



# THE LUTHERAN WITNESS™

**THE  
PARABLES**

**HOLY BIBLE**

**JESUS'  
PUZZLES**

**VOL. 125**

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**10**

**BY DESIGN,  
NOT BY ACCIDENT**

**16**

**THE MESSAGE  
OF CONFIRMATION**

**20**

**RESTORING  
SEXUAL  
MORALITY**

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## FEATURES

### 6 STORIES JESUS TOLD

by **Peter J. Scaer**

Parables help us see God's big picture, not just life's little puzzles.



6

### 10 BY DESIGN, NOT BY ACCIDENT

by **Paul J. Zimmerman**

If single-cell organisms are unexplainable by evolutionists, doesn't our very existence prove that we are not here by accident?



10

### 14 OUR NEW HYMNAL

Coming soon to a pew near you!

### 16 THE MESSAGE OF CONFIRMATION

by **Tim Pauls**

What you do at home affects a child's confirmation experience.



20



14

### 20 RESTORING SEXUAL MORALITY

by **Gene Edward Veith**

The church cannot stem sexual immorality by using the Law alone, as an upcoming LCMS conference will address.



23

### 23 GOD'S SOWER IN INDIA

by **Victor Raj**

300 years ago in India, God used this ordinary man to begin His extraordinary work.

## TO THE READER

In June, we marked the coming of Pentecost with a cover story on the Holy Spirit. This month, we focus on another aspect of the season: Jesus preparing His Church for its mission in the world.

One means Jesus used to teach His disciples about the nature of the Kingdom of God was through prosaic little stories called parables. These allegories, though simple-sounding and using such commonplace images as

a mustard seed, packed a wallop in terms of the profound truths they conveyed—so much so that Jesus' disciples often were baffled by them.

The parables, some more than others, still can puzzle us today. That's why we are fortunate to have Prof. Peter Scaer of the Synod's Fort Wayne seminary lend his insights and expertise to our cover story, "Stories Jesus Told."

We hope you enjoy Dr. Scaer's article and the other items in this issue.

*David L. Strand, Executive Director  
Board for Communication Services*

## DEPARTMENTS

3 LIFELINE  
4 LETTERS  
25 NOTICES

26 FAMILY COUNSELOR  
27 SHEDDING SOME LIGHT  
29 FROM THE PRESIDENT

## COMING IN SEPTEMBER...

- How the New Testament came together
- Ordinary means, extraordinary gifts
- The Lutheran view of mercy

# 'Hasta Siempre'

The bonds of faith and love break through barriers of language and distance.

meet again.”

After Charito left, I bought a Spanish-English dictionary and two Spanish textbooks. I had an incentive to learn now. I wanted to be able to communicate with Charito.

Several years and many e-mail messages later, I received an invitation from Charito and her husband to visit them at their home in Cordoba, Argentina. With that as a goal, I pored over my Spanish books. Charito worked on her English.

At first, I was afraid to go. Then, instead of focusing on what could go wrong, I focused on Jesus' promise to be beside me at all times.

Though I had spent only about two hours total with Charito at those coffee hours, my impressions of her had been correct. At her home, I saw that she had a heart full of Christian love that bubbled over and touched the lives of those around her. She and her extended family welcomed me into their lives and their hearts. Charito had made special preparations for my arrival, including repainting and papering my room. Even Bonita, her little white poodle, was groomed to perfection.

I spent two weeks with Charito. For most of that time there was no one around to be an interpreter. Much to my surprise, she and I didn't have as much difficulty conversing as I had feared. She was very patient with me and listened intently as I slowly expressed myself in Spanish. If I couldn't understand something that she was telling me, she would say, "Helen, pay attention!" Then she would try to explain it to me in her limited English. When all else failed, we would con-

sult her Spanish-English dictionary.

I saw no Lutheran churches in Cordoba, but one of the highlights of my trip was attending church with Charito at *la Iglesia Sagrado Corazón de Jesús*, The Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It's very big and has a dome similar to that of the Naval Academy Chapel here in Annapolis. Both the inside and outside of the church are adorned with ornate carvings of angels and saints. The main altar is carved out of white, shiny stone; the parament was a beautiful white lace.

Although the language and parts of the mass were different from our service at St. Paul, some things were the same. It was a holy place, and I could feel the presence of God. It was filled with people of all ages. The service was in rapid Spanish that was difficult for me to comprehend. But I knew when the lectors were reading the lessons and when the priest was reading from the book of Luke. I was impressed with the congregation. They could recite from memory the responses to the liturgy, the words of long prayers, and the Apostles' Creed.

With a heart filled with the joy of the knowledge of Christ's salvation, I knelt in prayer next to my friend. It was a beautiful moment. I was 5,000 miles from home, and once more, worshiping the Triune God with Charito. I gave thanks to God for His special blessing to me—the opportunity to spend time with someone who was once a stranger—my dear friend in Christ, Charito.

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Helen Hartman is a member of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Annapolis, Md.

Photo courtesy of author



The author, sitting, and her friend, Charito, attended a "tango show" in Argentina. They continue their close, Christian friendship via e-mail and phone calls.

by Helen Hartman

I met Charito one hot July Sunday morning at coffee hour following worship at St. Paul Lutheran, Annapolis, Md. She had come from Argentina to visit her cousin Dolly and Dolly's husband, Bob. It wasn't easy for me to talk to Charito; she didn't speak much English, and I could recall only one sentence from my high-school Spanish class. I recited that to her: "*Mi hermana Juana tiene un resfriado y tose mucho.*" It means: "My sister Jane has a cold and coughs a lot." We both laughed.

Dolly and Bob brought Charito to church for three Sundays. She had a warm smile and freckles on her nose from the hot July sun. Each week at coffee hour, Dolly acted as an interpreter so that Charito and I could "talk." We used lots of hand gestures. I could tell that Charito was a kind and caring Christian.

When it was time for her return to Argentina, we traded e-mail addresses. She said, "*Mi casa, su casa.*" I knew what that meant. "My house is your house." Then she said, "*Hasta siempre,*" "Until we

## The facts on Islam

Thank you for Dr. Alvin Schmidt's informative "Islam: Keeping the Facts Straight" (May '06).

I am Lebanese, live in south-eastern Michigan, and work with POBLO (People of the Book Lutheran Outreach). I have a master's degree in Islamic history and wrote my Ph.D. dissertation on the same subject. I also am a former Muslim activist.

In my opinion, many people in the West, including Christians with good intentions, take certain Koranic verses and sayings of Mohammed out of context in order to show that Islam is a "religion of peace." The fact is,

the need to modify the seminary curriculum of future pastors to make them better suited for ministry in the 21st century. A good follow-up article would pose the question, "What are the seminaries doing to prepare *women* for their role as pastors' wives?"

I ask this because I raised this same question when I served on the Synod's Board for Parish Services (now the Board for District and Congregational Services) in the late 1980s. A representative from one of the seminaries replied, "Well, we do offer a course on making paraments."

I hope the curriculum for pastors' wives is changing also.

*Marlys Kehm  
Santa Rosa, Calif.*

dispensational theology suggesting that Old Testament believers were saved in a different way from New Testament believers.

Did something miraculous, wonderful, powerful, and mysterious happen on Pentecost? Absolutely, but it was not the "birthday" of the Church.

*Rev. Terry Forke  
Columbia Falls, Mont.*

## Charting the image

Allow me to add a word to the May "Q&A," "In the Image of God."

When I teach on the topic of how God made man in His image, I make two broad headings on the board: "Before the Fall" and "After the Fall." Under each I make three subdivisions: "Fully," "Somewhat," and "Not at all." Then the class looks at the characteristics of God as listed in the Small Catechism.

"Holy," for example, gets checked as "Fully" for Adam and Eve before they fell into sin and "Not at all" after they fell.

"Almighty" gets checked as "Somewhat" for both before and after the Fall, since God gave, and still gives, man some power in this world.

"Eternal" also merits "Somewhat" checks for both before and after, because God did indeed create us to live forever, even though, unlike Him, we have a beginning.

I suppose I feel the catechism limits the image of God in man too much when its definition mentions only holiness and a knowledge of God.

*Dr. Wayne Renning  
Mt. Pleasant, Texas*

## An effusion of humor

Thanks so much for the funniness of Dr. Karl Barth's "Scripture and Inscriptions" (June '06). It certainly helped lighten the load of all the blather about "The DaVinci Code".



"Many people in the West take Koranic verses out of context to show that Islam is a 'religion of peace.'"

*Hicham Chehab  
Ann Arbor, Mich.*

as Dr. Schmidt points out, in view of the Islamic doctrine of abrogation (in which newer Koranic verses supersede older but still-extant ones), this cannot always be said to be necessarily so.

The author also is correct in his assertions about the inaccuracy of Muslim demographics in America, especially when we see Arab people (many of whom are not Muslim) routinely mixed in with actual Muslims. Most U.S. Muslim organizations use such ambiguous statistics to emphasize the political weight of their organizations in American society.

*Hicham Chehab  
Ann Arbor, Mich.*

## Making Shepherdesses

I read with delight the article "Making Shepherds" (May '06), one focus of which was addressing

## Hold the candles

Although I know this subject was not the central point of Dr. Siemon-Netto's "Happy Birthday, Sturdy Church!" (June '06), he nonetheless fostered a popular confusion concerning the doctrine of the church.

The Christian Church was not born on the day of Pentecost. We believe, teach, and confess that "the Christian Church, properly speaking, is nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints" (Augsburg VIII).

Are Old Testament believers members of the Church? Yes, they are! (Heb. 11). To use the language of the "birthday" of the Church in relation to Pentecost drives a wedge between the Old and New Testaments that confuses the people of God. Such language fosters a

Dear Dr. Eino Little! Quite a few students have matriculated into your Whatsamatta U.! It's a joy to see some LCMS whimsy!

