TODAY'S MAN

April-June, 1985

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The Liberated Man

TODAY'S MAN

Today's Man is really still a baby.

This is the fourth quarterly issue of the infant publication. As with most parents, we in the Assemblies of God Men's Ministries are proud of the growth and development of our "baby."

The magazine was born out of a desire to make Christian men aware of the resources available to them through the various functions and programs of the Men's Ministries Department, to keep them informed of events and activities and to provide help for living a Christ-centered life in todays world.

As the baby has matured we have been able to devote more and more space to articles that provide practical application of Bible principles to modern life. This issue contains a wealth of information on family interactions, finding your own specific ministry, and improving your personal relationship with God.

Also included are reports and features on the exciting activities of men and men's groups around the world.

If you are not yet a *Today's Man* subscriber, or if it is time for you to renew, you will find a subscription form on page 11.

Please send me your ideas on making this publication more helpful to you. We want you to feel like part of the family and have a real influence on the future growth of *Today's Man.*



Ernie Lawrence
Publications Editor
Men's Ministries

Today's Man Staff

Silas Gaither, *National Director*
Division of Church Ministries

Ken Riemenschneider
National Secretary
Men's Ministries Department

Johnnie Barnes, *National Commander*
Royal Rangers

Reginald Stone, *National Secretary*
Light-for-the-Lost

Ernie Lawrence, *Editor*

Arlyn Pember, *Circulation Manager*

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We believe . . .

. . . the Bible is the inspired and only infallible and authoritative written Word of God.

. . . there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

. . . in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, in His personal future return to this earth in power and glory to rule a thousand years.

. . . in the Blessed HopeP—the rapture of the Church at Christ's coming.

. . . the only means of being cleansed from sin is through repentance and faith in the precious blood of Christ.

. . . regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential for personal salvation.

. . . the redemptive work of Christ on the cross provides healing of the human body in answer to believing prayer.

. . . the baptism in the Holy Spirit, according to Acts 2:4, is given to believers who ask for it.

. . . in the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a holy life.

. . . in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost, the one to everlasting life and the other to everlasting damnation.

Cover Photo:
Cedar Creek
Eagle Rock, MO
By Bill Lawrence

Understanding Why They Died

By Larry Summers

The evening chill began to settle in as the September sun sank low over the western hills of our Oregon community.

I had just delivered our tractor and tandem hay wagons for our Young Adult Sunday School Class hayride. That's when I received the message. "Go to the hospital, your grandson is being treated for electrical shock." My first thoughts were things like, "he'll be alright, it can't be too bad; by the time I get there he'll be getting out, and what about the hayride?" Then this last phrase, "it can't be happening to us."

Arriving at the hospital I found my thoughts to be wrong. It had happened. There was no mistake. My fourteen-month-old grandson was being kept alive by mechanical equipment and external heart massage. Some two hours had gone by and still there was no sign of life. The call for prayer went out to friends and churches across the country, and I believe hundreds were interceding on Michael's behalf.

As I paced the floor of the emergency waiting room, a thought entered my mind. I asked those who were with us if anyone had laid hands on the child and prayed. The answer was no. I went to a doctor and was immediately escorted to Michael's side.

The scene in the trauma room brought more tears, more pain and sorrow as Michael lay naked upon his back. Five medical persons were working feverishly, all trying to force life back into a lifeless body. I placed my hands on Michael's head and began to pray. I asked God to give us complete healing and for Him to give great wisdom to the doctors and nurses. Wisdom far beyond their human understanding.

Within two minutes after returning to the waiting room, word came from the doctor. "We have a pulse, he is breathing on his own." It was almost as if God was saying to us, "I have heard your prayers, I am



Understanding Why They Died (continued)

changing my mind, you can have him back." We began to rejoice in the Lord and praise His wonderful name.

The night was far from being over. The decision was made to transport Michael to a Portland hospital, much larger and much better equipped to handle cases such as this.

Having completed the move, we camped in the waiting room for the remainder of the night. Being of heavy heart, it was prayer after prayer, tear after tear, always expecting the best and at the same time expecting the worst.

In the early hours of the morning, I began to receive a deep feeling that Michael was going to be with the Lord. I continued to pray. About 6 a.m. his heart started to slow and immediately the doctors began to revive him with shots of medication into his small arm. During the next hour, Michael's heart was to stop six times, and each time, he was revived. The stoppages became closer and closer together, and longer and longer in length. Testing had revealed that their was no brain response and that several internal organs had ceased to function. The decision was made. Should the heart stop one more time, no attempt would be made to re-establish a heartbeat.

No effort would be made to keep him from going to be with the Lord.

Standing beside his bed, I leaned over and picked him up. He was covered with a beautiful, patchwork quilt, that caused me to recall the coat of many colors that Joseph wore. As I held him in my arms and pulled him tight against my chest, I watched the monitoring of his heart on a machine in the corner of the room. The bleeps on the screen began to grow shorter in height and were spaced farther apart. I knew the end was near. The doctor, in understanding and compassion, lowered the contrast of the monitor so I would not see the last beats of the heart. Michael had gone to be with the Lord.

