

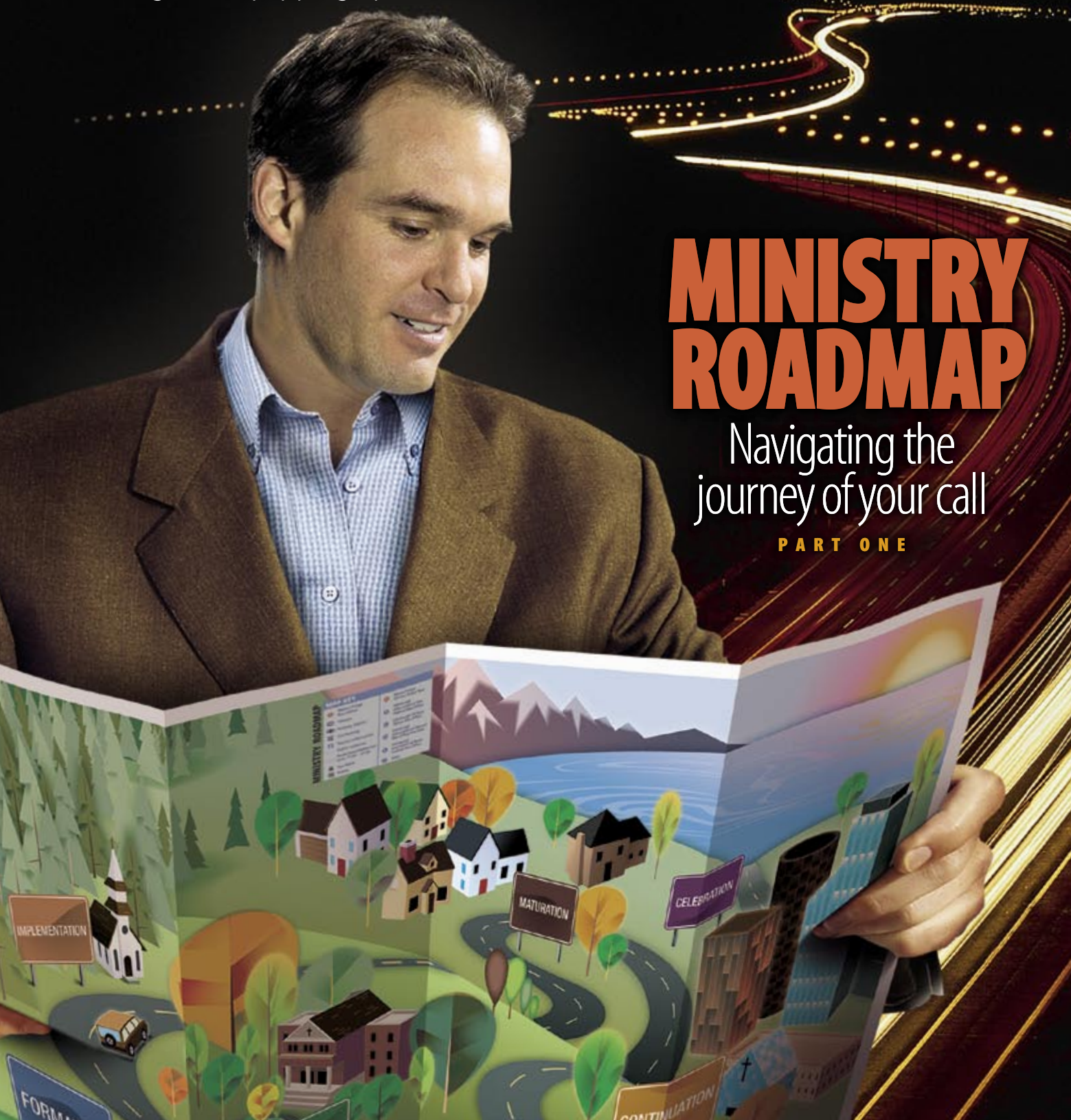


What to expect during your first decade of ministry 104

# enrichment

Enriching and equipping Spirit-filled ministers

Winter 2007



## MINISTRY ROADMAP

Navigating the  
journey of your call

PART ONE

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## MINISTRY ROADMAP

Navigating the journey of your call (part two)

Just as a roadmap helps us know where we are and how to get where we are going, a ministry roadmap helps us identify where we are in our present ministry, assess where we began, and describes the path we want to take to attain our ministry goals.

In part 2 of the Ministry Roadmap, we describe the last three phases — continuation, maturation, and retirement — to provide reference points for navigating the journey of your call.

## enrichment

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• Use of the masculine pronoun for pastor is used throughout this issue and refers to both genders.

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**TRENDS**

# Gambling:

## As the Take Rises, So Does Public Concern

**A** modest backlash in attitudes toward legalized gambling has taken hold of an American public that spends more money on more forms of legal gambling now than at any time in the nation's history.

Seven in 10 (70 percent) Americans say that legalized gambling encourages people to gamble more than they can afford, according to a new Pew Research Center survey. By contrast, 62 percent expressed that concern in 1989 when the same question was posed in a Gallup survey.

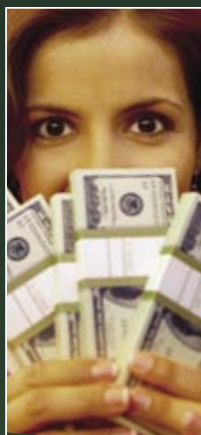
Similarly, 71 percent of the public today — down from 78 percent in 1989 — approves of lotteries as a way for states to raise revenue. Public support for other forms of legalized gambling, such as casino, off-track betting on horse racing, and pro sports betting, has either been stable or declined since 1989.

These findings come at a time when gambling has become more pervasive in the popular culture, with a record number of casinos operating across the country, with online gambling gaining fast in popularity (albeit from a small base), with several celebrities going public with their gambling problems and exploits, and with poker tournaments having become a new form of television entertainment.

Despite all this, the survey finds that fewer people now (23 percent) than in 1989 (34 percent) say that they enjoy making bets; it also finds a decline, compared with 1989, in the overall percentage of people who report that they made a bet of any kind in the past year. Betting on horse racing and pro sports, in particular, has dropped off.

However, the survey also finds a sharp increase since 1989 in some high profile forms of betting — including casino gambling and slot machines. These findings line up with industry reports that show that these forms of gambling have been in a period of rapid growth. *e*

**SOURCE:** *The Pew Social Trends Report* conducted by the Pew Research Center.



Photos.com

### PARSON'S PLACE

## MINISTERS ON THE MOVE

**PENTECOSTAL PASTORS MOST OFTEN leave their positions to start a church plant**, according to a recent survey by Ellison Research.

A study by the Phoenix-based firm shows that 31 percent of Pentecostal preachers left an existing pastorate to plant a church. In addition, 21 percent of Pentecostal pastors say they have taken a new clergy job to move to a higher post, such as senior pastor from associate pastor, and 21 percent list moving to a different community as their primary reason for a job switch. Fourteen percent indicated that they felt God's call as the chief reason for taking a new ministerial position while 10 percent had been asked to leave.

Among various faith groups, Pentecostal clergy had a much higher percentage of church planting moves. For instance, only 2 percent of Presbyterians and 1 percent of Methodists have ever left a post to start a new church, according to the poll.

Among all groups, Pentecostal leaders are least likely to change churches because they desire to move to a larger church (7 percent versus 16 percent for other denominations) or to obtain better pay and benefits (6 percent versus an 11 percent average for the rest).

Overall, sensing God's call or leading as a main motivator for moving ranks Pentecostals sixth for all denominations.

"People who work in real estate, manufacturing, marketing research, and other careers change jobs to move to a city they prefer, get a promotion, start a new company, find better working conditions, and make more money," says Ellison Research President Ron Sellers. "This study shows ministers take new jobs for mostly the same reasons." *e*

**JOHN W. KENNEDY,**  
*Today's Pentecostal Evangel*

Photos.com



David Bates

## AMERICAN LIFE

# Who's Feeling Rushed?

**E**verybody gets the same 24 hours in a day, but women are slightly more likely than men to feel starved for time.

About a quarter of all women (26 percent) say they "always feel rushed," while 21 percent of men report feeling that way, according to a new Pew Research Center survey.

This gender gap is bigger for women who are mothers and for women who are in the workforce. And it grows to 15 percentage points for

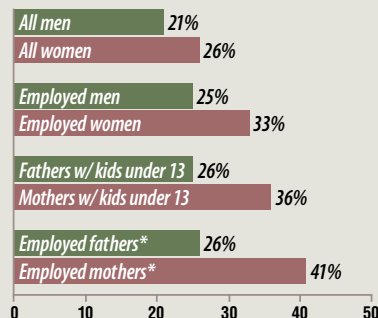
women who are both. A breakdown:

- Working women (33 percent) feel more rushed than do working men (25 percent) — an 8-percentage point gender/employment gap.

- Mothers of minor age children (36 percent) feel more rushed than do fathers of minor age children (25 percent) — an 11-percentage point gender/parenting gap.

**SOURCE:** *The Pew Social Trends Report* conducted by the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

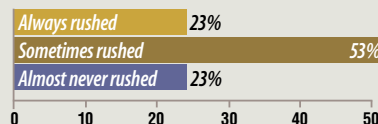
### Percentage of Americans who "always feel rushed"



\* Employed fathers, employed mothers refers to employed parents with children under age 18.

Employed does not include people who identify as retired but also work for pay.

### How do you feel about your time?



- Combining those two categories, working mothers with minor children (41 percent) feel more rushed than do working fathers with minor age children (26 percent) — a 15-percentage point gender/employment/parenting gap.

Overall, about a quarter (23 percent) of all adults in this country say they always feel rushed, while a majority (53 percent) of Americans sometimes feel rushed and about a quarter (23 percent) almost never feel rushed. 🔄

## CULTURE & SOCIETY

# Public Divided on Social Issues, But No "Culture War"

**Public attitudes** across a set of five issues that have been the focus of intense political activity in recent years — gay marriage, adoption of children by gay couples, stem cell research, and the morning-after pill — show a mix of conservative and liberal majorities. On none of the five issues does more than 56 percent of the public line up on one side of the question or the other. 🔄

**SOURCE:** *The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life*, August 3, 2006



## FIT FOR LIFE

# Eating Healthy Throughout the Holidays

**I**magine a golden brown turkey, fluffy white mashed potatoes with warm gravy, grandma's homemade stuffing, and flaky apple pie. Does this sound like a perfect holiday meal? For some it may be; for others with diabetes or heart disease, it can be a recipe for disaster.

Most people find consistently eating healthy throughout the year a challenge, but during the holidays it is even more difficult. If you add in other health conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol, it seems nearly impossible. Eating healthy during the holidays does not mean you cannot enjoy yourself. Try these tips to ensure enjoyment without feeling guilty about your diet.

### 1. Eat three meals on the day of the big feast.

When you wait all day to eat your big turkey dinner, you have a tendency to overeat and cause yourself uncontrolled blood glucose for the day.

### 2. Fill up on salad before you eat the rest of the meal.

This ensures you will have your vegetable serving for the day and will help you cut back on the starchy, high-fat, high-sugar, and high-salt foods.

### 3. Drink plenty of decaffeinated beverages before and during the meal.

If people are not fully hydrated, they tend to overeat. (Note: caffeinated beverages dehydrate.)

### 4. Pick out your favorite dessert, and eat only a small, reasonable portion.

If you select a small portion

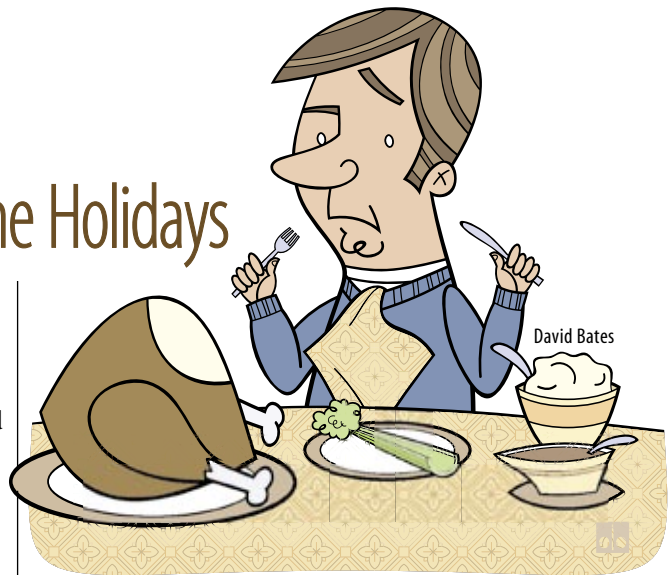
and move away from the dessert table, you are less likely to get too much. Do not go back for a second portion.

### 5. Watch your portion sizes.

It is okay to splurge a little on holidays (exchange your milk or fruit serving in the meal for more starch), but do not splurge on portion sizes.

### 6. Enjoy every bite.

If you eat slowly and savor every bite, you will be more satisfied and will not feel the need for more. 🍴



REBEKAH SIMMONS, RD/LD,  
Springfield, Missouri

### CORRECTION

The article "Life in the Youth Hall" (*Enrichment*, Fall 2006) gave incorrect information regarding the founding of The Tabernacle in Atlanta, Georgia. The church, originally known as Apostolic Assembly of God, was first pastored by Rev. L.G. Gilmore. Rev. Jimmie Mayo served as the congregation's second pastor. *Enrichment* apologizes for the error.

## CITIZEN CONCERNS

# CREDIT CARDS TO FIGHT PORN

**The Financial Coalition Against Child Pornography is teaming up with the U.S. credit card market** in an attempt to take the profitability out of the multibillion-dollar business of online child pornography. Participating credit card companies will report child porn sites they find accepting their cards as a means of payment for the porn. They will also block these transactions or possibly help track sellers and buyers, if an investigation by law enforcement results.

"The scope of the problem is much greater than we ever thought," said Ernie Allen of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. NCMEC's CyberTipline estimates it has received more than 340,000 reports of child porn Web sites — up from just 24,400 5 years ago. Allen and Senator Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) brought the coalition together with the goal of eradicating commercial child porn by 2008.

Participating companies include Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover. In addition, Bank of America, Chase, Citigroup, and PayPal are involved. However, MasterCard and American Express do not intend to reveal customer identities unless subpoenaed to do so.

"This is the broadest, most comprehensive coalition we've been involved in," said MasterCard Executive Joshua Peirez. "This is not a competitiveness issue. This is about protecting children." 🍴

Taken from *The Pastor's Weekly Briefing*, Volume 14, Number 32, August 11, 2006. Copyright © 2006, Focus on the Family. Used with permission.



## WHAT IN THE WORLD

# MIXED MESSAGES GO UP IN SMOKE

**You no doubt have seen the antismoking ads on TV.** They feature a father and son talking about the evils of smoking. The media campaign denouncing this addictive habit is convincing. At first blush, you'd think it is something produced by a

traditional-values coalition or maybe even the Mormon Church. Nothing could be further from the truth.

At the end of the commercial you are told who the sponsor is. The Philip Morris Company — one of the world's largest cigarette manufacturers — pays for these ads.

Why would a company that is seeking to sell cigarettes want to keep future generations from buying their product? In light of the hundreds of thousands of people who contract lung cancer and die from a disease related to smoking, the ads are perhaps an attempt to reduce a sense of corporate guilt. Just maybe.

But the butt of the joke is a lack of integrity. Why would anyone take the ads seriously once they know the company's overall objective? What appears to be a sincere attempt to keep people from lighting up is

nothing more than a public relations gimmick. There is no way Philip Morris wants to undermine what accounts for its billions in gross sales. Talk about hypocritical.

In Matthew 23, Jesus lights a fire under the flimsy foundation of the Pharisees' self-articulated righteousness. As you read His words, you cannot help but picture the smoke coming out of His listeners' ears as they internalize their anger. Jesus calls them hypocrites from the Greek word that means actor. A hypocrite is one who wears a mask to hide his identity. To play a part in a scripted performance, the hypocrite does what is necessary to convince the audience of something that is not true.

In Christ, we are called to live lives of integrity and honesty in which the attitudes and motivations of our hearts coincide with our speech and actions. *e*

GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS, Mercer Island, Washington



Photos.com

## BOOMERS TO ZOOMERS

# David and Solomon

**The last few chapters of 1 Chronicles contain the story of King David helping his son, Solomon, prepare for the construction of a temple in Jerusalem.**

David's dream of building God "a temple for your Holy Name" (1 Chronicles 29:16) would be realized, but only through the efforts and wisdom of Solomon.

This father-son transaction offers a compelling biblical image of how the generations can work together if certain principles are observed.

## David Blessed Solomon's Project

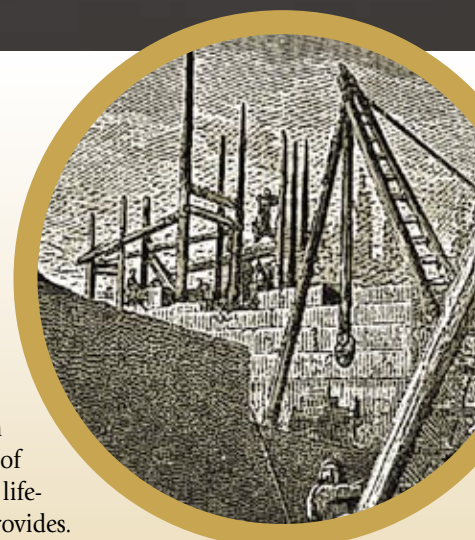
David was not permitted to build the temple himself. This limitation could have given rise to resentment, just as midlife leaders today may resent younger leaders who seem to be on a trajectory of effectiveness higher than their own. Instead, Solomon received David's outright blessing as the King

rallied the people of Israel to support the project and his successor with it, passing the baton to his son with rejoicing.

## David Resourced Solomon's Project

King David would have been within his rights to hoard all of his resources and enjoy the lifestyle that wealth and power provides. Instead, he dedicated himself to supplying the assets that the temple and its services would require once the structure was erected. In the same way, older leaders can help their younger peers build the future by resourcing their church plants and ministry training.

Only those who are willing to build together, as David and Solomon did, by combining their unique strengths will achieve their potential in the kingdom of God. *e*



Gustave Doré

EARL CREPS, doctor of ministry director, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri



## MODERN MORALS

# SEXUALLY DEGRADING LYRICS ENCOURAGE TEEN SEX

**A RAND Corporation study presents the strongest evidence yet that sexually degrading lyrics in music encourage adolescents to more quickly initiate sexual intercourse** and other sexual activities.

The study found that the more time adolescents spend listening to music with sexually degrading lyrics, the more likely they are to initiate intercourse and other sexual activities. This holds true for boys and girls as well as for whites and nonwhites, even after accounting for a wide range of other personal and social factors associated with adolescent sexual behavior.

Researchers found that only sexually degrading lyrics — many quite graphic and containing numerous obscenities — are related to changes in adolescents' sexual behavior. These lyrics depict men as sexually insatiable, women as sexual objects, and sexual intercourse as inconsequential. Other songs about sex do not appear to influence youth the same way.

"These portrayals objectify and degrade women in ways that are clear, but they do the same to men by depicting them as sex-driven studs," said Steven Martino, a RAND psychologist who led the study. "Musicians who use this type of sexual imagery are communicating something very specific about what sexual roles are appropriate, and teen listeners may act on these messages."

The study, entitled "Exposure to Degrading Versus Non-Degrading Music Lyrics and Sexual Behavior among Youth," is published in the August issue of the journal *Pediatrics*. ☺

**SOURCE:** The RAND Corporation, the nation's largest independent health policy research program. For more information go to: <http://www.rand.org/news/press.06/08.07.html>.

## UTHTRAX

# TECHNICAL VIRGINITY

**A**ccording to author Hayley DiMarco, author of *Dateable* and *The Technical Virgin: How Far is Too Far?* (Revell books) there is an epidemic affecting our youth and it needs to be addressed.

It is the subject of technical virginity.

DiMarco defines a technical virgin as someone who thinks he or she is still a virgin as long as he or she has not had intercourse.<sup>1</sup> The reasoning is that anything up to intercourse does not count against virginity.

This is a loophole for those who want to remain virgins but still be sexually active.

Are you uncomfortable? Do you wish you could check out of this conversation and move on to the next page? Stick with me. Satan is a convincing con artist, and he is confusing an entire generation about physical intimacy.

The aftermath of technical virginity is quickly becoming clear.

- According to researchers at Yale and Columbia, teens pledging abstinence are just as likely as their peers to contract or discover they have a sexually transmitted infection.<sup>2</sup>

- Sixty-seven percent of surveyed teens who engage in sexual practices wished they had waited longer.<sup>3</sup>

- Most 14, 15, and 16 year olds in a relationship break up; thus many teens are experiencing a growing cynicism about commitment and love.

Technical virginity is far from the gift of sexual intimacy defined by God. Our teens — even our Christian teens — need to know how to define sex according to biblical standards. They need to know how to deal with sexual pressures and the meaning of emotional purity. They need to understand what it means to wait for great sex that will be nurtured through a lifetime commitment. ☺

**T. SUZANNE ELLER**, Muskogee, Oklahoma

## NOTES

1. Hayley DiMarco, *The Technical Virgin: How Far is Too Far?* (Grand Rapids: Revell Books, 2006), 22.

2. Karen N. Peart, "Virginity Pledges Do Not Reduce STD Risk: May Encourage High Risk Sexual Behavior," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 36 (March 18, 2005): 271–278.

3. National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, *With One Voice: America's Adults and Teens Sound Off About Teen Pregnancy* (Washington, D.C.: 2003). <http://www.teenpregnancy.org/resources/teens/avoid/abstinence/absfacts.asp> See also: <http://www.teenpregnancy.org/resources/data/genfact.asp>.





## THE HER BEHIND THE HYMN

# Where Does the Shout Come From?

**D**arlene Zschech is one of the most celebrated and effective worship leaders of our generation.

Although humble and modest by nature, she commands authority and exudes confidence when she stands before several thousand people and guides them into the presence of the Lord through music. She is currently the worship pastor at Hillsong Church in Sydney (an Assemblies of God congregation).

Darlene, who was born and raised in Australia, showed promise musically as a child. Her parents bought her an old piano when she only 5 years old. Later she became a child star in an Australian television series entitled Happy Go 'Round. As she entered her teenage years, Darlene's parents divorced. Traumatized by the custody battle, she began to suffer from bulimia. She became familiar with times of discouragement. By the grace of God, Darlene found love, acceptance, and forgiveness in the person of Jesus Christ and began to write songs for church.

Curiously, the lyrics and melody to Shout to the Lord, her most well-known song, grew out of a season in Darlene's life when she was feeling desperately despondent and discouraged.

"It was one of those dark days in my life," Darlene admits. "Everything felt as if it was on top of me. There seemed to be no way out, and the only one I could turn to was the Lord. I felt I could either scream and pull my hair out or praise God."

As she sat down at the piano her parents had given her years before, Darlene drew strength from Psalm 96. Reading the words, she began to plunk out a tune and write down the lyrics that came to her.

"My Jesus, my Savior, Lord, there is none like You. All of my days, I want to praise the wonders of Your mighty love. My comfort, my shelter, tower of refuge and strength, let every breath, all that I am, never cease to worship You. Shout to the Lord. ... "

Since it was written in 1993, Shout to the Lord has been recorded on more than 20 albums and translated into many languages. An estimated 25–30 million churchgoers sing the song each week. In addition to weekly worship gatherings, Shout to the Lord is also heard at conventions, concerts, weddings, and even funerals. ☺

GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS, Mercer Island, Washington

## LEADERLIFE

# The Spiritual Discipline of Writing

**T**he ministry of Pentecostal writers should be expanding as rapidly as the global Pentecostal church. In our oral culture, however, this challenge can seem too difficult, unless we appreciate it as a spiritual discipline with four dimensions:

### 1. Writing maximizes my influence:

After our sermons have disappeared into thin air, the only thing that remains of our ministry is what we have written. Even our MP3s do not have the impact of books and articles.

### 2. Writing empowers my ministry:

No one wants to preach without feeling he is speaking for God, but we seldom think of

writing this way. As a gift of expression, the written word is just as eligible for the Spirit's anointing as the spoken word.

### 3. Writing bonds me to a community:

All professional writers know that creating their product is a team sport involving editors, readers, and others. In fact, Steven Lim, D.Min., says there is no such thing as writing, only rewriting. Done correctly, the discipline of writing will increase my accountability to other believers.

### 4. Writing brings me to the end of myself:

Staring at a blank computer screen while a cup of coffee cools on your desk is one of life's painful experiences. The

shortage of time, energy, and words that haunts most writers has a way of making the composition process feel desperate and impossible. Nevertheless, when we decrease, God increases.

A writing ministry forges enduring influence for the kingdom of God.

My major recommendation: rewrite something today. ☺

EARL CREPS, doctor of ministry director, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary



Photos.com



**Volunteers from Mascoutah Assembly build an addition to the youth center.**

"The oldest 'youth' to get saved in one of those services was 72," Andy says. "And we've seen dozens of young people make decisions for Christ."

Providing the meal in the small home from the limited snack bar was proving inadequate. Wal-Mart, however, was closing down a food service center. When Andy asked the day manager what the store might want for the equipment, the price was nowhere within range of the church's resources. Later, the general manager contacted the corporate headquarters and received permission to donate the kitchen to Cuba Assembly. Altogether, about \$20,000 worth of counters, ovens, and other equipment changed hands without a dime spent.



Photos.com

This summer, a group from Andy and Roberta's past showed up. A team from Mascoutah Assembly traveled to Cuba. Joining with Andy and other volunteers, the combined work crew almost entirely built an addition to the youth center in one weekend. Some 30 to 50 young people will no longer be packed into 700 square feet. The expanded facility promises to expand the church's ability to touch lives for eternity.

"God gave me a vision during a time of prayer in 2004," Andy says. "I saw a river of filth flowing through our town. Then I saw people from our church reaching into that river and rescuing young people before they could drown."

He believes the rescue mission has just begun. As material and financial donations continue to miraculously arrive at Cuba Assembly, this church of 20 is seeing its outreach bring hundreds of young people through its doors 30 to 40 at a time.

"We're committed to finding a need and meeting it," Andy says. "We don't expect people to come to the church and make our numbers go up. We just want to show the love of Christ in a practical way." 🌟

**SCOTT HARRUP**, associate editor, *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*

## CUBA ASSEMBLY OF GOD: Christ's Love, No Strings Attached

**F**or Andy Fyffe, Valentine's Day will always remind him of his love for God. He accepted Christ as his Savior on February 14, 1993. His wife and children soon made the same decision.

Andy and Roberta Fyffe had been married nearly 8 years. A career Coast Guard officer, Andy moved around the country with his family. Life was filled with transition. His newfound faith offered an anchor.

"We began attending Mascoutah Assembly of God in Mascoutah, Illinois, near St. Louis," Andy says. "God called me into the ministry."

Over the next 10 years, the Fyffes would follow Coast Guard assignments across the Midwest and out to California. The call to ministry never wavered. Andy retired from the military in 2001. In November 2002, the Fyffes accepted the pastorate of Cuba Assembly of God in Cuba, Illinois.

"This is a tiny little church in a tiny little town," Andy says.

He is not overstating the point. Cuba is home to about 1,400 people. Five of them were attending Cuba Assembly when the Fyffes came. Only 10 parking spaces are available on the lot.

As the church grew to 10, 15, then 20 people, their passion to reach their community with Christ's love grew exponentially. When a house on land adjoining the church property came

"They all asked if I had considered buying the property for a youth center," Andy says. The church voted unanimously for the purchase. Cuba Assembly closed the deal in June 2003 and plunged into renovation.

"From the beginning, the Lord provided," Andy says.

One woman's initial gift of \$5,000 paid for a new furnace and made possible the first remodeling. The small rooms downstairs were opened up into a larger area. A pool table became the center of action. A snack bar was soon making enough sales to pay the utilities.

By summer 2004, the place was crowded with kids. The church decided to close in the porch to create more room. A nearby congregation sent \$2,000 to begin that project.

"So many churches have helped," Andy says. "When there's a need, God meets it."

One of the largest gifts came by way of a local Wal-Mart where Andy's son worked. The donation promises to take a key outreach at the youth center to the next level.

For the past 5 years, Cuba Assembly has been feeding young people from across the community a hot meal every Wednesday. With the purchase of the home, those meals moved to the center. After the meal, young people walk to the church for a youth-oriented midweek service.

Photos.com

The youth center provides area teens with recreational opportunities and free hot lunches.







## The Formative Years of Ministry



**B**eing called into ministry is one of the most rewarding experiences that can happen to a person. Knowing that God has called you to be a gift to His church (Ephesians 4:7–16) is a high honor. No one knows this any better than General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask. In this first of a two-part interview with *Enrichment* journal, Trask not only reminisces about his own call to ministry, but he also provides practical advice for those who have been in the ministry awhile and for those who are just beginning their ministry.

### **Describe the most essential element in a young minister's formative years.**

**TRASK:** Ministry is not a matter of our own choosing or just another profession. What sets the ministry apart is the fact it is the response to a divine call from God. The first thing a young minister must know beyond a shadow of a doubt is that he has been called by God. If he knows for sure God has set His hand on him, he has a foundation that will help him in any situation.

A divine call to ministry comes with a continual stirring in one's spirit that is not just emotional — that is, something that happens and then is gone. The Spirit of God places a passion within one's heart and spirit, and it becomes a part of one's life. When the Spirit of God places that desire in our spirit, it begins to grow.

### **What should be the parental response to a child who is called to ministry?**

**TRASK:** Parents must be willing to give their child to the Lord and say, "Lord, my child belongs to You, and whatever Your plan is for his life, I yield to that."

Parents need to continue to expose their child to the work of the Spirit. One benefit of a Sunday night altar service is that parents can pray with their child. A call to ministry is not just a one-time call, dedication, or commitment. It involves continuing to commit and present oneself to God. Paul said, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service*" (Romans 12:1, KJV).

I consecrated myself to the Lord at the altar many times. This kept God's call fresh in my heart because it brought me back to that initial time when the Spirit spoke to me. Parents need to encourage their child to dedicate and rededicate his life to the Lord.

Parents can also expose their child to missionaries and pastors as well as to district- and church-sponsored camps, events, and ministries, such as Junior Bible Quiz. Through the course of a child's maturing and growing, parents need to continually nurture the call. During family devotions children may want to talk about their call. Parents need to encourage this.

Parents should never speak disparagingly of the ministry. Many young people have been soured because their parents brought the problems of the ministry into their home, and their child was turned off as a result.

### **Fewer ministers' children are going into ministry today. What might be contributing to this trend?**

**TRASK:** Ministry must be presented in a positive way, even though it may have some negative and unique challenges. I was raised in a minister's home. I never heard my parents speak disparagingly of the ministry. At times I knew they were facing hardships, but all I ever heard was that ministry was a thrill and a joy.

When I pastored, it was my goal to reproduce myself. During the 13 years I pastored in my last church, 32 young people went into full-time ministry. I believe they saw the joy of being in the ministry and desired that. As a result they were open to God's call, and it became fruitful in their lives.

We know the Spirit is still calling, but the church's responsibility is to pray that people respond to that call.

### **What educational opportunities does the Assemblies of God offer for ministry training?**

**TRASK:** The Assemblies of God offers many educational opportunities for ministry training. Master's Commission is a marvelous way to be exposed to servant-leadership training in the church. Master's Commission is much like a

“  
*The first thing  
a minister  
must know  
beyond a shadow  
of a doubt  
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been called  
by God.*”



“

*A divine call to ministry comes with a continual stirring in one's spirit.*

”

boot camp where students are given ministry opportunities and exposure to church work. This experience often leads them to further their training in a ministry-related area.

The Assemblies of God has Bible colleges and universities that offer Bible or pastoral ministry majors. Distance learning is also available through Global University.

District-based Bible institutes are also available. Seven districts are providing training and ministry development in classroom settings. Pastors are given opportunities to exchange ideas instead of learning alone through a distance-learning program. Districts are also involved in mentoring.

Over the years, opportunities for training, mentoring, and preparing for ministry have proven valuable. As those in the pews are becoming more educated, it is important that ministers be better prepared as well.

### **How can we minimize distractions that interfere in ministry preparation?**

**TRASK:** Probably the great distractions today are debt and materialism. The challenge for students is to live within their means during their formative years. Students need to learn how to avoid becoming burdened with debt.

Many pastors in the early years of their ministry are in debt. They graduate from college with

large student loans. Other ministry students graduate and get a secular job to pay off their school loans. If they are not careful, they continue to accumulate debt. They may pay off their school loans but lose the fervor and sense of their calling or at least suppress it. By this time, they may be raising a family and are trying to provide or accumulate material things. The call of God becomes secondary.

Many cities surrounding our colleges and universities are filled with students who went to school because they had the call of God on their lives but never entered the ministry. They graduated and entered the workplace. Many are good, faithful laypeople in the local church. That is okay, but it is not the same because they have the call of God on their lives.

### **Many ministers leave the ministry during the first 5 years. How can we minimize this?**

**TRASK:** It is critical in the first 5 years of ministry that one forms certain habits and disciplines. An old preacher gave me some great words of counsel when I first entered the ministry, “Tom, ask God to put you on a schedule, and stay on that schedule.” For 50 years I have been on that schedule. It is essential in one's early years to learn good study habits, fiscal responsibility, relational responsibility, and be committed to the call.

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*Pastors deal with imperfect people. It is important to understand this early on so they do not become weary in well doing.*  
”

Pastors need to know that if their only motivation is to serve the church, they will be disappointed. Pastors must realize that they are serving the Lord. In serving the church, pastors deal with imperfect people. It is important to understand this early on so they do not become weary in well doing.

Another thing ministers can do is develop friendships with other ministers. This will minimize dropout because pastors will learn that they are not alone in the ministry. They will see a colleague going through similar challenges, problems, and joys. Pastors can learn what is working in a fellow pastor's ministry. Friendships among pastors are beneficial and valuable.

**What is the value in ministry groups for mentoring and coaching?**

**TRASK:** The ministry can be lonely. Pastors need to have fellowship and friends. The best place to find friends in the ministry is with those who have a similar calling. They will be experiencing the same challenges. In ministry groups pastors can learn from one another, pray for one another, encourage one another, and support one another. Pastors who do not fellowship with other ministers are missing something.

**How should a pastor prioritize the many roles that demand his time?**

**TRASK:** A pastor's first commitment is to the Lord. His second commitment is to his wife and children. Third is his commitment to his ministry. In the early days of the Assemblies of God many ministers placed the ministry ahead of their families, only to lose their children. That is a mistake. God does not expect pastors to place the ministry ahead of their families. It is not biblical. If a pastor does not learn to put his family before his ministry, he will suffer. The Lord gives pastors priorities so they may have the joy of having their children serve the Lord.

**Being a lifelong learner is important in the ministry. Describe what has contributed to your lifelong learning.**

**TRASK:** A pastor must be a lifelong learner. A pastor must pray, study the Word, and have a devotional life so he can learn from the Lord. A pastor needs to read books that have merit, attend classes and seminars, and learn through independent study. Continuing education is important.

A good pastor is a good listener and observer of godly men. I learned early in my ministry to learn through observation. I watched successful men and learned from them. One of these men was former General Superintendent G. Raymond Carlson. He was my first superintendent and one of my professors while he was president at North Central Bible College. A person can learn by watching how someone else conducts himself, his attitude when he is under pressure, the priorities he has set, and his walk with the Lord.

**What differences do you see in ministry today?**

**TRASK:** Assemblies of God churches have matured. We have come a long way. When I was growing up in the pastor's home, we could not play ball on Sunday. Did that make us more spiritual? We thought it did, but it did not. Many of these ideas from the past that we might call *hang-ups* today are no longer practiced in the church. This has encouraged young people to want to serve Jesus. Instead of everything being negative, young people in the church today have positive opportunities for ministry, such as missions trips and camps.

The ministry is easier today because people in society have matured in their thinking about the Assemblies of God. When I was a boy in school, other students called me *Holy Roller*. No child attending school today is being called a *Holy Roller*. Why? Some would say that we have lost our testimony. I do not believe so. Young people in the church today are probably more passionate about serving the Lord than we were. Society as a whole has come to recognize that Pentecostalism and its distinctives are real because of what God has done in and through this church. It has given us an acceptance in society that we did not have years ago.

God has blessed the church. We have beautiful facilities and ministries that we were unable to provide in the past because the church lacked the resources. From my vantage point, I wish I were starting over again. I would love to roll the clock back 25 years and have the joy of sharing in the ministry opportunities the church offers today. 🙏

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**SUPERINTENDENT'S CHAT**

Remember to avail yourself of General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask's Chat with Pastors. A new video clip (also available in audio and text) is posted every Sunday, and past Chats are archived. Located at <http://www.ag.org/top/ministers>.











# MINISTRY ROADMAP: NAVIGATING THE JO

Phase I Formation	Phase II Preparation	Phase III Implementation Years 1 - 5
<b>Components/Issues:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Discipleship</li> <li>•Understanding one's call</li> <li>•Beginning one's lifelong personal and spiritual formation with a Pentecostal distinctive</li> </ul> <b>My Components/Issues:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Education</li> <li>•Internship</li> <li>•Evaluation and self-assessment</li> <li>•Credentialing (Many coming from distance learning)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•50 percent of those who drop out of ministry do so within the first 5 years.</li> <li>•Networking and support systems are essential.</li> <li>•Establishing worth and value</li> </ul>
<b>Role:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Disciple</li> </ul> <b>My Role:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Staff, Solo, or Senior pastor</li> <li>•Mentoree</li> </ul>
<b>Vulnerabilities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Discouragement</li> </ul> <b>My Vulnerabilities:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Distraction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Disillusionment</li> <li>•Financial stress</li> <li>•Isolation/boredom</li> </ul>
<b>Needs:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Encouragement</li> <li>•Modeling</li> <li>•Character development</li> </ul> <b>My Needs:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Counseling</li> <li>•Advice</li> <li>•Mentoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Mentoring</li> <li>•Support system</li> <li>•Proactive training</li> <li>•Relationships</li> </ul>
<b>Resources:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Family</li> <li>•Local church</li> </ul> <b>My Resources:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•College/seminary</li> <li>•Distance learning</li> <li>•District training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Peers</li> <li>•Section</li> <li>•District</li> </ul>
<b>Lifelong Essential Elements:</b> Personal development, family/marriage development, spiritual c <b>My Lifelong Plan:</b>		
<b>Finances:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Establishing financial values</li> </ul> <b>My Finances:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Financing education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Learning to budget on a limited salary</li> </ul>
<b>Family Issues:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Parent/Child relations</li> </ul> <b>My Family Issues:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Developing personal identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Marriage/children</li> </ul>
<b>Life Crises:</b> <b>My Unscheduled Crises:</b>	Illness, death, divorce, moving, occupational changes, discipline problem	

# JOURNEY OF YOUR CALL

Phase IV Maturation Years 6 - 14	Phase V Continuation Years 15 - Retirement	Phase VI Celebration Retirement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•George Barna says most effective years of ministry in one location occur during this phase.</li> <li>•The average Assemblies of God pastor stays 8.1 years. (Staff pastor much less)</li> <li>•Many pastors leave a church before their most effective ministry begins.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Many “hit the wall” during this phase.</li> <li>•May feel stuck</li> <li>•Have not obtained goals</li> <li>•Challenge is in remaining fresh</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Uncertainty</li> <li>•Questioning personal worth and value</li> <li>•Mixture of fulfillment and frustration</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Staff, Solo, or Senior pastor</li> <li>•Mentoree, Mentor/Coach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Staff, Solo, or Senior pastor</li> <li>•Mentor/Coach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Retired/semi-retired</li> <li>•Mentor/Coach</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Stress/burnout</li> <li>•Transition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Stress/burnout</li> <li>•Transition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Isolation</li> <li>•Health issues</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Coaching</li> <li>•Relationships</li> <li>•Lifelong learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Being a Mentor/Coach</li> <li>•Lifelong learning</li> <li>•Sabbatical</li> <li>•Update tools/skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Utilization</li> <li>•Role identity</li> <li>•Finishing strong</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Peers</li> <li>•Section</li> <li>•District</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Peers</li> <li>•Section</li> <li>•District</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Peers</li> <li>•Section</li> <li>•District</li> </ul>
Development, education, and skills training		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Consistent financial planning</li> <li>•Saving for children’s education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Evaluate net worth</li> <li>•Evaluate savings/retirement funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Living on retirement savings</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Adolescent issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Children returning home</li> <li>•Caring for aging parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Aloneness</li> <li>•Health issues</li> <li>•Death of spouse</li> </ul>
Issues of child, substance abuse in family, premarital sex by child, premarital pregnancy of child, etc.		







## MINISTRY ROADMAP: NAVIGATING THE JOURNEY OF YOUR CALL

➔ **If you have done much traveling, you know the value of a roadmap. A map shows where you started, where you currently are, where you are going, and how to get there. A ministry roadmap serves a similar purpose.**

Ministry is a challenging journey with the blending of divine call, supernatural guidance, spiritual discernment, human wisdom, and life experience. A ministry roadmap is valuable because it helps ministers identify where they are in their present ministry, assess where they began, and plan how they are going to arrive at their destination.

In this issue and the subsequent spring 2007 edition of *Enrichment*, we present six phases of ministry beginning with the call and ending with retirement. We identify the phases as: *Formation, Preparation, Implementation, Maturation, Continuation, and Celebration*. These ministry phases provide reference points for navigating the journey of your call. We intentionally did not include time elements, age, or the exact length of each phase because each minister will pass through the phases at different stages of his or her life. Also, the boundaries between the phases are sometimes difficult to identify because of personal issues, life experience, and ministry context. Yet, there is a general direction and flow in every minister's journey.

This ministry roadmap does not list every detail for every minister's journey. What we have provided, however, is a working roadmap for you to process and chart your own ministry travel.

We hope the ministry roadmap will help you identify where you are, what you should be experiencing, and what you can anticipate and plan for in the future. We have also provided numerous Web resources for each phase for further reading, research, and development. Visit EJ online at <http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org>.

You will find on the roadmap that there are two elements on a continuum that cut across all six phases of ministry. These elements are:

First, *lifelong learning* begins with personal and spiritual formation and needs to be an intentional element throughout each of your ministry phases. Lifelong learning can be formal or informal learning that improves personal development and ministry skills making you more effective in ministry.

Second, there is a *life crises* element to this roadmap. The hurts and tragedies of life usually intrude and interrupt when we least expect them. Crises may shock, traumatize, or immobilize us for a time. But even in and through these times, God is present and enables us to fulfill His call on our lives.

### ACTION STEP

Included in this issue, pages 19–22, is a colorful foldout ministry roadmap and a schematic listing all six ministry phases. There is space on the schematic for you to pencil in your journey. We have also placed a downloadable file of this worksheet on the *Enrichment* journal Web site at <http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org>. Click on *current issue* and look on the *table of contents* for this file. This worksheet is provided so you can build and expand your own roadmap. You may wish to periodically review your ministry roadmap to align and adjust your course.

We trust this edition of *EJ* will be a practical aid as you map the first three phases of your life and ministry. Look for the last three phases in the spring 2007 *Enrichment*. 🌐



**GARY R. ALLEN, D.Min.**, is executive editor of *Enrichment* journal and director of the Ministerial Enrichment Office, Springfield, Missouri.

# PHASE ONE: FORMATION

**The formation phase often begins when a young boy or girl (or a second-career adult) senses that God is calling him or her into some aspect of Christian ministry.**

Some may have a Samuel experience — they sense God's call at an early age but are unsure what it means. Others, going about the routine activities of family life, such as David tending sheep, experience a lion and bear event but may not realize what God is preparing them for. This is a critical time for family, friends, and pastors to help identify, evaluate, validate, and nurture their call.

The call also comes to the second-career person. His formation phase will look much different from that of a child or youth, even though it may contain

many of the same elements. His call may evolve through several years of lay ministry experience in a local church that culminates in a specific call to pastoral ministry.

*Pastor, we have included the information in this phase to help you as you mentor those in your church who have been called into ministry. As you identify and interact with these individuals, copy the information from this phase and share it with them. It will be a great source of help and encouragement to them. Your involvement in their lives will help them build a solid foundation on which to begin their ministry. It is critical that you also emphasize their need to commit to lifelong character development and sexual purity. 🙏*

## YOU ARE HERE





# CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT:

Preparing the Next Generation for Ministry

[ BY MIKE RAKES ]



**W**inston Churchill reportedly said, “I’m always ready to learn, although I do not always like being taught.” Every generation faces the challenge of personal growth. Long-term strategic leadership for the future of the church requires a more comprehensive approach to character development and an intentional plan to develop sensitivity to character development issues for those preparing for ministry.

The word *coach* continues to rise in function and importance to the body of Christ. The use of the word signals an awareness that personal change is desired. Nearly every leader admits that in all phases of ministry one must continue to grow and develop internally. Yet, the growth that must not be neglected is in the next generation of leaders who are nearly ready for significant leadership positions.

At the turn of this century, organizations measured their net worth in different ways from those in the 1900s. During the Industrial Age, an organization’s net worth was measured by its real estate holdings, factories and equipment, and warehouses of merchandise. Things have

changed. Some organizations are reducing their office square footage and real estate holdings and allowing employees to work from their homes. Organizations now use terms such as *virtual teams* — groups of people brought together by technology, usually to accomplish short-term organizational goals. This is one signal we have officially moved into a postindustrial society. Words like *intellectual capital* introduce us to a whole new economy and labor environment.

Church leaders who understand these cultural shifts will be better equipped to prepare the next generation for ministry. Postindustrialism is not only about a knowledge explosion and the change factors in that process, but it is also about the way in which the work force is used. Individuals in each organization now become the important capital — human capital. The personal-growth movement is a result of the way individuals and organizations perceive human capital.

The postindustrial shift toward investing more in personal growth was inevitable. Even a brief walk through a bookstore reveals that the demand for such

material has reached a near-obsessive level. What are the implications for current church leaders in preparing the next generation of leaders?

The church can be no greater than its leaders. Therefore, the emphasis on intentional character development of future leaders by the church and its schools and universities cannot be overstated. A clear understanding of Jesus' leadership principle of investing in key leaders is more important than ever.

