

PRESSING ON



the e-magazine for growing Christians

“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus,” (Phil. 3:14)

Sample Issue

Welcome And What We're All About

by Mark Roberts

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Welcome!

By Mark Roberts, editor

Welcome to the start of something fresh and new for disciples who want to follow Jesus more closely. Welcome to a monthly e-zine that combines the best of traditional writing and journalism with today's technology, e-readers and the Internet. Welcome to *Pressing On!*

All around us we hear the cry that reading is dying out. There is much lamenting that people don't read much any more. Without doubt conventional print journalism (i.e. newspapers) have seen a serious decline in their circulation. But that isn't because people don't want to read any more, it is because they are simply reading their news in a new way: electronically. On their iPad, or laptop computer or iPhone or desktop PC or ... well, in a hundred different ways people are reading like never before because the Internet offers so much information and knowledge to those who will read it.

The power of this new kind of reading was confirmed to me when I received a Kindle e-reader for Christmas last year. I will admit I had been very skeptical of these little devices but as soon as I switched it on, downloaded the complete works of *Sherlock Holmes* for ninety-nine cents and started reading thirty seconds later, I was hooked. The reading experience was excellent. The screen was beyond flawless. The wireless network that popped books onto my Kindle in seconds was so easy to use. I loved it. I loved reading on it. So naturally I began to look around to find good material from brethren to put on my Kindle. But such material didn't seem to exist.

As I talked with some preacher friends of mine (who similarly loved their Kindles) it seemed clear: these e-readers are great, but they'd be even better if we could read high-quality material written by Christians on them.

And so, *Pressing On* was born.

Our goal is to bring outstanding writing to you each month that will improve your discipleship, and help you serve the Lord more effectively, and to bring that writing to

you in a low-cost way on your favorite electronic device. For less than a cup of coffee at your favorite coffee spot you can enjoy *Pressing On* each month. That means you will be reading Dee Bowman's wise, warm and personal writing in his column *Be Wise Small*. Warren Berkley will help you make *Truth Connections*. Chuck Durham will tie history and scripture together in *Now and Then*. I will be writing about our outlook on life and its events in *On the Mark*. Further, each month a theme will focus our attention in a particular direction, with four or five articles helping us be better in that area. There will also be material for moms and wives, stuff that helps us with our Bible reading, and articles to feed your hunger for the meat of the word. All of it will be neatly rolled up in a bag of pixels and tied together with a few bytes, ready for you to download each month.

Give us a try. We plan to publish for 12 months to see if this is something brethren would benefit from and use. I hope you will see from reading this sample that you want a lot more than what is here in this sample issue, and you want it every month. I hope you will decide to become a subscriber and even more, a faithful reader of *Pressing On* magazine!

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“Be Wise Small”

by Dee Bowman, monthly columnist

I have nearly always made New Year’s resolutions. Several years ago, after making my ten resolutions and having broken nine of them by February first, I determined to change things. I decided to start a couple of months early and make just one resolution which I would work on all year. I enjoyed trying to figure out which way to go. Finally, I came to a conclusion.

My first resolution? *“Be Wise Small.”* Now after several years, I’m still working on that same resolution. It’s been an interesting and profitable journey. It has stood me in good stead, so I thought I would pass it on to you.

It’s actually rather simple. What you try to do is be wise about the smallest matters. If you miss the trash can, you go and pick it up. Better still, if you notice that someone else has missed the trash can, you go and pick that up. You take the grocery cart to the proper place, even if it was someone else who left it out. And you do it even when nobody’s looking. I concluded that if you continue to be wise about the smallest matters you will soon develop a habit, then when the time comes, you will be wise about the large matters, almost habitually.

When I was asked to write for this new and imaginative venture, I decided that *“Be Wise Small”* might be a wise choice for the name of my monthly column.

So here we go. *“Be Wise Small”* is my contribution to the new *Press On* magazine. I hope its pithy sayings and little pieces of wisdom will be of some benefit to you.

Small Thoughts I Had Today

Some people can’t give a compliment or word of encouragement, assuming that to do so diminishes in some way from their own personal worth.

- Talent very often breeds criticism.
- Sincerity is usually stronger than force.

- Accord is like a chord—just get a little out of tune and there will invariably be discord.
- Moral strength is apt to be measured as much by longevity as by a sudden burst of power.
- Sometimes it takes more courage to resist speaking than to speak.
- You can't say something to somebody without showing somewhat how you feel about the matter.
- Indifference is one of the main enemies of truth.
- The best medicine for depression is to go out and do something for somebody.
- You may get all the way to third base, but it doesn't count until you score.