The doctor said to me, "Sir, you are not normal. You should be throwing things out the window, screaming and hollering." All I could think of was, "the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." I experienced once again the great grace that only God is able to provide in time of need.

About a month ago I was thinking about Michael as I often do. During this time of meditation, I relived again the events of that tragic night. The sorrow and aching once again returned. I recalled the pain and emptiness that had been part of my life, it still was there.

As I held him in my arms and pulled him tight against my chest, I watched the monitoring of his heart on a machine in the corner of the room. The beeps on the screen began to grow shorter in height and were spaced farther apart.

As I thought on these things, I became aware that God had just given me the privilege, as it were, of stepping into His shoes for just a moment in time. The honor of sensing the love and compassion He has for us, His children.

Several deep impressions were left stamped in my heart and mind. I became aware of the really deep meaning of the most quoted of all scripture, John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

How real this verse became, as these questions were put to me; "How do you think I felt as I watched my Son die on Calvary's cross? How do you think I felt when I turned my back and heard Him cry out, 'My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?' How do you think I feel today as I look down and see soul after soul dying without having ever heard of my great love for them? Do you think you have shed more tears than I? The love and compassion you had for your grandson is only a small portion of what I have for you and for those who are waiting to hear."

My thoughts began to drift on into other areas. What about the monumental task that Christ has given us? Can we really reach the world? Is that goal really attainable? I, like many others I suppose, thought this to be too great of an accomplishment. I was reminded of an Old Testament story where twelve men were sent to spy out a land. When they returned, 10 said it was impossible, it could not be done. But, 2 replied, "we are able." Because of this division, Israel waited forty years to go forth. When at last they did step out, they did so as a united body with one common cause.

God has already demonstrated His love to us. In that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. This great love must not be kept to ourselves. The Scriptures declare, we love Him because He first loved us. If we are to carry out this Great Commission of taking the gospel to every nation, we must be united in the cause for missions. We must share this great love.

If the unsaved are not given the opportunity to hear, then is the love that God has shown by the giving of his Son wasted? Was the pain and sorrow that suffered for nothing? Did tears that God must have shed, run down His cheeks for no reason at all? I believe the answer is yes, unless we share this love with the dying world.

Lay up for yourselves
treasures in heaven.
Matthew 6:20

Father-Son Relationships

By Johnnie Barnes

A friend of mine was engaged in conversation with a number of peers at the close of a church service. I observed his 8-year-old son slip quietly up to his side and take hold of his hand. The boy said nothing but simply hung on to his father's arm. With a cross expression on his face, my friend shook the boy's hand loose and growled, "Don't bother me son, I'm busy."

I almost cringed. With a dejected look on his face, the boy walked away. His action had demonstrated his desire to identify with his father. Now he felt rejected. His father had violated a cardinal principle of good father-son relationships.

A good father and son relationship is no accident, it is something you must work on continually. A lion's share of the responsibility of this relationship falls upon the father. This is particularly true in a boy's more formative years. A father has the potential of exercising more influence upon his son's life than anyone else.

In a recent book entitled, *Teenage Rebellion*, by Reverend Truman Dollar and Dr. Grace Ketterman, the statement is made "One hundred young people were asked the following question: What person in your life has exercised the greatest influence in determining your behavior and beliefs? The influence can be either for good or bad and the person may or may not be a part of your family." The quick response the majority gave was "my father."

In light of the awesome responsibility placed upon a father, what should he endeavor to give his son? *Teenage Rebellion* listed seven things fathers should give their children: strength, protection, discipline, values, respect, laughter and example. May I add—love, understanding, and good memories.

Strength

Most fathers will readily accept the responsibility of being a strong father. However, many are confused about what real strength is. Some mistake toughness for strength. My father was a rugged man. He worked as a cowhand on the famous King's Ranch and later went into ranching for himself. Many of his exploits gave him the reputation of being a real "man's man." One of his mistaken codes was, a real man never cries in public. Even when my thirteen-year-old sister died. Dad cried in private away from even the eyes of the family. He never cried a tear at the funeral.

The first time I saw my father cry in public was the night I preached my first sermon. He came down the aisle with tears streaming down his cheeks to make a decision for Christ. I stepped down from the platform and hugged his neck and loved him for crying.

Sometimes gentleness and understanding show greater strength than stubbornness and toughness. Sometimes the determination to stand by principles, the courage to face problems and make decisions, and the willingness to understand other family members shows greater strength than the so-called "macho" image seen so often today.

Protection

A boy badly needs the security of knowing that if he needs his father's protection, he will be there to give it. When I was a boy, my brother and I were caught in a violent storm some distance from home. Racing toward home we were twice blown down by the wind. We saw the wind blow the roof from the barn. When we reached the house at the height of the storm the rest of the family had already retreated to the dugout cellar for protection.

But not my father. He stood braced against a post waiting for his boys to arrive. The image of my father facing into the teeth of that storm made an impression I'll never forget.

Even after closing the cellar door, he stood vigil on the steps. I'm sure that many fathers have experienced the calming effect of their presence near a child after a bad dream or a frightening experience. There are many ways a father can provide protection other than that of a physical nature. The important thing is to be there when your son needs you.

