The sixty years of John Bunyan’s life were among the most turbulent and troubled years of English history. Born in November 1628, Bunyan lived through the English Civil War and the execution of Charles I, the Commonwealth of Oliver Cromwell, and the Restoration of 1660. He died in 1688, just before the abdication of James II, the arrival of the reign of William and Mary, and the Toleration Act of 1689.

John Bunyan was born in the small village of Elstow, just south of Bedford on the London road, in south-central England. His father was a poor tinker, making and mending pots and pans. John learned his father’s trade, helping him in the workshop and going with him as he pushed a small wooden cart around the countryside to peddle wares and services. John went to school for a short time, long enough, at least, to learn to read and write. The Civil War erupted in England during the summer of 1642. About the time of his sixteenth birthday, John Bunyan enlisted in the Parliamentary Army.

In the summer of 1647, Bunyan returned to Elstow, where he was the ringleader of a group of idle young men much given to swearing and breaking the Sabbath. He was not very concerned with religious matters. He later wrote that he had experienced both judgments and mercy, but “neither of them did awaken my soul to righteousness; wherefore I sinned still, and grew more and more rebellious against God.”

Sometime in 1649 the twenty-one-year-old Bunyan married. We know almost nothing about his wife, not even her name, but we do know that Bunyan saw his marriage as an important turning point in his life. His wife’s father was a devout Puritan, and so was she. Bunyan’s first child, their blind daughter, Mary, was baptized on July 20, 1650.

Bunyan began going to church, but he “went on in sin with great greediness of mind,” he says. One day, as John worked in Bedford, he came upon “three or four poor but pious happy women” sitting at a cottage door in the sunshine, making lace while “communing about the things of God.” He soon realized, however, that they were far above him in spiritual matters, “for their talk was about a new birth, the work of God on their hearts.” He came closer to hear what they were saying, for he was, as he puts it, also a “brisk talker in the matters of religion.” He soon realized, however, that they were far above him in spiritual matters, “for their talk was about a new birth, the work of God on their hearts.” “They spoke,” Bunyan writes, “as if joy did make them speak.”

(continued on page 12)
Godly leadership is crucial for the church and for any ministry seeking to serve God, a fact sadly overlooked in today’s preoccupation with career and professionalism in the church.
Have you heard the new gospel? It’s not been codified. It’s not owned by any one person or movement. But it is increasingly common.

The new gospel generally has four parts. It usually starts with an apology: “I’m sorry for my fellow Christians. I understand why you hate Christianity. It’s like that thing Gandhi said, ‘Why can’t the Christians be more like their Christ?’ Christians are hypocritical, judgmental, and self-righteous. I know we screwed up with the Crusades, slavery, and the witch trials. All I can say is: I apologize. We’ve not given you a reason to believe.”

Then there is an appeal to God as love: “I know you’ve seen the preachers with the sandwich boards and bullhorns saying ‘Repent or Die.’ But I’m here to tell you God is love. Look at Jesus. He hung out with prostitutes and tax collectors. He loved unconditionally. There is so much brokenness in the world, but the good news of the Bible is that God came to live right in the middle of our brokenness. He’s a messy God and his mission is love. ‘I did not come into the world to condemn the world,’ that’s what Jesus said (John 3:17). He loved everyone, no matter who you were or what you had done. That’s what got him killed.”

The third part of the new gospel is an invitation to join God on his mission in the world: “It’s a shame that Christians haven’t shown the world this God. But that’s what we are called to do. God’s kingdom is being established on earth. On earth! Not in some distant heaven after we die, but right here, right now. Even though we all mess up, we are God’s agents to show his love and bring this kingdom. And we don’t do that by scaring people with religious language or by forcing them into some religious mold. We do it by love. That’s the way of Jesus. That’s what it means to follow him. We love our neighbor and work for peace and justice. God wants us to become the good news for a troubled planet.”

And finally, there is a studied ambivalence about eternity: “Don’t get me wrong, I still believe in life after death. But our focus should be on what kind of life we can live right now. Will some people go to hell when they die? Who am I to say? Does God really require the right prayer or the right statement of faith to get into heaven? I don’t know, but I guess I can leave that in his hands. My job is not to judge people, but to bless. In the end, God’s amazing grace may surprise us all. That’s certainly what I hope for.”

Why So Hot?

This way of telling the good news of Christianity is very chic. It’s popular for several reasons.

1. It is partially true. God is love. The kingdom has come. Christians can be stupid. The particulars of the new gospel are often justifiable.

2. It deals with straw men. The bad guys are apocalyptic street preachers, Crusaders, and caricatures of an evangelical view of salvation.

3. The new gospel leads people to believe wrong things without explicitly stating those wrong things. That (continued on page 15)
The fifth edition of John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* introduced fifteen pictures. Bunyan composed a quatrline to go with each picture. For Faithful’s martyrdom he wrote:

*Brave Faithful, Bravely done in Word and Deed! \nJudge, Witnesses, and Jury, have instead \nOf overcoming thee, but shewn their Rage, \nWhen thou are dead, thou’lt live from Age to Age.*

Not only have “brave Faithful”—and many other Christian martyrs—lived from “age to age,” but also has Bunyan’s greatest book.¹

Part one of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* was written while the author was in prison because he refused to promise to obey the laws of the Restoration government forbidding or limiting preaching by dissenters. A few years later Bunyan was again imprisoned, when he wrote part two of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* was immediately popular, selling more than 100,000 copies before John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* reached 4,000.

Twenty-two editions of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* had been published by 1700, seventy by 1800, and more than 1,300 by 1938.² For many years the sales of no other book except the Bible exceeded it. In the Victorian period, it was said, Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* “would sit side by side on the family bookshelf as revered classics.”³

Not only did common people treasure *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, many scholars and writers admired it. Augustus Toplady spoke of the “rich fund of heavenly experience, life, and sweetness” of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Jonathan Swift remarked that he had been more informed and better entertained by a few pages of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* than by lengthy discourses on the will and intellect. Samuel Johnson praised Bunyan’s allegory for its imagination and style. Benjamin Franklin collected Bunyan’s works and acknowledged in his autobiography Bunyan’s engaging blend of narrative and dialogue. Sir Walter Scott’s works include numerous allusions to Bunyan, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge admired Bunyan’s originality. John Ruskin’s early criticism of Bunyan gave way to an appreciation for his imaginative teaching, resolute faith, and deep insight into the nature of sin, concluding that in these respects he could be compared with Dante.⁴

Novelists inspired or influenced by Bunyan included Daniel Defoe, Charles Dickens, Herman Melville, William Makepeace Thackeray, Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot, John Greenleaf Whittier, Walt Whitman, and Matthew Arnold. So profound was the impact of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* on the nineteenth-century Indian poet Krishna Pillai that he converted to Christianity. This would have pleased Bunyan more than “all the literary accolades.”⁵

During the nineteenth century, “the great century” of Protestant missions, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* followed the missionaries and the Bible to almost every land and was translated into more than 200 languages. In Africa alone Bunyan’s book was translated into eighty languages during the nineteenth century.⁶

---

Permission is granted to copy for personal and church use; all other uses by request. ©2010 C.S. Lewis Institute 8001 Braddock Road, Suite 300, Springfield, VA 22151-2110 703/914-5602 www.cslewisinstitute.org
The influence of The Pilgrim’s Progress reached its highest point during the nineteenth century, but it was by no means forgotten in the twentieth century. In 1986, 200,000 copies of The Pilgrim’s Progress printed in Chinese by the government of the People’s Republic of China, as a sample of western literature and culture, sold out in three days.

During a period of convalescence after heart surgery last August, I spent a number of weeks reading whatever appealed to me in history and fiction. I was surprised and delighted to discover some reference to John Bunyan and his Pilgrim’s Progress in many of the books I read (all published in the twentieth century). For example, in Elizabeth Goudge’s The Dean’s Watch, a clergyman says to a friend, “You know your Pilgrim’s Progress, I expect, Mr. Peabody. You remember how Christian carried his burden up the ‘place somewhat ascending’ where there was a cross, and at the foot of the cross it fell off him and rolled away.”

