



PASTOR GENERAL'S REPORT

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Greetings ministers and wives!

God's people have so much to be thankful for! More than any other people on Earth.

The end of Revelation 3 talks about us *sharing God's throne!* Then comes a magnificent description of that throne in chapter 4.

Notice the excitement here: "And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Revelation 4:6-8).

These angelic beings are not depressed; they are giving God praise for everything. They have never been given the potential to be sons of God, yet they are still expressing their joy and thanksgiving to God day and night. Apparently their job is just to praise God—and they're thrilled to have it. These are not selfish beings.

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (verse 11). God is worthy to receive glory and honor. He created all things, including us, and He has sacrificed a lot for us. It keeps us humble to remember that. Lucifer forgot that he was a *created* being. We must never forget our humble beginning. A newborn baby wouldn't be able to do anything if someone didn't take care of it. Yet mankind, and even God's people, can get arrogant and forget how much we need to be taught and cared for by God. So many of God's people have turned away because they became more excited about *things* than about their potential to become God.

These angels have it right. They know who created them. They are simply rejoicing because God gave them life! They're thrilled to be alive, and they're going to live forever.

We need the gratitude of these beings. We need the joy and excitement that they have. If we don't have a lot of that joy in our life, something is wrong. Obviously, a serious trial can weigh you down; God says He puts those burdens upon us. But we need to be rejoicing and praising God like these 24 elders—and even more, because our potential is so much greater!

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With love, in Christ's service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gerald Flurry".

CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

LONG TERM WCG EVANGELIST DIES

Dr. Herman Hoeh, 74, died at his home this past Sunday, November 21, of natural causes. His wife of 52 years, Mrs. Isabell Hoeh, found him in the kitchen

early that morning. Dr. Hoeh was among the first four students who attended *Ambassador College* in 1947. He was also a prolific writer for the *Plain Truth* magazine and other WCG publications.

MEDIA SERVICES

SPANISH SUBTITLES

The TV department will meet this week with Carlos Heyer to continue preparations for offering Spanish subtitles to the program that we make available on the *Key of David* website. If we can keep up with the process, perhaps we will be able to offer Spanish subtitled programs for broadcast around the world. We hope to make these programs available on the website by the end of the year.

CLOSED CAPTIONING

Carol Adams creates transcripts of the *Key of David* program on a weekly basis. We are working on a system in which she, and perhaps an assistant, will be able to create the transcripts prior to us going to air with the program. If this is the case, we hope to begin to offer closed captioning for the hearing impaired on all broadcast tapes. We hope to incorporate this benefit to the program by the spring holy days or sooner if possible.

END OF FIRST YEAR OF BROADCASTING

We returned to air during the first weekend of November 2003. At that time, Mr. Flurry decided to use six stations in the United States, and five stations in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Malta, and the Caribbean. Throughout the first year, additional markets have been added both domestically and internationally. At the conclusion of the first year back on air, we ended up with 15 stations in the U.S., and eight international stations (adding Grenada, South Africa and the Philippines).

As we move into the second year after our return, we are anxious to add a few more stations in the U.S., Canada, Britain and Europe. We are presently working on several options for all of these markets.

During March and April of 1999, we used 85 different stations to take the program to the world. We averaged over 75 stations throughout 1999, which brought in our highest total response of all 12 years we have been on the air. That year, we received a total of 60,525 responses to the program. Though it is difficult to estimate where we will end up this year, we believe that we

will total about 53,000 requests for the year 2004. This year has represented the second-highest total amount of response generated by *The Key of David*. If you consider the amount of response we receive today, with fewer stations, it is clear that the program is drawing more response than ever before!

