

# enrichment

WINTER 2003

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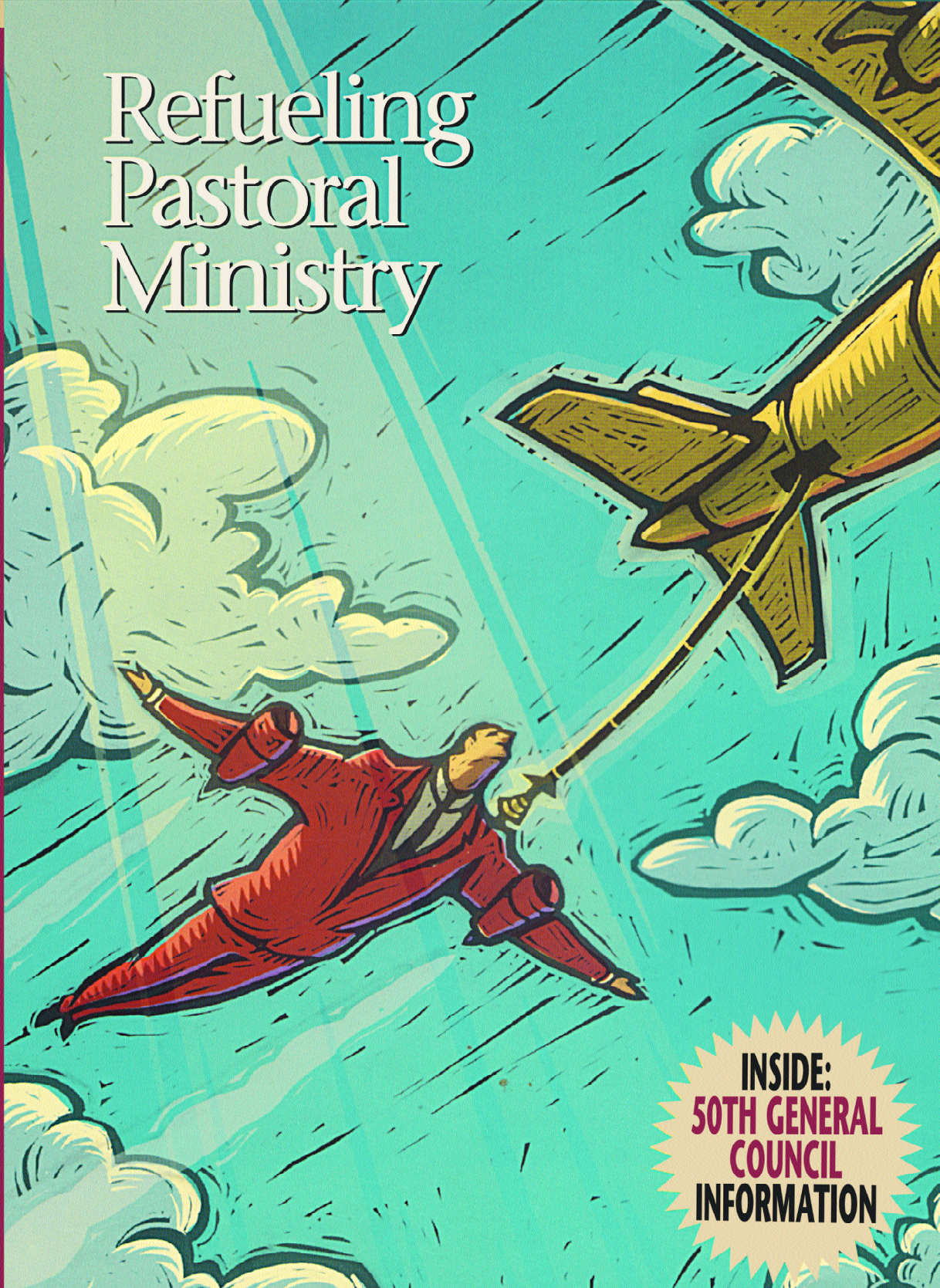
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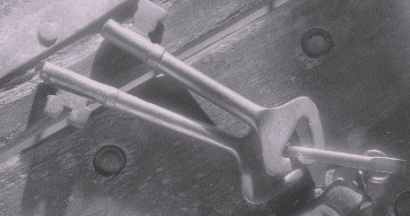
## Refueling Pastoral Ministry



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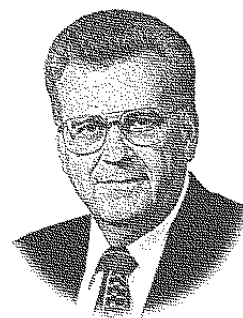






# ministry matters

BY GARY R. ALLEN



## Refueling Pastoral Ministry

**M**ilitary fighter planes are critical to air combat and air-to-ground support. However, these fast, agile fighters cannot carry large amounts of fuel. They depend on refueling tankers to replenish them. The fighter connects to the tanker in midair and in a few minutes is replenished and ready to continue its mission.

Combat pilots become fatigued as well. An influx of other pilots to help in the mission can minimize exhaustion and ineffectiveness.

Pastors face similar issues that fighter pilots face. We can never assume we presently have all of the resources and energy necessary for the remainder of our ministry. We must constantly be replenished from our Heavenly Father and from those with whom we serve.

Endurance in ministry is contingent on constant refueling. When ministers do not refuel themselves physically, spiritually, and emotionally, they risk losing their effectiveness and may even retreat from ministry altogether.

Many denominations are presently facing a serious crisis with a decrease in the number of ministers. Research indicates that several hundred ministers leave the ministry each month mainly due to disillusionment and burnout. Fifty percent of those who leave the ministry do so within the first 5 years.

The Assemblies of God is not yet at the same critical crossroads as other organizations. However, warning signs are on the horizon, and we could be in serious trouble in the future if we do not take more aggressive action in refueling

ministers and mobilizing future ministers.

While preparing this issue of *Enrichment*, I asked myself, *Why am I in the ministry?* The contributing factors are:

First, I was aware of God's call on my life at 9 years of age. Consistent Sunday school attendance, active participation in youth group, challenging worship services, and encouraging pastors gave me positive reinforcement.

Second, I was raised in an Assemblies of God deacon's home. My grandfather and an uncle were pastors. From as early as I can remember, I had a positive image of both the pulpit and the pew.

Third, I was mentored by senior pastors with whom I served as a staff pastor. These mentors cared enough to be supportive while being firm and direct in shaping my personal life and ministry.

Continual contact with ministry peers helped me remain in the ministry. Mutual nurturing is essential to maintaining a proper perspective of our calling. Times of discouragement are common to all of us. Those who are called need to know that their emotions and questions are common.

Building healthy relationships early in the formation period of the call of God is important. Transparency, vulnerability, partnering in prayer, and accountability are the elements of these healthy interpersonal relationships. When people learn to trust spiritual mentors, unnecessary fears can be minimized or eliminated. Such friendships maintain ministry fulfillment and may keep you from leaving the ministry in frustration.

Pastor, you are the key to raising up future ministers. Mentoring by a patient, sensitive pastor can facilitate the call of God on a young man or woman. Be cognizant of whom God may be calling into ministry. Help them distinguish between a true call and simply an emotional response. Your mentoring through the adolescent years can be invaluable and perhaps prevent some from wandering away from the call of God.

Also be alert to the second-career person whom God may be calling into full-time ministry. Many are coming from the workplace with rich life experience and skills that are valuable to the ministry. However, you need to help them make sure they are truly called into ministry and not just frustrated with their present occupation.

You also need to be sensitive in discerning what God is doing in the lives of others. Sometimes, as pastor, you will know that God is dealing with people about ministry before they even realize it themselves. You may have opportunity to confirm and encourage the call of God on their lives.

What wonderful opportunities you have to enhance your ministry and to facilitate ministry to and through others. I trust that the articles in this issue will refuel your ministry and encourage you to mobilize others. **E**

*Gary R. Allen, D.Min., is national coordinator of the Ministerial Enrichment Office and executive editor of Enrichment journal, Springfield, Missouri.*



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# e shorts

## Clergy Watch

### AMERICA'S PROTESTANT CLERGY

**W**ith more than 500,000 pastors serving in Christian churches in the United States, including some 300,000 senior pastors, survey data from the Barna Research Group provides insight into the background of America's Protestant clergy.

#### SELF-DESCRIPTION OF THEIR CHURCH (2001)

- 42 percent say their church is "fundamentalist"
- 22 percent say their church is "charismatic or Pentecostal"
- 14 percent say their church is "theologically liberal"
- 80 percent say their church is "theologically conservative"
- 80 percent say their church is "evangelical"
- 34 percent say their church is "seeker-driven"

- 31 percent say their church is "Calvinist or Reformed"
- 33 percent say their church is "Wesleyan or Arminian"

#### PASTORS' PROFILE (2001)

- 12 percent of Protestant senior pastors have been divorced.
- 94 percent of Protestant senior pastors are currently married.
- 93 percent are male.
- 63 percent have graduated from seminary.
- median age for senior pastors is 49.
- median years in full-time ministry is 16.
- median years at current church is 4.

#### COMPENSATION (2002)

Protestant pastors finally broke the \$40,000 mark in average annual compensation. Pastoral compensation

has risen from a median of \$32,040 a decade ago to \$40,077 today. That represents a 25-percent increase since 1992, a 10 percent rise in the past 5 years, and a jump of 4.9 percent above last year's average.

Education makes a substantial difference in compensation: seminary graduates receive an average of 38 percent more compensation than do senior pastors who did not graduate from a seminary. Currently about three out of every five senior pastors (63 percent) have a seminary degree.

Denominational affiliation also impacts earnings. Baptist churches—which include more than 20 different Baptist sects and constitute about one-quarter of all Protestant churches—have pastors who earn just slightly more than the national average (about \$300 per year more). In comparison, among the least-highly compensated pastors are those serving

charismatic and Pentecostal churches; their median package was 16 percent below the national average. At the high end of the compensation scale are pastors ministering in mainline churches, whose package is worth nearly 14 percent more than the norm (\$45,510).

Salary packages vary significantly according to the size of the church. Pastors of churches that attract less than 100 adults in a typical week receive compensation valued at \$31,613 annually. Pastors of churches that attract 100 to 250 adults get 50 percent more (\$47,368). The largest churches (251 or more people) get compensation that averages \$58,333.

#### SPIRITUAL GIFTS (2001)

When asked to identify their primary spiritual gift, this is what senior pastors said:

- 40 percent, preaching or teaching
- 12 percent, pastoring
- 6 percent, encouraging
- 4 percent, leadership

### Pastoral Compensation Levels, 1997-2002

	1997	1999	2001	2002
<b>Under \$30,000</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>\$30,000 to \$59,999</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>61%</b>
<b>\$60,000 or more</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Median</b>	<b>\$36,410</b>	<b>\$35,195</b>	<b>\$38,214</b>	<b>\$40,077</b>

Barna Research Group Online, Ventura, Calif., [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org)  
 Research Archives: See Pastors;  
 News Releases: A Profile of  
 Protestant Pastors in Anticipation  
 of Pastor Appreciation Month,  
 Sept. 25, 2001, and Pastoral  
 Compensation Hits New High,  
 May 28, 2002.  
 Used by permission.



# Boomers to Zoomers

## IS THE CHURCH IMMUNE TO THE CHALLENGE OF A DISAPPEARING GENERATION?

Adults of different generations are not responding to the church experience in the same ways. This is frustrating for everyone involved. Older Christians are appalled by what seems like the abandonment of corporate worship by so many of the young. Younger adults are equally appalled by what feels like the irrelevance of many churches to their way of life.

Part of this journey seems to be an aversion to standard-brand church experiences. The depth of this disinclination can be seen in results reported recently in the U.S. Congregational Life Study funded by the Lilly Endowment. After interviewing over 300,000 parishioners in 2,200 congregations that covered

8 denominations, the study found the following distribution of attendance by age. (See graph below.)

The point here is in the extremes. The percentage of 15- to 24-year-olds in the general population is almost twice what it is in the church. Meanwhile, the percentage of people over 65 is 50 percent greater inside the church than in the country at large. While the denominations studied did not include the Assemblies of God, it would be dangerous to conclude we are immune to the challenge of a disappearing generation.

There are several ways leaders can respond to this disturbing trend:

1. *Do the math:* Normally, under-35s should be at least 30 percent of adult attendance.

2. *Don't panic:* Jesus is still the Head of the church and values all generations equally.

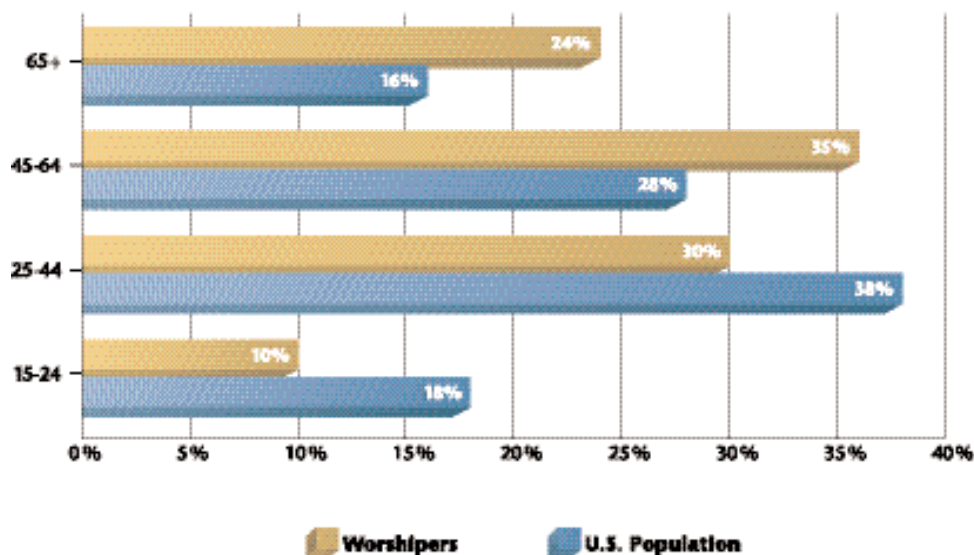
3. *Now panic:* Avoiding this issue could put a church on a trajectory for extinction. Our leaders may already sense this, but need you to articulate the issue.

4. *Consider adding:* You don't have to demolish your church. Add something (such as a new worship service) that helps young adults on their spiritual journey rather than forcing them to be part of yours.

**Recommended Resource:**  
Gibbs, Eddie. 2000. *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

—Earl Creps

Age of Worshippers



## ASSEMBLIES OF GOD MISSIONS LEADER DIES



The Rev. J. Philip Hogan, longtime Assemblies of God World Missions

director, passed away October 27, 2002, in Springfield, Missouri, at the age of 86 after a lengthy illness. He was born December 4, 1915, near Olathe, Colorado.

Deeply committed to fulfilling the Great Commission, Hogan spent his life in missions. During his 30-year tenure (1959-1989) as executive director of the Division of Foreign Missions for the Assemblies of God, his leadership had a profound effect on Pentecostal organizations around the world. Always devoted to building fraternal ties to national church organizations, Hogan sparked the birth of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship that now represents some 40 million Assemblies of God members worldwide.

"This church has lost a giant in the homegoing of J. Philip Hogan," said Rev. Thomas E. Trask, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God. "He is recognized around the world as a church statesman. His heartbeat for world missions, his passion to see the gospel preached in every nation set the course for the Fellowship's world missions efforts. The church continues to reap rich benefits from his years of missions leadership."



## Did You Know...

**L**iving in a faith-based household can impact giving. According to a 2001 Public Sector study, individuals living in households where members attend religious services each month tended to be more generous givers—\$2,151 versus \$964 contributed by those in households where members did not regularly attend such services.

- The IRS offers a free, 25-page, downloadable Tax Guide for Churches and Religious Organizations. ([www.irs.gov/pub/irs-utl/pub1828.pdf](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-utl/pub1828.pdf)).

- Each day, nearly 4,800 adolescents (ages 11 to 17) smoke their first cigarette; of these, nearly 2,000 will become regular smokers. It is estimated that at least 4.5 million adolescents are cigarette smokers. Approximately 90 percent of smokers begin smoking before the age of 21. ([www.lungusa.org/tobacco/not](http://www.lungusa.org/tobacco/not)).



- Teens are drinking alcohol at an epidemic rate. A recently released study found that 31 percent—more than 5 million—high school students binge drink at least once a month. (National Center

on Addiction and Substance Abuse)

- The “fair market value” of parsonages provided by churches to clergy is still exempt from taxes, despite earlier attempts to eliminate the deduction. Earlier this year, President Bush signed the Clergy Housing Clarification Act of 2002 (H.R. 4156), protecting clergy housing exemption. (<http://www.taxplanet.com/legislation/parsonage-jct/parsonage-jct.html>).

- Every 3.1 minutes someone will die from stroke. Yet, when it comes to health concerns, only 1 percent of Americans are worried about the disease, which is the third leading cause of death in the U.S. (American Stroke Association; [www.strokeassociation.org](http://www.strokeassociation.org))

- While people used the Internet in 2001 for gambling, auctions, stock trades, online banking, and telephone calls, even more used it for religious or spiritual purposes. Some 28 million surfers—or 25 percent of all Internet users—did so. Of this 28 million, some 3 million sought information daily. (Pew Internet & American Life Project)

- Married with children is a decreasing reality for most Americans. In fact, the proportion of traditional family households dropped to 24 percent of all households in 2000, from 40 percent in 1970. (U.S. Census Bureau)

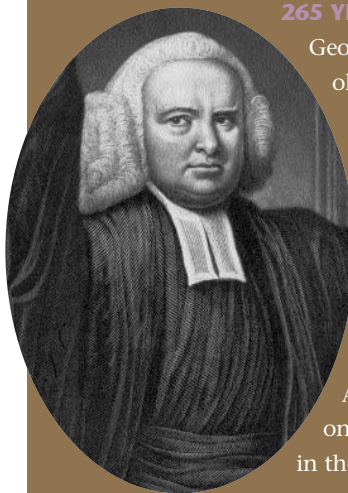
- Although 9 out of 10 people may marry someday, half may divorce. (U.S. Census Bureau)

—Lisa Crayton

## History at a Glance

### WHITEFIELD: CATALYST OF THE GREAT AWAKENING

265 YEARS AGO—1738



George Whitefield, a 24-year-old clergyman, was declaring the gospel of Christ with such fervor and power that no church could hold the multitudes that flocked to hear him. He became the primary instrument of revival in the Great Awakening that took place on both sides of the Atlantic in the mid-18th century.

25 YEARS AGO—1978

Assemblies of God evangelist John Stallings received the National Gospel Music Association's Dove Award for his legendary gospel song, “Learning to Lean,” as America's best gospel song in 1977.

50 YEARS AGO—1953

In January, President Dwight D. Eisenhower prayed for divine guidance as his first official act as President of the United States. A portion of his prayer included, “Give us, we pray, the power to discern clearly right from wrong, and allow all our words and actions to be governed thereby, and by the laws of this land.”

75 YEARS AGO—1927

The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, founded by evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson, was incorporated in Los Angeles on December 30. She served as founder and president of the organization until her death in 1944.

100 YEARS AGO—1903

A powerful revival swept through Moorhead, Minn., beginning in a Scandinavian Free Mission church (now Evangelical Free), pastored by John Thompson. Many received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the revival fires soon spread to neighboring Fargo, North Dakota, and other towns in the northern U.S.

—Glenn Gohr

# Health Watch

## ARE YOU AT RISK FOR DIABETES?

Sixteen million Americans have diabetes—and one out of three doesn't know it. Take this test to see if you are at risk for having diabetes. Write in the points next to each statement that is true for you. If a statement is **not true**, write a zero. Then add your total score.

1. My weight is equal to or above that listed in the chart. **YES 5** \_\_\_\_
2. I am under 65 years of age and I get little or no exercise. **YES 5** \_\_\_\_
3. I am between 45 and 64 years of age. **YES 5** \_\_\_\_
4. I am 65 years old or older. **YES 9** \_\_\_\_
5. I am a woman who has had a baby weighing over 9 pounds at birth. **YES 1** \_\_\_\_
6. I have a sister or brother with diabetes. **YES 1** \_\_\_\_
7. I have a parent with diabetes. **YES 1** \_\_\_\_

**TOTAL:** \_\_\_\_

## SCORING

### 3-9 points

You are probably at low risk for having diabetes now. But don't forget

AT-RISK WEIGHT CHART	
Height (in feet and inches, without shoes)	Weight (in pounds, without clothing)
4'10"	129
4'11"	133
5'0"	138
5'1"	143
5'2"	147
5'3"	152
5'4"	157
5'5"	162
5'6"	167
5'7"	172
5'8"	177
5'9"	182
5'10"	188
5'11"	193
6'0"	199
6'1"	204
6'2"	210
6'3"	216
6'4"	221

about it—especially if you are Hispanic/Latino, African American, American Indian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander—people groups with a higher risk for having diabetes. Keep your risk low by losing weight if you are overweight, being active most days, and eating low fat meals that are high in fruits and vegetables, and whole grain foods.

### 10 or more points

You are at high risk for having diabetes. Only your health-care provider can determine

if you have diabetes. See your health care provider soon and find out for sure.

If you weigh the same or more than the amount listed for your height, you may be at risk for diabetes.

## DIABETES FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Diabetes is a silent disease. You can have it for years and not know it. During this time, harm to your eyes, nerves, and kidneys may have been going on for 7 to 10 years. Diabetes kills more than 193,000 people each year.

Some people with diabetes exhibit symptoms; some do not. If you have any of the following symptoms; contact your doctor:

- Extreme thirst
- Frequent urination
- Unexplained

weight loss

For more information on diabetes, call 1-800-DIABETES.

This information is not a substitute for medical advice or treatment. The ADA recommends consultation with your doctor or health-care professional.

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Association.

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# Amu<sup>z</sup>ing Grace

## TOP 10 REASONS PEOPLE GIVE FOR LEAVING A CHURCH (AND WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN)

10. We like a more traditional service.  
*We don't want to sing any song written by someone who is not dead yet.*
9. We want more for our kids.  
*We want a kids' program that doesn't need us to help.*
8. We don't feel like we belong.  
*There is no one new left to gossip about.*
7. We desire an earlier service time.  
*We gotta beat the Baptists to the restaurants.*
6. We're not being fed.  
*We haven't attended since Easter.*
5. Your sermon singled me out.  
*If I want conviction, I'll spend the day with my in-laws.*
4. You always ask for money.  
*I've already given you my 2 cents worth, what more do you want?*
3. You always preach on the Resurrection.  
*We've decided to go to the Buddhist temple for our annual church service.*
2. You don't visit the sick.  
*I had a cold; where were you?*
1. It's nothing against you, Pastor.  
*It is you.*

—Steve Phelps

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**"Pastor, your sermon about loving thy neighbor gives us but one choice: to move."**



# Faith Communities Today

## SOURCES OF UNITY AND COHESION: HERITAGE, VISION, MORAL COMMITMENT

In 2000, 14,301 churches from 41 faith groups participated in the *Faith Communities Today* survey conducted by the Hartford Institute for Religious Research at Hartford Seminary. The *Faith Communities Today* survey is the largest and most inclusive denominationally sanctioned survey ever conducted in the United States.

Heritage, vision, and moral commitment are three sources of cohesion for congregations. Congregations with a clear sense of purpose feel vital and alive (Figure 1). In contrast to feelings of unity based on heritage (the past), this center of cohesion looks to the future. This positive assessment extends across the spectrum of denominational groups.

Older, smaller, town and rural churches are less likely to claim a sense of purpose and vitality. But even in these conditions, more than half of churches report feeling vital and alive, and over half report being a moral beacon for their communities (Figure 2). Feelings of vitality occur most frequently in traditional Black congregations and significantly less often in liberal Protestant congregations.

Although new suburban areas are financially and numerically more favorable to congregational growth, many faith communities in areas of declining populations still report high vitality. Larger, newer, and growing congregations most clearly report feelings of being vital and alive. When conditions are less favorable, congregations that are clear in membership expectations and rooted in their denominational heritage report vitality.

The complete survey can be viewed at: [www.fact.hartsem.edu](http://www.fact.hartsem.edu).

Examine the Assemblies of God portion of the survey at: [www.fact.hartsem.edu/denom/Assemblies-factfreq.pdf](http://www.fact.hartsem.edu/denom/Assemblies-factfreq.pdf).

—Faith Communities Today Survey

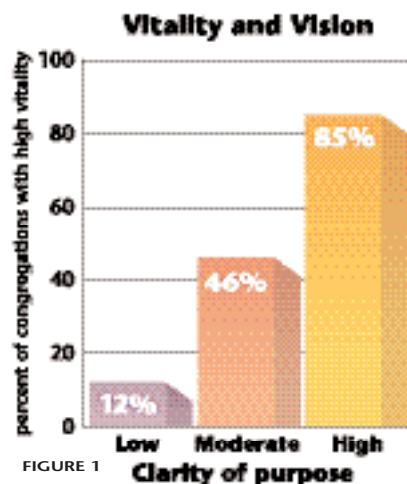


FIGURE 1

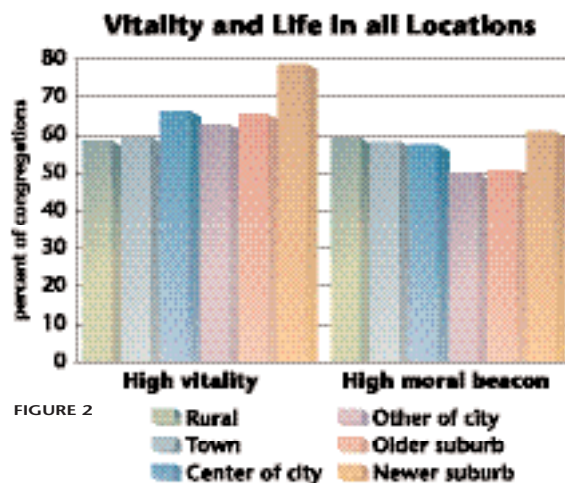


FIGURE 2

## Crossing Cultures

### LEADERSHIP FROM AN ETHNIC PERSPECTIVE

Think for yourself. Stick out from the group. Be direct and straightforward in your communication with others. And always look directly into the eyes of the person who is talking to you. These qualities are essential if you want to be an effective leader. Well, maybe for those brought up under traditional American values. Many ethnic minorities, however, view these as undesirable qualities.

Instead of thinking for yourself, presuming that you know better than everyone else, the wise leader places a higher value on the opinion of others, especially elders. Instead of sticking out, the leader who is apt to gain the most respect is the one who best fits into the group. Instead of being direct in communications, the perceptive leader is more subtle and indirect rather than appearing presumptuous. Getting to the point without personal interaction frustrates the more intrinsic value of building a relationship. Looking directly into the eyes of the person talking to you could be construed as a sign of confrontation. The caring leader knows to look down as a sign of respect while giving careful consideration to what the other person is saying.

While these attributes are not the same for all ethnic minorities, and while they vary in degree, they do reflect a fundamental difference in identifying desirable leadership qualities. These differences are based not on any absolute principles, but rather on ingrained cultural values.

—David J. Moore

## Religion Watch PLAGIARISM AGAIN

Sharing sermon notes and illustrations is a timeworn tradition, one encouraged by the growing market of tapes, books, and online helps. Catchy Web site names such as *Desperate Preacher.com*, *HearGoodNews.org*, *PreachingToday.com* or *SermonNotes.com* offer entire messages.

Ministers, some who must prepare three 45-minute sermons a week, are always looking for new insight into a much-told biblical story or a witty, culturally relevant illustration. Pastors often face additional counseling or administration duties. For many that means spending less time preparing sermons and a resulting drive to find a viable shortcut. And in the desire to present fresh material, the Internet has numerous sites where much preaching information is even free.

But some pastors—to their detriment—have taken a step further and appropriated entire messages from other sources, without attribution or payment. In February 2002, an Episcopal minister in Michigan was suspended by his diocese for 90 days after allegations that he used verbatim sermons of others without attribution. In October 2001, a Presbyterian minister in Missouri resigned after he confessed to plagiarizing sermons.

Using the work of others still is an acceptable practice. The rub is when pastors try to pass off material published by Charles Swindoll, Bill Hybels, or Dan Betzer as their own.

—John W. Kennedy

## CrossRoads

### GOSPEL BULLETS VS. BUILDING BRIDGES

Celebrities championing their pet causes are nothing new in a world dominated by pop culture. We've come to expect "stars" hawking everything from political views to pasta sauce. Bono, the lead singer for U2, is among the most visible pop icons who uses the platform that star-status provides to highlight causes. Bono and U2 have had an interesting journey, first acknowledging personal faith in Christ, then removing themselves from organized church networking.

Unlike a lot of pop stars who appear in the spring and are gone with the autumn winds, Bono endures and defies any attempt at labeling. The lyrics of U2 hits give keen insight into the honesty of Bono and I think countless numbers of searching people in this world.

"Heaven on earth we need it now, I'm sick of sorrow and pain . . . sick of hearing there's gonna be peace on earth."

"I can't believe the news today. I can't close my eyes and make it go away. How long, how long must we sing this song? How long?"

These poignant lyrics should cause serious Christians to do some reevaluation. This world is on a course toward self-destruction. A lot of people are oblivious to their imminent demise, but there are honest, searching people everywhere . . . like Bono. If we believe the gospel can utterly change broken lives and rearrange self-destructive societies, then we must

do more than lob gospel bullets at people.

The gospel of Jesus Christ "abundantly pardons and saves to the uttermost," and human beings are the objects of grace-filled divine initiative. If our Lord died to set the captives free, then we can take time to understand the longings and heartfelt cries of this world.

The John 4 account of the Samaritan woman tells the story of a human being whose broken life needed serious attention. Jesus took time to connect His answer to her problem by listening to her story so what He offered could make sense and result in a transformed life.

Jesus' actions run counter to my own. All too often I have placed everyone outside the fold into one large pit of decadence and hit the delete button.

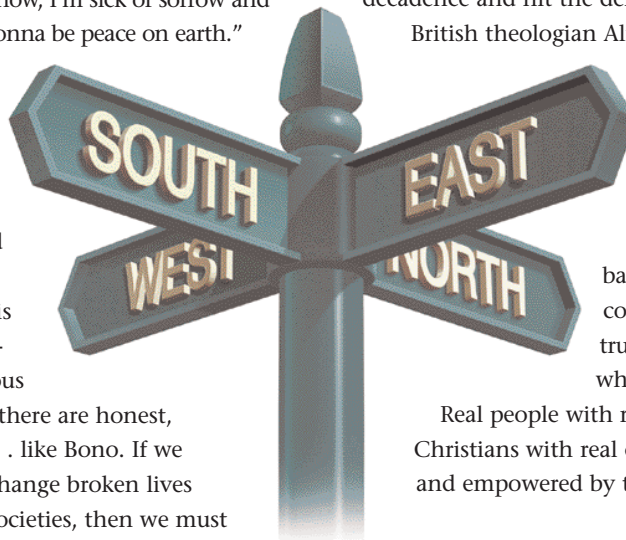
British theologian Alistar McGrath puts it this way:

"If you want to build bridges to any culture, you need to be an observer of it."

The late Francis A. Schaeffer said, "Our responsibility is not only to hold to basic scriptural principles, but to communicate those unchanging truths 'into' the generation in which it is living."

Real people with real questions deserve real Christians with real compassion who are motivated and empowered by the real gospel.

—Byron Klaus





## Dollars & Sense

### GRANTS AND THE GREAT COMMISSION

**G**rants are a funding option that many churches overlook. Here are ways to maximize your church grant-writing efforts.

**Research.** Local, state, and federal grants abound. Your local librarian can help point you to current resources and grant listings. The Internet also provides a wealth of information. The Foundation Center (<http://fdncenter.org>) provides resources, grant listings, and paid and free training in select cities.

**Organize.** Obtain copies of grant announcements and related applications. Then organize needed material, including copies of essential paperwork, including 501(3)(c) and recent financial statements.

**Announce.** Inform your congregation of the need for, and purposes of, your grant search. Invite members to join your grant-writing team. Where possible, use an established grant writer, even if just for the review phase, to perfect your application.

**Track.** As pastor or

senior ministry leader, you may not be involved in writing the grant, but your availability to answer questions and review the application package can substantially increase your team's morale and effectiveness.

**Review.** Review the grant application and make any revisions before your team finalizes the application.

**Submit.** Have your team carefully review the package to ensure all requirements have been met. Mail, hand-deliver, or e-mail the grant by the specified deadline, usually



5 p.m. in the grant-makers' time zone.

—Lisa Crayton

## Renew Your Mind

### LOOKING UP, KNEELING DOWN

**Among the road hazards that can crash a ministry, none is more insidious than pride. It can find expression in words and actions, and may be more obvious to the observer than to the minister personally. The necessity of man's humility before God resounds through Scripture. Some prominent Americans have expressed similar thoughts on the subject:**

**Thomas Jefferson exalted God as he wrote:**

**"God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that those liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever."**

**George Washington Carver, in spite of his achievements as scientist and educator, remained humble. He wrote:**

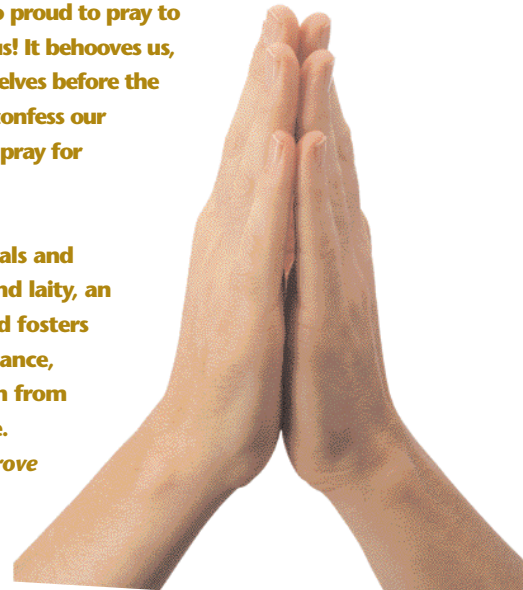
**"When I was young, I said to God, 'God, tell me the mystery of the universe.' But God answered, 'That knowledge is for Me alone.' So I said, 'God, tell me the mystery of the peanut.' Then God said, 'Well, George, that's more nearly your size.' "**

**President Lincoln expressed the need of national humility in his Proclamation for a National Day of Fasting and Prayer, April 30, 1863:**

**"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us! It behooves us, then to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness."**

**For both individuals and nations, ministers and laity, an exalted vision of God fosters humility and repentance, providing protection from the hazards of pride.**

**—Peggy Musgrove**



## TimeWise

### SAVING TIME AT HOME

Home is the place to relax, let down your hair, and get away from church-related activities. However, being time wise at home can pay great dividends. What are the biggest time eaters at home?



### TELEVISION

The average American watches TV more than 4 hours each day. Start a log to determine how much time you spend. Decide on how much time you choose to devote to TV each day and what programs represent the best use of your allotted TV time. Perhaps you will decide to totally eliminate this time waster from your life.

### PROCRASTINATION

Most of us spend more time worrying about projects and procrastinating than it takes to complete the project. In your list making, decide when you will start a project, set a completion goal, and stick to your plan.

### MAJORING ON MINORS

Figure out what is really important. Ask: *Why have I chosen to do this? Can this activity be replaced by something that takes less time and gives a better return?*

### LACK OF ORGANIZATION

One of the biggest time wasters and energy drainers is living in clutter. Here are a few simple steps to having an organized home:

Hang up your clothes when you take them off. Put dirty clothes in the hamper.

Put the cosmetics you use after showering back in the cabinet (with lids on).

Before going to bed, pick up the newspaper, books, and shoes you've strewn about. (Put snack dishes in the dishwasher.)

Open the day's mail and decide what to do with it—toss or hold. Have a special slot or folder for mail that requires a response.

Put things in your home office away at the end of the day.

Have as your motto: A place for everything and everything in its place.

These simple steps can give you back several hours of precious time over a 1-year period.

—Faith Hamilton

## LeaderLife

### IF I COULD TELL EVERY PASTOR JUST ONE THING...

If I could round up all the pastors in the U.S. every quarter for just 5 minutes, I know what I would say. Here is the first item on my list:

*Cut the activity level in your church by 25 percent for 6 months.*

Today's culture makes massive time commitments to church events increasingly difficult for families. Knute Larson estimates that the average church volunteer who was contributing 10–12 hours weekly to the congregation a generation ago, has less than 2 hours available today. People are working more, stressing more, and relaxing less.

Chances are your schedule is being ignored by your marginally committed folks anyway, while draining your committed people of the only hours they have for rest and family.

If the truth were told, it may even be burning you out. In fact, pastors are often deprived of the time they need for the prayer, study, and refreshing that would add real depth to their ministries. The culprit is the climate of busyness that many feel is an index of success.

With your leadership on board, why not experiment with a "lite" schedule for 6 months,

perhaps by extending your summer format, and see what happens. If it doesn't prove productive, you can always go back.

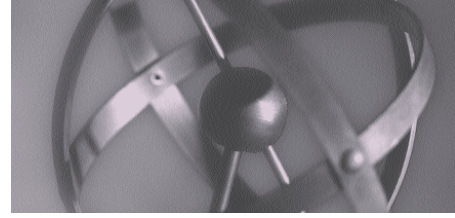
What would we do with the surplus 25 percent of the schedule formerly occupied by programming and events? How about releasing our people to try doing some Christianity in the flow of their lives? Spending time building relationships with lost people would be just one example. Another might be shoring up families by spending time together.

If we don't know how to do Christianity, or we don't trust our people to do it, our ministry infrastructure is not going to save us anyway. Ministries can always be added later by reaching, discipling, and releasing newcomers into the calling God has for them.

It's just a thought . . .  
—Earl Creps







## 50th General Council to Convene in D.C.

Major decisions of this Fellowship have been decided at General Councils by a very small portion of our constituency. That is not healthy for the Assemblies of God.



**W**ashington D.C., will play host to the 50th General Council meeting of the Assemblies of God, slated for July 31–August 3. General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask visited with Enrichment to talk about this upcoming event and why it is important that all ministers make plans to attend.

### **WE ARE APPROACHING THE 50TH GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD. DESCRIBE THIS EVENT.**

**TRASK:** The General Council is the biennial meeting of our Fellowship. It's a time primarily designated to conduct church business, to report to the constituency, and to receive inspiration and ministry from the Word. It's also a time to acquaint our pastors with Headquarters ministries and resources that can assist them in the local church. General Council also provides fellowship. People enjoy meeting friends they haven't seen for years and sharing what God is doing.

### **WHY IS THE 50TH GENERAL COUNCIL SPECIAL?**

**TRASK:** By nature, a 50th council is a special event. Special features will be part of this General Council. We will celebrate the past, the present, and the future. We will also cast vision for the Assemblies of God as we move deeper into the 21st century.

### **WHY WAS WASHINGTON, D.C., CHOSEN FOR THIS GENERAL COUNCIL?**

**TRASK:** We try to rotate the location of our General Councils to various geographic regions. This is the time for General Council to be on the East Coast. Furthermore, we felt it would make a statement that we support our nation following the 9/11 tragedy.

### **YOU MENTIONED THAT DIFFERENT MINISTRIES ARE FEATURED AT GENERAL COUNCIL. WHY ARE THE EXHIBITS IMPORTANT?**

**TRASK:** The exhibits give pastors

opportunity to see the entire spectrum of ministries that the Assemblies of God has. God has blessed this Fellowship with phenomenal ministries that touch people. Attendees can also interact with the leadership of these ministries and hear and see what is taking place.

#### **WHAT HAPPENS IN OUR TIMES OF WORSHIP TOGETHER?**

**TRASK:** As a Pentecostal church, the service times are special. Music and

We have a democratic form of government. Resolutions are presented and debated and then voted on. After that, it becomes incumbent on those who are part of the Fellowship to support that action.

We understand that it's not possible for all ministers to attend every General Council. But if they can come, and choose not to come, they forfeit their right to vote on important issues that affect the Assemblies of God. Major decisions of this Fellowship have been

confidence in the way the structure of the Assemblies of God functions.

#### **HOW CAN THE LOCAL CHURCH BENEFIT FROM SENDING ITS PASTOR AND/OR DELEGATES TO GENERAL COUNCIL?**

**TRASK:** Anytime a person understands an organization's structure, that person has greater interest and appreciation and will show greater support. It is also important for the sake of the Fellowship. One of the great strengths

## **If pastors can come, and choose not to come, they forfeit their right to vote on important issues that affect the Assemblies of God.**

different aspects of worship are featured. The preaching of the Word is the centerpiece of each General Council service. Historically, one of the great events of any General Council is the closing altar service. Many ministers and their wives come to Council with special burdens. God meets them during the altar time and gives them strength to continue the work of the ministry.

#### **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR MINISTERS TO ATTEND GENERAL COUNCIL?**

**TRASK:** We are a grassroots Fellowship. The General Council of the Assemblies of God cannot make any change doctrinally, structurally, or constitutionally unless it is passed through the biennial General Council. That is a safeguard ensuring that a committee or board cannot change church doctrine. That has to be done by a vote of the delegates. So it's important that every minister entitled to vote be there.

decided at General Councils by a very small portion of our constituency. That is not healthy for the Assemblies of God.

#### **WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE BUSINESS SESSIONS?**

**TRASK:** All ordained ministers holding a current fellowship certificate and church delegates from General Council affiliated churches are eligible to participate.

#### **CAN LOCAL CHURCH PEOPLE ATTEND OR SEND DELEGATES TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL?**

**TRASK:** Yes, on both accounts. A General Council affiliated church is entitled to send one voting delegate. And we encourage churches to bring delegates. We also encourage visitors to attend. They are welcome to sit in on the business sessions, but visitors cannot vote.


Coming to Council is a marvelous way for people to become acquainted with the infrastructure of the Assemblies of God. It will give them

of the Assemblies of God is the fact it is a voluntary cooperative Fellowship—people voluntarily lend their gifts and abilities to support the kingdom of God.

#### **HOW IS GENERAL COUNCIL A FAMILY EVENT?**

**TRASK:** We will have powerful children's ministries and phenomenal youth activities going on simultaneously with the main services and business sessions. Outreach ministries for the city of Washington, D.C., will take place. There is also much to see and do in the area. We anticipate many people will take their vacations in conjunction with General Council. In fact, new to this Council will be a block of time for families to spend together.

#### **ANY FINAL THOUGHTS?**

**TRASK:** Ministers who attend General Council show their support of this church's mission, ministries, doctrine, and what God has called it to do. We can't do it alone; we need the support of each and every minister. 









# interview

WITH THOMAS E. TRASK,  
CHARLES T. CRABTREE, JAMES K.  
BRIDGES, AND GEORGE O. WOOD



THOMAS E. TRASK



CHARLES T. CRABTREE



JAMES K. BRIDGES



GEORGE O. WOOD

## Rekindling the Call for Pastoral Ministry

**G**od has placed within the Assemblies of God leaders who have a passion for spiritual renewal and ministry. General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask, Assistant General Superintendent Charles T. Crabtree, General Treasurer James K. Bridges, and General Secretary George O. Wood desire to see the Assemblies of God become a dynamic, spiritual force in God's kingdom. These men also understand the need for effective pastoral leadership in the local church and the need to replenish leaders now and in the years to come.

Enrichment's executive editor, Gary R. Allen, interviewed the four top executive officers in the Assemblies of God about rekindling the call to pastoral ministry. In this interview, they share their wisdom, insight, and passion for current and future ministers in the Assemblies of God.

### **WHAT FACTORS ARE AFFECTING THE DECREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PASTORS IN THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD?**

**TRASK:** There are several factors. First, we have an aging Fellowship. Many of our ministers are coming to retirement age. Second, we need an increased number of ministers if we continue to plant churches. And third, as a church grows, it needs multiple staff. Presently our schools are not producing the number of ministers to sufficiently address these three factors.

We also need to look at more than numbers. We need to look at vision, passion, and fire. When these are in place, they attract people who desire to become involved in ministry. A rekindling of vision and fire will do a great deal in helping us fill our pulpits.

### **HOW DOES A PERSON KNOW GOD HAS CALLED HIM OR HER?**

**WOOD:** I have several responses based on scriptural analogies. Some people are called with a tremendously overpowering sense of God's revelation—

Africa, to come for a missions convention. I asked him, "Brother Williams, how did you get your call?"

He looked at me and said, "I never had a call."

I asked, "What do you mean, you never had a call?"

He said, "Well, I read in Scripture that Jesus was taking volunteers, and I up and volunteered."

But talking more with Morris Williams, I recognized that he overstated his case to make a point. Obviously there was a resonance in his

**The best staff members  
you can get are those  
you raise from within the  
church because they  
understand your passion,  
vision, and goals.**

**—Thomas E. Trask**



*Photos by Derald Masgrove*

**WOOD:** A sizable number of our credentialed ministers are being trained through Global University correspondence courses. Over the last decades, as our schools have broadened in their curricular emphasis, there is a move from a ministerial training-only program. We've reached a point where the issue of ministerial preparation is critical.

**BRIDGES:** At this point our crisis has not reached the proportion that other denominations are experiencing. But we need to be concerned. George Barna states that 40 percent of pastors today will not be in the ministry in 10 years.

His presence. Isaiah certainly had that kind of call. Paul had such an experience on the road to Damascus. John, at the end of his life, had a call to write the Book of Revelation.

Some have experienced a call through others who saw their potential and recognized their gifts. This is what happened to Timothy. Paul said, "Join me." Timothy didn't have the same kind of call that Paul had, but he had a legitimate call. There were ministry gifts that were obviously functioning in Timothy's life. Paul recognized them and drew them out.

When I was a young pastor, I asked Morris Williams, then field director for

heart. It wasn't just a mechanical, "Well, I volunteered." There was the gifting and the inner sense that this is what the Lord wanted him to do.

On a continuum there are these ranges—people who receive a revelational call generally suffer greatly later. That is why they receive that kind of call. Then there are people like Timothy in whom others see potential and nourish the gifts in them. Finally there are people like Morris Williams where their call doesn't seem to be highly supernatural, and yet their call is obvious as they step into God's call. God blesses the desire of their hearts and the desire of their hearts becomes a way of manifesting the call.

**CRABTREE:** Philip's ministry grew out of a task within the church. He was not called to the pulpit ministry at the beginning; he was called to be a deacon. We need to raise the level of service in the church. Doing this opens doors for the call to ministry.

**BRIDGES:** It first has to be an inward call. Jeremiah said it was a burning fire. But there is also outward evidence. One of the things that helped me was the affirmation of my pastor and other ministers.

It's interesting how we have defined the call from our beginning.

they need to stand on the fact God has called them.

Many times those who are looking for a place of ministry miss opportunities. We are not talking about faith to believe that God called them. They are looking to denominations to help them fulfill that call. But God may be testing them to see if they will respond to His call. At other times, they may not see the opportunities in front of them.

After I was called to preach, I learned to preach in a Sunday School class. As I taught this class, I took it as an opportunity to prepare a message and I grew.

more will be given. To the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. That's a principle of Jesus.

People say, "Give me a place; I have a call." But that is not how ministry functions within a biblical or a practical setting.

When a person says, "I have a call to the ministry," that call needs to be confirmed by other believers. The reason some people who feel called to the ministry are not in the ministry today is because the body of Christ never recognized their gifts.

None of us function in ministry without the affirmation and confirmation of other believers. A person can say, "I have

**I'm wondering if  
Pentecostal ministers are  
failing in the area of  
mentoring their own  
children.**

**—James K. Bridges**



We have called it the call to preach. It was a call to proclaim, which involved not only preaching the gospel, but also feeding, nurturing, and shepherding the sheep. Pastoring became a part of that call.

#### **HOW CAN WE HELP MINISTERS WHO HAVE BECOME SIDETRACKED FROM THEIR CALL TO MINISTRY?**

**CRABTREE:** First, I would encourage those who feel a call from God to have faith in the God who called them. Many times people look at their own abilities or circumstances and see that it didn't work out. But

Many times people want the ministry handed to them, but ministry is a process of development.

**WOOD:** Exactly. I tell people, "Don't go looking for a ministry."

People come to church and ask, "How are you going to use me?" If you're looking for a place to serve, you will always have a ministry. If you're looking for a ministry, you probably won't have a place to serve.

People need to bloom where they are planted. A person's gifts make room for him. If a person is functioning in ministry now, then to the one who has,

the gift of prophecy," but his words never console, encourage, or correct. He can talk about his gift all he wants, but there has to be an affirmation.

When someone drops out of the ministry, is the reason internal, or is it because the body of Christ did not confirm his calling? That's critical.

Then there are those whose calling is confirmed by the body of Christ. Say, for example, a person had a call, but is not now in full-time ministry. When he teaches a Sunday School class, things begin to happen as he teaches. Is there a confirmation building that attests to his ministry? And if



that's happening, that's the kind of person we need to encourage to get back into the ministry.

Some people see the will of God as a fork in the road. If you take the wrong turn you never get back. You're always going the wrong direction. I see it as beaching your canoe and going for a walk in the woods. You got out of the river. But come out of the trees, get back in the canoe, and get back in the river. You won't be as far downstream had you not banked your canoe, but at least you can get back in the river and keep following God's direction for your life.

**BRIDGES:** We fall short in helping those who have a call or have become sidetracked in ministry. Any number of things can lead people into disobedience—discouragement, pressure, failure. But once a man is called of God, I cannot see him ever being content in anything of this world.

### **HOW CAN PASTORS HELP OTHERS WHO FEEL CALLED TO MINISTRY DEVELOP THEIR CALL?**

**TRASK:** When a pastor recognizes a young person in his congregation has a call, he needs to give this person opportunity to preach. That is what happened in our Fellowship in years past. And once someone gets that feeling of God's anointing as he preaches—even though he might think he bombed out—there comes a fulfillment and joy that nothing can compare with. The mechanics of preaching will come as this person develops his skill. Young people need to have opportunities to preach and be involved in the other aspects of ministry. We encourage our pastors to let that happen. Pastors need to recognize the call of God on young and old alike, and then provide opportunities to nurture that call.

**BRIDGES:** Brother Trask, to do what you have described, a pastor needs a deep appreciation for the ministry. He needs to love preachers. When I

became district superintendent I found that some ministers caused problems. But you needed to love them anyway. When you love them, you want to help them. That's what we see in the apostle Paul. He had a special interest in younger ministers.

