

# Living to Win

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Personal from. . .

Ronald L. Dart

## The Choice

I thought I knew what to call a little wooden figure with movable arms and legs that is controlled by strings from above—as Pinocchio was meant to be. It’s a puppet, right? Actually, no. That’s a *marionette*. A puppet is a small-scale figure usually with a cloth body and hollow head that fits over and is moved by the hand—a.k.a. the ventriloquist’s dummy. Shari Lewis’ Lamb Chop comes to mind, or Charlie McCarthy, and of course, Miss Piggy, Kermit, and the other Muppets.

You learn something new every day, it seems. I learned this from a piece by Marvin Olasky. He was citing a remark by British psychiatrist Theodore Dalrymple in his book *Life at the Bottom*. Dalrymple writes, “Listening as I do every day to the accounts people give of their lives, I am struck by the very small part in them which they ascribe to their own efforts, choices, and actions. . . They describe themselves as marionettes of helplessness.”

What exactly does he mean by that? Well, Marvin Olasky called to mind the Virginia Tech killer. According to some sources, he just blew. It wasn’t really his responsi-

bility. He was “troubled.” He “had issues.” Maybe it was President Bush’s fault, as Rep. Jim Moran (D-VA) charged. Mr. Olasky observed that it seemed no one had the responsibility to help this young man, even though he “had written hyper-violent plays and poems, been declared mentally ill by a judge, set a fire in his room, and so on. Soon after the multiple murders, the head of Virginia Tech’s campus counseling center held a press conference and suggested the problem was inadequate ‘funding for mental health services in the United States.’”

I think the operative term in that paragraph is “no one had the responsibility.” Professor Dalrymple, in his book, gave some examples of this.

One killer said of the murder he committed, “the knife went in,” as if he had nothing to do with it. A thief who broke into churches, stole their silver objects, and then burned the churches down to destroy the evidence, said the problem was that churches had poor security and valuable objects: The combination was impossible to resist. Another troubled person said, “My head needs sorting out.”

From this he derives the idea that people see themselves as marionettes, controlled by strings that direct their actions. They can’t help themselves. If someone steals your property, it’s your fault for not locking it up. Actually, this is a very old idea, but in philosophy, it has a name: Determinism—the philosophical proposition that every event, including human cognition and behavior, decision and action, is causally determined by an unbroken chain of prior occurrences. Determinism may also be

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## Find a Good Match for Your Dollars

How often have you wished you could double or triple your offerings to CEM, but haven’t been able to fit it into your budget? There’s good news for you that may be as close as your employer. Many companies have a corporate matching program. If you’re interested in multiplying your power to give, contact your human resources or personnel department and ask if they have a matching gifts program.

## YEA Summer Camp 2007

By Gerald Saul

The 2007 YEA Summer Camp kicked off June 24<sup>th</sup> at the Wewoka Woods Adventist Center in Wewoka, Oklahoma. Forty-six campers traveled from 12 states to be a part of the yearly event; nearly half of them were there for the first time. After an active and successful week, campers headed home.

Bible lessons written by staff members focused on relationships with God, family, friends, community, and romantic relationships. Small group studies took place each morning. Campers were paired and given creative assignments by Beth Meese to learn real life experiences.

Each day camp consisted of four activity periods, three square meals, two Bible studies, and a different camp activity each night. Campers were forced to be flexible, as it rained nearly every day of the week, forcing some activities indoors and canceling others. But the much-needed rain made skiing and tubing more fun. Director and Boat Captain, Larry Watkins, needed all of the lake to commission the first two "Generals" into the "Air Force." Stephine Tarrant and Alyssa Pence were launched high into the air while tubing. This shattered the previous record held by Max Packard and Patrick Monahan of Kansas. Favorite activities of this year's camp were the multiple dances held throughout the week.

Camp is a time when teens get to share experiences and learn from each other about how to deal with the world around them. Through the Internet and cell phones, keeping in touch is easier than ever, and most of the kids are taking advantage of it. Groups have been formed on social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace, enabling young people in the faith to keep in touch. CEM has plans to promote programs such as Prayer 21 and providing a "Huddle" at this year's Feast in Fort Walton Beach. For more information about next year's YEA Summer Camp, write or call Larry Watkins at 1-888-BIBLE 44.

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## Using Your Talent

By Lenny Cacchio

Winston Churchill once said, "Writing a book is an adventure. To begin with it is a toy and an amusement. Then it becomes a mistress, then it becomes a master, then it becomes a tyrant. The last phase is that just as you are about to be reconciled to your servitude, you kill the master, and fling him about to the public" (quoted in Winston Churchill: *His Wit and Wisdom*, Hyperion Books, p. 135).

Over the several years that I have written a column, I have effectively written the equivalent of a book or two, and I can attest that it does become your master and tyrant after a while.

The task of wowing one's audience with brilliance week after week is daunting and not always successful, but it is fortunate that the focus of my efforts is a very special Book brimming with pearls. Those pearls lay hidden, awaiting someone to pry them free, but when one uses the Bible as a base, there is solace in knowing that the pearls really are in there somewhere.

The grain of sand that forms the pearl sometimes comes from the irritations in life, and so it has been with this column. It might seem like I am writing to you, but in reality I am writing to myself and reflecting on something that I need to learn

And so it is with this column. Not long ago I was studying Matthew 25, which contains three parables. It was the last two that caught my attention: the Parable of the Talents and the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats. I was surprised to see that both parables teach the same lesson, a lesson I sorely need.

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*The Choice  
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defined as the thesis that there is at any instant exactly one physically possible future. Why is determinism attractive? Because it bestows on man the universal copout: "It's not my fault."

Consider the day when Moses came down from Mount Sinai carrying the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments. As he approached the camp, he heard singing, and then he saw an appalling scene. He found the people dancing around a golden calf. It is only later that we learn the people were dancing naked. And it is only through archaeology that we learn that calf worship involved naked orgies and child sacrifice.

The confrontation of Moses and Aaron, who had been in charge of all this, is revealing. Moses' first thought was that Aaron had been coerced into this act. "What did these people do to you," he asked, "that you have brought so great a sin upon them?" (Exodus 32:21). Aaron's reply is classic:

"Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest *the people*, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf."

Moses face must have been a study about this time. Aaron refused to accept any responsibility for what he had done. But the true story, honestly told on the pages of

the Bible, is that Aaron collected gold from the people, melted it down, and then with a graving tool, Aaron fashioned it into a golden calf. Aaron built an altar to it and proclaimed the next day as a *feast of Jehovah*. Aaron even pronounced God's blessing on what they were doing.

I find myself fascinated to hear so much justification of evil coming from intelligent, educated people. And I wonder. What is the appeal of determinism? I would think the dignity of man would lead us to *want* to be responsible. And as long as things are going well, men are happy to take the credit for it—and the incredible salaries that follow. But when things go sour, they suddenly become determinists. "Out came this calf." Don't know how it happened. It just happened. It's not my fault. Men high and low plead the innocence of inevitability. But evil is not inevitable. It is a matter of choice.

Marvin Olasky chose an interesting illustration of this from a speech by C.S. Lewis. Space doesn't permit its inclusion here, but it is available in this month's *FREE CD, The Choice*. The bottom line is that temptation comes our way in tiny little increments until finally we have sold out to find a position in "the inner ring." Olasky concludes: "And yet, the scoundrel looking back *rarely remembers choosing*: His life just blew. Enron just happened. *He is just a marionette, a puppet on a string.*"

But if that is the way life is, then there is no value of wisdom over folly. No reason to beat your head against the wall in a university to gain an education. For there are no

choices that are not predetermined. What really astonishes me is the number of Christian thinkers who accept a theological determinism—something like predestination. But if that is the truth, then you have no choice. And any serious reader of the Bible knows better than that.

I could go on, but I would rather send you a *FREE CD* of this message so you can hear it in its entirety. Just check the box on the enclosed card and send it back to us. We have provided an envelope for your convenience.

Keep in touch,

*Ronald L. Dart*

PS. Don't hesitate to order the *FREE CD*. There is no obligation. But your freely given contribution will make it possible for still more people to hear this timely message.



*Radio  
Update*

**Detroit, MI**  
WDRJ 1440 AM  
M-F 4:30 p.m.  
Sunday 12:00 noon

*In Memory*

Christian Educational Ministries gratefully acknowledges the generous donations made in memory of Clell L. Benton of Pennington, TX, who passed away July 22, 2007. He was Linda Benton's, CEM's office manager's, dad. Our prayers and deepest sympathy go out to Mr. Benton's family.

*Using Your Talent  
continued from page 2. . .*

Some people have lots of talents to invest and some have just one or two. More is required of those who have more, but if you have only one talent, God doesn't expect you to produce ten with it. He expects you to do with what you have. Jesus honored a woman for the small kindness of anointing his head because "she had done what she could" (Mark 14:1-9), and the master would have honored him with one talent—if he had "done what he could." As it turned out, he did nothing with his talent and was roundly condemned for it.

Many of us have trouble finding this one talent in our lives, but sometimes what we consider the lesser gifts are of greater impor-

tance to God. That's the lesson of the sheep and goats, the parable that follows the one about the talents. In that parable, those who were admitted into the kingdom (the sheep) gave food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and clothing to the naked. They visited those who were ill and went to those who were in prison. But it is evident from the story that these sheep did not see what they were doing as great things. They were, in a sense, given one talent, but they did what they could with it, and for that they were honored.

The other group (the goats) had the same opportunities for service—the same talent, as it were—but rather than investing that talent for the good of all, they buried it. They let the opportunities of the moment pass, and for that

they were condemned.

As I mentioned earlier, the lessons I discuss in the column (you can read Lenny Cacchio's essays on [www.borntowin.net](http://www.borntowin.net)), are ones that I need to learn. Where is the thirst that I can quench or the hunger that I can satisfy? Where are the hurts that I can heal or the souls who need the comforting? Most of us do not have the five talents to fill a stadium with God-seekers nor have our voices carried on the radio waves. But there is a neighbor next door, or a child in the next room, or a spouse in the easy chair whom we can anoint with oil. There are people all around us who need our one little talent even if we in our own minds diminish its value. We must do what we can do, and for that we will be honored.

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## Calendar of Events

**The Feast of Trumpets, September 13** - Ronald L. Dart will be speaking at the First United Methodist Church, 503 W. College, Terrell, TX. The 2 p.m. service will be followed by a potluck meal. For more information or directions, please contact either Ralph Collins at 817-246-1874 or [r.collins@sbcglobal.net](mailto:r.collins@sbcglobal.net), or Larry Watkins at the CEM office, 1-888-BIBLE 44 or [lsw@cemnetwork.com](mailto:lsw@cemnetwork.com). Come join us!

**Day of Atonement, September 22** - Ronald L. Dart will be speaking at 11:00 a.m. at the Covenant Community Church of Navarre, FL, located at the corner of Panhandle Trail and Quail Roost Drive, approximately ¼ mile north of Hwy 98 in Navarre. Contact Carl Dillenback at 1-850-981-3207 or [dutchmen3@aol.com](mailto:dutchmen3@aol.com), or Larry Watkins at the CEM office, 1-888-BIBLE44 or [lsw@cemnetwork.com](mailto:lsw@cemnetwork.com) for more information.

**Feast of Tabernacles 2007** - will be held in the Emerald Coast Convention Center in Fort Walton Beach, FL beginning the evening of September 26<sup>th</sup> through October 4<sup>th</sup>. Ronald L. Dart will speak September 26<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m., and September 27<sup>th</sup>, September 30<sup>th</sup>, and October 4<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m. This Feast will be a time of great rejoicing for the entire family with inspirational sermons, biblical seminars, youth classes, and fellowship and fun activities. No preregistration is required. Everyone is welcome. For more information go to [www.borntowin.net](http://www.borntowin.net) or contact Linda Benton at [lsbtexas@cemnetwork.com](mailto:lsbtexas@cemnetwork.com) or 1-888-BIBLE-44.

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*That the man of God may be proficient  
and equipped for every good work.*