



IN PART

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE BRETHREN IN CHRIST COMMUNITY IN NORTH AMERICA

Fall 2010

IS IT OKAY TO ASK GOD WHY?

PLUS:

Walking the
“long road to
residency” with
immigrants

AND

How health
concerns are
weighing on
the Church

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I appreciate reading articles about worship and am glad to find anything that is helpful to us all in this day when different styles of worship are present among us. However, in light of the fact that we as a denomination believe in ten Core Values, one of which is “Pursuing Peace,” I do not feel it is appropriate to use the popular term of “worship wars.” I have sometimes heard this used, but I don’t believe it fits with the spirit of our Core Values to have “wars” about anything, and I don’t believe that we do.

Lois Jean Sider
WELLANDPORT, ON

This [Summer 2010] issue of *In Part* was absolutely great. More truthful and more biblical than anything I have seen or read on worship. We cannot worship God and hate our brother. To quote [from the “To Our Core” article by] Don McNiven, “Lifting your hands in worship is no more holy than helping your neighbor rake his yard.”

It needs to be said that we cannot go to church to worship, we *must go worshipping!*

Mel Brubaker
SALTILLO, PA.

I know you want to put this matter to rest and I make a comment only to, hopefully, help you do that. I like the paper stock you’re using, both for the reasons you mention and also because the glossy stock gives off a glare that I find annoying. Keep up the good work as to content also.

Pete Willms
ABILENE, KANS.

THE VIEW FROM HERE

A few months ago, my husband and I joined his family at the beach for one last summertime hurrah. Julia, our bubbly, almost-2-year-old niece, was the weekend entertainment, cracking everyone up with her antics and attempts at talking.

Although she hadn’t learned more than a few dozen words yet, an inexplicable fascination (bordering on obsession) with the Suburban we’d driven on the trip had inspired Julia to add the word “burb” to her lexicon.

In addition to this non-traditional vocabulary set, one of her favorite lines to repeat was the classic, “What’s that?” (pronounced *uh-sat?*). Over the course of the weekend, her curiosity prompted us to identify everything from shells and sand to kites and kiddie pools. Eventually, someone commented on her generous use of the expression, and her father replied, “It’s better than ‘Why?’”

At some point in life, most of us begin to ask the question, “Why?” We usually start off with things that seem straightforward enough to us but drive our parents mad, like “Why did that toy fall?” and “Why is the sun hot?” and “Why is that a girl?”

It’s not long, though, before our “Why” questions evolve into expressions of defiance, as in “Why should I listen to you?” And honestly, not

many of us ever grow out of demanding an answer to that.

Yet as our innocent childhood queries demonstrate, asking “Why?” is not always an act of rebellion; it can indicate a desire to more fully comprehend, as well. When it comes to faith, I’ve found that questioning plays a vital role in leading a thoughtful, authentic life in Christ. Even as we affirm our convictions, we continue to grapple with questions like, “But why do I believe this?” and “Why should I do that?”

Fortunately, we have a God who welcomes our curiosity—and who is even humble enough to meet us in our rebellion. We might not always receive a clear-cut answer, wrapped in paper with a bow on top. But we know that the Lord’s utmost desire is for our hearts to be with Him in what we do. Our Creator doesn’t call us to soulless compliance or robotic conformity but to “wholehearted obedience” of our minds, wills, bodies, and souls.

And sometimes, as the articles in this issue of *In Part* illustrate, this means asking not only, “Why should I follow you?” but also “How can I best follow you?”

Kristine
Kristine N. Frey

IN PART™

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Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. I Corinthians 13:12

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IN MOTION

A GOSPEL FOR ALL PEOPLE, BAR NONE

One pastor uses city nightlife for ministry

“It’s not because they don’t want God. There’s just a disconnect with church.”

Jeremy Ritch is talking about the folks who have joined the Bible study he and his wife, Hannah, lead at McGrath’s Pub on Locust Street in downtown Harrisburg, Pa. As Jeremy, of Harrisburg BIC, explains, many in the group have little or no religious background, and most express hurts from or suspicion about organized religion. But they trust Jeremy and Hannah, who bring the Gospel to them in the places where they congregate with friends.

On this night, Chris Tomlinson, who also assists with the ministry, is teaching from Matthew 6 on the different aspects of prayer. Music and noise drift in from the bar in the room next door to the study. Chris hones in on the words of the Lord’s Prayer and encourages listeners to “just be yourself as you talk to God. When you ask forgiveness for something, know you don’t have to keep begging for it. God’s like ‘Dude, I’m

over it.’” Members of the group nod in agreement.

The six men and two women here tonight are in their 20s or 30s and share interests in music, art, tattoo art, classic cars, roller derby, and mixed martial arts. During the week, they stay in touch on Facebook. Some of them are eating dinner, while others are sipping a beer or smoking a cigarette as they study. Chris has distributed a few copies of the New Testament, and everyone follows along as he reads from the text.

One of men, Mike Fritz, tells me he had just been through the breakup of a long-term relationship and the death of his brother when he met Jeremy and the group. He saw the care and mutual support between members and says, “I thought, ‘I have to become a part of that.’”

Jeremy and Chris spend time in the city’s bars building relationships, particularly with wait staff and bartenders. “It’s not an easy job to work ‘til two or three in the morning,” says Jeremy, who also pastors Holdfast



↑ Although uneasy in traditional church settings, those who meet on Monday nights at McGrath’s Pub in Harrisburg, Pa., feel comfortable at the Bible study that Jeremy and Hannah Ritch lead there.

Ministries, a church that meets on Sunday evenings to accommodate attendees’ varied work schedules. “A lot of them listen to other peoples’ problems all night. They like being able to tell you what’s going on in their lives.” He adds, “We really feel called to these people.”

