

KOINONIA KONNECTION

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EVANGELISM, THE UNLOVELY, AND THE CHARACTER OF JESUS

THE PRINCIPLE PERSONIFIED

He was the embodiment of Horror. The mere knowledge of his presence in the vicinity inspired fear and disgust among the people. He was a smelly, vile, mindless, shrieking mass. His emaciated flesh was covered with scars and scabs, bruises and cuts, slashes and scratches. He had become a perverse tapestry of self-hatred... an unwilling canvas of the twisted artwork of that dark, vile Thing which had so long ago taken hold of his mind and soul. An embarrassment to his family, a terror to the district, decent folk had time and again sought to restrain him... but to no avail. For time after time he had broken out of their chains, tearing shackles of iron like so much paper, only to return screeching to his haunt amidst the hills, in the tombs of the dead among whom he slept. Unclean, unwanted, unloved, doomed forever was he to wander amidst the ghostly sepulchers which served as a most fit abode for their one living resident.

That is, until HE came.

The Thing which, for so long, had wielded unchallenged power was made to grovel and plead like some helpless child. Its strength was made to depart from it, its arrogance broken like the chains its unholy force had so often rent apart. And with a word HE commanded it to flee... with a word HE healed a shattered mind, soothed a tortured spirit, cleansed a filthy soul. With a word HE made room for another Spirit, the purity, light, and power of Whom would fill

the heart of this dirty, scarred man and make of him a fruitful bearer of Good News. A Preacher of HIS glory amidst the Decapolis.

All because HE came.

THE PRINCIPLE APPLIED

I am mindful of those words of Christ when He said, "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick." (Mark ii. 17) In these words He described the nature of His ministry, and of His character. Christ was One who, in His work among people, seemed to take particular delight in focusing His energies toward folk on what we might call the margins of life. Not that He ignored "normal" people. His efforts were felt among any and all socio-economic groups. He preached to paupers and kings, perverts and Pharisees, laborers and landowners. Yet, it is in the wondrous breadth of this spectrum of ministry that my point is made. Christ didn't limit his time to the "who's who" of Palestinian life, but included even the most lowly of objects for His saving work. In fact, the Gospel writers seem to go out of their way to describe to us just how "soiled" Christ was willing to get for the glory of the Kingdom and the good of men.

Consider the kind of people to whom He ministered. Mentioned in our Gospel records are the blind, the lame, the deaf, the irreligious, tax-gatherers, lepers, thieves, the demon-possessed, murderers, cowards, Roman soldiers, Samaritans, prostitutes, adulteresses... all manner of unwanted,

unpleasant, unimportant, and socially insignificant folk that the decent citizen of Palestine would rather have had swept under the proverbial rug (or in some cases, pushed off a not-so-proverbial cliff). And yet, despite the negative social opinion surrounding such individuals, we find our Savior involving Himself in the lives and hurts of these very people. There is Christ, permitting a scarlet woman to kiss His holy feet and bathe them with her unclean tears. There again is Christ, laying His hand upon the putrid skin of a leper and pronouncing him clean. And again, there is Christ, summoning a murderer and terrorist in the person of Simon the Zealot to become an Apostle of God. And let us not fail to discern the deeper message to this aspect of Christ's character. His ministry to the unwanted and undesirable serves to teach the people of God a sobering and comforting lesson. That is that spiritually speaking, we are as leprous, adulterous, murderous, and demonic as any figure which has been spoken of in the Gospels. Their uncleanness is our own... their perversity and ill of soul no more theirs than it is ours. But Christ has come to minister to just such people as us. The unwanted. The unwashed. The unlovely. It is precisely because Christ ministered and continues to minister to the hideous that we have hope.

THE PRINCIPLE PERVERTED

In ministering the compassion and power of the Gospel to the unsightly, Christ sets forth a demanding object lesson. It is demanding because it forces us to ask of our own hearts uncomfortable questions. Questions like, "Do I have unreasonable, even unholy expectations about the make-up of the Church?" Or, "Do I secretly view the Church as my personal comfort zone, a realm of protected familiarity where everyone dresses like me, acts like me, talks like me, and smells like me?" In the end, perhaps, many of us ought to be asking: "Do I believe the Church to belong, in fact, to me and not to Christ?"

