



NEW LIFE NEWS

The official newsletter for New Life Presbyterian Church • November 2008 • www.newlifelamesa.org

HUGH WESSEL

Interviewed by Dean Abbott • Transcribed by Diane Henderson

Dean Abbott began the interview with some background of his Sunday School class on missions, which in the final classes concentrated on missionaries New Life supports and the cultural issues in their particular fields so that the congregation would have a broader context in which to view specific prayer requests.

Q: So toward that end if you could first, describe the big picture of what you are doing. Then we can get to some of the more general and broader issues about the French culture and as time permits maybe more broadly European issues with the church and with missions in Europe.

Okay. Let me first of all greet your Sunday School class. I am speaking to you from Marseille, France on Wednesday the 24th of September. Dean is asking me is to give a global review or picture of my ministry here in France. Let me give you a little background. When I first was appointed as a missionary, I needed to learn how to be a missionary. I came with good intentions. I have a French wife, which was a big help. At the same time it took some time to learn how to communicate within the French culture. The cultural gap between France and America is much larger than one might think initially. Just on the popular level people have asked me how many times, "Why don't the French like us?" That would be an example of showing how we don't understand the French culture, and the French culture doesn't understand the American culture. But in God's grace the Lord was gracious to me and answered the saints' prayers, and we had ministry pretty quickly.

Over these last few years the French denomination, which I have been working with these last 28 years, has asked me to fill a national position for them. And this national position is basically a pastor/evangelist at large. The primary job description that I hold onto, even

though there are two other ones they give equal weight to, is to mentor, coach, encourage, counsel, and train young French pastors. And so I travel to where they're working either in church planting or pastoring existing churches, which here in France are always very small, having prayed that the Lord would give me, as we say in English these days, the right DNA with these French pastors. There are times my wife travels with me, and she will minister to the wife of the pastor. When I am on site with these men and women, I will give a conference that we publish or advertise to try to attract people from outside the church to let the church be known. Sometimes I'll deal with issues about cosmology or the sophist questions or down to earth issues about the family and child rearing. Usually I'll be there over the weekend, and I'll relieve the pastor by preaching for him on a Sunday morning. But where my heart really lies is the teaching of evangelism. The evangelism that I like to teach is out on the streets showing these French ministers how to approach people in a way that can open up dialogue.

Essentially here in France we have two extremes. Within our Presbyterian reformed churches, you have ministers who are faithful and work in their office, but they have a hard time going and speaking to people. They are willing to speak if someone comes to them. Then you have in the evangelical world people who say, "Let's go out and conquer the world for the Lord." They'll go out in a kind of an aggressive manner. I'm not



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saying they're not doing the Lord's will, but in between those two extremes I try to cultivate an attitude of finding questions that we're truly interested in having responses to and then seek those responses from people on the street, praying to the Lord He'll open up doors. For example, we'll go out and say, "Excuse us, we're from a local church, and we're interested in why people aren't attending church regularly anymore. Can you help us?" Nine times out of ten, people will begin to help us, but then they'll start to make it personal, very quickly. There are other times we have used questions related to current events. When I do this with theological students, I tell them they have a great advantage because they are in training for ministry. So they can go out and say, "Excuse me, may I have a word with you? I am training for ministry in the church. I was wondering if you could give me some insight into what your feelings are of the church or what the church is doing in your mind or not doing?" We are trying to show to these young theological students that they need to develop a heart for the gospel witness. ☛

YOUR EDITOR GOES TO A WRITER'S CONFERENCE

By Diane Henderson

I headed straight for the coffee table after picking up my registration packet. Two large coffee machines were marked in large, black capital letters across the metal front, MEN'S. I thought it strange that they would have gender specific coffee. I was used to coffee makers marked Decaf or Caffeinated. This was something new. No other writer conferences I ever attended had coffee just for MEN. I looked to see if they had coffee for WOMEN, but found none. So, I tried it, but could

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not tell the difference. Not being a man, how would I know? It tasted like regular coffee to me. I poured in some soy milk from the tea table next to the coffee table as I saw no other cream or milk products. Evidently real MEN drink their coffee black. However, it might be a good idea to dilute any hidden MEN'S ingredient, whatever that might be. Not that I have anything against men. I like men. I just didn't want to turn into one. Who knows what might have been mixed into a coffee machine marked MEN'S in large black block letters. Other women didn't appear to have any problem drinking from a coffee machine labeled MEN'S. I have been taught to pay attention to words like MEN and WOMEN and had taught my children that these are important words, especially when they appear on doors. Forget graphics. (You don't see women in A-line skirts much any more.) I wandered over to a table, read the program and list of workshops, and chose "Dialogue Do's and Don'ts," "The Art of Interviewing," and one on poetry.

