

critique

A RANSOM FELLOWSHIP PUBLICATION

ISSUE 1 2007

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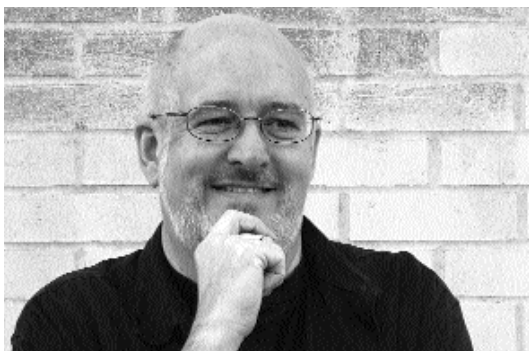
St. James claimed the tongue is a fire set on fire by hell. If that sounds unrealistic, we haven't reflected honestly enough on the sad reality of verbal abuse.

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Helping Christians Develop Skills In Discernment



A Faithful, Messy Purity

There is a difference between keeping ourselves pure, and keeping ourselves aloof from a broken reality. It's a huge difference. The first is courageous; the second, arrogant. The first finds us in the company of those who love virtue so much they have pursued integrity, regardless of the cost. The second is the busy isolation of those who imagine the problem of moral purity is not in them but in others. The cost they pay for this error is a sad superficiality in their relationships--a superficiality of which they are often mostly unaware.

There is an irony in this for the Christian. For the follower of Christ, the final standard for purity is Christ himself, the one in whom the brilliance, beauty, and excellence of God was made flesh, lived out in time and space. Yet, if anyone was never for a moment aloof from a broken reality, it was Christ. His critics pressed him at precisely this point, believing they had discovered a fatal character flaw, but Jesus would have none of it. When the Pharisees complained to Jesus' disciples that their Master hung out with disreputable people, Jesus responded by saying they should go study their Bibles. People opposed to him claimed he ate and drank to excess at parties with Roman collaborators, unscrupulous business people, and sinners. Jesus pointed out their hypocrisy, but the fact they could voice this complaint is proof that Christ mixed freely with broken people in a broken world. In fact, he mixed with them with an intimacy that did not just scandalize the devout believers of his day, it would doubtless scandalize the devout of today's evangelical community as well. One Jewish religious leader was disappointed when Jesus allowed a notoriously sinful woman (probably a prostitute) to keep on touching him. It must have taken awhile, too, since the text says she wet his feet with her tears, wiped them with her long hair, anointed them with a special perfume she had brought, and repeatedly kissed them. (Jesus was reclining for a meal at the man's house at the time--a setting which would have been open to passers-by.) Jesus not only did not stop her, but when his host objected Jesus told him his hospitality was shabby and that the woman, not he, would realize the salvation of

God.

But, someone might respond at this point, Paul approvingly quoted the proverb, "Bad company ruins good morals," so how does that figure in? True enough. If being around people who indulge in certain things causes us to stumble and fall, then we must either withdraw until we are stronger, or better yet, be with them only in ways in which we can be held accountable. This isn't being aloof from a broken reality, but a recognition we are weak and in need of grace. It will be a choice and lifestyle marked with humility.

If we choose to keep aloof from a broken reality we fail to faithfully follow Christ. In his incarnation Christ entered the messiness of people's lives to such an extent that his critics could plausibly insist his engagement with questionable people was an affront to holiness. That didn't stop him, and he did it without compromising moral purity.

Here is another way to put it: "We are not to love people in spite of their sin," Jerram Barrs insists, "but because of it." "In spite of" sounds good--but is self-righteous. Just as Christ came to redeem us because we are sinners, so we must love our neighbor because they, just like us, are sinners. Keeping aloof from broken people does not make us more pure; it merely adds hubris to the sins in which we indulge.

One of the attractions of being aloof from a broken world is that it seems neater, easier to manage. Huddled together with people like us, we have only our own sins to contend with, and a little effort can keep them carefully covered under a sheen of conservative social respectability. The broken world around us, on the other hand, is messy, unpredictable, disreputable.

Which is precisely where we have to be if we expect to be with Christ.

Sources:

Matthew 9:9-13; Luke 7:31-35; Luke 7:36-50; 1 Corinthians 15:33. Barrs at a seminar on evangelism at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Rochester, MN (April 2007).

critique

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Love the new website! Congratulations on making it look so sleek.

To the editor:

We have received your publications for several years now and have heard you both at the annual L'Abri conference in Rochester. When we think of ministries that we continue to be blessed by, yours comes to mind immediately. We want to thank you for your time devoted to ministry, your perspective, your vision and your heart for others. Your work makes a difference in our lives and the lives of others as we pass what we have learned on.

Sincerely,
and in God's love,
Dennis & Nan Nordstrom
Wisconsin Rapids, WI

To the editor:

Love the new website! Congratulations on making it look so sleek. I truly appreciate your ministry and look forward to the publications. Margie, you crack me up!

My husband Matt and I had the privilege of hearing Denis speak in Santa Rosa at First Presbyterian Church. God bless you both for your heart and willingness to serve as you have and continue to do.

Vicki Kenny
Santa Rosa, CA

Matthew Hundley responds:

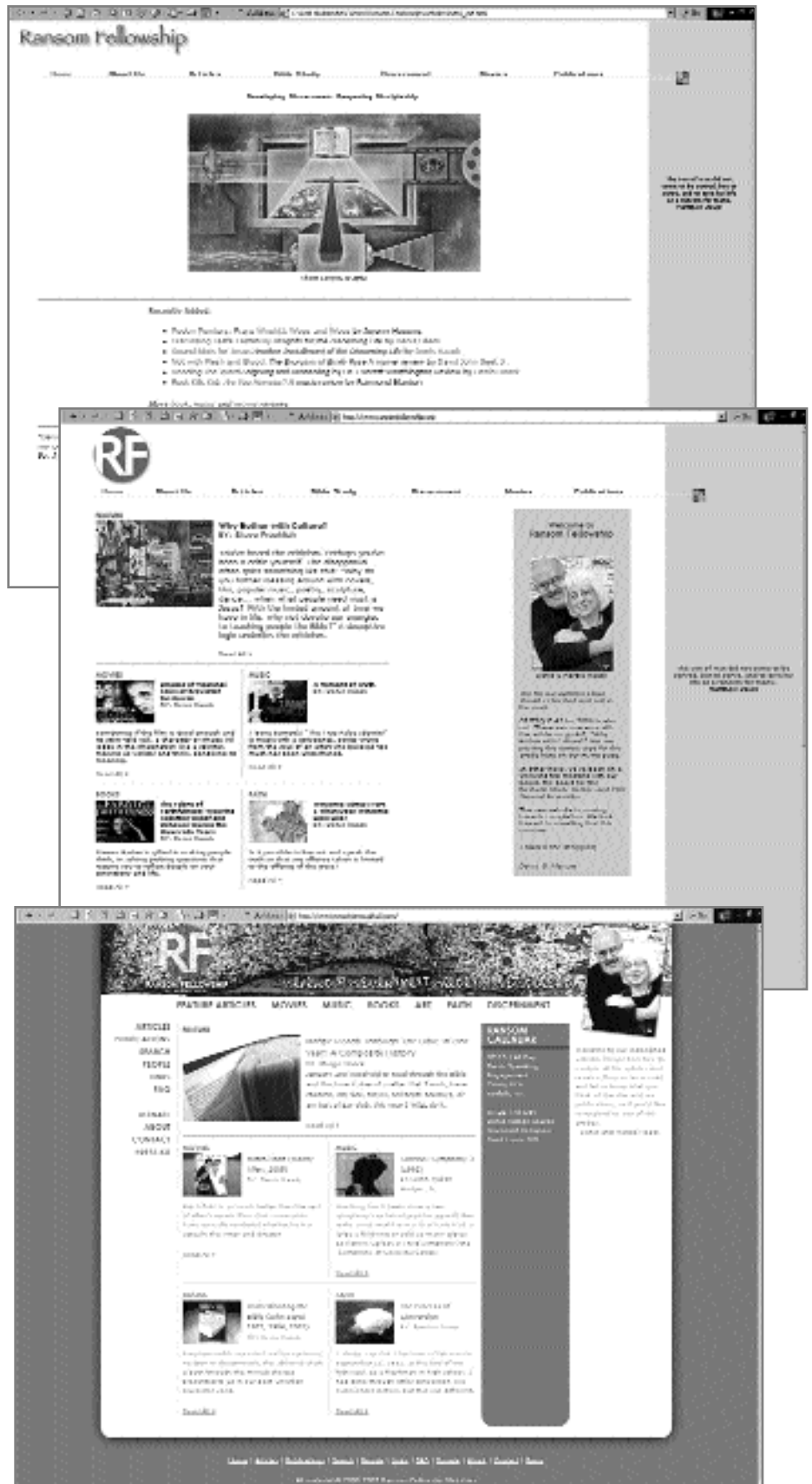
Dear Vicki Kenny,

Thanks for your positive feedback about our website. As you can see by the images on the right we have made a few modifications to the Ransom Fellowship website over the past several months. First we livened up the look and feel of the site with a new logo, home page layout and more photos. We are now in the process of putting all of our articles in a giant database and re-structuring the site so it will be easier for you to find reviews and information; we're also making it easier for Denis, Margie and all of those who contribute to the site to get their work out to our readers like yourself.

Thanks for making use of this resource. We hope to continue to grow this site both in content and in new features that will help you to find your way around the site.

God bless.

Matthew Hundley
Ransom Fellowship



Offensive Magazine Cover?

The editor of *Discipleship Journal*, a bi-monthly magazine published by The Navigators, reprinted a piece by me in their January/February 2007 issue. It appeared in a special section of the magazine addressing various issues on the theme of sexuality. Mine was an article that had originally appeared in these pages and then was posted on Ransom's web site. I appreciated their request to reprint it in DJ, and was impressed by the care and professionalism exhibited by the editor as we edited the piece down to the number of words they could accommodate.

As subsequent issues of DJ appeared, I glanced at the letters to the editor wondering if my piece would generate a response. My original desire in writing it had been to stimulate Christians into thinking more clearly about how best to engage our world with the gospel. I have no idea who reads DJ regularly, but prayed that God would bring what I had written to the readers of his choice. In any case, if my article generated a response, it didn't show up in any of the letters that were published. However, something far more fascinating did show up: three letters expressing strong objection to *Discipleship Journal's* cover. Here are the letters, as they appeared, unedited except for omitting the names of the correspondents. My intention is that we reflect not on the authors of the letters but on the ideas and concerns they express.

Letter #1 was from Georgia:

I was very disappointed to receive the January/February issue of DJ with SEX in large, bold type on the cover. It is frustrating enough to check out at the grocery store surrounded by magazine headlines about sex. It is even more disheartening when a trusted Christian magazine I subscribe to in my home has such a glaring

headline.

I don't have a problem with the content of the articles; however, you could exercise some discretion in how you headline the topics. I will have to remove the cover of the magazine or hide it from my 10-year-old son. It is a constant battle to raise children with a pure heart; please provide a magazine cover we can be proud to set out in our homes.

Letter #2 came to DJ via email:

I'm shocked, embarrassed beyond belief, and can't understand what you were thinking when you created your January/February cover.

If you wanted to address the topic of sex, you didn't have to emblazon it with a fiery red cover, giving it the appearance of a secular sex manual! I would expect a more discrete approach, not something that appears to have come straight from the pit of hell. Couldn't you have had a single article addressing the topic but

kept the focus on Jesus Christ and His teachings? Is it really necessary to have more than half of the magazine dedicated to the topic of sex?

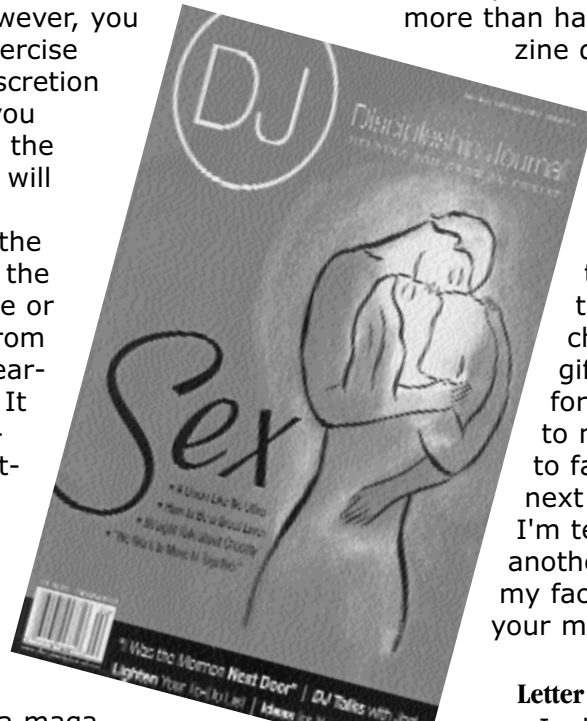
Thanks for the embarrassment. I can't wait to explain to my husband that we purchased this as a gift subscription for our pastor. Not to mention having to face my pastor next time I see him. I'm tempted to find another church. Color my face as red as your magazine cover.

Letter #3 was from Iowa:

I wholeheartedly approve of the subject of sex being in DJ. Sex needs to be

discussed openly in the Christian arena--silence about it has given Satan a stronger foothold in trashing it. So I applaud you for stepping forward with the wonderful articles.

But I was offended by the cover. A couple of weeks before I got this issue, I had a pornography site flood into my computer. That this stuff came into my personal computer unbidden shook me; I felt violated. Then I receive my new DJ and see the word sex boldly written across the



A color image of the DJ cover can be viewed on the back page of this issue of Critique.

cover. Why did you feel you needed to be so blatant with the cover? (I do think that the artwork throughout is beautiful.)

Go for it, DJ--address the issues out there. But please try not to be so worldly about it.

I would suggest this little controversy is not insignificant. It is an example of the sort of tension which arises in the wider evangelical community as Christians explore what it means to live faithfully on the edge of culture and faith. What one believer sees as appropriate, another sees as questionable. What one sees as thoughtful, another sees as unnecessarily provocative. The disagreement also illustrates the power of image--these letter writers are concerned not primarily by the ideas expressed in the articles but by the cover of the magazine. It is the color, headlined word "Sex," and font to which they object. And finally, the controversy is significant because Christians who disagree over such things are commanded to love one another. To love one another so clearly that their love will act as an evidence to the truth of Christ's claims. And it is significant because all thoughtful Christians would agree that Christ's Lordship not only applies to what we think and write about sex and morality, but to the artwork, color palette, and lettering we use on the covers of our publications.

