

Perspective

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Growing Edges

In this issue we focus on two new resources for renewal: Embracing the Love of God by James Bryan Smith and Songs for Renewal by Janet Lindeblad Janzen. I believe these two books are tremendous resources for your own personal growth in grace as well as exceedingly useful tools for small group and church-wide nurture.

How very appropriate it is that these two resources are coming out at the same time. Nothing is more important in life than being overtaken by the "furious love of God," and song is the medium that most fully expresses our experience of God's love. Love and song, love and song—they belong together, a little like a lock and a key or a bow and an arrow.

A Little Love Song

I must share with you a recent experiment with this glorious combination of love and song. Last Saturday I had the unenviable task of cleaning out the garage. After breakfast Carolynn blithely drove off to her stained glass class leaving me staring at a garage strewn with tools and dust and boxes ad infinitum. What was I to do? Suicide seemed too drastic a way out! No, my only choice was to wade into the pile to see if anything could be done to bring order out of chaos.

Looking at all the "stuff," I recalled Janet Janzen's ode to the simple life which she wrote for us as we were packing to move to Denver. It is sung to the tune of "Three Blind Mice."

Too much stuff, Too much stuff,
Too much stuff, Too much stuff,
More than enough, More than enough;
The piles are staring us in the face,

They multiply at an alarming pace,
And soon we'll be buried without a trace in
Too much stuff.

There is more but that gives you a hint of my feelings. However, I had been reading William Law's A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life, and I wanted, as he says, to make my life a devotion even in so mundane a task as cleaning out the garage. So I picked up a cassette tape of instrumental music featuring the hammered dulcimer. I love the sound of the dulcimer because it captures so wonderfully the haunting simplicity of mountain folk culture. So I worked throughout the day and into the night, allowing the captivating sound of the dulcimer to lead me into loving worship and adoration. It was a good day . . . and I did finish the task!

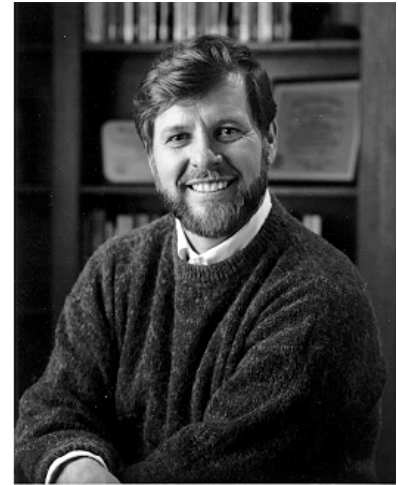
A More Excellent Love Song

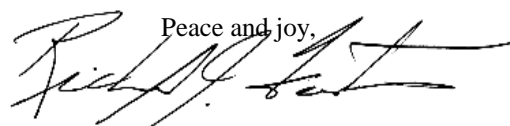
But my little twitter cannot compare to the more excellent love song that arises from all creation. In the middle of writing this essay I took a brief hike in a lovely area nearby, Castlewood Canyon. Entering the canyon alone, I soon became aware of the music of love and adoration to the Creator of all things. I heard it in the hymns of bird and insect. I heard it in the chant of wind and water. I heard it in the swish of pines that waved to the wind and stretched their needles toward the heavens. My ears were too limited to pick up the sound, but I could see the love song of Columbine and Larkspur and Golden Banner and Indian Paintbrush. I wondered if even the rocks were straining to shout out their own peon of praise.

"God so loved the world"

"We love him because he first loved us"

"singing and making melody in our hearts to God"



Peace and joy,

Richard J. Foster

Growing Together

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 10:19-25

Read the passage slowly, noting the access we have to God because of the blood of Jesus. This allows us to come with true hearts and a full assurance of faith. Note the purification given us by the blood of Christ and the command to hold fast to the confession of our hope. Finally, see the privilege and responsibility we have to provide one another with loving, nurturing accountability.

Scripture Meditation: Hebrews 10:23-24

Begin your meditation by singing the hymn (see preceding page). Become aware of the range of aspirations and hopes expressed in it. See how it centers on Christ. Especially note the refrain, "Jesus Christ, our everliving Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend."

When you are ready, turn your attention to the text for meditation.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works (RSV).

Speak it out loud. Read it silently. Mediate on the meaning of "the confession of our hope." Give thanks for the faithfulness of God. Consider those under your care and the ways you might be able to encourage them toward "love and good works."

