

THE BIBLE METHODIST

Volume 40 • Issue VI



BIBLE METHODIST CHURCH - HILLTOP CHAPEL

Concord, Michigan



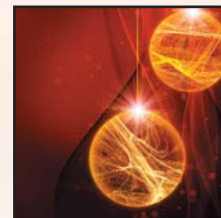
*The Church—
Organization
or Organism?*

Page 6



*The Sacrifice
of Steward-
ship*

Page 10



*Christmas
Cards for
Missionaries*

Page 12



EDITOR
G. Clair Sams

Churches of Compassion” is the theme for this quarter under the heading of “Behold the Harvest”. The subtitle is, “Do They Know We Care?” What a worthy concept, and what a heady question. Are we compassionate, and if so, how do we communicate that compassion through the church?

An acquaintance wanted to challenge his congregation to compassion so he asked a friend to dress shabbily and hang around the entrance of their place of worship Sunday morning. He was to appear to be homeless, hungry and at least hesitantly desiring a handout. The experiment got a little out of hand when some of the core people decided to have the “homeless” fellow removed from the premises. I wonder how you would react if a poor, racially different, handicapped or hungry person arrived at the entrance of your church next Sunday morning?

Wikipedia says this about compassion, “It is a profound human emotion prompted by the pain of others. More vigorous than empathy, the feeling commonly gives rise to an active desire to alleviate another's suffering. It is often, though not inevitably, the key component in what manifests in the social context as altruism. In ethical terms, the various expressions down the ages of the so-called Golden Rule embody by implication the principle of compassion: Do to others as you would have done to you. Ranked a great virtue in numerous philosophies, compassion is considered in all the major religious traditions as among the greatest of virtues.”

Again, Wikipedia said, “The Second Epistle to the Corinthians is but one place where God is spoken of as the “Father of compassion” and the “God of all comfort” (1.3). The life of Jesus embodies for Christians the very essence of compassion. Christ's example challenges Christians to forsake their own desires and to act compassionately towards others, particularly those in need or distress.

Jesus assures his listeners in the Sermon on the Mount that, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” In the parable of The Good Samaritan he holds up to his followers the ideal of compassionate conduct.

Christian compassion, say the Gospels, should extend to all, even to the extent of loving one's enemies.”

It seems to me that truly compassionate people will set the tone for a compassionate church. In fact it is impossible to have a compassionate church without it being composed of people who care about others and especially the less fortunate people.

Long gone from our midst should be the attitude that communicates the attitude of, “if they would help themselves they wouldn't need me,” or, “how do I know if I can trust them.” One look at the power of influence in men like General William Booth or John and Charles Wesley should remind us of our heritage and the strength of caring. It may not seem the *(continued on page 7)*



THE BIBLE METHODIST

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF
THE BIBLE METHODIST
CONNECTION OF CHURCHES

VOLUME 40-ISSUE 6

EDITOR

Rev. G. Clair Sams
gcsams@hotmail.com

SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER

Rev. Deron Fourman
1502 E 2nd St
Port Clinton, OH 43452-1336
pastorderon@verizon.net
Subscription price—\$10 per year

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Jon Plank
jplank@media-spring.com

PRINTING AND CIRCULATION

Old Paths Tract Society
Shoals, IN

CONNECTIONAL CHAIRMAN

Rev. Daniel Stetler
8858 Kingsley St.
Hobe Sound, FL 33455
danstetler@hsbc.edu

MISSIONS SECRETARY

Rev. John Parker
PO Box 366
Easley, SC 29640
www.biblemethodist.org

ALABAMA PRESIDENT

Rev. Walter Hedstrom
PO Box 523
Pell City, AL 35125
www.biblemethodist.org

GREAT LAKES PRESIDENT

Rev. Blake Jones
Box 5, Cedar Lake, MI 48812
www.biblemethodist.org

HEARTLAND PRESIDENT

Rev. G. Clair Sams
171 Gibraltar Dr.
Germantown, OH 45327
www.biblemethodist.org

HEARTLAND NEWS

Zanesville, Ohio



Church Board l. to r. Pastor Bill and Beth Blair, Jeff Harper, Audrey Archer, Yvonne Miller, Donald Newman, Bill Jones. Not pictured: Lee Johnson

May 27, 2008 was a special day for Heartland Conference as we welcomed the congregation from Zanesville, OH to the Conference. Pastor Blair, the Church Board and Conference Executive had met several times and discussed the possibility of working together. The cul-

mination of that discussion and work was a warm welcome from the Conference and joy from the Congregation.

