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God in the Workplace: A Labor of Love

By Janet Chismar

Business talks about race, gender equity, sexuality, disability...but religion remains a taboo.

“Avodah,” a Hebrew word, means both “work” and “worship.” Yet for most of the secular world, and even for some Christians, the two are at opposite ends of the dictionary. According to the latest issue of *Across the Board*, a business leaders’ magazine, “After 200 years, the nation continues to see religion and commerce as fundamentally incompatible.”

In the article, writer Laura Nash says, “Business people who claim to love their churches have difficulty identifying any ways in which their religion is a positive resource for them in their working lives.”

Nash is a senior research fellow at Harvard Business School. Prior to that she was a visiting lecturer and program director on business and religion at Harvard Divinity School’s Center for the Study of Values in Public Life. According to Nash, the split between commerce and church can be attributed to Christianity’s long-standing dismissal of business as “a legitimate focus of religious expression,” and “deep ideological hostility toward capitalism and the modern corporation.”

The result for many business people, she says, “is a form of schizophrenia. “[They] assume one worldview and identity on Sunday, but another on Monday morning. They cannot see how a single, church-based faith can be an ethical resource for leadership in a postmodern world.” Yet in the July 9, 2001, issue of *Fortune Magazine*, Nash is quoted as saying: “Spirituality in the workplace is exploding.”

That issue of *Fortune*, devoted to “God and Business,” profiles a group of executives who belong to Business Leaders for Excellence, Ethics, and Justice (BEEJ). For more than a decade, said *Fortune*, these people have wrestled with big questions: How can business promote family life? What is a just wage? When are layoffs justified?

The executives say the struggle to integrate faith with work is never-ending. Lately they find their numbers have grown a lot.

“Why would we want to look for God in our work?” asks BEEJ co-founder Gregory F.A. Pierce, a publishing executive and the author of a new book called *Spirituality@Work*. “The simple answer is most of us spend so much time working, it would be a shame if we couldn’t find God there. A more complex answer is that there is a creative energy in work that is somehow tied to God’s creative energy. If we can understand that connection, perhaps we can use it to transform the workplace into something remarkable.”

According to *Fortune*, these executives are in the vanguard of a diverse, mostly unorganized mass of believers - a counterculture bubbling up all over corporate America - who want to bridge the traditional divide between spirituality and work. Historically, says *Fortune*, “such folk operated below the radar, on their own or in small workplace groups where they prayed or studied the Bible.” But now they are becoming more organized.

“Employees don’t leave their problems at the door when they punch in,” says Gil Stricklin, founder and president of Marketplace Ministries. Stricklin heads an effort to place chaplains in work places.

His vision for the ministry started while he was serving as an army chaplain. “I saw that the people I took care of would call me when they were not on active duty. Whatever the problem was, they didn’t have a pastor, and they would call me to ask for help.”

Since 1984, Marketplace Ministries has been providing chaplains that can offer advice, encouragement, and spiritual counsel to employees 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Today, more than 230 companies have seen the value of hiring a chaplain from the organization.

What makes a company want to hire the services of a Christian chaplain? Well, for one thing, it’s good for business. “It saves us a lot of time,” comments a CEO of a printing company. “The chaplains help to handle the personal issues the employees have - and the chaplains are the first ones to arrive when an employee’s family faces a tragedy.”

Other benefits include improved employee morale, increased productivity, and the meeting of employees’ spiritual needs.

The chaplains are already trained in ministry, but Marketplace Ministries prepares them for the needs that appear at almost every job site. “We see families hurting, marriages breaking up, and racial tension,” comments Stricklin. “And if these workers don’t go to church, they can feel as if they have nowhere to turn.”

Henry Blackaby, author of *Experiencing God*, agrees that God is moving in a major way in today’s workplace. “I’m hearing a heart-cry from the CEOs in the business world,” writes Blackaby in *Leadership Network Explorer Lite #5*.

According to Blackaby, “There is an avalanche of CEOs from major companies - the movers and shakers across the nation - who want to be involved. They want to know, ‘How do I relate my relationship to God as a Christian CEO to the workplace?’”

“When we talk with them about the fact that, in the Bible, most all of the activity of God that changed society was done in the workplace and not in the church, suddenly the lights come on and they say, ‘How can I then make decisions in the workplace that make a radical difference?’”

Meanwhile the secular world remains wary. “As much as Americans say they believe in God, most also believe in religious freedom, and hence in the separation of church and boardroom,” claims *Fortune*. “And considering all the crimes committed in the name of one god or another, it’s only natural to imagine zealous executives doing more harm than good. So while the business world has found ways to talk about race, gender equity, sexuality, disability, and even mental illness, religion has remained the last taboo.”

Janet Chismar is Editor of Religion Today.

Western Washington Family Digest
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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

How many times have you heard the words “Since September 11th”? How has this date affected your personal lives? Are you filled with anxiety, worry and fear? Each time the television or radio is turned on you are reminded of the poor economy, more lay-offs, the hunt for terrorists and ravages of war in Afghanistan and other countries.

Many of you may have your own personal financial problems, divorce, loss of a loved one or problems with a teenager. The list could go on. You are not to worry about these things. Jesus said “Who among you can add one cubit to his or her life by worrying”? Needless worry and anxiety wastes time and creates more stress in an already stressful environment. There are some things we can do nothing about and it is those burdens that Peter tells us to lay before the Lord.

You can go to Him anytime, anywhere and tell Him what is troubling you. You cannot give the Lord part of your problems, fears and anxieties. By holding on to any part will keep you from the complete peace God has promised His children. You cannot be partly peaceful or partly anxious. Paul says “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6). If we fight and labor under the weight of anxiety and worry, thankfulness is hard to find. Anxiety divides our minds and makes it impossible to concentrate on the promises of God.

As you enter into the new year, ask God to keep your focus on Him even when answers seem delayed or unanswered. You will gain inner peace that withstand trials and tribulations by placing your trust and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1 “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

MAY YOU HAVE A BLESSED AND PEACEFUL NEW YEAR.

