

A NEW PERSPECTIVE.

James W. Buckingham
jamie buckingham

P. O. Box 1406
Eau Gallie, Florida 32935



Last year a small group of us gathered in a Catholic retreat center near West Palm Beach. We spent the time in prayer and honest sharing. The final day, however, our conversation degenerated into argument. We found ourselves in keen disagreement. The harmony of the meeting was broken.

Leaving the circle of chairs I slipped into the sacristy and found the elements of communion. Returning to our group I put the bread and wine on the floor in the middle of our circle.

"We can't take communion until our hearts are right," several said. "I cannot take it as long as I am angry," another said.

But it was apparent that only the broken body and shed blood of Christ could make us right. Man can never "get his heart right". All he can do is confess his wrongness. On the basis of that, God will bring about the needed change.

So, still mad at one another, we deliberately stopped our wrangling long enough to commune with our risen Lord. We sang together. We held hands and prayed. We passed the bread--"by his stripes we are healed." We passed the cup--

"His blood, shed for you, my brother." And something happened inside each of us. Mystical? Yes. Sacramental? Yes. We were literally transformed as our minds were renewed in Christ. He had actually come into each one of us. Those of us who moments before had been engaged in heated disagreement, now embraced in love.

This last weekend some of us from that same group met again in retreat--this time on a quiet, beautiful farm nestled in the rolling hills of Maryland. Sunday morning three of us rose early and went into the woods to pluck wild blackberries. We had some critical decisions to make during our final meeting time that morning--decisions which could affect not only our personal lives, but the entire Kingdom as well. A single harsh word could break the harmony and destroy God's purpose. However, before we met we squeezed the blackberries into juice, and with a leftover breakfast roll, we took communion. Why wait for disagreements? How much better to invite Christ in at the beginning. As a result we remained in one accord. We had learned our lesson well.

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A note from old friends said that even though they are not going to Jerusalem, they intend to spend much time praying for the Conference. They see it as one of the greatest gatherings of God's people the world has ever known--and they expect Satan to pull out all the stops to destroy us.

Actually the attack started before we left the States. With diabolical cleverness Satan began his counter offensive through the tour agency and the airlines. Flights were changed. Names left off the lists. Tickets were not mailed out as promised. All seemed designed to break down the Christian's resistance by harassing him in the little areas.

You see, the best way to open yourself to disease is to harbor resentment or unforgiveness in your heart. And quite frankly, it's difficult to keep a clean heart when you've planned on a trip for months, paid out a small fortune in plane tickets, and then at the last moment learned your name has been left off the list. In fact, the surest way to test the depth of a man's walk in the Spirit is to lose his suitcase on an overseas flight.

Still vivid in my memory is the realization of how shallow my own spirituality was when the airlines cancelled my reservation and left me stranded in Port Moresby, New Guinea, last year. Standing in that dirty little airport and watching the last plane for a week take off for Hong Kong brought a whole lot of junk to the surface that I didn't even know existed.

But such SNAFU's are not the fault of tour agents or airlines. These problems are just as Satanic in origin as the hijacking of an airplane or the antics of some mad terrorist who might drop a hand grenade into the crowded Congress Hall in Jerusalem.

Those of us in Jerusalem request your prayers. Not just for protection against hand grenades--but against the little annoyances that make us angry or scared. The best way to show the world that our experience with Christ is not real, is to lose our temper or break into tears when things don't go our way. I just don't believe Paul would have gotten upset over a lost bag.

And, of course, the same principles apply to our conduct in line at the gas station as well.

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Several years ago I spent some time traveling through the Iron Curtain country of Czechoslovakia with a Dutch Bible smuggler.

One night we found ourselves in a small basement "church" with a Baptist pastor and about a dozen old men and women. The pastor asked me to teach his people, hiding away in that dark basement, an American song.

I sang "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." The pastor laboriously translated my song into their language and after several attempts, they sang it back to me in the Slovak tongue.

After the meeting was over an aged, bent woman, her hands gnarled from years of work in the fields, came to me. Speaking through her pastor as an interpreter she said, "You Americans know Jesus loves you because the Bible tells you so. Over here we have no Bibles. We only know Jesus loves us as we see Him in the lives of our friends."

I remember a little poem I read many years ago. It still convicts me when I hear the words.

We are the only Bible
The careless world will read;
We are the sinner's gospel,
We are the scoffer's creed;

In Jimmy Rainwater's message last Sunday night (and I urge every Trumpet reader to write for the tape of this South Carolina banker's testimony) he exhorted us to "hold back nothing", to tell it all to everybody. He was right. Jesus never refused to speak of deeply spiritual things because He was afraid he would offend somebody. He never took a sick person off into a back room to pray for him since he might offend the Jews who didn't believe in healing. Paul wrote an open letter for all the world to see, saying, "I wish you all spoke in tongues." He wasn't afraid of offending somebody.

Let us be bold in our witness of what we have seen, heard and experienced. Let us be the Bible--the full Bible--for the world to read. Let the Word come alive in you making pains to see the type is not crooked or the words blurred.