Many who have dedicated their ministries to training young leaders know that those preparing for ministry often struggle with basic character deficiencies. George Barna's research shows no difference between church youth and secular youth. While most young adults respect the Bible and believe the Bible is accurate in what it teaches, their specific religious beliefs are inconsistent with the Bible. For instance, a majority believe that a good person can earn salvation through good deeds. A majority of born-again teens also believe Jesus committed sins while He was on earth. Further study shows these teens do not think their religious beliefs will change. Although teens can quote biblical facts, less than 1 of every 10 church teenager has a biblical worldview. In other words, personal faith is not making a difference in how they live. They do not make decisions based on biblical principles.<sup>1</sup>

When we consider that these teens are the future leaders of the church, we must be concerned about the substance of their faith that will be communicated and practiced as they lead the church. The church must reconnect to the main responsibilities of how to develop those preparing for ministry. Time and resources we spend preparing new leaders should

be made with great effort knowing it strengthens our human capital and adds value to the church.

## THE ALMOST READY

In his article, *Almost Ready: How Leaders Move Up*, Dan Ciampa discusses the vetting process that happens in organizations and who might end up in key positions of influence in the organization.<sup>2</sup> The phrase the *almost-ready leader* describes those in preparation for significant ministry right now.

A vetting process is now happening in churches and universities, but who will rise up and lead the church with purpose, precision, and effectiveness? Who will take on the task of not only leading our churches but also our government, education, and medical fields? Where are those leaders now? They are in your church and our universities. Pastors and youth leaders, then, need to place more emphasis on developing the character of the *almost-ready leader*.

In the 60s, around the time of the emergence of pastoral counseling as a viable discipline, Howard Clinebell gave a strong, simple formula when it came to developing adults. He said, "Caring + Confrontation = Growth." Pastors, faculty members, and denominational leaders must prepare, shape, and cultivate *almost-ready leaders*. The challenge Ciampa pointed out was that the *almost-ready leader* gets little if any feedback about what habits need to be added or dropped to increase his effectiveness.

One practical thing leaders can do is provide formal and informal opportunities for coaching and mentoring *almost-ready leaders*. Many different definitions for coaching exist, yet coaching in the classical sense involves "carrying along a client." My professional experience

shows that *almost-ready leaders* need mentoring (advice given through experience) more than they need coaching. The basic assumption of true coaching is that coaches help clients get what they want. But young leaders often do not know what they want, or they might even want the wrong things.

Pastors and youth pastors who want to help young potential leaders need to create pathways of growth that can be followed by those desiring personal growth. The doctrinal enforcement officer mentality does not address the deepest issue of motivation. Many character curricula miss the mark because they try the *add attributes* approach to developing character. Character comes from the inner life of an individual. A person can tie an orange to a tree but doing so does not change the nature of the tree, only the tree's outward appearance. Pathways of growth, such as Tuesday Night Talks (Q&A events conducted in a talk show format), can help open new ways of developing leaders.

The critical fact, especially for those influencing young leaders day in and day out, is that these young leaders are not completely ready but are still in the character-development stage. In my first doctoral research program I uncovered the four main ways God works on a person's character. Every individual has four main components to his inner life that make up his character. The four components are:

- Leadership: Increasing one's ability to influence others.
- Emotions: Dealing with the deepest parts of one's personality.
- Stamina: Strengthening one's ability to keep his word and finish what he starts.

- Spirituality: Deepening the soul's connection with God.

A pastor's ability to provide the right constructive feedback will help build character in the inner life of an

## SELF-LEADERSHIP AS A START

Leadership, as influence, demands the expression of one's authentic self. A leader in preparation needs to show leadership. Self-leadership is concerned with facing the truth about one's own leadership, emotions, stamina, and spirituality, and constructing ways to develop oneself. Leadership is ultimately

head quicker and quicker as his dad was trying to give him an important tip about driving in the heavy Atlanta traffic. His son kept saying, "I know, I know."

How many times have pastors tried to save someone some grief, and that person just would not listen? Self-leadership is the ability to learn from every possible source. There will always be those who decide to learn the hard way. The *almost-ready leader*

**Many who have dedicated their ministries to training young leaders know that those preparing for ministry often struggle with basic character deficiencies.**

practices self-leadership through humility in learning and exhibiting personal growth.

We have infused three questions into student life at Southeastern University. These questions provide a working model for the student life team: (1) Who am I? (2) What do I want? (3) What does God want?

### Question 1: Who am I?

This question must be asked of the *almost-ready leader* preparing for ministry. A greater awareness of one's personal darkness and struggles is critically important to the early development of the *almost-ready leader*.

Pastors and leaders can help by talking authentically about their own feelings. Online tools are available for growing young leaders. Pastors can lead the *almost-ready leader* to discover his personality traits through assessments that may have been important to the pastor's own development. I developed an assessment that helps individuals discover which of the four quadrants need the most self-leadership. This

about influencing others and helping them live better more fulfilled lives.

Leaders often seek to help people they hardly know.

But the one thread that seems to tie great leaders together, whether Christ-followers or not, is their desire to change themselves. Leo Tolstoy said, "Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself."

Self-leadership requires humility and a willingness to learn. While walking through a car dealership, I overheard a man sharing a tip with his 16-year-old son. The young, pimpled-faced teenager nodded his

*almost-ready leader*. Character flaws can be mitigated by intentional conversations that lead to the further development of the *almost-ready leader*. These conversations need to be taking place now. Pastors providing instruction to the *almost-ready leader* must remember that their ministries are not about themselves but the advancement of God's kingdom. The development of young *almost-ready leaders* must be seen as critically important to the health of the church.



assessment tool evaluates the four main issues at work in a leader's life (leadership, emotions, stamina, and spirituality).

Educators talk about learning curves. In this generation, there are also *awareness curves*. Some students come to Southeastern University with an awareness of the inclinations of their hearts. Others, through our discipline process, need help to see their character deficiencies. A key step in learning self-leadership is learning to say as Joseph did, "How ... could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). An *almost-ready leader*, fully awake to his call, must learn to live within the boundaries that call requires. The *almost-ready leader* needs a healthy awareness of who he is. Pastors and youth pastors should consider requiring the *almost-ready leader* to state his faith in his own words. Learning to avoid churchy phrases or spiritual clichés is an important part of answering the question, "Who am I?"

### Question 2: What do I want?

In a postmodern world where bodily comforts abound, the *almost-ready leader* must answer the question, *What do I want?* This question begins the process of sorting through intentional choices that will determine the outcome of one's days. Student culture is shaped at SEU because student leadership and administrative leadership will not ignore issues related to personal character. We are training spiritual champions and refuse to allow silly adolescent explorations into realms of life that lead nowhere and degrade one's destiny.

Here are three easy steps to begin implementing with an *almost-ready leader*.

1. *Tell him the truth.* The *almost-ready leader* must be confronted about his choices, or the opportunity for character development is missed. Leading the *almost-ready leader* to repeatedly answer the question about what he wants is a technique that works. When a student fails miserably, ask him if that was what he wanted to do? Help him examine in detail what led to his failure.

2. *Challenge his self-talk.* Listen to the words leaders say. In consulting and personal-growth language, a person's words reveal what is going on under the surface. Those who live with severe attachments or even addictions often do not think virtuously about themselves. In other words, the thoughts they have about themselves are not God's thoughts toward them. Their thinking and ultimately their speaking, which usually result in action, reveal the fallenness of their thinking. Theologians call it the *noetic effects* of the Fall. People's ability to think rightly of themselves (see themselves as God sees them) is flawed.

3. *Seek to influence them in formal and nonformal ways.* Taking time to think of specific leadership messages to send almost-ready leaders can be a profitable way to grow them past internal dead ends that result in a de-energizing effect.

### Question 3: What does God want?

*The Spirit To Serve* is the story of J.W. Marriott, Jr. Marriott shares stories and experiences about the early days when his father started the Marriott hotel chain. He weaves his message of humility, hard work, and respect for others throughout the book. He makes a call for servant leadership. He says, "There can be no distinction

between a company's core values and the core values of its leadership. The values originate from deep inside the people themselves."

If there is no inward transformation, all the programmatic character-building techniques in the world will have no impact on the *almost-ready leader*. If our goal is to renew our organizations, then we must lead out of a heart authentically devoted to what God wants. Living close to God means caring about what God cares about. The *almost-ready leader* must answer the question, *What does God want for me?*

Leaders are ultimately revolutionaries. They were once transformed from darkness to light, and they dream change and bring change wherever they are. They passionately pursue the goal of making things better. Every great leader desires to make a contribution with his life in some way. Connecting with what God wants from one's life, one's specific contribution is the guiding factor that keeps leaders of character making the choices they make.

Initially, there is usually an experience deficiency in the heart of an *almost-ready leader*. Character is not necessarily present in every leader when he starts the preparation. Depending on childhood development and family issues, character may need to be learned at even the most fundamental level. Character must be intentionally shaped, cultivated, and developed through caring and confrontation. The challenge for those currently in leadership is to not underestimate the human capital that surrounds them. This generation of *almost-ready leaders* is critically important to the health of the church. Each *almost-ready leader* contributes to the Kingdom's advancement.

# PHASE ONE

The apostle Paul might have underestimated the impact that a young John Mark would have on the Kingdom. John Mark was present when Peter was miraculously released from prison through the prayers of the believers (Acts 12:12–17). When John Mark left Paul and Barnabas, Paul underestimated John Mark's future ministry (Acts 13:13). When Paul and Barnabas had the falling out over John Mark, Paul underestimated the human capital that John Mark brought to the table (Acts 15:36–41).

Mark's Gospel, however, reveals a far different John Mark. Mark's authorship is placed sometime in the middle 50s to middle 60s. Mark's Gospel shows a more mature leader. Paul would have never believed that this young man's writings would be so valued by the church or that they would become canonized.

Mark's Gospel addresses the themes of suffering, handling criticism, the messianic fulfillment of Jesus' life, and the supernatural. What great themes for the *almost-ready leader* to learn. John Mark, if we knew the

behind-the-scenes story, probably underestimated his own value to the Church as much as Paul did. A pattern that often plays out in towns and cities across the nation is that leaders in preparation for ministry often underestimate their importance to the future of the body of Christ.

## CONCLUSION

The preparation phase is the serious vetting process of the Kingdom. For decades, the Assemblies of God has emphasized teaching young men and women the Bible and godly principles. We have emphasized life-on-life kinds of mentoring and discipleship, but something still seems to be missing. Here are a few suggestions that a pastor or youth pastor should consider.

The surge of servant leadership training around the country has continued to gain momentum with this generation of *almost-ready leaders* as a way of developing ministry skills. Local churches have developed or adapted intense training programs for those wanting to respond more fully to the call to serve.

One necessary element in any leadership program is intentional character development. Teaching *almost-ready leaders* the aspects of making good choices is a critical part of teaching maturity. Some leaders have the mistaken belief that if they get *almost-ready leaders* spiritual enough, there will be no

problems with character. Many leaders, however, have seen to their own embarrassment that this kind of thinking is not necessarily true.

Many good materials deal with what character needs to look like on the outside. A church's Christian education program should reflect all the aspects of a biblical worldview, and not just facts learned from the Bible. Discipleship at its core is about instruction. Consider pulling together teachers and other learning professionals in your church and community to address the character development issues students are now facing.

Bible colleges and Christian universities cannot assume full responsibility for developing character in *almost-ready leaders*. Their character is already shaped to a large degree before they ever reach college age. Pastors and youth leaders need to discuss ways to deal with the inner issues of character development. Programs that are intentionally structured to surface the issues of character development are needed at the early stages of a child's development. 🔄

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"How did I know I was called into the ministry?  
I think it was when a church actually asked me  
back for a second time."



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## NOTES

1. The Barna Group, "Teens Evaluate the Church-Based Ministry They Received As Children," 8 July 2003, <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&ID=143>. See also, The Barna Group, "Teenagers' Beliefs Moving Farther From Biblical Perspectives," 23 October 2000; <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=74>.
2. Dan Ciampa, "Almost Ready: How Leaders Move Up," *Harvard Business Review* 84 (January 2005).



## MENTORING THE NEXT GENERATION —

One District's Model for Discipling Teens Who Have Been Called Into Ministry

[ BY ROD WHITLOCK ]

**F**ormer Nebraska District Superintendent Bob Nazarenus became my hero a few years ago. I was serving as youth director for the Nebraska District. One morning he asked if I would be willing to work with him to organize a gathering for students called into full-time ministry. He had three purposes in mind.

First, he wanted every student called to full-time ministry to receive encouragement and a prayer of blessing from the previous generation of leadership. Second, his desire was that every student be empowered by the Holy Spirit to accomplish the task to which God had called him. Finally, he wanted to help pastors see the value of nurturing the call of God in students' lives.

He was speaking my language. Having my district superintendent, as busy as he was, offer to help students was a huge statement. He made a commitment to me and to the students of Nebraska to help equip the next generation to fulfill the call.

After General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask accepted an invitation to join us, I was asked to make the event happen. The most fitting location for the gathering was the district campground. After all, many students had been called to ministry while lingering at the altars after a camp service.

The event was free. This was another act of commitment from district leadership of their desire to invest in the next generation. We let the students know this because the district wanted them to understand that the older generation was, in every way, supportive of the younger generation.

Attendance was by invitation only. Only students called to full-time ministry were invited. Invitations were sent to every student on record who had responded to the call of ministry. We also invited our campus missionaries and senior pastors. More than 100 students responded.

**We wanted the Holy Spirit to speak more on His will for the students' lives.**

Registration and room check-in was Friday afternoon, followed by a brief time of worship and an overview of the weekend. Interactive workshops filled the remainder of the afternoon.

These workshops were discussion oriented so students could ask questions. Representatives from Master's Commission, area Bible schools, and missionaries and pastors were invited to speak with students to provide them with a well-rounded view of ministry. Each of these representatives had multiple opportunities to meet with students, giving them time to interact with leaders from various ministries and to ask specific questions in planning for their futures.



On Friday evening we had a more lengthy time of worship and heard a message on the call of God. This was my opportunity as district youth director to encourage students and leaders to continue to seek God's will. After prayer, the campgrounds were opened until midnight for fun and recreation.

At midnight, the chapel was opened again for an hour of worship. Students could choose to come for worship or go to their rooms. Most ended up at the altars, worshipping the One who had called them. We wanted the Holy Spirit to speak more on His will for the students' lives. Many students spent their time at the altars listening and journaling what the Spirit of God was saying.

The following day students had opportunity to attend workshops: "Women in Ministry"; "What's Next?"; "Marriage and Ministry"; "The Call of Missions"; "What is Bible College?"; and "How Can I Make a Difference Now?" During one workshop, Nazareus met with senior pastors, youth pastors, and other key leaders. He talked to them about how they could help students find, develop, and use their gifts for God.

"We need to help our pastors nurture the call of God in the lives of students," Nazareus shared. "We have students reporting the call of God on their lives, and we need to do a better job providing leadership training on the local level.

"We lose many students to so many other things, and maybe it's because we don't help students with God's call," he said. "Every student should open himself up to the possibility of God's call on his life, and then ministers should help the student discern. The local church and pastors are key to making this happen."

The weekend was valuable for pastors and youth leaders because they were able to see their students in an entirely different light.

"The room exploded with questions about God's will for a student's life and God's call," Youth Pastor Toby Schneckloth said regarding a workshop, "This retreat was about them."

Students were serious about the weekend because they knew it would affect their future. There was no need to motivate participation. In many cases, the students' enthusiasm motivated their leaders. It was encouraging for both leaders and students.

During the retreat, Schneckloth said he "was amazed at how many students showed up for the weekend." This was, in part, thanks to those who drove the students to the campgrounds — their parents. "Parents got behind this weekend and saw it as not just an event, but rather as an opportunity to see their teenager grow in

leadership and prepare for God's call," Schneckloth said. Schneckloth, who is now the Nebraska District youth director, plans to offer a similar weekend in the future.

The gathering concluded with Trask speaking to students on Saturday afternoon. He spent several minutes praying for and laying hands on each student.


Because discipleship is a process and not an event, the Nebraska District continues to offer other opportunities for student growth. Each year, Nebraska youth camps offer three tracks during the afternoons including a discipleship track geared for students wanting to grow closer to Jesus and learn more about ministry. Nebraska conventions occasionally offer similar workshops.

Although the discipleship track at camp and the workshops at conventions are important, the local youth leader has the greatest influence on a student's decision for ministry. Shortly after the gathering, I began meeting with youth pastors throughout the district to discuss ideas for equipping the next generation of leaders. Youth pastors cannot allow students' passion for fulfilling God's call to die because they failed to fan the flame. In 2 Timothy 1:6,7, Paul wrote: "For this reason I *remind* you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline" (emphasis added).

Paul set a standard for youth pastors by mentoring Timothy. Like Paul, leaders need to help the next generation by equipping, empowering, and giving them opportunities to develop their calling.

My passion for equipping students for God's call comes from my own experience as a 19-year-old student wrestling with the call of God. I was attending Bellevue Assembly of God in Bellevue, Nebraska. I met with my pastor, Sam Mayo, to discuss what I was feeling concerning God's call.

As I walked into his office, he said he needed to make an emergency hospital visit. He asked if I would be willing to meet with him as he drove. By the time we returned to the church, Pastor Mayo had me lined up to do visitation with him for the next several weeks.

I will never forget that car ride and the weeks we spent ministering together. If the pastor of a 1,000-member church had time for me, I should do everything I can to journey with those pursuing God's call for their lives — and so should you. 



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## CALLED TO MINISTRY?

What's Sex Got To Do With It?  
[ BY CHERYL TAYLOR ]

**S**o you sense God may be calling you into ministry. Did you know the choices you make now will impact your future ministry? One of those choices is the decision to save sexual activity for marriage. First Timothy 3 lists qualifications for church leaders, and the prerequisites include self-control and being above reproach. One tangible evidence of these qualities is the pursuit of sexual purity.

The importance of sexual integrity for leaders is dramatically illustrated in the stories of David and Joseph. These young men both had the call of God on their lives, yet each chose to respond to sexual temptation in different ways.

Remember David? While still a boy tending his father's sheep, he was anointed to be the next king of Israel. At the height of his career, however, he saw beautiful Bathsheba and caved into sexual temptation. From that point on he faced a series of consequences that haunted him until his dying day. An overwhelming sense of guilt, the death of his baby, broken family relationships, and ultimately the fall of his kingdom all came as a result of his decision. Yes, God forgave him and he was restored to leadership, but he still reaped the natural consequences of his actions.

Joseph, too, had a call on his life. When he was a young man, God gave him a dream revealing his future role as a leader of God's people. When faced with sexual temptation, Joseph chose a different course of action from David. Remember when Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph? He was a slave, and she the first lady. He could have definitely worked this to his advantage. Yet, what did he do? Joseph turned and fled. From that point he rose to one of the top leadership positions in Egypt, and God used him to save the Israelites.

You, too, can choose to pursue the path of sexual purity. "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable. ... For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life" (1 Thessalonians 4:3–8).

Some young people assume, *If I can somehow just make it until I get married, then I won't have to worry about sexual temptation anymore.* Wrong. Sexual temptation does not stop simply because you have walked down an aisle and said, "I do." Not only will you still face sexual temptation, but the stakes will be greater — your marriage relationship. The good news, however, is that the foundations you establish now will carry into — and

strengthen your future marriage and ministry. You will be equipped to help a world that desperately needs to understand God's game plan for sexual integrity.

## WHY WAIT? REASONS FOR PURSUING PURITY

Young people today are bombarded with sexual temptation from all sides, and often the moral standard is gray. Our sexually saturated culture has made sex bigger than life; love has been reduced to lust, intimacy has become synonymous with sex, and sex is seen as merely a physical act. In this culture, sexual permissiveness, media, friends, and our bodies all seem to be screaming, *Just do it*. At times we may wonder if it is really worth it to wait. What is the advantage of purity? Consider the following seven reasons why waiting is in your best interest.

### Waiting is a spiritual act of worship

"Flee from sexual immorality. ... Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, ... Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Corinthians 6:18–20). As Paul wrote these words, he understood that a temple is not just a building, but it is a place where God dwells. We are special and sacred because God lives in us through His Spirit. Wherever we go, whatever we do it all reflects on God. Suddenly, the dividing wall we use to divide our lives into sacred and secular is gone. We cannot compartmentalize our lives into church/spiritual stuff and regular/daily life stuff. Paul says, if we are Christians, it is all God's stuff. Our thinking regarding sexual purity must begin here. All of life, public and private, spiritual and sexual, is part of our worship to

God. This is why Paul said that our bodies are living sacrifices — our spiritual worship (Romans 12:1,2). You already practice the spiritual disciplines of prayer and Bible reading, why not add the spiritual discipline of chastity?

### Waiting honors God's plan for sex

"It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable" (1 Thessalonians 4:3,4). Sex is not for people who are *ready*. Sex is not for people who are *in love*. Sex is for people who are *married*. Why? Because sex is not just *physical*; it is *relational*. It is to be reserved for the committed relationship of marriage.

God created us with sexual desire, and within the proper boundaries it is a beautiful thing to be shared and enjoyed by a husband and wife. Problems arise, however, when we go outside biblical boundaries, trying to meet legitimate needs in illegitimate

are you willing to give away to the person you are now dating?

### Waiting results in a more satisfying sex life in marriage

God is not just trying to keep you from having fun. In fact, just the opposite is true. God created sex. Don't you think that the One who created sex knows best how the gift was to be used? (Better than any *Seventeen* columnist or MTV relational guru?) In the Book of Deuteronomy, God says, "I know your kids will come to you one day and ask the reason for all the rules. You tell them that I made the rules so they will prosper" (Deuteronomy 6:20–25, my paraphrase). This is so true in the area of sex. Some of today's most liberal studies reveal that people who wait to have sex enjoy it the most. It is not those you see portrayed on television; on the contrary, it is the faithful married partners who are having the most fun with sex. They do not wake up in the morning wondering if the person will still be there, or if they have an STD.

## Staying pure is not a passive activity, but the pain of discipline is far easier than the pain of regret.

ways. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:18, "He who sins sexually sins against his own body." When we commit sexual sins, we hurt ourselves. We damage the potential for a satisfying sexual relationship with a marriage partner down the road. We rob our future spouse of intimacy as well. God intended for husbands and wives to become "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Yet, with every premarital sexual encounter, we decrease the significance of sex with our future partner; the oneness factor is damaged before it even exists.<sup>1</sup> How much of your future spouse's wedding gift

What do you gain by remaining pure that is better than what you give up? Intimacy. "Purity paves the way for intimacy. Impurity, on the other hand, erodes the capacity to experience intimacy and consequently diminishes the satisfaction of sex."<sup>2</sup> When we save sex for marriage, God blesses it, and this includes making it more fun.

### Waiting prevents a progression from which it is difficult to backtrack

When you flirt with sexual sin, it may start out small, but it will grow.



## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

The further you go, the further you will want to go; this is how God wired our bodies. “When you feed an appetite, it will increase its intensity. Short of intercourse, there is no ‘ultimate’ satisfaction. Human bodies were designed to go ‘all the way.’ The only way to keep your sexual appetite in check is not to feed it.”<sup>3</sup> In addition, the further you go, the harder it is to go back. Once you cross a line it will usually progress from there. You will find yourself thinking, *Well, I’ve done that, and there’s no way I can take it back, so what difference does it make if I do it again?* Why let yourself get started down that track?

### Waiting protects you from emotional and relational problems

Young adults are often warned about the physical consequences of sexual activity (pregnancy, HIV, and STDs), yet few are warning you about the emotional and relational consequences. Three out of four teens who lost their virginity said they wished they had waited. They become bogged down with feelings of guilt, shame, low self-esteem, self-hatred, and spiritual bondage. Many carry this emotional baggage into adulthood and may punish themselves for their pasts by not letting themselves enjoy sex in marriage. Others have trouble establishing meaningful relationships because they have disconnected sex and love. The world’s advice is simply, “Wear a condom.” Yet, condoms do nothing to block the mental and emotional consequences of sexual sin. A condom cannot erase a memory, remove guilt, restore a reputation, repair self-esteem, or re-establish sensitivity and obedience to the Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

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**CHERYL TAYLOR, D.MIN.,** Springfield, Missouri.

### Waiting is a sign of your submission to God’s will

How you handle your love life as a young person is a big test of whether you will follow God’s clear commands. If you regularly choose to resist God’s will for your love life or any other part of life, then seeking more of His will is pointless. To be an effective Christian leader, you must be able to say, “I am willing to do God’s will — whatever it is.” Jesus said, “Whoever serves me must follow me” (John 12:26). If you make that one decision to submit in all things, every other decision becomes clearer and easier.

### Waiting enables you to serve as a model for others

“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but

set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and *in purity*” (1 Timothy 4:12, emphasis added). Church leaders labor in a profession in which character is critical. Scripture states that pastors are called to serve as models in the church and as examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:3). When we demonstrate to the community what it means to live in integrity, we fulfill this biblical mandate. What a privilege we have to model God’s best to a world that needs to know there is another way. Now is the best time to do this. *Carpe diem*.

### WAIT TRAINING: STRATEGIES FOR PURSUING PURITY

You may be thinking, *Sure, I have the desire to be pure, but let’s get real. In today’s world how can I do this?* The

good news is that you have options other than to simply kiss dating goodbye, but it will take effort and discipline on your part. Staying pure is not a passive activity, but the pain of discipline is far easier than the pain of regret. Here are biblical principles that can assist you in making wise choices to remain sexually pure.

### Determine in your heart your desire to remain pure

Remember the story of Daniel?

As a young boy in the king's court, surrounded by temptations forbidden to the Israelites, he resolved in his heart to remain pure (Daniel 1:8). It is foundational to determine to remain pure, and know why. If you do not really believe it matters, then you will not stand up under the pressure. Temptation is strong; you will need a higher allegiance than

emotion to navigate it. The key here is to do this ahead of time. If you wait until the heat of the moment, your ability to think clearly is clouded and all perspective is lost.

One exercise to help you determine in your heart is to consider the consequences. Visualize the grief on your Lord's face each time you sin against Him. Visualize yourself having to tell the person you will marry that you have not saved yourself for him or her. Visualize yourself telling your parents and pastor that you have gotten your girlfriend pregnant. Visualize yourself living the rest of your life with an STD. Develop your own personal list of consequences, and you will begin to think twice.

### Establish ground rules

Job was said to be righteous before

God. In fact, he was the only man in the whole earth who was. What was the key to his remaining pure? It is seen when he declared: "I have made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl" (Job 31:1). He had clearly defined ground rules.

We, too, need to have clearly established boundaries. Develop a concrete list of activities that cause you, or someone else, to desire things you cannot righteously fulfill. Assuming you will be tempted to go further than you choose, how intense do you want that temptation to be? Where you draw the line determines the intensity of the temptation. Where you draw the line will determine the nature of the consequences once that line has been crossed.

Guys are more visually oriented, so determine what kinds of things

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PURSUING PURITY

Want to pursue God's best for your life? Wondering if a given activity is right or wrong? Consider the following biblical principles to help guide your choices. If you cannot engage in a given activity without violating scriptural principles, then avoid it.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE	REFLECTION QUESTION
• Do not lust in your heart (Matthew 5:28)	• Does this activity cause my mind to dwell on lustful thoughts/fantasize?
• Do not lose self-control (Galatians 5:22,23; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)	• Does this activity promote the fruit of self-discipline?
• Do not become mastered by anything (1 Corinthians 6:12; 2 Peter 2:19)	• Does this activity have the potential to become addictive?
• Do only what builds up relationships (1 Thessalonians 5:11)	• Does this behavior have the potential to help or hurt my future marriage relationship?
• Do not dishonor God with your thoughts (Philippians 4:8; Romans 12:1,2)	• Does this thought bring glory to God or transform me/renew my mind?
• Live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:16)	• What are the fruits/effects of this activity on my life? Does it reflect a Spirit-controlled life?
• Treat young women as sisters, with absolute purity (1 Timothy 5:1,2)	• Am I showing the respect I would want someone to show my own sister?
• Do not be a lover of self ... or of pleasure rather than a lover of God (2 Timothy 3:1-9)	• Is this a self-centered activity that creates even more self-centeredness?

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# PHASE ONE

should or should not be viewed. Girls may be more intimacy oriented, so they must decide what kinds of books can be read, or chat rooms visited on the Internet. As you establish ground rules, consider the ramifications of given activities in question. Will they result in growing in Christlikeness and building up others, or will they tear you down? Is it feeding the flesh or feeding the spirit? As you go about your relationships, remember that ground rules may be different for different people. Do not pressure someone to violate his convictions just because you may be comfortable with it. This is not love; this is selfish desire.

## How far is too far?

In the process of establishing boundaries, at some point most Christian young people ask “How far is too far?” Interestingly, many of them already have a mental line in the sand that holds sexual intercourse to be the only real taboo. A common trend is to speak of *technical virginity*, claiming *if it's not penetration, it's not fornication*.

Rather than drawing a line in the sand, one should be asking a completely different question. The question should not be, *How far can I go?* but *What can I do to make sure I don't go too far?* The Bible says, “Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise.” Appropriate questions, then, are: *What is the wise thing for me to do in my pursuit of righteousness?* and *What can I do to experience God's best in my future marriage?* Each phase of intimacy that you save for your spouse is a bank account of pleasure that will pay dividends “till death do you part.”

## Make choices to limit your level of sexual temptation

Rather than getting set up for temptation, try not to get in the situation in the first place. Take active steps to get out of the hot spot. If you know you are easily tempted in a certain area, do not go to those places, view those materials, or hang around those people that cause you to be tempted. For example, if you are easily tempted with Internet pornography, keep the

computer in an open area of your home, do not use the computer after the family has gone to bed, and do not have an iPod or cell phone with video capabilities. Ask a friend to periodically check the sites visited to provide accountability, and place a virtual accountability program on your computer. (See

sidebar *Safe Surfing Resource List* on page 40.)

## When faced with sexual temptation, do a 180

Remember how Joseph fled from sexual temptation? You can do the same. First Corinthians 10:13 states: “When you are tempted, he will provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” Notice it says, “When you are tempted.” The Bible assumes you will face temptation. Temptation in and of itself is not the problem. How you choose to respond is the key. Fortunately, when faced with temptation, there is an escape route — an exit door. It may require you to change the TV channel, leave the movie theater, close a book or magazine, log off the Internet, avert your eyes, finish the date early, or whatever else is necessary. You cannot continually feed your sexual appetite and expect to stay sexually pure.

A great motivator to flee in times of temptation is to rehearse your list of consequences that would result from committing sexual sin. In a tangible and personal way, it brings home God's unchanging law of choice and consequence, cutting through the fog of rationalization and filling your heart with the healthy motivating fear of God.

Another good way to gain victory is to confess your struggles with someone. Are you fortunate enough to have someone in your life who loves you enough to regularly ask the questions of accountability? Picture yourself having to tell that person you failed, and amazingly the temptation will often go away. A secret revealed loses its power. If you do not have an accountability partner already, begin cultivating a relationship with someone who will hold you accountable.







# PHASE ONE

## Should you make a poor choice, repent and start fresh

Some may feel called to ministry, yet they are struggling because of some things in their past of which they are not proud. They may be wondering if God can still use them. When God forgives, He chooses to remember our sin no more. He will not hold it against us. While you may still experience the natural consequences of your choices, in God's eyes you have a fresh starting point. You can choose purity, from this day forward. It is never too late to do the right thing. If you have truly repented, this will be your desire, for repent means turn and go the other way. Vow not to do it again and pray with David, "Create in me a pure heart, O God" (Psalm 51:10).

## CONCLUSION: IT'S YOUR CALL

While God only calls some to full-time ministry, He calls everyone to sexual purity. I challenge you to regularly renew your commitment to personal purity in every aspect of your life. Choose to pursue God's best for your life. If you keep your heart tender to God's calling, you will do great things for God, no matter where and how He chooses to use you. ☺



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### NOTES

1. Andy Stanley and Stuart Hall, *The Seven Checkpoints* (West Monroe, La.: Howard Publishing, Co., 2001), 84, 85.
2. *Ibid.*, 81.
3. *Ibid.*, 94.
4. *Ibid.*, 91.

# SAFE SURFING RESOURCE LIST



## SERVICE PROVIDER SELECTION

Some Internet service providers can filter out pornography and unwanted material.

- Integrity Online (<http://www.integrityonline.com>)
- ViaFamily (<http://www.viafamily.com>)
- Advanced Internet Management (<http://www.AIMconnect.com>)
- FilterReview.com (<http://www.filterreview.com>)
- GetNetWise (<http://www.getnetwise.org>)

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Some Web-based accountability sites combine personal accountability and virtual accountability by automatically e-mailing to your chosen accountability partners a regular log of all the sites you visit, including the Web addresses and amount of time you visited the site.

- American Family Filter (<http://www.afafilter.com>)
- Covenant Eyes (<http://www.covenanteyes.com>)
- XXXChurch (<http://www.xxxchurch.com>)
- Bsafeonline (<http://www.bsafeonline.com>)
- Hedgebuilders (<http://www.hedgebuilders.com>)
- Literature Ministries International (<http://www.thesafesite.com>)

## FILTERS/BLOCKING SOFTWARE

Computer-level filtering programs can block selected Internet material from your computer.

- Hedgebuilders (<http://www.hedgebuilders.com>)
- Bsafeonline (<http://www.bsafeonline.com.com>)
- American Family Filter (<http://www.afafilter.com>)
- Cyber Patrol (<http://www.cyberpatrol.com>)
- Solid Oak Software (<http://www.solidoak.com>)
- PearlSoftware (<http://www.pearlsw.com>)
- Net Nanny (<http://www.netnanny.com>)
- SurfControl (<http://www.surfcontrol.com>)
- 8e6 Technologies (<http://www.8e6.com>)
- Guardian Software (<http://www.guardiansoftware.com>)
- ContentWatch (<http://www.contentwatch.com>)

## EDUCATION AND HELP

Several Internet sites provide helpful resources to assist ministers in understanding and addressing the problem of Internet pornography.

- Focus on the Family (<http://www.family.org/pastor>)
- Pure Intimacy (<http://www.pureintimacy.org>)
- Enough Is Enough (<http://www.enough.org>)
- Covenant Eyes (<http://www.covenanteyes.com>)
- exit.org (<http://www.exxit.org>)
- Literature Ministries International (<http://www.thesafesite.com>)
- Knights' Quest Ministries (<http://www.knightsquest.org>)
- Love in Action International, Inc. (<http://www.loveinaction.org>)
- Hedgebuilders (<http://www.hedgebuilders.com>)
- Setting Captives Free (<http://www.settingcaptivesfree.com>)
- EMERGE Ministries, Inc. (<http://www.emerge.org>)  
(for ministers)
- Faithful and True Ministries (<http://www.faithfulandtrueministries.com>)
- Pure Life Ministries (<http://www.purelifeministries.org>)
- The Omega Recovery Institute (<http://www.omegarecoveryinstitute.com>)
- Every Man/Woman's Battle (<http://www.newlife.com> and  
<http://www.newlifepartners.org>)

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ILLUSTRATION: DAVID BATES

# MONEY AND MINISTRY:

Finding Financial Favor From the Lord [ BY KREGG HOOD ]

“But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today” [ Deuteronomy 8:18 ].

**A**s a high school student or young adult who feels a call to ministry, you need to know about finances as you plan for your education and future ministry. You also need to develop a financial knowledge base that will help you avoid some of the pitfalls that could sidetrack you from ministry. As you prepare for ministry, here are five things you need to know about finances:

1. *Put God first in your attitude and in your giving.* He is in control. Paying your tithe comes first. These convictions will protect you from spiritual and financial harm.

2. *Start saving now.* The most powerful financial tool is time. When you start early, you begin to build a strong future. If you wait until you are 30, you will be way behind.

3. *Automate your saving and investing.* Try to have some amount, no matter how small, withdrawn from each paycheck and deposited into your savings account.

4. *Start thinking about retirement.* By starting your retirement account while you are young, the small amount you may start with has opportunity to grow. AG Financial is the retirement financial resource for Assemblies of God ministers. (For more information on AG Financial, visit <http://www.agfinancial.org>.)

5. *Do not accumulate credit card debt for any reason.* If you cannot pay off your credit card bill every month, put your card away immediately. Do not use the card again until you have paid off your bill.

## BUILDING FINANCIAL DISCIPLINE

The headline on a front-page article in a recent *USA Today* read, “Many Marriages Today Are ’Til Debt Do Us Part.” My eyes rapidly scanned the content. I felt an ache in my heart for the families who have been torn apart by money woes.

The first reaction we might have when we read articles such as this is, *People should be more careful and*



*spend less.* But that assumes a lot. In fact, almost everyone I have counseled who has struggled with debt and managing finances knows that obvious truth. What is difficult is learning how to say yes to the smart expenses and no (or not yet) to unwise expenses. How can you build this discipline into your life and ministry?

The best way to build financial discipline is to think before you spend. Many expenses come from *impulse* buying rather than a careful, objective decision based on personal priorities and values, counsel from godly friends, and biblical insight. When faced with a spending decision, ask, *What am I giving up to make this purchase?*

The Enemy would like you to believe you can spend all you want. His objective is to snare you with a covetous heart and financial stress. God, on the other hand, wants you to be blessed and to be able to share. In fact, the discipline you may need most is the ability to say no to things that are okay so you can say yes to purchases that are better.

## GOD AND FINANCES

Wisdom and discipline are key ingredients in this equation, but they are not the starting place. The starting place for learning about finances is with God. His desire is for you to make a healthy income, to spend it wisely, to enjoy life, and to expand His kingdom.

Several years ago I wrote my first book, *Take God at His Word: Experiencing the Power of Giving*. One of the discoveries I made while working on that book was a deeper awareness of Deuteronomy 8:16–18: “He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end

it might go well with you. You may say to yourself, ‘My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.’ But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.”

Isn’t this amazing? When it comes to finances, God both humbles us and empowers us. His covenant includes both.

This truth encourages me. Let it sink deep into your heart as well. At this point in your life you probably have limited finances. You might have developed spending habits and are having trouble managing your finances. Allow the Lord to humble you so you can listen to truth. Truth is always good, even when it is hard to accept.

God’s truth is designed for your good. Life will be easier as you apply and see the results. As you face times of financial difficulty in the future, use what you are going through now as an opportunity to look for the messages, ideas, and skills — and not on your own strength and ability — that God will use to teach you to rely on Him. This is why it is important

to learn financial wisdom in high school and college. The earlier you learn an important lesson the better.

First, you will escape from the results of bad decisions, such as credit card debt, because you understand what it can do to you. Second, you will develop financial wisdom as the result of a series of steps you have taken consistently over a long period of time. Third, the more you practice financial lessons, the better you get at them. Fourth, when it comes to investing and saving, the power of compound

interest is amazing. Over time, even a small amount of money can grow to a large sum.

The Children of Israel wandered until they learned to trust God. Their journey took 40 years, but yours does not need to.

## PRACTICAL STEPS

Make it your goal to find favor from God in your finances. Do this before you build a budget, analyze your debts, or worry about your credit score. Start with desiring God’s touch on your finances. Anything God works on will improve — guaranteed.

## Reducing expenses

Favor from God has two distinct themes. First, we need God to show us (through any means He chooses) how to reduce expenses, break free from debt, restore credit, and stop beating ourselves up for past mistakes. What will debt, especially credit card debt, do to hinder or destroy ministry?

When you are trapped in debt, you are limited in what you can do, where you can go in ministry,

**When it comes to finances, God both humbles us and empowers us.**

and what you can give. Even good debt can hinder you if the amount is more than you can afford to pay. This can include student loans, car payments, and house payments. Bad debt is especially destructive if it hurts your testimony as a Christian leader. Paying your bills on time is a mark of integrity. Failure to pay bills can bring accusations of dishonesty, and also have a negative witness in a community. In addition, many churches will terminate a minister who is not trustworthy in handling his personal finances.

## When you are trapped in debt, you are limited in what you can do, where you can go in ministry, and what you can give.

If you are already in financial trouble through credit card debt or other spending, seek His help so you can stop the negative activities and consequences that are hurting your financial life.

### Increasing wealth

The second equally important theme is to find God's favor for increasing wealth. Wealth is a tool — a financial force or strength that can be used to support yourself, provide for your family, give to expand the Kingdom, prepare for your retirement, and enjoy life now. In short, seek God's help to add positive financial ingredients to your life.

First, develop a biblical concept of wealth. *What is wealth? Is it having a large amount of money?*

Many people who have a great deal of money also have huge expenses. One of my most trusted, wealthy friends reminds me that people have a tendency to spend whatever they make, regardless of whether they make a lot or a little. People become wealthy simply by living within their means. How does

a person discipline himself to live within his means?

Why is this important for ministry?

The most powerful way to control expenses is to only spend what you have planned

to spend. This is called *budgeting*, but I prefer to call this a *spending plan*. (See my article "Getting Your Finances on Track," page 116.)

You put a

spending plan together by determining how much you will make in a month, and then deciding what you can afford to spend once that money comes into your account. Do whatever you need to do to stay on track. For some, this will mean cutting up credit cards and going with a cash-only system for spending.

The impact of having or not having a spending plan can either have a positive or negative effect on ministry: A pastor

- can be a good example in how to handle finances,
- can support God's work,
- and has less stress when he handles his finances well.

But,

- financial stress or failure can make it hard to minister effectively,
- and many people doubt a pastor's wisdom or integrity if he does not handle his finances properly.

Second, understand the true meaning of wealth. The real

definition of wealth has more to do with what you have left after you pay your bills and how you feel on the inside. Proverbs

10:22 says, "The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, and he adds no trouble to it." When you have peace that comes from the Lord's presence, you are experiencing great blessing. That, my friend, is wealth.

In the Old Testament, the word *chayil* is sometimes translated "wealth" or "riches." It is also used to describe an army, especially one that is *valiant*. This word can mean "something with power or force." I love this imagery — valiant and courageous — because God wants to create this kind of wealth in us. When He does, He can also trust us to manage it for good purposes, blessing, encouraging, and creating positive results. That is why He wants you and me to experience His creative blessing through our work. This is a part of His covenant with us as we follow Him.

### CONCLUSION

As you are preparing to go into ministry, knowing this truth from God's heart gives you a starting point. You take courage knowing that God intends for you to be financially healthy, strong, and productive. Poverty, debt, and financial struggle are not His goals for any of us. We may have to face them, but we do so in God's strength to defeat them. 🌟



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# PHASE TWO: PREPARATION

➔ **Preparing for ministry is essential and must be intentional.** Ministry demands personal and spiritual formation different from other life vocations. If those called into ministry are not careful, they can be distracted from their call because they may have aptitudes and skills for a variety of vocations or professions.

Ministry preparation may take place on a college/ seminary campus or in a solo setting through distance learning. Both are valid models. The campus setting provides opportunity for interaction with peers but can also present social distractions. Solo distance learning may provide a level of convenience but

may deprive students of social development through interaction with other students.

As senior pastor or youth pastor, this is a time to provide godly counsel as those who are called into ministry enter their preparation phase. Talk with these young people about their educational options and the necessity of lifelong learning and spiritual growth. Pray with them for God's guidance in their lives. Consider providing an annual scholarship for those attending Assemblies of God institutions.

Counsel them and pray with them concerning mate selection. The mate they chose is a critical factor in the effectiveness and success of their ministry.

## YOU ARE HERE





# LIFELONG LEARNING:

Developing Excellence and Finishing Strong

[ BY BYRON D. KLAUS ]

**P**reparation for the ministry should begin at the moment when we sense the call upon us. It should never end.”<sup>1</sup> With that poignant statement, Ralph Riggs described simply, and profoundly, a foundational part of the equation for effective ministry over the long haul. Although this Assemblies of God leader made that statement more than 65 years ago, its value refuses to be outdated.

Huge transactions are occurring in our world. Regardless of where pastors live, none are exempt from the radical morphing of our world, regional culture, and the church context in which we find ourselves.

The clash of civilizations predicted by historians and scholars is occurring, not only between cultures but also within similar cultures. Pastors need only to observe the Muslim world to see a fracturing that is mind-boggling.

Regardless of what a person may feel about postmodernism and its impact on our culture, there is a definite change in the assumptions by which values are arrived at personally or corporately. One need not be a student of the Pentecostal church to know that changes are occurring at an extraordinary rate in this Movement. The effort to keep up may doom us to be forever outdated.<sup>2</sup> The apostle Paul’s stark inquiry, “Who is equal to such a task?” (2 Corinthians 2:16) is not mere rhetoric; it captures the haunting question that faces every honest church leader.

Pastors live in a chaotic world that might be more accurately described as *chaordic*.<sup>3</sup> Multiple layers of change are occurring simultaneously in the places where God has called pastors to serve as leaders. Pastors can

choose to create their own virtual reality — a reality that becomes a safety zone removed from the real challenges

**“Preparation for the ministry should begin at the moment when we sense the call upon us. It should never end.”**

of representing Christ's kingdom to a fallen world. Pastors are most effective, however, when they choose to see that Jesus, as Minister par excellence, is not just a model, but also the continuing power of ministry being lived through them by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

## DRIVEN OR CALLED?

Ralph Riggs' poignant observation that preparation for ministry begins at one's calling requires the person who is called to make sure he proceeds from that point as one truly *called*, not *driven*. A pastor must see himself as Christ's steward, and not as a master of his own purposes, role, or identity.

The contrast between called and driven can be seen in juxtapositioning the lives of John the Baptist and King Saul.

John the Baptist seemed to have a sense of destiny that came from a deep understanding of his heavenly calling. We see

John the Baptist's inner disposition in John 3:27–30, where he said that the source of his ministry purpose and power was heavenly. He understood whom he represented when he concluded his speech by saying that “He (Jesus, the Messiah) must increase, but I *must* decrease” (KJV).<sup>4</sup>

Contrast John the Baptist with King Saul, who assumed that his call/anointing meant that he personally owned the throne of Israel. Any threat to that ownership needed to be met with violence and a defensive posture. As a driven person, Saul took his God-appointed role and created a major crisis. When we observe Saul's life from his anointing/calling forward, we see a slow but steady trajectory toward self-destruction.<sup>5</sup>

A comparison of John the Baptist and Saul provides a biblical example of what can happen to any 21st-century leader who does not proceed from the point of God's call with proper perspective. Biblical foundations are the primary and necessary structure on which ministry must be built for the long haul. What are biblical foundations for a lifetime of ministry?

