

PSYCHOLOGY FOR  
**Living**

FALL 2008



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## Things That Last

Recently my wife Kathy was sorting through copies of a batch of old letters that her missionary mother, Mildred Rice,



Bruce Narramore, Ph.D.

had asked us to store in our garage for her years before she passed away. Those letters had been typed and mailed by Mildred from China, Japan and Taiwan

where she and Kathy's father Rolland ministered from 1936 until they retired decades later.

Like many of her generation, Mildred was an incredible letter writer. She typed personal letters two, three and even four pages in length to family and friends around the world. Reading those letters brought back wonderful memories to Kathy of her life as the daughter of missionaries to Asia.

One of those memories was standing at the back of the ship, the *President Wilson*, as her family left Japan to return to the U.S. in 1952. On the dock were more than one hundred Japanese pastors and leaders, each waving a flag with a logo of a flaming heart. Each flag represented a separate church that had either been newly planted or reopened after World War II under Kathy's father's ministry leading Every Creature Crusade teams during a single three year period! Kathy's father stood at the back of the ship waving goodbye to the people he loved with his own flag with the flaming heart logo. It is a memory Kathy will never forget of an unusual period in her father's ministry that mattered for eternity.

On several occasions over the years,

Kathy and I have met Japanese Christians who were influenced by Kathy's dad. Several have become pastors and leaders in the church in Japan. The same is true of the ministry Rev. Rice had in China. One of his students became one of the best known leaders of the house church movement. He spent years in prison for his faith but even toward the close of his life, he continued sharing his faith and baptized thousands in a river outside of Beijing.

Another of Mildred's letters told of a meeting she and Rolland had with their pastor, Dr. Louis Talbot, of the Church of the Open Door in downtown Los Angeles. Dr. Talbot had traveled to Japan to minister and to visit the missionaries sent to Japan and supported by the church. During his visit, Dr. Talbot told Mildred and Rolland he had just had an hour long conference with General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Japan after the Japanese surrender. General MacArthur told Dr. Talbot that Christians should flood Japan with Bibles and that if the church didn't "take its opportunity, it will go down in history as a tragic mistake." General MacArthur knew that certain things especially matter. They can change lives for eternity and impact a nation.

The apostle Paul encouraged Christians at Colossae to focus their hearts "on things above." (*Colossians 3:1*) And Jesus told us "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal." (*Matthew 6:19*) As we approach the upcoming Christmas Season, let's keep our hearts focused on things above and let's spend our time, energy and resources on things that will make a lasting difference for the cause of Christ.

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# Salvation:

## How Much Does it Affect Your Personality and Behavior? (Part I)



by Dr. Bruce Narramore and Dr. Clyde Narramore

Some time ago I was the guest speaker at a Christian college and immediately after the assembly I went to the student lounge for an informal discussion.

“Dr. Narramore,” one girl asked, “when we trust Christ as our Savior, how much does it actually affect our personality and behavior?”

“Yeah,” one puzzled young person said, “the *Bible* tells me I’m a ‘new creature in Christ.’ However, I often act like the same dumb guy I was before I was saved.”

Undoubtedly he is referring to *2 Corinthians 5:17*: *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (KJV).*

This is a tremendous portion of Scripture, and those of us who know Christ as our Savior know that this verse is packed with vital truths. But like these college students, many Christians are perplexed because the last portion of this verse seems to say that everything about us has changed, yet we know not everything about us *is* different. In fact, most of our old behavior patterns probably did not immediately change at the moment we became Christians.

Our physical and mental abilities and characteristics didn’t change. Our IQs were not suddenly higher. Our noses were no longer or shorter. Our attention deficit disorders, problems concentrating, and temper tantrums didn’t all vanish. And many of us still struggled with ►



longstanding emotional, physical or spiritual problems.

Because many things haven't changed immediately some Christians conclude something spiritually is seriously wrong with them. Others have nearly given up on Christianity because it doesn't seem to work in their lives. It doesn't deliver what it appears to promise. So how do we reconcile "all things

are become new" with what we all know from our own experience? Not everything is new - yet!

*Clarity comes when we realize that certain things change completely at the moment of salvation. Other things change as we grow and mature over the course of our lifetime. And still others will only change completely with the return of Christ and the beginning of our life*

*in eternity with God.*

In this first of a two-part series on how salvation affects our personalities and behavior we discuss the major changes that take place immediately, at the moment we become Christians. Most of these changes are in our relationship with God, our standing before Him, our eternal destination, the forgiveness of our sins, and our spiritual rebirth. These immediate changes lay the foundation for other huge changes that can take place in our lives in the years following salvation, in a process of growth the *Bible* calls sanctification. We will discuss those changes that take place as we grow spiritually in Part II in the next issue of *Psychology for Living*.

### **Clarifying the Confusion**

Anytime a verse from the *Bible* like *2 Corinthians 5:17* seems unclear or confusing there are several things we can do to be sure we understand it properly. One of the first principles of biblical interpretation is to "interpret Scripture by Scripture." For example, the same Apostle Paul who wrote "all things are become new" also wrote,

**"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me," *Philippians 3:12*.**

**"For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want," *Romans 7:19*.**

Paul himself acknowledged that he struggled with the gap between what he wanted to do and what he did. Even though he had a miraculous encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus that radically turned his life around, everything about him didn't change at that moment.

So how are we to understand the statement "all things are become new," written by the same man who said "I haven't become perfect" and "I practice the evil I don't want to

do?” It certainly can’t mean that we have stopped sinning or reached perfection. If it wasn’t true for Paul, it won’t be true for us!

We find some clarification in another passage where Paul also talked about being a “new creation.”

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works ... Therefore remember that formerly you were separate from Christ ... without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ,” *Ephesians 2:10-13*.

Before salvation, Paul says, we were *separated from Christ, without hope and without God*. Now we are created in Christ Jesus, and brought near to God through the blood of Christ. **Here Paul tells us the primary focus of what it means to be a new creation. It is to be reconciled to God through Christ.** We will see later that this is precisely the same focus of the “problem passage” in *2 Corinthians 5*.

Another principle of biblical interpretation is to understand each verse in its context. Every verse in the *Bible* needs to be understood in light of what the author says immediately before and after the verse we are attempting to understand. In the case of *2 Corinthians 5:17* the context is Paul’s reminding the church at Corinth that Christ died for our sins and that we should therefore all be agents of reconciliation. Look at the three verses immediately preceding verse 17.

“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.” *2 Corinthians 5:14-16*.

### What’s New Now

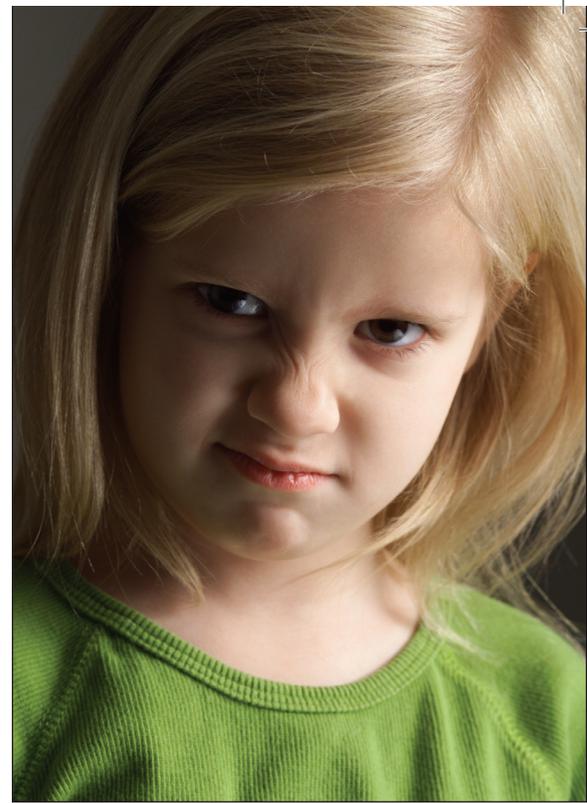
Notice that Paul mentions three things that are new.

