



Grasping or Giving?

Vic Reasoner

In some respects Jacob was a prototype of the coming Messiah. However, Jacob was not like Christ in one crucial defect. At his birth he came from the womb grasping his brother's heel. Later he deceived his own father and beat his brother out of the blessing of the firstborn.

However, Paul wrote that Jesus Christ did not count his equality with God a thing to be grasped (Phil 2:6). Jesus was not driven by selfish ambition or conceit but by a pure love which was willing to give himself. Before we are transformed through the Spirit, we are more like Jacob than we are like Jesus. In fact, Paul wrote that even those who surrounded him were focused on seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ (v. 21). Wesley explained that we naturally seek ease, safety, pleasure, and profit. In Philippians 1:12–17, Paul even accuses some who are in Christian ministry of selfish motives. He admonishes us to have the mind of Christ, a mindset which is not content to provide for our own needs but who thinks about other people (v. 4).

David Livingstone is famous for the statement, "God only had one Son and He was a missionary." Jesus was sent with a message across barriers. Most of us put our gifts under a tree, but God put his gift on a tree! He was born to die that we might live.

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In this Advent season, may we become givers, not grabbers.

As Dr. Smith will share in his Christmas story, "A baby is God's opinion that life should go on." But the coming of Christ was more than God's opinion—it was God's plan of redemption. Mankind is valuable because of the investment God made. From the worldview of the materialist, the chemicals in our body are worth about one dollar. Our skin is worth about \$4.50. The minerals in our body should bring about \$15, so we are worth a little over \$25.

However, Leonardo da Vinci was commissioned by King Louis XII of France in 1605 to paint a portrait of Jesus entitled "Salvator Mundi." That work of art cannot be priced based on how much canvas and oil paint cost. Nor can it be simply evaluated on the basis of da Vinci's time and talent. Recently, it sold for \$450 million and so its worth has been established on the basis of what an art collector was willing to pay for it.

How much are we worth? God gave his one and only Son to redeem us. Therefore, our worth is of inestimable value. A consistently Christian worldview must hold that every person has worth—even those who have a different skin color or who speak a different language or who don't have as much money as we have.

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The Incarnate God-Man

Samuel Chadwick



Excerpted from *Humanity and God* (1904), 20–22. Chadwick (1860–1932) served as the president of the British Wesleyan Methodist Conference in 1918–1919. In this article, he helps us understand God’s Christmas gift.

That man may be as God reaches its highest certainty in the fact of the Incarnation. God has become man in the person of Jesus Christ. In some quarters that may be challenged; but if there is one thing that is clear in the New Testament, it is that Jesus and God are one. He is God “manifest in the flesh”; “the effulgence of His glory and the very image of His substance.” (1 Tim 3:16; Heb 1:3). What light that sheds upon the essential quality of man’s nature! How real must be the correspondence between God and man, to make it possible without loss of identity or break of continuity for God to become man! The Son of God is truly man in every essential of manhood, yet very God of very God. He is the perfect example of manhood: the last Adam; the truly Representative Man. He is man as man was destined to be.

Between this man Christ Jesus and God there was no antagonism. He was as truly one with God as He was one with men. He believed and declared Himself to be one with the Father. Here again we have divided to our hurt. As we have separated God from ourselves so we have antagonized Father and Son. A false theology has slandered and caricatured God by representing Him as a relentless Shylock grimly exacting extreme penalty from an innocent Son. The result is that the Son is loved and the

Father is feared. The unspoken creed of many is summed up in the words: “I love Jesus, but I fear God.”

The story is told of a Christian worker who was shocked at the answer received from a dying widow to the assurance of God’s fatherly care for the widow and the fatherless. The dying woman raised herself upon her bed and entreated: “Don’t talk about God. I am afraid of God. I hate God. Every hard and bitter thing in my life has come from God.” Quietly the exhausted woman was allowed to recover strength. Then the Christian began to speak of Jesus. “Ah! yes,” said the dying woman, “He’s different, isn’t He? He was so good and kind I like to hear about Him. I could trust Him.” Different? No, He is not different. And yet what that woman said I have heard in effect a thousand times. It seems a dreadful thing to say, but it needs to be said, that Jesus is no better than God. He is not different; they are One.



When Philip asked that they might see the Father, Jesus answered out of a grieved

heart: “Have I been so long time with you and dost thou not know Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me?” (John 14:9–10). No, He is not different. God is not only as good as Jesus, but infinitely transcends all that Jesus revealed of Him, for there is a glory yet to be revealed. We have failed to catch the significance of the fact that the Son is the Father’s gift to the world. He was in the Son. All that it cost the Son to redeem the world it cost the Father. He suffered in the suffering Son. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Cor 5:19). They were not in conflict, they were not dissimilar; they are One. ✠

A Christmas Story

Ron Smith

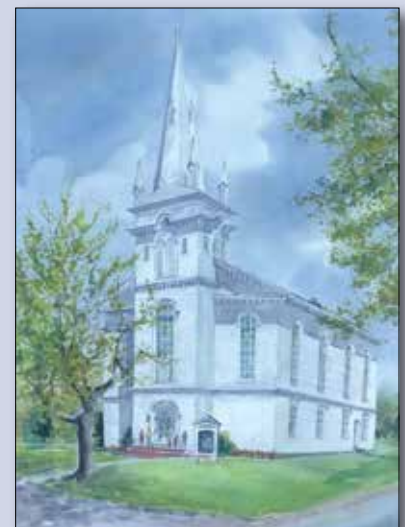


I was asked to write an article for this issue of *The High Calling* that was not an academic article but rather one that embodied some personal experience from our pastoral ministry that was reflective of the Christmas season (Advent). As I write, Dorena and I are staying at The Hemlock Inn in Bryson City, North Carolina. At each meal I have been sitting alongside of Mr. John Shell. Mr. Shell has owned The Hemlock

