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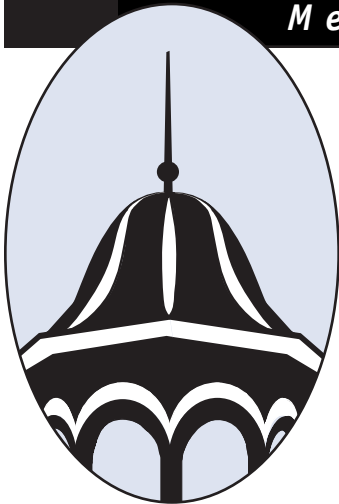
HARDING
UNIVERSITY

The Bridge

Memphis, Tennessee

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Wisdom Literature Addresses Moral Development of Youth

by Dr. Dave Bland

Wisdom literature (namely Proverbs and Ecclesiastes) is primarily addressed to youth transitioning into the adult phase of life (e.g., Proverbs 1-9; Ecclesiastes 11:9; 12:1). This makes the wisdom material an ideal resource for this year's theme of young adult and campus ministry. Wisdom is about the moral development of young adults. One well-known scholar, Michael V. Fox, states wisdom's objective succinctly: "And fostering moral character, it is no overstatement to say, is at all times the greatest goal of education." Wisdom is about the moral development of young adults that manifests itself in implementing righteousness, justice and equity as a way of life (Proverbs 1:3). The instruction given to young adults in wisdom literature is the sage's attempt to put godliness in working clothes.

Wisdom is an essential part of the education process. Educators are coming to identify two types of intelligence. On the one hand, people with high IQ know facts and excel in the ability to think logically. On the other hand, people with high moral and emotional intelligence possess self-control, persist in the presence of frustra-

tion, delay gratification, control moods, think clearly in the face of stress, express compassion, and maintain hope. Wisdom is more closely related to moral and emotional intelligence than it is to IQ. The goal of the sage is to instill these character qualities in young adults about to venture out into the adult world.

Ultimately moral character is a product of one's relationship with God and with other fellow humans. That means wisdom is relational. In coming into relationship with God and becoming involved in the lives of oth-

ers, character takes shape. In keeping with this year's theme of ministering to young adults, students in both "Sermon Development and Delivery" and "Preaching Wisdom Literature" are speaking from wisdom literature in chapel each week on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. The topics focus on issues of integrity, character and values. Students are addressing particular decisions and temptations that young adults face. Please feel free to join us as we explore wisdom's insights for living responsibly before God and others.



K.C. Winters speaks in chapel on "Wisdom literature for young adults" as an assignment in "Sermon Development and Delivery" with Dr. Dave Bland.

Around & About

Dave Bland is presenting a paper at the annual Academy of Homiletics meeting in December, which is convening in Memphis. This year the theme of the Academy is "Prophetic Preaching." Bland's paper is titled "Prophetic Authority in Preaching." The Academy of Homiletics is a professional organization for professors of preaching.

Congratulations to **Cecil and Caroline Tomlinson** on the birth of their third child, William Brooks. He was born Oct. 7. Cecil is the director of maintenance at the Graduate School.

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From the Dean



Bridging Honor and Authenticity

Where there is no middle ground, we need a bridge. I appreciate the authenticity of Paul's self-disclosure to a young preacher in 1 Timothy 1:15. To honor God (1:17), he knew he needed Jesus, the bridge (1:16). As the body of Christ, we are the bridge of God to a lost world.

The world is so much with us that we need bridge building inside the church. For example, we have a generation that values honor (loyalty) and a generation that seeks authenticity (freedom). In our efforts to be honorable, we can hide behind a facade of righteousness. In our efforts to be authentic, we can be self-serving. This creates real tension between expectations of worship, preaching, teaching doctrine and ministry.