In one very true sense, the Church is a haven. It is a haven for the tired, the afraid, the filthy, the unpopular, the unwanted, and the tortured. It is a place where men and women in spiritual poverty may come to be made rich in the blood of Christ. In this sense, it is really and truly a haven... the only haven, in fact. But how often have men endeavored to make the Church a haven of a different sort? A cultural haven. An ethnic haven. An economic haven. A sociological haven. A haven of convention rather than compassion? We have created a multitude of self-interested "havens" which have less to do with the promotion of the glory of Christ than they do with the preservation of the petty tastes, backgrounds, and social positions of the persons making up their number. These are cozy corners of self-indulgence, wherein the devil may more easily preserve and fester our prejudices, our blindness, our evangelical slothfulness, and spiritual slumber.

It doesn't take much work to discern how having such a view of the purpose of the Church could thoroughly paralyze and pervert the evangelistic efforts of a congregation. Such a group is typically selective in their outreach efforts, limiting their labors to methods and locales which are more likely to attract people such as themselves. Although they may not be slow to verbalize the truths of the Gospel to the unlovely, they are far more unwilling to "congregationalize" such a person. By "congregationalize," I mean to engraft such a person into the full congregational life of the particular church.

I am thankful for the holiness of God's people, and that involvement in the Covenant Community often has accompanying it a multitude of temporal blessings, such as pure pasts, stable families, secure work, and a blissful ignorance of so much of the evil which goes on in the world. We ought never to ask

-continued on back cover

FAMILIES IN FOCUS

FAMILY WORSHIP



Jesus gave the Samaritan woman a most profound answer in response to her query regarding the location for worship. God Himself designated the location for worship at Jerusalem, but the time was coming when the place wouldn't matter. What was of importance was that God's worshippers would worship Him in spirit and in truth. It always was important how God was worshipped, but now the time came that God's worshippers would be found all over the world, outside the accessibility of a single, holy site. Worship is one of the grand functions of the family institution, one of God's purposes for this basic, domestic relationship.

Already in the Garden of Eden, when God brought Adam and Eve into the first family relationship, He gave them their cultural mandate. "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." God called man to reproduce and to serve Him by tending and keeping the garden. This ordinance was not given simply to Adam; rather it was given to the whole human family through him.

One of the elements of worshipping God is the submission of the whole man to Him. The twenty-four elders before the throne of God were heard saying, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created." Revelation 4:11 Man, man's purposes and the family institution are all included amongst the created things that are God's and for which He is to be worshipped.

God is seeking true worshippers. He is simultaneously seeking a godly seed, one of the reasons for which God instituted marriage. In Malachi 2 God emphasises that He demands

covenantal faithfulness between a man and his wife. This faithful, God-glorifying relationship is the context in which a 'godly' posterity is to be raised in accordance with the cultural mandate. They are to be those who worship God in spirit and truth, such worshippers as the Father seeks.

Sadly, through our fall in Adam, together with all our subsequent sin, we as a race, and, excepting the redeeming grace of God, we as individuals, have largely lost sight of this glorious vocation. This is expressed by a variety of attitudes that are prevalent in our day. The most blatant and vocal expression is the idea that children are an impediment to enjoying life and so people 'choose' not to have kids. Every available means is employed from various forms of birth control to abortion. This is a bold expression of self-worship, with no thought of raising an army of worshippers of Jehovah. There are milder forms of missing God's purpose for the family, though. Many people are happy to bring up children and consider themselves successful when their children become 'good' contributing members of society, educated and self-sufficient. I wonder how many in the church settle for this goal. Perhaps in the church none would openly admit to it, but practically speaking, many are happy to see their children do just that, with perhaps a sharing of religious profession and tradition. It is very sobering to contemplate the destructively sinful thoughts of men as to the purpose of family, and then to contrast it with God's purpose of having a people to serve and worship Him. And family is the means that God intended to achieve the training and raising of future generations of God-fearers. Thanks be to God that His redemption extends to the family institution as well.