*Char Kolzow  
Lake Oswego, Ore.*

## **Whither 'Searching Scripture'?**

I appreciate the fine Lutheran articles we have seen in recent issues. But I am curious about one thing: What happened to the monthly "Searching Scripture" Bible studies? I hope the *Witness* will return to its former practice of including a Bible study in each issue.

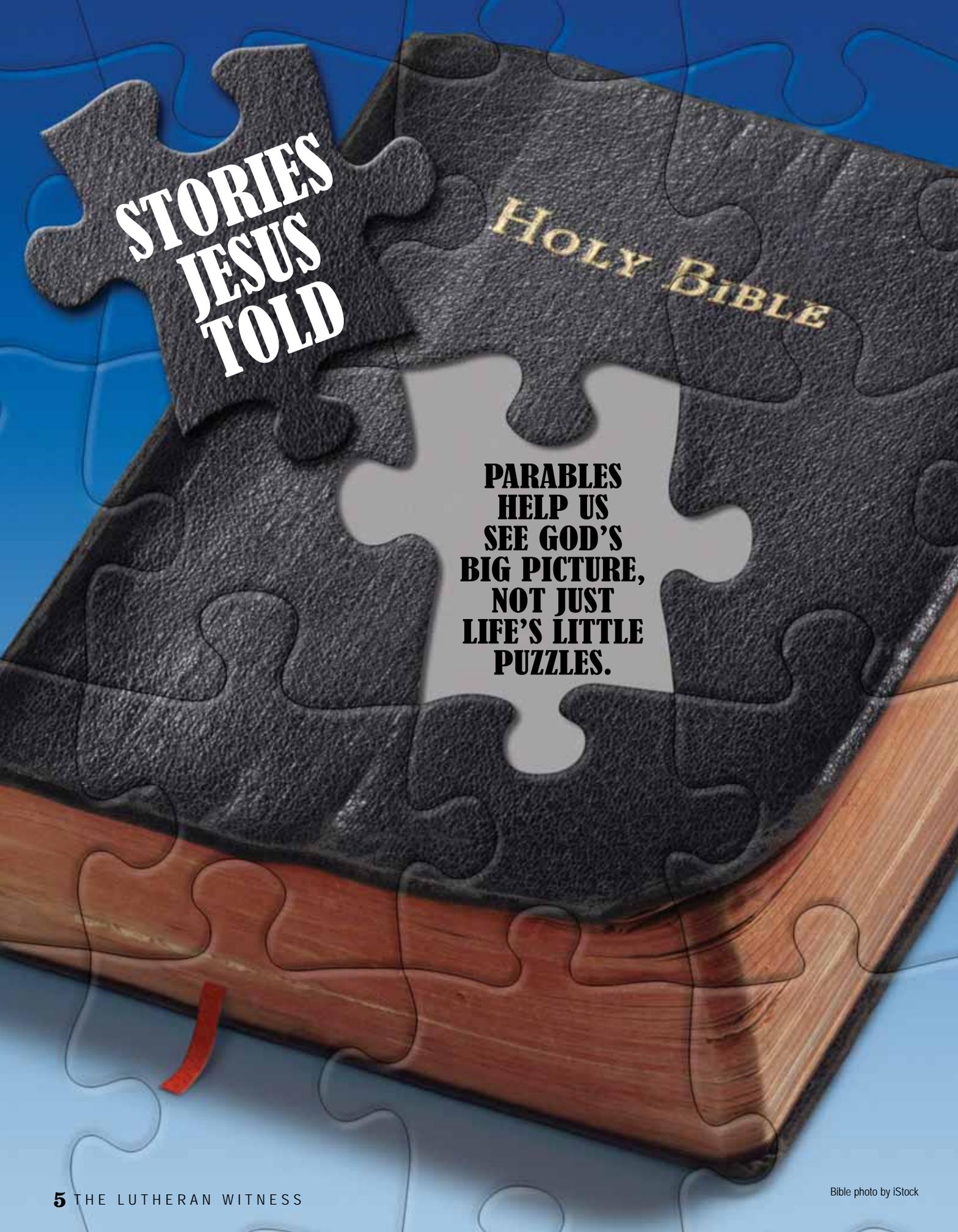
*Rev. George Clausen  
Rock Rapids, Iowa*

*The people have spoken!*

*When we redesigned the magazine this past April, one decision was to discontinue the monthly department known as "Searching Scripture." Our thinking was that people could find good Bible studies in other places, both print and online. In retrospect, however, judging from the chorus of disappointment from readers (Rev. Clausen's note is but one of many we have received), this move appears to have been less than stellar.*

*As a result, the "Searching Scripture" Bible study will reclaim its rightful place in the pages of The Lutheran Witness starting in September. Our sincere thanks to all readers who weighed in to effect the restoration. — Ed.*

***We welcome letters that comment on articles in The Lutheran Witness. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Send letters to "Letters," c/o The Lutheran Witness, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; or send them via e-mail to Lutheran.Witness@LCMS.org. Please include your name, postal address, and telephone number.***



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**HOLY BIBLE**

**PARABLES  
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PUZZLES.**

by Peter J. Scaer

People love puzzles. Kids' meals come with riddles and mazes. Newspapers offer daily crosswords and word jumbles. The latest craze is a game called *Sudoku*, which challenges us to figure out an intricate combination of numbers on a grid. Good puzzles aren't for the faint of heart, the lazy, or the indifferent.

Frankly, puzzles can drive you crazy. But that's what makes solving them all the more rewarding.

Jesus often spoke in parables, which are, in their own way, puzzles. Matthew alone records 17 of them. The parables of the sower, the wedding feast, and the Good Samaritan draw us in and capture our imagination. Through them our Lord reveals the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. In fact, parables are often called "earthly stories with heavenly meanings."

Forget stories like *The DaVinci Code*. The stories that Jesus told are, in fact, the path to true knowledge.

The world, for all its knowledge, doesn't have a clue to what life is all about. For all of our advances in technology, the basic questions remain: "Why are we here?" "What's life about?"

Jesus' parables can be thought of as keys to open the door of life. Parables open our eyes to the mysteries and miracles that are happening even today, as God's Kingdom comes among us. Through parables, Jesus speaks about Himself, and He teaches us how to live and understand our lives as Christians.

Why did Jesus so often speak in parables? The disciples asked Him that very question. Our Lord answered, as you might guess, cryptically: "I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand" (Matt. 13:13).

Does our Lord really want to conceal the Kingdom of God in puzzles? Does He want the world to remain deaf and blind? Of course not. If our Lord wanted us to remain in ignorance, He would have remained silent. Instead, He speaks in parables or puzzles. And puzzles are meant to be solved.

Parables challenge the listener to step into the thought-world of Jesus and see things from His perspective.

Parables, again, are not for the faint of heart. They demand struggle. And that's what makes them so enjoyable. Through parables, our Lord heals and strengthens our ears and eyes, so that we might hear and see Him as He truly is.

Rather than speak about parables in general, let's study a few of them specifically.

Parables open our eyes to the mysteries and miracles that are happening even today, as God's Kingdom comes among us.

The parables in Matthew 13 are largely about growth in the Kingdom of God.

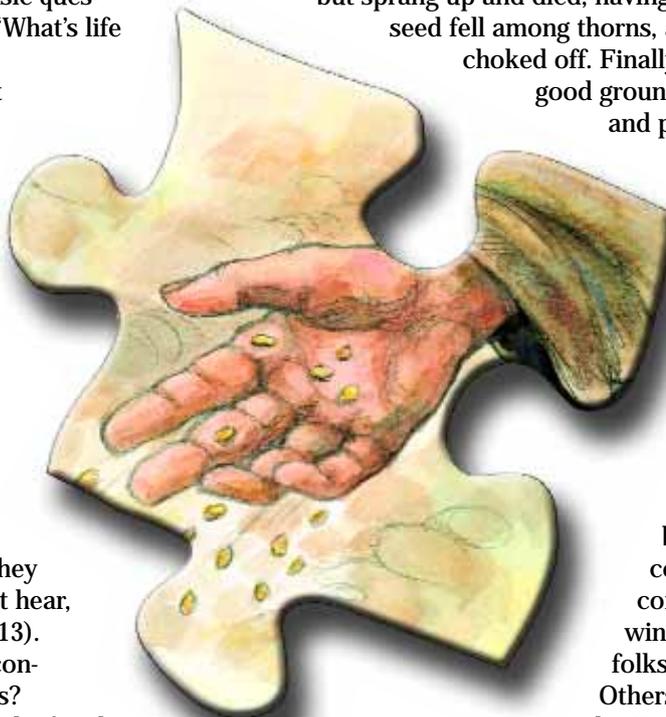
In His first recorded parable, Jesus talks about a farmer who plants seed. Some seed fell on the path and was devoured by birds. Other seed fell on rocky ground but sprang up and died, having no root. Still other seed fell among thorns, and the plants were choked off. Finally, some seed fell on good ground, and the plants grew and produced abundantly.

What does all this mean? In this instance, Jesus includes an answer key.

Planting the seed is proclaiming the Gospel. When telling others about Christ, we should not be surprised or discouraged by the outcome. No matter how winsome you are, some folks will not believe.

Others will get excited by the Gospel at first, but their faith won't take root, and it eventually will die. The faith of others will be choked by the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches.

In this one parable, preachers have found a lifetime of sermons. All of us are warned against the dangers of shallow faith and falling prey to the temptations of the



# The Origin of Parables

Throughout history, people have told stories in order to teach deeper truths. The Chinese retell the sayings of Confucius, while other people recall the tales of the Buddha. As children, many of us have learned important life values through hearing Aesop's Fables. It's one thing to tell a child to plan for the future. It is more effective to tell him the story of the "Three Little Pigs." No lecture on the consequences of lying is likely to match the poignancy and immediacy of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf."

