

PSYCHOLOGY FOR
LIVING

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1996

**CHRISTMAS IS
GOD VISIBLE**

**A THANK-YOU
NOTE FROM
GRANDMA**

**THE BEST
DAY OF
YOUR LIFE**



**WELCOME,
WINNIE!**

A PERSONAL WORD

by Clyde M. Narramore

ROADBLOCKS TO THANKSGIVING

WHAT KIND OF PERSON DO YOU LIKE? Whom would you choose for a close friend?

If you are like most people, you'd choose someone who has a thankful spirit—someone who is grateful. If there is any *one* personality trait that tends to turn people off, it's being unappreciative and taking everything for granted.

Thankfulness is a character trait that is admired universally. Some years ago I lived in Iceland for the better part of a year. Since it's a small country and because I spent much of my time with born-again Christians, I got to know many of the Icelanders very well.

I remember one fellow, Jon Jonson. I didn't speak much Icelandic, so I depended upon his English. It wasn't the best, but it really didn't make that much difference. He was one of the most appreciative persons I have ever known. People liked to be around Jon and were eager to do things for him because they knew he would be grateful.

Unfortunately, some people have been raised in homes where the parents seldom expressed any thankfulness. The father didn't voice much appreciation—although he was very vocal when it came to finding fault and complaining. The mother was quiet and unexpressive. A child growing up in such a home where thankfulness has never been modeled has no example to follow. By the time that child is ten or eleven, he has logged up a mountain of sterile experiences. By then it seems normal to him not to express feelings of gratitude. A thankful attitude must be learned. Parents must teach their children to be grateful—both by word and example.

Some people do not show thankfulness because of a selfish attitude. They seem to feel that the things they have and the things that are provided for them are entitlements. Children growing up in homes where they have been given every advantage and have been inundated with every new gadget imaginable are not always grateful. Those who have had to work and save for a desired object



understand its value, and therefore may be more appreciative. Then, too, "things" are sometimes given as a substitute for a loving parent-child relationship. Toys and other objects—no matter how expensive they are—can never take the place of parental love and caring. Many children grow up feeling deprived even though they are laden with this world's possessions.

Another dynamic involved in the development of a thankless spirit is anger. If one's childhood has been filled with frustration and unhappy experiences, he may grow up finding it difficult to express much gratitude. Basically, the anger which has developed in the first 25 years of life has never been resolved. So today he is a hostile person. It is difficult to be appreciative when one is angry.

Not long ago I was conducting a seminar when a woman raised her hand and said, "Nothing in my childhood ever turned out right!" She went on, "As I look back, I can't think of much of anything that turned out very happily. I remember when I was twelve years old, saying to my parents, 'I wish I could have a bicycle like the other kids do.' My dad's answer was, 'You're too awkward! You could never learn to ride a bike. You've got to have coordination, and that you ain't got!'"

She continued, "When I tried to help my mother with the meals, either the

cake would fall or something would burn, or I'd drop a plate!"

Then, in a pensive way, "I'm wondering if that's why I made such a high score in hostility on my personality test. I almost blew the top off the scale! I guess I'd have to say I've had a 45-year case of hostility!"

Such a person finds it difficult to feel thankful. In other words, "you can't spit and swallow at the same time."

When counseling, **I sometimes find that a person is restricted in his ability to show gratitude because of hurts in his childhood which have never been resolved.** It may be that he has suffered from emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. When a child has been used as a whipping post or has never been encouraged, or has been violated in a personal way, it's hard for him or her to be thankful until those negative experiences are dealt with, usually with the help of a godly therapist.

But not all unthankfulness can be traced to the early years of life. Some people have had some bitter experiences as an adult. Perhaps they married the wrong person and their marriage and family life have been anything but happy. They are frustrated and their lives are filled with deep regrets, so they have a difficult time feeling thankful.

Can a negative attitude be changed to a thankful one? Yes, praise God, it can! But it isn't easy. Accepting Christ as our personal Savior is a great step toward thankfulness. Realizing that the sinless Christ paid the debt of our sin causes us to feel intense gratitude.

In many instances, a person's feelings have such deep root systems that he requires help from a godly counselor. Little by little, as the causes are identified and talked through and understood, that person becomes able to accept God's wondrous love. In time he will learn to be thankful, not once a year, but every day of his life!

Clyde M. Narramore

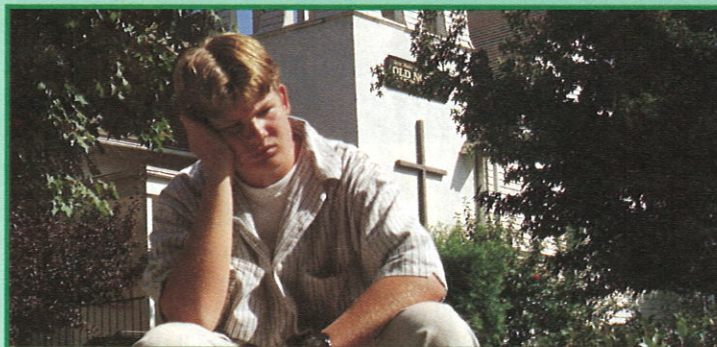
PSYCHOLOGY FOR LIVING

November-December 1996 Vol. XXXVIII No. 6

DEPARTMENTS

- 2 A Personal Word
- 4 From The Editor's Desk
- 4 What People Are Saying
- 15 Making A Difference
- 16 Health Watch
- 16 Living Memorials
- 17 Answers To Your Questions
- 18 Insights And Sharing
- 19 Our World Today

FEATURES



- 5 CHRISTMAS IS GOD VISIBLE**
by J. GRANT SWANK, JR.
The Bible's invisible God seems to delight in revealing Himself visibly.

- 7 THE BEST DAY OF YOUR LIFE**
by JOAN CLAYTON
As you enter into the new year, determine to make each day the very best.

- 8 IS PERFECTIONISM CRIPPLING YOU?**
by ACHMED C. HENRY
Learn to be your best friend—not your worst critic.

- 10 "I HATE CHURCH"**
by PAUL SAILHAMMER
I didn't feel the need for a slow-motion version of "the same thing" on Sunday morning.

- 12 WELCOME, WINNIE!**
by EVA HALLAM SOLBERG
Her blue eyes grew round with wonder as she accepted the first big package.

- 13 A THANK-YOU NOTE FROM GRAMMA**
by MARJORIE R. JOHNSON
An expression of gratitude for an adopted grandchild.

STAFF

Founder and President:
Dr. Clyde M. Narramore

Editor:
Ruth E. Narramore
Editorial Assistant and Staff Writer:
Eva Hallam Solberg
Art Director:
Donald Ensign
Photographer:
Benjamin Burnweit

Published bimonthly by the Narramore Christian Foundation, 250 W. Colorado Blvd., Suite 200, Arcadia, California 91007. All material in this issue is subject to United States and international copyright laws. **Permission to reproduce** may be obtained only by writing the editor. **Change of Address:** When ordering a change please send your OLD address along with the NEW, enclosing the label, if possible.



How to get PSYCHOLOGY FOR LIVING on a regular basis: This helpful publication is not sold by subscription but is sent to supporters of the NCF ministries. A tax-deductible donation will bring each issue of LIVING magazine to your home along with other beneficial literature on everyday problems (minimum, \$18 for one year, \$32 for two years). Write to NCF, P. O. Box 661900, Arcadia, CA 91066-1900, or phone (818) 821-8400.



Photo and Illustration Credits:
Cover photo by Jim Whitmer. Back cover photo, p. 13—Comstock, Inc.; p. 7—Eva Hallam Solberg; p. 8, 10—photos by Don Ensign.



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

WHO AND WHAT WERE THE WISE MEN? Where did they come from?

Matthew is the one who tells us about them (chapter 2), and he calls them magicians. Some take it in a good sense since among the Persians, the Magi were considered as philosophers and priests. Interestingly, the same word is used in other passages of Scripture to denote the unlawful practice of sorcery (Acts 8:9, 10, and 13:6).

