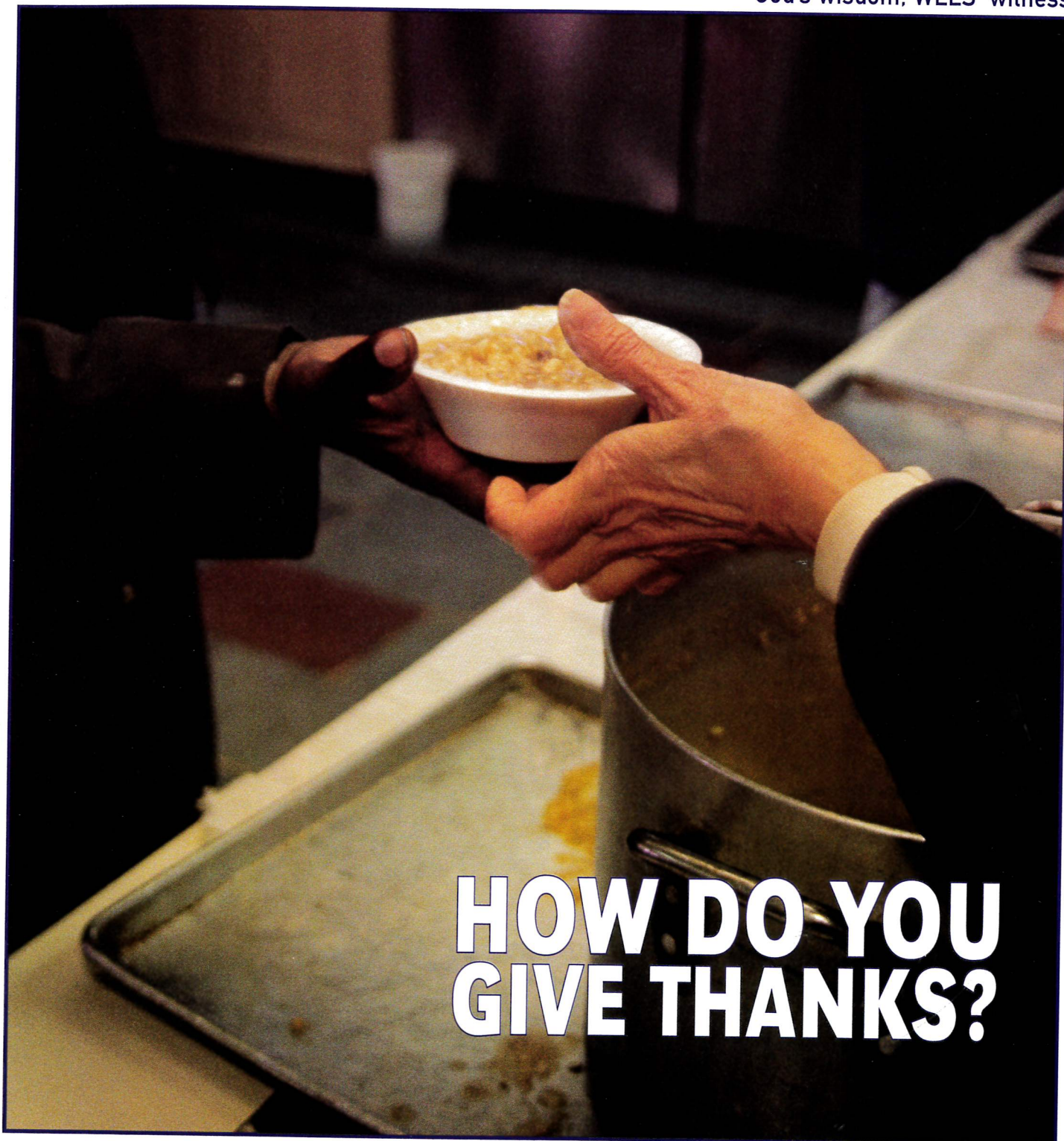


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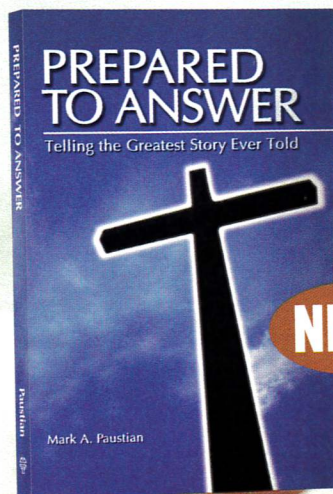


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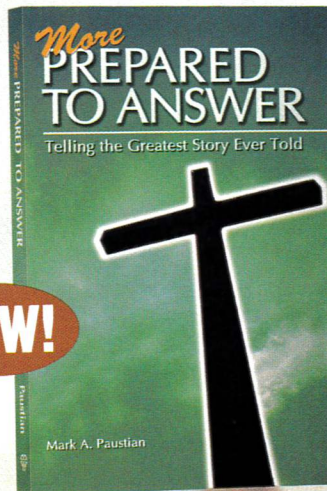
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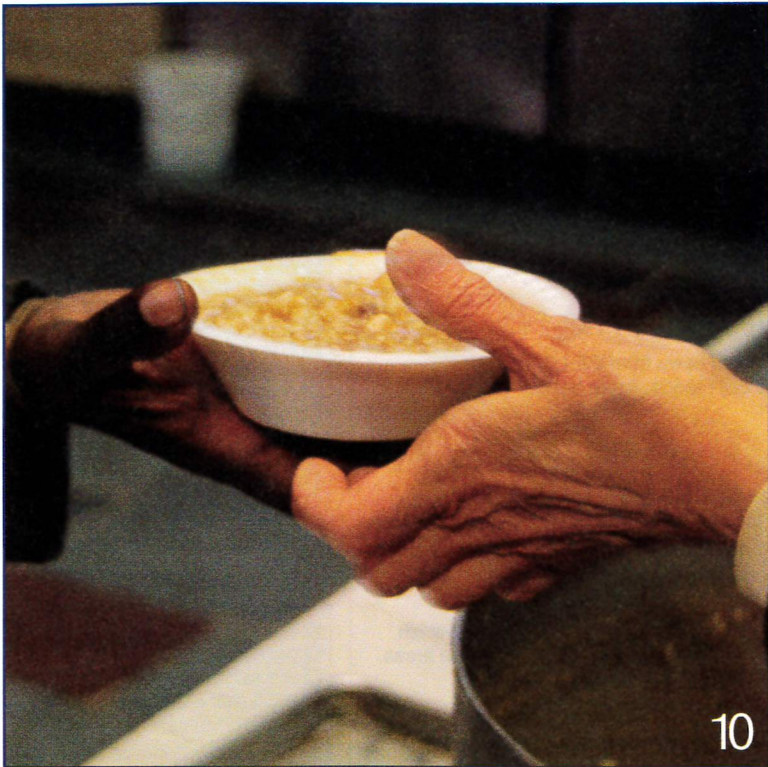
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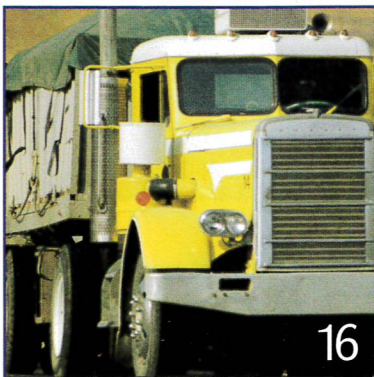
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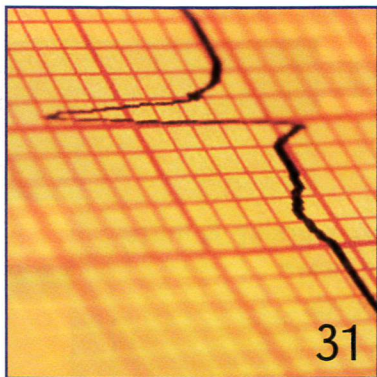


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BE WITH US AS HE WAS
WITH OUR FATHERS;
MAY HE NEVER LEAVE US
NOR FORSAKE US.
1 Kings 8:57

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NOVEMBER

WHAT'S INSIDE *by Nicole Balza*

Happy Thanksgiving! Or, as Andrew Schroer would like us to say, "Happy Thanks Action Day!"

In his article on p. 10, Schroer reminds us that Thanksgiving is more than just a single day in which to thank God for our blessings. Rather, it is also a day to consider whether we are living our lives as testimonies of thanks for all that God has done for us.

Take a moment to consider ways that you can live your life as a visual "thank you" to God. How can you serve your family, church, or community through your donations of time, talents, and money? Imagine those who could benefit from hearing you talk about your blessings and about the one who showers you with those blessings.

If you can't imagine squeezing anything more into your schedule, consider why you are doing the things you do and the attitude with which you do them. I know how easy it can be to serve out of a sense of obligation, but that often takes the joy out of serving. As Schroer reminds us, when we serve as an act of thanksgiving to God, we are truly living out Thanks Action Day.

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ANNUAL DISTRICT CONVENTIONS

I just want to comment on the item from the "District convention news" [Sept.] where delegates from the Michigan District requested having [district] conventions every year.

First, I would say that most of our pastors and male teachers don't need any more meetings to attend. Second, I would venture that in most congregations the pastor, male teachers, and lay delegates are the only ones aware of what is happening at the district level and others are not real concerned with what is happening beyond the boundaries of the church property as it relates to district and synod programs and missions.

Having a convention every year is not going to dismiss the apathy of the average WELS pew sitter. With modern means of communication there are more effective ways to disseminate information. These should fall into the hands of the local pastor and church councils to consistently keep our people informed.

*Alan Ross
Manitowoc, Wisconsin*

STRESS MANAGEMENT

I am writing to express some concerns with Donald Patterson's recent article about stress management ["Living in Jesus' peace," Aug.].

The article begins with the premise that stress management has been a human concern since the fall into sin. This statement misses the point. The real problem that affects all human beings since the fall is our inherited sinful nature.

Stress is a real, but, theologically speaking, minor issue (if that). This is comparable to treating a broken leg by taking two aspirin. There is a larger issue here! Stress is but one symptom; sin is the real problem. Talking about stress does not deal with the real issue that underlies the matter. . . .

Perhaps the article could have spent more time focusing on the root cause of stress and worrying, which, spiritually speaking, is a lack of faith or weakened faith. If we view the subject as a matter of a faith that needs strengthening, the solution to the problem becomes the administration of the gospel in Word and sacraments.

*Johnold J. Strey
Belmont, California*

EARLY CHILDHOOD MINISTRIES

The WELS plan to increase the quality in our Lutheran elementary schools is an admirable goal ["Challenge 2010," Sept.]. Yet the plan is incomplete.

WELS currently has 24 high schools, 357 elementary schools, and 364 early childhood ministries. That means that there are more early childhood ministries than elementary schools. The plan makes no mention of how WELS is going to improve one of the fastest-growing outreach programs of WELS, with a 72 percent rate of increase over the last 10 years. Many of these programs are being started with no guidelines and under-trained teachers. What is WELS going to do to improve this wonderful and growing ministry?

*Patti Fellers
Charlotte, North Carolina*

Parish Schools administrator Jim Brandt responds: The issue of early childhood ministries received high priority at September 2004 Parish Schools meetings. A task force was established to investigate the needs and concerns of early childhood ministries and will report its findings in fall 2005.

DOCTRINES OF ISLAM

Since Prof. John F. Brug in his article, "The menace of Islam" [Sept.], mentions the miracles of Jesus, I will explain what Islam teaches about the first miracle of Jesus—the

turning of water into wine. Islam will state that the Bible libels against the Prophet Jesus. Islam will claim that the Prophet Jesus would never attend any social event that involved drinking. Islam will further claim that the Prophet Jesus would never turn water into wine and then sit around and watch as his colleagues drank.

Islam will make these claims about this miracle because the Prophet Mohammed did not drink, and he forbade all forms of drinking. Because he took this position on drinking, all prophets—including the Prophet Jesus—must take the identical position on drinking.

*Daniel Wortman
Rhineland, Wisconsin*

COMPLIMENTS

The September issue is really awesome. This is a magazine that I read cover to cover, and over the past few years I've found it easier and easier to do so. The articles speak to me, and I'm always copying articles to send to this friend or that and then passing the magazine on.

The pictures drive the points of most articles home. I especially like the people stories. This puts a human face on our synod and reminds us that we are a family.

Lynnette Hupman

EDITOR'S NOTE

The WELS Benefit Plans ad printed on p. 4 of the August issue should have mentioned that the benefits described in the ad are only available to those who are working for the synod.

Send your letters to "Feedback," *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. Letters between 100 and 250 words are preferred. Include full name and address. Letters are edited for clarity, conciseness, and relevance. Not all letters received can be acknowledged or used. Writers' views are not necessarily those of WELS or *Forward in Christ*.

Look around. Then look up.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. James 1:17

Stephen H. Geiger

I didn't believe my eyes. Raindrops. They were falling. Glistening in the light of a sun soon to set. Rain, though the sky appeared cloudless. I dashed to my deck, neck spinning around. Still, I couldn't believe my eyes.

For the record, three wispy white nothings, streaks far to the west and high in the sky. But where were the rain clouds? For proof of the moment, I raced out to the lawn with my camera, shooting in every direction the clear blue of that day.

It seemed miraculous, though a weatherman might offer a good explanation.

Either way, a moment of wonder. Rain falling, but no visible source. A gift coming down, but no clear giver.

Do you see the cloud that rains gifts down on you?

Blessings

Every one of us is so blessed. To count the breaths of air, meals when hungry, friendships when lonely, discipline when needed, checks from work, safe travel, strength even in suffering . . . to count our blessings would be like trying to count those droplets falling from the sky.

Yet when we look for a cloud, the source of every gift, often we see no cloud.

One would think we would stand in awe. "Rain, but no cloud? Blessing, but no visible giver? Surely this is a miracle! Surely every good and perfect gift is from the hidden Creator of the heavenly lights. Praise God for my food, my check, my strength in troubled times."

Instead we can look to the sky, feel raindrops but see no cloud,

and shrug our shoulders. Not a word of admiration.

"Blessings? That's just what happens. Blessings are natural."

Though we witness miracles every moment, we begin to see them not as miracles.

Miracles

Why do we hesitate to call every blessing that falls into our lives a miracle? It must be pride. We don't want to be dependent. We don't want to think we need someone. We don't want to admit that on our own we cannot cause a single good thing to occur. We want to think we have power. We want to think we've earned our paycheck. We want to think that our strength, wisdom, and good decisions have brought us the good things that we have.

