

The Little Pink Spoons

by Mark Rudolph

- A CEO successfully negotiates a corporate merger, avoiding hundreds of layoffs in the process.
- An artist completes a mosaic for public display at a bank, showcasing neighborhood heroes.
- A contractor creates a work-release program in cooperation with a local prison, growing the business and seeing countless former inmates turn their lives around.
- A high-school principal graduates 20 percent more students than the previous year, and the school's average scores go up by a similar percentage.

What is the common thread uniting these four events? These are Christians acting like little pink spoons.

"Little pink spoons" is what Dr. Amy Sherman's book entitled "Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship For the Common Good" tells us Christians should be. The image comes from the little pink spoons used in ice cream shops to allow customers to taste a new variety of ice cream before purchasing it. The spoon gives a foretaste of what the ice cream cone will be like.

Early in the book, Sherman refers to Proverbs 11.10-11: "When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices ... By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted." Her point is that Christians are supposed to be a foretaste of His kingdom to come.

The body of Christ has long struggled with the artificial divide between sacred and secular. Besides being theologically problematic (since it is a form of Gnosticism), this approach is also destructive in our own lives. We feel the tension between "what is" and "what ought to be", but without any idea how to bridge the gap between the two.

We have come to expect that "institutional religion" ought to solve the problem, while individual Christians wait for the kingdom to come. Some have gone so far as to assert that we must so strongly fix our

vision on the kingdom to come, that we ought to have nothing to do with the present. It is not just the Amish who've taken this approach! Most of modern evangelicalism simply cannot see how our careers, our families, even our hobbies and pleasures all can be used for the sake of being a foretaste of the kingdom to come.

The result is that biblical ethics are for discussion, not for living. Biblical goals for our lives are fine in principle, but in practice have little bearing on reality. After all, don't we know that some people "are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good"? And isn't it true that "God helps those who help themselves"? We need to "keep our head out of the clouds" and be sure "that our feet are firmly planted on the ground".

The result is that Christianity has become the ancient faith with absolutely no relevance or applicability to modern life. Where is God when we need him? We have relegated him to a very small drawer in a desk in a back room in a barn somewhere at the back of the property that represents our lives. The faith is stripped of power. The church has become an emperor walking around in the nude. And committed Christians feel that they are at a loss to make any difference.

St. John's is working hard to take a different approach.

We truly believe that what God says is not only theologically accurate, but the most practical information and advice one can imagine. We want to know and practice "the wisdom from above" (James 3.17). The wisdom from above is comprised of "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

We want to have our feet firmly grounded in our ancient faith, because there is absolutely nothing else as relevant, as helpful, or as practical for modern life. It is a wisdom that "is wiser than men" (1 Corinthians 1.25). It "is the power of God for salvation" (Romans 1.16), not only for our souls, but also for groaning creation (Romans 8.22).

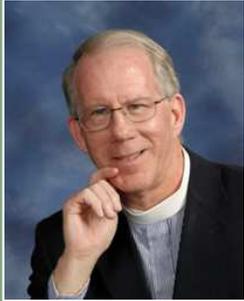


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*Baker Library Book
Brief
By Ken Cook*

“I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). These words from the incarnate Creator and Master of the universe serve as a perpetual encouragement to the vast international throng of his disciples. Yet, it is obvious that not everyone has bent the knee and confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord. The faith of Christ crucified and raised from the dead is challenged and attacked from all angles around the world. So, also, are those who hold this faith. It has always been this way. Thus, the Church is forced to affirm the relevance of the Apostle Peter’s command that we must “always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). This ministry of offering a “defense” for the Christian faith (Greek = apologia) is the concern of the newest volume being added to your congregational library.

Although many Christian authors from antiquity and throughout the intervening years to the present have chosen to approach the defense of the faith along similar lines, Art Lindsley offers a particularly pointed form of Christian living as the best recommendation for Christian belief. See his Love, the Ultimate Apologetic: The Heart of Christian Witness. Lindsley is a senior fellow at the C.S. Lewis Institute in Springfield, Virginia. He is a conference and retreat speaker and has taught at several seminaries. He has published several other books, including C.S. Lewis’s Case for Christ.

Lindsley’s first chapter poignantly recalls a

popular Christian chorus from the early 1970s – “How Will They Know? They Will Know Us by Our Love”. The themes and dynamics that he considers there are hard to ignore and do speak to the truthfulness of the Gospel, via Gospel living. I, for one (among many), found the compassionate love of those who first bore witness to me about Christ to be initially as compelling as the message they offered. And this is why both Jesus Focus and St. John the Evangelist are involved in “mercy ministries” like the Food Pantry, and why we are choosing to serve those outside our community via Faith in Action initiatives. This is also why, among other things, Alpha routinely offers a meal to those who attend their Gospel presentations, and why we are organizing an ongoing series of social occasions of fellowship and friendship.

