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LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

FLY
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THE REAL JESUS

BY PASTOR TOM PARRISH

Who is Jesus? This seems like a simple question, and it was in 1955. But today this question causes people to react with confusion, and results in misinformation and intentional manipulation. Since the 1960s, modern society has been working overtime to create a Jesus of its own imagination. A Jesus who champions personal causes and holds political views. A Jesus who is weak, anemic, and welcomes anyone no matter what they believe or espouse.

Think about the many versions of Jesus created in recent times: the all-roads-lead-to-heaven Jesus, a socialist Jesus, a LGBTQ Jesus, an I'm-okay-you're-okay Jesus, the grace-alone Jesus, the great teacher Jesus, the fictional Jesus of the media. We could go on and on. It seems that everyone has their own version and Jesus' name is used frequently but in all the wrong ways.

What does the Bible teach about Jesus? The Apostle Paul writes:

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he

might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by his blood on the cross" (Colossians 1:15-20).

This is the real Jesus. The one we can trust, depend on, seek, serve, and witness about. This Jesus is the answer to every human situation and need. Notice in these words from Colossians that the real Jesus desires "that in everything he might be preeminent." Preeminent means having paramount rank, dignity, and importance. In other words Jesus desires to be supreme over the church, government, schools, hospitals, colleges, politics, and each and every personal life.

Colossians 1:15-20 is the paramount statement regarding the real Jesus. Every Christian home should have these verses hung on a wall. And every believer should mark these words upon their hearts, which in turn will dictate their actions and reactions, whether in thought or deed.

The world needs the real Jesus, and those who trust in Him are His voice of reality.

Parrish, Mendota Heights, Minn., operates Stepping Into Eternity Ministries, which develops discipleship materials and seminars (toeternity.org).

If you young fellows were wise, the devil couldn't do anything to you, but since you aren't wise, you need us who are old.

—Martin Luther

Really, a young Atheist cannot guard his faith too carefully. Dangers lie in wait for him on every side.

—C.S. Lewis

Christian Youth, I need to ask why you sit in the padded pews of your fathers while all around the darkness takes your cities and your friends.

—Andrew Strom

How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life you will have been all of these.

—George Washington Carver

I have met so many young people who do not see the church as relevant and do not consider the Bible a real book of history that can be trusted.

—Ken Ham

BY MOLLY BARSNESS

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hinking back to our week at FLY Beyond, I believe the teaching will have a massive impact on my work with the youth group I serve.

We spent time in large group sessions, small breakout groups, and time together with our brothers and sisters in Christ. The main focus of the week was the first eight verses of Romans 12. Throughout the week we were shown the importance of keeping our focus on Jesus and what He has done for us. We had sessions on personal devotions, the Early Church, philosophy and worldview, Islam and Christianity, praise and worship, being Christians in this culture, communicating Scripture, our spiritual gifts, servant leadership, living the baptized life, and short-term missions. It was a lot to take in in a few short days, but it was so worth it.

I learned quite a bit, but I think that the biggest thing that I will walk away with as a leader came from our bonus leader session with Tim Barnett of Stand to Reason. In our leader session he presented the idea that our students need to be trained, not taught. He focused on Ephesians 6:12: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over the present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” There is a battle being waged for the souls of our youth, and they need to be trained to fight. We can give our students knowledge through teaching, but that teaching should be followed up by exposing them to the challenges that may be presented by their school instructors, other students, or the world at large. Before, during, and after that exposure, Christian leaders need to be there for them, helping them think through their answers, encouraging them, and nurturing their wounds.

We need to engage our youth! Barnett explained that students are “disengaging from the church because they were never engaged by the church.” But in fact, we are commanded by Jesus to use our minds. Think of Jesus’s words in Matthew 22:37-38: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment.”

I was reminded during these sessions that

leaders like me need to be training up students to thrive when faced with arguments against Christianity—not just giving them tools to survive. We should be supplying the answers for the big questions that get asked: Where did we come from? Why are we here? Why do bad things happen to good people? And we need to remember that there is so much more than the “what” to believe in, but the “why,” as well. As the Apostle Peter wrote, “But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame” (1 Peter 3:15-16). It may seem easy to supply the answers, but we need to practice our responses as well, so that we can become more familiar and comfortable with keeping our cool and answering with gentleness and respect.

Our youth group has invited speakers from our congregations to come and talk to us about serving Jesus where they are. The idea is that no matter where God calls you, you are there for a purpose. No matter where that is, He can and will use you to make an impact on the Kingdom for Him.

My prayer is that my students will see the importance of being prepared for battle in their everyday lives. And I pray that they can be prepared and used by God whether they have formal training or not, and whether they are called overseas or not.

The week at FLY Beyond has helped to prepare me better for follow-up with my students. It supplied me with many ideas and resources. But most importantly, it has refocused my sight on Jesus, on His Kingdom, and on my role as a part of the body. To be completely honest, I went into FLY Beyond with a poor overall attitude brought on by a number of different things. From Monday night through Friday morning God was constantly reminding me to keep my eyes fixed on what matters most: His Kingdom.

Barsness, a 2006 graduate of AFLBS, serves as the youth director at Hauge and Emmanuel Lutheran churches, Kenyon, Minn.

A young man with short brown hair and red-rimmed glasses is shown in profile, looking down at an open Bible he is holding with both hands. He is wearing a light grey t-shirt. The background is a blurred classroom with other students and wooden paneling. The text 'FLY BEYOND ONE YOUTH GROUP' is overlaid in the center, with 'FLY' in white, 'BEYOND' in bold black, and 'ONE YOUTH GROUP' in white with three white chevrons pointing to the right.

FLY
BEYOND
ONE YOUTH GROUP >>>

BY SARAH BENRUD

I had been to FLY Beyond twice before—this was my third time this summer—and I had never heard a speaker like Idha Jaszczak.

After Idha was introduced to our group, she ran up to the front, eager to speak and so full of energy. Idha grew up in Indonesia in an Islamic home. She described the Islamic faith, what they practice, and how it is different from Christianity. I thought it was so cool to hear her story because she had grown up with a completely different faith than what she embraces now. A fair amount of those of us who attended FLY Beyond grew up in or are growing up in a Christian home, so the Christian faith is all we have known. But Idha grew up in an Islamic home, and converted to Christianity not by the help or will of her family, but by the will and calling of God.

Idha loves her family. Imagine how hard it would be to tell them that she didn't believe what they believed anymore. Her parents were probably heartbroken, angry, and confused. I would bet that Idha was a little scared and confused, as well. But she had hope and a God whom she trusted to guide her through this new journey. Idha gave up her home, her family, and everything that was familiar for God. She took the ultimate leap of faith to follow Him.

