

Gospel

Herald

For the promotion of
NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

ISSN 0829 - 4666

Vol. 78, No. 3

TORONTO, ONTARIO

March 2013



January 27 was an exciting day at Strathmore Boulevard in Toronto as the congregation confirmed the appointment of Moises Velasco as an elder and Leo Razon as a deacon. In the picture, Leo is fourth from the left and Moises is fifth from the left in the third row. The four other elders and four other deacons were also reaffirmed in their leadership service of the congregation. The elder's and deacon's wives, the evangelists and their wives are also pictured.

THIS ISSUE'S THEME:

Leadership and Loyalty: Lessons from 1 and 2 Samuel

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First and Second Samuel – An Overview

Edwin Broadus

In our Bibles 1 and 2 Samuel are the ninth and tenth books of the Old Testament and part of a section appropriately identified as books of history, for they relate the history of the Israelites during the times of their last judge, Samuel, and their first two kings, Saul and David. In the Hebrew Bible these two books were one, as were 1 and 2 Kings, and all these were part of what was called the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings), so-named because it was thought that they were composed by prophets.¹ The translators of the Septuagint, who rendered the Hebrew scriptures into Greek in the pre-Christian era, divided the book of Samuel into two parts, apparently for practical reasons. The Greek text took up more space than the Hebrew, making it desirable to make two books out of one.

While 1 and 2 Samuel provide entertaining and instructive Bible stories for children's books and Sunday school classes, the significance of this part of the Bible goes far beyond this. These books tell how the people of God moved from the last of the times of the judges, under Samuel, to the inauguration of a kingship under Saul and its transition to an hereditary monarchy under David, with all of its messianic implications, for it was predicted that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David. And, while the stories provide moral and spiritual instruction for adults as well as children, more importantly, they reveal God at work and revealing himself in history, carrying out through human beings, some cooperative and some uncooperatively, His divine purpose. This history is revealed, then, not as a mere collection of events, but as directed by God, despite the flaws and failures of the human actors. The period covered in

1 and 2 Samuel is sometimes the story of miserable failure (as in the case of Saul), but overall it is a positive narrative, for it tells of religious revival under Samuel and later under David. Because of the latter, the tragedy of Saul was not the final word in this period of Israel's history.

The author or authors of 1 and 2 Samuel are not specifically identified, but we learn from 1 Chronicles 29:29 that "the acts of King David, from first to last, are written in the Chronicles of Samuel the seer, and in the Chronicles of Nathan the prophet, and in the Chronicles of Gad the seer, with accounts of all his rule and his

W.J. Martin, in his introduction to the books of Samuel, rightly calls them, "History at its best."

might and of the circumstances that came upon him and upon Israel and upon all the kingdoms of the countries."² While we cannot know whether the reference here is to our books of 1 and 2 Samuel, at the very least it tells us that Samuel made a written record about some of the acts of David, making it possible that some or all of the events in these books that transpired during his life time were written down by him. Others have speculated, with similar good reason, that Nathan and Gad may have penned other parts of these books. But when all is said, we do not actually know who wrote 1 and 2 Samuel. Perhaps the men mentioned were the authors; perhaps someone unknown to us made use of the records of some or all of these men.

There is much overlap between 1 Chronicles and 2 Samuel relative to the lives and activities of David and many of his peers, and the two

books can be compared with profit. Chronicles was written later, after the return from Babylonian exile. The Chronicler had little interest in the northern kingdom, but is concerned with the rise and fall of the Davidic monarchy. He was writing a supplement to what was written in Samuel and Kings and omits many of the personal stories about David and his family while supplying material about the temple and its worship, not found in such detail in the earlier writings.³

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel are easily summarized and outlined. Samuel is the main character in 1 Samuel 1-8. Saul rises to the forefront in 1 Samuel 9-31, although there are frequent interactions with David in much of this section. All of 2 Samuel is primarily the story of David as king.

The books cover a period of about a century, from 1050 to 950 B.C. When they were put into final form is a matter of conjecture, but it would not have been until the death of David at the earliest. Depending on their relationship with 1 and 2 Kings, which so obviously are a direct continuation of 1 and 2 Samuel and complete the history of the monarchy from the time of Solomon to the Babylonian captivity in the sixth century B.C., 1 and 2 Samuel may not have been put into their final form until then.

W.J. Martin, in his introduction to the books of Samuel, rightly calls them, "History at its best."⁴ The character studies of its main persons, Samuel, Saul and David, are incisive and instructive. Beyond these leaders, there is a subset of other characters:

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1 R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 664.

2 Quoted from *English Standard Version*.

3 J. S. Wright, *New Bible Dictionary*, 1962, 211.

4 W. J. Martin, *Ibid.*, 1139.

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Leadership Lessons from Samuel (PART 1)

Thayer Salisbury

The books of Samuel contain a wealth of instruction regarding leadership. There are so many leadership lessons to consider that we will need some means of organizing the material, or we will soon be lost in it. I propose to divide the material into five major segments.

1. The leadership crisis in the pre-monarchy period (Eli & Samuel).
2. Leadership lessons from Saul.
3. Leadership lessons from David before his kingship.
4. Leadership lessons from Jonathan.
5. Leadership lessons from David's kingship.

In this article (part one of the series), we will cover the first two topics.

The Leadership Crisis in Pre-Monarchy Israel (1 Samuel 1-10)

To a large extent the problem revealed in the book of Judges is a leadership problem. The judges were leaders, but they were largely local leaders. None of them influenced the entire country; and they were erratic. A given judge would lead only for a short period, and then things would again descend into chaos.

The problems revealed in the book of Judges are not over as First Samuel begins. There is still a leadership crisis in Israel. This leadership crisis will not be solved in the book of First Samuel, although there will be times when it appears to have been solved.

Most of the leadership lessons in First Samuel are of a negative nature. We are shown how not to lead

more often than we are shown how to lead. But whether the lessons are cast in positive or negative terms, the lessons are there to be learned.

The lesson we are most clearly to learn in these early chapters is that their leadership crisis was the result of a failure of family and of faith.

The Failure of Family

The failure of Israelite families was a root cause of the leadership problem. Eli is presented as a father who failed. He has not instilled faith in his sons, as Deuteronomy commanded him to do (cf. Deuteronomy 6:4-24). He is unwilling to restrain his sons. He talks (2:22-25), but he takes no action (3:13; cf. Psalm 101:7; Deuteronomy 21:18ff). Evidently he even ate of their stolen meat (2:12-15, 29 & 4:18). In his failure as a father, he failed in the most fundamental responsibility of all. He failed to honor God (2:27-30).

Samuel is presented as only slightly better. He is never accused of fattening himself by means of his sons' sins as was Eli (12:1-5). But Samuel also has failed to raise his sons to honor God (8:3). Samuel, while not participating in his sons' sin, has trouble admitting that his sons are unfit. He appoints them as judges (8:1), and he takes offense when their sins are pointed out (8:6).

When a church or a nation faces a leadership crisis, all kinds of solutions are suggested. Rarely do we face the fact that a failure at home is almost always at the root of our national and church failures. Good leadership begins in the home (1 Timothy 3:4-5). The training of a solid leader normally begins not at school but in the home (2 Timothy 1:3-5; Deuteronomy 6:7-9, 20-25; Genesis 18:19).

The training of good leaders begins in the home, and the influence of the home does not stop when the child leaves home. This is a biblical truth we need to rediscover. Too many Christian parents are not using their influence with their children as they ought.

A few years ago I was distressed beyond measure when I learned that the daughter of a good friend had left her husband and was living with another man. This friend was an elder in the church, and had been a preacher for over thirty years. I expected that he would do something. But he refused to do anything. He said, "She is an adult. I do not think it right for parents to interfere in the lives of their adult children."

The daughter took this

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1 & 2 Samuel

Wayne Turner



One Sunday morning after the worship assembly, as the preacher stood at the back of the auditorium and spoke with various members, one man, a long-time member who had served the congregation in several capacities of leadership, made a point of coming to talk to him. The sermon that morning was from one of the Psalms. “I wish you would only preach from the New Testament.” Given a comment like that, is it any wonder that occasionally, we have the reputation of only using “half of the Bible.” How unfortunate!

For some church members the idea that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament when He died is sufficient grounds to ignore that part of the Bible. They would agree, as Paul wrote, that the Law brought us to Christ. But, since we are under Christ, we no longer need the Old Testament and do not need to study it. However, there are several reasons why we should.

To begin, the Old Testament books were the scriptures that were used by Jesus and the early church. Jesus taught from the scriptures. Even more, after His resurrection, He showed His disciples how they foretold His death and resurrection. Paul explained the story of Jesus from the scriptures. The Old Testament was the background to the New, so, to really understand the New Testament, we need to know the Old.

