

Words of Faith

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The Church of Christ is God's witness here on earth, and it remains now, as always, the foundation both of the Christian life and of the Christian mission. This issue of the *Words of Faith* aims to focus on the multi-faceted roles of the church, something all of us should meditate on in these uncertain times.

We are, certainly, at something of a unique juncture for the Christian church in the United States in recent decades. The American church now faces difficulties we are all familiar with. The future of the church in the United States appears more difficult, as the culture grows increasingly hostile. The numbers of young people leaving the church are very high, and the mainline denominations, which once helped to make Christian values (if not the true Gospel) a major force in the culture, are rapidly dying. A worldwide pandemic has produced division even in the Christian church, as people debate how best to respond to the government regulations and how to protect other believers while maintaining religious freedom. It is easy for Christians to become distracted from the main role of the church, dealing with so many of these things as they are.

Add to all of this the recent deaths of two of the major forces in the Evangelical church in the twentieth century: Ravi Zacharias and J. I. Packer. Zacharias's apologetics ministry covered the globe, and he proved a voice uniquely able to connect with university students in the modern age. Those who are not familiar with his life could benefit from reading

Walking from East to West, his spiritual autobiography which tells of his conversion as a young man in India, his ministry in Vietnam during the war, and the beginnings of his global ministry. J. I. Packer was a man whose impact was felt in a multitude of areas. Indeed, Leland Ryken has commented that "J. I. Packer filled so many roles that we can accurately think of him as having had multiple careers."¹ Packer, along with Lloyd-Jones, helped to bring Puritan theology back into the mainstream in the Reformed world, something which proved vastly beneficial to the maturity of the Evangelical church. His scholarship was mustered in quite a variety of ways, including in defense of the inerrancy of Scripture. And his classic, *Knowing God*, has proved one of the major classics of the twentieth century. Who will replace them? The question remains.

In the midst of all of this, we decided to run an issue focused on the roles of the church. We are all familiar with what has been going on at Faith Presbyterian: how the church was shut down for several months in the Spring, doing only online services, and how our current system involves both indoor and outdoor services with social distancing and masking. It would be of little benefit to rehearse all these details in the news pieces typical of the *Words of Faith*. Hence this issue: an exploration by members of the congregation on a number of the themes of the church, from worship to Christian education, evangelism to counseling.

¹ Leland Ryken, "J. I. Packer, 'Knowing God' Author, Dies at 93," *Christianity Today*, July 17, 2020.

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/july/j-i-packer-died-evangelical-theologian-knowing-god.html>

The Sunday Liturgy

By the Rev. Dr. Robert S. Rayburn

Though faithful Christians attend worship services every Lord's Day, a great many of them rarely think about what it is that they do in those services. They are familiar with the routine, they know what to expect, and that is enough for a great many. They may like the songs that morning or not, but, as we say nowadays, "It is what it is." But Christian worship has long been recognized as the foremost instrument of Christian discipleship and so what is done and how it is done in Lord's Day services is a matter of first importance. Christians should know why they worship as they do so that they can be intelligent participants and should want a service that each Sunday, and Sunday after Sunday, is forming in them a true Christian mind and heart.

What we believe and teach at Faith Presbyterian Church is that there is a logic to redemption and, therefore, there is a corresponding structure to Christian worship, which, after all, is to be the whole-souled response of God's people to that divine redemption. The structure of a rightly ordered worship service is the structure of a rightly ordered Christian life. So the now popular American evangelical Sunday Service—twenty minutes of singing, the offering, and a sermon—not only fails to respect the two-thousand years of careful reflection on the Word of God the church has invested in her worship but must produce over time a superficial Christian life. Historically, Christian liturgy has sought to impress upon worshippers the fullness of the Christian worldview or philosophy of life by recapitulating its most vital elements. A call to worship – a summons into God's presence (the very nature and wonder of salvation itself!) –; a hymn that sets before us God in his transcendent majesty, holiness, and grace; the confession of our sins followed by their absolution in the name of the Lord Christ who died for our sins; the confession of our faith in the Triune God and his salvation; the offering of our gifts; serving the Lord with our prayers; the hearing of his Word with the intention to believe and

obey; all of this summed up, signified, and sealed at the Lord's Table, he with us and we with him; and the receiving of his blessing: *that is the Christian life* and so *that is Christian worship*.

