



Cornerstone United Methodist Church

1411 Rim Road Fayetteville North Carolina 28314 868-5686

September 2003

From the Pen of Pastor Ben The Way of the Cross



From July 24-26 of this year I attended the Exodus International Conference held in Orlando. Exodus International's purpose is to "encourage, strengthen, unify and equip Christians to minister the transforming power of the Lord Jesus Christ to those affected by homosexuality." I went to the conference as a representative from Transforming Congregations, a ministry directed toward United Methodist Churches who want to offer a biblical, Christ-centered

alternative to men, women and youth who struggle with relational brokenness resulting in sexual sin.

One theme ran through the warp and woof of this gathering: the Way of the Cross. Before attending the Exodus Conference I harbored an unarticulated, smug assumption that I knew what it meant to follow the Crucified One upon the Way of the Cross. However, as I listened to a message delivered by Andy Comiskey, the Holy Spirit convicted me of my spiritual arrogance and said quite clearly: "You know nothing of the way of the Cross! Do you see these men and women who die daily to the desires and needs that seek to dominate and define them? They know my Cross in a way you will never know." I have to admit that by the end of the message I was openly sobbing with repentance.

I thought I had reached a fairly respectable level of Christian maturity when I arrived in Orlando. Less than twenty-four hours later I heard Christ speak the same words to me that He had spoken to the self-satisfied, self-sufficient Laodicean Church:

"You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.'

But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent" (Revelation 3:17-20)

Exodus was a transforming experience for me in that God opened my eyes to just how trifling and shallow my own identification with the Cross of Jesus had become.

The Way of the Cross is central to what it means to be a transformed follower of Jesus Christ. Our Lord himself declared that following him upon the way of the Cross was the essential mark of being a disciple:

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24)

St. Paul exemplifies the heart cry of the disciple when he exclaims:

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:10-11)

Continued on page 2

Youth Events

Do you have kids, grades 6-8 that are interested in coming to a great youth group with kids their own age? If you do, call Sue or Mike Todd at 425-6443. We meet on most Sunday nights from 6:30 to 8:00 or 8:30.

This fall we are planning on going to Pilgrimage which is a weekend event for Methodist youth groups from all around the state. They invite guest speakers that give small sermons on everyday things from a Christian point of view from dating to getting confirmed. That takes place on a Friday night and Saturday. Saturday evening they have a concert. Last year the group was "Petra", a Christian 80's and 90's group and they were really awesome! Sunday morning there is a worship service for the youth. We always have a great time! We are working on getting dates and times, scheduled out.

We went bowling recently and it was so much fun. Mr. Mike got 4 strikes in a row! WOW!

Hope to see you soon!

Homeschooling?

Does your family homeschool? We are starting a small support group for the homeschooling families of Cornerstone. We are exploring some ideas for a few group activities for the upcoming school year. The moms also get together every few weeks for breakfast on a Saturday to give encouragement and support to each other.

If this sounds like something you might be interested in, contact Lisa Sharpe at 868-6991 for more info.

Here is the truth we embrace when we accept Jesus Christ: when it comes to human existence, biblical transformation is not about therapy. It is about dying. Specifically, our transformation comes about through dying and rising again with Christ. There is no other option in God's economy. There is no "Plan B." We cannot "manage" our brokenness through creative forms of rehabilitation and trendy treatments. We have to die.

My experience at Exodus affirmed my belief that those who struggle with sexual sin and relational brokenness in the Church today are uniquely positioned to challenge the shallow, rapid, Cross-less Christianity that seems to dominate the Body of Christ in the western world. Those who are daily dying to the power of same-sex attraction and sexual addiction have the potential to be a prophetic voice to the Church. The Way of the Cross challenges believers from the liberal and permissive enclaves of the main-line denominations, to the entertainment and consumer oriented pseudo-spirituality that runs through much of the evangelical community.

Ultimately, the life defined by the Cross is one of self-surrender to the will of God. It begins with the crisis of Gethsemane when we wrestle, along with Jesus, with the choices before us: To follow the will of the Father and go the way of the Cross or to take the path that keeps our wants and desires intact. In that

moment we are given the outrageous freedom to choose to lose our lives or save our lives. The paradox is that if we take the way that seems to protect the self we ultimately lose our lives. Yet if we take the path that leads towards the Cross we gain a life that transcends anything we ever hoped to experience.

Much-loved Christian apologist and author, Peter Kreeft, eloquently unfolds this truth when he writes:

"Thy will, not mine, be done" is not only the hardest thing we can do (that is what sin has done to us), but it is also the most joyful and liberating thing we can do (that is what grace has offered us). A trillion experiments have proved one point over and over past all doubt: that whenever we aim at happiness as if we were God, by exerting our power and control, we end up in unhappiness, whether we get the thing we wanted or not. For if we get it, we are bored; and if we do not, we are frustrated. But whenever we become nothing, become utterly weak, whenever we say and mean with our whole heart, "Not my will but thine be done," we find the greatest happiness, joy, and peace that is ever possible in this world. Yet despite the trillions of experimental confirmations of this truth, we keep trying other experiments with happiness outside of God and outside of submission to God, thereby repeatedly selling our birthright of joy. In other words, we are insane. Sin is insanity. [Peter Kreeft, "How Does the

Weakness of the Cross Make Us Strong?"]

The way of the Cross leads from Gethsemane to Calvary where there is the anguish of total self-surrender to God. In Andy Comiskey's presentation on the morning of July 25th he told the story of a young woman who had returned to the process of seeking transformation after years of an intense lesbian relationship. He related that, as this woman began to pour her life out to God in prayer, she was wracked with such agony that she looked like she was dying. Andy paused and then said, "She *was* dying!"

But here is the Good News: It is in such moments of death to our own deepest, most broken selves, that we are truly transformed into the image of Jesus Christ! Since our Friend and Savior has already pioneered the Way of the Cross before us, our own Golgotha becomes a place of unimaginable sweetness because it is at that point we become most intensely united with Jesus Christ. The Cross was the moment of agonizing desolation and abandonment for Jesus, but for us it is the moment of reunion and deep communion. Praise God!

The Way of the Cross leads from the joyful anguish of Calvary to the undiluted triumph of the empty tomb. We share in Christ's own exaltation when we pass, with him, through our own little crucifixions to the glorious resurrection. Moreover, the transforming power we need to live in victory over sin flows directly from surrendering ourselves in the Cross. St. Paul testified to this reality in his own life when he poured out his own struggles:

But [the Lord] said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

We long to go immediately to the victory of Easter without our own Good

Continued on page 4



Cornerstone Small Groups

Mon. Women's Bible Study	Joy Semrad	867-6786
Wed. Night Bible Study	Richard Upchurch	424-4164
CBS (Corner. Bible Study)	Ben Sharpe	868-5686
Friday Night Fellowship	John & Antonia Ban	860-3470
United Methodist Men	Steve Kublank	424-1757
Senior High Youth	Brian & Christyn Hahn	480-0603
Junior High Youth	Mike & Sue Todd	425-6443
Kids Ministry	Melinda Alleyne	764-9083

The Sign of the Cross

You will occasionally see the pastor or members of the congregation make the sign of the cross during certain times in the service. This is a completely voluntary act that some feel enhances their worship of God, while others find quite alien and unnecessary. For the latter this is an unusual practice that we do not associate with United Methodist worship. However, the reality is that many Protestants (Lutherans and Anglicans in particular) engage in this historic act of Christian devotion. Also a growing number of Christians within the Methodist tradition are embracing long-neglected worship practices that reach deep into the rich tradition of historic Christianity. You may or may not be inclined to employ the sign of the cross during worship. However, it is still a good idea to know why and when some Christians use the sign of the cross.

Early Christians made use of the sign of the cross as a means of blessing oneself, beginning and ending a prayer, and in devotions associated with the Holy Trinity. One practice for the faithful was, upon rising in the morning, to begin their daily prayers in the name of the Trinity and sign themselves with the cross at the same time. This is still a good devotional practice that many Christians put to good use.

Holding the thumb and first two fingers together (three fingers for the Holy Trinity, two fingers for the two natures of Christ) and touching the forehead, the breastbone, the left and then the right shoulders makes the sign of the cross. Some Christians complete making the sign of the cross by bringing their hand to rest over their heart, as a sign of how Christ is at the heart of their being.

