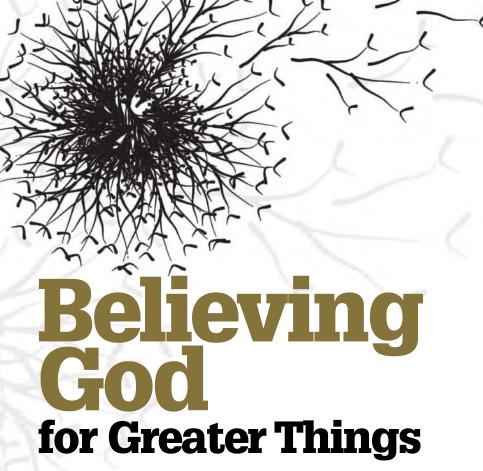
## Discovering Jordan 16

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\*Image shown is the student selected prayer focus



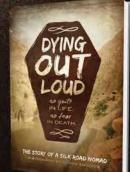
## NO GUILT IN LIFE NO FEAR IN DEATH

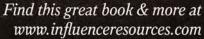
One man answers the calling of his childhood by taking his family to shine the light of God's love into the darkness of Istanbul, the heart of the Muslim world, offering peace, grace, and a new hope for the lost.

Over a decade after embarking on the greatest adventure of his life, Stan Steward now faces the next great adventure. Diagnosed with stage 4 colon and liver cancer, he shares his journey through the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

## DYING OUT LOUD

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A SILK ROAD NOMAD BY SHAWN SMUCKER









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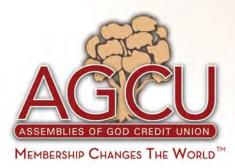


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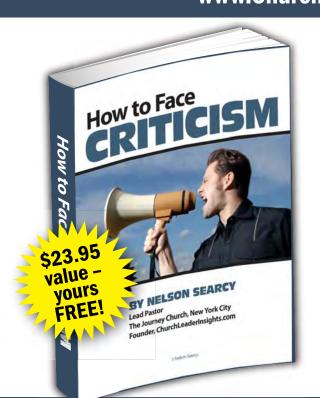






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"I will read anything I can get my hands on if Nelson's name is on it. He is one of the most practical writers I've read on any topic relating to the church."

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"Nelson is one of the most strategically-minded leaders on the planet. I love how he's used his gift to share with other church leaders the steps we can take to make sure our churches are healthy."

– Perry Noble, Pastor, Newspring Church, Anderson, SC



**NELSON SEARCY** is the Founding and Lead Pastor of The Journey Church. Started in 2002 in New York City, this ground-breaking church sees the majority of its growth coming from new believers and currently meets in Manhattan, Queens, San Francisco and Boca Raton, FL. He is the author of over seventy-five church-growth resources and ten books, including the brand-new *Engage: A Guide to Creating Life-Transforming Worship Services* and *Revolve: A New Way to See Worship*. Nelson is also an experienced church planter, coach and church-growth strategist. He is also the founder of ChurchLeaderInsights.com, the Church Leader Training Ministry of Nelson Searcy and The Journey Church.

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## Inside Enrichment

16 Discovering the Land of Jordan By RICK KNOTH Jordan, like Israel, offers the ideal setting to study the Bible and the roots of the Christian faith.



## **Shop**Talk

**18** Q&A FOR MINISTRY WIVES

I'm Tired of Struggling Financially

#### **By GABRIELE RIENAS** In times of financial

blessing or financial challenge, we serve the same God who has promised to take care of us.

20 LEAD LONG ... LEAD STRONG

Do You Recognize Your Family?

## By SCOTT HAGAN

Millions of Christians in America cannot locate each other because, like Esau, they cannot recognize each other.

22 STAYING CONNECTED

Using Social Media to Build Connections & Community

## By JUSTIN LATHROP

How do we use social media without letting it use us?



## Creative Sermon Change-Ups By DOUG GREEN

Preaching that exposes the biblical idea of the text ought to be compelling and life-changing.

**EShorts** 

## 26 MANAGING THE MAYHEM OF MINISTRY

Reading Your Board's Body Language

#### By CAL LeMON

Those who share leadership with you do not always communicate with just words.

**28** DEALING WITH DOUBTERS

Is It Wrong to Believe Without Evidence?

#### By PAUL COPAN

How should Christians respond to athiests who claim "it is wrong ... to believe anything upon insufficient evidence"?

## 32 IN CONTEXT

The Pilate Inscription from Caesarea

## **By MARC TURNAGE**

An archaelogical find adds to our understanding of Pilate's character and his seminal role in Jesus' crucifixion.



## Whole Genome Sequencing: How Much Information Is Too Much?

## **By CHRISTINA M.H. POWELL**

When reading a person's genetic blueprint, how much information is too much?

2 EJ Online

#### Features

## 38 Pentecost: This Story Is Our Story

By ROBERT P. MENZIES

The reluctance to give clear, theological definition to the Pentecostal movement misses the fact the Bible shaped the Movement. We need to know who we are to pass on this legacy.

## 46 Relentless: Pursuing a Life That Matters

By DAVE DONALDSON and TERRY GLASPEY There has never been a time in history where it is so easy for the church to help so many. Are we determined to take advantage of this moment to make a difference?

## 54 Against the Wind: Creating a Church of Diversity Through Authentic Love

By J. DON GEORGE

Taking bold steps of inclusion and equality to change your church's culture can be challenging. The following five principles will guide you during the process.

## <sup>62</sup> Four Faces of a Leader : What It Takes to Move Your Church Forward

By H. ROBERT RHODEN with DEAN MERRILL Four Faces of a Leader will summon you to a leadership journey that can potentially move you from simple survival ... to success ... and on to significance.

## The Jesus-Hearted Woman: Ten Leadership Qualities for Enduring & Endearing Influence

#### By JODI DETRICK

Wherever you are in your leadership journey, being a Jesus-hearted woman is possible by embracing these ten leadership qualities.

## In Depth: Believing God for Greater Things

## 77 Introduction

By GEORGE PAUL WOOD Will we allow the Spirit that fanned into flame the faith of the Assemblies of God founders to also fan into flame that same faith in us?

(continued on page 6) 🕨

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## Inside Enrichment

#### Believing God for Greater Things (continued from page 5)

## 78 Believing God for Greater Things



Interview with GEORGE O. WOOD General Superintendent George O. Wood focuses on what the Assemblies of God is believing God for as it enters its 100th year of ministry.

## Believing God for Spirit-Empowerment

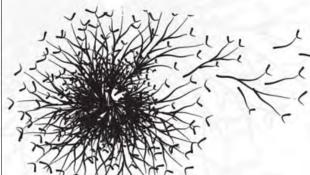


**By L. ALTON GARRISON** Are believers in the church abandoning Spirit-empowerment because of our failure to give them access to it in the first place?

## <sup>92</sup> Believing God for Jesus-Style Leaders

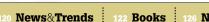


**By JAMES T. BRADFORD** Where do you find a template for a better way to lead? Jesus modeled three defining characteristics of Pentecostal leadership.



