

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

May 16, 2000

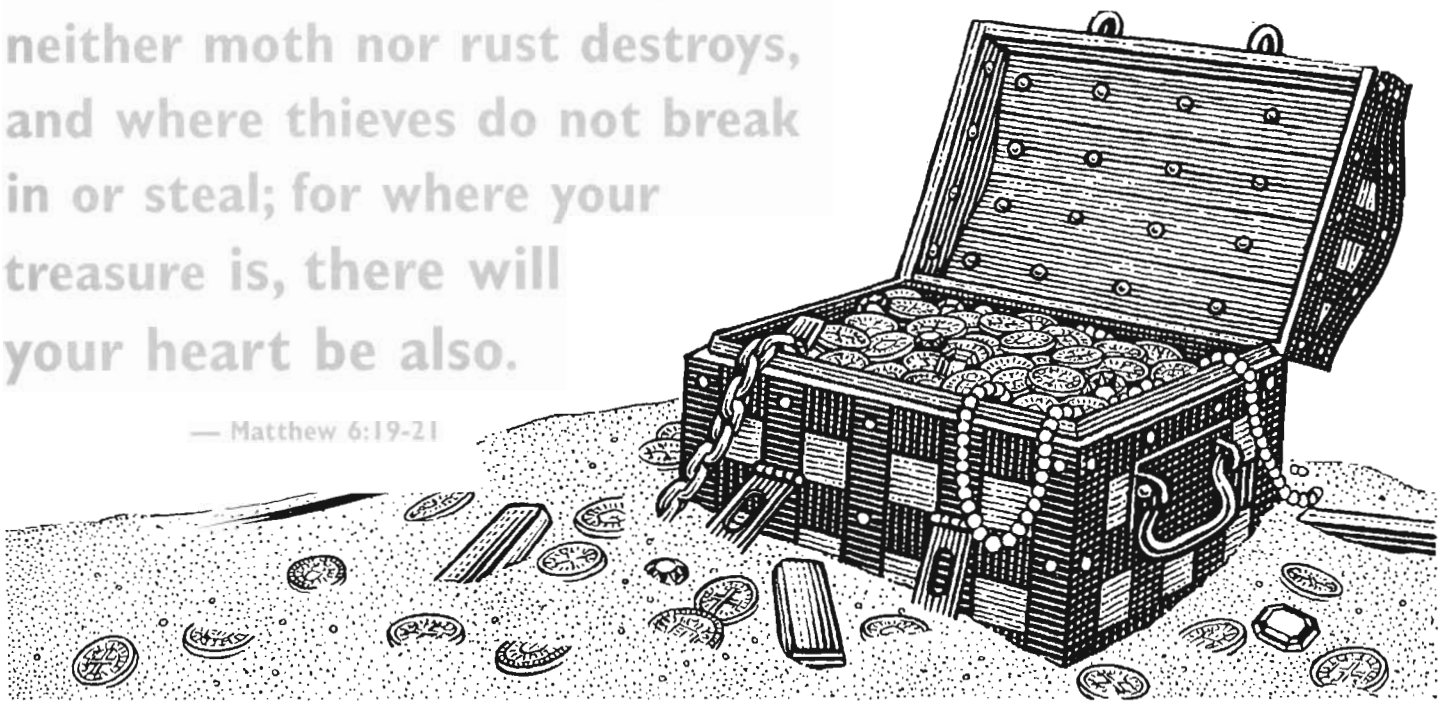


## DIVE IN AND DISCOVER!

Jesus said:

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

— Matthew 6:19-21



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May 16, 2000  
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## CONTENTS

**Is there danger  
in debt?** p. 4

**Health and wealth  
gospel** p. 6

**God's faithful  
provision** p. 8

**First AFLC  
missionaries  
to Portugal** p. 10

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## AN ENCOURAGING WORD

### Cheerful givers

"For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills" (Psalm 50:10).

**J**esus said much about money and possessions. The Bible has much to say about the material goods of this life. This shows that it is an important subject.

God is the creator and owner of all things. All who live in this world are caretakers of what is here. We are users of all God has provided and then we leave it for someone else to use. We call this stewardship, looking after what belongs to another. When God created the beasts of the field, the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, He told Adam to have dominion over them. Of course, this means wise and humane care, just as there must be unselfish and prudent use of vegetation and other natural resources.

Part of our stewardship is related to money. In older days, as in those of the pioneers, not much money was available. Bartering, that is the exchange of a commodity one had for one someone else had, was common. Or labor was performed in lieu of cash. That was the way many of the early church buildings were erected.

Today we deal all the time with cash, currency, checks, certificates and bonds, some people having more and some less. It has been said that a lot can be told about a person by examining his checkbook. Of course, that is a private matter, but God knows about these things.

For the Christian, in addition to taking care of the many necessities of life, there is the desire, yes, the need to share in the maintenance of God's work in the world. There is the local congregation to be supported, there are the needs of the larger

church fellowship, including bringing the gospel to others beyond one's own community. There may be schools to operate, Christian material to be printed and works of charity to be performed.

The tithe, or giving of the tenth of what one has, was commanded in the Old Testament. That was used mostly for the upkeep of the temple and its services. In our day what is given goes out much further, even to faraway places in the world. In reality, then, we try to do more with less.

We are not under the law now. Our stewardship of money is a matter of freewill. Paul gives good advice in II Corinthians 9:7 when he says, "Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." Let us give as God has blessed us. The tithe is good to aim for. For others that would be too little. Some may feel that they cannot reach the tithe. But by all means, seek to give proportionately.

And as the beloved Pastor Trygve Dahle used to say, "I shovel out, but God has a bigger shovel," meaning, we can't out-give God.



— **Pastor Raynard Huglen**  
Newfalden, Minnesota

# Sound Bites

Luther fought against what he saw as the two-sided coin of mammonism: ascetic flight from money and the acquisitive drive for it. His foundation for this battle was

**1** the great reversal of the gospel that a person's worth is not determined by what he or she does or does not possess, but rather by God's promise in Christ. Thus money is not the lord of life, but the gift of God for serving the neighbor and building up the community.

— *Carter Lindberg*

**2**

The world asks, "What does a man own?" Christ asks, "How does he use it?"

— *Andrew Murray*

**3**

There are two ways to get enough. One is to accumulate more and more. The other is to need less.

— *G. K. Chesterton*

**4**

As a rule, prayer is answered and funds come in, but if we are kept waiting, the spiritual blessing that is the outcome is far more precious than exemption from the trial.