Describe the service as you like—a service in which God renews his covenant with us; a service in which we recapitulate the gospel and impress it and its implications again upon our hearts and lives; or, in more homely terms, a visit to God's house or the story of your life in 60 or 75 minutes – what it ought to be in any and every case is a renewal, a refreshment, or a reinvigoration of what we believe about God, ourselves, our salvation, our life in Christ, and our hope of eternal life. And so it ought to contain, in an order that reflects the logic of redemption, the great embodiments of that redemption as we find them in the Word of God: hymns of praise, confessions of sin, the divine word of forgiveness and promise, confession of faith, giving of gifts, the hearing of God's Word, sharing a sacramental meal with the Lord, and receiving his blessing. Obviously, the order adds meaning to each element. Isaiah first saw the Lord lifted up; then he confessed his sins; then he was forgiven; and then and only then did he hear the Lord's summons and offer his obedience. Reverse that order in any way and the order of the gospel is betrayed. In ways only slightly different from time to time and from place to place, *this* has been the worship of the people of God from earliest times. It is in this worship that we are liberated from the captivity to which so many people are subject: that of being people of only one time and one place. This worship is transcultural, timeless, eternal indeed. By participating in worship of this kind we take our place in the great stream of Christian life: past, present, and future, in heaven and on earth.

There is, no doubt, a routine. And routines can become lifeless and thoughtless. But it takes only a little thought, a little effort as you make your way through the worship of the Lord's house to realize anew and afresh that *this* is who and what you are;

this is why you are on your way to heaven; all of this—each element of the service and all of them together—all of this is what makes your present life so terrifically important and so wonderful, whatever

your circumstances may be, and *this* is why the Triune God deserves all of your love, all your gratitude, all of your commitment, all of your service, and all of your confidence.

“How lovely is Thy dwelling place, O Lord of Hosts!”

By Florence Rayburn

If we are to embrace the spirit and heart of Psalm 84 then it behooves us not only to think of the Lord’s House, and what happens in it, as lovely and beautiful, but also to make it so to the best of our ability. Calvin has said that “beauty is the shining forth of the goodness and glory of God.” In my own musings on the subject, with the help of my personal theolog, we came up with the definition of beauty as “Goodness experienced sensually,” that is, through sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. When one adds to that Jesus’ remark that “only God is good,” we get pretty close to Calvin’s definition. We have an obligation, as people of our God, to celebrate, express, reflect and embrace beauty in all areas of life but most especially in our worship. Music, being the audible expression of beauty, ought not only to be present in that worship but to be executed with as great a skill as is possible to achieve, with the gifts our God has given to us both collectively and as individuals. The work of the choir is meant to enhance the beauty of the congregation’s worship leading it into ever higher standards of beauty in singing to our Lord and transporting the congregation to the place where “even the sparrow finds a home...at your alters, O Lord of hosts.”

We know that when David, who the Lord said was a man after His own heart, set up the worship of the temple, he appointed men who were skilled in music, both instrumental and vocal, to lead the people in singing. I Chronicles 25 tells us that there were 288 such men! In fact, he thought it so important that these men *had no other duties* but to take care that the music was well executed and beautiful. “Now

these, the singers, the heads of fathers’ houses of the Levites, were in the chambers of the temple free from other service, for they were on duty day and night” (I Chronicles 9:33). David was himself enough of a musician to take care that only those skilled in music were assigned to it. During the event of the returning of the Ark to Jerusalem, David appointed “Chenaniah, leader of the Levites in music,” to direct the music, “for he understood it” (I Chronicles 15:22). So the job of the choir at Faith is to sing anthems that the congregation is not able to sing and to sing songs at a level of execution the congregation cannot attain, making her worship more beautiful and so more acceptable and pleasing to the Lord. Incidentally, it is because the choir sings *for* the congregation, not *to* the congregation that it is placed in the gallery at the back of the sanctuary; we are its voice. Providentially, the gallery is also where the choir sounds its best.

Here at Faith we have been blessed through the years with folk displaying a wide range of interest and ability in music: from those whose interest is passive but who “would miss it if it were not there” to those who feel their worship depends upon it; from those whose understanding of notes on a page is virtually non-existent to those who can sight read anything put in front of them without actually hearing it first. Most of us land somewhere in between. Our challenge, and that of any church choir, except those of large wealthy churches, is to collect a reliable cadre of able singers in each of the four voices. Those who have gathered to sing in the choir have not auditioned but have come voluntarily,

with good heart. Volunteers are, of course, impossible to command. They must want to be faithful at rehearsal and performance and, I believe, because God cares about how we worship Him the Lord has sent us many singers who do! It has been my privilege and responsibility as choir director not only to seek to maintain but also to raise standards of execution while not discouraging participation. These singers have hard work to do week in, week out, preparing at least two anthems every Sunday and to present them in both the 8:15 and the 11:00 services. The fact that it sings in two services inevitably means that the entire choir is rarely present in either service which makes their work more difficult and still they faithfully do it week by week and together, we feel the Lord's blessing and help.

The choir ordinarily sings at one of four places in the liturgical order:

1) At the head of the service prior to the call to worship at the moment in which, in our imagination, we come into the place where our holy Lord dwells: these anthems need to express, for the worshiper, how great our God is, how lovely, glorious, beautiful and how glad we are to be able to come into His presence. Praise, gratitude and summons to both is what is required here.