Franklin, Ohio

PASTORAL INSTALLATION



Conference President Sams conducted the Pastoral Installation Service at the Frankin Bible Methodist Church. The board and congregation of the church welcomed

their new pastor and wife, Rev. and Mrs. Jack Hooker.

Following the service the congregation enjoyed a special fellowship dinner.

GROUND BREAKING

Conference President Sams was present at the Ground-breaking Service in Franklin, Ohio for the new Family Ministry Building. President Sams and the church board joined Pastor Jack Hooker in turning over the first shovel of dirt on the building site. The 11,000 square foot structure should be completed by the Spring of 2009.



Ruth Tillis



The Heartland Conference has lost one of its saints. Ruth Louise Tillis, 73, went to be with her Lord on Friday, June 6, 2008, at her Hysell Run Road home in Pomeroy, OH. She was born March 16, 1935 at Cuzart, WV, daughter of the late Charles Troy and Olga Zephyr (Wolfe) Awman.

Ruth wore many hats during her lifetime. She was an English teacher, missionary to the Texas-Mexican border and to Eritrea, East Africa, a homemaker and a helpmate to her husband as he pastored the Allegheny Wesleyan Methodist Church in Leon, WV. At the time of her death she was a member of the Danville Bible Methodist Church, Danville, OH.

She was a 1952 graduate of Kingwood, WV High School, attended West Virginia Wesleyan College and West Virginia University. She graduated from God's Bible School and College, Cincinnati, OH with a bachelor's degree in theology in 1956 and with a bachelor of arts the following year. Both years she was the class valedictorian.

Sis. Tillis is survived by her husband of 51 years, Rev. Amos Tillis, children, Susan (Jerry) McVey of Galloway, Don (Gina) Tillis of Rutland, Barbara Williams of Milton, WV, Rebecca Tillis of Rutland, and Joseph (Faye) Tillis of Danville, a sister, eight grandchildren, three step-grandchildren, one great-grandchild and ten step-great-grandchildren.

A memorial service was held at the Danville Bible Methodist Church on June 10, 2008 with Rev. Roger Hatfield officiating. Burial was in Bruceton Mills, WV, June 11th.

She will be missed by her husband, her family, her church and her conference. God bless her memory.

Danville, Ohio

President Sams conducted the Pastoral Installation Service at the Danville Bible Methodist Church. The board and congregation welcomed Rev. and Mrs. Brian Bailey. Pictured is Rev. and Mrs. Bailey with the church board.





GREAT LAKES NEWS

Fall Family Retreat

As the campground's maple trees begin their blaze of autumn colors, it was time again for our annual Family Retreat. This year the weather was especially warm as we gathered in the tabernacle for a family rally. Pastor Jason & Christy Lindahl and Pastor Joey & Jessica Kretoski planned the weekend and the activities. They gave out gifts of books to dads who had most recently helped vacuum the house or washed the dishes, and to moms who had participated in hunting, fishing or a recent project.

Rev. Verne Asbury, a former missionary to China, who is presently teaching at Union Bible College, presented to us a message titled "What Holiness looks like in the Home." He shared some things that should not be found in a holy home and a great list of things that should be hallmarks of holiness families. The evening concluded with families roasting hotdogs around a bonfire.

Saturday morning gave couples an opportunity to interact and test their knowledge of each other. It was a morning of happy laughter that concluded with each couple renewing their vows.

