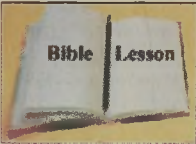


5B

RELIGION



Determined to praise God PSALMS 145: 1-2

Introduction††
We often hear about how important it is to "be practical." If a preacher spends any length of time discussing some attribute of God or a point of theology, it is not unusual for someone to say, "He may be right about all that, but I just want to hear about stuff that I can use in my life."

Of course, there is nothing wrong with wanting instruction that will help us to be more useful and grow in our Christian lives, but we must be careful that we do not improperly define what is practical. We were put on this earth primarily to enjoy a relationship with God and to glorify Him.

If our greatest purpose is to know God, perhaps we can profit from stretching our minds a bit to learn some theological truths about Him. And if we are to glorify our Lord, maybe we should join the Psalmist David in singing God's praises, as he did in Psalm 145. In truth, nothing could be more eternally practical or sensible!†

Lesson background

The Psalmist David was a man who knew all about the ups and downs of life. His victory over Goliath, being chased by Saul, selection to be king, adultery with Bathsheba—so many experiences on both the spiritual mountaintop and in the spiritual valley! Probably it was both types of experiences that drove David to greater praise and worship.

A Determination to Praise God (Psalm 145:1-2)

1. What does David make clear from the beginning of this psalm (vs. 1,2)?

Notice the words extol, bless, and praise in the first two verses of Psalm 145. Each word has the same essential meaning: to lift high, to give honor publicly and openly, and to promote. David makes very clear from the outset what this psalm is about. He intends to promote God publicly and vigorously.

The Psalmist David centered his life not on building himself up but on giving glory to the Lord. He did so not because he felt he had to but because he loved God.

Although David addresses God directly, the intended action is for others to notice. David wants to make sure that the fame of God is spread everywhere. No one should fail to know or understand how great God is, and David will make sure that God's greatness is unmistakable and undeniable.

2. Why is daily spiritual consistency "with" God more

See DETERMINATION/6B

In the family way

LeJeune Thompson's Charlotte recording includes husband, son



PHOTOWADE NASH

CJ, LeJeune and Cedric Thompson will all be a part of LeJeune's live recording on Friday. LeJeune Thompson is a neo-soul gospel singer and is recording her first live CD in the Queen City.

By Cheris F. Hodges
cheris.hodges@thecharlottepost.com

When LeJeune Thompson records her first live CD in Charlotte Friday, it will be a true family affair.

Her 14-year-old son, C.J., will play the drums. Her husband Cedric will lend his musical expertise. He is a famed gospel music producer with 13 years in the business.

The Thompsons will launch their new record label, LeCe Entertainment, as well.

"I had previously done a recording on EMI and it was a studio record,"

Thompson said. Her debut CD, "Soul Inspiration," had a bit of R&B, hip-hop, traditional gospel and jazz. She even tackled a remake of the Clark Sisters hit "You Brought the Sunshine." Thompson said that she wanted to do a live album because, "I like the interaction from a live audience," she said.

The recording session will feature a new group called Dennis Reed & G.A.P., which will provide background vocals on "Metamorphosis."

The CD is a project that will display a complete

spiritual, mental, and emotional change in Thompson's life over the last five years. Gospel music lovers can look forward to foot-stomping songs like "I Gotta Feelin'" and "Wait," while contemporary music lovers are sure to appreciate "The Praise."

"Metamorphosis" is set to drop in 2006 and will be recorded at New Life Fellowship Center. "I started singing in 1983. A friend introduced me to John P. Kee," Thompson said.

She became a featured vocalist on Kee's New Life

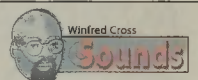
Community Choir and sung with Donald Lawrence and the Tri-City Singers.

Performing has always come natural to Thompson.

"I come from a family of 10 brothers and sisters," she said. "I was always singing. It was what I really wanted."

But singing, she said has one purpose. "The purpose of giving God the glory remains the same, regardless of what project I'm working on at the moment," she

Please see CD/6B



Lawrence's 'Finale' closes great chapter

Donald Lawrence & The Tri-City Singers
Finale
Limited Collector's Edition
CD produced by Donald Lawrence
EMI Gospel



Donald Lawrence's ego kept this special package from being called "Phenomenal" instead of "Finale." That only begins to describe the farewell concert from what may be the world's best ensemble.

Recorded live at Atlanta's Tabernacle, "Finale" winds up a 15-year association between Lawrence and Tri-City, an ensemble originally formed in 1981. Lawrence became its musical director in 1991 and led it into the national spotlight with "A Songwriter's Point Of View." Recorded at Charlotte's Spirit Square, it defined gospel for the 1990s nearly in the same way André Crouch did in the '70s and the Hawkins did the '80s.