Pride. The Lord opposes the proud. How easily he can crush us, withdrawing the shower of his love. How he should.

Yet then we see him send with love one special shower to the earth. This rain, his one and only Son, most dear yet unappreciated. Most precious yet overlooked. Most innocent yet bearing guilt of the worst: the proud, the unthankful, me and you.

On him the fury of God poured out until the pool of guilt was emptied. Then suddenly a shower of a far different kind, the blood of a lamb sprinkled on sinners. The dirty now bloodied yet white as pure snow.

Sin forgiven. A gift coming down from heaven.

Like every gift.

Every good and perfect gift is from above. Every blessing is a miracle from above.



A miracle. The Giver is unseen, yet he showers food, your paycheck, air, strength, friends, a heartbeat, job, sandals, green grass, decorative rock, the pictures on your walls, grandchildren, relief in trouble, peace of conscience, water to drink.

Miracles. They are all miracles.

Thanksgiving

Look around. What blessings do you see? Then look up. What don't you see? You're right. You don't see the Giver. You can't see the cloud.

You can see the rain.

See your blessings. Thank the Giver. Look around. Then look up.

Stephen Geiger is pastor at Prince of Peace, Yankton/Christ Our Savior, Vermillion, South Dakota.

Concentration + perspiration = sanctification?

Kenneth A. Cherney Jr.

“Perseverance and determination alone are omnipotent,” said Calvin Coolidge. Maybe. Maybe not.

Students of mine, please take note. I’m not questioning the value of good, old-fashioned hard work. But it seems to me that, although “Silent Cal” was a devout Christian, here he was saying something not only unscriptural but untrue. All things are not achievable if you simply try long and hard enough. Persistence alone is not omnipotent.

Try this test sometime. Some night when you’re lying awake in bed, try really hard to fall asleep. You know what happens. The harder you try, the more sleep becomes impossible. In fact, it’s the very fact that you’re trying that chases your sleep away. The only way you’re going to fall asleep is to quit trying, and to do or think about something else.

That illustration isn’t original with me, of course. It’s from C. S. Lewis, who applied it to the pursuit of happiness. He said that the rule in life seems to be that the harder you work at being happy, the more miserable you become. The only way to be truly happy is to forget about how happy or unhappy you are and think about something else. Better yet, about somebody else.

Exactly the same rule applies to spiritual growth. Real spiritual growth—as opposed to ersatz growth, which is a narcissistic delight in what a splendid spiritual specimen I am becoming—is always God’s work through the gospel.

The gospel is not about things I do. It’s about things God does for me. Therefore, the more determined I am to pull myself up by my own spiritual bootstraps, the further I’m pushing

away from me the only thing that can make real growth happen: the gospel’s sweet message of forgiveness, peace, and rest. I’m not getting the message any time I’m looking for the solution to my spiritual growth in myself. I only get it when I learn to trust God—and trust his Word to do what he says it will.

Try another analogy. Forty years ago, Adolf Heisenberg shook the scientific world when he discovered his famous Uncertainty Principle. Heisenberg said that the movements of subatomic particles can never be precisely measured, because the very fact that you’re trying to measure them changes the way the particles behave.

The same applies to spiritual growth, which is a phenomenon much more sublime and mysterious than a subatomic particle. Not only can’t the Spirit’s work be monitored or predicted (John 3:8), it can actually be destroyed, or at least disturbed,

by our constant attempts to monitor it. When we do that, we’re behaving exactly like a gardener who plants potatoes, then digs them up once a week to see how they’re doing.

Real growth—again, as opposed to ersatz growth—happens only on those rare occasions when the Holy Spirit manages to pry our egoistic gaze off ourselves and onto Christ. That won’t happen as long as we’re obsessing over our own spiritual progress or lack thereof.

When they are genuine, the things of the Spirit are also invisible, non-quantifiable, unpredictable.

Spiritual, in other words.

Contributing editor Ken Cherney is pastor at St. John, St. John’s, Antigua, West Indies.

The gospel is not about things I do. It’s about things God does for me.



at the foot of the cross. Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: Authority and false teaching

If women must submit to men in the church as those to whom God gives authority, what defense or protection does she have if she's concerned about false teaching in her church? What if her husband and friends are all unbelievers? What should she do if she cannot ask them to help raise her concerns?

It would be helpful to remember that all human authority in this life is "borrowed" authority. The only ultimate authority in the world is God's. In his wisdom, he "lends" a bit of that authority to those whom he places in positions of responsibility over others. As Jesus reminded Pilate, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above" (John 19:11).

Therefore, whenever those exercising such "borrowed" authority seek to command us to do or believe what God in his ultimate authority forbids—or forbid us to do or believe what God commands—in *that specific situation* those exercising such "borrowed" authority forfeit the authority God loaned them.

God doesn't place us into contradictory situations. If he says one thing for us to believe or do, and those in positions of authority say another, then the path is clear. We join the apostles who boldly stated to their ecclesiastical authorities: "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

This principle applies equally to men and women. Although a woman will recognize the God-given authority entrusted to men in her congregation, she's not bound to recognize their authority in any matter in which they teach contrary to Scripture.

Consider what Luther did as he stood before both governmental and ecclesiastical authorities at Worms. He certainly recognized their positions of authority over him. Yet, when they commanded him to retract what he was convinced were biblical teachings, he refused.

At such times, even if a Christian woman has no man in the congregation to serve as a faithful "head" for her, her respect for the ultimate authority of God in his Word would give her the right—

in fact the duty—to point out that error to those teaching it.

The example of Priscilla in Acts 18:24 is instructive. Now, Priscilla did have a Christian husband (Aquila). What is more, the person exercising teaching authority in the church (Apollos) wasn't so much guilty of false doctrine as a lack of information. Yet notice that Priscilla does participate in explaining "the way of God more adequately" (Acts 18:26) to Apollos. So also a Christian woman today may find herself in a situation in which she must seek to explain more adequately God's Word to someone who typically speaks that Word authoritatively to her.

However, we mustn't overstate the case. Even those teaching falsely have not forfeited all respect and obedience from us. In all other respects other than that false teaching, they retain their position of authority.

Consider the amazing words Jesus spoke about the Pharisees and teachers of the Law. "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you" (Matthew 23:2,3). Our sinful nature would like to conclude that we can disregard entirely anyone who misuses a position of authority. That would cater to our sinful nature's rebelliousness, which resents all God-given authority.

What's our chief concern in this? "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path" (Psalm 119:103,104). God's Word shares with us our Savior's sweet promises and the perfect wisdom of his precepts for our life. Neither women nor men can remain silent when someone contaminates the sweet honey of his saving Word.

Contributing editor Richard Gurgel, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Calvary, Thiensville.

Have a question? Send it to "Q & A," *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. Look online at www.wels.net, jumpword "qa," for more questions and answers.

THANKS ACTION DAY

Being thankful is more than a question of mere words. Being thankful is an action.

Andrew C. Schroer

A young child stands with his mother in a packed elevator. The child sneezes. Someone nearby says, "Bless you." Without hesitation, the mother looks down at her child and asks, "What do you say?"

Embarrassed, the child meekly looks up and says, "Thank you."

Is that what it really means to be thankful?

How some of us give thanks

Each year in the United States, thousands of families gather together on the fourth Thursday of November. We talk about being thankful. We eat turkey. We eat pie. We eat until we can't even move. Then we watch football. Again I ask, is that what it means to be thankful?

On the fourth Thursday of November each year, families on the island of Puerto Rico also gather together to celebrate. In Puerto Rico, Thanksgiving Day is called *el día de acción de gracias*—literally “Thanks Action Day.”

Now I think we are on to something.

How Zacchaeus gave thanks

There once was a man named Zacchaeus who lived at the time of Jesus. He was a tax collector in the town of Jericho. In those days, being a tax collector meant that you were most likely a thief and a traitor.

One day Jesus was walking through Jericho. Large crowds gathered around to hear him preach. Zacchaeus, too, wanted to see this famous prophet. Yet he had a problem. You see, Zacchaeus was vertically challenged. To put it bluntly, he was short. But he didn't let that stop him. He climbed a tree to be able to see over the crowds. As Jesus passed by, he looked up at short Zacchaeus wobbling there in the tree and said, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today” (Luke 19:5).

Later, Zacchaeus witnessed Jesus' generous love and forgiveness personally. He heard how Jesus had come to save even lousy tax collectors like him. Overwhelmed with thanks, Zacchaeus stood up to address those present. He announced that he would give half of his possessions to the poor. To all those whom he had cheated over the years, he would pay them back four times.

On that day 2000 years ago, Zacchaeus celebrated Thanks Action Day.

Why give thanks

Every day our heavenly Father looks down on us, his undeserving children, and says, “Bless you!” He generously showers on us more blessings than we can count. He gives us family and friends. He gives us houses, cars, TVs, computers, and riding lawn mowers. He gives us air to breathe and water to drink. God has blessed us to be born in the richest country in the world.

Our God showers on us the riches of his forgiveness and love.

Did you know that? Even the poorest of us here in the United States are richer than the majority of the world. So often we see our neighbor's new car, our brother's new pool, and our friend's new Nintendo GameCube, and we wish that we weren't so poor. We tell ourselves that we just can't afford to give more in our offerings because we are only farmers, factory workers, or teachers. Yet, even the poorest of us are richer than the majority of the world!

And if that wasn't enough, our God showers on us the riches of his forgiveness and love. With his perfect life and innocent death, Jesus paid the price of our materialism, selfishness, and worry. Through water and the Word he adopted us as his dear children. Even now he has prepared for us an inheritance in the riches of heaven where we will forever reign with him in glory.

Even if we were forced to sleep on the dirt floor of a grass hut in the middle of Africa—even if we lived in the rubble of war-ravaged Iraq—

we wouldn't be poor. There is no such thing as a poor Christian. We are princes and princesses. We are heirs to the glory of heaven.

Give thanks beyond words

Every day our heavenly Father looks down on us, his undeserving children, and says, “Bless you!” So now, what do you say?

After Thanksgiving dinner every year, my family has the tradition of asking each person at the table to say one thing for which he or she is thankful. Over the years we have thanked God for boyfriends and girlfriends, for graduating from high school and college, for our health, for our salvation, for our parent's love. Part of being thankful is expressing our thanks out loud.

But being thankful is more than a question of mere words. Being thankful is an action. Zacchaeus showed his thankfulness by giving half of everything he owned to the poor. Zacchaeus showed his thankfulness by paying back those he had wronged four times the amount he had stolen. Zacchaeus thanked Jesus for his generous love by giving generously to others. Being thankful is an action.

Every day our heavenly Father looks down on us, his undeserving children, and says, “Bless you!” Because of Jesus, we are rich. So, let's follow Zacchaeus's example and thank Jesus with our actions. Give generously from the riches that God has given you. Seek opportunities to volunteer your time and talents at your church and worthy charities. Tell your children, your neighbors, your friends—tell everyone you can of the generosity of your Savior God.

This year, don't let your thanks be merely a question of words. Show it with your life. Oh, and have a happy Thanks Action Day!

Andrew Schroer is pastor at Redeemer, Edna, Texas.

Prepared to

A RATIONALE FOR WITNESSING THROUGH "JESUS STORIES"

What is unique about Christianity . . . is Christ.

In a culture that is increasingly biblically illiterate, more people reject a Savior whom they have never encountered in any meaningful way. Let them know just who it is they are rejecting—and at what cost.

Who doesn't love a good story?

Gospel narratives may be ideal conversation pieces between ourselves and the story-hungry culture that surrounds us. The real Christ is both alarming and compelling. You hate him or you love him; no one merely yawns and walks away.

Narratives are a powerful way to convey revealed truth.

Rather than debating the nature of truth, a well-told story may sneak past the defenses of people in a relativistic age if they are (at first) unprepared to seriously consider doctrinal claims.

"Jesus stories" lead effortlessly to what we really want to talk about.

Law and gospel are inherent in these stories. You'll always be able to find that bridge to the person and work of Christ.

Stories are memorable and easily repeated.

Kayla, referred to in the article, told me a moving experience she had after our first meeting. She began, "Remember that story you told me? I told my husband . . ."

When talking about your faith, don't think, "What do I say?" Rather think, "What story can I tell?"

Mark A. Paustian

I drew a slip of paper from the hat. It read, "Boxing." In the time it took to walk to the front of my class, I had to decide what I wanted to say in a speech about boxing. But the class offered one magical piece of advice. You only need to think of a personal story relating to what is on the slip of paper.

So I told the story of the boxing matches between my brother Phil and me when we were kids. Our boxing "ring" was a blanket spread on the floor. Our "gloves" were two pairs of socks pulled over our fists. The only rule: "Don't hit too hard." And a vivid memory of the two of us inevitably rolling around on the ground turned into a poignant lesson about the big brother you fought with and how your parents sighed and told you he'd be important to you one day and if I could go back . . . I'd try not to hit so hard. (Not bad, for 20 seconds notice.)

When it comes to speaking off the cuff, how liberating it was to change the question from, "What do I have to say about that?" to "What story can I tell?" And so was born an idea that has completely changed how I look at impromptu speaking on the topic of my Christian faith.

Planting a seed

A woman I had just met, named Kayla, was cutting my hair. I had a Christian book along, and she began telling me about the physical fights

between her parents when she was just eight or nine. What she remembers most from that time was how a man once came into her room in the middle of the night and sat on her bed. She could just make out his face. She's convinced it was Jesus.

Here her story breaks off. It's my turn. What do I say? What would you say to a woman who hides such a tentative faith in her heart and who has been waiting 20 years for someone to explain this man to her? What do you say? No, change that. What story do you tell?

You know, Jesus did go to a little girl in her bed. Did you know that?
No.

I continued the story¹: the concerned dad who would have given away all his riches to help his sick little girl.

"Let's go to her," Jesus said.

But they got delayed helping someone else, and the news came that it was too late. The father's heart was breaking.