In his autobiography, John Buchan describes his love as a child for The Pilgrim’s Progress. The book became his “constant companion. Even today I think that, if the text were lost, I could restore most of it from memory,” he wrote. “My delight in it came partly from the rhythms of its prose, which, save in King James’s Bible, have not been equalled in our literature; there are passages, such as the death of Mr. Valiant-for-Truth, which all my life have made music in my ear.” In one of Buchan’s books, Mr. Standfast, The Pilgrim’s Progress not only furnished the book’s title but also played an important part in the story. Mr. Standfast was part of a series beginning with the best-known of John Buchan’s books, The Thirty-Nine Steps. These adventure “thrillers” featured a young South African called Richard Hannay whom Buchan invented and presented in the books in various exciting and dangerous situations. In Mr. Standfast, World War I airman hero, Peter Pienaar, who loves The Pilgrim’s Progress, proves himself to be a “Mr. Standfast” by his fortitude, loyalty, moral and physical courage, and friendship. He died when he purposely rammed an enemy plane, the only way he could secure victory in his last battle. In his pocket was found his old battered Pilgrim’s Progress. His colleague and friend, Richard Hannay, says:

It was from the Pilgrim’s Progress that I read... when I stood in the soft spring rain beside his grave. And what I read was the tale of the end, not of Mr. Standfast whom he had singled out for his counterpart, but of Mr. Valiant-for-Truth whom he had not hoped to emulate. I set down the words as a salut and farewell: “Then said he, ‘I am going to my Father’s; and though with great difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him that can get it. My marks and scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me that I have fought His battles who will now be my rewarder.’ So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.”

The tercentenary of Bunyan’s birth produced at least twenty biographies in 1927 and 1928. At the end of 1929, young Oxford don C.S. Lewis was reading Bunyan’s spiritual autobiography, Grace Abounding. He wrote to a friend: “I should like to know in general what you think of all the darker side of religion as we find it in old books. Formerly I regarded it as mere devil-worship based on horrible superstitions. Now that I have found and am still finding more and more the element of truth in the old beliefs, I feel that I cannot dismiss even their dreadful side so cavalierly. There must be something in it: only what?”

Despite Lewis’s struggle (continued on page 17)
God’s Grace in the Old Testament: Considering the Hesed of the Lord

by Will Kynes
Ph.D. Candidate, University of Cambridge

Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love [hesed] of the LORD. (Ps. 107:43, ESV)

Though we may deny the commonly held opposition between the wrathful, judging God of the Old Testament and the gracious, loving God of the New Testament, we may still be guilty of propagating it by neglecting the Old Testament’s own witness to God’s character, and especially to his grace. Too often, preaching from the Old Testament (if we hear it at all) either presents the relationships its characters have with God as a foil for the one now offered in Christ, or focuses merely on the moral example of those heroes of the faith (“Dare to be a Daniel”). Recently I heard a student say that growing up, he knew that Noah had built an ark and Jonah had been swallowed by a fish, but he did not know who God was. The central figure of the entire Bible is God, and we must be attentive to the many ways he has revealed himself.

To attend to God’s character in the Old Testament, we should start with his self-description, a description which emphasizes his grace:

The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love [hesed] and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love [hesed] for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation. (Exod. 34:6–7)

Though God’s promise of transgenerational punishment may appear problematic, it is engulfed in love, faithfulness, and forgiveness. God twice mentions his hesed, which is here translated as “steadfast love,” giving it a prominent place in his self-understanding. If we want to grasp the merciful and gracious nature of God, we will have to comprehend his hesed. But what does this word really mean?

The word’s etymology helps little since we only know of a doubtful connection with an Arabic word, hashada, which means “come together for aid.” In the Septuagint, a collection of ancient Greek translations of Old Testament books, the word is primarily translated by the Greek word for “mercy,” but several other words are also used, including the words for “righteousness,” “grace,” “glory,” and “hope.” The words that parallel hesed in the Hebrew text also reflect a broad semantic range stretching from “faithfulness” and “goodness” to “strength” and “salvation.” In English Bibles, hesed is translated with a variety of words, including “kindness,” “love,” “steadfast love,” “loyalty,” “favor,” “devotion,” and “mercy.” Attempts to define the word have filled scholarly articles, dissertations, and even entire books, which testifies to both its theological importance and indeterminate meaning. The streams of ink spilled in this debate have congealed around disputes over the word’s relation to covenant and...
whether it is inspired by mutual obligation or gracious condescension.

Some insight may be gained by beginning with the word’s usage in the human plane, where it was likely first used before it was applied to God. On this horizontal level, _hesed_ always involves an interpersonal relationship between either individuals or groups, whether that is between family members (Gen. 20:13), a host and guest (Gen. 19:19), friends (1 Sam. 20:8, 14), or a sovereign and his subjects (2 Sam. 2:5). A degree of mutuality can be assumed since a response in kind is often expected (e.g., Gen. 21:23; Josh. 2:12, 14).

Further, _hesed_ is never merely an abstract feeling of goodwill but always entails practical action on behalf of another, whether that involves the restored cupbearer putting in a good word to the Pharaoh for Joseph (Gen. 40:14), Bethuel giving his daughter Rebekah in marriage (Gen. 24:49–51), or the Israeliite army sparing the family of Rahab (Josh. 2:12–13).

Finally, _hesed_ is enduring, corresponding to both the unchanging nature of God’s requirements of his people and the lasting commitment built into the relationships in which it is expressed. Here the concept of covenant intertwines with _hesed_ because covenants cement an enduring commitment in a relationship in which one would not necessarily be assumed or an uncertain future threatens, such as David’s relationship with Jonathan, the son of the man seeking his life (1 Sam 20:8, 14). However, this horizontal study is of limited value because the relationship between God and humans is unlike that between any two people, with the inequality between the parties far surpassing even that between a king and his subjects.

Of the 246 times _hesed_ appears in the Old Testament, the great majority refer to the vertical plane of God’s relationship with people. The vast disparity between the eternal and infinite God and the mere mortal recipients of his _hesed_ alters the meaning of the term. It still describes an interpersonal relationship, but now it can encompass the entire nation of Israel and even all of humanity (Ps. 36:7) as God’s _hesed_ fills the earth (Ps. 33:5).

Mutuality can no longer be expected because God does not have any needs for humans to fulfill (Ps. 50:12), though he does demand obedience to his commandments (Deut. 7:12). The practical nature of _hesed_ remains, with the Hebrew verb often used suggesting that God “does” _hesed_ for those who call on him (e.g., Gen. 24:12, 14; Ruth 1:8). The Psalms are full of appeals to God to work in _hesed_ on behalf of the psalmist (e.g., Ps. 6:4) or the community (e.g., Ps. 44:26) to hear, answer, save, redeem, deliver, help, protect, and forgive. In fact, the repeated refrain of Psalm 136, “for his steadfast love endures forever,” suggests that all God’s actions from the creation of the world (vv. 5–9) to the redemption of Israel from Egypt (vv. 10–15) and beyond testify to his _hesed._

God’s _hesed_ can be the basis of these appeals precisely because it “endures forever.” This characteristic is crucial to Israel’s understanding of God’s gracious relationship with them and is often repeated, becoming a refrain which resounds in the later books of the Old Testament (e.g., Ezra 3:11; 2 Chron. 20:21). Though the

(continued on page 20)
Darkening Our Minds: The Problem of Pornography Among Christians

by Joe Dallas

Program Director, Genesis Counseling

“I remember clearly, and with inexpressible regret, the night I walked into an adult bookstore and entangled myself in the use of pornography. I was a 23-year-old former minister at the time, well on my way toward a fully backslidden state, and I was considering whether to indulge in the many sexual sins that I had, at that point, only allowed myself to imagine. That evening in the spring of 1978, my decision was sealed when I embraced what I now call the “dark magic.”

The “magical” qualities of pornography were obvious and immediate. One glance around that roomful of graphic sexual images sent a rush through my system very much like a narcotic response. The longer I gazed, the more intoxicated I became, and over the next few hours the porn brought me temporary escape and exhilaration. I’d found a new drug, and it seemed to work beyond my expectations.

The darker aspects of this newfound magic soon became clear to me. I revisited the same porn shop nightly for the next two weeks. I then spiraled into the use of prostitutes, an affair with a married woman, homosexuality, and a five-year habit of reckless, degrading sexual practices. It began with the use of pornography, a product I continued to consume during my backslidden years, and which I have come to regard much the way an addict regards a drug—a destructive vice I have to strenuously avoid, always remembering its lethal impact on my life.

The Problem that Grows Unnoticed

That same lethal impact is being felt on a broader level today as pornography’s availability has reached levels unimaginable twenty-five years ago. Through cable, videotape and DVD products, and the Internet, virtually anyone wanting to view porn is able to do so with minimal effort. The statistics on porn usage, therefore, while tragic, shouldn’t be surprising:

• During the single month of January 2002, 27.5 million Internet users visited pornography websites.
• Americans spent an estimated $220 million on pornographic websites in 2001, according to a New York-based Internet research firm. (The same firm, Jupiter Media Metrix, noted that the $220 million figure was up from $148 million in 1999; Americans are expected to spend $320 million annually on porn sites by the year 2005.)
• In a national survey polling 1,031 adults, Zogby International and Focus on the Family found that twenty percent of the respondents had recently visited a pornographic site. Every month millions of people stop what they’re doing to look at erotic images and, in most cases,
pretend that they are sexually interact-
ing with the women or men on display. It makes St. John’s description of the world—a place dominated by the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes (1 John 2:16)—chillingly relevant.