"Finale" also restates Lawrence's place as one of the best songwriters of the last decade. There is a treasure trove of songs that are now standards. His song writing skills are matched by his touch as an arranger. His choir arrangements rival anyone else's in the business.

"Finale" features many favorites and a few new ones that will be added to Lawrence's burgeoning standards catalogue. Erica McCullough sings the absolute life out of "God." Lawrence can always match her voice with the right song. This is the right song. Blanche McAllister does "These Nails" right as well. Tri-City has never sounded better than on "The Blessing of Abraham," a praise and worship song that's neither boring nor repetitious.

It's the medley of the old stuff that makes this something special. "Oh Peter," "When Sunday Comes," "Seasons" "When The Saints Go 'n Worship" and "Bless Me" would be enough to make this package stunning. The rest is gravy.

Speaking of packaging, pick up the limited collector's edition. It's lavishly packaged with two CDs, 2 DVDs and full-color booklet on the choir's accomplishments. As much as I like the CD, the DVD is way better.

Ratings

Classic	★★★★★
Excellent	★★★★
Good	★★★
Fair	★★
Why?	★
No stars = A mess	

Please see AFRICAN/6B

African church aims to save America

By Rachel Zoll
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IRVING, Texas—On the 25th floor of a luxury office tower, a church most people have never heard of is planning to save America.

Its leaders believe Jesus has sent them to spread a difficult truth in the United States: Demonic forces are corrupting society and only spiritual warfare can stop them.

Call it the message. The messenger comes from Nigeria.

The Redeemed Christian Church of God was founded in Lagos by men and women who were once the target of missionary work themselves. Now their church has become one of the most aggressive evangelizers to emerge from the advance of Christianity across Africa.

The Redeemed Church is part of a boom in African churches establishing American outposts. Jacob Olupona, a professor at the University of California, Davis, has found hundreds of examples in cities large and small.

"Anyone who writes about Christianity in America in the 21st century," Olupona



PHOTO: THE STOCK MARKET

said, "will have to write about African churches."

At the core of the shift are pastors from Nigeria. Over the last century, Christians there have swelled from a tiny minority to nearly half the population, and its pastors have shown an excep-

tional talent for winning believers abroad.

In the United States, the Redeemed Church is ahead of them all.

It has opened more than 200 parishes in just over a decade, from California to New York, and is training

pastors of all ethnicities to reach beyond the church's base in the African immigrant community. One of its largest congregations, Victory Temple in Bowie, Md., claims 2,000 members.

Please see AFRICAN/6B

CHURCH NEWS

The calendar deadline is noon on Fridays. Fax announcements to (704) 342-2160 or e-mail cheris.hodges@thecharlottepost.com.

Ongoing

Inspiration Networks is holding a gospel talent search for its nationally televised series Christian Artist Talent Search. The winner will receive a national recording contract with Point Of Grace Entertainment. All entrants must be at least 15 years old by April 21. Entries are due by April 21. For rules and entry forms, log on to www.winsp.com or call the CATS hotline at (704) 561-7955.

April 8

Friendship Missionary Baptist Church will host its fourth annual Wedding Extravaganza from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. The event is free and designed to help brides, grooms and wedding planners focus on the preparation and the implementation of a perfect Christian wedding and marriage. The registration deadline is March 31. For more information, call (704) 392-0392, ext. 111.

C.N. Jenkins Memorial Presbyterian Church, 1421 Statesville Ave., will host a health screening from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. There will be testing for diabetes, cholesterol, HIV

and prostate cancer. For more information, call (704) 393-8387.

April 16

RABO Records will host an Easter Sunday celebration at Robert L. Bowers Fellowship Auditorium, located at 407 Rocky River Road, Mooresville. The event begins at 4 p.m. The doors open at 2 p.m. Some of the performers include Lil Willie and The Gospel Keynotes, Ronica and The Mighty Blazing Stars and The Singing Angels. For more information or to purchase tickets, call (704) 333-7729.

April 22

Preserve Pro Inc. is offering a workshop on

"Optimizing Your Church's Records: A Preservation Workshop." This workshop will be held from 9-11:20 a.m. on the campus of Central Piedmont Community College, Room 215, Professional Development Building.

The purpose of the workshop is to bring together individuals who have an interest in preserving the history of churches. This workshop is also open to the public and highly recommended for all individuals interested in learning about preservation, and archival practices. The registration fee for the workshop is \$50.

Please see PRESERVATION/6B