All of which, it seems to me, raises a series of questions that discerning Christians would be wise to consider and discuss.

Questions for discussion:

1. What was your immediate or initial response when you saw the DJ cover? When you read the three letters? Why did you respond that way? Was there a time in your life when you would have responded differently? If yes, why the change?

2. Being as objective and careful as possible, summarize the letter-writers' concerns. In what ways would you say their concerns are based on good or virtuous desires?

3. If you disagree with the letter-writers' concerns, do you know Christians who would share them? How do you tend to think of or characterize them? How close are you to them? Do you harbor Christ-like affections for them?

4. If you agree with the letter-writer's concerns, do you know Christians who would feel the DJ cover is not only fine, but that being concerned about it is silly? How do you tend to think of or characterize them? How close are you to them? Do you harbor Christ-like affections for them?

5. Having upper Midwest roots, I have numerous friends and family who grew up on or live on working farms. Unlike their urban and suburban friends and relatives, sex tends to be for them simply an unavoidable part of ordinary reality. Farms raise animals, animals reproduce, and most animals aren't very secretive about the process. In fact, farmers usually are involved in the process, so the cycles of breeding, birthing, and weaning are labor intensive, involving not just the farmer, but his family as well. Growing up in this setting, the rural people I know tend to see sex and reproduction not as a secretive, embarrassing category of life but simply as part of the natural order of things. As a result, they tend to be more casual about sex than the attitude expressed in these letters. Or to try to see it from their perspective, when your 10-year-old helps the day a neighbor brings his stallion to breed your mare, or has bred a ewe to raise lambs for the County Fair, or helps during a difficult delivery when a foal is born, the DJ cover does not

seem all that bold or remarkable. With this in mind, to what extent do you believe the letter-writers' concerns are more the result of the cultural shift from rural to sub/urban settings than they are to a legitimate spiritual awakening to sexual purity? How would you express this to a sub/urban friend who replies that this merely proves their point: the DJ cover is inappropriate for children raised in today's citified setting?

6. How would you respond if someone argued that a more casual approach to sex (as expressed in question #5) tends to lead to a more casual approach to morality, and thus eventually to immorality?

7. If you were not offended by the DJ cover or feel it was inappropriate, what would the cover need to include before you would begin to feel uncomfortable, or that the editor was not adequately exhibiting a Christian sensitivity in their cover art?

8. Is it possible for Christians who hold radically different views on the DJ cover to live happily together in the same Christian community? What would be required for this to occur? Could the fellowship in this community ever be anything more than superficial? How?

9. Some Christians would respond to the letter writers by saying that their concerns are so removed from both real life and a biblical view of sexuality as to represent a grievous barrier to the gospel. That it is attitudes like this that convince many young adults that evangelical Christianity is so inauthentic as to not merit serious consideration. That the problem is not in the cover but in the letter-writers' consciences, which are immature, culturally bound, and biblically uninformed. Do you agree? Why or why not? If you agree, how might this be said to the letter writers without breaking fellowship with them?

10. How does this whole discussion make you feel about your faith? Why? Do you need to do anything about it?

Why Bother With Culture

You've heard the criticism. Perhaps you've been a critic yourself. The disapproval often goes something like this: "Why do you bother messing around with novels, film, popular music, poetry, sculpture, dance... when what people need most is Jesus? With the limited amount of time we have in life, why not devote our energies to teaching people the Bible?" A deceptive logic underlies the criticism because, of course, there is nothing in the universe greater, grander, and more needed than Jesus, and there is nothing more essential to life than knowing him as he is revealed in the Scriptures. If that premise about Jesus and the Bible is true (and it is true), then why do we... no, why should we bother messing around with the stuff of culture, the so-called lesser things that so often take people on a path of idolatry away from Jesus?

This year, I'm preaching through the book of Acts, and in my study I came across an answer to that question from a source that surprised me: the magisterial Welsh preacher and churchman from the mid-20th century, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981). In 1927 Lloyd-Jones entered pastoral ministry, leaving behind a promising career in medicine. However, his years of medical training, in addition to sharpening his skills of inquiry, observation, and analysis, softened his heart as he confronted the sorrow and suffering of those who had come to him for help. Known affectionately throughout his life as "The Doctor," Lloyd-Jones' prowess as an expositional preacher was matched by a deep passion for holi-

ness. Os Guinness, who was under Lloyd-Jones' preaching and pastoral ministry for a time, once said that like no one else he knew, Lloyd-Jones preached as if he had just come from the presence of God. So, why bother messing around with lesser things? Here is Lloyd-Jones' answer from his sermon on Acts 3:12-18, Peter's sermon explaining the healing of the lame man at the Temple (not exactly the text I would have thought of to call the Church to cultural engagement):

To me this is in many ways the most astonishing thing of all. Peter's sermon did not even start with the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you ever been struck by that? Peter had

Why do you bother messing around with novels, film, popular music, poetry, sculpture, dance...when what people need most is Jesus?

healed the man "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth;" yet when the people said, "What is this?" Peter's answer was: "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob." I speak carefully because I know I am liable to be misunderstood at this point, but this to me is a very vital part of Christian teaching and of the Christian message. You do not start with the Lord Jesus Christ. I wonder if perhaps most of our troubles in the Christian church today are due to just that. We must start with God. We start with the whole message of

the Bible.

When Lloyd-Jones says that we must start with God, note that he equates this starting point with the over-arching message of God's Word. To start with God means to know him first as he has made himself known. To start with God means to view the Creation and especially God's image-bearers through the eyes of the Creator. All hope of truth, beauty, goodness, and justice must be brought before the Lord God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, with the question, "How can these things be?" Lloyd-Jones continues:

There is a modern conception of evangelism that regards it as simply saying to people, "Come to Jesus." This view says you do not need to talk about repentance; rather, if they are in trouble or are unhappy, you just tell them to come to Him. You start with Him and end with Him. But that is not Christian preaching....

The first step in Christian preaching is to tell men and women that they and all their problems must always be considered in connection with God. That is the whole message of the Bible. You do not start with particular problems, but with men and women as they are in this world. How are they to be understood? It is in their relationship to God....

Men and women in their folly have rebelled against Him and brought chaos down upon themselves, but

Editor's note: This piece was published in the last issue of *Critique*, but due to an unfortunate printer's error, did not appear in its entirety. We republish it here, with our apologies.

Christianity brings the message that God is concerned and is determined to do something about it. So we do not start with Jesus Christ but with God, who thought out a plan of redemption before the foundation of the world. It is the most comforting and consoling fact that though statesmen fail, having done their best, though clever men propound their theories but do not help us, and through civilization advances but immorality increases, in spite of that, all is not lost and all is not hopeless because the everlasting God is concerned.