A parable is, in its simplest form, a comparison, of "putting things side by side." Parables are extended similes and metaphors. They take the reader from what is known to something that is unknown or underappreciated.

The book of Proverbs, for example, may be thought of as a book of little parables that teach us to consider our life from God's perspective. The Old Testament includes examples of longer parables as well. When King David fell into sin, the prophet Nathan turned David's heart by telling him a parable about a rich man, a poor man, and his lamb (2 Sam. 12:1-6).

Even today, folks are moved to hear the Gospel through such stories as C.S. Lewis' "Chronicles of Narnia."

Still, the best of all stories are the parables of Christ, for He is, Himself, the Wisdom from on high.

— P.J.S.

world. Christians also find solace, knowing that the growth of the Kingdom is in the hands of God. Indeed, as a type of supplement to this parable, Jesus says in Mark that the Gospel seed grows "all by itself" (Mark 4:28). The preacher cannot make faith grow. He can only preach the Gospel, and let it, by the power of the Holy Spirit, do its work.

Not all parables are lengthy. Some address profound theological themes in very few words. Take for instance, the parable of the hidden treasure: "The Kingdom of the Heavens is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes out and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matt. 13:44).

What does this little, one-verse parable mean? Many people have taken this as an exhortation to discipleship. Like the man in the parable, we too should sell all we have in order to follow Jesus. Who can argue

with that? Jesus is our priceless treasure.

This parable, however, probably means something different. Following the pattern of the other parables in the group, the man is Jesus. Christ has paid for the sins of the whole world. This is the doctrine of redemption. And what is the treasure? The church.

True, the church is full of us sinners and may not seem to be a precious treasure. But our beauty is in the eyes of our Beholder. None of us has given up everything for Christ. But truly, He has given up everything for us.

The parable of the great banquet, told in Luke 14:15-23, works on a number of levels. It warns against letting earthly matters stand in the way of our salvation, and it also encourages us to invite others to the heavenly banquet. But this is not simply about the future. Inviting people to the banquet is inviting them to

church and the banquet of our Lord's Supper—a taste of the heavenly feast to come.

Think also of the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. It's primarily about the mercy of our Lord. Then, secondarily, it encourages us to love others as He loved us.

Some parables are jolting, intended to wake us up. The parable of the ten virgins warns us to be prepared for our Lord's coming, and the parable of the talents urges us to make the most of our time and talents while we live this earthly life (Matt. 25:14-30).

The parable of the wedding feast, in Matt. 22:1-14, is similar. But it emphasizes the fact that Christ is the Church's groom, and underlines the necessity of wearing our wedding clothes—the baptismal garment of Christ's righteousness.

A surprising number of parables deal with money. Who has not been moved by the parable of the rich fool? In this story, given to us in Luke 12:13-21, Jesus tells us about a wealthy but pathetic man who thinks of nothing but money, eating, drinking, and being merry. He has





The Church, full of us sinners, may not seem to be a precious treasure. But our beauty is in the eyes of our Beholder.

lost sight of his mortality, and the fact that his soul could be required of him at any time. The message is clear: Life is short; eternity is forever; live accordingly.

How then shall we live? As part of our orientation into the Kingdom of God, our Lord tells the parable of the shrewd manager in Luke 16:1-9. This one has proved to be a particularly tough nut to crack. The "hero" of the story is, shall we say, "ethically challenged." Having learned that he will soon lose his job, the shrewd manager springs into action. He reduces the debts owed to his master. In this way, he makes friends of those who owed money. The master commends the dishonest steward. Why?

Think about such movies as "Ocean's 11" or "The Sting." We end up rooting for the thieves, not because they are dishonest, but because they are clever. Does this mean Christians should be dishonest? Heaven forbid. But, if clever folks put so much thought into securing their earthly future, should not Christians also think and plan for

their eternal future? Should we not use worldly wealth for eternal good? Give to the poor, and support those who preach the Gospel, Jesus urges.

This memorable story brings to life two little sayings of Jesus: "Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven" (Matt. 6:20), and "Be as shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves" (Matt. 10:16).

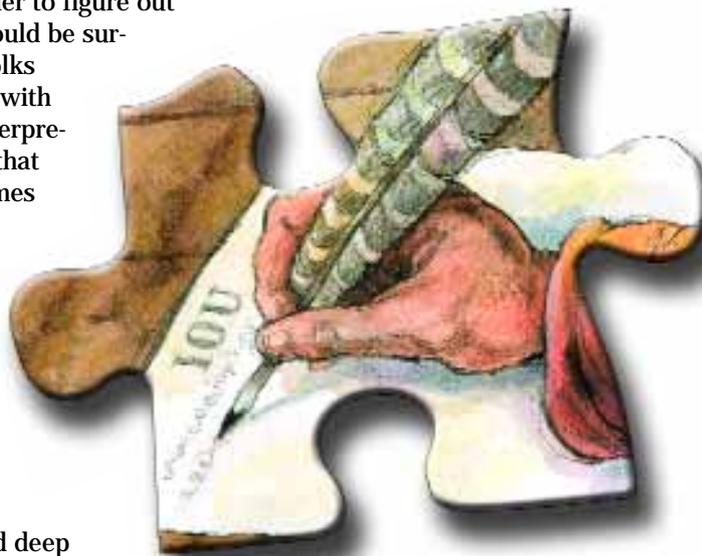
Like the *Sudoku* puzzles, some parables are easier to figure out than others. I would be surprised if some folks did *not* disagree with me about the interpretation of this or that parable. Sometimes we wish that all the parables came with an answer key at the back of the Bible. Yet, there is good that comes out of the struggle. Parables demand deep and meaningful thought;

they encourage us to search Scripture. They invite all of us to discuss things that are of first and lasting importance.

Indeed, Jesus' parables tell us something profound about our proclamation of the Gospel. The church is always about the business of reaching out (mission) and teaching (doctrine). Parables are wonderfully missional and profoundly catechetical.

Through parables, our Lord reached out to the world, and He also drew the world into Himself and into the church. He did not trivialize the mysteries of the Kingdom,

but He invited people to share in the deep and wonderful knowledge of salvation. Children love to hear the parables, and adults will never fully plumb the depths of their meaning.



Preachers love to tell stories. In an age of increasing biblical illiteracy, we would all do well to spend more time hearing and studying the stories told by Jesus Himself. In them lies the truth and mystery of the Kingdom of God. "He who has ears, let him hear" (Matt. 13:9).

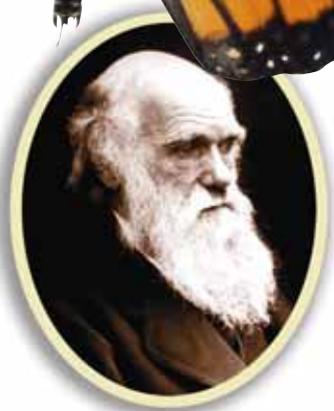
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Dr. Peter J. Scaer is assistant professor, Exegetical Theology and dean of Distance Learning at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. His e-mail is: pjscaer@yahoo.com

# BY DESIGN, NOT BY ACCIDENT

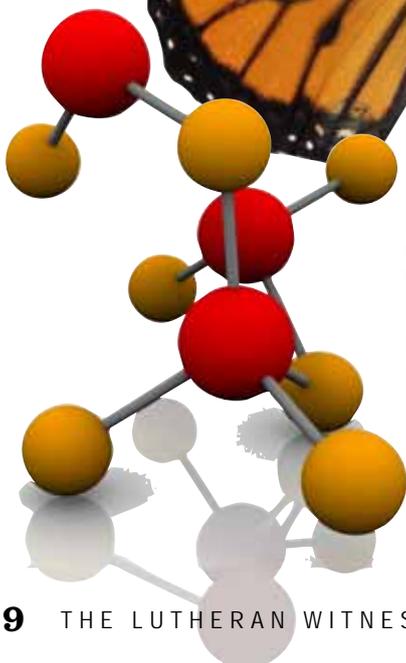
by Paul J. Zimmerman

If single-cell organisms are unexplainable by evolutionists, doesn't our very existence prove that we are not here by accident?

Newspapers, radio and TV talk shows, books, magazines, and even conferences of scientists and philosophers of science have been giving a great deal of attention to Intelligent Design. The term has arisen as a result of research in molecular biology and biochemistry, showing that the living cells that make up living creatures, both plants and animals, are far more complex than previously thought. Single cells are highly structured and amazingly complex. They are run by living machines made up of molecules. These machines enable the cell to move, transport nutrients, and even defend itself.



DARWIN





We have learned also about the double helical structure of DNA, the genetic code, and the complicated, irregular structure of proteins.

These amazing discoveries have led many scientists to conclude that these structures are entirely too complex to be explained by the Neo-Darwinian theory of evolution, which depends upon chance mutations and natural selection to account for the existence of all forms of life.

Michael Behe, author of *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*, writes: "The main difficulty for Darwinian mechanisms is that many systems in the cell are what I call 'irreducibly complex.' I define the complex system as a system of well-matched interacting parts that contribute to the basic function and where the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease functioning."

One of the most complex systems is DNA, the nucleic acid that controls reproduction and heredity. It directs protein synthesis in the cell. DNA has a helical structure and contains millions of specifically arranged chemicals called nucleotides or bases that run along the two strands of the helix. The arrangement of the nucleotides serves like letters that form a word. The arrangement spells out the information needed. DNA functions like a computer program, as Microsoft's Bill Gates once noted. But, he added, "It is far more advanced than any software we've ever created."

Human DNA amounts to around three billion nucleotides. Intelligent Design advocates point out that no one has ever been able to explain how such a complex structure might ever have been produced in a Darwinian, step-by-step fashion. It's not logical to attribute its origin to chance.

