

# ENRICHMENT

WINTER 2000

## Developing Vision for the New Millennium

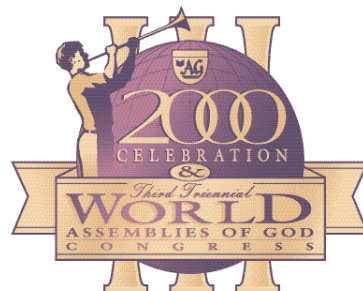
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A JOURNAL FOR PENTECOSTAL MINISTRY



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2000 CELEBRATION • AUGUST 8-10, 2000  
Indianapolis  
Indiana  
USA



# M<sup>inistry Matters</sup>

BY WAYDE I. GOODALL

## VISION THROUGH THE END

And Lord, help us to end well!"<sup>1</sup>  
"Remember that very few men, and very few ministers, keep up to the end the edge that was on their spirit at the first."<sup>2</sup>

These two statements, and others like them, trouble me—partly because I have witnessed the lives of many along the way who have lost the edge or didn't end well. Somewhere in the midst of the battle, the vision faded, was forgotten, or was overtaken with discouragement. If you have been in ministry for very long, you have observed the same.

This issue of *Enrichment* is the first of the new millennium. We have chosen vision as the topic for this timely issue. Though the church worldwide has made incredible advances for the gospel, there is still much to do. Billions have yet to hear about Christ. Multitudes of villages, towns, and even cities do not have a full-gospel church and our great country, America, is in a spiritual crisis.

Vision is something God gives His faithful followers to accomplish His will for His kingdom. Vision is not complicated nor does one need to have a mystical experience to receive God's vision. It is something that He places in your heart. Vision is usually developed to direct your life, your family or friends, the church you serve, or to reach the lost around you. As David Yonggi Cho, pastor of the world's largest church, once said, "You become pregnant with the vision until it gives birth."

What can you do to follow through to the end with the vision that God has given you? John Maxwell and others suggest several clues for ensuring

success in the vision process. Permit me to highlight some:

- The greatest gift you can give your church is a vision.

- Vision must have clarity—clarity brings understanding to the vision. To have clarity, you must see it clearly, share it continually, and tell it creatively.

- Vision connects with the past. People will not reach for the future until they have touched the past.

- Vision has a sense of purpose and gives uncomplicated direction. It answers the question: "Why are we doing what we are doing?"

- Vision has goals and goals will make the vision real. Goals are not the vision; they are stepping-stones to the vision.

- Vision has honesty. When you fail to be honest and address your weaknesses, your integrity and the vision's validity are questioned.

- Vision has passion and conviction. Someone said, "Public speakers want to be liked; leaders want to change lives." The bottom line is that your vision has to do with people who either need Christ or need to be grounded in the faith. That conviction should motivate your passion.

- Vision adjusts along the way. As you begin down the road of the vision, you will need to adapt, organize, and be sensitive to timing.

- Vision has a sense of urgency. If it is important to God, then it needs to be important to you. While you are sensitive to how much you can accomplish because of people, finances, or challenges, you have a feeling of pressing on.

- Vision is normally conceived by the leader but birthed by other leaders. How you model the vision will be contagious to those you are serving with and leading.

- Vision has a strategy. It is terribly frustrating to hear a goal without a specific strategy of how you plan on getting there.

- Vision can be passed on from one leader to the next in the church you serve. Think of the vision Moses passed on to Joshua; the vision Abraham passed on to Isaac, then Jacob; the one that Elijah passed on to Elisha. How about the vision Paul passed on to Timothy, Titus, Silas, and numerous others? All of these leaders understood that true vision is from God and they didn't personally own it. Those to whom it was handed didn't feel awkward fulfilling a vision that someone else started. They "followed through" with great joy knowing that God started the whole process.

If you are following a great leader, continue with the vision God gave your church and let God use your unique administrative gifts along the way. Most of all know that God has a vision for your life and ministry and He is faithful. You can trust everything "to him who is able to keep you from falling" (Jude 24, NIV). **E**

## ENDNOTES

1. William Culbertson, president of Moody Bible Institute (1948–71).
2. An anonymous elderly preacher counseled Andrew Bonar (Scotland) with these words before Bonar began his public ministry.

Wayde I. Goodall, D.Min., is executive editor of *Enrichment* and national coordinator of the Ministerial Enrichment Office, Springfield, Missouri.



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# I

## INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS E. TRASK

# My Vision for the 21st Century

*Vision. Will the church of the 21st century survive without it? A healthy, vibrant church understands the necessity of vision and passion for ministry. A church's vision is the by-product of focused, intentional prayer. It is the indispensable element in the product of vision; they go hand in hand. Intense passion and prayer are words that describe the spirit of Thomas E. Trask. He knows full well the value of prayer and what it can do to revitalize a sleeping church. Here he shares his thoughts on vision and prayer and why together they will be important to the church during the next century of ministry.*



### **WHY HAS THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD ENJOYED GOD'S BLESSING OVER THE YEARS?**

We are thankful for God's blessing. Prayer has been a vital part of this Fellowship since its beginning in 1914. It is the foundation stone for everything we do as a church. We have been known, and are known, as a praying church. This is the best thing that can be said about us.

### **HOW DOES A PASTOR MOVE HIS CONGREGATION TO PRAYER?**

The desire to pray must come from the heart—whether it is the heart of the pastor, the church, a layperson, or a denomination.

Prayer is absolutely fundamental to anything that is accomplished spiritually. Nothing of lasting value will take place unless it is birthed through prayer. Every ministry in the church needs a prayer base—

a core of people who are praying for that ministry. As a pastor, by focusing on the various ministries in the church, you can provide several opportunities for prayer. By giving your people prayer options, they will choose the prayer meeting that best fits their interests and schedules, and you

will begin to see increased participation. All-night prayer meetings, prayer walks, home prayer meetings, early-morning prayer meetings, or before-service prayer meetings are just a few ways you can provide opportunities for people to pray.

Pastors sometimes get upset when their people don't show up for prayer meetings. If you will live a life of prayer before your congregation, let them see that prayer works, talk to them about the exciting things the Lord is doing, your desire to pray becomes contagious.

***The desire to pray must come from the heart—whether it is the heart of the pastor, the church, a layperson, or a denomination.***

You will never gain by chiding your people and trying to shame them into praying. You must lead them into it. It is a mistake for you to scold your congregation because they did not come to the prayer meeting. Even in a large church, very seldom will you get crowds at the prayer meetings. But what happens in the services on Sunday and Wednesday is the result of the prayers of those who did come to pray. This is why Jesus said in Matthew 18:19, "That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." It doesn't take a crowd; you and your spouse can be that majority; you and God are that majority.

We sometimes try to measure the success of a prayer meeting by the number of people who show up, or by how long or loud they pray. There's nothing wrong with praying long and loud, but that's not how you measure a successful prayer meeting. Success is what happens as a result of prayer. Are people being saved, delivered, or healed? Are signs and wonders accompanying the ministry of the Word? Is the Body being edified? This is the measure of successful prayer.

## **IN WHAT WAYS ARE THE PASTOR AND PASTORAL STAFF THE PRIMARY INFLUENCERS OF PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF THE CONGREGATION?**

The pastor, associate pastor, or any other staff member cannot delegate praying to anyone else. You and your staff must set the example by praying and modeling a life of prayer. Jesus is our example. He rose up early to pray. He said, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

The leaders at Brownsville Assembly in Pensacola, Florida, gathered on Sunday nights for a couple of years to pray. They met, they prayed, and their revival was the result of their praying. Another one of our churches, one of the fastest-growing churches in America today, has turned their Wednesday adult service into a prayer meeting. This has to be part of the leader's passion.

## **PRAYER AND VISION. HOW ARE THEY RELATED?**

As pastors pray, God will show them the will of Christ for their church. The Holy Spirit illuminates the mind of the pastor. The pastor then begins to envision what God wants to do through the church. The pastor can then begin to communicate this vision to the people.

***If you will live a life of prayer before your congregation, let them see that prayer works, talk to them about the exciting things the Lord is doing, your desire to pray becomes contagious.***

## **IN THE NEXT MILLENNIUM, WHY WILL PRAYER CONTINUE TO BE IMPORTANT?**

If ever there is a time to reinforce our emphasis and commitment to prayer, it is today. The powers of darkness are prevalent. Only through prayer can the powers of darkness be defeated.

We need the foundation of prayer undergirding the church as we move into

the next century. Prayer is like putting the rebar down before you pour the concrete. The rebar ties the concrete together and gives it strength. Prayer is the rebar for the upper structure. Prayer will hold the structure together. When the winds of adversity blow, they will not shake the structure because prayer is its sure foundation.


***Are people being saved, delivered, or healed? Are signs and wonders accompanying the ministry of the Word? Is the Body being edified? This is the measure of successful prayer.***

The church will only move forward to the degree that it prays. A church can have activities—and there is nothing wrong with activities. But what makes the activities powerful, transforming them from religious activities into effective ministry, are the prayers that support them. The church must have prayer; there is no substitute for it.

## **FOR WHICH THINGS SHOULD THE CHURCH PRAY?**

We designated 1999 as the year of prayer. With the 2000 Celebration gathering in Indianapolis in August, each month, from August 1999 to August 2000, we have called the church to prayer. This is an extremely important gathering for the Fellowship.

Second, the church must pray to receive a vision from God for its community. The ministries of the church will become vibrant when this vision is caught and shared by everyone.

Third, we all know of individuals who are people of prayer; they know how to touch God. They are a tremendous blessing to the church. The enemy would love nothing more than for the church to become preoccupied with religious activity, good in itself, but void of the spiritual power that only prayer can bring. We must pray for a spirit of prayer to sweep across our churches. 





*Developing Vision  
for the New  
Millennium*

# THE SECOND COMING OF THE CHURCH

BY GEORGE BARN A

*As we prepare to enter a new century of ministry, we*

*must address one inescapable conclusion: The church*

*in America is losing influence and adherents faster*

*than any other major institution in the nation.*

**A**s we prepare to enter a new century of ministry, we must address one inescapable conclusion: The church in America is losing influence and adherents faster than any other major institution in the nation. Unless a radical solution for the revival of the Christian church in the United States is implemented soon, the spiritual hunger of Americans will either go unmet or be satisfied by other faith groups.

Within the next few years, America will experience one of two outcomes: either massive spiritual revival or total moral anarchy.<sup>1</sup> The world around us is changing at an unprecedented pace. What worked 10 years ago is already obsolete; cultural analysts estimate that our culture essentially reinvents itself every 3 to 5 years.

Most American churches, however, are holding fast to programs and goals established by their charter members years ago. Many of these ministries are also denying the cataclysmic cultural changes around them, responding with cosmetic changes that make little difference. Is it any wonder that the critical measures of the health of the Christian church show decline and a loss of influence?

## **UNDERSTANDING AND EMBRACING CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

To remain relevant and influential, we must be current in our understanding of cultural changes and their implications. The changes that influence our lives and ministry fall within these key domains: demographics, attitudes and values, lifestyles and behaviors, and spirituality.

Understanding demographic trends—attributes such as age, education, ethnicity, and income—can permit a church to increase its responsiveness to the needs of the community it seeks to serve. We raise our probability of developing ministry solutions to the real needs of the people.

## **Demographic Trends**

### ***Ethnicity***

Twenty years ago, the vast majority of American families were white, and most babies were born to families headed by white married couples. Today, Caucasians in the United States are at zero population growth. Our minority populations, however, are growing.<sup>2</sup> This is attributable to two factors: increased immigration, and minority populations have a greater number of children per family. By 2050, only half of the nation will be Caucasian. Multiculturalism will be increasingly significant in our language, customs, values, relationships, and processes.

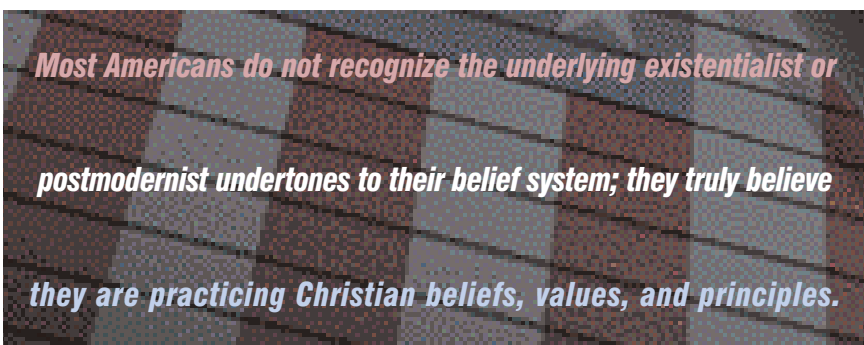
How do these realities impact Christian ministry? Before the church

gradually being removed, leaving the poor to fend for themselves.

The church must consider carefully how it will respond to this situation. As the government seeks to unload the responsibility of caring for the poor on churches and other nonprofit organizations, new economic tensions will arise. Given the declining interest in compassion ministries, costly church-related construction projects, and changing donation habits of Americans, it seems likely that growing numbers of economically disadvantaged people will continue to struggle.

### ***Education***

The educational system in America is in shambles. Last year more than a million teenagers received high school diplomas



can begin to adapt its programs to the needs of various ethnic groups represented within the community, we must take a hard look at ourselves. We cannot expect to influence our community for good until we repent of racist attitudes, inaccurate assumptions, and unrealistic expectations related to racial diversity. Until Sunday morning ceases to be the most racially segregated time of the week, the church will never be a major agent of influence in racial matters.

### ***Wealth***

The cumulative, personal net worth of Americans continues to grow. In fact, we now have more than 3 million households in the United States considered “wealthy”—having a net worth in excess of \$1 million.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, government statistics suggest we have more than 30 million people living in poverty. The government-sponsored safety net for the poor is

even though they couldn't read them. Kids graduating from high school are monumentally ill-prepared to handle the world.

Half of today's adults cannot read or write at an eighth-grade level. People's levels of confidence in traditional forms of communication (such as the printed word) and in the integrity of popular communication media (such as television and radio) have declined.

Attention spans are getting shorter all the time. An increasing degree of learning is taking place through informal observation, rather than through listening to lectures or reading reasoned arguments.

One of the challenges the church must face is how to communicate effectively with the intended audience. The content and delivery style of much of the current teaching and preaching in churches is designed for an older audience. About 60 percent of the adults in Christian churches on any given weekend



are less than 50 years old. The under-50 crowd receives and interprets information differently from their older counterparts:

- *Younger adults are accustomed to receiving information at a faster rate than older adults.* Pacing has become a crucial element in determining whether or not the typical listener sticks with an entire sermon.

- *Time is treasured.* Sermons tend to lose younger listeners long before they are concluded. Among the younger Busters, the tendency is to tune out after 6 to 8 minutes—unless there is some type of transition that renews their interest.

- *Words are important.* Language that is theological, judgmental, or incessantly paternalistic creates problems for many younger listeners.

- *Attitude is everything.* Audiences who perceive speakers as arrogant or insensitive won't give them the benefit of the doubt.

- *The medium used to transmit information impacts the perceived credibility of that information.* Information conveyed through the use of technology often has a higher degree of believability than does information coming directly out of a speaker's mouth.

If we are going to be effective, credible witnesses to the younger generations, we cannot afford to lose sight of

these educational and communication-oriented principles.

## **Trends in Values and Attitudes**

### ***Philosophy of Life***

First, most adults live for the moment and have nothing more than a loose set of ideals and principles to which they cling. These ideals often conflict with one another (for example, love your neighbor; always look out for your own best interests) and are frequently abandoned during times of stress, crisis, opportunity, or confusion.

Second, the basis of people's philosophy is not Christianity as much as existentialism. This is often referred to as a postmodernist line of reasoning. Its essentials are as follows:

- *There is no grand purpose to life.* Success is defined as the absence of pain and sacrifice, and the experience of happiness.

- *There is no value to focusing on or preparing for the future.* Every person must live in the moment and for the moment.

- *There are no absolutes.* All spiritual and moral principles are relative to the situation and the individual.

- *There is no omnipotent, all-knowing deity that guides reality.* We must lean on our own vision, competencies, power, and

perceptions to make the most of life.

Most Americans do not recognize the underlying existentialist or postmodernist undertones to their belief system; they truly believe they are practicing Christian beliefs, values, and principles.

### ***Core Values***

Buying in to the moral relativity and "political correctness" embraced by our culture, most people no longer deliberately organize their lives around a core value system. Instead, most Americans back into a set of values that remain in force until something better or more appealing comes along.

Here are some of the most widely accepted values of Americans today:

- *Time is our single most precious non-renewable commodity.*

- *Minimize long-term commitments.*

- *Maintain your independence and individuality at all costs.*

- *Trust your feelings to guide you.*

- *Pursue love and acceptance from others with abandon.*

- *Develop competencies only in the aspects of life that are significant to you.*

- *Don't waste your time doing things that do not produce immediate gratification or reward.*

- *Set goals and achieve them.*

- *Have fun.*

- *Stay in good health.*

- *Discover and revel in the purpose of your life.*

Millions of Americans have resisted and resented Christianity because they perceive its principles and laws to be limiting rather than freeing. If the church is going to effect real change, we must first teach ourselves to recognize false values, and once again embrace God's principles. Our relationships, teachings, and programs must be wholly consistent with scriptural values. But it is the consistency of our own lives with biblical values that will give us the opportunity to be heard.

### ***Moral Truth***

To the average American, truth is relative to one's values and circumstances. Only one out of every four adults—and even fewer teenagers—believe there is such a thing as absolute moral truth. Human

reason and emotion become the paramount determinants of all that is desirable and appropriate.

Without an objective standard of right and wrong, laws and regulations become recommendations rather than mandates. Rights are nothing more than sets of competing preferences. There can be no such thing as deception, only differing vantage points. Without accepted guideline pillars to anchor reality, those who succeed are the ones who argue loudest, most convincingly, and most diligently.

Without absolute moral truth, there can be no right and wrong. Without right and wrong, there is no such thing as sin. Without sin, there can be no such thing as judgment and no such thing as condemnation. If there is no condemnation, there is no need for a Savior. This progression renders the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ historically unique—and eternally meaningless.

Until the church can persuade people that absolute relativism is not only inherently contradictory, but ultimately self-defeating and wrong, all the great biblical teaching we can muster will be negated by a perceptual filter that equates truth with personal preference.

## **Behavioral and Lifestyle Trends**

### *Longevity*

People change jobs and careers with reckless abandon. It is projected that Baby Busters will change industries—not companies within an industry, but entire industries—6 to 12 times during their working years. (Builders and Seniors typically remained in the same industry for their entire career, while Boomers change industries once or twice.) Building a community of faith is by nature a long-term proposition. Without stability it is difficult to invest in future-oriented outcomes and partnerships.

Local churches find themselves always taking one step forward and two steps back because of the constant relearning curve and the loss of expertise and knowledge brought about by continual departures of key players. If the church is going to maximize its influence, we must

find ways to develop longer-lasting commitments, both to relationships and to ministry plans.

### *Technology*

Most households now own at least one computer, and millions use a modem to connect their PC (or TV) to the Internet. The amount of time we spend involved with mass media (television, radio, newspapers, magazines) and targeted communications media (the Internet, E-mail, faxes) continues to expand. Teenagers now devote an average of 7 of their 17 waking hours each day to input from the media.

The technological changes that have swept America in the past few years—and the new breakthroughs announced with each passing month—are nothing short of remarkable.

Where does this leave the church? Church gatherings represent one of just a handful of remaining opportunities available to people to have regular face-to-face contact with people, other than family, who share their interests and background. Realize, too, that growing numbers of people now judge the validity and relevance of a church by the church's use of technology. Their perception is that if a church is intimately connected to the new digital world, it is more likely to under-

stand their pressures and challenges, and is therefore more likely to offer relevant commentary and solutions.

### *Family*

Three out of four adults concur that the family unit is weaker today than it was 30 years ago. Here are some changes that have shaped today's family:

- One out of every four marriages has ended in a divorce.
- Two out of three adults say that a successful marriage is one in which both partners have total freedom to do as they choose.
- One-third of all married adults believe that adultery is an acceptable behavior.
- Cohabitation has risen by more than 500 percent in the past 2 decades (even though people who cohabit prior to marriage have an 82 percent greater chance of divorce than do couples who marry without having first lived together).
- One out of three children born this year will be born to an unwed mother.
- More than 9 out of 10 adults have bought into the lie that the most important factor in developing a strong relationship is the quality of the time, rather than the quantity of time invested in that bond.

In the past, we defined family as

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**"My sermon is also available on tape for listening during waking hours."**

people related by birth, adoption, or marriage. These days, you earn your family by virtue of your emotional attachment. The danger is that family becomes very fluid: Here today, gone tomorrow. This approach to family undermines the potential for trust, loyalty, commitment, forgiveness, sacrifice, and emotional intimacy. The challenge to the church is to provide people with more than solid teaching about the importance of family.

### Religious and Spiritual Trends<sup>4</sup>

- Seven out of 10 Americans view themselves as religious.
- Eighty-six percent describe their religious orientation as Christian.
- Six percent claim to be atheist or agnostic.
- Ninety-one percent say they have a very positive impression of the Christian faith.

Every weekend the number of people attending Christian churches outnumber those who attend any other type of religious gathering. Nevertheless, Americans are still searching spiritually and willingly admit their commitment to Christianity is rather lukewarm.

More and more people, enticed by the narcissistic or feel-good focus of other

religions, will abandon Jesus Christ in favor of faiths that seem more in tune with their needs. Indeed, given people's underlying assumption that religious faith exists for the personal benefit of the individual, it is only natural for them to assume that defining, organizing, and practicing spirituality in ways that satisfy their personal needs is completely legitimate.

One of the chief struggles facing the Christian church in the days ahead will be to persuade people that the blending of disparate religious beliefs and practices into a customized, impure version of Christianity is illegitimate.

### A VISION FOR SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

#### *What Can We Learn From the Early Church?*

There are a number of things about building the authentic church we can learn both from Jesus' ministry and the activities of the Early Church.

*Jesus seemed more intent on the quality of ministry than on the quantity of people He was able to touch.* His primary investment was not in the crowds that flocked to see Him but in the core of leaders He lived with and mentored as the backbone of the first-century Church.

He was most concerned with whether or not the apostles achieved a deep understanding of the Christian faith. He knew that if they really got it, they would be devoted to spreading it. A larger and growing quantity of believers would come as a result of quality in discipleship.

*Jesus showed His followers that the church is truly different from existing pagan and religious groups, only if Christians are known for the quality of their hearts.* In other words, their reputation must be unlike that of any other group: They must be known as the most loving, most sincere, and most caring group of people around. This goes far deeper than mere friendliness. The church that glorifies Jesus Christ ought to be known by the depth and consistency of its love of all people—especially love of other believers.

*Integrity was a hallmark of the Early Church.* This was realized through an intense commitment to accountability. If believers sinned and showed no signs of acknowledgment and repentance, they were confronted. If the church preached one view but collectively lived another, individuals would call the church to repent. Paul's letters to the church in Corinth are examples of how seriously the Early Church guarded the quality of believers' lives. And the experience in Acts 6 where the church was accused of abandoning the needs of its widows is yet another sign of its devotion to integrity.

*The first-century church was distinguished by its attitude.* Specifically, the Christians of the day felt a sense of urgency about ministry. Not knowing when Christ would return, and acutely aware that the ministry agenda He had outlined was of the utmost significance, they felt a need to be diligent about ministry. They also exhibited an intense passion for Christ and for serving Him with their lives. And they were committed to doing their service with excellence because they knew it reflected their own depth of commitment to Christ.

## ***Ten Important Steps To Building an Authentic Church***

Good intentions, great marketing, and an abundance of resources cannot compensate for bad strategy. If God has invested His vision for the future in our hearts and minds, we can be assured that He wants that vision to be fulfilled. However, because He has chosen to use human instruments as the means to seeing the vision come to fruition, we must operate wisely in our pursuit of His outcomes.

**Here are 10 perspectives that should help give shape to our ultimate proposal for the second coming of the Church.**

**Step 1. We must have a firm and accurate understanding of our business.** Many churches have lost people and missed opportunities because they have misunderstood the business they are in. We are in the business of life transformation.

**Step 2. We must know the competition for our target audience.** Our competition is not other churches. Our competition is the universe of organizations, opportunities, and activities offered by the world that nudge a Christian lifestyle or Christian commitment out of the picture.

**Step 3. We must anticipate, not merely react.** A core principle of effective leadership is that you must try to stay one step ahead of reality. Those who evaluate conditions in order to dictate or shape the future course of events are truly the influence agents of their era.

**Step 4. Before adopting a course of action, we must consider all possible alternatives.** Because every action has a consequence, wisdom demands that we reflect on the likely outcomes of all potential strategies, selecting those that promise the greatest return on our investment of resources, in light of our values and vision.

**Step 5. Effective change requires a detailed plan.** Reliance upon the Holy Spirit for guidance is one of the fundamental principles by which we live; but the refusal to plan ahead, sensitively, is not so much reliance upon the Holy Spirit as it is testing God.

**Step 6. Forward movement is achieved by building upon existing strengths.** The church must identify its strengths and build upon that foundation as we restore the church to health.

**Step 7. The church can be effective as the church only if it operates within scriptural boundaries.** We must identify the boundaries of acceptable practices for the church.

**Step 8. Creating a better future—the goal of vision—requires rational innovation.** Innovation for its own sake is merely an exercise in creative disruption. Our task is to grasp and articulate God's vision for our future and to facilitate the change necessary to create that future.

**Step 9. Success demands that we think holistically.** Organizations and individuals that make alterations without regard to the big picture run the risk of introducing change that is either counterproductive or inconsequential.

**Step 10. Lean not on your own understanding.** It is important to remember that God does not need us to accomplish any of His ends, yet He has chosen to work through us. We must be constantly sensitive to His guidance, which He gives to us through the Bible, experience, history, and direct revelation.

*—Adapted from chapter 7 in The Second Coming of the Church, Barna Research Group, Ltd., Ventura, California. Used by permission.*



*The Lord would have searched for evidence of dependence on God.* Constant and wholehearted engagement in worship suggests our recognition of our own insignificance and an understanding that God is awesome. Investing substantial time and energy in prayer is another indication of our reliance upon God. Even the degree to which we count on the church as a central means of emotional and spiritual support is a signal of our devotion to the resources provided by God for our strength and development.

*The true church is strategic in its response to conditions and opportunities.* When conditions change, the church's responses must also change. Operating in ways that fulfill God's vision for our lives and ministries requires that we hold the vision constant but the plans and strategies as flexible guides toward our vision-based goals.

### **Three Strategic Thrusts**

The church must pursue a three-pronged strategy for vision and renewal. The aggressive and intelligent pursuit of these three outcomes will position the

church for strength and impact for years to come, enabling Christianity to successfully compete for the minds, hearts, and souls of the people.

*1. Motivate people to pursue, embrace, and live according to a biblical worldview.* Churches today are filled with people who claim they are Christians but who demonstrate no depth of understanding or consistent application of core biblical principles.

*2. Allow the church to be led by the people whom God has called and anointed for that task—that is, leaders.* As long as the church persists in being led by teachers, it will flounder. Identifying, developing, deploying, and supporting gifted leaders will renew the vision, energy, and impact of the church. Most of the leaders that need to be invited and nurtured within ministries will be laypeople. While seminaries may produce some of our future leaders, the majority will arise from within our congregations to sharpen their leadership abilities and use the leadership gifts they possess.

*3. Develop new forums and formats*

*through which people will experience, understand, and serve God.* New models of the church must be allowed to blossom—models that reflect the diversity of needs, opportunities, and perspectives that define our culture. These new models will make the Christian faith accessible and relevant to people who otherwise would not consider Christianity to be an option worthy of exploration. ■

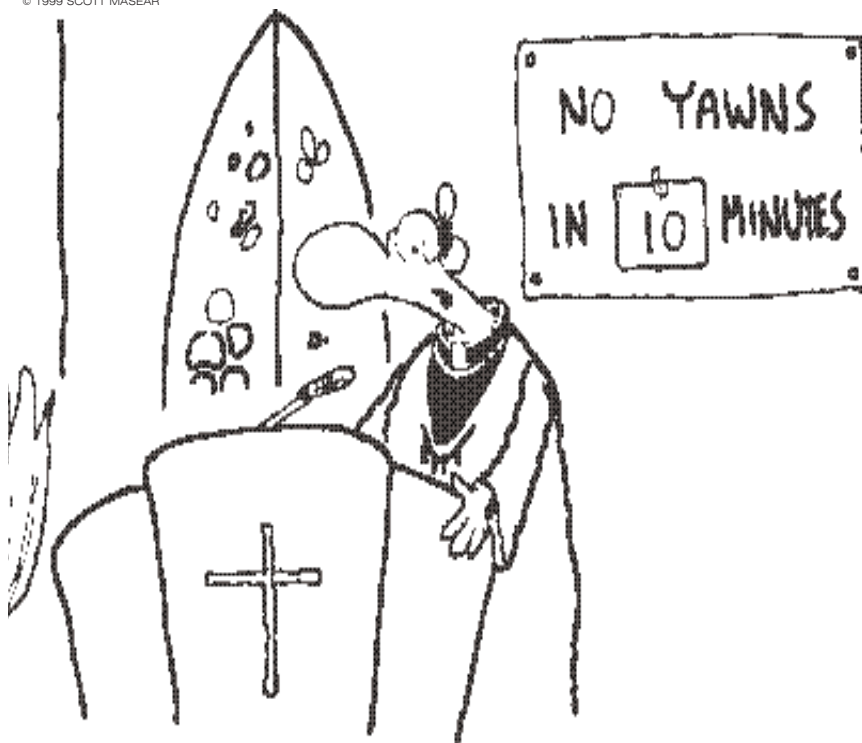
### **ENDNOTES**

1. These two outcomes are not necessarily mutually exclusive. However, it seems probable that one or the other will be the dominant, if not exclusive, outcome.
2. The term "minority" must be used carefully these days. Minority groups, such as African Americans, represent the majority in many of our largest cities and metropolitan areas. In a growing number of communities it is the Caucasian population which is the minority group. In an even greater number of communities the population has become so diversified that there is no majority segment; every ethnic or racial group is in the minority.
3. Information on wealth comes from a variety of sources. Among those cited here are data from the Census Bureau; information contained in *The Millionaire Next Door*, by Thomas Stanley and William Danko (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1996); and *Trends 2000*, by Gerald Celente (New York: Warner Books, 1997).
4. The most comprehensive edition of facts on the spiritual state of the nation is contained in *The Index of Leading Spiritual Indicators*, by George Barna (Dallas: Word Books, 1996). The book contains data pertaining to 13 dimensions of America's current spiritual character and perspectives. Updated information is accessible through *The Barna Report*, a bimonthly newsletter available from Word Ministry Resources, Nashville (1-800-933-9673) and via the Barna Research website ([www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org)).

*George Barna is founder and president of Barna Research Group. This article was adapted from The Second Coming of the Church, Barna Research Group, Ltd., Ventura, California, and used by permission. You may purchase The Second Coming of the Church at [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org) or call GPH at 1-800-641-4310.*



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**Pastor Rinehold was very sensitive about audience response to his sermons.**



I

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN C. MAXWELL AND RON F. MCMANUS

# Turning Vision Into Reality

Pastoral leadership is critical in developing vision for the local church. Without a vision a church will not grow. In fact, it might even decline if people leave the church to attend another church that has a clear and more defined purpose. Even when pastors have a vision for their church, there is much to be done to see the vision fulfilled. How pastors communicate vision will determine if the congregation will join them in fulfilling that vision. The congregation will also need to evaluate its ministries in light of its vision. Change may need to be made if the church is to remain effective in reaching its community with the gospel and turn its vision into reality.

Enrichment asked two successful pastors—John C. Maxwell, founder of INJOY, Inc. and EQUIP, and Ron F. McManus, president of EQUIP, whose ministry involves training pastors and leaders—to discuss the role of pastors in developing and implementing vision in their church. They provide practical advice for pastors who want to get a fresh vision from God for their church.



JOHN C. MAXWELL



RON F. MCMANUS



## DEFINE VISION AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN MINISTRY.

**MAXWELL:** Vision is a picture of a desired future; a picture of something that I don't possess right now, but it is something I want to see and experience, and something I want the people I am leading to experience. When the pastor and his or her church have a vision, they will put their energy, time, money, and personnel into achieving it.

## LESS THAN 5 PERCENT OF PASTORS HAVE EFFECTIVELY ARTICULATED A VISION. WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF THIS ON THE LOCAL CHURCH?

**MCMANUS:** The Scripture, "Without a vision the people perish," is two-sided. Without a vision our community will perish without Christ, but without a vision the church will perish as well.

Churches whose members fight with one another have lost their vision for the lost. Without a vision people and the church become self-centered. People start finding fault with one another and the church self-destructs. Vision is something pastors and churches cannot afford to live without.

**MAXWELL:** Anytime a church squabbles over minor things you can be certain they do not have a clear picture of what they need to be.

In my leadership conferences, pastors ask, "Do you have a vision for my church?" Many times they want me to give them a picture of where they should go and what their church should look like.

When these pastors do this, I always feel bad.

Without a vision people in leadership positions perish. You not only lose your people, you lose the person who is in a leadership position—you lose it all. Many times when people leave churches we think it's a doctrinal issue, but most

of the time it's a leadership issue. Most pastors have a hard time grasping a vision. But vision is the indispensable quality of a leader. The rallying call to people is to give them hope. When you have hope, that's huge.

Not everybody who has a vision is a leader, but every leader has a vision. When somebody tells you he or she is leading something, a fair question is, "What is your vision?" If a leader cannot

***When the pastor and his or her church have a vision, they will put their energy, time, money, and personnel into achieving it.***



give you a clear picture of what he or she sees in the future, that person is not the leader of that organization.

## WHAT IS THE DANGER IN HAVING A VISION THAT HAS NOT HAD ADEQUATE PRAYER AND DIRECTION FROM GOD?

**MAXWELL:** Bill Hybels gives an illustration. The average pastor in America stays about 3 1/2 years in a church. Pastor Joe comes to the church and believes the vision is to march to the right. Everybody in the church starts marching to the right. After 3 1/2 years, Joe is gone and Pastor Harry comes. He wants the people to march to the left. So, most of the people start marching to the left. Pastor Harry leaves after 3 1/2 years and Pastor Jack comes. He tells the people, "You are the most confused people I have ever seen. Some of you are marching to the right and some to the left. We need to go forward." By this time three pastors with three different visions in less than 10 years have come to the church. The people are confused and frustrated.

**MCMANUS:** A similar type of thing happens when a pastor attends a conference. The congregation thinks, *Next Sunday we're going to get the whole load.* They do, and they sit in the pews and think, *He'll get over it.* And sure enough, he does. The result is that credibility is lost with the people because they hear this over and over.

## HOW CAN PASTORS DEVELOP A GOD-GIVEN VISION FOR THEIR CHURCH?

**MCMANUS:** If pastors are going to get a vision, they must hear from God. They have to pray and seek the Lord. That's where it begins,

in their heart. God drops something in their heart and spirit, and then it becomes something they need to communicate effectively to leadership so they can take ownership of the vision.

**MAXWELL:** Pastors need to find their place in the community of believers by

spending time with God. Let God talk to you and minister to you, where you get honest with Him—here's what I do well and don't do well; here are my shortcomings, my strengths, and my gifts. Many times we ask people to march outwardly, when we haven't yet spent the needed time inwardly. People are not going to give you a vision, but God can.

