




Editor's Note

In this issue, we welcome back Arnot McIntee as contributing writer to ESN. His previous articles include, "How To Conduct A Funeral" in Volume 1 Number 4. See our web site for archives issues.

Also, we welcome Dr. Jim Rennie, a medical doctor who has extensive ministry in Christian counseling. Dr. Rennie is doing a two part series on "Forgiveness." There are differing views on how and when to

apply forgiveness in conflict. This series will challenge you to think a bit more deeply on this important subject. Elders must learn to forgive one another *before* they can teach the congregation about it.

Also, we are continuing the series on 1 Timothy, that NT training manual for leaders. Since some of chapter two deals with women, we have asked an elder's wife to address this for us, from a woman's perspective. Selah! 

Leadership Principles

Connected With The Chief

by Chuck Gianotti

Studies in 1 Timothy—Part 4

Perhaps the older brothers who spoke of "laboring" in prayer were on to something. It's hard work and just about anything else seems easier to do. I suspect Timothy found this so, judging from the earnest appeal Paul makes in 1 Timothy 2. The apostle says, "First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men..." (2:1 NASB). This immensely spiritual activity is of first importance in being a leader of God's people—it provides a constant communication link with the Chief

Shepherd of the flock. We elders are assistant shepherds and we plead with God (for leadership orders),

discuss with God (the general concerns of the body), intercede with God (when His people struggle), and thank God (for what He has done, is doing, and will do).

Of course, in the context of chapter two we are to pray for those in secular authority, but certainly this teaching would include praying for those in spiritual leadership as well, whether our fellow-elders, deacons, Sunday school leaders, teachers, women's ministry leaders, youth leaders, small group leaders, various ministry coordinators, etc. This leads to a "quiet life in all godliness and dignity" (2:2b). Nothing can wear down a local church more than lack of capable leaders who exercise good organizational management. In fact, a well managed church is "good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior" (2:3). It frees believers to be about the ultimate business of the church, reaching lost souls for Christ. That is God's desire (2:4). Therefore, we should pray for the spiritual leaders at every level.

Paul contrasts his instruction to the males in verses 1-8 with his instruction to the women in 9-13. Not that women were not to pray, but rather, prayer ought to be a priority for men. Possibly, men need more prodding on this than women. Some even find it helpful to physically lift up their hands (2:8) to symbolize their yearning for the Lord's involvement in their lives and ministry, as it so often means in Scripture. The thrust of this verse is that our prayers should not be simply an ostentatious show, but should be backed by a life unstained by sin's unity-destroying

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deceitfulness, that is, "holy hands without wrath and dissension."

So, fellow-elders, it's hard work to pray—and it is

hard to do it often. It requires faith that God really does hear us and that our prayers make a difference. Through prayer, we connect with Him who gave His life for the sheep.

Do you begin your elders' meeting with prayer? I don't mean a rote rehearsal of some dusty list of names, or a generic, "Lord, bless all these requests"—but rather real, sustained prayer for the needs of the people. Does the congregation have a means for regularly conveying their specific prayer needs to the elders? Here is one idea that works: in our church we regularly have comment/prayer cards in the bulletin each week for people to write in their prayer needs. And then each week at our elders meeting we pray for those needs on our knees.

Whatever the method, elders need to be about the task of praying for the people of God, both collectively as an elders' group, as well as individually.

NOTE: See the Wives' Corner for thoughts on verses 9-10. 

Practical Ministry

Small Groups Revisited

by Jack Spender

In my occasional travels, I have enjoyed discussing the subject of small groups with assembly elders, and hearing the different ways God has used the gathering of believers in homes to strengthen and encourage His people. Variations are limitless, but enhanced fellowship, active discipleship, outreach to neighbors, and opportunities for the young to get involved are just some of the benefits. Sometimes questions are raised, so I'd like to address a few of the ones I hear most often.

One common question is whether the practice of small group meetings is something new? Good question. Actually, the idea isn't new at all. It seems clear from the book of Acts that the earliest Christians met not only in united public gatherings, but also in small numbers in private homes (Acts 2:46; 5:42; 20:20). Anyone familiar with the wonderful work of God in England in the 1700's through the labors of the Wesley brothers, John and Charles, will remember that the heart of that work which reached thousands depended on what they called "class meetings;" weekly gatherings of 12-20 believers for confession, accountability and growth.