#### 116 ClergyCraft

With Christ



News&Resources

7 Ad Index

Enrichment is prepared under the direction of the Executive Presbytery: George O. Wood (General Superintendent) / Warren D. Bullock / Douglas E. Clay / L. Alton Garrison / J. Don George / Saturnino Gonzalez / A. Elizabeth Grant / Larry H. Griswold / R. Bryan Jarrett / Nam Soo Kim / Rod Loy / John E. Maracle / Jesse Miranda, Jr. / Greg Mundis / T. Ray Rachels / H. Robert Rhoden / Clarence W. St. John / Zollie L. Smith, Jr.

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## Believing God for a Prophetically Relevant Church



**By DOUG CLAY** The Church should have a sense of prophetic relevance — a call to be wholly biblically relevant and culturally literate.

## Believing God for Unreached People Groups



#### By GREG MUNDIS

You don't measure yourself by your success but by the unfinished task. The purpose of AGWM is "so all can hear." We must pay any price to keep fulfilling that purpose.

## Believing God for a Mobilized Church: Reaching the Lost, Helpless, Hurting, and Oppressed



BY ZOLLIE L. SMITH, JR. The Church is poised like never before to be the key rescuer to redeem America — that is, if the church will be the Church.

## <sup>128</sup> A Final Word I Am Believing God for ...

BY RICHARD L. SCHOONOVER Will you believe that God will continue to do immeasurably more than you can ask or think?



# CENTENNIAL

## NEW CENTURY, RENEWED COMMITMENT.

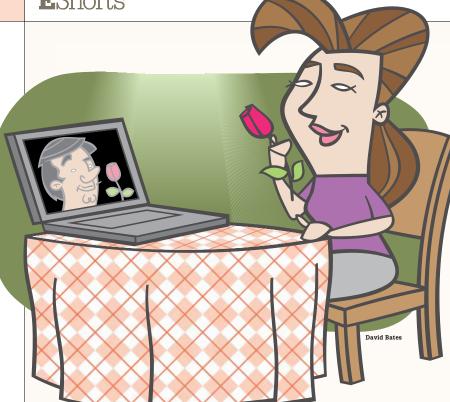
Through The Centennial Initiative we hope to join hands with the next generation and generations to come to help ensure a healthy Assemblies of God Fellowship. Together, we will

- Create cutting-edge, educational materials to teach our Fundamental Truths to the next generation.
- Plant new, innovative Pentecostal churches that will reproduce themselves.
- Transform existing churches by promoting church health.
- Train young leaders who will passionately proclaim our Pentecostal distinctives in the pulpit and the marketplace.
- Fervently pray for God's continued blessing upon our Fellowship.

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## **HELPING HEARTS & HOMES Online Dating Services** — A GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR LOVE?

ne might think with 131.2 million single adults in the U.S. age 18 and older (2012 census), it might be easy to find "Mr. or Miss Right." Not so, say many single and single-again adults of all ages. Enter online dating, society's answer to this dilemma.

E Harmony, Match.com, AdamMeet Eve, Christian Soulmates, and a thousand other online dating services (ODS), Christian and secular, offer themselves as a possible, sometimes seemingly sure way to find a perfect relationship or soul mate.

Considering the divorce rate, however, it is apparent that perfect relationships are not a reality. In my experience with single adults, half or more of them have tried ODS. What should a single adult think about these — especially a Christian single adult who desires to marry — but discovers only 20 percent of churches offer a group where single adults of similar ages can discover and develop friendships with the opposite sex? As a former pastor to single adults for 21 years, and now director of Assemblies of God Single Adult Ministries, I am not against online dating services. I have seen a few of these relationships form and mature into healthy marriages. I do have many concerns, though.

ODS are tools to bring about a contact — not much different from a person meeting someone in the grocery store, except the person may live 2,000 miles away. Because of this, rather than condemn online relationships, I urge extreme caution and offer tools for navigating the world of ODS. Here are some dos and don'ts.

## Do — Realize:

- People can and do misrepresent themselves.
- People exaggerate personal qualities.
- We cannot know one's depth of

character online, or even on the phone.

- ODS can take a lot of time.
- Online stalkers exist.
- Two can build false intimacy electronically.
- Online connections tend to reveal too much too soon.
- Most Internet matches do not lead to long-term relationships.
- The need to maintain a healthy level of skepticism.
- The need to protect your identity.
- The need to use caution in communication.

#### Don't:

- Reveal too much personal information too soon.
- Use any part of your legal name in your screen name.
- Assume someone is a Christian just because they say they are.
- Schedule a visit early in the getacquainted period.
- Travel by yourself to a distant city/state (especially females).
- Meet in a private place.
- Believe there is a perfect soul mate.
- Believe technology before believing God.

#### For an initial meeting:

- Use public transportation if possible.
- Plan and discuss a specific time period.
- Meet in a public place.
- Let two friends know where you are going and when you will return.

#### **Develop the Most Important** Relationship

Trust God to provide the right relationship in His timing. Until, and after He does provide, deepen your relationship with Him through prayer and study of His Word. Live an obedient life in your attitudes, desires, priorities, motives, and commitments.

It is more important to become the right person for marriage, than to find the right person for marriage. Would you marry someone like you?

— DENNIS FRANCK, Springfield, Missouri

## WISDOM FROM THE WORD

## FOX HUNTING

**atch for us the foxes, the little foxes** that ruin the vineyards" (Song of Solomon 2:15).

Solomon describes a beautiful vineyard in early spring. Little foxes that come to eat the tender grapes before they are ripe, however, threaten the vines. Solomon warns us that when something is *alive* and *growing*, there are spoilers to that growth. Our lives, churches, and ministries are like these vineyards. God has planted His choicest seeds of righteousness and goodness. But the devil sends his little foxes into the vineyard to spoil the growth.

What are some little foxes that undermine what God is building? Pride, exaggeration, selfishness, discouragement, resentment and retaliation, lust, gossip, companionship with the world, doubt, fear, murmuring/complaining ... self-pity in trials, self-seeking in business, self-indulgence in one's spare time, touchiness, resentment, and self-defense when we are hurt by others.

Sometimes these are little problems that arise between members. Sometimes it is an unkind word, a critical attitude, or a lack of appreciation — things that bring heartache.

It is easy to see why we must guard our vineyards. The time we spend in prayer, praise, and fellowship with God is a kind of insurance policy against the damage done by little foxes. Our hearts need to be under heavenly cultivation, walled around by grace, planted by instruction, weeded by heavenly discipline, watered by God's love, guarded by His power, warmed by His sunshine, and shaded by His wings.

Ask the Lord to reveal and help you guard against the little foxes of external and internal destructive tendencies.

- PATTI ANN THOMPSON, Kansas City, Missouri



W are one of the strongest religious trends in the last two decades and the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. religious landscape. If we combined all independent and nondenominational churches into a single group, it would be the third largest group of churches behind the Roman Catholic Church and the Southern Baptist Convention.

Independent and nondenominational churches are scattered throughout the country, though the Southern region has over half of these churches. These churches are parallel to the distribution of the general population, though it is more likely that they would appear in metro areas with populations over 250,000.

