

LOVEJOYPEACE
PATIENCEKIND
NESSGOODNES
SFAITHFULNES
SGENTLENESS
SELFCONTROL

// Nothing great is created suddenly, any more than a bunch of grapes or a fig. If you tell me that you desire a fig, I answer you that there must be time. Let it first blossom, then bear fruit, then ripen." (Epictetus)

An epic journey takes time, as does the growth of true spiritual fruit in our lives (Gal 5:22-23). At the Place, we have embarked on this journey with our teachers, and the introduction - the final boarding details - to this lifelong walk is transcribed in this issue of commonplace from Randy's talk.

Our core value of orthodoxy leads us into teaching from the Bible. But to many, the use and authority of the Bible is a big question mark... after all wasn't it written by humans, put together by humans, and delivered to us by, yes... you guessed it, humans? And humans are kinda unpredictable at best, and corrupt at worst. What's more, aren't there contradictions and mistakes in it? These, and many more, are good questions, that need some serious thought, discussion, musings - and so to kick this off - I have inserted an article by Neil Livingstone from IVCF in Washington (with permission) and thrown in a dialogue from our website, answered by James Prette. All good stuff.

The ladies of the Place have stepped up to the plate by dominating this issue's People's Place. Topics range from rivers to forests, and from self-branding to friendship-handling. Come on guys, it's time to show what you know... treatises on 15th Century arts and crafts, would be a great start for instance.

Outside of this issue but ever affecting our world, are large events and campaigns, such as Make Poverty History, the Micah Challenge, Live8 concerts and the G8 Summit. In fact 2005 is an incredibly important year

as various international groups meet to determine the immediate future of the poor in terms of social justice, aid and sustainable development, debt reduction or nullification, fairer trade, transparent good government, gender inequality and violence, and global pandemics such as AIDS and malaria. These are issues at the very heart of the gospel. Over 3000 verses in the Bible talk about God's concern for the poor. We are called to do justly, love mercy and to walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8). We are to be clear about what God is (abundantly) clear about... So we need to educate ourselves about these issues in Canada and globally. We need to make choices that do not work against God's priorities. We need to give a voice to the voiceless, as well as feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Especially in our blessed land of plenty, we need to realise that we are here, and we can do what we like, only at the expense of the developing world.

So why all the preaching, editor? you may ask. Well, I guess it is because I had the opportunity and privilege to go to Ethiopia as representatives of our church, and see the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead there. More than that, I learnt so much from the people: from the trusting faith of the faithful, to the hope that shone out from those in the gravest of situations. The experience changes you I guess. David Collins from Canadian Food for the Hungry (CFHI) said once that 'it is through service that God transforms you.' This has been so true, and I am glad to report that Lambrick Park Church and the Place is being transformed by the partnership with CFHI, their Ethiopia counterparts and the village of Belo. We are committing sacrificially and with glad hearts to this sustainable development opportunity and look forward to our future together.

Simon at cp@theplace

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(Embracing the fact that the Bible is a human book)

We have to face hard questions. They'll come up sooner or later, so we might as well deal with them sooner. And its best to talk about them among friends, where we can work on them together.

My wife Renea has this policy, especially in talking about sex with our daughters. She would rather have them hear about the whole story from her, in the safe environment of our house, than hear it from their friends on the school playground. Besides, what they hear "out there" will not be very accurate. As Renea says, "I know more about sex than all their friends. Let our kids ask – I'll tell them what they want to know."

So let's tackle our hard questions about the Bible "in the family". Too often we are afraid to admit to others – or ourselves – that we have questions about the Bible. But the questions are there, so we need to make it safe for people to ask them openly. Besides, good questions, asked honestly, will always lead us to a stronger faith.

I am not primarily going to be defending the faith against outside attacks; My goal here is to encourage the faith in those who want to believe. There is a place for defending the faith to those outside. But even when I am doing that, very often I ask the person who is questioning my faith to come over to my side, just for little while, so I can show them the view from where I stand. Often, we try to argue people over, step-by-step, from their position to ours. But I find that asking someone to come over and see things from our point of view, just to see how it all fits together for us, often builds a much better understanding. So I want to invite you to join me in taking a disciple's perspective on some of our hard questions about the Bible.

The Problem of Human Touch

When you boil down most people's problems with the Bible, it comes down to the matter of human touch. The fact

that the book was written by humans seems suspicious in itself. Because these humans have their own viewpoints and limitations we conclude that the Bible is full of biases and ignorance. And there were so many hands involved in writing the book (and deciding what counted as "scripture", and transmitting the text to us) that it just seems fishier and fishier the more we hear. The truth is that there do seem to be some inconsistencies between some of the different authors and accounts, and there are some verses where it is hard just to establish what the original text is.

Outsiders look at all this earthy, historical, and human nature that we see in the Bible and they scoff at the idea that it could be a divinely inspired text. And we Christians buy it –at least enough to make us worry. We are often ashamed of the human side of the Bible. We treat it like some dirty family secret we hope never gets out. Some of us loudly deny it. Some of us talk about it in whispers in a back room, or a seminary class. But mostly we try to forget it and hope everyone else will, too. I think most Christians would feel easier with one unified dictation, a monolithic word from God. We would rather have something like what the Koran claims to be – a single stream of dictation from God. That would make it feel much more divine, if it came in one vision to one person – if it had fewer human fingerprints on it.

But I want to suggest a different picture to you, another model of what is going on. I want to show you a perspective that I have found as a disciple – one that makes the Bible look much more trustworthy than the skeptics would say, and much more wonderful than the dictation that we might wish it to be.

A Quilted History

I'd like you to consider a patchwork quilt that has been in my wife's family for generations. You might take a look at one of these quilts and say that it is pretty, in a quaint sort of way. But it

becomes more wonderful by far when you know its story. This quilt was begun by my wife's great-grandmother, with two of her little daughters -- my wife's grandmother and great-aunt. As with any real patchwork quilt, each patch tells a story. Some of the pieces of cloth in these quilts are from chicken-feed sacks. Back in that old Texas farm town, it was big news when a new fabric pattern on the chicken feed sacks arrived at the store. My wife's grandmother and great-aunt would go on down to the store and make sure to buy enough chicken feed so that they would have enough of the same material to complete a few squares. Some of the other patches come from old dresses. Some of the squares are polyester. (My wife's grandmother loved newfangled things -- she had no time for antiques and classics. She would always prefer a yucky polyester pantsuit to a nice cotton dress. So the polyester is in there with all the rest.) To anyone who sees and knows, these quilts have many stories to tell. It's a part of their unique beauty, that they hold so much family history.

This is a part of the Bible's beauty also. The Bible is full of stories, and histories, and songs, and letters. Each one tells a story of God working with some new generation of people. This huge collection of "patches" shows us a God who delights in having people with him. He doesn't want to avoid contact with humans. The whole huge patchwork quilt of his word shows him constantly working to bring his human children along with him in life. The stories here do not point to a God who would dictate commands to as few messengers as possible. This is a God who loves to have his children gather around him and learn his words. This is a God who longs to be in relationship with all his human children. This is part of the richness that this collection of patches brings.





The Glory of Participation

But even more than the stories that the different patches tell, the process of how the Bible was put together shows God's purpose even more clearly. God could have just printed all his stories on one big piece of patterned cloth. He could have just produced one novel. But he chose to put the Bible together like a quilt. As I mentioned, my wife's great-grandmother and her two girls, over time, assembled all the fabrics that they wanted to use. They sewed them, over time, into patterned squares. The next generation, my wife's mother, didn't work on the quilt *per se*, but she did preserve the squares. They had not been made into a quilt, yet. But she knew that they were valuable, a family heirloom. When her daughter, my wife Renea, found out about all these quilt squares that had not been assembled into quilts, she determined to do something with them. As a high school senior she took her growing sewing skills and sewed the squares all together, just one beside the other, into a quilt. But she didn't like how it turned out; it just didn't work. So she folded them and put them away. And there they stayed, waiting... until recently.

When we moved into our new house, she had the idea to take the squares and make them into quilts that would fit uniquely in each of our three daughters' rooms. The girls helped in this process. They helped pick out the border material and they helped sew the quilt together. My oldest child would sometimes be at the sewing machine, the middle sister pinning fabric onto backing, while the youngest was ripping strips of fabric for later use. So there were many hands involved in choosing and cutting the fabric, making the individual squares, preserving the work of previous generations, and then assembling all that heritage to fit into the context of a new generation.

