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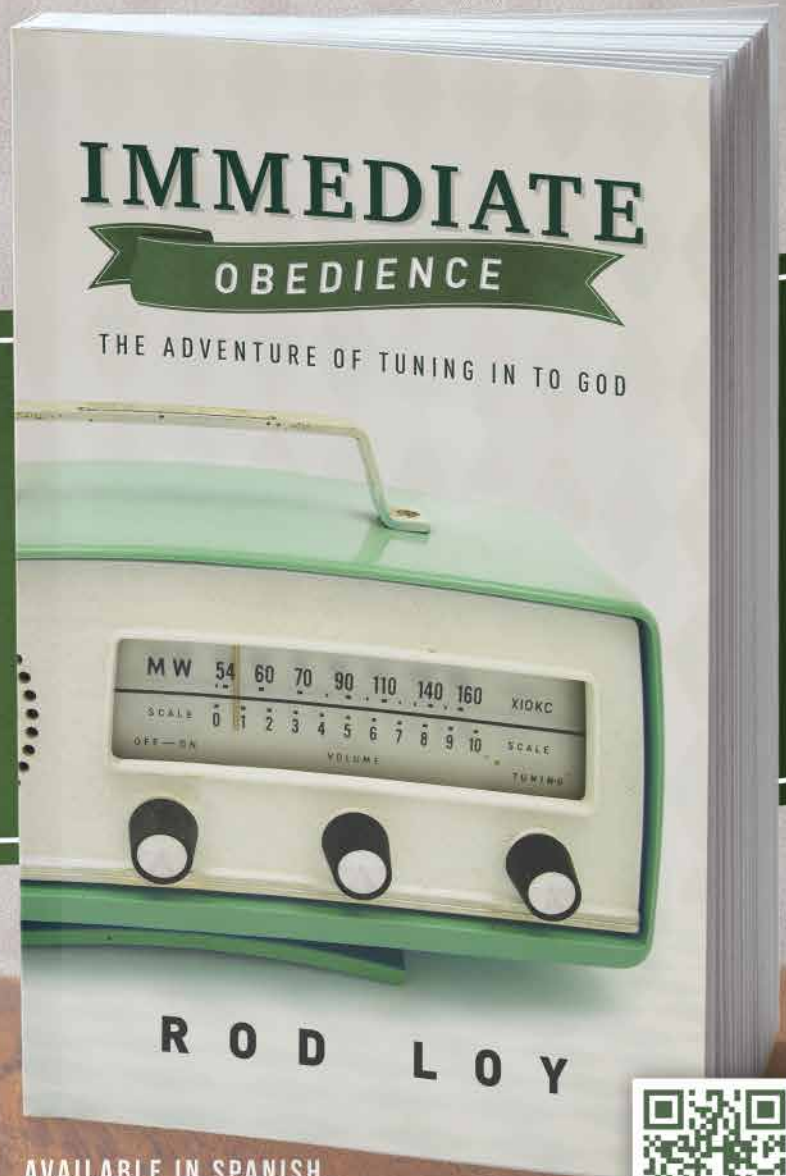
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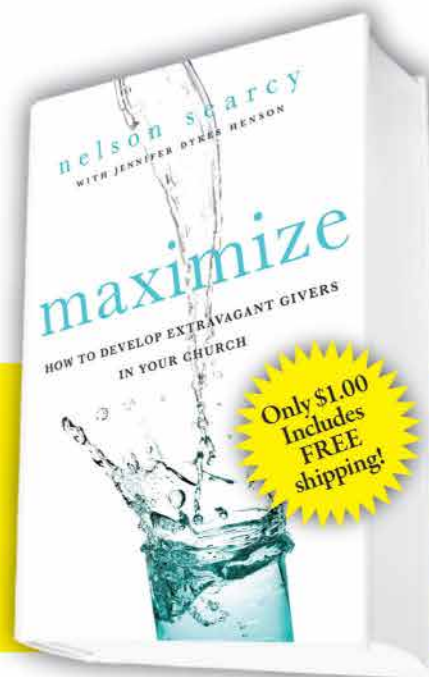
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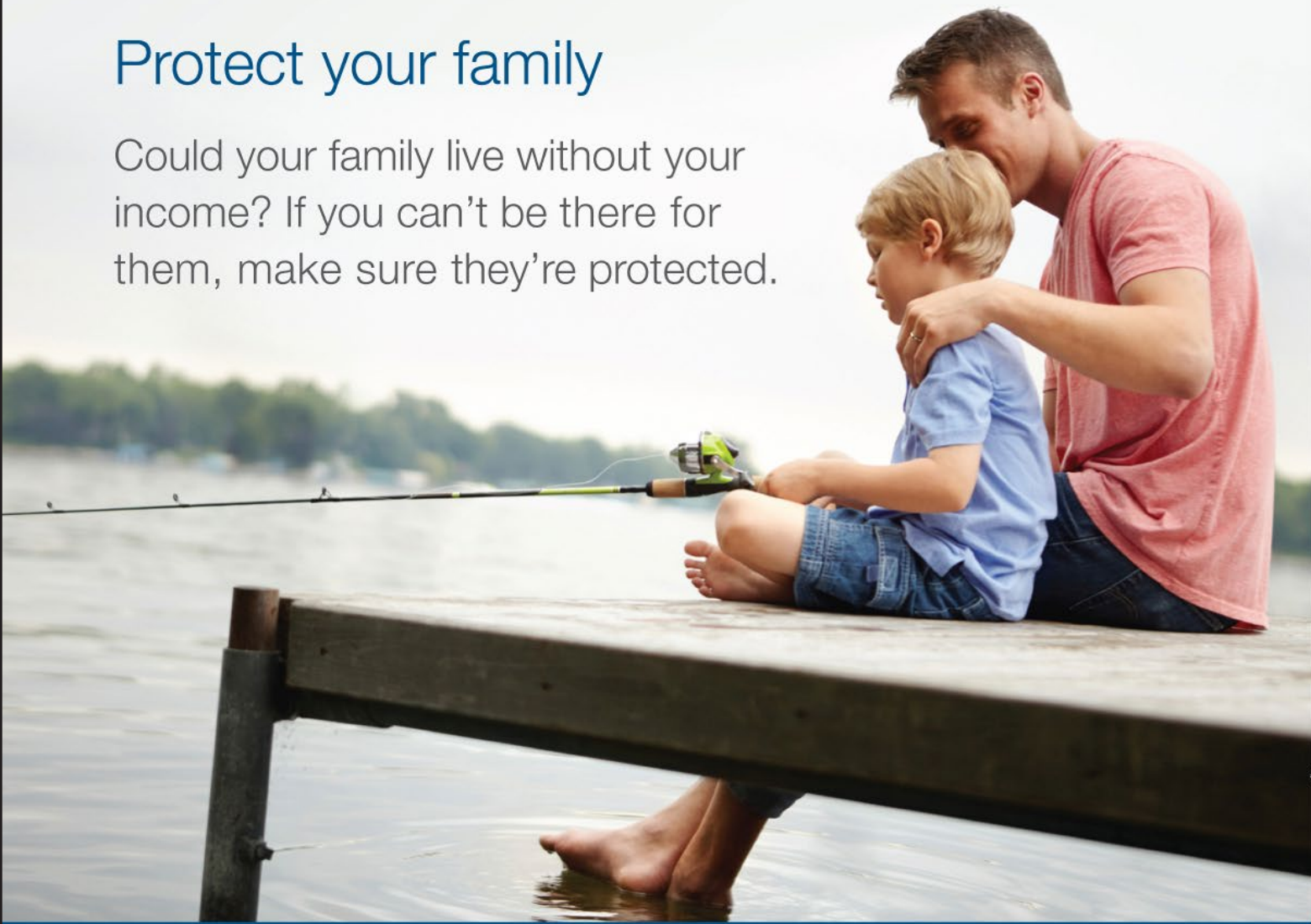
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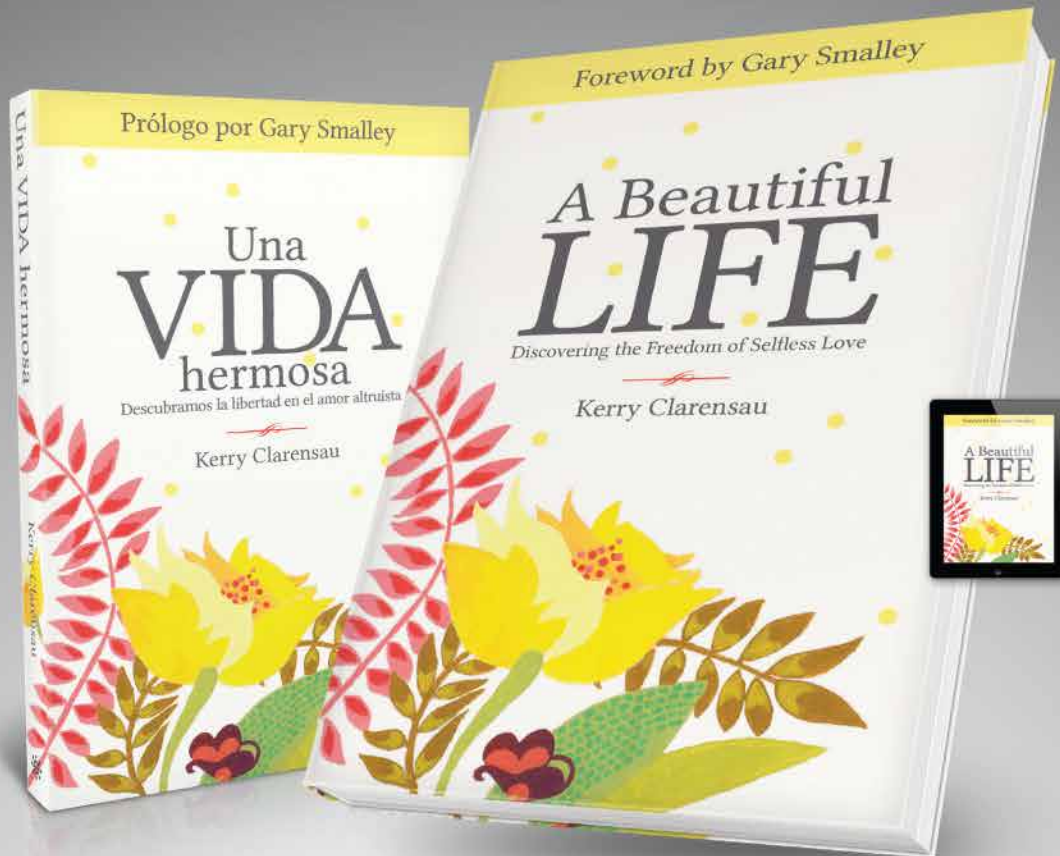
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# Love is closer than you think.



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**Kerry Clarensau** is the national director of Women's Ministries for the *Assemblies of God Fellowship*. She is a credentialed minister, a mentor, and an international speaker. A prolific writer, she creates resources for women and is the author of *Secrets*, *Love Revealed*, and *Redeemed*. Kerry has served in ministry with her husband, Mike, for over 20 years.



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**MY HEALTHY CHURCH®**  
Equipping Spirit-Empowered People

THE NEXT 100 YEARS...

## Centennial Affirmations

**A**ny group that celebrates 100 years of existence has to admit that a century brings about a steady stream of adaptations.

To understand where we've been and where we are today, consider two related questions: What is our mission, and what is the source of power we access to accomplish that mission?

A series of Pentecostal affirmations shape our responses to those questions. We affirm that God is near and provides considerable evidence of His presence in our lives and in the Church. When we pray, that prayer is not empty rhetoric. It is a language of the heart that is understood in heaven.

We affirm that left-brained activity alone cannot contain God. We personally and powerfully encounter Him in our daily lives. Dramatic physical demonstrations of God's grace are not unusual, but expected, as God shows up in obvious and demonstrable ways.

Because of the realization that God is active in His creation, we affirm that the world we see is not all there is or will be. We live with the expectation that there is a God who will inevitably reveal in fullness a whole new world, fully transformed and reflective of His redemptive mission.

— **BYRON KLAUS, president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri**



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## HELPING HEARTS & HOMES

### WHAT IS YOUR CHURCH DOING FOR SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES?



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#### Single-parent families are all around us today

— in our neighborhoods, schools, work places, and churches. Consider these U.S. demographics:

- Twenty-four million children are growing up without a father in the home.
- Fifteen million parents are single.
- Between 26 and 47 percent of children are in single-parent homes.<sup>1</sup>
- Four out of 10 children are born to unmarried parents.
- Half of all children born since 1990 will spend time in a single-parent family.<sup>2,3</sup>

Imagine having to cook, clean, pay bills, shuttle the family to activities, attend school functions, help children dress, solve problems, and juggle homework assignments — with no help from anyone. Add to this the emotional stress of dealing with an ex-spouse or death of a spouse and countless other issues. No wonder single parents are tired.

Single parents need acceptance, encouragement, time alone, and role models for their children. As well, they need help with home and auto repairs, and other

material needs.

Single-parent life is full of complex challenges, but God cares. Scripture says, “God sets the solitary in families” (Psalm 68:6, NKJV).<sup>4</sup>

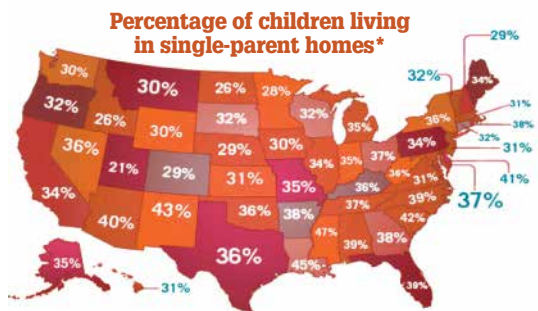
God is “the helper of the fatherless (Psalm 10:14). In Him, “the fatherless find compassion” (Hosea 14:3).

**2. Role models.** Kids of single parents need same-gender role models to take them to events, talk about issues, and serve as a godly example.

**3. Adopt a family.** Encourage church families to “adopt” a single-parent family and include them in family outings and dinners.

**4. Material resources.** Churches can show Christ's love by providing such things as auto and home repairs, free childcare, Christmas gifts, help with utility bills, and gently used clothing and toys.

— **DENNIS FRANCK, former director, Single Adult/Young Adult Ministries, The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri**



\*Children under the age of 18 who live with their own single parent. Data from the Population Reference Bureau analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2011), via the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

#### HOW A CHURCH CAN HELP

Single parent families need the spiritual instruction and relational involvement a church can provide. They need:

**1. Respite care.** Most single parents have little free time away from children and cannot afford childcare. Offer a monthly night of childcare so single parents can attend an event, hang out with friends, or just be alone to read or watch a movie.

#### Notes

1. U.S. Census Bureau, “Current Population Survey”; 2012 Social & Economic Supplement; Wade F. Horn, president of the National Fatherhood Initiative, Gaithersburg, Maryland.
2. <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/WomensHealth/story?id=7575268&page=1> – 2010.
3. Sources include Single and Parenting, [www.singleandparenting.org](http://www.singleandparenting.org); Center for Single and Parent Family Ministry, [www.spfm.org](http://www.spfm.org); Assemblies of God Single Adult Ministries, [www.singles.ag.org](http://www.singles.ag.org); Kids' Hope, [www.kidshope.org](http://www.kidshope.org); Dads for Life, <http://4liferesources.com>; and Divorce for Kids (DC4K), <http://www.dc4k.org/parentzone>.
4. Scripture quotations marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Map courtesy Single & Parenting ([www.singleandparenting.org](http://www.singleandparenting.org))





IN THE RED ZONE

## Avoiding Costly Penalties

For individuals open to hearing the good news, spiritual opposition frequently intensifies. After explaining how to accept Jesus, eager Christians must be careful not to shut down conversation by being too pushy. Otherwise, they might incur penalties that lose important spiritual ground.

Pastors are the coaches who teach believers how to respond appropriately when someone isn't quite ready to receive Christ.

After listening to a presentation of the gospel, a fireman named Ron hesitated to cross that line of faith. Like Nicodemus in John 3, Ron needed time to consider the spiritual truths he'd heard.

The acronym **TAP** can help guide the conversation when talking with people like Ron. TAP stands for:

1. **T**hat's OK. Take time to think about what you've heard.
2. **A**ny time is a good time to respond to Jesus.
3. **P**ray when you are ready to receive Christ.

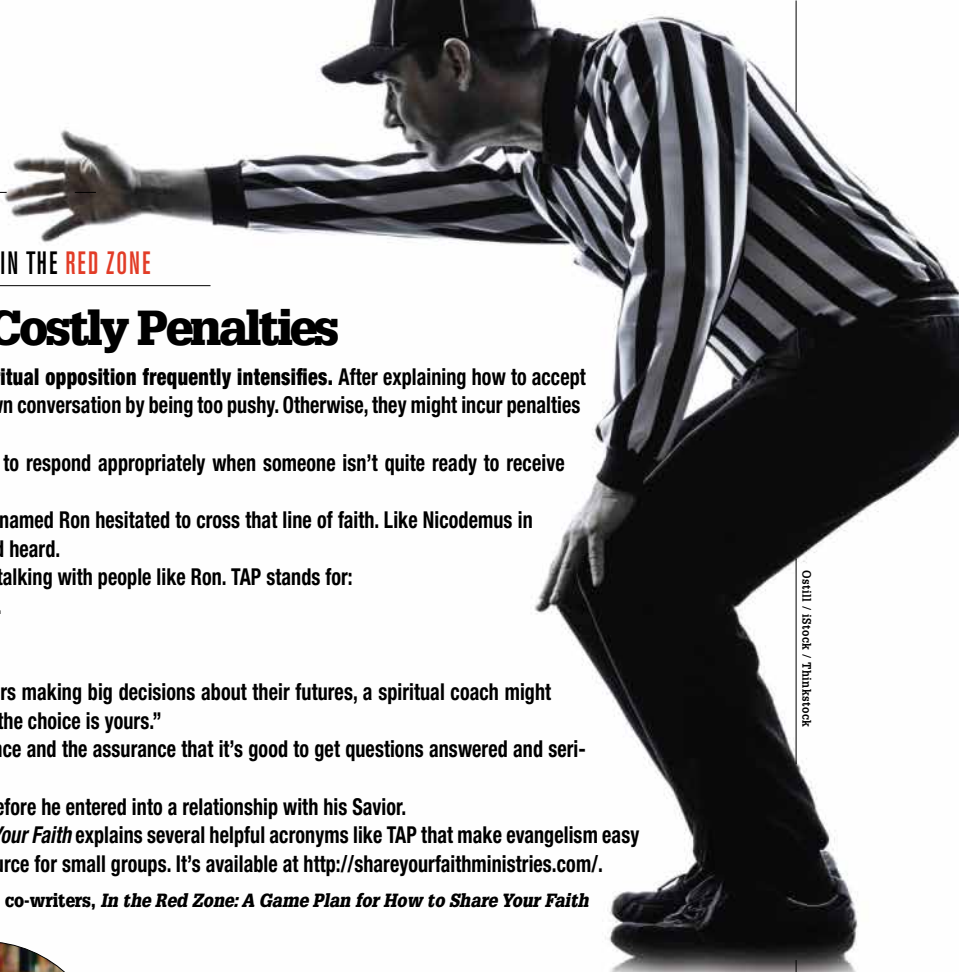
Just as a high school coach provides guidance for seniors making big decisions about their futures, a spiritual coach might tap a seeker on the shoulder and say, "I'm here to help, but the choice is yours."

Believers who use a gentle touch communicate acceptance and the assurance that it's good to get questions answered and seriously consider this life-altering choice.

With Ron, TAP took the pressure off, and it wasn't long before he entered into a relationship with his Savior.

Our book *In the Red Zone: A Game Plan for How to Share Your Faith* explains several helpful acronyms like TAP that make evangelism easy and effective. Discussion questions make it a valuable resource for small groups. It's available at <http://shareyourfaithministries.com/>.

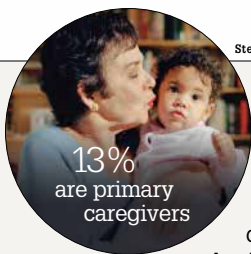
— KENT TUCKER and PATTI TOWNLEY-COVERT, co-writers, *In the Red Zone: A Game Plan for How to Share Your Faith*



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### ALL ABOUT GRANDPARENTS

## Fun Facts ABOUT Grandparents



13% are primary caregivers

Stewart Cohen / Blend Images / Thinkstock

### National Grandparents Day is September 7.

Which of these statistics about grandparents surprise you?<sup>1</sup>

- Forty-three percent became grandparents in their 50s, and 37 percent gained the title in their 40s.
- Grandparents lead

37 percent of U.S. households. By 2015, grandparents are expected to head

50 million households.

- Thirteen percent are primary caregivers.
- More than five percent of all U.S. households (or 6.2 million) are multigenerational.



10% have a tattoo

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- Nearly three-quarters of grandparents care for their grandchildren on a regular basis.

- Sixty percent have a full-time or part-time job.
- Twenty-three percent started their own business.

- More than half no longer carry a mortgage.

- Grandparents make 45 percent of the nation's cash contributions to non-profit organizations.

- Grandparents account for 42 percent of all consumer spending on gifts.

- Grandparents spend \$100 billion annually on entertainment and \$77 billion on travel.

- Sixty percent live close to their grandchildren, and 46 percent wish they could live even closer.

- Seventy percent see their adult children at least once a week, and 68 percent think being a grandparent brings them closer to their children.

- More than 80 percent have their grandchildren for part or all of their summer vacation.

- Sixty-six percent travel with their grandkids.

- Fifty-five percent play video games with their grandchildren.

- Ten percent have a tattoo.

- Sixty-three percent say they can do a better job caring for grandchildren than they did with their own children.

- Nearly three-quarters think being a grandparent is the single most important and satisfying thing in their life.

— DIANNE E. BUTTS, Pueblo, Colorado

### Note

1. <http://www.grandparents.com/food-and-leisure/did-you-know/surprising-facts-about-grandparents> (accessed January 28, 2014).



55% play video games

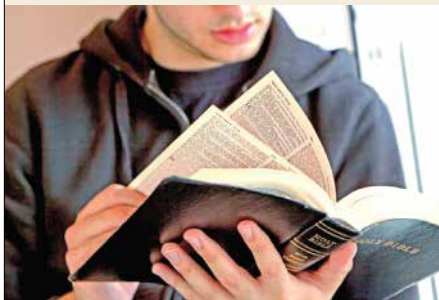
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UTHTRAX

# WONDERFULLY **HARD**

**Y**ou've run out of ways to convince your students that God has His best in the works for them. They have probably heard Jeremiah 29:11 so many times they can recite it. Yet their lives say, "I doubt it."

Looking for a fresh way to teach my students about God's best, I found Psalm 40:5: "O Lord my God, you have performed many wonders for us. Your plans for us are too numerous to list. You have no equal. If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds, I would never come to the end of them" (NLT).<sup>1</sup>



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Searching the Hebrew word for wonders, I discovered exactly what I expected: "wonderful," "marvelous," and "amazing." However, I didn't anticipate the last definition: "to be hard."

At first glance, "wonderful and hard" seems like an oxymoron. Yet as I ponder God's law of sowing and reaping, I get

it. When it comes to obtaining God's best, sometimes life has to be hard. Discipline, unselfishness, patience, and learning build a platform for holding God's wonders when they come. Without this foundation, the character of our lives will be unable to handle God's wonderful plan.

Maybe part of the reason our students aren't going for God's best is we've not given them the whole truth. Yes, God has plans to prosper them — to give them a hope and a future. But we usually stop there, thinking they just need to show up. We assume God's best simply happens. Isn't that how things usually work in our high-tech, instant-fix world?

Not in God's kingdom. Experiencing God's best can be wonderfully hard.

Now is the season for our students to stop passively waiting around for wonderful things to drop out of the sky. It's time to do the hard stuff. Get the foundation of their character set to handle the best God has for them. While they do their part, God will do His.

— LYNN COWELL, Charlotte, North Carolina

**Note**

1. Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

**AMY WRITING AWARDS**

## Inspire Your Latent Christian Writers to Disciple Through Secular Publications



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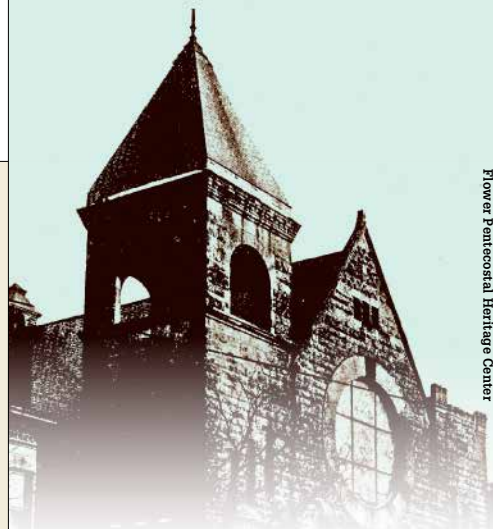
The Amy Foundation challenges Christians to write for local and national publications through the Amy Writing Award competition. Included in the eligibility rules:

- Articles must contain at least one verse of Scripture, quoted from an accepted version of the Bible.
- Articles must acknowledge the Bible as the source.
- Articles must appear in a non-religious publication, such as a city newspaper or national magazine.

Administered by *World* magazine, the Amy Writing Award competition offers an annual top prize of \$10,000, with \$5,000 for second place, \$4,000 for third, \$3,000 for fourth, \$2,000 for fifth, and up to 10 outstanding merit awards of \$1,000 each. News and feature articles that include original reporting receive preference. The contest is open to anyone, with no previous publishing experience required.

For more information, visit [AmyFound.org](http://AmyFound.org) and [WorldMag.com/AmyAwards](http://WorldMag.com/AmyAwards).

— DIANNE E. BUTTS, Pueblo, Colorado



Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center

PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVES

## ROOTS OF A PENTECOSTAL CENTURY

**T**he 19th century is remembered as the Great Century of missionary activity globally. As a celebration of that modern missionary movement, the World Missionary Conference took place in Edinburgh, Scotland, in June 1910. Hundreds of delegates came from around the globe to hear reports of gospel advances and to strategize reaching the entire world for Christ — a task many believed their generation would complete.

While scholars still discuss the lasting impact of this historic conference, a smaller missionary conference from that year should interest Pentecostals. The event in May 1910 at Stone Church in Chicago was a call to praying, giving, and going to spread the good news of Christ.

The Stone Church meeting played a big



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role in shaping Spirit-empowered missionary efforts under the Pentecostal banner throughout the 20th century. One of those early missionary pioneers, Minnie Abrams, summarized the assumptions of the time: “The baptism in the Holy Spirit should make us worldwide.”

Her pioneering efforts in India established some basic principles of early Pentecostal missions. First, western civilization is not equivalent to the kingdom of God, and missionaries have no monopoly on God’s grace. Second, contemporary methods should not take the place of deep reliance on the Holy Spirit. Third, missionary efforts bring together a diverse group as one unified body.

Providentially, it was at this same Stone Church in fall 1914, at the 2nd General Council of the Assemblies of God, that the young Fellowship committed to “the greatest evangelism this world has ever seen.”

There is no doubt the events at Stone Church in May 1910 and November 1914 transformed the nature of the missionary enterprise in ways that continue to impact global Christianity to this very day.

(For an account of the 1910 missionary conference at Stone Church, see “Pentecostal Missions and the Changing Character of Global Christianity” by Heather Curtis in *Assemblies of God Heritage* 2013, Volume 33.)

— BYRON KLAUS, president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

## LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM OLYMPIANS

### TURN SETBACKS INTO COMEBACKS

**T**hose who compete in Olympic games understand this wisdom from Henry Ford: “Life is a series of experiences, each of which makes us bigger, even though it is hard to realize this. For the world was built to develop character, and we must learn that the setbacks and griefs which we endure help us in our marching onward.”

Toward the end of World War II, a 23-year-old woman from Denmark named Lis Hartel was emerging as one of her country’s best equestrian riders. In 1944, she became pregnant and contracted polio. Although the illness left her almost totally paralyzed, she gave birth to a healthy baby girl. Determined to fight back and return to equestrian competition, Hartel began exercising.

At first, she could only lift one arm and use some thigh muscles. Then she crawled. And within eight months of her paralyzing polio diagnosis, she walked with crutches. Eventually, she got on a horse again. In spite of paralysis below the knees, she concentrated on how to ride and perform without the benefit of those muscles.

Though she needed help mounting and dismounting from her horse, Hartel competed for Denmark at the 1952 Olympics, winning a silver medal in a sport almost entirely dominated by healthy men.

This feat is even more remarkable considering equestrian dressage competition demands near-perfect interplay between horse and rider. The rider’s commands are supposed to be invisible — a nudge with the knee here, a tiny pull of the reins there. The format precludes loud, noisy commands.

Hartel continued riding, winning another silver medal in the 1956 Olympics.

Like this Olympian, you can turn a setback into a comeback.

Human will alone isn’t always enough. But Jesus assures us, “With God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26). Whatever you may face, and whatever the Lord calls you to do, trust Him to help you overcome every obstacle and win the victory.

— VICTOR M. PARACHIN, ordained minister and author, Tulsa, Oklahoma



#### DID YOU KNOW?

## Star-Spangled Banner

**O**n September 14, 1814, a 35-year-old lawyer and amateur poet named Francis Scott Key penned on the back of an envelope his rhyming reaction to the British bombardment of Baltimore.

Key’s ability to see the American flag still flying by the dawn’s early light inspired what became known as the “Star-Spangled Banner.”

Visitors to the Smithsonian Museum of American History can see the flag that flew over Fort McHenry when Key wrote our national anthem exactly 200 years ago. Boasting 15 stars and 15 stripes, the historic flag measures 42 feet by 30 feet. The flag’s immense size allowed Key to see it from his position 10 miles out on the sea following that night of gunfire.

The means by which a flag that large could fly on a pole 189 feet in the air is on display at Fort McHenry on Baltimore’s inner harbor. There, in one of the barracks, are two 8-by-8

oak timbers, joined as a cross. In 1958, National Park Service personnel discovered this cross-shaped support buried 9 feet in the ground near the entrance to Fort McHenry. Not only did the crosspiece help rangers locate the original site from which the Star-Spangled Banner flew, but it also answered the mystery of how such a large flag could fly in stormy weather without snapping the pole. This unseen wooden device provided a firm foundation for the symbol of our national freedom.

Similarly, the cross of Christ provides the foundation by which our faith is rooted and supported.

— GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS, Mercer Island, Washington

FROM BOOMERS TO ZOOMERS

IN THE LOOP



A group of entrepreneurs recently created **Loop**<sup>1</sup>, a device similar to Wii that keeps track of outdoor physical activity.

Over the last three decades, childhood obesity rates have tripled.<sup>2</sup> Loop capitalizes on the popularity of digital gaming systems and the push to create healthier activities for young people. Participants engage in outdoor activities and earn points, which are cashed in for more gaming options. A social network component

makes it possible for players to interact with friends and make online connections.

Church leaders can learn from such innovations by finding ways to address today's obesity epidemic. We shouldn't leave this to the government or corporate world to solve. We can create interactive programs for children and youth to move them away from video screens and toward each other. We can also join them in meaningful outdoor activities, from fishing to throwing a football.

Don't worry if you're not athletic. Your very presence is all that matters. Besides, you might give the students something to laugh about — not to mention a memory of you that will last long after the event.

Notes

1. PushStart, "Loop Outdoor Gaming Platform," [http://www.pushstartcreative.com/blog/2013/08/loop-gaming/].
2. Let's Move: America's Move to Raise a Generation of Healthier Kids, "Learn the Facts," [http://www.letsmove.gov/learn-facts/epidemic-childhood-obesity].

THE MENTORING GAP

**What do Millennials seek?** A 2013 survey by LifeCourse Associates<sup>1</sup>, a consulting firm that provides corporate America with demographic data on the generations, reveals a disparity between the expectations and realities of the Millennial generation (a term that generally refers to individuals born after 1980).

The poll of workers in the insurance industry reveals a wide gap between the desire for career advancement (81 percent) and the actual opportunity to advance (11 percent) among Millennials. The report also shows that while 94 percent want rewards for achieving goals, only 52 percent get rewards.

Perhaps the most interesting gap is in the area of mentoring. While 81 percent of Millennials long to work in a company that provides mentoring, only 8 percent receive mentoring. Millennials surveyed were 33 percent more likely than Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964), and 24 percent more likely than Generation Xers (those born between 1965 and 1980) to want hands-on guidance by their supervisors.

I wonder whether this 73 percent mentoring gap has something to say to church leaders. If Millennials seek mentoring, are we providing it? If not, shouldn't the church find ways to do so?

Millennials in the survey were 32 percent more likely than Baby Boomers and 18 percent more likely than Generation Xers to have a college education. How can we keep this more highly educated generation on the bench when they are begging the coach to help them develop the necessary skills and put them in the game?

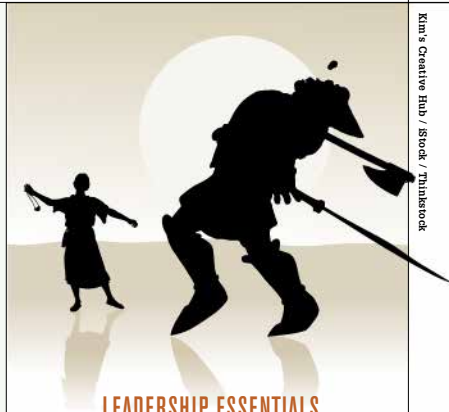
Note

1. LifeCourse Associates, "The Millennial Insurance Gap," http://www.lifecourse.com/media/articles/lib/2013/03282013.html (accessed October 22, 2013).

— RANDY WALLS, D.Min., director of continuing education, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri



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LEADERSHIP ESSENTIALS

No Guts, No Glory!

support **Open Doors**, an effective and powerful ministry to the persecuted church.

Brother Andrew started this outreach decades ago. The author of *God's Smuggler*, one of the all-time

best-selling books, is now 85 years old.

Having read *God's Smuggler* in the late 1960s, I pay attention to anything that mentions Brother Andrew. So when



*Open Doors* offered to send me his latest book (co-authored by Al Janssen), I accepted.

*No Guts, No Glory!* is 141 pages of spiritual insight and challenge. Focused on the confrontation between David and Goliath, it carefully unpacks the Old Testament story like no other Bible resource I have encountered.

The book has 36 brief chapters, organized in four sections: The Problem, Introducing the Man of God, Preparing for Battle, and The Battle. I have been reading it devotionally, completing a chapter a day.

This short book is an excellent resource for sermons and lessons, personal devotions, and individual or small group study. Published by Open Doors International, it is available only at their website's online store ([www.opendoorsusa.org](http://www.opendoorsusa.org)).

— DAVE VEERMAN, Naperville, Illinois



ericmetaxas.com



WEBSITES AND MORE

## CONVERSATIONS ON THE EXAMINED LIFE

**E**ric Metaxas is a busy man. He is a best-selling author with works including *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* and *7 Men and their Secret of Greatness*. He writes and presents editorials for radio and the Internet. And he is the founder and host of “Socrates in the City,” a monthly online forum that addresses contemporary topics. According to the website, the program is designed to “create a forum to encourage busy and successful professionals in thinking about the bigger questions in life.”

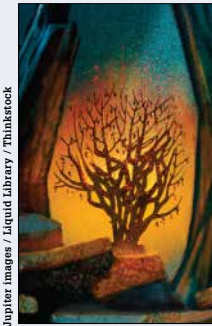
Each event features a monthly guest spot or interview, followed by questions from the audience. Guests have included Os Guinness, Francis Collins, John Lennox, Mike Huckabee, Stephen Meyer, Lauren Winner, N.T. Wright, Mosab Hassan Yousef, and Malcolm Gladwell.

Archived programs are available at [socratesinthecity.com](http://socratesinthecity.com). For more information about Metaxas or to subscribe to his newsletter, visit [ericmetaxas.com](http://ericmetaxas.com).

— DAVE VEERMAN, Naperville, Illinois

### Next time in *Enrichment* **MONEY AND MINI\$TRY: PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP**

**North American Christians** live amidst historically unprecedented levels of affluence. However, in the past number of years the United States has experienced a deep recession and a slow recovery. With giving down even among Bible-believing Christians, it’s important for those who earn their living from preaching the gospel to manage church finances and personal finances wisely. In this issue of *Enrichment*, we will explore time-tested biblical principles that will help guide Christian leaders during these turbulent and uncertain financial times. The issue will address such questions as: What does the Bible teach about wealth and stewardship? Will believing in Jesus Christ make you rich? In acquiring wealth, how should Christians use it? Why has giving decreased and what practical steps can Christian leaders take to help reverse this trend? In tight times, what are best practices for stretching ministry dollars? Because helping the poor is a core moral obligation for Christians and churches, what are some time-tested ways of helping the poor that do more good than harm?



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### Burning Bushes and Other Lessons for Living From Moses

By Victor M. Parachin



**Although he lived thousands of years ago**, Moses continues to be a source of inspiration, providing important lessons for today’s Christian leaders. Consider these four lessons from Moses.



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### Integrity: It’s About People

By Nick Fox



**We typically think integrity** is what we do when no one is around but God. But sometimes it is about what we do when everybody is around.



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### Passing the Pastoral Baton

By Tim McGraw



**How can we avoid the pitfalls of poor transitions?** How can we better manage these seasons of change? Moses and Joshua provide a good working model.



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### Expository Sermon: “What’s It Going to Take to Be Holy?”

By James D. Hernando



**What does it take to be holy?** Peter summarizes his teaching on holiness in three simple words.



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### Speaking in Tongues: Its Essence, Purposes, and Use (Part 1)

By George M. Flattery



**This four-part series on speaking in tongues** examines the practical issues on the uses of speaking in tongues in connection with the baptism in the Holy Spirit, in communication in the services of the church, in times of worship, and in private prayer.



# In What Part of Your Ministry Are You Failing?

BY CAL LEMON

**P**erhaps you have a stellar reputation as an empathetic caregiver who quietly reads Scripture at the bedside of a sick or dying parishioner. Yet people may also know you as a mind-numbing, wake-me-up-when-the-sermon-is-over preacher.

You may parse Hebrew verbs but cannot decipher the myriad rows of numbers slathered across a spreadsheet for the upcoming annual church business meeting.

Maybe you believe a “strategic plan” in your ministry is an increase in your housing allowance and the installation of a new double sink in the women’s restroom.

Regardless of your quasi-divine reputation, look down. You do have feet of clay. While you excel at some theological tasks, you probably struggle in other areas. Consider this question: In what part of your ministry are you failing?

## THE SELF-AWARE SHEPHERD

Clergy are notorious for their personal discomfort with the subject of failure.

The idea of failing in any area of ministry somehow seems unbiblical. When face-to-face with failure, spiritual leaders have a default recording between their ears that cues up the words, “We are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:37).

Yet we easily forget the passage of Scripture that says Christ’s “power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

The abundant life preached from our



A self-aware shepherd should follow these three, pragmatic steps toward accurately identifying specific ministry skills he or she is lacking.

pulpits often paints the servant of God with a patina of perfectionism. Sure, the minister may not excel at every detail of the job description. But failing is not an option — at least not one that is privately or publicly acknowledged.

An admission of weakness seems out of place in leadership. The persistent illusion that the minister should not need ministry plagues spiritual leaders. “More than conquerors” is the only choice — every day and in every ministerial situation.

This closet collusion between clergy and laity can produce an unproductive and stilted ministry. When everyone quietly accepts the pastor’s floundering, and the shepherd quietly accepts the silence of the lambs, the body of Christ ultimately suffers atrophy and remains anemic.

Charles Caleb Colton, an English cleric and graduate of Eaton and King’s College said: “To dare to live alone is the rarest courage; since there are many who had rather meet their bitterest enemy in the field, than their own hearts in their closet.”

Yet in our hearts — in those interminable hours in the middle of the night — we must finally confront the fact that we have failed and are failing.

Therefore, the mark of the self-aware shepherd is someone who has the courage to step off the well-lit dais in the sanctuary into the darkness of honesty and embrace his or her limitations and resulting failures.

## NAMING AND CLAIMING FAILURE

Without apology or intimidation, the self-aware shepherd can openly admit to the mirror: “I know my gifts, and I also know the areas of ministry where I am not competent.”

To get to this internal transparency, the self-aware shepherd must take the following three, pragmatic steps toward accurately identifying specific ministry skills that are lacking.

**1. Make a list of all the duties in your present ministry.** Be specific (e.g., providing marital counseling, visiting elderly parishioners in retirement facilities, conducting a weekly staff meeting, etc.).

Next to each duty, rate your performance from 1 to 10. One represents a responsibility your ministry community expects of you even though you have no skills or interest. A 10 represents what you love about the ministry. You probably expend lots of time and energy in these areas because you enjoy them and

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excel in them. Any score of 10 should immediately make you smile.

Once you finish this quick numerical assessment, make two lists. You may want to use the headings, "Ministry Skills Where I Excel" and "Ministry Skills Where I Fail." Keep both lists in a private place.

Regularly look at each list, and start taking steps to make the "fail" list shorter.

**2. Surround yourself with friends and colleagues you can trust.** Meet with these confidants individually in a private setting and ask this question: "What skill sets demonstrate I am engaged and adept, and what ministry skills do I seem to lack or show little interest in pursuing?"

Keep notes from the conversations. Periodically check with these people to ask whether they see positive changes in your ministry.

**3. If the leadership in your ministry conducts an annual performance review, take full advantage of this organizational asset.**

When you have been "around the block" in your ministry for years, you know the silent parishioner is the greatest threat. This person consistently warms a pew, smiles, and pumps your hand in the foyer but rarely offers affirmation. Consequently, you may wonder about this person's support of you and your ministry.

An annual performance review provides a ministry-wide, comprehensive process to affirm your gifts and appropriately list your challenges.

These three suggestions are not exhaustive. Consider other ways for getting accurate feedback about your strengths and weaknesses.

### THE FREEDOM OF FAILURE

Failure is an intimidating word in the ministry.

Your life of serving is all about success and building the Kingdom. We feast at banquets that serve up huge platters of overcoming victory. Yet effectiveness in ministry requires honest faith.

Repentance is an honest confession that we have willfully missed the mark. Sanctification is an honest commitment to be holy in an unholy world. And a willingness to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit is an honest admission that we are powerless to follow Christ in our own strength. We teach and preach that no one can receive salvation without first admitting he or she is spiritually lost.

The freedom of owning our failures provides the minister with three assets.

**1. Acknowledging our failures creates**

We are all growing into the image of Christ. This spiritual journey takes time, confession, restoration — and failure.

**credibility to speak as God's representatives.**

Perfect people are not believable. Preachers tell the good news to people immersed in their own bad news. The wounded are more readily willing to receive this message from wounded healers.

**2. Failure shows others that discipleship is not a destination, but a journey.**

Do you know Christ as Lord of your life in a more intimate and powerful way today than when you first made a public confession of faith? We are all growing into the image of Christ. This spiritual journey takes time, confession, restoration — and failure. Without the reality of failure, there is no journey because we would already have arrived.

**3. Our confession of failure makes us malleable clay on the Potter's wheel.**

Failure places us in the stanza of "Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me. Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me."

There is spiritual freedom in owning our failure. ☒



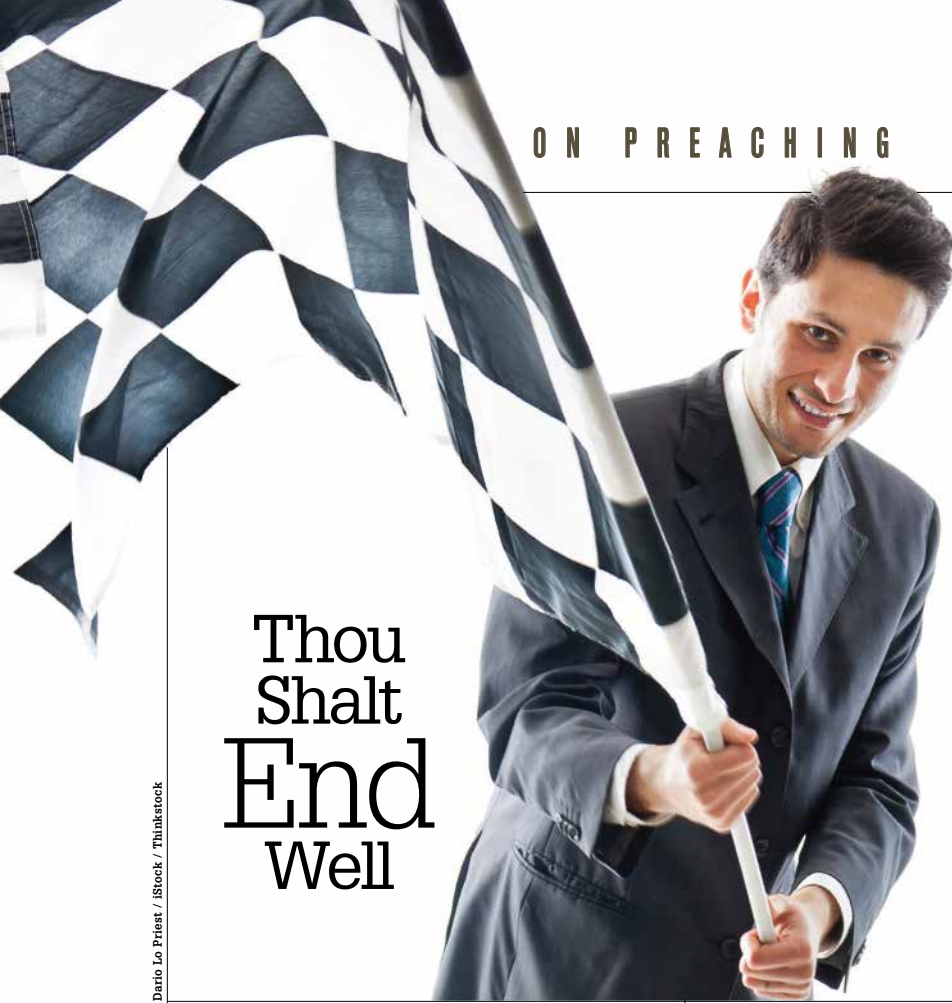
**CAL LEMON, D.Min.**, president, Executive Enrichment, Inc., Springfield, Missouri, a corporate education and consulting firm.