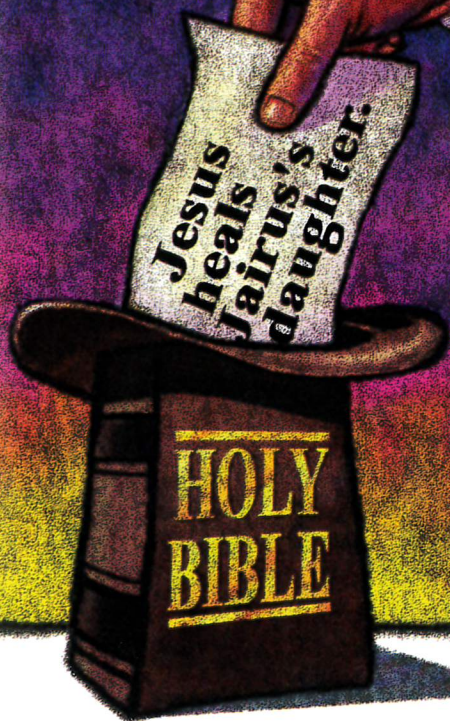
"I'm afraid I've wasted your time," he says.

"No. No, you haven't. She's only sleeping."

Then Jesus says, "Little girl, get up!" And she did.

Kayla, I believe he still comes to people who are dead—they're dead inside because they don't know love and they don't know God. Their sin

answer



and shame is all they have. He wants them to be alive and not to be afraid, so he comes to them in his Word. The one who died on the cross for them draws near saying: "Be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven." And when people hear his voice in those words—when they only believe him—they live.

All this I told Kayla. And out of the suffocating fog of mere "religion" stepped her Savior.

Through using divinely inspired narratives, we give people something they'll remember, something that enters their mind and will stay with them even when they don't yet understand it. This is what it means to plant a seed. Something alive and waiting is hidden in the shell of the story. They don't know what it means. And then, one day . . . they do.

Capturing the essence of God

As a pastor and professor, I constantly face challenging situations. I walk into a room where someone has just died. I'm invited into a marriage where something

shameful has been exposed. And I get questions and challenges from intelligent and hurting people who are skeptical that there could be a God somewhere loving them. You find yourself in those places, too. If you don't, just carry a book with the word "Jesus" in the title to your next hair appointment.

The parables Jesus told were the net in which he captured for us such things as forgiveness, wisdom, faith, and love.

These situations used to fill me with apprehension because I could never be prepared. Now just about every one suggests to me a story from that collection of inspired historical accounts of Christ that move us, that reveal God to us and clarify the big issues of our lives.

Why tell stories? Let this gleaming detail from the mine of Old Testament prophecy catch your eye—that Messiah himself would be a marvelous teller of stories. "[Jesus] did not say anything to [the crowd] without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: 'I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world'" (Matthew 13:34,35).

C. S. Lewis was on to something when it comes to the power of stories. He pointed out that every good narrative is made up of a series of events that make up the plot. But those successive moments—this happened, then that, then this—are actually a "net" in which the author is trying to catch something else. In story, something is discovered that is *not* successive, such as what truth really is, or beauty, or friendship. So also the parables Jesus told were the net in which he captured for us such things as forgiveness, wisdom, faith, and love.

A father running toward the distant figure of his disgraced son.

A ring.

A robe.

A celebration.

Made so clear amid the mesh is a closer look at God's face. Jesus' parables let us wrap our thoughts around the deeper things—what the kingdom of God is like. We see it. We get it. We are let in.

continued on p. 14

WHAT STORY CAN I TELL?

THE CHALLENGE

“WHAT IF I HAVE DOUBTS?”

THE STORY

JESUS WALKS ON WATER

Let the one struggling with doubt watch Peter sinking under the waves. All he can muster is a panicky “Lord, save me” It is enough. “Jesus reached out . . . and caught him.” (Matthew 14:22-33)

THE CHALLENGE

“HOW CAN A LOVING GOD SEND PEOPLE TO HELL?”

THE STORY

THE BETRAYAL BY JUDAS

It doesn't read like the story of anyone being sent anywhere. It's the story of man making his own desperately wicked, tragic choices, and the only one trying to stand in his way . . . is the Son of God.

THE CHALLENGE

“ALL THE CHURCH CARES ABOUT IS MONEY.”

THE STORY

THE JAR OF PERFUME

Jesus had been predicting his own death for some time. Someone finally heard, and the jar broke along with her heart. This narrative lets you explore the meaning of Christian giving in the perfect context in which to do so. “She anoints me for my burial.” (Mark 14:3-9)

These are among the 64 examples in *Prepared to Answer—Telling the Greatest Story Every Told*, Volumes 1 & 2.

Prepared . . . continued from p. 13

Most of all, in that true story, the events that loom at the center of history, on a dark hill outside Jerusalem, is captured that very affection and grace that is the essence of God. And so all who believe it are also captured. We are brought back alive in the net that is the real-life story of Jesus. The title? “You can always go home.”

Knowing what to say

In my former congregation, our Sunday Bible study spent two years contemplating the gospel narratives, marrying those beautiful stories to all kinds of situations and questions we were likely to face. We always would save time for a single, vital question: Who needs to know this story? That is, what questions are people asking for which this story is the right reply?

Then we might attempt to role-play the storytelling. One person articulated the skeptical challenge, and the other, after acknowledging the question and probing a little deeper with thoughtful questions, began: “I wonder if you know about the time Jesus . . . No? . . . May I tell you?”

As the weeks went by, experiences drifted back of how in real life people responded to a question, challenge, or need with a “Jesus story.” Lifelong Christians were delighting in the sudden awareness that they knew what to say—and had known for a long time.

Then it was my turn to role play. The woman across from me was pretending to be burdened beneath a shameful past, as if she had trouble believing forgiveness could be

true for her. “Have you ever heard about the time a woman was caught in the act of adultery,” I began, “and all her bloodthirsty accusers

dragged her to Jesus?” I proceeded to tell the story from John 8. I relished the details, pausing as

Christ bent to scratch the dirt . . . “let the one without sin throw the first stone” . . . and I let the rocks hit the trampled ground . . . I let the town square empty out and the reproachful crowd disperse . . . until the woman, so ashamed, looked up into the face of her Judge, the Man from Galilee.

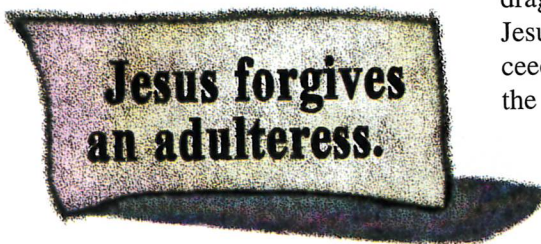
“Neither do I condemn you,” I said into her wide-opened eyes.

And my role-play partner, dear woman, nearly fell apart.

She wasn't acting anymore, nor was I pretending to witness. We were experiencing the presence of Christ, and the dynamic power of him, and the dissolving of every question in that living water, that enduring Word.

Mark Paustian, a professor of Hebrew and communications at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member of St. Paul, New Ulm.

This article is adapted from Prepared to Answer—Telling the Greatest Story Ever Told Volumes 1 & 2, by Mark Paustian. Order it from Northwestern Publishing House, www.nph.net; 800-662-6022.



Partners

The WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc., is partnering with WELS congregations to spread the gospel.

Nicole R. Balza

Imagine you're a member of a young congregation that is ready to buy land and build a church. How will your congregation afford this expensive project? Who will loan your congregation the money it needs to take your ministry plan to the next level? With a short credit history and an unstable cash flow, your congregation does not look like a good credit risk to most financial institutions. If you can secure a loan, the interest rate is likely to be high. That is where the WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc., (CEF) comes in.

What is the WELS CEF?

A WELS subsidiary, the CEF exists primarily to make low-interest loans to newly established WELS congregations so that they can acquire ministry facilities, land sites, and parsonages.

If your mission congregation qualifies, it can also obtain a CEF grant. The current grant structure is set up as a 4:1 matching grant for those that received mission status after July 1, 2002. So, if your congregation wants to buy a piece of land for \$500,000 and it can contribute \$100,000 to the project, the CEF will give your congregation the other \$400,000 needed to buy the land. This means you can start your building project with no existing debt.

Currently, the WELS CEF is servicing just under 300 loans for a total of about \$90 million. Since 1993, it has been able to give away \$14 million in grants to mission congregations.

Where does the CEF get the money to give these grants and loans? From

donors and investors like you and me. Donations go into the matching grant program and investments help comprise the financial base needed to make loans.

What makes the WELS CEF unique?

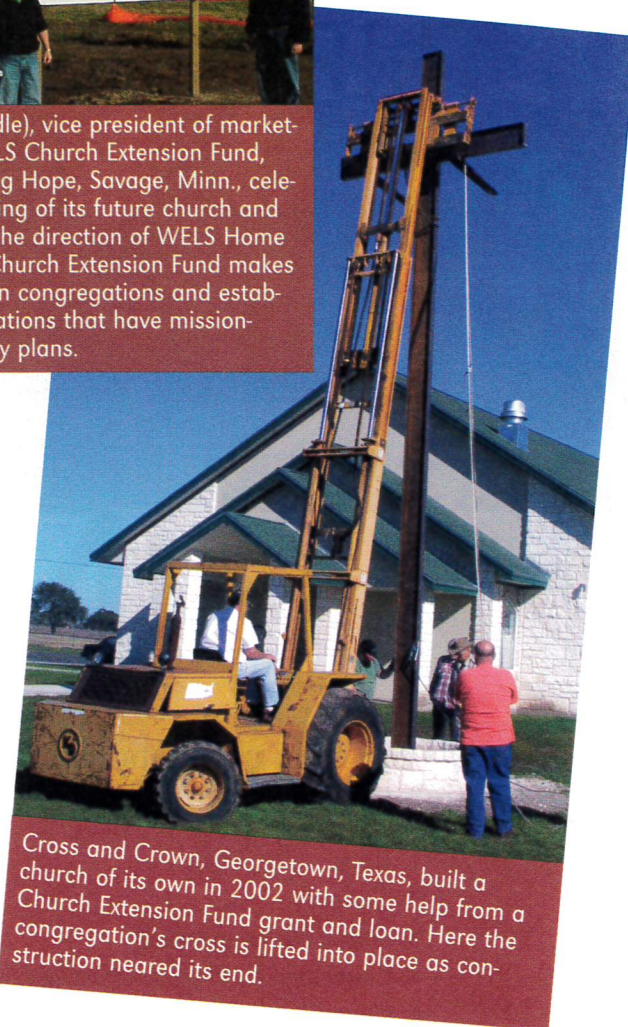
The difference between the CEF and many other financial institutions is that it wants to become a partner in your congregation's ministry.

"The CEF was a tremendous partner in understanding the challenges that a congregation has and helping us meet them," says Ken Fisher, pastor at Risen Savior, Milwaukee. Fisher recently worked with the CEF on expanding Risen Savior's current ministry facility and adding a school to it. "The CEF has been a partner in helping us advance our mission. Representatives want to support the ministry of the church and be fiscally responsible. I think they balance those things out as they look at your ministry plan."

Michael Otterstatter, pastor at Abiding Word, Maineville, Ohio, agrees. "With the CEF we knew that we were working with brothers and sisters in Christ. The CEF helped us meet the ministry needs in our community by giving us both a grant and a loan so that we could build a church that would give us a true face in our community."



Joel Kock (middle), vice president of marketing for the WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc., helps Living Hope, Savage, Minn., celebrate the building of its future church and school. Under the direction of WELS Home Missions, the Church Extension Fund makes loans to mission congregations and established congregations that have mission-minded ministry plans.



Cross and Crown, Georgetown, Texas, built a church of its own in 2002 with some help from a Church Extension Fund grant and loan. Here the congregation's cross is lifted into place as construction neared its end.

The CEF motto says it all: "Partners in the gospel. . . . Building the Church of tomorrow, today!"

Nicole Balza is a communication projects manager for Forward in Christ and WELS Communication Services.

For more information on the WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc., visit www.wels.net/cef or call 800-729-9357. This article is for informational purposes only and is not an offer to sell or request to buy securities. The offering is made only in the offering circular.

To read the first article in this series on WELS subsidiaries, go to www.wels.net, jumpword "ficarchive." Search using the title "Managing our investments" to learn about WELS Investment Funds, Inc.

God wants us to do every job well and without complaint, because through our work we serve each other and so we serve him.

Frederick J. Toppe

THE BEST JOBS



IN AMERICA

Do you work at one of the top jobs in America? This is a list of the 30 most common occupations in the state of Missouri. The jobs are listed in order (high to low) by the number of people employed in each category:

1. Retail salespersons
2. Cashiers
3. Office clerks, general
4. Combined food preparation/serving workers
5. General and operations managers
6. Waiters and waitresses
7. Registered nurses
8. Truck drivers, heavy and tractor-trailer
9. Janitors and cleaners
10. Customer service representatives
11. Laborers and material movers
12. Nursing aides
13. Team assemblers
14. Supervisors/managers of retail sales workers
15. Secretaries, except legal/medical/executive
16. Stock clerks and order fillers
17. Bookkeeping, accounting, auditing clerks
18. Elementary school teachers
19. Supervisors/managers of office workers
20. Maintenance and repair workers
21. Sales representatives
22. Secondary school teachers
23. Executive secretaries/administrative assistants
24. Maids and housekeeping cleaners
25. Carpenters
26. Security guards
27. Receptionists and information clerks
28. Licensed practical nurses
29. Packers and packagers
30. Truck drivers, light or delivery

Working an ordinary job

The first thing that strikes us: these are ordinary jobs, the jobs people actually do rather than the jobs that people dream about doing. There is

nothing especially glamorous about any of these jobs. These are not the jobs that kids or teens list as what they want to be when they grow up. Rather it comes as a shock to many

a young person that these are the jobs most people do, and these are the jobs that they will be doing for the rest of their lives. They're not going to be the apprentice on

Donald Trump's high-powered management team, but they may work at the factory that makes the chairs the managers sit in, or they may ship the snacks that the managers eat, or they may clean up the room after the managers are done.

The second thing that strikes us is that there are so many jobs like these because this is the work that needs to be done. Most of these jobs are classi-

we are using our energies to help them have more happy and comfortable lives. When we help as volunteers in government programs or through our congregation, we are using our energies to help others have more happy and comfortable lives. Helping others is necessary work and good work. It is work that should leave us feeling content about our lives.

is how we help one another. Work is how we take care of one another.

Being content

Our Lord God intended for us to work. He set it up that our sustenance does not drop out of the sky for us but that we must diligently work to provide for ourselves and for others. Even in the garden of paradise man worked—and enjoyed it. God blessed the work



fied as the service industry, jobs that meet the needs of others: packing and shipping food to their supermarkets, cooking it for them and carrying it to their tables, making household products for them and then stocking the products in the stores where they shop, caring for their sick in hospitals and institutions, building their homes and guarding their property, keeping track of their insurance paperwork or their bills in some office, teaching their children, cleaning up their messes and fixing things they broke, and solving their problems. This is all work that is done for the good of others, to help them lead more happy and comfortable lives.