Inn since 1969. John is 91 years old (soon to be 92) and was on the board of the Francis Asbury Society that brought me on as a Francis Asbury Fellow in 1993. Mr. Shell asked if I would greet his friends that are readers of *The High Calling*. I shared with John regarding my task to write this article. John said, “A Christmas story should be like the task of innkeeping. Just... invite people into your family.” So the following is an invitation into the lives of the Ron and Dorena Smith family in 1989 as we served St. Paul’s United Methodist Church in Port Republic, New Jersey. Welcome to the family!

“And you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High...” (Luke 1:76)

It was Advent season in the year of 1989, thirty-two years ago. My wife, Dorena, and I were pastoring St. Paul’s United Methodist Church in Port Republic, New Jersey. Port Republic is a beautiful, small town some ten miles or so from Atlantic City. It rests on the banks of the



St. Paul UMC, Port Republic, NJ

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Incarnational Ministry

Paul Wesley Chilcote



Adapted from *Recapturing the Wesleys' Vision* by Paul Wesley Chilcote. ©2004 by Paul Wesley Chilcote. Used by permission of InterVarsity Press, PO Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60559. www.ivpress.com. Dr. Chilcote is visiting professor of the practice of evangelism at Duke University. In this article, he illuminates the balance of the Wesleys in bringing together the personal and the social, mission and service.

We see the conjunction of works of piety and works of mercy most clearly in the life of Jesus. He was a man of prayer. He was devoted to the study of the Hebrew Scriptures, a rabbi who had immersed himself in the teachings of the Torah and the Prophets. His life was shaped by the Jewish festivals and feasts. No one could ever question that Jesus was a man of deep piety. But he also believed that his spirituality had to be lived out in a servant ministry to those around him. He clearly viewed himself as a suffering servant who was called to heal the sick, to feed the hungry, to release those who were in bondage, and to proclaim God's reign to all.

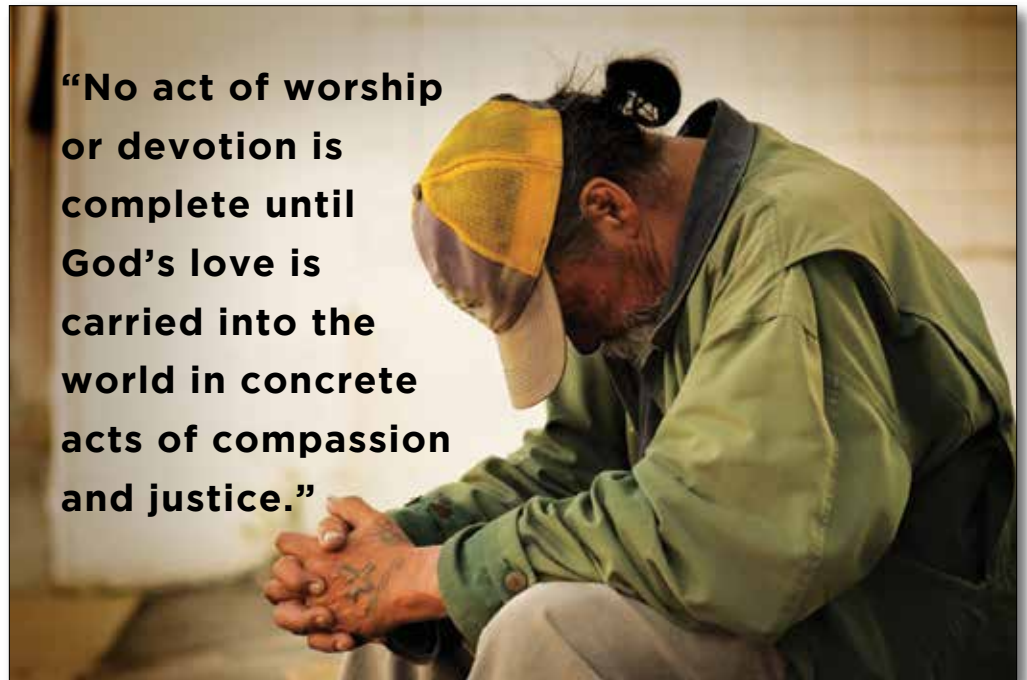
Luke's account of the Transfiguration poignantly illustrates the conjunction of the spiritual and physical in the life of Jesus Christ. He and his closest companions ascended a mountain to pray. They were overwhelmed by the presence of God in a powerful spiritual experience. Despite Peter's pleading to remain there, apart from the world, to soak up this spiritual rapture, Jesus came down from the mountain with his disciples the next day. There Jesus was confronted by a boy who was writhing and contorted because he was possessed by a demon. This is exactly where Jesus was called to be in ministry (Lk 9:28-43). He intentionally immersed himself in the hurting places of humanity. He sought out those who were least and last and lost. He became what we are (as the great fathers and mothers of the early church would say) in order that we might become what he is. He took onto himself all the brokenness and fullness of life as we know it, with all of its joy and triumphs, with all of its pain and defeat. He lived out God's solidarity with us all.