What, at first glance, appears to be a secular problem is, in fact, a problem more commonly found among Christians than any of us would care to admit. Over eighteen percent of the men polled in the Zogby/Focus survey cited above, for example, identified themselves as Christian believers. The Promise Keepers Men’s Conference conducted an informal poll during its 1996 rally and this poll yielded even more dismal results when one out of three men in attendance admitted they “struggled” with pornography. Finally, the Colorado-based Focus on the Family organization reports that seven out of ten pastors who call their toll-free help line claim to be addicted to porn.

The use of pornography is not restricted to men, either, as is often assumed. Thirty-four percent of the readers of the popular magazine Today’s Christian Woman admitted to the use of Internet pornography, and the Zogby/Focus poll indicated one out of every six women surveyed viewed pornography regularly. James P. Draper, president of Life Way Christian Resources, was hardly exaggerating when he stated, “It appears the sin of choice among Christians today is pornography.”

Considering the prevalence of pornography use among Christians, it’s time we examine the effect it’s having on individuals and families within the church and on our Christian witness in a secular and increasingly sexualized culture.

Defining Pornography

Webster defines pornography as “obscene literature or art.” This leaves the term “obscene” open to interpretation since a good deal of socially acceptable material may be obscene to some while artistic to others. The legal definition of obscenity, however, as established by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1973, narrows the term:

1. While applying contemporary community standards and taken as a whole, it is something that the average person would consider appeals to prurient interest.
2. The work (or material) depicts or describes sexual conduct in a patently offensive way as specifically defined by the applicable state law.
3. The work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, and scientific value.

By this three-part standard, sexually explicit videotapes, DVDs, magazines, and websites qualify as porn. Honesty and common sense will also allow that any visual material used to incite an erotic response, even if the material is not generally considered obscene, becomes a form of pornography to the individual who uses it to that end. For the purposes of this article, however, we’ll use the Supreme Court’s definition as a reference point.

The Lethal Effects of Pornography

The use of pornography, I believe, weakens the church today in three significant ways: First, it creates a dependency on pornography that weakens the individual believer. Second, it causes a disruption of the “one-flesh” union that weakens Christian marriages. Third, it results in a distortion in thinking that weakens a Christian’s ability to relate and function.

(continued on page 21)
**“I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel”: The Centrality of the Gospel**

by William L. Kynes, Ph.D.

*C.S. Lewis Institute Senior Fellow and Pastor, Cornerstone Evangelical Free Church, Annandale, Virginia*

---

**W**hen it comes right down to it, there is really only one thing I as a pastor have to offer my congregation—and only one thing that the church has to offer the world—and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Certainly we can do many useful things. We can help the poor, befriend the lonely, and comfort the sorrowing. We can encourage struggling marriages and families. And we can champion certain moral causes that could have a positive impact on our society. But there is nothing particularly Christian about these deeds of kindness. The one unique and truly indispensable thing we as Christians have to offer the world is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This gospel creates us, this gospel defines us, and this gospel equips us to serve the world in Jesus’ name. Nothing is so precious to us; nothing can be so dear to our hearts; nothing can so demand our loyalty and commitment as this gospel.

This gospel can be found nowhere else—not in any government agency, not in any university degree program, not in any corporate product line. In fact, you couldn’t buy it if you had all the money in the world. Only the church can offer the world this rare treasure, this pearl of great price.

In my role as a pastor people come to me with all sorts of problems in life, but I confess: I am a physician with but one medicine to prescribe, and that is the gospel of Christ. It may need to be administered in the right form. But only the gospel of Jesus Christ can heal the deepest wounds of the human heart and can enable us to prosper according to God’s design.

The centrality of the gospel for the church is illustrated most clearly in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. This was a church with a host of problems, and in every instance Paul’s response was to ex-pound the gospel.

Addressing their divisions and in-fighting caused by their pride in wisdom and knowledge, Paul points to the foolishness of the cross of Christ (1 Cor. 1:17–18). Regarding the sexual immorality that was prevalent among them, Paul urges them to get rid of the old leaven of sin from their midst, for Christ the Passover Lamb has been sacrificed (5:7). Through the gospel we are joined to Christ. How, then, can we be joined to prostitutes? “You were bought with a price,” Paul says, “now honor God with your body” (6:20).

On the issue of marriage, the gospel means you can serve God in whatever circumstance you are in—whether married or single, whether slave or free. You can live out the gospel wherever God has put you, so don’t be overly concerned about whether you are married or not (7:17–24).
And as to eating food sacrificed in the pagan temples, the gospel prohibits us from participating in idol worship, for through the gospel we participate in Christ (10:14–17). The gospel also sets us free from laws about what we eat and what we drink (8:1–8). Time after time, Paul’s response to the problems of this church centers on the gospel and what it ought to mean in our lives.

So it should be for us. Are you battling depression? Cling to the hope that is yours in Christ. Are you lonely and insecure? Reflect on the message of God’s love and eternal companionship found in the gospel. Are you struggling to get along with your spouse? Consider what it means to follow a crucified Messiah who, in humility, gave up everything for you. Are you racked with guilt? Receive the forgiveness found in the cleansing blood of Christ. Are you angry with a brother or sister? Forgive as you have been forgiven.

Certainly, I’m not so naïve as to think that the gospel gives us a quick and easy solution to all of life’s problems, nor that the gospel alone is the treatment for all of life’s ills. But I am saying that it is the ultimate answer and the answer we most need if we are to have a real and final hope.

And what is this gospel? The gospel is the good news that in his Son Jesus Christ God has revealed his holy love to the world. In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself. In Christ God has given us victory over the powers of sin and death. In Christ God has acted to bring us out from under his judgment and into a right relationship with himself. Through Christ’s death for our sin we can be justified before him—forgiven for all that we have done to offend him. In Christ we can come to know God as our Father in heaven. In Christ we can be given new life by his Spirit living within, changing us from the inside. In Christ we can be assured of a relationship with God that death cannot destroy. Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. This the gospel.

This gospel is the very centerpiece of the plan of God to restore and renew his creation. The universe itself was created with Christ in mind. He is the supreme revelation of God—his true image. Jesus Christ reflects God in the world and so brings him glory. Jesus Christ is the one through whom and for whom and to whom are all things. He is the key to the mystery of human existence, giving us a reason for living. Not only that, he give us a hope for the future, for in his resurrection glory he has revealed the destiny of all who are joined to him by faith. God’s kingdom will come, his will will be done, on earth as it is in heaven in and through Jesus Christ.

This is the gospel—the revelation of the grace and truth of God in Jesus Christ. That’s what has to be at the center of who we are as a church. If we give that up, we have nothing.

(continued on page 29)
Profile in Faith: John Bunyan
(continued from page 1)

This meeting with the women marked a definite change in Bunyan’s inner life. His thoughts became “fixed on eternity.” He began to look into the Bible “with new eyes” and read it as he never had before. Indeed, as he puts it, “I was then never out of the Bible, either by reading or meditation; still crying out to God that I might know the truth, and the way to heaven and glory.”

John Bunyan, however, had no assurance that he was “one of that number that did sit in the sunshine.” He was so troubled that he hardly knew what to do, when the voice of Christ broke in upon his soul, saying, “And yet there is room.” These were “sweet words to me,” Bunyan writes; “for, truly, I thought that by them I saw there was place enough in heaven for me; and, moreover, that when the Lord Jesus did speak these words, he then did think of me.” Bunyan was encouraged for a time but still faced the old temptations “to go back again.” For about a year he remained in great despair until some relief came from various verses of Scripture, and then from Martin Luther’s commentary on Galatians. The book was “so old that it was ready to fall piece from piece if I did but turn it over,” Bunyan writes. After reading a little of this old book, Bunyan, as he puts it, “found my condition, in [Luther’s] experience, so largely and profoundly handled as if his book had been written out of my [own] heart.”

One morning the words “My grace is sufficient” came to Bunyan. Earlier he had felt that this verse was “not large enough for me,” but now “it was as if it had arms of grace so wide that it could not only enclose me, but many more besides.” Still there were doubts, until one day, sitting by the fire, he suddenly felt a desire sound in his heart, “I must go to Jesus.” “At this my former darkness and atheism fled away, and the blessed things of heaven were set within my view,” he wrote. With joy he told his wife, “O now I know, I know!”

The Bunyans moved from Elstow to Bedford to further his trade and to be closer to his church. He began to preach not only in Bedford but also “in the darkest places in the country.” In 1658 Bunyan’s wife died, leaving him with four children under ten years old, one of them blind. In 1659 he married Elizabeth (her surname is unknown). He was thirty-one and she was eighteen.

