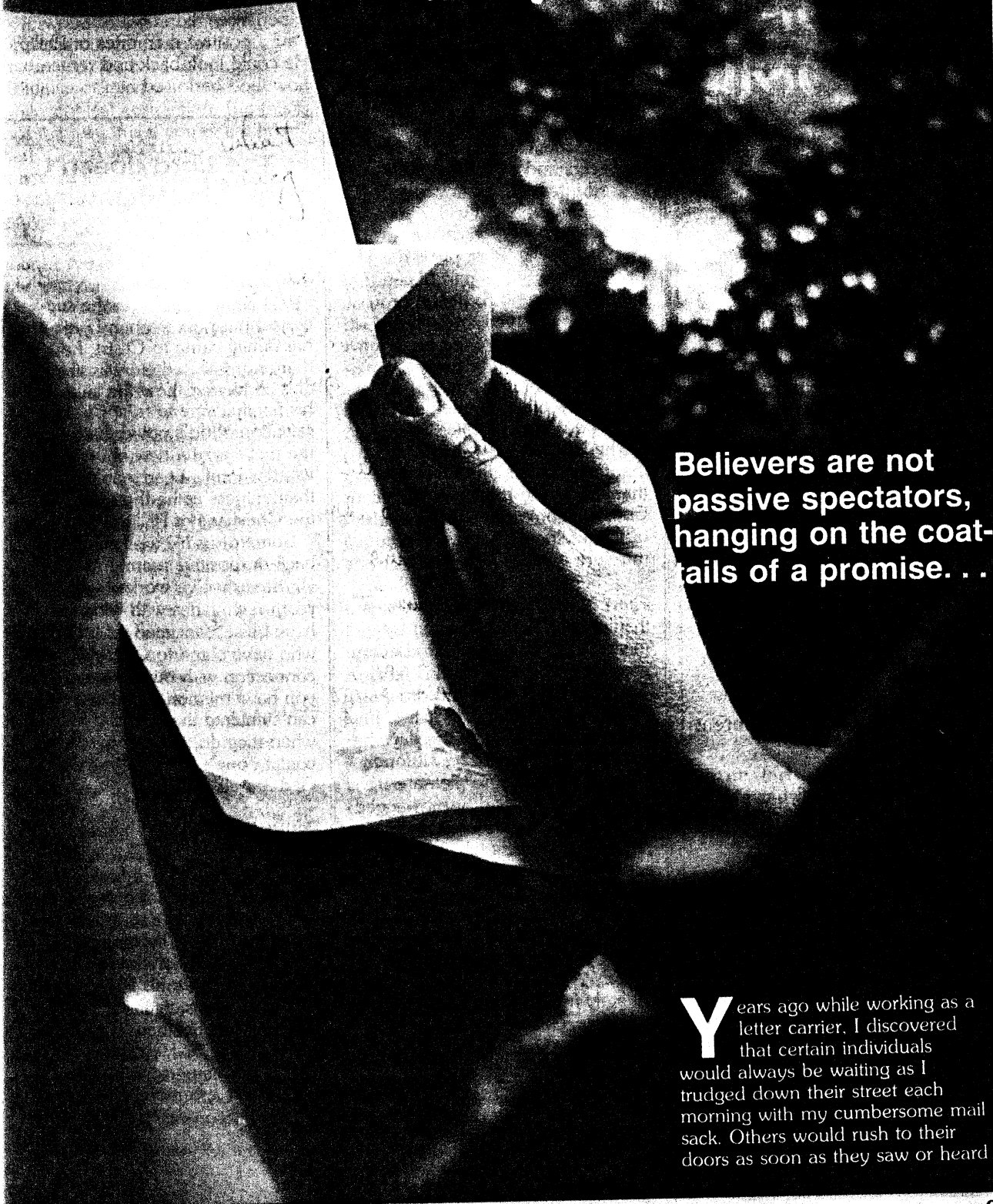


# We are partners

Paul E. Engle



Believers are not passive spectators, hanging on the coat-tails of a promise. . .