Here is a parable of love itself. The loving person does not remain aloof from life. The loving person is not disengaged or protected from the brutal realities of this life. The loving disciple can never be uninterested in the plight of the poor, the weak, and the broken. Rather, God's love reaches out to us wherever we are. The children of God who have

been grasped by this love, like Jesus, invest themselves in the lives of broken and wounded people. People who are shaped by this kind of love are willing to get their hands dirty in the service of others in God's world, as Jesus did.

This essential discovery about the Christian life is nothing other than the "incarnational principle." For nowhere are the spiritual and the physical held together more closely than in the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. The word *incarnation* literally means "to become flesh." And this is precisely what God, in God's love, has done. In Jesus Christ, God entered into our physical world, in time and space, and became a human being, both affirming and redeeming all that we are. In a lyric paraphrase of Philippians 2:7, Charles Wesley said it well:

*He left his Father's throne above
(So free, so infinite his grace!),
Emptied himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me!*



"No act of worship or devotion is complete until God's love is carried into the world in concrete acts of compassion and justice."

For the Wesleys, the implications of this central Christian truth were clear. The fact that God is Emmanuel (literally, God with us) means that the Christian is called to a life of incarnational ministry. It means that Jesus' disciples (those who learn how to love in his family) are also called to be apostles, those who are sent out as servants to incarnate that love for and with others. It is our task to make this spiritual reality (God's love) a concrete reality in people's lives. To be a Christian is to "flesh out" love.

The Wesleys realized that works of piety devoid of compassion are pharisaical. They also knew that works of mercy not rooted in a grace-filled relationship with God are ultimately bankrupt. The Wesleys realized that the more one practices mercy and piety, the more mercy and piety begin to impinge on one another. But the primary insight of the brothers was that no act of worship or devotion is complete until God's love is carried into the world in concrete acts of compassion and justice. ✠

It is an absurdity to celebrate the nativity at all if you don't believe in the Incarnation.

—C. S. Lewis

The Remedy of the World's Misery

Richard Watson (1781–1833)



Richard Watson was the first Methodist to write a systematic theology. His *Theological Institutes* were first published in 1823–1829. He was also the general secretary for the Wesleyan Missionary Society and was influential in casting a vision for Methodist missions. He was regarded as a master preacher. This sermon, lightly edited for a modern audience, was #99 in his collection of sermons. In it, he expounds on Isaiah 9:2–7, one of the great Advent texts.

Consider the moral state of the world previous to the glorious change which this text prophesies. They know not God. They do not worship him. His greatness is hidden from them; and therefore no adoration is among them. His goodness is hidden from them; and therefore they have no hope. His holiness is hidden from them; and therefore they have no standard of moral purity. The harmony of justice

because of the discoveries which it makes. It is life and health to the world. It shows us “the Sun of righteousness” rising with “healing in his wings.”

As light succeeds darkness, so also joy succeeds fear and misery. This is no common joy; it is the joy of harvest and the joy of victory. The diffusion of the Gospel produces universal joy. So vast a change must be produced by causes proportionate to the yoke of sin and bondage of Satan. The words of verse five speak of resistance and struggle. We cannot expect the conversion of the world without opposition from the enemy and without the perseverance of the saints.

But two factors are different in this battle: the insufficiency of the enemies resistance and the miraculous success of the Christian. Whenever the victory shall take place, it shall be eminently of God. The demonstration of the Spirit, the power of God, is here compared to fire.

The basis of this expectation is that *a child is born, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

The Christianizing of the world is no novel thought. It was laid in the mind of God before the world was. In a word, we expect success, because God has formed a scheme of universal redemption to be gradually but fully developed. The incarnate God is come; and by the affixing to the cross of that consecrated spotless body which he assumed, has paid the costly price of the redemption of all mankind.

We expect success because *to us a son is given*. He took our nature; he was made flesh; and therefore is allied to man. His is the brother of every man; of the black and of the

white; of men of all countries.

All power is given to him. All things are put under him, to be used as instruments of accomplishing his proper work, to seek and to save that which was lost. As he reigns his wisdom sees, his power grasps, and his love directs everything.

We can see nothing strange or improbable in the conversion of the whole world to discourage us when we read that his name is *Wonderful*. The mysteries of his nature and his acts of grace and government have always been and will always be. As our counselor he will guide us by his wisdom in all our efforts and plans. He is the mighty God and nothing is too hard for him. He has fathered eternity and is the same yesterday, today, and forever. If his government never ceases then his peace shall never end. Let us do our utmost to extend the knowledge of this name and to make it known in every place. ✠



“As light succeeds darkness, so also joy succeeds fear and misery.”

and mercy, in saving men through an accepted atonement, is hidden from them. No Gospel is proclaimed to them; and no hearts therefore bound at the joyful sound.

But the prophet adds to his description of their darkness “the shadow of death.” It is darkness, thick darkness; the darkness of the grave or of the place where damned spirits are held in chains of darkness. The predominant idea is that of a sense of insecurity accompanied by fear. Darkness increases danger and fear at the same time. Such is the state of the heathen. Misery is multiplied where God and truth are unknown.

However, the text breaks upon us with a glorious and cheering view. *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.* This Gospel light originates from heaven. It is truth, without a mixture of error. It is light because of its penetrating nature. It is light

The True Light

Kenneth J. Collins



Dr. Collins is professor of Historical Theology and Wesley Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary. This article explains how Jesus became the light of the world at his advent. It is excerpted from *Jesus the Stranger: The Man from Galilee and the Light of the World* (Seedbed, 2021), 2–4. Used by permission.