- 1) *Jesus died for our sins and the sins of every person.*
- 2) *Because Christ loved us so much he died for us, his love compels us to no longer live selfishly, but to serve Christ.*
- 3) *We have a new way of viewing people. We now know that some people are reconciled to God and others are not. That’s a whole new way of thinking about people – a spiritual way of thinking, not a worldly way.*

These three things happen at the moment we become Christians. They are new now.

Immediately after mentioning the three things that happened at salvation, Paul writes “Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new” (*KJV*). Or as the *New International Version* of the *Bible* translates it, “The old has gone, the new has come.” Notice that nothing in any of these verses says that our entire personalities are changed or that all of our old habits and behavior patterns and problems disappear. We have experienced such a radical change in our relationship with God that we are considered new creatures. We are forgiven and reconciled to God and are being compelled by love to serve Him. That’s what’s new. It would be forcing things into this text that aren’t there to suppose that all of our physical, spiritual and emotional problems suddenly vanish at the moment of salvation.

For example, large numbers of people who are “new creations” suffer obvious physical illnesses like cancer, blindness or hearing disorders. Many others suffer from hidden physiological difficulties that can cause all sorts of emotional problems that in turn impact their feelings about their Christian life. Carol, for example, was a committed Christian who attended church and Bible studies regularly and was serious about maturing as a



Christian. But she always felt there was something missing in her relationship with the Lord. She didn’t emotionally feel His presence and consistently lived with a moderate level of depression. She read a number of books on the deeper Christian life and changed churches a couple of times looking for a more vital relationship with God but nothing seemed to help.

Eventually Carol sought help from a Christian counselor who suggested she have a thorough physical examination. The exam revealed a serious thyroid condition and after several weeks on medication her depression lifted and she began to experience a much more vital Christian life. Her physical problem had not been changed at salvation and that was impacting both her emotional and spiritual life.

The next three verses continue the same theme of being forgiven through Christ and called to serve him.

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are ►

therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you, on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God." *2 Corinthians 5:18-20*.

Once again Paul tells us that because God has reconciled us to Himself we should be sharing that message with others. This is the



focus of *2 Corinthians 5:17*. It is not about any immediate, total personality change, let alone about being perfect!

Other biblical passages use a variety of images to describe what happens to us at the moment of salvation. Jesus told Nicodemus "No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again," *John 3:3*. A *spiritual rebirth, also known as regeneration, is used to describe the fundamental change that takes place in our lives at the moment of salvation*. God makes us spiritually alive. We begin to understand things we could not comprehend before. The Scripture says, for example, "The man without the Spirit does not accept things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned," *1 Corinthians 2:14*.

This is a tremendous change. It gives us a very different perspective on life. We suddenly begin to under-

stand spiritual things. We also undergo a deep internal shift at the moment of salvation.

This shift comes from realizing and accepting the fact that God is the sovereign, righteous, loving Lord, and that we are finite and sinful people in need of His redemption. This fundamental change, acknowledging God as God, lays the foundation for many of the changes we will see in our lives as we grow spiritually. It can impact our ability to forgive and to overcome anger, worry, impatience, guilty feelings and a host of other less than ideal personality characteristics.

*At the time of our spiritual birth we also become God's adopted children (Eph. 1:5). We enter into a personal relation-*

ship with God as He becomes our heavenly Father and we become His earthly children. Some of us lost our earthly parents through divorce or death. Others had parents with severe mental or emotional problems. And none of us had perfect earthly parents. These patterns leave their mark. "The sins of the fathers are visited to the third and the fourth generations" (*Exodus 20:5*). But now we have a perfect father. He is gentle with us, and loves us unconditionally. He is always faithful, just and kind.

"I will be a father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty," *2 Corinthians 6:18*.

"His name is the Lord. A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling," *Psalms 68:4-5*.

As we get to know our heavenly Father better He becomes more important in our lives and we increasingly benefit from our rela-

tionship with him. We will grow in our experience of God our Father over the years, but it all begins when we become his adopted children at salvation.

*When we trust Christ as our Savior, the third person of the trinity, the Holy Spirit, takes up residence in our lives*. He comforts us and counsels us (*John 16:7*), assures us that we are the children of God (*Romans 8:16*), helps in our weakness (*Romans 8:26*), prays to the Father on our behalf (*Romans 8:26-27*), testifies to the work Christ has done (*John 16:14*), leads us into truth (*John 16:13*), helps us understand the Bible (*John 15:26*), and encourages and aids in the entire process of our growth as Christians. Although most of this growth will take place gradually, over the entire course of our lives, it begins with the entrance of the Holy Spirit into our lives at the moment of salvation.

When we accept Christ as our Savior we don't just gain a heavenly Father and the inward presence of the Holy Spirit. *We join a larger family — the family of all people who have put their faith in Christ*. That family, the Church Universal, is designed to help us to grow, mature and reach out to others. Like becoming a child of God and being filled with the Spirit of God, living in the family of God begins at salvation. But the impact of being a member of the family of God will be worked out over our entire lives.

Taken together these radical changes that occur at the time of our spiritual birth lay the foundation for many behavioral and personality changes that will come as we grow in our relationship with God and others in the years following our salvation. These changes will be the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, but they also require our active participation. And most of them take a significant amount of time before they are fully developed. In fact most if not all of them won't be totally and perfectly changed during our life on this earth. We will look at how these changes can take place in Part II in the next issue of *Psychology for Living*. 



# Compulsive Hoarding: Don't Throw That Away

by Dr. Robert Whitcomb

Chuck asked if I would go with him to fix his neighbor's computer. Walking to Helen's home he described her as "a little strange, but "nice". When we entered her house, I saw what Chuck meant. Helen led us through a path in her home just wide enough for one person. Along the edges were piles of old magazines and newspapers that nearly reached our waists. They had frayed edges, likely from being repeatedly rubbed against by passersby. Helen made some weak comment about not having been able to get through them before she tossed them out. Chuck and I smiled and nodded like we understood just what she meant.

As we left, after identifying the problem with Helen's computer, Chuck asked, "Have you ever seen anything like that before?"

"Not really," I replied, "Although my garage almost seems like that

sometimes." We both related to that and laughed. "Seriously," I continued, "I have only read about situations like this in books. People who behave like this are called *compulsive hoarders*."

Many of us have closets and garages with a lot of "stuff," but most of us do not qualify as dyed-in-the-wool hoarders. Hoarders represent a small group of the population; but they are enough of a problem that health departments, fire and police, family services, mental health services, housing, and public works are now working to find solutions. In 1998 the county of Fairfax, Virginia, developed the nation's first task force on hoarding. Prior to the attention given to this issue in Virginia, hoarding problems were often considered sanitation issues, fire code violations, or animal abuse. More careful investigations have revealed that hoarding is not just an annoyance of an overly zealous collector, but a mental/emotional problem with potentially significant consequences for society.