One of the complex biologic systems that Behe uses to illustrate Intelligent Design is the bacterial flagellum. Behe describes the flagellum as comparable to an outboard motor. It serves the bacteria in the way of a propeller, allowing the bacteria to swim. This "propeller" is attached to a drive shaft that is attached to an organic motor that uses acid or sodium ions to power its rotation. Reportedly, this tiny engine can rotate at speeds up to 17,000 revolutions per minute.

Studies have shown that 30 to 40 proteins are required to produce a functioning flagellum in the cell. Each protein is necessary for the construction and operation of the flagellum. If any are missing, the little machine will not be built.

Behe and others maintain that these amazing biological structures are far too complex to have evolved as Darwin and his followers theorize. They show evidence of having been designed. They point to a designer. It's important to note that the concept of Intelligent Design is based on the research of many scientists; it is independent of religion. Moreover, the concept is not based on a few scarce examples. Writes Behe: "Most

proteins are found as components of complicated molecular machines. Thus design might extend to a large fraction of the features of the cell.”

## Reaction in our courts

The rise of Intelligent Design has led some public school boards to consider mandating that the concept be included in biology classes when treating the subject of evolution, believing that students should be made aware of the latest developments in molecular biology and biochemistry.

However, the suggestion that Intelligent Design even be mentioned has met with fierce opposition. In the Dover, Penn., school district debate, a lawsuit charged that the Intelligent Design theory is based on creationism and thus is religious in content. After a long trial ending last December, the circuit judge agreed with the plaintiffs and ruled that teaching Intelligent Design in the public schools violates the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which forbids the establishment of a religion.

Michael Behe, one of the witnesses for the defense, accused the court of accepting “tendentious and shopworn excuses for Darwinism with great charity and impatiently dismissing arguments for design.”

Biological fact, he observed, is not changed by litigation.

We can hope the courts will realize that Darwinian evolution also is connected with a religious philosophy. Darwinism is based on a theory of naturalism or materialism. It assumes that everything in nature can be explained without God or His laws. It is a religion of atheism. Richard Dawkins, well-known Oxford biologist, has said, “Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist.”

It's obvious that both evolution and Intelligent Design have, by implication, a philosophy—a religious point of view behind them. One is atheistic; the other speaks of a designer. But Intelligent Design does not attempt to go beyond the point of scientific evidence of the designer's work. It's grossly unfair for courts to rule that Intelligent Design violates the First Amendment while granting a monopoly to Darwinism, whose philosophic background is clearly atheistic.

What about theistic evolutionists? How do they react to Intelligent Design? The answer appears to be that most theistic evolutionists reject the concept of Intelligent Design. Theistic evolutionists typically accept

Darwinism and try to “baptize” it by saying that evolution is God's way of creating.

But it's important to note that Christians who adopt theistic evolution as a compromise fail to gain respect from strict evolutionists. They dismiss the theistic evolutionist as a “weak-kneed sycophant” who refuses to go all the way and reject the concept of a living God.

## Powerful evidence

The concept of Intelligent Design is not new. Greek philosophers, early Christian church fathers, and medieval scholars all observed that nature gave powerful evidence of being designed, the work of a super intelligence.

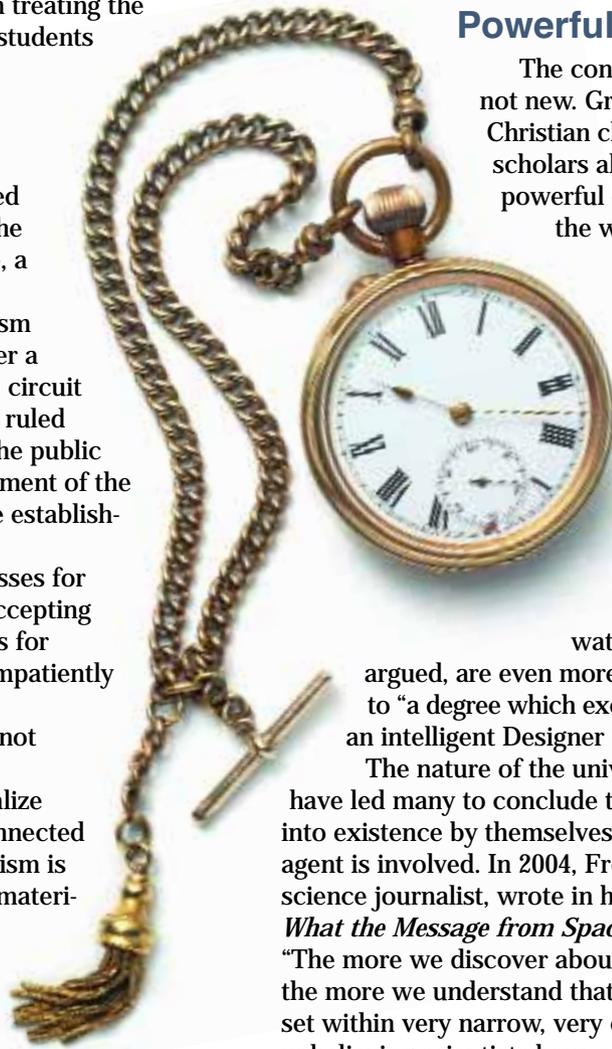
In 1802, William Paley became famous for his book *Natural Theology* in which he argued that if one inspects a watch, one does not say the watch made itself. Instead, the logical conclusion is that there is an intelligent watchmaker responsible for the existence of the

watch. Living organisms, Paley argued, are even more complicated than watches, to “a degree which exceeds all computation.” Only an intelligent Designer could have created them.

The nature of the universe and its origin also have led many to conclude that things cannot come into existence by themselves, that a super-intelligent agent is involved. In 2004, Fred Heeren, a well-regarded science journalist, wrote in his book *Show Me God: What the Message from Space Is Telling Us About God*: “The more we discover about how the universe works, the more we understand that our universe's laws are set within very narrow, very critical parameters. Even unbelieving scientists have come to agree with the Bible's assertion that our universe has been very precisely prepared for us.”

However, it is research in molecular biology and biochemistry that, in recent years, has increased interest in Intelligent Design. Angus Menuge, professor of philosophy at Concordia University Wisconsin, writing in the Cambridge University Press publication *Debating Design: From Darwin to DNA*, states that several books helped to lay the foundation for the current interest in the topic.

One of the authors cited is Michael Denton, an Australian molecular biologist, who wrote: “No evolutionary biologist has ever produced any quantitative proof that the designs of nature are within the reach of chance.”



Other scientists have joined the ranks of those supporting the Intelligent Design concept. The Discovery Institute, Seattle, recently produced a list of more than 500 scientists of varying faith and non-faith—including some from Princeton, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Cornell—who signed a statement stressing that they were “skeptical of claims for the ability of random mutation and natural selection to account for the complexity of life.”

## Closed ranks, closed minds

The reaction against Intelligent Design on the part of naturalist supporters of Darwinism has been very strong. Despite the scientific evidence and the qualifications of the scientists promoting the concept of Intelligent Design, supporters of Darwinism have called Intelligent Design “creationism in disguise” and unscientific.

In several instances, action has been taken against those advocating Intelligent Design. Michael Behe, one of the main architects of Intelligent Design, was disowned by the biological sciences department at Lehigh University, where he teaches biochemistry. Steve Fuller, a professor at Warwick University, England, recently cautioned adherents of Intelligent Design in colleges and universities against going public unless they have permanent tenure.

This behavior is entirely out of step with the concept that science should be open to new ideas and asks only that the evidence be solid.

You may be asking, Hasn't evolution been shown to be a fact? The answer is both “yes” and “no.” There are many definitions for evolution. Sometimes it is defined as “change over time” or “descent with modification.” This is called “micro-evolution.” It's true that mutations occur in the genes of living organisms. Mutations are frequently lethal and often harmful. But occasionally they do produce changes that may benefit an organism.

However, a comprehensive definition of evolution is one that describes it as “the theory that all living organisms have descended from simpler ancestral forms that evolved from the first living cell, which somehow came into existence from non-living chemicals.” The name for this is “macro-evolution.” This complete idea of Darwinism is indeed without proof.

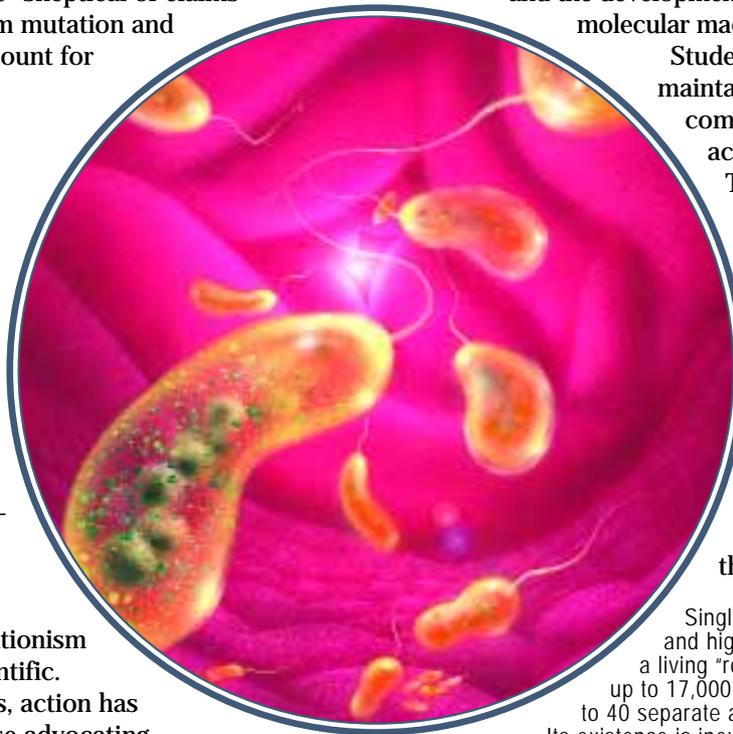
William Dembski, one of the leaders of the Intelligent

Design movement, has written: “The following problems have proven utterly intractable, not only for the mutation—selection process (i.e., Darwinism) but also for any other undirected natural process proposed to date.” He then lists the origin of life, the genetic code, multi-cellular life, the absence of transitional forms in the fossil record, and the development of irreducibly complex molecular machines.

