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A Perspective Feature: In Focus

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IN FOCUS

So Where Is God When We Suffer?

Jesus is there, sitting beside us in the lowest places of our lives. Are we broken? He was broken, like bread, for us. Are we despised? He was despised and rejected of men. Do we cry out that we can't take it anymore? He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Do people betray us? He was sold out himself. Are our tenderest relationships broken? He too lived and was rejected. Do people turn from us? They hid their faces from him as from a leper.

Does he descend into all our hells? Yes, he does. . . . He not only rose from the dead, he changed the meaning of death and therefore of all the little deaths. . . . Every tear we shed becomes his tear. He may not wipe them away yet, but he will."—Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000, pp. 51, 52).

Perspective

• It is not impossible that to some infinitely superior being the whole universe may be as one plain, the dis-

tance between planet and planet being only as the pores of a grain of sand, and the spaces between system and system no greater than the intervals between one grain and the grain adjacent.—Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Show-Off

• In one second, the star Cygnus A produces more energy than the Sun does in 40,000 years.—The late Carl Sagan: David Duncan Professor of Astronomy and Space Sciences at Cornell University, where he served also as director of the Laboratory for Planetary Studies at the Center for Radiophysics and Space Research in *Contact*.

The Problem With Words

If God speaks, he must use words to do so. Words express thoughts, commands, descriptions, and the like. The problem is that words and sentences. . . must be interpreted if they are to be understood. It is far more than a matter of translation, for while translation gets at what God says, we are still left with the

question of what God means.”—R. C. Sproul, *Christianity Today* (Oct. 22, 2001), p. 40.

Get in Shape

We think about Scripture because we wish to become “Scripture-shaped”—and, therefore, “Christ shaped.” In response to Scripture’s compelling power, we wish to become living commentaries on Scripture. We wish to exhibit the reality of the risen Christ in our own lives.—John P. Burgess, *Why Scripture Matters*.

Best Foot Forward

“Do not make prominent the objectionable features of our faith, which strike most decidedly against the practices and customs of the people, until the Lord shall give the people a fair chance to know that we are believers in Christ, that we do believe in the divinity of Christ, and in His preexistence.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 253.

What Is legalism?

Writer Max Lucado describes legalism as “slow torture, suffocation of the spirit, amputation of one’s dreams. Legalism is just enough religion to keep you, but not enough to nourish you. . . . Legalism is the search for innocence—not forgiveness. It’s a systematic process of defending self, explaining self, exalting self, and justifying self. Legalists

are obsessed with self—not God.”

Sweaty Gift

Nicolo Paganini, the great 19th century violinist, was once complimented on his “gift.” He retorted, “Humph! Thirty years, eight hours a day, and they call it a *gift!*”

Sure Foundation

“Excuses are valueless. All circumstances, all appetites and passions, are to be servants to the God-fearing man, not rulers over him. The Christian is not to be enslaved by any hereditary or cultivated habits or tendency.”¹ “Those who through an intelligent understanding of the Scriptures view the cross aright, those who truly believe in Jesus, have a sure foundation for their faith. They have that faith which works by love and purifies the soul from all its hereditary and cultivated imperfections.”²

Epigrams

This church is prayer-conditioned.

Plan ahead—it wasn’t raining when Noah built the ark.

Most people want to serve God, but only in an advisory capacity.

Suffering from truth decay?

¹ Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, Vol. 1, p. 146.

² *Ibid.*

Brush up on your Bible.

Never give the devil a ride; he always wants to drive.

Nothing ruins the truth like stretching it.

He who angers you controls you.

Worry is the darkroom in which negatives can develop.

Give Satan an inch and he'll be your ruler.

Be fishers of men—you catch them and he'll clean them.

God loves you just as you are, but he loves you too much to leave you that way.

A teenager's car is often the fastest thing on the road. It can go from zero to traffic court in 6.7 seconds.

Get a Handle on It

Wilt Chamberlain is known as one of the greatest basketball players in the history of the sport. He was also known for ranking his own opinions above those of his coaches. When he was traded to the Los Angeles Lakers, one of the reporters asked Wilt, "Do you think coach Butch van Breda Kolff can handle you? It's been said you're hard to handle."

Wilt replied, "You *handle* farm animals. You work with people. I can work with anyone."

Longtime coach of the UCLA Bruins John Wooden heard the exchange. He had sent a book manuscript *Practical Modern Basketball* to the publisher only two days

before. One segment was called "Handling Your Players." Wooden called the publisher and had the heading changed to "Working With Your Players."

Which reminds me of a professor or two who should have written a chapter titled "Working With Your Students."—R.R.H.

An Intelligent Conclusion

Brilliant scientists act with integrity, managing to skirt the minefield of hype and hokum that can taint objectivity. Still, scholars cherishing competing worldviews may reach different conclusions looking at identical facts. Swedish embryologist Soren Lovtrup went so far as to suggest in 1987, "that one day the Darwinian myth will be ranked the greatest deceit in the history of science."

Hype and hokum aside, a growing chorus of scientists reject the obsolete primitivisms of Charles Darwin and embrace a worldview recognizing intelligent design fashioned by a Master Designer.—Ian T. Taylor, *In the Minds of Men* (Minneapolis: TFE Publishing, 1996).

Mother Teresa Needs Help

If you want to be canonized (a Catholic Church rite that declares a deceased person to be a saint and due the honor of that status), you have to be credited with two miracles per-

formed after your demise. Mother Teresa, who did, indeed, live a saintly life, has been credited with her first. On September 5, 1998, 366 days after her death, Monica Besra, of India, was writhing in pain from an abdominal tumor at a Catholic home run by the Missionaries of Charity. The nuns had just the right answer: They placed a Mother Teresa medallion on her stomach while praying for her. Reported Amanda Bower in *Time* magazine, quoting Ms. Besra: "The pain subsided, and the tumor vanished."

"This miracle," says Episcopal Bishop Salvatore Lobo, "meets the requirements. It is organic, permanent, immediate, and intercessory in nature." Lobo is forwarding 35,000 pages of Teresa's good deeds to the Vatican. Come up with another miracle, and sainthood awaits.—Based on a report by Subir Bhaumik and Dev Nayak from Calcutta.

Irrefutable Logic

R. J. Reynolds Co., the maker of Camels and Winston cigarettes didn't like having to pay a \$20 million fine for running ads aimed at teenagers, a violation of the 1998 national tobacco settlement. The company, said California Superior Court Judge Ronald Prager, had improperly run ads in such magazines as *Vibe*, *Spin*, and *Rolling Stone*.

In arguing against the June 2002 fine, Reynolds pointed out that the

same magazines called "too youthful" for cigarette ads, advertize wine, beer, and liquor, violent and graphic movies, and other tobacco companies' ads.—Based on a column by *Washington Post* staff writers Marc Kaufman and Jeff Adler.

Sherbeck's Secret

Hal Sherbeck, a successful coach on high school and college levels, was asked, "What is the secret of your success?" Sherbeck didn't hesitate to share his credo: "Press on. Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are important."—Quoted by Walla Walla College senior pastor Karl Haffner in the *North Pacific Union Gleaner* (May 2002).

Great Taste!

Hagar the Horrible is a crude cartoon character with a long-suffering wife, Helga. In a recent strip she is telling her husband like it is. "Your outfits never match, your hats are all too shabby and that bearskin is out."

Hagar is hurt. "Hey, say something nice about me!"

Helga ponders a moment, throws her arms around him, and says: "You have a great taste in women!" □