👉 HOLDFASTMINISTRIES.COM

➔ [PEGGY MUMPER](#)
Harrisburg (Pa.) BIC

more at INPART.org

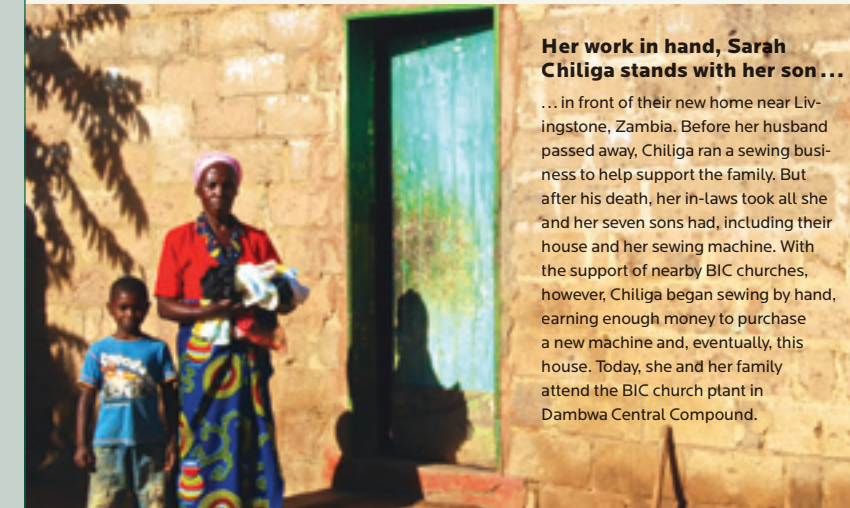
- 🏥 **Cure for AIDS?**: BIC doctors in Macha, Zambia, may have found a way to eradicate the virus in the next 40 years
- 📀 **Women as Pastors DVD**: A new small-group study series based upon the “Women as Pastors” Impact Seminar is now available. *Order before Nov. 30 to receive a \$5 discount!*
- 📷 **Photo album**: See the families who have benefited from the Family to Family initiative, which has raised \$210,000 (USD)
- 🙏 **2011 BIC Week of Prayer and Fasting**: Find resources and information as we celebrate the mosaic of North American BIC churches in 2011
- 🕊 **Finding peace**: BIC missionaries Doug and Barb Miller share about the ministry they’ve continued in Malawi, despite an accident that left Barb paralyzed

This is our story

This spring, 195 BIC men and women attended an Impact Seminar sponsored by Equipping for Ministry entitled “Women as Pastors.” Here’s a history of women’s leadership in the BIC:

1770s BIC Church begins; no evidence of women in leadership	1878 BIC Council rules “sisters have full liberty to prophesy or [testify]” but not to preach publicly	1880 Sunday School Movement offers women the opportunity to teach and lead	1887 Women address issues with the “brotherhood” through articles in the <i>Evangelical Visitor</i>
1893 Three women and two men staff first BIC tent meeting	1895 A February <i>Visitor</i> article argues that women’s public visibility will have “demoralizing effect”	1895 A June <i>Visitor</i> article counters that the BIC should recognize women, who “manifest more interest in the salvation of souls than the brethren”	1897 General Conference (GC) approves five women as foreign missionaries
1905 GC permits women to be ordained but not to perform ecclesiastical duties	1910 GC resolves “we do not consider it the right of women to stand on equality with men”	1921 In Oklahoma, Anna Kraybill Engle is ordained by a bishop but not recognized by BIC	1933 GC reinstates 1905 ruling
1921–40 Only one article about women in ministry appears in <i>Visitor</i>	1970 <i>Visitor</i> article contends, “[Excluding women from ministry] is an affront to the dignity and a waste of the talent of BIC women”	1979 Theological study concludes “the sum of Scripture does not forbid women to serve”	1982 GC amends <i>Manual of Doctrine & Gov’t</i> to affirm women in pastoral ministry
1984 Two women are licensed; none are ordained	1987 Lynda Kelly becomes first ordained female pastor	1994 Total of seven women are ordained pastors	2010 Total of 41 women are licensed and 14 are ordained