John’s affirmation: “The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world,” is rich with meaning on so many levels. First of all, this statement reveals that the light identified with Jesus, the Word made flesh, exists prior to coming into the world. Elsewhere, John declares: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (v. 1). These statements could not rightly be made in terms of any other human being. Think about that for a while. Second, observe that John writes of “the true light,” implying that false lights, pretend lights, misguided lights also exist and that they can lead many people astray. Third, note also that Jesus, as the true light, gives light to everyone, to all people, to white, black, rich, poor, male, female, young, old, middle-aged, Christian, non-Christian, theist, atheist. *All* really does mean *all* here (v. 12); none are excluded from this illumination whose source is none other than the “light of the world” (John 8:12). It is this light that was “with God, and . . . was God” (John 1:1).

Various Christian traditions have grappled with the meaning of this universal illumination. Some consider it along the lines of general revelation—in terms of a created order embedded in the things that have been made, reminiscent of what the apostle Paul had written in Romans 1:20: “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.” Others, however, view this illumination not only externally, in terms of the things that have been made, but also internally with respect to such things as conscience, knowledge of the moral law, and even a basic, if primitive, intuitive knowledge of God. The larger point here—and it’s an important one—is that all of this illumination has Jesus as its source. He, and he alone, is the true light that illuminates all of humanity whether he is celebrated or not or even recognized or not.

John is only a few short verses into his gospel and he already introduces remarkable irony. Given who Jesus is, we would naturally expect he would be recognized by the world since the world itself, and all that is in it, has been made through the Word. Instead, we get exactly the opposite: not recognition, but neglect; not reception, but rejection. Who is this Jesus that I should pay attention? What’s so special about him? When the light or Word came to that which was his own—meaning the Jewish people—he was not welcomed or received. However, such a frosty attitude, suggesting perhaps a hardness of

heart, was not shared by all first-century Jews, though it was found among their religious leaders. (And there were exceptions even here; think of Nicodemus, for example.) In fact, not only was Jesus himself Jewish, but every one of his disciples was as well. We must never forget that.

The irony of verses 10 and 11 is heightened in one of the largest contrasts ever offered in literature, any literature. Consider this: the light that has entered the world is none other than the Word who is God. Accordingly, the Word, the Most High, the one greatly to be exalted, will not only be met with stupefying neglect and unwelcoming attitudes, but also, as John will later tell us, outright torture, mocking, and murderous intent. This vast difference, this huge chasm, between the glorious heights of who this light is, in terms of his essential being, and the wretched depths of his rejection manifested in the evil practices and the murderous designs of those who reject this light, both Jew and Gentile, is without parallel. Indeed, this difference, which again is colossal, is one of the



“He, and he alone, is the true light that illuminates all of humanity whether he is celebrated or not or even recognized or not.”

reasons why the gospel story is unlike all other stories. It is and remains, unique, distinct, and set apart. It offers the grandest narrative of all, from the highest heights to the lowest depths, an invitation to a world much larger than our own workaday world, a reality far deeper than we have ever imagined—or could have imagined.

To be caught up in such a story, then, to be engaged in this matchless narrative, is an invitation to discovery and transformation, to a new way of being, to participating in what is nothing less than a new world, an enchanting world, one that is full of light precisely because God is light. We enter that world, John tells us, not through our own self-will or strength, not in any natural way, but through the very gift of the new birth, graciously given to us, whereby we become something absolutely amazing: the very children of God (John 1:13). ✠

When the Eternal Son of God Assumed Human Nature

Joseph D. McPherson



Joe is the son of a Methodist pastor and evangelist. His mother, Anna Talbott McPherson, was a well-known author. Joe has been researching early Methodist literature since 1961. Here, Joe gives new life to an old treasure in the Methodist storehouse. This article was taken from *Exploring Early Methodism* (Fundamental Wesleyan, 2018), 359-361. Used by permission.

Scripture assures us that “in the fullness of time” the eternal Son of God took upon himself human nature, being born of a virgin and conceived by the Holy Ghost. “The Word [or second person of the Trinity] became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Flesh in this context carries the meaning of human nature.

The doctrine of the incarnation teaches that the eternal Son of God became human and that he did so without diminishing the reality of his divine nature in any manner or degree. The mystery of the incarnation cannot be properly understood without placing implicit faith in the virgin birth. While it is known that in the process of ordinary human birth a new personality is brought into being, Christ did not begin to be when he was born in Bethlehem. He is the eternal Son and has ever existed with the Father and Holy Ghost. Although the Holy Ghost has never been thought of as the father of Jesus, the virgin birth can be explained only as a miracle wrought by the Holy Ghost. Jesus should never be thought of as half man and half god like the Greek mythological heroes. As the Second Person of the Trinity, he was fully God. “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form” (Col. 2:9). The eternal Son of God “became flesh” by taking to himself a genuine human nature, in addition to his eternal divine nature.

William Burt Pope, a proponent of early Methodist teachings, is often referred to as the “prince of theologians.” In his remarks concerning the incarnation, he assures us that “It is the infinite condescension of the Son of God and the glory of man that the union of the two natures [the divine and human] in Christ is permanent. He became man once for all: our manhood is a vesture which He will never fold and lay aside. Emmanuel is His name forever.” Even now he retains the same human body he took upon himself in the Incarnation. He triumphed over death in his resurrection, ascended to heaven where he was glorified, and sits at the right hand of God interceding for his people.

When we read the New Testament epistles we “find,” writes Pope, that “the Incarnation is always closely connected with an atoning design: not indeed generally as one stage towards the Atonement, but as essentially

connected with it.” He points to the fact that “Our Lord is our Representative; ‘forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood He also Himself took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death.’”