But because the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ is unique (John 3:16; 1 John 4:7-21), and because both secularists and adherents of other world religions are capable of love and are motivated to love others, Lindsley’s analysis and application of Christian love reaches beyond his initial 30 pages. Successive chapters also consider “Love and Commitment- Love Is Never Sure Apart from Commitment”, “Love and Conscience- Love Is Never Sane Apart from Conscience”, “Love and Character- Love Is Never Safe Apart from Character”, “Love and Community- Love Is Never Stimulated Apart from Community” and “Love and Courage- Love Is Never Seized Apart from Courage”. It seems to me that each of these chapters clearly speaks to developments within, and aimed beyond, our congregation these days. As we continue to develop and multiply our outreach to those who may wonder why they should investigate and trust the good news of Christ, we are called to do so by the love of God (Romans 5:5). Lindsley can help us flesh this out.

June

Birthdays

3rd Phil Tolbert
5th Bill Kenney
16th Mary Iacampo
16th Ches Schmitt

Anniversaries

16th Ernie & Elaine Rogers
22nd George & Molly Pulimala
39 Years

May

Belated

Happy Anniversary

George & Trudy Green
Celebrated 50 Years of
Marriage on May 19, 2012

Baker Library Book Brief By Melissa Gentles

When Helping Hurts, by Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert
– Book Review

When Helping Hurts provides a new paradigm for partnership by asking Christians to declare and demonstrate among people who are poor that Jesus Christ is making all things new. While this book exposes past and current development efforts that churches have engaged in which unintentionally undermine the people they're trying to help, its central point is to provide proven strategies that challenge Christians to help the poor empower themselves. Focusing on both North American and Majority World contexts, When Helping Hurts catalyzes the idea that sustainable change for people living in poverty comes not from the outside-in, but from the inside-out.

If you're like me, you enjoy books that are engaging as well as informative—and better yet, challenging! When Helping Hurts so encompassed all of the above that it spurred me onto action—firstly, reforms to my current thinking and practices, and then onto dreams of potential new ways to effectively help without hurting in my

own context(s). This very practical read spoke not only to my heart and mind simultaneously, but also to the different parts thereof—the international missions part, the national missions part, and the local, day-to-day, “marketplace missions” part. After tearing through this book in a few sittings, I came away with practical philosophies and strategies, on both a large and small-scale, for doing missions of all types—not to mention the incredible, encouraging, edifying, relatable stories from seasoned (and not-so-seasoned) missionaries sprinkled throughout the book to illustrate the points, which I couldn't wait to share with as many people as possible. In fact, the initial spark and actual idea for St. John's Faith in Action Initiative was drawn from this and another supplementary reading suggestion from these authors. There are also reflection questions and exercises for group or individual study after each chapter. No matter what type of missionary you are—and we all are—you will surely be moved by a reading (I'm on my second) of When Helping Hurts.

Melissa



WWW.PHILLYBURBS/BLOGS.COM
THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 2012

Nice To Meet You. Take My Kidney.

Lindsey Steege (right) donated her kidney to Rachel Buckley.



I don't usually write about important topics during their designated “awareness” months, because it always seems so gimmicky. But I'm making an exception for Organ Donation Awareness month, mostly because this story is too sweet not to share. It comes via the PR folks at Albert Einstein Medical Center (full disclosure: former Daily News scribe Jill Porter consults for the marketing department there). And if it doesn't convince you that some people are angels on earth, I'm not sure what will. This is from the press release:

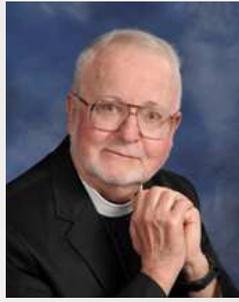
“Rachel Buckley and her family asked members of their church to pray for her to get a new kidney. Rachel, now 38, had been ill since she was a teenager and had developed renal failure. Congregants in the intensely devout evangelical Christian church in suburban Philadelphia not only prayed for Rachel: one of them donated her kidney.

“Lindsey Steege, now 23, was following the example of her father, who had donated his kidney to his sister a few years earlier. Lindsey and Rachel were too divergent in age to be social friends but the families had befriended each other through St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church in Huntingdon Valley, PA. The two families recently got together to celebrate the first anniversary of the transplant, which took place at Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia on Feb. 25, 2011. “We are forever intertwined as families,” said Lindsey's father, Chuck Steege. “And most definitely Rachel and Lindsey are intertwined. I don't think words can even define the connection.”