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**"Here's the cause of our 'summer slump.' Someone set the thermostat on 'lukewarm'!"**



# Thou Shalt End Well

Dario Lo Priest / iStock / Thinkstock

BY DOUG GREEN

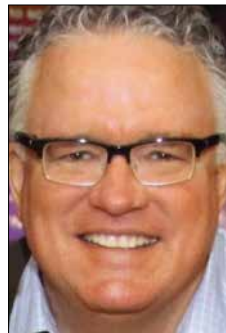
**H**ave you ever heard Mark Twain's take on sermon brevity?<sup>1</sup> He valued it. Once he listened to a preacher for 5 minutes, and, subsequently, was ready to contribute \$50. After 10 minutes more

of the sermon, he reduced the amount of his contribution to \$25. After 30 minutes more, he cut the sum to \$5. At the end of an entire hour of oratory, when the plate was passed, he stole \$2.

In light of dwindling attention spans, I give to you the following prohibitions when it's time to end your sermon. I'm right there with you, confessing my transgressions and asking for help, hoping to end each sermon well. I implore you to join me and walk the path of thoughtful preaching, especially when it comes to the sermon conclusion.

## THE AUTHORIZED VERSION OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF SERMON CONCLUSIONS

**1. Thou shalt not fail to prepare the**



Consider these 10 prohibitions when it's time to end your sermon.

**conclusion in the study.** It should not take much time to prepare your conclusion, but it's time you cannot jettison. Write the body of your sermon first. Then write your introduction, and finally, write your conclusion. Make it the cherry atop your week's composition. Much like a marathon runner who won't quit moments from the finish line, don't skip this step. Finish strong in the study, and you'll finish strong in the pulpit.

**2. Thou shalt not introduce new information.** Summarize what you've said, but do not add new points — otherwise, it's not a conclusion, but an extended movement of the main body. Hammer in what you've started with conviction and purpose. When you make a whole new point, you demonstrate a lack of discipline, which is frustrating and confusing for the audience. In the same way the runner sprints for the finish line, once you see the end, focus and finish fast.

**3. Thou shalt not manipulate your congregation.** Using emotion for the sake of emotion or because you know it will get you a better response at the altar is not an act of kindness. You should preach unto others as you would have them preach unto you. Even if you can trick others into believing your manipulation is an authentic spiritual response, you cannot trick God. Preach with authenticity, and reject exploitation.

**4. Thou shalt not abandon the big idea.** The big idea rules every part of the sermon, including the conclusion. The big idea is the point of the sermon — one sentence taken directly from the biblical text. It is reflected in every point. It's the one thing you'll want the audience to remember days later — the clear bull's-eye, not the scattered buckshot. Thus, with your final opportunity to proclaim it, do so. You'll not regret keeping your conclusion simple.

**5. Thou shalt not build your sermon to support your conclusion.** You know the temptation: You have found a great story, and now all you need is a sermon to get you to your great story. I've done it. You've done it. We know it happens. However, that's not how it's supposed to work. The conclusion serves the sermon; the sermon serves the big idea; and the big idea serves the biblical text — not the other way around.

**6. Thou shalt not bypass the opportunity to call for commitment.** Every sermon ought to lead the preacher and the congregation



into the presence of God where a challenge is given, a decision is made, and a life is changed. Spirit-empowered preachers should never lose the opportunity to create space for the supernatural. Always call for a commitment to Christ, never missing the moment to respond to the message of God's Word. If you preach the Bible, you should expect the Holy Spirit to stir the hearts of those He loves.

**7. Thou shalt not end abruptly.** Abrupt endings are usually traced to poor sermon preparation. The definition of abrupt is when you stop speaking while the congregation's mind is still going. It's awkward and unsettling. It's not the way you want to finish. Years ago, I was listening to a sermon and the ....

**8. Thou shalt not end on the negative.** The gospel has two sides: bad news and good news. While it's vital to confront, not skirt, the bad news in order to set up the announcement of the good news, never end on the bad news. Conclude with the answer that Jesus brings. End with the hope for the troubles of this life. End pointing others to Jesus, the One who saves and gives faith for tomorrow.

**9. Thou shalt not end with an apology.** I've learned long ago that I shouldn't apologize for my effort, as feeble as it might be, to preach the Word of God. Over the years, as long as I am faithful to preach the scriptural text, I've discovered that what I thought was really good was not always what the Holy Spirit used to change someone's heart. Conversely, what I thought was not good was often what the Holy Spirit used for change. I do my best to be prepared to stand in the pulpit, but I know it's not up to me to do what only God can do. I don't apologize. I leave it to Him, trusting He will use even me. In my weakness, He is strong.

**10. Thou shalt not circle the airport.** Finally. In conclusion. One more thing. As we wrap it up today. Let me tell you one more time. As we end. Drawing to a close, etc., etc., etc. When the time comes to land the plane, like a good pilot, prepare the audience for touchdown, and quickly put it on the tarmac. Your goal as a communicator is bringing the listeners to a destination. You will never spend a Monday wishing you had spoken longer, said a few more things, or circled the airport a few more times. You'll always be content with an on-time landing.

The sermon conclusion provides a vital function. As you prepare it, remember you

When the time comes to land the plane, like a good pilot, prepare the audience for touchdown, and quickly put it on the tarmac.

bring finality to your message by driving home the main idea into the hearts of your hearers, giving them opportunity to respond to God's truth.

Of course, in your conclusion, you can summarize, give an illustration, quote a poem, ask a question, sing a hymn, give final instructions, or some other creative option, but I find the best conclusion is the one I keep short by simply restating the big idea with force and conviction. Because the weight of my preaching rests squarely on my exposition of the biblical text (i.e., the main body of the sermon), my conclusion is best when fewer words are spoken.

In brevity, I seek to end well. After all, we want the Mark Twains of the world to tune in and hear the gospel. 📖

**Note**

1. Cyril Clemens, *My Cousin Mark Twain* (New York, NY: Haskell House Publishers, 1974).



**DOUG GREEN, D.Min.**, founding pastor, North Hills Church, Brea, California

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**"Clothes torn, spat upon, bruises and scars, shrieking cries, constant harassment, unwillingness to change ... yeah, I've suffered for the Lord serving in the nursery, too."**

# Making the Most of the ASSEMBLIES OF GOD



a very lonely ministry. Then one day the late Wendell Smith, founder of The City Church in Seattle, made me realize he stood miles ahead of me as a networker.

Independents must be serious about networking. Otherwise, they won't know anybody. Denominational pastors can fall asleep on networking because the network always seeks them out. Missionaries call for services, a monthly news packet arrives in the mail, the retirement plan beckons for their savings, and a host of other agencies appear in turn to call for their attention. In the process, networking can seem superfluous. But the same easy access to denominational resources that can make us lazy networkers can also make us prodigious ones.

## START WITH YOUR SECTION

As you probably know, the AG organizes itself by sections, districts, and regions, as well as by ministry focus. Your most important connection to the Fellowship may occur at the sectional level.

If the business of such meetings seems uninteresting to you, remember that you aren't there for the formal part, but rather to connect with other members of the section. Take a half-hour with the district directory to learn the names and faces of every minister in your section before you attend the next meeting. When you already know people's names and faces, it is much easier to connect with them. Make a special effort to greet each minister at the meeting by name.

Obviously, learning names and going to meetings only gets you started. Follow up by putting an appointment on your calendar to call every minister in the section at least once a year to ask how they are doing and how you can pray for them. End the call by praying for them. Let them know that for the next week you'll continue praying for them every day. At the next meeting ask them how the issue you prayed about has developed. It may amaze you how much you start caring about people you have prayed for every day, even for just a week.

As you begin to know the members of your section, invite a few of them to join you in activities of mutual interest outside formal ministry. Sharing something other than ministry can help create deep friendships. After all, it's true what the old adage says about all work and no play. The friendships you form with other ministers offer the most important

BY JOSEPH CASTLEBERRY

**B**elonging to a denomination or fellowship can become a real stumbling block to networking. I've been an Assemblies of God guy my whole life. I am part of the fourth generation of AG adherents in my family. I grew up attending Royal Rangers and AG youth camps. I graduated from an AG university and received credentials by age 20. I spent 20 years as a missionary with Assemblies of God World Missions, and I've now worked for a dozen years as an AG college administrator. Few can claim a more devoted AG pedigree. I even lived nine years in Springfield, Mo., and consider it my hometown.

I am an insider. Yet all of these things that might count as a benefit to me, I now consider loss if they turn me into a lazy networker.

I used to think independent pastors stood at a disadvantage to people like me in terms of networking. I assumed they must carry out



The same easy access to denominational resources that can make us lazy networkers can also make us prodigious ones.



benefit of denominational affiliation.

In addition to connection within the section, ministers should establish relationships in areas of church type (urban, rural, suburban, etc.) or ministry specialty (youth, children, etc.) within their district.

Pastors may feel more in common with colleagues outside their section for a variety of reasons. But the idea that we do not need relationships with proximate pastors does not negate the reality that they need us. Becoming known in the section as a genuine person who cares will inevitably open up opportunities for further ministry.

### **DISTRICT AND GENERAL COUNCIL ACTIVITIES**

Many pastors adopt an idea from the business world that they should try to encounter at least one new idea while attending conferences. Perhaps an equally important goal is establishing at least one new relationship.

To get the most out of district council, plan ahead. Call a few friends, and set up appointments to connect with them during a meal or break time. In addition to meeting with friends, take the opportunity to connect with people you admire but have not yet met. When you see them, introduce yourself. Ask if you could visit them for a half-hour at their office and ask for their advice about some issue in your own ministry. Even pastors of large churches will usually make time for a colleague who has travelled a couple of hours for a previously arranged, half-hour opportunity to pick their brain. If they agree, promise to contact their assistant to set up an appointment. Bring along some small gift to show your appreciation. The advice — and enhanced relationship — will be well worth your time.

Some districts have formal mentorship programs to help young ministers gain personalized coaching and professional formation. Whether you are a potential mentor or coach or a less-experienced minister, ask your district office whether such a program is available.

### **LEVERAGE YOUR MISSIONARY RELATIONSHIPS**

Every Assemblies of God minister should participate in AG World Missions and financially support our missionaries. Our network of churches around the world and our ability to connect with them on a personal basis has no precedent in all of church history.

The idea that we do not need relationships with proximate pastors does not negate the reality that they need us.



Make the most of it.

Set up a regular Skype appointment with at least a few of your missionaries to hear their latest stories and pray for them. Don't just wait for a newsletter to come. Visit them on the field to see their work and meet the local pastors with whom they work. Go to help them, and just as importantly, to learn from them. Collect direct experiences from outstanding ministries around the world, and use them to improve your own ministry.

### **AG COLLEGES, CHARITIES, AND SERVICES**

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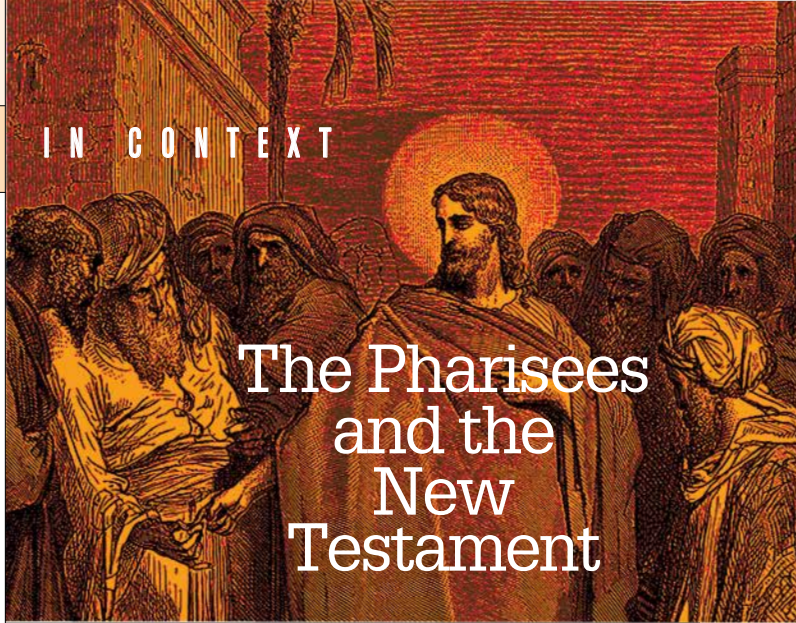
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**JOSEPH CASTLEBERRY** is president of Northwest University in Kirkland, Washington. He is the author of *Your Deepest Dream: Discovering God's Vision for Your Life* and *The Kingdom Net: Learning to Network Like Jesus*. Follow him on Twitter at @DrCastleberry and at [www.facebook.com/Joseph.Castleberry](http://www.facebook.com/Joseph.Castleberry).

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## The Pharisees and the New Testament

BY MARC TURNAGE

**M**ost students of the Gospels are familiar with the Jewish party of the Pharisees. Christian history remembers them as the opponents of Jesus, even though the Gospels are unanimous that the party that handed Jesus over to Pilate did not include Pharisees (Luke 19: 47,48; 23:1,10; Mark 11:18; 15:1; Matthew 27:1,2; John 18:28; 19:6).<sup>1</sup>

The Gospels define the body that handed Jesus over to Pilate as composed of the chief priests, their scribes, and the Sadducees, led by the high priest Caiaphas (Luke 22:54,66; 23:1; John 18:13,14,19,28).<sup>2</sup> They are typically identified as hypocrites who fixated on legalism and works-based righteousness, the very attitudes Jesus came to stand against. However, some of our ideas about the Pharisees may not be completely accurate.

During the Protestant Reformation, terms such as *law*, *grace*, *works*, and *faith* became buzzwords of the Church. The Reformers framed their struggle with the Catholic Church through their distorted historical lens of the Early Church's struggle with Judaism. The Reformers had very little direct contact with Judaism; therefore, Judaism, Jews, and the Pharisees became abstract ideas and concepts within their theological discourse.<sup>3</sup>

Within the Reformation discourse, the Pharisees became negative representations of Church attitudes and actions having nothing to do with the historical Pharisees. In other words, the concept of Pharisees became more associated with inner-Christian polemics than historical or modern Judaism.

A more recent example of this phenomenon is a popular drink that appeared on menus in the 19th



With the resources and data available today, we do not have to accept the historically flawed presentation of the Pharisees.

century. Made with rum and coffee, the drink was served in a tall glass with whipped cream to hide the smell of alcohol. To passersby, it looked like a cappuccino. This permitted patrons to hide the midday drinking from friends and neighbors. The drink was called a "Pharisee."<sup>4</sup>

Christians today still call certain unethical or hypocritical people and practices Pharisees or Pharisaic, using these terms in disparaging ways. The political overtones have faded through the centuries. Yet the negative stereotype attached to the Pharisees affects how Christians read about them in the Gospels and Acts. At the least, this produces poor and faulty interpretations of the biblical text. More problematically, it continues to foster Christian anti-Jewish attitudes that penetrate Christian preaching and teaching. So who were the historical Pharisees?

### THE PHARISEES: A HISTORY

The Pharisees appear in the ancient writings of the first century Jewish historian Josephus, the New Testament, and in a few places within the Talmud. The name "Pharisee" seemingly derived from the Hebrew word *parush* (שורפל), which means "to be separated."

In Hebrew, this term carries a negative connotation, which is why the Pharisees themselves generally avoided using the word.<sup>5</sup> Like the term Protestant, the name Pharisees originated with their opponents. The pejorative connotation did not cross over into Greek, as both Paul (Acts 23:6; Philippians 3:5) and Josephus (*Life* 10) refer to themselves as Pharisees in Greek.

The Greek New Testament identifies Nicodemus (known in Jewish sources as Naqdimon ben Gurion) and Rabban Gamaliel the Elder as Pharisees (John 3:1; Acts 5:34). Likewise, Josephus identified the grandson of Rabban Gamaliel the Elder, Rabbi Shimon ben Gamaliel, as a Pharisee (*Life* 191), as well as Samaias and Pollion, two prominent Pharisees who lived under Herod the Great (*Antiquities* 15: 4,370).<sup>6</sup>

The origins of the Pharisees begin during the second century B.C. Josephus first mentions them in connection with the career of Jonathan the Hasmonean (152–142 B.C.; *Antiquities* 13:171). His first mention of them in connection with historical events dates to the reign of John Hyrcannus (134–104 B.C.). The Pharisees rejected John's identification of both priest and king, so Hyrcannus aligned himself with the enemies of the Pharisees — the Sadducees. The Pharisees and Sadducees both sought to influence the political workings of the Hasmonean government. Alexander Janneus,



son of John Hyrcannus, crucified 800 Pharisees for their opposition to his government. Yet on his deathbed, he instructed his wife Salome Alexandra to heed their counsel. So, during her reign, the Pharisees exercised great political influence and power. With Rome's conquest of Judea and the rise of Herod the Great, the focus of the Pharisees shifted from politics to areas of religious practice. Josephus reports that during the time of Herod the Great, there were about six thousand Pharisees in the land of Israel. This number represents those who undertook to "consume their everyday food in ritual purity."

### THE PHARISEES: THEIR BELIEFS

This brings us back to the origin of the pejorative nickname "Pharisee." As we said, the word means "to be separated." Within Jewish sources, we encounter groups functioning in the first century called *Haverim* (*Havurah* singular). These groups were particularly fastidious about ritual purity, especially pure vessels and eating meals in a state of ritual purity. In fact, for their meals, they assumed a degree of ritual purity required of priests eating in the Temple, which was not required outside the Temple. This requirement of table purity excluded the regular person from the table of the *Havurah*. They received upon themselves a stricter purity code not accepted by the remainder of Israel, which separated them from the people. This separation caused by their strict purity led to their identification as Pharisees (cf. *m. Hagigah* 3:7).

The Pharisees did not insist that everyone should be a full member of their community; rather, they reflected a broad stream of piety based upon certain points of agreed consensus, which gave them widespread support. Josephus relates that the whole nation followed the Pharisees. Their influence came through their positions within the synagogues throughout the land of Israel.<sup>7</sup> In the synagogues, they instructed the people in their interpretation of the Torah, which they viewed as a developing dynamic entity that comprised the written Scripture and their oral tradition around it. They sought to provide accurate and exact interpretations of the Torah, while also making it relevant, vibrant, and applicable to the current life situation of the people. In this, they were no different than a pastor who seeks to make the ancient Scriptures relevant to his or her congregation by giving it contemporary meaning and application.

The Pharisees frequently taught the people using story parables. In fact, outside of the Gospels, story parables only appear in the teachings



The negative stereotype attached to the Pharisees affects how Christians read about them in the Gospels and Acts.

of the Sages (Pharisees).<sup>8</sup> They embraced Jewish redemptive hopes and believed in the bodily resurrection of the dead, as well as the world to come. They also accepted that divine will and human freedom existed simultaneously in the world.

We should think of the Pharisees as a movement, a stream of piety, with subgroups that did not all agree on a specific topic. For example, two of the primary camps, or schools (houses) in the first century, were those of Hillel and Shammai. A group called the Hasidim existed among the broader Pharisaic movement. These pious, sometimes wonder-working, individuals had a tense relationship with the Pharisaic establishment. So did an activist group Josephus called the "fourth philosophy," affiliated with the Pharisees. The Pharisaic "peace movement" disagreed with their religious-political activism and coined the phrase "kingdom of heaven" as an antislogan against those who sought to bring about God's reign by force.<sup>9</sup>

The theology of the New Testament emerges from the world of Pharisaic theology. While some sectarian Jewish elements appear in the writings of Paul, John, and the author of Hebrews, for the most part, the theological worldview of Jesus and Paul was Pharisaic. In fact, in the earliest rabbinic commentary on the Book of Exodus, we find Sages (Pharisees), who predated the New Testament, saying that salvation comes through faith.<sup>10</sup>

As communicators of the biblical text we have a responsibility to do the work in order to properly place the Bible within its historical, cultural, and linguistic milieu. The best intentions cannot save edifices built upon poor foundations. With the resources and data available to us today, we do not have to accept the historically flawed presentation of the Pharisees, nor do we need to continue to perpetuate a presentation that undermines the historical reality of the Incarnation by driving a wedge between Jesus and His Jewish contemporaries. By understanding the historical Pharisees, their faith, piety, and hermeneutics, we can better understand Jesus and Paul. In fact, failing to do so permanently removes us from Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate Son of God. ☒

### Notes

1. The Gospels are clear that Jesus' actions during His last week in Jerusalem were deliberately directed against the chief priests, their scribes, and the Sadducean leaders (Luke 19:45,46; 20:1-40). His popularity with the masses protected Him against the chief priests, led by Caiaphas, who sought to destroy Him (Luke 19:47,48; 20:19; 22:2; John 18:14,28). The Book of Acts likewise portrays this same group as the opponents of the disciples in Jerusalem (Acts 4:1-7), who, like their Master, enjoyed the favor of the Jewish masses. The chief priests of the first century belonged to the party of the Sadducees (cf. Acts 4:6; 5:17; Josephus, *Antiquities* 20:199; and *b. Pesahim* 57a). See also Marc

- Turnage, "The Enemies of Jesus," *Enrichment* (Spring 2012), 112–114.
- The mention of the supreme Jewish court, the Sanhedrin, in Matthew 26:59 and Mark 15:1 have led many to assume the presence of the Pharisees at Jesus' inquiry; however, if the Sanhedrin was in session at Jesus' inquiry, Caiaphas only needed to assemble 23 judges of his Sadducean friends to condemn Jesus to death (m. Sanhedrin 4:1). The entire council did not have to pass judgment. Caiaphas could have easily orchestrated such a group since the Sadducees were the dominant party on the Jewish court. The fact that Jesus was crucified suggests that He was not condemned by the Sanhedrin, but rather an inquiry sought grounds to hand Him over to Pilate, allowing Rome to do the dirty work. One of the most telling facts that the Sanhedrin did not condemn Jesus is that He was not buried in one of the two graves reserved for those executed by order of the Sanhedrin (m. Sanhedrin 6:5). According to Josephus, the high priest Ananus, the grandson of Annas (John 18:13), a Sadducee, convened a session of the Sanhedrin apparently engineered with Sadducees in order to condemn James, the brother of Jesus, and other Christians to be stoned. Upon hearing of this illegal session of the court, the Pharisees protested to the Roman governor and Agrippa II that this was done without their knowledge (*Antiquities* 20:199–203). Josephus describes a relationship between the chief priests and Sadducees, who were hostile to Jesus' movement, and the Pharisees who sought to defend and protect this movement, which mirrors the presentation found in the Book of Acts (4:1–7; 5:17–39; 22:30 through 23:10). Cf. David Flusser, *Jesus* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2001), 146–148; and Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1974).
  - This is also true of how they interpreted and discoursed about the concepts of "law," "circumcision," and "works." See the excellent work of Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law* (*Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).
  - S. Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 76.

The theology of the New Testament emerges from the world of Pharisaic theology.

- The group that Josephus and the New Testament refer to as Pharisees, which reflects a broad movement, is referred to within Hebrew sources as the Sages or the Sages of Israel.
- Josephus undoubtedly referred to the great Sages Shammai and Hillel.
- In the land of Israel during the first century, the synagogue was primarily a place for the reading, studying, and interpretation of the Torah. The few first century synagogues excavated in the land of Israel were built with the architectural focus of the building at the center where the reader/interpreter could teach. These earlier structures do not reflect the later practice of orientation toward Jerusalem when prayer became the central focus of synagogue worship.
- Cf. R. Steven Notley and Ze'ev Safrai, *Parables of the Sages: Jewish Wisdom from Jesus to Rav Ashi* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2011), see especially 1–70; Brad Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1998).
- David Flusser, "The Image of the Masada Martyrs in Their Own Eyes and in the Eyes of Their Contemporaries," in *Judaism of the Second Temple Period, Volume 2: The Jewish Sages and Their Literature* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 76–112; idem, *Jesus* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1998), 104–112, and 258–275.
- Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael* on Exodus 14:31 through 15:1; cf. also Sifra to Leviticus 18:5.



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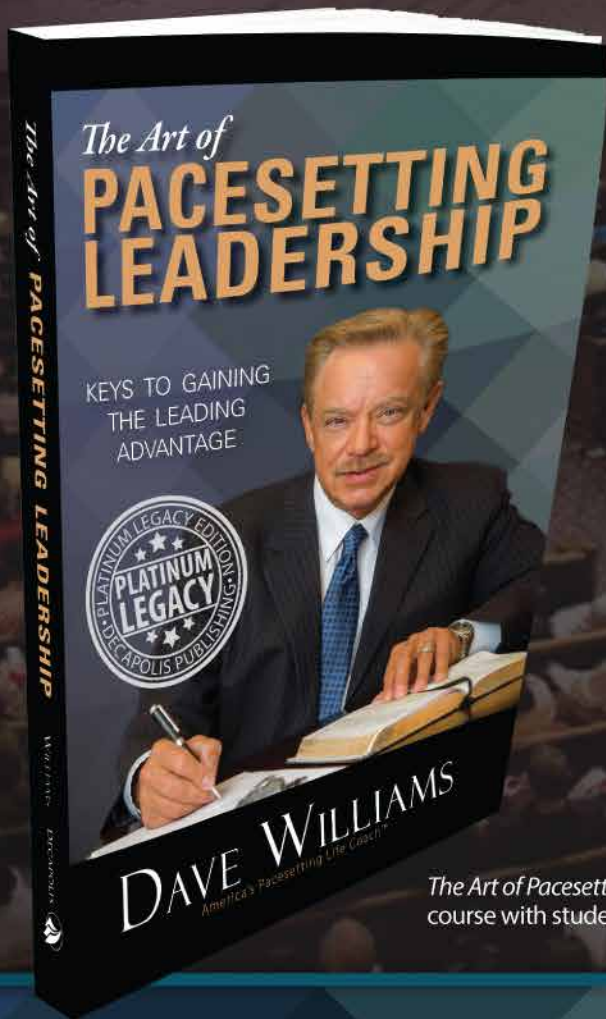
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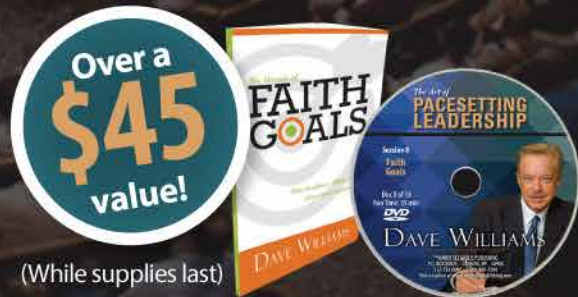


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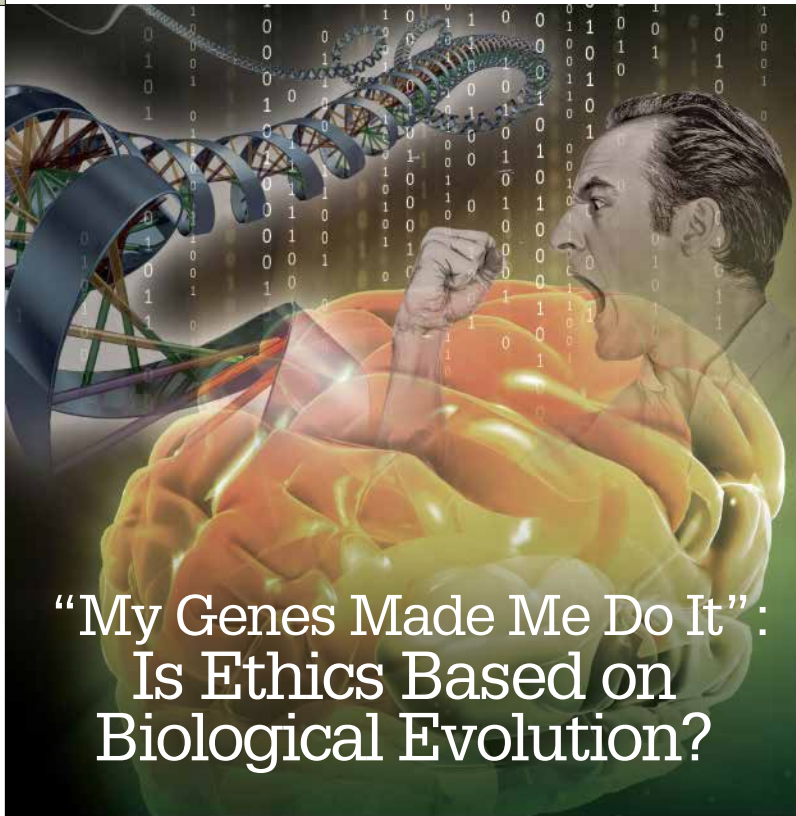


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“My Genes Made Me Do It”:  
Is Ethics Based on  
Biological Evolution?

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BY PAUL COPAN

**I**t is quite common to read in the philosophical and scientific literature that ethics is nothing more than the result of biological processes and social forces. Atheist philosopher Bertrand Russell asserted that “the whole subject of ethics arises from the pressure of the community on the individual.”<sup>1</sup>

Philosopher James Rachels says something similar: “Man is a moral (altruistic) being, not because he intuits the rightness of loving his neighbor, or because he responds to some noble ideal, but because his behavior is comprised of tendencies which natural selection has favored.”<sup>2</sup>

Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson says, “Precepts and religious faith are entirely material products of the mind.” He claims moral feeling is rooted in “the hypothalamus and the limbic system” and is a “device of survival in social organisms.”<sup>3</sup>

Science philosopher Michael Ruse maintains that morality is simply the “ephemeral product of the evolutionary process, just as are our other adaptations,” such as our hands



Why trust our moral beliefs — or any of our beliefs — if they are the products of nonrational material forces beyond our control?

and feet and teeth. “Morality is just an aid to survival and reproduction, and has no being beyond this.”<sup>4</sup>

Ruse writes with E.O. Wilson: “Human beings function better if they are deceived by their genes into thinking that there is a disinterested objective morality binding upon them, which all should obey. We help others because it is ‘right to help them and because we know that they are inwardly compelled to reciprocate in equal measure. What Darwinian evolutionary theory shows is that this sense of ‘right’ and the corresponding sense of ‘wrong,’ feelings we take to be above individual desire and in some fashion outside biology, are in fact brought about by ultimate biological processes.”<sup>5</sup>

We could pile up lots of other quotations like these, but you get the idea.

We shouldn’t be surprised at this viewpoint if the physical world is all the reality there is. This outlook undermines such objective moral values as, “Torturing babies for fun is wrong,” and, “Kindness is a virtue rather than a vice.” In addition, the stark worldview known as naturalism ultimately undercuts any sense of objective purpose or meaning in life.

The outspoken atheist zoologist Richard Dawkins puts it this way: “... if the universe were just electrons and selfish genes, meaningless tragedies ... are exactly what we should expect, along with equally meaningless good fortune. Such a universe would be neither evil nor good in intention .... The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind pitiless indifference .... DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music.”<sup>6</sup>

In this brief series, we have examined certain ethical perspectives. We have attempted to show that if these ethical perspectives fail to include an intrinsically good God as the source of objective moral values and the Creator of humans in His image, then systems will be woefully inadequate. This certainly applies to naturalistic evolutionary ethics, as we’ll see.

**PROBLEMS WITH NATURALISTIC EVOLUTIONARY ETHICS**

While not all naturalists claim that ethics is “nothing more” than the product of biological



evolutionary processes, many do — and this viewpoint is quite pervasive in the academic and wider cultures. According to this perspective, God has nothing to do with moral beliefs or conscience since naturalists claim God doesn't exist.

Naturalism advocates three key tenets concerning reality (metaphysics), causes (etiology), and knowledge (epistemology). First, the physical universe is all the reality that there is. Second, all causes operate mechanistically and deterministically. Third, knowledge is only (or best) achievable through science — a view called “scientism.” So if we are the products of a strictly physical universe, the development of our moral beliefs is due to the mechanisms of evolution or natural selection. All that can be known about morality is discovered through the tools of science.

With this basic outlook in mind, let's respond to the representative naturalists we've just cited.

First, even if morality reflects the influence of biological evolution, this still doesn't discount God as the source of humans' basic moral awareness. It doesn't follow that God has nothing to do with morality simply because evolution plays a part. If the evolutionary process produced moral beliefs such as, “Love your neighbor,” why couldn't this be the result of God's guiding hand?

Second, we cannot trust our minds if we are simply the products of naturalistic evolution, hardwired with the drive to fight, feed, flee, and reproduce. Notice the confident statement on page 24 by Michael Ruse and E.O. Wilson, who argue our genes have “deceived” us. They claim that morality is a “corporate illusion” that has been “fobbed off on us by our genes to get us to cooperate.”<sup>7</sup>

How is it that these two naturalists have somehow risen above the deception to recognize that this is what is happening to the rest of us? Why are they not taken in by the illusion? This suggests they don't really believe they are deterministically programmed to believe what they do. They can reflect on and evaluate their beliefs.

In 2011, I had the opportunity to ask Richard Dawkins this very question. Here is the gist of what I asked him: “If theists and atheists alike are shaped by non-rational forces beyond their control (after all, we are dancing to the music of our DNA), then why think that the atheist is more rational than the

While not all naturalists claim that ethics is “nothing more” than the product of biological evolutionary processes, many do — and this viewpoint is quite pervasive in the academic and wider cultures.

theist? After all, the naturalist would only be accidentally correct, not because he is more rational.”<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately, Dawkins never answered the question. (He was “Dawkin” the issue!) He only gave the rhetorical quip that “science flies rockets to the moon, but religion flies planes into buildings.”

Of course, Dawkins ignored or was unaware that the Nazis invented rockets. And what about the 9/11 Muslim terrorists? Weren't they simply “dancing to the music of their DNA”?

Charles Darwin was rightly skeptical about the possibility of rationality for the naturalist: “With me the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man's mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would any one trust in the convictions of a monkey's mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?”<sup>9</sup>

Why trust our moral beliefs — or any of our beliefs — if they are the products of non-rational material forces beyond our control? Yet even the most skeptical person assumes his mental faculties are trustworthy and not systematically deceiving him. He doesn't doubt laws of logic or the workings of his mind to come to his skeptical conclusions. He thinks he is in full control of his beliefs. But given naturalism, such faith that these processes will lead me to truth is unwarranted.

However, if we have been made in the image of a truthful, rational Being, we have the proper context for generally trusting our five senses — as well as our fundamental, moral intuitions.

We could believe many things that enhance survival and reproduction. For example, our genes could fob off on us the belief that humans have dignity and worth or that we have a duty to love our neighbors. Both ideas are beneficial to species survival. Yet from a naturalist viewpoint, these assumptions might be completely false. If a truthful, rational God exists, however, such problems about rationality and trusting our beliefs evaporate.

Third, this view of evolutionary ethics goes against our intuitions about fundamental realities. We assume a number of common sense beliefs — that we humans are morally responsible for our actions, that our minds are not systematically deceiving us, that we have duties, that we act with purpose, and that our acts make a difference in the world.

But consider what naturalistic philosopher of mind John Searle of Berkeley says: “Physical events can have only physical explanations, and consciousness is not physical, so consciousness plays no explanatory role whatsoever. If, for example, you think you ate because you were consciously hungry, or got married because you were consciously in love with your prospective spouse, or withdrew your hand from the flame because you consciously felt a pain, or spoke up at a meeting because you consciously disagreed with the main speaker, you are mistaken in every case. In each case the effect was a physical event and therefore must have an entirely physical explanation.”<sup>10</sup>

But if that’s the case, Searle’s own statement has “an entirely physical explanation.” One suspects that in writing this, he doesn’t really believe this, however.

Richard Dawkins, at least in some places, is willing to admit that as a naturalist he can’t practice what he preaches. He says: “As an academic scientist, I am a passionate Darwinian, believing that natural selection is, if not the only driving force in evolution, certainly the only known force capable of producing the illusion of purpose which so strikes all who contemplate nature. But at the same time as I support Darwinism as a scientist, I am a passionate anti-Darwinian when it comes to politics and how we should conduct our human affairs.”<sup>11</sup>

In fact, in an interview, Dawkins had to confess to the counterintuitive belief that the conviction that rape is wrong is just an evolutionary adaptation and nothing more. His interviewer pressed him: “Ultimately, your belief that rape is wrong is as arbitrary as the fact that we’ve evolved five fingers rather than six,” to which Dawkins replied, “You could say that, yeah.”<sup>12</sup>

Fourth, naturalism cannot derive “ought” from “is” — duty from scientific descriptions. “Why should I be moral?” For the naturalists we’ve described, they would say that this is like asking, “Why should I be hungry?”<sup>13</sup> Drives such as hunger and sex or emotions like jealousy and anger are hardwired into us by evolution.

But C.S. Lewis observed that given such conditions, moral impulses are no more true (or false) “than a vomit or a yawn.”<sup>14</sup> Thinking, “I ought” is on the same level of, “I itch.” Indeed, Lewis continued, “My impulse to serve posterity is just the same sort of thing



The stark worldview known as naturalism ultimately undercuts any sense of objective purpose or meaning in life.

as my fondness for cheese,” or preferring mild or bitter beer.<sup>15</sup>

Naturalists like Ruse and Dawkins can only describe how human beings actually function, but they can’t prescribe how humans ought to behave. These states just are.

Dawkins elsewhere admits that, rationally speaking, you can’t get angry with criminals since they’re hardwired by nature to do what they do — although Dawkins finds this emotionally unacceptable.<sup>16</sup> Naturalism doesn’t allow him to move logically from “is” to “ought.” On the other hand, if a supremely valuable God exists who has made morally valuable human beings in His image, we have no illogical leap from “is” to “ought.”

Fifth, naturalistic morality is arbitrary and could have developed in opposite directions. Michael Ruse (with E.O. Wilson) gives an example of how this works. Instead of evolving from “savannah-dwelling primates,” we, like termites, could have evolved needing “to dwell in darkness, eat each other’s [waste], and cannibalize the dead.” If the latter were the case, we would “extol such acts as beautiful and moral” and “find it morally disgusting to live in the open air, dispose of body waste and bury the dead.”<sup>17</sup>

Our firmly embedded moral beliefs could have developed along other lines.

And what if humans have evolved in such a way that rape actually enhances survival and reproduction? A biologist and an anthropologist teamed up to document this very point. In their book, *A Natural History of Rape*, they argue — much to the horror of many people, including staunch atheistic feminists — that rape can be explained biologically.<sup>18</sup> How so? When a male cannot find a mate, his subconscious drive to reproduce his own species presses him to force himself sexually upon a female. And acts akin to rape do occur in the animal kingdom — perpetrated by male mallards and scorpionflies, for example.

Don’t think for a minute that these authors advocate rape. They do not excuse rapists for their behavior (or misbehavior). But what if rape is as natural as granola? What if human nature has the rape-impulse embedded from antiquity, conferring biological advantage? The is-ought problem rears its head here as well. The authors cannot condemn this behavior based on their logic. The authors’ resistance to rape, despite its “naturalness,” suggests objective moral values exist and that



they are not rooted in nature. An ethic rooted in mere nature leaves us with an arbitrary morality.

On the other hand, the existence of an intrinsically good God helps us anchor these basic moral intuitions about the wrongness of rape in something transcendent — something outside or beyond nature. Thus, the naturalist must borrow from a worldview like theism to justify opposition to an act that is both very natural and morally revolting.

### CONCLUSION

As we have noted in previous articles, in contrast to other ethical theories on offer in the academic world and popular culture, biblical theism presents a way out of the ethical cul-de-sac that naturalists face. This perspective gives us solid grounding for affirming the reality of objective moral values (such as, “Kindness is a virtue rather than a vice,” or, “Rape is wrong”) instead of denying these and other common sense beliefs about rationality, human dignity, and free will.

Also, theists are not left with the problem of the “is-ought” gap. And they do not have to worry whether they can trust their senses or basic moral intuitions. Nor do they have to wonder whether their minds are systematically deceiving them. Theism offers resources unavailable to the naturalist, who often inadvertently borrows from the metaphysical resources of a theistic worldview. ■

### Notes

1. Bertrand Russell, *Human Society in Ethics and Politics* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1954), 124.
2. James Rachels, *Created From Animals: The Moral Implications of Darwinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 77.
3. Edward O. Wilson, *Consilience* (New York: Random House, 1998), 268, 269. Derk Pereboom (a theist) gets it right when he says, “Our best scientific theories indeed have the consequence that we are not morally responsible for our actions ... [we are] more like machines than we ordinarily suppose.” *Living Without Free Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xiii — xiv.
4. Michael Ruse, *The Darwinian Paradigm* (London: Routledge, 1989), 268.
5. Michael Ruse and E.O. Wilson, “Moral Philosophy as Applied Science,” *Philosophy*, 61 (1986): 179.
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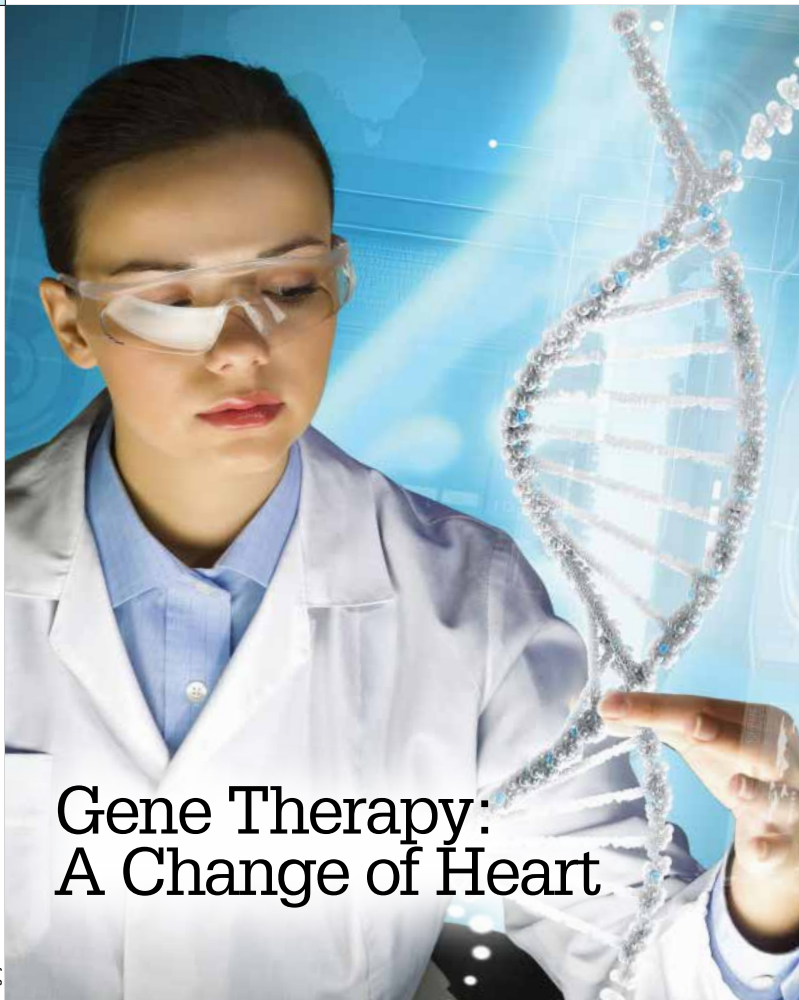
Doubters,” received a first place award from the Evangelical Press Association.

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“Can you tell me about Armageddon again?”

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# Gene Therapy: A Change of Heart

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BY CHRISTINA M.H. POWELL

**M**any diseases are not a result of an attack from an infectious agent or a loss of function from an injury or environmental hazard, but a

problem within the genetic code of a patient. Instead of drugs or surgery to treat symptoms, what if doctors could go directly to the heart of the matter and change the defective or missing genes responsible for serious diseases?