Now here is a question: Who is the better seamstress, the one who can go alone into a room and come out with a beautiful quilt, or the one who can go

into a room with a bunch of children and come out with a beautiful quilt *and* children who are full of the joy of having helped make something beautiful? And what is the more glorious quilt? The one that is just skillfully made, or the one that has been lovingly made over generations by a family? Think this over, and you will begin to see the true richness and glory of this book – a book which comes out of the partnership of God and his human children.

So, not only are the individual stories or “patches” about God calling people to himself. Even the way the stories are told, preserved, and transmitted to future generations show us God's purpose: to have his human children participate with him in his own life and mission. He wants them to learn to see as he sees, and speak as he speaks. So he brings them along with him in creating this Bible, this treasury of stories about God and his people. At every level, wherever we look, God is working on the same thing. He is working to share his life with us, that we may participate in his life and his work in this world.

A Hand-sewn History

Let's take a simplified look at how some of this has happened. Israel was founded as a nation by God's saving work in the Exodus. God brought the children of Israel up out of Egypt, and they knew it. They were careful to remember that story, and all the things that God said to Moses. This became the foundational story of their life together as a people. Then God brought them into the promised land. As this “family history” unfolds in this new land, we see over the centuries many stories of people relating to God. On the whole, however, things do not go well. So the word comes to the prophets, as the writer of Hebrews says, “at many times and in various ways”. Often, these are people who have cherished the stories and laws that came from the time of Moses, and looked carefully around at what is happening in their own time. And a protest rises up within them – they want to cry out against the idolatry and the injustice they see. And God confirms that cry. He says “Yes, that is my righteousness, my concern, and my

anger that is rising in you. You speak that word to them in my name.” So they speak out to the people, and some listen. Some hear what is said and say, “That is a word from God. We must hold onto it.” So the stories and the words of the prophets begin to become a part of the quilts. More squares have been added.

And the story goes on. In general, the nation does not listen to the reforming words of the prophets, and the threatened disaster falls. The nation is hauled off to Babylon. The people's world is crushed. They had assumed that God would always make things good for them, even if they disobeyed. But here they are in a foreign land, conquered by pagans. Perhaps their God was not God after all. Then God says, “My people need to be encouraged.” This resonates within some human hearts, there in exile; They also find themselves saying, “My people need to be encouraged.” So one or more of them goes around and picks up the patches of the stories of God's people, and makes squares out of them, and gives them borders to match, so that the people can see their story in a proper and useful framework. They arrange the stories of the people of God to show these exiles that God is faithful, that he is still their Lord, and that there is a purpose to all this history. Then they give this word to the people. And again there are some who say, “Amen. This is really what is happening. This is God's word to us.” They repent of their despair, they hold onto hope, and they hand on this new/old word of hope to the next generation. It is handed down until it becomes... the Scripture that Jesus read as a boy.

Can you see now that the human participation in the making of the Bible is no shame? Instead, it is glorious. The book that carries the gospel (God is with us!) speaks the gospel even by what it is and how it is made. The story of the writing of the Bible says clearly “God is with us, speaks to us, and moves in our lives. He is determined, even delighted, to have us live and work with him.” The fact that the Bible has been touched by all these hands makes it lovely. The full humanity of the Bible is as glorious and encouraging a truth as the full humanity



of Jesus. It may cause outsiders to shake their heads and say “merely human”. But a disciple looks at this work and says “blessedly human”.

I now want to use this new perspective on the Scripture to look at two problems. I want to look at the problem of ugly stories in the Scripture, and the problem of factual discrepancies.

Tough Patches

There are many ugly stories in the Scripture; it pulls no punches about the human condition. One disturbing story is that of Abraham and Sarah (Abram and Sarai), and Hagar. Take a look at this “patch” - Genesis 16:1-14, (NIV). There is much beauty in this patch, but also much ugliness. There is the beauty of the faithfulness of Abraham and Sarah that got them into this position in the first place. They are out away from their home and people because they followed the call of God. This was an incredibly bold step. They heard the word of God and stepped into participating in his work in history. But there is also the ugliness that they bring to the pattern of this patch. They treat the woman Hagar like a thing, like an extension of themselves. Note that the child that Hagar would conceive from Abraham would not be considered hers, he would be considered Sarah’s. And, of course, no one asked Hagar’s permission. The master was going to have sex with the slave so he could have a child. And the slave would not even legally be the mother of her own child. If you have never read the story before and seen the ugliness here, you need to stop and think.

But notice how God, like the expert seamstress, comes in to supervise the work of his children. His co-workers, Abraham and Sarah, had made a great mistake. But God has the wisdom and the power to superintend the situation, to work with and around the failings of his people to make the situation come out all right. He not only speaks to Hagar, he gives her a promise for the future that will give her hope. And, by sending her back to the household of Abraham, he is making sure that the child will be safe and provided for as he grows up. (Later, in Genesis 21,

Hagar will again leave with the growing boy and then it will be time for her to be out of that household forever. God continues to meet and provide.) But this is not the only redemption of ugliness that we see in this piece of the quilt.

For there is beauty not only in the pattern of this piece of the Bible fabric, but also in how the patch was cut and placed. Look at how the story is told. There are only two people in this story who call Hagar by name. Abraham and Sarah don’t, she is a thing to them. But God calls her by name. And so does... the narrator. When God spoke to Hagar, she called him “the one who sees me”. And God has taught one of his partners to see Hagar also. The teller of this story is also “one who sees”. God has taught this storyteller’s heart to see the lowly one who was pushed out, and to tell her story. Look back at the text. Is the story really about Abraham and Sarah? Or is it not the story of Hagar, and the God who saw her? God taught the storyteller how to see what he sees, and how to shape and cut this piece of history so that others could also see what he sees. So again, not only in this story, but in how the story is told and preserved and given to us, we see a God who wants to be with people and have them share his life and perspective with him. When you look at the ugly stories in the Bible, watch how they are told, and you’ll often see more beauty and redemption than you thought you ever could.

Mismatched Seams

But how about another problem? What about the discrepancies and “errors” in the Bible? Of course, there are many supposed errors that merely come from poor readings of the text. But there are also some real discrepancies, when all is said and done. Certain census numbers are hard to line up, and there are some genealogies that seem to be a problem. Some of the stories in the gospel accounts are hard to line up with each other. For example, the death of Judas in Matthew 27 is hard to reconcile with his end in Acts 1.

How can our quilts help us? As you look at the pattern you find that the regular geometry is part of the beauty. But if you look closely, it is



not perfect. Perfect in its geometry, that is. Not all of the corners are really right angles. Not all of the diamonds come to exactly the same point. Some of the seams are a little crooked. But who would consider these real problems? This is what you would expect to find in a hand-made quilt. You might even look for them to assure you that it is genuine. (Many Christian apologists make this connection. They say we should be wary if all the gospel accounts sounded exactly the same. It is actually reassuring that they agree almost completely, but have some small differences around the edges. It doesn’t look like there was a purposeful collusion of lying witnesses. It looks like we are hearing the testimony of different, reliable human witnesses to the same event.)

Would you really rather have a seamless sheet of vinyl? That does have a certain kind of perfection, and some would rather have the Bible be that way. I would rather take this glorious treasury of God’s work. I see more beauty and perfection in the complex whole that we have actually been given. Knowing the true goal of the Master as a beautiful partnership between him and his people, I see this work as having the higher perfection. And I see the whole collection as having been so supervised and superintended that none of its supposed imperfections are damaging to the whole. They merely add to the authenticity, the history, the family feel of it.

Handed Down to You

Is the Bible inerrant? That depends what you mean. I don’t think God made a mistake giving it to us. It is the perfect book for us, given by a trustworthy God. Christians have always held that the Bible is unique, divinely inspired, trustworthy, and authoritative. I would agree, and also add that it is beautiful. Can you see it?

And do you want in? Now that you see that the Bible is about God bringing people to himself, calling them



alongside him in his work in history, you have to ask this question: Do I want to participate also? If the Bible was just a download of information, then you could ask yourself if you thought it was true. But this is much deeper. To hear the point of the story is to be called up into life with God. So... do you want in?

Those old quilt squares started by Renea's great-grandmother now make up two beautiful quilts in two of our daughters' rooms. Each has its share of the old material, bordered with new material to blend into the setting of the girls' rooms. But our oldest daughter has on her bed a quilt of all new material. It was inspired by the older quilts but was done completely in this generation, specially designed for the setting of her room. The Bible has been completed, but God's work with his people goes on.