In the closing chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, knowing Timothy was going to be there. He told the church, "Don't you intimidate him, now. Don't you do anything to harm him. Listen to this pastor" (paraphrase mine).

In 2 Corinthians 2, Paul said that God had opened the door for him at Troas, but he was concerned about Titus because he was not there. Titus should have been there. What did Paul do? He left Troas and looked for Titus.

In chapter 7, Paul found Titus. Paul's spirit was refreshed because this young minister was OK. That's powerful.

In Colossians 4, Paul sent a message to Archippus, urging him to go forward in ministry. This is the heart of a pastor who wants to help. We must restore that in our Fellowship.

In earlier days pastors supported and mentored young people. More of our preachers have probably grown up in smaller churches than larger ones because nurturing comes from personal relationship.

An example of this is something we have in common—all of us here in this room today are PKs. We had input from our fathers. My father was a pastor and presbyter. He died at 85. He was supposed to have been retired, but he never retired. A large group of young ministers were at his funeral to honor him. He had meant so much to them, had pastored them, and had helped them in the ministry. That impressed me. Even in his old age, he was still influencing.

**WOOD:** A pastor recently told a parishioner that his two most important goals for that year were to see his daughter graduate from high school and for him to complete his master's degree. Now these are important goals.

But what was absent was any passion for the church, any passion for reproducing himself in the people surrounding him, any passion for preaching God's Word, or any passion for seeing the church grow.

We live in a self-centered age. If we are not careful, that same spirit of the age will seep into our lives and become our career instead of His career, or our church instead of His church. We need to be careful as we look at our passions and our priorities. What we live and what we preach is what we're going to get. If we're not seeking to exalt Christ and put His concerns first, we are going to get self-centered congregations, people concerned about their own agendas rather than Christ's agenda.

**CRABTREE:** We need to realize that our greatest resources are ministers themselves. Churches that reproduce themselves are the strongest way to build new churches. But historically, future pastors and leaders have been inspired by motivational pastors who saw the ministry as the highest calling. We need to get back to that and challenge our finest students to come into the highest and best calling. Our ministers can raise the level of the worth of the pastorate and the ministry.

Jesus spent most of His time reproducing himself into His 12 disciples. Our pastors need to catch a vision of the wonderful young people who are in their churches and the calling of God that is on them.

When I pastored, I took guest preachers out to lunch to learn from them. I once took the late James Hamill to lunch. He preached to me for an hour and a half. At the time I had a church of 150. He asked how many staff I had. I said, "I have a secretary who comes in 3 days a week."

He replied, "Don't you have any Sunday School teachers? Don't you have anyone working in the music ministry? The next time I ask you, I want you to say at least 75 staff people." He said it bothered him that pastors are

so nice to people they pay and forget they have many assistant pastors—people who are ready to work for nothing—but who are treated wrong by the pastor. This changed my life. People who are not full time and paid are still called of God, called to ministry.

### **HOW CAN A PASTOR CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE IN HIS CHURCH WHERE GOD CAN SPEAK TO PEOPLE AND CALL THEM INTO THE MINISTRY?**

**TRASK:** We live in a fast-paced society, and many times we do not give God opportunity to speak to us because we are always running from event to event. As pastors, we must be sensitive to the time demands we place upon our people. It is essential that when we do meet in corporate settings that we provide an atmosphere where God can speak to His people.

**WOOD:** I think back to the churches in which we grew up. We all grew up in similar kinds of churches. But there were several components that nourished the call for me. One is preaching on the call. Another component is the example of a call.

My father pastored small churches. At times he had to take secular employment to supplement his income, but he never thought of walking away from the ministry. That was his call.

Another element was the altar service, giving young people a chance to respond. Another thing was an opportunity for practicum. I felt called to preach when I was 11 years old. Within weeks I was preaching my first sermon in the youth group. I'm sure it was a terrible experience for the listeners, but at least there was an immediate effort to get me going and encourage me. And finally, people came along and affirmed me. I think of H.C. Ball, my Sunday School teacher when I was 15. He was in his late sixties. He called his Sunday School class every Saturday night and asked, "Are you going to be in Sunday School tomorrow?" At the end of every Sunday School

class, he would put his bony hand on every one of our knees and pray that God would use us. This had a powerful impact on my life.

**CRABTREE:** We have been talking about the importance of the call. The call starts with the importance of preaching. We've seen a diminishing in the last few years of the preaching ministry. And we are now into programs with a lot of specialization. The pastor has to understand that he is a general practitioner. He cannot leave preaching on the call only to the children's pastor, youth pastor, or district youth directors at the youth camp.

Someone said, "You get what you preach." There has to be a desire to preach on the call of God for ministry. Pastors need to preach on this a minimum of once a year. I did that. I preached fervently on the call and then had an altar call. I asked missionaries and others who were coming to emphasize the call to the ministry. As pastor, I had personal theology classes with scores of young people. I believe in the importance of the preaching ministry; it's the highest calling. Pastors need a rebirth of the importance of preaching itself. We're losing that. We're moving more in the direction of worship and programs. We need to get back to the pulpit.

In the last number of years the ministry has taken a beating. Many look on the ministry as second-class. But it is the highest and best calling in the world. I encourage a revival in our pulpits to preach this, believe it, and seek to reproduce young people for the ministry.

### **WHAT CAN PASTORS DO TO FACILITATE THE CALL IN CHILDREN?**

**TRASK:** The emphasis our churches are placing on children's ministries today is good. The philosophy is this: If you can reach children, then you can reach parents. We are seeing an increased number of churches hiring a children's pastor. This is good.

We must never minimize the fact

Jesus touches children and calls them when they are tender. Who knows what God has in store? As a pastor, when I was dedicating babies, I prayed that God would lay His hand on them for ministry, particularly if the parents had a heart for ministry. God can set children apart at an early age. A great number of our ministers probably received a call from God at an early age.

**BRIDGES:** Brother Trask, I'm wondering if Pentecostal ministers are failing in the area of mentoring their own children. As ministers, we must create and nurture an atmosphere in our own homes so our children can respond to the call of God. I have two sons in the ministry whom I trained both at home and in the churches I pastored. My greatest joy was investing in our children from their youth up. When they got to the age where we could use them in the youth group and the college group, we trained them in these. Today it is a great joy to see the products of that mentoring. My concern is that our pastors are not investing time in their own children who may be called to ministry. When you look at the number of PKs and MKs, that's a valuable source we may be overlooking.

Also, the place of the baptism in the Spirit in the lives of young believers draws them much closer to the call of God. When children and youth are open to the fullness of the Spirit, they are much more open to the call of God. That in itself is another reason why pastors need to be preaching the Baptism, providing a place for young people to receive the call.

### **HOW CAN WE BETTER FACILITATE THE CALL TO THE SECOND-CAREER PERSON?**

**CRABTREE:** I was in a church recently and the pastor said, "You see that man over there. He is a brilliant businessman; God's hand is on him. I'm training him to take this church when I leave." This pastor had put him in leadership. Pastors need to recognize

the importance of ministry and then provide ministry opportunities and encouragement for the laity. Facilitating the call in second-career persons is all about releasing and encouraging. Pastors need to tell their people it's exciting to be called of God, and we're going to help you. We're going to make room for you and believe in you.

**TRASK:** Pastors should not view business people who feel called to ministry as threats. They should see them as individuals who possess great potential for the kingdom of God and then begin to mentor them. The best staff members you can get are those you raise up from

ministry to professional ministry? Some wonderful people who were called of God came into ministry. One young man who was teaching school had a tremendous gift for working with young people. We invited him to be our junior high pastor. Within a year he had 200 teens in his junior high group. He was an incredible evangelist.

One of the mistakes churches make is to say, "We're not going to add a staff person until we have a certain amount of money." You have to look at staffing a church like a mission field. We send a missionary before there is a church. I made it a rule of thumb that we didn't

this young schoolteacher on staff. We had almost no laypersons involved in junior high ministry. But if you're going to have 200 teens in a junior high ministry, you need laypeople working with them. There's a mushrooming effect that comes when you add staff that empowers others for ministry.

#### **TALK ABOUT TAKING RISK WITH YOUNG PREACHERS.**

**TRASK:** This Fellowship has taken a risk with all of us and given us credentials. I mean there are no guarantees.

**WOOD:** Absolutely. I hadn't thought of that. That's right. One of the

**Our pastors need to catch a vision of the wonderful young people who are in their churches and the calling of God that is on them.**

**—Charles T. Crabtree**



within the church. They are great candidates for ministry positions in your church because they understand your passion, vision, and goals. They are committed to you as a leader because they may have been saved under your ministry. They are known by the church and understand the ministries of the church. Pastors need to mentor laypeople as they feel called into the ministry.

**WOOD:** In the church I pastored, we always sought to staff from within the congregation. We would ask: Who is on the cusp of transition from lay

add staff because we had money or resources. We added them because there was a frontier that needed to be addressed. We had to take some steps of faith.

One of the problems our churches get into—boards especially—is the status quo mentality of we are going to stay where we are. We can't afford that. Churches must keep pushing the borders of faith. And one of those borders is adding people on the staff of the church, not to become stars of the team, but to become coaches and to release more and more laypeople for ministry. That was the whole idea when I brought

functions of those in ministry is to help people to the next level. When I graduated from Evangel College I was heading to Fuller Seminary for further education. I wanted to find a local church, but I had never been in Southern California. I wanted a ministry position to help pay some of my tuition. I came over to Headquarters and met with Charles W.H. Scott, assistant general superintendent. I said, "I know you don't know me well. You know my dad. I'm graduating from Evangel College. Do you know anyone in Southern California who is



looking for a youth pastor? If you could help me, I would appreciate it."

He said, "Sure, George, I'll help you." So he wrote letters to Southern California pastors. Arnie Vick, pastor of Bethel Temple, Los Angeles, wrote back and said, "Brother Scott, if you recommend this young man, I'll hire him." So Arnie Vick hired me sight unseen based on the recommendation of somebody who didn't know me. That's a risk.

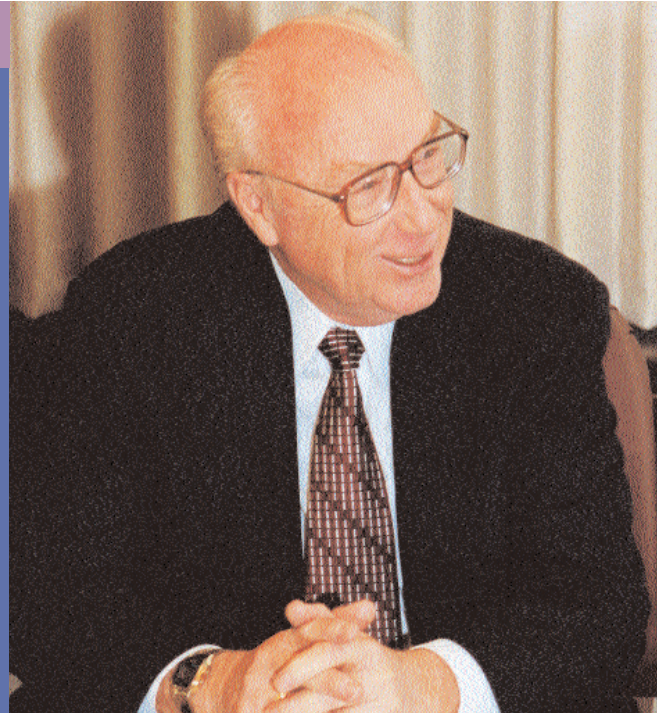
that God will raise up ministers. We don't call people. God does. This Fellowship only recognizes the call, and we grant credentials as a recognition of their call. If we as a church will pray, "Lord, raise up laborers," God will answer. I see evidences of that. Assemblies of God World Missions has more applicants for service today than any time in their history. There's a trend and we see more coming. We're not there yet, but as we pray as a

the 12 who took Him at His word.

We also have another source of workers for the harvest. There are 650 Assemblies of God students in non-Assemblies of God seminaries, and approximately 350 students in our own seminary. This provides 1,000 potential ministerial applicants in seminary alone at this point. This is going to be a primary area for future leadership. We need to take every effort at the district, sectional, and

**If you're looking for a place to serve, you will always have a ministry. If you're looking for a ministry, you probably won't have a place to serve.**

**—George O. Wood**



**BRIDGES:** When I was a young man, my pastor contacted other pastors and said, "I want you to use my boy." That used to be a common thing. If you were called to preach, get out there and yell it. Every Saturday night several of us were on the street preaching to drunks by an old bus system that served the outer limits of Houston. We would get a bunch of winos on their knees, and it created a congestion. But we had them praying and seeking God.

#### **PLEASE SHARE A FINAL THOUGHT ON REKINDLING THE CALL TO PASTORAL MINISTRY?**

**TRASK:** The Scripture says to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send forth laborers. I would like to ask our pastors to have their churches pray

church and then nurture those who are called, God will help us.

**WOOD:** Regarding the Lord of the harvest, it is interesting to put Matthew 9 together with Luke 6 and Mark 3; you get a collage. After Jesus said "pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest," He went up to the mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer. When it was morning, He called to Him the disciples from whom He chose 12. There was obviously a larger group than 12 from whom He chose. What was the criteria for the final cut? My guess is that these were the ones who took Him seriously when He said "pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest." Perhaps He observed them praying and chose

national levels to embrace and welcome these who are presently going through graduate theological and ministerial training. They are a tremendous resource for us.

**BRIDGES:** The Lord has put a principle into life from Genesis that you only reproduce after your kind. What you want to see reproduced is not more of a lackadaisical kind of ministry, but one of character. If we are going to reproduce preachers, there has to be a commitment to preaching. We're not going to reproduce what the church needs until we ourselves have that in our own lives. I'm praying that God will help us reproduce those who are compassionate and deeply committed and who will stay in the trenches. **e**









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

# Reclaiming Your Call to the Ministry

## G O D ' S C A L L T O S A L V A T I O N

THE NEW TESTAMENT MAKES IT CLEAR THAT THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS A DIVINELY CALLED INSTITUTION. THE GREEK WORD FOR CHURCH, *ECCLESIA*, MEANS “CALLED OUT.” EACH BELIEVER WHO IS IN CHRIST HAS BEEN CALLED.

JUDE WROTE HIS EPISTLE “TO THOSE WHO ARE CALLED” (VERSE 1\*). THE BELIEVER’S CALL IS FROM “OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT” (1 PETER 2:9). IT IS ALSO A CALL TO “LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE” (1 TIMOTHY 6:12). THE APOSTLE PAUL URGED BELIEVERS TO “WALK WORTHY OF THE CALLING WITH WHICH YOU WERE CALLED” (EPHESIANS 4:1). THESE CALLINGS ARE IN REFERENCE TO THE CALL THAT CHRIST GIVES TO ALL WHO RECEIVE HIS GRACIOUS OFFER OF SALVATION, FOR GOD IS “NOT WILLING THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH BUT THAT ALL SHOULD COME TO REPENTANCE” (2 PETER 3:9).

## GOD'S CALL FOR MINISTRY

There is another calling, however, to which I give attention in this article. It is the call of God to ministry. Paul acknowledged this call in his deep gratitude to Christ Jesus "who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry" (1 Timothy 1:12). Paul later identified this calling more specifically when he wrote: "I was appointed a preacher and an apostle . . . a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (1 Timothy 2:7).

The first order of importance to the ministry is the call itself. This is expressed in Paul's series of penetrating questions in his letter to the Romans: "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?" (Romans 10:14,15). Without the appointment and assignment of the messenger, the message cannot be delivered.

our Lord gives us a model for the call to ministry today. Mark 3:13-15 records that event: "And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons."

*"He went up on the mountain" (Mark 3:13).* Christ sought the mountain atmosphere to issue His call. It gave His disciples a symbolic sense of the strength, height, and holiness of the appointment they were receiving. We must never forget that Christ's call to ministry is a high calling (Philippians 3:14), a holy calling (2 Timothy 1:9), and a heavenly calling (Hebrews 3:1). It must never be treated as mundane or trivial.

*Jesus "called to Him those He Himself wanted" (Mark 3:13).* As the Head of the Church, Christ reserves the right to determine who will be His ambassadors. The call to preach still goes forth

who ordains into the ministry. He stated, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21). Again He said, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit" (John 15:16).

## God's call today

The Assemblies of God grants credentials to preach the gospel, recognizing the call of God on a minister's life. But only the Head of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ, has the authority to assign us to such a sacred duty. He alone can issue the divine right to represent His cause.

In our North American culture today, the ministry is facing some distressing times. Ministers are experiencing discouragement and disillusionment in major proportions. James Dobson's research has indicated that 40 percent of all pastors will be out of the ministry within 5 to 10 years.

For ministers contemplating leaving the ministry, this is an appropriate time to reevaluate their call of God and to fulfill

# For ministers contemplating leaving the ministry, this is an appropriate time to reevaluate their call of God and to fulfill that call.

The Assemblies of God has always recognized that our Lord has provided for "a divinely called and scripturally ordained ministry" (Assemblies of God Constitution, Article V, Section 11). It is obvious when you study the calling of the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament, that none of them made application for their jobs. God called them all, although their callings came in a variety of ways. We hold sacred the sovereign right of our Lord Jesus Christ to call His messengers.

## Jesus' call to the Twelve

The calling of the original apostles by

directly from the Master himself. To Jeremiah God said, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5).

*"And they came to Him" (Mark 3:13).* Christ will always have people to preach His Word, who will respond to His call and willingly accept His challenge. The question is, Will it be me? Will I say, "Here am I! Send me"? (Isaiah 6:8). When He calls, will I obey?

*"Then He appointed twelve" (Mark 3:14).* Many disciples were there, but He commissioned 12. Christ is the One

that call. The title of this article, "Reclaiming Your Call to the Ministry," points the minister toward a renewal of his\*\* original call, when the Lord first gave a realization of His purpose for his life.

We must understand that it is not the Lord who has changed His intentions toward us. As James Moffatt translated Romans 11:29, "For God never goes back upon his gifts and call." It is up to us to reclaim what we have allowed to slip away. The good news is that it is possible to rekindle, reinvigorate, and restore what we have lost if we repent and recommit to our sovereign Lord.

## DETERMINING THE CALL OF GOD

### HOW CAN YOU DETERMINE WHETHER YOU ARE CALLED OF GOD TO LIFETIME MINISTRY? YOU MUST ASK THE FOLLOWING THREE SPECIFIC AND SIMPLE QUESTIONS.

#### ARE YOU CALLED TO SERVE?

*Am I called to serve the Lord?* If you are saved, you are called to serve the Lord. That is the purpose of our salvation.

I have often said, "You should never quote Ephesians 2:8,9 without quoting verse 10." Verses 8 and 9 tell us *how* we are saved; verse 10 tells us *why*.

We are not saved to sit, soak, and sour; we are saved to serve, and if we fail to do so, we frustrate God's purpose in giving us life on this earth.

#### HOW ARE YOU CALLED TO SERVE?

*How am I called to serve the Lord?* This is where the specificity of God's call enters the picture. If you are a believer and are called to serve the Lord, how will you do it? Romans 12 provides the answer.

After those two important "living sacrifice" verses, Paul says, "For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us . . ." (Romans 12:4–6).

How are you to serve the Lord? As God has gifted you, that's how. God gifts His children for particular service. If a pastor sees a young man in his church who is gifted for ministry, what right does that pastor have to send him to the state university to major in computer science? I believe he or she has no right at all.

God does not call us to a specific ministry and then not gift us for that ministry. But conversely, God does not gift us for a specific ministry and then not call us to it. God doesn't waste His gifts.

Does this mean there is no definite call of God on a person's life? Not at all. The call of God is specific; it is supernatural. But it is rarely sudden; it is rarely spectacular. The call of God most frequently comes to a yielded and tender spirit and is spiritually discerned, not spectacularly displayed.

#### WHERE ARE YOU CALLED TO SERVE?

*Where do I serve the Lord?* This is the most difficult question of all. Again we must rely on the gentle leading of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of God does not work in a vacuum, and at this point serious servants gather all of the material they can about the needs of the world and how their spiritual gifts can meet those needs. Serious servants who need training in the Word gather all of the catalogs they can of institutions that have a strong program in Bible and ministry skills. Serious servants do not choose a college curriculum that will teach them how to serve only mankind. Serious servants choose a college curriculum that will teach them how to be used of God to save mankind.

The devil has been incredibly successful in diverting men and women from lifetime service to the Lord just by confusing them about the call of God. I have always heard that if you can do anything other than preach, you should never aspire to preach the Word. Although I understand this thinking, it does not seem to me we have great numbers of men and women in evangelical pulpits today who do not belong there. But it does seem we have great numbers of men and women in evangelical congregations today who belong in pulpits. Are not the laborers few? Does that mean God has incorrectly calculated how many pastors and missionaries He needs? I don't think so.

#### GOD'S GENTLE PRODDING

Certainly nothing is wrong with one being a plumber, a pipe fitter, or a postal employee. This world needs all of these occupations, and you can enjoy any of them and use your gifts for God at the same time. But if you think you are gifted to preach the Word, if you see the desperate need for preachers, and if you feel that gentle tug from the Holy Spirit to exercise your gifts in a way that better serves eternity, for what are you waiting? Throw down that plunger, pipe, or Publisher's Clearing House envelope, and pick up the powerful and living Word of God.

If the blitzkrieg call were necessary for ministry, most of us would be in another line of work today. It isn't necessary. In fact, it isn't characteristic of the way God works in the lives of men and women to convince them of lifetime service. Listen to His gentle prodding, hear His still, small voice; examine your gifts; and *assume* that He wants you in lifetime ministry. When you step out in faith, He will confirm His call. You'll know.

—Taken from *The Vanishing Ministry in the 21st Century* by Woodrow Kroll ©2002,  
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Of course, the better thing is to cherish and protect our calling so we do not allow the world, the flesh, or the devil to rob us of that to which the Lord has called us. Every minister must stay alert in maintaining the calling and prevent the erosion so prevalent today.

### **RECLAIM A DIVINE ASSOCIATION**

Jesus called His disciples “that they might be with Him” (Mark 3:14). The first element of a call is that we might have a divine association with the One who called us. Jesus wants His ministers to have a special relationship with Him so we know Him, not just know about Him. And He wants to be close to us, and He wants us to be with Him.

our personal ambition, there is reason to conclude that it is not a divine call.

A divine call requires that we spend time in prayer and communion with our Lord. The apostles pointed this out when they said, “We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). Dr. Chalmers declared that most failures in the ministry were due, not to lack of vision, study, or organizational activity, but to lack of prayer.<sup>1</sup> This is true today. A lack of spending time with Jesus will quickly drive a minister to despair and ultimately out of the ministry.

The minister who wants to reclaim his call to ministry must reestablish a close vital relationship with the One

little dressing on the salad of a gospel service. Preaching is the main dish.”

Preaching is not in decline as some suggest. Jesus has not rescinded this divine assignment. He said, “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

R.E.O. White in his book, *A Guide To Preaching*, has pointed out what preaching has become today. “For some it is self-opinionated dogmatism, an aggressive ego-seeking self-expression, a strutting peacock showing off its feathers and the harmless relief of a hen-pecked husband.” But he identifies what preaching should be: “an act of worship in which divine truth is explored and

## **Unless the minister is confident that the Word of God is inerrant, inspired, and infallible, effective preaching will not be accomplished.**

When the Jews observed the conduct and ministry of the apostles, “they realized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). Jesus wants to rub off on us so we will act, think, and live like Him. Christ spoke of a special relationship with His ministers: “He had in His right hand seven stars . . . . The seven stars are the angels [pastors] of the seven churches” (Revelation 1:16,20). Ministers are in His right hand to be observed, encouraged, instructed, corrected, and anointed for the service to which they have been called.

It is important for a minister to reexamine the motives that caused him to enter the ministry. If he has entered the ministry as a profession, a preference over other professions, a desire to do good, a means to earn a living, or because of the influence or advice of friends or ministers, then by all means seek an exit. We must honestly evaluate our motives. If the ministry is merely

who issued the call. The apostle Paul’s all-consuming zeal for his call led him to say “necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16).

### **RECLAIM A DIVINE ASSIGNMENT**

Mark tells us that Jesus called His disciples “that He might send them out to preach” (Mark 3:14). The second element of a divine call is that we accept the divine assignment to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15), and “make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:19).

Preaching is a vital part of the gospel. Paul declared that God had not sent him to baptize, “but to preach the gospel” (1 Corinthians 1:17). He added that God “in due time manifested His word through preaching” (Titus 1:3). As Pastor Odunaike of Nigeria said, “The apostles took preaching seriously and so should we Pentecostals. It is not just a

proclaimed from faith to faith, in the power of the Holy Spirit with a view to persuasion and decision.”<sup>2</sup>

Many ministers today have become disillusioned because of what they have allowed their preaching to become and their consequent failure in the pulpit. Bishop Quayle asked his ministers the definition of preaching: “Is it the art of making a sermon and delivering it? Or is it the art of making a preacher and delivering that?” He added: “It is no trouble to preach, but a vast trouble to construct a preacher. Remember that when Gehazi was sent with Elisha’s staff to resurrect the dead, nothing happened. The power of the staff was negated by the hands that held it.”<sup>3</sup>

For a minister to reclaim his call to preach, the Holy Spirit must be allowed to reveal the truth of the inspired Scriptures, the foundation for preaching. Unless the minister is confident that the Word of God is inerrant,

inspired, and infallible, effective preaching will not be accomplished. The minister who is called of God must realize that not only must the message be prepared, but the messenger must be prepared as well.

### RECLAIM A DIVINE AUTHORITY

Jesus provided His disciples with “power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons” (Mark 3:15). The third element in a divine call is that we recognize the need of the power of God to fulfill the

ministry to which Christ called us. We receive authority through the blood of Christ’s sacrifice, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God.

Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth”

## MAINTAINING GOD’S CALL IN THE SMALLER CONGREGATION

Thirty-six percent of Assemblies of God churches are located in communities of less than 5,000 people. Seventy-eight percent of these churches have fewer than 100 people in attendance on Sunday morning. Forty-seven percent have fewer than 50 people in their congregations. Many are in small towns and rural areas with declining populations. Thus, many ministers will never pastor a congregation of more than 100.

The call of God to such places requires ministers to be secure in His ability to accomplish through them the work to which He has called them. Paul states, “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6, NIV).

Those who minister in small churches face constant pressure regarding their responsibility to lead the small church in fulfilling the Great Commission. The call to leadership encompasses the totality of the pastoral call. This high calling can be exhausting, demanding, painful, and discouraging. Yet it can also be rewarding, exciting, and it can bring joy and refreshing.

Many times the calling may seem beyond a minister’s abilities and wisdom, but Paul reminds us: “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

When your joy is gone and discouragement has set in, the following suggestions can provide encouragement and help keep you in the ministry for the long haul:

**1. Spend time alone with God.** At one point David was discouraged. But “David encouraged himself in the Lord his God” (1 Kings 30:6). Time spent alone in the presence of God will lift one from the depths of despair.

**2. Seek out a Barnabas.** A neighboring pastor, district official, or a trusted friend can often supply the necessary underpinnings for encouragement. Every David needs a Jonathan, and every Paul needs a Barnabas. Place your discouragement before a trusted friend and allow him to assist you back to a place of stability in God.

**3. Be honest with yourself.** Ask the hard questions and allow the Holy Spirit to direct you regarding spiritual fruit that needs cultivation and growth. Being a man or woman called by God demands change. These changes can often be painful. Through your pain, however, you can achieve a new level of spirituality and encouragement.

**4. Evaluate your call.** A current evaluation of your calling can be maintained through the use of the acronym SHAPE:

<b>S</b> piritual Gifts	I believe I have
<b>H</b> earth	My motivation
<b>A</b> bilities	Special talents
<b>P</b> ersonality	Type
<b>E</b> xperiences	That have brought me this far.

To be effective, pastors must develop a biblical theology of leadership. The small congregation needs the same quality of leadership as the larger church. Size is not an indicator of importance and value in the sight of God, especially when a sincere effort is made to reach people with the gospel and see them grow spiritually.

Pastoral leadership involves maintaining a vital connection with God, so He can accomplish His purpose through the church and its leader. Remember:

1. It is God’s work.
2. It is God who calls.
3. It is God who equips.
4. It is God who directs.
5. It is God who empowers.
6. You are His servant and without Him, you can do nothing (John 15:5).

When you allow God to accomplish through you His intended purpose, you can rest assured He will finish the work. Be encouraged in the Lord and know that He is not finished. Allow God to accomplish in you all that He desires, and you will be far more than you ever expected.

—Ralph V. Adcock, D.Min., Buffalo, Oklahoma

(Matthew 28:18). It is in His authority that the minister is expected to carry out His commission. Paul wrote that “the kingdom of God is not in word but in power” (1 Corinthians 4:20), and that the servants of Christ are to “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (Ephesians 6:10).

A minister must personally know the power of the blood of Christ to redeem

reclaim the anointing on our preaching.

The power that exists in the preached Word of God is witnessed in Jesus’ testimony when He visited the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth. He said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of

Remember the seven sons of the Jewish priest named Sceva? They thought they could cast out an evil spirit through Paul’s calling. The evil spirit said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” (Acts 19:15). What happened next was not pretty.

A minister can have no ministry outside his own calling in Christ. If that calling is in question, the minister

## A minister who has lost the anointing on his life must earnestly seek to reclaim the call.


if he is to preach this truth successfully to others. Jesus promised that “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8). However, some Pentecostal ministers have become frustrated because they function with a ritual of Pentecost without the Spirit’s manifestations. This can only lead to despair and resignation. The apostle Paul offered us a model when he described his preaching in 1 Corinthians 2:4: “My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” Let us earnestly seek the power of the Holy Spirit in our ministry, and it will be the joy of our Lord to help us

sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18,19). The people were “astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority” (Luke 4:32).

Without the call of God, a minister does not stand a chance against the powers of darkness in this world, for a minister’s authority resides in the call. A minister who has lost the anointing on his life must earnestly seek to reclaim the call. If he does not, he will experience continued discouragement as he attempts to minister the gospel without such an assurance. It is the same as trying to function in the ministry in someone else’s calling.

has cut off his source of authority and power.

### CONCLUSION

The call of God is intended to be carried out by a man or woman of God. When Paul addressed Timothy as “O man of God” (1 Timothy 6:11), he was using a title that referred to one wholly given to the purposes of God. The minister must protect the call of God by pursuing “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness” (1 Timothy 6:11). We must keep our lives and ministry blameless until Jesus Christ, the One who called us, appears again (1 Timothy 6:14). 



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

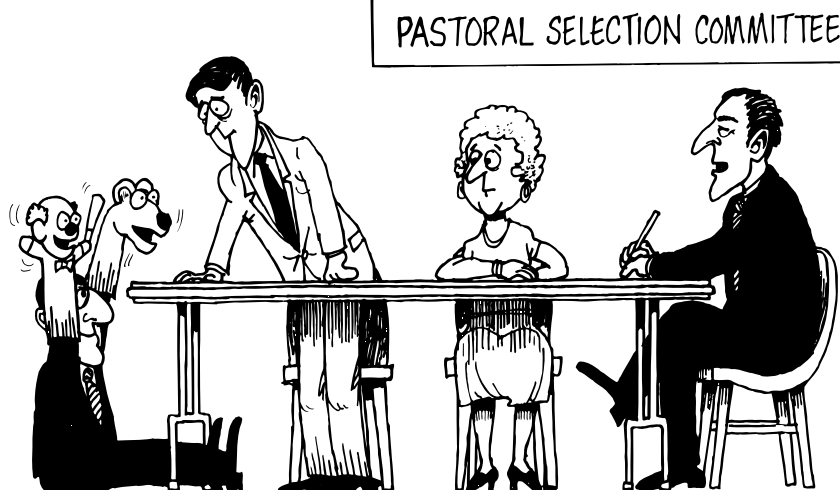
*\*Scripture references are from the New King James Version.*

*\*\*One’s calling to the ministry is not gender specific.*

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1. James S. Stewart, *Heralds of God* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2001), 202.
2. R.E.O. White, *A Guide To Preaching* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1973).
3. Stewart, 190–91.

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**“We will consider you, Pastor Osgood, but we had planned on someone more conventional.”**



We started planting churches due to growth in our church. We're running about 1000, with no opportunity to expand. Neighbors were unwilling to sell their property. We planted 5 churches in a 15-mile radius in 5 years! All these churches are strong and we've grown to 950 again. The neighbors have sold us their property, giving us 33 acres total and we'll be building in the next year or two.

THE BEST thing I ever did in my life...the most exciting, adventurous, profitable and fulfilling thing I've ever done! Probably for the rest of my life, I'm going to be planting churches.

Jeffrey Leake  
Allison Park Assembly of God  
Allison Park, Pennsylvania

The absolute best evangelistic tool and church growth tool is Church Planting. After planting 13 churches, we have never lost any growth in the home church!

We ran 2300 when we started multiplying; we now average 4100, and are planning planting 20 more churches in the next 10 years!

Multiplying through church planting is scriptural: It's the Law of being better to give than to receive. We give our People to those who have no gospel light, then God adds them back to us!

Pastor David Williams  
New Hope Church  
Lansing, Michigan

At first, As of now we have planted 4 churches in our community and assisted in planting 2 others. We ran 1700 before we got the vision for multiplying through Church Planting...now our own congregation runs 2500 plus on Sunday, and weekly salvations of up to 24 in a given service! We've learned that you cannot out-give God, whether it's money or people! As we send out...He sends in!! Church Planting is now in the DNA of our people. It is the greatest way to evangelize a community!

Pastor Ron Johnson  
Bethel Temple Assembly of God  
Hampton, Virginia

Church Planting is the single most important activity in the Assemblies of God. Everything we do comes out of the local church! Church Planting is the future of our district. Our church planters are on the cutting edge of ministry. They provide us leadership in developing new ways to reach the lost. Church planters are helping us stay "connected" in a fast-changing society.

Paul Hamelink  
Secretary/Treasurer  
Wisconsin/N. Michigan District

And God said,  
"Be Fruitful and

**Multiply...**

The best way to multiply your church's outreach is to plant a new church.

*Multiplication* works.

*Church Planting* works.



Paul Drost  
Church Planting Director  
Assemblies of God Home Missions

Multiplying through Church Planting is the way to extending The Kingdom of God in a dramatic way. We have one church in 15 locations throughout Hawaii, plus even churches in other countries. The planting of a church breaks through barriers: geographic, psychological, spiritual, ethnic. The best thing about church planting is reaching new people by doing new church extension in another location as part of the home parent church.

Dr. James D. Marwick, Pastor  
First Assembly of God  
Kapahulu, Hawaii



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BY GEORGE O. WOOD

# Avoiding *the* Paralysis *of* Analysis

**Y**ou've heard that the difference between an optimist and a pessimist is this: the latter looks at a glass partially filled with water and says, "half empty," while the optimist says, "half full." By looking at our statistics, you can paint the Assemblies of God one of two ways. On the one hand the pessimists say, "We have plateaued. Our churches aren't growing. The number of ministers is declining. We have a very difficult period ahead of us." Statistics abound to support this viewpoint.

The opposite and more hopeful view is that growing churches are like growing children or teenagers. Often spurts of rapid growth are interrupted with a season of nongrowth, during which the body is marshalling its genetic resources for the next leap ahead.

I prefer the latter view. This is why I have titled this article accordingly.

I've been in the Assemblies of God long enough to develop a memory. In 1949, for example, *The Ministers Letter* featured a strong admonishment by then general superintendent and general secretary, E.S. Williams and J. Roswell Flower, warning against the excesses of the Latter Rain Movement. The Latter Rain people shrilled back that the Assemblies of God had lost its fire as a revival movement and that shortly Ichabod would be written over our door. As it turns out, we were just on the cusp of tremendous growth.

The same thing happened in the 1960s. In 1966, we grew by only 3,935 members over the preceding year (576,058 compared to 572,123 in 1965). But just around the corner came a tremendous and steady growth for the next three decades. The momentary lull forced us to ask, "What is our reason for being?" Once the answer was defined, our Fellowship surged ahead with renewed prayer and faith to fulfill our three-fold purpose: to be an agency for the worship of God, the evangelization of the lost, and the discipling of believers.



We can take a page out of the lessons of the 1960s by recognizing that a pause in growth can be an effective time to drive us first to our knees, and then to be reinvigorated for the great unfinished task that lies before us.

Let's take a moment to get a snapshot of where we are.

#### A LOOK AT MINISTERIAL STATISTICS

The number of credentialed ministers has remained fairly stable over the past 10 years (see figure 1). At the end of 1991, we had 30,746 credentialed ministers; at

more churches and credentialed ministers. But a closer look at the numbers within the numbers does yield cause for some concern.

First, the number of those being newly credentialed at the first and second levels—certified and licensed ministers—has declined slightly. Certified is the feeder for license, and license is the feeder for ordained. For a 4-year period from 1994 through 1997, the number of newly certified ministers annually flowed in the mid-800s. For the 4 years between 1998 and 2001, the number of

A more critical number, however, is that of those licensed ministers advancing to ordination (see figure 2). This number has been steadily dropping for 15 years—from a high of 760 in 1987 to a low of 418 in 2001. Licensed ministers are tending to stay longer at that category of credential and not advance to ordination.

Measured over a period from 1987 to 2001, the number of ordained ministers has grown from 17,600 to 18,903; the number of license to preach ministers has dropped from 9,085 to 8,147; and

## We can take a page out of the lessons of the 1960s by recognizing that a pause in growth can be an effective time to drive us . . . to our knees.

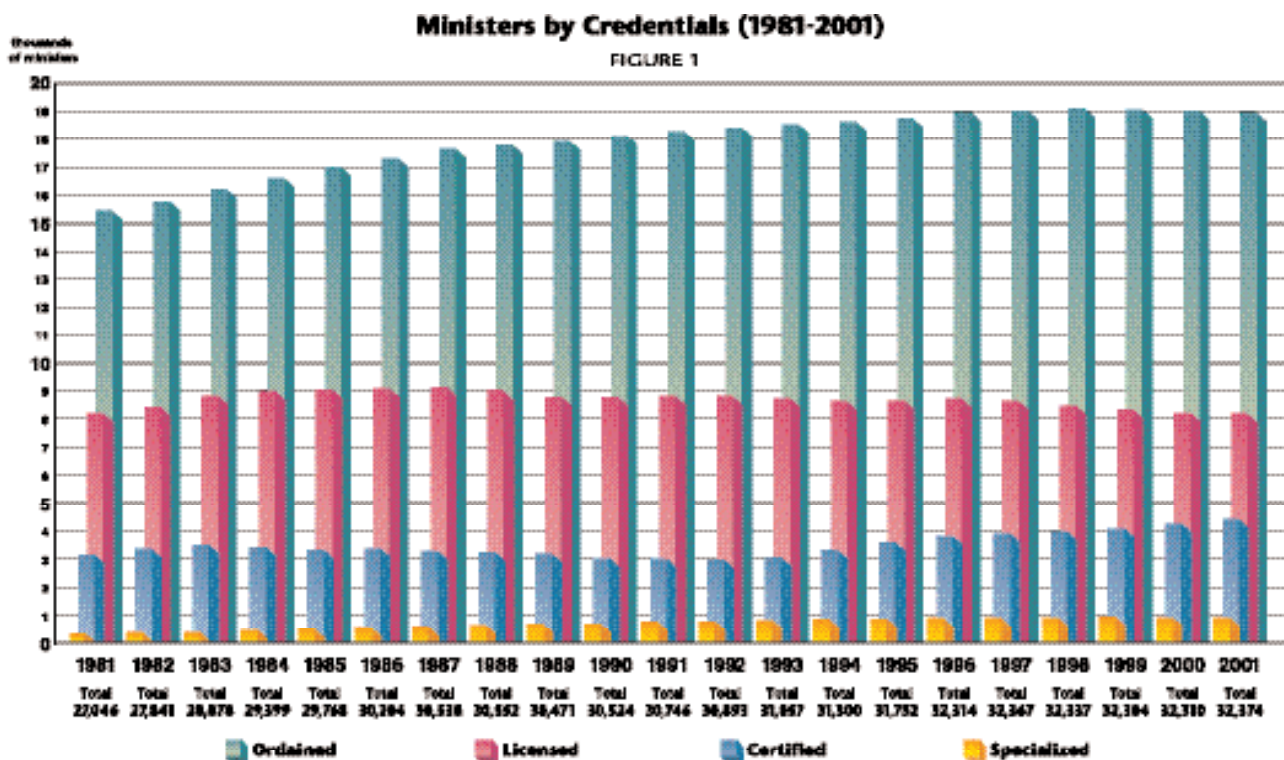
year-end 2001, 32,374—a gain of 5 percent for the decade. In the same time period, the number of churches grew from 11,536 to 12,082—also a gain of 5 percent. Our decadal growth in members and adherents was approximately 15 percent.

Thus, over the past 10 years, we have 15 percent more people and 5 percent

newly certified ministers fell in the mid-range of the 700s, although an up tick occurred in 2001 to 770.

In the 4 years between 1994 and 1997, newly licensed ministers ranged from a low of 543 to a high of 700; from 1998 through 2001, the number ranged from 449 to 507.

number of certified ministers has grown from 3,274 to 4,405. The single greatest percentage gain in credentialed ministers has occurred in the specialized license category—from 579 in 1987 to 919 in 2001—a gain most likely due to the growth of multistaff ministries in Assemblies of God churches and



ministers' spouses seeking credentials.

Additionally, there is an upward creep in the actuarial tables for Assemblies of God ministers. The median age (half above, half beneath) for ordained in 1979 was 50; and licensed, 37 (records for certified were not kept in the national office at that time). By 1988 the median age for ordained was 51, licensed 39, specialized license 37, and certified 36. In 2001, the median age for ordained had climbed to 54, licensed 44, specialized license 49,

desire for the future and how best we can ready ourselves for what He has in mind. Here's why we have reason for optimism and hope.

#### **GOD'S PLANS**

One of the great weaknesses of the American church is its overreliance on analysis and technique. We are always trying to find the seven habits of highly effective churches. If we can take in another seminar or read a new book or attend some successful church or revival,

educational experience involving 8 years of graduate school and two earned doctoral degrees taught me great respect for the discipline of study.

What I am opposed to, and what I caution against, is the swing of the pendulum—equating the future of the church with the successful implementation of some learned behavior or methodology. Such thinking totally discounts our reliance on the work of the Holy Spirit to surprise His church and lead it in paths that rational

## **Since we are people of the Spirit, let's contemplate what God would have us desire for the future and how best we can ready ourselves for what He has in mind.**

and certified 39. The median age for all ministers climbed in 2001 to the highest level ever—50 years of age (compare to 1979 when the median for all was 46).

From the total of 18,903 ordained ministers—5,636 are 65 years of age and older, or 30 percent of the total. Twenty-two percent of our total number of ordained ministers—4,146—are 70 and older. From the total of 8,147 ministers licensed to preach, 1,341 are 65 years of age and older—16 percent of the total.

Only 14 percent (2,709) of our ordained ministers are under 40 years of age. However, the ratio is better for those holding license to preach—39 percent (3,145) are under 40 years. It gets better with certified ministers—50 percent (2,217 of 4,405) are under 40 years of age. Clearly, in these latter two categories lies the greatest potential for the number of ordained ministers in the years to come.

In short, there is room for a range of emotions from alarm to encouragement in the above sampling of statistics. But these numbers tell us where we have been, not where we are going.

Since we are people of the Spirit, let's contemplate what God would have us

then we can import their strategies and methods into our church. And presto, things will turn around, the church will grow, and revival will flourish.

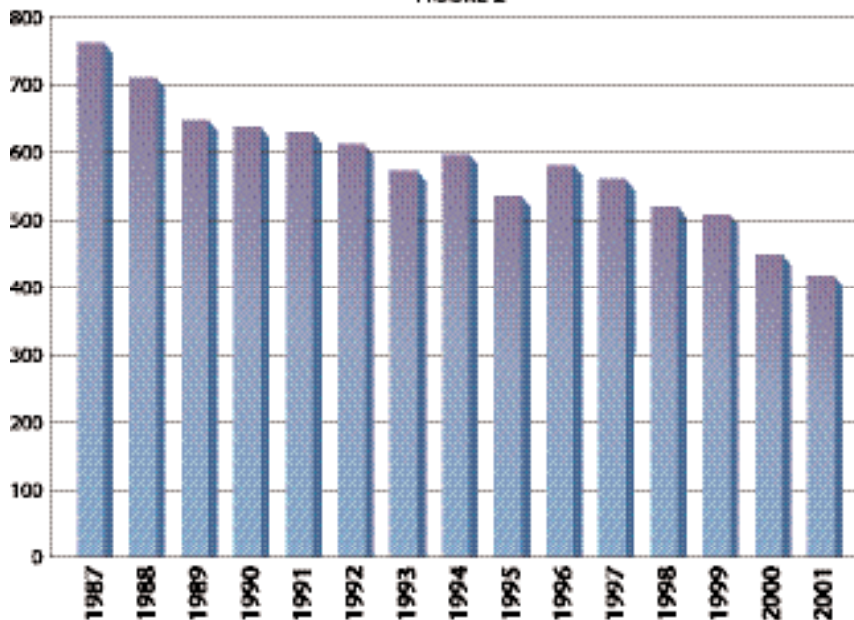
I don't want to be misunderstood. I believe in learning. I believe in developing leadership skills. I believe we can and must learn from others. I believe in left-brain, rational thinking. My

planning would not have foreseen. We must be careful here. For neither am I saying that we should excuse human laziness because of God's sovereignty.

In the Assemblies of God, we have both ends of the continuum. From listening to some, I would think it all depends on us. From listening to others, I would think it all depends on God.

**Licensed Ministers Advanced to Ordained (1987-2001)**

**FIGURE 2**



—Statistics provided by the General Secretary's Office

It's really not either/or, but both/and.

Stand with me at the edge of the first missionary journey. Do you honestly think Paul and Barnabas had a clue as to what the texture of the next 15 years—the expansion of the gospel westward from Antioch to Rome—would look like? Put yourself in Paul's shoes as he trekked across present-day Turkey on his second missionary journey, stopped twice by the

with accounts of their travels, dangers, stoning, and methods of ministry. But their focus was not on what they had done, even though what they had done was nothing short of heroic. *Their focus was on what the Lord had done.*

In missions conventions all across this country, I have told the story of my parents' work in northwest China. The church was reopened in 1983 after the

He looked at me like I had asked one of those stupid American technique questions, and simply replied, "Well, Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And we pray a lot." Then, he went on to describe what the Lord had done in that town—the conversions, the healings, the miraculous breakthroughs. It was not what he had done, but what the Lord had done.

## As Pentecostals, we are going to stall if we begin pointing to our own successful strategies and techniques for growing the church.

Holy Spirit from going to Asia or Bithynia. He appeared to be clueless about where he should go. He only knew for a time where he was not supposed to go. Arriving at Philippi, his flesh was flayed for his witness in the power of Christ, and he was thrown into the Philippi jail. Do you think he had a mission statement for the balance of his trip if he survived a rat-infested prison? He had no clue that the greatest days of church planting were just ahead of him—Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and more. The Lord opened the door.

We are Pentecostals. We must remember it was the Lord who opened up the last century. Standing on the precipice of the 20th century, what church-growth expert could have foreseen the Pentecostal revival, the implications of Topeka's Stone's Folly, or Azusa Street's humble mission?

As Pentecostals, we are going to stall if we begin pointing to our own successful strategies and techniques for growing the church. We must keep the perspective of Paul and Barnabas. They reported at the end of their first missionary journey to their sending church at Antioch "all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27\*). They certainly could have mesmerized the Antioch church

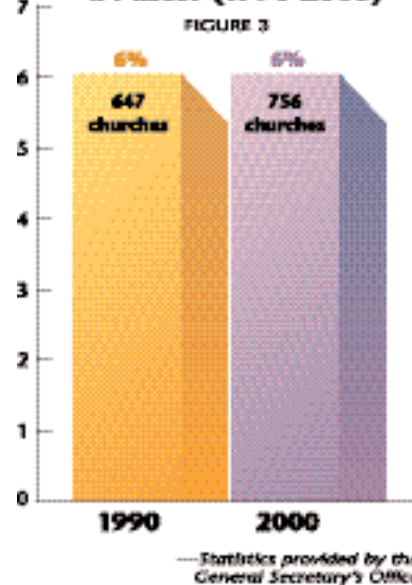
Communists had closed it for 28 years. The old pastor, who had served 9 of those years in prison, reopened the church with 30 old people. I wouldn't have given them a chance.

If I had been asked at the time to write an article on "The Future of the Church in My Old Home Town in China" for *Enrichment*, I would have reported that in all likelihood the church would gradually wither and die. After all, they didn't have resources: money, curriculum, or any of the Western means we have for making church vital. They couldn't have Sunday School or youth groups because it was illegal to indoctrinate the young. The government did not allow them to baptize anyone under the age of 18. And those over the age of 18 had their names and address registered with the government as Christians, thus opening up avenues against them of persecution, harassment, and intimidation. Besides, what could an old pastor accomplish at the age of 75? We would put him out to pasture in the United States—if he hadn't already put himself out to pasture.

Today, 19 years later, the old pastor is still alive. He's 94 now. But the church no longer has 30. It has 14,000 adult baptized believers. I asked him once, "How do you account for the growth of the church?"

If the Assemblies of God is to have a bright future, with thousands of young people pouring into the ministry, we must launch this century with a fervent call for God to help us. It's His church. He's the one who has to build it. We'll do our dead-level best. We won't be slothful. We'll be diligent. But we must know that our labor is never enough. We are completely reliant on Him. That's why our general superintendent has ordered that we place these signs around the Headquarters building: "God, we need Your help!"

**Percentage of Assemblies of God Congregations Without a Pastor (1990-2000)**





We can permit, if we will, our present growth doldrums and status quo rates in ministerial ranks to become our Goliath, our insuperable obstacle that leads to pessimism and defeat. We can make the mistake of David's brothers by staying on our safe mountain-tops and shouting our "war cry" (1 Samuel 17:20) of "Hallelujah, God is great!" And then, duck safely for cover when the Goliath of our culture exposes our human weakness. Or we can declare, "I come against you in the name of the Lord

loves us, He loves the world, and we have not finished the Great Commission.

### OUR PLANS

Mark's gospel closes with the statement that "the Lord worked with them." It does not say, "the Lord worked without them." The use of the preposition "with" tells us that both the Lord and the disciples worked.

