

Volume
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Inside:

- 2 ➤ Writers' Toolbox
- 3 ➤ Discipling Journal
- 4 ➤ Amy Foundation Outreach
- 5 ➤ Amy Internet Syndicate
- 6 ➤ Amy Writing Award Winners
- 8 ➤ The United States—A Discipled Nation

A Newsletter of the Amy Foundation



Unworthy, but responsible for feeding the need

By Irving White

As a servant of God who has made some mistakes along my life's journey, I find myself incarcerated with no specific direction or purpose. So I thought.

Even though I participated in the Prayer Fellowship Group conducted within our dormitory every evening, there was a yearning for more.

I'd already completed several Bible correspondence courses and was diligently studying more. My philosophy has always been to maximize my time, realizing that my times are in God's hand, and He will perfect that which is committed to Him.

So while standing out on the top range one afternoon, a fellow brother in Christ approached me with a very puzzled look on his face. There was no secret among us (our group) that I served in various

ministerial capacities as a free man, and the brothers felt comfortable in talking with me about their spiritual cares and concerns. Even that did not prepare me for his disheartening question: "Brother White, why is God a 'terrible' God?"

His question came as a result of reading (without understanding) Nehemiah 1:5. I could see how deeply troubled this passage had caused this new born-again believer to be.

I explained to him the meaning of "terrible," when referring to God in the Old Testament, spoke of God's divine awesomeness.

After this explanation, I then asked him, "How long have you been reading the Old Testament without understanding?"

Before he was able to answer the question, God prompted me to ask him if he would be interested in commit-

ting to a study of the Old Testament.

That one question in Nehemiah 1:5 has resulted in a transformation in the course of

[Continued on page 3 ➤](#)

Prayer Requests

We believe "The prayers of the righteous availeth much." We invite you to pray with us about various aspects of The Amy Foundation Ministry.

Please join us in asking for God's direction and for the leading of the Holy Spirit as we work to help Christians obey Christ's mandate to make disciples by teaching obedience of all His commandments.

Amy Prayer List:

- Amy Writing Awards — increased number of submissions in 2007.
- For the Lord to open the hearts of editors to material that we provide through the Internet Syndicate.

Irving White currently serves and disciplines other inmates of the Telfair State Prison in Helena, Georgia.

To quote or not to quote (that's the question)

by Shaunna Howat

Opinion pieces, like essays and articles, are strengthened by outside resources. Give your writing a little muscle by bringing in some quotes.

➤ **Use a famous saying judiciously**, because these can be overused and become trite. Readers become tired of Abe Lincoln's or Ben Franklin's most famous words; dig up something that is less known but still applicable to your main point. Abe and Ben were great guys, but remember the centuries of other famous people too!

➤ **The internet** can make itself useful when you want just the right quote. Type "famous quotes" into a search engine and see how many thousands of sites pop up. You can also use online Bibles and commentaries to find interesting notes about verses you want to use.

➤ **To use a quote, find a way to integrate it** into your sentence. Introduce the quote with your own words, use the quote, and then wrap up with your own commentary. That's called "bookending" a quote, and it helps the reader make sense of the point you're trying to make. Try to never let a quote stand alone.

➤ **Don't get grandiose:** "Thus saith St. Paul the apostle..." Say it in an inviting manner, as you would to a friend: "Paul, a contemporary of Jesus, said..." Be humble and gracious with your words, as well as someone else's.

➤ **Try to always attribute the quote to a source.** Tell who said it, or what book or speech it came from. Skeptics will try to find fault with a quote that is not well-sourced. If you found someone's quote in someone else's book, say so. "Charles Colson loves to quote from Francis Schaeffer in Colson's book *How Shall We Then Live*."

Be sure to mention the book and its author whenever possible. (In a short opinion piece or essay it's not necessary to provide publisher and copyright date unless the editor specifies the need, or if it is for an academic purpose.)

➤ **Remember how to punctuate a quote.** Unless a parenthetical note follows a quote, the punctuation stays inside the quotation marks (see this article for examples). Never use single quotation marks (') to quote someone, not even a phrase or a few words. Single quotation marks only get used as a quote within a quote: C.S. Lewis writes in *Reflections on the Psalms*, "Friendship, as I have said, is born at the moment when one man says to another, 'What! You too? I thought that no one but myself...!' But the common taste or vision or point of view which is just discovered need not be a nice one."

Don't forget to tell after you have quoted just why that quote is important or what it has to do with your subject.