During the Commonwealth there had been a large measure of religious freedom for most separatists, like Bunyan, but this liberty ended in 1660 with the Restoration. Parliament now sought to reestablish a single state-controlled church, and preaching tinkers with undesirable views were silenced. On November 12, 1660, Bunyan planned to preach to a group of people in Bedfordshire. He opened the meeting with prayer, and then, as he began to speak, the constable arrived and arrested him. He was charged with holding an unlawful meeting. The local magistrate offered him a way out: if he would go home and not preach anymore, he would not be prosecuted. This he would not promise, so he was hauled away and locked up in the Bedford County Jail, where he spent most of the years between 1660 and 1672.

While in jail, the Bedford tinker who had become a Puritan preacher worked to support his family by making shoelaces. Bun-
yan's wife and children were allowed to visit him in prison. Mary, his blind daughter, regularly brought him soup for his supper in a little jar.

Bunyan's Bible was his treasure. He tells us that he never in all his life had "so great an inlet into the Word of God" as he did in prison; he writes that "those Scriptures that I saw nothing in before are made in this place and state to shine upon me. Jesus Christ also was never more real and apparent than now; here I have seen him and felt him indeed."

He did not give up his ministry. He simply moved it to the jail. Bunyan and his friends preached to one another on Sundays. People came to see him for counsel. He hoped that his imprisonment might be "an awakening to the saints in the country."

And Bunyan wrote. Late in 1667 Bunyan began expanding a sermon he had preached earlier into a book called The Heavenly Foot-Man: or, A Description of the Man That Gets to Heaven. While he was writing this book he was inspired to write another. He explained in the preface of the latter work:

> And thus it was: I writing of the way And race of saints in this our gospel day, Fell suddenly into an allegory About their journey, and the way to glory.

The allegory's title, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, sets forth the book's theme—the journey that Christian and other pilgrims make from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. Upon seeing the Cross, Christian's burden fell away, never to return. There are frequent times of suspense and uncertainty in Christian's pilgrimage (as there are in every Christian's life) but also certainty that the journey will end successfully. (Bunyan was a Calvinist who believed in the perseverance of the saints.) Later Bunyan wrote a second part to *Pilgrim's Progress*. It tells the story of Christian's wife, appropriately named Christiana, who decides to take her children and a neighbor called Mercy and follow her husband.

After 1668 Bunyan's imprisonment seems to have become more and more nominal. He was able to take on an increasing load of church work, culminating in his election as pastor of the Bedford congregation on December 21, 1671. In 1672 King Charles II issued a Declaration of Indulgence for both Protestant Dissenters and Roman Catholics, and in March Bunyan was released from prison. (He was imprisoned again for six months in 1676 and 1677.)

John Bunyan became a recognized leader among the dissenting churches of his part of England. Some, though most often in a jeering manner, called him "Bishop Bunyan." Bunyan ministered to his own congregation in Bedford and to other churches in Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Surrey, and London, so far as it was possible in the intermittent persecution of those years.

He became famous as a preacher. His simple themes, homely anecdotes and illustrations drawn from his own life, everyday language, and abundant repetition enabled him to hold congregations spellbound. Some 3,000 people came to hear him one Sunday in London, and 1,200 turned up for a weekday sermon during the winter. King Charles II once asked John Owen, the distinguished Puritan theologian and Oxford scholar, how such an educated man as he could sit and listen to a tinker. Owen replied, "I would willingly
exchange my learning for the tinker's power of touching men's hearts."

Shortly after completing another book, *The Acceptable Sacrifice: or the Excellency of a Broken Heart*, an expanded sermon on Psalm 51:17, Bunyan rode on horseback to Reading to reconcile a son and father who had quarreled. Traveling on to London, Bunyan was drenched in a heavy rain and fell sick with a violent fever. He preached on August 19 at a meetinghouse in Boar's Head Yard. His text was John 1:13—"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Toward the end of what was to be his last sermon, he said:

If you are the children of God, live together lovingly; if the world quarrel with you, it is no matter; but it is sad if you quarrel together; if this be amongst you, it is a sign of ill-breeding; it is not according to the rules you have in the Word of God. Dost thou see a soul that has the image of God in him? Love him, love him; say, This man and I must go to heaven one day; serve one another, do good for one another; and if any wrong you, pray to God to right you, and love the brotherhood.

Bunyan concluded his sermon: “Consider that the holy God is your Father, and let this oblige you to live like the children of God, that you may look your Father in the face, with comfort, another day.”

That day was not far off for John Bunyan. He died on August 31, 1688. The cause of his death was influenza, or possibly pneumonia, which was contracted as a result of his pastoral work of family peacemaking. One of Bunyan's biographers aptly stated: “Thus one last act of love and charity put an end to a life almost entirely devoted to the good of others.” On September 2 the sixty-year-old Bunyan was buried in Bunhill Fields in London.

John Bunyan wrote some sixty books—one for every year of his life, it is said. These included many sermons expanded into sizable treatises, poetry, and books for children. His best known books are his spiritual biography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, and two of his allegories, *The Holy War* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, all of which have been steadily in print since Bunyan's day. His greatest book, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, is still read and loved by people around the world.

Notes

is, Christians who espouse the new gospel feel safe from criticism because they never actually said belief is unimportant, or there is no hell, or that Jesus isn’t the only way, or that God has no wrath, or that there is no need for repentance. These distortions are not explicitly stated, but the new gospel is presented in such a way that nonbelievers could, and by design should, come to these conclusions. In other words, the new gospel allows the non-Christian to hear what he wants, while still providing an out against criticism from other Christians. The preacher of the new gospel can always say when challenged, “But I never said I don’t believe those things.”

4. It is manageable. The new gospel meets people where they are and leaves them there. It appeals to love and helping our neighbors. And it makes the appeal in a way that repudiates any hint of judgmentalism, intolerance, or religiosity. This is bound to be popular. It tells us what we want to hear and gives us something we can do.

5. The new gospel is inspirational. This is what makes the message so appealing to young people in particular. They get the thrill and purpose of being part of a big cause, without all the baggage of the Church’s history, doctrine, and hard edges. Who wouldn’t want to join a revolution of love?

6. The new gospel has no offense to it. This is why the message is so attractive. The bad guys are all “out there.” This can be a problem for any of us. We are all prone to soft-pedaling the gospel, only presenting the attractive parts and failing to mention where Christ does not just comfort but also confronts. And it must confront more than the sins of others. It is far too easy to use the new gospel as a way to differentiate yourself from all the bad Christians. This makes you look good and confirms to the non-Christians that the obstacle to their commitment lies with the hypocrisy and failure of others. There is no talk of repentance or judgment. There is no hint that Jesus was killed not so much for his inclusive love as for his outrageous godlike claims (Matt. 26:63-66, 27:39-43). The new gospel talks of salvation in strictly cosmic terms. In fact, the door is left wide open to imagine that hell, if it even exists, is probably not a big threat for most people.

Why So Wrong?

It shouldn’t be hard to see what is missing in the new gospel. What’s missing is the old gospel, the one preached by the apostles, the one defined in 1 Corinthians 15, the one summarized later in the Apostles’ Creed.

“But what you call the new gospel is not a substitute for the old gospel. We still believe all that stuff.”

Okay, but why don’t you say it? And not just privately to your friends or on a statement of faith somewhere, but in public? You don’t have to be meaner, but you do have to be clearer. You don’t have to unload the whole truck of systematic theology on someone, but to leave the impression that hell is no big deal is so un-Jesus like (Matt. 10:26–33). And when you don’t talk about the need for faith and repentance you are very un-apostolic (Acts 2:38; 16:31).

“But we are just building bridges. We are relating to the culture first, speaking in a language they can understand, presenting the parts of the gospel that make the most sense to them. Once we have their trust and attention, we can disciple and teach them about sin, repentance, 

It shouldn’t be hard to see what is missing in the New Gospel. What’s missing is the old gospel, the one preached by the apostles…
The Gospel Old and New
(continued from page 15)

faith, and all the rest. This is only pre-evangelism.”

Yes, it’s true, we don’t have to start our conversations where we want to end up. But does the new gospel really prime the pump for evangelism or just mislead the non-Christian into a false assurance? It’s one thing to open a door for further conversation. It’s another to make Christianity so palatable that it sounds like something the non-Christian already does. And this is assuming the best about the new gospel, that underneath there really is a desire to get the old gospel out.