Many times when people have a vision, they think in terms of a big vision—I want to take my city for Christ. But the problem with many pastors and this type of vision is this: they haven't developed the strategy to fulfill that vision. A pastor preaches a dream or vision to his/her people, they get excited for a week, a month, or a couple of months, but there is no strategy, planning, or process to fulfill that vision.

Hope is not strategy. Hope fits with vision, but we must have a strategy and a process to make our vision become a reality. Many pastors fail to see God's vision fulfilled because they never have a strategy for fulfilling that vision.

#### **HOW DO PASTORS COMMUNICATE THEIR VISION TO THE CHURCH?**

**MAXWELL:** Great visions are cast one on one. As a pastor I reinforced my vision over lunches. When I had something I thought God was talking to me about, the first thing I did, before I ever talked to the congregation, was to sit down with the major influencers of the church and share with them what I thought God was speaking to me. I gave them time for input or questions. Many times they would ask questions and I would reply, "I need to spend more time on this. I'm not sure I'm thinking clearly there." Other times they added value and helped make this vision better or more accessible to the people.

One of the laws of leadership is the law of buy-in. People buy into the leader before they buy into the vision. All visions begin with relationships. My relationship with God is where I receive the vision; my relationship with my people is where I give the vision. If those relationships aren't what they could be or should be, on either side, the receiving or the giving out, the vision is going to be aborted.

when God first gave it to me; it was clearer and bigger. It was better because the body of Christ complemented what God had given me. So when I gave the vision to the congregation, the influencers already bought it. Then after the people have heard my message, and migrate to the influencers, these influencers are already my allies and help me communicate the vision to the congregation.

***Why would God give a multigifted, multitalented, and multifinancially wealthy person to a church if the biggest thing you are going to do is paint the restrooms next year?***



#### **OWNERSHIP OF THE VISION IS IMPORTANT TO THE CONGREGATION. WHY?**

**MAXWELL:** There is something to be said about a pastor and a church that develop a missions statement and the people take ownership of it. They get their identity, purpose, and energy from the unique place their church is to be in that community. If churches would take ownership of a vision, the next pastor who is thinking about coming to that church can see what their vision is and then determine if their vision fits with his or her ministry. If it doesn't, then it would be wrong for that pastor to come to that church.

#### **DESCRIBE THE TYPE OF VISION THE CHURCH WILL NEED IF IT IS GOING TO IMPACT 21ST-CENTURY SOCIETY?**

**MAXWELL:** If the church is going to make a difference, it will need to go through the "big give-up" stage. Churches will need to quit being selfish and become relevant. The only way a

church is going to be relevant is to get out of its comfort zone and connect with unchurched people. There is a real hunger for spiritual things in today's culture; people are seeking something spiritual, something beyond themselves. That's the good news. The bad news is people are not getting it at church

When pastors ask me if their people will buy this vision, I ask them two questions: "Have they bought into your leadership?" If they haven't, don't ever try to pass on a vision. Second, "Have you processed this vision correctly?"

## ***Why Organizations Fail in Experiencing New Vision***

John P. Kotter, Konosuke Matsushita professor of leadership at the Harvard Business School, wrote an article, "Leading Change: Why Transformational Efforts Fail,"<sup>1</sup> from his experience of watching more than 100 companies try to remake themselves into better corporations. These leadership efforts were initiated for many reasons: total quality management, reengineering, right sizing, restructuring, cultural change, and turnaround. Regardless of what the process was called, the goal was essentially the same. They all wanted to make fundamental changes in how the business was run to better cope with the changing market.

While a few of the leadership efforts were successful and a few were failures, most fell somewhere in the middle, with a concentration at the lower end of the scale.

Kotter drew two conclusions and then identified eight errors organizations make. The first observation was that the change process is a combination of several phases that take a considerable length of time. Skipping steps may seem faster, but compromises the end result. Second, he observed that critical mistakes in any of the steps could slow the progress of the project and undo previous gains.

### **Error #1: Not establishing a great enough sense of urgency.**

Getting a transformation program started requires the aggressive cooperation of many individuals. Kotter claims that well over 50 percent of the companies fail in this first step.

### **Error #2: Not creating a powerful enough guiding coalition.**

Large processes often start with one or two people, but in successful cases the leadership coalition continued to grow over time.

### **Error #3: Lacking a vision.**

In unsuccessful cases, the leadership team failed to develop a picture of the future that is relatively easy to communicate and is attractive to insiders and others.

### **Error #4: Undercommunicating the vision by a factor of 10.**

In unsuccessful projects, the leaders failed to use all existing channels and every opportunity to communicate the vision to their people.

### **Error #5: Not removing obstacles to the new vision.**

All obstacles are not obvious from the beginning. The process of removing them is an ongoing one.

### **Error #6: Not systematically planning for and creating short-term wins.**

Real transformation takes time and a renewal effort loses momentum if there are no short-term goals to meet and celebrate.

### **Error #7: Declaring victory too soon.**

Premature victory celebrations kill momentum before the process is actually finished.

### **Error #8: Not anchoring changes in the corporation's culture.**

Change isn't permanent until it becomes "the way we do things around here." Until the group norms of the various units change and the organizational culture is altered, the changes are likely to be abandoned when the pressure for change is removed.

The strength of the local church organizational culture makes it very difficult for a pastor to lead a church through major change without committing errors very similar to these. Number one on Kotter's list is likely number one on our list. The pastor has a great sense of urgency for the church to change, but the local stakeholders rarely do.

#### **ENDNOTE**

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1. Kotter, John P. "Leading Change: Why Transformational Efforts Fail." *Harvard Business Review* (March–April 1995): 59–67.

—Information supplied by Steven R. Mills, leadership development coordinator for the Assemblies of God Division of Christian Education, Springfield, Missouri.



because the church is singing songs, preaching messages, doing programs, and taking offerings for itself.

There are pockets of the church that will “give up,” and reap a bountiful harvest. They are going to have huge success, like the church has never experienced since the Book of Acts.

There is another pocket of the church that will not give it up. They will say, “This is our pastor. We pay his or her salary. We want our church, our songs, our pews, our parking spaces.” The church that will not give up will be outdated and passed by, quicker than they realize.

The church will not stay the same. It will either blossom because someone understands the season the church is in, or it will wither very quickly.

**MCMANUS:** We have to build bridges to the world. Many believers were raised with the mentality of “them and us.” But we need to change our mentality and bring light to a darkened world.

The church that will impact the 21st century is the church whose dreams are bigger than its memories. To hear people in the church say, “We’re grateful for the past and for what God has done here, but God has exciting things for our future,” then you know their dreams are bigger than their memories.

#### **WHAT ABOUT PASTORS WHO HAVE A VISION BUT ARE NOT SEEING IT FULFILLED?**


**MAXWELL:** There are a lot of pastors who have a vision and have not yet seen it become a reality. Remember, at the time God gives us a vision, we never have the resources available to accomplish it. We don’t have the people, the money, the knowledge, or the opportunity.

So at the beginning, all we have is the vision. At that point God expects us to begin walking in obedience according to the dream He has given us.

What happens is this: we say, “As soon as I get some people to help me I’m going to....”; or, “As soon as I get somebody to give an offering I’m going to....” In other words, we often wait for the resources before we make a move.

God gives us the vision, then He expects us to walk in obedience. As we do, the resources we need come to us. If I’m halfway to the dream, at best, half of my resources are there. Your resources to fulfill the dream will come during the last step of the dream.

Think about it. Why would God send people to our church if we don’t have a great dream? Why would God give a multigifted, multitalented, and multifinancially wealthy person to a church if the biggest thing you are going to do is paint the restrooms next year? That’s bad stewardship. So God gives us resources according to our dreams and according to our obedience. And God doesn’t give those resources until we’ve started walking in obedience.

For pastors who have a dream and who are walking in obedience but still don’t have the resources they need, don’t worry. Keep walking in obedience. God has never given anybody a dream that He did not want that person to fulfill. He has never given a dream that could be fulfilled at step one. So start walking, be obedient, and watch God fulfill that dream in your life. 

**To hear people in the church hallways say, “We’re grateful for the past and for what God has done here, but God has exciting things for our future,” then you know their dreams are bigger than their memories.**



#### **RECOMMENDED RESOURCES**

Maxwell, John C. *Developing the Leader Within You*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993.

Maxwell, John C. *The Twenty-One Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998.

*John C. Maxwell, D.Min., is a former pastor and founder of INJOY, Inc. and EQUIP ministries, Atlanta, Georgia.*

*Ron F. McManus is a former pastor and executive presbyter for the Assemblies of God. He is currently president of EQUIP ministries, Atlanta, Georgia.*



*Developing Vision  
for the New  
Millennium*

# WHAT WILL THE 21ST- CENTURY CHURCH BE LIKE?

BY LEITH ANDERSON



**A**t the beginning of the third millennium, a common question is, “What will the 21st-century church be like?” Will it be large or small, low or high-tech, denominational or nondenominational, worship in houses or church buildings, stronger on evangelism or social action, spiritually dead or spiritually alive, growing or declining, racially integrated or segregated? The answer is, “Yes.” Just as the church of Jesus Christ has greatly varied in the past, it will greatly vary in the future, only more so.

Various churches around the United States and the world demonstrate the wide variety of congregations. Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Florida, is famous because more than 1 million people have come from around the world seeking the supernatural in the famous Brownsville revival. People by the hundreds stand in line hours before the service begins hoping to get in.

The Southeast Asian house church is vibrant, but illegal. In one church, the pastor is a government-paid teacher. The congregation is less than 20 people. It is part of

authority will, as they mature, eventually outgrow their initial heresies.

There is no single design for 21st-century churches. We will see greater variety, new expressions, novel structures, and ways of doing church that we would not have previously imagined. Just as previous generations used innovative ways to meet their needs for buildings, Sunday schools, committees, organs, pianos, hymnals, and choirs, so the next generations will develop innovative ways to be effective in the third millennium.

Here are some interesting trends that indicate what we may expect to see among 21st-century North American churches.

### **MORE LARGE CHURCHES**

Most North American churches are small. Over 100,000 of these churches average less than 50 in Sunday worship services and show little prospect of growing any larger. The median worship attendance of the 400,000 USA churches is about 75.

However, most people attend larger churches. One-half of all worshipers next Sunday will be in the largest (1/7 or 14 percent) of churches. This trend has been in

Catholic churches where there is a shortage of priests. While there are some things only priests are allowed to do, many other things are being done by lay leaders and volunteers. The emergence of lay ministry in Catholic churches will probably spill over into Protestant churches.

There will also be a growing emphasis on pastors doing what they are called to do in Ephesians 4:11,12—to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry—rather than doing it themselves. More and more laypersons want to lead, serve, preach, evangelize, visit, and disciple. The most effective churches will be those that free their laity to serve Jesus Christ. Some of that ministry will take place within the life of the church, but most of it will take place in the community.

### **EVANGELICALS IN THE MAINSTREAM**

Evangelicals were once on the margins of American society. No more. Evangelicals have entered politics in large numbers, gaining fame and power. Almost all of the largest and fastest-growing North American churches are evangelical. Evangelical

*We will see greater variety, new expressions, novel structures, and ways of doing church that we would not have previously imagined.*

an amazingly evangelistic network of house churches that would be closed immediately if the government found out about them.

In the Pentecostal church in Romania, the women sit on one side and the men sit on the other side. All women wear head coverings; no jewelry is allowed, not even a wedding ring. Men do not cross their legs while seated or put their hands in their pockets while preaching because Christians don't do such things.

New African denominations are starting up almost every day. Missiologist Ralph Winter states that many of these churches and denominations are riddled with theological heresy. Winter believes the churches that hold the Bible as the source of

place for most of the last 20 years and will probably increase in the 21st century. Larger churches are thriving; smaller churches are struggling.

This is not to say that we will see many, if any, American churches grow to 50,000 or more in attendance. But there are churches breaking the 1,000 barrier every week, and there will be hundreds if not thousands more churches over 1,000 in the next 10 years.

### **GREATER LAY MINISTRY**

One analyst argues that the emerging movement of lay ministry will be the “completion of the Protestant Reformation.” Lay ministry is more evident in some churches than others, but especially in Roman

colleges and seminaries are strong and growing, often supplying significant numbers of clergy to nonevangelical denominations. Evangelicals now significantly outnumber the people in mainline denominations. Evangelicals have an increased, growing, and significant voice in both academic circles and in the national press.

While evangelicals are far from a majority (about 23 percent) of the American church, they are a formidable influence in American life and culture. There is every indication that this will increase until evangelical churches will become the predominant voice of American Christianity in the 21st century.

This is not to say that evangelicals will be evangelistic. This is the sad side of the



equation. The large majority of evangelical churches exist primarily for themselves, not for others. Programs, budgets, and objectives are targeted to meet the needs of those

already churchd. Unchurched people are often unwelcome in evangelical churches. Even though there may be talk of evangelism, there is comparatively little effective

evangelism. Most evangelical churches major on winning those who are already churchd, primarily from inside their own congregations and secondarily, recruiting believers from other evangelical churches.

## ***The Power Churches of the 21st Century***

### **Which were the “power churches” of the first century?**

Read the Book of Acts and the list becomes obvious:

- Jerusalem: The Church of Pentecost and the Great Commission.
- Antioch: Where Jesus’ followers were first called Christians and the missionary movement began.
- Rome: The capital of the empire and the dominant church by the end of the century.

### **Which will be the “power churches” of the 21st century?**

Our first guess may be wrong—the churches with thousands of people. Although they have great influence, size isn’t everything.

The power churches of the 21st century will be those churches started after the year 2000.

As a general rule, older churches become ingrown. Older churches reach an older generation and tend to repeat the successes and blessings of yesterday more than they trust God and innovate for tomorrow.

Look at the denominations in the United States with the oldest churches, especially those founded before World War II. They tend to be aging, if not dying denominations. Examine the denominations with the youngest churches and those who are starting new churches. They tend to be vibrant and growing denominations.

The 21st century belongs to those who start new churches for the 21st century.

— *Leith Anderson*


## **LOTS OF CHOICES**

In the 1960s, sociologists worried, wrote books, and offered courses about how Americans in the 21st century would use their leisure time. Some predicted that the average work week would shrink to 20 hours. They weren’t very good prophets.

We now work longer, sleep less, have little leisure time, and constantly talk about how busy we are. One of the consequences is that time for church activities is shrinking.

Churches of tomorrow will do more with less time. There will be more choices, but little expectation that everyone will choose all of them. The church of the 21st century will have more services, not one service. There will be different types of services with a choice of languages, music styles, and times other than Sunday mornings. Prayer ministries have requests in prayer rooms, on-line, through voice mail, E-mail, and alphanumeric beeper messages. Christian education opportunities will come through traditional classes, computer chat rooms, cable TV, books, tapes, one-on-one spiritual mentoring, intensive Saturday classes, night school, and more.

## **WHAT WILL GOD BLESS?**

There is every indication that God’s blessings will be new and broad for the new millennium. He will not contain His Spirit to any single program, denomination, geography, or human design. The church of tomorrow will be as varied as the colors of God’s creation, as numerous as the sands of the seashore, and as spectacular as the variety of human beings created in the image of God. It will be new; it will be exciting. The best is yet to come. 

*Leith Anderson is pastor of Wooddale Community Church in Eden Prairie, Minnesota.*





*As we move swiftly into the 21st century, it is important  
for us to look back to find the core values that give meaning to  
our ministries and leap forward to take hold  
of new opportunities.*

# LOOK BACK, LEAP FORWARD

B Y G A R Y L . M C I N T O S H

**W**hen Australia was a new nation, its leaders established a crest to represent their country. Two animals—the kangaroo and the emu—stand one on each side of the crest. These two animals were chosen because of a unique common characteristic—while kangaroos and emus turn their heads to glance backward to get their bearing, they always move forward. Though each animal is very swift afoot, neither is able to walk backwards. The founders of Australia wanted their country represented by what moved forward, never backward. In other words, kangaroos and emus look back and leap forward.

As we move into the 21st century, it is important that we look back to find the core values that give meaning to our ministries and leap forward to take hold of new opportunities. Unfortunately, the strong pull toward the future may cause us to overlook the past. When looking back promotes a Band-Aid® mentality (doing whatever it takes to hold the church together, and looking back to the good-old days for ministry results and affirmation), then looking back is not good. If looking to the past only leads to an attempt to redo ministry in bygone ways, we are doomed to failure in the 21st century. In short, the past is for remembering, not living.

Looking back, however, is often necessary to fund a powerful future and vision. Martin E. Marty, church historian at the University of Chicago, calls this “finding a usable future in our past.” Joshua might have believed that a good past is the best future. The story is recorded in Joshua 4:1–24. After the people of Israel had crossed the Jordan, the Lord spoke to Joshua and commanded that 12 stones be removed from the river and set up as a memorial. After the stones were set up in Gilgal, Joshua explained the reason for the stones (verses 6,7). He understood that core values of the past are crucial for designing a new future. Thus, he commanded that whenever the nation of Israel struggled with determining direction, the

people should look to the past to rediscover their core values.

There is a great deal of talk today about defining a church's core values. It is a mistake, however, to think we create our values in a vacuum. The truth is, we discover them by looking to the past, just as the people of Israel looked to the past to rekindle the fire of their own values. How is this accomplished? The following are a few steps to assist leaders to “look back and leap forward.”

### **HONOR THE PAST**

A wise person once commented, “The past teaches us, the present tests us, and the future rewards us.” Unless you are a church planter, you will build on the foundation of others. It was their commitment, sacrifice, and love for the Lord that provided for your church to be where it is today. Respect and honor past leaders, pastors, and ministries that faithfully built your church. See what lessons can be learned from former leaders and ministries. When looking to the past, ask questions such as, “What values does our church actually hold?” “What has inspired great passion in our people in the past?” The answers to these questions will point to the values your church naturally embraces.

### **AFFIRM PREVIOUS MINISTRIES**

Over the years, priorities and needs change. Some old ministries lose their effectiveness and new ones are born. Vacation Bible school is an example. In the 1950s, VBS was an effective way to reach children. Almost every church had some form of VBS. But almost no churches had a divorce recovery group. Today it has reversed—the effectiveness of many VBS programs has been reduced due to the numerous activities available for children; but churches add divorce recovery groups every day.

We do not “install” new values into our people. Values are something our people must buy into, and they must have a predisposition to hold them. By affirming the underlying values of former ministries, we retain the people attracted to those values. Learn what ministries are legendary in the

history of your church. Begin to affirm those ministries and the people who served in them. This is particularly important when you are planning to restructure or replace ministries. Let your people know you understand the place a ministry holds in your church and their hearts.

### **HIGHLIGHT THE BIBLICAL VALUES AND PRINCIPLES**

Methods are not long term, but the values that created and supported them are. As you affirm past leaders and ministries, highlight foundational values. For example, foundational values that supported VBS were evangelism and love for the lost. As you affirm VBS, highlight the church's commitment to evangelism and love for the lost. Think through each ministry that needs to be changed, and identify the biblical values that make it valid. Teach and preach Scripture, values, and basic principles that are timeless and remain valid.

### **PRESENT NEW MINISTRIES AS EXTENSIONS OF THE PAST**

Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards. Or, as an old Chinese proverb suggests, “It is written that they who move not forward move backwards.” New ministries and methods will be developed as we enter a new millennium.

Once you have reaffirmed your core values, anything not supportive of those values is up for change. When people complain, “We've never done it that way before,” remind them, “If it's not part of our core values, then it's open for negotiation.”

Building on the first three steps just noted presents new approaches to ministry as an “extension” of former ones. For example, if you desire to begin a new worship service, do not present it as a replacement for a poor worship service that is not meeting needs. Instead, focus on your core value of reaching more people.

### **SHOW HOW NEW APPROACHES CARRY ON VALUES OF THE PAST**

One church I worked with wanted to move away from a midweek prayer

meeting and institute a small group ministry. In the process of obtaining the congregation's ownership of the new small group ministry, the pastor and church leaders helped people see that the purpose (value) of the midweek meeting was prayer. They highlighted how early founders of the church believed prayer was the main foundation for church effectiveness. Gradually, church leaders demonstrated to the congregation that the new small group ministry would build on the founders' commitments, and more people would be praying if there were several small groups meeting at different times during the week. The congregation agreed to try it. Within 1 month, attendance at the small groups tripled that of the midweek service.

### **ASSURE PEOPLE OF YOUR COMMITMENT TO CORE BIBLICAL VALUES**

Take time to educate people so they understand it is the "form" of the ministry that is changing, not the "core values." Stress the principles of 1 Corinthians 9:19–23, and show your new ministry becoming "all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." Keep stressing the biblical principles of the past rather than the styles of the past, bridging into an explanation of how the newer styles carry on the old values.

### **LISTEN AND LOVE**

If a change is major, take a minimum of 1 year to work through the above steps. Effective leaders give people time to share their feelings, vent frustrations, and become accustomed to new ways of ministry. It is wise to provide small forums where a few people can ask questions rather than having a full congregational meeting. Be willing to meet with some people individually as needed to hear their concerns.

### **COMMUNICATE THAT TRADITIONS ARE HONORED BEST WHEN THEY ARE CARRIED ON IN NEW MINISTRIES**

Most churches have a Communion table. Two different phrases, with different emphases, are engraved in many of these tables—"In Remembrance of Me" and "Until He Comes."

Communion is a living tradition because it points us to the past—In Remembrance of Me—and to the future—Until He Comes. It causes us to remember the Lord's sacrifice on our behalf and, at the same time, it calls us to look with hope to His coming.


There are dead traditions and living traditions. The dead ones continue to be remembered, but with little impact on life and people today. Living traditions continue on by underscoring the historical values for ministries being accomplished

today. The best traditions are ones that point to the future through effective ministries that reach people today.

### **BE PATIENT**

Understand that in urban and suburban areas of the United States, it normally takes 5–7 years to turn an existing church in a new direction. In more rural settings it takes 10–12 years and sometimes longer. Church leaders in the 21st century should be careful to take the long view. While we may not be able to accomplish as much this year as we might hope, more may be accomplished over the next 5 years than we could possibly think.

### **TRUST GOD TO MAKE A WAY FOR IT ALL TO HAPPEN**

The old hymn says it well, "O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come." What better words to bear in mind while leading a 21st-century church. As we love God and His people, He will help us lead them to effective ministry in the new millennium. 

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## IN THE GREAT REVIVALS OF THE PAST, PRAYER WAS THE FRONT, CENTER, AND CIRCUMFERENCE OF THE HOLY AND GODLY LIVES THAT LED THESE AWAKENINGS.

**V**ision is a vital part of me. I am not sure where I discovered vision, but I know it is a never-ending process. Vision is an ongoing gift from the Spirit of God. Sight is one thing; vision is another. Vision enables one to look into the distance with God and see what He sees and discern what is in His heart. To be effective, one's heart and vision must remain synchronized with God's. What does God see? Multitudes in the valley of decision and countless people without God and without hope.

My vision was most likely born in my father's church; it was caught, not taught. Herschel Barnett's heart was big, and his plans to expand the Kingdom were larger than life. Prayer supported everything he did. "Be Thou My Vision," a hymn rarely sung today, is descriptive of my father's ministry.

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my  
heart—  
Nought be all else to me, save that  
Thou art;  
Thou my best thought, by day or by  
night—  
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence  
my light.<sup>1</sup>

Vision in Dad's vocabulary had a capital "V." It was the person of the Holy Spirit, synonymous with godly insight and wisdom.

The Holy Spirit is my prayer partner in seeking vision for my church. The day the Holy Spirit became my head pastor, teacher, and prayer partner, I experienced a spiritual revolution. He made prayer intimately personal. He began the renovation process of my whole inner life. It is one thing to know about the Holy

Spirit when we pray, but another to know Him. When the Holy Spirit became real, prayer was a priority, and the ordinary became extraordinary.

In praying for a vision, we are limited only by His limitless resources. We are totally dependent on God alone as our Source. During times of prayer, we will sense the urgency of the hour. In prayer we also understand that without prayer, we are powerless to impact a lost society.

Prayer is a scheduled, daily event and also a continuous flow. God makes it clear we are to study to be quiet, take time to be holy, and meditate on His Word day and night. Today there is a plethora of success formulas for prayer and revival. But in the great revivals of the past, prayer was the front, center, and circumference of the holy and godly lives that led these awakenings.

We can learn many lessons for life by observing a tree. The beauty, the foliage, and spring budding are part of the uniqueness. The Psalmist wrote that the blessed and successful man "shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:3).

Trees have taken greater significance of late—possibly because I am growing older and possess a compelling concern to multiply until He comes. When I pastored in Davenport, Iowa, my wife and I built a house. One day I planted a twig in our front yard. We watered it, protected it, and watched it grow into a large tree.

When I visit Davenport, I often drive by the house to observe the magnificent tree. However, I will never enjoy the luxury of sitting under that tree. Someone

else enjoys its shade and seasonal change; but as long as I live, I know I planted it.

In this hour, we must plant trees under which we may never sit. This will have a bearing on the lives of those who come behind us. We may have a vision for revival, but do we plant the seeds for revival that will impact future generations?

First Chronicles 22:1–5 relates another concept of praying for vision. Do we have the vision and heart to work toward what we may never experience? David was an old man, but he planned for a house for God he would never enter:

"Then David said, This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel. And David commanded to gather together the strangers in the land of Israel; and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God. And David prepared...in abundance...and the house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceedingly magnificent.... I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death."

The greatness of a person is measured in multiple ways. One way is this: There are those who plant trees under which they will never sit. It is critical that we prepare for the future. Many great preachers in the past failed to do this. Great churches such as Metropolitan Church in Philadelphia and New York once housed thousands; today neither one exists. One of the great healing evangelists held countless revivals when I was in Bible school. People came from all over the world to witness the work; today the ministry is but a

BY TOMMY BARNETT

# How to Pray for VISION

*The day the Holy  
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handful. Charles Spurgeon was a preacher's preacher. He called for revival and his messages blanketed the earth. His writings continue to impact countless people. At one time thousands came to worship in his church; today few attend on Sunday mornings, and the proceeds from a tiny bookstore help maintain the building. Why? These churches failed to become self-propagating. Though most reaped a harvest of individuals who were faithful and grew spiritually for the glory of God, they lost their vision for the future and consequently their effectiveness.

America has become a secular nation. Our foundations are crumbling. If ever revival is needed, it is now. Will it come? Has God bypassed America? Habakkuk wrote about God's vision for Israel: "Though it tarry, wait for it" (Habakkuk 2:3).

God still speaks through His Word to those who will listen with their hearts. At times we may feel overwhelmed by the wickedness and evil influences around us. We might wonder, *Will revival return? Will churches overflow again and remain strong for another generation? Will our people accept their God-given responsibility of prayer, witness, and worship? Do my church and I*

*have the vision to tarry for it, to plant a tree of revival through faithfulness and prevailing prayer? Am I willing to accept the cost in God's formula for a revival I may never see?*

Suddenly the vision returns. Not of praying for revival, but a vision of "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he

***We need to dedicate the rest  
of our lives making preparation  
for the next generation while  
giving the current one  
everything we have.***

wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand" (Ephesians 1:19,20). Such greatness reveals our insignificance in light of God's power.

Paul focused on the power of Almighty God, who raised Christ from the dead, declaring Him victorious over sin, death, hell, and Satan. The same power is at work in us. Christ's work has been accomplished. Our work is to prayerfully continue to nurture the church while planting seeds of revival that we may never see in full fruition.


If revival looks less and less likely, we must work more diligently and, like David, we must prepare abundantly. We must keep the fire alive in our churches and the prayer fires burning for a world being destroyed by the forces of Satan.

David sought to build a house of God. He would never enjoy the beauty of the new temple or the sacrifices and worship that would be conducted there. David, however, made plans for Solomon to accomplish this task. He gave the last years of his life so the next generation would have a magnificent house of God prepared for them.

In the same way, we need to dedicate the rest of our lives making preparation for the next generation while giving the current one everything we have. We need to build upon the pattern of the New Testament church and plant seeds of revival for the future. We need to finish strong and keep the revival fires alive. Our prayer for a renewed vision should be for all of us to "enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes" (Isaiah 54:2, NIV).

As we come to the 21st century, we must expand our vision and increase our prayers in preparation for strong, soul-winning churches and the long-sought-for awakenings we may or may not experience in our lifetime. The hymn writer of "Be Thou My Vision" expressed a similar desire in these lines he penned long ago:

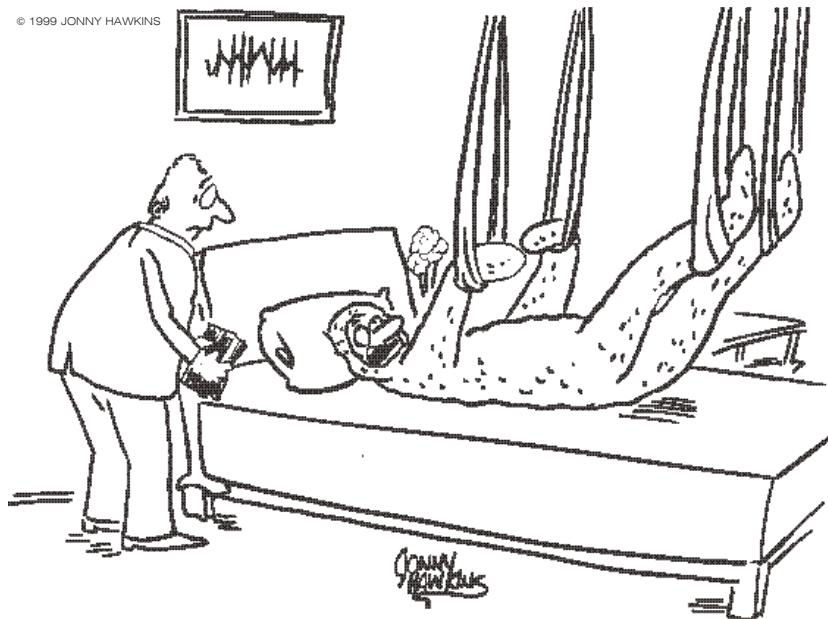
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,

Still be my Vision,  
O Ruler of All. 

*Tommy Barnett is  
senior pastor of  
First Assembly of  
God in Phoenix,  
Arizona.*



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**"I came forward while listening to you evangelize on the radio.  
Unfortunately, at the time I was in a hot air balloon."**

#### ENDNOTES

1. "Be Thou My Vision," an Irish hymn, c. 8th century, translated by Mary Byrne, in *Great Hymns of the Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1968), 334. Used by permission.














When pastors simply tell their people about the vision and their people have little opportunity to participate in shaping it or talking about it, they may comply, but they may not buy into it.

# SO YOU'VE GOT A VISION—NOW WHAT?

BY J. DAVID SCHMIDT

Each year my wife and I attend a friend's Christmas party. We always exchange white elephant gifts. We spend a hilarious hour watching mostly junk emerge from beautifully wrapped boxes. One gift—an ugly china hen and rooster—has been circulating for years. There are usually moans from the couple who gets them.

## WHAT DO I DO WITH THIS THING?

Vision, for some pastors and churches, can be like that pair of china chickens—you own the vision, but wonder what to do with it. Perhaps you and your church are one of the thousands of Assemblies of God fellowships that are participating in the 2000 Celebration vision discovery process. You are holding your meetings and are delighted and challenged by the visions God is placing in the hearts of the people in your church. You are working to coalesce those visions into one statement that will guide your church's ministry. But you may be wondering, *What will I do with this vision our church is creating?*

## PEOPLE NEED TO BUY-IN TO TIE-IN

The single biggest challenge that most churches face, and the step most often skipped, is that of communication. Most churches and pastors who develop a vision move immediately to turning their vision into action. But a vision that is moved too quickly from idea to action dies because few people understood the vision.

When people don't understand the vision, and don't buy into it emotionally, they don't tie their lives to it. Therefore, it is important that you develop a plan to communicate to the entire church, and keep it in front of the church until it is owned by a broad majority in the church. This is a fundamental and critical step a pastor, staff, and leadership team must take.

Vision teams and pastors who leave out this communication step risk alienating people; or, worse, seeing those who weren't directly involved in the process shrug their shoulders and say, "It's fine for you, but I don't have anything to do with that." It would be disappointing to hear from God, develop a

vision, and then have people in your church say: "What vision? I didn't know our church was working on one"; or "You may have a vision, but I have my own"; or worse, "I don't want any part of it."

### **VISION GROWS IN STRENGTH AND GAINS MOMENTUM AS IT IS SHARED**

Communicating the vision is the first and most essential step in turning vision into action. There is no right way to do this. Every leader and church has their own pattern for how ideas are shared. In some churches it is assumed the pastor will announce to the church what will happen. In other churches more laity are involved. You need to understand how your church best accepts new information and fresh ideas. Communicate on their terms, not yours.

discuss it, refine it, and add to it. Your job as pastor is to facilitate this talk-about-it phase.

John P. Kotter, in his book, *Leading Change*, states, "A great vision can serve a useful purpose even if it is understood by just a few key people. But the real power of a vision is unleashed only when most of those involved in an enterprise or activity have a common understanding of its goals and direction." That shared sense of a desirable future can help motivate and coordinate the kinds of actions that create transformation in ministries and people.

### **EXPECT A BUMP OR TWO**

A fresh vision for your church will almost always mean change. Developing a vision opens our eyes to programs that have lost their impact. A ministry or program that God blessed in

doing church. They will resist changing them. But we are at a difficult time in local church history. We have come to the end of one era marked by certain tools and strategies, and have launched into a new era where new tools and strategies are needed to reach the unchurched and to make disciples.

Many churches seek to blend the past with elements of the new, and find it difficult. God can use a fresh vision to help people make the transition; but clear communication in words, pictures, and images is necessary. It is hard work, and a certain amount of emotional work—that of letting go of what used to be and taking steps toward what might be.

Many times people who participate in the vision development process have already done this emotional soul-searching and are prepared to enter into



***Keeping [people] encouraged by giving them a clear picture of the future is an important part of assimilating people into your church.***

Increasingly, people want to have a say in the future of their church. As pastor, you can share your vision from the pulpit, have the whole church applaud and nod their heads in seeming agreement, and then see nothing happen. When pastors simply tell their people about the vision and their people have little opportunity to participate in shaping it or talking about it, they may comply, but they may not buy into it.

A church needs to have the experience of looking to the future together. This shared experience builds community and builds a common appreciation for the vision. For vision to take on energy, it must be shared. Shared vision gains momentum as individuals talk about it,

the past may now be something the church maintains but is no longer effective.

Oftentimes ministries continue to outlive their usefulness because no better idea has come along. The point of your church participating in the vision process is to help your church hear from God, identify those ministries that are no longer effective, and with the Lord's leading, determine new ministries to reach people.

When people see a fresh vision, there comes a greater willingness to let go of the old and the comfortable. This isn't to say that simply communicating a fresh vision will make change easy. People develop deep loyalties to ways of

a new future for their church. But the rest of the congregation hasn't had the opportunity to look at alternatives and let go of outdated programs. Yet this same journey must be offered to the congregation. They, too, must see the need and discover the new ways God is working. This will help them be challenged to join Him rather than stay behind.

### **HOW CAN YOU COMMUNICATE THE VISION?**

Here are some steps to consider:

1. *The primary vision communicator must be the senior pastor.* Prepare and deliver a compelling statement of vision to your church. At Willow Creek

## ***Six Habits of a Visionary Leader***

Peter Drucker, in his book, *The Effective Executive*, advises that anyone who wants to lead should not worry about doing everything perfectly but commit to doing the right things for the right reasons every time. Here are six habits of visionary leaders that will help you to keep doing the right things, for the right reasons, over and over.