It is important to see that independent and nondenominational churches are not isolated congregations, but a unique religious phenomenon and a distinct religious market segment. They label themselves with different kinds of names, but the most distinctive self-identification is the fact they did not claim a singular connection with a formal denomination. Even the term *denomination* becomes increasingly gray with the rise of loose networks, affiliations, fellowships of churches, and even multiple affiliations within one church.

The growth in number of independent and nondenominational churches reflects many new church start-ups, but they also have a high failure rate in the first several years of existence. This very fluid grouping of churches is very susceptible to fast growth and even quicker dissipation in relatively short periods of time.

> - BYRON KLAUS, D.Min., president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

Note

 See "Non-Denominational Churches Census and Study." Found at www.hartford institute.org/cong/nondenominational-churches-national-profile-2010.html. Accessed 27 August 2012.

## FAITH & SCIENCE Modern Science and God

**he John Templeton Foundation** has supported a variety of discussions among leading scholars about big questions related to science and faith. A recent dialogue asked, "Does Science make belief in God obsolete?" A leading Catholic scholar, Cardinal Schönborn of Austria, answered both no and yes. No, because modern science makes belief in an Intelligence, behind the cosmos, more reasonable than ever. But yes, because we have increasingly relied on a "scientific mentality" that comes with power, control, comfort, and convenience that are the experience of much of the Western world. The concept of needing a God, beyond our human capacity to control our own world, has resulted in the hazy twilight of agnosticism. We increasingly seek to explain the whole of our existence by quantitative and reductive descriptions of the workings of all the components of life itself.

Cardinal Schönborn observes that people remain unsatisfied and that "sooner or later we face an existential crisis, and recognize in our lives something broken, disordered, in need of redemption. The fact that we can recognize disorder, brokenness, and sin means that they occur within a larger framework of order, beauty, and goodness, or else in principle we could not recognize them as such." Cardinal Schönborn concludes that science will never make obsolete the quest for Someone (Something) who is beyond us that embodies a truth that can offer a reference point by which to navigate the brokenness of our world.

> — BYRON KLAUS, D.Min., president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

For more information, visit John Templeton Foundation, Supporting Science — Investing in the Big Question at www.templeton.org/belief.

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## THE SPIRITUALITY OF MONEY

## Faith &Trust

**iving expands faith and trust.** By sharing we show that we live with a spirit of abundance and not a fearful spirit of hoarding. In his book, *Living Faith*, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter addresses this very matter in a personal way, saying, "Many people my age have cautionary phrases deeply ingrained in us: A penny saved is a penny want not. Haste makes waste " Consecuently

earned. Waste not, want not. Haste makes waste." Consequently, many people live cautiously, hesitantly, and timidly. "Most of us still want to be sure we don't give away too much, so we always parcel out a little at a time, making sure we hold back more than we might need," he writes.

There is a downside to this mentality, Carter notes, in that we underestimate the gift God has given us — "life, talent, ability, knowledge, freedom, influence, and plenty of opportunities to do something extraordinary." He urges people to give generously so faith and trust are expanded. "We have to remember that our lives will become shrunken if we only act from a cautious sense of duty. It is the reach, the inspiration, the extra commitment that provide the foundation for a full and gratifying life." — VICTOR PARACHIN, Tulsa, Oklahoma IN THE RED ZONE

## USING YOUR PLATFORM WELL

very pastor might desire to have a Tim Tebow in his or her congregation, someone who can inspire church members to share their faith. Tebow understands that regardless of what is going on in his life at any given time, he has a platform God can use for His good purposes.

Whether a megastar or an ordinary

## REVIEWS

## **BEING EXPLICIT**

**Att Chandler is a fascinating individual.** In his mid-30s, he is the lead pastor of a church of 10,000+ in the Dallas area. Matt has gained national attention with the rapid growth of the church (160 in attendance in 2002), his podcasts (in the top five), and books. Matt's recent publication, written with Jared Wilson, arose out of his realizing that most professing Christians have very little understanding of the gospel. This affects their relationship with God, certainly, but also has implications for the church and their witness in the world.

The Explicit Gospel (Crossway) is divided into three sections: "The Gospel on the Ground," explores the gospel from a human perspective; "The Gospel in the Air," giving a God's-eye view; and "Implications and Applications." This book would be an excellent resource for an adult Sunday School class or small group. It is also available as an audio book (Christian Audio). The DVD package with study guide (Zondervan) is okay, but the video does not follow the outline of the book.

What makes this more powerful is the fact Matt has brain cancer and has been undergoing treatments for many months. Perhaps this is what has given urgency to his writing and preaching. According to an AP article in 2010, "Chandler is trying to suffer well. He would

> never ask for such a trial, but in some ways he welcomes this cancer. He says he feels grateful that God has counted him worthy to endure it. He has always preached that God will bring both joy and suffering but is only recently learning to experience the latter."

This young pastor is fully aware of his mortality and making the most of every moment that God gives him.

- DAVE VEERMAN, Naperville, Illinois

Christian living an ordinary life, God gives every believer a platform — a web of relationships and unexpected divine encounters with the potential to draw individuals into a personal relationship with Jesus.

Chandler

Recently I (Kent) had such an encounter with a young woman at a computer store. After asking questions about her life, I discovered the tragedy she had experienced as a young girl. Convinced God did not care, she turned away from Him.

As we talked, I helped her understand that Jesus was right there with her in the midst of that childhood trauma. His heart was grieved along with her's. Then I pulled out my phone and used the "Share Your Faith" app to show her how easy it is to cross over the line of faith into a personal relationship with Christ.

This app can empower any believer to use his or her platform well. A simple explanation of the good news along with key words helps Christians know what to say. For questions, light bulb icons provide further explanations. Plus the app explains the benefits of salvation. Encourage your people to download this app to their Android, iPhone, or iPad (see shareyourfaith app.com). Equipping your congregation to share their faith is that simple.

— KENT TUCKER and PATTI TOWNLEY-COVERT, cowriters, In the Red Zone: A Game Plan for How to Share Your Faith. See www.howtoshareyourfaith.com/.

#### GRANDPARENTS DAY RESOURCE

## GRANDPARENTING THROUGH OBSTACLES

September 8, 2013, is National Grandparents Day.

One-third of adults in America are grandparents. According to Grandparents.com, every year 1.7 million people become grandparents. Thirteen percent of grandparents are primary caregivers. But for some, their grandparenting experience has not been so grand.

Many grandparents long to pass their Christian faith to their grandchildren, but they encounter obstacles to doing this. For some, physical distance separates them from their grandchildren. Others are within reach but the grandchildren's parents are not walking with God, creating obstacles to grandparents sharing their faith. With divorce rates and never-marrieds having children, nontraditional families can present obstacles to spending time with and influencing grandchildren. E. Butts

What's a grandparent to do?