— *Hudson Taylor*

The irreducible minimum of money management and stewardship is recognizing that God owns it all. If you accept that, then every spending decision is a spiritual decision. ... I'm using God's

**5**

resources.

**6**

**I think I'm learning to live with enough, but what I call enough is staggering lavishness to most of the world.**

— *Mark Buchanan*

# Is there danger in debt?

**D**ebt is certainly a common part of our society's modern way of life. The opportunity to "buy now and pay later" is offered for almost anything you can name. Just hand over the credit card. And that plastic seems to be easy to come by. How many applications for "pre-approved" cards

do you receive in your mailbox each week?

What should we think of this whole subject of consumer debt? Is all debt sin? Is credit for appreciating items different than debt for depreciating items?

Truthfully, not all share exactly the same perspective in answer to these questions. However, there are numerous spiritual consequences of indebtedness and credit buying. At the least, we as Christians should be aware of these and weigh them in our decisions over financial matters.

*Debt often demonstrates and fosters discontentment.*

First Timothy 6:8 urges, "Having food and clothing, let us be content." The affluence of our society has enabled us to enjoy much more than the basic necessities of life. What happens when you see something you would like, but just don't have enough money? It has become too easy to "put it on the card" at those times. When we are willing to borrow to purchase those things that are not even necessities, we show how spoiled we have become — discontent with God's provision and willing to do whatever we need to do to get what we want.

*Debt interferes with God's provision and robs Him of glory.*

Last week I was in a store checking out a particular item that we were considering purchasing. I walked away reminding myself of how important it was to wait to see if God wished to provide this item a different way. Just in the week since I was in that store we have been given two of them — to His glory! We have become convinced that God often wishes to provide for needs in ways that bring glory to Him if we will just make the need known to Him (pray) and then rest in contentment (wait).

*Debt steals opportunities for us and our children to grow in faith.*

A number of years ago one of our daughters expressed a desire for a new (different) bicycle. I asked if she had prayed about it, so she began to pray from that day. The next week I was approached by a man in the church who had no knowledge of our prayers. "Do you have any need for a bike?" he asked. I answered, "You are the answer to a little girl's prayers." We kept the bike as



—Pastor Rick Long  
Atonement Free Lutheran  
Arlington, Washington

a surprise until Christmas Day. After all the other gifts had been opened, I said to my daughter, "There is one more gift. The answer to your prayers is in the basement." Not only was she thrilled but her faith in a prayer-answering God was strengthened. How many opportunities do we miss to strengthen our children's faith by purchasing on credit what God wished to use as an occasion to demonstrate His power and goodness?

*Debt enables us to step around God's will and develop unhealthy independence.*

In 1985 we moved to the southeast United States just in time to experience the beginning of summer heat. The vehicle we had was without air conditioning. We just had to have a different vehicle with AC — and have it now! With that mentality we stepped into one of the biggest fiascos of our married years. We purchased — on credit — a vehicle that we literally began to regret the moment we had it out of the dealer's lot. Of course, our discontentment was compounded by my ignorance of cars. But all the frustration and lost dollars on that vehicle would have been spared if we had considered our lack of resources as an indication of God giving us His direction. By contrast, when we grow accustomed to credit buying, we can begin to feel as if there is never a need to consult God. The purchase is always a possibility as long as you haven't reached your limit. What a dangerous habit to develop.

*Debt often results in poor stewardship through impulse buying or consumption of resources by interest.*

It is a proven fact that credit card users tend to buy more than those who pay cash, and they tend to pay more for the items they do buy. There is a greater sense of the size of a purchase when we need to pull out our cash and count it dollar by dollar. The credit card, on the other hand, gives the false notion of unlimited resources, and a person can easily be less apt to compare prices and resist a purchase.

*Debt presumes on the future.*

James 4:13-14 says, "Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why you do not even know what will happen tomorrow.

What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." Proverbs 27:1 reads, "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth."

Stepping into debt is based on the assumption that we will have adequate resources over the term of the contract with which to meet our obligation, in addition to meeting our other financial responsibilities. Do we know that we will have the same level of income next year or next week that we have today?



*Debt prevents a person from being wholly available to God's changing of their life direction.*

How can a person who is weighed down with unnecessary debt answer God's call to leave his current employer and go to the mission field, if that call should come?

I began seminary with a man who sensed a call to ministry a little later in life when he already had a family. However, he had to drop out of school after his first year, not because of the responsibility of day-to-day living expenses but because of the weight of debt from the past. Living debt-free can help us to be free to respond to God's promptings for change — to move to a different location or to change employment or to serve Him in a new way and place.

*Debt removes barriers to harmful items.*

A general principle of finance all should acknowledge is that God has the ability to provide for the things that He wishes us to have. The corollary to this is: what God has not provided for (assuming we have made the right use of our resources) is not in His will for us to have. But purchasing items on credit can change all of that. All of a sudden, we can have the ability to go purchase the very things from which God was trying to protect us.

*Debt stifles resourcefulness.*

A previous congregation I served had hopes of building its first church. Plans were pretty lofty for the small group that we were, and so was the level of debt we were projecting. However, a time came when the congregation as a whole agreed that proceed-



ing without debt was the way to go. From that day forward, we saw new, creative ideas come forward that had never come to mind previously. When we commit ourselves to live within the means that God provides, He is freed to give His direction and inspiration.

*Debt damages God's reputation.*

I was saddened to learn many years ago that it is not uncommon for churches to default on their bank loans. How does it happen? A congregation gets a desire to have a beautiful, new facility. Funds are made available at a rate the congregation is sure it can handle. After all, it is assumed the congregation will grow with that new building. All of a sudden, key families experience job relocation, others go to a different church, and the income is not sufficient to keep up with the mortgage payments. Meanwhile, the watching world wonders, if God is so great why can't He provide for the needs of the church?

*Debt hinders the effective functioning of the Body of Christ.*

Because we live so isolated from one another in our modern world, we have sadly grown away from taking loving interest in one another's well-being in the way God intends. It is God's plan that one who has a legitimate need will receive assistance from another believer who has an abundance. In fact, God Himself allows needs within the Body to give us an opportunity to be drawn together around those needs.

*Debt can undermine the spirit of giving within a local congregation.*

It is exciting for a congregation to commit itself to going forward in ministry without indebtedness because then all have a mind and heart to watch to see how God will provide. Each can legitimately ask, "what portion of what God has entrusted to me is intended for this project?" By contrast, when the assumption is made that resources are not available and there must be a loan, people who are holding God's resources may never be challenged in such a way as to recognize God's direction for their stewardship.

