Godly friendships are vital in the life of every believer. As the wife of Lon Solomon, the senior pastor of the large and still growing McLean Bible Church, and mother to Jill, our daughter with special needs, I've witnessed the spiritual danger of isolation. But I have also seen the power of being carried, encouraged, challenged, and transformed through the ministry of friendship.

It is a testament to God’s grace that I survived the heartache of the past twenty-one years. In January 1992 my family began an unforeseen and deeply painful journey. Our sons were fifteen, eleven, and seven the winter that we welcomed our baby girl, Jill, into the world. We were thrilled to have a healthy and strong baby and praised God for our daughter. But three months later Jill started having focal seizures in her hands, and these quickly turned into uncontrolled grand mal seizures. Daily Jill would have many hard seizures. We tried new medications and new doctors, but nothing seemed to help. I felt my life unraveling, and Lon and I were heartbroken. Of course we knew that serving God didn’t exempt us from suffering, yet we couldn’t help but question why this was happening to our family.

Suddenly our usual dinner times together, sitting on the sidelines at sporting events, and attending church as a family were all but impossible. We grieved the death of dreams and the loss of family time together. As Lon once described it, “The laughter had been sucked out of our family.”

The Ministry of Discipling Friendships:
How God Uses Christ-Centered Friendships to Sustain Us in Trials and Help Redeem Our Suffering

by Brenda Solomon, Co-Founder of Jill’s House
with Kristie Jackson, C.S. Lewis Institute Fellow

The Gift of Godly Friends

The depth of our grief was indescribable, but Lon never faltered. He encouraged us to keep claiming God’s promises, and Lon’s consistency—emotionally, spiritually, and physically—was essential. But as I look back, I can clearly see that God also provided an intimate network of godly women to support me. Three friends in particular were a part of my spiritual growth and accountability well before Jill was born. And when Jill started having seizures, and weekly—sometimes even daily—trips to the emergency room became part of family life, God sent me another very special friend named Mary.
Is someone who comes into contact with you drawn closer to God or more likely to come away less interested in having a relationship with God? I believe this is a key aspect of evaluating whether or not we are living as authentic disciples of Christ. The articles in this issue provide a good starting point for any of us to sort this out.

Are you the kind of friend described in Brenda Solomon and Kristie Jackson’s article, “The Ministry of Discipling Friendships,” who would stand by a family overwhelmed by a daughter’s disability? Read how God expanded this love in an amazingly powerful way by establishing Jill’s House, a respite center for families with disabled children.

Are you the kind of person who actively shares your faith as described in Gerard Long’s article, “Evangelization: Sharing the Good News with Delight”? As head of Alpha USA, Gerard has a wealth of experience to share, to help us become more comfortable and effective as we share the Good News.

How about coming to grips with overcoming temptation? Tom Tarrants’s and Bill Kynes’s articles on dealing with “the flesh” provide excellent theological teaching and practical insight on this important topic.

Have you suffered a great loss or been a friend to those who are grieving? Jana Harmon walks us through stages of C.S. Lewis’s heartrending journey after the death of his wife. Jana’s summary of Lewis’s experience can help us face our humanity and ultimately see God’s care as we walk through the dark valley.

The Bible tells us that true believers possess the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This issue highlights the fruit of the Spirit in action. We can all seek to exhibit these qualities in increasing measure over our lifetimes. By doing so, we will indeed become the kind of people who will draw others closer to God.

Sincerely,

Kerry A. Knott
K.Knott@cslewisinstitute.org
Evangelization:

*Sharing the Good News with Delight*

by Gerard Long  
*Executive Director, Alpha USA*

**The Heart of the Gospel**

When God sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world, He didn’t do it to condemn the world but to save the world through Him (John 3:17). Jesus came to rescue precious souls from sin and death and to bring us hope and a future. The name Jesus means Savior, and He was totally successful in His mission!

To evangelize means simply to share “good news.” From the Greek word evangelize we get the word angel, which means messenger. When the angel announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds on that first Christmas, he came to evangelize them: “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10–11).¹

In the Great Commission Jesus called every disciple to share the Good News of Jesus Christ: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:19–20).

Early in His ministry Jesus said, “Follow me [a disciple is a Christ follower], and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19). From this we see that the end result of discipleship is to be a fisher of one’s fellows. Later in the New Testament we see that all Christ followers have been equipped through the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8) and to be His ambassadors here on earth (2 Cor. 5:20).

When we have good news—whether it’s about an amazing person we’ve met, a new job, a new home, or an incredible vacation we’ve just had, we don’t have to be encouraged to tell our family and friends. We all like to share good news, and, if it’s well received, it encourages our hearers.

Throughout the Gospels, when people met Jesus Christ, they told other people about Him. Think of the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. We’re told many people believed because the woman shared what she’d seen, heard, and experienced—the transforming power of Jesus. In the book of Acts, starting with the 120 disciples in the Upper Room, the early disciples turned the world “upside down” through evangelization—sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Today we need to learn afresh how to evangelize. A recent Barna study showed that only 3 percent of sixteen- to twenty-nine-year-olds have a positive view of evangelical Christians! Instead of drawing people to Jesus, we’ve turned them away from Him!

Sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ should not be something we dread. It can be something we love to do, flowing naturally from the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Where do we start a vital evangelism campaign for and in America? I suggest we ask God to renew our vision, faith, courage, and action.

**Vision**

Lord, I pray, renew our vision of Your love for us and for the (continued on page 16)

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¹ Gerard Long had a dramatic encounter with God in 1980, and following that encounter he began to serve in a church in North London. He was at this church for twenty-two years, including seventeen as a pastor, while also working in the banking and finance industry. Gerard has a BSc (Hons) Banking and Finance degree and worked for HSBC (one of the largest banks in the world) for 30 years, retiring at the end of 2006 as Senior Vice President, Corporate Marketing. In 2006, Gerard decided to leave behind his highly paid banking career and join Alpha USA, whose mission is to serve local churches in presenting the Gospel through the Alpha course. Alpha is now being run in over 169 countries and more than 15 million people have gone through the course.
PART TWO OF TWO

Hindrances to Discipleship:
*Freedom from the Flesh*

by Thomas A. Tarrants, III, D.Min.
*Director of Ministry, C.S. Lewis Institute*

In this issue we present Part 2 of our treatment of “the flesh,” one of the three biblical hindrances to following Jesus Christ. In previous issues of *Knowing & Doing*, we focused on the two other major hindrances, “the devil” and “the world,” as well as presenting Part 1 of this article.

In Part 1 of this article, we looked at the nature of the “flesh” and saw something of the problem we are up against as we try to live for Christ. It was a grim and discouraging sight. Is there any hope of deliverance from the flesh and the enslaving sins it produces? Yes. Thanks be to God, we can be set free and empowered to live a new life—a life that transforms us, blesses others, and glorifies God.

We Can Be Set Free

Here is a helpful way to think about our predicament and how to escape it. In relation to the flesh and sin, every human being is like a patient who has a fatal disease. We inherited this disease from Adam, and we worsen it with our choices each day. But unlike some fatal diseases, death is not inevitable. Treatment is available and effective if taken soon enough. And, amazingly, it is completely free. The treatment, of course, is the gospel—the Good News that Jesus, the Son of God, died on the cross to atone for our sins and reconcile us to God and then rose from the dead. To properly take this treatment, we must repent of our sins and trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Faith in Jesus alone (not Jesus plus good works) frees us from the guilt of our sins, delivers us from the wrath of God, liberates us from the devil’s oppression and brings us new life in Christ.

But that’s not all. Trusting Christ also brings us into union with Him and thereby breaks sin’s reigning domination in our lives. Paul says, “We know that our old self was crucified with [Christ] in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin” (Rom. 6:6–7). What does this mean? The “old self” Paul refers to is the unregenerate person we were before trusting Christ, that is, our life as it was “in Adam,” as part of this present evil age. It was shaped by the sinful flesh and expressed in the particular sins of thought, word, deed, and desire that dominated us. That old self died when we repented and trusted Christ. As a result we are no longer in Adam but in Christ, and a new self has been brought to life in us by the Holy Spirit. We have become a new creation in Christ and part of the age to come, which began when He rose from the dead and will come to full fruition at His second coming. Because of this profound change, we now want to live a life that pleases God, a life of obedience. And we can do so because the Holy Spirit now empowers us, and the sinful flesh (which Paul also refers to as “the body of sin”) has been “brought to nothing,” that is, greatly weakened and no longer able to keep us enslaved to sin. The bondage of our will to sin has been broken, and we are now free to obey God. (In this issue see the article “Dying to the Flesh,”...
by Bill Kynes, for a clear and very helpful treatment."