Gene therapy can treat conditions such as a compromised immune system,<sup>1</sup> cancer,<sup>2</sup> certain forms of inherited congenital vision loss,<sup>3</sup> and even heart failure.<sup>4,5</sup>

The first gene therapy patient was a 4-year-old girl with a genetic disease that left her defenseless against infections. The treatment



Pastors may wonder if altering the genetic code is an example of scientists and doctors “playing God.”

was temporarily successful. Children with her condition die in infancy or early childhood unless treated with either a bone marrow replacement therapy or ongoing injections of enzyme replacement therapy. Bone marrow replacement therapy works best when the patient has a matched sibling donor. Otherwise, the patient faces many potential complications. Enzyme replacement therapy is expensive, and patients need injections once or twice a week. Gene therapy offers the promise of a normal life.

Any pastor who has visited a sick child in the hospital can understand the value of such a treatment. However, pastors may wonder if altering the genetic code is an example of scientists and doctors “playing God.” Somewhere between embracing all technological advances as blessings and fearing science run amok lies a balanced understanding of the value and dangers of gene therapy.

## DESIGNING PAST DANGERS

Gene therapy delivers a treatment directly where the body needs it, precisely supplying a healthy copy of a defective or missing gene. Ideally, it delivers the gene safely to the right cells in the body, expressed at the right level to cure the disease without causing toxic side effects or an unwanted immune response.

In many cases, viruses serve as vectors to carry the desired gene into cells. This requires removing the genes needed for a viral infection and replacing them with the therapeutic genes. However, sometimes the human body can react to these viral vectors as if they were disease-causing intruders, mounting an immune response that can lead to inflammation and even organ failure.

An example of this danger is the death of Jesse Gelsinger, an 18-year-old boy who died in 1999 in a clinical trial for gene therapy four days after receiving an injection of a viral vector containing a therapeutic gene. His body mounted a massive immune response to the viral vector, resulting in brain death and the failure of multiple organs. His death sparked widespread concern about the potential dangers of gene therapy and slowed progress in the field for many years.

A second danger is that the virus may infect and damage healthy cells, rather than impacting only the targeted cells. Also, a few copies of the viral vector used to deliver the therapeutic gene could insert into unintended places



in a patient's DNA, disrupting normal genes. This genetic damage can result in leukemia or other cancers. Finally, although the viral vectors are missing the viral genes needed to cause infection, once inside the human body, there is a small possibility that the virus could recover its original ability to cause disease.

Thus, scientists and doctors must exercise great caution when designing the method for delivering the therapeutic gene to the right cells in the patient's body. The potential risks of gene therapy suggest that the approach be reserved for serious diseases where the benefits of the treatment offset the potential dangers.

### CONSIDERING APPROPRIATE LIMITS

Altering the genetic blueprint of a human being feels like "playing God" on a whole level beyond prescribing a course of penicillin to treat an infectious disease. However, a treatment that inserts a working gene for a certain enzyme into somatic (body) cells within the patient poses fewer ethical challenges than gene therapy that alters germ line cells, allowing the new gene to be passed on to future generations.

Gene therapy that affects body cells poses risks only to the patient. However, gene therapy that alters germ line cells poses unknown risks to individuals not yet born. In addition, corrections within a specific tissue of one person do not change the future gene pool for human beings, while germ line alterations would. Of course, germ line gene therapy holds the power to eradicate a genetic disease for a person's children and grandchildren. However, germ line gene therapy could have unknown effects on the development of a child or unexpected side effects. An individual not yet born would be subject to potential dangers without ever having a choice in whether to undergo the treatment. For this reason, the United States federal government forbids the use of research funds for human germ line gene therapy.

The same gene therapy techniques that cure disease theoretically could bring about human enhancement. Should gene therapy be limited to correcting genetic diseases, or is it appropriate to enhance traits such as those that lead to greater athletic ability or intelligence? When is gene therapy appropriate, and where should doctors draw the line between traits considered normal and

Somewhere between embracing all technological advances as blessings and fearing science run amok lies a balanced understanding of the value and dangers of gene therapy.

those viewed as a disability?

How would the existence of gene therapy for certain traits or conditions change the way we viewed people with those traits or conditions who chose not to undergo gene therapy? For example, some parents of children with Down syndrome would not be interested in a gene therapy that might change certain positive characteristics of their children in the process of genetically reversing Down syndrome.

As gene therapy becomes safer and easier, society will need to consider the appropriate limits for genetic alterations. The technique can make a diseased heart return to health after a brief treatment, a scientific breakthrough with the potential to bless many people. As God asked Job so long ago, "Who has put wisdom in the mind? Or who has given understanding to the heart?" (Job 38:36, NKJV).<sup>6</sup>

Christians can view scientific knowledge ultimately as a gift from God, while appreciating the need for limits in the exercise of our human creativity in the laboratory. We cannot truly play God, but we can partner with Him in finding new ways to bring healing to people. ■

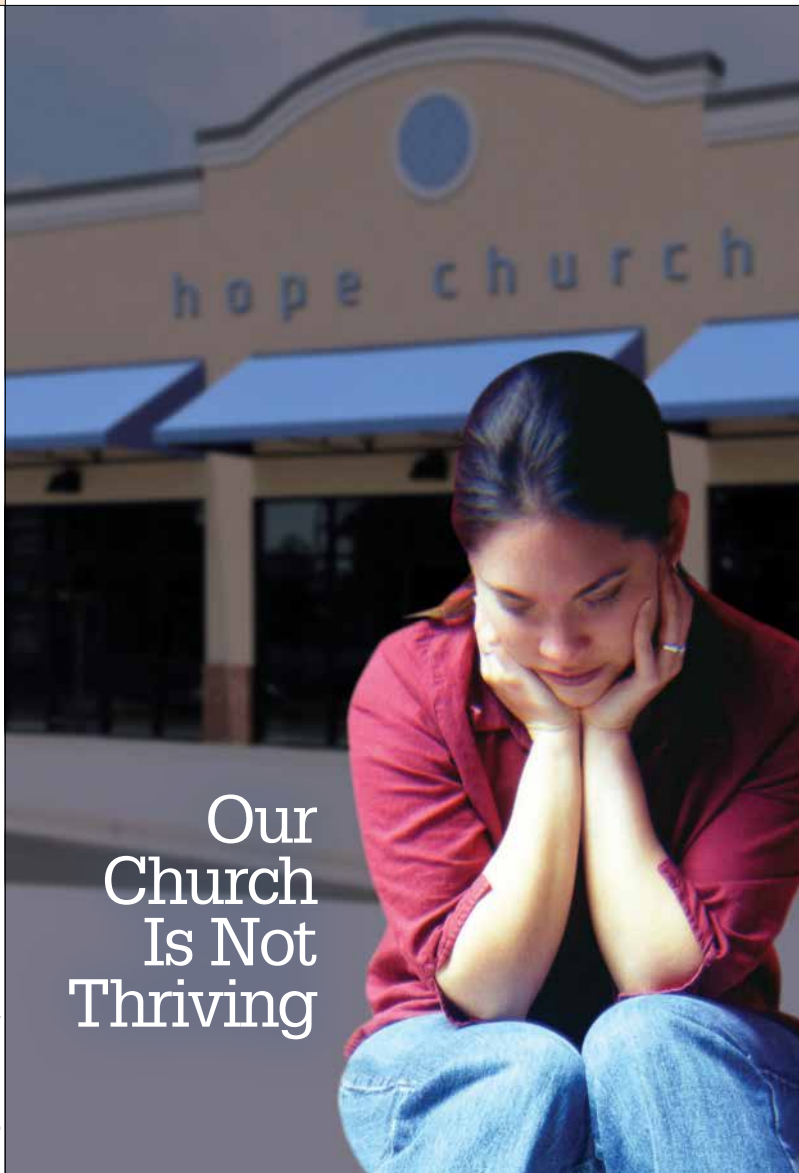
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## Our Church Is Not Thriving

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BY GABRIELE RIENAS

**Q**

**Our efforts at this church seem to be going nowhere, and it seems that we are failing. When we came here five years ago, we were so excited about this opportunity. We**

**came to pastor a small church plant in a popular, urban setting, and we were hopeful that we could approach ministry in a new and innovative way. My husband and**



**The God who calls us is also faithful to equip us.**

I work closely together in ministry, and we felt God leading us to leave a staff position at a large, metropolitan church in order to minister here. We have prayerfully put in our best effort. Among other things, we have built a core team, reached out to the community, and sought the advice of experienced leaders. However, after a short spike in numbers, we now consistently minister to the same number of people as when we first came. I wonder if we should move on and let someone else tackle this project, but my husband thinks we should stay.

**A** I am intentionally directing my answer to the ambivalent feelings you express about failure in ministry and the decision to stay or leave. I will leave the issue of numerical church growth to those more experienced on the topic.

My main concern is your sense of failure in ministry. You secretly suspect this calling is wrong for you and your husband. Such doubts are troubling — yet all too common among ministry couples. Many leaders faithfully give their best daily for seemingly meager results. To top it off, other churches in close proximity often seem abundantly blessed and thriving. Seeing the glaring differences, it is easy to conclude inadequacy.

However, God did not give you these feelings of self-doubt and failure. The Word of God reminds us that the God who calls us is also faithful to equip us. We must make peace with the fact that increase is in God's hands and that our job is to be faithful to the day and moment of His calling. I remind myself frequently that God's definition of failure is vastly different from our culture's definition. Our world would have quickly dismissed many of the biblical heroes, as well as historical giants of the faith.

Two things are essential in order to find peace about anywhere you may find yourselves in ministry. First, the measure of success must be more than numerical growth. While an impressive attendance count can certainly reflect God's blessing and favor, it is not the only criteria for increase. Nor is it the only agenda God has at all times and in



all seasons. If your validation rises and falls with the numbers, you will be vulnerable on both sides of the scale: thinking too highly of yourselves when the momentum is up and facing self-doubt when the numbers are down or stagnant.

Second, do not measure yourself against other ministries. This can be especially difficult when there is a larger congregation down the street or in the next town that seems to be numerically growing, more financially blessed, and more endowed with talent and potential. It gets even more complicated when some people visit your ministry and then end up at the larger church. Though it is difficult, resist the tendency to compare. Always remember that God's calling and agenda are unique to each situation. Focus on the task in front of you as your contribution for a certain time and place. Embrace your specific calling with your whole heart, and don't apologize for what you don't have. (I've now lived long enough to say with confidence that no matter how it appears from a distance, the grass isn't always greener elsewhere.)

As for your current ministry, there is nothing wrong with exploring the best way to present the gospel message and build the community of Christ in a relevant, invitational manner. By all means, pursue whatever education and resources are available to help you be innovative and creative. At the same time, recognize that Kingdom results do not come by sheer effort and expertise, but by the Spirit of God for the right season and the right time (Zechariah 4:6).

You and your husband are currently church planters. The term itself implies sowing and reaping. This principle is a much-emphasized spiritual law (1 Corinthians 3:7-9). There are times for sowing, times for watering, and times for harvesting. All are needed for crop growth. Not all contributors will see the results of the harvest. Yet all contributors are essential to the process.

You mentioned that your husband has come to a different conclusion about what the next step should be. This is an opportunity for you to enter into a mutual discussion about your thoughts and feelings. Ask open-ended questions, and explore his perspective and rationale for staying. Pray together about the situation and for one another.

Working with your husband as a team is

Do not underestimate the honor in showing up and offering your best, day after day, time after time.

your strongest asset in ministry. Do not let conflicting agendas undermine your unity. Encourage one another with biblical truth about your calling, and continue to work together resourcing one another's strengths and input. Together, God will guide and direct your steps.

Lastly, do not underestimate the honor in showing up and offering your best, day after day, time after time. God is certainly capable of accomplishing His will. He does not require that we make it happen solely by our best efforts and personal intelligence. He simply looks for willing, submitted servants who faithfully carry out the task placed in their hands as each day presents itself. That is the key to success — in ministry and in life. ☑



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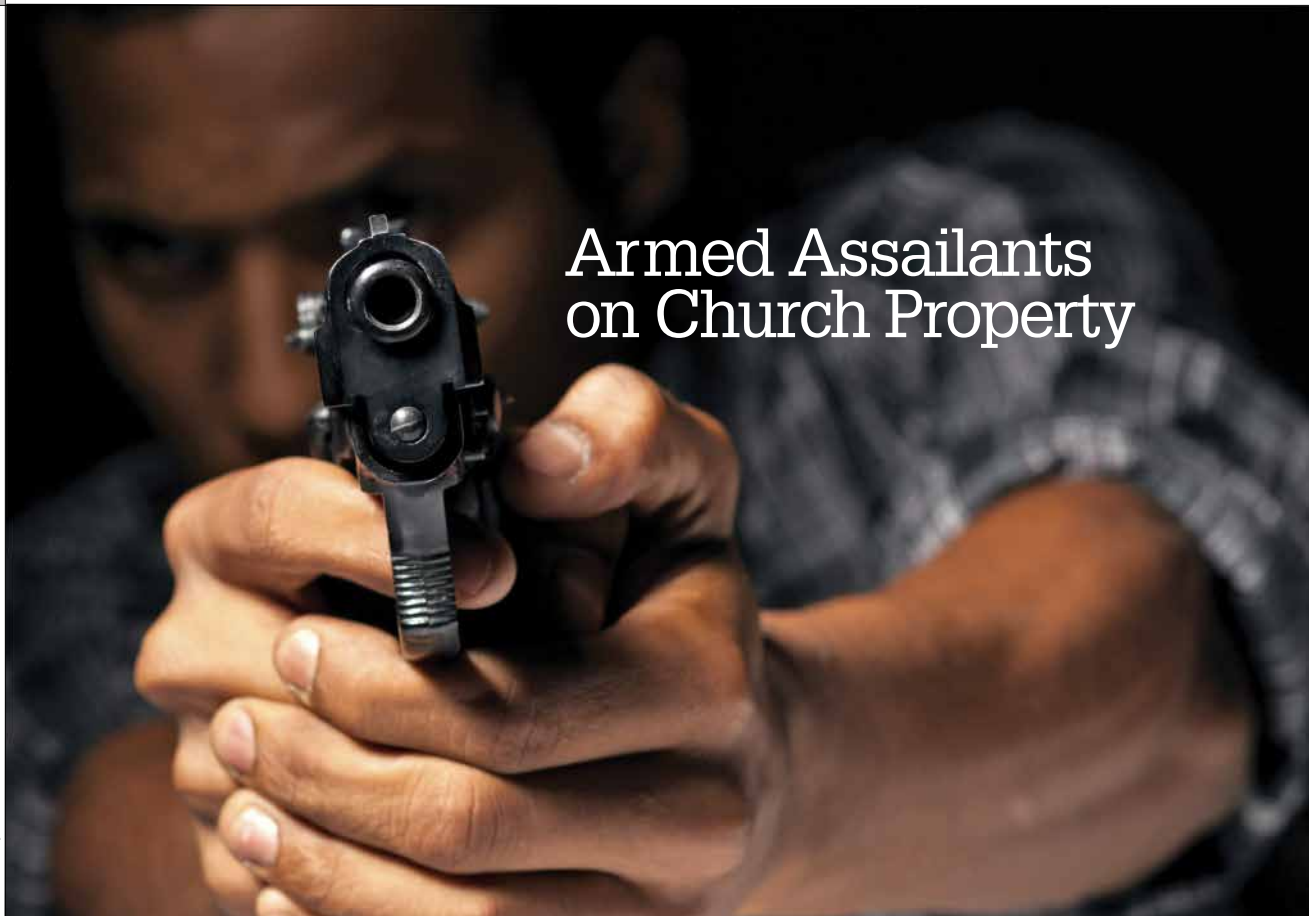


**"It's mostly dental floss. You shouldn't have had that salad before your sermon."**

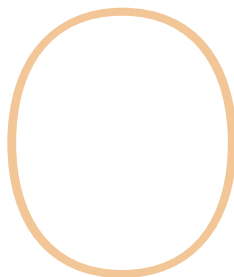
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# Armed Assailants on Church Property

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BY RICHARD R. HAMMAR



**On the morning of April 16, 2007, an armed gunman shot and killed 32 persons** and wounded 17 others on the Virginia Tech University campus before committing

suicide. The families of two of the victims sued the Commonwealth of Virginia, the president of Virginia Tech, and several other persons (the “defendants”) for wrongful death. The plaintiffs claimed the defendants had a duty to warn students of criminal acts and that their failure to do so in a timely manner was the cause of most of the deaths and injuries.

The defendants argued that they had no duty to warn students since the massacre was not reasonably foreseeable. A jury returned a verdict in favor of the plaintiffs and awarded \$4 million to each family. On appeal, the Virginia



In responding to the risk of armed assailants, there are several factors for church leaders to consider.

Supreme Court reversed the trial court’s ruling and dismissed all claims against the defendants, concluding that “the facts in this case do not give rise to a duty to warn students of the potential for third party criminal acts” (*Commonwealth v. Peterson*, 2013 WL 5833262, Va. 2013).

The court began its decision by noting that “as a general rule, a person does not have a duty to warn or protect another from the criminal acts of a third person,” and that “this is particularly so when the third person commits acts of assaultive criminal behavior because such acts cannot reasonably be foreseen.”

The court concluded: “Here ... there simply are not sufficient facts from which this court could conclude that the duty to protect students against third party criminal acts arose as a matter of law. In this case, the defendants knew that there had been a shooting in a dormitory in which one student was critically wounded and one was murdered. They also knew that the shooter had not been apprehended. At that time, the defendants did not



know who the shooter was, as law enforcement was in the early stages of its investigation of the crime. However, based on representations from three different police departments, Virginia Tech officials believed that the shooting was a domestic incident and that the shooter may have been the boyfriend of one of the victims. Most importantly, based on the information available at that time, the defendants believed that the shooter had fled the area and posed no danger to others .... Based on the limited information available to the defendants prior to the shootings ... it cannot be said that it was known or reasonably foreseeable that students would fall victim to criminal harm. Thus, as a matter of law, the defendants did not have a duty to protect students against third party criminal acts."

The court applied the general rule that landowners generally are not liable for the acts of armed shooters on their premises unless such acts are reasonably foreseeable.

The *Restatement (Second) of Torts*, a respected legal treatise, states the general rule as follows: "[A property owner] is not liable where he neither knows nor should know of the unreasonable risk .... He is not required to take precautions against a sudden attack from a third person which he has no reason to anticipate" (*Section 314A, comment e*).

Similarly, *Restatement (Second) of Torts § 344 (comment f)*, says: "Since the possessor is not an insurer of the visitor's safety, he is ordinarily under no duty to exercise any care until he knows or has reason to know that the acts of the third person are occurring, or are about to occur. He may, however, know or have reason to know, from past experience, that there is a likelihood of conduct on the part of third persons in general which is likely to endanger the safety of the visitor, even though he has no reason to expect it on the part of any particular individual."

In summary, according to the Virginia Supreme Court and the *Restatement (Second) of Torts*, the foreseeability of an unreasonable risk of criminal conduct is a precondition to imposing a duty on a property owner to protect others from that risk. It is important to note that "criminal conduct of a specific nature at a particular location is never foreseeable merely because crime is increasingly random and violent and may possibly occur almost anywhere, especially in a large city.



The best way to mitigate the risks associated with an armed assailant is to have one or more police officers on site.

If a [property owner] had a duty to protect people on his property from criminal conduct whenever crime might occur, the duty would be universal. This is not the law. A duty exists only when the risk of criminal conduct is so great that it is both unreasonable and foreseeable. Whether such risk was foreseeable must not be determined in hindsight but rather in light of what the premises owner knew or should have known before the criminal act occurred" (*Lefmark Management Company v. Old*, 946 S.W.2d 52, Tex. 1997).

"[W]hat protective measures should be pursued to protect against a mass murderous assault truly defy exact delineation, because how can one know which measures will be effective against a degenerate, a psychopath or a psychotic?" (*Lopez v. McDonald's Corporation*, 238 Cal. Rptr. 436, Cal. App. 1987).

In deciding whether criminal conduct on a landowner's premises was foreseeable, the courts generally have examined the following factors:

- whether any criminal conduct previously occurred on or near the property
- how recently and how often similar crimes occurred
- how similar the conduct was to the conduct on the property
- what publicity was given the occurrences to indicate that the landowner knew or should have known about them.

Most churches will not be legally liable for deaths and injuries caused by armed assailants on their premises because such violent acts ordinarily are not reasonably foreseeable. To be sure, there are exceptional cases in which such acts are foreseeable, but this is the exception rather than the rule. As a result, most churches should not base their decisions regarding armed guards and other security measures on a desire to reduce legal liability, and the decision by the Virginia Supreme Court underscores this conclusion. That said, there are reasons other than the avoidance of liability for church leaders considering implementing measures to respond to armed assailants, including theological and moral considerations.

Many church leaders and congregations, guided and informed by their theological values, feel compelled to take steps to protect human life from acts of violence, regardless of whether they have a legal duty to do so. In responding to the risk of armed assailants,

there are several factors for church leaders to consider.

First, church shootings, and other violent crimes on church premises, are rare. The law imposes upon any place of public accommodation, including a church, a duty to protect occupants against foreseeable criminal acts. The level of protection is directly proportional to the degree to which an act can be foreseen.

Many courts assess foreseeability on the basis of whether any criminal conduct previously occurred on or near the property; how recently and how often similar crimes occurred; how similar the previous crimes were to the conduct in question; and what publicity was given the previous crimes to indicate that the church knew or should have known about them. If shootings or other violent crimes on church property are highly foreseeable based on these factors, a church has a heightened duty to implement measures to protect occupants from such acts.

In evaluating which measures to implement to discharge a legal or moral duty to protect occupants, church leaders should consider their affordability, effectiveness, and acceptability.

The best way to mitigate the risks associated with an armed assailant is to have one or more police officers on site. Police officers have extensive training in using firearms and responding to crisis situations. Their uniform is a deterrent, and when responding to a crime, they become “on duty” and no longer an agent of the church, which reduces a church’s liability for their actions.

Some churches use members with concealed weapons permits as their response to the risk of armed assailants. However, such persons often pose a substantial risk to a church because of minimal training and experience. The best response is to have such persons work with police officers rather than serving on their own.

Church leaders should consult with local law enforcement professionals, the church insurance agent, and legal counsel in making decisions regarding which protective measures to implement. These same persons should also review the church’s crisis response plan.

Contact other churches and places of public accommodation in your community to see what measures they have enacted to protect occupants against shootings and other violent crimes. Examples include schools, malls, libraries, restaurants, stores, sports facilities,

No measures will foil an armed and dedicated assailant, especially if that person plans to take his or her own life.

theaters, and concert halls. This research will help church leaders ascertain the community standard, an important consideration in deciding whether a property owner was negligent.

Note that even the most stringent protective measures will not deter a dedicated assailant from entering church property and firing at parishioners. In fact, in some cases involving shootings on church property, the church had implemented what seemed to be reasonable precautionary measures. However, no measures will foil an armed and dedicated assailant, especially if that person plans to take his or her own life.

While churches cannot anticipate and prevent all acts of violence, it is possible to deter such acts in some cases, and to contain the damage and destruction when an incident erupts. ■



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“What do you mean I’m ‘not committed’? I wear the biggest cross here, don’t I?”





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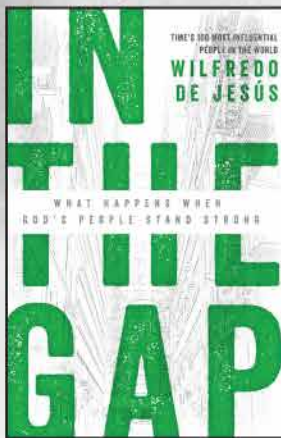
Let us rise up and build . . . [Nehemiah 2:18]



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# IN THE GAP

| By WILFREDO DE JESÚS |



**A** gap, by definition, represents a place of weakness, vulnerability, and danger. It is a defenseless location of exposure and limitation, a point where people face real threats. Gaps exist in our countries, our communities, and at home with our families.

This article is adapted from the book, *In The Gap*, by Wilfredo De Jesús (Influence Resources, 2014.) *In The Gap* explores nine biblical and current-day examples of courageous men and women who recognized gap situations and trusted God to use them to make a difference. This adaptation is from chapter one which centers on the story of Nehemiah, who worked hard to restore the city of Jerusalem — physically and spiritually. Quite often, though, God wants us to build a new culture and a new hope instead of city walls. Consider what God may be saying to you through the story of Nehemiah in the words that follow.



# WHAT HAPPENS WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE STAND STRONG

When the Babylonians defeated Judah in 586 B.C., they destroyed the temple in Jerusalem and took most of the captured people back to Babylon. The physical and emotional pain was excruciating, but the destruction of the temple broke their hearts. For centuries, God's people had worshipped there in the presence of God. His Shekinah glory dwelled in the Holy of Holies in the innermost part of the temple. Miracles happened every day. Now that was gone. Foreign invaders destroyed Jerusalem. They tore down and looted the temple, and about 50,000 inhabitants stumbled into exile in Babylon.

After many years, God's people started returning to their homeland. Zerubbabel and Ezra led the first group. They restored the altar, sacrifices, and worship of God. About 20 years later, the Jewish people built and dedicated a new temple. During this period, the Persians conquered Babylon. Nehemiah was a Jewish man who had remained in Persia. His story begins 141 years after the fall of Jerusalem.

## YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Before we continue with Nehemiah's story of courage, we need to understand something about ancient culture and biblical truth from the Old and New Testaments. The temple was the place where heaven and earth met — where God dwelled in His awesome glory. The wall around the city protected the temple.

At the moment Jesus died on the cross, the heavy veil separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple ripped apart from top to bottom. The curtain no longer separated the people from God. Because of Christ's supreme sacrifice, God's presence and glory no longer reside in a building. They reside in His people. One of the amazing truths of the New Testament is that you and I are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). We are the place where heaven and earth meet! And we need to build walls of protection to defend and cherish God's glory in us — walls of integrity, obedience, faith, hope, and love.

All around us, the enemy attacks people, but some are too

absorbed with doubt, greed, and fear to fight back. Their temple is ransacked and their walls, torn down. Sometimes it's not just our family members, friends, or co-workers who are devastated. Sometimes it's us.

God is always looking for someone to stand in the gap. About 141 years after Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians, God's people were still in distress. They were victims of injustice and racial hatred. At this moment, Nehemiah answered God's call.

## THE REPORT

Nehemiah had a dream job. He was the king's righthand man — trusted, important, and respected by everyone in the kingdom. The Jews had made a home in Babylon and Persia, and at least a few of them had positions of prominence.

One day Nehemiah saw Hanani, one of his brothers, who had just returned from Judah, 766 miles away. Nehemiah asked what was going on back in their homeland. Hanani reported that outsiders harassed the citizens, raped the women, and stole from the people — and no one could do anything about it.

## HE PRAYED

With revelation comes responsibility, and hearing this news broke Nehemiah's heart. Yet he didn't jump to conclusions or act impulsively. Nehemiah's heart was shattered, but he knew he needed to prepare before he acted.

For days, he wept, fasted, and prayed. The condition of God's people in their homeland was unacceptable to him. God gave Nehemiah a holy discontent, a fire in his bones to make a difference. Though Nehemiah was hundreds of miles away, he identified with the suffering. His prayer in Nehemiah 1:5-11 teaches us three steps to humbly make a request of God.

1. He acknowledged God (praise).
2. He reminded himself — and God — of the covenant promises.
3. He confessed his sins and the sins of the people.

Nehemiah shows us another important principle: When the pain others feel breaks your heart, don't act impulsively. We can follow

Nehemiah's example by spending time getting the Father's perspective through persistent prayer.

## HE PLANNED

For Nehemiah, prayer was preparation for action. Every pastor, leader, teacher, and disciple has calls to action. At specific times and places, we need to move past our fears toward what God is calling us to do.

Nehemiah prayed, and his prayer led to his plan. He knew King Artaxerxes could provide the resources to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. A few days later, as Nehemiah was serving him, the king noticed that he was preoccupied. The king had never seen his trusted servant like this, so he asked, "What's wrong?"

Nehemiah realized the moment of truth had come. He was terrified, but his fear didn't stop him. He replied with respect and boldness: "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" (Nehemiah 2:3).

Artaxerxes had absolute power over his nation and his people. Any hint of disappointment in the king might mean instant death! Nehemiah took a real risk by voicing his concerns. To his great relief, the king answered, "What is it you want?"

Instead of blurting out his request, Nehemiah prayed silently. He then told the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it" (Nehemiah 2:5).

The king gave Nehemiah everything he needed: letters of safe conduct to travel, timber for the beams of the gates, and time away to get the job done. He never lost sight of the fact that even the most powerful people on the planet are tools in the hands of Almighty God.

Nehemiah understood a profound truth: If you're experiencing a great difficulty, and you're ready to undertake a great work, then you need the power of a great God.

Nehemiah exemplified the "gap person trait" of being able to identify a problem, and then craft a plan to meet it. Nehemiah felt the weight of the responsibility to rebuild the devastated walls of the capital of his ancient homeland. During his days of prayer and fasting, God gave him direction to ask the king for all the resources. Nehemiah risked his life, and if he failed, God's people would continue to suffer from attacks and injustice in Jerusalem.

## HE PROCEEDED

King Artaxerxes must have loved and trusted Nehemiah. He not only gave his cupbearer all the resources he needed to rebuild the crumbled walls, but he also sent his cavalry with Nehemiah as an escort to protect him.



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Nehemiah didn't tell anyone about his vision or plans. Under cover of night, he inspected the city and the remains of the walls.

Finally, after three nights of reconnaissance, he called Jerusalem's priests, nobles, officials, and people together (Nehemiah 2:16,17). He told them the whole story of Hanani's report, his prayer, his request of the king, and the king's gracious answer. He wanted them to know this wasn't just something he had dreamed up. It was God's idea, and he was God's messenger and servant. Nehemiah invited them to join him in a great work.

They replied, "Let us start rebuilding" (Nehemiah 2:18).

They put on their tool belts, grabbed their work gloves, and looked to Nehemiah to give them directions.

## HE PERSUADED

Immediately Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arab mocked Nehemiah and his fellow workers. These men had a vested interest in keeping God's people weak and vulnerable.

They made the most serious accusation against Nehemiah, one that might have made the workers shudder. They asked, "Are you rebelling against the king?"

Treason was punishable by death — often a long, slow, painful death. Nehemiah didn't back down an inch. He claimed a higher authority: "The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it" (Nehemiah 2:20).

Nehemiah met the first test with courage, persuading the people he had the authority to lead them.

## FACING CHALLENGES

Standing in the gap involves difficulties and invites opposition. When you reach out to help a prodigal child, an addict, or a homeless person, things often get messy. When you confront gangs and racial injustice in your community, you can expect opposition and real danger. The three men who accused Nehemiah of treason illustrate three different challenges.

## COMPROMISE

Sanballat's name means "may sin come to life." He was the governor of Samaria, a region north of Jerusalem. When the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians in 722 B.C., some Jews stayed behind in Samaria. They intermarried with their pagan conquerors and formed a new life. When Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah came back from Babylon to restore the nation, the Samaritans, including Sanballat, felt threatened. The hatred between Jews and Samaritans started then, and it continued during the time of Jesus.

IF YOU'RE  
EXPERIENCING A  
GREAT DIFFICULTY,  
AND YOU'RE  
READY TO  
UNDERTAKE A  
GREAT WORK,  
THEN YOU NEED  
THE POWER OF A  
GREAT GOD.

The Samaritans had bent their lives, standards, and faith to accommodate the pagans among them. It may have begun gradually, but after a few years, the Jews there had lost their distinctive faith and culture. Today, the world is still trying to bend us to their way of life. They insist, "It's no big deal. Everybody's doing it."

So we make tiny, incremental choices to bend God's best for sex, truth, money, time, and relationships. Like the frog in a kettle, we don't notice the heat gradually rising — until we're boiled in sin!

When Sanballat attacked Nehemiah, he asked sarcastic, demeaning questions, and he brought an army. In both ways, he tried to intimidate Nehemiah and his workers. (See Nehemiah 4:1,2.)

Our task is to hold tenaciously to Christ, to trust Him for wisdom and strength, and to stand strong against the temptation to compromise our ethics, the truth, and the vision God has given us.

## DIVISION

Tobiah was an Ammonite, a pagan. Yet his name means "God is good." Though his name suggests he would support Nehemiah, he opposed him. Everywhere he went, Tobiah caused resentment, confusion, and division.

Tobiah governed the area around Jerusalem. Nehemiah was rebuilding God's city right under his nose! His reaction was to create doubt and sow discord between the people and Nehemiah. Tobiah shouted so the workers could hear him, "What they are building — even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!" (Nehemiah 4:3).

When work on the walls proceeded and success was in sight, opposition intensified. Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, and the Ammonites were furious. They plotted to attack Nehemiah and his men. Nehemiah responded as a great leader: He prayed and posted guards to protect the city. From that time forward, half the workers built the walls while the other half stood guard with spears, shields, bows, and armor.

For us, division comes in two forms: internal and external. Our enemy tries to create a divided heart, to tempt us to pursue things that aren't God's best. The enemy also wants to create division between people. Conflict isn't the problem; unresolved conflict is.



When people are honest with one another — when they forgive and restore — relationships grow stronger.

When we try to stand in the gap to help those in need, we can expect the threats of division — in our hearts and in our relationships. Winston Churchill once observed, “You have enemies? Good. That means you’ve stood up for something, sometime in your life.”<sup>1</sup>

## STORMS

Geshem’s name means “storms,” the kind of heavy rains that drench the ground in the fall and winter in that region of the world. Storms blow up unexpectedly and can cause devastating erosion.

Nehemiah and the workers finished the walls with incredible speed, but before they could build and hang the gates, Sanballat and Geshem again tried to stop them. They used threats, intimidation, and distraction, but Nehemiah saw through all their deceptions.

Geshem and his allies weren’t playing games. Storms are destructive. We may see hurricanes, tornadoes, and tsunamis featured on The Weather Channel, but other kinds of storms — addiction, abuse, abandonment, poverty, depression, sex slavery, prostitution, loneliness, shame, and hopelessness — destroy individuals, families, and whole communities. For Nehemiah and for us, a half-completed wall isn’t enough protection. We need to finish the work, no matter what it takes.

I don’t know how many times Nehemiah got discouraged, but he continually looked to God for hope and strength. I don’t know how many lies swirled around him, but he trusted God with his reputation. The storms were fierce. God didn’t protect him from experiencing these tempests, but He gave Nehemiah and his men courage to weather the storms. Nehemiah closed his ears to gossip and criticism, and he opened his heart to God and to his calling to stand in the gap.

## STAYING POWER

Sometimes we stand in the gap for a cause or a person for a short time, and then our role is over. More often, however, God wants us to keep standing in the gap for a long, long time. When Nehemiah finished rebuilding the city walls, he stayed in Jerusalem for 12 years. He knew opposition wouldn’t stop when they placed the final stone and hung the last gate. The temptation to compromise, the threats of division, and the storms of his adversaries would continue, so he stayed to protect the walls and care for the people. He wasn’t just a builder; he was a believer. With Ezra, Nehemiah worked hard to restore the city — physically and spiritually.

When Elizabeth and I wanted to build a home, some people advised us to move out to the suburbs and travel back to the city every day.

I said, “No, we’re going to live in the ‘hood. We want to live with our people. We want to share their hopes and their fears.”

Of course, our community isn’t as safe as the suburbs. We’ve been robbed, and I’ve even received a death threat. I briefly feared we made the wrong choice. But then I remembered how important it is to live in the neighborhood we serve. Our people face threats of crime and violence every day. How can they know we understand them if we don’t live in their world? Like Nehemiah, Elizabeth and I want to live, lead, and do life together with the people God has entrusted to our care.

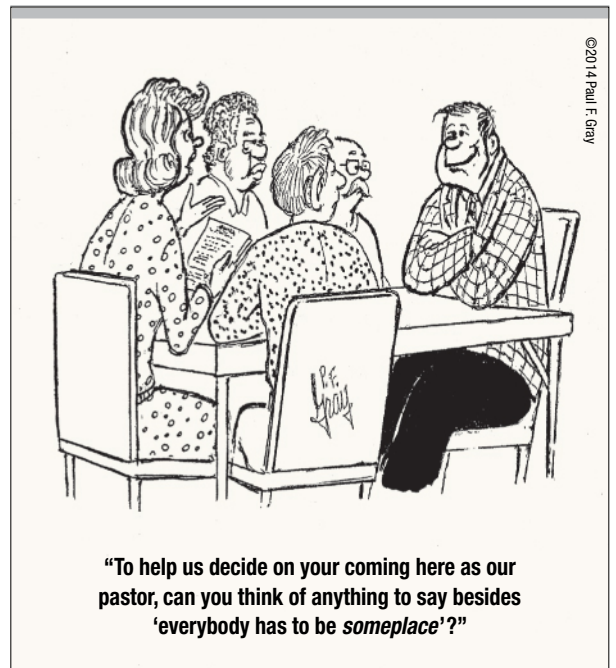
Let the love of Jesus move your heart. When that happens, you will see the wonder of His incredible grace, and your heart will break over the empty lives around you. Both wonder and sorrow are evidences of a person who finds the courage to identify a problem and dive in to solve it — a person who stands in the gap like Nehemiah. ■



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### NOTE

1. Richard Langworth, ed., *Churchill by Himself: The Definitive Collection of Quotations* (Perseus Book Group: New York, 2008), 573.



GOD IS ASKING,  
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# DISCOVERING YOUR DIVINE DESIGN IN THE MIDST OF TRANSITION

| By KENT INGLE |

HERE ARE SEVEN WISE STEPS  
ALL MINISTRY LEADERS CAN TAKE  
THAT WILL GUIDE THEM THROUGH  
THE NEW PHASE THEY'RE FACING.

**M**inistry leadership has many different phases, each with its own twists, turns, and challenges. No matter what phase you're facing in your journey — whether you are just starting out in ministry or making some form of a transition — one thing is the same: It's a process.

This leadership process is filled with new discoveries of who you are and the divine design that's embedded in your God-given DNA. The journey can be difficult to navigate, but there are seven wise steps all ministry leaders can take that will guide them through the new phase they're facing. These steps uncover new talents, gifts, and abilities for moving forward on the journey through ministry leadership. No matter how long it takes someone to discover deeper levels of their purpose and divine design, each ministry leader walks through a process to get there.

## 1. CATALYST

At the beginning of any story, there is an inciting action that gets the characters moving. Those moments are catalysts. They begin a process that shapes you into the person God created you to be — and become.

This phase is an invitation to recalibrate and reorient our lives for a new direction. Oftentimes in ministry these catalysts come in the form of an interruption. Perhaps an unexpected phone call, conversation, or email comes your way. It may be a news article or a TV documentary on a topic that stirred in your spirit. Whatever it was, it caused something deep within you to respond. It made you want to do something about it. In other words, an alarm clock in your soul caused your divine design to wake up!

God uses these catalyst moments to grab your attention because He wants to lead you to do something different. Maybe He wants you to enter a new ministry or maneuver your current ministry into an uncharted area.

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In my own journey, a significant catalyst moment happened while I was serving as pastor in the suburbs of Chicago. I received a call that ignited the process. This one conversation eventually led me into higher education. The voice at the other end mentioned that my name had come up in a search committee for a position to serve as dean of Northwest University. I never thought I would serve in higher education, but God had a different design for my journey. No matter the transition in my life, it always started with a God-given catalyst that grabbed my attention and ignited the process for a new adventure.

## 2. REFLECT

Once God awakens a new adventure or direction in your divine design, you should take time to reflect on your life. This is an essential step in confirming the catalyst as divinely inspired. During this process, think through experiences at work and events or conversations with family, friends, and mentors. Why do this? Because reflection reveals events and moments that help affirm the catalyst that ignited the process for the new transitional phase for your ministry. As you meditate on the past and ask for God's wisdom, you will begin to see events, circumstances, and situations that build the affirmation and, ultimately, the confidence for moving forward with the process the catalyst ignited in your soul. The point is that reflection produces affirmation for continuing the transition.

The continuing transition occurred for me when I arrived at Southeastern University to serve as president. I went through a significant moment that affirmed the new direction in my journey. One of my old teachers came to me and gave me a book on presidential leadership, along with an unlikely gift: a paper that I had completed in his class during my undergraduate years. He gave it to me to affirm me in the new position of leadership I was just about to assume. Often, God uses the people in our lives to bring affirmation to our new direction.

## 3. DECISION

Without this step, the transition in your ministry is just an idea in your head. Although you may not have all the answers, making a decision to do something about your calling is critical to fulfilling your divine

design and navigating the next phase in your journey.

After reflecting, you have to accept or decline this calling. The reflection provides the confidence to respond. Unless you make a decision, the process is stuck. Indecision creates a state of instability, causing frustration in your personal and professional life. The only way to move forward from this point is to make the decision to move in either direction.

If I had not made a decision to accept the new direction that was opening before me to serve as dean at Northwest University, the whole process would have just been a nice idea and not much more. Seek God, and reach a decision.

## 4. CONFIRMATION

After we act, we have the ability to obtain confirmation to continue with the transition process. Confirmation often comes through prayer. Other times, it comes from an internal sense of fulfillment or through the words of another person. It is essential during this time to be

attentive and open to God's Spirit.

Be aware that not every success is confirmation, and not every failure is a sign you should quit. Ask God to give you wisdom to discern His will as you navigate forward.

There are several ways confirmation can help solidify your direction. One way is relationships with key people, such as mentors and the people you look up to as leaders in your life.

They may offer seemingly off-the-cuff

comments that are relevant to what you're going through. Another way is simple common sense. In other words, the decision simply makes sense and doing anything else would seem ludicrous. Sometimes we don't like common sense and begin to over-spiritualize and over-analyze things. Be careful that you don't give way to this because it will eventually cripple the transitional process. God gave you a brain for a reason; use it to make good decisions.

When I was growing up in Bakersfield, Calif., my pastor at the time took an interest in me. He told me he had noticed some qualities in me and wanted to mentor me once a week. Years before my pastor approached me, I felt a growing desire to be in ministry, and this opportunity confirmed what was already brewing inside me. I knew for a fact that this was something I needed to do. Sometimes you simply know because you know.

## 5. PREPARATION

As you continue to grow to fulfill your divine design during this transitional process, push yourself to make the most of every opportunity to grow and prepare for what's to come. This type of development

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happens in many ways, often through formal training or general life experience. Whether it's higher education or the school of hard knocks — or a combination of the two — stay consistent in getting prepared.

Everything in life will either push you toward your divine design or away from it. The decision is yours. Intentionally take advantage of every opportunity to hone and sharpen your gifts and talents. God will bring situations and opportunities into your life to help you become the exceptional human being He divinely designed you to be. Embrace the challenge and molding process because it will certainly prepare you for whatever God has for you in the future.

When my pastor in Bakersfield was mentoring me, I encountered difficult things as well as pleasant things. I saw firsthand the situations pastors have to deal with, and through those moments, God was preparing me for a career in ministry. Make every effort to grow and learn so that you will be prepared for what lies ahead.

## 6. STEPPING OUT

Although it may be scary, stepping out into the new, transitional phase is the only way to make it real. Risk is an essential component to cultivating health and growth in your divine design, and transitions are perfect opportunities to cultivate that risk-taking faith into your journey. Until you follow through on what you know God has called you to do, you will have an unquenchable appetite for more and a general dissatisfaction with where you are today.

Keep in mind that if you're not stepping out, then you're not putting your faith into action. Faith is not something you simply talk about; it's something you work out through your decisions. You must cultivate the courage to follow the path laid before you. Make your divine design come alive, and step out in courage, confidence, and conviction to what God has awakened inside you.

I can tell you firsthand that it can be intimidating. I know I felt that way when I first assumed the role of president at SEU. The responsibility was a lot to get used to in the first few months. The university had been without a leader for two years and needed some radical transformative direction. However, as I reflected on the opportunity, decided on the transition, and prepared for the position, things in my life began to line up. I know God brought me to this place, and I know He will lead and guide me forward. He'll do the same for you. He led you this far, and He won't leave you where you are because He wants to take you further. So have faith, and step out.

## 7. DISCOVERY

Cultivating your divine design and making new discoveries is a continual process, even after you act. Transitional phases provide the gateway to uncover new talents, gifts, passions, and abilities in your life journey. When you discipline yourself into a posture of mission-minded living

— discovering and growing through reflection and prayer — you'll capture the significance of the important moments and experiences of transitional phases. This will give you momentum as you begin the growth process again.

Live with the God-given purpose and determination to impact the world for the glory of God. The more you cultivate God's purpose in your life and leadership development, the more you grow into the person God designed you to become. Always approach life with eyes wide open to what God might be birthing in your divine design, and you will never miss the opportunities that come in new transitional phases.