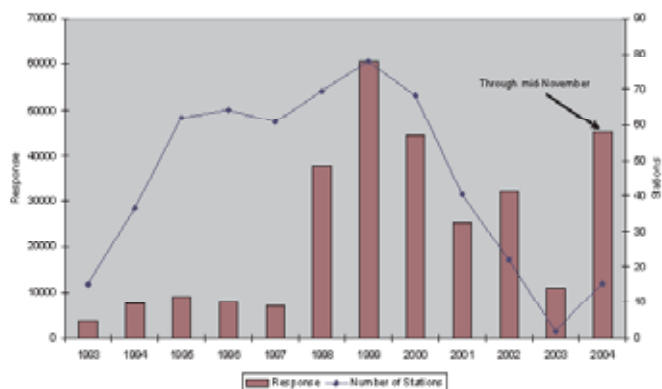
WEBSITES

We are pleased to announce an upgrade to our website www.pcog.org. The new look features *Mystery of the Ages* in addition to biographies, our statement of beliefs and other beneficial information about the Philadelphia Church of God. We have simplified the literature ordering tool so it will be easier to use and to expedite the processing of orders after they are placed. All pages of the website are available in both English and Spanish.

We hope to release a new look to the *Key of David* website within a few weeks and, shortly after that, release the new *Trumpet* website. The Imperial College site has already been updated and released earlier this year.

Altogether, we receive well over 50,000 different visitors per month to our websites. And thousands of literature requests are made each month via the websites. Our intentions are to continue to improve the look and functionality of the sites on a more regular basis as we use this feature of the Work of God to warn the world.

Key of David Response



EDITORIAL SERVICES

Something to be thankful for this Thanksgiving: We are planning to make the *Philadelphia News* a monthly publication beginning in 2005!

We have long bemoaned the fact that so much of the “news” in the *Philly News* is actually quite old by the time it reaches the brethren. In the wCG, the *Worldwide News* was a semi-monthly publication. We will make the less ambitious, but still exciting, move from six issues a year to 10 issues a year, like the *Trumpet* (with two bi-monthly issues). This will be possible for a few reasons: 1) the bulk of the work going into the PN is already coming from our student workers, and they are proving themselves increasingly capable in a variety of jobs; 2) the weekly news coming from the PGR is actually giving us more raw material to use and report on in the PN; 3) whenever necessary we will cut the page count to four pages (rather than eight)—the logic being that four pages every month will still make the news more topical and interesting to the brethren than eight pages every other month.

Another advantage to the new schedule is that, as crazy as it may sound, in many ways it is easier to produce a publication more frequently, because our staff can get into a rhythm. The PGR is a perfect example—quickly producing a small weekly mailing has been quite a lot easier than a bi-monthly PGR, which, as all the ministry are aware, proved to be practically impossible for us.

So—look for the new monthly PN to begin soon!

This week we finished our December *Trumpet* issue. The cover features an article by Mr. Flurry called “The Coming War Between Catholicism and Islam,” which discusses the Vatican’s recent labeling of militant Islam as being its next great adversary. Quite a chilling story, and extremely prophetic! For our cover shot, we used Paulette Corey-Armstrong from the Information Technology department, who has skill as a seamstress. Based on a photograph, she created the black-and-red costume of a Catholic cardinal in a single evening! She is officially the hero of the editorial department for this month. The photograph is a close-up of a Catholic priest’s hand drawing a sword from a scabbard, and the headline reads “CRUSADE: Catholics brace to confront Islam—again.” We are excited about how our final issue of this calendar year came out.

We also sent our final corrections for the November-December *Royal Vision* last week, which should reach our members in the U.S. in less than two weeks. The draft for the January-February issue is already out and, all being well, will reach subscribers by the beginning

of January 2005. So far we are doing well on our post-Feast goal of keeping the publications on schedule.

Meanwhile the foreign editions of publications form a continuous stream to Edwin Trebels, now helps produce the Spanish *Trompeta*. As a matter of fact, the production of literature has been such (see booklet update, below) that we’ve had to revert the production of the Spanish edition of *Royal Vision* back to the Spanish department, where they are eager to get it into the hands of our Spanish-speaking brethren. —Joel Hilliker

BOOKLET UPDATE

Last week was a very productive one for booklets. We sent the final files for the reprinting of *God Is a Family* and began work on updating five other booklets: *Jonah: A Strong Warning to God’s Church*; *Hosea and God’s Adulterous Wife*; *Lamentations and the End-Time Laodiceans*; *Ezekiel: The End-Time Prophet* and *Habakkuk*. The last of these will be significantly different from our existing *Habakkuk* booklet, updating it with the prophecy, and fulfillment, of our court case victory. Mr. Flurry has worked hard at editing this booklet to make this essential knowledge available to a larger audience. We expect this booklet to go to press by the beginning of December, and hopefully it will be in the hands of our members and co-workers by the end of the calendar year.