According to the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, hoarding is defined as "the excessive collection and retention of things or animals until they interfere with day-to-day functions such as home, health, family, work and social life." In January of 2006, a 62-year-old woman in Washington State suffocated under a pile of clothing in her debris-filled home! In July of the same year, 14 firefighters were injured putting out an apartment fire in Queens, New York, as a result of flammable materials being hoarded by occupants. Hoarding can cause damage to buildings, neighboring apartments, and pets that are subject to injuries from misguided "hoarders" or "helpers."

Hoarders are typically in psychological bondage to unconscious fears. Many of them have lives so captured by their compulsive behavior that they deny the problem outright or offer weak excuses. "It's still good—maybe someone else can get some use out ►

of it.” “I don’t have the energy right now. I’ll take care of it later.” Or, “What if I need it tomorrow?”

Others more readily confess their symptoms, but admit their embarrassing failures to fight the battle. Christians struggling with this disorder often pray and read Scriptures for release but experience the battle as insurmountable.

Researchers have found that the dynamics of hoarding are similar to other compulsive disorders. Patients with compulsive hoarding typically suffer from strong anxiety, and/or depression. Retaining and collecting items brings temporary relief from their anxiety and/or depression. But since relief is temporary, they must soon repeat it and the cycle of **anxiety, depression, hoarding, relief, anxiety, depression**, goes around again. Fortunately there is help available.

#### TRACING THE CAUSES

John and his wife came for counseling because they wanted to adopt a child but Cheryl would not agree until John cleaned out his compulsive mess from their house. It was so cluttered they were embarrassed to invite anyone to visit. In spite of his great desire for a child, John couldn’t overcome his problem. He also had other obsessive-compulsive symptoms like being unable to make decisions because he was so afraid he might make a wrong one. Fear overwhelmed and paralyzed him.

John had few friends and never asked for help from others, so coming for therapy was difficult. In fact, he wouldn’t have come unless his wife insisted. When he first spoke with a counselor he wasn’t sure he needed help. But he gradually felt safe enough to open up a little and start exploring the reasons he kept so many things. After exhausting one rationalization after another about how he might really need the information or object, he finally started exploring what really drove his compulsive behavior.

He realized that his “stuff” felt like parts of himself or of a significant other. He kept them because they felt like extensions of himself and his identity. He gained feelings of comfort,

security, and safety by retaining “stuff.” Then he discussed several childhood relationships that had hurt him emotionally. This left him reluctant to attach to others, including God, since he was fearful of being vulnerable to those who might reject or abandon him. John’s “stuff” turned out to be a substitute for people.

John also found that he felt a special responsibility for his possessions. He believed that he needed to control their usage, and ensure that they were not wasted. That gave him a sense of importance and control.

He also saw how he was using his

*Hoarders are typically in psychological bondage to unconscious fears. Many of them have lives so captured by their compulsive behavior that they deny the problem outright or offer weak excuses.*

compulsive behavior to manage his anxiety and depression. Once he understood that when he was anxious or depressed he tried to soothe his feelings by collecting or retaining stuff, he confronted his unrealistic thoughts. His therapist helped him learn to face the irrationality of them and replace them with more realistic ones. For example, when he found himself thinking things like, “I might need that again someday,” or “It’s still good, maybe someone else can use it,” he learned to ask himself “Do I really need it?” “How many do I already have?” “Will I use it within a reasonable time?” “What are the disadvantages and advantages of keeping this?” As John began pondering questions like this with the help of his counselor, he started gradually reducing his collecting behaviors.

He also found resources in biblical verses like *1 Peter 5:7*...“casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you”(NASB). Being reminded of the Lord’s caring provided him emotional and spiritual support when he was tempted. John also benefited from *Philippians 4: 6-7* “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (NASB). Learning to ask God and others for help gave John a sense that he was not alone. He began to feel an increased peace as he gave up the irrational beliefs that were triggering his compulsive behavior. And he understood that his compulsive behavior was really a means of quieting his anxiety.

Although John made good progress as he gained insight and applied these coping strategies, he still found the process of reducing his collecting and retaining painful at times. On those occasions he would fall back into his old ways of managing his anxiety. At that point John joined a support group with like sufferers and recruited a “partner” to hold him accountable by checking in with him daily. His accountability partner also came weekly to see his home and provided encouragement and support to help John maintain his gains. After nearly a year of work, John had made enough progress and had enough support in place to help him so that he could continue his growth without further therapy.

Some folks with a “hoarding problem” have such severe anxiety or depression that they require an evaluation by a psychiatrist to consider medication. Medication can help them manage their troubling emotions sufficiently to let them do the counseling work. 

Robert Whitcomb is a clinical psychologist practicing in Fullerton, California. His work includes psychotherapy with adults and teenagers suffering from a variety of problems.



# Seth's Silent Night

by Clifford E. Denay, Jr.

Our sanctuary was full. Standing room only. The service was almost over. As if by signal, the Christmas Eve crowd began to squirm. Several folks inched forward in their pews, silently shifting from one hip to the other, edging their way toward freedom, off the hard, grace-worn oak benches. Heads turned. Children whispered. A few of the older ones poked at each other. Many of the littlest children lay sound asleep, their heads snuggled into the crook of their father's neck or on the infinite softness of their mother's arms. It was late. Time to go home and wait for Santa's arrival.

Still, the best was yet to come. The kids knew it. I did, too. Santa could wait.

The newborn girl next to me, asleep in her mother's arms, suckled an imaginary breast. The rhythm of her mouth movements was interspersed with flashes of smiles. What does she see I wondered, this angel of God? Her mother caught me staring, smiled a grateful look. I smiled back, unembarrassed to be discovered. The young woman was proud. She reached down and pulled the pink Polartec parka up higher on both sides of her daughter's bare neck. Our northern Michigan winter wind was clawing at the church doors. It was bitterly cold. More snow was predicted.

Yet, this was the moment we had been waiting for — the candlelight service.

Just then, the sanctuary lights began to dim, one after the other. In the fading light, our pastor, Rev. Robert Kyser, gave simple instructions: "Please hold your lighted candles as straight as possible so the wax doesn't drip on the carpet and you don't set someone near you on fire." There was nervous laughter behind me. Rev. Kyser seemed to be only half-kidding about the possibility of fire. I wondered if anyone had actually been set ablaze from a careless candle flame. Unlikely, I concluded. He must be joking. Still, I wondered. A nearby boy of ►



about ten seemed to relish the thought. He wrinkled his nose and clenched his teeth, then threw a saber-like jab toward his younger brother with his unlit candle, waved it menacingly back and forth close to his face. The act drew a stern, silent rebuke from his dad, then a corrective hand on his shoulder. Caught in the act, he slowly lowered his would-be weapon. He shrugged his shoulders in defiance, tried to break free of his father's grip. No luck. His imaginary flame was snuffed out, his brother now free of the temporary tyranny.