**Y**ears ago while working as a letter carrier, I discovered that certain individuals would always be waiting as I trudged down their street each morning with my cumbersome mail sack. Others would rush to their doors as soon as they saw or heard

# INCREASE YOUR INCOME

PRAIRIE  
BIBLE INSTITUTE  
GIFT  
ANNUITIES

## OFFER YOU

- 41** Safety, Security, Satisfaction
- 42** HIGHER than average rates
- 43** Several different plans

We want to help you invest your money in a way that it will profit you most.

Write today for a free booklet on Prairie's Gift Annuities.

Mr. Ron Hewitson  
Dept. M  
PRAIRIE BIBLE INSTITUTE  
Three Hills, Alberta, Canada  
TOM 2A0

## FOUNDATIONS

me approaching.

Although not everyone greets the mailman with such enthusiasm, most of us are pleased to receive a personal letter.

The New Testament is full of personal letters for which we should be thankful in a deeper way. One was originally addressed to the church in the Greek city of Philippi. Paul wrote to the saints who constituted the church, and also their leaders whom he called overseers and deacons.

God intended, however, that this letter should have a wider audience, both geographically and chronologically. Philippians has been recognized as part of canonical Scripture and has been providentially preserved through the centuries. You have the prerogative today of receiving this letter as God's authoritative correspondence to teach, rebuke, correct, and train you in the Christian life.

The letter opens with six verses that teach us the importance of thankfulness in the life of Christians. Consider some of the characteristics of thankfulness and see how you measure up.

FIRST WE DISCOVER that Paul's thanksgiving was stimulated by memories. "I thank my God every time I remember you" (1:3 NIV). Thinking about his friends in Philippi triggered thanksgiving. Paul had fond memories of the days he spent in that Greek city, although certainly not all were pleasant memories. Paul had been dragged by some angry citizens into the public marketplace where false accusations were made against him.

We are told in Acts 16 that "the crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was

Dr. Engle is pastor of the Village Church of Lincolnshire, IL.

commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in stocks" (vv. 22-24).

However, these unpleasant experiences didn't overshadow Paul's positive memories of Philippi. He could look back and remember how God had used him to establish

## The Lord doesn't do things halfway.

that particular church.

Paul could recall how the successful business woman Lydia and her family came to Christ; how a demon-possessed girl was liberated and converted; how the jailer and his family came to trust Christ for salvation. God's power had created the nucleus of a new church. No wonder Paul's heart was moved to thankfulness as he thought about the Christians of Philippi.

Some of us likewise can look back on positive memories of Christians we've worked with in the past, of churches with which we have been associated, of individuals who have come to Christ in connection with our outreach. Do you have memories like that? They can stimulate thanksgiving and when they do, it is difficult to contain one's joy and gratitude to God.

PAUL'S THANKS WERE expressed Godward in prayer. This is the outlet the Lord has provided for us as well. Prayer is not only a vehicle for petition, but is also a vehicle for the expression of thanksgiving. Paul wrote that he spent time in prayer thanking God for his Philippian brothers and sisters in Christ.

Did you notice how he refers to God in verse 3? He calls Him "my God." God is personal, not impersonal. If we are members of the

ather's family we can approach  
im personally as our God. We  
in carry on a personal conversa-  
on because He is approachable in  
ayer. He's not like a god of  
one.

It's hard to imagine carrying on a  
ersonal conversation in front of a  
one god. It's hard to imagine  
raying to a god who is merely a  
hilosophical abstraction. But this is  
ot the way it is if you're a Chris-  
an. God is an approachable,  
ersonal God who desires that we  
xpress our thanks to Him in  
ayer.

We see that Paul expressed  
anks repeatedly. This is implicit in  
e present, continuous tense of the  
reek verb translated "thank"  
v.3). Its usage indicates continuing  
ction.