Paul’s approach with non-Christians in Athens is instructive for us (Acts 17:16–34). First, Paul is provoked that the city is so full of idols (16). His preaching is not guided by his disappointment with other Christians, but by his anger over unbelief. Next, he gets permission to speak (19–20). Paul did not berate people. He spoke to those who were willing to listen. But then look at what he does. He makes some cultural connection (22–23, 28), but from there he shows the contrast between the Athenian understanding of God and the way God really is (24–29). His message is not about a way of life, but about worshiping the true God in the right way. After that, he urges repentance (30), warns of judgment (31), and talks about Jesus’ resurrection (31).

The result is that some mocked (32). Who in the world mocks the new gospel? There is nothing not to like. There is no scandal in a message about lame Christians, a loving God, changing the world, and how most of us are most likely not going to hell. This message will never be mocked, but Paul’s Mars Hill sermon was. And keep in mind, this teaching in Athens was only an entree into the Christian message. This was just the beginning, after which some wanted to hear him again (32). Paul said more in his opening salvo than some Christians ever dare to say. We may not be able to say everything Paul said at Athens all at once, but we certainly must not give the impression in our “pre-evangelism” that repentance, judgment, the necessity of faith, the importance of right belief, the centrality of the cross and the resurrection, the sinfulness of sin, and the fallenness of man—the stuff that some suggest will be our actual evangelism—are outdated relics of a mean-spirited, hurtful Christianity.

A Final Plea

Please, please, please, if you are enamored with the new gospel or anything like it, consider if you are really being fair with your fellow Christians in always throwing them under the bus. Consider whether you are preaching as Jesus did, who called people, not first of all to a way of life, but to repent and believe (Mark 1:15). And as my friends and I consider if we lack the necessary patience and humility to speak tenderly with non-Christians, consider if your God is a lopsided cartoon God who never takes offense at sin (because sin is more than just unneighborliness) and never pours out wrath (except for the occasional judgment against the judgmental). Consider if you are giving due attention to the cross and the Lamb of God who died there to take away the sin of the world. Consider if your explanation of the Christian message sounds anything like what we hear from the apostles in the book of Acts when they engage the world.

This is no small issue. And it is not just a matter of emphasis. The new gospel will not sustain the church. It cannot change the heart. And it does not save. It is crucial, therefore, that our evangelical schools, camps, conferences, publishing houses, and churches can discern the new gospel from the old.

Page 16 • KNOWING & DOING | Summer 2010
with Bunyan’s theology, his writings “demonstrate that Bunyan—particularly *The Pilgrim’s Progress*—served as a touchstone for his thinking since his childhood.” In *Pilgrim’s Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason, and Romanticism*, Lewis uses Bunyan’s theme and also an adaptation of his famous title. For broadcast on the BBC on October 16, 1962, Lewis read aloud his essay on “The Vision of John Bunyan,” in which he provides wise words about *The Pilgrim’s Progress* as literature and theology.

Ralph Vaughan Williams knew and loved the writings of Bunyan all his life, and setting Bunyan to music occupied him on and off for over forty years. In 1909 Vaughan Williams’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* was presented at Reigate Priory. The performance comprised twelve episodes, with Prelude and Epilogue founded on the Roundhead hymn tune “York.” Vaughan Williams’s *Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains* was first performed at London’s Royal College of Music in 1922. The text—skillfully adapted from *The Pilgrim’s Progress*—briefly summarizes the story, from Christian’s meeting the Shepherds to his crossing the river and entering the Celestial City. It was presented as an operatic scene in one short act, with six singing roles (including the off-stage “Voice of a Bird” singing Psalm 23) and a small chorus. In 1942 there was a BBC production of the complete *Pilgrim’s Progress* by Edward Sackville-West, in thirty-eight episodes with “incidental” music written by Vaughan Williams. Sir Adrian Boult conducted the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus. As Christian, Sir John Gielgud (who said that the role was one with which he strongly identified) gave one of the outstanding performances of his broadcasting career. The culmination of Vaughan Williams’s work on Bunyan, and his last opera, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, was performed at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London, as part of the Festival of Britain in 1951 and at Cambridge University in 1954.

During the twentieth century Bunyan not only appeared in literature and music, but even in the movies. In the 1946 World War II movie, *A Matter of Life and Death*, one of British cinema’s most popular and best-loved films, John Bunyan makes a (very) brief appearance with a word of encouragement to the troubled Royal Air Force pilot Peter Carter.

Not only in his books but also in his own life John Bunyan sets an enduring example of courage and perseverance in times of hardship, and even persecution. Attempting to secure the release of four hostages in Lebanon, Terry Waite was taken hostage himself in 1987 and held captive until 1991. Kept in total and complete isolation, he saw no one and spoke to no one apart from a cursory word with his guards when they brought him food. One morning he was given with his breakfast what felt like a piece of a card. “What is it?” he asked his guard. His blindfold was pulled down over his nose so he couldn’t see under it. The guard replied that it was a letter. Waite’s heart leapt. Could it be news from his family at last? When the guard left the room, Waite quickly lifted the blindfold. He described what he found. “It’s a colored postcard. I think it’s a representation of a stained-glass window. John Bunyan sits at a table looking through the bars of his cell in Bedford jail. My hand shakes as I turn it over. It is addressed to me by name, but the address has been scratched out and the postmark is too blurred for me to read. However the message is clear.” It was from a woman he did not know, writing to...
tell him, “You are not forgotten. People every-where are praying for your release, and that of the other hostages.” Waite wrote: “I reverse the card and look once more at Bunyan…. Why, after years without mail or news from the outside world, should this single postcard find its way to me?... I place the card carefully in my Bible.”

A few days later, Waite asked himself, “Will I go mad, lose my reason? I take out the Bunyan card and look at it again. What a marvelous irony that this man accused of holding services not in conformity with the Church of England should now bring me comfort. Bunyan managed to turn his captivity to good effect. But he had a strong, certain faith, a rock-like belief.”

The Pilgrim’s Progress continued to be reprinted in the twentieth century. A number of children’s versions of the story appeared, including Dangerous Journey (1985), The Evergreen Wood (1992), and Pilgrim’s Progress as retold by Gary D. Schmidt (1994). Commencing in 1976, a new, critical edition of Bunyan’s works was produced by Oxford University Press.

It must be acknowledged, however, that The Pilgrim’s Progress is not known and loved in this secular age as it has been in the past. As the popular appeal of John Bunyan and his greatest book has waned, scholarly interest has quickened. The Pilgrim’s Progress has most definitely moved from its secure place in the hearts of Victorian readers to the minds of contemporary scholars of literature and history, from the bookshelves of nineteenth-century homes to the bookshops of most universities,” comments Michael Davies. In the last fifty years, at least 100 doctoral theses have been written on Bunyan and his works. There is now an International John Bunyan Society. A journal called Bunyan Studies began in 1988 as part of the Bunyan Festival, marking the tercentenary of Bunyan’s death. Books on John Bunyan regularly appear from major publishers, including Graceful Reading: Theology and Narrative in the Works of John Bunyan by Michael Davies (Oxford University Press, 2002), Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent by Richard L. Greaves (Stanford University Press, 2002), The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of The Pilgrim’s Progress by Isabel Hofmeyr (Princeton University Press, 2004). W.R. Owens and Stuart Sim (eds.), Reception, Appropriation, Recollection: Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007) contains ten chapters by Bunyan scholars from England, France, and South Africa and is “testimony to the extent of Bunyan’s legacy, and of his pilgrim’s ‘progress’ into an impressively wide range of contexts.”

Most contemporary scholarly works, however, set aside or at least minimize Bunyan’s theology, with little attention to what was without question his greatest concern. One Bunyan scholar confesses that “many of us have lost the faith Bunyan advocates,” but candidly admits that “this is a great loss.”

Some see Bunyan as a pioneer in development of the English novel and as “the greatest representative of the common people to find a place in English literature.” Some who criticize him for his narrow Puritan mentality praise him for his “pure imagination, the realm of the genuine artist.”