The book Grandparenting Through **Obstacles: Overcoming Family Chal**lenges to Reach Your Grandchildren for Christ (Pix-N-Pens, 2012, \$15.99) contains 20 stories of grandparents who are making a difference for Christ in the lives of their grandchildren despite the obstacles they face. From hosting "Nana Camp" and grandmother/granddaughter retreats, to vacations to Christian destinations within the United States, to daily or annual interaction in difficult circumstances, the stories present a wide variety of situations. They also reveal how grandparents are overcoming that obstacle and seeing eternal fruit result in their grandchild's life.

Beside the wealth of innovative ideas, the book includes resources, thoughtful questions, steps to take, suggested prayers, and Scriptures to study. This book makes a great gift for the grandparents in your church this Grandparent's Day. Available through online bookstores.

— DIANNE E. BUTTS, Pueblo, Colorado

## Next time in Enrichment THE MODERN FAMILY & THE FAMILY OF GOD

**B** y any statistical measure, the modern family is a mess. According to statistics in the The State of Our Unions: 2012, more than 60 percent of couples now cohabit prior to their first marriage. The average married couple faces a 40-50 percent chance of getting divorced. Forty-one percent of all childbirths are nonmarital. And 26 percent of children live with only one of their biological parents. These realities have a negative impact on the parties involved, especially the children.

The Winter 2014 issue of *Enrichment* examines how the Church — the family of God — should minister in the context of the modern family. Articles lay out best practices that move couples toward the ideal: healthy marriages and healthy families. However, they also address how the local church should minister in the context of divorce, blended families, singleparent households, and other situations.

The issue includes engaging articles by Joe Butler, Ron R. Deal, Diana R. Garland, Don Lichi, Elizabeth Marquardt, Robert S. Paul, Jane Richard, Rob Rienow, Mark E. Strong, W. Bradford Wilcox, and others.

We trust this issue will help you address the unique challenges and opportunities the modern family poses to the family of God.



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## Four Reasons Older Pastors Do Not Retire When They Need To



By **Dick Hardy** 

Some pastors look forward to retirement; others dread and postpone it as long as possible, often to their detriment. Church consultant Dick Hardy shares

how to prepare for a fruitful retirement.



## The Characteristics of Pentecostal Preaching, Part 1

By **Steve D. Eutsler** What makes Pentecostal preaching unique? The author presents several aspects of Pentecostal preaching and provides practical ideas to help Pentecostals preach more effectively.



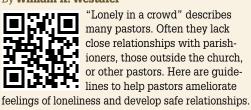
## Discipleship: Jesus' Way

By Clyde W. Harvey

Using the Sermon on the Mount, the author examines characteristics of Jesus' life that provide guidelines for what we want to produce in those we disciple.



## Loneliness and the Pastor By William K. Westafer



. . . . . . . .



## Power in Your Mouth, Part 1

Those who wrote Scripture lived in a world of oral communication. Our Western-world emphasis on print, reading, and literacy hinders our reception and use

of God's oral spiritual gifts. Our approach to this topic will determine how much we value the oral spiritual gifts.





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# Assemblies of God

## REACHING

We are reaching the spiritually lost with the message of Jesus Christ in all the world through every available means.

## PLANTING

We are planting churches in 252 countries, territories, and provinces following the New Testament pattern.

These are not four separate objectives but an integrated and comprehensive plan — commands of God we obey.

CAMINO

# World Missions

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We are training leaders throughout the world to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ to their own people and to other nations.

## TOUCHING

We are touching poor and suffering people with the compassion of Christ and inviting them to become His followers.

They work together to achieve our primary purpose so *all* can hear. **Solution ince antiquity, humankind has felt the urge to journey afar** in search of meaning and religious experience.

DISCOVERING

HELAND

For many, there is a conviction that prayer, meditation, or performing spiritual duties brings them closer to God, and is more meaningful in places of biblical, religious, or historical significance. Today, pilgrimages continue to flourish as vast numbers of people from all walks of life and faiths travel great distances to their sacred places of worship.

People often commemorate places of particular importance with shrines, temples, mosques, or tombs: For example:

- Buddhists journey to Bodh Gaya, India, the place of Buddha's supposed enlightenment. It is the most important pilgrimage site related to the life of Gautama Buddha.
- Muslims are encouraged to go to Mecca at least once in their life. Muslims also highly revere *Qubbat As-Sakhrah* (Dome of the Rock) in Jerusalem, the place where the Prophet Muhammad is thought to have ascended to heaven.
- One of the most revered sites for Hindus is the Mata Vaishno Devi Temple near the town of Katra, India, in the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Catholics venerate Saint Peter's Basilica located within Vatican City. It is their most-visited site. Another well-known Catholic

pilgrimage site is Lourdes in France, where Catholics celebrate the Virgin Mary's ascent to heaven.

By RICK KNOTH

 For Jews and Christians alike, the city of Jerusalem is a place of enormous importance. Each year millions of devoted followers of Judaism and Christianity visit this holy city. Followers of Judaism see Jerusalem as the biblical Zion and the eternal capital of Israel. For Christians, it is the site of the Last Supper, the crucifixion of Jesus, and the place where Christ was buried, resurrected, and ascended to heaven.

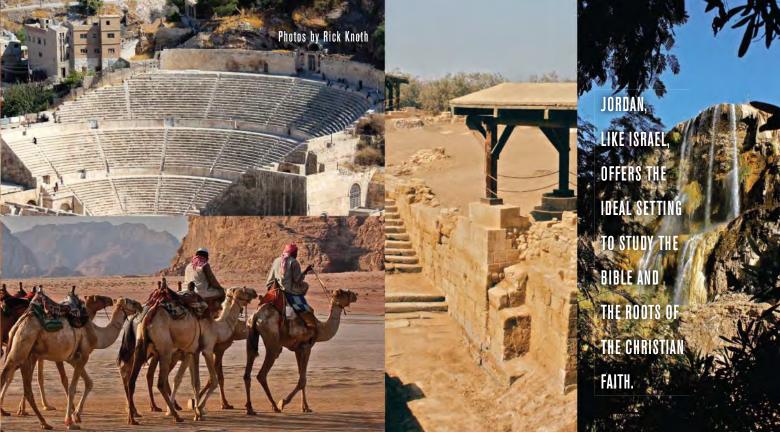
Many pilgrimages to the lands of the Bible begin and end in Israel. But another land of the Bible offers Christian sojourners a treasure trove of biblical antiquities of immense importance to their faith walk with God. No journey to the Holy Lands is complete without a stay over in the small, but serenely beautiful country of Jordan.

We can trace some of mankind's earliest inhabitants and settlements to this sacred piece of real estate. Jordan has been home to Nabataean tradesmen, Greek and Persian armies, Roman legionaries, and Christian Crusaders who fought tirelessly against Mohammedan tyranny.

In this land to the East of the Jordan River reside countless sites of biblical importance. Abraham, Moses, Saul, David, Elijah and Elisha, Ruth the Moabite, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and others are all intimately tied to the Jordanian landscape.

Jordan is where:

- Important events in the lives of Isaac's twin sons, Jacob and Esau, took place.
- Jacob and Laban made a covenant and set up a memorial at Mizpah.