Students of Genesis have long maintained that microevolution is compatible with the Biblical account of creation in Genesis.

The opening chapter of Genesis says that God created living things “according to their various kinds.” The Hebrew word for “kind” is “*min*.” It is used in Scripture to refer to super-families that contain many species, as in Lev. 11: 13–19. Variation within the boundaries of the created “kind” is not in conflict with the concept of creation.

Single-cell bacteria (shown here colored and highly magnified) propel themselves with a living “rotary engine” that rotates a flagellum up to 17,000 rpm. The engine depends on up to 40 separate and essential proteins to function. Its existence is inexplicable by evolutionary theory.



What is the Christian to make of Intelligent Design? Most importantly, we remember that our belief in creation by God is a matter of faith. Hebrews 11:3 states plainly: “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what is visible.” We do not base our stand on the latest scientific research or theory. We base our faith on the Word of God in Scripture.

However, we do marvel at the remarkable complexity of living cells and how they make life and living possible. We are reminded of the apostle Paul’s words in Rom. 1:20: “Since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood by what has been made, so that we are without excuse.”

As we gaze out into space with its countless stars and galaxies, let us join with the psalmist who exults: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands.” But most of all, “We rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Rom. 5:11).

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Dr. Paul A. Zimmerman is president emeritus of Concordia University, River Forest, Ill. He holds a doctorate in chemistry. His e-mail is: PAZCHEM@aol.com

# Our New Hymnal

THE CHURCH

Coming soon to a pew near you!

644

## The Church's One Foundation

1 The Church's one foun-da-tion Is Je-sus Christ, her Lord;  
2 E-lect from ev-'ry na-tion, Yet one o'er all the earth;  
3 Though with a scorn-ful won-der The world sees her op-pressed,  
4 Through toil and trib-u-la-tion And tu-mult of her war-

She is His new cre-a-tion By wa-ter and the Word.  
Her char-ter of sal-va-tion; One Lord, one faith, one birth.  
By schisms rent a sum-der, By her e-sies dis-tressed,  
She waits the con-sum-ma-tion Of peace ev-er-more



**M**ost likely, nearly everyone has heard that a new hymnal for LCMS congregations has been in the works. Your pastors, church musicians, lay leaders, and probably your choir members have followed with interest its seven-year development and design. And now, finally, it's nearly here.

To help introduce *Lutheran Service Book (LSB)* to you and your fellow church members, an audio-visual packet is being mailed to every congregation during the first week of July. In it is a DVD containing several video presentations. One is a 12-minute overview of the

hymnal, its features, and companion resources. This video can be played at Bible classes, church council meetings, voters' assemblies, and the like. It is designed to be helpful not only as the decision is made to purchase *LSB* but also when the hymnal is introduced at your congregation.

Check with your church office, your music leader, or your pastor to learn when you can see it.

There are also four shorter videos on the DVD—one for pastors, one for church's

musicians, one for Lutheran educators, and another providing an overview of *Lutheran Service Builder*, the electronic edition of the hymnal.

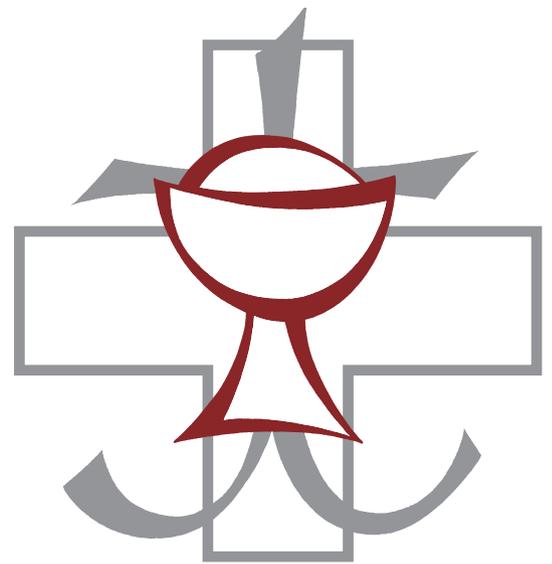
The packet also contains a music CD of 23 hymns from *Lutheran Service Book*. It includes some of the new texts and tunes. The variety of styles on the CD will give you a sense of the richness of the new *Lutheran Service Book*.

Several hymn stanzas on the CD are sung in

four-part harmony; others are sung to piano accompaniment.

Like the DVD, the CD can be shared in a variety of settings in order to experience some of the new hymns included in *LSB*. If your congregation purchases *Lutheran Service Book*, the CD will be helpful in teaching these hymns to the members.

Dr. Paul Grime, executive director of the LCMS Commission on Worship, said the commission plans to mail a congregational kit in late summer that will include a copy of *Lutheran Service Book* and another recording of hymns.



## Introductory workshops

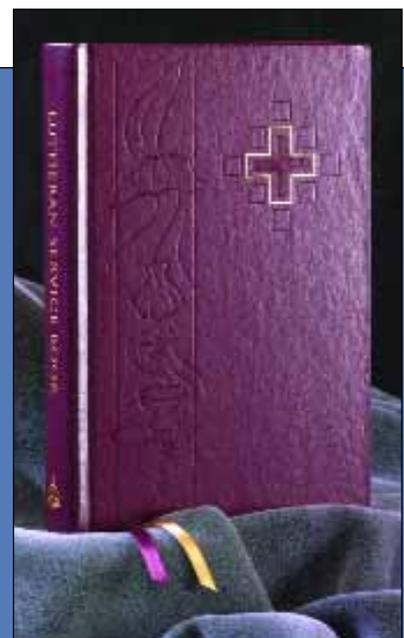
This fall, the LCMS Commission on Worship and Concordia Publishing House will conduct more than 280 workshops across the United States and Canada to introduce *Lutheran Service Book*.

The workshops are designed to be interesting and helpful to *all* church members, not just pastors, church organists, and choir directors. Sunday-school teachers, members of your church council and board of elders, and certainly choir members and volunteer musicians—actually, anyone who loves to sing—will all enjoy attending!

If you attend, you will receive a copy of the new hymnal and other helpful resources and suggestions.

Whether your congregation has already decided to purchase *Lutheran Service Book* or is waiting to see and experience the printed book before making its decision, this workshop will be a great benefit.

To register online, or to learn more about the *LSB* workshops, visit: <http://lsb.cph.org>.



# The Message of Confirmation

What you do at home can affect your child's confirmation experience.

by Tim Pauls



**A**h, confirmation—a defining mark of Lutheran congregations. It's supposed to be a good thing, the pastor preparing youth for communicant membership. Too often, though, it's seen only as a necessary rite of passage to endure rather than a blessing to enjoy.

For some reason, teenagers just don't seem to enjoy memorizing the catechism or giving up their Wednesday nights to attend class. They often arrive as unwilling participants. And frankly, when that's the atmosphere, we pastors aren't all that excited, either.

So, what to do? I've contemplated other options, like a reality-show format where we vote one student out of class each week. But I believe there's a better way. Here are a few suggestions that pastors and parents might find helpful.

## I. START AT HOME.

Each chief part of the Small Catechism begins with the subtitle, "As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household." The Small Catechism isn't supposed to be the mystery book that your child suddenly discovers in confirmation class. It's designed to be used in the home by the family. When it gets used at home, it communicates to your child that it's a book for use in life, not just at church.

## 2. START EARLY.

God created toddlers with the astonishing ability to memorize. They can hear a jingle on the radio one time and sing it back to you for the next eight hours in the car. (What a fun trip that is!)

Young kids are very good at learning words by heart, even if they don't understand what the words mean; so help children memorize the catechism while they're still very young. They won't understand all the words; that will come later. For now, teach the text.

One of the great errors of education today is to think that kids need to understand the words before they learn them. So parents tend to leave the catechism on the shelf. Meanwhile, kids are growing up listening to ads and music, often loaded with sexual innuendo. They're memorizing this stuff even though they don't understand the meanings. But they will.

Later, when they become puberty-stricken teenagers, their parents expect them to do memory work. That's the last thing they want to do. Eighth graders don't want to memorize—they want to argue, which actually is a necessary and helpful skill in education when properly directed. That's why you give them the data at an earlier age, so they can defend it and debate it later on. Confirmation-

class time is much better spent discussing doctrine than reviewing memory work.

Young children want to be grown up. That's why they follow you around the house, put on your shoes, and try everything that you're trying. They want to use grownup words and sing grownup songs. If you work with them at memorizing, they'll want to do it, too. And if you tell them that this is what eighth graders do, they'll work hard to be like "the big kids."

Don't be afraid of big church-words. Kids love them. Recently, I was talking to two 6-year-old students from our school in front of a bunch of adults. When I mentioned that we all were sinful, one of them said, "But God justifies us!"

The second one soberly added, "This is good, because we are concupiscent."

I imagine that the adults scurried for dictionaries when they got home. But the point is, when children hear new words, they want to use them.

Another big mistake is to believe that kids want to be young and cute. They don't.

Sure, they'll learn little children's songs, but they're also capable of learning serious hymns.

They love to sing them by memory in worship with the "big people."

It's disturbing that so many parents approve of makeup for very young girls,



but then want to limit their vocabulary to childish words. Meanwhile, the world isn't waiting—it's indoctrinating your kids about grownup issues at early ages.

Dinosaur books (practically every boy's favorite) preach evolution, and after-school TV shows for kids imply that all religions are the same. It's a bad idea to give the world a decade's head start on these matters.