After lunch, we participated in a family scavenger hunt, comical communication games and a hilarious relay race. As Family Retreat came to a close, we stood in a circle and asked God's blessing on our families and His safety for those traveling home.

Thank you, Lindahls and Kretoskis for a wonderful retreat!



Ashley Elliot runs the Rubber Boot Relay

It was really good to reconnect with friends at the Family Retreat. Bro. Asbury's teaching session Friday evening was very practical as well as the panel discussion on Saturday. We enjoyed the times of laughter with other Christian families. —Lynette Hough



Arlan and Mary Estes running the Balloon Relay



Steve and Lynette Hough just renewed their vows



Spencer Jones, the youngest contestant in the Rubber Boot Relay

ALABAMA NEWS

Church Expansion Department

Columbus, Georgia



1st Anniversary/Homecoming in Columbus

Rev. & Mrs. Curtis Going, Columbus, GA: At first sight, our building was a “ghost church.” The nursery was equipped with a baby bed, and toys waited for toddlers. In the sanctuary, flowers and offering plates graced the communion table, and a lectern at front-right held an old quarterly. Everything was as it had been when the church had closed. It almost appeared to be a fully-functioning church, but it was lifeless.

On a recent Sunday, I looked again. People sat in the pews, hands were raised and tears were running down faces as the Lord touched hearts. The new nursery is used every Sunday. The building is like new, and the Faith Bible Methodist Church is alive!

Salina, Alabama



Here we grow!

Rev. & Mrs. Todd Hurst, Salina, Kansas: We are excited to see God at work in our church. We have dedicated our first baby. We have welcomed our first exchange student, Jacob, 17, from the Czech Republic currently living with the Pepples. (His goal is to become a pharmacist. Our goal is for him to know Jesus.) We have ordered new carpet for our sanctuary! We have rejoiced that recently 31 people gathered to worship. Soon we will need more room!

God is promising us, “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you” and “Be strong...God is with thee.”

Rev. John Ingram,
Church Expansion Secretary
PO Box 43, Stanton, AL 36790
(334) 366-4766
JNIngram1@juno.com

Mr. Tim Helms,
Church Expansion Treasurer
419 Oliver St, Glencoe, AL 35905
(256) 492-4891

Church Expansion webpage:
biblemethodist.org/alabama/church-expansion-dept.htm

Dayton, Alabama

Rev. & Mrs. Robert Lands, Dayton, TN: God is enabling Bro. & Sis. Lands and Bro. Freeman to work together to rise above a challenging situation and minister to the Dayton community. They pray for daily strength and press forward, happy to be serving the Lord and the “Old Country Church”!



Dayton Bible Methodist Church

THE CHURCH ORGANIZATION OR ORGANISM?

BY BLAKE JONES

The Church of Jesus Christ is the healthy and glorious body of believers. Far beyond a formal organization, it is a living organism that functions in relation to its Head and in close connection to its integral and varied parts. This holy body operates both within the framework of smaller groups who meet in specific locales and in the universal spectrum representing Christ to our world.

Organizations can, and do, function simply from the dictatorial force of a demanding leader. Certainly, that is a long way from optimal. However, through a strong fear factor, and without any marked intimacy among the members, the organization may continue and even appear to thrive. Such is the case in many cults. At whatever point a small entity within the church universal becomes

a mere organization held together by politics and coercion, it is no longer the healthy, life-breathing, vibrant organism of Jesus Christ. Its organization has strangled the organism!

This is not to say that there can be no organization within the organism. Our physical bodies demonstrate incredible systems of interrelated connectedness. The nervous system, the cardio-vascular system, the digestive system, all operate in an orderly fashion and provide even one's little finger with nutrients, oxygen, and direction for usefulness and safety. I am well aware that organization can be overdone, but whenever we decry all sense of orderly pattern we are forgetting our desperate need of the varied members of the body and their need of us! As

we are connected to Christ, each member of the body, with its unique giftedness, helps to support the functionality, the health, and the protection of the whole. The senior saints of your church body, the struggling new believers, the youth, the busy parents, all are vital to your church's vibrancy! Your group's carefully planned ministry to these various parts of the body supports the life and health of the organism.

