

# Needed: More Spiritual Men

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Letter

## We need some more spiritual men

Dear Saints,

Grace to you and Peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to use the letter this month to explain a little about where we are as a church and things that might be coming up.

As a pastor in this body I am always asking myself, "Do we need to make a stronger thrust in evangelism?" "Is everybody in the body doing well?" and "Are we centering in on the Lord enough?" As a result of asking these questions hopefully we come up with God's direction for the body.

Generally, I sense a need for the men in the body to be more spiritual. That simply means diligently studying the word and praying and seeking God. I believe we are close to a time when God wants to open many to greater responsibility in ministry. We have been growing numerically the last few months and I believe that will continue to the degree we are able to minister in the Spirit.

There are some specific things you should pray about: First, beginning in October, I committed myself to train nine men from the body for one year. At the end of that year, we hope they will be better equipped to serve the body. Pray that they will be faithful to the challenging schedule we have set for them.

Secondly, we really need for more men and women to be faithful to seeking out the revelation of God's Word. I desire for people to diligently study the Book of Acts as we go through it in the Bible School. Pray that people will attend and study.

Also note, we are going to structure the church for more outreach sometime after January. Pray that we will be ready.

Growing in Him with you,

Billy

Bible School

## Acts class demands study

The Bible school class for this next semester is *The Book of Acts*. This class will be different from all the rest.

As most of you know the idea of a structured way to go through the word has been developing over the years. Classes have been offered regularly to help you study.

This semester will take us one step closer to the fully structured Bible School. (In structuring our Bible School we have made it an integral part of the church life. We believe that a Bible school apart from church life is counterproductive in some ways.)

The class this time will have a text book and a small tuition. The tuition is to help people take the class more seriously, and defer some of the cost of teaching the class.

Also, the structure of the class will be more demanding (however, people will still be allowed to audit the class). There will be more writing assignments and in class quizzes.

As we move toward the fall, a person will need to fulfill requirements to enter the school and we will develop a transcript for each student enrolled.

As always, the class will meet Monday nights from 7:00-9:00. The location will be announced. Register by signing up at the book table on Sunday nights.

## Single's Issues

### Marriage

## Ernie's Checklist

Here is a quick checklist Ernie Sacra uses to help a young couple determine if they are responsible enough to get married.

■Are you debt free? (The only exception would be a piece of property that would qualify as a good investment.)

■Are you financially solid, which includes being strong in tithing to your local church.

■Is your record good in paying your ongoing commitments? This would include rent, utilities, etc.

■Are you established in a strong savings plan?

■Do you have a budget plan and are you functioning under your budget?

■Are you established firmly in your occupation and/or calling?

Different pastors have different approaches to premarital counseling. I appreciate my relationship with Ernie and the perspective he gives on things.

Ernie loves to sit, drink coffee, and share. He gave me permission to encourage you to take him out to sit and talk about this checklist. It would be well worth your time. His number is 272-5049.

For those interested in who had who in the secret saints:

Donald had Jimmy had Robin had John had Brenda had Brud had Theresa B. had Dawn had Doug had Chris had Theresa C. had Rennick had Nancy had Debbie, had Donald.

Leta had Allen had Toni Had Steve had Curt had Brian had Cathy had Beth had Claude had Leta.

Kyra had Cheryl had Sally had Kyra.

### Building Relationship

## Mystery of Secret Saints is solved

The mystery of the secret saints was finally solved on Wednesday, December 13.

The mystery began two and a half weeks earlier on a Sunday night after church. The single women hosted a meal after church for the singles in the body. After that meal everyone drew names for secret saints.

During the next two weeks, the singles blessed the person whose name they had drawn. Blessings ranged from flowers, to cleaning rooms while the person was out, to arranging to have bills paid, and paying for a night out with a designated person.

On the last Wednesday, everyone reconvened at the women's house to share in another meal (both meals were great according to Steve Mazza). Afterwards, the final exchange of gifts was made and everyone tried to guess who their secret saint had been.

It was refreshing to see people really work to find out how to bless someone they did not know very well. As a result, everyone involved grew in finding out how to both meet practical needs and bless another person. It was refreshing to see people trying so hard to bless one another.

Another benefit was the developing and deepening of many relationships. A special thanks to those anonymous women who put it all together.

Curt and I had a thought. Wouldn't it be great to choose someone who was not a Christian and become their secret saint? You could really work hard at finding out their needs and bless them in unique ways. At the end you could invite them to a meal where a couple of people would share testimonies.