As a senior in high school I was a part of a Postsecondary Enrollment Option (PSEO) program, which meant that I attended college classes. I lost out on a lot of my high school friendships because of this decision. When I think about it now, I wonder if I really missed out on anything. I didn't agree with a lot of the things my peers were doing. As I think about it, there was no gain. This example is nothing compared to the decision that Idha made, but in listening to her it made me realize that my decision to enroll in PSEO was a good one. Through this decision, God helped me abstain from wrong or sinful behavior. And I was able to have more time to spend with my family, be in God's Word, and build relationships which might not have been as strong beforehand.

At the time I was frustrated and hurt because some people treated me as though I was a completely different person, that I didn't matter, or that I didn't care about them anymore. I did change throughout the experience, but I was able to appreciate the things I had so much more than I ever had before. And I was able to grow up and experience college classes and earn credit. In thinking about it now, God had a plan for me through this situation. I'm extremely thankful for that opportunity. Idha reminded me countless times that Christ is enough for me and that He is all I need.

Idha inspires me to be on fire for Christ. She wants us to realize how lucky we are to be in a place where we are able to learn and worship God freely. I want to have the same fire and passion that Idha has to spread the Word of God to other people. Paul writes in Romans 15:5-6, "May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." I came across that verse not too long ago and when I read it I thought of Idha. In a struggling world there needs to be more people like Idha who strive to serve the Father each and every day with a loud and encouraging voice, so hopefully one day all will serve Him and be just as on fire as Idha.

Benrud, a 2016 high school graduate, is a member of Emmanuel Lutheran, rural Kenyon, Minn.





BY TAYLOR HELLAND

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im Barnett of Stand to Reason spoke about being “A Christian in this Culture” at FLY Beyond. Barnett expounded upon this subject in multiple sessions, but there were two that stuck out the most to me: “Are Science and Faith Compatible?” and “If God, Why Evil?” In these two sessions we were given guidance on how to evangelize and instructions in defending our faith: apologetics. I felt as if I were reassured and being given a stronger foundation in my faith.

There were a ton of facts given during Barnett’s sessions. During the session of the compatibility of science and faith he said a line that has been stuck in my head ever since, “Faith is active trust based on evidence.” We do have evidence and that is the Bible and what Jesus Christ has done for us. The Bible even explains why the gospel was written (John 20:30-31). Barnett talked about the bias of modern scientists, from Albert Einstein to Stephen Hawking, who wrote, “There is a fundamental difference between religion, which is based on authority, and science which is based on observation and reason. Science will win because it works.” Yet Barnett pointed out that those same scientists believe in a theory that is impossible to prove—that over years of chemical combustions, something came from nothing. That pressure built up, and boom, there was a universe. If what these secular scientists say is true, and nothing was there in the beginning, then where does something come from? What comes from nothing is nothing.

Barnett’s defense of creation through God’s work was emphasized by explaining the unique balance of life on earth. If the sun was either just a little closer or just a little further away from earth, life could not exist. If Jupiter did not exist, the earth would probably have been destroyed by an asteroid. But its large gravitational pull has kept this from happening. Through these examples and many others, Barnett gave proof that the universe did not just come to be—it had to have a creator, and that creator is God.

During the session tackling the question of evil, Barnett began with a video of Stephen Fry, English comedian, actor and writer, annihilating God and questioning Him. He was asked, “If you were confronted by God at the pearly gates, what would you say?” His immediate response was, “I’ll say: bone cancer in children, what’s that about? How dare you create a world that is in such misery that is not our fault? It’s not right. It’s utterly, utterly evil. Why should I respect a capricious, mean-minded, stupid God who creates a world which is so full of injustice and pain?” It was an intense video, reflecting the outlook of many people around the world. But as Christians, we know that God created a perfect world. There is evil in this world because we brought it upon ourselves. This world of trial is what we deserve and so much more. We do not deserve a loving God, who is caring, patient, merciful, and full of grace. We deserve hell. But instead, Jesus Christ took away our eternal suffering that we did deserve so that we could be with our God in heaven.

FLY Beyond with Tim Barnett provided an experience like no other. You could see God working through him and firing others up about Jesus, just like he was. This time in God’s Word together as Christians and fellowshiping with other believers is something we need.

Helland, a senior in high school, is a member of Emmanuel Lutheran, rural Kenyon, Minn.



“THEREFORE I URGE YOU, BROTHERS, IN VIEW OF GOD’S MERCY, TO OFFER YOUR BODIES AS LIVING SACRIFICES, HOLY AND PLEASING TO GOD—THIS IS YOUR SPIRITUAL ACT OF WORSHIP. **DO NOT CONFORM** ANY LONGER TO THE PATTERN OF THIS WORLD, BUT **BE TRANSFORMED** BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND” (ROMANS 12:1-2, NIV).

BY PASTOR TIM CARLSON

If instant answers don’t come with one click, we become impatient.

What is a Christian to do? How can we be different from the world and thereby not conform to the pattern of sin? Every New Year, the long-established ritual of making resolutions ushers in mostly fruitless efforts to change oneself into a better person. We work hard and try harder. Self-help and determination, however, will not yield true, lasting change. If we are honest, we have to come to a place of helplessness and hopelessness. Romans 7:21-24 describes the condition of our hearts in this way: “So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am!”

Romans 12:1-2 provides a surprising plan of action, or non-action. God calls the Christian to do just one thing: **present himself before God**. Paul calls this act a presentation of a “living sacrifice” in Romans 12:1. In the Old Testament, sacrificial animals were put to death. The Christian living sacrifice, however, is allowed to live, but his old nature is slain over and over again as he daily presents himself to God in repentance and faith.

Every Christian knows the struggle he or she has with the sinful nature. God calls us to do one thing and one thing only: come to Him in repentance and present ourselves for his viewing. God knows our hearts, so He uses Scripture to change us from the inside out. This daily roll call involves listening to Him by prayerfully meditating on His Word. After a short confession of our true condition, it is time for Him to speak.

The words, “be transformed,” are not a call to action at all. They are a description of the mighty work of God in us. Through His Word comes a change in the heart and mind of a believer. God’s Word is not just facts and information. It is living and active (Hebrews 4:12). Paul shows us that unlike conformity—which works from the outside—transformation is real change that God brings about from the inside, renewing our minds and changing our wills. “For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose” writes Paul in Philippians 2:13.