### **1. Have a Clear Vision**

- *Start by developing a long view.* See clearer, farther, and more than any one else.
- *Communication increases commitment.* Share the vision in committees, from the pulpit, and in private conversations.
- *Vision makes church appealing.* When a congregation shares a vision, excitement and anticipation can be felt everywhere.
- *Vision takes a church beyond maintenance.* In church, everything is energized with a vision.

### **2. Influence Influencers**

Recognize and utilize your basic leadership inclinations and strengths. A *cohesive* leader creates togetherness and warm, fuzzy relationships; a *task* leader has visions, sets goals, and goes all out to accomplish the dream. At times, both leadership styles are needed in the church. A wise pastor will value both kinds of influencers.

A clergy or lay leader gains influence in various ways:

- *Clear vision*—Elmer Towns says, “When people buy your dream, they buy into your leadership.”
- *Credibility*—Do what you say you will do.
- *Confidence*—Be a faith-filled and hope-filled person.
- *Character*—Teach ministry by modeling ministry.
- *Commitment*—Be the most committed of all.
- *Courage*—Faith involves taking risks.

### **3. Build a Winning Team**

More is accomplished when people work as a team. *Synergism* captures this idea and means everyone combining his/her unique giftedness to produce significant achievement for Christ. Visionary leaders must build individuals together into teams and empower them for their ministry—laity want to be in the action.

### **4. Be a People Person**

People are the church’s main business. Cherish people; laugh and cry with them. Listen to their fears, failings, and feelings. Value their affirmations and rejoice in their potential. Remember, the Savior established His church for them.

### **5. Attitudes Really Matter**

Most leaders have a special attitude inside them. Call it possibility thinking, passion, positive thinking, energized focus, or vital faith. They believe God wants to help them accomplish the impossible. Every church that desires explosive growth must have someone near the top of their team who believes and communicates an attitude that expects and experiences miracles.

### **6. Never Give Up**

When the going gets tough, with Christ’s help, the tough get going. Struggles give us strength to fly higher, to become what God created us to be. God has placed resources within us that we can discover only through struggles and hardship. Strength, both physical and spiritual, is the product of struggle. That is why it is so important never to give up.

—Adapted from Dale Galloway’s article “Seven Habits of a Visionary Leader” from *Leading With Vision, Beeson Leadership Series*, Beacon Hill Press, Kansas City, Mo. ©1998. Used by permission.

Community Church, Pastor Bill Hybels conducts a Vision Night twice a year. He reviews where the church has come from in the previous 6 months; lays out a vision for the church's fundamental mission, vision, and calling; and shares the specific details of where the church will be headed. This approach shows that the senior pastor is behind the vision.

*2. The senior pastor cannot be the only vision carrier or vision champion.* Ask the vision planning team to communicate the vision, perhaps over dessert in homes, in Sunday school classes, or in visits to small groups within the church.

Equip vision-planning members with tools. A PowerPoint® presentation or video is ideal in certain settings, but printed copies of the vision are also helpful. Vision planning members can

may need to be refined.

There is a key difference between listening and leading. The process of listening to the congregation's reaction to the vision is critical. But at some point the listening and the communication process must end and the implementation of the vision must begin. Don't get sidetracked by endless cycles of dialoguing with one or two people in the church who resist change. If this happens, send these people to the church board, where differences can be ironed out in a way that is honoring to God and to everyone involved.

*3. Keep communicating the vision.* Nehemiah clearly and frequently articulated his vision. He repeatedly announced that the wall needed to be rebuilt. The king, the religious leaders, and the workmen knew his vision. Eventually his prayers and proclamations

percent of all the communication is devoted to vision. Fully 99.75 percent of communication is devoted to everything else but vision. These proportions are not healthy in a church, which is a volunteer-intensive organization. If anything, vision communication in the church must have a higher priority because people do not have to attend your church. They can attend any church they like. Keeping them encouraged by giving them a clear picture of the future is an important part of assimilating people into your church.

In our postmodern world, loyalty to institutions is at an all-time low. Even in the most loyal layperson's heart, the struggle occurs: "Is this the church my family really needs? Are my needs being met? Do I want to keep attending here?" When loyalty lags or discouragement sets in, vision can help bring people



## *The single biggest challenge that most churches face, and the step most often skipped, is that of communication.*

share copies with people they talk to as they communicate the vision. The more they share it, the more they own it.

These meetings will need to allow for dialogue. The vision may not be clear to everyone the first time he or she reads it or hears it. There may even be conflict over certain points. But the key is that more than just the pastor is carrying the vision to the congregation. He or she is not alone, but is one of many people who are committed to a new future for the church.

Vision team members can return from these meeting and dialogue about what they have heard. In some cases what is shared in these meetings may alter the vision. Certain points

resulted in many people sharing the vision and carrying out the task. That's a key lesson. The vision needs to be communicated regularly, even after the initial communication process.

Use a church newsletter to communicate a certain aspect of the vision and how it's going to be worked out. If your church chooses to have a Vision Night, invite vision team members to prepare a testimony of parts of the vision they are particularly excited about. These testimonies will authentically communicate the vision through those who helped shape the vision.

*4. Help people sign up for the vision over and over.* Some studies show that in a typical organization, only 0.25

back into alignment with their local church. But that takes intentionality.

Where possible, mention the vision in your sermons. At least one or two times a year recalibrate the entire church through a reiteration of the vision. Make it a part of new-member orientation. People need to hear ideas repeated before they sink in. Run the risk of being too repetitive about the vision of your church rather than assuming everybody got it in one Vision Night.

### **CUT THE HAPPY TALK**

People need to know two kinds of information when it comes to evaluating your church's vision:


1. Where is God working that is worth celebrating? Where is there evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit outside of church services? Where are people's hearts getting softer, marriages being preserved, people avoiding sin, the fruit of the Holy Spirit being manifested? Illustrate the evidence of vitality.

2. There must be diplomatic candor about what's not going well in the church. Tell how many people in your church came to faith in Christ last year. If it's a number to rejoice about, rejoice. If it's a number to weep about, weep.

### ADOPTING THE VISION

The greatest keys to the vision being adopted by a congregation include: giving people the opportunity to participate in shaping the vision; giving them an opportunity to embrace it; and letting people hear their peers endorse it.

Don't develop a vision for your church only to have it languish in a file drawer or on a computer hard drive. Develop a communication plan that allows you and key lay leaders to speak regularly about your church's vision—its strength, value, and impact on the church and community.

Your church's vision will light the dark path God's people must travel in today's world. To hide vision from the rest of the congregation is to make the vision useless. Develop a communication process that allows an ever-increasing number of people in your church to understand the vision and talk about it. This will set the stage for action. A greater number of people will be able and willing to throw their weight into the vision's activity. 

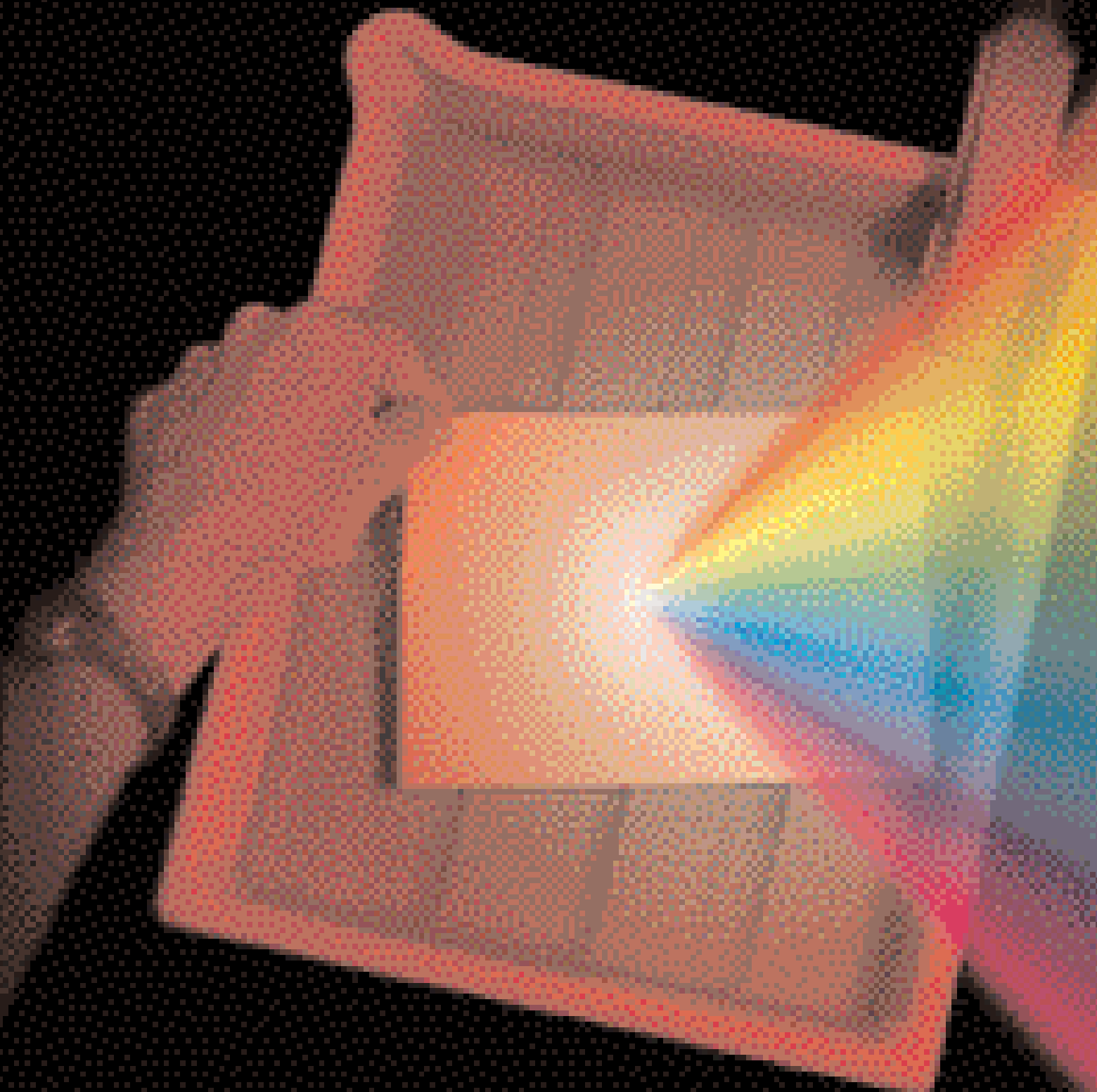
*J. David Schmidt is president of J. David Schmidt & Associates, Inc., a management consulting firm that has served Christian organizations, denominations, and local churches for 23 years. He lives in Wheaton, Illinois.*





*Developing Vision  
for the New  
Millennium*

# DEVELOPING VISION



# IN THE SMALLER CONGREGATION

**V**ision is one of the most critical elements in the success and effectiveness of the local church. The Bible is clear, “Without vision people cast off restraint.” To keep the church traveling down the right path, it is important for its members to have a clear and shared

vision. But how do ministry leaders develop and communicate vision? More important, how do you get your people to embrace the vision God has given you?

Vision is not just for the large church; smaller churches need a vision for ministry as well. Understanding small-church culture is key to developing and communicating vision to its leaders. This article focuses first on the unique culture and characteristics of the smaller congregation, and second, on how to initiate change and communicate your God-given vision within the small-church context.

BY STEVEN R. MILLS

*Pastors who want to*

*initiate change and*

*communicate vision need*

*to build solid relationships*

*with the church's primary*

*influencers and lead them*

*to discover God's vision*

*for the church.*

## UNDERSTANDING SMALL-CHURCH CULTURE AND CHARACTERISTICS

Generally, there are two types of small churches: the primary family church and the extended family church. In each type, the organizational cultures are resistant to change. Developing vision must be done with an understanding of how these two church types relate, what they value, and how they make decisions. Developing vision within their cultural paradigm is easier than developing vision that requires a change in the organizational culture itself. The leader who understands and adapts to the organizational culture of the small church is much more likely to succeed.

*Description.* The primary family church is inseparable from family life. Each member knows the others very well. The average attendance is usually 30 to 40, but can run as high as 50. This type of church is generally located in rural areas, some urban centers, and small towns.

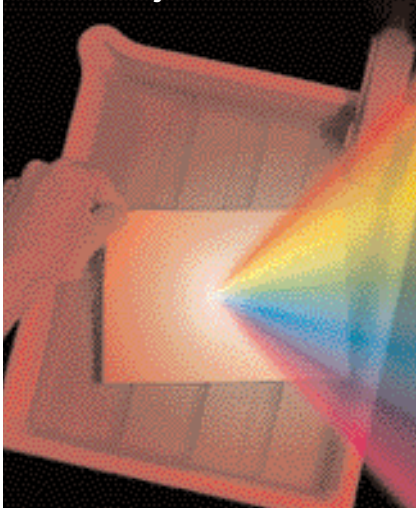
The primary focus of this church is building and maintaining relationships. It exists against significant obstacles because of the value members place on the family. The family church is a tight-knit intergenerational group and is laity owned and operated. Resources are limited, as are programs and ministries.

The extended family church (50–150 average attendance) resembles a clan or a family reunion. It is still a family church, but three or four family leaders have emerged. This type of church tends to be very homogenous where people know each other and share similar values.

*Primary Leadership.* In the primary family church, a matriarch or patriarch, not the pastor, is the primary leader. Two or three individuals or families fill the key leadership positions and hold these responsibilities for years or for life. The real leader may not hold an official or elected position, but is the person to whom others look when decisions are being made.

The primary leadership in the extended family church is a small core of dominant members or families. The key leadership positions have been in the hands of the same families for two or three generations. The core leadership group regularly interacts with each other. The church is large enough so no one person can control everything. Procedures and policies are unwritten and informal. They exist in the collective

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memory of the group. The church board generally makes sure the pastor and church leaders carry out the decisions of the primary family groups. Although the leaders may change formal positions, the informal roles and power structure remain constant.

*Pastor's Role.* In the primary family church, the pastor is expected to love the

people, do visitation, and preach. His or her official duties include baptisms, baby dedications, weddings, funerals, and presiding over the primary activities of the church. Specific responsibilities are determined by the church's traditions. If the pastor's relationship with the primary leader is weak or damaged, his or her ability to lead is weakened. The pastor is viewed as an outsider, but can do almost anything as long as he loves and cares for the people and responds to their primary expectations.

The pastor is the shepherd in the extended family church. He or she is the preacher/pastor for the church. Building and maintaining relationships with members is one of the highest values. In this church, the pastor is likely to have mixed support. Some members like the pastor, others tolerate his leadership, and others do not like him at all.

*Decision Making and Planning.* In the primary family church, decision making and planning are done spontaneously and informally. Decisions are made by the consensus of those in leadership or by direction from the patron/matron. In the absence of the matriarch/patriarch, no action will be taken until everyone is sure what the leader will do.

Decisions are made based on what is best for the "family." The primary family church values persons and relationships more than setting and achieving goals. Enacting change in the primary family church requires first the consensus of the group, then the permission of the patron/matron. This church does not have a written statement of purpose and mission. The church does have informal goals that are very meaningful to the patron/matron who takes his or her role very seriously.

In the extended family church, decision making and planning shifts between the formal and the informal. The decision-making process is flexible and low key. Decisions are made when they have to be made. The process is often spontaneous and may happen when the pastor isn't present. The pastor may be one of the least informed at

decision-making time because he or she is outside of the group. Decisions are made when the primary group reaches a consensus and then gives direction to the larger group. Bringing change in this church requires the permission of the dominant coalition.

Planning and organization do not play a big role in church life. The year's events occur in traditional patterns rather than in planned, intentional efforts. Planning usually is done by event or by crisis. Planning will generally be initiated by the governing coalition. The primary source of information for planning and decision making comes from the knowledge and experience of the members. The church's goals are informal and are meaningful to the families in the church. The primary purpose of the church is to serve the needs of the families that attend. Relationships are valued above results. If a pastor leads the people to write a vision statement, it will probably be discarded or disregarded when he leaves.

In the extended family church, the pastor accomplishes his leadership

primarily as a mentor and occasionally as a mediator. The dominant coalition maintains control of most of the management functions. The pastor must become part of the dominant coalition if he is to accomplish much in the church or in guiding the growth and development of the members and their ministries.

*Implementation of Plans.* Individuals rather than committees implement plans in the primary family church. Long-term planning is viewed as unnecessary. Rather than leaders being organized into a system of committees, this church may seem to carry out its entire operation like a single committee.

The extended family church implements plans by dividing the workload. Programs are more general in nature. Little training is required for leaders or participants. All members are expected to participate in most programs and activities. Programs are done based on the way things have always been done.

*Communication.* Communication in both church types is by word of mouth, and the telephone is the primary tool for communication. In larger churches,

communication can be supplemented with a bulletin or a monthly newsletter.

*New Members.* New members are accepted into the church if they have connections inside the church, marry into the church, or have abilities or resources the church can use. Some may be accepted if the congregation feels sympathy toward them or their personal situation. All others generally discover they really don't fit or belong. In larger churches, new members may come by transfer.

## INITIATING CHANGE

The process of developing mission, values, and vision is a journey, not a destination. It may take a year or more to work through. Pastors who want to initiate change and communicate vision need to build solid relationships with the church's primary influencers and lead them to discover God's vision for the church.

You begin by meeting with your primary influencers to study God's Word and discover Christ's mission and purpose for the church. Do not assume your leaders already know this. This step can

## Mission, Vision, and Values

The terms "mission, purpose, vision, vision slogan, values, and value statements" are used frequently but not always with the same definition. This often contributes to confusion and passivity in leading a church to identify and develop its vision. Generally, these terms are defined as follows:

- **Mission/Purpose:** The mission or purpose statement is God's universal unchanging plan for His church. It is "what" the Church is about and "why" it is doing it. In essence, it is the Great Commission. The mission statement is a brief biblical statement about what the church is to be doing. It informs us about our reason for being. The mission speaks to and flows out of our head, our intellect.
- **Vision:** The vision is a clear and challenging picture of the future. The mission of the church is to win communities for Christ. The vision statement is what your local church is going to do, and how it will fulfill the mission. The vision considers the needs of the community and the congregational context and values. The vision statement inspires a church to pursue the mission. The vision touches and flows out of the hearts of the church members.
- **Vision Slogan:** A brief memorable and challenging statement of the vision of the local church. The vision slogan takes the longer vision statement and puts it into the battle cry or the cheer. It keeps the vision alive, visible, and memorable.
- **Value Statements:** Core statements of beliefs about the church's mission that govern what the church does and how it does it. Value statements are biblical, but not doctrinal statements. Value statements reveal what is vitally important to the church. They are unchanging, passionate, and drive the ministry of the church. Core values help to solve problems, make critical decisions, develop consensus, and build the team.

—Information supplied by Steven R. Mills, leadership development coordinator for the Division of Christian Education, Springfield, Missouri.

help your people develop a personal conviction that this is what God wants their church to be.

After your leaders understand God's purpose for the church, have them clarify their core values. These are statements of belief about a church's mission that govern what it does and how it does it. Value statements describe the things that are most important to believers and their church. They are not doctrinal statements, but they are biblical. Ask your leaders to complete the phrases, "I believe...." and "I value...." This can be done as a group through brainstorming or individually. Compile the list and ask each person to rate each value on a scale of 1 to 5 (low to high). Tabulate the scores. The highest scores probably reflect their values. Write a short biblical statement for each value.

The next step is to have your leaders list the primary needs of their community. Encourage them to survey their unchurched friends by asking, "What are the greatest needs and/or problems people deal with in our community?" Have each person record his or her responses and discuss the results together. Help them think about the people and families in the community. What is the nature of their work? What is their economic status? Do you have different ethnic groups in your community? This will help your core leaders think about their community and how the church can best influence it.

A realistic vision takes into account the strengths, resources, and abilities of the church. If a church has just a few teenagers, it is unlikely to minister effectively to teenagers. If a church has two young couples with five children between them, it has some resources to minister to young families. Brainstorm with your influencers and other leaders about what they see as the church's strengths, resources, and abilities. Help them see the church's possibilities rather than its limitations.

You will need to spend time individually and collectively with your primary

influencers. Talk to them about their vision and dreams for the church. Have them write it down.

After your primary leaders have written their responses, bring the church together to discuss them. You should work to seek consensus, not compromise. Identify only the most essential elements for the church. Out of this forum develop a vision statement unique and specific to your church.

Put in the vision statement only what is essential for the church to be the church. The statement can be a single sentence, but not more than a short paragraph. An effective vision statement should be biblical, specific, transferable, motivating, and measurable. It should be stated in terms of results, not activities; stated in a manner that motivates and encourages participation; and arranged in a sequential, logical process.

Share the draft vision statement with the congregation and with key groups in the congregation. Encourage them to give honest feedback. Stress that the vision statement is only a draft and that their input is essential.

With the primary influencers and leaders, synthesize and incorporate feedback into the final vision statement. Each word in the vision statement needs to carry strong imagery and powerful meaning.

Listed below are samples of mission, vision, and value statements:

#### **Mission Statement**

To bring people to salvation in Jesus Christ and disciple them in their relationship with Christ (Matthew 28:19,20).

#### **Vision Statement**

We believe God has called us to reach the unchurched of our city by providing caring structures for families, diversity in worship, small caring groups, and knowledge of spiritual gifts.

#### **Value Statements**

1. We believe that the process of


becoming a disciple of Jesus involves: baptism, prayer, ongoing learning about the Christian life, regular worship, and participation in activities that utilize one's spiritual gifts for ministry.

2. We value the Bible as the inspired Word of God from which Christians learn about God's truths.

3. We believe in the importance of stewardship of time, talents, treasures, and the earth's resources as a sign of a mature Christian faith.

4. We believe that evangelism is the role of every Christian.

In a congregational meeting, communicate the mission, vision, and value statements. The meeting's purpose is to secure formal approval. Summarize the process that was used in developing each statement. Provide practical examples of how the mission, values, and vision will impact the ministry and function of the church. Explain how these statements will provide leadership for decisions about ministry, budget, schedule, and relationships. Make sure everyone is clear about the importance of each value statement. Provide each person a copy of the mission statement; it should be kept in front of him/her at all times. Use the statements to guide all present and future decisions of the church. Your leaders must personally apply the values and vision before the church will adapt and change to reflect the new vision and values of the church.

To develop and transfer vision in the small family-type church, you must focus your efforts on building credible relationship with the primary influencer(s) to the place where they will permit you to come along side them and together discover God's vision for their church. 

*Steven R. Mills is leadership development coordinator for the Assemblies of God Division of Christian Education, Springfield, Missouri.*











# I

## INTERVIEW WITH J. DAVID SCHMIDT AND MIKE MESSNER

# The Shaping of a Vision

Scheduled for August 8-10, 2000, in Indianapolis, Indiana, 2000 Celebration will be a significant turn-of-the-century event in Assemblies of God history. It will be about victory and vision. Pastors and church leaders from around the world will join in corporate celebration to God for the victories He has given the Assemblies of God during its 85-year history. It will also be a time when churches will bind together for one focused vision for ministry in the years to come.

J. David Schmidt and Mike Messner visited with *Enrichment* and shared their thoughts on the vision-casting process and its importance to 2000 Celebration.



J. DAVID SCHMIDT



MIKE MESSNER

**THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD AND J. DAVID SCHMIDT ARE WORKING TOGETHER ON THE 2000 CELEBRATION EVENT TO BE HELD IN INDIANAPOLIS NEXT AUGUST.**

**DAVID, IN WHAT CAPACITY ARE YOU WORKING WITH THE GENERAL COUNCIL ON THIS SIGNIFICANT EVENT?**

**DAVID:** General Superintendent Trask asked me to help coach the process of developing an understanding of what God is calling the Assemblies of God to do as it moves into the new millennium. Scripture states in Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint."\* Sometimes we have not fully understood this passage.

For the last 20 or 30 years we have had a top down leadership style in our country. When we read Proverbs 29:18, we generally think that vision comes through one person. But this way of thinking limits God's way of working in the church. God works through a variety of processes and people to establish His kingdom. In the last few years, many people have expressed a desire to become a part of the decision-making process—whether it is in the company where they work or in the church they attend.

God already has a plan and a vision for the Assemblies of God. It is our responsibility to see the future as God sees it, and to make plans to accomplish His purpose for our Movement. We need to understand how God sees each of us, our church, our community, and our country.

**MIKE:** Solomon set a pattern for our partnership with David Schmidt in 1 Kings 5 and 7. Solomon inherited his father's vision and passion to build the temple. After assessing the job, Solomon asked the king of Tyre to help him. He said: "So give orders that cedars of Lebanon be cut for me. My men will work with yours, and I will pay you for your men whatever wages you set. You know that we have no one so skilled in

falling timber as the Sidonians" (1 Kings 5:6). Scripture then records that "King Solomon sent to Tyre and brought Hiram...a craftsman in bronze. He was highly skilled and experienced in all kinds of bronze work" (1 Kings 7:13). Verses 45,46 state, "All these objects that Hiram made for King Solomon for the temple of the Lord were of burnished bronze. The king had them cast in clay molds in the plain of the Jordan between Succoth and Zarethan.

***When church leaders and churches become content with the way things are, they lose their effectiveness. Even the most effective Assemblies of God churches can become content.***



Solomon left all these things unweighed, because there were so many; the weight of the bronze was not determined."

Solomon recognized that to accomplish this task he needed expert help outside of his own resources. He called on someone who knew how to cast molds. The Assemblies of God needed someone who understands the Kingdom, the vision process, and is a proven craftsman to come alongside us. This person is not to do the work for us, but to put into order the steps

that we need to follow and let our pastors come alongside him and work just like the timber cutters of Tyre. This is why we have asked David to help us.

**WHAT HAPPENS TO A CHURCH THAT LACKS VISION?**

**DAVID:** The statement, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (KJV), also means each one of us dies a little when we don't have our eyes on the future.

John R. Stott, a well-known English theologian, said that vision begins with a holy discontent with the way things are. It is easy to become content with our churches and our Fellowship. We are busy building our homes, our families, and our jobs. We are working on our careers, trying to move forward in a very chaotic, change-filled world. The church is the last thing we want to see changed, so we become content. When church leaders and churches become content with the way things are, they lose their effectiveness. Even the most effective Assemblies of God churches can become content. We need a way for God to break into our routine and make us discontent with the level of impact we're having in our world. We can do this by keeping an eye on the future and by asking, "What's next for us?"

We need a process that will help us move out of our regular routine in church work and set aside time to ask, "God, what do You see in our church's future? What do we need to see about our community and church?" This is why we developed the Vision Discovery Kit.

**THE 2000 CELEBRATION AND VISION DISCOVERY KIT WORK HAND IN HAND. EXPLAIN.**

**MIKE:** The 2000 Celebration will be a corporate celebration where we come together to wait on God and thank Him for all the wonderful things that He has done over these 85 years the Assemblies of God has

been in existence. At the celebration, we will hear from our leadership as they share where they believe God is leading the Assemblies of God into the 21st century.

Every pastor in the Assemblies of God has received a Vision Discovery Kit for his or her church. This tool kit contains in part, a video message from General Superintendent Trask, a leaders guide for the pastor, and a workbook for lay leaders. The kit was designed to help pastors and their churches work through the vision-casting process. We want pastors to come to the 2000 Celebration in Indianapolis with their dreams bigger than their memories. This is one of the reasons the Vision Discovery Kit is so important. The kit will help pastors focus on the future and the importance of the 2000 Celebration.

#### HOW WILL VISION CASTING FROM THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL AFFECT THE MOVEMENT AT LARGE?

**MIKE:** The Vision Discovery Kit is designed to direct pastors and churches through the process of putting together a vision team.

The vision team can be the church board, a group of leaders in the congregation, or a special team that the pastor puts together.

Pastors will use the kit to guide their leaders through the vision-casting process by asking: "Lord, what are You requiring of us? What would You have us do in relationship to our Jerusalem? What do we have to become in order to fulfill Your mission for our church? What do we need to do in the next 5 years to fulfill Your mission for our church?"

We are asking the local church to write their vision statement on a sheet of paper. We want something that is simple—a few paragraphs, no more than two pages. We want to hear what they believe God is saying to them. After they have done this, they are to send their vision statement to their district office. At this point their vision statement becomes a diagnostic tool for the district superintendent and the district presbytery. It will help them understand what God is saying to the churches in their district. We believe a common theme will emerge. God will be saying some of the

same things to churches. The district superintendent and the district presbytery will have the input from the churches as they begin to formulate a vision for their district. As the district superintendent and the district presbytery evaluate the vision statements from their churches, they may need to examine the programs and the services they are offering churches. They may want to give concentrated effort to developing new avenues of ministry to help both clergy and laity.

From the input of their churches, the district will formulate a vision statement and send it to the General Council. The general superintendent and the Executive Presbytery will then read what each district believes God is saying to them. This provides guidance at the national level as the officers of the Assemblies of God formulate a vision for the Movement and make decisions about resources—programs and publications the Assemblies of God needs to offer to its churches. This will also affect how we use our financial resources. We want to be the best stewards of God's resources.

This is a vastly different process than leadership by consensus. This process gives people opportunity to help shape the vision they feel God is giving their church. At every step along the way it is necessary for leaders—church leadership, pastors, district superintendents, or the general superintendent—to spend time alone with God. Receiving input from grassroots doesn't relieve district and national leaders from their responsibility to hear directly from God.

**DAVID:** As we move into the 21st century, it is imperative that district and General Council operations be aligned with the vision and the needs of the local churches. The real frontline of ministry is the local church. The function of the districts and the national office is to provide service and support. Therefore, what God is showing local churches becomes the marching orders for the districts and national office. They might need to rearrange their priorities, departments, and resources to better serve the local church.

### Vision

While there are some leaders whose primary focus is the discernment and communication of vision, every true leader must have a deep understanding of the vision of his or her ministry. Without a clear vision in mind, there is no place to lead the people.

Every leader should develop the ability to do three things related to vision:

**(1) Discern God's vision for his/her ministry.** This entails an extended time of self-discovery, intense interaction with God, assessing the ministry environment, and gaining counsel from trusted advisers. When God raises up leaders, He has a specific vision for the people those leaders have been called to mobilize. Knowing God's vision for the ministry is the starting point for effectively leading people forward.

**(2) Articulate the vision in ways that inspire and direct people.** This entails developing a vision statement, which is a brief, punchy declaration of the unique purpose for which God has allowed that specific ministry to exist. The leader must use all available opportunities to cast the vision to the people who will make it come to pass.

**(3) Incorporate the vision into every aspect of the ministry.** Progress is evaluated according to the vision. People are hired based on the ministry needs dictated by the vision. Sermon topics are selected in keeping with the vision. Strategic plans are determined by the content of the vision. Relationships with other ministries are developed in light of the vision. Vision, in short, becomes the centerpiece of the ministry—and of the leader's life.

—Adapted from chapter 12 in *The Second Coming of the Church*, Barna Research Group, Ltd., Ventura, California. Used by permission.

This process is intended to move information and vision from the front line to leadership. Two-thirds of the value for the local church is in the process—in the meetings where leaders gather, pray together, and dream out loud about the vision God has for their church. As the local church leadership works through this process, there will be a blending together of the leaders into a united group determined to do God's will. When they write down their vision, they won't forget it; it will be kept in the forefront.

This process has been calibrated to serve every Assemblies of God church no matter what the size. A church planter ready to plant a church, or a pastor of a church of 20–30 people who brings two or three elders or leaders together and involves them in completing the process will benefit. A church of 5,000 will be helped by this process as well.

**WE ARE PENTECOSTAL AND GENERALLY RELY ON MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SPIRIT FOR OUR GROWTH. HOW DOES THIS VISION-CASTING PROCESS RELATE TO THAT FACT?**

**DAVID:** Proverbs 24:3,4 in the *Living Bible* states, "Any enterprise is built by wise planning, becomes strong through common sense, and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts." This includes the local church. The Word of God is clear about listening to God's Spirit. Wise planning and listening to the Holy Spirit are not a contradiction. God intends for us to balance that tension in our daily lives. Leaders are challenged to know the condition of their fields, their herds, or their flocks. God was the greatest strategic planner of all time. His overall plan for this world spans thousands of years. Before Adam and Eve sinned, God had a strategic plan to bring that part of creation that He cared most deeply about back to himself.

The Assemblies of God is not short on

Pentecostal expression. As a Fellowship, it understands how to listen for God's voice. The Assemblies of God clearly understands the work of the Holy Spirit better than many other denominations. But there must be room for God to lead the mind as well.

Much of the growth in the Assemblies of God is in other parts of the world, not in the United States. Our churches need to make some changes so they can relate to

empower those who depend on Him. But God uses what we place into His hands.


**AFTER PASTORS HAVE DEVELOPED A VISION FOR THEIR CHURCH, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT THEY AND THEIR STAFF COME TO 2000 CELEBRATION?**

**DAVID:** Pastors and their key church leaders should not miss the 2000 Celebration. Three things will happen at this event.

Pastors and church leaders will come with fresh vision, with excitement, and will share with others their vision of where their church is going. This will be a great encouragement and will help inspire pastors and their vision.

As General Superintendent Trask shares the vision for the future of the Assemblies of God, it will build people's faith. They will sense God's direction as a Fellowship as they look to the 21st century. There will also be a great unity that comes from the 2000 Celebration. As pastors and lay leaders sense what God wants them to do in their communities in relationship to what the Assemblies of God is doing as a whole, it will bind churches together in heart and purpose.

The 2000 Celebration will be clear evidence once again that God in supernatural ways can visit thousands of pastors and church leaders and put into their minds, hearts, and thoughts ideas that will bind a group of churches together for one focused mission in the

years to come. 

*\*Scripture quotations are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*

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*Mike Messner is administrative assistant to the general superintendent and spiritual life coordinator and 2000 Celebration event coordinator for the Assemblies of God in Springfield, Missouri.*

***The 2000 Celebration will be a corporate celebration where we come together to wait on God and thank Him for all the wonderful things that He has done over these 85 years the Assemblies of God has been in existence.***



today's culture. We need to remain biblically sound, but we need to become culturally relevant. To do this we need a fresh vision for how we can reach our culture with the gospel.

**MIKE:** Good stewardship and planning are not contrary to walking by faith or the empowering of the Spirit. They are like the two wings of an airplane—good planning on one side, walking by faith and depending on the power of the Holy Spirit on the other side. You need both. God certainly will







*Developing Vision  
for the New  
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B Y R A N D Y H U R S T

# VISION



Big Enough...and Small Enough

**V**ision is a popular word; Fortune 500 companies talk about it and politicians claim to have it. But the Church needs to understand the difference between the secular and Pentecostal meanings of the word.

Much of what passes for vision are mere fantasies or dreams, produced by the human imagination. But the vision essential for the Church to fulfill its mission must be a revelation from God himself. Human vision is powerful, but it lacks two significant characteristics of divine vision. First, human vision isn't *big* enough; second, it isn't *small* enough.

### **BIG ENOUGH VISION**

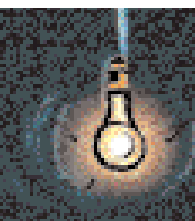
During the Pentecostal revival early in this century, the fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit resulted in an immediate, Spirit-imparted concern for a lost world. In the first General Council held in 1914 in Hot Springs,

the Holy Spirit's power to do it. This Spirit-imparted zeal was not mere enthusiasm but a purposeful mission guided by a thorough study of the Scriptures.