Lois

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GUEST PASTOR'S CORNER

Living What We Believe

By Pastor Tim W. Clarkson
Randle Church of the Nazarene

In Jesus teaching in the Sermon on the Mount in chapter 5 of Matthew the says in verses 13-16, “You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.” Not, you should be salt. Not you ought to be light. No! “You ARE salt! You ARE light! By virtue of what I have made you to be by My grace, you are!” The grammar that Matthew uses in this section makes the second person very emphatic: “YOU are!”

Because the Beatitudes begin the Sermon on the Mount, they also set the criteria for life in the kingdom of God. What we do as Christians must flow out of what God has made us to be. Being always precedes doing.

Jesus uses a good metaphor to for this emphasis, because salt does not exist for itself. Salt is the preservative that penetrates our food to give lasting value. Salt brings out the flavors in our food. In the same way, the disciples of Jesus exist for God's work in the world. Disciples are the seasonings that bring out the God-flavors in the world. But to be the preservatives that penetrate into society and help to purify a fallen and sinful humanity.

Light is the second metaphor that Jesus uses in this section. Light defuses the darkness. It is visible. It draws attention. The disciples of Jesus are visible expressions of the kingdom of God in the world. As Christians, we are not called to some type of covert mission to the world. No undercover Christians! As Christians we are called to unveil the face of God to our culture.

And all Jesus does is give the facts! “You are salt!” Fact. “You are light!” Fact. But the facts are immediately followed by function. Jesus continues to speak in reference to what is before he impresses on us what to do.

But while Jesus does not command His disciples to become salty (because their saltiness is a gift of God's grace), He does challenge them to stay salty (to be what they are).

It appears that disciples who are not freely giving what they have received are in danger of losing what they have been given. In latter part of Matthew 5:13 Jesus says, “But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it useful again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless” (New Living Translation). And Jesus says when that happens they become good-for-nothing. The word in the Greek language is dumb. Disciples who cease to be who they are simply become foolish, because they have lost the meaning of what they are to be as followers of Jesus Christ. And those

followers suffer a very peculiar persecution. They aren't ambushed, beaten or attacked. They are merely ignored. Their faith is so insipid and tasteless, they're not worth taking seriously.

We are to be visible in the darkness, to the point people to Christ, and we are to do that by penetrating into the very fabric of the world because of WHO and WHAT we are.

People often ask, “Why do I exist? What is my purpose in living? Is there a reason I'm alive? Christians need not ask those questions. Christian disciples exist in the world to bring glory to God through their lives. We do not become salt by tightening our belts. We do not give off light by gritting our teeth. We become change agents in God's world through God's grace – by being what we are!

Attitude

by Charles Swindoll

“The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company... a church... a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past... we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude... I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it... and so it is with you... we are in charge of our Attitudes.”

February's Verse:

...it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Romans 10:15

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'Lord of the Rings' has ring of the Christian Lord

By Jeff Robinson
Baptist Press News Service

Crosswalk.com News Channel - LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)-Near the end of his life, J.R.R. Tolkien (also spelled Tolkein) received a letter from a young girl posing a question concerning the chief end of man.

Tolkien, author of "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy which has now become a motion picture, provided the youngster an answer that lends insight into the worldview of the realm in which he casts his fantasy novels.

"It may be said that the purpose of life for any one of us is to increase according to our capacity, our knowledge of God by all the means we have and to be moved by it to praise and thanks," he wrote. "[To God we must say,] 'We praise you, we call you holy, we worship you, we proclaim your glory, we thank you for the greatness of your splendor.'"

Tolkien's three-book fantasy series -- written in the 1940s and 50s -- are now the subject of a movie trilogy, the first installment of which will arrive in theatres on Dec. 19. The remaining two parts will be released during the holiday season over the next two years.

In a lecture on the life of Tolkien, James Parker, professor of worldview and culture at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said the movie will serve as fruitful viewing for Christians.

"He operates out of a thoroughgoing trinitarian worldview and (he) says that very explicitly, plainly and bluntly on several occasions," Parker said Dec. 5. "He has a traditionalist Catholic worldview, which means his doctrine of God, his doctrine of the Trinity and his Christology were totally orthodox.

"I have differences with him because of his positions on soteriology (the doctrine of salvation) and ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church). But in terms of his trinitarian formulation of the doctrine of God, there would be no differences (between Protestants and Catholics) because of his historical orthodox expressions of those doctrines. In fact, he says himself that 'The Lord of the Rings' grows out of this fundamental belief system."

Parker said the most obvious declaration of Christianity in the trilogy is found in another book by Tolkien, "The Silmarillion." In it, Tolkien details the historical background of Middle Earth -- the fictional world in which the story of "The Lord of the Rings" takes place."

In "The Silmarillion," Tolkien speaks of The One who is the creator of the universe and everything in it. This parallels the Genesis creation account, Parker said. The providence of God is also obvious throughout "The Lord of the Rings" because Tolkien's Middle Earth is clearly a moral universe with a set of universal absolutes regarding right and wrong, good and evil, Parker said.

"Not only is God superintending Tolkien's Middle Earth, but He is governing it according to His will and accomplishing His own ends; this comes through in many places in the story," he said.

It was Tolkien who, as a professor of Anglo-Saxon language at Oxford University, led a colleague to embrace Christ in 1929. The colleague was C.S. Lewis, who would go on to become a stalwart apologist for the Christian faith. Lewis also wrote a Christian fantasy series, "The Chronicles of Narnia," along with apologetic works such as "Mere Christianity," and "The Problem of Pain."

It was Tolkien's view of myth -- that it is always grounded in the reality of the transcendent God, (even if subtly) -- that ultimately shattered the barriers to Christianity for Lewis.

"Tolkien did not mean by 'myth' that it is defined as 'non-historical,'" Parker said, "but that it exhibits certain characteristics, certain ideas, recurring themes such as the dying and rising God, the sense of the moral universe behind things.

"Lewis said when he read the Gospels, he felt like he was reading a myth because it contained mythical elements. But ultimately, he knew it was fact. This was the 'true myth' that was absolutely true and historical."