With the last set of lights extinguished, the entire sanctuary was bathed in blackness. A hushed silence surrounded us and held our complete attention. On the altar, the Christmas candle alone lit our little spiritual world. All of us, saints and sinners alike, sat in silence and pondered the Christ child's arrival, the birth of the unlikely One who would carry us from serial sin and darkness into the light of Saving Grace. I reached for my wife Jane's hand, held it close, and watched two dark shadows approach the altar. Slowly, both figures reached simultaneously toward the lighted Advent candle. Quickly, each backed away, their newborn candle flames blazing bright. One flicker of the Advent candle light had become three. Our little midnight world was about to

experience an early morning light. *A Son-rise.*

Then, as the two gray figures turned toward the congregation, their facial features barely visible, they walked to the front pews and bent down. Again, new flames flared. Each person in turn shared his or her newly lighted candles with pew mates. Quickly, candlelight spread from the inside of the aisles toward the outlying pews. One after another, row by row, the Light of the World crept toward the back of the church. In a flash, candlelight chased the rest of the darkness out the back doors.

The transformation was complete. Each of us held a flame. Once again, God was within reach in the hopeful face of every wide-eyed family member, every homeless wanderer, all the sick, lonely, and discouraged. The newborn stirred. Our little group of pilgrims heaved an almost audible sigh of relief. I felt tears streaming down my face.

*Blessed is He who takes away the sins and pains of the world, I thought. Again. Still again.*

I felt as if I could have sliced the silence. Only the lighted candles spoke a wordless phrase. Joy unbound! Faces up and down my pew stared into their candlelight, looked past the flickering flames and into their futures, past their sorrows and into hope, past their discouragement and into joyous possibilities. I prayed they would

also look into the eyes of their Savior, into the Joy of the moment, into the faces of their loved ones. God is that close. I squirmed sideways so that I was touching Jane, glad for her warmth. She snuggled back into me, turned and smiled. This is heavenly.

On an invisible cue, the chancel choir stood like a breath of unbridled wind. The choral director pointed toward the organist with his left hand, then raised his right in anticipation. In no more than a heartbeat the familiar words to Silent Night began to spread before us, the choir voices in unison, male and female, bass and tenor, alto and soprano, soft and sweet, heartfelt and heavenly, each welcoming, once again, the newborn Christ child back into our midst: "Silent night/ holy night/ all is calm/ all is bright..." Somewhere near the back of the sanctuary one clear congregational voice joined in, followed by younger voices near the front. I added my own to the growing bouquet of music. Quickly, everyone joined in: "Round yon virgin/mother and child/ holy infant/ so tender and mild/ sleep in heavenly peace/ sleep in heavenly peace." We sang the final verse a cappella. I felt a peaceful feeling I hadn't felt in years. I dropped my head and looked at my folded hands. I was proud to see that they looked like my mother's hands – small enough to pray, big enough to love the world and this holy night. Someone tried to muffle a cough.

Then, out of the chorus of newly lighted candles, an unplanned movement, a small child's uplifted head. The boy's voice was surprisingly crisp, clear, and concise. Little Seth Moffat, three years old at the time and snuggled safely in his daddy's arms, raised his head and lovingly spoke past the thrill of his own flaming candle and into the quiet moment: "Happy Birthday, Jesus."

Seth's words, so clear and true, a reminder of why we had gathered, hung on the silence. He laid his head back down, quickly nuzzled into his father's familiar warmth. Just for a moment, everyone's candle seemed to burn brighter. A hush fell over the sanctuary. Most of the grown-ups, caught off-guard by Seth's birthday wish for the infant Christ, shifted their weight from one foot to another. Some pulled their coat collars higher, as if the outside chill had somehow crept inside.

It takes a child to remind us, I thought. Always, a child. Thanks for the reminder, Seth. And, yes, Happy Birthday, Jesus!

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# Little Baby, Do You Know?



**There on a bed of manger hay  
a newborn infant sweetly lay.**

**"Oh, little Baby, do you know?**

**What lies ahead in this world of woe?**

**Do you know, precious Child, the  
reason you came?**

**Do you know the significance of Your Name?"**

**Gazing upward with eyes clear and true**

**He nodded His head as to say, "Yes, I do!**

**And this is the reason for Christmas morn**

**That 'unto you, a Savior is born.'**

**Yes, dreary world, I know why I came:**

**To die, and bring life through**

**My God-powered Name!"**

*— By Ruth E. Narramore*

# Retire Or Create?

by Elizabeth Ross

Jane Marie Thibault in her book *10 Gospel Promises For Later Life* assures us that it's "never too late to grow." In his book *Mature Years* published forty years earlier, Dr. Clyde M. Narramore was spelling out a similar message. "People are born to create" he writes "and we should not stop creating."

Many famous people have been cre-

ative in old age. Sir Winston Churchill wrote *The History of the English Speaking Peoples* (four volumes) in 1956 when he was between the ages of 82 and 84. Australian artist Pro Hart, whose pictures of the Australian Outback are greatly prized, was still painting in his 70s. (Incidentally, he always started his day with prayer). I once enjoyed seeing Dame Sybil Thorndike and her husband, Sir Lewis Casson, both in their eighties, perform

superbly on the London stage in *Eighty in the Shade*. Dame Sybil who started learning Greek in her sixties read a chapter of the New Testament in Greek before breakfast each day!

And it's not only the famous. You probably haven't heard of Lambert Ferris Bawdrey, who migrated from England to Australia in 1846. During the week he worked as a blacksmith. On Sundays he taught Sunday school and as a lay preacher walked miles to take serv-



ices. Lambert had a dream to create musical instruments; an “impossible dream” in the minds of those who looked at his work-roughened hands. Lambert retired in his seventies and only then began to make stringed instruments. Between the ages of 75 and 95, when he died, he had made more than forty violins, three violas, six cellos and a double bass, all described by a critic as “mellow and finely resonant.”

Perhaps we think that creativity is only for a lucky few. We tell ourselves that you need special talent, and it is true that violin-making or writing world history are not for everyone. But for everyone there is something; and perhaps the guide to your own creativity is to think:

What have I always wanted to do?

Eighteen months ago I tested this theory by inviting residents of the retirement home where I live to form a creative writing group. A long-held desire to write overcame the diffidence of seven of our residents, and we have been meeting twice monthly ever since. We write in class on set subjects, share our work, then do homework, and read this work at the next group meeting. This is writing as a form of self-expression, an opportunity to create. We don't write for publication but for the joy of creating and the insight that our work mysteriously brings. We've had a lot of fun and have bonded together in friendship. Publication was a by-product when we thought it would be good to raise some money for the benefit of all our residents. So at the end of 2005, we launched our first book: *Creative Writing Bouquet*, a collection of short stories, poems and spiritual reflections, which has sold well. All members of the group are in their eighties and nineties.

Christians are promised abundant life; why then do we not take this promise into retirement and beyond? Perhaps we should each personally ask ourselves what it is that prevents us now from pursuing earlier dreams to write, paint, dance, sing—whatever? Were we deflected by the myth that “you can't teach an old dog new tricks?” as Jane suggests in her book? Did a parent or teacher ignore our yearnings and steer us away to more “rational pursuits,” or were we so lacking in self-esteem that we could not accept our gifts? This was certainly so for me as a writer. Once a reader of an article I'd written wrote to me and compared my work to that of Scottish author Gavin Maxwell. He urged me to find an agent. I denied this at once. It was decades before my first book was published. Perhaps we should take time to ponder and even write down what is stopping us being creative in later life.

