

The GAZETTE

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Man Makes His Plans, But God Directs His Path



by Mike Ahrendt

During a recent business trip to Philadelphia, my day ended watching a cable news channel. I learned that Elizabeth Edwards, wife of former senator John Edwards, had died of cancer. I watched as the newscaster recounted a number of tragedies in her life. Her oldest son had been killed in a car accident. On the day that her husband's running mate conceded defeat in the 2004 presidential election, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. While her husband was running for president in 2007, Elizabeth announced that her cancer had returned and spread. In January 2010, John publicly admitted what many had believed to be true for years: that he had an affair with a political consultant traveling with him on the campaign. He also admitted to having fathered the two-year old daughter of that consultant. For over two years he called the accusations "tabloid trash...full of lies." The affair had started only months after his wife had learned of the

recurrence of her cancer. As I sat in that hotel room, I thought to myself, "The wrong person in that marriage just died. It should have been John."

As the week went on, journalists filed reports chronicling Elizabeth's life. Included in those reports was a story recalling that she had been a staunch supporter of same-sex marriage, even making an appearance before a gay pride parade in San Francisco during the 2008 presidential campaign. John Edwards had made it clear during that campaign that he was opposed to same-sex marriage. I began to realize that it was more difficult than I originally thought to determine who had the morally superior position in that marriage. I also realized that it was horribly wrong for me to have plans (even in my mind) about who should die. I was attempting to assert my "sovereignty" at the very time that I was denying God's in the death of Elizabeth Edwards. God ordained that she should die (and her husband would live) on December 7, 2010, and my misguided plans were not going to change that.

In Matthew Henry's commentary on Proverbs 19:21, his thoughts are divided into two parts: "Man Projecting" and "God Overruling." In my case, I projected and God overruled. I had to repent.

Scripture is filled with examples of men who had many plans, only to see the Lord make His purpose clear and their plans be turned upside down, sometimes more than once. Gideon was called by God to deliver Israel from the Midianites (Judges 6). Gideon questioned God, asking for a sign that it was indeed God who was speaking to him. Once he was given that sign (the meat and unleavened bread being consumed by fire coming from the rock), Gideon asked for TWO signs that God would save

Israel by his hand. He asked for God to make a fleece dry on the threshing floor on a morning when the ground had dew, and conversely a wet fleece on a morning with no dew on the ground. God produced both. Now convinced of God's plan for Gideon to lead this attack (and covered by the Spirit of the LORD), he called out to men from many tribes, just as the Midianites and the Amalekites prepared to battle Israel (Judges 7).

Gideon prepared for battle with 32,000 men. At first glance, this number seems appropriate. When Gideon spied on his enemies, we are told that the men were "like locusts in abundance, and their camels were without number, as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance" (Judges 7:12). However, God again spoke to Gideon, telling him that he had "too many" men, and that Israel would boast and take credit for the victory with this large of an army. He told Gideon to dismiss any men who were afraid, and 22,000 left. God then told Gideon that He would further pare down his troops by testing the way that they drank water. Those who lapped water from their hands into their mouth were told to prepare for battle. The rest were sent away. Gideon was left with 300 men, less than 1% of the troops he expected to have to battle the large contingent of Midianites and Amalekites. Gideon's spy mission allayed his fears as he overheard an enemy soldier describe a dream that was interpreted to mean that Gideon and his men would be victorious in battle. In fact, he worshipped God when he heard this report! He led the troops into battle and was victorious.

Here are several questions to ask yourself as you consider Gideon's dealings with God:

- When you ask God about why He has not done something, are you prepared for the fact that His answer may include you doing some very difficult things? Gideon was in the midst of the mundane task of beating out wheat in the winepress when he inquired of God (Judges 6:13). He would find himself in battle with his enemies soon thereafter. Are you prepared to fight battles to fulfill the purpose of the LORD? Have you been afraid to ask things of God for fear that he would involve you in the answer?
- Are you inquiring of God throughout your plans? Gideon asked God to confirm that the voice he was hearing was really His (Judges 6:17). He later asked for confirmation that Israel was to be saved by his hand (Judges 6:36-40). Are you patient enough to wait for this confirmation from God? Do you seek wisdom in the Word of God, through prayer, through listening to the faithful preaching and teaching of the Word, and from the counsel of godly brothers?

“ARE YOU PREPARED TO FIGHT BATTLES TO FULFILL THE PURPOSE OF THE LORD? HAVE YOU BEEN AFRAID TO ASK THINGS OF GOD FOR FEAR THAT HE WOULD INVOLVE YOU IN THE ANSWER?”

- Are you sensitive to God's direction even when you are not specifically asking for His guidance? While Gideon did at times ask God for confirmation, God intervened without waiting for Gideon to ask when reducing the number of troops (Judges 7:2-8) and when instructing Gideon to spy on his enemies (Judges 7:9-11)? Are you so convinced of the

righteousness of your plans that you ignore God's "yes" or "no"?

- Are you prepared to follow God's direction, even when in our foolishness it seems to be wrong? Of course, God's direction is never wrong, but in our pride we often find it impossible to believe that our plans could ever be wrong. The plan to reduce troops because some were afraid is easier for us to understand, but why would God send people home because of the way that they drank water?