Our mission is also encompassing in breadth of ministry. Four words describe our mission: *reaching, planting, training, and touching*—evangelism, establishing churches, training national leaders, and compassion ministries. These four biblical pillars of our mission are not separate objectives but a comprehensive, integrated, synergistic plan. Each is right in itself. What distinguishes our mission is not merely our obedience to each mandate, but how all four work together to achieve our primary objective—establishing the church.

The first Assemblies of God *Missionary Manual* published in 1931 stated: "The winning of souls to Christ and establishing of assemblies in all places where converts are won should be regarded as the primary objective of all missions. All other branches of

***The vision essential for the Church to fulfill its mission must be a revelation from God himself.***



Arkansas, our leaders gave eloquent and passionate expression to the missionary purpose for forming the Fellowship. Later that year during the second General Council held at Stone Church in Chicago, our early leaders made an amazing declaration: "We commit ourselves and the Movement to Him for the greatest evangelism that the world has ever seen." This Spirit-imparted *big* vision caused our mission to be extensive in geographic scope. Unlike many church bodies whose missions focused on certain parts of the world, our early leaders were compelled by the Spirit to obey our Lord's command to "go into *all* the world and preach the gospel."<sup>1</sup>

The boldness of our forefathers' response to the Great Commission is astounding. How could such a small group of Christians even consider attempting to preach the gospel in all the world? Because they believed both Jesus' *command* to reach the whole world and also His *promise* that we would receive

ministry should be subordinate to this." Our priority and perspective haven't changed.

The cutting edge of our mission is evangelism. But the Great Commission involves more than proclamation. Our Lord also commanded: "Go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."<sup>2</sup> In the statement from the 1931 *Missionary Manual*, evangelism and church planting are interrelated. If not discipled, most people reached through evangelistic efforts will be lost. We are called not only to reap a worldwide harvest, but also to help conserve it.

We do not merely transplant the American church in foreign lands. From the earliest years of our Fellowship, Assemblies of God missionaries have established indigenous churches to support and govern themselves. Our primary objective is to establish local bodies of believers that will live and grow without dependency on the mother church

that sent the missionaries. We commit the work into the care of national ministers who are divinely called and gifted and have been trained for leadership.

Our mission is comprehensive and integrated. Each aspect contributes to establishing the church, and each is served by the church.

Synergy is cooperative action that results in a total effect greater than the sum of each action's effects measured independently. As demonstrated recently after the hurricanes in Central America and the war in Kosovo, each time two or more of our four pillars are in place, that integration produces synergy. What otherwise might take years or even decades for the church to accomplish can be done in weeks or months.

While we continue to obey divine commands to evangelize, train spiritual leaders, and minister the love of

Gentiles." The prophetess Anna, standing nearby, began giving thanks to God and spoke of Jesus being the "redemption of Jerusalem."<sup>3</sup> Jesus probably looked like any other Jewish baby boy, but Simeon and Anna saw more.

When Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman at the well, He saw her as no one else did. The villagers saw an immoral woman; Jesus saw someone with a receptive heart who would become a catalyst for reaching that community.

The small vision needed to see the big vision fulfilled is a Spirit-empowered ability to see people as God sees them, with all their divinely planned potential.<sup>4</sup>

When John Bueno, foreign missions executive director, pastored the *Centro Evangelistico* church in San Salvador, El Salvador, the congregation grew to 23,000. The Christian school system he founded has served more than 330,000

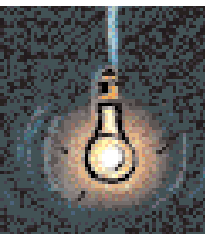
At Southern Asia Bible College in India, missionaries David Stewart and David Grant saw God's hand on a young student named Mohan. They invested time, teaching, and friendship in Mohan's life, and now a church numbering more than 15,000 has come into being. In Argentina, young students disciplined by missionary Rocky Grams now pastor congregations of many thousands.

The Spirit equips men and women to far exceed what their mentors envision for them. That is the power of small vision. God enables us to see His planned potential in a person, but we can't know what great things He will accomplish through that person's life.

What God wants to do in and through lives is "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine."<sup>5</sup> If we live in God's will, we are always out of our depth and stretched beyond ourselves.

Our vision for the 21st century must

***Vision that is focused on the multitude but not the individual will be ineffective.***



Christ to poor and suffering people, the highest priority of our mission is to establish New Testament churches that will mature and multiply.

### **SMALL ENOUGH VISION**

Paradoxically, some ministries do not become *large* enough because in some ways their vision is not *small* enough. If vision is focused too much on the future rather than the present and too much on the far rather than the near, the potential of that vision may never come to full fruition. Vision that is focused on the multitude but not the individual will be ineffective.

Simeon saw a carpenter in the temple with his young wife and baby and exclaimed, "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation," and prophesied that Jesus would be "a light of revelation to the

students. The vision for the school system did not begin with a projection of what it would become; it began with an insightful burden. As John drove to the church each day, his heart was burdened by the dead-end existence of the young boys on the street who shined shoes, washed windshields, and sold newspapers. He wanted to reach them for Christ and do something to improve their lives. Spirit-guided insight preceded foresight.

Spiritual leaders see people's potential—the gifts and callings that will shape the future of the church. Among the significant differences between our mission and many others is a strong emphasis on training national ministers. Missionaries have seen the Spirit of God dwelling in power in the lives of our national brothers and sisters.

continue to be *big* enough to obey the Great Commission which extends to *all* the world, and observe all our Lord has taught us.<sup>6</sup> It also must be *small* enough to see the potential in just one life. **E**

*Randy Hurst is communications director for Assemblies of God Foreign Missions.*



### **ENDNOTES**

1. Mark 16:15 (Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.)
2. Matthew 28:19,20 (NIV)
3. Luke 2:30,32,38
4. Psalm 139:1-16
5. Ephesians 3:20
6. Matthew 28:20

















Kevin, pastor of our only Assemblies of God congregation in the U.S. among the Kmhmu people, has a hard assignment. His people, torn from their Asian home and thrust into a 1990s Orange County, California, struggle. Their ways and customs no longer fit in their new world. Supported by the government, they have lost the dignity of supporting themselves. Their children, adjusting more quickly to the American way of life, no longer follow

who could not see what God had in mind for them to become. They couldn't find the faith to make the jump, in one generation, from slaves in Egypt to possessors of the land in Canaan. They were contentious, resistive, and difficult to lead.

Sometimes all you can do is confirm that a task is tough and can't be hurried. My meeting with Kevin was one of those times.

After Kevin and Linda left, I began to think about our organizational trek in

here and globally. We have become one of the largest organized blocs in the Protestant world. We are welcomed among evangelicals. Our ministers hold key interdenominational leadership assignments. In real and significant ways, we have "entered the land."

On the other hand, paradoxically, we dare not fully think of ourselves in those terms or let ourselves act like it. After 85 years and several generations, we haven't fully changed our self-definition. God has indeed made us significant

# STRUCTURING "TOUGH"— A CALL TO THE LAST DESERT GENERATION

BY C. DAVID GABLE

the patterns that had worked for generations. The Kmhmu people don't know what will become of them. They are hard to lead, venting their uneasiness on those who try. So Linda Gross, home missionary to Southeast Asians, brought Kevin by for encouragement.

My only word of hope for him was to compare his assignment to that of Moses, who was trying to lead a people who were not what they had been, and

the Assemblies of God from have-not to have status. Drawn from the disenfranchised, rejected from fellowship by evangelicals and fundamentalists, we began in humble storefronts on the wrong side of the tracks. We were have-nots. We defined ourselves as "peculiar people" and "the Lord's despised few."

Times have changed; we are not what we were. We now have beautiful churches. We are among the leaders in growth,

among His people, but we are just beginning to think of appropriate ways of acting or restructuring to take responsibility for the stewardship of what we have become. We live in the land, but act like we are still in the desert.

We all have our own ways of discovering the significance that God has given us. For me, it came in an interview in the mid-70s with a representative from the American Bible Society. He asked



whether I, college youth representative for the Assemblies of God, was interested in a certain Bible distribution project. I told him it didn't fit, and asked where he would go next for help. He replied, "Don't you realize who you guys are? If I have a national project, I go to the Southern Baptists. If they don't pick up on it, I come to you; and if you don't either, I quit. No one else has the people or spiritual energy to pull off anything major." I had no idea we were thought of in such exclusive company.

God has allowed the ugly duckling to become a swan; yet, we should not think of ourselves as anything more than, at most, a big bird.

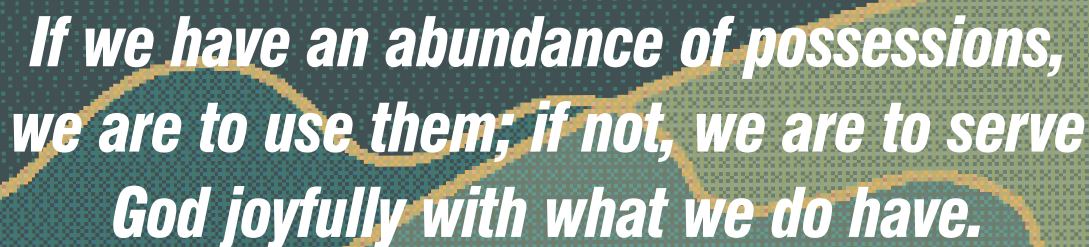
This concept occurs in almost every chapter in Deuteronomy. God brought them out to take them in. He intended for them to enter the Promised Land and to live there successfully. It wasn't just a human or cultural hope; it came from God.

An allegorical study such as this must tread carefully at this point. The New Testament has no direct promised earthly equivalent of the Promised Land. Yet, it is a characteristic of God to bless His people. Our deep desire to bless our kids finds its origin in God's tendency to give His children "all things."

As a Movement, seeking to do well and build for God's glory, we submitted our plans and purposes to Him. And we have

When we know God was with us as have-nots in the desert, we sometimes identify those have-not components as necessary elements in our walk with God. Since we've never been haves, we are naturally suspicious. We reasonably conclude: "Those haves don't see God move like we have-nots do."

Nomad and slave, they knew, but what about land-holder? Most assuredly, once they were in the Promised Land, someone pointed out the virtues of the good old days in the desert when God directly supplied their needs. These prognosticators bewailed the present "falling away" and gloomily predicted dire consequences. After all, "We've never done it this way before."



*If we have an abundance of possessions,  
we are to use them; if not, we are to serve  
God joyfully with what we do have.*

With this in mind, I began to reread Deuteronomy. Moses wrote this at the end of the desert time, just before the Israelites crossed the Jordan River. It is a repackaging of the instructions of Exodus through Numbers—a directive to have-nots who are about to become haves. Deuteronomy, the Old Testament equivalent of the Sermon on the Mount, told the Israelites how to live. It took into account what happens to people when they are blessed with success. It embodied self-correcting principles that were to carry the people into the coming generations and keep the blessing of God flowing. It spoke to spiritual, economic, political, religious, and relational matters. But what does it say to us in reassurance, direction, or warning at this time in our journey?

#### **GOD'S PLAN FOR ISRAEL**

**It was God's plan that they possess the Promised Land.**

experienced His blessings in numerical growth and an increase in our resources. We should feel neither guilty, denying this; nor arrogant, crediting ourselves. We should feel joyful, celebrating what we have been given, and listen closely to a generous God, seeking how we can best use this newfound status and stuff He's given us.

#### **The God of the desert is also the God of the Promised Land.**

The Israelites experienced daily the miraculous manna and quail in the desert. But they were about to eat in the Promised Land. Accustomed to a miracle of provision, would not the normal form of provision signal a lessening of their anointing?

While on the move they had a cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. Not needing guidance the same way in Canaan as in the desert, how will they experience a guiding God?

It was going to be vastly different in Canaan. None of them had done anything like it. No wonder they cried, "If You go not up with us, carry us not up hence." And God understood. Over and over at this critical juncture He reassured them: "I will be with you." He fully intended to remain in relationship with them. The God of the desert is also the God of the Land.

#### **The critical factor is not "land or desert," "have or have-not," but "with God or not with God."**

Possessions and status simply aren't the point. They are secondary; nice, but not what it's all about. At any given time, for any of His people, God may allow possessions or status, but they are not primary. If we have an abundance of possessions, we are to use them; if not, we are to serve God joyfully with what we do have. Abound or abased, it is more important to hold to God's hand

than to the pennies in it.

While we may have possessions, they are not without hazard. God saw the spiritual danger in acquiring possessions (Deuteronomy 8:14). But God knows what He wants—our hearts. The goodies He gives us can get in the way of that. The more we have of status and stuff, the greater our tendency for self-reliance and pride. This calls for some discipline of our hearts and habits.

**On the verge of giving them the Land, making them “haves,” God made provision for the care of the “have-nots.”**

The direction is clear. Just in case the generations to come forgot the way it was or having never known what it felt like to be a have-not, this first generation in the Land was to build a model for caring for have-nots into their way of life, for the rest to follow.

The needy come in three categories: the alien, the widow, and the fatherless. God said to care for them passively and actively—passively, in their being

guaranteed the same justice as those who have more power to get it for themselves (Deuteronomy 24:17; 27:19); in the landowners’ generous awareness that others might have a greater need to glean their fields (Deuteronomy 24:19–21). Then actively, in the great annual celebrations—the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) and the Feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 16:11,14).

Besides this hospitality spaced throughout the year, an even larger involvement was required (Deuteronomy 26:12,13). A significant part of the 10th of their annual gross national product was to be made available to the powerless, as well as the priests.

God takes people’s needs seriously with this built-in, ongoing provision. Even with the national forgiveness of debts every 7 years, and the return of mortgaged land to original households in the jubilee years, God made some allowance for the poor, knowing that bad things will happen. People will need help, even in God’s ideal economy. How does this speak to us?

In these days of New Testament and grace-instead-of-law, might we, when our needs are met, forget the needy and hurting? To the extent that God allows us to become haves, we need to build in a pattern of care for the have-nots.

How are we doing in our care for the have-nots? We are not very far along. We have grown more in becoming haves than we have in structuring care for the have-nots. We do much better at “tell” ministries (evangelism) than “touch” ones (feeding, clothing, and visiting). Our evangelical and holiness forefathers led the way in these categories in the 1800s; but in our century, after the liberal vs. evangelical wars in the first half, the “touch” ministries were so preempted by the modernists that we are scared of them. We so equate social concern with theological liberalism that we cannot organize to help people without deep uneasiness that we are headed down some primrose path to perdition.

We might assess our Movement as finally countenance situational touching, glimpse at the possibility of

systematic touching, and mostly not yet even dream of systemic touching.

For instance, Assemblies of God churches would probably offer a graceful welcome to one of its sons who comes home to die with AIDS (situational). But I do not know a single Assemblies of God church that has begun an intentional ministry to AIDS victims and their families (systematic).

We show similar tendencies in the other needs. In feeding the hungry, we have gotten into Convoys of Hope (situational), and some avant-garde churches have food pantries. But far rarer is the Assemblies of God church that asks why so many families in their community are hungry, and helps people organize their city for changes that promote jobs and address the system.

Even with a clear case of human need and a strong biblical imperative in this area of feeding the hungry, we feel a need to reassure ourselves that it's OK to risk this. We hasten to remind one another that the food is just "the hook, to bring them to the Book." We are uneasy with "touch" unless there is a direct connection to immediate "tell" with a call to decision. It is not enough for us to simply do these things because Jesus said to.

Will we change? We are shaped by our past, but not trapped by it. I see these forces encouraging change.

## **FORCES THAT ENCOURAGE CHANGE**

### **Successful models overseas.**

Our missionaries planted national churches that now minister in all kinds of practical "touch" ways. They not only retain their spiritual fervor, they outstrip us in it.

Latin America ChildCare teaches us we can provide education. The Buntain hospital in Calcutta, and countless HealthCare outreaches, demonstrate the power of providing medical care. Our national sister churches see a need and organize politically and economically to meet it. We are told that in Latin America to be Pentecostal is to be socially active.

It is time to go to them, not as teachers, but as learners: to learn from LACC how to educate, yet help dump-dwellers keep dignity; from African leaders, how to help economically and still hold people accountable; from Caribbean pastors, how to turn a handout into a lift up.

### **Welfare reform is changing the playing field.**

Welfare reform—to get people from

welfare to work—is due to kick in. When it does, needs will increase. Some, for various reasons, won't get jobs; and some won't get jobs that will adequately support them.

On the other end, provision for meeting the needs of welfare recipients is being passed down from national to state to local agencies. But local churches are still the most effective and responsible distributors of assistance. Let a local assembly show initiative, integrity, and interest in helping, and it will discover a new willingness from the government at all levels to work with and through it to alleviate human need. Bethel Assembly, in Fontana, California, headed a coalition of churches, police, and social agencies to deal with the homeless, and became so effective that the state of California granted them \$185,000 to operate for 2 years. May this be the harbinger of good things to come.

### **The failure of liberal churches is leaving a vacuum.**

Mainline is now old-line. Made-in-Europe denominations are in serious decline. In the last 30 years, the Presbyterian church has lost a thousand churches and a million members.

Theological liberalism lacks energy and has failed on every front. Thousands of local churches totter, attended only by the elderly. It will get worse. They are less prepared than we to step up to the challenge of the postmodern world.

### **Touching churches grow.**

Above all else, we are pragmatic. Show our Assemblies of God pastors a way to grow a church, and we become interested. The new way of growing churches will demand a new kind of hearing for "touch" to be combined with "tell" in church life.

In the late 80s, the churches in my city, Fresno, California, collaborated on a citywide evangelistic endeavor. We spent hundreds of thousands of dollars, involved hundreds of people over weeks

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**"Since today's lesson is about confession,  
I'll be the first to confess that I need a new alarm clock."**

of time, and imported a world-renowned speaker for the week-long crusade. I have yet to hear of a single pastor reporting the addition of a single new Christian to his or her church as a result of that crusade.

In contrast, one of our Southern California churches led a 19-church Convoy of Hope 1-day food give-out. It cost less than \$10,000 and featured only local pastors and people. Of the 6,000 people fed, over 1,000 signed decision cards, and over 95 percent of them gave genuine addresses. All the sponsoring churches reported growth, some significant.


The Los Angeles International Church's Adopt-a-Block outreach puts Christians on the street each week, cleaning, painting, visiting, feeding, clothing, and befriending. As a result, a steady stream of the church's new friends come to worship with the people who helped them, meet the God who sent these workers, and become part of the church.

For months I have been asking: Is there a church among us that is experiencing significant growth, that is not heavily involved in touching ministry? None are reported yet. Growing churches tell and touch. Touch has quietly become an essential part of church growth. The significance of touch is underreported and underanalyzed, since other factors preach better in our tradition. And we have too many old fears concerning touch to let ourselves properly weigh it.

Why has touch grown in importance as an essential to church growth? In the postmodern world in which we live, it is not so important to win witnessing arguments concerning what is true, as it is to first demonstrate to our neighbors what is real by visible acts of love. You don't need to know much about postmodernism just as you don't have to have a degree in electrical engineering to flip a light switch. You don't have to be able to explain postmodernism to show you love people by helping them. Combine touch

with tell and see what happens in your church.

#### **Ongoing revelation of the Word.**

I don't remember ever hearing an entire sermon preached on Matthew 25:31–40. We often preach from its two preceding stories—the Parable of the Ten Virgins and the Parable of the Talents. But Christ's teaching in verses 31–40 hits us in an uncomfortable spot. Putting all else aside: our organizational development, changed circumstances, and new relevance to postmoderns, this Word stands, and obedience is imperative. May that day find us among the righteous at His right hand. 

*C. David Gable,  
assistant superintendent of the  
Southern California  
District of the  
Assemblies of God,  
lives in Irvine,  
California.*











# Pentecostal Mus

*As we prepare to reap the last-day harvest, it would serve us well to gain greater insights into the dynamics and role of music in the Pentecostal church.*

B Y C H A R L E S T . C R A B T R E E

**I**t would be difficult to overstate the importance of music in the life of the church. By its nature, music impacts the soul. It carries an inherent, powerful influence for good or evil. The Scriptures reveal music as an instrument of worship and praise to God; however, this wonderful gift can be misused and perverted as one of Satan's devices. In other words, it is a spiritual force that must be spiritually discerned and spiritually led.

At this moment in time the Church is beginning to experience the greatest spiritual awakening in history. As we prepare to reap the last-day harvest, it would serve us well to gain greater insights into the dynamics and role of music in the Pentecostal church.

### **MUSIC CONVEYS BOTH VERBAL AND NONVERBAL MESSAGES**

The words of a song are vital because people memorize them over a period of time.

rather than a means to glorify God; they have no anointing of the Spirit and have failed to prepare their hearts for ministry; and those who are leading the congregation are apathetic and ill prepared.

As the senior pastor, you are the executive worship leader and minister of music. You must take your responsibility in music seriously. Above all, you need to know what is right for your people and the spiritual direction music needs to take in the timing of God.

How are you supposed to take the leadership role in music; what guidelines should you follow to protect the church, while still allowing musicians to express themselves with joy and freedom?

### **FOUR KEYS IN MAINTAINING AN EFFECTIVE MUSIC MINISTRY Culture**

Sometimes successful pastors move to a new congregation and experience trouble almost from the first day. They do not fit. In the same way, others accept a new pastorate and begin to make wholesale

with the Word of God, they showed amazing latitude and flexibility.

When circumcision became a matter affecting salvation (Acts 15), Paul was adamant. He refused to bow to the pressure of Jewish leaders. He would not allow a tradition to change the message of grace.

When circumcision was not a matter touching salvation but was only cultural (Acts 16), Paul asked Timothy to be circumcised so the preaching of the gospel would not be hindered. Within that context, Paul did not compromise the gospel but did accommodate the culture to remove a barrier to the gospel.

Every church has its own unique culture. Those who fail to be sensitive to this are often the catalysts for disunity. Most of the time when music offends, it is not a matter of right or wrong, spiritual or unspiritual; it is a matter of being insensitive to the congregation.

### **Balance**

It is acceptable to introduce new music or new presentations of old music into the

# ic and the Pastor

They will not only continue to be repeated, but will continue to influence spiritual life as long as the song is sung. Great theology and marvelous truth can be taught through inspired hymns and choruses. But false doctrine and compromise can also be communicated through bad religious music.

The pastor constantly needs to ask, "Beyond the words, what are the musicians communicating to my people?" The words might be true, but the body language or the spirit might be misleading. Musicians send the wrong message when: The performance becomes a thing in itself

changes that result in chaos and division. Most of the people involved are sincere and capable, but they fail to understand the soul or the culture of the church.

The word "culture" means the total pattern of human behavior embodied in thought, speech, and music. It is the distinct tradition and customary beliefs and traits peculiar to a specific group.

The New Testament church was sensitive to the diverse cultures within the church. In matters of salvation, the apostles were unbending. But when it came to standardized characteristics that were not in conflict

spiritual life of the church. After all, the Scripture encourages us to "sing unto the Lord a new song" (Psalm 96:1). However, it does not say, "Sing no old songs unto the Lord." The Book of Psalms is a type of hymnal to be used over and over. The key is balance.

The Bible says a wise person who is well instructed in the kingdom of heaven "is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old" (Matthew 13:52). The application of this Bible truth is rather obvious. A wise musician in charge of

music in the church will see both old and new music as a treasure to be brought forth with just the right blend.

Music should not appeal to only a certain segment or group in the church. Spiritual music has many expressions. The wise pastor will make certain there is a balance of anointed music—some fast, slow, traditional, contemporary, majestic, and some informal. God is a God of variety, and He receives praise through a variety of expressions.

### Anointing

Music plays a vital role in revival. This last-day revival is no exception. Because God is pouring out His Spirit, the only music that will be effective will have the anointing of God on it.

Many choirs and individual musicians who do not have the Holy Spirit's anointing would do well to cancel rehearsals for a month and gather for fasting and prayer. A choir singing "Blessed Assurance" in unison under the anointing of the Spirit will be much more effective than a dazzling, complex arrangement sung in human ability of the flesh with a spirit of pride.

The pastor has the responsibility to model a Pentecostal ministry. He or she must flow with sensitivity and obedience to the move of the Spirit and focus on building spiritual people through music. The goal is not entertainment or the

opportunity to display musical ability. The goal is to worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth.

We can have both the anointing and excellence, but the priority must be the anointing of God. There is a tendency among talented people to depend on their ability to do what only God can do. Preachers, teachers, administrators, and communicators are easily caught in the same snare, but the proof is unassailable—without the Lord's power, we can do nothing that will last or be of any spiritual value.

### Excellence


Excellence does not conflict with the anointing. The Spirit of God demands excellence. We are to study diligently and strive for mastery. We are commanded to play skillfully before the Lord. God seeks disciplined tools to use. Beyond technical ability and musical talent, those who lead in Pentecostal music must be excellent in spirit and become excellent in learning to flow in the Spirit.

The need for excellence cannot be overemphasized. Music is a medium that reveals attitude and spirit almost immediately. The pastor and musicians must be in harmony spiritually, or no amount of skill and practice will be able to keep discord from surfacing. There is great joy and freedom when everyone in leadership is of one spirit.

In Pentecostal worship, when the Spirit of God begins to minister through a hymn or a chorus, the wise leader will realize the touch of God and continue to use that song to edify the Body and exalt the Lord. At those moments, the leader needs to set aside the planned music and allow God's Spirit to use a particular song or songs with the same theme or key. Unless a person is working with the finest musicians, it is very difficult to make key changes and maintain the flow of the Spirit. Both the pastor and song leader should be comfortable in responding to the moving of the Spirit outside the planned program. A Spirit-filled music director will sense faith for salvation or healing and call for a response.

Excellence in preparation and practice is an absolute necessity for music to be a consistent source of edification and blessing. Musicians need to know the music well so they can lead with authority. Nothing quenches the Spirit like an unprepared song leader who does not know the song, or an unrehearsed choir that does not know the arrangement, or a soloist who is floundering. The Holy Spirit does not choose to anoint laziness or lack of preparation.

When teaching a new song or chorus, the leader should not only know the music well, but also make sure the accompanists and all the musicians are familiar with it. A new song should be rehearsed so the congregation can enter into the spirit of the song more readily. Care should be taken to choose new songs which are not only excellent lyrically, but excellent musically. Some songs carry a great message but do not fit a melody. They should not be sung but spoken.

All music presented to God should be prepared and presented as skillfully as possible. The purpose of music is to minister to the Lord, the church, and the world in the power of the Spirit. 

*Charles T. Crabtree is assistant general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.*



**PASTOR PERCY KNEW  
HOW TO END A SERMON  
WITH A BANG**



**"And in conclusion."**

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PENTECOST-A NEW

FOR WITNESS

*This article was previously printed in the Spring 1999 Enrichment.  
Unfortunately, some copy was missing and other copy was duplicated. We are reprinting the article in its entirety.*

# EMPOWERMENT

B Y J A M E S K. B R I D G E S

**T**he Book of Acts records the first Pentecostal sermon preached by Peter.

He preached to a multitude of Jews from all over the world who had

gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. Those gathered

observed 120 Galilean Jews speaking clearly in the languages of their fellow

Jews who had come to Jerusalem from more than 15 countries to attend this feast.

# AND MINISTRY



This crowd wanted to know: “What does this mean?” (Acts 2:12, NIV). Some claimed these 120 were drunk. But Peter reminded them of the time of day. Besides, have you ever seen a drunken person who could speak his own language fluently, much less speak a language he did not know?

Peter then began to speak under the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:14). Beginning with Joel 2:28–32, Peter proclaimed the meaning of Pentecost. His message elicited another question from the audience: “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37).

the shadows, but in the substance.

Our Passover is no longer a feast, but a Person—Christ is our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7). Our Pentecost is no longer a festival; the Holy Spirit is our Pentecost. Acts 6:7 states, “A great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.” Can you imagine the joy those whose previous ministry had been to sacrifice animals experienced when they entered into the reality of ministry in Christ who “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Hebrews 9:26)?

The Day of Pentecost had fully come. The One whom the Feast of Pentecost

Him since He had ascended into heaven some 10 days earlier (Acts 1:9). This marvelous outpouring of the Holy Spirit was an assurance that Jesus had arrived in heaven and had kept His promise to send His church another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth (John 14:16; 15:26). Jesus is alive and He is the Head of the Church. He guides, protects, edifies, and empowers His body through the Holy Spirit. Everytime a believer receives the baptism in the Holy Spirit, it is a sign that our resurrected Lord has fulfilled His ministry to His church from His heavenly throne.

*Can you imagine the joy those whose previous ministry had been to sacrifice animals experienced when they entered into the reality of ministry in Christ who “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Hebrews 9:26)?*

Because of the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit in these last days, these two questions are still being asked. It is important for everyone to know what the coming of the Holy Spirit means to the Church and what each believer must do to receive the precious gift of the Spirit.

#### **PENTECOST MEANS A NEW ERA OF REALITY FOR THE CHURCH**

Peter began his explanation by pointing to the fulfillment of prophecy (Acts 2:16,17). After Pentecost, we no longer live in the typology of the Old Testament; we live in the reality and fulfillment of the New Testament. We no longer live in

prefigured had come. This Feast was different from all those before, for on this day the promised Spirit was given, the promised Comforter had come. The reality is here. We no longer serve God in ritual and ceremony, but in Spirit and in truth.

#### **PENTECOST MEANS A NEW EVIDENCE OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**

Peter explained that what was happening was evidence that something had happened in heaven (Acts 2:33). Jesus' followers had not seen or heard from

#### **PENTECOST MEANS A NEW EXPERIENCE OF FULLNESS**

It is obvious from Joel's prophecy that this outpouring of the Spirit of God was to be generous and abundant. Also, it was to be shared with young and old, with men and women, with bond and free. And this outpouring would create an overflow from which all believers were to live and minister (Acts 2:17,18).

The Book of Acts is a book of fullness (Acts 2:4). Luke characterized the individuals in his history of the Early Church as people who were either full of indignation, envy, fear, amazement, anger, and Satan, or full of faith, love,

## ***Ministering the Baptism in the Holy Spirit***

In leading to a response for the altar call, I anticipate a desire that is created by the Holy Spirit. I speak faith and hope to those who respond and try to get them to relax and overcome any obstacles or nervousness they may have. Here are some ideas I present that can achieve results:

### **Creating Desire and Building Faith**

Paul wrote “desire spiritual gifts” (1 Corinthians 14:1). Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst...they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6, NIV). I tell people, “You are going to ask to be filled, and you are going to receive the real thing.” This is crucial for the skeptic and long-time seeker. The devil deals in doubt. He did it in the Garden and with Jesus in the desert, and he will do it to believers. Satan will do anything to keep believers from seeking this gift from God.

In Luke 11:13 Jesus said, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a good gift. Here is a wonderful truth: When you ask for the real thing, that is exactly what you get—the real thing.

How do you receive? By asking by faith. Some ask, “How can I speak in a new language when I don’t know what to say?” If they knew what to say, it wouldn’t take any faith. Emphasize that those who are seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit are participants, not spectators. “And they...began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4).

### **Overcoming Obstacles**

Some people say, “I am not good enough; I am not worthy.” People will never be worthy. But Jesus is worthy. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a gift (Acts 2:38,39; 10:45). Like salvation, we can accept or reject it, but we certainly cannot earn it. Believers need to receive this gift with childlike faith.

Others say, “Today is not the day. Some other time.” “It is not real.” “It may be for some, but not for me.” “What will people think?” But today is the day; now is the time. *Tomorrow* is the devil’s favorite word. And it doesn’t matter what people think. If they think anything, they will think you are hungry and thirsty for more of Jesus.

Speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the real thing; it is not gibberish. Also, never judge a language by its sound. Those who have traveled overseas or lived in an international area have heard languages that didn’t sound like languages.

Some are afraid they are making up a language or have been accused of copying someone. But people cannot make up a language. But even if you could, Jesus wouldn’t let you. If you ask for bread from Jesus, you get bread. And that is what people are going to receive because Jesus is waiting, willing, and able to baptize them in the Holy Spirit. Besides, when we are baptized in the Holy Spirit, we are not copying anyone—we are speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives us utterance.

—Jim Ripley, Olympia, Washington

wisdom, power, joy, good works, the Word, and the Holy Spirit.

Everybody is full of something, and we determine what we will be filled with—either the good or the bad. But the Lord's purpose for us is to be filled with the Holy Spirit and all the fruits and gifts God has for us. The meaning of Pentecost is to live out of the overflow of the Spirit-filled life. To live off the dregs of a carnal life is a terrible waste when the Lord has so much more for us. So, "be not drunk with wine...but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

fulfillment on the Day of Pentecost. We no longer celebrate the Day or the Feast; we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues is not a symbol, but the evidence and expression of the Person of the Holy Spirit. We no longer need the symbols, but we will always need the sign of the Spirit—speaking in other tongues—the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

"They were all filled...and they began to speak"—that is the pattern. The compound predicate indicates that, upon the infilling with the Person of the Holy

(Mark 16:17). And of the five signs Jesus mentioned, He chose tongues to be the initial physical sign or evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence in Baptism.

It is most unlikely that the speaking Spirit would infill a believer and choose to be inconsistent in the manner in which He manifests himself. Peter mentioned two characteristics of the Baptism when he stated that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is something for us to "see and hear" (Acts 2:33). In each case of the Spirit's outpouring in Acts where Luke provides a description

***This marvelous outpouring of the Holy Spirit was an assurance that Jesus had arrived in heaven and had kept His promise to send His church another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth.***

#### **PENTECOST MEANS A NEW EXPRESSION OF THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN AND THROUGH THE BELIEVER**

Luke, by inspiration of the Spirit, gave us a valuable model for the baptism in the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:4. This is to be a pattern for the Church because it was the standard by which the Gentile baptism was measured (Acts 11:15).

Some who question Acts 2:4 as a model for the baptism in the Holy Spirit think this verse requires wind and fire to be present each time a believer is baptized. Such thinking fails to take into account that the wind and fire were symbols of the Holy Spirit heralding the

Spirit, the 120 began to speak with other tongues—not by themselves—but as the Spirit enabled them by using their tongues and vocal cords with the language He gave them.

The Holy Spirit is not muted. He is a speaking Spirit because He is a Person. He is not some influence or force; He is the Third Person of the Godhead. It is unthinkable that He would infill (Acts 2:4), baptize (1:5), fall on (8:16), be poured upon (2:33)—and would not express himself in a manner common to His personhood.

Our Lord Jesus promised that one of the signs that would follow believers was: "they shall speak with new tongues"

of what happened, there is something to "see and hear." Since the believer finds edification and many more benefits through speaking in tongues, it is incongruous with the nature of the Holy Spirit to delay expressing himself through the believer who has been baptized. Also, the Holy Spirit is anxious to give each believer a personal Baptism whereby he or she can communicate with God through the Spirit for edification and empowerment on a regular basis.

There should be no question in the believer's mind concerning the immediate expression of tongues when one is baptized in the Holy Spirit according to

the pattern of Acts 2:4. When you are filled (baptized), you will speak.

### **PENTECOST MEANS A NEW EMPOWERMENT FOR WITNESS AND MINISTRY**

Like our Lord, we must exercise our witness and our ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. Luke 3 has taught us that Jesus did not begin His ministry until He had been empowered with the Holy Spirit. Our source of strength is also from the Spirit (Acts 1:8).

Our Lord, who was the bearer of the Holy Spirit during His earthly ministry, has now become the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16). The same Holy Spirit who anointed Jesus, and who infilled the apostles, is still superintending the Word of God in the earth today. This is true apostolic succession—the passing of the mighty anointing of the Holy Spirit to believers in each succeeding generation, empowering them to witness to a lost world and carry out Jesus' ministry in His Spirit.