It is evident then, that we Christians need to consider seriously the character of the family institution. God has called us to bring up a generation to be a godly seed and he has ordained the family as a means to it. God wants to be glorified in the family. And not only does He desire to be worshipped in the family, but He also desires to be worshipped by the family. Though the members of the family are personally to worship God, they also are corporately to worship Him. There ought to be times when the individuals of the family unit lay aside their personal pursuits to worship God as a unit. And there are several compelling reasons for doing so.

God is glorified in the worship of each of His people. But when the worship of the several family members is corporate and combined, God's praise is magnified. The worship of God is not simply the personal delight of a lone individual, but rather the collected and harmonious veneration of many persons who live in close proximity and with the greatest influence on each other. In families we sometimes experience the severest of trials because of our differences with those we expect most to conform to our own thoughts. The greatest hurt comes from those who we love most but who often, because of their nearness, conflict with us most. Now when these people in this close relationship are set in a determined purpose to worship God with one heart and mind, it speaks of the grandeur of the singular worth of God. And this is evident even more when family worship is not just on occasion, but becomes a daily habit that takes precedent in the lives of each one. Differences and personal agendas are set aside in order to facilitate corporate worship.

But not only is God worthy of the collective worship of the family, but every believer desires

the fellowship of other worshippers and in particular, the fellowship in worship of those with whom he shares the experiences of the grace of God. The scriptures are full of the call of one believer calling to others to share in the worship of God because of his conviction that God is worthy of the gathered praise of men. "Give to the LORD, O families of the peoples, give to the LORD glory and strength. Give to the LORD the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come into His courts. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth." Psalm 96:7-9

Surely, if believers desire the communion of other believers in the worship of God, then there is a greater pleasure and fulfillment when husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters in the flesh, are united in spirit with the goal of worshipping God. Even nature teaches this desirability of sharing the most precious things we have with those who are closest to us. And if the worship of God is our hearts greatest delight, then the inclusion of our family in its exercise is extremely coveted. Many have been deeply wounded in their spirit when they have seen their children forsake the God whom they worship. Conversely, others have had great joy and tranquillity, perhaps in spite of many trials and adverse circumstances, when they know that their family members all worship God.

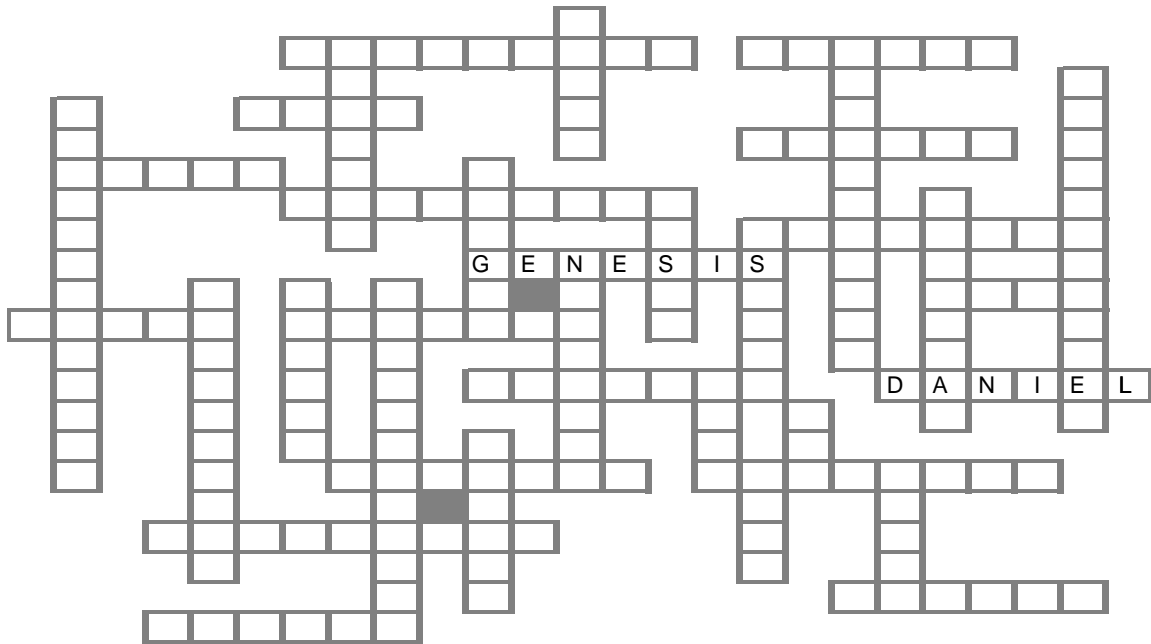
This begs the question of husbands and fathers. Do you so worship God that you do all that you can in order that your family will worship Him with you? Would the worship of God appear to be curtailed if your family didn't share your sense of God's worth? The Lord delights to bless the home where He is worshipped. Genesis 18:19