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

ISAIAH 55:8-9

God's ways are not only different than man's ways, they're higher. Are you praying that God increases your faith as you work to embrace a plan that seems counterintuitive?

- Will your plans cause you to boast? God stepped in and reduced Gideon's troop count so that Israel would not boast and say, "My own hand saved me" (Judges 7:2). We are cautioned elsewhere in Scripture as to how we are to make such plans:

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.’ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.”

JAMES 4:13-16

James says that YOU are a mist. Certainly, your plans are no more substantial. Are you prepared to change your plans so that God gets the glory, not you?

As we begin this new year, many of us are making resolutions. We can look to Gideon's example in Scripture to assure that these resolutions align with God's purpose.

Unfriend Facebook



by David Bayly

I failed to write on the perils of Facebook for last month's Gazette as I'd promised I would do largely as a result of time pressures—Nate and Aleah's wedding coincided with the Gazette's publication date. But a sense of fear also struck me as I considered the topic. How many of us heard last month about the pastor who warned his congregation not to use Facebook—only to have his own sins in that realm exposed the following week?

The Bible warns against confronting sin in others without first dealing with it in ourselves. Yet Facebook is a danger worth warning about, in part because it's a brand new venue for a bunch of very old sins. What kind of sins?

First, consider the basic human desire for admiration, that pride of life which drives the pursuit of popularity. How many Facebook friends do you have? You probably know the figure within a dozen in either direction. How many Facebook friends do your friends have? It's likely you know this too. Ironically, Facebook brings many of us face-to-face again with popularity issues we thought we'd left behind in high school. This is not a good thing.

So too, it's seldom a good thing to be caught primping for publication. Few of us are immune to the pressure: I remember being embarrassed by certain yearbook photos when I was growing up, but neither I nor any of my male friends ever primped for the yearbook. We would have

considered such behavior unmanly. Today's Facebook men are a legion of Warren Beattys. Vanity runs as thick in their veins as in yesterday's prom queens. They can't get enough of their own biopics with Facebook the celebrator of their lives. I recently saw the Facebook page of a young man with over eight hundred profile pictures in his album. Amazing. Tragic. Men on Facebook put Narcissus to shame. Nor is it healthy for young women to aspire to Facebook beauty. Vanity is sinful; vanity, thy name is Facebook.

Third, consider the inanity of it all. So much energy and time producing so much prattle. Scripture says, "When words are many, sin is not absent."

Fourth, gossip. Need I say more?

Fifth, consider the naked emperor. Is the world really better for knowing your child's potty-training progress? Your thoughts on your husband's work schedule? Your opinions on the latest werewolf movie? People complain about the looseness of Facebook's privacy controls. What ever happened to the virtues of discretion and silence? Our culture thinks privacy is an innate right to run around in the buff prattling nonsense without anyone ever mentioning shame. Nonsense. Privacy begins with clothes kept on and mouths kept shut.

My father used to say, "Of the spoken word, the speaker is the master. Of the written word, the author is the servant," and it's true. Speech is nuanced by tone, setting, expression and countless other variables. It's not recorded but spoken live. The written word is permanent and impersonal. It can be construed by anyone who wishes to do so in any semi-plausible way—and the author is powerless to prevent it. The lesson? Don't write down what you don't want to defend. Don't write down what can easily be spoken. Use the phone more and Facebook less.

Sixth, more than anything else, the danger of Facebook is the temptation to live according to sinful imaginations rather than for God and

according to His Word in the present. At its core, idolatry is a re-creation of the world which lets us escape life as God has created it—because life as God has created it rewards sin with unhappiness.

I am quite certain that there is an inverse relationship between hours spent on Facebook and happiness in life. A happy life is lived. An unhappy life is escaped: it's lived vicariously through novels, movies, gossip, video games and Facebook. This is why the internet and Facebook constitute such a ripe setting for emotional indiscretion and even adultery. Unhappy people escape unhappiness vicariously on the internet, but then they bring the second life of the internet back into real life. They run off in reality with the man they married online in Second Life. They rekindle high school romances on Facebook—then run away from home in pursuit of the sinful life first forged online.

Are these dangers unique to Facebook? Of course not. This is why it's pointless to ban Facebook. If Facebook is sinful in itself, then so is the telephone, the printing press, the office water cooler...

But because Facebook is a new phenomenon, its dangers are not as clear as those of the party line or the printing press, and the caution we need to live without sin on Facebook hasn't been ingrained in us from the cradle the way it has in many other areas.

I like knowing when friends have birthdays. Facebook is great for this. I like knowing when babies are born. Facebook is a good way to disseminate such news. But Facebook's ubiquity is its power, both for good and for bad. Let's preserve the good while remaining vigilant against the bad.

Sinners frequent Facebook and sins are committed there. For this reason I plead with you to exercise caution and restraint in your life on its pages. We may not forbid our members from entering bars, but we do caution against the sin that often blossoms in such settings. So too with Facebook.