I've learned that writer conferences

are one more way to avoid writing; you seldom have to write. Once again this conference surprised me. In the poetry workshop the leader had forgotten her handouts. She had time to fill and wrote four sentences on the board for us to rewrite, which we would then share aloud. Now the title of this workshop was "The Unforced Rhythms of Poetry." By now I felt a little forced, and had almost not attended this workshop because the poetry I write usually has some kind of punch. Unforced rhythm doesn't exactly define my poetry, but maybe that's the problem. The sentences were: (1) The rose garden was colorful and fragrant. (2) The least likely child on the team hit a home run. (3) I saw a homeless man sitting in a doorway away from the rain. (4) The sand castle was washed away by the wave. I started with the first one and for some unknown reason, call it the muse fairy, the word "bleating" came to mind when thinking about colorful roses. I know most people associate bleating with lambs. What I wanted to get across, but failed to do, was to present a picture of roses lined up against a fence bleating out color in the annoying way that keeps mother sheep sleepless, while her lambs are begging, "pay attention to me!" I wrote, "Roses bleating in the sun spread fragrances to nobody, no nonsense in their beauty." I was the only one the workshop leader, a published poet, asked to reread their rewrite. The second sentence changed to, "Sudden surprise, sudden delight, unexpected happiness came home and ran across his face." Sentence three became "Vagrant eyes viewed water drops bouncing before his dirty face." My muse fairy ran out of steam with sentence four. After the rewrite exercise, the leader informed us there was still time if anyone had brought along a poem they would like to share. Several had. We listened. One poem in particular flowed with so much unforced rhythm it flowed right past me through the glass window, between parked cars, and across the street.

I'm quite sure it flowed out over the Pacific and is in Japan by now. After her reading one attendee commented that she appreciated this kind of poetry with no forced words. I thought she referred to bleating. I think it all goes back to this morning's cup of MEN'S coffee. ☘

What more, you may ask, do we want?... We do not want merely to see beauty, though, God knows, even that is bounty enough. We want something else which can hardly be put into words-- to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it.

—C.S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory"



Picture this. It's a typical Saturday morning. You get up, clean the house, mow the lawn, wash the cars, and as the last load of laundry is put in the dryer, you sit down to enjoy the cartoon channel. Drat. You've already see this episode of "Scooby-Do." Now what? But wait! It's still a few minutes before 7 a.m. There's still time to grab your running gear and join your New Life friends at Lake Murray. You shut off the dryer and rush out the door thinking, "This will be a productive day after all!" —Guy Kemp

THE DRAKES

By Curt and Misty Drake

Greetings from Curtis and Misty Drake. Curt has been attending New Life since 2002, and Misty has attended since 2003. We have been married since 2005 and have the distinguished honor of being the last couple married at New Life by Pastor Miladin. Both of us grew up as Lutherans and how rejoice in the Bible centered reformed teachings and balanced worship that we have found at New Life.

Curt, originally from Wisconsin and now a 25 year not-so-native Californian, has three grown daughters, Rachel, Kristen, and Brenna. Rachel and Kristen are college students and Brenna is in the Air Force, currently stationed in Afghanistan. Misty is almost a lifelong resident of San Diego. As a registered California architect Curt owns an architectural firm that specializes in historic preservation and has

directed restoration of a number of buildings in Balboa Park including the Museum of Art and the California Tower. Misty works as a claims examiner for a health insurance company and enjoys making beaded jewelry in her free time.

Curt has been sighted frequently traveling on a motorcycle even to church on some Sunday mornings. Misty is an occasional passenger, but has not committed to any serious distance riding.

Together we enjoy regular Bible reading and many other spiritually centered books. Misty is an avid reader and has enjoyed participating in the Women's Book Club at our church. Curt has enjoyed being part of the choir for the



last five years and hopes to continue as a busy schedule permits. We have found the blessings of a sovereign grace to be both reviving and a great comfort in our daily lives. We are glad this church boldly proclaims these truths.

We both feel very blessed to have a Christian based marriage and supportive church to help us in our walk together.

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW? *A Letter from Erick and Cassandra Elliott*

"I have learned in whatever state I am to be content..." (Philippians 4:11). As we write this, in our cozy travel trailer, our youngest, Mr. Spurgeon is wrestling both of us, thus the need for two writers for one small article. Our home hasn't sold yet, but we decided to rent it out, which will enable us to rent a home here. Living in a 25' travel trailer has been a blessing and a challenge. Mostly, we can see God's glorious provision all around us as "...according to His mercy He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior" (Titus 3:5 & 6). So, we of all people are rich as we are heirs of the promise.

We are enjoying our new church and are going through the book of Hebrews. This is round two for us after Pastor Tallman's awesome trek through the same book, not too long ago. Today, as Cass swept the floor, she was reminded of a verse we have been reciting each Lord's day. "...He became the source of eternal salvation to all who would believe in Him" (Hebrews 5:9). As a dear saint once said, "I am so thankful for Christ's obedience, no hope without it."