Worship is one of the grand functions of the family institution.

YOUTH'S CORNER

OLD TESTAMENT BIBLE BOOKS

Fit the names of the Old Testament books, omitting numbers and spaces between words, into the puzzle below.



BOOKS IN REVIEW

This is the biography of Amy Carmichael, an Irish missionary who spent 53 years in South India, without a

furlough. Called to missions as a young woman, Amy responded joyfully, first traveling to Japan, then China, Ceylon and finally India. While there she founded Dohnavur Fellowship, a refuge for children in mortal danger (they would normally be killed). It was here that she also taught the children about the Christian faith. In this story, Elliot shows how one woman offered up her singleness for God's service and found true fulfillment. Amy's life of obedience stands as a model for all who claim the name of Jesus Christ. She was a woman of dreams, faults and fears, who gave up her life unconditionally to serve her Master. Christians who are committed to walk the straight and narrow road of the cross of Christ in today's crooked world will realize the true costs-and rewards-of discipleship by reading this book. This unforgettable story should provoke the reader to examine the depths of their own commitment to Christ.

A Chance to Die:

The Life and Legacy of Amy Carmichael

by Elisabeth Elliot

Publisher: Revell (382 pages)

-Cope Jonkman



MISSION SPOTLIGHT

KYIV CALLING

February 2004

You Are My Life! (Who Will Be King?)

Praise God! "...a huge personal benefit for me! As usual the material taught works immediately in my life. I then use and see the benefit of this great material. Every module for me is an honest conversation with God... a difficult conversation, but then it results in great value."

"My work with dependent people and addicts was previously very chaotic, but after this module everything is in order, in sequence. The teaching presented a very clear, vivid structure..."

Module 5: "You Are My Life!" The year is number 2 of 3 for our Ukrainian and Russian students. They completed the 4 foundational modules in year one and now the first of 8 "Issues" modules. The subject was Addictions, and the focus once again was the root idolatry and ways to and from that for both counsellor and counsellee. (ie. a "comfort idol" lies behind all sorts of addictions. Human hearts manufacture countless idols.) Guests Ursula and Dan also taught and shared an Addiction program called "The Most Excellent Way" (not to be confused with Ron's course on spiritual warfare: "A More Excellent Way"). I, Linda, contributed more morsels to the teaching this module than any other for which the students were grateful, giving me hugs and chatting with me through interpreters between classes. There are no strangers teaching unapproved material but not all details can be known ahead of time of course. It was amazing that though none of us knew exactly what the other was going to say and all come from a very wide variety of backgrounds and cultures, God seemed to drive home "grace over legalism". Besides through scripture, each speaker knew this through painful life experiences of ministering and being ministered to in wrong ways, and then the contrasting power and beauty of living and receiving ministry more faithful to the bible's commands to love. The law without love is deadly. Yes you have to be tough but "better to not even try to minister to addicts if it is without love" said one and all agreed. This perfect judge plus perfect love aspect of God's character came up again last night as university aged young adults from our church meet here in our flat every Sunday evening. The caption "Heavy Hearts" refers to soul searching and working with messy lives, while "Heavenly Highs" are seen in their smiles, comments, and singing and such, as they discover even more truth to set hearts free.