I have taken a considerable portion of this article to focus on God's part of the work, because that's how the church is

new generation flood the ministerial ranks? Here are some perspectives.

### Our own children

I start here because the boys and girls growing up in ministers' and missionaries' homes have a greater likelihood of picking up the torch for ministry. It would not be unreasonable to assume that 32,000 credentialed ministers in our Fellowship are parents to 75,000 or more children. And the Lord alone knows how many grandchildren.

## The Lord wants this church to grow because He loves us, He loves the world, and we have not finished the Great Commission.

Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel" (1 Samuel 17:45).

In spite of the present slowdown in growth of our churches and ministers in the United States (see figures 3 & 4). I have reason for hope because I believe we are the Assemblies of God and not the assembly of men and women. The Lord wants this church to grow because He

built, that's how men and women are called into the ministry. We desperately need the work of the Holy Spirit.

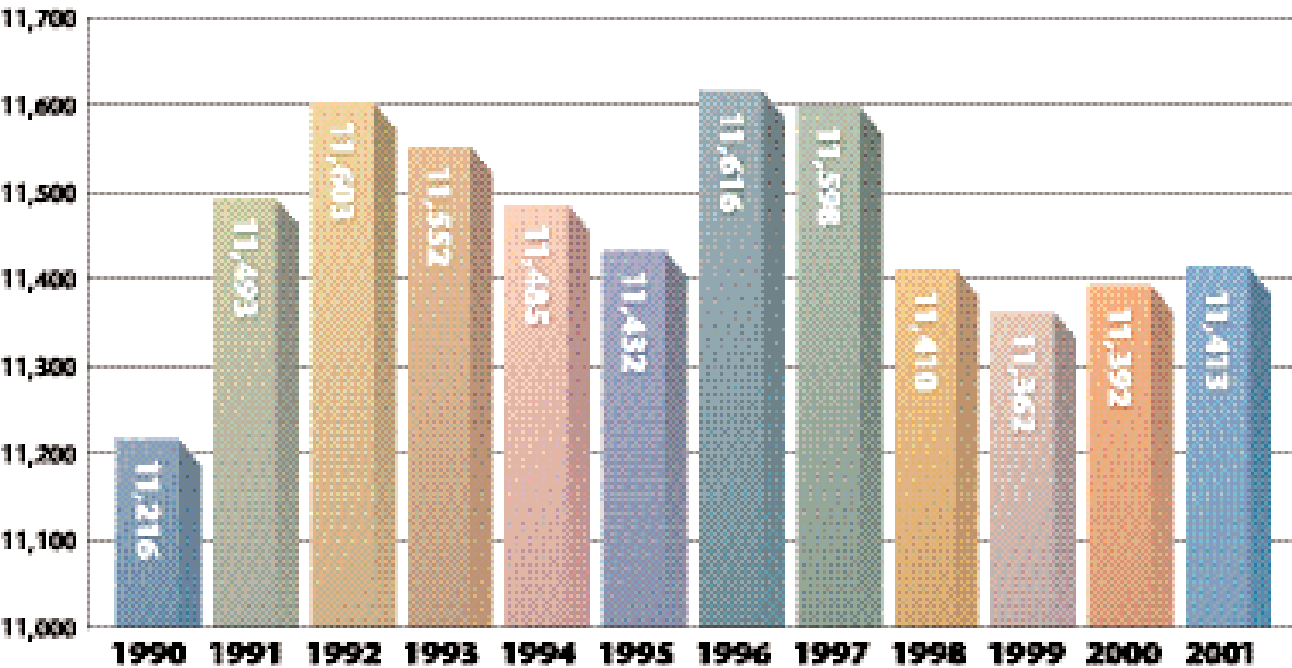
But God uses us to do His work. So, work we must. And we must work intelligently.

What are the things, from a human point of view, that we need to do to cooperate with God's work in seeing a

If just a tithe of our children and grandchildren experience the call to the ministry, we will have come a long way toward meeting the present-day needs of our existing churches for ministers. Obviously, we cannot give these children and grandchildren a call. But we can whet their appetite by our own Christlike example, our love as shepherds for God's

### Senior Pastors In the Assemblies of God (1990-2001)

FIGURE 4



—Statistics provided by the General Secretary's Office

people, and our passion for ministry.

I caught the passion for ministry from my parents, and I am grateful my son has followed me into the ministry. I've lived long enough, however, to see other preachers' kids who missed out on serving God largely because of the gap between their parents' example at home versus their conduct in the pulpit.

I want to challenge every ministerial parent with a child still at home to pray earnestly that their son or daughter, as with Samuel, may be given over for his or her whole life to the Lord (1 Samuel 1:28), and for ministerial grandparents to pray this for their grandchildren.

### The youth of our churches

When I was growing up in the Assemblies of God, few weeks went by in which I was not challenged to seek God's will for my life. There was a steady emphasis in Sunday services,

revival meetings, and youth rallies on the call of God and responding to that call. When I was 11, in a Sunday night service, the Lord clearly touched my heart and laid on me a call to the ministry.

We must stay away from the concept of seeking to get our young people pointed in the direction of choosing the ministry as a vocation. There has to be something deeper, a sense of "this is what God wants me to do."

The saying is true: "You get what you preach." If we will preach to our young people (and older people as well) the passion for ministry and the calling of the Lord Jesus for persons to follow Him, we will see a revival in our day of renewed focus on ministry among our people.

### Our schools

One of the human factors accounting for the great growth of the Assemblies

of God in foreign lands is our emphasis on and funding of Bible training schools. Our pastors and people have wholeheartedly supported missionaries who founded, staffed, or resourced our overseas ministerial training schools.

That commitment overseas has not been matched by a similar commitment here at home. Our endorsed Assemblies of God schools struggle for home support. This is in spite of the fact a very high proportion of our ministers are trained in our schools. The leaders of our churches tomorrow, should Jesus tarry, are in our schools today. That includes both residential students and students learning through distance education.

There is not a single school in the Assemblies of God that does not struggle financially. Since church and individual support is at such low levels, students must pay higher tuition, and often

## ADDITIONS AND TERMINATIONS OF A/G U.S. MINISTERS, 1987-2001

Year	Total Ministers <sup>1</sup>	Net Change	Rate of Change (%)	Ministers Added <sup>2</sup>	Ministers Terminated <sup>2</sup>	Ratio of Terminations to Additions <sup>3</sup>
1987	30,538					
1988	30,552	14	.0	2,255	2,241	.99
1989	30,471	-81	-.3	2,059	2,140	1.04
1990	30,524	53	.2	2,089	2,036	.97
1991	30,746	222	.7	2,162	1,940	.90
1992	30,893	147	.5	2,040	1,893	.93
1993	31,057	164	.5	2,034	1,870	.92
1994	31,300	243	.8	2,347	2,104	.90
1995	31,752	452	1.4	2,472	2,020	.82
1996	32,314	562	1.8	2,692	2,130	.79
1997	32,367	53	.2	2,414	2,361	.98
1998	32,337	-30	-.1	2,212	2,242	1.01
1999	32,304	-33	-.1	2,110	2,143	1.02
2000	32,310	6	.0	2,242	2,236	1.00
2001	32,374	64	.2	2,290	2,226	.97

<sup>1</sup>All Certified Ministers were added to the computerized files in 1988 and are now included in this report.

<sup>2</sup>These totals will not correspond to the total "added" or "removed" categories on other reports from the General Secretary's Office which reflect transfers between all categories. This report does not reflect these transfers. Categories considered "added" here are new licensed/specialized licensed/certified ministers, reinstated, recognized, renewed, and transferred from the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. Categories considered "terminated" are deceased, "other" deceased, resigned, lapsed, dismissed, inactive, not renewed, and transferred to the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. Categories considered "transfers" are transferred from/to ordained/licensed/specialized licensed/certified minister.

<sup>3</sup>Expresses the number of terminations for each addition.

—Statistics provided by the General Secretary's Office







graduate with multiplied thousands of dollars of debt.

We must switch our mentality away from a token support of our schools and lead our churches into making significant investment in our schools. You cannot have a harvest if you do not plant seed, and the most significant long-range missions investment we can make is training our own young people for ministry.

### Many ministry seedbeds

One of the great assets in the Assemblies of God is our openness to a multitude of ways men and women may prepare themselves for ministry. We should nourish this diversity, recognizing the multiple ways the Holy Spirit works to prepare people for His service.

In addition to our homes, endorsed schools of higher education, and our churches, there is a rich variety of training for men and women preparing for ministry. Here are a few:

- *Seminaries.* In addition to the 350-plus students in our own Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, another 650 Assemblies of God students are presently preparing for ministry in non-Assemblies of God seminaries. We must do our best at all levels (church, district,

General Council) to reach out to these seminarians and encourage them to ministry within the Assemblies of God.

- *Berean distance education.* We presently have over 19,500 students either enrolled or having completed one or more Berean courses. Many of these are headed for full-time ministry.

- *Master's Commission.* This relatively new program of spiritually mentoring young people for an intense period of evangelism training and discipleship is being increasingly utilized in our churches. At this moment, 423 Assemblies of God churches have a Master's Commission, with 2,154 students. The Lord will call many of these into full-time ministry.

- *Church-based Bible institutes.* Over 12,000 students are presently enrolled in church-based Bible institutes in 665 of our churches. While many of these are laypersons seeking to deepen their discipleship, some will respond to the call of God for full-time ministry.

- *Chi Alpha.* Over 200 students in Chi Alpha on secular campuses have attended intensive leadership training this past year. Another 100 have been involved in campus missionary-in-training, internship programs, and

missionary summits. These young people have a passion for God and have great potential for lifetime ministry within our Fellowship.

The above are just some of the seedbeds that hold great promise for producing future credentialed ministers within the Assemblies of God.

### THE PRAYER OF JESUS

I have always been struck by the juxtaposition of Matthew 9:35 through 10:4 with Luke 6:12-16. In the Matthew passage, Jesus calls on His disciples to pray for laborers in the harvest, and then subsequently appointed the Twelve. Luke adds the detail that before Jesus appointed the Twelve, He spent the night in prayer.

Two things strike me. First, Jesus did more than ask others to pray—He prayed. Second, I have always wondered what criteria Jesus used to make the final cut from the many disciples to just the Twelve? Scripture doesn't explicitly tell us, but I wonder if knitting the Matthew and Luke passages together on the call of the Twelve justifies an inference that Jesus observed all His disciples to see which ones took seriously His call to pray for laborers. Could it be that the Twelve made the final cut because they're the ones who actually prayed?

Jesus' prayer request comes to us again at the start of the third millennium. He's asking us to pray for laborers in the harvest. Will we do more than talk about the need? More than analyze the need? Will we work as if everything depended on us, but pray as if everything depended on God?

Each time we issue a credential, there needs to be some expression in our hearts like, "Praise the Lord. This person we now credential is an answer to the prayer of Jesus, and our prayers as well." **e**

George O. Wood, D.Th.P., is the general secretary of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.



\*Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.



"Well, I've finished my critique of your first sermon."

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ADAPTING AND MINISTERING IN A FAST-PACED  
AND SHIFTING CULTURE MAKES IT DIFFICULT  
FOR PASTORS TO FULLY PREPARE FOR THE  
CHALLENGES THEY WILL FACE IN MINISTRY.



BY H. B. LONDON, JR.  
and the pastoral ministry team at Focus on the Family\*

# STEMMING THE TIDE OF Clergy FALLOUT:

## LESSONS FROM A MARRIAGE

Jim was weeping when a member of our Pastoral Care Line staff answered the phone. In between sobs, the all-too-familiar story unfolded. Multiple issues had turned into overwhelming stress. Stress had turned into burnout. Jim, a talented and gifted pastor, was considering leaving the church for secular employment. In his time of stress, he had become entangled in a sin he thought he had conquered long ago. In his devastation, he called wondering if all hope was gone. Was there a reason to continue?

Calls like Jim's are all too common at Focus on the Family. We are reminded almost daily of the reality affirmed by recent research that finds clergy leaving the ministry in unprecedented numbers. Between 23 and 27 percent of pastors have experienced a forced termination at some time in their ministry (Focus on the Family survey). The Southern Baptist Convention reports that 23 of their pastors are terminated each week ("Exposing, Ending, a 'Dirty Little Secret'") from SBC Web site: <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=910>.

Many who are forced out do not return to a ministry position: 10 percent of those who are dismissed leave pastoral ministry (*Your Church* March/ April 1996). While the reasons vary, common themes have surfaced over the years that help us understand what motivates a pastor to make such a life-changing decision. Those factors seem to originate in three general areas: the level of intimacy we develop in relationship with God, the demands of the congregation we serve, and the culture of the world in which we live.

## PERSONAL LIFE

We live in ever-changing times. Adapting and ministering in a fast-paced and shifting culture make it difficult for pastors to fully prepare for the challenges they will face in ministry. Like a couple preparing for marriage, many issues may remain unapprised during ministerial preparation. The divine nature of a call from God can inspire pastors to have unrealistic expectations and goals. When those unattainable aspirations are not met, discouragement and even depression can and will undermine the confidence of the pastor. The love affair with the “bride of Christ,” the church, can turn cold and even bitter as hurt and pain develop around unrealized goals.

Other factors can also interrupt the healthy development of a solid ministry partnership when sin is allowed to enter in the form of lies, addictions, infidelity, and even illegal behavior. These selfish actions steal energy from the authenticity of such relationships. The bitter pain of forced termination or resignation, which is usually seen as failure, most likely will deny the pastor his future ministry.

## CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

At the same time, congregations can

play a major role in adding to the discouragement that may lead to a pastor’s resignation. Congregations are often guilty of their own unrealistic expectations that project responsibilities on a pastor that are neither biblical nor healthy. George Barna tells us that many congregations expect the pastor to be available night and day and to fulfill as many as 17 to 20 roles at a high level. This may leave the pastor feeling he will never fully meet the requirements for leading the congregation ([www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org)).

Also, the church may adopt the belief that clergy are paid to do the work of the church. While this is not the biblical guideline, congregations may express this message verbally or simply by a lack of involvement in the work of the church. Since pastors often feel they are unable to do all that is demanded of them, a “what’s the use” mentality may develop when the shepherd feels lonely and isolated.

## CULTURE OF THE WORLD

The attitude of consumerism lends itself to the third factor that may cause a pastor to leave the church. Church members no longer ask, “What can I do for the church?” but rather, “What can

the church do for me?” This consumer mentality, which is truly selfish, leaves little room for loyalty or the possibility of long-term relationships to provide lasting and stable church health. Many church members overlook the fact most pastors work 60 to 70 hours a week, yet have the same responsibilities as any other husband or father waiting for them at home. Also, the constant pressure to succeed in the church world also feeds a mentality that demands that appearances and perceptions of progress be displayed even if, truthfully, the body of believers is filled with great pain and struggle. Such comparisons can quickly lead to a sense of failure on the part of the pastor as well as damage to the self-image of the congregation. It is deadly.

To say the role of the pastor is a difficult assignment is a great understatement; but, like all relationships, it can be very fulfilling when it functions well. It can also be hurtful when it is sabotaged. The bond between pastor and church is so much like a marriage that it would be appropriate to draw some comparisons to building strong families. Families that are vital seem to demonstrate certain outstanding qualities that can also be equated with healthy and thriving churches and pastors. Over the past several years, researchers (such as Nick Stinnett, Ph.D., at the University of Alabama) have looked at the identifiable characteristics of strong families. (See his research at: <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/family/nf498.htm>.) Researchers conclude that, if families will work on developing these qualities, they will become stronger. The analogy parallels pastor and church relationships. If these same strengths were being developed in church and pastoral leadership, the rate of pastors leaving the ministry could be reduced significantly. What are the characteristics of strong relationships?

## RESOLVING CONFLICT AND CRISIS

Some churches and pastors consciously



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decide that they will avoid conflict at all costs. While a fight a day may or may not keep the enemy at bay, conflict can actually be healthy. Unfortunately, much of the conflict within the church seems to center around personal preferences. In a consumer-oriented culture, there is a trend to reject any decision that does not match one's preference or taste, and then to simply go elsewhere to get what one wants. However, since all churches change to some degree, most of the church-shoppers never find the perfect congregation that matches

solutions, will determine whether the church will survive the conflict unscathed. That is essentially what happened in the Jerusalem church as the apostles faced dissension over the treatment of widows (Acts 6:1–7). The best option was to select good people who would be accountable to see the issue addressed.

Conflict resolution must move to problem solving under God's leadership. It is important for couples as well as for churches and pastors to know when the conflict is resolved. In fact, a

manage conflict by focusing on resolving the issue, and acknowledge when the conflict or crisis is resolved, so the work of the church can move forward.

### **SPENDING TIME TOGETHER**

Just as strong families make a point to spend time together, congregations and pastors need to find those common times that build mature love and appreciation. Then when crises or conflict develops, a spirit of unity exists that will help them survive. These times of fellowship should include fun, humor,

## **To say the role of the pastor is a difficult assignment is a great understatement.**

all of their expectations. As a result, they become spiritual vagabonds, wandering to the next meal that temporarily satisfies their taste. Once the new menu no longer meets their expectations, they simply move on to another place of worship leaving a discouraged pastor in their wake. Pastors must know they will never be able to please everyone. In fact, the Bible says to be careful when all men speak well of you (Luke 6:26).

Conflict also rises out of issues of control in a congregation. These concerns are most likely planted in the seeds of dissatisfaction. Many times they surround issues of change. A person or a small group of people who either fear change, or see it as threatening their control of the congregation, attach emotional meaning to simple disagreements. The resulting confrontation often becomes a personal attack on the pastor. These attacks can leave the pastor questioning his calling and abilities. These personal assaults often devastate the good efforts that have been invested in the church and congregational life.

Healthy conflict focuses on the issue and does not use attacks to gain advantage. The ability to move beyond a win/lose mentality, and engage in developing options that provide

creative time of celebrating this unity can affirm commitment to one another and give God credit for His help. The particulars may vary, but the result should be to show Christlike love to one another and affirm that the conflict is fully resolved so the unity of the body can be achieved.

A failure to address conflict never gives proper opportunity for resolution. Avoidance allows hard feelings to simmer below the surface. Many pastors and congregations remain distant from one another and never experience *koinonia*, because they have not resolved their issues. Other types of conflict within the body are often so petty that they may immobilize the pastor. It is essential that we establish healthy boundaries, respect privacy,

celebration, and food. Shared experiences, focused away from problems, will help build unity and loyalty within relationships that will stand the test of any challenge. A healthy family has a balance of interaction between family members. If some church members consistently demand unwarranted amounts of time, the rest of the church can suffer from isolation or lack of attention. Barriers tend to be built between people who are selfish and do not interact. Working and playing together as a team can begin to build a foundation for trust and mutual understanding. Every church should be organized in such a way that small groups, Sunday School classes, and niche groups can provide these opportunities for fellowship and interaction.

### **ACTION POINTS FOR MAINTAINING HEALTH IN THE MINISTRY**

- Deal with crisis and conflict as it arises.
- Get to know your congregation personally. Spend time together. Have fun.
- Commit yourself to your church. The grass probably is not greener elsewhere.
- Find creative ways to communicate. Listen, listen, and listen.
- Show appreciation to someone daily. Thank God.
- Stay in love with your Lord. Make your relationship with Christ your top priority.



### **WARNING SIGNS OF PASTORAL BURNOUT**

- Depletion of energy and enthusiasm.
- Changes in eating and sleeping patterns.
- Difficulty in making decisions.
- Sense of failure that persists for more than a few days.
- Emotions tend to be inappropriate and on edge.
- Difficulty in coping with regular day-to-day activities.
- Feeling of being overwhelmed by others' problems.
- Sense of helplessness and hopelessness.
- Avoidance of interpersonal contacts.
- Persistent feelings of negativism and cynicism.
- Depression that lasts for more than a few days.

Tension exists when a pastor is solely focused on outreach and growth but exhibits very little of the servant-shepherd attitude for his flock. Conversely, the pastor who spends all his time tending the sheep will most likely see little growth in the church. A balance of priorities is always needed. On any given day priorities will need to be established and may need to be adjusted. Like a family, however, a church will usually respond very positively if they know every effort is being made to meet their needs and to respond to their feelings.

Strong families find reasons to spend leisure time together. Some of the strongest bonds between pastor and church are built during fun activities or just by being together through choirs, athletic teams, ministry trips, and recovery groups. While serendipity experiences are wonderful, they are the exception. Spending time together demands good planning and clear boundaries. Shared fellowship can be experienced around such activities as common projects, special events, and small groups.

Apathy will creep into the life of the church when a pastor thinks he's the only one called to minister. The act of equipping mentioned in Ephesians 4:12

will demand an investment of the pastor's time with his people. One of the sad characteristics of the 21st-century church is isolation. When people do not interact with each other, they tend to feel lonely and left out. If fellowship is ignored, barriers to communication and support will be built that ultimately can cause separation or resignation. True relationship develops in lives when time together becomes a priority regardless of the size of the congregation. Time spent together sends a strong message that everyone is important. No one is excluded from the family.

### **BEING COMMITTED TO EACH OTHER**

One of the greatest dangers for pastors and congregations is a tendency to fantasize about the proverbial greener-grass on the other side. One man celebrating his 50th anniversary responded to the question, "Are you surprised that your marriage lasted so long?" by saying, "I never considered an alternative." Too many congregations and pastors get caught in the trap of imagining the perfect situation, and as a result of that idealism they make comparisons that may lead to desiring unwarranted change. Current circumstances may be criticized to the point that a pastor can become convinced change is needed even when it's not, and at times he may misinterpret God's direction for the congregation.

Commitment requires mutual trust and respect. When pastors feel they are being taken for granted, or congregations begin to sense that the pastor no longer respects them, it will not be long before the relationship suffers. Both parties need to love each other and celebrate God's calling and purpose for the other. The same is true when a pastor no longer values or sees the importance of what he is doing, and as a result, commitment to the congregation will suffer. When a congregation no longer embraces what God has called it to become, the ministry of that congregation will tend to become very me-focused.

Timely and decisive decision-making will often become a testing ground

for trust. If a congregant cannot trust a decision made by the pastor and begins to question that decision, loyalty wavers. If commitment is already low, unreasonable criticism of decisions can destroy all remaining unity. The significant difference between a dating relationship and a marriage is the level and terms of commitment. While a dating relationship may be expendable, a marital commitment clearly is not. Healthy relationships find ways to reinforce good decisions, communicate constructive criticism, and celebrate confidence in decisions. Commitment is necessary if the revolving door filled with pastors leaving their churches is going to be slowed.

### **PRACTICING GOOD COMMUNICATION**

Strong families are strengthened by good communication skills, which include both speaking and listening. It is an active process. All too often in the church, we assume that God has given both pastor and parishioners the insight to read minds so we do not have to work at good communication. Healthy two-way communication is a skill that demands effort and practice. Effective communication involves such things as active listening, clarification, reflection, articulate explanation, shared feelings, and empathy. We cannot allow ourselves the luxury of thinking we know what's being said and felt. We must accept our responsibility to know for sure.

A common expression used today is being on the same page. Quality communication helps us understand each other's frame of reference. As we begin to understand not only what the other person means by a statement, but the feelings associated with that statement, we can truly begin to enter each other's world. That is the basis for understanding and accepting each other in Christ. It goes beyond acceptance to a level of harmony that allows for mutual understanding.

If the pastor comes to believe that he is only a fix-it man, he will quickly grow weary from the constant pressure to

## REVITALIZATION THROUGH LIFELONG LEARNING

The apostle Paul penned advice to Timothy that has served ministers well ever since: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15, NIV). Paul clearly indicated that the workman is to be prepared by being well trained for the task, and above all else to please the Master without being ashamed.

Many pastors prepare themselves for ministry through Bible college or Global University. But once they begin to minister, they fail to become involved in continuing education. Lifelong learning is an important element to pastoral revitalization and longevity in the ministry.

### PREPARATION AS WE MINISTER

I am an avid proponent of lifelong learning. I have continued both formal and informal education throughout my ministry to sharpen my skills.

Once you are active in ministry, you may find yourself needing additional training and education. Programs and courses of study exist that can help you sharpen your skills while you minister. For some, enrolling in a community college, university, or seminary may provide the training they need. You don’t always need to acquire another degree to obtain what you want. Taking a few courses in an area of interest such as computers or business administration will help you gain ongoing skills.

One word of caution: be careful not to take on too much education at a time for fear of either overextending yourself or experiencing information overload.

In addition to ongoing formal education, conferences and workshops can provide short-term, useful quick-fix information. Many of these are hosted by districts and are easily accessible to most ministers. Sometimes scholarships are available for ministers in need.

For all forms of continuing education, consider having the church board allocate a portion of the church budget to cover continuing education, workshops, seminars, and conferences. Missionaries can allocate an approved portion of their work funds to cover degree completion costs.

### PREPARATION TO REJUVENATE

Sometimes ministers need to prepare themselves to continue ministering by rejuvenating or reenergizing themselves. This may help keep their ministry on the cutting edge. In the mid-1980s my wife and I traveled to the Holy Land. Undoubtedly, the greatest benefit was the spiritual pilgrimage we made. Seeing biblical sites come alive revitalized my appreciation for the Scriptures in a way that no classroom experience or seminar could have.

Kent and Barbara Hughes recommend that pastors be given 2 weeks a year to study and rejuvenate themselves.<sup>1</sup> This time should not be considered vacation but as part of the minister’s personal and professional enrichment.

In my experience, ministers are often diligent about preparing for the ministry and are even careful to attend conferences, obtain graduate degrees, or gain new computer skills, but often do not prepare by rejuvenating their ministry. Jesus frequently went to lonely places by himself just to energize himself and commune with the Father.

For those who can’t afford the luxury of an extended sabbatical or trip away, perhaps arrangements can be made in schedules to allow additional time to read and study for spiritual enrichment rather than just preparing for sermons. Reading the biographies of great individuals such as presidents, military leaders, preachers, and missionaries has enriched me. Identifying with the struggles and triumphs of others helps me contextualize my own ministry and realign my priorities. By scheduling study times carefully, I can spiritually and intellectually energize myself even when my schedule is not very flexible.

Indeed, the process of ministry preparation is lifelong. It begins as we prepare for ministry and continues throughout our lifetime. Yet, we must not neglect to spiritually rejuvenate ourselves as well during the process. Ongoing education and rejuvenation will make us more effective as we engage in ministry.

—Joseph J. Saggio, Ed. D., Phoenix, Arizona

E N D N O T E

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1. Kent and Barbara Hughes, *Liberating Ministry From the Success Syndrome* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1988), 193.

have all the answers and to mend every problem. Most pastors indicate they were called to minister to the souls of people, and not to be repairmen. This weariness tends to creep in when good communication is lost and ministry is reduced to emergency calls. Addressing the root causes of pastoral fatigue through healthy interaction is a significant factor in stemming the tide of clergy fallout.

### EXPRESSING APPRECIATION

Members of strong families tend to express appreciation for each other. Paul modeled the ability to thank God for fellow Christians in his pastoral epistles (Colossians 1:1–3; Philippians 1:1–3). Paul indicates that God desires us to support and encourage those providing

uncommon expression left a long-term impact on the ministry of that pastor . . . and the people he served.

On the other hand, relationships that never express appreciation become targets for difficulty and personal hurt. The loss of encouragement is significant whether it is between fellow Christians like Paul and Barnabas or congregations and pastors. It is in the intimacy of authentic relationships that we accurately affirm strengths we have observed about someone else. This goes beyond a casual, “Your sermon was good today.” It becomes meaningful because it comes from someone who truly knows and cares about the pastor. It’s an expression of the heart.

While a congregation might say that its pastor should know he is doing a

### DEVELOPING A VITAL SPIRITUAL LIFE

While a vibrant faith is an obvious building block for families, does it need to be mentioned in reference to pastors? Unfortunately, consistent involvement in ministry can drain vitality out of the pastor’s spiritual walk. Devitalized faith can turn into routine ritual. Pastors may end up just going through the motions of faith. Routine can destroy the basis for life-giving ministry. Burnout and stress have become epidemic in the pastorate. While it is clearly the result of many factors, burnout is the number one concern identified by pastors in focus groups hosted by Focus on the Family. The mundane can invade one’s ministry and leave it powerless to impact lives and carry out the day-to-day assignment.

## Healthy relationships find ways to reinforce good decisions, communicate constructive criticism, and celebrate confidence in decisions.

pastoral leadership and care (1 Thessalonians 5:12,13; 1 Timothy 5:17). There are some Christians who, in a twisted way, fear that expressions of real appreciation will lead to pride in their leader. However, we know that authentic responses of appreciation are a great source of encouragement and a strong motivation for continued service and happy relationships. Clergy Appreciation Month has proven to be a wonderful blessing for many pastors, especially for those who have never received expressions of appreciation or affirmation from their congregations. For scores of pastors, that tangible expression has provided hope that lingers in their memory during the challenging times throughout the rest of the year. One pastor noted that he remembered an act of appreciation shared by his congregation 30 years earlier. That

good job unto the Lord, the truth is that pastors need affirmation from those who know them well. How long would a marriage remain strong if neither mate said, “I love you” or “Thank you”? We all have heard the story of a couple discussing love. The wife asks, “Why don’t you ever tell me you love me?”

His response is, “I told you I loved you when we got married. If anything changes, I’ll let you know.”

The healthy need for recognition for a job well done should not be confused with the pastor who decides weekly whether or not to stay in ministry, based on how many compliments he received that week. Pastors do need partners in ministry who are close enough to share encouragement in an insightful way, to speak the truth in love. Honest and authentic appreciation plays a vital role in preventing clergy fallout.

The reason for disciplines such as prayer, fasting, and Bible study can be lost in simply going through the motions. Once the motivation for these disciplines is lost, the impact is greatly diminished. Lack of spiritual incentive results in an attitude that no longer cares, or becomes stuck in legalism and perfectionism. A visible shell of spiritual life exists, but the pastor knows he is empty inside. Attentiveness to emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual health is necessary to effectively produce vitality. It just makes sense that if we only deal with the emotional and neglect the physical, it will not be long before the lack of energy impacts our spiritual development. The disciplines are interrelated, and neglecting one area will impact other areas as well.







Vital spiritual life can also be lost on the altar of spiritual pride that sees oneself as the only person who can do these great things for God. We may begin to define success as the world or as a colleague does, thereby no longer giving the time and energy necessary to develop a good spiritual balance in our lives. We look very busy and find we are driving

burnout.

#### IS REENTRY REALISTIC?

When we have fallen, can we ever get up? When we have burned out, can we ever regain our vigor? When we have loved and been hurt, will we ever be able to love again? Reentry into ministry for any reason can be difficult. It does seem strange

unique set of issues, reentry at its best involves developing a support group and accountability system so isolation is not a threat. Second, reentry needs to involve a renewed sense of calling, not simply a return to the job. It is important to be certain that the motivation to return to ministry is based on a response to God. It is vital

## The ability to move beyond a win/lose mentality and engage in developing options that provide solutions will determine whether the church will survive the conflict unscathed.

for more, but ultimately this produces an isolation that leaves a majority of pastors without a close friend. Pastors can be driven to do more and more without any consideration of the cost of what they may be sacrificing for their busy look. Eventually running on empty leads to

to read in the Bible about gently restoring (Galatians 6:1) if restoration is not possible. One may be restored, yet realize that returning to ministry would be unhealthy. So timing becomes an important factor. While each situation will have a

to remember that God really does love us, and His love is not contingent on what we do for Him. For some it might be best if they choose not to return to ministry.

All of this begs the question: Can we stem the tide of clergy leaving the pastorate? Preventative steps must be taken to turn the tide. While the culture of the world may not change dramatically, guidelines must be understood that recognize both the dangers inherent in ministry and the power of God to protect us. Pastors and congregations must work together to develop foundations of prevention and walls of strength covered by the power and presence of a living God. No task is too difficult for God. Paul's words to the church at Galatia seem appropriate in this contemporary dilemma: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9, NIV).

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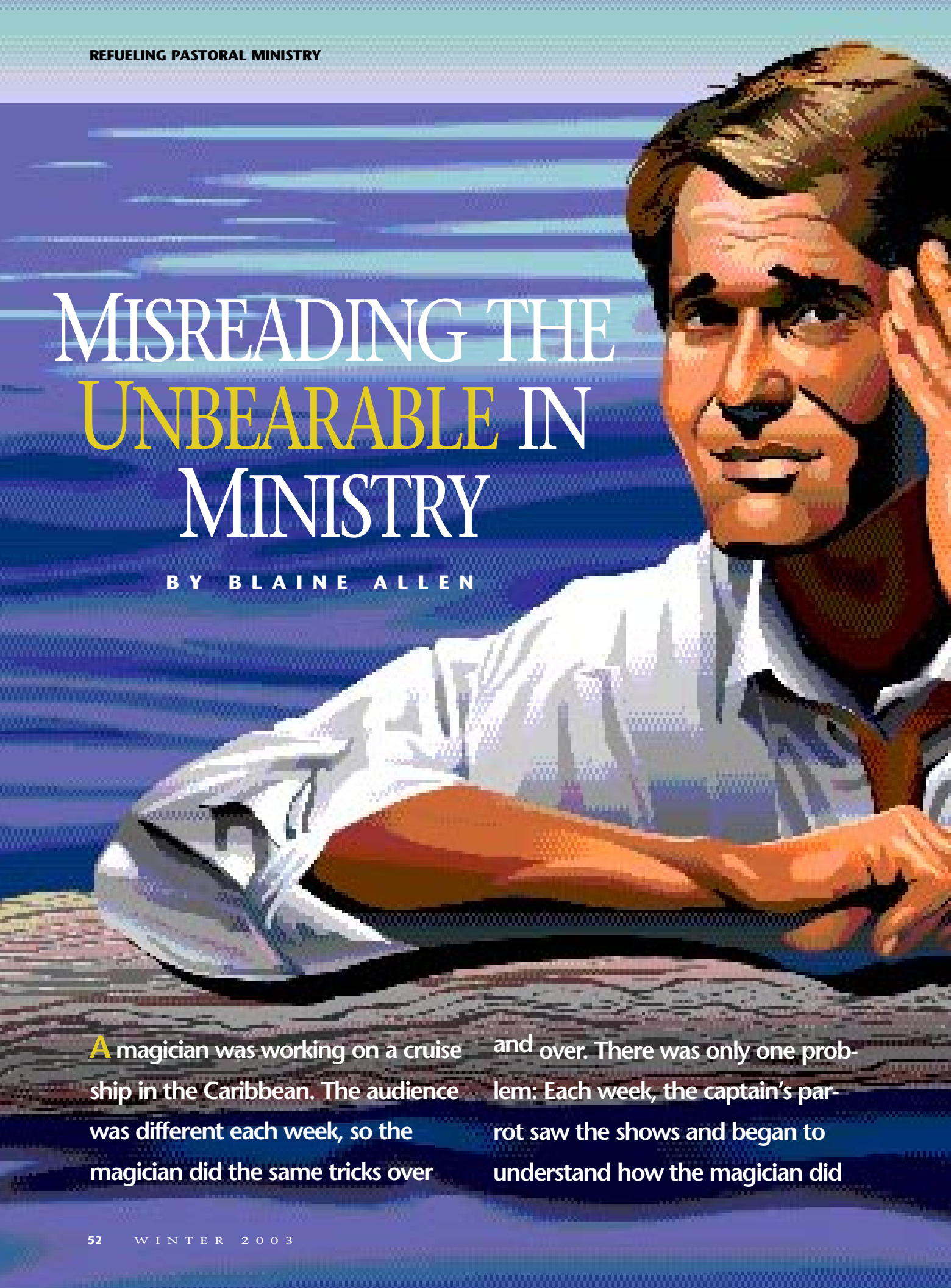
H.B. London, Jr., is vice president of ministry outreach/pastoral ministries for Focus on the Family, Colorado Springs, Colorado. \*Other contributors to this article





# MISREADING THE UNBEARABLE IN MINISTRY

BY BLAINE ALLEN



A magician was working on a cruise ship in the Caribbean. The audience was different each week, so the magician did the same tricks over

and over. There was only one problem: Each week, the captain's parrot saw the shows and began to understand how the magician did



parrot.

the tricks. Once he understood, he started shouting in the middle of the show: "Look, it's not the same hat." "Look, he's hiding the flowers under

the table." "Hey, why are all the cards the ace of spades?" The magician was furious but couldn't do anything; it was, after all, the captain's

# Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28,29).

One day, the ship sank. The magician found himself and the parrot clinging to a piece of driftwood in the middle of the ocean. They stared at each other with hate in their eyes, but neither uttered a word. This went on for one day . . . and then another . . . and another. After a week, the parrot finally said, “OK, I give up. Where’s the boat?”

## **FACING THE PRESSURES OF MINISTRY**

Have you as a pastor, youth pastor, worship leader, missionary, teacher, administrator, or college director been asked to do something you don’t have the ability to do?

Like the magician, we can’t produce the boat. When our backs are against the wall, and our critics are saying, “Do it and do it now,” we can’t do what only God can do. Who, then, would blame us for quitting?

On the Sinai Peninsula with a restless young nation of Jews, Moses knew he could not do what only God could do. Moses knew He could not produce the boat. He was experiencing pressure from God’s people. Moses let God know it was unbearable.

He asked God, “Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that

Do the following verses ever haunt you? “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28,29).

Our Lord’s yoke is easy. Our Lord’s burden is light.

Two possibilities exist if this is not so for you.

The yoke you wear is not His yoke. What you are doing is not what God wants you to do. It might be a good yoke. It might be a ministry yoke others wear, but it’s not the one for you. Maybe God did not mean for you to be on the mission field. Maybe you did misinterpret His will about the pastorate. Maybe it was not Him who called you to serve in a parachurch ministry. That’s why the yoke is hard. That’s why the load is intolerable. Maybe you wear the yoke by default, guilt, or pride. But a yoke you weren’t meant to wear is always an unbearable yoke. It’s OK to say, “I was wrong.”

Second: The yoke is meant for you, but you are not learning from Christ how to wear it. Jesus said, “Learn from Me.” He teaches us how to wear the yoke. He teaches us gentleness and

humility of heart. In gentleness and humility we find rest for the soul. If you have determined you are wearing the right yoke and are pulling His load, but your hide’s rubbed raw and you’re bleeding, then maybe you have not experienced an increase in gentleness and heartfelt humility. Even the right yoke, worn in ignorance, is unbearable.

To learn from Him is to ask for ourselves what Paul prayed for the Ephesians and Colossians:

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Ephesians 3:16,17).

“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way . . . being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience” (Colossians 1:9–11).

Paul said it this way in Philippians 4:13: “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” If you’re not feeling His strength, if things are such



# Misunderstanding what God is doing happens to a lot of people, including us. When ministry is under siege and things are not always what they seem, the potential to misread God's intent is probably never greater.

that the ministry is unbearable, either you're wearing somebody else's yoke or you're wearing your own yoke, but you're wearing it unlearned.

## EXPERIENCING GOD'S GRACE

Ministry defined as "what God wants me to do," and unbearable defined as "the ministry is too much for me" are incompatible concepts. This does not mean we do not become tired. This does not mean we don't need to get away to regain perspective. This does not mean we can never leave a hard place. It does say, though, that God does not use unbearable situations to get you to say, "I quit."

The testimony of the Spirit, given to all believers, reveals God's gift for prevailing in any situation that's within His will:

"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you" (Romans 16:20).

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen" (Philippians 4:23).

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (1 Thessalonians 5:28).

"Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:2).

"Grace be with you" (1 Timothy 6:21).

"The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you" (2 Timothy 4:22).

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (Philemon 25).

Even the apostle Paul, at least in one stage of his ministry, told God, "Too much." Paul wrote, "There was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me" (2 Corinthians 12:7,8). Too much. Intolerable. Unbearable. "Hello, placement office? I would like to activate my file."

But Paul discovered that burdens read as unbearable are misreadings. He continued, "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you' " (2 Corinthians 12:9). Grace is not a general anesthetic, but the ability to graciously endure moment by moment. Felt needs—even felt ministry needs—allowed by the providence of God—are tolerable. To use the unbearable as a reason to quit is to deny the sufficiency of that grace. "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

On July 28, 1962, the *Mariner I*

space probe was launched from Cape Canaveral in Florida toward Venus. The objectives were the following: after 13 minutes into the flight, a booster engine would give acceleration up to 25,820 mph. After 44 minutes, 9,800 solar cells would unfold. After 80 days, a computer would calculate the final course corrections. After 100 days, the craft would circle Venus scanning the planet's mysterious cloud shroud. The reality: 4 minutes after takeoff, *Mariner I* plunged into the Atlantic Ocean. An investigation revealed that when the instructions were fed into the computer, a minus sign was omitted—a minus sign that cost millions.<sup>1</sup>

Do you feel frustrated? That's understandable. We all do on occasion. But as a believer, neither you nor I can give in to frustration and say, "I quit." To do so is to feed data into our God's-will-for-my-life computer that omits a critical sign. It's a sign that could cost both you and me a bunch. This sign reverses everything. The intolerable becomes tolerable. The unlivable becomes livable. To say, "I'm finished," is to omit the sign—the ever-sufficient grace of God.

As long as God has communicated in His Word something that is able to sustain you, something to help you

## BURDENS AND YOKES

### “FOR MY YOKE IS EASY AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT” (MATTHEW 11:30).

One of the most powerful foes we face as ministers of the gospel is the work of the ministry itself. The stresses of ministry take a huge toll on our bodies, minds, emotions, and spirits. As we feel the weight of our responsibilities pressing us ever downward, we often find it difficult to believe that His “yoke is easy” and His “burden is light.”

Was Jesus jesting with His followers when He spoke of the toil of ministry in seemingly naive terms? Was He attempting to gain their devotion by misleading them about the rigors of serving God? Surely the Son of God was neither jesting nor attempting to mislead. Rather, He was conveying a truth that would serve as a continual reminder of the most important principle of successful ministry: We cannot do it alone.

#### HIS YOKE IS EASY?

His yoke is difficult when we plan our work without consulting His wisdom. His yoke is strenuous when we labor in the feebleness of the flesh instead of the power of the Spirit. Should His yoke become anything but easy, we must take it as a signal that we are no longer depending totally on the Lord.

Ministry is a spiritual, eternal endeavor that cannot be accomplished by frail, temporal flesh. When subjected to the supernatural essence of the tasks of ministry, our feeble frames are quickly overcome by the impossible nature of our calling.

However, what is impossible with man is possible with God (Luke 18:37). Here are a few things we can do to lighten the load of the ministerial yoke:

1. Remain in God's presence
  - \* For spiritual power—Luke 24:49
  - \* For physical strength—Isaiah 40:31
  - \* For wisdom—Ephesians 1:17-20
2. Rejoice—Nehemiah 8:10; Philippians 4:4
3. Repent of self dependence—Acts 3:19
4. Reflect on heavenly things—Colossians 3:2-4
5. Release anxieties in prayer—Philippians 4:6,7
6. Refuse unnecessary activities—John 5:19

#### HIS BURDEN IS LIGHT?

His burden is heavy when we attempt to fulfill the duties of ministry by ourselves. His burden is cumbersome when we fail to share that burden with the gifted parishioners. We have a strong helper to carry the weight of ministry—the Holy Spirit. But we also need strong helpers to assist us in moving the church in the direction God intends.

After experiencing the disappointment of assignments done poorly, and feeling a sense of rejection from the repeated excuses people offer for their lack of involvement, spiritual leaders occasionally succumb to the temptation to “do it myself.” But, if a pastor is willing to do what others should be doing, his congregation will continue to let him do it.

The principal responsibility of the pastor is not to perform the work of the ministry, but to train people to do the work of the ministry. Here are some basic suggestions to help pastors:

1. Define your responsibilities clearly to your congregation. Also, define the responsibilities of the congregation. These will vary depending on the size of the church.
2. Identify areas of need, and recruit workers to fill those needs. Provide adequate, ongoing training for your workers.
3. Allow people to make mistakes while they are learning. You may feel you could mow the church lawn better than the person who is doing it. However, a poorly mowed lawn is more desirable than a poorly preached sermon or a worn-out preacher.
4. Cultivate strong leaders who can give oversight to various ministries within the church. Do not merely train them in the duties of their position. Disciple them in the art of leadership. Meet regularly to discuss topics of spiritual growth, relational skills, and personal accountability. Plan a long-term strategy for leadership development. Delegate authority as well as responsibility.
5. Praise your people for faithfulness more than for performance. You can always teach a faithful person to become a skilled person. You can't teach an unfaithful person anything. Express your gratitude on a regular basis.

Jesus told His followers, “By myself I can do nothing.” If our Lord Jesus Christ could do nothing by himself, we certainly should not attempt to perform the work of the ministry by ourselves. We need the strength of God and the assistance of people to accomplish the mighty deeds of Christ's kingdom.

—Steve Reynolds, Lindale, Texas

you put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their forefathers? Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!' I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me" (Numbers 11:11-14\*).

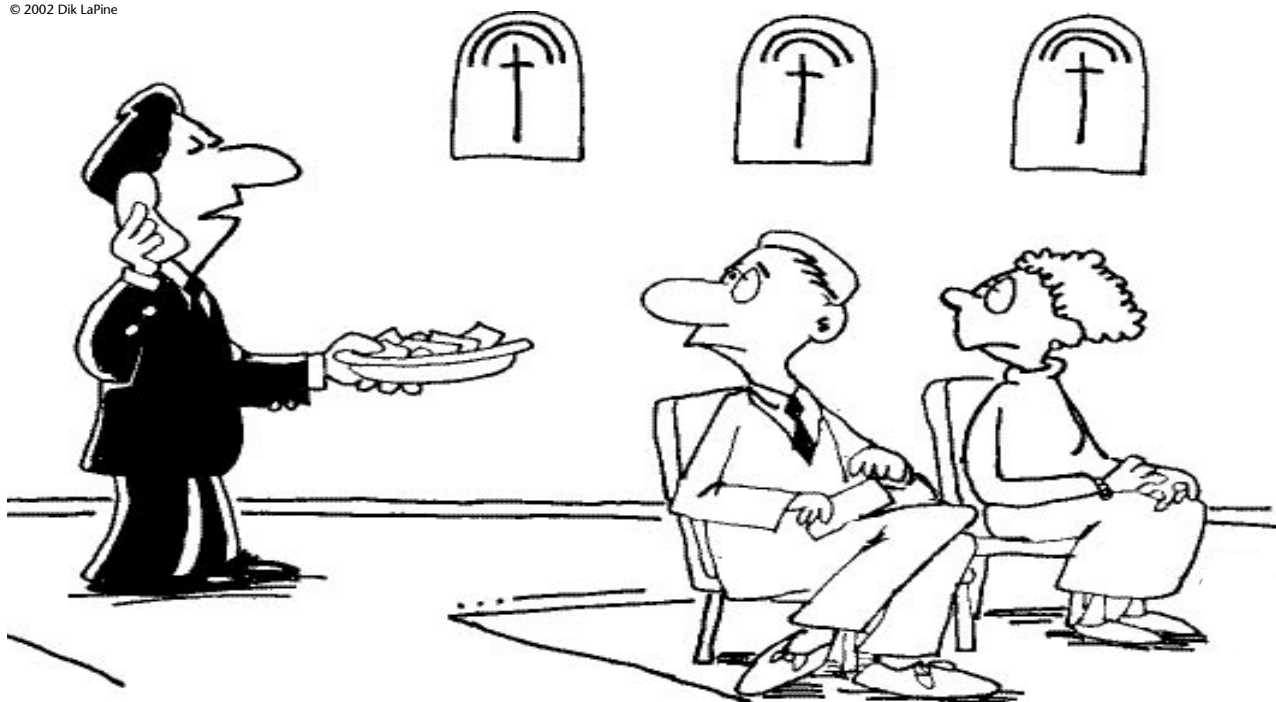
Notice the accusations. The term *conceived*—a common Hebrew expression for becoming pregnant—and the terms *birth* and *nurse*, were all judicial indictments—slams against God's qualifications as a parent.

"Order in the court. God, please be seated. You are hereby charged with parental neglect." So who's to take care of the children—the 2 to 3 million little urchins—now?

Usually it's the Moses—the leader—who feels the responsibility to make it happen. And, as the real Moses found out, "the burden is too heavy." Simply too much. Result? He wanted out. He saw the situation as intolerable. But this was a misread.

## WEARING GOD'S YOKE

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**"Hi, Bob, it's me. I'm ushering, and I'm at a lull in my job. I'm at the nongiving row."**

vanquish even that which torments, then the unbearable cannot be read as an automatic permission to leave. If we have been doing God's will—wearing His yoke, actively learning from Him how to wear it—and still plan to quit because the burden is too much, then our felt needs have gotten out of hand. We've assumed the role of a surrogate, trying to make up for God, a role that no amount of grace will help us pull off. So let's back off.

A plaque on the wall of a friend's guesthouse says:

"I was regretting the past and fearing the future. Suddenly God was speaking MY NAME IS 'I AM.' When you live in the past, with its mistakes and regrets, it is hard. I am not there. MY NAME IS NOT 'I WAS.' When you live in the future, with its problems and fears, it is hard. I am not there. MY NAME IS NOT 'I WILL BE.' When you live in this moment, it is not hard. I am here. MY NAME IS 'I AM' " (author unknown).

Grace, His grace. Grace that is now. Grace, the sign you do not want to omit. There has been no parental neglect.

Assuming that your obedience is up to speed, what you do not have right now you do not need. Because divine

grace is forever sufficient, God is not using the unbearable to communicate to you, "Quit."

So be careful. Misunderstanding what God is doing happens to a lot of people, including us. When ministry is under siege and things are not always what they seem, the potential to misread God's intent is probably never greater. To misread, as Moses did, may cause you to feel that things are unbearable and may lead you to jump.

