

## *A Gwen Shamblin Update*

Shamblin now projects herself as a full-fledged preacher, as she broadens her outreach to include people, "dealing with addictions other than food, such as alcohol, cigarettes, and sexual obsessions."

As to the inroads this work of error will make among our brethren, only the Lord knows. We do, however, as individuals have a serious responsibility to be aware of the dangers of this innovations.

In the [February 1999, issue of Banner of Truth](#) we carried an article entitled, "Gwen Shamblin's Weigh Down Program Weighs Up With Doctrinal Error." In that article we discussed the beginning of the Shamblin program and pointed out some specific errors which are held by her and others involved in her program. Our primary concern was, and still is, that Gwen Shamblin is a member of the church of Christ and the error which she upholds will adversely affect the Lord's church. Already, a number of congregations are involved in the program as participants. This is a clear violation of God's will in that it is bidding "God speed" to error (2 John 9-11; Eph. 5:11).

Due to the increased participation in this program by our brethren, and the increase of error by Shamblin, we believe there is a need to sound a warning for the benefit of brethren who are serious about living according to God's will as revealed in His word. We are well aware that it is impossible to force people to have the respect for God's inspired word that He intended. Therefore, we don't try to force anyone to do God's will, but we feel a sense of responsibility in pointing out that which is contrary to God's will, trusting that some will heed the warning.

In this **Update** on the activities of Gwen Shamblin and her growing program we will be repeating some things which were discussed in the February article last year. We believe this is needful since a great many members of the church are still uninformed about this rather recent innovation which is being characterized by increased error as time passes. The response to the article of almost a year ago was considerable, with much of it being negative. This response is evidence of attitudes toward error. It is quite obvious that some have almost no knowledge of God's word and some seemingly simply don't care what God's word says. This latter group will do whatever they desire anyway. In some cases it may be a combination of lack of knowledge and indifference. In this discussion we will give attention to some of the error involved in the Shamblin Weigh Down program, but we first want to give some background of the Shamblin Program.

**THE WEIGH DOWN PROGRAM BEGINS**

Shamblin, a registered dietitian, was a faculty member of a university in Memphis for five years. She has worked as a nutritionist for the state health department, focusing her consulting practice to weight control since 1980.

It was in 1986 that Shamblin founded the Weigh Down program for weight loss. The first Weigh Down program to be hosted by a church was in 1992, when Shamblin presented her program to the ministers of the Bellview Baptist Church in Memphis, to get their approval. Bellview Baptist is said to have an attendance of 12,000 on Sunday, a good potential for recruits.

The coordinator for this first church-sponsored program was Joyce Smith. It is interesting to note what Smith says about the results of that program. She said several had come to know Christ as their Savior, several had become members of the Bellview Baptist Church and other churches in the area.

The results of the program at Bellview Baptist constitutes strong evidence for the basis of concern about the Shamblin Program from a spiritual standpoint. Let me make it clear that I'm not opposed to losing weight when there is a need for it. Neither am I saying that there is no worthwhile information in Shamblin's book, *The Weigh Down Diet*. I am concerned however. First, Gwen Shamblin is a member of the church of Christ, yet she is responsible for some people becoming members of the Baptist Church and/or other denominations. The Baptist Church is unknown to God's word, as are all the man-made churches. It is a serious matter to encourage people to become part of something which God does not recognize and in which there is no true hope, only false hope. Second, I'm concerned that Shamblin's book and other aspects of her program are upholding and teaching that which is in clear opposition to God's word, error of the rankest sort. In the third place, the primary business of Gwen Shamblin is the furtherance of her Weigh Down program, yet she is using God's word and making merchandise of it to promote her program. This is indeed a most serious matter. We shall say more about this later and give evidence for our conclusion.

### THE GROWTH OF WEIGH DOWN

The growth of Shamblin's program has been no less than phenomenal. *The Lipscomb News*, April 1998, reported that the program "has grown to more than 20,000 classes in every state in the U.S. and in more than 71 countries worldwide." Shamblin's book, *The Weigh Down Diet*, had reportedly sold 500,000 copies at \$21.00 each. Shamblin has gained publicity through a number of national news sources.

The Abilene Christian University *News*, Sept. 17, 1999, reports that "the program has grown to over 30,000 locations with nearly half a million participants in the U.S., Canada and 68 countries worldwide." My concern about the growth of the program is that as it becomes more widespread, more of our liberal-minded brethren will become participants. As such they will become partakers of serious error, bidding "God speed" to that error which can claim the souls of men. That some congregations of the Lord's people and some of "our schools" have already become supporters of this innovation of error is a great disgrace to the cause of Christ! It appears that the matter will only get worse. That is, unless there is powerful opposition on the part of the faithful.

### MAKING MERCHANDISE

### OF GOD'S INSPIRED WORD

As stated earlier, the primary business of Gwen Shamblin is the furtherance of her program. The **preaching** and teaching which she is doing will not, as far as I've been able to learn, result in people becoming New Testament Christians. Yet, her program, which ACU described as "God-based," relies upon the continual emphasis upon God for its furtherance, to such a great degree. If the mention of God,

Christ and the Holy Spirit was removed from Shamblin's book, there would be very little left. In her book, *The Weigh Down Diet*, Shamblin begins by attributing the success of her program almost entirely to God. In the introduction to her book, p. xi, she says, "This book emphasizes God's power—not 'will power.'" Then, she says that it wasn't diet or weight-loss groups that helped thousands lose nagging extra pounds, "it was God." Shamblin goes on to imply that God may be guiding an individual to participate in her program, apart from any cooperation on the part of the individual. She says, "...—do not think of yourself at all. If God puts this course of action on your heart, then come along."