Does this mean that henceforth we experience a life untroubled by the flesh and sin? No. Our old self has indeed died, and our bondage to the sinful flesh has been broken. We have died to sin. But though sin no longer reigns in us, it does still reside in us. And since we live in “this present evil age” (and still feel its effects in our “mortal bodies” which are subject to death), sin remains a possibility if we choose to yield to it rather than the Spirit. Because the flesh is still alive, ready to reassert itself and take on new strength if we yield to it, we can become ensnared and defeated by yielding to sin. And indeed it isn’t long after conversion that sin begins to stir again. Some of the sinful habits and desires of the flesh that we once struggled with reappear, crying out to be satisfied. We also discover other sins we had not previously been aware of. At that point we may wonder, “What is going on? Have I really been saved or not?”

Actually, this is to be expected, and Paul addresses it by saying:

“So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. (Rom. 6:11–14)

In other words, we must reckon and count as true (even though it might not feel that way sometimes) that we are no longer slaves of sin but are now alive to God in Christ. Sin’s reign (rulership, domination) in us has been broken, and we can now live for God. But sin’s residue remains, and we must not yield to it lest it regain strength. A new era has dawned, but it has not yet been fully realized. We are “new men,” united with Christ, yet we are still living in mortal flesh, not yet raised with Christ in glorified bodies. For that reason, growing in godliness remains a struggle—though it is a battle we can and will win as we cling to Christ in faith.

John Stott says:

The major secret of holy living is in the mind. It is in knowing (Rom. 6:6) that our former self was crucified with Christ, in knowing (Rom. 6:3) that baptism into Christ is baptism into His death and resurrection, and in considering (Rom. 6:11 RSV) that through Christ we are dead to sin and alive to God. We are to recall, to ponder, to grasp, to register these truths until they are so integral to our mindset that a return to the old life is unthinkable. A regenerate Christian should no more contemplate a return to unregenerate living than adults to their childhood, married people to their singleness, or discharged prisoners to their prison cell."

So we must proceed to be what we are. This means that as those dead to sin and alive to God, we are to give ourselves wholeheartedly to God as grateful children, actively offering up the “members” of our bodies (eyes, ears, mouths, hands, feet, etc.) as instruments of righteousness for God’s pleasure and glory. In our (continued on page 21)
One of the greatest hindrances to discipleship is what the Bible calls “the flesh.” How do we overcome the flesh? The Bible declares that to be delivered from the flesh we must die. And when we turn to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith that is just what happens to us. Paul says that all who have been baptized into Christ have “died to sin.” Something has happened to us as believers so that continuing to live as we did before no longer makes sense; it is illogical. “We died to sin,” Paul says, “how can we live in it any longer?” (Rom. 6:2).

How are we to understand this “death to sin”? Some see it as a final and complete break: Christians are completely cut off from any influence of or attraction to sin. But if that is what it means to be a Christian, I’ve never met one, and I’m sure none exists. For the truth is, Christians still sin. All of us do. And if we had no attraction to sin, why does Paul have to keep exhorting us, as he does so often, to live godly lives?

Others say this is something that ought to be true of us, or that it is a process in us: “we are dying to sin.” But Paul speaks of it here as a fact; this is something that happened, in the past: we died to sin.

So what does this mean? The key is to recognize that Romans 6 comes right after Romans 5. In the second half of chapter 5, Paul sees every human being as being bound up in solidarity with one of two men—Adam or Christ. These two function as the representative heads of two eras or two families. First, by birth we were all caught up in the old era, the era of Adam. Adam was appointed by God as the representative of all mankind. When Adam sinned, we all sinned in and with him, and so through his sin, death came to us all. We, along with all other human beings, were trapped under the oppressive reign of sin. We were a part of the kingdom of death.

But the message of the gospel is that that is not the only solidarity to which we can belong. God has appointed a new head, a second Adam, whose obedience has powerfully overcome the sin of that first Adam. And by faith we can become a part of this new era, this new family—the family of Jesus Christ. We are transferred into another kingdom, a kingdom of grace.

Now in Romans 6 Paul draws out the personal implications of this cosmic reality. If Jesus is now our representative head, then His death to sin means that we died too. In Christ we died to sin. We are no longer in the old Adamic family; we are in the family of Christ. We no longer belong to that kingdom of sin and death; we now belong to the kingdom of righteousness and life. Where once sin reigned in death, now grace reigns through righteousness (Rom. 5:21). Or as Paul says in Colossians 1:13: The Father “has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.” It is as if we are now out of sin’s rightful territory. We have crossed the state line, so to speak. Now the devil may yell across at us, but he has no rightful authority over us.

Again, Paul is not making a statement about our experience, necessarily, but about our status. In our experience we are a lot like some of the American slaves after the Civil War. They were given their emancipation, but some had lived their whole lives as slaves, and they didn’t know what it meant to live as free men. They still thought they
could be bought and sold as property. So we can still act like slaves, under the reign of sin, when in fact we died to sin, and we are now under the reign of God’s grace. Paul’s main point in all of this is his statement in Romans 6:14: “Sin will have no dominion over you” (ESV).

So if this is now the case, if we died to sin, Paul says, “how can we live in [sin] any longer?” We have a new status, as those belonging to Christ, and this new status must lead to a new way of life. Continuing to sin is as illogical as an emancipated slave still toiling for no pay under the hand of an oppressive master in the cotton fields of Mississippi. It makes no sense. One cannot become a Christian without becoming a new person, called to live a new life. For in coming to faith in Christ, we died to sin.

But how have we died to sin? What is the means of this new reality? This is Paul’s concern in Romans 6:3–11.

Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (6:3–4)

Paul appeals to the common experience of baptism—every Christian, Paul assumes, has had his or her faith visibly expressed in the waters of baptism. Baptism was so intimately connected with conversion in Paul’s mind that he could speak of baptism as shorthand for the conversion experience as a whole. And baptism, in this sense, is the means by which we are joined to Jesus Christ. And since we are joined to Him by faith, as exhibited in baptism, what is true of Him becomes true of us.

And what is true of Christ? Romans 6:9–10: “For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.”

Becoming a Christian, which is publicly manifest in baptism, means being identified with Christ—being identified with Him in His death, as the believer says, “That is the death I deserve.” And it also means being identified with Christ in His resurrection, as the believer says, “That is the life that I now share and will share.” Jesus Christ died to sin—he decisively said no to sin—even to the point of death. He triumphed over it, by obediently enduring its sting on our behalf. But He was raised to life by the Father, never to die again. If we are identified with Christ in His death, we will also share in His life.

Twice Paul says it: “If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection” (6:5); and again in verse 8: “Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.” This is what identification with Christ means; what is true of Him is true of me. It’s like identifying yourself with a football team: when they win, you win; you share in their joy! But when they lose, you lose, and you feel their pain!

“We died to sin.” Paul expounds this further in verse 6: “For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.” There is a great deal of discussion among commentators as to exactly what the various terms Paul uses here actually mean. Let me set forth a way of understanding them that I have found helpful.

(continued on page 26)
More than to any other person, we are indebted to William Tyndale for our English Bible. Apart from a few manuscript translations from the Latin, made at the time of John Wycliffe, the Bible was not available to English people in their own language. Tyndale was called by God, he believed, to provide a translation of the Bible so that even “a boy that driveth the plow” would be able to read and understand it. The keeping of that promise is the story of Tyndale’s life.

William Tyndale was born in 1494 in the remote west-country Forest of Dean on the border of Wales. He studied at Magdalen Hall, Oxford, earning his bachelor of arts degree in 1512 and his master’s three years later. Thomas More, who later became Tyndale’s bitter enemy, admitted that during his early life Tyndale was well known as “a man of right good living, studious and well learned in scripture, and in divers places in England was very well liked, and did great good with preaching.”

After Oxford Tyndale spent a few years in Cambridge, furthering his biblical knowledge and absorbing the Lutheran ideas being discussed in the White Horse Inn and spreading throughout the country. In 1521 he became a tutor at Little Sodbury Manor, north of Bath. Probably already ordained as a priest, he was soon known as a preacher of evangelical convictions and penetrating power of expression.

England, unlike any major European country, was without a printed vernacular translation of the Bible. To translate the Bible into the vernacular was still illegal in England. For more than a hundred years, the Catholic authorities had seized fragments of the Wycliffe manuscript Bibles, forcing their owners to recant, even burning them at the stake. But Tyndale was not deterred. He went to London, hoping to receive encouragement. Soon, however, he came to believe that not only was there “no room” in London for him to translate the Bible, “but also that there was no place to do it in all England.”