Do you want to step into the story that God is writing? Are you going to believe that a wise and loving Father can take imperfect children and create a perfect thing with them? If you are disciple I hope you can believe that. And, as you walk along the way in following God, if you ever doubt that God can create beauty through the work of his fallen children, just read your Bible. And be encouraged.

Neil Livingstone, IVCF Washington

Q: Why do we accept the Bible as the infallible truth? If human hands wrote the Bible, and humans are imperfect, shouldn't the end result be imperfect as well? I know we say that the words were inspired by God, but I sort of see this like the old TVs with an antenna: those who wrote the Bible were inspired by God (received a signal) and wrote it down (displayed a picture), but if the antenna was not very good, the picture wouldn't have come through clearly. We may get the gist of the picture, but we can't be sure that we're seeing it clearly. And to say that the Bible is true because the Bible says it's true is circular reasoning... And the religious writings of many other religions also claim to be inspired by God, so why do we dismiss these?

Also, it seems reasonable to me that sometime in the last 2000 years, at least one piece of writing would have been created that was inspired by God, so, why isn't this included?

Finally, I'm of the understanding that the Bible as we have it today was not standardized until the Council of Nicea (sometime around 300 AD) and that there were actually several dozen gospels that weren't included. There may have been good reasons for their exclusions, but again, we trust the judgments of men - none of which were alive when Jesus walked the earth. I know that we say the Bible's truth is a matter of faith, but God also gave us reason. It seems to me that placing faith in what is ultimately the works of man goes against putting faith only in God.

A: Why do we accept the Bible as the infallible truth? This is an excellent and important question. "Orthodoxy" is one of our core values at 'The Place'. Orthodoxy is a Greek compound word that means straight or correct (ortho) glory or illumination (doxa). We have the audacity to claim that there is such a thing as "correct illumination" of God. How can we? How can we know what is the "correct" way to worship? What

is our standard for what is "correct" or "true" for life & faith?

For the historic, Christian Faith Community, the navigational tool for knowing "truth" is the Bible The "Holy Scripture". We believe it is "The Word of God". The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." When he says that all Scripture is "God-breathed" he uses another Greek compound word meaning God (theo) breath or Spirit (pnuma). He is claiming that The Christian Scriptures are not only the work of human hands, but that they are actually the very breath of God; God's Spirit, God's revelation, God's Word.

This means that the text is "REVELATION". We believe it is not humans trying to figure our God and being merely "inspired" to write some insightful things about God. Rather, it is God's breathed out revelation of Himself; His personal character and will. One of the most fundamental characteristics of the God of the Christian faith is that He is a God who acts to reveal His character and will. He is not capricious or willfully hiding from us. It is only our willful ignoring of Him that keeps us from receiving His constant revelation of Himself through His Word. His Word includes all He has created (By His Holy Spirit He spoke His word and creation became), The Scriptures (By His Holy Spirit He spoke to and through Prophets and Apostles and their testimony was recorded in the Bible), and Jesus Christ (By His Holy Spirit The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us).

We believe that in the Bible God has revealed everything we need to know for life and faith. He never claims to reveal "everything there is to know" or "everything we would like to know", but everything we need to know for correct illumination for life and faith.



This is what the Bible claims of itself. This may sound like “circular reasoning”. Actually, it is a claim, and it is either correct or false. How can we know if it is a trustworthy claim? One can discern the divine, rather than human origin of the Christian Scriptures through its uniqueness. It is different from all other religious documents. Eyewitnesses to its claimed historic events wrote it. Its documents have been miraculously preserved over its 3,500-year history. It was written by over 40 human authors yet, if understood correctly, speaks with one unified voice. It contains no significant contradictions (again, if understood correctly). Its historical claims have never been disproved by any archeological discovery. It has proven to be right in its prophetic predictions with a miraculous accuracy. Each of these facts is unique to the Christian Scriptures.

There are several reasons that the Bible is closed and has not been added to over the last 2,000 years. First, to be included in the Old or New Testament the author had to be an approved spokesperson for God. These only included The Law giver (Moses), The Prophets and the Apostles. The only exception is historical books written by the faith community and wisdom literature collected by the faith community. The Prophets and Apostles approved these documents. Prophets and Apostles had to prove their trustworthiness through God performing miraculous signs through them. In the Old Testament, if one claimed to speak for God and could not prove it, one was to be killed. That is how seriously they took Biblical authority. By 400 BC, there were no more Old Testament Prophets, so there



was no more Old Testament. After the death of the last Apostle, there was no more New Testament.

The fact that the New Testament, as we know it today, was finally officially canonized (closed) at the Council of Nicea around 325 AD speaks of the collective response of the various Christian church leaders to a common agreement about what books and letters had ALWAYS BEEN regarded as having Apostolic authority and trustworthiness. The standardized list was more about making sure that all the churches had all the known authentic parts than about deciding which ones were to be “in” or “out”. There were some documents that were beginning to be circulated at that time. There were roundly recognized as inauthentic and unauthoritative. None of the rejected documents had any Apostolic approval, while our current New Testament is made up of documents written during the lifetime of the Apostles. An Apostle is one

who was a commissioned eyewitness to the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

These are some of the reasons why we are confident to receive the Bible as God’s breathed out personal revelation to us, and therefore our authority for orthodox life and faith. This is also why it is “useful for teaching (basic doctrine), rebuking (show faulty deviations from correct thought and practice), correcting (re-straightening and setting one back on the “correct” path), and training in righteousness (disciplining in what is right and training one up in correct faith and life).

This is also why we engage in the Spiritual disciplines of reading it, studying it, memorizing it, meditating on it, praying through it and believing it. “So that the (person) of God (all of us) may be thoroughly equipped (be mature & have equipment we need) for every good work” (for all the good work God has for us.)

At ‘The Place’, we gather around the text together (God’s Word). We listen to it together. We seek to understand it together. We seek to apply it to our lives together. We chose a part to listen to. We chose someone takes responsibility to interpret it. He or she takes the chosen text, examines it for interpretation then prepares a sermon to expose us to the text, and presents it. We gather together, to listen to God’s Word together; read, sung, prayed and preached, and we apply what God reveals to us to our daily lives, worshipping Him together.

James Prette

PROSTITUTION OF PERSONALITY

The other week, a friend and I had the opportunity to watch *The Corporation*, a 2004 film based on Canadian law professor and legal theorist Joel Bakan's book *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power*. Apart from the underlying premise that modern corporations reflect the same characteristics as human sociopaths, I was particularly interested in the part of the film that discussed how corporations are clamouring to establish patents on human genes. Taken to an extreme, the filmmakers posit that the rights to the entire human genetic

code will eventually be owned by self-interested corporate interests - the very fabric of our humanity reduced to a commodity that can be bought and sold on the New York Stock Exchange.

A few days later, I received an invitation to attend a workshop where I could learn the skills required to promote myself as a brand based on the work of Tom Peters' 2003 book, which suggests among other things:

You're every bit as much a brand as Nike, Coke, Pepsi, or the Body Shop. To start thinking like your own favorite brand manager, ask yourself the same question the brand managers at Nike, Coke, Pepsi, or the Body Shop ask themselves: What is it that my product or service does that makes it different? Give yourself the traditional 15-words-

or-less contest challenge. Take the time to write down your answer. And then take the time to read it. Several times. If your answer wouldn't light up the eyes of a prospective client or command a vote of confidence from a satisfied past client, or -- worst of all -- if it doesn't grab you, then you've got a big problem. It's time to give some serious thought and even more serious effort to imagining and developing yourself as a brand.

I must confess that when I first read the flyer, I was sceptical of anything that left me with the impression that my life could be somehow linked to marketing myself like a box of Corn Flakes... so I decided to do a bit of digging. What I found was an article written in the August/September 1997 offering of *Fast Company* magazine

THE RIVER

I'm a good Christian. I love my neighbour, I love God, I attend church almost every Sunday, I pray (OK, maybe not as much as I should, but it still counts) and I follow all the "shall nots" more closely than most people. So why am I not getting the blessings I see others getting? Why am I mired down in all this garbage in my life? C'mon God, it's not fair!

That prayer is one that God hears from me every so often. Usually the reply is silence- or at least it seems to be silence- but recently I had a dream that answered my prayer.

I was standing on the shore of a fast flowing river. At my feet were large, smooth river rocks. The bank sloped upwards and behind me was forest. Not West coast rainforest, but the kind of forest you find in Northern Alberta. Forests of spindly trees that go on forever. I stood on the bank and watched the river surge past me hypnotically. Occasionally I would see someone in a canoe traverse the

river. Sometimes they were paddling very hard, sometimes they were taking advantage of the current and speed of the river. I would watch them paddle down the river and disappear out of sight around the turn in the river.

