

# *When a church bites you!*



"If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other." Galatians 5:15

John Beaumont

Names of family members and the location of their denominational headquarters have been changed to maintain confidentiality. The first letter has been abbreviated and minor changes have been made elsewhere to make this correspondence more suitable for general reading.

# **When a church bites you!**

Letters written in response to emails in which a pastor's wife shares her heart and asks for our prayers

**Dear John**

**I just finished your book "A God-Filled Nobody" and am passing it on to a good friend to read and continue passing on.**

**We live in a small town in the USA that is rather isolated, in more ways than one! We pastor a church that was formed from a split of an awful mess. We found out too late that we brought a big chunk of the underlying problem with us. It's a very deceitful and rebellious situation.**

**It is overwhelming. My husband is worn down to a nub. My kids hate church. Thankfully, they don't hate God. We keep the lines of communication open. My husband Paul is planning to leave the pastorate as soon as he can. There is more going on in prisons for the Lord than in churches!**

**I don't have the energy to write all the gory details. Please pray for us. It would be such a blessing in this life to be able to look around and see the shoots growing around the old tree. Most days it just seems like it has been one long waste. You do what you think you are supposed to do and you always wind up getting whipped. I just don't know what to say and I know this doesn't explain much, but I just had to write.**

**Thanks for the book. It has encouraged me. I want so much more for my family and my church. I can't make sense out of any of it, though. I don't even know what to ask. But please pray for us. My family is really hurting. God gave us a great dog named Fred who is the laugh-centre of our lives!**

Dear Wendy

Thanks so much for your letter. We're glad that you have found encouragement from the Lord through reading my book. Wayne Jacobsen, whom you mention, is a fine brother with a tender heart for God's glory in the church and God's fullness in His people.

We identify in some measure with what you are experiencing since I used to pastor in the New Zealand equivalent of the denomination you are in. We have suffered at the hands of conniving, dominating, wicked people wielding influence over others in the church, and also seen the devastation they can cause in our children's lives.

In the end though, I have to acknowledge that they were used by the Lord to free us from the kind of church life where control by man is dominant and normal, and where Jesus is not permitted to really be the Head of His church.

You may be interested in having a look at [www.Hislife.co.uk](http://www.Hislife.co.uk) operated by good friends of ours in England. John and Jenny have not only made other books of mine available to read and/or download, since they are out of print now, but they also add articles that I have more recently written.

One thing we learn in situations like yours, don't we, is that while we may not be able to bring about the change we would like to see in others, we can allow the Holy Spirit to progressively change us more and more into the likeness of our precious Lord Jesus. 2 Corinthians 3:18 comes to mind.

We do look to the Lord to guard you and Paul with His love, inundating you with the abundance of His grace. There have been times when I've told people that I'm all for God but not much for church, meaning the man-made, man-controlled monstrosity that is surely doomed to die. I sincerely hope that your children really grasp the difference between Christ's care and love and the church thing that He is at least as disgusted with as we are.

With our warmest love and desire for God's richest blessing to flood your heart and mind.

In Jesus - because of Calvary

John and Mary

## **FROM WENDY**

**Thank you so much for your encouragement. I will check out John and Jenny's site.**

**We have an interview in Atlanta tomorrow afternoon with denominational leaders for chaplaincy certification so that Paul can apply to the State prison system. Another friend who has left the pastorate has recently become a prison chaplain.**

**He has opportunity every day to talk to men who know they need Jesus. Men get on waiting lists to participate in chapel discipleship groups. We sure don't see that interest in churches. [In fact, I just tried to get a group interested in discussing Wayne's book on Authentic Relationships. No bites. Nada. Zip]. My husband is particularly interested in re-entry programs for ex-offenders.**

**It really isn't easy to walk away from this mess. It is hard to see people so asleep. . . . . Deacon election is Wednesday night. Paul is picking up the little tell-tale signs that things aren't quite right. Something is afoot. Yes, I do watch it with mixed emotions. I know that it is pushing us out the door, and I'll be glad to be free of it.**