- Jacob struggled with God and God changed his name to Israel.
- The Israelites' exodus journey from Egypt to the Promised Land passed through Jordan.
- King Mesha of Moab rebelled against Israel.
- Moses last spoke to God and saw the Promised Land.
- Joshua and Caleb crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land.
- Elijah was born and ascended to heaven in a fiery chariot.
- John the Baptist started and ended his ministry, and where Herod Antipas imprisoned and beheaded him.
- John the Baptist baptized Jesus.
- Jesus was anointed by God.
- Jesus called His first disciples.
- Jesus traveled and performed many miracles in the region of the Decapolis.
- Some of Christianity's earliest churches are found.

Jordan's rich biblical past echoes with clarity the stories of the Old and New Testaments. To discover Jordan is to enter into the three-dimensional world of the patriarchs, the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles.

Jordan, like Israel, offers the ideal setting to study the Bible and the roots of the Christian faith. In Jordan, you can visit such places as Amman, Anjara (the town where it is believed Jesus, His mother Mary, and His disciples rested in a cave), As Salt (tomb of Job and Jethro), Jerash (a well-preserved Greco-Roman city in the Decapolis), Tall Mar Elias (site of Elijah's ascension to heaven in a chariot), Bethany Beyond the Jordan (presumed baptismal site of Jesus), Madaba (site of the earliest religious map [mosaic] of the Holy Land and a town mentioned throughout the Old Testament), Machaerus (modern-day Mukawir and the site of Herod Antipas' palace and where he imprisoned and beheaded John the Baptist), Mount Nebo, Pella (Penuel), Mount Hor near Petra (site of Aaron's tomb), Umm Qays (Gadara), and others.

With its welcoming people, unsurpassed beauty, and multiple sacred sites, a visitor's pilgrimage to the Holy Lands is not complete until he or she has discovered Jordan.

Have you discovered Jordan? I did, and it changed my life. 📾



To view additional photos of Jordan, click on the link at enrichmentjournal.ag.org. To share or comment on this article, go to **ej.ag.org/jordan** or scan the QR code. Visit *Enrichment* journal on Facebook



**RICK KNOTH**, managing editor, *Enrichment* journal, Springfield, Missouri

## I'm Tired of Struggling Financially

## BY GABRIELE RIENAS

I am tired of struggling financially. Our salary meets our basic needs, but money is always tight. Today I had to tell my son that we can no longer afford to

have him participate in the sport he loves. We have been in the ministry since we married 12 years ago. We pastor a small church. The loving people in our congregation can only afford to pay us a small salary. I am the church administrative assistant and work full-time but receive only a part-time salary. I don't know how much longer I can stand the financial strain on our household.



Financial worries can be emotionally draining and relentlessly stressful. At the same time many people feel it necessary to hide their struggles out of shame. Thank



After a sustained time of scrimping and doing without while others seem to thrive, frustration can easily come. you for your honesty. I assume that you, like most people entering the ministry, have made peace with the likelihood you will not accumulate wealth. However, after a sustained time of scrimping and doing without while others seem to thrive, frustration can easily come.

You mentioned that your salary meets your basic needs, so I am going to respond from that perspective. (If you were lacking in basic needs such as groceries or shelter, I would suggest that you address those needs first by letting your congregation and your district know and by reaching out for assistance wherever it is available in your community.)

A major contributing factor to financial stress is not so much the dollars you earn as it is the reality that our culture strongly celebrates both accumulation and immediate gratification. This tide threatens to sweep us all along toward obtaining more stuff and better technology. Though we know cognitively that possessions do not bring happiness, it certainly appears like they do in commercials and advertisements. It takes a conscious effort to turn our eyes away from those things and to remind ourselves that true joy comes only from the One we serve who continually reminded us He will meet all of our needs.

There is no shame in living simply and frugally. At the same time, there is no shame in honestly admitting to others that you have financial limitations. If this is your reality, then speaking the truth about that will free you from the stress of hiding it. Do not allow the pressure of unspoken expectations to add to your worries. For example, it is common to socialize by going out for dinner or spending recreational time with friends. This presents a dilemma for our financial challenges if we make plans that exceed what we can afford. Find ways to matter-of-factly clarify where your limits lie or suggest less costly alternatives.

Beware of comparisons. Comparisons bring discontentment. Remain vigilant about this because it is so easy to fall into this trap. Observing what other people enjoy can so easily bring envy and longing because it seems like the object or the experience of their enjoyment would do so much to enrich our own lives. Remind yourself of what you already know: that no thing or recreational experience can ever bring lasting happiness, health, or contentment.

Again, financial stress lies not so much in what we have, but in what we believe about what we have. Attitude toward financial success plays the biggest factor in interpreting our situation. Prayerfully ask God to reveal false beliefs that bring discouragement like:

- we won't have enough.
- we can't keep up with others.
- we have less than everybody else.
- our children will be hurt by this.
- this is unfair.

Root out such thoughts by pursuing financial attitudes of thankfulness, self-discipline, faith, and generosity.

I suggest seeking some outside input regarding your financial situation. Find a reputable class on personal finance or a financial advisor who can put fresh eyes on your situation. He/ she could recommend the best way to catch up on those bills as well as find ways to bring you greater freedom. Some simple adjustments might bring relief fairly quickly.

Pray about creative ways to supplement your income. Revisit with your husband your decision to work at the church office and explore other options you might pursue. On the other hand, consider cutting back your hours at the church to match your part-time salary, allowing you to supplement your income in other ways. If creative ideas seem scarce, ask for outside advice from people whom you financially admire.

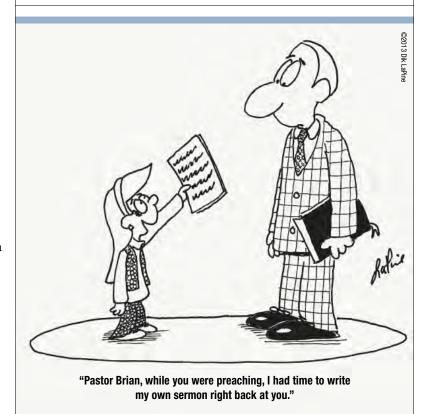
Remember that you are modeling your values to your child. No doubt he will be disappointed that he cannot join his team. However, he will Financial stress lies not so much in what we have, but in what we believe about what we have. not suffer any lifelong ill effects from missing sports unless you model for him a perspective that teaches him to be devastated by it. In other words, he will take his cue from you as to how consuming this disappointment is. If you matterof-factly acknowledge his feelings, while at the same time urging him to cooperate with the family in financial decisions, you will teach him lifelong lessons.

Finally, in no way do I want to sound cliché; however, the call to ministry carries an inherent dependence on faith in God's provision. While it requires a higher level of trust, it will also reap a deeper dependence on Him. In times of financial blessing or in times of financial challenge, we still serve the same God who has promised to take care of us. While we should strive to continually gain more wisdom in all things, including financial, we have no choice but to trust Him along the way. ■



**GABRIELE RIENAS**, a pastor's wife for 32 years and a professional counselor, lives in Beaverton, Oregon. She speaks at retreats, conferences, and events worldwide. Contact her at 503-705-9230. Visit her website: **www. gabrielerienas.com**.