After watching people in canoes go past, I heard a noise behind me. At the edge of the forest there was someone carrying a canoe on his head, walking along a deer path. He didn't stop to put the canoe in the water at the clearing I was at; he just kept portaging along the edge of the riverbed. I watched him head down river with the heavy load on his head and having difficulty on the forest track. I couldn't understand why he wasn't canoeing.

As I looked back to the river, my canoe was on shore. In it was a lifejacket and paddle. I was then asked, "Are you going to trust the River or are you going to do it yourself?"

God supplies each Christian with a canoe (and a paddle and lifejacket). He takes us to the edge of the river and the river points us towards Him. We can trust the fast-flowing and sometimes unpredictable river or we can stay on

land and portage all the way.

I have been carrying that canoe for a very long way. And to be honest, my back is sore and my arms are tired. I am sick of watching other Christians pass by on the river and get closer to Him. They must cover more miles each day than I possibly can. And they seem to have to put less effort in.

If this is where you are at, let's put our canoes in the water together. Don't let fear, stubbornness or your desire to be in charge stop you from being on the river and accepting His blessings. There's no guarantee you won't get wet. There may even be rapids. But when you put your faith in God and you follow His lead, you're going to get closer to him sooner. I don't know how long the river is. I don't know how long each of us has to paddle. I do know I want to be in the middle of the blessings. So, I am zipping up the lifejacket and heading out in the river. I may be white-knuckling it for the first part, but I am looking forward to seeing what He has in store for me around the next bend in the river.

Alison S



that was written by Tom Peters himself. It was quite eye-opening and led me to think that I have been doing it all wrong. According to Peters...

There's literally no limit to the ways you can go about enhancing your profile. Try moonlighting! Sign up for an extra project inside your organization, just to introduce yourself to new colleagues and showcase your skills -- or work on new ones... If you can get them singing your praises, they'll help spread the word about what a remarkable contributor you are. The second important thing to remember about your personal visibility campaign is: it all matters. When you're promoting brand You, everything you do -- and everything you choose not to do -- communicates the value and character of the brand. Everything from the way you handle phone conversations to the email messages you send to the way you conduct business in a meeting is part of the larger message you're sending about your brand. Partly it's a matter of substance: what you have to say and how well you get it said. But it's also a matter of style. On the Net, do your communications demonstrate a command of the technology? In meetings, do you keep your contributions short and to the point? It even gets down to the level of your brand You business card: Have you designed a cool-looking logo for your own card? Are you demonstrating an appreciation for design that shows you understand that packaging counts -- a lot -- in a crowded world? Getting and using power -- intelligently, responsibly, and yes, powerfully -- are essential skills for growing your brand. One of the things that attract us to certain brands is the power they project. As a consumer, you want to associate with brands whose powerful presence



creates a halo effect that rubs off on you.

Profile. Remarkable Contributor. Image. Substance. Coolness. The acquisition of power to advance the brand called You.

Does anyone else have a problem with this approach? **Do these characteristics describe the kind of person that you want to be, or how you want to be seen by other people?** Just like corporations are buying up human genes, Peters' thinking suggests that the human experience is subject to the same dynamics as any other marketable commodity. Create enough interest in the brand... convince the public that they want it... create an image and clients will want to be associated with the brand that is you. In some ways, what Peters is describing is the prostitution of personality as people turn themselves into walking billboards - trying to entice people to buy what is being sold based on profile, image, and coolness.

If I take Peters seriously, I again must confess that I have been approaching my life all-wrong. Thus far I have been striving for authenticity (even when it means that I publicly confess I am somewhat less than perfect), for honesty, and for the integration of my personal and private life into a consistent whole so that I am not separate people in different situations.

Thus far, the battle has been to shed and destroy masks that distort the real

person. For me, this is the simple quest for integrity: to understand who I am and to reflect that understanding, as well as possible, in all I do - not to present myself to the world in the best light possible in the hopes of being promoted, advanced, or hired. **My personality is not honey used to catch the flies**

of power and prestige... nor is it something that should be branded, marketed, advertised, commoditized, or exploited, I am bigger than a brand. I am more complex than Nike. I see things and feel things and react to things more authentically than Dodge because I am human.

Without question, I can bring my humanity to the marketplace but heaven forbid that it be transformed into a marketing gimmick.

I have quoted Jim Wallis often, and will continue to do so, because I think he clearly and articulately presents the counter to Peters' perspective. Wallis writes:

Celebrity status can no longer be confused with leadership, and society's preference for celebrities instead of leaders is a deadly flaw. Charisma, sex appeal, excitement, flair and flash all have their appeal. But they are no substitute for integrity when it comes to leadership. Consistency, honesty, humility, decency, self-discipline, dedication and faith are the leadership qualities we must now rediscover.

Sometimes I shake my head in disbelief when I read some of the things that we try to teach each other in the name of good business practice.

Daryl T

THE ROSEBUSH FOREST

At four years old the place seemed magical. William Arthur and Lillian my grandparents owned a fairy castle with real gemstones set into the mortar of its walls. A willow tree with long sensuous limbs swayed her graceful hips in the breeze as my mother and I came up the walk. Thousands of tiny fairies that were living in the top of that willow tree beat their wings in unison every time an unexpected wind would blow past. My mother wore her Chanel suit and eel skin pumps that day, the remnants of an up and coming life shared with my now ex-father. On we came mother and daughter in our best princess get-ups, and me well, I was wearing a white pleated skirt and matching navy jacket with white piping and a big sun-hat to protect my bright skin and hair. We came up the walk that summer day. My mother's brother Uncle Bill had driven all the way out to Alberta in his green station wagon to liberate we princesses from the ire of my father the frustrated artist. On we came, the sun so bright my eyes boggled with the shock of it and everywhere I laid them there were spectacular explosions of colour. We passed the rhododendrons. A bank of them, planets of freaky colours inhabited by these crazy occupants competing with each other for just one set of shy blue eyes. I gazed on tripping and stumbling in my penny loafers scuffing just enough to bring me into the now, the place of new beginnings. We were only half way up the walk and the best was yet to come, a forest of English roses - smells fit for a princess. These flowers were strangely beautiful. Mysterious to my four-year-old eyes, beautiful and leggy, roses with thorns that offered barbed-wire protection from curious plump little hands aching to caress a silky bud or bloom. It was intoxicating on that hot summer day. By now we were nearing the turret of the

fairy castle my grandparents lived in, here we two princesses walked on in our ruby slippers. We glided past the north face eyes feasting on diamonds, sapphires and emeralds and countless other jewels I couldn't name. My grandparents must be the wealthiest fairies in the whole fairy kingdom. On that day in that moment it seemed as though a whole constellation of stars had fallen and landed there winking at me in amazement in their new occupation.

Oh, but what's this! We turned the corner and just like that we were in someone's backyard. There were so many fruit trees and berry vines crammed into that backyard that my grandfather had fashioned a scarecrow of sorts to scare off the black birds who sat gloating in the top branches of his cherry tree. The clothesline made a courageous effort, one thin line in a land of exaggerated forms; defiantly it still strung itself lazily across the back garden. But this was a stucco bungalow with a clothesline and a basement that you had to go outside to get to, and it was a partial basement at that. This was my first realization that there exists the possibility of the enigmatic union of opposites, the attraction of the complimentary and different. The house had an addition my grandfather had built which was slightly skewed as he had an economical turn of mind and saw no reason for a fancy foundation. As we two princesses finished our regal walk to our new life the smell of

raspberries heavy in the air. We came to a fork in the path. My grandfather had extended the yellow brick road on a right angle and there at the end of it several meters away stood a very small cottage, only big enough for a single bed. It was a wee house with ginger bread cutouts and flower boxes. It was in that little house the Healthcliff of our family slept. His name was Uncle Hughey, we called him that as opposed to a more dignified "Uncle Hugh" because no one had any respect for him. His life had added up to a zero. An alcoholic nomad - that was my uncle. Driven by some inner prodding he would migrate with the winds. One day you'd see him, the next day he was gone. That uncle was a point of contention between Lilly and Art, and my grandmother favored him. He was the middle child and he resembled her. He had hair the colour of pumpkin pie with too much spice in it, and he cut a tragic figure. Out of all five siblings in my mother's family he was the most sensitive: The sponge that sopped up the mess when the two universes that were my grandparents converged, back in the day when there was plenty of jousting between the two. Uncle Hugh got the worst of it. None of this was news to my mother; a woman of many secrets with all of them safely packed away in her Chanel suit and eel-skin pumps. Through the garden we came trees laden with succulent offerings the likes of which a little girl might need to drop down a rabbit hole to ever see again. There were



Winter King apples, two kinds of cherry trees, black plumbs and yellow plums, Bartlett pears, Blackberry bushes and raspberry canes. I tried to hide my confusion, as not only did this lush garden seduce me into the now, this inexplicable reality, it was offset by an eerie quiet. No more frantic little fairies and doggy comments, everything was still here. I tried to hide by making myself invisible walking in the scant shadow that was my mother. We fast approached the back door of the bungalow; the castle was left in the front yard with the three-legged dog and the orbs of crazy looking flowers and sexy willow trees.