**Paul has not been open to the things that I have seen lately, but he has devoted so much time and effort into keeping up with the responsibilities at “church” and taking care of us; he has hardly had time to think about anything different from the traditional forms he grew up with.**

**I guess that is changing!! But it is hard to see these people committing death. How can they have no hunger? I know God is willing; the fault is not on His end. But I can’t imagine how people can be so insensitive to His wooing.**

**Well, I'll get off here before I write a book! I'll be in touch. I'm grateful for your prayer cover. Peace!**

**Wendy**

Wendy, our sister,

One time when we were in Zimbabwe a friend there told us that the most fragrant thing God was doing in the country was down in the south east corner of it, a very dangerous part of the country at that time. He told us about lovely happenings there as people turned to the Lord. I asked him, "John, you have real discernment, tell me what lies behind it all?" His answer was astonishing. He said that all he could discover was that Rees Howells had been a missionary there many years before.

Rees Howells [the book “Rees Howells, Intercessor” made a deep impression on Mary and me in our young days] had returned to Britain feeling that he had accomplished nothing amongst a hard, unresponsive people. Now years later - lo - a harvest! If I could speak directly to you from the Lord I would say, "Remember this, nothing is wasted that is sown in My name," because I'm sure He would like you to be certain about that.

We will certainly pray about the meeting in Atlanta tomorrow afternoon.

John and Mary

**WENDY:**

**John, thank you for the word. And I'll read Rees Howells' biography for good measure. I have a copy, but I could never get past the first half. Maybe it's time. Will be in touch. Wendy**

**WENDY, again:**

I'm about to fall asleep at the keyboard. Please excuse the brevity. It has been a long day.

The meeting in Atlanta went very well. The chaplaincy director is sending the endorsement to the prison system this week. He knows they have openings now. He is confident that they will hire Paul. That was very encouraging.

When we came home we checked email. We had two very critical letters from the guy we know has been working to undermine my husband. Secret meeting. List of charges. List of those who attended. [That hurt the most; there were several we trusted.] It was the last straw. Announced they would call for a vote of confidence.

Paul is resigning immediately. He is going to mail a letter out to all members in the morning. He is also going to copy the emails for everyone. Should level the playing field for them and make for an interesting business meeting Wednesday night. We will not be going back though. Three and a half years and two groups is enough. The new start is worse than the bunch we left behind.

So "the Sunday" is coming. We can wake up without constant crisis hanging over our heads. I hope Paul fixes raised waffles. If it isn't too hot, maybe we can sit on the porch with coffee. Our dear friends who have already left the "monstrosity" [as you so aptly term it!!] might even join us. God can speak, and Paul won't have to prepare a sermon.

Time to learn new lessons in faith! Want to get to John and Jenny's site tomorrow. Susan looked at it today and enjoyed it. Thanks so much. Wendy

**US again:**

Thanks for letting us know about the events of yesterday. The things you and Paul are going through are heart wrenching, and we feel for you deeply. A lot of things have been flashing through my mind, so I'll ramble through them and you can read on if you want to!

From a longer view point, I don't doubt you will both come to see that what men may have meant for your harm, God will use for your benefit. He still causes everything to work together for the good of those who love Him and are called to be conformed to the likeness of Jesus.

Some years ago I spent time with a pastor and his wife here in New Zealand who had been told by their elders that they may not be able to vote them out, but they would starve them out. They refused to pay any salary, refused to repair the manse, and spread malicious untruths about them.

The wife said to me, "John, I'm sick of the church and fed up with God." My reply: "Oh my dear, what God are you fed up with? The God of wicked church elders, or the One who says, 'My yoke is mild and pleasant, and my load is light in weight' and who also says He will never leave us nor forsake us; we can depend on the fact that underneath are the everlasting arms."

She responded with feeling, "Oh no! I am not sick of Him."

It is so easy to focus our minds [and therefore our hearts] so much on the wrong and the hurt - especially to our husband or wife and children - that without meaning to we don't keep our eyes steadfastly on Jesus, our very precious Lord and Saviour. I don't doubt you will magnify the Lord and not the hurt. He will be pleased by that!