Second, the Old Testament tells the story of God, from before the creation to Christ. If we are not interested in the story of God and His dealings with humanity, we will not be able to grasp a fuller, balanced view of God. Paul spoke of the goodness and the severity of God. To really appreciate His grace, should we not also understand His justice and abhorrence of sin? And, parallel to seeing God’s story through the Old Testament, we also learn our story—the story of humanity—our origin, fall, weakness, purpose and all that God has done to prepare for our redemption and salvation. The stories of the Patriarchs, Moses, Israel, the prophets and everything else in the Old Testament are part of our story. We need to know that story.

Third, we need to remember the aphorism that those who do not learn the lessons of the past are condemned to repeat them. We often refer to the cycles of history—how history seems to repeat itself. (Perhaps a better way to understand this is not that history is to blame but that over the millennia, human

beings have not changed. As a species, we keep making the same mistakes over and over and over again.) In part, this is the result of Satan’s efforts to break our relationship with God. Further, our record shows our stubborn desire for independence and self-sufficiency which has led to a myriad of bad choices and disastrous consequences. And, in scripture, we see the recurring failure of those who held positions of leadership among God’s people. How well is this seen in the accounts in Genesis, Exodus and Judges as well as during the time of the kings and prophets? Throughout these centuries, we see the repeated pattern of human failure, consequences, God’s intervention and restoration only to again be followed by human failure. Though culture and technology may have changed over time, what is there today that would lead us to believe that human nature has really changed? The unfortunate truth is, we have not changed. The same temptations and sins that affected the people of the Old Testament world are still at work today.

This issue of the Gospel Herald focuses on the Old Testament books of 1 and 2 Samuel. Often, it seems that these books are mainly used, as Ed Broadus notes, as sources of “entertaining and instructive Bible stories for children’s books and Sunday school classes.” These books tell an important part of the history of Israel, from Samuel the prophet through Saul and the beginning of the Israelite monarchy to King David. Beyond the “moral and spiritual instruction” offered by these

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GOSPEL HERALD

Published Monthly by the Gospel Herald Foundation, a non profit corporation, for the Promotion of New Testament Christianity

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NOTICE—All materials for publication must be in the hands of the editors by the tenth (10) day of the month preceding the date of issue. Date of issue is the first of each month.

Canadian Subscription \$16; \$28 for 2 years.; Widows & Gifts, \$15

PDF version by email \$10.00

U.S. And Foreign Subscriptions \$23.00 CDN per year to cover higher postage

“Publications Mail Agreement Number 4000 5401”

Indexed by Restoration Serials Index

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

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books, “they reveal God at work and revealing Himself in history, carrying out through human beings ... His divine purpose.”

Thayer Salisbury introduces us to the ‘Leadership Lessons from Samuel.’ He observes that the problem in Judges is leadership, which carries over into Samuel. This “leadership crisis was the result of a failure of family and faith.” He notes that the “leadership lessons of First Samuel are of a negative nature ... how not to lead more than ... how to lead.” Thayer shows the danger of leaders who fail to lead from fear of their followers or who try to blame their failures on them.

In “Obedience and Sacrifice,” Peter Mophy explores Saul’s transition from his initial reluctance to overconfident disobedience. He observes, “Sometimes our power, pride or position can make us feel infallible and invincible.” He shows that as Saul’s heart and attitude changed, the distance between him and God increased. Though “God had given Saul everything he needed to be a great man of God,” he disobeyed God.

Tim Johnson uses the story of David and Saul to remind us of the importance of faithfulness. In “Loyalty in a Cave,” he points out the loyalty issues in 1 & 2 Samuel. He contrasts the loyalty of David and his men and the disloyalty of Saul. He shows how the loyalty of David as a leader inspired loyalty from his men. And he uses David to remind us of the characteristics of faithfulness and its importance to us as Christians in our relationship with God, other Christians and in our marriages.

This issue of the Gospel Herald reminds us how relevant these two books are to our lives today. They are not just old history. They are the real lives and characters of people that are being lived today. We thank Paul Birston for his work planning and organizing this issue.

*First and Second Samuel – An Overview...
continued from page 2*

Hannah, who for years yearned to have a son of her own, and when she finally had one dedicated him to God; Eli, the well-meaning high priest who was an inept father; Jonathan, torn between loyalty to his father and attachment to David; Joab, David’s military commander, unstintingly devoted to the king’s interests but ultimately rejected by him; and Abner, the king’s son who led a people’s uprising against his own father. We learn from all these people, identify with some of them in their struggles and even in their failures, are appalled by the actions of others, but through it all are left pondering some of the deeper issues of life and of human relationships. Even more important, through these people and through the events surrounding them we learn about God, who He is, how He acts, and who He wants us to be.

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inaction as approval of her behavior and was emboldened to continue in sin. I asked the father, "For what sin was Eli told that his house would be destroyed?" He replied, "I don't know." A preacher in the Lord's church for thirty years and he did not know that Eli's house was destroyed "for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them" (1 Samuel 3:13).

Those sons were over thirty years of age, but their father still had influence over them and he was expected to use it. Because he failed to make full use of his influence to cause them to honor God, his house was destroyed.

May we take warning. May we realize that we bear a tremendous responsibility before God with reference to our children. We have influence and we are to use it to its fullest to cause the Lord to be glorified. If we do not, we are unfit leaders, and our children will be unfit to be leaders, in the kingdom of God.

The Failure of Faith

The failure of key Israelite families explains much but it does not explain all. At the root even of the family failure was a failure of faith. Israel has trouble coming up with the right kind of leader because many Israelites looked to the world, rather than to God's word, for their model of leadership.

Contrary to what some have taught, God had planned for them to have a king. He had indicated as much in Deuteronomy 17 and even as early as Genesis 49:10 ("The scepter shall not depart from Judah..."). The trouble with their request for a king is with the timing of the request and the type of king they wanted. Instead of waiting for God's man in God's time, they are eager to have a king who contradicts the guidelines that the Lord had given (compare Deuteronomy 17:14ff with 1 Samuel 8:11-20).

Their eyes are on the nations around them. When Samuel tries to point out the dangers of a kingship, they say, "No! But there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles" (1 Samuel 8:19-20).

When we fix our eyes on the nations, our eyes are not on God. This is not walking by faith, it is walking by sight.

The Lord responded by giving them the kind of king they sought, one who was tall and strong (10:23). In His mercy He chose a humble man (10:22). In His mercy He enabled

A leader who is not looking to God looks instead to himself, this is pride and it manifests itself in arrogant behavior.

Saul to deliver them from the current threat (10:6, 9, 10; 11:6). But there was danger in the way they chose. They had to experience the bitter results of their own way before they were ready to accept a leader who did not meet worldly expectations.

The Lord is preparing for them a leader after His own heart. He has been doing so since the years of famine during the era of the judges (Ruth 1:1; 4:18-21). But it will be years before that leader is ready. In the meantime, they will suffer under the leader chosen by sight rather than by faith.

Leadership Lessons Learned From Saul (1 Samuel 9-15)

Generally we have focused on Saul's failures, but he had some good leadership qualities at the beginning of his reign. We should learn from both his good points and his failures.

Started Humble

Saul began as a humble leader. His humility, like that of Moses, may even have been too great at times

(10:22; cf. Exodus 4). But in certain respects, he began just as an Israelite king should have begun. At first he did not enrich himself. He did not build a palace or raise an army when first anointed (10:25-27), he went home and continued to do farm work (12:4-5). This was in keeping with the instructions in Deuteronomy 17.

Saul also did well in that he did not deal in anger with his critics (10:25-27; 11:12-13). During his early popularity, and especially after his victory over the Ammonites, it would have been tempting to do so.

Pride & Fear

But a little later we see a strange combination of pride and fear in Saul.

We see evidence of pride in several things said about Saul. He offered a sacrifice that should have been offered by a priest (13:7-14). He took a son of Eli as priest (14:3), even though God had rejected Eli's family (2:30). On one occasion, Saul started to consult the Lord and then decided matters on his own (14:16-20). Saul also made a rash vow (14:24).

The crowning event of Saul's decline was set up by his sparing of Agag in direct disobedience to the Lord's command. On that occasion, Saul set up a monument in his own honor (15:12), and refused to admit his wrong when confronted with it. Instead of admitting his wrong he made excuses and blamed others (15:13-15). His sin was described by Samuel as rebellion and presumption (15:22-23), and set in contrast to his earlier humility (15:17).

