

# THE COMMUNITY BUILDER

AUGUST 2008

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE EVANGELICAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

## Pastor to the People

### The Spirit of Christ

For a long time, I had wondered why some refer to the Holy Spirit as the 'Spirit of Christ.' John Owen, the great Puritan theologian of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, shows why this is an appropriate and important title for the Spirit. These thoughts flow largely out of an essay concerning John Owen's view of the Holy Spirit by Dr. Sinclair Ferguson in *John Owen: the Man and His Theology*.

Owen points out that it is the Spirit who overshadows Mary at the conception of Jesus. It is the Spirit who guides Jesus as He grows in "wisdom" and in favor with God and man. Biblically, wisdom is a key term for describing a person full of the Spirit (Isaiah 11:1-3). It is the Spirit who anoints Jesus at His baptism for His public Messianic ministry. It is by the sword of the Spirit and in the power of the Spirit that Jesus defeats Satan in the wilderness. The Spirit empowers Christ to do mighty works and sustains Christ through His passion.

The Spirit declares Christ to be the Son of God at His resurrection. This intimacy between Son and Spirit continues as Christ is exalted at the right hand of God. From this lofty position of authority, Christ sends the Spirit to the believers on earth to be "another Paraclete" taking the place of Christ in the lives of believers in an invisible, subjective manner.

Now the Spirit of Christ comes in fullness, into the lives of believers and in part begins to fulfill the New Covenant promise that "**He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God**" (Rev. 21:3). The Holy Spirit is the great gift of the Covenant—a gift we often fail to appreciate and take for granted.

There is an intimate communion between the Spirit and the Son. Jesus tells His disciples that the Spirit

**"will take what is mine and declare it to you"** (John 16:14). The Spirit has been in intimate communion with Christ from womb to tomb.

The Spirit loves the Son and vice-versa. Because Christ loves us enough to die for us, the Spirit also overflows with love for us. Both the Son and the Spirit love us with an eternal, unbreakable love. More than this, by His power that is at work within us, the Spirit is constantly sanctifying and conforming His people into the image of the Son in whom He delights.

So what happens when we rebel against the commands of Christ? What happens when we ignore or dismiss the Word of Christ as we find it in the Spirit-inspired Scriptures? Ephesians 4:30 tells us that we grieve Holy Spirit. It isn't just that He is holy and we are not. It is that those who love us best, grieve over us most when we act in an unworthy manner.

Looking at the life of Christ, we see modeled before us a life of dependence on the Spirit. As we keep in step with the Spirit, we become more like Christ and begin to experience His joy in the Spirit.

May the Spirit of Christ be your strength.

Grace and Peace,  
Pastor Rich



## Praying to Jesus

By Pam Dollard

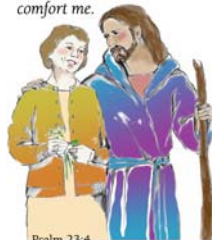
Jesus: *Savior...Master...Friend*

These titles sum up for me the various roles Jesus plays in my life, although each is a broad category with many variations and shades of meaning. How it relates to prayer is this: to “do life” with Jesus *is* to pray. For in what part of my day, any day, is He not present via the Holy Spirit and willing to communicate with me?

Savior – it all starts here, and it all starts with Him. It is a relationship of unequals in every way. He is the initiator of relationship, the sustainer of relationship far more than I, the purchaser of relationship, the desirer of relationship more than I. He is the one who steps off the pages of scripture and communicates Himself to me in my own heart language.

Master – I owe Him all my allegiance. I owe a debt I will never... could never... repay. I look to Him for direction. I am completely in His care and my assignment is to await, then obey, His bidding. As one who is responsible for my well being, I trust in His provision for all my needs for body, soul and spirit. I am inspired by His loving leadership.

*I will fear no evil:  
for thou art with me;  
thy rod and thy staff they  
comfort me.*



Friend – I would never presume to consider myself as a friend had He not called me so Himself first. I don't know why He thinks of us this way. I don't know why He would want to. I do know that I am amazed, humbled, and determined not to cast aside such a great gift. I want to learn to be the best sort of friend to Jesus, who is the truest friend one could ever hope to gain. A soul friend...a heart friend. When I stop and listen to Him, I find Him irresistible.