Give thanks today:

-for someone who loves you.

-for the little things in life.

-for the times in which we live.

-for the privilege of approaching your Father.

-for the possibility of forgiveness.

Things My Daddy Told Me

My dad was king of the roost around our house. The scepter of his authority was a big, black razor strop. It hung on the wall behind the bathroom door. He knew how and when to wield it. Just the sign of it brought horror to the soul. Now, he never misused it, but he was not afraid to use it when the occasion called for it. He would always say just before administered the punitive measures, "this hurts me more than it hurts you." I never understood that. The seat of his pants weren't on fire.

One day he called me and my brothers—all four of us—and said, "you boys get outside and line up, I'm going to give you all a spanking." "Why, Dad, what did we do?" "Just on general principles," he said, "I know you've done something or other wrong today, so I'm just gonna spank you."

Want to read the rest of Dee's column? Want to read Dee Bowman's column "Be Wise Small" every month? Subscribe to Pressing On magazine! Go

to www.PressingOnMagazine.com now to take advantage of a special introductory subscription offer!

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**This Month's Theme: I
Want to Worship Better**

Each month *Pressing On* will present several articles on a theme. These articles will all contribute to a better understanding and a better application of the Scriptures to our lives in that area. In this sample issue we present two articles from the October 2011 theme on worship.

I Want to Worship Better while Being Led in Prayer

By Edwin Crozier

Worship is work. Whether individually in the privacy of your home or gathered together with the congregation, worship won't happen accidentally. Further, worship doesn't happen simply because you can check one of five acts off a list.

If you're like me, the easiest time to slip into a checklist mentality rather than worshipping is while being led in prayer. It is so easy for the leader to be speaking God's praises and seeking God's blessings while I'm rehearsing my sermon, thinking about what's for lunch, or grousing in my mind about how long the prayer is. I bowed my head and said, "Amen," at the end, so I worshiped right? Wrong. According to **John 4:24**, worship is not simply about the action being taken but the attitude, motivation, and submission that accompanies it.

Worship is expressing the worth of the object of our worship through reverence and obeisance. A great example is found in **Revelation 4:8-11** when the 4 living creatures and the 24 elders worship God. They declare His greatness and worthiness and profess their own unworthiness. We need to understand this because worship is about the object of worship, not the ones worshipping. Some seem to think that worship has happened when they have experienced some kind of emotional fulfillment. That is not so. Worship is not about us being moved by God; worship is about us moving toward God in humility. Therefore, I'm not worshipping better in prayer because I feel emotional, giddy, stricken, or pumped up (though all of this might happen). I'm worshipping better in prayer when I'm drawing closer to God, surrendering more to Him, proclaiming His worthiness more.

We might easily misunderstand what is happening during congregational prayer, thinking the one leading is praying, but unsure what we are doing. In **Acts 1:24**, we witness a congregational prayer. The text says, "And they prayed and said, 'You, Lord, who know the hearts of all...'" This was not some liturgical prayer. They didn't have this written down in a book to read in unison. They were led in prayer by someone

offering these words. But how did the Holy Spirit describe what was going on here? “They prayed.” Notice a similar occurrence in **Acts 4:24-30**. This even says, “...they lifted their voices together to God and said...” Really? They all said these exact words in unison? No. They were led in prayer, perhaps by multiple people, but God viewed it as the whole group praying, even lifting their voices together as one. When we are being led in prayer, God sees the whole congregation as praying together. We are not listening to a prayer when being led; we are praying. Or we should be.

What must we do then to be lifting our voices in one accord when being led in prayer?

First, we have to take care of some issues before we pray. I trust we are working on these things. For instance, **James 5:15** explains that the prayer of faith is effective. If we want any of our praying to be better worship, we have to work on our faith. This, of course, leads to the principle in **Proverbs 28:9**. We need to listen to and heed God’s Word. Our speaking to God is useless if we are ignoring what God is saying to us. Finally, we need to check our thankfulness (**Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2**). We need to be grateful for this opportunity to pray.

Second, we have to make sure we are properly focused while being led in prayer. **I Corinthians 14:13-19** provides the two-pronged focus we must strive to maintain. Paul said first, “I will pray with the spirit,” and second, “I will pray with the mind also.”