Lillian and William Arthur had the back door wide open awaiting two new additions, my mother and me. William Arthur was really just Art, a diminutive man with a trace of a northern English accent. He smoked a pipe and wore suspenders to keep his pants up. My grandfather weighed 126 pounds all of his adult life and was colour blind. I always loved the look of my grandfather the sight of him gave me great comfort. He made up for his lack of colour sense, with interesting fabrics and was nonetheless natty. He would mix patterns and textures to his advantage, a jumble of plaid, corduroy and paisley. And it was more than that he smelled good too, like amphora pipe tobacco and motor oil with a whiff of good black tea thrown into the mix. Art was a thing sprung up from his own backyard wholesome and lovely and tangled. My grandmother on the other hand was opulent looking. Her hair had the colour of flame in an autumn leaf, a red crown that had an uneasy arrangement with her pale skin, which was the colour of good vanilla ice cream. Lillian was not one for sunshine and stayed out of the backyard, which was Arthur's domain. She would from time to time teeter precariously on the edge of the succulent and tangled yard clinging to her basket of wooden pegs directing wet laundry along the clothesline. She came from the fairy castle as she took

the stage, resplendent in her natural state offset with a dazzling rhinestone cigarette holder. Lillian liked to stuff a smoke in the end of it and tell me fairy tales. They weren't lies exactly but bytes of reality scored with fantasy and bitterness. Yin and Yang was alive and well in the state of my grandparents union. The outward manifestation of the castle complete with servants' quarters in the back generated the backdrop of my new life, the life without my father. The two extremes that were my grandparents - Art the tinsmith and Lillian the butterfly were my living illustration of black and white - the grayscale would be what I could make of it in the years to come. My mother and I retained our princess tiaras only for a short time as we got used to life on the inside. The turning inward of lives began at a little cement bungalow. The memory of life before that magical country was comprised of a different palette. The colours and textures did not have the wild unpredictability of my grandmother's house. My father, the up-and-comer, kept the palette tasteful and serene - another illustration of opposites. My father is both yin and yang, feminine and masculine, all the colours and all the textures. In that life my mother was an accessory. She was a pot of paint in my father's colour-field. A woman with the ability to camouflage, a gecko.

The princess tiaras were put away permanently with my mother's second marriage. The day I met my new dad I was deep in my fairy-tale fantasy playing in the front yard with Dingo. I had decided to take on the forest of roses that day and with fierce determination I burrowed deep into the land of heavenly smells and tough terrain. Undeterred by the thorns cutting deep warnings into my chubby pink limbs - I wouldn't be held back by tea roses and on I plundered, taking the punishment like the regal creature I was. Dingo sat awkwardly on his hind end -



a wary look on his narrow black face. He was all black except for a large diamond of white on his chest and as he panted his pointy chest heaved. He was a patient canine no matter what his shortcomings, three-legged or not he was my pal. Bravado notwithstanding he waited on the edge of the Rosebush Forest for me to come out. I'd managed to twist myself into a mass of flower and thorn when I heard the car. Out I popped sensing something foreign. It was a Ford Biscayne. The man driving it was tall and thin looking with black hair and he was all smiles. It was a great big car with white vinyl seats, the man inside was obviously lost. We were a kingdom of small and richly textured English people; we all had fair hair and just looked like we belonged. This man was very definitely from another kingdom altogether. His colours just all seemed white. And where was my mother anyway? As I continued my examination of the man and his big white car my mother emerged from the back of the house wearing white jeans and a top, waving her arm and laughing. She was waving at the man and she was wearing clothes of the new life. These two knew each other and now my mother's colours looked like his. She greeted the man and he smiled more mightily than ever as she slid into the front seat next to him and motioned for me to get in. I knew where this car was going to lead as I sat in this cavernous back seat quietly nursing distrust and indignation.

As I look back on that summer of extremes and opposites, colours and textures and new countries - I see it as a signpost. A sign pointing to a new world, my own world made up of my own shades and hues. But none as sweet and perfect as the ones I experienced that summer at my grandmother's house.

Rhonda S

FRIENDSHIP

In the last few years, and especially the last few months, I've really contemplated the value of friendship. There are friends in my life that I've had for a number of years and friends that I've had only a few months, but each friend holds a special place. We've gone through many a season together, laughing together and sharing in each other's struggles and sorrows. I truly believe that friendship is an awesome gift from God, especially when those friends come in your weakest hour to uphold you in prayer! Or when they have forgiven you for something that you cannot forgive yourself for. They love you despite what you look like, be it dressing up for an evening out, or at home in your comfiest clothes! A friend has said to me that you don't need many friends; you just need a few that know you terribly well. Sometimes in our ever changing world, friends come and go, new friends are made and old friends fade out of our lives, but the friends that have stood the test of time are your most cherished treasures! Make sure to value your friends, new or old. We must continue to cultivate new friends because you never know what treasure is awaiting you. This is for my friends whom I love and cherish dearly, you know who you are!

Friendship is: (Inspired by True events)

- Worth fighting for!
- When there is spinach in your teeth and you are told about it within seconds of it appearing in your smile.
- Someone to laugh at all your jokes, regardless if they are funny or not (for moral support).
- Reading each other's minds from across a crowded room at a party.



- Giving without expecting anything in return.
- When they say out loud things you are thinking.
- Despite the most embarrassing of moments (and I've had my fair share), they help you laugh at yourself and remind you that people are not perfect.
- Reminding your friend to breathe as she is in the delivery room about to become one of the world's best moms.
- Saying, "I love you" –just because.
- Pointing you to Christ when you've lost your way.
- Showing up!
- Having "remember when" stories.
- Arms to hug you when you're feeling blue.
- When you actually TAKE their advice, rather than just seeking it.
- Doing their most famous impression of the cowardly lion (from Wizard of Oz) when you need a smile.
- When no one else in the room matters but the person you are with.
- When they don't jump out of a plane with you, BUT they are on the ground yelling their lungs out.
- Someone anxiously pacing in the doctor's waiting room while awaiting those test results that could possibly change your life forever.
- A hand to hold when you are scared or afraid.
- To show you the error of your ways without making you feel stupid (who knew you could wear white after labour day.)
- Making you feel beautiful despite your insecurities.
- Holding your heart, when your heart has been torn in two.
- Making any place feel like home.
- Will drive you to the Emergency Room in the middle of the night and sit there for hours with you.
- Will stand up for you!
- Will help mold your character by telling you things that are hard to hear.
- The doorstep at 4:00 am in the morning.
- Make you laugh when you least expect it!
- Being your family when you don't have family close by.
- Having someone around when life seems grim and you are about to eat all the garlic you have in the house!
- When tears don't need to be interpreted.
- The person you call after you've met the person of your dreams.
- The person to have faith in the world around you, when you've lost faith in all mankind.
- Someone to pick you up at work (in all your stress) dressed in their most famous Indiana Jones outfit and taking you on an adventure hike, making the world vanish at least for a few hours.
- Someone to challenge your character to make you a better person.
- Knows how to have spontaneous fun!
- Daily forgiveness.
- Unconditional love.
- Will not cast judgment in any circumstances, especially when they are showing you the latest dance moves or singing to you their version of a top 40 "greatest hit".
- When silence isn't awkward.
- When all you need is their presence.
- When time is irrelevant.
- When that person meets beside you when you're on your knees.
- When you find your life is worth giving for theirs!