## Single's Retreat Cumberland Falls State Park (Pumpkin Lodge)

### February 18-19

Scott Willams, from Columbia, Missouri, will be sharing with us from his experience with college students at U.M.

Registration forms will be on the book table each week. The cost is \$30. Register before Feb. 1 and avoid a \$5.00 late fee. See Steve for more details

## Teaching

## Prophetically radical relationship is violent

Relationship is the present prophetic, radical, and violent move of God.

For the shallow believer, teaching on relationship is neat to hear. It is a good idea. It offers some interesting possibilities.

For those who have an ear to hear what the Spirit of God has to say, it is the moving heart beat of the Father and the dictate of the Sovereign Potentate.

### Prophetic Relationship

The present word going forth on relationship is not the new fad (although it is in danger of becoming that). Restoration of relationship is the word God is putting in the hearts of his people. It is the prophetic word.

When we speak of the prophetic word, we mean the truth is more than a rehash of old material. God is always giving a new and deeper revelation of Himself and His purpose in the earth.

It is commonly agreed that God revealed Himself progressively throughout the Old Testament. Originally, He walked with Adam in the Garden. After the original rebellion, man was separated from the Father. Then began the long process of God allowing man to get to know Him in greater measures.

As the Old Testament progressed, God chose to reveal Himself in different ways during different periods. When Abraham was about to offer Issac on the altar, it was there that God revealed Himself as "The One Who Sees" and therefore provides.

When the Hebrews had just crossed the Red Sea and had come to the place of bitter waters, God revealed Himself as "God that

healeth thee". And so, throughout the History of Israel, God revealed Himself in ever increasing ways.

The climax of God's revelation of Himself was in Jesus. John 1 tells us that no man had ever fully known the Father except the Son. So, the Son came into the world to make the Father known. The scripture goes on to say that we saw God in Jesus.

This in itself shows the significance of relationship in the Father's heart. That He would send His Son to die for us that we might once again know Him is sufficient evidence of the ultimate priority of relationship.

After Jesus came, people had a fresh revelation of God. They knew that the church was at the center of the Creator's heart. And so, they gave up everything to see others come into relationship with the Father.

Unfortunately, just as the original relationship between God and man became darkened, the relationship between God and His church went through the Dark Ages. Man left the simple mandate to love God and one another. Then, he went on to build a structure which he called the church. In reality, it became a mechanism that actually worked against the unity of God's people.

During the Dark Ages, the church subjugated the people to unspiritual authority. It choked the revelation of God's Spirit and forbade the reading of the word. The whole structure was built on causing people to serve God out of fear of Hell. I John clearly teaches that when we know God's love, there is no fear of judgement. It says in the same portion of scripture that we know that we have come to love God when we love (have relationship) with the people

around us.

So, the church actually separated people from God's grace. That also took from them the ability to truly love one another. Unless God's love is known man has no love.

But God was faithful. He spoke by His Spirit to men who would hear. And, in the midst of the darkness, prophetic revelation began to flow. Most of the prophets of restoration are unknown. God put His truth in their hearts and they lived it out never to be recorded in man's history's.

Some, however, were raised up and have become points to identify how God was revealing Himself that He might once again be known. John Wyclif is an example.

John Wyclif (about 1329-84), was an early prophet in restoring the Word of God to the common man. Going against church

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teaching, he believed that God wanted to communicate with every man through His Word. And so, the restoration of the Word was facilitated.

Later on, John Huss would give his life in further bringing the Word of God into the hands of every man.

Another point of light in restoration was the restoration of salvation through faith. Martin Luther became history's spokesman against keeping man in bondage to the church through fear. He

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## Christmas Advice

### Traditions

## Right activities shaping lives

"In days to come, when your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' say to him, 'With a mighty hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery'"

Exodus 13:14

"HO! HO! HO! or Bah, Humbug!" that is the question. It is the question we tried to answer when some of the married couples sat around, one Friday night recently, trying to decide what to do with the Christmas Season.

The verse written above shows God instituting a yearly ritual that would cause the children to ask questions. In return, the answers would proclaim the works of God.

This teaching method was used by God quite often. As a matter of fact, not a day went by that was not structured in some way to have the children ask, Why?

Seeing this method of instruction, the parents in the body are realizing that significant events and the activities which accompany those events have deep and long lasting affects on little minds.