From time to time I've told people to expand Paul's statement, "Where sin abounds, grace abounds much more." In other words, whenever pain abounds - or illness, hurt, rejection or misunderstanding, or whatever - grace abounds ever so much more. We have proved that true over the years - and do now, for example, with the health problems I have. I often whisper, "He loves me, He loves me," and "He is here, He is right here right now!" How favoured we are!

We have probably all noticed that two people may go through the same trials, one come out 'smelling like roses' and the other hurt, hard, bitter and way off the course. Father in His wisdom has planned for them. Wise folk guard their hearts diligently and maintain an attitude of praise to the Lord for His love and care.

Please be assured of our love, faith and prayers for you in these days. Hopefully it will be a bit like a jet soaring through the sound barrier - there may be brief turbulence but then will come the serenity of a higher and better plane for your lives. It's great that things look good for a prison chaplaincy opening. May it be a wide and effectual door, opening up for you by the hand of the Lord who opens and no man shuts.

One more rambling thought. Years ago Mary and I were in Cape Town, South Africa, when I received word of a disastrous situation in a church in New Zealand. Without bothering with the details, I knew there were some rejected and very hurt, lovely people whom we knew there, since I had ministered in that church on a number of occasions.

I asked the Lord whether I should return home to be with them, lift and bless them in His name. Very clearly I understood His response to be, "John I AM there." That was sufficient for us to totally trust Him for their well being. We still have contact with some of them, and God has certainly been wonderfully faithful.

Much love and every blessing

John and Mary  
In Christ—where grace ALWAYS abounds!

**John and Mary,**

**I am so grateful for your encouragement. You speak the truth. I needed to hear it. I'll copy out this for Paul to read. He is out in the shed right now organizing boxes for moving - whenever. He thinks better sometimes when his hands are busy. We're trying to shift the mental gears right now and be done with this mess and move on with what the Lord has for us next. It has consumed us far more than it should have.**

**Maybe revival is being re-consumed with Jesus. We need Him.**

**Thank you for speaking the truth in love. I feel like I've known you a long time, and I appreciate your prayer and input now. Hits the spot. It takes time to write out emails and organize one's thoughts. Thank you.**

**My mind cannot take in a God who can be "here" for each of us where we are all the time, but He is. I know it, and I certainly have a lot to learn about living it. "He is here, and He loves us right now." I was remembering earlier that my own understanding isn't worth leaning on, but we can pursue Him as we go about our ways.**

**I'll be in touch.**

**Wendy**

## **AN EXPLANATION - AND MORE**

You may wonder at the strong terms I have used in this correspondence, when writing about so-called elders or others who seek to dominate and manipulate others in the local church. At the same time I am confident that most of my readers are aware of sincere believers who have been hurt by such people, even if you have escaped such treatment yourselves.

Would you agree that one of God's major problems in today's churches is with well-meaning people who confess that Jesus is their Lord, and yet who do not live sweet, gracious Christ-like lives, manifesting His love, humility and grace, only wanting His will to be done in every situation? How deeply this must grieve God. I hate it, and am audacious enough to believe that He does too!

## **THE REASON WHY**

Over many years, when someone has asked me to define my ministry for them [not a question I really like] I have spoken of the two major aspects of it, as I see it.

Firstly, I have a deep heart desire to encourage every believer to walk in an on-going intimate love relationship with our precious Lord Jesus, acknowledging Him as total Lord of their life. It seems to me that to enjoy and delight in the wonder of God's boundless love, and to respond wholeheartedly to it, provides the only adequate motivation for long term holy, God honouring living.

We have just received a letter from an old friend in New Zealand who mentions different translations of two favourite old verses that are a special challenge and encouragement to him these days. Here they are:

Paul expresses a deep longing “. . . that I may progressively become more personally and intimately acquainted with Him.” Philippians 3:10, Amplified Bible.

“Celebrate God all day - every day. I mean *revel* in Him. Philippians 4:4, The Message.