But can the Tolkien movie bridge the gap between Christians and non-Christians in a way that will enable believers to proclaim the saving Gospel of God? Parker feels confident that the movie -- with its patently theistic world, albeit a make-believe one -- will do just that.

"The moral universe will do that," he said. "If they are really into Tolkien, you can go back to the 'Silmarillion' and the view of God which comes through there. And you can contrast that with other views in say, 'Star Wars' (with its impersonal, pantheistic 'force'), or even Harry Potter, as far as that goes.

"Also, the sense of providence that goes through it -- there is a sense of providential oversight in 'The Lord of the Rings' that is inexorable. You have all these individual players whose roles are not lessened by the overarching providential drive of the story."

MUSIC REVIEW

Ron Block: Faraway Land

Rounder Records

Out from the shadow of Alison Krauss, Union Station's multi-instrumentalist/songwriter Ron Block displays fine chops and an even finer pure Americana singing voice. Making evident who supplies the spiritual sensibilities of Union Station, Block writes songs that sound somewhat somber, yet speak of the hope that lies in a relationship with Jesus Christ. Combining elements of Mountain Music, Blues, Folk and Country-Gospel, Block shows a pop sensibility that unifies Far Away Land. The CD's story paints a compelling whole. Far Away Land could succeed in bringing a much larger audience to a largely under-appreciated style of music.

Paul Baloche: God of Wonders

Integrity

Worship leader Paul Baloche's latest release "God of Wonders" is augmented by producer Steve Hindalong (City on a Hill project producer) and several top-notch studio musicians. Together they help him create one of the best sounding, innovative live worship discs heard by these ears in many moons. The real strength however is Baloche himself and his pop songwriting smarts. Rarely have such sing-able songs been so sturdily crafted. "We Humble Ourselves" is positively sublime, featuring some of the most beautiful harmonies ever laid down on disc. With each new release, Baloche raises the standard of modern worship recordings. Get this one now!

Caedmon's Call : In the Company of

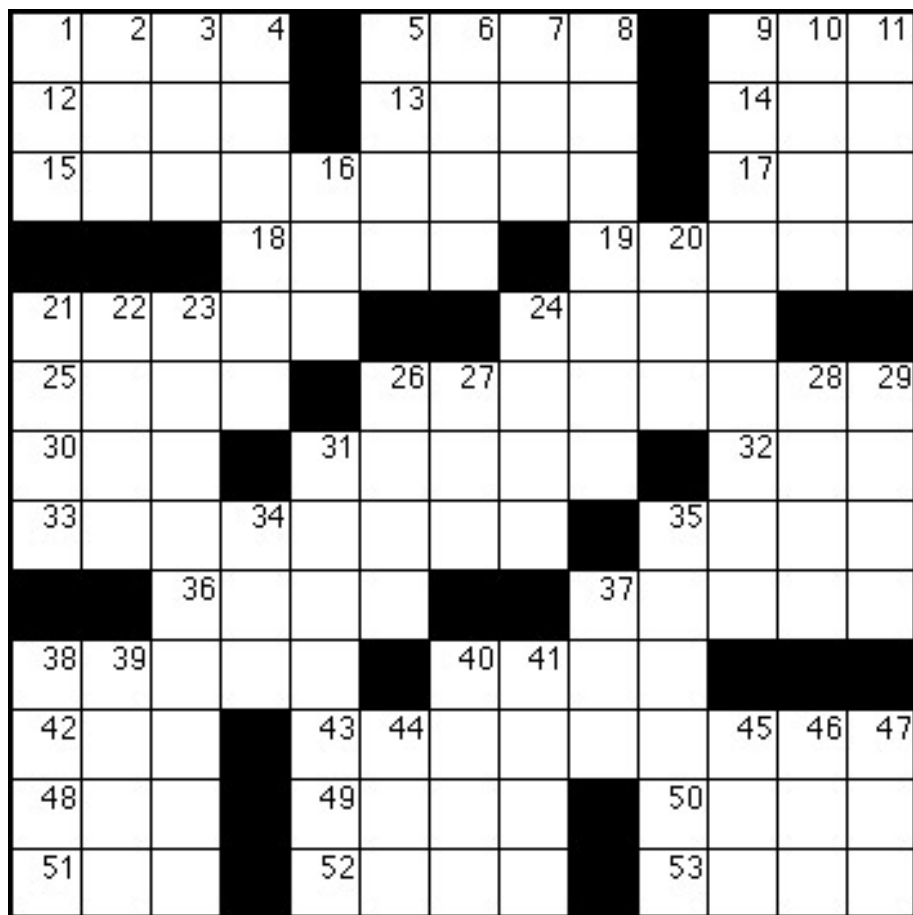
Angels

Essential

Comprising a middle ground of sorts between the Folk-pop of Caedmon's Call and the more experimental nature of Long Line of Leavers, the band's latest effort In the Company of Angels satisfies fans of both camps. Caedmon's first "proper" worship album, the disc contains such challenging fare as the bouncy opening "Who You Are" as well as the simple yet wonderful "Thy Mercy" and "We Delight". They might as well release a songbook right away as several of these songs have "Worship Classic" written all over them. A first class step into the worship category.

Reviewed by Bruce Adolph
Christian Musician Magazine
www.christianmusician.com

DISCLAIMER: Not all opinions expressed in the Western Washington Family Digest reflect the opinions of the paper staff.