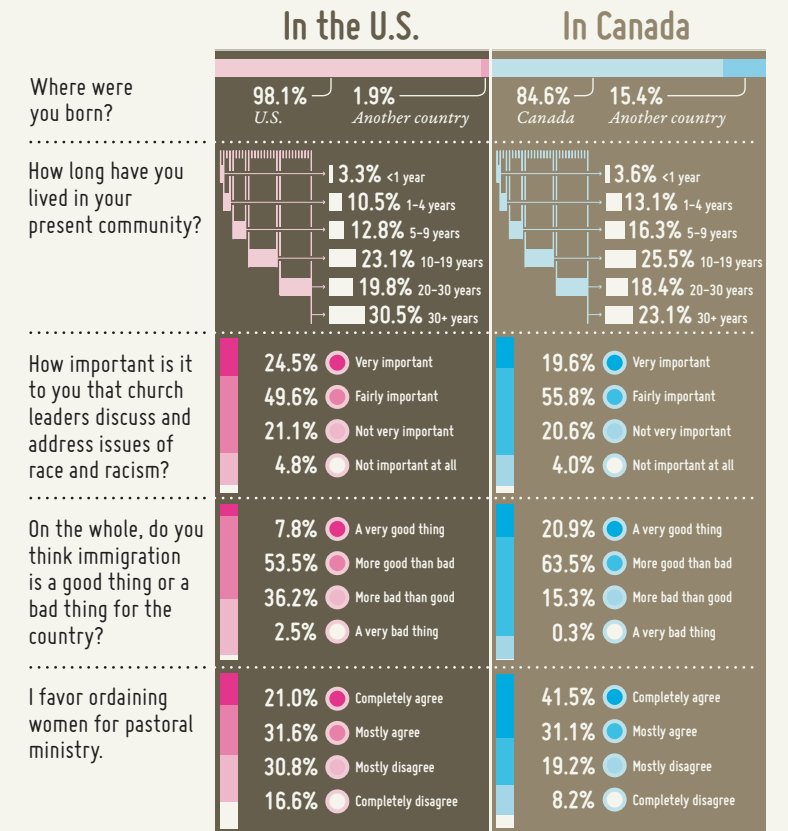
IN MOTION



Her work in hand, Sarah Chiliga stands with her son...
... in front of their new home near Livingstone, Zambia. Before her husband passed away, Chiliga ran a sewing business to help support the family. But after his death, her in-laws took all she and her seven sons had, including their house and her sewing machine. With the support of nearby BIC churches, however, Chiliga began sewing by hand, earning enough money to purchase a new machine and, eventually, this house. Today, she and her family attend the BIC church plant in Dambwa Central Compound.

Church Member Profile

BIC perspectives on nationality, immigration, & women in ministry



Faith-switching

A recent study by the Barna Group found that among adults in the U.S. ...

75% are the same religious faith today as during childhood

12% are “ex-Christians” who grew up Christian but have become atheist, agnostic, or a follower of another faith

3% converted to Christianity for the first time

7% moved from Protestant to Catholic or vice versa

1 out of 3 who experienced a major faith change did so before age 20

2 out of 3 who experienced one did so before age 30

PART OF THE WHOLE

FOCUSING ON ONE WOMAN'S FAITH

MADDY ENGLE

She's survived growing up as a bishop's daughter and her first year at Messiah College (Grantham, Pa.). As she completes her summer internship with the Atlantic Conference and returns to school, this California girl talks about life, learning, and her newfound love for the countryside. Maddy Engle is ready for your questions.

Has Ontario, Calif., always been your home?

We lived in Pomona, Calif., up until I was 10. One time, at our house there, my dad found a handgun and a bag of drugs on the porch in our backyard! Then, when my dad got the position as bishop, we moved to Ontario.

What's it like to be the daughter of a bishop?

Well, there's nothing super special about it—I don't get to go to Messiah for free or anything. I guess I sometimes feel that the expectations are higher or that I'm being watched because I'm the bishop's daughter. But I also think it's really cool that I can go somewhere and have that instant connection because people know who my dad is. It's a good conversation starter.

You just finished your first year at Messiah College. How did you end up there?

I knew I wanted to get out of California and experience something different. I didn't really think I would go to Messiah, but when I visited, it felt good. I'm not really a logical thinker, so I didn't list out the reasons for why I wanted to go or anything. It was more like, I'm going to do this because it feels right.

Have you enjoyed your time in the Northeast so far?

It's been like a breath of fresh air, an escape. Every time someone asks me, I say, "I prefer it out here." The scenery is beautiful. If I'm driving through the country, and you know how sometimes you can see out really, really far, across all the hills? Just looking at it, I love that.

This summer, you and five others interned at the Atlantic Conference. What did you do?

Early on, we spent a lot of time planning Sunday School and VBS programs. Everything we did—the games and crafts and skits and music—all of it was stuff that we'd thought of. Then, we went around to different BIC churches and put on the programs, just to give the children's ministry workers a break.

What got you interested in the Conference's internship program?

Honestly, this opportunity just kind of came up. I pushed it away for a while because I thought, This really isn't my thing. I don't think I can do this. I don't know that I'm strong enough in my faith to do this. But when I got the job, I thought, Ok, maybe God's trying to push me. So, I was excited about it, but also scared because I didn't know what I was doing. It was a push for me.

FAVORITE COFFEE-HOUSE TREAT:	CHAI TEA
MAC OR PC:	MAC... ALL THE WAY!
COLLEGE MAJOR:	SOCIAL WORK
ALL-NIGHTERS PULLED IN FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE:	3



PHOTO: COURTESY OF MADDY ENGLE

What did you learn during that time?

I know I did a lot of growing this summer—more things than I can pinpoint. But one thing was learning to be flexible. We went to so many different churches, and nothing was ever the same. We had to learn to work with anything and everyone. I think that's something that will really come in handy in the future.

TO OUR CORE

EXPLORING THE CENTRAL VALUES OF THE BIC CHURCH

A GAIN OR A LOSS?

Weighing the costs and benefits of faith in Christ

by JOHN ZUCK

I remember expecting as a child that following Jesus would be costly. I'd need to turn my back on all that was fun and instead lead a hard life with many sacrifices involved. No wonder I struggled for years, counting the cost of receiving the "free" gift of salvation!

Eventually, I decided that, though it would be a great sacrifice, I would just grit my teeth, bite the bullet, and follow Jesus. But I discovered, as you likely have, that life in Christ does not doom us to lifelong misery and suffering. Jesus has offered joy, even in sorrow; peace in the midst of turmoil; fulfillment, even in frustration; and life with meaning and purpose in an aimless society.

Now, I admit, it has not always been easy or fun. And make no mistake: Many, many of our spiritual brothers and sisters have paid dearly for their decision to trust and obey. In fact, Christian evangelist Billy Graham equated Jesus' charge for believers to "take up the cross and follow me" to "come, and bring your electric chair with you."

Christ calls us to forsake our self-obsession and publicly bear the cross, even when it's not to our advantage. And we're to do this daily for the long haul of life!

This might sound like a terrible loss, but, in truth, it's a gain. When we choose to die to ourselves, the empowering presence of the Spirit enables us to live beyond our greatest expectations.

→ **FOLLOWING JESUS:** We value wholehearted obedience to Christ Jesus through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.



John Zuck has served as bishop of the Great Lakes Conference since 2004. He and his wife, Connie, live in West Milton, Ohio, where he enjoys woodworking, gardening, and taxidermy. John is also known for his unusual hobby of driving north, following routes to their northernmost points.