And it can help to think creatively about being creative. Maybe writing or painting is not your thing. Maybe you've been pressured to produce all your life and producing conventional artwork does not appeal to you. Consider

instead what does appeal. Explore wild possibilities. One of my most unlikely but liberating creative experiences was to take up clowning. Yes, really, I can show you my costume—though I'm not sure I still have the red nose! One of the funniest clowns in our class was a doctor whose daily work in oncology was far removed from clowning. Another class member was a woman who at first could hardly make eye contact with the rest of us but later, in clown costume, danced merrily around playing her flute for us. It's amazing what clowns can get away with and how the role can take you out of yourself. In my case, clowning set free a sense of mischief and daring that had been suppressed since childhood.

So what will it be for you? Learning to sing or to dance? Inventing something you always thought should exist? Storytelling? Making jewelry? Designing a garden? Researching your family genealogy? Surely you can think of something that maybe taps into a long-held dream?

I would like to finish with a vignette that lifted my heart and which I hope will lift yours. Esther, in her 90s, plays keyboard on Tuesdays in our community hall. As she belts out old favorites I dance to the music. Recently I saw Betty and Paul, who have been married for 68 years, come slowly into the hall. Betty, who is partially blind, stopped when she heard the music. I danced across to her and led her towards Esther.

“Will you play: ‘Have I told you lately that I love you?’” asked Betty. Esther obliged and I then danced Betty back to her husband. She sang the first line of the song to him and gave him a kiss.

“I love you,” he said, and kissed her back.

Creativity doesn't die in old age, and neither, it seems, does true love. 

Elizabeth Ross is the pen name for Dorothy O'Neill. Ms. O'Neill is the mother of three adult children. She has published eight books and written and broadcast talks and plays for Australian radio. Ms. O'Neill has had articles and stories published in magazines in the U.K., U.S.A, and Australia. She is currently publishing devotions for “The Upper Room.”



# Home: A Story of His Grace

by Ginevra Rose Young

I never felt home to be a safe place. Though many rooms were empty, some were filled with too many words not saying “I love you.” I was only a child but life felt like a war. Hurt came from all around, clashing and crushing. Sharp words and barbs stung, then subsided into dull pains.

Robed in fear and confusion, I never was able to understand my mother’s anger. It wasn’t just the words, “I hate you,” that cut deep, but also her sighs, slaps, and scratches.

My mother wouldn’t look me in the eyes when I showed her discovered treasure, read my first poems or shared a hard-earned grade. Why did she belittle my successes? Didn’t she understand she was minimizing me? Why couldn’t she find the good in what I tried to do or even believe that there was something good in me? Why was she sad—weeping heart, weeping ways? Why did she hurt me so? And why did my dad let her?

She’d yell, grab me, pinch me, pull my hair, and start shaking me. I couldn’t run physically, so I ran emotionally into darkness. I ran into arms that said they cared. But they lied also.

In my world, love was a confusion of light and darkness, caring and harshness. Though it was called love, it seldom felt good. Home was not a haven.

I remember one day when I was 12. My parents were fighting in their room. Mom was yelling, screaming, crying. My dad silent. I went into the guest bathroom and put my head in my hands, crying softly, Who am I, what does my name mean? Who am I? This was the beginning of my realization that I could not tell where Mom and her hatred ended and me and my confusion began. I wondered if I was like my mom, wondered why I wasn’t allowed



to like anything Mom didn't like or dislike anything she liked?

In that darkness Jesus came. He took me in His arms, into His world. He loved me, He loved me, He loved me.

Mother said, "You are unlovable." But Jesus loved me. She said, "No one will ever love you but me." His words told me differently. He loved me. Jesus didn't turn from me. He called me to sup with Him.

She belittled my athletic awards and threatened me with an operation to make me a boy. She yelled, "You're ugly and disgusting, get out of my hair!"

In *Psalms 139* God told me He knit me together with His own hands and that I was a wonderful work of His.

She constantly said, "You're a clumsy fool and an awful person."

He gave me Grace. In so many ways He gave me grace. He asked me for my love, but I held on to my heart. If I couldn't trust my family, how could I trust anyone? I fought Him, not wanting to give my heart to anyone. My heavenly Father told me to come home.

She wrote me, "I'm cutting you off from us, like an arm with a festering sore." My earthly family disowned me.

My Heavenly Father told me, "You are my Child. I have given you new birth, I am your daddy." "But daddy, I don't want to go to anyone's home. It's not safe. Home means fear and confusion."

He assured me that His home was a haven for me. I came to understand that He gathered me as a shepherd does. He made me realize I was His lamb and He would hold me close to His heart. "Come home."

Jesus continued to offer me freedom, but I replied, "Total freedom frightens me. Bind me, Lord." His truth gave me form. I found freedom within form and it felt safe. His words came to me, "I have grafted you into my kingdom, into My people. You were a stranger and now you have become a member of our family. You belong to our home now." I belonged. He gave me strength to walk on.

The church wasn't a mere facade. It became real, as tender arms held me,

words comforted, and smiles didn't turn to sneers. Through Jesus' love and their tender love, I began to heal.

He took me to a college, A Castle in the Clouds (as it is called). Though I was a stranger, it became my home. After days I felt a chasm in my being. I was missing something that was central to whom I had become. It had been a painful presence but I couldn't identify it. After praying and pondering I realized I no longer felt fear. I didn't even know it had been my companion until it was gone.

As a child I had fantasized loving people; now it existed and in my college years, on a mountain top with mentors, professors, and friends, I came to know them. At first we were strangers walking the same road to Glory. They sought me out and loved me, strengthening me with truth and faith. They didn't just say their love with words, but they opened their hearts and homes. They gave me their time, food, hours of talking, music like the angels, laughter and joy.

On Sundays they took me to church and home for dinner. We prepared the meal and prayed together. After the dishes were cleaned, they'd say, "Stay the afternoon, listen to jazz or nap. Relax. Be a part of our home."

Some of these people were my professors, some their wives and others were church members and pastors and their families. They taught me in the gentle ways a loving mother or father teaches their child. I learned, laughed, felt loved, and grew to know God's grace and love. I left that church and college. I was thrust into the world. They called it graduation; I called it grief.

Wobbling, swaying, I found my feet, my faith, and moved into my first apartment and a place to open to those who needed a sense of belonging. I became a part of another church and again found Home. Because I had been welcomed when I was a stranger, I became a welcomer of strangers. This heart that had been bruised and battered was healing. I learned to open it to others.

A new location and another church became home. A man living Grace

became my husband. His actions showed me daily I was safe. I cried when the old fears rose up and called me to return to the bondage of my memories. My God, the body of Christ, and my husband said, "No, you are home."

God told me that He had never left me alone, that it all had been a part of His plan. "Dear one, I have a future and a hope for you; my purposes will come to pass." I cried, "I don't understand." He replied, "Trust and obey."

My love for my heavenly Father grew as I realized He had been holding me in those dark hours. Even when it hurt, He held me. He went on to promise, "I will return to you the years destroyed by the enemy".

I am safer now, healing but not yet whole. Though I fought depression for years, I was always aware of God's love and sweetness; a life full of joy and pain, laughter and crying. Dangers are out there but I know they cannot destroy me for He holds me.

Those past sorrows caused anger and sadness that seeped into my mothering, though there has always been hope. Even now, this hope continues as a part of my healing. Though it has been decades since I first knew His love and forgiveness, this walk to Glory has been bitter and sweet. Christina Rossetti's words confirm what I've experienced, that "the road is uphill, to the very end."