A related question is: Are you saying that all local churches must have small groups? Emphatically not! All biblically based gatherings enjoy the blessings of fellowship (I John 1:3), and fellowship has its practical side (Acts 2:42 - 47), but each is autonomous as to the structure of its various meetings. A midweek small group ministry is just one way that some assemblies provide intimate fellowship for the believers. Some things are easier to learn in the informal environment of a home, with a few friends that have come to know each other well. Believers can learn to pray together, discuss the Word together, and grow in the accountability of being faithful to commitments they have made. The truly important thing is that every church have a living, practical approach to genuine 'koinonia' or fellowship.

Another question has been raised repeatedly, and reveals some cloudy thinking on a basic spiritual principle: "Don't small groups divide the local church?" After all, division is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20), and the Lord loves

unity among His people (John 17:21-23), so shouldn't we insist that all meetings be held in the same place and include all those in fellowship? Let's think about this in some detail.

Recently, I have been studying through the book of Joshua, and enjoying the pointed lessons that relate to spiritual warfare in the Christian life. The first city facing the nation of Israel once they had crossed the Jordan, was the city of Jericho (Joshua 2, 6). God worked in mighty power as the whole army circled the city until the moment came in which the walls fell down flat, and the city was taken.

In chapter 7, we read next of the attempt to overthrow the city of Ai. Instead of victory, Israel fled in defeat, and Joshua fell on his face in discouragement before the Lord. What went wrong? Much of chapter 7 traces the process by which Achan's sin of taking for himself some of the spoils was uncovered and judged.


When we come into chapter 8, Joshua is given a comforting word from the Lord that "all the people of war" should arise and go against Ai, because the Lord had given them the city (8:1 KJV). Several commentators have called attention to the contrast with the first attack on Ai in which Joshua was advised (without seeking counsel from the Lord) that only a couple thousand warriors should be sent against such a small city (7:2). This, we are told, was part of the problem! Israel should never have been divided.

Although there is no suggestion in the text that Israel had sinned by sending only some of the men of war against Ai, it might be granted that all the warriors were needed based upon the Lord's words that Joshua should take them all. But note the divine instruction that follows immediately about how the battle was to be conducted. "Lay thee an ambush for the city behind it" (vs. 2). In order to conduct a successful ambush, the warriors must be divided into two companies. One company draws the enemy away from the gates; the other company rushes in and takes the city. And this is exactly what happened.

Here is a spiritual principle that every elder must know. True unity is not

a matter of being in the same place physically; but a matter of oneness of heart! Israel could not stand before her enemies, because sin had come in and brought a spiritual estrangement from the Lord. Once that condition was confessed and judged, the Lord was with His people again, and the very method He chose to conquer the city required dividing the warriors into different groups. As each went to his different place of battle, he went with the quiet assurance that a great inner unity of heart had been restored.

Perhaps, a long answer to a simple question, but how important it is for the life of the church. How many assemblies proclaim "unity" in their outward appearance as all meet in the same room and same building. But below the surface there may be smoldering grudges and long-standing bitterness which have crippled any true fellowship that may once have existed.

Elders may choose to have all the believers meet together in the same place for every meeting of the local church, or they may find it helpful to have several homes open for small groups to meet. It is a blessed truth that a warm spirit of unity and harmony may exist among those gathering in different homes, and in fact, some have found that this practice can contribute much to such a spirit of unity. Of course we should have known these things, as we sometimes sing, "We are not divided; all one body we." This is true even though the body of Christ actually meets in many different locations all around the world, and ever awaits the day when, for the first time since there were local churches, the whole church will meet together in the same place—at the marriage supper of the Lamb. 

From the Q-Files

I was intrigued by a statement recently by a single woman: "When I see an ugly bride, what I am really seeing is a glimmer of hope for the future [maybe I will marry, someday]."

Likewise, when I see the kind of people God uses to preach and be an elder for His glory, what I am really seeing is the glimmer of hope that maybe He is using me as well—for His glory!

Wives' Corner

Inner Modesty

by Mary Gianotti

Men, it is said, tend to focus well on one task while women can multitask with relative ease. You may have experienced this first hand while making a new recipe for dinner, answering your kid's questions and thinking about how you will lead the ladies Bible study, this all being done at the same time. A few moments later dinner is on the table, the kids are demonstrating a high level of energy and your husband doesn't hear you call him for supper because his focus is on what he is reading. For women this ability to focus on many things is to our advantage as we care for our husbands, raise our families and seek to meet the needs of the Christians in our fellowship. But when it comes to the all important call to worship we are often easily distracted.