Those who wish to diminish the importance of speaking in tongues as evidence

of the Spirit's infilling refer to being empowered by the Spirit for missionary service as the major sign of the Spirit's infilling. This puts tongues and empowerment in competition with each other. But the same Person who gives evidence of His presence through speaking in tongues is the same Person who empowers the baptized believer to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). Without the empowerment of the baptism in the Holy Spirit (with the initial physical evidence), the Church is unprepared to demonstrate the sign of evangelism and go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15). Jesus instructed His disciples not to even think of doing His work until they were endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49).

The revival in the earth today is a Pentecostal revival being proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit by those who have allowed the Lord Jesus to "baptize them with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5). This Baptism is the "promise of the Father" (1:4), which is the "same gift" (11:17) He gave to the Jews and the Gentiles as described by Luke in the Book of Acts.

### **PENTECOST MEANS A NEW ENTRUSTMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY ON EACH GENERATION TO PERPETUATE THE PROMISE**

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is not only available to all believers, but it is the responsibility of the Church to see that this vital truth is perpetuated to each generation. In response to the question, "What shall we do?" Peter urged repentance, baptism, and reception of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:39).

It is important that all believers understand the importance of Spirit baptism and seek to lead their children into their Pentecostal heritage. Isaiah 44:3 is a Pentecostal prophecy that is incumbent on all believers to claim for their families. Let's keep the fire burning on the altar and keep Pentecost alive in our hearts and in our churches. 

*James K. Bridges is the Assemblies of God general treasurer, Springfield, Missouri.*



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**"Lets handle this change one step-on-toes at a time."**

# Visions and Dreams

BY STANLEY M.  
HORTON

**The Pentecostal outpouring with the evidence of speaking in other tongues came upon all believers on the Day of Pentecost, continued through the Book of Acts, through the early centuries that followed, and in revivals throughout Church history.**

Does the Holy Spirit still give believers visions and dreams? In Joel 2:28, Joel prophesied that the Holy Spirit would give believers visions and dreams when God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter, exercising the gift of prophecy, confirmed Joel's promise, "Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17).

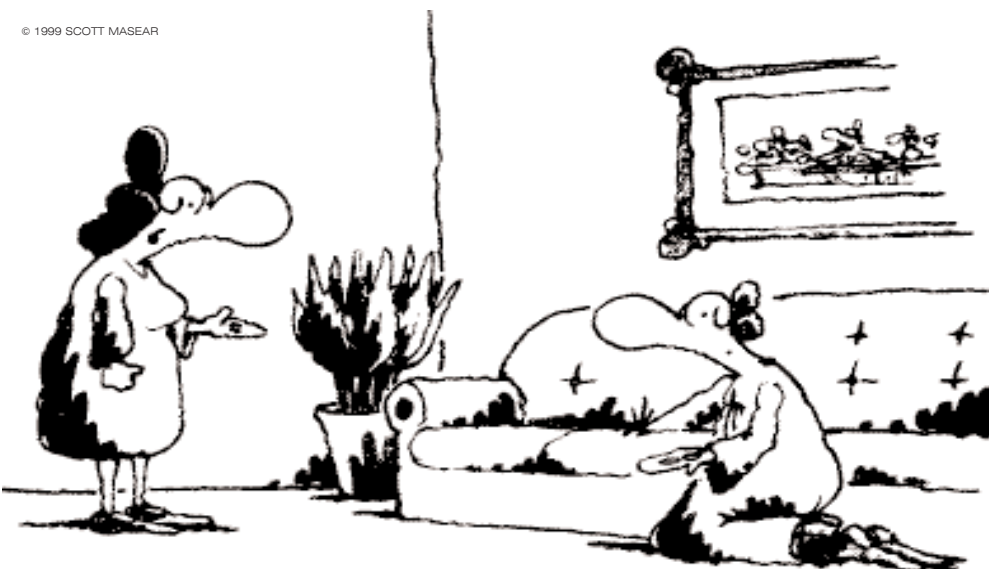
The context in Joel emphasizes the fact the Holy Spirit will be poured out on all flesh. He will minister through sons and daughters, old and young, God's servants both men and women. "All flesh" includes all people of every background, every color, every nationality. Clearly, God wants every believer, from every class of society, to be involved. The Pentecostal outpouring with the evidence of speaking in other tongues came upon all believers on the Day of Pentecost, continued through the Book of Acts, through the early centuries that followed, and in revivals throughout Church history.

In the Hebrew, *zichnekhem*, "your old men," is derived from *zāchān*, "beard," and meant mature men with a full beard. The

emphasis is on maturity and experience rather than on age. These were men who were wise, able to judge what was right and wrong, but they would need to have God's Spirit poured out on them to dream God-sent dreams that would bless His people.

The Hebrew word, *bāchurechem*, "your young men," is derived from *bāchar*, "to choose, to select." These weren't ordinary boys. The Hebrew has another word, *na'ar*, for that. These young men were fully grown, about 20 years old, full of vigor, and unmarried. Proverbs 20:29 refers to their *kôach*, "strength, stamina." But even they can weakly totter and fall in the race of life (Isaiah 40:30). They need the fullness of the Holy Spirit if they are to see God-given visions and be used by the Spirit to carry them out.

Some have supposed that the visions of young men look to the future while dreams of mature men look back to the past. This is not biblical. The whole Bible has a forward look. The word "dream" (Hebrew, *chālôm*) is mentioned over 60 times in the Old Testament. Sometimes it refers to ordinary dreams (Isaiah 29:8; Psalm 73:20), but it often refers to prophetic dreams or dreams that give a revelation



"I take it the collection plate didn't exactly runneth over."



of God and His plan or purpose. Jacob's dream of the great, wide ladder stretching from earth to heaven (Genesis 28:12–15) and Solomon's dream at Gibeon (1 Kings 3:5–15) are examples. God used these and many other dreams as an indirect means of communicating with His people. Moses was the only one in the Old Testament that God communicated with directly (Numbers 12:6–8). The corresponding Greek words in Acts, *enupniois enupniasthēsontai*, “dreams they shall dream,” could also be translated “they shall have visions in dreams.” This again indicates dreams and visions being used somewhat interchangeably in the Bible.

Not all who claim to have God-given dreams can be trusted, however. The Bible warns against those who dream dreams and use them to turn us to other gods or false worship (Deuteronomy 13:1–3). The same passage shows that the dreams the Holy Spirit gives will cause us to love God and follow and obey Him. We can also apply what the Bible says about the congregation judging or weighing carefully manifestations of the gift of prophecy. That means seeing how they line up with Scripture as well as thinking about what God wants us to do about them. If they are truly God-given dreams, we should not treat them as if they are mere entertainment.

Vision (Hebrew, *chāzôn*) is derived from *chāzāh*, “to perceive, to foresee.” It is sometimes a synonym for “dream.” The corresponding Greek word in Acts, *horaseis*, means supernatural visions, usually meant to give a message to the public. Sometimes these bring symbolic pictures of the future, such as in Daniel's dreams and visions in chapters 7–12, and Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones, where the dry bones represented the scattered people of Israel whom God would restore to their land, forgive, and put His Spirit in them (Ezekiel 37:1–14). These visions needed God-given interpretations. Joseph's interpretation of the dreams of the cupbearer, baker, and Pharaoh (Genesis 40:9–41:30) were given him by God


(Genesis 40:8; 41:16), as Joseph said, “Do not interpretations belong to God?” (Genesis 40:8). Daniel's interpretations also came from God (Daniel 2:20–23), though sometimes God used the angel Gabriel to give him the meaning (Daniel 8:15–17; 9:21–23).

The same word for vision, *chāzôn*, is also used of God's revelation in a whole book of the Bible, as in Isaiah 1:1; Obadiah 1; and Nahum 1. The word emphasizes that the entirety of the prophecy was a God-given, Spirit-inspired revelation. This is another indication that dreams and visions from God will always be in line with His Holy Word.

Proverbs 29:18 tells us that when there is no vision the people perish (or it can mean they throw off all restraint, as we see in so much of today's society—and therefore perish). The rest of the verse lets us know that the vision has to do with God's Law (Hebrew, *torah*, “instruction,” a term that includes the whole of God's Holy Word).

In the 1906, Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, California, a number of dreams and visions were recorded. My mother was 11 years old at the time. One day she was quite sick, but her father and mother did not want to miss the meeting. Wonderful things were happening in every service. So they prayed for her,

tucked her in bed, and left her. Then she had a vision where she saw two trains on parallel tracks. At each station the young people on her train would go across to the other train and persuade people to come and join them on theirs. After a time, the other train veered away and she heard a terrible crash in the distance. Her train came into a beautiful station and she was ushered into a magnificent palace. She saw Jesus talking to a man. Their clothes were sparkling. She looked down and her dress was sparkling. Then Jesus pointed to her and said to the man, “See that little girl. I healed her.” Then the vision ended and she got up from her bed totally healed. The next night she gave her testimony in the Azusa Street mission and this encouraged others to believe for healing.

Today, with the pressures of the world against Christians and the Bible, believers, young and old, need to be encouraged to be open to God-given dreams and visions. The Holy Spirit wants to use them to encourage us to trust God, believe His Word, and rejoice in the hope of the future that His Word promises. 

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# Vision Casting and Theological Perspectives

BY RICHARD L.  
DRESSELHAUS

***Lifestyle, ethics, and miracles have only the power to reform. Only the Cross has the power to transform.***

Any pastor worth his or her salt will not head into the new millennium without casting vision that will grip the hearts of the people. It must be a vision that will excite, motivate, focus, and yet be reflective of sound theological principles. That is the intent of this article.

We stand at the edge of a time that has been greeted by only a handful of generations. New millenniums do not come often. In fact, if we use conservative dating, this is only the seventh since creation. In all my years, I have never sensed such openness, expectation, and sense of adventure that is now upon us. What a context in which to cast vision. Appropriately, pastors like myself are now taking a fresh look at contemporary models of ministry, new styles of leadership, and intriguing strategies for communications. We reach for books, enroll in seminars, analyze sociological factors, study psychological techniques, and hope the vision we cast will reflect a comprehensive awareness of the world we will meet in 2000—should Christ delay His coming.

Are these the significant factors that should shape vision? Is this where I ought to concentrate my visionary expectations? It is here I am sobered. In my spirit there is a sense of disquiet, uneasiness, and growing apprehension. Are cultural criteria and influence dominating me? Is there a flaw in my methodology?

I recall an apostolic confession that explodes in my heart: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14). Suddenly a brilliant light of revelation casts its illuminating rays across my visionary aspirations.

To intensify my awareness, a hymn written by Isaac Watts comes to mind:

When I survey the wondrous cross,  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Vision casting demands theological perspective. This is work that cannot be done in a vacuum. Millennial visionaries must take a hard look back before daring to chart the course for the years that lie ahead. A vision cast outside of solid theological context will certainly promote a shallowness and emptiness that will leave the church of tomorrow in a state of sad and tragic despair.

What are these theological perspectives that guide the visionary?

***Vision casting without theological perspective results in a vision cast out of arrogance, self-seeking carnality, and worldly wise creativity. Little wonder that the end is death.***

## THE CENTRALITY OF THE CROSS

The centerpiece of the gospel we preach is focused on the Cross. Vision casters must establish this perspective as the one great essential. "Let me show you its Mount," or "God forbid that I should glory save in the miracles of Jesus." No! Jesus came "to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). That is the core; that is the centerpiece. That is where vision must focus. Any other starting point is a visionary misfire of eternal consequence.

What is meant by such attention to minutia? The treacherous folly before us in this sophisticated, high-tech, data-driven, quick-fix society is that people will miss this essential starting point. If so, they never will really face the horror of their sin, confront their utter loss, or deal with their offensive pride and total depravity of spirit.

There is no substitute for Calvary. His lifestyle doesn't save. His ethics don't save. His miracles don't save. You must stand at the Cross. To miss it here is to plunge even the

most sincere and devout into the vortex of despair. It is a truism. No one can ever really be like Jesus, follow exactly the principles set forth in the Sermon on the Mount, or satisfactorily work past the miraculous to a deeper truth. All of us must begin at the Cross. Every millennial visionary must establish once and for all that the Cross is the only place where the journey can begin.

Again, why is this so essential? The answer is clear; lifestyle, ethics, and miracles have only the power to reform. Only the Cross has the power to transform. And it is transformation, not reformation that opens heaven's gates. "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). Jesus came to die. That is the center. The vision we cast must start with this first principle and never move away from it.

I have heard some have removed the visible cross from the house of worship. I trust such an action only means the loss of a symbol. If it is more, the end is tragic. Vision must embrace evangelistic fervor. The unsaved must be drawn in. We must become all things to achieve that end. But if we don't bring people to the Cross, they will remain hopelessly lost. Observable change is no proof that the saving grace of Jesus has taken root in their hearts. Christ lifted up is the only cure.

How-to sermons do promote reformation. Horizontally focused preaching will help people to a more positive relational life. Health and wealth preaching might help some to live abundantly. Radical faith preaching can stimulate trust. But if you bring people in on the second floor, without a life transforming trip to Calvary, they will be shallow-rooted, guilt-ridden, uncommitted, and ultimately unsaved.

Visionaries for the new millennium must keep the Cross at the core.

### THE PREACHER'S BOAST

I return to the apostle Paul's words, "God forbid that I should glory...." This is strong language. There is resolve and passion here. The apostle considers it unthinkable to allow anything to compete with the Cross. Vision casters for

the new millennium must stand with Paul at just this point. The destiny of the Church is at stake. Anything less will threaten the very life of the Church.

Some years ago my wife Elnora and I set out from Seattle for a visit to Mount Rainier. We circled around this great mountain on our ascent to its peak. Interestingly, at some points it seemed as if what was before us was the whole mountain, only to learn later that it was but one of the many foothills. Obviously, no matter what might have been in view

at any moment, the scene before us was still a part of Mount Rainier. So it is with the story of Scripture. It is all a part of Mount Calvary.

***Every millennial visionary must establish once and for all that the Cross is the only place where the journey can begin.***

Consider the garments God provided for our first parents, the curses

pronounced by God following the Fall, the elaborate system of sacrifices that stood at the heart of tabernacle and temple worship, and even the giving of the Law. It is all a part of Mount Calvary.

Then move to the New Testament. The life and witness of Jesus, the preaching of the apostles, the *kerygma* by the Early Church, and the apocalyptic disclosure are all part of Mount Calvary.

Rising from within our preaching, vision, motivation, passion, direction, style, and methodology must be the Cross. There is nothing else. It is the only event that matters. It is all, absolutely all, that is worthy of boast.

The millennial vision must lift up the dying Christ, define mission in terms of the Cross, and promote motivation and methodology that finds its life in the Crucified One.

I sometimes feel the emotions of discouragement, fear, uncertainty, offense, and disappointment. However, because I am positioned solidly at the Cross—and that is the one and only subject of my boast—I find an emotional anchor at Calvary.

The vision we cast grows out of our continual and persistent survey of the Cross.

***Any pastor worth his or her  
salt will not head into the new  
millennium without casting vision  
that will grip the  
hearts of the people.***

### **THE EXHIBIT BEFORE THE WORLD**

We come back for a final time: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” But we go on, “by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Galatians 6:14).

Pity the poor church whose pastor has courageously and confidently cast a vision for the new millennium but has not yet died to the world—its values, imaginations, preoccupations, devotions, and desires. We have seen it far too often. Vision casting without theological perspective results in a vision cast out of

arrogance, self-seeking carnality, and worldly wise creativity. Little wonder that the end is death.

The call of the Savior to every millennial visionary is that the starting point must always be the Cross. Strategies, programs, mission formulation, and every appeal for motivation dare not flow except out of that life-giving source.


Vision casting demands theological perspective—that begins, continues, and consummates at the Cross.

A great Puritan prayer of the 17th century gathers all the strands together:

Make my every sermon a means of grace to myself,

And help me to experience the power of Thy dying love,

For Thy blood is balm, Thy presence bliss, Thy smile heaven,

Thy cross the place where truth and mercy meet. 

*Richard L. Dresselhaus is an executive presbyter and pastor of First Assembly of God in San Diego, California.*

## *The Church's Vision for Building People—Who Makes It Happen?*

Vision is marvelous and mysterious; it is also powerful. George Barna provides an excellent Christian perspective on vision. He states, "Vision is a clear and precise mental portrait of a preferable future, imparted by God to His chosen servants, based on an accurate understanding of God, self, and circumstances."<sup>1</sup>

It's one thing to dream a dream and see a vision, but who makes it happen? Who develops the strategy to see it achieved? The composer's idea must become a musical score before it is ever a moving symphonic performance. The builder's dream becomes an architect's drawing, followed by a construction crew's dirty, noisy work before it is ever a beautiful edifice. In the church, someone has to take the pastor's vision and translate it into a congregational strategy before it can become part of the church's ministry, or all is lost.

***The person who is leading the visioning process must be careful to ensure that everything is bathed in prayer and guided by God's Word.***

Although a church's vision to reach the lost and build people must, in large part, be owned and cast by the senior pastor, the question is: Who develops the strategy and works the plan so a local church truly accomplishes this vision? In a larger church this may be the pastor's senior associate or a Christian education director. In a smaller church it may be the pastor himself, or the task may be assigned to a deacon, Sunday school superintendent, or other lay leader.

### **BUILDING THE VISION**

Regardless of who leads the process, the senior pastor must be deeply involved in the process from beginning to end. Other key leaders and influencers within the church should

be included in the process as well. Without their involvement and ownership, there is little chance of success.

A vision statement is built on a church's mission statement and expresses the mission in terms of a future goal. It answers the questions: Where is God leading us in the immediate future? and What does God want us to accomplish? The process takes into account an analysis of the demographics and needs of a community, as well as the dynamics and character of the church.

The person who is leading the visioning process must be careful to ensure that everything is bathed in prayer and guided by God's Word. Building a vision is a spiritual task, not simply a corporate necessity. No vision casting for a church is worth the paper it is printed on, unless it is generated and characterized by faith.

### **COMMUNICATING THE VISION**

One of the key tasks is communicating the vision in appealing ways. After the vision statement has been written, it should be reduced to a memorable slogan that can be easily remembered. A commercial designer or artist can be used to develop an attractive visual representation of the vision slogan.

The vision must be promoted continually in formal and informal ways. It must make its way into all of the church publications, correspondence, and advertisements. Products like mugs, pens, key chains, mouse pads, and apparel items can also be developed and effectively used to promote the church's vision.

If the person responsible for coordinating and overseeing the church's Christian education/discipleship ministries is given the task of communicating the church's vision, that person must realize the importance of personally modeling that vision. It does no good to live in contradiction to the vision. He or she must help the leaders of the various ministries of the church see the importance of living the

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BY LEROY R.  
BARTEL

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***Vision is a clear and precise mental portrait of a preferable future, imparted by God to His chosen servants, based on an accurate understanding of God, self, and circumstances.***

vision as well. The church can use various ways to reward and acknowledge those who make significant contributions to achieving the vision. The vision should be shared at every available opportunity. Also, opportunities need to be provided for people to make commitments to do their part in achieving the vision.

***In the church, someone has to take the pastor's vision and translate it into a congregational strategy before it can become part of the church's ministry, or all is lost.***

#### **DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY FOR THE VISION**

Developing a strategy for implementing the church's vision involves more than the Christian education/discipleship leader and the pastor; all key leaders in the church—children's pastor, youth pastor, Sunday school superintendent, Sunday school department leaders, and music director—need to be involved in this process. The Christian education/discipleship leader and the pastor need to help these ministry leaders think

through the implications of the vision for their respective ministries. They must answer the questions, What will this mean for us? What will have to change? What will it cost in terms of time, personnel, facilities, and money?

The Christian education/discipleship pastor must involve other ministry leaders of the church in the process of developing strategy. This includes helping the leader of each department develop a vision for his or her own department in conjunction with the pastor's vision. If these leaders are not involved in the vision process, they will not take ownership of the vision or goals. Attempts to achieve vision without the support and involvement of others can be a lonely and frustrating endeavor.

The Christian education pastor will need to keep the process focused and on track. Sometimes there seems to be a thousand distracting and divergent trails to follow. Strategic planning is critical. Vision goals need to be broken down into achievable units. The rule of thumb is: plan backward from the goal to where you are.

Prayer is indispensable. If the church's vision can be achieved without faith, it is not a spiritual vision. A godly vision can only be achieved with

risk-taking faith. A godly leader will persuade others to pray until the vision becomes a faith reality. Prayer makes the vision become a passion in the hearts of leaders. Prayer opens eyes of faith to grasp innovative ways to achieve a challenging vision. Prayer helps leaders find solutions to problems and see them in proper perspective. Prayer provides a leader with the wisdom, faith, and strength to achieve a godly vision. The Christian education/discipleship pastor will provide plenty of opportunities for prayer.

***Prayer opens eyes of faith to grasp innovative ways to achieve a challenging vision.***

***Prayer helps leaders find solutions to problems and see them in proper perspective.***

***Prayer provides a leader with the wisdom, faith, and strength to achieve a godly vision.***

#### **IMPLEMENTING THE VISION**

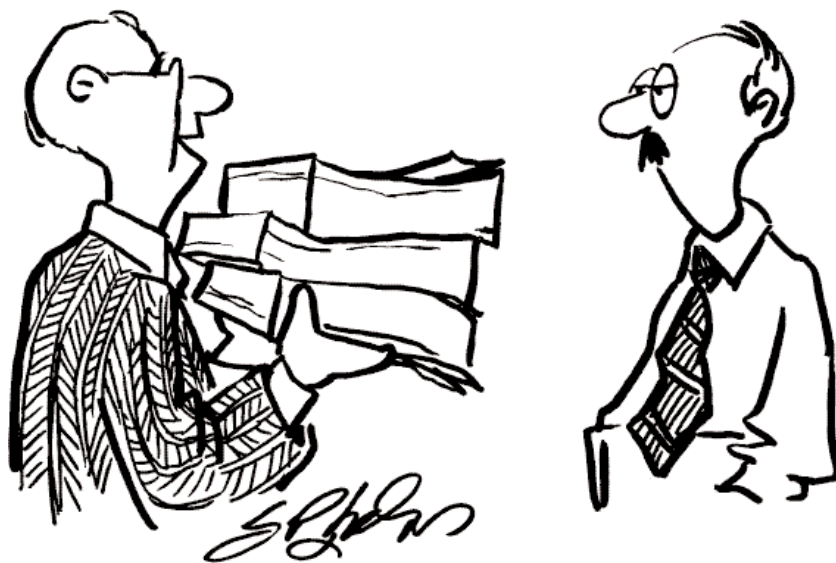
The responsibility for implementing the vision strategy of the church demands several things:

**It demands patience and persistence.** Things that are worthwhile usually never come quickly. A leader must be able to encourage people to stay on course when things are discouraging and help them ignore temporary frustration in order to achieve the hope of a better future.

Closely related to patience is persistence. Persistence is that quality that never gives up and keeps on trying. It is a determination animated by confident belief in a God-given vision.

**It demands perspiration.** There is no substitute for hard work. A vision will never be achieved without diligent, untiring effort. The Christian education pastor must encourage others to selfless effort for a preferable future. They lead by setting the benchmark in effort.

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**"The church got together and came up with a job description for you."**



**It demands participation.** Wise leaders understand that a significant goal is rarely achieved alone. Realized vision is

***The leader must involve those heading the various discipleship ministries of the church in the process of developing strategy.***

the result of unified hearts, common goals, and cooperative effort. Every person involved in Christian education in the church must participate if the church expects to achieve its vision. Without this participation, there is no ownership of the vision. Consequently, those charged with the task of implementing vision are careful to involve people in both the responsibilities and rewards of realized vision.

**It demands publication.** Communication is a critical element in effective implementation of a vision. Those who lead others to achieve visionary goals understand the value of communication, both up and down the chain of command. Without communication misunderstandings proliferate, people lose sight of the goal, and before long no one knows where we are or what we are trying to do.

**It demands power.** No godly vision can be achieved by human strength alone. Divine challenges undertaken in human strength are an invitation to futility and frustration. The impossible task undertaken by Zerubbabel and the vision to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple for Jehovah could only be achieved through divine power. The secret to success in leading people to the realization of godly visions remains the same today: “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the Lord Almighty (Zechariah 4:6, NIV).

Nothing is as satisfying as cooperating with God to achieve what would be otherwise impossible goals. The Christian education and disciple-making ministries of the local church are in a

unique position to work with people helping them realize a God-given vision through the power of the Holy Spirit. What a thrill this brings.

I was raised on a farm and remember my father’s demeanor at harvest time. Months before, he had envisioned the harvest, planned for it, prepared for it, and worked hard to see the crop grow and mature—now the harvest was here. His eyes twinkled, his face shone, laughter came easy, and

thanksgiving overflowed. The vision had been realized. It’s no different in the divine harvest. 

*LeRoy R. Bartel is the leader of the Commission on Discipleship for the Assemblies of God in Springfield, Missouri.*

#### ENDNOTES

1. George Barna, *Turning Vision Into Action*. (Ventura, Calif: Regal Books, 1996), 35,36.





# My Father's Eyes—Vision for the Harvest

BY LILLIAN E.  
SPARKS

*Jesus responded to people with compassion because he understood their pain.*

As a child, the compliment I relished the most was, “Oh, you have your daddy’s eyes.” I was delighted to resemble my daddy, but do I have eyes like my Heavenly Father? Do I have eyes that see a face, not a crowd; a name, not a list; a possible harvest, with only a few laborers?

Matthew gives us a glimpse of what melted Christ’s heart, “But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36).

Do we see people the way Jesus sees them—eternally lost without any hope? Unless we catch a fresh glimpse of hurting humanity, God will not use us in this great end-time harvest.

We do not have to look very far to see people who desperately need help. They may be the single mother who lives next door, the middle-aged widow at the checkout counter, or the grumpy old man at the post office. Without God they are lost.

I will never forget the face of the homeless man who stood on the median strip in the middle of a congested intersection. He trembled uncontrollably in the February cold. With every change of the traffic light our car inched closer, and I saw him better. He was holding a sign that read, “Will work for food. I have four kids. God bless you.”

*I rolled down my window and said, “Sir, we want to help you and your family. Please use this money for food.”*

I kept hoping that my daughters would not notice the freezing stranger. They continued with their silly chatter until we were directly beside him. I glanced at his cracked fingers poking through holes in his tattered

gloves. Icicles clung to his rugged beard. Just as the traffic signal flashed green, the girls saw him. At first they stared, then began to cry. “Mom, we have to help this man. We can’t just drive by!”

*Unless we catch a fresh glimpse of hurting humanity, God will not use us in this great end-time harvest.*

I protested by telling them we had only enough money to buy supper and complete our journey. This brought a chorus of wails and urgent demands, “Do something now.”

I rolled down my window and said, “Sir, we want to help you and your family. Please use this money for food.” I pressed the \$20 bill into his palm and in an instant he grabbed my hand. I looked into his eyes; they were pools of despair. Then I saw a flicker of hope, the realization that someone cared.

Jesus saw the crowds, and He was “moved with compassion” because their needs were so great and they didn’t know what to do. Jesus responded to people with compassion because He understood their pain.

A boy who came to the pet store looking for a puppy knew exactly what he wanted. The storeowner showed him some puppies in a box and told him not to delay in choosing one; they wouldn’t be there long. The young lad smiled. “I’m not worried,” he said, “mine will be still be here.”

The boy went to work—weeding, washing windows, and cleaning yards. When he had enough money to buy the puppy, he returned to the store. He laid the wadded bills on the counter. After the owner counted the money, the boy reached into the back of the box, pulled out a skinny dog with a limp leg, and started to leave.

The owner protested, "Son, don't take that puppy. He has a bad leg."

"Thank you, sir," the boy replied, "but this is just the one I want!"

As the boy turned to leave, the merchant suddenly understood. Extending from the bottom of the boy's trousers was a brace; he had a deformed leg. Why did the boy want the dog? He knew how it felt to be handicapped.

How did Jesus minister to people so effectively? He knew how people felt, and He knew they were special. The Great Physician wasn't afraid to touch the diseased skin of a leper. The Creator made clay out of spit and anointed a blind man's eyes. The Resurrection and the Life broke up a funeral procession when He took a dead boy by the hand. This same Jesus held the children in His arms and blessed them. He loved humanity and felt their pain. Only when we feel the way Jesus feels will we touch people for eternity.

***"Please, don't leave," he begged. "There is something you can do for me. My feet itch. Would you scratch them?"***

Often God gives us opportunities to make a difference in someone's life. Meeting Eric was one of those opportunities. My son Bryon, who suffered his entire life with an incurable skin disease, was invited to the research center at Rockefeller University Hospital in Manhattan for a week's treatment. He would meet the world's best skin specialists and have biopsies, evaluations, and tests.

Even though Bryon was only 15, his maturity was evident when he said, "Well, Mom, I guess Jesus wants us to touch someone with His love."

The day we arrived we knew God had sent us. The cursing and violent screams from the patient's room across the hall sent nurses, and even

his own mother, fleeing in tears. The frustration and anger of living in an institution, wrapped with bandages, and in constant pain for 22 years had taken its toll on Eric. We prayed for the right moment to share God's love.

***I truly understand that the best compliment someone can give me is, "You have your Father's eyes."***

The week was almost over and the time to talk with Eric never seemed right. One night remained. Bravely, I went to Eric's doorway and whispered, "We will be going home tomorrow, and we wanted to get to know you. If there is anything we can do for you, let us know."


I turned to walk away when I heard a groan. Eric's desperate eyes loomed above the soiled bandages and bloodied sheets. "Please, don't leave," he begged. "There is something you can do for me. My feet itch. Would you scratch them?"

*Scratch feet! O, God, anything but this!* I pleaded silently. Then God reminded me that I had promised Eric anything. *OK, God, I'll scratch, but You keep me from getting nauseous.* For the

next 45 minutes I scratched feet, knees, a back, and even his hair. In those few moments God did a miracle. Instead of spewing obscenities, Eric smiled and finally laughed. When his mother came to visit that evening, Eric was playing Monopoly® with Bryon in the game room.

As I talked with this Jewish mother and reassured her that I understood her pain, I felt her heart soften and sensed her cry for help. We stood in the hospital corridor and spoke of our pain and years of struggle to raise sick children. We cried and held each other; strangers, yet friends. Eric's mom turned to leave and said something that pierced my heart: "What Eric really needs is a savior!"

I told her that I knew such a Savior; His name is Jesus.

Many times I have reflected on this experience. As I do this, I truly understand that the best compliment someone can give me is, "You have your Father's eyes." 

*Lillian E. Sparks is the director for the Women's Ministries Department, Springfield, Missouri.*

# People Helping in the Church

## PART 2: A Biblical Model for Counseling in the 21st Century

BY DONALD A.  
LICH

*The successful pastor/counselor will work with the counselee to accurately assess the current scenario, develop a clear picture of a preferred scenario, and then develop strategies for appropriate action.*

The previous article in this series (fall 1999 *Enrichment*) asserted that the 21st-century pastor must stay anchored and grounded in the changeless truths and principles of God's Word to face the increasingly complex counseling problems in the congregation. Evangelism (saving the lost) and pastoral care (healing the saved) constitute the dual responsibilities of the church. Personal qualities of the pastor/counselor were examined along with a simple structure for the counseling relationship.

### JESUS...THE WONDERFUL COUNSELOR

Parishioners seek help from their pastor when they are in crisis or are experiencing predictable life difficulties—the same kinds of concerns that were presented to the Lord Jesus. He was a great listener and responded appropriately to people's concerns. Similarly, the successful pastor/counselor will work with the counselee to accurately assess the current scenario, develop a clear picture of a preferred scenario, and then develop strategies for appropriate action.<sup>1</sup> In short, the pastor as counselor provides a realistic evaluation of what can be done by the counselee, helps identify unrealized potential, and assists the counselee to employ unseen opportunities.

*The quality of the relationship between the pastor and counselee is derived from the pastor's accurate empathy, warmth, genuineness, and authenticity.*

### THE COUNSELING/HELPING RELATIONSHIP

The quality of the relationship between the pastor and counselee is derived from the

pastor's accurate empathy, warmth, genuineness, and authenticity. Furthermore, the counselee must perceive that the pastor has the credibility and experience to grasp the presenting concern. The pastor's "presence" in the counseling relationship is an outgrowth of personal godliness, wisdom, character, integrity, and a reputation as one who keeps confidences.

*The pastor's "presence" in the counseling relationship is an outgrowth of personal godliness, wisdom, character, integrity, and a reputation as one who keeps confidences.*

The counseling relationship has the following phases:

**1. The opening phase.** Rapport is established, acceptance is offered, the counseling relationship responsibilities are defined, and the issues are identified.

**2. The exploration phase.** The problem's nature, history, and complexity are determined. Problem solving, decision making, and goal planning are the major tasks of this phase.

**3. The closing phase.** Includes a plan of application, homework, a summary of major insights, required behavior changes, and prayer.

To enable each phase to be productive, the pastor must learn some basic attending, listening, and responding skills.

### ATTENDING SKILLS

Attending is the use of one's body, time, and space to indicate attention is being given to the counselee. Attending signals our interest in the other person. Egan (1998) describes attending in terms of the acronym SOLER: squared-up, open stance, lean toward the counselee, eye contact, relaxed.

Attending skills help equalize the power in the counseling relationship and allow the pastor to observe the nonverbal body language of the counselee. Attending begins when the counselee first enters your office. To help the counselee feel relaxed, offer a handshake and a drink of water or coffee.

The wise pastor will attend to the counselee's body language. For example, eye contact regulates a relationship. Does the counselee glare, look defiant, or look away when discussing uncomfortable topics? Does the counselee's posture communicate physical alertness, eagerness, or tiredness? Are facial expressions consistent with the topic being discussed?

Attend to the counselee's tone of voice, rate of speech, and breathing patterns. For example, someone highly anxious might take short, quick breaths, while a depressed person might not breathe much at all. An angry person often exhales sharply when speaking.

***Prayer at the end of a session serves as a summary of important issues raised during counseling and helps counsees feel they are not alone in the change process.***

In Western culture, appropriate conversational space, or "life space," in one-to-one relationships is approximately 3 to 5 feet. I have had couples come for counseling and sit at opposite ends of the couch, piling the pillows between them. This told me a great deal even before one word was spoken. In another marriage counseling case, a man directed his wife to sit on the couch while he pulled up a chair and sat next to me. His behavior implied that we, as "co-counselors," were going to "fix" his wife.

## LISTENING SKILLS

James 1:19 urges believers to be "quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (NIV). The pastor/counselor must listen carefully to what and how words are said.

***Attending is the use of one's body, time, and space to indicate attention is being given to the counselee. Attending signals our interest in the other person.***

**1.Listen for relevant content.** What topics are important to the counselee, and does he\* share his inner life, thoughts, feelings, and significant others?

**2.Listen for self-references.** How does he refer to himself? Watch out for key words such as, "but," "can't," "won't," and, "I need." Often the word "can't" really means "won't."

**3.Listen for his concept of God.** Does the counselee see God as harsh, demanding, and difficult to please, or accepting, forgiving, and loving? Helping a counselee know, according to God, he is lovable,

valuable, forgivable, and changeable presents a more accurate view of who God really is.

**4.Listen for significant history.** What were the formative experiences in the counselee's life—the significant people, events, and experiences that helped shape his view of God, himself, and the world?