Well, whatever these men were, they got on the right track when they sought after Christ. This is what made them truly Wise Men.

We know too that these men were Gentiles and did not belong to the commonwealth of Israel. John's statement that Christ "came unto his own, but His own received Him not" (John 1:11) is surely illustrated in this circumstance. The Wise Men had come from a far country to worship and acknowledge the infant King. The people of Jerusalem (only six miles away), and most of those in His own village (Bethlehem) did not know who He was.

Did the Wise Men come from Arabia? Some think so! The Bible says they were "from the east."

Arabia is referred to as "the land of the east" (Genesis 25:6), and Arabians were called "men of the east" (Judges 6:3). The presents they brought were the products of that country.

These Wise Men were scholars whose learning became meaningful once they learned of Christ and acted upon that knowledge. They are said to have been astrologers who studied the stars and worshipped them. But the hearts of these philosophers were seeking God—and He met them in their search by providing an extraordinary star. Thus the stars that had been misused were put to the right use when this amazing star led these men to Christ.

That the Magi were men of high standing was evidenced in Jerusalem in that they were granted access to King Herod. The Bible gives no indication as to how many Wise Men there were, but undoubtedly there were more than three. Most likely they had a large



TO THINK ABOUT

by Ruth E. Narramore

entourage, for it would not have been safe for a small group to be traveling a thousand miles across those barren deserts. Areas such as those were infested with bandits and filled with wild animals. Realize, too, that since these men were dependent upon the guidance of a star, it would necessitate traveling after dark—all the more danger-ridden. Although we do not know how many were in their party, we do know it was enough to create quite a stir when they arrived in Jerusalem.

It took the Wise Men almost two years from the time they first saw the Bethlehem Star until they reached the humble home of the Child Jesus. It was a long, hard journey, but well worth it! It brought them exceeding great joy. When they came face to face with Jesus, they presented their treasures... and worshipped Him!

Their quest had resulted in the ultimate fulfillment.

THE WISE

Are you sure they were wise men who followed the star?

The wise never journeyed at night

When beast and bandit lurked in the land;

Wise travelers waited for light.

Are you sure they were kings who came from the East

Trekking through dry, trackless sand?

Why, with their greatness, would these seek a child

To worship in some distant land?

Are you sure they brought gifts that were costly and fine

To offer a baby unknown?

How strange that such monarchs with power and might

Would acknowledge His right to the throne!

Are you sure that the wise ones still look to that star

As a symbol that leads to God's love?

Yes, through the ages it has pointed with joy

To the Child, — our King from above!

—Ruth E. Narramore □

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

THE DOORMAT SYNDROME

Thank you for your Letter of Blessing in August on "the doormat syndrome." It helped me say "no" and to delegate work.

Elaine Knudsen
Newell, Iowa

YOUR IMPACT ON OTHERS

I am writing to thank you for your faithful work in God's

4 November-December 1996

ministry. I have been listening, reading, and corresponding with you for over 15 years. I am amazed at how many other ministries involving counseling have sprung up. They use the same principles that I first heard you use years ago. Glory to God in the highest for the impact you are making on so many people.

I'm disappointed that I'm no longer able to hear your broadcasts in our area. I miss

PSYCHOLOGY FOR LIVING

them, but I cherish your magazine and Letters Of Blessing. You are in my prayers always. Thank you for your help in healing the many wounds I have received and inflicted.

Mark A. Dorsey
Beltsville, Maryland

MOM APPRECIATES MK SEMINAR

I just wanted to drop you a note to thank you for allow-

ing our son to attend your MK seminar in California. He had a wonderful time. He seems to be doing fine at college. He found a part-time job and bought a bicycle. Our daughter will be graduating in two years. I hope she will be able to attend, also. I think your seminar is an excellent opportunity for MKs. Thanks again.

Beverly Vaughn
Senegal, West Africa



CHRISTMAS IS GOD VISIBLE

**The Bible's invisible God
seems to delight in revealing Himself visibly.**

by J. Grant Swank, Jr.

THERE ARE THOSE who do not believe in Christmas. They say they cannot bring themselves to hold to a fanciful story about a tiny baby named Jesus who was actually God. How could such a thing be? It doesn't make sense.

Only the Pollyanna-duped would look at an infant in a cow's trough and conclude that this

tiny specimen was Deity. Surely the God of the universe would not bring Himself to *that*!

Such persons have been labeled with various tags: agnostics, atheists, adherents of other religions, theological liberals, skeptics of religious faith, and the like.

Understanding that according to the world's logic, the Christmas story is far from reasonable,

Christmas is a display of the completeness of the redemption plan in all its heavenly love.

I nevertheless believe that the Bethlehem Baby was God. I believe this for it is consistent with the Deity of the Old Testament.

For instance, the Bible's *invisible* God seems to delight in revealing Himself *visibly*. He cannot do this in full scope for mortal's eyes because His splendor would burn the human retina. Our eyes are in spiritually fallen bodies; therefore, our visual equipment is inadequate to absorb the fullness of His divine glory. Our sockets would be housing burned out retinas if we attempted to see the wholeness of God's wonder.

Therefore, in graciousness toward us, God does not make Himself totally visible until that time when we shall be equipped with perfect bodies (and perfect visual equipment) for eternity.

Nevertheless, God has given us some sneak previews of Himself. And this is evidence of His longing to ultimately be with us in eternity when we shall see Him—not through a glass darkly—but face to face. How earnest is His love to make provision to take us to Himself forever.

In the meantime, God gives us partial revelations of Himself:

Old Testament visibilities of God include the Lord appearing to Abraham and Sarah at lunchtime, staying with them for the meal. It must have been an awesome experience for that couple to play host and hostess to God.

Another revelation of God's presence is recorded in the incident of the fiery burning bush. Moses looked up and witnessed the evidence of a supernatural experience in which God Himself was a part.

God also showed Himself in the autumn season of each year to the high priest. God was in the holy flame above the Ark of the Covenant housed in the Holy of Holies.

Still another time, God presented Himself as the fourth Person in the fiery furnace when three Hebrew believers were cast alive into the pagan's oven of death. The result was life for these faithful followers of God.

These are minor visibilities of Deity. Yet they relate a personal God who yearns to come near us. Knowing that our present state prohibits a full-blown visibility, He adapts Himself to temporary separation.

Eager to make Himself visible, God also spoke

through Old Testament prophets predicting His coming visibility in human form. This was yet another indication of His anticipation for the ultimate embrace with His children.

Eventually, in the fullness of time, that great day came. It took place in Bethlehem. Mary was the vessel. Joseph was the caretaker. Cows were the onlookers. Pigeons were cradle tenders. Shepherds were nursery workers.

The invisible God made Himself visible in a very special Baby.

Humans could gaze on Him without eye damage. Human arms could hug Him. Human hearts could love Him.

It was the *eternal* made earthly. It was the *forever* made fathomable.

But how can this be believed as history? How can any intelligent person of this world reconcile such a story as fact?

Yet it can and must be believed because the facts are consistent with a holy God who had revealed Himself to mankind in the years leading up to the Bethlehem Babe. The divine One had made Himself visible in the minor occurrences: mealtime with host and hostess, burning bush, holy flame, fourth Comrade in the furnace. Now, in His consistency, He lodged His major earthly visibility in a human being cradled in a bed of straw.

Understanding this, we see that it would have been inconsistent of God to do anything other than reveal Himself in a maximum visibility suitable for the frail human body. Had God not become incarnate, He would have revealed Himself as either incomplete, or less than compassionately powerful.

However, Christmas is a display of the completeness of the redemption plan in all its heavenly love. Compassion had come to earth. Salvation had been communicated to humankind. And *visible* Jesus revealed the *invisible* God.

The entire pageant of Old Testament revelation had wrapped itself in the swaddling clothes of humility and holiness. That innocent Infant lifted His hands to us that He might take us in.