From the above it would seem that if God doesn't put "this course of action" on the heart of one who needs to lose weight, that He is a "respector of persons." Yet, the apostle Peter perceived that "God is no respector of persons" (Acts 10:34). In fact, I could stand to lose a few pounds myself, but God hasn't put the Weigh Down program on my heart, and I am in possession of Shamblin's book.

Emphasizing that this business of weight loss is completely in God's hand, Shamblin begins page 1 of her book, "With God's help you *can* learn to stop in the middle of a meal..." Then on page 11 she implies that God's hand is in complete control when it comes to weight loss. Just as God delivered the Israelites from slavery, so God has rescued thousands from the love of food and unwanted pounds, Shamblin says. It is at this point that the miraculous is brought in, when the statement is made, "There is hope for you, for it is by no coincidence that you have picked up this book." She then adds, "You will ultimately find that God has *everything* to do with weight control!" If God has *everything* to do with weight control, why doesn't He do something about the millions in our country who are considerably overweight? Again, this raises the question, "Is God a respector of persons?" The Bible believer will answer, "No."

In Shamblin's book there is a continuing emphasis upon just leaving everything up to God and that man's "will power" has nothing to do with losing weight. In her book of 317 pages, other than the introduction, God is mentioned in more than 250 pages, with several times on many pages. Many, many passages of Scripture are referred to. But with all this, there is nothing to prove that God will cause man to lose weight apart from man's own will power and cooperation. If God would do that, why wasn't He doing it before Gwen Shamblin came along with the Weigh Down program? It is rather absurd to think that God's power to bring about weight loss apart from man's will power was kept on hold for all these centuries before Shamblin appeared! Without all the emphasis upon God Shamblin's program would soon pass away. It is due to this that I contend that she is making merchandise of God and His word by using the same for the promotion of her program.

## SHAMBLIN'S PROMOTION OF

### ERROR THROUGH HER BOOK AND OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

In the overall sense, the teaching that God will bring about weight loss in a direct way and/or apart from man's "will power" is false teaching. It is not in accordance with "the doctrine of Christ" (2 Jno. 9). Beyond the error as noted above, there are many specific instances where error is clearly taught. We shall note some of these, but there are too many to consider all of them. It is usually the case, however, that if an individual will not take note of half a dozen errors, neither will he take note of a dozen or more. We shall first consider some errors in Shamblin's book, of which there are many.

**"Man-made rules will not work."** (p. 4). It is here stated that man-made rules will not bring about weight loss. One doesn't have to be very smart to know that some people **do lose weight** by following rules made by man. I lost weight many years before I heard of Gwen Shamblin. This bold, untrue, statement by Shamblin should cause readers of her book to note other things she says, as to their

truthfulness.

**Filled with His Spirit.** (p. 61). *Wayne R. Russell* says he prayed to God to fill him with His spirit and take away his hunger. *Russell* says it works. From a study of the New Testament it is clear that the direct operation of the Holy Spirit is no longer occurring. That "which is perfect" (the completed revelation) has come and the miraculous has ceased (I Cor. 13:8-10). Shamblin is responsible for the error in the various testimonies included in her book as well as for what she says directly.

**God is your Father** (p. 68). Shamblin says, "Don't be afraid of running to God. He is your Father!" Is this true? Only those who are of God's family can rightfully say that God is their Father. The church is the "house of God," in the sense of a family (I Tim. 3:15). Unless one is a member of the Christ-built and blood-purchased church, one is not in God's family (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28). Shamblin doesn't mention this, and her statement may well lead some to believe God is their Father when such is not true at all.

**God gives Gwen a sign** (p. 122). She relates how that she was driving to work and prayed to God that He would give her a sign that He was still there and loved her. She asked for "maybe a bird." Well, before she got the words out of her mouth, she says, a dove on a mailbox jumps out at her. She relates how that a man listening to a Weigh Down tape, took her advice to ask God for a sign of His presence. The man asked for a cardinal and a bluebird together. Sure enough, before thirty minutes there were both birds on a bird feeder. Now, seriously, what reason do we have to believe that God is working with people in that way today? It is even more absurd to believe that God will work in such ways with those who are participating in the Weigh Down program, but not with others. I'm not denying that some people will believe just about anything, whether or not there is any evidence for believing it. When it comes to spiritual matters it is difficult to accept the gullibility of people which is so often demonstrated.

**God Wakes Gwen Up** (p. 140). She says she has not used an alarm clock for years, but that she just asks God to wake her at the right time and He does. She goes on to say that she now interprets most love songs as God singing to us, since love and romance were all God's own idea. God singing to us through the love songs we hear today? How incredible!

**God Wakes Gwen In The Middle Of The Night** (pp. 153, 154). She asks God to give her two signs if He was waking her in the night, such as having to go to the bathroom and blowing her nose. Sure enough, God did it, she says. She says further that she is never tired because God gives her sleep back in a concentrated form. Seriously, I've had to get up to go to the bathroom, and I've had to blow my nose, but that God was doing that, I just can't believe it! You?

**Sinful Before And At Birth** (p. 178). Gwen says God made us one way by nature. As proof of that she quotes Psalm 51:5: "Surely I was sinful at birth, and sinful from the time my mother conceived me." There you have it, her belief in **hereditary depravity**, or inherited sin. How could God have led her to this conclusion and contradict what He says in Ezekiel 18:20: "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son...." Hardly would Christ have used a "little child" as an example of what His followers should be if a child is **sinful at birth**, even from the time of conception. Truth never contradicts itself, even if Shamblin makes it do so. Her quotation of Psalm 51:5 is from the NIV, a version which teaches error on many counts.