Getting to Know... The Heyerlys by Renee Brunner

'Twas the night before school and all through the house, everything stunk due to one little skunk. It was not a big wonder but it was a big blunder, that when one shoots a skunk one is bound to be stunk. It all started when ma, not much for surprise, found a skunk who was sitting beside their car's trunk. Pa set the traps, and waited for naught, as the skunk was wily and could not be caught. So Pa and big brother, fearless and brave, armed themselves heavily and set out for the knave. They had not gotten far, for the skunk he was sitting, right next to the car. Guns were drawn high and shots were heard 'round, they had killed that skunk dead, and he lay on the ground. But before the skunk passed, he released all his gas and the whole family stunk from that last little blast. With a dunk in the pool they sent Alex to school. His teachers and peers filled the room with loud jeers, as Alex's smell still filled the air. They weren't being mean, they just wanted him clean. So off he went, to get rid of the scent, to return to the fresh air to vent.

The adventures never stop at the Heyerly home. The above tale is based on a true story. For the whole story, just ask Alex.

The real story of this fun family begins on a blind date. Which is a tradition, it seems, as both Jeremy's parents and Rhonda's parents met on blind dates. A girlfriend of Rhonda's knew of a handsome young man who needed a wife. She accepted the offer for dinner and a double date which included the other couple's three year old daughter. Now a date with a three year old may not seem romantic, but they each saw how well the other got along with children. Being good with kids would become very important in their married life.

Both Rhonda and Jeremy grew up in the Fort Wayne, Indiana area, but did not know each other until their first date. Rhonda is the elder of two daughters. Her dad worked for the FBI (Farm Bureau Insurance) as an insurance adjuster. Her mother was the secretary for Fort Wayne Christian School, which is also where Rhonda attended. Her grandmother



was an important influence in her Christian life. Rhonda and her sister spent a week each summer with their grandparents where grandma boldly taught them the gospel and lived as a great example to the girls. She grew up in the local Missionary Church and went to college at Summit Christian in Fort Wayne where she received her degree in Elementary Education. She met Jeremy only one week before graduating. She worked in a local Christian bookstore for one year and then taught for a year before she and Jeremy were married.

Jeremy grew up in Yoder, Indiana outside of Fort Wayne. He also has one younger sister. His father is a printer by trade and works for an educational resource company. His mother retired as a secretary from Verizon. Jeremy grew up in the United Brethren Church (which was how they started attending Springfield United Brethren, where David Bayly used to pastor.)

Jeremy received his Bachelor's and master's degrees from Purdue in Civil Engineering. He specialized in geo-

technical engineering, which means: he knows how landfills work. He is now an Operations Manager for URS Corporation. And, he often travels to Tennessee, Cincinnati, and Cleveland for work.

The Heyerlys have six kids, the eldest being Alex. Alex is almost twelve years old and attends sixth grade at Monclova Christian Academy. He

was born on Groundhog's Day, and each year the family celebrates Alex's birthday by searching for groundhogs. Alex is known to be resourceful and creative, as shown by his renting of neckties at school to others who forget their ties for chapel day. He also plays hockey for the Pee Wee Squirt house team in Bowling Green.

Alyssa is the oldest daughter and will soon be nine years old. She is a homeschooled third grader whose favorite food is candy. She is a great helper with the younger kids around the house, and is very good at story telling. According to her parents (and sometimes to her siblings' dismay) Alyssa is very maternal. Alyssa attends ballet classes at Cassandra's School of Ballet.

Hannah is seven years old and is in second grade. She is a peculiar child in that she neither likes cake nor pie. She will eat ice cream cake. She is quiet, dependable and brave. If ever a child is needed to brave a dark night with only a flashlight, Hanna is the girl for the job. When no one else, including Dad, will sleep outside in the tent with Alex, Hanna

can be relied on as his companion. She also is known for sending thoughtful notes to her friends and church family.

Caleb is five and a half years old and in kindergarten. He is an AWA-NA Spark this year and he is already done with his book for the year. (This is a BIG deal.) He is known for being rough and tumble, adventurous and full of energy, which helps as he also plays hockey in BG.

Most people, however, do not know that he also has a quiet and gentle side. I have seen him play Legos and cars with my Joseph for over an hour without any harsh words or disagreements, even when Joseph was not being very nice.

Samuel is three years old and has been a great gift to all of us. He prays very purposefully, likes songs with

hand motions, and is great at giving kisses and hugs. He shows a bit of Dad's penchant for engineering as he likes things orderly and is eager to open and shut doors to see how they work.

Joshua is one and a half and is already fitting in with the other children. He joins in wrestling matches with Dad. And he and Sam have teamed up to destroy many, many Christmas tree ornaments. They have finally been taught not to take the ornaments off of the tree, however they have improved their throwing arms by using Thomas the Tank Engine as a projectile to break ornaments; thus, giving a whole new meaning to the "Tank" portion of Thomas' name.

The Heyerly's were one of the founding members of CTWC and

have long been leaders with the Youth Group. Jeremy is more active with the youth, and Rhonda helps with behind-the-scenes tasks. They attend the Swantucky Pathway and have been instrumental in bringing the pro-life ministry, Forty Days for Life, to CTW. They continue to pray at the abortion clinic as a family throughout the year. They also enjoy nice vacations every now and then going to such exotic places as Hawaii, Alaska, Cape San Blass, Florida, and even a romantic getaway to the very tiny Erie, Pennsylvania. Next anniversary's escape: Flint.