Discipline

One of the greatest needs of children in today's society is good discipline. It is a proven fact that children who are kept within the bounds of certain restrictions and guidelines are much happier than those without restriction.

Believe me, they will test the length and breadth of those bounds over and over again. However, they feel more secure and more loved when there is discipline. I hasten to explain that discipline should not be authoritarian in nature, but must be seasoned with love.

When punishment is necessary it should be given in a spirit of love—never in anger or frustration. Also, discipline achieved through fear is never ideal. There must be a balance.



Johnnie Barnes
National Commander
Royal Rangers

Values

I would like to preface this paragraph with the question, "What are the most important values a father should teach his son?" Now, ask yourself the personal question, "Am I teaching these values to my son?"

Truman Dollar states in *Teenage Rebellion*, "Dads rarely talk about their values or beliefs with their children. In our survey, one hundred young people were asked the question, 'Does your father personally communicate to you his moral and spiritual ideals.' Only two answered yes." As Christians, most of us know what we consider to be important values. We must spend more time sharing these with our sons. What a tragedy for a boy to grow up not knowing what his father believed was important.

Respect

Each boy is an individual and should be respected. Emily Post once stated this fact quite well when she said, "Children are people." This does not mean he should be treated as an adult. But he should be respected as a valuable member of the family. We should respect his right to express himself.

There are times when a boy badly needs someone to talk to—someone who will really listen with an open heart. He may wish to talk out a problem, share an achievement, or complain of an injustice. At such times he needs someone to hear and to care.

Respect his opinion in personal and family matters. This doesn't mean he necessarily has an equal voice in family decisions. The amount would depend on his age and circumstances. But we should hear his opinion.

Allow him to make decisions for himself. I realize there are areas which involve the physical, mental and moral welfare of our sons in which a conscientious father must maintain control. However, there are many other areas in which a boy can make decisions—good or bad—that will have a minimum effect on his well-being. Boys who learn to make decisions early are better prepared for life. Plus it will help you gain his respect.

Encourage him to identify with you and the family. This will give him a sense of self-esteem or self-worth. Sometimes this will require some effort and time on the father's part.

The story at the beginning of this presentation illustrates a situation in which a father was too busy for his son. A father who makes his son feel unwanted and unimportant has driven a large wedge between himself and the boy. On the other hand, when mistakes are made, I have found six words to be very helpful in bridging the gap. They are, *"I was wrong, please forgive me."*

Laughter

Some of the most memorable times I have spent with my son were times of laughter. Laughter at the humor of a situation, laughter at ourselves, laughter from the joy of sharing adventure and fun. A sense of humor is vital to good relationships. An overly serious father will have difficulty making his children feel comfortable around him. I enjoy humor and laughter, and I'll admit I spent a lot of time "clowning with the kids" during their formative years—and still do. Many times it has helped relieve tense situations.

Just the other day I heard a boy pay his father a high compliment. He said, "My Dad is a lot of fun to be with." I would like to be remembered that way.

Example

Some things can only be taught by example. One thing is attitude. Your son's attitude toward his family, other people, religion, circumstances, and life in general will normally reflect your own attitude.

A boy made a trip about town with his father. During the drive he observed with interest the comments his father made about other drivers. Upon arriving home he exclaimed to his mother, "Guess what, we passed 5 idiots, 4 dumb dumbs, and 3 knuckleheads!"

Your son will remember your actions and attitudes long after your words are forgotten. To paraphrase the statement of a famous sage, "What you are speaks so loud your son can't hear a word you're saying." The old cliche "like father like son" may have more truth than we realize.

The closeness of home relationships seems to exaggerate all our flaws and short-comings. When we should be at our best, we often demonstrate our worst. Being a good example may not always come easy, but it pays high dividends in father-son relationships.

Another strong need is for a spiritual example. Too often the spiritual guidance is left to the mother. It should be the father's role. Your son should have the privilege of hearing you pray, hearing you read the Bible, seeing you lead the family in spiritual activities.

Love and Understanding

As a Christian father it is essential that you make your son feel loved, and that you are trying to understand his needs and problems. He must feel loved when he is bad as well as when he is good. (This does not exclude discipline.) When he faces the rough and tumble game of life, he must know that home is a haven where he can always find love.

Your son also needs understanding. The stresses, the temptations, and the obstacles a boy faces do not make it easy for him in today's world. The one person he should be able to look to for support and understanding is his father. Sometimes it can make the difference between success and failure. Three of the most important and influential words in the English language are "I love you." Say them often to your son, and back them up with your actions. There are many other needs, however, let me conclude with one final one:

Good Memories

I heard a touching story of a father and son who spent an exciting trip together. Both agreed it was the highlight of their lives together. Returning home they made a pact. If there was ever difficulty between them in the future, they would use a "code word" that would remind them of this time together. This word was used many times to smooth the rough waters of disagreement and resentment. Periodically plan special trips you and your son can take together. One of them may be the most valuable time of your life.

Good memories will cement a father and son relationship better than anything I know. Start building some now!



Photo by Ernie Lawrence



Men in

Above: Volunteers work on the floor (left), walls (center), and rafters (right) of the headquarters lodge building at the National Royal Rangers Training Center near Eagle Rock, Missouri.