BUT WHY?

**The vital role of asking
questions when
God speaks to us**

BY DAVID M. CSINOS

**In 1988, Nike Inc., unveiled its
new ad campaign by airing a
commercial with this message:**

**Just kick it. Just bounce it. Just spike it.
Just ‘arrghh’ it. Just zap it. Just flip it.
Just smash it. Just slam it. Just rock it.
Just face it. Just do it.**

And with that, three little words became cultural icons.

For over two decades, Nike has doggedly promoted its appeal to “just do it” through the endorsements of high-rolling athletic stars like Michael Jordan, Roger Federer, Mia Hamm, and Lance Armstrong. Whether on billboards, TV, the radio, or the internet, these celebrities have reached consumers with Nike’s message, a demand for unequivocal obedience: *Don’t ask questions. Don’t make excuses. Don’t complain. Just obey.* And apparently, we have, with Nike garnering almost \$20 billion in revenue in 2009 alone.

Yet true obedience extends well beyond brand loyalty. When God calls believers to trust and obey, God isn’t hoping to persuade us into buying some product. Nor does God shush our questions or command us to “just do it.” So how does God communicate instructions to us? And what should our obedience look like? Questions like these lie at the heart of what it means to follow Jesus.

Beyond just doing it

A “just do it” approach to obedience might make it seem as though it’s based upon action. Too often, we train children to think that obedience means the outward performance of an authority figure’s instructions, watering down the message to “you just need to *do* it” or “you just need to follow the rules.” And I’ve heard my share of sermons that define trusting God as simply doing what God (or the Bible/pastor) says to do, without questioning the purpose or intentions of the mandate.

While obedience is certainly about action, that accounts for only half of its meaning. True, holistic obedience is a matter of the heart and head as much as it is a matter of the body. It comes not only when we do what we are told or asked to do, but also when we willingly submit ourselves to the one offering the instructions.

This idea of holistic obedience—one of body, mind, and soul—is ingrained in the lifeblood of Pietism, one of the key sources of inspiration and theology for the Brethren in Christ. In a sermon entitled “Marks of the New Birth,” 18th-century theologian John Wesley teaches that a vital mark of conversion is “universal obedience to Him we love, and conformity to His will; obedience to all the commands of God, internal and external; obedience of the heart and of the life; in every temper, and in all manner of conversation.”

Obedience comes not only when we do what we are told or asked to do, but also when we willingly submit ourselves to the one offering the instructions.

According to Menno Simons, the 16th-century Anabaptist reformer whose ideas have greatly influenced Brethren in Christ life and thought, obedience is not only the most vital aspect of the Christian life, but also a defining aspect of the true Church. When the body (the Church) fails to obey the head (Christ), it dies.

As children of God

In his writings, Simons refers to Christians as “children of God,” comparing believers’ submission to God with children’s submission to their parents. By exploring our relationship with God in terms of a parent–child relationship, we can better grasp our divine parent’s call to obedience.

In 1966, developmental psychologist Diana Baumrind first proposed three general styles of parenting in her book *Child*

But where?

David points to these books for direction on nurturing a child’s faith

- » *Making a Home for Faith*
Elizabeth F. Caldwell
- » *How to Bury a Goldfish and Other Ceremonies and Celebrations for Everyday Life*
Virginia Lang and Louise Nader
- » *In the Midst of Chaos*
Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore
- » *ChildFaith*
Donald and Brenda Ratcliff
- » *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey*
Catherine Stonehouse
- » *The Power of God at Home*
J. Bradley Wigger

Go to INPART.ORG for more of David’s picks!

Development: authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative.

Authoritarian parents affirm the “just do it” slogan, telling their children precisely what to do and expecting their complete, unquestioning obedience. Permissive parents, on the other hand, give their children a large degree of freedom (too much freedom, in fact) and let them do whatever they would like to do.

Looking at the extremes, authoritarian parents are all rules with no respect for autonomy or freedom, while permissive parents are all freedom with no respect for the value of expectations and guidelines.

Authoritative parents lie in the middle of these two extremes. They provide their children with clear expectations and rules for behavior without becoming taskmasters.

A major difference between authoritarian and authoritative parents is that the latter respects the individual freedom and autonomy of their children. Authoritative parents make it a priority to provide reasons for the guidelines and rules that they put in place in order for their children to understand why the rules exist. This enables their children to obey with their hearts, minds, and actions.

A few years after Baumrind proposed this theory, E.E. Maccoby and J. A. Martin identified a fourth parenting style: neglectful. Neglectful parents, as one can guess, put their own needs and wants first, often disregarding those of their children.

A divine parenting style

As a number of biblical passages bear out, God, our heavenly parent, offers a fairly clear example of authoritative parenting. The first chapter of Isaiah, for instance, records the Lord’s words to Israel about the consequences of the nation’s choices. After laying out God’s expectations, God says, “If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.”

The gift of the Bible itself also attests to God’s authoritative parenting style. Through it, not only can we learn what we must do to be obedient, but for thousands of years, we have sought to uncover the intentions behind God’s commands.

On the other hand, some of the Bible’s passages might seem to paint God as a domineering and authoritarian parent. In Genesis 22, for example, the Lord gives Abraham a command to sacrifice his son, and Abraham attempts to fulfill it without asking for or receiving an explanation from God.

At first, this might seem to indicate that God holds an unyielding relationship with humanity. However, recent scholars have suggested that questioning God’s intentions and instruction actually plays an integral role in this passage.

In *The Child in the Bible*, author Terence Fretheim points out that just a few pages back, in Chapter 18, the Bible depicts Abraham inquiring after the Lord’s intentions to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. This earlier account, Fretheim argues, demonstrates that God invites—and even seriously considers—our questions. We learn that it’s not wrong for us to wonder about and even directly question God’s command for Abraham to sacrifice his son.

