

Central Gwinnett Ministry

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Practical Thoughts from ElderLink

By Alan Rouse

On Saturday, March 25, Steve Galbreath and I, along with our wives were privileged to attend the Atlanta ElderLink program, a ministry of Abilene Christian University. The mission of the ElderLink ministry is to equip, encourage and link those who lead and serve as elders in Churches of Christ through collaborative relationships, informative resources and shared learning opportunities.

One of the highlights of the ElderLink program was a presentation by Dr. Randolph Lowry on the topic **Five Strategies to Manage Difficult Moments**. Dr. Lowry is the president of Lipscomb University, and is the founder of the nationally recognized Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution at Pepperdine Law School. Through the Straus Institute he has served many churches and individuals in resolving church-related disputes.

As the title suggests, he offered five points of advice for resolving conflicts:

1) Think Chinese. In the Chinese written language the word for crisis is made up of two parts: danger and opportunity. The advice here is to look for the opportunity in the crisis.

2) Focus on the process. Rather than going straight to the answer (my instinct!) he advised us to focus on the process for arriving at a solution. "The right answer at the wrong time, presented in the wrong way, could be the wrong answer." He pointed out that Jesus cares about process in conflict resolution (Matt 18).

3) Go below the line. He pictured the conflict resolution space as a piece of paper with a horizontal line drawn in the middle. Above the line are the issues and positions. Below the line are the interests of the various parties. Instead of simply identifying the issues and deciding on our position on the issues, we should draw out the interests that are moti-

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UPCOMING EVENTS

April

4/23 Special Teaching Seminar: □The Qur'an & the Da Vinci Code□presented by Dr. Douglas Jacoby, 2-5 p.m. Doubletree Hotel in Marietta

May

5/4 No Midweek - please see below

5/5 Midweek service - Harvest Community Church Congregational Worship Workshop with Kevin Darby (Athens Church of Christ)

5/7 Sunday service - Meadowcreek High School auditorium Guest Worship Leader - Kevin Darby

5/25 Midweek service - Harvest Community Church Missions Contribution

The Swamp

Week 1 June 11-17

Week 2 June 18-24

Week 3 June 25-July 1

Week 4 7/5-8 (family camp)

Week 5 July 9-15

Week 6 July 16-22

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vating each participant in the dispute, and to find ways to satisfy those interests.

4) Take care of the three things all parties need. Each needs to be satisfied with: (1) the product (result / decision), (2) the process, (3) the people (how they were treated).

Embrace God's promises

Jesus prayed for unity in John 17, for the benefit of the world. In this world there won't be complete uniformity nor agreement on every subject. But there needs to be peace among believers. Jesus prayed for unity, and God will answer his son's prayer. As God said when Solomon dedicated the temple:

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:14

By following these five principles in conflict resolution, it becomes much more likely that a solution can be found that is satisfactory to all parties.

This presentation at ElderLink was an exceptional opportunity to hear a nationally recognized expert speak on a topic that is highly relevant to the work of a shepherd. I am very thankful to have heard him speak on this topic, and hope to be a more effective shepherd as a result.

Women's Corner



God's Extravagant Love

By Sarah Hartline

What is love? It is one of our greatest pursuits. It is the theme of most songs, and the number one quest of most hearts. Energy is spent in search of it; emotion is evoked because of it. It makes our life fun and gives us a reason to live. It is motivating and empowering. It gives a twinkle to our eyes, a glow to our cheeks and a lift to our steps. Love is the most powerful force in the world.

God can love us like no one ever has. God's love for us is like a dream come true. It is exactly the kind of love we dreamed of as children. Take time to reflect on the following aspects of God's extravagant love, and you will be amazed at the way He can fill your life and heart the way nothing else can.

1. He allures me. Hosea 2:14-16 He wants to get my attention. All He has made screams out, "Here I am-look at me." He wakes up my senses with colors, designs, and uniqueness; he longs to wake up

my heart to him.

2. He does not mind if I am needy. Psalm 123 He wants me to be desperate for him. He wants me to be love-sick for him-to long for His face with every fiber of my body. He wants me to need him.

3. He always takes me down the right path. Psalm 23

4. He does what He says He will do. Ps 145:13 He is faithful to all his promises! What has he promised: forgiveness, Holy Spirit, change, to know him, relationships, strength, confidence, peace, that He hears me, heaven. He never breaks a promise!

5. He always remembers me. Isaiah 49:15-16 He never gets too busy to think of me. He is never distracted when I talk to him.

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FAMILY GROUPS

If you have not yet connected with a family group, we invite to join any of our eleven different groups below:

John Yang □ Lilburn

Glenn Hayes □ Loganville

Phil Dawson □ Lawrenceville

Audie Flowers □ Lawrenceville

Russ McGarr □ Lilburn

Karl Lynn □ Snellville

Ward Rutland □ Lawrenceville

Barry Jennings □ Lilburn

Mike Garrett □ Snellville

Joe Washington □ Lawrenceville

Gary Roberson □ Lawrenceville

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6. He delights in me. Psalm 147:11, Zephaniah 3:17 He rejoices over me with singing. That is such a wild thought: that someone would love me enough to sing about me!

7. He wants me to be with Him. John 17:24 He chooses me. I am not just part of a crowd or someone that got in by mistake. He is willing and desirous for me to be his. What an honor!!!