Bunyan is studied by others as an example of the spiritual quest. Joyce Godber has written: “Bunyan has stood for that in our national tradition which has impelled individuals to uphold what they believe
to be right, regardless of consequences to themselves. He has also...helped countless readers, latterly all over the world, in that spiritual pilgrimage which, whether or not it is conscious and articulate, we must all make.”20 Like Bunyan’s Christian, writes Jenny Uglow, “each of us is a traveler, ‘a solitary man,’ finding our path through life.”21

Some have characterized Bunyan as a champion of individual rights. Twentieth-century Marxists see him as “an anti-establishment figure who in both his life and his fiction refused to compromise his beliefs, no matter what pressure was applied to him to conform.” The Pilgrim’s Progress has been called by these writers “one of the two foundational texts of the English working-class movement,” the other being Rights of Man.22

Bunyan’s writings, however, like Bunyan’s life, had only one goal—to present as clearly and vividly as possible the Christian message of God’s grace and forgiveness for sinners and the trials and blessings of the Christian life leading to the everlasting joys of heaven. When he could, Bunyan preached the gospel; when he could not preach it, he wrote it. Christopher Hill has commented, “Bunyan’s only weapons were preaching—for which he was sent to jail—and then writing... The tinker’s books lasted longer than anyone else’s preaching; longer in fact than the British Empire.”23 Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress has indeed “lived from age to age.”24 His continued attraction is due in no small measure to the fact that in him, even today, as “in former times men have met with Angels here, have found Pearls here, and have in this place found the words of Life.”25

Notes
1. For Bunyan’s life and work, see my Grace Abounding: The Life, Books & Influence of John Bunyan (Geanies House, Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2005).
5. Greaves, Glimpses of Glory, 632.
13. Waite, Taken on Trust, 266.
17. Owens and Sim, eds., Reception, Appropriation, Recollection, 183.
22. Owens and Sim, eds., Reception, Appropriation, Recollection, 214.
23. Christopher Hill, A Tinker and a Poor Man: John Bunyan and His Church, 1628–1688 (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1990), 368.
God’s Grace in the Old Testament

(continued from page 7)

loss of God’s he[se]d is threatened on occasion (e.g., 2 Sam. 7:15; Jer. 16:5), God’s institution of the covenant with the people (Deut. 7:9, 12) and their king (2 Sam. 7:11–16; Ps. 89:28–29), reinforces the gracious and enduring nature of his commitment to them. God is not like a family member whose he[se]d can be taken for granted. He is vastly superior to the Israelites, and yet, through his covenant, he binds himself to them eternally to do them good. The appropriate response is to recall God’s he[se]d (e.g., Ps. 106:7), to hope (e.g., Ps. 33:18) and trust (e.g., Ps. 13:5) in it, and to proclaim it (e.g., Ps. 92:2; Isa. 63:7) with singing (e.g., Ps. 59:16–17) and rejoicing (e.g., Ps. 31:7).

As divine he[se]d on the vertical plane intersects with the human horizontal plane, it transforms it. Our lives are infused with the he[se]d we experience from God, creating new relationships with those around us as his goodness pours through us. We see this in the Old Testament when God demands he[se]d of his people (e.g., Mic. 6:8) and when David asks if there is anyone remaining in Jonathan’s house to whom he may show “the he[se]d of God” (2 Sam. 9:3; cf. 1 Sam. 20:14). Jesus also illustrates this principle in the parable of the unforgiving servant, who after having a great debt forgiven by the king is expected to forgive his fellow servant (Matt. 18:23–35). The climax of the story is the king’s accusation of the unforgiving servant using the verb form of the Greek word most often used to translate he[se]d: “And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?” (v. 33).

Ultimately, the vertical and horizontal dimensions of he[se]d cross in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus himself, as he demonstrates God’s covenant he[se]d to his people. Jesus takes his place on David’s eternal throne, thereby providing the means for individual sinners to be made into a community called the church, bound in his new covenant and committed to showing he[se]d to one another. At the cross, God by no means clears the guilty, but, by visiting the iniquity of the fathers on his only Son, he displays his abounding he[se]d.
A Dependency That Weakens the Individual Believer

The value of personal freedom is an ongoing biblical theme. Adam was created under God’s authority with the freedom to choose, manage, and procreate (Gen. 1:27–30); Israel’s slavery was an evil that God sent Moses to confront and dismantle (Exod. 3–15); Jesus began his public ministry by announcing he had come, among other things, to set captives free (Luke 4:18); and Paul asserted that liberty is what God has called us to, that Christian liberty should be protected, and that bondage is to be avoided (Gal. 5:1, 13). The Judeo-Christian ethic places a high premium on personal freedom and condemns anything that restricts or prohibits a person from reaching his or her God-given potential. If liberty is good, it stands to reason that addiction—a dependence on a certain behavior or experience—is bad; and if something can be shown to be addictive, that in itself becomes a strong argument against it.

There are limits to this argument, to be sure. Most would agree that caffeine is an addictive substance, and yet coffee drinking is generally not frowned on; nor is the use of sugar, which many consider a relatively addictive substance. What distinguishes these substances from cocaine or heroin is the degree to which their use impairs a person’s freedom and productivity.

A woman who drinks three cups of coffee daily, for example, is different than a woman with a thousand-dollar-a-day heroin habit. Both of them may be, in the strictest sense, dependent on their drug of choice, and so their freedom is impaired. The coffee drinker is not, however, in virtually all cases, significantly and functionally impaired by her drug. She can operate on the job, maintain focus and stability, and manage personal responsibilities quite well despite her habit. The heroin user, in contrast, is rendered largely dysfunctional by her drug, will often resort to illegal activities to support her use of it, and is affected by heroin in such a way that it becomes increasingly difficult for her to sustain even the most primary human relationships. Both women are in bondage to some degree, but there’s a huge contrast in the nature of their bondage and in its impact on their general abilities.

The nature of immorality and its impact on a person’s abilities are described in Scripture as “enslaving”: “His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins” (Prov. 5:22). Peter described the false promise of freedom through immorality: “They allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness….While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage” (2 Pet. 2:18–19).

Bondage to a sexual sin—a growing dependency on the sin, similar to dependency on a drug—often goes unrecognized because addiction to a behavior is a relatively new concept to many people. Most mental health professionals agree that people can become addicted to chemicals. Many of them also recognize the possibility of becoming addicted to an experience. Those who believe in this possibility—myself included—believe addiction to an experience, such as gambling or (continued from page 9)
the use of porn, follows a threefold pattern: the *discovery* of a hyperstimulating experience, the *repetition* of the experience, and an eventual *dependence* on the experience as a means of functioning or coping.

**Discovery, Repetition, Dependence**

When pornography is viewed for the first time—discovered, as it were—the viewer experiences a unique rush, accompanied by a strong sexual fantasy. The viewer is not, after all, simply enjoying the sight of another person's body, potent as that pleasure might be. He is also creating an imaginary bond with the image he's viewing, enjoying a false but potent connection in which he orchestrates and controls the entire sexual encounter. He has, in short, discovered a powerful and rewarding product, and like any consumer, he will be inclined to repeat its use until he no longer simply enjoys it but becomes dependent on it.

Christian counselor Robert Ellis describes this hyperstimulating experience much as one would describe a narcotic rush: “Use of pornography creates an exotic combination of internal stimulants which cascade through the bloodstream like liquid flesh. They create a sense of relief, excitement, exhilaration, or pleasure—when these pleasurable, relieving surges get grooved into association with pornography, the flesh gains control over the spirit and the problem becomes one of addiction. It is not uncommon for pornography to elicit internal surges as addictive as cocaine.”

This “addictive as cocaine” experience is shared by millions of pornography’s consumers, as evidenced by the National Council on Sexual Addiction Compulsivity, which estimates between six to eight percent of Americans display symptoms of sexual addiction (percentages that translate into 16 to 21 million citizens). Indeed, an MSNBC poll showed that in a sampling of 38,000 respondents, one out of every ten persons surveyed indicated they were addicted to sex on the Internet.

Any form of sexual sin is serious, whether or not the person committing it is “addicted” to the sin or indulging it only on occasion; but when a person becomes dependent on that behavior as a source of comfort or relief, the problem of sin is now accompanied by the problem of bondage. When numerous Christians have come under such bondage, the entire church, like a body with parts that are diseased or crippled, must suffer.

**A Disruption That Weakens Christian Marriages**

Further problems are created when the use of pornography invades Christian marriages. It will eventually disrupt the unity, both sexual and emotional, that is vitally crucial to stable marital life.

When a group of Pharisees questioned Jesus on the ethics of divorce (Matt. 19:4–6), He articulated a basic standard for the human sexual experience: sexual union is to be heterosexual (“He made them male and female”), independent (“a man shall leave father and mother”), and monogamous (“one flesh”). Paul added that within the sanctity of a monogamous and permanent commitment, husband and wife are to attend to each other’s sexual needs (1 Cor. 7:4–5) and reserve their sexual energies for each other, thus preserving the uniqueness of their bond and avoiding moral transgressions (1 Cor. 7:2).

The benefits of a “one-flesh” union are confirmed elsewhere in Scripture. A cursory look at Old and New Testament figures confirms the wisdom of... (continued on page 24)
“The Christian religion…does not begin in comfort; it beings in…dismay. If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end: if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth…”

C.S. Lewis

Questions & Answers on C.S. Lewis

Q: Which books (of the ones he had written) were Lewis’s favorites?

A: Actually it depends on how you ask the question. According to Walter Hooper, Lewis considered his most important work to be The Abolition of Man. He thought his best work was Till We Have Faces. Lewis’s favorite work was Perelandra.

Q: Did Lewis really deny that there was a historical period called the Renaissance?