As you have read in the last PGR, *Ezekiel: The End-Time Prophet* is one of our most-requested booklets. This booklet was first printed two years ago, with a print-run of 30,000 copies. Normally we aim for a three-to-five-year shelf life for these booklets; but, to our surprise, this barely lasted us two years. This just shows the increase in demand for literature and the impact God’s message has on the world. We truly do fulfill the watchman commission of Ezekiel 3.

This year we have already printed 363,592 pieces of literature, not including our periodicals and foreign-language items. By the time our backlog has been worked away, we hope to add another 405,000 copies to that number before the year is out! That’s a 35 percent increase over last year, the year we printed most of Mr. Armstrong’s works for the first time. Compared to the year before, 2002, that would be a 359 percent increase—how exciting! With the excitement comes a price-tag, too. Please be mindful of this need in God’s Work in your prayers and keep God’s people stirred up by the statistics provided to you in this publication. —Wik Heerma

MAIL PROCESSING

AUTOMATED MAIL PACKING EQUIPMENT

An exciting development took place for the Mail Department this past week. Mr. Flurry approved the purchase of our first large piece of automation equipment—a Bell & Howell Mastermailer mail processing system. The Mastermailer can insert up to eight documents, or pieces of literature, into an envelope, and can process as many as 6,000 envelopes an hour. The machine uses a conveyor system which uses arms to pull, stack and insert documents into envelopes.

The main purpose of the Mastermailer is to handle packaging requirements for the Correspondence Course, the “He Was Right” issue of the *Trumpet* (which is sent to all first-time subscribers), and the “like item” orders we receive as a result of the telecast. All of the above mentioned items generally total over 35,000 orders we package per month. We believe the inserting machine will eliminate the need to add several staff members to keep up with these packaging needs.

With the acquisition of the Mastermailer, the department expects to process all requests on a weekly basis. All literature requested from the Key of David program should be processed and sent out within a few days of the air date, and all other miscellaneous requests will be sent out having not spent more than a few days in the data base.

As the volume of outgoing mail continues to climb, we continue to add additional pieces of automation equipment to the new Mail Processing Center to keep pace. With the exception of the students who provide help throughout the week, the mail department staff still only numbers two full-time employees! The appropriate application of technology does help the Work of God to keep

up with the demand for God’s warning message! The urgency of the warning message continues to increase and the added equipment will greatly assist in delivering God’s message more efficiently. *-Mark Saranga*

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

Hundreds of letters have been mailed to the first enrollees of the *Imperial College Correspondence Course*. Orders for the course continue to mount with each passing day. We expect the numbers to increase substantially as soon as members begin to enroll in the course. Mr. Flurry has mentioned his plans to advertise the course on *The Key of David* program which will undoubtedly add thousands more subscribers.

CALL CENTER

The past week has been the busiest week in our call center to date. The combination of the new *Trumpet* magazine hitting homes, the offer of the Correspondence Course, and our largest weekly response to the *Key of David* program, all combined to present us with over 6,000 calls in the past 14 days. At this rate, we could break the 10,000 calls per month goal by the end of November—the first time ever for the PCG.

We have had to tap in-home operators and staff from various departments around headquarters to handle the call volume. The daily written requests for literature have also taken a dramatic upswing in the past few weeks as well.

Our websites have also presented a slight increase in the number of requests, and we hope with the release of the new website (www.pcog.org) we will see an even greater increase.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Rain has continued to fall this week on God’s land. The above normal rainfall for this time of year has certainly caused us some challenges, but the time we have lost in construction progress has been put toward campus maintenance and planning upcoming building projects.