## RESPONDING SKILLS

How the pastor/counselor responds to information presented by the counselee will either help or hinder the counseling process. Responding and questioning skills that assist the helping relationship include:

***Helping a counselee know, according to God, he is lovable, valuable, forgivable, and changeable presents a more accurate view of who God really is.***

**1.Silence.** Amazingly, when we create a brief vacuum of silence, the counselee often continues to give useful information without the pastor/counselor having to ask "20

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***"It's obvious to me that you two have been jumping to conclusions."***



questions.” How comfortable are you with moments of silence? Do you find yourself trying to fill each silent moment with another question?

**2. Acceptance.** A nod of the head, “OK,” or “I see,” allow the counselee to know he is being heard. Remember, acceptance does not necessarily mean you are agreeing with the counselee or approving of his choices. Jesus often modeled an acceptance of

people even when He disapproved of their behavior.


**3. Reflection/restatement.** Many counselees speak without really hearing what they have actually just said. Reflecting or restating what the counselee said (in feeling and tone) allows him the opportunity to confirm or modify his statements.

**4. Clarification.** Statements or questions such as: “Explain what you

mean by....”; “In what way?”; “You just said you were furious, what does that mean to you?”; “Say the same thing in a different way” are all examples of clarification leads.

**5. Summary.** The summary serves to tie together important thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; and is, perhaps, the most powerful lead. It is used at the beginning of subsequent sessions, during the counseling session, and at the end of a session. The rule is, don’t let more material go by than can be adequately summarized. Prayer at the end of a session serves as a summary of important issues raised during counseling and helps counselees feel they are not alone in the change process.

***Reflecting or restating  
what the counselee said (in  
feeling and tone) allows him  
the opportunity to confirm or  
modify his statements.***

Attending, listening, and responding skills will greatly assist you in your important ministry of counseling. In the next issue, two important behavior change models—praying through (to deal with past hurts) and putting off the old self/putting on the new self (to deal with besetting sins and temptation)—will be presented. 

*Donald A. Lichi, Ph.D., is executive vice president of EMERGE Ministries, Inc., Akron, Ohio.*

*\* While the male gender is used in this article, the material applies equally to females.*

#### ENDNOTES

1. Gerard Egan, *The Skilled Helper* (Pacific Grove, Calif.: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1998). This book is used in many Christian graduate counseling programs. The text provides a helpful overview of the stages of the counseling relationship.

# Revoking an Exemption From Social Security

Many ministers have exempted themselves from social security by filing a timely application form (Form 4361) with the IRS. Unfortunately, many of these ministers were not eligible for the exemption. In recognition of this fact, and because of the large number of exempt ministers who wanted to rejoin the Social Security program to qualify for Medicare benefits, Congress gave ministers a brief window of time in 1977, and again in 1987, to revoke an exemption from self-employment (social security) tax. Few did so. Ministers soon may be given another window to revoke an exemption from self-employment taxes. It is important for exempt ministers to be aware of these developments so they are ready to respond quickly if another window is provided. The lesson of the 1977 and 1987 legislation is that the longer ministers wait to revoke an exemption, the less likely it is that they will do so. This article reviews the status of current

legislative efforts, assesses the likelihood of success, and provides ministers with recommendations to consider.

## QUALIFYING FOR EXEMPTION

Ministers are allowed by federal law to exempt themselves from self-employment taxes by filing a timely exemption application (Form 4361) with the IRS. To qualify for exemption, ministers must meet several requirements. Among other things, they must certify that they are opposed on the basis of religious convictions to the acceptance of public insurance benefits (including social security and Medicare) based on their ministerial services. The application must be filed by the due date of the federal tax return for the second year in which a minister has net earnings from self-employment of \$400 or more, any part of which derives from the performance of services in the exercise of ministry.

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BY RICHARD R.  
HAMMAR

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*Ministers soon may be given another window to revoke an exemption from self-employment taxes.*





## REVOKING AN EXEMPTION FROM SOCIAL SECURITY

The tax code states that ministers who exempt themselves from self-employment taxes cannot revoke their exemption. The decision to become exempt from self-employment taxes is "irrevocable." Form 4361 itself warns that "once the application is approved, you cannot revoke it."

On two occasions in the past, Congress has enacted special legislation giving ministers a brief window of time to revoke an exemption from self-employment taxes.

### The 1977 legislation

Congress allowed ministers who were exempt as of December 20, 1977, to revoke their exemption by the due date of their federal income tax return for 1977 (April 15, 1978) by filing a Form 4361-A.

### The 1987 legislation

The Tax Reform Act of 1986 gave exempt ministers another limited opportunity to revoke an exemption from self-employment taxes, by filing a Form 2031 with the IRS by the due date for their federal income tax return for 1987 (April 15, 1988). Congress provided this

limited opportunity for ministers to revoke an exemption from self-employment taxes because of a recognition that many of these ministers did not qualify in the first place.

***If enacted, this bill would allow ministers to revoke an exemption from social security by filing a form with the IRS by April 15, 2002.***

Ministers who revoked an exemption by April 15, 1988, did not become liable for self-employment taxes all the way back to the date of their original exemption. Rather, they were required to pay self-employment taxes effective January 1, 1986, or January 1, 1987. This meant, for example, that a minister who revoked an exemption by April 15, 1988, had to pay not only the first quarter's estimated self-employment tax for 1988 by that date, but also (1) the entire social security tax liability for 1986 and 1987, or (2) the entire social security tax liability for 1987. The minister elected on the Form 2031 whether to pay taxes for both 1986 and 1987, or just for 1987.

Very few exempt ministers revoked their exemption. The reason is simple:

Most ministers who were seriously considering revoking their exemption waited until the deadline, only to discover that revoking their exemption would make them liable for at least five quarters of self-employment tax. Even on a modest income, this was a crushing liability that few could afford.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

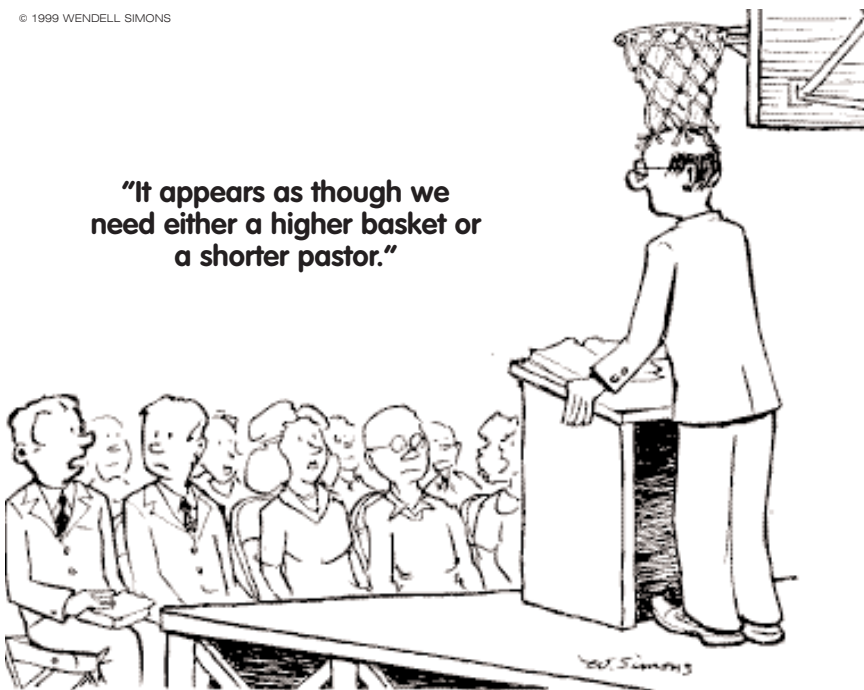
In 1998, a bill was introduced in Congress that would have allowed ministers another opportunity to revoke an exemption from social security. The bill passed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 410 to 1, but the legislative session ended before the Senate could take action. An identical bill was introduced in Congress in 1999, and passage appears likely. If enacted, this bill would allow ministers to revoke an exemption from social security by filing a form with the IRS by April 15, 2002. Ministers can choose to revoke their exemption beginning either with year 2000 or year 2001. The bill specifies that ministers who revoke an exemption will not be permitted to apply for exemption at a later time. The decision to revoke an exemption is irrevocable.

***Remember that the longer you wait to revoke your exemption, the more back taxes you will have to pay***

## THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES ALL ASSUME THAT SENATE BILL 331 WILL BE ENACTED:

*Example: Rev. D. opted out of social security in 1980 because he did not want to pay the self-employment tax. He now recognizes that he was not eligible for the exemption, and would like to revoke it. If Congress enacts the pending legislation, Rev. D. will be able to file a form with the IRS revoking his exemption. On this form, Rev. D. will designate whether he wants to revoke his exemption beginning with either the year 2000 or the year 2001.*

**"It appears as though we need either a higher basket or a shorter pastor."**



*Example:* Same facts as the previous example. Rev. D. waits until September 1, 2002, to file his revocation form. He has waited too long. The form must be filed no later than April 15, 2002.

**Since it is likely that Congress will enact legislation giving ministers an opportunity to revoke an exemption from self-employment tax, ministers should be reviewing their options at this time.**

*Example:* Assume that Rev. D. has net self-employment earnings of \$50,000 in 2000 and 2001, including his church-designated housing allowance. Assume further that Congress enacts the pending legislation allowing ministers to revoke an exemption from self-employment taxes. Rev. D. waits until April 15, 2002, to decide whether to revoke his exemption. By delaying his decision, he now has two options: (1) Revoke his exemption beginning with the year 2000. He will be liable for back taxes to January 1, 2000—that is, for 2 years plus the first quarter of year 2002 self-employment taxes. This will amount to approximately \$17,200 (multiply the 15.3 percent self-employment tax rate times 2 years of net self-employment earnings of \$50,000, plus the first quarter of compensation for 2002). Obviously, this liability is so large that it is doubtful that Rev. D. will be able to afford it. (2) Revoke his exemption beginning with the year 2001. He will be liable for back taxes to January 1, 2001, or 1 year plus the first quarter of year 2002 self-employment taxes. This will amount to approximately \$9,600 (multiply the 15.3 percent self-employment tax rate times 1 year of net self-employment earnings of \$50,000, plus the first quarter of compensation for 2002). Obviously, this liability is also substantial, making it unlikely that Rev. D. will be able to afford revoking his exemption. The problem in this

example is that Rev. D. waited too long to decide whether or not to revoke the exemption. The key point is this—the longer ministers delay in making this decision, the less likely they will be able to afford revoking their exemption.

*Example:* Assume that Rev. D. has net self-employment earnings of \$50,000 in 2000 and 2001, including his church-designated housing allowance. Assume further that Congress enacts the pending legislation allowing ministers to revoke an exemption from self-employment taxes. Rev. D. learns of the new law, and decides to revoke his exemption immediately by filing a revocation form with the IRS in January of 2000. He designates on the form that he wants to revoke his exemption beginning with the year 2000. Rev. D. uses the quarterly estimated tax procedure to pay his taxes, and so he simply begins basing his quarterly estimates on both income taxes and self-employment taxes. This will increase his quarterly payments by approximately \$1,900 (one-fourth of his annual self-employment tax, computed by multiplying net self-employment earnings of \$50,000 times the self-employment tax rate of 15.3 percent). By making the decision to revoke the exemption early, Rev. D. is avoiding the problem of having to make large payments of back taxes. It is more likely that Rev. D. will be able to afford revoking his exemption in the event that he would like to do so.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several important considerations for ministers to note:

1. *Nothing has been enacted, yet.* No law giving ministers an opportunity to revoke an exemption from self-employment tax has been enacted yet. Ministers who would like to revoke an exemption should do nothing now—except to review their options and be prepared to act quickly if any of the pending bills become law.

2. *Enactment is likely.* It is very likely that Congress will enact legislation


giving ministers an opportunity to revoke an exemption from self-employment tax.

3. *Be prepared to act.* Since it is likely that Congress will enact legislation giving ministers an opportunity to revoke an exemption from self-employment tax, ministers should be reviewing their options at this time. Here are some questions to ask:

- *Am I exempt from self-employment tax?* You are if you filed a timely Form 4361 in triplicate with the IRS, and received back one of the forms marked “approved.”

- *Was I eligible for exemption at the time I filed Form 4361?* When you filed your exemption application, were you opposed on the basis of religious convictions to accepting social security and Medicare benefits based on your ministerial services? Many ministers were not.

- *Do I want to revoke my exemption?* Some ministers will want to revoke an exemption because they now realize that they were not eligible. It is an ethical matter for them. For others, the inducement to revoke an exemption may be to qualify for Medicare coverage and the other benefits of social security.

- *If I decide to revoke my exemption, when should I do so?* Remember that the longer you wait to revoke your exemption, the more back taxes you will have to pay—up to a maximum of 2 years plus one quarter of self-employment taxes. Even on modest incomes, this can result in a crushing tax liability. If you decide to revoke your exemption, consider doing so as soon as the law allows. This will minimize the financial impact of your decision and make it more affordable by avoiding a large back-taxes liability. 

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## The PK Syndrome

*Preacher's Kid...Pastor's Kid...PK.* These words can strike terror into the hearts of children's pastors, youth pastors, Sunday school teachers, and children's workers. "I've got the PK in my class, so you know what that means."

Many pastors' kids inherit a bad reputation before they even have the opportunity to demonstrate a specific behavior pattern, good or bad. It is assumed that PKs are the worst kids in church. Unfortunately, this assumption is sometimes justified.

Pastors respond to these comments about their children by saying, "It's because my children are forced to live their lives in a fishbowl; everybody can see and judge their behavior. Their privacy is violated. My kid's behavior is no better or worse than any other healthy, normal child."

Other pastors try to ignore their children's behavior, choosing the ivory tower attitude. "I'm too busy to be bothered with mundane things such as my child acting up in children's church."

Some are so embarrassed they become publicly humiliated and hide in their office, committee meetings, or the golf course.

It is a challenge to raise a family in the public eye. Sometimes our kids demonstrate negative behavior, and it brings a form of shame to

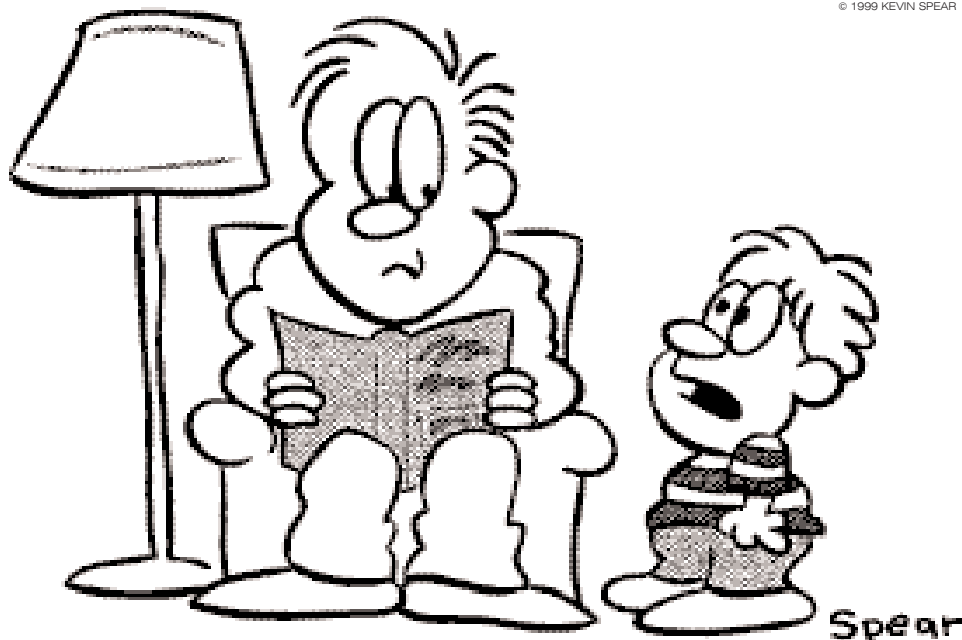
***Our children require a great deal of love and attention from us, and often we feel the demands of church and ministry are overwhelming.***

our ministry. How we respond makes all the difference in the world—and in what we are modeling for the child-raising parents of our congregations.

Through observations made in over 22 years of children's ministry, my wife and I have found that when young children act up in public, it is usually because they are experiencing a lack of love and attention in the

BY ROBB DUNHAM

***Most of us would agree that our children are on loan to us by God. They are not our possessions; we do not own them.***



**"If you play with me, it can mean the difference between a heartwarming sermon illustration and a poignant one."**

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home. PKs and their parents have experienced these problems since Bible times. Read between the lines when studying the accounts of Absalom and David (2 Samuel 18:33), or Hophni and Phinehas and their dad, Eli the priest (1 Samuel 2:12–34). Think about the lack of child raising that brought about such tragedies. We have all seen the fallout in our day: The pastor whose grown daughter calls every weekend in a drunken stupor; the district official who, unable to sleep, goes out to a lonely field late at night and cries out to God for the life of his drug-dealing child.

There can be no doubt—our children require a great deal of love and attention from us, and often we feel the demands of church and ministry are overwhelming. Some pastoral families have dual-working parents; some pastors' wives are also employed by the church. Church committees, ministry programs, and church office work take her time. How can we strike the balance between home and church that we advocate from our pulpits?

Perhaps taking a different approach will help. Most of us would agree that our children are on loan to us by God. They are not our possessions; we do not own them. We are to invest in them, and then disburse them into the kingdom of

God. Like Jesus' parable of the profitable and unprofitable servants, we are to invest that which He has entrusted to us for the growth and blessing of the Kingdom.

Our children are searching for love and attention. This means spending time with our children. The investment of time with our children pays rich and long-lasting dividends. When we are convinced that the investment of time in our children will pay these dividends—peace, joy, harmony, and clarity—we will take the steps necessary to achieve it.


***Many pastors' kids inherit a bad reputation before they even have the opportunity to demonstrate a specific behavior pattern, good or bad.***

You have probably heard the formula that lists the priorities for our lives: God first, family second, and church third. All three comprise the ministry of our lives. All three are intimately intertwined. We minister to the Lord; we minister to our family; and we minister to the body of Christ. Church ministry is an extension of our ministry with our family.

We need to ask ourselves the

penetrating question, What good is a successful megachurch ministry if I lose my own child? How many children, teens, and adults harbor deep resentments because the church stole their pastor-parent's time from them? The results are devastating. An old truth bears repeating: I have yet to hear ministers on their deathbed regret they did not spend enough time in the office. But they do regret spending too little time with their children. Is it possible that with proper priorities we can have God's blessing on both home and church?

Many churches understand the value their pastoral staff place on keeping family times a high priority. Some pastors schedule one evening each week without any church activities or meetings, and hold that night sacred. Many churches are insisting that unless there is a true emergency, the pastoral staff is not to be called on their day off, and they are not to show up at the office or call in. Other churches allow their pastoral staff to attend special family activities during normal business hours of the church. They realize special times between parents and children don't always come at the convenience of church schedules. If they love their pastoral staff, churches are wise to invest time in them.

Dividends are paid back to the church that cares for their pastoral staff—added richness and depth to their ministry, longevity (which saves the church money), joy, and greater productivity. The congregation that is blessed with pastoral staff having these qualities will reflect them, and will grow in an infectious way. An added benefit is that the pastor's children are more likely to grow up as well-adjusted adults serving in our congregations. Others who observe these healthy pastor/family relationships will want the same in their own family. And a legacy is handed down to the next generation. No more PK syndrome. 

*Robb Dunham is an Assemblies of God family and children's evangelist with a nationwide ministry called SuperKidz 4 Christ. He lives in Denver, Colorado.*



# Doing Our Father's Business

BY PAUL E. DROST

**In the 4-year period from 1994–98, it took 339 churches to net 1 church per year. Our production capacity is now only one-sixth of what it was just 15 years ago.**

Peter Drucker, famed consultant to American businesses, says there are two fundamental questions that need to be asked to evaluate a situation and get to the heart of a matter: "What is our business?" and "How is our business doing?"

Peter Wagner states, "The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting churches." One of our foundational beliefs is that the local church is the center from which evangelism and ministry spread. Planting churches has been one of the primary goals of the Assemblies of God. We cannot improve on the New Testament pattern of preaching the gospel, baptizing and discipling believers, and planting new churches.

We, as the Assemblies of God, must ask: "What is our business?" Nothing less than total honesty will do at this pivotal crossroads in our history. Since the church is the heart of spiritual life in the kingdom of God, our business is to grow strong, healthy, reproducing churches. Our business is not about buildings, bank accounts, reputation, or even political power. It is about raising up churches whose main concerns are the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.

**In the last 6 months, my office has received more inquiries about church planting than the previous 6 years combined.**

We must also ask: "How is our business doing?" The figures do not look good for our Fellowship. In 1998, we had almost 12,000 churches and more than 30,000 credential holders. Yet our net growth was only 17 churches for the entire United States. Our inability to produce strong, healthy churches has caused our production capacity to sink to historical lows. In the 4-year period from 1979–83, it took 56 Assemblies of God churches to net 1 church per year. In the 4-year

period from 1994–98, it took 339 churches to net 1 church per year. Our production capacity is now only one-sixth of what it was just 15 years ago.

However, there is good news. There are signs that the tide has begun to turn. In the last 6 months, my office has received more inquiries about church planting than the previous 6 years combined. The response has been all across the board, from Bible college students to men who have well-established ministries.

Doug Oss, a former professor at Central Bible College, has planted a church in Salt Lake City. Dan Betzer, executive presbyter for the southeast region and pastor of First Assembly of God in Fort Myers, Florida, has committed his church and resources to help plant churches in south Florida.

The final question we must ask is: "What can be done?" As ministers and leaders, our individual response will determine the heart and direction of our Fellowship. Each of us will become either a part of the solution or a part of the problem.

Here are some determinate things you can do to become part of the solution:

1. Revive the pioneer spirit of sacrifice and obedience in your own life.
2. Recognize and promote new church-planting efforts by giving it a high priority on your agenda. What you fertilize grows.
3. Respond to the call to personally plant a church or have your church involved in a local church-planting project.
4. Rejoice as you partner with Him and reap an abundant harvest.

If we determine to be part of God's harvest, we can expect God's greatest blessings to be on us. Let's serve Him with no reserve, no regret and no retreat. **E**

*Paul E. Drost is director of church planting for the Division of Home Missions, Springfield, Missouri.*

# S E R M O N S E E D S

## CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

**Luke 9:57–62**

### INTRODUCTION:

Christ's words on discipleship offer a study in contrasts. On the one hand, they seem harsh and demanding; on the other, they are full of love and understanding. All these ingredients are evident in the responses Christ made to three men who declared their allegiance to Him. From the responses of these three, we observe what He requires of Christian disciples. He demands:

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. Discipleship based on an intelligent decision.

- a. The first man made his decision to follow Christ ignorantly—without knowledge of the difficulties, demands, and denials of self in

discipleship (verse 57).

- b. Christ lovingly revealed by personal illustration the hardships of discipleship (verse 58).
- c. An intelligent decision for Christ will be based on an understanding that peace and persecution, happiness and hardship, and love and loneliness are involved in discipleship.

#### 2. Discipleship motivated by a central affection.

- a. The second man put love for family before love for Christ (verse 59).
- b. Christ bluntly declared that love for God and His kingdom must be first (verse 60).
- c. Christ must and will be our central affection—before family, friends, employment, or pleasure.

#### 3. Discipleship perpetuated by a persevering spirit.

- a. The third man said he would follow, then turned back (verse 61).
- b. Christ clearly indicated that one who turns back is not fit for God's kingdom (verse 62).
- c. We must not only begin well, but we must persevere to the end.

### CONCLUSION:

Each Christian should ask: Have I intelligently decided to serve Christ? Is He the center of my affections? Am I pressing "toward the mark?" Unless the answer in each case is positive, he or she cannot be called a disciple of Christ.

—Warren D. Bullock  
Brier, Washington

## FORGIVENESS AND INTERCESSION

**Exodus 32:1–14, 30–33**

### INTRODUCTION:

Israel had a very bad habit—the nation forgot God. This causes the same trouble today as it did in Bible times. The Psalmist warns against forgetting God (Psalm 9:17). Our text tells us how Israel broke the first and second commandments (Exodus 20:1–5) by making and worshipping a golden calf.

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. The condition (Exodus 32:1–6).

- a. Impatience (verse 1). Moses was on the mount praying. The people did not know if he was going to return, so they made an idol. We do not need to see God to worship Him—we worship Him by faith.
- b. Indifference (verses 2–5). Moses' brother Aaron collected the earrings and bracelets, and made a golden calf. Then Aaron had the gall to make a feast unto the Lord. Here we see a picture of double-minded people holding to the world and at the same time holding a religious profession.
- c. Impurity (verse 6). After making

offerings and sacrifices to the golden calf, the people drank and played. What a mixture of worship and sin.

#### 2. The condemnation (Exodus 32:7–10).

- a. God's command (verse 7). God told Moses to go down to the people—they had corrupted themselves.
- b. God's controversy (verse 8). The people had turned aside, worshipping a calf and not the Lord.
- c. God's compassion. Though they had turned aside, He still loved them and was patient and kind. God is longsuffering toward all sinners (2 Peter 3:9). He wants all to be saved (John 3:16–19). If Christians sin, God is willing to forgive them (1 John 2:1).

#### 3. The concern (Exodus 32:11–14).

- a. The pleading (verse 11). Moses pleaded and interceded for his people. To intercede means to stand between God and man. Do you intercede in prayer for the souls of men?
- b. The problem (verse 12). Moses asked God to be patient with the people to preserve their testimony to the heathen nations.

- c. The promise (verses 13,14). Moses reminded God of the promise He made to Abraham.

#### 4. The compassion (Exodus 32:30–33).

- a. The sin (verse 31). Idol worship is sin. God could not close His eyes to this flagrant breaking of His laws.
- b. The sympathy (verse 32). Moses prayed that if someone must be destroyed as punishment, let it be him. Paul displayed this same unselfish compassion (Romans 9:3).
- c. The separation (verse 33). God cannot tolerate sin (Ezekiel 18:20). All sin, whether committed by a believer or an unbeliever, must be punished unless it is confessed and forsaken.

### CONCLUSION:

Do you care enough to pray for others? Do you believe they will be lost if they are not born again? (John 3:5). Will you intercede for them, as Moses interceded for the sinners in Israel—or are you unmoved by the doom of the wicked?

—Croft M. Pentz  
Waynesboro, Pennsylvania



# S E R M O N     S E E D S



## THE BELIEVER'S FORMER WALK

### **Ephesians 2:1-3**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

The word "walk" in the New Testament is often used in an ethical sense and reflects the spiritual condition of the person. Before people are born again, they walk according to:

#### **MESSAGE:**

1. **The standards of the world (verse 2).**
  - a. The world represents all that is hostile toward God and His righteousness (James 4:4).
  - b. The world represents all that is

hostile toward the efforts of God's people to live according to His Word.

2. **The suggestions of Satan (verse 2).**
  - a. Satan suggests that people reject God's Word, as in the case of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:4,5).
  - b. Satan suggests that people reject God's salvation (Acts 13:6-8).
3. **Their own will (verse 2).**
  - a. God has a perfect will for everyone (Romans 12:2).
  - b. Unbelievers walk contrary to this will as in the case of Pharaoh (Exodus

5:2) and Balaam (Numbers 22:22).

#### 4. **The desires of the flesh (verse 3).**

- a. The desires of the flesh can take many forms (Galatians 5:19-21).
- b. The desires of the flesh may sometimes take seemingly respectable forms (Philippians 3:4-6).

#### **CONCLUSION:**

In the walk before conversion, people are candidates for the judgment of God (Ephesians 2:3). After conversion they "sit...in heavenly places" in Christ (verse 6).

—Hardy W. Steinberg

## THE WALK IN GOOD WORKS

### **Ephesians 2:10**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

When believers turn their lives over to Christ, they become God's workmanship, as the potter molds the clay (Jeremiah 18). He creates them unto good works in which they should walk. The believer's salvation is not of works, but works follow salvation.

#### **MESSAGE:**

1. **The nature of good works.**
  - a. Work and labor of love in ministering

to saints, as in the case of Dorcas (Acts 9:39) and others (Hebrews 6:10).

- b. Ministry to others who are suffering or in need (Matthew 25:34-40; Luke 10:25-37).
2. **The attitude toward good works.**
  - a. Jesus Christ gave himself that He might redeem a people zealous of good works (Titus 2:14).
  - b. The good works should be done with meekness (James 3:13) and humility (Matthew 6:1-4).

#### 3. **The results of good works.**

- a. People will glorify God (Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12).
- b. Others will be challenged to do good (Hebrews 10:24), and unsaved will be won to Christ (1 Peter 3:1,2).

#### **CONCLUSION:**

While there is a satisfaction in doing good, there is the further incentive of knowing believers' works follow them in death (Revelation 14:13).

—Hardy W. Steinberg

## THE WALK WORTHY OF VOCATION

### **Ephesians 4:1-3**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

The first three chapters of Ephesians deal primarily with doctrine. The last three deal with practical living. Because of the believer's high calling, as outlined in Ephesians 1-3, his or her life should be lived on a higher plain. The following are elements of the believer's worthy walk:

#### **MESSAGE:**

1. **Lowliness or humility (verse 2).**
  - a. Lowliness or humility was regarded as vice rather than a virtue by pagans.
  - b. The humble are the greatest in

the kingdom of God (Matthew 18:4; 20:20-28).

- c. John the Baptist (Matthew 3:14) and the centurion (Matthew 8:8) are illustrations of humility.
2. **Meekness or gentleness (verse 2).**
  - a. The word translated "meekness" was used of trained animals. When applied to believers it refers to having desire and emotion under God's control.
  - b. A special blessing is pronounced on the meek (Matthew 5:5).
  - c. Moses is an illustration of a meek man under God's control (Numbers 12:3).

#### 3. **Long-suffering or patience (verse 2).**

- a. The word translated "long-suffering" refers to patience with others.
- b. Long-suffering is a characteristic of God (Romans 2:4) and is a factor in the believer's salvation (2 Peter 3:15).
- c. The prophets are an example of long-suffering (James 5:10).

#### **CONCLUSION:**

When believers walk worthy of their vocation, they will "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

—Hardy W. Steinberg



## A MORE SURE WORD

### 2 Peter 1:1–21

#### INTRODUCTION:

A psychic advertisement on television included the disclaimer, “for entertainment purposes only.” Why? Because psychics know they cannot live up to their claims. But the claims of Scripture are bold (Numbers 23:19; Matthew 24:35). There is no fine print; no explaining away the promises of God. God’s Word is not “for entertainment purposes only.” It contains the message vital to your well being today and your eternal future tomorrow.

#### MESSAGE:

#### 1. God’s Word is sure in its accuracy (verses 20–21).

The psychics say if you get the wrong message, it’s because you talked to the wrong psychic. Each one claims to be able to deliver the goods. But God’s Word is clear—the standard for God’s prophetic Word has 100 percent

accuracy (Deuteronomy 18:21,22).

The exciting fact is that each of the 314 prophecies concerning the birth, life, works, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ have already been fulfilled to the letter. Thirty-nine times in the Gospels there is reference to the Old Testament Scriptures being fulfilled in relation to the life of Christ.

#### 2. God’s Word is sure in its relevancy. (verse 4).

The three-fold purpose of prophecy given in 1 Corinthians 14:3 is that of “edification, exhortation, and comfort.” No wonder the promises of God are spoken of as “exceeding great and precious.” The Word of God will help:

- build you up (verses 5,6).
- stir you up (verse 13).
- take away the fear of death (verses 14,15).

#### 3. God’s Word is sure in its urgency (verse 10).

- The only unfulfilled promises of

Scripture relating to Jesus Christ are those which speak of His return (2 Peter 3:1–15).

- The skeptics will be silenced on that day, because God’s Word assures us, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise” (3:9), and “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night” (3:10).
- The believer who “gives diligence” (1:4) to make his calling and election sure, will be ready when the last-days prophecies of the Word of God are fulfilled.

#### CONCLUSION:

Millions of dollars are spent annually on psychics’ consultation fees. Sooner or later, the victims of Satan’s scam will be disappointed. But God’s offer of eternal salvation is free, and there is no disappointment.

—Samuel Bush  
Jasonville, Indiana

## THE FOOLISHNESS OF GOD

### 1 Corinthians 1:18 through 2:16

#### INTRODUCTION:

The message of the Cross is foolishness to the lost (verse 18), but it is the power of God to those who are saved.

#### MESSAGE:

#### 1. How wise it is.

The foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom (1:20–25).

- God has made worldly wisdom foolish (1:20).

(1) The world through its wisdom cannot see God (1:21).

(2) God chose to save believers through the foolishness of preaching (1:21).

- We therefore preach Christ, crucified for us (1:23).

(1) This preaching is a stumbling block to Jews, who ask for signs (1:22).

(2) It is foolishness to Gentiles, who ask for wisdom (1:22).

(3) It is the power of God to those who are called by God (1:24).

#### 2. How powerful it is.

The foolishness of God is more powerful than man’s ideas.

- God deliberately chose the seemingly foolish things to confound the wise (1:27).

(1) That no one should glory before God (1:29).

(2) That we might receive our salvation through Christ, not through our own wisdom (1:30).

- Paul himself did not use the approach of the philosopher (2:1).

(1) He used simple preaching (2:1).

(2) He preached only Christ (2:2).

(3) He himself was not pretentious (2:4).

(4) He wanted his converts to endure by God’s power only (2:5).

#### 3. How to understand it.

The foolishness of God can be understood only by a spiritual man (2:6–16).

- This apparent foolishness is really wisdom, revealed through a

“mystery” (2:7).

(1) It is unknown to wise men (2:8).

(2) It was made plain to us by the Spirit (2:10).

(a) We did not receive the spirit of the world (2:12).

(b) We received the Spirit of God who made spiritual things plain (2:12).

- This divine wisdom is not received by the natural man (2:13).

(1) He cannot understand (2:14).

(2) The spiritual man can judge it and receive it (2:15).

#### CONCLUSION:

The gospel fulfills the Old Testament prophecy in Isaiah 29:14: “The wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.” For man is not wise enough to instruct God (1 Corinthians 2:16), but we who have the mind of Christ can humbly receive God’s wisdom and be saved.

—Howard C. Osgood



## MARY

### Luke 1:42

#### INTRODUCTION:

It was a long way from Eden to Bethlehem. But God said woman would have the last word—there would be no Christmas without Mary. One part of the church worships her; the other part ignores her. She should be recognized as the only woman chosen by God to be the mother of the God-man.

#### MESSAGE:

##### 1. Her relationship to God (Luke 1:28).

- His choice was a Jewess in the direct line of David (Isaiah 9:6,7).
- She was devout and knew the Word—evidenced in the Magnificat.
- There was no immorality in her (Luke 1:34).
- She was willing to pay the price of misunderstanding (Luke 1:38).

##### 2. Her relationship with Joseph.

- We are told little about him, but

believe after Jesus' birth, Joseph and Mary had a normal, fully developed love life.

- Children were born after Jesus (Matthew 13:55,56). God had simply asked for first place in their lives.
- Joseph was a laborer with restricted means, indicated by his offering (Leviticus 12:6–8; Luke 2:23,24).
- God chose and loved Joseph, who trusted Him (Matthew 1:20,21).