I think the apostle Paul understood this when he wrote his first letter to Timothy, who was mentoring the Christians in Ephesus. While other passages in the New Testament also address women's appearance and behavior, the teaching in 1 Timothy is foundational in the context of developing leaders. And as wives of elders, it makes sense that we understand and model what is taught here.

The believers in Ephesus had come from a variety of religious backgrounds. There were those from a pre-Gnostic belief who said the


spirit was entirely good and matter was entirely evil, some had been following the strict Mosaic Law, and others had been involved in idol worship and may even have been temple prostitutes. Paul instructs Timothy on this important topic of worshipping Christ Jesus, who came into the world to save sinners, from whom we have received eternal life, the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God.

After addressing the males earlier in the 1 Timothy chapter 2, Paul then turns his attention to women. It seems odd in a way that he begins to talk about what women should wear, particularly during public worship. Consider first the context and to whom Paul is addressing his instructions. The women in the church at Ephesus, as we mentioned all came from a variety of religious backgrounds. Some had been modest to an extreme, others sensual and extravagant. Here Paul admonishes all women regardless of culture or past beliefs to "dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes" (2:9 NIV). While styles and the specifics of what constitutes modesty may vary from one culture to another, public worship was not the time to be lavish or a time for attention getting—rather it was a

time for modesty of life style and appearance. This speaks to the inner person and behavior as well as the outward appearance. When they came to worship the Lord, the sole purpose for women was to focus on God.

Could it be that Paul was aware of the tendency women have to think about many things at once and in the process become easily distracted? Dressing in a way that is elaborate, expensive and showy is a means of self exhibition and can consume our time, energy and emotions. To have hair, jewelry or clothing that takes our attention or the attention of others away from the Lord during worship is inappropriate because the focus is to be on Christ.

Paul makes it clear how we can please God when we come to worship, that is, "... with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God" (vs. 10). God is delighted with women who live simple lives characterized by good deeds. In Col 3:17 the Lord says that our deeds are all to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus. This means living our lives so that the Lord Jesus gets the credit and attention for anything good we do.

If we come to pray and worship with other believers and have given our lives in service to the Lord, intending that He gets the glory, no one will be distracted in worship. 

Practical Ministry

John Has Gone

by Arnot McIntee

He has gone to Heaven and I am sorry. Oh, not that he has gone to the land of eternal day, but sorry I did not get to see him, as I had promised myself. John had been a good friend and a valued colleague. With his technical knowledge he had maintained the professional recording equipment on which the Family Bible Hour radio program was produced. He made it possible to send the message of the Savior's love world-wide by radio.

Both he and his wife would have appreciated my 20 to 30 minute visit, but sadly, I thought I could not spare the time from health problems in my own family. Had I gone, I would have called ahead to be sure a visit was convenient. Then I would have prepared a few thoughts and read promises from the book we both loved, the Bible. As a visitor, I have often felt I was more blessed than the one I was visiting.

John was a good conversationalist. So, our dialogue would have flowed freely. In some visits it is not always that way, and I have found it important to lead, but not dominate, the discussion when sharing mutual interests. Such topics as the family, church activities, hobbies (and John had a number), always make for good conversation. Then we would have discussed those thoughts from the Word of God I men-

tioned earlier. This is no time for a long theological discussion, at least not with most saints. They want some reassuring words which will help them bear today's burden. The burden may be lifted tomorrow, should they go into His presence.

Whatever is said must be from a heart of love. Sometimes the visit takes place in a hospital and, upon arriving at the patient's room, I have found someone already there and enjoying a chat. On such an occasion, a brief friendly greeting to both parties, with the promise to return at a later time, will be appropriate.

One of the great blessings to the person being visited is to know someone cares and is taking the time to "drop-in." Although an ill friend will appreciate your visit, so will the care givers. They, too, need to experience the loving interest such a visit brings. Unfortunately, prolonged care giving can take its emotional and physical toll. So they, I have learned, will appreciate being a part of the visit. Before I leave, I always like to ask if I may pray. This is especially important if the visit is with an unsaved person in the hospital. I recall asking a gentleman who was to undergo surgery if I might visit him while he was confined to the hospital.

He replied, "Yes, but don't pray." I went, gave him the gospel, and honoured his request not to pray.