Reflecting in Song

This song takes to heart the words of St. Basil that the Holy Spirit blends "the delight of melody with doctrines in order that through the pleasantness and softness of the sound we might receive unawares what was useful in the words."¹ It sets forth some of the basic convictions of RENOVARÉ—the centrality of Christ, our commitment to one another as a community of faith, the importance of the five great streams of life and faith, and more.

Sing the first verse. These words grow out of our weekly experience in the Spiritual Formation Groups. These meetings involve a covenant to live as disciples of Jesus and a commitment to help one another live out the life of that covenant. Sing these words as your personal confession to live as a disciple—an apprentice, if you will—of Jesus. Speak a prayer of receiving Christ as your life.

When you are ready, sing the second verse. Notice how each of the five dimensions of the

spiritual life is held up to view: the Contemplative Tradition—the prayer-filled life; the Holiness Tradition—the virtuous life; the Charismatic Tradition—the Spirit-empowered life; the Social Justice Tradition—the compassionate life; and the Evangelical Tradition—the Word-centered life. Consider how these traditions have nurtured your spiritual life. Give thanks to God for these good influences. Do you see traditions that you would like to learn more about? Ask God for help and guidance to move you into these newer realms.

Now, sing the hymn one last time, centering on "Jesus Christ our everliving Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend." Jesus Christ is alive and here to teach us himself. He has not contracted laryngitis. His voice is not hard to hear. His vocabulary is not difficult to understand. And he is among us in all his offices: he is our Savior to forgive us, our Teacher to instruct us, our Lord to rule us, and our Friend to come alongside us. How do you need Jesus to function in your life today? Invite his life to come upon you. Allow his love to conquer you. Receive his grace to enable you.

Questions of Examen and Exercises of Devotion

1. How have I experienced Christ most fully: as Savior, Teacher, Lord, or Friend?
2. Of the five dimensions of the Christian life mentioned in verse two, in which am I strongest? Where do I need to grow?
3. Plan some definite steps you can undertake in the next few months to immerse yourself more fully in one of the five traditions—Contemplative, Holiness, Charismatic, Social Justice, Evangelical.
4. Pray the third verse of the song for yourself or for a loved one. ("Though the path ahead be narrow, Jesus make my/her/his burden light. . . . Be my/her/his everliving Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend.")

The Prayer of the Heart

Dear Jesus, thank you for being my everliving Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend. Help me to grow as your disciple, and help me to encourage others in their walk with you. Amen.

¹Quoted in Source Readings in Music History, Selected and annotated Oliver Strunk (New York: W. W. Norton, 1950), p. 65.

Excerpt and song taken from the RENOVARÉ Resource for Spiritual Renewal, Songs for Renewal, by Janet Lindeblad Janzen (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995).

Caring for One Another

One evening I was invited to a communion service with a small group of about twenty men and women. I had not known these people for very long, and I felt a little out of place. It was a very informal and relaxed gathering. We sat around a large table, lit only by candles. No one had been designated as a leader, so we all took turns sharing anything that was on our hearts. At first I was very reluctant to participate because it was so unstructured which made me feel uncomfortable.

We sang some familiar hymns and praise choruses, followed by a time of silent prayer. A few minutes later someone read from the Scriptures, and then began to teach a little on the meaning of the passage. After she finished teaching, people began to share some of their own hurts and needs, and each person was received with warmth and encouragement. Then we took part in what was one of the most beautiful communion services I had ever experienced.

As the bread came into my hands, I actually felt the presence of Christ. I looked around the room and saw that everyone was holding a piece of bread from the same loaf, that each of us was holding the body of Christ. A woman began to pray, "Brothers and sisters . . ." I didn't hear the rest of her prayer. I looked around at all of the bowed heads and it struck me, "These people are my family. That woman is my sister, that man is my brother."

For the rest of the evening I felt a kinship with every person in the room. It was like the meal shared by the two people on the road to Emmaus: in the breaking of the bread I saw the presence of Christ in our midst. We were held together by the love God had shown each of us; that was our common bond.

Interdependent and Incomplete

God has made us interdependent. From the moment of our creation God felt that it was important for us to live in community. He looked at Adam and said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner" (Gen. 2:18). At the core of our being is a need to love and be loved by others.

The great wonder of our existence is the fact that God has made us incomplete. He could have

dispensed all of our necessities directly to us so that we would have had no need for each other. Instead, he gives us all of the resources we need to care for one another and encourages us to share those resources.

We live in a vast network of care in which each of us has been given precious offerings from God and is called to pass on these gifts to those who need them. To put it another way, God cares for us through one another.