People of God, let's break out of the secular mindset that doesn't even acknowledge that there is a God in the heavens who knows our needs and can meet everyone of them in His wise time and by His almighty power. Follow His direction through provision; make needs a matter of prayer; and use occasions of His provision for specific needs as an opportunity to give honor to Him and build the faith of those around you.



# Health and wealth gospel

— Pastor Kevin Garner  
Fox River Lutheran  
Norway, Illinois

On her program "Today with Marilyn," Marilyn Hickey looks into the camera with a smile on her face, and proclaims to her TV audience, "You can live in supernatural health and divine prosperity" (TBN, April 5, 2000). How? Simply by trusting Jesus Christ. Such claims are typical of "health and wealth" gospel or "prosperity" gospel evangelists who preach and teach that God intends for all believers to live healthy, wealthy lives in this world, and that only lack of faith keeps them from overcoming any emotional, physical or financial problem.

The prosperity gospel is very appealing (who wouldn't want God to make them rich and healthy?), but for several critical reasons, it is also very destructive to the cause of Christ.

Prosperity teaching glosses over many Scriptures that clearly warn us to expect trouble and persecution as believers. Texts such as "Endure hardship with us as a good

soldier" (II Timothy 2:3) and "Everyone who wants to live a godly life ... will be persecuted" (II Timothy 3:12) are conveniently ignored by the health and wealth teachers.

Prosperity teaching presumes that God wants each and every believer, at all times, to be rich and healthy. But if that were true, Paul would never have been whipped, beaten, stoned, shipwrecked or martyred. His thorn in the flesh (II Corinthians 12:7-10) proves that God wants more for us than 20/20 vision, cancer-free lungs, or fat bank accounts. God wants perseverance and He often allows hardship in our lives to produce it. If Jesus was "made perfect through suffering" (II Corinthians 12:7-10) why shouldn't we be?

Don't misunderstand. God still heals. He still causes some believers to prosper, but the health and wealth gospel forgets God's sovereignty and forgets that God heals and prospers whom He wants, when He wants, according to His will, not ours.

In a booklet he sends to new believers, Kenneth Copeland says, "You have the right to live free from sickness and disease!" The Bible says however, that God is obligated to no one, nor does He take orders from anybody (Job 41:11). First John 5:14 reminds us that God gives us only what He wills us to have, so no matter how much we pray, how many Bible verses and "positive confessions" we may quote, how much "seed faith" money we contribute to a particular ministry, God is not going to give us something that He does not want us to have.

## Why then does God heal and prosper some, and not others?

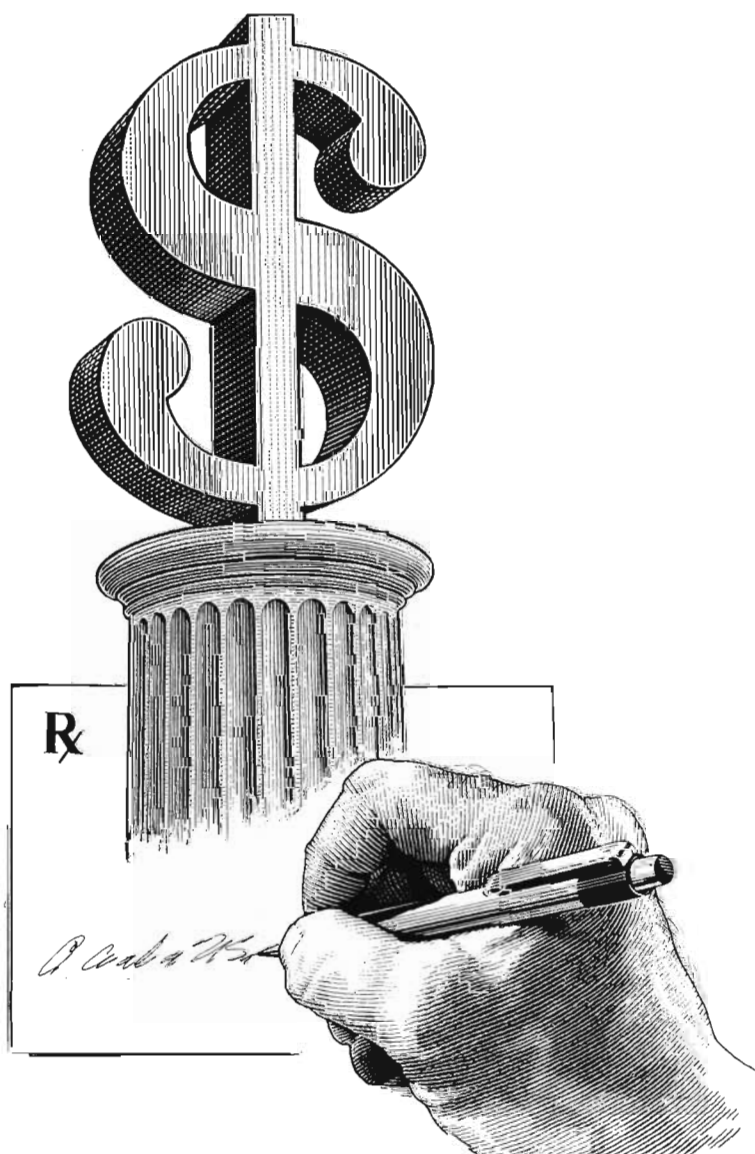
Scripture teaches that "hidden things belong to God" (Deuteronomy 29:29), so that is a question we cannot answer. God does not need us explaining His actions or apologizing for them. All He asks is that we trust Him, trust Him that He knows and does what is best for us individually, and that He is able to take any bad circumstance in our lives and use it for something good (Romans 8:28).

Prosperity teaching offers a wrong motive for serving God, focusing on what God can do for us, rather than what we can do for Him. We shouldn't serve God for what He can do for us. We should serve Him because it's the right thing to do and because He loved us enough to give His life

for ours.

Prosperity teaching is a false gospel because it does not have the universal applicability that the true gospel has. Just try to preach health and wealth in the Sudan where Christians are being slaughtered, or in Haiti where some of the world's poorest children go blind for lack of a 10 cent vitamin! The pure gospel, the good news that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for guilty sinners like you and me and rose again from the dead to guarantee us eternal life; that gospel can be preached anywhere, with eternal results.

Prosperity gospel teaching would not survive in America, or in America's churches, if believers truly knew the Scriptures and the God of the Bible. Don't be deceived. "Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you — guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit that lives in us" (II Timothy 1:14).