HALL OF ADMINISTRATION

Wet and muddy conditions continue to hamper progress on the Hall of Ad. site. It rained for most of the week, which brought the dirt work to a standstill. *Please ask the brethren to pray about this.*

PASTOR GENERAL’S HOME

All of the wainscoting, cabinets, and book shelving are completed in Mr. Flurry’s office. We are only waiting for a few more pieces of molding to arrive next Tuesday so we can finish off the room. The crown mold installation began Thursday this week and the base molding followed soon after.

I spoke to Robert, at Hill and Company, on Thursday, about getting the gas line pressured up and ready for inspection. The gas pressure test is being done at Mr. Flurry’s today and the bricklayers returned, for the

first time this week, to complete the brickwork. They should be back on Sunday, and will be very close to being finished by the end of the day.

OTHER PROJECTS

Before the Feast, the trailer that formerly served as the Turgeon's residence was moved off the original 40-acre plot to where the campus's other three trailers reside. This trailer now serves as the IC library, and its former trailer serves as offices for the IC administrative staff. The library is now completely moved to its new location. We still have to install some bracing to ensure the bookcases are stable. The landscape students installed paving

stones leading to the new library making it a little easier to get to, especially in the overly wet, muddy conditions here lately.

With all the rain this week on God's land, we have been able to send some much needed labor to the MPC to provide some assistance with their increased workload. Hopefully, sending the landscape students to them when we have inclement weather will be sufficient to stay ahead of the increased workload at MPC. If this is not the case, then we can provide additional help for special projects as needed, while still trying to keep up with the many projects we hope to accomplish over the winter months.

FOR WIDER DISTRIBUTION

SONGLEADING GUIDELINES

Being a songleader is a big responsibility. You set the mood—to a great degree—for the entire service. You are the first person to speak to God’s people in a formal setting on the Sabbath. If there are any new members or PM’s in the congregation, you provide their first impression of God’s Church. As Ambassador College’s *Basics of Principles of Song Leading*, by Leroy Neff, states: “A songleader is a sort of ‘toastmaster,’ or ‘master of ceremonies.’ He should be friendly, have good stage presence, some proper humor, and also have a genuine interest in his audience and the occasions.”

Here we offer some basic principles for our songleaders—some solid guidelines, as well as some suggestions.

The first and most important aspect of song leading is PRAYER. Pray about the service—the selection of the songs, your leading of them, your delivery and presentation, the pianist, the opening- and closing-prayer men, the speakers, the sound, and even the congregation. If you have any part in selecting the opening and closing prayer men, pray about this as well. If the prayer men are scheduled, your minister may allow you to select from any visitors (especially ministers or deacons) in the area that Sabbath.

You should also prepare *physically* for this responsibility. Leading songs will take *practice*. It is also recommended that songleaders have, or be in the process of receiving, Spokesman Club training, if available.

There are some important guidelines about DRESS that all songleaders must follow: A songleader should always wear a suit, a “normal” tie and a *white* dress shirt that is *long-sleeved*. The outfit should look sharp and not be extreme or make any fashion statement.

In the lead-up to services, we recommend songleaders confirm the presence of the prayer men on the schedule, the pianist (or, if applicable, to ensure the sound crew knows what hymns to play from the CD) about 15 minutes prior to services. (This may be unnecessary in small congregations.)

Songleaders should also be fully apprised of any variance of “normal” Church service agenda (i.e. three hymns, opening prayer, sermonette or offertory, one hymn, announcements, special music, sermon, one hymn, closing prayer).

Usually within two to five minutes of the beginning of services, the songleader should make a brief announcement telling brethren how much time they have to find their seats. It is the songleader’s responsibility to START SERVICES ON TIME.

When it comes to comments, keep introductions SHORT for all prayer men and speakers. BE VERY CAREFUL ABOUT USING HUMOR. DO NOT COMMENT OR GIVE ‘EVALUATIONS’ OF THE SERMONETTE OR SERMON. Songleaders should not “sermonize” while at the microphone.

Concerning introductions, as is common toastmaster practice in Club, the last words spoken of the introduction should be the man’s name. Introduce ordained men with their title most relevant to the congregation (e.g. “our pastor, Mr. ...” or “a local church elder, Mr. ...” or “a deacon serving here, Mr. ...”).