➤ **A long quote must be set apart.** The rule of thumb is over four lines or 40 words

of text. The quote gets single-spaced and indented on the left. Don't center it, indent it on both sides, or add funky type size or font. Just single spacing and indenting tells the editor what he needs to know. (This means the rest of your article, when sent in, should be double-spaced!)

Remember that wise words well used are like "apples of gold, set in silver" to a person who is hungry for the truth (Proverbs 25:11).

Use a quote once in a while to inspire, teach or encourage!

Pen &
Sword

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Great places for quotes

American Rhetoric

www.americanrhetoric.com

showcases hundreds of famous speeches over time and can be a great resource for lesser-known speeches by famous people.

Bibles and Bible commentaries online:

e-sword.net
crosswalk.com
studylight.org

Quote Lady:

www.quotelady.com
features hundreds of quotes sorted by subject, author or date added.

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A Discipling Story

by Marilyn Hall

It was 1968, our three children were now on their own, and my husband and I had just found a beautiful place of retirement in Sylva, North Carolina.

Inductive Bible study had always interested me, and I deeply desired to start one. So I put this ad in the paper: "Six week inductive Bible study on Women of the Bible. Free materials and babysitting—10 a.m. on Wednesdays. Call"

Six people showed up and most of them finished the course. Women's Community Bible Study was off the ground.

WCBS, as we called it, still continues today. A few weeks ago I received a beautiful card of appreciation signed by 30 people, some of whom had never known me. Several of the original people are still involved.

It seems that inductive Bible study has a way of promoting itself. I remember its inception with deep appreciation because it led me to a much deeper understanding of God's Word.

Marilyn Hall lives in Lookout Mountain, Georgia.

Tell us a discipling story

Do you have an interesting discipling story to tell?

Send a vignette (200-400 words) about a situation or interaction that led to your discipling another person—or group of people—in an unusual or unexpected way. How was God faithful in supporting, reinforcing or extending your obedient actions?

Send stories to the *Pen & Sword* Editors, Amy Foundation, P.O. Box 16901, Lansing, MI 48901; or email AMYFOUNDTN@aol.com.

Popular writing conferences

Featured in The Christian Communicator:

- **June 8-9**, Columbus Ohio
- **June 22-23**, Grand Rapids, MI
- **July 6-7**, Atlanta, GA
- **Nov. 25-Dec. 2**, Caribbean Cruise

Visit www.acwriters.com for more information.

Attended an inspiring writer's conference?

Send a 200-word description, plus contact info for the conference, to amyfoundtn@aol.com.

We might include it in a future issue!

► Unworthy...

Continued from cover

our daily spiritual lives. We have come together every night since May 2006 to search God's scriptures and to be enlightened by them. From within a dark and desolate prison cell God is answering the profound question of faith from the most unlikely biblical students.

Beyond the scope of our imagination He is bringing spiritual illumination to both the teacher and his students.

What began with two incarcerated brothers having a strong and sincere desire for the understanding of God's scriptures has developed into me discipling seven men. These brothers come from various traditions, denominational backgrounds, and religious experiences.

We currently pray, "Lord shed your light within our spirit and teach us Your way, and we shall walk in Your truths, even in the midst of all this darkness." ◀

► Discipling my community...

Continued from page 8

7. I will encourage an emphasis on the need for righteousness in the life of every believer. I will teach the need for an inventory of blatant and subtle sin in our lives so we can do the work of discipling from a state of righteousness with no unconfessed sin in our lives.
8. I will encourage the use of modern methods for identifying personal giftedness so spiritual gifts may be recognized and used with discipling power.
9. I will support pastoral prayer during every worship service for the United States - a disciplined nation in this generation.
10. I will support and participate in the discipling ministry of a Church Writing Group.
11. I will support the formation of a group from our congregation to study and perform the necessary work to provide services and sustenance for the needy. As government downsizes the role in welfare by turning this responsibility over to the private sector, congregations are mandated by Jesus Christ to come forward and obediently fill this gap. Momentous discipling opportunities exist in this expression of Christ's love.
12. I will support the formation of a small group to carry out research to determine the most effective discipling materials available. These would be materials suitable for discipling self, family, congregation, and neighborhood.

You can read the entire Disciplined Nation Plan at www.amyfound.org.

Michigan Prayer Breakfast

Historically, the leadership of our nation has turned to Almighty God for strength and guidance. It is in this spiritual tradition that the Michigan Prayer Breakfast is held. Those invited represent the leadership of our State, which, through attendance at this inspiring prayer breakfast, demonstrates the dedication of our nation and ourselves to God and faith in the future under His guidance.