By faith we still see Him and give praise with the angelic choir: "Glory to God in the highest...." □

Pastor J. Grant Swank, Jr. is pastor of the Church of the Nazarene in Windham, Maine.



THE BEST DAY OF YOUR LIFE

As you enter the new year, determine to make each day the very best.

by Joan Clayton

LIFE HAS A WAY of being so *daily*. We sometimes slide into complacency, taking it for granted. But we are not guaranteed "x" number of years. We can agree with Job 7:6 that our "days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle."

It is so important to come to the end of our lives with no regrets—to leave good memories for those around us. It would be sad indeed, to not even be missed!

So what would you do if you knew you were on your very last day? Would you be critical? Would you have a disagreement? Would you be a faultfinder?

I think not! I think you would look into the faces of those you love and tell them your deepest feelings. I think you would make it a point to see a sunrise or a sunset in a fresh new way full of wonder and awe. I think you would study the incredi-

ble design of a rose. I think you would make an effort to talk to friends, encourage people, and hug those you hold dear!

Love isn't love until you share it. It isn't love until you give it away. If you knew you were embarking on the day that would be your last, those things that are taken for granted would become extremely important!

What is your most prized possession? How valuable is it to you? Does it have eternal consequence? What would you do with it on your very last day? Can you take it into eternity with you? Priorities would surely come into play if you knew you were experiencing your last day!

But please don't wait until your very last day to live, to laugh, and to love! Do it now! Be at peace with God and man, cheering others on whenever and wherever you can. Let your light shine brightly so that others will be drawn to Jesus. After all, when life is through, it is only people that you take with you!

Life is a gift from God, the Giver of life. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down

from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). The precious gift of life is too short to waste! A little further in his letter, James writes, "You do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (4:14).

So make each day special! Bake a pie for a neighbor. Look into the face of a child. Write a note to someone you have long admired. Sit in a swing and marvel at God's beautiful landscape. Share with others the wondrous message of God's love. Hold hands with a loved one. Listen to the early morning serenade of the birds. Smile and see how many people return your smile with theirs. (You'll be surprised!)

As you enter into the fast approaching new year—1997—determine to make each day on this earth the best day of your life! □

Joan Clayton is a freelance writer in Portales, New Mexico. She also has a column in The Amarillo Globe News in Amarillo, Texas.

IS PERFECTIONISM CRIPPLING YOU?

Learn to be your
best friend—not
your worst critic.

*by Achmed C.
Henry*



IS YOUR BEST NEVER GOOD ENOUGH? Do you tend to belittle yourself for not reaching that high standard? Would you rather not try something for fear you might fail? Are you constantly comparing yourself with others? Do you rate your worth as it relates to your performance? If so, you are probably a victim of perfectionism.

Perfectionism is a compulsion which can produce a whole gamut of feelings and emotions. These can include low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, frustration, anger, depression, insecurity, false guilt, procrastination, and more. Much like an addiction, it may require recovery and/or therapy. There are health risks associated with this compulsion. Some performance perfectionists become so driven and stressed that they put themselves at risk for a heart attack or a stroke.

Roots of Perfectionism

The basic problem with perfectionism is a lack of self-acceptance or self-approval. In their place is self-contempt and low self-esteem. You may have grown up in a home that was negative, critical, and faultfinding—a home where love got meted out based on performance and not given unconditionally. You may have been raised by parents who were perfectionists so that nothing you did was completely satisfactory. Maybe you take the media and advertising too seriously. Perhaps you were often compared to a sibling or some other relative and were devalued because you didn't measure up to that other person's performance. We are taught in Scripture to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. But what if we don't even *like* ourselves? Perfectionists need to learn to love and accept themselves in spite of their imperfections, faults, and flaws.

What's So Bad About Being Perfect?

Ecclesiastes 7: 16 admonishes, "Do not be overrighteous, neither be overwise—why destroy yourself?" There is no such thing as *perfect* behavior, *perfect* intelligence, or *perfect* beauty. Perfectionists are extreme and compulsive. They aim for the impossible. This keeps them from ever being satisfied with the fruit of their efforts. Some people become so obsessed with having everything perfect that they actually sabotage themselves. One woman, for example, wanted to write personal notes on Christmas cards to be sent to her dearest friends. Her plan was to write something very special, so she pulled their cards out from the rest and put them aside to do this at another time. The result was that she kept putting it off until she could find the time to do them perfectly. This never happened—so her special friends were the ones who received no cards. This happened year after year.

A perfectionist brings on his or her own stress. Because the demands he sets for himself are so high, he (or she) is under constant pressure. This shows up in the person's disposition.

But it isn't only the perfectionist who suffers. A person who must have everything "perfect" makes life difficult for everybody else. Nothing others do is ever good enough. This causes problems in relationships. It can cause unhappiness in the home and in the workplace. A perfectionist can sometimes cause a lot of disharmony.

During the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, perfection was destroyed. Ever since that fateful day humans have been trying to achieve a perfect self, a perfect mate, perfect chil-

dren, a perfect neighborhood, a perfect job, perfect teeth, and much more. But only God is perfect.

Think Positive, Feel Positive

Thinking creates feelings. If you think negatively, you will feel negative. If you think demandingly, you will feel stressed, tensed, and hassled. This leads to feelings of hostility. You find yourself feeling angry with yourself when you are less than perfect and angry with others who make mistakes or don't measure up to your standards.

Self-esteem is an emotion based on love and respect. If your self-esteem is low, it is due to negative thinking about yourself. This is what shapes your self-image. Eventually, negative thinking and negative feelings will lead to negative actions. As a man thinks, so he behaves (Proverbs 23:7). But when a person has positive thoughts about himself, it raises his emotion of self-esteem.

Cognitive Traps

The faulty thinking that usually accompanies a perfectionistic attitude leads to what is known as *cognitive traps*.

First, is the use of compulsive words such as *should*, *must*, *ought*, *have to*, and *got to*. When these words take over your mind set, they become dictators. It then becomes hard to relax or unwind. For example, *I must, should, and ought to exercise three times a week*. And when you don't, your perfectionistic voice causes you to feel like a failure.