For more specific guidelines, songleaders should seek guidance from their regional directors. For instance, in song selection, some ministers don’t like too many four-verse hymns in one service. As far as song selection goes, headquarters gives no specific directive, but we suggest the following:

The second song of the opening bracket of hymns is probably the best place to put any special hymn (e.g. ladies on verse two, men on verse three, etc.) or any UNFAMILIAR hymn. If a songleader selects a hymn that is relatively new to the congregation, it would be appropriate for him to have the pianist (or the CD) play through one verse, to acquaint the congregation with the tune.

We encourage our songleaders to get familiar with more of these hymns. In the late 1980s, the WCG started eliminating some from the list of what was suitable for services as it phased in its more Protestant-slanted hymnal—meaning there are several good ones that the Church is not familiar with. A songleader can *gradually* add these to the congregation’s repertoire.

If a songleader makes a mistake in his conducting, he should continue directing the song in single-beat time (i.e. all *downbeats*) until he finds his place again without losing confidence or composure.

This leads into the last point we’d like to make. In addition to being a “toastmaster” or “emcee” of God’s Sabbath services, the songleader is also a LEADER. If you have a live pianist, the songleader should *lead* the pianist to the best of his ability—i.e. starting the congregation and pianist together, establishing the tempo (or speed) of the hymn. The pianist may have more musical experience, of which the songleader may wish to tap, but during the service the songleader must be in charge. To understand the musical fundamentals of what you are doing—which will help you stay in charge of the moment—consult Mr. Neff’s book, quoted above.

MINISTERIAL TRAINING SERIES

CONFRONTATIONAL LEADERSHIP

By Stephen Flurry

Herbert W. Armstrong's first trip outside the United States was just across the border into Canada—to Niagara Falls. In his *Autobiography*, he mentioned how that experience impacted his life—especially how those raging waters were able to get around a seemingly insurmountable barrier in the middle of the water—a huge boulder. “The waters of that river swirled around the great rock, struck it head-on and splashed over it,” he wrote. “One way or another the waters got past it, and hurried on to their destination—the falls, and then down the swift rapids of the river on into Lake Ontario. The waters didn't lie down. They didn't become discouraged. They didn't quit. They found a way around the impassable barrier, and on to their destination.

“I decided that if inanimate, mindless elements could surmount and find a way past obstacles, so could I. This experience has often come back to mind when the going has gotten tough, or when I was tempted to become discouraged and quit.”

As Mr. Armstrong wrote elsewhere, “God has never intended our lives, yielded to Him for His service, to be a proverbial soft ‘bed of roses.’ God has not intended our Christian lives in His service to run smooth and easy, with no problems, no concerns. God intended—ORDAINED—that we should be confronted with continual problems, difficulties, troubles—that we should have to make constant SACRIFICES, learning to give up our own ways and wants—even some of our money, and the things we WANT to buy with it!”

Confronting obstacles and problems in our own lives is simply *a way of life* for a true Christian—particularly Christian leaders in the ministry. One of our duties in the ministry is to exhort others when we speak. We also must learn how to give correction or criticism in a way that our audiences will receive!

THAT IS NO SMALL TASK!

In fact, *giving correction* in love is MORE DIFFICULT than receiving it. The reason is because in receiving correction, you've got to see yourself and God. But to give it, in love, you've got to see yourself, God *and others*.

I'd like to give five points to consider before giving an exhortative message.

1) BE COURAGEOUS

We all know the story of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17. When the men of Israel really needed someone to step forward and *confront* a problem, all the elder, wiser, best trained soldiers, slunk into the background. David, however—a lowly shepherd—stepped forward and said, *Who is this giant who thinks he is going to stop God's Work?* As is often the case in so many biblical accounts, the one you would think least likely to succeed, succeeded!

“And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle” (verse 28). Standing up and just doing the job that needs to be done is so rare that, often, the only thing scoffers can say is, *You're just being too arrogant, always talking about YOUR work, attacking others*. Notice the response. “And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause?” (verse 29). Don't *we* have a cause to confront?