Jennifer H



THE GREAT HAT PARADE

The church that I spent my early childhood in required women to cover their heads. All the old ladies wore what I used to call “doilies” round bits of lace in white or black that perched on the tops of their grey heads. My mother, however, and all the women her age were a different story. Sunday morning was “The Great Hat Parade”, hats to match every outfit. Preferably, the bigger the better. I once asked my mom why she had so many hats, she just kind of laughed and said: Well I have to wear something to church! Why did these women cover their heads? Well, because of the



passage in 1 Corinthians 11 that talks about it. Now I am not an advocate for head coverings. I personally believe that particular practice to be quite culturally rooted and not translatable to today's culture. But, Paul does specifically address other areas of women's apparel when he writes: “I want women to dress modestly... not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes...” (1 Tim 2: 9) Paul rarely spoke directly and exclusively to women. When he did it was most often to outline the role of a wife, his other reason was to address himself to what women wore, on their heads or otherwise.

We have to ask why this issue of women's apparel came to Paul's attention on more than one occasion. What was Paul's motivation for writing about this topic? These women had been granted new freedom in Christ. Women of The Way were given a new role never before offered to our gender.

Why the need for caution?

I love the diversity of role given to women at The Place. I've never been a part of a congregation that encourages women to take prominent leadership roles. I think the women at The Place are in a unique position to influence the next generation of women (and men) in the church. One issue that is always up for debate is that of appropriate dress for Christian women. I think that women in leadership need to have a firm grasp of what the Bible says about the way we dress. I think if we are to lead, we need to make sure that we understand our own attitudes towards clothing and fashion that are such a hot topic among women.

Now it has been argued, that we must dress modestly and appropriately

so that we do not cause our brothers in Christ to stumble. I would like to offer another reason. More important than choosing our dress so we do not cause men to stumble, is choosing our dress out of obedience to God. God asks us to be modest and humble to be “clothed with strength and dignity” (Prov 31:25).

Sometimes I think dressing up has nothing to do with guys and has more to do with how we will appear to other girls. As women we all dream of that one Cinderella moment when we get to be the prettiest one in the room. Often we desire that moment because that one special someone will notice us and we will live happily ever after. Why would he notice? Because we look so fine, we will catch his eye, more than any other girl there. We are essentially competing with every other girl in the room. Often when we look and feel fabulous is it because we believe that

we might just look a little better than someone else. So, are we dressing up for the guy? Or are we dressing up to beat the other girls?

If you have seen the movie “Mean Girls” you cannot help but remember the scene where the main character, in her daydream, lets out a fierce growl and proceeds to dive across the table and tackle her competition like a wild jungle cat. I think we all have a little inner jungle cat. I will admit to having to fight my inner jungle cat. She's the one who struggles not to constantly compare herself to others. She's the one who can find herself feeling jealous of the women she calls her very best friends. We are hardest on the most talented among us and often struggle with feeling like we don't measure up.

We already know we don't measure up to the magazine models so we pick someone we know, and make ourselves feel better by silently listing ways we are better than them. So far I've said “we” but being totally honest, I should say “I” or “me”. I don't honestly know if other women are plagued by the same self-doubt and insecurity. We don't talk about our petty jealousies in nice Christian circles. Or if we do, we phrase them as jokes or jabs. If we could be honest I think most women would admit to struggling not compete with other women for superiority. The last place we need to bring this competitive nature is to church.

Please understand I am not advocating that women of virtue have to be granola hippie types. When Proverbs 31 extols the virtues of a wife of noble character one of her qualities is that she is “clothed in fine linen and purple”.

Crossword

submitted by Zac and Launa K, answers on p. 17

Beautiful clothing or designer shoes are not the sign of weak character.

God loves beauty. But we all struggle with vanity. As women we are bombarded daily by a culture that values beauty and possessions above all else. Why, when Paul is speaking to women, does he speak of our apparel? Because this is an area of struggle for us. Down through the ages women have wanted to stand out in some way, to be noticed for some element of their physical appearance. Even at church! In one way or another each generation of women has found a way to make Sunday into a parade day. My mother did it with her hats.

The role of women in the church is currently changing. We are the generation that is being asked to step into new leadership roles previously unavailable to us. But that new opportunity comes with great responsibility. In the same part of 1Timothy quoted earlier, Paul goes on to describe leaders of the church. They are to be above reproach, worthy of respect. Paul even addresses women here, and specifically calls us to be temperate and trustworthy. The responsibilities of leadership have historically fallen squarely on the shoulders of men. Now, as women, we are asking for leadership roles. We need to take seriously the responsibility that goes along with the roles we seek. If we are to be given a more visible role in the leadership of the church, we are more responsible for our actions and the example that we set. If we desire to take on visible roles, we must know what the Bible has to say about who we are to be in Christ.

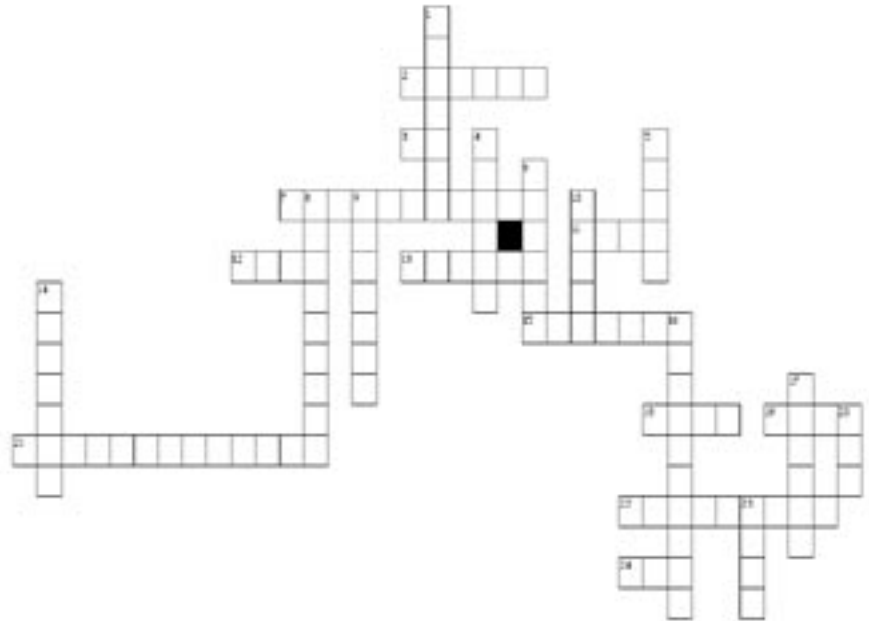
We all struggle with materialism and vanity. We struggle to love and encourage the women around us and not to allow ourselves to be in competition with them. I think that it is important to consider what God wants from the women of his church. What His values are.

Across

2. the most powerful thing we can do
3. what we say to people who leave their cell phones on in service
7. this crossword is in _____
11. American, Canadian, golden calf?
12. Fanny is our resident _____
13. Ryan, Dave and Randy play the _____
15. Easter _____ service
18. what Randy is , no not BOLD
19. if you need any information after the service you go to the _____
21. "the grease" in the cog of community life
22. fellowship, group, a unified body of believers, a core value
24. Mr. Crawford, also known as "the _____"

Down

1. not just singing but our lives
4. The core value artists love, (among others I'm sure)
5. THE book
6. _____ and Hands in Africa
8. the "foundational" core value of The Place
9. It's Bingham, It's Davidson, It's Conrad, no it's a gospel
10. our resident brat, I mean BRIT
14. The Place _____ is usually the highlight of the year
16. "involvement" core value, or the period of time before marriage
17. Jackson, Reno, and Doherty
20. in London they have Big Ben, at the place we have Big _____ (he's in charge of the ushers for offering, among other things)
23. "turn to the person _____ to you and tell them....."



Your turn. Email your submission to
cp@theplace.ca

Sherri P



summer 2005

NO PARKING anywhere but the LPC or Tyndall. :: NO STICKING GUM under chairs :: LOCK YOUR CAR as there are thieves 'about'



ongoing



MOSAIC

Wed for 10 weeks
(Starting SEPT.)
6:30pm Dinner
7:30 Sessions

- 1) Good faith, bad faith?
- 2) A Walk in the Garden
- 3) Salvation History
- 4) Jesus: His life and teachings
- 5) Jesus: Why did He have to die?
- 6) Jesus: His deity and resurrection
- 7) Trinity: 3-in-1? Father, Son and Spirit
- 8+9) Christian Life: choosing solitude, community & engagement
- 10) Thoughts from the floor

Our goal is to provide you a safe, non-threatening cafe-style environment that incorporates talks, Q&As, and small group conversations about the Christian faith.