The uniqueness of Jesus in the Godhead centers, in part, around His incarnation. It is this point of commonality that enables the various facets of relationship. It was necessary for Him to face human temptation to become the perfect human substitute for us. While we can envision being a slave or servant to a non-human power, the fuller master/servant relationship is best experienced with one who is like us, only greater. Friendship is not really conceivable to us apart from human attributes. Even in cases where we feel a vague sense of friendship with some other creature, like a pet, it is packaged in terms of their perceived human qualities.

**Continued on p. 4**

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### Editor's Note

Many of us understand the need to maintain a relationship with God through the person of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. It is a struggle, however, to establish a strategy whereby we accomplish this goal. We buy books to study. We promise that we will spend more time in prayer and reflection. But somehow it is still more difficult than we ever could imagine.

This month our writers share some of their insights on developing a relationship with Jesus through study, prayer and sometimes through simply experiencing His presence in our daily lives. I hope that the articles are inspirational as well as instructional. In the end we all benefit by establishing, maintaining and enjoying this relationship with God because He desires us to.

If you have comments, questions or want to share some of your own experiences about this topic, please feel free to contact us.

## Loving My Family, Loving My Lord

By Erin Meyer

Every time I hold my husband's hand, hug my grandma, or kiss my kids, I am reminded that the Lord has created within us a deep desire to love our family. Though we are warned not to put anything before our devotion to God, these earthly relationships are gifts given to us by a compassionate heavenly Father, who loves to see us happy.

The experience of being part of a family has taught me much about loving others. Through the years I have found myself playing out many of the same family scenes, though cast in different roles – daughter, mother, sister and wife. Each has added a new dimension to my perspective. Often these experiences are like custom parables revealed to me by Holy Spirit, guiding me to a deeper understanding in my faith journey. Loving my family has taught me much about loving the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Throughout my childhood, Grandma kept a collection of dresses, wigs, and jewelry for dress-up play. Not only did she watch me get gussied up, she would let me dress her in a lovely ensemble before we dined on fancy hors d'oeuvres like saltine crackers with American cheese slices. At the time, I thought she enjoyed looking fabulous and sipping on Seven-up and maraschino cherry cocktails as much as I did, but I realize now her pleasure was in sharing my joy. Today, Grandma listens patiently and respectfully to my worries, even though she has lived through the same problems and knows they are not a big deal. Loving Grandma has taught me to love and appreciate my heavenly Father who cherishes my joy and cares about my concerns.

Being a wife has taught me the frustration of trying to change my husband's perceptions and behavior to match by own. I have seen stubborn conflicts and resentment lead to pain and sadness. It is difficult to surrender pride and take the path to understanding. It takes a lot of time and devotion. When we make the effort, the reward is a deeper and purer love. This has taught me to love Jesus enough to not give up when His teaching is difficult. I will not try to turn Him into a Savior who suits my desires, but let Him change my heart to match His.

As a mother of a son who went to The Citadel, I read books about military college. Having a daughter who had scoliosis, I read whatever I could find on spinal issues. Some of what I read was tough to take in, but because I love my children, I felt compelled to learn as much as I could. Reading the Bible does not come easily to me because it can be so challenging. However, when I look at reading scripture as a way to love Jesus, it really changes things. So does realizing that every word of scripture is a loving gift given to me, and everyone else in need of a savior. Nothing could be more compelling than that.



Being a big sister gave me the chance to teach my younger sisters how to do important things like braid hair and tie shoe laces. Depending on the task at hand, I would often sit behind them, reaching my hands around to guide their hands and actions. I remember being taught to do things this way, too. Though it is hard for me to conceptualize the Holy Spirit, I see him in this picture of loving arms wrapped around me, making me feel as though I am doing things myself. Loving the Holy Spirit means letting those arms embrace me and guide my every move.

I have learned in family relationships that it is a wonderful feeling to see loved ones enjoying and delighting in each other. Conversely, nothing stings as painfully as watching people you love being hurtful, cruel and thoughtless toward one another. This helps me comprehend, in small measure, how the Father rejoices in seeing us love one another, and sorrows in our sin toward each other. I love the Holy Spirit by allowing him to cultivate in me a heart that loves others.

