



The Candidate Who Didn't Have Enough Votes

By Catherine Clark Kroeger

In the 1930s, Minnesota had a brilliant young governor who captivated my family's imagination and admiration. His innovative labor program became a national model, and soon his sights had moved beyond the state level to broader objectives. Harold Stassen set the national record as having tried for the presidency no less than seven times! From my childhood, I understood about a disappointed candidate.

The Bible too tells us of a leader who simply did not have enough votes to implement his dream. Born into a slave family, the young Caleb could envision a society where his people would be free from bondage and oppression. There they could own their land, occupy their own homes, and live in peace and prosperity.

As the years rolled on, the impossible dream still lay in his heart—and then one day Moses entered the land with a mission to deliver God's people. The slave community began to stir, to assess the risks of following Moses' program, of daring to think of themselves as a free people called by God. The escape from Egypt was anything but easy. Yet at last they were on the far shores of the Red Sea,

a newborn nation with a glorious future ahead.

Traveling though the wilderness toward the Promised Land was not all roses. Petty complaints included the lack of melons, cucumbers, onions and garlic that the children of Israel had known in the land of their slavery. There were moments of grandeur as well, as when Moses ascended the mountain and gave them the law of God.

But Moses had his own limitations, and the occupation of the Promised Land fell to a younger generation. First, there was a feasibility study. A promising young leader was selected from each of the twelve tribes, one who could be trusted to make a careful assessment of the terrain and conditions in Canaan and to bring back strategic recommendations. Among that number was Caleb, representative of the tribe of Judah.

At the end of forty days the intelligence team returned, bearing evidence of the fruitfulness of the land. The majority report, however, was truly alarming. There were people there of enormous stature and strongly fortified cities impregnable to a newly freed slave population with limited military skills. On a note of

further terror, the observers identified the various tribal groups and their exact locations throughout the land. How could a conquest ever be attempted against so many foes?

As desperation seized the children of Israel, another voice was raised, one that could see the potential. Caleb tried to calm the panic of the people as they stood before Moses: "Let's go at once to take the land. We can certainly conquer it" (Num. 13:30).

Although Joshua shared his viewpoint, Caleb seems to have been the more articulate and perhaps the initiator of the strategy that would eventually give them the land. There were indeed formidable occupants, but there was no cohesion among them. They were dissociated from one another, scattered about with different languages, cultures and loyalties. Each group had its own set of gods, rooted in a specific area of the land and peculiar to a specific population.

Caleb seemed already to be developing the strategy that would in time win the land divinely promised to them. They would move forward not as a group of isolated tribes but as the one people of God. There would be a common language, a common culture and common objectives. There

continued

would be commitment to one another, with each tribe pledged to assist the others whenever need might arise. Above all, they would have a common God and come together to worship at a centralized point.

It was true that there were some unusually large individuals (Goliath had four brothers; see 2 Sam. 21:19–22 and 1 Chron. 20:4–8), but this tended to build a reliance upon individuals whereas real strength lay in building a unified team. It behooved them to develop weapons that gave superiority to well-drilled forces.

While some of the Canaanites were semi-nomadic with no fixed place of settlement, others had imposing fortifications around their cities. As we all know, a fortress mentality does not ultimately win the day. A siege can be broken with perseverance and determination. Foot soldiers with a clever strategy might prove more effective.

But Caleb's innovative approach did not gain a hearing. When the speeches were over, the opposition had won. The vote was two against ten, a 16 percent minority.

Then all the people began weeping aloud and cried all night. Their voices rose in a great chorus of complaint against Moses and Aaron. They plotted among themselves, "Let's choose a leader and go back to Egypt!" (Num. 14:2)

A return to the familiar life of slavery seemed preferable to launching out into a new and terrifying world. Patterns and attitudes do not change rapidly, as many of us know all too well. When we dare to speak out against domestic abuse and demand that the church maintain a policy of zero tolerance, there is resistance. When we challenge believers to obey the biblical mandate to deliver the oppressed from the hands of the violent, we are ignored. When we set

forth the Scriptures condemning abuse of any sort, we may find ears just as deaf as those turned toward Joshua and Caleb.

Joshua and Caleb said to the community of Israel, "The land we explored is a wonderful land! And if the Lord is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us... don't be afraid of the people of the land. They have no protection from their gods, but the Lord is with us. (Num. 14:7–9)

No one was willing to accept this presentation of the potential that lay ahead. The people were doubt-filled, demoralized, divided and defiant. There could be no hope of an integrated occupation force. Caleb had been outvoted. His approval rating dropped to zero, and there was even talk of stoning him and Joshua.