We clearly see that the incarnation was the way to the cross. “It was to abolish death, by taking his power from its representative and lord, ‘that is, the devil.’” Only by becoming man could he be “a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God to make expiation for the sins of the people.” In order to bring about the destruction of death, the reconciliation of sinners who were subject to death, and accomplish the propitiation required in order to both, “He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16).

“The blessed Mother of our Lord,” writes Pope, “was the human custodian of the mystery . . . though a veil, which we must not penetrate, falls upon her communications. It was part of our Lord’s lowliness to bear the reproach which sprang from the paradox of His human birth: His cross began from His conception, and His mother bore it with Him, the sword piercing her soul also from the beginning as well as at the end.

“This reproach,” continues Pope, “He has endured at the hands of both Gentiles and Jews to this day; but reverence forbids our further examination of it.” It is interesting to note that “whatever His disciples knew, Jesus Himself always spoke and acted as One who ‘made of a woman’ knew that God was His only Father: evidence of which abounds from His first testimony to Himself, ‘Wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?’” Even to the end of his earthly ministry he assured his

disciples “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father!”

All three persons of the Trinity were involved in the Incarnation. “The Father, or what is in the New Testament the same [as] God, is connected with the miraculous entrance of the Son into human nature only in a general manner. He is said to have ‘sent forth his Son, made of a woman and in the likeness of sinful flesh’ (Gal. 4:4; Rom. 8:3). In relation of the Son Himself to His incarnation [we are to understand that it] was His voluntary act.” We find him saying, “a body hast thou prepared me” (Heb. 10:5; John 6:38), and “I came down from heaven not to do mine own will,” and finally, “Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:7).

“The Body was prepared by the Third Person of the Trinity The Son sent of the Father, and voluntarily



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We Minister in Our Weakness

Daryl McCarthy



Dr. McCarthy has been involved in theological education internationally since 1986. In his 2021 commencement address to Asbury Theological Seminary, excerpted here, he addresses the insecurities of leaders and the inadequacies of ministry. Yet it is liberating to realize that God can use you and me in spite of our weaknesses.

Do you feel adequate? Do you feel like you should believe yourself to be adequate? Most of us struggle with a sense of inadequacy and weakness. But in our self-esteem culture we need to remember God's Word warns that the danger is not in feeling *inadequate* for the challenges we face but in thinking that we are *adequate* and ready in and of ourselves.

Is it okay to feel inadequate?

Paul's simple poignant words answer this question resoundingly, "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10). You may protest, "But would I dare step into the pulpit or into a challenging leadership position without self-confidence?" The quick answer is yes, because the Word of God makes it clear that it is alright to feel inadequate. Paul himself was transparent in admitting, "I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling" (1 Cor 2:3 NIV)

So are weakness, fear, trembling—are those qualifications for leadership? Apparently, it is the very kind of leader God is looking for. Paul reminds us, "We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Cor 4:7).

You have this priceless treasure of the Gospel in a fragile, easily-breakable container—you. These jars of clay Paul was referring to could be purchased for a penny or two, like a disposable cheap plastic cup, not even as good as styrofoam. This is liberating, the source of true humility, not a fake, sickening Uriah Heep kind of humility, but an honest, true, transparent recognition, "Yes, I am inadequate! Get used to it!"

Self-confidence is grossly over-rated. Several years ago I read about a study which compared the self-esteem of two groups: corporate executives and young men in prison for violent crimes. Which group do you think had the highest self-image? As it turns out, the self-image of corporate executives was much lower than that of the prisoners. After all, the prisoners had so much confidence they could easily do violence to others and feel justified. But the executives knew they couldn't depend on their accomplishments of yesterday; they had to produce today to keep ahead. God Himself specializes in using small things and weak people. God used David with an arsenal of five small stones. God used a young lad with five little loaves of bread and two small fish.

A long line of great saints have labored faithfully in spite of their sense of weakness and inadequacy.

- St. Patrick in his *Confessions* said he was "rustic, exiled, unlearned" and "the outcast of this world."
- Martin Luther said of himself, "I am mightily displeasing to myself."
- John Knox admitted, "I quake, I fear and tremble." He saw himself as having "a certain clumsiness in himself."
- In his old age, John Wesley wrote in his journal, "I am now an old man, decayed from head to foot. My eyes are dim; my right hand shakes much; my mouth is hot and dry every morning; I have a lingering fever almost every day; my motion is weak and slow. However, blessed be God, I do not slack my labor: I can preach and write still."
- One of Francis Asbury's biographers, Darius Salter, observed that "Asbury's journal exhibited a good deal of anxiety, restlessness, depression, and guilt."



"Self-confidence is grossly over-rated."

At the end of one discouraging year Asbury wrote, "I felt weakness of body and dejection of mind; and sometimes I . . . think of requesting, as Elijah and Jonah did, that I may die. . . . I wonder sometimes, how anyone will sit to hear me, but the Lord covers my weakness with his power."

- Adam Clarke admitted that "His popularity was great, but he was not lifted up by it; [because] he felt too much of weakness, ignorance, and imperfection in himself; to allow the foot of pride to come against him."
- The great missionary William Carey said, "I am not gifted, but I can plod."
- Duncan Campbell, the main preacher at the Hebrides Revival in the late 1940s, was a powerfully anointed preacher in the pulpit when God's *shekinah* glory came down on that island. But during the hours between sermons, he struggled under deep depression which would lift only when he walked into the pulpit.