Will We Have To Pry Them Apart? The way things are going the students are becoming more and more "family". These students from all across Ukraine and 3 from Russia, truly "one-another one another" from "iron sharpens iron" discussions to hugs and tears. Also we have now added a guitarist (UFI student) and provide a rented keyboard for other talented students to help enhance the daily worship/prayer time between breakfast and 1st 9 a.m. class. Voluntary attendance for that segment seemed very high if not 100%!

Light In The East! This ministry began November 10th, 2003. Their goal is to "prepare Christians in practical ministry in churches and establishing new churches." They invited Ron and the UFI staff to teach the counselling segment of the training program on a regular basis. Dmitri appreciates the approach to counselling in striving to be consistently biblical.

Wisdom Needed in Accepting Teaching Invitations As our ministry becomes more known and the fruits more visible, there are more comments of delight from distant places and requests as well. We must keep our mandate clearly before us and not over-extend ourselves. The above (Light In the East) particular opportunity is a bite-size realistic time commitment with great potential as we help equip future leaders.

American Ex-Biker & German Medical Doctor / Biochemist Help Dan Shaw and his wife Nina (who is Ukrainian) and Dr Ursula Muller-Erberhard, shared their unique stories and specialized ministries in the area of addiction. Dan has been in Ukraine for 10 years (Dneprozerzhinsk near Dnepropetrovsk, south east of Kiev a day or so train ride) Now he has some stories to tell! though said little about those until he and his wife stayed overnight at our flat after the module. (His gang is defunct, as most members are now dead.) I wasn't born yesterday so skepticism lingered awhile but eventually I relaxed and enjoyed the blessing of this fine couple. Every day is living faith here in Ukraine, and frequently surprising.

More Student Comments If I had not been equipped by knowledge that I received at UFI I would be angry before God for the pain which He brought for me. Now I know how to think about pain in the Christian life...

M-5: I was impressed by the rich theological understanding of nature and action of addiction, but also the true help for addicts according to the Word. It's important that 5th module was built up on the previous four.

...M4 helped me personally and in my counseling; warning about misuse of the Scriptures; the "farmer" and "doctor" concept help to diagnose correctly and to prepare the soil of the heart in order to sew the needed seeds in the right time.

(M4) Law and Grace. The result of understanding the connections was wonderful... the way to use Law and Grace in proper time, proper place and proper quantity.

M-5: light bulb about anatomy of sin; the alcohol addiction is very typical for all the rest of addictions; "king-priest-prophet" concept help God to reveal my own addictions.

Sickness, death, darkness, trial and triumph Besides the material always being challenging even for these bright, dedicated leaders, the UFI Team and students alike seem always to face surprise challenges each module. Specific prayer in this regard has become part of our office life. Thank YOU too for prayers sustaining us all through the challenges. One never knows quite what to expect. This time we experienced...

The first day two students received the bad news that a father-in-law died suddenly and a student's mother had a stroke. These two students left with prayers, tears, hugs of comfort, and homework plan "B" since the modules are so intensive that missing one is very serious. One student had been told before she came that she had cancer. Many ministered to her as (as she did to us by her courageous words of faith) and even set her up to go to another doctor in Kiev. So part way through the module a second opinion was announced. She does NOT have cancer after all, but something else. Praise God if this is indeed true! Several times the electricity went off but of course was taken in stride. Only the hour or more in the early morning when it was still dark out and everyone was wanting to get ready for breakfast and worship was it a bit troublesome. I did some exercises in the dark. Ron couldn't do those because of his back, but praise God it was getting better every day! God answered those prayers in grand style. One of our students is a physician employed by her church in Poltava, one of the poorest Oblasts in Ukraine. Previously she laboured as a surgeon, and part of her training and her work now is chiropractic. God used her three massages to improve and sustain Ron's back through this gruelling week. He had no time at all for therapeutic walks (since all non-teaching or sleeping hours were filled with one-on-one and group meetings, even through meals) but these massages were, as Ron says, "messages" showing the hearts of our students.