Whatever stage of the journey you're navigating toward your divine design, I trust these seven steps will serve as encouragement to keep you thriving. May they empower you to move forward with clarity, confidence, and conviction so you can strive in your mission.

Cultivating a posture of intentionality to discover your divine design will be the key that enhances the new experiences and opportunities in your life and career. Leadership in ministry is a process that is perpetual and will continue to enrich your Kingdom pursuits according to God's good plan and purpose. ■



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# PASTORAL HEALTH: FOUR BEHAVIORS TO DISCOVER

| By JOHN OPALEWSKI |

**“My life is over!”** I remember choking out those words to my best friend. Six weeks of insomnia and a severe decrease in appetite due to extreme anxiety had pushed me to the edge.

My emotions were out of control, I was suicidal — and I was the lead pastor of a growing congregation. My story may be your story.

**HERE IS A PRACTICAL PATHWAY  
THAT WILL HELP LEADERS  
RECOVER FROM DEPRESSION  
AND AVOID A PREMATURE EXIT  
FROM THEIR CALLING.**

Clinical depression barged into my life uninvited. This affliction cuts across lines of age, race, gender, and position. It can happen to anyone — even to pastors and their family members.

Statistics regarding the current state of pastoral health vary depending on the source. The most conservative estimates reveal that:

- More than 1,000 pastors leave the ministry every month. Burnout, contention in their church, and moral failure are the main drivers.
- Approximately four in 10 pastors suffer from depression. Five out of 10 spouses of pastors are depressed.

So when pastors find themselves confronted with depression or burnout, what can they do? Give way to the idea that longevity and health are a lost cause? Or does a practical pathway exist to help leaders approach life and ministry in a manner that does not end in emotional crisis or a premature exit from their calling? Yes, it does.

Four behaviors will help leaders recover from depression, or help them avoid falling into that long, dark tunnel. These behaviors lend to health, and in turn, pastoral longevity. Before we unpack them, let's make one thing clear: These four habits assume a leader already possesses a passionate, growing relationship with Jesus Christ. In John 15:5, Jesus told the Twelve: “Apart from me you can do nothing.”

Walking close to Him, reading and meditating on Scripture, and cultivating a private prayer and praise life provide the anchors for emotional fitness.

Illustration by Gary Locke



## BEHAVIOR 1 : LOVE YOURSELF

Emotional health begins with laying a solid foundation. Jesus revealed that the most important relational actions in life are loving God and loving our neighbors. “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matthew 22:37-40).

MY EMOTIONS  
WERE OUT  
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I WAS SUICIDAL  
— AND I WAS  
THE LEAD PASTOR  
OF A GROWING  
CONGREGATION.

Most pastors find loving God easy. Loving others is more difficult — but at least it is on our radar. Loving ourselves is where many of us go off the rails. Here are a few ideas regarding implementing this first behavior:

**Use healthy self-talk.** Self-talk is how you speak to yourself (inwardly or outwardly) about yourself. Verbally assaulting yourself damages your emotional health — every time. Being kind to yourself with words enhances your emotional health — every time. Ephesians 4:15 tells us to speak the truth in love. This includes telling the truth in love to yourself.

Understand what loving yourself means. It is different than selfishness. Acts 20:28 says: “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.”

The phrase “keep watch” in the Greek language means “paying attention to; devoting thought and effort to.” Loving yourself includes paying attention to others while simultaneously devoting thought and effort to you.

**Uncover God’s perspective.** Self-image gets a bad rap in many Christian circles. Psalm 139 helps us think the right way about self. David wrote you are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (verse 14). God knows everything about you — but loves you anyway. He

places high value on you. You are never outside His thoughts.

Using healthy self-talk, understanding what loving yourself means, and uncovering God’s perspective form a pathway to a strong emotional foundation that helps you in every area of your life — in family, work, and ministry.

## BEHAVIOR 2 : MANAGE YOUR ANGER

In Ephesians 4:26, Paul wrote: “In your anger do not sin.”

Anger often fools us. We can express it externally or repress it internally. We easily identify the external variety. Take a drive on your local freeway, and within minutes you’ll observe plenty of external anger. Repressed anger is more difficult to notice and corrosive to our health. Repression often results in depression.

Pastors get angry. Repressing their anger is not a healthy response. Neither is going ballistic. Learning how to express anger without sinning is Paul’s prescription. It contributes to a healthy emotional life. With that in mind, how do spiritual leaders get a handle on their anger?

It’s time for an honest assessment. This includes understanding:

- Anger is part of the human experience. It happens when a person violates you or crosses a healthy boundary you have established.
- Anger often involves emotional residue. Several years ago, I experienced severe pain in the middle of my back. After consulting with a chiropractor, I learned the source of my back pain was a compressed vertebra in my neck. Similarly, the presenting anger is not always the real issue. A rough day in the office sometimes translates to over-the-top reactions toward your spouse and children at home. A difficult evening at home can contribute to disproportionate anger over a minor incident with your staff the next day. Discovering what is boiling beneath the surface helps us more accurately assess our anger.
- Anger is sometimes the right response. Jesus demonstrated this when He turned over tables in the temple. Some appropriate occasions for anger can include, for example, when someone you love betrays you. Anger is an appropriate response when you see injustice inflicted on others.
- Anger can alert us to our limitations. Pay attention when you find yourself increasingly irritable. It could be due to an out-of-control calendar or too many emotionally draining events in a row with little time in between for recovery. Anger is a potential warning indicator that you may be overcommitted and overscheduled.

Learn to express your feelings of anger properly. The bottom line is figuring out how to be assertive rather than aggressive or passive. Aggression includes foul language, yelling, or getting physical with people. Passivity is another word for repression. Here we stuff



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our anger and let it boil on the inside. An example of passivity is giving someone the silent treatment. Assertiveness means standing up for yourself. It involves expressing your needs to others with love and respect. Assertiveness outlines how the behavior of the person violating you is negatively impacting your life.

Pastoral health requires us to learn how to manage anger. The good news is we are capable of adding this behavior to our tool kit. We can learn how to express our anger in a way that honors God and keeps us emotionally fit at the same time.

### BEHAVIOR 3 : PROTECT YOURSELF FROM ABUSE

This includes establishing and enforcing healthy relational boundaries. Abusive personalities introduce special dynamics into a pastor's life. The first order of business is learning to identify abusive individuals.

An abusive person can be defined as one who harms people — verbally, emotionally, physically, sexually, or spiritually. They manipulate people through coercion, false guilt, and fear. Their primary interest is not relating with you; rather, it is controlling you.

The apostle Paul warned the young pastor, Timothy: “Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message” (2 Timothy 4:14,15).

You are likely aware that some abusive people attend your church. How can you protect yourself?

**Hold your ground.** Standing up for yourself is the bedrock of Behavior 3. Jesus didn't allow anyone to push Him around until His hour had come. When an abusive person attacks you, or tries to intimidate you, you have the right to set a clear boundary and refuse to be treated poorly. When they pounce, monitor your self-talk and tell yourself the truth: *I am fearfully and wonderfully made. I don't deserve this abuse. I am a capable person.* Standing up for yourself in this fashion creates a perimeter around your emotions.

**Highlight unhealthy relationships from your past.** This can be a painful experience, but examining your family of origin can pay off. Recall how your family related to each other. How did you handle anger, conflict, or disappointment? If your family of origin was toxic, you have a higher probability of subconsciously being drawn to abusive people. The familiar often draws us — even if it is unhealthy.

**Hang out with healthy people.** Unless we are intentional here, our calendar can revolve solely around people in distress. Block out time in your schedule for people who replenish you — friends you trust, who give you permission to be human. Healthy relationships offer some protection from abusive people.

You cannot get or stay healthy without developing this third behavior. Protecting yourself from the “Alexander the metalworkers”

## Separation

**L**ongevity in ministry requires a leader to practice the art of separation. When you have people responsibility, disengaging from work tends to be a monumental challenge. Leadership is influence, but it is often intrusive.

The apostle Paul referenced this reality in 2 Corinthians 11:28: “Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.”

A beneath-the-surface pressure exists in pastoring that never seems to go away completely. A few contributors to this ongoing pressure include the budget; the expectations of people; and fear that if you speak the truth in love, people in whom you have invested a lot of time and energy may bolt. Then there are the random calls

at night or on your day off; concerns over retaining valuable team members; and perhaps pressure from an overbearing board member. All these things can intrude on your personal life. Extending your leadership run requires you to practice separation.

Separation is a learned behavior. It is easy to write about but much harder to practice. The ministry possesses an unpredictable element. Emergencies happen. But honestly, real emergencies rarely happen. You cannot control real crises, but you must understand that not every animated request from a member of your church is a genuine emergency. Separation means learning to distinguish between what is real and what is not.

Separating from work requires you to shut down your computer when you get home. Turn off the sound indicators on your smartphone that signal the arrival of an email or text message. Those noises entice you to look — and suddenly the separation you are attempting to gain gets lost. It only takes one email or text message to set the work wheels in motion.

Separation. Without it, your leadership shelf life will contract. With it, you set yourself up for a longer, more fulfilling, and more influential ministry. ■

**JOHN OPALEWSKI, Washington, Michigan**



of the world will increase your longevity in the ministry. Fortunately, with practice, you can develop this behavioral skill.

### BEHAVIOR 4 : REFUEL EMOTIONALLY

This concept is the great frontier for many spiritual leaders. The idea of a healthy ebb and flow between work and rest flies in the face of our culture — and in many respects — our Church culture.

Jesus said: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

Refueling emotionally has nothing to do with being ruled by our emotions. It has everything to do with paying attention to them. Paying attention requires us to learn how to monitor the level of emotional fuel we have in our tanks. Here are several practical indicators:

**Our pace.** Our culture’s influence impacts the Church in this area perhaps more than any other. God expects pastors to work hard and be responsible. The danger becomes running too fast because of the importance of our calling. Laziness isn’t the answer. Sensible scheduling is a better response. Setting a reasonable work-rest cadence contributes to overall health. And it will make you a more effective and productive leader.

**Our personal relationships.** Spending day after day trying to lead a church and putting out fires leaves many leaders exhausted. The thought of taking time for the important work of friendship building is overwhelming for some pastors. Regardless, when did you last spend time around friends with no other agenda than having good, clean, fun? “Two are better than one, because they have a better return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up” (Ecclesiastes 4:9,10).

**Our plan.** My car has a maintenance plan. Its purpose is extending the vehicle’s life. I change the oil every several thousand miles and rotate the tires. Likewise, there are habits you can develop that help maintain your emotions. The following are some emotional maintenance items. None of these are earth-shattering, new revelations. This is stuff you probably already know. It’s what you do with what you know that makes a real difference.

- Laugh out loud. The feel-good rush we experience after a belly laugh is chemical in nature. Scientific research confirms that laughter releases endorphins that reduce stress hormone levels and elevate our mood. Regular doses of laughter help us refuel. “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones” (Proverbs 17:22).
- Get moving. Much like laughter, exercise helps burn off nervous energy and lowers our stress levels. When I’ve had a stressful day, pounding weights at the gym works wonders for my mood.

Walking is effective as well. The type of exercise doesn’t matter; just get your body in motion. If you are not currently exercising, check with your doctor before you begin.

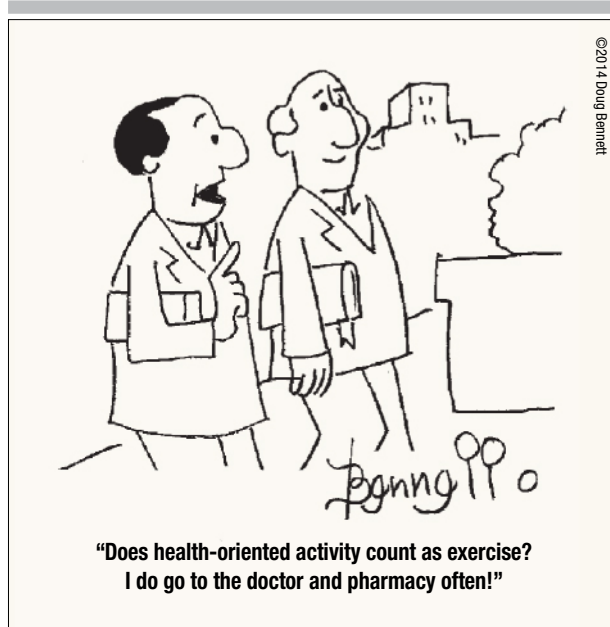
- Plan some down time. Some leaders could use a little boredom. God did not wire us to be on high alert 24/7. Plant some flowers; play 18 holes of golf; visit a museum; take a walk on the beach. For our 25th wedding anniversary, I surprised my wife with ballroom dancing lessons. When you are learning how to do the rumba, you have no time to think about ministry. You’ll have a better chance of extending your leadership shelf life if you learn how and when to take your foot off the gas pedal.

If you are suffering with depression, anxiety, or burnout, make an appointment with your doctor. Seek out a qualified counselor. Surround yourself with people who love you and are committed to you.

Pastoral health can be elusive, but it is not unreachable. Love God wholeheartedly. Love yourself. Manage your anger. Protect yourself from abuse. Refuel emotionally. These four behaviors will help you get healthy (or stay healthy). They will free you to lead longer, better, and enjoy it more. ☒



**JOHN OPALEWSKI**, Assemblies of God minister and author of *Pastor Disaster: Confronting the Growing Crisis Among Church Leaders*. He lives in Washington, Michigan, and is the founder of Converge Coaching, LLC, a ministry that equips leaders to be effective in their calling while maintaining health in their personal lives. Contact John at [john@convergecoach.com](mailto:john@convergecoach.com). Visit his website at [www.convergecoach.com](http://www.convergecoach.com)



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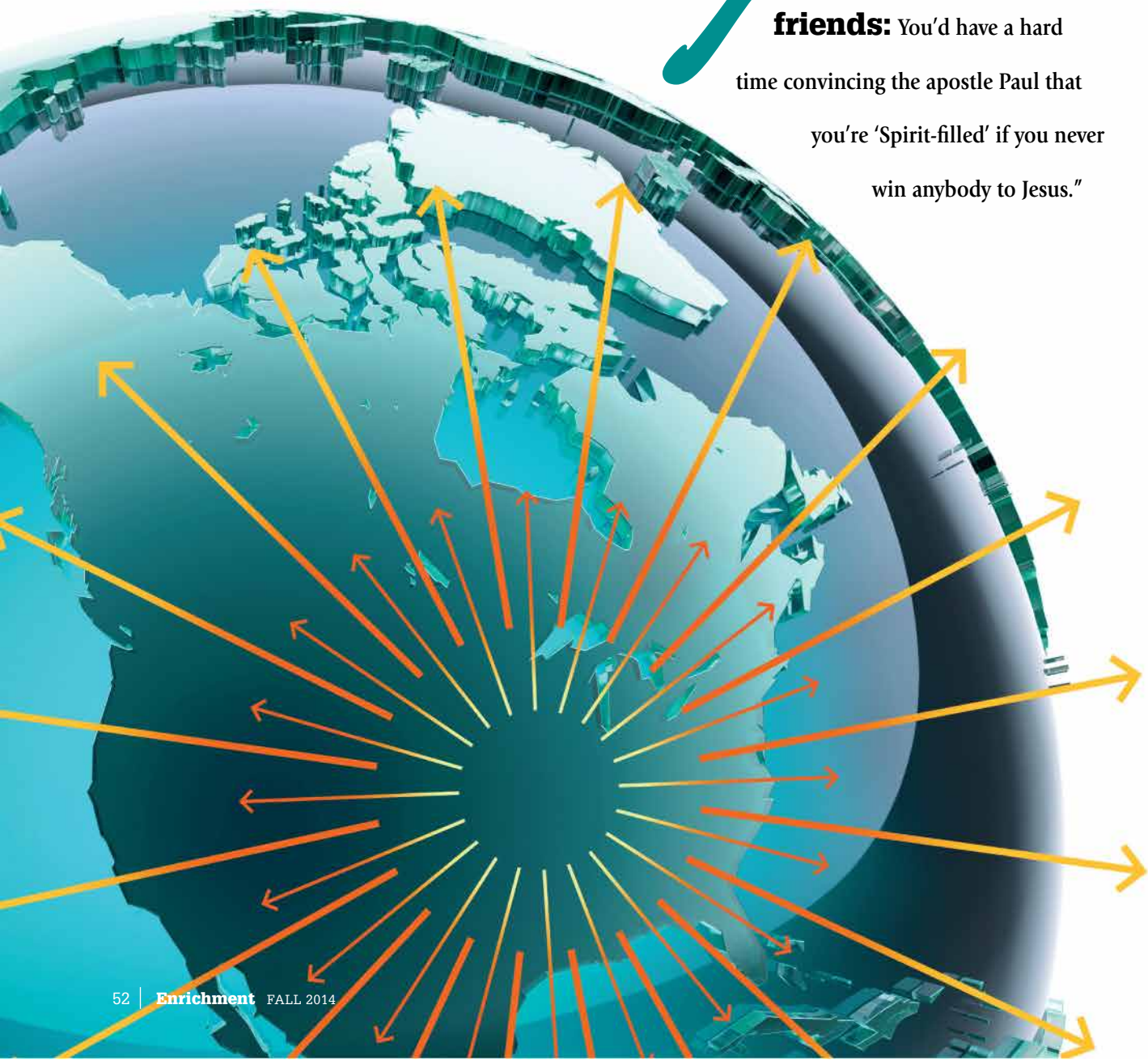
I N T R O D U C T I O N

# OUR *Greatest* WORK

By George Paul Wood

When you bring God into the picture —  
when you embrace the missional logic of Pentecost —  
all things are possible.

“**To all my Pentecostal friends:** You’d have a hard time convincing the apostle Paul that you’re ‘Spirit-filled’ if you never win anybody to Jesus.”



My friend Scott Camp, an Assemblies of God evangelist, posted that statement in his status update on Facebook awhile back. Those words grabbed me by my suit lapels (yes, I still wear a suit to work) and shook me good and hard. They dragged me back into the New Testament for confirmation and then in front of a mirror for confrontation. Is this what Scripture says? Is this what I do?

In 25 words, Scott laid bare the missional logic of Pentecostalism: To accomplish the Great Commission, we need the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This is what Scripture teaches, of course.

"[Y]ou will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you," Jesus promised the disciples, "and you will be my witnesses ... " (Acts 1:8).

Jesus kept His promise on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and the number of the saved has increased every day since.

The founders of the Assemblies of God, like other early Pentecostals, grasped this missional logic, both intellectually and in practice. That is why delegates to the 2nd General Council in Chicago, Ill., in November 1914 pledged themselves to do "the greatest work of evangelism the world has ever seen." Like the Church on the Day of Pentecost, they received the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit filled their mouths with the gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the nations.

This August, the Assemblies of God celebrates its centennial. Delegates from across the United States and around the globe will gather in Springfield, Missouri to rejoice in our first 100 years and plan for the next 100 years. As an editor, I was tempted to take a retrospective look at our Fellowship, commissioning authors to write about what God has done for us so far. But I

resisted that temptation strongly. Now is not the time to engage in historical reverie or get nostalgic for the past — however storied it may be. Now is the time to bring Pentecost's missional logic to the forefront of our attention and challenge me and you and our entire Movement to remember our commitment to doing the "greatest work."

Has the Assemblies of God grown in the past 100 years? Yes, magnificently so, and for the 67.5 million current AG

worldwide adherents, all glory belongs to God. However, the world population has grown, too. Has our rate of growth exceeded its rate of growth?

Have we established indigenous churches throughout the world? Yes, the Assemblies of God ministers in 252 countries, regions, and territories, and once again, to God be the

glory! But there are still — 2,000 years past Pentecost! — 7,000+ people groups who have never heard the gospel, who have no viable Christian witness within their own culture and language group. Alongside these unreached people groups are the people

next door to our churches who have never heard the gospel from us. Apart from Jesus Christ, who loves

them all, they are lost.

I don't know about you, but when I consider the immensity and complexity of the evangelistic task on a global level, even on a national level, I begin to feel overwhelmed. When that happens, I go back to a sermon my dad often preached on the feeding of the 5,000, titled, "How to Be a Failure."

"Look at the size of the task," Dad would say. "Look at the little you have, and leave God out of the picture."

That's a sure recipe for failure.

But when you bring God into the picture — when you embrace the missional logic of Pentecost — all things are possible. This immense task, our greatest work, is doable because God empowers us through the Holy Spirit to accomplish the mission Jesus Christ gave us to be His witnesses to "all nations" (Matthew 28:19) and "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). All we need is Spirit power for the Jesus opportunities right in front of us.

On behalf of the editors, I offer you this Centennial issue of *Enrichment* as an aid to accomplishing your Spirit-powered, Jesus-focused work of proclaiming God's good news to all humanity. The harvest is plentiful. Let not the workers be few! 📖

**Now is not the time to engage in historical reverie or get nostalgic for the past. Now is the time to bring Pentecost's missional logic to the forefront of our attention and challenge our entire Movement to remember our commitment to doing the "greatest work."**

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**GEORGE PAUL WOOD**, executive editor, Assemblies of God publications, Springfield, Missouri.





# Fanning the Flame:

## SPIRIT EMPOWERMENT FOR THE NEXT 100 YEARS

Interview with **George O. Wood** and **Greg Mundis**

**T**he early founders of the **Assemblies of God** understood the intrinsic connection between Spirit baptism and evangelism. During the 1914 General Council in



Chicago, Illinois, delegates committed themselves to do the greatest work of evangelism the world has ever seen.

Now after 100 years of Assemblies of God history, is it possible we have forgotten the importance of the connection between evangelism and Spirit baptism?



To discuss this connection and our way forward for the next 100 years, **George Paul Wood** interviewed **George O. Wood**, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God USA and chairman of the World Assemblies

of God Fellowship, and **Greg Mundis**, Assemblies of God World Missions executive director.

# In essence, what is baptism in the Holy Spirit?

**WOOD:** Baptism in the Spirit is defined for us in Acts 1:8 and Acts 2:4, where Jesus commands the early disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they are endued with power from on high. Acts 2:4 then describes that experience of receiving the baptism in the Spirit. I like to use the phrase “overwhelming baptism,” since the meaning of baptism is really immersion. It is the “overwhelming” in the Spirit, with Christ being the Baptizer. He is the One who baptizes us into the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit is the element into which we are placed, much like a minister baptizes a person into water. So Christ baptizes us into the Spirit — overwhelms us with the Spirit. That, for me, is a very helpful way of casting the doctrine and the experience of Spirit baptism, by saying it’s an incredible experience of truly being overwhelmed in God.

**Dr. Wood has brought up the connection in Acts 1:8 and Acts 2:4. How then does this overwhelming experience of the Holy Spirit relate to the Church's evangelistic mission?**

**MUNDIS:** Acts 1:8 says, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (KJV).

Christ said once you receive this power, you will be My witness. After Peter’s sermon in Acts 2, the first thing that happens after the baptism in the Spirit is a proclamation. Pentecostal scholars, particularly in the 20th and 21st centuries, see that the prophetic gift, the utterance, was such an important part of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

**That brings us into the question of our distinctive doctrine. In the Assemblies of God Statement of Fundamental Truths, Article 8, the initial physical sign — sometimes now referred to as the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit — is speaking in tongues. Why tongues? What is**

**the connection of tongues, or more broadly, prophetic speech, to the Church's evangelistic mission?**

**WOOD:** Acts 2 puts together what I would call the inward journey and the outward journey. The outward journey is the empowerment to proclaim the gospel. The inward journey is that we are filled up with the Spirit’s presence. We are placed into the Spirit. If you are going to have a successful outward journey, you

have to be inwardly enabled and empowered to make you able to bear witness in the outer way.

We understand from the Book of Acts that they were all filled with the Spirit and began to speak in tongues as the Spirit caused them to give forth speech. That speaking in other tongues is inextricably linked to this empowerment, which first of all has the inward component. You have to trust the Holy Spirit

when you speak in a language you have not learned, just like you have to trust the Holy Spirit to speak to others in a language you have learned. One of the great impediments to a gospel-empowered witness is people do not feel confident to step out in faith and bear witness. If you have had this experience of the inward journey and have stepped out in faith, it is a natural sequence to step into the outward journey of empowerment. There is a definite connection between Spirit empowerment, speaking in tongues, and bearing witness for the Lord.

**MUNDIS:** Bob Menzies has written in his book *Spirit and Power*: “Luke describes the gift of the Spirit exclusively in charismatic terms as the source of power for effective witness.”

He goes on to say, “The manifestation of tongues is a powerful reminder that the church is by virtue of the Pentecostal gift a prophetic community empowered for the missionary task.”

Menzies articulated that our Pentecostal community is a prophetic community. The prophetic gift Dr. Wood just mentioned, the inward and the outward expression, is a symbiotic relationship between the two.

**Critics of the Pentecostal Movement describe baptism in the Spirit as a form of ecstasy, an uncontrolled emotionalism. Share your experience of baptism in the Spirit, and that ongoing filling. How has that affected your life in ministry?**

**WOOD:** It affected me deeply as a kid, because I thought that in order to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, I needed to be unconscious or in a catatonic state where I would wake up afterwards and would be told I had spoken in tongues and received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Of course when I was young I had no knowledge of the root word in the Greek for *ecstasy*. The word comes from two Greek words — *ek stasis*. *Stasis* means “being,” and *ek* means

“**God taps the noncognitive side of our personality to help us relate to Him in a powerful way.** — Wood”

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“out.” Ecstasy literally means “out of being.” Nothing could be further from the truth in terms of Spirit baptism and Spirit empowerment. In fact, the apostle Paul says, “The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets” (1 Corinthians 14:32).

One of the things I discovered in Spirit baptism was that I gave expression to the Spirit’s utterance to speak in a language I had not learned while I was fully conscious. It did not involve me being ecstatic.

Are there ecstatic experiences that believers can have as a personal spiritual blessing? Yes! We have witnessed that in the Pentecostal Movement. Those unique phenomena are exceptional kinds of circumstances. They are not directly related to the scriptural theme of Spirit baptism and Spirit empowerment. For me, it was the release of praying that gave me a liberty to talk to the Lord when I ran out of intelligible words to say.

When you kiss the one you love for the first time, the kiss beats about a million words. How do you communicate with God outside of the parameter of the normal verbal language? It seems to me that the Lord reaches deep into our psyche, deep into our inner being, to give us a way of loving God, praying to God, and interceding to God past our cognitive ability. God taps the noncognitive side of our personality to help us relate to Him in a powerful way.

**MUNDIS:** As a teenager, I knew that everybody in the youth group was seeking the Baptism, but I was extremely shy. I remember so passionately wanting more of God. The Baptism for me was like the unleashing of a fire hydrant. It was just so marvelous. The Baptism altered me. If you were to talk to my wife, she would say it altered my personality. It transformed me, not only to be His witness, but it transformed even a part of who I am.

**Is the baptism in the Holy Spirit a one-time event or a repeatable event, and are there other results in a person’s life from being baptized in the Spirit?**

**WOOD:** The Scripture says be filled with the Spirit, and that admonition to the Ephesians is being given to persons who

have received the baptism in the Spirit. Receiving the baptism in the Spirit is like a moment in time and space; like salvation, you cross from one line to another. It is a definite happening.

If a person gets saved and then does not live the Christian life, the great moment will quickly dissipate in its impact and influence. It is the same way with Spirit baptism.

I had to learn growing up in the Pentecostal Movement and in the Assemblies of God that life in the Spirit is an ongoing development in our lives. The term “filled with the Spirit” throughout the Book of Acts and in Paul’s letters is an elastic term that not only refers to the initial Baptism; it also can refer to moments in our life when we are being pressed upon with new challenges.

In Acts 4, Peter and John are thrown into prison. Acts 4:8 says Peter was filled with the Spirit. He was filled with the Spirit in Acts 2. But now he has a situation that he has never faced, and he needs to be filled up to his then present need. That is the ongoing work of the Spirit that meets us in crisis moments.

Paul also talks about the continual life in the Spirit in Ephesians: “Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:18–20).

The fruit of the Spirit are also marks of a Spirit-filled life: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (Galatians 5:22,23).

The hallmark of Spirit-filled, Spirit-empowered people always ought to be that one word: more. I am capable of receiving more of the Spirit, and He is capable of giving himself more to me.

Paul prays in Ephesians 3:19, “And to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” That is the most audacious prayer request ever made. That would be like saying pour the ocean into my little cup. My cup cannot contain the ocean any more than my life can

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**[The Baptism] transformed me, not only to be His witness, but it transformed even a part of who I am.**  
 — Mundis  
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**One of the aspects of early Pentecostalism is the power of testimony.**  
 — Wood  
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**If you are not preaching the baptism in the Spirit or conversion, you will not get it.**  
 — Mundis  
 ”



## Fanning the Flame: Spirit Empowerment for the Next 100 Years

(continued from page 57)

contain all the fullness of God. Our life is not like a porcelain cup that is not expandable. We are expandable. We are capable of receiving more of Him, and we need more of Him as we journey through life, because there is nothing worse than stale experience.

**Some churches are good at bringing people to an experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit, but not good at making converts. Other churches are good at making converts, but not good at discipling them into the baptism in the Holy Spirit. How do we interpret this dilemma?**

**WOOD:** Pastors who emphasize Spirit baptism need to also emphasize that the Spirit is given that we might be empowered to bear witness. Pastors who do not emphasize Spirit baptism but emphasize conversion need to emphasize Spirit baptism as a consequence to conversion.

It all comes down to pastoral leadership. You get what you preach. You get what you set your mark for. You get what you plan for. If you do not preach on Spirit baptism, you will not have Spirit baptisms. If you do not give opportunity for people to receive the Spirit, they will not receive the Spirit. If you do not preach for an altar call, if you do not preach for a response, if you do not preach for conversion, you will not get it. It all boils down to the priority of leadership.

**MUNDIS:** Bob Mackish was one of my mentors. He always approached this with the same answer: You get what you preach and teach. If you are not preaching the baptism in the Spirit or conversion, you will not get it. But if you are preaching it, that is what will happen. Pretty simple, but pretty profound.

**WOOD:** You cannot do it in an overbearing way. You cannot get people to move to the altar by overloading them with guilt. The Holy Spirit has to do that. You want to create the context for hunger, to set the table scripturally and experientially for both conversion and Spirit baptism.

**Prior to the 2013 General Council in Orlando, the Associated Press released a story using Assemblies of God official statistics from 2012 that indicated a three percent decline in Spirit baptisms. This AP story got magnified around the media world that while the**

**Assemblies of God is growing, its distinctive practice is declining. This is about biblical faithfulness to the pattern of biblical living, so should we be worried about this or not?**

**WOOD:** No matter what the statistics tell us, the fact remains that we need to be more intentional and more deliberate in seeing that people are given the opportunity to receive Holy Spirit baptism.

A large percentage of our people are in churches with attendance over 400 people. Many of these churches have multiple services on Sunday morning, and they do not have adequate time at the close of the service for people to come forward for prayer to receive the baptism in the Spirit.

Churches have to be intentional about providing opportunities for people to be taught what Spirit baptism is and what living in the Spirit is. Many churches do that very well through monthly Holy Spirit emphasis, adult retreats, youth retreats, and children's retreats.

We also recognize that many churches are completely unaware of how many people receive the baptism in the Spirit in a youth convention, youth camp, or children's camp. We do not tabulate those numbers. Nor do we gather statistics for family retreat centers. We are cautious when we see a three percent drop in a statistic, because that may not be accurate in terms of describing the totality of what happened. We are trying to make a more complete statistical analysis so we get better data, without doing double counting.

**MUNDIS:** That is our heart, our passion. That is who we are; it is our identification. My hunger for God that I described in the 1960s has not wavered. It has grown. Seeking after God and wanting to fulfill His will, with all of the circumstances of life that I have endured — that does not change. God is a non-

changing God who wants to fill me and use me for His glory and honor. He is so passionate about me that He sent His only Son. I want to be that passionate about Him.

**We need to be more intentional and more deliberate in seeing that people are given the opportunity to receive Holy Spirit baptism.**

— Wood

**He is so passionate about me that He sent His only Son. I want to be that passionate about Him.**

— Mundis

**The baptism in the Spirit is a moment in time and space; like salvation, you cross from one line to another.**

— Wood

In my own heart as a minister of the gospel and in the Assemblies of God, I don't ever want that kind of passion to wane. I want to be a model for young people. I want to be a model for my family. I want to be a model for people that I associate with that Christ is all in all, and that is who I seek. I seek Jesus. Jesus then overwhelms me with His presence in the baptism in the Spirit.

**You said earlier it all devolves to pastoral leadership. With the growth of larger churches, what are some innovative ways that churches in these new cultural settings can use to help people both to receive Spirit baptism and then to express this experience through mission?**

**MUNDIS:** An effective tool is the cell group, where life is lived together in community. Spiritual experiences happen there, along with physical and social experiences. Cell groups offer that opportunity for the expression of the body of Christ in an environment where you really know people. Cell groups grow and people bring in friends for specific interest

groups. They can experience Jesus, and they can experience what I have experienced.

**WOOD:** One of the aspects of early Pentecostalism is the power of testimony. A pastor of a church of about 4,000 people was preaching, and a young man who was in a third-generation criminal enterprise was in his church. He came from horrendous family circumstances. The preacher later found out that the previous night, this young man had a gun pointed at his head, and the attacker fired, but the bullet did not discharge. The boy ran, and subsequent bullets discharged and did not hit him. This boy finds himself in church on

Sunday morning with his mother. As he is preaching, the pastor experienced a gift of discernment. He pointed to the young man and said, "God is calling you right now to give your life to Jesus Christ. If you're serious about that, I want you to get out of your seat and come up and join me on the platform."

That young man came up. Today that young man is finishing his fourth year in Bible college and is going into youth

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**Prayer is the igniting force — that connection with God that keeps this whole thing going.**

— Mundis

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## Fanning the Flame: Spirit Empowerment for the Next 100 Years

(continued from page 59)

ministry. When you share a testimony, it creates a hunger in people. What is God doing in the life of a layperson that has significantly altered them? The power in testimony is a tremendous augmentation to the singing and to the preaching.

**MUNDIS:** In our early Pentecostal movements, it is the priesthood of all believers. The identification factor is so important. Sometimes preachers are held up to be a little bit more sanctified or holy. But as a layperson, a businessperson, a carpenter, a plumber, a housewife, a child, that identification factor accelerates that excitement in people.

**WOOD:** Entrepreneurs — spiritual entrepreneurs — tend to look for the next innovative thing they can do. The main things are the plain things, and the plain things are the main things. A local church must cultivate an atmosphere of prayer to be effective in any arena — Spirit baptism, divine healing, conversion, and deliverance. If you can get a band of people who are interceding for God to work in that church, and God to work in that town or community, He will do that. Nothing goes forward without prayer.

You can do all the whiz-bang stuff in the world; but if it is not backed by a solid commitment to praying and letting the Holy Spirit go beyond what we can plan, think, and do, it is going to crash and burn.

**MUNDIS:** Prayer is the underlying assumption in our conversation. We have talked about mechanical and logistical aspects, with the underlying assumption that you are tarrying and hearing from God. We cannot just pass over it by assuming it is happening.

Prayer is the igniting force — that connection with God that keeps this whole thing going. I love getting on the 7:14 prayer app and seeing people praying around the world. Prayer is so important to this whole conversation.

**Both of you have pastored churches, and both of you currently lead leaders. So you can imagine a pastor saying, “Yes, yes, I long for more, but I’m tapped out.” Talk to that pastor. How does he or she receive this fresh infilling of the Spirit that is the kick-start for everything else?**

**MUNDIS:** We have the opportunity in leadership to travel across

the states and visit many churches and associate with incredible people — pastors and associate pastors and laypeople. On occasion, we find pastors who are struggling. My heart goes out to them, because Sunday keeps coming. It does not matter if you are depressed. Sunday is there, and people need pastoral care and need a word from God.

I default back to prayer, and not only my prayers. Those people in your life — your family, your spouse, people you trust — are praying for you and can lay hands on you and walk with you.

Obviously, with severe depression, that needs to be addressed with other elements. I am Pentecostal enough in belief and practice to believe that God can intervene in those kinds of situations. Even though I may not be the best vessel He can use, I am a vessel that He can use if I open myself up to Him.

**WOOD:** As a pastor, I set aside, as a regular discipline, significant blocks of time for personal feeding through study, Scripture, and prayer. Nearly every week I would devote at least 20 hours for intake, where I study the Scriptures, break out the commentaries, and really take time to develop and feed my soul. When my soul is fed, I can feed other people with the overflow.

Having a vision greater than my current resources always encouraged me. If I can get up excited about the next challenge that waits, that helps me deal with fatigue or even depression. I have experienced depression, so I know what it is like to keep going despite it.

This is where our Movement has been so great. We have exposed people through world missions and U.S. missions to areas of tremendous personal and social need. Finding a way to give is a critical component of our Christian walk. Jesus did say it is more blessed to give than to receive, and I find that I am really energized by the joy of giving. I am not just talking about writing out a check, but giving meaningfully of yourself to another. ■

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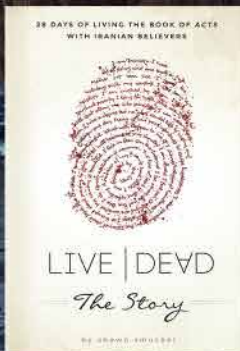
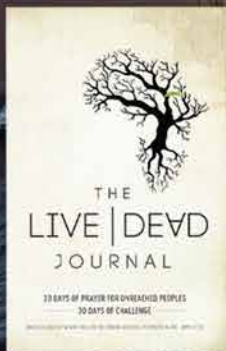
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**When my soul is fed, I can feed other people with the overflow.**

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A wooden cross is the central focus, set against a background of plywood. The plywood has faint, large letters visible, including "T" and "C". The cross is made of weathered, greyish-brown wood. The background is a warm, brownish-orange color.

# *What Shall We Preach?*

## **A BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOSPEL**

By **Deborah M. Gill**

How a biblical understanding of the gospel, focusing on God's action and our response to it, will change how you preach.



Mark 1:14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.  
15 "The time has come," he said.

# The kingdom of God has come near.

Repent and believe  
the good news!"



# The word “gospel” comes from the Old English *gōdspel*, comprised of *gōd* (“good”) and *spel* (“news, or story”).

This term identifies the best news the world has ever heard.

The Greek New Testament words from which “evangel” derives (*euangelion* and *euangelizomai*) have roots in the Old Testament Hebrew word *bāšar*.

This verb has to do with announcing good news and bringing news of victory, as in war.

This Hebrew word is most prominent in Isaiah 40–66, chapters that promise the coming of God’s kingly rule as the ultimate good news. It is rendered in the Greek translation of the Old Testament with the verb *euangelizomai* (cf. Septuagint of Isaiah 40:9; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1).

## GOD’S GOOD NEWS

What is the gospel? What is the nature of this good news? It is the message that in Jesus Christ God’s righteous reign has arrived on Earth. It is the invitation to enjoy the benefits of God’s kingdom — now freely extended to all.

The synoptic Gospels frequently link the good news to the concept of God’s kingdom (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:14,15; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 16:16). The kingdom of God was the central focus of Jesus’ preaching. Christ’s good news was the announcement of the arrival of God’s kingly rule.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus read Isaiah 61:1,2 in the synagogue of Nazareth and identified himself as the fulfillment of Scripture. This marked a key moment in His ministry. Matthew and Mark record this event near the end of Jesus’ Galilean ministry (Matthew 13:53–

58; Mark 6:1–5). Luke places the story near the beginning of his account, right after John’s imprisonment, highlighting its significance to Christ’s mission and message (Luke 4:16–21). In so doing, Luke illuminates the meaning of the term gospel.

Jesus identified himself as the One anointed by the Holy Spirit to proclaim good news by declaring: “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:18,21).

The subject matter of this good news includes freedom, recovery of sight, and the Lord’s favor. Helpless and afflicted individuals — the poor, the captive, the blind, and the oppressed — are among the recipients of Jesus’ message. Of the five actions on behalf of the helpless listed in Luke 4:18, proclaiming the good news is the most definitive summary of Jesus’ ministry. Throughout Christ’s ministry, the task most closely associated with preaching the good news is healing the sick (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 11:5; Luke 7:22; 8:1,2; 9:6).

The first fulfillment of Isaiah 61 was the return of the Jewish captives from Babylon. Isaiah prophesied they

would one day be set free to return to their homeland. Isaiah’s good news may also refer in part to the year of jubilee established in Leviticus 25. God instructed the Israelites to cancel debts, free slaves, let fields lie fallow, and restore lands to the original families on the 50th year, after seven sabbaticals, or Sabbath years. In the original languages, technical terms related to the year of jubilee appear in both the Isaiah and Luke passages. Two changes Jesus made to the Isaiah passage further strengthen the probability of an allusion to the year of jubilee. First, He inserted between His reading of verses 1 and 2 of Isaiah 61 a reference from Isaiah 58:6 containing Jubilee-related terminology. Second, Jesus stopped His reading from Isaiah 61 prior to the proclamation in verse 2 of “the day of vengeance of our God.” Instead of executing judgment in His first coming, Jesus offers peace to those who are enemies and comfort to those who mourn.

After identifying himself as God’s Spirit-anointed good-news bearer and announcing the arrival of the year of the Lord’s favor, Jesus met with a mixed response from His hometown folk. At first, “all spoke well of him” (Luke 4:22). After Jesus clarified that the poor to whom the good news is addressed includes outsiders, they were furious (Luke 4:28).

Jesus regards no religious yardstick or political prerequisite to determine one’s worthiness to participate in His kingdom blessings. It is the helpless in general who qualify as recipients of Jesus’ good news.

Jesus’ message was the gospel: the good news that God’s kingdom had come, bringing freedom, liberty, and healing to those in need.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the gospel is both the announcement and enactment of the fulfillment of God’s promises, and Jesus is the prime proclaimer and personification of that good news.

## THE MESSAGE OF THE APOSTLES

In his Gospel, Luke uses the verb *euangelizomai* (“preach the

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good news”) but never the noun *euangelion* (“gospel”). He reserves the noun for apostolic preaching in the Book of Acts. We can loosely categorize the message of the apostles as *kerygma*, which is missionary or evangelistic preaching, and *didache*, or Christian teaching.

When they announced the good news, the apostles preached Jesus. The person and work of Christ are often the objects of the verb *euangelizomai* (Acts 5:42; 8:35; 11:20; 17:18; Galatians 1:16; Ephesians 3:8; 1 Peter 1:11,12). The apostles sought to communicate the gospel in ways that were appropriate to the circumstances and cultural backgrounds of their readers — a method missiologists call contextualization. Still, scholars note certain themes in *kerygma* in Acts, including Christ’s sacrificial death; God’s vindication of Christ through resurrection; apostolic, firsthand testimony of events; Christ’s fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies; the presence and power of the Holy Spirit; and the offer of forgiveness.<sup>3</sup> And like Jesus’ ministry, apostolic preaching was accompanied by supernatural power (1 Corinthians 1:17; 2:4).

It is important to look to Paul for insight into the gospel since 60 of the 76 New Testament occurrences of *euangelion* appear in his epistles. A key passage of special importance to a Pauline theology of the good news is one in which the apostle offers his own authoritative summary of the gospel: 1 Corinthians 15. In verse 3 of that chapter, Paul uses the verb *paradidōmi*, technical terminology in Judaism for transmitting tradition. This points to an authoritative gospel pattern. After all, Paul claimed to teach the same gospel as the other apostles (Galatians 1:8; 2:1–9).

And what is Paul’s gospel, according to 1 Corinthians 15? This summary includes a statement of Christ’s sacrificial death (verse 3), an emphasis on forgiveness, salvation, scriptural fulfillment, and the Resurrection (verses 2–4), and a litany of apostolic witnesses (verses 5–7).

Theologian David Jackson explains the logic of Paul’s combination of facts and doctrines this way: The death of Christ comes first, as it is of greatest importance. Scripture explains its mystery, and the Resurrection defends it. Apostolic

witnesses corroborate the argument. Thus, verses 1–11 contain the elements of the general *kerygma*. Through the rest of the chapter, in rabbinic style, Paul offers logical arguments and further appeals to Scripture concerning Christ’s resurrection and the resurrection of Christians, essential elements of apologetics in a Jewish milieu.<sup>4</sup>

What can we apply from this brief investigation of *kerygma* and exposition of Paul’s gospel? The elements of *kerygma*

are essentially a condensation of the very reasons why the message is such good news. How does *kerygma* characterize the gospel?

**The gospel is historical fact.** Christ’s life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven are real events supported by many authentic, apostolic witnesses.

**The gospel is providential.**

God’s mission involves divine foresight and intervention from eternity past to eternity future.