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## Do You Recognize Your Family?



## BY SCOTT HAGAN

hen Jacob and Esau lost their empires and found their brotherhood, it not only released something inside them,

it released the people around them. It brought them out of the shadows. It defied gravity. Then Esau asked Jacob, " 'Who are these people with you?' " (Genesis 33:5). What an indictment. How do you not recognize your own family? Esau was an uncle to most of them.

Millions of Christians in America cannot locate each other because, like Esau, they cannot recognize each other. They are trapped and invisible behind leaders who are not experiencing the broader design of God's family as our Creator originally inspired. But an ideal and long-awaited shift is happening in America. It is happening because pastors, churches, and believers are finally awakening to the oddities of a masked and incomplete church.



Millions of Christians in America cannot locate each other because, like Esau, they cannot recognize each other. Many pastors are weary of the ethnic reconciliation message. But weary or not, there is a massive ethnic shift engulfing both rural and urban America. Building a strong multifaceted, multigenerational, and multiethnic church used to be a niche leadership initiative; this is no longer the case. Becoming a strong multiethnic church is now the core passion for many growing churches in America.

A thriving church in America today must have a strong sense about its multiethnic mission or it will remain largely unnoticed by its community. Those pastors and leaders who press in and develop strong healthy multiethnic ministries will be the leaders and influencers to this generation. Without it, they have a diminished voice.

There is an eerie similarity between the church we see today and what Nehemiah beheld as he surveyed the fallen walls of Jerusalem. Some 94 years after the Jews started rearranging the rubble, Nehemiah saw the stony disarray and said, "Enough is enough." King Cyrus granted Israel its freedom after seven decades of captivity so the Jews could return and rebuild. But as the years passed, there was no discernable improvement. The broken walls remained just that: broken. Over time those in Jerusalem forgot about God's dream and just accepted incompleteness as a way of life. That is, until Nehemiah arrived.

The Lord filled his mind with new paradigms that would produce new progress. Those broken walls that unnecessarily lay in waste for nearly a century can be compared to God's ever-present dream of His church walking in unity — a dream that is still, for all intents and purposes, broken and buried beneath the ruins of denial, laziness, and bias. There is progress, but God has called us to completeness, not mere progress. Breaking down barriers requires a miracle of the heart that inner awakening that changes a person's core notions and attitudes about himself/herself and about those who are culturally different. The miracle of the heart moves a person from the valleys of isolation and ignorance to the plateaus of openness, dialogue, and acceptance, and then finally upward toward the peaks of genuine joy, where he experiences ongoing side-by-side friendships with people who are different from him.

Peter and Cornelius were the first in the Early Church to experience this miracle of the heart (Acts 10:34–11:18). It had been over a decade since the Day of Pentecost, yet the church was still oddly exclusive. Having never captured the spirit of Jesus, the church was primarily about converting Jews and few others. But the Holy Spirit convicted these two men about their indifference to difference. A bond formed between two men who never would have chosen friendship because their paths were institutionally separated. For churches to break down the barriers and become noticed by their communities, pastors must model their own personal necessity for friendships with people outside their cultural scheme. Otherwise, their congregations will see their attempts as mere token experiments to market their struggling churches.

Unless we allow the Holy Spirit to perform a personal miracle of love in our hearts, then the church will pull back toward predictable safety that includes only people like themselves. Acts 11:19 is a sad commentary on the Early Church. "Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled ... spreading the word only among Jews."

Many churches are doing the same, convinced they are best equipped to reach only people like them. But thankfully, the next verse declares, "Some of them, however, ... began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good People in our churches feel dismissed from the journey when they see their own leader lacking a personal passion for reconciliation. news about the Lord Jesus" (Acts 11:20). Inside the context of the persecuted church, the idea of the invisible church is theologically compelling. In every other context, it is an offense. Change begins with taking notice of the world directly in front of you and seeing people as Christ saw them. Here are three effective ways to shift your atmosphere at the local level.

1. It begins with celebration, not toleration. Most people can immediately tell when we are tolerating them. Heartfelt enthusiasm for people and their stories goes a long way when it comes to modeling the love of Jesus. Discrimination is denying someone the right to have. Segregation is denying someone the right to belong. Jesus didn't die so we could have things; He died so we could belong. Communicating that sense of belonging is the responsibility of pastors and the church.

2. Make it happen in a house. Until we begin breaking bread with people who are different from us in our homes, we will not have reconciliatory breakthrough. Your home is your sanctuary far more than your church. Having someone in your home is worth more than a hundred meals at a restaurant.

3. Say, "Help me understand." Passion flows like gravity. People in our churches feel dismissed from the journey when they see their own leader lacking a personal passion for reconciliation. We each need solid and safe relationships where we can ask someone from a different background to help us understand. The problem with the church is that everybody is an expert and no one is a learner. But three simple words can change our lives and communities: "Help me understand."

America is a broken nation. That brokenness is low hanging fruit spiritually. The hope for a sweeping infusion of Christ is everywhere. The sea change in our nation is not political, but prophetic. Nothing has caught the Holy Spirit off guard. Nations gathered at the doorstep of the Upper Room during the Feast of Pentecost by God's grand design. Once again the church is poised. The world is poised. May God grant by His Spirit a visitation between us once more.



**SCOTT HAGAN** is senior pastor Real Life Church of the Assemblies of God, Sacramento, California.

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## STAYING CONNECTED



## BY JUSTIN LATHROP

ocial media became popular in the last decade because of its ability to connect us with others. As Facebook, Twitter, and blogs explode, we marvel at the way we can catch up on old high school friends, keep up with our favorite families who moved from

one side of the country to the other, or missionaries who live on the other side of the world.

But something is shifting. Not overnight, but slowly social media is becoming less and less social. It is becoming less about connecting with others and more about promoting ourselves.

It's easy to let social media play into our sin tendency of assuming the world revolves around us. If it weren't social media, something else would draw out our narcissism and steal us from being in lifegiving relationships with others.



How do we use social media without letting it use us?

For Adam and Eve, it was the fruit of a forbidden tree. For us it is many things, social media not excluded.

Social media can be a valuable tool to keep us connected, to share the gospel, to be honest with one another about who we are. So how do we use social media without letting it use us? I have a couple of ideas.

## SHARE YOUR PLATFORM

Thanks to social media, most of us have personal platforms, even those who don't blog. Our Facebook page is our personal platform, as well as our Twitter and Instagram feed. While there is tremendous value in these spaces, we increase their value when we share them.

If you are a blogger, that might look like inviting others to share their wisdom and stories in your space. The benefit to you is undeniable. Not only does it open space for you to consistently produce more quality content, it also diversifies your readership and the perspective of the message being shared.

Sharing space can also be as simple as tweeting or sharing on Facebook the best things from others you have read on the Internet.

