

5B

RELIGION

Life 1B



Introduction unresolved guilt

She sat on the tailgate of a pickup in the parking lot, her body shuddering with silent sobs. In the nearby park the rest of the church was enjoying the annual picnic, but she didn't participate. She just sat there, hugging herself tightly, staring into nothing.

The preacher sat down next to her and asked, "What's wrong, dear? Can I help?" She gained control for a minute and blurted, "I take shower after shower, but I still feel dirty." Her problem? She had recently committed adultery with her best friend's husband.

Her sin made her feel guilty and unclean, and she felt there was no way to get over it.

Counseling professionals say that unresolved guilt is one of the great problems facing troubled adults. The church knows the cause of unresolved guilt: sin. Some secular counseling theories deal with sin problems by saying, "That's who you are. Just accept yourself and be happy." They believe that clients want a therapist who will say that their sin is OK. Actually, no one needs to spend money to hear this. All you have to do is find a bunch of drinking buddies to party with, and they will tell you this for nothing!

God, who made us, knows that sin cannot be ignored or explained away. It must be confronted and overcome. Ignoring sin is a sin itself and is ultimately destructive. The apostle John has a strategy for dealing with sin that we will see today. This week's lesson uses bold symbolic language to guide us into a fellowship with God. This fellowship moves beyond paralyzing guilt to a joyous walk with the Lord.

Lesson background

The apostle John was one of Jesus' closest associates. Jesus trusted him enough to task him with the care of His own mother, Mary, at the cross (see John 19:26, 27). Church tradition says that John later moved to the great city of Ephesus, taking Mary with him. There he ministered for many years, dying sometime between a.d. 95 and 100. His exile to Patmos is also well known (Revelation 1:9).

There are five books in the Bible written by the apostle John: the Gospel of John; 1, 2, 3 John, and Revelation. We are not sure who the intended audience was for 1 John, but apparently they were confronted with many threats to their faith. Some may have been Jewish believers who had denied Jesus in order to return to the synagogue (see 1 John 2:22). Oth-

Please see INTRODUCTION/7B

Faith-based diet books call for more than just fruits and veggies

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MIAMI—When Eve took that forbidden first bite of organic apple, she had no idea she would be linking food and religion forever. Thousands of years later evangelical Christians and worshippers of low-carb diets are worrying about how many carbohydrates are in their communion crackers.

In the first go round, dozens of books like the "Hallelujah Diet" and "The Maker's Diet" harkened the fare of Biblical times to take off the pounds that church potlucks and Sunday picnics packed on.

But the latest crop of faith-based diet books are moving outside the realm of food and exercise, touting a more holistic approach that encourages everything from advanced hygiene, a challenge to feed the poor and a call to add a side of prayer and meditation alongside your veggies and hormone free meat.

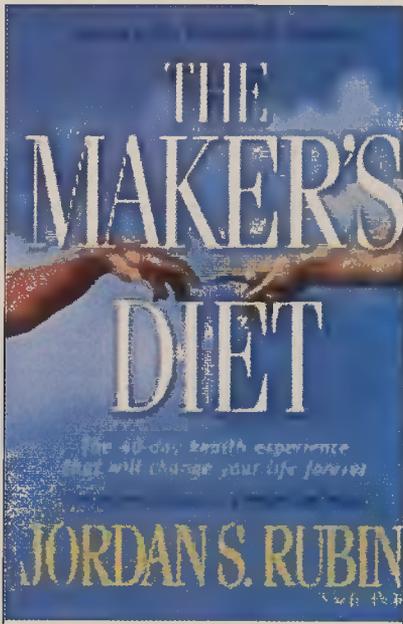
Author Tom Hafer says diet and exercise don't just benefit you, they allow you to live a longer, healthier life to better care for others.

In "Faith and Fitness: Diet and Exercise for a Better World," Hafer says the bulk of the \$40 billion diet industry is all about self. But this hippie-preacher who is more U2's Bono than Billy Graham says the real focus should be consuming the right amount of food for ourselves and saving the excess resources for the millions dying from hunger.

"This is motivation like no other. When we switch the understanding of self to the global community, we have more than enough motivation to last a lifetime," said Hafer, a recent seminary grad and physical therapist from Cape Coral.

Jordan Rubin says his latest book "The Great Physician's Rx for Health & Wellness" is a "God-inspired road map to wholeness for the body, mind and soul." It also includes a series of 35 smaller books targeting diseases including diabetes, cancer, arthritis and irritable bowel syndrome.

Please see FAITH-BASED/6B



Mixing stars for Covenant

Various Artists
Tavis Smiley presents
The Covenant
Various producers
Verity Records



Tavis Smiley's purpose in life is still a mystery to me, but many find his ramblings inspirational. Those that do will find this collection of songs he's put together for "The Covenant" as motivational.

Even those who don't know of Smiley should enjoy these songs pulled from various gospel CDs released on the Verity label.

Smiley sprinkles his commentary between some of these selections as well as the CD's beginning and end. I suspect this is to give the CD a more personal touch. Or it could be Smiley simply likes to hear himself talk.

Smiley has labeled each song with the message he's trying to push. Donnie McClurkin's "Yes You Can" is for young people's potential. It's one of the better songs from McClurkin's "...Again" CD. Donald Lawrence's joyous "Healed" promotes health and well-being. Hezekiah Walker and John P. Kee pair on "Til Make It," meant to be an inspiration towards prosperity.

Eclectic Deitrick Haddon contributes "U.N.I.T.Y.," included to push community awareness and togetherness. It's an odd choice for such lofty social goals, but Haddon's odd take on gospel appeals to a lot of young folk.