Paul's thanks didn't stop with the  
onversion of Lydia and her  
ousehold. Nor did his thanks  
ease when he had left the  
hilippians. He was writing the  
hilippian letter approximately ten  
ears after planting the church—  
till offering thanks to God.

On each occasion when he  
hought of the Philippians, he  
ould breathe a prayer of thanks to  
he Father. Is this a characteristic of  
our prayer life—persistent thank-  
ulness? Have you thanked the  
ord for other Christians in your  
hurch? Do you thank Him for  
hem still today?

Another fact to notice in this  
ortion of Scripture is that Paul's  
hanks resulted in joy. Some have  
alled Philippians a letter of joy.  
The term "joy" or "rejoice" is used  
seventeen times in this letter.

Paul touches on this theme at the  
eginning in verse 4 where he tells  
us that his prayers were made with  
oy. What was he doing in these  
prayers? He was thanking God for  
the Philippians. Notice also that his  
thankfulness led to joy, as it will in  
your experience also.

Have you ever had a day where  
t seems that absolutely everything  
s going wrong? You awaken to find  
hat the alarm didn't go off which

means you're going to be late for  
work. Your only tube of toothpaste  
has strangely disappeared. The  
toast burns.

The car won't start. Finally, after  
several futile attempts to get the  
motor to turn over, you realize the  
battery must be dead. And so it  
goes.

However, you can still determine  
not to allow circumstances to warp  
your disposition. In the moments  
while you wait for a friend or  
mechanic to help you with your  
car, you may look up to God in  
prayer.

You can thank Him for who He  
is, for all His glorious attributes and  
for what He has done in sending  
Jesus Christ. If you do, you will  
discover your very thankfulness  
begins to generate an inner joy, in  
spite of outward circumstances.

This joy is one of the identifying  
marks of the Christian. One of the  
best ways to cultivate the fruit of  
joy is by repeated thanks to God in  
prayer.

PAUL WAS A perennially thankful  
Christian. That does not mean the  
apostle went around muttering  
"Thank you, thank you Jesus,  
thank you." He didn't make  
thankfulness a transcendental  
meditation mantra or a Hare  
Krishna chant to produce euphoria.  
The word "thanks" isn't a mystic  
formula that can be used to conjure  
up a kind of inner gratification.

Paul's thankfulness had specific  
content as we see in verses 5 and  
6. In these verses he gives an  
immediate reason for his gratitude.  
He also gives an ultimate reason.

Paul's immediate reason for  
thanks was the fellowship, the  
*koinonia* of the Philippian church.

What do we mean by "fellow-  
ship?" It's a biblical term, but one  
that's often misunderstood by  
reason of misuse. Some people  
think of fellowship as when they sit  
down with friends over coffee and  
doughnuts to chat and chew.  
However even non-Christians can  
enjoy that kind of camaraderie, so

# Don't just take our word for it. Take Robert Nicholson's.

"As the editor of a 'de-  
nominational hymnal,' I  
am impressed by the  
superb song selection and  
intrigued by the rich array  
of worship resources, un-  
matched in any hymnal I  
have seen. It has been  
very moving to hear our  
entire college community  
sing such songs as Stain-  
er's 'God So Loved the  
World'. . . For many con-  
gregations **HYMNS FOR  
THE FAMILY OF GOD**  
will be a marvelous sup-  
plement to their own de-  
nominational heritage  
songs. It excites me very  
much!"

Robert A. Nicholson  
Vice President and Dean  
Anderson College  
Anderson, Indiana

Write for free four-color bro-  
chure and recorded introduction  
to **HYMNS FOR THE FAMILY  
OF GOD**.

Alexandria  
Dept. M House  
Box 300 / Alexandria, Indiana 46001

Hymns  
for the  
Family of God

## Opportunity

People needed for leadership roles in each state to begin a new Bible study organization. State, local directors, and teachers will be chosen soon.