Of course Christmas day receives more attention than any other day in America. Unfortunately, a lot of things that go on around this event do not reinforce Biblical principles.

As we discussed our own personal traditions and what we were trying to do with them, a wide variety of activities emerged. All of us had come to the place that we did not want to get in on the worldly HO!HO!HO! attitude. At the same time, we want to be careful not to be on the Bah, Humbug! side.

We came up with at least three guidelines that we should follow in developing our activities that will leave a lasting impression on children for the rest of their lives:

- We should not do anything just because it is the easy thing to do.
- We should choose things that promote Godly characteristics, such as giving and loving.
- Our lives should be full of true joy based in the coming of the Son of God. We want to show the world that Christians have true joy during this season, as well as throughout the year.

We are all continuing to seek God about the best use of this teaching opportunity for ourselves and our kids. We hope that anytime our children ask us why we are doing something, our answer can reflect a Godly principle.

## Greer's Christmas Open House

(A Church Family Tradition)

December 25th 1:00 - 5:00 pm



Call Gregg  
for details.

### Spiritual Family

## Going home for Christmas

There is a Christmas carol that says "I'll be Home for Christmas." It really becomes an emotional song for people as they look at what going home means.

For some, whose parents are already deceased, it reminds them that home does not mean mom and dad anymore.

For some, who had a terrible home life, it means reliving the pain of physical and mental abuse.

For one I know, who is from a Muslim family, it means facing his family with the news of his acceptance of Jesus.

For some, it means facing a lot of relatives who do not really know the meaning of the birth of Jesus.

For some who never really had a home, they don't quite know what to think.

For some, it means going home to the joy of sharing with parents and brothers in the love of Jesus.

If "going home for Christmas" brings sadness to your heart, let it remind you of your spiritual family and turn it into joy.

For all who have been birthed into the Kingdom of God and placed with His people, it reminds us that, "God sets the lonely in families," (Psalm 68:6b) "For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." (Matthew 12:50) and "you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household;" (Ephesians 2:19).

I am glad we are part of the same family.

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restored the beautiful and vital truth of salvation by simply trusting in God's love through Jesus; salvation by faith.

As restoration has continued, it has dealt with areas relating to direct relationship with God. It has moved toward restoring the right structure to the church itself over the past four hundred years. Men like Calvin, Wesley, and others have all made their contributions.

Today, however, God is dealing with the dynamics of body life. He is speaking to His people in a new revelation of how to live together and reflect the unity of the Godhead.

People have seen themselves as independent from one another in their relationship to God. Now, God is pressing home the truth that we can only come to a greater revelation of Him, through being knit together.

Just as revelation progressed through the Old Testament until the coming of Jesus, restoration of the church is progressing toward the return of Jesus. As He speaks to the bride who will listen, He is preparing her to be His eternal habitation.

The word He is speaking to her now is "Pull yourself together."

## Radical Relationship

The word radical means "1. of or from the root or roots: going to the center, foundation, or source of something; fundamental; basic: as, a radical principle." according to Webster's.

When we speak of radical relationship, we are talking about something that affects every aspect of our life and thinking because it takes place in our roots. When we begin to understand what God intended to happen through relationship, it changes the way we view and participate in everyday

life.

First, we begin to view life as revolving around relationships; first with God, and then with others. That begins to affect how we react in certain situations. For example: If we have a disagreement with someone over what to do or personal property the issue is no longer what to do or property. The issue is how this affects our relationship.

I was watching two of the brothers discussing their living situation not long ago. As they mentioned amount of rent paid, how sloppy the other person was or wasn't, etc. I was trying to discern the whole situation in light of relationship. What was God trying to speak to them about relationship in the midst of this situation.

As it affects church life, understanding relationship revolutionizes the way a church functions. It transforms it from a religious organization in to a group of people being built together into a house of God.

The whole dynamics of the structure changes. A good example is the way in which leadership is raised up. Commonly, when people come to a church, current leadership is interested in what these people have or can do. In the church that understands relationship the person's ability to have friends and bend their life to the body is of first importance.

There is a policy at Lexington Christian Fellowship that new people are not asked or even allowed to take on any position of responsibility their first year in the church. A lot of people would feel like they are sitting around doing nothing. That is not true. They are being given the time to build relationship.

If during this first year, relationships do not begin to form, the first order of ministry is to see why. Only after people are able to have strong relationships are they

ready to carry spiritual responsibility.