David took a simple approach to the battle. Saul wanted to weigh him down with all sorts of armor. But David JUST WANTED TO GET ON WITH THE BATTLE. Think about how much this Work can do with attitudes like that! People might laugh and ridicule us from time to time—like Goliath did David—but we're not interested in responding defensively to things like that. We are more concerned about the battle. WE ARE PART OF THE ARMIES OF THE LIVING GOD! (verse 45).

David told Goliath: “This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands” (verses 46-47). As warriors in that battle, there is the key to our success: Though we are a part of the battle, it's not really our battle! God is the one who fights and wins for us. And all He wants are

men and women who KNOW that God is the one who does the fighting. We have to search for the weapons, as David did—a simple sling and a few smooth stones—but *faith* is what enables us to prevail.

David didn't let the fear of missing his shot get in his way. Instead, he RAN toward Goliath! (verse 48). Are we this eager to resolve problems settle conflicts? Or do we sometimes put them off hoping they will go away? I remember my father telling me awhile back that humanly, we tend to *avoid* the battle whenever possible. "But the nature of this Work," he said, "dictates that we be people who will CONFRONT." He then went on to say that in the past we have probably taken too long to make some of our toughest decisions simply because we are NOT CLOSE ENOUGH TO GOD!

How close we are to God directly affects the way we *approach* and *handle* confrontation (see Joshua 1:8-9). Mr. Armstrong wrote, "If you will let God have His way in your life, then you will have begun to learn HOW to let Him fight your battles, solve your problems, and deliver you from so many troubles you are suffering" (*Good News*, March 1985)

The first point to consider in learning how to exhort others in love is to BE COURAGEOUS!

2) BE CRYSTAL CLEAR

An article appeared in the November-December 2002 *Harvard Business Review* about Bill Parcells, an NFL football coach who has been praised for turning losing teams into winners THREE DIFFERENT TIMES—even getting to the Super Bowl for one team and *winning two* Super Bowls for another. He said, "The toughest challenge I've faced as a coach is taking a team that's performing poorly and turning it around. ...

"Those turnarounds taught me a fundamental lesson about leadership: You have to be honest with people.... You have to tell them the truth about their performance, you have to tell it to them face-to-face, and you have to tell it to them over and over again. Sometimes the truth will be painful, and sometimes saying it will lead to an uncomfortable confrontation. So be it. *The only way to change people is to tell them in the clearest possible terms what they're doing wrong.* ...

"To lead, you've got to be a leader. That may sound obvious, but it took me an entire year to learn—and it wasn't a pleasant year. When I started as coach of the Giants, I lacked confidence. I was surrounded by star players with big names and big egos, and I was a little tentative in dealing with them. I didn't confront them about how they needed to change to succeed. As a result, I didn't get their respect and I wasn't able to

change their attitudes. So they just kept on with their habit of losing" (emphasis mine throughout).

Now obviously, there is a spiritual dimension missing from this example. Our confidence comes from God. And in communicating in the clearest terms were people have gone off track, we don't want to forget about tact. Even still, like Parcells, we are leading teams! And that means we must communicate.

He continued, "After I talked to them as a group and established my credibility as a leader, I began talking with them personally. With the Giants, and with the other teams I've coached, I've found that holding frank, *one-on-one conversations* with every member of the organization is essential to success. It allows me to ask each player for his support in helping the team achieve its goals, and it allows me to explain exactly what I expect from him. ... Leaders can do everything right with their teams and still fail if they don't deliver their message to each member as an individual. ...

"If you want to get the most out of people, you have to apply pressure—that's the only thing that any of us really responds to. As a coach, I've always tried to turn up the heat under my people, to constantly push them to perform at a high level.

"Creating pressure in an organization requires confrontation, and it can get very intense, very emotional. I've seen coaches avoid confrontations with their players because they don't like conflict, and I assume the same thing is true among the leaders of business teams. But I've actually come to relish confrontation, not because it makes me feel powerful but because it provides an opportunity to get things straight with people. It's not until you look people right in the eye that you get to the sources of their behavior and motivation. Without confrontation, you're not going to change the way they think and act" (ibid.).