## THE WORD OF GOD: A FOUNDATION FOR A LIFETIME OF MINISTRY

Pentecostals hold a deep belief in the authority of the Word of God. This dimension of our tradition has not wavered from its affirmation of historic commitment to the authority of the Bible. Yet, this commitment is not meant to be

Bible reveals God's perspective to readers so the Bible *reads us* while we read it.

The priority of building one's ministry on a biblical foundation is most effective when the Bible is viewed not only as a source of authoritative information, but also as a dynamic of spiritual formation. When pastors build foundations for ministry on a view of the Bible that sees God's Word as merely a source of authoritative information, negative results can occur over a lifetime of ministry.

First, pastors can grow weary of accumulating more information. They can become comfortable with their quota of information and retire not only from the rigor of studying God's Word, but also, more important, from any spiritual

**While today's pastors have learning opportunities that our forebears never dreamed of, the most important need Pentecostal leaders have is to make learning a way of life.**

a cold and calculating position that views the Bible as a scientific document that must be approached with the skill and precision of a scientist and only those professionally prepared to enter into such an interpretive exercise can hope to know what the Bible says. My pastor father often sang this song before he preached:

“The Bible stands though the hills may tumble,

It will firmly stand when the earth shall crumble;

I will plant my feet on its firm foundation,

For the Bible stands.”

This song was a declaration of the Bible's authority that affirmed the seriousness of reading the Word with respect. Because of the Bible's authority it also affirmed that the

willingness to submit their lives to the Bible's authority.

Second, pastors can become proud of the intellectual capabilities they have honed over a lifetime of ministry, such as their command of texts, tenses of verbs, and syntactical nuances.

Finally, a pastor's expertise in biblical interpretation can become a source of pride, and he can wield his sword with self-filled efforts to demonstrate his biblical prowess and destroy another person's perspective on similar texts. Such understandings of biblical foundations for ministry can become self-centered and lack any life-giving spiritual guidance or fuller disclosure of Jesus Christ.

Biblical foundations for ministry that view the Word of God as formational yield an entirely

different result over a lifetime of ministry. The Word of God is a mediator between people and God. It intrudes into people's lives and brings with it the presence of God that critiques their self-centeredness. The Word brings the power of God that calls people to repentance and demands submission to the purpose of God in His kingdom.

The picture Paul uses in 2 Timothy 3:16, when he describes Scripture as *God-breathed*, is crucial to any Pentecostal leader who desires an effective lifetime of ministry. God not only breathed on those servants He used to first write the texts of the Bible, but God also breathes on people as they read those God-breathed words so they can see God at work in their lives through a divine companionship with the Scripture they read. As a result, the Word of God shapes pastors into the bearers of God's presence in this world as their lives are empowered by the Holy Spirit to represent His redemptive purposes in concrete ways to a lost world.<sup>6</sup>

## THE PRESENT TENSE OF JESUS

When pastors have allowed a formational understanding of biblical foundations for ministry to be their experience, they open themselves up to a ministry based on the present tense of Jesus. Such a ministry takes seriously the guarantee of Pentecost that provides the assurance that the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth continues to this day by the power of the Holy Spirit. Luke's intent in his two-volume contribution to the New Testament was to demonstrate the connection between the earthly ministry of Jesus with its authoritative nature and the role of the Holy Spirit in continuing

Christ's redemptive ministry in the present by the work of the Holy Spirit. The Bible becomes a roadmap as pastors view the perimeters and dimensions of Jesus' ministry on earth and realize this same ministry is resident among them as Jesus in the present tense. When pastors realize this Pentecostal principle, they begin to understand that a lifetime of effective ministry is connected to their ever-maturing capability to discern Jesus in every aspect of ministry in which they participate. Pastors no longer view the Bible as a mere repository of authoritative information, but as an ever-present doorway to a deeper understanding of God's desire to redeem lost humanity. Pastors infuse their ongoing ministry with a continuing sense of His presence that connects biblical times and present experience.<sup>7</sup>

Ministry in the 21st century requires professional skills that previous generations would have known little about. For example, new technical skills are necessary for continuing effectiveness in our world. Huge philosophical shifts that have been in the making for half a century are now evident as pastors navigate the 21st century. These shifts will impact their preaching, relationships, and affect the social structures in our world. Changes will impact the way people understand the church and the way it is organized. Pastors cannot be shoddy in the way they approach preparation for the huge task of being a leader of the church in the 21st century. Quick-fix solutions to massive problems or short-term preparation for a lifetime of ministry that sees preparation as a nuisance and a waste of time cannot produce the deep rootedness that will reap effectiveness in the 21st century.

## DISCERNMENT: A BASIC TOOL

While there is no lack of literature on leadership and management in general and for the church in particular, the Pentecostal leader who wants to experience long-term effectiveness as a leader needs desperately to cultivate the skill of discernment.<sup>8</sup>

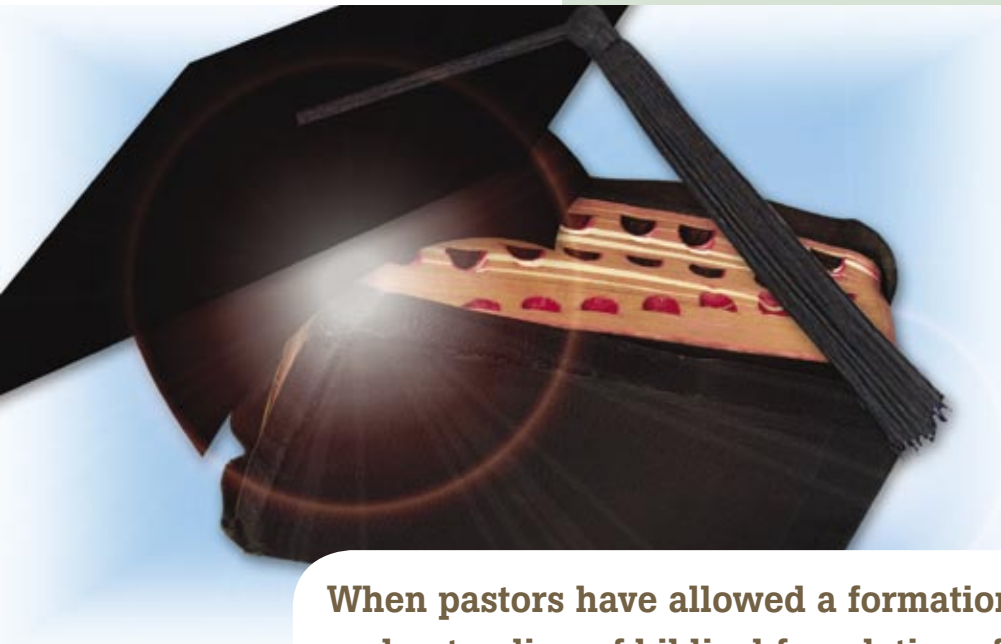
Discernment for ministry is the spiritual maturity to know the difference between works of human effort and the continuing ministry of Jesus empowered by the Spirit. If pastors have built their ministry on the Word of God that shapes and transforms their lives, they will enter into the realm where discernment becomes the minimal requirement for effectiveness.

Some may describe such a tool for 21st-century ministry as lacking practicality. The propensity toward concrete actions that produce results in ministry and the Pentecostal tendency to value results as a bottom line can cause pastors to become insensitive to the spiritual dynamic necessary for powerful Holy Spirit ministry. Well-intended ministry efforts can also be nonreflective of the continuing work of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pastors must be willing to admit that not all of their ministry efforts have been carried out in the power of the Spirit. The reality is that in their frenetic pace, ministers sometimes create their own vision for ministry, build the organization for that ministry, solicit the funds for such ministry, and think they have done God a favor by praying at the end of this process that their vision will glorify God.

Discernment critiques our tendency to work hard and believe that our efforts are self-validating because we called our efforts





**When pastors have allowed a formational understanding of biblical foundations for ministry to be their experience, they open themselves up to a ministry based on the present tense of Jesus.**

ministry. But the only ministry that will have lasting results is the continuing ministry of Jesus Christ working through us by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. If pastors do not cultivate this basic leadership skill, they are bound to experience the same shock experienced by the leaders in Matthew 7:21.

How do pastors build ministry discernment skills? Focusing on the Word of God is foundational. When pastors accept the Bible as God-breathed, and affirm that God-breathing includes them as they encounter this doorway into God's presence, they have built their foundation well. As pastors encounter God's Word as transformative, they see the Bible as alive and God at work. There is a sense that the presence, power, and purpose of God's redemptive plan is written on every page. We affirm this continuing action in the same way that Jesus says He was continuing the work of His Father (John 5:17).

Pastors must nurture a deep realization that the Bible is the authoritative doorway that not only records God's action and perspective with His created world, but also affirms that redemptive action continues to this day because the followers of Jesus have been empowered to bear witness to that redemptive purpose (Acts 1:6–8). No part of our world, or any dimension of our ministry in the name of Jesus Christ, can avoid the necessity to reflect on the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ. Pentecostals have long been known as people who believe that Jesus is coming soon. They have been infused with a baptism of God's power that is intrinsically connected to the redemptive ministry of Jesus Christ. The will of the Father is that none perish and that some from every tribe, tongue, and nation be present on that final day to bear witness to the power of redemption.

As a Pentecostal leader, I live under the realization that the present

tense of Jesus is here and now. The redemptive work that Jesus did 2,000 years ago is still going on; and, by the guarantee of Pentecost, we get to participate in that ongoing ministry. The most practical thing Pentecostal leaders can do to connect to the ongoing ministry of Pentecost is to realize that God is at work to this very day. He does not have a new agenda because it is the 21st century. God has the same agenda that brought Christ to earth. Jesus came to give His life a

ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

The only thing that will please God and assure ongoing long-term ministry effectiveness is a

keen awareness of when we have constructed our human efforts as a substitute for God's transforming power. Ministry effectiveness only occurs when we have truly allowed Christ to shine forth in all His intended redemptive power.

## PREPARATION: WHERE AND HOW?

As a seminary president, I believe in thorough preparation and continuing development of ministers. While I cannot make a case for the number of earned degrees (or the lack of degrees) as a clear indicator of effective long-term ministry, I do know that personal growth as a minister requires time and hard work. Personal preparation is not an addendum to add to one's agenda if he finds time at the end of the day. I do not want a surgeon operating on me if the last time he was in an operating suite was during his medical residency. If real estate agents are required to continue learning to maintain their real-estate

# PHASE TWO

licenses, then it seems that a lifelong pursuit of those spiritual resources that create vibrant Pentecostal leaders should not be avoided.

The continuing growth of a minister cannot be done in a haphazard way. Professionals, such as doctors, have specific pathways toward certification. Real estate agents who want the state to renew their licenses must follow a prescribed pathway of continuing education to remain certified.

While pathways offering training abound, these can be categorized in three major areas. The *formal process* is one in which a set course of study is systematically carried out in a prescribed place over a prescribed period. Because the course of study is highly informational, this process is usually housed in an educational institution. We usually call educational experiences received through formal processes *pre-service*. This kind of education process is seen most clearly in colleges and universities, and for some in seminary.

The *nonformal process* is short term and what might be called *in-service* training. People in professional careers take short periods of time to sharpen their skills so they can be more effective. Nonformal education is expected to bring immediate results in the effectiveness of the professional because enhanced skills are the focus of this training.

The *informal process* happens in the context of relationships. Intentional friendships/relationships allow human relationships to become the classroom for growing as a person and a leader. Current examples of this are mentoring relationships, accountability groups, and life coaches. This educational process focuses on the inner life of the leader

and the way in which one's inner self plays out in human relationships.

Leadership that expects to have long-term effectiveness needs to have components of all three of these educational experiences. Lifelong growth toward effectiveness acknowledges that pastors need an ever-expanding breadth of information with which to understand the people God has placed them with, the needs these people have, and how those needs have developed. But informational knowledge must be applied because human relationships are the context in which church leaders operate. A pastor's self-awareness as a human being and his growing in his capability to communicate with people are crucial. New skills are often necessary as pastors face an ever-changing world. Nonformal education can facilitate the growth of those professional skills that help keep pastors sharp and effective.<sup>9</sup>

While today's pastors have learning opportunities that our forebears never dreamed of, the most important need Pentecostal leaders have is to make learning a way of life. The development of rabbis in the later part of Old Testament history created a priority and desire in Old Testament life for a never-ending commitment to learning.

A commitment to learning does not necessarily mean the pursuit of academic degrees, but it does mean a commitment to systematic growth and exposure to learning resources that can enhance our lifelong pursuit of God's call on our lives. I have met some Pentecostal leaders who say with pride that they have not read a book since the day they graduated from Bible college. They view this as a badge of spirituality. Such affirmation smacks more of personal pride than of spiritual vitality.

Some leaders' aversion to continual growth as a leader is stymied by the memory of a teacher who was boring and out of touch with ministry realities. While such experiences can be powerful, they do not explain why one would want to repeat that odyssey. Poor examples abound as to how some pastors were mentored, taught in an educational institution, or shaped by on-the-job training.

The needs of our world are too great, the challenges of the 21st century so daunting, and the hunger for spiritual things too obvious in our world for pastors to be anything less than committed to the most rigorous efforts in growing as 21st-century leaders. This is a lifelong task; it is a necessary discipline for the person called by God, and it will require thoroughness, not shoddiness, in our efforts. 🌱

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## NOTES

1. Ralph Riggs, *A Successful Pastor* (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1931), 20, 21.
2. See Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1996). Also see George Barna, *Revolution* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005).
3. *Chaordic* is a word coined by the founder of the VISA card, Dee Hock, to describe a world that has simultaneous order and chaos intertwined. See Dee Hock, *Birth of the Chaordic Age* (San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler, 2000).
4. Gordon MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 56–59.
5. See 1 Samuel 18–31 for the full account of Saul's self-destructive life trajectory.
6. M. Robert Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2000), 41–43.
7. Ray S. Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997), 149–158.
8. A search of <http://www.amazon.com> using the keyword leadership will yield at least 71,000 entries. If the word management is used, an additional 200,000 entries are offered. Even allowing for significant overlap of the entries, this still demonstrates that there is no lack of information on the subject.
9. Edgar J. Elliston, "Designing Leadership Education," *Missiology: An International Review*, 16, no. 2 (April 1988): 203–213.

BIBLE

# THE BIBLE COLLEGE —

Developing Character and Building Theologically Sound Ministers [ BY GARY DENBOW ]

**When a person desires to become a medical doctor, he seeks acceptance into a reputable medical school.** He spends the next 4 years

engrossed in the study of medicine and the life of a medical professional. His educational experience is part academic, part practical (hands-on), and part cultural. He learns to think, respond, and live like a physician.

When a high school senior senses a life direction toward military service, he seeks appointment to a military academy where, for 4 years, he is educated in the rigors of military life and work. That student's plan of study is academic, practical, and cultural. Within 4 years, an 18-year-old cadet can become a 22-year-old second lieutenant leading a squad of 30 soldiers into combat.<sup>1</sup>

Many educational specialties require students be fully immersed in vocational-related work during their educational experience. The vocation being taught cannot be relayed through class attendance a few hours a week. It must become a lifestyle — a total life experience for the student. This kind of education is the goal of each Assemblies of God Bible college.

Every Christian is called to experience new birth or salvation (John 3:3), water baptism (Acts 2:38), discipleship (Luke 9:23), evangelism (Mark 1:17), and service (Matthew 25:34–40). It is also clear from Scripture that God, in His providence, calls men and women specifically to the ministry of the Word — to full-time vocational Christian service (Acts 6:4; 13:2). The question is: What kind of education might best serve a person who responds to God's call to the ministry of the Word? What can a Bible college do to train workers for church leadership and missions work? Let's look at some areas of training where a Bible college can serve a unique role.

## PROMOTING PERSONAL SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The late George W. Peters, veteran missionary and seminar professor, outlined several ways in which a minister prepares his heart for the ministry of the Word. Here are some of his suggestions:

- “Make sure your body has become a living and sanctified sacrifice unto the Lord” (Romans 12:1,2).
- “Make sure there is no conscious sin dulling your

spiritual ear and spiritual sight” (Ephesians 1:18; Colossians 1:9).

- “Make sure there are no preconceived personal plans and preferences” (Psalm 25:9).

- “Make sure you are willing to go and be used anywhere” (John 7:17).

- “Get saturated with the Word of God” (Psalm 119:11,104,105).

- “Get a world vision and a world burden through intercessory prayer” (John 4:35).<sup>2</sup>

Such a list is only representative of the many aspects of personal, spiritual growth that need to take place in the life of one called to the ministry of the Word. But an Assemblies of God Bible college with its daily chapel services, association with spiritually mature, seasoned faculty, and assigned times of prayer and study is the perfect place for spiritual formation to take place.

## BUILDING A GOOD FOUNDATION OF BIBLE AND THEOLOGY

There are two reasons why students, especially those just out of high school, need a concentrated track of courses in Bible and theology.

1. Many teenagers answer the call of God at youth camp or a convention. Many of these are saved and filled with the Spirit in that same meeting. This indicates that they are believers only 1 or 2 years before coming to Bible college. They have not had time for the Bible teaching necessary to give them a good understanding of Scripture. They must have a place where a foundation is laid in Bible and theological studies that will help shape their worldview for the rest of their lives.

2. Many of these same teenagers come from churches that have no organized Bible-study programs, such as Sunday School. They have heard some Bible stories, but have not attended classes that systematically cover the Bible over a 5- or 7-year period. Most have never read the Bible through. Some do not even know the names of the books of the Bible. They need classes to build their level of biblical knowledge.

It takes a significant amount of training to move a student to think biblically concerning life issues when he has never been taught to do so. If he does not learn

# PHASE TWO

to think biblically, he will not be able to lead churches to think biblically. Bible schools that require students to take 30 hours or more of Bible and theology are the best places to train students to think biblically, especially recent high school graduates.

## **BUILDING MINISTRY LEADERSHIP CHARACTER AND SKILLS**

Timothy's relationship with Paul was that of a learner. Paul's goal was to train Timothy to be a leader. Paul's teaching provides a good outline of the work of a Bible college in training church leaders in the character qualities and leadership skills necessary to adequately serve the church.

1. Timothy's responsibility was to maintain correct doctrine in the churches he served (1 Timothy 1:3,4; 6:3–5; 2 Timothy 2:2). Paul expected Timothy to identify false teachers, to keep false teachers from teaching in the churches, and to teach the churches to “avoid godless chatter” that would lead to ungodliness and false teaching (2 Timothy 2:16). Similarly, Bible college curriculum includes apologetics, ethics, philosophy, and Assemblies of God history and polity. These courses are designed to equip church leaders with the tools needed to keep church teaching pure and biblical.

2. Timothy had the responsibility to identify, test, and install church leadership (1 Timothy 3:1–13). Bible college students participate in practicums that enhance their leadership abilities in practical areas of ministry. Bible colleges encourage students to be involved in practical ministry. During the Central Bible College 2006 spring break, 35 ministry teams comprising 500 or more students participated in ministry in the United States, England, Czech Republic, Guatemala, and Burundi.

3. Timothy's responsibility was to maintain a right spirit and character. He was to stay humble (1 Timothy 1:12–16); not be fearful (2 Timothy 1:7); maintain an active prayer life (1 Timothy 2:1–8); “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness” (1 Timothy 6:11); engender hope in others (1 Timothy 6:17–19); live an exemplary life before others (1 Timothy 4:12); keep his relationships above reproach (1 Timothy 5:1–16); and learn to be content in every situation (1 Timothy 6:6–10).

The leadership qualities and characteristics Paul wanted to instill in Timothy require training beyond classroom instruction if they are to grow in the life of a prospective minister or missionary. Developing leadership qualities requires training from living, breathing examples — mentors and coaches. Bible

colleges provide an atmosphere where students can be mentored by ministry veterans who exemplify and display the characteristics that Paul commended to Timothy as indispensable in the life of a minister.

## **BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP/ACCOUNTABILITY NETWORK FOR A LIFETIME**

Classes, chapel services, dorm prayers, and class projects serve many purposes. First, they build a bond between students that remains beyond commencement. That bond is aided by today's communication technology. Students can contact other students by e-mail in any area served by an Internet service provider. Recent Bible school graduates have established regular times when they group together in a chatroom, sometimes using video, to continue accountable relationships with each other.

Second, shared experiences help students who, because of their background, come to Bible college relationally challenged. Some students want a close, supportive relationship with someone who has experienced a similar call to the ministry, but, because of their home or local church situation, they have never had this kind of relationship. Bible college is a place where students from all walks of life can learn how to relate to each other and learn to live in community with others.

## **BUILDING FOR THE HARVEST**

Jesus' prayer for the harvest was for laborers to enter the harvest (Matthew 9:38). The role of Bible colleges is to do just that — produce laborers for the harvest. Worldwide (outside the United States) there are 47,628 students studying in 869 Bible schools/colleges and an additional 45,669 students studying in 1,131 extension schools.<sup>3</sup> Added to these students are those studying at U.S. schools. Our total number of ministers and missionaries currently in training is more than 100,000. What an army of harvest workers those currently in training will be. It is a pleasure to be part of such an endeavor. 🌱



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### **NOTES**

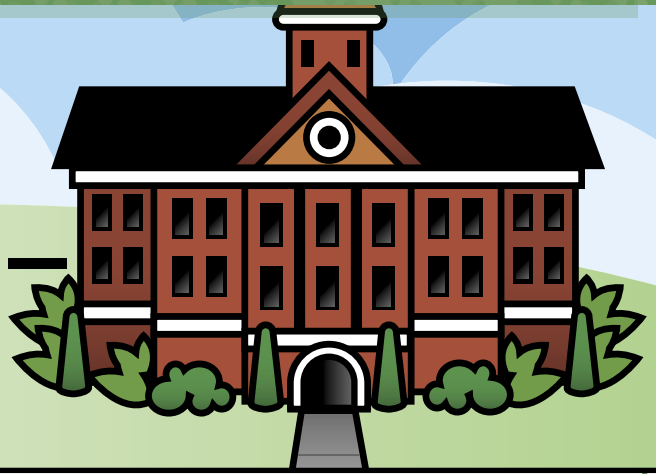
1. This idea was shared with the author in a conversation on 16 August 2005 with Byron Klaus, president of Assemblies of God Theological Seminary.
2. George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 284.
3. Statistics for the 2004 calendar year supplied by the Assemblies of God World Missions Research Office.



# THE UNIVERSITY

Providing Diversity in Ministry Training

[ BY ROBERT H. SPENCE ]



## The role of the university in ministry training has deep roots in our nation.

Higher education in America had its beginning shortly after the first permanent settlements were established in the new world. Early colonial leaders foresaw the need for preparing ministers who would fill their pulpits. Following the building of homes and places of worship and establishing local government, they gave priority to providing college experience to equip ministers spiritually and academically. Harvard University, founded in 1636, was the first of America's well-known colleges and universities begun primarily to prepare ministers.

The Assemblies of God also recognized the need for a trained ministry from its beginning. Church historians have documented the purposes set forth for the April 1914 meetings in Hot Springs, Arkansas, that led to the establishment of the Assemblies of God. During the 10 days of worship, prayer, debate, and discussion, the delegates considered five basic purposes for their coming together. These five purposes had been published in advance in various publications including *Word and Witness*. Among these five purposes was: "We may also have a proposition to lay before the body for a general Bible Training School with a literary department for our people."<sup>1</sup>

Many prominent leaders in the Pentecostal movement in the first and second decades of the 1900s were well educated by the standards of their day. Many had university and seminary degrees. It might be assumed that these leaders would have emphasized formal education for future ministers and encouraged college education. However, the reaction of the established church to the Pentecostal revival, and especially the strong opposition to the Pentecostal message by well-educated clergy, led to the perception that Pentecostal experience and college-trained clergy were not compatible.

Consequently, the Pentecostal/charismatic movement in general and the Assemblies of God in particular, encouraged pastoral training that primarily focused on concentrated Bible study. Early Pentecostal leaders, believing strongly in the imminent return of the Lord, urged those who felt a call to pastoral or evangelistic ministry to move quickly into full-time service. Expanded educational experiences would delay their ministry.

For the first half-century of our church's history, a Bible institute or Bible school graduate often had as much, if not more, formal education than most people in his congregation. Preparation for ministry, patterned after the effective and successful Bible training institutes begun by Dwight L. Moody and A.B. Simpson, was considered adequate for students in attaining a basic knowledge of the Scriptures. Pastors were neither expected nor required to have broad educational experience. But radical changes in society following World War II, however, created a drastic paradigm shift.

Access to higher education was greatly enhanced in postwar America. Government programs in the 1960s that made financial assistance available further accelerated the expansion of educational opportunities beyond high school to more people. Consequently, pastors began standing before congregations that included ever-increasing numbers of college graduates and professional people. The infusion of large numbers of people during the charismatic revival further changed the educational complexion of the Pentecostal movement. What transpired educationally in our nation was also occurring around the world in varying degrees.

With the challenges facing the church today, a relevant question is: What role does the university have in equipping those called to full-time ministry?

## PHASE TWO

First, universities provide opportunities to amplify the study of Scripture with complementary curriculum. Biblical studies include a strong emphasis on examining the biblical text as well as the context. Opportunities to study Greek and Hebrew strengthen students for lifelong learning. English, classical literature, history, and courses in the behavioral and natural sciences also help prepare ministers to present the Scriptures more effectively.

Assemblies of God universities also emphasize the integration of faith and learning, helping students move from the perception that the work of God is confined to the church and the Lord's Day to an understanding that God's truth permeates the totality of their world. Studying in this environment prepares future ministers to see God at work in history as well as in the present, enabling them to teach and preach God's Word and make applications of the truth relevant to where members of the congregation are living.

An expanded curriculum permits future ministers to respond to God-given interests that add depth as well as breadth to specialized ministry. For example, those who sense the Lord's leading toward a counseling ministry can be more appropriately prepared by studying human behavior. Parallel studies of Scripture help students use relevant applications of God's Word to address inappropriate behavior patterns.

Ministerial students in a Christian university have opportunity to grow with classmates who are also preparing for their divinely ordained tasks. Rubbing shoulders with fellow students who will become teachers, business executives, and professionals — people with whom the minister will be working with on church boards — can lead to a more harmonious future ministry together.

The role of the university in ministry training is becoming increasingly important as a place where those who will serve in other cultures can develop skills and professions that permit access to closed societies. A significant number of Assemblies of God missionaries have been able to go into places that desperately need the gospel because of skills or professions that a university education provided them.

Bivocational pastors, as well, are filling a unique need in the Pentecostal church by serving smaller churches in areas that do not have population-growth potential. The role of the university in ministry training can equip God-called men and women with the vocational skills and professional preparation that will provide them with finances while ministering to the body of Christ.

Preparing for ministry in a Christian university helps

students acquire an appreciation for lay involvement in Christian service. During college, numerous opportunities are available for missions outreach. Student groups include some who are majoring in Bible, some who are called to missions, and others who will be accountants, social workers, coaches, and scientists. Christian service can establish a foundation for a structure of outreach ministry that places value on all members of the Body.

Ministers enjoy the enabling presence of the Holy Spirit as they discharge their spiritual duties. They can also appropriate boldness and courage from the Lord's vast reservoir of enabling grace. But many sincere and

**Ministerial students in a Christian university have opportunity to grow with classmates who are also preparing for their divinely ordained tasks.**

dedicated ministers, however, may feel unprepared and inadequate as they face their congregations because of limitations in their training. A university education can reassure ministers by helping them avoid intimidation and feeling a lack of self-assurance. Also, when ministers successfully meet the academic requirements of a university, they better understand the academic preparation necessary in other career fields.

University training is not the only way spiritual leaders can be equipped, but it is one way. Educational experience is never a substitute for personal, spiritual preparation and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Educational development that sponsors a haughty and proud attitude is not only a poor education, but also an inadequate education. Solomon could have been speaking directly to someone seeking the Spirit's direction about ministerial preparation when he said, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10). 🌱



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### ENDNOTE:

1. Edith L. Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism*, vol. 1, (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), 201, 202.



# DISTANCE LEARNING —

## Training for Ministry While in the Ministry [ BY DILLA DAWSON ]

### Picture a 28-year-old accountant in Cleveland.

By day he supervises a staff, meets with clients, and oversees the audits for major corporations. He works an average of 50 hours per week (more during tax season), travels at least twice a month, and commutes 45 minutes to work (each way). He spends time with friends, jogs everyday, and is active in his college alumni association. He is also training for ministry through Berean School of the Bible.

The path to ministry is not nearly as clear-cut for most people as we would like to think. Often, God's plan takes people via the scenic route to the pulpit or mission field. Bivocational ministry has become a common practice, and more and more God is calling people who are not 18-year-old high school seniors.

Such individuals require options for training without compromising the value or content of that training. Global University's Berean School of the Bible has the task of meeting these training needs, and has been rising to the challenge for nearly 60 years. In today's world, the stakes are higher than ever. Berean is working to provide quality distance learning, consistent doctrinal training, and practical ministry application.

### GOING THE DISTANCE

Distance learning offers those preparing for ministry a distinctive opportunity: to train for ministry while in the ministry. In establishing the Berean School of the Bible, the General Council of the Assemblies of God recognized the necessity of allowing individuals to learn the important theological and practical aspects of ministry while fulfilling the call of God on their lives.

The benefits of such training are unquestioned. First, the daily schedule of the average minister is anything but average. Meetings, office work, visitation, and crises tend to make the pastoral ministry far more than a 9-to-5 job. Add to that the large number of bivocational

ministers, and the time constraints become nearly impossible. The key element these ministers need in training is flexibility. A course that requires them to be at a certain place or even to attend a virtual classroom at a specific time is not a viable option. Independent study is the answer for these individuals.

This is what the General Council had in mind from the beginning for Berean — training that meets the needs of those who wish to train for ministry even as they participate in ministry.

Many students learn better in a group environment or lack the discipline to study on their own. For these, Berean developed church-based study centers. Today, half of Berean's 22,000 students are learning alongside their peers in more than 2,000 study centers. In addition, districts are establishing study centers to develop closer ties to students in their borders. Master's Commissions, Urban Bible Training Centers, and Chi Alpha groups all operate study centers using Berean materials to train individuals for ministry while they do the work of ministry. The argument that students can learn more effectively in a group setting is not lost with distance education. Berean study centers demonstrate that the group learning environment is alive and well, even among those who choose to learn at a distance.

### MINDING THE THEOLOGICAL STORE

Consistent doctrine is important in today's church. The Assemblies of God has done better than most at maintaining its core beliefs. The battle usually comes down to relevance versus biblical fidelity. Can the church hold the theological line and still engage the culture of today? Absolutely. Maintaining core beliefs starts with the basic concept of knowing what you believe and why you believe it. Pentecostal doctrines are so essential that our teaching must remain steadfast and true.

The General Presbytery commissioned Global University

# PHASE TWO

to develop new Berean material with doctrinal purity largely in mind. When half of newly certified ministers are receiving their ministry training through Berean, explicit biblical truth is non-negotiable. Much of the time spent developing these new courses has been devoted to theological review from leading Assemblies of God scholars. To ensure a standard of excellence regarding Bible doctrine, Berean courses are rigorously analyzed for clear, consistent content. These courses, developed under the careful supervision of the finest minds in our Fellowship, offer consistency that is indispensable in training a generation of world-changing ministers.

In developing new Berean courses for training Assemblies of God ministers, it was clear from the start that these courses be explicitly, undeniably, and unabashedly Pentecostal. The authors were to be Pentecostal, the collateral texts were to have roots in the Pentecostal heritage wherever possible, and assignments were to emphasize Pentecostal principles. Many of the courses use collateral texts published by the Assemblies of God.

Our goal is to raise up a generation of ministers so entrenched in the Pentecostal experience that they cannot help but declare it from their pulpits. In doing so, they link arms with previous generations that have impacted eternity in the Spirit's power to make an indelible impression in these last days. The Great Commission is to be completed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

## BEYOND THE BOOKS

Ministry training that never takes students beyond a book is less valuable. Education must include more than exams, and essays only fulfill a piece of the training puzzle. The final major directive from the General Council for Berean courses was that courses include a practical element.

This requirement created a unique set of challenges for a distance learning institution. How does an institution do field work for more than 20,000 students whose classrooms are located in home offices, Starbucks® coffee shops, and church fellowship halls? Three key elements were determined to meet the need.

First, each level (certified, licensed, ordained) was given a ministerial internship course. These courses build on each other and provide consistency of content. Each student works alongside a seasoned pastor, meeting with him weekly to complete hands-on assignments and for coaching in a mentoring relationship. There is still basic course work, an exam, and a collateral reading

assignment. In addition, the pastor submits an evaluation of the student's progress during the internship. This approach gives the student exposure to ministry in a supervised environment where learning and growth can take place.

Every Berean course also has a practical assignment attached to it called "Pass It On." These assignments are less involved than the internship, but require students to

**Our goal is to raise up a generation of ministers so entrenched in the Pentecostal experience that they cannot help but declare it from their pulpits.**

perform tasks ranging from witnessing in the community to service projects in the church. In addition to applying what they are learning in each course, students are also taught the value of hard work in the ministry.

The final practical element is a district seminar course that is required at each level. These courses give students opportunities to interact with district leaders and give leaders opportunity to directly impact those preparing for ministry. Courses focus on leadership techniques and practical ministry components. The level of direct involvement is left up to individual districts. Some districts choose to offer seminar courses, as well as other courses, in a seminar format. Some allow students to study this material independently. Other districts do the seminar course, but allow for some flexibility.

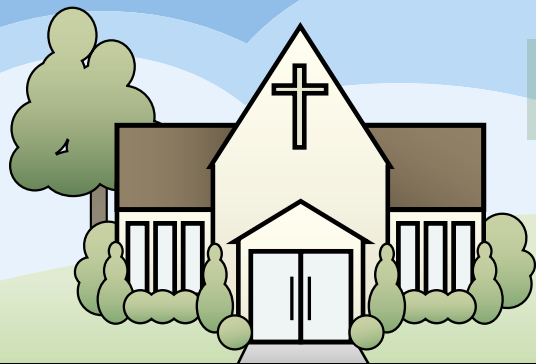
## LEARNING AT THE SPEED OF LIFE

Life will not slow down for ministry training. If current trends continue, we will never be less busy than we are right now. This is not an appealing thought, but it makes distance learning more important than ever. Berean School of the Bible offers training solutions for people who want to learn ministry as they do ministry. Undergraduate and graduate training is also available through Global University. To learn more about training options, visit <http://www.thenewberean.com> or <http://www.discovergu.com> today. 🌐



**DILLA DAWSON** is vice president of U.S. Student Relations and dean of Berean School of the Bible, Springfield, Missouri.





# MASTER'S COMMISSION—

## A Generation Equipped To Influence Its Culture

[ BY JEREMY DEWEERDT ]

**In 1993, I was asked to start a Master's Commission at First Assembly of God in Rockford, Illinois. Master's Commission had begun in Phoenix, Arizona, at Tommy Barnett's church, under the direction of Lloyd Ziegler.**

The movement, however, had been contained to Phoenix and a couple of other locations across the nation. Little did anyone know that Master's Commission was on the verge of explosive growth.

I began to look into Master's Commission and was immediately captured by the spirit of the ministry — a call to discipleship and the mentoring of a generation. Thus, with the encouragement of Jeanne Mayo, I began Rockford Master's Commission. With 19 students, I started a journey that would forever change my life and the lives of others. In this, our 13th year, we currently have more than 130 students and staff from around the world, hungry to see God change their lives.

In the Assemblies of God, Master's Commission has become a household name, much because of the vision of Lloyd Zeigler and his desire to see God spread this vision to a worldwide audience. Today, Master's Commissions have spread across the United States, Canada, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Central America.

But, why Master's Commission? Why the exponential growth over the past decade?

### THE POWER OF TRAINING WITHIN THE FOUR WALLS OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Endless resources for ministry training and mobilization exist inside the local church. The goal of Master's Commission is to create a classroom called the local church, where young adults can learn from those in full-time ministry. Jesus called out to His future disciples, "Come, follow me" (Matthew 4:19; 19:21). Each day the disciples were taught by Christ and caught His heart for this world. Master's Commission enables this same environment inside the church.

Every year dozens of students travel from around the world to Rockford to commence training and life-change inside Rockford First Assembly of God. Students interact on a weekly basis not only with the RMC staff, but also the pastoral leadership team, including our lead pastor, Paul Martin. Ministry Tracks, as we have coined

them, place pastor with student, creating a mentoring environment that produces spiritual growth.

Students shadow pastors and staff as they perform various ministry tasks. Students have opportunity to interact with every ministry from the nursery to the retirement center — watching, observing, learning, catching, and, most important, interacting with pastors and RMC staff who are doing the work of the local church. For example, if a pastor is meeting with a grieving family, a RMC student is there and observes firsthand how to make funeral arrangements.

The opportunity to learn by doing is unique and life changing. I have watched hundreds of students come through the doors of RMC, and, over a 3-year period, live the ministry. One of our mottos is: RMC — Where education meets experience. Students must overcome their fears as they preach, lay hands on the sick, comfort a mourning person, feed the poor, share their faith, run events, live within a budget, and live out the ministry. This up close and personal approach to ministry training provides an environment of trial and error. Usually there is a learning curve, until students begin to feel relatively comfortable doing ministry. In the long run, these years of trying, failing, trying again, and succeeding give students a head start into their vocational ministry calling.

### REGENERATION THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD AND PRAYER

The mission statement of Master's Commission is simple: To know God and make Him known. These two core values drive and determine the daily schedule.

When a student arrives at Master's Commission, he is immediately placed in an environment where there is a hunger to understand the Word of God and participate in prayer. In Rockford, the day begins with praise and worship led by students. Then, each student spends 90 minutes in prayer and personal study of the Word in our sanctuary before attending academic classes taught by pastors and staff. This combination is revolutionary.

Over 9 months, the concentrated time in the Word of God and in prayer begins to renew the mind, impassion the heart, and build the personal convictions of each student. Each student is also required to memorize 120

# PHASE TWO

Scriptures, study them in their original language, and within their biblical context.

Connecting to God is what gives a minister his spiritual vitality, insight, and longevity. Master's Commission students build habits that prioritize the things that will keep them in the ministry for the long haul. With an understanding of and a hunger for the Word of God and prayer, the minister-in-the-making learns that it is more important to be than do. Being precedes doing and creates eternal fruit for the kingdom of God.

Because of Master's Commission's emphasis on the Word and prayer, thousands of lives have been restored and minds have been renewed. Bitterness, hurt, pain, apathy, abuse, guilt, and worldliness have been dealt with through the regenerative power of the Word of God and prayer. Together with their classmates, students wrestle, pursue, and engage the Bible in the unique community of Master's Commission, alongside those who are hungry to know God and live their lives for Him.

## A CALL TO ACTION

During the week, each Master's Commission makes efforts to reach its community. Whether it is urban work, coffeehouse outreach, foster-care mentoring, neighborhood adopt-a-block, juvenile detention home involvement, hospital visitation, community volunteerism, nursing home care, jail ministry, or after-school programs, each Master's Commission finds a need in its community and attempts to meet that need in the spirit of Christlike love. Recently, a group of RMC students adopted a local urban public housing development. Every Tuesday night they meet with the residents and share the love of Christ. This experience will mark them for the rest of their lives.

Each student is also given opportunity to choose from a dozen mission trips to places around the world. We want students to develop a worldview. These future ministers will then take these life experiences and the global view they have gained and apply it to their future assignments. Ministry will become their passion, and Jesus' mandate to go into the entire world and make disciples will be a reality in their lives. As missionaries, pastors, children's workers, or even ministers in the marketplace, they will notice the fields that are white, ready for harvest.

I was proud of Master's Commissions across the nation that immediately responded to the disaster created by hurricanes in the Gulf Coast states last year. Dozens of Master's Commissions provided hundreds of workers who gave thousands of man-hours laboring to help those in need. Each Master's Commission that participated

did not put its educational syllabus on hold during that season because the relief effort was part of the Master's Commission educational experience. They could respond quickly to bring help where it was most needed.

This generation is intensely creative and passionately desires to make a difference in its culture. Once God captures students' hearts, they believe they are designed for a purpose and want to make a contribution that will be eternal. Many will go into full-time ministry, but many will become teachers, doctors, homemakers, artists, musicians, and businessmen. Either way, their lives will be missionally focused.

Anne Tumborello is a single female who is leading an urban youth group in downtown Chicago at a church plant. Tiffany Reed is a missionary associate in Russia. Chad Furlong planted a church in San Diego. Kim Johnson just passed her BAR exam and is pursuing juvenile law. Brian Smith is a youth pastor in Des Moines, Iowa. Ryan Furman is an actor in New York City. Kristi Phillips won Mrs. America 2003. Kristi's husband, Brian, is director of Youth Alive for Illinois. Nate Eiesland just released his third CD. Stephen McNeilly is a business owner and youth pastor. Shayna Stimpson works with Viacom, Jerry Bruckheimer films, and now heads up her own design studio. Andrew Moore is a missionary in Haiti. Corbyn Tyson is a graphic designer. Andy Warren is lead pastor of First Assembly of God in Conneaut, Ohio. I also think of Ty Bean, graduate of Phoenix Master's Commission, who is presently leading a spiritual renewal in the professional rodeo community, and Suzy Vulaca who was one of the favorites of *American Idol* season 3 and was public about her relationship with God.

What do they have in common? They all graduated from Master's Commission and are using their lives to make a difference in this world. They are taking the Lord's instruction to be salt and light seriously.

God wants His people at the crossroads of culture. People of faith should be the most influential business professionals, musicians, teachers, missionaries, parents, artists, pastors, government officials, and community leaders. Without adopting the value system of this world, they will stand with conviction. Through Master's Commission, God is raising up a generation that will influence its culture. 🌱



**JEREMY DEWEERDT**, is director, Rockford Master's Commission, Rockford, Illinois.



# URBAN BIBLE TRAINING CENTERS—

Empowering Local People for Local Ministry [ BY JIM HALL ]

**"If you have any heart toward the cause of Christ and for building people up and letting them do the work of the ministry, you need to look for alternatives for their lives, and there is no better alternative than this one for somebody in my case,"**

says Chicago UBTC graduate Marcos Sollis, ex-gang leader, and current Royal Rangers commander and elder in Risen Savior AG, Chicago, Illinois. Sollis is married with five children and employed by Shell Oil Co. Pastors Dan and Dena Bawinkel did the foundational discipling in Sollis' life, and UBTC provided the tools for training Sollis needed for leadership in the church.

Urban Bible Training Centers, an endorsed ministry of Assemblies of God U.S. Missions, was originally provided to help pastors and U.S. missionaries raise up indigenous church leaders in our nation's urban centers. U.S.

Missionaries Jim and Betty Hall were recruited to design and launch this ministry. Jim continues as national director.

Local pastors and U.S. missionaries serve as local directors. Berean School of the Bible (Global University) provides academic services. There are more than 40 UBTCs nationwide, with more than 1,000 students enrolled at a time.

The primary mission field of UBTC continues to be major cities, but the UBTC model has also proven effective in suburban and rural communities because the strategy is based on principles of leadership training demonstrated in the New Testament by Jesus with the apostles. These principles are:

1) Teaching takes place in the context of personal relationships.

2) Instruction is concurrent with active ministry.

This is how UBTC applies these principles:

First, students study distance-education materials at home, and then attend discussion-based classes to reinforce comprehension and develop communication skills. Local pastors and other Christian leaders who are proven in the topic of study facilitate classes. Course materials are noncollege level, but meet requirements for credentials with the Assemblies of God. Between 200 to 300 graduates have received credentials with the Assemblies of God in the 14 years of this program.


Second, all students must participate in local church ministry during the time they are students.

Third, proven leaders in the church mentor each student. The student and mentor meet 2 hours each month and discuss the student's classroom studies, personal spiritual growth, and his ministry in the local church. The mentoring agenda also addresses family life issues, ministry within a culturally diverse environment, and how to disciple a new believer one-on-one.

The UBTC model is effective because it is accessible and affordable. Churches and pastors work together to provide training for members who feel God calling them to ministry as laypersons or as credentialed ministers. UBTC is accessible to those who cannot uproot their families and move to attend Bible college. Student bodies are multiethnic, reflect a broad range of age and professional skills and street smarts, and include gang-bangers, single moms, and corporate executives. Numerous graduates have become effective class facilitators, mentors, and even local directors.

UBTC is affordable because trainers are volunteers and churches donate classroom space. A student's major expense is for study materials. In return for their investments, local churches and pastors receive trained, passionate laborers. Many students remain in their churches as deacons, disciplers, and evangelists. The local church is also privileged to send out or partner with students who are called to full-time ministry.

The national UBTC director or a locally based U.S. missionary will guide pastors as they set up a UBTC in their community (approval from a sectional presbyter and district superintendent is required). A committee is established that will adapt the UBTC model to their local community and assist the area UBTC director by giving oversight, establishing the calendar of studies, recruiting volunteer facilitators and mentors, and promoting the ministry. This partnership multiplies any one pastor's ability to train laypeople or credentialed ministers for his own church and for the greater Kingdom.

Contact National Director Jim Hall at: [jhhalls@aol.com](mailto:jhhalls@aol.com) for further information or, visit: <http://www.UBTCNational.net>. 



**JIM HALL**, M.Div., is national director of Urban Bible Training Centers, Springfield, Missouri.



# FINDING YOUR MATE FOR MINISTRY

[ BY RICHARD D. DOBBINS ]



**T**here is nothing like being married. If you are happily married, there is nothing like it. If you are unhappily married, there is still nothing like it. This is especially true for clergy couples.

The public nature of ministry puts the minister's marriage in the spotlight. People grant other professionals a much greater degree of marital privacy than they do their minister. Few people care to know who the spouse of their physician or attorney is, but they know who the spouse of their minister is. And people generally impose high marital expectations on their minister's marriage.

When a minister is happily married to someone who also feels called to the ministry, or is at least supportive of the ministry, his work and marriage reinforce each other. When a



minister's spouse has chosen another profession, she may feel her husband's ministry conflicts with her career goals. Both may feel the ministry is an imposition on their marriage. In either event, the stage is set for marital tension, conflict, and potential disaster.