As the ill and caregivers will appreciate a visit, so will their Great Physician. When He was here on the planet, He was often in the company of the sick, diseased and dying. (Matthew 25:36, Mark 10:51, 52, John 11:3,) When invited, He shared with them His love and plan of salvation. Today, as His representatives, we are privileged to do the same. What a joy it is to share the hope found in God's salvation with someone on the border line between time and eternity. It is even more thrilling to see them trust the Savior before leaving for His eternal presence!

It is in James' epistle, (5:14), sick saints are encouraged to call for the elders and to ask for their prayers. It is still the responsibility of caring, praying elders, to visit and pray for the ill of the flock. Needy saints will be even more appreciative if sensitive, spiritual shepherds visit without even being called. Of course, visitation is not limited to the shepherds of the flock. Each believer should show his or her love for fellow members of the church when illness occurs.

What an honor it is to visit and pray for those for whom the Savior died!

Biblical Foundations

Forgiving Other Elders

by Dr. Jim Rennie

“It’s burning me up inside. I just don’t know which way to go with it,” said the young elder who came to my office for counseling. “I know for sure that one of the men in the assembly has been spreading rumors that I have been too close with a woman at my work. This is entirely untrue. I can understand this brother may be jealous of me because he was passed over when I was selected as an elder last year. He has been a long time friend of mine. What am I to do?”

Another elder shared this story: “I’ve been struggling with an issue for several months now. It has robbed me of peace and joy. One of the other elders seems to be against me. He doesn’t listen to anything I say. He talks over me. When I do venture a comment, he finds fault with it. It is so discouraging. I feel like quitting. I keep wondering what I did to cause him to be like that.”

I assured both of these men that there was a path of peace to follow in Scripture, but the first step on that path was to forgive the offending parties. Here are some keys to understanding forgiveness.

1. Forgiveness is a legally binding transaction where one surrenders the right to collect on a debt.

Forgiveness is the centerpiece of the Lord’s prayer. (Matt. 6:12, 14,15) The word for forgiveness is the Greek word, *aphiemi*, and it means “to send away from.” Combined with the Greek word for debts, *opheilema*, we get the idea of giving up the legal right to collect on an account of sin. In

other words, we give up the right to get revenge or to get even.

2. Forgiveness is business, not emotions.

One of the greatest misunderstandings about forgiveness is to confuse the business of forgiveness with the emotions surrounding forgiveness. There are usually emotions of anger and hurt, and perhaps fear when we have been sinned against. Someone might say, “I feel I have forgiven the person who faulted me because I don’t feel bad or angry about it anymore.” But feelings can deceive us. If the business has not been done, it is not done! Another person might say, “I have obviously not forgiven that person, because I am still angry about it.” But these are only the emotions around forgiveness. Forgiveness itself is business. Once business is done, it is done! It does not need to be repeated again and again just because we *feel* it is not done. We need to believe it’s done and rest on that fact.

3. Forgiveness is for guilty people.

Someone might say, “I know he did wrong to me, but I can understand that he didn’t mean to, he was just upset, and so I forgave him.” Often what is being done is not forgiveness at all, but rather *excusing* the offending party. In order for someone to be forgiven, he must first be truly guilty. Another person might say, “I can’t really say that he is guilty because *he* doesn’t think he has done anything wrong.” Guilt is not to be determined by what the other person thinks, or even by what *I* think, but rather by what *God* thinks. If he is guilty

according to God’s standard, then he *is guilty* and needs to be forgiven.

4. Forgiveness is before God first.

Forgiveness is first and foremost a transaction I make with God. It is expressed in prayer to God (Mark 11:25). Some people might say, “It is enough that I made the decision in my heart. I don’t need to pray about it.” However, forgiveness is a business transaction which requires *two parties*, you and God. The right of revenge is to be given up to God who has the right to administer judgment for sin (Rom. 12:19). Forgiveness is therefore an act of faith in God’s justice. If one does not believe in God’s justice, then forgiveness is really a giving up on justice altogether, a kind of hopeless acceptance that justice will not be served.

5. Forgiveness is an act of obedience to God.

Forgiveness is an obvious command of God. I am to forgive because I have been forgiven. I must see that forgiving others is a small price compared to the great price of my own forgiveness. The parable of Christ in Matthew 18 illustrates this well. Note that there are serious consequences to unforgiveness. (Matthew 18:34-35, 6:14-15)

When both these elders followed the Lord’s command and forgave before God, they began to experience the peace of God once again. However, other steps needed to be taken to complete the forgiveness. The offending brothers needed to be confronted in love. We will deal with that in the next installment.



ELDERS’ SHOPNOTES

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