Paul’s praying with the spirit was connected to miraculous gifts that the Spirit no longer employs. However, there is a principle that applies to us. The one praying in a tongue was connected to God in that prayer. The prayer’s spirit was interacting with God’s Spirit. We may not experience the miraculous aspect of speaking a prayer in tongues, but we need to remember that prayer is about connecting to God. It is about our spirit reaching out to God. These are not words that are floating in air; these are spoken directly into the ear of God. As **Hebrews 10:19-22** says, we are drawing near to the presence of God. We may not be walking through the veil into the Holy of Holies literally, but that is exactly what we are doing spiritually. By the blood of Christ, we are walking into the very presence of God. We must be humbled and amazed. This is no ho-hum occurrence. God may allow it repeatedly and frequently, but we must not let the amazingness of what is happening be lost in the repetition. God is allowing us en masse to praise and plead in His presence. Be in awe.

Praying is also about the mind, about understanding what is going on and what is being said. We need to attend to what is being said. Instead of letting our minds wander, we need to focus our attention on the words so we can be lifting them up

together with the one leading. Perhaps we can use some practical help here. I do not suggest that you pray your own prayer while the leader is praying. How then could you say the “Amen” to that brother’s praying? However, I do suggest that you mentally repeat what the leader is praying, even adding in further praises, confessions, petitions on your part. Perhaps, like in **Psalm 118**, you can have a phrase that you repeat mentally as the leader leads you. As the leader’s prayer reminds you of God’s love you can repeat in your own mind, “His steadfast love endures forever,” or some other statement proclaiming God’s greatness, holiness, and worthiness. Finally, if the leader prays something you do not agree with or in a wording you feel is off, simply correct it in your own praying alongside his.

Yes, this is work. And yes, sometimes it may even seem tedious. Let’s face it—it is a whole lot easier to just let our minds wander unless the prayer leader grabs them and moves us. But worship isn’t about us being moved; it is about us moving. That takes work. But when we have worked, we will have worshiped better.

*Edwin Crozier works with the Brownsburg Church of Christ in Brownsburg, Indiana. He, his wife, Marita, and their four children, Tessa, Ethan, Ryan, and Trina, moved there in 2010. Edwin is the author of multiple books including *Plugged In: High Voltage Prayer and Walks with God*. He also runs and is the principle contributor to the blog “God’s Way Works,” which can be found at edwincrozier.com.*

I want to worship better during the Preaching

By Roger Shouse

We hate to admit this, but most of us have sat through a sermon with our minds somewhere else. The preacher was boring, the sermon was long, and we were no longer with him. There is a responsibility upon the preacher to find ways to communicate effectively and efficiently with the audience. But we have a responsibility as well. How do we worship better during the preaching?

To understand this we must understand the concept of worship. Worship involves participation on the part of each of us. Worship is not a spectator sport. Worship is action. It is something we do. Worship reflects an attitude we have. It involves all of you, including your mind, your heart and your emotions. The things that affect your insides will affect your worship. Being tired, bothered, worried, bored, or mostly how you view God, will affect worship. Its hard to get much out of a sermon when one can barely keep his eyes open or his mind is racing with all that he plans to do the next day. Doing worship better begins with being focused.

Sermons really serve two purposes. First, they inform and instruct. Some listen to sermons, others learn from sermons. *There is a difference* . So we ask, 'How do I learn better?' First, bring your Bible and follow along. Listen to what the preacher is saying. See it in your Bible. That is essential. The facts of the Bible will build faith, strengthen convictions and destroy error. God's word is powerful! Take notes, either in your Bible or on paper. Circle words, underline phrases, write down what words mean, interesting thoughts, and things that you did not know. Make your Bible user friendly to you. We remember only so much of what we hear. We remember more by hearing and seeing. We remember even more by hearing, seeing and writing down. We remember the most by hearing, seeing, writing down and telling someone else. Find a way to save and then use your notes from the sermon. You might refer to them in teaching a friend, or you might use them in teaching a class. There is a wealth of study being shared with you each week. Listening week after week ought to be a growing experience for you. You are learning and you are getting stronger as you think, listen and grasp the messages from God's word. Come ready to learn!

It is sad to see brethren gathering each week, with no Bible in hand, no paper to write on and just staring at the preacher during the sermon. If a college student did that in

one of his classes he'd probably not pass. It's hard to remember things from week to week. We can do better. We must do better.

The second purpose of preaching is to persuade the listener. Paul said, "knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor 5:11). The preaching of Peter moved the audience to interrupt him and ask, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Preaching is more than the giving of facts, it is the changing of lives. The Lord ended His incredible Sermon on the Mount with the story of two men who built their houses on different foundations. This story illustrated the difference in those that were persuaded to do something and those who were not. The preaching of Jonah changed the city of Nineveh. Preaching can change your life and impact generations of your family.