Tyndale left England in April 1524, never to return. He planned to publish Bible translations on the Continent for distribution in England. After traveling in Germany, probably spending some months in Wittenberg, he went to Cologne, one of the great trading ports of northeast Europe. When his work was disrupted by the magistrates of the city, Tyndale moved to Worms, where Luther had made his famous defense before the Diet a few years earlier. There, early in 1526, he successfully completed the translation and printing of the New Testament. Tyndale wrote in his prologue, “I have here translated (brothers and sisters most dear and tenderly beloved in Christ) the New Testament for your spiritual edifying, consolation and solace.” Tyndale’s New Testament was the first printed New Testament in English and his prologue, heavily dependent on Luther but also including his own ideas, was the first English Protestant tract. The pages of his New Testament were
smuggled into England, where they found eager readers, despite the public burning of Bibles and books at St. Paul’s Cathedral.

Tyndale worked steadily, revising his New Testament translation, learning Hebrew so as to translate the Old Testament, and writing theological treatises to support the Reformation. He moved from city to city, seeking a place where he could safely work and have his translations sent across the sea and sold in England. It did not matter to Tyndale who did the work or got credit for it. He even offered to return to England and write no more if the king would allow the publication of an English translation of the Bible.

In 1531 Tyndale’s translation of the book of Jonah was published, and in 1534, the same year Martin Luther’s complete German Bible appeared, Tyndale’s New Testament was reprinted with corrections and revisions. He was now living in Antwerp, Belgium, a thriving city of trade where sympathetic English merchants protected and helped him.

In his first extended treatise, *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon*, Tyndale treated the central Reformation doctrine, justification by faith. As Tyndale put it, “we are saved by faith in the promises of God, and not by a holy candle.” In this book Tyndale developed an extended illustration of the anointing of Jesus’ feet by Mary, summing up the story with the words: “Deeds are the fruits of love; and love is the fruit of faith.”

C.S. Lewis writes that the theme or message of all Tyndale’s theological works was the same and notes that the repetition is intentional. “He is like a man sending messages in war, and sending the same message often because it is a chance if any one runner will get through.” Every line Tyndale wrote, adds Lewis, “was directly or indirectly devoted to the same purpose: to circulate the ‘gospel’ either by comment or translation.” Tyndale’s one message was that no one can be saved by good works, certainly not by the requirements of the Catholic Church, which was little more than a system of prudential bargaining with God. We must see the law as it really is and despair, because we cannot begin to keep it. But after the frightening “thunder” of the law comes the sweet “rain” of the gospel. By the gift of faith we receive God’s forgiveness and are thereby enabled to love and serve him and to love people. Good works are not the cause of salvation, but they are its inseparable symptom. We are “loosed from the law” by fulfilling it. Once the tree has been made good (by no merit of its own), it will bear good fruit, almost as a by-product. It was the same message that was being preached in Wittenberg by Luther and would soon sound from Calvin’s pulpit in Geneva.

As Reformation writings circulated in England, opposition grew. Sir Thomas More called *Tyndale’s Parable of the Wicked Mammon* “a very treasury and well-spring of wickedness.” Despite efforts to prevent Luther’s books and Tyndale’s translations and treatises from reaching England, more and more people were obtaining and reading the contraband books.

Tyndale published *The Obedience of a Christian Man* in October 1528; it quickly crossed the sea to England. It was Tyndale’s most important book outside his translations of the Bible, full as it is of “mountain ranges of New Testament doctrine.” “If we had nothing from Tyndale but his Obedience,” David Daniell (continued on page 27)
Writing the book *A Grief Observed* was the one therapy that helped C.S. Lewis cope following the death of his wife, Helen Joy Davidman (“H.” in the book). Here C.S. Lewis–Atlanta Teaching Fellow and apologist, Jana Harmon, shares some insights on this great classic work of Lewis.

Intense emotional pain. It changes the landscape of our minds. It moves the ground upon which we stand. It brings clouds, obscuring the once-clear view. The heart overrides, plowing through the once-fertile rows of contentment, happiness, clarity, and peace, and leaves a dry, parched, disrupted soul in its wake. It causes us to question the very core of our beliefs, the Person in whom we placed our trust. Is God really all that good, all that powerful? Couldn’t He have prevented this pain? Is God there? Does God care? Why do I feel only overwhelming silence?

C.S. Lewis was not immune to the overwhelming grief that accompanied the mourning of his young love in later life. His erudite argument in *The Problem of Pain* lay still, lifeless against his raging sorrow. In faithful manner, he questioned and agonized through his pen. It was meant to be a private, honest reflection of his passionate struggle, but its value was too great to remain for an audience of one. For such is the common arduous experience of man, even for the most faithful of believers. Value is found in authentic company of the bereaved. Published first under a pseudonym to preserve Lewis’s anonymity, it was later printed posthumously under his given name.

Lewis soberly moves us through his journey of grief.


According to stepson Douglas Gresham,

*It almost seem(ed) cruel that her death was delayed long enough for him to grow to love her so completely that she filled his world as the greatest gift that God had ever given him, and then she died and left him alone in a place that her presence in his life had created for him.*

C. S. Lewis . . . too fell head-long into the vortex of whirling thoughts and feelings and dizzily groped for support and guidance deep in the dark chasm of grief.

Lewis was in a trough of despair and vacillating emotion. The mind tries to reassure the heart that all is well, then a sudden earthquake of pain erupts any and all sense of well-being: “a sudden jab of red-hot memory and all this ‘commonsense’ vanishes like an ant in the mouth of a furnace.”

The mind can go only so far to convince the heart in the way of suffering. In this acute phase of loss, emotions rule the day. Desperate longings for the one who is gone or the One who should be ever present are met with empty return. In their absence, we idealize the absentee loved one and denigrate the evasive Lover of our souls, questioning the cruelty of God’s love. We find the lost one’s presence everywhere and cannot find God’s presence anywhere. We move through the day with despondency weighty,
slow, dismantled from our normal passions. Death comes. Death matters. It is the great separator.

The second stop: Less than a month after his loss of H., Lewis begins the slow process of imagining their lives, of its “otherness,” of its profound intimacy. He realizes the vanity of his fleeting impression of her, his self-created images. He wants to press beyond sentimentality to face soberly the reality of her person, of her death, and the fullness of his loss. Death is the ultimate test of belief. Is religion only for those who cannot face reality? The curative opiate? Lewis would have none of that. The past is the past. Death is final. He has no place for the supposed comforts and answers and rhetoric of religion. He wonders whether the “good God” is in the midst of his incomprehensible pain. He questions whether it is “rational to believe in a bad God.” He chooses to face unbearable reality. He, like his lost loved one, would rather “have truth at any price.”

Questioning God, he realizes the futility and meaninglessness of it all, that he must suffer regardless of his intellectual ramblings. Pain will still be pain. Grief and fear pervade. Endless moments of successive emptiness remain.

The third stop: The world goes on for Lewis, but it is flat and lifeless. Knowing that “trouble” is to be expected in his life does not help his failing faith. He begins to question the authenticity of his belief, his trust in God, his care for others. True tests, or “torture” as Lewis calls it, reveal true faith. Reflecting, Lewis states, “I thought I trusted in the rope until it mattered to me whether it would bear me. Now it matters, and I find I didn’t.” He desires a restoration of faith but realizes that this too may be merely another house of cards. He even begins to question his love for H. as a mere “card-castle,” as well as a relationship of egoism rather than altruism.

In his turning, he sees God as the great iconoclast who offers remedial pain—to hurt in order to heal. The tortures are necessary. Christ suffered for us. God is indeed good. This realization brings about a lighter heart, a lifting of sorrow, a clearing of tears, a moment of clarity and release. His passions no longer blind or block God from view. The bolted door to heaven is no longer locked. Lewis not only sees his need, but realizes his newfound capacity to receive from God. He sees marriage and its end as a universal experience in learning to love the other. His prior intellectual insight (from The Problem of Pain) is finally met with experiential understanding. He sees the value of God’s testing, of experiential knowing. H. is not removed from his thoughts (and is in fact constantly present), but meets him in a profoundly good, real, authentic way.

The fourth and final stop: Lewis now has the perspective to see grief as a valley with varied and surprising venues along the way, not as a circular, engulfing trench. It is a process. He begins to see signs of healing along the way, signs of hope, signs of God’s presence, a healthier remembering of H. He even moves toward moments of praise of the Creator, of his creation of H., of their time together. He rises from his self-imposed darkness to appreciate the comforting reality that he was never really alone. He realizes that his imaginations and passions overrode his
The Ministry of Discipling Friendships
(continued from page 1)

One morning, when Jill was about two-and-a-half, she had a very hard seizure and I just fell apart. Utterly broken, I fell on my face before the Lord. I begged God to use Jill’s life in a mighty way, because what we were experiencing was just too painful to waste. Later that very day, Mary called. Even though we had never met, Mary said that God had told her to call me. Of course she had no idea about the state of mind I was in. I spent two hours crying into the receiver, telling Mary how helpless I felt, how completely drained I was emotionally and physically.