From this perspective, the story of Abraham and Isaac becomes a testament to God as a loving, authoritative parent, with clear expectations and respect for human autonomy and freedom.

God trusts that we will ask questions when we are unsure about the instructions, commands, and guidance that God offers to us. After all, without comprehension, we can obey only with the body but not the mind, the external without the internal, and our obedience would be incomplete.

Authority as love

The Hebrew verb for “to obey” (*šāma*) is the same verb for “to listen.” In order to follow God, we must first be listening for and open to God’s voice. Then, as God offers us instructions and expectations, we’re encouraged to ask questions so that we can obey fully, with our bodies, hearts, and minds.

God’s authoritative approach to “parenting” serves as a model for anyone in a relationship of authority—employers and employees, teachers and students, pastors and congregants, parents and children. Following God’s example, those in

leadership should provide guidance, invite questions, and respect the personalities and autonomy of others.

When we model authoritative leadership or practice wholehearted obedience, we reflect God, for at the core of both leadership and obedience is love.



David M. Csinos recently concluded his time at Union Presbyterian Seminary (Richmond, Va.), where he studied children’s spiritual formation. He is currently a doctoral student at Emmanuel College in the University of Toronto. David has worked in children’s ministry at several churches, including Westheights BIC (Kitchener, ON) and has penned several articles as well as a forthcoming book on children’s ministry and spirituality. He and his wife, Jenny, live in Ontario. SUCHASTHESE.WORDPRESS.COM



Official use only

Paperwork, patience, & pride

Gloria James walks the "long road to residency" with would-be U.S. immigrants, one application at a time

Box 20
Box 21
Box 22a
Box 22b
Box 22c
Box 22d

by Devin C. Manzullo-Thomas

CONTINUE TO PAGE 11

Signature _____ Date _____

As an immigration associate for West Coast Mennonite Central Committee, Gloria James spends a lot of time doing paperwork: filling out applications, photocopying birth certificates, filing forms. It's sometimes tedious but always rewarding, she says—especially when she gets to help clients like Frank and Carmen Rodriguez.*

Early one Monday morning, the newlywed Rodriguezes arrive at the gray, stucco-roofed office building in Upland, Calif., that Gloria (the only MCC case worker in Southern California) shares with the staff of the Pacific and Midwest Conferences of the Brethren in Christ Church.

Gloria—a short, fiery Peruvian-American woman—is ready for them: It's the couple's fourth visit to the office, and today they'll be working to put the finishing touches on Carmen's application for legal resident status.

Huddled around a desk, the group gets to work on the piles of documentation paperwork Gloria has already laid out. Gloria's pen moves furiously across the documents; the bangles around her wrist rattle metallically as she works to fill in the correct blanks and check the correct boxes.

Throughout the process, she maintains conversation with Frank and Carmen, double-checking the information she's writing on the sheets, shifting fluidly from English to Spanish and back again for the benefit of her bilingual clients. (Carmen, who speaks some English, prefers to converse in her native tongue; Frank, a fluent English-speaker, has been trying to learn Spanish to communicate more intimately with his wife.)

After more than half an hour of work, Gloria finally comes to the bottom of a stack of forms and looks up at the couple. "*No te olvides,*" she intones. "Don't forget." Gloria taps the bottom of a form. "Sign. *Escribe.* Lots of times, Immigration rejects applications that are not signed."

She taps it again. "Very important."

The scratching of Gloria's pen overtakes the room once more, until Frank raises a question: "Gloria, do you enjoy this kind of work?"

Gloria stops writing and looks up. "I do," she replies. "It's my passion. It's a challenge, but it's what God wants me to do."

"Takes a pretty dedicated person," Frank observes.

Gloria smiles. "When I came to the U.S., I didn't know this is what I'd be doing—helping other people. I came here to help myself!" She chuckles. "But I love it. This is what I'm meant to do."

Finding faith, finding purpose

In 2000, Gloria left her native Peru and came to the U.S. on a visitor visa to explore educational opportunities. Settling near Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., Gloria connected with family members already living in the area, including her aunt, who immediately invited Gloria to attend her church, The Lord's House, a BIC congregation in Alta Loma.

"My belief background is Catholic, so I knew God in a certain way," says Gloria. When Gloria accepted her aunt's invitation, she found herself in an unfamiliar—although warmly welcoming—faith community.

After a few visits to The Lord's House, Gloria's aunt asked her a pointed question. Gloria recalls, "She said, 'Do you believe in God?' I said, 'What kind of question is that? Of course I believe in God.' But then I realized that my aunt meant other things as well—did I know Christ as my savior? Did I have a relationship with Him?" Further reflection on her aunt's question led Gloria to accept Christ during a service at The Lord's House.

Gloria remembers that period of her life as challenging, but ultimately rewarding. "I was learning many things at the same time," she says.

“I was learning the English language, I was learning about God, and I was learning about the different ways [Christians] show their faith—the ways you should put faith into practice. It was amazing. I thought, You know, this is something else. Nobody ever taught me about God like this. I never knew I was special, never knew I was free from sin because of what Jesus did for me.”

After marrying her husband, U.S.-born David, in 2002, Gloria began to consider pursuing legal resident status in the U.S. “I had to go through the system,” she recalls. “I said, ‘I’m here, I’m in this country, I’m married—what’s next?’ I knew with the kind of visa I had here, I was just able to visit and to go to school, but that’s it.”

So Gloria started investigating her options—a difficult prospect for someone still learning English and lacking a guide through the maze of applications and affidavits. Opting to tackle the seemingly insurmountable pile of paperwork without assistance, Gloria soon found herself overwhelmed.