### 3. TAKE LITTLE STEPS.

You may feel ill equipped and unprepared to teach the faith at home. However, you have the tools you need and more opportunities than you realize. You probably already read stories to your children; so read them Bible stories and talk about what God does for people in each one.

If you have a toddler in a stroller or a bike seat, recite the Apostles' Creed during the ride. Call your child over from the swing set and whisper, "Hey, do you know what? 'We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.'" Kids love it when adults take time to impart information, because it makes them feel more grown up.

Celebrate their baptismal birthdays every year, so that they understand that it is important to you. Get a copy of the catechism on CD and play it in the car. Better yet, print off a portion of the Small Catechism on a piece of paper and hang it in the kitchen. Each day, memorize three or four more words as a family. Don't force it. Make it a simple, important family ritual over the years.

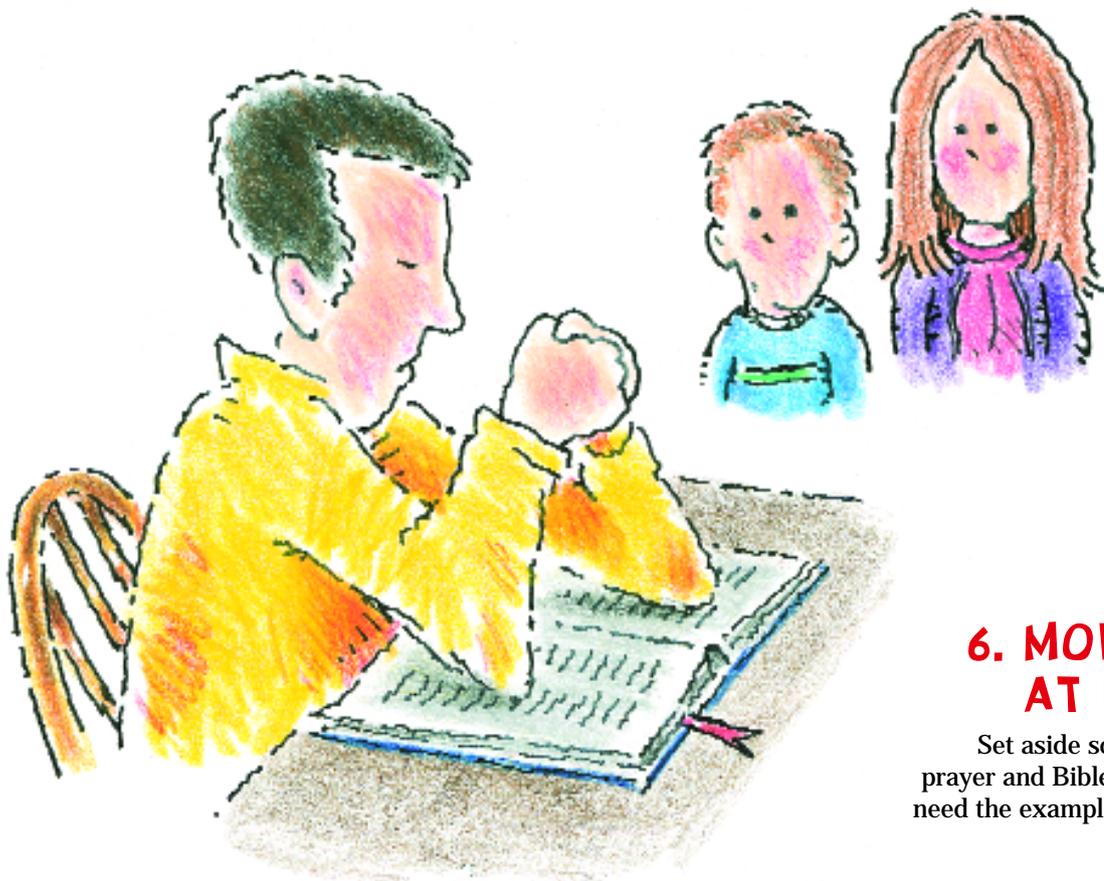
### 4. REVIEW FREQUENTLY.

As the old saying goes, "Repetition is the mother of all learning." Challenge your children to repeat the memory work you've learned as a family or to tell you their favorite Bible stories. Praise them lavishly when they do.

### 5. MODEL CHURCH ATTENDANCE.

Your kids are watching you; your actions teach them what is important to you. When parents drop off their kids for Sunday school on their way to breakfast, it sends the message that they skip Bible class because they believe that there's a time when we can stop learning about the Lord and His grace.

When parents attend worship only sporadically, it teaches their children that church is something to be done occasionally—that Jesus' presence and forgiveness are no more important than sports or reading the paper in bed.



### 6. MODEL STUDY AT HOME.

Set aside some time for your own prayer and Bible reading. Your kids need the example. You need the Word.



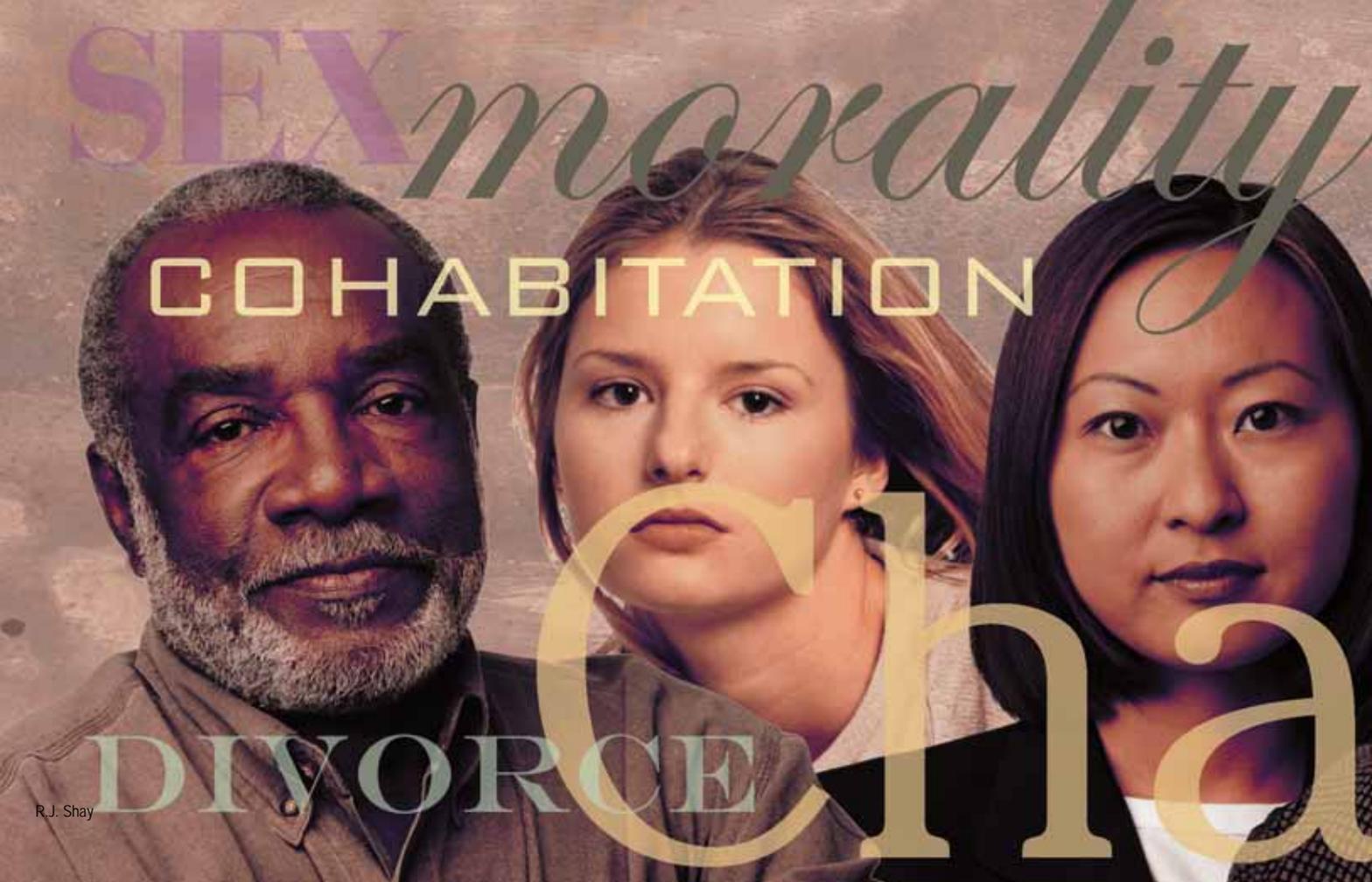
## 7. MODEL REPENTANCE.

It's hypocritical to teach your kids about confession and then never apologize to them for your mistakes. And your kids know it. So confess your sins when you mess up, and ask for their forgiveness. Furthermore, voice your thankfulness that Jesus forgives you, too.

One of the failures that you may need to confess is that you haven't taught the faith at home through the years, and now you're facing a rebellious confirmand. Don't bluster and threaten. Confess. And then rejoice that the Lord forgives you for all of your sins. When all is said and done, *that* is the message of confirmation.

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Rev. Tim Pauls is associate pastor and acting school administrator at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Boise, Idaho. His e-mail is [tpauls@goodshepherdboise.org](mailto:tpauls@goodshepherdboise.org)



R.J. Shay

# Restoring Sexual Morality

The church cannot stem sexual immorality by using the Law alone, as an upcoming LCMS conference will address.

by Gene Edward Veith

**S**exual morality is in a state of collapse in our culture. The teachings of the Bible seem to have little influence anymore, even on the behavior of Christians. But as churches try to reverse the trends, they are finding that the threats of the Law alone cannot create virtue. That requires the Gospel.