##### 3. Her relationship with Jesus.

- He grew under her training (Luke 2:52).
- She lived with mystery concerning His future (Luke 2:34,35) and His purpose (verses 49,50).
- At Cana she had to take a new place (John 2:4). Those who do God's will are now just as close to Jesus as she (Matthew 12:50; Luke 11:27,28).
- The tie was broken at His death; no

earthly ties in heaven (John 19:26). Mary can't save you or speak for you, but you can go to Jesus (John 6:37).

##### 4. Her relationship with the Church.

- Mary was at the cross. She needed a Savior.
- She was in the Upper Room tarrying for His Spirit to be outpoured on her (Acts 1:14).
- She will be in heaven, not as queen, but as a sinner saved by grace. She is saved by the Blood that was shed, not by the birth she gave.
- She will reign with Him, as you and I will, as part of the bride of Christ.

#### CONCLUSION:

Mary was a great woman, not a goddess. Her name should be respected, but there is only one Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). God chose Mary, and Mary chose God. He has chosen you.

—C.M. Ward

## THE SHEPHERD OF LOVE

### Psalms 23

#### INTRODUCTION:

In just six short verses we have a beautiful picture of our divine Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. He called himself the Good Shepherd because He would give His life for His sheep. That is the ultimate demonstration of love. Let's look more closely at this wonderful Shepherd of Love.

#### MESSAGE:

##### 1. Personal love (verses 1–3).

- Notice the personal pronouns: "My shepherd"; "I shall not want"; "He maketh me to lie down"; "He leadeth me"; "He restoreth my soul."
- Salvation is a personal gift to you from God.

##### 2. Practical love (verses 4,5).

- "I will fear no evil; for thou art with me." The Shepherd's rod and staff comfort the sheep because they are constantly fighting evil forces that rise up against them.
- The prepared table speaks of the

Shepherd's abundant supply of the sheep's every need (John 10:10; Philippians 4:19).

##### 3. Perpetual love (verse 6).

- "All the days of my life."
- "Forever." His love is eternal, never-ending (Jeremiah 31:3; Ephesians 3:19; 1 John 4:10).

#### CONCLUSION

I'm so glad He's my Shepherd. Is He yours?

—John F. Walker

## OPPOSITION OR OPPORTUNITY

### Acts 19

#### INTRODUCTION:

The church at Ephesus is an example of how opposition can become opportunity.

#### MESSAGE:

##### 1. The opposition.

- It was spiritual in nature (Ephesians 6:12).

- It was evident in various forms:
  - Hardened hearts (Acts 19:8,9).
  - Pagan religions (Acts 19:23–41).

##### 2. The opportunity.

- Every opposition and circumstance was an opportunity (Acts 19:8,18).
- God gave unusual demonstration of power (Acts 19:11,12).
- Mightily grew the Word and

prevailed (Acts 19:20).

#### CONCLUSION:

Will you tarry at your "Ephesus" until God makes opportunity of your opposition (1 Corinthians 16:8,9)?

—Wm. E. Pettry  
Adapted from Advance



## PLANNING WITH FAMILIES IN MIND

In your planning sessions, prayerfully consider what is put on the church calendar. Be aware of school holidays, spring breaks, and other community activities. Don't fill the calendar just to fill it. Ask, "Are we doing this just because it's tradition, or does this truly build up individuals, families, and couples in the Lord?"

Your area is different from another's, and you must prayerfully discern with your staff what will best build your families. Just because something worked for one church doesn't mean it will work in your area. Distribute surveys and brainstorm among your congregation to see what their needs are. Look at the culture around you and plan activities, events, and programs to help couples and families face the challenges of today's society.

—Nancie Carmichael, Black Butte Ranch, Oregon

## A HIGH-IMPACT MARRIAGE MINISTRY IS POSSIBLE

"This has saved our marriage!"

"This has been life changing—thanks!"

Have you ever longed to hear that kind of response from your people? It is possible. By God's grace and some hard work, we often hear these phrases about the Family Life Ministries of our church. One class in particular, a young marrieds class, has experienced continual growth and unabated enthusiasm over the last 3 years.

What is the key to this growth and excitement? One thing is for sure; it didn't happen by accident. We have been intentional about creating a high-impact marriage ministry, and the growth strategies we adopted have led to some very satisfying results. The principles we use are transferable and will work for any church that is committed to developing a high-impact marriage ministry. Here is how it is P-O-S-S-I-B-L-E:

**Partnership.** Since the goal of the class is to equip couples to be better marriage partners, we model this goal by having a husband and wife team-teach the class. This teaching partnership brings the unique perspective of both the husband and wife, and enables the class to see how a marriage partnership works. This element of a teaching partnership has been received with acceptance and appreciation, and is now even expected by the group.

**Openness.** The class responds more enthusiastically when the teachers are open and vulnerable about their own marriage. Couples sometimes find it difficult to relate to the picture-perfect marriage they often observe in their leaders. They need to know how to make it when marriage is less than perfect. Our teachers talk openly and in very practical terms

about how they overcame the challenges and failures of their own marriages.

**Sources.** We worked hard to find creative sources for teaching material that would attract not only the couples in our church, but the unchurched as well. There is tremendous competition in the world for the hearts and minds of people, so we paid close attention to offering both interesting and relevant topics.

**Solutions.** Couples need help—real solutions to everyday problems. They don't need theory; they need solid foundations balanced with practical and workable answers. We are committed to teach truths that work in the real world: how to process anger, communicate assertively, listen with an understanding heart, and resolve conflicts. This strategy puts the practical tools they need in their hands for building strong relationships.

**Involvement.** We didn't want to just talk at them; we wanted them to talk back to us and to each other. We include small group discussions as a part of every lesson, encourage feedback, and provide opportunities for couples' home group Bible studies. As couples interact with other Christian couples in the class, they develop relationships, encourage and pray for each other, become accountable to the group, and, ultimately, their lives are changed.

**Bible-centered.** There are many great marriage resources on the market, but in the end we wanted marriages and lives built on the Word of God. We made the commitment to center our teachings on the Word and not just the opinion of Christian marriage experts. We alternate our marriage series with solid Bible studies. This helps establish a core value that built-to-last marriages are built on the Word of God.

**Leadership.** We defined various roles and responsibilities and enlisted couples to form teams to help with this ministry. Class members are responsible for weekly refreshments, social activities, visitor follow-up, promotion and marketing, ministry meals for new moms, a prayer ministry, and much more. These teams create a sense of ownership for the ministry and enable the class to thrive and continue as an ongoing ministry.

**Enjoyment.** Helping couples build lasting relationships requires dealing with a host of difficult issues. To ease tension, we sometimes insert humor and fun into the class. Couples that laugh together, last together.

Any church can have a first-class ministry that attracts couples both from within the church family as well as from the unchurched community. You can have a growing, exciting, healthy couples ministry that is relevant, practical, fun, life-changing, and, most of all, God-honoring. It is POSSIBLE.

—Ray Noah, Portland, Oregon





## LETTERS OF APPRECIATION

From time to time, it is good for a Sunday school director, pastor, or minister of education to write personal letters to the workers. It is not always necessary to wait for a special occasion. (Many people do not have events that are tremendously recognizable except being faithful each Sunday and giving their best.) From time to time, words of appreciation, a pat on the back, and “Well done, thou good and faithful servant,” need to be given.

Following is a sample letter of appreciation.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Someone has wisely suggested there are four types of people in any organization, including the church. There are those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, those who try to keep things from happening, and those who do not even know anything is happening.

It is obvious to me you are in the group God uses to make things happen. The skills God has given you, and your willingness to use them for His glory, give us a positive means to affect those who attend (name of church) for the cause of Christ.

No one really knows the lasting and powerful influence of a life like yours, nor do we really know how to say how much we appreciate what you are doing. You are an important part of the team God has given us. Thank you for all you are doing at (name of church). You’ve blessed my life and many more.

Because He lives,

Minister of Education

—Adapted from 100 Great Growth Ideas  
by Neil Jackson, Jr., © 1990, Broadman Press,  
Nashville Tennessee. Used by permission.

## MISSIONS MAIL

To instill in the children a desire to pray for the missionaries our church supports, we assigned a missionary to each child who could write. The name of each missionary and the child assigned to that missionary were recorded in an address book.

We purchased a white plastic mailbox and printed the letters BGMC on both sides. We also purchased a plastic storage box with numerous compartments to hold religious stickers, stamps and stamp pad, pencils, pens, BGMC notepads, and envelopes.

On BGMC Sunday, the children come to the classroom before morning worship and write a letter to their missionary. They decorate their letters with stickers and stamps, address the envelope, and place it in the mailbox. The church secretary mails these letters.

We pray that each child will have a special place in his or her heart for these missionaries.

—Dalinda Marshall, Youngstown, Ohio

## PLANNING ACCORDING TO YOUR CHURCH'S MISSION STATEMENT

What is the mission statement of your church? What do you want to accomplish as a church? After reflecting on these questions, take an analytical look at your church and ask: Is our church family-friendly? Does it build the lives of younger families? What will our church look like in 10 years? Does my own family love to be here? What makes it a great place to attend?

Analyze the facilities and ministry of the nursery and Sunday school. One pastor of a large church helped in the nursery one morning during a women's Bible study. He gained some insight into what it takes to run a good nursery, and his presence spoke volumes to the young mothers. Are the Sunday school rooms pleasant and comfortable? Do they say, “Welcome—this is a wonderful place”? Or are they dreary? The atmosphere of a room speaks volumes.

People today are extremely busy. They have many options for their time, and we need to work to remind families of the importance of church. Our planning must make attending church worth their while.

—Nancie Carmichael, Black Butte Ranch, Oregon

## GET ME TO THE CHURCH ON TIME!

How many prospects have given up attending a church because they could not find the church's location. We can take a timely tip from the metro real estate ads that give street names to turn on from the main highways near the church (N. Main to Second St. to Oak St.).

Other ideas include printing a simple, “We Are Here” line map in the yellow pages. You can also put this map in the area newspapers and on the back of your church business card and promotional flyers.

The use of sign at strategic locations can indicate directions to your church. We have also used commercial billboards to give direction at strategic spots. Radio and TV promos can also offer tips for finding your church.

By using signs and maps, you can help visitors find your church instead of giving up and going back home.

—Douglas R. Rose, Grand Prairie, Texas

## PRAYER WALKING WITH CHILDREN

Prayer walking provides a concrete means for children to actually see the things for which they are praying. For example, it is difficult for our kids to pray for their home city of Richmond, Virginia, while sitting in a Sunday school class. But take them to the observation deck of city hall, and their prayers take on new life. Prayer walkers call this “praying on-site with insight.”



Find people in your church who are knowledgeable about the geography, politics, and history of your area. These experts are great resources for preparing children for the prayer walk; they also make great guides during the prayer walk. Remind them, however, that prayer walk sites need to be kid friendly. Kids respond to sites that tend to be more sensational, such as places where battles took place, or on top of tall buildings overlooking your city.

One site we chose for a prayer walk was the original Masonic Lodge in Richmond, where some of the first slaves in America were sold. While we were holding hands in a circle and praying, a white girl in the group asked forgiveness for the sin of slavery. It was a powerful moment when the eyes of that girl met the eyes of a African-American girl in the group. This was truly a classroom-of-life experience that could never be duplicated in a Sunday school room.

Other good prayer walk sites include schools, churches, places where the homeless gather, headquarters for ministries, hospitals, jails, abortion clinics, or any place where significant spiritual or historical events have occurred.

During a 2-hour prayer walk, we usually cover 3-4 locations, more if several sites are within easy walking distance of each other. Before we begin, we have a time of prayer to prepare our hearts. We ask God to examine our hearts, and we confess any sin God shows us. We then ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in our intercession. Through prayer, we put on the armor of God and ask God to protect us from the enemy.

Take time to teach the kids appropriate ways to pray while on a prayer walk. We usually utilize conversational prayer, since it gives all kids an opportunity to pray. Conversational prayer is short, to the point, and natural, which is exactly how most kids pray. In conversational prayer, you pray for one topic at a time, so each prayer builds on the previous prayer. When everyone who wanted to has prayed for a topic—usually indicated by a period of silence—a new topic can be introduced. If the kids are reluctant to pray at first, assign topics.

Encourage adults to let the kids do the praying. Long adult prayers tend to rob kids of the ownership of the prayer walk. I usually place the children in the center of the circle with the adults surrounding them.

Don't forget to debrief after the prayer walk. Ask kids to share the impressions they received from God while they were praying. God tends to speak to kids through mental pictures, probably because they think more concretely or maybe because they are just more open to God speaking to them in this way. We bring a large pad of paper with us on prayer walks so the kids can draw pictures that come to their mind as they are praying. These pictures motivate the kids to pray by helping them

visualize what God is doing in the heavenlies.

For example, on one prayer walk the kids were interceding at St. John's Church, where Patrick Henry gave his famous, "Give me liberty or give me death" speech. A young child drew a picture of the church grounds planted like a vegetable garden. In the drawing, God was gathering the ripe fruit and vegetables. The girl believed God gave her this mental picture to show that the prayers of the kids were going to begin a great harvest of souls in Richmond. That picture energized the children's prayers for revival, a revival we are just now starting to see years later.

Prayer walks are probably the best way to involve children in the community. Prayer walks don't take much effort to facilitate, and there are huge rewards, both in the lives of the children and through the fruit of their answered prayer.

—Peter Hohmann, Mechanicsville, Virginia

*(More ideas for kids can be found in the book and video Mobilizing Kids for Outreach, Gospel Publishing House, order #715-LC-204.)*

## ATTENDANCE ACTIVITIES

To make a Sunday school and church grow, there is a constant need to work on increasing the attendance. Listed below are ways to increase Sunday school attendance.

1. *Action*—Once a year, canvass areas of your community to enlist new people and find new prospects.
2. *Saturday Morning Team Visitation*—Visit church members or visitors not yet attending Sunday school.
3. *Class/Department Goals*—Establish outreach goals by class or department.
4. *One-for-One*—Personal goals given to outreach leaders and teachers.
5. *Fellowship Bible Class Transfers*—Enlist members of home Bible study classes for church classes.
6. *Neighborhood Outreach Teams*—Organize outreach teams by neighborhood.
7. *Internal Census*—Once a year, enlist nonattending parents whose children are in Sunday school.
8. *Weekday Sunday School*—Have Sunday school during the week for those people who work on Sunday.
9. *Enlist During Sunday Services*—Have enlistment cards in the pews.
10. *Special Education Emphasis*—Once a year in September.
11. *Bus Ministry*—Enlist families of bus children in Sunday school at least once a quarter.
12. *Cradle Roll Concentration*.

—Adapted from 100 Great Growth Ideas by Neil Jackson, Jr., © 1990, Broadman Press, Nashville, Tennessee. Used by permission.





## BLAMING OTHERS

The bumper sticker read: “Humpty Dumpty was pushed.” We have all heard the nursery tale about Humpty Dumpty falling from the wall. But now we are saying he didn’t fall—someone pushed him. Blaming others is nothing new. It began with Adam blaming Eve for his sin and Eve blaming the serpent.

The three hardest words to say are: “I am wrong.” It’s easier to blame someone else. We want to believe that, like the saying on the Humpty Dumpty bumper sticker, our accidents or problems are someone else’s fault.

—*Croft M. Pentz, Waynesboro, Pennsylvania*

## CHEESEBURGERS AND LEADERSHIP

“And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them” (Psalm 78:72, NIV). This Scripture is an antidote to one of leadership’s most insidious diseases, typecast often as “not paying attention to business.” A sure-fire slide toward spiritual leadership disaster includes ideas like: 1) I don’t think; 2) I don’t know; 3) I don’t care; 4) I’m too busy; 5) I leave well enough alone; 6) I have no time to read and find out; and 7) I’m not interested.

A *Wall Street Journal* article shows how to reverse the downward slide into mediocrity. It is a story about William F. Foley II, who, since 1994, has been CEO of Carl’s Jr. fast-food restaurant chain. He recently bought Hardee’s, the nation’s fourth largest, but languishing, hamburger chain. The story read:

“Between the buns of a bacon cheeseburger lay a clue to the sales decline at Hardee’s. Plastered to the hamburger patty was something less than a slice of bacon. A slice of a slice of a slice; it invited customers to ask, ‘Where’s the bacon?’

“The puny strip was part of a pattern that caused customer turnoffs. Foley bought the Hardee’s chain saying, ‘If you pay attention to business, and become responsive to the customer, and serve up a quality burger in a clean environment, people will buy it. You can revive your business,’ Foley explained, ‘if you carefully think through the ideas of excellence, and begin on a regular basis giving excellence the chance to make its own statement to your customers and community.’ ”

The same is true in building a church or growing a ministry. A pastor’s worst nightmare is to hear somebody say of his or her leadership or preaching, “Where’s the bacon?” You can cure that, just as you can cure a poorly managed and ill-run ministry. But it takes paying attention to business and being responsive to people.

The *Wall Street Journal* article closed with this note: “‘Getting your order filled sometimes takes longer, but it’s worth it,’ says Nathan Schadt, 16, unwrapping his second big 99-cent burger.” Ah, a satisfied customer.

Quality begins with the leader. When you determine to be the best you can be, work hard at it, and extend the search for excellence in all God gives you to do, you’ll be an effective instrument in God’s hands for reviving and lifting His work. Customers will find you. You won’t be able to stop people from unwrapping their second big 99-cent burger, and then coming back to you for more.

Do your best this year to exude excellence and pay attention to the business God has put in your hands.

—*T. Ray Rachels, Huntington Beach, California*

## CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

Early in the morning, December 25, 1492, while trolling off the coast of Hispaniola, Christopher Columbus ran aground in his flagship, the *Santa Maria*. He and his crew spent the rest of Christmas Day unloading the ship in a vain attempt to float again.

Ironically, many families will spend Christmas Day frantically trying to salvage a month-long season that has taken on a surplus cargo of stress, debt, family tensions, extra calories, and unrealistic expectations. No matter how hard they try to keep Christmas afloat, they won’t succeed. A day meant for worship, joy, and a sense of God’s love will sink in the sands of selfish pursuits.

The alternative is to let the storms of the season pass while you anchor in the harbor of personal reflection. Take your cue from Mary, the mother of Jesus, who “treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19, NIV). Then when Christmas Day comes, you can raise your sails and let the winds of celebration blow freely.

—*Adapted from The Log of Christopher Columbus.*

Submitted by *Greg Asimakoupoulos, Naperville, Illinois.*

## BURNING YOUR SHIP

In 1519, Hernán Cortés outfitted some ships in Cuba to explore the coast of Mexico. After landing at the southeastern Mexican coast, Cortés ordered the men to have all of the yardage, sails, metal fittings, and the cannon removed from the ship. He then ordered the ships to be burned so there would be no retreat. It must have been a terrible sight for those men, standing on a hostile beach with a mysterious continent to their backs, to watch their ships burn. They probably thought they would never see home again. By burning his ships, Cortés committed himself and his soldiers to survival by conquest.

Are you willing to burn the ships in your life? Are you willing to say, “No retreat. It’s all for Jesus—my life, my plans, my goals, my ambitions, my heart, my mind. Lord, I’ll go where You want me to go.”

—*Adapted from an encyclopedia article on Cortés.*

Submitted by *Morris Chalfant, Bourbonnais, Illinois.*



## FAR FROM HOME?

When Anthony Olearchick, 86, and his wife Viola, 85, left their Kenilworth, New Jersey, home on an errand, the couple had no idea it would be over 24 hours before they would return home. A wrong turn sent them on a journey of perhaps 800 miles through three states. Their excursion did not end until they collided with another car in Newton, New Jersey.

Family members reported the couple missing after the usually punctual pair missed a doctors appointment. Viola suffers from several illnesses and requires two insulin shots per day and several other medications. Nevertheless, the couple only stopped two times over the 24-hour trip, and only for gas, not for food. "If you eat, you fall asleep," Anthony noted.

The next part of the story is the most curious. The extended journey could have been avoided, but Anthony refused to ask for directions during the entire trip. Even while stopping for gasoline twice he would not ask for help. In the end, having a collision spared them.

Many people are lost in life, and their own efforts take them further and further from God. It's time to stop and ask Him for help.

—Adapted from a July 1997 news article in the Bergen Record. Submitted by Chris R. Rainey, Fort Lee, New Jersey.

## GOD'S WORD

A person once asked, "Can I be a Christian without really knowing God's Word?"

My response was, "Yes, you can. But it's like being a quarterback without a playbook, a traveler without a map, a pilot without a compass, a CEO without a job description, a chef without a recipe, a building contractor without a blueprint, a conductor without any music, or a mailman without a route. All are in a position to do something, but have no direction. Is this the kind of Christian that is pleasing to the Lord? Is this the kind of Christian you want to be?"

—Patrick Newton, Terre Haute, Indiana

## AS YOUNG AS YOUR HOPES

General Douglas MacArthur wrote: "People grow old by deserting their ideas. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up interest wrinkles the soul. You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubts; as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fears; as young as your hope, as old as your despair."

—Adapted from 1985 Pastors Manual, by T.T. Crabtree.  
Submitted by Douglas R. Rose, Belleville, Illinois.

## LINCOLN LISTENED

Strong leaders know that listening carefully to others helps them in two ways. First, by hearing what others say, their own

vision for the future can be clarified, modified, and intensified by what they hear. Second, when leaders listen carefully and respectfully, even to criticisms, they not only gain additional insight, but often receive the support of the one speaking to them. When leaders listen, people rally around them.

An exceptional example is that of Abraham Lincoln. One of the reasons for his effectiveness as America's leader during the Civil War was his ability to listen. In his day there were no public opinion polls. "Yet he kept in touch with common people and was able to perceive what they were thinking better than any other American politician at that time," observes David Herbert Donald, Ph.D., professor of American history at Harvard University.

"With no way to measure public opinion, Lincoln invented one. The doors of the White House were thrown open almost every day for what Lincoln called his 'public opinion baths.' Dozens of people dropped in and voiced their opinions. Sometimes Lincoln shaped policy to follow public opinion. More often than not, however, he used his ability to read people's sentiments to determine how to sell them the policies he favored."

—Adapted from an interview with David Herbert Donald on leadership lessons from Abraham Lincoln.  
Submitted by Victor Parachin, Claremont, California.

## TO QUOTE

There is nothing more clearly declared in the Bible than that Christ will come and reign on earth during the Millennium.

—Billy Sunday, *Second Coming*, 1913

The Church had never such influence over the world as in those days when she had nothing to do with the world.

—Harnack

God judges what we give by what we keep.

—George Muller

It is the set of the sail that decides the goal, and not the storms of life.

—Anonymous

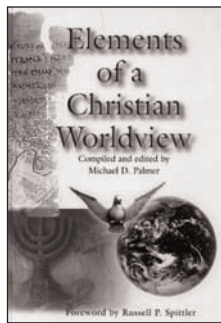
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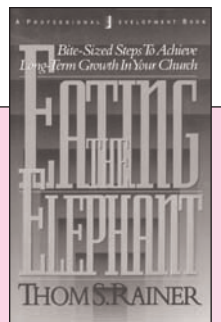
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George Barna (Word Publishing, 217 pp., hardcover, \$18.99)



Compiled and edited by Michael D. Palmer (Logion Press, 576 pp., hardback, \$39.95)



## Eating the Elephant

Thom S. Rainer (Broadman & Holman, 212 pp., hardcover, \$16.99)

If you have ever left church growth or other how-to conferences feeling overwhelmed, this book could bring encouragement. Rainer makes a strong case for proper perspective in pastoral leadership. He emphasizes that "church growth

and leadership books" describing the latest cutting-edge methodologies must be evaluated in view of the church's uniqueness and the parameters of Scripture.

His case studies are limited to his Southern Baptist denomination, but the book would be a valuable addition to any pastoral library. It provides insight into the many options for ministry, whatever the size of the congregation. It offers encouragement to the pastor of a small congregation who struggles when comparing his or her Sunday attendance to that of a megachurch.

After reading the book, I was drawn to a quote from Billy Graham: "We are not called to be successful. We are called to be faithful."

—Reviewed by Howard Cummings, senior pastor,  
Aurora First Assembly of God, Aurora, Colorado.

## The Second Coming of the Church

George Barna (Word Publishing, 217 pp., hardcover, \$18.99)

In *The Second Coming of the Church*, George Barna addresses classical social problems and how the church will address these problems. Without transformational change, the church will experience virtual oblivion in the next 50 years. This book sounds the alarm and makes specific suggestions for navigating change.

The book is divided into four parts. Parts I and II present the sociological problems in our nation and churches and attempt to build the case for change in ways that are meaningful to distinct generations. Barna presents three case studies of churches from the perspective of baby busters, baby boomers, and builders. He suggests that the church will have difficulty applying effective church models for one generation to other generations.

Part III develops the theological and theoretical rationale for addressing the changes. Important concepts in change are godly church leadership and a biblical worldview.

Part IV provides a prescription for avoiding the pitfalls identified in parts I and II. In this section he uses themes addressed in previous books such as the need for vision, change, and authentic

relationships in families and small groups.

This book is an excellent resource for church leaders engaging in strategic planning. Barna provides numerous lists that are useful in presenting the need and methodology for change to the church. His suggestions for the future church are worthy of prayerful consideration.

—Reviewed by Jeff Fulks, professor  
of behavioral sciences at Evangel  
University, Springfield, Missouri.

## Elements of a Christian Worldview

Compiled and edited by Michael D. Palmer (Logion Press, 576 pp., hardback, \$39.95)

*Elements of a Christian Worldview* explores the elements that contribute to a person's worldview. Palmer defines "worldview" as "a set of beliefs and practices that shape a person's approach to the most important issues in life."

Fourteen Pentecostal educators contributed to this exploration of the integration of faith, learning, and life. The chapters take the reader on a journey from "The Role of the Bible in Shaping a Christian Worldview" to "Politics for Christians (and Other Sinners)."

Throughout the text there are sidebars on topics such as "Torah," "Yiddish," and "The Christian Calendar," as well as mini-essays on "Free Will," "The Elements of the Lord's Supper," and "The Puritan Ethic."

*Elements of a Christian Worldview* is a textbook written for young adults who are being confronted by questions regarding fundamental facets of life. It is extremely helpful to those who are in a secular college or university environment, but anyone will profit from the book's rich insights.

The book helps the reader see the connection of Christianity to science, ethics, music and other entertainment, work, and leisure. Its greatest strength lies in its stimulation of the thinking process. Students of the Christian life will go away from their reading of this book with a desire to learn more and an ability to think more critically about Christianity's influence on society.

—Reviewed by Kenneth R. Horn,  
managing editor, Pentecostal Evangel,  
Springfield, Missouri.



## B O O K R E V I E W S

### Planting Growing Churches, 2nd Edition

Aubrey Malphurs (Baker, 368 pp., paperback, \$22.99)

Malphurs divides the task of church planting into four considerations: preparation, personnel, principles, and process. Each area is given multiple-chapter treatment in a volume that has gained, in its first edition, widespread respect among church-planting practitioners and theorists.

Threaded throughout the book is the constant challenge to reevaluate the cultural relevancy of how churches do church. The author argues that if it was all right to accommodate various aspects of 1950s culture, then it is all right to do the same for 1990s culture. What is unacceptable and ineffective is to offer a 1950 church to a 1990 community.

It is not necessary for the reader to accept every aspect of the author's user-friendly approach. He challenges the reader to think about which aspects of doing church are Bible-based and which are actually tradition-based and therefore changeable.

It is regrettable that Malphurs sometimes presents Scripture references as saying more than they actually say, sometimes views church planting as more specialized and sophisticated than it has to be, and disallows the leadership of women in local church ministry. It should be noted, as well, that the second edition adds essentially nothing to the first. However, the book, in either edition, is a worthy addition to anyone's study of church planting and growth.

—Reviewed by Judy Brown, professor of church ministries, Central Bible College, Springfield, Missouri.

### Purpose-Driven Youth Ministry

Doug Field (Zondervan, 400 pp., hardcover, \$19.99)

With insight from years of youth ministry, Doug Field explores the essential ingredients in building an effective youth ministry. His book breaks down the intimidating task of starting

a youth ministry from the ground up by clearly and thoroughly addressing the basic principles needed to begin a youth ministry. However, this is not simply a book for those starting in ministry. Field offers perspective and strategy that will benefit even the veteran youth pastor.

The book begins by focusing on the importance of knowing and defining a clear mission and purpose for youth ministry. Field walks the reader through a strategy for developing a purpose statement and explains the importance of having students and leaders know and embrace it. He also demonstrates the best way a youth pastor can share his or her vision, inspire students, and build a team of great leaders.

The remainder of the book presents practical issues that can make or break a youth ministry: relationships between youth pastor and parents, between youth pastor and senior pastor, how to build a worship team, and how to develop creative and strategic outreaches. Field acknowledges that his approach isn't *the model*, it's simply *a model*. This book and its principles provide an example for any youth worker.

—Reviewed by Scotty Gibbons, youth pastor, James River Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri.

### Pastors of Promise: Pointing to Character and Hope as the Keys to Fruitful Shepherding

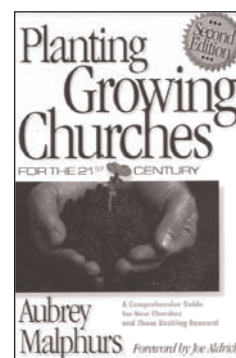
Jack Hayford (Regal, 288 pp., hardcover, \$17.99)

From the first chapter, dealing with the call of God on a pastor-leader's heart, to the final chapter where he sounds the warning to guard against the "thief," *Pastors of Promise* is laced with scriptural promises and is tintured with experiences, tests, trials, and triumphs from Hayford's own memoirs.

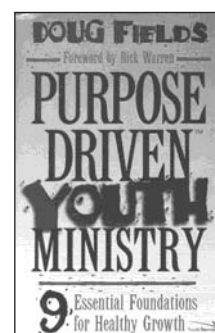
One of the great challenges facing pastors today is knowing how to accept the responsibility of God-given leadership without feeding the spirit of machoism. Pastor Hayford faces this issue head-on. He shows how, with the sword of the Spirit, to slay the two-headed dragon of male chauvinism and machoism.

*Pastors of Promise* is a timeless treasure that will be a pastor-leader's handbook for inspiration and strength until our task is completed, and we are transported to our homes on high.

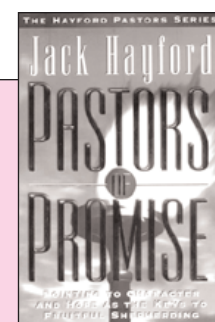
—Reviewed by J. Don George, senior pastor, Calvary Assembly of God, Irving, Texas.

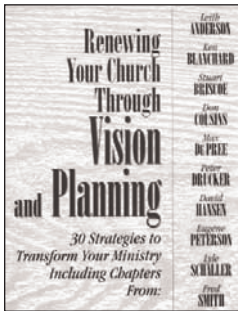


Aubrey Malphurs  
(Baker, 368 pp., paperback, \$22.99)

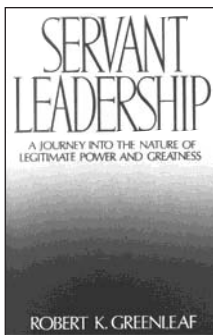


Doug Field  
(Zondervan, 400 pp., hardcover, \$19.99)

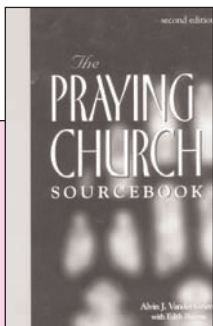




Marshall Shelley  
(Bethany, 288 pp.,  
hardcover, \$19.99)



Robert K. Greenleaf  
(Paulist Press, 338  
pp., paperback,  
\$14.95)



### The Praying Church Sourcebook

Alvin J. Vander Griend with Edith Bayena (Church Development Resources, 368 pp., paperback, \$24.95)

The second edition of *Praying Church Sourcebook* provides dozens of innovative ideas for local church prayer ministries. Some of the topics covered in the *Sourcebook* are: The prayer coordinator, the school of prayer, teaching children to pray, family prayer, prayer guides, prayer chains, senior intercessors, evangelism prayer groups, pastor's prayer support team, solemn assemblies, and prayer-walking. These chapters contain effective techniques to enhance local church prayer ministries.

Dr. Vander Griend speaks of the powerful prayer movement in our world today and the need for leaders to set the example for others by their prayer habits. He remarks, "The church's greatest deficiency today is in power—not in programs, strategies, materials, or ideas. And power for ministry can be released only through prayer." He stresses the fact ministry without prayer leads to work in the power of the flesh, and prayer without ministry becomes complacent Christianity.

—Reviewed by Sandra B. Clopine, former coordinator of the Assemblies of God National Prayer Center, Springfield, Missouri.

### Renewing Your Church Through Vision and Planning: 30 Strategies To Transform Your Ministry

Marshall Shelley (Bethany, 288 pp., hardcover, \$19.99)

If you are looking for pat answers and quick fixes, this book will leave you frustrated and ready to look for answers in other places. However, if you are a leader who likes to sort through the "stuff" until you find exactly what you are looking for, this book is the answer.

In *Renewing Your Church* you will meet creative and gifted leaders who rank among the finest in today's church world. Each of them writes about vision and planning from a unique perspective. In this mix pastors will find practical principles that will work well for them.

*Renewing Your Church* is the second volume in the *Library of Leadership Development* by *Leadership*. The same high quality typical of *Leadership* is exhibited here.

The chapters are relatively brief and to the point. Typically, each writer is anecdotal enough to break the possible boredom and redundancy of rigid leadership theory. Each writer provides helpful insight into the personal side of his own ministry.

Here is a book worth the time of a busy pastor who wants to tackle head-on the hardest job

of all—casting vision and making it work.

—Reviewed by Richard L. Dresselhaus,  
senior pastor, First Assembly of God,  
San Diego, California.

### Servant Leadership—A Journey Into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness

Robert K. Greenleaf (Paulist Press, 338 pp., paperback, \$14.95)

*Servant Leadership* is one of the 10 most important books in my collection. At first it seems secular, but then its scriptural roots grab you.

Robert Greenleaf spent 37 years in management research development and education at AT&T. After retirement, he taught at universities and served as a consultant for foundations. Greenleaf, a deeply committed Christian, came to the thesis of this book by reading Hermann Hesse's *Journey to the East*.

A great leader is first a servant—not someone with leadership abilities who decides to act like a servant. Greenleaf provides an exposition of the deep truths of Jesus' words on the subjects of privilege, money, and power. The book reads easily, but is not easily understood because of its priority on the power of symbolism.

For me, chapter 11, "An Inward Journey," is worth the price of the book. Greenleaf draws a parallel between Robert Frost's poem, "Directive," and the poorly understood passages of Jesus in Matthew about some revelation being hidden so the "wrong ones don't get it" (Matthew 13:10–17). Greenleaf provides a rare glimpse into Christ's teaching so often hidden from the perception of westerners.

—Reviewed by Delbert Tarr, Ph.D., former president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.

### Strategies for Church Growth

C. Peter Wagner (Regal, 216 pp., paperback, \$12.99)

If you are a leader whose idea of ministry is to ignore numbers and statistics, *Strategies for Church Growth* will confront you and your notions about effective leadership.

## B O O K R E V I E W S

Wagner feels that keeping count is a biblical and practical way of determining effectiveness. Jesus' disciples pulled in 153 large fish (John 21:11), and He later said, "I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). Wagner's point: "It is better to win 153 persons to Jesus Christ than 152. The more fish the better."

The harvest principle is a foundational idea in this book and is a launching pad for planning strategies for church growth. Workers, money, energy, and planning should focus on where the harvest appears most ready for reaping.