Across

1. Belonging to Noah's son (Gen 7:13)
5. A duke (Gen. 36:43)
9. Tree
12. Ancestor of Jesus (Matt. 1:7)
13. Female camel
14. Greek for "new"
15. Christ purchased our ___ (Luke 19:9)
17. King Alfred's city (abbr.)
18. Kind of ore
19. "___ on me, my God" (Neh. 5:19)
21. Composed of 2 metals
24. Fuel from a tree (2 words)
25. "Ye have the ___ always with you" (Matt. 26:11)
26. "He ___ them walking on the sea" (Mark 6:48)
30. Sin (Prov. 14:22)
31. Paul sailed to this city (Acts 20:15)
32. Metal for cans
33. "I know that my ___ liveth" (Job 19:25)
35. Lat. prefix meaning "almost"
36. Belonging to a male
37. Eats
38. Barked
40. The Lamb opened one (Rev. 6:1)
42. Protein food (Job 6:6)
43. "I will ___ my covenant" (Gen. 6:18)
48. River (Span.)
49. Beverage (pl.)
50. Parcel of land
51. Deity
52. We must ___ evil (Psalms 97:10)
53. It controls a horse

Down

1. Possesses
2. Camel's-hair robe
3. .001 of an inch
4. Jesus is our ___ (John 4:42)
5. Opposite of "out of" (1 Sam. 10:6)
6. Noah heard it for 40 days (Gen. 7:12)
7. Gone by (1 Sam. 9:20)
8. "... the ___ and the wimples" (Isa. 3:22)
9. God will ___ my darkness (Psalms 18:28)
10. Man's name
11. Member of a religious order
16. Slang for "any"
20. The furnace was exceeding ___ (Dan. 3:22)
21. Mimic
22. Traditional knowledge
23. "The ___ will enlighten ..." (3 words, Psalms 18:28)
24. Love (Lat.)
26. Eccentric pieces, rotating
27. Cockney for "home"
28. Prong of a fork
29. God called His mighty ___ (Isa. 13:3)
31. "He ___ forth two of his disciples" (Mark 11:1)
34. Combining form in zoology
35. She became a ___ of salt (Gen. 19:26)
37. A little bit
38. Ice formation
39. Foreign trade discount
40. Immediately
41. "Woe to them that are at ___ in Zion" (Amos 6:1)

FOR SALE: A complete set of encyclopedias. Like new. Since our child has become a teenager, she now knows everything and we no longer have need of reference books.

There comes a time in the life of every child when he or she tries to break away from parents. They want to be on their own -- to do it their way -- and they resist parents at every turn. This can be a difficult time for both parents and child. Confrontations can develop and angry words fill the air.

The problem is two-fold. Most parents are wise enough to know that, in spite of conventional wisdom to the contrary, a child of 13 or 14 is not ready make all of their own decisions. Also, parents are saddened that their kids are actually growing up. In a few years they will go to college and will be on their own. But a half-grown child, just beginning to feel his oats, is more concerned about independence than parental love and protection.

Jesus wanted to protect His children as a loving parent protects his child. After one of His many encounters with religious leaders, Jesus grieved over Jerusalem. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing." (Matthew 23:37 NIV) Neither the teachers of the law nor the Pharisees would listen to Him, however. They, too, thought they knew everything.

Do you know everything, or are you listening to Jesus? He wants you to come to Him for loving protection. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. (Isaiah 40:11 KJV)

Like children and their parents, we sometimes rebel against God because we are so filled with ourselves we think our Creator cannot give us what we really need. But those who turn to Jesus discover to their delight that He can help us like no one else can. It is a wise child who knows he can always benefit from his loving parent's wise counsel -- and listens when it is given.

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Grace Is All We Really Need

Even though we are now in faith, the heart is always ready to boast itself before God and say, "After all, I have preached the law, lived so well and done so much that surely He will take this into account." We even want to haggle with God to make Him regard our life, but it cannot be done. With men you may boast, "I have done the best I could...If anything is lacking, I will still try to make recompense," but when you come before God, leave all that boasting at home. Remember to appeal from justice into grace. But let anybody try this and he will see and experience how exceedingly hard and bitter a thing it is for a man, who all his life, has been marred and has worked righteousness to pull himself out of it with all his heart, would rise up through faith in the One mediator. I myself have been preaching and cultivating it through reading and writing for almost twenty years and still feel the old clinging dirt of wanting to deal so with God that I may contribute something so that He will give me His grace in exchange for my holiness. Still I cannot get it into my head that I should surrender myself completely to sheer grace, yet I know that this is what I should and must do. - Martin Luther

Down Cont.

44. "... there was no more ___" (Rev. 21:1)
45. Frozen water (Psalms 147:17)
46. Ceylon is now ___ Lanka
47. "... as a ___ gathereth her chickens" (Matt. 23:37)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PAGE

What are the Biblical guidelines for dating relationships?

God wants the best for us in every area of our lives. This includes relationships with boyfriends or girlfriends. We should date for fun, friendship, personality development and selection of a mate, not to be popular or for security. Don't allow peer pressure to force you into dating situations that are not appropriate. Realize that over 50% of girls and over 40% of guys never date in high school. The Bible gives us some very clear principles to guide us in making decisions about dating.

1. Guard your heart.
The Bible tells us to be very careful about giving our affections, because our heart influences everything else in our life. "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." (Proverbs 4:23)
2. You are known by the company you keep.
We also tend to become like the company we keep. This principle is closely related to the first one and is just as important in friendships as in dating. "Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character." (1 Corinthians 15:33)
3. Christians should only date other Christians.
Although it is fine for Christians to have non-Christian friends, those who are especially close to our heart should be mature believers who are seeking to follow Christ with their lives. "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14).
4. Is it really love?
1 Corinthians 13:4-7 defines real love. Ask yourself these questions:
Are you patient with each other?
Are you kind to each other?
Are you never envious of each other?
Do you never boast to or about each other?
Is your relationship characterized by humility?
Are you never rude to each other?
Are you not self-seeking?
Are you not easily angered with each other?
Do you keep no record of wrongs?
Are you truthful with each other?
Do you protect each other?
Do you trust each other?

If you answered "yes" to the above questions, then 1 Corinthians 13 says that you truly have a loving relationship. If you answered "no" to any of the above questions, then maybe you should discuss those issues with your boyfriend or girlfriend.

How Far is Too Far?

Many students ask the question, "How far should I go on a date?" Here are some principles that will help you decide what is appropriate behavior on a date.