That phone call marked the beginning of an extraordinary, God-ordained friendship. Just dialing me up was an act of obedience for Mary. Even though we had never met, Mary said that God had told her to call me. Of course she had no idea about the state of mind I was in. I spent two hours crying into the receiver, telling Mary how helpless I felt, how completely drained I was emotionally and physically.

Freedom from Expectations

For a long time conversations with all four of these girlfriends focused on how Jill was doing, and they always listened patiently and lovingly. I knew they would be loyal and not think less of me because of my problems and neediness. Had I not been certain that what I shared would be kept in confidence, I would have been isolated by my grief, keeping my suffering to myself. Ann Voskamp writes in her beautiful book One Thousand Gifts that her mother often said, “Expectations kill relationships.” As I ponder those early years with Jill, I am so grateful that my core friendships weren’t burdened by expectations. These friends loved me just where I was. They knew I was grieving, that I was often holding on by a thread, and that I needed loving encouragement. How different my experience would have been had I not had strong Christ-centered friendships during this time of crisis!

Shortly before Jill was born, God gave me Isaiah 41:10:

So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you:
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Little did I know that I would soon need to be upheld by God Himself and through His ministers of grace and love—my beloved friends. They brought meals, loved on our boys, came to the hospital to be by our side or to let us go home for a nap. They
never waited for me to ask for help; each of them tried to anticipate what I might need. Once in a while that meant just taking me out to lunch. A simple lunch outing can be truly restorative; time with friends away from home is important for anyone who faces circumstances that are isolating.

Cultivating Right Relationships

By God’s grace I was already in community with my three girlfriends before my life began to unravel. Each of them was sold out for the Lord Jesus, committed to studying Scripture and living a life of obedience. Over a period of years before Jill arrived, we had been meeting together on a regular basis and had developed a high level of trust. We had a desire and willingness to be transparent and a spirit of trust and confidence in the group, essential elements of heart-level openness. We not only shared with one another our deepest hurts and burdens, we also lifted one another up in prayer and challenged one another to live according to God’s Word. Ephesians 4:15 inspired us: “speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.” I feel so blessed to have seen this verse play out in my life and the lives of my friends.

Of course happening into this kind of community of disciples is uncommon. Most of the time discipling friendships must be cultivated with intentionality. Greg Ogden, who has written a number of books on this topic and leads discipleship seminars, recommends groups of three or four. A one-on-one group invariably puts one person in the role of teacher-mentor and the other as student. And an ordinary small group, which has its own important role in building a community of believers, can become too large to develop true discipling relationships. Groups of three or four people bring a variety of perspectives and experiences, yet the group is small enough to engage at a deep level.

The more-than-twenty-year journey of my foursome has been nothing short of amazing. We’ve grown together in countless ways, clinging to each other and to the Lord Jesus in times of sorrow, and yet celebrating great joys as well. Paul writes in the book of Romans that we are to “rejoice with those who rejoice; [and] mourn with those who mourn” (12:15). Mourning with those who mourn comes naturally in bibli-

Not only has God sustained us; He has also redeemed our suffering in ways we could never have imagined.
could never have imagined. That day when I cried into the phone, Mary recognized that my most immediate need was for a break, and she helped organize an anonymous support group for our family. That group not only prayed for us, but also provided a caregiver to give us a break from caring for Jill. This amazing and desperately needed gift of grace came not a minute too soon.

Until this point Lon and I had not slowed down. We were depleted. Once we got respite, we finally got some sleep, we spent much-needed time with our other children, and we were able to make better decisions regarding Jill’s ongoing medical needs. Respite changed our lives and reenergized us so we could keep going. Respite gave us hope and instilled a vision and longing to help other families like ours.

This led to the development of Access Ministry, which aims to serve children with special needs. It was started at our church in 1996. The first week brought four children, but the program doubled the next week and kept growing. Today Access Ministry serves several hundred families each month through various programs.

Early on we had a desire to expand the services we offered to include overnight respite, and in October 2010 this vision became a reality with the opening of Jill’s House. Jill’s House is a short-term, overnight respite center located in Tysons Corner, Virginia, for children with special needs, ages six to seventeen. And it is bigger and better than I ever imagined it could be!

The mission of Jill’s House is to be a safe haven in our community where parents can entrust their children with special needs. But Jill’s House was not built just so that parents could get a break. We built Jill’s House because we wanted to build an exceptional place for these amazing children. There is an art room stocked with inspiring supplies, and a music room, with various instruments and ample space to dance. There are themed sensory rooms, a library, and a computer area. Jill’s House has a playground, a gymnasium, and an indoor swimming pool all built with special needs in mind. The water in the pool sparkles as the sun shines through the windows, and the surrounding walls are painted with beach-themed murals. It feels like a vacation destination, filled with fun activities and a lot of laughter and love.

Many, many people have prayed for and given sacrificially to Jill’s House. Already more than one hundred seventy-five thousand hours of respite care have been provided to families and their children with special needs. Lon and I know that these children are near and dear to the heart of God. Jesus said, “But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed” (Luke 14:13–14).

As I look back at the journey, from feeling hopeless, defeated, and exhausted to a place of renewed strength and confident
Is any pleasure on earth as great as a circle of Christian friends by a fire?

C.S. Lewis

hope, I have much to thank God for. For His Fatherly love and faithfulness to me in the darkest hours of my life. For godly women who walked beside me through my sorrow. For clearly answering our prayers, redeeming so much pain and drawing us all closer to each other and to Him in the process. And not least, for using Jill’s life in such a powerful and redemptive way.

I agree with Greg Ogden that “for the truth of God’s Word to be released in its transforming power, it must be pursued in the context of trusting, intimate and lasting relationships.” Without them, we lack a major channel of God’s grace.

Do you know the blessing of “trusting, intimate and lasting relationships”? If not, may I humbly encourage you to seek them out in a prayerful and intentional way? Discipleship resources are available at most churches and through the C.S. Lewis Institute. I am confident the time and energy you invest will reap heavenly rewards.

Notes

2. Scripture quotations in this article are from the New International Version.

RECOMMENDED READING

Where is God When it Hurts? by Philip Yancey
Yancey’s book reveals a God who is neither capricious nor unconcerned. Using examples from the Bible and from his own experiences, Yancey looks at pain - physical, emotional, and spiritual - and helps us understand why we suffer.

Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ by Greg Ogden
A year 2000 Finalist in the ECPA book competition! Discover the fullness of life in Christ. We grow in Christ as we seek him together. Jesus’ own pattern of disciple-making was to be intimately involved with others and allow life to rub against life. By gathering in twos or threes to study the Bible and encourage one another, we most closely follow Jesus’ example with the twelve disciples.

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Kristie Jackson, C.S. Lewis Institute Fellow
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lost. But there’s more to this prayer: Lord, give us a clearer understanding of Your eternal purpose and plan.

God’s Love for the Human Race

Here’s the Good News: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). God doesn’t want anyone to perish but all to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). God has “reconciled us to himself through Christ,” and He has entrusted to Christ followers this amazing message of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18). In the first few chapters of Acts, God has given us a model of how this love and power works in practice.

In Acts 1 we see 120 disciples hidden away in an upper room. They knew they had been commissioned to be witnesses of the resurrection, but they had no power or vision. Then, as recorded in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit came and filled them—changing everything. They were empowered and transformed to do extraordinary things, and these people turned the world upside down. Just think, it started with only 120 disciples! How did this happen? I believe there are two keys.

First, in Acts 2 we witness Pentecost when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. From that moment on, the disciples began to evangelize the world with the message of redemption through Jesus Christ.

Born into a wonderful Christian family, I came to faith in Christ when I was very young. I certainly had the Holy Spirit, but I was not filled with the Holy Spirit. That happened on February 14, 1980, in a powerful encounter with God. I was dramatically transformed and fell head over heels in love with Jesus Christ, so much so that I only wanted to please and glorify Him. Also the Bible came alive to me. I couldn’t put it down, and I desperately wanted to evangelize my friends! I was filled with the Holy Spirit, and since then I have been filled again and again and again (Eph. 5:18). As D.L. Moody said, “I need to keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit because I leak!”

It’s the Holy Spirit who pours God’s love into our hearts (Rom. 5:5), and this love compels us to lay down our lives in order to carry out the mission (2 Cor. 5:14–15). And it’s the Holy Spirit who empowers us to be witnesses of the Good News of Jesus Christ to lost and broken people (Acts 1:8).