8. He reveals his heart to me. He wants me to know Him. Proverbs 1:23 He wants me to know what he thinks. He gives me his precious words in the Bible and lets me read them every day. He writes me a love letter every day. What a gift of love!! And he gives me the times to sit and meditate on his words!

9. He wants to know everything about me. 1 Corinthians 8:3 He lets me be myself and does not misunderstand me; He knows my heart and motives. He loves to hear me talk to Him. Psalm 139

hugs me when I am terrified, and soothes me when my heart is breaking. He always puts me back together by his comforting touch.

12. He would do anything for me. John 3:16



And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge .. Ephesians 3:18-19

13. He will never let me sink. Psalm 18:16 He is my rock of refuge-my solid ground. He catches me when I fall. He saves me from my sin, my emotions, and my self. Psalm 69

14. He makes me beautiful. Zechariah 9:16 He loves me unconditionally. It is not based on my performance, strength, perfection, or production. Psalm 147:10

10. He fulfills my dreams. Psalm 145:19

11. He protects me. Psalm 27:5 He touches me. Isaiah 42:6 He holds my hand when I am scared,

Meditate on the ways God loves you and make your own personal list. Keep your list with you so that you can reflect on it and add to it. Then, we truly will be able to live as the dearly loved children that we are.

Deacon Corner			Weekly Attendance and Contribution		
Karl Lynn	Single Parents	770-978-4747	Date	Attendance	Contribution
Ken Watson	Benevolence	678-376-2677	3/5	315	\$8,995
Peter Berry	Benevolence	678-376-1878			
Patrick Freeman	Kingdom Kids	770-921-1811			
Glenn Hayes	Kingdom Kids	770-985-6921			
Dan Stehr	Visitation	770-925-2943	3/12	325	\$7,551
Bill Francis	Visitation	770-806-8645			
Todd Reynolds	Middle School	770-682-0027			
Russ McGarr	Middle School	770-381-5045			
Steve Collier	Teens-Parents	770-717-5784	3/19	358	\$8,604
Joe Hartline	Teens-Parents	770-277-4765			
Danny Emmett	Hope, events	770-985-4542			
Todd Shultz	Communications	770-277-4276	3/26	319	\$7,274
Birt Anglin	Ushering	678-849-0180			
Jeff Mueller	Order of Worship	770-492-0544			
Kendall Knight	Music Service	770-972-6887			

Pure Religion

By Danny Emmett

Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world. (James 1:27 - Holman Christian Standard)

Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles, and refuse to let the world corrupt us. (James 1:27 - New Living Translation)

Sometimes people say they are not religious, but still consider themselves to be a Christian. I don't think that the Bible states that being religious or being a Christian are different things. James writes that the type of religion you *practice* is what glorifies God. When we are under trials, we sometimes feel our situation is an exception or a special circumstance that somehow allows us to be less restrained in what we say. "After all, we think to ourselves, this is a very hard time and so being more lax is perfectly understandable, if not justifiable. We may be tempted to indulge ourselves in self-pity or in some manipulating of our situation to make things better for ourselves. What might we be tempted to say that shows we are not bridling our tongue? I think we can get a hint of this by looking at verse 27. James says there are two things that show a "religion that is pure and undefiled before God." The first is to visit "orphans and widows in their affliction" and the second is "to keep oneself unstained from the world."

Orphans and widows were the powerless of their society. They had lost all connection to those who were responsible to take care of

them. They had no status, no influence. James tells his readers (us) that we should visit these people in the midst of their affliction--in their very place of pain. We are not to wait until these children and women are in a better, more respectable place, in a position to give something back. To visit them in their affliction offers no advantage to the one doing the visiting. This is true religion.



Just a few of the countless orphans in need of a home.

We have opportunities monthly to assist in helping with people who are powerless in our city. I know of two groups of disciples who have taken it on their own to assist in feeding the homeless. This is a kind of religion the Bible speaks about.

We also have the opportunity to give each week for adoptions. This is one way of showing God how much we care about orphans. Another way is to pray for the wisdom, patience, and guidance of couples who are thinking of adopting.

I know that sometimes we think, "I have served enough, when will someone serve me?" When we trust God to be our only and real source of life, peace, rest, and worth, then we can enjoy the wonderful freedom of serving others with no need for a direct return from them. That is why it is true religion. It reflects the very heart of our loving God who gives so much to us. Serving

allows us to see deeper into His great heart, and we can receive His overpowering love because we are not distracted by looking for a way to put ourselves into advantageous positions.

The second part of true religion is to "keep oneself unstained from the world." This goes back to James' comments earlier in this same chapter about one who is double-minded (vv.6-8). When we seek to receive and know God's presence and love, we need to turn from looking to the world for honor or life. We come to see more and more the truth that the world cannot tell us who we are and what is true life, so we stop seeking for it to do so. Of course this is a process--part of the testing of our faith to make it steadfast (vv. 3-4).

James contrasts true religion with religion that is vain. So it would seem that when he speaks of bridling one's tongue, he is encouraging his readers to restrain themselves from using their tongues to bring about their own advantage or to get others in the world to give them recognition, status, power, or worth. When we use our tongues for these things, we deceive ourselves because we are using them to gain what can only be received from God.

When exercising true religion we no longer regard ourselves as victims or tragic heroes. Rather we are choosing to live as if we are the beloved sons and daughters of our Father who is with us whatever our circumstances. He is using every day to transform us to be in every way His mature children, able more and more fully to live in the love with which He loves us completely.