Yet, despite these evidences of a proud attitude, we would have to describe Saul as a man who came to live in constant fear. Even though the Lord had defeated the Ammonites by his hand, Saul feared the Philistines and he feared that his own troops might desert him (13:7-12). Saul did not lead his troops in doing right, rather he feared his own troops and was led by them into doing wrong (15:15, 24). As he continued to

decline, Saul reached a point where he lived in fear of everyone around him, including his most faithful friend (18:12, 15, 29) and even his own son (20:30).

Leadership Lessons From Saul

We often imagine that those who behave in a proud or arrogant manner are self-confident. But the truth is sometimes, perhaps often, the opposite. Those who act proud are often fearful.

A leader who is not looking to God looks instead to himself, this is pride and it manifests itself in arrogant behavior. But occasionally this same leader will allow his eyes to stray to his enemies, or to his own inadequacies. When that happens, fear sets in. The odd vacillating between setting up a monument in one's own honor, and fearing to contradict one's own followers is not, perhaps, so odd after all. Fear and pride have the same root cause. They both are present because the leader has stopped looking to God.

Neither pride nor fear is to be attacked directly. The cure for both is greater trust in and reliance on the Lord. If Saul had continued in his humility, if he had continued to rely on the Lord, all might have been well. But he took his eyes off the Lord. Sometimes he looked to himself, sometimes at his enemies, sometimes at his friends, but rarely to the Lord. This was the first key to his failure as leader.

We must also remember that God does not see the sin as the biggest problem. **The denial is a bigger problem.** Had Saul confessed as soon as Samuel confronted him, the story might have been very different. All leaders fail. All leaders sin. The difference is that a godly leader accepts rebuke while a worldly leader rejects it. *The Lord mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble* (Proverbs 3:34).

In summing up Saul's leadership failures, we are reminded that leaders must lead. They must not fear

their followers or use their followers to excuse their own wrongdoing. Saul fell into that trap. He lost the respect of those around him, he may even have lost his own self-respect. Few things will destroy a leader's ability to lead faster than hiding behind those he ought to be leading.

There are more negatives than positives when we look for leadership lessons in the life of Saul. But I want to give credit where credit is due, and there is one item in regard to which I think we tend to be rather unfair to Saul. On the night before his death he was told that he would die in battle the next day (1 Samuel 28:19). Saul did not run away; he did not hide; he went into battle knowing the outcome. The man had his flaws, but on the last morning of his life he tried to end as he had begun, humbly, faithfully and courageously. We should learn from his errors, certainly, but we would also do well to emulate his occasional strength.

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Obedience and Sacrifice

Peter Morphy

Samuel had a difficult and dangerous mission of confronting King Saul who had allowed his position and power to alter his altar. The first king of Israel began his reign with fear and trembling but over the years his confidence in his attitudes and actions led him away from obeying the word of the Lord. The temptation to gradually wander away or to quickly turn from following the path of the Lord is still a great struggle for believers today. Sometimes our power, pride or position can make us feel infallible and invincible. We can develop the mind and heart to justify and rationalize things that we know are wrong.

Many of those who have been born again initially make a great commitment to be faithful to the Lord. Not unlike Saul's transformation, God changes us when we are born of water and the Spirit (John 3:3-5). When Saul was first anointed King, the Lord enabled Saul to prophesy with the prophets and the Lord would continue to be with him (1 Samuel 10:6-7). In fact, God changed Saul's heart and the Spirit of God came upon him in power (10:9-10). God had given Saul everything he needed to be a great man of God and lead the people in the way of the Lord. In the same way, God has given us everything we need for life and godliness as we know the word of God and the God of the word (2 Peter 1:3-4).

When the Philistine army intimidated the men of Israel, God's people scattered and hid for their lives. Samuel was delayed in coming to offer the priestly sacrifice, so Saul reasoned to himself that he could perform this duty. It was urgent, necessary, expedient. Surely the people would gain confidence, Samuel would understand and God would be honored. It just makes sense. Even if it was the wrong thing to do, God will simply judge the motive and overlook the presumptuous offense. That is what most of us conclude. Not Samuel. Not God. Samuel said this act was foolish, a breaking of the command of

God, a heart issue and grounds for seeking another to lead the people (1 Samuel 13:13-14).

Later Samuel told King Saul to fight and totally destroy the wicked Amalekites and everything that belonged to them, including men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys (1 Samuel 15:2-3). King Saul destroyed everything of the Amalekites ... everything except King Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle. The reasoning was superb. These could be used in a grand thanksgiving offering and sacrificed on the altar to the Lord (1 Samuel 15:21). "God will be so

The Lord is more concerned about our obedience to His word than our brilliant, innovative, contemporary worship ideas and sacrifices.

pleased," must have been the mantra going through Saul's mind.

Reading between the lines, we also see that Saul was looking for a way to exalt himself. He had built a monument on Mount Carmel in his own honor (15:12). Even after being confronted and confessing his sin, Saul wanted Samuel to go with him in order that the King would be honored before the elders and the people of Israel (15:30).

Samuel had a hard message to tell the King who at this point is quite full of himself. Somehow Saul has convinced himself that he has followed the instruction of the Lord and twice he confidently told Samuel about his obedience (15:13, 20). Samuel's words for King Saul are just as important for us today. "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king" (15:22-23).

Deep down I wonder if Saul knew there was a growing distance in his relationship with the Lord. When he spoke to Samuel about sacrifice and worship to God he used the term, "the Lord your God" (15:15, 21, 30). If God was the Lord of Samuel and Saul, he would have said "the Lord our God." In his heart Saul knew that God was the Lord of all, just not the Lord of his life. Jesus asks the question in this way, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46).

The Lord is more concerned about our obedience to His word than our brilliant, innovative, contemporary worship ideas and sacrifices. We tend to think that Saul was distracted, unfocused, misguided, and influenced by the people. God knew that this was a sin of the heart, full of rebellion, pride, evil and idolatry. Samuel said that what Saul had done was evil in the eyes of the Lord (15:19).

Saul refused to take personal responsibility for his sin by blaming others (15:24), but he was judged and rejected as king of Israel because he rejected God as the King of Kings (15:26). Today the decision is ours to make. We have a greater revelation and understanding of God's will, purpose, grace and love than the prophets, priests or kings. Will we obey the word of the Lord? We must not be led astray by the influence of our parents, our relationship with our children, the pressure from our friends or the fear of our enemies.

This is the last time Samuel saw King Saul in this life. Samuel mourned. God was grieved. Saul was distant and became an angry old man. The story could have ended much differently for Saul, but it didn't. But it can end very well with us. May we one day hear God say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness" (Matthew 25:21).

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Loyalty in a Cave

Tim Johnson

One doesn't have to wade into 1 & 2 Samuel very far before encountering loyalty issues. Despite all of David's brave support for King Saul, the compromising monarch turned against him. Even then, David remained loyal and refused to hurt or humiliate Saul when he could have. On one memorable night David and Abishai crept into Saul's sleeping camp and stood directly over the slumbering king, but would not allow Abishai to kill him. "Do not destroy him, for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed and be without guilt?" (1 Samuel 26:9) A disloyal king slept unknowingly at the feet of a loyal subject.

Remarkable loyalty united hundreds of David's soldiers when the future king was a fugitive. Retreating to the Cave of Adullam, a constant trickle of discontented people arrived at the hideout seeking safety under David's leadership. Some of them were his own brothers, others were deserters from Saul's army, and yet others were running from debt collectors. (1 Samuel 22:1-2). They grew to 300, then 600. Seeking more safety, David eventually moved the entire band to the Philistine village of Ziklag, and eventually to Hebron after Saul's death. One group of new arrivals was examined by David, who said, "If you come peacefully to me to help me, my heart shall be united

with you" (1 Chronicles 12:17-18). They replied, "We are yours, O David, and with you, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, and peace to him who helps you; indeed your God helps you!" Thus David and his new recruits willingly entered into a pact of loyalty.

His men were divided into three groups: the Cherethites, the Pelethites and the Gittites. They supported David during his fugitive years, and then helped to install him as Israel's new king. He rewarded them with top positions in his national army and kept them close as his personal bodyguards. They went with him when he was

David didn't appreciate Saul's murderous intentions, but he was loyal.

forced out of Jerusalem by his rebellious son, Absalom, and then escorted him back again when the threat was over. David's old friend, Hushai, cautioned Absalom not to pursue the retreating king and his men, "You know your father and his men that they are mighty men and they are fierce, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field" (2 Samuel 17:8).

