

A PREZ RELEASE

from AGTS

(Monthly commentary from the President of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary)

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A Mile Wide and An Inch Deep

Richard Foster has written, "Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem." Yet, there is no lack of spiritual hunger in the world today, . . . whether the motivation be transcendence, self-actualization or just simply escaping pain and tragedy. Seeking an alternative to present desperate circumstances is a fairly regular pursuit of a lot of people today.

Particularly in the western world, our pursuit of a hope broad enough to neutralize our personal limitations has been infected by certain self-defeating tendencies. Whether you're into blaming postmodernism, the media or lack of prayer in schools, we live in what Alduous Huxley called a "Brave New World." This new world is one where we have so much available information that we are overwhelmed and thus allow self-centeredness to rule. 500 channels on DirecTV and countless websites provide so many choices that we have become a trivial culture controlled by self-defeating pleasures of personal pursuits. (If you don't think that is a reality just watch the Jerry Springer show for several days....if you can stand it.)

Is it any wonder that superficiality is the "curse of our age" and we settle for solutions for life issues that only last a short while. This reality only confirms what Screwtape told his nephew Wormwood (in C.S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters*) "All habits of the patient are still in our favor." In other words, without deep roots connecting us to God, circumstances and the current state of affairs will rule the day.

The reality I've just described is both good news and bad news for a vibrant Christianity. It's good news because lots of people are seeking a "final answer" ... something that will connect them in a shiftless age akin

to a bowl of Jell-O. But it's bad news if some current versions of Christianity are what we are offering to serious seekers of a transformed life. Whether it's 12-step Christianity, the God who can solve all your problems and make you happy Christianity, personal fulfillment Christianity or consumerism masquerading as revival Christianity.... To suggest that following Christ is instantaneous, simple or even the best choice we could pick, is to sell short the reality of the God who wants to transform all humankind.

The only journey with Jesus Christ that can yield eternal benefits is one that starts at the Cross. The Cross essentially says you can't bring your agenda and superimpose it on your relationship with God.... It's the other way around. And the fullest impact of a life following Christ only occurs when you let your roots grow deep into an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus Christ. Following Christ is not just a choice, (like whether or not you will buy Oprah's latest book selection) it is a journey of ever deepening connection to the eternal reality of the ruler of the Universe.

Psalm 1 describes the spiritual reality well. He shall be like a tree planted by streams of water which yields fruit in season (regardless of the weather).

Now there's a picture of life worth pursuing. A tree--with deep roots that exudes stability--sense and sanity in the middle of superficiality--eternal significance--not self-centered shallowness.

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Check it out. . .

BOOKS

I got my inspiration this month from several books authored by James Emery White, a pioneering pastor of new church models in Charlotte, N.C.

You Can Experience A Spiritual Life is published by Word ISBN#0-8499-3766-3

A Search for the Spiritual: Exploring Real Christianity published by Baker Book House ISBN# 0-8010-5818-X

Both books are really helpful for new or plateaued Christians. Written in plain English avoiding religious jargon.

DEADLINE APPROACHING FOR UPCOMING EVENT

Leadership Roundtable 2000

Sponsored by AGTS

St. Louis, Missouri, October 30-31, 2000

"Emerging Church Models for 21st Century Ministry"

- Hear Alton Garrison, pastor, First Assembly of God, North Little Rock, Arkansas, speak on "Renewal and the Established Church,"
- Hear Doug Oss, pastor, Capital Christian Center, Salt Lake City, Utah, speak on "Renewal and Generation X,"
- Hear Ray Berryhill, pastor, Evangel Assembly of God, Chicago, Illinois, speak on "Renewal and the Inner-City,"
- Hear Paul Grabill, pastor, Assembly of God, State College, Pennsylvania, speak on "Renewal and Impacting the Entire Community,"
- Hear Ron McManus, president, Equip Ministries, Atlanta, Georgia,
- Hear George Wood, general secretary of the A/G, Springfield, Missouri.

Space still available!

The Leadership Roundtable 2000 will be held at the Renaissance Hotel adjacent to the St. Louis Airport. Early registration fee is \$150 (after October 2, \$175). Fee includes all meals and computer disks of all presentations. To register or for more information contact jeutsler@agseminary.edu or call 800-467-AGTS.

Hotel reservations (\$79 per night) must be made directly with the hotel by calling 888-340-2594.