## TURN ONLINE RELATIONSHIPS INTO REAL-LIFE RELATIONSHIPS

Sometimes we get lost in the avatars. I have watched heated conversation unfold on someone's Facebook wall, or in the comments of his or her blog, and I can't help but think, *These people would never talk to each other this way if they were in person.* While social media gives us a strange sense of anonymity, remember there are faces behind the avatars, and being anonymous and being social do not mix.

One way to combat this tendency to see people as avatars is to connect *in real life* with people we meet online. Obviously, it's important to take safety precautions, but I have heard stories of people who found church communities, deep friendship, and even marriage because they reached out to someone on Twitter.

## **GIVE AS MUCH AS YOU RECEIVE**

Honestly assess what you are giving, and what you are receiving online. Healthy relationships are not imbalanced. In fact, imbalanced relationships rarely continue for long. Are you constantly posting pictures online,

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hoping for affirmation about your beautiful family, house, or new purchases? How often are you engaging with others, commenting on their photos, sharing what they write, or sharing something useful or inspiring with them?

If you have a big platform, have you thought about how you can leverage that community to do something meaningful? It's not bad to want more traffic to your site, or more followers or more "likes" on Facebook — especially if you believe in the message you are sharing. But have you thought about a way to gather that community around an even bigger objective?

One example is Jon Acuff. He has worked hard to develop his platform, but not just for the sake of the platform. He now uses it to make a difference in the lives of kids in India and Africa through his organization called Hope Mob. What are the end goals of your social media platform — big or small? Are your goals outward reaching or inward focused?

## TAKE A BREAK FROM WATCHING STATS

It's not bad to check your statistics or desire them to grow. A pastor may pray for more people to come to his or her church on a Sunday morning. Although this desire can be distorted, at its core it reflects the pastor's desire for more people to hear the gospel and to come to Jesus.

Checking statistics can be addicting, however. Progress may appear not up to standard the more a person looks at them, bringing on feelings of insecurity. The more insecure people feel, the more they want to look at the statistics. It is a vicious cycle.

There may come a time where it's good to take a break (for a day, a week, or longer) from checking your stats. Rather than becoming obsessed with getting more people to your website, ask yourself: *How am I serving* the people already coming?

## ASK YOURSELF: HOW AM I ADDING VALUE?

I love the movie, *Field of Dreams*. "If you build it, they will come." The same thing is true with people to your platform. If you add tangible value to their lives, they will come.

The irony is that this outward focus of social media is actually more inwardly

Rather than becoming obsessed with getting more people to your website, ask yourself: *How am I serving the people already coming?*  fulfilling. The catch-22 of narcissism is the more self-focused you become, the less selffulfilled you feel, which leads you to be even more self-focused and insecure than you were in the first place. End the cycle now. The apostle Paul commissioned the Philippians to consider others more important than themselves.

When you stop being social, you lose what this new media is all about. When you trade "we" behaviors for "me" behaviors, you forfeit an opportunity to make a real difference in the world. Worse, you abandon an opportunity to be the person God made you to be, made in His image, a person who thrives when in relationship with others, giving of oneself for the benefit of the whole.



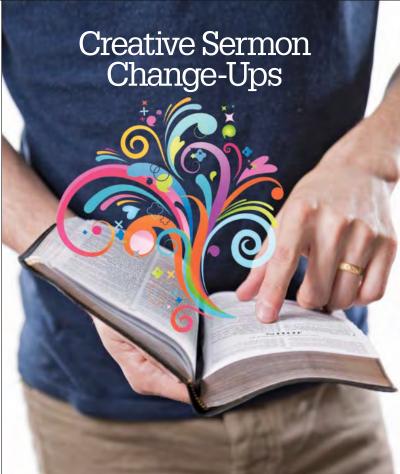
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with the church finance committee."

## ON PREACHING



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## BY DOUG GREEN

he Bible is a compelling book. More good news: if you are preaching through *this* Bible week after week, you ought to be a compelling preacher. Best news: if this is

true, God's Word ought to come alive in your congregation, causing them in the pew to fall in love with what He says.

That's right, biblical preaching *can be ...* well ... exciting.

So, why does expository preaching often get a bad reputation, frequently associated with monotone lectures about ancient civilizations and antiquated languages? Could it be the deficiency of the presentation, not the content? Are there ways to spice up your



Preaching that exposes the biblical idea of the text ought to be compelling and lifechanging. preaching and keep your congregation intrigued — even though they listen to you preach week after week?

Let me use a baseball metaphor and call these templates "change-up pitches." These sermon templates give some new creative ways to say the same things, mixing up your predictable "fast ball" with freshness.

So, once you establish the content of a biblical text, there are thousands of — actually infinite — ways you can communicate it to your audience. You will not exhaust God's creative power in you nor will you run out of things to say about His imaginative Word. Expository preaching can only be boring because the preacher has sidelined creativity. However, preaching that exposes the biblical idea of the text, at its best, ought to be compelling and life-changing. It should be anything but boring.

Here are some creative sermon forms. Try them soon:

**First-Person Narrative (biblical character).** Consider saying the same things you would say as the preacher, but through the voice of another character. Rather than the anticipated sermon on Psalm 23, preach the sermon as young David, the original author. Or, be a person from the church in Rome and tell your congregation about an important letter that just arrived from the apostle Paul.

Possibilities are endless: tell the story of Goliath from the giant's point of view; the Parable of the Prodigal Son from the servant's point of view; the crucifixion of Christ from the point of view of a person in Herod's mob. Make God's Word come alive. Your church will forgive you if you are not an accomplished thespian. In fact, they will be glad you care enough to be creative in your preaching.

**First-Person Narrative (modern character).** Preach the sermon through the eyes and experience of a modern person. Approach and speak about the text as a college student, a kid, an elderly man, an executive, or a gang member.

I once did a Christmas message about the role of the shepherds from the perspective of a night custodian, complete with mop and bucket. As I was "watching over my floors by night," I verbally pondered what it must have been like to have my nocturnal work interrupted by the gift of heavenly beings announcing the birth of Christ. I presented the points in my sermon about Luke 2:8–20 while holding a mop.

Interview. If you are preaching through Romans 4 and Paul is referencing the story of Abraham, take on the role of Paul and interview another person in your church who will take on the role of Abraham. Sit at a table and break some Jewish bread while walking through the main points of this chapter. Turn Paul's propositional points into questions Abraham can answer with the depth of his story from Genesis.

Once I recruited another preacher, Carl, to be Simeon, as told in Luke 2:21–40. I put him in a wheelchair and visited him at the nursing home. I took the role of a newspaper reporter trying to find out what it must have been like to see the baby in the temple.

**Interaction.** I preached through the Book of Revelation. In chapter 4 (a description of heavenly worship), I used various forms of media (music, video, responsive reading, instrumental solo, etc.) to preach the sermon. Earlier I coordinated with the musicians to turn the entire service into the sermon — both Word and music (i.e., the sounds of heaven). We started with church housekeeping issues and explained the rest of the service (all but those first 7 to 8 minutes) would be the sermon. Rather than just talk about what happens around the throne of God, we did it. Experientially. We worshipped like they worship in heaven. Some say it was their favorite sermon ever.