# God's faithful provision

— Iris Myron  
*Living Faith Lutheran  
Tucson, Arizona*

**L**ooking back over my life of four-score, it is with great praise for my Savior who faithfully and lovingly guided me, often when I was not even aware of it. Now I can see that indeed God knew from the beginning that He had plans for me, as Jeremiah 29:11 promises.

My husband and I both grew up in the Midwest and experienced farm life as teenagers during the depression. We learned early that it took hard work to make a living. I remember needing a pair of shoes. Eggs sold for 10 cents a dozen and my shoes cost \$2.98. That meant a day's work for 360 hens!

Throughout my childhood I knew God was real, but didn't understand that I could have assurance of salvation. I left home to teach country school and for my fourth year

I moved to a Norwegian community in southern Minnesota. I jokingly told my family I was out to look for a tall, blonde Norwegian farmer. God was working and I did not understand it at the time. Later that fall, I met a young man who was the Sunday school superintendent. He heard I could play the piano and asked if I would help him with the Christmas program. I did.

Our first date was to a special meeting in a nearby church where Pastor A.W. Knock was speaking. After the service I spoke with him and for the first time I saw the light of assurance of salvation. Eighteen months later I married that farmer. I wonder if the Lord sat back and smiled.

Our first small farm was rented and we started with the help of a loan. My husband's spiritual leadership established daily devotions, which became the foundation of our home all through life. Later God blessed us with the opportunity to purchase our own farm where we built up a dairy herd. God blessed us with good health, two children and no significant disasters or accidents. As our son indicated no desire to continue in farming, we chose to sell all the cattle and equipment. The timing was perfect, although at the time we did not know what the future held for us.

In a few months, God led us to nursing homes in Nebraska where we became administrators. I went back to school for a degree in occupational therapy, and my husband took training in gerontology and became administrator of a retirement home in Southfield, Michigan. We worked in our respective fields for twelve years before God led us to Tucson, Arizona for our retirement. Along with the continued blessings of good health and strength, He provided for us financially. We tithed, and enjoyed being active in congregations wherever we lived. One special joy was being able to help in the beginning of Living Faith Free Lutheran in Tucson.

Six years ago, the Lord called my husband home after 53 years of marriage. Because of his hard work and wisdom, richly blessed of God, I am able to maintain my home and help support the Lord's work. Phillipians 4:19 is certainly true: "My God shall supply all your needs according to His glorious riches."

His provision for my earthly needs is only part of His plan. The best is yet to come! John 14:1-3 describes the wonderful home He is preparing for me and for all who love Him.

I look forward to that day, don't you?



**Be a spendthrift in love!**

Love is the one treasure that multiplies by division:

it is the one gift that grows bigger

the more you take from it.

It is the one business in which it pays

to be an absolute spendthrift;

give it away, throw it away, splash it over,

empty your pockets, shake the basket,

turn the glass upside down,

and tomorrow you will have more than ever.

— taken from the Newsletter

*First Lutheran, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma*

*March 31, 2000*



# Trading consumerism for contentment

Excerpted from "More to Life Than Having It All," by Bob Welch, (Harvest House, 1992).

**M**oney and things, we've come to believe, create a sort of plexiglass shield able to deflect bullets of the real world. Some learn the hard way that it just isn't so. Yet we live in a consumer-oriented world where those who provide and promote products deperately want us to keep believing the myth. They fuel their own empty dreams by making sure that our dreams are found in the things they sell. The key to their contentment is making sure we don't find ours. And even if we become satisfied with a product, Madison Avenue is after us again, luring us with something new-and-improved, an added option, a larger model — anything to make us want more than we already have, or at least want what our neighbor has.

Madison Avenue loves to see discontent, covetousness, worry, comparison and blind ambition — all those things that contradict God's values. People buy when they're discontent, envious, afraid, left out and obsessed with power or prestige. The materialism rampant in the baby-boom generation is not so much a sign of success but of desperation. Many have traded the pursuit of happiness for the purchase of happiness.

In determining how we should approach spending and owning, we need to ask our-

selves some questions. Will buying this item dilute time with family, friends, God? Can I realistically afford it? Why am I purchasing it? Am I buying something to keep pace with those around me? Because I have an unfulfilled need elsewhere in my life and, subconsciously, I'm hoping this will compensate?

Jesus can fill that need — continually. Materialism only temporarily quenches our thirst for fulfillment. Speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:13-14).

The world's treasures are temporal; God's are eternal. "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19).

When our treasures are in heaven, when we have a sense of life as eternal, we don't have to "grab-for-all-the-gusto." We're free from the cultural tug to conform ... free to live more simple, other-oriented lives. That doesn't mean selling all that we own. It means owning without treasuring, possessing without being possessed. It means being content with what we have.



Starbuck, Minnesota — New members at Minnewaska Lutheran along with Pastor Todd Klemme.



Bagley, Minnesota — The new members at Grace Lutheran. Pastor Lyle Twite serves the congregation.



Upsala, Minnesota — New members at Word of Life Lutheran with Pastor Jon Benson.



Edinburg, North Dakota — New members at Grace Lutheran with Pastor Mark Antal.

## Mohagens leave for Alaska in June

Lay pastor Henry Mohagen and his wife Linda have accepted the call to South Naknek, Alaska and plan to leave on June 20, 2000. They will conclude their ministry in Inherred Lutheran Church in rural Bottineau, North Dakota as well as their work as rural mail carriers. The Mohagens have worked as short-term missionaries in Alaska with Pastor Tom Olson on different occasions in recent years.

They will live in the parsonage in South Naknek, a village of about 120 people. They hope to reach out to other villages as well. The church they will serve was built years ago by missionary Oscar Brown. People recall him with fondness when they say, "I remember Oscar's big hands reaching out and taking me by the shoulders saying, 'You need to be in Sunday school.'" The Mohagens also will minister in Naknek while Pastor Olson and his family are gone during July and August. This summer's projects include working with volunteer crews coming to build a hanger to house the Cessna 150 plane used in the mission work.

"We are looking forward to our call to South Naknek and the oppor-



tunities and challenges it will bring," wrote Pastor Mohagen. He added, "We ask that you remember us in prayer as we follow the call of God to this remote area." The call is a part-time one and the Mohagens will seek some outside work for their support.

Because of previous responsibilities, the Mohagens plan to return to the "lower forty-eight" in October through November. They will also plan to visit as many congregations as possible to share about the mission work in Alaska. Their address will be Box 70084, South Naknek, Alaska, 99670.



