

# BUCKINGHAM REPORT

**AN IN-DEPTH CRITIQUE BY AMERICA'S FOREMOST  
CHRISTIAN ANALYZER OF THE ISSUES, PEOPLE, &  
EVENTS AFFECTING TODAY'S SPIRIT-LED LEADERS**

## **GROUND RULES FOR SMALL GROUPS**

Many churches are recognizing the value—the necessity—of small groups or home churches. Especially is this true as churches grow larger and pastors see they cannot effectively touch their people. In these situations the use of home church leaders (pastors) is most effective. I have been a part of such a small group in our church for almost eight years. We meet weekly as friends. While our group is “closed” (that is, we do not take in new members), some of the principles we use are also valid for an “open” group. Here are the basic ground rules we have agreed to follow.

1. Be personal, not abstract, when sharing needs. Do not deal with theological abstractions, but with overt acts, attitudes and feelings.
2. Intellectual opinions play no part in our discussions, except as they may bear upon our own personal lives.
3. Each person has a right to his or her feelings. No one is condemned for having feelings and each person is encouraged to express those feelings, even though they may embarrass the other group members or the person's spouse. The task of the group is to protect the rights of each person.
4. While we always express feelings, we are careful not to accuse one another or pass judgment on one another—especially our spouses. We are not called to confess one another's sins—only our own sins and deficiencies.
5. We agree to pray for one another daily.
6. We agree to try to set aside daily quiet time for study, meditation and prayer.
7. What is spoken in the group remains in the group.
8. We agree we will not discuss church business except as it affects each of us personally.

Many groups have discovered a new bond of love and concern by putting into practice James 5:16—“confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.” They have found, as we have, that healing involves spirit, mind, body and circumstances. Remember: Our concern should be with feelings, attitudes and causes.

## SKIP THE SMALL TALK

If you have an unpleasant job to do, such as correcting an employee, skip the small talk and get right to the facts. It may seem harsh, but when the subordinate knows criticism is coming, pleasant remarks as an opener only increase his or her anxiety. Put yourself in his place. It is torture to sit there while your boss asks about your family, talks about his hobbies, and goes around Robin Hood's barn to get to a subject you know is going to hurt. Nor does it help to begin with, "First, I want you to know I love you," or "Let's pray before I nail your hide to the wall." The place for small talk is after the criticism. Then it can mitigate some of the pain and embarrassment, show the employee you don't harbor a grudge, and help restore the normal friendly relations. Small talk is a poor anesthetic, but it can be a healing balm after you've opened the wound with your scalpel.

## LIVING IN HIGH GEAR

A friend, a retired army general, recently complained of losing his memory. He's only 58 years old, but now that he's off active duty, his mind is slowing down. "I have no problem remembering when I'm speaking in public," he says. "But sometimes in private conversation I have trouble digging up names, dates and facts."

This bothers him—and rightly so. Philosopher and psychologist William James, in a 1906 essay, "The Energies of Men," said it is evident that most of us work at only a fraction of our capacities. We ignore the evidence of our higher capacities, using them in emergencies—such as when we are speaking or at other times when the adrenalin is flowing—but rarely trying to achieve them otherwise. For instance, I can sustain long periods of physical and emotional strength when I'm playing racquetball. But at other times I get out of bed feeling tired and listless—and remain that way until stimulated by some outside challenge. Most of us have worked to exhaustion, then gotten a second wind. Question: Is there a third wind, and a fourth? Is there a way of slipping into high gear and staying there most of the time without having to gear down for hills and difficult tasks? Probably, according to James. In other words, you can break the "habit of inferiority."

I'm not talking about panic—which isn't healthy. Most of us know that operating in an artificial state of emergency is not only a bad management technique, it can kill you. James says certain ideas—patriotism, truth, honor, etc.—can release in large groups of people energy that wouldn't otherwise come forth. That's the reason certain positive preaching can sometimes inspire an entire congregation to new heights of energy. When we lift up Christ and reveal Him to our congregations, we literally inspire them to new capacities of energy.

Psychologist Harry Levinson, commenting on this, asks: "With only one lifetime in which to do everything we want to do, how can we be satisfied moving about in low gear most of the time?" High gear is not the exclusive property of those great leaders we all know. It is possible for all of us to break through the barriers of habit and negative thinking to our third and fourth winds. The same things that cause the adrenalin to flow in times of excitement (preaching, racquetball, emergencies) can be brought into play on the day-by-day level. But instead of being keyed off by some kind of crisis, this energy can be released by prayer, commitment, and positive attitudes. The stimulus which helps you break through to second wind in a race or a sermon is yours the moment you get out of bed in the morning. All you need to do is make it happen.

## UPDATES

### **Voice of Hope Radio Bombed**

Only days after George Otis had sent out a special letter to his supporters asking for prayer that he might find new guards for his radio station in southern Lebanon, three suicide bombers blew up the studio—and themselves. In his letter Otis explained that General LaHad had to recall his soldiers who had been guarding the Voice of Hope station near the Israel border in order to defend the nearby villages. "We must find replacement guards—and at once," Otis wrote. Less than a week later, in late October, terrorists killed a guard and blew up themselves and the studio building. In the blast a second guard was killed. The station was back on the air (the transmitter was unharmed) in a few hours, broadcasting from a nearby village.