Helping others

But, in fact, that is what most of life is. Most of our time is spent doing something for other people, not just on the job at the workplace, but especially in our jobs at home. When we care for our families, for our children and grandchildren, and for our parents and grandparents,

But there is something in us that thinks otherwise. Something in us thinks work shouldn't be . . . so much like work. Work should be glamorous and exciting and immensely rewarding for us. Ask kids what they want to do with their lives when they grow up, and they mention being professional athletes or rock stars or running their own business, or something fun like that. Ask adults what they want to do with the rest of their lives, and they answer that they want something more exciting and more rewarding than what they're doing now.

We should appreciate what work is and what we are trying to accomplish through our work. We all need people to help us. We need a mother and father to change our diapers, a truck driver to bring us our food, a garbage truck driver to haul away our trash, a clerk to process our prescription, and an assembly line worker to put together our computer. We can't do all of these things for ourselves. Work is how we share the responsibility. Work

done then, as he blesses the work we do now.

This world gets excited about what work we do and confers special status on those who have prestigious jobs. God is concerned about how we do our work and considers honest work to be good work for us to do. He takes the work we do and uses it to accomplish his good will of providing for us and for others. He wants us to do every job well and without complaint, because through our work we serve each other and so we serve him.

When we realize that, we can be content with the job that we have. We don't need a different job, but we can have a better attitude about the job we have. The best job in America isn't what someone else is doing. The best job in America is what you do when in faith you use your work to serve others and so give glory to God. Work is not about us, but it is about the good that God does through us.

Fred Toppe is pastor at Redeemer, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

WHATEVER

A fight to the finish

The Lord has more than enough love for every single person. So why do we try to push each other down?

Rachel Kolander

My family has always been competitive. Whether it is sports, grades, or even board games—Monopoly can get wicked at my house—it is a fight to the finish.

Our favorite babysitter would offer gold stars as an incentive to behave. My brothers and sister and I would jump over each other to clear the table, wash the dishes, or even give up the remote control just for a chance at one of those elusive gold stars. All they meant was five extra minutes of staying up, but to our minds, whoever had the most became champion of the night.

Thank God that it is not a competition to get to heaven. He does not hand out gold stars or little pieces of heaven to the person who does the most good works. The Lord has more than enough love for every single person. So why do we try to push each other down?

I was reading the parable of the prodigal son last night. The story of forgiveness and acceptance when the disobedient son at last returns is a wonderful example of God's perfect love. Yet it can be overshadowed by the older brother's attitude.

"Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!" (Luke 15:29,30). It is easy to accuse the older brother of jealousy, bitterness, and pride, but it's also easy to identify with his feelings at the same time. How could the father take the younger brother home without any punishment or scolding? How could he instead

throw a party and joyfully take his son back into his home?

"Not fair," we cry.

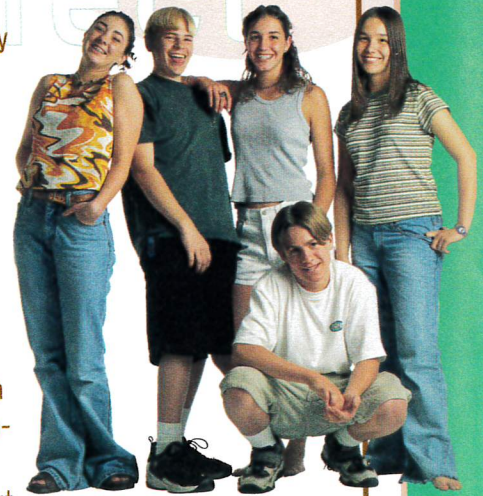
Why is it so hard to accept God's all-encompassing love? We slip and

stumble on the narrow path of life just as much as our friends and neighbors. Yet how like us to reach up, not to God, but to pull down the person next to us.

Praise God he somehow still loves us. As we do good works as a sign of our love for him, let us never do them in an attitude of jealousy and pride, fighting over them like my siblings and I fought for stars. In the place of bright, gold stars, we are struggling for rags. For that self-seeking attitude makes "all our righteous acts like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). Compared to God's holy righteousness, we can do nothing even close to good. That he still accepts our greasy rags and even died for us is the most amazing thing.

Pray that we work in love, not for recognition. For "if I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3).

Rachel Kolander, a student at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is a member of Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wisconsin.



love

Obituaries

Nancy C. Cole 1932-2004

Nancy Cole was born Dec. 8, 1932, in Sault Sainte Marie, Mich. She died Aug. 17, 2004, in Big Rapids, Mich.

She served East Fork, Whiteriver/Grace, Glendale, Ariz.; and King of Kings, Garden Grove, Calif.

She is survived by many cousins and friends.

Gary J. Greenfield 1937-2004

Gary Greenfield was born Aug. 30, 1937. He died Aug. 17, 2004, in Wauwatosa, Wis.

A 1959 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served at Siloah, Wisconsin Lutheran High School, and Wisconsin Lutheran College, all in Milwaukee, Wis. Greenfield was the first president of Wisconsin Lutheran College.

He is survived by his wife, Sandra; two sons; two daughters; and three granddaughters.

Ronald N. Kaiser 1936-2004

Ronald Kaiser was born Nov. 1, 1936, in Detroit, Mich. He died Aug. 23, 2004, in Phoenix, Ariz.

A 1971 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Salem, Ann Arbor, Mich.; Immanuel, Neenah/Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.; Salem, Colorado Springs, Colo.; and Grace, Pueblo, Colo.

He is survived by his wife, Lois; two sons; one daughter; eight grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

Lorraine Engbretson 1913-2004

Lorraine Engbretson was born Sept. 21, 1913. She died June 1, 2004, in Tucson, Ariz.

She served Redeemer, Tucson, Ariz., for 20 years.

She is survived by two sons, two grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

DECEMBER 2004

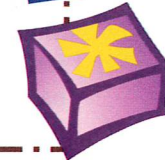
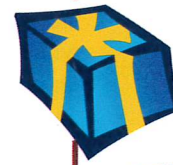
1. 2 Peter 3:1-10	17. Dan. 11:2-20
2. 2 Pet. 3:11-18	18. Dan. 11:21-
3. Jude 1-16	12:13
4. Jude 17-25	19. Psalm 139
5. Daniel 1	20. Ps. 140, 141
6. Dan. 2:1-30	21. Ps. 142, 143
7. Dan. 2:31-49	22. Ps. 144
8. Dan. 3	23. Ps. 145
9. Dan. 4	24. Ps. 146
10. Dan. 5	25. Ps. 147
11. Dan. 6	26. Ps. 148-150
12. Dan. 7	27. Revelation 1:1-8
13. Dan. 8	28. Rev. 1:9-20
14. Dan. 9:1-19	29. Rev. 2:1-7
15. Dan. 9:20-27	30. Rev. 2:8-17
16. Dan. 10:1-11:1	31. Rev. 2:18-29

GIVE THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

Order a subscription to *Forward in Christ* magazine for someone on your gift list this year. *Forward in Christ* really is the gift that keeps on giving because it equips readers to grow in their faith.

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Untangling the Web



The Internet has become a vast maze of information. Knowing where to look for strong Christian content can make the journey easier.

Unfamiliar with the WELS Web site? Go to www.wels.net and take a tour! Either click on the "Tour this site" button or enter the word "tour" in the jump-word box. The site tour will show you how to:

- navigate the site with ease;
- access resources for missions, evangelism, worship, and more;
- subscribe to e-mail devotions, prayers, and news;
- view questions and answers and discussion boards;
- browse WELS' teen e-zine, livingbold.net; and
- set up free @wels.net webmail accounts.

Discover why www.wels.net is the place to go to be in-the-know about WELS news, resources, and spiritual growth opportunities.

One more tongue

"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing," I've often pleaded. After getting to know Melanie Weiskerger, though, my prayer is to use the one tongue I have to share Jesus' love as much as she has.

Weiskerger is a 24-year-old serving the United States Navy on an aircraft carrier in Virginia. A year ago she did not know that Jesus saved her. But now that she knows, very few people in her life *aren't* aware of the fact.

Weiskerger grew up in Bowie, Md., in an unchurched family. She was invited to Resurrection in Virginia Beach, Va., by her coworker, John Fabian. Having recently read some religious literature, Weiskerger was interested and accepted his invitation.

"I was overwhelmed by the sermon," Weiskerger shares. "The most comforting thing was learning about God's grace and how it is not by what we have done or try to do, but what he did. I had worried that I was not good enough, and I learned that I am not, but he is. . . . It made me want to learn more and more."

Connected to Jesus

On June 12, over 80 teens from six states gathered at WELS' headquarters in Milwaukee, Wis., to audition as the new hosts for *Kids' Connection*, a video newsmagazine for kids. Now in its 10th year, *Kids' Connection* is introducing new hosts and music as well as a new logo and Web site.

Kids' Connection is a ministry of WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship. Designed for use in Sunday schools and Lutheran elementary schools, it helps connect kids to Jesus by sharing stories of real-life Christians doing real-life things to serve others and their Savior. Each episode includes a fun devotion from Tony Schultz, pastor at St. Luke, Watertown, Wis.

Since the first episode in 1995, *Kids' Connection* has had nine hosts and four field correspondents. This

The next week, Weiskerger went to Bible information class. "Everyone was surprised because they had no idea who I was," she remembers. "Even the pastor didn't know I was coming, but he was very helpful and patient."

Weiskerger kept on coming to church and was baptized on the first Easter Sunday she ever spent in worship. She completed her classes and was confirmed on June 13.

"Church always seems to come up when I am talking to someone. Either they ask what I have been up to lately or why I am so happy, or I just tell them!" says Weiskerger.

Eric Roecker, pastor at Resurrection, reports that Weiskerger brought 20 people to church in the first eight weeks she came, including coworkers, friends, and people she hardly knew. A number of these guests enrolled in Bible information class, and two were confirmed this August.

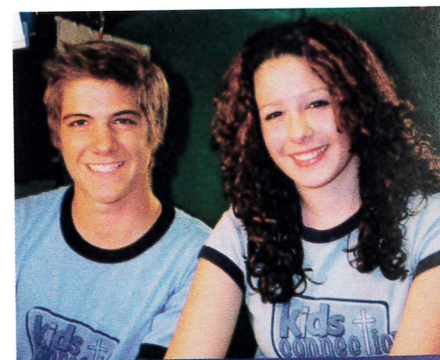
"I just wanted them to see how wonderful the message was there," Weiskerger says. "[Some] had been to churches that left them feeling



Melanie Weiskerger, a member of Resurrection, Virginia Beach, Va., is excited about her new faith and is not afraid to share that faith with friends, coworkers, and even strangers.

guilty and bad about themselves, but I have only felt the opposite. I wanted to share that with everyone!"

"There is absolutely no doubt that it was the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit that convinced Melanie of the Bible's truth," Roecker says. And there is no doubt that the same Holy Spirit is using Weiskerger's gospel witness to work the miracle of faith in the hearts of others.



New *Kids' Connection* hosts Koley O'Brien and Maria Vajdani.

September's episode was a special tribute to 19-year-old Chris Jagodzinski, *Kids' Connection*'s host of three years who suffered a stroke and was taken home to heaven in February. In the episode, Chris's mother thanks the *Kids' Connection* audience for the encouraging cards, letters, and pictures they sent. She and Chris's co-host, Julia Buzdum, remind the kids that Chris is now eternally connected to Jesus.

The new hosts, Koley O'Brien of Winneconne, Wis., and Maria Vajdani of Burnsville, Minn., make their debut on the October episode. In the next couple of months they will show viewers what it takes to become a pastor, hear how a World War II veteran and a soldier from the National Guard see God's hand in their lives, and discover how a church in Michigan turned Halloween into Hallelujah Night.

Although the *Kids' Connection* family has undergone many changes, their message remains the same. Just before the cameras go dark the teen hosts look straight out at their young Christian audience and say, "Remember . . . Stay connected to Jesus."

For more information about *Kids' Connection*, call 414-256-3274 or e-mail cyd@sab.wels.net.

Where are they now?

In Forward in Christ magazine, we report the news but aren't always able to follow up. "Where are they now?" is our way of giving you the rest of the story.

Jason Nelson, then principal at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis., shared his children's response to his first back surgery in "I was haunted by Laura's question" (February 1991).

Here's a recap: The article, prompted by Nelson's second back surgery, reflects on a haunting question asked by his then eight-year-old daughter, Laura, the night before that first surgery, "What if it doesn't work?" He related how his children responded to his surgery. Five-year-old Justin peppered him with questions. Laura listened to the answers intently with her head lying on Nelson's chest. And at age 11, Amanda was ready with a strong faith and words of biblical encouragement.

So, where are they now? (according to Nelson)

"What if it doesn't work?" That question has lingered in my life to this very moment. It would be easy to answer that it didn't work. I had significant pain for 13 years. I was forced to resign from church work and go on long-term disabil-

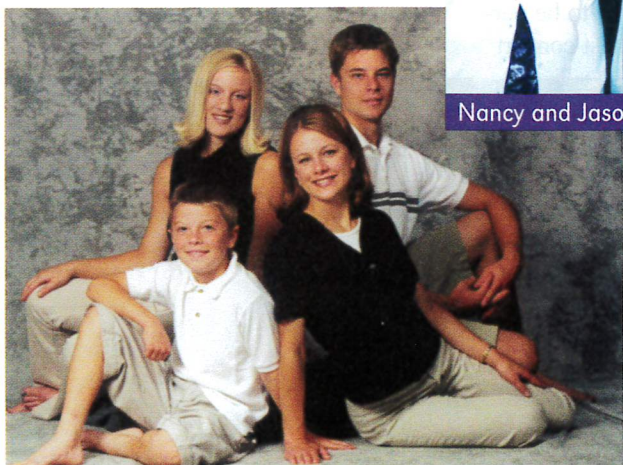
ity, and I have endured my third major back surgery.

But to say things didn't work would be to deny the reality of Amanda's answer to Laura's question. With Roman's 8:28 rolling off her tongue, Amanda reminded us that even if things don't work the way we would like, all things do work together for good to those who love God.