2) As part of the congregation's confession of sin: these anthems express for the worshiper how unworthy we are to be there; the complete contrast between our own character and God's is brought home to the soul. Penitence and sorrow are given voice. Some of the Church's most beautiful and poignant anthems have been composed for this moment in our liturgy.

3) As part of the Lord's Supper. The choir's work at the Supper changed several years ago when the understanding of the place and role of the Supper in the liturgy came into Rob's mind. We were in Idaho on a speaking trip and were out together on a walk when marathon runners came by. Running in place, we watched them take refreshment at a water station before running on to complete their race. "That is what the Supper is for Christians!" Rob said. After that the congregation began going forward to receive the bread and wine and the choir stopped singing penitential anthems; I began looking instead

for anthems expressing the strength and nourishment we gain from Christ, from His body and blood, from His work on our behalf, or sometimes a simple reflection on how beautiful He is.

4) As a conclusion to the silent prayer that follows the benediction: These anthems need to help strengthen our resolve to live for our Savior in the coming week and to express once more our deep gratitude and love for Him. These may include a prayer for grace to live and love Him well.

Other places in the liturgy are certainly possible, including musical responses, and/or chants, but these four are the ones we have so far found practical and possible given the gifts of talent, singers and situation that we have.

The anthems we look for have objective texts, that is, expressing truth about our God, what He has done, who He is, what He expects and our relationship to Him rather than about how we feel or what we want, that is, expressions of pure sentimentality. The music ought to express and adorn each text clearly in a way that is attractive and engaging to the congregation, lifting them in their minds to the heavenly places. We also try to find and perform new musical settings set to old, familiar texts in order to bring to them new life in the minds of the worshipers. If this is done with taste and sensitivity this can deepen the congregation's understanding of any given text.

The choir can, and has been, the teacher of the congregation, giving it the ability to sing anthems and worship music it had not known before. The *Kyrie* which the congregation was learning earlier in the year is an example of a piece of worship music the choir has first learned and performed in their hearing. The tune *Rivaux* sung to the text *Father of Heaven Whose Love Profound* is another example of the same. *St. Patrick's Breastplate* and *Psalm 68* are examples of both music and text introduced to the congregation by its Priest over time, made achievable by them not in small part by choir members interspersed throughout the congregation who are able to read music and perform it.

The FPC choir over many years has built up a repertoire that includes a substantial portion of the canon of sacred choral music from the several periods of music history in a wide variety of genre (Gregorian

Chant, old and newer motets, Renaissance polyphonic, Baroque, Classic, Romantic, American spirituals and Christian folk standards, and a variety of 20th century pieces). Samuel Wesley, Felix Mendelssohn, George Fredric Handel, Gabriel Fauré and John Rutter are some of our favorite composers. Even as the Church cannot live without Augustine, Calvin, Luther, C.S. Lewis and so many others so it's music cannot live without Bach, Handel, Vivaldi, Mozart and Mendelssohn, the musical springboard from which all else comes. It is a deep tragedy that so many of today's young people are growing up in ignorance of these great masters. It is for this reason the choir's repertoire intentionally represents the catholic and historic tradition of choral music even as we look for new, engaging and beautiful anthems. We are always polishing our presentation of familiar ones that have been in our repertoire a long time, even while we learn the new, thus increasing our skill

and enlarging the repertoire that we can easily draw from.

One of our greatest pleasures has been learning and presenting anthems suited to the seasons of the Church calendar. On the first Sunday of Advent, for instance, we have presented the same three anthems for the last several years. Singing these anthems opens the season for us with all the keen anticipation of the first coming of our Lord moving our minds into deeper meditation on the need for that coming and rejoicing over its effect on our salvation. Christmas, Lent, Good Friday, Easter, and Pentecost have afforded us some of our most beautiful repertoire which we have loved more deeply as the years have passed and have increased many-fold our devotion to the Savior. We pray they have done the same for you, the congregation, since that is truly our "raison d'être." "Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise!"

Evangelizing Muslims: two different approaches

By Benjamin Mellott

As American Christians head further into the twenty-first century, there is one group expanding in the United States, resulting in more contact every day with believers. American Muslims are a highly receptive group; coming to a new country, many of them are prepared to meet religious differences head-on in thoughtful discussion in a way that most secular Americans are unwilling to do. Also, American Christians and Muslims hold many more things in common than American Christians and secularists—such as one true Creator God, objective morality, Scriptures revealed by God, a real man named Jesus, a final judgement, and many more. As Muslims become more prominent in American society, it is increasingly important for Christians to know how to evangelize them. The key question to ask, however, is *how should believers do this?* There are two main approaches that can be taken.