We may not recognize how the process described in Romans 12:2 affects “the renewing of our minds.” The acts of memorizing Scripture, singing Scripture, and reading and thinking about Scripture seem like a passive answer to the question, “What is a Christian to do?” In reality, God’s Word is the sword of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:17). He will use that Word to perform surgery on our hearts and minds. This process is called sanctification and will be continued by the Lord as we continuously present ourselves before Him. Philippians 1:6 has a comforting promise: “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” This promise remains true even in the face of repeated failures on our part. Our job is simply to present ourselves.

Hello, Father. It’s me again. Save me from this body of sin and death! Thanks be to God through the Lord Jesus Christ! (Romans 7:24)

Carlson, who serves Bethel Free Lutheran, Grafton, N.D., led an evening session on this theme at FLY Beyond.

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ressure! The world is full of it. The attitudes of the world (people and their institutions)

pressure everyone to conform to accepted norms. Cowboys wear big hats, motorcyclists wear black leather, and ballerinas are clothed with tights and tutus. No one wears one white sock and one black sock. Unfortunately, the world’s attitude about worldly pleasures could lead to sin. The attitudes of, “I want it now so I will get it,” or, “I want more than I need,” lead to excess, with a continuous quest for self-fulfillment. The abuse of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and the language of cursing and racial slurs are the accepted practices of today. Anyone who saves sexual intimacy for marriage is nearly laughed out of the room. The size of restaurant meals and drinks followed by enormous, sugary desserts leads to gluttony and to health risks like diabetes and heart disease. Truth, as always, is either avoided or not to be believed. People’s words flow unchecked with no thought for their consequences, especially in the various forms of instant communication available today.



TRANSFORM
CONFORM



BY PASTOR MATTHEW BALLMANN

IN LOVE

I remember the conversation vividly. I was standing on the roof of a house we were decking, he was on the ground cutting plywood. Somehow we got on the topic of abortion. He was easily three times my age and hardened by years of strenuous work and unbound passions. As the conversation continued, I could see his face seething with anger under his peppered colored beard. The conversation ended with a verbal barrage of cuss words aimed at me and all who were pro-life. Our relationship was cold for the weeks following that conversation.

I would like to say that in the weeks and months to come I swayed him, but that didn't happen. What I can say is that through subsequent conversations and working side-by-side he allowed me to share my beliefs with him and challenge his beliefs. I sought to love him well and speak the truth of God's Word into his life on many topics, most importantly to what Christ had done on his behalf.

No doubt you can think back to many conversations, some good and some not, that you have had with both believers and unbelievers. Our communication with those around us is important. While Scripture has much to say on speaking the truth in love, I want to draw our attention to Ephesians 4:15 which says, "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ."

There are at least three principles in this passage on communicating as Christians, namely the content, the audience, and the means.

THE CONTENT

We are called to be truth speakers, people who open their mouths and share truth. What is truth? Broadly speaking, God's Word is truth and it is this Word that reveals both His holiness and grace. The center of God's Word, truth incarnate, is Jesus Christ (John 14:6). The command to speak truth is a call to share God's Word and allow Him to speak, convict, draw, save, and sanctify. To speak truth then is to ultimately point individuals to their sin before an all-powerful and righteous God, to the One who came to die that we might have life abundantly, and to live reliantly on the Spirit.

THE AUDIENCE

In the case of the Ephesians passage, the audience is our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ (see also vs. 25). In addition to this household of faith, I Peter 3:15 says that we are also to be ready to give an answer to those outside the household of faith. We are called to be truth speakers to those both inside and outside the household of faith (Ephesians 4:15).

THE MEANS

The means of our communication is to speak truth "in love" (vs. 15). What is love? Christian love is the giving of self for the ultimate good of those around us. Love is not primarily a feeling or an emotion, though it is not absent of these. Rather, it is an action, oriented toward a purpose. The truest and richest expression of this love is described in I John 4 as the sending of Jesus Christ into the world to lay down His life that we might have life in Him. We are called in that same chapter to live our lives in like manner, laying them down for those around us. Walking in love means to live in all humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love, and forgiving one another (Ephesians 4:1-3; Colossians 3:12-17). All of these characteristics describe a person who has been deeply shaped by the gospel. As we grow daily in our understanding of our great sinfulness and God's incredible love, we are humbled not just before God, but also before those around us. The means of communicating truth, then, is not in pride, arrogance, and self-righteousness, rather, through a gospel shaped, formed, and infused life.

Here are a few practical expressions of love lived out in our communication:

Listen and ask questions. Cliché but true, before anyone cares how much you know, they

need to know how much you care. Before speaking truth into people's lives, it is imperative that we have taken the time to carefully listen to them and learn their thought process, beliefs, and assumptions. In doing so, it not only provides us a greater credibility, but it also allows us to more articulately apply the truth of God's Word to their lives. Reminds me of the saying, "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him."

Speak boldly and unapologetically. Truth often hurts because it uncovers our failures and self-deceptions. Speaking truth can, even when accompanied with humility and respect for others, bring a response of harsh words and ill feelings. We must never back down in sharing truth nor apologize for what Scripture teaches.

Consider your environment and the timing. As Ecclesiastes rightly points out, there is a time for everything. Exercise discernment in knowing the who, when, and where of speaking truth. Indiscriminately making statements on Facebook, in large mixed groups, or in public settings can be unhelpful and unloving. Whether you are approaching people about sin in their lives, correcting a theological error, or condemning our culture, we should seek to be discerning to time and context.

Speak humbly and respectfully. Anytime we speak, especially as we represent God, our attitude should be marked by humility and respect for those around us. In today's world, with the amplification of our voice through technology, we must be extra careful not to be pulled into the fray of emotionally charged rhetoric. It should grieve our hearts when we hear men and women of faith, proclaiming truth, but doing so in arrogance and disrespect toward those around them.

In all of our communication, let us listen well, speak truth boldly, be discerning to our environment, and exercise a spirit of respect and humility. We are ambassadors of Christ, may we not take that lightly, but live as we have been called to speak truth in love.

Ballmann, who serves as assistant pastor at Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., spoke on this topic as an evening speaker at FLY Beyond.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

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or many growing up in the church, prayer has been a thing that has just been done. Prayers were said before meals, at church, or when you needed something. None of these are wrong in any way, but for a large number of Christians, this is the extent of prayer's function. Because of this nonchalant attitude, many teens seldom take time to intentionally pray, and if they do, it may often be for selfish gain or short, desperate cries during times of personal struggles. Not seeing instantaneous results, kids will often give up entirely on prayer, feeling that no one was listening to them. How do we teach these teens (and ourselves) how to pray as Jesus taught us? How do we transition prayer from a mindless act of self-orientated requests to honest cries as the children of God for our lives *and* the lives of others?