“To deal with Immigration, with the government, is not easy,” she recounts. “My case wasn’t denied, but it was rejected. My whole bundle of paperwork was sent back to me two times, just for minor errors.”

In the midst of the tumult, Gloria found herself in church, offering up an unexpected prayer: “I said, ‘You know what, God? If you put somebody in my path and they are going through the same nightmare that I’m going through right now, I promise you—I’m going to help them. I will serve them in any way you want.’”

Gloria laughs now, thinking back on that prayer: “I never meant to have a job doing this!” But, she admits, God works in mysterious ways. “This work is what keeps me alive.”

In late 2003, shortly after receiving notice that her case had been approved, Gloria applied for a job with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), a worldwide disaster relief and advocacy ministry of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches.

“I didn’t know anything about MCC,” Gloria admits, “but they were looking for a person in Southern California to work with their immigration program—someone who was bilingual and who was able to work with people from different backgrounds. I was so excited, because I’m that type of person!”

The job for which Gloria applied focused on providing immigrants with documentation assistance and in adjusting their residency status. Although initially fearful that she was

not qualified for the position because she didn’t have a background in law, Gloria says that her experience as an immigrant who had gone through the system eventually won her the job.

Accepting the position with MCC, Gloria notes, “was very powerful, because for me it was the beginning of showing my faith. Since the time that I became a Christian, I said, ‘God, use me. I know these are my goals, I know these are my priorities—but you might have other plans for me. I want to be obedient to you.’”

Now, almost seven years later, Gloria’s still gets a thrill helping folks like Frank and Carmen. “This work is what keeps me alive,” she says. “I love feeling that God is using me to serve my clients.”

Since the time that I became a Christian, I said, ‘God, use me. I know these are my goals—but you might have other plans for me. I want to be obedient to you.’

BOX A

BOX B

BOX C

Setting the record straight on immigration

Gloria admits that her work isn’t without difficulties—especially, she says, because immigration is such “a hot-button issue.”

“Sometimes in the U.S., we tend to judge immigrants: ‘Oh, they come illegally,’” she notes. “But a lot of people come from different circumstances and for different reasons—economic freedom, religious freedom. There are people who come here looking for new opportunities. And most of them come here risking everything.”

Gloria points out that many undocumented immigrants “live in the shadows of society” for fear of persecution, stigmatization, or castigation. She believes that the Church has an important role to play in assisting such people.

“A lot of times, immigrants can talk but nobody will hear them,” she observes. “So as citizens, we can speak up. We can advocate on behalf of the immigrants in our midst.”

Though much of her work for MCC focuses on providing direct services, Gloria occasionally engages in conversations to “set the record straight on the issue of immigration” by holding informational seminars at area congregations.

“We need to help our constituent churches understand that MCC is asking for immigration reform that is not going to be amnesty,” Gloria says. “It’s an immigration reform for which only a certain group of people are going to meet the requirements—in other words, it will affect people who really deserve to be here. Of course, also there are a lot of people who make mistakes but deserve a second chance, so we have to take that into account.”

Sometimes in the U.S., we tend to judge immigrants. But people come from different circumstances and for different reasons—economic freedom, religious freedom, new opportunities. And most of them come here risking everything.

Gloria acknowledges that there are many strongly held opinions on both sides of the immigration issue. “It’s hard. I understand it’s hard,” she says. “But every time it comes to immigration, I just want to think with my heart. I want to remember that we are all creations of God; we are all brothers and sisters.”

The long, arduous race

After months of work and almost an hour of watching and waiting in Gloria’s office, a palpable feeling of relief washes over Frank and Carmen. They look on as their caseworker slides the thick stack of documents—upon which so much of their future depends—into a catalog envelope.

“There we go,” says Gloria, handing the bundle to the couple. She tells them that the package is ready to be mailed to U.S. Immigration Services. They’ve finally

completed the first leg of the long, arduous race toward legal resident status.

Moments like this, says Gloria, fill her with a lot of pride—not selfish pride at her own work, but pride for the individuals and couples who are making the commitment to do the right thing and pursue a legal change of status.

“When clients come here seeking their change in legal status, it’s like the beginning of a new life,” she shares. “And I’m part of that. I was part of the foundation for that new life. Knowing that fills me with so much joy. I think I will do this kind of work for the rest of my life.”

With a few parting words of instruction from Gloria, the couple rises to leave the office. As Gloria waves good-

bye, Carmen turns and touches her arm. “Gloria—*por tu trabajo muchas gracias*.” Thanks so much for your work.

Gloria cracks a smile. “*De nada. Mucho gusto*.” No problem. My pleasure.

* For reasons of confidentiality, some of the names used in this article have been changed.

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- Read MCC’s immigration reform recommendations
- Walk the trek along the U.S.–Mexico border
- Learn how one BIC church has served the refugees in its community
- Access study guides to four films on faith and immigration



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VIBES

AN EXPLORATION OF FAITH AND POPULAR CULTURE

A SECOND LOOK AT THE SECOND HELPING

How health concerns are weighing on the Church

by LAWRENCE OLSON

It's a Tuesday night, and I'm at home channel-surfing. After flipping through a few stations, I come to a stop on NBC's hit reality series "The Biggest Loser." As I watch the contestants sweat off the pounds, I wonder, Why am I fascinated by a show like this? And when did weight become such an issue for so many people?

Most of us would readily identify fitness as a problem in North American society. Less frequently would we say it's an issue in our own churches. However, studies have shown that the frequency of obesity among believers is as high—and sometimes higher—than that of the general population.

Whether or not we like to admit it, North Americans are facing a health crisis. For far too long, we've avoided the topic, either because we don't want to give up our lives of ease and excess, or because speaking into the deeper issues that cause weight gain is too painful. But in our denial, we, as the Church, have neglected to remember that leading a sanctified life means pursuing health—mental, spiritual, and physical. And if this shift in priorities should start anywhere, it should be in the community of faith.