Contact randy@lambrick.com

SMORGASBORD

There will be a variety of other servings to attend on Wednesday nights at Lambrick from Sept. on. Meal followed by fellowship and learning. What more could you want? Watch out for the registration forms.



For anyone looking to explore theology and the arts then this is for you.

www.cccollege.org

needs

PRAYER ROOM

Love God? Love people? Like to pray for them?

Then we need you! (Especially guys)

Whether praying with someone as they accept Christ into their lives, helping someone pray through a problem or thanking God, this ministry will bless you as much as it blesses others.

The prayer room is open 15 minutes after the Place service and is staffed by both men and women to allow for a comfortable environment.

Contact Alison to be part of this ministry. 592-6160 or a.stevens@shaw.ca

events

PLACE RETREAT

A highlight of the year for many,
Thetis Island Oct. 28-30th

MATTHEW DAVIDSON

Solstice Cafe July 18th 7:30pm \$5

Matthew will be launching his new EP "Glory is a Broken Hill", and supporting acts t.b.a.

JASON HARROD

coming in August



WOODSONG FESTIVAL

Premium folk fest and w/end away

All the details to be found at:

www.woodsonginc.com/concerts.htm

*and after
the Place...*



COMMUNITY LIFE

Lawn Games are the new Bowling

Summertime at the Place finds most our "formal" small groups taking a break before committing again in the fall, but that but that doesn't mean there's nowhere to go if you're new to the community or wanting to connect with others. Chances are, if you're looking to get involved you might want to meet some people first – this is where bowling has been of great help in the past.

Yes, you may recall that ol' twinkle toes here was often spotted on a Sunday night blathering on about who showed up for a rousing frame or three of ten-pin that afternoon. It was a great opportunity for many of us to get together to talk about our week, our faith and our bowling scores, but the weather has since turned too nice to carry on such a relationship indoors.

Enter "Lawn Games." The 'all white' uniform is optional, but we're ready to head out to Beacon Hill Park on Sunday afternoons and rediscover the "refined sports." That's right, the Park will be crawling with us as we place our wickets strategically between tourists and flowerbeds and dangerously toss weighted spheres despite the close vicinity of small children and squirrels. Before you know it, you too will be wondering where Croquet and Bocce have been all your recent lives.

There is a myth out there that Lawn Games are for the "more mature" but I know better. The fact is, I like them. You like them. You know you do. Tell me you're happy that Lawn Darts are only available on the garage sale black market and I'll stand corrected. But if we can't find community in Lawn Games we're either taking things too seriously - or not seriously enough. Is there anything more fun than a game where you are encouraged to send people off course? Or one where you can pretend to speak Italian! If you've ever watched



a seasoned vet play either of these games you know what James Prette means when he talks about "Grace and Truth."

I know you're interested, so I'll only ask "if you're able" to show up from 2-4pm on Sunday

afternoons "at the rock across the road from the washrooms" at Beacon Hill Park.

For more info, or a better sense of where the "rock across the road from the washrooms" is, drop me an email at theplacesmallgroups@shaw.ca. Or give me a call on actual day at 884-1500. All games are weather permitting, so please call if you're wondering!

Passing through one wicket at a time,

James Kingsley

(Proud Member of the V.I.C.E (Vancouver Island Croquet Enthusiasts) and your friendly neighbourhood small-groups-guy.)

CAFE SUBURBIA

Come experience our own coffee house after the Place every week. Fine coffee, delectable desserts and a chance for relaxing conversation. The Cafe also promotes bands and runs concerts at Lambrick and downtown.

Want to help? Contact Dave at cafe@theplace.ca



SMALL E-GROUP

Fancy some in-depth daily bible wrestling and an online fellowship feel?

Contact narrowgate@shaw.ca

PLACE KIDS MINISTRY

The Place offers a place for Kids who come with their parents to the Place. There is always a staffed nursery at the back of the main sanctuary. For kids (K to grade 5) there are special groups that meet downstairs and are run by groups of caring, responsible leaders.

Want to help? Contact Lisa at kids@theplace.ca

MIDDLE SCHOOL MINISTRY

Andy Renton works with Middle School ages and will develop what we have been doing with them on Sunday nights. If you want to find out what is going on, or:

Want to help? Contact Andy at msm@theplace.ca

OFFERING - TIME

Facilities/ Ushering - Ken Thomson

facilities@theplace.ca

Art and Music Setup - Ant Andrews

art@theplace.ca

Worship and Music - Launa Kremler

music@theplace.ca

OFFERING - \$\$\$

Our God is a generous God, and He calls us to be a generous people. If you wish to make financial giving easier, more regular or get a tax receipt at the end of the year you can:

- *Get some envelopes, and 'number' and a tax receipt...*
- *"Swipe your tithe" - Interac is available.*
- *Set up a direct debit*



SINGLE PARENTS GROUP

We will continue to meet during July and August, but in a format that includes Kids - in various locations according to the activity planned. This is because our numbers totally fluctuate over the summer and most of us want to enjoy the longer daylight hours and better weather by doing more informal things together like kite flying, mini-golf, BBQs and picnics. (Our Wed. night and Saturday special occasion itinerary is available by contacting LPC, or Penny Hoepner at pennyh@uvic.ca)

Regarding our need for Wed. night volunteers to help with the kids: It appears we're running currently with a one-to-one ratio for the rest of June, which is super, and we want to take this opportunity to thank all who have given their time. We've had a blast with them, and the kids have loved every second in their company! We're especially grateful for Rachel Lawrance, who has very capably coordinated the evening activity and mustered the volunteers. The parents have been grateful for her consistent presence. To all our helpers we say THANK YOU, and have a great summer!

SPG will begin meeting on Wed. nights - in a formal way- once again in September. At that time we will be calling on the community to help us with our kids. We will be looking for volunteers to engage in activities with them either on-site or possibly at the Gordon Head Swimming Pool. When Smorgasbord starts up in the Fall, the childcare becomes hyper-organized and our volunteers fall in with the organization of those nights. Everyone has a great time, and it's a wonderful relationship building opportunity with kids who will never forget you. So when you are considering your plans for the fall, please think SPG!

Michelle M



SOLUTION

Across

2. prayer 3. sh 7. commonplace 11. idol 12. poet 13. guitar 15. sunrise 18. bald 19. back 21. jameskingsley 22. community 24 don

Down

1. worship 4. beauty 5. bible 6. Hearts 8. orthodoxy 9. Matthew 10. Simon 14. retreat 16. engagement 17. Janets 20. Ken 23. next

"I don't go to church ... I don't consider myself to be religious ... I am, however, a deeply spiritual person."

How many of you, in one way or another – it may have been phrased differently – have heard this statement before? I hear it all the time ... almost every time somebody finds out what I do for a living. "Wow, I 'm not religious, but I am spiritual." Are you curious what people mean? I've thought about it hard and I think I've boiled it down to this...I wonder if we've been too hard... To me, this person is saying, "I want to believe there's more to life than dying with the most toys. There's more to life than what the scientific community can reduce and explain. I want to believe there is something sacred." And sometimes added is this little critical sting, "Randy, I went to church to find it, and I found Christians preoccupied with other things. So now I don't go." Are you sympathetic to this person? Maybe at one point you were this person. Are there good reasons why organized religion is 'out' and spirituality is 'in'? Maybe Jesus was irreligious. What do you think would be the first thing Jesus would say to this person? Would he say, "You're wrong ... go back to church, all you need to learn is a little Christianeeze – just enough to get by – and learn how to smile and tell everybody that everything is all right – even when it's not. Church attendance will eventually result in genuine spiritual vitality." Or would he say, "I can tell you are thirsty for living water."

I think the church has to wake up to the fact that our culture has a thirst. I think pastors and church leaders have to wake up to the fact that our churches are also thirsty. You come in here some of you tired, some of you struggling, some of you living on the surface. But I know you want to encounter God.

What does a spiritual person look like? What image does that conjure in your mind? When we say somebody is showing evidence of the Holy Spirit working in their lives, what do we mean? When I open up the Scriptures, it's clear to me that we've made some mistakes here. And I think we have to

be careful.

Firstly, I think we tend connect spirituality only to people that are deeply intuitive. We talk about these people as being 'spiritually sensitive'. Think about that phrase – connecting spirituality to emotion. Despite my education in philosophy and logic, when I take personality tests, I tend to be more intuitive/emotive than rational/logical. The problem with people like me we can become susceptible to suggestion. Frequently we can look at events, or look at people, and feel things, and then connect dots that we shouldn't be connecting. We come to conclusions. Then because we "feel" those conclusions, we call them "revelations". We tell people our revelations and they ask us, "How come you saw this revelation and I didn't?" You say, "Because I am spiritually sensitive and you are not." Doug once said, "Randy do you know the difference between faith and delusion?" Faith is unafraid of facts. It's a way of seeing facts. And it is SLOW to draw conclusions.