A: Even though he was appointed to the chair of Medieval and Renaissance literature at Cambridge, Lewis questioned whether there was such a period as “the Renaissance.” Lewis defined the Renaissance as “an imaginary entity responsible for anything a modern writer approves of in the fifteenth or sixteenth century.” He considered two titles for a series of lectures he was going to give at Cambridge: “Absence of the Renaissance” and “What Was Happening While the Renaissance Was Not Taking Place.” He argued that dead civilizations (prior to rebirth) do not produce such classics as the King Arthur tales and the works of Dante, or cathedrals such as Chartres or Canterbury.
monogamy and the chaos introduced by infidelity, polygamy, or loss of sexual control, all of which play key roles in some of the Bible’s greatest tragedies. Witness the bitter rivalry between Abraham’s wife and her maid and the painful repercussions that result, the foolish loss of judgment that came with Herod’s sexual obsession with his stepdaughter, the death of a child and permanent family curse caused by David’s adultery, and the spiritual decline of Solomon’s faith because of his appetite for foreign women. A fundamental lesson emerges: The one-flesh union provides psychological safety to individuals, stabilizes the family, and enhances productivity and order within the community.

Jesus further clarified the concept of the one-flesh union when He declared that adultery is not limited to actions but can also occur in the heart: “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. 5:27–28). Pornography, which necessitates lusting after strangers, accordingly disrupts the one-flesh union, depriving husband and wife of the very benefits the Bible promises to those who remain monogamous.

In concurrence with the Bible, a growing number of secular theorists are also celebrating the wisdom of monogamous commitment. Studies show that it enhances the life span of men and women who practice it and that the quality of life improves in proportion to the practice of fidelity. Drug and alcohol abuse dropped significantly among married test subjects in a University of Chicago study, and monogamous individuals made more money, had twice as much sex as their nonmonogamous counterparts, and experienced half the domestic violence of those studied who either lived together unmarried or lived alone.

In light of this, pornography is shown to be especially crippling to marriages, as it damages the ability of its users to maintain an ongoing, committed union. The claim that it is a harmless product and practice belies the biblical and secular evidence that it violates the one-flesh standard. The man using pornography violates this standard, whether he is married or single. If he is single, he violates it by engaging in random sexual fantasies with the innumerable women he views in magazines or pornographic websites. He is, in essence, attempting to enjoy the ecstasy of sexual union without any of its commitments or responsibilities and thus creates a false, temporal bond with phantoms. Since a one-flesh union is both authentic and exclusive, he is falling far short of the biblical standard.

When a married man uses porn, he violates the Matthew 5 standard as well: the sexual energy he has pledged to reserve for his wife is now being invested into his private fantasies. He is, in essence, embezzling from his spouse what is rightfully hers, and is instead spending it irresponsibly, much as a gambler steals funds from his employer to support his habit. What properly belongs to one person is thus stolen, making the term “cheating” all the more applicable.

Secular studies confirm the crippling effect of pornography on a person’s ability to maintain a monogamous bond. Researchers Dolf Zimmerman and Jennings Bryant, for example, noted that continued exposure to pornography increased its user’s desires for sexual contacts and behaviors outside their marriages, and author Diana Russell found that pornography leads men and women to experience conflict, suffering, and sexual dissatisfaction.

Common sense would lead to the same conclusion. Each of us contains a limited amount of sexual/emotional energy, which
will either be reserved for a monogamous bond or spent elsewhere. Our ability to sustain a bond with one partner cannot help but be impacted by the level of energy we’ve reserved for that partnership.

As a counselor, I see this principle played out repeatedly. When a husband engages in the use of pornography, his wife almost always notices a certain detachment on his part: less time, less sexual interaction, less attention. She suffers; he embezzles; everyone loses. Pornography systematically weakens marriages within the body of Christ, for it disrupts the bonds crucial to a healthy marriage.

A Distortion That Darkens the Christian Mind

The eye is indeed the lamp of the body (Matt. 6:22–23). If a person’s eye is perpetually exposed to darkness, there comes an inevitable distortion in that person’s thinking. It is in this darkening of the mind that pornography makes its leap from an act that is morally repugnant to one that has frightening consequences. “Evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. 15:33), Paul warned, and the impact on the mind of a Christian consistently exposed to the wrong types of communication is immeasurable.

Zimmerman and Bryant, for example, found that continued exposure to pornography affected a male viewer’s basic beliefs about sexuality in general and women in particular.19 They likewise noted that exposure to porn increased its viewers’ desires for deviant behaviors, such as sadomasochism, and also desensitized their attitudes toward rape. Psychologist Edward Donnerstein of the University of Wisconsin came to similar conclusions, noting that even brief exposure to violent forms of pornography led to antisocial attitude and behavior.20 Clinical psychologist Victor Kline concurs, noting that men who consume pornography on a regular basis experienced increased aggression in attitude and behavior, noticed an increase in “rape fantasies,” and felt increased indifference toward women in general.21

Like any drug, pornography’s effects vary according to the general health of the individual who uses it. In other words, while a person will be adversely affected by using an illegal drug, the specific effect will probably vary from person to person. A person already predisposed toward violence may well become more violent when intoxicated; a person more inclined to depression may find himself acutely suicidal when under the influence. Similarly, not every porn user becomes a rapist or sexual deviant, but there can be no question of its adverse effects on the user’s thinking.

I can testify to this firsthand, both as a former user of pornography and as a counselor. Having discovered the “dark magic,” I found myself increasingly withdrawn from genuine interpersonal relationships and more isolated, defensive, and detached. Accustomed to the false world of phantom relations, I found real relations less and less tolerable. I also developed a callousness toward women, which I repeatedly see in my clients. They existed for me—I visually

Pornography systematically weakens marriages within the body of Christ, for it disrupts the bonds crucial to a healthy marriage.
Darkening Our Minds
(continued from page 25)

used them daily via magazines and videos; I controlled them in my fantasy world; and I became less tolerant of any defects in real women as I spent more time in the company of unreal, though perfect, images of women. I had discovered a world in which both I and all around me would be perfect. In the shadowlands of pornographic imagery, people existed for my pleasure, and I existed to rule and indulge. In short, I had adopted a mindset so far away from the mind of Christ that I decided to usurp His authority for my own, thus completing the darkening of my mind.

C.S. Lewis alluded to this self-idolatry when he described the world of sexual fantasy as being “a harem of imaginary brides. And this harem, once admitted, works against a man ever getting out and really uniting with a real woman. For the harem is always accessible, always subservient, calls for no sacrifices or adjustments, and can be endowed with erotic and psychological attributes which no real woman can rival. In the end, they become merely the medium through which he increasingly adores himself.”

Piercing the Darkness

When a person is angry enough, scared enough, or frustrated enough, that person will take action. So it is with pornography. If you recognize its impact on your life, and you are sufficiently concerned to take action, that is the beginning of true change.

The journey away from pornography, like the journey away from sexual sin in general, is so simple it escapes many people. It can be reduced to three simple principles: repentance, discipleship, and accountability.

Repentance: Reject the behavior by separating yourself from it. If you have not separated yourself from it, you haven’t repented. In practical terms, that may mean purchasing a filtering device (or switching to an Internet service provider that prohibits pornographic material from coming through), or doing away with the Internet altogether. It may mean discontinuing the cable service on your television. In short, do whatever is necessary to separate yourself from the behavior on which you’ve become dependent.

Discipleship: Establish yourself in the daily discipline of prayer and Bible study. If you do not have a regular devotional life, begin now by naming a book of the Bible you can begin reading today. If you haven’t read the Bible before, or you’ve been out of the habit for a while, let me suggest the following books, and read them in this order to get you started: the Gospel of John, Romans, Ephesians, James, and Proverbs. Follow up these daily readings with a time of prayer, following the model of prayer Christ taught in Matthew 6:9–13. Prayer and the reading of Scripture are requirements for anyone wanting to renew his or her mind; they will diffuse the power of deeply ingrained sexual images.

Accountability: Start a relationship with at least one believer who knows about your use of pornography. Have this person ask you, on a weekly basis, whether you’ve repeated this behavior and how well you’ve resisted the temptations to repeat it. Remember, sexual sin thrives in the dark. A large part of recovery from it lies in your willingness to keep your private behavior in the light of another believer’s scrutiny and prayers. This, like the daily discipline of prayer and Scripture reading, is required if you’re serious about your repentance.
A Battle Worth Fighting

After the English Parliament’s 1938 appeasement in Czechoslovakia, Winston Churchill saw the danger of choosing peace when honor and common sense called for battle. “You have been given the choice between war and dishonor,” he said. “You have chosen dishonor, and you will have war!” History, of course, would confirm his prophetic warning: refusing to fight an honorable battle may afford a temporary peace, but in the long run it’s too costly. Delaying a necessary battle may well result in a devastating, full-scale war.