Called to fast food?

For a period of time in my life, I could eat anything and not gain an ounce. In fact, at one point, I wanted to play football but couldn't meet the minimum weight standard.

This changed dramatically around my 40th birthday. While working in

church planting, I frequented convenience stores and fast-food outlets, justifying it in my own mind by reasoning that my ministry was important and I was just trying to steward my time well.

By 60, I needed several coronary stents, which the surgeon jokingly referred to as "Big Mac appliances," and I still have a stubbornly high cholesterol level.

As numerous reports have indicated, maintaining an overweight condition for a prolonged period of time shortens one's lifespan and increases the likelihood of health risks like Type II diabetes, cancer, and high blood pressure. Even so, I suspect that others have, like me, used the misguided excuse of following Jesus to justify our extra pounds and less than great health.

But Christ has called us to love God and to serve others. When we take care of our bodies, we honor the Lord's craftsmanship and are more able to serve with our whole selves.

Weighing in on holistic health

Realizing that our physical health and our spiritual lives are not entirely separate issues, we in the community of faith must consider ways to encourage more wholesome practices in both areas.

For those who recognize that they struggle with weight—whether weighing too much or too little—a good place to start may be your family doctor. Doctors can conduct a standard wellness test called the BMI (body mass index), which charts a healthy



body weight for you based upon your height. If prompted, most physicians will recommend a weight and exercise program appropriate for you and can help you sort out the conflicting claims for incorporating vitamins and additives into your diet.

Another step toward holistic health involves training ourselves to recognize and confront the false, conflicting messages that retailers peddle about physical appearance. On one hand, culture insists that to be thin and fit is to be beautiful. (Thus the success of a show like "The Biggest Loser.") Yet these same voices also tell us that we should never say "no" to ourselves, and then they offer products that, like the characters in *Alice in Wonderland*, relentlessly call us to "eat me." And so, even as society shoves a generally unattainable template of perfection down our throats, it continues

to spoon-feed us products to satisfy our voracious appetites as consumers.

Take stock of the ideas presented to you—through friends, movie stars, TV shows, magazines, or other sources. As your awareness of both overt and disguised messages about weight grows, consider how these messages influence your private judgments, stereotypes, and perceptions. Seek out others who strive not to reach a certain waist size but to make consistently healthy lifestyle choices. And speak out against ad campaigns more interested in selling a body image than a product. (Warning: There are many.)

Inviting everyone to the table

Equally vital is to consider with compassion the reasons why a person might struggle with weight. At times, the visible evidences originate from unseen causes, like depression, side effects of a medication, loneliness, or attempts to fulfill cultural ideals. Most times, improvements to one's physical health will be limited until these deeper issues are addressed.

These influences are exacerbated by systems that support food inequalities. In a country where a two-liter bottle of soda costs around one dollar and a gallon of milk, about three, individuals in lower socioeconomic circles can more easily afford less expensive, processed foods than the more expensive lean meats and fresh produce. Yet these cheaper options come at a price: They're full of empty, less sustaining calories from excessive fat, sodium, and sugar.

And so, the greater one's food insecurity, the more likely they are to purchase processed and fast foods, and the more likely they are to experience weight gain and other health issues. Thus, people may become overweight not because they simply consume too much, but because they don't have access to healthy, more fulfilling food options.

Again, this should move us to support efforts seeking to keep fresh foods as accessible, affordable, and untainted as possible. It should also motivate us to reconsider the foods that we donate to local food banks, offering not the dregs of our cupboards—the sodium-laden soups, sugary cereals, and nutrient-bare canned vegetables—but the items that communicate our concern for the well-being of everyone in our communities, regardless of economic status.

Our family feasts

As the body of Christ, it's our job and our joy to encourage each other toward sanctification, temperance, and healthy living. Rather than approaching weight as an issue of appearance, we need to recognize the hidden injustices and insecurities that might be behind our weight struggles. And we should remember that we can better perform God's work in the world when we are healthy in mind, body, and soul.

As I turn off the TV for the evening, it occurs to me that maybe we should think about updating those trusty old potluck recipes with a lot of salt, sugar, and butter. Heading to bed, I chuckle at an idea for a new reality series: documenting a church as it transforms its potluck dinners from creamy casseroles and decadent desserts to marinated meats and fresh fruit salads. Let the drama begin!

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→ Add trusty new recipes (recommended by BIC cooks) to your culinary repertoire



Larry Olson is a bi-vocational pastor at Light of Christ Fellowship, a BIC church in Johnston, Iowa. Over his years in ministry, he's served as a missionary in the Aleutian Islands; a church planter in Colorado, Wisconsin, and Wyoming; and a chaplain for the Air Force Reserve. Now that he's in semi-retirement, he has more time for his hobby of providing authentic jacks for antique car restorations. He and his wife, Karen, have six children.

More die in the United States of too much food than of too little.

JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH
The Affluent Society

THE SKINNY ON OBESITY

12.5 MILLION People who watched the January 2010 premiere of NBC's "The Biggest Loser: Couples"

90 Countries that have aired "The Biggest Loser" since its 2004 premiere

OVERWEIGHT ▷ Excess amount of body weight (including fat, muscle, bone, and water) **US.**

OBESE ▷ Excess amount of body fat

in the U.S. in 2009*

26.7% of adults were classified as obese

25% of whites, **31%** of Hispanics, and **37%** of blacks were obese

33% of people without a high school diploma were obese

in CANADA in 2009*

17.9% of adults were obese

43.9% of adult women and **59.2%** of adult men were obese or overweight

36% of First Nations adults were obese (2003)

22.5% U.S. children living in food insecure households in 2008

17% U.S. children identified as obese in 2008

1 billion Overweight adults in the world

300 million Obese adults in the world

It is not uncommon to find under-nutrition and obesity existing side-by-side within the same country, the same community, and even within the same household.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

* Figures based upon self-reporting, so actual rates estimated to be higher. (Men and women often report being taller and lighter than they are.)

