

# Christ

*Life*

MINISTRIES

REPORT

JANUARY - APRIL 2005 VOLUME 1

## Tradition versus Change

*Finding Our Way in Trying Times*

**N**egotiating the right path in a post-modern world presents a great challenge to Bible-believing churches. A knowledge of history, an eye to the future, and wisdom in the present are imperative for an effective ministry in today's world. Advocates for change are legion. Should we continue attending class with the "old school" professors or enroll for tutelage under the change agents from the "new school"?

### Tradition for Tradition's Sake

Families have traditions. Nations and cultures have traditions. Religious bodies have traditions. Churches have traditions.

Our lives are the result of our choices. Our choices are the consequence of our beliefs. Our beliefs are determined by our view of God. Ultimately we do what we do because of the way we see God. It is imperative to understand that the whole question

of *Tradition versus Change* is a theological issue.

Proverbs speaks of "ancient landmarks" which cannot be moved. In context, it is speaking about boundary markers. These landmarks designate personal property and to move them would constitute an act of dishonesty. Similarly, there are ancient theological landmarks which cannot be moved without doing great damage to the Faith.

Nevertheless, there is an inherent danger in holding a position for the sake of the position. Principled reasons, based on God's character and Word, are the plumb line by which everything must be measured. Understanding why we embrace a particular position is imperative.

Beyond a ceremonial duty, the Passover observance was far more than an end in itself. God commanded the Israelites to keep the Passover in order that succeeding generations would remember God's faithfulness in

delivering His people out of bondage. The Passover tradition had this distinct purpose. It was a living illustration intended to communicate truth to succeeding generations. Whenever the historical and spiritual significance was obscured, it deteriorated into mere form. It became a tradition for tradition's sake.

Understanding the Biblical reasoning behind ecclesiastical practices is essential. All religion is prone to externality. Substance is often lost in the shadows. It is not enough to do a thing just because that is the way we have always done it. Whenever the internalization of truth is eliminated from the equation it always results in dead orthodoxy and ritual.

The Pharisees were the traditionalists in Jesus' day. They tenaciously held to the inspiration of Scripture, the resurrection of the dead, and the moral code expressed in Old Testament law. Over time they became obsessed with exterior applications of the law. They



## Personal Word

Tradition and change are allies, not enemies. People typically tend toward one or the other, instead of embracing both as necessary and legitimate.

Biblical roots provide an anchor amidst the ever-shifting tides of culture. When the foundations are destroyed the righteous become perplexed and confused (Ps. 11:3). Innovation, initiative, and forward motion are evidences of healthy growth.

Effective organizations are growing organizations. Adjustment, alteration, and adaptation are a given because the environment is in a constant state of flux. Staying true to Christ while keeping a sharp cutting edge are essentials in the 21st century.

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*The Christ Life Report is the official publication of Christ Life Ministries, Inc. CLM is a 501-c-3 non-profit organization. It exists exclusively for furthering revival and evangelism in local churches.*

*The major emphasis of this ministry are four-fold: crusades, publications, Prayer Advances, and The Report. Evangelist Harold Vaughan is the founder of CLM.*

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## Tradition versus Change continued from Page 1

devised an exhaustive list of *do's* and *don'ts*. Conformity to their system had more to do with the fear of man than devotion to God. With their mouths they showed much love, but their hearts were far from Him. Neglecting the heart motive, they substituted the traditions of men for the commandments of God. By the time Christ appeared on earth the Pharisees were worshipping their traditions, not God!

Two results are inevitable when tradition is embraced for tradition's sake. Holding to tradition apart from the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit brings death. The letter kills; it's the Spirit that gives life. Second, the fatal error in this approach is seen in the children who either rebel or become the FUTURE PHARISEES OF AMERICA!

### Change for Change Sake

Growth means change. Physical growth means change in appearance. Intellectual growth means change in understanding. Spiritual growth means change in character. There can be no growth apart from change. The world is changing and churches must *adapt* without *adopting* the sins of our culture.

Essentially, the change for change's sake crowd tell us that we must abandon principle for the sake of expediency. They insist that we must adopt the world's media, modesty, music, and morality to reach people for Christ. This pragmatic approach is little more than warmed over "Schullerism."

A local newspaper did a write-up on an area church. This church has "Saturday Night Live" which is billed as an evangelistic outreach. They photographed the youth pastor's wife dressed up as Marilyn Monroe singing suggestively to the crowd. Just think of it – imitating a prostitute in the cause of Jesus! Brethren, we have had enough of that which is rude, crude, shrewd, and partially nude being pawned off as "evangelism" in the house of God!