**Belief In Demon Possession** (p. 223). Gwen says that she has found that if demon possession is suspected, the thing to do is to get down on one's knees and bring self or loved one to the feet of Jesus in prayer. Jesus still heals many, she said. I'm not being facetious when I say that I believe many people are today "full of the devil," but I don't believe in demon possession in our time such as occurred in the time

of Christ. Gwen's belief in such is an exception.

**God Calls Gwen On The Phone** (p. 246). She relates how that the last time she was tempted to binge [on brownies and ice cream] she cried out to God, and after reminding Him to make her feel better than to binge. According to her, before she got the prayer out of her mouth, the phone rang. The phone was dead on the other end. Then she remembered her prayer. God had never called her on the phone before, she said. Then she felt that God was leading her to put on a musical tape. There was a tape on the floor, and without looking at it she put the tape in. God had inspired the song, and she knew God was singing of His love to her, Gwen said. Again, I'm not being facetious when I say that our phone rings quite often and when we pick up the receiver there is no one on the other end. I have no reason to believe God is doing this. If it were Him, looks like He would let us know for sure. From Gwen's outrageous claim, others may think God is calling them on the phone. The only way God calls us today is through His word, and to that word we must one day give an account. We'll be judged by it (Jno. 12:48).

**No Five-Step Formula** (p. 269). Gwen says, "There is no formula to get your heart right." After saying, "You need only to desire it," she makes clear what she has in mind: "Never in the entire Bible did any prophet, nor Jesus, nor the apostle Paul present a five-step formula for giving the heart over to God." The reference to the "five-step" formula says more than some realize. The liberal-minded people who scoff at and even make fun of those who believe God has a "plan of salvation" quite often refer to sound brethren as "five-steppers." I do not hesitate for a minute to affirm that God has a plan of salvation for man which involves a number of steps. Those steps in gospel obedience involve: Hearing (Rom. 10:17). Faith in God (Heb. 11:6). Repentance (Lk. 13:3; Acts 17:30). Confession of Christ (Rom. 10:10). And Baptism for remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4). After reviewing Gwen's book, it is easy to see why she makes reference to a "five-step" formula in a negative way. Nowhere in her book, that I have seen, does she tell readers how to become a Christian according to Bible teaching.

**Testimonials! Testimonials!** (pp. 283-298). A great many religious programs use testimonials as an effective means of promotion. Oral Roberts and many other promoters of false religions have depended to a great degree upon testimonials. Testimonials seem to have a way of influencing people when other methods fail. It is a matter of fact that testimonials can be found to uphold just about everything, including things which are false to the core. This may help account for the pressing quest for them by many religious programs. In the literature put out by Weigh Down there is a continuing emphasis upon testimonials, with requests being made often. There are many testimonials in Gwen's book in the section noted above.

In the testimonials for Weigh Down all sorts of claims are made. Some even claim miracles have been performed, as Gwen Shamblin does. Many claims are made of God giving people signs, as well as of the Holy Spirit working directly upon people. Direct communication with God is claimed by many. I don't hesitate to affirm that God influences people in our time, only through His complete, all-sufficient word (2 Tim. 3:16-17). If God is dealing directly with people, is He showing partiality to many by not communicating directly with them? I try to live a Christian life, and yet God only speaks to me through His word. Why would He speak directly to those people who participate in the Weigh Down program? This question deserves an answer on the part of those who want to please God by living in harmony with His will.

**Belief In Christmas.** In *Exodus Magazine* 1/99, Gwen speaks of enjoying a "loving time of celebration with our families during the joyous celebration of His Son's birth." If God had intended for man to celebrate the birth of Jesus, it seems that He would have mentioned that in His word, and allowed man to know the date.

**Gwen Engages In False Worship.** From the *Weigh Down Digest* we learn a few things about "Desert Oasis '98" which took place in Nashville. Gwen describes how uplifting it was to see 4,000 people engaged in worship. There were excited words...voices quietly sharing prayers and voices lifted high in praise of His glory; hearts bowing before the Lord in repentance and hearts reaching for God's hand... She goes on to say, "And even with those backgrounds, all those cultures, and all those denominations, every person looked alike—they were all worshippers, sharing the great personality and Spirit of God." The message is clear—Shamblin accepts denominationalism and implies worship from the same is acceptable. She is not alone in this among brethren. Max Lucado, Rubel Shelly, Jeff Walling and a host of others are guilty of this same grievous error, but it doesn't make it right, nor will such ever be right.

In the above we have called attention to only a portion of the error which is involved in the Gwen Shamblin program. As stated earlier, if the above error is not enough get the attention of people, any amount more would probably not get the attention of those same people. We do, however, want to call attention to another error, which has not been discussed up to this point. That error is the following:

### **GWEN SHAMBLIN IS NOW PROJECTING HERSELF AS A FULL-FLEDGED PREACHER**

One person said in response to the Shamblin article which we carried in the Feb. 1999, issue of B.O.T., that she did not believe a woman should preach, and that she didn't think Gwen Shamblin was preaching. Shamblin is **Now Preaching**. As to what difference this will make with some, I don't know. I wonder, though, what the response of our brethren who uphold the use of women translators before mixed audiences will be, especially those who argue that a woman has a right to "speak in a mixed audience" and to "speak alone." That is what Shamblin is doing, and it's a matter of record.