We need look no further

BY JOE LARSON

than the Word. Here we find two themes that lay the foundation of prayer's function and teach our youth about the power and purpose of prayer. These themes were expressed excellently by the 20th century theologian Ole Hallesby in his aptly-named book *Prayer* with two simple yet profound concepts: helplessness and faith.

To understand helplessness, look at the relationship between a mother and her infant son. This young one is unable to do anything to provide for himself, and depends entirely upon the mother's care. Yet we find that when the baby is in need, in his helplessness he does not even have the strength to formulate a request in words. Instead, he cries out with all of his might, knowing that his mother will hear and come to provide. In the same way, we find that in prayer it is not about the eloquence or detail of our prayer that brings about the working of the Lord, but the fact that He knows just how helpless we are.

As Jesus confounded His disciples in Mark 10:15 by teaching to them to receive the kingdom as children, we find that the more that we look at our own weakness and inability to save ourselves or change a situation, the more we begin to see how great our Father's mercy is and how much we truly need Him in every area of life. We are in such need, like helpless infants, that "we do not know what to pray for as we ought" yet we find comfort in the fact that "the Spirit himself inter-

cedes for us with groanings too deep for words" (Romans 8:26). This helplessness is what defines the purpose of prayer, as those who rely solely on the work of the Lord in all things bring before Him not only their own pleas, but the needs and concerns of those around them. To teach our teens about prayer, we must have them understand their helplessness in all things.

This helplessness is not hopelessness, as the infant son knows well that his mother will provide what he needs. He has faith in his mother, because of who she is: his provider and protector. We must remember that we serve a King who is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (Psalm 145:8). The Lord "is pleased to give [us] the kingdom" (Luke 12:32) because of who He is. Because the Lord has already shown His grace and made Himself known to us, we must simply open the door of our hearts and let Him in that His power might be displayed. By understanding that the Lord is faithful and will bring about what He wills to pass when we come





humbly before the throne and acknowledge our helplessness, we have faith that His power alone is what answers our prayers, not our striving. These answers may not be what we desire, but we also learn to understand that He knows far better than we do what is needed in every situation, and He will work to bring it about in His perfect timing. Teaching our youths that their prayers are heard and the Lord will answer according to His goodness is a necessity for developing their relationship with Him.

We may now understand prayer a bit more, but how do we communicate these truths to our youth? There are innumerable answers, but a few practical steps stand out to me. To start, model the helplessness and faith of prayer in your own life. Kids are very quick to note falsehood and will promptly scoff at someone who prays without knowing true need, seeing that the adult thinks little of their own praying. Learn to pray honestly when you are together and to set aside more time for prayer each day so that the kids can

understand that prayer isn't just a formality, it's a necessity.

Another step that can be used is to gather with other believers in prayer and intercession. I can think of no better opportunity for this than See You At The Pole. At 7 a.m. local time on Wednesday, Sept. 28, students from all around the globe will be gathering at their flagpoles, praying for their school, friends, families, churches, and communities. Everyone is welcome to come and pray as a united body of Christ. This year's theme, "We Cry Out," reflects the helplessness of our hearts and the faith we have in our Father's provision. By having students participate in this event, they can have their eyes opened to the needs and prayers of those all around them and can find inspiration to continue on day after day in honest prayer before the Lord.

Finally, if you long to see true prayer in your teens, point them to the cross. Here is found the basis of our cries: that we were helpless and lost, but at our most helpless God sent His only Son to

die for us that we might be free. This gift is without cost, and in faith we open our hearts and receive Him, becoming children of God. By this we all can find the purpose of prayer as beloved children coming before the merciful Father with our needs, and we can have confidence that His power, the same power that raised Christ from the dead, will be at work no matter the plea. Only beneath the cross will we find the true power of prayer and cry out as one: "Thy will be done, Lord."

Larson is a youth worker at St. Olaf Lutheran, Montgomery, Ill.



AFLBS at 50

More than 500 alumni and friends of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School gathered on the Plymouth, Minn., campus July 28-31 to celebrate the school's 50th anniversary. Events throughout the weekend offered guests an opportunity to return to their time as students, as well as a chance to interact with former classmates and faculty. The weekend event also raised more than \$135,000 toward scholarships for future AFLBS students.

Visitors began arriving on campus the evening of July 28, gathering for dinner and reuniting with friends. A full day of events began on Friday, July 29 with morning events that included a golf scramble, vacation Bible school and youth activities, and Bible classes and workshops. After lunch, recreational activities were provided for all ages, including sporting clays, disc golf, pony rides, face painting, and crafts. The day ended with a testimony service followed by a late-night praise and worship time.

Saturday's events began early with a children's run and a 5K run/walk for adults. Children participated in another day of VBS, and there were Bible classes and workshops taught by AFLBS faculty and guests. In the afternoon, alumni gathered with their classes for a short time before the evening gala event. Featured speaker was Wayne Pederson, AFLTS alumnus and president of Reach Global. Later, a gathering was held back on campus with live music.

The celebration concluded on Sunday with a closing worship service, with Pastor Josh Skogerboe speaking.





Current page, clockwise from top left: Sharon Burgau, and Pastor Tonnes and Mary Pollestad greeted visitors to the campus. Kids participated in a fun run on Saturday morning before a group of adults either ran or walked a 5k course near campus. Jonathan Strand (class of 1980) takes part in a class. On Friday night, visitors took part in a night of worship and testimonies. Wayne Pederson, president of Reach Global and an AFLTS alumnus, was the featured speaker during the gala dinner on Saturday evening. Sonja and Don Balmer react during a class taught by Pastor Robert Lee. Pastor Jerry Moan, AFLC Schools faculty, teaches a class on Friday morning. Opposite page: The AFLBS alumni choir, led by former music director Jerry Nelson, sang during Sunday's worship service. Faith and Elden Nelson, Prinsburg, Minn., worship.

Ambassador Publications releases fourth book in Heritage Series

Footprints of the Faithful

Fifty Years of the AFLC Mission in Brazil

From a primitive Brazilian frontier through western expansion and to the developing cities, God prepared the groundwork, provided workers to plant the seed, and brought about growth in Christ through the Word of God. Though 50 years of mission work have certainly brought challenges, unforeseen circumstances, grief and loss, there is cause for celebration as these historic accounts demonstrate God's hand, guiding, sustaining, and expanding the work of AFLC–Brazil to the present.