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Our World Needs Divine Healing

Vic Reasoner

Joel tells God's people to repent. They were to declare a holy fast and put on sackcloth. Chapter 2 of Joel continues to describe the horde of locusts. Then Joel calls for God's people to rend their hearts, not their garments. The trumpet will be sounded in order to call a sacred assembly. The priests are to lead the congregation. They are to intercede, asking God to spare his people. As the priests weep between the temple porch and the altar, they are bringing the congregation from the entry point to the place of surrender and sacrifice.

Joel promised that if God's people repented, he would take pity. He would restore what the locusts devoured. He would send refreshing rain on the barren land. But Joel looked ahead and prophesied that afterward, God would pour out his Spirit. Peter explicitly declared that this wonderful promise through Joel was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. While Pentecost marked the inauguration of the new covenant and the last days, in Acts 3:19, Peter preached that if we will repent and return to God, times of refreshing will come.

This is no time to close down or cut back. According to Joel, we are to sound a trumpet which provides leadership. We need to fast and pray. According to 2 Chronicles 7:14,

God's covenant people are to humble themselves, repent, and seek his face. God has promised to hear and to heal.

Our world needs this divine healing. The Church, as a community of priests, must lead in this intercession. We acknowledge divine sovereignty and human responsibility. However, we are not simply to pray for a return to business as usual. We are not merely to ask God to stay his hand of judgment. We are to pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. May God give us the faith to trust God for

healing from the pandemic and a corresponding reset of refreshment. The coming revival can be as pervasive as the recent pandemic!

The Francis Asbury Society is calling the international Church to a day of corporate fasting and prayer. On November 23, we will host a virtual international healing service from our



headquarters between 6:00-7:30 EDT. Please mark your calendar and plan to participate in whatever ways you can. We also encourage you to begin praying now. More than likely you have already been praying, but it is time for the whole church to come together and pray in unity. The basis of our petition is stated in Daniel 9:18, "We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act!" ✠

Lord, who am I that You should desire me to join You and the blessed Holy Spirit in interceding for the needs of Your church and for the world still unreached, yet so constantly loved by You? I am unworthy of Your love. I know not how to pray as I ought. But I want to touch the world through prayer. Let the power of Your Spirit anoint me to touch and bless Your world and its people. Lord, teach me to pray.

Teach me, Lord, to see the world through Your eyes, to love the world with Your love, to weep with You over the sorrows and sins of the world. I am unworthy to carry prayer burdens, but I am willing to share them with You.

—Wesley Duewel, *Touch the World through Prayer*

The history of the Church and global missions is replete with individuals who recklessly and boldly threw themselves into God's service, all the while struggling with a keen and often painful awareness of their own weaknesses. The bold Apostle Paul himself admitted he had "fears within" (2 Cor 7:5 NIV).

Do you see a pattern here? Such a long list of frail human beings though should not surprise us because Jesus Himself is the model of ministering in weakness. Isaiah declared that the Messiah was "a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity" (Isa 53:3 NRSV). The writer of Hebrews reminds us that Jesus "is beset with weakness" (Heb 5:2 ESV).

None of this sounds like the bold, confident, self-assured evangelical leader we are told is the model for us to follow. But confident self-esteem is never listed among the qualities required for Christian leaders in the Bible. So yes, it is okay to feel weak and inadequate.

Of course, some weaknesses can be addressed through study, preparation, spiritual growth, self-discipline, accountability, and maturity. No doubt many of you came to study precisely because you recognized your weaknesses and wanted to address them. So acknowledging our weakness is not a license for lethargy or indolence. We are commanded by the Word to excel and to be diligent, to learn and grow.

But even with our learning and striving to be at our best for the King, God uses our weaknesses and inadequacies for *our* benefit and *His* glory. Weaknesses push us to rely on God and not ourselves.

Paul certainly understood this. On one occasion he said he was "so utterly, unbearably crushed that [he] despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death so that we would rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead" (2 Cor. 1:8-9 NRSV).

In the *Chronicles of Narnia*, Aslan asked Prince Caspian, "Do you feel yourself sufficient to take up the Kingship of Narnia?"

"I—I don't think I do, Sir," said Caspian. "I'm only a kid."

"Good," said Aslan. "If you had felt yourself sufficient, it would have been a proof that you were not."

I grew up on a farm in southern Missouri. And if we were walking along a country road and saw a turtle on a fence post, there was one thing we knew, even before we got our high school diploma. A turtle on a fence post did not get there on its own. It had help!

We are all turtles on fence posts. We got where we are only with God's help and the help of others. You arrived at this graduation day because of the help of

sacrificial family members, faithful faculty members, and many others.

Once Billy Graham was asked, "How do you feel when you stand up to preach to the tens of thousands of people in a stadium?"

He answered, "Usually I feel totally inadequate and wish that the floor would open up and let me drop through. There are many times when I stand up that I almost feel like running from the stadium. I feel like I have nothing to give these people . . . And then I remember that it's the power of the Word. It's not me."

Our weaknesses keep the focus on Jesus and not on us. That's why Paul said, "We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body" (2 Cor 4:10 NIV).

Philip Hughes said, "It is precisely the Christian's utter frailty which lays him open to the experience of the all-sufficiency of God's grace, so that he is able even to rejoice because of his weakness."

Alistair Begg put it like this, "We can either embrace our weakness and dwell in phenomenal strength. Or

we can embrace our strength and dwell in phenomenal weakness."

Embrace your weakness. Rejoice in your inadequacy. Sadly a fear of failure paralyzes many, including many in ministry and leadership. But in truth, it should make us bolder for Christ. It should galvanize us, spur us into action.