### **Shamblin Speaks at First Baptist Church**

#### **in Dallas Suburb of Carrollton**

The March/April, 1999, issue of *Exodus* says of the above activity, "Weigh Down Workshop launched its newest seminar entitled *EXODUS from Strongholds*." This took place on Feb. 6th with about 2,000 people present.

I was not present at the above event, but I have viewed a video of the event. If I know what "preaching" is, and for more than 45 years I have been doing what I thought was preaching, there is no question but that Gwen Shamblin was projecting herself as a full-fledged preacher in that First Baptist Church.

In the beginning of the program Shamblin's son, Michael, sang a song. Gwen said the Lord had given Michael twelve more songs.

When Gwen began her sermon, she followed the general pattern which many preachers follow. Her subject of discussion was "The State of the Church." She spoke quite often about repentance. She must be given credit for using more passages of Scripture that many of our preaching brethren generally use. In her sermon Gwen never told the audience how to become a Christian and to be saved from their sins. If anyone in the audience had wanted to know what to do to be saved they would not have been told.

Gwen was quite adept at playing on the emotions of the audience. She related how

that an eighteen year old boy had gotten in a chair and put a rope around his neck and committed suicide. She averred that "we" were guilty of this tragedy. The suicide was mentioned a number of other times during the course of her sermon. She threw in "funnies" from time to time which drew strong laughter and applause. She appealed to the audience to help her, as she came close to tears. At the conclusion of her sermon a couple of women gave testimonies. Gwen led a prayer near the end.

I must hand it to Gwen Shamblin, that she is very effective as a speaker. I've seen TV Evangelist who could not hold a candle to her. But having said that, I must say that she is a false teacher, and that she is violating the role of Women as ordained by God. She was in direct violation of I Timothy 2:11-14 and also I Corinthians 14:34. Furthermore, if she was speaking to a group of denominational people in that Baptist Church building she failed to show them from God's word that they should be New Testament Christians. She would not have caused anyone to leave a man-made church. We simply do not have the space to relate in detail the content of Shamblin's sermon, but the fact that she was in violation of God's word should open the eyes of brethren who claim to respect God's word. If this is not an eye-opener, then likely nothing she does may serve as such. (*See p. 8*)

The problem of women being used in roles which God does not approve is just another one of the serious problems which is now being confronted within the church. Gwen Shamblin is now taking a lead in the encouragement of that problem. Will brethren stand up in opposition? Some will, but too many likely will not.

Just this very day I learned, from a lady with whom I talked on the Weigh Down 800 number, that Gwen Shamblin and others are starting "a new church" in the Franklin, Tennessee area. I was told that there were about 30 families involved. I just wonder if Gwen will preach in that "new church" as she did in the First Baptist Church in the Dallas suburb?

**"Gwen Shamblin, founder of the Weigh  
Down Workshop, will bring messages  
from her God-based weight program  
to ACU on Sept. 30."**

The above is from ACU News, in a release dated September 20, 1999. A "*McGlothlin Campus Center Memo*" says Shamblin will "speak in Chapel Thursday, introducing her message that she will deliver at 7 p.m. in Moody Coliseum that evening." It is also stated that "Michael Shamblin, an upcoming Christian artist and Gwen's son, will perform before his mother speaks."

Some additional information relative to the above activity comes from Gwen's web page. Gwen personally invites...to an evening of **praise, worship, encouragement and study** (emphasis mine. wwp). She says further that "we" would delve together into what God wants from His people. From another web page, readers are invited to join Gwen for an evening of **inspirational worship and encouragement** (emphasis mine. wwp). The same web page invites people to hear the "anointed music" of Michael Shamblin, Gwen's son.

I was not present for the activity described above, nor did I hear a recording of the activities. But from what is said in the advertisement of the event, a fair and serious question is: "Did Gwen Shamblin preach at ACU, like she did at the First Baptist Church, mentioned earlier?" It would certainly seem so. If such she did, here is an outright violation of God's word as set forth in I Corinthians 14 and I Tim. 2.

Furthermore, this activity was promoted by a school of our brethren which dares to use the term "Christian" in its name. As I have pointed out before, "our schools" are actively bidding "God speed" to error of various sorts. Among the sad things about this is, a great many brethren are still "loyal" to the schools and will not protest their propagation of error. Just think what evil influence is being brought to bear upon the young people who are students at these schools.

It cannot be said that ACU invited this woman preacher through ignorance. Her preaching at the First Baptist Church took place in early February and she appeared at ACU on September 30th. Abilene Christian is not alone in encouraging Gwen Shamblin and her error. In this connection we call attention to:

### **Lipscomb Honors Shamblin**

The April 1998 issue of *The Lipscomb News* reveals that "Lipscomb University has chosen Gwen Shamblin...as its 'Christian Business Leader of the Year' for 1998." Lipscomb President, Stephen F. Flatt, referred to Shamblin as "a remarkable lady," stating that the choice of Shamblin for the honor was based on three criteria. Those criteria were stated as follows:

"First, her life exemplifies a dedicated and consistent walk with Christ. Second, her business, the Weigh Down Workshop, is more ministry than industry. Third, the phenomenal success of Weigh Down Workshop is attributable to the direct blessing of God and Gwen's present stewardship of the abilities and talents He has given her," Flatt said.