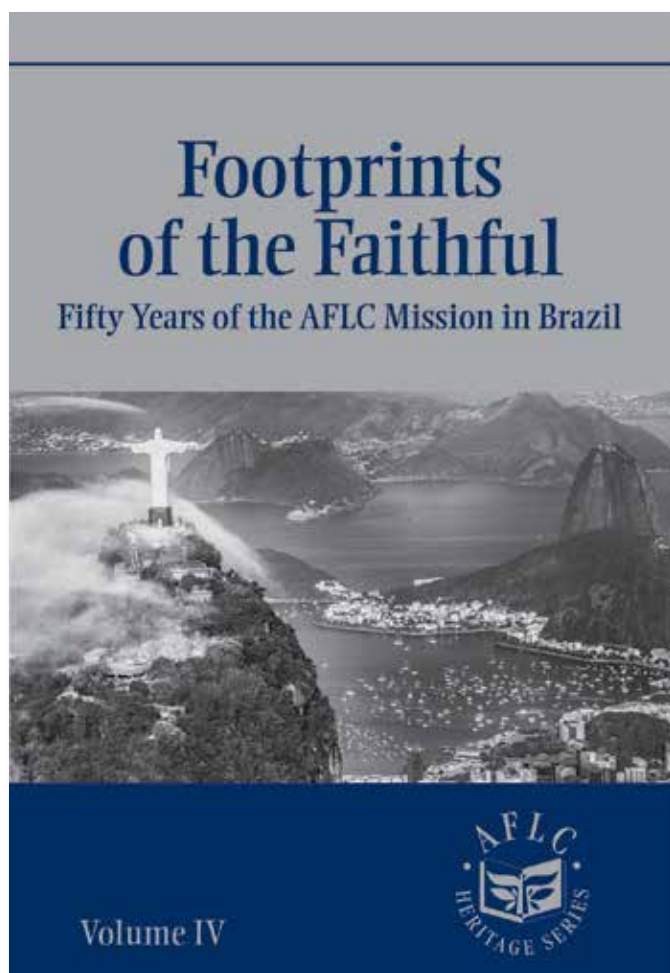
This new volume focuses on God's work during the early mission years through the lives of the first four AFLC missionary couples: Pastor John and Ruby Abel, Pastor Alvin and Frances Grothe, Pastor George and Helen Knapp, and Pastor Connely and Carolyn Dyrud. The book gives a chronological history and includes testimonies, maps, and photographs. This book is a history, but it is also multiple biographies—the intertwining of lives and ministries. Thanks to author Loiell Dyrud, who spent countless hours interviewing people, and years gathering, researching, compiling, writing, and editing to make this significant volume possible. May we be inspired by missionaries who not only answered the call to go to regions beyond, but also stayed and persevered through unknown paths, relying on the strength and grace which God provides.

Introductory Sale

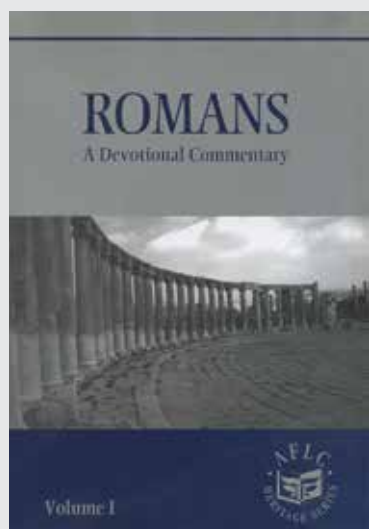
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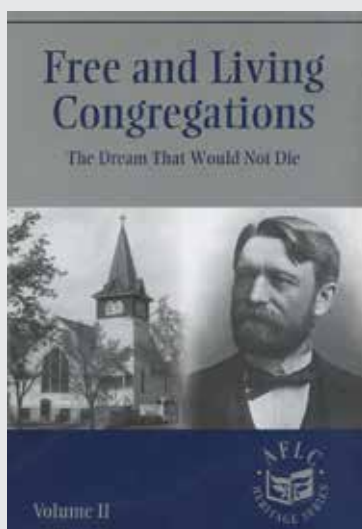


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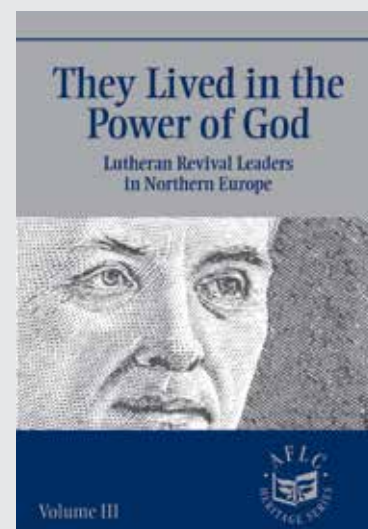
Romans
A Devotional Commentary

Volume II



Free and Living Congregations
The Dream That Would Not Die

Volume III



They Lived in the Power of God
Lutheran Revival Leaders
in Northern Europe

**WMF**WOMEN'S
MISSIONARY
FEDERATION**A**

fter going through
endless articles
from *The Lutheran
Ambassador* while

I was working
on *Footprints of the Faithful:
Fifty Years of the AFLC Mission
in Brazil*, I was struck by the
enormous contribution made
by the Women's Missionary
Federation toward the
mission effort of the AFLC.
Through their project support,
prayer support, and constant
encouragement, a strong bond
between missionaries and the
WMF has been forged.

One of the earliest examples
came in the spring of 1964 when
Alvin and Frances Grothe, our
second missionary couple to
Brazil, were spending a year
of mission preparation taking
courses at Lutheran Brethren
Schools in Fergus Falls, Minn.
(The Free Lutheran Seminary
had not yet opened.) They had
five children, and as the school
year wore on, money was
running low. Since Alvin was
often invited to speak at various
WMF meetings on weekends,
it was no surprise when he
received a letter one day from
the WMF. He expected it to
be another invitation to speak
at a rally. But when he opened
the letter, to his surprise, he
found a check for \$500 from
the National WMF and a note
stating, "This is a scholarship
from the WMF. Use it wherever
you need it most." He was so
shocked he told Frances they
couldn't accept such a large gift.
Her quick response was, "We
prayed for God to supply our
needs. ... quit your doubting and
thank Him for it." These kinds
of scholarships and "Missionary

FOR THE MISSIONARY

BY LOIELL DYRUD

for a Day" projects have been an invaluable help
through the years.

Later that same year, people were talking
about starting a Bible school in Brazil. At a fall
rally, the Eastern North Dakota WMF took up
an offering of more than \$900 and sent it to the
Mission Committee to begin the Bible school in
Brazil. What is so remarkable about this is that at
the time the AFLC had not yet started our own
Bible school in Plymouth, Minn.