Below left: The current national officers of Light-for-the-Lost stand before the







Photo by Paul Stanek

Ministry



Photo by Paul Stanek

crowd at a banquet during the National LFTL Convention in Indianapolis.

Below center: Men in prayer at the close of a Kingsmen International banquet.

Below right: An Oklahoma steak wagon team prepares barbequed ribs for a Light-for-the-Lost banquet.





Photo by Ernie Lawrence

Chosen

Each to a Specific Ministry

By Reginald Stone

"Chosen," what an uplifting word.

As a boy did you ever participate in a choose-up baseball game? Maybe you were a star player. Unfortunately, I was not so talented. I remember so well the agony of waiting to see if there would even be room for me on the team. Maybe at least they'd let me play right field.

Standing on the sideline isn't easy. Let's not kid ourselves. Rejection hurts. One of the basic needs of man is to feel wanted. To feel wanted is to feel fulfilled.

As we move through the Bible we discover a prominent theme, God wants man. He wants man so much that He sent His only Son to seek us out.

Peter knew the joy of being wanted. He testifies in I Peter 2:4 that as Christians we are rejected by men, but chosen by God. Most likely if the selection of Jesus' Disciples had been left to a committee, Peter would have been excluded. Fortunately, Jesus personally chose all of His Disciples.

When Jesus found Peter, he wasn't much to boast of. But as Jesus looked at this burly, uneducated fisherman He said, "Follow me and *I will make you.*"

What was the attraction?...Jesus not only saw what Peter was; He saw what He was going to be when He finished His work in Peter's life. Just as Peter was a called man, so is every Christian man a *called man.* As men, our first and foremost calling is to follow Jesus. Out of that relationship flows the rest of our calling. It is a calling to ministry. *Men's ministries* simply means men who are fulfilling the ministry to which God has called them.

Some years ago I met a man at a camp meeting. In my awkward attempt to find out if he was a clergyman I asked, "Are you a minister?" Never will I forget his answer. "No, I'm *just a layman.*"

Unfortunately, this man's non-Biblical answer reflects the attitude of far too many Christian men. In fact, the Bible clearly teaches that all of us are called to the ministry. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12). God's desire is that we all fulfill the ministry to which He has called us.

A dear friend who was closely acquainted with Billy Graham's family shared a very interesting insight about the evangelist's home. One day Billy's father was asked, "Aren't you proud of your son?"

This wise father answered, "Which son? I've got two—Melvin and Billy." His inquirer responded, "I mean Billy." To this that dear man of God replied, "Brother, I'm equally proud of both of my sons. They are both serving the Lord. Billy is doing God's will as a preacher, but Melvin is also faithfully doing God's will as a Christian farmer." Both were called by God, but they were called to different ministries.

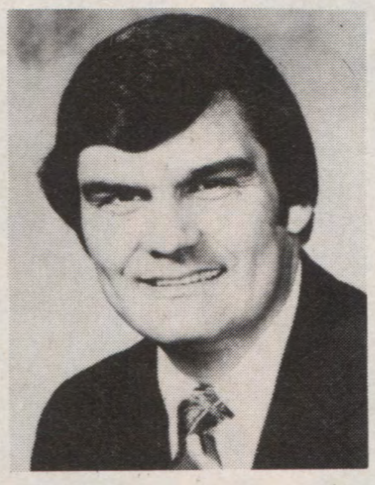
Brother Peter almost disqualified himself because of his attitude. Jesus was celebrating the Passover meal with his disciples. He waited for Peter or one of the other eleven to complete the servant ministry of washing the feet of these weary travelers. All seemed to think themselves above this menial task. At this point the Son of God taught them a lesson never to be forgotten. He "took off his outer garment, and tied a towel around his waist. Then He poured water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples' feet" (John 13:4,5, TEV).

Peter never forgot that moment when Jesus knelt as a servant before him. Years later he opened his second epistle with the words, "Simon Peter, a servant." This God-called man had had a change of attitude.

General George Washington once came upon a platoon of soldiers who were struggling to put a foot bridge in place across a stream that had swollen to twice its normal size due to torrential rains. The sergeant, from a safe vantage point on the bank, was barking out commands to the drenched soldiers as they were struggling to put a heavy log in place. Without saying a word, Washington dismounted and entered the water. These amazed soldiers watched as he put his shoulder under the log. Together these privates and their Supreme Commander finished the task. Without saying a word to the embarrassed sergeant, General Washington mounted his horse and continued on his way. The servant attitude of our nation's father had powerfully demonstrated the words of Jesus, "whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

At this point perhaps you are saying, "But I have failed." If this be the case, I've got good news for you. Peter failed. In fact, he blundered many times.

Look at him beside the fire. This man who only a few hours before had boasted of his courage, now melts into cowardice as a young girl accuses him of being a follower of Jesus.



Reginald Stone
National Secretary
Light-for-the-Lost

No failure is ever final unless you allow it to be. Peter became the man God wanted him to be because of this truth. Even in the hour when he slipped so badly, to the point of uttering his swearing denial of his Lord, there was hope. As soon as the rooster crowed, Jesus turned and looked upon Peter. It was not a look of rejection, but of compassion. Jesus had chosen Peter, and even though Peter was ready to give up on himself, Jesus was not giving up on him. Our Lord had never lost sight of the man that he wanted to make Peter into.