*The Lipscomb News* also carried the following explanation: The Christian business Leader of the Year is an annual award which seeks to present to Lipscomb students role models who have lived by Christian principles and have been highly successful in business." That Shamblin has been successful in business no one can deny, but in view of her stance with regard to doctrinal matters and stupendous claims of miraculous happenings, I would seriously question the "Christian principles" by which she has supposedly lived. In view of the error she has taught I would question the statement that "her life exemplifies a dedicated and consistent walk with Christ." We are not surprised that Lipscomb would gloss over Shamblin's serious errors, considering the error they have upheld in recent years. With Lipscomb's roster of speakers having included such men as: Joe Beam, Jeff Walling, F. LaGard Smith, Buddy Bell, Wayne Kilpatrick, and a host of others known for their error, it is not surprising that Gwen Shamblin would be honored. Again, think of the influence such as the above and how it will affect those who attend DLU as students!

### **SHAMBLIN'S NEW BOOK**

### **AND OTHER MATERIALS**

Having sold over a million copies of her book, *Weigh Down Diet*, Shamblin has another book on the market, *Rise Above*, at \$24.99. In addition to the new book she has near 50 other items of a wide variety for sale.

Like her first book, *Rise Above* confirms various errors held by Shamblin, along with some new ones. Space does not allow us to go into great detail, but we shall mention a few of her errors if only in a brief manner.

**Signs from God.** Many are the supposed signs received by Gwen directly from God, according to her. Furthermore, she claims time after time that God talks with her personally and in a direct manner. Gwen claims that when she hears certain songs, she knows it is God singing to her (p. 170). God even



strengthened Gwen's finger nails on one occasion (p. 310). Gwen says she asked the Father for a song, and sure enough, in just 15 minutes, God gave her the words and tune to "Heaven's Kiss" (pp. 317-319). It can be purchased, on tape, for \$9.00. Can you believe the above claims? I can't.

**Gwen Encourages the Use of Alcohol.** Though she says the use of alcohol can be harmful, she encourages its use. She says certain passages from the Old Testament indicates that God knew why He created wine, and that its alcohol content had to do with cheering the heart of man (p. 243). Shamblin contends that all the wine mentioned in the Bible was intoxicating. She says Jesus commands us to drink wine and gives I Cor. 11:23-26 as a reference. She alleges that there is not one verse that can be found that backs up that God doesn't want us to enjoy wine. Gwen also says that Paul told Timothy to take alcohol for his stomach problems. She also says that she would never tell anyone to abstain from alcohol because some have mishandled it. Though the above is not all that is said that would encourage the use of alcohol, we conclude our comments on this subject by a statement made by Gwen to the effect that it makes one feel differently about God when one realizes that God wants people's heart to be joyful, and He created wine. See pages 243-245 relative to the above and other statements on the subject.

**Gwen Obviously Accepts Denominationalism.** Different claims are made in her book that people have been led to accept Christ through the Weigh Down program. There is no evidence that any have become true Christians. Though Gwen says the Coordinators of her program have advanced the kingdom of God, it is interesting to note who she includes in that category. She makes reference to the "body of Christ" in the 30,000 churches where her program has been taught!(p. 101). There are far less than that number of churches of Christ. Those other than New Testament Christian are obviously included. The seminars of Gwen's program are described as simply a gathering of the sheep or lambs of God (p. 87). Does God have sheep in the world of denominations? Men like Rubel Shelly would answer in the affirmative, but God's word answers in the negative. The Shamblin material says that Weigh Down Workshop is in more than 60 denominations. The program is said to be non-denominational and Bible-based but not church-based. It is in "all denominations across the country," and the staff is made up of various backgrounds. In view of the above, the claim that the Weigh Down program saves souls should be taken for what it is, a statement of error.

It is so tragic that some will believe the claim that the Weigh Down story is put together by the "heavenly Father." As my wife suggested, those who would believe the outrageous claims of Gwen Shamblin would believe just about anything. With that I agree, though it is so sad.

**The Shamblin Program Influence.** As we have noted, the program is growing and influencing many people. I know some of the Lord's people are participating in the program and thereby bidding "God speed" to it. As to just how many congregations of God's people are involved, I don't know. In a conversation with a lady reached by the 800 number of Weigh Down, I asked her: "Are there very many churches of Christ involved in the program?" Her response was, "Yeah, there are a lot of them." If there was only one, that would be one too many. But error is sweeping like a tide.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Considerable time and effort have been put forth and much space given to the discussion of the subject under consideration. A concerned individual has contributed many hours of labor and no little expense in researching the Gwen Shamblin program. I'm indebted to that person for much of the information from books and other sources of information.

This subject has been discussed with the hope that at least some people would be aware of the error contained in this innovation, and thereby choose to avoid participation in it. It is so hard for me to

understand why people will knowingly accept things which are contrary to God's will, but I know this is done often.

We earnestly plead with the elders and/or leadership in congregations to avoid this error, by not allowing it to operate within their respective congregations. Not only will the leadership in congregations have to stand before the Lord to account for their actions, the countless individuals who may be influenced will have to do so as well. It is hard to understand how that those who claim to love the Lord and have any respect for His will can do that which is hurtful to the cause of Christ, which became a reality only by the shedding of our Savior's blood.

It troubles me greatly that God's word would be used to make merchandise. It is right to ask God to help the Christian overcome problems, including weight, but to lead people to believe that God is working through a man-made program to bring people to Christ and to solve man's problems apart from his own will power is false teaching. When God's word is used to further such, that is making merchandise of it.

Some criticism of this discussion is expected, but we don't expect that criticism to be based on the teaching of God's word.