You don't want to do that. Your parachute just might not open. 🌿

Blaine Allen, D.Min.,  
is senior pastor, Faith  
Baptist Church, Starkville,  
Mississippi, and author of  
*Before You Quit: When  
Ministry Is Not What You  
Thought. Visit his Web site at: [www.blaineallen.com](http://www.blaineallen.com).*



*\*Scripture references are from the New International Version.*

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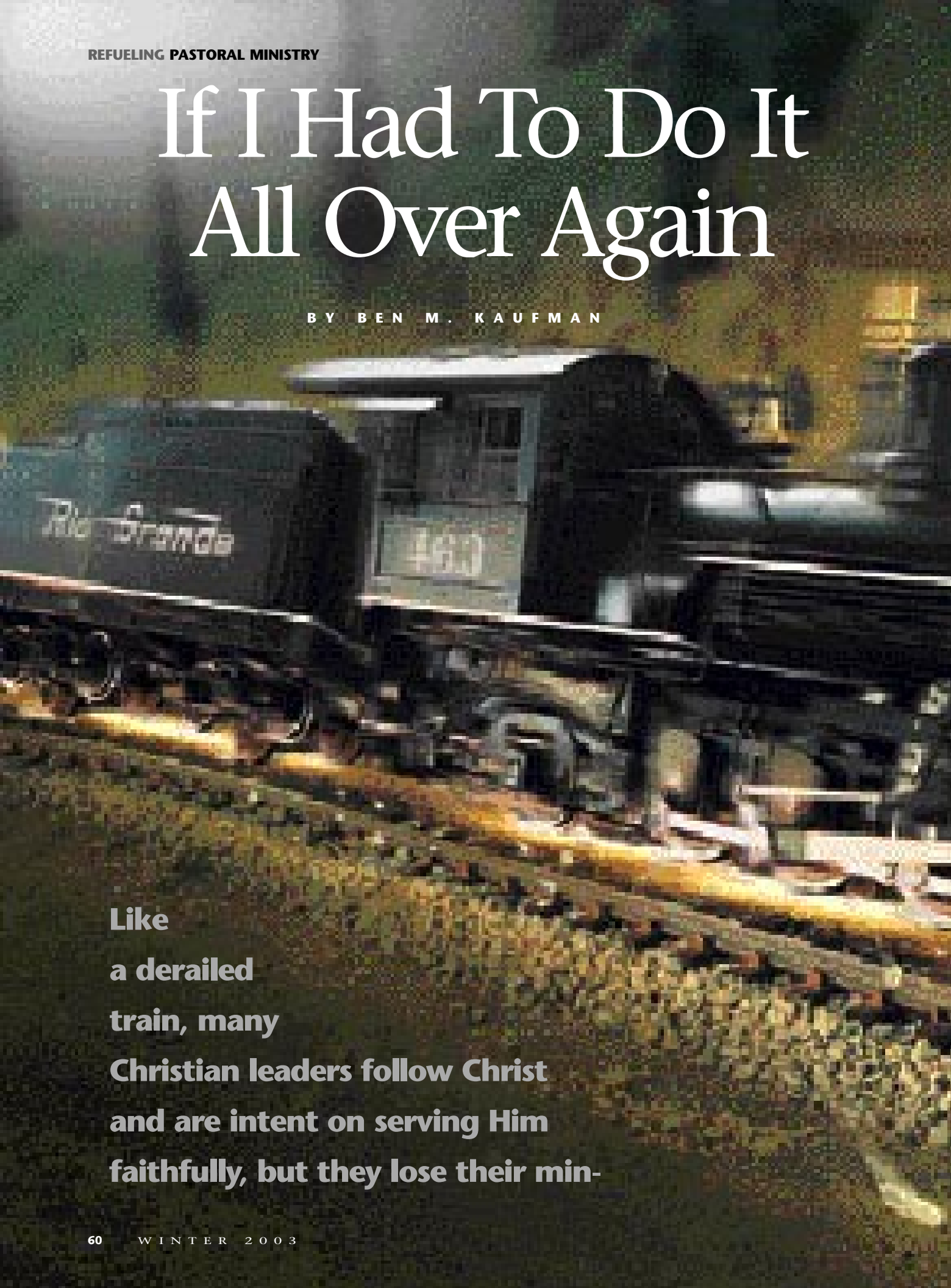






# If I Had To Do It All Over Again

BY BEN M. KAUFMAN



**Like  
a derailed  
train, many  
Christian leaders follow Christ  
and are intent on serving Him  
faithfully, but they lose their min-**

**I**t doesn't get any better than this, John thought. Just 7 weeks ago he had been elected pastor and now he was standing before this group of 225 wonderful people. It was his first Sunday at the church, and he knew already

that he would like it here. The congregation had voted him in unanimously. They were all smiles, so glad to have their new pastor at the church. The board members who had

interviewed him were rooting for him. They had recommended him to the congregation. His wife and family were on the second row praying for him. Everything was in place and perfect. That morning he preached his heart out and was rewarded with warm handshakes and generous compliments as people left the church. It was a dream come true.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID EDMONSON





Less than a year later John thought, *I can't wait to get out of here.* John was once again standing before his church—his former church. It was his last Sunday. He wondered, *What had gone wrong?* Yes, he had replaced the bulky, wooden pulpit with a new Plexiglas lectern. He had reformatted Sunday School. And the music had been upgraded to a more modern style. *Those and a dozen other changes were needed,* he thought. But the church was of a different opinion. At the last church meeting one member had concluded with the words, “Too many changes too fast.” Pastor John was voted out. Just that fast. The dream had turned into a nightmare.

### DERAILMENT

The word *derailment* generates an image of a moving locomotive whose wheels lose their traction causing the train to disconnect from the tracks and keep it from arriving at its destination. Like a derailed train, many Christian leaders

singing engagement, she was killed in a car accident. Nobody knows if she rededicated her life to God.<sup>1</sup>

Derailment occurs too often. Consider the statement of Clinton and Stanley, two authors who have studied ministry derailment: “We continue to be amazed by the large number of those who start following Christ, serving Him in many fields, intent on faithfulness and fruitfulness, and yet do not finish well.”<sup>2</sup> We all agree that too many have been thrown off track and lost their way. Even one derailed leader is too many.

“John, as you get ready to enter the ministry, I want to give you some advice.” It was Paul Beck, speaking to his son-in-law John Bisagno, pastor of a large church. Beck continued, “Stay true to Jesus. Make sure you keep your heart close to Jesus every day. It’s a long way from here to where you’re going, and Satan’s in no hurry to get you.”

Beck went on to remark that out of

### Derailed Bible characters

A tragic biblical example of a derailed leader is Judas Iscariot. He was part of Christ’s inner circle, yet he betrayed his Lord and lost his way, finally committing suicide.

Another biblical character who derailed was Demas. In Philemon he is called one of Paul’s fellow workers. But 2 Timothy 4:10 states that Demas had forsaken Paul because “he loved this world” (NIV). Demas started well, but did not finish well. Fortunately, many biblical leaders who derailed for a time were able to get back on track. The most notable are David and Peter. Both are examples of the fact derailment need not be permanent.

### DERAILMENT FACTORS

Derailment occurs when a leader wants to retain his or her present position and is demoted or dismissed. Derailment also occurs when a leader plateaus in his development, loses ministry focus,

## Derailment occurs when a leader plateaus in his development, loses ministry focus, and flounders with little or no direction.

follow Christ and are intent on serving Him faithfully, but they lose their ministries.

Recently I read of a train that derailed as it rumbled through a rural area. The next day the front page of my newspaper showed damaged train cars straddling the bent railroad tracks and other cars cast aside in the snow-packed ditches. One person was killed and 96 injured. Investigators were considering the possibility that an internal defect in the track may have occurred when the steel for the rail was forged.

Just as a derailed train leaves a path of destruction, so derailed leaders find their path is strewn with disillusioned followers. Some derailed leaders have devastated entire congregations and

10 who start out in full-time ministry in their early 20s, only 1 is still on track at retirement age. They have moral failures, lose out to liberal theology, get obsessed with making money, or simply get discouraged.

Bisagno was surprised at Beck’s assertions, but Beck continued. At the age of 20, he had written in his Bible the names of 24 peers who were committed preachers, trained for the ministry. “I am now 53 years old. From time to time as the years have gone by, I have turned to that page in my Bible and crossed out a name. I wrote down those 24 names when I was just 20 years of age. Thirty-three years later, there are only 3 names remaining of the original 24.”<sup>3</sup>

and flounders with little or no direction. The leader may keep his leadership position but loses his zeal, resolve, and love for Christ, plateauing at a disappointing level.

Recently I conducted interviews with a number of Christian leaders to determine the causes of derailment among their colleagues. I asked the leaders to call to mind a growing Christian leader and a derailed Christian leader and then evaluate them (the information was strictly anonymous; no names were mentioned).

Those interviewed were asked why the leader had derailed. Following are the factors mentioned most often.

The derailed leader:

- suffered from a lack of

## HOW TO AVOID DERAILMENT IN THE MINISTRY

**TO FINISH WELL WE MUST COOPERATE WITH GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT. WE CAN START BY DOING THE FOLLOWING:**

### 1. DEVELOP NOBLE CHARACTER

Remember the train wreck where the investigators concluded that a defect in the track caused the train to derail? So it is with leaders. We derail because we don't deal with our character issues.

Consider this fact about character. When you see a leader who has failed in an outward, visible aspect of life, you know there was a failure in the inner life. The Scripture states, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23, NKJV). What is on the inside eventually is manifested on the outside. If we fail to deal with secret sins, they will eventually be made public.

Have you ever bitten into an apple and found a worm in it, and yet the outside of the apple showed no hole or entry point for the worm? How did the worm get inside the apple? Clearly it could not have burrowed in from the outside. Scientists have discovered that the worm comes from inside. But how does it get in there? Simple. When the apple tree has only blossoms, an insect lays an egg in an apple blossom. Sometime later, the worm hatches in the heart of the apple, then eats its way out. Like the worm, sin begins in the heart and works out through the behavior.

### 2. PROTECT YOUR MINISTRY

I asked several leaders why their colleagues had derailed. One leader responded, "He did not put safety measures into his life and ministry."

Another stated, "He placed himself above the possibility of failure."

A third responded, "He had nobody in his life who was honest with him. He had too many back patters."

A safety measure that leaders can put in place is accountability. Accountability is often viewed as something to be avoided at all costs. However, it is actually a blessing for those willing to submit to it. To be accountable means you are willing to be responsible to another person for your actions and thoughts. Accountability implies a level of submission to others' opinions and viewpoints.

Proverbs 27:6 declares that "faithful are the wounds of a friend" (NIV). In this context a "wound" might be a friend's constructive criticism. Such criticism may hurt for a while, but eventually it will bring good to the one who receives it. Having friends who provide you with advice and honest feedback is a great blessing.

### 3. BEWARE OF BITTERNESS

One leader warned, "Don't let the circumstances of life embitter you." They will, if you give them a chance.

One man grew bitter toward people because of a significant interpersonal disappointment. I asked a friend of his what became of the man. He responded with sadness, "He spent 30 years wandering around in a spiritual desert."

The Scripture speaks of the root of bitterness (Hebrews 12:15). When the roots of a tree grow and spread out, it is difficult to uproot the tree. That man's bitterness had taken root and even 30 years of wandering did not uproot it.

Leaders should treat bitterness as they would adultery and murder. As surely as the latter can destroy a life, bitterness can also. We dare not take bitterness less seriously than sins of the flesh. Bitterness can destroy too.

### 4. BE WILLING TO ADAPT

Leaders must understand that what worked in the past may not work today. The leadership style they practiced in the past may not work in their present context. Pastor John, the pastor I referred to at the beginning of this article, apparently did not understand his context and attempted to change things in his church too fast. Leaders must recognize when their present approach or skills are failing to meet the current challenges. They must be willing to adapt.

Bill Hybels' comments are relevant to this subject: "When you've stayed at one church as long as I've stayed here, there's a price level you get comfortable paying. Every time that price goes up, I have to do a gut check: What am I in this for? Am I here to be comfortable and reduce personal cost? Or am I here to pour out my life as a drink offering to Jesus?"<sup>4</sup>

I was talking with two pastor friends about adapting. One said, "Pastoring today is quite different from 20 years ago."

The other pastor commented, "Yeah, and I don't like the changes."

It is difficult to make significant adjustments in our lives. We agree with Mark Twain who said, "The only person who likes change is a baby with a wet diaper." Yet, to survive and flourish we must learn to adapt.

God sustains the leader who sincerely requests help. A minister friend faced probable derailment due to an addiction that had seized control of his life. He recognized his need and sought help from his district leaders. After rehabilitation he resumed his ministry and today he is doing well. His story offers hope to others facing derailment. He is realizing his dreams. Why? He humbled himself and obtained God's help and the help of others. Through his experience he put into practice the Scripture, "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12, NKJV).

—Ben M. Kaufman, Ed.D., Foothill Ranch, California

biblical leaders who derailed for a time were able to get back on track. The most notable are David and Peter. Both are examples of the fact derailment need not be permanent.

### DERAILMENT FACTORS

Derailment occurs when a leader wants to retain his or her present position and is demoted or dismissed. Derailment also occurs when a leader plateaus in his development, loses ministry focus, and flounders with little or

- succumbed to bitterness.
- burned out.
- demonstrated a lack of character or integrity.
- did not deal with his or her doubts successfully.
- did not handle the expectations placed upon him or her.
- was unable to resolve conflict successfully.
- displayed poor interpersonal skills.
- lacked leadership aptitude or skill.
- had unresolved marriage issues.

- was sued by the government.
- was unfaithful and left spouse.
- lost ministerial credentials.
- is in a different ministry today and was helped by others.
- is a successful pastor today.

### FINISHING WELL

God must grieve over derailed leaders because of the pain it brings to the leader and others. Derailment goes against God's nature. He is a God of completion, taking pleasure in mature leaders and finished

## Derailment also occurs when a leader plateaus in his development.

no direction. The leader may keep his leadership position but loses his zeal, resolve, and love for Christ, plateauing at a disappointing level.

Recently I conducted interviews with a number of Christian leaders to determine the causes of derailment among their colleagues. I asked the leaders to call to mind a growing Christian leader and a derailed Christian leader and then evaluate them (the information was strictly anonymous; no names were mentioned).

Those interviewed were asked why the leader had derailed. Following are the factors mentioned most often.

The derailed leader:

- suffered from a lack of accountability.

- was overly ambitious.
- was filled with pride.
- stopped learning and growing.

### DERAILMENT RESULTS

I asked those interviewed another question: What happened to the derailed leader? Following are some of the results. The derailed leader:

- recuperated and went on to a different ministry.
- is working card tables in a gambling casino.
- has pastored a number of churches, but stays in each church 1 to 2 years, then moves on.
- left the ministry and became a bartender.

projects. He completed the creation of the world and said it was good. Jesus Christ cried out on the cross, "It is finished."

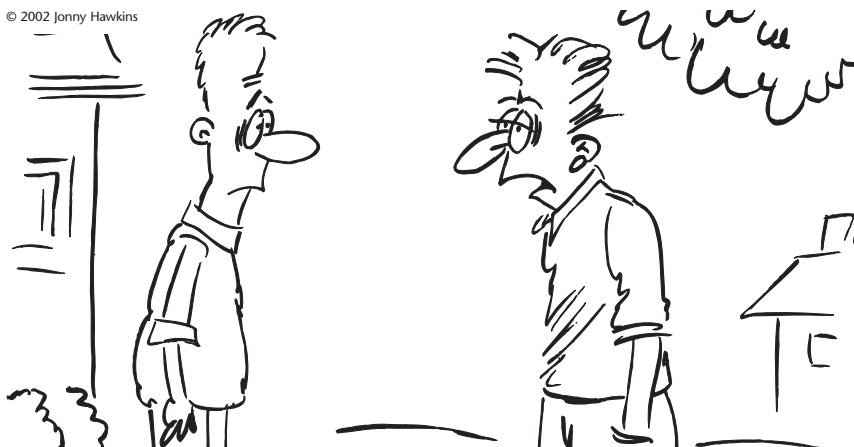
Paul declared, "I have finished the race. I have kept the faith."

God wants us to finish well. Satan does not. We must shut out the voice of Satan who loves to whisper in our ear, "You're not going to make it. The challenges are too great." Our hope is rooted in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, a historical fact and miracle that demonstrates that God's power is sufficient to meet the challenge.

Ben M. Kaufman, Ed.D.,  
Foothill Ranch, California, is  
leadership development spe-  
cialist for Asia Pacific Center  
for the Advancement of  
Leadership and Missions.



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**"I got kicked out of my church for taking a stand . . . and a pew, some hymnbooks, and an organ."**

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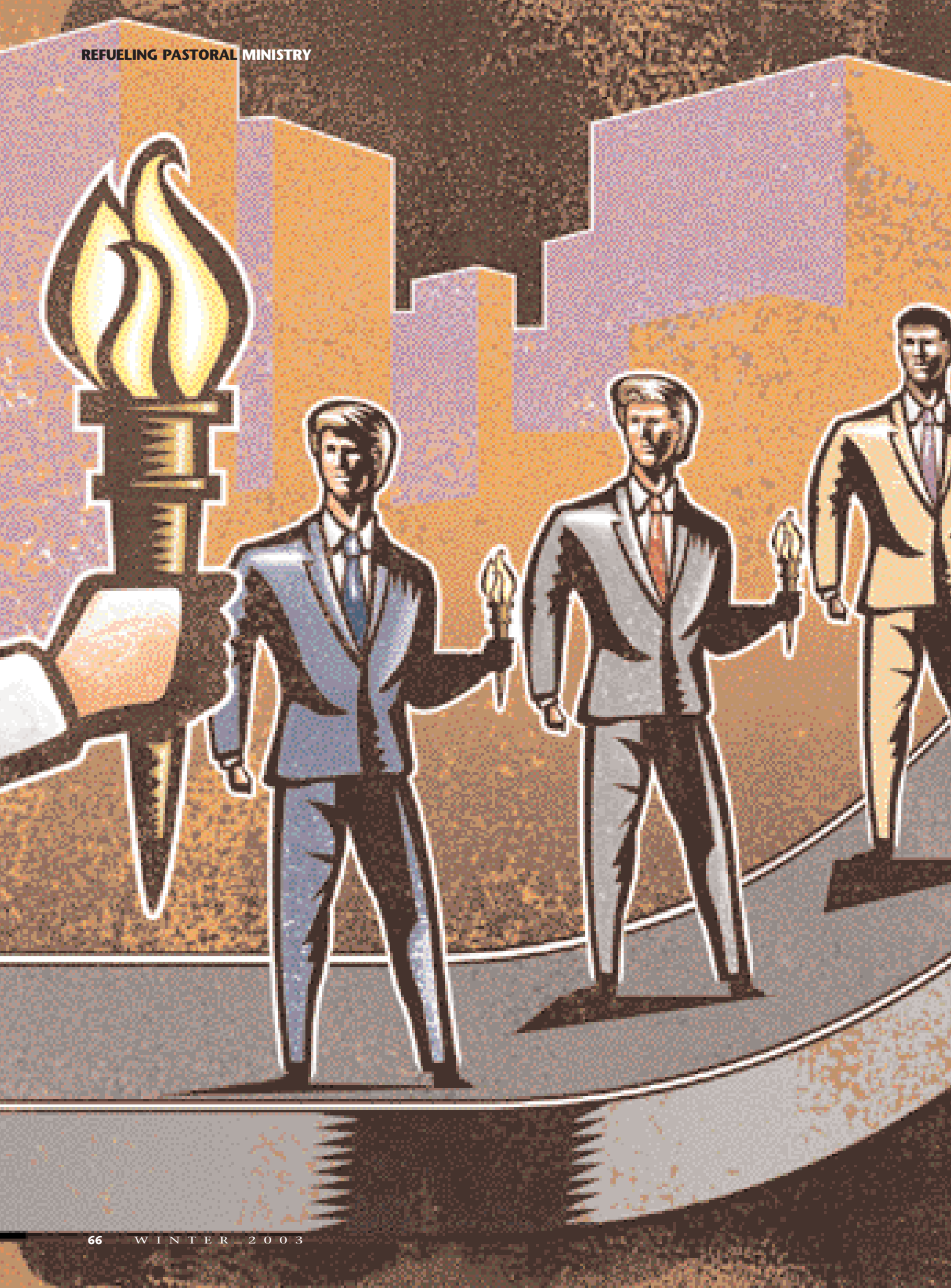
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BY RICHARD L. DRESSELHAUS

# Passing the TORCH: The Art of Mentoring Staff

I had my master's degree, but I knew little about pastoring. So I watched and listened as Wilbur Weides showed me how. When he retired, I took over. I did it like he did, and it served me well.

Wheaton Graduate School was a great place to learn. I relished every moment. I had the finest instructors, a challenging curriculum, and great interaction. But how to pastor? Well . . . that would have to wait.

My first assignment: associate pastor at Summit Avenue Assembly of God, St. Paul, Minnesota. Now for the doing. And the step from Wheaton's classrooms to practical ministry was a big one. Maybe I should have focused less on theory and more on practice. Was I wise to opt for advanced Greek rather than pastoral ministries? Never mind. The choice had been made months before.

ILLUSTRATION BY RANDY FISHER

Nearly 3 years passed. Suddenly Pastor Weides resigned and the church elected me as pastor. It was a large, city church, and I was a young novice. When G. Raymond Carlson, district superintendent, gave the installation charge, I claimed the words first spoken to Joshua: "I will be with you; I will never leave you or forsake you" (Joshua 1:5\*). I held on to that.

What should I do? How do you pastor? What should be first? Easy. I will simply do as I had seen Pastor Weides do for 3 years. I had watched every move, hung on every word, observed every attitude, and followed every step. The torch had been passed.

All I had to do now was reap the benefits of having a superb, God-given

pastors are masters at pastor-board relationships. It is a must.

Pastor Weides invited me to sit in on every board meeting. This was not a requirement of my work; it was his way of preparing me for what lay ahead. I doubt I would have made it in the early months of that first pastorate if I had not observed firsthand how a successful pastor works with a church board. He made room for me. He allowed me to have a part of the action. He selflessly shared his board with me. It was an incredible learning opportunity.

The temptation for every pastor is to become possessive and overly protective. To allow an associate too much access to the power center feels threatening. None of us want to be witness to

the pulpit as a mechanism for influence. When a pastor shares his pulpit with an associate, the experience, in terms of mentoring, is significant. It provides an opportunity for the mentoree to touch the heart of a congregation and elicit from it the kind of affirmation and support so essential in pastoral growth. Again, it is a matter of sharing the limelight to build the strengths a mentoree will need for future ministry.

Some pastors struggle at this point. The thought of sharing influence and power seems threatening and unsettling. They think, *If I give away too much, I will jeopardize my leadership*. That is true. But the key is to use discretion, knowing that the people we serve will typically sense intuitively what is taking

## Over the more than 30 years as pastor of San Diego First Assembly, I have had 32 opportunities to mentor staff.

mentor. To this day I am grateful. Maybe, just maybe, I can do for other servants of the Lord what Pastor Weides did for me.

Over the more than 30 years as pastor of San Diego First Assembly, I have had 32 opportunities to mentor staff. It has been a privilege of the highest order.

This article, however, is as much about how I was mentored as it is about how I mentor. Here are some don'ts and dos about mentoring. Or, put differently, how the torch is passed from one pastor to another.

### **DON'T HOG THE SHOW: SHARE THE GLORY**

One of the big challenges for any pastor, especially at the beginning, is working harmoniously and productively with a church board. I can almost guarantee it. Work well with the board, and you will work well with the entire church. Wise

a power struggle that we might lose. We clutch the top like it belongs to us.

Mentorees must see what things look like on the inside. If an overly protective pastor guards the gate too closely, the learning curve takes a dive. If there is any glory, mentoring says it must be shared. It is the view from the inside that drives the leadership lessons deep into a mentoree's spirit.

Leadership technique is critical. There are many books that outline the strategy. But nothing takes the place of sitting at the table with leadership, listening to the interaction, observing people's reactions, following the arguments, evaluating the conclusions, and watching as decisions are played out in real life. The view from the inside, that's what counts.

A shared pulpit provides yet another incredible mentoring opportunity. There is nothing that compares with

place and will hold the mentoree's pastor in high esteem for his generous spirit. Few character traits hinder the work of God more than insecurity. Effective mentoring pastors will not allow their egos to dictate their actions.

### **DON'T FEATHER THE NEST: INVEST IN OTHERS**

Here is a practical roll call of those with whom I have had the privilege of serving over the years: a seminary president, the pastor of a large missions-supporting church, a leading minister of music, an associate who took a church of 400 to 1,000 in just a few years, a missionary who is doing creative work in global distance learning and evangelism. The list goes on.

It is with deep gratitude to God that I have been privileged to participate in developing these choice servants of the Lord. In many ways they are going far

beyond what I have achieved. In this I take great pleasure.

At every turn, there is a choice to be made. Do I invest my life in other potential leaders (paid or volunteer), or do I only work to solidify my own? The correct choice here will measure the ultimate impact of our lives.

It is a principle: Help others accomplish their goals, and in the process your own will be realized. A pastor who invests heavily in developing his pastoral team will in the end witness a ministry that is ever expanding. It is a rule that will not be broken.

I grew up in a dynamic, but small church, in northeast Iowa. On a good Sunday, when the roads were clear, we might have 60 in attendance. But what

opportunities for pastoral mentoring. All it takes is a pastor who is willing to accept the challenge.

#### **DON'T ASSIGN THE MENIAL: LEAD BY SERVING**

"Let the associate do it." Is that the attitude and approach that serves best? Menial tasks need to be done, but they should never be the exclusive property of the associate.

What is the point here? Simply this. Leadership in God's economy is always based on serving. Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve. His example is always the pattern.

"I'm the pastor's errand boy. I do what he doesn't like to do." No. Never. Any pastor who provokes that response

#### **DON'T CAP THE TALENT: INSPIRE EXCELLENCE**

Always try to hire someone who is better than you. That is the key to building a strong leadership team. Take it as a compliment when an associate is given high praise. After all, you had the good sense to hire him. This is an essential principle of good leadership.

I overheard a conversation in which an associate was being praised for the fabulous sermon he had preached in my absence. Great. Forget the momentary emotions of intimidation and rejoice in God's blessing on your ability to choose good associates.

Any pastor who feels threatened by strong and capable associates will promote mediocrity at best. Crucify the

## **It is a shame for any pastor to undercut or attempt to undercut any exploration of God's will for ministry placement.**

it lacked in size, it made up for in quality of ministry. There I had my first experiences in ministry. And it was there that loving pastors began the mentoring process for me.

The Assembly of God in a neighboring town had closed its doors due to a crisis in leadership. My pastor asked me if I would be interested in working with him in reviving the church. As a college student heading for ministry, I found this a perfect challenge. I will not forget cleaning the building, leading the worship, and participating with the pastor in a worthy endeavor.

While I do not know how successful our efforts were, I do know the experience was invaluable to me. It was part of my mentoring process. The pastor was willing to invest himself in a young man who felt called to ministry. In every church, large or small, salaried or volunteer, there are abounding

is failing to lead by being a servant. That attitude will sabotage every effort in the mentoring process.

The spirit of servant leadership is best tested by the responses of those without power—the high-maintenance people, the ones who give little but demand much. A mentoring pastor must demonstrate that servant leadership knows no bounds. And that the least, last, and the lost are the very ones whose needs most merit high priority.

Ministry is always a matter of the heart. It was this about Pastor Weides that made the greatest impact on my life: the loving way he treated people, the grace he demonstrated in times of conflict, the selfless charity characterized all that he did. I am eternally grateful for a man of God who opened his heart to me so I might learn what servant leadership is all about.

flesh and help others rise above the level of your own competence. Give the credit to others and watch what great things God will do through you.

I have heard over and over, with variation, the same message: "I think my pastor felt insecure with the acceptance I was receiving from the people. Little by little he undercut my influence until, finally, I had to move on."

What a sad sacrifice of God-given gifts and talents. Good pastors do all they can to push an associate to the highest levels of ministry development. Jesus said His followers would do "even greater things than these" (John 14:12). What an example. This is the spirit of Jesus.

Some time ago I spoke with an associate who served under a dynamic, successful pastor. But the associate complained: "The pastor must always be the dominant one, in every conversation



and every situation.” To say the least, he was disillusioned and made his exit at the first opportunity. What a shame. Who, but Jesus, is to be the dominant One? Since when is Spirit-empowered ministry to be competitive and personality-driven?

### **DON'T UNDERCUT THE PROCESS: INSTILL TRUST**

It has happened over and over. An associate comes to us inexperienced and green. But after a few years, the associate has blossomed like a rose, won the hearts of the people, and become effective in ministry. Guess what?

“Pastor, I’ve been invited to accept another position.”

My first response: “How dare you do this to me? Who is this pastor who is trying to steal you away?” Then I catch myself: *It is for just this that I am called. I am to help others like Brother Weides helped me. This is the fulfillment of God’s plan for my life and theirs.*

Transitions are hard at best. Associates fear that any expression of interest in another position will be interpreted as disloyalty. Are they burning bridges prematurely? Is secrecy the better option? But the risk of secrecy is great. Someone may find out, and the

pastor will feel betrayed.

None of this should be. This is the work of the Lord. It is in His vineyard we all serve. He assigns the workers as He chooses. For this reason, hard as it may be, I have informed associates that I will partner with them in exploring any other ministry opportunities that may come. I reassure them that their position is not in jeopardy, nor will I interpret their exploration of an opportunity as dissatisfaction. This partnership has paid handsome dividends. It has freed me from any feelings of betrayal and allowed me to be a creative part of a decision that may be critical for future ministry.

It is a shame for any pastor to undercut or attempt to undercut any exploration of God’s will for ministry placement. Only the Lord of the harvest knows where and when any of us might serve to the greatest benefit of the Kingdom.

Interestingly, I am now an adjunct professor at a seminary whose president is a former associate. The tables have turned. Employer has become employee, and the relationship is stronger than ever. I recall the transition years ago that set the stage for what has followed. This could not have happened had we not both been committed to a positive transition.

Passing the torch in ministry presupposes this kind of partnership. Effective leadership always keeps an eye on succession—who it is that is going to follow. Too often the torch is dropped and ministry is aborted. It must not be. A partnership of trust in transition is the key.

### **DON'T SPARE THE ROD: CORRECT WITH LOVE**

Mentoring is not always easy. Whether a pastor is mentoring laypersons or salaried pastoral staff, the requirement is the same. Sometimes correction in love is a necessity.

I do not like this part. My style is to affirm, suggest, and encourage. To speak words that inflict momentary hurt is not easy for me. But it must be done. A pastor who refuses to deal correctively when required is missing an essential link in the mentoring process.

I recall an event years ago that involved a breach of integrity between an associate pastor and the church board. Hard as it was, I knew I must request that the associate call each board member and apologize. He willingly complied and is pastoring a large and growing church today.

The key is attitude. A word properly spoken will release an incredible power. It will move a mentoree toward a new level of maturity and effectiveness in ministry. Yes, sometimes confrontation is imperative. It is work that must be done.

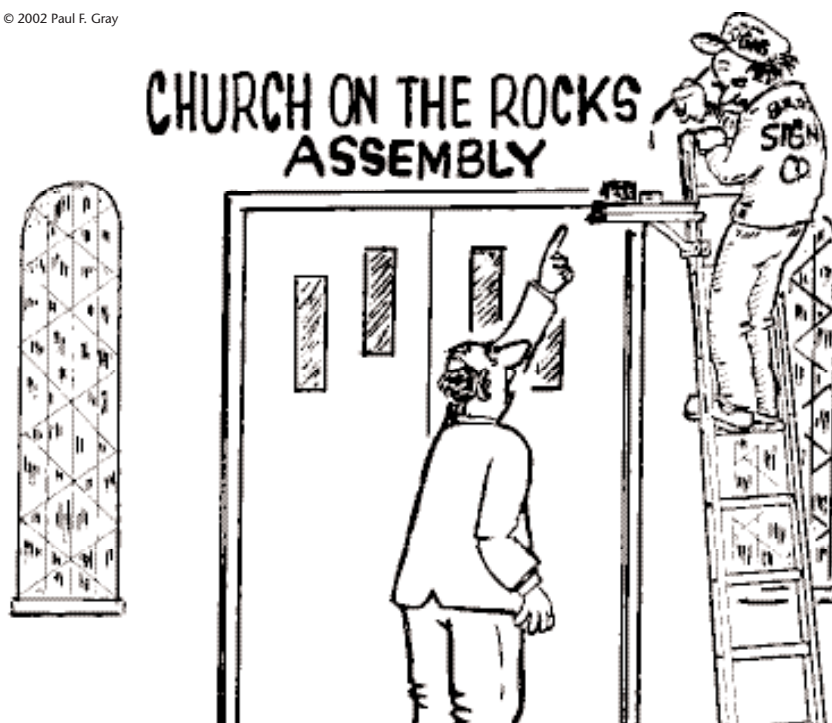
### **CONCLUSION**

Pass the torch. To ignore this necessity is to be guilty of spiritual treason. Be it a group of volunteers or a team of salaried staff, a wise and godly pastor will accept the ministry of mentoring as an honor and privilege. No aspect of pastoral ministry pays higher dividends than this. **e**

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



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**“I don’t care what you’ve heard. That ‘S’ comes off.”**

*\*Scripture references are from the New International Version.*

# Calling. Bring yours to NCU.

Name: Holly Feia

School: North Central University

Major: Youth Ministries

Calling: Lead teens to an exciting relationship with Jesus Christ

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2. Know it all. Complete minimum course requirements required in subjects like languages and social studies.
3. Make a list of all the teams and extracurricular clubs you've been in. Refer to this list when filling out your applications.
4. Pray about college. Ask God to guide your decision.
5. Visit a college or university.
6. Explore your financial aid options.

Have questions about filling out applications? Call the Admissions Office at North Central University at 1-800-289-6222.



Holly in junior high

Studying for a degree in youth ministry wasn't Holly Feia's first career choice. When she was in high school **Holly enjoyed reading English literature and writing in her journal.** She was considering pursuing a career as a teacher or an author. "At that time I was totally convinced that

I was going to choose my own profession and no one was going to tell me what to do," says Holly.

But **a radical change was in store for her** at Bible camp during the summer of 1998. While there, Holly felt called to ministry and decided to enroll in North Central University's youth ministries program. **"I knew that North Central was where God wanted me,"** she says.

**A**s a part of her major, Holly completed a ministry internship in the summer of 2001 where she led and mentored junior high-age girls. When she discovered there was a lack of quality Bible study curriculum for her girls, Holly decided to write her own. **She created a 12-week Bible curriculum called "Priceless,"** which motivates and informs junior high girls of Biblical applications to their everyday problems. Not only did Holly submit this curriculum as her senior project in youth ministry, she plans to submit her "Priceless" curriculum to companies for publication.

Holly's calling is to lead teens to an exciting relationship with Jesus Christ. At North Central University, **our calling is to instruct Holly how to make Christ real to youth.** We combine academic excellence with spiritual passion to prepare Pentecostal leaders for service in the church and the world.

**Bring your calling to NCU.**





# Be a Barnabas; Pursue




# a Paul; Train a Timothy

B Y P A U L R . M A R T I N

In a world of increasing disconnectedness, it should not come as a surprise that the relational dynamics of ministry development are being revisited. Words like *mentor*, *small group*, *cluster*, and *accountability group* are buzzwords highlighting the symptomatic issues resulting from a lack of meaningful relationships.





The ministry demands open, trusted relationships. Inappropriate feelings, behaviors, or attitudes fester when covered with a shroud of secrecy.

relationships, the Holy Spirit can illuminate our own realities. By God's grace, further casualties among Christian leaders may be averted.

## In a day when the number of Christian ministers is in drastic decline, perhaps a revisit of some basic ministerial relationships may help turn the tide.

Unfortunately, more often than we want to admit, this renders the man of God spiritually and emotionally crippled.

Perhaps "know and be known" would be a timely call for all leaders in the Lord's church. Jesus had three inner-circle friends. The apostle Paul had his trusted ministry companions throughout the Book of Acts. John Wesley had the Holy Club, complete with a series of probing questions that went much deeper than, "How many are you running?" or "What's your golf score?"

I sometimes wonder, *Who really knows me, my feelings, my struggles, my failings?*

Some pastors believe they have long-distance accountability relationships. But in reality, for the most part, only what is willingly shared is what is known. Some expect a public platform to provide the safeguard; others join a small group.

Accountability is not guaranteed by any certain relationship since the relationship itself does not have the ability to hold us accountable. We must make ourselves accountable. Unless one willingly submits to another, the vulnerability of a duplicitous life remains. Transparency, openness, honesty, and the like can never be imposed; rather, they come from a sense of the fear of the Lord.

In a day when the number of Christian ministers is in drastic decline, perhaps a revisit of some basic ministerial relationships may help turn the tide. At least three key relationships surface in an overview of ministry models in the Book of Acts. Perhaps through a prayerful application of these examples and introspection of our own ministry

### BE A BARNABAS

One wonders if Paul would have made it without Barnabas. The Damascus dust may still have been on Paul's sandals. The fear of Paul's murderous threats toward those of the Way was still very much a reality when Barnabas took Paul to the apostles and vouched for the veracity of his testimony (Acts 9:26,27). Barnabas did not have to do this, but this act of encouragement provided a necessary link between Paul and the fulfillment of his calling. Several years later, Barnabas was prompted by the Holy Spirit to look for Paul (Acts 11:25). No doubt the Damascus Road testimony had been forgotten by most, but not by Barnabas.

Barnabas, in keeping with his name, always seemed to be looking for someone to encourage in the ministry. The Tarsus tentmaker had seemingly been overlooked by the established church and bypassed for meaningful ministry assignments. But Barnabas remembered. Because of Barnabas' influence, the Antioch church found a place for Paul and helped him develop trusted relationships and a respected teaching ministry (Acts 11:26; 13:1,2).

This was not the only time Barnabas took such an initiative. Remember John Mark (Acts 15:37)? Regardless of the baggage or failure from the past, Barnabas was there.

How many ministers have needed a modern-day Barnabas to come alongside them to give them ministry opportunity? How many ministers sit dejected on the sidelines because of a failure? Their church didn't grow. The vote was not strong enough to stay. The

program was a disaster. A marriage or family relationship disintegrated. Where is the brother or sister in the genre of a first-century Barnabas to look

Scriptures was given context and application as the apostolic ministry team went from city to city.

Who is the 21st-century Paul you are

## Well-trained ministers have a better potential for longevity in ministry just as well-trained marathon runners have a better chance at finishing the race.

for the forgotten, to believe in the divine call, to hope for the best?

The 21st century needs larger numbers of Barnabas-minded ministers. Deserting the call is pandemic. Be a Barnabas. The silent sufferers are hidden in the shadows of the successes of others. Be a Barnabas. The challenge is before us. Scan the topography for the bypassed, the overlooked, the rejected. Be a Barnabas. Look for someone who has failed and is discouraged. Be a Barnabas. Retaining our minister will certainly help reverse the trend of declining numbers in vocational ministry.

### PURSUE A PAUL

Much is being said today about mentoring. The need, no doubt, is being exacerbated by sociological realities of the 21st century. The breakdown in the home where sons and daughters have distant or nonexistent relationships with their fathers certainly has had a negative effect on leadership development. In times past, the son worked alongside his father, learning not only skill and competency, but also behavior and values. Where does this happen today? Peers in a classroom learning theory?

Real life is different from laboratory theory. An education in itself does not prepare one for life. Just as an airplane has two wings, the cognitive must be balanced with practical application.

Think of the list of individuals in the New Testament who were impacted by the apostle Paul. Did this take place in a formal classroom for Titus, Onesimus, Luke, and Silas? Probably not. Rather, their foundational training in the

pursuing? Observation tells us that mentoring is not best accomplished through a formal program. Mentoring takes place best as the one desiring formational input pursues.

“Will you mentor me?” is probably not the right question. Mentoring takes place as we watch, listen, serve, follow, learn, read, glean, emulate.

In Elisha’s day, this process took place as “the two of them walked on” (2 Kings 2:6\*). “As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you,” embodies the resolve Elisha had in pursuing Elijah.

Each minister needs to pursue someone who excels in some area of life or ministry. Thanks to 21st-century technology and travel, the whole world is open to us through print media—classic and current—tapes, interactive CDs, the Internet, conferences, and networking. This allows any minister, wherever he or she may be serving, to connect with any Christian leader anywhere.

Mentoring is not something someone does to someone else; it is the result of a diligent pursuit of another’s life and ministry. So, pursue a Paul. Look around. Key in on someone you respect. Prayerfully ask the Lord to lead you to the influencers who can have formational impact on your life.

Pursuing a Paul is not an activity solely for the younger minister. All can benefit from being a lifelong learner. Pursue a Paul. Perhaps the attrition rate of ministers can be normalized.

### TRAIN A TIMOTHY

A third key ministry-development



## POTENTIAL MENTOR INVENTORY

You may be wondering whether you are cut out to serve as another person's mentor. Answer these questions to help you evaluate your suitability:

1. Are you a person of patience? Do you take the long-range view?
2. What is your area of competence? In what skills are you qualified, and what is your specific area of expertise?
3. How strong are your interpersonal skills? Are your relationships generally healthy?
4. Are you process-oriented? Are you capable of sticking with people over time while they develop?
5. Are you willing to take risks?
6. Are you willing to accept responsibility to help someone else grow?
7. Is your character worth emulating? Would God approve of someone adopting your behaviors, attitudes, values, language, and mannerisms?
8. Are you willing to make time for someone else?
9. Is there any sin or unhealthy situation that you have not addressed that could possibly damage your relationship with another person?
10. Have you settled the question of Christ's lordship over your life? Are you fundamentally committed to honoring Him in every area?

—Adapted from *As Iron Sharpens Iron*, by Howard and William Hendricks (Moody Press, 1995). Used by permission.

relationship we observe in the New Testament is embodied in training. When, as a minister, you find a willing, motivated follower, take time and expend energy, and invest in training.

Training is a cyclical activity involving instruction, implementation, observation, and evaluation. In this model, the event of teaching/instruction is but one component in the process of training. Training gives further opportunity for implementation and observation with evaluative feedback, followed by further instruction as necessary with the cycle continuing.

Intentional training is needed in the

ranks of our ministers today. Skills need to be learned; competencies need to be refined. Many young Timothys desperately need increased effectiveness. They need to be well-trained.

While the primary result may be that the young minister is trained and more effective, several things happen as a by-product of this activity. Benefit also comes to the one doing the training. As the teacher shares the principles, they are further highlighted in the teacher's mind and heart, thereby strengthening the faith and resolve in the one doing the training. Additionally, a certain amount of accountability is applied to the life of

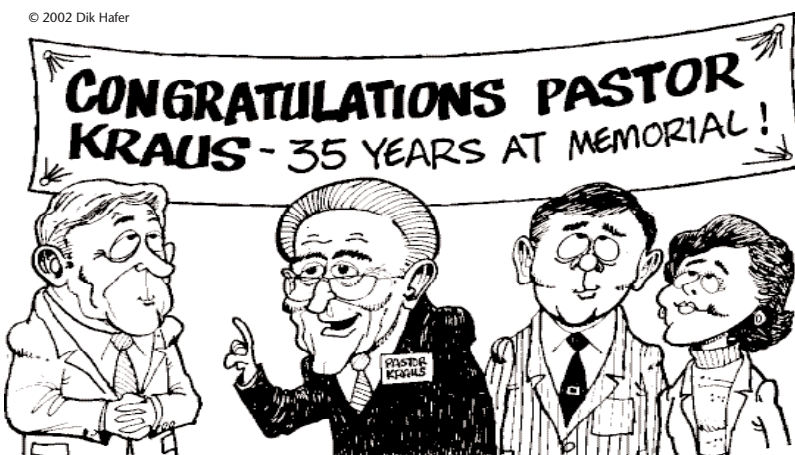
the one doing the training, "so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (1 Corinthians 9:27). Furthermore, joy wells up in the heart of the one investing the training energy whenever those influenced become effective in the work of God. The aged apostle John, referencing his friend Gaius, said, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth" (3 John 4).

Well-trained ministers have a better potential for longevity in ministry just as well-trained marathon runners have a better chance at finishing the race. Train a Timothy. In addition, the process and discipline of training another can have a positive effect on the trainer through reinforcement of truth. It brings accountability and adds a joy factor to the ministry.

## CONCLUSION

If every minister would seek to be a Barnabas, pursue a Paul, and train a Timothy, many ministers on the sidelines or in the grandstands could be active in ministry assignments. In pursuit of much needed mentoring, ministers, as lifelong learners, could be better prepared for the long haul. When younger ministers are mentored, they will be more effective in the work of the ministry. And those offering themselves in training will be further encouraged and safeguarded along the way toward "the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). More ministers, better equipped, in it for the long haul, will have a profound positive effect on the declining number of ministers. Be a Barnabas, pursue a Paul, and train a Timothy. **e**

Paul R. Martin is senior pastor, First Assembly of God, Rockford, Illinois, and former superintendent of the Illinois District of the Assemblies of God.

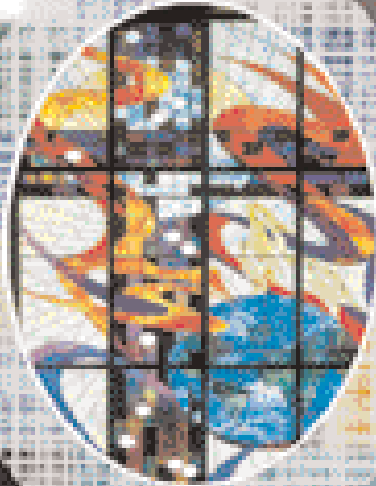


**"Yes, one of my proudest accomplishments is my consistency. I'm still doing everything the exact same way I did them on my first day here!"**

\*Scripture references are from the New International Version.









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B Y C . D A N B E T Z E R

# From Pew to Pulpit— Preparing Laity for Full-Time Ministry

**B**ecause of the ministerial shortage the Church at large is beginning to face, we must look for ways to find and prepare people for ministry.

One of the best resources for future ministers is the people in the pew. At First Assembly of God, Fort Myers, Florida, several laypeople have responded to the call of God for ministry. Here are some things we have done in preparing laypeople for full-time ministry.

## PERPETUATION

As pastor, I have an obligation to duplicate my ministry—not once,

but exponentially. I am constantly looking for people of all ages who can be challenged and mentored to take frontline ministry positions. In fact, it is a scriptural responsibility of pastors to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

Recently one of our city's leading attorneys, a member of our church, told me God is directing him and his family to the mission field. Even now he serves as our Royal Rangers commander.

How that thrills me. Perpetuation is vital to any pastor's ministry. Of the 14 full-time pastors on my staff, four have come into the ministry

from the congregation. In addition to these four, several other members of the laity have been full-time pastoral staff members and have since gone on to other ministries. For example, Bill Campbell came to Fort Myers 13 years ago to operate a gift shop. I saw in him enormous abilities. He became involved in volunteer ministry and within a few years was my associate pastor. He is now senior pastor of Calvary Temple in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Ron Webb also came from the business world and now pastors in Ohio. He also served as my associate pastor.



Currently on my staff are: Charlie Brown, former administrative assistant to our county manager; Pete Beaulieu, a young man who operated a pressure cleaning business and is now our children's pastor; Connie Weisel, a housewife in our congregation who is now minister of women's ministries and hostess of her own syndicated television program, *Help For Hurting Women* (see sidebar by Connie Weisel on page 81); and Doug Williams, family ministries pastor, who had his own successful business. We have also had several laypeople

What is there about First Assembly that spawns this kind of ministerial recruitment? Let me list several of the triggers I believe stimulate laity to go into full-time ministry.

#### FREEDOM OF MINISTRY

I am not a hands-on senior pastor. To me it is sheer foolishness to bring well-paid associates on staff and then do their work for them or sit on their shoulders watching them while they do it. With this philosophy of ministry, I look for self-starters, those who show unusual

These people feel assured that I am going to support them, not hinder them, in their God-given call to ministry.

#### I WANT SMART PEOPLE

When I look for a layperson I want to train for ministry, there are several things I look for. First, what is the spiritual condition of the person's life? Does the Holy Spirit flow from that person in a demonstrable manner? Is he or she completely amenable to God's will? Once those spiritual qualities have been found, I begin to look for other qualities.

## There is no question that the smaller numbers entering ministry is directly attributable to the number of churches discontinuing Sunday night services.

go into full-time missions work within the Assemblies of God and several with parachurch organizations. A former rock 'n' roll drummer was saved in our church, and he and his family are full-time Assemblies of God missionaries in India. Brad Liebe and his family are Assemblies of God missionaries in Denmark. And the list goes on and on.

initiative. I also do not allow layered status of ministry. Everyone has direct access to me without having to go through middle management. I believe passionately that it is one of my primary responsibilities to equip the saints for the work of ministry. Involved in that is instilling in them a sense of confidence and my fervent faith in their abilities.

Sometimes a prospective staff member comes to me and indicates his or her desire to be used in ministry. Sometimes the Holy Spirit will direct me to them. I only bring on staff people who are smarter than I am in their field of ministry. I let them know that I believe they are smarter. I tell the congregation regularly that they are smarter. They are not second-class ministers.

People in the congregation observe this relationship. I believe it starts a faith process in their hearts that as God leads them along, they, too, would like to be a part of a dynamic group of men and women working together for God. They are given opportunities for ministry that often lead to the desire to serve the Lord full-time.

#### CREATIVITY

I constantly challenge people from the pulpit to be used of God. We frequently use the altars at First Assembly. In the Sunday morning services we have two altar calls. On Sunday nights I encourage people to seek God at the altar. The growing move in Pentecostal churches to discontinue Sunday night service is a fatal mistake. This is usually where people get down to business with God's



**"And to ensure your confidence as our new pastor, we'll have the beloved former pastor reassigned to the back pew."**

call on their lives. There is no question that the smaller numbers entering ministry is directly attributable to the number of churches discontinuing Sunday night services. On that same note comes Sunday School. I don't believe a pastor can build a strong and long-lasting (for generations) ministry without both Sunday night services and a powerful, functioning Sunday School. I owe a great deal of the ministry God has entrusted to me to Sunday School attendance as a kid. And our Sunday School teachers, properly trained and encouraged, can become a source of future ministers.

It is insanity for a pastor and church to keep doing the same things and expect to somehow get different results. Joshua told the Children of Israel on the eve of their crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land, "You have never gone this way before. Sanctify yourselves and tomorrow God will do wonders among you" (Joshua 3:4,5).

Over the long ministry God has given me, I have preached in over 1,500 Assemblies of God churches. What an education. I have seen again and again the ugly philosophy raise its head: "We

have never done this before." Or, "We don't think this will work." Or, "There's only so much blood in a turnip." Strong, creative people are not going to associate with that restricted mind-set. They are going to give their time, resources, and lives to ministries that are relevant and that challenge their own abilities.