First, there is the approach advocated by Pakistani-American Nabeel Qureshi, who converted from Islam to Christianity shortly after college, in his compelling book, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*. In this autobiographical narrative, Qureshi describes how he was brought to Christ and through his description lays down general principles for evangelizing Muslims. During college, Qureshi met a fellow student, David Wood, who was an outspoken Christian. The two built an unlikely friendship, challenging each other in one another's beliefs. After some discussion, Wood talked with Qureshi to make sure the latter was completely dedicated in actively pursuing God and His truth. The two then launched into a comprehensive evaluation of Christianity with specific criteria. After realizing how strong the case for Christ actually was, Qureshi then turned around and scrutinized his own beloved Islam with more

specific criteria and found his childhood faith wanting. After wrestling with the cost of conversion, Qureshi finally surrendered his life to Jesus in August of 2005, when the story ends.

The other approach to evangelizing Muslims can be found summarized on the blog, *Good Soil Evangelism and Discipleship*, in the post, “How to Witness to Muslims.” In this post, the authors advocate that Christians first build a relationship with their Muslim friends, finding such common ground as mentioned above and using it to get conversations started. They then recommend that believers walk through the Bible chronologically with their Muslim friends, allowing all of Scripture to make its own case for the necessity of the gospel, the source of the most controversy between Christians and Muslims. The authors point to dozens of Muslims whom they personally know who have come to Christ through such ways.

After evaluating both approaches, Christians can soon easily discern both similarities and differences between the two. The key similarity between the two is that they both require relationship. Qureshi needed Wood, and *Good Soil*’s converts needed the authors to start them down the path leading to Christ. However, after this, the differences between the two approaches become more apparent. To start, Qureshi’s approach begins with active pursuit of God and His truth in spite of the differences between Christianity and Islam, while the approach of the *Good Soil* authors starts with finding common ground between the two worldviews. Qureshi’s approach goes on to require systematic evaluation of both Christianity and Islam, while the approach of the *Good Soil* authors goes on to require a chronological evaluation of the Christians scriptures only. After assessing the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, American Christians will find that Qureshi’s approach is better for evangelizing culturally Western Muslims, while the approach of the *Good Soil* authors is better for evangelizing culturally Eastern Muslims.

It is worth stopping now to briefly discuss what is meant by “culturally Western” and “culturally Eastern.” Culturally Western Muslims value critical thinking over submission to authority and tend to be

second-generation immigrant Muslims raised in Europe or North America. Culturally Eastern Muslims, on the other hand, value submission to authority over critical thinking and tend to be first-generation immigrant Muslims raised in the Middle East or another predominately Muslim region. With these terms explained, it is time to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of both Qureshi’s and the *Good Soil* authors’ approaches to evangelizing Muslims.

Qureshi’s approach has a couple important strengths. He uses critical and systematic evaluation, starting from as objectively neutral position as he can and then evaluating all sides of every issue, following the evidence where it leads him. By using such evaluation and leaving no stone unturned, he is able to confidently come to a rational, well-thought-out conclusion. This very approach was used to evangelize Qureshi himself by a few apologist friends and was very effective in showing him that Christianity was a viable worldview while Islam was riddled with systematic errors. This in turn played a key role in his conversion to Christianity.

However, Qureshi’s approach also has a couple key weaknesses. For one, it can deter Eastern Muslims since it puts its emphasis on critical evaluation with little attention paid to human authority, which is the opposite of what an Eastern Muslim would usually do. Also, Qureshi’s critical approach that questions every idea and tradition, no matter how sacred, can come across as adversarial, which can deter Eastern Muslims as well as unprepared Western Muslims. This can result in barriers being thrown up that can shut down evangelization conversations.

The approach offered by the authors of *Good Soil* largely addresses the weaknesses left by Qureshi’s approach. They advocate finding common ground with one’s Muslim friend to strengthen the relationship and “open doors” to conversations concerning the differences between Christianity and Islam. Also, by taking Muslims through Scripture chronologically and letting it “speak for itself,” this approach appeals to a more story-based culture where storytelling is often more compelling in shaping one’s worldview.

However, the approach of the *Good Soil* authors also has several glaring weaknesses. For one, it leaves some questions that a more critical Muslim may have completely unanswered, such as what one should do with Islam and why, as well as questions about the prophethood of Muhammad and the inspiration of the Quran. Another weakness of the *Good Soil* approach is that it risks conflation of Islam and Christianity if a believer is not careful to draw distinctions between the two after finding common ground with his Muslim friend. This is a trap that many liberal Christians and Muslims fall into today, and so Christians evangelizing must be clear in laying out the differences as well as the similarities between the two worldviews.