Someone might say, "Pastor, I'm a believer, but I am not a member of your organization. So, don't expect anything from me!" Nonsense! The organism is much larger than the organization! It is universal! You are a Christian and you bear responsibility to the body. It is not from your pastor that you are withdrawing, it is from Jesus Christ, the Head of the body!

Having said that, let me hurry to say that in the physical realm we give a broken arm time to heal. It is not cast off, but it is allowed to mend. And bruised members of Christ's family may need to be understood and given time to regroup and heal. If you are bruised by life's blows, even in your brokenness, poor health, financial devastation, or church misunderstanding, you are vital to the life and outreach of the body! Your testimony, your spirit, your faithfulness, your participation, your commitment to the cause is vital. Your sweetness while healing is inspiring to the whole body! You may have to step away from some organizational responsibilities for a time, but do not disconnect from the organism. Though you feel that you can only be on the receiving end you are of value to the Head and to every member of the body!

We need to be very careful, however, that hurts in the body do not turn into infected sores. Their infection will very likely spread to other parts of the body and "many be defiled". What heartbreak it is to watch a strong and healthy individual succumb to the ravages of disease while cancerous cells spread throughout the system. And it is no small grief when bitterness and spiritual poison begins to infect the body of Christ. You say, "Ah, it's no big deal. It was just a little church problem, just a little misunderstanding." Then I ask, "Why such a big head of steam every time the subject is mentioned?" "Why does it have to be talked about everywhere you go?" The oozing, festering sore is indication of something unhealed by Christ's life nurture!

You see, because of the intricate connection we enjoy as fellow members of Christ, even small points of pressure and minor "pinches" devastate the work of the body. You know how it happens! A minute blockage in a blood vessel, a small pinch in the vertebrae, a tiny leakage in the brain—those things can kill a body or cripple motor skills. And so it is in the church body! A "pinched relationship" in your church family can paralyze the body's efforts for revival and outreach. In order for the living organism of the church to fulfill its mission, it must be drawing from and connected to the Head! If a "pinch" numbs and paralyzes the operability of the body, how will it reach to sinners to lead them to God? If a

small blockage effectively hinders the life-giving flow of the Holy Spirit, then what will happen to the body's contagious, compelling, consuming worship? What parts will be starved and die? Who will drop out of the body because the life nurture of the Head did not effectively reach them?

Dr. Yocum used to preach about the Asbury revival. A chapel service was in progress when God said to a young man, "I want you to go to the platform and publicly confess that you have been at swords-point with another." He responded to God that it was merely an issue between him and the other gentleman. But God insisted that it was affecting the whole atmosphere. When he was convinced that this was God's voice, he made his way to the front and began climbing the side steps to the platform. Lo, God had been similarly at work in the other gentleman's heart and he was ascending the opposite set of platform steps. Each knew why the other was coming. They met in the middle of the platform and revival began at Asbury! Why? Because the "pinch", the "blockage", had been corrected and the dynamic, electric, life-giving power of the Head was free to flow! Had the organization been in shambles due to these two men's petty rift? Certainly not. But the organism had been limping and chilled by the spiritual malady.

Friends, our Living Head is our all. Without Him we can do nothing. Organization at its best will be sterile and smell like a funeral parlor. But in Him the living, loving, and yes, even laughing body of believers can thrive in spiritual vibrancy and holy usefulness. ■

(continued from page 2) most productive use of time to visit someone in prison, or stop and say hello to a homeless person, but some dividends cannot be measured apart from eternity.

The people who care will find people who need that care. In a recent meeting the pastor took me calling. We visited several homes but I will not, for a long time, forget the run down inner city home where a woman lie in a hospital type bed. She was so ill that her arms were little more than skeletal with thin skin, but she needed Jesus and someone to care. A busy pastor was taking time to show her compassion by the time he spent and the things he invested.