## Missions committee approves first AFLC missionaries to Portugal

On April 10, 2000 the AFLC World Missions Committee voted unanimously "that the David Nelsons be reassigned to Portugal anytime after the Brazil schools' second semester. Final arrangements and timing to be coordinated with the church in Portugal and the World Missions Committee." The resolution sends the AFLC's first missionary family to the country of Portugal.

During an earlier meeting the world missions committee received a written request from Pastor Artur Villares on behalf of the Lutheran Church of Portugal requesting an American missionary to be placed in Portugal to assist in the establishment of other Lutheran congregations in the country. Missionary David Nelson had also previously expressed a concern and interest in an AFLC mission outreach into Portugal. World Missions Director Eugene Enderlein reported, "The committee discussed its concern that the ministry of the AFLC in Brazil would be strengthened and go forward, seeing the need for additional missionaries to serve in the task of church planting and training of Brazilian workers. They expressed

## Easter in Alaska

Early Easter Sunday I went down to Paul's one room tin shack to pick up Peter for our community Easter services. He had been drinking and I couldn't wake him. However, Paul was up and greeted me.

Paul is a Korean War veteran and has been a part of our town for decades. He is a master woodworker and boat builder by profession. His years of drinking have destroyed his family, career and body. His tin shack is surprisingly neat. It's finished in plywood and chip board. The simple furnishings are a bed, table and two chairs, couch, a small counter top and barrel stove. He has no electricity but uses lanterns and a battery-operated radio.

Paul faithfully listens to KAKN,

our Christian station and loves to hear Bible studies and "Unshackled" the true-life radio dramas from Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago. These are stories of messed-up people just like Paul who have found Jesus and new life. Paul, himself needs a mighty, miraculous touch from God to be freed from the powerful grip of alcohol.

As I turned to leave the little cabin on that bright Easter morning, I noticed a well-worn Bible on the stand by Paul's bed. Paul sincerely wished me a happy Easter and assured me that even though he was messed up on the outside, he was clean on the inside. My heart groaned as I longed to see the power of God released to free

Paul from his bondage.

I will never forget this visit. It was almost like a "sunrise service" for me as I saw the sun pouring in that little cabin window, the passed out man on the couch, the warm fire cracking in the homemade stove and the worn Bible on the stand. But most of all I will remember the gnarled fingers of Paul shaking my hand as the worn-out soldier and fisherman respectfully wished me a blessed Easter.



— Pastor Tom Olson  
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**Pastor David and Sarah Nelson.**

the need to strengthen the Brazilian national leadership and many other issues related to the Nelsons not permanently returning to Brazil were discussed."

The committee also approved a visit to Portugal in May by Pastor David and Sarah Nelson along with their youngest son to meet the people at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Lisbon. While in the capital city, the Nelsons will look for housing and other preparations for their expected move sometime in late fall of 2000. Upon their return, they will pack for their departure on June 7 for Campo Mourão, Brazil. Pastor Nelson will continue his teaching at the Bible school until the November graduation.

Pray for the provision of a New Testament teacher for SEMEAR in Brazil.



## A Free Lutheran Portuguese visits AFLC-Brazil

Five hundred years ago a group of Portuguese caravels and sailors reached Brazil. With them there was the Catholic church and the preaching of the Counter Reformation. Only several centuries later did the true gospel reach this big land. In the nineteenth century, several waves of German emigrants gave origin to the other Lutheran churches that exist in this country, mainly working with Brazilians of German descent. Then, in the sixties, appeared a Lutheran pietistic mission work in Brazil among the Brazilians, independently of their national origin. The gospel in its full strength. So it appeared the Associação das Igrejas Luteranas Livres do Brasil - AILLB (Association of Free Lutheran Churches in Brazil). This church, a product of AFLC's mission vision, through the pioneering work of Missionary John Abel, completed now its 34th anniversary. And so, invited by Missionary Connelly Dyrud, I spent with my Brazilian brothers and sisters their moment of joy in the Lord.

What now I recall from those days spent with my Brazilian Free

Lutheran brothers is their love for Jesus and the gospel. Everything in their lives seems to live around the hope of the gospel flowing from their hearts and mouths. It was a moment of sharing the common faith that involved us, Brazilians, Americans and Portuguese during that annual conference. As I told them, when we, in Portugal, pray for our Brazilian brethren (like for our American, Mexican, Canadian and Indian brothers) I was not able till now to imagine the faces for whom we pray. Now, when I close my eyes, talking with the Lord, I can see the faces of my Brazilian brethren. May the Lord continue to bless the dedication of His people in Brazil, the lay people and the devoted national pastors and missionaries this church blessedly has.

I pray also for the continuing strengthen of this blessed fellowship around this AFLC family, so that many in the world could come to salvation in the Lord Jesus, till His coming.

—Rev. Artur Manuel Villares  
Free Lutheran Church of Portugal

## AFLC-India has new headquarters facilities

AFLC World Missions Director Eugene Enderlein made two visits to India in recent months to complete the reorganization of the ministry and purchase property with funds provided by an anonymous donor. A beautiful 10-room house is serving as the headquarters of the AFLCI. Located in Chirala, the headquarters are near to the center of the area served by the AFLCI. Chirala is a small city just a few miles from the Bay of Bengal. The top floor of the house has four rooms made into a guest apartment and



**Pictured are the pastors and families who attended the January Bible seminar in India led by AFLC professor Phil Haugen.**

the lower level was immediately modified to accommodate 20 orphans from the congregations. A young couple from the fellowship serves as house parents.

During the January visit, Pastor Enderlein purchased two lots adjoining the property, doubling the size which provides an adequate headquarters compound.

# Medicine Lake Lutheran has sister congregation in Latvia

The church bell rings in the high steeple of a beautiful stone church in Riga, Latvia calling people to worship. The pastor, Guntis Dislers, greets parishioners at the door as the service begins. As the congregation enters the sanctuary to the beautiful sound of the pipe organ, they prepare themselves for worship in quiet prayer and meditation.

This may be a familiar scene to many, but for the people in Riga, it is new, wonderful and exciting! These people grew up in a Communist country experiencing 50 years of state atheism. Their freedom to worship publicly was interrupted from 1941-1991, during the occupation of the Soviet Union. But now the spiritual leaders in the country have the freedom to preach to their people who are receptive to the Word of God. Many are excited and thankful to have the freedom to come into the house of the Lord.