Thank God, Peter's failure wasn't final. He made a comeback. In Acts chapter four we discover that in the same place where a few weeks earlier he had failed so miserably, he now boldly proclaims Christ, defying the orders of the high priests of Israel. Peter the victim became the victor.

What had happened? Peter's failure had taught him a lesson. He was powerless without God's strength. His hunger for God led him to an upper room, and it was there that this weakling had an encounter with the Holy Spirit that transformed his life. He had become the man Jesus said he would be.

Has the fear of failure paralyzed you in your ministry? There are many who never fulfill God's call because they never launch out. And, the reason they don't launch out is because they are afraid of failure. Theodore Roosevelt expressed it so very well:

The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena
Whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood.
A man who knows the great enthusiasms and the great devotions
Who spends himself in a worthy cause.
Who in the end knows the triumph of high achievement
And if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly.
So that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls
Who know neither victory or defeat.

Some years ago a little boy sat in a one room school in Colorado. It was his first day of school. The time would come when this little fellow's hand would pen some of the most powerful books in the Christian world. But on that day such an accomplishment seemed to be an impossible dream. He tried so hard to copy the letters from the alphabet chart that hung above the blackboard, but as he tried again and again his fingers would not cooperate. Tears flowed down the lad's face as he looked at the unintelligible scratches on his writing tablet. He was a failure.

Suddenly he felt another hand touching his clumsy hand. It was the hand of his teacher who said, "Let's do it together." That day was a new beginning for Melvin who went on to become a literary giant.

As you read these words perhaps you feel like a failure. May I remind you that the same Lord who chose Peter has also chosen you.

Jesus says to you, my brother, "Follow me and I will make you."

Remember, He doesn't just see what you are. He sees what you are going to be when He finishes His work in your life.

TODAY'S MAN

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The Liberated Man

By J. W. Jepson

Years ago my father told me a World War I story that went something like this:

A young man was drafted into the army at the height of the war. When news reached his mother that her son had been inducted into the military, she became ecstatic with joy.

"The war's going to be over in two weeks!" she exclaimed.

"How do you know?" someone asked.

"Because my son has been drafted," she replied! "and he's never held a job longer than two weeks!"

Dad was a naturally born comedian, and whenever he told this joke, it always got a laugh.

But all joking aside, there is a serious note here that leaves us with lingering thoughts and feelings.

Let me describe a young man to you. He is twenty-two years old, married, the father of a small child. Last year he "held" three jobs. A month ago he quit his last one after working only three weeks. His supervisor "got on his case." So he got mad and told his boss what he could do with his job.

The little family moved in with his parents. Our young man's eyes are glued to the TV tube several hours a day. Instead of spending his evenings with his wife and baby, he is out playing ball with the guys.

Please do not tell him what to do, or he will growl at you something about his being a man and big enough to do what he wants.

For the sake of a "handle," let us call him Chuck. Or, maybe you know him by another name.

But before we come down too hard on Chuck, we should remember what a young fellow has to face these days to become a real man.

For one thing, our society does not give him much to go on. Juvenile attitudes toward human sexuality are palmed off as being "adult." Drinking and sex are the assumed symbols of manhood. He is told to make his decisions according to what he feels. Self-will is camouflaged as independence. On the other hand, an imaginary uniformity of the sexes is confused with equality. Thus real masculinity becomes obscured, its qualities rarely defined, while homosexual practices are elevated to acceptability.

Perhaps, too, Chuck was raised by an immature father who struggled ceaselessly with his own self-image as a man and therefore was not able to be a good role model for him.

So we have a not uncommon product: a confused, frustrated little boy hiding inside a big, bearded body, trying by a display of macho bravado to convince the world (and himself) that he is a man.

Now, this—the world's caricature—is not what God intended for any man.

Selfishness destroys relationships and produces alienation. Alienation leads to isolation. Christ came to emancipate us from selfishness, break us out of the prison of isolation, bring reconciliation, and restore relationships (with God, with ourselves, with others).

Men's liberation is not escape from responsibility into a proud, make-believe ego world. That is Satan's emasculated substitute. Rather, it is God's exciting, dynamite program for making new men and releasing their full potential!

Let us explore just a few of the marks of the new man.

From Colossians 3:9-10 we learn that the new man is renewed in knowledge after the character-image of Christ. The new man knows where he stands with God, with himself and with others. He stands justified from sin by faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). Because he is "in Christ," he is free from condemnation (Romans 8:1). His life has been changed from the inside out, and now he is more than a conqueror through his Lord (Romans 8:37). He grows in the knowledge of his God-given gifts, and by the power of the Holy Spirit he experiences expanding fulfillment in service and ministry.

The new man is created for maturity, to grow up into Christ in all things (Ephesians 4:15).

This "new man" includes both men and women, of course. For women, maturity seems usually to come more naturally. But for us men, it represents a challenge. For most men, maturity is not automatic. Paul reports, ". . . when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1 Corinthians 13:11).

Notice, the inspired apostle did not say, "when I became a man, childish things automatically left me." He said, "I *put away* childish things."