## **MY SECOND REASON**

The other aspect of my ministry that I have spoken of is my deep longing to encourage every believer to know experientially what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to be led by the Holy Spirit, and to be controlled by that self same Spirit of God. Many speak and preach about some experience or other in the Spirit, but do they speak and live out the reality of on-going life in the fullness they proclaim?

Why, O why, O why do many believers become somewhat uncomfortable when one speaks about Spirit filled living? Have they never heard the Holy Spirit

described as ‘Jesus other self’? Do they ignore what the Scriptures teach on the subject? Let me share a few verses with you.

The primary issue is not terminology, even though that is valuable. At times I hear someone say, “I just knew that I should take that step,” or, “Deep inside I knew that was what the Lord was wanting of me.” Some have said, “I had such a deep peace about it” or, “I was certain that was what the Lord wanted.” These and other terms are describing being led by the Holy Spirit.

In Romans 8 in the New International Version Paul writes that “The mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace” and “. . . *Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*” [verses 6 and 14] Ponder that!!

In Wuests expanded translation of Ephesians 5:18 is this: “But be constantly controlled by the Spirit . . .” [Actually, the whole verse is outstanding.]

If you prefer ‘filled’ to ‘controlled’ when thinking of the place of the Holy Spirit of God in your life, let me suggest that there is little difference, since whatever we are filled with we are controlled by. To be filled and consumed with ambition, or some kind of sport, hobby or possession means, surely, that one is controlled by it. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be controlled by the Spirit - not just in special moments, but as a norm of life.

Unless we are enjoying the freshness of a sweet love relationship with the Lord Jesus, and unless we are filled, led and controlled by the Holy Spirit we are deluded if we think and profess that Jesus is Lord of our life. The same applies to local churches too!

I suspect that the only legitimate and healthy desire one should have for their relationship with other believers is to ‘walk the walk’ in a loving, humble, fragrant manner; not striving to force anything onto others, but seeking to be an encouragement to all and to trust God Himself to bring about His will, for His glory alone.

Let anyone who would be a leader be an example of Christ-likeness with a pure servant heart and a love filled life since we are each called by the Lord Jesus Himself to love in the same manner and to the same degree that He loves us.

Let us not wait for others, or ‘point the finger’ in any way at all, but let us give ourselves completely and irrevocably to living the kind of life I have tried to describe in these few lines.

## **FINAL COMMENTS**

Yes, you may have wondered at the strong terms I have used in this

correspondence when writing about elders or others who seek to dominate and manipulate others in the local church.

Can you see that it is because I am firmly convinced that their ways are diametrically opposed to those desired by the One they claim is their Lord. Their heartlessness is despicable and their activities tend to make void the grace of God in the local church where *they* want to be the head - the position of honour that Christ claims for Himself alone.

Jesus *will* build His church - His way, or no way! The day will surely come when every knee shall bow before Him and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord - King of kings and Lord of lords, and He shall reign for evermore. Come quickly Lord Jesus!

*John Beaumont*

In Christ - The One who loves with an everlasting love!

## PLEASE LORD

Your problems are pathways with Christ by your side;  
Your trials are triumphs when He is your guide.  
For He is almighty, His love's without end  
And He will watch o'er you, this wonderful friend.

If you serve the Saviour, the Christ of the Cross,  
If you trust him truly and count all else loss,  
A new joy He'll give you and peace will He send,  
If He's yours as He's mine, this wonderful friend.

Lost folk need the fullness of life in the Lord;  
The sure hope of heaven that faith can afford.  
Our need is for fire that comes from above,  
For tears and for travail - hearts burning with love.

The church needs the newness of heaven's fresh air,  
The fruit and the fragrance of Jesus so fair.  
Away with the structures of dominant men,  
Taste New Test'ment simplicity over again.

I lay down my life now, fill all that I lack.  
The need is too urgent to hold something back.  
God please send the fire my all to consume  
That out of the ashes your glory shall bloom.

Lord save from the self-life; Lord, please hear my call  
And flood all my being, Christ, be all in all.  
O God rend the heavens and let the fire fall;  
Prepare now your bride, Lord, and reign over all.

John Beaumont