God's Care

The motive to care for one another comes from the care God has shown us. The apostle John wrote, "Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit" (1 John 4:11, 13). God's love for us becomes the source of our desire to love one another.

How does God care for us? God cares for our spiritual life, God cares for the health of our soul, and God provides for our physical needs. God is available, God listens, and God never abandons us. This is how we are to care for one another.

God also provides the actual care we give to one another—one another's physical needs, one another's souls, and one another's spirits. We are not really caring for one another, but rather, it is God who cares through us. We are merely vessels that carry a great treasure; there is no power within us.

Life Is Too Short

The following "Life is too short . . ." list suggests ways to show we care for one another.

Life is too short to refuse to offer a kind word to someone who needs it, too short to turn a deaf ear to someone who is hurting, and too short to pass by someone who needs a hand. Life is too short to withhold a Word of life, too short not to pray for someone we know is in trouble, and too short to neglect that note of encouragement we were meaning to send. Life is too short to let a week pass without hearing someone say, "Thank you. You really didn't have to . . ."

Excerpted from Chapter 9 of *Embracing the Love of God* by James Bryan Smith (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995).

Going Deeper

It has been two years since our first two products—A Spiritual Formation Workbook and Devotional Classics—written and coedited by James Bryan Smith and Richard J. Foster respectively—were released by HarperSanFrancisco. This issue we are featuring two new RENOVARÉ resources **that will be personally autographed by the author.**

In his new book, *Embracing the Love of God*, Jim Smith launches readers on a revitalizing spiritual journey by harkening back to the simple wisdom of St. Augustine: "By loving us, God makes us lovable." He distills the basic principles of Christian love and provides a new paradigm for relationship with God, self, and others that is based on acceptance and care.

Jim's insights illuminate the true, gentle nature of God's love and teach readers how to continue on the path of love by embracing it day by day. For both new Christians and those desiring renewal, his inspirational guide offers hope, peace, and sure guidance for spiritual growth.

In *Songs for Renewal* Janet Lindeblad Janzen has brought together all the best elements of devotional worship—Scripture, music, and prayerful reflection. Biblical passages, illuminating reflections, and devotional questions and exercises enable participants to deepen their experience of musical worship and probe the spiritual issues of their own lives.

Songs for Renewal resounds with a rich array of voices from the Church's diverse musical traditions by featuring African-American, American folk, Gospel, traditional, and contemporary hymns and songs. A composer and hymn writer, this is Janet's first full-length book. She lives in Wichita, Kansas, where she has led musical groups and choirs for churches of several denominations.

Going Places

Date	Event	Location	Staff	Contact & Phone
6/19/95- 7/13/95	Trip to Australia and New Zealand		Richard Foster	Australia: John U'Ren— 61-3-347-8052 New Zealand: Andrew Saunders—64-4-385-0483
7/16/95- 7/19/95	Christian Booksellers Association Convention	Denver, CO	Richard Foster Lynda Graybeal Joan Skulley	
8/11/95- 8/13/95	RENOVARÉ Board of Trustees Meeting	Denver, CO	Richard Foster Lynda Graybeal	
9/15/95- 9/16/95	RENOVARÉ Regional Conference	St. Francisc By The Sea Catholic Church Family Center Hilton Head Island, SC	Richard Foster Jim Smith	Walter Schymik—803-681- 5860 and Susan Britt— 803-681-7553
10/13/95- 10/14/95	RENOVARÉ Regional Conference	Walla Walla College Academy Aud. College Place, WA	Richard Foster Roger Fredrikson	Henning Guldhammer— 509-527-2800
10/16/95- 10/25/95	Academic Teaching	Azusa Pacific University	Richard Foster	
11/10/95- 11/11/95	RENOVARÉ Regional Conference	Pioneer Drive Baptist Church Abilene, TX	Richard Foster Emilie Griffin	Don Mattingly— 915-692- 6776(Secretary—Anita)
12/23/95- 1/1/96	Christmas/New Year's Holidays	Office Closed	Everyone!	

Transitions

As this is being typeset, we have received \$9,847.00 toward the matching \$10,000.00 challenge gift. Words can't express our thanks for your generosity and sacrificial giving.

We have a new receptionist/secretary, Joan Skulley, who started working for us in April. Joan

has a heart for helping people grow spiritually and is doing a wonderful job.

As you can see from the above, Richard's speaking schedule is lighter than usual this fall. He has accepted only a few speaking engagements for the rest of 1995 and all of 1996 so that he can concentrate on writing two books.

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