Through the years whenever special projects
came up, the WMF was there to promote and
raise money for support. To name a few—during
the 1970s, the WMF raised money to pay the rent
for the Bible Bookstore in Campo Mourão, Brazil.
When the Miriam Infant Home was being built in
the 1990s, the WMF sponsored a "Brick by Brick"
fund-raiser that promoted the project by donating
"a dollar a brick," and raised several thousand
dollars. From the very beginning, the WMF sent
endless boxes of clothing to help clothe the needy.
Thus, it was not uncommon to see little children
in Brazilian Sunday schools wearing t-shirts with
the names of American high schools, such as the
red t-shirt I saw on a little girl in Curitiba that had
"Ottawa, Illinois" emblazoned across the front,
and the basketball schedule printed below.

But it was not only the financial gifts
and supplies that buoyed up the spirits of
our missionaries. There has been a constant
correspondence between WMFs and missionaries
through letters of encouragement, special
birthday cards and presents, and constant
reminders of daily prayer support from local
WMFs across the United States, undergirding
their efforts.

Through these efforts, our missionaries were
made to feel they were never alone. I have read
several letters from our missionaries to local
WMFs thanking them for sending such ordinary
things as sheets and pillowcases, breakfast
cereals, and even toothbrushes—things we take
for granted here. And by doing so, the WMF for
more than 50 years has provided a compassionate
touch that has helped allay the feelings of
separation and loneliness of those on the front
lines of our AFLC missions.

*Dyrud, a member of Our Saviour's Free Lutheran,
Thief River Falls, Minn., is the author of Footprints
of the Faithful, the fourth volume of the Heritage
Series, published this summer.*

A night of Lutheran liturgy

Members of the Dockcrew—friends of musician Jeremy Erickson, who passed away in 2012—presented a night of worship on July 29. Held in the AFLC Schools chapel, the worship service focused on “A Lutheran Liturgy,” Erickson’s last album, which was released following his death. Erickson’s goal was to reclaim the life-giving aspects of the worship service with which he grew up.

The evening worship closed out the events of the AFLBS 50th anniversary celebration, and bridged the gap to the beginning of the Summer Institute of Theology, which focused on content-driven worship.

Clockwise, from top: The congregation was encouraged to lay hands on each other. Jenny and Jo Isaac Erickson sing “Amen.” Members of the Dockcrew lead worship. Erickson’s family was present during the worship service. Jeremy Holm presents a spoken word piece he wrote. Pastor Josh Skogerboe recalls a time when Erickson encouraged him to swing big.



BY JUSTO PILLMAN

‘Y

ou are evangelicals. You cannot worship here. You cannot sleep here. You must leave!”

These were not the words the men on the church retreat were expecting or wanting to hear as we began the last evening session and then prepared to head to bed.

Each year, Polivio plans a weekend men’s retreat to a rural location, and 2016 was no different. This year we went to a very isolated community about a two-hour drive from Cuenca. Our travels took us up 10,000 feet, and then down a narrow, winding dirt road barely one lane wide, deep into a valley. The scenery on the way down was breathtaking, but I couldn’t fully appreciate it as I carefully navigated our 12-seater van full of men as we zigzagged down the side of the mountain.

Polivio is friends with Don Marcelo, president of the isolated community at the end of our drive. It consists of little more than a tiny school and 14 adobe homes scattered throughout the valley. Don Marcelo had offered us the school with its desks and concrete floor as a place to sleep, and he and his family would make the meals for us.

We arrived late Saturday morning and enjoyed the day hiking, getting to know the community, and having a volleyball tournament competing



WE MUST STAND FAST

against various teams from the community. It was during supper and the evening worship/teaching time that the conflict came to a head. Some were not happy with evangelicals visiting their community. First, they turned off the electricity to the school room we were using, and then they came out directly and told us to leave the building.

In II Timothy Paul gives us the rather unpleasant promise that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (3:12). Suffering of any kind is not pleasant, but as Christians we should assume that *if* we desire to live godly in Christ Jesus we will experience it. In reading this verse, the first question that comes to my mind is: Am I experiencing persecution for my faith? And secondly, how do I respond to that persecution?

Compared to what Paul and other Christians have experienced, the persecution we experienced was very minimal. Even so, there is always the question of how we will/should respond to persecution. In our situation, some tried to reason with the antagonists. Others explained the legal reasons why they had to let us stay. Others were fearful and drove home that very night, and

others simply said nothing. In the end, for most us at the men’s retreat, our response was to look for another place to spend the night. There certainly wasn’t the possibility of a hotel in the area, but Don Marcelo graciously offered his home and our suffering continued for the rest of the night as we tried to sleep in very cramped quarters.

Increasingly, we see the Church throughout the world experiencing persecution. How will we respond? In Scripture we see various responses. Jesus did not revile in return or threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges justly (I Peter 2:23). Peter also reminds us to resist the devil and that we should rejoice when faced with persecution (I Peter 1:6-7, 5:9). Lastly, Paul instructs us in II Thessalonians 2:15, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions”—my Spanish Bible says “doctrine”—“which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.”

Pillman is an AFLC missionary serving in Cuenca, Ecuador, with his family.

WATERS IN THE WILDERNESS

SEPTEMBER 9

"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

H

ow wonderfully the Lord deals with us. Through various means we are humbled and brought to the place where the Lord's will is our will.

At one time this was not true, for we sought to live mainly for ourselves and our own will was still uppermost. The Holy Spirit gently led us on and we found that we were no longer satisfied with this self life. Then came surrender and we experienced a new life. This was real living.

Oh the blessings that have come with the new life. We have freedom from the load of sin and guilt. We have the right to ask for wisdom, power and deliverance from fear. We have been given the courage to speak of Christ so that others too may know Him. We have the privilege of casting all of our cares on Him for He has invited us to do so. We have the release from tension about our material needs for He is faithful in supplying.

To live now means opportunities to serve with gladness. To live means sharing the Gospel of Christ's love and forgiveness of sin to souls that are lost. To live means faithfulness in carrying on the work of the church here on earth.

Then when the summons comes to leave our earthly home and to begin a new life in Heaven with Him, it will have been worth it all for we shall see Christ.

Marion Hellekson, now deceased, of Grafton, N.D., served for several years as administrative assistant to Pastor John Strand, first president of the AFLC.

Waters in the Wilderness is a daily devotional published by the AFLC Board of Parish Education in 1971 with Dr. Iver Olson, editor. All 365 meditations were contributed by AFLC members from many walks of life. "Here, they offer each a glass of cool and refreshing water each day to thirsting souls," wrote Olson in the preface. Reprinted by permission. The volume is out of print.