That answer has sustained us all and proven true over and over again. God gave us Jordan, now 13, in the midst of my first two back surgeries. Justin, a university junior, is heading into a promising career in business and real estate. Amanda is a teacher and the wife of a soon-to-be pastor. Laura, a registered nurse, regularly cares for patients who have just had their first, second, or more back surgeries. She comforts many of her patients with well-chosen anecdotes from her dad's story as testimony that all things work together for good.



Nancy and Jason Nelson



Jason Nelson's four children: (back) Laura, Justin, (front) Jordan, and Amanda.

administrator. I share a birthday with my granddaughter. And I am counting on more good to come because God has promised that even when things don't work, all things work together for good to those who love him.

All things worked together for good for me as well. I had 13 more years to serve my Lord as a teacher, principal, counselor, consultant, and synod

Building from the ground up

On Sept. 17-19, 225 people attended the first biennial WELS Youth Ministry Conference in Naperville, Ill. Sponsored by WELS Commissions on Youth Discipleship and Parish Schools, the event offered encouragement and practical help for those who minister to toddlers, children, and teens.

The conference included keynote speeches presented by John Boggs, pastor at Saving Grace, Mobile, Ala.; Bruce Becker, Parish Services' administrator; and Kevin Festerling, teacher at St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis. The topic of each keynote speech revolved around the conference theme of "Building from the ground up," based on Psalm 127:1.

"We have to believe that God loves us before we can tell others that he loves them."

Boggs focused on the importance of parents in a child's spiritual development, while Becker emphasized the need for the home and the church to work together to build up God's children. Festerling's speech, titled "Building an outreaching ministry: The importance of sharing Jesus with everyone," inspired attendees with its reminder that God loves us all. As Festerling noted, "We have to believe that God loves us before we can tell others that he loves them."

Conference attendees could attend four of the 24 different sectionals that were offered. Topics relating to Sunday school, confirmation, vacation Bible school, and other youth ministries were presented. Time was set aside for idea sharing and group problem solving so that attendees could apply the topics to their own situations and go back to their congregations with solid ideas for their ministries.

Looking back

In this, the magazine's 90th anniversary, we bring you articles and news from previous issues.

From the February 1989 issue—

James H. Krause writes:

"The date 1997, when the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong will revert to Chinese sovereignty, is less than ten years off. . . .

"In excess of 100,000 people have left the colony thus far.

Another 50,000 packed their bags last year. . . .

" . . . Most often, those on their way out are the well-educated, the entrepreneur and the wealthy—in short, those whose knowledge, potential and capital are in demand elsewhere.

" . . . The so-called 'Brain drain' has had an impact on the church in Hong Kong. . . . Christians are on the average better educated than most. It was their education that, in many cases, caused them to doubt the family's religion while growing up. Now . . . their education is their ticket out.

"How has this affected our WELS sister church? Until now we have lost to emigration only one national pastor and none of our evangelists. . . . Our two largest congregations, Grace and Taipo, have lost about five percent of their members in the past year. However, both congregations are growing faster than the rate of their emigration losses. . . .

"Hong Kong's losses are the world's gains. It hurts to see some of your best members leave. But the modern diaspora from Hong Kong is taking

dedicated Chinese Christians to many areas of the world to witness to their faith. How evident it becomes that God uses things like '1997' to the benefit of his church's growth!"

FYI: Daniel Koelpin, Board for World Mission administrator, writes: "In the process of transitioning to Chinese sovereignty, Hong Kong became a Special Business District of the People's Republic of China. Commerce and political involvement in government continue much along the same lines as in the past. The Chinese national church in our fellowship has continued to grow in this stable environment. Today there are four national pastors and five evangelists. We can only believe that the Lord will continue to bless the efforts to spread the good news to the most populous nation on earth."

Lutheran high school choir sings at Carnegie Hall

On April 18, 2004, the Traveling Choir of Winnebago Lutheran Academy (WLA), Fond du Lac, Wis., fulfilled the lifelong goal of most professional musicians as they sang in Carnegie Hall in New York City. They performed with six other high school choirs from around the United States, accompanied by the New England Symphonic Ensemble.

The WLA Traveling Choir was able to perform at Carnegie Hall through a seemingly unrelated series of events. The story started two years ago when the Traveling Choir was invited to sing with the choirs at the University of Wisconsin—Green Bay. This performance was recorded and sent to the planners of the 2003 state convention of the Wisconsin Choral Directors Association to audition WLA's choir to sing at the convention. The choir was accepted and presented a 30-minute program of all sacred music for the convention.

A week after the performance, Dale Witte, director of the choir, received an e-mail from MidAmerica Productions stating that a choir director who had directed at Carnegie Hall in the past

had seen their performance at the convention and had recommended that the choir sing at Carnegie Hall.

"Most choirs have to make a recording and audition . . . to sing at Carnegie Hall," says Witte. "The difference for us was that we were recommended—we didn't have to audition. In a sense, our audition was live in January of 2003 before Wisconsin's choir directors—we just didn't know it."

Although Witte was awed to be performing in one of the greatest concert

halls in the United States, the choir's favorite moment on the trip wasn't even singing in Carnegie Hall. It was singing a religious folk song on the streets of New York while walking from the hotel to the concert hall.

"It was because [choir members] got to sing about their faith," says Witte. "That's the most important message we can sing: We have a Savior, he gives us joy, he gives us heaven, he gives us peace."



The Winnebago Lutheran Academy Traveling Choir and its director, Dale Witte (second from right), pose outside Carnegie Hall, New York City, before their concert. MidAmerica Productions Conductor in Residence Jonathan Griffith (far right) led the group. Says Griffith, "The Winnebago Lutheran Academy Choir was exceptionally well prepared for their Carnegie Hall debut. . . . They have a standing invitation from me to return to Carnegie Hall for a future concert."

Two new WELS high schools open

Two new WELS high schools opened this fall. Although they differ in size and make up, they both are working to provide a solid Christian education that emphasizes God and his Word.

Southern Lutheran Academy, Mulberry, Fla.

It was a whirlwind start for Southern Lutheran Academy—literally. Three hurricanes within a month damaged the high school's 33-acre property, knocking down more than 80 trees. One hurricane delayed the school's opening, while another closed the school down for a week after it was open for only seven days. The installation service for the principal and the three part-time teachers has been canceled twice.

Yet even with repairs and clean up still to do, spirits are high. "We're in great shape," says Neil Scriver, president. "Everybody's happy to be back."

The academy actually opened a year earlier than expected. The school's association of 37 churches, incorporated more than 25 years ago, owned 60 acres of land and was intending to build and open a school in 2005. But in 2003, it purchased a Baptist college and decided to open the school's doors in 2004.

"We had really hoped to have about 15 students. We ended up with three," says Scriver. "But we had made a decision that we would open with one."

Although things are starting slowly, Scriver is excited about the school's future. There have been many inquiries about the school from the community, and the school's goal is to have 100 students in five years.

"We pray that God will bless the efforts of our teachers and staff," says Scriver.

The Hope School, Milwaukee, Wis.

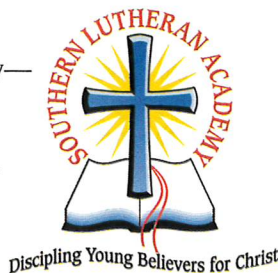
The Hope School, located in Milwaukee's inner city, opened the school year with four full-time teachers and 108 ninth-grade students. Nine of these students are WELS. Most of the rest come from the Milwaukee Public School system. Many are part of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, in which the government gives low-income families vouchers to send their children to private schools.

Besides having a large number of unchurched students, The Hope School also differs from most WELS high schools because it is not supported by an association of churches. A group of WELS members, who had already opened Hope Christian School (a grade school) in inner-city Milwaukee, worked to procure funding and the things necessary to start the school. The group is working to open two more schools by next fall.

Sharing God's Word with the students is a priority at The Hope School. Daily Word of God classes, prayer and reflection time before and after classes, and a Wednesday chapel service infuse students with the hope of the gospel.

"It's surprising how much they don't know, how much a foundation they don't have, and how much we have to spark at such a late age," says Tommie Myles, principal. "A major concern here is getting them to think about God's Word on a daily basis—to put it in their heart, their mind, and their actions."

The Hope School will be adding a grade each year. Myles is expecting about 400 students by 2008. The school's ultimate goal for its students is 100 percent graduation and acceptance into a four-year college.



Executive director for support services retires

Eugene Ludwick, executive director for support services, retired from his position on Sept. 30.

Ludwick, a management consultant from Calgary, Alberta, Canada, was hired by the Synodical Council in December 2000 to be the administrator for WELS "Forward in Christ" offerings and ministry programs. The council then hired him as the executive director for support services in July 2001.



Executive Director for Support Services Eugene Ludwick retired in September.

As executive director for support services, Ludwick streamlined operations, improved customer services, trimmed budgets, and achieved new efficiencies through restructuring. He pressed for hiring technically competent staff and uncovered the internal borrowing problem that led to the hiring of a chief financial officer.

Todd Poppe, WELS' chief financial officer, will assume many of Ludwick's responsibilities. Remaining duties will be reassigned through administrative restructuring.

Says First Vice President Wayne Mueller, "We will miss Gene's dedication and broad range of expertise."

Not your typical vacation Bible school

In the past five summers, 91 different students from Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, have spread the gospel on mission trips to the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Colorado, Ukraine, and Peru. Here is one story from a teacher who accompanied a group of students to Peru this summer to help the Evangelical Lutheran Synod missionary there.

It was day 10 of our trip to Peru. We had been bouncing up and down rustic mountain roads for over a week, traveling to far-flung Andean villages, visiting mission churches, and pre-

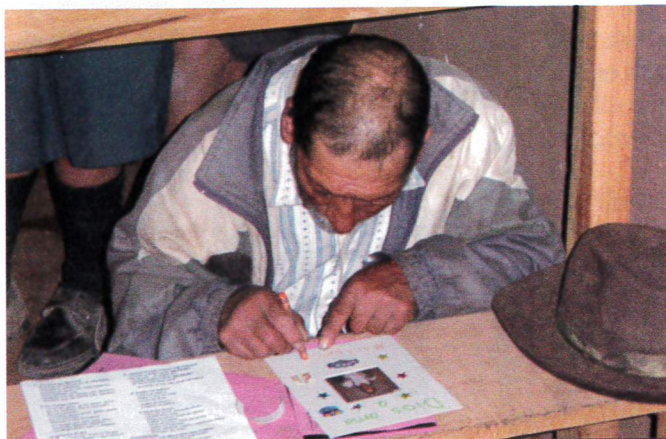
But the first day we learned that in Peru everyone comes to VBS. Big kids and little kids. Moms and dads. College students and professors. Grandmas and grandpas. Everybody.

God has blessed the churches in Peru with people who hunger and thirst for the gospel, and they came out in droves for our VBS. We were glad to see them, but we knew that were going to run out of stuff.

Which is why, on day 10, as we bounced our way to our last village, we were hoping for a small crowd. Not because we were tired of teaching and wanted to get it over with, but because it hurt so bad to not

We dug deep into the craft bag and, with a little on-the-spot ingenuity, had just enough supplies for all. We gave away the cross necklaces we were wearing so that everyone could get one, and in the end there were only three left. Everyone, from the two-year-old girl to the 67-year-old blind man, enjoyed the crafts, sang our songs, and walked away with more than they had arrived with—including us.

Ask any of the six American teens who were in Pacllón that day who the richest and most blessed people in that church were, and they won't talk about nice homes, designer clothes,



Both young and old appreciated the opportunity to learn more about their Savior during the vacation Bible schools in Peru taught by Wisconsin Lutheran High School students.



Those who attended the vacation Bible school presented at Pacllón, Peru.

senting a not-so-typical version of summer vacation Bible school (VBS).

What made this VBS atypical? First, it wasn't summer in Peru. In fact, it was downright cold. Second, we brought the VBS to the students, not the other way around. Third, we did all of our teaching in Spanish. But the biggest difference, and the one we weren't quite ready for, was also the one that was causing us the most trouble.

You see, the missionary in Peru said we could plan on teaching about 200 children. So we packed supplies and donations for just over 200 kids.

have enough. To see a kid drawing in the dirt and not be able to give him a pencil. To see a kid whose wide, bright smile shows his dirty, stained teeth, and not have any more toothbrushes to give away.

When we walked into the church in Pacllón, we discovered that God had chosen not to answer our prayer for a small group. A warm, effusive greeting from almost 100 people welcomed us. The congregation received us as brothers and sisters in Christ, shared their worship service with us, and listened as we presented our Bible lessons.

and toilets that flush. They will tell you about people who have strong faith in a God who keeps his promises, people who have a sure hope of a home in heaven, and people who have a love that comes from God and is expressed in generous outpourings of hospitality. As we left Pacllón we knew that we were the ones who had gotten the most out of that visit.

Chris Pluger

District news

Arizona

Two groups of students from **Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.**, volunteered with WELS Kingdom Workers this summer. These high school students helped congregations in Iowa and Florida.

Dakota-Montana

St. Paul, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, has started a Christian Information Resource Ministry that allows people in its multicultural area to borrow Christian books, cassettes, and videotapes.



Western Wisconsin

The 452D Combat Support Hospital, Task Force 44 MED personnel, who returned this past spring from a 10-month tour in Afghanistan, used the facilities at Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis., during a defense exercise this summer.

Michigan

Students from **Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.**, took part in a variety of mission experiences this summer. They volunteered in Ukraine; Milwaukee; and many Michigan congregations.

Ron Briney, basketball coach at Michigan Lutheran High School, St. Joseph, received the 2003-04 Herb Quade Memorial Sportsmanship Award. Local basketball officials select one coach to receive the award each year.

Minnesota

With support from WELS Kingdom Workers, approximately 60 students from **Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.**, assisted WELS ministries across the United States this summer. Of special interest are **Marshall Milbrath**

and **Nathaniel Ehlers**, who served eight different congregations in five states.

Genevieve Baumeister and **Beverly Collyard**, two volunteers from WELS Mission for the Visually Impaired in Minnesota, were nominated for the Governor's Acts of Kindness Award.

North Atlantic

Sure Foundation, Queens, New York, bought its first building on Aug. 25.

South Central

Members of **Risen Savior, South Austin, Texas**, recently began learning conversational Spanish so that they can welcome Spanish-speaking visitors.

Calvary, Dallas, Texas, dedicated its new sanctuary on Sept. 26.

WELS Multi-Language Publications, El Paso, Texas, published its millionth item this year.

