

Faith

How will you respond to God's love?

By Dan Nixon
Pastor, First United Methodist
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In John 14:15, Jesus said: "If you love me you will keep my commandments." There is another part to that verse that is often forgotten, "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth." (16-17)

"If you love me you will keep my commandments," sums up the entire Old Testament. God created laws and commandments for the people of Israel to follow so that they could reciprocate His love for them.

Deuteronomy 6:5 states: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." In return God promised the children of Israel: "to give you a land with large flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant - then you will eat and be satisfied, be care that you do not forget the LORD ..." (10-13).

Remember: It is God who first "loved the world enough to give His only begotten Son..." Obedience should be humanity's response to that gesture of love

so freely given. Obedience is a natural response to love; it is not a forced capitulation. Love is circular, not linear. True love is a cycle of gesture and response. Most everyone reading this article can tell the story of how they met their first love. Looking back on it, one can see that the cycle of gesture and response grows from a meaningful glance, to holding hands, to embracing, and so on. In addition, one can look back and see the many instances where he or she obeyed another person's needs simply as a response to their loving relationship.

How can love be com-

manded? The love that God commands is not based on an emotion, romance, or even impassioned love. The love that God commands is an intelligent decision to be loyal, to be obedient, and to be faithful to God no matter our physical circumstance or emotional state. The love that God commands requires a dependence upon God for everything, including life itself. Without this dependence, one will not remain loyal to God or to His commands. Without this dependence, people become rebellious, wicked, and envelop themselves in all manner of strife and turmoil.

Since God gave His best for

humanity, (creation, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, etc.) God expects humanity to give their best to him (love, loyalty, faithfulness, and obedience). God gave, humanity responded. When God reciprocates humanity's response, humanity is blessed. See the cycle? Loving God increases God's demonstrations of love which increases our love, which increases His demonstrations of love, which increases ... This cycle of love will ultimately result in eternal life through which this cycle will continue throughout eternity. What a wonderful blessing it is to know that God's love has no limits.

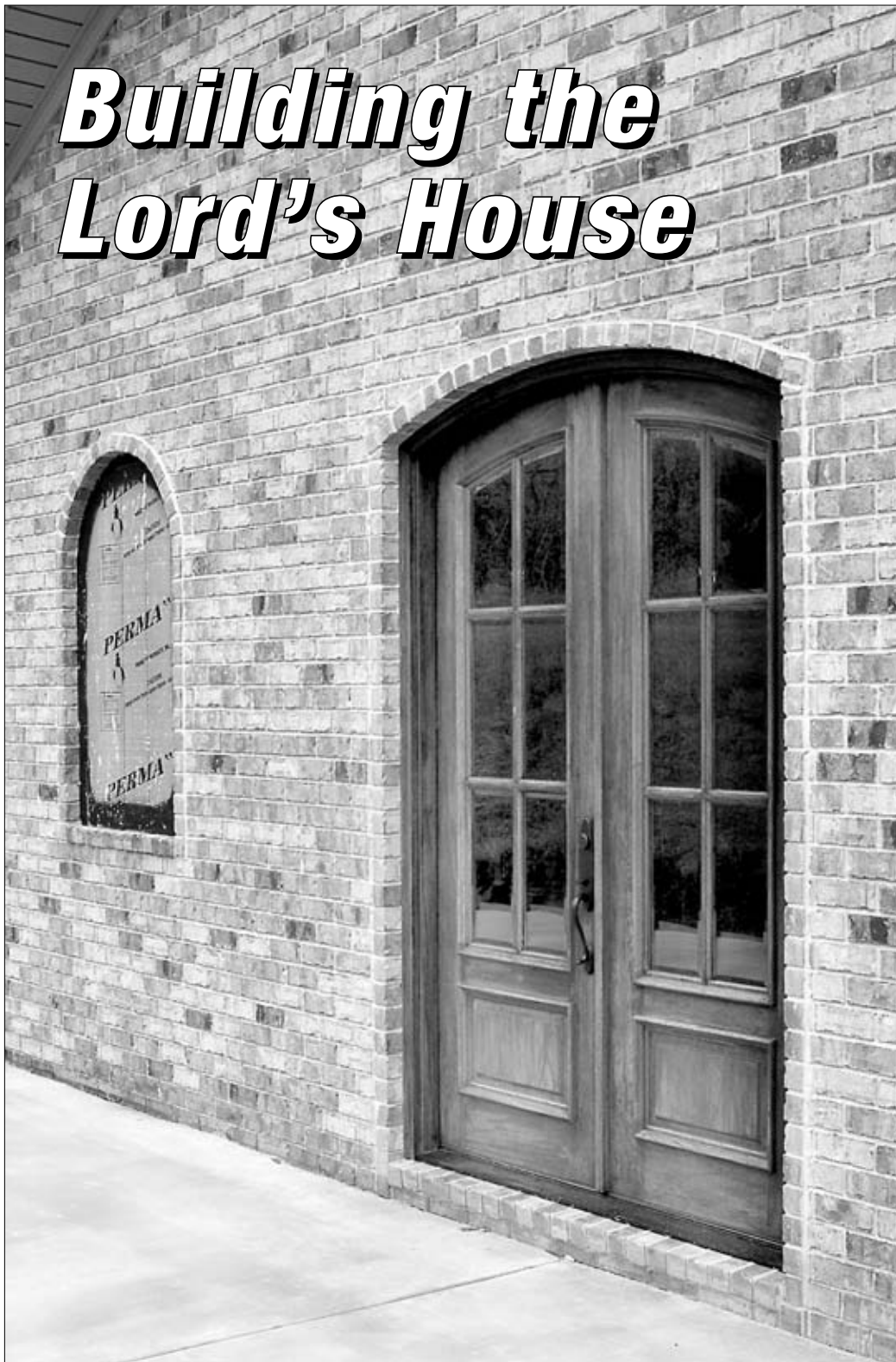
Sullivan Family to sing at Melvin

MELVIN -- The world-famous bluegrass-gospel group The Sullivan Family will sing at Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church at Melvin, at 6 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 11th.