- - *Walter W. Pigg*

## HAS THE CHURCH CHANGED ?

*By A. J. Zenthoefer*

Across generations in the local congregations we would ask, "**Has The Church Changed?**" I trust that none of these terms need to be defined. The Lord Jesus said he would build His church (Matt. 16:18). That is what will be under consideration in this discussion. The intent in bringing up generations or different age groups is to consider the understanding of the church.

**The youngest members of the church.** This takes in the Bible camp ages and the young "devo" crowd. If we inquire of these, "Has the church changed?" we would most likely get a response close to "No." Though some would say the church has not changed enough. These youngest members typically want: excitement, entertainment, "camp songs" (those that charismatic body movements go along with), drama presentations, things to do, i.e., like rafting, theme parks, and arts and crafts.

It is no wonder that when video games, CDs that can be tuned to specific songs, malls with 100 stores, fast-food, and the movie multiplex, that their minds are accustomed to constant stimuli. Less than constant would be less than desirable. This may encourage a demand for changes in the church. The result has been a job market that is supplied from our Christian colleges, called Youth Ministers (read "entertainment ministers," actually more of a baby-sitter). This group's desire has perpetrated much change in the church. But I believe that in many cases this group's perception is that the church has not changed, when it actually has changed.

**The "Seasoned Citizens" of the church.** There are those who have been members of the church for 30 to 60 years or more. When asked, "Has the church changed?" their answer is most likely "Yes."

They have been witnesses to much change: 1) Hour-long sermons are no longer preached, let alone tolerated. 2) Week-long Gospel Meetings, with great attendance by the congregation and sister congregations, are a thing of history. 3) Sheet-chart sermons, along with chapter and verse preaching are things of the past. 4) Youth Ministers, formerly unknown, are now commonplace. 5) Women, in some instances, leading prayer and serving at the Lord's table, were once unheard of. 6) "Praise teams" and drama groups had not come on the scene. 7) Doctrinal issues concerning the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, church sponsored entertainment, salvation without baptism and in man-made churches were yet to be to any measurable degree. Now it is different.

These "Seasoned Citizens" can describe these changes, and there is often a hint of sadness in their eyes as they relate them. They say things like, "That never would have been allowed to be an issue in my day."

**The in-between group of members.** This would include those of us converted from denominationalism. Maybe those who are only four or five year members.

When asked, "Has the church changed?" we would likely admit that we aren't really sure, since we have not known the past very well. We have heard of some congregations that have gone over the top. Their own "Community Churches" have been started, where taped instrumental music is used. Women lead in prayer and drama and puppet shows entertain. Social activities are supported and paid for by the church. Denomination influences may not be recognized as such.

These changes remind me of the "How to boil a frog" illustration. You don't just drop him into boiling water; he'll jump out. Instead, place him in cool water and then put fire under the water and bring it to a boil gradually. He'll never know what happened until he is fully cooked. It's like a person dieting, you don't see the weight loss like those who don't see you often. Gradual changes are just naturally hard to detect. That should, in itself, remind us of something: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3). This should also bring to mind the passages that describe the "ole adversary" and his ways as "devices" (2 Cor. 2:11) and "wiles" (Eph. 6:11).

**Has The Church Changed?** Emphatically NO, that is, with respect to its Divine side. The Lord himself said, "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18). Daniel prophesied, "it shall stand forever" (2:44).

There are those who are changing the church on the human side. But those who would perpetrate on the body of Christ various forms of apostasy are "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18). There are those who would and are following denominational thinking, disregarding the authorized work of the church: evangelism, edification and benevolence. God's law on fellowship is being ignored, as are His law on marriage and divorce and many other things.

The safe principle is best stated by God through His prophet Jeremiah: "...Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls..." (Jer. 6:16). The people refused to abide by God's instructions. They would pay a price for their disobedience, as will all those who disobey God, departing from that precious pattern for God's church as found in the New Testament. Salvation can only be found in that glorious institution (Eph. 5:23).

## Looking Back Over 1999

The great apostle Paul emphasized looking forward when he said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). This should be our goal, but as we reach toward that goal it is some times in order to reflect on the past. This we want to do. The past year has been a most encouraging one in many ways. Our brethren have been so good to supply our needs financially to enable us to continue our work. We have not had to worry as to whether or not our support would be there as needed. Our brethren were so very generous when we made a plea for help in the purchase of a new printing press. The new press is working very well now and that is a great help to us.

The response received from many of our thousands of readers could hardly have been more encouraging. Time after time brethren tell us how much *Banner of Truth* means to them. So many pass the paper on to others or recommend it to them, and this has enabled us to increase our mailing list to interested readers. We have been commended often for standing up for God's Truth, and this we appreciate. If ever I quit upholding the truth, as many have done, I do pray that I will quit writing and preaching, and not hurt the church for which my Lord and Savior gave His blood.

I'm indebted to the people at Hickory Grove for the help they have given in getting the paper ready to mail. Many, many hours go into this. If we did not get help in this way, my wife and I would have to spend most of our time on the paper. In this connection I'm most grateful for the help my wife gives. Some times we spend almost an entire week in getting an issue ready to mail, not counting the time I spend getting the material together and printing the paper.

We ask for the payers of our brethren that our work will go well in this New Year. - - *Editor*

## Transfer Of Blame Is A Disgrace And Tragedy!

By *Marvin L. Weir*

It appears that the people of America are set on tolerating the building of a liberal avalanche that will one day break loose with enough force to destroy our nation. It is amazing to observe how the majority is now being influenced and controlled by the minority! If the selfish attitude of "I'm doing okay financially and I don't want to be involved" continues to flourish we will see the liberties our forefathers fought for continue to erode at an alarming pace.