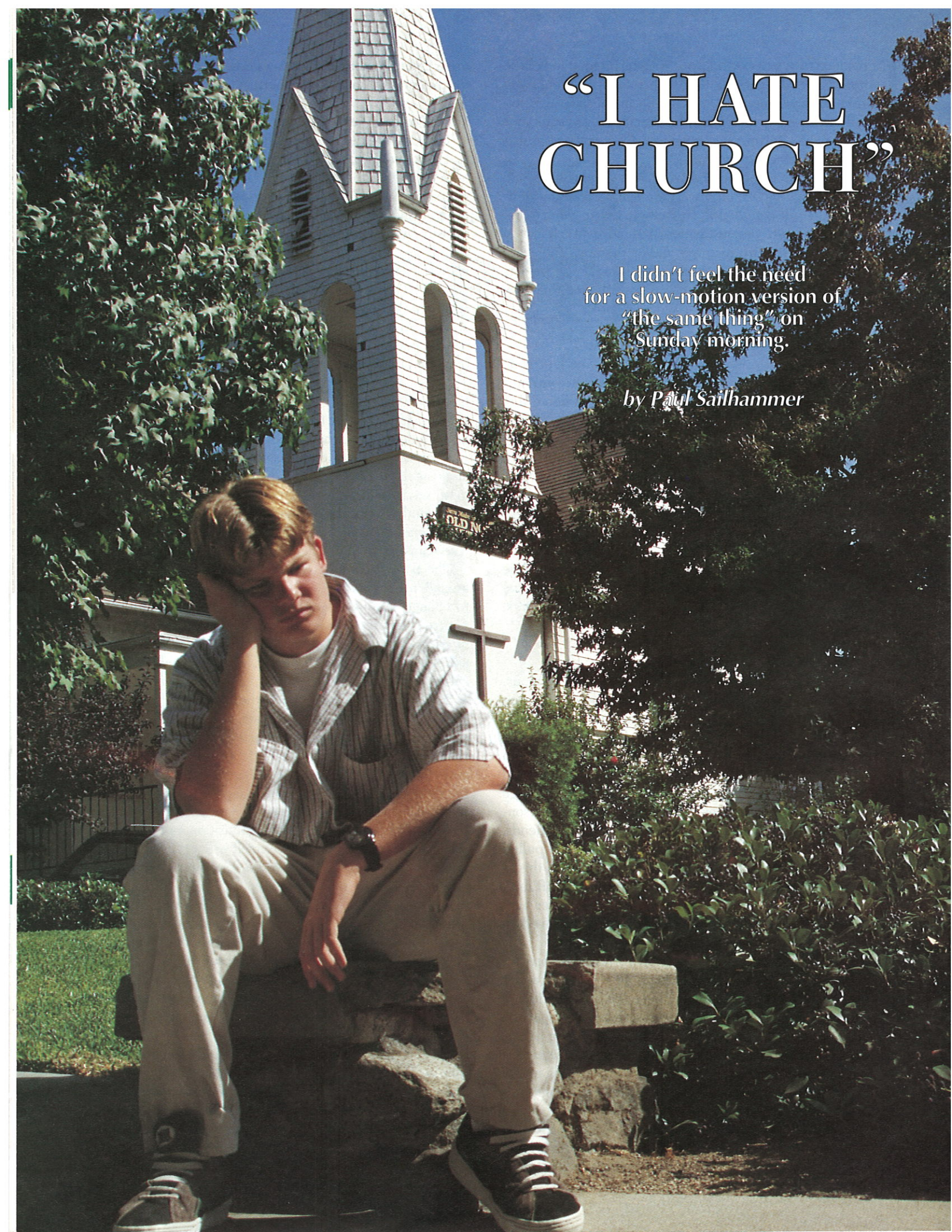
The book of Romans states that those who belong to God are led, *not driven* by the Spirit. How much better it would be to change those demanding thoughts into suggestions. *Why not try to exercise three times a week? It would be in my best interest. But if I don't do it, it's not terrible or catastrophic. I will not blame or punish myself. Rather, I will nurture and affirm myself.*

The second cognitive trap is the "*all or nothing*" thinking. This centers around a dichotomous, polarized viewpoint which sees things only in black or white with no middle ground and no balance. For example, if a student sets as his or her goal to make five "A" grades, but only achieves three, does that mean the student is a total failure? (Or a partial success?) Do *you* feel that if you're not on top, you're a total flop?

The third cognitive trap is magnification and minimization. This comes from comparing yourself with others and magnifying their desirable qualities while discounting the less desirable ones. At the same time, you may tend to magnify your own *undesirable* qualities and minimize your good ones. Magnification is the tendency to blow things out of proportion, making them far greater or far worse than they are. This kind of faulty reasoning causes a person to compare himself with others, rather than simply doing his best. The Bible tells us, "They measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (II Corinthians 10:12).

The fourth cognitive trap is a mental filter in which you see only one single negative event or detail to the exclusion of everything else. For example, here is a woman before a mirror who has been working on her hair for a half-hour. Then because she finds one or two strands of hair out of place, she gets so upset that she starts all over again.

(Continued on p. 14)

A full-page photograph of a young man with light brown hair, wearing a striped short-sleeved shirt over a white t-shirt, light-colored pants, and dark sneakers. He is sitting on a stone step, leaning his head on his right hand with a somber expression. Behind him is a white church tower with a pointed roof and arched windows. A wooden cross is mounted on the wall of the tower. A small sign on the tower reads "OLD N". The scene is set outdoors with lush green trees and bushes under a clear blue sky.

"I HATE CHURCH"

I didn't feel the need
for a slow-motion version of
"the same thing" on
Sunday morning.

by *Paul* Sailhammer

IF YOU ARE A PARENT, then you have probably heard the words, "I hate going to church" from adolescents in your home. I know my parents did.

When I was a teenager, I didn't really "hate church".... I had great friends there, and I loved the youth group and the activities it provided. But I didn't like going to the Sunday worship services. I didn't mind it too much on Christmas because the decorations made the sanctuary look so pretty and the music was always very special. But outside of that, I went because I knew my parents expected it and my youth pastor modeled it and encouraged the group to go. In fact, there was a definite section in the worship center that we invaded each Sunday just before the service began.

I had a list of reasons I could use when I regularly tested this parental expectation:

On Saturday nights Youth for Christ put on a great rally where hundreds of kids my age gathered to sing great Christian songs we liked, and we heard a message from the Bible designed to appeal to our mentality. We would go with our church friends, bringing our school friends to hear about Christ. It was exciting and fun, just what I was going for, so I didn't feel the need for a slow-motion version of "the same thing" on Sunday morning.

We had a great youth pastor and Sunday School teachers who provided a youth group on Sunday mornings and Sunday evenings. That group attracted us like a magnet and involved us in issues that we cared about. Our teachers also trained us to be creative and to make the group attractive to our friends. Some of the best things I learned as a teenager I learned there.

Church seemed to have a different agenda. The sermon topics seemed over my head. The music, though well done, seemed remote. I found myself restless, distracted, sleepy.

Looking back 30 years later, do I still resent those tedious hours spent meeting my parents' expectations? On the contrary, I now have the same expectations for my two teenage sons. I don't want them to miss what I now look back on and treasure:

- A strong sense of church as extended family—not just peers, brothers and sisters, but also moms and dads, grandparents, uncles and aunts.

- A strong sense that there is church after high school, that church is not something you grow out of. It's something you grow up into.

- A realization that worship is not just God speaking to me in a language I can easily understand, but it also involves my learning to understand God's language and the language of His people, my people, my heritage as a Christian.

- An appreciation for a church that recognized what I wanted as an adolescent, but also realized what I needed to grow up in Christ—a church that was patient with my restlessness and made room in its pews for my condescending attitude—a church where I learned to sit still and to

listen for the voice and call of God on my life.

Looking back, I don't have to devalue my youth group memories to enhance my "church" memories. It was my church that provided the youth group and made it possible. It isn't an either/or proposition. In fact, when I myself became a youth pastor, I faced the challenge of involving my own youth group in the whole life of the church. They were attracted to our youth events, but I had to lead them into "big church." That involved modeling its importance in my own life, clarifying my expectations for my group, securing a regular spot that we invaded each week in the worship center and being patient with their restlessness. It also included influencing the planning of worship so that it did not seem tedious and obscure, realizing too that it wasn't just another version of what my group knew and enjoyed.

Now I practice these same things as a parent. When our sons were in fifth and sixth grade, we began to bring them to "big church" periodically. Needless to say, it wasn't their first choice. We had a rule: You can go to sleep in the service, but if you do, that will mean you also need a nap this afternoon when we get home. That allowed them to regulate their attention span.

When they started junior high, they were expected to be in church with us regularly. It still wasn't anywhere near their first choice, but it was their parents' expectation. They could bring friends to sit with our family, or they could sit with their friends' families. The more the merrier, from our point of view. "Misery loves company" seemed more appropriate from their end at times. Maybe I was reading my own memories into their perspective.

Now they are young men, and I think they feel about church pretty much how I felt at their age. That's fine with me. I appreciate their cooperation. We don't enforce our expectations harshly. Firmly, but not harshly. Church isn't our whole life, but it is the center of our whole life.

As a parent, it is my responsibility to make it the center. I appreciate the help of youth leaders and those who plan our services, but it is my responsibility to provide the opportunity, and it is my sons' responsibility to decide what they do with it. In a few years they will call their own shots. By then I hope they will begin to realize how much they need the whole church family.

In the final analysis, it's a parental responsibility. The church doors are wide open. The youth leaders will model and reinforce. But it's the parents' commitment that is primary. Let's start worshipping together as a family. Who knows? It might start a trend, even for those who think they hate going to church. □

Rev. Paul Sailhammer is Senior Associate pastor at First Evangelical Free Church of Fullerton, California. Reprinted with permission from Newsbreak, the church's weekly newsletter.