Let's (Help Other People) Keep New Year's Resolutions

by Jason Wiltse

The New Year is here! This is the time when folks are making resolutions. They're looking to drop bad habits and start the New Year fresh with good, life changing ones.

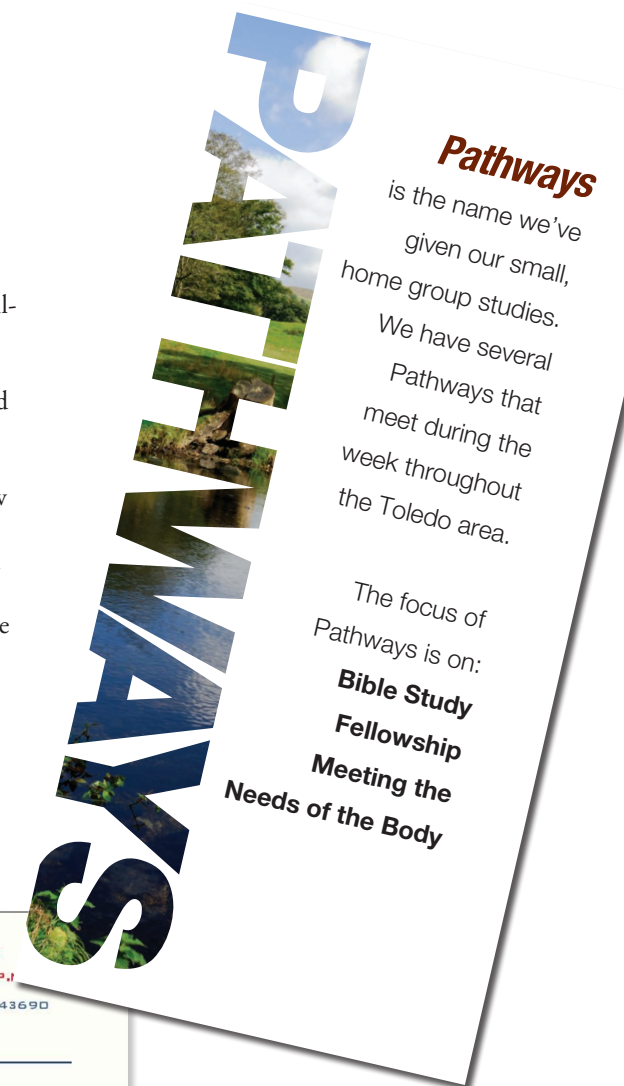
Maybe you have a relative who hasn't attended church for some time and who knows that they need to get back? Perhaps you have a friend that's been talking about getting back into a Bible study? It could be that a coworker talks about pursuing something bigger in life and feels dissatisfied with where they are now. In any event, people are looking to better themselves, and the mark of a New Year is a well-known starting-point for changing one's direction...

One of the greatest strengths and defining characteristics of Christ the Word is the ministry that takes place within our Pathways. Why not help someone keep their resolution by

inviting them to your Pathway this January?

We have cards and brochures available to help you invite those who want to make a change when the year 2011 arrives. The Pathway card has two blank lines so you can fill out your contact information. The Pathway brochure gives an overview of what we believe and how we approach ministry. If you haven't seen these resources recently, ask your Pathway leader how you can acquire them, check them out, and hand them out this January!

MY PATHWAY
MONDAYS @ 6:00 P.M.
1234 MAIN ST. TOLEDO, OH 43690





TM 3-522-15

DEPARTMENT OF THE MAN-POSSE OFFICIAL TECHNICAL BULLETIN

TM 3-522-15:

The Man-Posse Secret Handshake

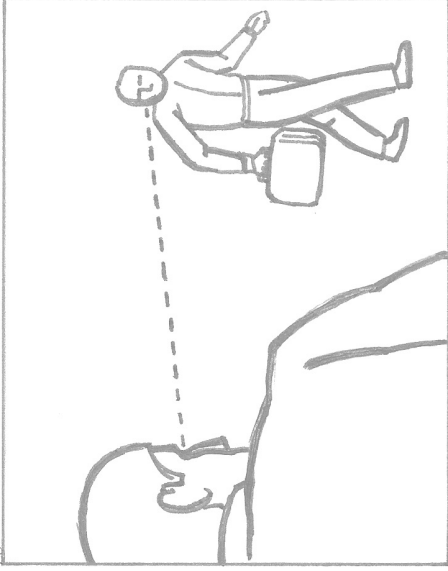
This instructional bulletin replaces CTW Man-Posse handshake technical instructional bulletin number TM 3-522-14.

Special attention should be paid to the addition of step 7, the "shoomp shibboleth." This step ensures the new method by which all CTW man-posse trainees and field agents, whether active or retired, will be able to recognize other agents without being fooled.

Improper performance of the shoomp shibboleth will result in death, dismemberment, painful hazing, or at the very least, eternal indentured servitude to the Man-Posse.