Since the dropout rate of our young adults is extremely high, how will we ever reach unchurched young adults? Like any age cohort, young adults bring special gifts as well as new challenges. The young adults at the Graduate School of Religion are very spiritually minded and a blessing to know. But I fear that for many young adults, the Church of Christ may not be the church of their future. A student confessed to me that when he came to the Graduate School he did not have much loyalty to the Church of Christ, even though he had attended one all his life and graduated from a Christian university. He added that after being in school here for several years, taking courses like Restoration History, and working in a local church, he has much more love and appreciation for our fellowship. If only the blessing of intergenerational interactions that we have here could be reproduced in every congregation!

I understand why some young adults can be disturbed with a specific congregation, but the Church of Christ represents some wonderful people with a great heritage. We are a global fellowship of believers with a high respect for the truth of God's Word and a sincere commitment to seeking and doing God's will in our

lives. That is why I would much rather see a group of believers call themselves a Church of Christ than use some generic name. It is a good name. I would also rather see that church active in transforming lives through authentic confession and openness than use the name as a meaningless brand name.

Space will only allow me to list a couple of powerful cultural forces that call for a bridge.

1. Americans constantly search for what is new, as if what is new will always be better. AOL just launched new branding with the message: "Want a better Internet?" Sure I do, and many young adults want a better church. However, a new name may not change substance. I'm not the same person I was 30 years ago, but a name change did not bring about my spiritual renewal.
2. Turnover is the American way. Frederick Reichheld, author of *The Loyalty Effect*, may exaggerate a real phenomenon when he claims that U.S. corporations lose half their customers every five years. An older generation loyally supported one church all their life, expecting uniformity in any congregation they would visit. A younger generation will shift to another church, even of a different "brand," if it meets their needs. As we transition from a rural to an urban church, we struggle to maintain unity while allowing for racial, economic, generational and cultural differences. Each factor requires greater maturity in discerning what is really important. The transition will make the difference between a church that keeps the next generation and the one that dies with the older generation.

The Graduate School serves as a bridge between those who honor our heritage and young adults who seek authenticity, renewal, and a vibrant life in Christ.

— *Everett W. Huffard* (dean@hugsr.edu)

Marriage Mentoring: 12 Conversations

As concern grows for the health and stability of marriage in a divorce-friendly society, Dr. Ed Gray, professor of counseling, is launching a new marriage-mentoring program.



Dr. Ed Gray

This program taps into the resources of healthy marriages in our churches. Instead of being based on a marriage-counseling model, this program is based on a fellowship and conversation model.

Each month, mentoring couples will take time from their busy lives to give another couple the gift of conversation as they embark on 12 marriage-mentoring discussions. Each couple will share their life experiences and stories. Mentoring couples will be able to use the lantern of wisdom gained from God and their experiences with their spouse to shine light on the path of marriage for their mentored couples who follow.

Twelve conversations will occur over a

period of one year. Each session, the two couples will meet together for approximately an hour and a half in a relaxed atmosphere of their choosing. At each fellowship time the couples will discuss a topic and corresponding list of questions from the mentoring booklet. Topics of conversation include the following:

1. Thankfulness
2. Leaving and Cleaving: Making Our Life Together
3. Recreation and Playfulness
4. Money in Marriage
5. Communication
6. Problem Solving
7. Balancing Acts: God, Marriage, Family, Community and Work
8. Parenting: How Do We Know We Are Doing It Right?
9. Intimacy: Making Time for One Another
10. Planning for Our Future
11. Healthy Marriage Habits: How Do We Show We Love Each Other?
12. Celebrating the Holidays

Marriage mentoring involves supportive friendship, sharing stories about marriage, and being realistic about the challenges marriage brings. A mentoring couple uses their example to cheer another couple on in their marriage. Marriage mentoring does not involve counseling, taking sides, fixing couples, parenting couples, telling all, or relating discouraging war stories from marriage.