Members of the AFLC's Coordinating Committee approved a motion to accept **Holmes Lutheran Church**, Clarion, Iowa, onto the AFLC congregational roster. The congregation is served by pastor Richard Taylor.

Pastor Eric Christenson was ordained Aug. 28 at Amery Free Lutheran, Amery, Wis., with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, officiating.

Pastor William Goodman, Bemidji, Minn., announced his plans to retire in December. Goodman serves Trinity Free Lutheran, Bemidji.

Pastor Aaron Olson, a 2016 graduate of the Free Lutheran Seminary, was installed June 26 at Calvary Free Lutheran, Arlington, S.D., with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, officiating.

Pastor Martin Horn has resigned from his call to the Kenyon, Minn., Parish. Horn will pursue doctoral studies at Midwestern Baptist Seminary, Kansas City.

Pastor Jon Langness, a 2016 graduate of the Free Lutheran Seminary, was installed Aug. 21 at Abiding Word Lutheran, Deshler, Neb., with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, officiating.

Pastor Brandon Marschner, a 2016 graduate of the Free Lutheran Seminary, will be installed Oct. 9 at Bethel and Faith Free Lutheran, Brockton, Mont., with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, officiating.

Five 2016 graduates from the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, Plymouth, Minn., and a first-year student have accepted calls to serve as AFLC Home Missions Parish Builders in local congregations. They are:

- **Haley Thramer**, Roseau, Minn., and **Diana Alverson**, Osakis, Minn., will serve Immanuel Lutheran, Springfield, Mo., under Pastor Richard Ramsbacher.
- **Isaac Nelson**, Kandiyohi, Minn., **Chris Papillon**, Sheridan, Ill., and **Anisa Robinson**, Badger, Minn., will serve the Gateway Gathering, Mesa, Ariz., under Pastor Ryan Tonneson.
- **Phil Mundfrom**, Valley City, N.D., will serve Lutheran Church of Hope, Loveland, Colo., under Pastor Greg Schram.

Lutherans for Life will host their annual convention Oct. 21-22 in Bloomington, Minn. Visit lutheransforlife.org for more information.

Correction: Elected to the Eastern District for the Nominating Committee was Gary Yerger, Leesport, Pa. The elected nominee was misidentified in the last issue.



FLY

FREE
LUTHERAN
YOUTH

ILLUMINATE

BY PASTOR DAN HURNER

The darkest place in my home is the potato cellar in the basement. My family and I found out just how dark it can get in there a little more than a year ago when we hurried downstairs for shelter during a particularly bad storm. With no light fixtures or windows, any light that was in the little room was extinguished the moment we closed the door. As a remedy for the problem, I dug out my LED lantern from my camping supplies. With the flick of a switch, light flooded into every corner of the room.

It is no wonder I strongly resonate with the theme of FLY 2017, “Illuminate.” It’s not hard to set up an experiment that shows people how powerful light is. Take them into a room or a closet. Turn off the lights. Turn on a flashlight. Simple conclusion? No amount of darkness will ever be able to overcome the light that is given off by even the wimpiest of flashlights or meekest

of candles. Any attempt to measure darkness is really measuring the lack of light in a given space. But “the dark” is commonplace in our vocabulary. To be fair, it’s a lot easier to say, “It’s really dark outside,” than it is to say, “There is now a significant absence of light.”

Spiritually speaking, we don’t have to look very hard in Scripture to see the significance of light. Light was the first thing God made when He created the world (Genesis 1:3). God led the Israelites through the desert in a pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21). Paul tells Timothy that God dwells in unapproachable light; a statement that is echoed by John when he states that the city of God has no need of the sun for the glory of God (lightens the city) (II Timothy 6:16, Revelation 21:23).

And what is the ultimate form of darkness but the absence of God and His glory? It’s why God cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. The fall into sin was also a fall into darkness; so long as there is sin in our lives, we are not able to be in the presence of God without perishing.

Fortunately, a promise of light is given in Genesis 3:15. It’s a promise that is woven throughout the Old Testament: Someone who abides in light will come and live with us in the darkness. Someone who knows the light will come and do battle against the dark. Someone who embodies light will take our darkness upon Himself. All the darkness in the world will do its best to snuff out

the Light, but the Light will not be overcome.

In John 8:12, the theme verse for FLY 2017, Jesus proclaims that He is the Light we have been waiting for. This is one of Christ’s “I AM” statements. By making this statement, Jesus is telling people who have been looking for the light that God promised back in Genesis 3 to look no further. In the second half of verse 12, He gives a promise to those whose faith rests in Him: “Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

While our natural fallen nature would keep us from ever being able to abide in the presence of God, our status changes when our faith is in Jesus. With Him, we have an ally who is able to overcome the darkness that plagues us. With Jesus, we no longer have to stumble around in the dark looking for assurances. With Jesus, we are empowered to be His light in a world that is filled with darkness. Although that darkness seems great and overpowering, remember that it has been defeated by the Light of the World. With this in mind, please continue to pray in the days and weeks to come that God would continue His work in our hearts as we look forward to FLY 2017—Illuminate.

Hurner, who is the associate pastor of Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon, Minn., serves as second vice president of the FLY Committee.

Institute focuses on content-driven corporate worship

Attendees of the Free Lutheran Seminary's Summer Institute of Theology (SIT) this August focused on what makes a worship service: from the form and content of worship to a look at liturgy and servant leadership. Workshops focused on practical skills such as audio and video production, ensemble and choral music, and specific instruction on instruments such as guitar and piano. Guest speaker Chelsea Chen, a professional organist, spoke on worship styles and the need to bridge the division between "traditional" and "contemporary" services. Chen also gave an organ recital.



Entrusted: FLY Beyond digs into Romans 12

Meeting under the theme, "Entrusted," members of AFLC youth groups and their leaders attended the bi-yearly leadership training August 18-22 at the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis. Training focused on Romans 12:3-8, with morning sessions on the challenges of being a Christian in modern times, apologetics, reaching Muslims, and science and faith. Evening speakers (Pastor Tim Carlson, Adam McCarlson, Pastor Matthew Ballmann, and Pastor David Nelson) addressed the theme Scripture.