If you will help to share the Word of God with others, please write to:

Dr. B. Thompson  
Moody Monthly  
2101 West Howard St.  
Chicago, IL 60645

Do something exciting this summer . . . plan your vacation in beautiful East Tennessee . . . and include the

### Summer Bible Conference at Bryan College

JULY 21-27, 1979

SOMETHING FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY



Dr. Van Gorder

- Inspiring messages
- Air conditioned facilities
- Afternoon recreation
- Low rates
- Special program for children
- Home-cooked meals
- Special music every day

#### FEATURED SPEAKERS

Dr. Paul Van Gorder  
Associate teacher on Radio Bible Class  
Dr. Karies Leyasmeyer  
Former Communist, noted authority on world affairs  
Dr. Louis Hamada  
Converted Arab, noted authority on Middle East  
Mrs. Dolores Cooley (Music)  
Soprano soloist from Chattanooga

Write for free Conference brochure and plan a vacation you will remember.

#### SUMMER BIBLE CONFERENCE

BRYAN COLLEGE • Dept. MM • Dayton, TN 37321

Please send me \_\_\_ Bible Conference Brochures.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

## FOUNDATIONS

there must be more involved in "fellowship" than pleasant associations.

The word *koinonia* means "to have in common, to share, to be partners." It's a partnership among those who are linked to Jesus Christ, a oneness which goes much deeper than just sharing food and small talk.

Biblical fellowship is the sharing of a common family identity as brothers and sisters in Christ, the sharing of ministry together in Christ's Church, the sharing of bearing one another's burdens, the sharing of sitting down together with open Bibles.

Paul had experienced this kind of genuine fellowship in Philippi and he thus gives thanks for this experience. In verse 5 he calls it "fellowship in the gospel," or, as the New International Version puts it, "your partnership in the gospel from the first day till now."

Acts 16 gives us a glimpse into the fellowship that Paul experienced in the first days at Philippi. Lydia and her household came to faith in Christ. Following her conversion, she invited Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke to stay in her home.

Lydia's home became a gathering place for the new church. Are you using your home, however humble or grand, to further the work of Christ? If so, you are probably encouraging fellowship in your church.

Acts 16 also records what happened to the jailer and his family on the eve of their conversion. An instant bond of fellowship with the apostles motivated the jailer's family to share. The jailer began by washing the wounds of Paul and Silas and inviting them into his home for a meal. How thrilling it must have been to sit around that dinner table in the warmth of Christian fellowship.

That jailer's family become part of the new church family in Philippi. They labored with Paul as partners in establishing the church. When Paul reflected on that fellowship, he was full of thanks, writing in verse 5, "I always pray

for joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."

"First day" refers back to the initial planting of the church. But the fellowship continued even after Paul had left their city. The Philippians continued to fellowship with Paul by sending him missionary gifts. In fact that was one reason for writing this letter.

Paul wanted to thank them for their gifts. So in chapter 4 he said, "When I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need."

That's real fellowship! It did more than stir the emotions. It moved the believers to action, the act of sharing with a brother in need. This is all part of what it means to experience fellowship in the gospel, and Paul was thankful for it.

Have you experienced the warmth of Christian fellowship? Have you been helped in time of need by other Christians? Have you been able to help others? Then let it move you to thank God. Don't take fellowship for granted. Thank the Lord in your daily prayer times this week and every week.

THE IMMEDIATE REASON for Paul's thanks was the Philippians' fellowship in the gospel. But there was a second reason, an ultimate reason—God's faithful perseverance in the lives of the Philippians. Paul wrote in verse 6, "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Paul was confident it was God who had begun a good work in the Philippian believers. What does it mean to "begin a good work?" The same terms are used in Gal. 3:3 where they refer to the conversion of individuals.

Here Paul is looking back at the conversion of the Philippians and the planting of the church with confidence that God himself had

## FOUNDATIONS

begun the work in them and that, therefore, their conversion was genuine. It was God who had taken the initiative in their lives. Acts 16:14 says of Lydia, "The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message."