Some of us who dare to envision new horizons can resonate with him. When we strive to integrate believing Christians to stop domestic abuse, we too walk into a minefield. There are those who think it is none of our business to meddle in somebody else's family problems, and those who think a victim must be to blame if there has been abuse. There are those who insist that she must return to the home, even if it is a place of danger for her and her children. There are those who say that we do not heed the Word of God. Besides, it's a very unpleasant subject for discussion in the first place.

On the other hand, there are persons deeply committed to the elimination of domestic abuse who feel they cannot trust us. They view the mandates of Scripture and the influence of the church as contributing to the endangerment of women. They view with suspicion our interest in faith-based intervention groups for offenders. They are fearful of what we have to offer, yet we can bring special gifts

to the spiritual needs of a person caught in volatile situations. Our strategy can incorporate persons of faith in prayer and love and encouragement for those in need. There is much we should not attempt if we are not trained in safety counseling and care provision. Nevertheless, we can serve as part of a unified team. We can listen with compassion rather than judgment; we can seek to build bridges with the domestic violence community where other needs can be met: "From the steeple to the shelter."

Our efforts to build this unified approach are not always understood nor appreciated, just as Caleb's was not. The candidate was not only disappointed but had become endangered as well. Yet there was one vote that had not been counted yet:

Then the glorious presence of the Lord appeared to all the Israelites from above the Tabernacle. (Num. 14:10)

Now the voice of God weighed in:

"My servant Caleb is different from the others. He has remained loyal to me, and I will bring him into the land he explored. His descendants will receive their full share of that land." (Num. 14:24)

No less than six times in the biblical account, Caleb is described as "loyal" or "following the Lord wholeheartedly"—depending upon the translation (Num. 14:24; 32:12; Deut. 1:36; Josh. 14:8, 9). Although Caleb now had a heavenly promise, not much had changed on the ground. There were years of disappointments and frustrations. There were water shortages, petty arguments and major power struggles. As time wore on, those who had been most opposed to entering the Promised Land found their last resting place in the desert. A new generation was rising, one that was willing to think in new terms of a uni-

fied people seeking to do God’s work. Introducing new concepts is not an easy task.

The conquest itself was not easy nor was it ever complete. But as an integrated force, God’s people moved into the land and claimed it as their own. The values that Caleb espoused were at last becoming a reality. Joshua had been the administrator, but the vision and commitment of Caleb is mentioned more than once as distinct from that of his more illustrious colleague (Num. 14:24; Deut. 1:36). There came a time when he could inherit the “full share of land” that had been promised to him and his descendants so long before. He approached Joshua with a reminder:

“I was forty years old when Moses, the servant of the Lord, sent me from Kadesh-Barnea to

explore the land of Canaan. I brought him back a report according to my convictions. But my brothers who went with me frightened the people and discouraged them from entering the Promised Land. For my part, I followed the Lord my God completely. And Moses swore on that day, saying ‘Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholeheartedly followed the Lord my God.’” (Josh. 14:7–9)

At last, after so many years of waiting, the time to realize his dreams was come. Now that the nation had found a new home, he too must find his own. He was still well qualified to claim the land and to settle it:

“I am as strong now as I was when Moses sent me on the journey, and I can still travel and fight as well as I could then.” (Josh. 14:11)

Perhaps his eyesight or his hearing were not what they had once been, but his commitment had not flagged. It remained as strong as ever. He moved into one section of the territory readily enough and then delegated the task of conquering Debir to another of his own tribe. Whoever could accomplish the feat might wed his daughter. So it was that Achsah received from her father not only land but springs to water it. There the family might dwell in peace as the vision had at last come to fruition. ❧



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Promises of Redemption

By Amy N. R. Fisch

Historically, churches in the United States have functioned as separatists, and this tendency has contributed to assumptions that Christian communities are safe. Statistics, however, do not support this notion. Contrary to what many believe, there is little if any difference in the incidence of domestic abuse in and outside of Christian communities. Statistics demonstrate that approximately one in three adult women have experienced a physical assault by an intimate partner during adulthood. One cannot assign a price tag to the damage that domestic abuse causes victims and their children. Child abuse occurs in 30 to 60 percent of family violence cases; and between 20 and 50 percent of abused children suffer mild to severe brain damage. Childhood abuse has been correlated with increased adolescent and young adult truancy, running away, and risky sexual behavior. Between 50 to 70 percent of women and a substantial number of men who are treated in psychiatric settings have histories of sexual and/or physical abuse. Numerous studies have documented that most violent criminals were physically or sexually abused as children. According to secular psychologist Lundy Bancroft, the power to change values that will most transform our society is held by churches. Dr. Bancroft speaks prophetically, whether or not he intends to! And, notably, victims of domestic abuse usually turn first to clergy when seeking help.