What was it about David that inspired such immediate and long-term loyalty? Compared to Saul, people saw him as a just and wise leader. David gave them new lives, honour and importance; their calling was greater than anything they had ever known. David was able to take these diverse, ruined men and create a fiercely loyal army, despite their rough backgrounds and differences. They would gladly give their lives for him.

Such loyalty is almost unheard of today. Too many marriages easily crumble because "It's all about me!" Long-time employees find themselves without a job because "The shareholders need to see more profit." The Lord's church watches people go elsewhere because "It's more exciting over there." Loyalty has become a

treacherous thing; those who profess it often dispense with it in order to please themselves. The great spoiler of loyalty is selfishness.

To be loyal means to be faithful in allegiance, true, faithful to love, duty and obligation. Older versions of the Bible don't use the word "loyal," but use "faithful" instead. Loyalty is faithfulness. It gives itself to another without question. Loyalty involves complete trust and dedication. Nothing delights God more than the loyalty of His people. (Hosea 6:6)

Loyalty is built on gratefulness. David was thankful for his dedicated men; they were grateful for his care and kindness. The apostles loved Jesus because His loyalty to them was unquestioned. He told them, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). In turn, they gave Him their lives.

Loyalty can't exist without truth. Deception and lies destroy loyalty. Who can be loyal when falsehood is present? Jesus has given us the Truth. On this foundation we can stand. It gives us reason to be loyal. Loyalty is abiding in Him. "The one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). To do otherwise is to forfeit both.

Loyalty can exist when people and circumstances displease us. David didn't appreciate Saul's murderous intentions, but he was loyal. The Cherethites were willing to live in a cave with the one they were loyal to. The disciples were led to persecution and death, but would not be found unfaithful to Jesus. Is your congregation having its struggles? Don't run away; be loyal! Is your marriage partner disappointing? Don't look for another; be faithful! Do your brothers and sisters in Christ fail you? Don't grumble. They're God's people. Be loyal!

Loyalty will cost you, but in the end it prevails. To the suffering saints in Smyrna the Lord said, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

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Virginia Hipwell, at GHbywomen4women@aol.com

Hannah's Tears – 1 SAMUEL 1

Bullying is nothing new. Just take a look at Hannah. And she was by no means the first. Hundreds of years earlier, Sarah had undergone harassment from her handmaiden, Hagar, for similar reasons. (Genesis 6:4, 5). Although infertility still causes heartache for many couples today, our society does not fully grasp the impact it had on women like Hannah. A woman's self-worth and the esteem of her husband and community were largely tied to her ability to bear children, especially sons. The importance of having children is evidenced by the blessings given to Rebekah (Genesis 24:60) and Boaz (Ruth 4:11). To be childless was to live under a cloud of disgrace (Genesis 30:23 / Luke 1:25). Hannah's inability to conceive was more than sufficient cause for emotional suffering. When this sore spot became the target for Peninnah's abuse it was true torture.

We do not know what home life was like for Hannah. In 1 Samuel 1, we see a brief glimpse of her dysfunctional family at an annual feast in Shiloh. This seemed to be when Hannah's rival could mount her most successful attacks. Peninnah's harassment was deliberate and malicious (v. 6). It may have been Elkanah's love for and obvious favoritism toward Hannah that so aroused Peninnah's jealousy that she lashed out at Hannah not only crushing her spirit but also upsetting her so severely that she was

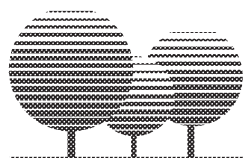
unable to eat her special portion of the meal (v. 4). If, as some speculate, this was the Feast of the Tabernacles celebrating the Exodus from Egypt and the year's harvest, Hannah may have felt her own unfruitfulness at this time even more than usual. Whatever the underlying factors may have been, Peninnah was unrelenting in her heartless attacks (v. 7).

To Hannah's credit, she did nothing to retaliate (Romans 12:17-19). Apparently, she also did not complain to her husband as Sarah had done regarding Hagar's taunting (Genesis 16:5). And just where was the head of the household while this verbal violence was taking place? Elkanah seemed to be either unaware of or oblivious to what was happening at his feast table. He knew Hannah longed for a son and that she was extremely upset and unhappy (v. 8) yet all he did was to make a feeble attempt to comfort her. Hannah did not need platitudes. She needed relief from her tormentor. She

needed peace of mind not a large piece of meat. It is difficult to imagine that Elkanah could have been unaware of Peninnah's treatment of Hannah considering it occurred over a number of years at a special family meal. Perhaps he did not understand the devastating power of spiteful words. Whether from ignorance, indifference or weak leadership, Elkanah did nothing to correct an abusive situation which he was ultimately responsible for. If he did, in fact, know what was going on and did nothing to stop the bullying, that is inexcusable.

The Bible does not give us much background information on this story. We do not know the when or why, but as Hannah was the loved wife (v. 5) it is likely that her infertility was the reason Elkanah had taken a second wife. To carry on his name, continue the family line and inherit his property, he needed an heir. Elkanah wanted a son. Hannah's barrenness was a problem for him and so he married Peninnah to solve that problem. Like Sarah, Elkanah had used his own wisdom to fix the problem and, like Sarah, had messed things up. How sad that he had not chosen instead to follow Isaac's example in regard to a barren wife. Rebekah was childless for nearly twenty years. Isaac took the

continued on page 15



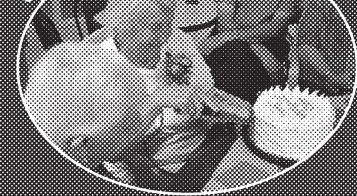
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by Don Hipwell and Harold Bruggen
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NEW YORK

Newark: We are currently preparing and finalizing our plans for the 17th Annual Western NY Lectureship, sponsored by the Churches of Christ of Greater Rochester and hosted by the Church of Christ of Newark, NY. The dates are April 12 - 14, 2013. Our theme this year is "The Challenging Ministry of Reconciliation"

Sardinia: Kyle Frank has begun a new teaching class for the adults on Sunday mornings. The lessons will help all of us learn how to use study helps to better understand what we're reading. Kyle has also been diligently studying a Course for Preacher Training. We encourage him in this direction of life he is pursuing, and pray he will make an impact for Christ, not only in his life, but the lives of others. For the remainder of the winter and early spring we are encouraging people to come a half hour earlier on Sundays and warm up with hot cocoa, coffee or tea and then to stay after worship as well to socialize.

ONTARIO

Bramalea: Tony Bonsu was guest speaker for the congregation on January 20. The congregation is in the process of choosing additional leaders. A small group program is planned to begin in September. Michael, Carol, Danielle and Dominic Millet became Canadians on February 5, 2013. Bramalea's Sunday a.m. high school class recently composed a letter to the congregation based along the lines of Paul's epistles. Thanks to all who support the Japanese mission/relief work through their prayers and financial contributions. For up-to-date information on that work, go to Joel Osborne's Facebook or ask for his report at joelosborne4@yahoo.com; or check the Facebook pages of Jonathan or Michiko Straker, or their website: www.strakerhouse.com. One way Japanese women (including Michiko Straker) are raising money for the relief work and as a reminder of those devastated

by the 2011 tsunami, is by making jewellery from broken shards left in the sand from that disaster. The project is called Nozomi ("Hope") and can be accessed at www.nozomiproject.com/collections. By viewing "Gifts" the jewellery can be seen and, by going to "FAQs," information on how to order items can be found.

Kenora: This winter, we received a big spiritual boost when two members came home full of the Word. Earle and Reed Rattai travelled to Memphis in October for the Spiritual Sword Lectureship. Over five days, they heard many inspired speakers on topics concerning matters God has eternally settled and the Church in the purpose of God. Outstanding among the talks was 'What the Great Commission Embraces'. The subject was presented by John Deberry Jr., who is a representative of the Tennessee General Assembly. Earle and Reed came back filled with enthusiasm to share with the congregation.

Toronto (Bayview): Under the direction of Carrie Barbour, thirty-five school bags are being sewn to send to Haiti for orphan children there. A group has been working on completing this sewing project so that the school bags can be received by May.

Toronto (Harding Ave.): After searching the word of God for guidance and leadership qualifications we were pleased to install two Elders: Bro. Bernard Worloson and Bro. Aikins Wiredu and one Deacon: Bro. Ayo Sanusi, on January 13, 2013 under the direction of the Evangelist Bro. Santiago Molina. Also we rejoiced with Opeyemi Martha Sanusi, who was baptized into Christ, on February 7, 2013, by Bro. Santiago Molina

Toronto (Strathmore Blvd.): Renee Bryan, from Trinidad, who is in Toronto to study architecture, was welcomed to the Strathmore Family. **Key to the Kingdom** - The latest numbers of "total Canada average minute audience" from June to November, 2012 was 4,000. This is an increase of 1,500 from our last rating

period. These numbers are of viewers who had their television on Vision for the full half hour. We received an average of 62 calls per month. We sent out 388 intro World Bible School courses. We also distributed 135 of our DVD Bible studies. Thank you to all who helped with the follow up of students and the financial support of the Key ministry.