I've come to understand and agree with C.S. Lewis, who called this home our shadow land. This life is only a shadow of the one we will know when we are Home with Him. Heaven, where there will be peace and no memory of fear. We are promised that there will be no more pain; no more tears, and death will not prevail. "Oh, Father, you've given me Hope, you're taking me Home." 🙏

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Ginevra Rose Young is the pen name for a happily married mother of four young adults. She enjoys theology, Starbucks, psychology, writing essays, and her church. But most of all her joy is her family and inviting the world home.

# Think on These

by  
**Michelle  
Rocker**

In a society consumed with sexy this and sexy that, I find it difficult at times to keep my mind on things that are pure and lovely. It seems as if every commercial has a sexual undertone. Nearly every time my husband and I decide to watch a new comedic show on television, we watch part of

one episode and turn it off in disgust. Somehow romance has turned sexual, and love is sex.

I am a hopeless romantic. I love romantic movies. I love the whole idea of romance. At a very early age, I read romance novels, Christian and non-Christian. When I got married, I had high romantic standards for my husband. I don't think any man could have met the ideas that I had in mind.

During marriage, my love of romance became an addiction. As my marriage got progressively worse and I increasingly escaped into books, movies, or lustful thoughts as a "romantic" diversion, gradually the books grew more graphically sexually. Once you open yourself up to this idea, it isn't long before you start on a path that leads you down a road you swore you would never go.

My husband had a violent temper and Satan played that angle as well. It gave me an excuse to look elsewhere. Pornography entered our marriage and it was not long until I was chatting with other men, who began filling my mind with what they thought they could do for me. After all, online you can be whomever you want.

Most people believe pornography affects primarily men. And while the percentages are higher, around 30 percent of American women also say they are addicted to pornography. Because of my involvement, my mind increasingly distorted what true love is. I even met a man who talked about swing clubs and thought maybe that was our answer. How can you go from a virgin bride, to considering a swing club, and inviting others into your marriage?

Pornography always begins a journey. When you open that door, you have opened Pandora's box. Satan began with me at age 13. As the years passed he sensed this weakness in me and fed it. He disguised himself as a



# e Things

book, a movie, and soon, pornography.

I ultimately met a man on line, and chose to leave my husband. I was unprepared for what awaited me, and was introduced to a side of pornography that made me sick called BDSM. In its simplest form, I define Bondage, Domination, Sadism, and Masochism as sex mixed with pain. I wanted to run, but felt trapped. This man threatened my life and fed me magazines and movies of what he wanted. Frightened, I checked his computer one morning after he left for work. I found sex slave contracts and letters and communications with other women. He had fooled them as he had me. I was woman number 10. I wasn't special. The images I found on his computer terrified me.

I didn't know where to go. None of my friends were speaking to me, and the ties with my family were strained. I did not want to go back to marriage, and I felt I had no place to go. When he came home, I just decided to play along. That night he could have killed me. I was humiliated and degraded and saw a man possessed.

The next morning, I was in pain, but I knew I couldn't stay. I grabbed my two little boys who had slept through the night in another bedroom. I packed up my car as soon as he left for work and then plopped on the bed, unsure of where I was going. I set up a hotel on line as far as I could get from his house in the state, not far from my husband and family. I was terrified. I could barely muster the word, "God," but when I did, the phone rang. An old friend quickly discerned the situation without me saying a word, and told me to run. I listened and cried the whole drive.

If I had known at thirteen where this journey was going to take me, I would have stopped. Unfortunately, I never took this weakness of being a hopeless romantic to God, my parents, or others and didn't seek help. The Bible tells us "in our weakness, He is strong" (2 *Corinthians* 12:9). And it encourages us to bear one another's burdens (*Galatians* 6:2). When we turn a weakness over to God and follow His counsel of letting others encourage, comfort, and bear our burdens, we can change.

Today my life is radically different. God has turned both my husband and me around through counseling, commitment, and lots of prayer. But it took time to heal.

Because of this weakness in me, I am very careful about what I read and watch.

I do not want to struggle with obsessive thinking in this area again. God tells us exactly what we should be concentrating on in *Philippians* 4:8.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

I am finding the love story of how Jesus loves me much more rewarding than sexually oriented trash. He is true, pure, lovely, and He calls us to become the same.

I spent the first years of my marriage building up unrealistic expectations. Then I spent more time following my sinful fantasies. But my husband and I renewed our vows

*As a result of basing my marriage and romantic needs on Christ, my marriage has grown and my walk with Christ has grown. I confessed my sins and God graciously forgave me. ... There have been temptations, but I always remind myself of where those temptations took me. Sin will take you farther than you ever imagined, so think on true, honest, just, pure, and lovely things.*

on Christmas Eve 2000, and we added two little girls to our home. Since that time, I have based my expectations on Jesus Christ. He never lets us down.

As a result of basing my marriage and romantic needs on Christ, my marriage has grown and my walk with Christ has grown. I confessed my sins and God graciously forgave me. I focus on devotional books, fun movies, and God's Word. There have been temptations, but I always remind myself of where those temptations took me. Sin will take you farther than you ever imagined, so think on true, honest, just, pure, and lovely things. There will be virtue, and, without a doubt, praise. Think on these lovely things. ☺

Michelle Rocker is an author, speaker, singer and songwriter. She has recently completed her first novel, *You are Loved*. Ms. Rocker lives in Hobe Sound, Florida and she can be contacted at her website, [www.michellerocker.com](http://www.michellerocker.com)

# Me? A Mentor?

by Leone A. Browning

“Since we have no teen Sunday school teacher for our youth, we are asking some adults if they would volunteer to mentor one of our teens. Would you consider doing that?” our Pastor’s wife asked.

“I don’t know exactly what a mentor does,” I stammered. “But I love teaching that age group. I’d like to try if you think a teenager would relate to a great grandma.”

“I’m sure you have had many experiences she will enjoy,” she assured. “I’ve noticed your friendship with the youth.”

“What will I be expected to do?”

“You will be asked to share Scripture with the person assigned to you. Discuss the verses and apply them to daily living. I suggest that you share prayer requests, do activities together and fellowship in any way you might both enjoy. Just pray together, keep in touch and show an interest.”

A lovely blonde 13-year-old girl was assigned to me. I shuddered as we approached the first Sunday, but our session was pleasant. She participated in the discussion as we applied Scriptures to life, and discussed the beauty of nature and the blessings God gives. Since I had recently moved to the area, I suggested we each bring wild flowers to identify on Sundays. Soon I received a beautiful homemade card, which she decorated with dried wild flowers.

Later when my husband and I invited the church youth group to our home for a party, she was by my side helping serve refreshments. I enjoyed phoning her for little chats and remembered her birthdays and other special occasions. Searching for other ways to be a friend, I heard she was taking a class in cake decorating. When I asked her to make a cake for a special occasion, she seemed happy about the request. The cake was beautifully decorated.



The mentoring experience ended when a youth teacher was found for the Sunday school class, but when I got hugs from this girl at church, I thanked God for the time we had together and the blessing one young lady had been to me when I attempted to be her mentor. As we continue our friendship, it has been a reward to watch her grow spiritually.