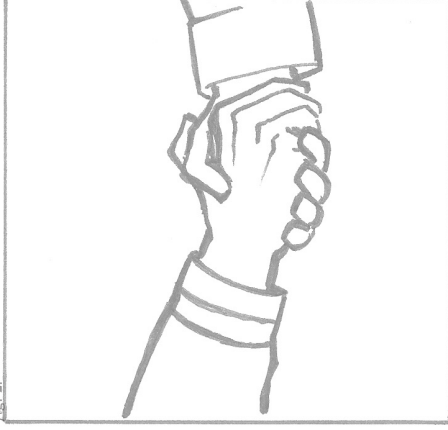
Please destroy all previous editions and facsimiles of this document.

Fig. 1.



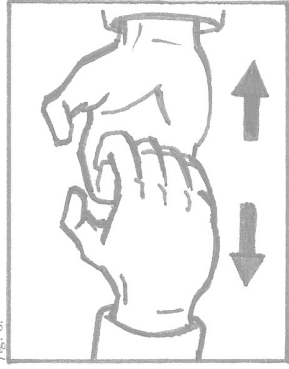
Target your opponent.

Fig. 2.



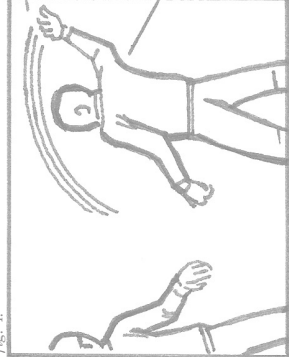
Seal the deal (right hand of fellowship).

Fig. 3.



Grappling hook covenant.

Fig. 4.

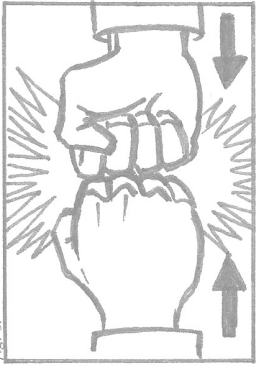


Arm the bomb.



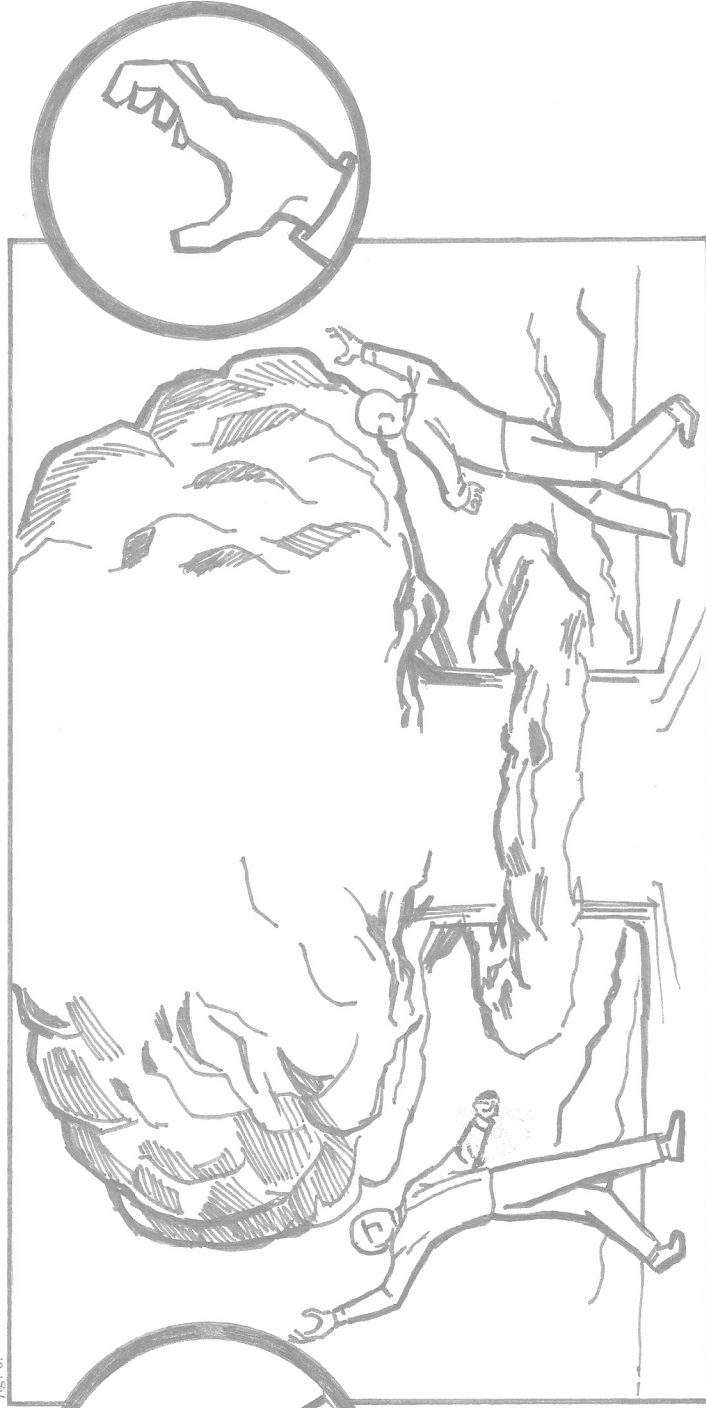
4-a: "snap!"