This book offers an excellent structure for working out the practical dimensions of growing a congregation or a mission by giving specifics for targeting your outreach. If you find yourself in a situation "characterized by little or no fruit," says Wagner, then look to four areas:

1. Intimacy with the Savior is a must.
2. Be sure you are preaching to the right people.
3. You have been using the wrong methods.
4. Be sure you are working hard enough.

This book can have an empowering and effective result on your leadership.

—Reviewed by T. Ray Rachels,  
Southern California District superintendent,  
Irvine, California.

### Strategies for Victorious Christian Living

Compiled and edited by Hal Donaldson, Ken Horn & Ann Floyd (Gospel Publishing House, 120 pp., paperback, \$5.99)

For years the *Pentecostal Evangel* has provided inspiring articles to encourage believers in their walk of faith. Christians look forward to these articles in each week's edition of the *Evangel*. The *Evangel* staff has now combined many of these articles into book form.

In today's society, believers want answers and help in living godly lives. *Strategies for Victorious Christian Living* provides this help. Each article contains practical advice for overcoming the challenges of life and living in victory over the difficulties we face.

*Strategies for Victorious Christian Living* contains 27 chapters on topics such as: prayer, salvation, healing, holiness, the Holy

Spirit, daily living, and other topics pertinent to the Christian life. Authors include: Thomas E. Trask, George O. Wood, Charles T. Crabtree, James K. Bridges, G. Raymond Carlson, Loren Triplett, J. Robert Ashcroft, and many others. These articles will encourage and strengthen the reader in his or her faith in Christ.

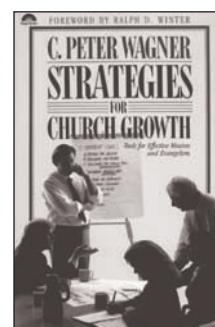
Readers can incorporate the articles in this book into their daily devotions or read a chapter before going to bed each night. The articles can also be used as a resource to provide answers for many of the specific needs of life.

*Strategies for Victorious Christian Living* will be an asset to any Christian's library. And it is a great gift to encourage others in their walk of faith.

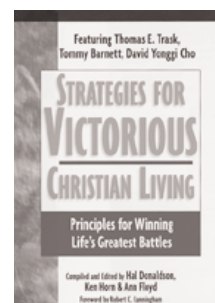
—Reviewed by Richard Schoonover,  
associate editor, *Enrichment Journal*,  
Springfield, Missouri.

#### A S E R V I C E

Enrichment reviews books we feel our readers would like to know about. These books are not always in accord with our point of view, and the reviews do not constitute a recommendation of the books. As a service to readers the Gospel Publishing House will supply any of these books, but books cannot be returned for credit.



C. Peter Wagner  
(Regal, 216 pp.,  
paperback, \$12.99)



Compiled and edited by  
Hal Donaldson, Ken  
Horn & Ann Floyd  
(Gospel Publishing  
House, 120 pp., paper-  
back, \$5.99)

### Women of Courage: Inspiring Stories of Faith, Hope, and Endurance

Debra Evans (Zondervan, 224 pp., hardcover, \$14.99)

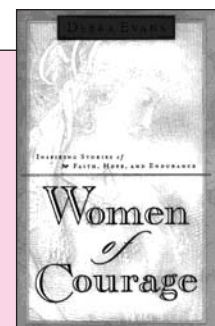
Through the lives of 12 women from biblical and Church history, the reader is drawn to moments of decision where these women's destinies were determined.

These women have impacted their world and revitalized many people's views of the significant role of women. The stories of these women come alive as these women encountered opposition and faced profound personal trauma.

In the warm style of a great storyteller, Evans describes the circumstances these women faced and how they responded with courage. These women do not necessarily represent powerful characters, just ladies who acted on the opportunities they encountered; perhaps just trying to pick up the thread of their lives.

It is important to identify with contemporary and historical role models as we search for ways to live a victorious Christian life. As women, we often face unique and fascinating challenges. We have a responsibility to respond with courage to the opportunities God gives to us.

—Reviewed by Rosalyn R. Goodall, adjunct professor of writing at  
Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri.





# NEWS & RESOURCES

## CHURCH STEWARDSHIP SERVICES

Church Stewardship Services (CSS) is a member of the Assemblies of God Financial Services Group. Its mission is simple: to provide Assemblies of God churches with superior, personalized, and creative stewardship consulting services that will challenge faith and require a dependence on the leadership of God's Holy Spirit.

CSS's individualized campaigns utilize a unique campaign manual and a variety of training resources, including E.M. Clark's book, *How To Be Happy Giving Your Money Away*.

To receive a complimentary CSS information packet or a complimentary copy of *How To Be Happy Giving Your Money Away*, call the CSS office at 800-962-7499.

## CHURCH STEWARDSHIP SERVICES CHALLENGES YOU TO SAY "YES, LORD!"

Would you like to strengthen, enhance, or expand the ministry of your church through capital improvements? Would you like to lead each person in your

congregation to seek and discover God's will for his/her life in relationship to the future ministry of the church? Would you like to encourage growth in the grace of giving? Would you like to teach the biblical principles of lifestyle stewardship? The answer to these questions is, "Yes, Lord!"

Studies reveal that in churches with 500–1,000 in attendance, over 40 percent of the families do not give anything of record to their church. Statistical studies also prove that in the average church, less than 20 percent of the members give 80 percent of the money for the work of the church.

Many people will not give until it is "demonstrated" for them, and "demonstrating" is scriptural. Read Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 1:5-7.

The words, "Yes, Lord!" are the cornerstone to a life that is pleasing to God. Any undertaking for God, great or small, has to start with these two words.

"Yes, Lord!" is also the theme for most capital stewardship campaigns, but it is much more than that. It's about attitude, character, and lifestyle.

A CSS consultant can assist churches in designing a program to challenge individuals in the church to participate in the campaign, embrace the vision of their church, and grow in the grace of giving.

The qualified consultants of Church Stewardship Services challenge you to say, "Yes, Lord!" For a complimentary CSS information packet or a complimentary copy of E. M. Clark's book *How To Be Happy Giving Your Money Away*, please call 800-962-7499.

## FREE 2000 HIGHLANDS BABY CALENDAR

Begin the millennium right by ordering a free Highlands baby calendar for the

families of your church. Each month features a cute baby picture along with a humorous or thought-provoking caption. For your convenience, the calendar also notes national holidays and Benevolences events.

To order free Highlands baby calendars for you and your church families, please complete and mail the Highlands baby calendar reply card in this issue of *Enrichment* and indicate quantity.

## NEW BENEVOLENCES DEPARTMENT BROCHURE AVAILABLE

A new, 20-page, full-color brochure describing the ministries of the Benevolences Department—Highlands Child Placement Services and Maternity Home, Hillcrest Children's Home, Aged Ministers Assistance, and Disaster Relief—is available for distribution in quantity.

To order this free brochure, check rsc #1 and indicate quantity.

## HIGHLANDS BABY BOOTEE CLUB DAY FEB. 20

The Highlands Baby Bootee Club is an innovative way Women's Ministries groups, Missionettes clubs, Sunday school classes, and other groups from your church can get involved in the pro-life ministry of saving babies from abortion through Highlands Child Placement Services and Maternity Home. Baby Bootee Club Day is Feb. 20, 2000.

Each group joining the Baby Bootee Club receives a starter packet, quarterly idea packet, and a plastic baby bootee-shaped coin bank for each member.

To receive Baby Bootee Club materials and for more information, check rsc #8.

## BEREAN COURSE WINS HONOR

"Assemblies of God History and Polity,"

a Berean University course, won first place in the undergraduate credit course category in the annual contest sponsored by Christianity Today, Inc., and the Association of Christian Continuing Education Schools and Seminaries (ACCESS) in January 1999, in Orlando, Florida. This marks the first time a Berean course has placed in a college-level category.

This annual competition motivates member schools to improve the quality of their courses. Judges consider the instructional design, materials production, and learner support of each course submitted. The Berean course scored 97 points out of a possible 100.

"Assemblies of God History and Polity" is a required course for every associate of arts student studying for a ministerial studies degree. However, the course benefits anyone wanting a more thorough knowledge of the Assemblies of God's heritage and policies.

The course's first unit traces the roots of the Fellowship from the revivals of the 19th century. The second unit examines the Constitution and Bylaws of the Assemblies of God. The third unit provides guidelines for leading the local assembly in conducting its business.

Berean University has been a member of ACCESS for 13 years. ACCESS has approximately 60 institutional and individual members; among them are such well-known schools as Wheaton College, Moody Bible Institute, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Members meet annually to share ideas and resources and to grow professionally.

## BEREAN OFFERS A FRESH CONCEPT IN ADULT EDUCATION

Berean University has developed a series of non-credit, non-diploma courses called, "Current Topics in Continuing

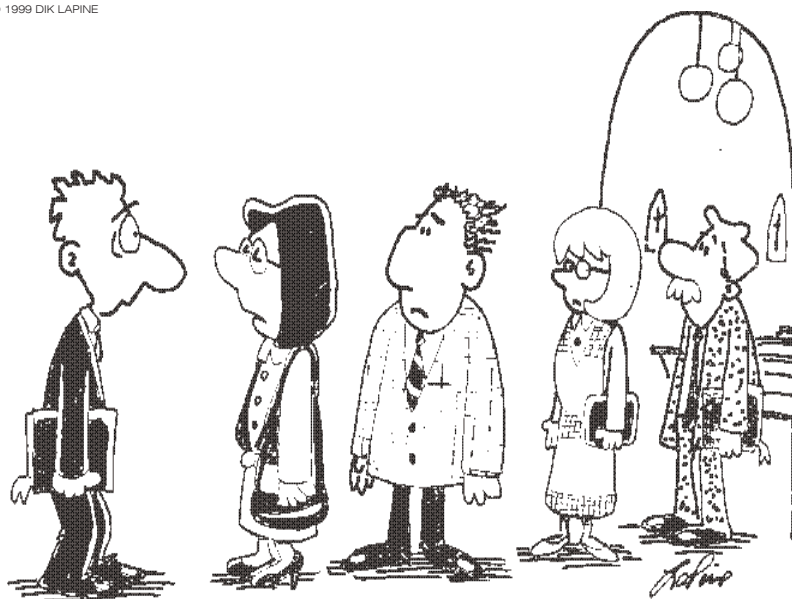
Education" courses. These courses will enhance any Christian's ministry, whether a pastor or a layperson. Final exams are not required unless the courses are taken for credit.

More compact than other for-credit courses, Current Topics studies are designed to give greater insight into specific areas. Two Current Topics courses available now are "Experiencing Life in the Spirit" and "The Evangelist and the 21st-Century Church."

"Experiencing Life in the Spirit" is a clear explanation of the fruit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The course's instructional guide is a companion to the textbook, *The Pentecostal Experience* by Donald Gee.

Evangelist James O. Davis authored the textbook and the instructional guide for "The Evangelist and the 21st-Century Church." He presents the essential steps to growing an evangelistic preaching ministry, one that includes the ministry of the local church pastor.

© 1999 DIK LAPINE



"Pastor, did you know that you plagiarized our last pastor with that sermon? He too spoke on Ephesians Six."

These steps include biblical, spiritual, and practical factors. The textbook is entitled *The Pastor's Best Friend: The New Testament Evangelist*.

Students' costs for these courses include \$15 for tuition, \$10 for the instructional guide, and the price of the textbook. For further information contact Berean at: 1-800-443-1083.

Berean is one of 17 endorsed A/G postsecondary schools.

## A/G POSTSECONDARY SCHOOLS

The following Assemblies of God postsecondary schools have announced the dates for the first day of classes for the spring 2000 semester, college days, and spring commencements.

American Indian College, Phoenix, Ariz.—Jan. 6; not yet set; April 28.

Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Mo.—Jan. 6; N/A; June 9.

Berean University, Springfield, Mo.—Varies; N/A; not yet set.

# NEWS & RESOURCES

Bethany College of the A/G, Scotts Valley, Calif.—Jan. 13; Feb. 17,18; May 6.

Black Hills Indian Bible College, Rapid City, S. Dak.—Jan. 4; N/A; April 21.

Central Bible College, Springfield, Mo.—Jan. 13; not yet set; May 4.

Evangel University, Springfield, Mo.—

Jan. 13; March 23,24; May 5.

Latin American Bible Institute, La Puente, Calif.—Jan. 25; Feb. 24-26; May 6.

Latin American Bible Institute, San Antonio, Tex.—Jan. 5; not yet set; April 28.

North Central University, Minneapolis, Minn.—Jan. 18; March 30,31; May 5.

Northwest College of the A/G, Kirkland, Wash.—Jan. 10; Jan. 22; May 6.

Southeastern College of the A/G, Lakeland, Fla.—Jan. 6; Feb. 3,4; April 21.

Southwestern A/G University, Waxahachie, Tex.—Jan. 13; not yet set; May 5.

Trinity Bible College, Ellendale, N. Dak.—Jan. 12; March 30,31 & April 1; May 4.

Vanguard University, Costa Mesa, Calif.—Jan. 12; N/A; May 6.

Valley Forge Christian College, Phoenixville, Pa.—Jan. 12; Feb. 10,11 & March 16,17; May 5.

Western Bible Institute, Phoenix, Ariz.—Jan. 10; March 20,21; May 1.

## ENRICHMENT JOURNAL PRODUCES 85TH ANNIVERSARY HISTORICAL TIMELINE

To mark the 85th anniversary of the Assemblies of God, *Enrichment Journal* has produced a high quality, glossy, full-color timeline depicting 100 years of Pentecostal and Assemblies of God history. The timeline highlights significant events from three major tracks of history: Assemblies of God History, Church History, and World History.

Illuminated with a wide selection of photos and text, *The Rise of Pentecostalism and the Assemblies of God (1899-1999)* timeline measures 20 1/2- by 29-inches and is suitable for framing. It will complement the décor of any church or minister's office.

Unfolded timelines sell for \$5 each; 2

or more \$4 each, postage and handling included. To order your copy of the A/G timeline, call 1-800-641-4310 and request item #751-028 or check rsc #10.

## SALVATION RESPONSES SENT TO THE EVANGEL REACH 4,000 MARK

In mid-May, the *Pentecostal Evangel* received its 4,000th salvation response form from a reader who had made a decision to follow Jesus Christ. That total was reached in 29 months. The Evangel began publishing "The ABCs of salvation" and a response form on a continuing basis with the Jan. 5, 1997, edition. Since then, the periodical has averaged more than 140 salvation indications per month.

An individual who shares his/her decision to become a Christian is sent a copy of the booklet, *Rock Solid—Building Your Relationship With Jesus*. In addition, the respondent's name, address, and telephone number are forwarded to a nearby Assemblies of God church for follow-up. Many of those accepting Jesus Christ were recipients of *Evangel*s distributed by churches and laypersons in their local communities.

Hundreds of men and women behind bars have also received Christ as their Savior by following "The ABCs of salvation." Nearly 8,000 copies of the *Evangel* are mailed weekly to correctional institutions across the United States. The cost of printing and mailing the magazine into prisons is underwritten by Light for the Lost's "Key Bearers" fund.

## VENTURE WITH GOSPEL PUBLISHING HOUSE PRODUCES FIRST BOOK WITH PENTECOSTAL EVANGEL IMPRINT

Through a joint venture with Gospel Publishing House, the *Pentecostal*

*Evangel* has produced its first book, *Strategies for Victorious Christian Living* (ISBN 0-88243-340-7). The book, containing material by 27 *Pentecostal Evangel* contributing authors, debuted at the 1999 General Council in Orlando, Fla.

Among the contributors are Thomas E. Trask, David Yonggi Cho, Tommy Barnett, Dan Betzer, and Robert C. Cunningham, who also wrote the book's foreword. Chapters featuring the work of late Assemblies of God statesmen like G. Raymond Carlson, J. Robert Ashcroft, Richard Champion, and Bernhard Johnson are also included. The book covers a wide range of subjects, such as prayer, revival, worship, holiness, and healing.

*Strategies for Victorious Christian Living* was compiled and edited by *Evangel* Editor Hal Donaldson, Managing Editor Ken Horn, and Associate Editor Ann Floyd. Copies can be ordered by calling GPH Customer Services at 800-641-4310 and requesting item #02-1032. The price is \$5.95 per copy.

### **PENTECOSTAL EVANGEL WEBSITE IMPROVED AND EASIER TO REACH**

What's the easiest way to reach the improved website of the *Pentecostal Evangel*? Just use the web address [pe.ag.org](http://pe.ag.org) and you'll find the Internet home of the Assemblies of God's official publication. No prefix or additional identification is needed.

The magazine's new web address became functional in spring 1999, when the *Evangel* homepage was undergoing improvements as part of the A/G Online Development Site. Along with other official Assemblies of God web locations, the *Evangel* site was standardized for ease of use by both Internet visitors and headquarters personnel.

A major benefit of the new site is the ability to update current material quickly.

Shortly after the April 20 events at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., the *Evangel* was able to place online the June 13 cover story and other articles dealing with the spiritual outpouring that resulted from the tragedy. It marked the first time a portion of the *Evangel* was available via the Internet prior to the actual printing of the magazine.

### **READERSHIP INCREASE FOR PENTECOSTAL EVANGEL**

By late spring, the *Pentecostal Evangel* had reached a 10-year high in circulation when the periodical's average distribution surpassed 268,000 copies per week. The figures reflect the first 21 issues of 1999. By the end of the year, it is projected that nearly 14 million copies of the *Evangel* will roll off the press during 1999.

### **TEEN CHALLENGE DAY IS DECEMBER 5**

A generation ago, drug addicts and alcoholics began walking through the doors of Teen Challenge. Since then, countless

people with testimonies of God's grace have walked out to become productive citizens—their lives changed forever. Many times they are restored to their families.

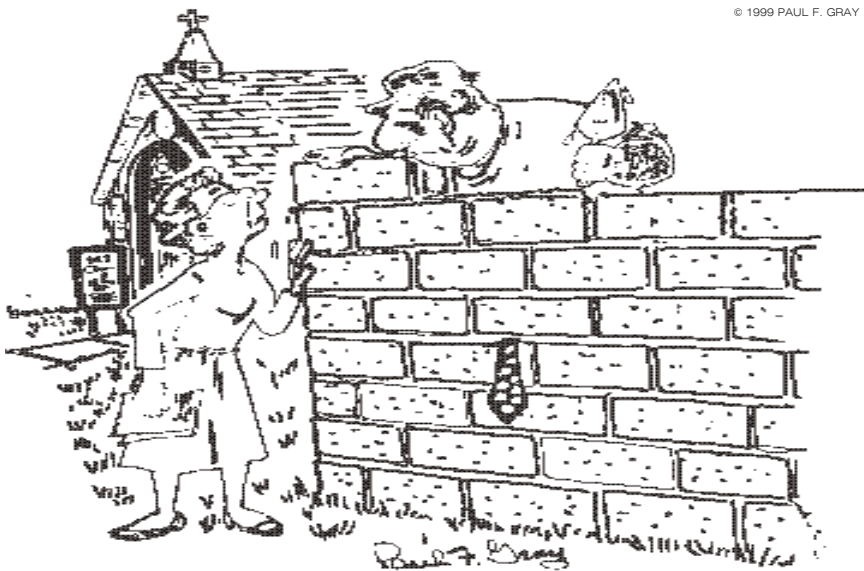
Teen Challenge is an incredible success story. However, the ministry is always in need of people willing to supply resources, prayer, and personal dedication.

"Many times our centers are full and short staffed," said Teen Challenge International, U.S.A. director John Castellani. "As a result, we can't take people in immediately. We have the solution to their problems; it's just a matter of being able to reach everyone."

The Division of Home Missions asks you to join in support of Teen Challenge with your prayers and finances on Dec. 5. For more information, contact Teen Challenge International, U.S.A. at 417-862-6969.

### **THE BOOK OF HOPE REACHING YOUTH IN THE SCHOOLS OF ENGLAND**

The *Book of Hope*, a Scripture book for teenagers, has young people in England



© 1999 PAUL F. GRAY

**"Have you seen the pastor? He came out here hours ago to see if he could hurry you along some!"**



# NEWS & RESOURCES

buzzing about the relevance of God's Word to their modern lives.

"I read it in one week," one teenager said.

"I read it, and my mum is reading it also," another student stated.

The *Book of Hope* is taken directly from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, telling the life story of Jesus in chronological order.

The "Anglicized" edition has been designed especially for the young people of Great Britain, with sections showing them how to address the felt needs of teenagers with answers from the Bible.

The book is the product of the Florida-based ministry Book of Life International, founded by missionary and gospel publisher Bob Hoskins. It comes in various versions—for younger children and teenagers, in dozens of

languages and in several editions—and has been placed in the hands of more than 60 million students around the world.

In many nations, the books are given to students in their public school classrooms, sometimes as part of the curriculum. Part of the book's popularity is due to its innovative design. It is produced in color, in a tabloid format, with text and graphics designed to capture the attention of today's teenager.

"We know from the Scriptures that God's Word cannot return void," states Rob Hoskins, Book of Life International executive director. "We're seeing that in England, where teenagers are discovering for the first time that the Bible and the plan of salvation through Jesus are life-changing forces."

The *Book of Hope* is changing the lives

of young people in England and around the world. The *Book of Hope*, USA is also available for American schools. For more information, call Rob Hoskins at 954-975-7777.

## **FROM THIS DAY FORWARD OFFERS GUIDELINES FOR GOOD LIVING**

In Jan. 1999, the Assemblies of God and EMERGE Ministries launched the new radio program, *From This Day Forward* with Dr. Richard Dobbins and Jerry Qualls. Pastors quickly realized the wisdom shared by Dr. Dobbins would be a valuable resource when helping hurting people.

"After listening to the first few broadcasts, we decided to make this information available in a printed format for review later by individuals, as well as



pastors,” stated Media Ministries general manager Jeff Nene. “That’s when we developed *Guidelines for Good Living*.

*Guidelines* is a condensed version of the weekly program discussions. For \$20, subscribers receive a notebook and a total of 52 Guidelines that will be mailed on a monthly basis throughout the year.

To subscribe to *Guidelines*, send a check for \$20 to: *From This Day Forward*, P.O. Box 70, Springfield, MO 65801; or, if ordering by credit card, call 1-888-400-2001 and order item #1001—*Guidelines for Good Living* subscription; or mark rsc #9.

### **MBA LAUNCHES INVESTMENT EDUCATION PROGRAM**

Ministers Benefit Association has launched an investment education program to inform ministers about the new investment options available with their MBA retirement funds. Over 50 districts have scheduled seminars designed to inform ministers about MBA Plan changes, introduce new investment options, and provide an opportunity to assess retirement planning needs.

MBA’s Original Plan, 403(b) Plan, and Choice Plan are now merged into MBA SELECT Plan. Seven different investment options, including new funds developed by the Assemblies of God that do not invest in companies that involve alcohol, abortion, pornography, tobacco or gambling, are now available. Ministers can continue to invest in a stable fixed income pool primarily invested in church and ministry loans.

A new 1-800 number and PIN number allow members to access account information 24 hours a day and modify investment strategies as often as quarterly. By the end of 1999, participants will also have online access to account

information, which is particularly valuable to foreign missionaries.

For more information on MBA’s new retirement options or for a copy of LifePoints, an award-winning investment education program, call 1-800-MBA-PLAN.

### **CHURCH PLANTING DAY IS FEB. 13, 2000**

What’s happening to the church in America today? Revival? Maybe. But the underlying truth is, America is dying of spiritual complacency.

“Most established churches in America spend too much time looking inward and trying to figure out how to nurture their members,” said Home Missions Church Planting Director Paul Drost. “The church needs to look at itself as a family and procreate or plant more churches. There’s no better nurturing experience for a church body than the planting of another church.”

Over 10 churches (including all denominations) are closed each day compared to about 3 1/2 that are opened. “What many people don’t know,” Drost said, “is the Assemblies of God is not insulated against this complacency. In 1998, excluding churches that transferred in, we closed more churches than we opened.”

Drost believes America, which ranks third behind China and India in the number of unsaved people, is at a crossroads. “We not only need to plant more churches to reach America, we need to keep from closing churches.”

According to church statistics, 50 percent of all Assemblies of God churches planted close within 5 years. “That’s going to change,” Drost commented. “We now have in place a screening and training program, complete with ‘boot camp.’ Districts can use the training

program to help ensure each church plant is successful.”

However, these new training programs and camps are costly. On Sunday, Feb. 13, 2000, please ask your congregation to financially support the Church Planting Department through a special offering or monthly support. “We cannot sit and wait for America to come to the church—we must take the church to America,” Drost said.

### **NEW ADULT SMALL GROUP STUDIES PRESENTED BY RADIANT LIFE**

The four-book adult Biblical Living Series was released by Radiant Life at General Council in Orlando. This series focuses on relationships and everyday Christian living. It is ideal for adults of

# NEWS & RESOURCES

all ages to use in Sunday school or other small group settings. "We believe our churches want and need numerous options for discipling adults. This series will be a great addition to our list of adult resources," said Paul Smith, senior editor for Radiant Life's Adult curriculum.

The Biblical Living Series includes four titles: *You and God*, *You and Others*, *You and Your Family*, and *You and Your Priorities*. All four titles are available from Gospel Publishing House. To order or request more information, call 800-641-4310.

## RADIANT LIFE RELEASES FIRST-EVER YOUTH ELECTIVES

*Holy Spirit: The Power Source* introduces a new line of discipling resources for youth. These real-life studies allow youth leaders and Sunday school teachers to target foundational and contemporary issues in their youth groups and Sunday school classes. "We've been looking forward to this day for quite some time," said Tammy Bicket, senior

editor for Radiant Life Youth curriculum. "This new series allows us to provide two lines of youth products that will be among the best resources for youth Sunday school and small group ministries."

Real Life Series studies will focus on two tracks: Essentials, covering doctrine and Christian life fundamentals, and The Edge, dealing with contemporary issues from a biblical perspective. The Real Life Series will ultimately feature up to 24 titles. Four titles are already available: *Holy Spirit: The Power Source*; *Different, But Alike*; *Facing My World*; and *To Infinity and Beyond: The End Times*. To order or request more information, call 800-641-4310.

## FOUR NEW YOUNG EXPLORERS CHILDREN'S CHURCH CURRICULUM TITLES AVAILABLE

Radiant Life Children's Church undated curriculum for elementary grades is releasing four new titles: *The Lord's Army: Lessons From the Ten Commandments*; *Here Come the Judges*;

*Lessons From Old Testament Judges*; *Olympic Training: Lessons in Christian Living*; and *Around the World in 90 Days: Lessons in World Missions*. Similar to other Young Explorers releases, these new titles follow the theme approach. *The Lord's Army* lets students get a glimpse of army life as they study the Ten Commandments. *Here Come the Judges* takes students into a newsroom environment as they explore the Old Testament judges. *Olympic Training* helps students understand training to be an Olympian as they train to be Christians. *Around the World in 90 Days* uses an airport environment to study about world missions and a personal mission field.

Young Explorers titles are complete, reusable kits, offering reproducible activity pages, cassettes, posters, and ready-to-teach lesson plans in a three-ring binder. To order these new titles or request more information on Young Explorers, call GPH at 800-641-4310.

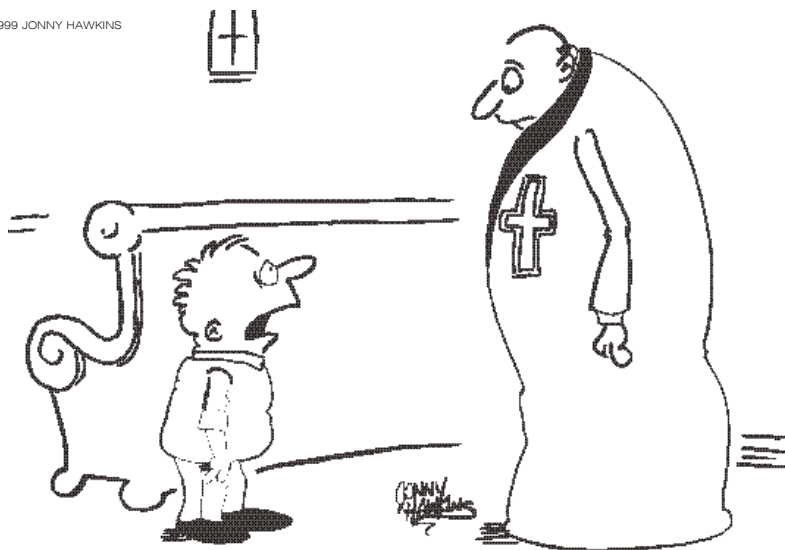
## LIGHT FOR THE LOST CONVENTION 2000 MOVES TO AUGUST

The LFTL 2000 convention will take place in Indianapolis, Ind., Aug. 7, 8, 2000. The convention will be held in conjunction with the 2000 Celebration. Make plans now to attend. Call 800-988-0292 for information.

## NEW JUNIOR COUNCILMEN BROCHURE AVAILABLE

Light for the Lost is now offering a new Junior Councilmen brochure. The brochure explains the purpose of the Junior Councilmen program and how boys can become members. A new contemporary logo and clear layout are just two of the features of the new brochure. To order call 800-641-4310 and ask for item #728-015.

© 1999 JONNNY HAWKINS



"I like what you said about being a man of principal.  
I visited him six times this week."



## **2000 NATIONAL WOMEN'S MINISTRIES DAY THEME EMPHASIZES EFFECTIVE OUTREACH**

In 1999, the new identification for Women's Ministries projects nationwide, "Women Touching the World," was introduced. This new umbrella name covers all ministries on national, district, sectional, and local levels. The theme has inspired women across the Fellowship to effectively touch their world by sharing their faith through lifestyle evangelism.

February 27 is National Women's Ministries Day in the Assemblies of God. The theme for 2000, "TOGETHER—Women Touching the World," is supported by the theme Scripture, "In him you too are being built together to become a dwelling

in which God lives by his Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22, NIV).

While one woman can make an eternal difference in the kingdom of God, when women join together with one goal—touching women and girls with the love of Christ—their ministry is more effective. Together we can go beyond all limits and reach those who are lost and become instruments through whom His Spirit can touch a hurting world.

The 2000 National Women's Ministries Day service provides a wonderful opportunity to focus on honoring the women of your church, encouraging them to draw unsaved and unchurched women into their circles, attracting them through love and friendship in Christ. Pastors may also wish to recognize the women of the church for

their varied and valuable contributions to the ministries of the entire church.

Receiving an offering for the national Women's Ministries Department as part of the day's activities helps cover the significant costs of the ministries provided to some 425,000 women and girls involved in Assemblies of God Women's Ministries and Missionettes.

Information for planning a dynamic National Women's Ministries Day service is mailed to churches in December. If your church does not receive the packet containing a program guide, offering envelopes, a sample bulletin cover, and other theme-related items by Jan. 15, call the national Women's Ministries Department at 800-448-2235. If you would like a free National Women's Ministries Day program guide, check rsc #11.

# With Christ

Robert M. Abbott  
Springfield, Missouri

Juan F. Alire  
San Jose, California

Romualdo E. Ariza  
Roxbury, Massachusetts

O.R. Ball  
Farmington, Arkansas

Eugene E. Barger  
Sallisaw, Oklahoma

Lessie C. Barrett  
Cedar Park, Texas

Florence M. Beck  
Altadena, California

John Leonard Beck  
Claremore, Oklahoma

Zola P. Bedell  
Kingfisher, Oklahoma

Paul J. Bicket  
Waupaca, Wisconsin

Oliver L. Blackwell  
Weatherford, Texas

Clarice Bottenfield  
Mount Solon, Virginia

Robert E. Bowen  
Pensacola, Florida

Tommie L. (Green) Bowen  
Pensacola, Florida

Earl R. Briggs  
Thermal, California

Thelma Brotton  
Tempe, Arizona

Willard T. Cantelon  
Victoria, B.C., Canada

Beulah M. Carlson  
Orange, California

G. Raymond Carlson  
Springfield, Missouri

Orville E. Carter  
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Sandra K. Casady  
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Brandon, Mississippi

Herbert J. Cooper  
Enterprise, Alabama

James H. Cooper  
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Richard P. Crabtree  
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# In Closing

BY THOMAS E. TRASK

The writer of the Proverbs states in 29:18, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” Another version reads that where there is no vision “the people cast off restraint.” The best commentaries all agree, where the prophet sees no vision and fails to declare God’s truth, the people are deprived of moral restraint.

It is imperative for the church of Jesus Christ to declare that the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the sure judgment of God are coming unless we as a people repent and turn back to God. Our preachers must be prophets, warning and forewarning what God’s Word says.

In recent years, people do not believe sin is as sinful as it once was. Judgment has become doubtful, mercy universal, and God’s love wonderful. The last part is true, but so are the first three. What is preached or taught from the pulpit, the pew accepts, and the public acts upon.

Judges 21:25 states, “In those days...every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” The Word of the Lord was scarce in those days. There was no open vision” (1 Samuel 3:1). When there is no vision, the immediate effect is in moral conduct. People lose sight of eternity. The end result is people will perish. As we start the 21st century, we need a fresh vision of God, a divine awareness of His holiness, His majesty, and His glory.

William Booth of the Salvation Army once said we must be spared from:

1. Religion without the Holy Ghost.
2. Christianity without Christ.
3. Forgiveness without repentance.
4. Politics without God.
5. Heaven without hell.

As pastors and churches, we must look at our communities as God sees them—sheep without shepherds, lost men and women. Then we must ask Him how we can reach people with this glorious gospel. God knows how to reach a city, and He will give us a vision of how it is to be done and what methods need to be used.

***As pastors and churches, we must look at our communities as God sees them—sheep without shepherds, lost men and women.***

Vision will only come as a result of prayer, both individually and corporately. This might require waiting in the presence of God until the vision becomes clear. Then we can come out of the prayer closet and speak to the hearts of God’s people by saying, “Thus saith the Lord.” Then the church will respond to the challenge to reach, teach, and touch those who need to have the gospel of Jesus Christ. There will be a passion within the hearts of God’s people.

Five things will affect the church as a result of a fresh vision—Five Cs:

**Costly.** There is a price leadership will need to pay for the church to have a fresh vision that will result in revival. We can expect conflict; there are those who are happy with the status quo. They are happy with the way things are while men and women are going into a Christless eternity. But if we will pay the price, standing firm in the vision God has given us, He will hear and answer our prayer.


**Consecration.** Consecration assures us of victory. When the Children of Israel

consecrated themselves before God, they were victorious. When we consecrate ourselves, God is able to work in and through us. We become channels of God’s power and presence. Read Romans 12:1.

**Cleansing.** God works through clean vessels. The Scripture states that without holiness, “no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). At Isaiah’s cleansing (Isaiah 6:7), God pronounced that “thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.” After this cleansing, Isaiah had a God-given vision.

**Commissioning.** A fresh vision will result in a new commission. In Isaiah 6:9, God commanded Isaiah, “Go, and tell this people.” God also wants us to go. When we have a fresh vision, there will be a compelling urgency to respond, “Here am I, send me.”

**Change.** We will be changed from glory to glory; from self to the image of His Son. We will never be the same. We will have a different set of priorities. Our goals will not be man-made, but God-given. We will see people differently; we will feel for people differently; we will hear differently. We will hear the cry of broken hearts. We will see people turn from sin to a Savior. Instead of death, they will have life.

I pray that as a church in the 21st century we will have a fresh, clear vision of who God is, what He wants to do, and the way He wants to do it. For it is “not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord” (Zechariah 4:6). 

*Thomas E. Trask is general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.*





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"It's the chairman of the budget committee; he has insomnia."