**The gospel is salvific.** Christ’s death is the only acceptable sacrifice sufficient to save mankind from sin.

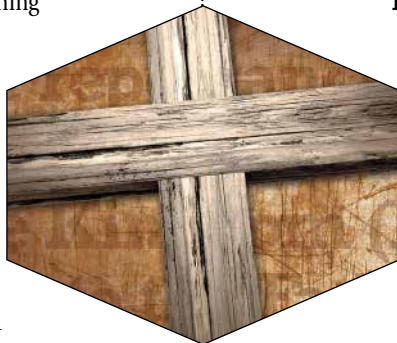
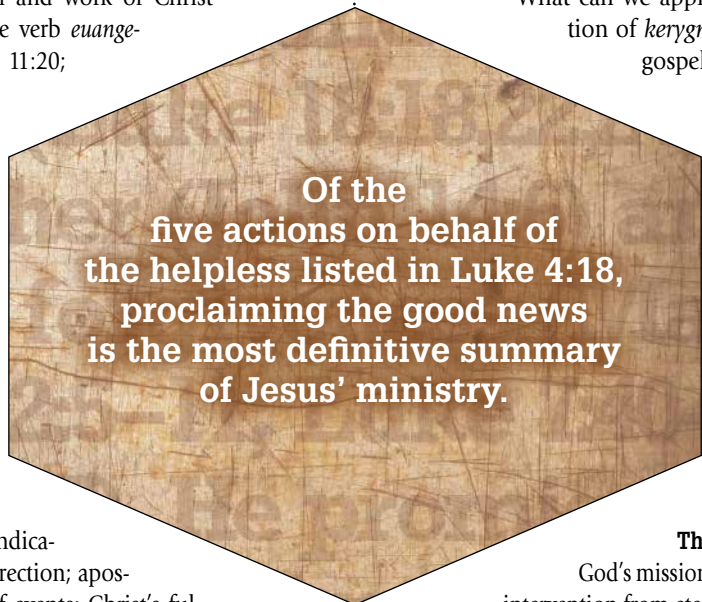
**The gospel is supernatural.** The Resurrection is God’s divine exclamation point vindicating His Christ and validating the gospel.

**The gospel is available.** It requires only repentance and faith to receive Christ as Savior and become a child of God.

**The gospel is accessible.** The Lord invites all people to come to Him and receive the same presence and power of the Holy Spirit that worked in Jesus’ life.

Justification and faith are two essential theological elements of the gospel seen throughout both Galatians and Romans. Consider the important interplay of these two aspects of the gospel.

Justification is a declarative act with a judicial connotation. Just as a defendant can be cleared of charges in a courtroom, God pronounces sinners free from sin and its penalty through faith in Jesus.<sup>5</sup> It is not people’s own good works that merit such a verdict but their trusting in Christ’s work on their behalf. The Divine Judge considers one thing in the place of the other. Through justification, God no longer views repentant sinners as guilty. Instead, He sees a people redeemed by Jesus’ atonement.<sup>6</sup>





## What Shall We Preach? A Biblical Understanding of the Gospel

(continued from page 65)

The Greek noun *pistis* unites the two concepts of faith and faithfulness. The foundation of all Pauline theology is God's faithfulness and the response of human faith for which it calls (Romans 3:3). Saving faith is the placing of the believer's entire trust and confidence in the *kerygma* — the message of the Cross and the story of Christ's faithfulness to the eternal plan of God. To have faith or to believe (*pisteuein*, the cognate verb of *pistis*) requires not only hearing the good news but confession and repentance — the faithfulness of a disciple formed of both an intellectual and moral response.

In Romans 3, Paul discloses how the gospel works. The context (verses 1–20) explains that all humans are guilty before God. With every benefit of their spiritual heritage, even Jews are sinful. Though they have the covenant, the sign of circumcision, the prophetic oracles of God, and the Law itself, they need a Savior. Indeed, no one is righteous. So God took the initiative and revealed the righteousness of God “through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe” (verse 22). Since everyone — whether Jew or Gentile — needs righteousness, God offers it to all without distinction. For we have all failed to measure up to the image of God in us (verse 23). Justification comes as a free gift of grace to those who receive by faith the redemptive work of Christ through the blood atonement God put in place (verses 24,25).

Justification includes forgiveness, but it is more. According to theologian John R.W. Stott: “Pardon is negative, the remission of a penalty or debt; justification is positive, the bestowal of a righteous status, the sinner's reinstatement in the favor and fellowship of God.”<sup>7</sup> Instead of the law of works, the gospel equates to the law of faith, i.e., the principle of faith in action (Romans 3:27). Romans 3 concludes that there is no place for boasting because the gospel is a sheer gift of grace.

### THE GIFT OF THE GOSPEL

What has God given us in the gospel? God offers His kingly rule that His purposes will prevail in the lives of those who accept Christ's lordship. Jesus is inseparable from the Kingdom.

He is the Kingdom personified (Matthew 19:29; Mark 10:29; Luke 18:29). Conscious of His identity and mission, Jesus invites people to himself for rest from the burden of the yoke of the Law (Matthew 11:28). He offers hope to the poor and oppressed (Matthew 11:5; Luke 4:18; Isaiah 61:1). His “I am” statements offer provision for the needy (John 6:35,41,48,51; 8:12; 10:7,9,11,14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1).

To those who respond to His invitation with repentance and faith, Christ offers salvation (Luke 19:9) and entrance into the Kingdom (Luke 18:18,22,24). They come to the Father (John 14:6) and experience divine forgiveness (Matthew 18:23–35; Mark 2:5–11; Luke 7:40–48) and peace (John 14:27). He promises believers the protection and provision of the Heavenly Father (Matthew 6:25–34; 7:7–12; Luke 12:4–7,22–32) that removes anxiety in this life and assures hope in the next (John 10:29).

But there is more! Believers in Christ come into a new and eternal relationship in the family of God. They relate to God as their Father (Matthew 6:9; John 3:3–8,16;

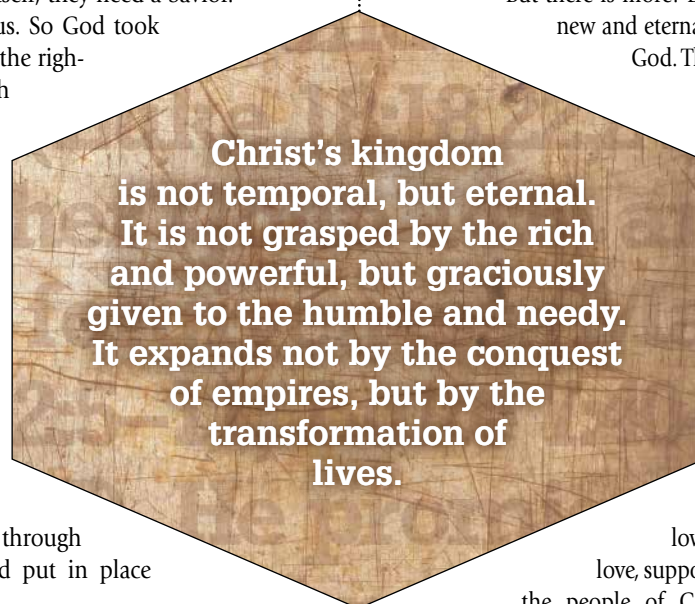
20:17) and share the kind of intimacy Jesus experienced in the privilege of addressing God as Abba (Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). They receive the Holy Spirit, who offers them guidance, instruction (Luke 11:13; 12:11,12; John 14:16,17), and power to live this life of the Kingdom (Acts 1:8). Christ fol-

lowers enter a new community of love, support, and mission — His Church, the people of God. And at the consummation of Christ's kingdom, the people of God will share in His glory and authority (Luke 12:32; 22:29,30), in the eternal security of His Father's home (John 14:1–6).

The human heart hungers for these gifts, and man-made religions relentlessly and vainly struggle to achieve them. The good news is that God has taken all the initiative in Christ. Luke 19:10 and the parables of Luke 15 remind us Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. There is an urgency and yearning in His mission and a lament over those who reject God's gifts (Matthew 23:37). God longs to bless us even more than we long for His blessings. What a remarkable gift He offers!

### THE COST OF THE GOSPEL

As the gracious gift of God, this good news is free. Yet this



free gift cost Christ profoundly, and His followers are not to regard it as cheap. What does God expect of recipients of the gospel? Since Christ is to be their final judge, they should consider most seriously their response to His invitation. Rejecting Christ means death (Mark 8:34–38; Matthew 7:13,14). Ignoring His offer equals rejection, for neutrality is impossible (Luke 11:23).

Once a person makes a decision for Christ, discipleship begins. New requirements and responsibilities emerge. The offer of rest involves a new yoke of obedience to Christ (Matthew 11:29) as God’s rule personified (Matthew 5:22–44; 7:24–27). Christ calls His disciples to live in a manner worthy of Him, adhering to His ethics both individually and communally. Their relationship with God rules over everything, and their own lives are to be reflections of God’s (Matthew 5:48). As Kingdom representatives on Earth, they are to witness for their Master (Matthew 5:13–16; Mark 8:38) and serve Him faithfully in view of the Last Judgment (Matthew 25).

Thus, as Christ is the complete expression of God’s sovereign rule, hearers of the gospel have a responsibility to glorify Christ completely. Though such a lifestyle is impossible for sinful humans to maintain by their own power, God graciously enables that outcome by grace and Spirit empowerment.

### WHAT SHALL WE THEN PREACH?

In the ancient city of Priene in western Turkey is a Greek inscription from the year 9 B.C. lauding some of the more remarkable aspects of Caesar Augustus, who ruled Rome at the time of Jesus’ birth. It begins by praising the pagan goddess Providence for giving the empire Augustus, for filling him with virtue, and for sending him as savior. The inscription concludes with the rationale for dedicating the calendar to him: because “the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of good news for the world.”<sup>8</sup>

The Gospel of Mark starts with similar words: “The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.”

Since he was the first Christian author ever to use the noun *euangelion*, scholars debate whether Mark was adapting from the verb *euangelizomai* in Isaiah or influenced by the Roman imperial cult. Was Mark making a direct challenge, in the opening of his Gospel, to the imperial claims that the gods had chosen Rome to rule the world and usher in a lasting age of peace?<sup>9</sup>

Christ’s kingdom is not of this Earth, but of heaven. It is not temporal, but eternal. It is not grasped by the rich and powerful, but graciously given to the humble and needy. It expands not by the conquest of empires, but by the transformation of lives.

Theologian Gerhard Friedrich put it this way: “Caesar and Christ, the emperor on the throne and the despised rabbi on the cross, confront one another. Both [offer good news]. ... But they belong to different worlds.”<sup>10</sup>

Whose gospel will you proclaim? ☒



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### Notes

1. David R. Jackson, “Gospel,” in *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Revised, Accordance electronic edition, version 1.3., eds. Moisés Silva and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 2:814–820.
2. Craig C. Broyles, “Gospel (Good News),” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Accordance electronic edition, version 2.1, eds. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 282–286.
3. The question of a stereotyped *kerygma* has been debated since the 1930s. The work of C.H. Dodd has had the most influence among English-speaking scholars. This list is my adaptation of general characteristics of *kerygma* based on more recent scholarship. Cf. Jackson, “Gospel,” ZEB 2:816–819.
4. Jackson, 2:817.
5. Lorman M. Petersen, “Justification,” in *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 3:869–880.
6. *Ibid.*, 370.
7. John R.W. Stott, “The Message of Romans: God’s Good News for the World” in *The Bible Speaks Today*, Accordance electronic edition (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 110.
8. I was introduced to this inscription while leading a “Life of Paul” study tour for the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, May 2010.
9. “Pirene Inscription and Mark 1:1,” by Michael Kok posted on Euangelion Kata Markon: A blog dedicated to the academic study of the Gospel of Mark, at [ntdmark.wordpress.com](http://ntdmark.wordpress.com), <http://ntdmark.wordpress.com/2011/11/17/the-priene-inscription-and-mark-1/> accessed January 1, 2014.
10. Gerhard Friedrich, “Euangelion” in *Theological Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Gerhard Kittel and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, eds. Accordance electronic edition, version 2.0. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964. 2:725 (721–735).







# THE HIGH COST OF BEING LOST

## *(and What We Can Do About It)*

By **Alan R. Johnson**

**While contemplating eternal judgment is painful, the Church cannot jettison the idea because of its discomfort or because non-Christians scoff at such notions. Our response to the challenge of reaching the lost must start now.**

*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10).*

*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ... (1 Timothy 1:15).*

**W**e sat in a courtyard on the outside wall of a famous temple. I was with friends who had invited me to join them in researching one of the world's most unreached people groups. I sat facing 200 to 300 older people, chatting in animated fashion. Behind us was a shrine. We learned the people would spend a month in the capital city doing religious rituals before heading back to their villages.

It was a profoundly moving moment for all of us as the reality struck so forcefully that all of these elderly people were beyond the reach of any Christian witness. Near the end of their lives, living in a people group with some of the least access to the gospel in the world, they faced eternity with no knowledge of the saving message of Jesus.

I have spent nearly 28 years living among a Buddhist people whose population includes only 0.3 percent of Protestant Christians of any stripe. Surrounding me are millions of people who have yet to meet a Christian or hear a relevant presentation of the gospel. Isolation from the Christian message is not an intellectual concept of academic interest for me. The spiritually lost state of humanity disturbs me. There are days when it feels overwhelming.

As we walked away from the courtyard that day, my eyes filled with tears, and my heart grew burdened in prayer. In today's world, referring to people as lost and separated from God is unpopular, particularly in the west. Those who claim all paths lead to God would call my burden for these people misplaced. The Scriptures answer the objections and questions of Christians and non-Christians alike. We must go back to the Bible to see what it means to be lost and how we should respond to a lost world.

### **THE HIGH COST OF BEING LOST**

When Jesus defined His reason for coming into the world as "to seek and to save the lost," He concisely framed His mission in ideas that are central to biblical faith. The Bible teaches that God created people in His image to enjoy a relationship



## The High Cost Of Being Lost (and What We Can Do About It)

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with Him. Human rebellion broke that relationship. From God's perspective, we are lost. We wandered far from our intended purpose of experiencing a relationship with Him and our intended destination of living in His presence as His people. Because our spiritual condition came about as a result of our own free choice, we are liable to judgment for our sin and rebellion. To be lost means we are in need of salvation from judgment as well.

The Bible's view of humanity as lost, separated from God, and in need of salvation and deliverance from judgment is at the heart of God's redemptive project. It is also the fundamental position for understanding the whole of Scripture. Author and theologian Chris Wright says, "The whole Bible could be portrayed as a very long answer to a very simple question: What can God do about the sin and rebellion of the human race?"<sup>1</sup>

The Book of Genesis narrates not only how humanity becomes lost but also the high cost of their downfall. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, there were consequences that are temporal and spiritual. In Genesis 3, the Fall shatters all the dimensions of human life — spiritually with God, socially with other humans, and environmentally with the creation.

Wright observes that Genesis 3–11 reveals the basic infrastructure of God's creation project and the elements of His grace. "But at another level everything is tragically adrift from the original goodness of God's purpose," he says. "The earth lies under the sentence of God's curse because of human sin. Human beings are adding to their catalog of evil as the generations roll past — jealousy, anger, murder, vengeance, violence, corruption, drunkenness, sexual disorder, arrogance."<sup>2</sup>

The problems we see in the early chapters of Genesis and in our societies today are symptoms that flow from our broken relationship with God. Being spiritually lost brings dreaded consequences for the quality of human life. Paul says present human experiences reveal God's wrath (Romans 1:18), and people reap the results of their actions in this life (Romans 1:24–32).

However temporal, judgment and the fruit of sinful behavior in this life foreshadow even more serious spiritual consequences. In the Garden, God warned Adam and Eve the consequence of disobedience would be death (Genesis 2:17). As we

move through the Bible, the Holy Spirit progressively reveals more about spiritual death and a Day of Judgment for sins. The hope of the righteous and the fate of the wicked begin to take shape in the Old Testament. By the time of the New Testament, there is an expectation of a coming day of wrath — beginning with the preaching of John the Baptist in Matthew 3:7.

But it is in the words of Jesus himself that we find the most explicit teaching about the Last

Judgment. Using a variety of imagery, Jesus talks about hell and judgment as horrible realities.

The rest of the New Testament holds this same view. We are, as a consequence of humanity's fallen nature, objects of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). There is a coming time of wrath (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10). The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Humans are destined to die once and then



## REACHING UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS

**W**e know from Scripture that God loves every person on Earth. He is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9).

The scope of the task for God's people, the Church, is to declare His wonderful salvation to the whole world. In that sense, all evangelism is equal, as everyone is in need of the saving message.

But there is another sense in which all evangelism is not equal. This is because while all people are equally lost spiritually, not all of them have equal access to the gospel. Some people groups have no Christians or churches among them to share the gospel in a relevant fashion.

Mission thinkers call Christians of the same language and culture "near-neighbor witnesses." The gospel travels fastest by near-neighbor witnesses, but when there are no Christians among a people (or so few that the chance of meeting such a witness is unlikely) cross-cultural witnesses can come, live among them, share the gospel, and plant a church.

Barriers that keep people from receiving the good news, even when they live geographically near Christians, are understanding and acceptance. These cultural obstacles include language, caste, and religious worldview, among other things.

People who study the global mission of the Church realize that while the Church exists in nearly every nation-state on earth, it is not present in many of the cultural language groups that populate those nations. These people groups lack near-neighbor witnesses

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face judgment (Hebrews 9:27). There is a Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men (2 Peter 2:9). The Book of Revelation reveals a final Great White Throne of judgment for those who reject Christ (Revelation 20:11–15).

Sincere Pentecostal interpreters who take the Bible seriously wrestle with how to understand these texts that teach about hell. These truths are incomprehensible in terms of our own

who can share the message of Jesus in a relevant manner through word and deed.

Mission thinkers settled on the term “unreached people group”<sup>1</sup> to describe such populations. These groups have no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate resources to evangelize the rest of its members without outside, cross-cultural assistance.

It is important to remember that *unreached* in this sense is a technical term to refer to people who have limited or no access to the gospel in a way they can understand and accept. It is not a synonym for lost people in general. A group with many non-Christians and a vibrant, indigenous witnessing community is not, by definition, an unreached people group.

Experts say 2.91 billion people today in more than 7,000 distinct people groups are less than 2 percent evangelical Christian. These same people have less than 5 percent of any form of the Christian faith among them. These people live primarily in the Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist religious blocs. According to estimates, 86 percent of them do not know even one Christian.<sup>2</sup>

This is the great cross-cultural mission challenge of our time. The need is to put boots-on-the-ground workers among these people groups with the least access to the gospel. Post-Christian Europe has 20 countries that are less than 1 percent evangelical, and the vast majority of the Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist worlds have either no access or extremely limited access to the gospel, Christians, and churches. These large segments of humanity represent over 40 percent of our world and the most difficult and complex missionary task.

When it comes to spiritually lost people who lack access to the gospel, it is not enough to do helpful projects. The situation requires workers on the ground with language and cultural competency to tell the story of Jesus. That is why I like to say that for unreached people groups the worker is the project. God is calling workers to give their lives away among the unreached. Who will send them?

ALAN R. JOHNSON

#### Notes

1. <http://www.beyond.ag.org>

2. <http://www.joshuaproject.net/>

human experience. Face-to-face with eternal realities, human language fails, and we reach the limits of our understanding. The images, most of them from Jesus himself, are intense: the fiery furnace, fire that never goes out, the undying worm, darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth, eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, eternal punishment, a lake of fire, and separation from the presence of the Lord. Scholars who disagree on details generally agree that hell is a place of unfathomable misery but that the Bible is more concerned with presenting the seriousness of the coming judgment than explaining the precise nature of hell.<sup>3</sup>

The lost state of people apart from God and their coming judgment are biblical truths that are uncomfortable and raise many questions. Non-Christians scoff at such notions, and Christians increasingly disregard the Bible’s teachings on heaven and hell. Only 11 percent of American Christians believe there is one right religion, according to a 2007 Faith Matters Survey.<sup>4</sup> This means that many who self-identify as Pentecostal Christians no longer believe God will judge those who reject the gospel since, in their view, there are multiple effective ways for people to know God and live with Him eternally.

The idea that people are spiritually lost and facing God’s judgment offends non-Christians, who see it as a reason to attack the character of God. They point to the biblical teaching of hell as a moral flaw in God, calling Him a sadistic torturer for punishing people eternally with conscious torment.

In such an environment, the Church must do its homework to articulate biblical faith clearly. We need the Spirit’s guidance and great wisdom as we engage unbelievers with biblical truth.

While contemplating eternal judgment is painful, we cannot jettison the idea because of our discomfort. Neglecting these truths demeans all that the Bible says about God, sin, and the work of Jesus on the cross. We must remember that while the Bible is very clear about judgment, it is also very clear about two other things: human freedom and the great lengths to which God has gone to bring salvation to us. Those sincerely asking difficult questions should be encouraged to look at the biblical evidence of human choice. John reminds us that Jesus “came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him” (John 1:11) and that while light has come into the world, humanity “loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). Paul tells us that humans “suppress the truth by their wickedness” and are without excuse because they have rejected the knowledge of God available to them in creation (Romans 1:18–20). The Book of Revelation reveals that even in the midst of horrific judgments, people living in the last days will “not repent of the work of their hands” (Revelation 9:20).

One scholar says that hell is proof of how much God values human freedom; ultimately, He will not force people to dwell eternally in His presence who do not want to be there.<sup>5</sup> While the Bible is realistic about the human condition, it is a Book about hope and a rich salvation offered to all. Our response

## The High Cost Of Being Lost (and What We Can Do About It)

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to the spiritually lost is rooted in God's response.

### WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT THE LOST TODAY?

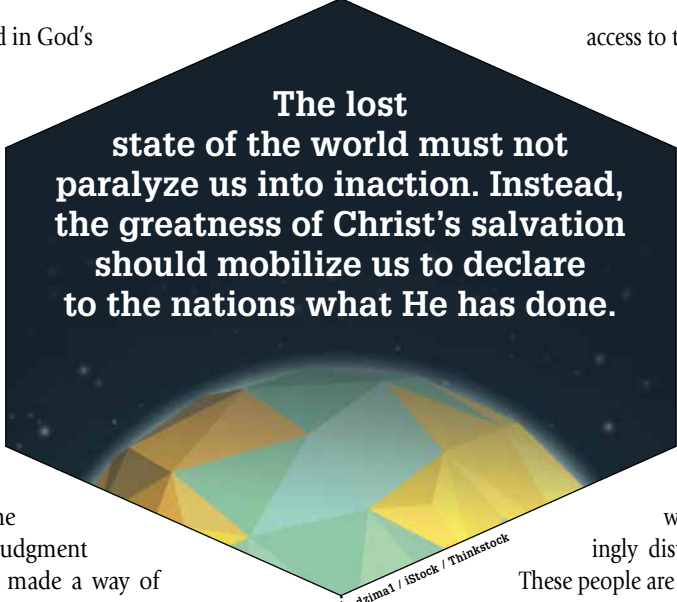
For people who believe the Bible's teachings about lost humanity, the task can seem overwhelming. They may wonder whether their efforts can make a difference or whether they should even bother getting involved. Yet the same biblical texts that speak of judgment also proclaim that God has made a way of salvation from sin; the sinner can reconcile with the living God. These powerfully motivating promises keep me engaged with lost people.

The Bible is all about good news. It is the grand story that makes sense of all things, assuring us one day God will put all things right (Ephesians 1:10). Jesus gave His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). He calls us to help in His mission of seeking and saving the lost. He said the Heavenly Father is not willing that any be lost (Matthew 18:14) and that there is great joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7,10). Through His work on the cross, Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10). Paul says Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). The good news is that Jesus destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:10). God entrusts us with a wonderful message to tell the world.

The lost state of the world must not paralyze us into inaction. Instead, the greatness of Christ's salvation should mobilize us to declare to the nations what He has done. As in past generations, taking this good news to the lost — geographically and culturally, near and far — is the heart of Pentecostal missions. Acts 1:8, which promises Spirit empowerment to bear witness to the very ends of the Earth, has a special place in Pentecostal missions history and remains relevant for today's Church.

Today we are more aware than ever that while all people are equally lost, not all have equal access to the good news. Those who study the status of the Christian faith among the various people groups of the world estimate that 86 percent of the Buddhist, Muslim, and Hindu populations do not know a single Christian.<sup>6</sup>

What can we do in this moment in our history? While lost people are everywhere around us, some groups have less access to the gospel and need special attention. I believe the Assemblies of God (USA) can have strategic impact among three specific groups of lost people that represent the great missional challenges of



The lost state of the world must not paralyze us into inaction. Instead, the greatness of Christ's salvation should mobilize us to declare to the nations what He has done.

access to the good news in our time.

- 1. The growing number of "nones" and those disenchanted with organized religion.** Religious polls show that some 20 percent of Americans mark "no religious preference" on surveys of religious adherence, and the number of those disenchanted with the Church continues to increase.<sup>7</sup> It is not enough for us simply to "shift the saints" around while the "nones" grow increasingly distant from the Christian faith.

These people are not surfing our websites or visiting our services. We need to find them and develop loving, redemptive relationships with them.

- 2. The diverse people groups from around the globe living in the U.S.** The countries of the world have come to America, and many of them are from places with very little access to the gospel. These are the lost who are culturally distant but geographically near to us. Who will step out of their comfort zones to reach out to them in love?

- 3. The ethnolinguistic groups with little or no access to the gospel.** A strategic cross-cultural mission priority must be putting boots-on-the-ground workers to live and bear witness among the 86 percent of the Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist populations and the 20 countries of post-Christian Europe that are less than 1 percent Pentecostal Protestant.

This is the moment in which we live. God has called us — individually and as a Movement — to himself for a purpose. However, persevering and doing the hard labor of reaching the world requires a renewed biblical vision of the spiritually lost and a supernatural burden from the Holy Spirit to do something to help them.

### THE LOST AND OUR NEED OF THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

In Genesis 3:9, God called out to Adam: "Where are you?"

These words reveal the seeking heart of God for His lost children. Our response to the challenge of the lost must start here. The Spirit makes us co-seekers with the triune God and pours into us divine passion and longing for lost humanity.

Caring about the eternal, spiritual welfare of others is not natural. It is natural to tend to our own needs, and those of our families and friends. But it is a work of the Holy Spirit to change our hearts to follow His lead in seeking to engage lost people, no matter the cost.

Recently I was reviewing our Pentecostal mission history as background material for a writing assignment. One of the



things that jumped out at me was the simple logic of early Pentecostals about missions. As they saw it, the Spirit comes so we can have power to take the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth — to every tribe, tongue, and nation.

It made me wonder what would happen if we returned to that kind of simplicity and pared ourselves down to a laser focus on taking the gospel to lost people locally and to the tribes and tongues with the least access to the good news globally. I believe it would renew us. Why? Because it would break us. In our own power, we simply cannot do it — not with our dollars, manpower, technology, or techniques. We do not know how to do it, and we will die as we try to do it. It will drive us to repent of our idolatries of human and technological ability and fall on our faces before God to seek mercy, power, and divine strategies from the Spirit.

In August of this year, the Assemblies of God in the United States celebrates its 100th anniversary. We have much cause for rejoicing. The accomplishments wrought by God’s grace in the past century are stunning. But to reach lost people in this day and hour, we need the Holy Spirit to fill us anew. We need to become people who are Pentecostal by desperation because we now know the toughest, most daunting tasks remain. The challenge of reaching the 20 percent of American society that are the “nones” and the peoples of the world with least access to the gospel stretches us beyond our human ability.

A laser focus on the lost will renew us as the Spirit’s zeal for lost humanity releases the multiplying and unifying power of a vision deeply rooted in the heart of God. It will give us a purpose bigger than our personal pursuits and agendas. When people become broken for the lost who are geographically and culturally far from them, they will begin to see the lost who live across the street with different eyes. People who get on fire to reach unreached people groups will start to view their neighbor differently, while people who begin to engage their neighbor across the street will better understand the complexities of reaching lost people across the globe. The critical priority of boots-on-the-ground workers among unreached people groups will become clear.

I have this crazy dream. We have nearly 13,000 churches in the United States, nearly all meeting in some kind of rented or owned structure. What would happen if a movement of the Spirit — not driven by pastors, not programmed out and pushed, but simply working in the hearts of people — turned these nearly 13,000 places into houses of prayer for their nation and the nations? What would happen if people confessed their sins, repented of their idolatries, and acknowledged their inability to bring Christ to their lost neighbors, the diverse cultural groups of their own nation, and the unreached people groups around the world?

Praying, telling, sending: That is the response the Holy Spirit has always stirred in His people as He draws them to participate in God’s mission. The Christians with me in the courtyard that day were there because of a burden from the Holy Spirit.

They are bathing that people group in prayer and are actively working to equip and send workers who will be linguistically and culturally competent to tell the story of Jesus.

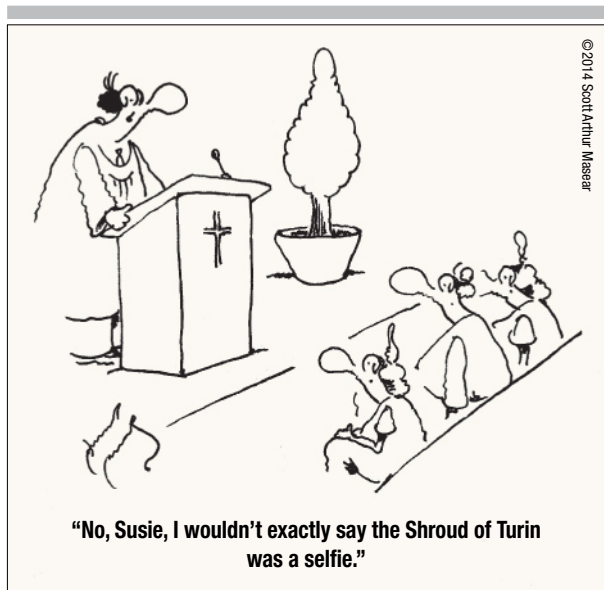
If it is too late for those elderly people in the courtyard, there is still hope for vast numbers of people stretching from your town to the corners of the globe. They need to hear a loving invitation to experience the salvation Jesus brings. They need to come home to their Heavenly Father and be lost no longer. ❏



**ALAN R. JOHNSON** is a missionary in Thailand, serving there since 1986.

#### Notes

1. Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking The Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2006), 195.
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3. See William Crockett, *Four Views On Hell* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996), 29–31, and Stephen H. Travis, “Judgment” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall, (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 408–411.
4. Robert Putnam and David Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 542,43.
5. Crockett, *Four Views*, 142.
6. Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910–2010* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, Center for the Study of Global Christianity, 2009), 316.
7. See <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2012/10/08/nones-protestant-religion-pew/1618445/>. For a detailed look at the American religious landscape, see Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace*.











# LIFE IN DEEP ELLUM

SECOND ANNUAL

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## EVANGELIZING RELIGIOUS

# Nones

By Joel and Rachel Triska

Stop being a church *in* the community and start being a church *for* the community. Reaching religious nones takes a willingness to do things differently.



# **L**ife in Deep Ellum is a cultural center built for the artistic, social, economic, and spiritual benefit

of Deep Ellum and urban Dallas. We are its pastors.

Seven years ago our faith community received a 24,000-square-foot facility on the edge of Deep Ellum, the street art counterpart to the fine arts district in Dallas. And we made a crucial decision: Rather than renovating the building to serve our church body, we would develop the building as a community cultural center.

The vision was for a space where believers and those outside the faith would gather and do life together. So instead of investing in a reception area, we opened a craft coffee shop that is open Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Instead of a lobby, we have a 1,700-square-foot art gallery with shows rotating every four to six weeks. Our exhibits feature local artists, including many who do not share our faith.

Rather than meeting in a traditional worship center, we have a venue the Dallas community uses widely. Two of our favorite events from the last year were a fashion show that benefitted the Transplant Center at Baylor and a Red Bull Curate event. The latter occasion brought 20 of the city's premier emerging artists into our building for a week that culminated in an art show attracting more than 1,500 guests.

## **NONES, NOT NUNS**

By trial and error, this approach has taught us how to connect with a sector of our population churches are struggling to reach. Many refer to this group as the religious "nones" or the "religiously unaffiliated." Those labels reference a population that is largely uninterested in organized religion and unconnected to a specific faith.

Deep Ellum is one of the few concentrated pockets of this type of post-Christian culture in the South. The majority of people who live, work, or play in Deep Ellum take a great deal of pride in not needing religion. Still, each year 10,000 people come through our cultural center. A large number of these have never come to our Sunday morning worship service, but they are in our building — becoming friends with our members and learning to love

this unusual community of faith. We would love for the success we've experienced in engaging the nones to become the norm among churches, rather than the exception.

The religious nones are the fastest-growing religious group in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> Over the last five years, the number of people who identify as religiously unaffiliated has grown from 14 percent of the adult population to nearly 20 percent.<sup>2</sup>

We have a friend who serves as a rabbi here in Dallas. Like us, he is in his 30s. When Pew Research reported on this trend of the nones, he said the Jewish community was shocked to learn they were not exempt. Though many American Jews had no problem identifying as culturally Jewish, 22 percent checked the box labeled "none" when it came to religion.<sup>3</sup> Our rabbi friend said this was no surprise to him. He has known about this trend for years. And it's only growing.

Our Movement is not immune from a hesitancy to tune out significant cultural shifts. What we in the Assemblies of God heralded as the Decade of Harvest, sociologists called the secular boom. Each year of the 1990s, 1.3 million more American adults joined the ranks of the nones.<sup>4</sup>

## **ARE YOU ENGAGING THE NONES?**

If you're wondering how well your church is engaging the nones, here are a few questions to consider: How do you do with liberal Democrats? Are there any attending your church? Does a significant percentage of your annual budget go toward engaging college students and young professionals? Would outsiders say that your church contributes to your city by building community or serving the poor and needy? Would the religiously unaffiliated engage your programs even if they didn't attend your weekend worship services? And lastly, if your church disappeared, would your community miss you? We point to our ability to answer, "Yes," to these questions as part of the reason we have success engaging the nones.

According to the experts, more than six in 10 nones identify with the Democratic Party. Seven in 10 are under the age of 50, and the 18 to 29 crowd is where this trend is most evident. Though the nones are uncomfortable with church, researchers list community building and helping those in need as two areas where nones continue to view religious organization positively.

Statistically, 72 percent of nones seldom, or never, attend religious services (other than weddings and funerals). In fact, 88 percent of nones report zero interest in affiliating with an organized religion. If we wait for the nones to come to us, we will continue to see the number of the religiously unaffiliated grow.

## **LOW-HANGING FRUIT**

One of the leading thinkers in this area is Alan Hirsch, a South African missiologist. Recently, he argued that the reigning model of the American church only reaches a maximum of 40

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percent of our population. He argues: "Ninety-five percent of American churches are using a model that, even if successful, will reach less than half the population."<sup>5</sup>

This is where many pastors push back. They point out that churches are still growing. Well, that depends on how you look at it. Many internal church studies show that increases in attendance are attributable either to people coming from another church or families expanding.

If missiologists are right, decline will soon outstrip growth

if our approach to evangelism does not take into account the growing number of nones. Reaching these people takes a willingness to do things differently. We must discipline ourselves to reach above the low-hanging fruit. We understand it's much easier to communicate with an audience that already identifies with our values, rituals, and worldview. But the problem is that the number of people who fit that category is shrinking. Statistically speaking, there are too many workers trying to harvest the bottom third of the tree.

## LISTENING TO THE NONES



### Sean

Our friend Sean is agnostic on good days. Other days, he'd tell you he's atheist. While he grew up Roman Catholic, he has no interest in institutional religion. He lives across the alley from our building, and we share a passion for social and economic development in our neighborhood. So we decided to ask Sean about his perspective on the rising number of nones.

We began by asking how he feels when he hears Christians talk about "evangelism." His very honest reply was, "It puts me on edge. I get it — for those who feel it's a moral imperative. In every other respect, it makes my skin crawl."

To explain his distaste, he referenced anecdotal examples of American missionaries entering third-world countries, ignoring the cultures and customs of the people groups they engaged, and creating replicas of their version of Christianity.

When asked what he believes to be the most effective form of outreach, Sean said simply, "To live what you teach."

He shared that he walked away from the Catholic Church decades ago but added that in the last year he had been "rooting for the team again." So what changed? Sean was moved by the authenticity of Pope Francis's faith. He had watched from a distance as the pope washed the feet of convicts and welcomed little children. If the pope begins ordaining female priests, Sean said he might start attending mass — though he didn't plan on taking Communion.

Quietly observing Christians engaging their faith with integrity and authenticity is what makes the nones willing to think about faith and talk about their beliefs. Sean said if people at Life in Deep Ellum bombarded him with those "uncomfortable Jesus questions" instead of just having "normal conversations," or if we were always bothering him to join us for church on Sunday, he'd probably stop coming around. He said the reason he's comfortable with us (as opposed to other churches) is because of how we practice community.

"Your sense of community is outward," he said. "Someone doesn't have to be a part of the club to be a part of the community. You walk in the doors here, and you don't know you're in a church. It doesn't trigger my defenses."



### Heather

Our friend Heather is a successful, young businesswoman and former agnostic, but she was raised in the church. According to her, the family rule was: "If you are in the house, you will be in church."

She attended services weekly, but when she moved out of her childhood home, she walked away from the church. As a part of her experience with Life in Deep Ellum, she came into a personal relationship with Christ about three years ago. We sat down with Heather to get her perspective on how to reach people who have no interest in becoming a person of faith.



## Evangelizing Religious Nones

(continued from page 77)

Heather explained her former view of religion this way: “My attitude was apathetic — really, nonexistent. It wasn’t hateful. I wasn’t against it, and I didn’t judge people who engaged with faith. I just didn’t feel like it had anything to offer.”

She had grown up in church, and though her experience was not wholly negative, it seemed like something to rebel against rather than grow in.

We asked her how she perceived witnessing and evangelistic efforts when she was outside the faith. She chose four words to describe her feelings as a none toward traditional evangelism: uncomfortable, ineffective, phony, and self-serving. So what made the difference when she began to engage with our faith community? Heather said the difference at Life in Deep Ellum was that relationship came first.

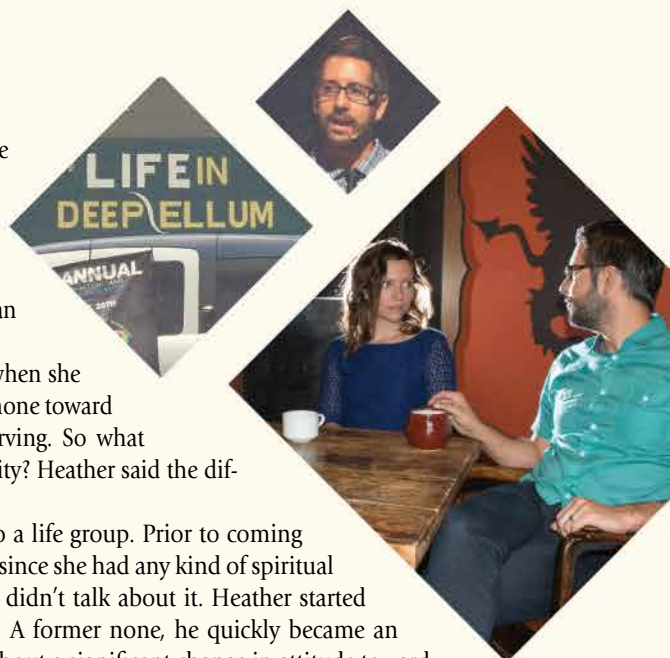
Heather’s friend Justin, who is now her husband, introduced her to a life group. Prior to coming into the community at Life in Deep Ellum, it had been about five years since she had any kind of spiritual conversation with anyone. If any of her friends were Christians, they didn’t talk about it. Heather started attending services with Justin about six months after his conversion. A former none, he quickly became an active part of Life in Deep Ellum. Heather came for several months without a significant change in attitude toward faith, but things began to shift when she joined a life group.

Initially, she was uncomfortable around the group that included, in her words, “artists who didn’t work.” Yet she found the group’s transparency compelling. The people were open and authentic. For her, it was meaningful that she never felt like anyone had an agenda. What she experienced was something more than friendship evangelism. She knew these people would still be hanging out with her years from now even if she never came to share their faith. She felt permission to be herself, without pressure to conform. As friendships developed with those in the group, she began to learn from her Christian friends. She also read the Bible and books on faith. And somewhere along the way, those friends helped guide her into a relationship with Christ.

When asked what she wants people to know about reaching the nones, her advice is this: “Friendship comes first.”

“As a friend, live openly and authentically, and make sure your friends know they are more than welcome to join you on the journey,” she said.

Today, Heather and Justin regularly live this out among their friends.



### Will

Will is one of our friends. He founded and runs an amazing spoken word art program called DaVerse Lounge. DaVerse Lounge is an opportunity for middle and high school students to perform original spoken word pieces on a big stage with musical accompaniment. Life in Deep Ellum hosts the event in our space. At the most recent show, we welcomed more than 450 guests from 10 Dallas schools. It is always a blast.

Will is one of our

Cultural Center’s community partners. He has office space in our facilities, our members volunteer for his events, and several businesspeople from our faith community have mentored him over the past year. Just recently, he started attending services with his family.

Will comes from what he describes as a highly religious and very rigid background. The religious structure of his childhood and college experience was not life-giving.

“I had issues that mass and the church were not solving,” Will said.

So Will became a devout spiritual seeker. He went from attending mass daily to a spiritual journey that was synonymous with his experience with the arts. He said he tried to bring the two worlds together, only to find that his religious friends “couldn’t handle the content.”



Will summed up his spiritual state during that time as “religious paranoia.” When life got chaotic, he attended a church service. He stayed connected to the faith of his childhood, if only out of guilt. He said he was exploring, but he was hesitant to commit to anything else. Will represents well the 12 percent of the nones who are actively seeking.

We told Will, “We have this thing here on Sunday, but you don’t have to attend.”

That, for him, was a radical shift from what he expected from a religious organization.

Will was with us five days a week, using our office space, getting lunch with us, watching us work, and dropping in on staff meetings.

“When I came here,” he said, “I wasn’t looking for the pastor, or choir practice, or any of those church dealings. I was just tired of trying to take the awkward out of places. This place offered a place to be treated like a human being — like a person — to be received and met with a genuine connection. What happened here Monday through Friday is why I gave Sundays a chance. And it’s because of Sunday that my faith is being restored in what a [Christian] community can be.”



When we listen to our friends outside the faith, what we hear is that evangelism is most effective when they are given the opportunity to live alongside a community of believers, know they are loved by that community, and experience that love unconditionally in the context of real friendships.

A friend asked once, “So what’s the difference between your friendships with other Christians and non-believers?”

We replied, “Not much — except we pray differently for our unbelieving friends.”

### FLESHING OUT OUR PHILOSOPHY

We’ve found two strategies particularly effective in engaging the nones.

**Assess assets.** Instead of focusing on the weaknesses of our immediate neighborhood, we decided to focus on its strengths — the assets of the community. We conducted about a thousand street interviews asking people in downtown Dallas, “What are Deep Ellum’s strengths, and what would you miss if Deep Ellum disappeared?”

After compiling the results, these four pillars of our Cultural Center emerged: art, music, commerce, and community. Dallas had several ministries addressing the weaknesses of an urban context. We decided to get behind the good

that was already happening. We interpret those strengths as places where the Holy Spirit is already at work.

This is how we exegete the community so we can appropriately contextualize the gospel.

What are the strengths of your community or city? Where do you see the Spirit of God already at work?

**Develop community partners.** From the beginning, we decided we didn’t have to be in control of every program. So we built relationships with other organizations that shared our values of community development. We partnered with artist collectives, counseling practices, design firms, yoga studios, and others.

Not only did we harness their particular expertise to help forward our mission, but we built great relationships along the way. Some of these community partners share our faith; others do not. But we choose to focus on our common ground rather than our differences. This is one of many reasons why we have nones regularly wandering our building.

Has your church ever worked alongside non-Christians? Whom can you partner with to help forward your mission?

**The number of people who identify as religiously unaffiliated has grown from 14 percent of the adult population to nearly 20 percent. The majority of people who live, work, or play in Deep Ellum take a great deal of pride in not needing religion.**



### ENGAGING YOUR WORLD

In Acts 17, Paul ministered in two very different contexts. In Thessalonica and Berea, he engaged the low-hanging fruit. These Jews and God-fearers already shared most of Paul’s worldview. This

## Evangelizing Religious Nones

(continued from page 79)

was necessary evangelism in his day. Not many preachers were introducing synagogues to Jesus back then.

Paul's next stop was Athens. Here's what we learn from his brief ministry there:

- **Metrics for success are different.** You can't simply look at numbers to see whether you are effectively connecting. Only a few in Athens responded. But that doesn't mean Paul's ministry made no impact.
- **Be respectful.** In spite of Paul's disgust of the people's idolatry, he respectfully addressed their worldview. He even used their statues and poets as means for communicating the gospel. Respecting others breeds respect in return.
- **Be authentic.** Paul was faithful to the gospel. He didn't hide who he was nor did he shy away from hard truths. In this generation, authenticity is vital. But without mutual respect, it will quickly devolve into a shouting match.