Welcome, Winnie!

Her blue eyes grew round with wonder as she accepted the first big package.

by Eva Hallam
Solberg

December 23—A cold wind scattered snow on icy streets. Winnie* tugged her ragged woolen coat closer around her barrel figure and pulled her stocking cap lower over her forehead. The teller at the bank had been short with her when she asked for money again. "A few blocks more and I can go in the warm store and buy a candy bar...."

The phone rang. "Eva," a voice said when I picked it up, "This is Doris.* I have a woman in need of a place to stay. I found her wandering on the icy streets. She was cold and confused."

Doris was the county social worker in the small Montana town where I lived and managed the local personal-care home. People from middle class, as well as from wealthier backgrounds, resided at that home, but those who were not blessed financially or who were emotionally or mentally less equipped were treated with no less dignity.

Doris went on hesitantly. "She hasn't had a bath in months...and her clothing is real dirty, too." Doris may have been thinking, *Will you accept her? What will the other residents think of this woman, this abused piece of humanity?*

"Bring her right over," I answered quickly. "She can eat lunch here and we can talk about her staying."

A little later, Winnie appeared at the door with Doris. A brown stocking cap, stiff with cat hair and dirt, covered Winnie's wispy grey hair, a few strands of which stuck out

around the bottom of the cap. The hem of her dirty and ragged coat hit swollen ankles protruding over once-white shoes. She grasped a bulging purse. A cracked red truck reflector hung on a heavy shoestring around her neck. She was a sight to behold!

After sizing up Winnie's pitiful condition, I had the attendants set a separate table for her and bring a

hot meal. She seemed oblivious to any others as she wolfed down the potatoes and gravy, beef chunks and carrots, drank her glass of milk, and stirred sugar into her coffee. Spoon still in the cup, she gulped down the hot liquid.

Meal over and her appetite satiated, Winnie stuffed a large roll into her purse—found later squished among colorful junk mail from the post office dumpster, a comb and small mirror, a child's squeaky toy, and a monkey wrench that looked like an antique.

Other residents whose experiences during the Great Depression left an unresolved fear of going hungry, sometimes took food from their plates to stash inside a drawer in their room. The attendants had to be on the alert to find and dispose of any remaining food before ants got to it.

Winnie's habits were relayed to me by the social worker. On an average day she walked seven or eight blocks from her little house, visited the bank and withdrew a little money (she had sufficient), stopped in at a store or two to buy chewing gum, a candy bar, or crackers and cheese, and then walked home again. She resided—not alone—but in a house filled with a dozen cats. The townspeople avoided this "strange" woman. (One time after Winnie had become a resident in our personal-care facility, I had taken her arm to lead her into the medical



clinic, and the doctor commented, "This is probably the first time in her life that Winnie has been treated with respect.")

Janny, an attendant, whispered to me, "I'd sure like to get her into a bathtub!"

"Winnie, how would you like a nice warm bath before you go home?" I asked. Winnie had no objection.

While Janny scrubbed, changed bath water, and scrubbed some more, another attendant cleaned and disinfected the chair where Winnie had sat during her meal. I quickly drove to the used-clothing store down the street, made a few purchases, and returned in time for Janny to help Winnie put on the clean, used clothing.

What a transformation! With her hair shampooed and neatly combed, a pink dress over clean underclothing, and her countenance relaxed, Winnie looked not only presentable, but grateful and sweet.

"You're a nice lady," she murmured as I handed over a new-to-her stocking cap.

The social worker prepared to leave with Winnie. "Hopefully, we'll be back tomorrow to sign papers," she said.

An hour later Doris called. "Winnie's ready to sign in permanently! I'm just going to have to find another home for her cats."

Later that afternoon Winnie went down the hall to the room quickly prepared with a *WELCOME, WINNIE!* sign to greet her.

Other residents stayed aloof from Winnie, aware of her reputation as a "strange" woman. Winnie, who reportedly had suffered abuse from family members, including a psychotic relative,

seemed not to notice their aloofness. Grateful for the warmth, good food, and attention from the staff, Winnie settled in.

Then it hit me: *Tomorrow is Christmas Eve—what about Winnie?* Gifts would be distributed from family members, along with some from the Salvation Army for those who had no family. I made another quick trip uptown.

As the strains of *Silent Night, Holy Night* from the piano faded into the background the next evening, pretty packages were passed around to each resident—including Winnie. Her blue eyes grew round with wonder and gratitude as she accepted the first big package.

I'll never forget that look. *How many years had passed since she had received personal attention... and a gift?* I wondered.

I thought of the Christ Child who entered this world in humble surroundings among smelly animals. The gift of eternal life which He made available to all was extended to Winnie. She had readily accepted one gift. *Would she accept the greatest Gift of all?*

Although she was unable to express in words her trust in Jesus Christ, Winnie had listened to the gospel and experienced His love through the kindness and gentleness of the staff. With childlike faith, I'm sure she believed. God's Word says, "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7). □

Editor's note: *Christmas is a wonderful time to put out God's "welcome mat." By reaching out to those less privileged, you, too, can extend God's love and caring.*

**Name has been changed to protect identity.*

A THANK-YOU NOTE FROM GRAMMA

An expression of gratitude for an adopted grandchild.

by Marjorie R. Johnson

OUR GRANDCHILD RACES UP to the door to show off a new T-shirt bearing the inscription, "I'm two years old and there's nothing you can do about it!"

The youngster's parents are close on their toddler's heels. "Fit's, doesn't it?" our daughter laughs. "No kid could be more 'two' than this one."

Their cheerful faces are in sharp contrast to the dejected expression they wore during days of difficult miscarriages and a painful stillbirth. But memories of these heartaches are blurred by the tiny bundle of energy who runs full-speed ahead dispensing joy like angel dust.

In a prayer heard only by God, I express gratitude to Him for bringing this child into our extended family. I would also like to thank the courageous young woman who made it possible, but I can't. I don't even know her name.

So now at this Thanksgiving season I write this public letter, hoping



she will see it and know how grateful I am —grateful to God and to her for allowing this delightful child to come and enrich our lives:

Dear Birthmother of Our Grandchild,

If you were to meet us on the street we would pass like strangers, because that's what we are. Yet, you are an integral part of our family. You have given it life.

Your gift wasn't an easy one to obtain, or to give. To pull this off you needed more courage than ever was possessed by any history book hero. Most of them fought shoulder to shoulder with others for a common cause. Your battle was a lonely one, a battle in which you easily could have surrendered and no one would have known the difference. A quick trip to an abortion clinic and it would have been all over, but so would the existence of the perky little person who now frolics in our family-room. It wasn't easy, but you persevered and brought this new life into the world.

Bearing life has been difficult since the beginning of time. You were no different from other mothers when you struggled with morning sickness, followed by backaches. And, like others, after nine months you waddled uncomfortably into a birthing room to endure more pain.

However, some things were very different for you. You had no strong husband to hold your hand, rub your back, and share dreams of a bright future with your baby. Other mothers knit sweaters and decorated nurseries. You knew that you would be placing the one whose heart had beat so close to yours into the arms of another woman, aware that the child you loved would be taught to call that other woman "Mommy."

How difficult that must have been! Yet you endured it all because you knew this child deserved to live. And you knew God had a special plan for your baby's life.

Maybe He intends for this child to someday become the President of the United States—or the developer of a vaccine to eradicate a dread disease. Perhaps he will be an author—a gifted musician—a preacher, or even a missionary.

Only God knows your baby's destiny—but we can make some promises to you about the path upon which your child will walk on the way to that destiny.

First of all, I want you to know that in our close-knit extended family, your child will receive exactly the same love,

the same discipline, the same opportunities, the same encouragement, the same time, the same care, and the same spiritual guidance as our biological grandchildren.

When your little one entered our family, the whole world seemed to rejoice. Grandparents and great-grandparents on both sides of the family — aunts, uncles, and cousins by the dozens all joined in the celebration — everyone vying for a chance to hold the baby. And we haven't stopped.