Of the thousands of clergy couples we have seen at EMERGE Ministries, Inc., most listed marital dissatisfaction as a major source of their pain. Other studies of clergy couples confirm this observation.<sup>1</sup> So, the wise, single minister will learn from the painful experiences of others the need to carefully consider several important factors when seeking a lifelong mate.

## SEXUAL RESTRAINT

Guard against allowing your friendship with a potential spouse to become overheated. Do not allow yourself to become a victim of the double funnel theory of mate selection. To see this theory in action, draw two funnels side by side. Above the funnel on the left write "Male." Underneath "Male" write "Contact." Above the funnel on the right write "Female." Underneath "Female"

**Be sure you are seeing the person you are considering as a mate the way she is, not how you hope she will be after you marry her.**

write "Commitment." These natural dynamics can and will drive your relationship if you let them.

When a man and woman are romantically inclined toward each other, the man usually wants and expects some contact; the woman wants and expects some

commitment. According to this theory, when a man makes some commitment to a woman, he expects her to permit some contact. Then he

**There is nothing like being married. If you are happily married, there is nothing like it. If you are unhappily married, there is still nothing like it.**

wants more contact, and she requires more commitment. The farther down these parallel funnels a couple goes, the more slippery the funnels become. When the couple marries, they are not quite sure at what point in their journey down the funnels they reached this decision.

Do not let this happen. Your decision to marry is too important to be determined in such a physical way.

Ask God to help you stay in control of your sexual urges until you are married to either the person you are now dating or to someone else you meet in the future. Practicing self-control will enable you to reserve your final judgment about the wisdom of marrying a person until you have examined other dimensions of the relationship.

Until you are married, do not let anything transpire between the two of you that would embarrass you later should one or both of you decide against a future together. Remember, you are never as good as married until you are married.

Only God knows how many couples are married today because they thought it was the only honorable option left once they had allowed their passions to define their relationship. Another mistake in judgment, however, does not rectify the first. It is wiser to confess sin than it is to marry in hopes of rectifying it.

## PERSONAL HAPPINESS

Happiness is a blend of love, peace,

and joy. Are you a happy person most of the time? If not, are you ready for marriage? Why would you want to impose your unhappiness

on another person? After all, no one but you can win the battle for your happiness. This battle should be fought and won before you get married. Otherwise, marriage just gives you someone to blame for your unhappiness.

Does the person you are considering as a spouse know how to be happy as a single person? Talk to her peers. How do her peers see her? This information can help you determine whether she is shielding you from aspects of her personality that you would discover only after you are married.

Many future pastors fail to give basic questions such as these the consideration they deserve. After all, if a woman has not learned to be happy when she is single, she is not likely to discover happiness in marriage.

Often, people who are saved bring troubled personal histories into the Kingdom with them. Once you are physically attracted to a woman, however, it is easy to overlook her history and assume your love for her can more than compensate for whatever is in her past. It may seem flattering to be the only person in the world who can provide the missing pieces to another person's puzzle of happiness, even though that person may never have been happy in her entire life.

If you assume the challenge of making your future spouse happy, how likely are you to succeed? Not very likely. After all, marriage itself never makes anyone happy.

Jesus can heal a troubled past and help people achieve personal happiness in spite of what they have been through. But, if the woman you find appealing has this kind of history, be sure she has dealt with her past, risen above it, and found personal happiness in Christ before you seriously consider marrying her. After all, if she has not learned to assume responsibility for her own happiness during the first 20 to 30 years of life, how likely is it that marrying you will make a lasting difference?

How can you know if the girl you are dating has won her battle for personal happiness? Observe her moods and listen to her conversation. Why would you want to marry someone who will bring unpredictable moods, hostility, resentment, and depression into your life? The burden of making such a person happy is too heavy for you to carry until death relieves you of it. The ministry will not allow you to make this kind of an investment in your spouse.

Remember, in matters of love, your eyes can deceive you. Inside a gorgeous woman or a handsome man you may find a miserable person. Do not fall in love with what you see. Time will change that. Let your love be guided by what you hear. Jesus assured us that a person talks about what he has stored in his heart (Matthew 12:34). Be more impressed with what you hear than with what you see. You need to like what you see, but save your love for what you hear. What you see will change, but what you hear will only intensify over the years.

Marriage seldom changes anyone. It only intensifies the state in which it finds you. If you are a mature, happy person most of the time, and, you marry someone who is mature

and happy much if not most of the time, the two of you are likely to make each other happier than either of you would have been alone. However, if you are an immature, unhappy person most of the time, and you marry someone like yourself, the two of you are likely to make each other much more miserable than either of you would have been alone.

Remember, God did not call you to make your spouse happy. Only

He can do that. God, however, does expect you to bring the happiness He has helped you find in life into the life of your spouse. You can make your spouse happier. You just cannot make your spouse happy.

So, be sure you are seeing the person you are considering as a mate the way she is, not how you hope she will be after you marry her. Be sure she passes this simple happiness test before you go any further in your relationship.

## BEFORE YOU SAY "I DO": Financial Questions To Discuss With Your Future Spouse

### FINANCIAL HISTORIES OF EACH OTHER'S FAMILIES

- Who provided the financial support?
- Which parent managed the finances?
- What income class best describes the family?
- Was money plentiful, just enough, or scarce?
- Were financial problems prevalent?

### FINANCIAL GOALS AND DESIRES FOR YOUR NEW FAMILY

- What standard of living do you desire to have?
- How much do you want to give to charity?
- Will you help your children with their education?

### WAYS TO OBTAIN THESE GOALS AND DESIRES

- Who will work?
- Will it be to each his own, or all for one and one for all?
- When will you have children?
- Will one parent stay home with the children?
- Will you count on a lottery, or sacrifice and work?

### FINANCIAL DECISIONMAKING

- Who will decide how money is allocated?
- Will it be an individual or team effort?

### GUIDELINES FOR SPENDING

- Will there be any guidelines for spending?
- Can one spend without the permission of the other?
- What will be the spending limit for individual decisions?
- Will you have a waiting period before purchasing items that exceed a set amount?

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PAUL EBISCH, Springfield, Missouri

## PERSONAL COMPATIBILITY

Once you know the person you are interested in has learned to be happy, then you will want to assess other aspects of her personality. How is the chemistry between you? Are you comfortable with each other? Do you enjoy being together? Do you have similar interests?

Early in the relationship, test the ability of the girl you are dating to keep confidences. You want to marry someone you can trust with private information about yourself that you do not want others — even members of your families — to know. Confide in her something about yourself and ask her to keep it confidential. Then listen to conversations among your friends. If, from what you hear, it becomes obvious that your confidences have been broken, seriously consider whether you can feel safe with her once you have married her.

Also, does she share personal matters about herself with you? If she cannot trust you with some of the secrets of her life before you are married, do you want to consider her as a potential mate? In healthy marriages, spouses are each other's confidant.

**Once a couple knows they can trust each other, they will begin to develop a dependency on each other.**

Once a couple knows they can trust each other, they will begin to develop a dependency on each other. They will call each other more frequently and spend more of their free moments together.

The next turn in this cycle of love is important. Is the girl you are considering as a possible mate a



**Of the thousands of clergy couples we have seen at EMERGE Ministries, Inc., most listed marital dissatisfaction as a major source of their pain.**

giver or a taker? How can you tell? Do something unselfish for her and see if she reciprocates. If you are doing most or all of the giving in the relationship, you need to realize this as soon as possible. Marriage is not going to change this equation. The person is showing you she is a taker.

Sometimes, a giver enjoys giving so much he does not notice that the other person is not reciprocating. Some givers mistakenly assume that if they give enough, they can make a giver out of a taker. However, a giver can never give enough to make a giver out of taker.

You need to see these personality traits for what they are. They are life patterns. A giver has spent his whole life learning how to be a giver. Unfortunately, a taker has spent his life learning how to be a taker and making other people feel guilty for not giving more to him.

Two givers deserve each other. So, do two takers, but they seldom find

each other. Be sure you find a giver. When two givers find each other, they enrich each other's lives.

## VOCATIONAL COMPATIBILITY

In the best of all possible worlds, the person you choose for a mate will feel as called into the ministry as you do. When this is the case, both of you will find significance as you share the burdens and blessings of this calling.

At EMERGE, however, counselors often find that the minister's wife does not feel called into the ministry. This aggravates whatever tension already exists in the marriage. She feels too obligated to the ministry of her husband to pursue her own vocational identity, but finds little significance in being the wife of a minister.

Wives in these situations often wonder, *Was I called to be a minister's wife, or did I simply choose to be married to a man who was a minister or became*

one? When a wife does not feel called to the ministry, her lack of significance in being the wife of a minister leaves her feeling like an appendage of her husband's life. This poses a real, existential crisis

## Does the person you are considering as a spouse know how to be happy as a single person?

for both the minister and his wife. He cannot find significance outside the ministry, and she does not feel significant in the ministry. In most cases, this dilemma can be avoided by the man being sure that the woman he hopes to marry can find significance in the ministry — either as his wife or through her own ministry.

Husbands of women in the ministry do not seem to struggle with this same frustration. The public expects men to have a vocation of their own, and men find fulfillment in their vocation. So, being married to a minister becomes an avocation for them. Within his work schedule he is usually more than happy to assist his wife in her calling.

The ministry is a demanding life for someone who does not feel called to it. During the course of his career, a minister will relocate several times. When a minister's wife has a different vocational calling,

her career may suffer because she is required to move wherever her husband's ministry calls them; or she may need to turn down a much deserved promotion because it would require the family to move away from the church served by her husband. Adjusting to this kind of situation requires a person to be flexible, comfortable with change, and able to adapt to a new community with ease. Keep these things in mind during your search for a mate.

## FAMILY COMPATIBILITY

Remember, marriage does not just join two people together; it joins two families. You may think you are only marrying your spouse. In most

cases, however, after marriage you will discover that your spouse wants you to fit in with her family.

As you can see, this is one of the reasons finding your spouse at a Bible college or Christian college can be so risky. You do not know anything about each other's family history. When you grow up in the same

town and go to the same church, you have a much better opportunity to determine whether you will fit in her family. Before you get too committed to a relationship, get to know her family and insist that she become acquainted with your family.

If you discover that you do not fit in her family or she does not fit in yours, you may want to reconsider your mate choice. This is another reason why it is important to keep the physical dimension of your relationship well under control as you explore the possibility of a future together.

## CONCLUSION

In your life, you have already made some wise decisions. The wisest choice of all was your decision to follow Christ when God's grace extended that opportunity to you through the gospel. Then, when God called you into the ministry, you said, "Yes." Next to these, probably the most important decision of your life will be your mate choice. In choosing a spouse, you are choosing your friend for life, your partner in ministry, and the other gene pool from which your children will be drawn. I hope some of the guidelines presented in this article will prove practical and useful in finding your mate for ministry. 🌱



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## ENDNOTE

1. file:///C:/CLERWIVES/ChristianNews. "UK Evangelical Survey Reveals Stress as Biggest Problem for Pastors." 6/14/2006. file:///C:/CLERWIVES/TheChristianCentury.htm. "Exit Interview: Why Pastors Leave." 6/14/06.

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**"The pulpit search committee must be desperate. They've resorted to musical chairs."**





# YOUR GREATEST INVESTMENT— YOU

[ BY PAUL EBISCH ]

**P**eople often look for the latest and hottest investment ideas. But many times they overlook the greatest investment anyone can make. Your greatest investment is *you*. The group that falls outside of this rule is small, and sometimes things seem to fall into place in their lives to make them successful.

Students may be tempted to get only enough education to get by. Some ministerial students may feel they have enough Bible or practical education to make it in the ministry and do not finish their degree. But doing this will probably hinder advancements in ministry because they have limited education or experience. Let's look at an example:

Joe makes \$25,000 a year at his job. This will add up to \$1 million over 40 years. However, if Joe were able to get a job that paid \$35,000 a year, this will add \$400,000 to his income over this same time period. This is a phenomenal profit by anyone's standard.

The difference in this scenario could be as simple as someone specializing in accounting or finance instead of just getting a general business administration degree. The key for students preparing for ministry is making sure that their education adds some expertise that makes them more attractive in the ministry. Develop skills that augment your ability to assist a church or a senior pastor.

College, vocational schools, and apprenticeships are all worthwhile endeavors because they work to increase your investment value by enabling you to make a better salary. However, the school you choose and the amount you spend for an education will greatly affect the return on your investment — you.

Many young people never consider the income potential of the occupation for which they choose to study. Never choose an occupation based on income alone, but understand what potential income is available before investing money into a particular degree program.

The rest of this article focuses on ministry education in particular, though the concepts apply to any vocation.

## SPENDING MONEY TO MAKE MONEY

Education is expensive, and it is getting more costly each year. Every parent is acutely aware of this dilemma. Education and training after high school, however, is critical for most young people. Spending money to get a return in the future is investing, and investing is always crucial to making money.

Spend time determining your future ministry goals. This will help you determine which major course of study will be best for you. Many students enter college without

## INTEREST RATES FOR THE FEDERAL FAMILY EDUCATION LOAN (FFEL) PROGRAM FOR LOANS FIRST DISBURSED ON OR AFTER JULY 1, 2006

LOAN TYPE	INTEREST RATE
Federal Stafford Loan (Subsidized and Unsubsidized)	6.8% Fixed
Federal Plus Loans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For parents of undergraduate students and</li> <li>• Graduate and Professional Students, known as Grad PLUS</li> </ul>	8.5% Fixed

## HOW EXPENSIVE IS EDUCATION?

EDUCATION LEVEL HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD	MEDIAN INCOME IN THOUSANDS
No high school diploma	19.4
High school diploma	35.6
Some college	41.1
College degree	73.0

**SOURCE:** 2004 Federal Reserve Board's Survey of Consumer Finances

## STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT SCHEDULE

NUMBER OF PAYMENTS	INTEREST RATE	TOTAL LOAN BALANCE (INCLUDING ANY INTEREST)	MONTHLY PAYMENT
120	6.8%	20,000	230.16
120	6.8%	25,000	287.70
120	6.8%	30,000	345.24
120	6.8%	35,000	402.78
120	6.8%	40,000	460.32

knowing what they want to do. Switching majors can be costly, so try to keep changes in major courses of study to a minimum. Take career and personality assessments to help you determine the route to take. Career Direct® Guidance System Software from Crown Financial Ministries is an excellent tool for helping students determine their career paths. To order, go to: <http://www.crown.org/cartproducts/product.asp?sku=CD970>. Churches might consider buying this for use in helping their students plan their

future vocations.

Some students do change direction when they learn there are few jobs or when they discover they dislike a particular field. Do your homework early on to keep these costs minimal. It might even be a good idea to take a year off after school and minister or work somewhere to figure this out.

Some Bible college students think they will always be a youth pastor and never consider the possibility that some day they might be a senior pastor. As a result, they do not prepare for future changes in their

# PHASE TWO

ministry. Consider planning not only for ministry out of college but also for changes in ministry that might take place down the road.

## INVESTMENT DEBT IS OKAY BUT TOO MUCH DEBT IS A PROBLEM

There are many opinions about debt. Many debts are the result of bad ideas. Investment debt, however, when used properly, is essential to almost every company's success. You can use educational debt the same way. The difference between good and bad debt is that good debt increases your bottom line.

Incurring debt for educational purposes is okay. Properly used, investment debt can enable you to get an education that increases your value for the next 45 years. Improperly used, debt incurred while in school can take decades to recover from. Many ministry occupations do not pay enough to justify incurring large school loans.

The burnout rate for pastors in the first 5 years of ministry is high partly because of stress from low pay and

high debt. Adding financial pressures to the normal stresses of ministry can be detrimental. Debt forces many promising ministers into other occupations. This is not God's plan, but debt can distract ministers from making a difference in the Kingdom.

## KEY STEPS TO TAKE

1. Find out the earning potential of your desired occupation by talking to ministers who are doing what you wish to do. Ask them about their first pastorate.
2. Ask potential schools about job-placement statistics and what their graduates' average starting salary is.
3. Apply for every grant and scholarship available.
4. Realize that the school advisor has a vested interest, and it may not necessarily be aligned with yours.
5. Take more time to finish school if needed to allow you to work more to keep from borrowing money. This is especially true for lower-paying occupations.
6. Use school money for your education. Taking out loans for other things will come back to haunt you.

7. Do not use credit cards or any store credit cards while you are in school. Even gas cards can get you into trouble unless someone else is paying the bill.

8. Decide quickly what your major will be to avoid too many unnecessary courses.

9. Finance your education with the least

amount of debt as possible. Family and friends may tell you that you can pay loans after you get a job, but most graduates would rather put their money into a house or something else.

10. Do not take on school debt totaling more than 110 percent of your first year's expected income after graduation.

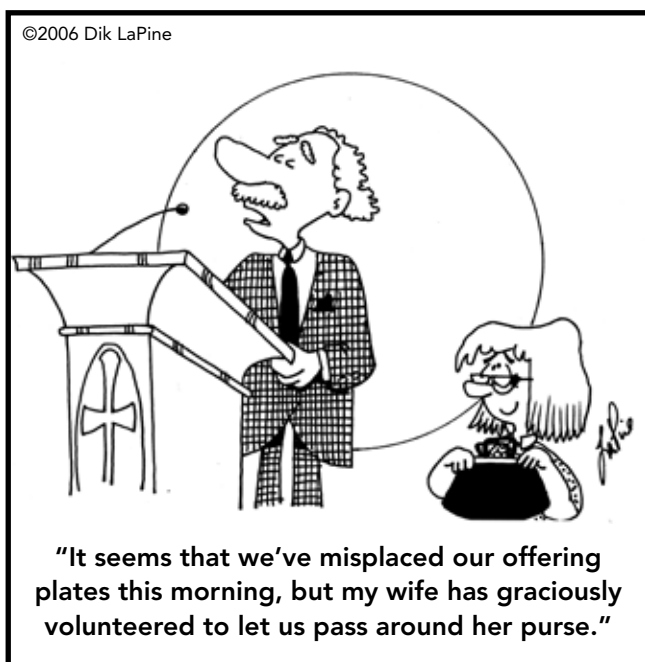
For example, Joe's school costs are \$12,000 a year. Joe anticipates earning \$22,000 his first year out of college. This means the maximum amount of debt Joe should accumulate while in school is \$24,200. If Joe finds a way to pay for half of his school costs, he will be doing well when he graduates. He can do this with the help of family and by working part-time. Statistics show that students who work during college get better grades and make better employees afterwards.

## CONCLUSION

Spending money to enhance your skills and increase your value in the ministry is vital. (See sidebar *How Expensive Is Education?* on page 69.) It can even increase your income in ministry-related positions. Your goal should not be money oriented, but you need to realize that your potential income must match up with the costs of gaining your education. Many businesses fail within their first year of existence. One main contributor to business failure is too much debt. The same principle works for people. Do not be a financial failure; take time to ensure that you get a great return on your greatest investment — you. 🌱



**PAUL EBISCH** is chief financial officer of Assemblies of God Credit Union and founder of Blaiacol Capital Management, LLC.









# PHASE THREE: IMPLEMENTATION

**Nearly half of those who leave the ministry do so in the first 5 years of ministry.** Several factors contribute to this exodus: interpersonal conflict with church people and denominational leaders, and disillusionment. New pastors are often disillusioned by what they perceived the ministry would be, what they thought they could initially accomplish, what they thought the church was and/or should be, and what they experienced in ministry. Many (at least those willing to admit it) are also disillusioned with God. They often think *Where is God in all of this if He called me?*

Research indicates that second-career ministers leave the ministry at nearly the same rate as other ministers. It was first thought that life and marketplace experience would minimize the

dropout rate of second-career ministers. It appears that the interpersonal conflict, stress, and disillusionment in ministry are so different from their previous experience that they often cannot adjust.

The articles in the *implementation* phase focus on bringing perspective to the first 5 years of ministry. This is the time to establish meaningful relationships with other ministers. Look to those you respect who have a proven, effective ministry and develop a mentoring/coaching relationship to help you through the challenging times of ministry. Set goals for your marriage and family life, as well as financial goals and plans for the future. Remember, ministry is a lifelong venture. Building a solid foundation now will pay dividends in the future.

## YOU ARE HERE



A man in a dark suit, white shirt, and red tie stands with his arms outstretched, eyes closed, and a serene expression. He is standing on a red cloth that is draped over an open book. The book is open to two pages filled with text, and the red cloth is positioned in the center, creating a path for the man to stand on. The background is a deep blue with a bright, glowing light source behind the man, creating a halo effect. The overall scene suggests a spiritual or religious journey.

# SPIRITUAL FORMATION:

A Lifelong Pastoral Journey  
[ BY EDGAR R. LEE ]



**T**he term *spiritual formation* is fairly new among Pentecostal pastors and among evangelical Christians in general.

Traditionally, we think of outstanding pastors and Christians as being spiritual. We usually characterize these people by their integrity, love, and mystical experiences with God periodically expressed in spiritual gifts: prophecy, messages in tongues, and interpretation of tongues — perhaps even in miracles. Unfortunately, while we admire their spirituality, we rarely give thought to the journey that nurtured it. But today, faced with a host of alien spiritualities and a creeping professionalization in the ministry, it is urgent that pastors identify and consciously adopt a process of authentic spiritual formation in their lives and ministries.

The use of the adjective *spiritual* does indeed have scriptural precedent. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Brothers, I could not address you as *spiritual* (*pneumatikois*) but as worldly — mere infants in Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:1, italics added). To the more mature members of the churches in Galatia, he said, “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are *spiritual* (*hoi pneumatikoi*) should restore him gently” (Galatians 6:1, italics added).<sup>1</sup>

The Spirit had brought new birth to the Corinthians whom Paul called “brothers,” but with regard to their spiritual development they were “infants” (*nepios* “baby, infant, child; immature; innocent; under age”), and still “worldly” (*sarkinos* “fleshly”). Spiritual was not the right term to describe their Christian growth. On the other hand, Paul regarded at least some persons among the Galatians as being sufficiently advanced in their faith to warrant the term *spiritual*.

The contrast between the Corinthian *infants* and the *spiritual* believers of Galatia is a sharp reminder that all believers, and especially pastors, are to continuously grow in their relationship with Christ. Their spiritual development is not simply a matter of one spiritual crisis or a single compelling call to

the ministry. It is a process of formation under the dynamic instruction of God’s Word and Spirit.

### GOD’S WORKMANSHIP

Christian faith is more supernatural than even many pastors fully appreciate. The writers of the New Testament repeatedly teach that the Christian life is not just moral reformation — which pastors tend to regularly impose upon themselves. Paul pointed this out succinctly in his Ephesian letter, “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.” He then added, “For

**Spiritual development is a process of formation under the dynamic instruction of God’s Word and Spirit.**

we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:8–10).

In Paul’s words, salvation is first a “gift” (*to dōron*) from God, something one has neither earned nor achieved. Divine initiative is further emphasized in the fact believers are “God’s workmanship” (*poiēma*). *Poiēma* is that which is “created or made.” Paul reminds believers that they are truly new persons solely on the basis of God’s supernatural initiative and intervention in their previously broken and sinful lives.

Paul made the same point elsewhere using other figures of speech: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation (*ktisis* “creation, what is created”); the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). This is merely a change of metaphor to describe the same reality that Jesus discussed with Nicodemus, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again (*gennethe anothēn*, John 3:3).” Jesus, in His talk with Nicodemus, connected the born-again experience with the work of the Holy Spirit, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born (*gennethe*) of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5).

Spiritual formation thus begins, not in a person's determination to change behavior — though that is the point of repentance — but in a supernatural work of inner spiritual renewal. Again, as Paul wrote in Titus 3:5, “he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth (*palingenesias*) and renewal (*anakainoseos*) by the Holy Spirit.” We get the word “regeneration” — which theologians use to describe the experience of new birth — from the word *palingenesias*.

As one who has been supernaturally reborn, the believer has the Holy Spirit living within. Among the many ministries of the Spirit is a convincing internal witness that we are in fact the

a doctrine mastered in elementary theology, regeneration is the wellspring of the pastor's existence. The indwelling Spirit provides newness of life and a powerful intimacy with God unique to Christian faith and vital to pastoral ministry from beginning to end.

## MEAT — NOT MILK

Even pastors sometimes view the Early Church through a romantic haze, thinking the first believers were exceptional Christians from day one of their conversion. A close reading of the New Testament, however, shows that many of them were just as carnal and immature as many Christians today. Shortly after Paul left his fledgling congregation at Corinth, he found it necessary to write to

a once-for-all crisis moment of regeneration, Spirit baptism, or some other moment of spiritual ecstasy.

New Testament writers used various appeals to move their occasionally reluctant congregations to a higher level of faith. To the squabbling Corinthians, Paul introduced the notion of maturity: “Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults” (*teleioi*; NASB “mature”; 1 Corinthians 14:20).<sup>1</sup> The word translated “adults” in the NIV is the adjective *teleios*, which has such meanings as “complete, perfect, whole,” or in the case of persons, “full-grown” or “mature.” To the Colossians Paul wrote, “We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect (*teleion*; NASB “complete”; NRSV “mature”)<sup>2</sup> in Christ” (1:28).

Hebrews continues with a similar understanding of maturity, “But solid food is for the mature (*teleion*), who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil” (5:14). Furthermore, “Therefore let us leave the elementary truths about Christ and go on to maturity” (*teleiotes* — noun denoting “completeness” and well translated here as “maturity,” Hebrews 6:1). James wrote to his (probably) Palestinian congregations, “Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature (*teleion*) and complete (*holokleros* “sound, whole, complete”), not lacking anything” (James 1:4).

Rather than being merely preachers of maturity, pastors are called on to be models of maturity. As Paul put it to a young pastor he was mentoring, “set an example for the believers in speech, in life,

## The indwelling Spirit provides newness of life and a powerful intimacy with God unique to Christian faith and vital to pastoral ministry from beginning to end.

redeemed and regenerated children of God. As Paul said, “you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children” (Romans 8:15,16). Another powerful image Paul uses to express the indwelling ministry of the Spirit in the newly regenerated believer is the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). “Temple” here is the Greek *naos* that normally denotes the temple proper where the presence of God dwells, rather than the word *hieron* that denotes the entire temple complex with its courts and extra rooms.

Rather than being a long forgotten experience of the past or

them, “I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready” (1 Corinthians 3:2). The writer to the Hebrews similarly complained to his charges, “In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!” (Hebrews 5:12). These canonical observations are a startling reminder that Christian faith — while Spirit-created and enabled — must also become a thoughtful, deliberate, and disciplined lifestyle developed over one's entire lifespan. It is not instantly achieved either by parishioner or pastor in

## Rather than being merely preachers of maturity, pastors are called on to be models of maturity.

in love, in faith and in purity”  
(1 Timothy 4:12).

### WORD — NOT WHIM

Sound teaching has always been a

major factor in Christian maturity. The ministry of teaching was fundamental to the Christian community from the beginning. Following Jewish tradition, Jesus was

known as a preacher, but even more as a teacher. He spent long hours in personal instruction to the Twelve as well as a larger circle of disciples. Modern pastors, in their role as teachers, have an inside track for their own personal growth as they nurture those whom they serve.

## THE EIGHT DIMENSIONS OF A HEALTHY MINISTER

This profile describes what a healthy minister will strive to become.

### THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

A healthy minister maintains a current Pentecostal experience and remains intimately connected with God through a vital devotional life. A healthy minister understands his complete dependence on the grace of God.

### THE PHYSICAL DIMENSION

A healthy minister takes care of his body as the temple of the Holy Spirit through:

- a minimum of 1 hour (20 minutes on 3 days) of exercise weekly.
- good nutrition.
- properly managing stress.
- sufficient sleep.
- balancing work, play, worship, and rest.
- addressing health issues with both faith-based and medical help.

### THE RELATIONAL DIMENSION

A healthy minister strives for quality relationships in each area of his life. A healthy minister will remain intimate, committed, and connected with his family, and will be unselfish in helping other ministers.

### THE EMOTIONAL DIMENSION

A healthy minister has the ability to work through differences, depersonalize conflict, wait for answers, admit wrong, forgive, rejuvenate, handle rejection, handle praise, grieve personal losses, and relate to being confused, tired, or just plain mad. A healthy minister does not seek personal validation through those whom he serves, and engages in good self-care.

### THE CHARACTER DIMENSION

A healthy minister exhibits the fruit of the Spirit and embraces both personal integrity and ministerial ethics.

### THE WORK DIMENSION

A healthy minister senses a strong calling into ministry, continually seeks to develop competent ministry skills, and enjoys the work of God because he serves in a ministry fit for his giftedness. A healthy minister manages his time and does not try to meet all of the people's expectations.

### THE FINANCIAL DIMENSION

A healthy minister provides for his family, pays his tithes and bills on time, expresses faith through personal giving, and seeks to set aside money for emergencies and retirement.

### THE MORAL DIMENSION

Before the onset of his ministry, it is expected that a minister has successfully resisted temptation and has addressed childhood trauma that may lead to poor life management. A healthy minister recognizes and maintains professional boundaries and will seek help beyond himself at the earliest indication of succumbing to temptation.



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## PHASE THREE

Remember, the Great Commission is not only about evangelization. It is also about teaching converts all that Jesus commanded — an ongoing, never-ending process (Matthew 28:20). For this daunting task, Jesus promised the aid of the Holy Spirit in this teaching ministry (John 14:26).

Among the first recorded activities of the Early Church are their gatherings in the temple and from house to house to attend the teaching of the apostles (Acts 2:42; 5:42). The core of apostolic teaching — the *kerygma* — had to do with Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. But it also entailed systematic instructions — the *paranaesis* — on the way Jesus taught believers to live. The epistles are good examples of what the apostles taught, emphasizing correct doctrine but also giving extended treatment to spiritual experience and personal ethical behavior.

The value of these scriptural teachings is attested by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16,17, "All Scripture

is God-breathed and is useful for [1] teaching (*didaskalia* "what is taught, teaching, doctrine; act of teaching, instruction"), [2] rebuking (*legmos* "refutation of error"), [3] correcting (*epanorthosis* "correcting faults") and [4] training

(*paideia* "discipline; instruction, training") in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

In this passage, the Word of God fulfills four definitive functions that pastors are to facilitate not only among their congregations but also in their own spiritual growth. First, the Word is the content of a pastor's teaching, and the source and measure of doctrine and personal spiritual maturity. Second, the Word serves to rebuke, or reprove the inevitable sinful errors in a pastor's

life. Third, the Word corrects a pastor's faults in the sense of straightening out what is sinful and immature. Fourth, the Word provides firm guidance much like a strong and skillful tutor who guides young charges in their personal lives. Rather than yielding to the shifting ethics of human cultures, pastors are to carefully and

methodically mold their character by the God-breathed Scriptures.

Far from being a stale and difficult manual, the Word of God is especially dynamic. To describe its nature, Paul used the word *theopneustos*, a compound word from

**For pastors reading the Bible regularly and sensitively to hear the voice of God in personal address is absolutely essential to sturdy spiritual formation.**

*theos*, "God," and *pneo*, "to breathe." *Theopneustos* implies that God is not only the originator of His Word, but He is also powerfully present in it as a pastor reads it, hears it, and reflects on it. As Edward W. Goodrick discerningly put it, "Scripture as *theopneustos* ... [is] 'alive with the vitality of God, which He, himself, breathed into it when He created it.'"<sup>3</sup>

For pastors reading the Bible regularly and sensitively to hear the voice of God in personal address is absolutely essential to sturdy spiritual formation. Learning the Bible is the pastor's job and joy.

### BAPTIZED IN THE SPIRIT

Supernatural at its outset, Christian faith is a continuing journey into the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, a journey that pastors must covet for themselves. The Old Testament lays the groundwork for present-day spiritual formation by showing us a variety of spiritual experiences among the leaders of ancient Israel. Saul, the first king of Israel, was first given a "changed" heart and then, somewhat later, "the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he joined [the prophets] in ... prophesying" (1 Samuel 10:9,10).





When Samuel anointed David, “from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power” (1 Samuel 16:13). Jeremiah and Ezekiel wrote that the time would come when God would put His Spirit in new covenant believers and give them a new heart (Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 36:25–27). The Old Testament also prophesies more dramatic Spirit encounters for the new covenant era. For example, Moses foresaw a time when the Lord would put His Spirit on all His people and they would become prophets (Numbers 11:29). Joel predicted that the Spirit would be poured out on all people and all of them would prophesy (Joel 2:28,29), a promise made even more explicit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16–18).

Jesus taught that all believers were to have a dynamic, ongoing relationship with the Holy Spirit. He modeled for the disciples what it was like to minister in the power of the Spirit. The Spirit would be their Helper and Guide in times of persecution (Matthew 10:16–20; Mark 13:9–11; Luke 12:11,12; 21:12–15). In addition to bringing the new birth (John 3:5), the Spirit would be a Counselor and Teacher who would remind them of all Jesus had taught and who would also lead them into all truth (John 14:26; 16:13). Jesus echoed the Baptist’s promise of a coming baptism in the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5) and specifically instructed His disciples not to leave Jerusalem to begin their ministries without being “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49; compare Acts 1:8).

The promised baptism in the Holy Spirit was historically and initially fulfilled on the Day of

Pentecost. There came “a sound like the blowing of a violent wind” and “what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest” on each of the 120 believers. Wind and fire were regular signs of theophany, the personal manifestation of God in the Old Testament. Here, these phenomena seem to indicate a distinctive coming of the Lord to personally take up residence in the temple of His people. “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:4).

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is about radical divine indwelling and empowerment; speaking with other tongues is not the essence of the Spirit baptism but the initial sign that it has occurred (Acts 2:4; 10:44–46; 19:6). Interestingly, the verb for “enabled” is the Greek *apophthengomai*, often used in the Greek language at that time to denote divinely given prophetic speech<sup>4</sup> that is so appropriate to Joel’s prophecy.

Along with Spirit baptism, Pentecost brought an abundance of spiritual gifts that gave powerful impetus to the Early Church’s ministry — gifts of prophecy, wisdom, healings and other miracles, guidance, power for witness, and others. Early Christian life and ministry was, therefore, *charismatic*.

The term, from *charismata*, the predominant word in the Greek New Testament for spiritual gifts, denotes that the Church lives and serves only through the power and presence of the Spirit who fills, empowers, transforms, and gifts His people for life and service. No mere add-on, Spirit-baptism was essential to the formation and equipment of first-century believers

and leaders. It is a crucial step in modern pastoral spiritual formation as well, not to be neglected in the hard-won process of acquiring necessary technical skills for the pastoral office.

## WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

It is one thing to have a powerful, initial experience of Spirit baptism and another to incorporate that experience in a productive and overcoming life and ministry. One dramatic way to further illustrate the dynamic biblical path to maturity is to use Paul’s metaphor of “walking in the Spirit.” “But I say, walk (from *peripate*) by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16, NASB).

Modern translations, such as the NIV, usually translate “live by the Spirit,” which is not inaccurate with regard to Paul’s meaning, but the notion of walking with its deliberate, measured progress is particularly striking. Paul followed up with: “Since we live (*zomen*) by the Spirit, let us keep in step (*stoichomen*) with the Spirit (5:25). The apostle is calling for nothing less than a careful, day-by-day engagement with the Spirit of God to direct and energize our thinking, attitudes, and actions in accordance with the Word of God. Spiritual formation for pastor and pew is, therefore, constant interaction with the Spirit.

The Scriptures also teach periodic renewals of the Spirit in one’s personal life. Even a casual reading of the Book of Acts shows “one baptism, many fillings.” In other words, the 120 on the Day of Pentecost were baptized in the Spirit once (Acts 2:1–4). But we see the Spirit coming on them many times thereafter for encouragement and empowerment for particular

## In the current milieu, the technology of *doing church* too often trumps the role of the Spirit and His gifts.

tasks. Peter was “filled with the Holy Spirit” at a dangerous, crisis moment to witness to the Sanhedrin about the resurrection of Jesus and explain the healing of the man at the Beautiful Gate (Acts 4:5–22). All the participants in the urgent prayer meeting that followed were “filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly” (Acts 4:31). This pattern continued through the Book of Acts and ought not be lost on those set apart to teach and lead the people of God.

Paul used other terms to encourage his followers to habitually draw on the richness and power of the Holy Spirit in their daily lives. To the Romans, he wrote, “Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor (“fervent in spirit,” NASB), serving the Lord” (12:11). To the Ephesians, he gave an imperative command regarding the Spirit-filled life: “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. [1] Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. [2] Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, [3] always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. [4] Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:18–21).

Paul’s imperative, “be filled,” is present tense and can be translated, “keep on being filled.” To describe, at least in part, what it is like to be Spirit-filled, Paul used four successive participial clauses, identified in the passage above by number. First, the Spirit-filled speak to fellow believers (a horizontal ministry in corporate settings) in

a communicative and mutually edifying way through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, the last perhaps being “singing in the Spirit.” Second, they “sing” and “make music” in their hearts (a vertical and personal ministry of worship to God). Third, they always “give thanks” to God in Jesus’ name for everything. Fourth, they willingly “submit” out of reverence to Christ and His Word. If these passages are significant for “laypeople,” they are doubly so for the pastors who lead them.

### THE WORKS OF THE FLESH

Walking in the Spirit entails for pastors, just as parishioners, regular communion with the Spirit of God for power and wisdom to overcome the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Much like Jesus (see Matthew 5), Paul was specific about sins that must be avoided. One of his vice lists is found in Galatians 5:19–21 where he uses the metaphor, “the works of the flesh” (KJV). Among the sins listed, though not comprehensive, are “sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.”

Paul concluded pointedly, “those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Paul’s utter departure from legalistic pronouncements about avoiding sin is significant. As he had pointed out so eloquently in Romans 7, sin cannot be mastered by purely human zeal. Rather, one overcomes sin by the power of a Spirit-filled life. “So I say, live by the Spirit, and

you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Galatians 5:16). It is “by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body” (Romans 8:13). In the journey of spiritual formation, the incessant ministry of the Spirit shows pastors and all believers their sins, convicts them of those sins, leads them daily in confession and renewal, and brings them to victory over their sins. In New Testament thinking, neither pastors nor rank-and-file believers overcome merely by trying harder. They overcome by nurturing the Spirit-filled life. This dynamic of the Spirit is well described in the title of an old Scottish preacher’s sermon, “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection.”

### GIFTED — TO SERVE

Pentecostal and charismatic pastors too often train for and practice their ministries as educated and accomplished professionals with little apparent dependence on the Spirit. The work of the Spirit through spiritual gifts is often thought of as an experience for a few spiritual people. As this heresy goes, more practical and rational believers may safely go about their day-to-day business free from any incursions of the supernatural. Unfortunately, clergy, in the acquisition of liturgical and leadership skills, often neglect this part of their formation. In the current milieu, the technology of *doing church* too often trumps the role of the Spirit and His gifts.

Not surprisingly then, one of the least understood aspects of Christian spiritual formation among pastors is the importance of spiritual gifts, their cultivation,

and use in personal ministry. Paul's reflection on his own preparation for ministry is enlightening: "I became a servant (*diakonos*) of this gospel by the gift (*dorean*) of God's grace (*charitos*) given me through the working (*ten energeian*) of his power (*tes dunameos*)" (Ephesians 3:7). The learned Rabbi did not cease to be learned, but it was not his rabbinical education that made him a minister. His essential qualification for Christian ministry came by a supernatural endowment of God's dynamic grace and gifts. Paul could

teaching on spiritual gifts, wrote to the Corinthians, "Now to each one (*hekast*) the manifestation (*phanerosis*) of the Spirit is given for the common good (*sumpheron*)" (1 Corinthians 12:7). The apostle reiterated the importance of every-member gifting in other passages as well. To the Romans, "We [all] have different gifts (*charismata*), according to the grace (*charin*) given us" (12:6). To the Ephesians, "But to each one (*hekast*) of us grace (*charis*) has been given as Christ apportioned it [literally, "the measure of the gift

as a "manifestation" (1 Corinthians 12:7). Paul's term is *phaner sis* that means "bringing to light" or a "disclosure." In other words, something about God's nature and activity is revealed and brought to realization by the Spirit through the expression of these gifts in regenerate human beings. Third, the gift is, to Paul, "for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7) and, to Peter, it is to "serve others" (1 Peter 4:10). Therefore, the use of the gifts is vital to the well-being of the body of Christ and, by implication, vital to the spirituality of every member of the body of Christ.

By following Paul's favorite word for spiritual gifts, *charisma*, we can identify several lists of

## One of the least understood aspects of Christian spiritual formation among pastors is the importance of spiritual gifts, their cultivation, and use in personal ministry.

only describe the mystery of what God had done in him by referring to it as a gift of grace accomplished and accompanied by God's active (*ten energeian*) and mighty power (*tes dunameos*).

Spiritual formation must also take seriously the biblical teaching that every believer is a minister. Clergy, who are themselves designated as "gifts" (*doreas* in Ephesians 4:7 and *domata* in 4:8), in turn, equip their ministering brothers and sisters: "And He [Christ] gave [ ... apostles ... prophets ... evangelists ... pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints (*ton hagion*) for the work of service (*diakonias*, that is, "ministry")" (Ephesians 4:11,12, NASB).

So, pastoral leaders are not the only ones called and gifted to do ministry. The teachings of the epistles support the narrative theology of the Book of Acts where people outside the apostolic circle are granted spiritual gifts. Paul, who gave us most of the New Testament

(*doreas*) of Christ"]" (4:7). Peter echoes the teachings of Paul, "Each one (*hekast*) should use whatever gift (*charisma*) he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace (*charitos*) in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:10).

As those gifted to "minister to the ministers," pastors are destined to serve with joy, power, and effectiveness in the unique spiritual gift mix that shapes the major contours of their particular style of leadership.

### DESIRE THE GREATER GIFTS

A careful reading of the above passages in their contexts readily discloses several life-changing principles vital to spiritual formation for the pastor. First, the Triune God, by the Spirit, grants spiritual gifts to every believer — regardless of race, sex, age, education, experience, or station in life. Note the repeated emphasis on "each one." Second, each of the gifts may be identified

spiritual gifts. They are Romans 12:6–8; 1 Corinthians 12:8–10, 28–30; and 1 Peter 4:10,11 (see also Ephesians 4:7–13, which varies the Greek terms). Paul apparently did not intend to list all possible gifts. For example, craftsmanship and music are Spirit-gifted activities in the Old Testament.

Some gifts, including the traditional nine of 1 Corinthians 12:8–10, are more obviously supernatural. Their use seems to require a special and sovereign move of the Spirit within the gifted person, providing a discernible and definite impetus for ministries, such as prophecy, words of knowledge or wisdom, messages in tongues and interpretations, and various miracles. To emphasize the initiative of the Spirit and the necessity for spiritual sensitivity for their reception and deployment, I describe these gifts as *spontaneous*.

But other gifts are often neglected in the Pentecostal-charismatic

## Pastors ought to carefully ponder scriptural examples of those who began well but ended badly.



tradition. In Paul's lists in Romans 12:6–8 and 1 Corinthians 12:28, he also uses *charismata* to denote “serving,” “teaching,” “encouragement,” “giving,” “leading,” “mercy,” “help,” and “administration,” just as he does “prophecy” (also found in the *supernatural* list of 1 Corinthians 12:8–10). Admittedly, the latter group of gifts appears to be less supernatural in nature. For that reason they are often called *motivational gifts* or *ministry gifts*. Every spiritual gift, however, is a ministry gift. One so gifted does not need to wait for an unusual and occasional visitation of the Spirit to practice these gifts. To emphasize the constant and abiding nature of this group of gifts, I describe them as *resident*. While given and energized by the Spirit, the

aptitude for these particular functions is always present and is to be used regularly and diligently in one's ministry — whether it be that of a credentialed minister or layperson.

Spiritual gifts, while divinely given, are also humanly appropriated. On one hand gifts are first of all distributed by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:11), God is at work in them (12:5), and the manifestation of the Spirit is given [passive] (12:7) or received (1 Peter 4:10). God has placed gifts in the church (1 Corinthians 12:28). On the other hand, the better, or “greater,” gifts are to be eagerly desired (12:31; 14:1, 12, 39) and believers should “try to excel in gifts that build up the church” (14:12).

Human responsibility is also urged in the proper placement and utilization of spiritual gifts in the worship and community life of the church. Those exercising verbal gifts in the worship service are to exercise discernment, give place to other gifted believers, limit the expressions to a congregationally edifying number, and accept the primacy of the

written Word over their inner sense of what the Spirit is doing or saying (14:13–33).

For pastors to neglect the dynamism of the *charismata* in their own personal spiritual formation, the spiritual formation of their congregants, their services of worship, or the various ministries of the church would appear to be an unconscionable neglect of a major stream of biblical teaching, not to mention a tragic loss of spiritual power and effectiveness. Even Pastor Timothy needed a stern reminder to “fan into flame the gift of God (*charisma*), which is in you through the laying on of my hands” (2 Timothy 1:6). Modern “Timothies” must “eagerly desire the greater gifts” (1 Corinthians 12:31) and likewise fan them into flame.

### FUNCTIONAL FAITH

As important as sound doctrine and authentic Christian experiences are to spiritual formation, none of these guarantees that pastors will grow to maturity in life and ministry. When disappointments, sufferings, and temptations befall pastors, God can sometimes seem far away. At such times, there may be neither conscious sense of His presence nor signs of supernatural intervention. One thinks of Paul on his second missionary journey optimistically headed for the province of Asia and its chief city, Ephesus, only to be frustrated as door after door closed in his face





until he dead-ended in the small port city of Troas at the northwest tip of Asia Minor. Only there did he find that God had other, and greater, plans to lead him into Europe — and Troas was the ideal jumping off place (Acts 16:6–10). Probably even more disconcerting was Paul's experience of a "thorn in [the] flesh," revealed also as "a messenger of Satan" to torment him — apparently some physical ailment compounded by demonic causation (2 Corinthians 12:7–9). To add insult to injury as it were, God refused to take the thorn away, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (12:9). Even Jesus, staggered by the impending sin-bearing of the cross, cried out in agony, "Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me" (Mark 14:36).

The crucial question at such a time is *How functional is my faith?* There is a valid saving faith exercised in receiving Jesus as Savior. Occasionally in life one receives the gift of faith — miraculous mountain moving faith (1 Corinthians 12:9; Mark 11:22–24). But for day-to-day effectiveness in Christian life and ministry, one must also have a dynamic faith rooted in the God-breathed Word and nourished with regular spiritual disciplines of Bible study, meditation, and prayer.