Clearly, the stakes are high with regard to what Christian communities do about domestic abuse. Ephesians 5:19–21 points at the truth regarding sins that contribute to domestic abuse:

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

God opposes the values of the sinful nature that result in decay of communities. The good news is that God wants men and women and their children to escape bondage to sin and its devastating effects. After delivering the Ten Commandments to Israel, Moses proclaimed God's heart for the people: "If only they had such a mind as this, to fear me and to keep all my commandments always, so that it might go well with them and with their children for ever!" God desires to bring healing and wholeness to individuals and communities.

It is notable that God's Word correlates pure religion with the tending of widows and orphans; nowhere does God rebuke them for failures. Rather, God emphasizes that communities ought to provide for them. God calls churches to extend mercy, where mercy is due, and to enact justice in every way possible. If Christians ignore statistical realities and scriptural truth about domestic abuse, then they take part in one of the seven social sins—knowledge without character—according to Mahatma Gandhi. In his book, *Rich Christians In An Age of Hunger*, Ronald Sider comments,

Unless we drastically reshape both our theology and our church life so that God's

concern for the poor and oppressed is as central in our theology and programs as it is in Scripture, we will demonstrate to the world that our verbal commitment to *sola scriptura* is a dishonest ideological support for an unjust, materialistic status quo.

Although Ronald Sider speaks regarding the injustice of poverty in our world, the same biblical principles hold true for other injustices, including domestic abuse.

Rather than conforming to the ways of this world, God calls us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. And we are called not to be overcome by evil but to overcome evil with good. Divine wisdom promises transformation of lives and communities. Where sin and suffering have prevailed, God promises new life will spring from out from ashes. What looks impossible for those enslaved to sin or oppression is indeed possible for the One who has conquered sin and death and purchased our salvation. Just as Christ belongs to His Father, so we have been adopted into God's family. His righteousness is imputed to us with power that enacts sanctification and redemption. The Holy Spirit, guaranteeing our inheritance, promises to redeem our lives and communities. We may therefore build healthy communities with complete confidence, knowing that Christ's death and resurrection pave the way, while promising the ultimate victory over sin and death (1 Cor. 15:57, 1 John 5:4). The moral well-being of entire communities hinges not on human understanding or traditions but on God's intended purposes. God's Word requires opening our eyes and responding to injustices in our world. ☞

From the Shelter to the Steeple: Building Bridges to Pastors

By Rev. Steve McMullin

As she did every Sunday morning, Janet was getting her two children ready to go to church while her husband slept after a night of drinking. But this Sunday was different. In fear, Janet had stayed awake all night after her husband arrived home in a drunken rage, hitting her and threatening to beat the children. It wasn't the first incident like that, but it was certainly the worst. Janet had been beaten before, but this was the first time her husband had threatened the children; and as she realized the violence was escalating, she knew that soon she wouldn't be able to shield her young son and daughter from their father's rage. Her home was no longer a safe place for the children or for her. She always thought she would be able to protect them, but this morning she realized they were in danger. Tired and worried as she got ready for church, she wondered about her Christian faith and the teaching of the Bible. The words "God hates divorce" echoed through her mind as she thought about packing a suitcase and leaving. "Wives, submit to your husbands"—her devout Christian mother had reminded her of that Bible verse on her wedding day twelve years before. Janet wanted to be a devout follower of Jesus, who took her marriage vows seriously, but she knew her marriage had been far different from her parents' marriage—a relationship where her father and mother loved and respected each other and where she had never heard a word spoken in anger.

Janet had worked hard to keep the torment in her home a secret, but now she felt alone as she realized

there was no one who knew about the violence. She had been so careful to hide the abuse from her family and friends that she was sure folks at church would be shocked to think that her well-respected husband was a violent man. People would probably not believe her. Tears welled up in her eyes as she and the children left for church.

Once in church, Janet hardly noticed what was happening around her. Holding back tears, she looked at the happy families sitting around her and wondered why she was the only person to be living such a nightmare. She tried to pray but wondered what good it would do. Church seemed so irrelevant to her problems. She wanted to get up and leave, but then she worried about what people would think about her—so she stayed glued to the seat, hoping to hold back the tears and that the sermon would not be too long.