TO THE POINT

In the parable of the two lost sons (Luke 15:11–32), to which son do you relate to most, and how does your church minister to both older and younger brothers?

Recently, a man named Paul joined Story Core, an eight-week on-ramp to God's story we have at Engage. Paul is a self-reliant professional who, at the young age of 28, has done better in life than his alcoholic father or manic-depressive mother. Paul's never been close with God, so when our group read Luke 15, I thought he would say he identified with the prodigal. Instead, Paul identified with the older brother. He said, "I'm starting to get this grace of God in Jesus thing, and it's really pissing me off."

Paul was realizing that even though he's been the responsible one—he worked hard through school, built a family, owns his own home, and is moving up in his career—none of that makes him any more deserving of God's love and forgiveness than his parents.

Grace is a stone all older brothers must stumble over to fully follow Jesus.

I personally relate to the younger brother. I don't recall doing much at all in my life because I "thought I should" or it "was just the right thing." I'm normally led by what I think will make me the happiest.

Both sons have their challenges and connecting points:

Younger brothers find it easier to trust Jesus, they relate to His antagonism toward religious leaders, and they instinctively know their failures. But they are allergic to church because they believe only older-brother-types belong there. Older brothers show up at church, but they have sophisticated theologies that prevent their hearts from being fully changed.

Although I'm the youngest of four children, I have long related to the older brother in the parable. Despite this, the older brother character frustrates me. The reason Jesus told this parable was not to present a salvation message, but to call out the older brothers—the Pharisees. These religious leaders had reduced following God to a list of strict rules, cutting off those who did not measure up.

The older brothers among us forget that they have sinned and need forgiveness, too.

They forget that there is really only one sin in God's eyes: rebellion against God. That includes 100 percent of us.

I've been in full-time ministry for a couple years now. This makes it easy to develop an older brother-ish sense of Kingdom pride, a feeling that we are the "in" and others (non-believers) are the "out."

When I'm in this mindset and encounter people in the exact predicaments I have been in, I think, "Well, you got yourself into this mess, so deal with it."

And then there are times when I silence the Spirit and go my own way. Eventually, I realize my foolishness and crawl to the throne, knowing I deserve condemnation. But I'm reminded that for those that are in Christ, even the ones that stumble, there is no condemnation.

I can relate to both brothers. You see, it depends. Ask me tomorrow.

Brian Ross
Koinos Community Church
(Reading, Pa.)

Dan Houck
The Table Church
(Lancaster, Pa.)

Tom LaBonte
Heise Hill BIC
(Gormley, ON)

Jon Hand
Engage Community
(Carlisle, Pa.)

PARTING WORDS

FOLLOWING JESUS THROUGH SWEAT AND TEARS

by PERRY ENGLE

It had snowed the night before, just a dusting, so the day had dawned clear and bright, with air so rare and crisp it could only be a New Mexico morning. The snow-capped Rockies some 75 miles to the north appeared beyond the mesas, like the teeth of a bleached jawbone rising out of the desert.

As afternoon turned to evening, on a hill a mile or so from the BIC Navajo Mission, nine of us were preparing for a sweat in a homemade lodge made out of PVC pipe, tarps, and old wool blankets. I had been invited to join with a group of Native American men at various stages in their recovery from alcohol and drug addiction. It was humbling to be included among such courageous warriors, with each seeking to break the strongholds of addiction and abuse in his life and follow Jesus.

Traditionally, Native people have used the sweat lodge to cleanse the skin and purge the body of disease. Today, among new Christian movements, the ritual serves as a time for worship, prayer, the confession of sins, and the sharing of heartfelt needs.

Our meeting began in a circle of folding chairs gathered around a drum outside of the lodge. One brother offered a song that seemed to swell from a deep abyss of personal pain. "O Lord, please forgive me of my sin!" he wailed. "Please forgive me of my sin!"

We then stripped down to our shorts and crawled through sage smoke into the makeshift lodge. Hot lava rocks,



glowing red in the bonfire outside, were carried by pitchfork into the center pit of the lodge. The blanket over the doorway was pulled down, and there we sat by the glow of a single candle as the steam rose heavy off the stones.

"Everything done tonight will be focused on Jesus," the leader explained. "The forms we use will be Native American, but they will all be used to point us to the Creator of all, Jesus Christ."

Sharing ensued, and it was clear right away that there were three themes common to each of the men's stories: alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and fatherlessness. One by one, they told of fathers fueled by booze, raging at their families, beating their mothers, repeating the pattern, and then eventually leaving the family or dying.

The sweat came freely, as did the tears. Men, I have come to realize, are simply boys who have learned to protect themselves from the pain of their

past. They cover themselves with tattoos, sunglasses, bandanas, and scowls, all meant to insulate them from a life that has stripped them of their dignity and any hope for the future.

After four hours of singing, sharing, and praying together, we emerged to a night so cold and stars so bright that I was sure that we had all died and been born again. The Milky Way danced overhead like a billion heavenly hosts, while the wind whistled through the sage and over the bonfire's dying embers. I couldn't help but hear the still, small voice of the Creator who died for our sins calling to me and my newfound Navajo brothers from across the sand and beyond the canyons: "Hágo, shikéé' wóhkah." Come, follow me.



Bishop Perry Engle is a member of the board of the BIC Navajo Mission and Overcomers Program of Bloomfield, N.M. He and his wife, Marta, and their family live in Ontario, Calif.



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