As Christ followers, we desperately need to ask God to keep on filling us with the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:9–13). As Billy Graham said, “It’s not an option for a Christian to be filled with the Holy Spirit; it’s a necessity.”
Knowing & Doing

God’s Plan of Redemption

The Holy Spirit also helps us to understand God’s bigger picture of redemption. This, I believe, is the second key that will help Christ followers to evangelize America. Relative to eternity, our lives on earth are but a breath or a vapor (Ps. 39:5), but, while we are on earth, God has called us to complete a specific mission. To be effective in completing the work God has set for each of us (Eph. 2:10), we’re called to live as aliens and strangers on earth (1 Pet. 2:11). And our faithfulness to the work He has given us will be rewarded through eternity (2 Cor. 5:10).

God has enabled me to understand this bigger picture through the demise of close family members. Through the brokenness caused by the death of my youngest son, Alex, in 2005, followed two months later by the death of my sister Jax, eternity has become very real to me. Scripture says God has “set eternity in the hearts of men” (Eccl. 3:11), and often brokenness will release this understanding. While it is certainly true that God wants us to glorify Him by living abundant lives here and now, we do that by having our eyes and hearts fixed on eternal things (2 Cor. 4:18), on the things above (Col. 3:1–3). Moses prayed, “Teach us to number our days aright, / that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Ps. 90:12). Having an eternal perspective helps us to set correct priorities for our days on earth.

C.S. Lewis said,

If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, Wilberforce and the English Evangelicals who abolished the slave trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.

Aim at Heaven and you will get earth thrown in; aim at earth and you will get neither.

In Acts 3 and Acts 4, we see how this perspective influenced the actions of the early disciples. In Acts 3 a man who has been crippled for forty years is healed in Jesus’ name as Peter and John are going into the temple. The city is in uproar on account of this healing, and Peter and John are dragged before the religious leaders. In Acts 4 I note some key statements. In verse 12 we’re told that salvation comes only through Jesus Christ, and in verse 13 we’re informed that evangelization can come through uneducated, ordinary people who know Jesus! By God’s grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, everybody can and should be evangelizing.

If we believe hell is a reality, it should fundamentally change how we go about our lives.

In Acts 4:18 the religious leaders basically say to Peter and John, “Look, unless you stop speaking about Jesus Christ, we’re going to kill you.” And in verse 20 they respond with these amazing words, “We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” Again, to paraphrase, they’re saying, “Kill us if you want, but what we’ve seen and heard is so incredible that we have to share it with other people, even if it means our losing our lives in the process!”

What did they see and hear that they were willing to die for? Well, we know that they saw and walked with Jesus on earth. They saw how He lived. They saw His example; they heard and saw what the kingdom of God looked like. They also saw Jesus die on the cross, and they saw Him alive again in His resurrected body. They saw that life does not end when our physical bodies die; there is much more to come!
And of course they heard all that Jesus had spoken when He was with them. He spoke about the kingdom of God, and He also spoke a lot about the afterlife. He spoke about heaven, and He spoke about hell.

Regrettably, we’ve come to a place in our society where we don’t want to hear about hell. It’s uncomfortable and not “politically correct.” Whatever we feel about hell, the key question is, what is the truth? Do we believe Jesus was telling the truth when He warned people about eternal judgment? If we believe hell is a reality, it should fundamentally change how we go about our lives. If we know the end of the story, and other people don’t, I think it’s fair to say that we’ve got an obligation to tell them about it. Not out of guilt, but out of a genuine concern and compassion for people, deep in our hearts.

If a blind man was about to walk off a cliff, how hard would we try to persuade him to change course? If he’s convinced he’s on the right path, we’d have to be strategic in how we persuaded him to take another course.

I believe God wants to give Christ followers a fresh and clear vision of His calling on our lives. When He told Joshua to go in and take the Promised Land, God gave him a clear vision. He defined the area of land to take and told him what he would need to carry out the task.

The Bible says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Prov. 29:18 KJV). What is your vision for your life? Why are you living here on earth (assuming you are living)?

I heard about an old man who was asked what he did first thing in the morning. He said, “The first thing I do in the morning is read the obituaries in the New York Times. If I’m not in it, I get up to face a new day!” What do you get up to do each morning?

Maybe a better question is what is God’s will for you here on earth? After all, as Christ followers, we’re called to live for God’s will, right? Our fulfillment is to do God’s will.

The kingdom of God will break out across America if the church is renewed and Christ followers are mobilized once again to evangelize the lost and perishing: friends, neighbors, relatives, and work colleagues.

What is your vision to obey the Great Commission, to make disciples of all nations? What are you doing about the people God has put in your life?

Jesus clarified and confirmed His mission on earth when He said, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). And He says to us, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you’ (John 20:21).

Faith

The second area that needs renewal is our faith. “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). As we hear God’s message and heart for the lost through Scripture, faith is stirred in our hearts. And faith leads to victory! (1 John 5:4).

The big question is, are we really hearing the message? When asked what God
As Christians we are tempted to make unnecessary concessions to those outside the Faith. We give in too much. Now, I don’t mean that we should run the risk of making a nuisance of ourselves by witnessing at improper times, but there comes a time when we must show that we disagree. We must show our Christian colours, if we are to be true to Jesus Christ. We cannot remain silent or concede everything away.

C.S. Lewis

requires, Jesus replied, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent” (John 6:29). Do we believe enough in the things we have seen and heard that we would die in order to tell them to other people?

Mohammed was an Iraqi Muslim who came to faith in Christ. The gospel so impacted his life that he felt compelled to share the Good News with his family. “I have happiness; I cannot stop myself,” he told his wife, Liyla. “I must share this truth with my family.” But his words were not received well, and a family member murdered him for leaving the Islamic faith. Widowed and with a young child to care for, his young wife was encouraged to flee Iraq along with other Christians. But Liyla decided to stay and witness about Jesus Christ for whom her husband had given his life. As a result of her faith and courage, other Muslim women are coming to faith in Christ.

There is an amazing YouTube clip of a magician named Penn, who shares how impressed he was by a man who gave him a New Testament and Psalms. He goes on say that although he is an atheist, he has never had a problem with Christians proselytizing because, “If they believe what they say about heaven and hell, why aren’t they telling us more about them?” And, of course, he has a great point. Not that Christians should go about telling people they’re going to hell (that rarely works!), but we should be more active in sharing the Good News about Jesus Christ our Savior.

Scripture clearly indicates that the evidence of our faith will be seen by how we live and what we do (John 14:21, 23; James 2:22). Again, this comes through the work of the Holy Spirit. We need to keep asking Him to fill us with His love and power, enabling us to be witnesses for Christ (Eph. 5:18).

Courage

I also challenge you to ask God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to renew your courage. When commanding Joshua to take the land they had been given, God told him three times to “be strong and very courageous!”

Courage is not the absence of fear or pain but a willingness to do what is right whatever the cost. Jesus modeled this perfectly on the Mount of Olives just before His crucifixion. Aware of what was coming, He was in mental and emotional agony, so much so that He started to sweat blood. He cried out, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be
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done” (Luke 22:42). This is a total surrender of His will to the will of God.

To obey God’s Great Commission to evangelize requires courage and involves sacrifice as priorities shift and we focus our time and energy on following Christ and becoming fishers of men. What’s more, an enemy scheming against us has come to kill, rob, and destroy (John 10:10). Praise God, we do have the victory in Christ, but we need to recognize and engage in the battle. As Paul said to Timothy, we need to have the attitude of a soldier, athlete, and farmer (2 Tim. 2:1–7).

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12).

And all the sacrifice is more than worth it both today and through eternity. When the church fails to obey the Great Commission, Satan and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms go unopposed, thereby causing darkness in and confusion over every societal arena, including politics, the economy, morality, and the media. But when the church obeys Jesus’ instructions to go and evangelize, to share the Good News about Him and the kingdom of God, Satan is displaced from the heavenly realm. This leads to the kingdom of God breaking out in every area of society.

Action

In 1865 William Booth had a vision from God in which he saw a raging sea with masses of perishing souls in the water. Then he saw a huge rock with a platform rising out of the water, and some of the people were being saved from the raging sea. But his heart broke because so few people who had been saved from drowning had any concern for those who were still perishing! From this vision, Booth started the Salvation Army.

We need renewal in a fourth and final aspect: in taking action. It’s so easy to hear the message and then do nothing about it.

I love the film Schindler’s List, in particular, the powerful ending, when Schindler—who has risked his life to save so many Jews in the Holocaust—realizes after the war that he could have done more. He could have saved more victims from the gas chambers. Will there be a time, I wonder, at the end of this age, when we realize we could have done more to evangelize the lost?

Notes

1. Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New International Version, 1984.