It has now been several years since our mentoring days, but she still remembers me in delightful ways on Mother's Day, birthdays, and Christmas. Recently, when my husband was hospitalized with a serious illness, she and her mother took me out to lunch. After spending many days by his side, it was a wonderful break to have a good meal with the fellowship of friends. The caring spirit continued as they spent over an hour visiting with me after lunch.

Soon another 14 year-old girl started to church. No one asked me to mentor her. It just happened! She was a total contrast to the other girl, but for some reason I felt drawn to her. We chatted at every opportunity and she began to share some problems about trying to overcome temptations being offered by her non-Christian friends. I assured her I would pray. I felt a deep bond developing when she started sitting beside my husband and me at church. She seemed to adopt us as great grandparents.

Thinking of ways to encourage her, I invited her to our home to make cinnamon rolls.

While working in the kitchen, she asked, "May I make Chinese food for lunch?" I had the ingredients and soon we enjoyed a delicious meal. The rolls were wonderful too.

Weeks went too fast and suddenly she disappeared. I cried when I heard this beautiful young girl had run away from home. "What more could we have done?" I sobbed to my husband. I prayed that God would protect her while she was out of our reach. After many agonizing weeks, her parents found her. She had yielded to the temptations offered by friends. She was sent away to recover from acquired habits. We corresponded regularly and my heart rejoiced when she wrote, "I love you a

lot, and I miss you so much. I can't wait to come home and get a hug from you. Your letters give me a lift and I'm so thankful you care about me."

When she returned home, she asked her dad to pray with her as she rededicated her life to God.

This young lady is a gifted writer. When she asked me to read a story she'd written about witnessing the death of a girl who over dosed on heroin, I

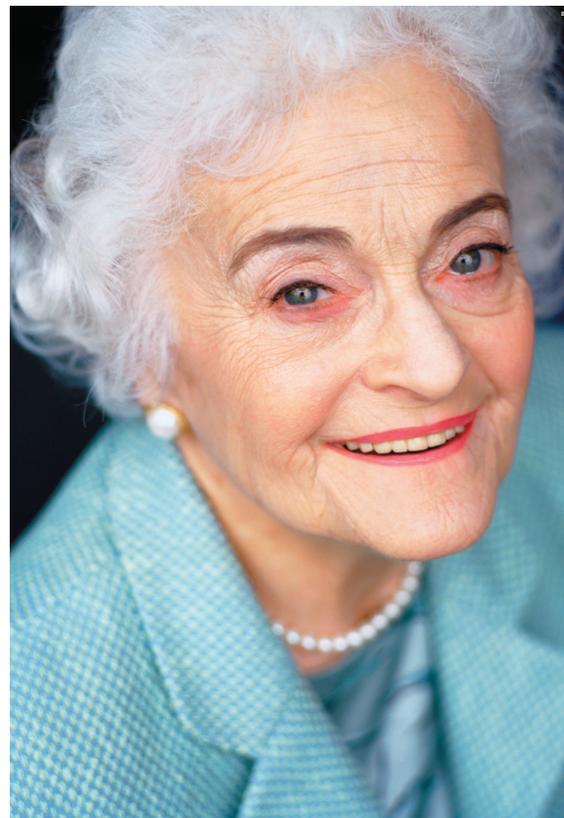
*I thank God for these experiences and the continued friendship I am privileged to have with youth. When my 19-year-old great grandson brings his friends to visit, I am glad when they call me Grandma. Youth are wonderful people, who often just want someone to love and guide them.*

volunteered to type and submit it to an editor. She recently got a check for it! This encouraged her to have hope and feel useful.

She recently said, "I'd like to come to your house to 'hang out' again."

I joked, "I'm not sure I know how to 'hang out,' but I'll try. Maybe we can fix cinnamon rolls again. When can you come?"

While watching her mature, and trying to overcome the damage from the mistakes made in her younger life, I have tried to be her friend and show my love. It has been a privilege to pray with her as she has struggled. She is now married and has a child. When she had her pastor father dedicated the baby to the Lord recently, we were filled with joy as she and her sister sang a sweet song about how the Lord can change a life. She still struggles with serious temptations, but continues to have a victorious testimony. She still sits by us in church and comes to our home to "hang out" with me occasionally.



I still am not sure how to "hang out" or mentor, but something seems to work when there is love and caring.

My first mentee is now a radiant college student. I recently received a letter from her. She is going to Zambia on a mission trip. She is a lovely Christian girl.

I thank God for these experiences and the continued friendship I am privileged to have with youth. When my 19-year-old great grandson brings his friends to visit, I am glad when they call me Grandma. Youth are wonderful people, who often just want someone to love and guide them.

Even though I felt inadequate in the field of mentoring, I am thankful I have had the opportunity to share a small part in these girls' lives. 

Mrs. Leone A. Browning has been writing articles for over 40 years. Her works have been printed in 50 magazines including skits and plays published by Lillenas Publishers. Mrs. Browning continues to be active in her church today and often reads the children's story on Sundays.

# Tribute Gifts

*Would you like us to join you in honoring your loved one? You can send a Tribute Gift or Living Memorial Gift to the ministries of the Narramore Christian Foundation.*

**Gifts in the Memory Of:**

**Presented by:**

Melodie Narramore Yocum \_\_\_\_\_ Shirley Crouch \_\_\_\_\_

Melodie Narramore Yocum \_\_\_\_\_ Georgia Wisenor \_\_\_\_\_

James L. Young \_\_\_\_\_ Eric and Vicki Young \_\_\_\_\_

Henry Berry \_\_\_\_\_ Mrs. Virginia Berry \_\_\_\_\_

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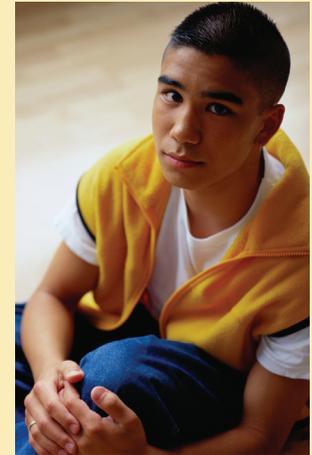
Clip out and return with your loving gift.

**In Memory of:** \_\_\_\_\_  **In Honor of:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Amount: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Given by: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Send acknowledgment to:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Mail to:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Narramore Christian  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Foundation  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Address: P.O. Box 661900  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Arcadia, CA 91066-1900

## Suicidal Thoughts Among College Students

During the 2008 meeting of the American Psychological Association, Dr. David Drum and his associates reported results from a survey of 26,000 college students on the subject of suicide.<sup>1</sup> This web-based survey was conducted by the National Research Consortium of Counseling Centers in Higher Education and included college and university students from 70 different institutions.



More than half of the students completing the survey indicated they had experienced at least one time in their life when they contemplated suicide. Fifteen percent reported having thought seriously about ending their life and another five percent reported having made at least one suicide attempt. The number of students reporting suicidal ideation was quite similar to the number reporting substance abuse, depression and eating disorders.

The most frequent reasons for considering suicide included problems in romantic relationships, pain relief, a desire to end their life, and academic difficulties. "The majority of students described their typical episode of suicidal thinking as intense and brief, with more than half the episodes lasting one day or less."<sup>2</sup>

The researchers did not compare the frequency of suicidal thoughts among different groups of college students, for example, Christians and non Christians, but whatever the frequency, suicidal thoughts are also known to be a concern to many Christian young adults. Parents and friends need to be alert to students with suicidal thoughts and encourage them to discuss their feelings and thoughts and seek professional help. 