It seems counter intuitive for Paul to declare, "I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." Are you able

to "delight in weaknesses . . . in difficulties"? Get ready, because that is a key mark of effective and missional servants of God.

Precisely because we embrace our weakness, we are freed up to take bold steps of obedience to Christ. We don't have to be afraid of failing, because we already know that in ourselves we will not only fail, we are failures. But God uses our weaknesses, our failures, our suffering for His purposes and for His glory.

In the middle of Hebrews 11, that great chapter listing heroes of the faith, we read about those, "whose weakness was turned to strength" (Heb 11:34 NIV).

Let your weakness be turned to strength by our strong and faithful God. Serve God boldly, not in your own strength, but with His power working through your weakness! Not in self-confidence, but with an overflowing, abundant confidence in Him. Give Him your weakness! Give Him your inadequacy! Let your weakness free you to serve Him recklessly! 🐢



"Let your weakness be turned to strength by our strong and faithful God."

Nacote Creek in the Great Egg Harbor watershed area of the Atlantic Ocean.

St. Paul's was the only church in a little town of just over one thousand people. It had a Norman Rockwell ethos about it, with a high spiraling steeple and an old New England congregational design. The sanctuary sat on the second floor, with majestic stained-glass windows, vintage woodwork, and antique tin walls and ceiling. People would drive all the way from New York City to see me about getting married there because the church's Hallmark quaintness made it, if ever there was one, the perfect "wedding church."

Christmas in Port Republic held an almost "Narnia-like" feeling of Christian enchantment in our small, wooded town by the water up in the Northeast. Very near to Christmas, an ad hoc choir of carolers made up of seventy-

five men, women, several teens, and children would go door to door singing the greatest message ever presented to humanity: "Joy to the World, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King!" Singing outside in New Jersey in the last part of December was quite the chore. With lips thick and quivering, rosy cheeks, and runny noses we were unlikely to do justice to one single carol with any kind of deserved excellence that adequately portrayed the sacredness of the season. No, we just got caught up in the grace of the season and the sanctity of the message in a community that, for all of us, was just right.

Sis Brown, our church's very own Mother in Israel (see Judges 5:7), had the perfect warm-up at the end of caroling—hot chocolate or spiced cider and goodies served in the fellowship hall!

Advent of '89 had (could it be possible?) a still greater joy in store for Dorena and me. She was pregnant, VERY pregnant, carrying our first child. Remember all of the anticipation around your first baby? I was thirty-four years old and clueless as to what it would mean! But that didn't do anything except heighten the new mystery and anticipation of it all. And sure enough, on December 19, in the Mainland Medical Center in Absecon, New Jersey, in a private suite made just for the expecting couple to deliver their baby (right on schedule!), Dorena gave birth to our firstborn, Katharine Elizabeth.

Things were great! Katie was healthy and beautiful, and two days after her birth, on December 21, we brought her home. Over the next two days, our new daughter struggled while nursing, which deeply upset her mother, and, moreover, she turned so yellow her name could

have been "Chicquita"! By December 23, we had to take our new bilirubin baby back to the hospital. In our thirty years of marriage, I never saw my wife's heart break like it did when I took Katie from her arms (the doctor wanted Dorena on bed rest, so she had to stay home). Dorena's spirit was crushed!

We all know Santa has elves, but what I had never known was that Jesus had ministering angels in medical centers in New Jersey! They even have a name—pediatric nurses! God's perfect helpers put my little girl back in the incubator, and Katie's Daddy stayed and prayed, prayed and stayed. For two days and nights, I stayed with my newborn and we formed, as I now call it, The Christmas Bond. On Christmas Eve (just after midnight so really it was Christmas) I was holding Katie in my lap singing Christmas carols to her. One of the nurses decided to join me. After the carol, she brought the other nurses on duty

in and they all helped me sing another carol to my daughter. It blew my mind to receive that kind of love! I just wish you all could have seen me and those nurses singing a Christmas carol to a newborn in an incubator on Christmas Eve. Did we ever sing! I'll never forget that divine moment.

The doctor decided that two days and nights in the incubator had lowered Katie's bilirubin count enough to allow her to return home.

On Christmas morning, 1989, I carried my firstborn child wrapped in swaddling clothes, now much more pink, back to the St. Paul's parsonage in Port Republic. I laid her in a cradle under the Christmas tree and brought my wife to her. We held hands and mingled tears of joy, and I looked at Katharine Elizabeth and prayed in my heart, "And you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High" (Luke 1:76, RSV).

There are things forever branded on my mind because of Christmas, 1989.

I learned that God's heart was crushed when He let His only begotten One come to a world of sinners who would one day crucify Him. But He was willing so that every person the world over could have under their Christmas tree a newborn, and He is the Most High. Let earth receive her King!

It was Carl Sandberg who wrote, "A baby is God's opinion that life should go on." In addition to God's Christmas gift of baby Jesus, sent to our families to bring us into that "family after which every family in heaven and earth is named," Dorena and I count the Christmas of 1989 gift of life as that sacred reminder of the verse, "In Him is life, and that life is the light of men" (John 1: 4). ✨



coming to His own new nature, is yet CONCEIVED OF THE HOLY GHOST." It is made a point of great importance by Pope that "The human nature of our Lord must be separate from sinners: in the Christian economy the Third Person is the sanctifier; He hallowed the flesh into which our Lord entered, and also so sanctified the Virgin Mother as to make her meet for her high function." A prophetic declaration had been made that the Seed of the woman should bruise the Serpent's head. A theme of the Psalms and Prophets predicted the coming of one whose coming was deliverance. And so the fulfillment is expressed in those words, "He hath visited and redeemed his people" (Luke 1:68).