From St. Stephens, Alabama, The Sullivan Family has performed around the world, and even had their recordings preserved in the U.S. Library of Congress.

A love offering will be taken and the public is cordially invited to attend and enjoy an evening of worship through traditional bluegrass-gospel music.

For more information call Pastor Pike Smith at 601-776-0308.



Choctaw Sun photo by Tommy Campbell
Work continues at Tallawampa Baptist
TALLAWAMPA COMMUNITY -- The new sanctuary of Tallawampa Baptist Church continues to take shape. Watch for future updates in The Sun.

Are you a "religion" addict?

By Rev. Arthur Hudson
Pastor, Morgan Chapel Baptist Church

Do you feel God is angry at you?
Do you feel extreme guilt for being out of church just one Sunday?

Do you feel if you work a little harder God will finally forgive you?

Do you feel that you can never stop meeting others' needs?

If you could answer yes to any of these questions you made an addict to religion. The word religion is a very unpopular word in most churches today, but if you are involved in church work with the idea of working your way towards perfection and favor with God - you are living in a religious dream world.

You probably will not even realize that you are a person with a problem and that is why you will use shame, fault finding of others, denial and perfectionism. A religious addict is really wearing a mask and may often be seen to be laughing on the outside, but is really crying on the inside.

There are many kinds of ways that religious addiction can show up even in the lives of Christians. One man had been badly abused relationship with God had been terribly messed up. The man believed that God had chosen him from birth and was angry and vengeful, bringing terrible things into his life. Christian counseling was able to help this man and he began to realize that the love of God was the greatest experience of his life.

Other people refuse to face life as it is really is and try to blame, shame, and fault finding to mask their own unhappiness with their lives. Blaming others will never satisfy this individual and such behavior may go for years until the person realizes that he has a real problem.

The good news of course is that we have a God who understands. God sent his son, Jesus Christ in while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Most Christians will admit that we are powerless to save ourselves, but how often do we so foolishly refuse to admit that we are powerless to lead the Christian life without a strong devotion to God's word.

During his life Jesus main opponents, the Pharisees, were religious addicts who were devoted to the idea of working their way to heaven. Jesus told one Pharisee, Nicodemus I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is he is born again. Once a religious addict's spiritual eyes are opened then they can begin to realize the true joy that only Christ can bring in their lives. Yes, His name is Jesus for only He has the power to set the prisoner free!

Sadly, until our churches begin to focus on the main job of making disciples that our lord left us with the problem of religious addiction will remain with us. Mere church attendance and doing the busy work of maintaining the local church will never replace the call of Jesus to share the gospel and make disciples.

The **Sun** will be glad to promote your upcoming church event. Send us the information as far in advance as possible. The deadline for MIDWEEK editions is noon on Fridays, and noon on Wednesdays for our WEEKEND edition.

Learn to say, "I like you"

Scripture in Focus:
1 Thessalonians 5:11

My eyes watered so much that I could hardly see the road in front of me. My voice was husky as I spoke.

"Thank you," I managed to say to my son as he sat beside me.

It is so sweet to receive a compliment. Compliments have a way of lifting your spirits and making you feel special. A sincere compliment can make an otherwise dull day a whole lot brighter. And, just as it helps us to receive compliments, it also helps us to give them.

Telling your family that you love them is wonderful. Those three little words are so vital to our existence. In fact, scientists have proven that without the knowledge that someone loves you, your life is shortened considerably. Yet there are other words that are just as vital to the emotional health of most people.

No medicine can cure the ache in the heart of the wife who does not know that she is appreciated, that she is consid-



Meditations for Moms

By Dee Ann Campbell
Editor

ered capable and important. Nothing can soothe the hurt inside the husband who is never told that he is needed and that he is important in the lives of his family. There is an indescribable pain in the heart of the child who does not learn from his parents that he is accepted just the way he is.

Unfortunately, we so often neglect to give those that we love the one thing that can make the most difference to their emotional health. We neglect to tell them that we "like" them.

Perhaps we get too busy and life gets in the way. Perhaps we let bitterness and hurt cause us to withhold our words of affirmation.

Perhaps we just do not realize the importance of simply taking time to tell our daughter that we think she is the best gymnast in the whole wide world. Perhaps we just don't remember to tell our son that we are so proud of the way he keeps his room neat or the way he says "yes, ma'am". Or perhaps we just neglect to tell our husband that he is the very best friend that we have on this earth and that we think he hung the moon.

A compliment spoken at just the right time, words of encouragement shared during a busy day, a phone call just to say "you are on my mind" - it really doesn't take much to give our loved ones something that they so

desperately need. It doesn't cost anything, but it is worth so much, just to say, "I like you."

Make an investment in the emotional happiness of your family. Take the time to tell them that they are wonderful.

While your wife stands in the kitchen cooking breakfast, give her a hug and tell her that she is beautiful in the morning. While your child combs his hair to go to school, tell him that, if you were twelve years old, you would think he was a hunk. As your husband sits beside you in the car, grab his hand and tell him that you still think he has gorgeous eyes.

Or maybe you are a twelve-year-old boy like my son was just a few short years ago. And maybe you could make your mother's eyes get misty and her voice get husky as she drives down the road. Maybe you could simply say, "When I grow up, Mama, I hope I marry a girl just like you." (From **Monday Morning Meditations for Moms**, a year-long devotional series)

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