<sup>1</sup> "Key Findings From the Suicide Ideation Survey," Adryon Burton Denmark. And "Defining the New Paradigm for Addressing Suicidality," David J. Drum. Presented at American Psychological Association, Boston, 2008.  
<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

# Using Technology to Teach Children with Autism

Autism is a developmental disorder characterized by three distinct behaviors: difficulties with social interaction, problems with verbal and non-verbal communications, and repetitive behaviors or narrow obsessive interests. It is estimated that three to six out of every 1,000 children will have autism and they are four times more likely to be males. The primary feature is disturbed or impaired social interaction and parents usually see signs as early as infancy. These children seem to be unresponsive to others or focused upon one item to the exclusion of others. The impact of the behavior causes mild to severe disability. There is no known cure for autism but some help can be received. Current treatments include education and behavioral interventions, and medication. Research on additional therapies is ongoing. One new intervention being

studied at Northwestern University is the Articulab.

Professor of Communications Studies and Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Justine Cassell, Ph.D., and her staff have been examining how to increase the frequency and number of “contingent” sentences with autistic children. Contingent sentences are appropriate back and forth conversation—a primary disability with autistic children. Presenting her results to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Dr. Cassell reports that “children with autism produced more and more ‘contingent’ sentences when they spoke with a ‘virtual peer,’ while their sentences did not become increasingly contingent when they were paired with the real-life children.”<sup>1</sup>

The virtual peer’s name is Sam. Sam is technically an Embodied

Conversation Agent (ECA) in a computerized Kiosk that uses synthesized speech as well as non-verbal gestures and head movements. Two advantages virtual peers have over real-life children is that autistic children typically like technology and the virtual peers do not get tired or impatient. They can provide the viable and repeated teaching that autistic children require to learn the rules of social interaction. Miri Arie, Ph.D. sums up their efforts, “we hope virtual peers like Sam will allow children with autism to practice the rules behind joining a game, holding a conversation and maintaining social interaction. Then they can apply their newly acquired skills to real-life situations.”<sup>2</sup>

1 “Virtual peers’ may teach children with autism,” Medical News Today, March 3, 2008.

2 Ibid.



## LETTERS / EMAIL

Praise God I found your web site! I was diagnosed with Histrionic Personality Disorder many years ago and just brushed it off. Consequently over the past several years my life has been nothing but DRAMA! To make matters worse, I have bipolar disorder and am a recovering meth addict. But I’m making my way back to the Lord and now, with your help, I can begin to understand my Personality Disorder and start to take charge of my life. Thank you and God bless you!

— V.N.

## Last Laugh



“You’ve got to stop blaming everything on your parents. You’re old enough to start blaming your computer!”

# MKs Complete 29th Annual Reentry Program



**Ice Breaking Activities on Day One.**

**by Dr. Bruce Narramore**

**F**orty-seven sons and daughters of missionaries from twenty three countries around the world stopped in Southern California for two weeks in July before beginning life as college and university students throughout the United States. The “MKs” were attending NCF’s annual reentry program, now in its 29th year.

Since its founding, the seminar has helped ease the transition to life in America for more than 1500 sons and daughters of missionaries!

Each day of the reentry program began with a time of singing and worship. Then these young adults moved into lecture and discussion sessions geared for those who have grown up in countries other than their parents’ home countries. Sessions on transitions, grief, and loss helped them process the many moves they have made during their childhood and adolescent years and the many goodbyes they have had to say to friends and families. Typically they have spent three or four years in another country, then a year in the U.S. and then another three or four year term overseas. Each time they begin to put down roots, only to have to move and say goodbye again.

Sessions on dealing with emotions like depression, guilt, fear and anger helped them understand that these sometimes troubling emotions are common and can be understood, worked through, and resolved rather than carried into their marriages and adult lives. And sessions on U.S. cul-

ture helped prepare them for the cross cultural shock they may well experience when rooming with and making friends with young people who have spent their entire lives in the U.S. and may not have a clue about what it’s like to grow up in another country.

Feedback from two psychological tests helped them take a look at some of their personality strengths and weaknesses and daily small group sessions provided a safe, confidential setting to process any difficult, painful or traumatic experiences they faced during their developmental years. A number of the students sought out individual counseling from the Christian counselors in addition to their small group times of sharing.

Evenings provided free time and opportunities to “hang out” with new friends and enjoy small group devotions. Sunday was set aside to attend a local church and an evening worship time together.

But it wasn’t all work and worship. One afternoon they enjoyed a swimming pool party and barbecue at the home of Dr. Bruce and Kathy Narramore. Saturday was spent at Knott’s Berry Farm, a popular



**Relaxing Between Sessions.**



**Listening Attentively to Transition Presentation**



Southern California entertainment park. Another afternoon and evening they enjoyed a picnic and time at the Beach. And one evening after classes they attended a professional baseball game.

The MKs left the seminar much better prepared to handle the huge transitions that lie ahead. It helped them spiritually, emotionally and socially. One young man said, "The seminar changed my attitude toward Americans and made me look forward to this next year." Another commented, "It has helped me deal with my past and feel more confident about my future." A young woman said, "Before I was afraid to let go and be excited about college. Now I am finally ready to move and to feel OK about being excited by it." Another remarked, "I've come to grips with some painful aspects of my past. I feel released." And another said, "Hearing how God has worked in other people's lives was so encouraging. It reaffirmed God's goodness and faithfulness."

Please pray for these wonderful young men and women who have left their parents and home countries behind to begin life in the U.S. as College and University students. And don't forget to remember their parents in prayer too, as they carry on their ministries thousands of miles from their sons and daughters!

## Dr. Hewitt



**Dr. and Mrs. Paul Hewitt and children celebrate Paul's doctoral graduation.**

## Paul Hewitt Receives Doctor of Psychology Degree

Paul Stacey Hewitt, son-in-law of Dr. Bruce Narramore, recently received his Doctor of Psychology degree from Rosemead School of Psychology, Biola University. Like his father-in-law and Dr. Clyde Narramore, Paul grew up in a small rural town (Manlius, Illinois). He took his undergraduate studies at the University of Illinois and then served on the staff of Intersivity Christian Fellowship at the University.

During a short term missions trip to Swaziland, Paul served on the same ministry team as Debbie Narramore. After a period of being "just good friends" they fell in love and married. Paul then transferred to Intersivity's ministry at Colorado State University. Throughout his ministry to university students, Paul found that the young men he served often opened up to him about some deep personal needs.

Coupled with a desire to serve pastors and missionaries, this led Paul to begin doctoral studies in psychology at Rosemead while continuing to serve part time with Intersivity, this time with graduate students at the University of Southern California.

Paul completed four years of intensive on-campus coursework and practicum experiences at Rosemead, and then a full year internship at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. Paul and Debbie and their children, Grace and Ethan have now settled in Grand Rapids, Michigan where Paul has joined the staff of the Christian Counseling Center. He will be working primarily with university age students and adults, including couples seeking help with marital struggles. Please pray for Paul and Debbie and their children in this new phase of their lives and ministries.



# FOUR FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR FINANCES

✓ If you are 55 or older, you can receive, depending on your age, annual returns between 5 to 11% for as long as you live, through an NCF Annuity and receive a tax deduction.

✓ If you haven't updated your will for 5-8 years it could be seriously out of date.

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