Maturity is a decision. In some areas of life it is a daily decision. Maturity is a decision to love, a decision to face one's self honestly, to root out selfishness. It is a decision to change, to take responsibility, to get ahold of one's feelings, to deal resolutely with insecurity and fear. Maturity is a decision to respond to life and to other people rationally instead of emotionally, to stop nursing one's feelings. Maturity means breaking out of moods decisively, holding steady under pressure and provocation. Maturity also involves defining clear objectives in the will of God and remaining unshakably true to them.

Let no one dismiss this as starry-eyed idealism. On the contrary. This freedom is God's desire for every man and His norm for each one who has become a new creation in Christ Jesus.

To this purpose He has committed the full resources of His grace. He has provided the fullness of His Spirit to all who will receive it. *No man can be all that God wants him to be without the baptism in the Holy Spirit.* The Holy Spirit is the Person of the Godhead Who brings the full resources of divine grace and power into the life of the believer. His fullness is available to any man who will open up and receive it by faith.

Such a man is in demand.

II Kings 2:9-15

Where Is The Lord God Of Elijah

By Ken Riemenschneider

"Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" The cry fell from the lips of the prophet Elisha immediately after the translation of his predecessor. Was he equal to the task that lay ahead? A great weight of responsibility had fallen upon him. How could he—a poor, insignificant stripling—follow in the succession of the mighty Elijah? He was on the spot.

Could Elisha follow successfully in the supernatural work of God? Elijah had gone to his reward-would God's power still operate? Elijah's God had answered His servant by food and fire, by drought and rain, by miracles and mercy. He had never failed, so that the prophet was able to declare, with flashing eyes, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand...."

Elisha was standing before the river Jordan with the mantle of Elijah in his hand. The young prophet seized the mantle of his master, and with strong sturdy steps faced his first test. The college students were watching with skepticism across the river. Was Elisha a prophet in name only? Did he just have the mantle of the prophets profession? Excitement was in the air as the servant of the Lord waved the old mantle above his head and cried, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

Now this was not a cry of unbelief. It is common to use these words during times of declension and departure from the faith, when there was a loss of spiritual prestige and power. Men wring their hands and beat their chests and cry out in despair. "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" Some people when they ask this question, really mean, "Where is Elijah"-Elijah with the piercing eyes and the voice of thunder; Elijah, the spectacular man of God followed by mighty victories.

No, Elisha's was not a cry of despair arising from unbelief. Elijah may pass from the scene, but the God of Elijah still remains and is ever ready to work even today. The danger is that we may trust more in the "mantle" of Elijah than his God.

Nor was this a cry of idolatry. Elisha did not cry, "Where is God's Elijah?" but "Where is Elijah's God?" We are living in days of evangelical idolatry. As the personality parade passes before carnal eyes, unsanctified believers bow in adoration and worship. We thank God for the inspiration and strength we derive from the lives of mighty men of God, but we cannot worship them. If all the famous preachers of the world should die tomorrow, God could carry on His work without them. He is still the God who answers by fire. God buries His workmen (Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David), but His work goes on. The prophet was glorying not in Elijah's faith, but in Elijah's God.

This was a cry of victory. It was the language of daring faith. He knew that Elijah's God was with him, and he marched boldly to his first conquest. The waters parted. The servant of the Lord passed through!

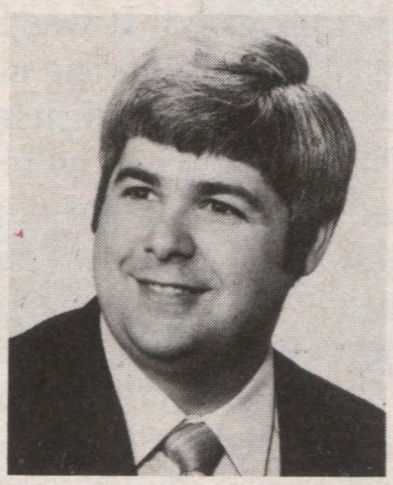
There is victory for the man who deliberately faces the problems of life, takes his stand on the promises of God, and challenges Him to perform the miraculous. It is useless for any man hoping to win victories carrying a mantle that has been riddled with holes by moths of doubt and uncertainty. Such a mantle has never yet opened a path for the man of God, although it may have been wielded successfully by some other godly man aflame with passion and power.

Elisha was bold enough to claim from God what ordinary people imagined God would give only to Elijah. Many men go on in feebleness and despair, because they cannot believe that God will give them spiritual power. This insignificant man of God, conscious of his own weakness, cast himself in utter abandonment upon God, and took the kingdom of heaven by force. Elisha was really saying, "Did Elijah divide this river? No!...It was God Himself! Then where is the God of Elijah?" He remembered that the mighty prophet was as human as he, and that it was Jehovah who wrought the miracles.

Elisha's cry was a command, a challenge to God. He demanded an immediate consciousness of His presence and power. And he had every right to do so, since God was making demands upon him. He wanted a definite confirmation of his call.