Fig. 5.



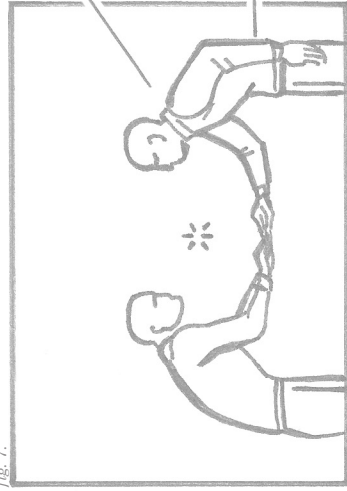
Deep impact.

Fig. 6.



Man-Posse holocaust.

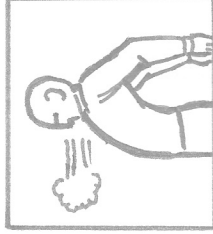
Fig. 7.



Black hole collapse.

7-a: "shoomp!"

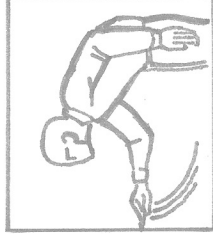
7-a.



7-b.



7-c.



Correct procedure for the Shoomp Shibboleth.

- 7-a. Forcefully expel all air from one's lungs at the end of step 6.
- 7-b. Begin to inhale (not exhale) the word "shoomp," while closing one's fingers and hand in the direction of the Black Hole Collapse.
- 7-c. Conclude the inhalation of the word "shoomp," while bringing one's thumb, fingers, and galaxy to a single, infinitely collapsed point.



Getting to Know... The Slicks

by Tyson Turner

What a joy and encouragement! I recently had the privilege of conducting a "Slick Interview" with Matt, Mary, Kaylee, and Ian Slick. Now, you may not receive any commendation from Emily Post, but I strongly urge you to invite yourself over to the Slick family's home so that you may also taste of their godly fear and warm hospitality. (Just hope that you don't suffer the fate of the bucks who are mounded in the house, having met their demise at the end of Matt's arrows.)

In case you didn't know already, the Slicks have been faithfully worshipping with Christ the Word for close to three years now. The complete story of their journey here is hard for the Slicks to remember and would be harder for me to decipher and relate here. It includes Matt working as a youth leader with Shelley Schriener years ago, where one night they took a pickup truck load of students out to see Christmas lights at the KOA campground in December—Matt's truck broke down and put them in a scare for a while! The story also includes years of knowing the Ahrendts and Van Wormers and others from Christ the Word. Bill Van Wormer even stood up in the Slicks' wedding!

Their first visit was on a Sunday evening. The music was difficult for Matt to embrace, being used to more contemporary and popular praise songs, while it made Mary feel comfortable and closer to her Catholic upbringing. To this day, Mary loves it

when Sandy Taylor makes the organ swell to God's praise. Within just a few weeks, they decided to commit to being at Christ the Word. You can find the Slick family serving together (and separately) in many ways among the body. As a family, they prepare the coffee and bagels for the fellowship hall every Sunday morning. They are thankful to God for the faithful help they have from Jordan Ahrendt and Martha Twining in this ministry, and for the recent addition of two other families.

God has brought great blessings and changes to the Slick home while they have been worshipping with Christ the Word. Young Kaylee enthusiastically pointed out to me that being at Christ the Word is a joy to her because she hasn't had to work so hard to make and have friends. She really enjoys being with friends from Christ the Word. She also pointed out that her whole family now fellowships a lot more compared to previous church

involvement. "We used to go to Sunday service and then come home and watch a movie," she shared. Now the family is at corporate worship services, mens' and women's Bible studies and Friday Night Pathway. They also are invited over to other families' homes and have guests often from Christ the Word. It is a testimony to God's Spirit and the faithfulness of her parents that, after having semperRef college students over for a lunch one day, Kaylee could not think of any costs or drawbacks associated with their new life. Ian now desires to invite them all to his birthday party.

Mary praises God for Matt's desire to be a "man of faith." Whether at work, where he is a witness even to the inmates of Lucas County CTF, or in the church, where he leads in giving his personal time and that of his family to serve, or at home where he constantly reminds Mary and the family to believe that God will indeed answer their prayers, Matt takes God at His Word and leads his family in this faith. Matt praises God for Mary's gift of tolerance. Mary homeschools two young children, opens her home to others and gets to be patient with a husband who has so much energy! They are both thankful that God has convinced them of His sovereignty over all. Mary praises God for the peace and joy that this trust in God has brought to their home. I strongly encourage you to take some time to get to know this joyful family!

(Author's note: Can you guess which Slick won just over \$12,000 at a bowling tournament?)



Sunday School Locations Change

Three Sunday school classes are changing locations beginning January 2, 2011. The Preschool 4 and 5 year olds will be moving to the library located off of the narthex, the Junior High is moving into the Sanctuary and the High School is moving to the first room on the right in the Education Wing. Someone will be available to help direct anyone looking for assistance. Thank you for your patience as we adjust to these new classrooms.