According to Pope, "The most distinct and emphatic prophecy of the birth of Jesus unites in one sentence 'Unto us a Child is born' and 'His name shall be called The Mighty God, The Prince of Peace' (Isa. 9:6). The first New Testament name of Jesus is Immanuel (Matt. 1:23), God with us. The song of the angels heralds a Savior Whose advent is the pledge of an accomplished salvation" [Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology*, 2:141-151]. ✠

Yet our worth hinges on his worth. If Jesus was just another philosopher, a magician, or a misguided prophet, then mankind is not worth any more. The irony of Christian worship is that when we exalt Jesus Christ as the God-Man, the higher he is lifted the more valuable we also become.

It takes divine revelation to grasp the significance of Christ. A history professor, Roland Bainton, wrote these words in a Christmas letter, "Simon, the aged, held the baby Jesus, one would assume for less than a quarter of an hour. Yet he could say that he had seen a light for revelation. Life is so full of brief encounters."

In this advent season, may we not only simply encounter Christ in passing, but may we enter into a relationship with him that transforms us—making us givers and not grabbers.

This issue of *The High Calling* focuses on the incarnation of Christ and incarnational ministry—the fact that we must become like him and reflect him before we can declare him to a self-centered world. ✠

Hymns for the Nativity of Our Lord (1745), Hymn 6

Charles Wesley

*Join all ye joyful nations
Th' acclaiming hosts of heaven!
This happy morn
A child is born,
To us a Son is given:
The messenger and token
Of God's eternal favour,
God hath sent down
To us his Son,
An universal Saviour!*

*The wonderful Messias,
The joy of every nation,
Jesus his name,
With God the same,
The Lord of all creation:
The Counsellor of sinners,
Almighty to deliver,
The Prince of Peace,
Whose love's increase
Shall reign in man for ever.*

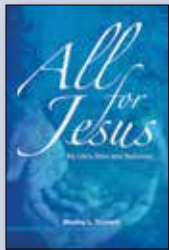
*God see the King of Glory,
Discern the heavenly stranger,
So poor and mean,
His court an inn,
His cradle is a manger:
Who from his Father's bosom
But now for us descended,
Who built the skies,
On earth he lies,
With only beasts attended.*

*Whom all the angels worship,
Lies hid in human nature;
Incarnate see
The deity,
The infinite Creator!
See the stupendous blessing
Which God to us hath given!
A child of man,
In length a span,
Who fills both earth and heaven.*

*Gaze on that helpless object
Of endless adoration!
Those infant-hands
Shall burst our bands,
And work out our salvation;
Strangle the crooked serpent,
Destroy his works for ever,
And open set
The heavenly gate
To every true believer.*

*Till then, thou holy Jesus,
We humbly bow before thee,
Our treasures bring
To serve our King,
And joyfully adore thee:
To thee we gladly render
Whate'er thy grace hath given,
Till thou appear
In glory here,
And take us up to heaven.*

See https://divinity.duke.edu/sites/divinity.duke.edu/files/documents/cswt/31_Nativity_Hymns_%281745%29.pdf

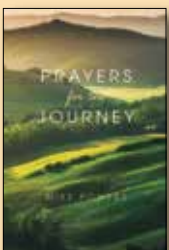


All for Jesus

The life story and testimony of Dr. Wesley Duewel

\$17.95 (paperback; 344 pages)

Dr. Wesley Duewel was a missionary statesman, an engaged intercessor, an author, a teacher, a sought-after speaker, a discipler, and a leader. This book tells the story of this godly man who lived relentlessly and uncompromisingly for Christ and others—"All for Jesus" was his motto. With so many Christian leaders not finishing well, may you be inspired by this story of one who did!



Prayers for the Journey

Mike Powers

\$14.95 (paperback; 246 pages)

These daily prayers are designed to help Christian pilgrims understand, embrace, and enjoy the blessings of spiritual wholeness amid the challenges and complexities that confront followers of Jesus on the Way.

The most exciting thought for me about the Rev. Dr. Mike Powers's book is it is the work of a shepherd. In all ages, our shepherd's words carry us to the safest place in eternity. —Dr. Ron Smith, President, Francis Asbury Society

Giving Thanks for Your Partnership

Charlie Fiskeaux, Special Assistant to the President for Financial Affairs

Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make my request for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. (Phil 1:3-5 NLT)

In his letters to the different churches, the Apostle Paul frequently begins his discourse with a statement of thanks to the persons in the church. He recognized that being in partnership with other persons who shared the truths of the Scripture was a valuable asset.

This principle still holds true today. It is still vital to have the participation and support of other persons in the task of "spreading Scriptural holiness through the land"—indeed, around the world. Through your prayers, words of encouragement, event attendance, distribution of our materials, and financial support, you are a partner with the Francis Asbury Society in proclaiming the message that persons can be transformed to live wholly devoted to God. In this time of Thanksgiving, we follow the Apostle Paul's example in expressing our thanks for your partnership in the gospel. Your participation enables the transformational message of Good News to be proclaimed with vitality.

Details for various methods of giving to the ministries of the Francis Asbury Society are available on the website <http://www.francisasburysociety.com/support>.

Sign up to receive our companion e-newsletter, *Ministry Matters*, at www.francisasburysociety.com

The High Calling—November–December 2021

The High Calling is a bimonthly publication of The Francis Asbury Society to serve as a link between FAS and its constituents, building loyalty and awareness so that the teaching and experience of Christian holiness may continue to be lived and proclaimed throughout the world.

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The High Calling

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