Cross Lutheran Church began in 1996 with Guntis Dislers as their pastor. The building they meet in for services was used as a storage building during the communist regime. The roof leaked, the organ needed repair, and the building still has no heat.

Many of the members met Dr. Francis Monseth when he was on teaching and preaching assignments in Lutheran theological schools and churches in Eastern Europe. He was also the interim pastor at Medicine Lake Lutheran in Plymouth, Min-

nesota and he returned after each trip with reports of what the Lord was doing in Eastern Europe. That was the beginning of our relationship with Cross Lutheran. It seemed to be a natural window of opportunity for our churches to become sister congregations.

We here at Medicine Lake Lutheran have enjoyed getting to know more about these countries and the people who live there. Our Sunday school children have exchanged pictures, gifts and letters. Money was sent to help fix the organ and the leak in the roof. The congregation in Riga heard the sounds of the organ for the first time on Sunday, October, 9, 1999. It is reported they were so overwhelmed by the sound that they didn't want to sing, but just listen.

On Sunday, March 12, 2000, Medicine Lake Lutheran had the privilege of meeting Pastor and Mrs. Guntis Dislers. He shared during the Sunday school hour and gave the message during our worship service. We also enjoyed a wonderful fellowship time with them during a potluck dinner.

It is a blessing to know this congregation and hear of the spiritual growth and increasing number of people attending their church. Cross Lutheran started with twenty and now its membership is about two hundred with up to 300 often in attendance. Most of the membership growth has been through conver-

sions to Christ. Two prominent officials in the Latvian government are attending regularly.

We here at Medicine Lake remember our "sister" in Latvia at our worship services, prayer meetings and in personal devotions. We have been assured that Cross Lutheran also prays for us. What a joy and sweet union that is.



— Mary Jo Dyrud  
Medicine Lake Lutheran  
Plymouth, Minnesota

## Seminary internships to begin June 1, 2000

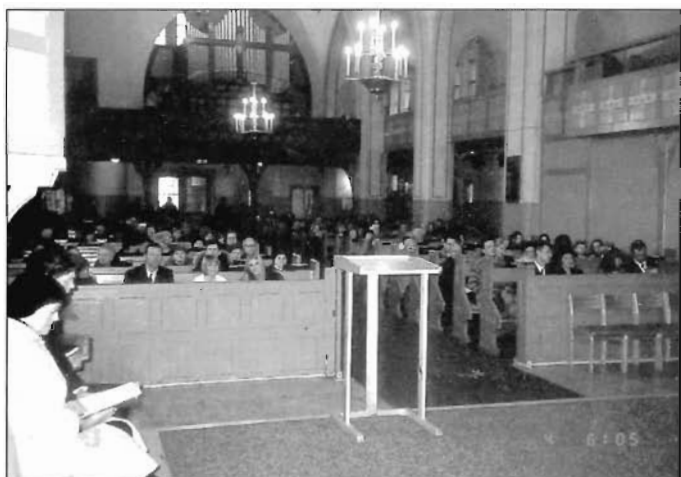
- Jon Bylkas to Trondhjem Lutheran, Volin, South Dakota, with Pastor Michael Klenner.

- Steve Carlson to Torden-skjold and Zion-Sarpsburg and Kvam Free Lutheran Parish, Dalton, Minnesota, with Pastor David Skordahl.

- Todd Erickson to Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran, Lakeville, Minnesota, with Pastor Allen Monson.

- Peter Ward to Westaker Free Lutheran, Newfolden, Minnesota, with Pastor Raynard Huglen.

- Philip Hooper to part-time internship ending on December 31, 2000 at Faith Free Lutheran, Shakopee, Minnesota, with Pastor Del Palmer.



Cross Lutheran in Riga, Latvia.



Some of the members at Cross Lutheran.

## AFLBS announces summer teams

**Ambassadors** — Dulcie Winkelmann, Fosston, Minnesota; Laura Melby, Badger, Minnesota; Nate Anderson, Ames, Iowa; Ryan Egan, Sioux Falls, South Dakota; and Cary Buhr, Milford, Illinois. This team will present concerts throughout the Midwest, Canada, Pacific Northwest, and Colorado.

**Cornerstone** — Jon Dahl, Borup, Minnesota; Jimmy Loken, Grafton, North Dakota; Tomasz Chmiel, Trinic-Kanada, Czech Republic; Michelle Satren, Bloomington, Minnesota; and Kara Crimmin, Oswego, Illinois. This team will assist seven congregations in Minnesota, North Dakota, and Illinois with vacation Bible school and is scheduled to counsel at four Bible camps.

**Northern Barnabas** — Sane Foley, Little Falls, Minnesota; Brian Grabowska, Humboldt, Minnesota; Elizabeth Kormanicki, Chester, Pennsylvania; and Tara Callander, Maple Grove, Minnesota. As with the other teams, the Northern Barnabas team begins their 11-week summer schedule on June 5. They will assist in eight congregations in the Midwest along with three Bible camps in North Dakota, Minnesota and Oklahoma.

**Southern Barnabas** — Kristen Agrimson, Maple Grove, Minnesota; Tim Borg, Cokato, Minnesota; and two more yet to be named. This team will work a week in congregations beginning in Metropolis, Illinois to Oklahoma, Missouri, Texas, Arizona and California.

**Majesty** — Seth Forness, Whapeton, North Dakota; Kevin Subbert, Onalaska, Wisconsin; Kristen Antal, Park River, North Dakota; Evija Plaveniece, Riga, Latvia; and Mary Solom, St. Paul, Minnesota. After beginning their summer ministry at Resurrection Free Lutheran in Beltrami, Minnesota and the AFLC Annual Conference in Osceola, Wisconsin, they travel west to help congregations in Montana, Washington and Oregon.

## Evangelism director to participate in Amsterdam 2000

Pastor James Rasmussen plans to join approximately 10,000 evangelists and church leaders from at least 185 countries and territories in Amsterdam during July 29 - August 6, 2000. The invited participants will gather at the Amsterdam RAI International Exhibition and Congress Centre in The Netherlands for teaching and discussion of every aspect of evangelism.

Amsterdam 2000 will give many evangelists and church leaders their first formal training in evangelism. Participants will learn how to improve their evangelistic presentations and strategies as well as their prayer life and family life. As a result, it is expected they will return to their home countries with a renewed zeal to implement practi-

cal and helpful ideas. The conference is expected to build a renewed emphasis on evangelism among churches worldwide. Speakers at the plenary sessions, seminars and workshops will address vital issues facing evangelists today. The conference is sponsored by Evangelist Billy Graham and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Similar conferences for evangelists were held in Amsterdam in 1983 and 1986.