### **IRS Extends Ministerial Housing Deduction**

In 1983 the IRS ruled that ministers could no longer deduct interest and property taxes on homes covered by tax-free church rental allowances. The rule was to go into effect this year. Last year the IRS extended that until 1986. Now, in a surprise move, the IRS has postponed the blow until 1987. Christians in the IRS say it is the result of thousands of letters—and a lot of prayer.

### **Tax Reform Bills Will Curtail Deductible Donations**

Nearly all the tax reform bills being offered severely limit the amounts of donations which are now deductible. Pastors should be aware of this and encourage their people to make their large donations before December 31, 1985. The same will apply to property gifts. Donors may have to pay minimum tax on increases in value even if the property is given to a church. No tax is now assessed.

### **Financing the PLO**

Ever wondered where Yassir Arafat and his terrorist organization, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), gets money? According to James Adams of the **Sunday Times** of London, the PLO was heavily bankrolled in its early years by oil-rich Arab states. They invested wisely in a portfolio designed by the same bankers who manage much of the Arab world's money. The PLO now controls about \$5 billion in assets and draws on an annual income of more than \$1.25 billion in portfolio profits from the tithing of Palestinian supporters around the world. According to Adams they are also heavily financed from the profits of illegal hashish traffic.

### **A Conference Worth Attending**

Give prayerful consideration to attending the Maranatha World Leadership Conference in Ft. Worth December 29-January 2. I believe there will be a prophetic word spoken by the powerful assortment of speakers. Oral Roberts, Derek Prince, Jack Hayford, Larry Lea and Peter Wagner highlight the program. Contact: Maranatha World Leadership Conference, Box 1799, Gainesville, FL 32602 or phone (904) 375-6000 for registration information. Pastors and leaders are receiving special consideration.

### **ORU Transfers Law School to CBN**

For months there had been speculation that Oral Roberts would have to close his law school at his university in Tulsa. Earlier this year Roberts had announced the university's dental school would close and speculation ran high the law school was

next. Instead, Roberts has transferred the law school to Pat Robertson's CBN University. Roberts and Robertson announced the transfer of the Oral Roberts University Law School on November 1. The transfer is in line with Robertson's long range goals for CBN, which call for graduate schools in many different fields—including law. Robertson himself holds a law degree from Yale. Roberts played down rumors of financial strains at the university and said no other changes in the ORU curriculum were planned.

### **Coming Up**

Next issue I'll share my opinion on Dave Hunt's controversial book **The Seduction of Christianity**.

IN THIS ISSUE I AM SPOTLIGHTING...

## **THE AMERICAN CHURCH HAS SPIRITUAL AIDS**

The problems which have once again surfaced in the town of Rajneeshpuram (formerly Antelope), Oregon, are an indication of young America's desperate search for God. Four years ago an Indian guru named Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh bought a 64,000 acre ranch 20 miles south of Antelope. Immediately the young and wealthy—and spiritually empty—of America flocked to his commune where they experienced a classless society based on sexual freedom and the enjoyment of riches. Now the Bhagwan has more than a million followers—with 5,000 of them living in his Oregon commune. Last year they took over the town of Antelope and changed its name to honor their spiritual leader.

Who are these people? They are young, early-to-mid-30s, single, well-educated, often successful in their former lives. They dress in Rajneesh's favorite sunrise colors with necklaces bearing his picture. They greet each other with loving hugs. They give all their money to the apostle. When he drives by each day at 2:00 p.m. in one of his 90 Rolls-Royces, they line the road singing, cheering, speaking in mantras, and weeping with delirious abandon. Their lifestyle has many of the elements of a Charismatic church—but the differences are drastic once you peek beneath the surface.

They take on new names. Francoise Ruddy, whose former husband helped produce **The Godfather** in Hollywood, is now Ma Prem Hasya. She wears diamonds and pearls and says she's always been a seeker for spiritual truth. Shannon Jo Ryan is the daughter of California congressman Leo Ryan who was killed by cultists at Jonestown, Guyana. She is now Ma Prem Amrita Pritam. She has bought the guru's line that "God is the greatest lie invented by man." She believes her father, killed by similar cultists, would approve.

### **Mutiny in the Camp**

Recent problems have forced the guru out in the open. His chief spokesperson, Shiela, was accused of trying to murder some townspeople by putting poison in the food in a restaurant. She—and a dozen top aides—recently fled to Europe. The guru was left with a \$52 million debt. He desperately tried to change his public image. He told his people to stop worshipping him. He burned his religious books in a public ceremony. He even told the townspeople they could have their original name back. But things had gone too far. AIDS had surfaced in the camp as the result of the free sex philosophy. The FBI and the state attorney decided it was time to move in. In the early

hours of October 28 the guru was arrested at the Charlotte airport where his private jet had landed to refuel. He, too, was attempting to flee the country.