We encourage people to be themselves, not carbon copies of others. Diversity is mandatory. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12 that there are diversities of gifts of ministry. The old sociological herd instinct is fatal to relevant ministry. We not only allow diversity; we encourage it.

### THIS IS A HAPPY CHURCH

Not all churches are happy. Upon entering their doors, you can feel a heaviness. On this journey to heaven, I believe a congregation should have a happy time of it. Just before he died, the legendary Malcolm Muggeridge told me, "I believe the very first sound I shall hear as I enter the gates of heaven will be laughter." Laughter and joy should be part and parcel of what we are now. We serve the Lord with delight. This stimulates the desire in the hearts of spiritually hungry

people, young and old, to serve God even more fully.

### OPEN COMMUNICATION

Our annual business meetings are short. Not many questions are asked. Why? Because the people are given a regular, steady diet of information. There is nothing hidden at First Assembly. I was a journalist far too long in the secular world where we news people demanded strict adherence to the Sunshine Law—the dissemination of fact from every source and an openness to what was really happening. I expect that Sunshine Law to be manifested in the church world, too. It is shocking how many churches operate in a secretive manner, somehow thinking the laity aren't smart enough to understand facts. I tell pastors to let the people in on everything except personal counseling matters. What this does to a congregation is promote trust in the ministerial staff. Some members will be more ready to pursue God's call in their lives when they understand the openness of the church operation.

### HONORING THE STAFF

On a regular basis I praise the pastoral

## STEPPING INTO FULL-TIME MINISTRY: LAYWOMEN TURNED MINISTER

It was an amazing experience for me as I began to sense that the Lord was calling me into full-time ministry. And yet, I now realize that my experience should not be unusual; it should be the normal outworking of the church as the Lord intended it to function—the saints being trained for the work of the ministry.

The spiritual atmosphere at First Assembly in Fort Myers under Pastor Dan Betzer's leadership is conducive to developing full-time ministers from within the congregation. The church is blessed with a pastor who not only recognizes and affirms the giftings of each staff member, but also their potential with continual encouragement to step out and try. From the top down we have a hands-off management style (no micromanagement here). We know we are expected to fulfill God's vision for our ministry. Yet we also know we are protected. If we begin to get off track, Pastor Betzer will guide us back. He won't let us hurt others or ourselves. This is the perfect environment for developing self-starters.

As a result of attending church and Bible studies in this atmosphere, I opened my heart for the Lord to use me however He saw fit. I served in many capacities throughout the church. As the years passed, I was asked to teach Bible studies for women. This led to the day I felt compelled by love for the Lord and for women to accept the leadership of His Women, our women's ministries group. I served in this capacity as a full-time volunteer for several years. One day Pastor Betzer told me that he and the church council wanted me to serve on staff as a pastor. I was stunned and humbled. My husband and I prayed about this invitation, knowing this would radically change our lives. He so quietly and simply said to me, "Connie, you have always had a pastor's heart. Of course you must accept." I shall forever thank God for a pastor who saw potential in me and offered me an open door so I might do what God had always prepared for me.

Is it easy? Oh, no. The hours are long, the work is hard, never ending, and sometimes gut-wrenching. But the rewards, even here on earth, are unspeakable and full of glory as women are transformed, becoming free and whole. The truth is that most of the time it's fun, freeing, challenging, and rewarding.

It all works the way it does because of a pastor who reminds us that we are designed to change the world.

—Connie Weisel, women's ministries pastor, First Assembly of God, Fort Myers, Florida.



# When the senior pastor regularly and warmly endorses the successes of his or her staff and lauds them to the congregation, it is an incentive to those contemplating full-time ministry.

staff from the pulpit. I call them by name. I tell the congregation what each one is doing, the victories being won, the inroads to new ministries being achieved. I make sure the congregation knows that the progress made here is because of all of us working together.

In my travels, I have often encoun-

tered senior pastors who are either insecure in their own ministry or jealous of the talents of their associates. They are uneasy when their pastoral staff members are embraced by the laity or asked to their homes for dinner and fellowship.

This feeling exhibited by the senior pastor is spotted immediately in the pew.

The member thinks, *I wouldn't want to be a part of that team.* But when the senior pastor regularly and warmly endorses the successes of his or her staff and lauds them to the congregation, it is an incentive to those contemplating full-time ministry. They think, *I would enjoy being a part of that team.*

## LAY PEOPLE CALLED BY GOD: ONE CHURCH'S STRATEGY

At a recent church anniversary, we celebrated the fact 85 people have gone out from us into full-time ministry. (To be counted, persons had to engage in 1 or more years of unbroken ministry, thus excluding the hundred who have gone on short-term assignments).

Our strategy of seeing lay people brought into ministry includes:

- **giving public calls for people to commit their lives to ministry.** We want our people to say, "Lord, I am willing. You can send me." At these times people have not just come forward in a service. They have sometimes signed a public roll, or taken specific steps to clearly evidence their willingness to go as God would further call them.

- **following the mandate of Jesus to pray for laborers.** Each year we set faith goals for the number we are asking God to call into ministry that year.

- **placing short-term ministry opportunities before the church.** This gives everyone direct ways to explore what long-term missions and ministry might be like. We assist people financially, train them for the experience, form a team experienced in prayer, and debrief them when they return. In recent years, up to 10 percent of the congregation have engaged in short-term missions trips.

- **presenting each team to the church and commissioning them prior to their leaving on a missions trip.** Everyone is asked to pray for them. We often circulate E-mail reports during their time away. When teams return, they give testimony that shows God's blessing on and through them. People can see in this the high value and esteem we place on ministry.

- **mentoring promising adults in leadership cohorts led by the pastoral staff.** These cohorts dialog over assigned strategic literature. We also provide opportunities for pastoral service and assist those in these cohorts in understanding ministry concepts and challenges. We currently have 4 cohorts meeting with 25 persons involved.

- **offering internships to those who are being raised up for ministry.** In an internship, a person must be pursuing ministerial credentials and taking the courses required to prepare for ministry. They then engage in a rotating discipleship experience with all of the pastoral staff to experience hands-on ministry in every zone. (As I write this, our hearts are still joyful at the public commissioning 10 days ago of our latest intern who will now become the pastor of one of our Nebraska congregations. See sidebar, "Pastoral Ministry As a Second Career.")

- **developing a team formation that guides the ministry of the entire church.** This gives hundreds of people regular opportunity to truly engage in ministry at the leadership, vision-casting, high-impact level.

- **involving every age in the ministry calling and development process.** For instance, our children's pastor discipled children to lead their peers in ministry. Several of the older children, after 2 years of training and experience, are now indicating they want to become children's pastors.

- **ensuring the pastoral staff sets an example of zeal, positive excitement, and ultimate purpose.** This model is attractive to others and serves as a flash point for the call of God into pastoral ministry.

—David Argue, senior pastor, Christ's Place, Lincoln, Nebraska

## PASTORAL MINISTRY AS A SECOND CAREER

*Mark Borchardt is senior pastor at Victory Assembly of God in Gothenburg, Nebraska. Mark was a layperson who felt the call to full-time ministry. Prior to his becoming a pastor, Mark was involved in a ministry internship at Christ's Place, in Lincoln, Nebraska. The following interview with Enrichment's associate editor, Richard Schoonover, shares the account of Mark's transition from secular employment to ministry.*

### TALK ABOUT YOUR CALL. WHERE DID IT BEGIN?

**BORCHARDT:** In 1996, my family and I started attending Christ's Place in Lincoln, Nebraska. I immediately wanted to become involved, so I began teaching a class that summer. We also became involved in home fellowships, and later I began to lead a home fellowship group. Shortly after that I joined the small-group leadership team. We led a home fellowship group for about 4 years. Getting involved in structured leadership was the beginning of the Lord calling me into full-time vocational ministry. I then took courses to become a licensed minister. I did that within a 4-year span.

### DESCRIBE YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE MENTORSHIP/INTERNSHIP PROGRAM AT CHRIST'S PLACE.

**BORCHARDT:** A few years ago one of the pastors started a mentorship group, of which I was a part. That was a great learning tool. About a year after that, I did an internship at the church that lasted about a year. I had a well-rounded experience—children's ministry, youth ministry, adult ministry, home fellowship, counseling, and sermon preparation. It was a good training program. I treasure the things I learned. I also took part in funerals, weddings, being on call, and crisis situations.

### HOW DID YOU TRANSITION FROM SECULAR WORK TO BEING INVOLVED IN THE MENTORING PROGRAM?

**BORCHARDT:** That was quite a process. I had a gracious boss who told me, "Take the time you need to do the internship." I wasn't a full-time intern; I probably spent 10 to 15 hours a week doing hands-on ministry. I remember going through Berean courses and it felt like I was juggling three balls—my family, my job, and Berean courses. It took a while to get a handle on that.

### WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEBODY TRANSITIONING FROM A SECULAR CAREER INTO THE MINISTRY?

**BORCHARDT:** Spend time in the presence of the Lord and get confirmation of your call. The process takes time. It's a big transition. Let the Lord take the time to do the work He needs to do.

My staff and I sit on the platform during service. The congregation sees me with my team. They see the bond that is there.

Long ago, the members and adherents of First Assembly learned that I fiercely defend and protect my staff. An attack on one of my associates is a direct attack on me. Not many people want to enter a situation where the one in charge throws staff to the wolves.

President Harry Truman had a little sign on his desk in the Oval Office that read, "The buck stops here." Not only do I want to give my staff confidence in themselves, I want to breed their confidence in me.

### LAUNCH INTO MINISTRY

The most common way I have employed in putting laity into full-time ministry is by creating positions for them on staff. Note: I don't create positions just so I can hire them; new positions are developed to fill urgent needs in the body of Christ. I prefer using local

workers because they are already acquainted with First Assembly's philosophy of ministry and have a comprehension of how I operate. Bringing in someone from the outside means time spent in orientation. And sometimes, despite extensive research, a new staff member from the outside brings unwanted surprises. There is a much better opportunity to avoid that by working with people you already know.

Accompanying this article is a sidebar from Connie Weisel, who directs our women's ministries. Some years ago, my wife Darlene served as the women's ministries director. Her time was filled with other ministries, not to mention caring for our family. She prayed for someone to take her place. That someone was Pastor Connie. Only she wasn't a pastor at that time. But I saw in her great potential for leadership, which she has more than fulfilled in these years. Darlene and I both knew Connie and her husband Walt. We knew there wouldn't be any surprises. We knew she was capable.

What a blessing she has been. Our church honors and loves her.

### ACRES OF DIAMONDS

Years ago, the story was told of a man who wanted to find diamonds. He had a nice little acreage that he sold so he could have operating funds to begin his global search. The new owners of his property found on it one of the largest sources of diamonds known to man. The poor original owner had been sitting on a diamond mine all the time.

That can happen in ministry, too. We senior pastors search everywhere for that man or woman to fill a vital slot in our churches. And many times, we have the acres of diamonds already there, waiting to be mined, cut, and polished. I have found some dazzling diamonds. And they were right here all the time. **e**

*C. Dan Betzer is senior pastor, First Assembly of God, Fort Myers, Florida.*



# God's Call: Triggering Youth Response

BY BRAD P. BAKER

**NO MATTER WHAT WE DO, THE KEY IS TO DO SOMETHING—SOMETHING THAT WILL TAKE OUR YOUNG PEOPLE FROM OFF THE BENCH WAITING FOR WHAT GOD CAN DO THROUGH THEIR LIVES AND GET THEM IN THE GAME WHERE THEY ARE DOING IT.**

There is nothing in the world like working with young people. I see their hungry hearts wanting something real, their impressionable appetite, and their innocence that can still be molded.

Since I was a child I have heard it said that if we are going to reach this world for Christ, young people must lead the way. Many will agree there is much wrong with today's youth culture. But even with all its failings, this generation is a generation of destiny that holds not only the future of our Fellowship, but also the key to revival. But to get there we must transfer this philosophical understanding into active reality.

One doesn't need to look far to see that to have breakthrough in our churches, we must do things differently. It is easy to look at the directions our students are choosing for their futures and accuse them of spiritual depravity. When we don't see as many young people preparing for ministry as we would like, the church shoots darts instead of taking an active role in seeing change happen.

Leadership must bear responsibility for the current direction we are moving. If we accept some blame for these trends, then we can help turn the tide by reevaluating our emphases. Youth leaders can major on the majors and help our students hear God's voice and follow His leading. This is a good time to assess what God wants, and then act accordingly.

Here is an important question to address at the outset: "Is God calling as many young people today as in the past?" Though this may sound like a ridiculous question, it must be considered. With more people on the globe and the need for workers being greater than ever, it would seem that God would be doubling His recruiting efforts. If so, there appears to be a breakdown between His speaking and the responding stage of the call. This is where pastors and youth leaders have a chance to contribute. It is God's job to speak to the heart, but it is our responsibility to respond. It is also the duty of the church and its leaders to establish the environment where God's voice will be clear and response certain.

### CLARIFY THE CALL

In a practical sense, it is imperative that we as leaders create a desire for young people to follow God's call on their lives. This is the best place for us to start. This is where it started for most of us. We may have had a mentor or role model in ministry who so influenced us we felt that the greatest people in the world were those in ministry.

Willie Nelson sang, "All my heroes have been cowboys." But as I was growing up, my heroes were always preachers (with a few baseball players thrown in). My dad was my hero, and he was also my pastor. His hero was H.W. Barnett, his pastor. Thus, Pastor Barnett became a superhero to me. For a person to be called pastor was the ultimate. My dad cultivated a desire within me by esteeming the men who followed God's call.

Too often we see a different picture today. It is easy to be critical of ministries that aren't exactly what we think they should be. In our efforts to protect

the flock, we carefully dissect other ministers without concern for the fallout in impressionable hearts. Though our doctrine may be correct, we sow seeds that taint the position of the called. It might be better for us to leave character assassination to our enemies and commit ourselves to catching people doing right. We will gain more by modeling godly principles and esteeming those in ministry.

### CULTIVATE THE CALL

For students to be responsive, it is essential we as leaders create an atmosphere where they can hear God speak. Never has there been a time where there are more distractions to hearing God's voice than today.

We deal with distractions on a weekly basis. Our weekly youth activity has to compete with the local amusement park or local youth hangout. Unfortunately, we tend to fall into the competition trap, exposing our weaknesses instead of accentuating our strengths. We develop some cheesy, half-baked game night instead of giving our teens what they can't get anywhere else—the presence of the Holy Spirit. Yes, we need fun, but not at the expense of what will make the difference in young lives. God is speaking, but the noise is so loud our students can't hear Him. The distractions aren't only on the outside; we've let them in the door. We must commit to creating an atmosphere where God can be heard and where teens can respond.

Years ago, Glen Berteau built one of the great youth ministries in the country on the concept of Word and worship. His youth group saw more young people called to ministry than any I have seen before or since. What was true 20 years ago is still true today. When we create an atmosphere that welcomes the presence of God, things happen. Distractions are eliminated and the ability to hear God's voice becomes maximized. God wants the opportunity to speak to young people more than just at our summer camps. God must be given a platform to speak every week.

### ESTABLISH OPPORTUNITIES

For teens to follow the voice of God, it is imperative that we create opportunities for them. It is one thing to encourage students to trust God, but it is an entirely different thing to release them into ministry. Somewhere the desire has to be fed for the young person to grow. Students who hear from God and have no chance to exercise their gifts will become frustrated and discouraged. This is why it is important to develop ministry that involves student leadership. Granted, kids can't do it all, (act as staff, leaders, disciplers, etc.), nor should they. However, we must create opportunities that allow them to grow and prosper.

There is no better place for ministry opportunities than in outreach to school campuses. The campus presents the perfect opportunity to fulfill the call God has on our students. The school is their mission field, a place where only they can make the difference. To reach the campus, Bible clubs or Youth Alive programs must become the focus of outreach ministry in our youth programs. What an incredible opportunity awaits. Unfortunately, not enough youth pastors or young people share this sentiment. They are waiting for God to send them to some far away, uncivilized tribe instead of seeing the great need right before them. The opportunity is there. All it takes is encouragement and organization to make the difference.

Traditionally, Bible colleges were established to train young people and release them into ministry. Then Master's Commission came along, preparing graduates for ministry through discipleship and outreach evangelism. We are equipped to train our young adults, but we also need to train our teens in ministry. There is a gap—years for some—from the time young people respond to God's call to ministry to when they prepare for ministry. Teens are hungry for a program similar to Master's Commission. This program needs to be more than just a discipleship or missions programs, but a program that will help prepare them for ministry.



## LAMPAS YOUTH MASTER'S COMMISSION

Discipleship is the key purpose for Lampas YMC. We train our teens to minister to others through servanthood, witnessing, and drama.

We challenge our teens to a higher level of Christianity. *Lampas* requires a long-term commitment, with accountability, standards, and goals that are beyond mediocrity.

A commitment of 8 to 9 months allows teens to establish a steadfast routine of prayer, reading the Bible, and witnessing, preparing them for a life filled with ministry through Christ. We want the principles taught in *Lampas* to become a lifestyle.

### COMMITMENT

*Lampas* YMC requires a commitment from student, parents, and teachers. It requires time to prepare for weekly lessons, dramas, etc. Leaders are expected to be an example of the things we teach.

### SERVING

Ministry is about serving others. We serve Christ by serving our families, church, and community.

### OUR MISSION

To disciple and prepare young adults to spread the gospel of Christ.

### PRAYER

In *Lampas* YMC, we teach young people how to pray. This includes getting up early before school to read God's Word and pray. Prayer needs to be an everyday occurrence in their lives.

### PRAISE & WORSHIP

We lead teens in praise and worship, allowing them to experience a deeper level of communion with God.

### SERVANTHOOD

We want to allow God's hand to use us to reach our community and to help meet the needs of our church.

### GUIDELINES

Classes are held as an elective on Sunday mornings during Sunday School.

Students are expected to keep a godly testimony (devotional life, respecting parents, teachers, doing chores, keeping up with schoolwork, etc.) at church and *Lampas* activities, at home, and at school. Parental evaluation forms are sent home each month. We review these evaluations with the students.

- Students are to be involved in youth choir, and all scheduled activities unless previously excused.
- No dating is allowed.
- Students must be modest in appearance.
- Students are required to memorize 100 Scriptures, read assigned books, and write reports.
- Students are required to take sermon notes twice a week.
- Students must bring their Bibles and notebooks to class.
- Students must be prepared to contribute in services.
- Annual tuition for *Lampas* is \$175.

Students who do not abide by the guidelines will remain in the program, however, they will NOT be allowed to MINISTER until the problems have been rectified.

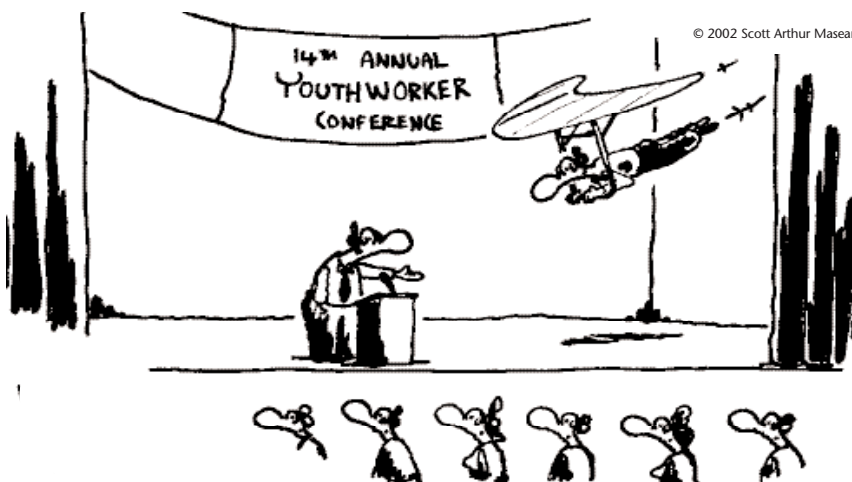
Pushed by this desire among our students, we started a program called *Lampas* (see above), designed to fulfill the yearning of teens to be in recognized ministry now. Students give a year of their lives to committed ministry,

outreaches, adopt-a-block, and other types of service. It is amazing to see students respond to the recognition of their gifts. For them, ministry is not something they will consider for the future, but is something they are doing now.

Since implementing *Lampas*, we have seen the majority of our high school graduates following God's direction for their lives by either joining Master's Commission or attending Bible college. It doesn't take much, just a commitment among leaders and a desire to invest in lives.

No matter what we do, the key is to do something—something that will take our young people from off the shelf waiting for what God can do through their lives and get them in the game where they are doing it. God faithfully continues to do His part—calling hungry young people. But we must do our part so His call will not go unheeded. **e**

Brad P. Baker is pastor of student ministries, First Assembly of God, Phoenix, Arizona.



"Ladies and gentlemen, our next speaker works exclusively with high-risk teenagers."



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BY DAVID J. BOYD

# RAISING UP YOUNG SAMUELS— Affirming a Child's Call

Eighty-five percent of our missionaries state  
they received their call from God  
while they were children.



**T**rent, Tonya, Shane, and six other children finished packing up the puppets, loading the sound equipment, and putting away the PVC puppet stage. What a day it had been. Where had all the kids come from? When the loud music began announcing that Sidewalk Sunday School was about to begin, kids came from everywhere. Seventeen children accepted Jesus as Savior that day. Hopefully many of them would be riding the bus to church on Sunday.

What makes these memories of that ministry team so special? It is the three children who helped that day and are now—years later—leading ministries of their own. Shane is a youth pastor in North Dakota. Trent is planting a church in St. Cloud, Minnesota. Tonya is a pastor's wife in North Dakota. Tonya's younger brother Troy, who joined the team 2 years later, is completing his chaplaincy course for the United States Army. Ministry breeds

What could be the cause of our shortage of new emerging pastors for our churches? Was ministry to children not emphasized enough 15 years ago? Did churches overlook and undervalue children? Did God call children into ministry only to have that call stripped away due to a lack of affirmation or growth? Ask yourself: *How can I adequately build and disciple children? How can I effectively affirm a child's call to ministry? How can I strengthen the walk of a child on whom God has placed that call?*

David came home from camp and announced to his father that God had called him to be a preacher. His father, who didn't regularly attend church, said, "I'll try to lead you down a different road, but if I can't, then I suppose it's God." That is not the kind of encouragement for which David was looking. Fortunately, a Sunday School teacher and a pastor felt otherwise.

church in Huron, South Dakota, was an environment where Sunday School teachers, youth pastors, and senior pastors touched our lives, deepened our walk, and affirmed our calling.

## THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

How can churches create an environment where children can hear God's voice and follow His call into ministry? Following are six ways the church can help children respond to the call of God.

First, examine your children's church. Ask yourself, *Are we having altar times in our children's church?* Many children's churches are so full of games and time fillers that the traditional time at the altar has been lost. This should not be. Every child needs to be invited regularly to spend time at the altar. This is their time to pray and seek God. Most calls to ministry and a deepened relationship with Christ occur at the altar. Examine your children's classrooms as well. They, too, can be places where children kneel in their seats and have an altar experience with God.

Second, be prepared for the child who says God has called him or her to the ministry. Talk privately with each child who has been called to affirm that call. Teach these children how to grow in their knowledge of the Lord. First Samuel 3:7-9 says:

"Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, 'Here I am; you called me.' Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, 'Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." ' "

God was calling Samuel, but the boy needed someone to affirm that call. Eli fulfilled that position for Samuel. It was probably one of many times Eli invested himself into the life of this young boy called by God. Affirmation poured into young, hungry, open hearts pays dividends that last a lifetime. The encouragement by my Sunday School

# to Ministry

ministry. The call from God on kids' hearts plants His Spirit deeply within.

Eighty-five percent of our missionaries state they received their call from God while they were children. We don't have clear statistics that tell us when pastors received their call. However, most missionaries were once pastors, so we can assume that many or most pastors received their call as children. Would that statistic hold true today? Does God still call the majority of future pastors while they are children? If so, is it critical that the church disciples children? It would seem so.

Scripture is clear that God wants us to place high emphasis on teaching and reaching children. Deuteronomy 11:18,19 says, "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children."\*

David's elderly Sunday School teacher was thrilled at the news, and in the following months answered his multitude of questions. David's senior pastor made him part of the church's youth choir, taught him to sing solos, and took him traveling and singing on a ministry team.

I was that child. My dad eventually believed my call was from God, but it was my Sunday School teacher, Pearl Gange, and my pastor, Howard Cummings, who affirmed my call. They gave me the confidence to follow the path God had set for me. There were others who continued to affirm my call and lead me along God's path, especially my youth pastors, Dennis and Jill Franck.

I wasn't the only one from that small youth group to go into ministry. The list includes nearly 15 individuals who are missionaries and pastors today. That



teacher and pastors still pays off every time I win another child to Jesus.

Third, spend time with the parents of children who are called to ministry. Teach them how to encourage their children in this call. Suggestions would be:

- Encourage them to pray with their children about God's plan for their lives.
- Encourage them to spend time reading the Bible with their children.
- Encourage them to purchase books for their children about the lives of missionaries and pastors.
- Encourage them to ask questions of the pastors and missionaries who visit your church.
- Expose them to ministry opportunities and encourage them to get involved now in the local church.

Fourth, look for places for all children to minister. Start ministry teams. Create positions in classrooms where children can serve as helpers. Create positions in worship services where children can serve as ushers, greeters, or run the sound system. Take children to nursing homes or to the homes of elderly people and have them do service projects. Take children to those who are less fortunate. Teach them to minister to others. Especially target children who have received a call from

God. Teach them that they have talents and abilities God wants them to use to bless others.

At the beginning of this article, I mentioned four children on a small ministry team who are in the ministry today. This is not a coincidence. In the years since, I have had numerous children and teens on similar teams who today are either in full-time ministry or preparing for ministry at Bible college. One 10-year-old knew that God had called her to be a missionary in Asia. Now an adult, she has recently finished her first term teaching English, sharing the gospel, and fulfilling God's plan for her life. She is preparing to go back.

Fifth, make sure children are being taught about missions through Boys and Girls Missionary Crusade. Once kids learn about the world, they begin to develop a heart of compassion for the world. A call from God often happens during times when kids are learning about missions.

Sixth, have a transition plan for children when they pass from children's ministry to youth ministry. Prepare a list of all the children, their ministry gifts, and specifically those children who feel a call to ministry. Youth leaders or pastors can underestimate the children who are moving up into

their ministry. It's easy to ignore or overlook new 12-year-olds when the 16-, 17-, and 18-year-olds are leading the youth group.

Encourage the youth pastor to immediately use these children in ways that complement the ministries in which the children have already been used. Have the youth pastor meet with those young people who feel called into ministry. Teach them to be altar workers and prayer warriors.

Invite the youth leader to meet with these children a few weeks before they enter the youth ministry to give the youth leader time to bond with them before they mix with other teens. Youth leaders can assign each new young person to an older teen. Explain to the older teens that they are big brothers and sisters who can help mentor the younger ones. Choosing correct mentors can yield huge dividends as children respond to the call of God.

## ROLE OF DISTRICTS

Children often return from district or sectional camps and retreats having been called by God. These kids are sometimes treated as statistics rather than as young Samuels. The affirmation process needs to begin at camp. How can districts help children who have received a call into ministry?

First, prepare camp counselors. Make sure counselors realize how important the call from God is on a child's life. Make sure they realize that many of our pastors and missionaries first felt a call from God at children's camp. If one of the children in a counselor's group feels God may be calling him or her into ministry, the counselor needs to be one of the first persons to sit down with the child and let him or her know how awesome it is to be called by God.

Second, prepare a document to give to children who feel they have been called. In this document explain what it means to be called by God.

Third, before camp ends, sit down with those who have felt a call from God and pray for them. Thank God for His call and ask God to continue to



**"Oh, I'm sorry. Did my joyful worship awaken you?"**

confirm it. Instruct the kids to tell their parents and pastor about their call when they get home. Remind them that you will be praying for them.

## CHILDREN AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Last summer I spoke at one of our district camps. I videotaped campers as they registered on the first day. I asked them questions having to do with the messages I would preach during the week. One question was, "Can you tell me all you know about the baptism in the Holy Spirit?" Out of almost 200 children questioned, I could not find one child who could give me information on this important doctrine. It was as if I were Paul and Acts 19:1–6 were happening again. These children had "not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit" (NIV).

We are Pentecostal. The full gospel must be preached to people of all ages in our churches. There are some who would attempt to sell the idea that children cannot understand deep spiritual truth. I propose that children can make a heart decision concerning the spiritual much more readily than can adults, and that furthermore, if our children stand a chance of being called into full-time Pentecostal ministry, they must have opportunity to experience the fullness of God's Spirit.

How do we approach this doctrine? First, we must review our position on the baptism in the Holy Spirit and then study what we believe. Several aspects of this experience come to mind:

- **This is a second and unique experience for the believer in Christ.** Acts 19:1–6 tells the story of Paul and the Ephesians. These people heard about Jesus, were baptized in His name. Then Paul placed his hands on them to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
- **The child must desire this experience.** Matthew 19:14 tells us to let the children come. We should never force, intimidate, drag, coerce, or shame children into seeking God at the altar.
- **We believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking with other tongues as demonstrated in Scripture.** Speaking in tongues, or a prayer language, is the only physical constant presented in the accounts of Holy Spirit baptism recorded in Scripture.
- **The child must ask God for this experience.** Luke 11:13 indicates that God will not allow a believer who asks to receive anything but a genuine experience in His Spirit.
- **This is not a natural experience (Acts 1:5,8; 2:4).** This is a supernatural gift. A child cannot be taught how to speak in tongues, only to seek this experience and begin speaking as the Spirit gives help.
- **Keep your teaching on this subject simple and in terms easily understood by children.** Any teaching to children should be given in kid-friendly language.
- **Illustrate the message.** Children respond much better to a message they can see and experience. I often use the two wheels of a bicycle to demonstrate the power and prayer language that are received with the Holy Spirit baptism.
- **Pray before presenting the message.** Any message preached to children should be accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit. I always spend extra time in prayer when preparing to preach on this subject as it is my desire that God fill every boy and girl to overflowing.

God has placed you in leadership over His children. Do not shy away from teaching on His wonderful Holy Spirit baptism. Remember, a Spirit-filled child is much more likely to respond to the soft voice of the Spirit calling him or her to a greater life of service.

—Dick Gruber is children's ministries specialist at Valley Forge Christian College, Phoenixville, Pennsylvania.


Fourth, write a personal letter to the child's pastor and parents. Let them know that their child feels called by God. Explain how they can affirm that call.

Recently, I came across this staggering statistic: Of the Canadian children who attended church at age 12, an overwhelming number of them were no longer following God by age 21. I am sure some of these children had received a call from God, yet they never followed that call. When I heard these statistics, I felt God speak to me that children's ministries can make a difference.

The Children's Ministries Agency has eight goals to help churches disciple kids and raise them up to live for God their entire life. They encompass helping kids become:

- powerful in prayer.
- baptized in the Holy Spirit.
- radical in worship.
- mobilized in service.
- sacrificial in giving.
- active in evangelism.
- knowledgeable in God's Word.
- baptized in water.

Each of these goals is vital to growing godly children and keeping them their entire lives. Districts, churches, and parents have the responsibility to make sure their children are growing in all these areas, especially if they are children who have felt the call from God.

Children are our future pastors and missionaries. If you are a pastor, children's leader, or youth leader, and you learn that a child feels a call from God to the ministry, don't let that child slip through your fingers. If God makes you an Eli with a young Samuel under your care, all those whom that child will win in a lifetime are resting in your hands. Teach them to say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." 

David J. Boyd is director of the Children's Ministries Agency for the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.



\*Scripture references are from the New International Version

# Drinking from



ILLUSTRATION BY JIM DARNELL

# a Fire Hydrant

A N O N Y M O U S

I had just accepted the call to First Church.\* While the setting of my new charge was rural, the church was large and historical. Some of the brightest and best the denomination had to offer preceded me to that pulpit. During its glory days, it boasted a popular local television ministry, mega-productions, and outstanding missions giving. It had been one of the largest churches within the Fellowship. That was all past, though. Something bad had happened and most everything had changed.

My predecessor had been dismissed because of his long-running extramarital affair with a woman in the church. Did I say that he had been dismissed? No, that doesn't tell the story. He was fired on the spot. His ministerial card was taken from him. He did not go back to the church to say good-bye or to apologize. Without notifying the district, he emptied his office and house in the middle of the night and moved away. The newspaper placed a story about his departure on the front page complete with his picture. One Sunday the

church had a pastor; the next Sunday the church had a denominational leader telling them things that they didn't want to hear, things that didn't make sense.

My résumé is rather full—various churches, committee work, and a short stint as a Bible college professor prove that I have been around for awhile. Nonetheless, I was ill prepared for what I was to face. A friend told me that pastoring First Church was going to be like taking a drink from a fire hydrant. How did he know? An acquaintance simply remarked, "May God have mercy on your soul." I would have preferred a simple "congratulations."

Who of us has not heard of the tragic moral failure of some preacher? An article in a 1997 issue of *Newsweek* noted that various surveys suggest that as many as 30 percent of male Protestant ministers have had sexual relationships with women other than their wives. The *Journal of Pastoral Care* in 1993 reported a survey of Southern Baptist pastors in which 14 percent acknowledged they had engaged in "sexual behavior inappropriate to a minister." It also reported that 70 percent had counseled at least one woman who had had intercourse with another minister.



As disturbing as these statistics are, the most disturbing one was that it happened at the church I had come to pastor and to the people I had come to love.

There is a great gulf fixed between reality and media news reports. The television anchorperson shares a dramatic 30-second sound bite. Maybe a brief video is aired of the repentant minister. People hear, but they do not understand the full impact of that

confirmed that I needn't expect anything from him on Pastor Appreciation Day. In an attempt to play the role of peacemaker, I finally decided to invite the brother out to lunch (my pay). Before we could be seated, his awful anger spilled out like a cup of hot coffee on some unsuspecting patron. I quickly realized that the special of the day was going to be grilled preacher. I had not noticed, but my antagonist had brought a book with him for the

my predecessor. He wanted to know what I was going to do to restore that virtue to the church.

Due to the great men who had pastored First Church, I enjoyed asking the people about the strengths of my predecessors and which one they liked best. Certain names came up time and time again as the people reminisced. However, I found it peculiar that if someone brought up the name of the errant pastor, they did so with a whisper.

## Various surveys suggest that as many as 30 percent of male Protestant ministers have had sexual relationships with women other than their wives.

which has taken place. The vision of the local church dies as if by a massive and sudden heart attack. The pain is akin to a toothache that never goes away. Trust and confidence in the clergy—all clergy—is replaced by anger, suspicion, and a sense of betrayal.

One gentleman in the church did not like me (did I say one?). I knew that I had done nothing to engender his animosity, but his words and attitude

meeting. Prior to me taking my seat, he slammed the volume down on the table in front of me. He said, "Preacher, I want to know what you are going to do about this." His bony finger was pointing at the title of the book, *Integrity*, by the former president of PTL, Richard Dortch. He then proceeded to tell me about how everyone from the district to the deacons had failed the integrity test in dealing with

It was almost as if his name was off-limits, as if the very mention of his name was defiling. To be sure, a certain shame was attached to his memory.

### THE RESTORATION PROCESS

One day, as I was in my office, I received a memo from God. I found the note tucked away in the words of 2 Corinthians 2:6–11.\*\* The apostle Paul wrote:

"The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes."

I was smart enough to understand what the Lord was saying. It was time to restore and forgive the fallen brother. Satan had won a victory, but God was putting a plan together whereby He would win the war. The battle plan would be based on the church's ability to forgive and to give grace.

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**"And the Lord said, 'Let there be light.' I'm inclined to agree with those who think our sanctuary is under illuminated."**

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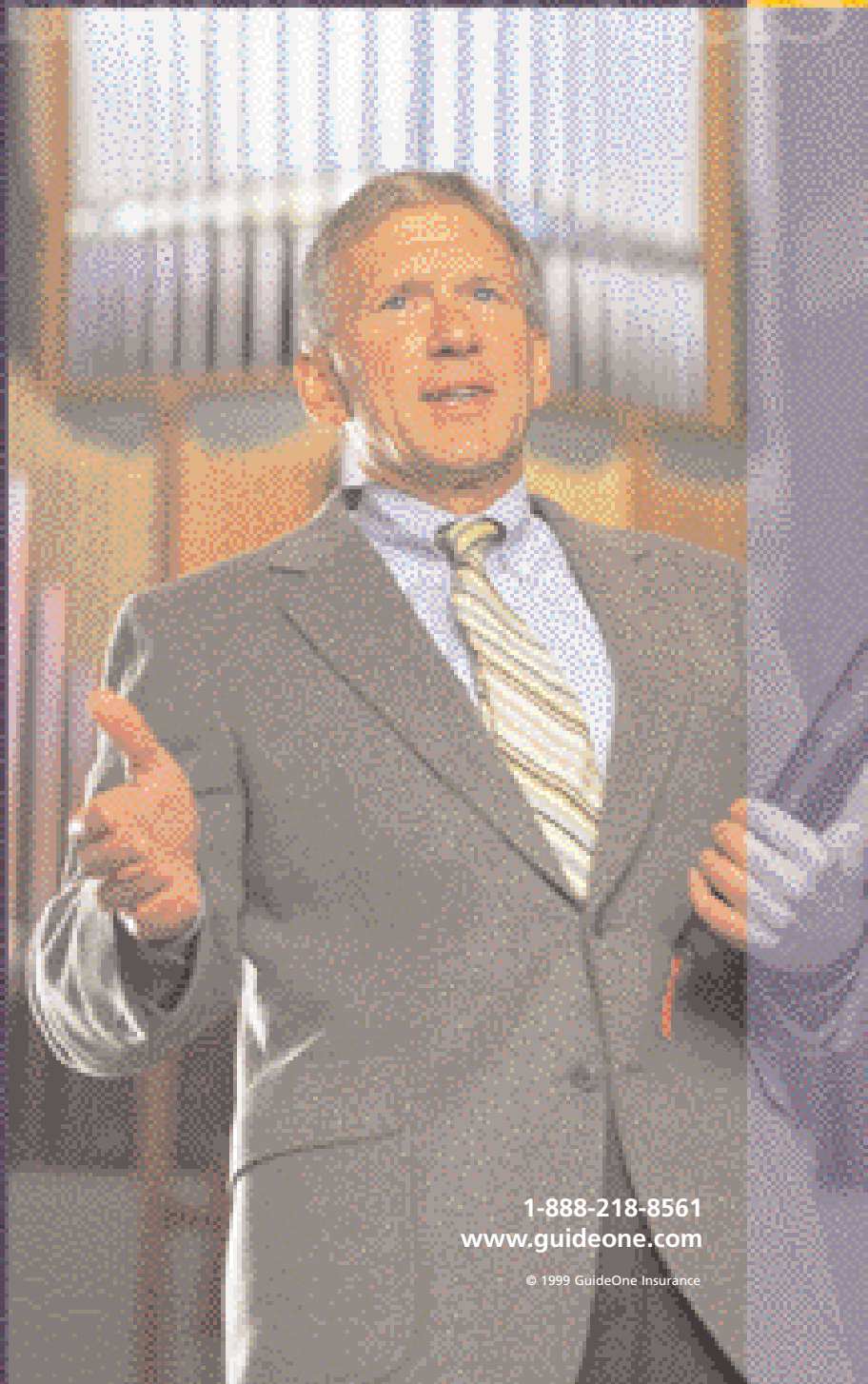
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Neil Anderson in his book, *The Bondage Breaker*, notes: "Forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of another person's sin." As the pastor, there had not been a day since I had become the leader of this church that I had not borne the consequences of my predecessor's sin. The congregation also had to deal with the fallout from his sin. Some no longer attended the church. Others used his sin as an excuse to do the same thing. Marriages were therefore negatively impacted. People were hurt by coworkers who charged that First Church was made up of nothing but a bunch of hypocrites. The enemies of the Cross had a field day. Now it was apparent that the Lord was calling the believers to forgive this great sin. Would they? Could they?

#### **Initial contact**

It was shortly before Christmas, when I made my initial contact with the fallen minister. I felt a little awkward as I wrote a letter, telling him of my interest in beginning a process of restoration. A thousand questions raced through my mind. *How would he respond? Would he respond? How would the board react to the effort? What about the congregation? The community? My superintendent? My wife? The other woman? My staff?*

I fully understood that the risks were great. The old adage warns, "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." Was I that fool? Was I about to let something out that couldn't be put back? I didn't know. However, I felt that the Lord had spoken. That was enough.

The process was not easy, nor was each successive step clearly marked. There were times when I didn't know if I was walking on egg shells or trudging through a mine field. I always knew that the Lord was my light, but there were moments when I wished that He would have used more wattage. One thing was clear, though. As the senior pastor, I was the one who had to oversee the process. I could not delegate this task to one of my associates. Whether or not I wanted the ball didn't matter. It was mine.

The brother called me shortly after Christmas. He told how he cried after he had read my letter. For the first time in several years, he had a glimmer of hope that his long nightmare might finally come to an end. He said he would submit himself to the process and would do anything I thought necessary. His wife had stayed with him. She too was hopeful but cautious.

Research into the matter of restoring such an individual proved to be less than encouraging. One friend in a position to know bluntly warned that if a preacher had one moral failure, he would have another.

Another counselor warned me not to proceed. His reasoning: "What if he suffers a relapse?" Again I received a memo. This time it was from 1 Samuel 17. David was standing before King Saul. Goliath was waiting in the wings. The young shepherd stated his case as to why he should be allowed to face the giant. "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (verse 37). As David, I too was reminded of some victories. People had said that a homosexual couldn't be changed, that "once a heroin addict, always a heroin addict," and yet I had seen both types delivered and restored by the power of God. What was a moral failure in the hands of omnipotence?

At this point, the communication between me and my predecessor quickened. We agreed on a tentative deadline. I needed time to work some things out. He and his wife needed some time, too. The deadline assured each of us that the process would not run on forever. This date became the light at the end of the tunnel.

Proverbs 15:22 notes, "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed." I knew that I could not afford to fail, therefore I surrounded myself with a host of wise men and women. After talking to my wife, I then approached a man in the church. I respected his godly counsel. This wise deacon knew perhaps better than

anyone else the feelings of the church. When I told him what was on my heart, he encouraged me to proceed. He promised to hold the matter in confidence and offered me his complete and unwavering support.

#### **Meeting with church leadership**

Over the next weeks, I met privately with each deacon and staff pastor back to the time of the fall. In confidence, I opened my heart to them. I read Scripture, letters, and shared my objectives. Again, there was near unanimous backing for the plan. One former deacon, though, did express some doubts and felt as if I should halt the process. One former staff pastor said he didn't care one way or another and didn't want anything else to do with the restoration. Need I tell you he was bitter? Nevertheless, I felt as if I had the green light that I needed.

Several other individuals proved to be invaluable, including my predecessor's best friend. He helped me determine the sincerity of the errant one's repentance as well as his motives in agreeing to go through the process. I talked with George Wood, general secretary of the Assemblies of God, H.B. London of Focus on the Family, Dr. Richard Dobbins of EMERGE Ministries, as well as three district superintendents, who were also my friends. A godly missionary and his wife covered me with hours of prayer support. Each of these individuals provided me with a bit of wisdom that I received from no one else. Interestingly enough, even with so many in the loop, the integrity of the process was never compromised by even one leak. Each of these people acted wisely.

#### **Contacting the other woman**

Perhaps the best advice came from H.B. London. He told me that in order for the process to have real integrity, the other woman—Connie—had to be involved. She too needed to be restored. (While I knew that this was true, that was not what I wanted to hear.)

I had seen Connie once or twice. She



was divorced and no longer attended the church. I knew she felt rejection from the body of Christ and I was not sure how she would receive my telephone call. Connie answered before the fifth ring. (After five rings I would have hung up and told the Lord that I couldn't reach her.) She was warm. She said that only the week before my call, she had taken every card, letter, and newspaper clipping that related to that period in her life and had burned them in her fireplace. She also told how a friend reminded her that she still had time to sue the church and former pastor if she wanted to. She was not interested. In her words, she had already brought enough pain upon the church. As I began to share my quest, Connie cried. She had been praying for this very thing to happen. She was thrilled as the truth dawned on her that God had answered the prayers of an adulterous woman. Connie was on board, but more important than that, she was also now on the path of spiritual restoration herself.

#### **Meeting with the district**

It was important during this time that my predecessor contact the district and offer to meet with the district leadership. An apology from him was in order. It was given and received. Then, he was also instructed to write a letter to Connie. Without going into any specifics of the past, he was to simply apologize and ask for forgiveness. I both read and delivered the letter. It was proper and professional without the usual references to "dear" and "love." While the affair had ended years earlier, the letter provided the participants with a formal closure. It also gave him a forum to say that he had failed her as a pastor and that he was truly sorry.

#### **RESTORING THE FALLEN BROTHER**

##### **Meeting with the board and staff**

The date we had set finally arrived. My predecessor and his wife understood that they were to meet that night with me and my wife, the present and former staff pastors, and board men back to the time of the offense. The wives were also

invited. In very graphic and honest terms, he confessed his sin and begged forgiveness. Only once before had I seen such agony worked out in repentance. There was not a dry eye in the place. One by one his former leadership team stood and affirmed him and assured him that he was forgiven. He then asked me to conduct a renewal of vows between him and his wife. He noted that it was in this church he had violated his vows, and it was here he wanted to have them restored.

We agreed that a second meeting was in order. This one was to be the biggie. He and his wife were to come back in 2 weeks on a Sunday night and speak to the congregation. He was to confess his sin (minus the gory details) and ask forgiveness. The following Sunday morning I told the congregation of my plan for my predecessor's restoration and of the process that I had been working through. Again, no one had a clue. I then preached on grace and forgiveness. I let them know that throughout the process my two main concerns were to walk in obedience to what I thought the Lord was speaking to my heart and to safeguard the welfare of the church body. I reminded them that in the long history of First Church, really only one major blot had marred the testimonies of their pastors. That blot was obviously the sin of my predecessor. It was time to remove that blot and to replace it with God's great love. In the future, when someone reviewed the history of that church, they would be drawn less to the sin than to the grace that covered the sin.

##### **Meeting the congregation again**

The following Sunday night finally came. The long process had now come down to one evening service. He and his wife arrived on time. As the two of them walked out on that platform after a lapse of nearly 6 years, the place erupted with shouts of love and rounds of applause. Everyone stood and stood. Then, nearly everyone cried. After he and his wife shared their tearful

statements, I said that I would allow 5 to 10 people to respond to what had just been said. The aisles were immediately flooded as people stood in long lines to share statements of grace, loving memories, and yes—forgiveness.

I promise you, no one there that night will ever forget that service. The church was truly the Church—the body of Christ. They looked like it, acted like it, and talked like it. Can I confess my pride? I was and am so very proud of them. Remember the gentleman who wanted to see integrity restored? He never said a word that evening. He simply walked in front of the platform and gave me two thumbs up. I understood.

After my wife and I returned home from church, I sat down in my chair. I felt as if I deserved to finally relax. The sky hadn't fallen and the church hadn't mutinied. My wife was in the kitchen when God showed up again. This time He didn't send a memo. Instead, He sent His precious Holy Spirit. I felt Him as close as I had ever felt Him. He simply spoke to my heart and said, "Well done." I couldn't hold back the tears as I took pleasure in God's pleasure.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Since that night, my predecessor has become a dear and trusted friend. I truly love him and his beautiful wife. He never suffered a relapse. He won't. The denomination gave him back his ministerial card. I have had him preach for me. He did a great job. Connie moved away, remarried, and I understand that she is back in church now. You see, God loved her too.

As I think back over that time, I have come to understand that drinking from a fire hydrant isn't all that bad, if the water gushing out is the living water of God's grace. **e**

*Author's name remains confidential.*

*\*All names, places, and dates in this article have been changed.*

*\*\*Scripture references are from the New International Version.*

# A Company of Giants

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

I noticed in the newspaper that David Ogilvy, founder of the advertising giant, Ogilvy and Mather, died at his home in France. He was in his eighties. A few years ago I read his book, *Confessions of an Advertising Man*, in which he had this idea: Companies that attract a high proportion of peak performers are run by managers willing to give power to gain power, not by people who collect power in order to squelch others.

Ogilvy reinforced the importance of this principle among his executives by sending a Russian doll to each person newly appointed to head an office in the Ogilvy and Mather chain. Inside the larger doll were five progressively smaller dolls. The message inside the smallest one read: “If each of us hires people who are smaller than we are, we shall become a company of dwarfs. But if each of us hires people who are bigger than we are, Ogilvy and Mather will become a company of giants.”

Ogilvy’s principle is one of the great leadership principles of our time. The opposite of this is leader paranoia—the kind that keeps a thumb on anybody else with gifts or ideas, stifles promise, and bends what

shine. Be proud when they do well. Praise them publicly.

Create a hospitable and good environment for the people on your staff or in your congregation to grow into their potential. Make them look good, and you’ll look good doing it. Surround yourself with good people, then give them room to grow. Expect failure from time to time, and when it happens, pick them up, dust them off, and put them back to work. Nobody bats .1000.

## TALENT, LIKE MUSCLE, GROWS THROUGH EXERCISE

Kenneth Hildebrand, management guru, said that if we fail to extend ourselves, and merely go through the motions while we wait for something more fitted to our abilities to come along, we are headed for continual frustration. We may think we have ability enough to warrant starting at the top, but the only chance most people get to start at the top is in digging a hole. Consider this fine sentence: “God has never put anyone in a place too small to grow.”

Wherever our place may be, suggested Hildebrand—whether on a farm,

personal growth is inevitable. Three things begin to happen. One, we do our jobs better; two, we expand our talents through vigorous use; and three, we fit ourselves for larger responsibility and wider opportunity.

Listen carefully to Eugene Peterson’s translation of Romans 12:4–8 in *The Message*: “In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we’re talking about is Christ’s body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of His body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn’t amount to much, would we? So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ’s body, let’s just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren’t.

“If you preach, just preach God’s Message, nothing else; if you help, just help, don’t take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don’t get bossy; if you’re put in charge, don’t manipulate; if you’re called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don’t let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face.”