We know other churches share our passion to reach the nones (or Athens or the one lost sheep). The question is not, "Do we care?" The question is, "How can we communicate our care?"

We think this is best addressed with one simple shift: Stop

being a church *in* the community, and start being a church *for* the community. Trust us, the nones will notice. ☒



**JOEL and RACHEL TRISKA**, pastors of Life in Deep Ellum, Dallas, Texas

### Notes

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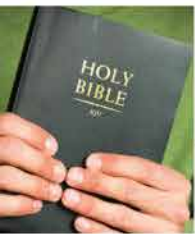
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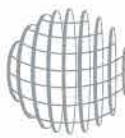
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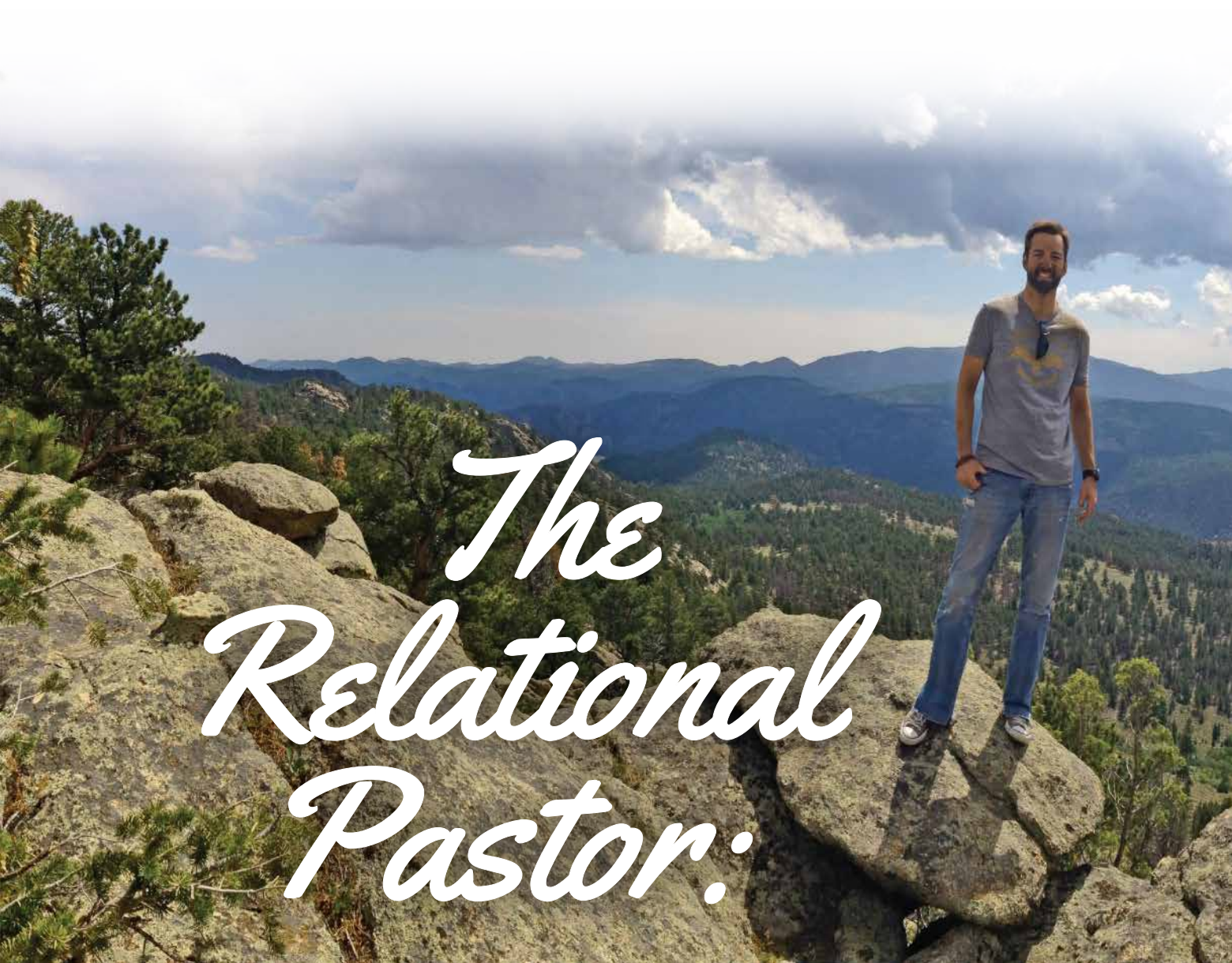


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# The Relational Pastor:

## **BUILDING BRIDGES, NOT BARRIERS TO THE UNCHURCHED**

By **Dary Northrop**

**Here are practical things you can do in your community to influence people toward that critical God decision.**

**To be completely honest, I am not crazy about the word “evangelist.”**

I know it is a Bible term, but in our culture many people think of evangelists as pushy preachers who try to force something on someone.

I prefer the idea of being a bridge builder. Think about what a bridge accomplishes. It allows us to go over water, canyons, and potentially dangerous terrain on a smooth surface.





I have owned several horses over the years, including a mare I trained named Colorado. She was strong and highly spirited. But she slowly learned to trust me as I fed her, combed her, walked all around her, led her with a rope, and helped her get comfortable wearing a saddle and bridle. Then came the bridge.

We happened upon it on one of our first mountain rides. It was an old, wooden bridge that made a big, hollow, clunking sound when her hooves hit it. She backed away quickly and did not want to touch that bridge again. I decided to walk her across by leading her with a rope. As we made our way along, one tentative step at a time, she seemed to warm to the idea



that the bridge would not fail her — and neither would I. At last, we made it to the other side.

People who have little or no faith are often afraid of the bridge that leads to God. It feels like a blind leap and seems so foreign to those who have not grown up around it. Most of these people are not God-haters; they are simply uncertain about the bridge. Perhaps they have heard negative things about it. Maybe they have known bridge-crossers who failed to make the journey seem attractive. Sadly, the church world sometimes gets in the way of people coming to faith. We must patiently and compassionately allow people to approach the bridge and ask any questions they may have.



## The Relational Pastor: Building Bridges, Not Barriers to the Unchurched

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At the church I lead, I often say something like this: “If you have come today without a personal relationship with God, we really welcome you. This is a great place to ask questions about your journey with God. It’s OK if you feel uncertain or need to think through your decisions.”

This allows people to be in the room and watch people of faith. They learn to trust, respect, and sense the presence of God. If they have come to the bridge to test it, I want to welcome them. If they are only three or four feet onto the bridge, at least they are on their way. That is a good thing.

How many connections or conversations does it take for someone to come to faith? It could be 10, 28, or 233. It is a joy to lead someone to Christ, but we will not always be that person. God may use you as number eight or 16 to help someone on their journey. Ask God to make you a part of the process, regardless of what stage it is. God uses each of us in different ways. I am hesitant to say of new converts, “I led them to the Lord.” After all, it is the Spirit who brings people to salvation. We simply facilitate conversations with them along the way.

When I sense the Spirit drawing someone to Christ, I start with questions rather than statements. For example, I may ask: “What are you feeling about making a life commitment to God? Have you come to a decision about what you believe about God? Would you like for me to lead us in a prayer that declares your faith in God?”

Such questions encourage introspection and help people understand the value of that life-changing moment.

As a pastor, I certainly appreciate the importance of that moment. But I also recognize the worth of the seemingly mundane moments that may lead to it. My driving passion is building bridges that lead people to Christ — and doing everything I can to help them across.

I believe that is your passion as well. Here are some practical things you can do in your community to influence people toward that critical God decision.

### GET INVOLVED IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Join a service club — or several. Find hobbies that let you touch base with other people. Spend time with people who are not a part of the church you pastor.

Make friends with people who are different from you. That may mean hearing jokes that aren’t funny or to your liking or discussing topics you don’t find particularly interesting. People might even try to push your buttons just to see how you respond to them. Get familiar with being in awkward situations. Never

compromise your Christian values, but do not draw lines that needlessly alienate lost people.

Do the things in your community that need to be done. Sit with your mayor for 15 minutes and ask this question: “What are some of the greatest needs you see in our city, and is there a way my church can help?”

This lets others know you are not demanding something or pushing your opinion on them but offering to help meet needs. We have influence with government leaders and secular organizations in our community because they trust us and realize we want to serve our city. This builds bridges with people and allows honest conversation about faith.

I believe strangers rarely influence strangers in our culture. I really do not want people who have an agenda of some kind knocking on my door or calling me on the phone. I need to know them first and then hear what they have to say.

### SHARE MEANINGFUL MOMENTS

No one enjoys attending funerals, but you can touch every family group in your community if you take these important occasions seriously. Early in my ministry, I went to every funeral home in our community to meet the owners and directors, making myself available to do any funeral that needed a church or pastor.

I have no idea how many hundreds of funerals Timberline Church has done over the last 27 years. We follow up a year later with a card acknowledging the death. People are so appreciative, and they never forget it. Grateful people frequently approach me with a story about how our church provided comfort during a time of loss. I believe there are very few times when people actually need a pastor by their side. But in such poignant moments, spiritual support can make a lasting impact.

Be available for other big events as well, including weddings. Like funerals, weddings eventually touch your entire community. What better way to share in the lives of families than to celebrate their happy beginnings?

Learn about the couple and how they met, and tell their story in the wedding. Hang around for the reception to talk with people. Be a friend who is known for your kindness. You will be a magnet for those needing to connect with someone.

Meet the family and the parents. Get involved in meaningful conversations. Make a goal of having people leave that wedding feeling like you really cared for this couple and invested in their lives. They will respect that.

### BE REAL

Have authentic friendships with people who have no faith. Set aside any agenda, and just be their friend. Learn to laugh, cry, and enjoy meaningful discussions that may not be about God.

I have many friends in my community who respect me but want little to do with the preacher part of me. So I give them my friendship as best I can. Through the years, I have seen a couple of things happen because of this. First, they learn to trust my

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faith and see it working in my life without me coming across as weird or pushy. Second, when they struggle with something or their lives start falling apart, they usually call me for support and encouragement. At some point, we all experience crisis moments. This means that it is only a matter of time before I will have an opportunity to point someone to Christ.

In tough times, people are sensitive to the touch of the Spirit in their heart.

I have seen God use crazy circumstances in people's lives to bring them to His truth. I do not believe God creates all these circumstances, but He will never waste opportunities to reach lost and hurting people. Allow God to use you to accomplish His purpose.

**MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE**

I believe there are three things all people have.

**1. They have needs.** It may be as simple as giving a cup of cold water, but there are always human needs you can help meet. As you walk the streets of your city and serve your community, be sensitive to the needs around you.

Even little things — such as holding a door, giving someone a hand, or smiling in kindness — can make a difference when people are hurting. It changes how I meet people if I know they have a need.

**2. They have hidden pain.** I am always amazed at the depth of pain people suffer. It's easy to assume others are sheltered from pain, sorrow, and bad news. But when I meet people for the first time, I assume their lives have not been easy. This prepares me for anything they may want to share. It also gives me a sense of compassion for them before I know the details of their lives.

When I look out at the members of our congregation, the stories represented there deeply move me. Physical abuse, rape, incest, addiction, the loss of a loved one, disease, chronic pain, divorce, war trauma, guilt, and shame make up the fabric of their human experiences. All of these struggles — and more — fill the lives of people all around us who are trying to put God somewhere in their journey.

Think of Jesus and the way He met with people in need. Consider His gentle compassion in dealing with the woman at the

well, Zacchaeus, the lepers, the blind, the deaf, and the broken.

**3. They have potential.** Jesus saw what people could become. He looked for potential in others, elevated them, and helped them fulfill God's plan for their lives.

How can we live like this? I believe reaching people for the kingdom of God involves learning how to see the potential in others before they even see it.

**I have many friends in my community who respect me but want little to do with the preacher part of me. So I give them my friendship as best I can.**



**BE A PEOPLE PERSON**

When you walk into a room, assume everyone loves you. Maybe they don't, but when you make such an assumption it changes your attitude and demeanor. Some pastors and Christian leaders are so insecure they miss starting conversations because it feels awkward to them. Assuming

people like you puts you in a frame of mind to minister to Christians and non-Christians alike.

Be a disciplined listener. I made a willful decision several years ago to be fully present. In other words, I give my attention to the person with whom I'm talking. That means setting aside my phone and making eye contact. It means resisting the urge to look over that person's shoulder and greet someone behind them. Lock onto the moment, whether the conversation is

with your spouse, child, a church member, or a lost soul. Give each person your best.

This will separate you from the crowd, and people will be drawn to you.

We have the greatest message in the world to share. Let's share it well and build relational bridges that lead people into the loving arms of Jesus. 📖



**DARY NORTROP**, senior pastor, Timberline Church, Fort Collins, Colorado



**JESUS  
IS A  
MYTH**

**† THE †  
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WRONG**

**KEEP  
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**BIGGOTS**

**HATE  
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FAMILY  
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# *Speaking the Truth in Love:* **WHY EVANGELISM ISN'T INTOLERANT**

By **Joseph Dimitrov**

**How can the Church carry on its God-given mandate in an atmosphere filled with spiritual indifference at best and militant opposition at worst?**

**“So I will burn in hell because I don’t believe?”**

That was the sarcastic, confrontational response of a man in my daughter’s Dutch language class the moment

she revealed that, as a Christian, she believes in life after death. The conversation arose as part of an academic discussion on spirituality. Though my daughter explained she did not intend to judge anyone, the class erupted in a debate over whether she has the right to share her beliefs at all.

What’s wrong with this picture? If my daughter had claimed to be a Muslim or Buddhist, I suspect she would have received a more positive response.

Why are people so uncomfortable with the gospel message? In a society that encourages diversity and a free exchange of ideas, why do many lash out at Christians — often before they even hear what we have to say? In many ways, Christianity has arrived at a collision point with our postmodern culture.

## **HOW DID WE GET HERE?**

To answer that question, we must consider the sweeping changes of the past 300 years, beginning with the Age of Enlightenment in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This period, which elevated human reason as the highest level of authority, sought to alienate intellectual pursuits from divine influence. As breath-taking scientific discoveries captured academic imaginations in ways that eventually trickled down to the general public, people increasingly questioned the need for Christianity.

The modern age further marginalized the role of faith in

society until the secular world viewed evangelism with not only skepticism but hostility.<sup>1</sup> Many rejected as intolerant Christianity’s claims of divine truth, moral absolutes, and salvation through Christ alone. People took offense at biblical teachings that leave no room for alternative realities or contradictory paradigms.

Additionally, rapid changes in information technology and increased mobility gave rise to an interest in various Eastern religions and the adoption of secular humanism. This development challenged the traditional Judeo-Christian values upon which most of Western society was founded. Personal rights and mutual acceptance became the leading social principles.

Today’s culture shows a growing dissatisfaction even with the tolerance concept, cynically viewing it as a tool for unacceptable ideas to gain influence. According to this new, postmodern trend, tolerance is less important than dismantling absolute or relative belief systems that might make others feel uncomfortable.<sup>2</sup>

All of this should lead us to ask some healthy questions. How can the Church carry on its God-given mandate in an



## Speaking the Truth in Love: Why Evangelism Isn't Intolerant

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atmosphere filled with spiritual indifference, at best, and militant opposition, at worst? In such a cynical environment, how can Christians effectively proclaim the gospel? And how do our perceptions of evangelism differ from those outside the faith?

### THE BASICS OF CHRISTIAN EVANGELISM

To answer these important questions, let us first define true evangelism. There are two main components of biblical evangelism: It contains a message and exhibits an attitude. One cannot function without the other. Evangelism that communicates the message but lacks the right attitude is a mere proselytizing tool. Evangelism must be exemplified, not just exclaimed. On the other hand, evangelism that demonstrates compassion or benevolence without proclaiming the gospel message is like a signpost that points to nothing.

No wonder John 3:16 is so powerful and meaningful. It communicates the message of salvation while simultaneously unveiling the sentiment behind it: "God so loved the world ...." God's love set in motion His plan of salvation, and the declaration of this good news reveals His heart for humanity. Effective evangelism arises from love and is proclaimed in love.

The gospel message without the attitude of God's love and compassion is void. It is the love of God that compels us toward proclamation. We should never forget that the Holy Spirit uses both the message and the love attitude of the gospel.

The gospel contains an uncompromising message. Jesus declared, "No one comes to the Father except through me," and asserted that He is "the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6).

Many other verses support this truth. The Gospel writers did not present a neutral message with an open end for interpretation. They wrote with a bias and an evangelistic mission: "But these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

There is no ambiguity in regard to the way of salvation. It is this clear message that bothered the Jews and the Greeks of Paul's time. Paul knew his contemporaries could not adjust the message of the Cross to fit their expectations. Through the ages,

the Word never changes. Instead, it calls us to change and become like Jesus. Long before our postmodern time, Paul reflected on tolerance as it relates to the gospel but firmly concluded, "If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10).

In response to false teachers who attempted to bring the gospel closer to Judaism and make it look more acceptable, Paul insisted that any attempt to change the message would turn it

into "a different gospel — which is really no gospel at all" (Galatians 1:6,7).

While the message is unequivocal, the love attitude of the gospel is all-embracing. God loves everyone and wants all people to receive salvation through Christ (1 Timothy 2:3–5). The Bible commands Christians to love others, preach the good news to all creation, and live in peace with everyone (Mark 12:31; 16:15; Hebrews 12:14). Jesus loved and welcomed all kinds of people, from lepers and tax collectors to sinners and beggars. Though religious leaders criticized Him for associating with people of bad reputation, society's outcasts found a true friend in Jesus. He still gladly receives all who come to Him.

Romans 10:13 declares: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." The gospel is not exclusive. God isn't concerned with a person's ethnicity, social status, physical appearance, religious background, or any other superficial characteristic. He invites everyone to come and receive His free gift of salvation. And He commands us to preach His message to everyone who is willing to hear it.

Even when people reject the gospel, we should love them. When they persecute us because of the message, we should forgive and continue in love. Loving others is evangelism in action, and very often it is the only thing we can do. While other religions extend acceptance only when their message is accepted, the Christian faith places no limits on compassion. Jesus' love did not cease on the cross. Stephen's concern for others did not end as he faced death by stoning. Burning as torches on the stake or devoured by animals for their faith, the early Christian martyrs did not stop loving and forgiving their executors. They witnessed the rejection of the message, but they all demonstrated the right attitude of the gospel — the attribute of love.

The Bible applies this principle even to the smallest unit in society: the family. To the Christian with an unbelieving spouse who has not yet accepted the message, Paul asked, "How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?" (1 Corinthians 7:16).

Likewise, Peter said women should maintain a godly and loving attitude toward their husbands "so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives" (1 Peter 3:1).

### EVANGELISM AND TOLERANCE

It should be noted that the tension between evangelism and tolerance is somewhat natural because, while the two have common points, their ultimate goal is different. The goal of the tolerance movement is peace and mutual acceptance among the different segments of society. The goal of evangelism is genuine peace in the heart of the individual through reconciliation with God.

Our Western culture questions the notion of absolute truth. According to humanistic thinking, truth progresses over time as societies and beliefs change. To be politically correct, the world

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**Upon  
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to ignore it, accept, or reject it.  
There is nothing intolerant in this  
because it respects the rights  
and free will of every member  
of our pluralistic  
society.**

asks us to accept today what yesterday was considered completely wrong.

In spite of this frantic push for tolerance, politically correct policies have yet to offer any real solutions to the world's problems. Tolerance aims to improve our diverse society by teaching people to set aside personal convictions

and concepts of truth to embrace differences. However, the question of inner healing and transformation remains somehow unanswered. All human beings share the same sin nature, experience the same emotions, and ponder the same existential questions. Our eternal souls long for the truth and fulfillment only Jesus provides.

Christ calls us to take His unchanging Word to a changing world. We don't alter the message, but we can adapt our methods. Perhaps the approach that is most in line with today's culture is persuasion. We live in a world of diverse intellectual expressions. Art, literature, philosophy, entertainment, advertising, and technology compete for attention.

Persuasive communication invites discussion based on a respectful exchange of ideas. In this culturally familiar context, an honest conversation can emerge. Think of two elected officials with differing political affiliations meeting over coffee. Through give-and-take, they can agree to disagree, find common ground, offer ideas for consideration, and ultimately build a relationship in spite of their differences.

During his missionary journeys, the apostle Paul practiced persuasion in the synagogues, the marketplaces, and other public meeting places. Facing the philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:16-34), he respectfully used their own beliefs and writings to introduce the gospel. This method of civil persuasion did not turn into an endless and aimless conversation. It usually came to a point where the audience was offered the opportunity to make a choice without any coercion.

Paul extended respect and appealed to his listeners to respect him and consider the sincere motivation behind his message. "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Manipulation and intimidation have no place in the gospel proclamation. These approaches convey an air of superiority, and their usage has marked the dark spots in the history of the Church. True evangelism is not a means for attaining a position of dominance over other segments of society. The Word of God is living and active; it does not compete with the propaganda methods of other religions.

Surrounded by agnostics, atheists, liberal thinkers, and people of other faiths, our task is not to withdraw from them because

they are different from us but to engage in meaningful communication that reveals the gospel's unique message of hope and the love attitude we have for each person. We have what the world so desperately needs. And so we offer it from a heart that seeks to serve

others and honor God. This is the approach Paul prescribes in 2 Corinthians 5:11: "Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others ...."

The true gospel message appeals for a response. This leads many to the false presumption that evangelism is intolerant. After all, Jesus seeks to change hearts while the world encourages people to remain in sin and embrace self-centered living in the name of diversity. Upon hearing the simple message of salvation through Christ, an individual must choose to ignore it, accept, or reject it. There is nothing intolerant in this because it respects the rights and free will of every member of our pluralistic society.

When we communicate the gospel authentically, it does not sound very attractive. Contemporary philosophies promote the pursuit of personal gain, guided by relative values and truths, and spares the individual from too much trouble in dealing with the conscience or moral principles. Contrast that with self-denial, righteous living, and accountability to God's Word and Spirit. The gospel message proclaims salvation from sin and the gift of eternal life, but it also calls us to personal responsibility. We must be willing to deny the old sin nature, turn aside from wrongdoing, and give our lives fully to Christ — putting His plans ahead of our own. This is a radical departure from the world's way of doing things. Isn't this why many of Jesus' disciples left Him? Therefore, a biblical gospel presentation has nothing in common with the proselytizing techniques that manipulate people through attractive sales pitches. This is why the method of rational persuasion provides the best opportunity for an objective and full explanation of the message.

Efforts to silence the gospel for the sake of tolerance reveal the hypocrisy behind the haughty proponents of "diversity." When a pluralistic society employs such tactics, it becomes an authoritarian society, where the elite determines how other people can think, speak, and act.

Recently, a group of Christian students in our city applied for permission to organize a student Christian association. The constitution of their prestigious university allows for and encourages the formation of various social student fellowships. Among others, there is a student Jewish association and an Arab-European group. Why not a Christian association? Yet the University Council refused the application, claiming Christian ethics, beliefs, and doctrines are incompatible with principles of pluralistic thinking



## Speaking the Truth in Love: Why Evangelism Isn't Intolerant

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and social tolerance. The Council recommended students revise their proposal to remove references to Christianity. The simple conclusion was that the proposed student Christian association could be anything other than Christian.

As disappointing as such blatant discrimination can be, fear of rejection must not lead the Church underground. God does not want us to be alienated from society. When Jesus prayed for the Church, He said: "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world .... As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:15,18).

Our real foe is not the culture in which we live. Instead, we battle unseen demonic forces that seek to keep people from coming to a saving knowledge of Christ (Ephesians 6:12). As sinners saved by grace, motivated by love, and inspired by faith, we can identify with the spiritually lost as we graciously and respectfully present Christ's message of hope.

The Old Testament prophet Jonah refused to identify with the people of Nineveh. As a result, he failed to understand God's heart. Even when he preached the message, Jonah missed the compassion and mercy behind it.

The Great Commission in Matthew 28 is not a campaign slogan we trumpet for special events. Instead, it should be a normal mode of life for Christians. Evangelism should

happen wherever God's people live and work. The literal reading of the Greek text of the Great Commission is: "As you go, make disciples ...."

When we have the heart of God and live in His will, evangelism flows from everything we do. We naturally serve the good of the people around us as Christ's representatives in the world.<sup>3</sup> By our gracious words and actions, our very lives become persuasive demonstrations of the gospel's truth.

Of course, we have an obligation not only to show Jesus' love and compassion, but also to explain it. Helping those in need is biblical. However, it's also important to tell people why we love them, why we walk the second mile with them, why we turn the other cheek when it hurts, and why we even offer food and drink to our enemies. These gospel concepts are strange to our modern Western society. Yet they are in line with humanitarian principles many in our culture appreciate and celebrate. Indeed, there is nothing intolerant about extending kindness to everyone — even to those who are indifferent or hostile.

Of course, evangelism isn't about human effort. Changing hearts is a supernatural work of God. Unless the Holy Spirit is involved, our plans fall flat. On the other hand, whenever a genuine move of God accompanies the preaching of the gospel, people rarely raise the issue of tolerance. When God

## THE ROLE OF THE ITINERANT EVANGELIST



Marge Ross / Hemera / Thinkstock

By **Scott Camp**

**A**n evangelist has a passion to reach the lost. There is a difference between a person gifted in "stirring the saints" to seek God in revival and a person gifted to harvest the lost.

The primary difference is the focus of the preaching. The evangelist's preaching centers on what God has done in Christ to reconcile the lost to himself. An evangelist is gifted to speak to folks who are lost.

He or she relates to the unchurched. An evangelist often has a dramatic personal story of conversion. This can build a bridge with young people.

However, the message extends well beyond any personal testimony. The focus is the gospel — the life, death, resurrection, ascension, and reign of Christ. The evangelist calls hearers to repentance and faith in Christ. He or she is unusually gifted and skilled at extending a public invitation.

### INVITE AN EFFECTIVE EVANGELIST

Along with a passion to reach the lost by calling people to repent of sins and trust in Jesus, an effective evangelist has a plan to fill the building with people who need Jesus. Nothing frustrates an evangelist more than a

failure to attract large numbers of unchurched people to the evangelistic meeting.

The building may be packed, but if it is packed with only Christians, the crusade service will fail. Every harvest evangelist has a strategy for reaching the lost. Such a God-given plan typically focuses on reaching different groups within the community. Special preservice events attract men, women, children, and students. For example, the church may serve meals and invite special guests to share testimonies of interest to lost folks.

We use an illusionist to communicate the gospel through magic to hundreds of elementary students. Many harvest evangelists gain access to the public schools via assembly programs. Athletic teams, high school marching bands, and

other extracurricular groups receive invitations to the crusade.

The pastor encourages church members to bring lost family members, coworkers, neighbors, and friends to the preservice events. Guests and church members receive prizes for bringing the most friends.

In short, the meeting has an exciting, inviting, celebrative atmosphere. The music should focus on Jesus, the Cross, the Blood, and the Second Coming.

With prayer and preparation, scores of lost people may respond to the invitation to come to Jesus. This ignites revival among God's people as well. Spirit and water baptisms of new converts should take place in every service.

### FOLLOW THE EVANGELIST'S LEAD

Pastors, allow the evangelist to lead

heals the sick or frees someone from demonic bondage, or a criminal repents and turns from wickedness, people discuss whether they believe the testimony. Their focus shifts from humanistic ideals to the question of whether God exists and works in the world — and if so, what they should do about it.

Though it is natural to rejoice over those the Lord adds to His Church, the major task of evangelism is not counting numbers of converts. Rather, Christ's followers are to preach the Word and rely on the Holy Spirit for the results. Evangelism is a spiritual activity of the Church. As such, Christians need the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to carry out this task. This is the teaching of the Book of Acts and the Epistles. Whether witnessing to a Greek, Roman, or Jewish audience, the early Christians relied on the Holy Spirit to touch the hearts and lives of their listeners. The Holy Spirit crosses cultural boundaries and communicates the heart of God to the hearts of people.

No matter what challenges we face in our changing culture, we must not strip Christ's compassion from our ministry. Speaking the truth in love is the very foundation of Christian evangelism. Efforts to modify the message to make the gospel sound acceptable would change its distinctiveness (which a truly "tolerant" society should encourage us to maintain). At the same time, acting with an attitude other than love for the

sake of securing a position of dominance or superiority robs evangelism of its power.

The history of the Church is replete with examples that prove the effectiveness of this biblical, God-centered balance. Genuine evangelism begins and ends with love, and between these two points people encounter Jesus' life-changing message. ■



**JOSEPH DIMITROV**, president, Continental Theological Seminary, Sint-Pieters-Leeuw, Belgium

**Notes**

1. Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Do Not Be Afraid! The Call to Evangelism and Christian Intellectuals," *Word & World*, 25 no. 2 (Spring 2005): 172–179.
2. *Ibid.*
3. K.H. Ding, "Evangelism as a Chinese Christian Sees It," *Missiology: An International Review*, 11, no. 3 (July 1983): 314–316. Lecture given at the Uppsala University in Uppsala, Sweden, November 2, 1982.

— and not merely preach — the meeting. Follow the plan and every detail. Help organize your people. Failing to plan is planning to fail. Every member of the congregation must have a responsibility during the crusade.

Remember, the evangelist is a specialist God calls to this work. Release the specialist to lead the crusade. Many evangelists bring in a team that may include a worship leader, youth and children's workers, and other platform guests.

**ABOUT THE FINANCES**

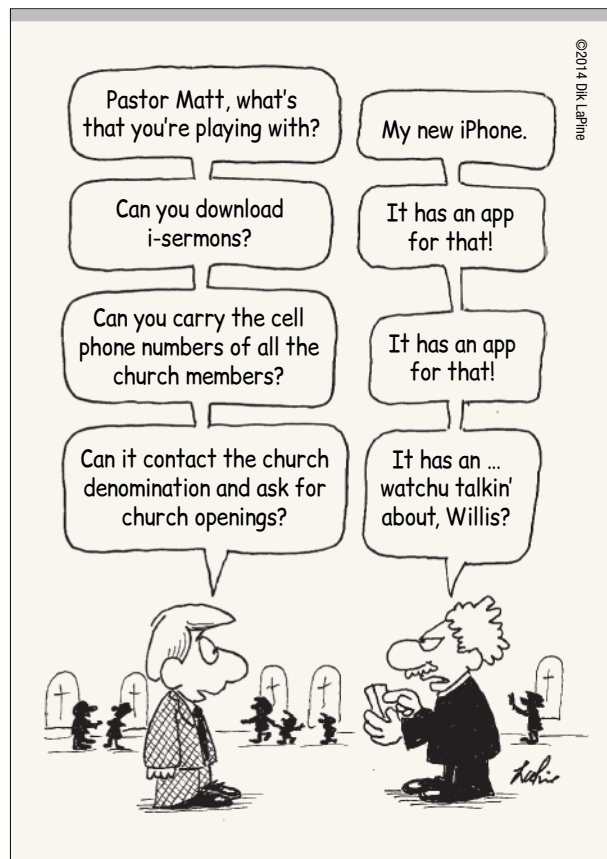
The congregation should pay all the expenses for the crusade from the church budget in advance of the meeting. The evangelist and his or her team should receive a love

offering collected in every service.

Explain to your people the unique aspects of an itinerate ministry. Ask the evangelist about budget requirements, and pray and work to exceed this need. Set a goal for the offering. Believe God, and inform the people of this goal. Keep the congregation posted on the financial progress.

Crusade evangelism is not the only way to reach the lost. But it has proven effective throughout the years, and churches that utilize evangelists win more souls than those that do not.

**SCOTT CAMP**, a featured program guest with Billy Graham Crusades, preaches throughout the United States and West Africa.






# *The Indigenous Church:*

## **ADVANCING OUR MISSIONS STRATEGY FOR THE NEXT *100 Years***

**The Assemblies of God enters a new era of world missions service that will look and feel much different than the world of 1914. What valuable lessons can the AG learn by drawing on its missiological knowledge accumulated during our history?**

By **John L. Easter**

 **One hundred years ago, the Assemblies of God grounded its very purpose** in the fulfillment of

the Great Commission. The often-quoted declaration from the second General Council remains quite remarkable:

*“We commit ourselves and the Movement to Him for the greatest evangelism that the world has ever seen.”*









This statement of purpose reflected more than the optimistic exuberance of a small band of Pentecostal preachers. It symbolized their collective calling to take the gospel to the ends of the Earth, daring to believe in Jesus' promise to enable them, by the Spirit's power, to fulfill the task (Acts 1:8).

Advancing this vision, the third General Council adopted a formal statement in 1915 urging the movement to "exert all its powers" toward promoting the evangelization of the lost according to New Testament methods.<sup>1</sup> To strengthen this commitment, the 1921 Council declared that it would seek "to establish self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing native churches."<sup>2</sup>

This statement defined the strategic method by which the Assemblies of God would fulfill its mission of evangelization.

From a fledgling group of 300 people in 1914, the Assemblies of God has grown to more than 67.5 million members and over 350,000 local churches worldwide. One major factor that contributed to the success of our mission is the long-standing commitment to plant indigenous churches and train local leaders wherever missionaries serve. Though some may question whether the philosophy of the indigenous church remains adequate for our contemporary missional context, this method remains highly effective as we seek to fulfill the unfinished task of reaching the lost.

### THE INDIGENOUS PHILOSOPHY

The concept of the indigenous church emerged in the 19th century during a period of western missionary expansion often referred to as the Great Century of missions.

As products of their times, numerous missionary societies were overtly paternalistic in an age of colonial dominance, holding the prevailing view that nationals should first be civilized. Missionaries expected national believers to conform to a western form of Christianity. The rise of missionary compounds inadvertently separated missionaries and new converts from their communities. Further, missionaries began financially supporting local ministries, including the livelihoods of national ministers. Terms like "rice Christians" described people who converted solely for the benefits they received. These circumstances developed an unhealthy system of dependency between missionaries and national converts, and serious issues associated with basic trust and human dignity emerged.

### OF THE PEOPLE AND BY THE PEOPLE

Responding to the dilemma created by the dependency system, Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson, two missionary statesmen, initiated the modern concept of the indigenous church.<sup>3</sup> In their view,

the ideal goal of Protestant missions was planting the Church on foreign fields through preaching the gospel, cultivating leadership, and developing indigenous churches.<sup>4</sup> They articulated the now-famous three-self formula to describe an indigenous church: self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. The Venn/Anderson model of missions offered a radical departure from the old paradigm.

Later, John Nevius, an American missionary to China and Korea, developed a similar strategy of indigenous methods known as the "Nevius Plan,"<sup>5</sup> which stressed the three-self formula, as well as an emphasis on laity training.

Missionaries in Korea eagerly applied this strategy. Their efforts to plant and develop viable indigenous churches quickly yielded evidence of success, which did not go unnoticed by the larger Protestant world.

### A SPIRIT-CENTERED ECCLESIOLOGY

Roland Allen, an Anglican missionary to China and East Africa, indirectly exerted tremendous influence on the future of Assemblies of God mission practice. His concept of the indigenous church, as described in his *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (1921), offered a revolutionary element to the indigenous church philosophy. Providing a strong biblical framework, Allen emphasized the necessity of a Spirit-centered ecclesiology.

Allen's missiological exposition of the Book of Acts attracted the interest of many Pentecostals, including Alice Luce. A former Anglican, Luce experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit and later joined the Assemblies of God. In 1921, she authored three influential articles in the *Pentecostal Evangel* vying for the establishment of indigenous churches according to the New Testament pattern.

Luce's approach went beyond Allen's concept of the indigenous church, in that she stressed the necessity of Spirit baptism as the means to empower believers for witness. She proposed that the Spirit provides the bond for meaningful relationships when planting indigenous churches and fostering sustainable partnership.<sup>6</sup>

Three decades later, pioneer missionary and mission statesman Melvin Hodges provided the clearest description of the indigenous church practice and the three-self formula for the Assemblies of God. In his well-known book, *The Indigenous Church* (1953), Hodges contended that national converts empowered by the Spirit could carry on the work of the church as well as Americans or Europeans: "There is no place on earth where, if the gospel seed be properly planted, it will not produce an indigenous church. The Holy Spirit can work in one country as well as in another."<sup>7</sup>

Thus, early in its history, the Assemblies of God mission strategy endorsed the principles of the three-self formula, understanding them as follows:

"Self-governing: In a self-governing church, nationals, empowered by the Holy Spirit, provide leadership for the church, rather than rely on outside agencies for decision making.

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“Self-supporting: A self-supporting national church does not rely on outside funding to carry on its work, but rather encourages its people to give in devotion to Christ and the work of ministry.

“Self-propagating: A self-propagating national church effectively evangelizes on its own within the surrounding region and beyond. A self-propagating church should by nature be self-missionizing. There may be no greater indication of indigeneity than when a national church establishes a sending structure to mobilize workers to reach beyond its own people.”

Many missionaries have realized it is not enough to characterize a church as indigenous only because it is self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. As a national church grows and matures, it should also learn to apply the Word of God appropriately to the lives of its members in light of the unique issues, situations, and experiences of the local people, as the Holy Spirit illuminates and quickens a community of faith. Hence, self-theologizing represents a fourth key element of indigeneity.

**PLANTING THE INDIGENOUS CHURCH**

The presence and work of the Church represents an important feature of God’s redemptive purpose in the world. We learn from the ministry of Jesus that personal conversion and relationship with God are of fundamental importance. Yet Jesus also declared, “I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18).

While God calls individuals, they must become part of the mission and life of the Church. In accordance with Matthew 28:18–20, Christ’s mission strategy centers on His Church. His followers are to establish communities of disciples among every people group. Encompassing communities of believers, the Church functions as the primary agent for world evangelization.

**EMPOWERED INDIGENOUS CHURCHES**

One reason for the success of Assemblies of God missions over the past 100 years is our belief that the Holy Spirit is the great equalizer. All people who trust Christ can receive the Holy Spirit’s empowerment as part of the witnessing Church

— without respect to ethnicity, culture, history, language, gender, or economic position (Joel 2:28,29; Acts 2:17–21).

In Acts 2:39, Peter says, “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

The Spirit’s outpouring on all people emphasizes God’s principle of inclusivity. The ground is level at the foot of the Cross. We believe the Spirit directs and empowers national believers everywhere to carry out the work of ministry in their own locality and beyond. If national believers everywhere can receive the Spirit, they can also effectively bear witness to the gospel of the Kingdom everywhere.

**TRAINING INDIGENOUS LEADERS**

A local indigenous church does not emerge in a vacuum. The New Testament pattern validates the planting of churches through the work of training local leaders who will faithfully reproduce themselves.

In Paul’s missions work, he affirmed believers in their faith, trained disciples, and appointed local believers as elders in the churches (Acts 14:22,23). The New Testament pattern is evident in Paul’s instructions to Timothy and Titus to appoint elders and deacons in every township where churches had been planted (1 Timothy 3:1–13; 4:11–14; Titus 1:5).

Paul’s words to Timothy highlight the need for mentoring local leadership in establishing the church: “And the things you have heard me say ... entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2).

This passage suggests that indigenous churches take root in their own culture as the Spirit calls local believers to leadership positions. In turn, local leaders train and equip new converts for the work of ministry, which makes possible another generation of reproducible churches.

Planting and sustaining viable, indigenous churches directly corresponds to training and equipping national leaders for Pentecostal ministry. Empowered by the Spirit’s effectual work within their lives and churches, leaders rise to their full potential in administrative oversight, evangelism, church planting, training, and financial readiness.

**If we have learned anything from 2,000 years of Christian missions, including our own 100-year history, there is no substitute for long-term “boots-on-the-ground” missionaries who work — regardless of the hardships — to plant and nurture indigenous churches.**





(continued from page 95)

**PARTNERSHIP AND INDIGENOUS PRINCIPLES**

The pioneer work of planting indigenous churches must transform into partnership when new communities of faith take root and begin to mature into a national church.

The strategic partnership between a national church and an on-field missionary team certainly generates unique challenges. But when western institutional and support ministries (as well as short-term mission teams) also enter into that partnership, the relational dynamic requires greater care and consideration.

**STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

History provides many painful lessons concerning western institutional and support ministries whose efforts resulted only in meeting short-term needs at the expense of the long-term goal to plant and nurture viable indigenous churches. These ministries include schools, orphanages, medical clinics, construction projects, and athletic camps. Noble motives often fuel institutional and support ministries. Even so, their purposes may not align with the mission of the national church.

Typically, institutional and support ministries are not designed for, nor are they oriented toward, the essential task of planting reproducible churches. This does not mean these ministries cannot positively contribute or add value to our mission as a sending church. It does underscore, however, the critical need for strategic partnership.

Only a far-reaching strategic partnership can ensure that the resources, personnel, and activity a western institution or support ministry offers do not disrupt or detract from the efforts of a missionary team and local believers to nurture an indigenous work.

**STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT**

Western institutions and support ministries should work in alignment with the vision of national churches, valuing the role of local churches. Connecting to the vision and ministry of the local church produces more effectual ministry on the ground.

The national church and missionary team should carefully evaluate the activities of support ministries to safeguard long-term goals. Western ministries often bring large amounts of

resources to the national church, so even when a western institution has a good relationship with the missionary team and national church, it can often lead to the “tail wagging the dog.”

This same lesson applies to short-term mission teams.

These workers should support the long-range goals of the missionary team and national church, growing the work of the indigenous national church. For this reason,

short-term mission teams seek to work with missionaries who strategically support the planting and nurturing of indigenous churches, whether in a pioneer or partnership phase.

**INDIGENOUS PRINCIPLES AND THE LOCAL U.S. AG CHURCH**

An AGWM Africa support ministry recently held a forum on the West Coast to raise awareness for training indigenous leaders. At one point, a local American pastor raised his objection to U.S. churches providing financial support to missionaries. He said it would make more sense to use those funds to support national workers to carry out the work of ministry. He contended that AGWM could pay 100 nationals for the price of one American missionary unit.

At that moment, an executive church leader from an African nation stood up and pleaded with the attendees not to heed the pastor’s suggestion.

“Please don’t take away the opportunity for my brothers to believe God to provide for our ministry efforts by you becoming their provider,” he said.

Today, representing one of the poorest countries in the world, this African church now numbers over 1 million members and sends out scores of cross-cultural missionaries to surrounding nations.

The view of this African statesman did not preclude strategic partnership between his church and an Assemblies of God missionary team. Throughout the years, missionaries had provided assistance with personnel, finances, and equipment — all as a sign of mutual respect and love. In fact, the U.S. AG now enjoys a century-old relationship with this particular country, and the partnership has become a model of a biblical indigenous church that continues to enjoy close friendship with our U.S. Fellowship.

In the present climate of world missions, most U.S. pastors

**Our collective calling has the greatest impact when missionaries, national churches, support ministries, and local U.S. Assemblies of God churches align through shared values and goals.**



insist on strategically investing their members and finances in mission priorities that will result in Kingdom advancement. When investing personnel and finances in missions, U.S. churches should assist missionaries and institutional ministries that strategically support the planting of replicating, indigenous fellowships.

For example, if a missionary or support ministry works independently from the vision of the mission team and national church, there is reason for concern regarding strategic alignment and accountability issues. Similarly, when supporting a missionary-led ministry in an area with a viable national church, a sending U.S. church should inquire as to whether both the national church and the missionary team consider the ministry as strategic.

Our collective calling has the greatest impact when missionaries, national churches, support ministries, and local U.S. Assemblies of God churches align through shared values and goals. In the end, we are a financially blessed church that sends missionaries to plant churches. These will, in turn, plant more churches to reach individuals and communities with the transformational power of the gospel.

### COMMITMENT TO CONTINUE THE GREATEST WORK OF EVANGELISM

Today, nearly 4 billion people have not yet received an adequate witness of the gospel, and over 6,500 people groups have no witness among them. These spiritually lost people are without a vibrant and sustained local community of faith. Going forward in this century, we must maintain our commitment to the “greatest evangelism the world has ever seen” by planting local churches and training local leaders — continuously guided by indigenous church principles.

The 100th anniversary of our Movement provides a marvelous opportunity for us to renew our collective calling to evangelize the “regions beyond” and to strengthen and mobilize national churches around the world in their efforts to do the same.

To remain committed to the priority of world evangelization, our mission must continue to value the planting of indigenous churches and the training of local leadership. If we have learned anything from 2,000 years of Christian missions, including our own 100-year history, there is no substitute for long-term “boots-on-the-ground” missionaries who work — regardless of the hardships — to plant and nurture indigenous churches that reflect the uniqueness of the local context and culture.

As the Assemblies of God celebrates 100 years of ministry as a Pentecostal movement, we enter a new era of world missions service. This period will look and feel much different than the world of 1914. Dramatic changes have occurred over this past century, and great challenges have arisen while engaging the unfinished task of world evangelization. Nonetheless, we can learn valuable lessons by drawing on the reservoir of missiological knowledge accumulated during our history.