Waterloo: Francis Merritt, turned 90 years old on February 3. Her address is: Francis Merritt, P.O. Box 147, Kearney, ON P0A 1M0 She'd love to hear from you! Bianca Azzoparde organized several photographers and volunteers as we welcomed our community neighbours for Free Family Photo days on Saturday, February 16 and Monday, February 18 (the Family Day holiday in Ontario). We served coffee and hot chocolate and welcomed our visitors. We also provided a framed 5 x 7 photo for each family to take home. The church-plant team met for its first full meeting Sunday, January 27, 2013, and it was something of a marathon. Instead of the scheduled hour, we kept talking for two-and-a-half hours. At our previous preliminary meeting, we had brainstormed a list of items we needed to work through as we prepared for the start of the new congregation. We are now taking these in turn as we meet every other Sunday afternoon. The target date for the beginning of the new congregation was set for the end of September this year. There are many matters to be worked through in an effort to make the best use of our talents in establishing and growing this new congregation.

Windsor - West Side: After a meeting with the director of Forgotten Harvest Canada, we were informed that the most underserved area of Essex County in regards to food banks is the West End. Beginning Tuesday, January 15, 2013, the drop off area became the church parking lot for the different agencies to pick up what they need and to be delivered around the West End. We will be a part of it as usual—still servicing around our building area. Continue to pray for this effort as a means of serving others and allowing us to enter into relationship with others. We celebrated Bob and Isabel Underwood's 70th wedding anniversary. We admire the two of them so much and this is a milestone worthy of mention. 'Let marriage be held in honour among all'—Hebrews 13:4

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(BC news supplied by Barbara Lewis)

ALBERTA

Camrose: God truly blessed us in 2012 here in Camrose. The work is moving forward with 4 baptisms in 2012 - Leila Barnachea, Linda Campbell, Ingrid Glover and Emanuel Burnstad who was baptized at a youth camp in Great Falls, Montana. Emanuel is now interning with David Friesen while working on his Bachelor's Degree in Biblical Studies through the Sunset International Bible Institute. Emanuel has been a great blessing to the church here as he reaches out to many of the younger crowd in Camrose. Donna Burnstad, Emanuel's mother, was also restored to the fellowship. I currently have a weekly article that runs twice a week in the local newspaper. I also have a ½ hour radio program with a radio station in Wetaskiwin, our neighbors 25 minutes west of Camrose. Our VBS was a great success last year with 30 children attending. There are currently two children in our congregation. We held a seminar in October, "Building Strong Families." We also purchased a new sign for the building with the help of the Waterview congregation in Richardson, Texas. All of these things have helped to put the church out in the community and heighten the community's awareness of the Lord's church. We appreciate the Waterview congregation and all of their support. God blessed us with 37 first time visitors from the community in 2012 and quite a few of those visitors continue to return. Almost every member of the body here is reaching out to someone. We have a few one on-one studies currently going and we continue to try get more started. We solicit your prayers for the continued growth of the Lord's church here in Camrose and around the world - David Friesen

Edmonton northside: We rejoice over 2 recent baptisms. Janessa Johnson, daughter of Garth and Kris Johnson, and David Mandaka. Our annual Beat the Blues Banquet was held. What the crowd lacked in size, it made up in enthusiasm. The 50's

theme was thoroughly enjoyed! A group of sisters met at Yola Latifi's home and made up 80 meals for the frozen food ministry. The monthly congregational pot luck and time of song learning was held the last Sunday of January.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Burnaby: Group meetings for our Swahili people were begun here at the church building in January by Tchaka Kimwemwe. Our young people also had their initial meeting to start planning for their annual SBCC youth retreat which is scheduled for the end of May this year. We are offering a course called "On the Front Lines: Sharing in Jesus' Ministry to People", for those interested in learning how to do prayer ministry. For more information, see our website, www.sbchurch.ca, and look under the Bible study resources tab. Also recommended is "Raising Truly Great Kids", a meaningful seminar/series of DVD's and workbooks by Dr. Tim Kimmel, which is furnished by Focus on the Family Canada. It is intended to give a clear game plan, practical tool, and an effective model to parent children the way God parents His: with grace!

Prince George: Although "house churches" have been well-known in many foreign countries for a long time, it is only in comparatively recent years that what were once small but active churches in parts of Canada have dwindled to the point that they no longer have enough members to be designated as anything other than "house churches". These are the ones that Norm and Jen Weir try to encourage and serve in B. C. through regular visits as time and weather permit. In one of these groups in the Prince George area that they frequent on their circuit are faithful members Grahame and Toni Somerville. In January they received a call from Toni. She had called an ambulance as Grahame had not been well for some days and could no longer walk. He was in ICU with a very serious leg infection, had three IV's delivering high-powered drugs to combat it, and they were putting in a pic-line. (He had other serious medical concerns that stem back many years to a work-related accident.) Toni is a Type 1 diabetic and has been blind in one eye since having a stroke, requiring two transplants. She must fly to Vancouver every three months or so for medical checks, yet joyfully runs her own accounting business out of their home (because of her condition, she is denied a driver's license). She has a staff of three, and hires a few free-lance accountants during the busy season. Despite their medical concerns, they are joyful people in the

Lord, not complaining, but always happy and upbeat. They learned a few days later how grave Grahame's condition had been when he improved quickly and could be moved out of ICU. His Doctor informed Toni that he was within two hours of going into Septic Shock because of the infection in his system. The doctors believe that it had been growing in his system for over six months, yet he had continued working until the previous week. The Weirs are convinced that only strength from the Lord kept him going.

Vernon: Our attention to Feb. 14 was called a bit early this year when a very special "Love Lunch" was enjoyed on February 10, following the worship service. Low in cost but" worth a million dollars in good advice was a "Five Steps Toward Healthier Relationships" Workshop the following Saturday. The \$10 cost covered lunch and a workbook as well as four hours of lectures.

MANITOBA

Winnipeg: Saeed Rastgari was baptized recently. The 6 lessons Bob Lewis presented at the Marriage Enrichment Seminar were: "The State of the Union", "Communication: Marriage Super Glue", "Keeping the Flame Burning", "Is the Young Man Safe?", "Giving Your Child the Blessing", and "Raising Families for Christ". The annual "Mountains of Fun on the Prairies" was held. The Winter Mission Lunch was held to raise awareness and to fundraise for the Zambia Mission Fund.

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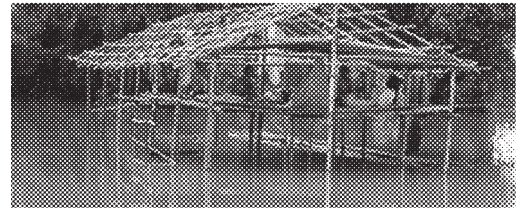
AUSTRALIA: Erol Dogan has recently spent five weeks in Sydney, Australia for the purpose of networking and connecting Arabic, Lebanese and Egyptian Christians to the people and works going on in both Israel and with the Palestinian Authority. Former members of the Burnaby congregation in B. C., Steward and Sandra Noel have been great at getting doors opened for him. Erol has met with two of the main church leaders in the Greenacres church of Christ who are involved in ministry among the Arabic communities in the Sydney area, which number some 30,000 people. This included a long discussion with the Arabic minister for the Liberty church. Through an Egyptian man, Sameeh Nan, whom he met in Cairo seven years ago he has been able to speak/preach, in English and Arabic, to small house groups where there are people from Palestinian, Lebanese, Iraqi and Egyptian backgrounds. The topic Erol initially chose was focused on specific needs, mainly the addressing of some of the bias and discomfort against reading the OT that Arabs have because it "mentions 'Israel' too much". By using Chapter 49 of Isaiah to show how the message of the old carries into the new giving Jesus' mission, his rejection and the gospel going out to the world, he felt it might help them overcome this prejudice when it is carefully studied. Sameeh also asked him to teach Hebrew, which Erol speaks more fluently than Arabic, but is not used as much in Australia. Apart from Erol's emphasis on Arabic-speaking Christians, he has learned that the Liberty church describes itself as an outwardly focused, multi-site church in southwestern Sydney comprising eight congregations in five locations: Greenacre, Strathfield, Menai, Villawood and Carramar, with plans in place to expand outwardly in the near future. Roughly 500 people regularly attend the worship gatherings at these locations. The congregations work together through an organization called "Fresh Hope" to conduct several community welfare programs. These include a youth

refuge, a pre-school, two opportunity (thrift) shops, a community café, and sponsors three "Food for Life" programs. While there are now about 30 congregations following the New Testament church pattern in not using instrumental music in worship services, there are over 400 known as churches of Christ which do.