You will get more out of a sermon as you engage in the worship with an open heart and mind. The preacher is talking to you! That's all that matters. Where are you in the things that he says? The words of the sermon can move us to obey the Gospel of Jesus. They can move us to a deeper commitment and challenge us to become more involved. See yourself, not just in the sermon, but in what the Bible says. Make application. How can this lesson make me a better parent, or a better disciple? What is it that the Lord wants me to be? The seed that was planted into the good and honest heart produced a bountiful harvest. The good and honest heart - that's up to us, not the preacher.

The other soils found in the parable of the sower may well explain why we are not getting the most out of preaching. Our hearts may be too crowded, or shallow or hard. I will get the most out of a sermon when I listen to it with the idea of making application to myself. It is so easy to play spiritual dodge ball with the preacher, ducking from this point and then that point, or worse still, to try to guess what person the preacher is talking about, never realizing it could be me. Don't do that. You are wasting time, not worshiping as you should and failing to grasp a wonderful opportunity to become a disciple of Jesus. All of us, including those of us who preach, can learn from the sermons of others. The message is more important than the messenger. What is said is more important than how it is said. Sometimes we get that backwards.

Preaching and teaching are God's avenues of growing the kingdom. There is no other way. That powerful seed planted in fertile hearts will produce a disciple that longs to walk with Jesus. That's what a sermon can do.

Roger Shouse preaches for the Charlestown Road congregation (formerly Silver Street) in New Albany, Indiana. Roger writes a daily email devotional called Jump Start. Its subscription base

has spread across the country. You can subscribe to Jump Start by going to www.jumpstartsdaily.com.

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Now and Then

by Chuck Durham, monthly columnist

The Battle of the Bulge was the last offensive launched against the Allied West by Nazi Germany during WWII. It's name came from the huge "bulge" in the Allied line created by the intense attack in the Ardennes forest on 16 December 1944. The Americans holding those positions were overrun by German tanks and infantry. Many lost their lives or were captured. Estimates vary, but one set of figures places the American casualties at 89,000 men, of which, 19,000 were killed and 23,000 missing. It was the largest and bloodiest battle the U.S. fought during the war.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower had wagered British General Montgomery, £5, in October 1943, that the Germans would surrender by Christmas 1944. The troops defending Bastogne in sub-freezing weather, with no air support or supplies, and limited ammunition, would have bitterly laughed had the bet been widely known. The heroic battle waged on for eleven crucial days in which the tide of victory for both sides hung in the balance. Clearing weather allowed the superior Allied air force to both pummel the German army and air-drop supplies to the beleaguered Americans, spelling the beginning of the end for the Ardennes offensive. The Bulge would not be completely flattened out until 25 January 1945.

One of the more memorable stories of this battle is told by Stanley Weintraub (*11 Days in December, 152*) of the village schoolmaster at Champs, outside Bastogne, who returned to his devastated classroom to find the following agonizing message in German written on his blackboard:

May the world never again live through such a Christmas night! Nothing is more horrible than meeting one's fate, far from mother, wife, and children.

Is it worthy of man's destiny to bereave a mother of her son, a wife of her husband, or children of their father?

Life was bequeathed to us in order that we might love and be considerate to one another.

From the ruins, out of blood and death shall come forth a brotherly world.

Signed: A German officer.

While most people of any nationality share the sentiment expressed in this moving message, it sadly will never happen in this world. How many deadly struggles have come and gone since WWII? Korea. Vietnam. Iraq and Afghanistan. Jesus said it would be so. He told his disciples, "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars..." (Matt. 24:6), and so it has ever been. The stirring words of Isaiah 2:4 are inscribed on the United Nations building: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." Is it not the ardent wish of each generation, to live in peace and prosperity? But it seldom has ever happened in reality. Why? Because men are sinners before God.

The answer has never been political or economic. It has always been spiritual. Men hate one another and murder one another because the love of God does not reside in their hearts. Read 1 John ...

Want to read the rest of Chuck's column? Want to read Chuck's column "Now and Then" every month? Subscribe to Pressing On magazine! Go to www.PressingOnMagazine.com now to take advantage of a special introductory subscription offer!

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A Mom Reads the Book of James

By Rebekah Klutz

[Editor's Note: Pressing On wants to be a practical help in your daily walk with the Lord. Therefore, you can count on lots of articles on the home, parenting, and raising children to know God. Here is a sample of that kind of material from a new writer, Rebekah Klutz. Rebekah is reading through James and sharing her thoughts and ideas of what James means as a mother of four. -mdr]

"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:1-4).