Erick enjoys his new Alpine County district, and we have been able to explore some of it camping as a family this summer. It is so rugged and beautiful and shouts our Creator's handiwork.

The boys love it here. They spend extraordinary amounts of time each day outside playing in the dirt and anything else they can find. Even Spurgeon gets to play in the dirt sometimes and crawls around the woods like a regular mountain boy. The boys miss "the old church" for there is no place like "Sonbeams." Danny has a great love for learning, and Davie is most joyous when he is busy working. Spur remains our sweet cuddle bug, especially with Daddy.

Lately, Cass has been busy harvesting and canning elderberries, a perky berry that grows just up the mountain from here. Erick has harvested some fresh venison for our growing sons. Come up and stay with us, and we can promise you a huge portion of elderberry pie and lots of wrestling from three joy-filled boys! We love you all so much. Keep persevering! ✠



DEVICES OF THE SOUL: BATTLING FOR OURSELVES IN AN AGE OF MACHINES

By Steve Talbott, O'Reilly Media 2007 • Book review by Tom Ziegler

The war for humanness against the incursion of machines (computers) is vividly fought by Steve Talbott. I had difficulty reading this book as its early chapters revolve about experiences that are largely foreign to me. But as I proceeded further, it became clear that Talbott had chosen to present “parables” of modern existence and let the reader mentally provide his own conclusions.

From the introduction: “In the computer’s case, the mechanics of addition involve no motivation, no consciousness of the task, no mobilization of the will, no metabolic activity, no imagination. And its performance brings neither the satisfaction of accomplishment nor the strengthening of practical skills and cognitive abilities” (vii).

Chapter One: “The Deceiving Virtues of Technology” makes the point that device, contrivance or craft can mean either an external object or an inward, mental thought or plan. Technology becomes a shelter to conceal the self; “when I venture onto the information highway today, I put almost nothing of myself on the line” (13).

In chapter two he deals with the proposition that nothing can be completely understood by analysis into objective, measurable components. Rather, we come to know things by living with them, interacting with them, and experiencing them over time. His charming example is the noble savage of the Amazon jungle who skillfully uses blow darts coated with curare to paralyze and catch animals and birds for food, and this entirely by tribal tradition and skills completely devoid of scientific or mechanistic knowledge or analysis. An example closer to home is the vast compendium of traditional remedies of folk medicines which were developed utterly without scientific analysis or understanding of a mechanism.

Chapters four through six deal with the intellectual and spiritual crisis that the disabled need to be made whole and “normal” by the wonders of technology, rather than being valued for whom they are, accommodated with their disability, and appreciated for their compensatory skills, knowledge, sensitivity and perception. A classic example is the uncanny perception of a blind man.

Chapters seven through eleven are concerned with the topic that education has come to focus upon the acquisition of knowledge while running away from the more important issues of educating people to evaluate information, test, interpret, use, question, and evolve it into better knowledge. Students learning from computers rather than from human mentors is his obvious target.

Chapters twelve through fifteen constitute a screed against artificial intelligence efforts to synthesize emotions, humor, irony, evaluation, friendship, animosity, or other human functions.

Chapters sixteen through twenty-one describe the problems of the mechanization of society. It begins with a two-page chapter on evil, reaffirming the reality of original sin within each of us, which cannot be blamed on external circumstances. Chapter

eighteen deals with the ubiquitous nature of technology, which exerts a “big brother is watching you” effect by its insistence upon conformity (at least in format and usually in substance). A familiar and infuriating example is the digital Maginot Line that one must navigate before being allowed to speak to a human being at “customer service” in most businesses and government agencies. Chapter nineteen reviews the destruction of privacy inherent in the digital world.

Overall, this book is filled with wonderful insights and wise counsel. It is marred by the author’s assumption that his readers will know the authors and books that he cites in an offhand way, but would be laborious and lengthy if he summarized the substance of each cited author he grants concurrence or disagreement. I feel that Talbott has provided an important prophecy and warning as we evolve into “digitopia.” It is strange that he never references the many books and articles of the prescient Jacques Ellul, who warned the world on these same topics some 30-40 years earlier. ❧

THE ROAD I TRAVEL

By Bob Whitson

*The road I travel is stain'd with tears,
With human heartaches, with doubts and fears.
The road is dark and the lights are few;
My light, O Lord, is You.*

*The road I travel has many signs
To tempt my thoughts from the center lines.
The way is long and the toil is due
But I, O Lord, know You.*

*The road is rugged. It rises and falls,
And sin surrounds me like cold, cold canyon walls.
The road I travel was made by Man.*

*Its hazards are part of the Devil's plan.
The road was rocky before I knew,
O Lord, that I have You.*

*The road is rugged. It rises and falls,
And sin surrounds me like, cold, cold canyon walls.
The road I travel may go awry,*

*And pass through shadows before I die.
Your infinite power will see me through,
Dear Lord, if I trust You.
Dear Lord, if I trust You. ❧*