A company of giants, indeed. **E**

*T. Ray Rachels is superintendent of the Southern California District of the Assemblies of God, Irvine, California.*

**Expect failure from time to time, and when it happens, pick them up, dust them off, and put them back to work. Nobody bats .1000.**

otherwise might be a good and productive future into broken dreams. The me-not-you attitude hurts everybody. The antidote for this attitude is to give talented associates a chance to

in the office, behind a counter, at a teacher’s desk, in a kitchen, wearing a uniform, caring for a child, or in a church ministry position—when we fill that place to the best of our abilities,

# God's Call (*qârâ; kaleo*)

B Y S T A N L E Y M . H O R T O N

**T**he idea of God's call resonates throughout the Bible. When God created Adam, the first thing God did was give him work to do. He was to be a fellow laborer with the Lord to care for what God had made. Adam and Eve together were to rule over all animal life and to work the Garden and take care of it. This was their calling.

## GOD'S CALL TO ISRAEL

Most often in the Old Testament we read of God calling Israel. "Listen to me, O Jacob, Israel, whom I have called" (Isaiah 48:12\*). God's call to Israel was for them to accomplish His mission (Isaiah 48:15). This was a call to be God's servant, that is, to prepare the way for redemption and blessing (Isaiah 41:9). But in spite of the fact God kept calling them, they did not listen, they did not answer, they turned away to other gods (Isaiah 65:12; 66:4; Jeremiah 7:13; Hosea 11:2). Therefore God brought judgment and sent them into

Isaiah 51:2; Hebrews 11:8). He called Moses to leadership and Aaron to the priesthood (Hebrews 5:4). He called Samuel and the prophets. Sometimes He did this by giving them a vision, as in the case of Isaiah and Jeremiah. With Ezekiel, God spoke directly as His Spirit raised him up on his feet so he could give God full attention (Ezekiel 2:1–3).

Sometimes God's call was such a powerful word that, as in the case of Amos, he could not help but prophesy, even though he had not been a prophet or a prophet's son (Amos 3:8; 7:14,15). Often the Bible just says the word of the Lord came to them.

An unusual call was God's call of Cyrus to restore Israel. God called (summoned) him by name even though he did not know the one true God before he entered Babylon (Isaiah 45:4,5; 41:2). Cyrus' own records have been discovered by archaeologists. They show he was a polytheist who told the Babylonians that their own gods had

be His servant "to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles [the nations]" (Isaiah 42:6). Isaiah then gives the most important prophecies of the Messiah, especially in chapters 53 and 61.

## GOD'S CALL IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament draws attention to Jesus calling disciples to follow Him (Matthew 4:18–22). Then, out of a large group of disciples He chose 12 to be apostles (Luke 6:13). To these He gave "power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases" (Luke 9:1). The Twelve are designated as a special group who not only were primary witnesses to the life, teaching, and resurrection of Jesus, but will "sit on twelve thrones, judging [and ruling] the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30). But Jesus did not limit His call to the Twelve. He called 72 others with the same power and authority (Luke 10:1–20).

Paul was also called to a special ministry as an apostle "set apart for the gospel of God" (Romans 1:1), "by the will of God" (1 Corinthians 1:1), and "by his grace" (Galatians 1:15).

## GOD'S CALL TODAY

Too often people think of God's call as only a call to some special ministry. But over and over again the New Testament emphasizes that God calls all believers. He has called us "out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9); "called to belong to Jesus Christ . . . called to be saints" (Romans 1:6,7); "called according to his [God's] purpose" (Romans 8:28); called "into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9); "called

**Over and over again  
the New Testament emphasizes that  
God calls all believers.**

exile in Babylon (Jeremiah 35:17). Yet God restored them and prepared the way for Jesus to come.

## GOD'S CALL TO INDIVIDUALS

God also called individuals. When the world as a whole had turned to idolatry, He called one man, Abraham, to prepare the way for blessing to all the peoples of the earth (Genesis 12:1–3;

chosen him to deliver them from the misrule of Nabonidus and Belshazzar. God even called him His anointed (45:1). God was the one who really gave him his victories and made it possible for him to make the decree allowing Jews to return to Jerusalem. (See my Logion Press commentary on Isaiah.)

Most important, God prophesied His call to the Messiah "in righteousness" to



to peace [including spiritual health and well-being],” made possible by the peace of Christ ruling in our hearts (Colossians 3:15; 1 Corinthians 7:15); “called to be free” (that is, free from the old law), but not to use our freedom “to indulge the sinful nature; rather, [to] serve one another in love” (Galatians 5:13); and thus, called “to

love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things [the qualities just listed], you will never fall, and you will receive a rich

2:20–25). Then we can, as Paul told Timothy, “fight the good fight of the faith” and “take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses (1 Timothy 6:12). Like Paul, we must “press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me [Paul, and us as well] heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14).

We do need to honor those God has called to special ministries of servant leadership. But they must also recognize that every believer is called to minister, for we “are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God” (1 Peter 2:9). **e**

*Stanley M. Horton, Th.D., is professor emeritus, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, and former project coordinator for the Pentecostal Textbook Project, Springfield, Missouri.*

*\*Scripture references are from the New International Version.*

## Think about it. God has called us so we may inherit a blessing (1 Peter 3:9).

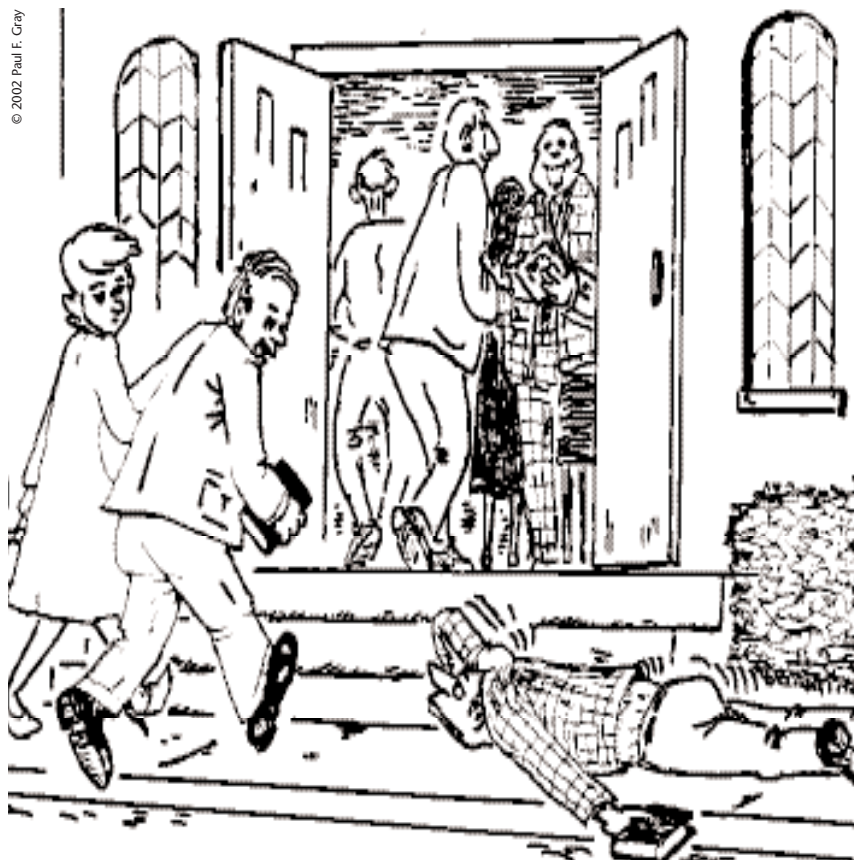
live a holy life” (1 Thessalonians 4:7; see 1 Peter 1:15). With all this in mind, the apostle Paul “as a prisoner for the Lord” urged the Ephesians (and all of us) “to live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (Ephesians 4:1). We do not do this in our own strength. But by God’s power He can “fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith” (2 Thessalonians 1:11).

Paul reminded believers that “we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). Peter put it this way: “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these [his glory and goodness] he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (2 Peter 1:3,4). That is God’s part. Next, Peter tells us our part:

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness [that is, exercise your faith in such a way as to produce goodness]; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness,

welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:5–8,10,11).

Think about it. God has called us so we may inherit a blessing (1 Peter 3:9). As the God of all grace He has called us “to his eternal glory in Christ” after we have suffered a little while—but He will restore us and make us “strong, firm and steadfast” (1 Peter 5:10; cf.



**“Elmo, do you still feel like  
you have to drag yourself to church every Sunday?”**



# Showing Promise

BY CRAIG BRIAN LARSON

**Y**ou want people to obey God's commands. Are you giving them faith to do so? To obey God's command fully, we must see the enabling promise in all of its glory and express our obedience as an act of faith.

While reading Scott Hafemann's *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith*, I came across a passage with profound implications for preaching:

"The promises of God are always organically linked to corresponding commands. Every *command* of God is built upon a promise from God. Therefore every divine call to action (obedience) is, at the same time, a divine summons to trust in God's promises (faith). The promises of God are commands in disguise, and vice versa. God commands what he promises because he promises what he commands. After the Exodus, God promised Israel that it would rain bread from heaven every day except the Sabbath. God therefore *commanded*

the confusion in our culture over God's requirements, I probably lean toward preaching God's commands. I want to help people understand what God expects and save them from the terrible consequences of sin. In addition, I typically preach in an expository approach, and the selected text may not state both promise and command explicitly. If I'm not looking for the promise as well as the command, I may miss it.

But Hafemann's insight implies that to omit either promise or command is to break off one wing of the airplane. To obey God's command fully, we must see the enabling promise in all its glory, and express our obedience *as an act of faith*. And to respond to the promise fully, we must understand how to *express our trust* in obedience. That doesn't mean a 50-50 split between command and promise in every sermon, but each element is there, developed enough to make a significant impression and connected to the other wing.

wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress."

The commands in this passage are clear: "Do not neglect . . . be diligent . . . give yourself wholly." But where is the promise? What beliefs enable us to obey? This clearly had the potential to be a moralistic, grit-your-teeth-and-do-this sermon.

In search of promise, I decided to focus on the word *gift*. To be faithful managers, Christians must believe God has promised to give each believer spiritual gifts. So I began there, quoting 1 Peter 4:10 and Ephesians 4:11-16. To ensure this idea made an impression on hearers, I provided a visual illustration: On our 25th wedding anniversary, I bought my wife a pair of diamond earrings. In His love, God gives each of us spiritual diamond earrings, valuable and intended to display His glory.

I decided to bore still deeper to another promise underlying God's promise to give gifts: God promises to make us fruitful. I quoted John 15:5,8. With this promise, the images of a lush garden versus a dry desert were appropriate. (In retrospect, I see one additional avenue of theology I probably should have developed. The word *gift* is *charisma*, which implies the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.)

After laying the groundwork of God's promises, I turned to the commands. With the promises firmly in place, the congregation and I experienced the commands more for what they are—not burdensome, but reasonable, righteous, and good. The feeling of synergy between promise and command was palpable. The commands "Do not neglect . . . be diligent . . . give yourself wholly"

**To obey God's commands fully, we must see the enabling promise in all its glory, and express our obedience as an act of faith.**

Israel not to gather more than their daily ration, except on Friday . . . . Disbelief always shows up as an act of disobedience, since every promise carries with it a command. Every time we disobey God it is because we are not trusting Him."<sup>1</sup>

God's promises and commands are the stuff of preaching. Most preachers default toward one or the other. Given

We must learn to see both promise and command in the text (or context). In a recent series on stewardship, I preached one message on the faithful stewardship of our gifts from 1 Timothy 4:14-16\*: "Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself

told us how to follow through on the promises, how to avoid short-circuiting the loving and gracious promise of God. The promises brought joy, hope, and faith—and thus empowerment. My sermon felt more whole, more like gospel, than it would have otherwise.

In many ways, paying close attention to the relationship between promise and command resembles the classic indicative-imperative sermon form, or gospel-and-its-implications form. In these forms we state who God is and what He has done for us in Christ, and then apply that to how we should live for Him. Although it may just be a difference in terms, seeing the relationship between promise and command, and our corresponding faith and obedience, definitely made lights come on for me. The emphasis on faith makes everything fit.

As my example from 1 Timothy 4 shows, at times we may need to broaden our horizon from the preaching text to the context of the book or Testament or entire Bible to fill out the

theology of promise or command.

Suppose the sermon text is Philippians 4:19: "My God will supply all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." What is the obligation inherent in that promise? The immediate context of Philippians 4:10–18 shows us. We must be content in our relationship with the Lord, and we should be willing to give to support the work of God. That of course is specifically commanded in the wider New Testament context of Matthew 6:33 and Hebrews 13:5,6.

As we consider the promise side of the equation, the sort of truths that qualify as a promise are not just verses like Philippians 4:19 where God addresses us in the second person, "I promise to do this for you." Promise is broader than that. It includes the truth statements of Scripture that call us to trust. For example, in the affirmation "God is love," God promises, "I love you." In the statement "God is righteous," God promises, "I will always act toward you in a righteous way."

Two questions give us the ability to see complementary promises and commands. The lens for finding promises is the question, "What must we believe if we are to have the faith/ability to obey this command?" And the lens for finding commands is the question, "How does God expect us to live based on faith in this promise?"

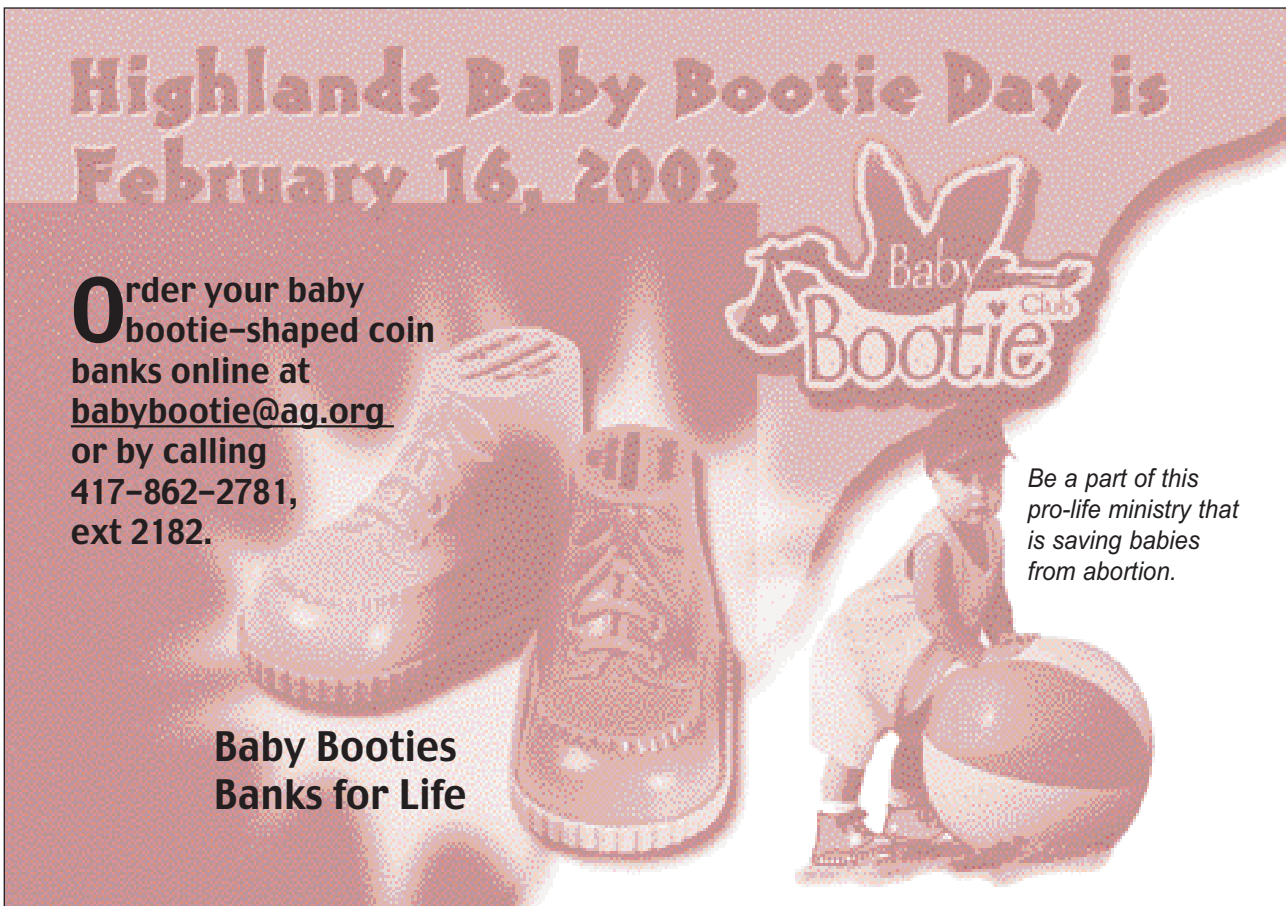
Answering these questions empowers hearers to obey. **e**

*Craig Brian Larson is editor of Christianity Today International's preaching resources—PreachingToday.com and Preaching Today audio—as well as pastor of Lake Shore Church (Assemblies of God) in Chicago, Illinois. He is coauthor of Preaching That Connects (Zondervan, 1994).*

#### E N D N O T E

1. Scott J. Hafemann, *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2001), 87.

*\*Scripture references are from the New International Version.*



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# Accountability With Church Staff

B Y S T E V E M A R R

**P**astor Jeff had been senior pastor for 5 years at his church of 250 members. While the church had not grown, most of his congregation gave him high marks for personal contact and preaching good sermons. But others had left the church, or never joined, because of problems with the other church staff members.

The office secretary, Annette, was often late, took many days off, and was disorganized. As a result, key work was never finished, or was late. Annette forgot to give Pastor Jeff important calls.

Associate Pastor Ed never seemed to make all his visitation calls. He failed to follow through on some assignments and was often late for committee meetings. Some members declined to serve on committees headed by Pastor Ed. Privately, they shared their discouragement over his poor leadership.

Pastor Jeff didn't hold these staff persons accountable. As senior pastor, he would often cover the extra work

## ACCOUNTABILITY

What is needed in this situation? In a word: *accountability*. Accountability is defined as "the obligation to give a reckoning or explanation for one's actions and responsibilities." In the case of Pastor Jeff and his staff, it also means clearly defining work or ministry responsibility and then ensuring that each staff member follows through.

Pastors often fail to confront poor performance because of their fear of church reaction. This perspective—that ministry must be nice to all employees—often masks an unwillingness to tackle issues.

Scripture instructs us to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called" (Ephesians 4:1\*). Each Christian must be called by God and working in the area of his or her calling. Then the gifts and graces to be successful will operate in their lives and ministry.

with a large inner-city church, and his ministry blossomed. Had the original situation never been confronted, the church would have continued to struggle, and the inner-city church would have been denied the youth pastor God called.

While some workers are misplaced, others are not working up to their capacity. Because someone is busy does not necessarily mean he or she is effective.

Diligence is more than hours and activity—it is work focus. Paul gave us an example, "I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air" (1 Corinthians 9:26).

## TAKING STEPS TO IMPROVE

Meet with each staff member and outline in writing the standards and results you and the church expect. Be willing to give and take, but do not retreat from the minimum requirements. Confirm his or her understanding in writing. Then outline the importance of each task. Help each staff member understand the issue is not what you want, but what the church needs to fulfill God's mission.

For example, Pastor Ed might agree to make a minimum of four visitation calls per month and be on time for each meeting. Annette might be instructed not to exceed her allowed sick and vacation days, and salary would not be paid for additional days worked because of her disorganization. (Perhaps a time management course would be a wise investment for the entire staff.)

Follow-through is critical. Meet at the start of each week and evaluate how

**This perspective—that ministry must be nice to all employees—often masks a personal unwillingness to tackle issues.**

himself, giving up time with his family, time preparing sermons, and time leading other church work.

In spite of the fact both Annette and Pastor Ed were failing in their jobs, Pastor Jeff felt he could not take action. Annette had been a fixture in the office for 22 years, and Ed was everyone's friend.

An inner-city pastor was cited as a failure for only obtaining one new family for the church in a year. However, over 20 youths became Christians under his leadership. Fortunately, he and the church realized he was not called to be a senior pastor, but was instead a dynamite inner-city youth pastor. He took a youth pastor position

each person is doing with his or her goals. Praise positive results and correct poor performance. Do not gloss over deficiencies. The Lord's work will suffer if tasks are not done well. Most often, work will improve with clear direction and enforced accountability.

Most often, performance will improve and the staff person's successes can be celebrated. Do not forget to let this person know how his or her improvement has helped you.

When failure persists, discern the reason. Often, the giftings and talents

needed to move forward into a new opportunity.

Taking a positive, proactive approach gives the best possibility of protecting relationships long term. Failure to act will result in poor performance and will increase the likelihood of a confrontation in the future.

As God holds us accountable in our lives, hold your church staff accountable. The result will be personal growth for you, your staff, and ultimately for God's kingdom. **e**

**Accountability is defined as "the obligation to give a reckoning or explanation for one's actions and responsibilities."**

If failure continues, sit down with the staff person again. Outline the previous agreement and ask the person to explain what is keeping him or her from accomplishing the assignments. Provide coaching, mentoring, and suggestions, but reinforce the principle that the responsibility belongs to each person individually.

are not a good fit with the job. A person may lack the ability to stay focused and disciplined enough to follow through on assignments, but may be blessed with an abounding creativity which can be successfully used elsewhere. Help your staff person discern what position might offer more success and provide the help

*Steve Marr is president of Business Proverbs Management and the Widow's Mite Foundation, Tucson, Arizona. He has authored Business Proverbs, a workplace devotional. His radio feature, Business Proverbs, is heard on 950 radio stations internationally.*

*\*Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible.*



# Can Anything Good Come Out of Nazareth?

BY GREG ASIMAKOULOPOULOS

**N**azareth? Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Nathanael wasn't the only one who believed that. That was the question sophisticated city slickers asked in Jesus' day.

Nestled on the slopes of the Galilean countryside, Nazareth wasn't a hillbilly town, but it was a blue-collar community of only a few hundred people. Here was a village that no doubt struggled with low self-esteem. What did they have to offer? Nothing. At least not when compared with Sepphona, a thriving metropolis of 20,000 just 3 miles away. Sepphona, an administrative and cultural center, had everything—libraries, Roman streets, a coliseum—you name it. Existing in the shadow of this impressive major city, the people of Nazareth were reminded daily how little they had and how little they mattered.

## SMALL DOES NOT MEAN LESS IMPORTANT

Small towns overshadowed by large cities or affluent suburbs are still prone to have poor self-images. When I ministered in northern California, there was one such city 3 miles away from my church. Concord was (and is) an attractive middle-class city of 100,000. Just over the hill was Pittsburg, an industrial town with significantly fewer people. Pittsburg struggled with unemployment, racial tensions, and small church-itis. It was a tough assignment for any pastor. Could anything good come out of Pittsburg? Well, there was a great Mexican restaurant. The Old Mecca Café was outstanding.

But small rural communities aren't alone when it comes to low self-esteem. According to a recent survey by George

Barna, pastors who serve churches whose pews are few struggle with self-image issues. They are more apt to question their worth and doubt their abilities than pastors who preach to hundreds every Lord's Day.

When I came across Barna's findings, I was not any more surprised than you. In our culture, where importance is gauged by attendance and programs, the small-church pastor is continually called up short—not by his people or his superintendent (or even his ministerial colleagues), but by the values of a society a pastor applies to himself or herself.

During much of my two decades in pastoral ministry, I struggled with low self-esteem that was self-inflicted. The pastors of larger churches didn't look down their noses at me. But I had pew-envy. I believed the lie that said, "Unless your congregation reaches a certain attendance average, you are below average as a pastor."

Back to first-century Nazareth. Something good (or should I say someone great?) did come from that little suburb of Sepphona. His humble beginnings were part of His Father's plan. He understood and appreciated the unique challenges of those who lived in Nazareth-like communities. His on-site training program allowed Him to identify with the overlooked and the underdog. Because Jesus came from a poor family in an impoverished town, His teaching about how blessed the poor were was not rationalized as pure rhetoric.

Now, to 21st-century Pittsburg. Something good has also come from this overlooked Bay-area town. Although I ministered for 11 years in Concord, I never met Larry Combs,

pastor of Lighthouse Christian Center (Assemblies of God). I have since gotten acquainted with him. When Larry was called to LCC, he knew God desired to use that less-than-mega ministry to minister to spiritually seeking people in that small struggling community. He didn't know that the impact of his ministry would stretch beyond Pittsburg to reach all 50 states. But it has. Not through his preaching, but through his parenting.

Ever heard of the Christian band, Plus One? If you haven't, your teenage daughters have. With three girls in the house, I know almost all of Plus One's lyrics by heart. Their first album, "The Promise," sold more than a million copies. Larry Combs' son Gabe is one of the five members in the group. A small-church pastor's faithful ministry in a small community provided a pastor's kid with the motivation, modeling, and opportunity to find his own calling to ministry. Gabe Combs has put Pittsburg on the map.

## VALUE YOUR SMALL-TOWN MINISTRY

If you find yourself minimizing your gifts and calling, you aren't alone. But just because the church growth others are experiencing isn't happening in your congregation, that is no reason to contemplate bailing out. Consider the following suggestions that have helped me arrive at a sane estimation of my assignment in the Kingdom.

**1. Remind yourself that God has personally placed you in your place of ministry.** Dissatisfaction with your ministry is nothing less than an ungrateful heart toward the Lord. Give

Him credit. He knows what He's doing in your life. Where you are is your Nazareth for however long that may be. Perhaps some day your Sepphora will be up the road. But for this season of your ministry, He has linked your gifts with a congregation that can benefit from what you uniquely have to offer.

**2. Give yourself fully to your ministry situation as long as God sees fit to have you there.** It is unlikely you will be where you are forever. God knows your address and phone number. He knows how to contact you when it's time to move on to your next ministry assignment. In the meantime, serve the Lord with gladness. Remember the old adage, "The grass is greener on the other side of the fence"? Well, don't believe it. Just because it's old doesn't mean it's true. The grass is generally greenest where you spend the most time watering and fertilizing.

**3. Seek to understand and appreciate the unique challenges that people in your congregation face.** Do what Jesus did—spend quantities of time with your people. You may feel like a missionary in a remote part of the world. So, do what missionaries do. Don't judge. Learn their language and values. Look at this season of your life as a learning time that will prepare you for opportunities you will have down the road. Those individuals and families (no matter how difficult or needy) are in your life for a purpose.

**4. Regularly chart the growth that is taking place within your church.** Every pastor I have ever met wants to be associated with a growing church. Growth is synonymous with life. But the pastor who only equates church growth with an increased Sunday morning attendance is shortsighted. In every congregation where the Lord of the church is worshiped and obeyed, individuals are growing in their understanding and discipleship. Sick marriages are healed. Drunk spouses are delivered. Nonbelieving family members are marvelously saved. Powerless

pewsitters are gloriously filled with the Holy Spirit. Timid saints find unprecedented confidence in sharing their faith at work. Those developments are nothing less than indicators of a growing church. But, have you been documenting them as they occur? Start now. Create a family album in which you can see babes in Christ grow into maturity. Reviewing those snapshots of God's grace will encourage you on those days when you wonder why the Lord has placed you where He has.

**5. Pour your life into those who will multiply your ministry beyond your local church.** You may not have a son or a daughter that is destined for a gospel music award or a career as a Christian performer, but you have sons and daughters in the Lord who are being shaped by more than your pulpit ministry. Who are those future pastors, missionaries, politicians, teachers, and community leaders? Ask the Lord to open your eyes to individuals within your congregation who have a special anointing on their lives. Who are those in whom you see potential they themselves may be blind to? Don't define your ministry by what flows through

you or what is happening at present. Take your cue from the Savior. He spent His public ministry serving a very small congregation of 12. But after 3 years of investing himself in those men, the world has been touched by Christ for 2 millennia and counting.

Never underestimate how God can grow a church or a pastor's heart. Two thousand years ago, Sepphora was the envy of every small village within 100 miles. Nazareth was merely a bump in the road travelers cursed as they stumbled over it. But how things have changed. Today, Christians by the millions visit Nazareth on spiritual pilgrimages. They worship at the Church of the Annunciation. They look to the north and think they see the same rolling hills that Jesus must have enjoyed as a teenager. But they are wrong. What is now verdant pastureland was, in Jesus' day, a teeming city of 20,000 people. But no longer. Except for some archaeological ruins, there is no trace of Sepphora. Who has the self-image problem now? **e**

*Greg Asimakoupoulos is director of creative communications for Mainstay Ministries, Naperville, Illinois.*

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**"You want my money or my life? I'm a pastor.  
I don't have either."**

# Worship and the Sanctuary Choir

BY TOM MATRONE

**B**ecause I have served the church as a minister of music for the past 24 years, my allegiance in partnering the sanctuary choir with the congregation in worship has never been more valid than it is today. The choir is an effective tool in leading a congregation into the presence of God.

Something about a sanctuary choir under the authority and anointing of the Holy Spirit ministers to all who are present. The choir becomes a force that sounds a call not only to the congregation but also to the Lord. The ministry of the choir in worship has enhanced my spiritual life countless times.

The validity of local church choir ministry is being debated in many of our churches. In some instances a sanctuary choir ministry may not be valid. But the challenge before us is to consider the importance of allowing this valid ministry to remain in our denominational structure.

My sensitivity to the ministry of the local church choir is apparent for obvious reasons, but I reflect on an incident in my early years after becoming a believer. As a child I was raised as a Catholic, but as a teenager, a Pentecostal. My first exposure to a sanctuary choir came in a Pentecostal church. At that time in our Catholic parish, music was not a mainstay of the mass. I had limited exposure to choral music in a ministry venue. One can imagine my surprise at being enraptured with the ministry of music in the Pentecostal church. Even though I was young, I remember being moved by the choir's selection and their intensity of singing. I began to formulate an opinion that has become my conviction: A

strong sanctuary choir can help a congregation respond to the Lord because of its relationship to the congregation as peers.

## RELATIONSHIP OF THE CHOIR TO THE CONGREGATION

The concept of peer relationship is important because the choir can often be a thermometer for the temperature of a congregation. My using the choir to inspire a community of worshipers has succeeded at the local level. We have diffused stylistic debates and the ever-present hymn-versus-chorus war that seems to tear apart many churches today.

What takes place in a congregation when it is evident that a choir is in unity on the platform? Old and young alike respond when they observe their peers worshiping in spirit and truth, not concerned with style—but engaged in worship that is God honoring.

When I am leading worship and I turn to the choir, I look for their passion for worshiping the Lord. Many times parishioners have told me that observing the love for God on the faces of the choir touched them. When a choir is strong in its approach to worship, I have experienced a congregation responding to the call of worship.

Is it possible that the trend of removing choirs from the platform has lessened our musical expression of worship as a congregation? My present post as minister of music has challenged me to further research the need for choirs to remain a substantial component in the worship life of the church. My existing choir is as diverse in its musical taste as any choir I have ever conducted. The

ages vary as much as their backgrounds; but when they gather to sing, something wonderful begins to happen. Their sound and physical expression lend an atmosphere of worship that I cannot replicate on my own. Thus my partnership with them has cultivated a much larger picture than today's worship-team philosophy that so many churches have embraced. That is not to say I discount the worship team. I wholeheartedly endorse the concept and have a strong worship-team ministry in my present position. They often travel with me and are used consistently in worship in our congregation.

## CHOIR AND MINISTRY

My proposal of conceptual thinking in worship is to see the choir in two engaging venues. The first is being a catalyst for worship. The second is being a unit promoting a higher level of music ministry that has been lost in the postmodern culture.

The ministry of the choir provides something far more transcending than merely congregational singing. At times a choir can provide for a congregation that which it cannot do for itself. It provides a textual expression of worship that otherwise may be absent in our services. The simple fact is not all people are musical. I have often been approached by church members who say they wish they could sing but cannot and appreciate having a choir that can.

Choral music is a viable art to consider in congregational worship. The beauty of learning and rehearsing an anthem is rewarding for the singers and that reward is passed on to the listeners. The offering of a choir selection in a

service should never be diminished in its value. It is an important part of the overall worship experience.

The term *worship service* is inclusive of all the elements in a church service. Music is just one form of expression. Congregational singing does differ from choral selections by its makeup, but not its philosophy. Everything that takes place in the worship service must be for the purpose of worshiping God and equipping the body of Christ.

The minister of music and senior pastor make decisive moves to create a conducive atmosphere for connecting with God. We work diligently to provide an intellectual and emotional venue for congregational worship.

In many churches, budgets and personnel can either enhance the ministry of music or create significant limitations. There are some cases where the ministry of the sanctuary choir is not viable and other alternatives must be developed. On the flip side, many congregations can provide a choral ministry to enhance the service and create an openness for other components of worship, especially the preaching of the Word.

In my conversations with our senior pastor, I always refer to the choir as his best friend on the platform. When a choir and a senior pastor are visibly united, there isn't much room for criticism. There is vitality in partnering with the senior pastor because he or she becomes the keynote worship leader for the congregants. In past experiences, I have witnessed senior pastors who held different values on congregational worship than that of the music department. Whether it was the pastor's lack of communication with the music department or whatever the reason, he ultimately hindered the congregation from moving ahead in worship.

It is important to be true to your convictions, but it is even more beneficial that the pastor and his or her staff define the culture in which they minister. Gone are the days of small-minded thinking. Understanding your unique congregation is invaluable to your own personal success in ministry. Congregations are becoming as diverse as America, and to copy another ministry is a deadly decision. I have found that success comes from finding the

mind of God for our music department, not copying the one down the street. Consequently, we become pliable in the hands of God for the people with whom He has blessed us. For me, my congregation is the music department in which I serve. The sanctuary choir is a congregation within the main population, and its contribution to the worship is invaluable.

Is it permissible to say that God has shown favor to the ministries of local church choirs and their particular ministry to the congregation and the community at large? Choirs can acquaint congregations with a wide variety of musical styles and also deepen their faith and love for God. Including the choir's contribution is not an issue of keeping traditions, but of allowing the musical expression of the congregation to be noted and confirmed. "Each one, as a good manager of God's different gifts, must use for the good of others the special gift he has received from God" (1 Peter 4:10, Good News Bible). **E**

*Tom Matrone is minister of music at Central Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri.*

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# Giving Patterns in Changing Times

BY RANDALL K. BARTON

**G**iving patterns have undergone dramatic changes in the last decade. Church leadership must understand these patterns and respond in ways that will encourage and grow biblical stewards in our congregations.

## NATIONAL CHARITABLE GIVING TRENDS

While troubled or uncertain times always affect giving, total giving to American charities has increased every year since 1960, with the exception of 1987 when a stock market collapse affected total giving.

Even when giving trends remain positive, the rate of increase in giving diminishes during times of economic uncertainty. Some charities experienced a substantial outpouring of one-time donations in response to September 11, while thousands of other charities were adversely affected by a combination of factors, including an economy flirting with recession and the impact of redirected giving from September 11.

church has declined steadily and now stands at around 60 percent. This represents a drop of over 10 percent in the last few years. While this may not sound like much, it could mean 6 million fewer adults support a church today than 5 years ago.

- The average church donor's giving has decreased almost 20 percent over the last 3 to 4 years.

- Even among born-again Christians and evangelicals, giving has declined almost 20 percent in less than 5 years.

- Although 17 percent of adults claim to tithe, when you compare church giving to household income, only 6 percent donate one-tenth of their income to churches.

How have these uncertain times and trends affected support for ministries and missions of the Assemblies of God?

## GIVING TO ASSEMBLIES OF GOD MINISTRIES

While church giving in the United States continues to decline, giving to

to approximately \$1,800 per year—an increase of 31 percent in 5 years.

- Assemblies of God World Missions giving increased during this same period of time from \$108 million to over \$153 million—a 42-percent increase.

- Every major giving category in the Assemblies of God from Benevolences and Home Missions to Speed the Light and Higher Education has shown increases in giving at rates higher than national charitable giving trends.

- Total World Ministries Giving for the Assemblies of God in 2001 reached \$347 million—an increase of \$188 million since 1997.

## SHIFTING GIVING HABITS

While the growing support nationally for the mission and ministries of the Assemblies of God is extremely positive, many congregations have not adapted to shifting habits of giving. There was a time when most families were paid weekly and stopped off at the store, utility company, or bank, and paid their bills. These patterns are now archaic. Yet for the church, giving opportunities are primarily modeled after old lifestyle assumptions that are no longer relevant.

Giving opportunities today should be designed to reflect the realities of how people in our pews conduct their personal financial affairs while encouraging habits of stewardship.

## Strategy #1: Church Giving Consistent With Financial Patterns

Churches do not adequately provide opportunity for individuals to express giving consistent with their other financial patterns and decisions. Travel schedules, vacations, out-of-town

**Giving trends among churches and religious organizations have been losing ground for decades.**

Giving trends among churches and religious organizations have been losing ground for decades. According to Barna Research Group statistics ([www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org)) and others who track church support, giving to churches continued to decline in every major category of giving.

- The number of adults giving to a

Assemblies of God churches and ministries has not followed these negative trends. The Assemblies of God has been one of the few major denominations that have exceeded national charitable giving trends.

Consider these statistics:

- Per capita giving in Assemblies of God congregations increased from \$1,372

activities, winter homes, and monthly bill-paying systems have created a need for other ways to give than personally dropping in the tithe during a Sunday morning service.

Good biblical stewardship is not just a decision, but a discipline. Churches need to encourage the discipline of good stewardship by providing monthly giving opportunities consistent with the other financial patterns expressed.

An old example updated for today's lifestyles includes monthly or weekly giving envelopes—not to be dropped off at the church—but a response device to be mailed with prepaid postage, using tax-exempt mailing rates.

Taking a lesson from mortgage and car lenders, some churches provide monthly/weekly coupons to be filled out and mailed to the church.

#### **Strategy #2: Effective Use of Giving Records**

Some churches only provide donors giving statements annually. While meeting IRS requirements, a report after the end of the year provides little encouragement in biblical stewardship patterns. Churches must use giving records as a way to assist members in disciplining their giving.

Quarterly statements provide a minimum level of accounting to your congregation as a record of how they are doing. Some churches provide monthly giving statements, including return envelopes, thus combining the benefits of financial patterns today (paying bills monthly) while making effective use of giving records.

#### **Strategy #3: Electronic Giving**

Every month, an increasing number of financial transactions occur through electronic fund transfers. Many individuals (especially those in their twenties and thirties) conduct virtually all their financial affairs this way. It not only saves time, but it creates a very disciplined approach to budgeting.

Only a small number of congregations have made available and

encourage giving through electronic fund transfers. Such opportunities not only reflect the realities of an age of technology, but they encourage a disciplined giving pattern consistent with the biblical principle of firstfruits.

#### **Strategy #4: Web and E-mail Opportunities**

Some congregations have recognized that a church Web site coupled with E-mail opportunities for each member, adherent, or supporter is not only effective to communicate ministry, but to respond to special giving opportunities.

God burdens people for different needs at different times. Pastors are often reluctant to use Sunday services to make their attendees aware of special needs and special giving opportunities. Others limit special appeals from the pulpit to monthly or even quarterly.

Through the Internet and E-mail, churches can communicate weekly the special needs and opportunities to support the ministry and mission of the local church. Individuals can prayerfully respond in the privacy of their home or office to needs God places on their hearts. Unfortunately, ministry needs go unmet not because of lack of resources, but because of lack of communicating those needs. Your Web site or E-mail list serve can allow a senior pastor to communicate effectively to his or her congregation (wherever they may be in the world) and provide opportunity for them to make stewardship decisions.

While you do not want to bombard a congregation with excessive requests, a sophisticated effort can communicate giving opportunities. It would also allow you to develop an electronic giving database so individuals are sent information, updates, and requests consistent with ministries they already support or have shown a desire to support.

#### **STEWARDSHIP EDUCATION**

Helping people become God-honoring in their stewardship walk is much more than encouraging healthy giving habits. It must also include opportunities for stewardship education.


The Assemblies of God Foundation (1-866-621-1786), in partnership with Crown Financial Concepts, is providing training nationwide, through Assemblies of God certified representatives, for leaders for the 12-week small group *Biblical Financial Study*. The president of AGFSG has recently written a 10-lesson adult elective class, *Discovering Financial Success* (student book and leader's guide), that provides an important theological base for stewardship. This course can be ordered by calling GPH (1-800-641-4310).

MasterPlan Stewardship Services (1-800-962-7499) provides professional consultants who can help your church with a capital campaign to provide the resources you need to expand your ministry. The Assemblies of God Foundation (1-866-621-1784) provides opportunities for a church-based, estate-planning program that provides free wills to every member of your congregation who gives a charitable gift at the time of his or her death. Take advantage of these and other stewardship resources.

#### **EXPRESSION OF STEWARDSHIP**

Ultimately, it is all about stewardship. One definition of fully devoted stewards is "people who have yielded control of their finances to Christ, habitually honor Him in their financial decisions, and steward resources He has provided."

Recognizing and responding to changing cultural-giving patterns help us create fully devoted stewards by providing opportunities to habitually honor Christ in financial decisions and establishing financial priorities.

Multiple stewardship strategies are necessary to effectively realize the resources God has made available to meet ministry needs. Unfortunately, the pass-the-plate mentality as the primary or exclusive-planned stewardship opportunity fails to recognize the realities of changed giving and financial patterns of our culture today. 

*Randall K. Barton is president and CEO of the Assemblies of God Financial Services Group, Springfield, Missouri.*

# George Whitefield— Flaming Comet of the Great Awakening

BY WILLIAM P. FARLEY

**M**ost Christians today have heard of Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley. But, in mid-18th century, George Whitefield (pronounced Whit-field) was the transatlantic celebrity with whom everyone was most familiar. Because he did not start a denomination, found a college, nor publish a distinctive theology, few know much about him today. But according to Martyn Lloyd-Jones, he was probably the greatest English-language preacher.

Just as Jonathan Edwards was the intellect of the Great Awakening, and John Wesley its organizer, George Whitefield was the conduit through whom the Holy Spirit's fire uniquely flowed. Who he was and why he is important to today's Assemblies of God leader is the subject of this article.

George was born to a tavern keeper in Gloucester England in 1714. His father died when George was 2. Recognizing his special talents, his mother enrolled him at Oxford while he was in his teens. Since she had little money, George worked his way through college as a servant to the wealthier students. At age 19 he met John Wesley, 11 years his senior, and joined Wesley's Holy Club.

During his Oxford years he labored under the law, working to earn God's acceptance. He visited prisoners, fasted himself into emaciation, fed the poor, and spent long hours in prayer. But his failings only increased his feelings of unworthiness and amplified his strivings for God's acceptance. Toward the end of this period, the free grace of God began to dawn in his heart. The contrast between this newfound liberty and his youthful strivings greatly enhanced

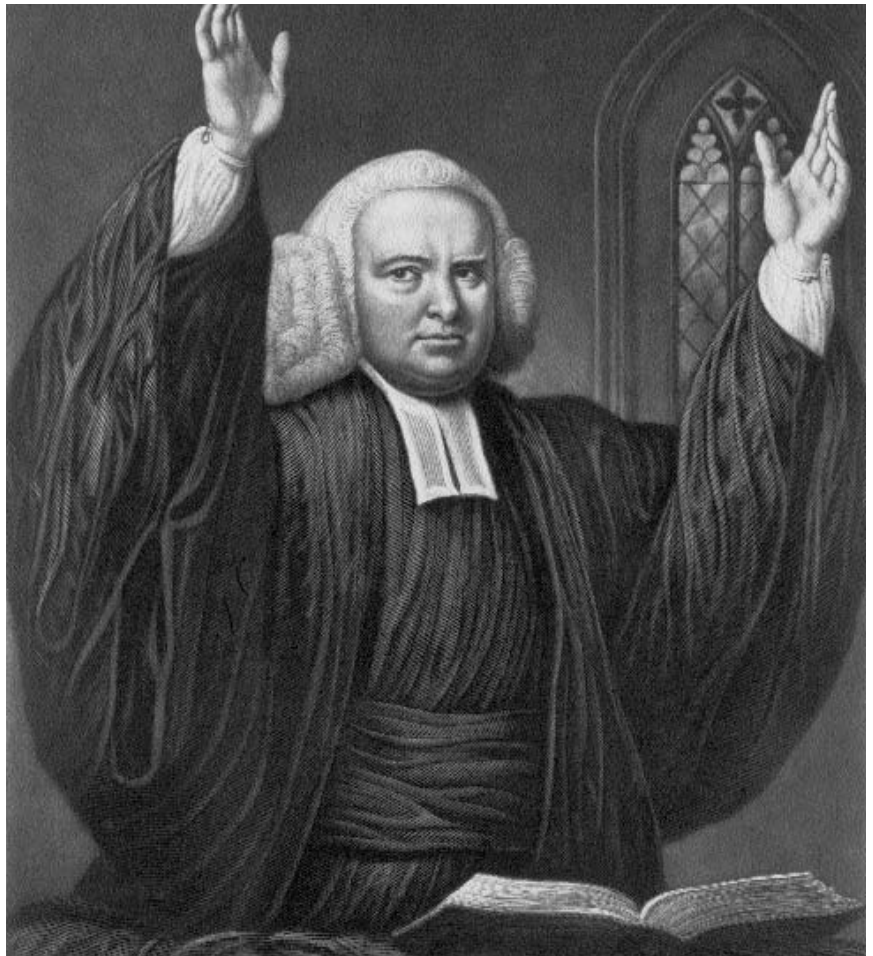


PHOTO: BILLY GRAHAM CENTER MUSEUM

both the depth and the duration of his spiritual joy. "Of all the band of Oxford Methodists," wrote J.C. Ryle, "none seems to have got hold so soon of a clear view of Christ's gospel as he did, and none kept it so unwaveringly to the end."<sup>1</sup> For the remaining 34 years of his life, God's free, unmerited grace was the central theme of his preaching.

## HIS PREACHING

In Whitefield's day there was little interest in Christianity or spiritual things. Anglican priests read dry sermons in cavernous cathedrals to 50 or

60 listeners. Deism and agnosticism possessed the hearts of most. Gambling and drunkenness were epidemic.

But nations tremble when God fuses great oratorical gifts with spiritual power. Whitefield possessed both in abundance, and he discovered it suddenly and dramatically.

At the end of his senior year at Oxford, he returned to his hometown to preach his first sermon. He was a mere youth of 21. He later wrote in his diary: "Last Sunday I preached my first sermon . . . Curiosity drew a large crowd . . . The sight at first over-awed



me . . . . As I proceeded, however, I perceived *the fire kindled* . . . I trust I was enabled to speak with some degree of gospel *authority*.”<sup>2</sup> The fire he referred to was the presence and power of God. He would become very accustomed to it, for it would accompany his ministry from that day forward.

Gospel authority was present in abundance. Such was the force of this gospel fire that later the bishop heard a complaint that young Whitefield’s sermon had driven 15 people mad. The bishop is reputed to have wished that they stay in this state of madness until at least the following Sunday.

Next, Whitefield filled a friend’s London pulpit for 2 months. The effects were the same. Word spread quickly and vast crowds thronged wherever young George was to preach. What was the secret of this boy-preacher’s popularity? It was simple: God was there. No one has trouble drawing a crowd, then or today, when the felt presence and power of God accompany a ministry.

#### CREATIVE METHODS

George spent the following year, 1738, as a missionary in Georgia, in the United States. He then returned to England to resume his ministry. He was in constant demand and preached as often as 15 times per week—sometimes for up to 2 hours. At this time he heard about the thousands of miners and factory workers who had no knowledge of Christ. He could not proclaim the good news to them because they would not attend a church. Since they would not come to him, he decided to go to them.

work in the early morning light. The effect was electric. These men had never heard the good news or known the power of God. Tears stained their coarse, coal-grimed cheeks. Word spread, and within a few days, he was speaking each morning to crowds averaging 5,000. Thus began Whitefield’s novel ministry of field preaching.

**The greatest impact of his ministry took place in the Thirteen Colonies. In fact, he was the first national celebrity in North America.**

For the rest of his life, he preached in churches or fields—wherever anyone would listen—to crowds of up to 20,000 or more with tremendous power. Remember, he had no microphone to amplify his voice. He spoke in summer and winter, in rain and heat. He often had to shout through the wind, rain, hecklers, and other distractions, but God used him greatly. He was a true servant of God.

#### PERSECUTIONS AND LABORS

Great spiritual power always comes with great opposition. His life was not easy. The religious establishment detested his emphasis on the necessity of new birth. Everywhere church doors began to shut to his ministry. Preparing to preach at St. Mary’s church in Islington, for example, the rector informed him he could not use the pulpit, so George announced that he would preach in the adjoining graveyard.

sleeping. Another time an Irish mob tried to kill him.

He traveled constantly. He visited Scotland 14 times, Ireland twice, and went to Wales numerous times. In a time when it took up to 3 months to cross the Atlantic in cold, leaky, smelly ships—he crisscrossed it seven times to preach the good news. The greatest

impact of his ministry took place in the Thirteen Colonies. In fact, he was the first national celebrity in North America.

Scholars estimate that he preached 18,000 sermons in his lifetime—an average of 10 sermons a week for the duration of his ministry—34 years. It is impossible to calculate the number converted by his fruitful labors, but they were in the hundreds of thousands.

The amazing thing is that, given these exertions, he lived to age 55—preaching himself to death. On the day before his death—weak, sick, and exhausted—he preached a field sermon in New Hampshire. “Lord, I am weary in Your work,” he prayed, “but I am never weary of Your work.” Then he ascended the scaffold. For 5 minutes he stood silently before the crowd, gathering his strength. Then he preached with great power for 2 hours with great effect. He died that night of an asthmatic attack.

**No one has trouble drawing a crowd, then or today, when the felt presence and power of God accompany a ministry.**

But to do this, he had to preach in the open air—an act offensive and socially unacceptable to the stuffy English.

After much prayer, he spoke to about 100 miners by the road on their way to

An immense crowd emptied the church to listen. Mockers often threw rotten vegetables and dung, while brawlers tried to shout him down. Once he narrowly escaped a fatal stabbing while

#### LESSONS FROM WHITEFIELD’S LIFE

The first great lesson we learn from Whitefield is the necessity of preaching. We Pentecostals rejoice in the Holy Spirit’s power ministered to us through the spiritual gifts. But we often overlook the power that most effectively plunders Satan’s kingdom—preaching. Great preaching is truth on fire. Jesus, Peter, and Paul spent most of their time preaching. It was their great passion and occupation. Why? Because preaching



coupled with the power of the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, encourages God's people, and kindles the faith that transforms lives.