The second point to consider in learning how to exhort others in love is to BE CRYSTAL CLEAR!

3) BE HUMBLE

"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). Wolves just love to break into a herd of sheep. But here, the story is reversed. As *Lange's Commentary* says, "A few sheep invade a territory of wolves." To be LEFT ALONE, unprotected from a pack of wolves would have been bad enough. But here God actually SENDS a few sheep right in among the wolf pack!

What's more, God says to be as wise as *serpents* and as harmless as *doves*. What an odd match! Elsewhere in

the Bible, God a serpent represents the devil (Genesis 3 and 2 Corinthians 11). It makes sense that if our army is fighting the devil and his army, we've got to be every bit as cunning as the devil if we are going to defeat him. The serpent, again and again, can slip away from the hand of its enemy. Yet at the same time, we have to be as simple and harmless as a dove. God says to find a perfect balance between these two because of the very unique times in which we live!

God expects us, even as sheep, to go in among the wolves—to actually *invade* their territory—to seek out those who will receive the Kingdom. Now that would seem to put us in a completely defenseless position! But it doesn't, not if we are as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves.

The third point to consider in learning how to exhort others in love is to BE HUMBLE!

4) KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Paul Harvey told this story many years ago. It's about an elementary school teacher. Her name was Mrs. Thompson. Standing in front of her fifth grade class on the very first day of school, she told the children a lie—she said that she loved them all the same.

One student in the front row, however, was impossible to love. His name was Teddy and he was a social outcast—unpleasant and unkempt. Mrs. Thompson rather enjoyed correcting him—giving him “F’s” at the tops of his assignments, in bold, red letters.

One day, Mrs. Thompson happened to stumble onto Teddy's file. Teddy's first grade teacher wrote, “Teddy is a bright child with a ready laugh. He does his work neatly and has good manners. He is a joy to be around.”

His second grade teacher wrote, “Teddy is an excellent student, well liked by his classmates, but he is troubled because his mother has a terminal illness and life at home must be a struggle.”

His third grade teacher wrote, “His mother's death has been hard on him. He tries to do his best but his father doesn't show much interest and his home life will soon affect him if some steps aren't taken.”

Teddy's fourth grade teacher wrote, “Teddy is withdrawn and doesn't show much interest in school. He doesn't have many friends and sometimes sleeps in class.”

By now, Mrs. Thompson realized the problem and was ashamed of herself. She decided to change her whole approach to teaching. Mrs. Thompson paid particular attention to Teddy. As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. THE MORE SHE ENCOURAGED HIM, THE FASTER HE RESPONDED. By the end of

the year, Teddy had become one of the smartest children in the class and, despite her lie that she would love all the children the same, Teddy became one of her “teacher's pets.”

A year later, she found a note under her door, from Teddy, telling her that she was still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life.

Six years went by before she got another note from Teddy. He then wrote that he had finished high school, third in his class, and she was still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life.

Four years after that, she got another letter, saying that while things had been rough at times, he'd stayed in school, had stuck with it, and would soon graduate from college with the highest of honors. He assured Mrs. Thompson that she was still the best and favorite teacher he ever had in his whole life.

The obvious lesson in this story is that we ought not to judge someone according to APPEARANCE. God judges the brethren by what they do, not how they look (see Luke 19:12-15). He's able to do this because God is perfect LOVE.

God and Christ are able to praise and congratulate us for the *littlest things* because they both focus on the positive and they forgive. How else could God praise and honor Israel in every land after they have brought such shame upon God? How else could He call David a man after His own heart? How else could He reward the repentant Laodiceans with such an exalted calling in the World Tomorrow? Look, ANYONE who is enduring the struggle through life is extending some kind of effort that is worthy of praise to be sure!

All of us in the ministry struggle with weaknesses and sin. When we truly realize that, we can have greater compassion for the weaker ones in the Church (Hebrews 5:1-3).

The fourth point to consider in learning how to exhort others in love is to KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE!