Often it takes little more than a caring heart, prayer and some time to develop a caring church. All the compassionate programs, placards and platitudes in the world will not create a caring church. People with a heart like Jesus, people who know how to intercede, people who take time to care create compassionate churches. ■

By the time you are reading this in *The Bible Methodist*, it will be history, Lord willing! But please indulge us as we share the excitement of this event! It is reflected in a posting on the Sankey's Blog (<http://sankeyfamily.blogspot.com>) for September 2, 2008.

We are so excited and pleased to announce the upcoming re-opening of our bible Methodist Institute in Mexico! (Oct. 14–20 Rio Bravo, Tamaulipas, Mexico). The Lord has opened some wonderful doors of ministry opportunity to us and we thank Him for His divine wisdom and leadership in these developments. Please notice the prayer request info below along with some details about the Institute.

- Please pray for the Institute President, Eli Balderas, and the staff.
- Pray for visiting professors: Rusty Rundell from Union Bible College, teaching Doctrine of Holiness class; and William Snider from Hobe Sound Bible college, teaching Church History class.

Though this event is now past, your prayers are still needed for this vital part of the missions work in Mexico! Our Mexico Field Director, Rev. Marc Sankey and Missionary, Rev. Steve Stetler consider the restoration of an effective Bible Institute program to be key to the growth and maturity of our Bible Methodist Missions work in Mexico!



The first classes will be held in church facilities such as Rio Bravo. It is the desire of our Bible Institute leadership to take the Institute classes to the trainees. This will enable us to get started without needing to build a facility first. There are already students who are ready to enroll full-time in the Bible Institute. We believe that this number will grow quickly as students and trainees are exposed to the training offered by the Bible Institute. This will eventually require that a facility be provided for the Bible Institute to be housed in. We are prepared and anxious for that day to arrive. Funds from the sale of our Donna, TX campus are being held for that purpose.

Bible Institute classes will also be made available through "Distance Learning" programs. This will enable pastors who want to train but are unable to leave their families, jobs and churches to be enrolled in the Bible Institute.

BIBLE INSTITUTE PRESIDENT REV. ELI BALDERAS EARNS MASTERS DEGREE

Mexico Field Director, Rev. Marc Sankey writes:

"We are so proud of Brother Eli Balderas and his recent scholastic accomplishments in graduating with his Masters degree in educational administration. This has included many years of laborious study and disciplined work....but it has paid off!

We are grateful for his dedication and sacrifice in working toward this goal. This is only going to help the work in Mexico as we push toward the goal of educating Christian young men and women to serve the Lord in the whitened harvest fields.

Eli has manifested a great attitude and willing spirit to use this education to further advance the cause of the Bible Methodist Institute. We commend and congratulate him on this outstanding and noteworthy accomplishment!"



Mexico Bible Methodist Missionaries, Steve and Beth Stetler write:

Eli Balderas, the President of the Bible Institute for Bible Methodist Missions in Mexico, recently graduated, earning his Master's Degree. We congratulate him on this great achievement. Steve and I were able to attend his graduation, in Rio Bravo, Mexico."

We join our missionaries and the great Bible Methodist Connectional family in congratulating Brother Elias Balderas in this outstanding accomplishment! He is to be commended for the years of very diligent study and work that has gone into the earning of this accredited degree! His investment will reap great dividends in the education of workers for the Kingdom of God!

We also thank our supporters for your faithful investment in paying for Bro. Eli's education. Bible Methodist Missions was able to underwrite the cost of this degree program because of your support! We are grateful that you made this possible!

Please pray for the reopening of the Bible Institute! It is our heart prayer that many workers will be trained for the whitened harvest fields of Mexico and Latin America! —John D. Parker

News from the Fields

REPORT OF MEXICO CAMP MEETING

Janet and I recently had the opportunity to drive from Bedford, IN, to Edinburg, TX, on our way to special services being held at the Bible Methodist Church in Saltillo, Coahuila, MX. At Edinburg, the Steve Stetlers (Steve, Beth, Maria, Kent) met us and took us on to their home in Saltillo.