RECOMMENDED READING

Evidence for Christianity by Josh McDowell

Whether debating Marxists, college professors, or Islamic apologists, Josh McDowell’s hallmark has always been to walk boldly into enemy territory and speak truth. This book is based on the expectation that, with a growing number of adults becoming increasingly skeptical toward Christianity, there is a need for a solid body of persuasive evidence to be presented to them.
Hindrances to Discipleship: Freedom from the Flesh
(continued from page 5)

old life, energized as it was by the flesh, our spiritual deadness and rebellion against God were expressed in sins through the members (parts) of our body. In our new life, empowered as it is by the Holy Spirit, our love for and submission to God is expressed in obedience through the members of our body.

For example, we choose to no longer look with our eyes at pornography but rather at things that are wholesome; to no longer listen with our ears to dirty jokes, gossip, etc., but rather to things that are edifying; to no longer use our mouths to tell lies, gossip, or slander but rather to speak truth and share the gospel; to no longer hold tightly to what is ours but rather to share with those in need; to no longer sit at ease in our bodies but to get up and out in service to God and neighbor; to no longer use our private parts to have sex outside of marriage but to be chaste, and so forth.

In short, now that sin’s reign over us has been broken, we are to give ourselves up to God and set ourselves to obeying the word and will of God from the heart (Rom. 6:17). We have been set free; now we must walk in the freedom we have been given. This is a matter of our will, of choosing to put off the attitudes and behaviors of our old self and put on those of the new self. However, our willing/choosing, while necessary, is not sufficient for victory; we must act in the power of the Holy Spirit, as we will see ahead.

We might think of this as a process of reversing and rooting out our practice of the sinful attitudes and behaviors that have characterized our past life (old self). We must cast off, our old sinful ways and embrace their godly opposites. This is easier and quicker with some sins than others. Depending on how deeply rooted a given sin is, it may take considerable time and effort to eradicate it and cultivate its opposite. Most people, for example, would find it easier to stop lying than to root out sexual lust or greed. Paul is very realistic about the challenge we face:

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. (Rom. 8:12–14)

We must put sin to death, says Paul. And this can be hard business. Just as a large thorn bush with a deep root takes much effort to uproot and destroy, some sins are more difficult than others to root out. But as we work determinedly with the Spirit’s help, the weeds and thorn bushes in the gardens of our hearts are progressively eradicated and replaced with the beautiful, fragrant flowers and fruit of Christlikeness. As we live in this way, motivated not by law but by a grateful, self-giving love for God, the flesh has no dominion over us and gets weaker, while the new self becomes stronger.

Contrary to what many people seem to think today, this earnest pursuit of freedom from the flesh and sin is not optional for those who have been made alive in Christ.
Hindrances to Discipleship: Freedom from the Flesh

It is simply another way of talking about the pursuit of “the holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14; see also 1 Pet. 1:13–19). Thus it is a matter of life and death. As John Owen said, “We must be killing sin or it will be killing us.” The flesh is always ready to reassert itself in our lives, and the world is a playground full of temptations and snares to entice us. The tragic downfall of David and Bathsheba shows that even a godly psalmist is not immune to the temptation to sin. The price of freedom in the spiritual life, as in political life, is “eternal vigilance.” The devil, who sees us as prisoners who have escaped from his jail and seeks to recapture us, skillfully uses the world and its sinful enticements as bait to ensnare our flesh. But as we have seen above, we can escape capture. It is a law of life that what we starve dies; as we starve and put to death the flesh and its sinful thoughts and deeds, we deny the devil access to our moral lives. As an old Puritan once said, “If we would deal with the flesh, it would put the devil out of business over night.”

Practical Next Steps

What practical steps can we take to live this way? Assuming that we have grasped what has been said thus far, the next step is to follow Paul’s instructions. Make some time to get alone with God and your Bible and “present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness” (Rom. 6:13). This means a literal giving of ourselves to God wholeheartedly, without reserve. We give everything we know about ourselves at this time to everything we know about God. Everything must go on the table; nothing can be held back.

So vital is this point that Paul reiterates it in Romans 12:1, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” This is a critical step, without which we will make little progress in the spiritual life. To make this surrender concrete, early in his life Dr. Richard Halverson filled out a blank Bill of Sale, with himself as the seller and God as purchaser, and irrevocably conveyed himself and all he had or would ever have to God and His service. Many of us are stuck right here. Either we have not been taught this truth, or we do not understand what it means, or we refuse to surrender ownership of ourselves to God, or we have surrendered ourselves but later taken back control of our lives. In every case, however, the remedy is the same: to present (or re-present) our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

Doing this clears the way for the next step: to be filled with and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Living for Christ requires the supernatural power of the Spirit. Yet many believers are either confused about or afraid of the Holy Spirit; herein lies another common reason for our weak, anemic lives. We need to take the wise counsel of John Calvin, who somewhere said that we should “believe all that the Scriptures teach us about the Holy Spirit and expect all that the Scriptures promise us from the Holy Spirit.” Some of us are stuck between Calvary and Pentecost. We know that our redemption was accomplished by Christ on the cross, but we don’t realize that it is applied in daily life only by the Spirit, whose fullness we desperately need. We receive the power to live this life as we obey the command to...
be filled continuously with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). There is no other way. Just as a jetliner cannot become airborne without power to overcome gravity, so we cannot be victorious without the Spirit’s power to overcome sin. This means allowing the Spirit to have full control of us and empower our lives. John Stott describes being filled with the Spirit as “a penitent turning from what grieves the Holy Spirit and such a believing openness to Him that nothing hinders Him from filling us.” This explains why it is so critical to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God; for if we are running our life in our own strength and self-chosen way, we are disobeying God, grieving the Holy Spirit, blocking His fullness and power in our lives making ourselves vulnerable to the Devil, and ensuring our own defeat.

It is sometimes thought that once we have been filled with the Spirit, we are permanently empowered and good to go indefinitely. But this is mistaken, “For the fullness of the Spirit is not a once-for-all experience which we can never lose, but a privilege to be renewed continuously by continuous believing and obedient appropriation.” Just as an aircraft requires a continuous supply of fuel to remain aloft, so we need the continuous empowerment of the Spirit to overcome sin. Clearly, continuous faith and obedience are essential for continuous fullness of the Spirit.

This brings us to yet another step, daily walking in the Spirit, which is closely related to being filled with the Spirit. Paul tells us that as we walk in the fullness of the Spirit, we will not gratify the desires of the flesh, which are opposed to the desires of the Spirit and are always seeking to reassert themselves (Gal. 5:16–17).

The desires of the flesh are connected to particular sins we think will give us pleasure in one way or another. But Paul assures us that the Spirit will enable us to resist the temptation and walk in obedience, if we choose to do so. This is a crucial point. Our will must be committed to obeying the Holy Spirit and resisting the desires of the flesh if we are to have victory. Or to put it differently, we must desire and will to do God’s will above our own. If we don’t, we will yield to the flesh by default, with potentially serious consequences. (If there is an area in our lives where we really don’t want to do God’s will, if we will honestly confess it to Him and ask Him to help us become willing, He will answer.)

In some cases we may think, “What’s the harm if it’s just once? God will forgive me.” Such deceiving thoughts come either from our flesh or the devil. The harm, in addition to grieving the Spirit and thus breaking fellowship with God, is that what we feed grows. If we begin to feed the flesh, the flesh will gain increasing domination over us with the potential of leading us back into enslavement to sin. What we must do when we are tempted is immediately turn to the Holy Spirit and ask for help; He will lead and prompt us with the Word of God. This is not an inconsequential matter, for whenever we take a deliberate step into darkness, the next step is easier and the one after that is easier still. Each
step puts us that much further from God and progressively hardens our conscience. And we cannot know where it will all end. Like stepping into quicksand, there is no guarantee that we will be able to extricate ourselves. No doubt David thought just one sexual encounter with Bathsheba wouldn’t matter. But it did matter—greatly. Although he eventually repented (Psalms 32 and 51), he nevertheless incurred God’s disciplinary judgments (2 Sam. 12:7–14) which, as recounted in 2 Samuel 12:15–20, are very sobering.

In other instances, thinking that temptation is just too strong to resist, we deceive ourselves with the thought that God will understand and give us a pass. Perhaps David thought this as well. But this, too, is deception, for, as Paul says, “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it” (1 Cor. 10:13). In other words, we can overcome temptation if we really want to. How? When we become aware of sinful desire rising in us and are tempted, we must at once ask the Holy Spirit for strength, remind ourselves of what the Word says, and resist before it can germinate and blossom. James reminds us that “each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death” (James 1:14–15). Resisting vigorously at the first suggestion of sinful desire, before it can conceive and gain strength, is a critical key to overcoming temptation. Wise men and women will seek to avoid being surprised by temptation by asking the Holy Spirit to search their hearts and reveal any indwelling sins so they can close the doors of vulnerability before being ensnared (Ps. 139:23–24).