Another example of how relationship affects the function of the church is in the area of guest speakers. Our general policy is, if we don't have a relationship with them, don't invite them.

In order to help train traveling ministry, I have a common practice when someone I don't know calls and wants to preach for us. First, I ask what local body they are committed to. Next, I ask for their pastor's name and phone number. Then, I ask them if they are going to be in the area so that I can get to know them.

Some men feel really threatened by this. As a matter of fact, most people who call a pastor

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they don't know and ask to preach are threatened by this. They are used to peddling their wares rather than really being known.

Hopefully, this manner of dealing with calls helps men see that we are interested in them as individuals and not traveling shows.

These are only a couple of areas that are affected in the way we operate. Many other examples could be given, like how we structure meetings, how we structure government, what we do as special events, how we do outreach and others.

Since relationship is radical (getting to the foundation of things), it also affects our view of theology and doctrine. Most systematic theologies are some variation of those laid down by Calvin, Arminius, or some other theologian. Each of these men made great contributions to restoring a right view of God.

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However, none of the more accepted theologies that I am aware of use relationship as a guiding principle throughout. There may be some work done in this area, but it is far from being lived out in daily church teaching.

So, as the understanding of relationship grows, our understanding of the ideas of sin, the Godhead, and salvation will take on a new light. Sin is understood as doing the unloving thing, it is sin against some relationship. The Godhead is seen for Their ability to carry on eternal relationship and desiring to bring us into that relationship. Salvation is seen as being brought back into relationship with God, so that we can have relationship with each other.

As people from other church backgrounds come to a group that is growing in relating, it is often hard for them to really believe relationship is that important. They are so used to being accepted for how they believe. It takes a long time of being together to really impart what the true issues of the Kingdom are.

It would take many pages to show how the subject of relationship affects every area of our teaching. (At this point, I am working toward writing a book that would be entitled something like "A Layman's Guide Toward a More Relational Theology.") Suffice it to say, "We must be open to a re-evaluation of everything we think and every way we act as we allow relating to God and one another to become the bottom line of our purpose."

## Relationship is Violent

Any prophetic message is in some way violent. It usually cuts across the accepted way of doing things and brings turmoil in the existing system. Relationship is no exception. Jesus said that the Kingdom of Heaven suffers vio-

lence, and the violent take it by force. So it is with relationship.

Jesus died on the cross. This is evidence enough that establishing relationship is a violent matter. Jesus literally died a horrible death to see relationship established between Himself and those who would become his followers and friends.

This is the pattern for all who would like to enter into relationship with God and others. There must be a complete death to self.

Death to self and the crucified life have been popular teachings throughout the history of the church. Unfortunately, a lot of ideas about being dead to self had to do with getting away from everything and everybody. This is contradictory.

It is exactly the flesh that wants us to stay away from everybody. Love has to do with putting up with one another, not running from one another.

When we are left to live our lives without interruption from others, then we do not know if we would actually bend to meet their agenda rather than ours. So, God has ordained the flowing together in the body to help us move toward a realization of and violent death to our flesh.

There is no endured violence in the relationship of the world. It is more of an inflicted violence. It has to do with causing pain to others. In the Kingdom, we endure the wrongs of others, we endure the differences of others, we change.

The world's relations break down when there is need for change or suffering a wrong. They are content only when the relationship is self-fulfilling. Christian relationship is only fulfilling when it is serving others.

When a marriage goes sour in the world, separation is the answer. When a Christian marriage

goes sour, the violent death to the flesh is the answer.

In many churches the tongue of gossip is always wagging. In the church that understands relationship the same poisonous tongue is violently crucified.

As many people look for the move of God they will find the people who are moving in true relationship. They will enjoy what they see. They will want to be a part. They will join. But, for everyone who wants to move in true relationship, a time will come when they will have to face themselves for who they really are. Then the violence begins.

The process will end in one of two ways. The first way is that they will go through great turmoil as they learn to lay their lives down for others. The second, is that the

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church will go through great turmoil as the new person accuses them of being unloving (which really means the church was not structured around them, but the common cause of Jesus).

If, then, we are going to establish the Kingdom of Heaven, we must be willing to be violent in our own lives and in the presentation of relationship to others.

The prophetic word to the church today is in the area of relationship. It must radically touch every aspect of our lives. To be in this, as in all other moves of God, we must be willing to suffer violence as we represent the church, and violently present the gospel of the Kingdom. ■