The Assemblies of God continues to value the approach of

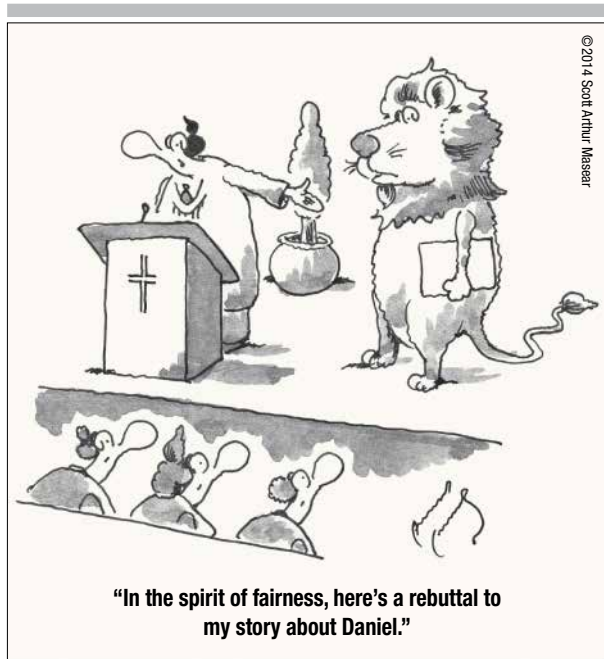
planting indigenous churches, and our future success will be predicated in part by our continued commitment to planting new indigenous churches, training local leaders, and valuing historical partnerships. ■



**JOHN L. EASTER**, AGWM Africa strategic leader for training and director of Africa’s Hope, a ministry that aids various levels of training for AG African schools. He is also the vice chancellor of Pan-Africa Theological Seminary, with campuses in Lomé, Togo, and Nairobi, Kenya.

#### Notes

1. General Council of the Assemblies of God, General Council Minutes (Combined Minutes), 1914–1917, 9–10.
2. General Council of the Assemblies of God, General Council Minutes, 1921, 61–64.
3. Rufus Anderson (1796–1880) served as the foreign secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Henry Venn (1796–1873) served as the general secretary of the Church Missionary Society in London. At the time, these entities reflected the two largest Protestant missionary agencies. Independent of one another, Venn and Anderson arrived at the same basic principles during their early careers, but in the course of time, the two contemporaries shared ideas, experiences, and friendship.
4. William R. Shenk, “Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn: A Special Relationship?” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 5, no. 4 (October 1981): 168–172.
5. Gary McGee, *This Gospel Shall Be Preached* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1986).
6. Gary McGee, *Miracles, Missions, and American Pentecostalism: American Society of Missiology Series 45* (New York: Orbis Books, 2010).
7. Melvin Hodges, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1953), 14.





*Changing the*  
**WORLD**  
*One Church at a Time*

By **John W. Kennedy**

**Church planting is the building block of the kingdom of God and continues to be the most effective means of evangelizing unreached people. In this article-interview, three Assemblies of God church planters discuss how church planting is transforming lives and communities.**



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**BRYAN BRIGGS**



**VERLON FOSNER**

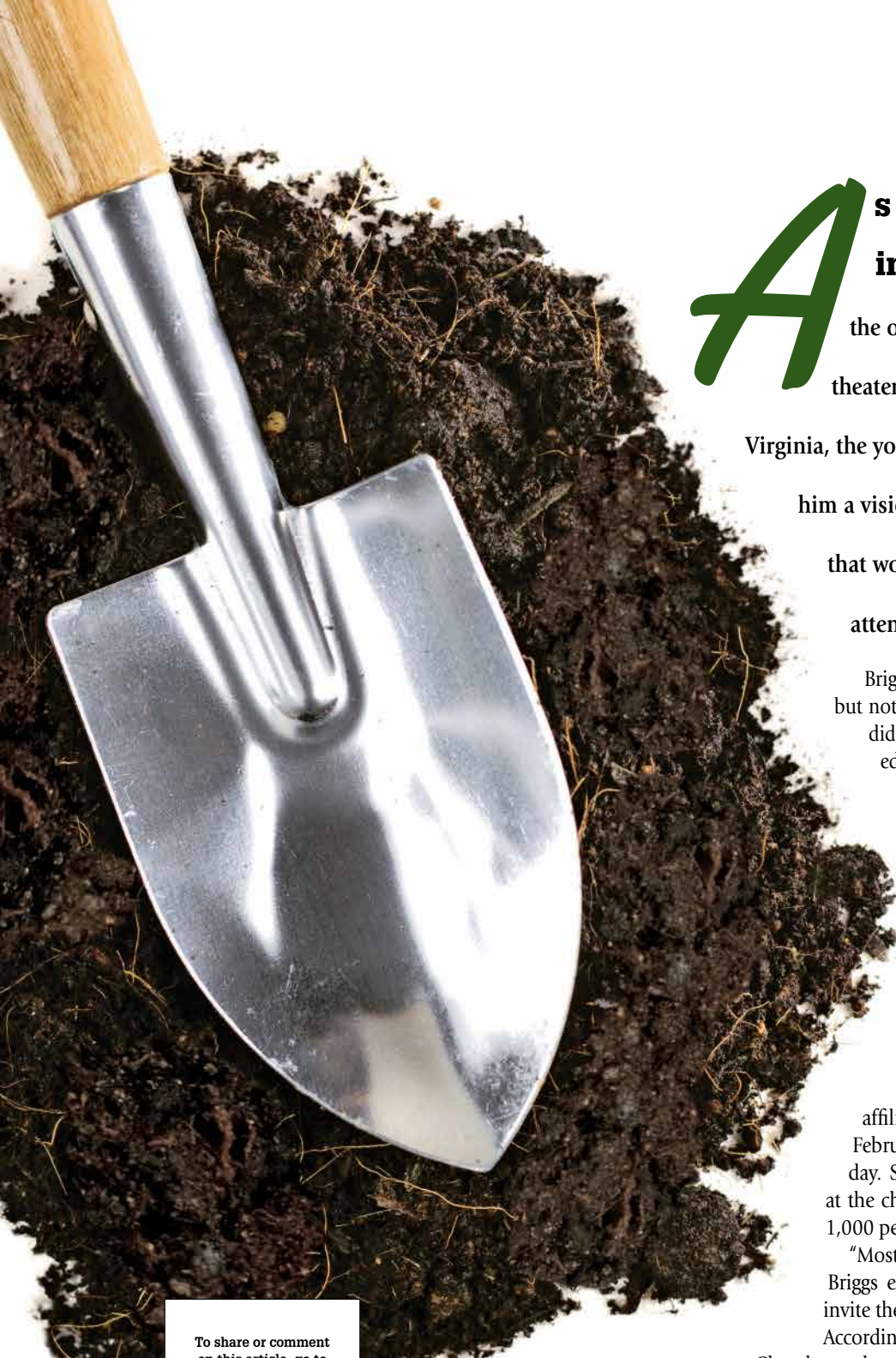


**ADELITA GARZA**



Photos courtesy of Church Multiplication Network and Bryan Briggs





**A**s Bryan Briggs stood in a lengthy line on the opening night of the new movie theater complex in Colonial Heights,

Virginia, the youth pastor sensed God giving

him a vision: start a church on the site

that would duplicate the scene of eager attendees.

Briggs knew he had the call and the will, but not the wherewithal, to start a church. "I didn't have any money, contacts, or knowledge of church planting," Briggs recalls.

God soon connected him with Stan Grant, who in a decade of pastoring in nearby Midlothian saw the congregation grow to 1,200 from 20. Grant hired Briggs at Clover Hills Assembly of God, and for the next year and a half the two men, along with help from the district and national offices, began planning for Destination Church to open in Colonial Heights.

With Clover Hills AG as its parent affiliate, Destination Church launched in February 2011 with 450 attendees the first day. Since then, someone has been saved at the church every weekend, and more than 1,000 people have been water baptized.

"Most of those who attend are unchurched," Briggs explains. "When they get saved, they invite their unsaved friends to church."

According to *Outreach*, in 2013 Destination Church was the youngest fastest-growing church on the magazine's list of 100 fastest-growing churches.

Briggs says 15,000 people each week watch a movie at the multiplex adjacent to Interstate 95.

"All we have to say is, 'We meet at the movie theater at the mall,' " Briggs says. "We don't have to give directions; they already know where to park because they have been here during the week to see a movie."

In addition to the 1,000 attending Destination Church every Sunday morning at 8:45 and 11, last September Destination launched a daughter church in Hopewell, Virginia, with 500 showing up the first weekend. The Hopewell campus meets Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning in a renovated defunct movie theater.

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The U.S. Assemblies of God is one of the few denominations in the nation experiencing growth these days. That in large part is attributable to an aggressive renewed interest in church planting via a variety of methods, in a plethora of unlikely places.

"Church planting is the building block of the kingdom of God," says AG General Superintendent George O. Wood. "Evangelism and discipleship can't happen without the local church."

The Assemblies of God had 117 U.S. churches by the end of its first year when forming 100 years ago. In the first half century, the Movement grew to 8,500 congregations across the nation. In roughly the past half-century, the Fellowship has added 4,500 U.S. churches, for a total of around 13,000 today.

"The early part of the Movement was prolific in starting churches," says Church Multiplication Network (CMN) Founding Director Steve Pike. "The early historical accounts show starting new churches was so normal they didn't make a big deal about it. They felt compelled to have a Pentecostal voice in every town possible. It was a spontaneous, unstructured, unplanned expansion. We can truly say this Fellowship from the very beginning was a church-planting Movement."

Ministers started churches in basements, brush arbors, storefronts, and fraternal organization halls.

"They had a great passion to reach people who didn't know Jesus," Wood says.

By the 1930s, AG leaders recognized the need to prepare church planters, and that served as the impetus for establishing Bible institutes, which became the colleges and universities of today. Pike notes that during the Great Depression, the AG developed a Missions and Education Department to prepare and send leaders to pioneer new churches. The number of AG congregations more than doubled from 1,600 in 1929 to 3,500 in 1939.

If church planting has been effective in the United States,

it has blossomed exponentially elsewhere. AG World Missions Executive Director Greg Mundis says pioneer minister Alice Luce (based upon Anglican missionary Roland Allen's work)

proposed that missions emphasize planting indigenous churches after the New Testament pattern. Mundis says worldwide growth began exploding in the 1950s when the self-governing, self-financing, and self-propagation philosophy gained widespread acceptance through the ministry and writings of AG missions leader Melvin Hodges.

Assemblies of God World Missions calculates that an AG church is planted somewhere in the world every 39 minutes, and that includes such improbable settings as under a tree, in a living room, under a tent, and in an open-air jungle site. There are more than 362,000 AG congregations around the globe.

“  
**They [early church planters] felt compelled to have a Pentecostal voice in every town possible.**  
”  
— Steve Pike



**Destination Church**  
Colonial Heights, Virginia



## Changing the World One Church at a Time

(continued from page 101)

### RECENT EMPHASIS

When Wood became general superintendent seven years ago, he quickly identified church planting as one of the AG's five "core values." In 2006, Pike became director of the U.S. Missions Department of Church Planting.

Early on as he conducted research, Pike learned from church growth expert Ed Stetzer that the AG already was nestled among the top 10 church-planting organizations in the U.S., but lagged far behind in providing financial support to such efforts.

organization matches \$30,000 of a church planter's fundraising to assist in startup costs. To date, just over 300 congregations have participated. The AGTrust has raised and invested over \$6 million into the matching fund.

To qualify for the money, church startups must agree to elements that will help ensure their survival. For instance, matching fund congregations have an approved CMN coach during early development. They also are required to be deliberate about reaching the unchurched, with face-to-face encounters in the neighborhood.

Ninety percent of matching fund churches are functioning after four years. Briggs credits the CMN training and financial backing for trimming years off Destination Church's launch date.

A team approach tends to work when a church-planting pastor receives help from several other missions-minded Christians, often college students. Wood recalls San Antonio pastor John Van Pay meeting with a core team. Over six months they gathered weekly to list on a butcher paper the names of all the unsaved people they had encountered in the last

week. In a focused concentration, team members prayed for those acquaintances and made intentional relationships with them.

Gateway Fellowship Church started in 2008 with 283 attendees on their first day. Today, more than 1,000 attend.

Rather than opening with a handful of people, the pattern before CMN's existence, now it's rare for a new AG work to have fewer than 100 attendees at the first service.

"Churches are starting with more missional momentum," Pike says. "Our churches are starting stronger and lasting longer. And because we are more strategic, they are starting to make an impact from day one."

"The reason for preplanning is to be large enough when opening to reach the community effectively," Wood says.

### CHANGING WORLD

When the AG organized in 1914, the U.S. population stood at 99 million, in a still predominantly rural society. In the early days of the Fellowship, Pentecostal pioneers went to the highways and byways seeking to start an Assemblies of God church from town to town.

Now, the nation has more than 320 million people, with more than 80 percent of them living in urban areas. Although an AG church still is present in most small towns, church planting has failed to keep up in burgeoning suburbs and metamorphic inner cities.



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How people  
are welcomed is the  
deciding factor if they  
come back.  
”

— Bryan Briggs

"Our advantage was we planted so many churches because of the built-in emphasis of being empowered by the Holy Spirit," Pike says. "Ed Stetzer challenged me to imagine what would happen if we added intentionality and strategy to the anointing."

In 2008, Pike became director of the newly formed CMN, reporting directly to the general superintendent. The number of church plants launched since then has increased annually, with the exception of last year: 247 that first year, 266 in 2009, 325 in 2010, 368 in 2011, 391 in 2012, and 324 in 2013. The U.S. Assemblies of God has an ultimate goal of planting 500 churches a year.

Currently, because of population growth and existing churches that close, the U.S. AG needs to open around a church a day just to keep pace with the need.

When church planting shifted to CMN from AG U.S. Missions in 2008, the Fellowship launched AGTrust. This financial

"Urban center planting is complicated," Pike says. "You have to exegete the cultural situation. It's like thousands of little towns smashed together in one place. If you cross the street in an urban center, you can enter a different world."

Yet a new wave of pioneers is deciphering how to thrive in metro areas.

Verlon Fosner has been an AG pastor for 34 years. A decade ago he led a church in Seattle in a neighborhood rapidly changing from predominantly traditional families to older, fractured singles. The switch resulted in the church hemorrhaging members. Fosner realized he needed to devise a bold strategy for the congregation to remain relevant.

In a three-year transition, Fosner and his team, with help from Assemblies of God Theological Seminary professors, rethought their urban ministry grid. They concluded that continuing a Sunday morning performance-based service in such an urban setting would result in the death of the church.

"We had to find a way to engage a variety of neighborhoods," says Fosner, whose research showed Seattle is comprised of 27 "walking villages" where people for the most part confine themselves to eat, shop, and work.

Subsequently, five years ago Fosner began following a strategy used by the church through the apostolic era. Community Dinners gatherings are the equivalent of weekly agape meals in the Early Church. The meetings target the unchurched in five Seattle locations, such as a senior citizen center or a banquet hall. With evening meals as communion to the poor, broken, and lost, Community Dinners does church around tables, with conversations about Christ in the mix.

Meals are provided by caterers, culinary arts professionals, and church personnel, depending on the site.

"It has worked from the first week," Fosner says. "Jesus had nonreligious people at His table. The gospel is profoundly revealed in an abundant feast."

The feasts draw an average of 150 per night, with people of

faith sitting beside those who have no spiritual background, and people of means talking to those with nothing. Regular attendees engage visitors about their health, housing, and job needs.

Briggs concurs regarding the importance of sustenance. He notes that Destination Church has an ample supply of snacks and beverages available to attendees.

"Free food is the key to making people feel comfortable and at home," Briggs says. "When Jesus ministered, He always made sure He fed people before He left. How people are welcomed is the deciding factor if they come back."

Community Dinners is based on a "social lift" structure. This year, Community Dinners began leasing two dozen low-income apartments to help local residents return to a sustainable life.

"We must have a mission of social engagement welded to our spiritual mission," Fosner says.

Food likewise played a role in the growth of Puente de Vida, a Spanish-speaking AG congregation in Santa Paula, California, pioneered by Adelita Garza in 2009. The church started in a garage with distribution of boxes of fresh fruit, vegetables, dairy products, and meats to first-generation Latino families, mostly migrant workers.

Garza initially had no intention of becoming a U.S. pastor. She envisioned life as an evangelist who would travel the world. But while a graduate student at Fuller Theological

Seminary, Garza agreed to join the staff of the predominantly white Ventura First Assembly of God, with the assignment to help diversify the congregation. Eventually the outreach resulted in planting a church for Spanish-speaking families.

"I knew the need was there," Garza recalls. "But God had to take me through a series of events to convince me I was to lead it."

A couple of years into the new work, Garza says God changed the target group of Puente de Vida (Bridge of Life). Professionals and blue-collar workers who didn't understand Spanish began showing up — even though services were only in Spanish.

Garza, who is fluent in both Spanish and English, in 2011 transitioned to bilingual services. She preached a phrase in Spanish

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**Jesus had nonreligious people at His table. The gospel is profoundly revealed in an abundant feast.**  
— Verlon Fosner  
”

“  
**I knew the need was there. But God had to take me through a series of events to convince me I was to lead it.**  
— Adelita Garza  
”



## Changing the World One Church at a Time

(continued from page 103)

then translated it herself into English, in essence doubling the length of the service. In February 2014, the church began separate services; Garza preaches one in Spanish, the other in English.

### EVANGELISM UNLEASHED

Pike notes that early New Testament churches began the practice of planting daughter congregations.

"Starting new churches is the way the Kingdom advances," Pike says. "Churches that are generous toward the mission of God — sending out other churches and missionaries — rapidly unleash multiplication."

Pike says study after study reveals that evangelism is a key ingredient to church planting.

"The older a church gets, it tends to be less effective in reaching new converts," Pike says. "A brand new church is effective because it goes after people who need Jesus."

Church planters and their team members are motivated to evangelize, Pike says, because otherwise the congregation will be sparse. So engaging others in the community is a logical step to finding potential followers. CMN encourages a four-step evangelism approach in church planting that encompasses awareness activities, connecting, relational activities, and discipleship.

"New believers bring in other new believers," Mundis says. "They have a fresh testimony and excitement."

"The reason for doing church planting is evangelism — to reach the unreached," Wood says.

Today that can lead to some unconventional, but effective, locations — from elementary schools to taverns. A movie theater is a natural place for unchurched crowds to meet during the week because people are accustomed to going there, feel they can dress casually, and can expect a certain degree of anonymity.

### CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

A "Global Church Planting Summit" is one of the three emphases at the August 2014 centennial celebration in Springfield, Missouri. Effective church planters from around the world will interact with U.S. counterparts. Pike says many AG churches around the world begin as an effort to bring compassion to a desperate situation, such as providing wells in an area where no potable water exists, or rescuing women out of sex trafficking.

"The global church planting network has created this broadband approach to missions that brings the whole gospel," Pike says. "For example, they not only rescue women out of sex slavery, they go to the root of the problem and plant a church in a neighborhood where the evil exists and give perpetrators the opportunity to hear the gospel and repent of sin."

The summit will enable U.S. church leaders to interact with innovative church planters from around the globe. Whatever the setting, Mundis says church planters share similar challenges. A quarter century ago, Mundis helped plant what is now Vienna Christian Center. Today the church holds nine

weekly services conducted in eight languages, with 65 nationalities represented in the multisite congregation.

"If you put a seed in the ground, find good leadership, and get faithful people, God can do amazing things," Mundis says.

It's a lesson that will be shared extensively at the summit.

"We're going to discover ways to step into the future that we haven't even dreamed of before," Pike says.

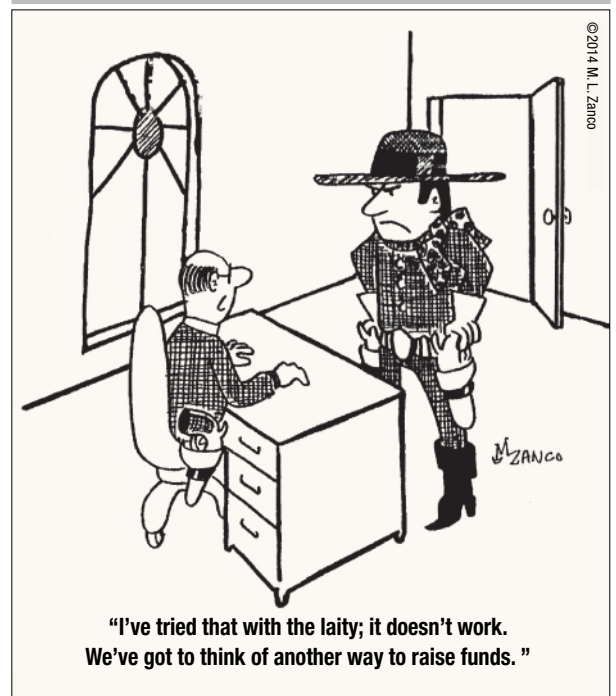
Because of mentoring from CMN, Bryan Briggs says multiplication seemed logical from the beginning of Destination Church.

"Our goal is to start a new campus at least every two years," Briggs says. "We feel like our mission field is the state of Virginia." ❏

*Editor's Note: In May of 2014, Steve Pike accepted a new position with CMN to serve as the Urban Church Planting Strategist for the Assemblies of God. Pike will begin the formation of an urban church planting project that will serve as a reproducible model for effectively starting new churches in densely populated urban centers.*



**JOHN W. KENNEDY**, news editor,  
*Pentecostal Evangel*, Springfield,  
Missouri



"I've tried that with the laity; it doesn't work.  
We've got to think of another way to raise funds."

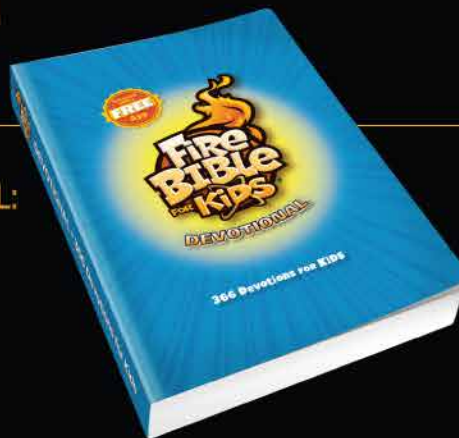


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# **KEEPING** *Compassion AND Evangelism* **TOGETHER**

By **Jerry Ireland**

**While we cannot lead people to Christ apart from sharing the gospel message, it is unlikely our message will receive serious consideration if our lives contradict what we proclaim. Here is how to keep evangelism and compassion together.**

**F**or people to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus, we must preach the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. God has spoken to us in words and given us a verbal message. It is imperative that we share those words of hope with the world (Colossians 1:5).



## Keeping Compassion and Evangelism Together

(continued from page 107)

However, it is also vitally important that we conduct ourselves “in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Philippians 1:27). To be a follower of Jesus means more than mere mental assent to a list of dos and don’ts. It means our entire lives are radically reoriented because we have turned from lies to the truth, from darkness to light. In fact, it means we ourselves must be light (Matthew 5:13). Paul reminds us in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 that our work as Christ’s followers is ultimately love-driven.

Between 1996 and 2006, the number of non-Christians viewing Christianity in a favorable light dropped by more than 20 percent, according to the book *unChristian* by David Kinnaman.<sup>1</sup> Of the 24 million 16- to 29-year-olds in America, only about 500,000 (approximately 2 percent) view Christianity in a favorable light. This represents a radical departure from the Early Church, a Church that garnered praise from even its critics because of its love for outsiders, especially the poor and sick.

As Michael Green observes in his book, *Evangelism in the Early Church*: “The Church had qualities unparalleled in the ancient world. Nowhere else would you find slaves and masters, Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, engaging in table fellowship and showing a real love for one another. That love flowed to outsiders, and in times of plague or disaster the Christians shone by means of their service to the communities in which they lived.”

**When  
the Church responds in  
the present to those who hunger  
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proclaim.**

Green adds: “Nowadays the lifestyle of Christians is hard to distinguish from [unbelievers] .... Our need for wholeness ... can only be met and sustained by love without strings attached. God loves like that, and the early Christians seem to have been so warmed by his love that it bound them together and flowed naturally from them.”<sup>2</sup>

Of course, we must couple compassion with communication. Some claim the Christian

calling is not at all about what we say but solely about our need to engage in loving action. Author Greg Garrett writes: “Our call as followers [of Jesus] is to try to walk in the world with the compassion of Christ, to demonstrate God’s love with action, not words.”<sup>3</sup>

While Garrett represents an extreme position, he does highlight the divide within the Church over how best to understand our task in the world. We must return to the teachings of Scripture to understand compassion from a biblical perspective. These foundations can keep us from losing sight of our evangelistic calling as we respond with Christ’s love to the needs around us.

### COMPASSION AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Bible calls God’s people to demonstrate compassion as a reflection of God’s nature and kingdom. The Old Testament characterizes God’s reign fundamentally in terms of righteousness and justice, declaring that these two qualities form the foundation of His throne (Psalms 89:14; 97:1,2). As such, God expects His people to embody these qualities. In the Old Testament, righteousness and justice relate especially to God’s holy character and to the expectations of a holy people created in His image (Genesis 1:26,27; 1 Kings 10:9). Our holy God hates oppression and injustice, which most often victimize the poor and needy.

In the New Testament, Jesus’ work on the cross makes salvation available to all people (Luke 18:25; John 3:5). Christ’s followers are transformed to be like Jesus. This includes sharing His compassion for the world. To be saved is to be Kingdom-minded — and to embody the concerns of the King. Those who come to faith in Christ experience a radical reorientation of their lives, including a newfound concern for the poor.

We see this played out in a number of scenarios in Scripture. For example, Zacchaeus comes to faith in Jesus and gives half his possessions to the poor (Luke 19:8–10). Conversely, those who fail to make Jesus Lord and embody His concerns go away sad, their love of wealth proving a hindrance to Kingdom participation (Luke 18:23). Thus, our attitudes and



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priorities reveal Christ's influence in our lives.

A compassionate Church reflects the characteristics of the One we profess as our King. In showing compassion, our goal is not to usher in a utopian society — or even the kingdom of God. Only God brings about His kingdom. But by showing compassion, we give evidence that the King of Righteousness dwells among us and within us. How odd it would be to proclaim God as Lord and King — a God who demonstrates great concern for the poor (1 Samuel 2:8; Psalm 113:7) — and not also practice His priorities. When we disregard the King's concerns, we are not His faithful subjects.

### A CREDIBLE WITNESS

The gospel is credible all by itself. It doesn't need us to make it credible. It is credible and authoritative because it has its origin in God (2 Peter 1:21). It is literally "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). Yet the conduct of the Christian community goes a long way in determining whether the credible gospel will get a fair hearing. If our lives don't line up with what we say, our message will not likely provoke serious thought.

Jesus says the Church's mandate is witnessing for Him (Acts 1:8). Proclamation is certainly a key part of that witness. However, the Greek word translated as "witnesses" in Acts 1:8 (μαρτυρες) is the same term from which we get the English word martyr. Witnessing to the life and ministry of Christ, then, involves a complete commitment of our words as well as our actions — and even our very lives. Numerous passages in Scripture link faith in Jesus to the expectation of deeds reflective of that faith. Jesus tells Nicodemus: "Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God" (John 3:21). Similarly Paul says those who believe in God are "careful to devote themselves to doing what is good" (Titus 3:8). Scripture doesn't allow for the separation of our calling to preach the gospel from our calling to live it out. How we live in the world has much to say about the degree to which we have truly heard and understood Jesus' words.

The ministry of Teen Challenge helped bring me to a

saving knowledge of Christ following a 10-year drug addiction. I entered Teen Challenge as an atheist-leaning agnostic with serious doubts about the existence of an all-loving, all-powerful God. However, the love and kindness of an elderly couple played a major role in my coming to faith. Every other weekend, Paul and Norma opened their home to the entire Buffalo, N.Y., men's Teen Challenge program. They regularly hosted 20 to 30 former drug addicts and alcoholics in their home to share a meal and just hang out. Their love and compassion gave flesh to the daily sermons we heard, showing that the message they proclaimed was truly transformative.

### HOPE EMBODIED

A second way in which our compassion serves the mission of the Church is through the embodiment of hope.

According to Galatians 6:10, we should do good to all people. As Christians serve one another, as well as outsiders,

through acts of love and kindness, ministry to the poor and needy, and concern for the sick, we demonstrate the incomparable qualities that await us when Jesus returns and brings about the final resurrection.

The Church, as author Julian N. Hartt says, "is to show forth the eternal kingdom of God by precept and example."<sup>4</sup> Thus,

the Church should be a microcosm of the future to which God is leading us, a future of healing and wholeness in every area of life.

In the Book of Revelation, we read of the future that awaits God's people. "They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 7:16,17, NASB).<sup>5</sup>

When the Church responds in the present to those who hunger and thirst and lack basic necessities for life, when we comfort those who mourn, we become a community that embodies the hope we proclaim.

Anyone who travels frequently has likely experienced at some point a free upgrade to first class. This happened to me recently on the second leg of a three-leg journey to Africa. As I

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## Keeping Compassion and Evangelism Together

(continued from page 109)

settled into the luxurious and comfortable seat/bed, I thought to myself: *This is really a bad thing!*

I knew that after tasting the good life, so to speak, sitting in coach would be difficult. And indeed, on the final leg of the journey, a coach seat that had been perfectly acceptable to me previously seemed cramped and unsatisfactory.

This is precisely the idea behind embodied hope. As the Church, empowered by the Spirit, embodies the qualities of our heavenly destiny, we hold forth a taste of a truly first-class life — the abundant life Jesus promises (John 10:10). As unbelievers experience these dynamic qualities, it becomes increasingly difficult to return to a life apart from Christ.



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## WOMEN AND EVANGELISM

**W**e can't ignore women. Beginning with the Garden of Eden in the Book of Genesis, the Bible reveals women as key participants in God's promised salvation through His Son — and as objects of Satan's schemes to undermine God's redeeming purposes.

Our planet is home to an estimated 3.5 billion women and girls.<sup>1</sup> These aren't just statistics; they represent people to whom God has called His Church to bring the good news of Jesus. They comprise 49.6 percent of the world's total population.<sup>2</sup>

## COMPASSION AND EVANGELISM

Most errors relating to compassion arise from a faulty understanding of the biblical kingdom of God. Those who understand the Kingdom in entirely earthly terms often focus on Scripture's ethical and moral teachings, while neglecting aspects such as personal sin and judgment. Others, concerned

only with the future aspect of God's kingdom, emphasize saving souls while overlooking other human needs.

Scripture refutes both lopsided views of the kingdom of God. Jesus taught the Kingdom as both a present and future reality (Matthew 7:21; Luke 11:20). So the first key to preventing compassion from eclipsing evangelism is maintaining the biblical

Among them, an estimated 35 percent (1.2 billion) have experienced sexual violence.<sup>3</sup> In times of armed conflict or natural disasters, with their accompanying breakdown of social, political, and family infrastructure, women and girls are especially vulnerable to acts of sexual violence. And many cultures view a sexually violated female as damaged goods, condemning her to a life of sexual exploitation and slavery.

Staggering numbers of the world's female population are wounded women, often bearing deep scars that only Jesus can heal. And because of cultural, religious, and social norms, a majority of women in the world who need our Savior are only accessible through other women passionate to share the Jesus they love.

Fiona Bellshaw is one such passionate lady taking Jesus to women from the nations in her city of Madrid, Spain. Scottish-born, Bellshaw went to Spain with her missionary parents, where she met and married a young minister, Juan Carlos Escobar, who later became the Assemblies of God superintendent for Spain.

A pastor's wife, Bellshaw noticed non-Spanish young women forced to work as prostitutes on Madrid's streets. Bellshaw began to befriend women one by one as God led her, offering them friendship, prayer, and Jesus. She sought and received permission to visit trafficked women held at the Center for Internment for Foreigners. There she ministers to ladies awaiting release to the streets or deportation.

Last year, Bellshaw and her women's team ministered to women from 34 nations (including Islamic countries), praying with them for help, healing, spiritual deliverance, and salvation. Some women have received water baptism and are on the discipleship journey, becoming women of God. Bellshaw is a 21st century evangelist.

So is Connie Weisel, women's pastor at First Assembly of God in Fort Myers, Florida. Committing her life fully to Christ at age 38, Connie was a successful businesswoman. Then, in 1991, she started a Monday night class at the church called "Help for Hurting Women" (HHW) to reach out to women like herself who needed a healing journey with Jesus. Women of all ages, social strata, and ethnic backgrounds came from across Southwest Florida for a night of praise reports, prayer, Bible study, and

personal ministry. HHW has met every Monday night, except for national holidays, for 23 years. Over those years, 46,000 women have attended, with 3,450 coming to Christ for the first time or rededicating their lives to Him.

"It is simply amazing how thousands have come to redemption and wholeness in such a simple setting," Weisel says. "We have been faithful to just be there, week after week, with love and comfort for women — no matter what the issues may be."

Weisel and her leadership team do not wait for hurting women to find them. They seek and follow the Spirit's lead all week long, wherever they go — in restaurants, grocery stores, and other business places — and invite women to meet them at HHW.

Weisel and her team believe in casting the net for those who need Jesus. As a result, Help for Hurting Women is a meeting place for miracles of salvation and healing.

In Mumbai, India, Bombay Teen Challenge women outreach workers minister each year to thousands of women and girls in prostitution. Rescued brothel madams and women formerly enslaved in prostitution now serve as some of the most powerful evangelists. Today, they fearlessly take Jesus to women in bondage who are desperate for deliverance. Like 21st century Mary Magdalenes, they share the good news that Jesus is alive and moving in the world (John 20:18). In the face of hell, they cast out demons and set women free.

Yes, Satan has targeted women since the Garden. But God has a greater redemptive plan for the women and girls of the nations. And He still calls courageous daughters to do the greatest work of evangelism among them. God does not ignore the women of the world. Neither can we.

**BETH GRANT, missionary educator, cofounder of Project Rescue and executive presbyter for the General Council of the Assemblies of God, representing credentialed women ministers**

### Notes

1. <http://www.census.gov/population/international/data/idb/worldpop.php>
2. <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/world-population-gender-age.php>
3. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/en/>



## Keeping Compassion and Evangelism Together

(continued from page 111)

balance of a present and future kingdom of God — the already and the not yet. By staying balanced, we can avoid overemphasizing the gospel's social and compassionate mandate. Likewise, we can avoid an entirely future view of the Kingdom that lacks contemporary relevance and leaves the Church seeming cold and calloused regarding present human suffering.

Judgment is a key feature of the future dimension of God's kingdom. When we downplay too much the future aspect of the Kingdom, God's coming judgment is often the first casualty of that imbalance. Without judgment, there can be no true justice. God is just because He is the Righteous Judge. In the context of our compassionate outreach, we must attribute injustice to sin. If we never get around to talking about sin and judgment, our compassion efforts cannot really be called Christian.

### CONCLUSION

As a student in Teen Challenge, I closely watched Paul and Norma to see whether their actions lined up with their words. I remember wondering, *What's in this for them? What are they getting out of this whole deal?*

I wondered this because I had come out of a life in which relationships were primarily utilitarian. People tended to use one another. But as I watched Paul and Norma, I began to realize their sole motivation was love. They did what they did because they had a genuine love for people the rest of society had written off. I realized this Christian couple had something unfamiliar to me: a radical love for others that flowed from their love for God. Their loving actions included both sharing the gospel and sharing their possessions. And because their actions lined up with what we were being taught, I seriously considered the Bible's relevance and importance for my own life.

We should not view compassion as a platform or entry point for gaining people's trust. If compassion is not genuinely part of our life in Christ, our actions become disingenuous. We find ourselves in the awkward and unbiblical position of feigning love in order to preach about love — a position completely foreign to the life and ministry of Jesus. When it becomes obvious that our love was merely a means to an end (and it will become obvious if that is the case), we risk leaving the person worse off than they were before. Then, instead of simply being ignorant of the gospel, they may become openly hostile to it.

While we cannot lead people to Christ apart from sharing the gospel message, it is unlikely our message will receive serious consideration if our lives contradict what we proclaim. And so the apostle John instructs us, "Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

Apart from evangelism, compassion can only offer temporal comfort. But humanity needs more than comfort. It needs salvation. And we declare that salvation best when we preach the good news and engage in good deeds.<sup>6</sup> 📖



**JERRY IRELAND** is the director of Africa AG Care, which facilitates compassionate ministry for all of sub-Saharan Africa for the Africa Region of Assemblies of God World Missions. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in theology and apologetics at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia.

### Notes

1. David Kinnaman, *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity ... And Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2007).
2. Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 20.
3. Greg Garrett, "God Commands Compassion, Not Evangelism," [http://day1.org/3351-greg\\_garrett\\_god\\_commands\\_compassion\\_not\\_evangelism](http://day1.org/3351-greg_garrett_god_commands_compassion_not_evangelism). Accessed February 18, 2014.
4. Julian N. Hartt, *Toward a Theology of Evangelism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), 67.
5. Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission ([www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org)).
6. See Ron Sider, *Good News and Good Works* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1999).

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our actions become  
disingenuous.**







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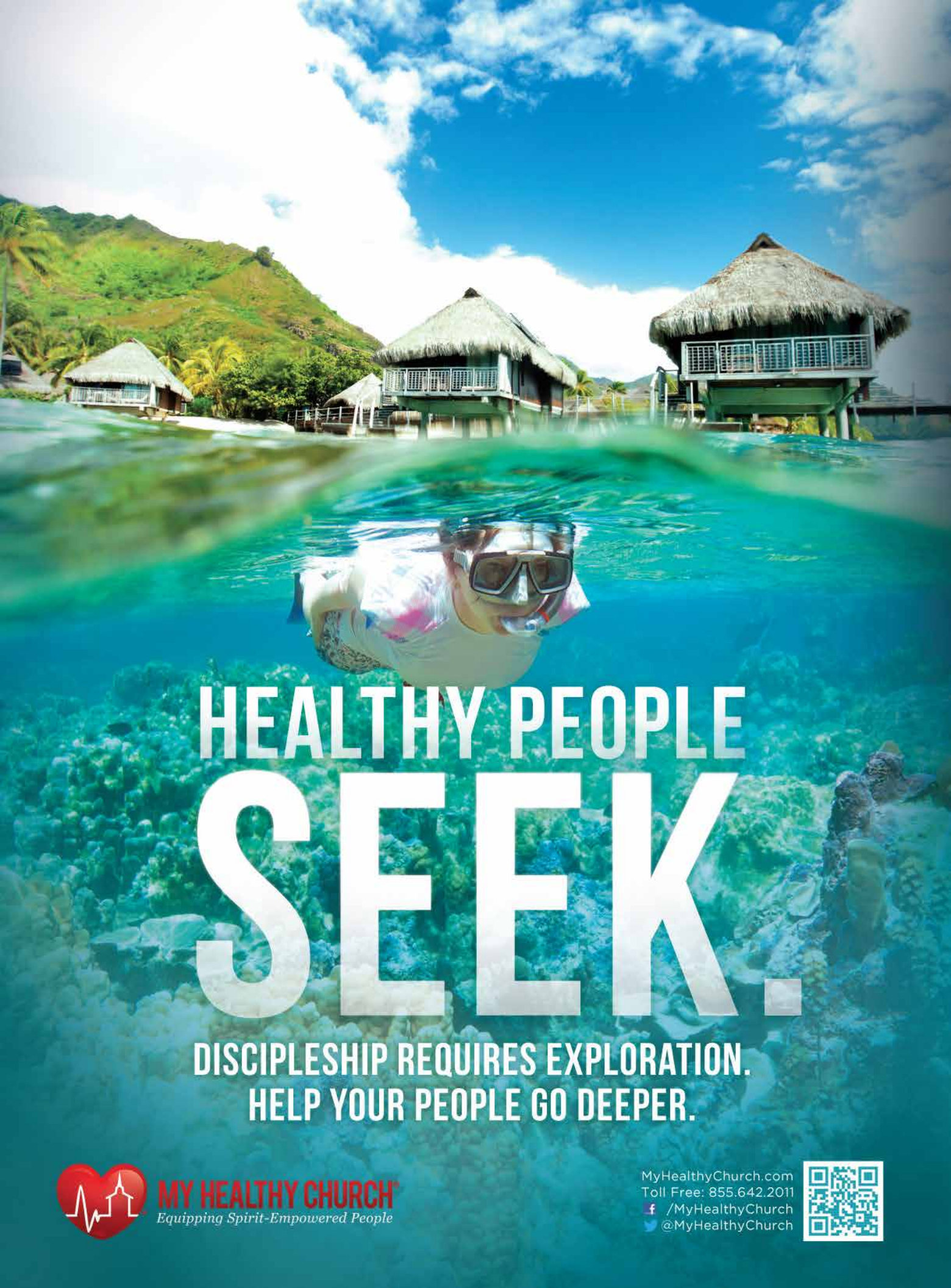
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## LIFE & MINISTRY

### STAYING POWER

**T**he Center for Relationship Enrichment reported that half of pastors are so discouraged they would leave the ministry if they had another way to make a living.

This statistic reveals the depth of misery and pain in today's ministry environment. It may also help explain the number of church workers who burn out, drop out, and experience moral failures.

Yet when I read such alarming reports, I also consider the positive news. If 50 percent are discouraged, I like to think 50 percent of pastors are encouraged. How are they staying encouraged, staying pure, staying strong, and staying in ministry?

Like most pastors, I have experienced disappointment and discouragement. It is a

constant battle. But through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can consistently win and experience victory against the enemies of encouragement.

We often forget the Holy Spirit empowers us for Kingdom service. Serving in our own strength is the quickest way to deplete our courage. Ministry is one of the most courageous things we can do with our lives. Yet failure is eminent if we do not wait for Holy Spirit empowerment. We must be patient and prayerful regarding God's plan so we are careful not to step out on our own.

Holy Spirit empowerment is the gateway to encouragement and will give you the staying power you need for your life and ministry.

— DEAN DEGUARA, director of resources, Jesus Culture, Sacramento, California.

## UP WORDS



We've all seen those climactic moments in the movies when the good guy's archenemy comes in for the kill. Our hero, wounded and grimy from the rising action leading up to the showdown scene, appears cornered. And the evil enemy's face smirks because of the presumed victory soon to be his.

Blades and shields clash. Then the hero trips and falls flat on his back, presenting the enemy with a window for finally destroying goodness personified. Down comes the heavy sword with a clang! The hero's shield, however, does not fail. Within moments, the protagonist is on his feet, and the villain is no more.

The lesson is clear: Unshakable courage and a powerful defense are needed to survive the attacks of the enemy.

What kind of shield helps us withstand attacks from the enemy of our soul?

"By this I know that you delight in me: my enemy will not shout in triumph over me. But you have upheld me because of my integrity ..." (Psalm 41:11,12, ESV).

Sharp-edged lies intended to wound or destroy are among the most dangerous attacks Christians face. Our responsibility as believers is to stand firm in faith, truthfulness, and Christ-like character.

God delights in and protects those whose hearts are committed to honoring Him. You've seen Him come through for you before. You can trust Him to do it again. Your godly integrity — your faith and life in Christ — is a mighty shield.

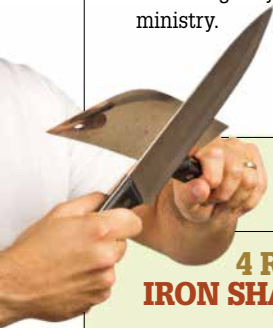
— PATTI ANN THOMPSON, Kansas City, Missouri

#### Note

1. Scripture quotations marked ESV are taken from The Holy Bible: English Standard Version, copyright © 2001, Wheaton: Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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## STAYING ON TRACK

### 4 REASONS WHY IRON SHARPENING IRON WORKS

The Bible says, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). Most church leaders agree with this in their heads, but what about their hearts?

When I consider my life and experiences, I come to one conclusion. If I'm iron, I need lots of other iron to help me become all God wants me to be. It's not because I'm no good — rather, it's because I want to be better.

Here are ways iron sharpens iron in my life — and can do the same in yours.

#### 1. It Exposes My Blind Spots

I know I have blind spots. I have areas in my life I just can't see. Without the use of a mirror, I can't see between my shoulder blades, but others can. What if something goes wrong back there? I need others to show me what I can't see.

Considering the perspectives of those around me helps me avoid mistakes and become a better person.

#### 2. It Validates My Intuition

Sometimes you have that sixth sense in ministry that says, "This will (or won't) work in my setting and culture."

You didn't learn it from a book or classroom; you just know. But you don't have to trust intuition alone. At such times, others can confirm you're not crazy. A

few trusted advisers may validate what your intuition tells you.

#### 3. It Reveals New Things

Going it alone is extremely risky. Allowing other leaders to show me what I don't see is a huge plus.

#### 4. It Positions Me to Sharpen Others

When I allow another leader to sharpen me, I can, in turn, do the same for others. While I may not have all the answers, I can know that when one brother or sister sharpens another, good things happen.

I'm a huge believer in iron sharpening iron. I allow it in my life, and I do it for others.