To be qualified as a mentoring couple, the husband and wife need to have a successful marriage at their stage in life, be willing to share stories in an encouraging way, and be comfortable and positive in discussing mentor conversation topics with one another. A three-hour mentor-training workshop is provided to mentoring couples. They do not have to be educated marriage counselors or have the “perfect” marriage. They simply need to be willing and able to share in loving and caring ways the stories of their married life.

If you are interested in implementing this marriage-mentoring program in your church, contact Dr. Ed Gray at (901) 681-9200 or e-mail egrays@hugsr.edu.

Graduate School Provides Ministry Training for ICOC Congregation

Forty-nine leaders from the Chicago Church of Christ gathered in Lisle, Ill., Aug. 26 for the presentation “Spiritual Transformation in Ephesians” by Dr. Richard Oster, professor of New Testament at the Graduate School of Religion.

The presentation is the part of efforts by the Graduate School to offer ministry training for International Church of Christ leaders wanting more theological training.

“What stuck out for me in the seminar was Dr. Oster’s discussion of the first three chapters of Ephesians, with only one imperative, as setting the stage for the last three chapters, with 40 imperatives,” says Steve Staten, elder of the Chicago Church of Christ. “It is refreshing to think in terms of spending more time building people’s perceptions of God from the

text, before giving imperatives.”

The second part of the Graduate School’s effort is the online course “Corinthian Letters” with Oster this fall. “We have designated one section of this course just for ICOC ministers,” reports Mark Parker, assistant executive director at the Graduate School. “We want to make sure they are challenged to examine the text faithfully, as are all of our students. But by offering a section of the class just for these leaders, they have a forum for exploring issues specific to their context.”

These efforts began in response to contact between Parker and Staten. “Steve called me last year during the leadership struggles the ICOC was having, seeking ways to strengthen church leadership,” says Parker. “Leadership training is what we are about, and we

have the resources to make learning meet their unique needs, so it was a natural fit.”

Update: The students are responding very well to the challenge of examining the Corinthian letters with Oster, and several have already com-

mitted to taking classes in the spring. New students from Southern California also are planning to join the cohort this spring.

Editor’s Note: This article also appeared in the November 2004 *Christian Chronicle*.



More than 40 leaders of the Chicago Church of Christ meet with Dr. Richard Oster for “Spiritual Transformation in Ephesians.”

Return Service Requested

Real Work of Graduate School is Supporting the Students

by Mark Parker

Two major activities have occupied a great deal of time and energy on the Graduate School of Religion campus this fall. One event was the Leadership Council dinner honoring Jane Tomlinson; the other was the golf tournament.

These events were important because they allowed us to honor Jane for her years of service and to connect with friends of the school.

Each event was also important for raising key funds for endowed and annual scholarships. We are truly grateful for those people

who worked and donated for the success of these events.

There is a temptation, however, to look at these events as ends in themselves. I have to remind myself that as much as I enjoy the projects, there is an even greater purpose served. The events and the funds are part of the larger tapestry of ministry training at the Graduate School.

In chapel I recently heard a young man speak about confession and how we as Christians and ministers need to incorporate honest confession of sins into the life of the church. He gave examples of those whose ministries were destroyed for lack of confession and those whose ministries were blessed because of their openness. He was candid and honest, and as he spoke I felt I was glimpsing what the future of ministry can be — a bold and personal testimony to the power of God in our lives.

Students like this — some of the best and the brightest our fellowship has to offer — give meaning to the events we organized this fall. He will leave here a better minister and a better man. God will be glorified, and the church will benefit.

As Jane said in preparation for her dinner, this work is about supporting the students. There is great hope in knowing that

our work and funds continue to bear eternal blessings.

Thank you for your continued support of these worthy students. If I can be of service to you, please contact me at mparker@hugsr.edu.



Dr. Jack and Annie May Lewis visit with Jane Tomlinson during the 2004 Leadership Council dinner. Mrs. Lewis was the honorary chair of the dinner committee.



Dave Phillips, minister at the Germantown Church of Christ, practices during the 2004 Golf Tournament.