### **Counterfeit Religion**

Counterfeit religions—like fungus—thrive in an atmosphere of spiritual deadness. Scandals at such institutions as Texas Christian University and Southern Methodist University—where alumni are accused of buying football players—drag the name of institutional Christianity to new lows. Newspaper reports of leading ministers entering into divorces, confessing homosexuality, and heaping up personal riches all lead the public to assume these drives for sexual freedom and personal wealth are godly rather than self-centered. The casual observer, viewing the opulence and sexual decadence of today's Christian leader—and the downfall of his institutions—has little choice but to conclude that institutional Christianity in the United States has gone the way of cultural Christianity in Lebanon and Ireland. Desperately seeking truth and not finding it in the inconsistency of preachment vs. lifestyle in today's Christian leader, they turn to people like the Bhagwan—not knowing he is even more inconsistent than the others they sneer at.

Where the living Christ is proclaimed, where signs and wonders flourish, where people do not quench the Spirit, where the church is really the church and not a social club or family clique, where ministers do not preach personal sacrifice and drive luxury automobiles, where preaching is practiced in the lifestyle of the leaders, where sex is enjoyed inside the disciplines of marriage, where love, acceptance and forgiveness are practiced rather than bullying and cruel enforcement of the law—there false religions die as soon as they sprout. The rise of groups such as Rajneeshism are an indictment on institutional Christianity, for they show that the genuine spiritual hunger of today's society is not being satisfied at the table God wants spread—because the leaders are serving up a diet of either mush, straw or iron pellets, or they are eating all the good stuff themselves. They then sit back and burp on Christian television and tell the world that if they will grub for themselves they, too, can drive fancy cars and gad about in private jet airplanes.

### **Spiritual AIDS**

The church—including a large segment of the Charismatic church—has spiritual AIDS. This horrible disease, as you know, does not kill. It simply wipes out the immunity system of the body, leaving the patient susceptible to any disease which may come along. It is the result of an undisciplined life—a life lived only for self-pleasure. It is not limited to the homosexual ghetto. It has now spread into our spiritual lives as well. It is being passed along via the media (not only the secular media but even more so by "Christian" networks and programming) as a religion of self-centeredness which knows nothing of the suffering of the cross and the necessity of self-sacrifice. The disease of spiritual AIDS does not kill. But as we take it into our spirit, it destroys our immunity system. Gradually we begin to rationalize. It's okay to spend money on ourselves rather than giving to the poor. We defend taking the tithes of widows and using the money to purchase personal opulence by quoting the passage where Jesus commended the pouring of expensive perfume on His feet, saying the poor will be with us always. We forget Mary was anointing Him for the cross. The result is a breakdown of our spiritual immunity system, leaving us open for any germ which will finally destroy us.

Democracy, without God, is doomed to fail. Godless democracy is even more dangerous than godless communism, for in a godless democracy anything goes. Every spore has the right to grow and flourish. Every minority, no matter how bizarre and

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subversive, is protected. The answer is not more laws, but a return to God at the grass roots level. Until that happens, our courts and lawmakers will continue to protect evil under the guise of fairness. Unchecked, this kind of godless democracy will eventually become cannibalistic. The nation will devour itself under the policy that "everyone has the right to do his own thing."

## **A Charge to the Christian Media**

Despite the secular press's abhorrence of any kind of censorship, there comes a time when lines must be drawn. Obviously this is true in what is happening in the entertainment media where satanists have taken over great segments of the rock music field. I'm grateful that secular record companies have finally responded to the pressures of concerned parents and will now label the records of today's musical demons—i.e., "Madonna" and "Prince"—as "sexually explicit." That's not censorship. It's simply responsibility.

But what of the Christian media? It is time for those with the awesome responsibility of sending out material over the airwaves and on the printed page to reassess their charge. Much of what is being broadcast today—even though it loudly proclaims the name of Christ—comes from million-dollar ministries which have virtually no resemblance to the lifestyle of the humble man of Galilee. In their effort to fill their programming slots with paying customers, much of today's Christian television is nothing more than an endorsement for materialism. I'm no Amos, but someone needs to call into account those who pervert the gospel with materialism so they can lie on personal beds of ivory.

## **What Is the Answer?**

The answer is each of us must hear God at every turn. We must do things God's way rather than man's way—even when our way seems slicker and easier. Where true Christianity flourishes, the spores of Rajneeshism—and all other cults preaching self-centeredness—quickly die. Before it is too late we, as leaders, need to heed God's call to a return to genuine faith: the signs and wonders of Jesus; a church which is a loving, caring family; not only the preaching but the practicing of the cross as evidenced in our lifestyle; and a proclamation of a positive gospel of grace based on the inspired Word of God. The youth of America are starving for spiritual reality. If they don't find it in us and in our churches—they'll find something else like it, somewhere, which will eventually kill us all.