Saltillo is about a 4 1/2 hour drive from the TX/MX border over nice roads. Some very beautiful and unusual land formations greeted our eyes as we traveled southwest from the border.

(Incidentally, it was nice to be able to share this time with our children and grandchildren. You have provided a very nice and adequate house for them; Janet and I appreciate it very much.)

The services began on Tuesday night and continued each night through the week, and ended with three services on Sunday, in one of which, Steve Stetler spoke to the youth.

As always, I am "nervous" about trying to use the Spanish language when I have so little opportunity to practice or use it in the Bedford area. So, whatever I said in the services, I'm sure it wasn't "pretty" but perhaps sufficient for the task that had been assigned me.

These services are a kind of "indoor campmeeting" for the Saltillo area to which a number of people from other churches come in to enjoy the fellowship and spiritual blessings. Especially, we appreciated the fine group from the San Rafael Bible Methodist and some from a sister holiness group, centered in San Ildefonso.

You have much for which to be thankful in the Iglesia Biblica Metodista de Saltillo. A very fine group of conservative holiness people make up the core of the church, and at the same time, they attract many others to join them in worship. I appreciated, also, going to San Rafael with Brother Stetler and meeting some of the Bible Methodist people there.

The pastor of the Saltillo church, Dolores Hernandez, provided excellent leadership to the services; he is also President of the Mexican Conference of the Bible Methodist Church. He is solid, and spiritually-minded. We enjoyed his fellowship.

All in all, it was a very excellent trip; Janet and I drove the 1400 miles south and west, and enjoyed having Maria join us for the 1400 mile trip north and east, as she returned for her second year at GBS.

Thanks for allowing me to visit this church, and to enjoy the spiritual fellowship. —Leonard Sankey

PHILIPPINE MEDICAL MISSIONS TRIP



We had a wonderful medical missions trip. It was tiring with the time change and took us a while to adjust, but it was worth it. We loved the experience and the opportunity to meet and help our Filipino brothers and sisters. They are very precious people.

There was unity and devotion among the team members. We learned to appreciate The Keep Family even more. The Lord is definitely using them. They are very dedicated and perfect for the work there. We would love to go back sometime when we are able to attend more worship services with the Filipinos. Rick enjoyed visiting with the pastors, too. They have a good relationship with the Keeps. Our hearts were definitely challenged. A day does not go by that we do not think about our Filipino brothers and sisters and pray for them. It has helped us to see and be part of the work. We have learned first-hand how to pray more for our missionaries and the people there. —Jody Herring

SPIRIT OF REVIVAL ON PHILIPPINE BIBLE COLLEGE CAMPUS

The clanging of the bell on the Bible College Campus at 4:40am brought me out to see what was happening! I saw the students streaming across the campus in the early morning darkness with their Bibles and notebooks in hand, going to a Prayer Meeting!

One night they earnestly prayed in several groups well past midnight. Their fervent heart cries gripped my own heart!

Bro. Tim Keep says they are truly one of the most spiritual groups of students we have ever had in the Bible College! PRAISE THE LORD! —John Parker

What can I do? How can our church help?

Are you looking for a missions project or special need on a Bible Methodist Mission field? You will find listed here several such needs that need funding. If you are interested in taking on one of these projects, please contact John Parker for more information at johnparker@juno.com or call 864.850.0222

- Funds are urgently needed to finish the Tabernacle facility at the Philippine Conference Center. We would like to be able to pour the concrete floor so we can have Camp Meeting in the facility in May 2009.
- Funds are needed to cover the cost of housing for our Missionaries, The Steve Stetler Family, until housing can be purchased or built in Mexico for them (\$500 Per month). Could your church cover this as a project for one month?
- The Middelburg, South Africa work is presently 100% self-supporting! This is a Miracle! However, because of extremely high inflation and more than 20% interest on our Bible Methodist property, they need help in covering the mortgage payments! Any help for our brothers and sisters in South Africa is appreciated! Please pray for them during the very difficult times they are experiencing in their country.



the sacrifice of stewardship

LUKE 16:1-17

part 2

To be a good steward of even the smallest sum is to demonstrate your ability to manage greater possessions (verse 10). Fred Smith wrote, “God entrusts us with money as a test; for like a toy to the child, it is training for handling things of more value.”

