

IN PART

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE BRETHREN IN CHRIST COMMUNITY

Winter 2007



everyday
HOLINESS

Now I know *in part*, then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.
1 CORINTHIANS 13:12 (NIV)

THE VIEW FROM HERE

One of the most unsettling experiences from my childhood occurred when my parents packed our family belongings—beds, books, bicycles, and all—into a big, yellow moving van and quit the quaint prep school campus on Long Island (N.Y.) where I had grown up for a slick, humid city on the Gulf Coast of Florida. Perhaps because of my age, I, more than anyone else in the family, struggled to acclimate to the new neighborhood, new church, new school, new house, new weather, new culture, and new people in our new life. I survived the experience and, through it, came face to face with the inevitability of change and the challenge of transition.

Today, I have arrived at another life junction. Within the past six months alone, I have graduated from college, gotten married, moved to Pennsylvania, and joined the BIC communications team. These major adjustments have again made me profoundly aware of the role that transitions play in life and of the fragmented knowledge we have about what will happen in the future. There are births, moves, weddings, joys, deaths, and pains on this side of heaven. As 1 Corinthians 13:12 reminds us, we only know “in part.” Yet the passage also reassures believers that someday we will dwell with our God, knowing fully and being fully known by Him. The hope that we have in this promise triumphs over our fears about transition and uncertainty in life.

This message of hope encouraged us here in the BIC offices as we faced the challenge of renaming this magazine. And it has sustained Nate Bridi and me, both recent graduates from Messiah College, as we have stepped into the roles that Katie Geshay and Dulcimer Brubaker so ably filled as the graphic designer and editor during the past two years.

In the course of my own interactions with the content of this issue, I have been reminded, too, that the kind of hope we hold on to does more than comfort us during times of change. It actually uses those periods to renew hope within us and make us more like Christ. As you make your way through this first issue of *In Part*, I hope you will join in the conversations initiated by its articles as they examine holiness, the ultimate transition we encounter as we move from death into new life.

And, of course, I invite you to share your thoughts, suggestions, questions, and reactions with me as we all adjust to the new aspects of *In Part*. This is, after all, *our* magazine.

Warmly,

Kristine

Kristine Frey, Editor

NATE BRIDI graphic designer

Designing a magazine is generally reserved for veterans of the graphic design business, but it's the fortunate position in which I found myself only a few months out of college. Considering my youth, I'm extremely grateful to be trusted with the challenge and responsibility of this project. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did working on it. If you want to learn more about the thought behind the design, visit INPART.ORG.

IN PART™

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WANT A MORE WHOLE UNDERSTANDING?

Visit *In Part* Online at WWW.INPART.ORG for additional stories, pictures, discussions, and resources that relate to this issue!

IN MOTION

STORIES OF THE BIC IN ACTION

BLAZING A NEW TRAIL

Though modern forms of transportation have replaced the Chisholm Trail, a 19th-century cattle-herding route, its iconic status in cowboy mythology lives on in central Kansas. Pamphlets introducing the New Trail Fellowship BIC church plant in Abilene draw upon the Chisholm Trail's legacy by announcing that "God's Trail Begins Where Yours Ends."

"I want to use language that the cowboy culture will understand," explains Stan Norman, New Trail's church planter and pastor.

At the church's kick-off service in early September, Stan illustrated the meaning of Jesus' interactions with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) for the 135 attendees by sharing about his struggle to break in a stubborn heifer. "I was trying to lead the heifer to water, to give her what she needed," says Stan, relating the story. "Just like Jesus, who was trying to lead the Samaritan woman to living water."

New Trail Fellowship, which has emerged out of a Bible study group, welcomes "country music lovers, cowboys, and country folk," some of whom journey up to 50 miles to worship in the barn-turned-church.

"We're getting back to the basics," says Stan, who formerly served as the pastor of Abilene BIC. "Cowboy people want the basics."

DEVIN THOMAS
Harrisburg (Pa.) BIC

New Trail Fellowship is a BIC church plant for cowboys and country music lovers.



First Nation neighbors in Nakina, ON, learn carpentry skills and mingle at "The Shack."



↑ PHOTO (L) Robert Paull
↑ PHOTO (R) John Reynolds

LEAVING HOME TO FIND IT

As Janet and John Reynolds say, anything less than a call from God wouldn't have persuaded them and their sons, Conwell and Jesse, to exchange their sprawling suburban home in Toronto for a small "bit of a dump" in the rural reaches of northern Ontario. But while attending The Meeting House (Oakville, ON) in 2004, the Reynoldses found that they couldn't "continue [to hear] about communities with high rates of suicide, high unemployment, crime, and other problems, without actually trying to help."

So the Reynoldses sold their home; moved to Nakina, ON; and became a foster family through Tikinagan, a First Nation child-care agency. "Although we didn't really feel that fostering was our strength," John shares honestly, "we were told that there was a great need because of the number of kids that nobody else would take."

"We want them to experience life with us," Janet adds.

Outside their home, the Reynoldses have countered the widespread sense of hopelessness on the Reserve by building "The Shack," a 16' x 40' workshop/community center that has become a popular gathering place for area teens and community members. John and Janet also spend time with youth by taking them on wilderness journeys and organizing summer camps.

When asked if following God's call to Nakina has been worth it, both John and Janet reply with a resounding "yes." "Our ancestors literally shattered the lives and communities of the First Nation people, and we need to be willing to stand up and ask what we can do to make amends," John says.

For more about the Reynoldses' ministry, go to WWW.PEOPLESERVINGPEOPLE.CA.

LISA BROWN
The Meeting House (Oakville, ON)

The Valentins make prayer a vital part of ministry at Iglesia Monte Carmelo in Philadelphia, Pa.



↓ PHOTO Jane A. Clinton

MIRACLE AT FRANKFORD AND TIOGA

A hand-painted sign reading "Iglesia Monte Carmelo" hangs above a door at the corner of Frankford and Tioga streets. Inside, festive decorations, such as yellow and white tissue-paper flowers, balloons, a garland of red roses, and gold drapes welcome visitors to the church that Moises and Lily Valentin moved from Florida to Philadelphia, Pa., to plant.

"People prayed for a church here," Lily explains, translating for her husband. "It used to be a really bad area ... and the police were always around." But by "planting seeds" of hope and faith in people who struggle with addictions and homelessness, the Valentins have helped make the area safe. "The police don't need to be here, because of us," Lily reports.

The Valentins' work centers on prayer, and Moises' eyes light up

as he shares stories of the miracles that have resulted from it: Women with cancer and asthma, cured. A son born deaf and mute, now speaks and hears. Brain tumors, shrunk. Serious infections, healed. Vision problems, vanished.

"We never get tired of doing this work, because God called us and He never gets tired," says Moises. "We need to follow Him. We need to love like Him to save people. It's not easy. But people's lives are worth more than anything."

Atlantic Conference Bishop Craig Sider commends the Valentins for their work in Philadelphia, explaining that their service represents a broader mission of the BIC Church: "We believe God is calling us to impact our cities. In doing so, our congregations will better reflect the growing diversity in our region."

Back in Philadelphia, the Valentins and the 50 or so people who make up their congregation dream of a bigger building with rooms for the kids and space to store donations. But until then, they'll just keep praying—and watching for miracles.

JANE A. CLINTON
Circle of Hope (Philadelphia, Pa.)

IN MOTION

BACK-TO-SCHOOL BLESSINGS

In 2003 Pastor Oscar Burgueno Soto from Ojos Negros, Mexico, and David Watring, a lay leader at Crest Community Church in Riverside, Calif., founded the Kingdom Coalition, an international outreach organization that collects needed items, such as food, clothing, and medicine, donated by a network of California churches and transports them to Oscar, who then distributes them to the families of poor, migrant farm workers there.

Oscar's heartfelt desire is to see the power of Jesus take root in the lives of these families, whose teens are often forced into drug trafficking due to lack of education and employment opportunities. Because families must often sacrifice necessities such as food to purchase school supplies for their children, the Coalition hosts a yearly back-to-school drive in September. This year's effort provided a trailer full of notebooks, crayons, pencils, and pens to Mexican school children.

Currently, the California contingent of the Coalition is gathering Christmas gifts for over 300 children and eagerly anticipating a return to Ojos Negros in December for the third annual "Gran Posada Navidad." The event celebrates the birth of Jesus and ends with a special holiday meal.

To support the Coalition, contact David at KINGDOMCOALITION@SBCGLOBAL.NET.

DEBRA BREMER
Etiwanda BIC (Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.)

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PART OF THE WHOLE

FOCUSING ON ONE MAN'S FAITH

WILLING TO LEARN

K.B. Hoover reflects on almost a century-long journey of faith

by DEVIN THOMAS

Ask Kenneth B. Hoover—or K.B., as he's known to his friends—what obedience is all about, and he'll tell you that "obedience means you must be willing to learn." After 95 years as a student, teacher, pastor, and church leader, K.B. certainly knows a little something about learning—and the blessings that come from a life of walking with God.

Growing up in the now-closed Bethel BIC Church in Kansas, K.B. had a thirst for knowledge. In 1930, he traveled across the country to attend Messiah Bible School in Grantham, Pa., where he completed a two-year program. From there he moved on to get his bachelor's and master's degrees. In the early 1940s, he reached a vocational crossroads: He was offered the presidency of Jab-bok Bible School in Custer County, Okla.; the position of pastor at his home church in Kansas; and the chance to teach science and math at Messiah. The irony of the situation was not lost on K.B.: "In the Depression days you couldn't get a job, and suddenly I had the pick of three!"

In the end, K.B. took the pastorate at Bethel. After spending a year there, however, he learned that he "was a better teacher than a preacher." He joined the Messiah College faculty in 1942. During his almost 40-year career



at Messiah, K.B. was named chairman of the math and science department and was instrumental in the addition of the school's Kline Hall of Science and greenhouse.

K.B. also assisted in the development of the Grantham BIC Church, from its earliest days as a small chapel in Messiah's Old Main building to its current location on the edge of the college campus. And he has been active within the wider church, serving on the Board for World Missions from 1966 until 1982.

K.B.'s obedience—his years of submission to God, his willingness to learn both in and out of the classroom—has provided him with rich

insights into the world. His journey, he knows, has led to many transformations along the way—transformations that have built him into the person that he is today.

And that ninety-five-year journey surely hasn't dulled K.B.'s razor-sharp sense of humor. When asked about his post-retirement accomplishments, he says—with perfect delivery—"Well, I'm the oldest member of the Grantham church. I suppose that's an accomplishment."



Devin Thomas is a junior at Messiah College, where he studies, frequently writes, and drinks too much Mountain Dew. During his summer internship at the BIC offices, he wrote articles that appear in "Vibes", "In Motion", and online at INPART.ORG.

INPART.ORG

TO OUR CORE

EXPLORING THE CENTRAL VALUES OF THE BIC CHURCH

FOLLOWING JESUS

by HARVEY SIDER

→ We value wholehearted obedience to Jesus through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

Imagine how Peter felt when Jesus spoke to him for the first time, saying, "Come, follow me" (Mark 1:17). Now imagine how he felt three years later when Jesus' final words, "Follow me!" emphatically reminded Peter that his call to obedience remained personal and absolute (John 21:22). Sandwiched between these first and last words were three years for Peter to follow Jesus, learning from His

words and deeds. No longer could Peter merely fulfill his own personal goals or selfish whims. Rather, being a disciple involved wholehearted obedience to Jesus Christ.

Following Jesus in full obedience gives Him highest priority in all of life. While this has endless implications, broad areas often affected include vocation, interpersonal relationships, and talents.

With respect to vocation, obeying God involves doing what He wants us to do wherever and whenever He wants us to do it. In his book *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer proclaims, "It is not for us to choose which way we shall follow. That depends on the will of Christ." The journey of discipleship is one of following wherever the Lord calls.

In terms of interpersonal relationships, complete obedience to Christ often involves new challenges and responsibilities. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7), Jesus speaks of relating to spouses (5:27–32), enemies (5:43–48), and siblings (7:1–5). Essentially, Jesus calls his followers to reconcile differences and to love and care for all others, no matter who they may be. When personalities clash or when other difficulties present themselves, Christ's followers are called to love and forgive, and to

work through tough issues.

As for talent, obedience calls us to surrender our abilities to serve Christ and others. Scripture repeatedly suggests that we have been gifted by God in order to serve each other, whether as technicians, teachers, farmers, doctors, lawyers, housewives, chefs, pastors, or any other vocation (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:7–16). While some professions are more prominently associated with the Church, each is equally important and necessary to its development.

As we live in the Spirit and cultivate communication with the Lord, we can rest assured that our every step will be directed by God. To be genuine disciples, we must give wholehearted obedience to Jesus Christ, trusting in the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. We must walk the narrow way, placing what Jesus wants above our own wishes and ambitions. Only then can we follow Him without looking back.

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Harvey Sider has pastored BIC congregations in Toronto, Cheapside, and Stayner, ON. He has also served as a missionary in India, president of Niagara Christian Collegiate, bishop of the Canadian Conference, and moderator of the denomination. Now retired, he remains active in the life of the wider church through a variety of volunteer roles.



ILLUSTRATION: Sonya Berg

TO READ MORE . . .

about following Jesus, as well as other Brethren in Christ core values, see the book Focusing our Faith: Brethren in Christ Core Values, edited by Terry L. Brensinger.

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ON THE TABLET OF YOUR HEART

by Doris J. Barr

PURSUING
HOLINESS IN THE
NITTY-GRITTY
OF EVERYDAY LIFE

My friend Dalton probably wouldn't

describe himself as holy, but I see him as a holy man, and I believe God does too. When Dalton came to know Jesus as his Savior while in prison about seven years ago, his life was radically transformed. Now, he's a part of the Celebrate Recovery leadership team here at Mechanicsburg (Pa.) BIC Church, and in one of our meetings a few months ago, he shared, "When I came to Christ, He instantly freed me from alcohol and an anger problem, but I've continued to struggle with chewing tobacco. Recently, I was reading the autobiography of my child-

hood hero, Steve Borden, a professional wrestler known as Sting, who had also come to faith in Christ. He wrote of his addiction to chewing tobacco and how God had instantly delivered him. I put the book down and prayed, 'God, if you can do it for Sting, you can do it for me,' and I was instantly delivered."

Is my friend holy because he stopped chewing tobacco? No. He is holy because he opens his heart to the power of the resurrected Christ and His work in him. Dalton is holy because he is being transformed into Christ's likeness.

Hebrews 8:10

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."



NO MORE HOLY ROLLERS

Holiness is not an everyday topic of discussion at the local Starbucks or Tim Horton's—or in many churches, for that matter. And when the word “holy” does sneak into the conversation, it often has derogatory connotations: holy roller, holy Joe, holy terror. Other times, it's used in a slang phrase to express less-than-holy surprise: holy cow, holy smoke, holy cats.

Little wonder, then, that a 2006 report from the Barna Research Group on the topic of holiness found that “most adults remain confused, if not daunted, by the concept.” Three out of four respondents said they believe it is possible for someone to become holy, but only half said they know someone they would consider holy. And less than one-fourth would label themselves as “holy.” These percentages are only

A HOLY SOLUTION

What we need is an antidote for the confusion about holiness that prevails on both sides of the church walls. That antidote is found in sound teachings on the biblical message about holiness and holy living. Holiness is not about the things we do or don't do. It is first and foremost surrendering one's life fully to the triune God who has chosen us in love and called us to be His holy people, reflecting His image to our world (Leviticus 26:12, Hebrews 8:10, 1 Peter 2:9). When we truly understand who we are as God's chosen people, we can give ourselves up to His will and follow His call to “be holy, because I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16).

The call to holy living points us to Jesus. To live in relationship with a holy God requires a remedy for the human struggle with sin. Jesus became our remedy:

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). And Jesus not only forgives our sins, but also calls us to live “in Him.” As Paul knew well, this union with Christ, though mysterious, is the key to our growth in holiness. To be holy is to become more like Jesus. He must become our first love, the focus of our attention, the One we worship. As we contemplate His glory—the essence of who Jesus is—we may become transformed more and more into His image.

And when it comes to moral, biblical living, God has given us

much more than a set of commandments. He has written His law on the tablets of our hearts by sending His Spirit to live in us: “I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws” (Ezekiel 36:27). Drawing from this promise, the BIC Articles of Doctrine and Faith articulate the rich life of faith in this way: “The Spirit-filled life results in a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, inner strength in times of temptation,

godly living, and wholehearted service to the Lord. The Holy Spirit produces virtuous character—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These virtues characterize the believer's walk in the Spirit.”

HOLY HABITS

Growth in holiness engages the will and spiritual disciplines, which makes us more open to God working in our lives. Holiness is not just something we believe, but a lifestyle we practice, a continual decision to invite God to change and guide us. As Paul writes in Philippians 2:13, “Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” We work out our salvation as God works in us.

Properly understood, then, a holy life is one as God designed it to be. Or as author Richard Foster writes in *Streams of Living Water*, “Holiness is loving unity with God. It is an ever-expanding openness to the divine center. It is a growing, maturing, freely-given conformity to the will and ways of God. Holiness gives us our truest, fullest humanity. In holiness we become the persons we were created to be.” We discover our true identities when we deny ourselves—when we are crucified with Christ and then become alive in Him.

Living as God's holy people is about a lot more than personal piety. While it certainly includes moral living, and even a cursory look at the Scriptures confirms that, it is primarily about relationships—with God and with people. So the laboratory for holy living is in the nitty-gritty of life: in our homes, our churches, and our neighborhoods.

Just recently I had a conversation with a young mother of three who was concerned about what her children, husband, and neighbors are seeing in her. She wept over her failure to reflect the image of Christ to her children. She felt grieved by her need to be in control in her home and by her apathy toward her neighbors who don't know Christ. Yet she was alive with holy desire—

desire to live in intimate relationship with Christ and to work out her holiness in relationships. She is on a journey and she is a holy woman.

At the end of the day, it all comes down to this: the call to holy living is not a call to somber or austere living but a call to celebrate life as God intended, living as His holy people and reflecting His glory to the world.

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- CHECK OUT OTHER PERSPECTIVES ON HOLINESS
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“
... THE LABORATORY
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OUR NEIGHBORHOODS.”

slightly higher among self-identified Christians. We can conclude, then, that most people, including many Christians, don't understand holiness, have no personal desire to be holy, and do little to pursue personal holiness. In other words, “holy” is not the sort of label we're likely to claim for ourselves.

“
THE CALL TO HOLY LIVING
POINTS US TO JESUS. TO LIVE IN
RELATIONSHIP WITH A HOLY GOD
REQUIRES A REMEDY FOR THE
HUMAN STRUGGLE WITH SIN.”



Doris J. Barr is an associate pastor for Mechanicsburg (Pa.) BIC Church. She serves on the Commission on Ministry and Doctrine and recently co-taught a seminar for BIC pastors and laypeople on the subject of holiness.



Jeremy Botts lives in Lewisberry, Pa., with his wife, Susan, and his daughter, Cora Jane. Jeremy recently received a Master of Fine Arts from Maryland Institute College of Art, where he also currently teaches classes.

JOY TO THE WORLD RELIGION IS DEAD

Based on “The Death of Religion” in
It’s a Sign: Seeing Jesus in the Ordinary

by Timothy W. Fisher

Jesus didn’t come to establish a new religion or to add the religion of Christianity to the rest. **Jesus came to put an end to religion.** He came to reveal a brand-new way of relationship to God, and with God.

“Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days,” Jesus promised.

It is difficult for those of us who have grown up with a Western view of Jesus to grasp just how subversive and outrageous His words sounded to people whose identities were tied up in the temple. It was the focal point of first-century Judaism—the physical location of the presence of God. It was through the temple that people received forgiveness of sins. As part of the worship ritual that took place in the temple, worshippers were surrounded by temple furnishings such as the Bread of the Presence, the Golden Lamp Stand, and the Altar of Incense.

From guidelines to grace

Then along came Jesus, declaring that God was present in Him. He brought a type of worship based not on physical location and religious artifacts, but worship

“*That’s the problem with religion... We can practice the rituals and follow the rules religiously—and still have a heart that is far from God.*”

that is in spirit and in truth. He held out the offer of forgiveness of sins, not through temple rituals, but through the authority of His spoken word. And He invited all who believed into a living, dynamic union with Him. In the Bible this union is called a covenant, or a testament.

After Christ’s birth, forgiveness of sins was no longer attained through the offerings of bulls, rams, and goats, but through His once-and-for-all sacrifice and by coming to Him as our High Priest. God’s presence, previously boxed in by physical walls of stone, would be manifested fully in the temple of Jesus’ body, as that destroyed body would be raised to life in three days.

The implication of Jesus’ anti-temple movement was that religion as the way to God was finished. Israel

had long anticipated the day spoken of by the prophet Jeremiah when captivity would finally come to an end and the Messiah would rule: a day when a new covenant would be revealed by God, when God would write His precepts upon the heart rather than on tablets of stone; a day when religion would be replaced by relationship.

This was a revolutionary message for first-century Jews, whose relationship with God was wrapped up in rituals and rules.

The more things stay the same

But are we 21st-century Christians all that different? I have been a follower of Jesus for most of my life, and yet I still find myself drifting back to the futility of religious ways, to a white-knuckled devotion fueled by human strength rather than by a dynamic relationship with Jesus. I try harder, read more, pray longer, and participate in what I call “do-more” theology rather than trusting in the strength that comes from knowing God. That’s the problem with religion, or perhaps better said, that’s the problem with human nature. We can practice the rituals and follow the rules religiously—and still have a heart that is far from God.

Jesus described the dynamic union that we can have with Him as being led by the Spirit. At another time, He likened the influence of God and the Holy Spirit to that of the wind. So I figure that trying to please God and obey Him through my own strength is like trying to fly a kite or sail a boat without any wind. On the other hand, a dynamic union with Jesus produces change and authentic faith, just as submitting to the wind gives full sail to a boat and carries a kite high into the sky.

Overcoming identity confusion

I think it is worthwhile to ask the question from what or whom do I derive my identity? Is it through a dynamic union with Jesus, or from another source? It comes naturally for most of us to draw our identity from something other than Jesus: our abilities, our relationships, our work, our socioeconomic status, our hobbies.

Some of my favorite television commercials are for Nationwide Insurance, each of which ends with the

tag line “Life comes at you fast.” A star athlete falls down the stairs and breaks his leg. A handsome gondolier morphs into an old man. A father pushing his young son on a swing is knocked over by a burly youth. Life does come at us fast, and if our identities are wrapped up in our abilities, our youthful looks, or in earthly relationships, we are building on shifting sand. It is worthwhile to take inventory from time to time, checking to see what it is that gives us identity. God said to Jeremiah, “I will be their God, and they will be my people” (31:33b), and this is what gives me an identity that is built on solid ground.

The greatest hunger of the human heart is to know God—and thus to know ourselves—and for first-century Jews, the temple was germane to knowing God. But when Jesus replaced the physical temple with the temple of His body, He became the means by which we know God. As the Apostle Paul, once from the strictest religious sect of the Jews, would later write, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

It is done

All of religion can be summed up in the word “do.” It revolves around what I must do to know, experience, and be forgiven by God. The spirituality of Jesus, on the other hand, can be summed up in the word “done.” It rests on what He has done for me rather than on what I must do for Him. All of the miraculous signs that Jesus did point to this astonishing truth: that we might know Him and have a life that is full of His life. Let heaven and nature sing, the Lord is come.

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Timothy W. Fisher is the lead pastor of Walkersville (Md.) BIC and serves on the Commission on Ministry and Doctrine. He and his wife, Beth, have four children: Stephen, Jason, Chloe, and Karis. Tim enjoys the 3 R’s: reading, running, and the [Washington] Redskins.

Leaving it up to God



Touring with Messiah College’s New Light music ministry team could have been a summer-long spiritual high. But that’s not what David Perry, a junior music education major who attends the Grantham (Pa.) BIC Church, experienced—at least not immediately. “My heart just wasn’t in the right place,” he says.

Fortunately for David, a mid-summer break with The Journey BIC Church in Pewaukee, Wisconsin, gave the members of New Light time for prayer and Bible study before they headed on to several weeks of camp ministry.

“God showed me that I was actually trying too hard to get to Him. I was pressuring myself to have a right relationship with God, and it was blocking me from Him. I didn’t need to do that at all; instead, He would draw me to Him,” David states.

At a BIC World Missions–sponsored Ignite event in Ohio, David prayed that God would break him down to the very core of his being and use him fully. In that moment of rededication, David sensed God’s presence in a powerful way. This commitment was reinforced when New Light’s travels took them to Roxbury Holiness Camp in Pennsylvania, where the week’s theme was “Extreme Surrender.”

Looking back on the summer, David now understands that “it’s possible to look like an amazing Christian and never experience God to the fullest.” He adds, “I don’t pretend I have it all figured out, but that’s not a burden because of what God has already done for me.”

VIBES

AN EXPLORATION OF FAITH AND POPULAR CULTURE

POP CULTURE: MISSION FIELD OR MENACE?

by BRIAN ROSS

Imagine that you are preparing to serve as a missionary in China. What steps would you take to become a part of Chinese culture? You would need to study the culture in depth in order to know its people. You would become familiar with Chinese dress, social codes, forms of entertainment, and narratives that shape the culture.

Similarly, in order to think more like missionaries than like chaplains, we need to cultivate a deeper understanding of our North American culture. Films, songs, TV shows, and video games are worldview-shapers, especially for people under the age of 45. But because so many Christians denounce these entertainment forms, many of today's younger, educated adults label Christians as naïve and ignorant. By thoughtfully engaging pop culture, those of us in the Church can demonstrate that we truly care about the people we are trying to reach, even as we live for a different kingdom.

WHERE THE REAL DANGER LIES

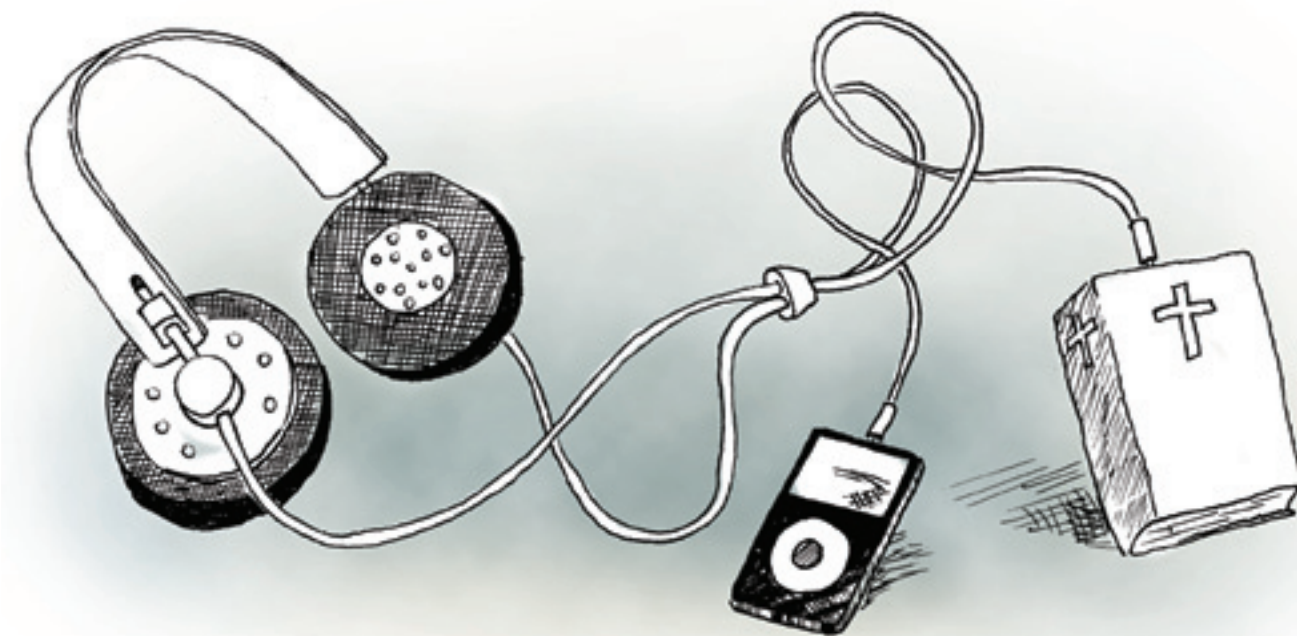
The potential that human hearts and minds will be swayed more by the spirit of the world than the Spirit of Christ always exists. However, isolating ourselves or sampling only the entertainment offerings from Christian book distributors does not prevent this from happening. The corrupting

spirit of the world is not limited to Hollywood film sets or New York City music studios; it can also seep in to “Christian” entertainment.

The ultimate danger is not pop culture. It's our rebellious hearts. We can immerse ourselves in YouTube and movies on demand and be led into selfish, sensuous thinking. And we can immerse ourselves in religious films and music and be led into selfish, morally superior thinking, like the Pharisees.

BECOMING ALL THINGS

Read Peter's sermon at Pentecost in Acts 2, and then take a look at Paul's message to the Athenians in Acts 17. The differences are startling. Peter makes repeated references to the Hebrew Scriptures as he speaks to culturally conservative, ethnically religious, Torah-savvy Jews. Paul, though equally adept (or more so) at quoting Scripture, alters his approach when interacting with the spiritually diverse and secular audience in Athens. To connect with Athenians, Paul engages with their culture, quoting Greek philosophers and poets (Acts 17:22, 28) and recognizing their commitment to “religious” or “spiritual” cultural pursuits, even as he points them to the true God (Acts 17:22–23).



Paul models what it means to become all things to all people (1 Corinthians 9:19–23). He becomes like those who do not have the law to reach those without the law. He makes himself a slave to everyone. He is not a pastor fighting a culture war. He is a missionary building bridges for the Gospel.

Jesus Himself demonstrated this when He became the incarnation of a Holy God, entering our world and culture so that we might know Him more fully. He had strong words for the separatist and “Bible only” teachers of the law.

TO ALL PEOPLE

The benefits in engaging culture are clear: We learn to speak the language and build bridges with our seeking friends. We gain a better understanding of people's values, which helps us to wisely share the Gospel. We act like Christ when we do.

Historically, the Gospel message has been presented as the way to

forgiveness, true morality, and heaven—all of which is true. Yet these are not the topics on which many of the people we are trying to reach these days are focused. Today's younger generations are searching for personal freedom and community. They want to find their identities as individuals by becoming a part of something bigger than themselves. It's unfortunate, then, when we cast the Gospel message in ways that fail to address the existential questions that many young adults are asking, or, even worse, when we present the Christian faith in ways that make it seem irrelevant or intellectually dissatisfying. We need to re-frame the way we share God's good news, just as culturally sensitive missionaries do and as Peter and Paul did.

WHEN POP CULTURE WALKS IN

Now don't get me wrong. I agree that we should avoid entertainment that tempts us where we are weak, and we should shield children from

these influences when they are not able to discuss and process the issues involved. But shielding only goes so far. If our discipleship plan is based on avoidance, we are in trouble and in denial about the true influence culture has on our everyday lives.

We are called to a mature, incarnational faith that is devoted to Jesus. Immature faith tries to hide from the world and then collapses when it can't shut the door before North American entertainment walks into the room. That is not the Spirit of Jesus. It's the spirit of the Pharisees. It's the spirit of the world.



Brian Ross is the founding pastor of Koinos Church in Reading, Pa., and a student in the Doctor of Ministry program focusing on Leadership in the Emerging Culture at George Fox Evangelical Seminary in Portland, Ore.

→ **POPULAR CULTURE** encompasses the cultural elements in any society that are perpetuated through that society's vernacular language or *lingua franca*. It comprises the daily interactions, practices, needs, desires, and cultural “moments” that make up the everyday lives of the mainstream. It can include anything from cooking, clothing, and consumption to mass media and facets of entertainment, such as sports and literature.

→ ADAPTED FROM WIKIPEDIA, THE FREE ENCYCLOPEDIA
EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/POPULAR_CULTURE

WITHOUT CURLING UP IN A BALL

Looking for truth in popular music

by DEVIN THOMAS

Now I'll be the first to acknowledge that I've hardly reconciled faith and pop culture. But I think I've found a way to follow the Biblical mandate of being “in the world but not of the world” without curling up in a ball and hiding in the corner. I've learned to look through spiritual eyes at the abundance of art in our world, seeking out messages of truth and faith in works that may or may not be expressly Christian.

Recently, I heard award-winning Christian writer Lauren Winner speak about the relationship between art and spirituality: “We cannot fully represent the light without showing the darkness first.” We're all sinners and, as such, we must learn to acknowledge the fallen-ness of humanity—even in art. When we do that, God speaks into our brokenness, revealing His truth and wholeness.

→ You can read the full story of Devin's journey into the realm of popular music at INPART.ORG.

TO THE POINT

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REFLECTING ON HOLINESS

Ken Smith
OAK RIDGES BIC
RICHMOND HILL, ON

The concept of holiness is difficult for 21st-century people to grasp because we have failed to model and teach it in its most primary meaning—being Christ-like. In all our teaching, the more we focus on Christ, the more people will be able to grasp truth and see it as something practical and viable for daily living. The Hebrew word for holy, *qadosh*, simply means “other” or “different.” If we present holiness as being like Jesus—thinking, talking, acting, and reacting differently than the average person in society—I believe people will not only understand holiness, but also have a passionate desire to pursue this high calling from God.

Jeff T. McKinnon
WESTERN HILLS BIC
CINCINNATI, OHIO

There seems to be a stigma associated with the term holy, perhaps because early in the 20th century there was a misappropriation of the term and theology of holiness. We used to define holiness as the things we didn’t do, but the scriptural mandate to be holy conflicts with this thought pattern and ideology. Rather, the Bible shows us that holiness is an issue of the heart.

Are we teaching holiness? Are we teaching and preaching that God is a holy God who demands us to be holy as well? I have observed and participated in many churches where holiness is not even an issue of concern or discussion. We have become far too concerned with the types of music, the length of service, the mode of the service, and so on. When we focus and mandate the entire Word of God, we will see a resurgence of holiness in the Church. The Bible clearly teaches that when Christ returns, it is for a spotless Church. We know we can become spotless by His blood, but we remain spotless by obeying His word.

John Pletcher
DAYBREAK COMMUNITY CHURCH
LIMERICK, Pa.

Most people today are weirded out by the concept of holiness, primarily because of a misunderstanding of its original meaning and heart intention. The early Israelites struggled in a similar fashion, and the Pharisees perpetuated the struggle. Across previous generations and centuries, God’s people have diminished holiness to following a list of negatives: “Don’t do this” and “Thou shalt not do that.”

In reality, the ancient story flowing from Leviticus and echoed by Saint Peter’s epistle reveals an extremely positive nature in the call to holiness. To be “set apart” was to mimic the very nature of God, to live a life flowing out of a love relationship with one’s Creator. “Set apart” carries the idea of being “one of a kind,” “above the norm,” “totally unique.” Walking in holiness is all about ordinary people relying on the Holy Spirit of Christ, learning to live extraordinary lives!

EVER WONDERED . . . WHAT IS THE CMD?

→ The acronym CMD stands for the Commission on Ministry and Doctrine, a team of at least five members from the General Church that is charged with reviewing crucial issues in doctrine and practice within the Brethren in Christ Church in North America. The CMD also facilitates the discernment, equipping, and credentialing of ministry leaders.

The men and women appointed to the CMD (two of whom penned feature articles for this issue of **IN PART**) must be mature, experienced, and ordained persons qualified in theology and leadership. The moderator is *ex officio* and chairs the Commission.

PARTING WORDS

HOLY INCARNATION

by PERRY ENGLE

This past year, our family has spent a lot of time in cities. With trips to Miami, Washington, D.C., New York City, and San Diego, our travels have exposed us to culture, history, diversity, and some really great food.

Many people I know dislike cities. For them, cities represent everything that’s wrong with the world: crime, noise, traffic, pollution, crowds.

But I happen to like cities. A lot.

I like the energy, the diversity, the sights, and the sounds. I like the cross-section of humanity, the art and the architecture, the best and worst of what people can be. The smell of diesel mixed with coffee and cigarettes, the clattering of construction echoing through the urban canyons. I love the interaction of thoughts and words, light and darkness, and the collision of smells where Chinatown meets Little Italy and then melts into Fisherman’s Wharf.

Cities have always reminded me of what a struggle it is to be holy and live in the world.

I’ve always heard that Christ-followers are to “be in the world, but not of it.” And that’s great, except that when you live in a city, the city gets all over you. The stink, the grime, the sheer humanity of the place attaches itself to you, and you can’t just shake it off. Similarly,



living in the world makes it entirely unlikely that some of the world won’t find its way onto you.

I try to imagine what it must have been like for Jesus to lay aside His divinity, clothe Himself in human flesh, and set His feet down on this filthy lump of clay. How gracious He was in accepting His incarnation, how patient in dealing with humanity, how engaged with a culture that was so thoroughly not His own.

I have come to the conclusion that to live in true holiness is to follow the example of Jesus, to embrace His calling to live as servants in a horribly misshapen world. If holiness truly is attained by becoming more like Jesus, then whether in urban

centers or small towns, we must live more closely engaged with culture, not separated from it—conversing, not condemning—interacting, rather than avoiding.

Can light live in fellowship with the darkness? Absolutely not. Light exists in proximity to darkness, confronting and engaging it, dispelling and transforming it. Like a light on a lamp stand. Like a city set on a hill.

Like a God who so loved the world.



Perry Engle is the bishop of the Midwest and Pacific Conferences of the BIC Church. He and his wife, Marta, and their three daughters live in the ever-expanding city of Ontario, Calif.

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→ **THIS PAST SUMMER**, we learned that the title *Seek* belonged to another Christian publisher. So, after less than three years with *Seek*, the search for a new name for this magazine began.
It ended in I Corinthians 13 with the words “in part.”

→ FOR MORE ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAME **IN PART** AND THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THE DESIGN, GO TO INPART.ORG.