That doesn't mean your baby will be spoiled. Our daughter and son-in-law wouldn't allow that to happen. As your baby grows from toddlerhood to childhood, then on to his teenage years and adulthood, they'll nurture and love your young son, but not overindulge or overprotect.

They'll treat your baby like their own biological offspring, but they won't hide the fact that this child who is a part of you and a part of them, is adopted. From infancy on up, your baby will hear about

you and the role you have played. Your face and body will be absent, but you will always be a vital part of your youngster's life.

And you are a part of our lives as well. Never a day goes by that we don't pray for you, thanking God for giving you the strength of character to complete your pregnancy. We ask Him to wrap His loving arms around you and hold you close, begging Him to compensate for any longing you might have to be with your baby. We also pray that if you have never done so, you will invite Christ into your life and be born again into the family of God.

May God fill you with an awareness of His accepting love and constant care. And may He guide your footsteps today, tomorrow, and always.

With hearts full of grateful love we are,

Your baby's Gramma

—and Grampa, too □

Grandma Marjorie Johnson lives in Fullerton, California.

Perfectionism

(Continued from p. 9)

The fifth cognitive trap is the well-rehearsed irrational belief that, "If I am anything less than perfect, I am not acceptable." Or, "If I am not perfect, I deserve to be rejected, humiliated, embarrassed, or demeaned." The message of this kind of flawed thinking is that to be accepted, we must be perfect. Remember that God accepts us just as we are...and He, more than anyone, knows our weaknesses and imperfections.

This doesn't mean that we don't work toward improving ourselves. What it means is that we move forward with an encouraging outlook unhampered by the weight of discouragement. There is nothing that motivates a person to succeed like encouragement.

So watch those cognitive traps. Protect your self-esteem. Don't drive yourself, but nurture yourself. Learn to be your own friend. So whether you win or lose, know that you are a person of worth. That's how God sees you! □

Achmed C. Henry is a Christian counselor at an addiction facility in Las Vegas, Nevada. Reprinted with permission from Newsbreak, the church's weekly newsletter.

Making A Difference

(Continued from p. 15)

problem of not being able to trust other people. This extreme mistrust is a definite hardship. It isn't the way God intended us to live. While we must be careful not to be "taken in" by schemers or slick-talkers, still the world has its share of good, honest people whom we can trust. In fact, this is one of the greatest joys in life—being able to trust others and being the kind of person that our friends and family can trust.

Because delusional mistrust is an elaborate defense, it usually requires help from a competent therapist. A good therapist often begins by helping a suspicious person rebuild a positive self-orientation which, eventually, will reduce his level of suspicion.

The ultimate blessing of trust is being able to trust God. What a joy to trust Christ as our personal Savior, knowing that all through life we can have the confidence to trust Him completely. People who have an unusually hard time trusting can receive real help from knowing Christ, reading God's Word, praying, and learning to rely on Him. □

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

by Kevin Narramore

HOW TRUSTING ARE YOU?

In the last issue of *LIVING* in Part 1 of this column, we discussed how trust, on a collective level is the glue—the *moral glue*—that holds a good and prosperous society together. But what are the dynamics on an individual level?

As a point of reference, let's start with a trust test. After answering the following questions, use the same scale to rate your spouse, coworkers, or family members:

Yes No

- — It's difficult for dishonest people to "put things over on me."
- — I often insist on getting my point across.
- — I feel that people often talk about me behind my back.
- — Many people look to me for my "gift of discernment."
- — I sometimes get perturbed by the stupid little things people do.
- — I tend to be quick to take the offensive.
- — When people give me compliments, I wonder about their motives.
- — My closest friends are keen observers of human frailties.
- — I have a difficult time delegating work because other people are often "incompetent" or need direction.
- — It's easy for me to see through most people's ulterior motives.
- — I'm jealous of others who have what I don't, but which I feel I deserve.

It Hurts Not to Trust

If you have answered "yes" to more than six of these questions, you probably have difficulty trusting people. Excessive mistrust and suspicion are "defensive projections" brought about by inner tensions such as a low self-image, and in a few instances, feelings of superiority. People who are unable to trust have a perpetual appetite for cynicism because criticizing and finding fault provides a defense mechanism that temporarily relieves their inner tensions.

To continuously manufacture suspicious thoughts requires distorting reality.



Dr. Kevin Narramore holds a Ph.D. in psychology and is Executive Vice President of the Narramore Christian Foundation.

The Crisis of America's Vanishing Trust Part 2 — How Trusting Are You?

Clinicians often call this phenomena "delusional thinking" or "paranoia." Paranoia (severe mistrust) is a form of self-deception often brought on by a low self-image. It's a serious problem because of its adverse impact on both interpersonal relationships and a person's health. Researchers, for example, have found that people with mistrusting personalities are prone to stress and have more medical problems, including low back pain and higher incidences of coronary heart disease.

Those Who Cannot Trust

In certain situations it's normal *not* to trust. Demographically, those who live in high crime areas such as Miami or the South Bronx will tend to be less trusting than those living in Sioux City, Iowa, or Wanaka, New Zealand. Suspicion, in these circumstances, can be a normal adaptation to the environment in order to survive. In addition, socially disadvantaged groups and minorities who have been historically oppressed usually score higher on the suspicion scale of personality tests than people brought up in the mainstream of political and social power. Also, if a child has grown up in a family where he was not able to trust his parents or siblings, he may find it hard in adulthood to trust other people.

In a 1989 study of over 200 paranoid people, Dr. Heather Cattell found some

common denominators in their **early childhood experiences**. The majority of her subjects recollected a recurring theme of childhood alienation stating that they "did not belong," and were made to feel ostracized, either to their own community or their family circle.

Partners of Paranoids

What if you are married to a non-trusting spouse? Interestingly, partners of paranoid persons often misunderstand the difference between *naïve* versus *delusional* mistrust. The trusting spouse often presumes that the suspicious partner would gladly correct his or her thought distortions if simply told to change. Consequently, these couples engage in never-ending arguments where one spouse is trying to "talk some sense" into the other.

Some paranoid persons can form what seem, on the surface, to be close attachments with others. This closeness, however, requires that the spouse of the paranoid person goes along with the paranoid person's attitudes and projections.

Dealing with the Untrusting Person

The paranoid person may feel quite distant from God. Scriptures like "Trust in the Lord with all your heart" seem impossible. On the other extreme, I have seen paranoid people who have felt so let down by their own family and friends that they have turned to the Lord as the only One they can trust. "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me" (Psalm 27:10). Yet, the untrusting person may still have a monkey on his or her back that will not go away because everyone, except God, fits into the category of an unreliable foe.

The non-trusting person needs help in seeing that people are a mixture of attributes, both good and bad. However, don't delude yourself into thinking that a "Band-Aid" is going to change a paranoid person's deep dynamics.

Learning To Trust

Some Christians realize they have a
(Continued on p. 14)

HEALTH WATCH

by Eva Hallam Solberg

COFFEE AND BONE LOSS

Caffeine can cause the body to lose higher-than-normal amounts of calcium and magnesium in the urine. In one study of post-menopausal women, drinking just two cups of coffee a day was associated with a significant loss of bone. But this occurred only in women whose daily calcium intake was below the Recommended Dietary Allowance of 800 milligrams per day.

(*Better Homes and Gardens*)

IS SURGERY REALLY NECESSARY?

When surgery is recommended, you will be wise to ask your doctor to explain in detail why he feels surgery is the best medical option, and what the alternatives might be. Before a doctor can legally proceed with any type of

treatment, he must have the patient's consent. This consent is valid only if all the practical methods of treatment have been explained, as well as the risks involved and the benefits expected. It is usually a good idea to get a second opinion from another doctor when surgery is recommended. Some health insurance companies require it.