“Rachel developed an auto-immune disease when she was 13, and although it eventually went into remission, her kidneys were severely damaged. By 2010, she had to stop singing with the choir and stop planning evenings out with friends because she was always exhausted. She got on the transplant waiting list and was awaiting a date to have a device surgically implanted so she could start dialysis. Meanwhile, the church held prayer chains – and, unbeknownst to her, Lindsey had started testing to see if she was a match.

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*Adapted From The Homilies of
the Church of England (Sermons
from the 1500's)*
By Bill Kenney



Christ became pilgrim on earth
to make us citizens in heaven,
became the Son of man
to make us the sons of God,
became obedient to the Law
to deliver us from the curse of the Law,
became poor
to make us rich,
became vile
to make us precious,
and became subject to death
to make us live for ever.

Therefore, let us love Him, fear Him obey Him and
serve Him.

Let us confess Him with our tongues,
believe in Him with our hearts,
and glorify Him with our good works.

Let us receive Christ,
not for a time, but for ever;

Let us believe His Word,
not for a time, but for ever;

Let us become His servants,
not for a time, but for ever.

Consider that He has redeemed and saved us,
not for a time, but for ever;

And He will receive us into Heaven,
there to reign with Him,
not for a time, but for ever.

To Him, therefore, with the Father and the Holy
Spirit,
be all honor, praise and glory
for ever and ever.

Bill



*Painted Bunting
Courtesy of
William Keene*

Christ the Physician *By Linda Barrett*

And His health care plan
Cures every condition
Ever known to Man
Come to Him with suffering
To receive healing
From His nail-pierced hand
He binds up the broken hearted
And allows the deaf to hear

He makes the blind to see
His treatments erase all fear
And always bring full recovery
Christ the Physician
And His health care plan
Can cure any condition
Ever known to Man
Come to Him with your suffering

Far from any part in the land
And receive a touch of healing
From His nail-pierced hand
Within his mercy and power
There's no reason to dread
His treatments last for hours
He can even raise the dead!
Christ the Physician

And His health care plan
Can heal any condition
Ever known to Man
His shed blood cures everything
Down to your slightest sin
Under His miraculous healing
Even death cannot win!

@2006 Linda Barrett

Upcoming Events

June 3rd: Parish Picnic

June 10th: Rev. Shane
Copeland, Guest Preacher

Thank you....

Thanks, Thanks ----

Last few months, Feb, March and April, I was at Eisenstein Hospital, Moss Rehab at Elkins park and Willowcrest long care facility as a surgical patient. Lot of believers from St John's send me cards, flowers fruit baskets and visited me at that time. Also your valuable prayers to me and my family.

Let me take this time to say a big thanks to each and every one at St. John's. Special thanks to Rev. Mark Rudolf, Rev. Kenneth Cook and William Kenney Jr.

I am doing much, much better ^{now} by His grace. Please continue to pray for me and my family.

5-14-2012

George Pulimala.
~~George Pulimala.~~
Molly Pulimala

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"Lindsey's decision to donate was almost casual. 'One Sunday after church, I was talking to Rachel's mom about Rachel's situation and I said, 'Why don't you get me the information?' (about donating). Lindsey was familiar with the process because of her father, and was motivated by her faith. 'I believe you do unto others as you would have them do unto you,' she said. She was tested and determined to be a match.

"It wasn't long after the surgery that Rachel regained her strength. 'It's the most clichéd thing to say but I got my life back,'" she said. Her feelings towards Lindsey are beyond description. 'Every time I see her, I want to grab her and thank her.' For her part, Lindsey is embarrassed at the attention she's received at the church and deflects Rachel's gratitude.

"There was an unexpected and touching moment in the hospital the day of the transplant. Although transplant teams try to keep donors and recipients apart to spare each of them distress if a complication arises, the only bay available to Rachel in the recovery room after surgery was right next to Lindsey. 'I remember looking over at Rachel; she looked at me and said thank you,' Lindsey said. With tears in her eyes, Lindsey said, 'You're welcome.'

(continued from Page 1)

We believe that having our feet firmly grounded in that faith is what gives us wings to fly toward heaven. "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint" (Isa 40:28-31).

"Little pink spoons." It may sound dumb or trite. However, aren't we praying that God will make us little pink spoons - a foretaste of the eternal kingdom - every time we pray "your kingdom come, your will be done"?