A properly functional faith is one that has been tested in the realism of daily life. Faith maintains a sturdy conviction that God's Word is true and His guidance is certain, whatever the situation appears to be at the time. While often shaken and never infallible, a healthy functional faith is resilient and keeps one moving on toward God-given goals in life and ministry.

Only that kind of faith can stabilize pastoral ministry in the hard places and tough times. Only the ear of faith can heed the apostle's command to his younger pastoral associate, "Endure hardship with us as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:3).

### THY KINGDOM COME

Spiritual formation has as its goal a lifelong process of spiritual maturation. Pastors are intended to begin well, serve well throughout life, and finish well. Vigilance and effort are required at every stage. Pastors ought to carefully ponder scriptural examples of those who began well but ended badly. Saul, the first king of Israel, stood head and shoulders above his contemporaries and began well, only to falter early on and finally succumb to pride, jealousy, psychotic episodes, witchcraft, and die ingloriously on the battlefield (1 Samuel 9:2; 13:1–15; 18:6–16; 28:1–25). Solomon, perhaps the smartest and richest man who ever lived, started his reign with dramatic revelations from God, realized incredible success and public acclaim, but then, in his mature years allowed his oversized, pagan harem to steal his heart away from God (1 Kings 11:1–13). Uzziah, also known as Azariah, one of Judah's greatest and longest-reigning kings, became powerful and famous, then, puffed up with pride, contracted leprosy while arrogantly usurping the role of the temple priests (2 Chronicles 26:19). We may also think of contemporary greats who have ended badly when they too became lifted up with pride and felt themselves above the normal disciplines of Christian life.

Moving through life and, eventually, God willing, into the

new opportunities of retirement, pastors need to remember that Jesus taught His followers to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven ... Thy kingdom come" (Matthew 6:9,10, KJV). These words are a poignant reminder that spiritual formation is never finished this side of the Kingdom. While certain aspects of God's kingdom are now among us, it fully and perfectly comes only with the return of our Lord. "In my Father's house are many rooms," Jesus said. "I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:2,3).

The ultimate purpose of our spiritual formation is to be prepared and present the announcement, " 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God' " (Revelation 21:3). 🌀



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### NOTES

1. Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission ([www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org)).
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3. Edward W. Goodrick, "Let's Put 2 Timothy 3:16 Back in the Bible," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 486.
4. Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

# NUTURING THE CALL – A LIFETIME RESPONSIBILITY

[ BY MICHAEL B. ROSS ]

**L**ist pastoral ministry's three biggest surprises." Those were the instructions I gave 25 senior pastors attending one of five discussion groups I was hosting to better understand 21st-century pastoring. All of these pastors were ordained and had been in pastoral ministry more than 4 years. I was hoping to learn which responsibilities of pastoring they felt most unprepared to handle.

Many of their answers were predictable. Several cited uncooperative lay leaders; others bemoaned having to give so much time to administrative duties. A few mentioned the unreasonable amount of energy required to lead their congregations.

Another common answer surprised me, particularly since many of the pastors had avowed earlier in the meeting that their call from God is a lifetime responsibility.

"That I have sustained," they said.

I probed. "What do you mean, sustained?"

"That I didn't give up and leave pastoral ministry. I often wanted to," they added, "but I hung in there. I didn't buckle under pressure."

No one knows for sure how many are leaving pastoral ministry each year, but denominational leaders seem to be discussing pastoral sustainability more these days. It may

be a matter of supply and demand. Some small congregations, particularly in rural areas, are having difficulty finding and keeping a pastor.

The phenomenon of pastoral attrition also may raise theological questions. There is a widespread view that the call to pastor is irrevocable, that

**Understanding the call to ministry as a trophy on the shelf has value. For many, the call becomes a pivotal point serving as a source of courage, purpose, and self-differentiation.**

a clergyperson changing careers should not be compared to leaving a retail management or teaching position.

Sustaining is more than just hanging in there. Many pastors who would never consider voluntarily leaving their ministry careers have slipped into ineffectiveness, biding their time until retirement mercifully comes. The routine, if not the boredom, of pastoring is interrupted for them only by relocating to another church.

## THE TROPHY ON THE SHELF

The Pastors Institute, of which I am executive director, received a grant from the Louisville Institute, a Lilly Endowment program for the study of American religion, to better understand why some pastors do not sustain. The project,

“Murmurs From the Outside: What Former Pastors Are Saying to the Church,” included writing a report comparing six national studies on pastoral attrition.

The final report to the Louisville Institute included a narrative that gave a collective voice from thousands of pastors reflecting on the circumstances that had fueled their exiting ministry. The studies noted that the former pastors included in the research believed their exiting career ministry was the result of a stream of causes.

Those causes mostly mirrored what the pastors in the above-noted discussion groups

cited as the biggest surprises of their pastoral ministry. Unresolved conflict and too many demands were included as some of the major causes of pastoral dissatisfaction and attrition.

There was an unexpected factor, observed mostly as a common thread in the studies’ qualitative feedback. It was highlighted in my final report to the Louisville Institute:

“This may be the most important thing we need to tell you, but it also is the most difficult. Our ministry began with a call — for some mystical, for others an awareness formed by time and circumstances. We felt we were affirmed, encouraged, educated,

ILLUSTRATION: JAMES PALMER



and empowered by the church and its institutions. We were not, however, led into times of evaluating and understanding our call. We did not realize that our call should not only be validated and reaffirmed, but also continually redefined. It was what it was, a trophy on the shelf, and that seemed good enough for us, our families, and the church.”

Ironically, the former pastors stated that one of the factors in their not being able to sustain their ministry was the experience that had resulted in their becoming pastors in the first place — the call. For them, the call had become a trophy on the shelf.<sup>1</sup>

Understanding the call to ministry as a trophy on the shelf has value. For many, the call becomes a pivotal point serving as a source of courage, purpose, and self-differentiation. It is not uncommon for pastors to find the strength to continue by glancing at the trophy on the shelf.

There are some inherent concepts in the trophy-on-the-shelf view of the call, however, that suggest the call needs more than a prominent place and an occasional polishing. The call to ministry needs to be continuously nurtured and redefined.

## LET YOUR CALL SPEAK

The Louisville Institute study evolved into a closer look at how pastors understand their call. A follow-up grant from a global corporation gave the Pastors Institute the funding for the project, “Let Your Call Speak: A New Model for Pastoral Development.” The project included probing into how pastors, their spouses, and laity understand the call to pastoral ministry. Two of the tools we used,

small-group discussions and an online questionnaire, provided insights into the call experience.

The impact of the initial call is often underestimated. My own transition from pastoral ministry 10 years ago resulted in my realizing

## What if that initial call was then nurtured into life and it began to speak again? Would there be a restored freshness to ministry, a new imagination, and a humbling excitement?

how much of my life had been formed by a call.

I clearly remember as a young boy leaning over to draw water for a bath and sensing God’s presence. I knelt by the bathtub and immediately said yes to God’s call. I ran to tell my mother that God had chosen me. At age 13, my path had been marked by an interruption of God.

Other than my childhood family — parents, siblings, and other relatives — my life has been shaped by that 2-minute encounter with God. Where I attended college, who I married, my friends, and most of my life experiences can be traced back to that moment. It was, to use an over-used phrase, a *life-changing experience*.

Many pastors describe their call as being a *peak experience*. Psychologist Abraham Maslow first used this term to describe sudden and self-validating experiences that often include an awareness of an ultimate truth. Even pastors who define their call as being a process admit to having a specific moment when the call was accepted.

Pastors frequently compare their call to other peak experiences. One’s hearing and accepting the call often

is coupled with a moment of full surrender, sanctification, or being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The voice of the initial call to pastoral ministry for most is clear and personal, both formidable and formative. Its purpose, however,

is generally limited to being an entry point into pastoral ministry that is required and verified by ordination approving bodies. Its continuing value rests mostly in its visibility for an occasional glance that would produce a boost of energy and determination.

What would be the outcome if pastors would hear their call speak again? What would be the result if pastors went back and listened to their call? What if they rehearsed it and began to describe it more in terms of an ongoing story not yet finished? What if that initial call was then nurtured into life and it began to speak again? Would there be a restored freshness to ministry, a new imagination, and a humbling excitement?

## A NEW SETTING

I have been surprised at the extent of details pastors recalled when they reflected on their call. Many include what has now become for them a sacred place. For some it was a church building or a youth camp altar; others describe being in a college dorm room or alone in the woods.

It is obvious that the call immediately takes on a form that is



structured by its immediate context and history. Ministry by its nature must be understood in context. Places, times, and feelings are parts of a call to ministry.

Unfortunately, the original context of the call often becomes a fixed template for ministry. Satisfaction in ministry is determined by one's success in fulfilling the call as originally imagined. Circumstances and people who seem to hinder the formation of a context that would result in fulfillment of the initial call are viewed as burdens or roadblocks.

It has often been noted that full-time pastors are not aware of laypeople's common experiences in the home or at work. It is also true that many pastors who relocate do not see the value in learning the history of the new church. The call embraced and valued by some ministers has little connectedness to the congregation they now pastor.

I was invited to preach for a weekend at a church in the South I had formerly pastored. I agreed to come after the current pastor assured me that my coming would help him and the church.

When I arrived, I soon realized there was a hidden agenda. The pastor began to tell of his frustration with some of the men who were pressuring him to join them for coffee on Saturday mornings. He asked if I would speak to them and help them understand his loftier goals.

"I have a church to pastor," he told me. "I don't have time to drink coffee."

I reminded him that the Saturday morning coffee event had been a longtime tradition, one in which I had participated when I was the church's pastor. His response made

it clear that he intended to break the tradition. In the end, he was the one broken.

Would the outcome have been different if my pastor friend had nurtured his call until he heard it invoking him to pastor in the here and now? Would he have been able to set aside some preconceived ideas of pastoral ministry and realize that God had chosen him to serve this small-town congregation whose men just happened to enjoy drinking coffee on Saturday mornings?

A nurtured call demands new contextualization that allows pastors to fulfill their call more easily in their current setting.

The narrative report to the Louisville Institute included this reflection by former pastors: "Our imagination was cradled in naiveté and disproportionate zeal. Our call was absent of a setting and a future that would reconstruct it. Our imagination was not reality, and we became confused about our role."

## A FOCUS ON CHARACTER

Many of the pastors who participated in our studies described their call primarily as one of *doing*. When asked to define their call, they often used verbs such as *preach*, *teach* and *lead*. Seldom were nouns, such as *presence*, *compassion*, or *suffering*, included. None told of a call to live incarnationally.

In its early days

of formation, the call can take on a skill-based identity. More than half of the pastors in our discussion groups remember at least one friend or family member not being surprised by their call to preach. When I asked what they thought others had seen in them that indicated their pastoring potential, they responded with: "I was good up front"; "I was a powerful speaker"; or "I knew how to plan an event." None of the pastors said their observable qualities had included holiness or servanthood.

It is clear that successful pastoring is becoming increasingly defined by criteria focusing on skills. A review of the curriculum offered in more than 125 seminaries offering doctor of ministry degrees shows that pastoring seems to be becoming more of a proficiency centered career. A high percentage of the courses offered are how-to classes.

Many congregations have expectations for their pastors that highlight proficiencies. Teaching, preaching, and directing



# PHASE THREE

the organization are often listed on official and unofficial job descriptions. Congregations want pastors who do things well.

My wife is the dean of Anderson University's School of Education that offers a specialization in teaching character development. Leaders of public schools

church was "Look and Live."

Written by William Ogden, the song refers to Moses' instructions to those bitten by poisonous snakes to focus on a bronze snake mounted on a pole. To look at the bronze snake meant the venom would lose its effect and victims would survive (Numbers 21:6-9).

I've a message from the Lord,  
hallelujah!

This message unto you I'll give;  
'Tis recorded in His word,  
hallelujah!

It is only that you "look and live."

for all who are called.

What would the outcome be if a pastor took his "call trophy" off the shelf and began to relive its initial impact? What if he traced its history through centuries of the church's recognition of God's intentional choosing of men and women to preserve the gospel and announce the arrival of the Kingdom? What if that pastor then retreated into a time of wilderness to pray and listen, and then to pray some more?

The call might speak again. If it did, it would be the words of



nationwide are recognizing a character gap in many of their students. They want instructors who can teach the sciences and the arts, but they also want teachers who can develop honesty, kindness, and respect in their students.

Congregations also hope and deserve to have pastors who can both model and teach Christian graces. While it smacks of the old double standard, it remains that congregants expect more of their pastors than they do of themselves. They want a pastor who has closed the character gap.

A nurtured call speaks of more than what a pastor should know and do. It forms a self-realized need for the development of character. It speaks of humility and sacrifice. Leadership is more defined as servanthood than as motivation.

## LISTEN

One of my favorite gospel songs as a child growing up in a holiness

**A nurtured call speaks of more than what a pastor should know and do. It forms a self-realized need for the development of character.**

Ogden understood the account of the bronze snake lifted high as a precursor to the death of Jesus on the cross.

"Look and live," my brother, live;  
Look to Jesus now, and live;  
'Tis recorded in His word,  
hallelujah!

It is only that you "look and live."

Pastors hoping to sustain an effective lifelong ministry might find strength and wisdom if they would "look." There is value in rehearsing the call and renewing the vows. Some of the early zeal and even the naiveté could be invigorating.

An occasional glance toward a past experience, as life changing as it may have been, may not be enough, however. The grace needed to sustain pastoral ministry may come from not only looking, but also listening. Staying power's best source is in the words of the One who modeled leadership for us all. Christ's instructions to feed and care for His sheep were not directed only to Peter, but serve as a commissioning

Christ reminding the pastor to feed the sheep, even the burdensome ones. Holy imagination would be rekindled allowing him to see a renewed church impacting the community and the world. A fresh compassion coupled with a mandate to live a holy life exemplary of the One who first called and now calls again would take root and grow. Then I believe the strength to continue would suddenly appear. 🌀



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## ENDNOTE

1. The call in this article refers to the experiences or processes through which pastors come to an awareness that God is invoking them into career ministry. The call is presumed and hopefully verified by most ordaining bodies. It seems to be a standard expectation of pastors both by denominations and congregations.



ANTIDOTES FOR THE TOXINS  
IN **SPIRITUAL**  
**LEADERSHIP**  
THAT DESTROY  
AUTHENTIC MINISTRY

[ BY JAMES BRADFORD ]





**T**his past year on Sunday nights I sequentially went through the Minor Prophets. I called this series “Major Words From the Minor Prophets.” One Sunday night I did something I rarely do. Because of the diversity of our congregation — and at the risk of having some people feel excluded — I felt I needed to speak to the spiritual leaders in our congregation. They were on my heart, and I felt we needed to spend time in the first half of Malachi 2 where God speaks to spiritual leaders.

After my message, I invited every credentialed minister in the church to come forward and be prayed for. The fact there were two rows of people wall-to-wall shows how many spiritual leaders are in our church. Because of that message I was invited to revisit that passage of Scripture with you today.

Malachi 2:1,2 reads, “‘And now this admonition is for you, O priests. If you do not listen, and if you do not set your heart to honor my name,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them, because you have not set your heart to honor me.’”

When I speak to pastors and missionaries, I tell them that what we do as leaders while we navigate through the journey of our call must never become a performance. This issue has become one of the greatest battles of my life. I have been in full-time ministry more than 25 years. The last thing I want is for what I do to become a performance.

Scottish preacher and writer James Stewart once described the landscape of religious leadership in Jesus’ time this way: “The Pharisees had externalized religion, the scribes had professionalized religion, the Sadducees had secularized religion, and the zealots had politicized religion.”

Stewart’s words explain why spiritual leadership is so toxic to our spiritual health.

***I constantly ask myself, If the preaching ministry was taken from me, would I still have a personal, growing relationship with Jesus?***

People do not need to be around religious things and religious leadership very long before they start fighting every one of these battles. This happens easily. Unless we pay incredibly close attention to our hearts, those in a religious context with the label *leader* can easily become externalized, professionalized, far too cynical, and way too political. Everything that seems to be a part of religious leadership takes us off dead center of the very thing we ought to flow out of — our relationship with God. I never want to stand and perform in front of my congregation. What I do as a leader must be the fruit of a heart that is prepared before God.

My biggest problem is me. It is not the budget or the parishioner that can complicate my life. My biggest problem is taking care of my heart. The longer I pastor, the bigger the battle becomes to not be externalized, to not be professionalized, to not become cynical, and to not become political.

This is where God put His finger on the spiritual leaders in Malachi 2. He said, “I have set you to honor my name, but your hearts no longer do that.” He also said, “I have already cursed you because you have not set your heart to honor me.”

I am always impressed with my capacity to miss the obvious. Sherlock Holmes and his trusted sidekick, Watson, went camping. They had bedded down for the night and were lying in their sleeping bags on their backs. Mr. Holmes said to Mr. Watson, “Would you look up and tell me what you see?”

Mr. Watson said, “Well, I see a sky filled with stars.”

Mr. Holmes asked, “What does that tell you, Mr. Watson?”

Mr. Watson replied, “Well, theologically this tells me that

you. Period. That’s it. The problem with everything else surrounding religious leadership is that it wants to take you away from the obvious.

Spiritual leadership is one of the most toxic things to our spiritual lives. The priests had no excuse at this time in Israel’s history. The temple that had been destroyed by the Babylonians had been rebuilt under the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah and the leadership of Joshua and Zerubbabel. Under the God-favored leadership of Nehemiah the walls had been set around Jerusalem. There was every capacity for spiritual restoration with the rebuilding of the temple. The economic and political restoration in Jerusalem brought functionality and security back to the city. But instead, there was drift, loss, and corruption at the highest levels of leadership

But you have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble; you have violated the covenant with Levi,’ says the Lord Almighty. ‘So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law.’” Here God addresses their teaching ministry. The problem is at a personal level because they had deviated from the ways of the Lord.

I have reduced preaching to answering two questions. It is probably a little more complicated than this, but ultimately preaching answers two questions: *What?* and *So what?*

The *what* is the “thus saith the text” — what does the text say and mean?

The *so what* is the prophetic dimension of teaching — the various directions we could go in applying a given text. What does God want to say to this group that I am speaking to on this particular day?

Jesus fed 5,000 people 2,000 years ago; that’s the *what*. But the *so what* is for the average person sitting in the congregation who is living with stress, may lose his job, and whose kids are going bonkers. This person may think *So what that Jesus fed 5,000 people 2,000 years ago.*

Pastors need to answer the *what* and the *so what*. That is why I develop messages partly by immersing myself in the text, and partly by pacing and praying. In the text I get the thus saith the text; in the pacing and praying, I get the “thus saith the Lord.” These two things need to come together. But if my heart no longer honors God,

## **If my heart no longer honors God, and I am not following His ways, there develops a serious disconnect between my capacity to minister the tangible *what* of the text and the prophetic *so what* of God’s Word to people.**

God is great and I am small. Astronomically, there must be multiplied millions of stars in our galaxy. Atmospherically, it tells me that we will probably have good weather tomorrow. Why, Mr. Holmes, what does it tell you?”

To which Mr. Holmes replied, “Somebody stole our tent.”

It does not matter what leadership title is over your door. The obvious is this: God called you, in Jesus you are saved, and His Spirit fills

because something had happened at a heart level. God’s diagnosis through Malachi was: “Your hearts no longer honor me.” He did not say “you are not doing the job of spiritual leadership,” but “your hearts no longer honor me.”

God takes it one step further in verses 7–9, “The lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, and from his heart men should seek instruction — because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty.

and I am not following His ways, there develops a serious disconnect between my capacity to minister the tangible *what* of the text and the prophetic *so what* of God's Word to people. Between *what* and *so what* there is a breakdown because something has broken down in my heart. Ministry has then become just a performance, and I am simply doing what I am paid to do.

So, what is the antidote to the toxins of spiritual leadership and its tendency to take us off dead center and turn ministry into a performance? It is not complicated.

I want to provide two antidotes for the toxins of spiritual leadership.

## HONESTY

I believe the first antidote is honesty. A man came to my office a couple months ago. He is a former pastor and now an evangelist. When he is home he worships with us at Central Assembly. He said, "Pastor, I'm 65 years old, and for the last 5 years I've had to deal with honesty. Not honesty with others, I've never had a lying problem. It is honesty right here in my heart. I can't believe at my age how big the battle to be honest with my own heart has become."

This summer I sat with another man who was almost 65 years old — a pastor and evangelist who is no longer in ministry. In a profound way he is starting from scratch to rebuild his life because he skipped over the issues of honesty with himself. This is why I believe the hardest thing about being a Christian is the painful, abject honesty that Jesus calls us to concerning what is going on in our own hearts.

A few months ago I wrote down seven questions I need to keep asking myself as a spiritual leader. When it comes to the issue of knowing God I do not want to miss the obvious. I do not want my gravestone to read: "He pastored a great church." I would like my gravestone to read: "Here is

## I believe the hardest thing about being a Christian is the painful, abject honesty that Jesus calls us to concerning what is going on in our own hearts.

somebody who really knew God." Here are these seven questions:

### Am I growing in my relationship with God?

I constantly ask myself, *If the preaching ministry was taken from me, would I still have a personal, growing relationship with Jesus?*

We have services at 9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. on Sunday. A few weeks ago I came to the 9 a.m. service. I had spent a great deal of time waiting on God that week and the weeks before. As the music started, tears came to my eyes. I started to weep and felt the presence of God. I began to respond to the Lord. I thought, *Lord, as hard as it is some days, I never want to lose this place. Because as a pastor, I do not come first as a worship leader, but I come as a worshiper. Lord God, I never want the hunger, the capacity to know You, love You, and experience You to go away, even though I am standing in front of 1,000 people that I must lead in worship. It does not matter; this is not a performance. I am coming as Your*

*child. Thank You, God, that by Your grace alone, my heart is at least still soft enough to love You even more than what I do for You. Thank You, Lord.*

### Am I pursuing integrity?

I have to constantly be rigidly and rigorously honest with myself. I ask myself: *Are there areas of ongoing*

*secrecy in my life that I am trying to hide from those closest to me?* This is where red lights always come on. We begin to believe deceptive things like: *I'm a spiritual leader. Everybody thinks I'm spiritual. I'm a man of God. I've done this a long time. I have the privilege and right to dabble in things I would not want my congregation to do. I'm above some things: I'm above the law; I'm above standards; and I'm above morality. I can get away from integrity, and I can still keep convincing people every Sunday morning that I'm something that increasingly I'm not in secret areas of my life.*

If there are patterns of secrecy in your life that are morally questionable, and you realize you're consciously trying to hide them from your spouse, your boss, your friends, and your pastor, I want to tell you that these are the things you need to be rigorously honest about. When something has integrity it is like a structure — a bridge or a building — that has the capacity to stand up under pressure, rigor, and adversity.

The priests Malachi addressed

had deviated from pursuing integrity in their own lives and had lost their moral and spiritual authority when they came to teach the Law. When integrity starts to weaken in your life, you are going to collapse. You are not going to win. It takes incredibly

has created me to be, I need to ask myself this third question: *How often do people say, "Pastor, thank you for your authenticity."*? The more I try to perform and impress people, the less people say this. But I view pastoral leadership — spiritual leadership of any kind — this way.

## When integrity starts to weaken in your life, you are going to collapse.

painful honesty to let God open your heart to expose the secret motivations — the behaviors that are happening under the cloak of darkness and secrecy. We need to pray, "God, help our hearts to be absolutely honest before You and help us to live in the light."

### Am I authentic?

When it comes to being myself, not trying to imitate other people, or be something other than what God

I made five commitments to Central Assembly when I came 3 years ago. My second commitment was: "I commit to always be a growing person."

I do not want to stop living before I die. I do not want to stop the disciplines of growth. I want to be a growing person.

As pastor, I first commit to be a growing person. I then invite everybody to join me in that process. I love it when someone says,

of the authenticity of me being a growing person.

### Am I honest with myself?

The fourth question concerns my capacity to own responsibility. *Do I acknowledge my mistakes, or do I project blame and use the pulpit to vent unresolved anger? Am I being rigidly honest with the issues in my own heart?* When I am not, I am unhealthy inside. If I use my congregation to deal with my pathologies, it is toxic for me personally and toxic for my congregation. Ask yourself, *Do I acknowledge my mistakes? Do I own myself? Am I honest enough at a heart level to say some things inside me are not working right? Do I keep blaming everybody else but myself?*

I had a person say to me, "I have been fired from five jobs, and it's because every place I have worked is lousy." He does not get it. There is one common denominator to every place he has been fired, and that is himself — nothing else.

### Am I consumed with passion for the future?

The fifth question concerns embracing change. *Is my attitude faith-filled and future-focused, or am I too nostalgic about the past and too fearful of taking risks in the present?* Even at 54 years old I am surprised at my growing rigidity and my capacity to wallow in nostalgia rather than staying rigidly focused on appreciating the past but engaging the future with faith and anticipation.

The fifth commitment I made to Central Assembly was to believe with the congregation for the future of the church. The moment I can



"Pastor, thank you for being a real person." They do not compliment my sermons or my staff restructuring. They just say, "Thank you for being a real person." The degree I do not hear this very often shows me there is slippage in my heart. My ministry is becoming a performance; it is not coming out



no longer be consumed with a passion full of faith for the church's future, my ministry becomes just a performance. I am simply putting in time to get a paycheck. Instead, I made a commitment that I will constantly believe with the congregation that the church has a future in God. The moment I no longer believe this, I will do the church a favor and resign as pastor. My ministry must never become a performance. I need to constantly ask myself, *Am I becoming too cynical? Am I becoming too nostalgic? Are the issues my preferences or the hard decisions it will take to move this ministry forward?*

### Am I growing in ministry?

The sixth question concerns loving learning. *Am I coasting intellectually, or am I disciplining myself to personal study and reflection.* When I turned 45 years old, it surprised me how tempting it was to coast on all the work and investment of the first half of my ministry and give up the disciplines of growth. I must be rigidly honest with myself. *What do I do when I go home? Do I pick up a book or do I veg in front of the TV? Am I just getting by in preparing messages? Am I just getting by doing what I used to do, not digging anymore, not learning anymore, or not keep trying intellectually?*

*Do I grow in my understanding of people?* I keep time open in my calendar every week for anybody who wants to see me. I have enough staff and a big enough church to pastor that I could justify not having time to do that. But if I am going to stay a leader, I need to leave time for anybody to see me. I never want to lose touch with what people are

thinking, feeling, and struggling with in life. When I come as a priestly minister, I bring God and people together. This is the intersection — the crossroads of the Scripture — where God's sovereignty meets man's situation. I need to know God, and I need to keep learning about people, so ministry does not become a performance. Ministry must be humanized and authentically

college students preparing for ministry I say, "Look, as far as I am concerned, you do not need to prove a thing to anybody. Just go and do what Jesus has asked you to do. Keep honest with yourself, and keep your heart humble."

### HUMILITY

The second antidote for spiritual toxicity is humility. God said to the

## In the text I get the *thus saith the text*; in the pacing and praying, I get the *"thus saith the Lord."*

spiritualized as I bring people to the Word of God. Something catalytic happens at that moment.

### Am I living joyfully?

The last question concerns joy. *Am I living joyfully?* I need to be honest with myself about this. *Am I living under the self-imposed pressure of always needing to prove something to somebody, or am I living with the joy of being Jesus' servant?*

I do the stupidest things and trip all over myself when I feel pressured to prove something to somebody — when I go into a board meeting and feel pressured to prove to the board that I am a good leader; when someone comes to see me for prayer, and I feel pressured to prove to that person that I am a spiritual person; when I get up Sunday morning and feel pressured to prove to somebody that I'm a good preacher.

My joy is gone because I am living under pressure. My God is me, not the One whom my heart ought to be set to honor. I become obsessed with proving something for myself.

On occasions when I speak to

priests in Malachi's time, "You have no longer set your hearts to honor me." A serious spiritual toxin had corrupted their hearts. This toxin was probably produced by the demands of the spiritual leadership to which God had called them. Their ways corrupted their teaching because they deviated from the law of God they were to teach.

My wife was reading a book, and she said, "This author is saying something I never noticed before. There is a lot of talk these days in Christian books and in churches about commitment. We need to be more committed, but we rarely hear the word *surrender* anymore."

This past spring I read *Spiritual Leadership* by Henry and Richard Blackaby. A part of one chapter says:

"All a leader can do is submit. Some spiritual leaders try to be more committed. What they need is to be more submitted. There's a significant difference between a personal determination to try harder and a complete abandonment of one's self to God's purposes. The former rests on people and

## The funny thing about honesty and humility is they are hard, but they are not complicated.

their commitment; the latter relies on God and His sovereignty. The biographies of history's greatest spiritual leaders reveal specific divine encounters wherein these men and women yielded themselves to God at the deepest level of their lives.

"All spiritual leaders have a point when they yield to Christ as their Savior and Lord. But the greatest leaders have subsequent encounters with Christ, in which they fervently, unconditionally yield every aspect of their lives to Him. The more these people come to know God, the more they recognize their own limitations and the more compelled they are, as a result, to yield to God."<sup>1</sup>

It is a painful, stripping, experience to come before God in abject humility, for He has reduced you to the place where you even doubt that you have the capacity to commit like you ought to commit. When everything is based on my commitment, I am still in the driver's seat. I make the calls as to how much of me is given to Him and how much energy I put His way. But submission is painful. It is reducing. It is humiliating. It is before God.

Sometimes I lie on my face before I leave my office to preach and say, "God, I have no clue how to lead this people. I have no clue how to fix this place. I have no clue how to overcome the obstacles and take us into the future."

Humility is reducing. But it is the exact place I need to be when I start feeling confident; when I start feeling that I have things where I want them; and when I feel I

have some control because then I become cocky, and my dependence on God begins to shift from Him to me.

This is not rocket science, but this is where God calls us. It is not our capacity to commit, but it is our willingness to submit and say, "God, I am nothing, and You are everything."

I eat carpet. I lie before God and say, "God, I am nothing. God, You have every part of my heart. Help me to be relentlessly honest with everything inside of me. Help me be relentlessly dependent on You for everything — even the things I think I have down, and I am able to produce. My God, keep me broken before You. Help my capacity to follow Your will not be based on my ability to figure out what You want but on Your sovereign capacity to get me to the right place at the right time in my life."

I was reading on the will of God and the author said that when we think of the will of God, we think blueprints, spiritual tip tricks, and directional instructions. But God tends to use words like *discipleship*, *intimacy*, and *submission*. These are the places where God's will is gestated, and where His greatest purposes of power are released through us. It is in those places where we finally understand that in humility it's "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord" (Zechariah 4:6).

The funny thing about honesty and humility is they are hard, but they are not complicated. It is the simple, basic center where we say,

"O God, let me always have a heart that honors You, and let this never become just a performance."

## CONCLUSION

Here is my prayer for you: "Lord, here we are. Here are our hearts. Here are our lives. Here are my faltering words. Yet here is Your amazing truth. You spoke to the priests and the leaders and said, 'I want your heart.'"

"Lord, would You give us honesty with torturing questions that cause us to examine the depths of what is happening in our hearts as we seek to lead for Your name? And my God, let there be the humility of absolute submission to You and brokenness before You whereby You gestate purpose, life, and grace in us.

"God, here is my heart again. Here are our hearts. Thank You for the anointing and the presence of God we sense as we are honest and humble before You. I pray You will keep our hearts from the toxins of spiritual leadership. And O God, help us to honor You. We love You, Lord. There is no one we want more than You, Lord, in our hearts. So here we are. May Your blessing be upon all who read this article in Jesus' name. Amen." 🙏



**JAMES BRADFORD, PH.D.**, senior pastor, Central Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri. **Note:** Pastor Bradford preached this message at Assemblies of God Headquarters, Springfield, Missouri.

## ENDNOTE

1. Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People to God's Agenda* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2001).



# HELPING YOUR MARRIAGE SURVIVE THE FIRST FIVE YEARS OF MINISTRY

[BY MIKE & KERRY CLARENSAU]

**I**t seemed ministry should be natural and easy. After all, we both felt called to serve God full time — a calling we each had known since childhood. Finding each other on the same path brought bright visions for the future. Our *I dos* were undergirded by many *we wills* as a life of serving God together defined our sense of destiny. Now, more than two decades later, we have found that ministry is as wonderful as we had hoped, but the road was much different from what we had anticipated.

Ministry and matrimony offer the promise of a match made in heaven, but when these powerful forces converge in the lives of a young couple, the results are sometimes mixed. Each year a new batch of fresh faces walk arm-in-arm across the Bible college lawn and into the real arena of calling. The hard earth and the needy hearts of local church life replace semesters filled with the challenge to bring a not-of-this-world Kingdom to a prodigal planet of billions. While a few boxes of textbooks reveal an education to meet the challenge, the marriage may not be so well prepared.

Many young couples have found the early years of ministry to be difficult and even disillusioning. They discover that alongside the marital adjustments every young couple must make, the new life of ministry they have embraced together is ripe with surprising hardships. They quickly discover that this side of the pulpit does not naturally strengthen their relationship. Instead, obstacles emerge that few of the people they serve understand.

### CHALLENGES

The challenges a young couple may experience in their early years of ministry are potentially numerous, but they typically melt into five familiar realities.

### People bring high expectations to those who minister to them

Few classroom lectures prepare students for the level of expectations awaiting the minister and his spouse. Depending on the setting and the success or skill of previous leaders, these expectations can swamp the unsuspecting pastor.





ILLUSTRATION: JAMES PALMER

**Many young couples have found the early years of ministry to be difficult and even disillusioning.**

A new pastor may find his assignment defined by the demand for ever-growing programs, while he simultaneously tries to prevent his converts from slipping into sin's carnage. Meanwhile, his bride must manage a series of best-friend relationships so not one of a host of ladies feels slighted or unimportant. This pile of expectations also includes a pleasant home environment where the door can swing open at all hours and reveal the flawless hospitality within. For those who can manage such responsibility, added agendas of administration, availability, and wise counsel are expected as well.

While such expectations may seem exaggerated,

most ministry couples know they can be even worse. The time demands of ministry can undermine a couple's effort to build their life together, sometimes causing one spouse or the other to feel neglected and left out. The arrival of a new baby and the pressure to minister effectively while being a good spouse and parent seem overwhelming. Whether their first 5 years are spent leading a department or an entire congregation, the expectations of others can swamp a ministry couple's marriage.

Caring for people and their needs can seem unending. When one person's crisis is averted, sirens blare for the next. The minister is expected

to answer each time, bringing the strength and wisdom his position promises. While most people in his congregation understand that his schedule is demanding, few respond well if he fails to minister to their need. This nonstop level of expectation often leaves little time for the one who made that “for better or for worse” promise of loyalty.

## **Ministry demands enormous emotional energy**

With ministry expectations comes the reality of the work and its impact on the minister. Walking through life’s traumas with the hurting brings its own emotional weariness. Every person faces his moments of crisis, whether they are random or the result of flawed choices, and the minister must attend to them all. So, counseling and emergency prayer moments can consume much of a minister’s day and strength.

That same minister returns home each evening to a spouse who needs some of his emotional energy, too. But he is weary or she has little left to offer the one she claims to love most. The couple leaves their own needs on the back burner while the ever-present urgencies of those they serve take first place. When they do find strength for each other, it is often consumed by the concern they share for the flock — a concern that keeps them responding to the steady stream of other people’s issues at the expense of their own.

Nearly all occupations require an emotional investment, but few confront trauma and life-altering moments more than ministry professions. To survive, a minister needs emotional strength from his spouse, but often finds he has not

given enough of himself to his marriage relationship. His spouse, neglected and alone, lacks what is needed despite her desires to help.

## **Family needs are not easily accommodated**

Another stress couples face in the early years of ministry is the changing demands of the home, and the rigors of ministry make it difficult to manage them. Many young couples find it necessary for one or both to work additional jobs to pay the bills. The ministry they envisioned giving their full strength to is compromised by another work schedule. Frustrations build and the congregation they serve may be unaware or unable to help them address their struggle.

When a baby comes along — a common occurrence in a young minister’s life — one or both spouses become less available for the daily ministry they previously carried out. While most congregants understand the responsibilities of parenting, many are unwilling to adjust their own expectations for the minister and his wife. Criticisms such as “he doesn’t spend time with us like he used to” or “she’s always too busy for us” drift toward the ministry couple’s ears. Soon the minister feels he must constantly choose between the needs of his family and the people he has committed to serve.

## **It is hard to keep everybody happy**

One of the great traps for a young minister is believing his success is attached to his ability to keep

everyone happy. If he serves as staff pastor, then the senior pastor’s expectations must also be met. But within the couple’s own scope of leadership, people — including their own relatives — must be pleased as well, because any level of unhappiness will be reported to the senior pastor, thus making him unhappy.

The pressure to please people confronts every minister. Obtaining a level of maturity derived from a few experiences that prove pleasing everyone is a hopeless task is often needed to dispel this notion.

For many young ministers, the early years of ministry require an incredible balancing act to keep home and office satisfied, and few succeed. Those who do may be the worse for it because such patterns harden and destine the minister to a life of people pleasing.

When a minister seeks to please everyone, his family usually gets the leftovers. His spouse and children

## **One of the great traps for a young minister is believing his success is attached to his ability to keep everyone happy.**

are expected to understand because, “after all, we’re in this together.” But there is no real *together* when the minister places the demands of others ahead of the needs in his own home.

## **This is not what we pictured**

In the early years of ministry, many young couples are devastated when their dreams of ministry seem far from reality. Perhaps they had anticipated ministering side-by-side, giving their full attention to the calling of their hearts. The

ministry, however, only provided an office for him as senior pastor or only included him in staff meetings as staff pastor. Instead, she must fill a secretarial role at a law office or work the cash register at a department store. By the time they find each other at day's end, both are too tired to share in ministry.

Many young couples find that a ministry income is insufficient to meet their financial needs. School loans and burgeoning responsibilities steal a portion of their thoughts — a portion they hoped to invest in God's work. *No. This is not what we anticipated at all.*

## CHOICES

Sadly, many young couples leave each other or the ministry in the early years. Others feel such pressure in their current location that they resign and bounce from church to church, looking for stability and family strength that every move seems to push farther away. But the early years of ministry can be healthy, and they can be a time of establishing principles and patterns that will keep a marriage healthy through decades of ministry.

Before we consider these principles, it is essential that the ministry couple understand the importance of choosing them now. Thinking that the right choices can be made later — when things get better — is a pipe dream. If you resist making the choices today that will make your marriage strong, you and your spouse may never find the strength to make those choices later.

## Choose to prioritize your marriage

When God established marriage, He intended it to be the most important

## Thinking that the right choices can be made later — when things get better — is a pipe dream.

horizontal relationship in our lives. No other relationship is described as a “one-flesh” experience (Genesis 2:24), nor does God illustrate His own relationship with us using any analogy other than that of husband and wife. God intends pastors to enter marriage with a keen sense of the relationship's priority, and no ministry commitment alters that premiere position.

When a minister puts his work ahead of his marriage, he misjudges the God who called him. Such actions reveal that the minister is seeking his self-worth in the same manner as the workaholic husbands of his congregation. Sadly, many ministers reflect the same misguided priorities as the people in their congregations who frustrate them most.

As a couple, establish shared priorities for your marriage and determine what you want it to be like. Both spouses can express their expectations and needs, and together find strategies for meeting their needs. Do not let public statements about your marriage priority be undermined by inaction. It will not take long for your failure in this area to become visible or worse, to be mimicked by those who follow you.

## Communicate your marriage commitment to those you serve

For your marriage priorities to survive, they must be communicated to those you serve. Some young couples are afraid to speak to their leaders about the health of their marriage. Perhaps they witness their leader's weakness in this area

and assume he will either not understand or be critical of their desire to put their marriage first. Nevertheless, do not sell your pastor or your congregation so short. Your choice may provide the momentum necessary for others to choose as you have.

You can assure those you serve that the fruit of your commitment will follow. Among our ministry team we have consistently insisted that the most important gift any ministry couple brings to our congregation is a healthy marriage. A minister who functions from the strength of a healthy home offers an example and a joyful demeanor that will enrich the lives of others. Regardless of the ministry task, a healthy marriage is an asset, but an unhealthy home will quickly become a heavy anchor.

Some may question if such a commitment will be well received in their setting, but the alternative is unacceptable. If a senior leader or congregation rejects the leader's priority of his own home, it is time to demonstrate that priority by finding a healthier setting in which to minister.

## Guard your ability to live that priority

Demonstrate the priority of your marriage and home by taking time off from ministry responsibilities. Ministers must take time off. Taking a sabbath is essential for ministers. Despite his efforts to appear superhuman or the congregation's willingness to attribute such qualities to him, the minister must rest, and he must spend time with his family.

Most churches and ministry teams have discovered the importance of taking time off, but not everyone is good at implementing it. Some ministers mistakenly view their day off as a personal day and spend it on the golf course or in some other venue that does not include their family. Instead of thinking *day off* why not consider the time as *family*

## Demonstrate the priority of your marriage and home by taking time off from ministry responsibilities.

*day.* While some ministry couples may not be able to coordinate their schedules to spend time together, most can if they will plan to.

Our regular family day is Monday. On that day, we do not answer the phone or have direct contact with those we serve. We let our voice mail inform us of needs, and we only respond to emergencies. Consistently guarding time for you and your spouse will train those you serve to respect it; and you will even find that they will soon help you guard it.

Similarly, vacation time should not be neglected. Time together is necessary for you and your spouse to refuel the intimacies of your relationship and your ministry strength. Some ministers struggle with the thought that time away is time taken from the church, but the investment in your marriage relationship and your own physical rejuvenation will ultimately give the church a stronger and healthier ministry.

## Set goals together for your ministry

Though the work of ministry may

involve one spouse more than the other, ministry couples need to work together to establish their goals. Plan time each year to discuss short- and long-term ideals so you both can find ways to contribute. The more you plan ministry together, the more you will both feel a part of that ministry as it unfolds. Be partners at the beginning of ministry initiatives,

and you will have an easier time remaining partners throughout the implementation.

As you set goals, pray together concerning those goals. Even though one spouse may be more involved in the day-to-day fulfilling of those ministry dreams, he should not assume his spouse is less committed to or less interested in the work. One mistake often made by the more involved spouse is believing his partner lacks sufficient connection to provide meaningful input. Each spouse brings unique gifts and insights that God intended to be used in ministry as couples work for Him.

Listen to each other and trust the advice of your partner. A husband will likely never master the people nuances his wife can easily see, and she will find that his insight will provide necessary perspective for ministry success as well. As a package, these critical bases can be covered, and the marriage can grow strong as trust in this shared calling matures. Neglecting each other in ministry planning can likewise create distrust that spills into the

marriage beyond the boundaries of ministry work.

## Include each other in ministry life

By any and every means possible, do ministry together. If schedules and other demands conflict, include your spouse by sharing as much as possible through close communication. A working spouse can feel a part of a ministry event if she is included on a deep level.

If you and your spouse fail to include each other in your ministry efforts, your marriage will grow apart — even if your offices are adjacent to one another. The work God has given can bring you closer together if you will be careful to include one another. You started out pursuing this kind of life, and you will find this kind of life the most rewarding.

## CONCLUSION

The early years of ministry can be devastating to a marriage, particularly if the ministry couple allows the ministry to be in the driver's seat of their relationship. You can have a healthy marriage that strengthens your efforts to serve God, but you must be intentional in your choices. Keep your marriage ahead of your ministry, and you will find the strength and health you need to be successful at both. 🍷

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**MIKE AND KERRY CLARENSAU**, senior pastors, Maranatha Worship Center, Wichita, Kansas.







# YOUR FIRST DECADE OF MINISTRY

[ BY KEITH DRURY ]



ILLUSTRATION: JAMES PALMER

**W**hen you've finished school and been ordained, what's left? Is there more preparation, or are you now trained for life? What can you expect in the first decade of ministry? How will people treat a young minister? What should you look forward to in the first decade or so of local church ministry?

Those of us who teach ministerial students see it often. Bright students leave college or seminary and enter the ministry, launching their life's work and assuming all preparation is in the past. Then they hit the wall. Things don't go as well as they had expected.

Their great ideas are harder to implement than they had imagined. People don't flock to hear them speak at the church they've planted. Church people don't seem as impressed with them as their professors were.

Consider Michael. While only a junior in college, he launched a major community outreach program that reached more than 300 high school students. Now Michael is pastor of a church that has hovered around 32 people for the 2 years he has been there.

Or, how about Christine. She delivered the senior address at a college chapel service and blew the socks off more than 1,000 students. Last week the middle-aged ladies in the Women of the Word Bible study asked her to conduct one of their lessons. These women think they are giving this young girl a break by letting her teach a Bible study for a half dozen women.

Or consider Andy. He always stood out in college and seminary. He was constantly told that he was the most promising ministerial student. Today Andy is in his third year of carving out a new church plant in a suburb of Denver, Colorado. About 40 people attend — on a good week, that is.

What happens when talented young people graduate from training and enter the ministry?

In the first few years, many of them hit the wall as they come up against the hard realities of ministry. It is not as easy to plant a church as it is to lead a worship service on a college campus. Young ministers often find that the reality of being in the ministry is somewhat different from what they expected. Although they've been through several years of training in college or seminary, people begin to treat them as if they were freshmen again. When this happens, they sometimes come to doubt their abilities. They

**During the first decade of your ministry, worry less about success and more about growth.**

wonder if the problem is this church, a church that simply doesn't recognize their gifts and training, or whether they were perhaps mistaken when they believed God called them into the ministry. Some ministers actually give up and drop out in these early years, deciding they failed in the ministry or just weren't cut out for it.

### EXTENDED PREPARATION

You can do better than to give up when the ministry gets hard. Being prepared for these first years of ministry will help. You need to know what those first 10 years might be like. This e-mail to Michael, a frustrated young minister, will help you get the idea.

Dear Michael:

Sure you feel like a failure. That's because you have your head screwed on wrong. You think now that you've entered the ministry things should just explode for you because you've prepared so well for the last 4 years. You imagine that life should be all downhill after graduation. That's the trouble. You're acting like you've finished preparing for the ministry. In fact, you've only just started. You're out of school, but not out of training.

Face it: you're still a student. So act like it! Keep learning. Keep growing. Keep developing. That's your job for the next 10 years or so, learning to minister. For all practical purposes, you are still in school, but this time it is just the "college of life." You're a freshman again. If you see life from God's perspective, looking from the end of your life backward instead of looking from this point forward, you'll recognize that you are in the second stage of what Leadership Emergence Theory calls inner-life growth. You thought you were finished training when you left school, but you were just starting. College introduced the inner-life growth stage. Now you are in the second half of that stage, the in-ministry half. Schooling got you started, but it represents only about 25 percent of all your training years.

When you look back on your life from age 70, you'll probably categorize all of your 20s (and maybe much of the 30s) as preparation. From that perspective, which is also God's point of view, you will see this 10- to 15-year period as the time when God developed you into the servant He needed for your Big Task, which almost always comes later in life. You'll remember two parts to this preparation stage: the schooling years, and the early ministry years. You'll tend to see them both as training.

So, how will you respond to this idea of an extended preparation stage? The advice you would get from wise old ministers is to quit trying so hard to succeed and try harder to develop. Stop acting as if your whole ministry is going to be judged on what you do in your 20s.

## Let God develop your character, sharpen your skills, and deepen your spiritual life.

(That very thought will someday make you chuckle!) Realize that this decade or so of extended training is a common experience among leaders. Moses spent 40 years in the desert; Paul spent a decade in Arabia and Cilicia before his emergence in Antioch; Jesus spent 10 years of adulthood in Nazareth. During this first decade of your ministry, worry less about success and more about growth. You're still in school. So let God develop your character, sharpen your skills, and deepen your spiritual life.

If you are in school now and preparing for the ministry, you might sigh at the notion that there is still more training to get even after your education is finished. But don't be discouraged. God will use you in the lives of others while you are growing and learning. In most denominations you will have at least a few years after your education before you are ordained. During those years you will be getting more experience, making sure of your calling, and developing competence. In fact, you will probably be ordained part way through the first decade of experience, sometimes as quick as a few years after your initial education is complete. But, even after you are ordained you'll have lots of development ahead of you. So, what are the "courses" in this decade-long period of your life? There are at least three: developing character, sharpening your skills, and deepening your content.

### DEVELOPING CHARACTER

College and seminary do not prepare you completely for the

storms you may face in your 40s and later. Most young ministers are not even ready for success. Few things destroy a young leader faster than premature success. God needs more time to prepare you for your later work. Your character needs to be refined. Your heart needs to be worked on. At 25, you may have experienced many temptations, but not enough kinds of temptation. Temptation is great preparation for future ministry. Facing and beating temptation develops the character God wants from you in the future. At 25, you've not had enough criticism or opposition, and you've not experienced great failure. All of these are experiences that develop the strength you will need for the Big Task that lies ahead. During these years of extended preparation, let God refine your character. Give Him a decade or more to do it. That's your primary assignment in this phase of your life.

### SHARPENING SKILLS

When you graduate from college or seminary, you'll probably think you are pretty hot stuff. When you compare yourself to who you were as a freshman, your growth will seem impressive. But God has so much more in store for you. How will He develop your skills in speaking, leading, managing, and, most of all, working with people? He will develop them as you use them. You try. You fail. You evaluate. You adjust. You try again. You learn. You copy others. You ask questions. You read. You make mistakes. You pick up the pieces and try again.

You will want to find a place of



service where you can fail forward. You'll want a place where you can try new things, get correction from wise leaders, improve yourself, then try again. Look for a place where people will help you improve. Certainly you don't expect your college or seminary homiletics class to provide all the learning you'll need to become a great preacher. And those Christian education courses you took couldn't provide all the Bible teaching or group skills you'll need for the rest of your life. You are still in training for preaching, teaching, and leadership for at least a decade after you graduate. This will be a 10-year lab course in the actual skills of ministry. You'll learn. You'll read. You'll get evaluation. You'll improve. The first 10 years of your active service in the church is really a decade-long residency.

## DEEPENING CONTENT

When God does finally give you your Big Task, what will you say? What will be the content of your message? A few years of upper level courses in Bible and theology can't provide all the wisdom you'll need to make your life's major impact. It takes years of experience to discover the deepest needs of human beings. It takes years of walking close to God and understanding His plan to really know His will for the church. It will take at least a decade to hammer out the implications of your own theology. You may know theology based on college and seminary studies, but when you hit the real-world local church, you will have to revisit everything you believe in order to develop practical applications for preaching and leading God's church.

How could you be an expert on marriage and raising children at age 25? You could read and study and interview parents, but a decade of experience raising your own son or daughter will bring bonus wisdom and credibility you could never get otherwise.

How about Scripture? Most men and women entering the ministry, even after seminary training, have merely scratched the surface of God's Word. Nothing will drive you deep into the Scriptures like preaching to needy people. All these experiences develop content in your life. They give you something to say to people. They supply you with the wisdom for which people hunger. Of course, you will continue deepening your content throughout your life, but during these first 10 years you will see a giant leap in the "finishing school" of life.

Sometimes graduates of seminary or college say to God, "Give me my Big Task now, Lord, and I'll cram for it. I'll develop the character, skills, and content I need quickly." But be careful what you ask for. God may answer that prayer. You may find yourself leading a ministry far greater than your character, skills, and content. And you may fail too early in life, where the consequences are too big. Instead, wise ministers go for the long haul. They know God develops character, skills,

and the content over many years and seldom accelerates the process. So even when you have finished your education, there is ahead of you a decade of greater development. Developing your character, skills, and content is like raising children. It takes years to get the job done, and it can seldom be hurried without serious consequences.

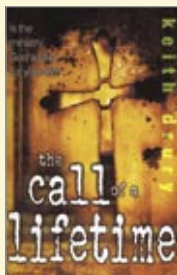
## GOING THE DISTANCE

Your first decade in the church is a period of extended preparation for ministry, but even that won't make you a finished leader. People change. Ministry methods change. Society changes. Satan shifts his strategy constantly. Thus you will need to keep learning and growing throughout your life. This learning curve will seem steepest when you are young, but there will be other periods of your life when you will leap ahead in learning. Many ministers go back to school — even after many years in the ministry — to sharpen their minds and develop their skills. Ministers frequently



## THE CALL OF A LIFETIME

Keith Drury (Wesleyan Publishing House, 176 pp., paperback)



Have you ever read a book and thought, *I wish I had this information earlier*. *The Call of a Lifetime* is such a book. Keith Drury has written a book about ministry for those in ministry.

Drury examines the difference between *ministry* and *the ministry*. He also defines what it means to be called into the ministry, along with the various aspects of ministry. He states, "You can know for sure that God is calling you into the ministry just as certain as you can know for sure you are in love."

His chapter "Women in the Ministry" supports the ordination of women, but also mentions some of the challenges that these women will encounter.

Drury has a high view of the church and ministry. He encourages those called to ministry to discover God's fingerprint for their lives and to obtain the best education possible to prepare for their calling. At the end of each chapter is a section titled "Exploring Your Call." This helps the person examine his outlook on ministry. It also suggests looking for opportunities to talk with others who are in ministry and learn from their insight and wisdom.

His chapter "Dating, Marriage, and the Ministry Lifestyle" is a must read for those going into ministry and those who are planning on marrying a minister. This book needs to be required reading for all pastoral ministry students in our colleges.

—Reviewed by Richard L. Schoonover, associate editor, *Enrichment journal*, Springfield, Missouri.

their entire ministry into a few years, then leave the active ministry before age 35. This is burnout.

Some others flameout. They lose their heated passion and become spiritual zombies, finally abandoning their call. Still others spin out, getting involved in immorality that gets them removed from the ministry. Either way, if you burn the candle of life at both ends, you can burn it up too fast.

To avoid burnout, flameout, or spin out, you (and you alone) must learn to pace yourself. Ministry is not a 100-yard dash. It isn't even a marathon. Ministry is a long-distance trek. It is like backpacking a 1,000 miles or more. It requires taking a long view, pacing yourself, and making sure you don't break your (spiritual) ankle and get eliminated from the journey. While there are times when a burst of speed is needed, a trek is completed with a dogged, determined, steady pace. God is more interested in your next 50 years of ministry than your next 50 weeks. Go for the long haul. ☺

Excerpted from *The Call of a Lifetime: Is the Ministry God's Plan for Your Life?* by Keith Drury. ©2003 by Wesleyan Publishing House. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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*People*, *So What Do You Think?*, *There Is No i in Church*, and *Unveiled Faces*. These books can be ordered from Wesleyan Publishing House: <http://www.parable.com/wph/>.

attend worship services and seminars to enrich their spiritual lives and get new ideas. In answering the call to the ministry you are answering a call to lifelong learning.

As a young person, it will be tempting for you to cram a whole life's ministry into the first decade. Unfortunately, some actually do that! They are so passionate about ministry, so committed, so intense, that they burn out by the end of their first decade in the ministry,

some even before that. They tried to win the world to Christ as if they were the only foot soldier in God's army. They take little time off, have no hobbies, skip their vacations, and do without sleep. And sure enough, their ministries explode with growth! They soon begin to get famous in their district or denomination. But 6, 8, or 10 years later they are gone — poof — like falling stars that disappear, burned out and cold. They did indeed cram



# SMALL CHURCH MINISTRY

A Sprint or a Marathon?

[ BY GLENN DAMAN ]

**T**wo races seem to capture the attention of even the most casual observers of track and field — the mile and the 100-meter dash. Throughout the development of these races, the public has watched in fascination to see if someone would break the 4-minute mile, and to learn who would win the 100-meter dash and be crowned the world's fastest runner. The manner in which these races are run is vastly different. One race requires blazing speed, the other tenacious discipline.

Pastors must decide how they will do ministry. Will they run in ministry like sprinters or as long-distance runners? A sprinter in ministry is one who blazes into town, brings new and fresh ideas, and challenges people to move forward in their relationship with God, but soon burns out from discouragement. Tragically, the small church is often plagued with pastors who stay 1 or 2 years. If the small church is to be healthy and make an impact, it needs pastors who are committed to run the race with endurance, who at the end of their ministry in the church can affirm with Paul that they have finished the race (2 Timothy 4:7).





## IDENTIFYING THE RACE: THE IMPORTANCE OF LONGEVITY

To be effective, pastors need to understand the nature of the race. When pastors talk about longevity, they immediately think of an individual who stays 15 to 20 years in one church. For some, this kind of longevity is a requirement. Others balk at the idea of longevity. For them, it violates the role of the Holy Spirit. Who is right? Are pastors stifling the Spirit when they try to put a time frame on ministry? Are pastors hindering the church when they stay for only a short period? To answer these questions, pastors must acknowledge from the outset that how long they stay and where they serve is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, they must also be aware that the lure to leave a church for greener pastures can cause them to leave too soon. Longevity, while involving temporal considerations, is the commitment to remain in one church until one's ministry is finished in that church.

**Pastors must decide how they will do ministry. Will they run in ministry like sprinters or as long-distance runners?**

## Longevity is critical for building relationships

Effective ministry requires that pastors know their people and the issues confronting them. One hallmark of the small church is it is relationally based and driven. For pastors to be effective, they must know the people (both in the church and in the community), and the people must know them. Relationships do not develop just because a person has been given the position of pastor. Effectiveness only comes through long-term relationships. It takes time to learn the spiritual struggles of people. The greater the depth of pastors' relationships with people, the more effective they will be in influencing them eternally. Christ, in developing and training His disciples, did not invent a program or give them a book to study. He invested His life in them and developed a

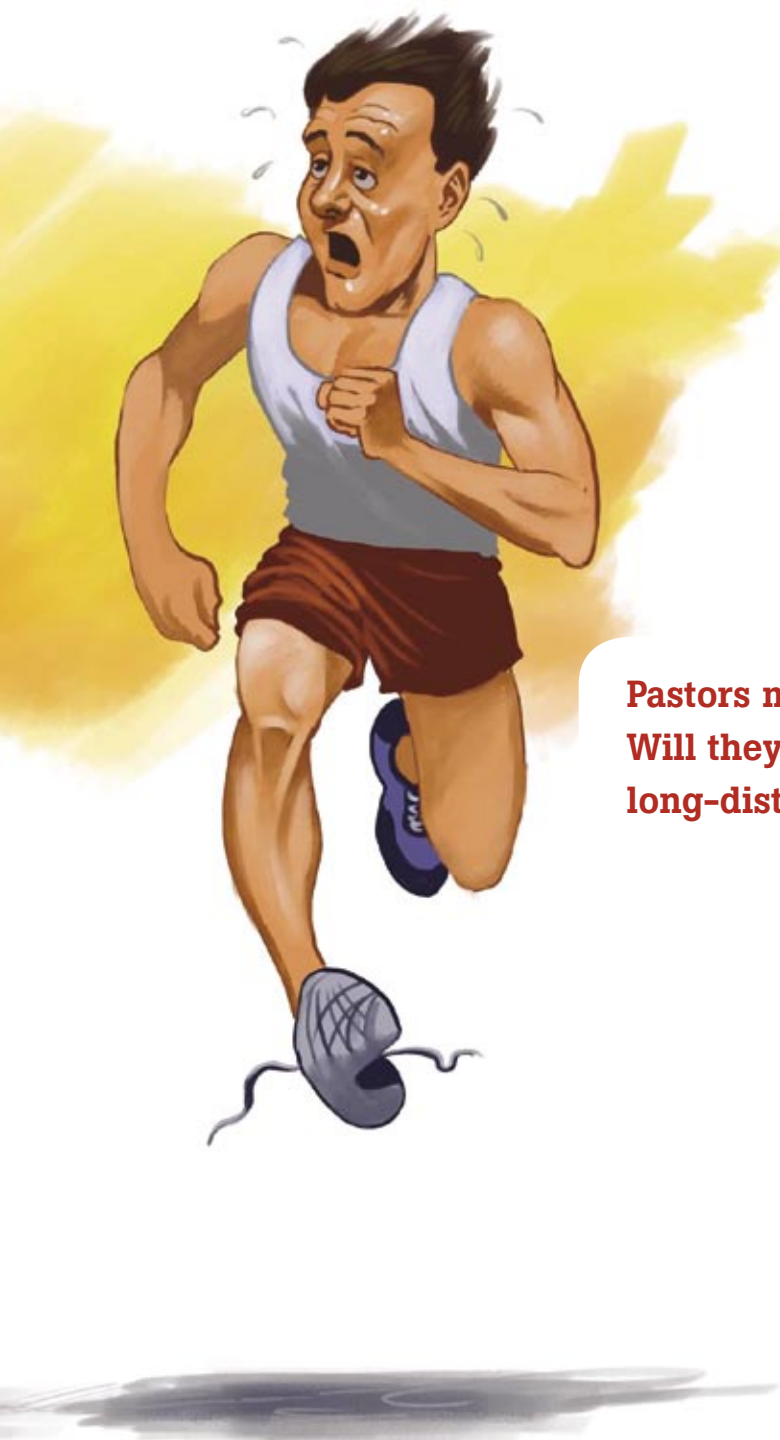


ILLUSTRATION: JAMES PALMER

## PHASE THREE

close relationship with them. The time He spent with His disciples, walking with them through the affairs of life, had significant impact.

### **Longevity is critical for developing trust**

Because the small church has often seen a rapid turnover of leadership, it has developed a distrust of pastors. Before a pastor can move a small church in a new direction, the congregation must trust him and know he will remain long enough to see his goals implemented. This is also true of people in the community. In rural areas, many people are suspicious of newcomers. They see people come and go; and, as a result, they are reluctant to develop a close relationship with a new pastor. One pastor shared his experience, “At 7 years, the church was getting ready to build a new parsonage. We had been living in a mobile home, and the church sold the mobile home so they could build on the same property. A day after they removed the mobile home, my wife was visiting a lady in the community whom she knew casually. When my wife explained the church would be building a new parsonage and we had no intention of moving, she told Randy, ‘That means you will be staying for a long time, and we can now become friends.’ That was after 7 years.” Often it takes at least 2 years to get to know people in the church and 4 years to gain the confidence and trust of the community.

### **Longevity is critical for developing spiritual health in the church**

When pastors accept a call to a church, they envision a spiritually vibrant congregation. However,

**The greater the depth of pastors’ relationships with people, the more effective they will be in influencing them eternally.**



their dreams of an exciting church are soon dashed on the rocks of ministry realism. It does not take pastors long to realize their church is not the ideal church of Acts 2 they dreamed it was when they entered the ministry. When they encounter resistance, they wonder if God has placed them in a church that is the modern-day version of what Ezekiel encountered (Ezekiel 2:3,4). When people do not respond immediately to their call for change, pastors start looking for another congregation in hopes it will be more receptive. What they have forgotten is God does not call them to perfect churches, but to imperfect ones. Because people are tainted with sin, pastors continually deal with the reality of people’s sinfulness and their struggle to attain Christlikeness. It takes time to develop spiritual health in a congregation and in the lives of

individuals just as it takes time for a baby to grow into adulthood. Paul reminds us not only to preach the Word, but also to do so with great patience (2 Timothy 4:2).

### **Longevity is critical to maintain morale**

Congregations, like individuals, can become discouraged. When a congregation becomes discouraged, the ministry becomes stifled as people lose their sense of hope and purpose. While many different issues and events can undermine morale, a significant problem in the small church is the rapid turnover of pastoral leadership. This, when coupled with other factors, can undermine a pastor’s confidence that God is working in the congregation. When a church is struggling, it needs stable leadership. When pastors leave, instability undermines effectiveness. People wonder if God is working in their church. This is further compounded by our mega-focused culture. Our culture operates with the assumption that bigger is better. As a result, the church begins to view itself as inferior. When several pastors leave to serve larger congregations, it reinforces this thinking.

### **Longevity is critical for effective transformational change**

The small church has often been labeled as unchangeable. While this

is usually not the case, the small church is often slow to change. Pastors are agents of change. Growth (whether spiritual or numerical) cannot happen without some degree of change where pastors replace old patterns with new ones (Ephesians 4:22–24). Transformational change in people takes time. This is equally true for a congregation. Change brings uncertainty and risk. It takes time for a congregation to become accustomed to new practices so they no longer feel uncertain or hesitant. It takes time for people to feel comfortable with change so they fully understand how they are to act, what they are to do, and why. This can only happen when pastors, as change agents, remain long enough to see new patterns established.

## AVOIDING THE HINDRANCES

The writer of Hebrews, in comparing our spiritual pilgrimage to a race, writes, “Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles” (Hebrews 12:1). Difficulties and obstacles can easily bog down those running the race, whether it is the race of the Christian life or the race of ministry. While pastors face many hindrances caused by outside forces, pastors place some hindrances on themselves. While serving a small church, pastors can allow hindrances to restrict their ministry; and, if these hindrances are left unchecked, they can cause a pastor’s ministry to lose its vitality.

### The pitfall of complacency

One danger pastors face when remaining in a small church is complacency. They learn what is expected, become comfortable in their activities, and become complacent in ministry. They put

in their time, do the required tasks, but do not move beyond them. This danger becomes greater the longer a pastor is in ministry. Like a weary marathon runner, pastors can get to the point where they cease to focus on finishing well and just want to cross the finish line.

One pastor, in describing the dangers of longevity, made this observation, “Because of the lack of turnover in many small communities you may be stuck at where you came in. Sometimes once they have figured out who they think you are and what they think you can accomplish, it is difficult to grow in that setting.” As a result, pastors become satisfied. They no longer have a sense of urgency to their ministry and can lose their vision for the church and for reaching the community.

### The pitfall of success

The lure of success is an illusion pastors must overcome if they are to remain in the small church for the long haul. Pastors attend conferences, regional meetings, and see the success of others and the benefits they receive. The result is pastors become jealous of other pastors. One pastor writes, “We are too worldly — we think size is more important. Even our reporting seems to focus on size or at least numbers. They look across the fence and see the benefits (larger salary, better benefit packages) other pastors receive and decide they should be entitled to them as well.” When this happens, their discontentment begins to grow. He looks at his church much like how a man looks at his old clunker while walking through a new car lot. What used to be seen as reliable transportation now appears to be a sputtering rust

bucket. The church that excited him when he first arrived now appears tainted because of its smallness.

The pastor’s discontent can further be exacerbated if the church is in an isolated location and offers a small or limited benefits package. It is difficult to remain in a church where it is a daily fight to make ends meet on a limited salary. It is difficult not to see the larger church with the larger salary as God’s calling. What pastors attribute to God can often be a blanket to conceal their own desire for ministry and financial success.

### The pitfall of human imperfection

One challenge pastors face in remaining for an extended period in a small church is they know the people and the people know them. Pastors have seen the people at their worst, and they have seen the pastor at his worst. The result is pastors may form conclusions regarding people in the church and in the community. They no longer see the potential; only the problems. But the street goes both ways. Just as pastors view people in a particular way, people also see their pastor’s faults. They learn he is not the ideal, perfect pastor they once thought he was. Their rose-colored glasses are replaced with the dark lenses of reality. They know their pastor and his faults just as the pastor knows them and their faults. The pastor no longer has a clean slate. However, familiarity does not need to be a hindrance. It can be a springboard for authentic, transparent ministry. When people see their pastor’s warts, a pastor can begin to show them Christ and the difference He can make in one’s life.

## PHASE THREE

### The pitfall of unrealized goals and expectations

Pastors often measure their effectiveness by visible results. They set goals and expect to achieve those goals. When goals are not reached, pastors become discouraged and may question the commitment of the people, doubt their own abilities, and even become unsure of God's promises. The result is they may look elsewhere for a more hopeful ministry, or perhaps look for employment outside ministry. When facing unrealized expectations, pastors wonder if they would be better off working as a greeter at a local store where there are no expectations, pressures, goals, or frustrations. In reality, the problem is not the people, the pastor's abilities and calling, or even God. The problem is pastors often have unrealistic expectations. The challenge they face is to establish goals based on their present resources and opportunities. They must prayerfully consider the opportunities God has placed before

them, recognizing He has given them the available resources to meet these challenges.

### RUNNING THE RACE: KEEPING ENERGIZED DURING THE RACE

When confronted with the discouragement and complaints of Jeremiah regarding the ministry to which he was called, God responded by challenging Jeremiah: "If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?" (Jeremiah 12:5). How can pastors have longevity in ministry without becoming worn out? How do they maintain their ministry vitality while remaining an extended period in a small church?

### Pastors maintain their ministry vitality by maintaining their spiritual growth

Longevity in ministry requires a spiritual connection to the empowerment of Christ (John 15:4). Before pastors can lead others toward spiritual maturity, they must be spiritually mature themselves. They must continually be striving toward godliness in both faith and practice (1 Timothy 4:16). It is easy to become so involved in ministry

that pastors neglect their own spiritual well-being. In his pursuit of preaching, the Scriptures can become a textbook to be studied and expounded on rather than a personal Word from God on how to live. If a pastor's identity does not come from his calling and his relationship with Christ, he can easily become distracted by those critical of his ministry. If he is not clear in his relationship with God, then his ministry will become clouded by the struggles he faces. Like Elijah, when pastors are discouraged, they do not need more programs or to be reminded of past accomplishments. They need to know whom God is and what He is doing in the outworking of His redemptive plan (1 Kings 19:11–18). If a pastor does not have a firm understanding of who God is, God's call on his life, and God's empowerment to fulfill the call, ministry can easily become distorted and misguided. Longevity, ultimately, is not about staying in one place versus moving to another church with more potential. Longevity in ministry is about a pastor's communion with God, and his sensitivity to God's will and purpose for his life and for the life of the church.

### Pastors maintain their ministry vitality by maintaining their ministry growth

Pastors need to remain current in the cultural, theological, and ministry trends affecting people and the church. To remain on the cutting edge of ministry (as opposed to the status quo), pastors must pursue continuing education, whether it is formal or informal. To keep vitality in ministry, they need to improve their ministry by training

When pastors meet at convention...



"Frankly, Paul, I was a bit uneasy when I saw my name on the church sign in VELCRO®."

©2006 Andy Robertson



for effectiveness. The moment pastors stop learning, their ministry grows stale.

Second, growing in ministry requires cultivating friendships with unsaved individuals. Pastors can easily become so involved in the church that most of their time

These victories may appear small, such as a person having enough courage to pray publicly for the first time. Yet, every measure of growth, no matter how small, is cause for excitement because it is a testimony of the grace of God working in the lives of people. Growth is the

lead to burnout in ministry (and unhealthy families and marriages). It is easy for pastors to think they must do everything, for if they do not, it will not get done. What they forget is that the health of the church does not rest on their shoulders, but on the person of Christ. He is the Messiah, not the pastor. God calls pastors to a Sabbath rest because they need to refocus on God in a hectic world. God also knows pastors' limitations and their need for weekly rejuvenation. Pastors need to take days off. They need to take vacations to maintain their emotional and personal vitality in ministry. Their people deserve it, and their families demand it.

## Pastors need to remain current in the cultural, theological, and ministry trends affecting people and the church.

is spent with Christians. Pastors who work overtime may lose contact with people outside the church. The result is many pastors no longer understand the issues confronting the unsaved and how to minister to them.

Third, growing in ministry requires establishing realistic and attainable goals. Goals challenge pastors to focus on what is ahead rather than only on the past and present. As pastors establish goals, they should periodically redirect the emphasis of their ministry. It is easy to become locked in on pet projects and topics, whether it is in one's preaching or ministry. Intentionally breaking out of the box brings freshness to a pastor's ministry and new perspective to his people so they are challenged to grow as well.

Fourth, growing in ministry requires pastors to remain excited about people's spiritual growth. It is easy to focus on attendance rather than on what is happening in people's lives. It is often difficult to see growth in people because growth occurs slowly over time rather than in dramatic spurts. When a pastor has been at a church many years, however, he can look back and see significant growth in people.

result of the Holy Spirit's activity (Philippians 1:6).

Fifth, growing in ministry requires maintaining the vibrancy that comes through sharing the spiritual load. Ministry is not a one-man show. The church's ministry is the calling of the whole church. No single individual is responsible for the ministry of the congregation. Scripture makes it clear that ministry is the responsibility of the body of Christ. Consequently, a pastor's challenge is not to do the work of ministry, but to encourage, exhort, and assist others in doing the ministry.

### Pastors maintain their ministry vitality by maintaining their personal growth

Someone said pastors must take care of themselves, for no one else will. People will often unwittingly take advantage of pastors. Ministry in the small church is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If pastors are not careful, ministry can suck the emotional and spiritual energies from their lives. Pastors need to take time for their own personal rejuvenation. While they may think working 80 hours a week is spiritual, ultimately it is a mark of pride and will eventually

## FINISHING THE RACE

It would be convenient if pastors could establish a set number of years to serve a church before they move on. But such convenience is not reality. If the small church is to be healthy, it needs committed leadership — individuals who are willing to remain for however long God calls them to the church. Leaders who are not lured away by greener pastures, are not quick to quit when conflicts and problems arise, and are not ready to bail when they receive unjust criticism. They remain steadfast and faithful, firmly focused on God's calling on their life and His will for their ministry. Longevity is staying in the church until God makes it clear that one's ministry is completed. 🔄



**GLENN DAMAN, D.MIN.,** is director of the Village Missions Center for Leadership Development, Dallas, Oregon. He is author of *Shepherding the Small Church*.

# GETTING YOUR FINANCES ON TRACK

[ BY KREGG HOOD ]

**R**ecently, I spoke at a ministry seminar in a crowded part of the Northeast. I was not excited about renting a car and driving through complex, unfamiliar territory. The car I rented, however, had a satellite tracking system. I entered my destination information, pushed a button, and waited as the system calculated and displayed my route. The next thing I knew, the system began talking to me, giving me the directions I needed to reach several important landmarks. As I drove along, it told me which roads to take, how many miles to my next exit, and whether to turn left or right. When I missed a turn, it said, “Recalculating route. . . .” and then told me what to do to get back on track. When I arrived at my destination, the system told me so. It was amazing. Sure, it took a little time to learn how to follow the directions the system gave. But once I got used to it, I loved it.

Imagine having a financial tracking system to help with spending? Just before you pulled out a credit card, your system would be programmed to say, “Put that back in your wallet.”



ILLUSTRATION: JAMES PALMER

If you automatically deposited into a savings or retirement account from your paycheck, the system might call your cell phone, and say, “Great decision.” Even if this invention existed, people might be tempted to ignore what they heard

ideas, remember that time can either be a friend or a foe. I waited too long to get started, and now I am playing catch up. While not impossible, catching up can be hard to do. As you start out in ministry, begin putting these principles to

## **Since we do not have an automatic tracking system for our finances, each person needs his own personal plan for managing his money. These simple steps are powerful.**

and stick with the low-tech way of maximizing their spending and saving decisions.

Since we do not have an automatic tracking system for our finances, each person needs his own personal plan for managing his money. These simple steps are powerful.

As a pastor starting out in ministry, your income may be limited. You may feel you are constantly under financial stress. If you are fighting some financial battles, these steps will help you get back on track. If you are hanging in there, these steps will protect you from wrong turns.

Only the Lord can be your security. Uncertain times can creep up on anyone. Work through this process because it will enlighten you to ways you can get even more value out of your current income and prepare for any future challenges.

In the early days of my ministry several members in my church gave me pointers about managing my small salary, purchasing insurance wisely, and steering clear of credit card debt. One of the areas where I shortchanged my family, however, was in preparing for future needs, such as my children’s college education and my own retirement.

As you read through the following

work. As you do, the results will show in the future.

### **KNOW WHEN AND WHY YOU SPEND EVERY DOLLAR**

Money does not spend itself. We decide to write a check, use a credit card, or withdraw cash. If the amount of money you have left at the end of the month does not allow you to build a positive financial future, start by looking at your spending.

### **PLAN SPENDING IN ADVANCE AND IN WRITING**

When you give a little thought before you spend, you acknowledge several values. First, it helps prioritize your spending by helping you pay your most important expenses first. Next, it helps you time your spending, which keeps you on track. For example, if you wait before making a certain purchase, you will have more funds for an important priority in the present. Finally, a spending plan energizes your convictions. We are constantly bombarded with ways to spend our money. When someone suggests when and what you should buy, and how much you should spend, you may or may not follow his advice, depending on

your spending plan. When you have decided on your plan, have tied it to your goals, and have written it down, and prayed for guidance, you are more likely to stick to it and not be persuaded by appeals for impulse buying. When you have a written plan, you will experience its benefits. Here is how a spending plan works:

- List all your income and expenses for the last 3 months. This task may be facilitated by using forms or worksheets developed by financial planners. (Go to this article at <http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org> to download PDF files of my financial planning worksheets). Using blank, lined paper works just the same. The main objective is to write down your income and spending habits and determine what needs to change.
- Spend less than your income. Determine your true needs and adjust your spending so your money goes first to your highest priorities. It may feel like you are working a jigsaw puzzle. You may need to transfer funds from one place to another to create the right picture. This is normal. Start with your regular fixed expenses (giving to the Lord’s work, mortgage or rent, car payments, and insurance).
- Next, consider monthly expenses where the amount varies from month to month such as groceries, utilities, even taxes. It may be helpful to use an annual total and divide by 12 to obtain a monthly average. Carefully prioritize and make adjustments for all expenses and commitments. Thoughtfully consider what to add or cut. For example, giving to the Lord’s work, buying a house, saving for your child’s education, and saving for retirement are



## TEMPTED TO SPEND?

The secret to financial success is simple: Keep spending under control. Nevertheless, the marketing geniuses in our culture know how to tempt people to spend more than they should. Federal Reserve statistics indicate that 40 percent of Americans spend more than they make. Here are 10 ideas about reducing your expenses:

1. Say no to new debt, especially big-ticket items. Even if you need a new car, do not assume the 0 percent interest rate justifies a new commitment.
2. Make and follow a spending plan. Do not wait to figure out what you can and cannot spend. Be tough on yourself at first, then relax and reward yourself later when you have truly followed the plan.
3. Watch out for how often you use your ATM card. ATM cards make it too easy to get money out of your account. Decide how much cash you can afford to spend each month and only use your ATM according to your plan. Remember, many ATM accounts charge a fee to use their services.
4. Take a shopping sabbatical. Some people go shopping because it relaxes them or because they are bored. Avoid any trip to a place where you might be tempted to buy something you do not need.
5. Avoid impulse purchases. Save money for your purchases and wait until you need them before buying them. Use what you have longer, fix things, and wear them out.
6. Use cash to pay down outstanding credit card balances. Every dollar paid on the balance reduces debt and the interest accruing on it. Small, consistent steps can make a difference.
7. Stay home and cook. Groceries for three to five home-cooked meals cost about the same price as one meal eaten out. Remember, the money saved is not extra spending money. Use it to pay down your debt.
8. Take your lunch to work. This is a quick way to save \$25 to \$30 per week. That may not sound like much, but it is more than \$100 per month. Take the money saved each week and add it to credit card payments or use it to pay for necessities previously purchased on a credit card.
9. Discontinue monthly subscriptions and memberships that are not necessary. Is cable TV or Internet access more important than your sense of inner peace? Do you need a daily newspaper? Can you exercise at home instead of at the health club? One thing may not seem like very much, but together they add up.
10. Use the envelope system for spending. When you get paid, pay your tithe, pay your bills next, then write yourself a check for the remaining money, and cash it. Put this money into a series of envelopes for each category of spending. Decide in advance how much you can afford to spend on each category until your next paycheck. When the cash is gone, stop spending. This is the single most powerful step you can take if you want to get spending under control.

Most important, remember that the Lord wants to guide you in this process. Hebrews 13:5,6 says, "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.' So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'"

**KREGG HOOD, Ed.D.**, Springfield, Missouri.

more important than going to the movies or eating out. Plan accordingly, remembering that inexpensive recreation is often just as much fun and protects your more important financial

priorities. To squeeze the most out of your income, get a receipt or record for every purchase you make during the week. No expense is too small. Make sure all weekly expenses are included on

your spending analysis worksheet. Add up the week's receipts to see what was purchased. Is the morning coffee on the way to work worth an extra \$10 or more a week?

# PHASE THREE

## KEEP STRETCHING YOUR RESOURCES

If reducing credit card or college debt is a priority, free up extra funds and double up on your monthly payments. This will become possible if you cut back on discretionary spending in your written plan (budget). Eat out less often. Buy less expensive items. Make clothes and other items last longer. Writing down expenditures and keeping a written budget near where you pay your bills will help you remember to keep finding money to put toward your plan.

## ADD A SAVINGS PLAN

One of the surest ways to reach your financial goals is by saving money. By definition, saving is the opposite of spending. Proverbs 13:11 says, "He who gathers money little by little makes it grow."

If you are not saving, something is wrong with your financial planning. Spending and saving work in tandem. Make short-term and long-term financial goals. One place to focus

your short-term savings is on an emergency fund. Save until you have accumulated \$1,000 in this fund. Having the cash reserves to handle the next maintenance emergency gives a great deal of satisfaction and relief.

After establishing an emergency fund, prepare long-term goals. It is better late than never to begin saving. Remember, once all the balances on your repayment plan are settled, more money can be devoted to saving and giving. Seek godly counsel on the most profitable ways to save and invest for the future.

## SET GOALS

Good money management includes having short- and long-term goals. Creating financial objectives in both areas will increase your motivation to follow through. This process also serves to crystallize your thinking. Even if you set aside only \$1 each month toward your goals, do that.

This creates a concrete goal instead of a fuzzy one. As you pay off old debts, apply that money toward goal accounts. If you plan to put your children through college, buy a home, tithe, support missions work, or pay off credit card or college loan debt, you must concretely establish that objective.

## HOW TO BECOME DEBT-FREE

Debt is slavery. Proverbs 22:7 states, "The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender."

The acrostic D.E.B.T. illustrates steps for becoming debt-free.

**D**evelop your personal debt-retirement plan.

**E**very bill you owe must be written, numbered, and added to your prayer list.

**B**e disciplined as you focus on paying off your present debts with double, triple, and quadruple payments.

**T**hink about saving for future needs so more debt is not created.

**JACK GLASS**, Bella Vista, Arkansas

When my wife and I bought our first house, I had just begun my ministry. We were also planning to begin our family in 2 or 3 years, so we established our goals first. First, we looked for a house we could afford on my salary alone. We wanted to live in a safe neighborhood near our church. We wanted a place where we could invite people over for fellowship. We had these ideas in mind, and God led us to a wonderful house. Given our stage in life, it was exactly what we wanted. We were even able to get a special, lower interest rate on the home because



**If you are not saving, something is wrong with your financial planning. Spending and saving work in tandem.**

## AS YOUR SAVINGS GROW YOUR WORRIES GO

Retirement planning needs to begin when you receive your first check from the church. When the church sends money direct to the minister's 403b

account it is pretax. Minister's Benefit Association is presently paying 6 percent interest compounded monthly. The accumulated amounts below are based on this rate.

INVESTMENT PER MONTH	AMOUNT ACCUMULATED IN YEARS			
	10 YEARS	20 YEARS	30 YEARS	30 YEARS
\$25	4,163	11,692	25,389	50,310
\$50	8,326	23,383	50,778	100,620
\$75	12,489	35,075	76,167	150,930
\$100	16,652	46,766	101,556	201,241
\$125	20,815	58,458	126,945	251,551
\$150	24,978	70,149	152,334	301,861
\$200	33,304	93,532	203,112	402,481
\$250	41,630	116,915	253,890	503,101
\$300	49,955	140,298	304,668	603,722
\$325	54,118	151,990	330,057	654,032
\$350	58,281	163,681	355,446	704,342
\$375	62,444	175,373	380,835	754,652
\$400	66,607	187,065	406,224	804,962
\$425	70,770	198,756	431,613	855,272
\$450	74,933	210,448	457,002	905,583
\$475	79,096	222,139	482,391	955,893
\$500	83,259	233,831	507,780	1,006,203



**JACK GLASS**, Bella Vista, Arkansas

## MANAGE DEBT OR DEBT WILL MANAGE YOU

Is your credit card use out of control? Remember, credit is a tool that must be managed. If you let it get out of control, the debt will manage you.

Here are the top signs of trouble. To determine how well you are managing the use of credit cards, read through the questions and answer yes or no.

1. Do creditors call you at home or write you threatening letters?
2. Do you borrow new money to pay old debts?
3. Do you and your mate argue frequently about money issues?
4. Do credit card bills take up more than 20 percent of your income (not including the cost of your home or apartment)?
5. Do creditors threaten you with lawsuits, wage garnishment, or repossession?
6. Do you only pay the minimum balance on your credit cards?
7. Do you depend on overtime or special bonuses to make ends meet?
8. Do you make late payments or skip payments for a month?

If you answered yes to one or two of these questions, you might have a credit card problem. Think through the reasons why you answered yes and determine if you can correct the situation on your own. If you answered yes to three or more of these questions, you definitely have a problem and need to make serious changes immediately.

**KREGG HOOD, Ed.D.**, Springfield, Missouri.

## CREDIT CARD DEBT— DIGGING A DEEP HOLE

The average family today has committed 110 percent of their income to out-going obligations. Every month they are falling behind 10 percent. This is being accomplished by the one thing that ensnares more American families than anything else — credit cards.

Think about a couple with \$10,000 in credit card debt. Their card charges 18 percent interest per month. If they pay their minimum payment — which is \$35 each month — it will take 10 years to pay off the debt. The interest will total \$5,575. This is based on the premise they do not charge anything else to the card during this time.

By adding an extra \$100 to their payment each month, they will pay off the card in 50 months and will save \$2,285 in interest.

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**JACK GLASS**, Bella Vista, Arkansas

## SPENDER MENDER AND SHOPPER STOPPER

My wife and I tape a placard to the back of our bedroom door entitled 30-Day Wait List.

We list large-cost items along with the current date. Our plan is to wait 30 days before making each purchase. This removed impulse and emotion from our spending plan. After 30 days we often decide we do not need the item.

Occasionally, the 30-day wait gives us time to find the item on sale and save money for our family.

“Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?” (Isaiah 55:2).

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**JACK GLASS**, Bella Vista, Arkansas

we were first-time homebuyers.

National speaker and author Stephen Covey says, “Begin with the end in sight.” That is the essence of good goal setting. It reminds me of what Jesus taught about counting the cost: “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish’ ” (Luke 14:28–30).

When you approach spending decisions by starting with goals, you make better decisions about homes, cars, college, and retirement. A goal-oriented approach will result in your becoming less vulnerable to impulse buying and more focused on the future.

Once you have your goals in mind,

your spending priorities will follow. You can determine your spending priorities simply by looking at the order in which you write checks. If God is first in your life, your tithe and offering check will be the first, not the last check you write each week. Your next check might be for your house or rent payment. Go down the line, based on priorities. If paying off debt or increasing your level of giving is a priority, you will not just talk about it, you will do something. Get that amount written as high on the payment list as possible. Make it an important commitment and do not forget it.

## CONCLUSION

Developing a budget and spending plan and following them requires self-discipline. But in the long run it leads to financial freedom. The best place to start this plan is when

you first enter the ministry. As you seek God and counsel from godly financial planners, the Lord will help you become good stewards of His resources. 🙏



**KREGG HOOD, ED.D.**, is senior vice president, AG Financial, Springfield, Missouri.







Check out  
*Enrichment* journal's  
Web site for these  
and other great  
ministry resources



**"Ministry is not so much what you do as it is what you are,"** says Pastor John Lindell of James River Assembly in Ozark, Missouri. Focusing on 1 Timothy 4, Lindell identifies five basic, yet life-transforming, characteristics of the minister. The minister

living up to his or her divine calling must be an example worthy of imitation, be a lifelong student of God's Word, hold unwaveringly to God's calling, shun distractions, and consistently demonstrate spiritual growth.

### **Full-time Pastor, Part-time Pay: Six Steps for Getting the Most From Your Bivocational Ministry**

**Whether a pastor is fully supported by a congregation or must rely on another job to earn needed income,** Harold R.

Newsome, Jr. believes pastoring is an around-the-clock responsibility. His six areas of advice for the bivocational pastor offer straightforward solutions to what could be an insurmountable paradox.

By recognizing personal limitations and carefully choosing where best to devote one's energy, a pastor can serve most productively within this common and challenging ministry environment.

### **Challenges and Victories: The Life and Times of a Pastor**

**Church of God Assistant General Overseer T.L. Lowery admits every pastor will face challenges,** but each day in ministry should bring a joy of shepherding, a joy of caring,

and a joy of administrating. The pastor as "shepherd" — or literally "the feeding one" — nourishes the congregation from God's Word and through personal relationship and guidance, lives out the caring ministry of Christ, and communicates the joy of service to every member of the church staff.



### **Am I a Person of Integrity?**

**In one of his many articles addressed to fellow ministers,** the late G. Raymond Carlson, former general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, called for rejection of personal ambition and complete surrender to God's leading. The minister who dedicates every area of life to God's service demonstrates the integrity Christ called for — a love for God that consumes one's passions and seeks only heaven's. "The choice rests with us," Carlson said. "The ability to practice it comes through the work of the Holy Spirit."



## Why Pastors Fall

**As president of Pure Life Ministries, an outreach to those dealing with sexual sin, Steve Gallagher has studied the life cases** of many ministers

who have succumbed to sexual temptation. Never give in, he warns, to the lie that moral failure is inevitable.

Remaining true to spiritual disciplines — faithfully walking in the Spirit — will connect the promise of Galatians 5:16 to every pastor's life; he "will not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

## Trustworthy Pastors

**"I've never been so happy and satisfied in my entire life,"** says Craig Brian Larson of pastoring

Lake Shore

Assembly of God in Chicago. But he believes the health and success of his pastorate are inextricably connected to the power of trust. Larson describes how a lack of trust can handicap the most dynamic ministry, and how a commitment to building trust will also inevitably build the church — and point others to a trustworthy God.











## Marital Conflict and Divorce

How to help couples become companions and not enemies



*To survive, couples must hold on to the belief that God brought them together for a reason.*

**M**any pastors know this scenario: A husband and wife come to his office and share how bad their marriage is. The pastor wants to provide counseling, but all they want to know is, “What does the Bible say about divorce?” or “Will we be condemned if we do not stay together?”

The pastor knows the biblical answer. Jesus said, “I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery” (Matthew 19:3–9). Paul wrote, “A wife must not separate from her husband. . . . And a husband must not divorce his wife” (1 Corinthians 7:10,11).

The Book of Genesis, Jesus’ teaching on marriage, and Paul’s writing agree that when a man and a woman come together in marriage they

create a one-flesh union. Paul admits that this is a “profound mystery” (Ephesians 5:32). He then explained that he was talking about the relationship of Christ with the Church. In other words, a husband should be willing to sacrifice his life for his spouse and avoid making selfish demands on her. When selfishness, not selflessness, occurs in marriages, conflict is the result.

So, what does a pastor do? He needs to ask the couple if they would be willing to work on their marriage in ways they may not have tried before. If a pastor cannot do the long-term counseling this will require, he can refer them to a competent Christian counselor.

A pastor must not use guilt to persuade a couple to attend counseling by telling them, “God hates divorce.” Rather, he needs to challenge



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them to give themselves opportunity to find the relationship that God intends for them to have.

## All Couples Go Through a Process of Development

Pastors need to help couples gain perspective. Couples are not alone in their conflicts, and conflict is a part of normal development for couples. One myth couples might believe is that marriage should always be exciting and romantic. If it is not, something must be wrong. The truth is that relationships develop over time; they mature and grow. A love that lasts is continually growing in spiritual depth and emotional intimacy. The struggles and challenges of life give couples opportunity to achieve this growth.

A person generally goes through six stages in life. **First**, he is single. If he has done his individual developmental work well, he will have a strong identity and be fully aware of God's calling, plan, and purpose for his life.

**Second**, some enchanted evening a person meets his spouse. Bells start ringing and violins start playing. The two only have eyes for each other. They become identified as a couple and lose themselves in each other. We often refer to this period as being infatuated with one another.

**Third**, sometime after marriage, the honeymoon ends. One morning the wife discovers that her husband does not put the toilet paper roll on right. The husband remembers his wife was raised Assemblies of God; he was not. He is a Republican; she is a Democrat. One spouse likes frequent sex; the other does not. Quirks and idiosyncrasies become apparent. Some begin to doubt that they married the right person. Conflicts over differences develop. One or both spouses decide it is time to develop their own life. As a result, they lose interest in each other. This leads to separateness and mutual coexistence.

**Fourth**, people go through a phase where they seem to get lost in themselves. One spouse may become preoccupied with work while the other is preoccupied with their children. This is the dangerous time when one or both spouses may turn to unhealthy ways of coping with their feelings of being separate and alone. Compulsive or addictive behaviors may result

for some. Sadly, some will turn to other people, and affairs are the result.

Criticizing one's spouse for coping in an unhealthy way leads to ongoing conflict and the couple seems stuck. Some couples use avoidance to cope with the pain, or the couple might turn to anger and conflict. Anger and conflict, at least, create adrenaline. Fighting might be the only passion being experienced in the relationship. In this stage couples might fight, then make up. They often become caught up in this endless cycle of ups and downs.

If a couple is strong and patient, they can survive this stage and move on to the next. Paul said, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:4,5).

**Fifth**, to survive, couples must hold on to the belief that God brought them together for a reason. If God had intended people to be exactly alike, one person in the marriage would not be needed. As they grow in their relationship, couples discover that one has strengths where the other has weaknesses. Couples also learn how to cooperate and become intimate allies. Perhaps couples even find that their strengths and weaknesses are a completely matched set.

In **the final stage** of development, couples understand that they are capable of taking care of themselves as individuals because they depend on God. They recognize their strengths, talents, and weaknesses as they develop self-confidence. But out of their strengths they also choose to remain together. While couples know they can be alone, they know that their spouse completes them in a spiritual and covenantal union. The two have become one and rejoice in it.

Few couples have the courage to get to this last stage. Most couples bounce back and forth between stages 2, 3, and 4. When some get to stage 3, their perceptions of their differences and the constant conflicts that go with them lead them into divorce.

In counseling, ask couples where they think they fit in these stages. Help them see that the process is normal. Challenge them to make

*Criticizing one's spouse for coping in an unhealthy way leads to ongoing conflict.*



it to the last two stages. Getting beyond stage 4 requires knowing how to resolve conflict in healthy ways.

### **Resolving Conflict: The Problem Is Never the Problem**

Family therapist Virginia Satir was fond of saying, "The problem is never the problem; coping with the problem is the problem."

A couple's conflict can develop over issues that are only symptoms or expressions of deeper issues. When a couple battles over superficial issues, there is no solution because the deeper thoughts, feelings, and needs are not being addressed.

Pastors can help couples see that they are fighting over issues that are not the real problem. At every turn the pastor must gently steer them away from these superficial arguments while helping them walk through deeper levels of understanding.

**First**, help couples understand how each of them copes with life. Give them examples of what coping means. Some people use substances such as alcohol, drugs, nicotine, and even caffeine to change the way they feel in the neurochemistry of their brains. Some people use activities such as eating, shopping, cleaning, or sex to find a high that medicates feelings. These coping strategies can get out of control for some and become addictions. Others use avoidance strategies by working, sleeping, watching TV, or getting overly involved in various other activities.

Have each person make a list of his coping strategies and share these with his spouse. This is the beginning of taking responsibility for each person's own actions.

**Second**, teach couples how they might be relating to each other in a variety of ways that may help them cope with difficult feelings but is detrimental to their marriage. One or both spouses may be constantly blaming the other. Some spouses try to always please the other one. This is sometimes referred to as codependency. Others may act in what they consider reasonable, but sometimes self-righteous ways. Christians who use this approach may use Scripture to prove their reasonable point. Finally, some may act as if they do not care or that everything is irrelevant.

In counseling, I sometimes have couples stand and assume a posture they think looks like blaming, pleasing, being reasonable, or not caring. I then ask them to choose the one stance

they do the most. This is also a way of taking personal responsibility.

**Third**, through your own modeling, teach couples about feelings. I give couples a list of feeling words and have them pick which ones they know they feel. You can sometimes see in their faces how they are feeling. Point that out to them. Have them listen to each other and reflect back what their partner is feeling.

**Fourth**, teach couples how to realize that they have certain core beliefs about themselves that have been formed in their history. This involves their families, churches, schools, and culture in general.

Many times I am confronted by people who say, "You can talk all you want about grace and God's love, but I know it does not apply to me."

Where does this roadblock come from? Somewhere in these people's past they were told they did not measure up, they were bad, and they did not deserve to get their needs met.

Men can develop incorrect messages about being men from the lies of culture. The same dynamic can happen to women. For example, men are led to believe that their greatest need is sex, when, in reality, this is a biological myth. Women can be led to believe that they are intellectually inferior to men. This too is a biological myth. The lists of core beliefs that people hold about themselves can be endless. These incorrect beliefs, however, may keep people stuck in conflicts. If a woman has believed since her early years that she has never been attractive, how can her husband convince her otherwise? Have couples list the core beliefs they carry with them, and have them discuss with each other where they learned them.

**Fifth**, help couples admit to the expectations they desire from their spouses. These expectations are formed out of a person's basic desires. When a person does not know how to get his desires met in his relationship with Christ and with others, he expect his spouse to fulfill these. For example, if a mother has not nurtured her son in a healthy way, her son may later expect his wife to nurture him in motherly ways. How many wives have said to their husbands, "I am not your mother"?

People bring these expectations with them to the altar. But people are not consciously aware of these expectations. A person gets mad when his spouse does not seem to live up to what he expects. Help couples see that many of the things they expect from each other are things that we can only expect from God.

Next to the bottom of these levels are seven



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desires of the heart that are universal to both men and women. These are: the desire to be heard and understood, affirmed, blessed, safe, touched in nonsexual ways, chosen, and included.

Men and women have more in common than they have things that separate them. Recent studies have discovered that 95 percent of the Mars and Venus differences are learned behaviors. People can unlearn these. There is no value in focusing on differences that are gender based. This usually leads to criticism and anger that is often disguised as sarcasm.

How many conflicts occur because couples do not listen to each other? How many people long for affirmation and feel their spouse does not give them any? Blessing is about the unconditional love that we should have received from our parents but may expect from our spouse. Safety means freedom from anxiety.

Healthy touch is a basic need people have. When babies are born, if they are not touched enough, they will have a failure to thrive and can even die.

Much of the conflict couples experience occurs when their need to be touched is confused with their need to be sexual. Even though people can be physically attracted to many others, God has put in people a desire to be the only one in another person's life. Furthermore, the only way to stay physically faithful is to spiritually choose in your heart that your spouse is the only person for you.

Finally, all people long to be included by their community, in their homes, neighborhoods, and churches. When people do not feel included, they can become isolated and alone. Conflict in marriage can occur when one spouse does not feel included in the other spouse's life.

An example of how unmet desires can rise to

*At the bottom of all conflicts is the fact couples forget who they are in Christ.*

## FANOS:

### An Exercise To Bring Understanding and Change

**O**ne exercise pastors can have couples do may help them understand how to begin to change. If a couple will take 5 to 10 minutes a day to do this exercise, it can have amazing results. We call it FANOS. This is an acronym for:

#### Feelings

Taking turns, each person states what he is feeling that day. He may need a list of feelings to remind him there are more feelings than being angry.

#### Affirmation

Have the couple offer one affirmation to each other. It could be as simple as, "Thank you for washing the dishes." It could be deeper, "Thank you for watching the boys tonight. You are a great father/mother."

#### Need

The couple takes turns stating one need. They may discover that they have difficulty knowing what they need. Again, it may be simple or more complex. Remind the couple that just because they state needs, it does not mean the other will meet their need.

#### Ownership

Spouses take responsibility for some behavior they have done that they feel was not helpful. They should resist any temptation to point out anything their spouse has done that was not helpful. By taking ownership and by giving affirmations, the couple reverses the vicious blame cycle.

#### Spirituality

Finally, the couple shares whatever Bible reading or spiritual thoughts they have been having that day. Do not make this a sermon, just a short summary.

In biblical Greek, there is a word similar to FANOS (*phanos*, lantern). The verb form of this word (*phaino*) means to shine or to be revealed.



Pastors should instruct couples to listen to each other and not seek to add, subtract, or correct what the other has said. In effect, this is also a listening exercise. A pastor's role is to keep them accountable to do this. Have them check in every week to report how it is going. 🌀

■ **MARK R. LAASER**, Ph.D., Chanhassan, Minnesota.

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the surface of marital conflict is the desire to be safe. All people have ways they believe will make them safe. They believe that if they have enough money they will be free of worry and problems. A wife may feel it is important to have a tight budget. Her husband may hide his anxiety by not thinking about money. Imagine the conflict that can occur between them because they have different strategies for managing their need to be safe.

During counseling I give couples a list of these seven desires and ask them to reflect on how they have expected their spouses to meet these desires. I point out that God is the only one with whom we can be heard and understood, affirmed, blessed, touched, safe, chosen, and included. I then challenge couples to sacrificially serve the other in these desires. I have each person keep a daily log of how he is doing in these ways of serving.

Finally, at the bottom of all conflicts is the fact couples forget who they are in Christ. First, they do not remember that they are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). Next, they forget that God loves them so much

that He sent His only Son. Then, they lose faith that only God can meet their deepest desires. Ultimately, they develop unrealistic expectations based on faulty core beliefs that lead to unbearable feelings. The ways people cope with these feelings can cause conflict with their spouses who may not help them with their coping strategies.

I encourage pastors to have couples sit facing each other knee to knee. Have them hold hands and look each other in the eye. Then have a conversation with them about all levels of this model. By practicing, pastors can help couples begin their discussions at the bottom of this list, acknowledging the truth of who they are as individuals and as couples in Christ. From this place, they can find that, as God satisfies their desires, they can seek to serve the desires of each other. As expectations fade, couples will develop a true understanding of who they are, their difficult feelings will lead to joy, and false coping will disappear. Couples will become companions and not enemies in the journey. 🙏





*The root behind the struggle many have with seeking professional counsel is the assumption that good Christians do not have problems of that magnitude.*

## Hanging Between Heaven and Help

*"A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels" (Proverbs 1:5, KJV).*

**S**ome family vacations become memorable for all the wrong reasons. When our boys were ages 8, 6, and 3, we joined another family for a motor home trip through Canada. Our eventual destination was Anchorage, Alaska. Two days into the trip, deep in the scenic but secluded Canadian wilderness, we stopped at a large campground that had a playground. Not 30 minutes later, our youngest son fell off the monkey bars and broke his arm.

The proprietor gave him Tylenol® with codeine and pointed us to the nearest clinic — 2 hours back down the winding road we had just driven. Praying all the way, we could not help but wonder what we would find when we got there.

Thankfully, the clinic was clean, well-equipped, and staffed by a competent, compassionate doctor. Faster than our wild mountain ride, our son's arm was set, placed in a cast, and we were back on the road. To my husband Jim's ultimate relief, the bill was only \$150 U.S. But we

would have gladly paid whatever it cost.

What would most people think of our parenting skills if, despite our son's distress, we had decided to continue our trip to Anchorage without seeking medical help? *Terrible. Ridiculous. Irresponsible.* These are correct responses. Any good parents would do what we did — get assistance quickly and pay whatever it cost to help their child.

**Why, then, when pastors see their families in emotional distress, are so many reluctant to seek professional counseling?**

### Stuck in the Mire of Emotion

Initially perhaps the D word — *denial* — keeps pastors from seeking professional counseling. Either pastors do not recognize they have a problem, or they may not consider the situation bad enough to merit professional help. Pastors may realize they have hit a little bump in the road, but that goes with the terrain, right? Yes, until one discovers there is more to the bump than meets the eye.

Due to the weather extremes — freezing and thawing — Alaskan roads are notorious for



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potholes. Once, during a spring rain, I drove into what appeared to be a large puddle. Instead, I hit a deep pothole filled with water. My tire went flat, and the metal rim was buckled. I cringed to think of calling my husband, but I could not deny the fact the car would not budge without professional help.

Likewise, only when pastors hit a major personal pothole do they begin to consider the need for outside intervention.

Enter then the P word: *pride*. What will people — their congregation or other ministers — think if they find out their pastor is seeing a counselor? After all, pastors are the ones who counsel others. If pastors are supplying their congregations with answers, why can they not help themselves?

For one thing, it is impossible for pastors to be objective and impartial when they are personally involved, and maybe even part of the problem.

It requires hard-fought humility to admit to someone, “I cannot fix this myself. Can you help me?” For many ministers, the rim must be badly bent before they will lay aside their pride and send out the SOS.

### **Taking the Do-it-Yourself Detour**

To preserve their dignity, ministers often choose the self-help route. Ministers are famous for attending conferences and seminars. Much can be learned from a good marriage-and-family conference. By nature, however, most seminars do not personalize issues to the point of meeting specific needs. An attendee’s best hope is to come away inspired and convicted to make some personal improvements. Unfortunately, without follow up, a seminar is usually only a temporary fix.

Pastors may turn to books dealing with marriage and family issues. Over the years I have read many, finding much encouragement. I also found that many were preventative or formulaic in nature. If it is too late for prevention or the formulas do not pan out, these books may possibly lead to further disappointment, even despair.

Another way people find help and comfort

is by sharing with others going through similar situations. What a relief it is to know we are not alone in facing a particular problem. Unfortunately, these informal forums can easily become a free-for-all for hashing over the same old pain with no plan or, worse yet, they can become a place for sharing collective misinformation. Then there is the privacy issue. For those in ministry, confidentiality is an understandable concern. Any open forum is potentially problematic.

Beware of the new gurus of pop psychology. While many find Dr. Phil or some other radio or television medic entertaining, it is wise to remember that most of these programs are for entertainment. Trying to apply their one-size-fits-all therapy is like taking someone else’s pills.

While these self-help tools may be useful in helping pastors cope, the one recurring theme is that none can be easily personalized.

### **Avoiding the Delays**

Nothing can take the place of meeting with a professionally trained counselor who knows what to look and listen for, and who can help a person understand himself and his situation better. A good Christian counselor will not only point out what one may have done wrong but also affirm what he is doing right, then prayerfully offer skills to apply like ointment to the wound.

The same way some people resist seeing the doctor because they fear bad news, some resist seeking professional counseling. Are people afraid to find out what is wrong, or do they view seeking professional help as admitting to failure? Either way, the longer people wait the more intensive and expensive the treatment.

Mel Johnson is a minister, state-licensed marriage and family therapist, and head of Rekindle Ministries — a counseling service he and his wife, Sharon, offer free to ministers and missionaries. Johnson says: “One of the greatest problems I face as a counselor is the delay that turns a solvable problem into a basket case. ‘If only we had sought help sooner,’ is a statement I have heard hundreds of times. It is true that what can be solved with a bandage today will



*Only when pastors hit a major personal pothole do they begin to consider the need for outside intervention.*



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probably require major surgery tomorrow."

My friend Robin Williams-Aladeen also runs a successful counseling service whose clientele includes many ministers. "Every day I deal with situations that could have been avoided if they had sought counseling earlier," she echoes. Her urging is that every ministry family "go in for a check-up," much like getting a good doctor or dentist on board before a crisis.

Why? "It sends a message to the family," Williams-Aladeen explains, "that counseling is not just a last resort, but rather a healthy, nonthreatening way to make sure you are communicating. It also allows the family to deal with any baggage mom or dad brought to the marriage."

Our family is a prime example. Like many couples, Jim and I were still working out some personal differences when our children came along. This included poor communication skills and different ways of processing things. Consequently, we developed the habit of waiting until crisis forced us into confrontation to resolve these issues. Then, inevitably, other latent issues would surface. How much sooner might our family have benefited if we had been seeing a counselor.

Sorry to learn we were so dysfunctional? Take a look around. Every family, ministry families included, are dysfunctional to some extent. Why? Because every family is human. How we all need God's grace and forgiveness every day.

### **Finding the Road to Reality**

The root behind the struggle many have with seeking professional counsel is the assumption that good Christians do not have problems of that magnitude. Could a pastor's real concern with seeking psychological counseling not only be fear of facing personal failure, but also a lack of faith that might be construed by others as unspiritual?

Again, Johnson offers excellent insight: "It's called honesty when we acknowledge our problems. That's to a person's credit, not discredit. The best role model we can set for our congregations is to be honest. What can possibly be more spiritual than that?"

Does seeking professional counseling show a lack of faith? Here is Johnson's observation: "Christians, even ministers, sometimes have a limited concept of how God works, or can work, to help His children. They insist that God must take care of their problem in a prescribed way, that is, miraculously or in some other

stereotypical, often inexplicable way. 'We're trusting God,' we say. 'God will take care of it in His own way and time.' So we just wait, feeling that doing anything else would show a lack of faith.

"The bottom line is this," Johnson continues. "God is sovereign. He's at liberty to meet people's needs in whatever way He chooses. Remember, too, that God has historically chosen to help us through others. He won't hold it against us if we seek help. Let's be honest, God sometimes seems far removed and untouchable. We need human contact. Laying hands on the sick is scriptural. There's simply no reason any of us should go through this alone.

"Counseling," Johnson concludes, "is in some cases the most spiritual thing that can be done."

### **Know When You Need a Tow**

Does Johnson mean pastors should stop trusting God and place their total trust in human beings? No. Pastors must trust God to direct the people who are best trained to help them, asking Him for humility to admit shortcomings and wisdom to apply the tools therapy offers.

First, pastors must determine when it is time to seek professional counsel. Johnson offers the following guidelines. When:

- we have repeatedly tried to solve the problem, but without success;
- attempts to solve the problem have encountered resistance from other involved parties;
- the home atmosphere is so emotionally charged over the problem that no progress can be made; and,
- we have come to a clear understanding that we do not have the resources, motivation, or understanding to adequately cope with the problem.

### **Bypassing the Biggest Roadblock**

A major roadblock for many pastors is the fact on-going counseling can be expensive. *How can we afford it*, a pastor may wonder, *living on a minister's meager income?* How much money are we talking about?

According to Williams-Aladeen, therapy can be *pro bono* (free), offered at adjusted clergy rates, or cost as much as \$250 a session, depending on whether one sees a psychologist or psychiatrist.

It helps to understand the primary difference between a psychologist and a psychiatrist. A

psychiatrist is a medical doctor. He can prescribe medication if the situation warrants it. Williams-Aladeen believes most clergy would be served well by either a psychologist or marriage, family, and children's counselor, which means costs are at the lower end of the fee scale.

Some additional advice Williams-Aladeen offers is to ask if a counselor offers pastors and their families a special rate. If not, ask for a therapist who may be able to work within your budget.

For those still struggling to stretch an already see-through budget, Johnson offers another practical point: "The money issue is usually a rationalization. Most people have money to spend where they want to spend it. It is a matter of priorities. When our car needs new tires, we put out the dollars because it is a high priority. Too often relationships, family stability, and emotional growth do not rank up there with new tires."

### Calling for Roadside Assistance

The most legitimate question when it comes to pursuing counsel is: "Whom do we call?" A ministry family needs to find someone with objectivity, confidentiality, and no conflict of interest. A pastor should choose a Christian counselor who agrees closely with his doctrinal views.

Both Johnson and Williams-Aladeen concur that the best place to start when looking for a counselor is to call another pastor in the area or ask friends. Check the phone book for Christian counseling centers or find the American Association of Christian Counselors online (<http://www.aacc.net>) and do a search by ZIP code or city. Assemblies of God ministers can call the 1-800-867-4011 Helpline, or the Ministerial Enrichment Office at 1-417-862-2781, ext. 3014, for a list of qualified Christian counselors in their area.

Citing the legitimate concern many pastors have regarding a possible breach of confidentiality, Williams-Aladeen suggests that it may bring peace of mind to seek a therapist outside one's own denominational family. The important thing is to choose someone with a sympathetic understanding of the unique pressures the pastor's family encounters. Both Johnson and Williams-Aladeen agree on the importance of finding the right person.

"After locating a possible counselor," Johnson advises, "make sure you speak directly with him by phone, sharing concerns about counseling and

asking any questions you may have, especially those regarding doctrine, counseling theory or approach, training and experience, and fees."

Williams-Aladeen adds: "Be prepared to meet initially with several counselors, perhaps by setting up 15-minute appointments simply to get acquainted. If you have a strong preference for one of them, then ask your spouse to join you for a full hour with the therapist to see if you both feel he or she is a good match for your family and the issues you are facing."

Remember, you are the customer. You are paying a fee, and you want the optimum for your money. You deserve a place where you feel comfortable and confident.

### Conclusion

Counseling provides a safe, open forum for honestly sorting one's thoughts and feelings. It also allows people to see their circumstances through the eyes of someone trained to pinpoint problems, enabling them to see God's direction more clearly. As a result, people's minds are freed to arrive at their own Spirit-inspired solutions for dealing with difficult situations.

It is never too late to seek out a good Christian counselor. Jim and I had been married 34 years — long after our boys had left home — when we hit a small snag because of some midlife transitions. This time, our situation had nothing to do with our children, though I am sure there were some leftover lesions from those difficult years. We were entering a new season of life and did not want to drag the old repetitive rubs with us.

"Despite the difficult times," I told the counselor, "we have had a good marriage and a great life together. The reason we are here now is to make sure we finish even stronger than we started."

Our counselor recommended we take a temperament analysis test. Since we had never taken one, I was apprehensive. Not surprisingly, our scores revealed some personality differences. The counselor, however, helped us see how our individual ways of seeing and doing things had brought balance to our marriage in many important ways over the years. That was reassuring. *Why, I wondered, didn't someone tell us this 34 years ago?* Perhaps, because we never asked.

My concluding counsel is this: As long as people are seeking to serve the Lord, they must hang onto heaven — even if it means they sometimes need a little help. 🍷



*Pastors must trust God to direct the people who are best trained to help them.*



## Charles Haddon Spurgeon: The Greatest Victorian Preacher



*His message was simple, and the secret of its power was the Cross.*

**W**hich 19th-century pastor has collected works that total approximately 25 million words and comprise the largest collection of books by any single Christian author ever printed, selling more than 1 million copies?

Which 19th-century pastor owned a personal library containing more than 12,000 books, 1,000 printed before 1700?

Which 19th-century pastor preached more than 600 sermons before age 20, read an average of 6 books per week, wrote 140 books, sold 25,000 printed copies of each of his Sunday sermons, and preached to at least 10 million people?

The answer: Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the 19th-century Baptist preacher; a man today's Christian leader can profit from greatly.<sup>1</sup>

### Birth and Childhood

Charles Spurgeon was born in 1834 in Essex, a town east of London, to John Spurgeon, a part-time pastor. Family poverty moved him to his grandfather's home where he lived until age 5.

His grandfather, a successful pastor, quickly discerned the intelligence of his precocious grandson. At age 5, Spurgeon first read *Pilgrims Progress*. "He was always reading books," his father later reminisced, "never digging in the garden or keeping pigeons, like other boys. It was always books, and books."<sup>2</sup>

By age 9 or 10 Spurgeon was reading books on advanced theological studies, and was attracted to 17th-century Puritans, such as John Owen, John Flavel, and Matthew Henry.

Spurgeon's intelligence also manifested itself in other ways. At age 15 he devised mathematical calculations that proved of such benefit a London insurance firm used them for a half century.

### Conversion 1850

Like Martin Luther, Spurgeon had great knowledge,

but lacked new birth. And, like Luther, he came under a deep and pronounced conviction for which he could find no remedy. His suffering was profound. "I had rather pass through 7 years of the most languishing sickness," Spurgeon later wrote, "than I would ever again pass through the terrible discovery of the evil of sin."<sup>3</sup>

About this time Spurgeon stumbled into a primitive Methodist chapel. The preacher read from Isaiah: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 45:22, KJV). At once the Holy Spirit opened his eyes. He saw that justification was by grace through faith alone. He firmly grasped this truth never to let it go. "I can testify that the joy of that day was utterly indescribable," Spurgeon later wrote. "I could have leaped; I could have danced; there was no expression, however fanatical, which would have been out of keeping with the joy of that hour."<sup>4</sup>

A few weeks later, before Spurgeon's 16th birthday, a rural pastor baptized him in a local river.

### Early Ministry

A few months after his baptism, Spurgeon moved to Cambridge. He addressed a Sunday School class when he was only 16. The adult supervisor was so moved that he asked Spurgeon to join the lay evangelists who preached in surrounding villages. In one village the effect of Spurgeon's words were electric. At his conclusion an astonished elderly woman cried out, "Bless your heart, how old are you?"

"Younger than 60," replied the gifted youth.

When Spurgeon was 17, the village church at Waterbeach called him to be their pastor. The church's congregation of 40 quickly swelled to 400. Even at this tender age, "Spurgeon manifested a gift for which he was to be pre-eminent throughout his later ministry — the gift of understanding and influencing people."<sup>5</sup>



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About this time Spurgeon began the system of rigorous daily discipline that characterized the rest of his life. This was the source of much fruitfulness later. Rising early, he spent the initial hours of each day in study and prayer. He kept himself from common diversions like sports, and even from young women, concluding that their friendship was an unnecessary distraction.

In February 1854, when Spurgeon was 19, the Park Street Chapel in London called him to their pulpit on a 3-month trial. He remained until his death 40 years later.

Although the church held 1,200, attendance had dwindled to about 80 people. Spurgeon's preaching was so powerful, however, that within 1 month of his arrival overflow crowds waited in the street to hear him. "No chapel seemed large enough to hold the people who wanted to hear him."<sup>6</sup>

When people asked the secret of his success, Spurgeon replied, "My people pray for me." He meant it. Members of his congregation regularly met and stormed heaven on his behalf.

To accommodate his success, New Park Street Chapel started enlarging its building. In the meantime, Spurgeon and his congregation moved into Exeter Hall in downtown London. Despite the fact it held 5,000 people, the crowds filled it to overflowing.

Spurgeon was now 20. His success might have been his undoing were it not for his humility. Spurgeon wrote, "When I first became a preacher in London my success appalled me, and the thought of the career which it seemed to open up, so far from elating me, cast me into the lowest depths."<sup>7</sup>

Continual persecution from the secular press also kept him humble. People were suspicious of an unordained 20-year-old who drew huge crowds while lacking college training. Spurgeon was also unrefined in the ways of London Society. His ministry attracted criticism and jealousy. The press labeled him the "boy preacher." The *Ipswich Express* reported that his sermons were " 'Redolent of bad taste, vulgar, and theatrical.' "<sup>8</sup> Others called him " 'a clerical poltroon,' 'the Exeter Hall demagogue,' or 'the pulpit buffoon.' "<sup>9</sup>

During this time he met and courted Susannah Thompson. In early 1856, they married. Charles desperately needed a helpmate, and she was the ideal choice. She shouldered his burden. Many have said that their marriage was made in heaven. Without her, Charles' ministry would not have become what it did. Filled with common sense and compassion, she was his lifelong sounding board. A year later, she birthed twin sons, Charles and Thomas.

In 1855, at age 21, Spurgeon began The Pastor's College to train men for the ministry. Although its beginnings were inauspicious, by 1877 enrollment climbed to 110. Eventually 900 men graduated, and Spurgeon planted 200 churches from their ranks.

## Depression

Many wanted to hear Spurgeon preach but could not get into his church. So, in October 1856, a month after the birth of his twins, Spurgeon decided to hold a service in Surrey Gardens, London's largest indoor venue. Even though it held 10,000 people, on the first night people filled the seats, aisles, and every other vacant space. A large number waited outside. In the crowd were also enemies. Shortly after the service began someone cried, "Fire." A stampede resulted. Seven people died and 28 were severely injured.

Spurgeon was devastated and plunged into depression. "Perhaps never soul went so near the burning furnace of insanity, and yet came away unharmed,"<sup>10</sup> he later wrote. It was the first of many severe depressions that plagued him for the rest of his life.

## Health Problems

New Park Street Chapel was building a larger facility. In 1861, at age 27, Spurgeon moved into the newly built Metropolitan Tabernacle, south of the Thames in downtown London. Seating 6,000, it was the largest Protestant church in the world.

God put the Spurgeons through many trials. In her mid-30s, Susannah contracted an illness from which she never fully recovered. She was sickly for the rest of her life. Often she was



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so weak she could not attend church with her husband.

About the same time, in 1869, rheumatic gout afflicted Charles for the first time. It continued off and on for the rest of his life, eventually causing his death at age 56.

### Preaching, Poverty, and Controversy

The outstanding quality of Spurgeon's preaching was earnestness. "Spurgeon was characterized by an earnestness that almost defies description."<sup>11</sup> "As he stood before the congregation, he felt a great sense of 'power from on high.'"<sup>12</sup> His message was simple, and the secret of its power was the Cross. "I take my text," Spurgeon later wrote, "and make a beeline to the cross."<sup>13</sup> "When it came to declaring the gospel in a relevant fashion to the common masses, Spurgeon was a master."<sup>14</sup>

Nineteenth-century London was the scene of great poverty and tragedy. Life expectancy was short, and orphans abounded. In 1866, Mrs. Hillyard gave Spurgeon 20,000 pounds. With this money he started four boys orphanages in London, modeled after the work of his friend, George Mueller.

In 1887, Spurgeon passed through a fiery trial known as the "Downgrade Controversy." At the end of the 19th century, liberal German theology was beginning to influence the English church. The Baptist Union came under its spell. Spurgeon complained of the growing tendency to downgrade certain fundamental doctrines. He was either ignored or opposed, so he eventually withdrew from the denomination he loved. This painful move caused him great stress and grief in his later years.

### His Servanthood

Spurgeon was amazingly productive. His secret was hard work. With the help of two secretaries he answered 500 letters per week.

In 1885, he finished his seven-volume commentary on the Psalms called *The Treasury of David*. Spurgeon's *Treasury* remains in print and is widely used today. He also published a monthly magazine, *The Sword and the Trowel*.

Every Monday morning Spurgeon edited his Sunday sermon for international distribution. He also preached nearly every day at different churches in London or on preaching excursions into the English countryside.

Spurgeon was also occupied with The Pastor's College. His ever-popular *Lectures To My Students*, were addresses regularly made to this body of

budding leaders. "We are all too much occupied with taking care of ourselves," he later wrote. "We shun the difficulties of excessive labour."<sup>15</sup>

Spurgeon accomplished all of this while married to a sickly wife and suffering bouts of depression and major illnesses.

### His Death

In January 1892, recurring and increasingly severe attacks of rheumatic gout finally ended his life. "Sixty thousand people came to pay homage during the 3 days his body lay in state at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. ... A funeral parade 2 miles long followed his hearse from the Tabernacle to the cemetery at Upper Norwood. One hundred thousand people stood along the way. Flags flew half mast, shops and pubs were closed."<sup>16</sup> Spurgeon was a man deeply loved by both citizens of London and believers throughout the world.

### Lessons

Today's pastor can learn many lessons from Spurgeon's life.

**First**, when God calls a man, He equips him. God called Spurgeon to a great work, and God equipped him for the task with a strong intellect, a voracious appetite to learn, a strong voice that could preach to crowds of more than 20,000, unusual organizational skills, and an uncommon compassion.

**Second**, Spurgeon's life casts light on the role of seminary. His career reminds us that seminary is helpful, but not necessary. Like Augustine, Calvin, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, A.W. Pink, and numerous others, Spurgeon received no formal theological training. Although this pattern is the exception not the rule, the church must be open to this kind of exceptional grace.

**Third**, great leaders are usually great readers. Spurgeon exemplified this principle. "We must recognize that Spurgeon was, above everything, a theologian. He had given thought to the great doctrines of the Bible from the time he had begun to read, and from that time he had been steadily building in his mind and heart knowledge of the vast system of theology that is revealed in scripture."<sup>17</sup>

Many people graduate from seminary, but then quit reading and learning. Spurgeon had a holy curiosity and developed a lifelong habit of daily reading motivated by a passion to better know God.

**Fourth**, fame and notoriety can be painful. One should not seek great things unless he is

ready for the consequences. Spurgeon was so popular that well-known theologian Helmut Thielke wrote: "Sell all [the books] that you have ... and buy Spurgeon."<sup>18</sup> In Spurgeon's case, popularity was costly. The British Media, the established church, and the upper classes envied and resented his success. In addition, people's expectations and the great workload nearly crushed him. Many times he wished for the peace and quiet of anonymity, but could not find it.

**Fifth**, God perfects His strength in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). God used Spurgeon's constant sicknesses and persecutions to humble him. Spurgeon's incredible gifts and successes made humility necessary. During one of his bouts of gout, Spurgeon wrote to his congregation, "The furnace still glows around me. Since I last preached to you, I have been brought very low; my flesh has been tortured with pain and my spirit has been prostrate with depression."<sup>19</sup> Spurgeon's suffering produced a humility that continually deferred all the glory for his success to God.

Spurgeon's life reminds pastors to thank God for the trials and troubles He allows. In Spurgeon's case, and ours, they are the necessary

foundation for our future "weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17, KJV).

History is His story! 🍷

#### NOTES

1. For these statistics and more see *Christian History and Biography* 10, no. 29 (1991): 2,3. See Iain Murray, *Spurgeon Versus Hyper Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1995). Also see, Iain Murray, *Forgotten Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1966).
2. Arnold A. Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1984), 8.
3. Iain Murray quoted in Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography*, 15.
4. Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography*, 19.
5. *Ibid.*, 35.
6. Patricia Stallings Kruppa, "The Life and Times of Charles Spurgeon," *Christian History and Biography*, 1 January 1991, 11.
7. Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography*, 52.
8. Lewis A. Drummond, "The Secrets of Spurgeon's Preaching," *Christian History and Biography*, 1 January 1991, 14.
9. Kruppa, "The Life and Times of Charles Spurgeon," 11.
10. Darrell W. Amundsen, "The Anguish and Agonies of Charles Spurgeon," *Christian History and Biography*, 1 January 1991, 23.
11. Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography*, 76.
12. *Ibid.*, 77.
13. Drummond, "The Secrets of Spurgeon's Preaching," 15.
14. *Ibid.*, 15.
15. Amundsen, "The Anguish and Agonies of Charles Spurgeon," 24.
16. Kruppa, "The Life and Times of Charles Spurgeon," 8.
17. Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography*.
18. Drummond, "The Secrets of Spurgeon's Preaching," 14.
19. *Ibid.*, 137.

*In Spurgeon's case, popularity was costly.*

## Preparing To Cross the Finish Line: End-of-Life Decisions



*The runner  
should not seek  
to shorten  
the racecourse,  
but trust the Lord  
for strength to  
complete the race.*

**T**he recent death of my husband's grandfather after living a full and fruitful Christian life for 88 years brought the words of the apostle Paul to mind, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). In our current world with ever-increasing medical technology, the last weeks and days before one crosses the finish line in the race of life can be filled with complex medical decisions that must be made. The Christian's desire is to cross the finish line in the same manner he has run the race — giving glory and honor to God.

Ministers often find themselves called on to provide guidance at this crucial time to both patients and their families who are seeking the will of God in the particular end-of-life situation that is facing them. The principles that must guide our responses to challenging end-of-life questions flow from a biblical view of life and a biblical view of death. Let us turn our attention to a biblical view of life.

### A Biblical View of Life

The apostle Paul told the men of Athens, "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else" (Acts 17:24,25). Paul's words echo the account of creation: "The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7). God is the Creator of life. Our life is a gift from God.

The prophet Jeremiah realized that since our life is a gift from God, our life belongs to God. He expressed this thought eloquently: "I know, O Lord, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Our purpose is not self-fulfillment, but rather glorifying our Creator (Isaiah 43:7). Furthermore, a biblical view of life includes the promise of eternal life at the end of our earthly existence (Titus 1:2; 1 John 2:25).

### A Biblical View of Death

While death appears to be a natural conclusion to life, we must remember that death came as a result of the fall of man and not a natural part of the creation of man (Genesis 2:17; 3:3; 1 Corinthians 15:21; Romans 6:23). The Bible teaches that death is an enemy that ultimately will be destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:26; 2 Timothy 1:10; Revelation 20:14). Yet, death is indeed an experience that all will face. As the Psalmist asks, "What man can live and not see death, or save himself from the power of the grave?" (Psalm 89:48).

There is One, however, who did overcome the power of the grave. God raised His Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead, "freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (Acts 2:24).



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For those who trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior, the day will come when “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

### **A Biblical Basis for End-of-Life Decisions**

With a biblical view of life and death firmly in place, we are ready to establish a biblical basis for end-of-life decisions. For the Christian preparing to cross the finish line, death marks the end of the earthly race and the beginning of eternal life. The hope of eternal life offsets the fear of the dying process. While the Christian might long to be with Christ and out of the suffering body, the Christian recognizes that God’s will and purpose for life can still be accomplished until the moment of death. As long as a person is conscious, he is capable of actively influencing others for Christ and interceding in prayer. The runner should not seek to shorten the racecourse, but trust the Lord for strength to complete the race.

Furthermore, the Christian recognizes that his life is not his own, for he was bought with the price of Christ’s redemptive sacrifice on the cross (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). Patient autonomy exists within the limits of God’s sovereignty. In addition, the Christian is sensitive to the needs of loved ones, choosing to strengthen relationships as life draws to a close.

A Christian who is responsible for making end-of-life decisions for another will seek to honor the wishes of the one for whom he is making decisions. The caregiver’s desire not to see his loved one suffer should be channeled into advocating for effective palliative care measures for the patient. Sometimes the employment of appropriate pain-killing measures will shorten the patient’s life, but the goal should be the alleviation of pain, not the hastening of death.

### **Prolonging Life by Extraordinary Means**

A Christian’s respect for the sanctity of human life does not mean that life must be prolonged by every technological means possible. A Christian should seek to be cured of a disease

if a cure is available. In the case of an incurable condition, however, where the course of the disease cannot be reversed, sometimes it may be appropriate to discontinue a particular treatment. There are times when the burden of the treatment outweighs any potential benefits of the treatment to a particular patient. For example, a cancer patient whose condition cannot be cured may prefer to choose home or hospice care where he can face death surrounded by loved ones in a familiar setting. A person making such a decision has not given up on life, but has chosen to live life to the fullest in the time remaining on this earth.

Experimental treatments, such as a phase I clinical trial for a new cancer drug, may be viewed as an extraordinary means of treatment. A phase I clinical trial is concerned with determining the correct dosage and overall safety of a new drug. These trials are a crucial part of the four-phase system of clinical testing of experimental drugs. However, since the main concern of the phase I trial is how the drug is metabolized in humans as opposed to the effectiveness of the drug for the particular disease affecting the patient, the benefit to the individual patient may be small or nonexistent. Patients who participate in phase I trials usually have exhausted all other treatment options. While patients who chose to participate in such trials are assisting the advance of medical science and the development of new treatments that may someday benefit other patients, it is not morally wrong for a Christian to decide not to participate in such a trial.

Certain treatments, such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation, that are lifesaving and appropriate in most circumstances, may be futile for a terminally ill patient whose death is imminent. Examples of conditions for which CPR is futile include metastatic cancer, septic shock, and acute stroke. CPR is a supportive therapy designed to establish circulation and breathing in a patient who has suffered an arrest of both with the goal of restoring spontaneous breathing and cardiac rhythm. The standard of care in the hospital setting is to perform CPR in the absence of a valid physician’s order to withhold it. In cases where CPR would be futile,

*There are times when the burden of the treatment outweighs any potential benefits of the treatment.*





*It would be a mistake to decide that a technology should always be employed or, conversely, always be avoided.*

a Do-Not-Resuscitate order may enable a patient to experience a more peaceful death, without employing technology that is intrusive, but ineffective.

Another example of a technology that is helpful in many circumstances but may not be beneficial in a patient whose death is imminent is artificial hydration and nutrition. Artificial hydration and nutrition are used when a patient is no longer able to take food or fluids by mouth. Two means of providing artificial hydration and nutrition are an intravenous line, and a feeding tube. Artificial hydration can also be provided by injecting fluids directly into tissues beneath the skin, a procedure known as hypodermoclysis. If an IV line is used, fluids, liquid nutritional supplements, and medications can be introduced through a patient's vein. A feeding tube can be inserted into a patient's stomach either through the nose (nasogastric tube) or through the abdomen by surgical means (gastrostomy or PEG tube, or g-tube). As with an IV line, liquid nutritional supplements, fluids, and medications can be given to a patient through a feeding tube.

One risk associated with the use of IV lines is the possibility of infection occurring at the IV insertion site. To reduce the risk of infection, the IV site may need to be changed every few days, creating discomfort for patients who find IV insertion painful. A risk of IV line usage for a patient near the end of life is that the patient's body may not be able to handle the IV fluids well. As death nears, a person does not need as much food or fluids and dehydration normally occurs. The addition of IV fluids at this time can cause swelling in the patient's arms and legs as well as fluid accumulating in the patient's lungs, making breathing more difficult. Swelling and the accumulation of fluid in the lungs is also a risk with hypodermoclysis for a patient nearing death.

Risks associated with the use of feeding tubes include the development of pneumonia if fluid from the stomach is aspirated into the lungs, infection at the point of insertion for a tube surgically inserted through the abdomen, and irritation of the stomach lining sometimes resulting in stomach ulcers. As a patient nears the end of life, it is normal for the patient's metabolism to slow. As a result, nutritional supplements given through a feeding tube can cause digestive problems such as bloating, heartburn, or indigestion.

In many cases, artificial hydration or nutrition can improve the quality of a patient's

life by increasing his energy and decreasing symptoms, such as nausea or weakness. The important principle to follow in making decisions regarding artificial nutrition and hydration is that one must balance the risks and benefits with knowledge of a patient's condition and particular needs. It would be a mistake to decide that a technology, such as artificial nutrition and hydration, should always be employed or, conversely, always be avoided.

### **Physician-Assisted Suicide**

Pain, depression, and fear of becoming dependent on others may cause a person with a terminal illness to consider ending his life. Often a dying person does not realize that loved ones want to provide care as an expression of love and do not view this opportunity as a burden. A terminally ill patient may look to his physician to provide the means for the patient to voluntarily cause his own death, a practice known as physician-assisted suicide.

Physician-assisted suicide usually involves the physician prescribing lethal doses of medication for the patient. Currently, the only state in the United States to legalize physician-assisted suicide is Oregon, which permits the practice for the terminally ill under limited conditions. Since the *Death With Dignity* law went into effect in Oregon in 1997, one-seventh of one percent of all deaths in the state are classified as physician-assisted suicide.

Frequently, the reason a patient seeks information about physician-assisted suicide is that the symptoms associated with the dying process (such as pain, depression, or nausea) are not being managed effectively. It is important for family members and caregivers to be sensitive to the pain-management needs of a terminally ill patient. In addition, the emotional and spiritual needs of patients must be addressed. Chaplains and others who provide pastoral care can support and guide family members in finding effective ways to address the patient's needs as death nears.

Historically, physician-assisted suicide has been prohibited in the practice of medicine for more than 2,000 years. The Hippocratic Oath, taken by many new doctors as part of their graduation ceremonies, includes the pledge, "I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody if asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect." Many Christian doctors feel that physician-assisted suicide undermines the trust relationship between a patient and a doctor.

Another concern of physicians is that the availability of physician-assisted suicide would decrease the impetus for improving good palliative care for dying patients. In other words, if prematurely ending one's life is an option, there is less reason to improve pain management and comfort measures for the dying.

## Euthanasia

Euthanasia goes one step further than physician-assisted suicide and permits the physician to directly end the life of a suffering patient at the patient's own request. For example, giving a patient a lethal injection would be considered euthanasia, while prescribing a lethal dose of medicine that a patient then intentionally consumes by himself would be considered physician-assisted suicide.

Euthanasia can be further subdivided into three categories: voluntary euthanasia, nonvoluntary euthanasia, and involuntary euthanasia. Giving a patient a lethal injection at the patient's request would be classified as voluntary euthanasia. Nonvoluntary euthanasia occurs in circumstances where the patient is unable

to make a voluntary request (an unconscious or mentally incapacitated adult; an infant or child). Involuntary euthanasia is ending the life of a patient who is perceived to be suffering and who is capable of making a voluntary request, but has not done so.

People have a natural fear of suffering and dying. Those who promote euthanasia and assisted suicide capitalize on this fear. Under the guise of compassion, they seek to reduce medical costs by classifying euthanasia as a medical treatment option. Pastors and chaplains are in a unique position to counteract the forces in our society that promote euthanasia by addressing the spiritual needs of patients and their family members. The fear of suffering and dying can be replaced with hope and trust in a sovereign God who is capable of bringing healing in spite of even the most dire circumstances, and who is capable of gathering us home at our appointed time. May ministers help others join the race of living for Christ, help them run that race with purpose and meaning, and help them complete the race by crossing the finish line victoriously. 🏁

*People have a natural fear of suffering and dying. Those who promote euthanasia and assisted suicide capitalize on this fear.*

## Who's In Charge Here?

**Q:** My husband and I recently changed pastorates. The woman in charge of Women's Ministries in our new church has been in place a long time. She takes a great deal of ownership, even though it is small and ineffective. I have run Women's Ministries in the past and disagree with the way things are currently being done. What can I do?

**A:** This kind of dilemma is familiar to anyone who has been in the ministry any length of time. Addressing it requires not only patience and sensitivity, but also creativity and boldness. If the pastor's wife is a visionary person with leadership capabilities, these gifts allow her to access situations and conceive of better ways to approach them. At the same time, frustration can result if situations stay stagnant and unproductive.

Resist the urge to react too abruptly. Instead, take time to pray and think through the situation. God will use your gifts and talents if you are submitted to Him. See it as a timing issue and be patient.

Take time to try to understand the Women's Ministries leader's motivation. If she is cooperative, meet with her and express interest in her heart and passion. How did she come to be in this position? What motivates her? What is her passion? How does she envision the future of Women's Ministries? Expressing interest in her as a person, ask these questions in an unanxious, undefensive way. Determine where her strongest gifts lie. Often, the things

she is most passionate about will reveal her strengths. Are her strengths in serving, reaching out to the lost, or ministering to the needy? Is prayer her focus or is it studying the Word? Is she a great fund-raiser or does she focus on seasonal events? What facets of

*In certain extreme situations a leader can establish an unhealthy ownership over an area of ministry.*



**GABRIELE RIENAS** has been a pastor's wife for 24 years and is currently at Christian Life Center in Aloha, Oregon. She is a professional counselor with Christian Counseling Center of Oregon, and also does Teambuilding Seminars with churches and businesses. She can be reached at 503-649-4444.



the ministry is she most excited about, and where has the ministry been most successful under her leadership?

Ascertain if she acknowledges her own areas of frustration or weakness. Chances are good, if she feels undefensive, she will confirm some of the struggles you are noticing, having recognized them herself. (For example: "I love the Women's Prayer group, but I am frustrated more people do not get involved.") Offer to help in these specific areas. ("I would like to help by coming up with new ideas to get more women involved. Would you be open to my input?") In many churches, the pastor's wife is an honorary Women's Ministries cochair. If this is true in your church, let her know you would like to fill this role and bring assistance to what is already being done.

Consider adding more people to the leadership team. This will bring more input and inevitably bring about change as new ideas are introduced, launched, and carried out. Consult with the current Women's Ministries leader about these additions and enlist her cooperation and endorsement if possible.

Find out the role the previous pastor's wife played and what her relationship was like with this person. It may help you understand what motivates this leader's stance. Remember, people will not necessarily respond to a pastor's wife's personality, but to her role and what she has experienced from others in her position in the past. This requires a pastor's wife to be the bigger, more understanding person, which is much to ask, but beneficial to her personal growth.

In certain extreme situations a leader can establish an unhealthy ownership over an area of ministry. Women's Ministries leaders are not exempt from this possibility. Possessiveness will be evidenced by resistance to any input or suggestions as well as the need to undermine any attempts to work under the leadership of the pastor and his wife. If everything has been tried to form a positive team relationship with the person, yet she continues to manifest hostility and resistance, it may be time for the pastor to step in and clarify the lines of accountability.

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18). The pastor's wife needs to make it her objective to do everything in her power to maintain peace between the leader and herself. Do this by staying undefensive, noncombative, and resisting the urge to discuss the situation with others in the church. When, and if, the time comes to take a firmer stand, she should do so graciously and kindly with the backing of her husband. Above all, remember it is God's church we serve. Trust His sovereignty in all things — even in leadership designations. 🌀

If you have questions you would like Gabriele to answer, e-mail them to: [enrichmentjournal@ag.org](mailto:enrichmentjournal@ag.org). You can also mail your questions to: Q&A For Pastors' Wives, Enrichment journal, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802-1894.

*The pastor's wife should do everything in her power to maintain peace between the leader and herself.*

## Fruit That Remains

**H**ave you ever shared Christ with someone you never expected to see again? Perhaps you met in a cafeteria, dormitory, on a bus, or at a social event. Maybe you wondered how, if at all, God would use your brief encounter. The following story might encourage you.

I received an e-mail from Bert Watson, who told of our 1973 conversation in his freshman dormitory at Georgia Tech:

"You came to see me on a Thursday, but I had an exam and asked you to return on Friday. You shared the Four Spiritual Laws with me, and I responded by saying I had 'done all that.'"

"Before you left, you asked, 'What do you think about heaven?'"

"I answered, 'I hope I am going there,' to which you quickly and emphatically replied, 'Bert, God wants you to know.'"

Bert recalls that he then escorted me to the door, thanked me, and said goodbye. He continues:

"The Lord used that statement in a powerful way. For the rest of the day our conversation played over and over in my mind. My roommate and friends were away, so I went to bed early. As I lay on my back facing the ceiling, I wanted to pray. But before I could open my mouth, God clearly told me, 'You have never received Me as your personal Lord and Savior.'"

"All I could say was, 'That's right.'"

"My spiritual eyes were opened. I was a sinner, and I was lost. I jumped up, grabbed the Four Spiritual Laws booklet, and read it cover to cover. That night I received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior."

Bert rode a spiritual roller coaster for the next couple of years. He transferred to Texas A&M to be close to his hometown friends. Emotional struggles sapped his interest in academics. Soon he dropped out of A&M to sort his life out.

Bert speaks with joy of the people God used to help him learn to walk closely with Him. A

Houston church assisted his spiritual development. He led several people to Christ, including "the meanest man I knew." He enrolled in the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, where a believer helped him learn to trust the Holy Spirit to empower his life. A couple of weeks later at a Christian camp in Georgia, Bert felt God's prompting to the ministry.

"God clearly spoke to me saying, 'I have called you to become a minister of My Word.'"

"I responded out loud, 'Lord, if that is You, You are going to have to prove it.' Two minutes later, the people in charge of morning devotions approached and asked me if I would speak at the 7 a.m. devotional the next morning. Only recognized ministers did the devotional. That was my first sermon, and I stayed up until 4 a.m. preparing."

After this, Bert studied further to prepare for ministry. He joined a small, dynamic church where, under the influence of godly mentors, he grew rapidly.

### Ministry, Pain, and Reconciliation

Bert received more opportunities to speak, teach, disciple others, and preach the gospel. He saw God work in his emotional and relational life. "I was so hungry for the Word that I would often read 20 or more chapters of the Bible a day. I soon found myself in active ministry, leading people to Jesus, speaking at camps, exercising gifts of the Spirit, and discipling new believers. During this time the Lord also exposed the root of my emotional pain and completely healed me, leading to a wonderful reconciliation with my father."

Bert soon became convinced that God wanted him to work with young people ... in Africa. Since 1983, he has taught, disciplined, and trained emerging leaders in South Africa. During his tenure there with Youth For Christ he oversaw a massive high school outreach and more than 140,000 young people indicated decisions to

*God's Word,  
sown in  
students' hearts,  
will bring about  
His purposes.*



**RUSTY WRIGHT** is an award-winning author, syndicated columnist, and university lecturer with Probe.org. He has spoken to secular audiences on six continents.

trust Christ as Savior. His lifelong dream of fostering leadership development led to the birth of Leading Edge Christian Ministries.

Bert travels widely training both emerging and experienced Christian leaders. He also consults for nation-changing projects and has worked with Bruce Wilkinson in one of the largest abstinence-based HIV/AIDS interventions ever undertaken in AIDS-ravaged Africa. In addition, he mentors emerging leaders and is currently developing an innovative leadership degree program for South African Theological Seminary.

Bert and his wife, Surette, have many reasons to express gratitude to God. Reflecting on his exciting ride with Jesus, Bert says, "God has been good to me. We have been privileged to see much fruit over the past 20 years.

"As the Lord has renewed my mind over the years, my worldview has been profoundly affected. One important principle that I have learned is that life is in Jesus; it is only in Him that we are complete or made full. No other person or thing can do this. Apart from Jesus, we are nothing and can do nothing. How do I experience this life? Jesus taught, 'It is the Spirit who gives life.' When we submit to His lordship and allow His Spirit to lead, teach, and empower us, we discover what it means to live."

Echoing John 15:16, he says, "I thank God that He chose me and appointed me to bear fruit that remains forever."

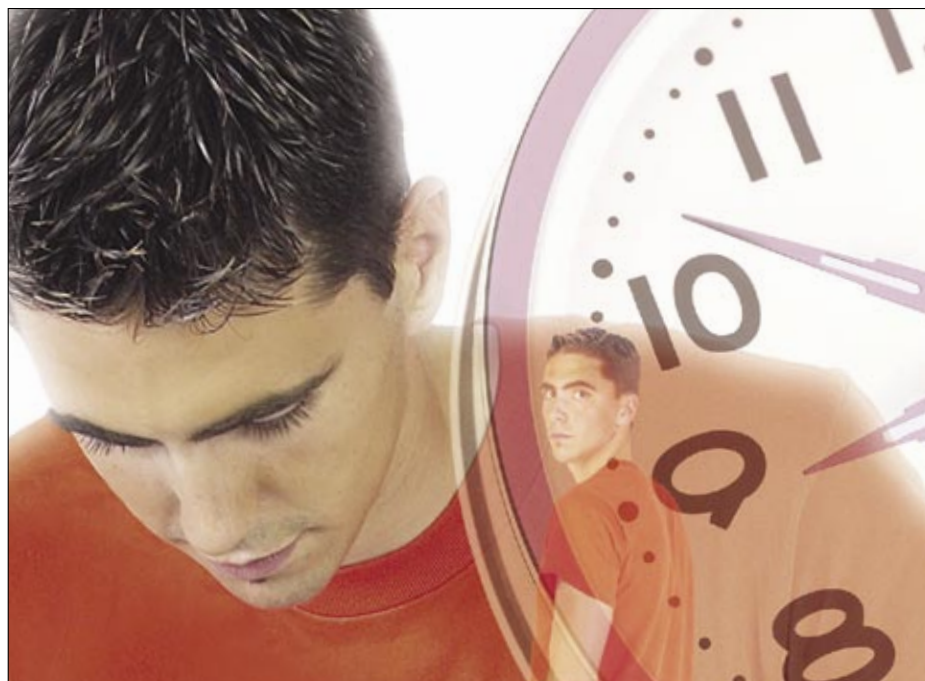
Not all chance encounters end up like this. We are responsible to be faithful; God works in hearts. God can use you and me to bear fruit that remains.

## Lessons for Reaching Secular Universities

What lessons for secular campus outreach might Bert's story hold?

### God's Word works

"The rain and snow come down from the heavens and stay on the ground to water the earth. They cause the grain to grow, producing seed for the farmer and bread for the hungry. It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it



to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it" (Isaiah 55:11, NLT).<sup>1</sup> In 1973, at Georgia Tech, God's Word worked in Bert. His Word, sown in students' hearts, will bring about His purposes.

### Trust God to follow up

Be faithful to contact spiritually interested people. But personal follow-up is not always humanly possible. God is the best follow-up worker. Sometimes we sow seeds; sometimes we water; sometimes we reap. God is always the one who causes the growth (John 4:35–38; 1 Corinthians 3:5–9).

### The Holy Spirit can work wonders

Bert's spiritual journey seems guided by God's Holy Spirit. At key points the Spirit brought people and circumstances across his path to nudge him in the right direction. Bert notes, "It is the Spirit who gives life" and guides and empowers us. Sometimes amid the details of ministry it can be easy to forget the One who is both the enabler and purpose of ministry. Focusing on Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, brings real life.

*Seeing results  
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### **Go where students are**

Students hang out in dorms, Greek houses, cafeterias, and open plazas. Bert and I spoke privately in his dorm room, a place where he could feel comfortable. Communicating with people on their own turf can help open hearts.

### **Be persistent about His tasks**

Campus ministers talk to many people. Managing details of timing and logistics plus remembering names and interests can be daunting. No one can contact every person. Ask God to give you wisdom to know His work for you. Jesus told His Father, “I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do” (John 17:4, NASB).<sup>2</sup>

### **Take the long view of ministry**

In God’s providence, seeing results sometimes takes time. Realizing this can help relieve pressure and discouragement. I left Bert’s dorm room not knowing of his continued interest. He left Georgia Tech after that term and next appeared in my life 30 years later. Encourage

students to take the long view of ministry. As they serve Jesus and minister alongside you, they are sowing seeds for decades into the future and for eternity.

### **Spiritual multiplication holds manifold possibilities**

Robert Schuller notes that anyone can count the seeds in an apple, but no one can count the apples in a seed. God has used Bert to touch thousands of lives and, through those he influences, countless others. Students you contact today can have similar influence. The words you speak, the counsel you give, the outreaches you plan, and the discipleship you foster can bear fruit many times over.

### **Be faithful**

Paul wrote that people should “regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:1,2). As we are faithful to fulfill the tasks He gives us, He will bring fruit that remains. 🍎





## Expositional Preaching— Connecting With Today's Postmodern Listener

### Interview with John Lindell and Chris Lewis: Part One



Lindell



Lewis

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Doug Oss, Ph.D., director of the Center for Expository Preaching at AGTS, is assisting the EJ team in coordinating "Real Life Preaching," a new column addressing contemporary preaching issues.



Oss

Before we launch into the first installment of "Real Life Preaching," with an interview by John Lindell and Chris Lewis, Oss answers the questions, "Where is this column headed? Why is this column worth reading?"

**So, what can be said about preaching that hasn't already been said?** Much of what is written about preaching rehashes the same traditional topics, without much fresh perspective. That would be so boring, wouldn't it? You'd be tempted to skip over a column like that, wouldn't you?

This initial installment, then, is probably the right occasion for you to ask, *Where is this column headed? Why is this column worth reading?* Perfectly legitimate questions.

First, the column is going to be reader aware. If there are issues or areas you consider worthy of discussion in the column, please e-mail *Enrichment* with your ideas at <http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org>. **Real Life Preaching** will not be able to pursue every suggestion, but some of your ideas will probably find their way into our discussions. Also, rather than communicating in a stiff, formal style, **Real Life Preaching** will adopt a more relaxed format (not meaning at all that the column will lack substance or solid content). Our purpose in adopting a more casual style of communication is simply to connect with readers in fresh ways that are a bit outside the box with regard to preaching.

Second, **Real Life Preaching** will mix methodological discussion on the one hand and philosophical analysis of contemporary issues on the other. The emerging and effective church of today's generation is different — so different,

in fact, that George Barna has called the current church-culture shift a *revolution*. If Barna is right, then his research requires more than merely a change in communication style or losing the coat and tie. That would be much too shallow. The pragmatic idealist (excuse the oxymoron, but it works) of today's generation may necessitate a transformation of preaching's DNA that is just as revolutionary as the DNA changes occurring in how people understand the local church. In other words, the "revolution" in church culture may necessitate re-examination of the entire concept of "preaching." If our goal is to maximize the life-changing impact of our preaching, then perhaps a good starting place is to think about preaching in terms of today's listener.

Third, preaching increasingly has been integrated into the larger framework of how the local church functions. So, from time to time, **Real Life Preaching** will explore the integration of preaching into emerging models of ministry and church.

Finally, **Real Life Preaching** will seek to advance the kind of preaching that seems to connect more effectively with the new pragmatic idealist, and that is expositional preaching (but not the stereotype of that style of preaching which so many people think of and cringe). Today's generation wants to know what the Bible says (whether they are Christians or not; whether finally they agree with the Bible or not). Today's listener rejects manipulation, simplistic assertions, and attempts at thought control. But these same people do give serious consideration to biblical truth claims, and they do value preachers who can lead them accurately on this path without drawing all of their conclusions for them.

Toward these purposes, the first two installments of the column consist of an interview with pastors John Lindell and Chris Lewis of James River Assembly in Ozark, Missouri. John is the senior pastor and Chris is the senior associate pastor for this well-known megachurch. John and the JRA preaching team are known for their passion to see sound expositional preaching become part of the core DNA of today's churches and ministry models.

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*There is no medium  
more powerful  
and effective  
for leading people  
than the pulpit.*  
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— LINDELL

## THE INTERVIEW

### What is your major concern for preaching in today's pulpits in America?

**LINDELL:** My greatest concern is that the pulpits in America today have abandoned the preaching of the Word of God and have opted instead to use the Bible, if it is used, as a jumping-off point for talking about philosophy, trends, or pop culture. Some ministers also think that every sermon needs to be relegated to the dimension of a person's self-need. They fail to understand that the Word of God rightly divided through the anointing of the Holy Spirit will touch people's hearts and lives in a way that is relevant to them.

**LEWIS:** My major concern is that ministers feel they need to be so relevant to today's culture. As a result, people begin to think the Word of God is not relevant today. This way of thinking is false. One of my professors said, "We need to be both biblical and relevant." When we preach without using the Bible, we only preach to people's felt needs. Many pastors have abandoned expositional preaching in the pulpit. When we do not preach expositionally, we are running down the wrong path.

### What role does the pulpit have in leadership?

**LINDELL:** What gets talked about gets done. There is no medium more powerful and effective for leading people than the pulpit. The voice in the pulpit — what is said in the pulpit — will not only direct the program of the church, it will also direct the attitude of the people in the church, and it will greatly affect how they process the world around them and influence their response to people and events.

**LEWIS:** The pulpit is key to church leadership. The pulpit is the place of vision and spiritual maturity. The pulpit is where we stand and say, "This is the way we are headed, follow us." The pulpit is probably the most powerful place for leadership, both in a local church setting and nationwide for a denomination.

### Why has there been a trend toward more shallow presentations on Sunday mornings in our society and a move away, in a significant degree, from expositional preaching?

**LINDELL:** One factor is that society has become entertainment oriented, and in some sense a pictographic society. Society has moved from cognitive thought to whatever people feel like doing. We have become a feeling-oriented society and a sound-bite society. When all these factors converge, it presents a daunting challenge for any communicator in any venue.

It is difficult to keep up with societal trends and compete with them. There comes a place where people feel that when society offers something, this is what the pulpit needs to offer, not only to be relevant, but also to simply hold people's attention.

Many also have a lack of confidence and understanding in the Word of God and its power to transform a person's life. Once we begin to



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*If a sermon lacks depth into the Word of God, people will question whether the Bible has anything to say about the human situation.*

— LEWIS

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think that philosophy can transform a person's life and fail to understand the power of the Word of God to bring about transformation, we soon drop what we think is unnecessary. These changes are the result of factors in society and a decrease in understanding the power, significance, and sufficiency of the Word of God.

**LEWIS:** I would add that people have introduced into society some psychological principles that

suggest people do not need the Bible. This happens when people begin to believe that the Bible does not speak to their real needs. Consequently, we have gotten farther away from the Bible. People feel, whether it is entertainment or just preaching to self-needs, that preaching is passé. Preaching is seen as an old-fashioned way of communicating with people. They believe preaching should be more conversational, offering more give-and-take between the preacher and the audience. But when preaching becomes more audience driven and less biblically driven, we make a mistake that eventually leads to shallower presentations. If a sermon lacks depth into the Word of God, people will question whether the Bible has anything to say about the human situation. They will then try to figure out a way to deal with their situation from a psychological perspective.

**What are the strengths of an expository pulpit in connecting with today's postmodern listener?**

**LEWIS:** It is a mistake to say that postmodern listeners do not want the truth. I think truth is what they want. They may filter truth, and say, *Well, that's not the truth for me*. If we were preaching Socrates or the latest book, we would have something to worry about. But we are preaching the Word of God that is living, active, and sharper than any two-edged sword that divides down to the marrow. When you preach God's Word, you are preaching the truth. They may say, *It's our prerogative to decide what's*

*true or not*. Fine. But they are being confronted with the truth of Scripture. At the very least, they are not saying, *We don't want you to tell us the truth*. I think they are saying, *Tell us the truth*. Our confidence is not founded on the fact the pastor has said something. Our confidence is based on the truth found in the Word of God. This truth transforms them.

**LINDELL:** People today, if they will come to church and open a Bible, want to know what the Bible says. They can decide for themselves whether it is relevant. This is where the post-modern mindset comes in. People will determine if the Bible will work for them and if it will be relevant. But when they come to church, they want to know what the Bible says. I think, too, that postmodernism considers the whole experience of an event. This is where expository preaching has strength. Again, when the Word of God is rightly divided under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, it has power that not only the preacher feels, but also the listeners. It is an experience to hear expository preaching with the weight of the Spirit on it.

**Have you dealt with any concerns in connecting with today's generation that maximized the effectiveness of your expository approach to preaching?**

**LEWIS:** We all have unique preaching styles at James River Assembly. I do not sound the same as John, and John does not sound the same as Scotty Gibbons, or any person on our preaching team. If we all tried to be homogeneous in our approach to preaching, it would come across as inauthentic. One of the things we are striving for is unity from the pulpit, with the recognition that there is diversity in the people. A diverse group requires preachers to use different styles and approaches. No one should have reason to think, *Well, you guys just get up there and one is a parrot of the other. You all dress the same*. We all have unique personalities and ministry styles.

In terms of concern and connecting, preachers want to remove artificial barriers. Something as simple as how you dress can be important. This is not an argument for having ties or not having ties. It is an argument for authenticity and recognizing the needs of one's audience. A preacher can dress according to the culture of the group to whom he is ministering. Ask yourself, *If I preach to them while wearing a three-piece suit, will they hear me or will they*





*not hear me?* How a preacher dresses in an African-American church may be important. In inner-city Chicago, whether the audience is predominantly African-American, white, or Hispanic will determine how one should present himself to gain a hearing. Dress is one barrier that can be easily removed allowing the preacher to better connect in his preaching.

Howard Hendricks said, "Guys, it's not difficult to be biblical if you don't care about being relevant. And it's not difficult to be relevant if you don't care about being biblical." The hard task of the preacher is to be biblical and relevant. If you are just one or the other, then you are not going to connect with your audience. If you jettison the biblical, you are not speaking what you ought to be speaking.

**LINDELL:** The human condition has not changed since the Bible was authored — people are still people. This is important to remember because it is part of the reason why the Bible is so relevant. The younger generation wants authenticity. They want someone who will get up in the pulpit and be genuine. If you are gifted with a good sense of humor, you have a wonderful strength. But what the younger generation wants more than anything else is a preacher who has done his homework and knows what he is talking about. They want to know that he is a genuine, real, authentic person. They do not want a preacher telling them to live something, pretending to believe something, or telling them to do something that he is not living, believing, or doing himself.

#### **Describe what you do to prepare for every sermon.**

**LEWIS:** When I prepare for a sermon, I read the text in two or three different translations, depending on the time I have. If the passage is not too long, I will work through the original language and translate it. I outline and transcript every sermon. I also pray a great deal. That may go without saying, but I think it is important to pray because I could have the most well-crafted sermon, everything could be done well, my exegesis could be perfect; but, if God does not show up, then it is all for naught. In general, these are steps I take when preparing my sermons.

#### **Describe a preaching moment when your preaching became prophetic.**

**LINDELL:** The height of preaching is attained

that moment when you leave yourself, in the sense that you are leaving your notes, and can tell that it is no longer you speaking in your own intellect as much as it is the Lord speaking through you. The height of preaching is found during that moment of inspiration. This is one reason why I think the gift of prophecy's greatest usage in the church is in the pulpit, not in



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*Once we begin to think that philosophy can transform a person's life and fail to understand the power of the Word of God to bring about transformation, we will soon drop what we think is unnecessary.*

— LINDELL

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someone standing from the pew and saying, "Thus saith the Lord," but someone weekly standing in the pulpit and dividing the Word of God. In that moment, or at several moments in the message, having a flash of inspiration where the Spirit comes on the preacher and carries him along with his listeners beyond what the preacher could do in his own human ability is the height of preaching.

A preacher should not try to facilitate that moment; it is a genuine, spontaneous move of the Holy Spirit. Self-consciousness works against a liberty in the Spirit. When a preacher is engrossed in the task, preaching the message with his whole heart and soul, it leads to a self-forgetfulness that creates an opportunity for God to use the preacher in a special, supernatural way. While many preachers have enjoyed these moments when the Spirit inspires their preaching, these moves of God may be happening at times when we do not realize they are happening. At that point, maybe it becomes less a miracle of speaking and more

a miracle of hearing. Or it may be a miracle of speaking that we are not aware of or able to appreciate due to a variety of circumstances.

There have been moments in my sermon preparation where I have felt the Spirit moving and believed the sermon would be used of

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*Most of my experience with prophetic preaching has occurred during the service; it's been serendipitous. Generally, it has been a surprise.*

— LINDELL

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God in a prophetic way. I would say these experiences, however, would be more the exception than the rule. Most of my experience with prophetic preaching has occurred during

the service; it's been serendipitous. Generally, it has been a surprise — out of nothing God breathed and created something.

Many times, people ask, “Do you have a great sermon today? Do you feel good about it?” I often do not feel good about it, and the ones I have found I have to worry about most are the ones I do feel good about. So there is a mystery, and I think this is part of the adventure of preaching. You do not know what God will do with a sermon. It is a matter of praying, “Lord, let the seed sown in weakness be raised in power,” and then watching how God will do that. Watching what God will do both with you and the listeners is one of the real thrills and adventures of preaching.

**LEWIS:** Preaching is one area where God helps us retain our humility. Every time we preach, we expect a move of God's Spirit, and I know God will move every time. We hope and expect that God will do that. Yet, I am not sure that God gives us the feeling of it happening every time. I can think of times, and I have preached far fewer years than John has, when I have preached, and thought, *Boy, that was just dead air*, only to hear someone say, “You were speaking right to me. The Lord used you to speak to some specific area in my life.” I think it is probably more common to feel the breath of the Lord on us during preaching than it is in an ordinary moment, such as right now. It is a wonderful experience when God's Spirit heightens our preaching, and I wish it would happen more, but I think part of that is God's design.

**LINDELL:** Every preacher needs to be careful how he evaluates what God is doing. We see through a glass darkly. What we feel are our greatest sermons are probably not preached as well as they could be, and our worst sermons are not preached as clearly as we would prefer. By and large, I take real comfort in knowing, whether I feel good about a sermon or not, ultimately, the most important issue is if my heart was right. Now, if my heart is not right, that is an issue. I need to leave the results with the Lord. Only in eternity will we know what He has done through the ministry He has given us. 🙏

#### NEXT ISSUE:

Interview with John Lindell and Chris Lewis, part two: Expositional Series & Team Preaching

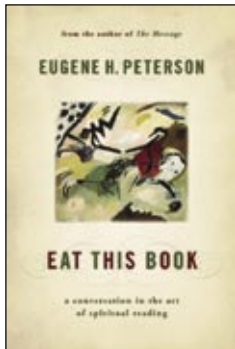
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PASTOR CARL COLTER  
DECIDES TO TELEVIEW  
HIS CHURCH BOARD MEETINGS



“Remember, this should only be done by a trained professional. Do not try this at home.”



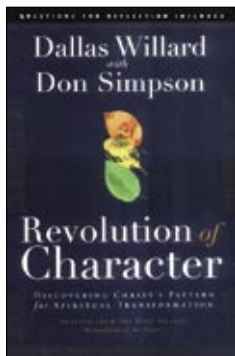


*Eat This Book*

“*‘Spiritual reading’  
... enters our souls  
as food enters  
our stomachs,  
spreads through  
our blood, and  
becomes holiness  
and love  
and wisdom.*

—EUGENE PETERSON

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*Revolution of Character*

## Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading

EUGENE H. PETERSON (*Eerdmans, 186 pp., hardcover*)

Eugene Peterson is convinced that the way we read the Bible is as important as that we read it.

Do we read the Bible for information about God and salvation, for principles and ‘truths’ that we can use to live better? Or do we read it in order to listen to God and respond in prayer and obedience?” This quote from the flyleaf summarizes the premise of Peterson’s book.

Unfortunately, many people, including pastors, read the Bible for the first reason. But *Eat This Book* challenges readers to “meditate” — “to taste and savor, anticipate and take in the sweet and spicy, mouthwatering and soul-energizing morsel words” of Scripture. To do so invites the presence of God into our lives.

In section 1, Peterson deals with the various ways people approach Bible reading and how these ways hinder the formation of God’s nature in us. For Christians, the Bible is the text by which we live our lives. It reveals to us God’s purpose for our lives and is the story that leads us into following Jesus. As we read the biblical text, we enter it to meet God as He reveals himself to us.

The author believes that readers must enter the world of the Bible to fully understand its revelation and teaching. In section 2, he focuses on several interpretive aspects that provide a deeper understanding necessary for the Word to change us.

Peterson is probably most known for his contemporary translation of the Bible — *THE MESSAGE*. In section 3, he explains the rationale behind this translation and how it came about. Those who depreciate modern translations need to read this section.

Readers who follow the admonitions in *Eat This Book* will approach Bible reading in a way that will revolutionize their lives.

—Reviewed by Richard L. Schoonover, associate editor, *Enrichment* journal, Springfield, Missouri.



Peterson

## Revolution of Character: Discovering Christ’s Pattern for Spiritual Transformation

DALLAS WILLIARD with DON SIMPSON  
(NavPress, 201 pp., hardcover)

Dallas Willard, professor of philosophy at UCLA, is a widely esteemed Christian author, thinker, and friend of Pentecostal/charismatic theology.

Don Simpson has taken Willard’s book, *Innovation of the Heart*, and created a fresh look at that work’s message, making its content more accessible and useful.

Willard’s writings have influenced the church to deeply embrace the disciplines of Jesus’ teachings. While he gives a practical, New Testament-centered schematic for walking

carefully under a Christ-centered covering, his overarching emphasis is that the spiritual life has no formulas, because it runs on interaction with God. Spiritual disciplines contain the elements to do what we cannot do by direct effect.

Revolution of character and spiritual transformation emerge from an intentional look at six aspects inseparable from every human life: thoughts, feelings, heart, body, social context, and soul.

The ideal of spiritual life happens when all six parts of the human self are effectively attuned to God as they are restored and sustained



by Him. Spiritual formation is clarified as Williard explains each of these six and shows how the inner process of one's self-reformation leads toward that ideal end.

The book is highly confrontational to a worldly culture wrongly aligned with God's will. The author advocates that a spiritual reprogramming of man's soul develops spiritual formation (reformation), and this creates what is God's will for man.

This book calls for a serious response from us on living a God-centered life. Spiritual formation in Christlikeness is a constant movement toward an eternal appointment God has with us; that is, to bring forth an immense community of people from "every nation and tribe and tongue and people" to worship Him (Revelation 14:6). This movement forward is now carried on through our apprenticeship with Jesus Christ. It is a process of character formation toward complete trustworthiness before God.

—Reviewed by T. Ray Rachels, superintendent,  
Southern California District, Irvine, California.

## Spiritual Leadership in the Small Membership Church

DAVID CANADA (*Abingdon, 101 pp., paperback*)

Canada, a United Methodist minister, has pastored small-membership churches. In this concise book, Canada discusses unique situations small-membership pastors face, and he discusses situations all pastors find in their daily tasks.

Canada defines spiritual leadership as "the art or practice through which the leader helps others move toward spiritual maturation." This definition is the basis for the entire book.

Canada applies the principles in his book to pastors, individual members of congregations, and to the congregation as a body.

Often, leaders in small-membership churches look to the future as a promise of a more blessed life. Canada believes a pastor should desire to be a blessing to those whom he is currently serving, regardless of the size of the congregation.

Canada also covers well the roadblocks of change that occur frequently in churches across denominational lines, and then he discusses ways to remove or adjust these roadblocks to ensure a healthy church.

A surprise in this book is the third chapter where Canada describes well a traditional Methodist worship service, the reasons behind

the liturgy, and other aspects of the worship service.

If you have ever struggled with the woe-is-me syndrome at pastoral gatherings, this book is for you. It will encourage you.

—Reviewed by Michael Hilger, pastor,  
River of Life Worship Center, Stewartville, Minnesota.

## Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology

EUGENE H. PETERSON (*Eerdmans, 368 pp., hardcover*)

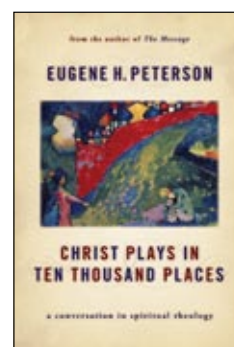
This foundational book to what will become a five-volume series by Peterson explores the vast subject of spiritual theology. In Peterson's own words, "Spiritual theology ... represents the attention that the church community gives to keeping what we think about God (theology) in organic connection with the way we live with God (spirituality)."

After an extended introduction to "clear the playing field" of many contemporary misunderstandings surrounding spirituality, Peterson gives sweeping treatment to the triple themes of creation, history, and community. With insight and exegetical depth, he correlates a biblical understanding of each with the birth (creation), death (history), and resurrection (community) of Christ. He also explores the primary threats (gnosticism, moralism, and sectarianism) inherent to each as well as exploring how Sabbath (creation), Eucharist (history), and Trinitarian Baptism (community) shape our lives under the "Fear of the Lord."

This penetrating book explores a biblical spirituality that works in the ordinariness of life while exposing the shallowness of contemporary Christianity. What artists do with color and sculptors do with texture and dimensionality, Peterson does brilliantly with language and phraseology. Though conversational in tone, this book is definitely not a fast read.

Ultimately, Peterson asserts "Christian spirituality makes bold to claim that there is only one game on the field of history and that is salvation. Everything that happens, everything that men and women do, happens on this playing field on and over which God is sovereign, the field in which Christ 'plays in ten thousand places.'"

—Reviewed by James Bradford, Ph.D., senior pastor,  
Central Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri.



*Christ Plays in  
Ten Thousand Places*



*Spiritual Leadership in the  
Small Membership Church*

### Assemblies of God U.S. Missions Spring Candidate Orientation

**A**ssemblies of God U.S. Missions is dedicated to evangelism in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. More than 1,000 missionaries and 5,000 field representatives are working to reach the lost in America.

The spring U.S. Candidate Orientation will be held Mar. 17–23, 2007, in Springfield, Mo. Orientation helps prepare candidates for the emotionally and spiritually trying aspects of missions work. Time is also available for interviews, training, and evaluation.

For more information, contact Assemblies of God U.S. Missions, 417-862-2781, ext. 3274, or visit <http://www.USMissions.ag.org>.

### ReachAmerica Coalition

**ReachAmerica Coalition is a group of church leaders, pastors, and laypeople that want to reach our nation with the gospel.** Laity are key in helping in this grassroots effort. By reaching outside the walls of the church and into the marketplaces, schools, and streets of our nation, we can reach America for Christ.

To become a member of the ReachAmerica Coalition, visit <http://www.reachamerica.ag.org>, or call 1-877-840-5400.

### New Tools Promote World Missions Involvement

**Assemblies of God World Missions has developed two tools to encourage involvement in missions.**

First, the newly published *Wide Open* magazine describes the different ways in which a person can become involved in world missions. From short-term MAPS volunteers to fully appointed missionaries, this magazine explains the steps and requirements for each position. To request a copy of *Wide Open*, call 417-862-2781, ext. 2061.

Second, a new Web site, <http://www.GoAG.org>, has information on available Missionary Associate and MAPS positions around the world, short-term programs, and how to become a fully appointed missionary. AGWM looks forward to helping people find their place in world missions.

### AG College Guide Now Available

**The eighth edition of the *Assemblies of God College Guide*, a free resource highlighting the 19 endorsed Assemblies of God colleges, is now available.**

This informative, full-color catalog includes current information about each school: tuition costs, majors and minors offered, admission requirements, housing, financial aid resources, ministry opportunities, and extra curricular activities. Business-reply postcards stitched into the catalog can be returned directly to the schools to request additional information.

Free copies of this guide are available for your church library and college-bound students when you contact the Christian Higher Education Department at 417-862-2781, ext. 3315, or visit <http://www.colleges.ag.org>.

### 2007 National Youth Scholarship Applications Available

**Each year Christian Higher Education and the national Youth Department of the General Council of the Assemblies of God sponsor the J. Robert Ashcroft National Youth Scholarship Program**, which gives financial assistance to outstanding high school seniors attending Assemblies of God churches.

Up to three district-level winners can be nominated by each district for the National Youth Scholarship. The NYSP committee then picks three national winners based on four criteria: academic achievement, extracurricular activities, Christian service, and Christian character.

The scholarship, which is granted for the first year of college, is given to winners who will be attending one of the 19 endorsed Assemblies of God colleges during the fall semester immediately following their high school graduation.



*Wide Open*



*Assemblies of God College Guide*



## National Missionettes Ministries Conference

The national Missionettes Ministries Department will conduct a ministry to girls training conference in Springfield, Mo., Mar. 14–16, 2007. In addition to district Missionettes leadership, local coordinators, sponsors, and helpers, the conference is also for children's pastors, youth pastors, and anyone interested in how Missionettes can help young girls — and their churches — thrive.

"Missionettes Ministries has never had a national conference available to all who lead and assist at every level," says national Missionettes Ministries Director Candy Tolbert. "We want local leaders, children's pastors, and youth pastors — all who have influence in the lives of girls — to join us for a time of training and inspiration."

The conference, to be held in conjunction with the Royal Rangers National Council, offers a variety of workshops that will benefit those ministering to Missionettes, children, and youth.

"All Missionettes leadership development courses will be offered as well as sessions on current social concerns that impact girls in our society, such as self-injury, homosexuality, and Internet safety," Tolbert says. Also, a Spanish track covering leadership development courses and other topics will be offered.

Speakers for the plenary sessions include Tolbert, George O. Wood, Lori O'Dea, and David Boyd (CMA director). The Celebration Banquet, featuring speakers Bradley T. and Rhonda Trask, will be Friday evening, Mar. 16, 2007, at University Plaza in Springfield, Mo. This event is open to Royal Rangers National Council attendees.

Registration is currently ongoing. The registration fee of \$125 does not include the Celebration Banquet.

Watch the Missionettes Web site (<http://www.missionettes.ag.org>) for upcoming registration forms and deadlines.



*"Hope for the Future—in Your Hands" is the theme for the National Missionettes Ministries Conference, March 14-16, 2007*



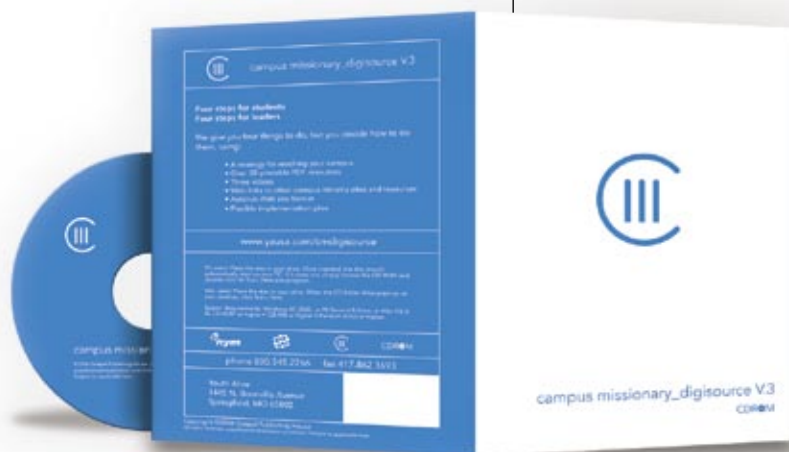
Applications for the 2007 J. Robert Ashcroft National Youth Scholarship Program are available from district youth directors after November and are accepted from Jan. 1 to Mar. 31, 2007, at district youth directors' offices.

## Youth Alive

**Campus missionaries are the backbone of Youth Alive.** While prayer offered by Prayer Zone Partners lays the foundation for lasting ministry, campus missionaries make a year-long commitment to their school and their friends — the mission field they are called to reach. To adequately present the gospel, CMs commit to pursue five main habits of ministry: to *pray, live, tell, serve, and give*.

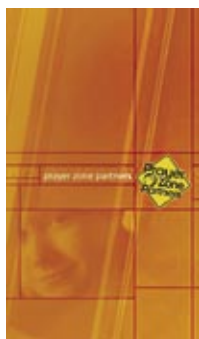
To support and equip student missionaries with the ideas and materials needed to effectively reach their campuses, Youth Alive has developed the **campusmissionary\_digisource V3.0**. This new product has more than 50

resources. The student section includes Answer the Call To Be a Campus Missionary, Grow in the Five Habits, Keep Your Focus on the Five Habits, and Find a Coach. The leader section covers how to find, empower, send, and coach (continued on page 162)



campusmissionary\_digisource V3.0





Prayer Zone Partners brochure

a campus missionary. Multiple links connect users to even more Web resources. By including materials that teach and train campus missionaries and help raise up qualified coaches, Youth Alive is creating a strong network of support for campus missionaries.

With the fall release of this new resource, students will have access to the most current materials from Youth Alive. A CD Rom with widespread computer compatibility, the campusmissionary\_digisource V 3.0 has an interactive menu and is easy to use. To order this product, visit <http://www.yausa.com>, or call 1-800-641-4310.

## Prayer Zone Partners

**Prayer is foundational to ministry.** No true and lasting outreach can happen without God's blessing and direction. Youth Alive, a multifaceted strategy for reaching junior high and high school students, uses Prayer Zone Partners, Campus Missionaries, Campus Clubs, and The Seven Project to cooperatively promote the gospel on school campuses.

Many adults in our churches understand how important it is to minister to and support young people facing the pressures of today's secular society. Some adults, however, do not know tangible ways to participate in their church's youth ministry. As Prayer Zone Partners, adults can commit to pray for specific schools, ministry outreaches, camps, and other local community events, while having a sense of ownership and involvement in their own church's youth group. By committing to pray for God to raise up campus missionaries and open up ministry opportunities for Youth Alive campus clubs and The Seven Project, adults become the necessary foundation behind the presentation of the gospel.

The national coordinator for Prayer Zone Partners, Cecil Culbreth, understands the immediate need for adults who are committed to prayer to accept this call to stand in the gap for students and young people. Over the next 5 years, Prayer Zone Partners would like 120,000 committed adult intercessors for

public schools. The vision is great, but so is the need. Today's students are hungry for real life. Youth Alive has a strategy for communicating the message of Jesus Christ to students. Visit <http://www.prayerzonepartners.com> to learn more about this amazing outreach and sign up to support our young people as they reach their campuses for Christ.

Enrichment:  
The First Decade



## Let Enrichment Outfit Your Expedition

**When James Gordon Bennett of the New York Herald commissioned Henry Stanley to find David Livingston,** Stanley traveled to Zanzibar, outfitted an expedition at great expense, and searched the African the jungle until He located Livingstone near Lake Tanganyika, and uttered



the famous greeting, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"

Today's pastors are commissioned to reach the lost (Mark 16:15). Whether you are ministering in Africa or the wilds of America, *Enrichment* can help you outfit your expedition with valuable ministry tools at an affordable price.

- **Enrichment: The First Decade**

Every issue of *Enrichment* (Fall 1995–Fall 2005) on 3 CDs. This high-quality, full-color reproduction includes 1,200 articles, is PC/MAC compatible, fully searchable, and costs less than \$1 dollar per issue.

Item 75TW1304 is \$39.99.

- **Managing Church Conflict 2-Volume Set**

Church conflict is the main reason pastors leave their churches and sometimes even the ministry. Learn the skills needed to resolve church conflict in a healthy manner from leading experts.

Item 75TW1501 is \$9.95.

- **Managing the Local Church/Leadership CD**

Pastors will learn six essential areas of church management: governance, church office, staff management, finances, legal risk, and property and facility management. This CD is filled with valuable ideas and tools for your ministry.

Item 751-305 is \$12.00.

- **Paraclete CD**

This CD includes all 29 years of the now out-of-print *Paraclete*. Filled with articles on theological topics concerning the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit, it is an indispensable source of sermon and Bible study material and has a fully searchable subject/author index.

Item 75TW1300 is \$20.

- **Advance/Pulpit CDs**

Long out of print but fondly remembered, *Advance* and *Pulpit* have blessed thousands of ministers. Now the entire *Advance/Pulpit* archive is available on separate CDs.

*Advance* CD (item 75TW1301 is \$39.99).

*Pulpit* CD (item 75TW1302 is \$14.99).

*Advance* and *Pulpit* CD (item 75TW1303 is \$44.99).

- **Enrichment Journal Spring 2006**

**Azusa Street Revival: 100 Years of Pentecostal Power and Passion**

This issue commemorates the Azusa Street Revival centennial. The origin of today's Pentecostal and charismatic movements, the Azusa Revival has touched millions of lives around the world. This issue contains articles from leading scholars, pictures, timelines, eyewitness accounts, and testimonies.

Item 75TW1070 is \$8.00.

Outfit your ministry expedition by calling Gospel Publishing House at 1-800-641-4310, or order online at <http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org>.



Women in Ministry

## Women in Ministry Web Site

### Are you a woman involved in ministry?

Have you visited the Women in Ministry Web site? Would you like to receive notice each time the site is updated?

"If ministry is the passion of your life, then this Web site is for you," says Beth Grant, chairperson of the Women in Ministry Task Force.

The Women in Ministry Web site (<http://www.womeninministry.ag.org>) will encourage and challenge you with articles and interviews written by women in ministry for women in ministry. To receive e-mail notifications of site updates, go to the top of the home page to: Click here to subscribe, or, to subscribe by phone, call the *Enrichment* journal office at 417-862-2781, ext. 4095. 







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## Pass It On

Recently I had brunch with a pastor and 15 other people. This pastor had already spent time with these people as he listened to their dreams about ministry. This pastor and I have partnered to serve as dream releasers as we guide these future ministers on their pathway to ministry.

At this season of life when I have more time to think about fewer things (a Tom Brokaw statement), I intend to invest more time in mentoring. Mentoring is a relational experience where we share our life and resources to help empower another person to reach his potential. One does not need to be perfect to be a mentor, just transparent.

Those coming behind us in ministry are looking for spiritual fathers to nurture them. We can *call out the called* by simply inviting them to a meal and asking them to share their stories. Then share yours. People want to be loved, needed, and included. Internships, whether for the summer or longer, are a great investment in young people called to ministry.

Paul in writing to Timothy gave a pathway to ministry that I have found helpful in mentoring.

### Ministry Begins With a Call

"Fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6). Anyone entering ministry must know he is called. It is an oxymoron to be in ministry without a clear sense of calling. Mentors can help those whose calling is being challenged, or who are discouraged. Mentoring provides a great opportunity to tell how God enabled you to press on and give others hope for their situation.

### Ministry Is About Character

Paul reminded Timothy that he was called to a holy life (2 Timothy 1:9). Mentoring others includes helping them understand that having character will not make them ministers, but the lack of it will torpedo their ministry. This is an opportune time to talk about integrity in ministry. Our private life must match our public life.

### Ministry Requires Competency

"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). People are sometimes drawn to ministry because they like the nurturing, caring aspect. They only see the *helping people* side of ministry. But the leadership/teaching gift that is required for most ministries is just as important. And developing these skills takes time and preparation. This is why I encourage every young person to attend one of our colleges or universities to prepare for ministry.

I am concerned for those who want to shortcut the preparation process. I have heard some pastors lament the fact they did not take more time for preparation. Fortunately, some of these pastors have enrolled in ministry preparation classes to catch up. Let's do our best to make sure people we mentor are adequately prepared before we send them to the front lines.

### Ministry Involves Covenant

"Do your best to come to me quickly. ... Get Mark and bring him with you. ... Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus" (2 Timothy 4:9,11,19). We were not designed to be spiritually alone or to do ministry in a vacuum. I remember a time in my early days of ministry when God spoke to me about connecting with my colleagues in ministry. It was a step of obedience and accountability for me.

This issue of *Enrichment* focuses on the first three phases of ministry: the call (formation), the preparation, and the first 1,826 days (5 years) of ministry (implementation). The *Enrichment* staff has planned this journal to help you mentor someone in ministry. I intend to use it in future meetings with the 15 people I mentioned earlier. And I am appealing to you, as a colleague in ministry, to find someone you can mentor. Paul said he was delighted "to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well" (1 Thessalonians 2:8).

All ministers want to leave a legacy. Our most meaningful legacy will be incarnated in the lives of those who come behind us. Pass it on. 🍷

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**H. ROBERT RHODEN**, former superintendent, Potomac District Council of the Assemblies of God, Fairfax, Virginia.