The breakfast is a similar version to the Presidential Prayer Breakfast held annually in Washington, DC. Inaugurated in 1952 by leaders in the United States Senate and House of Representatives, such events are now held annually in nearly every state and in numerous communities. We encourage you to participate in an event near you!

This year's Michigan Prayer Breakfast will be held on Wednesday, June 13th from 7:30 -9:00 a.m. at the Kellogg Center. This year's guest speaker will be Mr. C. William Pollard, Chairman and CEO of The ServiceMaster Company. The 22nd Annual Amy Writing Award will also be presented at this year's breakfast.

For information on tickets to the Michigan Prayer Breakfast, please call Judy Peterson at **517/321-4600** or Mary Spagnuolo at **517/323-6233**.

Winning Strategies

For avoiding "turn-offs" to readers of secular media

Prize-winning authors, when surveyed, said too many Christian writers:

- Are harsh, making their points with sledge hammers.
- Set their sights too low. We must be among the best writers and thinkers in the world. We have been given the truth...we must not squander it.
- Sound too much like a sermon, leading editors to fear they will lessen the intellectual integrity of their publication.
- Use too much church jargon.
- Lack writing skills and perseverance.



Submit Today!

15 writers will receive
\$34,000 in cash prizes

The Amy Foundation Writing Awards program recognizes writers who skillfully and creatively present the biblical position on issues affecting the world today in a sensitive and thought-provoking manner. Qualifying non-fiction entries must have been published in a mainstream non-religious publication.

Winning entries will be re-published in an annual collection of prize-winning entries.

For rules, sample articles and submission forms, visit www.amyfound.org or call 877-727-4262.



The Amy Foundation
Discipling Our Nation in this Generation

Syndicate offers editors free, timely solutions

The Amy Internet Syndicate, one of the newest Amy Foundation services, archives a variety of editorial page opinion columns under the name *Real Answers*. The columns are available for editors' use simply by downloading them at no cost.

The Amy Internet Syndicate consists of 20 authors who will submit opinion columns for secular newspapers on issues of the day, writing from a biblical perspective.

Real Answers is made available via the Internet to 1,500 daily and 10,000 community newspapers. Columns present objective analysis, applying spiritual truth supported with

biblical references, with the goal of teaching moral and biblical values.

The Amy Internet Syndicate posts 2-3 new articles per week to The Amy Foundation's web site. Columns are hopeful, committed not only to critical comment but to positive solutions.

Unlike typical religious columns published in newspapers, *Real Answers* columns are intended for the opinion pages and other news sections rather than the church pages of the publication. The writers offer legitimate commentary rather than the sermonizing that is frequently found in religious columns.

Check our Web site at www.amyfound.org to read new and archived columns.

New this month:

- "How Could Virginia Tech Not Have Happened?"
By: Tom Flannery
- "Stories of Barbarism: One Noticed, The Other Missed"
By: Gregory J. Rummo
- "Investing Time In Nursing Home Residents Pays Dividends"
By: Jill Darling
- "Imus' Firing Is Only the Beginning"
By: Don Lindman

"A disciple is an obedient follower of Jesus Christ who is actively engaged in making disciples by teaching obedience to everything Jesus commanded in self, family, congregation, and neighborhood."

Dear Amy Foundation,

This is just a quick note to let you know the role the Amy Foundation has played in my writing life.

For most of my life I've wanted to be a writer, but life sort of got in the way, and beyond getting a short story published, by the mid-1990s, I hadn't done a lot toward achieving that goal. Then I read Bob Briner's books, *Roaring Lambs* and *Lambs Among Wolves*, and learned about Jim Russell and the Amy Foundation.

Although I'd always thought I wanted to write fiction, as soon as I read about Mr. Russell's vision of discipling the nation by encouraging writers to be salt & light in the secular market, something clicked and I got so excited. I sensed somehow this was what I was really meant to do.

Not much happened for another few years, but in 2001, I submitted a column I'd written for our local paper to the Pen

& Sword's Roaring Lambs awards and won first prize. I attended a writer's conference that year and the following two years and gradually began building up a portfolio of published articles, commentaries, book reviews, and short stories.

At one point, I even toyed with the idea of submitting some sample commentaries to our local paper in hopes of being hired as a columnist, but I never got around to doing it. I continued writing, though, and in 2005, I submitted another commentary I'd written to the Pen & Sword Roaring Lambs awards and was again blessed to win first prize.