There are many times during the Service of Worship when it is appropriate to cross oneself:

- At the beginning of the Service when the Pastor opens the time of worship in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - this demonstrates that we have assembled in the name of the Triune God;

- When the reading from the Gospel is announced. This particular signation is done one of two ways. In some places the people make the traditional sign of the cross, but the more common form is to use the right thumb to make a small cross on the forehead, the lips and the heart, with the silent prayer intention being “God be in my thoughts, my words and my heart to believe your Holy Gospel”;

- At the end of the Nicene Creed at the words “and we look for the resurrection of the dead” because it is through the cross of Christ that the resurrection has become a reality for us;

- After the Confession, when the Pastor announces God’s forgiveness for sin, as the Pastor makes the sign of the cross over us, in acknowledgment of God’s forgiveness;

- At the “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord “ during the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy) because we give thanks for Jesus coming to us as our Lord and Savior;

- During the Eucharistic Prayer many people cross themselves at the elevation of the Eucharistic elements. This is in thanksgiving for the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the sacrament;

- At the point in the Eucharistic Prayer in which we ask God to send His Holy Spirit upon His people (“Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine.”);

- When receiving communion, making the sign of the cross just before we consume the Sacrament and again immediately afterward;

- At the final blessing, in thanksgiving for what God has done for us in the Service of Worship as we prepare ourselves to go into the world, declaring His truth.



Experiencing God's Presents

The church is not a bus where one person does the driving. It's like an anthill, where everyone works.

J.I. Packer

Is every believer guaranteed at least one spiritual gift?

—Tracie N. Moore,
Springfield Gardens, New York

The short answer is yes—at least one, perhaps more. But let us be clear what we are talking about. What are spiritual gifts? None of the New Testament passages that speak of them (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Pet. 4:10-11) define them. Since these passages all come from letters to churches where gifts were already in use, and the only question was whether they were being used well, that need not surprise us. But constructing a definition is not hard.

Gifts are manifestations of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4-11), given to build up the church (12:7, 14:4) and the individuals within it. It is only through Christ, in Christ, and by learning and responding to Christ that anyone is ever edified. Therefore, gifts should be defined in terms of him—as powers of expressing, celebrating, displaying, and obeying Christ. Gifts communicate his reality through word or action in service of God and others (fellow believers and non-Christians too).

Gifts vary. There are gifts of speech and of Samaritanism; Paul's flitting to and fro between the two kinds in his gift lists (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:8-10) shows that there is no scale of values attached to them. There is no pecking order between helping, serving, giving, administering, encouraging, and being kind, on the one hand, and preaching, teaching, leading, and exhorting, on the other, let alone such "sign-gifts" as healing, speaking in tongues, and interpreting tongues.

The key truth is that in the church, which is one body in Christ, we're all members—that is, body parts of Christ, and, in him, of each other.

Among the variety of God's gifts, some are natural abilities and character qualities sanctified, while others correspond to nothing that was previously seen in the person's life. That the gift is from the Holy Spirit is more evident in the latter case than in the former, but the reality is that all our capacities for expressing Christ are spiritual gifts. By means of them, Christ from his throne uses us as his hands, feet, and mouth, even his smile, and speaks, meets, loves, saves, and sustains.

As the test of whether you are a



leader or teacher is that others follow you or learn from you, so the test of whether you are exercising a spiritual gift is that people in the church feel the influence of Christ through what you say and do. Natural abilities, however spectacular, are not spiritual gifts as such, whereas diffident clumsiness of word and gesture is no sign that a spiritual gift is not in action.

That the indwelling Holy Spirit imparts to every Christian believer at least one gift appears both from Paul's image of the body growing toward the full stature of Christ, its head, "when [and clearly only when] each part is working properly" (Eph. 4:16), and from his emphatic

declaration: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7, cf. 11). It is plain that every-member ministry in the body of Christ is Paul's, and therefore Christ's own, ideal.

The church is not to be like a bus, where passengers sit quietly and let someone else do the driving, but like an anthill, where everybody is at work. Not everyone who thus ministers will be a church officer, nor will the service they render always be appreciated. But just as every bit of that fabulous complex, the human body, has a job to do, so it is with each of us who believe.

How can Christians identify their own gift or gifts? By trying themselves out in paths of service that attract them, or that others, who know them well enough to discern their potential, urge upon them. The presence or absence of a gift will quickly become apparent.