1. Does the situation I put myself in invite sexual immorality or help me avoid it?
1 Corinthians 6:18 says to "flee from sexual immorality." We cannot do this if we are tempting ourselves through carelessness.
2. What kind of reputation does my potential date have?
When you accept a date you are essentially saying, "My values are the same as your values." That in itself can put you in a position you may regret later. Remember 1 Corinthians 15:33, "Bad company corrupts good character."
3. Will there be any pressure to use alcohol or drugs?
Don't give up your values for a date.
4. Am I attracting the wrong type of person?
Make sure that the message you send with your actions doesn't attract people who will lead you to compromise your values.
5. Am I aware that sin is first committed in the heart?

Matthew 5:28 says, "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already

6. Are you going to the right kind of place for a date?
Many good intentions have been for gotten because the temptation and opportunity were too great.
7. Am I doing anything to encourage sexual desire?
Don't engage in any impure contact that is sexually motivated, such as petting.

If You Have Already Gone Too Far, Why Stop?

1. God is forgiving.
1 John 1:9 tells us that God is faithful and just to forgive our sins if we confess them. You can start fresh with God anytime you want to.
2. God is holy.
His word tells us that sexual sin is wrong, and He knows what is best.
3. God is caring.
God knows that going too far before marriage tends to break up couples and leads to less happy marriages. He knows that most guys do not want to marry a girl who has been intimate with someone else.

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Seattle, Philadelphia To Be Focal Points of Southern Baptist Ministry in 2002

By James Dotson, Baptist Press

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)--Philadelphia and Seattle in many ways are a study in contrasts, from the historic birthplace of our nation's freedoms in the Northeast to the high-tech epicenter of the Northwest.

But Southern Baptists in both cities are ramping up for a common goal: impacting their communities with the gospel and seeing lives transformed by the Christian gospel as never before. They'll do it with the help volunteers from across the country through the North American Mission Board's Strategic Focus Cities (SFC) outreach efforts.

"We hope that we can work together with both Southern Baptists and other evangelical groups within these cities to make an impact for the Kingdom," said Gary Frost, NAMB's vice president for strategic partnerships.

The 2002 efforts in both cities follow focused SFC efforts in Chicago and Phoenix in 2000 and Boston and Las Vegas in 2001 -- although evangelism and church-planting efforts in each of the cities occurs both before and after the primary implementation year.

John Eckle, city coordinator for the "Embracing Seattle" effort, described that city as largely unchurched, with little Christian influence.

"It's an area that is so steeped in recreation and entrepreneurialism that people just don't seem to have time," said Eckle. "Their lives are so full that when they do have time they just want to get away... from anything that might require commitment."

There are 120 churches in the Puget Sound Baptist Association, "most of them quite small," said Eckle, who came to Embracing Seattle as a retired chief engineer for the Seattle-based Boeing Company. Ninety percent of the region's four million people do not attend church at all, and only 4 percent attend an evangelical congregation of any kind.

The population also is ethnically diverse, with a particularly strong contingent of Asians and Pacific Islanders. The largest SBC church, First Baptist Church of Tacoma, is a Korean congregation. And one of the association's most exciting new churches, he said, is a mission to Native Americans sponsored by another Korean congregation.

One of the most ambitious strategies for Embracing Seattle lies in church planting. Organizers set a goal of starting 30 new SBC churches this year, and by mid-December 26 of those churches had been started. But that's only the start. Plans call for 60 new churches next year, and another 90 in the following year. "These guys are just unrestrained in terms of their ambition," Eckle said of Embracing Seattle's church-planting team.

Such numbers require not only the resources made available through Embracing Seattle, he said, but also partnerships with individual churches committed to

providing both funding and volunteers.

Prayer goals for Embracing Seattle also are ambitious, with 5,000 prayer warriors being enlisted across the country. Each volunteer is assigned to pray for a different family in the Puget Sound region each day over the next year, resulting in focused prayer for each of the area's 1.5 million families.

Ministries also are in place or being developed to touch everyone from the displaced teens in Seattle's inner city to the millionaires of suburban Redmond and Bellevue, which have some of the highest per-capita income levels in the country.

In Philadelphia, meanwhile, both the existing Southern Baptist presence and primary ministry areas are predominantly African-American and urban. Anglos make up only about 15 percent of the Southern Baptist churches, with predominantly African American churches making up 65 percent and other languages approximately 20 percent, according to Kathy Sheldon, associate city coordinator for the "Philadelphia Spirit" SFC effort."

At the present time we have only one Anglo congregation in Philadelphia, so there's a great need for church planting," she said.

Plans call for starting up to 70 new churches over the next two years, including one flagship church established last year in partnership with First Baptist Church of Orlando. Keystone Community Church in the suburb of Bucks already has 300 members.

The city is also significantly less affluent than Seattle as a whole, and the ministry strategies reflect those needs. Multi-housing ministry, volunteer opportunities with a food bank and other local ministries, homeless shelters, clothing and feeding ministries, and children's ministries all will figure prominently into volunteer needs.

As with Seattle, much of the effort also will be placed into strengthening both new existing churches through localized events and strategies, rather than large citywide efforts.

"We want to see people come to know the Lord, and we want it to be a lasting effect,"

Sheldon said. "... We don't want it to be just a one-time thing." Sheldon also said that as Southern Baptists begin to be identified with caring for people on a large scale, Southern Baptist churches could feel the effects for years."

I don't really think people in Philadelphia have a clue about what Southern Baptists are," she said. "So if we can come across offering a positive influence, that will help us create a strong positive image."

Several core ministries requiring volunteer support are foundational to both Strategic Focus Cities efforts. Among them:

-- Block parties -- Whether in an inner-city park or a suburban churchyard, the concept of offering free food, fun and fellowship is an effective means for both new and existing churches to reach their communities. Outside volunteers often are asked to work with games and food tables while church members are left free to share Christ and build relationships with guests. But evangelism opportuni-

ties abound for everyone.

-- Vacation Bible School -- Teams of workers are needed to lead Vacation Bible Schools, an effort made possible through funding assistance from Strategic Focus cities and literature provided by LifeWay Christian Resources. VBS programs have been among the most effective evangelistic events in previous SFC efforts.

-- Prayerwalking -- Volunteers are needed to simply walk through neighborhoods and pray for the people in homes, providing essential support for the ongoing and future efforts to reach communities with the gospel.