The sermon title was "The God Who Cares" and the pastor was talking about Abraham. As he continued to speak, she heard him refer to the abuse that Hagar suffered in the home of Abraham and Sarah. After pausing to show a brief video clip of a Christian woman telling about her experience of violence in her marriage, the pastor defined abuse and then looked at the congregation and said, "I know there are a number of people in this congregation who have experienced violence in their home. Some of you have found refuge from the violence, but some of you may still be living in fear. If you are, I want you to know the Bible says that God hates violence and that he wants you and your family to be safe. If you don't know

where to turn for help, you can come to talk to me or you can find information about where to find help in today's bulletin." Janet hadn't looked at the bulletin, but now she saw a note about a website—www.theraveproject.org—that would provide information about finding the nearest women's shelter. She couldn't believe the pastor had just said there were several other people in the congregation who had experienced domestic violence. She realized that God hated the violence she was experiencing, and she now knew she could trust the pastor to understand and believe her if she went to him for help. Suddenly she didn't feel so alone anymore. In fact, she started to believe that God cared about her. She knew the road ahead would be difficult, but she had hope for herself and for her children.

The fictional story above is meant to illustrate why it is so important for those concerned about family violence to build bridges to pastors. A pastor is a key resource for people of faith who are experiencing family violence. However, research by Dr. Nancy Nason-Clark has shown that the vast majority of pastors do not feel well equipped to respond to domestic violence in their congregation. We also know that victims of family violence say they rarely hear sermons about family violence, even though it is a common problem in our society and in churches. That is the reason why the Religion and Violence E-Learning (RAVE) research team is working to build bridges to pastors in order to equip them to address family violence from the pulpit and to help them respond to families in crisis.

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The sermon excerpt about Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar is one of many sermon resources offered on the RAVE website, as are the video clips that can be used as sermon illustrations or in discussion groups. Research data on the website can help pastors know and understand the facts about family violence so they can address it in their sermons; and online training modules on the website can provide pastors with the guidance and information they will need to assist people who seek help. Maps provide contact information for women's shelters in every state in the United States and for every province in Canada. The website also provides resources to help pastors understand theological issues surrounding Scripture passages that are often misused by abusers.

The RAVE project seeks to equip religious leaders to respond to domestic violence in ways that are compassionate, practical, and informed by the latest research and best practices for professionals. Through face-to-face presentations to diverse groups of people in a variety of settings, and through the online resources available on the RAVE website, our research team seeks to connect with church leaders and other resource people in the community so that pastors can effectively address and respond to domestic violence and so that effective community partnerships can be built that will include pastors. Within the faith community, victims of domestic violence often seek help first from their pastor. For that reason, it is especially important that pastors be part of the response to domestic violence and that they be equipped to respond well. Because the perpetrators of such abuse may attempt to misuse Scripture to justify their actions, it is also important that pastors be equipped theologically

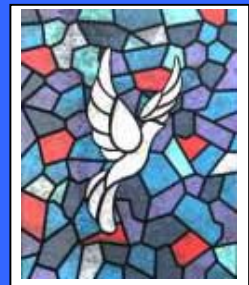
and hermeneutically to address such issues from the pulpit.

Although surveys have shown that pastors realize their lack of preparedness to respond to family violence, the RAVE team has learned that there are some challenges involved in building bridges to pastors so they will become aware of the resources available on the website and begin to use them. The first challenge is to get pastors to take the time to come to a presentation or to look at the website. Because they feel ill-equipped to respond, some pastors may convince themselves that family violence is not a problem in their congregation. Others may worry about the consequences of confronting leaders in the church whom they suspect are abusive in their homes. Once we have successfully invited pastors to attend a presentation, the challenges include everything from making sure that clergy from a wide variety of church traditions learn about the website, to finding a vocabulary that will be understood and respected by each group, to helping a variety of people understand how they can work in collaboration when in everyday life they are often quite separated from or even misunderstood by one another. People from different church traditions may have quite different perspectives about marriage and family, and about theology and biblical interpretation, but violence is a problem that has no religious boundaries. Additionally, people who serve as responders and resources in the community may have limited or no religious background, or may even be somewhat hostile to religious ideas. We need to build bridges also to those people in order to ensure that pastors are part of a community response to domestic violence and to ensure that the faith of victims is understood and respect-

ed. That means affirming the importance of pastors in the response to family violence, and helping non-religious community responders understand the significance of including pastors in the healing process for victims who are persons of faith.

By building these bridges, the RAVE team seeks to include religious leaders as an integral part of the response of the community to family violence. Our website is provided to the faith community to provide ongoing training, research data, and practical resources that can be used in sermons, youth group programs, women's groups, and personal study. By being equipped to address and respond to family violence, the church can make a real difference in the lives of its members who are suffering abuse. ❧

When violence strikes, chaos is created ... the glass is shattered into many pieces.