Southeastern Wisconsin

On Sept. 11, **Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee**, dedicated its science hall, which offers 18 classrooms, 10 research labs, and 22 offices.

Ninety-six men enrolled at the summer quarter held at **Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.**, from June 21-July 9.

Western Wisconsin

Sixty students and 18 chaperones from **Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.**, participated in mission projects this summer. Destinations included New York City; Atlanta; El Paso, Texas; Chula Vista, Calif.; Raleigh, N.C.; Antigua; Dominican Republic; Puerto Rico; St. Lucia; and Ukraine.

Dan Woltman, a student at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., won the Westfield Junior PGA Tournament in July.

Happy Anniversary!

D-M—On Sept. 12, **Emmanuel, Grover, S.D.**, celebrated its 120th anniversary. Emmanuel is the oldest congregation in its district.

On July 18, **Trinity, Aberdeen, S.D.**, celebrated the 50th anniversary of the congregation and the 25th anniversary of its elementary school.

MN—On Sept. 19, **Trinity, Crawford Lake, Minn.**, celebrated its 125th anniversary.



Minnesota

On Aug. 25, Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty visited The Lutheran Home Campus in Belle Plaine, Minn. From left: Representative Ray Cox, resident Sherry Fahning, and Governor Pawlenty.

SEW—On Sept. 19, **Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.**, celebrated the 75th anniversary of the seminary being located in Mequon.

Paul Wendland, president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., was honored for his 25 years in the pastoral ministry on Sept. 19.

On Sept. 12, Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, celebrated the teaching ministry anniversaries of **Gary Reinke** (40 years), **Keith Bowe** (25 years), **Allen Greschner** (25 years), **William Plamann** (25 years), and **Mary Schmal** (25 years).

WW—On Aug. 22, Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis., celebrated the ministry anniversaries of teachers **Paul Bauer** (25 years), **John Eaton** (40 years), and **Gerald Walta** (25 years), and **Pastor Mark Toepel** (26 years).

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: AZ—Fred Casmer; D-M—Wayne Rouse; MI—John Eich; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NA—Harland Goetzinger; SC—William Gabb; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Martin Baur.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

- Biga, Spencer G.**, to St. Matthew, Freeland, Mich.
- Helwig, Daniel J.**, to Peace, Livonia, Mich.
- Janosek, John M.**, to retirement
- Klug, Henry H.**, to retirement
- Lawrenz, John C.**, to Asia Lutheran Seminary, Hong Kong
- Mattek, James A.**, to Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service, Milwaukee
- Mielke, N. Martin III**, to Ascension, Sarasota, Fla.
- Muetzel, Ronald M.**, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee
- Russow, Richard S.**, to Lord And Savior, Waunakee, Wis.
- Shilling, David M.**, to Grace, Le Sueur, Minn.
- Vetter, Harold R.**, to retirement

Teachers

- Anderson, Sharon M.**, to St. John, Juneau, Wis.
- Ash, Edith M.**, to St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.
- Bauer, Stanley L.**, to Evergreen LHS, Des Moines, Wash.
- Borgwardt, Elizabeth**, to Fairview, Milwaukee
- Brown, Debra L.**, to Star of Bethlehem, New Berlin, Wis.
- Dennings, Jeremy L.**, to Trinity, Jenera, Ohio
- Douglas, Sarah E.**, to St. Lucas, Milwaukee
- Ernst, Erylyne M.**, to retirement
- Gast, Guy G.**, to Immanuel, Manitowoc, Wis.
- Inniger, Tracey J.**, to Christ, Big Bend, Wis.
- Lauber, Nathan D.**, to St. Lucas, Kewaskum, Wis.
- Lehne, Teresa**, to Good Shepherd, Burnsville, Minn.
- Lemke, Shirley A.**, to Trinity, Kaukauna, Wis.
- Pappenfuss, Kim J.**, to St. John, Pigeon, Mich.
- Schultz, Jeffrey D.**, to St. John, St. John's, Antigua, West Indies
- Schwalenberg, Christy**, to Holy Word, Austin, Texas
- Sonntag, Catherine J.**, to St. John, Milton, Wis.

SYNOD CONVENTION

The 58th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod will be held July 25-29, 2005, at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Details will be announced later.

Memorials to be included in the *Book of Reports and Memorials* must be submitted to the President's Office by Feb. 15, 2005. A memorial is a formal petition to the synod convention that asks consideration for a particular item of business. A memorial may be brought by an individual member or groups

of members in the synod. Memorials are usually composed in the format of "whereas" and "resolved." For an example, visit www.wels.net, jumpword "memorials."

Send memorials for the 2005 convention to President's Office, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; carlam@sab.wels.net.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Synod Nominating Committee will meet at the synod administration building on Jan. 5 & 6, 2005. The committee will propose three candidates for each of the following positions:

- Synodical Council: teacher-at-large
- Board for Ministerial Education: chairman (pastor), three board members (two laymen, one teacher)
- Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Governing Board: chairman (pastor)
- Northwestern Publishing House Board: three board members (layman, teacher, pastor)
- Board for World Missions administrative committee members: Africa (pastor, teacher); Japan Europe Asia (layman); Latin American (pastor, layman); Southeast Asia (pastor, layman); Native American (layman)
- Board for Parish Services: chairman (pastor), member-at-large
- Commission on Worship: chairman
- Commission on Special Ministries: chairman

The list of candidates nominated will be published in *Forward in Christ* in spring 2005. The delegates will elect one candidate for each position at the synod convention on July 25-29, 2005. Any synod voting member is invited to send names with pertinent information by Dec. 15, 2004, to Steve Lemke, 1108 Ontario Ave, Sheboygan WI 53081; welssecslemke@aol.com.

NOTICE FOR CONGREGATION TREASURERS

The cutoff date for Congregation Mission Offering receipts in the synod's post office lock box is the last business day of each month. December 2004 offerings sent to our lock box will be credited as 2004 receipts through Jan. 10, 2005, as long as they are received in the lock box on or before that date and are clearly labeled as "December" offerings on the remittance coupon. We ask that you continue to mail your offerings to the lock box. That location, our bank, will provide you with the fastest deposit process for your congregation.

Mark Meissner, director of finance

ANNIVERSARIES

- Port Washington, Wis.**—St. Matthew (25). Nov. 7. Service, 3 P.M. Meal to follow. 262-284-3360.
- Batesland, S.D.**—St. Paul (75). Nov. 7. Services, 8:30 A.M. & 4 P.M. 605-685-6494.

St. Paul, Minn.—Divinity (50). Nov. 7. Service, 10:30 A.M. Catered dinner to follow. 651-776-1786

East Troy, Wis.—St. Paul (130). Nov. 7. Service, 10 A.M. Dinner to follow. 262-642-3200.

Watertown, Wis.—St. Mark (150). Nov. 20. St. Marcus Gospel Choir concert, 6 P.M.

COMING EVENTS

Concert—Lutheran Chorale. Nov. 28, 3 & 7 P.M. Atonement, Milwaukee. Mary Prange, 414-873-9105.

WELS/ELS ladies retreat—Jan. 7-9, 2005. Springhill Suites, Sarasota, Fla. Judy Becker, 941-355-6591.

Marriage retreats—sponsored by WELS Adult Discipleship. Jan. 20-23, 2005. The Pink Shell, Ft. Myers Beach, Fla. Feb. 11-13, 2005. Heidel House, Green Lake, Wis. 800-567-8669 or www.welsmarriageretreat.org.

NAMES WANTED

Adult choir members—to sing in the July 17, 2005, opening concert of the National Conference on Worship, Music, & the Arts. Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minn. Worship office, 414-256-3226 or worship@sab.wels.net.

WELS musicians—submit names of conductors, composers, vocalists, and instrumentalists with advanced training to the Commission on Worship. Send short resume to Worship, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; worship@sab.wels.net; 414-256-3226.

Caddo Mills/Greenville, Texas—John Hering, 972-494-4911.

U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.—Donald Tollefson, 908-876-5429.

29 Palms Marine Corps Base, Calif.—Gene & Marty Olson, 760-369-1403.

Redlands/Yucaipa/Calimesa, Calif.—Mark Mammel, 909-794-2554.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Deputy director—English-as-a-Second-Language Outreach Program and Lab School, Gethsemane, Milwaukee. Qualifications: B.A. in Spanish, English, education, English as a second language, or staff ministry. Computer literate. Fluency in spoken and written Spanish. Study and/or work experience in a Spanish-speaking country or environment. Intercultural communication skills. Ability to learn project management and administration. Visit www.wels.net, jumpword "bulletinboard" for more details. Send cover letter and resume by attachment to Beth Thompson, bthompsn@dias.net.

To place an announcement, call 414-256-3210; bulletinboard@sab.wels.net. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date. An updated bulletin board is available at www.wels.net, jumpword "bulletinboard."

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

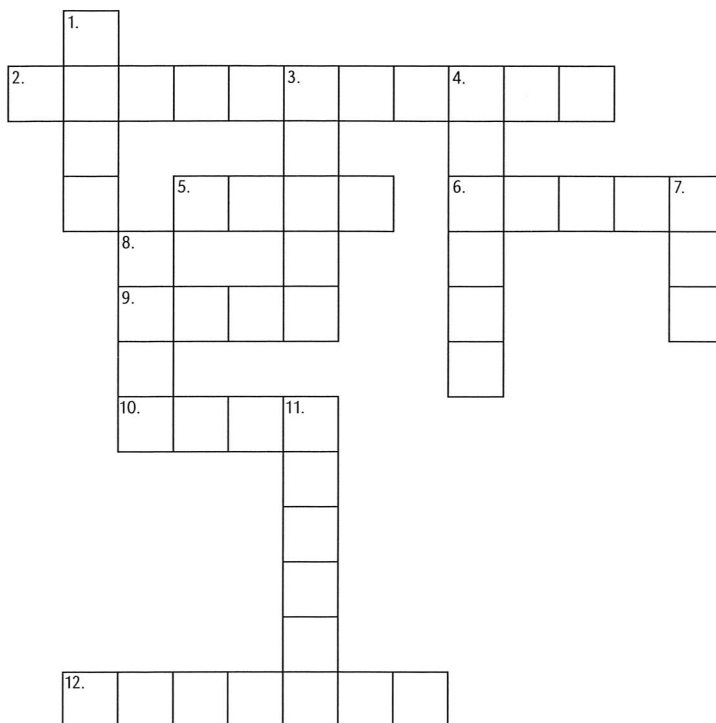
Test your Bible history know-how with this biblical crossword puzzle. Find the answers below. For more biblical crossword puzzles, visit www.wels.net, jumpword "crossword."

ACROSS

2. Two New Testament books written by Paul were letters to the _____ to encourage unity and love
5. Great-grandmother of David; her story is told in this Old Testament book
6. Daughter of Jacob and Leah (Genesis 30:21)
9. New Testament book by Luke containing the Ascension, Pentecost, and missionary work
10. The New Testament book containing the often-used account of Jesus' birth
12. This Old Testament book tells about the creation and the flood

DOWN

1. A New Testament book written by the disciple whom Jesus loved
3. Paul wrote this New Testament book offering advice to a missionary in Crete
4. Brother of Peter, originally a disciple of John the Baptist (John 1:35-42)
7. A son of Noah or a salty meat
8. He persecuted the disciples before becoming a disciple himself
11. The Old Testament book that tells about Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt



ANSWERS

ACROSS 2. Corinthians, 5. Ruth, 6. Dinah, 9. Acts, 10. Luke, 12. Genesis DOWN 1. John, 3. Titus, 4. Andrew, 7. Ham, 8. Ham, 11. Exodus

Thanksgiving worship service idea

From "Grace Notes," the newsletter of Grace, Muskegon, Mich.:

"In the spirit of Thanksgiving, we would like to dedicate our gifts from the Lord to our God during the Thanksgiving service this year.

"We invite all adults and children to contribute something that represents a gift that God has given you. If God has blessed you with the gift of music, artistic ability, baking, sewing, crafting, wood-working skills, computer work, writing, etc., bring a sample of your work. If God has given you gifts of service, which may not be easily seen, bring something that represents your gift. . . .

"We would like to fill the altar area to overflowing with the gifts that God has given us."

Picture this



David Kamin (third from right) plays with children in a village in Sonora, Mexico, who attended WELS' Mission to the Children Bible class. Kamin and 11 of his classmates from Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, volunteered with Mission to the Children from June 8-16.

Submitted by Debbie Kamin

Send pictures to "Picture this," *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. On a separate sheet, give us information about the photo. Those whose photos are chosen will receive a small gift.

OPEN BIBLE

THE VILLAGES, FLORIDA

Not your typical WELS church

Julie K. Wietzke

Open Bible, The Villages, Fla., isn't your typical WELS church.

Sure, it has Sunday worship and Bible classes. Sure, members get together for fellowship. Sure, the congregation is working to reach out into its community. However, it's missing some other "essential" pieces—Sunday school, vacation Bible school, and other children's programs.

This may alarm you until you realize the reason: Open Bible is serving a 55-plus retirement community.

"Up north, how do you oftentimes get people to come to church? Through their kids," says Don Meier, pastor at Open Bible. "We can't do that here."

So congregation members, whose average age is 70 years old (or young, depending on how you look at it), are finding different ways to reach out to and serve this aging, yet active, community.

The community and its people

The Villages is one of the fastest growing communities in Florida. Started in the early 1980s, The Villages had just over 8,000 residents in 1996. Today it has 43,000. By 2010, it is expected to have more than 100,000 people.

Who wouldn't want to live there? Described as "Florida's friendliest hometown," The Villages isn't just a place to live—it's a way of life. Located about one hour north of Orlando, this senior community offers residents more activities than you can count. "It's like being on vacation 24/7," says one resident.

It's also filled with unchurched people who need to hear about their Savior. "We always say they're a lot closer to their Maker than children are," says member Ruth Niermeyer.

The community is also full of people who may be "vacationing" from church. "So many retired people leave their home and their church up north. They come down here and forget about God," says Meier.

Yet many seem receptive to the Word. Churches of all denominations have sprung up over the past 10 years and have flourished.

"This is the time in people's lives that church starts to become more important to them," says Herb Schaefer, congregation president.



Members of Open Bible man a booth at Vendor Night in the town square. The Villages recently stopped allowing the congregation to set up this monthly booth that tells about its church.