Second, Whitefield's life demonstrates our need of God's power. When Billy Graham visited our city a few years ago, we filled the stadium. But it took several months of organization, advertising, and planning. Whitefield, however, drew vast crowds with no advance organization, relying instead upon the tangible presence of God.

Nathan Cole, a Connecticut farmer, described in his diary<sup>3</sup> Whitefield's spiritual power to draw a crowd in 1740. Cole was working in his field when a horseman galloped down the road calling out that Whitefield would be preaching at Middletown at 10 a.m. Cole dropped his tools, ran home frantically to tell his wife to get ready, "then ran to my pasture for my horse with all my might, fearing I would be too late," he wrote. (Imagine this earnestness to hear God's Word today.) He put his wife

on the horse, and running beside her, they fled to town. They "feared lest they would be too late to hear the sermon." On both sides of the road the fields were deserted, everyone having hurried to town ahead of them.

When he arrived, Nathan stood in the vast throng before a hastily erected wooden platform to hear the 26-year-old preacher. "A young, slim, slender youth before some thousands of people with a bold, undaunted countenance," noted Cole. I entered "into a trembling fear before he began to preach. For he looked as if he was clothed with authority from the Great God."

If you have ever experienced the tangible power and life-changing presence in the proclamation of God's Word, you know how Cole felt. Nothing but God's presence and power can explain the urgency of Cole and his neighbors.

The church today does not need more organization or better programs. We need the felt power and tangible presence of the living God in our

ministries today as it often was in days of old. The good news is that no culture is so far gone that God cannot revive it if this power visits us. **e**

*William P. Farley is pastor of Grace Christian Fellowship in Spokane Washington. His book, For His Glory, can be ordered by contacting him at 509 448 3979, or bfarley@cet.com.*

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CHAPLAINCY MINISTRIES





# Pardon Me While I Fix My Halo

BY SUZANNE JORDAN BROWN

It was the Sunday morning marathon, and I was off and running.

"OK everybody," I yelled as I stuffed the baby's flailing arms into her jacket. "Are all the teeth brushed? Is all the hair combed?"

With Olympic speed, I tore through the house gathering all the crucial baggage to cart to church.

"Beth, you carry the cake," I said, thrusting our fellowship dinner contribution into her 6-year-old hands. "You boys get your jackets on. We can't be late today."

Putting on a final burst of speed as I entered the last lap, I slung the baby under one arm and scooped the load of teaching materials, Bible, and reference books into the other.

"Now, Paul, just hand me the salad. No, put it in the other hand. The one attached to the arm the baby is hanging from. That's right. Now hang my purse on my finger."

"Mommy?" my son asked.

"Yes?"

"Are you going to wear your house shoes to church?"

Shuddering at the near disaster, I staggered back to the bedroom under the load. I didn't dare put it down. There wouldn't be time to pick it up again. I kicked off the house slippers and felt around in the closet with my foot. *Ah—there was one shoe, but where was the other?* I spotted it peeking out from under the bed. It was full of cowboy action figures, but with an agility that would do a gymnast credit, I emptied the shoe and put it on without dropping more than the purse and a volume of Spurgeon's notes.

"OK—let's go!"

This time we were going to make it. The preacher's family is supposed to be at church early, and today I wanted to do everything I was supposed to do. This was the day I was to teach the adult women's Sunday school class for the first time. Just thinking about it made my insides feel like the Jell-O salad I was juggling.

The pastor's wife is expected to be able to teach any subject, to any age group, at a moment's notice; and with the children's classes, I hadn't done too badly. With four kids under 7, I felt fairly confident in my home training to see me through. But the adults—that was another matter. The preachers' wives I had known before I married my preacher husband were calm, sweet, saintly women. They played the piano and sang beautifully, and always had an

diaper bag. The hasty side trip back to the nursery cost me my narrow edge of earliness. I slid into my seat just moments before the first members of my class arrived.

I straightened my jacket and happened to glance down at my feet. I froze in horror. There was a small plastic cowboy riding my shoe buckle, bronco fashion, but that was easily remedied. The real problem was that my shoes did not match. In my haste I had put on shoes from two different pairs. They were both black, but that's where the similarity ended. Not only were they obviously different styles, one was a heel and one a flat. *How could I not have noticed I was walking split-level?*

The ladies were filing in, and my feet were, alas, too big to hide. Let me assure you, it is a physical impossibility to

**The absurd mistake of mismatched shoes rescued me from the trap that most in the ministry fall into at some point.**

aura of graciousness and poise about them. I couldn't play the piano and couldn't sing beautifully.

And I was afraid I wouldn't be able to teach an adult class.

I took a deep breath as we pulled into the parking lot. *Be gracious*, I murmured to myself. Think poise. My calm and gracious manner lasted while I delivered the baby to the nursery and the other children to their classes.

I dashed to my classroom, still burdened down with Mr. Spurgeon, the Jell-O salad, and, unfortunately, the

create an aura of graciousness and poise while you are wearing mismatched shoes. There was no help for it. My preacher's wife performance would have to be scratched today. The only thing to do was to resign from the popularity contest, give my reputation to the Lord, and do my best to teach the class. No doubt, that's what the Lord had in mind all along.

"Look what I did!" I cried, holding out my mismatched feet. "I'm so nervous about doing a good job teaching this class and wanted to make such a

good impression, and I didn't even get here with matching shoes."

The class shouted with laughter.

"Don't worry," the eldest and most intimidating of the bunch told me compassionately. "You'll do fine. We'll all help you."

Suddenly, I was looking forward to it, too. The absurd mistake of mismatched shoes rescued me from the trap that most in the ministry fall into at some point.

We often complain that people don't accept the pastor and his family as real, live people. They expect us to be creatures

something so dreadful that further pretension is pointless. Like the time I startled the church members at a fellowship dinner by announcing, "I'm simply ravishing." (I meant *ravenous*. I always get those words mixed up.)

Yet, the people in our church are always kind to me and could not treat me more lovingly. They don't expect me to be any more than I am. And why should they? I'm only me. I'm here to serve them, not impress them.

And that's the whole point. If we want the church to accept us as real people, we have to accept ourselves as the real people we are and give them the best that we have, no matter how insignificant that "best" seems at times. The blessing is that the Lord is able to take and use the goofiest and most inefficient servant who is surrendered to Him. **E**

*Suzanne Jordan Brown is a pastor's wife who lives in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.*

**It's tempting to wear that halo as long as possible, not realizing the halo comes equipped with chains.**

Freed from my need to be sedate and gracious, I shared the insights I had gleaned from the lesson in my naturally goofy manner. The class all participated, sharing some funny and insightful stories of their own.

"You did just fine," they all assured me. "We're looking forward to next week's class."

somewhere between men and angels. Yet, we keep trying to live up to those unrealistic expectations. It's tempting to wear that halo as long as possible, not realizing the halo comes equipped with chains.

The Lord has graciously preserved me from that syndrome by giving me a propensity to do everything wrong. Any time I start slipping into that halo, I do

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# Caught in the Balance

BY LINDA ROSE HANIK

## GOOD INTENTIONS

Caught in early morning traffic, we drove our Ryder truck up I-30, smoldering under the Texas sun. As native New Yorkers, we arrived in Dallas during a three-digit August heat wave. After driving 24 hours without sleep, we unpacked the Ryder. We were 1,500 miles from everything familiar. Married only 3 months, we began classes at Dallas Theological Seminary. Both of us believed family comes first, yet we would soon fail in the balance of family and ministry.

Two weeks later, classes pressed us like dead weight under the routine of late-night papers and early morning classes. Class, work, study, sleep—not exactly the expectations of a newlywed couple. We played catch-up on weekends, cleaning house, grocery shopping, and writing papers.

*We have no time to pray together now. God knows how much we have to do. After things calm down, we will pray together like we used to. I spend less time with God now, but I use the time for ministry. All my work is about Him, isn't it? I can't believe it's time to clean house again. No time left to be newlyweds . . . you will be here tomorrow, but this has to be done yesterday.*

Like gerbils in a wheel, we scrambled to keep up. Soon my greatest fears took shape in reality—family quickly became last. Although we failed to reach a solution, we often found ourselves in repetitious conversations: (Husband) “I only have a certain amount of time in Dallas; I want to get all I can out of my studies. I’ll never have this opportunity again.”

(Wife) “But if we can’t balance family and ministry while in seminary, how

will we do it in full-time ministry? We need to form good habits now.”

Both arguments seemed valid, yet neither of us argued from Scripture.

## BAIT AND SWITCH

As a minister, I have no greater fear than sacrificing my family on the altar of ministry. Somehow ministers fall for the devil’s lie, believing this sacrifice is godly. We often interpret “God first” to mean “ministry first.” On the contrary, “God first” simply means our personal relationship with God first.

God desires a relationship with us more than He desires what we do for the ministry. He has gotten along for centuries without us. Let’s get real—if God didn’t create us, He would use someone else to accomplish His work. Remember Balaam’s donkey? With misinformed good intentions, we often place ministry before our relationship with God and our families.

Balancing family and ministry remains the greatest challenge for ministers. “God first, family second, ministry third” has long been the minister’s battle cry. Yet, do we do it? Do we even know what it means?

Theologically, Genesis provides black-and-white answers. Practically, black and white quickly turns gray, and we spread ourselves thin. Balancing family and ministry functions more as an unfolding process than completing specific accomplishments.

## GOD’S PERCEPTION OF THE FAMILY

Genesis 1 and 2 describe the creation of nature, humanity, marriage, and family. These chapters function as the prologue to the entire Bible; all other Scripture

builds on Genesis 1 and 2. Here we learn that God, the Creator, blesses and ordains the family at the climax of Creation (Genesis 1:26–28).

The entire Old Testament unfolds through families chosen by God. He promised Abraham that his seed would multiply into a great nation (Genesis 12:1–3). He promised that the Messiah would come through the line of David (2 Samuel 7:12,13). God chose to send His Son to earth through a family (Matthew 1:18–25).

## THREE MINISTRIES

God created what I call the *three ministries* in Genesis 1 and 2. God sought a relationship with man, creating the first ordained ministry. God had communion with Adam and gave him commands *before* He gave the woman to him (Genesis 2:16). Adam’s primary responsibility centered on obedience to the Lord, not a relationship with the woman.

Our relationship with God serves as our first ministry—a ministry of living each day in fellowship with the Lord through praying, listening, reading His Word, and allowing Him to mold our character. All other relationships flow from this and will remain as strong or weak as our relationship with Him. This includes our relationships with our family and congregation.

The family is ministry and worship—the second ministry God ordained. God then gave the woman to Adam and told them to procreate. “Male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it’ ” (Genesis 1:27,28).<sup>\*</sup> Dwell here for a

moment and consider that God's first command to this couple was to raise a family, not build an altar of worship.

If God blesses us with a spouse and children, they are a ministry we do unto Him. This includes parents and extended family, as well.

Last, God told the couple to subdue the earth—that they would work as stewards of His creation (Genesis 1:28). Our third ministry is our calling of service. God has called all believers to service.

These three ministries bring glory to God as an act of worship. To engage in these ministries out of order sows sin and we will reap chaos in our lives.

The Ten Commandments also follow this pattern. The first four commands describe relating to God; the fifth, relating to parents; and the last five, relating to others (Exodus 20).

### SERVE GOD, NOT THE MINISTRY

When we commit to serving God and not the ministry, we begin the road to balance. Serving God sometimes requires serving people. Yet, how can we serve others if we cannot serve at home (1 Timothy 3:4)? We need to serve people in the family of God by beginning with our own families. Resist serving programs, progress, numbers, or meetings—lest pride drives us to create a legacy by corporate America standards. History has no greater legacy than that of the family. Our values, character, and attitude about God and family will pass down to our children, whether we want them to or not.

After several years, my husband and I finally began to find balance. Some time ago we spent several months developing an evangelism campaign for the community. My brother's graduation ceremony coincided with an important day of the campaign. We both attended the graduation.

Recently, the young man my husband discipled once a week wanted to meet on our date night. My husband explained that our time together is important, and he would see him next week. Ministering to our partner often precedes ministering to others.

### THE CHALLENGE

Since balancing family and ministry is a process, we must continually evaluate our progress. Congregational needs, trials, and growth present challenges. Children grow and their needs change. Aging parents, illness, personal trials, holidays, etc., all scream for our attention. Praying and dialoging with your spouse about these concerns will help reach solutions that meet both your needs.

Whenever I converse with a seasoned pastor, I always ask, "What would you change if you could go back?"

Without hesitation, almost every response includes the first two ministries: "I would pray more and spend more time with my family."

I pray my children will never resent God or ministry because of me. Instead, I pray my example will encourage them to grow more in love with God's three ministries with each passing day. **e**

*Linda Rose Hanik and her husband, Thomas, pastor Trinity Worship Center (Assemblies of God), Valley Stream, New York.*

*\*Scripture references are from the New International Version.*

## FAMILY FIRST TIPS

- Make God a daily priority through adequate times of fellowship in prayer, Bible study, and reflection. If you engage in your ministries out of order, God will gently reveal it to you in your time with Him.
- Rely on the Holy Spirit for sensitivity to your family and their needs. If you seek the Lord about your spouse and children, He will be faithful to answer those prayers.
- Dedicate your children to the Lord. Children are God's children on loan to you. He entrusts you to raise them for Him.
- Pray daily for your spouse, children, parents, etc. Pray for their walk with God, their calling, and your relationship with them. Also pray for their general needs (health, test at school, etc.).
- Evangelize and disciple your children with your spouse.
- Seek time each day to engage in worship, prayer, and Bible reading with your spouse and children. Intercede together for family needs, ministries, relationships, struggles, etc.
- Intercede for unsaved loved ones during family prayer. Spend time with them to foster witnessing opportunities.
- Set aside 1 entire day each week for family fun time. Explain to your congregation to not contact you on this day, except for emergencies.
- Partake in Communion with your family periodically.
- Set aside time weekly to spend with members of your family, one on one, taking time for your spouse and time for each of your children.
- Dialogue with your spouse about your schedule, "Am I too busy for you?"
- Teach your congregation about the three ministries and encourage them to seek balance.
- Have a separate phone line, cell phone, or beeper for your congregation to contact you. Free up your personal line for family use and to avoid inconvenient calls.
- Discourage pastoral overdependence by teaching your congregation to first seek God when in need; second, pray with their family; third, contact the prayer chain/warriors; and finally, unless the need is urgent, contact the pastor.

*—Linda Rose Hanik, Valley Stream, New York*

# It Is Not Too Late

B Y R O B E R T H . S P E N C E

**H**igh school seniors will soon move into the concluding semester of their secondary education. They will be asked innumerable times, “What are you going to do after you graduate?”

Admittedly, parents, teachers, and pastors would prefer a better response than a nonchalant shrug of the shoulders and “I don’t know.” We would like to think they have formulated plans for the future.

There are students who do not know what they are going to do after receiving a high school diploma. Perhaps earlier plans of attending college or a technical school or even entering the job market had to be changed because of family circumstances. Poor academic performance or limited financial

depend to a great extent on the decisions that are being made now. It is sobering to realize that such far-reaching choices are being made by teenagers.

Thankfully, many young people have the support of godly parents and the encouragement of a strong church to help influence their decisions. We are blessed to have parents who have carefully planned for the expenses of continued education and have helped prepare sons and daughters for making good choices. While it is never too early to do these things, we also need to realize it is not too late to affirm our high school seniors in some of their most important decisions.

Finding time for private conversation with a young person presents a

to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord” (Romans 14:7,8\*). Concern for fellow believers as well as the unconverted will be demonstrated by living in a way that declares the lordship of Jesus Christ.

## AFFIRMING OUR STUDENTS

Our students need to be affirmed in their determination to live an uncompromising life. They have believed and responded to Paul’s instruction: “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

It is not too late to affirm the young people of our churches who have remained faithful in their commitment to the Lord throughout their high school years. In our efforts to reach the rebellious and the backslider, we must be careful we do not create a perception that to be considered important in the church, a young person must walk a devious path, have a dramatic conversion, and then share a sensational testimony.

A student approached a guest speaker at a youth rally and confided, “I do not count in my church. I am unimportant.” When asked to explain, the girl said, “If I had been on drugs or had been promiscuous, and then accepted Christ, I would be invited to give my testimony. I have lived for the Lord and maintained my walk with Him, and nobody in my church even knows I exist. No one is interested in my story.”

It is not too late to applaud the high school senior who is making good choices. We are sometimes amazed at the grasp of eternal truth these young

**It is not too late to advocate that these seniors plan for a life of dedicated service to the Lord.**

resources may have caused dreams to evaporate.

As our young people are approaching graduation (one of the most significant milestones of their educational careers), pastors and youth ministers have a unique opportunity to provide practical counsel and ministry. It is not too late for some things to be done that will affect these students for the rest of their lives.

Decisions are being made, especially during the senior year of high school, that will determine their futures. What these students become spiritually, intellectually, socially, or financially will

challenge. Parents are often frustrated by the lack of such opportunity. Pastors have even fewer occasions for discussing weighty issues with these emerging adults. It is not too late for our high school seniors to hear their names included in a pastoral prayer. Perhaps for the first time in their lives, they are sensing the need for divine direction.

Graduation from high school suggests a level of maturity and an assuming of additional responsibilities. The Christian young person is reminded of Paul’s words: “For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live

people have. There are teens who have seen the futility and emptiness that comes with a life lived only for the moment or for what can be accumulated. They have observed the rich and famous living lives of despair. They can provide names of entertainment stars and sports figures who prove

credentialed ministers in the Assemblies of God are over age 65. While many of these are still involved in active ministry, it is only a matter of time until this significant group will need someone else to carry on their work.

It is not too late to assist the high school senior who is still contemplating

certain levels—tuition grants provided by the student's home church.

It is not too late for pastors to assist young people in understanding the guidance of the Holy Spirit. When you inquire of the early steps toward ministry, you will often find that the men and women whom God is using today point to a leader who offered them encouragement. Opportunities for involvement in ministry, providing them with books and study materials, and financial assistance often came at critical moments. It is not too late to come alongside high school seniors and assist them in detecting and understanding the Lord's voice. **e**

**You will often find that the men and women whom God is using today point to a leader who offered them encouragement.**

that having fame and fortune are no guarantee of peace and happiness.

The zeal of a young person inspires an entire church fellowship. With total abandon, teenagers declare their readiness to live lives of service. Their participation in missions trips sponsored by their churches underscores their adaptability to inconvenience and hardship. Sacrifice is a challenge they accept.

It is not too late to advocate that these seniors plan for a life of dedicated service to the Lord. Men and women whose influence has impacted entire nations are remembered because they were living examples of what Jesus taught. He said, "The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:11,12).

We believe every child of God has been called to a life of service to the Lord. The call of God has been emphasized first as a call for dedication to the Lord and then as an openness to His assignment. For many, that direction will lead to full-time service in the work of God. There has never been a time in the history of our Fellowship when there was a greater need for young men and women to respond by saying, "Here am I, send me."

From a practical standpoint, the need for pastors, evangelists, and missionaries can easily be understood when we realize that almost 25 percent of the

attending college. Assemblies of God colleges offer a full range of majors leading to careers that permit a dedicated Christian to be an effective witness in this world. Assist students by helping them secure financial resources for college expenses. Many of our colleges have programs that collaborate with the local church by matching—up to

*Robert H. Spence is president of Evangelical University, Springfield, Missouri, and the commissioner of the Assemblies of God Commission on Christian Higher Education.*

*\*Scripture references are from the New International Version.*

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**"Oh no! All my Tim LaHaye books got left behind."**



# S E R M O N S E E D S



## FOUR VIEWS OF CHRISTMAS

John 3:16,17

### INTRODUCTION:

Just what does Christmas mean? Tinsel and lights? Family gatherings? Shopping? Parties? Church activities? Let's examine the meaning of Christmas from four viewpoints.

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. God's viewpoint.

- a. It meant giving His Son (3:16).
- (1) Foretold by signs—Ahaz (Isaiah 7).
- (2) Foretold by sages (Isaiah 9:6; Micah 5:2).

- b. God's motivation was love (John 3:16).
- (1) An everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3; Malachi 1:2).
- (2) Having loved us, He will love us to the end (John 13:1).

#### 2. Jesus' viewpoint.

- a. It meant giving up heaven's glory to become a servant, obedient unto death (Philippians 2:5-8).
- b. He knew it would lead to Calvary.
- c. He knew it was the only way men could attain heaven (John 14:6).

#### 3. The world's viewpoint.

- a. The world needed a Savior (Isaiah 53:6; Luke 2:10,11; Romans 3:23).
- b. God provided a Savior (John 1:29; Romans 10:9,10).
- c. The world's reaction has been indifference, rejection; adoration one moment and crucifixion the next.

#### 4. The believer's viewpoint.

- a. It means eternal life.
- b. It means Jesus came to be our Savior.

—Terry L. Terrell  
Burlington, Iowa

## HOW THE SOUL IS LIKE THE SOIL

Matthew 13:1-23 (NIV)

### INTRODUCTION:

Why do people react differently to the gospel? Why do some pay no attention? Why do some start for the Kingdom only to stop? Why are some believers unfruitful? Why are some fruitful?

A study of the action of sowing will help explain why people accept the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God produces a bountiful harvest when planted in the proper soil.

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. The sower illustrates how conditions can affect the harvest of the Kingdom (13:1-9).

- a. The setting was among people on the shore (13:1,2).
- b. The solution was a parable from the ship (13:2,3).
- c. The story was about plants in the soils (13:3-9).

#### 2. The seed illustrates how communication can affect the harvest of the Kingdom (13:10-17).

- a. Jesus concealed the truth from the willfully blind (13:11-14).
- b. Jesus confronted the hopelessly calloused with the truth (13:15).
- c. Jesus communicated the truth to the completely earnest (13:16,17).

#### 3. The soil illustrates how complications can affect the harvest of the Kingdom (13:18-23).

- a. Some never get started on their way to the Kingdom (13:19). The problem is a lack of understanding.
- b. Some stop before they get to the Kingdom (13:20,21). The problem is a lack of depth.
- c. Some shrivel along their way to the Kingdom (13:22). The problem is a lack of faith. Some Christians are in this category. They believe, have some

roots, but are weighed down with cares and consequently are not very fruitful.

- d. Some shoot up on their way to the Kingdom (13:23). Despite the poor response of most, the fruitful make up for more than the difference.

### CONCLUSION:

Since the problems are not with the seed, but rather with the soil, we should prepare our souls to receive the seed of God's kingdom.

1. We can do this by tilling our soil (heart) through repentance (Hosea 10:12).
2. We can do this by fertilizing our soil (heart) through submission.
3. We can do this by removing the rocks in our soil (heart) through discipline.
4. We can do this by sowing the right seed in our hearts through reading (Galatians 6:7).

—Steve Eutsler  
Springfield, Missouri

## THE A-B-Cs OF PRAYER

John 15:7

### INTRODUCTION:

Prayer is more than asking, seeking, and knocking. Prayer is a moment-by-moment communion with God.

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. Abide in Him (John 15:7).

Jesus gave an illustration of the vine and the branches and the importance of a branch being in the vine to have life. He desires the believer to draw sustenance

from Him, to have close communion with Him.

#### 2. Believe (James 1:6).

Ask with positive faith, expecting an answer. Faith bears fruit.

The Bible gives various degrees of faith—little faith, mustard-seed faith, great faith. Faith brings results and is necessary in receiving an answer.

#### 3. Continue to pray (James 5:16).

Our forefathers, great men of prayer, used the term praying through. It simply

meant continuing to pray until you knew the answer was on the way, persevering until God gave the answer, whether unseen or seen.

Often when you have prayed a matter through, circumstances will seemingly get worse, yet you know the answer is on the way. At this point you simply lift your voice and praise Him.

—Estella Hare  
Frostburg, Maryland

# S E R M O N S E E D S

## BROKEN TO BE MADE WHOLE

*Matthew 21:42–44; John 3:30*

### THEME:

Being broken before the Lord is a prerequisite for true spiritual maturity and leadership in the church.

### INTRODUCTION:

The stone in this passage refers to Christ. He is depicted in Scripture in three specific relationships as the stone.

1. To Israel . . . not in messianic glory but as a “stumbling stone” and “rock of offense.”

2. To the Church . . . as the “chief cornerstone.”

3. To the Gentile world . . . as the “stone cut out of the mountain” that will destroy the system of world governments.

Matthew 21:44 and Luke 20:18 are almost identical, and the only two passages in which the particular words for broken and grind are used.

Broken . . . to crush or shatter.

Grind . . . to scatter, as powder or dust. This refers to hulls from winnowing blown away by the wind.

The latter portion of Matthew 21:44 is graphically illustrated in Daniel’s record of Christ’s return to establish His millennial reign on earth. However, in the first portion, the person who falls on the rock does so volitionally. The idea of gain through loss goes against human reason and the depraved nature. Paul addressed this in Philippians 3:3–8.

Let us look at three Bible stories to illustrate the value of being broken.

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. Broken . . . in submission.

- a. Jeremiah’s visit to the potter’s house (Jeremiah 18).
  - (1) The potter created a vessel, but it was marred.
  - (2) The beauty and usefulness were less than desired/intended.
  - (3) The potter took the vessel that he had made and broke it/remade it.

b. Depraved nature of man mars the original purposes of God.

(1) Man is guilty by nature and actions (Romans 3:23).

(2) True reconciliation to God changes man’s nature (2 Corinthians 5:17).

c. True submission extends beyond initial moment of commitment to Christ.

(1) Relinquishes self-will with personal ambitions/desires.

(2) Ceases to look for excuses/alibis to avoid spiritual accountability.

d. Victory through submission comes only with willful submission.

**Illus.:** Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. Follow the divine order: rejection, death, resurrection.

#### 2. Broken . . . to become sufficient.

a. The feeding of 5,000 men besides women/children (Matthew 14). The only miracle of Christ recorded in all four Gospels.

(1) Four key words: *took, blessed, brake, gave*. The same four words are used at Lord’s Supper.

(2) The miracle of multiplication took place in breaking of bread.

b. Spiritual multiplication begins when broken for divine purpose. Hard work, personal ability, other advantages do not make one effective (sufficient) in the Lord’s work.

c. “Whole, unbroken men are of little use to God” (J.R. Miller).

d. Notice the language of Paul in 2 Corinthians:

- “Our sufficiency is of God” (3:5).
- “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (4:7).
- “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (12:9).

e. It is through the trials/sufferings of life that we become sufficient to minister

to others who may be enduring similar difficulties (2 Corinthians 1:3–5).

#### 3. Broken . . . for service.

a. Gideon’s army of 300 (Judges 6,7).

(1) Midianites came at harvest and took the Israelites’ grain.

(2) Israelites were afraid and angry. “If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles?” (Judges 6:13).

(3) 32,000 soldiers answered the first call of Gideon. But 22,000 went home “fearful and afraid.” And 9,700 went home not prepared for the battle.

(4) Weapons of the 300 were quite unusual—trumpets, empty pitchers, and lamps in the pitchers (Judges 7:16).

(5) God-given strategy for the battle—blow the trumpet, shout “the sword of the Lord, and of Gideon,” and break the pitchers (Judges 7:18–20).

b. The broken pitcher was to reveal the light that was inside.

(1) World does not need to see us, must see the Light of the world.

(2) “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

c. We will never serve to fullest spiritual capacity until we have been broken and the glory/beauty of His character is seen in us.

### CONCLUSION:

If you desire to be a whole person, it will come only as you are broken on the stone of Christ Jesus. This must be much more than the emotional decision of a moment; it is a lifelong choice of the will. Begin by falling on Him in submission and each day allowing your brokenness to make you sufficient for service.

—H. Maurice Lednický  
Springfield, Missouri

# S E R M O N S E E D S



## CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

1 Thessalonians 5:12–28

### INTRODUCTION:

The Christian has certain characteristics that differ from those of the non-Christian. In 1 Thessalonians 5:12–28, Paul speaks of these. They are not only requested, but required.

### MESSAGE:

1. **Christian cooperation (verses 12,13).**
  - a. Servants (verse 12; see 1 Timothy 5:17).
  - b. Surrender (verse 13).
2. **Christian conduct (verses 14,15).**
  - a. Practice (verse 14). Note the practice of Christians:
    - (1) “warn them that are unruly”
    - (2) “comfort the feeble-minded”
    - (3) “support the weak”
    - (4) “be patient toward all men.”
  - b. Peaceableness (verse 15). Don’t seek to

get even. (Note the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:39. Compare with those of Paul in Romans 12:17.)

3. **Christian commitment (verses 16–22).**
  - a. Rejoicing (verse 16; see Psalm 16:11).
  - b. Prayer (verse 17; see Ephesians 6:18).
  - c. Thanks (verse 18; see Psalm 100:4).
  - d. Spirit (verses 19,20). Allow the Spirit to work through you.
  - e. Proof (verse 21). Prove all things; hold to what is good.
  - f. Holiness (verse 22). Stay away from all that appears to be evil. Don’t just pray for holiness; practice it.
4. **Christian cleanness (verses 23–28).**
  - a. Purity (verse 23; compare 1 John 3:3; Hebrews 12:14).
  - b. Promise (verse 24; compare 2 Thessalonians 3:3; Hebrews 10:23).

- c. Prayer (verse 25; compare Ephesians 6:18,19).
- d. Parting (verses 26–28). Paul’s benediction: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”

### CONCLUSION:

The Early Church made its greatest impact on the world when it lived least like the world. As Paul and Silas rejoiced in prison, the Philippian jailer was converted (Acts 16:25,29–31). As the child of God bears the marks of Christianity, the non-Christian will be convinced of the reality of serving Christ and will accept salvation. The child of God need not tell the world he or she is a Christian; he or she should have the characteristics of a Christian in his or her daily life.

—Croft M. Pentz, Waynesboro, Pennsylvania

## JESUS, THE NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES

Luke 1:30–33

### MESSAGE:

1. **Christ came to establish His kingdom.**
  - a. Over the power of the devil.
    - (1) To set the possessed free (Acts 16:18).
    - (2) To break the curse of sickness and infirmity (Acts 3:6–8; 4:29–31).
    - (3) To satisfy the accusations against

us (Colossians 2:13–15).  
 (4) Jesus gives life, not death (John 20:30,31).  
 b. This is an eternal and final authority (Philippians 2:9–11).  
 (1) Christ will return on that great and dreadful day.  
 (2) He will establish His throne forever.  
 (3) He will judge all.

2. **In whom will you put your hope, faith, and love?**

- a. Jesus the Christ who is above all (Ephesians 1:19–23).
- b. The only One who can offer complete salvation (Acts 4:10–12).
- c. The One who can keep you forever (Romans 8:31–39).

—Les Sanders, Milford, Ohio

## WHEN IS THANKSGIVING OVER?

Psalm 100:1–5

### INTRODUCTION:

Nothing is as “over” as Christmas. But when is Thanksgiving over?

### MESSAGE:

1. **“Make a joyful noise” (verse 1).**
  - a. Some wake up and say, “Good morning, Lord!”
  - b. Others wake up and say, “Good Lord, it’s morning!”
2. **“Serve the Lord with gladness” (verse 2).**  
 Have you ever said, “Good morning” to someone, only to have them respond,

- “What’s good about it?”
3. **“Come before his presence with singing” (verse 2).**
  4. **“Know ye that the Lord he is God” (verse 3).**
    - a. A different kind of subject.
    - b. A different kind of verb.
    - c. Philippians 3:8–11, Paul’s great yearning.
      - (1) He is God.
      - (2) He made us.
      - (3) He shepherds and feeds us.
  5. **“Enter into his gates with thanksgiving” (verse 4).**
    - a. “For all things” (Ephesians 5:1–4,20).

- b. “In everything” (Philippians 4:6).
- c. “Whatsoever ye do” (Colossians 2:6,7; 3:17).
- d. “In everything . . . God’s will” (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18).

6. **“Be thankful unto him” (verse 4).**
7. **“Bless his name” (verse 4).**

### CONCLUSION:

When is Thanksgiving over? Never, for the Christian. Why? “For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations” (verse 5).

—Warren F. McPherson  
 Springfield, Missouri

# S E R M O N S E E D S

## GOD IS PRO-LIFE

Genesis 9:1–7 (NIV)

### INTRODUCTION:

Many Americans love opinion polls. In fact, one can find a poll on virtually any topic. Polls on abortion rights reveal a deeply divided nation.

In a culture that bases ethical standards on the popular whim, we must be careful to adopt God's viewpoint. Genesis 9:1–7 gives us two reasons why God is pro-life and why every believer should be pro-life as well.

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. God blessed life (verses 1,7).

- a. What God blesses prospers. What God wills to live shall live.
- b. Verses 1 and 7 frame this unit, indicating the importance of this thought. Each verse contains a string of commands from God that emphasizes His will:
  - (1) Be fruitful.
  - (2) Increase in number.
  - (3) Fill the earth.
- c. If God has blessed life, then we have no right to end it. Taking life is a denial of God's:
  - (1) authority as Creator.
  - (2) plan for humanity.
  - (3) exclusive right to choose. He alone has the right to choose. He "brings death and makes alive" (1 Samuel 2:6).
- d. Those who oppose what God has blessed are opposing God himself.

#### 2. God made life holy (verses 2–6).

- a. Verses 2,3 tell us that God has provided food to sustain us. Even more, these verses reveal a basic difference between human life and all other life. We are not animals. Rather, we are unique in God's creation.
- b. Verses 4–6 explain the reason why we are unique. Human beings are created in the image of God.
  - (1) God teaches us respect for all life by forbidding the consumption of meat with the lifeblood still in it. God also teaches about the uniqueness and sanctity of human life by

requiring the life of every person who takes innocent human life.

- (2) What does it mean to bear the image of God?
  - (a) "Image" and "likeness" are the same idea.
  - (b) The word "image" refers to an icon or statue that bears striking resemblance to the real thing.
  - (c) Though we are certainly not gods, we resemble God in many ways: intelligence, emotions, capacity for relationships, creativity, and appreciation for beauty.
  - (d) What is more, we are called by God to fill up the world and subdue it as His representatives.
  - (e) As we fill up the world, we mirror God's image everywhere we go and bring Him glory.
- (3) Defacing a picture of an individual is considered an insult to him or her. Those who take innocent human life deface and attack the image of God in that person. In doing this, they attack and insult God himself.
- (4) Since we are created by God to bear His image, we are more than a collection of biological material.
  - (a) While we want to affirm the value of science, we must cautiously reject the notion of some scientists that we are simply a collection of physical materials.
  - (b) If those who espouse such views are correct, then people would have no moral responsibility, only biological and genetic malfunction. The suffering and elderly in our society may be mercifully put to death, as a pet might be put to sleep. The unborn child may be discarded because it is simply biological tissue.
  - (c) Nigel Cameron, in his book

*The New Medicine*, warns that our American society is walking down the same logical path as Nazi Germany. Those who died in the Holocaust were considered to be simply "materials" to be used by the medical and scientific elite. The insane, the infirm, the aged, the handicapped, and the undesirable were all eliminated from German society and used for experimentation.

- (d) In America today, advocates for stem-cell research want to utilize the remains of aborted babies. Measures to ban partial-birth abortion have been blocked by pro-choice lawmakers. Human embryos may be stored; unwanted embryos may be discarded. Parents may selectively abort babies if there are too many in the womb.
- (e) A godless society will always devalue human life, for it denies the existence of a Creator who has stamped His image on every person.
- (f) God assigns value to every person. This view is not based on circumstances, nor on issues of health, nor on public opinion, but squarely on the fact human life is made in God's image.

### CONCLUSION:

Unmistakably, God is pro-life. If God is for life, who are we to oppose His will? As believers, it is our duty to obey God's will by promoting and protecting life in ways that are consistent with our faith. We must preach the gospel. We must pray. We must express our views and raise awareness. We must offer assistance to those who are suffering. We must deeply respect life and the image of God in each person.

—Greg Allison  
Beech Grove, Indiana





### THE BEST GIFT CAMPAIGN

Each year First Assembly of God in Alexandria, Virginia, has a program “The Best Gift Campaign.” Working with the celebration arts, benevolence, youth, singles, and couples ministries, we plan a party the night of our Christmas cantata and invite needy families from our community, prisons, and battered women’s shelters. Afterward we distribute clothes, food, and toys.

During the party the guests may shop in our blessing room or food pantry, go to our hospitality room for prayer and ministry, or eat refreshments and receive their gifts.

—Lisa Erickson, Alexandria, Virginia

### GRAND OPENING AND CORNERSTONE INSTALLATION

When First Assembly of God—now Pacific Christian Center—in Santa Maria, California, moved to a new location, we had a grand opening and cornerstone installation. We knew many visitors would attend. Because people are often reluctant to fill out visitor cards, we made sign-up sheets with places for names, addresses, and telephone numbers, and placed them on clipboards at each row of pews. During the service I announced that we would place the names of all those who signed the sheets into the box in the cornerstone. There were 630 who put their names and addresses on the sheets. We made copies of the sheets before placing them in the box. At the close of the service we had the cornerstone installation.

—Robert Palmer, Santa Maria, California

### MINISTRY EXPLO

We chose a late summer Wednesday evening to begin our fall program called Ministry Explo. Each ministry team has a table around the sanctuary to set up a display to introduce people to its ministry.

The term *Ministry Explo* has a twofold meaning. First, it refers to exploration, an opportunity for the church and community to become acquainted with ministries the church offers.

It is also a time to give God praise because He has exploded on the scene with more opportunities to minister.

Each team leader is given 5 to 10 minutes to describe his or her ministry. Information folders, registration forms, permission and medical forms are available. The event gives opportunities to look at displays, talk to representatives, and register for fall events.

We plan to do it again in conjunction with our annual missions convention.

—James Pentz, Montgomery, Pennsylvania

### RETHINKING NURSING HOME MINISTRY

Too often busy pastors carve up what they did last Sunday to fit the 30 or 45 minutes available for the nursing home service, arrive on time, and are already headed out the door at the final amen. But nursing home residents need:

1. respectful attention.
2. caring physical contact.
3. the personal promise of God’s enduring love.

Consider also the communication barriers in nursing homes:

1. poor vision and hearing.
2. dementia or medication making processing difficult.
3. anger or apathy resulting from loss of freedom and dignity.

Thoughtful meditation on both the needs and limitations of nursing home residents produces principles to help in planning nursing home worship.

- Arrive early and regularly, bringing members of your congregation with you. One preschooler is worth at least 3 hours of sermonizing, and an infant is worth her weight in platinum.

- Don’t neglect simple social sharing. Find out where residents lived and their memories of family and childhood.

- Start with a handshake and wait for the invitation for more.

- Instead of assuming that first names will be welcome, begin with “Ms.” and “Mr.” and wait to be invited to less formality.

- Hug or hold if invited.

- Bring enthusiastic musicians.

- Read Scripture, making sure the reader’s voice projects well.

- Keep your sermon short, simple, and encouraging.

- Allow nursing home residents to share testimonies.

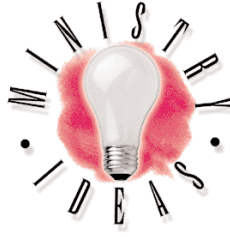
Many of them may have been Christians longer than you.

The people from your congregation will discover they have been ministered to. The most precious gift is providing the residents with an opportunity to be a blessing and share God’s love.

—David Trembley, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

### CHILDREN’S OUTREACH

For 1 week during the summer, we joined with the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program and went into county-funded project areas and ministered to children. We ran the program similar to a vacation Bible school. Teenagers did the games.



Each evening we picked up the children in vans for a crusade at the church. More than 150 kids attended each night and many came to Christ.

—Carl P. Redding, youth and children's pastor,  
First Assembly of God, Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania

### YOKEFELLOW

The Yokefellow plan is a means of involving more laymen of the church. Each deacon chooses a layman to serve as his partner for 1 year. The deacon outlines the ministries to his younger yokefellow. This person is not elected nor ordained as a deacon and does not participate in the deacons' meetings. Each deacon-and-yokefellow team is responsible for the spiritual and physical needs of the families assigned by the pastor and board. They contact each family at least once a month and visit as needed. They are available to counsel at the altar. They also pray for the pastor and staff and for each other.

This plan provides:

1. help for the deacons.
2. help in visitation so no one goes out alone.
3. on-the-job training for men who may later become deacons.
4. opportunity for commitment to servanthood for men who are not eligible for the office of deacon.
5. training in counseling, soul winning, and ministering to the needs of people.

—Douglas Rose, Grand Prairie, Texas

### WAYS TO HAVE SPECIAL MUSIC

Many churches do not have a choir. Others have a choir only during special seasons. Yet, in most cases, the pastor as well as the parishioners would appreciate having special music. Songs and hymns help people grow in their understanding of God, self, and others.

Use these ideas as springboards for providing special music:

1. Have the organist play a solo.
2. Invite people to choose their favorite songs and hold a hymn sing.
3. Solicit the Sunday School students to sing.
4. Use a soloist.
5. Ask the mothers to sing on Mother's Day.
6. Request the fathers to sing on Father's Day.
7. Arrange for the children to sing on Children's Day.
8. Chant a psalm on one pitch.
9. Make and use rhythm instruments.
10. Schedule a singing duet.
11. Provide an organ and piano duet.

12. Listen to a tape.

13. Invite a college choir or musical group to participate in your service.

14. Attempt a walk-in choir and hold one practice before church.

15. Encourage families to take turns providing music.

16. Clap the rhythm to a variety of hymns.

17. Include a piano solo.

18. Have someone play the guitar.

19. Have people bring instruments and form a band or orchestra.

20. Listen to wind chimes.

21. Try a trio.

22. Arrange for individual members or a small group from the local symphony to perform.

23. Read a psalm, a song of praise, to God.

24. Invite a touring choir to visit.

25. Have the senior citizens group provide music.

—Phyllis Wezeman, Mishawaka, Indiana

### MARKETPLACE MINISTRY

Reaching boomers and busters can be a difficult task. But many of them are white-collar computer operators who love to eat lunch at upscale restaurants. I selected two men from church who have a passion to reach their friends. Each month I meet with them for lunch at their favorite restaurant. I ask one of them to come with a topic and a short passage of Scripture to match the topic we can discuss as we eat. I attend the lunches but my men lead it.

I then had them invite their friends to eat with us. They told their friends the topic and Scripture we would be discussing. We selected topics such as being a great dad—things that would interest even an unsaved man. Their unsaved friends became acquainted with some men in our church. This made inviting them to church easy because they had already established relationships.

These lunches, which occur in a nonthreatening atmosphere, are effective for reaching these two generations.

—Submitted by Brent T. Galbreath, Kearny, New Jersey

### SEND US YOUR IDEAS

Enrichment will pay up to \$50 for each published account of a program idea. Send your ideas, along with a detailed description, to: Ministry Ideas, *Enrichment* journal, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802-1894.

E-mail: You may send your ministry ideas to: [enrichmentjournal@ag.org](mailto:enrichmentjournal@ag.org).



## THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving is unique among holidays. It is not a religious holiday in quite the same sense as Easter and Christmas . . . but we render the day meaningless if we fail to give thanks. It does not, like Independence Day, mark the founding of our nation. Rather, it marks the day of the founding of a spirit that is special in living . . . that of gratitude.

When the American colonists were being settled, they endured many privations and hardships. Being devoutly religious, they brought their problems to God on days of fasting and prayer. On one occasion, when it was proposed to appoint another day of penitence and humiliation, a sensible old colonist said he thought they had brooded over their misfortunes long enough; that it seemed high time they should remember all God's mercies toward them. He proposed that instead of another fast they should keep a feast . . . and from that time Thanksgiving Day has been an annual observance in America.

It is strange how little and how seldom we thank God for being God. We think in terms of things. We thank God for what we get or are, but we rarely arrive at the point of appreciation of being grateful that God is.

Thankfulness is a way of looking at life. So it is fitting that we pause in thanksgiving in our churches, in our homes, and at our bountiful tables for the blessings of another bountiful year. We give thanks for our freedom, liberty, and the guarantee of dignity for the individual. And don't forget that celebrating Thanksgiving Day was not meant to be kept on one day of the year only.

—Robert Strand, *Springfield, Missouri*, adapted from *365 Moments to Cherish (Springfield, Mo.: New Leaf Press, 1997)*. Used with permission.

## THE EYES OF HOPE

Ever since he was 11 years old, teenager Brandon McCoy of Anderson, Indiana, has celebrated his birthday by feeding homeless men and women. What inspired the youth was seeing a man begging for food outside a restaurant. Brandon invited the man inside and bought him a meal. From that day on and continuing now for 6 years, Brandon celebrates his birthday by gathering food for the hungry. He hosts a birthday party, inviting many friends, but asks them to bring food for the hungry rather than gifts for himself. After the party, Brandon calls the food bank to come and pick up his gifts.

Brandon McCoy is an example of a person who sees through the eyes of hope. His eyes of hope compel him to

reach out, to make a difference, to transform reality. He sees *and* responds with compassion. "Hope arouses as nothing else can arouse, a passion for the possible," notes minister and author William Sloane Coffin. Brandon's vision is the kind each one of us needs to have.

—Submitted by Victor Parachin, *Tulsa, Oklahoma*.

## KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE FATHER

A farmer worked his fields with the help of his three sons. Each hoped to inherit the farm when he passed on. He called his boys together and said, "One day I will be gone, and this farm isn't big enough to support all three of you. Tomorrow I'm going to give you a test, and the one who wins will get the farm."

The sons went to sleep that night anticipating owning the farm, and were eagerly awake at daybreak when the father arrived with three mules and plows. He led them to the edge of the field, and said, "I'm going to walk over to the other side of the field, and I want each of you to plow a straight furrow to where I'm standing. The one with the straightest furrow will get the farm."

The brothers waited until he was at the other end of the field, and then began plowing. The eldest son soon was out in front, but grew worried about the progress of the others. He began looking back to check where they were. His mule began wandering as he constantly checked and corrected his position.

The second son looked over the mule to target his father between the critter's ears, but then became conscious of a frayed line and a limp in the mule. Soon his attention was absorbed on the back end of the mule, and when he looked up he was far to the left of where his father was standing.

The third boy looked across the field and saw his father standing, so he guided his mule over the ridge and through the water furrow, always keeping the father in sight. Eventually he came to a stop directly in front of the older man, while the others were still coming from the middle of the field.

Who won the farm? The one who kept his father in sight, instead of the competition or the obstacles. We, too, must avoid the distractions of life by keeping our eyes fixed on our Heavenly Father.

—Submitted by Stephen Green, *Mount Ayr, Iowa*.

## OVER HELLS CANYON ROAD

The newspaper headline read: "Railroad Honors Conductor for Saving Teen Boy's Life." It happened in the summer of 2001 in Oregon. On August 9, train conductor Aric Jeffs, 25, and engineer Ted Kulick, 46, were hauling 30 cars filled with scrap steel destined



for Cascade Steel Mills in McMinnville, Oregon, when they saw six kids racing to clear the 631-foot-long trestle over Hells Canyon Road. Kulick slammed on the brakes, but it was obvious the train, going 15 mph and carrying 6 million pounds of steel, would not stop in time. Five of the kids cleared the trestle, but one did not. He fell, regained his footing, and fell again. He then appeared to give up. According to the conductor, "He just kind of hunkered down. The look he gave was the look of death . . . it's something I'll never forget." Jeffs and Kulick slowed the train to about 4 mph as it bore down on the young boy, but it would take another 150 feet to come to a complete stop. Jeffs then climbed down the left-side steps at the nose of the engine, yelled at the boy, and reached for him as he looked up. Jeffs was tall enough at 6 feet, 5 inches, and strong enough from playing football and lifting weights, to reach over the locomotive's plow and lift the boy to safety. The boy missed the train's front grille by just 2 feet.

In a very real way all of us were over a Hells Canyon Road, desperately running to save our lives until we too were saved by the strong arm of Jesus Christ.

—Submitted by Ed Uhles, Noti, Oregon.

### IN HONOR PREFERRING ONE ANOTHER

There is one less broken heart in Valentine, Nebraska. But before you credit Cupid, consider Bill Freeman. Although Bill's disability requires that he breathe with the help of a portable oxygen tank, he doesn't use it as an excuse not to go to church. He just takes his tank and his breathing hose with him.

One week as Bill and his wife were worshiping in their small church, a man clutched his chest, collapsed, and fell to the ground. Bill observed the apparent heart attack and quickly moved to where the man lay. Removing the breathing tube from his nose, he fastened it on the unconscious man's face until the paramedics arrived. At the hospital the unidentified man recovered and was told by his doctors that he was still alive because Bill Freeman was willing to place another's need ahead of his own.

In Romans 12, the apostle Paul celebrates the Christian virtue of self-denial. He calls us to think of others as better than ourselves and honor them with what we cherish. Obeying Jesus' words to take up our cross requires us to move beyond our comfort zones.

—Submitted by Greg Asimakoupoulos, Naperville, Illinois.

### SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

One of the tasks of a church leader is to be a vision caster, helping people see the big picture. Churches are riddled with

people who are frustrated, passionless, and burned out. One of the cures to these problems is to cast a vision of the big picture. The following may be helpful.

In the days of misty towers, distressed maidens, and stalwart knights, a young man walking down a road came upon a laborer pounding away at a stone with a hammer and chisel. "What are you doing?" he asked.

The laborer answered in a pained voice, "I'm trying to shape this stone, and it is backbreaking work."

The youth continued on his journey and soon came to another man chipping away at a similar stone. This man looked neither particularly angry nor happy. "What are you doing?" the young man asked.

"I'm shaping a stone for a building," replied the worker.

The young man went on and before long came to a third worker chipping away at a stone, but this worker was singing happily. "What are you doing?" the young man asked.

The worker smiled and replied, "I'm building a cathedral."

People must constantly be reminded that they are not just changing diapers, cutting the grass, or driving bus; they are helping to build the kingdom of God.

—Submitted by Kenneth Pagano, Garfield, Kentucky.

### TO QUOTE

The Christian character is the flower of which sacrifice is the seed.

—Fr. Andrew

God is more concerned about our character than our comfort. His goal is not to pamper us physically but to perfect us spiritually.

—Paul W. Powell

Teaching a Christian how he ought to live does not call so much for words as for daily example.

—St. Basil the Great

Thou has given so much to me . . . Give me one thing more—a grateful heart.