What if we do give in to temptation and commit sin? We should confess to God as soon as we become aware of our sin, repent and return to Him, asking to be restored and filled afresh with His Spirit and His grace. To repent and return to God doesn’t mean to simply say words like “God, I’m sorry.” It involves a full intention to forsake our sin and a battle to put it to death and root it out of our lives. God is gracious and will forgive those who are truly repentant, for “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Sadly, some people find such a life not to their liking. They believe they can be saved by grace but continue to live in the flesh and ultimately go to heaven. Rooting out sin may be okay for others, but it is not important to them. This raises the question, can a person pray the sinner’s prayer, continue to live in his or her sins as before with no concern or effort to live for God, and then go to heaven? One can only wonder, what kind of grace it is that saves a person and leaves

Hindrances to Discipleship: *Freedom from the Flesh*

Our world is hungry for genuinely changed people. Leo Tolstoy observed, ‘Everybody thinks of changing humanity and nobody thinks of changing himself.’ Let us be among those who believe that the inner transformation of our lives is a goal worthy of our best effort.

*Richard J. Foster*
him the same way it found him. Certainly not the transforming grace of God taught in the Bible. Paul, the apostle of grace, says, “If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (Rom. 8:13–14). The Spirit of God leads the children of God to turn away from sin and to give up themselves to His service, walking before Him in holiness and righteousness all their days.

Last, but by no means least, we must take the step of making regular use of the means God has given to help us grow and mature in grace. You might think of them as a kind of spiritual medicine that helps us grow stronger in our pursuit of God and Christlikeness and in our battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. As long as we continue to take our medicine, we will go from strength to strength; but if we stop, or become intermittent, we will begin to lose ground spiritually and become more vulnerable to infection from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Assuming that one has already been baptized, this would mean following the example of the early church; they “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). In practical terms, this means becoming a committed member of a congregation where these four means of grace are honored and practiced.

“The apostles’ teaching” is basically the teaching of the New Testament (and, by extension, the Old as well). Devoting ourselves to it involves listening to weekly preaching and teaching from the Bible and practicing personal, daily reading of Scripture, along with memorization of and meditation on selected passages. The latter two, often neglected, have been over the centuries among the most powerful resources for growth.

“Fellowship” is the sharing of our lives with other believers at a depth that enables us to know and be known, to bear one another’s burdens and pour out our lives for them, even as they do the same for us, and to serve them with our God-given gifts as they serve us in turn.

“The breaking of bread” in this context refers to the Lord’s Supper. This is a means of grace that has been overemphasized in some circles and neglected in others. But throughout history it has been recognized as a means of special spiritual communion with Jesus that strengthens us spiritually, if rightly received.

“The prayers” involves praying in church, in prayer groups, and over meals, and especially private time in personal prayer to God. There is no substitute for ample time alone in prayer to our Father in heaven, for only thus do we come to know Him better and love Him more. Finally, as we seek to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving ourselves” (James 1:22) and as we devote ourselves to good works (Titus 3:8), we will be wise to remind ourselves often that we are saved not by our works but only by the free grace of Him who loved us and gave up His life for us (Gal. 2:20).

Following the path laid out above will help us to grow and mature spiritually, fortify our souls against the resurgence of the flesh, strengthen us against the devil’s schemes, and help us become more and more like Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. ☩

Notes

1. All Scripture quotations in this article are from the English Standard Version.

Recommended Reading

Rediscovering Holiness by J. I. Packer

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Dying to the Flesh  
(continued from page 7)  

That “old self” is not a part of me. It is not my “old nature.” It is the whole of me as I used to be as a child of Adam, as a subject of the rule of sin and death. That “old self” died when I was transferred into the kingdom of Christ. But Paul refers here to another aspect of our existence—“the body of sin.” This “body of sin” is our embodied existence in this fallen world; it is our “mortal body” or our “sinful nature”—“the flesh.” This still exists, and it is still related to our former existence in Adam. I know that there is something about my new existence in this world that is still related to my former existence in Adam because my body will die. It is a mortal body—a body that is still a part of that old era, that sphere of sin and death.  

The Christian, you see, is a “new man” in an old “mortal body.” We have already died to sin with Christ when we were joined to Him in baptism, but we have not yet been raised to glory with Him in His resurrection. We live between the ages, having joined the new era, while still dragging along some of the traits of the old.  

It is important to emphasize that this is not saying that physical existence is bad and that things related to material life are evil. Eating good food and enjoying sexual relations in the context of marriage, for example, are good things. As we’ve said, for Paul the sins of the flesh are not just gluttony and lust; they also include things like greed and envy and pride (see Gal. 5:19–21). This “body of sin” that he refers to here is the remains of my Adamic existence as I continue to live in this old, fallen world as a new man, now a part of a new era. But Paul says that God’s purpose in putting to death my old man is that the body of sin might ultimately be done away with, taken out of commission—which is what He will do. But, for now, we still struggle with sin, so long as we are still in this mortal body, still this side of heaven and the glories of the resurrection. We still struggle with sin; even so, we are no longer slaves to sin.  

That is Paul’s point in Romans 6, and it is this fact that Paul wants us to get straight in our heads, as he says in verse 11: “Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”  

We have died to the rule of sin and death: “the flesh” is no longer our tyrannical master. Its spell over us has been broken. You’ve been emancipated, Paul says, so don’t continue to think like a slave. We can never go back to that state of captivity, for now we are alive to God and His grace in Christ.  

Notes  
1. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references in this article are from the New International Version.  
2. See also Acts 26:18: “I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.”  
3. This illustration is found in the work of Welshman Martyn Lloyd-Jones.  

…a Christian is not a man who never goes wrong, but a man who is enabled to repent and pick himself up and begin over again after each stumble—because the Christ-life is inside him, repairing him all the time, enabling him to repeat (in some degree) the kind of voluntary death which Christ Himself carried out.

C.S. Lewis
William Tyndale: “Apostle of England”

(continued from page 9)

writes, “he would still be of high significance for the time.”

Now a hunted man, Tyndale worked on the Pentateuch, having added a remarkable skill in Hebrew to his knowledge of Greek. He was delighted to find that Hebrew translated more easily into English than it did into Latin. Assisted by Miles Coverdale, Tyndale published a translation of the Pentateuch and finished the translation of Joshua through 2 Chronicles.

The erratic course of Henry VIII’s reign was creating confusion and tragedy in England. Young John Frith was burned on July 4, 1531, the first English Protestant martyr. As he died Frith commended his friend William Tyndale for his “faithful, clear, innocent heart.”

Thomas More, England’s leading humanist, became increasingly involved in the anti-Lutheran and anti-Tyndale campaign. More believed that the Catholic Church was superior to Scripture because of its possession of the unwritten tradition. He stated that it was impossible for the Church to err. He urged the burning of all heretics. More opposed Bible translation into English, arguing that if the common people had a vernacular Bible they would get it wrong—especially the Epistle to the Romans, “containing such high difficulties as very few learned men can very well attain.”

Tyndale answered More’s attack by describing “Christ’s elect church” as “the whole multitude of all repenting sinners that believe in Christ, and put their trust and confidence in the mercy of God, feeling in their hearts that God for Christ’s sake loveth them, and will be, or rather is, merciful unto them, and forgiveth them their sins.” Tyndale’s aim was to correct the faults of the Catholic Church, “to purge, not to destroy.” He did not “want to burn anyone alive, not even Master More,” writes Daniell.

More replied to Tyndale in two large books, which Tyndale did not answer. Daniell sums up the exchange: “More gave us three quarters of a million words of scarcely readable prose attacking Tyndale. Tyndale outraged More by giving us the Bible in English.” C.S. Lewis comments that despite his faults as a writer, Tyndale was superior to More in his “joyous, lyric quality” and in his sentences that are “half way to poetry.”

Betrayed by an English spy who was perhaps in the pay of Thomas More, Tyndale was arrested on May 21, 1535, and imprisoned near Brussels. Early in August 1536, after he had been in his cell for 450 days, he was formally condemned as a heretic, degraded from the priesthood, and handed over to the secular authorities for punishment—that is, burning at the stake.

While he was in prison, Tyndale wrote Faith Alone Justifies before God. The book has not survived, but there is no doubt what was in it. Once again Tyndale was trying to get his one message, the central message of the Bible, into the minds and hearts of the English people.