GUATEMALA: In a recent newsletter, George Hall, founder of the Bible Institute of Central America, believes the church is making serious advances in Central America. "Our goal is to duplicate first century growth with first century methods. Listen carefully. The violence is on the increase. According to the US State Department, Honduras is the most dangerous country in the world. The most dangerous city is San Pedro Sula, only 25 minutes from El Progreso where our school is located. Guatemala is also extremely dangerous. We have violence in the form of extortion, kidnapping, rape, robbery, etc. A survey states that 70% of the population live in fear. Our students take buses to their weekend preaching assignments. They have been on buses that have been robbed by gang members armed with guns. Most recently, two of our students were on one of these. Two gunmen shot bullets through the roof of the bus. Then they ordered one of our students to go through the bus to collect all valuables. Contrariwise, Nicaragua, which is above Costa Rica and Panama, is the safest country in Central America. That is why I choose Nicaragua as the place to take people on campaigns with our students. This June, we will again take a group to Nicaragua. It will change their lives. Young people leave the campaign week and return to the USA with resolve. Although I know that some churches are having budget concerns, I see in the New Testament two things that the church did. They were benevolence and missions. It is reasonable that these would be our last thing to cut in troublesome times. We in BICA live very modestly. We would have it no other way. It is the right way to go. However, our expenses have risen greatly lately, including food prices. The cost of house rental for our married students has also gone through the roof. I expected about 100 students in January. If we graduate 50 a year for the next 5 years, we will add 250 graduates to the 320 who have already graduated,

making a total of 570 grads. (These are life-time and self-supported.) I taught in all three schools two weeks in January. Pray for us. In Christ, George Hall"

INDIA: "The term "fighting the traffic" takes on a whole new meaning in India where it is always a challenge. Heavy traffic of all kinds includes huge numbers of pedestrians, bicycles, goats, sheep, pigs, dogs, cows, chickens, motorcycles,



(Excerpts from "Namaste", Pictures Taken by Jerry Edwards, Trenton, KY)

(Ed. Note: These types of conditions delay our missionaries but do not stop them from dealing with whatever comes and thanking God for those who become Christians because they refused to miss an opportunity to hear the Gospel preached.)

cars, motor scooters, buses, trucks, cars—not to mention sometimes even camels and elephants. The roads are constantly in need of repair from both the traffic and the rains, especially those during the monsoon season which are largely determined by its pattern. This system dominates the weather occurrences in all of India, meaning that the heaviest of the rain falls in about a four-month period with little or no rain the rest of the year. This usually starts in June—you can "set your watch" by this: between the 7th and the 10th of the month. The monsoons are supposed to be over by the end of September. But this has changed over the past few years. The monsoons have come later, stayed longer, and generally been very unpredictable. Only three years ago, everyone was genuinely concerned that the monsoons had failed. That would mean little or no water for crops; much

less drinking water; and every man's need for this precious commodity would be short-changed. The monsoons were very late, not starting until August. Then, did it ever rain! All the reservoirs filled up and overflowed. Major dams had to open their floodgates. Thousands of homes were destroyed. At Kurnool, water was 15 feet above houses near the Tungabhadra River. Over 220 people were drowned. The loss of property was enormous. It continued to rain until the early part of December. Not just a little rain, but in Bangalore many parts of the city were flooded as well as in a number of places throughout India. The monsoons can lead to a great deal of extreme amounts of rain in short periods of time. For example, in Mumbai (Bombay), a record of 37.1 inches of rain fell in one day on July 27th, 2005. This type of event leads not only to severe flooding but landslides every year, resulting in much loss of life and property. Meghalaya (in Northeast India) is generally viewed as the wettest place in the world. In particular, there is a town called Cherrapunji which receives about 400 inches of rain a year. Cherrapunji once had rain every day for two straight years—730 days in a row. This is partly due to the strange conditions in that area, but the monsoon also influences the liquid onslaught. It has held the world record since 1861 when 1,041 inches of rain fell.”

For Women by Women... continued from page 11

problem to God in prayer rather than taking another wife (Genesis 25:20-26). Elkanah's solution solved his heir problem but it created greater problems for Hannah increasing her heartache immensely. He had his heir, but she continued to suffer the disgrace of being barren. As well, now her two-become-one bond with Elkanah had been shattered as he became intimate with another woman. Not only was Hannah forced to share her husband, but also to share her once peaceful, happy home with a verbal viper.

The brevity of the biblical account leaves a lot of questions unanswered. Why was this year different than previous feast times? Had Hannah finally been pushed to the breaking point? Or had it taken all this time to develop a faith that believed God would hear her plea? Was her vow well thought out or the product of desperation? Whatever it was that drove her to the tabernacle/temple that day, it was the first step in her deliverance.

Elkanah had failed Hannah. It is a bitter fact of life. People, even those who love us, will at times let us down. Elkanah had not dried her tears so

“in bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD” (v. 10). She poured out her anguished heart to the loving compassionate LORD – the only One with the power to heal it. “Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them – the LORD, who remains faithful forever. He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry” (Psalm 146:5-7a).

Hannah handed her troubles over to God and left them there. She returned to her husband with up-lifted spirit and dry eyes. This peace of mind brought about by confidence in God was the first step in disarming her opponent. With Hannah no longer in tears and now able to eat, the poison had been removed from Peninnah's venomous bites. This would be the last feast marred by such abuse. The birth of Samuel some months later would seal Hannah's victory over her rival.

And yet, Hannah knew that the victory was not hers but God's and she praised Him for her deliverance. God not only granted her request and rescued her from Peninnah's bullying, but He also continued to bless her by giving her five more children (1 Samuel 2:21). Hannah's tears had been turned into a song of joy (1 Samuel 2:1-10).

God's eyes see every tear that falls from our eyes and He cares. (Genesis 21:15-18; 2 Kings 20:1-5; Luke 7:36-50; and John 11:33-35, e.g.)

“Is your burden heavy as you bear it all alone?

Does the road you travel harbour danger yet unknown?

Are you growing weary in the struggle of it all?

Jesus will help you when on His name you call.” (Reach Out to Jesus by Ralph Carmichael)

“Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7).



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Phone (416) 461-7406, e-mail <maxc@strathmorecofc.ca>

Doing a Right Thing In a Wrong Way

Faithfulness in following the will of God has been important from creation. A “small inconvenience” for Adam and Eve was to leave the tree in the midst of the garden alone. Pretty simple direction, but one that was not followed and got us all in trouble since we are like them and sometimes don’t want to follow God’s direction.

When God was establishing the worship He desired of Israel, He gave a good number of details about how things should be done. In the wilderness the centre of worship was the Tabernacle. The instructions for building it were very clear and complete. And, full marks to Moses, it was done as God directed.

This movable tent allowed for the people to travel when necessary and

to always be aware of God’s presence with them by the cloud or fire that was over it day and night. Once the instructions for the place to carry out the worship was given, there needed to be the instructions for what items were necessary to be supplied for use in the Tabernacle. One of these items was the Ark of the Covenant. In fact, this was a very important item since it was used on the most important worship day of the year, the Day of Atonement.

In Exodus 25:10 -22 the blueprints for the Ark were given. These covered the materials to be used; two were acacia wood and gold, and the size “...two cubits and a half shall be its length, a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height.” It was to be a very ornate “box” with two gold cherubim with their wings above and overshadowing the mercy seat. The mercy seat was an important part of the Ark since the High Priest was to go there on the Day of Atonement to carry out this important day each year in the life of Israel.

Instructions were also given that rings should be put on the sides of the Ark to allow for gold covered acacia wood poles to be inserted through them for transporting the Ark when moving it was necessary.

At the time of the events of 1 Samuel, the Ark was in the sanctuary at Shiloh. (1 Samuel 3:3). However, when Israel went into battle against the Philistines things were not going well. So they looked for help. “The Philistines drew up in line against Israel, and when the battle spread, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the field of

battle. And when the troops came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, ‘Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies.’ So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God” (1 Samuel 4:2 -4 ESV). This sounded like a good idea...wrong!

The Philistines were frightened at first, however, went to battle with an expected result. “So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home. And there was a very great slaughter, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. And the ark of God was captured, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died” (1 Samuel 4:10-11 ESV).