Paul had confidence in God's ability to go beyond those first important steps in salvation. He was confident God would complete the good work He had begun in the Philippians. Paul didn't worry about Lydia, or the former occultist, or the jailer. God would carry out His work in each of them in spite of the attacks against the church and the suffering of its members.

The apostle alludes to these assaults throughout his letter. In 1:28 he speaks of those who assault them; in 2:15 he reminds them that they live in a crooked and depraved generation, and in 3:18 he talks about the enemies of the cross of Christ.

It wasn't easy to be a Christian in first century Philippi, nor is it easy to stand for Christ in contemporary society. Yet God is still able to complete the work He began in us when we were saved.

The Lord doesn't do things by halves. The evil of the world and the opposition of the enemy are never too strong to prevent God's sovereign purposes from being completed.

Do you have any projects you have started, yet not finished? Perhaps your husband or wife asked you to do something around the house and you've not completed it. There may be some projects you'll never complete.

Praise the Lord that He never has that problem. He never leaves a job half done. When God chooses to save a person He persists in working in that person's life and will complete the project at the return of Christ. How reassuring it is to know this fact.

Perhaps you are concerned about a friend or relative who professed to make a commitment to Christ, but has since wandered away. Was it God who began a genuine work in that person?

Sometimes that's difficult to discern. But if it was the Lord who began the work, then that same Lord is sufficient to carry His work to its completion. God can draw His own people back to Himself with bands of love.

A WORD OF caution is in order, however. God's work will be carried out, but with the accompanying persistence of the person involved. The promise of verse 6 applies to those who were partners in the gospel "from the first day until now" (v.5). They were living up to their own responsibility to persevere in the Christian life.

Believers are not passive spectators, hanging onto the coattails of a promise. We're responsible to prove that God has begun a good work in us by persevering in the faith, even when the way is difficult. As we so live, God guarantees that He will carry out His work.

Those of us who are parents either have already seen, or will some day see the time when our children leave home. As they enter college or the service, or a career, we may be apprehensive. Will they withstand the pressures of spiritual warfare?

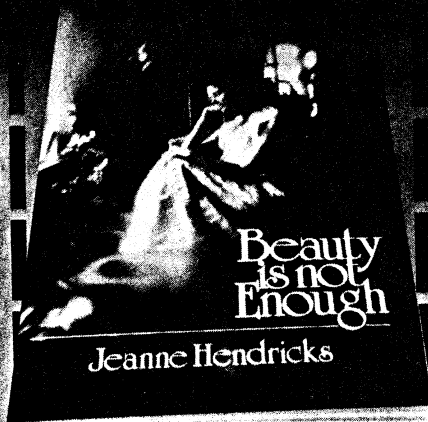
Or some of us may be involved in disciplining new Christians. When the time comes for us to move on, we're concerned as to whether they will withstand the pressure of spiritual warfare.

When Paul was separated from his friends, he rested on the confidence, that He who began a good work in them would carry it on to completion "until the day of Christ Jesus."

What a comforting promise to quiet our anxieties! God will complete all His projects in His chosen people. What a cause for rejoicing and thanksgiving!

Why not take time to express thanksgiving now? Thank God in prayer if you've experienced the warmth of Christian fellowship. Thank God for His promise faithfully to complete His work in His own people. Including you, of course.

# Spiritual guidance like this usually isn't FREE!



Are your looks important to God? You'll find perceptive answers in **Beauty Is Not Enough**. Jeanne Hendricks, wife of noted Dallas Seminary professor Howard Hendricks, draws six contemporary principles from the life of Esther and reveals how to gain the beauty both God and man admire. This helpful booklet is yours . . . FREE, for the asking.

Please send me the free booklet, **Beauty Is Not Enough**.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ MM/5/79

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to:

Dallas Theological Seminary  
3909 Swiss Avenue  
Dallas, Texas 75204