Overall, both Qureshi's and the *Good Soil* authors' approaches must be used by Christians, though in varying circumstances. While Qureshi's approach is more useful for evangelizing Western Muslims and the *Good Soil* authors' approach is more useful for evangelizing Eastern Muslims, in many cases a combined approach is the most helpful. The process of evangelization to Muslims, as with any other group, requires great discernment and prayer. However, this is not any reason to delay the work of evangelization to which the Lord calls us. The Holy Spirit can and will use our faltering attempts to bring Muslims out of darkness into light. It is Christ's work to bring Muslims to Him, so let us with discernment and prayer seek to be His instruments.

Every Christian a Missionary

By Abraham Sullivan

All around us, as we drive the streets of Tacoma, are those whom few of us touch, but whom all of us see. On the corner is the man with the sign, stating that "anything will help." In the bushes between the highway, cleverly hidden, are paths and passageways unknown to those who never cross the thoroughfare to explore the scotchbroom-covered median. Indeed, when you really begin to see them, they are everywhere. The homeless of our city surround us, and often prey upon our pity, and yet still the average American does very little but complain and perhaps give a granola bar. Of late, however, I have had a chance to take part in just a few of the activities of the Tacoma Rescue Mission, one group which does something more to address the problem. I wish to describe some small anecdotes of that experience here, scattered as they are.

It was a warm and balmy night—that was fortunate for those who have little cover. The sky was blue and golden, in the way that only a summer sunset in a clear sky can be. We were talking with a man by the car in which he lived, when we heard a whimper from the parking lot across the street. Running across

the street, three of us found the woman crying, sitting alone and desolate in the middle of the parking lot of a run-down and most likely closed store. At first she could not speak in her anguish, and so the others and I sat down around her. As I was informed later, it was Diamond, a homeless woman who has become a fixture of the region, never traveling far from the intersection by which her now-deceased grandmother made her home. One of the team, a young woman whose own childhood was lived out among the rougher parts of our town, but whose life has now been changed by Christ, took Diamond's hand. She spoke with a calm voice as Diamond's frantic wails began to subside. Diamond was distressed, afraid of the dark which was beginning to descend, and afraid of going through one more night on the streets. But equally so, she was afraid of finding shelter anywhere far from this place where her grandmother had lived, one of the only places which she knew. As we talked, she opened up somewhat, her eyes growing wide with fear as she admitted her need. Quickly she asked us for prayer, and so we held

hands in that cross-legged circle on the pavement, and lifted up her needs to the Father.

Another night, we stopped at a park on the edge of Lakewood. There we found a man in his car, an older gentleman likely around seventy years of age. His voice was weak as he spoke to us, but he longed to speak. He had just gotten out of the hospital after receiving a leg injury, and it was now infected. He has been staying in this car, along with a younger man who appeared aloof and hostile the entire conversation, and was now stuck in place. Someone had stolen the key and smashed the front window as he slept, likely waiting until he got out of the car to swoop in and drive it away. And so this man lived for these days, his belongings in a small sedan shared with an unfriendly passenger, hoarding his car as his last great possession on earth. We had little we could give him in the way of medical supplies, but we did provide him with gauze and some disinfectant. Far more wonderful, however, was that we were able to give him a Bible which his failing eyes could read. As I stood by and listened, John, one of the members of the team, shared the Gospel and talked to the man about Christ for some twenty minutes or more.

Or, just this past week, a man approached me with tears on his eyes. In a moving way, he began to apologize to me that at one time in the past he had spoken bad words against “you people.” Now, he wanted me to know that he had meant none of it. So concerned was he, that a simple “You are forgiven” would not suffice. For over twenty minutes, he apologized over and over and over again, even apologizing for his smile, worried that I might interpret it as a sign of mischief. His whole expression and demeanor filled one with pity. How could this man, abasing himself before me, his whole mind in distress at his former sins, be brought to peace? Never before have I seen a soul in such turmoil. At the mention of the name Jesus, however, he told me that we “ought to agree to disagree,” for he neither called religion “wrong nor right.” He continued to apologize for several more minutes. At last, all I could leave him with was one last charge: “You may disagree, but I firmly believe that Christ can forgive your sins and give you peace if you turn to him. Just keep it in mind.” A lame response, and very little of

the Gospel message, but I left this troubled man in the hopes that these few words might one day have some fruit.

All of these people, and so many more, in desperate need of the Savior. All of them in great need physically and emotionally as well. It is these most needy which the Rescue Mission makes it its goal to reach. Some hate us: a woman, addicted to heroin and near death from a dangerous infection, screamed at us when we tried to call an ambulance, fearful that a hospital would not let her have her beloved drug. Still now, I do not know if she is left on this earth—and only 22 years of age. But others love to see the Rescue Mission van. John, the inveterate Gospel sharer, is a well-loved figure on the streets of Tacoma. From him I have learned much about how to bring in the Bible message to every conversation without seeming awkward or intrusive. Mario, the “pastor of the streets,” the leader of the Rescue Mission’s outreach program, was himself once a drug addict before he came to Christ. And there are many others: volunteers, men and women who have decided to give one or two of their nights each week and serve a meal or drive to an encampment.