-- Door-to-door canvassing -- Community surveys, evangelistic visits, and the simple delivery of packets of materials are used to both provide an immediate Christian witness and to spread the word about new churches.

-- Lay church planters and strengtheners -- Volunteers willing to spend an extended period of time in a city are needed to provide leadership to new congregations.

-- World Changers -- Both cities will host projects with World Changers, a NAMB ministry in which youth rehabilitate substandard housing and participate in ministry efforts.

-- Cooperative ministry -- Joint volunteer efforts in conjunction with both Southern Baptists and other evangelical ministries provide a broad range of opportunities for sharing Christ through both personal witness and service.

For more on the Strategic Focus Cities efforts in the two cities and specific volunteer needs, visit www.embracingseattle.com or www.Philadelphiaspirit.com.



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WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

Shedding Light on September 11, 2001

By Jonathan Bernis

The terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001 has shaken our nation and its institutions to the very core. People are trying to understand how it could happen and its significance.

The hideous and vivid pictures of planes crashing into the World Trade Center and shortly thereafter, the collapsing of the buildings is just unspeakable. It's horrific. And I'm sure that all of us have asked, "Why? What does this all mean?" Surely we have all been reflecting on images that were unimaginable just a short time ago. Surreal is the word that came to me as I watched and listened to the commentator on the television say that these mighty towers no longer existed. How do we make sense of it all?

There has been a lot of introspection since these tragic events - not only in this country, but also around the world. This is a good thing. Times like these will either draw us to God or away from God.

So What Does it all Mean?

My personal perspective is that this is not God's judgment, although I know many will interpret it that way. I do think it's a wake-up call however. Shortly after the attack, I was contacted by a Christian magazine and asked to give a Messianic view and commentary on what this all means. A Messianic view is really a Biblical view. My response was that I was shocked, but not surprised. It's a very Biblical scenario that Jesus told His disciples would happen in the future. He used the expression "birth pangs" concerning the last days, and said there would be wars and rumors of wars and that nation will rise against nation. (Matt. 24:6,7) The Greek word for nations is "ethnos," or ethnic group. Not actually geopolitical boundaries or organized states, but ethnic groups will rise

up against one another, and kingdom against kingdom. These are the beginning of birth pangs. The predominant scenario that He communicates to us is one of violence. And these were acts of violence, of terrorism. As believers, we are shocked - it is a jarring experience to live through, but we shouldn't be surprised.

The Spiritual Dynamic

There are several levels with which to view this. First we need to consider the spiritual dynamic. Although this is a great tragedy, it is my personal opinion that this is just the beginning. This is not a pessimistic view, I am very optimistic. For although I think it's the beginning of many such attacks that will darken many nations, my confidence is not in the structures of man, nor is my peace in the security that my government can offer me. My confidence is found in God, and in Him alone. Proverbs 3:25 reads: "Be not afraid of sudden terror, nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes; for the Lord shall be your confidence." I cannot think of a more appropriate verse, for that is what terrorism is - sudden terror. These words direct us to eternity, for this world is not where our hope is. The Bible says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my Word will remain forever." (Matt. 24:35) Although it is a very good time for patriotism, our citizenship is in Heaven - the Kingdom of God, which can't be shaken, terrorized or brought down. That is where our hope is, and only rooted in that reality can we be filled with hope in a moment of despair. We need to ask ourselves if our trust and faith and hope is rooted in the structures of this world: financial security, military strength, family security, or is our security in God, and God alone. God, plus nothing else is, the only place we can find true peace in the midst of disastrous circumstances. And believe me, things could be far worse in the days to come. We need to be introspective during this time, drawing closer to the Lord than ever before. This is a wake-up call! I am heartened to see our leaders turning to God. President Bush declaring a day of national prayer and reciting Scripture from the Oval Office. A man of God and a woman of God are in the house of God in a time of despair.

How Should We Pray?

What should we be praying for as believers at such a time as this? Obviously, we must commit to pray for our president and our leaders in New York and Washington. We must pray for those who suffered great loss, the thousands of families that are mourning. Most importantly we must pray that God uses this event to spark revival in our nation. I pray that will happen. Although so many have lost their lives through this tragedy, how many more could find eternal life in turning to God for comfort and security - which is a far greater victory.

America Needs to Wake Up

Another dimension of these events is that America needs to wake up to the reality of the diabolical spirit of fundamentalist Islam. America needs to realize an identification with Israel. There needs to be a realization that Israel's

policies, which have been denounced, even by Christians, is sanity after all. I pray that America will find a lasting solidarity with Israel as we experience the horrors of what Israel wakes up to every single day. It would be a profound mistake to blame all Arabs for this. We must differentiate between Arabs, Muslims, and those involved with fanatical Islam, that have no regard for human life.

Is This Israel's Fault?

It is my sincere concern that there will be a growing hostility against Israel. Many feel that this horrible plight has come upon us because we have stood with Israel. Israel is used as a hostage by the Arab nations. Our well-being is promised if we would just give up Israel. But this is a fallacy. This tragedy has not happened because we have stood with Israel. This is the tip of the iceberg of a much larger problem because the spirit of fundamentalist Islam worships jihad, holy war. In holy war, we are the infidels - the west, the Christian and the Jew are the infidels that must be stopped and America is standing in the way of Islamic world domination. Israel is only the beginning.

This Day Your Soul is Required of You

It is my belief that somehow God will work this together for good - for our nation, for Israel and for the world. But we must recognize this as a wake-up call. Now is the time to grow closer to God than ever before. I have envisioned over and over again in my mind, the person at the window seeing the nose of the airplane coming toward them and in that last moment, do they cry out to God, or is it too late? They have put off the call of God in seeking their fortunes, their will, their plans, and then they are facing the nose of a plane that is about to hit them. It is a vivid picture of Yeshua's admonition: "This day your soul is required of you." (Luke 12:20) I am not trying to invoke fear, but reality. We must recognize the lateness of the hour. So let this awaken us, but let us not be afraid of sudden terror. Our faith, our peace, our hope, and our security lies in the fact that we know Him, and the promise that no weapon formed against us shall prosper. Why? Because our reality is a heavenly reality, and our hope is found in Him alone.