Those looking for a breakthrough will be drawn to Vickie Winans' "Shake Yourself Loose," not only for its uplifting message, but its club beat. Traditional gospel lovers will find The Canton Spirituals' "I Know I Can Make It" a memorable testament to civil rights and history.

Tonex, Joann Rosario and Fred Hammond also contribute to this project with songs for justice, honor and bridge-building.

'Blue Christmas' church services attract those who feel depressed

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RICHMOND, Va.—There were no jolly Christmas carols at the Cannon Memorial Chapel. No brilliant poinsettias or festive branches of holly. No smiling faces or hearty wishes of happiness.

Instead, melancholy piano music echoed through the hushed church. Dead branches were laid on a table covered in blue cloth, representing the "winter of our souls." Men and women held each other and cried.

"This is not a traditional Christmas service," chaplain Kate O'Dwyer Randall said

Tuesday, opening the University of Richmond's non-denominational "Blue Christmas" service, which drew around 60 people.

Somber Blue Christmas services are being held at many churches around the country this year, in recognition of what psychologists have long known: that the contrived good cheer of the holiday season can actually make some people who are dealing with heartbreak feel worse. The Blue Christmas services confront feelings of grief and loss head-on.

"Holidays in our culture

are often about families, and families are not always happy institutions," said O'Dwyer Randall, who once worked as a grief counselor. "I think that particularly if you're facing a death or a divorce, the 'empty chair syndrome' becomes very real at this time of year."

This is the first Christmas in a long time that 77-year-old Charles Minter Jr. will have to celebrate without Barbara, whom he married 19 days after they met and stayed with for "57 years, four months and three days." In May, she succumbed to

cancer. "I hate the holidays. I see the lights and Christmas—I just get the chills," he said. "I hope this is going to help."

Sharon Van de Walle's husband of 40 years died suddenly earlier this month. "This just is a preparation for Christmas, which is going to be rather difficult," she said tearfully.

"And it's a good place to have a cry and no one will mind," her friend, Anita McCabe, said as she embraced her.

The "Blue Christmas" con-

Please see BLUE/7B

Robbers nab more than \$20,000 after Christmas Mass in New York

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK—Two grinch-es spoiled Christmas Day for a church, robbing the safe of more than \$20,000 in donations for needy children, police said.

The pastor at St. Mel's Roman Catholic Church in

Queens said he believed the two men knew where they were going when they broke in through the back door and stole between \$20,000 and \$30,000 after morning Mass.

"It was done while the people were in the building," the Rev. Christopher J. Tur-

czany said. When church employees left the back area where the safe was located, the money box was removed from the safe, he said.

A parishioner saw the crooks flee with the cash in a sports utility vehicle. No

arrests had been made as of Monday evening.

"I couldn't think of anyone who would do this, especially rob a church, especially on Christmas Day," said the parishioner, Christopher Urena.

Va. parishes leave Episcopal Church over sexuality

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FAIRFAX, Va.—Two of the largest Episcopal parishes in Virginia voted overwhelmingly Sunday to break from The Episcopal Church and join fellow Anglican conservatives forming a rival U.S. denomination.

Truro Church in Fairfax and The Falls Church in Falls Church plan to place themselves under the leadership of

Anglican Archbishop Peter Akinola of Nigeria, who has called the growing acceptance of gay relationships a "satanic attack" on the church.

The archbishop hopes to create a U.S. alliance of disaffected parishes called the Convocation of Anglicans in North America. Truro rector Martyn Minns was consecrated a bishop in the Church of Nigeria earlier this year to lead Aki-

nola's American outreach.

Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori is saddened by any split from the church and will consult her advisers on how the denomination should respond, said Bob Williams, the national Episcopal spokesman.

Ninety percent of Falls Church parishioners and 92 percent of Truro members

Please see VA./8B

Ratings

Classic: ☆☆☆☆☆

Excellent: ☆☆☆☆☆

Good: ☆☆☆☆☆

Fair: ☆☆☆☆☆

Why? ☆☆☆☆☆

No stars - A mess

CHURCH NEWS

The deadline for announcements is noon on Fridays. Fax to (704) 342-2160 or e-mail cheris.hodges@thecharlottepost.com. Please type "church news" in the subject line.

Ongoing

We Empower Women For Life At Women of The Harvest Bible Study Wednesdays at 6 p.m. at 6636 Suite L Hickory Grove Business Park.

• Steele Creek AME Zion Church, located at 1500 Shopton Road, will have noon day Bible

study from 12-1 p.m.

• Join Scouting at Steele Creek AME Zion Church, 1500 Shopton Road. Boy Scout and Girl Scout troop meetings are held each Wednesday night at 6:30 p.m. Call (704) 523-6552 to register or to obtain additional information.

• Hearts and Hammers, a construction ministry of Independence Hill Baptist Church is currently collecting applications for its 2007 project. Hearts and Hammers assists non-prof-

it organizations by providing expertise and labor. The deadline to submit an application is Dec. 31. For more information or to obtain an application, call (704) 596-2124.

December 30

Laughalajah Mega Comedy Jam is recognized across the country as "the funniest live gospel comedy show ever!" This hilarious event comes to Charlotte Dec. 30 at University City Church located at 7829 Old Concord Road at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets are available, at the following locations: University City Church (704) 716-3610, Juniors Chicken and Waffles - (704)-503-3335, Premier Barber & Salon - 704-537-7858.

For additional information on Laughalajah Mega Comedy Jam show in Charlotte contact Patrick Porter - 623-910-4797, University City Church 704-716-3610 or visit the Web at www.theuniversitycitychurch.com

Please see JOINT/8B