A win for the Philistines? No! Various misfortunes began to afflict them and so they came to see possession of the Ark as a calamity rather than a blessing. So they sent it back to Israel.

Finally it was brought to Kiriath-jearim, just Northwest of Jerusalem. “And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD and

continued on page 19

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Spanish Ministry at Strathmore Blvd Church of Christ

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WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT FOR 2013

Dear Brethren in Christ:

GREETINGS from the bottom of my heart, it is my earnest desire that the peace and love of Christ dwell in your hearts. I hope it's not surprising that I write again in 2013 to you personally with a greater urgency.

As you know I have been working in the Hispanic community in Toronto for about 25 years (since 1986).

For 13 years most of my financial support came from congregations and individuals in USA and Canada. After 2001 we are down considerably in aid.

For this reason The Strathmore Boulevard Church of Christ has been covering my annual salary of \$30,000 Cdn.

At this time the Strathmore Boulevard congregation is still facing financial challenges and cannot cover my support.

The Elders have encouraged me to send this letter to seek help to cover 70% of my support (Cdn. \$ 20,000) for the year 2013 in order to continue our Spanish ministry in Toronto.

I follow the instructions where the Bible says in **Matthew 7:7** "*Ask, and it will be given to you. Search and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.*"

Galatians 6:9-10 "*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*"

I recognize the difficult economic times, but I am asking you, if you are able, to be part of the continuing preaching of the gospel in the Hispanic community in the Greater Toronto Area.

Your help will be greatly appreciated.

Please send a cheque payable to: Strathmore Blvd. Church of Christ, write in the memo line, SPANISH MINISTRY, at the address above.

For any additional information you may call or write me at (416) 751-6879
or e-mail me at smolina@iglesiadecristo.ca or contact Marvin Johnson (Strathmore Elder) at (416) 752-0325

Awaiting your kind answer, your brother in Christ

Santiago Molina
Evangelist.

Puzzling...

Don Hipwell

During the winter months, my wife, Virginia, and I enjoy putting together jigsaw puzzles. We haul an old card table up from the basement, set it up near our wood stove, and cover it with our latest challenge. We find it helps pass the time when outdoor activities are limited. Sometimes it ravenously consumes the time. We become so involved finding just the next piece and suddenly the day is gone. There is probably a lesson in that, but let me tell you about a puzzle we worked last winter.

That puzzle was made up of some of the oddest shaped pieces we have ever seen. Some were very narrow and came to a sharp point. Others were larger and twisted in peculiar ways. A few can only be described as misshapen, bending in very strange places. Added to this was the fact that they did not seem to fit very well together.

One particular piece did not want to stay where it belonged. In frustration, Virginia would push it back into place and say, "I know you belong there. Stay there!" It did not listen. In fact, it was not until we put other pieces in around it that it finally settled into place.

How like the church! We are made up of rather odd pieces. Some of us have sharp edges. We can be very pointed and not so easy to get along with. Others are quite misshapen. We have character flaws. We are bent in odd ways. We have opinions that do not conform with what is the 'norm'. There are a few of us who do not seem to fit in at all. We even have those who keep sliding out of place. Pieces that need to be pushed back and reminded that they really do belong. Oft times they do not listen and do not remain in place

until they have other pieces around them, helping them hold on. Doesn't that sound like the church?

But here's the neat thing about our puzzle. When it was all completed and we had admired the lovely picture for a few days, it became time to put it back in the box. At that point we discovered that you could take hold of two corners and pick it up. It held together! No piece was lost! Those pieces that seemed so different—that did not want to stay in place—refused to let go! They hung on to one another. Each odd little piece completed the whole and the whole was strong.

That's the church, too! I'm reminded of Ephesians 4:14–16: "Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every

way more and more like Christ, who is the head of His body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love." (NLT) Each unique member is needed there to create a beautiful picture.

Romans 12:4–8 reads: "Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly." (NLT).

Here we are, all different, but all with a role to play. Some of us are teachers and others need to be taught. Some of us have special needs and others are great at seeing those needs are met. Some of us are shy and awkward around people and in need of encouragement. Some just need a friend or two to keep from sliding away. Others of us need direction and there are those who are able to provide that leadership, pushing us into place. A lot of us have character flaws and need forgiveness and mercy again and again. Thankfully, there are others that can provide that in a very understanding way. Many of us are sharp and have rather pointed personalities that must be

Halifax

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dealt with. Oft times we need to be put in our place. Again, thankfully, God has provided those who can lovingly correct and guide.

“Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do His work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring

up to the full and complete standard of Christ” Ephesians 4: 11–13 (NLT).

What piece of the puzzle are you? Where do you fit in? What role do you play in making the whole hang together? Are you doing your part so maturity may be attained? Do you strive to ensure that when the whole is picked up in the end—at the time of completion—that it all holds together and no piece is lost?

Think on these things.

Fenwick, Ontario



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About Us

The Tintern Church of Christ is a congregation of 200 people served by four elders, twelve deacons, and another full-time minister. Built on a rich heritage, the Tintern family includes a blend of all ages (including 75 children). Tintern is located in Southern Ontario, in the Niagara Peninsula, one hours drive from Toronto ON.

Our Ministry Opportunity

We are looking for an associate minister with good personal and relational skills to join our ministry team. In addition to having a passion for the scriptures, as well as teaching skills, a successful applicant will have had positive experiences in Children’s, Youth, and Family ministry. A practical understanding of missional theology, and the ability to work cooperatively with established ministry teams are also an asset.

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Hiring Committee
Tintern Church of Christ
4359 Spring Creek Road
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Max’s Musings... continued from page 16

brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. And they consecrated his son Eleazar to have charge of the ark of the Lord. From the day that the ark was lodged at Kiriath-jearim, a long time passed, some twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord” (1 Samuel 7:1-2 ESV).

Jump ahead a few years to 2Samuel 6. David decides it is time to bring the Ark home. So... “And they carried the ark of God on a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. And Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart, with the ark of God, and Ahio went before the ark” (2 Samuel 6:3-4 ESV). All of this with great celebration.

BUT... “And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God” (2 Samuel 6:6-7 ESV). Oops! Had they read the instructions originally given about moving the Ark, none of this would have happened.

David’s reaction is typical of man when he violates God’s directions and reaps the consequences. “And David was angry because the Lord had burst forth against Uzzah. And that place is called Perez-uzzah, to this day” (2 Samuel 6:8 ESV). Who was David angry at? Seems from the text it was God.

Surely it was a very shocking day. Joy was turned into sorrow. Why... because David tried to do a right thing in the wrong way. Thankfully, David had time to repent and got the Ark home by doing it God’s way. That which pleases God brings blessings. Seems to me there is a lesson there for God’s people today.

(Title taken from J. Vernon McGee’s
“Thru The Bible”)

OBITUARIES

Joseph Raymond Smith 1927 – 2012

Joseph Raymond Smith was born in St. Walburg, Saskatchewan in 1927, to Samuel Edward Smith, a blacksmith from New York, and Ruth Elizabeth Willey from Newcastle-upon-Tyne in England. He passed away peacefully on December 14, 2012 at the age of 85 years in the loving presence of his wife and children.

Ray had two older sisters, Anne and Hazel. His mother separated from their father while Ray was still a baby and moved with her three children to Winnipeg, MB in 1928. His mother married again and there were six more children; three brothers: Bob, Jim and Dickie; and three more sisters: Eleanor, Connie and Joan.

Ray was sick as a child having had rheumatic fever and a heart condition (which he outgrew). He spent some time in hospital. His mother was not able to give him the care he needed at home with the other children and so, at the age of nine years, the Children's Aid Society placed him in a foster home.

The family who raised Ray were devout believers in Jesus and, though they insisted he go to church every

Sunday, they allowed him to choose where. Ray visited different churches, ending up at the Salvation Army where he started paying for a uniform.

Ray began attending the Church of Christ with a boy from his class in public school. He soon decided that this church was teaching what is revealed in the New Testament about the plan of salvation and, at the age of 11, he was baptized into Christ.

Ray never completed public school past grade 6 as a child because of his unstable home situation, but he was always a keen thinker and a hard worker. When he was 16, the Children's Aid Society found him a job in a print shop. He began by sweeping floors there, an indication of things that would come later.

After a few years, he decided to quit his job and attend Radville Christian College—in the Bible department. He attended RCC the same years (1949-1951) as Jean Williams from Beamsville, Ontario and this is where they met. They exchanged addresses while traveling home on the train one year and those tracks led to their wedding day on August 11, 1953. As Jean describes it, "Our walk of faith began together."