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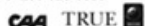
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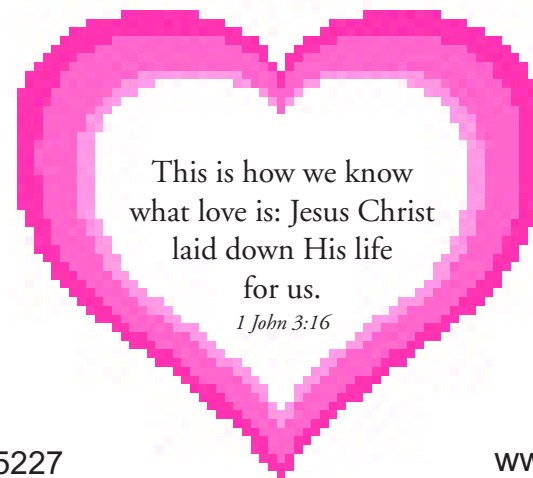
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SINGLES

GOD'S AGENDA FOR SINGLES

By Lois Wright

There is so much emphasis on marriage and family in the church that many single men and women wonder whether it is possible to be single and satisfied.

It is not only possible to be single and live a fulfilled life; it is sinful to be otherwise. If you are single and unhappy in the roll God has given you, you may not have a complete view of what God wants from your singleness.

Unfortunately, the church has helped fuel a sense of incompleteness by its great emphasis on family. There is nothing wrong with emphasizing family. There is something wrong with making singles feel like second-class citizens in the Kingdom of God.

Oftentimes pastors or counselors will try to help the single to cope with his/her singleness rather than to point out and help them to understand that God has a place for them in His agenda. Rather than wait to find that special person the single should learn to "wait upon the Lord." There is a big difference between marking time and purposely waiting on God to accomplish His will in your life.

In Corinthians 7 Paul discussed singleness in detail. In verse 24 it says "Let each man remain with God in that condition in which he was called." God gives us significance regardless of our marital status.

Therefore, our concern should be finding our calling, or purpose, not in trying to change our marital status. Look at life from a vantage point of your calling rather than as an opportunity to change your status..

Many singles want to get married for the wrong reason. You may say, "I am tired of being lonely." The desire for sexual fulfillment, financial help or the desire to have children can be other reasons.

All these may be seem legitimate but there are a lot of married couples that are lonely or never touch each other for weeks or even months. Basically Paul is saying "Look at your circumstances, and determine whether your desire for marriage is on target."

Paul said if you are married, be content with that. And if you are single, be content with that too. You don't have to go mate hunting. Let God do the matchmaking. Let God do the looking for you. God knew where Adam was and He brought Eve to Adam.

In your humanly search you may find disappointment and frustration. If you stop looking and start living out Gods agenda, when the divine "mate-finder" is ready He will lead you to a mate and you won't be frustrated or disappointed.

It is better to wait longer for the right person than to be stuck with the wrong person. Marriage is a big enough challenge even when you find the right person. You don't need the heartache of a bad marriage.

There are three things you can do as a single. First you can GRIPE. "God, I am tired of waiting." Second you can GRAB the next person who walks by and marry outside of God's will and timing or third, you can GROW.

Single Christian, ask God to take control of your life, use your singleness to help accomplish His agenda and help you to grow for His purposes, His glory and His kingdom.

Singleness is not second-class in God's kingdom. If you're an unhappy single, get in God's will so you can enjoy His plan.

Christian Singles of Lewis County Being Formed

The purpose of Christian Singles of Lewis County is to provide a place where Christian singles will be encouraged, informed and enlightened and will be able to interact with other Christian singles in a non-threatening environment.

The goal is to have informal activities to have a good time as a Christian group. Our hope is that friendships will develop so we can support each other; grow in the faith and relationship with Christ, reaching out and witness to other people.

Our intentions are to start from a solid position of prayer, asking God what He wants from this ministry. We are looking for more than just a social club. We would like to help those who are hurting and lonely.

We believe that Christian singles are often overlooked, underserved, and a forgotten group in most of our churches. Many churches do not recognize the needs and wants of Christian singles or simply do not have the resources to add to already busy schedules. Many times the Christian single is not being used to his/her full potential just because they are single. Not because they are not accepted but because there just doesn't seem to be a "place" for the single person.

By working with churches in the Lewis County area, selecting leaders from each church, we should be able to work out a plan for Christian singles that will include all age groups. We feel it is important that each age group is represented as different age groups have very different needs and wants. One group for all ages rarely works.

We believe that singles need a good, strong church home and all the social and spiritual events that occur in that environment, but there is also an unspoken void within most singles. As nearly everything in the churches are geared for family it leaves many of the Christian singles feeling very alone.

We would like to work along with your church reaching all the singles, regardless of age or circumstance. Working together we can make this a successful ministry.

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MISSIONS FOCUS

KAZUKO SATO

One cold Saturday morning in January our bell rang. “Who could that be,” we wondered, as we ran to answer the door. A middle-aged woman stood outside. “Kochira wa kyokai desu ka?” (“Is this a church?”)

“Yes,” I answered, as I glanced down and saw her clutching a Bible.

“I need to talk with a pastor,” she said. “I have so many problems. Can you save me?” she pleaded.

“My name is Ron Galbreath. I am the pastor here. Please come inside.”

Kazuko Sato came in and sat on the tatami (straw mat) floor beside our kotatsu, a low table with a heat lamp under it for warming your legs. Debbie moved a kerosene heater behind her and turned it on while I sat down on the floor across from her. Debbie quickly led the kids into the room across the hall, which doubles as our family bedroom and church nursery, and lit a kerosene heater in that room. Then she returned to serve green tea and snacks.

All the while our minds were racing. Where had this woman come from? How had she heard about us? In nearly 13 years of serving in Japan we had never had someone just show up at church to talk about faith. Japanese are nearly all Buddhist and Shinto. Most have never been in a church before. They don’t know what Christ offers, and they aren’t really interested. The few who are curious are too afraid of what others will say or do to come to church, even on a Saturday. But this woman was carrying a Bible.