Who is to blame for the crime and killing that is intent on paralyzing our country? Who is to blame for the educational woes that plague our society? Who is to blame for the ever-growing conviction that the government is responsible for one's needs and "owes him a living."?

The "blame" can be traced to today's homes! There is much more truth than most desire to admit in the old adage, "As goes the home, so goes the nation." What has contributed greatly to the breakdown of the home? The "powers that be" have worked hand in hand with the devil to "restructure" the home as God would have it. An attempt has been made to **remove God** from the home, the school, the judge's chambers and every facet of life.

God's message to children and parents reads, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy

father and mother which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:1-4). God also expects parents to admonish their children to do right and to correct or discipline children when they choose to rebel. "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah: and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down,, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 6:4-7). When people are determined to ban God and His teachings from the home they will reap exactly what our nation is reaping today—a "care-less" attitude toward morals and one's fellowman.

Our government would strip the parents of their duty to scripturally correct and discipline their children. God's word will forever teach that parents are responsible for controlling their children. Note the following passages of scripture from Proverbs:

(13:24) "He that spareth his rod hateth his son; But he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. (19:18) Chasten thy son, seeing there is hope; And set not thy heart on this destruction. (23:13-14) Withhold not correction from the child; For if thou beat him with the rod, he will not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, And shalt deliver his soul from Sheol. (29:15) The rod and reproof give wisdom; But a child left to himself causeth shame to his mother. (29:17) Correct thy son, and he will give thee rest; Yea, he will give delight unto thy soul."

People must **desire** to do right, to learn, and to respect their fellowman. Parents teach this **desire** to children – it is not legislated! There is no amount of legislation that will solve our educational and moral deficiencies. Our government is now continually attempting to take our constitutional freedoms as it craves more and more control over people's lives.

A case in point is recorded in the Wed., Dec. 8, 1999 *Dallas Morning News*, noting that the "federal government is preparing a lawsuit against gun makers on behalf of the 3 million people who live in public housing projects, where shootings have taken a heavy toll for years." Shall a suit be filed against the makers of matches because of all the lives that have been lost to fires that were purposely set? What about filing a suit against all the gasoline companies because gasoline is used in starting fires?

Folks, the transfer of blame is a smokescreen and cover-up, a disgrace and tragedy! People must be held responsible for their actions.

P. O. Box 975, Rowlett, TX 75030

## Dec. B. O. T. Late

It was not our intention to be so late in getting the December issue of *Banner of Truth* in the mail. My wife, Naomi, learned early in January that she had a serious blockage in the carotid artery on the left side of her neck. After the problem being confirmed by a dye test, a decision was made to do surgery. This was done on Jan. 12th. She returned home on the 14th and has done well in her recovery.

Naomi is to undergo an effort to remove a blockage from the renal artery to her right kidney, Feb. 17th If the balloon method doesn't work, then it will be necessary to have surgery. We ask for prayers in her behalf that all might go well with her.

The day after Naomi's surgery, it was learned that the mother-in-law of our son, James, Norma Dale Clark, was found dead in her bed. She had suffered from heart problems, but had not been confined to bed.

## How Our Readers Can Help Our Work

We now run just over 5,300 copies of *Banner of Truth* each month. We would like to increase the circulation this year, to at least 6,000. Our brethren have supported BOT in such a great way financially that we are well able to increase our mailing list. There are two ways to do this. First, we mail over 100 bundles each month. At the current postage rate it costs only \$1.13 to mail up to 16 copies in a bundle. When we mail bundles we like to have someone who will make sure that the paper is distributed to those who will read it. We have had more than one congregation to stop putting out the papers received in a bundle, without letting us know it. This results in an unnecessary cost to us that can be avoided when the paper is distributed.

Secondly, individual addresses can be submitted for addition to our mailing list. Mailing cost for individual pieces is almost eleven cents.

We ask that only the names of those who would have an interest in the paper be sent. If it is sent to those who do not have much in common with us with respect to standing fast in the faith, it will likely go into "file 13."

- - *Editor*

## READERS' RESPONSE

"Thank you for putting out such a fine publication month after month. It is so valuable that I want to add it to our church library as a resource for those who would know more about God's will. Please begin now sending this congregation a copy. Thank you again for standing solidly for the 'truth delivered once for all to the saints' - **Dean Boggs.**" - **Everman church of Christ, TX.** (*We send bundles to more than 100 congregations. If you would like to have up to 16 copies, let us know. - Ed.*)

"Thank you for sending *Banner of Truth* to me. I enjoy reading it. The articles are sound. My address has changed...- **Eural Wade.**" - **MS.** (*Thanks for sending your change of address - Editor.*)

"For some reason my *Banner of Truth* has not been sent to me for some time now. I enjoy reading your paper and would like to be added to your mailing list again. I admire your stand and defense of the truth — the world needs more men like you. Please accept the check for expenses of your paper - **Virginia Bryan.**" - **TN.** (*We're sorry that you haven't received BOT. We have no way of knowing how many get lost in the mail. You are on our mailing list now. Thanks for the check - Editor.*)

"Please put my name on your mailing list for *Banner of Truth*, a publication which is so desperately needed in the church of today. Thank you - **LuElla Fallier.**" - **KS.**

"When I visited my daughter, I got a chance to read your booklet "Banner of Truth." I have really enjoyed it. Please start sending me a copy - **Mrs. Bonnie J. Manuel - TX.**" (*If you know of others who would enjoy reading BOT, just send us their names and we'll add them to our mailing list, along with yours - Editor.*) (Continued )