Then shortly after the first of this year, our local paper, *The Roanoke Times* (the largest in SW VA), decided to hire several new local columnists and put out a call for submissions. When I saw the call in the paper, I knew this was my chance, so I put together the submis-

sions package and e-mailed it in. The result was that out of 143 submissions, I was chosen as one of four new columnists to write a bi-weekly column for the paper. Now, through God's grace, I have a forum whereby I hope to be salt & light in my community.

Only God could have orchestrated such an outcome. And though it took a while to happen, He used Bob Briner, Jim Russell, and the Amy Foundation to give me a vision for how I could serve Him with my writing skills and to prepare me to take advantage of the opportunity when it arose.

Thank you to all of you who faithfully carry on Jim Russell's vision.

Blessings,
Linda Whitlock
Salem, VA

Doctor's Story Is One of Inspiration

*Award of Outstanding Merit
\$1,000*

by J. Mark Fox

Dr. Ben Carson was in town a few years ago, and he spoke at Elon University.

He's the world's most famous pediatric neurosurgeon, and was the first to successfully separate Siamese twins joined at the head. Carson told us in Whitley Auditorium that night that he performs nearly 500 brain surgeries a year. He said people are amazed at that, but they shouldn't be.

"You can do much more than you think you can," Carson told the packed house. "Your brain is a marvelous creation of God that we cannot even begin to understand."

To illustrate this point, Carson said he could lead a blindfolded person who had not seen the audience onto the Whitley stage and take the blindfold off for one second.

Carson said he would put the blindfold back on, lead the person away, and wait 50 years. He could then do brain surgery on the volunteer, find where that one-second memory was stored, and the person could tell him where everyone in the audience was seated, what they looked like, and what they were wearing.

"Your brain can process 2 million bits of information per second," Carson said.

Carson looked at the stunned audience and asked, "So what are you talking about when you say, 'I can't?'" As my mother loved to tell me," Carson continued, "Son, you are not a victim."

Besides operating more than 500 times a year, Carson speaks at least 75 times at colleges, churches, and anywhere

else he believes there will be an attentive audience. He told us that night at Elon that people often ask how he can give 75 speeches a year. Carson said he likes to reply, "Well, its not brain surgery!"

Carson kept us riveted that night as he talked about the marvels of modern science and the complexities of the human brain. But he was interrupted by applause when he talked about moral values and spiritual foundations.

He said that the turning point in his life came when he was 12. He lived in a broken home with his mother and a brother in Detroit's inner city, and his nickname at school was "Dummy."

He and his brother were continually getting into fights, and one night his mother prayed that God would give her wisdom to know how to raise these two sons by herself.

She came up with the idea to turn off the television and only allow one or two programs a week. She told her boys they had to read two books apiece each week from the Detroit Public Library, and they had to turn in book reports to her on each one.

She couldn't read, but Ben and Curtis didn't know that. Within a year and a half, Ben Carson went from the bottom of the class to the top. His life changed and he credits God with making the difference.

In his book, *Think Big*, Carson uses the title as an acronym for what he believes are the eight keys to excellence in life. The last letter, G, stands for God.

Carson, recipient of 24 honorary doctorates, says, "You never get too big for God. I pray before every surgery," he says.

"I figure if he created the body, he sure knows how to fix it."

The Bible says "A faithful man will abound with blessings" (Proverbs 28:20).

Ben Carson is greatly blessed, in part, because he has been faithful to give God glory for all he does.

J. Mark Fox is a pastor, college instructor, newspaper columnist and speaker. Since 1990, he has taught over 2000 students Public Speaking in the School of Communications at Elon University. His column appears every week in the Daily Times-News in Burlington, NC. He lives with his wife, Cindy, and seven children in Burlington, NC.

You can read the full text of all 15 winning entries for 2005 at www.amyfound.org.

Coming Next Month!

2006 Amy Writing Award Winners.

Watch for Prize-Winners in future issues of *Pen & Sword*.

Sometimes, We Should Not Exercise Our Right to Remain Silent

Award of Outstanding Merit
\$1,000

Excerpt

By Ed Baswell

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I John 1:9 (KJV)

In 1963, Ernesto Miranda was arrested in Phoenix, Arizona, for stealing \$8 from a bank worker and was charged with armed robbery. He already had a record for armed robbery, and a juvenile record. While in police custody, he signed a written confession to the robbery and to kidnapping and raping an 18-year-old woman 11 days before the robbery.

After his conviction, his lawyers appealed on the grounds that Miranda did not know he was protected from self-incrimination.