Getting started

Church was important to the founding members of Open Bible. It all started when Russ and Ruth Niermeyer, Evangelical Lutheran Synod members, put an ad in the paper looking for WELS and ELS members living in or near The Villages. Five families gathered, and they asked Meier, who lives 25 miles away, to serve them. They called themselves "The Village Bible Lutherans" to emphasize their confessional teachings.

They began having Bible studies in members' homes in August 2002. Soon they had more than 20 people attending and needed to find a larger space. Although people normally aren't permitted to use The Villages' facilities unless they own land in The Villages, they were allowed to use The Church on the Square, a non-denominational church that is the focal point of the downtown area, for a devotion and spiritual growth hour on Thursday mornings. New people began attending.

Once a month, The Villages also allowed the congregation to set up a booth at Vendor Night in the town square. Here members answered questions, handed out survival packages (golf tees, candy, and religious bookmarks), and offered free Bibles.

"But we didn't just give them the Bible," says Meier. "We got their names and addresses, and we delivered the Bible to their homes. This way we got our foot in the door."

People began asking about Lutheranism. They also

wondered when services were on Sunday. This led members to rent space at the nearby Spruce Creek Professional Center and begin holding worship services, the first in August 2003.

This year, Open Bible—called this to keep the word “Bible” in its name—was accepted into membership in WELS. It is considered a mission church under the Board for Home Missions, but only receives a small subsidy to help with rent.

Reaching out in the community

Friendship evangelism is one of the main ways Open Bible reaches out to the community. Although there is a regulation against canvassing in The Villages, members invite friends and neighbors to church and Bible study and are open about talking about their faith.



Participants at Open Bible’s devotion and spiritual growth hour at The Church on the Square.

Patsy Farness, who retired to a nearby community, was raised Lutheran but had stopped attending church. Planning to come back to church in her retirement, she was pleased when a member of Open Bible invited her to Bible studies. Confirmed in April, she now is inviting friends and neighbors from her community to church.

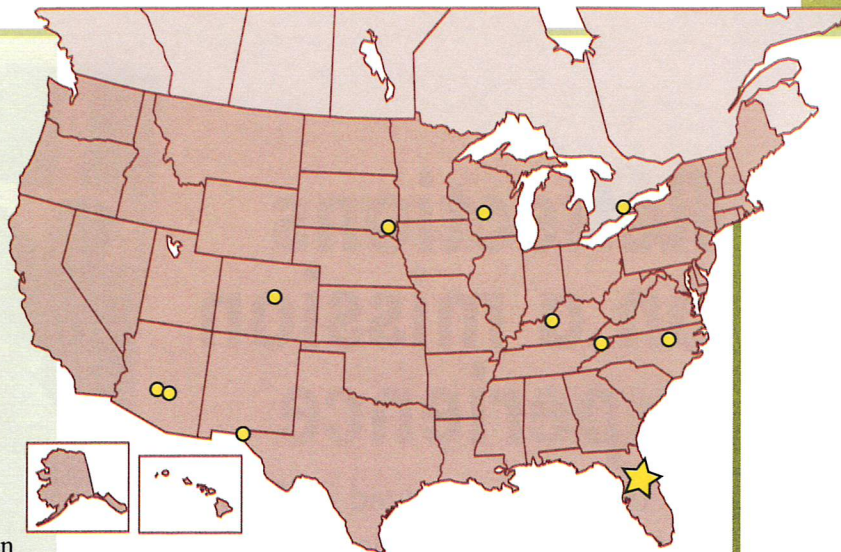
She describes the members of Open Bible as “a warm community of people.” “We all like each other and help each other,” says Farness.

Since many of The Villages residents are away from immediate family, the congregation serves as a home away from home for its members. “We all take care of each other,” says Schaefer.

Facing challenges

They also are taking care of the business of the church. Members are all involved in different aspects of church work—whether it’s making banners, helping with the Thursday Bible study, or coordinating advertising in the local newspaper.

But Open Bible’s work isn’t without its challenges—or should I say opportunities. The congregation temporarily isn’t allowed to have a booth on the square.



★ Featured congregation ● Congregation already featured

Quick facts

Open Bible, 352-728-8492:

- is served by a pastor who has been semi-retired for 14 years.
- doubles in size from October to May because of snowbirds, those who live “up north” in the summer and “down south” in the winter. These snowbirds are considered “associate members.”
- has 31 full-time communicant members, but often has more people in church than its membership.

Yet this only makes members more determined to find other ways to share the Word with the community.

Since The Villages is a contained community—with everything accessible by golf carts—another challenge for Open Bible is location.

“[Residents] will go anyplace in The Villages, but if you build outside The Villages, they won’t go to it,” says Meier. Land is at a premium as well.

The congregation recently has found some land that directly abuts The Villages property. It is working with the WELS Church Extension Fund so it can buy this land and hopefully build within the next few years. “Then we’ll really be able to show some permanency,” says Schaefer.

Many feel the lack of youth may also make it hard for Open Bible to grow.

“People say, ‘You eventually all are going to die.’ But we’re in a community where 7,800 new people moved in last year,” says Schaefer. “As one generation phases out, those houses aren’t going to sit vacant. There will be people filling them.”

People who will need to hear about their Savior. People who will need the members of Open Bible to share the gospel with them.

Hmm. Maybe this is your typical WELS church.

Julie Wietzke is a communication projects manager for Forward in Christ and WELS Communication Services.

Reflections on a mission experience

For two years I served in Taiwan as an English-as-a-second-language teacher for our WELS mission. Was my work there worthwhile?

Douglas Lange

As I write this, I am counting down the days of my two-year stay here in Taiwan. I have been thinking about all my experiences here. I have asked the questions: "What have I learned during this time? Have I accomplished anything? Was it all worth it?"

Living in today's world we are fascinated by the big, the exciting. We are always looking for the amazing story to stir us. I am no different. I used to hear stories from Christians who witnessed their faith to others. I was impressed by the unbelievable conversion stories they told: the dramatic changes that the gospel brought to the lives of those with whom they shared it. I, too, wanted to experience such things.

Recently, however, I was feeling down. I didn't feel that I had accomplished anything here in Taiwan. I told this to the missionary here. I told him of the amazing conversions that I wanted to be a part of. God used the missionary to help me see things differently. Because I was looking for the unbelievable conversion story, I failed to see the Holy Spirit at work here. I was reminded about the lives that have been changed over the last two years.

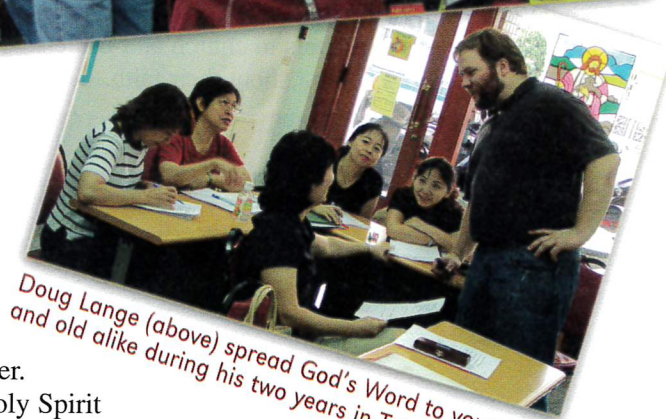
During this time we have had many people come to our English-language classes. For part of the

class we taught them stories from the Bible. For over two years now we have worked with a woman named April. Every week she has heard about God's unbelievable love for her.

During this time the Holy Spirit has been working in her heart. On Easter she was baptized. God used the English classes she attended and the Word taught there as the means by which he brought her to faith.

At first glance, nothing seemed unbelievable about this conversion. It wasn't a fast change of heart. No unbelievable circumstances surrounded it. So in my quest for the ultimate conversion, I failed to see this as anything special. However, by God's gentle reminder through the missionary and through his Word, I see it differently now. I realize that April's conversion, as well as others that have taken place in Taiwan over the last two years, is amazing. Even though there is no awesome story to tell, their coming to faith is amazing. They are now a part of God's family. They now have the peace that only God can give. They now have the hope of heaven in Christ. That is amazing.

Earlier I talked about how we look for the big and exciting story. We like



Doug Lange (above) spread God's Word to young and old alike during his two years in Taiwan.

to hear of the amazing stories of how people come to faith. I know that I did. However, God has taught me something different. God has taught me that he is still active in this world, that the most amazing stories often go unnoticed.

Moreover, these seemingly ordinary conversions cause much celebration in heaven. Luke reminds us: "I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent" (Luke 15:7).

Remember, God is at work in this world. Do not be discouraged when the unbelievable stories do not happen in your life. Remember, as Elijah found out, it is in the gentle whisper that God can be found.

Doug Lange is in his first year of studies at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin. WELS Kingdom Workers supported his mission work in Taiwan from August 2002-June 2004.

The shock of my life

During my hospital stay I experienced the shock of my life as well as the comfort God provides when life itself is shocking.

Paul L. Willems

My wife was attending a craft class in the school commons that Saturday morning while I was upstairs working at the computer. As I collected my work at the printer, I felt short of breath and lightheaded. My pulse was weak, but neither my wife nor I could tell if it was irregular.

I wasn't concerned. My annual physical was that coming Monday. I would just wait and talk to my doctor then.

Distressing diagnosis

All Saturday I was irritable and edgy. I did not sleep well that night. Sunday I rested and looked forward to visiting my doctor on Monday afternoon.

While teaching Monday morning, I felt weak and had to sit down during class. The school nurse, principal, and superintendent all insisted that I see my doctor right away. Before I knew what was going on, I found myself in the emergency room under medical supervision. I was diagnosed with arterial flutter.

Because I had not come to the hospital Saturday morning, my heart had been laboring at the rate of 150 beats per minute for several days. The doctors were concerned that blood clots in my heart would break loose and cause a stroke or that my overworked heart would fail and I would have a heart attack.

What a shock to my mind! I had not planned for this. I had things to do. My wife and I had been discussing retirement decisions. I was teaching a new class this year. I couldn't be ill now.

Soon nurses and doctors conferred in the intensive care unit. Electrocardiogram cables, blood pressure and oxygen tubes were attached to my body. Several bags of fluids were dripping intravenously into my left hand. I was scared.

Dramatic treatment

Alone that evening after learning the medications had not lowered my racing heartbeat, I found comfort from the Lord in the form of hymn verses and Bible passages long since committed to memory. Singing a hymn softly and praying filled in the spaces between the floor nurse's visits.

"Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word," I whispered. "Not my will, but your will be done."

The dawn brought another futile attempt to control my racing heart with medication. The doctor said, "That was the last shot in my arsenal." The decision was made to perform a cardio version. First I underwent a trans-esophageal echo cardiogram (TEE) to ensure the upper chambers of my heart were free from clots. More hymns and psalms soared through my mind as I was wheeled to and from my

TEE. The Holy Spirit provided comfort to my racing mind.

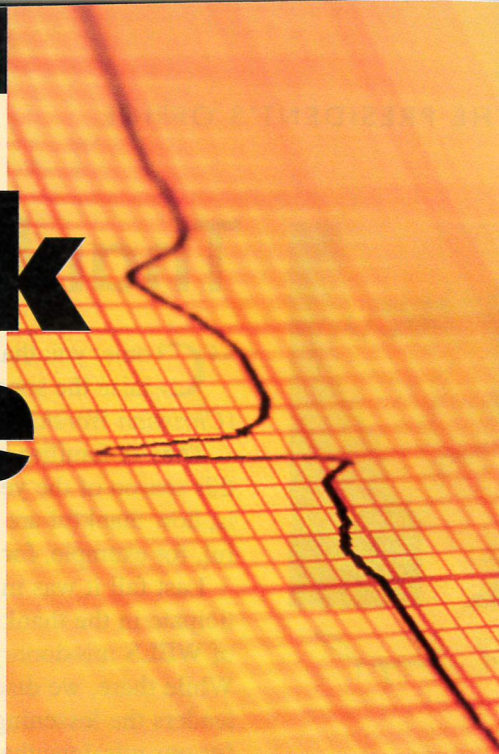
By 4:30 P.M. on Tuesday I was sedated, and the doctors shocked my heart, which then stopped. Its frantic beating came to an end. Then it restarted itself into a calm, normal rhythm of its usual lub-dub that I had taken for granted. Truly our bodies are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Comforting conclusion

To the doctors and nurses my situation was routine. To me and my family my experience was traumatic. I should have gone to the hospital on Saturday morning. By delaying my visit, I added to my problems and put myself into greater danger. Nevertheless, the Lord stood by my side. Thank God for my parents and teachers who helped me learn those Bible texts and hymn verses that I could recall when I could not easily reach a Bible or my devotional books.

During my hospital stay I experienced the shock of my life as well as the comfort God provides when life itself is shocking. He restored my heart rhythm, and he restored my soul. I know I will dwell in his house forever.

Paul Willems, a teacher at Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at St. John, New Ulm.



Thankful for shoes

“Come, you thankful people, come;
raise the song of harvest-home”
(*Christian Worship* 613).

They're familiar words, especially at this season of the year. But, the question is, how thankful are we? Are we thankful, for example, for our shoes?

Last fall it was my privilege to participate in the thanksgiving for 50 years of WELS missionary activity in Africa. While there, we discussed with African leaders the lessening financial support for our missions there. Sometimes people in Third World countries have the impression that Americans are a limitless source of wealth. When we try to explain that not all Americans are millionaires, they look at what we wear from head to foot and compare it to what they have to wear, sometimes little or nothing. It is hard for them to believe we can't do more financially for them. As one was heard to say: “But you have shoes!”

Although shoes can be relatively expensive, we may not often thank God that we can afford them. It's easy for us to take so much of what we have for granted. “Food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home . . .” Luther's list goes.

Still we haven't reached the bottom of the list. There are many more things. Nor have we come to the top of the list—we all freely and fully enjoy spiritual blessings, like pardon and eternal peace.

“Come, you thankful people, come; raise the song of harvest-home.” Thanksgiving is a good time to be reminded of the richness of our blessings, temporal and eternal. It's also a time to think of those less fortunate who may not even have shoes. It's a good time to think, as many of our congregations and members do, about doing deeds of charity, providing for the less fortunate.

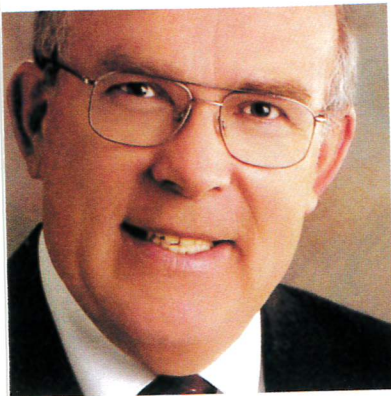
Is it appropriate to ask whether God's grace or our greed decides more in our lives regarding the needs of others? Isn't it a good time to reflect on supplying the even greater spiritual needs of people everywhere? Isn't this a time to consider even greater generosity so that the free gifts of God's grace, pardon, and peace might be proclaimed everywhere?