To break the least of the commandments is to break the greatest. The small, fine print of our life belongs to God. So many times we assume God wants only the big things to be included in our surrender, but if our surrender is to be full it must necessitate us giving God even the tiniest of things, our spare time, our eating habits, our sleep, etc.

Our surrender is measured by the sacrifices we make. Sacrifice is the flesh and blood of surrender. Surrender is beautiful and comparatively easy. Sacrifice can be ugly and difficult. But our continual sacrifice is the measure of our crisis of surrender. Our ongoing sacrifice validates or invalidates our instantaneous surrender. What you have purposely surrendered, you willingly sacrifice. Romans 12:1 states, ...present your body a living sacrifice. “Present” speaks of reaching the point of surrender; “living sacrifice” speaks of the performance of surrender. Your performance in the mundane and diminutive speaks volumes as to the fullness of your surrender. If you can care for the seemingly trivial things in your existence and be faithful when no one notices and no one sees then you can be trusted with greater, more significant possessions and responsibilities. If you can’t manage pocket change, don’t expect God to magically pay your bills. If you can’t show up for work at McDonalds, don’t think you would be better at running your own company. If you can’t take out the trash, don’t expect to be given a more significant task.

This applies to the spiritual realm. If you can’t develop a simple consistency of devotions, don’t expect God to bless you with greater spiritual responsibilities. How do you expect to grow in grace, into the fullness of the stature of the image of Christ, when you can’t make it to church on time or with any regularity? How do you expect God bless you with plenty of time to do good

things, if you squander what little time you have now?

To be a good steward of worldly gain is to ask God to give to you spiritual wealth (verses 11 and 12). If you cannot care for things of temporal, fleeting value, how will you care for the bona fide wealth of God? If you cannot care for someone else’s possessions how do you expect to receive anything of your own?

If you cannot maintain proper stewardship over material blessings (money, houses, cars, lands), do not expect God to entrust you with His spiritual blessings (vital relationship with Him, eternal life). If you cannot properly steward these earthly things, which belong to God, how do you expect Him to give to you eternal possessions. If you can’t care for His house down here, do you expect Him to give you a mansion up there? Make no mistake, that house you live in and that car you drive and that money in the bank is not yours. It’s God’s. Our inability or unwillingness to use it for His kingdom’s best interest while here on earth in this life will give God no choice but deny us our best interest in the life to come.

Bennett Cerf wrote, “The late Bishop Edwin Hughes once delivered a rousing sermon on “God’s Ownership” that put a rich parishioner’s nose out-of-joint. The wealthy man took the Bishop out for lunch, and then walked him through his elaborate gardens, woodlands, and farm. “Now are you going to tell me,” he demanded when the tour was completed, “that all this land does not belong to me?” Bishop Hughes smiled and suggested, “Ask me that same question a hundred years from now.”

John Wesley said, “The Possessor of heaven and earth placed you here, not as a proprietor, but as a steward. “

To be good steward of earthly goods is to give your total allegiance to God (verse 13). You cannot serve God and things. Either we will understand the sacrifice of stewardship, that all we have is God’s and to be used for His kingdom or we will refuse to make the sacrifice of stewardship and spend our days wrenching things away from God and gorging ourselves with more possessions to try to keep us happy. Learn to control things or things will control you.



BY MARC SANKEY

Andrew Murray wrote, “God is ready to assume full responsibility for the life wholly yielded to Him.” We must care about the stewardship of surrender for one day we will surrender our stewardship. Our story will end where this story began. “Give an account of thy stewardship: for thou mayest be no longer steward.”

Ron Lee Davis told the following story: The early years of the 19th century were troubled times in the German confederation. Across the countryside, young men in uniform tramped off to an unknown destiny.