Ultimately, I know that I am able to love Jesus only because He first loved me, and gave me the Holy Spirit. Loving the Holy Spirit is letting Him take control and embracing who God wants me to be. *If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of Truth.* John 14:15-17

## Studying The Person of Jesus

By Isaac Gould

Have you ever read pamphlets that extol the value of a personal relationship with Jesus? These often highlight the differences between *knowing* Christ and *knowing about* Him. The latter is presented as an inferior sort of knowledge based on information and not experience. While I do not deny the importance of this distinction, I fear that some make of it a false dichotomy or, at the very least, create an imbalance by overemphasizing experiential knowledge. To have a personal relationship with Christ, we must have a personal connection with Him *and* study to know about Him.

The personal connection to Christ is something we refer to in theology as *union with Christ*. Wayne Grudem defines union with Christ in terms of four Scriptural relationships (*Systematic Theology*, InterVarsity, 1994, 840–41):

1. We are in Christ.
2. Christ is in us.
3. We are like Christ.
4. We are with Christ.



Certain aspects of this union can be experienced, but not all of them. This calls for study. For example, what does it mean to be “in Christ”? Do you *feel* “in Christ”? This is the New Testament’s most frequent phrase to describe our relationship to Jesus. Since a concordance study on the word “in” can be somewhat tedious, I highly recommend a computer search, such as can be done at [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com). This allows you to find every place the New Testament uses the phrase “in Christ.” [Make sure you use quotation marks around “in Christ” when you type it in the search box. [Click here to see the](#)

[search.](#)] Studying these notions will deepen our understanding of our connection to Christ.

Our relationship with Christ is certainly different from the face-to-face (or computer-to-computer) relationships we are accustomed to, but even these relationships require study—so also our relationship with Christ. An author I read once suggested that there is a difference between *personal* “knowing about” and *impersonal* “knowing about.” I feel like I know a good deal about Martin Luther from having studied him, but this kind of knowledge is of an entirely different order than the knowledge gained from studying my wife. Gaining knowledge about each has required study, but I hope you can guess in which I have had a greater stake. Paul may be making a similar distinction with different ways of knowing Christ in 2 Cor 5:16b, “Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard Him thus no longer” (ESV). Surely, Paul had known the facts about Jesus, but after being confronted with the person of Jesus and His powerful words, the knowing was different. Christ became for Paul the Lawgiver, the Judge, the Lord. Furthermore, Paul was convinced that Jesus had loved *him* and been crucified *for him* (Gal 2:20). By studying Jesus’ words and actions, our sense of His love for us will grow, as will ours for Him.

In the words of Hosea, “Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; His going out is sure as the dawn; He will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth” (6:3, ESV). To be sure, there is study involved in coming to know Christ, but it will be richly rewarded.

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### ***Praying to Jesus Continued from p.2***

I have cast my relationship with Jesus so far in the best of terms. Anyone who knows me, however, knows that if I related to Him every day in the ways mentioned above, I would be acting a whole lot more like Him by now. Here’s the wonder of it: because He is real, not just a theological construct, He can handle my “realness” also. Neither the good, the bad, nor the ugly surprises Him – He’s seen it before, and He knows He’ll see it again. He is astoundingly patient.

But like a good friend, an able master, an efficacious savior, He has no intention of leaving me to my own devices, even when I would prefer to be. When I insist on sitting in my pit, He pokes His head over the side every now and then and offers to pull me out. In between offers, He might visit upon me a little rain, snow or dark of night. And when I am tired of sitting in my misery, I will agree to be pulled out and back into fellowship with him, where in my deep heart, I wanted to be all along.

## Jesus in History

by Don Carlson

When the authors of the New Testament wrote about Jesus, they assumed a shared cultural/religious/political context with their readers. But since we are far removed from the world of Jesus and his contemporaries, we cannot always rely upon the NT alone to provide us with the proper historical background required for understanding Jesus in history, that is, as a historical figure. That is to say, in order to understand the historical figure of Jesus, we must recall that Jesus' actual *historical* context is, of course, not actually the New Testament. For *Jesus' historical context is to be found within first-century Palestinian Judaism*. Consequently, while the NT is indeed our primary witness to *Jesus*, we must be willing to look outside the Bible for a proper understanding of first-century *Judaism*. For it is only in His historical context that Jesus' actions and sayings make any sense. After all, how can we declare that Scripture is "historically accurate" before we know something about the "history" which it "accurately" reflects?

To illustrate the point of this, let us look at what is probably the oldest known narrative about Jesus: the Gospel of Mark. Now it can be all too easy to read through the prologue to Mark's Gospel (i.e., the first fifteen verses) without giving pause to wonder at the strange sequence of events which unfold. The text is rather dense and begs to be unpacked, which we cannot do here in this short space. For present purposes, let us simply raise a few questions of the sort which historians typically ask.

The story begins with John the Baptizer. But why does the story of Jesus start with John?

Where did this "baptism" come from and what is its significance for John's contemporaries, including Jesus?

Moreover, if John is proclaiming a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins", why does Jesus himself make the trek all the way from Galilee down to the Judean wilderness to be baptized by John?

Mark continues by describing how the Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove, at which point the voice from heaven says "you are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

What is the meaning of this heavenly declaration, and how do we know?

Then, the very same Spirit who descends upon Jesus like a dove immediately banishes Jesus into the wilderness. Why?

There Jesus is tempted by Satan, with wild animals, and waited upon by angels, for a period

## A Historical Context

of 40 days. Then, after John is arrested (the reason for which we are not told until chapter 6!), Jesus returns to Galilee proclaiming, "The time is fulfilled," and "the kingdom of God is at hand" and He summons people to "turn and trust in the good news."

Hence, in these fifteen verses we have a dozen or more themes, the significance for which is not sufficiently explained for us by Mark's narrative *itself*. The narrative assumes its readers "know the story so far," so to speak. In short, if we want to understand Mark's presentation of Jesus, we have to look in a number of other places, particularly the Old Testament (especially the Pentateuch and Isaiah). Furthermore, if we wish to understand how this imagery relates to the *historical context* of Jesus himself, (again, within first-century Judaism) the picture becomes even more clear through those texts which are closer to the time of Jesus, like the writings of Josephus, Philo, the "Apocrypha", and the Dead Sea Scrolls. For these are the kinds of writings that give us the proper framework for understanding Judaism in the first century, Jesus' proper context.

In conclusion, let us remember that we come to know about Jesus in two ways: by faith and by history. Fortunately, I do not think the believer is forced to opt for one over the other. Indeed, both are fused together in Scripture. Still, if we are to take seriously the 'historicity' of Jesus, we must be bold to familiarize ourselves with His historical context, namely, His first-century Jewish context.

Finally, it is fitting to recall the story which tells about how one day some Sadducees attempted to corner Jesus with a tricky question (so they thought) about the resurrection, which they ardently denied. Very quickly Jesus cut them off at the pass and said to them, "Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?" (Mark 12:24). They were wrong about the resurrection because they were wrong about (1) the Scriptures and (2) God's power. Most certainly the same holds true today. And surely this applies not only for the resurrection, but also for our own knowledge of the historical figure of Jesus. So may the Lord, by his Spirit, enable us to both understand the Scriptures and to recognize His power so that we know His son Jesus better, by faith and in history.

## The Holy Spirit as Surety for Salvation

By Maurie Loomans

I had been a Christian for over 30 years, yet I had problems with a verse in Ephesians 1. It spoke of the indwelling Holy Spirit as positive evidence of my salvation.

*Ephesians 1: 13-14 Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.*

My problem was that I had no clear-cut evidence of the Spirit. I had faith but no evidence that I could point to. This changed. It changed big time.

I can best illustrate this with a story, which happened many years ago. For confidential reasons, I am not disclosing identities. My good friend, Keith Kintner, and I were known for our activity in the healing ministry and quite often made house calls. One day a devout Christian man called us to come to his home. This man and his family had just experienced a harrowing weekend. This was the story he told us. The man was putting on a weekend conference for about 125 people. Starting on Saturday morning, one thing after another began to go wrong. By the end of the conference he was exhausted.

At home he had a sick baby and a wife in pain with an apparent neck injury. When we arrived, the man looked absolutely exhausted, the baby was crying, and his wife had difficulty moving even ever-so-little.