When the language of the spirit (words of religious comfort) infuses the language of contemporary culture (principles of safety, accountability and empowerment), new images can be created from broken pieces of glass.

www.theraveproject.org



Partnering for Change The Church Responds to Domestic Violence



PASCH Fourth International Conference
Sligo SDA Church, Washington, D.C.
October 10–12, 2008

Preliminary Schedule*

Thursday, October 9, 2008

5:00–7:00 pm *Prayer Rally:* “Power to Change: God’s Response to Domestic Violence”

Friday, October 10, 2008

9:30–10:30 *Plenary Address:* Lundy Bancroft

10:45–12:00 *Workshops:* Faith-Based Programs for Men Who Act Abusively (Dr. Barbara Fisher-Townsend and Carolyn Rexus); Faith-Based Intervention for Abuse Victims (Dr. Steven Tracy and Celestia Tracy); Understanding the Basics of Domestic Violence and Issues Faced by Battered Christian Women (Julie Owens); Responding to Abuse—Analyzing Case Studies Sent in Prior to the Conference (Dr. Victoria Fahlberg); Survivor Support Groups (Joyce Holt); Predators in the Church (Dr. Audray Johnson)

1:30–3:00 *Plenary Address:* Dr. Nancy Nason-Clark—“Paving the Pathway between the Steeple and the Shelter: Twenty Years of Research on Abuse in Families of Faith”; plus advocate, survivor, criminal justice and therapist perspectives

3:30–4:15 *Plenary Address:* Lundy Bancroft

Saturday, October 11, 2008

8:45 a.m. *Worship Service*—Dr. Catherine Clark Kroeger

10:30–12:00 *Workshops:* Developing a DV Program Using a Faith-Based Duluth Model (Ty Schroyer and Barbara Jones-Schroyer); Functioning as the Body of Christ in Response to Domestic Violence (Rev. Bob Owens); Building Boys into Men and the Faith Community (David Thomas); Mother/Adult Daughter Reflections on Domestic Violence from Personal Perspectives (Kristen Price and Dr. Lilya Wagner); Help-Seeking Among SDA Women DV Survivors (Dr. Rene Drumm and Marciana Popescu); The Courts and Child Sexual Abuse (Renee Battle-Brooks); Panel Presentations, “Referrals Between Clergy and Community-Based Resources”

1:30–3:00 *Plenary Address:* Dr. Steve Tracy; plus DV community, therapist, biblical scholar and pastoral perspectives

Sunday, October 12, 2008

9:00–10:30 *Workshops:* Community Outreach and Domestic Violence (Dr. Steve Tracy and Celestia Tracy); Avenues of Healing for Men Who are Abusive (Dr. David Livingston); From Church Resistance to Church Support (Dr. Cynthia Fantasia); Wiser Victim Strategies (Beverly Hubble Tauke)

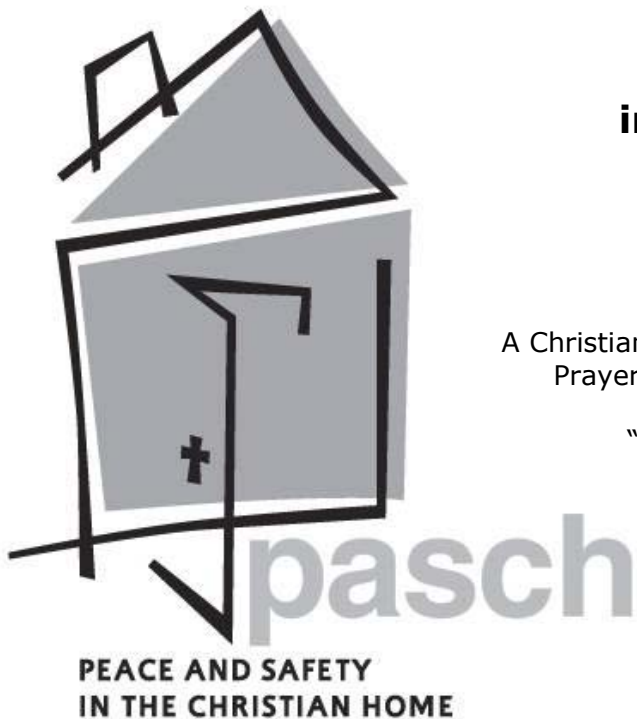
10:45–12:00 *Worship Service*—Rev. Bob Owens

*For a more detailed conference schedule, visit <http://www.peaceandsafety.com/pages/2008schedule.php>.

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