In one German village stood a grand old stone-walled church with an ornately carved facade, beautiful stained glass and a stately pipe organ. The organ was famed throughout the region for its beautiful, rich tone. One day the aged caretaker of the church was interrupted during his chores by a knock on the great oak door of the sanctuary. He opened the door to find a young man in uniform on the steps.

“Sir, I have a favor to ask,” the young soldier began. “Would you please permit me to play the organ for one hour?”

“I’m sorry, young man,” the caretaker replied. “No one but our own organist is permitted to play the organ.”

“But sir, I’ve heard so much about the organ of this church, and I’ve walked so many miles just to see it, just to play it for a single hour!”

The aged man paused, then shook his head sadly.

“Please,” the soldier pleaded. “My commander gave me a 24-hour leave. In a few more days we move to another province where the fighting is expected to be heavy. This may be the last chance in my life to play the organ.”

The caretaker reluctantly nodded. He swung the door open and beckoned the soldier inside. Then he took a key from his pocket and held it out to the soldier. “The organ is locked,” he said, “Here is the key.”

The soldier took the key and unlocked the ornate cabinet of the organ. Then he began to play. A billow of majestic chords rolled from the great golden pipes of the organ. The caretaker stood transfixed as the glorious music washed over him, bringing tears to his eyes. He

moved to one of the pews and sat down, as if entranced.

Within minutes, people from the village gathered at the church doorway and peered in. Removing their hats, the villagers stepped into the sanctuary and sat down to listen. Streams of beautiful music filled the sanctuary for one hour. Then the gifted fingers of the organist struck a final chord and lifted from the keyboard.

The young man closed and locked the keyboard cabinet. As he stood and turned, he was surprised to see that the church had nearly filled with parishioners who had laid aside their chores to listen to his music. Humbly receiving their compliments, the young soldier walked down the center aisle to return the key to the caretaker. “Thank you,” the young man whispered.

The old man rose to his feet and took the key. “Thank you,” he answered, grasping the young soldier’s gifted hands. “Young man, that was the most beautiful music these old ears have ever heard. What is your name?”

“My name is Felix,” replied the soldier. “Felix Mendelssohn.”

The old caretaker’s eyes widened as he realized whose hands he grasped—the hands of the young man who, before he was 20 years old, had become one of the most celebrated composers on the European continent. The old man’s gaze followed the young soldier as he left the church and disappeared into the village street.

“To think,” the old man wondered aloud, “the master was here and I almost failed to give him the key!”

So it is with us. The Master is here. God is with us. His grace envelops us. If you give Him the key to your heart, He can make unimaginably beautiful music in your life—music that will make the world stop, listen and wonder. The Master is here and He is ready to transform us by His grace. He is ready to give us a new beginning. It is not only our duty but our joy to give Him the key to all that we are and have.

The only way to follow through on this principle of sacrificial stewardship is to surrender the master key of your life to God. If you do this, God can make beautiful music sound forth from your life. ■

CHRISTMAS CARDS *for* MISSIONARIES

Each year we encourage everyone to send a Christmas card and a small love gift to each of the Mission Department personnel. This annual project has proven to be a great help to them for many years! Let them know that we support and appreciate them!

—The Conference Missionary Societies

Marc and Melodie Sankey
2112 W. University Dr.
PMB 1122
Edinburg, TX 78539

Sarel and Linte Pretorius
c/o Monte Stetler
P.O. Box 18128
Elsmere, KY 41018

Steve and Beth Stetler
2112 W. University Dr.
PMB 1122
Edinburg, TX 78539

John and Cathy Parker,
General Missions Chairman
P.O. Box 366
Easley, SC 29641

Tim and Becky Keep
c/o Monte Stetler
P.O. Box 18128
Elsmere, KY 41018

Monte and Connie Stetler,
General Missions Treasurer
P.O. 18128
Erlanger, KY 41018

THE BIBLE METHODIST
SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER
DERON FOURMAN
1502 E 2ND ST
PORT CLINTON OH 43452-1336

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SHOALS, IND.
PERMIT NO. 16

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED