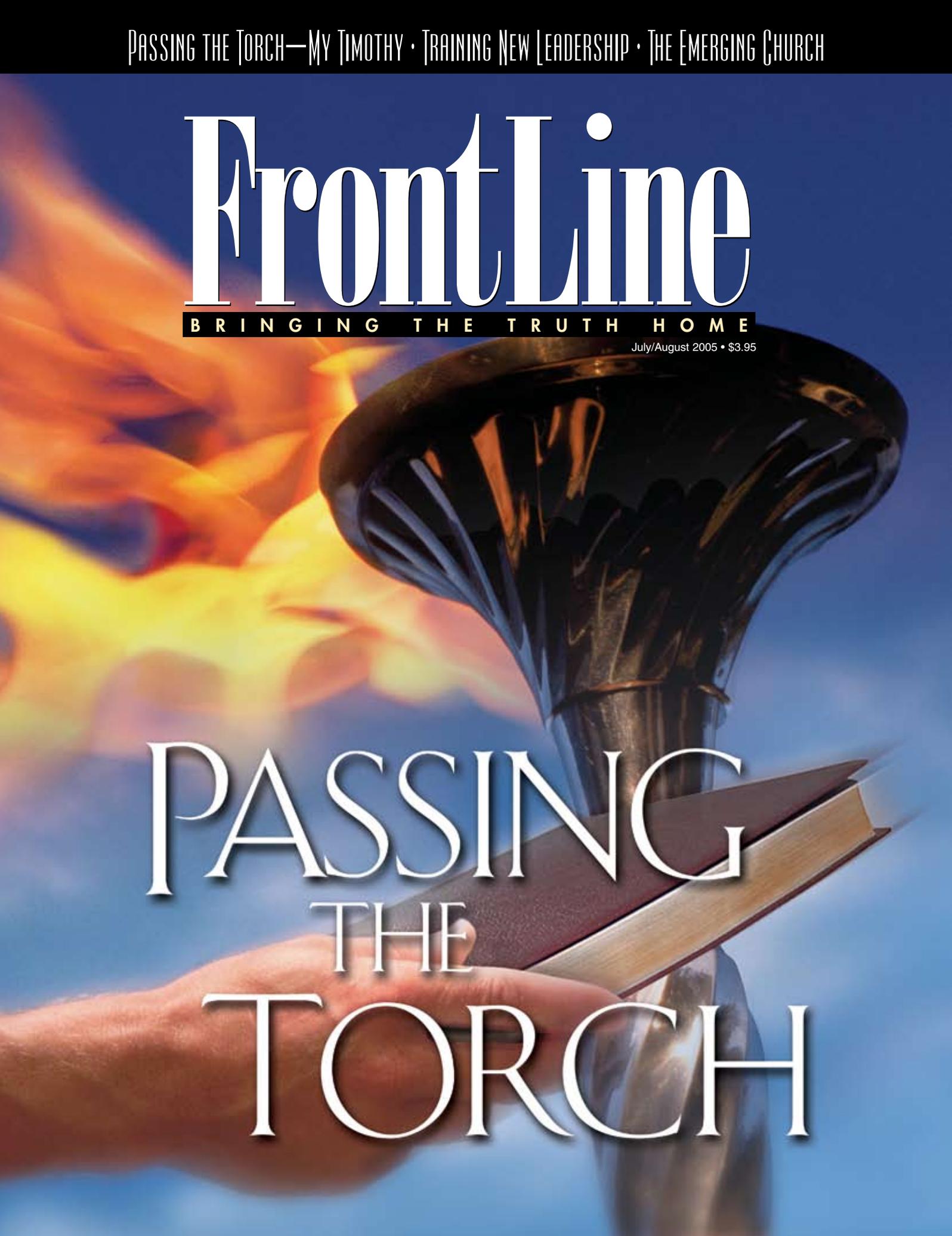


PASSING THE TORCH—MY TIMOTHY • TRAINING NEW LEADERSHIP • THE EMERGING CHURCH

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PASSING THE TORCH

During a severe drought, the members of a small country church met together to pray for rain. As the pastor of the church left his home for the prayer meeting, his daughter stopped him and asked, "Where are you going, Daddy?"

"I'm going to the church to pray for rain."

"But Daddy," she said,

"Where's your umbrella?"



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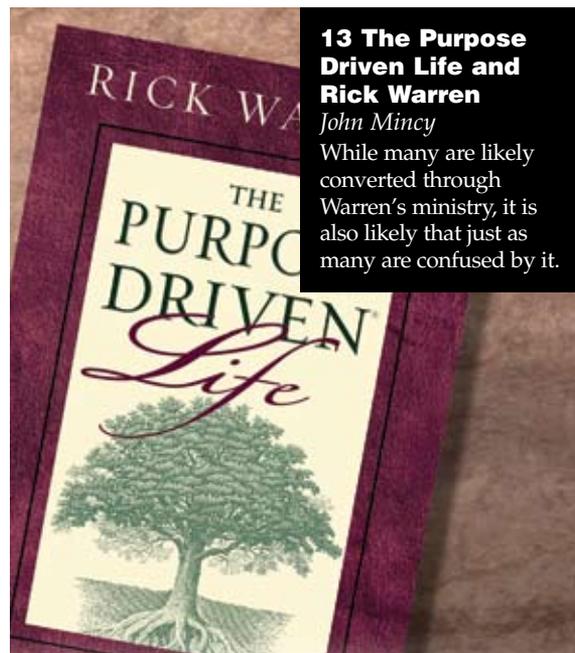
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Precisely because Piper has been so influential, those in positions of spiritual leadership will do well to be familiar with the basics of his theology along with the strengths and weaknesses of his ministry.

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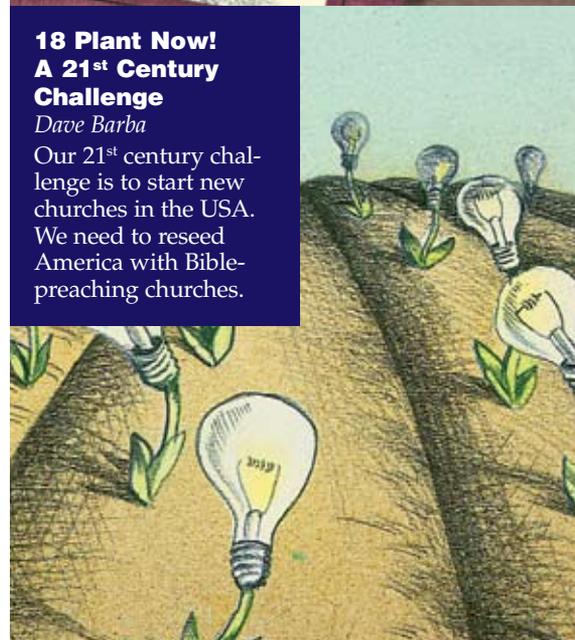
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You may request that your letter not be published or that your name be withheld, but anonymous letters will not be accepted.

I was taken aback when reading Dr. Sam Horn's review of Dr. Mark Sidwell's edited copy of d'Aubigné's *For God and His People: Ulrich Zwingli and the Swiss Reformation* in the March/April issue of the *FrontLine* magazine. Fundamental Baptist forefathers, who, in 1920 established the FBF, would surely have thought it incongruous that such an enemy of our forebears would be so honored in a future publication of their society. There is no question that it would be invaluable to Fundamental Baptists to examine the lives of Baptist heroes such as Issac Backus, John Leland, Francis Wayland, Shubal Stearns, and Daniel Marshall, but to honor an enemy of religious freedom is at variance with Baptist character.

I repeat, in face of the persecutions suffered by Anabaptists at his hand, I find it difficult to understand how a Baptist publication could ever honor Ulrich Zwingli's memory. I fear that many who today profess to be "Fundamental Baptists" are in essence merely "evangelical immersionists." It might be well

for the officers of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship to set aside time at an annual meeting to provide a friendly debate concerning our Baptist origins so that 21st-century Baptists might seriously consider our wonderful heritage.

David L. Cummins
Alabama

I always look forward to receiving *FrontLine* magazine. The articles challenge my thinking and cause me to think and rethink my personal convictions regarding many of the controversial issues facing Christianity today. I find it especially valuable because its writers are diligent to defend Fundamentalism only as it measures up to what the Bible proclaims. Although I agree with much of what Charles R. Phelps puts forth in his article "The Christian and Alcohol," I find his argument that "The Bible says that . . . priests are not to drink" difficult to defend based upon the Scripture that he cites (Lev 10:8, 9). He cites only part of the statement, for God actually says to Aaron "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons

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Faithful Men

In what may very well have been an introduction to Paul's philosophy of ministry, he wrote to Timothy, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." There is much more in that second chapter of 2 Timothy, of course, and all the Pastoral Epistles are essentially a philosophy of ministry. But these two verses are at the heart of the matter.

Spiritual leaders must first be empowered by the "grace that is in Christ Jesus," and then they must overflow that grace into the lives of "faithful men." That overflow is the practical result of effectively communicating "the things that thou hast heard

... among many witnesses." This is the irreducible minimum ministry: getting something from God and giving it to others. There is far more to the ministry than the minimum, but it is wise to see the kernel from which the rest will grow. When we think of "passing the torch," we would do well to understand how critical it really is in New Testament teaching.

Our ministries are not ours. We serve God at His pleasure. Our lives are short and our strength fails. We are but runners in a relay. Some will eventually have the joy of running the final leg, but the vast majority of us

will pass the torch far from the finish line. It would be a sad spectacle to see a runner refusing to hand it off, while he presses on in near exhaustion until he, and the torch, fall out of the race. Clearly, any successful ministry must include a successor.

Think of the poignant simplicity of Paul's exhortation. He has just reminded Timothy of the ministry and influence of others: that of Christ, himself, and both unfaithful and faithful helpers. In that context, he says, "Thou therefore, my son. . . ." As we hear the words of Ron Hamilton's

It would be a sad spectacle to see a runner refusing to hand it off, while he presses on in near exhaustion until he, and the torch, fall out of the race.

song echoing in our minds and remember that "faithful men have gone before us," we have no choice but to commit fully to being faithful men ourselves. No amount of determination alone will make us so. Faithfulness to Christ is not mere determination, it is dependence. We speak too much of

our devotion, and not enough of our dependence.

A well-designed appliance may be equipped and available for a life of usefulness, but it is of no use until it is connected to the source of power. Unplug your refrigerator for a single day and you will illustrate your ministry without the empowering "grace that is in Christ Jesus." Unplug your soul from communion with God and the effect is much the same. We must remember the "Onesiphorus factor," for he was the man that helps explain Paul's "therefore." In light of the fact that many had turned away, Paul

prayed that this faithful man would "find mercy of the Lord in that day." Knowing that a day of reckoning was imminent, he taught Timothy to stay plugged in.

Empowering grace is not for personal indulgence. The relay is not about the runner, it is about the torch. Power drives principles: "the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses." The ministry is about a message about a Man. There is no success apart from taking that message from the faithful men who have gone before us, holding it high while it is in our hands, then passing it on to the faithful men who will run after us. A missionary can spend a lifetime on the foreign field, building a compound with no one there to use it for God's glory when he is gone. A pastor can consume his body building a church complex that will fall into disrepair as he treats it like his personal retirement home. Buildings alone can become the tomb of human dreams.

Successful ministry finds the faithful men. We would not be in the ministry if the Lord had not brought His truth to our hearts. We will have no real ministry if we do not bring that truth to the hearts of others. That is the essence: taking the principles, in power, to people. Consider the missionary who takes the gospel to a foreign land, lives his life in a rented home, reaching just one man who will stay behind to reach other men. Our flesh craves a crowd—even the passing crowd. Paul did not fail to tell us why we must find those faithful men. It is so they can find the faithful men that will follow them, "faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." The message stands forever, in part because God's men stand in line.

—Dr. John Vaughn

PASSING THE TORCH— MY TIMOTHY

Ben Strohbehn

The letter was signed “Your Timothy”—one of the greatest commendations a senior pastor can receive. This came to me from one who once served as a member of our pastoral staff. He is now serving as senior pastor of another church to which the Lord led him. This unique closing of his letter caused me to reflect that four years of laboring together had obviously resulted in a “passing the torch” experience. Even though it began in 1982, that relationship has continued until this present day.

Passing the torch is a sacred responsibility that is entrusted to any senior pastor as he initiates contact with an individual who may be added to the pastoral staff. In fact, we have often been reminded of our first meeting when we discussed such things as salvation experience, call to the ministry, commitment to the inspired Word of God, extent of Bible training, music standards and separation, along with other essential areas usually covered at the outset of such a vital relationship.

It was also important that there be like-mindedness in regards to philosophy of ministry as set forth in Ephesians 4:11–16. Over the years we would utilize that passage as the ultimate guide to determine whether or not a particular plan or program would be useful. We wanted to be certain that it would include evangelizing, educating, or enlisting someone to whom we would have a ministry. At the same time we wanted the people of the church to be given the opportunity to be perfected (fully equipped) (vv. 12, 13), protected (vv. 14, 15), and edified (v. 16). To be successful in building a church, one must focus on building people, and this is done by the consistent preaching of the Word.

When I was in the early years of my pastoral ministry, a veteran pastor explained his preaching program, which had resulted in both spiritual and numerical growth. His Sunday morning sermon was strongly evangelistic, but he said he spent more study time in preparing for his preaching/teaching on Sunday evening and Wednesday evening, for that is when he was building (equipping and

edifying) his people. This is an excellent idea that works even in today's culture as evidenced in the church where "my Timothy" is the pastor.

As we endeavored to follow the pattern of Paul's ministry to Timothy, we found many nuggets of practical value, especially in 2 Timothy 3:10-17—things that could be applied to our labors together. Personally I wanted to be able to say to "my Timothy" as Paul said to his: "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience." Each topic provides a wealth of practical principals for personal application and opportunity for much valuable instruction.

Paul reminded Timothy of the consistent pattern of his life—he practiced what he preached. Purpose in serving the Lord must always be in focus, along with the importance of being longsuffering and patient. In pastoral staff meetings we often discussed the need to see "persecutions and afflictions" not as *problems* but as *challenges*.

Our regular staff meetings, including an early breakfast meeting on occasion, were always a delight as we reviewed the church calendar and planned special events. This time also allowed us opportunity to address some of the perils so common to the pastoral ministry. The danger of making comparisons seems to be a common peril, but John 21:15-21 readily shows how that can be avoided. The Lord Jesus reminded Peter not to be troubled by John's future, but rather Peter was just to "Follow me."

Another serious peril is discontentment. The apostle Paul reminded Timothy that "godliness with contentment is great gain" (see 1 Tim. 6:6-10). Senior pastors must be careful not to pass on "the Blue Monday syndrome" when spirituality becomes dependent on Sunday school or church attendance. Satan delights in that mentality but can be defeated by a reminder from the Word that "ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16).

There is also the peril that concerns companionship. While it is true that we must be careful in choosing

friends so as to avoid compromise, it is also important to build a strong relationship within the families of the pastoral staff. One enjoyable thing we did was to include the pastoral families in a time of fellowship in our home with guest speakers, especially evangelists and Bible conference speakers.

Passing the torch was a gratifying experience that we enjoyed for four great years, but there came that time when I said to him, "I want to recommend you to a church seeking the Lord's will for a senior pastor." With his consent the recommendation was made, and now you know the rest of the story whereby Dr. Chuck Phelps, "my Timothy," became the pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Concord, New Hampshire. I have personally been blessed exceeding abundantly through these many years of our association, but it must never be forgotten that it was all "the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes" (Ps. 118:23).

Dr. Ben Strohbahn is a full-time evangelist.

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Training New Leadership

Lessons from the Example of Barnabas

Paul W. Downey

The Bible doesn't provide a lot of biographical information about the man known as Barnabas in the Book of Acts, but it does present a man worthy of our admiration and emulation. His selflessness and generosity are seen in accounts of his activities as well as in the sometimes surprising silence of the text. Barnabas is obviously a significant figure in the early church, yet even in situations in which his leadership is evident he remains practically invisible. Was he fearful and unwilling to step up and be counted? I don't think so. As we consider the Biblical evidence, the portrait that emerges is actually that of a bold leader and effective mentor who was simply unconcerned about getting credit for his influence.

We first see Barnabas *setting a good example*. He is introduced in Acts 4:36, 37.

And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Joses may have been well-known by the apostles who may have been calling him "the son of consolation [encouragement]" for some time. However, I'm inclined to think that he was given that name for this act of generosity. The verses immediately following this passage

tell of others who decided to imitate Joses/Barnabas—in form, if not in fact. They seem to have wanted the same kind of reputation for spirituality without the same level of commitment. Barnabas had set an example of sacrificial generosity coupled with humility. His character was acknowledged although he had sought no praise. He had simply identified a need, recognized his own ability to help, and then acted.

The next time we see Barnabas, he is *befriending a new convert*. Much has happened among the believers since the events of Acts 4. The church has multiplied to thousands. Deacons have been installed in Jerusalem. One of them, Stephen, had so angered the Sanhedrin by his defense before them that a rising star among the Pharisees, Saul of Tarsus, had been assigned to supervise his execution by stoning. Many of the believers had been forced to flee Jerusalem. Another of the deacons, Philip, had begun evangelizing Samaria. As belief in Christ spread, the Sanhedrin gave Saul another assignment: to seek out and arrest followers of "the way" wherever he might find them (Acts 9:1, 2). Saul's travels took him beyond Jewish borders into Syria. He was confronted by the risen Christ on the road to Damascus and was converted. After spending some time there (and probably three years in Arabia—cf. Gal. 1:17), he returned to Jerusalem.

And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed [attempted] to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus (Acts 9:26, 27).

It is hardly surprising that Saul found the believers in Jerusalem more than a little skeptical about the genuineness of his conversion. Apparently only one among them, Barnabas, was willing to risk his reputation and maybe his life by meeting with this Saul. Then Barnabas put his personal credibility on the line, took Saul to the apostles, and spoke in his defense. He provided the support necessary for Saul to be accepted. The fact that the apostles received Saul on the word of Barnabas speaks volumes for their opinion of Barnabas. He's not very visible, but he was certainly more than a nice man who occasionally put a lot of extra money in the offering plate.

After a few days, Saul leaves Jerusalem and returns to Tarsus, and Barnabas fades to the background. In the months or years that followed, the church continued to grow. Peter shocked everyone by meeting in the home of a Gentile and leading him to Christ. The primary objection was that Peter had gone into a Gentile's home and eaten with him (Acts 11:1-3). The folks in Jerusalem seemed to have been willing to admit, albeit somewhat grudgingly, that Gentiles could be converted without being circumcised. But they weren't quite ready to accept a mixed congregation of Jewish and Gentile converts worshipping together. Then they got word that foreign evangelists from the Mediterranean island of Cyprus and the North African country of Cyrene had begun assembling an apparently mixed congregation in Syrian Antioch. Things were about to get out of hand.¹ It was time to send someone from Jerusalem to investigate. Whom did they send? Not Peter, James, or John. Not one of the other apostles. Not one of the deacons. No, they sent Barnabas. When he got there he was thrilled with what he saw, encouraging and exhorting them all, because he was "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith" (Acts 11:24). Then he did something unexpected.

Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people (Acts 11:25, 26).

Barnabas is *recruiting an assistant*. Rather than fearing that the enthusiasm of a relatively new and untested

convert might cause more harm than good, or even fearing that an assistant might threaten his own position of leadership, Barnabas was willing to invest the effort to find Saul in Tarsus, bring him to Antioch, and train him in the ministry. Considering Saul's extensive educational and elevated social background, Barnabas must have been a man of great confidence in the Lord and in his own ability to lead to even attempt to train Saul.

More time passes, during which Barnabas and Saul are sent by the church at Antioch to deliver famine relief to the believers in Jerusalem. While there, James is beheaded as an apostate by Herod (Agrippa I), and Peter narrowly escapes the same death through the miraculous intervention of the angel of the Lord. Immediately following that event, Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch, taking Barnabas's nephew John Mark with them (Acts 12:25). Barnabas has begun *training a new worker*. The next event that Luke records tells us that the Holy Spirit

moved the church at Antioch to send two of their five most important leaders on a special mission to the Gentiles, saying, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (13:2). We often think of Paul as the first missionary and forget that on his first journey Barnabas was in charge. Luke also tells us that when they departed from Antioch, "they had also John to their minister" (13:5). What we see is a three-man team with Barnabas in the lead, Saul working closely with him, and John Mark assisting both. But John Mark doesn't stay with the team. For reasons not made clear in the text, he decides to head home. Rather than giving up in despair over his "failure"

with John Mark, or dragging him along under duress, Barnabas takes Saul and continues to do the work God had appointed for them. Actually, on this trip Saul begins to be called Paul, probably because of the Gentile emphasis in their ministry.²

As this trip progresses, we see Barnabas *delegating responsibilities*. Paul may have always been the primary speaker, but he is clearly so starting with his testimony before Sergius Paulus. But even by the time they arrived in Lystra (Acts 14:8-12), Barnabas's leadership was still obvious to the crowds. After Paul healed a lame man, the people of Lystra said, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker" (Acts 14:11, 12). Remember that while Mercury was the messenger of the gods, Jupiter was their *king*. And don't miss the fact that it was the priest of Jupiter, not Mercury, who brought garlands and sacrifices to offer before them (14:13). The people of Lystra were honoring Barnabas above Paul, even though Paul was the speaker and miracle worker. Barnabas was deferring to his pupil and was

Barnabas is recruiting an assistant. Rather than fearing that the enthusiasm of a relatively new and untested convert might cause more harm than good, or even fearing that an assistant might threaten his own position of leadership, Barnabas was willing to invest the effort . . .

moving to the background in the Biblical narrative, but his leadership was still evident in this situation.

Eventually, we see Barnabas *surrendering leadership*. The time came for Barnabas to get completely out of the way and turn the work over to Paul. Unfortunately, the parting was not entirely amicable. Acts 15:36–40 says,

And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed to Cyprus; And Paul chose Silas, and departed. . . .

Significantly, they split over the issue of training John Mark. Who was right? Both of them. It was God's intention to divide the work at this point. Paul would take Silas and continue the missionary work he was called to do, and for which Barnabas had trained him. Barnabas would take John Mark back to Cyprus to disciple him.

Thus, the last time we see Barnabas in Acts, he is *starting over with a new recruit*. Was he successful this time in salvaging one who had been a dropout? While Barnabas disappears from the narrative, his pupil becomes important. Years later, near the end of his life, Paul writes in 2 Timothy 4:11, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry." Beyond that, the Holy Spirit used John Mark to write the gospel that bears his name. Tradition tells us that Mark traveled with Peter through the region north of the Caucasus Mountains in Anatolia: "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Peter 1:1). The earliest quotations from Mark's Gospel are found in the second-century writings of Justin Martyr, who identifies his source as "the memoirs of Peter." Mark was apparently a successful aide to Peter, transcribing Peter's sermons as his source material for his Gospel. In some ways much like Paul, the pupil of Barnabas once again rises to greater heights of fame than the teacher ever acquired.

Many among us are facing the reality of a personal ministry winding to



It is important to realize that the ministry is not so much a marathon as a relay, connecting generation to generation.

a close. It is important to realize that the ministry is not so much a marathon as a relay, connecting generation to generation. Are Fundamentalist leaders going to be willing and able to release the baton to the hands of those who will carry on the fight in the decades to come? Barnabas shows us how. His legacy was not in the books he wrote, the building he erected, or the crowds he addressed. It was the men he trained. May each of us run our leg of the race for God's glory.

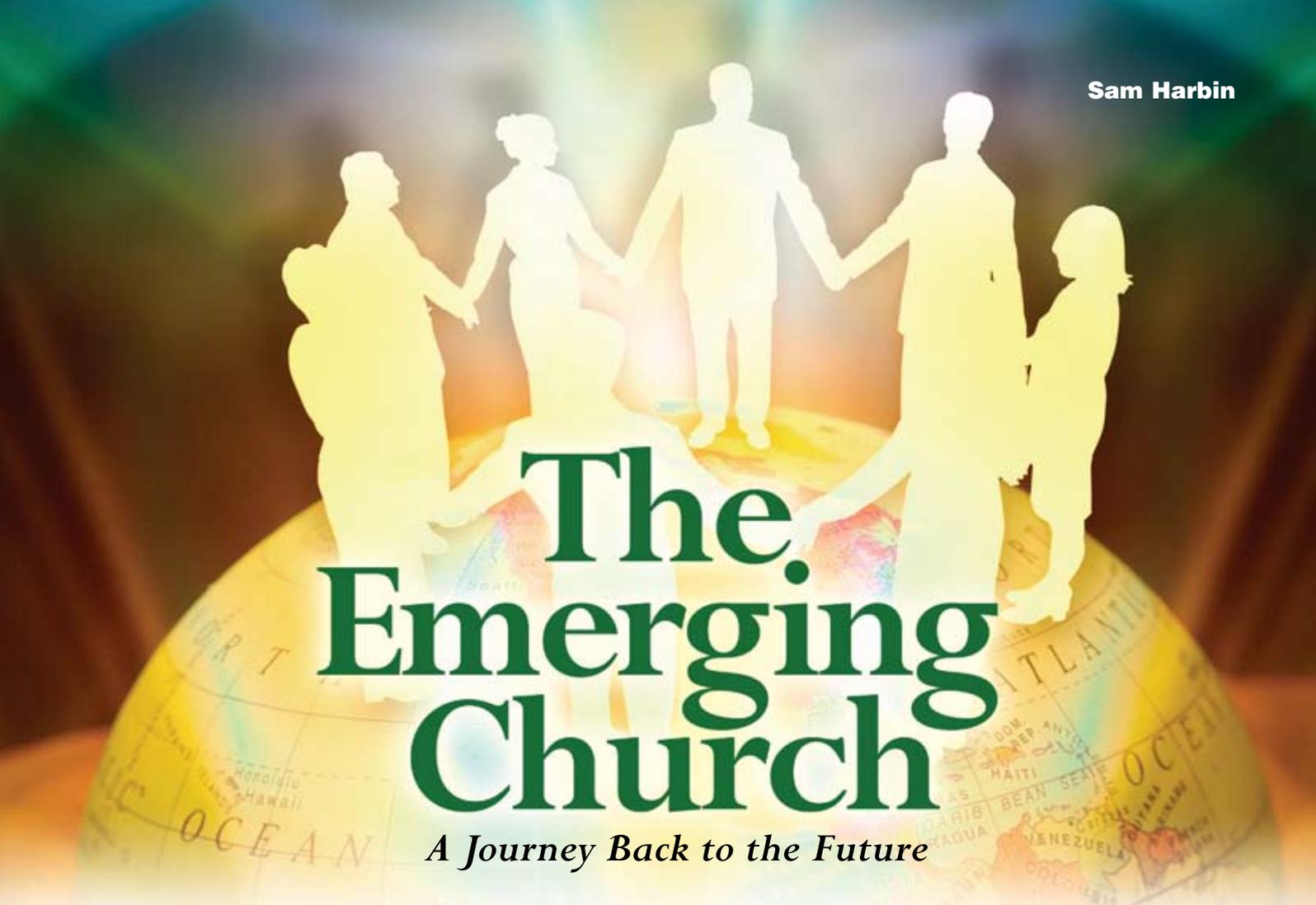
Paul W. Downey pastors Temple Baptist Church in Athens, Georgia.

¹ They were right to be fearful. Jewish opposition becomes much more intense after this. This was only partly due to the mingling with Gentiles. Perhaps more importantly, the believers are tagged with a new

name: "Christians." New Testament believers never called themselves by this name. It was given by their detractors. The only other times the name is used (Acts 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16) the context is persecution. By identifying believers as "Christians," the Roman authorities were no longer constrained to provide legal protection. They were followers of a new religion. But neither would the Jews call the believers "Christians," because they refused to concede the "Christ-ness" of Jesus. So this name stung the Jews as well. The Jews no longer saw believers in Christ as a variant denomination within Judaism, but as an apostate cult, evidenced by James's beheading rather than stoning in Acts 12:2. The establishing of the church in Antioch was a watershed event in more ways than one.

² The shift comes with the conversion of Sergius Paulus in Cyprus, the first record of a Gentile converted through the direct ministry of the gospel without any prior relationship with Judaism (Acts 13:7–12). Since John Mark left immediately afterward, it seems likely that his reason for leaving was objection to a ministry targeting Gentiles directly. If so, it might help explain the later attitudes of Barnabas and Paul toward John Mark: Barnabas thought spending more time with him would help, but Paul didn't want him coming with them on their next journey.

An advertisement for Secret Place Music Choral Director's Club. The background is a light blue sky with a faint image of a dove. The text is in various colors and fonts. The main title "Secret Place Music" is in a large, stylized font. Below it, "Choral Director's Club" is in a smaller font. The price "for just \$30 a year." is prominently displayed. To the right, there are bullet points listing benefits: "You will receive 3 packets a year with 4-6 choral pieces in each packet with SATB, SAB, Ladies, Mens, or Unison arrangements." and "Recent publications include the SATB octavos: Psalm 100 and God Leads Us Along". At the bottom right, contact information is provided: Website: www.secretplacemusic.org, E-mail: info@secretplacemusic.org, Phone: 1-888-SPM-5556.



The Emerging Church

A Journey Back to the Future

Arriving just in time for the church service, you enter a dimly lit room. Projected images of ancient Christian art decorate the walls, accented by flickering candlelight. The aroma of freshly-baked bread makes your mouth water. Strains of contemporary instrumental music provide an auditory backdrop for the meditative activities of worshipers already unfolding at separate stations around the room. Some pray, face-down, on the floor. Others add entries to a “hunger journal,” describing ways they have experienced spiritual longing in their life. At another, worshipers compose Post-it note prayers and attach their petitions to the silhouette of a cross on the wall. At still another, little children express their worship through the medium of finger-paints.

Motioning you into a seating area which resembles a Barnes and Noble coffee and conversation pit, a greeter presses a cool lump of modeling clay into your palm as the speaker for the evening takes his place on a high stool out among the audience. The speaker invites listeners to create, while he speaks, a clay sculpture based on the text for his talk, the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John.

By this juncture, you may suspect that you have time-warped into an ancient Gothic liturgical gathering, perplexingly populated by contemporary Montessori preschool educators. In fact, you have found your way into a gathering of worshipers who belong to Generation X. Though among the “generation which defies description,”

professing believers within these youthful descendants of the baby boomers, this first thoroughly postmodern generation, have taken to calling themselves the “Emerging Church.”

What this group is emerging *from* is the old view of life in the world, known as the “modern” world view. What they are emerging *toward* is the apparent successor to the dying modern mindset, a new paradigm known as *postmodernity*. In the modern world, absolute truth was accepted, authority was authoritative, and the concepts of right and wrong were recognized and embraced, in principle if not in practice. In the postmodern world, truth is relative, authoritarian leadership is shunned, and the old boundary lines separating right and wrong have been replaced with personally determined value systems (“my truth”). In the modern world, science ruled and life’s perplexities were unraveled through research and reasoning. In a postmodern world, science is suspect, as is human reason, since the scientists themselves are biased due to personal prejudice and political agendas. Postmodern thinkers do embrace one absolute: that there are *no absolutes*. Since no truth can be absolute, all points of view must be equally tolerated; hence the cardinal sin in postmodernity is *intolerance* of the others’ values.

You may have heard much or little about the phenomenon known as the Emerging Church. Are these people truly saved and simply searching for creative approaches

to evangelizing postmoderns? Is it a cult? Do you have to ride a skateboard or live in southern California in order to join? Should you be concerned if your twenty-year-old son thinks it's cool?

Sadly, confusion and ignorance bolstered by strong opinion have been the response of Fundamentalists to these questions, at least according to our critics. The Emerging Church may become more the passing fad it now seems to be. Like the men of Issachar (1 Chron. 12:32), Bible-believing men and women desire to "understand the times" so they can proclaim the gospel faithfully and effectively. Informed awareness of the Emerging Church is at least part of an intelligent understanding of our times.

Like the generation which is their primary target for evangelism, the Emerging Church is difficult to define. Largely nondenominational, those who identify themselves as "emergent" fall across a wide spectrum of belief and practice. The more conservative elements appear to be brothers and sisters in Christ who grieve the failure of the modern church to reach and retain Gen-Xers, who are attempting to do something about it. At the other end of the spectrum, some appear to be questioning the very nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To their credit, when some emergent writers speak of a "broadened gospel," they emphasize that salvation is not just a magical prayer that enables a person to escape Hell to live any ungodly way he chooses. Rather, genuine salvation is the beginning of a new life, a life of obedience to the commands of Jesus Christ. They emphasize growing to become more like Jesus, not just the prayer that marked the point when the process began. But, other emergent writers use the term "broadened gospel" to resurrect some old enemies of the cross—the reports of whose deaths may have been greatly exaggerated—such as the social gospel, which aims not at personal redemption from sin so much as the liberation of the oppressed from difficult earthly circumstances.

Because emergent groups fall across such a wide spectrum, it is wise to avoid broad statements such as, "The Emerging Church believes. . . ." It is more accurate to address what a single emergent congregation believes and practices. Emergent groups appear to be grappling with the same challenge faced by Fundamental churches: how to effectively confront a culture hungering for relevance with the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ.

The Emerging Church has both assets and liabilities. On the positive side, emergent churches appear to be engaging contemporary culture with the claims of Christ. They are definitely "in the world" (John 17:11), not cloistered away in a Christian subculture, safe from contamination but sealed off from spiritual impact on pagan culture. Emergent pastors teach their people a "missional" mindset, reminding American Christians to think of themselves as aliens on a postmodern mission field, not citizens of a supposedly Christian nation.

The Emerging Church presents a new celebration of human creativity in worship. Worship gatherings are designed to engage humans as God made them, with all five senses. Not just sight and sound, but touch, smell,

even taste will be summoned to enable the worshiper to understand spiritual truth and respond to God in expressions of praise. Various styles of learning, in addition to lecture, are accommodated through visuals and artistic activities, even during the sermon. Visual learners who quickly lose interest in emotion-free lessons find this new involvement refreshing. Men and women who can't sing well enough to minister in music have found other gifts (formerly welcome only in Vacation Bible School) useful in the Emerging Church.

But there are problems, such as the uncritical acceptance of much of popular culture. In choices of entertainment, music, or the consumption of alcohol, emergent believers draw more inclusive boundaries than Bible-believers of previous generations. Where Fundamental churches have lacked creativity, the emergent groups seem to be on the pendulum swing of excess. Instead of helping people to objectively focus on God with all of their being, worshipers may be attracted to the subjective *experience* of focusing on God with all of their being. It is one thing to desire to "experience GOD" through genuine worship. It is something else entirely to desire to "EXPERIENCE God" in the name of worship.

To their credit, emergent groups have raised fair criticism of the megachurch movement. They react negatively to man-centered sermons that sound like a Tony Robbins lecture on human success. They reject performer-focused "worship events" that resemble rock concerts, complete with platform celebrities. Some emergent pastors have returned to expositions of Scripture in context to educate a Biblically illiterate younger generation. They lead gently as shepherds among sheep, not as paid professionals who drive the sheep by virtue of their position. Fundamentalists themselves may be reawakened to grow and change through revitalization of these Biblical methods.

The Emerging Church does seem somewhat hypocritical in their often caustic criticism of "seeker-driven" churches. This new emphasis on designing worship around postmodern sensitivities may simply indicate that the "seekers" have changed and now demand that the church adjust accordingly.

Fundamental churches can be thankful that the emergent groups are raising issues that can help our own self-examination, a process that should never stop until we see Christ in glory. Like Paul on Mars' Hill (Acts 17), we must confront a culture of relativism. By God's grace, let us be compassionately *flexible* where we can do so without compromise, but courageously *firm* to sound out in clear tones the gospel of the *only* Savior, Jesus Christ.

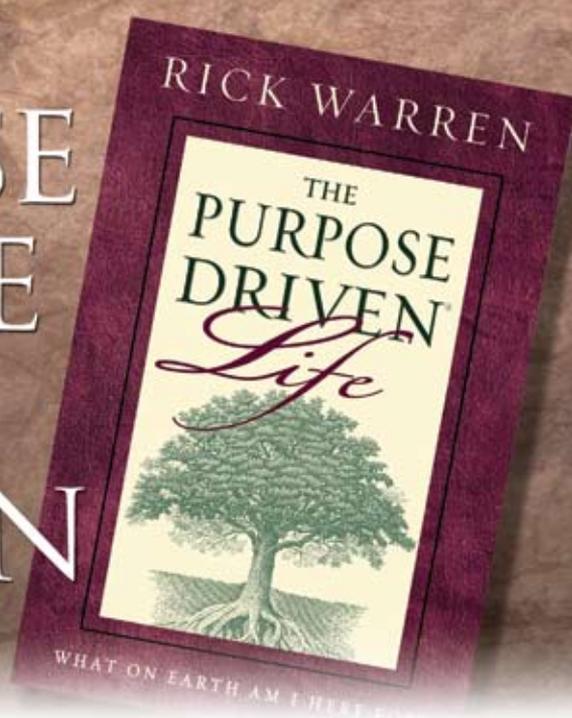
To learn more about the Emerging Church, you may find these books helpful:

The Emerging Church and Emerging Worship by Dan Kimball (Zondervan Publishing)
Mission to Oz by Mark Tabb (Moody Publishers)
Postmodern Youth Ministry by Tony Jones (Zondervan Publishing)

Dr. Sam Harbin is Chairman and Professor of Pastoral Theology at Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary, Lansdale, Pennsylvania.

THE PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE AND RICK WARREN

John Mincy



Who Is Rick Warren?

Rick Warren is the pastor of the Saddleback Church in the city of Lake Forest, Orange County, California. He grew up in a Southern Baptist preacher's home and went to Southern Baptist schools for college and seminary. Saddleback is a supporting member of the Southern Baptist Convention. Warren looks to W. A. Criswell, Robert Schuller, and Donald McGavran as his mentors. George Mair's biography of Warren includes Norman Vincent Peale in that group, especially in the "unification of psychology and theology."¹ Peter Drucker has been a major influence in Warren's life for over twenty years.² Warren's books have sold more copies than any other hardback nonfiction book in history, except the Bible.³

There is much that is commendable in the work of Rick Warren. He has had a consistent testimony even since high school.⁴ Warren has many creative ideas and has been successful in building a large church. He has a gift for communicating in an interesting manner using snappy sayings, alliteration, and an authoritative and appealing style.⁵

An Incomplete Gospel

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:8).

Warren's greatest error is the communication of an incomplete gospel. He makes reference to personal salvation in Christ at least fourteen times in PDL.⁶ His gospel is "Believe in Jesus Christ, pray a prayer, and you are saved and in the family of God." He does not mention repentance, the turning away from "dead works" or "idols."⁷ On March 22, 2005, Warren told Larry King, "You know, when I repented, Larry, years ago, I basically turned from hopelessness to hope, from darkness to light, from guilt to forgiveness, from loneliness to a family of God, from purposelessness to purpose, from having no meaning in my

life to having meaning. It was the most positive change in my life."

The unsaved religious person will not get the gospel from that statement. A Roman Catholic can hear or read his message and simply become a better lost church member by tithing or serving. There is no call to forsake false religious trust in good works, baptism, or religious rites, and trust only in the finished work of Christ. Fr. Phil Bloom, a Roman Catholic priest, wrote,

From a Catholic perspective, I find little to criticize in Pastor Warren's approach. Ironically, my major objection so far is that he seems over-reliant on the efficacy of works for salvation. Rick Warren's Saddleback Church, like certain Catholic parishes, strikes me as admirable, but somewhat hyper-organized⁸

While many are likely saved through Warren's ministry, it is also likely that just as many are confused by it. On page 34 of PDL he says, "God won't ask about your religious background or doctrinal views. The only thing that will matter is, did you accept what Jesus did for you and did you learn to love and trust him?"

Doctrine and church background *do* matter, for they often interpret for us what Jesus did and even who Jesus is. Because Warren's gospel is so generic, Catholics, Mormons, and others feel free to sell the books and even use the full-blown PDL program in their adult and youth ministries.⁹ Even George Mair, Warren's biographer, gets the wrong message about salvation.

As Rick says, when we place our faith in Jesus Christ, God becomes our Father, we become His children, and other believers from the past, present, and future become our brothers and sisters; the Church becomes our spiritual family. But there's one catch; although God creates us all, we don't immediately become a part of His spiritual family. We must have a second birth through baptism to truly become children of

God. Rick says that baptism is not an option for Christians; it is a must.¹⁰

While this is not Rick Warren's position, Mair's comment does demonstrate that Warren's generic gospel leads to and confirms a person in whatever gospel he already has from his religious experience. Even when given a golden opportunity to give a clear-cut gospel presentation Warren's answer is so soft as to be no gospel at all.

KING: Since you believe in God, if an agnostic or an atheist is doing good, God appreciates it, according to you, right?

WARREN: God wants us all to be loving to each other, there is no doubt about that. In fact, Jesus wouldn't have made any distinction between someone who was of a different background. The issue was, do they love him and do they have a purpose? Are they following his purpose?¹¹

A Misrepresentation of Scripture

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book (Rev. 22:18).

Another major problem with Warren is his abuse of Scripture. In fact, there are many statements attributed to God in Warren's books that God never said. The use of different translations is not worthy of condemnation in itself, as long as the translations are literal and accurate, but some of the paraphrases Warren uses put man's words in God's mouth. This is an especially serious problem when people are thinking, like Mair in his biography of Warren, that "by using different translations, Rick hopes to bring the reader as close as he can to God's original words."¹² The loose paraphrases start from Day 1 in PDL and continue all through the book. On the first day he quotes from *The Message*, "Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life." Is that anywhere near, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6)? Can you recognize this one? "God's wisdom . . . goes deep into the interior of his purposes. . . . It's not the latest message, but more like the oldest—what God determined as the way to bring out his best in us"¹³ He introduces this with "the Bible says." Certainly these are not God's words, only a poor and erroneous paraphrase of "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory . . ." (1 Cor. 2:7). It is not wrong to use a paraphrase to help with understanding, but the paraphrase should accurately portray Scripture. Introducing a paraphrase with the words "the Bible says" or "God says" rather than "a paraphrased edition of the Bible says" or another similar comment misrepresents the Word of God.

There are literally hundreds of examples throughout PDL. One more example: "We're Christ's representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them. We're speaking for Christ himself now: Become friends with God."¹⁴ This quote is introduced with the words, "the Bible says," but what the Bible really says is, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). The meaning has been changed, and the reader is robbed of the message because of the distortion of *The Message*!

An Extreme Pragmatism

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world (1 John 2:16).

According to Warren, "God loves all kinds of music because he invented it all—fast and slow, loud and soft, old and new. You probably don't like it all, but God does"¹⁵ He also says, "I reject the idea that music styles can be judged as either 'good' or 'bad' music."¹⁶ At the recent 25th anniversary celebration of the Saddleback Church Warren sang Jimi Hendrix' "Purple Haze," number 17 on the Rolling Stone's 500 greatest songs of all time! How important is music to Warren? "The style of music you choose to use in your services will be one of the most critical (and controversial) decisions you make in the life of your church. It may also be *the* most influential factor in determining who your church reaches for Christ and whether or not your church grows. You must match your music to the kind of people God wants your church to reach"¹⁷

Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. 1 Samuel 15:22

Pragmatism is the overriding theme of Warren's ministry. He says, for example, "If I didn't believe that pastors can change the world I would be something else."¹⁸ God's servants need to pursue God's purpose for our lives, not what may seem to produce results. Some of the Lord's servants never see the results of their work, but those who follow after do. Twice he says, "Never criticize what God is blessing."¹⁹ But he can be quite critical of others.²⁰ On page 164 of PDC, for example, Warren says, "God warns us over and over not to criticize, compare, or judge each other. . . . Whenever I judge another believer, four things instantly happen: I lose fellowship with God, I expose my own pride, I set myself to be judged by God, and I harm the fellowship of the church." This is not the place for a discourse on judging, but there are times to judge and there are times not to judge. In order to protect his pragmatic philosophy, Warren chooses to ignore clear Scripture.

. . . there are many statements attributed to God in Warren's books that God never said.

A Disregard for Biblical Separatism

Warren is certainly not a separatist. He shows disdain for traditionalists (Fundamentalists) but camaraderie with those who have compromised the Christian faith.

Warren is part of the ultra-conservative Southern Baptist Convention, and all his senior staff sign on to SBC's doctrines, such as the literal and infallible Bible and exclusion of women as senior pastors. Yet Warren's pastor-training programs welcome Catholics, Methodists, Mormons, Jews and ordained women. "I'm not going to get into a debate over the non-essentials. I won't try to change other denominations. Why be decisive?" he asks, citing as his model Billy Graham, a statesman for Christ ministering across barriers.²¹

To Warren true worship could include healing, miracles, ecstatic experiences, ceremonies, and candles (PDL, 64-65), appealing to Catholics and Charismatics. He refers approvingly of Roman Catholics such as Benedictine monks (89), Mother Teresa (125), and nuns (229). He refers approvingly of Bonhoeffer (163), Bill Bright (84), Billy Graham (187), Jack Hayford, Chuck Smith, and Chuck Swindoll (PDC 233). The first four pages of PDC are filled with recommendations from many apostate or non-separatist denominations.

The influence of Rick Warren's ministry is not going away. The April 16, 2005, issue of *World* magazine says, "Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* resumed its place at the top of the bestseller lists after a well-publicized role the hostage crisis in Atlanta involving hostage Ashley Smith and accused murderer Brian Nichols." With 22 million copies sold, Rick Warren and his *The Purpose Driven Life* are an issue that every Fundamental leader will have to address at some point. It is important that we are all well-informed concerning the strengths and weaknesses of his ministry and writings.²²

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¹ *A Life With Purpose, The Story of Bestselling Author and America's Most Inspiring Minister, Rick Warren*, p. 100.

² www.forbes.com, Dec. 13, 2004

³ For the sake of brevity, we will refer to Warren's two main works as follows: *Purpose Driven Life*, PDL, and *Purpose Driven Church*, PDC.

⁴ George Mair's short biography of Warren entitled *A Life with Purpose*.

⁵ Examples include: "It's not about you. . . . If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God" (PDL 17); "Don't repress it; confess it! Don't conceal it; reveal it. Revealing your feeling is the beginning of healing" (PDL 213); "Notoriety means nothing to real servants because they know the difference between prominence and significance" (PDL 263); "A great commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission will make you a great Christian" (PDL 306); "When you're helping row the boat, you don't have time to rock it!" (PDC 86); "If you focus on fishing [evangelism], God will pay your bills" (PDC 202); "Remember, people are not looking for

a friendly church as much as they are looking for friends" (PDC 312); and "Too many Christians use the church, but don't love it" (PDC 395).

⁶ Especially pp. 37, 58, 118, and 294.

⁷ He does address repentance in PDL on page 182, but only in the context of how to grow as a Christian.

⁸ www.geocities.com/Heartland/2964/33ordinary-b.html.

⁹ Check out www.tarfy.org or www.holyfamilyparish.org or www.missionaryhelper.com/resources or deseretbook.com.

¹⁰ p. 145.

¹¹ *Larry King Live*, March 22, 2005.

¹² Mair, p. 155, emphasis mine.

¹³ Quoted exactly from PDL, p. 20.

¹⁴ PDL p. 283.

¹⁵ PDL p. 65.

¹⁶ PDC p. 281.

¹⁷ PDC p. 280, emphasis his.

¹⁸ PDC p. 20.

¹⁹ PDC pp. 62, 156

²⁰ PDC pp. 56, 239, 299, 340, etc.

²¹ www.usatoday.com, article by Cathy Grossman, July 21, 2003.

²² There is a lot of material examining the ministry of Rick Warren. Warren Smith wrote *Deceived on Purpose: The New Age Implications of the Purpose-Driven Church*, which emphasizes Warren's indebtedness to Robert Schuller and Bruce Wilkinson.

Similar is James Sundquist's *Who's Driving the Purpose Driven Church?* T. A. McMahon has written a lengthy critique majoring on some of Warren's psychological buzzwords. (Enter "T. A. McMahon purpose driven" into your search engine.) Nathan Busenitz has written some good articles. (Enter "busenitz warren" into your search engine or see his chapter in *Fool's Gold*, edited by John MacArthur. By the way, MacArthur shares some of the Warren's problems in the area of ecumenism. Probably one of the better critiques is written by Jim Delany. You can find this at www.salem-bible.org.

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On the Ministry of John Piper

Other than John MacArthur, it is unlikely that any modern evangelical author has been more influential and respected in Fundamentalist circles than John Piper. Piper, the senior pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, has broadened the reach of his local ministry through his extensive book and sermon publications. A prolific author, his books have been well received and widely read by Fundamentalists. Precisely because Piper has been so influential, those in positions of spiritual leadership will do well to be familiar with the basics of his theology, along with the strengths and weaknesses of his ministry.

It is beyond reasonable question that Piper ought to be considered a theological conservative. He holds to the traditional position on inerrancy. His understanding of salvation is consistent with that of the Reformers and historic Fundamentalism, as against the more social understanding of salvation that is typical of liberal theologians. Basic Christian teachings, such as the deity of Christ and the authenticity of Biblical miracles, are assumed in Piper's teaching and writings. In simple terms, it is sufficient to say that Piper is a genuine evangelical, in the best and historical sense of the term.

It is certainly not difficult to identify Piper's main theological emphasis. He unambiguously declares that the theme of his entire ministry is, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him."¹ His three most important works expand upon this premise. In *The Pleasures of God*,² Piper advances the idea that God values Himself more highly than He values anything else. In *Desiring God*, he challenges us to value God more than we value anything else, and in *Future Grace*,³ he outlines in very practical terms the sort of life that results from such a God-centered focus.

It is this emphasis on being satisfied in God that inspires Piper's most valuable contribution to contemporary evangelical discussion. Piper's theology is in some ways a fresh updating of Jonathan Edwards's emphasis on the necessity of right affections. It is easy in our approach to our ministries to reduce genuine Christianity to right doctrine and right practice, because these are the easiest to judge based on externals. Piper, however, insists that right emotions are just as vital as these other essentials. He recognizes that it is

possible to believe the right things intellectually and do the right things morally, yet have no emotional inclination toward God. He relentlessly attacks the popular idea that obedience to God should be pursued from the motivation of mere duty, comparing it to a man who buys roses for his wife on their anniversary merely because it is his duty to do so. Instead, Piper encourages a pursuit of God that encompasses the entire person: mind, will, and emotions.

Piper argues that all people everywhere live for pleasure, but he does not consider this to be a bad thing. What makes a person good or bad, he contends, is not *that* he pursues pleasure as much as *what* he pursues for his pleasure. That is, people who find their pleasure in cheap, temporal things betray that they themselves are shallow. However, since people were created to enjoy God forever, Piper contends that we are fulfilling God's design when we seek to find our joy in Him.

Another major emphasis of Piper's ministry is missions. His approach to missions is radically God-centered. He opens *Let the Nations Be Glad*, his major work on the subject, by asserting, "Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't."⁴ Such a mindset should resonate with any Fundamentalist who understands that the spread of God's glory is of greater significance as a motivation for missions than is the salvation of men. Piper's understanding of missions also undercuts the driving force behind the modern megachurch movement, which tends to center on the felt needs of the unbeliever, rather than on the spread of the genuine worship of God.

A final commendation of Piper is that despite his immense popularity, his ministry has not appeared to be profit-oriented, offering an open invitation to those short of funds to request resources at reduced or no charge for their own edification and spiritual growth.⁵ In a time in which Christian celebrities offer books with so many related spin-offs and products, such an approach is undeniably refreshing.

However, Piper's thinking has not escaped criticism entirely. Many have objected to the pleasure-oriented language that he employs to describe the Christian life, especially his characterization of sanctification as "Christian Hedonism." If one is to literally judge his

book by its cover, it would be logical to assume that Piper is endorsing the unbridled notions of Christian liberty and antinomianism common in modern evangelical theology. However, this is simply not the case. Piper is sensitive to these charges, even offering an extended defense of his use of the term *hedonism* to describe sanctification.⁶ He acknowledges that, to some degree, he uses the term for its shock effect, intending to grab his reader's attention and focus it on a neglected area of sanctification.

Others have charged him with soteriological reductionism, in that he tends to identify the entire sanctification process with the one element of pursuing pleasure in God. Peter Masters, pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, has articulated this particular criticism. He writes of Piper, "Delighting in God . . . becomes the key formula for all spiritual vigour and development. . . . The entire Christian life is simplified to rest upon a single quest, which is bound to distort one's perception of the Christian life and how it must be lived."⁷ This is an interesting charge, and one not to be underestimated. Clearly, one could read Piper in such a way that other important Biblical motifs for sanctification, such as warfare and sacrifice, are entirely neglected in the pursuit of joy. It is doubtful, though, whether this is Piper's intent. For instance, he offers an extended chapter in *Desiring God* on the importance of suffering in the Christian life. Piper frequently challenges Christians to deny themselves lesser pleasures for those which are truly greater.

There are elements of Piper's ministry and teaching, however, that call for a higher level of concern. Piper offers an uncertain voice on the place of miraculous gifts in the modern church.⁸ This is not an issue in his books, by and large, as the topic simply does not surface. However, those who read Piper's books and become unduly enamored with his genuine passion for Christ might find themselves giving a more sympathetic hearing to the arguments for the continuation of the miraculous gifts.

Piper is also inconsistent in his practice of separation. Certainly, he acknowledges that there are those who claim the name of Christ who in reality are not truly Christian. However, the latitude he allows in his own associations is troubling. For example, while Piper's own position on inerrancy is solid, he offers enthusiastic support for Daniel Fuller,⁹ who has publicly undermined the traditional understanding of the authority of Scripture.

The most problematic example of Piper's non-separatism, however, is his reaction to the heresy in his own denomination. Piper's church belongs to the Baptist General Conference. This organization, however, also includes Gregory Boyd, a former professor at Bethel College in St. Paul, Minnesota. Boyd is one of the foremost advocates of a heretical theology, frequently called *open theism*, which denies that God's knowledge of future events is exhaustive. In a denominational meeting in 2000, a resolution was passed that deemed open theism to be inconsistent with the denomination's

historic position on God's omniscience. However, the same meeting acknowledged that such a position would be tolerated within the seminaries and churches of the conference. Piper himself has been outspoken in his opposition to open theism, calling it "a massive re-visioning of God" and a "distortion" of the faith.¹⁰ However, in spite of the denomination's failure to divest itself of this heresy, Piper decided to maintain his membership in the union.

Piper's rejection of Fundamentalist separatism cannot be chalked up to ignorance of the position. Piper grew up in Greenville, South Carolina, and his father was a board member at Bob Jones University. Thus, his decision to maintain unacceptable ecclesiastical associations is made in full knowledge of the Scriptural position on separation, but in conscious rejection of it.

In the main, Piper's books spur Christians to love the Lord with all of their heart, soul, mind and strength. Piper articulates the claims of the gospel to modern believers in such a way that he challenges the far-too-comfortable lives of middle-class suburban Christianity. When read with discretion, he provides much that is beneficial to Fundamental believers and churches. However, because of Piper's neglect of Biblical separatism, Fundamentalists cannot give a blanket endorsement to his ministry.

Michael Riley is currently working on a PhD in Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

¹ John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*, 10th Anniversary Expanded Edition (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996), 9

² John Piper, *The Pleasures of God: Meditations on God's Delight in Being God*, Revised and Expanded (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2000).

³ John Piper, *The Purifying Power of Living by Faith in Future Grace* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1995).

⁴ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993).

⁵ Piper, *Pleasures of God*, 341–42.

⁶ Piper, *Desiring God*, 287–290.

⁷ Peter Masters, "'Christian Hedonism'—Is it Right?" *Sword and Trowel* (2002): 10–16. Cited 30 April 2005. Online: <http://www.metropolitantabernacle.org/Pages/HEDONISM.html>.

⁸ Note, for instance, that Piper makes a distinction between open theism, which he believes to be very destructive to the church, and differences over the Charismatic gifts, which he finds more acceptable (John Piper, "We Took a Good Stand and Made a Bad Mistake: Reflections on the Baptist General Conference Annual Meeting, St Paul," n.p. [cited 30 May 2005]. Online: http://www.desiringgod.org/library/fresh_words/2000/070500.html).

⁹ "As with most everything I do, the influence of Daniel P. Fuller pervades. . . . I would be happy to view this book as explanation and application of his great book, *Unity of the Bible* (Zondervan, 1992). He remains a treasured friend and mentor" (Piper, *Desiring God*, 11).

¹⁰ Piper, "Good Stand," n.p.



Plant Now!

A 21st Century Challenge

Why Re-seed?

When I was a kid, I liked missionaries and their slide shows. A missionary was a mud-hut guy who carried water from the river, ate bugs with a smile, and preached in the jungle. He displayed snakeskins and shrunken heads. He was a *real missionary*, and he deserved our church's help. But raising my interest, and our support, for home missions in the comfortable USA, was tougher.

It still is. But the USA, more than ever, needs *real missionaries*. For decades, Fundamentalists have been zealous to support foreign missions but have largely neglected church planting. We are our own country's salt and light. Our 21st century challenge is to start new churches in the USA. We need to re-seed America with Bible-preaching churches because of

1. the **population explosion**,
2. the **loss of sound churches**, and
3. the **need to maintain our missionary support base**.

The USA Population Is Exploding

From 1990–2000, our population increased 13.2% (that's 32.7 million people). This was the greatest increase in our history, even including the baby boom years. Every state grew during that decade.¹

The Northeast grew by 5.5%. Once the seat of revival, it is now spiritually as cold as its winters. Many new churches are needed to complement those recently planted. Even the Midwest, with its strong Fundamentalist history, needs scores of new churches in its cities, which grew at a rate of 7.9%.

Go west, young man—and you will find countless towns with no Fundamental church. This part of the country grew 19.7% in ten years. Many think of the West as being full of movie stars and left-wingers. But it is also home to multitudes of middle-class, conservative citizens who need the Lord. Cities in the South are also growing too fast for existing churches to reach the people. At a growth rate of 17.3%, towns that were once too small for a church now need several.

As an example of the need, look at California—with its population of 34 million. One of every eight Americans is a Californian. In Los Angeles, there is one Fundamental

church for every 1.2 million people. Most of our large metropolitan areas have a few Fundamental churches, but not nearly enough to meet the need. A recent survey by Bob Jones University revealed about 1200 cities in the USA with a population of 5000 or more and no Fundamental church within 30 miles.²

We Are Losing Sound Churches

We are losing them to unscriptural methods of growth and worship styles. Former separatists are chasing after the methods of those whose philosophy is to "be like the world to win the world."

The sensual sound of contemporary Christian music is drawing crowds but is not turning sinful hearts to a holy God. A man-centered, entertainment-driven, low-commitment approach is producing a generation who do not know the God of the Bible. Though every believer needs to discover his purpose in life, it is impossible to drive oneself to holiness in forty days. To replace the churches we have lost, new ones must be planted by men who preach the whole counsel of God and pursue His approval rather than the praise of men.

We Must Maintain Our Missionary Support Base

America has historically been the financial and personnel base for sending Fundamental missionaries abroad. As the number of our churches shrinks, however, this base is drying up. If we fail to re-seed our land with new churches, it will eventually disappear.

Dr. David Cummins of Baptist World Missions said, "We have exhausted our local church support base for missionaries. We need to plant more churches if we are to continue to send missionaries around the world. Starting churches in the USA is a *foreign missions project*."

If we fail to reach our Jerusalem, we will not reach Judea, Samaria, or the uttermost parts of the earth. Plant a church. It will support missionaries, send young people to the field, and plant more churches. Those churches will support more missionaries, plant more churches, and so on and on.

In 1974 my wife and I planted Falls Baptist Church in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, with a few families and no missionaries. Falls Baptist now supports over eighty mis-

sionaries. In 1995 we planted Trinity Baptist Church in Franklin, Tennessee, with one family and no missionaries. Trinity now supports nine missionaries.

We must keep Jerusalem strong to reach Judea and send the gospel around the world!

How Do We Re-seed?

Churches Start Churches

A church is a body, a living organism (1 Cor. 12:12). A living organism normally reproduces others. Dr. Grant Rice, church-planting consultant, says, "A sign of good health for a husband and wife is reproduction. It is the same with the church. Healthy churches should be reproducing other churches." Church planting is every church's responsibility.

We have helped plant churches when the "mother church" was within a few miles (like the church at Antioch with Pastor Barnabas, Acts 11:22). Others have started thousands of miles away from the sending church. Churches can start other churches with heavy local involvement or with financial and prayer support across the miles.

At Falls Baptist, our mentor was the church-planting department of Bob Jones University, which depends on the financial and prayer support of many churches. At Trinity Baptist we had the help, prayers, and input of over 30 churches. Our home church was Marquette Manor Baptist in Downers Grove, Illinois, to whom we were accountable until we chartered as an autonomous body.

Planting new churches isn't only a responsibility. It's also the most efficient strategy for reaching people—much more effective than building one large church in one location.

Think about it. What strategy does business use? Does Amway have just one giant store? Is there one Godzill-sized McDonald's? Was Starbucks' marketing plan to build one mammoth store in Seattle? Common sense says we will reach more people through many churches scattered across a city than we will through a megachurch in one corner.

Men Start Churches

What kind of man does God use to start a church? In my experience, these traits are common to a man who effectively plants:

1. Commitment to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19, 20). He believes that souls can be saved anywhere. He has the Ephesians 4:11 gift of evangelism.
2. Vision (Prov. 29:18). He envisions a church building on desert land, where others see only sagebrush. He asks God to reveal His will; he communicates his vision clearly to his people.
3. Love for the adventure of faith (Heb. 11:3). He knows that living by faith is possible only during his short stay on earth. Admiring the Hebrews 11 heroes of faith, he is excited about trusting God alone.
4. Optimism (1 Thess. 5:18). A church planter is a Biblical optimist. He is not a "walking minus sign." He always sees his glass of chocolate milk half *full*. A church starter is not discouraged by the negatives of the first years. He

trusts God to turn them into positives.

5. Self-starting organizer. A church planter, though an evangelist, pretends that he has administrative gifts. He plans and organizes. He gets up, gets out, and put those plans to work.

You Can Start a Church

Fundamental Baptist churches are currently being planted—successfully. You can do it! In 2001 my wife and I began Press On! Ministries. We live in an RV, so we are free to move to assist church planters. We help in every aspect of starting the church and then stay for several months after its opening to support and encourage. We have had the privilege of helping these, among others:

Folsom, California—More than a Prison

When we arrived in August 2002, Derek and Robin Harm were already planting Faith Baptist Church. Thirty people were meeting in a public school. We helped them run a prospect-finding program called "The Phone's for You."³ We made 22,000 calls, and 1100 people gave us permission to send them mail about the new church. Over four weeks, we sent them information and invitations, then called many of them the week before the first service as a reminder. Over 140 folks came.

Faith Baptist is now about three years old, searching for property, and averaging about 100. They still meet in the public school—but give over \$12,000 a year to missions.

It Happened in Raleigh

Matt and Becky Walker invited us to join them in Cary, North Carolina early in 2003 to assist in starting College Park Baptist Church. A large group came from Fairfax (Virginia) Baptist Temple to hang 20,000 information packets on doors. Following that effort, we geared up to run the phones program.

Dr. Mike Yarborough of Bethany Hills Baptist in Raleigh graciously let us park our fifth wheel at his church and train his members to use the phones. (It's interesting that while Pastor Yarborough helped us start a new church, his own church grew!)

After 33,000 calls and mail to 1200 prospects, we held the first service. The attendance was not as large as we had hoped, due to our mistake in planning the first service on the Easter holiday. But some did come, and we immediately started visiting our prospects. God blessed. The church grew steadily.

After a few months, College Park leased the lovely meeting place and purchased the equipment of a church that had closed. This is now a healthy, vibrant church, averaging 70–80, looking for a larger building, supporting missionaries, starting a school—and planning to plant more churches.

Happy Trails in Apple Valley

In January 2005 we moved to Apple Valley, California—known as the home of Roy Rogers—to help Bryan and Rebecca Brock plant Life Point Baptist Church. With the help of teams in three eastern states, we made about 25,000 calls. About 1700 folks asked for mail about the

new church. On April 10, 135 came to the first service. Attendance is currently averaging 80–90. The Great Commission is being fulfilled as we lead folks to Christ and disciple them. A Fundamental, separated Baptist church has been planted in the high desert of southern California!

God can do it. He *is* doing it. As Fundamentalists see the need and our responsibility, He will use us to re-seed our country with sound churches. Healthy organisms reproduce. May our Fundamental Baptist churches always be healthy.

Dave Barba, in full-time ministry for thirty-one years, planted Falls Baptist Church (Wisconsin), Trinity Baptist Church (Tennessee), and spent nine years in itinerant evangelism. He and his wife Claudia now assist church planters in the USA through the work of Press On! Ministries (www.ipresson.com).

¹ www.census.gov. Click on American Fact Finder.

² www.bju.edu/resources/cplanting/metro.html.

³ For detailed information about “The Phone’s for You,” visit our website (www.ipresson.com).

Two Coffee Shops

A Parable for Pastors

Once upon a time there were two brothers, Al and Zack. Al liked making coffee. He served it in his kitchen. “This is delicious,” people said, and they invited others. Soon the group outgrew Al’s kitchen. He set up chairs in the living room. Al liked people—liked knowing their names, their joys and sorrows.

The group grew. They rented a building. Soon, they bought it. Still more came. They expanded into the building next door, and then added on. They were now in debt, but a thousand could be seated at once. Still people came, some from far away.

Al’s became the biggest, fastest-growing coffee shop around. Aspiring coffee-makers admired him. Everybody in the coffee world knew his name. He was a success. But now Al spent more time overseeing staff than brewing coffee. He worried about debt. He began diluting his coffee, just a little bit, to increase profits.

Al missed the old days, and his brother. Zack had also once served coffee in his kitchen, in his living room, and in a rented building. Zack’s shop also expanded, again and again. It was crowded, but still people came, some from far away. Zack sketched expansion plans and contemplated a big loan.

Then one of Zack’s customers suggested, “Teach me to make coffee. I’ll serve it in my kitchen to people who have been driving here. Then you’ll have more room.”

Soon there were two coffee shops rather than one. Whenever Zack’s shop gets too crowded, he just does it again. He never applied for that loan. And more people than ever are drinking coffee.

Zack still mingles with the people in his shop. He knows their names, their joys and sorrows. They think he’s a success. He spends more time brewing coffee than overseeing staff. And he’s never even considered diluting the coffee.

On the Home Front

FBF NEWS AND EVENTS

Upcoming Fellowships

September 6–9, 2005

Brazil Fellowship
Esperanea Baptist Church
Vila Mariana, São Paulo, SP
864.269.2818
Contact: milnun@hotmail.com

October 3–4, 2005

Mid-America Regional Fellowship
Falls Baptist Church
N69 W12703 Appleton Avenue
Menomonee Falls, WI 53051-5215
262.251.7051

October 17–18, 2005

South Central Regional Fellowship
Meridian Baptist Church
1130 West Broadway, Box 321
Newton, KS 67114
316.283.6380

October 20–21, 2005

New Mexico Satellite Fellowship
Northwest Baptist Church
7109 Weston Place NW
Albuquerque, NM 87114
505.344.5544

October 31–November 4, 2005

Caribbean Regional Fellowship
Calvary Baptist Tabernacle
Carolina, Puerto Rico
787.769.0055

November 8, 2005

Northeast Regional Fellowship
Trinity Baptist Church
80 Clinton Street
Concord, NH 03301
603.225.3999

November 14–15, 2005

Southern California Regional Fellowship
Camp Ironwood

49191 Cherokee Road
Newberry Springs, CA 92365
Contact: Ron Smith
760.373.7314

November 17–18, 2005

Northern California Regional Fellowship
Lucerne Christian Conference Center
P.O. Box 487
Lucerne, CA 95458
Contact: Dr. John Mincy
925.757.5242

Contact Information

FrontLine Magazine
500 West Lee Road
Taylors, SC 29687
(864) 292-3010 • (800) 376-6856
E-mail: info@fbfi.org

SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

First Partaker

An Intimate Knowledge of Divine Truth

Andrew Fuller, pastor of a Baptist church in Kettering, England, for thirty-three years (1782–1815), is one of those truly exemplary preachers and theologians whose influence deserves to be resurrected today. If he's remembered at all, it's for the fact that he served as the first secretary of the Baptist Foreign Missionary Society, which sent out William Carey. But actually it was as a preacher and writer that Fuller contributed the most both to his own and succeeding generations.

Fuller had been reared in the sterile atmosphere of a hyper-Calvinistic Baptist movement. Of his boyhood pastor, John Eve, Fuller regretfully testified that his preaching *was not adapted to awaken conscience*. He had *little or nothing to say to the unconverted*. Later, as a pastor himself, Fuller was introduced through John Ryland Jr. to the writings of Jonathan Edwards. These contributed to his rethinking the entire issue of human responsibility and therefore ministerial responsibility to urge all men to receive Christ. Eventually, Fuller, Ryland, John Sutcliff of Olney, William Carey, and a few others banded together for extended periods of fasting and prayer to implore *a revival of godliness in our own souls, in our churches, and in the church at large*.

These brethren regularly met for meetings of mutual edification during which several of them would take turns preaching. It's been my delight occasionally to stumble upon and be able purchase original copies of some of these fellowship meeting sermons. I've often thought of attempting to pare one or more of them

down for this column, but have hesitated due to their length and the inevitable loss of much of their impact through editing.

However, one that I've profited from twice in the past seems to nag to be reprinted.

So, the result is the following attempt to set forth some of the more pungent thoughts of a sermon that in its original printing amounts to forty-six pages. For anyone interested, the entirety, along with Fuller's biography and a complete edition of his works, is published by Sprinkle Publications in three thick volumes. Of these printed works, historian Joseph Ivimey wrote, *As a writer on the various important subjects he discussed he holds a high, and in regard to some of them, an unrivalled station*. I hope that this rather pathetic condensation of one of his sermons to other preachers might encourage some in our generation to revive the reading of Andrew Fuller.

"The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits"
(2 Tim. 2:6)

The Nature and Importance of an Intimate Knowledge of Divine Truth

[Preached before the Baptist Association at St. Albans, June 1, 1796, by the Rev. Andrew Fuller]

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. v. 12–14).

There is nothing in which the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan are more opposed than that the one is characterized by light and the other by darkness. The cause of falsehood is itself a dark cause, and requires darkness to cover it; but truth is light, and cometh to the light, that it may be made manifest.

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 Windows—Themed sermon illustrations 7

Knowledge is everywhere encouraged in the Bible; our best interests are interwoven with it; and the spirituality of our minds, and the real enjoyment of our lives, depend upon its increase. Grace and peace are multiplied through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Nor is it necessary for our own sakes only, but for the sake of others. It is a great encouragement to Christian ministers when those whom they teach possess a good understanding in the things of God. Indeed, none but those who are engaged in the work of teaching can tell how much the ardor of the mind is damped by the contrary. The truth of this remark is exemplified in the writer of this epistle. In the verses immediately preceding the text, you perceive him highly interested in his subject, and proceeding in a glorious career of reasoning; when, all on a sudden, he is stopped. He had many things to say of his Lord and Master; but which were *hard to be understood*, seeing those to whom he wrote were *dull of hearing*. It is on this occasion that he introduces the passage now before us, in which his object is to shame and provoke them, by comparing them with those who as to years were men, but as to knowledge children; and who, instead of having made advances in science, needed to be taught the alphabet over again.

It is a great encouragement to Christian ministers when those whom they teach possess a good understanding in the things of God. Indeed, none but those who are engaged in the work of teaching can tell how much the ardor of the mind is damped by the contrary.

The leading sentiment which runs through the passage, and comprises the whole, is THE IMPORTANCE OF A DEEP AND INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE TRUTH. To this subject, brethren, permit me to call your attention. In discoursing upon it, I shall first inquire wherein it consists, and then endeavor to show the importance of it.

I. What a Deep and Intimate Knowledge of Divine Truth Includes

That the oracles of God contain deep things, requires but little proof. The character of God, our own depravity, and that great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, &c., are deep and interesting subjects. The prophets had to *search* into the meaning of their own prophecies. The riches of Christ, with

which the apostles were entrusted, were denominated *unsearchable*, and even the highest orders of created intelligences are described as *looking* into these things for their further improvement.

It may seem presuming for any person, in the present imperfect state, to determine on subjects of such magnitude; or to talk of a deep and intimate knowledge of things which surpass the comprehension of the most exalted creatures. And if these terms were used either *absolutely*, to express the real conformity of our ideas of Divine things to the full extent of the things themselves, or even *comparatively*, if the comparison respected saints on earth and saints in heaven, it would be presumption. But it is only in reference to one another in the present state that these terms are intended to apply. Compared with heavenly inhabitants, all of us are babes; even an inspired apostle was no more. There are such degrees, however, among good men in this life as that, compared with each other, some may be said to possess only a superficial knowledge of Divine truth, and others a more deep and intimate acquaintance with it.

II. The Importance of Such a Knowledge

As the powers of created beings are limited, and no one can expect to understand every thing, it is the province of wisdom to select those kinds of knowledge, as the objects of our pursuit, which are most valuable and of the greatest utility. There are some depths, of which it is our honor and felicity to be ignorant; and even in things which are lawful, we may, in numberless instances, very well be excused, if not in wholly neglecting, yet in possessing only a general acquaintance with them. But Divine truth requires not only to be known, but *well* known; it is not only necessary that we have sentiments, and right sentiments, but that we enter *deeply* into them. Everything pertaining to God is great, and requires all our powers. In whatever we indulge indifference, there is no room for it here; God requires not only all our heart but all our mind and strength. The importance of a deep and intimate acquaintance with Divine truth will more particularly appear from the following considerations:

1. A neglect of God's word is represented as a heinous sin. To be contented with a superficial acquaintance with Divine things implies *disrespect to Him who has revealed them*. A letter from a distant friend, to whom we are cordially attached, is viewed and reviewed, and every sentence of it carefully inspected, and on many occasions committed to memory. Why should not the word of God be productive of the same effects? Indeed it is; for in proportion as we love God, his word will *dwell richly* in us. It will be our bosom companion, to which we shall have recourse on every occasion; especially in seasons of leisure, when the mind, like a spring from which a pressure is removed, rises to its natural position. Hence the following lan-

guage: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might: and these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up* (Deut. 6:5–7).

To be contented with a superficial acquaintance with Divine things implies also a *want of affection to the things themselves*. A will or testament, in which we were deeply interested, would be procured with eagerness, and read with avidity; and if any difficulty remained as to the meaning of a particular passage, we should have no rest till, by some means or other, we had obtained a solution of it. I need not apply this remark. Nothing is more evident than that whatever is uppermost in our affections will form the grand current of our thoughts. And where our thoughts are directed to a subject with intenseness and perseverance, it will become familiar to us; and, unless it be owing to the want of natural capacity or any other necessary means, we shall of course enter deeply into it.

I have been much struck with the ardent affection which David discovered to the Holy Scriptures, and every part of their sacred contents. The whole 119th Psalm is a continued encomium upon them. There we have such language as the following: *O how I love thy law! My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times. Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage. The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver*. Now, all the Scriptures which were then extant amounted to little more than the writings of Moses. What additions have we since enjoyed! Besides the Book of Psalms, and the prophecies which followed, we have the whole New Testament, *full of grace and truth*, wherein the invisible God has, as it were, rendered himself visible. How is it that such a price should be in our hands to get wisdom, and yet that we should have so little heart for it?

2. The word of God is represented as a means of sanctification. But no effect of this kind can be produced beyond the degree in which we imbibe it. One great object of our Lord's intercession with the Father, on our behalf, was, that we might *be sanctified through the truth*, even by his word, which is truth. The gospel is continually held up, not only as a *doctrine according to godliness*, but as having a powerful influence in producing it. It teacheth us that, *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*. It *worketh effectually in those who believe*. It was by the doctrine of the cross that the world became crucified to the apostle, and he unto the world. So universal and so manifest were the effects of Divine truth upon the practice of the primitive Christians, that the sacred writers could appeal to the

fact, on their behalf, that they, and they only, were successful combatants against the world's temptations: *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

How was it that the apostle became dead to the world by the cross of Christ? I suppose, on much the same principle that the light of the stars is eclipsed by that of the sun; or that a man, having drunk old wine, ceases to desire new, for he saith the old is better. It is by drinking deeply into religion that we become disaffected to carnal objects.

I have been much struck with the ardent affection which David discovered to the Holy Scriptures, and every part of their sacred contents. The whole 119th Psalm is a continued encomium upon them.

3. The word of God is represented as the great source of Christian enjoyment. The same way in which Divine truth operates as a medium of sanctification, it becomes a source of enjoyment; namely, by interesting and affecting the heart. That which, by its superior lustre, eclipses the pleasures of sense, and crucifies us to the world, at the same time kindles a joy in the heart which is unspeakable and full of glory. The habitual joy which was possessed by the apostles and primitive Christians chiefly arose from a knowledge and belief of the gospel. It was *the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord* that induced the apostle to *count all things but loss*.

The prejudice of many Christians against doctrinal preaching, as being, in their esteem, dry and uninteresting, and the preference given to that which is more descriptive of their feelings, and therefore termed experimental, is worthy of attention. If the doctrine which we preach be not the unadulterated gospel of Christ, it will indeed be dry; or if, instead of entering into the spirit of truth, we are employed in a fruitless discussion of terms, or things on which the Scriptures forbear to decide, it must needs be uninteresting and even disgusting to a holy mind. But if the pure gospel of Jesus, well understood by the preacher, and communicated from the fullness of his heart, do not interest us, there must be some lamentable disorder in the state of our minds. If the manna that comes down from heaven be loathed, it is a sign that things are not with us as they ought to be.

4. It is a great object in the Christian life, according to our capacities and opportunities, to diffuse the light of the gospel around us. But we cannot

communicate any thing beyond the degree in which we possess it. The communication of gospel truth is not confined to ministers. Every Christian moves in a sphere of some extent; and is expected so to occupy it as to embrace every occasion which may offer to make known the way of eternal life to those about him. The primitive churches were schools of heavenly instruction, as the words of the text, to go no further, plainly intimate; and the apostle reproves some of their members for having made no greater proficiency. Though it would be in vain for every one to aspire at being a public teacher of Christianity, yet, as has been already observed, every one should be concerned that he may be able to “give a reason for the hope that is in him,” and to teach the good and the right way to those with whom he is immediately connected. The duties of a parent and a master include in them the instruction of those who are committed to their care. Many opportunities arise in which Christians might communicate the knowledge of Christ to their neighbors; those in a state of servitude, to their fellow servants; and provided it were done on proper occasions, and according to the apostolic rule, “in meekness and fear,” persons in inferior stations might suggest a useful hint even to their superiors.

Though it would be in vain for every one to aspire at being a public teacher of Christianity, yet, as has been already observed, every one should be concerned that he may be able to “give a reason for the hope that is in him,” and to teach the good and the right way to those with whom he is immediately connected.

5. In times of apostasy from the truth, Christians are exhorted to be steadfast. But a steadfast adherence to truth requires that we be rooted and grounded in it. There were heresies in the apostles' times; and it was predicted that there should, in after-times, be persons who would bring in even *damnable heresies*. Let no one be startled at the use of these terms: I did not coin them, and am not accountable for them; but see-



Dr. Mark Minnick is the pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, where he has served on the pastoral staff since 1980. He speaks frequently in churches and at conferences across the nation and ministers regularly on mission fields around the world.

ing they occupy a place in the Holy Scriptures, I think myself concerned to understand them. Whatever difficulty there may be in ascertaining their precise object, they, undoubtedly, teach us that men's souls may be destroyed by mental as well as by sensual lusts, even the souls of professing Christians; for the words are not intended to describe open infidels, but such as should bear the Christian name, yea, and who should be teachers of Christianity.

The circulation of doctrines pleasing to corrupt nature will prove men to be what they are. They are the fan in Christ's hand, by which he will thoroughly purge his floor. That light-minded professors of religion should be carried away with them, is no more a matter of surprise than that chaff should be carried away by the wind; but how is it that those of whom we would hope better things are often shaken?

If a minister, in almost any congregation, should relinquish truth, and fall into the grossest errors, unless he had so conducted himself as to have gained little or no esteem among the people, he is seldom known to go off alone: sometimes half a congregation, and sometimes more, have been known to follow him, or, at least, to be greatly unhinged for a considerable time. If a writer start up, in almost any connection, let his performance be ever so weak or extravagant, yet, if he possess but a sufficient quantity of overbearing assurance, he will have his admirers; and some serious people, too, will be in danger of being turned aside.

How are these things to be accounted for? I conceive the principal reason is, that Christians content themselves with a superficial knowledge of Divine things. Great numbers, from a dislike to controversy, will never take any pains to understand the difference between one set of religious principles and another. They have no desire to enable themselves to distinguish between true and false reasonings. They are too apt to take it for granted that what they have imbibed is truth, and that nothing can be advanced, with the least color of reason, for the contrary: when, therefore, an argument appears with a little plausibility on its face, it has only to obtain a reading or a hearing, and their assent is gained. Brethren, let shame, if nothing else, provoke us, that *we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine*. Let us be concerned, not obstinately to adhere to our present sentiments, be they what they may, but to know the mind of God in his word; and, knowing it, let us steadfastly adhere to it.

Let us not presume on our own firmness, but *put on the whole armour of God*, that we may *withstand in the evil day*. The first thing required in this Divine accoutrement is, that *our loins be girt about with truth*; but truth will not prove as a girdle to our loins in the day of battle, except we be deeply and intimately acquainted with it. ☞

Bring . . . the Books

Spurgeon's Forgotten Lectures

Almost every student of preaching is familiar with A. C. H. Spurgeon's famous discourses on preaching, *Lectures to My Students*. What many do not realize is that these were originally a series of lectures given over a period of years to his students at the Pastors' College housed at the Metropolitan Tabernacle three years after his first and better known series of lectures were printed.

The *Second Series of Lectures to My Students* was published in 1902 by Alabaster and Passmore & Sons of London. Though no longer in print, this delightful work can be found on the used-book market and will be a rich prize for those who pursue the hunt to its successful end. For those who are not thrilled by the hunt of an old book, the second series has been included in the complete edition of *Lectures to My Students* reprinted by Zondervan.

Even the most veteran of preachers will benefit from Spurgeon's insights. He begins with a lecture stressing the importance and place of the Holy Spirit in relationship to our preaching. After listing seven or eight ways in which our preaching is dependent on the Holy Spirit, he closes the lecture with a passionate appeal to avoid the things that grieve the Spirit and rob us of His assistance in preaching.

Another grieving fault is a want of truthfulness. When a great musician takes a guitar, or touches a harp, and finds that the notes are false, he stays his hand. Some men's souls are not honest; they are sophisticated and double-minded. Christ's Spirit will not be an accomplice with men in the wretched business of shuffling and deceiving. Does it really come to this—that you preach certain doctrines, not because you believe them, but because your congregation expects you to do so? Are you biding your time till you can, without risk, renounce your present creed and tell you what your dastardly mind really holds to be true? Then are you truly fallen indeed, and are baser than the meanest of slaves. God deliver us from treacherous men, and if they enter our ranks, may they be speedily drummed out to the tune of the Rogue's March.

His second lecture, "The Necessity of Ministerial Progress," is equally stirring.

Dear Fellow Soldiers! We are few, and we have a desperate fight before us, therefore it is needful that every man should be made the most of, and nerved to his highest point of strength. It is desirable that the Lord's ministers should be the picked men of the church, yea, of the entire universe, for such the age demands; therefore, in reference to yourselves and your personal qualifications,

I give you the motto, "Go forward." Go forward in personal attainments, forward in gifts and grace, forward in fitness for the work, and forward in conformity to the image of Jesus.

*" . . . when
thou comest,
bring with thee
. . . the books"
(2 Tim. 4:13)*

His fourth and fifth lectures comprise a brief history of open-air preaching beginning with the ancient prophets of Israel and moving forward to the "Gospel Oaks" of his own day—well-known locations or trees where famous preachers and evangelists gathered crowds of thousands to hear the preaching of the gospel.

Lecture six, "Posture, Action, Gesture, etc.," is a humorous and at times pointed critique of a side of preaching often neglected in books and courses on homiletics. "A man of more than average abilities may, by ridiculous action, be thrown into the rear rank and kept there" (p. 96). His descriptions and comments on the nature of contemporary pulpits bring a smile to the face of any preacher who has had an itinerant ministry. The illustrations and sketches found in this section are worth the price of the book.

Perhaps one of the most helpful lectures in the series is the ninth, "The Blind Eye and the Deaf Ear." He begins by quoting Tacitus's response to someone who railed against him: "You are lord of your tongue, but I am also master of my ears—you may say what you please, but I will only hear what I choose." Spurgeon warned those commencing a new ministry: "As soon as you enter your pastorate you may be waited upon by persons who are anxious to secure your adhesion to their side in a family quarrel or church dispute; be deaf and blind to these people, and assure them that bygones must be bygones with you, and that as you have not inherited your predecessor's cupboard, you do not mean to eat his cold meat." He further advises, "Never hear what was not meant for you. . . . To opinions and remarks about yourself, turn also as a general rule, the blind eye and the deaf ear. . . . In the case of false reports against yourself, for the most part, use the deaf ear." His advice was clearly drawn from years of personal experience in pastoral ministry; and those of us who follow in his steps would agree when he concludes, "I have one blind eye and one deaf ear, and they are the best eye and ear that I have."

This delightful volume contains much that will bless and profit the reader. Those who are fans of Spurgeon's first series of lectures will undoubtedly find the second series to be as engaging as the first! 

Dr. Sam Horn is Executive Vice President of Northland Baptist Bible College in Dunbar, Wisconsin.

Straight Cuts

Kept from That Hour (Revelation 3:10)

The messages to the seven churches of Revelation contain rich material for local churches and Christians today. They function as mini epistles to each of the seven churches, and like the other epistles in the New Testament they are a source of instruction and edification. Each of the seven churches had unique circumstances of sin, persecution, and faithfulness. However, the messages follow a basic pattern. The pattern includes an identification of the church, a description of the Lord, a statement of the Lord's knowledge about the church, a description of the church's situation, and a promise to the overcomer. There is a promise in the description of the Church at Philadelphia's situation that is precious to the Body of Christ. The Lord promises that because the Philadelphian Christians had endured patiently He would keep them "from the hour" of testing "which shall come upon all the world" (3:10).

Three elements in this promise require explanation. First is the meaning of the words "I also will keep thee from." A clear modern translation of this phrase would be, "For my part I will keep you from." The first word of the phrase "I also" (*kagō*) indicates a reciprocal action on the part of the Lord (Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 283). The Lord is rewarding the faithfulness of the Philadelphians because of their perseverance despite strong persecution from the Jews in the city. A major issue in the interpretation of this phrase is the meaning of "keep you from" (*se tērēsō ek*). The issue is the meaning of the preposition "from" (*ek*). Does this preposition mean "out of" or "through"? If it means "through," then the promise by the Lord is to protect the believers during the coming trial. If it means "out of," then the promise is to exempt the believers from the trial. Several things argue in favor of the meaning "out of." The natural meaning of the word *ek* is closer to "from" or "out of" (BDAG). The combination of the word *ek* with the word "to keep" (*tērēō*) favors the concept of exemption from the trial rather than preservation within it. Finally, the concept of preserving believers through the trial would more naturally be communicated by other Greek words (*en* or *dia*) (Thomas, 286).

The closest grammatical parallel in the New Testament to the phrase "I will keep you from the hour" is also in one of John's writings. The parallel is

found in John 12:27 "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." The phrases "to save from this hour" (*sēzō ek*) and "to keep from the hour" (*tērēō ek*) carry similar meaning. Christ recognizes that He should not ask his Father to exempt Him from the hour of his crucifixion. Similarly, the promise in Revelation 3:10 is one of exemption. The Lord promises to exempt believers from the "hour of testing."

**"Rightly
dividing
the Word
of Truth"
(2 Tim. 2:15)**

The second element requiring examination is the phrase, "The hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." The nature of this "hour of testing" is clearly the seven-year Tribulation described in Daniel and Revelation. The Lord clarifies that this is not just any trial. It is the trial that "is about to come upon the entire world." It is a time of testing that is universal. It is also a time of testing for those "dwelling upon the earth." "Those dwelling upon the earth" are the objects of God's wrath in Revelation (6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8; 17:2). The universality of this judgment also indicates the universality of this promise. Because this verse views the coming of the Lord as imminent, the promise is not only to the church at Philadelphia, who never saw the Tribulation, but it is also for all Christians. This message functions like other New Testament epistles; it is applicable beyond the first-century recipients of the message.

Third, the context of this promise indicates that the Lord intends to exempt the Philadelphian believers from the trial. The promise is in response to the faithfulness of the church at Philadelphia through a time of trial. It would not be of any encouragement to promise to bring the believers through another trial. The reward is promised in response to faithfulness in a trial. To promise another trial would be disheartening rather than encouraging. It makes more sense in the context to view Revelation 3:10 as a promise of exemption from the Tribulation rather than help through it.

Despite the theological ramifications of Revelation 3:10, this passage is not merely an interesting note concerning the time of the Rapture. This passage is intended as an encouragement for all Christians. Although we may face persecution now, if we remain faithful, the Lord will be faithful. The Lord will judge those who are the persecutors and the faithful will be exempt from the judgment of those persecutors. This passage is a motivation for staying the course and remaining faithful to the Lord. ☞

T. J. Klapperich is an assistant pastor at the First Baptist Church of Troy, Michigan.

Dying Words

On a frigid, gray Monday morning I visited a cemetery in Nova Scotia, the burial ground of some *Titanic* victims. The snow crunched as I walked down the rows of granite tombstones. One epitaph is etched into my memory: “Here lies Lee Waldron King.” I lifted my camera to capture a memory. When the tombstone sharpened into focus, I stopped. Following the words of his birth and death were words covered with snow. Kneeling, I brushed away the white ice. “Nothing in my hands I bring; simply to thy cross I cling.” For years I used that epitaph as a sermon illustration. If I meet Lee Waldron King in heaven, I will thank him for a window of light that has helped me preach the gospel.

A bank in New York had some flowers sent to a competitor who had recently moved into a new building. There was a mix-up at the flower shop, and the card sent with the arrangement read, “With our deepest sympathy.” The florist, who was greatly embarrassed, apologized. But he was even more embarrassed when he realized that the card intended for the bank was attached to a floral arrangement sent to a funeral home in honor of a deceased person. That card read, “Congratulations on your new location!”

Laura Ward, in her book *Famous Last Words*, said one reason she wrote her book was her “notion that a person’s departing sentence, however brief, can tell us something about the life that preceded it, and perhaps throw fresh light on that individual.” True or not, parting sentiments can be useful as sermon windows.

Some, while dying, are *flippant*. Just before the death of actor W. C. Fields, a friend visited his hospital room and was surprised to find him thumbing through a Bible. Asked what he was doing with a Bible, Fields replied, “I’m looking for loopholes.”

Others *fear* dying. Playwright Neil Simon was asked on the *Dick Cavett Show* whether making a lot of money concerned him. The studio went silent when Simon answered, “No . . . what does concern me is the fear of dying.”

The Christian, however, views death with *faith*. Faithful saints have provided us with dying words that comfort and inspire. Here are some final words of the flippant, the fearful, and the faithful.

Flippant—No Concern

John Sedgwick, a Civil War general, was warned not to put his head above the parapet during the Battle of the Wilderness. His reply was, “Nonsense; they couldn’t hit an elephant at this distance—”

John Field was a British pianist and composer. He was asked while dying, “Are you a Papist or a Calvinist?” He replied, “I am a pianist.”

Albert Fish was a sadistic child killer and cannibal. At his execution in the electric chair in 1936, he said, “What a thrill it will be to die in the electric chair . . . the supreme thrill, the only one I haven’t tried.”

Robert Alton Harris was executed in the California gas chamber in 1992. He said, “You can be a king or a street sweeper, but everyone dances with the Grim Reaper.”

Gary Gilmore was the first man to be executed in Utah after the U.S. Supreme Court had lifted its 1970 suspension of the death penalty. His final words were, “Let’s do it.”

Timothy McVeigh was the executed Oklahoma City bomber. Quoting the poem “Invictus” by William Ernest Henley, he said, “I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.”

Carl “Alfalfa” Switzer was the freckle-faced star of “Our Gang” (the Little Rascals). In a bar, he rashly demanded repayment of a loan: “I want that 50 bucks you owe me—and I want it now.” His creditor was armed and shot him to death.

Pancho Villa, Mexican revolutionary, died in 1923. Apparently he did not have dying words ready to deliver. He said, “Don’t let it end like this. Tell them I said something.”

“I’ve had eighteen straight whiskies; I think that’s the record,” said Dylan Thomas, the Welsh poet, as he exited Greenwich Village’s White Horse Tavern in 1953. He then walked back to the Chelsea Hotel, where he dropped dead.

Pietro Aretino, a 16th-century Italian Renaissance dramatist, was anointed with holy oil during his last rites. His final words were purported to be, “Keep the rats away, now that I am all greased up.”

Movie star Joan Crawford was dying in 1977. Her housekeeper began to pray out loud. Crawford cursed loudly and said, “Don’t you dare ask God to help me!”

Fearful—No Hope

Caesar Borgia was a member of the infamous Florentine family. Near death, he said, “I have taken care of everything in life, only not for death—and now I have to die completely unprepared.”

Thomas Hobbes, an English political philosopher, corrupted a number of famous men of his day. His last words: “If I had the whole world, I would give it to live one day. I shall be glad to find a hole to creep out the world at. About to take a leap into the dark!”

William Pope (who died in 1797) led a company of infidels who ridiculed everything religious. Their typi-

“To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, ‘A window shalt thou make in the ark.’”

Charles Spurgeon

cal exercise was to kick the Bible around the room and tear it up. Friends around his deathbed described it as a scene of terror. He died crying, "I have no contrition. I cannot repent. God will damn me. I know the day of grace is past. You see who is damned forever. . . . Oh, eternity! Eternity! . . . Nothing for me but hell. Come, eternal horrors. . . . I long to be in hell."

Voltaire, the French infidel and prolific writer, attempted to destroy Christianity with ink. During his life, he bragged, "In twenty years, Christianity will be no more. My single hand shall destroy the edifice it took twelve apostles to rear." According to the physician who was with him, Voltaire cried as he died, "I am abandoned by God and man! I will give you half of what I am worth if you will give me six months of life. Then I shall go to hell, and you will go with me. O Christ! O Jesus Christ!" The nurse who attended him said, "For all the wealth in Europe I would not see another infidel die." Not long after his death, the house in which he printed his blasphemous literature became the headquarters of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

O. Henry was the nom de plume of William Sidney Porter, an American short story writer who died in 1910. His final words were, "Turn up the lights. I don't want to go home in the dark."

Louis B. Mayer, Hollywood producer (died in 1957) said in despair, "Nothing matters. Nothing matters."

Howard Hughes, worth 2.5 billion dollars at his death, spent his last fifteen years as a drug addict. No one mourned his death, but he did receive a moment of silence in his Las Vegas casinos. *Time* magazine said: "Howard Hughes' death was commemorated in Las Vegas by a minute of silence. Casinos fell silent. Housewives stood uncomfortable clutching their paper cups full of coins at the slot machines, the blackjack games paused, and stickmen cradled their dice. Then a pit boss looked at his watch, leaned forward and whispered, 'Okay, roll the dice. He's had his minute.'"

Faithful—No Dread

As the apostle Paul faced execution in a Roman prison, he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. 4:7, 8a).

When the great Puritan John Owen lay on his deathbed, his secretary wrote (in his name) to a friend, "I am still in the land of the living." "Stop," said Owen. "Change that to say, 'I am yet in the land of the dying, but I hope soon to be in the land of the living.'"

Charles Wesley: "I shall be satisfied with Thy likeness—satisfied, satisfied!"

John Wesley preached his last sermon of February 17, 1791, on the text, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near" (Isa. 55:6). The

following day, very sick, he was put to bed in his home. During the days of his illness, he often repeated these words from one of his brother's hymns: "I the chief of sinners am, But Jesus died for me!" His last words were, "The best of all is, God is with us!" He died March 2, 1791.

On his deathbed the British preacher Charles Simeon smiled brightly and asked, "What do you think especially gives me comfort at this time? The creation! I ask myself, 'Did Jehovah create the world or did I?' He did! Now if He made the world and all the rolling spheres of the universe, He certainly can take care of me. Into Jesus' hands I can safely commit my spirit!"

Rev. Christopher P. Gadsen (died 1805), an American clergyman, raised his arms toward Heaven and said, "I am reaching toward my inheritance."

William Gadsby (died 1844) traveled 60,000 miles and preached over 12,000 sermons. Thirty thousand people attended his funeral. His last words were, "I shall soon be with Him. Victory, victory, victory [then raising his hand] *forever*."

Welsh Baptist preacher Christmas Evans died in 1838. Famed for his eloquence, folks called him the Welsh Bunyan. He said on his deathbed, "I am about to leave you. I have labored in the sanctuary fifty-three years, and this is my comfort and confidence, that I have never labored without blood in the vessel. Goodbye! Drive on!"

Dr. Bob Jones Sr. died in 1968. In his biography, *Builder of Bridges*, R. K. Johnson recounts, "Mrs. Jones says that her husband's last words before sinking into a semi-coma were, 'Mary Gaston, get my shoes; I must go to preach.'"

Thursday, December 21, 1899, D. L. Moody cut short a crusade and returned home ill. He told his family, "I'm not discouraged. I want to live as long as I am useful, but when my work is done I want to be up and off." The next day he awakened after a restless night. In careful, measured words he said, "Earth recedes. Heaven opens before me!" His son, Will, concluded his father was dreaming. "No, this is no dream, Will. It is beautiful. It is like a trance. If this is death, it is sweet. There is no valley here. God is calling me, and I must go."

On November 2, 1982, Evangelist Lester Roloff walked to his airplane for a ministry trip with singers from his girls' home. Before entering the plane, he said to a friend, "I believe this is going to be the greatest day of my life!" Flying toward the destination, the plane was gripped by powerful wind shear. Brother Roloff lost control and the plane crashed. All on board died—or should we say—began to live?

Last words reveal much. How will yours be measured—as flippant, fearful, or faithful? ☞

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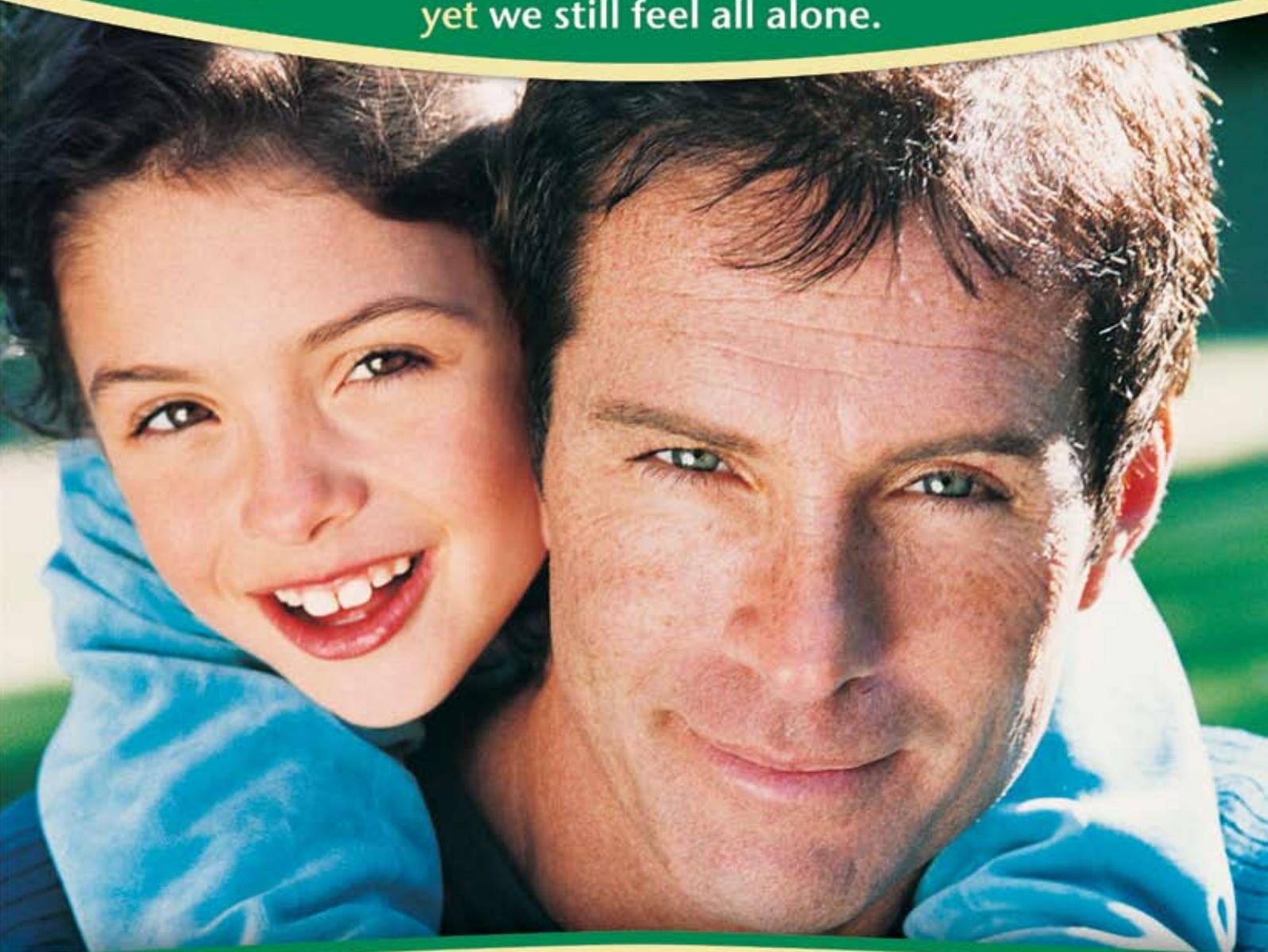
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Dr. Dave Barba, in full-time ministry for thirty-one years, planted Falls Baptist Church (Wisconsin), Trinity Baptist Church (Tennessee), and spent nine years in itinerant evangelism. He and his wife Claudia now assist church planters in the USA through the work of Press On! Ministries (www.ipresson.com).

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2005 Resolutions

Resolution 05—01: Concerning Rick Warren and the Purpose Driven Life Movement

Although the discerning Christian can find helpful ideas and challenging thoughts in his books, Rick Warren and his Purpose Driven Life movement represent an incomplete gospel, a negligent carelessness in the use of Scripture paraphrases, extreme pragmatism, and a disdain for Biblical separatism. The FBFI rejects and warns against such a philosophy of ministry.

Resolution 05—02: On the Ministry of John Piper

While recognizing much that is commendable in the ministry of John Piper, including his emphasis on a passionately God-centered life and his identity as a theological conservative, the FBFI has some genuine concerns about his doctrine and practice. John Piper teaches in his local ministry that miraculous sign gifts are continuing. Piper has also failed to separate from the Baptist General Conference which has deliberately chosen to tolerate the heresy known as open theism in its membership. He also enthusiastically endorses Daniel Fuller, who has championed the attack on the inerrancy of Scripture in our generation. The great popularity of Piper's writings, especially among younger Fundamentalists, requires that FBFI warn its members concerning Piper's nonseparatist position and, for those who read his works, to do so with careful discernment.

Resolution 05—03: Concerning the Reseeding of America through Fundamental Baptist Church Planting

The Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International appreciates the recent surge in church planting in America and commends the church planters and their supporting churches. The population explosion in America, the loss of sound churches to a wrong philosophy of ministry, and the need to replenish and maintain our base of support for foreign missionary efforts forces the FBFI to believe the reseeded of our

homeland with Fundamental Baptist churches is necessary. In that "churches start churches" and that "healthy churches should be reproducing other churches," we encourage all Fundamental Baptist churches to be directly involved in church planting. We urge soul-loving, vision-minded, faith-living, optimistic, entrepreneurial young preachers to consider the call to church planting. God is able, the need is alarming, and the adventure is waiting.

Resolution 05—04: Concerning the Emerging Church Movement

While the FBFI applauds the desire of individuals and churches involved in the Emerging Church Movement to reach the younger generation with the gospel of Jesus Christ, it also offers caution to those involved in or influenced by this movement because of its man-centered emphasis upon religious form, emotional experience, and popular appeal. While Bible believers need to be fervent in proclaiming to the lost the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, the presentation of the gospel message must be clearly based upon the Word of God rather than the desires of man. It is a concern of the FBFI that the Emerging Church Movement is simply another passing wave of evangelicalism that will leave the younger generation empty and disillusioned with the things of God.

Resolution 05—05: Concerning Our Host

The membership of the FBFI wishes to express its utmost gratitude to the staff and volunteers of Faith Baptist Church for their warm, gracious, and sacrificial hospitality in the 2005 annual fellowship. In addition, we wish to express to the people of Faith Baptist Church our sincere thanks for allowing your pastor to be our president, to share his time and your church resources so that this fellowship can exist. Your sacrifice and loving service are accomplishing much more than you know. Thank you.

2005 Resolutions Committee: Dr. Kevin Schaal, Chairman, Dr. Mike Harding, Dr. John Mincy, Dr. David Pennington, Dr. Wayne Van Gelderen

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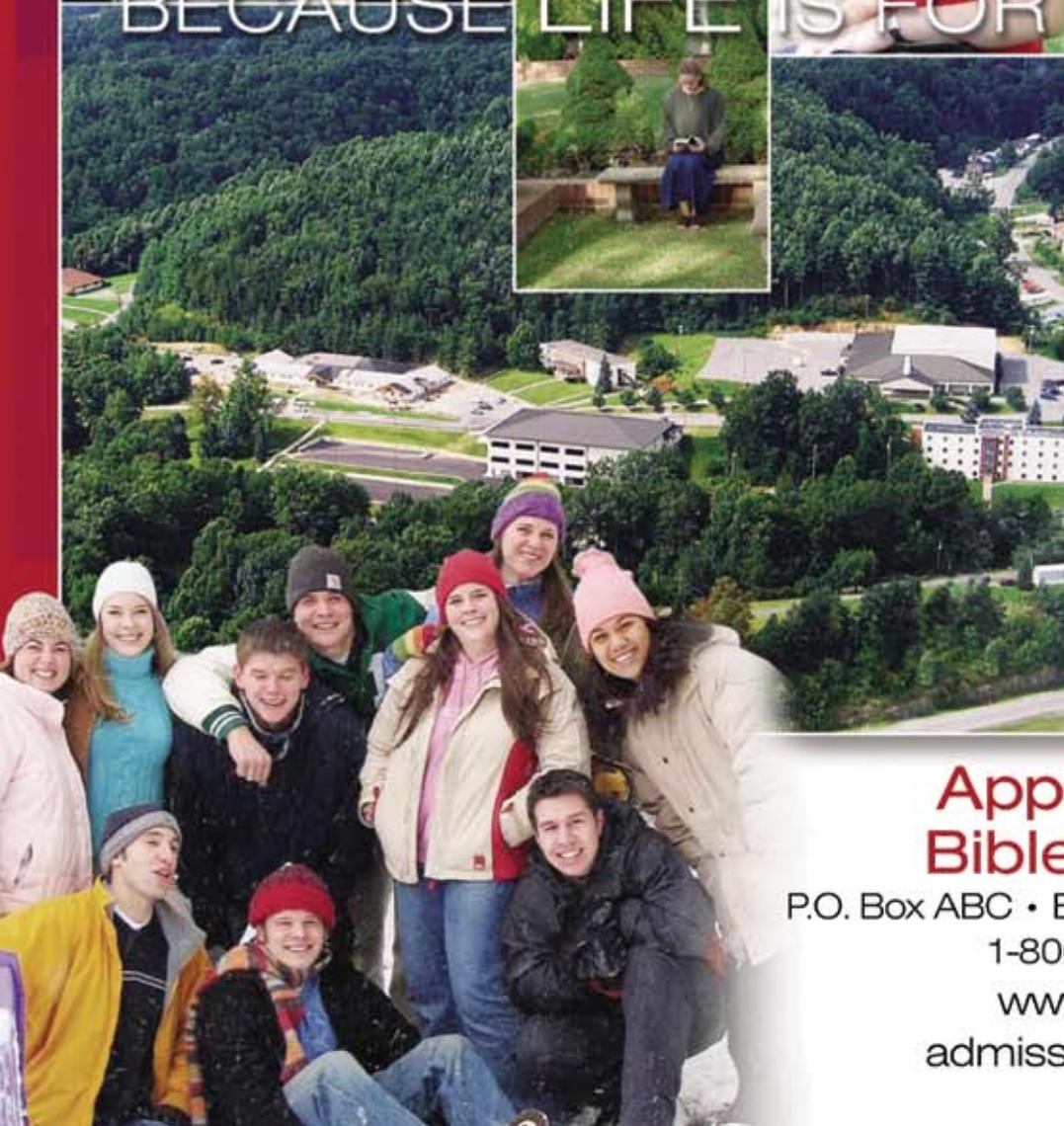
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—Hugh Latimer, prior to being burned for heresy

“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust.”
—Paul the apostle, 1 Timothy 6:20

“Truth, like a torch, the more it’s shook it shines.”
—William Hamilton

“And in a short while the generations of living creatures are changed and like runners relay the torch of life.”
—Lucretius

“Good friend, I am building this bridge for him.”
—William Dromgoole

“We cannot hold a torch to light another’s path without brightening our own.”
—Ben Sweetland

“Truth is a torch, but a terrific one; therefore we all try to grasp it with closed eyes, fearing to be blinded.”
—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

“Yield your torch to others as in a race. Your death is but a piece of the world’s order, but a parcel of the world’s life.”
—Michel Eyquem de Montaigne

“The more you mow us down, the more quickly we grow; the blood of Christians is fresh seed.” —Tertullian

“There is no success without successors.” —Unknown

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.” —Paul the apostle, 1 Corinthians 15:3

“I would not give much for your religion unless it can be seen. Lamps do not talk, but they do shine.”
—Charles H. Spurgeon

“How many people have you made homesick for God?”
—Oswald Chambers



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The Back Burner

Barbara Harper

Every mother, particularly one who has very small children, can get discouraged sometimes. Even though a woman has looked forward to being a mother all her life and delights in her child, there are those days when she feels she is accomplishing nothing beyond wiping noses and changing diapers, when she feels her mind is turning to mush after reading Dr. Seuss and *Curious George* all day, when she longs to do something "important." Certain intellectual and creative pursuits have to be put on the back burner because there are only so many hours in the day. Even some ministry opportunities have to wait until the children are a bit older. It is easy to lament what we can't do.

Of course, young mothers are not the only ones who have to put things on the back burner. Newlyweds, new teachers, young singles getting started in a career, middle-aged children taking care of an elderly parent, and any number of other life situations will cause us to have to focus on the business at hand and delay other pursuits. But motherhood is the area through which the Lord taught me about the back burner.

Some fifteen-to-twenty years ago I read something in a secular women's magazine that greatly encouraged me and has stayed with me ever since. Unfortunately, I can't remember even what magazine it was, much less what author. The writer was talking about those things that have to be put on the back burner. But, she wrote, what is usually on the back burner when we are cooking? Isn't it something that has to simmer awhile, that is all the richer in flavor for the time it spent there on the back burner? The meat gets tender, the flavors blend, the smell wafts through the house, and we can hardly wait until dinnertime.

Oh, dear mother . . . what you are doing is vitally important. Your little one may not remember the specific things you did together or all your loving care in their early childhood, but those loving ministrations lay the foundation for your future relationship. The time you spend together reading, playing, rocking, feeding, nurturing a new little life that God has given

to you to care for is precious.

As the children get older, their need of your care is still vital, though it is different from when they were small. Instead of feeling isolated at home, you may feel you are nearly living out of your car with all the places you have to take your children to. We have to keep a balance between giving them opportunities and spreading everyone too thin, but some of those times in the car can be precious as well. One of my sons does not open up to me if I sit across the table from him

and ask him how things are going in his life, but a casual conversation or observation made while we are out and about can give me glimpses into his heart. Sometimes children feel a little freer to open up while we're driving.

Someone once said, "With children, the days are long, but the years are short." That is all too true. You have heard it before, but they do grow up so fast. You always have a ministry with them and an influence on them, but your main years of training them are when they are little. Redeem the time and enjoy it to the hilt.

Don't worry about those things on the back burner. Give them a stir every now and then. Perhaps you can skim over the newspaper headlines or watch some of the evening news with your husband, or spend fifteen minutes or so a day reading a good book to stimulate your mind. Buy a craft kit, take a class, jot down story ideas, or somehow "stir the pot" of whatever your areas of interest are. Take advantage of opportunities to get together with other ladies for fellowship. Explore what ministry opportunities you can within the constraints of your situation, but remember that ministry doesn't take place only within the four walls of the church: getting to know your neighbor, inviting another mother from the baseball league to church, baby-sitting for another mother for a doctor's appointment, giving a tract to the repairman are all outlets through which the Lord can use you as well as through which you can be an example to your children.

Then, as you stir those things on the back burner from time to time, perhaps you can take a small taste to test the readiness of it. After all, if you start to

Someone once said, "With children, the days are long, but the years are short."

write the next great novel, and find the timing still isn't right, you can let it simmer a little longer.

Don't get discouraged if other women seem to have all their burners going at once, accomplishing things right and left. I used to lament that I couldn't do as much as some other ladies till I finally had to come to grips with the fact that God made us with different capacities, abilities, and personalities.

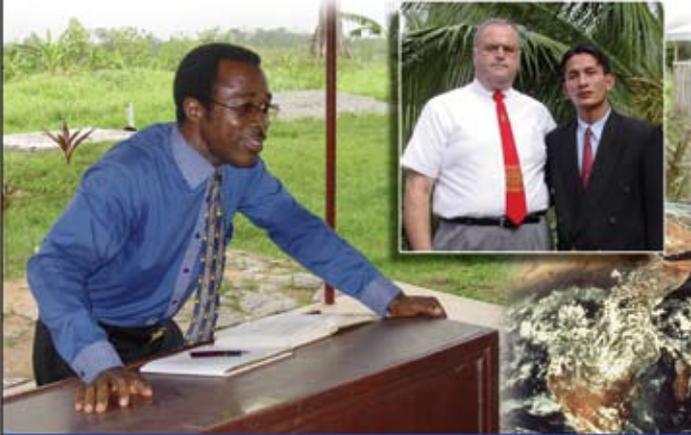
Ultimately we have to entrust those back burner issues to our loving Lord and ask His guidance as to when and how to proceed with them. There may be some things He wants us to relinquish completely, and here our back burner analogy breaks down: there are some things He never intended for us to pursue, and we have to set aside what was a personal desire that was not His will. We have to remind ourselves that, no matter how strong and even good a desire was, if it is not God's will, it would not have been good for us and may actually have been harmful and taken away from what He *did* have for us to do. On the other hand, we can't let the back burner become a place of excuses and, due to laziness or fear, place things there that the Lord *does* want us to pursue now. How can we know the difference? By walking with him day by day, seeking His guidance, asking Him to open doors He wants open and close doors He wants closed. When it is His timing to finally serve one of those "back burner" dishes, it will indeed be "just right."



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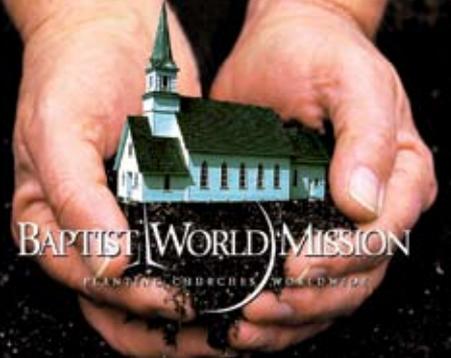
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The Three Dimensions Of Discipline—Part 1

One of the greatest struggles that many Christians have is maintaining a proper balance in their lives. This isn't an easy task, but we should stop to consider how well balanced our lives are. Before I proceed any further, I want to point out that for us to be a disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ is to be a "disciplined one." In Matthew 16:24 we read, "Then said Jesus unto his disciples [disciplined ones], If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Luke 14:33 declares, "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple [disciplined one]." And, in John 8:31, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." In John 15:8 our Lord said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples [disciplined ones]." Our heart's desire should be to live a disciplined life for our Lord.

The first area of discipline is the discipline of the mind. Isaiah 26:3 says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." How do we discipline our minds? It begins with memorizing the Word of God. In the Old Testament, the memorization of Scripture is highly emphasized. Deuteronomy 11:18, 19 says, "Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." The Lord wanted His children to know His Word! And there is no better way to know it than by consistent memorization. The Jewish children were so well versed in the Scriptures that by the age of twelve they could quote large portions of the Old Testament.

When I was saved as a teenager, my Sunday school teacher, Mr. Paul Phillips, challenged our class to memorize John 14:1-15. He said he would buy the student whatever he wanted if he memorized that passage. My whole life was wrapped up in playing sports; I needed a new baseball bat, so I decided to go home, borrow my mother's Bible, and memorize that passage. The next Sunday I went to Sunday school and our teacher asked if anyone had memorized John 14:1-15. When no one else raised his hand, I raised mine and said, "I did, sir." Mr. Phillips then told me to stand up and quote the entire passage in front of the class. I went into shock because I was terrified of speaking in front of other

people, but I stood and blurted out the passage as fast as I could. When I was finished, Mr. Phillips asked me what I wanted. I told him I wanted a baseball bat, and the next Sunday I saw him standing outside waiting for me. I ran to him to retrieve my new bat, but instead Mr. Phillips handed me a Bible. I had never owned a complete Bible; I took it home and decided to read it one night. As I started reading, I found I couldn't put it down. I found a greater joy in the Scriptures than in any sport I'd ever played. I began to memorize the Word of God that shaped my life as a new child in Christ, and it has been a wonderful journey and constant challenge in my ministry. Our authority for living as a Christian is the Word of God. Psalm 119:11 says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

The discipline of the mind begins with memorizing Scripture, but simply memorizing it isn't enough. We must also discipline our minds by meditating on Scripture. Nowhere does the Bible declare that the Lord will make you a success just by memorizing it. I was preaching to a group of pastors several years ago, and at the close of the service they asked me questions about the ministry. One pastor asked a question about a man who had memorized 8000 verses but who now was praising the pope and making close friendships with Charismatics. He wanted to know how a man could know so many verses and go in that direction. I told him that he might have indeed memorized all those verses, but it was apparent he did not meditate upon them. Success doesn't come by memorizing the Bible but by meditating upon it. Joshua 1:8 says, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." Meditation is applying the truth of Scripture to your life by dwelling upon it throughout the day. You memorize the Word and then constantly bring it up to your mind, fully digesting its truth.

Regardless of our ministry, we need to discipline our minds by memorizing and meditating upon Scripture. C. H. Spurgeon said, "The Holy Ghost rides in the chariot of Scripture, and not in the wagon of modern thought." It is my prayer that many will see the need of disciplining their minds and act upon it by God's grace.

Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty may be contacted at P.O. Box 141, Starr, SC 29684 or via e-mail at evangjsivn@aol.com.

PRAYER PRIMER:

How many readers are satisfied that you spend as much time as you ought, or need, in prayer? Few Christians would answer that question affirmatively. You are not alone. Nor are you in bad company historically. Despite multiple references to prayer on nearly every page of his journal, a godly young pastor named Andrew Bonar frequently lamented his “tendency to neglect or shorten prayer,” his “wandering in prayer,” and his fear that he was “losing the spirit of prayer.” The best of God’s saints are painfully aware of their shortcomings in this area. That does not excuse your failure, but it is to say that you are not alone.

Our greatest need on this subject is not to be told to pray (we are already aware that we should). Nor does our greatest need center so much on learning *about* the subject of prayer (though we need to understand clearly *what* it is we are supposed to be doing). Our greatest need is to be *shown how* to pray.

This need is reflected in the disciples’ request, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:2). They didn’t say “teach us *that* we should pray” or “teach us *why* we should pray” or “teach us *about* prayer,” but “teach us [*what and how*] to pray.” Jesus answered not by saying, “Simply pray whatever and however you want because God knows your heart,” or “Just rely on the Spirit.” Nor did He respond by talking *about* prayer but by *showing* them one, giving them a model prayer, a pattern: “When you pray, *say this*. . . .”—pray like this, say words like these, address God this way, pray about these kinds of things, and pray about them this way. What prompted their question in the first place? They were watching Jesus pray (Luke 11:1a).

The disciples’ question reflects our own need; and Christ’s reply meets that need. The Bible includes many prayers of God’s people—not merely *that* they prayed, but exactly *where* and *when* and *how* and *what* they prayed. These are not merely for historical curiosity. This is divine didactics—God’s systematic instruction designed to *show* His people *how* to pray.

Interestingly, as basic as prayer is to man’s relationship to God, the large body of Mosaic legislation governing that relationship includes virtually no instruction regarding prayer. As a rule, the OT contains more examples and fewer instructions; more of the OT is historical narrative (the natural context in which prayers are uttered) and devotional literature (the “natural habitat” of prayers). Notable examples of prayer permeate the patriarchal period (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob), the Mosaic era (Moses and Joshua), the Judges (Gideon, Samson, Samuel), the Kings (David, Solomon, Asa, Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat), the Prophets (Jonah, Jeremiah, Daniel), and the post-

exilic writers (Ezra and Nehemiah). By contrast, the NT contains fewer examples and more instructions (because more of NT is epistolary literature, which is instructive in nature). Nevertheless, exemplary prayers punctuate the Gospels (Matt. 11; Luke 11, 18; John 17), Acts (4), and even the Epistles (Eph. 1, 3; Phil. 1; Col. 1; 1 Thess. 1).

Prayer as Conversation

Prayer is fundamentally communication—not merely transmitting data (requests), but communing. John opens his first epistle with a desire that his readers would come to share in a “fellowship” not with the apostles only but with God Himself—for “truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son” (1 John 1:3). There is no “fellowship” where there is no conversation.

Prayer is not a rite but a privilege, not a religious custom but a real conversation. Conversation, by definition, involves not just one person speaking but at least two. “Prayer is not a monologue, but rather a dialogue” (D. Edmond Hiebert, *Working with God through Prayer*).

Have you ever noticed how many Biblical prayers ask God questions or express frustrations and doubts as well as desires and requests? Do you ever ask God questions when you pray? Express frankly your frustrations? Tell Him what you like and dislike? What you think? What you fear? “In the prayers of those who pray most and best, petitions proper, I venture to say, occupy only an inconsiderable place. Much of prayer expresses the fullness of the soul rather than its emptiness. . . . Prayer at its best is . . . conversation with God, the confidential talk of a child who tells everything to his father” (James Stalker, *Imago Christi: The Example of Christ*).

Components of Conversation

To underscore our basic premise that prayer is *conversation*, what kinds of conversations are there? What kinds of communication do we engage in with others who are also in the image of God? One may express:

- request or appeal (supplication), either
 - for oneself (petition), or
 - for others (intercession)
- sorrow or apology (confession),
- love or admiration (adoration),
- gratitude or appreciation (thanksgiving),
- promises or pledges (vow),
- hopes and joys or fears and woes (fellowship),
- dissatisfaction or frustration (grievance).

All these kinds of communication can be broadly grouped under three major categories: request, worship, and fellowship.

CONVERSING WITH GOD

Request arises out of a sense of need and a recognition of personal inadequacy, and is of two types, depending on the nature of the need.

- *Supplication* itself is of two types, depending on the object.
 - Petition (supplication for self)
 - Gen. 15:1–3—Abraham, for a son
 - 1 Chron. 4:10—Jabez, for personal blessing
 - Acts 4:24–30—adoration, fellowship, petition
 - Intercession (supplication for others)
 - Gen. 18—Abraham, for Lot
 - Ex. 32:11–14—Moses, for Israel
 - Eph. 3:14–21; Phil. 1:9–11; Col. 1:9–12
- *Confession* expresses a need for reconciliation of relationship.
 - Judg. 10:10, 15; Ps. 51; Lam. 5
 - Luke 18:13—Pharisee’s prayer (18:11, 12) is not supplication, confession, adoration, or fellowship, but a twisted form of “thanksgiving.”

Worship is an expression of love and admiration, and is of three types.

- *Adoration* for who God is and what He is like.
 - 2 Sam. 7:18–29 (personal)
 - 1 Chron. 29:10–19 (public)
- *Thanksgiving* for what God has done.
 - Dan. 6:10
 - 1 Tim. 1:12; 2:1; 4:3, 4; 2 Tim. 1:3; Heb. 13:15
- *Vow* is usually an extension of either a petition (“if You do this, I will . . .”) or adoration (“Because You have done this, I will . . .”).
 - 1 Sam. 1:10, 11—Hannah, in connection with a petition.
 - Ps. 132:1–5—David, in connection with his devotion to the Lord.

Confession is of two major kinds

- *Fellowship* is the essence of prayer as communion, dialogue, conversation.
 - Exod. 33:18—Moses, desire to see God’s glory
 - John 17—mixture of petition, fellowship, intercession
- *Grievance* is often misunderstood and misrepresented, but it is a vital form of frank communion with God displayed in the prayers of Moses, Elijah, Jonah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Job, and the psalmist Asaph.

Prayer, both private and public, is often a mixture—as most conversation is—of several of these kinds of communication. But also as in conversation, sometimes we may be driven to focus spontaneously on just one of these kinds of communication (when a sudden need arises, when you are convicted of sin, or when you are looking at a sunset). Prayer should be as exalted as its object, yet as natural as conversation. You find both beautifully blended in the prayers of the Bible. These are our God-given models to teach us not only what to pray but also how to pray.

Practical Prayer Advice

In *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*, D. A. Carson offers several practical points for vitalizing this spiritual discipline of prayer.

(1) *Plan*. “Much praying is not done because we do not plan to pray. We do not drift into spiritual life; we do not drift into disciplined prayer.”

(2) *Focus*. With disarming candor Carson asks, “Am I the only Christian who has ever had problems with mental drift?” There are several “practical ways to impede mental drift.” Pray aloud. Pray through passages of Scripture, or adopt/adapt Biblical prayers as models.

(3) *Pattern*. Take note of Biblical prayers; they are divinely inspired patterns for our instruction. What exactly did Paul pray for new converts, fellow workers, unbelievers, or himself?

(4) *Emulate*. “Choose models—but choose them well.” Good models “pray with great seriousness” and genuineness. Their language, requests, and priorities are shaped by Scripture. “Study their content, their breadth, their passion, their unction—but do not ape their idiom.”

(5) *Model*. “If you are in any form of spiritual leadership, work at your public prayers. . . . Some people think this advice distinctly corrupt. It smells too much of public relations, of concern for public image.” Granted, prayer is directed to God; but public prayer “is addressed to God while others are overhearing it.” As such, it presents a unique “pedagogical opportunity . . . to instruct or encourage or edify all who hear the prayer.” Biblically informed praying with a Scriptural spirit is “more effectively passed on by modeling than by formal teaching.”

(6) *Pause*. “Pray until you pray. . . . Christians should pray long enough and honestly enough, at a single ses-

Continued on page 32

At A Glance

(Continued from page 31)

sion, to get past the feeling of formalism and unreality that attends not a little praying." I might add, pause until you can pray. Don't rush breathlessly and thoughtlessly into the courts of Heaven. Pause long enough to compose yourself so that you are "praying with the spirit and with the understanding also"—that you are actually and naturally *conversing* and not merely mouthing habitual phrases. And pause while you pray. God doesn't mind pauses. He is in no hurry. Silent space, pausing for thought, is as natural in prayer as it is in conversation. Break the habit of filling empty space with unthinking repetitions that actually inhibit thoughtful praying. Think how unnatural these would be in daily conversation. Such verbal crutches underscore how self-conscious our praying can be.

Carson's personal observation as a seminary professor is sobering: "I am scarcely in a position to criticize expository preaching and seminaries: I have given my life to such ministry. Yet I would be among the first to acknowledge that some students at the institution where I teach, and some faculty, too, can devote thousands of hours to the diligent study of Scripture and yet somehow display an extraordinarily shallow knowledge of God. We need to know God better." And, "One of the foundational steps in knowing God . . . is prayer—spiritual, persistent, biblically minded prayer." Are we "better at theological articulation than spiritual adoration? Better—God help us!—at preaching than praying"?

Additional Reading

Bennet, Arthur. *Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions* (Banner of Truth, 1975)

Carson, D. A. *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers* (Baker, 1992) Hiebert, D. Edmond.

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Meeting at the Mosque

Laura Mansfield, Associate Director of the Northeast Intelligence Network, issued a chilling report of her recent visit to a mosque here in the U.S. She had been invited to the mosque to attend a seminar on family values. She arrived early and managed to sit in on the Arabic language service (since those present did not know that she spoke Arabic). Here is a portion of her report:

"One of the other men, Ahmed from Kuwait, gave a brief account of his friend Eyad, who had finally gone to Iraq. Ahmed was in email contact with Eyad, and hoped by the following week to be able to bring them more information about the state of the 'mujahideen' in Iraq. As the meeting drew to a close, the Imam gave a brief speech calling for the protection of Allah on the mujahideen fighting for Islam throughout the world, and reminded everyone that it was their duty as Muslims to continue in the path of jihad, whether it was simple efforts like those of Khaled and his friends, or the actual physical fighting of men like Eyad. As the meeting broke up, several women in hijab came in the room, and two of them sat with me. They were very warm and friendly and welcoming, and appeared to be clearly thrilled that I was there. . . . Where the previ-

ous session had definite anti-American tones, this session was all American and Apple Pie. The earlier session had been in Arabic; this one was in English. The woman leading the session, Nafisa, told of the concerns she had regarding her daughters in the public school system. She complained about the influence of the MTV culture, and seemed concerned about the rampant sexuality that pervaded all facets of American life, from TV to movies and on into the school system. . . . She then began to discuss Islam, focusing on the commonalities it has with Christianity. . . . While in the previous section, then men had quoted over and over again sura from the Qu'ran calling for violent jihad, the women's session focused on the 'gentler' side of Islam. The same Imam who demanded that the men continue in the path of jihad did a complete 180 degree turn in this session, stressing instead the suras that promoted the 'brotherhood' between Muslims, Christians, and Jews. 'After all, we worship the same God, and follow the teachings in the books he gave each of us. We are all the same, we are all People of the Book,' he stressed. The differences between the sessions were striking. Clearly the second session was a recruiting session. . . . The reason for concern is obvious: two different doctrines

are being promoted. One peaceful, friendly, warm, and fuzzy doctrine is being used to draw people in, with a focus on the well-being of their children. But the Arabic speaking sessions clearly have an anti-American tone." ("Jihad Comes to Small Town USA," <http://www.homelandsecurityus.com/>; accessed 4/20/2005)

Eurabia

Recently Frontpagemag.com interviewed Bat Ye'or, one of the foremost authorities on the current clash between Islam and other civilizations. Here are excerpts from that interview:

"Eurabia represents a geo-political reality envisaged in 1973 through a system of informal alliances between, on the one hand, the nine countries of the European Community (EC) which, enlarged, became the European Union (EU) in 1992 and on the other hand, the Mediterranean Arab countries. . . . The field of Euro-Arab collaboration covered every domain: from economy and policy to immigration. In foreign policy, it backed anti-Americanism, anti-Zionism and Israel's delegitimization; the promotion of the PLO and Arafat; a Euro-Arab associative diplomacy in international forums; and NGO collaboration. In domestic policy, the EAD established a close cooperation between the Arab and European

media television, radio, journalists, publishing houses, academia, cultural centers, school textbooks, student and youth associations, tourism. Church interfaith dialogues were determinant in the development of this policy. Eurabia is therefore this strong Euro-Arab network of associations—a comprehensive symbiosis with cooperation and partnership on policy, economy, demography and culture. . . . Eurabia is the future of Europe. Its driving force, the Parliamentary Association for Euro-Arab Cooperation, was created in Paris in 1974. It now has over six hundred members—from all major European political parties—active in their own national parliaments, as well as in the European parliament." (<http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=15044>; accessed 4/26/2005)

Purpose-Driven Catholics and Charismatics

A news release at purposedriven.com announced a new P.E.A.C.E. plan designed to "eradicate five giant problems that oppress billions of people." The Purpose-Driven Church seminars began at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, in 1996 under the leadership of Rick Warren. According to the Catholic PRWire, "The Purpose Driven

Church will—for the first time ever—be bringing their evangelical message of living out God’s five purposes to a Catholic Church: Holy Family Parish in Inverness, Illinois.” When accessed on April 20, the website for the Catholic congregation praised the new pope along with its advertisement for the Purpose-Driven seminar, to be conducted by Pastor Bret Schrock of Purpose-Driven Ministries. The invitation read, “If you want to help the Holy Family make the leap from a good parish to a great one, please plan to attend!” (http://www.holyfamilyparish.org/pdf_gen/pdc.pdf; see also <http://www.catholic.org/prwire/headline.php?ID=1306>; accessed 4/19/2005)

Charismatics want to be purpose-driven as well. “They believed that the Purpose Driven Church needed to be explained in a way that would connect with Spirit-led leaders. In other words, they wanted to de-baptist purpose-driven! We stayed outside our box, took another step of faith and said, ‘Go for it.’ . . . Are you open to that possibility? If you are, then I would like to invite you to attend our first regional Pentecostal/Charismatic Purpose Driven Church Conference to be held at Northway Church near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on March 29–30. It will be not be taught by pastors from Saddleback Church, but rather by these pastoral leaders who developed the training materials.” (Announcement of North Way Community Church, Wexford, Pennsylvania, <http://www.purposedriven.com/en-US/Events/PurposeDrivenChurchRegional/overview.htm>; accessed 4/9/2005)

NOTABLE QUOTES

Full-grown oaks are not produced in three years; neither are servants of God. —Douglas Rumford

We teach what we know; we reproduce what we are. —Robert Schmidgall

The kind of successor I may get may depend a great deal on the kind of predecessor I’ve been and how I’ve related to my own predecessor. To reject the past and ignore the future . . . is both selfish and foolish. —Warren W. Wiersbe

Christ does not bridge the generation gap. He bridges the regeneration gap, and when He does, the resulting reconciliation leaves no gaps at all. —Anonymous

God has not more precious gift to a church or an age than a man who lives as an embodiment of His will, and inspires those around him with the faith of what grace can do. —Andrew Murray

The error of youth is to believe that intelligence is a substitute for experience, while the error of age is to believe that experience is a substitute for intelligence. —Lyman Bryson

While no man has succeeded . . . without some spark of divine fire, many have succeeded better by taking precious good care of a precious small spark than others, who have been careless with a generous flame. —Henry Holt

We may consider each generation as a distinct nation, with a right, by the will of its majority, to bind themselves, but none to bind the succeeding generation, more than the inhabitants of another country. —Thomas Jefferson

The Christians who have turned the world upside down have been men and women with a vision in their hearts, and the Bible in their hands. —T. B. Maston

When I think of those who have influenced my life the most, I think not of the great but of the good. —John Knox

Example is not the main thing in influencing other—it is the only thing. —Albert Schweitzer

This news is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International.

Cutting: New Youth Fad

On February 23, Michelle Malkin’s commentary appeared in WorldNet Daily: “Have you heard of ‘cutting’? If you’re a parent, you’d better read up. ‘Cutting’ refers to self-mutilation—using knives, razor blades or even safety pins to deliberately harm one’s own body—and it’s spreading to a school near you.” (http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=42996; accessed 4/20/2005)

“Pastor Freak”

Steve Bensinger of the Come as You Are Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan, says that he uses his “150 hours of body art to make a statement of faith.” All of his tattoos reportedly have Biblical themes. Known locally as “Pastor Freak,” he says that he is making Christianity more accessible to unbelievers. One wonders whether he has the story of Goliath on his forehead. (<http://www.charismamag.com/a.php?ArticleID=10739>)

Pope in Heaven?

According to the Associated Press and other sources, radio host Marty Minto was fired from his job at WORD-FM for voicing questions as to whether or not Pope John Paul II would go to Heaven. When asked about the firing, general manager Chuck Gratner said, “WORD-FM needs to function in this city in support of the entire church—that means everybody—and not focus on denominational issues.” (<http://www.pennlive.com/newsflash/pa/index.ssf?/base/news-26/1113454260228210.xml&storylist=penn>; accessed 4/14/2005)

Help Wanted: Salt and Light Bearers in North Africa

Pearson Johnson

Global corporations are looking for you! Did you know that companies that have set up operations in North Africa are often running into difficulties meeting their staffing requirements? As North Africa economies continue to expand and national markets endorse globalization, these staffing problems could further make the job market a job-seeker market.

So reads an online information service for the North African job market. In the midst of developing economies and market systems, many corporations are looking outside of their countries for help. They are looking to Europe, Asia, and North America for help in spurring on their economy.

If we were to read this appeal from a salt-and-light perspective, it might look something like this:

Global mission fields are looking for you! Did you know that God has a heart to set up operations in North Africa and is creatively meeting staffing requirements? As North African economies continue to expand and national markets endorse globalization, these staffing problems could open great opportunities for gospel light-bearers to enter these countries for the sake of His Name!

What comes to your mind when you think of the North African countries of Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco? Perhaps Muammar al-Qaddafi's declarations in the late '80s while wearing his unique turbans. In our entertainment-focused world, mention of Morocco conjures up images of the French colonial city of Casablanca. Terrorism has changed our ideals, however. *U.S. News & World Report* recently ran a feature story on Morocco titled "The Casbah Connection: Why Morocco Is Producing Some of the World's Most Feared Terrorists."¹ If you are like most people, you probably think when reading an article like this one, "What a fearful place to live. Our government needs to do something to help bring stability to that country." There must be a way to solve these problems, but what is it?

Secularists know there is a missing element to present solutions. A common theme in writings I have read is that communities of hopelessness breed violence. The *U.S. News* author writes, "There is too much garbage around this shantytown outside central Casablanca, and too little hope" (22). An organizer of an Islamist movement opines, "You know the profile of our young people: no future, no prospects, no hope" (28). These authors are correct in diagnosing the problem—hopelessness. However, their solutions come from the wrong source.

Think about Morocco with a salt-and-light perspective, and your thinking likely changes to "What a lack of hope-bringing salt and light there is in those cities. I must pray that the Lord will send laborers to Morocco to share the gospel!"

The countries of North Africa are similar in characteristics. Arabic is the official language of all four countries, though French is broadly understood in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, and English is understood by many in Libya. Regarding religion, between 98 and 100% of the people are Muslim. At most, one percent claim some form of Christianity. Socially, they all have Islamist influence in government but are more democratic than we tend to think. Tunisia in particular is relatively progressive socially, with laws promoting equal rights for women. The need for literacy education is very high in rural areas, and there seem to be broadening opportunities for education in the major cities.

Economically, these North African countries are seeking development and even help from Europe and the United States. Agreements were recently signed which are destined to create a Euro-Mediterranean free-trade zone by 2010. This zone will include Europe, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Egypt in North Africa, and Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Israel, and Lebanon in the Middle East.² UN and US sanctions were recently lifted from Libya, so they will likely join the zone as well. There is a desperate need for Christian witness, and there are opportunities opening up for God-called pioneer laborers to be involved in these harvest fields!

What kind of perspective do you have on these nations? Do you see them as unstable political hotspots? Do you see them as huge sandboxes in the northern Sahara Desert? As areas of danger for Western Christians? Or do you see them as lands needing a clear and courageous gospel witness? Do you see the creative opportunities that are available for ministry? Until we realize that places are dark because they lack light and are corrupted by the diseases of sin because they lack salt, we will not gain a salt-and-light perspective on North Africa. Please pray that God would see fit to call out laborers for His Name's sake to go and be a part of His operations in North Africa!

Pearson and Ben can be reached at pjohnson@intercity.org. They would welcome your input and interaction.

¹ May 9, 2005, pp. 20-33.

² <http://www.afrol.com/articles/11381>

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Fbfi Chaplains Home From War Zone

As this issue of *FrontLine* goes to press, all FBFI-endorsed chaplains are home from Afghanistan and Iraq. God used them to minister to our military personnel, kept them safe, and returned them to their families. Below are excerpts from letters received shortly after three FBFI chaplains arrived home.

After 382 days deployed to Iraq, I have come home to Carissa and the kids. I arrived home to central Germany on Wednesday—we had a big welcome home ceremony. I wanted to take the time and thank all of you for your love and support during this long and difficult year. I remember saying—You can't do this deployment in one day—don't try—it takes time—one day at a time. However, we have marks on the wall—I can't help but split the year by marking the loss of soldiers. I look back and measure time over the year that way. My unit lost eleven soldiers to enemy contact and we have close to a hundred wounded. Sometimes over this year we had gain and we laughed. Sometimes, losses and we cried. One of the unexpected joys of coming home—being able to see the wounded from Iraq—the last time I had seen many of them—they were bleeding on the side of some dusty road in Iraq, now to see them whole was simply amazing. It is so good to be home—it is beyond words. Carissa and all the kids have been so wonderful. The kids have grown so much—it will take some time to adjust. We are all doing well and looking forward to some time together. The Bible declares in Ecclesiastes 3:11 that He takes these collective experiences of our lives and eventually makes something beautiful out of all the loose ends. It is about Time! Yes, it is about His Timing! I am glad to be home.

The joy and excitement of being home and back together—is best said by Andrew—He goes around the house yelling, "MY DADDY!!!"

—Army Chaplain (Cpt) Gary Fisher



GOD BLESS THE USA! I am finally home and have enjoyed a couple of weeks of down time with my family. What a blessing it is to be back on American soil. You don't know how good you have it, until you don't have it. I have missed my wife, my children, my church, and my country. There's no place like home.

For every prayer that was uttered for me while I was in Iraq—THANK YOU! Prayer does make a difference. There are numerous stories of lives being saved in miracu-

lous and unexplainable means—I know it is because of your faithfulness in prayer.

Please continue to pray for the men as they settle back into their lives here in the United States. For many it will be a challenge. I will need God's hand of guidance in counseling these men and covet your prayers. Many marriages are hanging in the balance as well as the mental state of many young men who have willingly put themselves in danger for the last 270 days. Don't stop the prayers!

—Navy Chaplain (LT) Richard Wiese

It has been a very long year in Afghanistan, and it is good to be back in Hawaii with family, friends, good food, daily showers, and modern conveniences. Thank you to the many churches and families that have been praying for us.

I wish this letter would be filled with nothing but good news, but it is not. Our battalion had its share of tragedies. We had four KIA (killed in action) and approximately a dozen WIA (wounded in action), including three amputees. Those in the infantry face the threat of serious injury and death on a daily basis as they defend their country from the threat of terrorism.

However, there is some good news. Three soldiers professed Christ as their Savior, two were baptized in one of the local rivers with an audience of Afghan children, cows, donkeys, and sheep. There are also three soldiers considering full-time Christian service, one of which is thinking very seriously about becoming a military chaplain. I have been mentoring him in this needful area. Lives committed to the Savior make a year-long deployment worth it all.

Our military is truly a great and needful mission field. The field is white and ready for harvest.

—Army Chaplain (Cpt) Roger Rodriguez

with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations." By only citing part of this command, Pastor Phelps is implying that this passage demands total abstinence from alcohol at all times. Although many would argue that other passages advocate total abstinence at all times, this passage does not. This passage demands total abstinence "when ye go into the tab-

ernacle." As Fundamentalists, we need to strive to present the Word of God in its proper context.

Douglas J. Nelson, Iowa

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To Take Up the Torch

Gordon Dickson

In preparation for the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin, Italy, the first Olympic torch will soon be lit. Thrust between parabolic mirrors in Olympia, Greece, and ignited by the rays of the sun, it will begin to carry the Olympic flame. The flame will be passed by successive torches carried by runners and celebrities as it journeys to Turin. According to an official website¹ of the Olympics, these torches will be constructed of steel, copper, and polymers housed in an aluminum shell. Each torch can burn for about fifteen minutes and cannot be relit. This is a fitting metaphor for generations of Christians to keep in mind—vapor-life creatures carrying the flame. The “great . . . cloud of witnesses”² has run before us. It’s important for us to remember the stamina and the stumbles of those who have handed down the torch to us. Each generation must learn to grasp the torch by honoring the God who “is a consuming fire.”³

It is clear that, at times, Elijah honored the God who is a consuming fire. We revere his prayers because he was a man who wrestled with the same passions and problems that we do. Through him, we have learned that the magnificent power of God can be brought to bear with pinpoint effectiveness.⁴ Like the rays of the sun

focused through parabolic mirrors, his prayers got results! And generations have followed his follower who cried out, “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?” When he prayed, the fire of God fell (1 Kings 18:37–39). Yes, there were hints of selfishness, but God was glorified by His prophet humbly waiting upon Him.

It is also clear that, at times, Elijah honored his own corrupt fleshliness. Today’s critics might view him as an inconsistent failure. After a brilliant beginning, he had run away from those who threatened him, given up on life, become self-centered, and insisted that he was the

only one who knew how to take the right stand. He serves as a reminder to all who would take up the torch of truth through the ages: if you fail to focus on God, you will know the fruitless frustration of flesh. “What doest thou here, Elijah?”

In order for the next generation to take up the torch, it must guard against its own flesh while honoring the God who is a consuming fire. To really grasp the lessons from Elijah, we must look carefully at his follower, Elisha. If we do, we may learn how to revitalize the generation that is passing the torch to us. When Elisha was chosen for the task, he responded with selfless sacrifice; he killed his cows and burned his

plows.⁵ He did not ask, “What’s in it for me?” The heart of the older prophet was undoubtedly warmed by the faithful fire he saw in the new prophet. It may very well be that the sacrificial ministry of Elisha extended the ministry of Elijah—and the fire of God continued to fall (2 Kings 1). But what did Elisha see that encouraged him to take up the torch? Did he focus on the frail flesh of Elijah? Did he waste his days in endless cynical commentaries about the failures of the prophet and his generation? No! Elisha focused on the Person behind the power of the prophet. He said, “As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.”⁶ Even when other prophets took a man-centered viewpoint—focusing on the prophet of God (before and after his death)—Elisha kept his focus on the God of the prophet. With this self-sacrificial focus, Elijah maintained a guard against his own flesh while honoring the God of the fire. When the time came for him to take the lead in his own generation, he cried out “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?” May God grant us the wisdom to do the same.

¹ http://www.olympic.org/uk/games/torino/index_uk.asp.

² Hebrews 12:1.

³ Hebrews 12:28, 29.

⁴ James 5:16–18.

⁵ 1 Kings 19:21.

⁶ 2 Kings 2:2, 4, 6.

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on the Person
behind the power
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