Interim Sunday School Class: Doctrine of Repen- tance Begins January 2

Confession of sin has recently become an emphasis in our Pathways. The end goal of our confessions is repentance. What does this mean? How do we move from confession to repentance? These questions and others will be answered as we use Thomas Watson's *The Doctrine of Repentance* (1668) as a basis for this course. Here's a taste of Watson's writing on repentance: "Either sin must drown or the soul burn. Let it not be said that repentance is difficult. Things that are excellent deserve labour. Will not a man dig for gold in the ore though it makes him sweat? It is better to go with difficulty to heaven than with ease to hell."

Two sections of this class will be taught, one by Scott Killy, the other by Andrew Dionne. Classes will begin on January 2 and run for three weeks. The book can be found online here: <http://www.gracegems.org/Watson/repentance.htm>.

Couple's Night: Saturday, February 12

Mark your calendars now for CTW's annual Couple's Night scheduled for Saturday, February 12 from 6:30 till 9:30 p.m. We will be joining together for a wonderful evening of fun activities, delicious food, and great fellowship at the Dominguez home located at 9035 Salisbury Rd in Monclova. Look for more details as the date of the event draws closer!

CTW New Attendee Open House at the Killys'

If you began attending CTW in the past 12 months you are invited to attend a New Attendee Open House at the Killy Home on Sunday, January 30 from 4-7:30 pm. Food and refreshments will be provided. The Killy home is located at 2342 Tanglewood Drive in Toledo.

Sunday School: Winter Trimester Sunday School Classes Begin January 23

Two classes will be offered during our Winter Trimester. The first is directed toward parents and will be based upon Tedd Tripp's book *Shepherding A Child's Heart*. Tripp writes, "God is concerned with the heart—the well-spring of life (Proverbs 4:23). Parents tend to focus on the externals of behavior rather than the internal overflow of the heart. We tend to worry more about the 'what' of behavior than the 'why'.

Accordingly, most of us spend an enormous amount of energy in controlling and constraining be-

havior. To the degree and extent to which our focus is on behavior, we miss the heart." Plan to attend this class if you desire to learn specific approaches to the shepherding of your children. Kevin Zellers and Jeff Schriener will lead this class.

The second class that will be offered is the second in our series, "Reformed Theology in All of Life." This second installment will focus on how reformed theology teaches us to interact with our culture. Some of the topics that will be discussed are evangelism in the workplace, cultural hot-topics, and church/state relations. Tim Varner and Matthew French will be teaching this class.

**Prayer requests
are now
available online!
Just go to:**

**www.christtheword.com
->community links
->prayer list**

**Then sign in
with your pass-
word. It's just
that easy!**

W

Women of the Word

Pressing On By Elizabeth Bayly

“Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own.”

PHILIPPIANS 3:12

It is a new month, in a new year, a time for resolutions and starting afresh. It is a time when big plans are made concerning what we are, or are not, going to do in the coming year. We work really hard for a few weeks, but by the time February rolls around these plans are all but forgotten. This year, the WOW committee has chosen Philippians 3:12-16 to be our “theme verses” for the year. As you consider resolutions for 2011, why not resolve to truly live out Philippians 3:12?

In this passage, we are exhorted to press on toward Christ-like perfection, through the saving grace of His resurrection. What does a life of pressing on look like? So often when focusing on the “Christian Life” we talk about living as a light to unbelievers and being a Christian around them. While this is good and I do not want to underestimate the extreme importance of doing so, I ask you to consider how you are living among your Christian friends.

There are two main traps that I believe we fall into as Christian women, and I would encourage you to fight both in this coming year.

The first is that of complacency. Frequently when among fellow believers, I have found that we allow ourselves to live in a rut, satisfied that we are good enough. When we are among those we hope to win to Christ, we desire to look like a “Good Christian,” but as soon as we are with our friends we are not careful to watch our actions, words, or thoughts. We gossip about those whom we dislike, we ignore the people who we simply find uninteresting or tiresome, and we make crude jokes, are prideful, and cliquish with our “friends.” I frequently find myself wanting to just relax on Sundays or at activities where I am comfortable with my fellow believers. I do not desire to “press on.” I much prefer to stay where I am with my group of close friends, ignoring or even being hurtful to others around me. In this way we adopt

the mindset that we are among Christians so we can stop trying.

At the other end of the spectrum, the second trap is that we give the impression to our fellow believers that we have already obtained perfection. I find it hard to be vulnerable; I don't like people to see the areas in which I sin. This too is ultimately a sin; it is pride. When in this trap, we act terribly all week long to our families and to those who know us best, but when we step foot into church or a place in which we are surrounded with Christians, we make sure that we have our costume on just the right way. We make sure that our perfect wigs aren't crooked, our perfect smiles are pearly white, that we have all the outward appearances of being the perfect pastor's daughter, or wife, sister, friend. Yet our hearts are anything but perfect. In this trap we are fakes, actors trying to live a life in which nobody knows we are acting.