A pastor attended a church growth conference and listened to all the seminars. At the close, he introduced himself to the speaker and said, "I believe what you've said will work if I go home and pray about it." The church growth expert retorted, "It will work whether you pray or not." Let's be candid, most of this is about methodology, marketing, and people management. You don't need God if your main goal is manipulating people. The change for success sake crowd transcends all doctrinal boundaries because it is not Truth-driven. A lot of this is so watered down that Roman Catholics and outright liberals endorse it. Is it not apparent that something is radically wrong with non-doctrinal evangelism? For too long the world's spirit has held more sway than the Holy Spirit in American churches.

History offers insight into this dilemma. The 1960's were a period of tremendous societal upheaval. College professors encouraged rebellious students to burn police cars and destroy municipal buildings. These professors who advocated

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rebellion were happy until the college students started burning their papers. How will the anti-tradition pastors feel when the people they have taught reject them for the “newest” and “latest”?

## Tradition and Change for Christ's Sake

*Tradition versus Change* is not an either/or proposition. Some things cannot be changed and some things should be changed. An exalted, balanced, and proper view of God will enable us to hold the line on the one hand while empowering us to move forward on the other.

Faithful Christians will not be found debating about the things most surely believed among us. The root of the righteous is firmly planted in the soil of God's Word and no amount of theological turmoil can uproot him.

Growing Christians are in an on-going state of transition. People who walk with God are being “changed . . . from glory to glory.” Spiritual growth is gradual, continual, and progressive.

*Tradition versus Change* is not a youth versus adult debate. It's not about age; it's about attitude. Someone said, “When the current generation goes to war with the previous generation you are sure to lose the future generation.” When you have rock solid convictions, and an open, teachable heart, you can glean the good without selling out the Truth.

A pastor recently said to me, “The conservative churches in our area are not the life-giving churches.” Vance Havner once said, “Many churches that were once on fire are now living in the smoke!” Nothing is more desperately needed today than a mighty baptism of fire in the pulpit. A reviving, refreshing touch from God is our greatest need.

Most churches experience their greatest effectiveness in evangelism during their first ten years of existence. Change is desperately needed in congregations that have become institutionalized, ingrown, and self-focused.

God told His people through the prophet Haggai, “Consider your ways.” Self evaluation is both healthy and helpful on occasion. You will not get a different result by continuing to do what you are already doing.

Stagnated churches where people rarely get saved must get out of the maintenance mode. God's mandate to the local church is disciple making. Our calling is to infiltrate the culture by preaching, winning, baptizing, and teaching converts. Churches who fail in this have lost the reason for their existence. By God's grace we can get off the defensive and go on the offensive. Courage is required to stop making excuses and take a long, hard look at the way we are doing things. By getting in step with the Spirit we can believe God for a better day!

Tradition and transformation go hand-in-hand when God is actively at work among His people. The things which are most surely believed among us cannot be abandoned. Yet we all know we must have the life-giving Holy Spirit in our midst.

Spiritual mongrelism is the consequence of an ill-defined, sensual, unprincipled, and watered down spirituality. It will always produce statistics consistent with the world because a cultural Christianity which models itself after the world is in essence nothing more than *the world*. This is precisely what the main-line denominations have been doing for decades. These unanchored souls drift

from fad to fad in search of anything which promises apparent success.

Revival will re-establish the immovable landmarks while pushing away the stumbling stones which hinder progress. There is no merit in being old-fashioned for the sake of being old-fashioned. Nor is there any virtue in going high-tech for the sake of being high-tech. Fidelity to the non-negotiables is non-negotiable. It's not tradition for tradition's sake. Neither is it change for change's sake. It's both tradition and change for Jesus' sake.

*Harold Vaughan*

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## Web Update

Check out a couple of new articles on our web site. You can access “Sissy Men” and “McChurch” by going to [www.christlifemin.org](http://www.christlifemin.org) and clicking on Special Articles.

Sign up to receive notification when new articles are posted by sending an e-mail with the words ‘subscribe onlinenews’ to [stlist@christlifemin.org](mailto:stlist@christlifemin.org). You will receive an e-mail confirmation once your request is processed.

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# Men's Advance

January 27 - 29, 2005

Hundreds are registered for January 27-29, 2005, but there's still room for you! Dr. Jim Binney of L.E.A.D. Ministries will be speaking to us about Living Purely in an Impure World. Pastor Paul Negrut from Romania will be preaching to us about the revival that took place under Communism.

Begin the new year by inviting God to Inspire, Inspect, Instruct, and Ignite your soul and spirit! Log onto [www.christlifemin.org](http://www.christlifemin.org) to get the details about this Advance.



MPA Song Time



Jim Binney



Paul Negrut



# Ladies' Advance

*Come to the Fountain* is our theme at the March 17-19 Ladies' Advance. Sue Hermes, a converted nun, is the featured speaker. Sue is known for her unique ability to deliver "Soul Food" in a very practical, searching, and effective way. We are encouraging all who have thirsty hearts to drink deeply from the fountain in March!