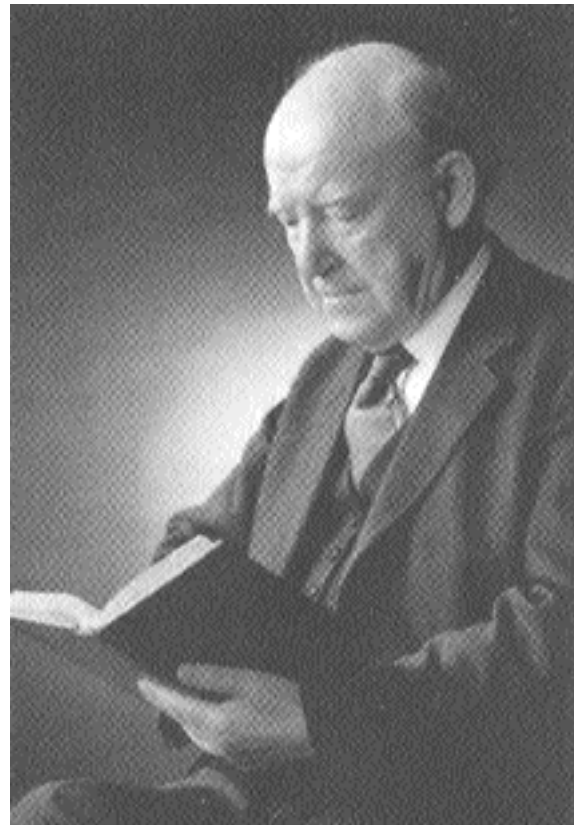
“Men and women as they are in this world.” There it is, the first step in Christian living, and Lloyd-Jones’ answer to why we bother with the stuff of culture. With his surgical incisiveness, he exposes the hastiness of our hearts to treat people as objects, things to be fixed. No so with Jesus. His critics said derisively, “Look at him. He’s eating and drinking, a glutton, a drunkard, and a friend of sinners” (Luke 7:33). Of course they were wrong about his behaving sinfully, but all the rest is completely true.

“Men and women as they are in this world.” The clamorous conversations and creative quests that produce the mosaic of culture reveal the deep human struggle to make sense of life as it really is—the longing to be accepted and loved, to be forgiven and vindicated, to discover and hope, to feel and understand, to be known and to matter. With that shared, irrepressible human heart-longing, we gesture with a half eaten bagel over a cup of mocha latte, we sit in a darkened theatre drawn into the story playing out before us, we huddle in recessed pools of gallery light remembering to keep our voices down, we pace with moody irritation scrib-

bling figures under fluorescent laboratory lights. As followers of Jesus, we step into a world that does not know him, but that yearns deeply, so that we may say with honest understanding and conviction, “My heart longs for the same things, too.” We mingle our lives with “men and women as they are in this world” sometimes glorious in creativity, sometimes derelict with despair, and we listen for the “hope of all the earth,” the “dear desire of every nation,” the “joy of every longing heart” (Charles Wesley). This is the way the world is, and this is where we begin to love the world into which our Great God has stooped low to whisper in his most comforting and eloquent Word, “I have heard your cry, and I have come.” Jesus has come, eating and drinking, a friend of sinners.

Lloyd-Jones rebukes me for those times when I been driven by my spiritual agenda to start with Jesus as “the answer”—too often I have not listened and I have failed to love. Yet, I believe Lloyd-Jones is affirming that the truly God-focused Christian life never detaches from the human encounter with life—our life in Christ is inextricably fused with the stuff of culture. His words bring me great encouragement to continue reading, listening, playing, creating, because (frankly) I am often wearied by the criticism of those who belittle our bothering to attend to “men and women as they are in the world.”

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Steve Froehlich is Pastor of New Life Presbyterian Church in Ithaca, NY. He serves as board president for Chesterton House Center for Christian Studies at Cornell University. An ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America, Froehlich completed undergraduate studies in theatre, and graduate studies in theology and pastoral ministry. His interests include the intersection of Christianity and the arts, especially literature and film.

A Fairy Tale for a Broken World

A Review of *Pan's Labyrinth*

*"I hope you enjoy it
and get lost in it."*

Guillermo del Toro,
Director's Prologue



Credits

Starring:

Ivana Baquero (Ofelia)
Sergi López (Capitán Vidal)
Maribel Verdú (Mercedes)
Doug Jones (Pan/Pale Man)
Ariadna Gil (Carmen Vidal)
Álex Angulo (Dr. Ferriero)
Manolo Solo (Garcés)
César Vea (Serrano)
Roger Casamajor (Pedro)

Director: Guillermo del Toro

Writer: Guillermo del Toro

Producers: Belén Atienza,

Guillermo del Toro,

Edmundo Gil,

Elena Manrique

Original Music: Javier Navarrete

Cinematographer:

Guillermo Navarro

Runtime: 112 minutes

Release: USA; 2006

Rated R (for graphic violence
and some language)

Imagination is a gift of God. It is the grace which allows us to see beyond what our eyes can register, to know things that though unseen are yet real. It permits us to enter stories which may be fictional, yet which open our eyes to a deeper understanding of life.

"The Mexican-born writer-director Guillermo del Toro," critic Kenneth Turan says, "is the most accomplished fantasist in contemporary cinema, a master creator of images, atmosphere and mood who uses his visionary's gifts to do what others cannot: make imaginary worlds seem more real than reality itself." *Pan's Labyrinth*, which del Toro made as a companion piece to his 2001 film, *Devil's Backbone*, is a visual feast, a highly compelling example of creative story-telling, and an extended meditation on brutality, innocence, war, imagination, disobedience, and choice.

As the film opens, ten-year-old Ofelia is traveling with her pregnant mother to meet her new stepfather, a Captain in the Fascist Spanish army. It is 1944, near the time of the Normandy invasion which brings hope to the rebels fighting the Fascists, sadly dashed, that the Allies will not desert them to Franco's dictatorship. Ofelia clutches a little pile of precious books, fairy tales into which she escapes from the brutal reality of war and death that rages around her. En route to the remote garrison commanded by Captain Vidal, Ofelia meets a strange, wonderful insect that is really a fairy, a creature from the world in which Ofelia is actually a Princess. In the woods outside the Captain's army garrison is an ancient labyrinth, in which Ofelia meets Pan, a mysterious faun who tells her she must pass three tests if she is to return to the kingdom where her real father awaits her. The tests are magical and scary, even nightmarish, mirroring not just the cruelty of the battles between the army and the rebels, but equally the deep loss and insecurity which Ofelia inhabits. Del Toro brilliantly cuts between the two stories, so that we easily follow the action in two worlds simultaneously, as it becomes increasingly clear that it may not be two worlds after all. "Imagination is," Thomas Howard argues, "the faculty by which we organize the content of our experience into some form, and thus apprehend it as significant. Put another way, it is what makes us refuse to accept experience as mere random clutter, and makes us try without ceasing to shape that experience so that we can manage it." It is in the world of the faun that Ofelia finally finds

herself and comes fully alive.

The characters of most fairy tales are often rather simple, not necessarily well-developed, in order to serve as types. So it is here, allowing *Pan's Labyrinth* to speak to universal themes common to all of us, in every culture and time. Del Toro quietly references other stories, fairy tales, and artwork in the film, for example, Dorothy's red shoes from the *Wizard of Oz*, David Copperfield's cruelly rejected left-handed hand-shake, and Goya's Saturn Devouring his Son. Del Toro is not just intimately acquainted with fairy tales, he believes in them. Not in the narrow sense that they are all equally true, but in the deeper sense that good stories get at the truth of reality in ways we can barely comprehend in words.

"The myth-maker, the teller of fairy tales, and the writer of fantasy," Dickerson and O'Hara remind us, "all may speak profoundly to the human soul. They do so through art, and imagery, including the imagery of magic in many of its forms, and as such they speak directly to the soul through the imagination." A world without such stories is not just poverty-stricken, it is less than fully human. God called us into existence in time; he called us to live in story. At the Fall our stories were violently severed from The Story, and so as sons of Adam and daughters of Eve we feel strangely homesick, lost in the cosmos. In the biblical narrative of redemption,

by God's grace our minds can be renewed and our imaginations can be nourished as The Story gives shape and meaning to the scattered stories of our lives.

Some have objected to *Pan's Labyrinth* as being too dark, more like a terrifying dream than a fairy tale. They mistake the good life for a comfortable existence, embrace personal peace as a virtue, and must learn that a good fairy tale, like truth itself, is never safe.

Unlike many films, *Pan's Labyrinth* not only is good enough to be seen more than once, it requires more than one screening to take in all the details lovingly crafted by del Toro. It is a wild ride into the world of imagination, full of love and horror, where choices count, where what is real is greater than science can detect, and where life is lived in a fragmented world and in the shadow of death. There are always two questions worth posing when we watch a good film: Do I like it? Do I get it? Even if you answer No to the first questions, *Pan's Labyrinth* is worth being able to answer Yes to the second.



Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What was your initial response to *Pan's Labyrinth*? Why do you think you responded as you did?
2. Spend time reflecting on the film as a piece of cinematic art: In what ways were the techniques of film-making (casting, direction, lighting, colors, script, music, backgrounds, sets, action, cinematography, editing, etc.) used to get the film's message(s) across, or to make the message plausible or compelling?
3. Background shapes are important to del Toro. For example, what is the significance of the shape of the great tree under which the Toad lives? Or the shape of Pan's head (which also can be seen in the staircase in Captain Vidal's house)? Or the straight lines that form the backdrop to Captain Vidal's room and the round shapes that tend to accompany Ofelia?
4. Del Toro has commented that "the rule of three" seems to weave its way through fairy stories--the three little pigs, Goldilocks & the three bears. Thus, he has crafted *Pan's Labyrinth* around a series of trinities--identify them and reflect on their significance. (If you can't find any, watch the Director's Commentary by del Toro, which is insightful and detailed.)
5. Each time Pan appears in the film, he gets younger. Why?
6. What does the Pale Man represent? His table mirrors Captain Vidal's table. Why?
7. Pan gives three tests for Ofelia, and she fails two out of the three, yet succeeds. Why?
8. Christians may assume that because the blood of an innocent victim is shed in the final scene, the primary theme of *Pan's Labyrinth* parallels the biblical theme of redemption. Del Toro says the story is about Ofelia finding her true self, as having to discover that sometimes breaking the rules is the best choice. "It is not about a girl dying," he says, "but about a girl giving birth to herself in the way she always hoped she would be." How do these different themes and mythic images relate?



9. In at least three scenes in *Pan's Labyrinth*, del Toro used actual events from the struggle in Spain over Fascism: the soldier's announcement when distributing bread to the people was what Franco ordered printed on each package of bread provided by his government; the early brutal scene when Captain Vidal beats the young peasant man to death; and the callous statement by the priest at Captain Vidal's dinner party. What is their significance to the impact of the story?

10. As they drive towards the Captain's house early in the film, Ofelia's mother says she must call him "father." When Ofelia objects, her mother says she doesn't understand how good the Captain is to them, and besides, "it's just a word, Ofelia. It's just a word." Discuss.

11. Is *Pan's Labyrinth* essentially a pagan or a Christian myth? Why? Does it matter?

12. In *From Homer to Harry Potter*, Dickerson & O'Hara include some interesting questions that could be interesting applied to *Pan's Labyrinth*: (1) What is magic used for? Is its goal the domination of wills? What is its end? (2) Are good and evil defined? Are they subjective or objective? What or who is the ultimate arbiter of what is good? (3) Is moral virtue shown to be heroic? What makes a hero a hero? (4) What is the cosmology of the fantastical realm in which the tale takes place? Does the world of the story have a personal and purposeful beginning that gives meaning to its history and to the lives of its inhabitants.

13. What is the message(s) of the film? Consider how the film addresses themes such as the nature of reality or what is really real; what's wrong with the world, and what's the solution; the fragmentation of life in our busy, pluralistic world; the significance of relationships and love; the significance and meaning of being human; whether there is right and wrong, and how we determine it; the meaning of life and history; and what happens at death.

14. What is attractive in this fairy tale? How is it made attractive? Where do you agree? Where do you disagree? Why? In the areas in which we might disagree, how can we talk about and demonstrate the truth in a winsome and creative way in our pluralistic culture?

15. With whom did you identify in the film? Why? With whom were you meant to identify? Discuss each main character in the film and their significance to the story.

Sources:

Kenneth Turan in a film review of *Pan's Labyrinth* in the *Los Angeles Times*, online <http://www.calendarlive.com/printedition/calendar/cletpan29dec29,0,2220366.story>
 Thomas Howard in *Chance or the Dance: A Critique of Modern Secularism* (Harold Shaw, 1969) p. 25
 Matthew Dickerson & David O'Hara in *From Homer to Harry Potter: A Handbook on Myth and Fantasy* (Brazos Press; 2006) p. 258.

Kindred Spirits Make Music

A review of *The Road to Escondido* by J. J. Cale & Eric Clapton

In 1970, after years of proving his prowess on the guitar in groups like the Yardbirds, Cream, and Blind Faith, Eric Clapton released his first solo album. On that record Clapton covered a song by a reclusive musician/songwriter named J. J. Cale. It was that song, "After Midnight," that rocketed Clapton onto the charts.

*After midnight,
we're gonna let it all hang down.
After midnight,
we're gonna chug-a-lug and shout.
We're gonna stimulate some action;
We're gonna get some satisfaction.
We're gonna find out what it is all about.
After midnight, we're gonna let it all hang down.*
("After Midnight" by J. J. Cale)

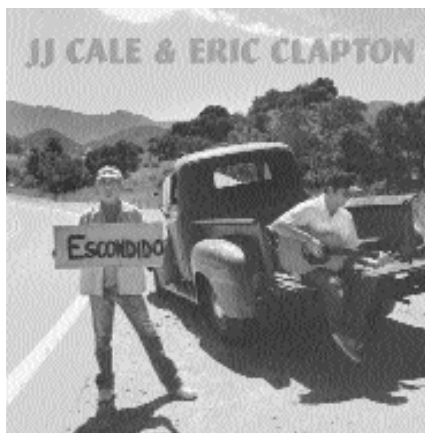
The lyrics may not seem like much, but coupled with Clapton's superb playing, the simple arrangement was destined to become a classic. It's about that magic moment that can only be experienced at a live performance with close friends, preferably in an intimate club, when the music takes on a life of its own. It may be after midnight but no one cares, because this is what music and friendship is all about, when reality is re-enchanting, and we know and believe once again that life is deeper and richer than we could ever imagine.

J. J. Cale hails from Oklahoma, and has never sought the spotlight, preferring to hone his guitar skills by playing in small venues, writing songs covered by musicians as varied as Johnny Cash, Deep Purple, and Santana (to name just a few). In 2000, *Mojo Magazine* asked Clapton if there was any other musician he would like to be. "I don't model myself on him," Clapton responded, "but I like J. J. Cale, his philosophy, writing skills, musicianship. He's a fine, superior musician, one of the masters of the last three decades of music."

In 2006 Cale and Clapton collaborated on an

album, *The Road to Escondido*. It has not made a splash on the charts, but is music produced by two musicians who respect one another, share maturity as artists, and who care deeply about the integrity of their music. Eleven of the 14 songs on *Escondido* are Cale's compositions, Clapton wrote two (one with John Mayer), and one is a classic, a cover of Brownie McGhee's "Sporting Life Blues."

Each song is like a deceptively simple snapshot of life, captured by someone who has been around and so is no longer easily fooled. The observations are simple, but in them we sense the grit of reality.



*Ain't no sense in the action,
killing people all the time
Ain't no sense no the action,
killing people all the time
When it happen on the street we call that a crime
These old boys are leading us
somewhere-that is plain to see
I don't know much of nothing, still it troubles me
Got to find another way,
this one ain't the way to go
Got to get a plan, change our ways or no...
When this war is over it will be a better day
When this war is over it will be a better day
But it won't bring back those
poor boys in the grave*
("When this War is Over" by J. J. Cale)

Some albums I appreciate enough to listen to repeatedly but never find them satisfying in any personal sense. *The Road to Escondido* is endlessly satisfying to me, like the feel I have returning home after a disappointing, hectic day to a glass of wine and a quiet meal with the woman who loves me.

The opening song, "Danger," reminds me of the ancient Hebrew sage who personified Wisdom and Folly so we could grasp their reality with imagination instead of conceiving of them only as abstract intellectual concepts. In this case it is Danger we meet, in all her seductiveness, made more attractive at a time when so many of the postmodern generation are dying from boredom, lost in a cosmos that seems to hold out little meaning or direction.

*Danger is out into the night
Danger she's such a pretty sight
She was treated so badly it seems, now
she's looking for a dream
Danger is out into the night*

*Danger she walks the streets alone
Danger all the bars she has to know
All the men that look her way could be
hers, hers today
Danger is out into the night*

*Locked into a love affair
didn't seem to go nowhere
With no choice she thought she might
Caution to the wind, right into the night*

*Danger she walks the streets alone
Danger all the bars she and I know
All the men that look her way
could be hers today
("Danger" by J. J. Cale)*



In a broken world, somehow the fear of death, the sense there is no significance beyond the whims of a cynical world, makes playing with danger all the more attractive. Which is why warnings without a recovery of hope are never enough. If there is no reason to wake up in the morning, playing at the edge of the abyss can be the only way we feel truly alive. It's the reason the film *Fight Club* has achieved cult status.

*Hard to thrill
Nothing really moves me anymore
Hard to thrill
Nothing really moves me anymore*

*There is nothing you can show me
That I haven't seen before
I've got time to kill
Keeping to myself inside this room
Time to kill
Keeping to myself inside this room
Over forty years of Fridays
You would give up trying too*

*Hard to thrill
Nothing really moves me anymore
("Hard to Thrill" by Eric Clapton & John Mayer)*

Both Cale and Clapton are understated on this album, as if both are making

way for the other, each honestly wanting the other to shine. It's more than a duet, more than a collaboration; *The Road to Escondido* is kindred spirits sharing the profound joy of a hard-won artistry and an easy friendship.

*Floatin' down that old river boy,
all my worries far behind,
Floatin' down that old river boy,
leave old memories way behind,
Yesterday is slowly fadin',
All my life, I've been waitin', for this time.*

*Ride the river in this boat, ride the river.
Ride the river in this boat, ride the river.*

*Floatin' down that old river boy,
leaves me feelin' good inside,
Floatin' down that old river boy,
tryin' to get to the other side,
Yesterday is slowly fadin',
I been waitin', now forever, for this ride.
("Ride the River" by J. J. Cale)*

In Spanish, "escondido" means "hidden." In this case I'd guess it refers to the mysterious yet inevitable final reality that awaits us as we walk down the path that shapes the story of our lives. The present moment is vital, of course, but maturity reveals that the present moment must be lived in light of the final reality or it is not lived at all. Which is why *The Road to Escondido* is an album that could not have been made earlier in their careers. It requires maturity to produce music like this. Maturity to face both the beauty of creativity and the darkness of our brokenness while refusing both despair and sentimentality. To hold out hope that someone might know how to walk into the mystery that is hidden at the end.

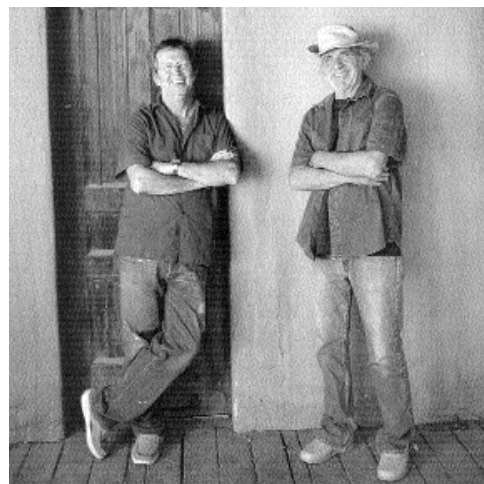
*Well I feel like I'm running down
a dead end road
Yes I feel like I'm running down a dead end road
I need some someone to tell me
which way I ought to go*

*I can't seem to catch up
distance keeps falling away
I can't seem to catch up
distance keeps falling away*

*Makes no difference where
I go dead end road every way*

*I feel like I'm running down a dead end road
Well like I'm running down a dead end road.
I need some one to tell me which way
I ought to go
("Dead End Road" by J. J. Cale)*

The Road to Escondido, one critic says, "is the sound of two friends getting together to sing a few songs for fun. It just happens they are both highly skilled musicians with 40 years of making music behind them." It isn't cutting edge or edgy as albums go, but every time I put it on I think of being with my own best friend, relaxed and at peace, which is its own special grace.



Source:

Critic Zane Ewton online (<http://www.rockn-world.com/features/06/jjcaleclapton.shtml>).

Using Words to Wound Instead of Heal

*It is not an enemy who taunts me--
then I could bear it;
it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me --
then I could hide from him.
But it is you, my equal, my companion,
my familiar friend.
[from a Maskil of David, c. 1000 BC]*

My memories of elementary school are fragmentary, and mostly negative. School yard bullies found me an easy mark, and always seemed to find me. Only rarely did physical violence transpire. I don't remember being beat up; I do remember being shoved, Napoleon Dynamite style, into lockers. What flew mostly in these encounters were not fists but words. Only words, but they were powerful. Powerful to hurt, to cause shame, to instill fear, to wound so deeply that being beat up seemed preferable. It's simply not true that words can never harm you. Some can tear at the fabric of your soul.

Power is never distributed completely evenly. Throughout the day, in various settings and relationships the equation shifts. At times by personality, expertise, age, size, or position we hold the greater balance of power. How we use it is a measure of our character. Sadly, in a broken world, we can misuse the power we hold. In such settings, when words are thrown, intentionally or not, to coerce or control or shame or belittle, it's called verbal abuse.

It can be hard to take words all that seriously. For one thing, sarcasm is fun. For another, our cynical age so echos with the highly charged rhetoric of talk-show hosts, evangelical pundits, and political commentators that it's easy to think words don't matter all that much. The apostle James, however, would not agree. He describes the tongue and the power of words to harm and abuse in terms that are worth reflecting on with care:

We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check. When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but

*no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men [and women], who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers [and sisters], this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers [and sisters], can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.
(James 3:2-12)*

If that sounds melodramatic--our tongues a fire set on fire by hell--it only proves how far we are from seeing the power of words realistically. Words that harm can wound hearts, kill dreams, fragment homes, extinguish hope, subvert love, poison a person's view of covenant relationships, wreck community, and shrivel souls.

Verbal abuse can occur in any relationship. In a small group Bible study I can add to the discussion or I can subtly manipulate people to accept what I say ("It's obvious..." "The very best commentators agree that..."). Instead of simply requesting help I can remind someone of how I've helped them, using guilt to get my way. Or I can use humor to embarrass someone and when they are hurt reflect the criticism back on them ("It was only a joke, for goodness sake; you're too thin-skinned"). As if the problem was in them.

Of course, among good friends who are equally adept at the fine art, a well-crafted insult can be cherished like a prized memory. Literature and the media are full of classics, old and new.

*"There's no more faith in thee than in a stewed prune."
(Shakespeare, Henry V)*

*"[Thou] appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors."
(Shakespeare, Hamlet)*

*"Would thou wert clean enough to spit upon!"
(Shakespeare, Timon of Athens)*

*"[Thy] kiss is comfortless as frozen water to a starved snake."
(Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida)*

*"I've had a perfectly wonderful evening. But this wasn't it."
(Groucho Marx)*

"If you ever become a mother, can I have one of the puppies?" (Charles Pierce)

"You're a good example of why some animals eat their young." (Jim Samuels)

Though verbal abuse can occur in any relationship, special concern needs to be given to its appearance in the home. The family is of vital importance both in the life of every individual and for the health of the wider society. Fathers who use words to harm help shape an unhealthy picture of God in their offspring. Women and children are easily abused since they are generally less powerful than men. And abuse in the home occurs behind closed doors, where it can be kept out of sight.

Christians who desire to be faithful as agents of reconciliation and healing in this sad world need to be aware of verbal abuse. We need to carefully consider how we use words, being sure our tongues are used to heal and not to harm. We need to know that verbal abuse occurs in the homes of Christians as well as in the homes of non-Christians. (In fact, studies show the rate of abuse is virtually identical in both categories.) And we need to make sure our living rooms are safe places for people who have suffered patterns of verbal abuse to share the pain they struggle to understand and perhaps are embarrassed to name.

A good place to begin is learning to identify, to name the types or categories of verbal abuse so we can recognize them for what they are.

Categories of Verbal Abuse

In *The Verbally Abusive Relationship*, Patricia Evans identifies 15 types of verbal abuse.

1. **Withholding.** The abuser uses silence, or a refusal to talk as a way to keep intimacy and communication from deepening. It is, Evans says, "a choice to keep virtually all one's

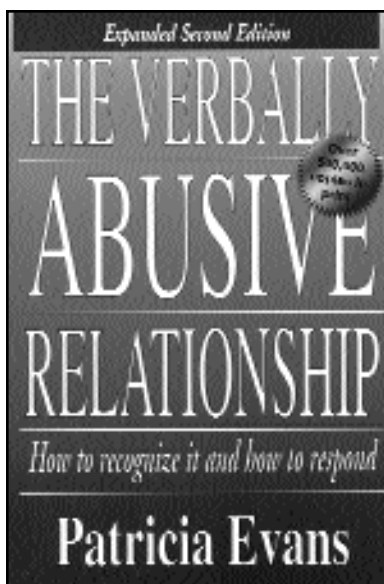
thought's, feelings, hopes and dreams to oneself and to remain silent and aloof towards one's partner, to reveal as little as possible, and to maintain an attitude of cool indifference." Statements like "There's nothing to talk about," or "What do you want me to say?" effectively end meaningful conversation.

2. **Countering.** The abuser finds ways to counter the ideas, dreams, or beliefs of the other person, constantly insisting on an opposite perspective. It's not cold but cool, the colors don't match but are off, critics would agree with me that the film isn't well made. These are not honest differences of opinion honestly discussed, but statements to end conversation, assertions that merely counter what the other has said. Attempts to sort it out are often met with, "You're just twisting my words around."

3. **Discounting.** This form of abuse "denies the reality and experience of the partner and is extremely destructive," Evans says. The statements used to discount are common enough. "You don't know what you're talking about." "You're too sensitive." "You take things too seriously." "You take everything the wrong way." Rather than address the difference in perspective, the abusive statements dismiss the person as incapable of having a perspective worth addressing.

4. **Abusive jokes.** Bringing up embarrassing moments or the unfortunate mistakes of someone might end an argument or produce a laugh from friends, but it can scar the other person. "It cuts to the quick," Evans says, "touches the most sensitive areas, and leaves the abuser with a look of triumph." If the partner is hurt, the abuser simply responds, smugly, "You can't take a joke," which only twists the knife. This form of abuse is doubly tempting, because humor can be redemptive (though abusive jokes never are), and because in a cynical age such comments seem like second nature.

5. **Blocking and diverting.** Here the abuser refuses to truly communicate and finds ways to control what is discussed and when. "Just drop it!" and "You always have to be right" don't resolve anything but they effectively end meaningful communication. Or the conversation can be diverted by switching the topic, raising unimportant issues, or making irrelevant comments designed to elicit a response. It can be hard to talk through hard things, but this sort of rhetorical manipulation is unkind and never helpful.



6. **Accusing and blaming.** Since we are all broken people, it is easy to find something in the other person that is wrong, but here the point is not to help someone grow but to wound them or control a conversation. Our anger is blamed on them, though the responsibility is ours. They are blamed for our failure though the fault is ours. "If you had made dinner on time we wouldn't be in this mess" isn't a way to express love or an excuse for my irritability.

7. **Judging and criticizing.** We all know these are potent weapons, and chances are have felt the sting of the abuse. "Your problem is..." "If only you had..." "She'd lose her head if it wasn't attached." The Scriptures teach us that the law kills, so Christians should know how such statements are always abusive. Being judged or criticized by someone we love can be extremely painful, especially if the judgment is expressed harshly. Words like that can be impossible to forget.

8. **Trivializing.** The abuser lets the other person know that whatever she is, knows, or does, is insignificant. It may be expressed overtly ("Can't you do anything of value?") or cynically ("Oh, isn't that nice!") or subtly ("Wow, am I impressed!"). Finding ways to belittle a person makes the abuser feel both powerful and significant, but the self-esteem achieved is pure wickedness. A person made in God's image has been trivialized, which is nothing less than trivializing God himself.

9. **Undermining.** Statements of disgust or other forms of put-down ("It's over your head," or "Whom are you trying to impress?") effectively undermine the person's self-esteem and equality. Interrupting them undermines them as well as controls the interaction. "Who cares?" is easy to say, but it's meaning cuts deep. It suggests the partner is out of their depth, and unworthy of careful attention.

10. **Threatening.** The threats will vary, since they will always be fine tuned to strike fear in the heart of the one being threatened. It might be a threat to leave, or to be hurt, or to be angry, or to be disappointed. In the home such threats are profoundly manipulative because wives and children realize instinctively the covenant nature of the family must not be broken. Thus on top of fear, guilt for threatening the relationship is born when in reality the threatened person is innocent.

11. **Name calling.** It's not just school-yard bullies that assign hurtful nicknames, and even sweet names can be said sarcastically. I know of a 12 year old boy who came home with a large black and blue knot on his forehead. He had been playing basketball and collided with a team mate in the rush to the basket. His father asked only "Did you cry?" and when the boy admitted he had, "sort of," the father snorted, "Real men don't cry," and went back to his study.

12. **Forgetting.** "I don't know what you are talking about" and "I never agreed to that" are designed to control, to deny, and to manipulate. Since we do all forget things, this form of verbal abuse is especially effective since it raises doubts about what really did transpire. It's also very convenient for the abuser, since it can be difficult to prove them wrong.

13. **Ordering.** Parents and spouses have all sorts of loving ways to ask someone to come to them without having to say, "Get in here!" This is not to deny that parents have a proper authority which should be exercised to save a child from their own worst tendencies. But some men have a pattern of ordering their family around--and in Christian circles such abuse is even defended at times with appeals to the Bible.

14. **Denial.** "I never said that." "You're getting upset about nothing." "I don't know where you got that." "You're making that up." Such statements end civil conversation by contradicting someone in the strongest possible terms. Done frequently enough, it can make the recipient wonder if they might not be crazy.

15. **Abusive anger.** Some men hold their wives and children hostage to the possibility of their anger and disapproval. It need not take the form of physical abuse--ranting, shouting, cold silence, and a look or glare of accusation all can be equally effective. What is so wicked about the exchange is that the abuser can feel pleased and self-righteous about the exchange, while the abused feels guilty for once again having failed to live up to expectations.

Dr Barbara Schaffer, a therapist with long experience

with abused persons adds a 16th category:

16. Bible guilt-tripping. Scripture, God's loving self-disclosure of grace in Christ can be twisted and used as a weapon. Verses are quoted to make someone feel they don't measure up, or to manipulate them into agreeing to believe in or do something. This is especially corrosive when the person being abused really does want to follow Christ.

There may be other ways to categorize verbal abuse, but these 16 categories are a good place to begin. They are ways that words can be used to harm. They can be used on a schoolyard or in the marketplace, though when they become a pattern in the relationships in a home they are especially destructive.

"If anyone considers himself religious," James writes, "and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless" (1:26). All of us Christians who take our faith seriously will want to take note.

Sources:

Psalm 55:12-13 (Revised Standard Version); *The Verbally Abusive Relationship: How to Recognize It and How to Respond* by Patricia Evans (Avon, MA: Adams Media Corporation; 1992, 1996) pp. 85-110; Schaffer in a lecture at Covenant Seminary.

For further study:

An excellent resource are the audio files (mp3) of the *Behind Closed Doors Conference on Abuse* with Drs Diane Langberg and Barbara Schaffer, hosted by Covenant Seminary. All the lectures are available free online at covenantseminary.edu. The talks are rooted in Scripture and reflect the wisdom of two godly and thoughtful therapists who have given their lives to help victims of abuse and their abusers.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

1. Identify the relationships of your life, both significant and extremely occasional, in terms of the power distribution involved. In which ones are you (relatively) powerful? Less powerful? Entirely powerless? Have you con-

sidered them in this light before?

2. What forms of verbal abuse have you suffered? How have they affected you?
3. What forms of verbal abuse have you witnessed? Where?
4. Which category of verbal abuse are you most tempted to use? In what situations? With whom?
5. Who do you need to approach to ask forgiveness?
6. Do you know of someone safe to talk about such things? Are you safe for people to talk to?
7. Whom have you known who consistently models a tongue that heals instead of harms? How can you grow to be more like them?
8. Since rules (the power of the law) will not tame our tongue, what power is sufficient? How can the grace of God be applied to our use of words? How can we grow in this area without getting discouraged? How can we practically help one another?

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In 2006 Preston Jones, a contributing editor to *Critique*, published a book with Greg Graffin called *Is Belief in God Good, Bad or Irrelevant?* (IVP). Graffin is the front man, songwriter, and vocalist for the punk band Bad Religion, and an evolutionary biologist (Ph.D., Cornell). Graffin thoughtfully engaged Jones, a historian (Ph.D., University of Ottawa) who is a committed Christian, on a wide range of issues including morality, the existence of God, music, and the meaning of life. I asked Jones to ask Graffin to name the three books he would encourage every Christian to read and discuss with care. These are the books Graffin recommends, and I gladly pass his recommendation on to you. All three are accessible, written by scholars who not only believe in evolution in terms of science, but also as the only reasonable basis on which to understand all of life and reality. -DDH

Darwin: A Very Short Introduction by Jonathan Howard (Oxford)

What Evolution Is by Ernst Mayr (Basic)

A Devil's Chaplain: Reflections on Hope, Lies, Science, and Love by Richard Dawkins (Houghton



In the Eighties, film writer, director, and producer Robert Lee Cantalon decided to "write the words of Jesus in modern language, and publish them outside the

New Testament." So he launched a project that took him across Europe, to libraries and universities, until *The Words of Jesus* was published in 1997 (New Haven Press). He decided to produce a spoken-word recording from the book, and invited singer Rickie Lee Jones to participate. Jones read the lines Cantalon had chosen for her and after a pause, said she'd rather sing them. *The Sermon on Exposition Boulevard* is the result. "I have known for a long time that the only song is the song to God," Jones says in the liner notes, "but never dreamed of hanging a sign on the door and saying, 'This where he lives, what he does.'" *The Sermon on Exposition Boulevard* is a poetic, musical experiment in creative, free-form spirituality. -



This Academy Award winning film (Best Foreign Language, 2004) is quirky, surprising, well-crafted, and designed to prompt sharp discussion. A dying professor nears the end of his life, a terminal disease relentlessly increasing his pain. Former mistresses and lifelong friends join his wife and estranged son to celebrate his life, to talk about things that matter, to reminisce, and to provide for his euthanasia at a lovely cabin on a secluded lake. Director Denys Arcand, who also wrote the screenplay, tells a deeply human story in which hard choices are faced by people who love one another and wish the best for one other. Like *Million Dollar Baby*, *The Barbarian Invasions* causes us to look deeply at life and death, and to see that simplistic answers are insufficient to the rich questions of life and death in a fallen world. -DDH

(99 minutes. Rated R for language, sexual dialogue, and drug use. Canadian, in French, subtitled.)



There used to be a great site site for indie music called Epitonic.com; it no longer exists so don't try the address. I owe that site some kudos though for

introducing me to the likes of Spoon and the now defunct Dismemberment Plan (their music still lives at www.dismembermentplan.com -- scroll down). *Ga Ga Ga Ga Ga* (2007) is the latest release from Spoon -- this Austin-based combo is still very much alive after six CD releases. Musically this album is a fun romp of very Beatle-esque power-pop melodies with many a well-crafted hook and lots of extra ambient studio bantor to make things fun. Lyrically, the title is quite fitting, as it seems that the album was rushed to market before the lyrics were fully finished. Thus we are left with lot's of "ga ga ga ga ga" in place of the typically clever Spoon lyrics which we are fed on releases like *Kill the Moonlight* (2002). -MEH



Some readers of *Discipleship Journal* were offended by their January/February 2007 cover. Should they be offended? And how should we relate to Christians who have radically different responses to such things? See page 4-5 for an exercise in discernment. - DDH



For readers unfamiliar with the *Qur'an*, this version includes the Arabic text and English translation, an introduction to each Súra (chapter), several brief essays on selected topics, and a verse-by-verse commentary.

The Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc.; New York). - DDH



Our Love to Admire (2007) is the third release from New York based Interpol. Recorded at the infamous Electric Ladyland and released on Capitol this CD marks not only a change in record labels, but a shift in sound akin to Joy Division's change to New Order. Keyboards play a heavier role and lyrics lose some of their depth. That said, the layered melodies still make for good ear candy. - MEH