One Happy Man (...which delights his wife!) Ron was very satisfied and grateful for the week. His students are now off with new counselling ministry projects to complete in the setting of their local churches. Then there's the constant stream of reporting and support. We both really enjoyed seeing the new Teaching Associate, Tanya, in action. Our students now pray for the 3 extension sites likely beginning as they remember what it was like stepping into the unknown, and being confronted with huge light-bulbs from Scripture. It's not just us who stepped out on faith; so did the students! In applying they decided to trust these foreigners!

Young People Delighting in Truth! They say we are a blessing to them, but so often they are just as much to us! This university aged group is invited to our flat every Sunday after church, which is just a 10 minute walk away. It's a small group but they enjoy the teaching, discussions, peaceful warm home atmosphere, Ron's roses and hugs for his wife, classy music, light usually healthy refreshments, and generally warm fellowship. They prefer this challenging material and their commitment to prayer often surprises me. Last night they watched and discussed an RC Sproul film segment on "Choosing Your Religion". We show this English language film here in our flat once per month as part of our outreach aspect of these meetings. The other weeks have a different focus. Besides enjoying the content and immediate usefulness in speaking to their unsaved friends, such that they want to watch all of the segments immediately and not wait, they also shared other interesting comments. They noted that while it seems western non-Christians and even some believers have a hard time believing that God is JUST and needs that part of His holiness satisfied (and so often feel they don't need God or that He just loves everyone regardless), the Ukrainians have a hard time understanding God's LOVE. (They said this, not me) It is understandable given the history of brutal oppression, present poverty and corruption struggles, and rituals of repentance and works to try to earn God's favour. However, praise God that these young people deeply and personally understand freedom in Christ. Pray many of all ages experience this freedom and joy we can know because of the heart-wrenching incredible gift of Christ crucified. Pray the older of our Ukraine Family Institute leaders also deeply understand God's LOVE. Their work and comments indicate they know His love more and more with each module. Exciting times, for these all influence the future of Ukraine and beyond! We hope you are enjoying being a part of this! Praise God!

Another Visit From President Mike March 8-15th is the scheduled whirlwind visit from our Ukraine Family Institute president Mike Linville. This is for team building and other very important UFI business.

Thank YOU! Thank you for YOUR prayers and funds which truly serve others. "The future is as bright as the promises of God!" Fear not, but in faithfulness rejoice!

*"You my brethren were called to be free.
But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature;
rather, serve one another in love." (Galatians 5:13)*

Serving Christ à from Kyiv Ukraine: Ron, Linda

EVANGELISM, THE UNLOVELY, AND THE CHARACTER OF JESUS

CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER

ourselves to be anything but heartily thankful for the "covenant bubble" in which God has put us. We ought to be thankful for it, and encourage it. It is His bubble... He has made it. Such a secure realm is part of the blessing Jehovah has given us as those who preserve and propagate His Name to our children and the world. Yet, one great purpose of this "bubble" which is the Church is that it might serve as a haven and harbor of peace for those souls who have never known peace. Christ has granted to us a Word which is powerful not only to preserve the security which you and I share as members of His community, but to propagate this security in the lives of broken people as we selflessly gather them into the bubble we have come to love and value.

Such a view of the Church means risk. It means discomfort. It means awkwardness, anxiety, and at times great disappointment. It's no picnic ministering to the unlovely. But in so doing, we present the character of Christ as it truly is: a shelter for the hurting and a harbor for the battered. And, likewise, we present the Word of God for what it truly is: the power of God unto salvation... the Word of might which makes cripples to walk, the blind to have sight, and demons to flee. A Word which destroys fearful memories, heals bitter pasts, and makes missionaries out of demoniacs. It is that Word which we possess. It is that Word which Christ commands us to take to the world.

-by Edward W. Ludt

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