The evangelism department of the AFLC encourages special donations to assist with Pastor Rasmussen's travel costs. Please designate as such to: AFLC Evangelism Department, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441.

## Campus Days attracts 130 prospective students

It was a full house on campus April 28-30. Pastor Kevin Garner of Marseilles, Illinois, spoke at the Friday evening service at the beginning of the evangelism rally.

Saturday morning sessions were led by students. Pastor Kirk Militzer of Moorhead, Minnesota, spoke at the

evening session.

Dean of Students Mark Johnson commented, "It's refreshing to see so many young people setting aside time to study the Bible. ... Our applications for next fall are ahead of last year, our enrollment looks to be real strong."

## AAL matching gifts received

The Free Lutheran Seminary and Bible School received \$100 and \$250 respectively from the 1999 fourth quarter Aid Association for Lutherans Member Gift-Matching Program. The total reflects AAL's matched portion of contributions received from members during that quarter. Annual gifts of \$25 to \$100 made by an AAL member to a participating Lutheran elementary or secondary school, college or seminary are matched dollar-for-dollar by AAL. Since the program's 1998 inception, AAL has given more than \$9 million to Lutheran schools nationwide through this program. For more information about the program, contact the seminary or Bible school or your local AAL representative.

**Lay Pastor Todd Peterson**, Mentor, Minnesota has resigned as pastor of Maple Bay Free Lutheran Church, effective at the end of April, 2000.

## Lutheran Brotherhood matching gifts received

The Free Lutheran Seminary received \$4,035 during the first quarter of 2000 from 46 gifts matched through Lutheran Brotherhood's Member Matching Gift program. During the same quarter, 79 gifts from Lutheran Brotherhood members provided a check of \$7,550 for the Association Free Lutheran Bible School. Lutheran Brotherhood matches dollar-for-dollar gifts of \$25-\$100 made by its members to Lutheran schools and outdoor ministries enrolled in the program.



## PEOPLE & PLACES

**DeKalb, Illinois** — Grace Lutheran hosted a Spring Bible Conference during May 7-10. Pastor Kevin Garner of Fox River Lutheran in Norway, Illinois was the guest speaker.

**Pastor Randy Nelson**, El Campo, Texas, accepted a call to serve Lisbon Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Lisbon, Illinois, which recently affiliated with the AFLC. He will begin ministry in his new parish in June.

**Pastor Alan Arneson**, Badger, Minnesota, accepted a call from Faith Lutheran Church, Ottawa, Illinois, and will begin his ministry there in August.

**Pastor Jim Ritter**, Bloomington, Minnesota has resigned as the senior pastor of Emmaus Lutheran where he has served for the last twelve years to accept the call to Living Water Christian Church in Parker, Colorado, beginning in July. Living Water is a two-year-old congregation in the fastest growing county in the United States. Parker is a suburb of Denver. The young church meets currently in a gymnasium with about 140 people in attendance.

**Pastor Michael Zehnder**, Parker, Colorado has resigned as pastor of Living Water Christian Church where he has served since its beginning two years ago. He has accepted a position as Vice President of Worship Resources with Fellowship Ministries out of Tempe, Arizona. He and his family are moving to Gilbert, Arizona where he will also serve part-time at Calvary Lutheran in nearby Mesa.

**Dorothy Presteng**, Grafton, North Dakota, takes to heart the saying, "God gave me hands to work with, so I got to use them." At age 82, she hosted an open house on April 15, where friends and neighbors could meet for coffee fellowship and to purchase her homemade lefse and eight quilts. The money raised was \$659 and was sent to the Miriam Infant Home in Brazil.

**Pews available** — Fifty 20 foot long solid oak church pews, in good condition, are for sale. Contact Alan

Behm at 320-283-5120 or e-mail at mem-merc@runestone.net

**Andy Anderson**, Golden Valley, Minnesota, is the new AFLC bookkeeper. At age 60, he brings a wealth of experience from his auditing and bookkeeping jobs in North Dakota and in the Minneapolis area. He audited the AFLC books during the early years of the church body. His wife Karen is the World Missions secretary. He began his new work on May 15.

**Camrose, Alberta** — Nearly 400 people attended the closing worship service on April 9 of the 17th annual conference of the AFLC in Canada. The host congregation was Solid Rock Lutheran and Pastor Collin Hauch. Guest speakers dur-

ing the conference were Dr. Francis Monseth, FLS dean, and Pastor Mark Olson, Tioga, North Dakota. Officers elected were: Pastor Ken Wilsdon, vice president; Pastor Rob Lewis, secretary; and Pastor Kelly Henning to the coordinating committee. Pastor Gene Sundby continues to serve as president.

### Workshop on personal witnessing scheduled

A workshop on personal witnessing is scheduled from 1-3 p.m. on Wednesday, June 14 during the annual conference at the Association Retreat Center. It will be sponsored by the AFLC Evangelism Commission.

### AFLC Memorial Gifts March-April 2000

Department given to —  
In Memory of —

#### World Missions

Marie Hitterdal  
Ron Coughenour  
Gordon Lykken  
Edel Gast  
Clarence Quanbeck  
Ike R. Swenson  
Robert Ostrem  
Faye James  
Lloyd Lee

#### Home Missions

Don Ronning, Jr.  
Lloyd Lee  
Rev. Herbert Franz  
Sylvia Franz  
Lillian Bystol  
Andrew Krieger  
Molly Kennedy  
Faye James  
Harlyn Hendrickson  
Edith Salge

#### Evangelism

Edel Gast  
Rev. Herbert Franz  
Faye James  
Doran Lindsoe  
Dagne Faust  
Preston Jensen  
Don D. Ronning  
Jace Wiertzema

#### Youth Ministries

Albert Bartsch  
Faye James  
AFLBS  
Bob Kuchera  
Edel Gast  
Rev/Mrs. Herb Franz  
Erling Hoseth  
Carol James  
Faye James  
Marie Pederson  
Edith Hanson  
Mabel Rogne  
Alvin Thompson  
Norma Johnson  
Frank Oien  
Adolph Kordahl  
Clarence Quanbeck  
Blanch Christianson  
Alder Pederson

#### Vision 2004

Edith Salge  
Faye James  
Wesley Bring  
Amy Deyo  
Irene Wilken

#### AFLTS

Lorraine Christensen  
Wendell Nelson  
Faye James  
Rev/Mrs. Herb Franz  
General Fund  
Clarence Quanbeck  
Curt Haag  
Herman Holmwick  
Lloyd Lee  
Faye James

## We are supposed to lead

**I** was driving down the freeway. The plan was for me to follow the person in front of me. But then things happened, and I ended up in the lead. The trouble with that arrangement was I didn't know where we were supposed to go. It didn't take me too long to figure out this wasn't going to work, so I slowed down and let the other person take the lead again.

