

# OPEN FORUM

Thank you for the great July/August 2001 issue of the *Circuit Rider*. It is a handbook full of helps to the pastor in what is called "Ordinary Times" (to use one of your article's wording) in the lives of us all. May others find in this issue the helps, ideas and well thought out comments of your writers who seem to hold a wealth of theology and biblically based support for those who are in need. I suggest each conference BOM, each District D.S. and each pastor keep this issue at an arms reach. This would be a good issue to give to each new pastor entering into the ministry of serving God. This issue is a very good reminder to all pastors who are serving God with some experience in the job. I stopped and reflected where God calls the church, the pastors and the ministry to serve him in his "Ordinary Times." I thank you for your good work and am glad to be serving with you in God's mission field of ministry.

**Karen Upson**  
Lansing, OH

It seems to me the basic question that church people are asking about in the church is concerning the veracity of the text. They want to know if pastors believe what is in the Bible. ("Is This Sermon Interesting?") Woe to the pastor that doesn't believe in old Nick. They at least have to say with the brilliant sermon by Joanna Adams "If you choose to believe that, that is all right with me." Thus, we allow for the tentativeness of our own position.

But my question is since when is believing something that is not true all right? For if we take the existence of Satan literally, and all know what that means, we also literalize the rest of the texts. In so doing we may find justification for our particular

ism or bias but it is not very honest. Maybe we ought to say so?

It also seems to me that one of the people who is dealing with the text and today's issues is Bishop Shelby Spong whom Sally Brown dismissed as a modernistic rationalist. I was at a seminar this summer given by Spong.

The questions he posed and tried to answer were the exact questions posed by Brown: Why Jesus? What is the relationship between Jesus and God? And do we worship a God who commits child-abuse, albeit, substitutionarily?

Spong takes the experiences of the early church, which is to say the Bible, as verifiable with our own experiences. What he rejects is that their explanations for those experiences can ever be ours. They lived in a

three-tiered universe which is inaccessible to us. Heaven is no longer located just above the clouds where Jesus was said to have ascended.

For Spong the veracity of the text is a shared experience. Some might want to dismiss this as a rationalism but then it could also be the truth.

**Al Milligan**  
Odebolt, IA

I enjoyed reading and learned some new perspectives from Thomas Long's article "What are they asking." I won't go into the points he makes that were enlightening to me. I do want to respond to him when he seems to put down preaching that helps people in the congregation where they are. I mean, if I have seen several people that seem to be having trouble in a personal or business relationship, what better way to make scripture come alive than to show them what Christ would have done in those situations.

I believe that people come to worship to praise God, in song, prayer and word. They also hope that they can hear from the word, how to get by in this life that sometimes doesn't treat them right. They want to hear that God loves them but also that he will meet them where they are. The congregation wants to be fed and supported and loved, not lectured to.

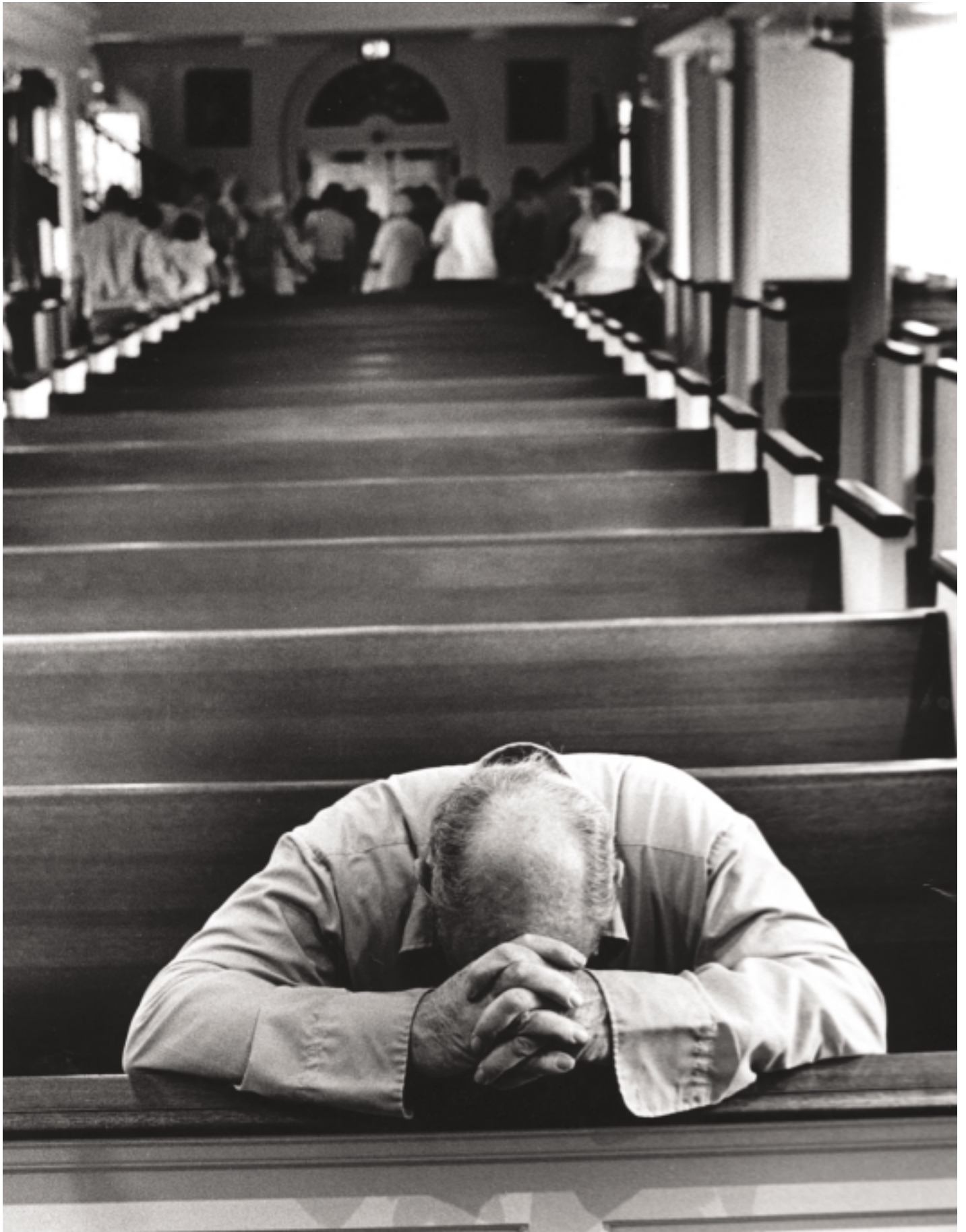
This was a great issue!

**Bill Siebert**  
Lincoln, MO

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**About the Photo**

On September 11th we were in the final production stage of this issue of *Circuit Rider*. We could not find words. We offer instead this photograph.



Photograph by Michael Hoyt