And they have fruit. It was through this program that C. J., one of the happiest men I have ever known, came to be saved. I talked of him in my online morning devotional back in June, and so I will leave his story there. Suffice it to say, however, that because of the power of the Gospel he was transformed from a homeless man, addicted to drugs, into a cheerful warrior of the cross. He is not alone—many have been helped by the Mission’s multitude of programs. Twice every day, the Good Neighbor Café serves hundreds who come through its doors. The men’s and women’s New Life Programs help those who have been addicted get back on their feet. Anyone who stays in one of the homeless shelters receives an advocate who will help them to find housing and a job. Vans drive the city all day every weekday, offering help with getting job applications completed, Social Security information or unemployment payments, or even citizenship applications. And then the Search & Rescue team goes out at night, serving food, distributing socks and

blankets, and always urging the homeless to seek more help.

Over a century ago, Johann Casper Lavatar wrote the words:

O Jesus Christ, grow thou in me,
And all things else recede!
My heart be daily nearer thee,
From sin be daily freed!

Here is a way to do that. Here, in the work of the Tacoma Rescue Mission, is one among the many ways to live out that prayer: “O Jesus Christ, grow thou in me, and all things else recede.” All of us know the average complaint, things we ourselves have felt often enough when we see a homeless person. ‘How come they are not working? They appear young and strong enough.’ ‘That lady will most likely spend the money on drugs.’ ‘It was probably their fault.’ ‘They must have been irresponsible to be on the streets.’ ‘Perhaps they like it out here; if they really wanted to

go, the government has enough programs to help them.’ And all of these things are true: true in the vast majority of cases. But Christ went not to those who needed no physician, but to those who were tax collectors and prostitutes. He came not to save the righteous, but sinners. Our help may well be taken advantage of; we may well be spurned for personal gain. But so was Christ, and so must we be.

Would you not live out this mission? Would you not wish it to be said of the church that its members were the people who best could *love*? Well, here is one way, and a way always in need of another volunteer. The Rescue Mission is a wonderful place, a place where Christ is proclaimed. If ever there was a place in Tacoma, it is this, which shouts most forcefully and brazenly, ‘Death, thou shalt die!’ For here death is stared straight in the face, and met with that only message which can save.

Counseling and the Church

By Andrew and Sandy Milton

“Bear one another’s burdens, Paul reminds the Galatians” (6:2). This seemingly simple statement portends depth and richness...and complexity. For, while the Bible speaks frequently of counsel, it seems to mean advice in decision making. Consider the Proverbs. “Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed” (15:22), or, “By insolence comes nothing but strife, but with those who take advice is wisdom” (13:10).

Bearing one another’s burdens, however, reflects concern with relational engagement, at least as much as proverbially correct choices. Life can be difficult, stressful and unhappy, even for godly people who take right and good steps in life, so bearing one another’s burdens certainly involves a kind of engagement beyond giving advice.

Argument over the biblical writ for counseling, by which I mean a professional counselor meeting with a person or persons and giving advice,

admonition, encouragement or guidance about relationships and life, generates much heat--though perhaps less light, however. The point here is to elaborate important considerations when seeking counseling, but a brief outline of this debate helps with that elaboration.

On one side are those who would—at most—accept the nouthetic approach to counseling. Namely, all counsel must be of and from God’s word, only. In brief, the nouthetic emphasis on sin as the source of distress--because the bad behavior causes mental anguish--addresses behavior without a clearer and more specific understanding of the roots and causes of the sin.

Not all distressing behavior is rooted in sin, though. To have difficulty interacting with an authority figure because your parents harshly withdrew their affection in response to your mistakes is not your sin. Rather, it’s a natural outcome of your

experiences and what was modeled for you during your formative years. Without loving instruction and right modeling, it's unlikely you'll simply intuit appropriate interactions with authority figures. In the end, right response to authority is required, but understanding the roots of wrong response can help as you navigate toward better response.

With such difficulties, counseling can help, and plenty of scripture supports a strong claim that something like counseling was and is very reasonable. Besides admonishing the Galatians, Paul also exhorted the Thessalonians, "And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all" (1 Thessalonians, 5:14).

But bearing one another's burdens, and encouraging, helping and waiting do not require a professional counselor, so why see one? Counselors are trained and experienced with tools/skills that enable insight, knowledge and wisdom for emotional and relational difficulties. The tools a counselor brings to the table can both be applied in the counseling relationship as well as taught to the counselee(s) to apply in their own lives.