(*American Health*)

NEW BREAST CANCER CASES TO BE STUDIED

Researchers at the Columbia University School of Public Health are recruiting participants for a study of newly diagnosed breast cancer patients. They will try to determine whether pesticides, auto exhaust fumes, or other chemical irritants are responsible for the high proportion of breast cancer found among women living on Long Island,

New York. Researchers also plan to collect dust, water, and soil samples from the various homes of the study volunteers. Death rates from breast cancer among women in Long Island have been among the nation's highest.

(*Los Angeles Times*)

BROWN SPOTS AND RENOVA

Renova, a new prescription skin cream, promises to reduce fine wrinkles, sun-roughened skin, and remove brown spots caused by lifetime exposure to the sun. The active ingredient is also found in Retin-A, which has been around for years. The difference is, Renova is less irritating to the skin. It is basically harmless, but its effects are sometimes hard to see. The effects end when you stop using the product. The side effects include redness, dry

skin, itching, peeling, and a tingling or burning sensation, usually lasting only the first few weeks of use. Renova causes more sensitivity to the sun, so extra care must be taken against sun exposure when this medication is being used.

(*University of Chicago Better Health Letter*)

ULCER TREATMENT

Treatment no longer involves a drastic lifestyle change. A majority of ulcers are caused by an infection with a common bacterium, and can be treated with a course of combined antibiotics. The recommended treatment for this disease differs somewhat depending on the cause, but a bland diet and antacids—the traditional remedy of the past—is *not* the preferred approach these days.

(*Better Health Letter*)



Living Memorials



My Gift of Love For a Living Memorial

IN HONOR OF

Alice Chatlos
Mary Gonclaves
Gloria Ruth Kuhn
Marcia Menke Merrill
Norman Smoll
Jack Wyrzten

DONOR

Dr. and Mrs. Clyde Narramore
Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Nader
Eugene F. Kuhn
Mary Guisti
Dr. and Mrs. Clyde Narramore
Norman and Edith Kuhlewind

(Gifts received after October 9, 1996, will appear in the January-February 1997 issue of PSYCHOLOGY FOR LIVING.)

In Memory of:

Amount

Given by:

Name

Address

Mail to:

NARRAMORE CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION
P.O. Box 661900, Arcadia, CA 91066-1900

Send acknowledgement to:

Name

Address

A MOST VALUABLE GIFT FROM YOU... TO YOUR LOVED ONES

This gift costs very little, yet it may be appreciated more than expensive presents. Why? ...

Because...

- *It demonstrates your love and thoughtfulness in a very special way.
- *It will make things easier for your family at a very difficult time.
- *It will probably save them money, time, "red tape" and heartache.
- *It may be the means of guiding them to eternal life.

This gift is your Will.

We think it's so important that our helpful booklet, "*Your Influence Living Forever*," is our gift to you just for the asking.

Phone 1-818-821-8400, or write
NCF, P. O. Box 661900,

by Clyde M. Narramore

WHY WOULD A YOUNG PERSON FROM A CHRISTIAN HOME GET IN TROUBLE?

QUESTION:

The 15-year-old son of one of the couples in our church was caught taking money from the cash register at the place where he had a part-time job. According to him, he didn't really mean to steal—just thought he'd "borrow" the cash so he could buy some expensive Christmas gifts for his parents.

The parents are fine Christians and naturally, they are very upset. They have tried so hard with this boy, but he has always had a difficult time. The other children in the family have no obvious problems.

Why would a young person raised in a Christian home get into this kind of trouble, and what can be done to help?

ANSWER:

Stealing is always wrong; we know this from God's Word. The Ten Commandments clearly tell us in Exodus 20:15, "You shall not steal." Ephesians 4:28 reinforces this command, "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need." So although this boy says he was taking the money in order to buy Christmas gifts for his parents, he needs to understand that **it is never right to do wrong, even for the right reason.** Stealing is a sin!

The motivation is important, however. Always ask *why* the person did what he did. If that is not understood, you cannot deal effectively

with the one who has done this misdeed. There is no one answer as to why a person would stoop to stealing. In the case of this boy, undoubtedly there have been many circumstances that have led up to this action.

An interesting clue as to his motives may be found in your statement, "He has always had a difficult time." I presume from this comment that the boy has had problems for a number of years, and that this episode of stealing may be one in a long succession of difficulties.

If so, the boy needs special counseling. Some questions which may need to be answered are these: What is the boy's intelligence level? What kind of grades does he make in school? Does he have learning disabilities? What kinds of friends does he have? Are his parents strong on criticism but short on compliments? Has he been abused in former years? Do kids often make fun of him? How much time does his Dad spend with him?

These questions and others, when answered, may give a parent or counselor a world of understanding.

I well remember a boy with whom I counseled. He stole quite regularly (and cleverly), but he never kept what he took. He always gave the things away. He did so in order to gain friendships. His parents were recently divorced and he felt embarrassed and alone.

We cannot help but wonder about the relationship the boy in the above question has

had with his parents. Does he feel insecure or misunderstood? We do know that through the years his parents have had a "difficult time" with him. So perhaps he wanted to do something "nice" for them since he may have felt guilty about causing them so much trouble. It may have been an attempt to earn their love and acceptance.

In contrast to this boy, it seems that his brothers and sisters have had no serious problems. This might indicate that the boy is laboring under a handicap which the others do not have: he may have a physical problem. From the information that has been given, one may wonder if this young man may have a neurological impairment. When a child has problems year after year, and all efforts to help him seem to fail, very often he has a minimal brain damage. If so, it could cause him to be "out of step" with his family and society. It would be wise to have this boy checked by a neurologist.

If the problem stems from neurological impairment, the parents may not be to blame for the boy's unacceptable behavior. Nevertheless, we cannot discount the possibility that the parents may not have met his basic emotional needs. Since no two children have exactly the same environment (even when raised in the same family), the father and mother may be treating this boy differently from the other children. He may remind them of someone they dislike.

It is important that the parents have someone with

whom to talk through their feelings, preferably a Christian psychologist who can give them biblical counsel based on professional diagnosis. As far as Christmas is concerned, the parents should make it as happy a time as possible. In this way it can help to heal family relationships that have been strained as a result of this ordeal.

Although this boy has been raised in a Christian home, one wonders if he has ever made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. It may be he needs to be saved and that if he yields his life to the Lord, his undesirable behavior will be remedied.

The most important consideration is the salvaging of this boy. God loves him and he needs to know that although his stealing is unacceptable, he is still loved and accepted as their son. I would strongly recommend seeking professional help. It may be the only way to prevent this young man from even greater, more serious trouble in the future. □

**Coming
Next Issue**

**To Be Or Not To
Be—Useable**

**Look At The
Bigger Picture**

**Gambling: A Bad
Bet For Anyone**

**Loving And
Laughing Together**

by Lee and Gloria Bendell

THE PRESENT A.D. — B.C.C.

*Yesterday is History
Tomorrow is a Mystery*

*Today is a Gift
That's why it's called The Present.*

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY to fully enjoy the gift of the present? To do this, we must look at history; especially the history of Jesus Christ, for history is *His* story. He is history!

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Unfortunately, the world has tried to box Christ into historical chronology. The American People's Encyclopedia (Spencer Press) describes it this way:

Historical chronology required the use of a regularly recurring natural phenomenon (e.g., an eclipse of the sun) as a long-term time scale. Before the introduction of written records, events were 'dated' according to outstanding occurrences in the lifetimes of individuals or in the collective memory of peoples. Another important basis for any historical chronology is a fixed starting point from which to begin counting the years.... In our own system, the birth of Christ (arbitrarily established) is used as a chronological starting point. Dates prior to the birth of Christ are labeled B.C., standing for Before Christ. Dates since that event are designated A.D., the abbreviation for the Latin phrase Anno Domini, which means 'the year of our Lord.'

Last summer while on tour in Hawaii, we met with Chaplain Ray (chaplain of Waikiki Beach). During his introduction of Dr. Clyde Narramore, who had been asked to speak at the Sunday morning service at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, he mentioned, **"It's not B.C.—before Christ—but B.C.C.—before Christ came.** There is no Before Christ, He existed before the foundation of the world." Although as Christians we know this, let's consider the effect the Historical Chronological Calendar has on our feelings and knowledge of Christ. During His three years of ministry on earth, Jesus said:

"I AM from above, I am not of this world" (John 8:23).