—George Herbert

### SEND US YOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

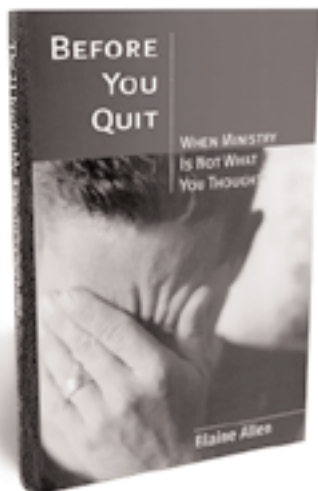
*Enrichment* will pay up to \$25 for each illustration we use. If the material has previously been published, please indicate the original source. Send your contribution to: Illustrate It, *Enrichment* journal, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802-1894.

E-mail: You may send your illustrations to: [enrichmentjournal@ag.org](mailto:enrichmentjournal@ag.org).





# book reviews



## **BEFORE YOU QUIT: WHEN MINISTRY IS NOT WHAT YOU THOUGHT**

Blaine Allen (Kregel Publications, 160 pp., paperback)

All of us have thought of quitting and writing a book on the subject. The book is here: *Before You Quit*.

Pastor Allen has survived the pastoral battles of stubborn boards, difficult members, obstinate leaders, and disappointing program setbacks. He recounts his education with clear insight, humor, and helpful life lessons.

The opening chapters deal with misguided, misinformed, and immature expectations in the hearts of inexperienced ministers. Allen gently deals with hidden flaws in the makeup of the novice minister. He then offers good guidance toward becoming an overcoming leader.

The middle chapters address the issue of ministerial survival. These pages are worth the read, leading from the pain of the problems to the possibilities of positive solutions.

The chapter entitled "Empty: When You Physically Crash and Burn" is a special read for professional preachers. It deals with the frustrations and inner struggles that seem to be the unique burden of this work and calling.

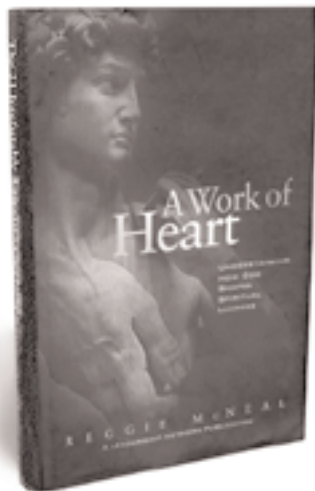
Some of the solutions in the book are a bit contrived and will not work in every situation, but the author knows that. He has not attempted to solve every problem, but to offer realistic suggestions. The book is a valuable read for any minister.

—Reviewed by Terry Raburn,  
superintendent, Peninsular Florida  
District, Lakeland, Florida.

## **A WORK OF HEART: UNDERSTANDING HOW GOD SHAPES SPIRITUAL LEADERS**

Reggie McNeal (Jossey-Bass Publishers, 205 pp., hardcover)

Reggie McNeal's guide to understanding the forces that shape the hearts of spiritual leaders challenges the core of ministers. McNeal identifies six heart-shaping influences which



ultimately force the reader to ask, *Who am I and where am I going?* As one contemplates the answers to this question, the reader finds a great deal of self-understanding in relationship to his or her ministry. To benefit from this book, however, one must lay aside pride and risk an honest assessment of the heart.

McNeal successfully demonstrates that leaders must find their true identity in Christ. When they discover the influences that have shaped their lives, then they can know where they should go in partnership with God. As McNeal states, "Self-understanding forms the fundamental building block for the leader's personal development."

McNeal distinguishes between the call to vocational ministry and the call or sense of mission that others in the church may have. Some might see this as a failure to recognize the priesthood of all believers, but the author provides a balanced approach to this issue. He also provides practical guidance for those who may be struggling with their call and may need to consider a change in ministry that is more compatible with their gifts.

Anyone engaged in ministry can benefit from this book if it's read with an open heart.

—Reviewed by Erica Abell Huinda, associate editor, *Woman's Touch* magazine, and student at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.

## **LOOK BACK, LEAP FORWARD**

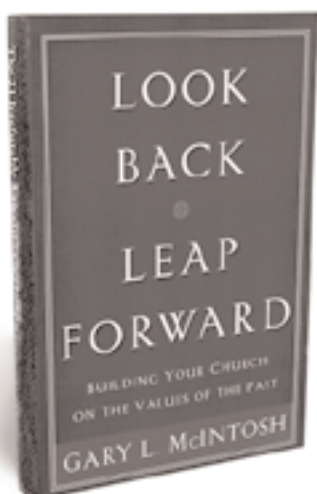
Gary L. McIntosh (Baker Book House, 140 pp., paperback)

Many pastors, myself included, have gone to seminars dealing with the mission and purpose of the church. At first glance, I thought *Look Back, Leap Forward* would be just one more book on the subject. Instead, I found a good tool for anyone interested in improving the effectiveness of the leadership of his or her church. The book is written in first person and is easy to follow.

I found *Look Back, Leap Forward* to be a good review of principles I've learned in four leadership seminars. I recommend this book for pastors who are beginning to look at forming a

mission statement and purpose statement for their church. I also recommend this book to any pastor who has attended a leadership seminar but has let the notebook sit on the shelf. Finally, this is an excellent book for any goal-setting committee in the church. The terminology used is understandable and usable for lay leadership.

In reading this book, I was brought back to many things I had previously learned, and in many cases, I understood the principles more clearly.



At the end of each chapter, McIntosh includes a summary of all the leadership principles covered up to that point. This book occupies a useful place in my library.

—Reviewed by Michael Hilger, pastor,  
Assembly of God, LeRoy, Kansas.

### NO ONE TOLD ME

James E. Hightower, Jr., Editor (Smyth & Helwys, 96 pp., paperback)

*No One Told Me* was written by pastors for pastors. The premise of the book is that many pastors enter the ministry having received little or no advance training concerning difficult issues they are going to face on a regular basis. The author of one chapter wrote, "I completed college, attended seminary, and never heard a word about managing conflict in a church." The purpose of the book is to equip pastors with some practical helps



for more effective ministry.

The editor chose seven topics, each assigned to a different author. The subjects are: seeking and receiving approval from God rather than your congregation; casting vision; ordering the weekly worship service; managing conflict resolution; developing a team; recruiting volunteers; and supervising people.

The book begins a little weak, but ends strong. Its 96 pages are an easy read. The chapter on conflict resolution is outstanding and is worth the price of the book alone. I would especially recommend this book to young pastors who feel unprepared to tackle some of these issues in ministry.

—Reviewed by Todd Weston,  
senior pastor, First Assembly of God,  
Manhattan, Kansas.

### ON-PURPOSE LEADERSHIP: MULTIPLYING YOUR MINISTRY BY BECOMING A LEADER OF LEADERS

Dale Galloway and Warren Bird (Beacon Hill Press, 120 pp., hardcover)

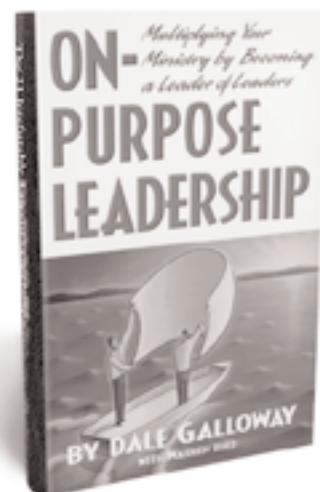
Of all of the recent books on Christian leadership, I would regard *On-Purpose Leadership* as one of the best.

Dale Galloway, dean of Asbury Theological Seminary's Beeson International Center for Biblical Preaching and Church Leadership, learned leadership the way most pastors do—through pastoral experience. Before his ministry at Asbury, Galloway

was the founding pastor of New Hope Community Church in Portland, Oregon, which grew to 6,400 members in 23 years. He is probably best known for his writings and seminars on small-group ministry, having raised up 500 lay pastors in his congregation in Portland.

Galloway does not use current management literature as his starting point; he starts with Jesus, the greatest leader who ever lived.

This book is packed with practical advice. The 22 chapters are divided into four main sections: Break Free From the Status Quo; Break Free From Living as a "Lone Ranger;" Break Free From



Attitudes that Attack; and Break Free From the Prisons of "Problem People."

I cannot recall a book on leadership that has been so practical and concise. I would strongly recommend it, not only for new pastors, but also for all who dream of developing leaders.

—Reviewed by Paul E. Grabill, senior  
pastor, State College Assembly of God,  
State College, Pennsylvania.

### PURE DESIRE

Ted Roberts and Jack W. Hayford (Regal Books, 300 pp., paperback)

Ted Roberts' timely and important book is a much-needed resource for pastors and laypersons. The book is designed primarily for those who have tried to build sexual holiness into their lives and



# book reviews

experienced constant failure. He correctly notes that a secret life of sexual sin weakens the integrity and power of the church.



The book is a readable and well-organized resource for the pastor in need of a practical guide for reference and referral.

Roberts asserts that sexual addiction and bondage is not simply a counseling issue for the church; it is a matter of spiritual life and death. He estimates that 18 to 29 percent of pastors and 50 percent of laymen are sexually addicted.

Drawing heavily on the work of noted sex-addiction expert, Patrick Carnes, he includes a self-rating scale, the Sexual Addiction Screen Test, in the appendix. He challenges the reader to answer questions about times and places of temptation and then demonstrates practical steps to freedom.

Numerous charts, resource lists, and personal testimonies strengthen the book's usefulness. Notable Christian leaders as John Trent and John Townsend (*Boundaries*) have endorsed the book.

*Pure Desire* is also available in video.

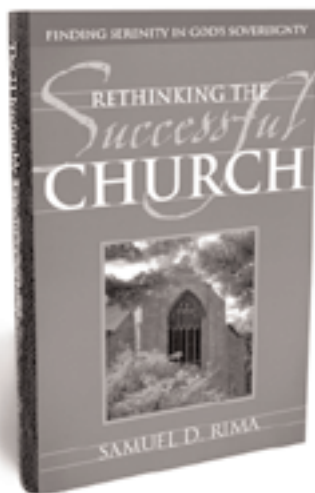
—Reviewed by Donald A. Lichi, Ph.D.,  
president, Chapel Hills Christian School,  
Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio.

## RETHINKING THE SUCCESSFUL CHURCH

Samuel D. Rima (Baker Book House, 192 pp., paperback)

How do we define success in ministry? Are only mega-churches successful? Is my personal happiness based on how well my church is doing, or is it attached to something more secure?

In *Rethinking the Successful Church*, Samuel Rima answers these questions in a biblical and encouraging way. Rima is careful to thank God for the wonderful things accomplished in the mega-church, yet he warns us not to define our success by comparing our churches.



While not advocating laziness in ministry, Rima reminds us that God's sovereignty is involved in growing His church. A radical trust in God is needed to replace our own ego-driven plans and motivations to build the church.

Rima recognizes that many are driven to success not by a love for God and His people, but by their own need to impress others. "God does not grow the church to meet our desperate need for tangible results so we feel good about ourselves or have the assurance

that we are succeeding in ministry," he writes.

Each chapter ends with ideas for self-reflection, allowing you to think deeply about the issues. This is a great book to share with a colleague in ministry. It has encouraged me to redefine success in my ministry.

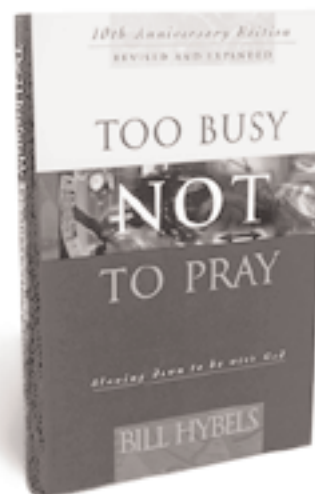
—Reviewed by Brent Sorlien,  
senior pastor, Assembly of God,  
Oak Harbor, Washington.

## TOO BUSY NOT TO PRAY: SLOWING DOWN TO BE WITH GOD

Bill Hybels (InterVarsity Press, 192 pp., hardcover)

He's busy . . . the leader of one of America's largest congregations. He prays . . . not in the pattern of the mystics or heralded writers on prayer of another generation. But he prays, consistently, thoughtfully, and with measured effect. He writes in this book about his life in prayer.

The book is simple, practical, and encouraging. It sparkles with interesting language and illustration. It is big



on personal vulnerability and how-to counsel. He brings in help from other sources. See for instance the ACTS pattern



he suggests for prayer: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication.

Hybels calls his readers toward “authentic Christianity . . . a supernatural walk with a living, dynamic, communicating God.” He states that “the heart and soul of the Christian life is learning to hear God’s voice and developing the courage to do what He tells us to do.” Missing in this book is the full, dynamic of prayer under the direction and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

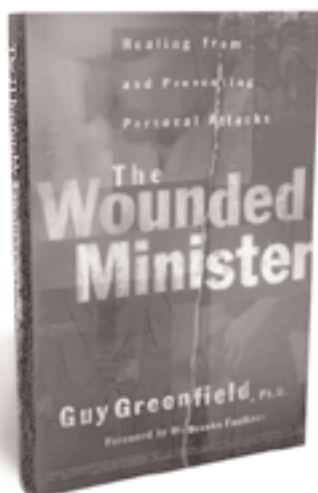
I liked his way of dealing with unanswered prayer and valued the way he continually points his readers to God. This is a good refresher for people who pray and a fine starter for those who are new in their faith.

—Reviewed by David Argue, senior pastor,  
Christ’s Place, Lincoln, Nebraska.

### THE WOUNDED MINISTER: HEALING FROM AND PREVENTING PERSONAL ATTACKS

Guy Greenfield (Baker Book House, 224 pp., paperback)

*The Wounded Minister* is written by a wounded minister. It is a must read for every minister and family member. He



writes from his experience of hurt and betrayal, but not with bitterness. Rather, he encourages those who may have experienced a similar situation or who are presently in a hurtful ministry experience.

Greenfield’s years as a pastor and seminary professor did not exempt him from the severity of spiritual confusion, mental frustration, and physical exhaustion of a most difficult church. With all his biblical knowledge and ministry experience, the emotional stress was overwhelming.

His approach is scholarly, well researched, well documented, but easy to read. While his experience was very emotional, this book is not just an emotional reaction to a traumatic experience. He provides a wealth of insight as to why hurtful people sometimes act the way they do and how we can effectively minister to them.

The author also addresses the issues of ministers who invite personal attacks and ministers who abuse churches. He provides insight for both the minister and the local church that have wounded each other.

Greenfield’s closing segments of the book on the “Steps for Healing for Abused Clergy,” “Wounded Healers,” and “Growing Through Rejection” are encouraging with practical steps for any minister who may be experiencing pain.

—Reviewed by Gary Allen, national coordinator, Ministerial Enrichment Office, and executive editor of *Enrichment journal*, Springfield, Missouri.

### THE LEADERSHIP LESSONS OF JESUS: A TIMELESS MODEL FOR TODAY’S LEADERS

Bob Briner & Ray Pritchard (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 250 pp., hardcover)

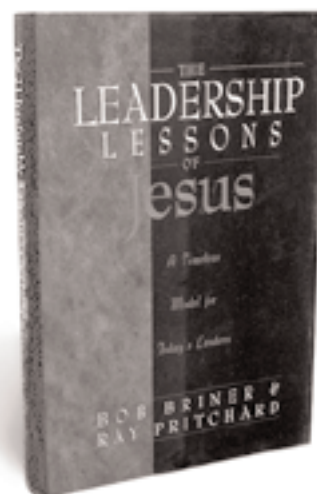
Who is the greatest leader throughout all history? Of all the names that might be offered, one name stands out above all others—Jesus Christ.

The issue of leadership today is important. A common synonym for leadership is *influence*. Who demonstrated a life of influence more significantly than our Lord?

The scope of this volume is broad. It contains 52 brief chapters, each of which is worthy of reading and

reflection. Topics include the call to leadership, temptations leaders face, leading through tradition, and timing in leadership.

Each chapter begins with a verse from one of the four Gospels, then expands on that verse and the principle it shows. The clear-thinking pastor or teacher can, with some work, develop a good series of lessons on leadership from these chapters.



One of the highlights of this engaging volume is the chapter entitled “Leaders Care.” The authors base their words on Mark 1:41, which portrays Jesus’ compassion. In contrast to the military or business definition of leadership, the writers properly assert that “enduring leadership—the kind that makes a positive, long-range difference—is always characterized by compassion.”

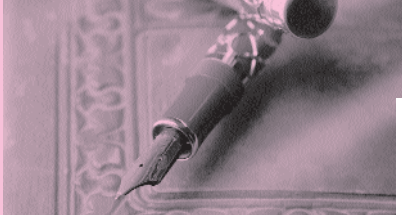
This book is a winner. I read it with great joy and profit.

—Reviewed by Thomas Lindberg,  
senior pastor, First Assembly of God,  
Memphis, Tennessee.

### A SERVICE

*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.





# news & resources

## **A/G NEWS: A VALUABLE RESOURCE FOR MINISTERS AND LAYLEADERS**

Three times each week, the Assemblies of God online news service, A/G News, sends out news designed to keep subscribers informed and inspired.

"Our goal is to provide a variety of news and features every week to help people know what's happening in the Assemblies of God," said A/G News Editor Dan Van Veen. "From being one of the first to know details about upcoming events to reading how God is working in Assemblies of God ministries around the world, readers will find something fresh and new in every issue."

A/G News periodically includes brief advertisements that tell of special events and offers from Headquarters departments.

To join A/G News and receive it free, send an E-mail to: [join-ag-news@news.ag.org](mailto:join-ag-news@news.ag.org).

## **A/G FINANCIAL SERVICES GROUP PARTNERS WITH CROWN MINISTRIES**

How many families know how to effectively manage their money? God has given the answers to financial problems, but most families have never applied these principles. They manage their resources by trial and error, make unwise choices, and suffer the consequences. Help is on the way.

The Assemblies of God Foundation is partnering with Crown Financial Ministries to bring an exciting in-depth, stewardship-education ministry to Assemblies of God churches.

The Crown 12-week Biblical Financial Study is a small-group experience that stresses participation, accountability, and confidentiality as couples work to bring their home and finances into accord with biblical stewardship principles. Topics covered include "Getting Out of Debt," "Spending, Saving, and Investing,"

"Budgeting," "Giving," "Earning Money," and "Training Children."

Assemblies of God Foundation certified stewardship representatives will train and certify local Christians to lead the Crown Biblical Financial Study. These stewardship representatives also serve as the link to the Foundation's will and estate planning services.

## **VIPSM LOAN INSURANCE PROGRAM ANNOUNCED BY AGFSG**

Assemblies of God Loan & Capital Services, a division of Assemblies of God Financial Services Group, is pleased to announce its new VIPSM Loan Insurance Program. Available to all of our mortgage clients, VIPSM is an affordable means for a church to protect and provide for its needs in the event of its senior pastor's death.

Consider these unique VIPSM benefits. At the death of an insured pastor:

The church's mortgage indebtedness will be paid off, based upon the selected amount of insurance in relation to the outstanding mortgage balance.

The pastor's family can receive a residual amount of life insurance as the mortgage balance is paid down.

VIPSM lets the church suspend mortgage payments for up to 18 months following the death of the insured pastor.

Guaranteed refinancing is available for up to 36 months at the initial interest rate of the loan or AGFSG's current rate, whichever is lower.

For more details, contact us at 1-800-449-5626, or visit: [www.agloanservices.com](http://www.agloanservices.com).

## **INVESTING IN CHURCH PLANTING**

Assemblies of God Financial Services Group, through its Assemblies of God Loan Services division, has joined with Assemblies of God Home Missions to bring unprecedented opportunities to

rapidly growing new church plants. With this partnership, AGLS, AGHM, the district, and the pastor and church leadership agree to certain qualifying criteria, including attending leadership BootCamp, implementing church development materials, conducting a professionally led stewardship campaign, and establishing a written ministry plan. The financing through AGLS at below-market rates and flexible terms can reduce traditional payments by as much as 40 percent, allowing churches to expand their ministries and facilities.

In just 3 years, AGFSG has invested \$40 million in over 80 new church plants. For more information on investing funds that will continue to build His kingdom and receive a competitive rate of return on your investment, call Assemblies of God Loan Fund at 1-866-621-1788. For further information regarding the lending program, contact Assemblies of God Loan Services at 1-800-449-5626.

## **STEWARDSHIP & DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE**

Over 150 Christian leaders from around the United States attended the 10th annual Stewardship and Development Conference, hosted in Phoenix, Ariz., by the Assemblies of God Financial Services Group. This conference provided an intense opportunity to build strong development and stewardship skills. It also marked the 1-year anniversary of the Keys to Tomorrow seminar program. This program highlights stewardship wills, produced at no charge for constituents who leave a gift to the ministries of their choice. In 2001, 1,700 Assemblies of God families were served, resulting in \$31 million being designated for ministries. A remarkable 8 out of 10 wills designated gifts to local Assemblies of God churches.

## **WORLDSEVE PARTNERSHIP ELEVATING A/G WITH GOVERNMENTS OVERSEAS**

"WorldServe International," says John Bongiorno, president of WorldServe, "is building bridges for the gospel in ways never dreamed. Though many closed countries shun traditional evangelistic efforts, they welcome humanitarian aid and economic development. As an outreach of the Assemblies of God, WorldServe has responded by offering aid infused with the love of Jesus Christ."

In 2002, through a partnership with Assist International and James River Assembly of God, Springfield, Mo., WorldServe donated a cardiac care monitoring system to the primarily Muslim country of Sudan. The \$1 million in hi-tech medical equipment will elevate their level of health care and save lives, but it will also pave the way for the penetration of the good news. Assemblies of God missionary to the Sudan, Dick Brogden, and the Sudanese Pentecostal Fellowship leadership are grateful for the doors this gift will open with the Sudanese government. "Projects like this," says Brogden, "demonstrate that the church is committed to both the physical and spiritual well-being of the Sudanese people."

In Myanmar (formerly Burma), an intensive care unit to a government hospital is having similar effects. Previously excluded Assemblies of God resident missionaries are now welcome—for the first time since 1966.

These modern-day cups of cold water given in Jesus' name are tangible expressions of God's love and will hopefully open doors to share the gospel with those in need.

## **ASSEMBLIES OF GOD CHURCH ADMINISTRATION ASSOCIATION**

New upon the landscape of church leadership and management is the Assemblies of God Church Administration Association. Sanctioned by the General Presbytery of the Assemblies of God, AOGCAA is fast becoming one of the premiere denominational groups impacting the kingdom of God through the ministry of administration.

In July 2001, the group officially gathered at the National Association of Church Business Administration annual conference in Seattle, Wash. At that conference, two Assemblies of God men were honored for their service to the local church. Merwin Pickney, administrator at Woodlake Assembly of God in Tulsa, Okla., was awarded the Church Administrator of the Year award. Jim Cobble, president of Christian Ministries Resources, was cited as the Significant Contributor to the work of church administration. NACBA is a multid denominational association of church administrators dedicated to advancing the work of the Lord through leadership, management, and administration.

AOGCAA provides forums for Assemblies of God administrators to network with others in similar churches. The association encourages certification in NACBA's Fellow in Church Business Administration program. Assemblies of God Theological Seminary is a newly appointed site for the FCBA certification and is endorsed by AOGCAA.

For more information about AOGCAA, contact its president, John Joseph, at Pinellas Community Church, St. Petersburg, Fla., at 1-727-866-1184, or e-mail: [pastorjj@churchadministration.com](mailto:pastorjj@churchadministration.com).

## **FREE BENEVOLENCES CHILD CARE 2003 CALENDAR NOW AVAILABLE**

Highlands Child Placement Services and Hillcrest Children's Home are again teaming up to provide your congregation with a quality calendar.

This full-color 10 1/2- by 9 1/2-inch calendar, with the photo of a delightful child for each month, has the national holidays and Benevolences days clearly marked. The calendar, designed with large squares for daily personal notes, will enhance the wall of any kitchen, office, or church classroom.

To order this free calendar for you and members of your church, call the national Benevolences Department at 1-417-862-2781, ext. 2182, or return the business reply card in the back of this issue of *Enrichment*.

## **HIGHLANDS BABY BOOTIE CLUB DAY IS FEBRUARY 16**

Highlands Child Placement Services is the pro-life ministry of the Assemblies of God. The Baby Bootie Club is a program whereby women's ministries groups, Missionettes clubs, Sunday School classes, and churches can do their part in saving babies from abortion.

Each member receives an attractive baby bootie-shaped reusable coin bank. Club leaders receive a starter packet and a 113-page *The Best of the Baby Bootie Club Ideas* book.

Highlands Baby Bootie Club Day, Sun., Feb. 16, is an excellent opportunity for you to share this pro-life ministry with your congregation. For more information or to enroll in the Baby Bootie Club, log on to [babybootieclub.ag.org](http://babybootieclub.ag.org), or call the national Benevolences Department at 1-417-862-2781, ext. 2182.

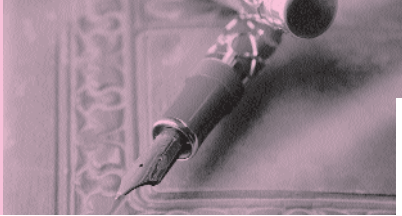
## **SIGN UP FOR BENEVOLENCES FREE E-MAIL SERVICE**

Keep up-to-date with your favorite Benevolences ministries by sending a blank E-mail to: [Join-benevolences-update@news.ag.org](mailto:Join-benevolences-update@news.ag.org). You will receive E-mails at least once a month from Hillcrest Children's Home and Highlands Child Placement Services with current happenings, inspirational stories, and projects in which you can participate. You will receive E-mails from Aged Ministers Assistance on a periodic basis about this vital ministry to our retired ministers. When a disaster hits our nation, you will receive instructions on how you and your church can help through Disaster Relief.

## **BOOK DONATIONS SOUGHT FOR PREACHERS LIBRARY**

Retired pastors and others wanting to contribute books to a Pentecostal preachers library will receive a tax credit for their donation.

Assemblies of God General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask wishes to assist pastors of small churches in building their libraries. Trask and Gospel Publishing House provided several thousand books free to pastors attending the



# news & resources

first Pentecostal Preachers Week in March of this year.

Books may be donated throughout the year and will be stored at Gospel Publishing House for free distribution to pastors at the second annual PPW, scheduled for Mar. 10–12, 2003.

For information regarding donations, call Danette McCabe at 417-862-1447, ext. 3000.

## **NATIONAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL CONFERENCE**

Administrators, principals, and teachers in Christian schools will find helps and new information available at the National Christian School Conference being held on Mar. 7, 8, 2003, at Evangel University, Springfield, Mo. The conference includes worship opportunities, workshops to provide attendees with tools to continue to provide quality education, and an after-conference entertainment trip to Branson, Mo. To register, contact the Christian School Services Department at 417-862-2781, ext. 4025, or mail your inquiries to: Christian School Services, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802.

## **2003 BGMC MISSIONS MANUAL FOR CHILDREN AVAILABLE IN NOVEMBER**

Every year Boys and Girls Missionary Crusade creates an annual missions-education manual. This *free* manual will be mailed to Assemblies of God churches in November. The countries of Eurasia will be featured in the manual.

The purpose of the manual is to educate children about missions, the work of missionaries, countries, people groups, and to instill a heart of compassion for the lost so they might receive a call from God to missionary service.

This 400-page manual highlights 12 countries from Eurasia and contains 12

missions lessons each for elementary and preschool children. Each lesson contains country information, puppet skits, object lessons, Scripture pictures, a recipe, activity pages, and a true story of miracles God is doing on the mission field. The manual also contains coloring pages, missionary thank-you letters, games, and ideas. These lessons can be used in children's church, Royal Rangers or Missionettes, Sunday School, or in Christian school classrooms.

For more information, contact the BGMC office by calling 1-417-862-2781, ext. 4009, or online at: [bgmc@ag.org](mailto:bgmc@ag.org).

## **A NEW BGMC PARTNERSHIP BEGINS**

Royal Rangers, Missionettes, and Christian Schools Services have adopted or ratified BGMC as their children's missions emphasis.

This partnership was born in the heart of Thomas E. Trask, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God. His desire was that the children of the Assemblies of God would have the same relationship with BGMC that the youth of the Assemblies of God have with Speed the Light. In June 2001, the Executive Presbytery made BGMC the children's missions program of the Assemblies of God. Each ministry will have access to free BGMC resources.

Royal Rangers and Missionettes will utilize free Buddy Barrels for missions offerings, while at the same time participating in other district missions projects. Missionettes Coins for Kids will continue to operate as they have in the past, with the national Missionettes ministries choosing special yearly projects and churches taking up an offering at the national sleepover. Coins for Kids projects will be a part of each church's annual BGMC giving total.

Christian schools can give missions

offerings to specific schools through BGMC. Schools can adopt another school so students will know where their funds are going. More than 150 target schools have been chosen from countries around the world and from the U.S. This will also allow the students to have pen pals, and in some cases, even missions trips to see the results of their giving.

A special bank has been created to differentiate from the traditional yellow Buddy Barrels for the schools to collect their BGMC offerings. This plastic bank in the shape of a crayon will have a special BGMC label on it. For more information and a listing of partner schools, visit the ACTS Web site: [www.acts.ag.org](http://www.acts.ag.org).

## **NEW DATE FOR NATIONAL BGMC DAY**

National BGMC Day has been changed to the second Sunday in March. In 2003, BGMC Day is March 9. For many years, National BGMC Day has been the fourth Sunday in January. This Sunday is traditionally Super Bowl Sunday and was a conflict for BGMC.

Every year BGMC highlights a mission field and a large part of the offering from National BGMC Day goes to that field. The field of emphasis for 2003 is Eurasia.

Churches are asked to turn in their yearly goal for BGMC in January of each year. BGMC is calling Super Bowl Sunday "Super Goal Sunday" and asking churches to call in their BGMC yearly goal to their district office by the fourth Sunday in January. Churches can also use this day to award the kids for their faithful giving from the previous year.

## **ENRICHMENT JOURNAL ARTICLES IN SPANISH NOW ON WEB**

Effective with the summer 2002 issue, *Enrichment* journal is placing articles in Spanish on its Web site.

Efraim Espinoza, director of We Build People for the Assemblies of God and ethnic representative, states: "My compliments to the *Enrichment* staff for taking this gigantic step to meet the needs of our growing Hispanic constituency stateside and abroad."

Assemblies of God worldwide statistics at the end of 2001 showed that nearly 70 percent of our churches and 60 percent of our members and adherents are in Latin America. Stateside statistics reveal that 16 percent of A/G churches in America are Hispanic, with adherents totaling 428,747. It has become imperative that the ministry materials contained in *Enrichment* be shared with our Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters.

Rick Knoth, managing editor of *Enrichment*, says, "This is an important first step in providing quality leadership materials to our Spanish leaders. We have our sights set on doing even more to assist our Hispanic constituency worldwide. Each quarterly Web edition of *Enrichment* will host several key articles in Spanish. This will be an ongoing service provided to our Hispanic leaders."

You may access the Spanish *Enrichment* journal articles online at [www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org](http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org). Please direct questions or comments to: [enrichmentjournal@ag.org](mailto:enrichmentjournal@ag.org), or call 417-862-2781, extension 4095.

### **ENRICHMENT JOURNAL WEB SITE UPDATED**

Beginning with the fall 2002 issue, the *Enrichment* journal Web site has a new look. Some of the features of the site include: articles pertaining to up-to-date ministry not found in the printed version of *Enrichment*; past *Enrichment* articles listed according to topic; additional sermon outlines, illustrations, ministry ideas, book reviews, an on-line polling feature; idea exchange; humor; links to Empower ([www.empower.ag.org](http://www.empower.ag.org)), a Web site for lay leaders, and Enrichment ([www.enrichment@ag.org](http://www.enrichment@ag.org)), the Web site of the Ministerial Enrichment Office; and the current

issue of *Enrichment* journal, in English and in Spanish.

Also included in the new design is an *Enrichment* store where shoppers can buy items that are related to each quarter's theme as well as other ministry-related resources.

To visit the site, go to: [www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org](http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org).

### **NATIONAL YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM WINNERS FOR 2002**

The national Youth Department and the Christian Higher Education Department of the Assemblies of God have selected the recipients for the 2002 J. Robert Ashcroft National Youth Scholarship Program.

First place, a \$3,000 scholarship, was awarded to Andrew Rowell, Abrams, Wis. Andrew maintained a perfect 4.0 grade point average while participating in several musical groups as a trumpet player as well as participating in football and track and field.

Andrew served as a Sunday School and children's church teacher while participating in a school Bible study.

Second place, a \$2,000 scholarship, went to Ryan Andrew Hennesy, De Soto, Tex. Ryan received many academic honors including induction to the National Honor Society and participated on the varsity football, baseball, basketball, and soccer teams.

Ryan served as a small-group leader, a children's church worker, a vacation Bible school worker, and a member of the visitation team. Additionally, he participated in four missions trips while memorizing several books of the Bible through Senior Bible Quiz.

Third place, a \$1,000 scholarship, was awarded to Kirk Hadden, Springfield, Mo. Kirk, class valedictorian, played trombone in several high school musical groups while participating in track and field, football, and cross-country.

Kirk was a member of the drama and outreach team, intercessory prayer team, and youth leadership team.

Applications for scholarships are available from district youth directors in November and are accepted from

January 1 to March 31 each year at the district youth directors office. Scholarships are awarded to high school seniors who plan to attend an endorsed college of the Assemblies of God after graduating from high school.

### **A/G POSTSECONDARY SCHOOLS**

The following Assemblies of God postsecondary schools have announced the dates for the first day of classes for the spring 2003 semester and spring 2003 commencements.

American Indian College—Phoenix, Ariz.—Jan. 9; May 2

Assemblies of God Theological Seminary—Springfield, Mo.—Jan. 6; May 2,3

Bethany College—Scotts Valley, Calif.—Jan. 16; May 9,10

Black Hills Bible College—Rapid City, S.D.—Jan. 3; April 24

Caribbean Theological College—Bayamon, P.R.—Jan. 20; May 18

Central Bible College—Springfield, Mo.—Jan. 9; April 30, May 1

Evangel University—Springfield, Mo.—Jan. 9; May 1,2

Global University—Springfield, Mo.—rolling; N/A

Latin American Bible College—California—La Puente, Calif.—Jan. 13; April 25,26

Latin American Bible College—Texas—San Antonio, Tex.—Jan. 7; April 25

Native American Bible College—Shannon, N.C.—Jan. 6; April 26

North Central University—Minneapolis, Minn.—Jan. 15; May 16

Northwest College—Kirkland, Wash.—Jan. 13; May 9,10

Southeastern College—Lakeland, Fla.—Jan. 8; April 25

Southwestern Assemblies of God University—Waxahachie, Tex.—Jan. 10; May 2

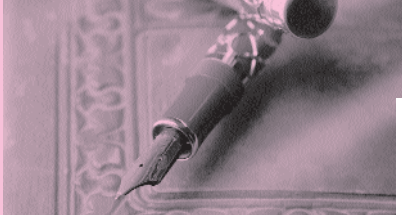
Trinity Bible College—Ellendale, N.D.—Jan. 8; May 2

Valley Forge Christian College—Phoenixville, Pa.—Jan. 8; May 2

Vanguard University—Costa Mesa, Calif.—Jan. 15; May 9,10

Western Bible College—Phoenix, Ariz.—Jan. 6; April 28





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Zion Bible Institute—Barrington, R.I.—Jan. 13; May 9,10

## **A/G COLLEGE GUIDE 6TH EDITION NOW AVAILABLE**

The new sixth edition of the *Assemblies of God College Guide*, a resource highlighting the 20 endorsed Assemblies of God colleges is available free. It includes current information from each school: tuition costs, application deadlines, extracurricular activities, an overview of the local community, job availability, and financial aid. Also included is a comprehensive listing of the majors offered at each school. Handy business-reply postcards can be returned directly to the schools to request additional information. You may request copies of this guide, item #747001, from the Christian Higher Education Department at 1-417-862-2781, ext. 3315.

## **PRAYER TEAM FOR HOME MISSIONARIES AND CHAPLAINS**

In response to numerous requests, Assemblies of God Home Missions has created an opportunity for supporters to pray for our missionaries and chaplains.

Those who join a prayer team will receive a list of prayer requests via E-mail each week. This list will include pressing prayer requests, as well as inspiring praise reports.

If you are a missionary or chaplain and would like to share your need with others, please E-mail us at: AGHM4Prayer@ag.org. To join the prayer team, subscribe at: join-AGHMPrayerTeam@news.ag.org

## **2003 LFTL CONVENTION**

Light for the Lost is celebrating 50 years. Come rejoice with us at our 50th annual convention in Corpus Christi, Tex., April 25,26, 2003. Speakers will be: Chuck Freeman, Oklahoma LFTL

director, and Jay Mooney, national Youth Alive director as well as dozens of missionaries and LFTL leaders. For more information or to register, contact LFTL at 1-800-988-0292, or check our Web site: [www.lftl.org](http://www.lftl.org). For accommodations, contact The Omni at 1-361-887-1600.

## **LFTL GOLF TOURNAMENT**

When you make plans to attend next year's Light for the Lost convention, come a day early to play in our annual golf tournament. Each year councilmen compete in teams of four trying to become LFTL golf champions for the year. The 2003 golf tournament will be April 24. To register or for more information, call Ron Barefield at 1-417-831-3774.

## **MAKE A DIFFERENCE! BE A TEACHER**

In our churches, teachers hold a unique position to make a difference in the lives of their students. *Make a Difference! Be a Teacher* affirms the importance of Sunday School and help teachers better understand the possibilities of their ministry, enabling everyone involved in the teaching ministry of your church to maximize his or her influence.

Divided into two sections, this staff-training resource first discusses the significance of a teacher's influence in the lives of students and how to strengthen that influence. The second section explores the importance of setting goals and priorities, ways to bring creativity into the classroom, connecting beliefs to behaviors, and the role of evangelism.

Veteran and new teachers alike will discover how attitudes and actions impact effectiveness and study key components in the teaching process that help students internalize biblical information, bringing real change to their lives.

Student Guide #02-2005

Spanish #02-2006

Effectively train your Sunday School teachers with the *Make a Difference! Be a Teacher Leader Kit* that includes a multimedia CD with English and Spanish PowerPoint presentations, handouts, and Spanish leader guide; English leader guide with workshop outlines and reproducible age-level handouts; and student guide, #02-2004.

Call 1-800-641-4310 for more information.

## **SPANISH MISSIONETTES CURRICULUM NOW AVAILABLE**

The Missionettes curriculum is being translated into Spanish. Currently available are the *Rainbows Sponsor Guide* and *Activity Folder* and the *Daisies Sponsor Guide* and *Activity Book*. The *Prims Sponsor Guide* and *Activity Book* are scheduled for release before the end of 2002. Also available is the Spanish/English Theme Songs CD and the *Missionettes Leader Training Guide*. Other club levels are in varying stages of translation and production with Stars materials scheduled to be released next. Friends and Girls Only materials will follow.

## **EMERGE MINISTRIES APPOINTS NEW PRESIDENT**

Richard D. Dobbins, founder and director of EMERGE Ministries, has announced that the Rev. Clayton B. Glickert was officially installed as president of EMERGE Ministries, Inc., on Sept. 22, 2002. Glickert was the assistant superintendent of the New York District of the Assemblies of God. He comes to EMERGE with experience in human relations, leadership, and managerial abilities. Glickert is a graduate of Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Ky., with a master of divinity, and an undergraduate degree from Houghton

College, Houghton, N.Y. His wife, Marlene, is a graduate of Westchester Institute of Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy, with an undergraduate degree in nursing from the University of Rochester, Rochester, N.Y. Mrs. Glickert has been in private practice as a psychoanalyst since 1994.

The Glickerts have experience as overseas missionaries and conduct retreats for married couples, men, women, and singles.

Dobbins will continue to serve as the founder, chairman of the board, and chief executive officer and plans to devote more time to writing. His latest book, *Invisible Imprint: What Others Feel When in Your Presence*, was released in January 2002. He is currently working on his newest book, *Breaking the Silence of the Bedroom*, to be released at the beginning of 2003.

#### **EVANGEL PLANS EIGHTH SUPER BOWL EDITION**

Since it was first published to coincide with the National Football League's title game, the annual Super Bowl Edition of *Today's Pentecostal Evangel* has become one of the periodical's most sought-after issues. The volume is well known for featuring challenging testimonies from some of football's most-respected believers.

"We do a Super Bowl Edition so Christians have a tool they can share with non-Christian friends, acquaintances, co-workers, or those they meet on the street," says *Evangel* Associate Editor Kirk Noonan, who oversees production of the special issue.

"The Super Bowl Edition uses sports as a way to open doors to share the gospel. The underlying theme of the edition is God, and how He can transform a person's life. For pastors who are looking for an effective tool, it's like a 32- or 40-page tract."

Every year pastors order extra copies of the Super Bowl Edition for distribution in their neighborhoods, communities, or church-sponsored outreaches, besides making sure they have enough for the sports fans in their

congregations. Typically, the Super Bowl Edition produces one of the highest response rates for salvation coupons mailed to the offices of *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*.

Churches requesting at least 400 bulk copies of the Super Bowl Edition may receive free imprinting on the back cover of every issue. The bulk price for the Jan. 26, 2003, Super Bowl Edition of the *Evangel* is 25 cents per copy when 50 or more magazines are ordered. Quantities under 50 are 50 cents per copy.

The deadline for receiving free imprinting on bulk orders of 400 or more is Dec. 20, 2002. To order, or for more information, call 1-800-641-4310. The 2003 Super Bowl Edition is item #69-7304.

#### **50 TOUGH QUESTIONS DEBUTS**

Pentecostal Evangel Books, a cooperative venture of Gospel Publishing House and *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*, recently published its fourth title, *50 Tough Questions*. This latest release follows *Questions and Answers about the Holy Spirit*, which is now in its third printing.

"One of the main goals of the *Evangel* over the years has been to answer people's spiritual questions," says Managing Editor Ken Horn. "The magazine has basically done so since 1913. Our latest endeavor is to print and provide books for the church that are practical.

"There was such a response to the last book, *Questions and Answers about the Holy Spirit*, we thought we would publish another book with even more questions. It wasn't difficult for us to find questions that had been answered in the pages of the *Evangel*. This current book is a sampling of 50 of the toughest questions people ask and answers from some of our best authors."

Included among the chapters in *50 Tough Questions*:

Why do bad things happen to good people?

How can I get control of my anger?

Why should I go to church with people who are hypocrites?

How can I get my finances under control?

Why are so many people not healed?

Like its PE Books predecessors, *50 Tough Questions* may be ordered from GPH Customer Services at 1-800-641-4310 or via the GPH Web site: [www.gospelpublishing.com](http://www.gospelpublishing.com). The product number for *50 Tough Questions* is 02-3033.

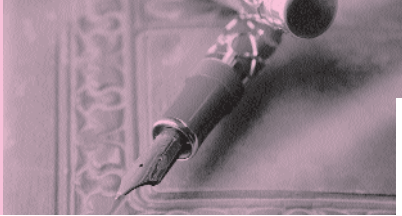
#### **GOD GIVES HOPE SIGN MAKER CD NOW AVAILABLE**

The Office of Public Relations has released a new ministry tool as part of its *God Gives Hope* media and community outreach campaign. The new tool called "God Gives Hope Sign Maker CD" is designed to help churches create customized road signs of the three *God Gives Hope* billboards. By purchasing the CD, churches will have access to the artwork, photos, and type of the original billboard layouts allowing them to create a vinyl sign of virtually any size or proportion.

Every design element needed to create a *God Gives Hope* vinyl billboard covering is contained on the CD. In a matter of minutes a professional designer or sign company can take the CD and build a beautiful customized vinyl sign for a church's needs. With the CD, a church can easily personalize a sign with its own church name and logo. The CD sells for \$75 for the first sign and \$50 per additional sign usage.

Vinyl sign wraps were introduced in the nineties and are now very common in the sign industry. Vinyl signs are typically guaranteed to last at least 1 year and often can be used as long as 2 years. The vinyl wraps can be ordered and developed through most local sign companies. Local churches will want to contract with a local sign company for producing the vinyl wraps because the local company will hang your sign and be able to service it and honor any warranties.

Sign Maker CD is designed to give churches a professional look and message while saving hundreds of dollars in designer fees. Sign Maker CD files are rendered in CorelDraw (vector/300



# news & resources

dpi/PC compatible); EPS (vector/300 dpi/MAC compatible); and an assortment of JPEGs (all 300 DPI).

As with other elements of the *God Gives Hope* campaign, the Sign Maker CD is available only to Assemblies of God churches as a privilege of affiliation. Local Assemblies of God churches can also order 36-sheet-size paper billboards of each *God Gives Hope* layout (10 1/2- by 22 3/4-feet) for short-term postings (30 to 60 days). The campaign also offers TV and radio spots, and print ads, along with a variety of ministry items for use in the local church.

For more information or to place an order for the *God Gives Hope* campaign or the Sign Maker CD, you can visit our Web site at: <http://GGHope.ag.org/gg hope/>. You can also order the God

Gives Hope Sign Maker CD (item # 281590) by calling Gospel Publishing House at 1-800-641-4310.

## NATIONAL SINGLE ADULT MINISTRIES CRUISE

Join single adults and young adults from all over the nation for a Western Caribbean cruise:

- June 30 through July 5, 2003
- Western Caribbean ports of call: Cozumel and Calica/Playa del Carmen
- Departing from Galveston, Tex.
- Prices start at approximately \$600 (based on 2 occupants per room—other prices for 1,3,4 per room)
- Excludes transportation to/from Houston airport or Galveston if driving
- Special group activities on board

For more information, contact national Single Adult Ministries Agency

at 417-862-2781, ext. 4125, or e-mail: [singles@ag.org](mailto:singles@ag.org).

## MORE ON-LINE RESOURCES FOR WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

As the number of visitors to the two national Women's Ministries Web sites increases, leaders in the national office are increasing the amount of material available online. The department oversees [www.ag.org/womanstouch](http://www.ag.org/womanstouch), and [ww.ag.org/womensministries](http://ww.ag.org/womensministries).

"We have been pleased with the number of guests and the duration of their visits. It is a privilege and a responsibility to nurture them in their walk with Christ," said Managing Editor Darla Knoth. "Now our *Woman's Touch* site features more inspirational articles, interviews, and photographs. Guests can read more Bible studies and devotions. Women enjoy diverse articles on health, home, career, church, and other topics."

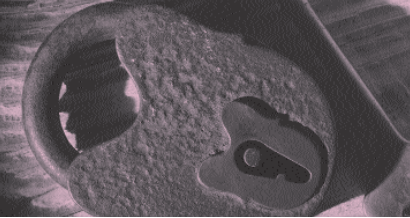
*Leader's Touch*, the sister magazine of *Woman's Touch*, is also expanding. Several months ago the printed version doubled in size. Now the on-line version provides additional suggestions and solutions for Christian women serving in church or community leadership posts. *Leader's Touch* on line has a resource area that is password protected. Passwords are available to subscribers of the magazine's printed version.

The national Women's Ministries Department's main Web site provides information about the national Women's Ministries Department, district and local events, Touch the World Fund, National Women's Ministries Day, and national missions projects. It also keeps women informed about See You at the Altar, the Compassion Challenge recycled printer cartridge project, event evangelism, new products, and more. **E**

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"Pastor, if you are not busy I can come back when you are."



# in closing

BY CHARLES T. CRABTREE

## Empty Pulpits= God's Opportunity

One of the saddest sights in the kingdom of God is an empty pulpit and a flock without a shepherd. For 80 years, the Assemblies of God has seldom had to struggle with such a problem. However, this edition of *Enrichment* journal clearly brings into focus a developing reality that demands immediate attention by anyone who loves our Fellowship.

The Assemblies of God has faced challenges before. And with the Lord's help, the downward trend in the number of senior pastors will be reversed. If we will look to God in this matter, He will intervene, meet the need, and solve the problem. However, it is our responsibility to take the steps necessary to move the hand of God.

**1. It all begins with faith.** Without faith, we might as well throw up our hands. The problem facing us is not a personnel problem, but a spiritual problem. If we are not careful, we will fall into the trap of studying the problem (which we should), but then turn to men and institutions to do what only God can do—supernaturally ordain men and women to fill our pulpits.

Faith, not problems, determines what happens in the kingdom of God. Through faith, God's will triumphs over difficulties. What man sees are small congregations that cannot support a pastor, isolated areas with decreasing populations, ministerial students with overwhelming debt, churches with bad reputations, and an overall perception

that pastoral leadership in our culture is becoming more and more difficult. These are the realities. But faith says, "So what?" God is aware of the need, and it is His will that every church He has planted will flourish.

**2. Prayer is the means God uses to solve any problem in the church.** Jesus foresaw the lack of workers for the harvest and provided the solution: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:38).

The call for study committees, commissions, and conferences can be helpful, but they are optional. Prayer is mandatory. It is God who performs the miracle. He is the One who calls laborers. Scripture tells us that the children of the world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light. When they have a problem, they find the leading authority in that area and seek his or her help.

If the church will begin to pray with focused faith in the area of needed pastors, God will begin to call people from every age group and walk of life. It would be a thrill to see what God would do if every church put the need for ordained ministers near the top of every prayer list.

**3. We get what we preach.** Pastors who preach missions with passion raise up strong missions churches. Pastors who preach the call of God on a regular basis have people divinely called to the ministry out of their churches.



Let every church leader, pastor, and parent begin to pick up the message and encourage our brightest, best, and—most important—the most open and available to respond to the call of God.

It is imperative we begin immediately to emphasize the miracle of ordination. Not just in youth camps, but also in Christian education and discipleship classes and in Sunday morning and evening services followed by open altars. However, it must be done with unwavering faith in the Lord of the Church who will lay His hand mightily upon whom He desires.

**4. Training for ministry should not begin in institutions of higher learning, but within the local church.** Many of our greatest leaders were mentored by pastors of comparatively small churches who saw potential in their young people and took them under their wing. In larger churches, regular classes for people called of God to a preaching ministry have proven effective.

The future of the Assemblies of God ministers and pastors is not in the hands of men, but in the sovereignty of God. He uses people of faith to motivate and encourage others to respond to His will. At this very moment, there is a mighty army of powerful preachers ready to fill Assemblies of God pulpits. Let us call them forth in Jesus' name. **E**

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







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