When, as sometimes happens, all attention focuses on the spectacular "sign-gifts" that, over and above their benefit to the church, specifically authenticated the apostles' personal ministry, the truth about gifts is skewed. God seems to have given some renewal of

"sign-gifts" in recent years (though some doubt this), but it is clear that, as in New Testament times, not all Christians become channels of these manifestations (see 1 Cor. 12:29-30). Most are gifted in less eye-catching and more unobtrusive ways.

Paul told the Corinthians to seek the best gifts. Other things being equal, the best gifts will always be those that express most love and do most good to most people.

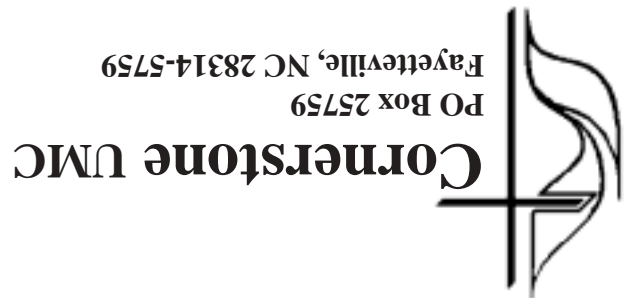
J.I. Packer is Board of Governors' Professor of Theology at Regent College and an executive editor of Christianity Today. Copyright Christianity Today 2003.

September 2003 October

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Pastor's Day Off Women's Bible Study	2	3 Noon Prayer Group	4	5 Friday Night Fellowship 7:00	6
7 Cornerstone Pizza Sunday @ Two Brothers!	8 Pastor's Day Off Women's Bible Study	9	10 Noon Prayer Group	11	12 Friday Night Fellowship 7:00	13
14 Council Mtg 7:00	15 Pastor's Day Off Women's Bible Study	16	17 Noon Prayer Group	18	19 Friday Night Fellowship 7:00	20
21	22 Pastor's Day Off Women's Bible Study	23	24 Noon Prayer Group	25	26 Friday Night Fellowship 7:00	27
28	29 Pastor's Day Off Women's Bible Study	30	1 Noon Prayer Group	2	3 Friday Night Fellowship 7:00	4
5 Cornerstone Pizza Sunday	6 Pastor's Day Off Women's Bible Study	7	8 Noon Prayer Group	9	10 Friday Night Fellowship 7:00	11
12 Church Council Meeting 7:00	13 Pastor's Day Off Women's Bible Study	14	15 Noon Prayer Group	16	17 Friday Night Fellowship 7:00	18

There's always something happening at Cornerstone!

You are... God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief Cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. *Ephesians 2:19-22*



From the Pastor

Continued from page 4

Friday passion. But this is not God's way. It is only when we follow Christ through those moments of soul-sundering acts of radical obedience that God exalts us and makes us participants in Christ's own glory:

And being found in appearance as a man, [Jesus] humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.... (Philippians 2:8-9)

May God grant us the grace to faithfully take the Way of the Cross so fully that we experience this resurrection exaltation poured out through our surrendered, transformed lives.

RECIPE FOR A HAPPY HOME

- 4 cups of LOVE
- 5 spoons of HOPE
- 2 cups of LOYALTY
- 2 spoons of TENDERNESS
- 3 cups of FORGIVENESS
- 4 quarts of FAITH
- 1 cup of FRIENDSHIP
- 1 barrel of LAUGHTER

Take love and loyalty, mix in thoroughly with faith, blend it with tenderness, kindness and understanding. Add friendship and hope; sprinkle abundantly with laughter. Bake it with sunshine. Serve daily with generous helpings.

The U in JesUs

Before U were thought of or time had begun, God even stuck U in the name of His Son.
And each time U pray, you'll see it's true You can't spell out JesUs and not include U.
You're a pretty big part of His wonderful name, For U, He was born; that's why He came.
And His great love for U is the reason He died.

It even takes U to spell crUcified.

Isn't it thrilling and splendidly grand He rose from the dead, with U in His plan?

The stones split away, the gold trUmpet blew, and this word resUrrection is spelled with a U.

When JesUs left earth at His upward ascension, He felt there was one thing He just had to mention.

"Go into the world and tell them it's true That I love them all - Just like I love U."

So many great people are spelled with a U, Don't they have a right to know JesUs too?

It all depends now on what U will do, He'd like them to know, But it all starts with U.