The second mistake we make is to equate "strong spiritual gifting" with spiritual maturity. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are fascinating and exciting; especially when those gifts are public gifts. To be publicly gifted is to receive praise from our church for our performance and abilities. The more exotic the gift, the more spiritual the person. For these reasons and perhaps others, the gifts of the Spirit receive far more attention in our church culture than the fruit of the Spirit. Paul makes it abundantly clear, in 1 Corinthians 13, that you can be spiritually gifted and be less than nothing. Some of the most spiritually gifted people in the world are some of the most spiritually immature. What is Paul saying to this group of 'gift obsessive' Christians? "Grow up ... there are bigger things at stake."

I am not anti-"spiritual gift". God has given each one of you spiritual gifts to build up his church and reflect his kingdom. And I believe we should be

open to everything God wants to give us. I also believe we absolutely must return to spiritual formation as a priority in the church. Instead of sending our leaders to time management seminars we need to send them to prayer retreats. I don't believe the effectiveness of the church in the future will be dependant on the mastery of skills, or the charisma of certain leaders. I believe the effectiveness of the church in the future will be dependant on whether we are willing to live by the Spirit.

But still, I ask, what does it mean to be spiritual? And what does a spiritual person look like? We should be clear about the things God makes clear. And this is something He makes abundantly clear. Paul writes in Galatians 5:16-25

So I say, live by [walk in] the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

What is developing here is a contrast between living by the Spirit and living by the sinful nature or the flesh. Here we begin to understand the nature of the freedom Christ has extended to us. When the scriptures say that we are free, the context never means that we are free to do whatever we want. "I'm under grace, I'm free do whatever I want." The freedom Christ extends is freedom from sin. Now, in Christ, we have a choice between slavery and freedom: slavery to sin, and freedom in the Spirit. That's the freedom we have.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.





Date	Teaching	Title
Jul 3	Fruit of the Spirit	Love
Jul 10	Fruit of the Spirit	Joy
Jul 17	Fruit of the Spirit	Peace
Jul 24	Fruit of the Spirit	Patience
Jul 31	Fruit of the Spirit	Kindness
Aug 7	Fruit of the Spirit	Goodness
Aug 14	Fruit of the Spirit	Faithfulness
Aug 21	Fruit of the Spirit	Gentleness
Aug 28	Fruit of the Spirit	Self-control

Schedule

So what does slavery look like? I want to make just a couple of quick observations here. First, it is obvious that evil is not capable of community. All of these things are ultimately about the self, and all of them eventually lead people to grow in on themselves. Second,

it is obvious to me that the first five and the last two are easily identified. And, as a church, we've been very quick to identify them. But look what sneaks into the middle? These things aren't easily seen. Just for a moment – look inside – sit in self-judgment. Maybe the church should be slower to point fingers. Judgment begins here, people.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires [we are free from that slavery]. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

If you want to know what a spiritual person looks like, from a biblical perspective, look no further than here. The Bible is absolutely clear. The 'spiritual person' is a person whose life demonstrates love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Now what does this tell you? It tells me, that true spirituality has more to do with what kind of husband I am to my wife, with what kind of sport I am when I coach lacrosse, it has more to do with how I conduct myself at a leadership meeting ... than it has to do with casting out demons. If you want to know how spiritual I am, don't ask me if I've seen a vision from heaven; ask my neighbors what kind of neighbour I am. Christian

spirituality is really earthy stuff. It has no expression outside of the quality of our relationships. Let me also add this: the true mark of a truly 'Spirit-filled' church is not how ecstatic it is. It is not how doctrinally pure it is. It is not how hip the pastors are or how rocking-yet-sensitive their worship music is. The true mark

of a truly 'Spirit-filled' church is this: do they truly love one another? Are they unified? Are they a holy-yet-grace-filled presence in the community? It is no accident that the fruit of the Spirit are not elevated as 'the test'. We prefer other standards. Honestly, I'd rather be measured by my ability to preach than my ability to love. It is easier for me to preach than to be patient: to talk about peace than to practice it.

Now, very important. do not look at these as rules of conduct. We don't get there by exercising self-determination. There is always a concern, when looking at the Fruit of the Spirit, that we will begin to focus on things. This is not a new law. In fact, when we focus on the particulars of conduct, we are in danger of placing all our focus on ourselves. We are in danger of actually becoming self-centered.

The Pharisees were so busy refining and finessing the formulas of religion that they lost interest in the content. We don't "get there" by refining and finessing things.

We "get there" by fixing our eyes on Jesus and keeping in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5 is full of this kind of language: "Walk in the Spirit", "Be led by the Spirit" "Live by the Spirit", "Keep in Step with the Spirit." This isn't the language of moral code. This is the language of a relational pilgrimage. We are being invited to walk with

someone. God is inviting us to walk with His Spirit. And, understand, there is no spiritual autobahn. We travel on foot. Walking is a relatively slow mode of transportation. It's important that we don't busy ourselves. There can be a lot of activity on the path and no progress. But as we walk, we find ourselves entering a larger story. As we journey, God super-naturalizes our lives. Life becomes something of a spiritual mystery. A seemingly mundane thing, like picking up your kids from school, can become a sacred act. We begin to see God's tangible presence everywhere.

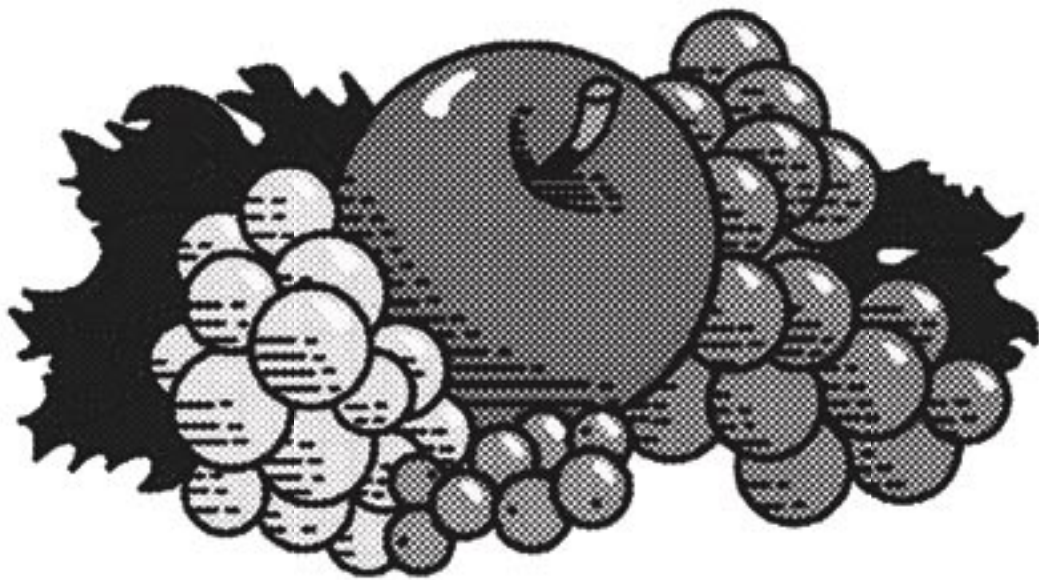
I challenged you to pray a question a couple of weeks ago. I challenged you to pray, "God, what are you already doing? How may I participate?" In this context these questions move beyond being missional-evangelism questions. "God, what are you doing here, in my life? What are you already doing here, in our community? I don't want to be a hindrance to what Your Spirit is doing. I want to participate."

By fixing our eyes on Jesus and keeping in Step with the Spirit, I believe we will see a progressive transformation in our lives. By fixing our eyes on Jesus and keeping in Step with the Spirit, I believe we will see a progressive transformation in our church. This is the liberating thing about the Good News of Jesus Christ. Fruit is something that is produced in us. These are not "the fruits of my labours and efforts" but the fruit of God's Spirit at work in my life.

"I am the vine," Jesus says in John 15:5, "you are the branches. If someone remains in me and I in them, they will bear much fruit."

So, as we look at the Fruit of the Spirit over the summer, may we remember the Giver of these good things. And may the Spirit move us. Move us into God's future. Amen.

Randy Hein



FRUIT ^{OF} THE SPIRIT

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