— DICK HARDY, The Hardy Group, Springfield, Missouri

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THE CHURCH THAT WORKS

## HOW CHURCHES BECOME DEACON-POSSESSED

When the local shepherd falls, the trust factor plummets for all preachers. The next pastor may be trustworthy and faithful in godly living and leading. Yet he or she is suspect in the wounded church.

Moral failure on the part of the lead pastor creates the second of four situations in which authority can shift away from biblical channels. (For the first installment in this four-part series, see the Summer 2014 edition of *Enrichment*.)

Like a betrayed man or woman who distrusts all members of the opposite sex, board members may overreact to shield themselves and the church from further pain. They may redefine their role to keeping the pastor in line.

Without trust, a pastor cannot lead, the board will not follow, and the church will flounder through a succession of ineffective and frustrated ministers. The way out of the impasse begins with the candidate or new pastor and the board candidly exploring the dangers the unhappy transition poses. They must mutually commit to God's purpose.

The new pastor understands he or she must exemplify Christ's character if they are to lead and expect people to follow. They must also submit to and serve under the oversight of the authority God has designed for them (in the Assemblies of God, his or her district or credentialing body). The outcome of the transition depends on their maturity, attitude, actions, and patience. If he or she does well, healing can occur with time.

The deacons, also in maturity and patience, must understand that betrayal and injury do not alter their roles and responsibilities. Supporting the pastor is still their primary work.

—MEL SURFACE, Crowley, Texas, and RICK DUBOSE, Hurst, Texas. Adapted from *The Church that Works* by Rick DuBose and Mel Surface

THE HEALTHY LEADER

## Managing Burnout

Mental health professionals tell us that burnout refers to long-term exhaustion, which results in diminished interest in work and home life. It's a state of mind in which continual, unrelieved stress can produce feelings of depression, hopelessness, and helplessness.

Forty percent of pastors and 47 percent of pastoral spouses suffer from burnout because of frantic schedules and unrealistic expectations. Forty-five percent of pastors say they've experienced depression or burnout to the extent that they needed to take a leave of absence from ministry.<sup>1</sup>

**What can pastors do? Understand God's schedule.** The burden of Jesus is light (Matthew 11:30). However, the burdens we choose to



carry and allow others to impose on us are quite another thing.

**Realize everyone needs rest.** Part of resting is understanding we can't always say, "Yes." It's unrealistic to think we have the gifts or talents to do everything.

Rest includes getting enough sleep, putting margins in our schedules, taking a day or two off weekly, going on vacation, and having days where we plan nothing.

**Emotions** Discouragement is a common feeling. Unlike

many other occupations, it's difficult to measure and evaluate what we do. Many pastors cross over into self-doubt. Keeping a sense of joy and peace is part of the discipline of guarding our hearts (Proverbs 4:23).

Many leaders are lonely and feel a sense of isolation. Leaders often withdraw when they feel ongoing pressure. We can become self-focused and self-absorbed under pressure. Having trusted friends helps us stay balanced (Proverbs 17:17).

Burnout is a common experience among ministers. Understanding our calling, our limits, and ourselves are important priorities we must cultivate.

—WAYDE GOODALL, D.Min., dean, College of Ministry, Northwest University, Kirkland, Washington

**Note**  
1. Paul Vitello, "Taking a Break from the Lord's Work," *The New York Times*, (Aug. 1, 2010). Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/02/nyregion/02burnout.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>.

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Proverbs 11:25 says, "A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed."

As a general rule, whatever you give out, you will get back. If you're generous with criticism, you're going to get a lot of criticism. If you're generous with gossip, you're going to get gossip. If you're generous with encouragement, you're going to get encouragement. It is the law of sowing and reaping. If you're generous with your money, God will be generous with you. It's the law of the harvest.

So I encourage you to enjoy the benefit of giving today — by believing that God will bless you in return.

—GLENN REYNOLDS, Hampton, Virginia



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HOPE  
FOR THE HURTING

## Biblically Based Training Equips Pastors to Effectively Minister to Those Impacted by CANCER

**C**ancer Treatment Centers of America (CTCA) wants to help churches minister to cancer patients and their loved ones.

CTCA sponsored the first Our Journey of Hope Cancer Care Leadership Training seminar last fall at CTCA Southwestern Regional Medical Center in Tulsa, Okla.

Our Journey of Hope, sponsored by the CTCA Department of Pastoral Care, is a biblically based, comprehensive cancer care ministry training program designed to equip pastors and church leaders with tools to minister effectively to those impacted by cancer.

During the two-day training session, pastors and church leaders from the region immerse themselves in the spiritual and practical methods of bringing hope, care, and comfort through cancer-care ministry. Participants receive ministry insights for addressing the specific spiritual needs of those battling cancer.

“Cancer is a unique disease that has a profound spiritual and emotional impact on the lives of patients and their loved ones,” says Michael Langham, director of pastoral care at CTCA in Tulsa. “Every leader who attends this Cancer Care Leadership Training represents the potential to minister to thousands who have been impacted by this disease.”

Chip Gordon, director of pastoral care at CTCA in Atlanta, says churches often fail to understand the full range of needs, concerns, and experiences of cancer patients and their families.

“The Pastoral Care Team recognizes the importance of the spiritual side of cancer treatment and wants to provide resources to the Christian community to minister to those affected by cancer,” Gordon says.

Each of the five CTCA hospitals located throughout the United States will host training sessions. For more information, visit [www.ourjourneyofhope.com](http://www.ourjourneyofhope.com).

— SEAN MCCARTNEY, *Infinity Concepts, Export, Pennsylvania*

PREACHING JESUS AS . . .

### THE BEGINNING AND THE END

**So how do we preach Jesus as the beginning and the end? How do we preach the gospel as the good news that it is? How do we show that all Scripture and all history exists to reveal Jesus? Pastor Tim Keller, author, speaker, and founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, offers the following four-step model.**

**1. The Plot Winds Up: What You Must Do Preach the principles in the Bible text. Go ahead and point out how we should live and what type of character we should have. Use the stories and teachings in the Bible to strengthen your points. (This is where most sermons end!)**

**2. The Plot Thickens: Why You Can't Save Yourself**  
Explain why people can never save themselves. Don't just go after the behavior, but go after the root — the lack of belief in the gospel or the lie behind the sin. This is your chance to critique both irre-

ligion *and* religion. Show how even the religious can be wrong in their hearts in spite of being right in their behavior.



**3. The Plot Resolves: How He Did It**  
Preach the One who made

a way for salvation! Show how Jesus kept the Law perfectly and wholly, and preach His supremacy over every issue. Make Him beautiful to the listener so that the very affections of their hearts can be realigned.

**4. The Plot Winds Down: How, Through Him, You Can Do It**  
Teach people how to rest in the truth of the gospel. Encourage them to rejoice in the knowledge that Jesus lived perfectly — and died purposefully — for them. Pray that the Holy Spirit will melt and move their hearts with the power of the gospel.

— DAVID HERTWECK, *Liverpool, New York*

### COMMUNITY CONCERNS

#### FATHERLESSNESS IS AN ECONOMIC ISSUE

**C**hristians tend to frame the impact of fatherless homes around biblical or values-related language. Yet the economic and social impact of fatherlessness can be common ground for dialogue with concerned people outside the faith.

Three-quarters of children growing up in single-parent families will experience poverty by age 11.

Fatherless children are at a dramatically greater risk of drug and alcohol abuse, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The federal agency also reports that children in single-parent families are two to three times more likely to have emotional, behavioral, and physical health issues.

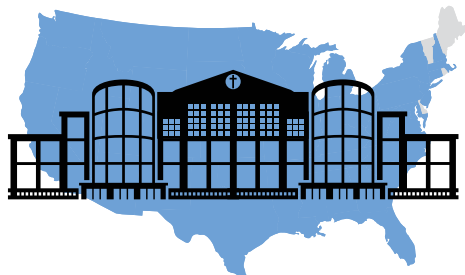
In addition, school drop-out rates are higher when the father is not present in the home. Juveniles are 1.7 times more likely to become juvenile offenders. Boys of absentee dads are more than twice as likely to be chronic offenders.

Involvement in these critical community issues is a doorway of opportunity for Christians to engage others who care about a safe and prosperous civic life. The economic impact of fatherlessness is a potential starting point for working together toward solutions for a tragedy of pandemic proportions.

— BYRON KLAUS, *president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri*



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## Megachurches Almost Everywhere Across the U.S.

**Although megachurches comprise just 0.5 percent** of the nation's 320,000 Protestant congregations, almost 10 percent of Protestant worshippers attend one, according to Warren Bird, research director at Leadership Network.

Bird reports that more than 5 million people now regularly attend one of the 1,650 megachurches in the United States. Four states — Delaware, Maine, Rhode Island, and Vermont — still don't have a megachurch, defined as a body with 2,000 or more weekly attendees.

The median age of a megachurch lead pastor is 55. Although 18 percent of megachurch pastors are under age 45, only five percent



**Virtually all U.S. denominations have megachurches, but most hold their denominational affiliation lightly.**

are under age 40, Bird says. Almost four out of five pastors who are leading megachurches have been there through the dramatic growth that saw the con-

gregation pass the 2,000 attendance mark.

Bird says megachurches exist in at least 48 countries, but the average congregation size globally is under 100. He notes that in some oppressive countries Christianity is all but illegal, forcing the faithful to meet secretly in house churches.

Virtually all U.S. denominations have megachurches, but most hold their denominational affiliation lightly, according to Bird.

The Hartford Institute for Religion Research reports that the Assemblies of God has 110 megachurches. California has the most with 19, followed by Florida (11), Texas (7), Illinois and Missouri with five each, and Arizona, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Washington with four each.

## MORAL WORLDVIEW MOVIES DRAW LARGER AUDIENCES

**M**ovieguide.org, a family-friendly review site that analyzes Hollywood fare according to biblical principles and theology, reports that films with a strong Christian, redemptive worldview averaged \$87.1 million in domestic box office receipts in 2013, while movies with non-Christian worldviews averaged only \$21.6 million. Movies with a humanist or atheistic worldview garnered an average of just \$3.7 million in ticket sales, according to Movieguide.

Ted Baehr, Movieguide's founder, says it's clear that American moviegoers prefer morally based films, such as *Frozen*, *Despicable Me 2*, and *Man of Steel*.

Movieguide also noted that movies without any obscenities or profanities raked in an average of \$65.8 million in receipts last year, compared to \$30.4 million for motion pictures that contained more than 25 obscenities or profanities.

Likewise, movies without any sexual content did best, averaging \$51.2 million in sales, versus \$17.9 million with features containing extreme sexual content. And movies without sexualized nudity earned an average of \$42.8 million, while films with nudity generated \$19.2 million last year.

Baehr noted that six out of the top 10 box office draws in 2013 contained overt references to Jesus Christ. Religious-themed blockbusters in theaters in 2014 include *Noah*, with Russell Crowe in the title role; the *Exodus*, starring Ridley Scott; and *The Son of God*, starring Diogo Morgado. Major Bible-related films in the works include features about Moses; Cain; and Mary, the mother of Jesus.

A separate recent study by Baylor University researcher Phil Davignon shows that viewing R-rated movies leads to decreased church attendance, and lessens the importance of faith among young people ages 13 to 17. According to Motion Picture Association of America guidelines, those under 17 aren't allowed to attend an R-rated movie in a theater without an accompanying parent or adult guardian because of sexual, violent, or language content.

"Adolescents and young adults base their movie choices on personal preferences, but R-rated movies seem to influence them beyond their initial attitudes toward religion," Davignon said. "Viewing R-rated movies was damaging to religious faith, even after accounting for the importance of religion in one's family, peer influence, and parental monitoring of media."

**Movies without any sexual content did best, averaging \$51.2 million in sales, versus \$17.9 million with features containing extreme sexual content.**



karon / iStock / Thinkstock



## Clergy Trustworthiness Rating Dips to Record Low

1985 :  
67%  
2012 :  
52%  
2013 :  
47%

**T**he public's perception of the honesty and ethics of clergy has dropped to the lowest level since the Gallup poll began surveying trust attitudes toward various professions.

For the first time, a minority of Americans — only 47 percent — gives clergy high marks on honesty and ethics. The previous low was 50 percent in 2009. Gallup began asking about profession rankings in 1976.

The clergy trust at the end of 2013 dropped five percentage points from the 52 percent trust level measured at the close of 2012. The highest rating ever for ministers was 67 percent in 1985.

But since the early 2000s, following media revelations of sexual abuse by various Catholic priests, the high trust rating has hovered in the low 50s.

Nevertheless, clergy still rank number seven out of 22 professions covered. Pastors trail nurses, pharmacists, elementary school teachers, physicians, military leaders, and police officers in the public's trustworthiness factor.

Respondents do trust clergy more than business executives, bankers, daycare providers, lawyers, judges, and newspaper reporters.

The clergy trust gap is most noticeable among young people. Half of those 55 and older expressed trust in clergy, while only 32 percent of those ages 18 to 34 did. That is triple the trust gap rate between young and old for any of the 21 other professions surveyed. Among those ages 35 to 54, a total of 54 percent expressed high trust in clergy.

The latest findings show that 48 percent of Americans say they have a great deal or quite a bit of confidence in "the church or organized religion," an increase of four percent from a year earlier.

## COURT RULING JEOPARDIZES CLERGY HOUSING ALLOWANCE

**The government has filed an appeal to a stunning ruling** by U.S. District Court Judge Barbara Crabb of Wisconsin that clergy no longer are eligible for Internal Revenue Service housing allowances.

In January, the U.S. Justice Department filed an appeal of Crabb's ruling to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. Crabb ruled that a section of IRS Code Section 107 is illegal because it "provides a benefit to religious persons and no one else, even though doing so is not necessary to alleviate a special burden on religious exercise."

Crabb agreed with the plaintiff, an atheist group called the Freedom From Religion Foundation, which argued that exempting clergy from paying income taxes on compensation considered a housing allowance violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

The Justice Department contends the Freedom From Religion Foundation had no legal standing to bring a suit. The decision on the appeal may not happen until early 2015. The Chicago-based Seventh Circuit earlier reversed Crabb's ruling that the National Day of Prayer is unconstitutional.

Crabb's decision applies only to ministers who receive a

cash housing allowance. Pastors who live in church-owned parsonages aren't affected.

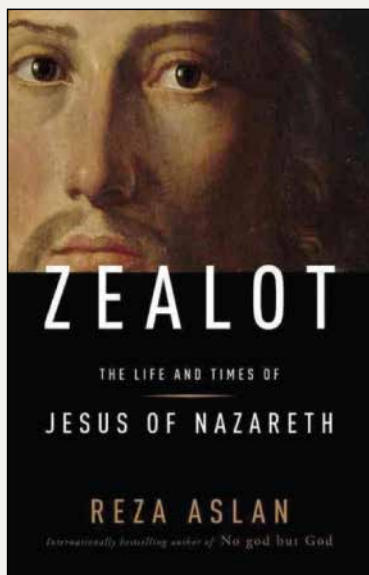
Clergy have received an exemption from federal income tax for congregation-owned housing since 1921. The government extended the exclusion to clergy-owned housing in 1954. In 2002, Congress amended the law to include the fair rental value of a minister's housing.

If the Seventh Circuit upholds the ruling, it will impact churches in Wisconsin, Indiana, and Illinois. But it also could prompt the IRS to apply the decision nationwide.

*Managing Your Church* reports that 84 percent of senior pastors receive a housing allowance. The Joint Committee on Taxation estimates that the exemption amounts to annual tax savings of \$700 million for clergy.

If upheld, the decision could mean pastors typically would see a reduction of an average of 10 percent of their take-home pay.





## **Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth**

**REZA ASLAN**

*(Random House, 336 pp., hardcover)*

**R**eza Aslan grew up in a Muslim family, became an evangelical Christian as a teenager, and then gradually shifted back to Islam as he studied Jesus and Christianity in his academic endeavors. He has earned a B.A. in religious studies (with a major in New Testament and minor in Greek), an M.F.A. in creative writing, a Th.M. in the history of religions, and a Ph.D. in the sociology of religions. He is currently an associate professor of creative writing at the University of California, Riverside, and also interacts with the university's Department of Religion.

In *Zealot*, Aslan takes an older scholarly argument regarding the historical reliability of Jesus according to the Gospels and presents it at a simplified level so that more people can grasp what he believes to be the vast difference between Jesus of Nazareth and Jesus the Christ. He argues that the "correct" understanding of Jesus is that He was a zealot-type revolutionary who

endeavored to establish the kingdom of God on Earth. The supposed failure of His mission led to His arrest and execution for the crime of sedition. This charge, according to Aslan, stemmed from Jesus' messianic aspirations that culminated in His entry into Jerusalem and "attack" on the temple. Since Jesus failed to establish the kingdom of God on Earth, Aslan writes, His followers reinterpreted the nature and understanding of the Jewish Messiah to align with their perception of Jesus, His mission, and His identity.

Aslan accurately relays that several potential messianic-type figures tried to overtake the Roman government in the first century and that healers and magicians were highly sought after in that time period. He states that the distinguishing feature of Jesus is that He did not ask for money in exchange for healing. Other than this, Aslan says, Jesus was no different than the other messianic-type figures. He claims all of them, including Jesus, failed.

Aslan accepts as historically accurate Jesus' baptism by John, His miracles and exorcisms, entrance into Jerusalem, entrance into the temple, and crucifixion. He insists, however, that New Testament writers fabricated everything else about Jesus based on their beliefs rather than on the historical Jesus. Aslan says the Gospel writers embellished many of Jesus' words, actions, and interactions to present Him as Jesus the Christ (Messiah) rather than Jesus of Nazareth, the zealot.

Aslan further argues that first century Palestinian Jewish followers of Jesus understood Him to be a human and a zealot who served as an insurrectionist against the Roman Empire. He claims the apostle Paul's letters to Christians throughout the Roman Empire first presented Jesus as a divine man.

According to Aslan's version of events, the Diaspora Jews and the Gentiles who decided to believe in and follow after Jesus began to reinterpret the Palestinian-Jewish perspective of the person and message of Jesus to make Him more palatable for their audience. Therefore, Aslan writes, Jesus went from being

"a revolutionary zealot to a Romanized demigod, from a man who tried and failed to free the Jews from Roman oppression to a celestial being wholly uninterested in any earthly matter" (171). According to Aslan, the original Jewish followers of Jesus (including James, the brother of Jesus) maintained the former perspective (Jesus of Nazareth) while Paul and the Jews and Gentiles living in the Diaspora maintained the latter perspective (Jesus the Christ).

In considering this book's credibility, it is crucial to keep in mind that Aslan's presentation of Jesus as a zealot arises from scholarly and popular writings that emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century. He does not critically engage ancient writings or current scholarship and does not interact with solid archaeological research. Rather, Aslan tends to take a sentence or two of ancient and current writings out of their literary context to further his viewpoint. For example, Aslan takes several individual passages within Paul's writings (Galatians, Philippians, 1 Corinthians, and Romans) out of context to suggest that Jesus the Christ of Paul's writing is totally different from the Jesus of Nazareth in the Gospels and the "Q" source (189). For someone who has earned a Ph.D. and claims to be a scholar of religions, his research and presentation in this book are weak, lack credibility, and would not stand ground in an academic forum.

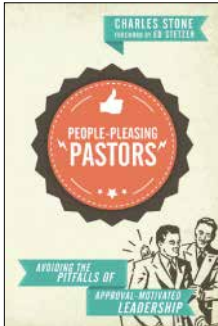
In conclusion, Aslan's presentation of Jesus as a zealot might be better characterized as historical fiction rather than fact. Because Aslan is an incredibly good writer who has earned a Ph.D. in sociology of religions and a master's degree in creative writing, some readers may mistake this author's unfounded descriptions of Jesus as somehow true and accurate. However, it is important to remember that Aslan is not recognized as an authority on the historical Jesus in academia. His arguments are weak, deeply flawed, and completely disconnected from the reality of who Jesus is.

— Reviewed by **Alaine Thomson Buchanan, Ph.D. (ABD)**, Ewa Beach, Hawaii.



## People-Pleasing Pastors: Avoiding the Pitfalls of Approval-Motivated Leadership

CHARLES STONE (*IVP Books, 234 pp., paperback*)



Charles Stone shows pastors why it is so important to seek identity and self-worth in Christ rather than ministry performance and congregational approval. Better yet, he provides practical tools to help the reader assess and grow in this important area of spiritual and psychological health.

Stone suggests pastors often try to appease or please people in their congregations in order to avoid anxiety. Focusing on people's opinions rather

than God's brings shame, guilt, and sometimes resentment. Such leadership is ineffective.

Stone helps readers assess whether their motivation is pleasing God or pleasing others in unhealthy ways. He combines three sources of insight: the Bible, Bowen Family Systems, and brain research.

According to Stone, everyone depends on others to some extent. Yet healthy leaders can stay calm and clearheaded in the face of conflict, criticism, and rejection. The changing opinions of others have a greater impact on leaders with a poorly developed sense of self.

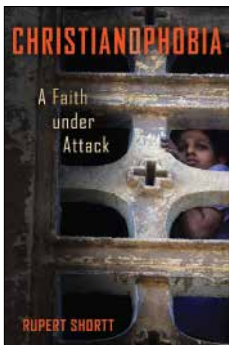
Stone could have spent more time explaining the difficulty and personal responsibility it takes to change. Once established, the level of self rarely changes unless a person makes a structured and long-term effort to alter it.

Stone nevertheless cuts through the fluff, helps leaders recognize their tendency to be people pleasers, and offers a practical way back to strong, authentic leadership.

— Reviewed by Mike McCrary, senior associate pastor,  
Central Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri.

## Christianophobia: A Faith Under Attack

RUPERT SHORTT (*Eerdmans, 328 pp., paperback*)



The world can be a dangerous place for Christians. As Rupert Shortt notes in *Christianophobia*, "About 200 million Christians are now under threat, more than any other faith group" (ix). This book focuses on 19 countries of particular concern, telling the stories of persecuted Christian within them.

The term *Christianophobia*, which Shortt did not coin, denotes an irrational fear or deep hatred of Christians.

The sources of that hatred are various. One source is theological, as in some — not all — Muslim-majority countries that practice jihad against unbelievers or consign them to the status of dhimmitude. Another source is ethno-religious, where one's nationality or caste

is tied to a particular religion. In India and Burma, for example, radicalized Hinduism and Buddhism, respectively, drive a nationalistic reaction against Christianity, which is seen as a western interloper. Still another source is political, such as in China, Vietnam, and North Korea, where Christian churches are seen as a threat to Communist Party control of the state.

Whatever the sources of Christianophobia, it evolves through three stages: disinformation, discrimination, and persecution. According to Johann Candelin of the World Evangelical Fellowship: "Disinformation begins more often than not in the media. Through printed articles, radio, television, and other means, Christians are robbed of their good reputation and their right to answer accusations made against them." That is followed by discrimination, which "relegates Christians to a second-class citizenship with poorer legal, social, political, and economic standing than the majority in the country." Finally, there is persecution "from the state, the police or military, extreme organizations, mobs, paramilitary groups, or representatives of other religions" (174-75).

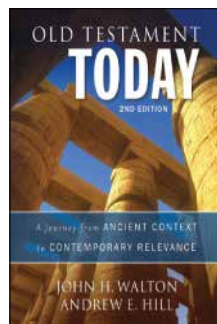
The one false note in this otherwise excellent book is its chapter on Israel. Israel is not above criticism, but to include it in a book on Christianophobia is perverse, especially since Freedom House rates Israel as a religiously "free" country.

This caveat aside, *Christianophobia* is a valuable contribution to the literature on the global problem of Christian persecution, and highly recommended.

— Reviewed by George Paul Wood, executive editor,  
Assemblies of God publications, Springfield, Missouri.

## Old Testament Today 2nd Edition: A Journey From Ancient Context to Contemporary Relevance

JOHN H. WALTON AND ANDREW E. HILL (*Zondervan, 480 pp., hardcover*)



This updated second edition makes an excellent 10-year-old survey of the Old Testament by two fine conservative scholars even better.

The layout is easier to read. They added more helpful tables, charts, and illustrations — in color. This edition more fully achieves the authors' purpose of helping people grasp the concepts of the Old Testament, the context of its world, and the principles and methods of studying it.

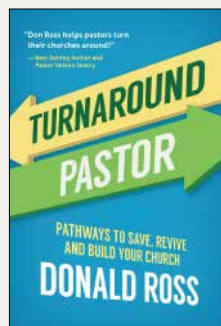
The authors do what many introductions today fail to accomplish: show how the Old Testament fits together and relates to the faith life of the reader.

Walton and Hill believe in the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible and refreshingly affirm the coherence and connectedness of all the Scriptures. I found myself in agreement with most of their interpretations of Old Testament issues and their choices of what is important to cover in a survey. They not only lay out the story line of the Bible (the content) but the plot line as well (the message).

An example of an excellent theological (continued on page 122)

## Turnaround Pastor: Pathways to Save, Revive and Build Your Church

DONALD ROSS (*Turnaround Church Coaching Network, 236 pp., paperback*)



In *Turnaround Pastor: Pathways to Save, Revive and Build Your Church*, Donald Ross offers his own story as an effective back-drop to his excellent insights into the challenges and critical stages of the church turnaround journey. Throughout the book, Ross affirms the difficulties of rescuing a church from decline and provides an honest discussion of the conflicts that

frequently arise in such an effort.

Using a military analogy to help describe the numerous “minefields” that confront a turnaround pastor, Ross manages to communicate the unexpected nature of the many pitfalls that can await the unsuspecting leader. He clearly demonstrates the commitment and endurance necessary for a turnaround journey while illustrating numerous principles of leadership wisdom.

Ross candidly explores his own mistakes and the subsequent emotional toll they took in his life. He also demonstrates clearly the path of healing seemingly forced upon him. Readers in the midst of a church turnaround will glean encouragement from his honest admissions and know they’ve found a friend who understands their difficult circumstances.

But this is more than an ultimately victorious testimony. While similar works offer principles arising solely from the author’s individual story, this book’s insights have a much broader foundation. As founder of the Turnaround Church Coaching Network, Ross has walked the turnaround journey with many pastors and drawn from their experiences in demonstrating his key concepts.

Throughout the book, Ross provides excellent lists that can help the turnaround pastor chart his or her course. He identifies the traits such a pastor must possess to succeed in the turnaround journey and includes key questions that will demand an answer at each stage. His work on “turnaround phases” in the final chapter can help any pastor have a better idea of where he or she currently stands in the turnaround process and what steps remain.

While the details of turnaround described in this book provide valuable help for the pastor in a declining church, the consistent evidence that such a work takes time and endurance may be the book’s greatest contribution. In a day when many seemingly successful pastors celebrate and even expect quick results, Ross sends a different message in *Turnaround Pastor*. His book gives value to those who are wrestling through great challenges and trying to navigate their own minefields.

This book encourages leaders to keep moving forward, but it also provides a needed reference tool that can inform and guide turnaround pastors about every stage ahead.

— Reviewed by Mike Clarensau, senior director, Healthy Church Network, Springfield, Missouri.

## Old Testament Today 2nd Edition (continued from page 121)

understanding is that Israel’s covenant with God as His chosen people was not about salvation but about being “a channel of blessing” (70) for the rest of the world. They emphasize the presence of God, a theme Pentecostals will find encouraging.

On the Old Testament laws, my academic specialty, the book is solid, though necessarily brief. John Walton is a credible Old Testament scholar, especially in ancient Near Eastern cultural background. A good example of a clarification from the ancient cultural context is the realization that the Old Testament writers did not construct genealogies like ours today. They did not write genealogies in a strictly linear or comprehensive way because their purpose was not to trace every individual ancestor.

One of the most controversial subjects, and one with which Walton has been involved for a while, is Genesis 1–11 in relation to history and science. The writers address this in two essays in the second and fourth chapters and make clear their stand on the trustworthiness of the Bible. However, they also assert (and I agree) that we must understand what God through the human writers meant to teach us and avoid making claims the Bible does not support. They do not go into specific issues from Genesis.

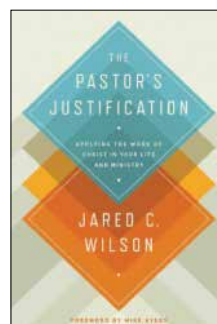
The brevity on most subjects and the lack of interaction with the scholarly issues in Old Testament studies makes this book a relevant survey of the Old Testament for many Christians. But it is probably not a strong enough textbook for a college course. However, everyone can benefit from the down-to-earth, concise, but accurate and helpful summaries of many topics, as well as answers to questions people have about concepts in the Old Testament. Throughout, the authors use insightful and effective analogies from current culture, such as comparing the biblical priests to U.S. Secret Service agents. I especially liked the idea that ceremonial cleansing was like the scrubbing a surgeon does before an operation to avoid contamination. The lists of books at the end of each chapter provide useful resources for further reading.

I highly recommend *Old Testament Today* for all who want to understand the Old Testament more fully and clearly and relate it to their lives today.

— Reviewed by Roger D. Cotton, Th.D., professor of Old Testament, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.

## The Pastor’s Justification: Applying the Work of Christ in Your Life and Ministry

JARED C. WILSON (*Crossway, 187 pp., paperback*)



Jared C. Wilson contends that pastors must stop justifying or condemning themselves on the basis of success defined in terms of church growth, public approval, or personal ability. Instead, they should return to their only true justification: the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A minister and freelance writer for 23 years, Wilson has served as pastor at Middletown Springs Community



“  
**There is only the gospel itself — the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Fusing this reality — the reality of eternal life — to the ordinary life of pastoral ministry is what this book is about.**  
 ”

— Jared C. Wilson

that pastors will find liberty in engaging in the role of the shepherd and remembering their justification is in what the Great

Church in Vermont since 2009. He is an avid blogger and author of *Your Jesus Is Too Safe*, *Gospel Wakefulness*, and *Gospel Deeps*.

The introduction in his latest work pinpoints the source of the problem: “A profound sense of insecurity for which the only antidote is the gospel” (17).

Wilson reveals three critical issues that contribute to this insecurity: the lost image of the shepherd; a false concept of success; and misdirected dependency. He addresses these issues through an exposition of 1 Peter 5:1–11.

Wilson recovers the image of the shepherd, a picture of the responsibility to look after and nurture a flock entrusted to one’s care. The pastoral task is not building an organization or a reputation. Wilson holds

Shepherd has done for them.

Addressing the false concept of success, Wilson says: “The way we are typically programmed to measure the success of our ministries sets us up for hollow victory and desperate failure” (85).

He tells pastors there is joyful freedom for those who put egos to death and remember that Jesus will build His Church. He reminds readers the gospel is a pastor’s reason for being. The gospel alone — not success, skills, or anything else — justifies ministry.

The most critical issue is misdirected dependency. Throughout the book, the author reminds pastors Christ did not call them because of their special abilities. Yet pastors continually focus on their own efforts as being the key to accomplishing the mission.

Wilson says the ultimate goal is Christ’s glory, not ours. Our security, our success story, is His grace at work in us.

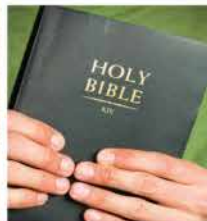
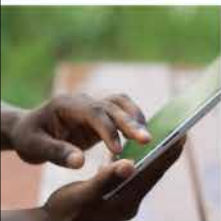
This is a great resource for young pastors just getting started. It is also a much-needed reminder for veteran elders. It is an excellent example of practical theology, applying Scripture to the everyday exercise of pastoral ministry. Wilson skillfully recasts the image of a pastor in the light of Scripture. He clearly reaffirms the importance of staying connected to our identity in the gospel, as individuals and pastors, and remembering that our ministry is an expression of that same gospel.

— Reviewed by Lance Smith, staff pastor, Bridge Community Church (AG), Leadington, Missouri.

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## Enrichment Journal Garneres a Record Nine EPA Awards

*Enrichment* journal received high honors at the Evangelical Press Association annual convention in Anaheim, Calif., in May.



*Enrichment* racked up nine awards, a new record for the publication. Only two other publications received more awards at this contest, which honored the best work in Christian publishing during the 2013 calendar year.

EPA divides the awards contest into two categories: Higher Goals in Christian Journalism and Award of Excellence. The Higher Goals competition honors individual

aspects of a publication, including reporting, column writing, critical review, interview, design, illustration, photography, and more. The esteemed Award of Excellence competition acknowledges overall excellence when compared to peer publications.

*Enrichment* received eight Higher Goals awards:

- two first place awards in Critical Review and Evangelism Article;
- three third place awards in Cartoon, Single Photo: Controlled, and Publication Redesign;
- two fourth place awards in Original Art: Traditional and First Person Article; and
- fifth place in the Article Series category.

*Enrichment*'s highest award was the Award of Merit (runner-up) in the Award of Excellence competition.

The Evangelical Press Association is a professional association of around 225 Christian magazines, newsletters, newspapers, and content-rich websites in North America. EPA's purpose is "to strengthen evangelical periodicals through inspiration, instruction, and networking." A key member benefit is the annual conference, which brings together leaders in the industry for a time of training, networking, and encouragement.

## AG Trust Advances a Growing Fellowship



Since its inception in 2008, the Assemblies of God Trust has grown to more than 8,600 members — including individuals, churches, businesses, and AG districts — and has invested millions of dollars in the Fellowship.

George O. Wood, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, founded AGTrust to advance the Great Commission. The ministry is focused on reaching the lost in each generation; cultivating a healthy, growing Fellowship; and empowering future generations.

AGTrust generates funds for four key initiatives: planting new, vibrant, evangelistic churches; transforming existing churches by promoting church health; training young leaders to passionately proclaim the Pentecostal distinctives in the pulpit and marketplace; and creating cutting-edge, educational materials to teach the Fundamental Truths to the next generations.

Over the past six years, AGTrust has contributed to the Fellowship in numerous ways, including the following:

- Providing almost \$9 million in matching funds to nearly 300 church planters.
- Providing \$357,000 in scholarships to 119 churches out of 375 in 20 districts that have participated in the Acts 2 initiative to achieve better health.
- Awarding \$1,776,320 in scholarships and grants to deserving AG students and graduates.
- Providing \$1.1 million to produce cutting-edge training materials for children and youth.
- Establishing The Centennial Initiative, and encouraging the entire Fellowship to help raise \$1 million to continue the four initiatives and strengthen the Assemblies of God for future generations.

"As we begin the second century of our Fellowship, we have a sacred challenge to renew our commitment to the task of fulfilling the Great Commission through every available means and to train future generations so that the Assemblies of God will be even stronger than the Fellowship we inherited from our forefathers," says Wood, who also serves as co-chair of AGTrust.

For more information, visit [AGTrust.org](http://AGTrust.org).

## BGMC Website For Kids

If you want a coteaching missions experience for your children's leaders and the kids they teach, send them to [BGMCKids.ag.org](http://BGMCKids.ag.org).

This website for kids offers virtual world travels with downloadable passports, interesting facts, devotions, activities, Scripture pictures, games, language skills, and much more.

Visitors to the site can listen to letters from missionaries who share what God is doing through funds given by BGMC kids. The site also features kids sharing what they are doing for missions and talking about how to pray, give, and go for Jesus.

## Free Online Lessons and Videos



BGMC's "E-Life" website provides downloadable lessons that teach kids five basic principles on how to live out their faith in school.

The site provides over 100 downloadable lessons plus videos that offer games, devotions, Scripture pictures, illustrated Bible stories, and group discussions on current issues. Visit the site at [www.elife.ag.org](http://www.elife.ag.org).

## Network211 Launches Project 100Million

**Network211 recently launched Project 100Million**, a ministry designed to reach 100 million people with the gospel via the Internet. Network211 builds on the vision of the recently completed Project 10Million. In just five years, this project accomplished its goal of reaching 10 million people with the gospel in 10 years. People from 242 countries and territories viewed the gospel message, with 608,052 making an evangelism response. Another 152,550 made a discipleship connection.

“God did immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine for His glory,” says Mark Flattery, Network211 CEO and ministry director.

George M. Flattery founded Network211 with the intent of using 21st century technology to communicate the first century gospel. The ministry offers evangelism sites; an online church at [GlobalChristianCenter.com](http://GlobalChristianCenter.com); web content for ministry partners; and an online life group in a social network format at [GlobalFriend Link.com](http://GlobalFriendLink.com).

The online church averages more than 30,000 visitors a month, and the online life group has more than 2,867 members from 129 nations.

Evangelism sites include [JourneyAnswers.com](http://JourneyAnswers.com), offered in 10 languages, and [WhoJesusIs.com](http://WhoJesusIs.com). Network211 hopes to produce both sites in the top 10 languages of the Internet by the end of this year.

“Each person reached by Network211 is a life transformed,” says George O. Wood, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God.

## Global University Course Leads to Spirit Outpouring

**A Global University course recently sparked a successful evangelistic outreach** in the African nation of Uganda.

Joe Szabo, AGWM missionary to Spain and former Global University vice president of Global Operations, recently traveled to Nairobi,

Kenya, to teach a 10-day Global University graduate course on animism and Islam. Pastors from Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and many other African countries attended.

One attendee, Peter Wanyama, a pastor of one of the largest Assemblies of God churches in Uganda, became inspired to train and equip his congregants to launch an outreach to the many animists and Muslims in his city. In addition to the training, Wanyama began a preaching series on Holy Spirit baptism and empowerment.

Wanyama gave congregants the assignment to approach at least one person and intentionally share the gospel message, believing the Holy Spirit to lead in convicting, saving, healing, or delivering the individual. Congregants later formed a long line to give testimonial accounts of their conversations with people miraculously healed,

baptized in the Holy Spirit, and delivered from addictions.

Wanyama says the Holy Spirit began to be poured out among the church body and overflow into the community, and many animists and Muslims received Christ as Savior through this outpouring.

“This course equipped me to reach Muslims and animists from an informed perspective,” Wanyama says. “It instilled in me a new determination to preach to these people. Animism is the worldview that permeates unregenerate Ugandans the most. Correct theology and appropriate intellectualism alone will not do. Holy Spirit power is vital to counter animism that employs the power of spirit beings.”



Szabo

## The Interactive Guide to Church Finance

**While church leaders are busy** doing ministry, they often overlook financial best practices. However, churches with a strong financial foundation are better equipped to fulfill their purpose: ministry.



Enabling churches to build a strong financial foundation and equipping them for future challenges were the primary drivers for creating *The Interactive Guide to Church Finance*. This extensive eBook addresses common church finance topics, such as budgeting and accounting best practices, insurance basics, church policy making, ministry financing, fundraising,

and building projects. The eBook also contains a comprehensive list of additional resources, including videos, templates, and articles. This material enables pastors to dig deeper into their specific areas of interest.

“We are passionate about resourcing churches with financial tools that will help their ministry thrive,” says Andy Whaley, senior vice president of marketing and strategic partnerships. “This eBook provides a compilation of financial best practices that pastors can use to establish a strong financial foundation for their ministry.”

For more information or to download this free resource, visit [agfinancial.org/ebook](http://agfinancial.org/ebook) or scan the QR code.



## Reaching Muslims in Your Community

**The Muslim world represents 1.5 billion people** people who are lost without Jesus. And this population is growing at a rapid pace in every corner of the world.

Global Initiative: Reaching Muslim Peoples seeks to facilitate an understanding of Islam; enlist believers as intercessors and equip them for witnessing and discipleship; and ultimately birth a burden



for the salvation of those 1.5 billion lost Muslims.

A special Muslim-awareness seminar, *Reaching Muslims in Your Community*, examines the attitudes and prejudices many people carry toward Muslims, explains the tenets and culture of Islam, and provides tools for learning about the Muslim world. The seminar inspires Christians to respond to the challenges and opportunities Islam presents to the Church and encourages them to befriend the Muslims in their local communities.

For information on hosting a local seminar at your church, call 417-866-3313, e-mail [contact@globalinitiativeinfo.com](mailto:contact@globalinitiativeinfo.com), or visit [www.GlobalInitiativeInfo.com](http://www.GlobalInitiativeInfo.com).

## Take a Spiritual Retreat to the Lands of the Bible

A journey to the lands of the Bible can be more than just a memorable vacation. It can also be a learning and spiritual retreat — an investment in ministry.

Saint Jerome said, “Five Gospels record the life of Jesus. Four you will find in books, and one you will find in the land they call holy. Read the fifth Gospel and the world of the four will open to you.”



The Center for Holy Lands Studies offers two dynamic programs for ministers who want to enhance their teaching and preaching. *As One with Authority* (based on Matthew 7:29) is a nine-day journey that takes travelers through the land of Israel, focusing on biblical leadership, Bible interpretation, and communication modeled after the life of Christ.

Summer Institute is a five-week program that offers an extended sabbatical in Israel. Participants visit Jerusalem and the shores of the Sea of Galilee, studying in-depth with world-renowned scholars in the fields of biblical history, archaeology, geography, Dead Sea Scrolls, and biblical languages. Onsite field studies bring classroom learning and the Bible to life.

Participants have an opportunity for spiritual renewal as they encounter God and deepen their own study of the Scriptures. For more information, visit [holylandsstudies.org](http://holylandsstudies.org) or call 1-855-700-CHLS (2457).

# Need help?

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## The Assemblies of God: Our Next 100 Years

By **Stanley M. Horton**

**Editor's Note:** *Dr. Stanley M. Horton died July 12, 2014. In what may have been Dr. Horton's last official interview, Enrichment journal's managing editor, Rick Knott, visited Dr. Horton in his residence on March 24, 2014. Dr. Horton was the inspired choice to provide A Final Word in Enrichment's Centennial issue. We now know that choice was providential. He was asked the question, "Having lived most of the entire history of the Assemblies of God, what would you like to say to those who will be living and serving this church during its next 100 years?" This is what he had to say:*

**H**aving lived most of the entire history of the Assemblies of God, I would like to share a few thoughts from my heart to those who will be living and serving this church during its next 100 years.

I have had the privilege of ministering in many areas where Assemblies of God ministers and missionaries are working. I have seen what God is doing. It gives me the assurance that God is faithful, and He is still giving His grace and blessing through us in many wonderful ways around the world. The Assemblies of God has had a tremendous influence around the world, and I believe that influence is going to continue. I believe God is going to continue to use this Movement to break through the oppositions of the enemy, including many false religions.

The methods we use to reach the spiritually lost can change to meet the changes in culture and the problems of the world around us. But the message must always be the same. As ministers of the gospel of Christ Jesus, we need to be faithful to our fundamental truths that have been so important to us during our 100-year history. We need to keep Jesus central as Savior, Baptizer, Healer, and soon coming King.

As I look back over my life, what impresses me is how many different people the Lord has used to give me guidance and to open doors of opportunity for me. The Lord has closed some doors, and I am glad

He closed them. I spent three years in New Jersey Metropolitan Bible Institute, 25 years at Central Bible College, 13 years at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, and have had opportunities to teach and minister in 24 different countries.

All through my life, the thing that has kept me going is to be obedient to the Lord and to take the opportunities that He gives me and not worry about my own desires. God is faithful, and we can trust Him as we walk in obedience to His Word.

When I received the baptism in the Holy Spirit as a student at University of California-Berkeley, it was like a dam broke. The tongues poured out, and I could hardly pray in English for a couple of weeks. The mother of one of our missionaries encouraged me. She said, "Stanley, God has done something wonderful for you. Don't let a day go by without letting Him repeat and renew that for you." Every day, I pray in tongues. I feel the presence of the Lord in a fresh way each time. I am thankful for that, and I pray that our pastors and leaders will continue to be filled with the Spirit, just as the apostle Paul admonished believers in Ephesus (Ephesians 5:18).

As I think about the current state of the church in America, what gives me pause is that some churches are trying to draw attention simply to the blessings God has for us, while saying less about our responsibilities. Some churches are putting too much emphasis on earthly blessings and earthly riches. God has promised to meet our needs. The 23rd Psalm says, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not lack." That is, I will not lack whatever I really need. We can go too much in the direction of poverty, thinking that we cannot be spiritual unless we are poor. Or we can go too far in the other direction, that if you are really spiritual you will have material riches. This is a danger.

Another concern I have for the Assemblies of God is we are not encouraging people to be baptized in the Holy Spirit like we once did. We are Pentecostal, and we need to stay Pentecostal! We need to continue to believe God for signs and wonders to be done on the mission field. We need to continue to pray for renewed revival here in America. God knows how much we need it!

I believe the Holy Spirit will continue to use our ministers, our missionaries, and our people to spread the gospel and to be witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ, as long as we seek His power through the Holy Spirit. We must keep on being Pentecostal! This is what God has called us to be — a light in this old dark world. We must continue to spread the gospel until Jesus comes. ☒

To share or comment on this article, go to [ej.ag.org/fall2014/finalword](http://ej.ag.org/fall2014/finalword) or scan the QR code.



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**STANLEY M. HORTON, Th.D.** (May 6, 1916 – July 12, 2014), author and distinguished Professor Emeritus of Bible and Theology, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.





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# 100 AG

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