

God Makes Life Bearable

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Carl and Toni have been married for seven years. They have lived in Florida for the last five years and both are working. Before they married they were both active in their churches back home.

However, since marriage and the move to Florida, they have not been in church. Their lives had become spiritually dry.

THEN THE BOTTOM fell out. Carl was waiting for Toni when she came in from work. She could tell by the look on his face that he knew.

"Johnny's wife called," Carl spit out the words from ashen lips. "Johnny's told her all about it. Now I think you better tell me what's been going on behind my back.

Toni brushed past him. "I'm tired, Carl let's talk about it later."

CARL REACHED out and spun her around facing him. "We'll talk now," he spit out. And before she could reply his open hand smashed across the side of her face, knocking her to the floor. "Now," he said again.

Hours later, after the heat of the argument had drained them both, they sat at the kitchen table. Half empty coffee cups, now cold and tasteless, sat before them.

Carl broke the long silence with a haggard voice, "Why, Toni? For God's sake, why?"

TONI, HER FACE swollen from crying, slipped to her knees on the hard, cold terrazzo and put her head in Carl's lap. She circled his knees with her arms. "Please, Carl, don't ask me questions for which I have no answers. I don't know why. Don't condemn me. Just understand me . . . just love me . . . please."

Carl slipped out of the chair and pressed his body close to his wife's. On their knees they clung together. Toni said, "It's like we were two babes lost in the woods. We cling together because we have no one else to cling to."

Carl nodded his head in agreement. The tears rolled down his face, but his mind raced back to another time when they had knelt

together. He could hear the words of the minister, "I charge you, Carl and Toni, to commit your lives first to God, and then to each other . . . in sickness and in health . . . for better for worse. . . ."

CARL BURIED his head in Toni's shoulder. If they had not neglected God, perhaps they would not have neglected each other. There was something else to cling to. Maybe it's not too late to begin now.

It's not too late for Carl and Toni. But just thinking about it won't solve the problem. Brevard County is full of churches. They stand as light-houses to warn of dangerous rocks — and to beckon the lost home.

Carl and Toni are fortunate. They realized in time that they could not handle life alone. They turned back to God.

ED WHO is perhaps the best friend I have in this world, told me that after 30 years of alcoholism he thought his life was hopeless. He had tried hundreds of times to quit drinking . . . but each time had wound up drunk.

Once, he said, he heard a preacher talk about the woman who reached out and touched the hem of Jesus' robe and was healed. He said he cried out in his heart, "Oh, if only He were alive today that I might touch Him also and be healed."

Ed said that it wasn't until three years later that he came to find out that He was still alive. And that all he had to do was reach out and touch Him.

THAT WAS 12 years ago and the responding touch from the Master has kept Ed from ever taking another drink.

Toni, Carl, Ed . . . all had the same problem. They had neglected the one power that was able to keep them. The first step in the 12-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous is to "admit that life has become unmanageable." Once a person takes this step, whether he is alcoholic or not, his victory is half won.

It is completed when he agrees to turn his life over to the One who can manage.