Only one writing from Tyndale during the year and a half in prison has survived, a letter, requesting:
[about William Tyndale] “If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the scriptures than thou dost,” and the fulfillment of that vaunt is the history of his life. The constancy of his purpose triumphed not only over perpetual danger, exile, poverty, and persecution, but even (which may be rarer) over all that was personal in the vaunt itself.

C.S. Lewis

... a warmer cap, for I suffer greatly from cold in the head, a warmer coat also, for this which I have is very thin; a piece of cloth too to patch my leggings. And I ask to be allowed to have a lamp in the evening; it is indeed wearisome sitting alone in the dark. But most of all I beg to have the Hebrew Bible, Hebrew grammar, and Hebrew dictionary, that I may pass the time in that study.

Tyndale’s words remind us of some of the last words of the apostle Paul, who wrote to Timothy urging him to “come before winter” and “bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments” (2 Tim. 4:21, 13), words that Tyndale had lovingly translated into English with all the New Testament writings of Paul and much of the whole Bible.

Tyndale did not despair or fall into self-pity or bitterness, even reaching out to others in his suffering. John Foxe wrote that “such was the power of his doctrine, and the sincerity of his life, that during the time of his imprisonment, it is said, he converted his keeper, his keeper’s daughter, and others of his household.”

Tyndale closed his last letter, writing that if a decision about his fate was made before winter, “I will be patient, abiding the will of God, to the glory of the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ.”

While Tyndale was in prison in Belgium, Queen Anne Boleyn was executed on May 19, 1536, on the absurd charges of incest, adultery, and treason. Anne kept open in her chamber her own copy of Tyndale’s 1534 New Testament (now in the British Library). While she lived, there was some hope that religious policy in England would become more favorable to the Protestant cause. But it did not come soon enough to save Tyndale.

On October 6, 1536, a little over four months after Anne Boleyn’s death, William Tyndale was tied to the stake, strangled first by the hangman, and then his body was burned. Tyndale’s last words were a prayer for the success of his beloved Bible translation. “With a fervent zeal, and a loud voice,” he cried, “Lord! Open the King of England’s eyes.”

His prayer was soon answered. Thomas Cromwell, the king’s principal adviser, and Thomas Cranmer, the archbishop of Canterbury, persuaded Henry VIII to approve an official English translation of the Bible. The king licensed the publication of fifteen hundred copies of a translation called Matthew’s Bible—largely a conflation of Tyndale’s work and that of Tyndale’s friends and assistants, Miles Coverdale and John Rogers (also known as Thomas Matthew). This became the first Bible in English to be legally sold in the country. Yet another

William Tyndale: “Apostle of England”
translation, the Great Bible of 1539 (a slight revision of Matthew’s Bible), was ordered by the king to be placed in every parish church in England. Now everyone could come and read the Bible, even “the boy that driveth the plow.”

Tyndale was both an able scholar (fluent in seven languages in addition to English) and “a conscious craftsman” with an “extraordinary gift for uniting the skill of making sense of an original with the music of spoken English at its best.” He succeeded in making the Greek New Testament and the Hebrew Old Testament speak in remarkably clear, beautiful and vigorous English. His work made the English a Bible-reading people and influenced future translations down to the present. Because William Tyndale gave the English people the Bible in their own language, he is rightly honored as the “apostle of England.”

Not a few of Tyndale’s translations have become a part of the English language, including the following:

- “A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.”
- “No man can serve two masters.”
- “Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you.”
- “Give unto one of these little ones to drink, a cup of cold water only.”
- “The spirit is willing.”
- “Fight the good fight.”
- “In him we live and move and have our being.”
- “With God all things are possible.”
- “Be not weary in well doing.”
- “Behold, I stand at the door and knock.”

Notes

1. The Latin inscription at the bottom of the portrait of William Tyndale that hangs in the dining hall of Hertford College, Oxford, reads in part, “This picture represents, as far as art could, William Tyndale . . . who, after establishing here the happy beginnings of a purer theology, at Antwerp devoted his energies to translating into the vernacular the New Testament and the Pentateuch, a labour so greatly tending to the salvation of his fellow-countrymen that he was rightly called the Apostle of England.” Cited in David Daniell, William Tyndale: A Biography (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1994), after p. 214. Magisterial in every sense of the word, Daniell’s William Tyndale is the best book to consult for Tyndale’s life and work. Daniell skillfully uses many sources, including The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe, quoting, summarizing, and clarifying Foxe’s material.

2. Daniell, William Tyndale, 1.
3. Ibid., 39.
6. Ibid., 156.
7. Ibid., 165.
10. Ibid., 232, 223.
11. Ibid., 219.
12. Ibid., 269.
13. Ibid., 270.
15. Ibid., 280.
16. Lewis, English Literature, 192.
17. Daniell, William Tyndale, 381.
18. Ibid., 379.
19. Ibid., 383. It is estimated that by the time of Tyndale’s martyrdom in 1536 as many as sixteen thousand copies of his translation had reached England. Few copies still exist, only two of his 1526 translation of the New Testament. Copies not burned were simply read to pieces.
20. Ibid., 48, 92.

RECOMMENDED READING

God’s Outlaw: The Story of William Tyndale by Brian H. Edwards
One of our best-selling books worldwide, this account of the amazing life of the pioneer bible translator keeps its readers attentive from the first page to the last.
reason, and he considers how anyone can “be utterly mistaken as to the situation he is really in.”

In the end, he is convicted by two things. One: Remedial pain is worse than our “severest imaginings.” And, two: “all shall be well.” We are in desperate need of what is real, of God, of others, not what is steeped in our imaginings of them, or even ourselves. Loving the reality of others is loving the reality of God, not our ideas of them. Loving the reality of God is loving the reality of others. He states, “I must stretch out the arms and hands of love . . . to the reality, through—across—all the changeful phantasmagoria of my thoughts, passions, and imaginings.”

All things are not perfectly clear, but Lewis appreciates that God’s ways are higher, that God’s presence and peace remains with us through our struggles. He sees that he might have been guilty of putting H. before God. He encounters intimacy without emotion and finds it to be enough, even better somehow, clearer, more honest. “Above all, solid. Utterly reliable. Firm.”

In reflection, it is striking to me to see the importance of balancing reason, passions, and the imagination. A sudden flood of emotions can drive like a runaway train, fueled by imaginings, leaving rationality on the tracks far behind. The reality of life becomes twisted by our self-absorbed desires, our emotional neediness, our longing for something or someone different from what they are. It can distort what we knew beforehand to be true. Emotions run unchecked. Imaginations move into fantasy. We move from painting realism in our minds to impressionism, in some cases, moving toward the abstract. Reality becomes no longer recognizable, with no grounding except for the self. Subjectivism moves toward its fullest manifestation. We become entombed in our own whirling sense of what we desire, what we wish to be true. “Reality doesn’t match our desires, so we bend our desires to meet our own sense of truth.”

Certainly we meet the circumstances of life with both heart and mind. We are depraved and finite. We encounter our own personal reality within the larger context of what is real, what is true of God, of the world, of others, of ourselves. But sometimes reality is hard to face. We wish it were other than it is. We end up creating God or others in our own image instead of knowing and loving and experiencing them as they are. We create an alternate world that is more attuned to our passions and imaginings than to reality. Reality, though, is a sobering stalwart revealer of truth. It reminds us that we are more than our desirings, that external reality is not as we can contrive it to be, that there is something or someone Other who brings sense, who brings healing to our circumstance. When our emotions and our eyes clear, we see that things are as they need to be.

Lewis, who was long steeped in rationality and imagination, found sentimentality afresh in Joy. When she was taken, this reasonable man found himself succumbing to an exaggerated emotionality, tipped beyond reason. Even though he searched for sobriety of thought, it evaded him during his early process of grief. We are all susceptible
In grief nothing “stays put.” One keeps on emerging from a phase, but it always recurs. Round and round. Everything repeats. Am I going in circles, or dare I hope I am on a spiral?

C.S. Lewis

to this tipping, to this overcoming of emotion. We see our own vulnerability in moments of pain, of loss, of desire. But, like Lewis, we need to look to the reality of an unchanging God who loves us in the midst of our pain even though we may not see Him or feel Him. We need not to neglect the reality of God’s past faithfulness and ongoing presence and overriding purposes in our lives. “Truth at any price” ends in contentment, in resting. It ultimately reveals that God sees us through the valley, stronger, clearer, knowing more fully the depth of His love for us. “All shall be well.”

Notes

4. Ibid., 30.
5. Ibid., 28.
6. Ibid., 37.
7. Ibid., 64.
8. Ibid., 65, “All shall be well,” quoting Julian of Norwich.
10. Ibid., 75.
11. Os Guinness, “The Thinking Man’s Journey,” Veritas Forum, Asheville, NC (1995) “Either we conform our desires to the truth, or we conform the truth to our desires.”
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