Both of these errors rebel against God's command in Philippians. In the first, we are not pressing forward to perfection; this is not the humility that we should have because Jesus Christ has made us HIS own. This behavior is sin. Instead of forming cliques and being complacent, we should run the race before us with our eyes set on Jesus and set an example for the believers in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity. When caught in the second trap, we hide behind a façade. With the fear of vulnerability before us, we do not strengthen Christ's body but instead we weaken it. We are told elsewhere in the Scriptures to confess sin to one another, praying with and for each other, because the prayer of a righteous man has great power. By hiding the areas of our weakness, we not only are living a lie, but we isolate ourselves from the encouragement, prayers, and intimacy of fellow believers. If we only allow ourselves to be seen in our “perfect” costumes, we will never truly be known by or know our brothers and sisters, our family in Christ. We know that as iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another, but within this trap there is no sharpening, no spurring one another on to perfection in Christ.

So throughout this year, as we are reminded of this verse over and over, remember to press on to make it your own. We are not perfect, but we must run the race so as to obtain perfection. Let your struggle strengthen your sisters in Christ and allow them to spur you on to holiness.

Do One Thing... by Ashley Marcuz

What great testimonies we have of God blessing our efforts in reaching out to other people. Julie VanWormer was praying for an opportunity to get back in touch with a neighbor family. This family had been to the Old Orchard Pathway last year and had not visited since. In God's providence, Bill and Julie came to hear about the wife having slipped a disc in her back. She was in a great deal of pain. Julie quickly organized some meals for the family and asked the Pathway to help minister to them as well. Because of Julie “doing one thing” this family received the love of the body of Christ.

PRAISE GOD!

From Diane's Desk

When we started the WOW (Women of the Word) ministry over six years ago, we were given the task by the leadership of CTW to teach and disciple women. We have lots of different activities to attend as women, but the most important activities for each of us to attend are the teaching events and Bible studies offered by WOW. If you must choose your event participation, let me strongly encourage you to attend each teaching event. The next teaching times to mark on your calendar are on January 22nd, and on April 9th. Looking further ahead, the date for our next WOW Retreat will be March 9, 2012. More details on the retreat will be coming in the fall of 2011.

Beating the Winter Blues

Once the presents are opened, parties are attended, the tree is down and decorations packed away, the long stretch of winter ahead can feel rather lonesome. With fewer opportunities for socializing and shorter days, it can be easy to feel bluesy. So how can we beat those winter blues? How do we get motivated when we just want to hibernate all winter?

1. Get Focused: It is nice to have a “snow day” now and then: a cozy chair, good book, and a pot of tea, but even in winter we should be serving the church and our families. Make lists, set a schedule, set goals for each day and week.
2. Get Creative: Begin a project you've been planning or get a jump on next year's Christmas gifts. Try out a new hobby, especially if you know a gal who would be willing to teach you.
3. Get Together: Make dates to spend time with friends or someone new. Plan a pitch in party where everyone brings new recipes!
4. Get Out: Plan a weekend away. Layer up and head to the park. Enjoy whatever sun you can get!
5. Get Purposeful: Put on music that encourages you to reflect on and glorify God, tape up favorite verses around the house, and make lists of all the great things God has done that you are thankful for!

Announcements:

Heard tales from previous women's retreats of the late-night Friday showdowns around a Qwirkle board, epic euchre tournaments, or crazy physical stunts? Heard people talk about friendships formed or chances to talk without someone small needing your attention? Well, this year we are not having a retreat, but we will have the opportunity to enjoy the sweet (and often humorous) extended Friday night fellowship. Prepare your gaming skills, brush up on your conversation starters and get ready for a fun night with the women of Christ the Word! The “un-retreat” will take place on Friday, February 25th at Holland-Free Methodist church beginning at 7:00 PM and extending late into the evening (or until the next day!). Look in next month's gazette or your forthcoming invitation for more details.

Come join Ryan and Emily Baechle as they look forward to the birth of their daughter! A baby shower to celebrate this event will be held on February 5th from 10am to 12pm at the home of Barb Oostra. If you have any questions, please see Sarah DeSonne.

WOW Calendar

January 22nd-
9:30a.m.-12:30p.m.
Teaching Event at Strawberry Acres

February 5th-
Emily Baechle's Baby Shower

February 25th-
Fellowship Event

January quote:

“The difficulties and trials- the casting about in our minds as to what we shall do this summer, or even tomorrow, all vanish when we look to God. Rouse yourselves up and look to God. Build your hope on Him. No matter if there are a hundred and one things that press, resolutely exclude them all and look to Him.”

Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost For His Highest*

calendar of events

January Calendar

- Jan. 2-16** Winter Interim
Sunday Schools
- Jan. 22** WOW Teaching Event
- Jan. 23** Winter Trimester
Sunday Schools Begin
- Jan. 30** New Attendee Open House
@ the Killys'

Mark Your Calendar

- Feb. 5** Emily Baechle Baby Shower
- Feb. 5** Presbytery
- Feb. 12** Couples Night
- Feb. 18-20** LWY Winter Retreat
- Feb. 25** WOW Fellowship Event
- Mar. 24** WOW Fellowship Bead Night
- May 7** Presbytery