Session at LPA

# Youth Prayer Advances

Contemporary youth work entices with *thrills*, anticipates *spills*, counsels with *skills*, and maintains with *pills*. Brother, there is a better way! God is calling youth out of the youth culture into serious Kingdom work.

The days of great spiritual experience are just beginning for many. God is doing a new thing among young people and it is thrilling to be a part of it.

You may not be able to do anything about the water that has already gone under the bridge, but you can reroute the flow for the upcoming generation! If you are longing for "higher ground" in the lives of your young people, then you should seriously consider this unique Advance for teachable young people. Brochures on the Youth Advances will be available soon.

# Bargain Books!

<b>John Phillips</b>	Retail	Our Price
Exploring Psalms Volume One	\$34.99	\$21.00
Exploring Psalms Volume Two	\$34.99	\$21.00
Exploring Proverbs Volume One	\$32.99	\$20.00
Exploring First Corinthians	\$25.99	\$16.00
Exploring the Future	\$25.99	\$16.00
Bible Explorer's Guide	\$13.99	\$10.00
100 New Testament Outlines	\$ 8.99	\$ 7.00
100 Old Testament Outlines	\$ 8.99	\$ 7.00

## Al Bryant and Charles Wood

Sermon Outline Books \$ 5.99 each  
 5 assorted titles (Our choice) \$10.00 for five!

### Postage

Under \$25.00 add \$4.00      \$50.01 - \$75.00 add \$7.00  
 \$25.01 - \$40.00 add \$5.00      Over \$75.00 add 9%  
 \$40.01 - \$50.00 add \$6.00

*Make checks payable to Christ Life Ministries,  
 P.O. Box 399, Vinton, VA 24179*

*Quantities are Limited!*

## New England Baptist College

Pastor Jim Townsley of Southington, Connecticut has started New England Baptist College. Young people from the northeast desiring to prepare for the ministry can now get training near home. For more information go to [www.newenglandbaptistcollege.com](http://www.newenglandbaptistcollege.com).

## Feedback

"Thought I'd take a minute to send you an email and let you know how much I appreciate Time with God. It has been a great help to me in the past several months as things are so hectic here. In the morning, I can just go to my chair with my Bible and Time with God and not think about what comes next. As you would suspect, God meets me there in His Word every time. I would like to think that I have probably read the entire Bible over the years that I have been a Christian, but I can now know for sure." – Maryland

"As I approach Thanksgiving Day I recall the good encouragement I have received from your ministry this year and over the last 4+ years." – Georgia

"Thank you for the Prayer Advances. I am where I am in my Christian life because of God using uncompromising messages of the Prayer Advance." – Georgia

"I am fourteen years old and I attended the Youth Prayer Advance South. This was my first Prayer Advance, so I wasn't quite sure what to expect, but it was GREAT!! Thank you so much investing in our lives! The weekend was a blessing, both in conviction and getting right with God, and encouragement. I think my favorite time was the Sweet Hour of Prayer. I had never prayed aloud when I was alone with God and at first the idea seemed strange, but as I went on it grew less awkward, and soon I was enjoying it." – Georgia

## Couples' Advance in October!

Plan now on attending the Christ Life Ministries' Couples' Advance in historic Williamsburg, VA. They say there are three stages of married life: Lust, Rust, and Dust! Whether you have been married recently or long ago, there is much you can do to enhance your relationship. The brochure with all pertinent information for the October 20-22 Advance will be available on our web site shortly.



Convention in Republic of Ireland



Pastor Marty Herron of Harvest Baptist in Guam



Chapel at Harvest Academy in Guam



**MINISTRIES**

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# *Spiritual* **LIFE** **Crusade**

**January 4-6**

Impact 21  
Kansas City, MO

**January 9-12**

Baptist School of Ministry  
Menomonee Falls, WI

**January 16-21**

Northland Grad. Studies  
Dunbar, WI

**January 27-29**

Men's Prayer Advance  
Goshen, VA

**February 6-9**

Brush Arbor Baptist Church  
Danville, VA

**February 20-23**

Calvary Baptist Church  
Smyrna, GA

**March 10-13**

Faith Baptist Church  
Champaign, IL

**March 17-19**

Ladies' Prayer Advance  
Goshen, VA

**March 20-23**

Ebenezer Baptist Church  
Callaway, VA

**April 2-6**

First Baptist Church  
Vinton, IA

**April 17-22**

Berwick Bible Church  
Berwick, PA

## **2005 Advance Schedule**

Men's Prayer Advance  
January 27-29

Ladies' Prayer Advance  
March 17-19

Youth Prayer Advances  
July / August

Couples' Advance  
Oct. 20-22, Williamsburg, VA

Contact us for brochures or  
visit our web site at:

**[www.christlifemin.org](http://www.christlifemin.org)**