“Are you a Christian?” I asked?

“No,” she answered.

“Have you been to church before?”

“This is my first time.”

“Where do you live?” (I thought perhaps she had received one of our tracts.)

“In Fukuchi-mura.” (We had never tracted in Fukuchi-mura, one of the many towns in our area that has no Christian work.)

“Then how did you hear about us? Did someone give you a tract?”

“No,” she answered.

We talked with Kazuko for about an hour. We learned that she was 54 years old, married and living with her husband and mother-in-law. She worked as a cook in a local pre-school. She told us that she had heard about our church from a pastor more than two hours drive away. When we asked if she had been to his church before, she said, “No.” She said that the pastor there told her on the phone that she needed to get saved, whatever that meant - “ikkoku mo hayaku” (as soon as possible).

Although Kazuko looked like any other woman her age, she wasn’t dressed in rags, she didn’t act like someone with mental problems, she told us that she had many, many worries and desperately needed help. At the same time, she wasn’t prepared to share the details of her life with us at this first meeting. We shared some scriptures with her, prayed with her, and invited her to come back to church for our

morning worship service the next day. To our surprise, she agreed to come. More than that, she gladly gave us her phone number and e-mail address. Often Japanese are hesitant to share their contact information with a church or other religious group, no matter how desperate they are, because they are afraid that the group will keep on hounding them and they’ll never be able to escape.

Sunday came. I had changed my message to one that would be more appropriate for a brand new person. Debbie and I had been praying constantly that God would give Kazuko courage to come to church. We had also called several of our mature believers and asked them to pray for her. In our experience, most of the time, Japanese get cold feet and don’t show up in church, even when they have promised to come. It is a frightening experience for them to come to church for the first time. Sometimes, they will say, “Yes, I’ll come,” when they fully intend not to be there. For them it’s much easier than saying, “No,” and avoids confrontation. In Kazuko’s case, we knew that she was desperate for help, and sensed that she was genuine in her desire to come to our service, but we also knew what kind of battle she would face in her own heart as she tried to follow through.

All morning as we prepared for the service we were also praying and hoping that Kazuko would have the courage to keep her word and come to our service. About 10:15 we heard the doorbell ring. It was Kazuko. Even though it was her first time ever to attend a church service, Kazuko seemed to enjoy herself. She tried to sing along with the worship songs and listened intently to the message. After the service she stayed and had lunch with the rest of the congregation. As she left we invited her to come again. She said that she couldn’t get away on Sunday evenings, but that she would be sure to come to our Wednesday night Bible study. Once again she was true to her word.

The following Friday we got a message from Kazuko on our answering machine. She said that she wanted to come over and talk with us privately the following day if we had time. We had been praying for this opportunity because we knew from our first meeting that Kazuko was carrying a heavy burden. She came over on Saturday afternoon. We began with light conversation, but soon Kazuko changed the subject. “How do you pray?” she asked. We directed her to the Lord’s Prayer, and to our surprise found it already highlighted in her Bible. “When did you highlight that?” we asked. “I read it this morning and felt that there was something significant about it.” It was obvious that the Holy Spirit was working in Kazuko’s life.

We shared for a while about what prayer is and how to pray. Kazuko listened intently. Then we prayed together. We knew that she had much more on her heart. Finally, she began to share. “Pastor, do you remember last week when I first came here? I told you that I have a lot of worries. I feel that I need to share these things with you confidentially so that you can understand and help me. I may not look on the surface like I have problems, but I am miserable. I don’t even want to live. I have tried several times to commit suicide, but have been unsuccessful. I have poured my heart into Buddhism, but it hasn’t helped. This is my last resort.” Kazuko went on to tell us about how she had endured more than 30 years of infidelity on the part of her husband with

numerous women and often in publicly embarrassing situations. She had quietly endured the pain while trying to keep it secret from her daughters. After they had grown up she separated from her husband a couple of times, but financially wasn’t able to make it. She wanted to die, but couldn’t. We assured Kazuko that God loved her and knew her pain. “It may seem impossible, but believe God. He can heal you and give you a new life.”

After Kazuko left, Debbie and I joined hands and prayed for Kazuko. Her pain was so great.

She understood what it was like to be sinned against, but she didn’t understand that she had sinned just as grievously against God. She wanted salvation from her suffering, but didn’t yet comprehend her need for salvation from her own sin. We prayed that the Holy Spirit would supernaturally reveal to Kazuko her own sinfulness.

A few weeks later, after our Sunday service, Kazuko stopped me as the ladies were serving lunch. “Pastor, when I first came here all I could think about was how awful my husband has been. Something has changed. I realize that I too am a sinner and need God’s forgiveness.” We were amazed at how quickly the Holy Spirit was working in Kazuko’s heart. One Sunday morning in March during the worship service we paused for testimonies just as we always do. Kazuko was sitting in the second row. “Does anyone have a testimony?” I asked. Kazuko must have been waiting for this moment because her hand shot up immediately. She stood and shared. “I have been suffering from high blood pressure for years. I take medication every day to try to keep it down, and still it is high. Yesterday without any medication at all my blood pressure was 120 over 70. I still have so many problems and worries in my life that I cannot bear the weight, but I know that God has done a work in my heart.”

At the end of March we had to leave Japan, Kazuko, and our little church to return to the States for deputation. We found a young Japanese woman to help hold the church together while we were away. Shortly after we got to the States we received a letter from Kazuko. In it she expressed her gratitude for leading her to Christ and told us that she was continuing in her faith. The thing that amazed us most about her letter was what she said about her husband. She wrote, “I am praying that one day my husband will be able to worship together with me at Hope Christ Church.” Even though he was still the source of Kazuko’s greatest pain, the Holy Spirit had worked a miracle in her heart. She was praying for the salvation of her husband.

In May, Kazuko’s mother-in-law began to come to church with her. In September Kazuko’s husband began coming to church. Kazuko is waiting for our return to Japan so that she can be baptized. Please pray for the salvation of her husband and mother-in-law and the complete restoration of this family.

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