How pastoral care can be brought to bear on sexual sin and how Christ can be the foundation of strong marriages will be the topic of a major conference to be held on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS) at Fort Wayne, Ind., Sept. 18–20.

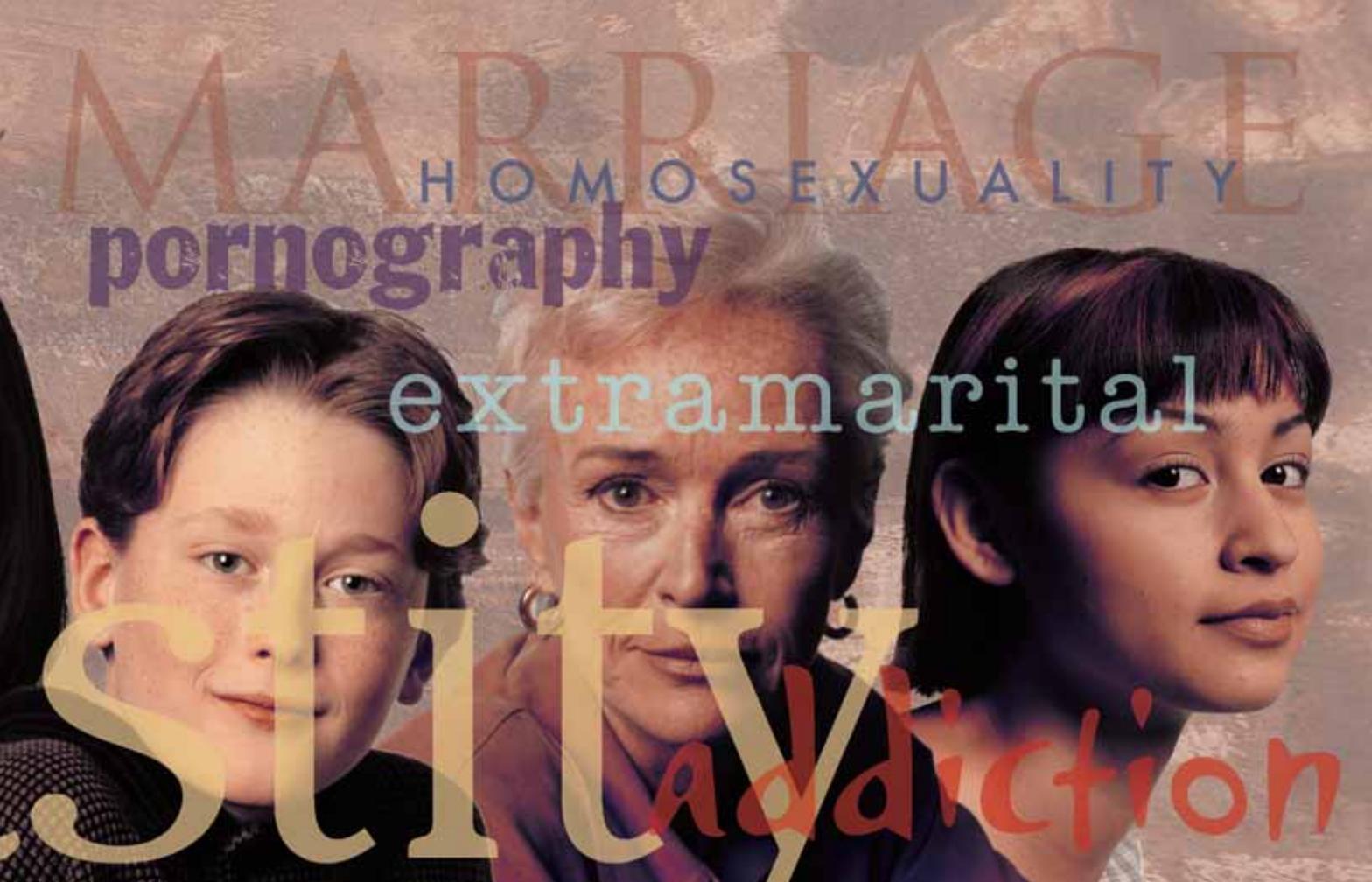
No one can deny that extramarital sex is rampant. Homosexuality has become socially acceptable, and even homosexual “marriage” is on the horizon. Couples living together without marriage has become the norm. So has bearing children out of wedlock. Pornography is just a click away on the Internet or on reputable hotels’ pay-per-view television systems.

The statistics are sobering. About 65 percent of American teenagers have sex before they finish high school. Over half of first marriages are preceded by the couple living together. And when a couple does get married, it doesn’t always last. One out of four American adults has been divorced.

The numbers are not much better for American Christians. One study by pollster George Barna found that two-thirds of single Christians have not practiced chastity. Conservative Christians have an even higher divorce rate than non-Christians, ranging from 29 percent for Baptists to 34 percent for non-denominational evangelicals. The rate for Lutherans is 21 percent, tied with Catholics for the fewest divorces. But that one in five of our church members has had a broken marriage is nothing to be proud of.

## Tough issues

Though pastors deal with these issues nearly every day, the Church



as a whole has been reticent in talking and teaching about such things. The subject is embarrassing. Pastors are worried about offending people or driving them away. Meanwhile, our young people are given little help or support in resisting the temptations they will face.

Clearly, the church—along with parents and counselors—needs to be proactive in addressing this moral collapse. But pastors often do not know what to do in the face of such enormous problems. Parents do not know what to say to their children.

Part of the problem is that the church has been unable to articulate the Bible's positive teachings about sex and marriage in a winsome way. Often Christians do not have a clear idea about what those teachings are.

Christian apologist Lauren Winner, author of *Real Sex: The Naked Truth about Chastity*, often asks Christian teenagers and young adults what the Bible teaches about sex. All they know is "no sex before

marriage." They know nothing of the Bible's positive teachings about sexuality. They know nothing about how the body relates to the very image of God. They are oblivious to how God works through marriage and the procreation of children. They have no understanding of how the foundation and model of marriage is the intimate relationship between Christ and the Church.

Lauren openly describes herself as a casualty of these misunderstandings and of the way Christian young people drift into sexual sin. She was a young adult when she converted to Christianity from Judaism. But even after she became a Christian, like many singles her age, she did not give up pre-marital sex.

Then, in a session of individual confession with an Anglican priest, she was convicted of her sin. She then learned how to practice the classic spiritual discipline of chastity. "Doing spiritual practices doesn't get you into heaven," she says. "Rather,

practicing spiritual disciplines helps align your feelings, your will, and your habits with God's will."

Later, she got married and discovered God's design for marriage and sexuality.

"Sex is, in Paul's image, a joining of your body to someone else's. In Baptism, you have become Christ's body, and it is Christ's body that must give you permission to join His body to another body," she says. "The place where the church confers that privilege on you is the wedding; weddings grant us license to have sex with one person. Chastity, in other words, is a fact of Gospel life. In the New Testament, sex beyond the boundaries of marriage—the boundaries of communally granted sanction of sex—is simply off limits. To have sex outside those bounds is to commit an offense against the body. Abstinence before marriage, and fidelity within marriage; any other kind of sex is embodied apostasy.

“In Christianity’s vocabulary,” Winner continues, “the only real sex is the sex that happens in marriage. The faux sex that goes on outside marriage is not really sex at all,” but “only a distorted image of sex, as Walt Disney’s Wilderness Lodge Resort is only a simulation of real wilderness.”

The goal should be for “real sex” within marriage to become a part of ordinary life, the everyday intimacy of being “one flesh” with another person. So, what does real married sex look like? she asks. “It does not look like the sex unmarried folks have in movies or on ‘Friends.’ Rather, it is deeply embedded in the domestic warp and woof. It is part and parcel of the household.”

So how can churches rebuild sexual morality? How should pastors deal with members involved with extramarital sex, pornography, homosexuality, and other sexual sins? How can the church help build strong marriages according to God’s design? How can pastors bring not just legalistic condemnations but the Gospel of Christ to bear on these issues?

## Addressing these issues

LCMS World Relief and Human Care, the Cranach Institute, and Concordia Theological Seminary are sponsoring “In the Image of God: A

Christian Vision for Love and Marriage,” one of the first major conferences to help the church—both pastors and laypeople—deal with these challenges. The conference will feature nationally known speakers, practical workshops, and spiritual guidance.

Winner, who also wrote *Girl Meets God*, and who has become an especially effective lay evangelist to the postmodern generation, will be a keynote speaker. Other plenary speakers include Christopher West, well known in Catholic circles for applying “the theology of the body” in successful marriage workshops. Lutheran ethicist Dr. Gilbert Meilaender will speak on “Marriage as a Form of Life.” CTS professor and theologian Dr. William Weinrich will address the vocation of being a man or a woman. And Lutheran psychologist Dr. Beverly Yahnke will talk about how the church can minister to both the sinner and the sinned against.

The conference also will bring in experts from a variety of fields. Dan Weiss, an LCMS layman, works with Focus on the Family on the problem of pornography. Also from Focus is Glenn Stanton, an expert on building strong families. Mike Haley and Melissa Fryrear, from Exodus International, are former homo-

sexuals who will offer workshops on the causes of homosexuality and how the church should minister to homosexuals.

Workshops will apply theological truths and principles of pastoral care in practical ways.

Part of the ineffectiveness of the church’s teachings when it comes to sex and marriage is that these teachings often consist of nothing but Law. The Fort Wayne conference will emphasize a positive Christian approach, grounded in the good creation of the creation of the Triune God and the forgiving, life-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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Dr. Gene Edward Veith is the director of the Cranach Institute at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., and academic dean at Patrick Henry College. His e-mail is: [geveith@aol.com](mailto:geveith@aol.com)

For more information and to register:

**“In the Image of God:  
A Christian Vision for Love and Marriage”**  
Sept. 18 – 20, 2006

Deadline: Aug. 5, 2006

Visit: <http://www.cranach.org/imageofgod/index.php>

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# God's Sower in India



The Ziegenbalg Monument stands prominently at the Commanders House in Tranquebar.

300 years ago in India, God used this ordinary man to begin His extraordinary work.

by Victor Raj

**O**n July 9, 1706, two Lutheran pastors from Leipzig, Germany, arrived in India as the first Protestant missionaries anywhere in the world. Bartholomeus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Pluetschau came to Tranquebar, a Danish colony on the southeast Coromandel Coast on the Bay of Bengal.

Danish royalty had handpicked Ziegenbalg, a German Lutheran Pietist pastor, to go to India. He was born in Saxony in 1682 and had studied at the University of Halle, then the center of the Pietistic movement in the Lutheran Church.

In 1707, Ziegenbalg spent four months in prison on a charge by Native Hindus that by converting the natives he was encouraging rebellion.

From that inauspicious beginning 300 years ago, more than 25 million people in India today are Christians. Mission societies from Germany, the Scandinavian countries, Canada, and the United States have reached out to this nation with the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the services of missionaries, teachers, doctors, nurses, and social workers.

Although Ziegenbalg's missionary life lasted just 13 years before he died of a stomach malady in 1719, the mission he launched with Pluetschau continues today as the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church. An estimated 1.5 million Christians are members of one of the 10 major Lutheran church bodies in India.

Ziegenbalg developed a comprehensive approach to mission work. From the beginning, he set a pattern for a variety of mission endeavors, such as language

development, education, and inter-religious dialogue. Throughout his missionary career, he was known as a man who called a thing what it is in uncompromising words. This daring and controversial apologist had a "gift for making enemies," according to biographer Brigraj Singh. His life was "brief, intense, and packed with activity." He saw in the face of every opposition another opportunity for mission.

In three months, he learned the vernacular to preach and teach and converse freely with the natives. He then translated into Tamil Martin Luther's Small Catechism, the entire New Testament, and much of the Old Testament. This led to a huge increase in the number of people joining the church. His Bible translation, with minor revisions, is still in use today.

Aware of the power of the printed word, he set up the first printing press in India and published 32 books in Tamil and 10 in Portuguese. As an educator, Ziegenbalg started Christian day schools and a seminary and compiled two dictionaries of the Tamil language.

"The conversion of the heathen" to the one true faith was Ziegenbalg's sole agenda. He boldly discussed Christianity and Hinduism with scholars as well as the public. Most Hindus who heeded his call to conversion, however, responded with a renewed commitment to a *righteous life*, rather than trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Ziegenbalg combated this by preaching a religion of the pure grace of God that humans are saved solely by faith in Jesus Christ.

Rev. Bartholomeus Ziegenbalg led the congregation of new believers to build the first Protestant church in Asia—The New Jerusalem Lutheran Church—which he dedicated in 1718. Since the tsunami of December 2004, it has been refurbished and is still in use today for worship services.



# TIME TO GET A MAKEOVER

**T**he New Jerusalem Church is the oldest Protestant church in all of Asia. At 287 years old, it was ready for some freshening up.

As part of a major local celebration of the 300th anniversary of the arrival of German missionary Bartholomeus Ziegenbalg in Tranquebar, India, the old church has been completely restored. Ziegenbalg was the first pastor of this Lutheran congregation; he led them to build the church, completed in 1718.

His grave is set into the floor in front of the altar. The church

has a decorative triangular gable in which one can see a crown, the Danish royal emblem, and the date 1718.

The church stands a little over a mile from the ocean. On the morning of Dec. 26, 2004, when the tsunami struck, the almost 300-year-old Lutheran church was full of worshippers, who safely escaped, many to the church roof.

Their community was less fortunate; 600 died in the immediate Tranquebar area, including 300 children.

In spite of the novelty and the genuineness of a burden-free Gospel proclamation, Ziegenbalg's audience, like most people today, noted the inconsistency in the daily living of Christians and the ethical principles contained in the Christian Scripture.

A written statement from one of Ziegenbalg's correspondents stated a popular opinion on Christianity: "Your laws are very good, but your lives are very bad; and therefore men should have nothing to do with you or your religion."

Nevertheless, as a person devoted to preaching nothing but Christ and Him crucified, Ziegenbalg was convinced that converting people to faith in Jesus Christ was purely God's activity, and no missionary has any credit to claim in that gracious act of God. Although humbled by that criticism, Lutherans live as living witnesses under the comfort of the Gospel, as sinners and saints at the same time.

## Planting the seed

Like the parable of the mustard seed (Matt. 13: 31–33), the Gospel seed takes root in new soil with humble beginnings and grows. Protestant mission work in India has since followed Ziegenbalg's model by preaching the Gospel directly to people of all walks of life, by translating the Bible and publishing Christian literature in the vernacular, by establishing and promoting educational institutions at all levels, and by extending Christian service through medical and technical education and a variety of philanthropic institutions.

Ziegenbalg was God's seed-bearer in India. Through the fruit of his labor, the ministry there would flourish as the seed that falls on good ground.

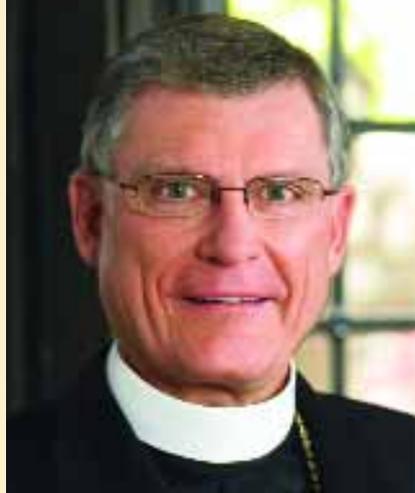
The Missouri Synod's first overseas mission followed Ziegenbalg's footsteps into India. In 1895, Rev. Theodore Naether and Rev. Franz Mohn were commissioned as missionaries to India. After nine years of seemingly little result in his missionary work, Naether died in India of the plague.

Eventually, though, the work there was blessed, especially among the oppressed, and the Synod sent 60 missionaries to India during the 1920s. In 1924, Concordia Theological Seminary was established in Nagercoil at the southern tip of India. The three hospitals started at that time continue to serve South India today. The Missouri Evangelical Lutheran Mission established a school system that today includes 59 elementary schools, 11 high schools, seven schools for the handicapped, a teachers training institute, and five boarding homes. About 800 teachers are serving in the school system.

Today, the India Evangelical Lutheran Church has 160 active pastors and nearly 60,000 baptized members.

Ziegenbalg, like Paul the apostle, went and preached the Gospel where no one had preached before.

Dr. Victor Raj is mission professor, exegetical theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.  
His e-mail is: rajv@csleu



# ‘The Stranger in Our Midst’

This month, as we celebrate American independence, we give special remembrance and thanks

to God for the freedoms and vast opportunities with which He has blessed us as citizens of the United States of America.

These blessings may be even more appreciated by those who have chosen to leave their homelands for this country than by those who were born here. One immigrant wrote this:

“The land which we have chosen as our home stands before our eyes and those of a wondering world as a tree towering high above all others. ... Under its protective, wide-spreading branches gather ever greater multitudes from all tongues, races, and nations, who here exchange their gifts and abilities, so that the gifts and abilities of all nations unite to make America a blessed nation.”

Those words were delivered in a speech July 4, 1853, by an immigrant from Germany—Dr. C.F.W. Walther, the first president of our church body.

Indeed, Walther, the other founders of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and most of the members of LCMS congregations in our church body’s early days were immigrants who had come to these shores in search of religious freedom and/or economic opportunity.

In recent months, immigration issues have risen to the fore in public debate. With the executive director of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, I have co-signed a statement regarding immigration concerns, including the challenges of illegal immigration. The full statement is available on the Web at [www.lcms.org/10023](http://www.lcms.org/10023). Here is some of what we said:

“Today, issues related to immigration and immigration laws are causing distress in our land. As corporate citizens of this nation, we recognize that solutions to the problem of illegal immigration are complex. There are many factors that deserve consideration. ... Secure borders, national security, policy enforcement, national stability, inexpensive labor, decent income, budget limits, human rights, and work opportunities are only the beginning of the long list. ...

“Millions of undocumented persons have come to the United States for many and various reasons. They have come to flee oppression of many sorts, including

extreme poverty and hunger. They have come in order to make provision for their loved ones. They have come in order to end separation from loved ones. They have come illegally because they have deemed that the legal route is nearly impossible to maneuver. They have come because they can work, and they find dignity in labor. We recognize also that a small percentage have come for malevolent reasons.

“Christians equally committed to God’s Word may reasonably arrive at different conclusions on specific aspects of these issues and their resolution. However, this much is certain: God, in His Word, consistently shows His loving concern for ‘the stranger in our midst’ and directs His people to do the same. ... God told Moses to tell the people, ‘When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God’ (Lev. 19:33–34). Jesus said, ‘Whatever you did for one of the least of these ... you did for me’ (Matt. 25:40). We are reminded in Heb. 13:2, ‘Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.’ ...”

Throughout its history, the Missouri Synod has been sensitive to the needs of immigrants. While those immigrants in the early days mostly were from Europe, we now welcome them with the love of God in Jesus Christ from all parts of the world. Our congregations have helped to resettle them, and we have many new ministries among them.

We would do well to remember that today’s immigrants also are people for whom Christ died. God is blessing us with the opportunity to share His love in Christ with them—especially with those who are not Christians—so that they, too, may hear the Gospel of forgiveness through the merits of Jesus Christ and receive the free gift of eternal life.

Lives Transformed through Christ, in Time ... for Eternity!

e-mail: [president@lcms.org](mailto:president@lcms.org)  
Web page: [www.lcms.org/president](http://www.lcms.org/president)

**Jerry Kieschnick**  
John 3:16–17