Sometimes we forget that the writers of the New Testament were people **just like us**. They had families and dealt with the challenges of living just like we do. James' letter is so personal it's as if he's writing a letter directly to me. And guess what, he is! We're part of that Dispersion he mentions... living a few centuries later.

I admit I struggle with the part about being joyful when I or my child is having a difficult time. James' intent is not for us to pretend everything is all right when things are going wrong. His purpose is for us to understand the peace that only one of the Dispersion knows. So, yeah. Sometimes life really stinks. We don't always know how to answer our child's difficult questions. We can't always make their pain go away. We can't always have homemade cookies for the school party, hair fixed and mascara on. But we don't have to do it alone, unless *we* choose to opt out.

And that's when James starts talking about steadfastness. It's easy to have faith when you're peacefully at home with your family. But when life inevitably steps in and tries to knock us around, use it as an exercise in determination. Let our children know, at an age-appropriate level, of our struggles and use them as a tool to teach about remaining steadfast despite those struggles. Let them see and hear our surety in the truth and that with His help, we're stronger than the Enemy could ever be. Show them that fortitude James was talking about, because just when we think Satan is off visiting someone else, he'll be back. Our children learn that life may not always be pretty, but with loyalty to God, one day it will be. Which is the point James was making when he said "that you may be perfect... lacking in nothing." We are able to inherently understand on a level most people on this earth cannot, that even if times are hard

right now, we'll be all right. And with our eyes steadily on the goal, we can impart this eternal blessing to our children.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:5-8).

I'm pretty comfortable in saying we all lack wisdom so James is talking to every single one of us. However, it seems this is never as glaringly obvious as when we're raising children. Let's face it; sometimes we just don't know how to handle ourselves or the situation we find ourselves in. When one of my sons was about three-years-old, he decided he did not want to go to bed, *ever*. Anytime he heard the words "nap" or "sleep", he would commence screaming. He screamed for days. He screamed so long he lost his voice. And he kept trying anyway. Sometimes he would fall asleep sitting straight up, mid-scream. Well, as a mom, you want to comfort. Tell them it's going to be okay. Rock away the hurt. And I tried that. For about four days. It got to the point where I was wearing ear plugs and was so sleep deprived I hardly knew my name. Finally the cavalry in the form of my husband, Brian, arrived. I love the cavalry. A lot. The fifth night, Brian decided he would put our son to bed while I lay slobbering on the couch. He rigged up a video camera in the boys' bedroom so he could watch what was going on. Then he explained to our son that he could scream all he wanted as long as he didn't lie down. When he was ready to go to sleep all he had to do was lie down **without** screaming...

Want to read the rest of Rebekah's article? Want to read this kind of quality writing every month? Subscribe to Pressing On magazine. Go to www.PressingOnMagazine.com now to take advantage of a special introductory subscription offer!

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Truth Connections - When Conformity Is Wrong

Warren E. Berkley, monthly columnist

For three years I was a soldier in the United States Army. Every day I went to work wearing a uniform that was just like what the other soldiers were wearing. From headgear to footwear it was all the same. We conformed.

At a restaurant one time I noticed and eavesdropped on a nearby table occupied by six or seven friends, who happily all agreed to order the same dessert. Just based on a recommendation, they all conformed.

Conformity is a compliance in actions, behavior, etc., with certain accepted standards or norms, (@World English Dictionary, Collins). People often agree to do something alike on occasion; wear the same kind of clothing, eat at the same place together, or take a trip together to the same location. In informal book clubs, readers agree together to read the same book, anticipating their discussion of the content. Even in the local church setting, there is conformity when everybody opens to the song number announced by the leader.

Conformity, in and of itself, is not wrong. There is nothing inherent in acts of conformity that put the conformer at odds with God.

Conformity is wrong when it involves compromise with God's will. The problem is not that we agree to do what others are doing, unless the agreed upon action is sin! Being a Christian is not just about being different or conformity for its own sake. Nor can we take any assurance that we are good Christians because of some sort of arbitrary choice of independence (advertised non-conformity).

The conformity to watch for and avoid is, that agreement and participation with group or culture, that puts us at odds with God.

Truth Connection: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God, (@Rom. 12:1,2).

Want to read *Truth Connections* every month? You can have Warren Berkley's good writing along with the rest of the staff and writers of *Pressing On* magazine delivered right to you electronic device! Subscribe to *Pressing On* by going www.PressingOnMagazine.com now to take advantage of a special introductory subscription offer!