The case, *Miranda v. Arizona*, made it all the way to the Supreme Court where the conviction was overturned. In a landmark ruling issued in 1966, the court established that the accused have the right to remain silent and that prosecutors may not use statements made by defendants while in police custody, unless the police have advised them of their rights.

Miranda was paroled in 1972, but died in 1976 at the age of 34, after being stabbed in a bar fight. A suspect was arrested and wanted to confess; but in an ironic twist, after being read his Miranda rights, refused to talk and was released.

The result of Miranda's case is what is now called the Miranda Warning: *"You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used*

against you in a court of law. You have the right to speak to an attorney, and to have an attorney present during any questioning. If you cannot afford a lawyer, one will be provided for you at government expense. Do you understand these rights?"

So, under man's law, you have the right to remain silent, and under God's law, you also have the right to remain silent.

But is that what God wants you to do? The Bible makes it very clear: *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (I John 1:9).

I am convinced, Christians by the thousands are living in defeat almost every day of their lives because they don't know how to deal with sin. As a Christian, you have the right to remain silent, but when it comes to sin, it is sinful to be silent.

If you are not a Christian, God wants you to admit you are a sinner and ask Christ to save you.

If you are a Christian, chances are, you won't be able to sin for long without experiencing a sense of guilt. It will weigh you down and render you ineffective.

Confession is good for the soul and it means to call sin what it is, as ugly as it may be. If it is jealousy, call it jealousy. If it is bitterness, call it bitterness. Don't call it a mistake, bad judgment, a bad habit, or a weakness—you are simply wasting God's time.

Call sin sin and understand that there is only one kind of sin that can defeat you if you are a believer and that is unconfessed sin.

In 1979, Daniel Crocker had been on a three-day LSD high

when he killed a 19-year-old woman after meeting her briefly at a convenience store. There were no clues and detectives admitted the case would have never been solved had Crocker not confessed.

Not long after the murder, Crocker made some serious changes in his life—he got off drugs, gave his heart to Christ and got involved in a church. In 1986, Crocker married a woman from his church and started a family.

In 1998, he could stand it no longer. He was overwhelmed with guilt and could no longer conceal his sin. He said goodbye to his wife and his two children and flew to Kansas City where he was convicted of murder and was sentenced to ten years in prison.

In an interview, Crocker said, *"I know it's hard to understand, but it's the right thing to do, because it was the only way I could be right with God and that is the only thing that matters."*

As a Christian, you have the right to remain silent, but it will not be good for your spiritual health. Lay the guilt of the sin in your life at the foot of Jesus Christ, and like Daniel Crocker, you will be cleansed and your sin debt will be marked, *"PAID IN FULL."*

Read the entire story at
www.amyfound.org.

Ed Baswell is the public information officer for the Bossier (Northwest Louisiana) Sheriff's Office. He is a licensed and ordained minister and pastors the Clarion Baptist Church. He writes a weekly "Life Lines" column in the Bossier Press-Tribune.



THE AMY FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

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The United States—A Discipled Nation

A Call To the Work of Teaching Obedience:

Discipling My Congregation

1. I will pray every day for the discipling effectiveness (teaching obedience of Jesus' commandments) of our congregation, its pastor, and all the believers who participate in its ministry.
2. I will support and encourage our pastor in his/her focus on Jesus' central mission for the congregation defined by Him in Matt. 28:18-20. "Make disciples by teaching obedience of all I have commanded you."
3. I will encourage our leaders to conduct a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) related to our congregation's discipling mission. This will enable us to:
 - Emphasize the effective use of our strengths in the work of our discipling mission.
 - Understand our discipling weaknesses and work to overcome them.
 - Understand our discipling opportunities and focus our strengths and gifts in these areas.
 - Understand the plans and strategies of the evil one so we can work in righteousness and obedience to overcome his defenses and thwart his intentions.
4. I will strive to be engaged in discipling at least one other person in our congregation at all times.
5. I will support the idea that every small group in the congregation must be organized for the end purpose of teaching obedience of Jesus' commandments; that Bible study without the effective, productive teaching of obedience is unbiblical.
6. I will work to guide the spiritual energies of our congregation to be focused on organized efforts to disciple individuals, families, congregation and neighborhood.

Continued on page 3 ➤

The Amy Foundation also offers a Discipled Nation Curriculum, a series of 4 user-friendly workbooks that tackle the tough issues of the family, and then initiates discipling activities in our churches and neighborhoods. Use them in Sunday School classes, Bible Studies, and prayer groups. The curriculum may be ordered online at: www.adisciplenation.com.