After explaining the circumstances, the man carried the baby upstairs to put him to bed. The crying continued, which was easily heard downstairs. One of us said, "Let's pray." While we were praying it came to me that a harassing demon was at work. We stopped praying and I commanded the demon to leave this house. Immediately, the baby stopped crying. After a little while, the man rejoined us for prayer. He also told us that the baby was diagnosed with a hernia. Keith said, "We'll just pray for that." When he finished praying, he said, "Well, that takes care of that."

As we continued to pray, the thought came to me that this man was going to have a change in his work assignment. I said, "I believe the Lord is leading you into another area of work." Keith suggested that we pray for the wife's healing. Both the husband and wife knelt down by the coffee

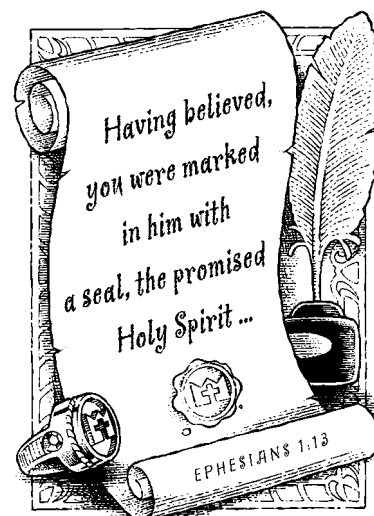
table. In the center of the table were a communion chalice and a Bible. It looked like a holy place. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and to our amazement, the wife experienced an immediate healing.

A week later, the man made luncheon appointments with both of us at our place of employment. He delivered the same message. He and his wife were very thankful for our ministry to them. Secondly, they had taken their baby to the doctor, and after careful examination there was no sign of any hernia.

In retrospect we realized that when Keith said, "Well, that takes care of that." he had just exercised the gift of faith, as given in I Corinthians 12. Also looking back, I can see that I had a forward-looking prophecy for the man. This was fulfilled when the man was asked by his employer a few months later to take on additional responsibilities. As to the harassing demon spirit, that may have been a discernment of spirits, again given in I Corinthians 12, or simply a good guess given the circumstances.

What this story does is illustrate the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit in our time, and clear evidence to the person ministering this grace of His presence within. Before and afterwards I experienced many times the power of the Spirit in me through the ministry of healing and deliverance from spirits to many people. I no longer had doubts about the presence of the Holy Spirit within.

Let it be noted that I am not extrapolating from my experiences, but have simply explained how I received evidence for the surety of my salvation.



# The Kid's Community



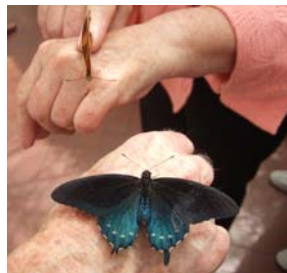
FAMILY  
HOLY  
JESUS  
LOVING  
MASTER  
PERSON  
PRAYING  
SALVATION  
SPIRIT  
STUDY



## Jesus & Holy Spirit

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Silver Heirs at Krohn Conservatory  
Silver Heirs concluded their regularly scheduled meetings in June with a trip to see the butterfly exhibit. A great time was had by all. As usual, it ended with lunch.





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# AUGUST

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	7 pm Session Business Meeting 4	7pm Sr.High Life Groups 5	7pm College/ Young Adult Study 6	7pm Singer/ Worship Teams 7	8	Families Leave for Family Camp 9
5:30pm Crew 7pm Connect 7pm Silver Heirs 10	11	7pm Sr.High Life Groups 12	13	7pm Singer/ Worship Teams 5pm Prayer Mtg 14	15	16
5:30Crew 6:30pm Concert 7pm Connect 17	7 PM Deacon Meeting 18	7pm Sr.High Life Groups 7pm Trustee Meeting 19	7pm College/ Young Adult Study 20	7pm Singer/ Worship Teams 6:30pm Mission Meeting 21	22	23
5:30pm Luau 24	7 pm Session Study Meeting 25	7pm Sr.High Life Groups 26	27	7pm Singer/ Worship Teams 5pm Prayer Mtg 28	29	30
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