5) FOLLOW UP

Paul set a good example of how a minister ought to follow up with someone or with a congregation that has been corrected. The Corinthian brethren were severely corrected in 1 Corinthians. Afterward, Paul scheduled a visit to see them, but changed his mind. Why? “Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that *to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth*” (2 Corinthians 1:23). He had corrected the brethren severely in his previous letter. His wise evaluation was that the timing of his visit was not right. This is an important principle of correction. He wanted to wait and give them more time.

Repentance takes time. It doesn't come easily or quickly.

The next verse reads, "Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are *helpers of your joy*: for by faith ye stand." (Moffatt's translation reads, "Not that we lord it over your faith—no, we cooperate for your joy: you have a standing of your own in the faith.") "Helpers" means to be a "companion in work."

My father wrote in *The Royal Book of Revelation* that ministers "shouldn't domineer over people, depressing them or discouraging them. They are here to serve. It's not the other way around. They help you really build your joy. But there *is* government, and we have to hold on to the Head."

Still, faith is an individual matter (Philippians 2:12). We stand and fall on our own two feet. Ministers are helpers, but they are not piggy-backers!

Then in 2 Corinthians 2:1 (there really should be no chapter break), Paul wrote, "But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness." Ministers do not enjoy giving correction. It's one of the most difficult aspects of the job. Paul wanted to come to them after they had repented; to be with them in joy. It was a matter of sparing himself as well as them.

The next verse states, "For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?" Paul was saying here, *If I came to you now, I would correct you harshly.* He had been through many trials and needed encouragement, not something to get him down. He needed a positive atmosphere. Paul's purpose for living was to serve God's Church. He had no family. The Church had a unique place in his life. Paul was positive. He knew that he and the Church were in it together. God's ministers do feel for the flock. It's not just a dutiful job.

Verse 3: "So the very reason I wrote was that I might not come only to be pained by those who ought to give me joy; I relied on you all, I felt sure that my joy would be a joy for every one of you" (Moffatt). In other words, the letter of 2 Corinthians was in place of a sorrowful visit. This verse is saying that the members also have a responsibility to bring joy to their minister, not just vice versa.

Continuing in verse 4, "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but *that ye might know the love which I have* more abundantly unto you." It is difficult to understand and grasp what is the greatest love of all. It is when a friend risks losing your friendship because he loves you enough to tell you something about yourself that you need to know. His willingness to come and tell

you is the greatest proof of love. There is always emotional distress and trouble involved with such action.

"If a certain individual has been causing pain, he has been causing pain not so much to me as to all of you—at any rate (for I am not going to overstate the case) to a section of you" (verse 5, Moffatt). Paul is singling out one man in particular—the fellow who was involved with incest (1 Corinthians 5). Paul could speak somewhat openly about this because he had to mark the man openly in his last letter. This fellow really did hurt Paul because he knew him well and loved him dearly. Yet, Paul was not the only one hurt—it hurt the whole congregation, which was not showing the individual love by allowing the sin to remain.

The majority did finally come around and abide by Paul's instruction to shun this man. That, Paul says, is punishment enough (verse 6). The man had undoubtedly repented by this point.

"So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow" (verse 7). What a flip-flop! First they wanted to allow the sin to go on in their midst. Now that he had been disfellowshipped for a time and then invited back to services, some didn't want to forgive him!

The Corinthians had been too broad, loose and tolerant. Then they went to the other extreme and became intolerant. Human nature goes from one extreme to another.

"Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him" (2 Corinthians 2:8). Here was their opportunity to really put God's law of love into action—to practice God's way.

"For my aim in writing was simply to test you, to see if you were absolutely obedient" (verse 9, Moffatt). The main reason he wrote to them instead of visiting personally was to test them—to see if they would be "obedient in all things." What a test! Yes, God actually expects obedience in all things—even our thoughts (2 Corinthians 10:5).

We must become more obedient—responding to God's call at a moment's notice. Be quick to obey, to step forward and help, eager to follow directions, to love one another and respect the different offices and responsibilities we each have. This Church has an awesome responsibility—it needs each one of us! The brethren need to understand what's expected.

The fifth point to consider in learning how to exhort others in love is FOLLOW UP!