It is important to keep in mind who is supposed to be the leader.

When it comes to the area of finances, at times it appears that Christians have forgotten that we are not called to follow the world. We are to receive our direction from Christ as to how to operate when it comes to money. As we follow Him we are to be role models, showing others how it can and should be done.

We are to lead in the way we pay our bills. Sadly churches are considered by many to be poor credit risks. This is based on the tragic truth that a number of times churches have failed to cover their debts. The Bible says, "Give everyone what you owe him ... Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another" (Romans 13:7, 8, NIV).

When something is charged to our congregations or a service is rendered may the businesses of our communities have a confidence that they will promptly receive what they are owed. If we do not respond appropriately to what we owe, how can we expect them to respond positively to the message we want to share?

In setting budgets and determining how we are going to spend what God has given us, we do not look to the world for guidance. Yes, our neighbors may have certain things and be able to do this and that, but that does not mean we have to follow their lead. "But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that" (1 Timothy 6:8, NIV). That verse does not say exceptions are made if you live in a wealthy suburb or you have friends and relatives with an abundance of material goods.

You may say, "But most people with my level of education and experience make this much money? They can buy this and do that?" So what! Who cares what the world makes or is able to buy? We find contentment in what God provides. Our budgeting is determined by how He guides, not by the examples set

by secular organizations.

Some of the middle school youth of my congregation recently told me that a big issue — possibly the biggest issue — affecting how someone is viewed by others at school is how much money they have. The poor ones get looked down upon. The rich ones have an easy time making friends. That is how it is with adults as well, but in the church we are to march to the beat of a different drum.

James 2:3, 4 says, "If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'You stand there,' or, 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?"

Secular groups give special attention to "the big givers." But we are not to follow their lead. It was the poor widow who gave what she could, small though it was, who received special attention and praise from Jesus (Luke 21:1-4). The Lord also said, "But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret" (Matthew 6:3, 4, NIV). That is not how the world operates, but it is what we are called to do.

The world offers many role models as to how to raise funds, but we follow a different example. We pray. We trust God will provide us with what we need. We give people the opportunity to serve the Lord with what He has given them. We teach about being good managers of what God has provided. But we should be careful to not give people reason to see us as beggars and badgerers, constantly asking for money for God's work. We should demonstrate a confidence in God and a security that comes not from our wealth, but from our Lord.

One Sunday most of the churches in the city where I used to live had to cancel services because of the weather. At the next area ministers' meeting one pastor talked about how it was too bad — they missed an offering.

That is the world's way of thinking, not Christlike thinking. We missed an opportunity to worship. We missed a chance to tell people the good news of Jesus.

The world worries about making budget and increasing income, but we care most about real treasure: souls coming to Jesus.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

**"It is important to keep in mind who is supposed to be the leader."**

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## BUILDING THE BASE

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### Honest search

A requirement that must be considered in our search for truth is that essential element of authenticity in our search. The quest for truth is always the supreme search in human endeavor, and all human beings whether they acknowledge it or not, desire to know truth. The difficulty we have in our search are those inevitable presuppositions and assumptions which cloud our search.

The human search is not merely intellectual, philosophical, or evidential. These issues are certainly important, yet do not speak to the core of who we are. Our search is primarily existential. What I mean is to say that at the core of my heart and yours is a longing for love, meaning, significance, wonder, and security undergirded by that which is true. Truth is essential. No one would deny these longings as universal to human experience, however we must carefully consider how willing we are to discover the truth that fulfills them.

I am currently doing postgraduate work in philosophy and have had the opportunity to establish a friendship with a fellow student in one of my classes. Recently we spent about a half-hour discussing the Christian faith. My friend declares himself an agnostic, however, as in most cases, this is simply a smoke screen for atheism.

Near the end of the discussion the topic of the Resurrection came up. I asked him if he had ever considered whether the Resurrection

story was true or not. I further suggested that if indeed Christ rose from the dead, would that not validate His claim to be God Incarnate? He stated emphatically that he did not believe that Christ was resurrected. He did, however, agree that if the Resurrection was legitimate than he would have to affirm that Jesus was who He claimed to be.

I then asked him if he would be open to look at the evidence. He said, "I am not interested in looking at any evidence. It simply did not happen." My surprise was apparent as I repeated my question emphatically. He reiterated, "Not interested."

Do you see what he was saying? His search was not an open search, but a search that would only allow views that met with his presupposition of atheism. Before I can really search for truth, I must put aside assumptions that may prejudice my ability to find it.

Jesus was a master at bringing out the questioner's presuppositions. Did you ever notice that practically on every occasion, when Jesus was asked a question, He responded with a question? Take for example the time Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees who asked Him whether or not He was indeed the Messiah. Jesus suggests that He will answer their question, if they will answer one of His. Jesus then proceeds to ask them about John the Baptist. Was John from heaven or from men? The trap was sprung and they had been had by the Master. If they answered that John was from men, the people would be outraged, as

they believed John to be a prophet. If they answered from God, they would have to accept Jesus because John pointed to Him. They finally answered, "We don't know." Jesus, true to His bargain, says, "Neither will I answer you." The problem for the Pharisees was not in their question, but in their motives.

One final example comes from the story of Job. He had lost everything: family, possessions, health, and there he sat covered in boils. Job needed answers. His theology was in ruins. His friends tortured him with their arrogant assumptions. He was truly a man in agony. Job demands that God explain Himself. Finally He comes to Job, and proceeds to ask him a battery of questions — sixty-four in all; no answers, just questions.

Finally the questioning ends. Job responds, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees Thee; therefore I retract and I repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5, 6). You see, Job thought he needed answers, but what he needed was God. Please don't misunderstand my point, Christians need to know what and why they believe. Our deficiency in this regard has harmed the cause of Christ to a great extent, but the problems we face are not simply intellectual. They are existential. I don't need answers nearly so much as I need to ask the right questions. The answers are not found in an idea, but in a Person.

— Rick Tollefson  
Helmar Lutheran  
Newark, Illinois