Years before this, Elijah had entered the field where Elisha was plowing and had cast his mantle around him, adopting him as his spiritual heir. Now Elisha was asking the Almighty for a sign that He too had adopted him to carry on Elijah's work. He had a secondhand mantle in his hand, but he wanted a firsthand call in his heart, or he would not go on. In reality he told God that he would not go forward in the work laid down by Elijah, unless he first received a fresh baptism of power.

The crossing of the Jordan was the first of sixteen recorded miracles wrought by Elisha. At the very commencement of his ministry he put God to the test. The River Jordan lay in front of him. He was going to challenge Jehovah immediately. His cry really meant, "I have my master's mantle as an outward symbol to denote that I am his successor; but O God, I am in desperate need of 'the double portion of the firstborn.' O



Ken Riemenschneider
National Secretary
Men's Ministries

Agape House

By James E. Brown

The Medical Center for Federal Prisoners receives inmates from all across the United States. Some people think the facility is just a nice place for rich criminals to spend their time. That simply isn't true.

The center is a prison—no better or worse than other federal penitentiaries. The only difference in the way the men are treated is due to their medical conditions. Most inmates have severe physical problems. Many know they will not leave the center alive.

A few years ago I became involved as a volunteer in the prison fellowship group that ministers to the inmates each week. We soon became aware of a very real and desperate need. One of the few things that is able to bring hope and help to these men is visits from family members. Unfortunately, the families of most of the prisoners are in the very lowest economic levels of our society.

The cost of lodging, food, and transportation to and from the center made visits nearly impossible, even for family members who could afford to travel to Springfield.

Members of our prison fellowship heard about the first Agape House, located in Jefferson City, Missouri. We formed a committee to find out all we could about it.

There are five state prisons around



The Medical Center for Federal Prisoners in Springfield, Missouri. Photo by Ernie Lawrence

Where Is the Lord . . . (continued)

God, baptize me with thy Spirit."

Dare we imagine that there was any special power in the mantle itself? Surely it is blasphemy to laud the mighty men of the past, as if it were by their own human power they accomplished their exploits. Perhaps it seemed audacious of Elisha to presume that he could do what Elijah had done. There was only one Elijah. Yes, but there is Elijah's God, and He can as easily work through an Elisha as through Elijah, if that instrument is fully surrendered to Him.

Elijah's mantle could not divide the water, but Elijah's God could-and did! If we have Elijah's God, the mantle will mean something; otherwise, it will be only a mantle of historical tradition. All mantles are valueless without this God's touch.

It was because Elisha believed in the supernatural God that the unbelievable happened. It was because our fathers believed in the almighty power of God that miracles took place. These miracles will happen again, because God is not dead—He lives and waits to be challenged by the faith of godly men. This is the revival we pray and wait for, and it can be experienced now in every place where God's people lay hold upon the promise.

Jefferson City. There was a crying need for a place for visiting families to stay that would be safe, inexpensive, and provide an atmosphere that would encourage a good family relationship.

Since it was founded in November 1980, more than 25,000 family members have spent at least one night in the Agape House facilities.

The need for a similar facility in Springfield became more and more apparent to our care committee. As we worked with the prisoners week after week we saw that they needed the stability of a family relationship nearly as much as they needed spiritual help and direction.

We wanted to establish a refuge that could provide support for families without criticizing or demeaning them or emphasizing their plight.

The house we have obtained is to be staffed by one paid director assisted by volunteers. A small fee is charged—not to make money, but to give the families a sense of self-esteem in paying something for their food and lodging. Of course the fee can be waived in cases of urgent need.



Photo by Ernie Lawrence

The newly opened prisoners' family shelter.