JULY MEMORIALS

AFLBS

Thorine Johnson
Ernest Nash
Ruth Claus
Kathy Solseth
Ileen Werkmeister
Elaine Seibel
Ron Lerud

AFLTS

Thorine Johnson
Edward Harms
Lee Hartel

Evangelism

Kathy Solseth

General Fund

Mel Fisher

Home Missions

Carol Mackey

Parish Education

Pastor John Strand

... in honor of

AFLBS

Pastor Mark Olson
Jean Nash

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-July 31, 2016

FUND	REC'D IN JULY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$24,101	\$203,453	\$208,981
Evangelism	14,977	72,857	86,564
Youth Ministries	4,716	62,412	67,537
Parish Education	9,097	88,865	71,688
Seminary	29,626	138,092	165,009
Bible School	46,561	302,252	295,185
Home Missions	35,355	258,913	249,750
World Missions	34,427	301,986	235,916
Personal Support	46,064	352,648	307,266
TOTALS	\$244,923	\$1,781,476	\$1,687,896

Contact the individual departments for further information about specific financial needs.

THE NEXT STEP

It's been a great summer for our AFLC family, especially for youth and young adults. The ministry of our Bible camps continues to thrive. Vacation Bible schools are also a familiar feature of summer life in the local congregations, and many of both the camps and VBS programs used teams from our Bible school. Your



Pastor Robert Lee

editor was privileged to participate in the "FLY Beyond" leadership training retreat at the Association Retreat Center in July, and the response of those who attended was positive plus. All of these ventures surely bore fruit as young believers were fed and challenged, and as new believers were welcomed into the family of God.

So what is the next step? Is there a next step? My four studies at the ARC focused on the Book of Acts, and chapter 14 provides us with an important glimpse into the first century missionary strategy of the Apostle Paul, a strategy that is still applicable to our 21st century evangelism and discipleship activities.

The first thing one might note is that Paul planted local congregations. In each of the cities where he ministered, sometimes quite briefly, he left a congregation behind. That's what a group of believers is, and that's what believers need. The local congregation is at the heart of God's plan for you and me. There is no such thing as a "lone ranger" Christian. One of my teachers once said that he has known some believers who withdrew from their congregations for the sake of their convictions and stayed home, but the next generation just stayed home.

After almost completing what is called his first missionary journey (Acts 13:4-14:28), Paul made what was surely a Spirit-led decision: to return to the cities where he had preached Christ "to strengthen the

souls" (14:22) of the new believers. "The New Testament knows nothing of 'hit-and-run' evangelism," wrote William LaSor, author and Old Testament professor. The interesting expression, "to strengthen the souls," means to firm up their spiritual lives, for he surely recognized the challenges that they faced in a society that was hostile to the gospel. Remember that these were the same cities from which Paul had been expelled, threatened, stoned and left for dead.

How were their souls to be strengthened? First of all, he exhorted them to continue in the faith (v. 22). The word "exhort" carries a sense of urgency, considering their perilous circumstances. Please note that it is *the* faith, which usually points us to the objective content of faith, what we believe, and in this context it is surely the body of central teachings that Paul and the apostles proclaimed. It is the Word that is truth, and the truth sets us free.

This strengthening message was brutally realistic. The road ahead would not be an easy one. These new Christians would face "many tribulations," and they should not be surprised when "those who live godly in Christ Jesus suffer persecutions" (II Timothy 3:12). But we can be "strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might" (Ephesians 6:10), as faithful believers from the early Church as well as from the persecuted Church of today have witnessed to us so clearly.

The new believers in the congregations established by Paul needed spiritual leaders to be strengthened in their souls, and so elders were "appointed" in every congregation (v. 23). This term does not mean an authoritative action by the apostle,

but rather includes the raising of hands, suggesting that these infant congregations were already voting. (See the comments on this word by Dr. Francis Monseth on page 62 in *Free and Living Congregations*). The fact is that elders/pastors were an integral part of God's plan for the Christian's growth in grace, and this is still true today.

Paul provided an example to strengthen the souls of these believers by leading them in prayer with fasting (v. 23), and then we encounter a striking expression in conclusion: he commended them to the Lord on whom they had believed. Richard Lenski's commentary on the Book of Acts states that the word "commended" means "to place at someone's side" (p. 587), perhaps recalling the words of Jesus on the cross (Luke 23:46). You belong to the Lord,

It is the Word that is truth, and the truth sets us free.

and He will take care of you in the days to come. Another writer says that the word means to deposit, as in a bank, which also suggested the believer's safety.

Our summer outreach activities are past, and now the missionary pattern of the Apostle Paul can be applied. There are souls to be strengthened, to be firmed up through the Word and in fellowship with the congregation, so that the blessings of summer might abound in the months to come. This is God's next step for us, and may He find us faithful.

something to share

TAKE AS PRESCRIBED

BY PEGGY BERGLUND

The question was always the same: “What medications are you taking?” And the answer was the same, too, as I produced a written list of each medication. Recently in frustration I announced that one of the allergy medications I was taking was not helping.

Then came the question, “How often do you take it?”

“As needed, and it doesn’t seem to do anything,” was my quick reply.

Looking over the top of her glasses, my physician informed me it was to be taken daily, to build up immunity in my body. I looked at the bottle, and yes, that’s exactly what it said, but for some reason I interpreted it “as needed.” Indeed it made a difference when I followed the directions. My body was more prepared to ward off the allergens that were attacking it.

It made me think of other prescriptions and how I may misinterpret their instructions.

The first one I checked on was Philippians 4:6-7: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present

your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” It was the “anything” and “everything” that I had been overlooking. In my mind I was sure I could handle the little situations that caused anxiety. My inclination was to wait until a situation was beyond my control and then resort to prayer.

Considering prayer, the second one I looked at was I Thessalonians 5:17, a very short verse, maybe that’s why it’s easy to miss: “Pray continually.” According to Vine’s Bible Dictionary it means to pray without omission, to bring everything to the Lord in prayer. There it was again, that interpretation of mine, “as needed,” instead of what the Word is inferring—that nothing is exempt; pray in every situation.

The third one that came to mind was clear, leaving no leeway for decisions about when, where, or how often to comply. Jesus clearly states: “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (John 15:12). It’s too easy to gravitate toward those who I know will return love to me. The love Jesus has for me and for you is unconditional,

not at all depending on our lovability. And He asks that of us, also, as He supplies the power to accomplish it (Romans 5:5).

Taking the prescribed allergy medication as directed has resulted in relief from the ongoing attack of pesky allergens. The reason we take medications is because we place a degree of confidence in the physician prescribing the medication, as well as the medication itself. As wonderful as some medications are, none of them will cause us to live forever. The prescriptions in God’s Word, on the other hand, have results that extend into eternity. It would seem, then, that we would be wise to follow the prescribed way to live as given in God’s Word, whether the command is to “put on the full armor,” “cast your burdens on the Lord,” or “seek first the Kingdom of God.” After all, He is the Great Physician and His remedies are eternal.

Berglund is a member of Amery Free Lutheran, Amery, Wis.