Keeping in mind that we are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14), we share the range of emotional responses God exhibits. Though we lack the capacity for His perfect responses, we each have our own complicated life history, traumas, attachment styles and genetic background which all contribute to making us the complicated creatures we are.

Take attachment style, for instance. The way your adult caregivers related and connected to you as a child, in combination with your own emotional predisposition, will create a pattern for how you attach--emotionally connect and relate to--others, including first your own family of origin, then later, your friends and your spouse and children. Recognizing the effects of having an anxious-preoccupied attachment style instead of a secure attachment enables one to navigate relationships with better preparation for the best way forward.

Important insights--including issues regarding attachment--have come from non-Christian scholars

and clinicians. And just as medical science has "plundered the Egyptians," the mental health profession does likewise. To take one simple example, the earliest theorizers on germ theory were not Christians--some were Indian, Persian and pre-Christian Greeks, and many of the first clinical specialists were not either. Yet, medical science--even that practiced by Christian doctors--has embraced the knowledge in that field, much to the happy benefit of us all.

Likewise with mental health and counseling. Plenty of non-Christians have recognized important patterns (such as the common elements we all experience as we traverse through loss/grieving) or discovered significant biological situations that give insight into our complicated lives. Understanding of the brain, for instance, has exploded in the last several years, and non-Christians the likes of Dan Siegel and John Medina have generated a wealth of knowledge that Christian counselors can apply within a biblical framework of counseling.

The point is that medical, biological and psychological research is amoral, waiting for the moral overlay we apply. For instance, the burgeoning field of epigenetics, which has found that life circumstances--like chronic stress or even working nights--can affect how genetic patterns express themselves in your behavior, gives substantive credence to God's declaration that He will visit the iniquities of the fathers on the third and fourth generations. With this in mind, the study of psychology offers insights that make counseling a potentially useful endeavor...with the right counselor.

So, what do you look for in a counselor? First, if you want to ensure that Christian ethics animate the counseling insights, see a Christian counselor who intentionally does so. Second, make sure the counselor is trained and experienced working with the kinds of issues you're wanting to work on. Counselors can specialize. Next, check with a prospective counselor about the modalities or counseling processes they use--not all counseling is so-called talk therapy. Finally, seek a licensed (or certified, and under supervision) counselor.

When might you consider a counselor? For a variety of reasons. When you've experienced a trauma, or you're processing the effects of cumulated ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences--or traumas), or when you are grieving a loss, or when depression or sadness has gripped you, or when you're having difficulty "making sense" of some difficult or complicated experiences, or when you're having

difficulty navigating important relationships, and more.

The Bible directs us to examine ourselves. This examination certainly requires teachability and accountability, but introspection and reflection are important, too, and counseling can facilitate that work.

Lessons on love by the Merchants of Cool

By Kimberly Reis

"K'Davey! If you don't stop jawin' back there... I'm gonna... c'mere you..." and he shuffled his 5'2" frame down the aisle between the desks, with his oxford loafers scuffling across the dusty linoleum floor with his hands in his khaki pockets. He suddenly seized the front edge of my combined chair-and-desk with surprising strength. As I started laughing, he dragged my desk—with me still seated in the chair—into the hall outside his classroom door.

"What're you doin' anyway, and how come you didn't answer my question about Conrad's floppywhitehat? Huh?" he scolded. Sliding away, he could suppress a wry grin no longer. He walked back into the classroom. I sat—in my desk—gazing down the deserted linoleum-floored corridor at an empty high school hallway, lined on both sides with grey lockers.

"Man!" I said to myself, "I love Honors English".

I got up and screeched my desk back into the room where he had resumed talking about *The Secret Sharer*, the white chalk tap dancing on the board as he wrote in square, capital letters. He turned to the side to look at me, who now sat up in the front of the class in my desk.

"I thought I kicked you out of here, K'Davey!"

"You did..." I slyly grinned from behind my up-turned collar, "but I'm back."

Mr. Jim Taylor was my Honors English teacher at Rogers High School, and that year, in 1988, I decided I would try to emulate that wild-eyed and smirking English teacher. Taylor was our "John Keating" of *The Dead Poets Society*, except Mr. Taylor really was a real-life, manic, lover of the English language who played the drums at Enchanted Village in their roving, 5-piece band. Mr. Taylor stood on his desk before Robin Williams ever did. He was well-read, quick-witted, engaging, funny, and we all knew the reason we had nicknames because he really *liked* us.

A 60-some year-old man with a large nose covered in red veins, ears that stuck out, a slightly kyphotic back, and dentures, he walked everywhere with his hands rebelliously jammed way down into his wrinkly pants pockets. Mr. Taylor corrected spelling and grammar mistakes on the hallway butcher paper signs we painted to advertise the Puyallup-Rogers football game while they hung on the walls. He introduced us to T.S. Eliot, Conrad, Shakespeare, Keats, Shelley, and W.H. Auden. Mr. Taylor had a literal passion for literature and language. Despite his age, he made learning cool.