In recent months, our congregations and synod have been experiencing financial difficulties. Congregations and the synod have even found it necessary to reduce called positions. Schools have raised tuitions. Work programs have been reduced, future opportunities put on hold.

Without a doubt, God wants us, personally and corporately, to be good money managers. Whatever we've been given we need to manage wisely, whether it's the money we give directly for the Lord's work or all the rest of what he's given us to manage for him.

Thanksgiving is a good time to reflect on our management of what God has committed to our care. It starts with counting all our blessings. There is nothing we have that we did not receive from him. And without his greatest gift to us, full and free salvation through his Son, our Savior, Jesus, nothing else really matters. Because of the eternal worth of that gift, the use of everything else he lends to us takes on a new perspective. In proportion to the way God has blessed us, we want to use his blessings to be blessings for others.

Thankfully, we have shoes—and a great deal more besides. Even as we use our resources to provide shoes for others, may we also proclaim peace through Jesus to them so that, along with us, they can walk in the house of the Lord forever.



Carl R. Gungl

Women of faith: The woman of Bethany

Faith in Jesus' sacrificial death moves believers to do beautiful things for him.

Philip L. Kieselhorst

He had done so much to help her family. He had done so much to help her. And now he was going to die. It was inevitable. He was going to die to help people beyond compare.

Although she could not stop his death from happening, there was still much she could do. The least she could do was say, "Thank you." She determined to express her gratitude by preparing a funeral fit for a king.

A generous gift of grace

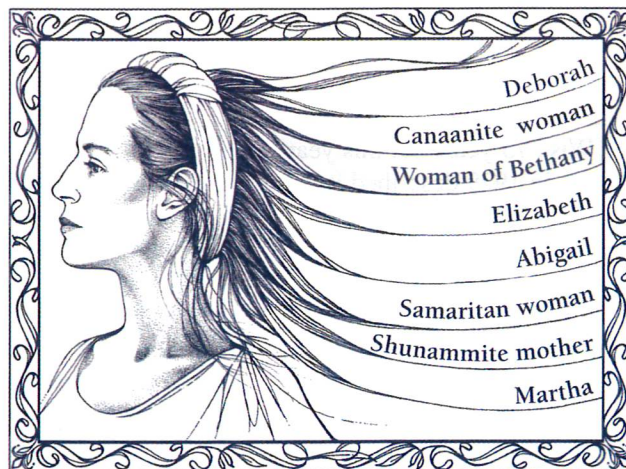
This woman's name was Mary. She lived in Bethany, and she understood everything Jesus had been saying to his followers about how he would soon suffer and die. While Jesus' 12 disciples tried to deny such statements, Mary understood and believed.

Mary had often enjoyed sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to his words about the kingdom of God. She understood that Jesus would die for his kingdom. The Savior who brought her brother Lazarus from death to life was about to give his life over to death in order to save people who didn't deserve saving.

Mary understood this. Jesus' grace meant he would suffer and die for her.

A generous gift of gratitude

Time was short. Mary had to express her gratitude and loyalty. During a dinner given in Jesus' honor,



"Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair" (John 12:3).

The most expensive perfume in the world could never adequately express a forgiven sinner's gratitude.

This perfume was so expensive that only the wealthy could afford to use it. But Mary paid no attention to this. She not only anointed Jesus' head, but his feet as well. Lavishly she poured the perfume on Jesus. When the last drop fell, she began to wipe his feet with her hair. To her, it seemed like such a small gift in comparison to what he would give to the world.

A generous gift of the gospel

To the disciples, it seemed like far too much. When they began to scold

Mary for her wastefulness, Jesus defended her. "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial" (Matthew 26:10-12).

Jesus knew Mary's motive. He refused to let anyone speak against her sincere worship. "She did it to prepare me for burial." He would die for her. He would die for a world of sinners. When the disciples realized that this was good news—the most precious gospel of all—they would understand that the most expensive perfume in the world could never adequately express a forgiven sinner's gratitude.

"I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her" (Matthew 26:13). This promise has come true.

You have the gospel now. It's your turn to do a beautiful thing for Jesus.

Contributing editor Philip Kieselhorst is pastor at Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

This is the third of an eight-part series by Philip Kieselhorst on "Women of faith." To read the first two articles, go to www.wels.net, jump-word "ficarchive," and search by the keyword phrase "women of faith."

This month's readings: Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8



Gary P. Baumbach

“Camelot”

“Camelot,” you’ll hear some say. “This is our Camelot.” The lazy lagoon, Jacob’s well, and the 80 parklike acres enhance its beauty and add to its peaceful mystique. The Wartburg look-alike, the Luther statue, the “Holy Ghost Room” all signal its purpose. The engraved cornerstone—*sola gratia, sola scriptura, sola fide*—reveals its enlightenment.

“It” is Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wis., 75 years old this year. Our forefathers in 1929 described it as a place with “room for all healthful recreation,” a place where “professors and students will be glad to live and study,” a place that is “a joy to visit.” The 15,000 who attended the Aug. 18, 1929, dedication service little knew how fully the seminary would fulfill those dreams.

In the seminary’s sacred halls, more than 2,500 young men have enjoyed the privilege of studying for the pastoral ministry. If you are a member of a WELS church, with few exceptions, your pastor studied here. For years, until the room proved too small, the Conference of Presidents and others met in the tower room, invoked the guidance of the Holy Spirit (thus the “Holy Ghost Room”), and issued the first calls into full-time public service to anxious graduates. Would it be a rural parish, an inner city ministry, an exploratory mission, a world mission . . . ?

The story of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is in many ways the story of WELS itself. The training here has shaped the essence of what we are as a church. Many things have changed over the 75 years. Several classes were taught in German in the early years. Today, PowerPoint and laptop computers grace the classroom. A library, an auditorium/ gymnasium, dormitory rooms, professors’ homes have been added. Students access research materials via the Internet from their dormitories and homes. In 1959 the name changed from the “Evangelical Lutheran Theological

Seminary” to “Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.” You might say, “This is not your father’s seminary.”

But it is, because of what hasn’t changed. Let me illustrate: Recently a new WELS member wrote to express his appreciation for WELS. He explained that he traveled and moved around a lot. As he did, he visited a number of WELS churches. No matter where he was in the country, he noted, the message in those churches never changed—always biblical, always Christ-centered. The unchangeable truth of the gospel moved him to join one of our congregations.

Without Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, I doubt that he would have had that faith-building experience. The cornerstone at the seminary is much more than a memorial with outdated Latin words inscribed on it. It is a sign of the rock-solid foundation of our church and the unchanging teachings at the seminary. For these 75 years we have taught and continue to teach

- *Sola gratia*—by grace alone. God in his unfathomable, unmerited love has saved us through his Son Jesus Christ.
- *Sola scriptura*—by Scripture alone. The Bible is the only source of all God’s teachings, every word inspired by God. Our seminary students study the Scriptures in the original languages of Hebrew and Greek.
- *Sola fide*—by faith alone. Through nothing we have done, but by the faith in Christ worked in us by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, we are saved for eternal glory in heaven.

The rallying cry for all who attend the seminary is “Preach the gospel,” words inscribed in Greek above the chancel of the seminary’s chapel for students to see every school day. Then, when their time comes, they go out, even as the renowned knights of King Arthur’s Camelot, to do battle. Only their weapon of choice is the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

It's all about Jesus

Mark J. Lenz

In the latter half of the first century many false doctrines began threatening the church. In response, the five epistles below

direct readers to Jesus, the one who is life and who alone reveals life.

2 Peter: The people to whom Peter wrote this epistle were troubled by leaders who claimed superior knowledge but were destroying the church by denying the redemption of Christ and by abandoning all moral standards.

- What has God's divine power given us (1:3,4)?
- What should we make every effort to add to our faith (1:5-7)?
- What is the origin of every prophecy of Scripture (1:20,21)?
- What comfort does Peter draw from the account of God's rescue of Lot (2:7-9)?
- Why will there be scoffers in the last days (3:3,4)?
- What did God's Word do long ago, and what is it doing at present (3:5-7)?
- What is the Lord's will for all people (3:9)?
- What does Peter say about the world's end (3:10)? What should our response be (3:11-14)?
- What insights does Peter provide concerning Paul (3:15,16)?
- How can a person grow in grace and knowledge (3:18)?

Jude: Like Peter, Jude encourages his readers to contend for the faith among those who made license out of liberty and also denied the person and work of Christ.

- Called . . . loved . . . kept. What comfort is there in each word (1)?
- What incorrect view about the meaning of grace threatens believers in any age (4)?
- With what three examples does Jude warn his readers (5-7)?
- Discover the six pictures with which Jude describes godless men in verses 12 and 13 and the five things he says about them in verse 16.
- How can we persevere in the face of scoffers (20-23)?

1 John: John assures his readers of eternal life in Christ, who he identifies as the Word of life.

- What does John say about the Word of life (1:2)?
- Why can we be certain that we are cleansed of all sin (1:7)?
- What confidence can we have when we confess our sins (1:9)?
- When we feel the weight of sin, what special comfort can we have (2:1,2)?
- Why did the Son of God appear (3:8)? What does this mean for us (3:8-10)?
- How do we know what love is (3:16; 4:10)?
- How can we recognize the Spirit of God (4:2)?
- What is the testimony God has given us (5:11,12)?

2 John: In a personal letter, John emphasizes God's grace in Christ.

- What is the source of grace, mercy, and peace (3)?
- How only can we know God (9)?

3 John: John praises an individual who assists missionary activity and rebukes another who hinders it.

- What gives John his greatest joy (4)?

Conclusion: Explain the full significance of how the Word of life has made it possible for us to pass from death to life.

Contributing editor Mark Lenz, a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at St. John, New Ulm.

Find this article and possible answers online. Go to www.wels.net, jumpword "fic," and click on "It's all about Jesus." Answers will be available after Nov. 5.

Fulfiller of promises

Mighty Savior

Merciful Savior

Son of God

Savior of all

Liberator

Righteousness of God

Bringer of joy

Mediator with the Father

Sacrifice for sin

Word of life

Faithful witness

Rejoice in a new day

Each new day is a gift from God.
How will you react to his gift?

Carl R. Henkel

An early missionary to the tip of South Africa tells how every morning the natives of that barren country greeted the sunrise with piercing howls and shrieking laments. So much misery crowded into the lives of these natives that they viewed each new day with horror, every sunrise as the beginning of added evil.

In stark contrast, for many years I have had the pleasure of beginning Sunday worship with the words of Psalm 118:24: "This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!"

It seems to me that every morning we have an important decision to make: either greet the day with shrieks of horror or songs of praise. The choice is ours.

When Jesus noted that "Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:34), he was not encouraging gloom and doom. He was simply stating a fact. "In this world you will have trouble . . ." That's a given. "But . . . I [Jesus] have overcome the world" (John 16:33). That's a promise.

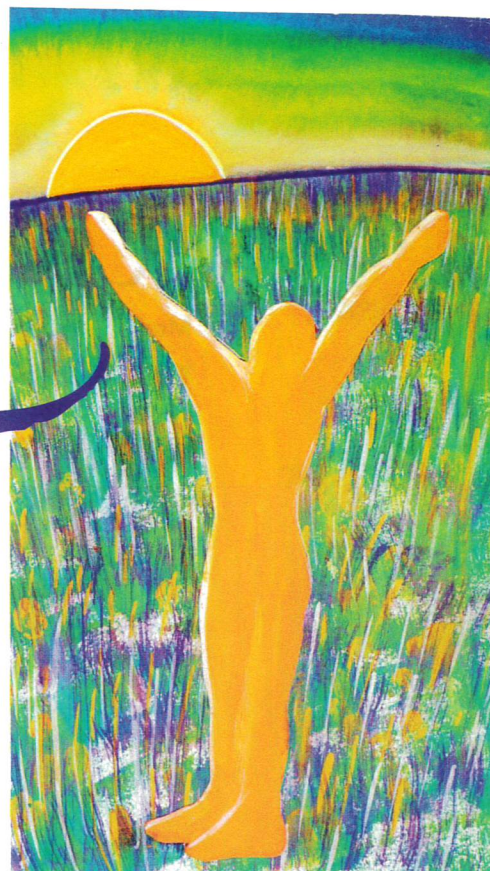
"Trouble" can come in many ways: chronic pain; loss of someone or something we held dear; setbacks in health, finances, family relationships; or temptations from without or within. But if we greet the sunrise

with "piercing howls and shrieking laments," we can expect a miserable day to follow.

So much better is the way of the Psalmist: greeting the dawn with praise and thanksgiving. Each new day is a time of grace. Each morning brings another opportunity to experience God's love—his forgiveness, his generosity, his peace. Even if the sun may not be visible today, it's still shining. "Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

After making a deliberate decision and conscious choice to face the new day with praise and thanksgiving, we have the privilege of committing the day to the Lord. Take the day, the whole day—its contents and outcomes—to the throne of grace. With prayer, we acknowledge that this new day is another opportunity to explore God's goodness and experience God's grace. It's another 24 hours to give glory to our Creator and Redeemer. Even if the day should bring troubles and pain, obstacles and sadness, if we have committed it to the Lord in prayer, we will see his guiding hand and feel his gentle hug.

Our prayer may go something like this: "Lord, these are difficult days for committed Christians. Satan is so active and sin so rampant. Yet this is the day that you have made. You've



given me the privilege to live it. Walk with me today wherever I go—or better by far: teach me to walk wherever you lead. Let me rejoice and be glad today. . . ."

There is one more thing: What we do with this new day. The choice to face the day with praise and thanksgiving is the first of literally hundreds of choices we'll have to make in the next 24 hours. A person with no serious desire to live for the Lord can just "go with the flow." He'll likely make choices that will benefit himself.

But we who belong to the Lord and desire to live for him will be looking for ways to serve him by sharing his love with others. We'll be looking for ways to bring honor to his name. We'll be keeping our eyes open for ways to pay him homage. We'll be listening for opportunities to stand up for and tell about Jesus.

Because we know that this new day is a gift from God, we want to live it to his glory. May we do so—that Jesus Christ be praised!

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