Ray returned to his job at the print shop in Winnipeg when they married. Their daughter Geri was born in 1955. Ray was laid off just before their son John was born in 1958, but soon found a job in another print shop. Jean worked in the head office of the Bank of Montreal for a few years at the corner of Portage and Main.

Ray always dreamed of becoming a preacher so at the age of 40, he decided to attend Sunset School of Preaching in Lubbock, Texas. One of the elders of the Osborne Street Church of Christ, where they attended in Winnipeg told Ray that he couldn't leave because he was needed in the congregation where he was a deacon. Ray told him, "I am leaving anyway!" That was August 1968.

Ray and Jean sold their home and contents and left for Texas with all their earthly possessions packed in the car. The kids were crying while Jean was trying not to break down, as they left the city, but Ray just drove on.

That move was one of faith—they trusted that God was with them. The

two years in Texas were a great spiritual experience for them with daily fellowship with other families at the school and the Monterrey congregation where they worshipped.

Ray graduated from Sunset in 1970 and the family moved to Dauphin, MB where he worked with the church for the next three years. While living in Dauphin, their son John started attending Western Christian College for grade 9 in Weyburn, Saskatchewan and their daughter Geri married Willie Lobert from Grandview, Manitoba.

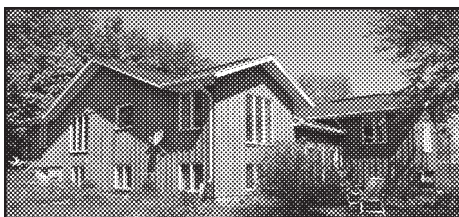
Ray and Jean moved to Prince Albert, SK in 1974 where Ray preached for two years. It was here at the age of 45 that Ray passed the grade 12 equivalency exams with flying colors. After the first year in P.A. the church couldn't support them anymore so Ray found other jobs to support the family. While working in a real estate office, Ray saw a janitorial business for sale in Estevan and decided to buy it. They sold their home in Prince Albert and moved to Estevan at the end of 1975. Geri's family joined them in Estevan to begin operating Estevan Cleaning Services, a business Ray and Jean successfully owned for 20 years.

Ray and Jean have always felt blessed to be a part of the Estevan Church of Christ. Ray served as an elder and together he and Jean took an active part in this congregation. In 1993, Ray was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. With failing health, his participation in the church soon decreased. In 1995, they retired as Ray could no longer do the heavy work of their janitorial business.

In August 2004, Ray entered the Estevan Regional Nursing Home, so he and Jean sold their home and she moved to an apartment in Yardley Place. It was a difficult adjustment for both of them however "faith in God" was still the motto by which they lived.

Ray and Jean now have eight grandchildren and nine great grandchildren. Their prayer for them will always be that they will have a desire to know God and serve Him in their lives.

The funeral for Ray Smith was held at the Estevan Church of Christ on December 20, 2012. He leaves a great legacy of faith to many but especially his family. On the day of his funeral his youngest grandson was baptized into



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Christ, joining the other grandchildren of Ray and Jean in obedience to the gospel. While Ray's dream of preaching the gospel full time was limited to but a few years, his influence is evident in the pulpits of two Alberta congregations of the Church of Christ; Medicine Hat where his grandson James Lobert preaches and Red Deer where his son John Smith preaches. The family finds comfort and hope in Jesus Christ whom Ray so faithfully loved and served.

– John Smith

Remembering Keith Thompson

For over sixty years, Keith Thompson, evangelist of the gospel, served Churches of Christ in Ontario. Keith was born in England but because of an imminent war, his father, a musician, boarded the British Empress with his family and sailed to Canada. After landing in Quebec, Keith's father sought work. Not being able to speak French was a hindrance so they moved to Toronto. Growing up in Toronto provided Keith a host of opportunities many of us can only imagine, from driving the horse and buggy bread truck around town to selling papers outside Maple Leaf Gardens. As a young boy he was part of the "Rideau Rats"; which included Joe Cannon, Murray Hammond and Bert Thompson.

Keith was first introduced to the Church of Christ through the Fern Avenue congregation. One of the stories (and there are many variations) is that the Rideau Rats broke a window in the church building. The church offered to call the cops or they could come to a church picnic and have some ice cream. The Rideau Rats choose ice cream and afterwards, feeling bad, they decided to attend Sunday school. After attending Sunday school the church sent the Rideau Rats to Camp Omagh.

At Camp Omagh Keith endured, in his words, "Two hours of preaching in the

morning, two hours of preaching in the afternoon and four hours in the evening." Somehow, through this experience, Keith was hooked and he wanted to devote his life to being an evangelist.

After high school Keith attended Harding University to study Bible. Several times he recalled stories of cutting his teeth preaching at small, rural congregations in Arkansas. One Sunday, after worship, a couple showed up and wanted to be married. Keith, being the visiting preacher was asked to perform the ceremony. The church moved back into the building and Keith performed their wedding ceremony. Afterwards he was handed the marriage license to sign. It was at this time he discovered he had no license to perform marriages. The dean of the college, after hearing about this, wrote Keith a letter of recommendation and sent him to the local town hall in order to receive the right to perform weddings.

From Harding University Keith moved back to Ontario, to the Jordan Church of Christ. While ministering to this congregation, he met Marie. At first the romantic bells were not ringing

but after time Keith and Marie were married. Marie became a strong and faithful partner with Keith in ministering to congregations in Ontario.

From Jordan, Keith and Marie moved to Owen Sound to help establish a congregation on the shores of Georgian Bay. The church met in Keith and Marie's home. Marie recalls how meeting in their home was difficult. Keith would be preaching and the congregation would be distracted because of Marie's roast beef dinner that was cooking. Eventually it was agreed that Marie and Keith could not cook roast beef while worship was taking place. In Owen Sound Keith began a radio ministry.

From Owen Sound the Thompson family moved to Beamsville. In Beamsville, Keith's theology began to change. Keith was known at the time for his "anti" positions, however, as Keith would say, "I began to see things differently; I began not to believe in the 'anti' position." Unfortunately, the elders in Beamsville at the time believed Keith was an "anti" preacher who would set the church right. The congregation, unfortunately, didn't want to be associated with the "anti" movement and so they did not welcome Keith or Marie. Overtime, as Keith and Marie loved the congregation, the church began to see Keith's theology had changed and so they welcomed him and Marie.

From Beamsville, the Thompson's moved to Niagara Falls where they continued to faithfully serve the congregation. From Niagara Falls, their final mission stop was Newmarket. For over 17 years Keith and Marie faithfully served the congregation and the town of Newmarket. Interspersed in Keith's ministry in five towns/cities are his 50 years of service at Camp Omagh, numerous radio shows and teaching classes at Great Lakes Christian College.

Keith spent his entire life ministering to his family, churches, schools and camps. He leaves a lasting legacy of individuals who continue to perform the story of Jesus.

– Nathan Pickard

The Church of Christ Greater Montreal

is looking for a Full-time minister and co-worker in the vineyard of the Lord beginning May 2013. We are the oldest Church of Christ in Montreal. The members of the congregation are distributed between three languages (English, French and Ashanti). We have an average attendance of 70 members for the morning service. We translate the Sunday morning service in French and English.

The Church is located in Montreal, Quebec at 785 Brault, Verdun, QC H4H 2B3.

Please send all resumes and inquiries to churchofchristgreatermontreal@hotmail.ca (514) 765-3948.

51st Annual Training For Service
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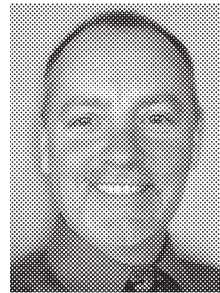
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Michael Tackett



Joanne Tackett



Don Rose

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- 9:30 – 10:00 : Congregational singing (Auditorium)
- 10:00 – 10:50 : Michael Tackett – Auditorium **Reflections In The Mirror** – *Does our life reflect that we are part of God's family?*
Teen Class – Don Rose – in Gymnasium
There will be children's classes during the three theme lectures
- 10:50 – 11:10 : Refreshment Break
- 11:10 – 12:00 : Michael Tackett – Auditorium **Inside Out Faith** – *Does our speech confirm we are part of God's family?*
Joanne Tackett – Ladies Class **God's Wisdom for Today's Woman**
Teen second class – Don Rose – in Gymnasium
- 12:00 – 1:15 : Lunch
- 1:15 – 2:15 : Congregational Singing & Announcements (Auditorium)
- 2:30 – 3:20 : Michael Tackett – Auditorium **Living By Heaven's Wisdom** – *Are we living according to our family values?*

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