Speaking of being well-read, quick-witted, funny, and tender-hearted, Dick Hannula told me one time that what defines a great teacher is her love of the subject she is teaching. What topic could be more worthwhile to teach than our faith, The Most Important Thing in The World? For Mr. Hannula,

history is fascinating because he understands that those Old Christian Guys and Old Christian Gals really have no wrinkles; in fact, they are not “old” at all. To resurrect them, we simply employ the time machine which God has installed in each and every one of us: our imagination. George MacDonald, C.S. Lewis, and J.R.R. Tolkien understood this. Our sanctified imagination is Andúril, the Sword That Was Broken, in our fight to combat the post-modern sorcerers as they attempt to invoke effective hexes on our faith with monikers like, “Outdated”, “Irrelevant”, “Disillusioned”, and “Uncool”. These lies, if allowed to take root, will dim our spiritual eyes, smother our youthful fire, and callous our tender conscience.

Ah...the idea of “cool”. That foe is indeed formidable and far more powerful than we adults now can even dare remember. One of the most eye-opening documentaries in the world is a PBS *Frontline* production entitled, “The Merchants of Cool”. I urge you to watch this 2001 biopic. Wow. Alone, the segment featuring the band “Insane Clown Posse” is riveting.

Exposing the well-tuned machine of marketing research, which employs teen focus groups, this video opens by showing an actual group of hand-picked teenagers from various ethnicities and socioeconomic levels who have been paid \$125 to point at pictures of what is “cool” at this moment: cool shoes, cool water bottles, cool music, cool food, cool tech. The viewer is immediately mesmerized by the tactical, methodical, pain-staking way marketing executives are currently going about hiding their money-making face from the teenaged consumer, and his/her parents. Writer for “The New Yorker”, Malcolm Gladwell, says “Cool hunting” is structured around the search for a certain kind of personality and a certain kind of player in a given social network. ‘Cool hunting’ is all about a kind of revolution that sets that earlier paradigm aside and says, in fact, “cool” has to do with the influence held by those who have the respect and admiration and trust of their friends.”

Rob Stone, teen marketing executive, explains the recent success of Coca-Cola’s campaign to boost the sales of Sprite: “We all of a sudden put our arm around that kid that was drinking Sprite and said, ‘We understand you. We recognize you. We

want to be part of your life,’ not just, ‘Please drink our product.’ We didn’t- we almost weren’t even selling the product. We were selling the fact that we understood the culture.” Why does Rob want to understand? Is he a caring guy? No. Its only because the Merchants of Cool are earning a piece of Generation Z’s \$830 a year pie. “Give us your money and we’ll make you worthy—for a minute.”

Historical Christianity indeed has an eternal solution, which cannot be bought with any amount of wealth. Isaiah has a message for the Merchants of Cool. He says, “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you without money, come, buy, and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost! Why spend money on that which is not bread, and your labor on that which does not satisfy?”

What if we’re not teaching about what ungodly “coolness” is, or preaching Nike? And what if you don’t have \$830 billion a year to fund your efforts? What if you are an ambassador for “Living Water” not LIFEWTR? Did we listen to what Rob Stone, the Sprite Teen Marketing Executive said? The brand abandoned typical efforts and simply said to the Gen Z consumer, “We understand you. We recognize you. We want to be part of your life.” There is an eternal echo of part of the Gospel, straight from the Trojan Horse’s own mouth. We all - Gen Boomer, Gen X, Gen Z, The Greatest Generation - we *all* have been made in the image of the Creator and every human being craves to be accepted. When teachers of the Christian faith love enough to ignite our sanctified imagination to the vast adventure that living for Christ truly is, we beat Sprite at its own game. At that point, we becoming a living advertisement for Him. Paul, speaking to the Romans, says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which* is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Jesus puts it in a spartanly when he states, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Oh, for the resolve of this author to follow that imperative more completely!

The mask is off! The Merchants of Cool are hiding very stealthily behind being the Merchants of Acceptance, which being translated in an “uncool” way means the Merchants of Love. Despite what Amazon touts, there’s *still* nothing new under the sun; *Love for Sale* was a hit by Cole Porter written back in 1930. So, wait! The oft-repeated fib that the

Christian message is “by-Gone”, “passe” and—worst of all—“uncool” is a lie then! Teaching the Truth is apparently hyper-relevant if Christian teachers will sacrifice the time and make the space to truly mean these words: “*Because the Good Shepherd loves me, I want to understand you. I think you’re valuable. I recognize you. I want to be part of your life*”.