## **FELLOWHELPERS**

November and December 1999

Lou Nell Elkins 50.00

R. C. Spears	10.00	
Anonymous	100.00	
Green Plain church of Christ		100.00
Bill Trees	10.00	
John C. Eason	50.00	
John Q. Mitchell	25.00	
Phyllis Mitchell	40.00	
Gene Nesler	100.00	
Veda J. Bean	75.00	
Anonymous	100.00	
Maple Hill church of Christ		200.00
M/M John H. Brown	50.00	
Roy L. Swanson	25.00	
Elizabeth Sublett	10.00	
Randell Phillips	20.00	
Anonymous	100.00	
Donald and Joy Shiflett	200.00	
Alhambra church of Christ	25.00	
Roy Williams	30.00	
Thomas O. McPherson	700.00	
Malcolm T. Halford	25.00	
J. & Dianna Shaffar	300.00	
I. J. Grizzell	350.00	
Robert French	20.00	
Bonnie J. Manuel	25.00	
Blackwell Family	25.00	
Clarence E. Hall	100.00	
Memorial Pkw. church of Christ	50.00	
Millard & Marion Shivers	<u>50.00</u>	
Total Nov. and Dec. Contribution		2,965.00

*"That we might be fellowhelpers*

*to the truth" (3 John 9)*

Our sincere thanks go out to those who have helped us in a financial way as "*fellowhelpers to the truth.*" It is only because of brethren like you that we are able to publish *Banner of Truth*. We look forward to another successful year in our work. May the Lord bless our brethren. - Ed.

***Banner of Truth Financial Report***

Nov. and Dec. 1999

Balance on hand Nov. 1, 1999	9,186.63
Nov. and Dec. contribution	<u>2,965.00</u>
Total funds available	12,151.63
Nov. and Dec. expenses:	
Mailing BOT	1,060.89
E-mail	24.00
Mailing labels	46.86
Envelopes and staples	<u>85.73</u>
Total expenses, Nov. & Dec.	1,217.48
Total funds available	12,151.63
Less Nov. and Dec. expenses	<u>1,217.48</u>
Bal. on hand Dec. 31, 1999	10,934.15

**Readers' Response Continued**

"It has been some time since I last talked with you. The last three issues of BOT prompted me to write and thank you for the good work you are doing. The August issue which spoke of the need for courage in these perilous times was right on target. Many of our brethren who know the truth do not have the courage to defend it. It seems that there were a lot of courageous members when in times past we were exposing denominational error. However, many of these are reluctant to defend the truth against those in the church who are promoting error. This is cowardice in full blown form. Enclosed is a check for helping wherever it is needed. Love you for your work's sake - **Don Waggoner.**" - **AL.** (*It is good to hear from you as always, and your help is greatly appreciated. We thank you for your encouragement. You have hit the nail squarely on the head, as I see it! I firmly believe that the greatest danger faced by the faithful in the church today is not from without, but from within. There are so many warnings in the New Testament about this very thing, and yet it seems that they go unheeded by so many brethren. We appreciate so much the work you have done over the years in the cause of Christ and have never sought any glory from men for it. We wish you the best - Editor.*)

"My husband and I enjoy reading Banner of Truth. Will you please put us on your mailing list - **Ava Kimbrough.**" - **TN.** (*You are now on the list. If you know of others who would enjoy it, send their names and we'll add them - Editor*) (*Continued next page.*)

"I appreciate so much your stand for the truth in Banner of Truth. Please add the following name to your mailing list - **Carl Brown.**" - **TN.**

"This is all we received of your paper this month. We were hoping you could mail us a copy in the enclosed envelope. My husband said tell you that you are doing a good job and must have said something that hit home because somebody got a little rough with your paper. Please keep up the good work - **Mr. & Mrs. Leon Crisp.**" - **MO.** (*In explanation of the above, all of the paper received was the part with the address on it. The P.O. sent this on to the Crisp's address - Editor.*)

"This is to inform you of our new address. We thoroughly enjoy the fantastic BOT and we would like to continue receiving it. May we all continue to walk by faith and those who have gone too far away come to the realization of their wrong. And may God continue to bless all of us - **Bob & Delsie Zimmerlee.**" - **AZ.** (*Thanks so much for sending your change of address. That helps us to save on expenses. Your wish is well stated - Editor.*)



"I cannot tell you enough how I appreciate this beacon of light in the world of darkness. With the tentacles of liberalism running rampant and taking over leadership – deceptively so – of our brethren. I shudder to think of the horrors of hell that many souls will face, if they don't wake up before it is too late. You can be sure that I will continue to show copies of Banner of Truth to others without reservations of what is taught of God's word in it. We certainly do not want the false doctrine of liberalism to creep in and take over God's word. The exposure of the false teachers needs to be made known to all concerned about their eternal spiritual welfare - **Paul M. Stone.**" - **ID.** *(If most of our brethren had the same concern you have, what a great difference it would make! The spiritual picture would be much brighter than it is now. We can be comforted by the fact that if we really want to live a life which is pleasing to the Father, there is nothing that can keep us from it. It is sad that so many do not seem to be concerned - Editor).*

Editor's e-mail address: <WPIGGBOT@prodigy.net>

*Banner of Truth* on bro. David Lemmons' web, below.

< <http://www.hcis.net/users/dlemmons/BOTlist.htm> >

**Editor's Note:** If mail for me is sent directly to my address I will receive it sooner than if sent to the church address. Mail is received by me only twice weekly when sent to the church address. My home address is:

[164 Coles Campground Rd., Murray, KY 42071](#)