Every person who has become involved in sexual sin makes a decision between battle and dishonor. As always, dishonor looks like an easier choice. Dishonor means making peace with your sin. It means telling yourself that after so many years, it’s become such a part of your life that trying to cut it out would be too traumatic and too uncomfortable. It would mean saying goodbye to a reliable (though destructive) friend, and the battle to abstain from this “friend,” with all the temptations and struggles it would involve, seems too demanding, so a dishonorable compromise is therefore reached when a person decides to live in peaceful coexistence with his (or her) sexual sin.

Tyrants, however, never coexist peacefully; by their nature, they demand increased territory, fewer limitations, and more captives. The sin a person decides not to go to war against soon demands more territory. It begins invading career, family, health, and reputation. Now the person finds that what could have been a brief skirmish, if it had been attended to earlier, has become full-blown war. He chose dishonor over battle. In the end, he winds up with both.

If your mind has become a battlefield—darkened by the use of pornography, which has distorted your basic attitudes toward life—you have already yielded a good deal of territory, and your willingness to concede it has already cost a terrible price to you, your loved ones, and the church. God grant that today you find yourself ready to abandon the dark and see again how wonderful the true light can be.

Notes

1. All Bible quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.
3. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
7. Ibid.

(continued on page 28)
Darkening Our Minds

(continued from page 27)


16. Ibid.


19. Zimmerman and Bryant.


RECOMMENDED READING

Two Books from Vishal Mangalwadi

Truth and Transformation

Vishal has been dubbed by some as “India’s Francis Schaeffer.” He studied with Schaeffer in his earlier days and spent considerable time at Cambridge University researching the content of this book. However, he is not just an academic, but has worked with the poorest of the poor in India. In fact, this book began when Vishal was thrown into jail for (guess what?) serving victims of a hailstorm.

He brings an Indian perspective to the cultural challenges of the West, arguing that the foundations of what made the West great are crumbling: morality, human dignity, rationality, technology, and character. These foundational ideas that have shaped our culture are rooted in the Bible. As these and other principles are replaced by lies, we need to transform our culture by returning to the truth. The first part of the book is the diagnosis of the problem, and the second part the remedy for our sickness. You will find many of the observations he makes and the stories he tells unforgettable.

The World of Gurus

Vishal provides a superb, brilliant response to Hinduism. He discusses the leading gurus that have shaped Hinduism and provides a brilliant critique of their positions. He knows what he is talking about because before he was a Christian, he studied with one of the gurus.
An abandonment of the gospel rarely happens by design; it usually happens by degrees. The gospel which was once central in one generation becomes assumed in the next. Sometimes good things—things like church growth or inspiring music or community service or political action for social justice—these good things begin to crowd their way into the center of the church’s life. But where the gospel is simply assumed, it soon begins to be forgotten. May it never be.

We must be deliberate and bold in seeking to keep the gospel at the center of who we are as a church, because by its very nature we will be tempted to set it to one side and put something else in its place. That’s why we must take to heart those powerful words of the apostle Paul in Romans 1:16—"I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes—for the Jew first, and also for the Greek."

Paul affirms that he is not ashamed of the gospel, for he knows well that that is always a real temptation, for God, in the majesty of his own wisdom, designed it that way. This gospel doesn’t come in an impressive manner that appeals to the values of this world. Jesus wasn’t born into a noble household in a regal palace as a royal prince, pampered and adored by all. No, he was born the son of a simple teenage girl, under the cloud of moral scandal, in a cattle stall. He lived a humble life as a carpenter in Palestine, before beginning a short career as an itinerant preacher, who was condemned to die as a common criminal on a Roman cross. After that he was proclaimed as the Son of God and Savior of the world by a bunch of fishermen from Galilee who claimed that they’d seen him back from the dead. We now have to take their word for it.

God didn’t intervene in history to bring salvation in obvious might and majesty, but in a veiled way that was bound to look to the world like weakness and folly. That’s why we are tempted to be ashamed of this gospel.

Paul had heard the sneers of the cultured crowd in Athens when he told them about Jesus being raised from the dead. And he had experienced the rejection of his own people when he preached this message of a crucified Messiah of Israel. Paul knew that this message of the gospel was an offense to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles. He knew the temptation to be ashamed of this message.

That temptation is no less real in our day. The “gospel” has all sorts of negative associations in our culture today. Some dismiss it simply for being old-fashioned and out of date. We live in a world where last week’s news is old news.

"Every Christian is to become a little Christ. The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else.”

C.S. Lewis

"I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel"
(continued from page 11)

We must be deliberate and bold in seeking to keep the gospel at the center of who we are as a church, because by its very nature we will be tempted to set it to one side and put something else in its place.
“I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel”
(continued from page 29)

How foolish it is to think that this man who lived 2,000 years ago could possibly make any difference today.

Some are offended by its exclusive and absolutist character. “You think you alone have the truth?” some ask. What about the sincere Muslim, the Hindu, the Buddhist or the moral agnostic—are they lost without Christ? It is an offense even to suggest that they are.

Add to that the harsh and judgmental character associated with the gospel. It’s about law, righteousness, and judgment—and even about a blood sacrifice that atones for our sin, appeasing the wrath of God. That kind of language is just not used in polite company today.

And then there is the supernatural nature of this gospel. Christians talk about Jesus’ miracles and his resurrection, and everybody knows that these things just can’t happen. It’s all legend; it’s primitive folklore—nobody can believe in all that anymore.

This gospel is just not in tune with the sophisticated world in which we live. What does it have to do with the network news and the Washington Post and the intellectual centers in our major universities? Don’t think you can say you believe this gospel stuff, much less try to speak about it to anybody else, and still fit in to the mainstream of American culture. It won’t work. If you talk about this gospel in public, people will be sure to think you’re one of those religious fanatics, those “fundamentalists” whom they read about in the newspapers.

Let’s face it, there is nothing impressive about this gospel message. This gospel is not about the high and mighty, but the weak and lowly. It’s not about self-promotion, but self-abasement. It’s about serving others rather than being served. The greatest among you will be the slave of all, Jesus said. Blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, and those who know they are sick. It’s about a road to glory, paved by the stones of suffering. It’s about a Savior who calls us to come and die to ourselves.

The gospel is still a scandal; it is still considered foolishness in many circles today. One might well be tempted to be ashamed of it.

But Paul will not succumb to such temptation, for Paul’s eyes have been opened to see that that gory cross, that bloody cross, that cross of Christ is, in fact, a thing of great beauty.

I’m reminded of the story of the girl who was deeply ashamed of her mother. The mother’s hands were grotesquely scarred from burns, and the girl insisted that her mother always wear gloves to cover up their ugliness. Then one day the girl asked her mother how her hands had become so badly scarred. “I burned my hands when you were only a baby,” she said, “when I reached out to pull you out of a fire.” From that day, nothing gave that girl more pride than her mother’s mangled hands. They became to her the most beautiful hands in all the world.

Are you embarrassed by the old-fashioned, unsophisticated, supernatural, and exclusive message of divine truth known as the gospel? Are you ashamed of the One who endured the humiliation of being spat upon, mocked, beaten, and then nailed to a cross? Are you ashamed of a Savior who shed his own blood for sinners like you and me? You shouldn’t be—for there’s only one thing worse than you being ashamed of him, and that is him being ashamed of you.

We must never be ashamed of the gospel. We can never let the gospel get pushed aside in the preaching and teaching of the church. Nothing is more important than this message of the gospel—this good news of the love of God in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is what the church must be about—learning to live all of life in the light of this glorious good news.
THOUGHTS TO PONDER

Covenant Prayer

From John Wesley’s Covenant Service, 1780.

I am no longer my own, but thine.

Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,

exalted for thee or brought low for thee.

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things

to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth,

let it be ratified in heaven.

Amen.
C.S. Lewis Institute
Summer Retreat
Beginnings and Endings: The Drama of Redemption
July 25-31, 2010
featuring Dr. Christopher Mitchell

Resources for Discipleship

- **Courses**
  In-depth studies in discipleship

- **Seminars**
  World-class speakers on relevant topics

- **Audio**
  Listen to great Christian thinkers on a wide range of topics

- **Programs**
  Individual and small group studies in discipleship

- **Publications**
  Browse articles on apologetics, theology, discipleship, worldview

- **C.S. Lewis**
  Learn about his life and works

Visit our website to learn more about these and other resources.
www.cslewisinstitute.org

The C.S. Lewis Institute is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) organization. All gifts to the Institute are tax deductible to the extent provided under law.

Support Us as We Build Disciples for Christ

We are proud to be an Affiliate Member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, whose mission is to develop and maintain standards of accountability that convey God-honoring ethical practices.