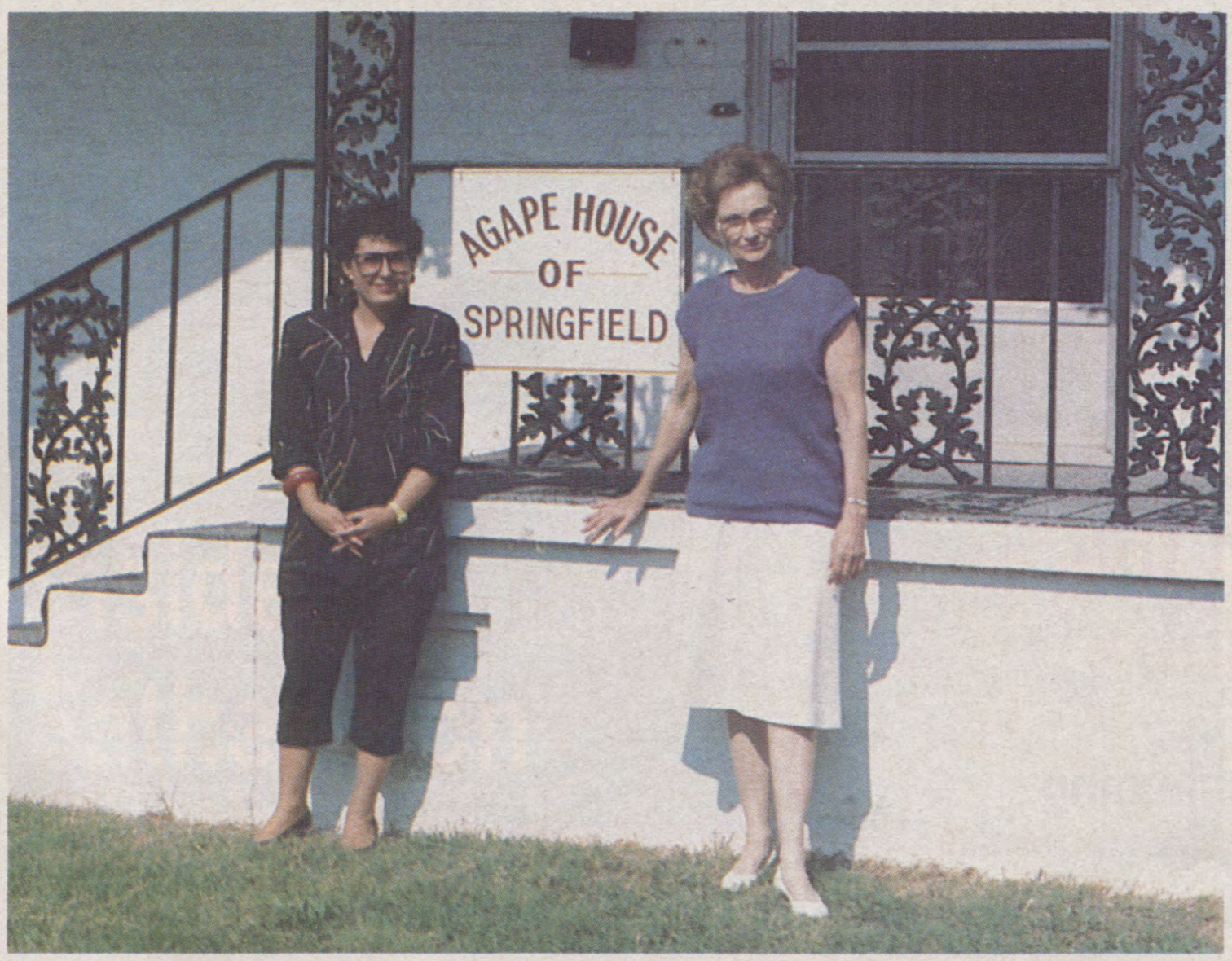


Photo by Ernie Lawrence

Interim Director, Mrs. Eleanor B. Davis (right) with the first guest of Agape House.

The volunteers and supporters of Agape House are from a wide variety of religious backgrounds. We have Southern Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian, Assemblies of God and a variety of other churches and individuals involved in one way or another.

We still have a few needs. Roof repairs, single beds and bedding, mirrors, household goods and about $2,000 per month for mortgage and maintenance costs. We are trusting God that people in this city and across the nation will join us in this ministry.

Agape House is a way to reach into prisons without going into them. It's ministry is to demonstrate unselfish Christian love to prisoners and their families. They won't be able to repay us. They won't even know who to repay. They will only know that their help comes from Christians acting out of agape love.

中國人要筆朋友

(Chinese Men Want Pen Pals)

By Ernie Lawrence

You don't have to be able to read or write the characters above in order to communicate personally with a man in the Peoples Republic of China.

Ken and Linda Benintendi, Assemblies of God missionaries to Hong Kong, have a long list of men from mainland China who want to correspond with American men. The Benintendis coordinate a program that matches men in the two countries who have similar interests, ages and occupations.

Right now many more Chinese men have asked for American pen pals than they are able to provide contacts for. Included on the waiting list are businessmen, farmers, professional people, church leaders and educators.

Since most Chinese schools have taught English for several years, all the men either read and write our language or have access to people who can translate for them. Through letters they hope to make new friends, learn of the outside world and be exposed to new ideas.

The program, named Sunrise Pen Pal Club, provides several services for people who want to become involved. When the missionaries receive a request for the name and address of a Chinese pen pal, they screen their lists to provide the best possible match of background information. Special efforts are made to pair men with similar characteristics in areas such as age, education, vocation, hobbies, etc.

When the selection is made, a personal profile form is sent to the prospective American pen pal, along with a letter explaining the Chinese mail system, advice on possible cultural or legal problems and some suggestions on the spiritual content of the introductory letter. Christian pen pals are encouraged to share their faith as the correspondence develops.

The Men's Ministries Department is prepared to forward information requests and personal data survey forms to the missionaries in Hong Kong as a service to *Today's Man* readers who want to become involved in the club.

Exchanging letters with people in a foreign culture can improve the lives of all concerned. Understanding the differences and similarities in lifestyles and sharing experiences will bring growth in the intellectual, social and spiritual lives of men on both sides of the globe.

China is the world's largest mission field, with over a billion people. It is easy to forget that each of those people is an individual. You may not be able to "win the world" as a missionary evangelist but you can surely be a Christian brother to one man.

If you are willing to write and make a new friend to share your testimony with, we will help put you in touch with him.

And remember, you don't have to learn to read or write any Chinese characters to have a pen pal in China.



Waiting for a friend

Please enroll me in the Sunrise Pen Pal Club

Send me information on exchanging letters in English with a man in the People's Republic of China

Mail to: Pen Pals, Men's Ministries
1445 Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Age _____ **Occupation** _____

Hobbies and Interests _____

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