

# COMMUNICATOR

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## Where Is Your Joy?

**God made us to know and experience delight. The desire for happiness is not a bad desire, but we can start looking for it in the wrong places.**

**F**or all of the joyful talk that is a part of our religion, real joy sometimes seems terribly scarce among Christians. There is a perfectly sensible reason for this. Life in this world is *serious* and often just plain *hard*. You can see it on the faces of people everywhere you go. We are stressed, distracted, worried, and tired.

In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he asks them an interesting question: "*What has happened to all your joy?*" (Galatians 4:15) The clear implication is that Christians should be living a life of joy. If we are not then something has gone wrong. I think what happened to the Galatians also happens to us. They didn't totally turn their backs on Christ, but they began to listen to other voices and that began to sabotage their joy.

This can happen even to pastors. What robs us of joy is probably not that we are living in willful disobedience. Sometimes, however, without even realizing it we begin to serve other gods. That may be hard to hear but I've noticed it in my own life. For example, sometimes I start desiring the affirmation of people more than the inner assurance that I am faithfully following God's will. When I do that, it's not long before joy takes a distant second to disappointment. There are a hundred ways to describe it, but the essence is the same. We get our eyes off Jesus who is the true source of our joy and we get our eyes onto people or things that can never measure up to the hunger of our hearts.

God made us to know and experience delight. The desire for happiness is not a bad desire, but we can start looking for it in the wrong places.

Thomas Aquinas said, "*No one can live without delight and that is why a man deprived of spiritual joy goes over to carnal pleasures*" (Wisdom of the Saints). If you find yourself getting dragged back into thoughts or behaviors that you really don't want to be a part of your life, it could be partly because your heart hungers for delight. But in a vacuum of true God-given joy, this world entices you to believe that delight can be found through what the Bible calls, "*the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.*" (1 John 2:16, KJV).

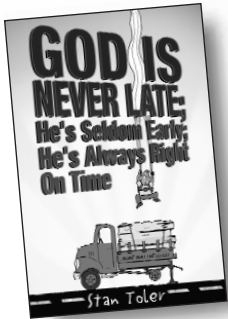
There's a hard question to face at this point: What faulty thinking or inappropriate desires are sabotaging your joy? If you can relate to Paul's question, there is an identifiable reason that joy eludes you. It has to do with what you really believe about who God is, or about who you are, or about what you think you deserve. It may be about choices you are making that move you outside God's will. It may be about a spirit of rebellion deep down that is hidden from all around you, except God. Could it be that secret sin that is eating away at your soul?

Joy is not something that just happens *to* you if you're lucky enough to have things work out right. Real joy is a matter of keeping your life properly aligned to God and refusing to dwell in some of the lifeless lies of our culture. Joy is the gift of God to you right now. The way to experience it fully is to repent from that which would draw you away from trusting totally in God as the source of your life.

-Jeren Rowell



By Stan Toler



**G**ive me patience God—but hurry!” Does it seem like God told you to take a number and move to the back of the line? Have you asked for patience but God hasn’t granted it yet? When we’re waiting on God to answer prayer, our timing and His timing are rarely the same. Sometimes it seems like God is in a different time zone altogether. We sometimes feel like we picked one of those numbers in the bureau of motor vehicles line and there are 78 others ahead of us. But we need God to wait on us—right away.

This book is about trusting God even when it seems He is run-

ning late. It’s about God’s perfect control over the times and events of our lives—and about His perfect power to order those events in a loving and meaningful way. Despite our anxiousness, impatience, and worry, God is faithful to work in our lives at just the right time. He’ll never be late.

*God is Never Late*. . . is the third book in a popular trilogy including: *God Has Never Failed Me, But He’s Sure Scared Me to Death a Few Times* and *The Buzzards are Circling, But God’s Not Finished with Me Yet*.

Stan Toler is the senior pastor of Trinity Church of the Nazarene in Oklahoma City.

(Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2004, 152pp., \$12.99, paper, COZZ083-412-1050)

BOOK BRIEFS

Recent publications you should know about

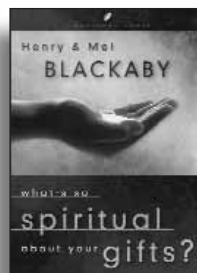
PRAYER

*Falling in Love with Prayer* by Mike MacIntosh. (Cook, 2004, 223pp., \$16.99, cloth, COZZ078-144-0076). MacIntosh has presented a traditional and biblical approach to prayer saturated with his own unique way of writing. It is for this reason that the book is so worthy of reading. There is no doubt that he holds prayer in very high regard. He deals with issues such as prayer utilized by poor and poverty stricken Christians as compared to prayer by those with many worldly possessions. In doing so, he skillfully reveals how materialistic the modern church has become. A study guide is included that covers each of the twelve chapters, making the book usable for a study group or by an individual. Some of the chapter titles include: “Praying with the Right Attitude”; “Growing in Prayer”; “The Eternal Value of Prayer”; “The Legacy of Prayer”; and “The Incredible Privilege of Prayer.” Within the pages of this book, one will find encouragement and guidance for the prayer life. The contents will motivate you to fall in love with praying unceasingly, as well as invigorating your current prayer experience. I recommend this book to all our readers. (SR)



DISCIPLESHIP

*What’s So Spiritual About Your Gifts?* by Henry and Mel Blackaby. (Multnomah, 2004, 96pp., \$9.99, cloth, COZZ159-052-344X). This little book is full of wonderful insights and teachings on the Holy Spirit’s work in the lives of believers. This is a great little reminder for those who have been on the journey for a while, and a simple introduction to the work of the Holy Spirit to those who are new to the Christian walk. The authors remind us that our “spiritual gifts” are from the Lord only for the purpose of serving him. God only equips and uses those pure of heart who will obediently follow His will. Excellent! (LA)

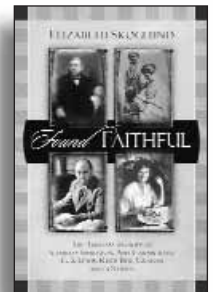


PASTORAL COUNSELING

*Before You Live Together* by David Gudgel. (Regal, 2003, 125pp., \$9.99, paper, COZZ083-073-2527). Pastors often encounter co-habiting couples in premarital counseling work. This is a thought provoking and realistic look at the issue. Using carefully gathered statistics, anecdotes, and biblical support, the author makes a strong argument against living together unmarried and for Christian marriage. This is an excellent treatment of a sensitive subject. (BR)

BIOGRAPHY

*Found Faithful* by Elizabeth Skoglund. (Discovery House, 2004, 330pp., \$12.99, paper, COZZ157-293-1051). *Found Faithful* is a collection of biographical sketches of “Saints of the Lord” and contains insights and excerpts from their life and writings. Skoglund has also included numerous devotional thoughts of encouragement and realism from their varied experiences. The reader will find themselves drawn deeper and deeper into the contents of the synopsis of the life of ten well-known and faithful Christians. The book is well written and easy to read. Included are stories of persons such as Charles Spurgeon, C. S. Lewis, Ruth Graham, Andrew Murray, and Dwight Moody. These vignettes are timeless because of the subjects selected and the author’s added insights. Skoglund presents these faithful Christians as flesh-and-blood people with real problems. They were sometimes wounded in their journey with God, yet remained faithful. One evident lesson is that “. . . victorious Christian living is not found in the elimination of problems. It is found in handling problems with all the resources we can gather . . . and the all-sufficiency of God.” Elizabeth Skoglund’s words are, “When we are realistic, we see life as a mix of pain and pleasure.” She shows the reader that meaning is not lost in suffering; rather it is often found there. The work is an excellent additional tool for devotional time and may also add illustrative material in sermon preparation. (SR)



(Reviewers: LeCrecia Mosher Ali, Sherman Reed, Bud Reedy)



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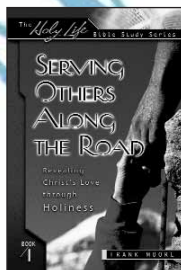
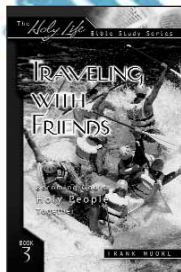
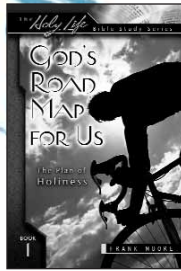
# NEW FROM BEACON HILL PRESS

**The Holy Life Bible Study Series, by Dr. Frank Moore, is a series designed to help Christians understand the meaning of holiness. Moore addresses real-life topics facing Christians who are struggling to live a holy life in our fallen world.**

**A practical, step-by-step approach to teach the concept of holiness.**

Each book in *The Holy Life Bible Study Series* includes thought-provoking reflection questions to stimulate discussion in a small-group study setting. The first book, *God's Road Map for Us*, outlines the plan of holiness. *The Journey Within* describes the individual's walk along the path of holiness. In *Traveling with Friends*, Moore challenges Christians to work toward community as they become God's holy people together. The fourth book, *Serving Others Along the Road*, commissions Christians to reveal Christ's love through holy living.

- God's Road Map for Us: The Plan of Holiness  
COZZ083-412-1093 .....\$7.99
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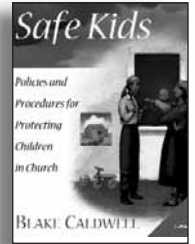
## New from LifeStream Ministry Resources!

Available August 2004

Child safety is a primary concern for unchurched parents. Churches can take active steps to assure both members and visiting parents that safeguards are in place for their child's protection.

*Safe Kids* is a manual designed to help churches structure the safest possible environment for their children's ministry. This manual provides:

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- And much more!



COZZ083-412-0852 \$89.99

**Safe Kids is the essential handbook for keeping children safe within the walls of the church.**

CHURCH OF THE COVERED DISH by Thom Tapp



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