"I AM doing the very work that the Father has given me to finish" (John 5:36).

"I AM with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me" (John 7:33).

"I AM the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me" (John 14:6).

"I AM the gate for the sheep" (John 10:7).

"I AM the good Shepherd" (John 10:11).

"I AM the light of the world" (John 8:12).

"I AM the true vine; you are the branches" (John 15:5).

"I AM the bread of life" (John 6:35).

"I AM the resurrection and the life, He who believes in me will live, even though he dies" (John 11:25).

Yet, it wasn't until "the fullness of time had come" (Galatians 4:4), that Jesus chose to reveal His complete deity, knowing full well that when He did, it would place Him on a Cross to die for the sins of the world. But that was the purpose of His coming.

Jesus Christ is concealed in the Old Testament, but revealed in the New. "When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said,

"I AM God Almighty; walk before Me and be blameless" (Genesis 17:1).

"I AM the LORD; I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by My name, the Lord, I did not make Myself known to them" (Exodus 6:2, 3).

God said to Moses, "I AM who I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you" (Exodus 3:14).

In the New Testament it was Christ's discourse with non-believing Jews that revealed His timeless identity. Jesus explained to the Jews "My Father, whom

you claim as your God, is the One who glorifies Me. Though you do not know Him, I know Him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His Word. Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day: he saw it and was glad."

"You are not fifty years old," the Jews said to Him, "and You have seen Abraham!" Jesus answered, "Before Abraham was born, I AM" (John 8:54-58).

We need not fear the mysteries of tomorrow because Christ said:

"I AM going away and I AM coming back to you" (John 14:28).

"I AM with you always—even unto the ends of the earth" (Matthew 28:20).

"I AM the living one; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades" (Revelation 1:17,18).

"I AM the Alpha and the Omega" says the Lord God, who *is* (present), who *was* (history), who *is to come* (no longer a mystery), the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8).

Do you have the present of today? Are you living for Jesus? You can! Christ said, "I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20).

Jesus told a parable about ten virgins. Five were wise and had prepared themselves for the Bridegroom's coming. When He arrived they "went in with Him to the wedding" (Matthew 25:10). But the other five were foolish and arrived late. When they tried to enter, the door had already been shut! In response to their knocks and pleas, the Bridegroom replied, "I do not know you" (verse 12). How dreadful for those who are "locked out" of heaven because they waited too long to receive Christ.

Don't be like the foolish virgins. Accept God's most precious gift, **Jesus Christ, the One of yesterday, today, and forever!** Trust Him now, in the present, and your future will be secure for eternity! □

All Scripture references are from N. I. V.



OUR WORLD TODAY

by Eva Hallam Solberg

CHRISTMAS CAROLS

Music for Christmastime began with the litanies (musical prayers) of the Christian Church. Christmas hymns go back to the A.D. 400's, when most of them were written in Latin. Priests strolled around their parishes singing them on Christmas Eve.

St. Francis of Assisi is known as the father of caroling, because only church officials had been encouraged to sing carols before his time. In 1223, St. Francis placed a crèche (miniature Nativity scene) in a hermitage at Greccio, Italy. After this, many churches began displaying a Nativity scene at Christmas. Soon the people began acting out the events. The actors composed Christmas carols to sing with their Nativity plays. After the religious service, the carolers strolled down the street, still singing. In that way, street caroling was born.

Some of the world's finest music has been written for Christmas. Johann Sebastian Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, written in 1734, follows the text of the books of Matthew and Luke in the Bible. George Frederic Handel first presented his *Messiah* in Dublin in 1742.

(The World Book Encyclopedia)

BETTER TO HAVE LOST AND REGAINED

New data on 17,233 women between the ages of 55 and 69 have found that disease prevalence was significantly lower in women who had lost and regained weight than in those who throughout the course of their lives put on

Imagine being in this glorious world with grateful hearts—and no one to thank.

—Christina Rossetti

extra pounds and never shed them.

So, the yo-yo dieting scare of a few years ago which suggested that people who continually lost and regained weight were worse off than those who stayed overweight may have been deceptive.

(Pritikin Vantage Point)

WORLD'S LARGEST RELIGION

According to statistician David B. Barrett, Christianity is the world's largest religion with 33.7 percent of the world's population (1.25 billion). Atheists, numbering 222 million, have been retreating steadily since 1970, dropping from 4.6 percent of the world's population to the current 3.8 percent. According to Barrett, this trend will continue.

(EP News Service)

EINSTEIN RETARDED?

Except for tremendous interest, enthusiasm, excitement and determination, great people are not clearly superior to those who don't become great. Example: Albert Einstein talked about how it was an advantage for him to be "retarded"—unable to understand things that everyone else thought were perfectly clear. Even as an adult, he was still trying to fig-

ure out what time and space were. Everyone else thought they understood both at an early age and moved on.

(Bottom Line Personal)

WOMEN 'PROMISE KEEPERS'?

After the enormous success of the Promise Keepers men's movement, two look-a-like organizations for women have been created. "Heritage Keepers" was created by Bob Beckler with his wife, Lori. Their first conference was held last August in Wichita, Kansas.

"Keys for Abundant Living: A Promise Keepers Counterpart" was organized in Tennessee as part of Deborah Tyler's Renaissance Ministries. Designed to "provide opportunities for women to be challenged, inspired, and encouraged, and to lead each woman to a personal commitment to God's Word as the ultimate authority for successful living."

(Christianity Today)

ELDERHOSTEL

Twenty-one years ago the new movement in American adult education called Elderhostel began. From a few hundred hostellers on a handful of New England college campuses to an international network of 1,800

participating institutions, Elderhostel offers inexpensive, short-term academic programs hosted by educational institutions around the world. For those interested in more information, call (617) 426-8056.

(Elderhostel Catalog)

EVOLUTION

More states are taking steps to inform students that evolution is theoretical. Georgia has legislation in committee which would prohibit the teaching of evolution as fact. Alabama has a disclaimer in textbooks stating evolution is a theory.

(Intercessors for America)

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE AND MEDICARE

A federal judge struck down Medicare and Medicaid payments to Christian Science healers as a violation of the constitutional separation of church and state for the first time. Practitioners have received millions of dollars in federal reimbursements because the law explicitly applies to the Christian Science church. The judge ruled that the accommodation of religious beliefs too strongly favors one particular sect.

(Los Angeles Times)

EVANGELICAL VOTE

Conservative white evangelical Protestants are the most active and cohesive religious force in American politics today, according to the Pew Research Center for People & the Press. This group consists of 24 percent of America's registered voters, up from 19 percent in 1987.

(NAE Washington Insight)



Can you think of a more perfect Christmas gift?

Ideal for Everyone

- *A Blessing That Keeps Coming All Year
- *Good For All Ages
- *Magnifies Christ
- *No Tiring Shopping Trips
- *Helpful, Informative, and Practical
- *Tax-deductible
- *No Gift Wrapping
- *We'll send a gift card.

This beautiful, four-color magazine, along with Dr. Narramore's SPECIAL INSIGHT on alternate months, comes to you or your friend(s) for one year for your tax-deductible gift of \$18, or two years for \$32. This is one of the best gifts you'll ever give to yourself or to another person.

To order by phone (using credit card) call 1-818-821-8400. Or mail your gift list with your check payable to Narramore Christian Foundation, P. O. Box 661900, Arcadia, CA 91066-1900.



PSYCHOLOGY FOR
LIVING

THE NARRAMORE CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION
P.O. BOX 661900, Arcadia, CA 91066-1900

MOVING? CHANGE OF ADDRESS: SEND THIS
LABEL OR COPY OF IT SIX WEEKS PRIOR TO
MOVING TO ABOVE ADDRESS.

NON-PROFIT ORGAN.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
THE NARRAMORE
CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION