

GOOD BOOKS

Prof. R. Paul Stevens has written three slender paperback books on marriage that touch on the essence of the biblical teaching on marriage. *Married For Good. The Lost Art of Staying Happily Married* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1986) is a popular book that uses a building analogy to analyze marriage, emphasizing the foundation, the erection of the superstructure, and the renovation of marriage. The reader will find straight, heart-to-heart, and sometimes hard-hitting thoughts that are practical and not tedious or technical. The marriage vow is analyzed phrase by phrase. I found Gordon MacDonald's foreword illuminating when he stated: "I believe with Paul Stevens that [a marriage covenant is] ... extraordinary because a vow taken is heard in heaven and honored by the living God." The use of Jim Unger's "Herman" cartoons provided much-needed light relief because of the weighty topics treated.

Marriage Spirituality (Downers Grove, Ill: Inter-Varsity, 1989) is not just another marriage book. It delves deeper into issues treated in the Prof. Stevens' earlier book. It is an excellent book, but I spotted one flaw. Stevens writes: "to be married also means to celebrate a sacrament every day, all day, through everything we share, even when we are not together" (p.14). The thought is repeated in "A down-to-Earth Sacrament" (pp.18-19). While I understand the spirit of the sentiment, which is to underscore the sacredness of marriage, I find myself in disagreement with a view that regards marriage as a sacrament, because it reduces the significance of the only two sacraments clearly and uniquely instituted by our Lord. Nevertheless the beautiful sections on prayer, listening, service, sexual fasting, forgiveness, and mutual submission are worth reading and practicing.

Marriage. Learning from Couples in Scripture, by R. Paul and Gail Stevens (Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw, 1991) is part of the *Fisherman Bible Studyguide*. It is presented in the form of 12 easy-to-use, inductive Bible studies. It is ideal for study groups. Leaders of such groups would find the "Leaders' Notes" helpful as they provide anchor points to ensure that group discussion do not meander around individual penchants, as often happens. For help on a broader scale I would strongly suggest that group leaders (and members) read Prof. Stevens's two other books on this topic mentioned in this review.

NEWS BITS

* Dr. P. Satterthwaite will be giving a series of six lectures on "Interpreting Judges" (OT 355, 1.5 credits), starting Friday, 27th April which will go through the entire book of Judges, particularly examining the questions of character and leadership. For those who have studied Hebrew there are will also be some classes in which we will be reading through some parts of Judges in Hebrew. This will be a good opportunity to revise and/or practise your Hebrew on some of the easier narrative passages in Judges. Suitable for those who have completed BH 111 and 112.

* A word of apology to those who have not been receiving BTW in email form. Recently, due to a restriction imposed by Pacific Net we had to revamp in our address groups thus causing some names to be "lost". Efforts are being made to reinstate them and all should be well by 30 April. Hmm... if you're not receiving this by email and not getting the hard copy ... you're also not getting this apology. So we would appreciate you, dear reader, passing the word round if you hear any murmurs of discontent.



THE HOLY WEEK IN JERUSALEM MRS S.M PECK

(In her recent update Mrs Peck gives an eye-witness account of how Holy Week was celebrated in the city where it all began. It's such a pity we can give only an excerpt of her account, leaving out Pesach (cleansing the house of leaven) and Seder (passover meal).

PALM SUNDAY

The parade began at around 2 p.m. from the Mt of Olives down to the Old City retracing the route that our Lord Jesus would have taken on that day, riding on a colt. It was a mixed international, inter-religious(?) affair. Representatives of just about every church and denomination, Jews and Gentiles, believers and non-believers alike were in the throng. I prayed that the Lord would reveal Himself to these religious devotees behind their facade of incense smoke, endless chanting, rituals and sacred relics. Jerusalem is indeed a most unholy city at this time of the year. It costs only US\$5.50 per palm branch if you want to wave one in the procession.

GOOD FRIDAY

More of the same here. You may have seen or heard the news about the police escorts that were sent to forestall trouble. One group tried to stop "Jesus carrying his cross" from completing the route along Via Dolorosa. It was a case of "Police against Roman Centurions". By the way, the Centurions with their plastic helmets won. Good Friday? No, it was a tense Friday. The Muslims were gathered in large numbers on the Temple Mount and the mosque. The Jews overflowed the Jewish Quarter and spilled all over. The Christians were trying to complete the Stations of the Cross. The police and soldiers had to maintain some semblance of order. Sharpshooters were placed on all strategic rooftops. The only people who enjoyed it all were the shopkeepers who (according to one newspaper report) were trying to mask their mirth.

RESURRECTION SUNDAY.

God was gracious to me and I was able to attend the sunrise service at the Garden Tomb. It was a meaningful time worshipping the Risen Lord with hymns of praise in the early morning hour. We paused to pray for the Peace of Jerusalem, for the suffering and for our own countries. Songs of hallelujahs rang out to the neighbourhood. We were amused when the Director of the Garden tomb, before we sang the last hymn, reminded us not to take the words too literally: "If your presence doesn't go with us, do not send us out from here." He told us that we had to leave immediately after the service as the next group will be waiting to come in to use the place. Indeed, worship services had been scheduled for the whole day beginning with the German language worship at 5 a.m. Our 6.30 a.m. English service was followed by French, Russian, Finnish and other language worship services.

What have I learned? Here is a sample:

1. In this "Cradle of Christianity" as one book title proclaims, the people are just as spiritually blind as we who live half a world away are. Do pray for those who live as witnesses for Christ here.

2. It is not where we are but where Christ is in our lives that matter. Friends have asked if being in Jerusalem during this Holy Week made any difference to me. My answer would be Yes and No.

3. This Passover Week school break may seem a good time to hit the museums. At least that was what I had scheduled. Jerusalem is filled with people (local) who make their annual pilgrimage to the Holy City. Every place I went to was packed with crowds. You "seliha" (excuse me) your way through the milling crowds along the narrow streets – same streets as in the ancient days. I can just imagine our Lord Jesus and his family making that same pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Groups comprised adults of various ages and many children. Extended families? They certainly traveled together in the tourist coaches, and they watched out for each other. It was difficult for me to try to figure out which children belonged to which couple. It could have been the same with our Lord's family too when they went to Jerusalem. That was why his absence wasn't noticed till much later.

 Chapel

Walter Edman brought the chapel message, entitled "The Reluctant Church". Here he gives a synopsis:

Several years ago I began to learn about Unreached People Groups (i.e. cultural-ethnic groups of people without access to the Gospel in their own language and culture). Initially I assumed that Unreached People Groups (UPGs) live in geographical areas where no Christians from other ethnic groups live. This assumption was incorrect. The fact is that UPGs often live in the same geographical region as other cultural groups who have a high population of Christians. Unfortunately these Christians seldom make efforts to reach out cross-culturally to share the Gospel with the individuals of the UPG.


Having made this observation regarding many UPGs in many countries of the world, I have come to the conclusion that Christians have a strong tendency to reach out only to people of the same ethnic and cultural group as themselves and not to reach out to people who are ethnically and culturally different than themselves.

As one looks in the Book of Acts, one finds this same tendency in the early church. This observation has led some Bible scholars to conclude that the author of Acts, Luke (a Gentile), actually wrote the book with a sub-purpose of reproving the early Jewish Christians, especially the apostles of Jesus. In the early chapters of Acts, Luke the Gentile presents the early Christians as a church which is reluctant to move out in obedience to Christ's command and to preach the Gospel to non-Jews (Acts 1:6; 8:4; 10:34-35; 11:3, 19; 15:1-19). In the latter chapters of Acts, Luke presents the positive model (especially in the example of Paul) of obeying Christ's command to share the Gospel cross-culturally.

By way of personal application to Christians today, I make three suggestions:

- 1 Recognize this tendency in ourselves as Christians – this tendency to reach out only to people who are like us culturally and ethnically.
- 2 Seek to overcome this tendency in obedience to Christ's command that Christians preach the Gospel to all people groups: pray for and reach out to people of a different cultural and ethnic group than yourself.
- 3 Help your church overcome this same tendency – even though your church may be strong in reaching out monoculturally. Support and promote efforts in cross-cultural outreach.

**We wish these who celebrate their birthdays
this week God's richest blessings**



Mr Chiam Cheng Kiat 23/4
 Mr Menon K Prabhakara 24/4
 Ms Tan Siew Goh 24/4
 Mrs Ee Pauline 27/4