Video Shoot. Preach off-site earlier in the week in a setting that would add context to your message. Record it on video and show it in lieu of your typical sermon. For example, record your sermon at a mortuary or a cemetery if your text is from 1 Corinthians 15. Or, go to a vineyard if you are preaching John 15:1–17. Or, you might go to the local high school stadium if you are preaching Hebrews 12:1–3.

Today's audiences are accustomed to receiving important information from video screens; they will appreciate the hard work you put into your message earlier in the week. Here is an ongoing benefit: if your setting is a local landmark, the message will be reinforced every time a member of your congregation sees it.

**Children's Sermon/Object Lesson**. Bring the kids into the adult service and have them sit on the floor near the pulpit. Give a children's sermon complete with an object



Once you establish the content of a biblical text, there are infinite ways you can communicate it to your audience. lesson. Ever notice how well the adults pay attention when you do this? If you are really brave, turn the whole sermon into an object lesson and see it stick.

**Testimony.** Illustrate your sermon points with live testimonies from your congregation.

**Tag-Team.** Use more than one preacher, taking turns with each new point.

**Sensory.** Employ smell, taste, and touch alongside the typical sight and sound.

Your faithfulness to preach through a book of the Bible week after week is the bedrock of employing creativity. Your marriage as pastor and congregation gives you license to mix it up with creativity — it's a romance needing a spark every so often. If you are reticent to take the dive and devote an entire sermon to one of these creative templates, then devote a section of your sermon and grow your confidence.

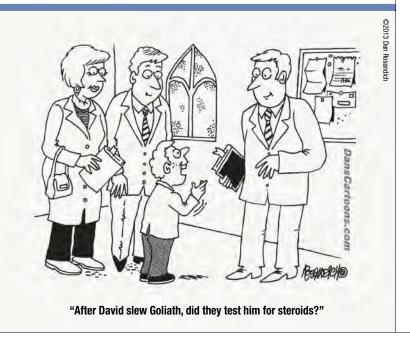
However you do it, pray about it, commit it to the Lord, and be amazed by how much favor He gives to those who love to find new ways to say old truths about *His heart* for the people *He loves*.

After all, He is a *compelling* God.



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

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## **Reading Your Board's Body Language**





issues for this monthly ministry board meeting. But. the "caution light" between your ears began to rapidly

blink as soon as the meeting started. Have you had this experience?

Did you say to yourself, Forget about it ... you have had a hard day ... don't get into the victim role ... you are imagining problems that do not exist ... get a grip and move on?

## BODY LANGUAGE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

As a professional, you openly admit those who share leadership with you do not always communicate with just words. Their demeanor, mood, and even how they have decided to sit at the table will broadcast a barrage of messages.

The next time you and your board members slide into those subtle leather, overstuffed, swiveling chairs to begin your next meeting, watch and listen for the real message — the message communicated without the use of

Avoidance normallv confuses and exacerbates a negative message into an extraordinary problem in the ministry.

verbs, gerunds, direct objects, or prepositions,

Julius Fast, author of Body Language, reminds us that we only transmit seven percent of all face-to-face communication through words. Thirty-seven percent of a verbal conversation is tone of voice and the remaining 56 percent is facial expression.

So, the body of Christ, the Church, the ecclesia, conducts most of its internal conversations ... nonverbally.

## WHEN BOARD MEMBERS SCREAM WITHOUT MOVING THEIR LIPS

It is Wednesday evening, the appointed time for the board of spiritual leaders in your ministry to make intelligent and spiritually intuitive decisions. You, the ranking spiritual leader, offer an emotionally warm verbal greeting in the first few seconds and then you invite Divinity to join your deliberations.

When eyelids pop into the open position, you begin to hear from everyone in the room. You must admit that the communication process has instantaneously moved to the "on" position ... without anyone, including you, articulating one syllable.

Body language, or the science called kinesics, will silently start to transmit messages like, "Watch out, he is very unhappy about something, ... or everything, ... again."

How about, "Better keep this meeting short; these people obviously missed the teaching that love, joy, peace, and patience are fruits of the Spirit."

Or, "Wow! Everyone is positive tonight ... hey, this is the meeting to float the idea of an additional staff position."

When your board members start sending and receiving messages across the polished conference table, kinesics, or body language, will become the predominant communication channel. We all know the real message is in eyes rolling to the ceiling when someone makes a suggestion, the hand slowly morphing into a fist at the mention of someone's name, or a mouth easily turning up at the corners when someone passes around a photo of a 2-week-old baby.

## THE GIFT OF INTERPRETATION

When the church called you to this place of ministry, you arrived with an amazing, perfected gift.

Over your lifetime, culture-specific memories have imprinted your mind. In nanoseconds

you pull these memories out of storage vaults between your ears, and they will define what you know is the real message.

Rose Rosetree, in her book, *The New Power of Face Reading*, reminds us the physicality of our bodies has already taught us how to judge the nonverbal messages that bombard our daily schedule.

For instance, if someone in the middle of a heated conversation crosses his arms over his chest, the message could be, "I do not like what I am hearing right now and I am protecting myself." If you notice in one of your board meetings someone has just finished speaking and then immediately begins to rub behind her ears, she may be saying, "I do not think they liked what I just said." And, if someone covers his mouth following a statement you have just made, the message may be, "He cannot be serious ... we are supposed to believe that."

This gift of interpretation also applies to how we use space between us and those we serve. Specifically, be careful about hugging someone in a public place who may be uncomfortable with this invasion of personal space. If you are sitting next to someone on the same pew or sofa, leave 12 to 16 inches between you and the other person. This space will normally create a comfort zone between you and the other person.

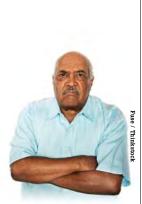
And, when providing pastoral care with the door closed, always sit in a separate chair apart from the parishioner and slightly turn your chair so the two of you are not seated directly in front of each other, which usually communicates confrontation.

## THE FINAL TEST FOR READING YOUR BOARD'S BODY LANGUAGE

You may have excelled at recognizing body language messages in your ministry board meetings and your one-on-one conversations with these important leaders. And, your gifts of accurately interpreting these messages may have been insightful and precise. But, there is no value understanding body-language messaging unless you reflect back to your board what you have just observed and how this knowledge can make the board more effective.

You have three choices.

First, you can *ignore* the messages you have received. Avoidance is an important egodefense skill learned throughout ministry that often whispers, "If you do not acknowledge



There is no value understanding body-language messaging unless you reflect back to your board what you have just observed and how this knowledge can make the board more effective.

this unpleasant message you have just received, time ... and our Lord will take care of this."

I will never deny the possibility of divine intervention. At the same time, avoidance normally confuses and exacerbates a negative message into an extraordinary problem in the ministry. Silence has the potential to nourish a problem into permanent, pervasive distortion that will continually create havoc in a board's deliberations.

Second, you can *dump gallons of hyperspiritual verbiage* as a response to unpleasant body-language messages. The divine diatribe may sound like this, "If what I am hearing and watching around this table tonight is supposed to be the work of anointed, Spiritfilled leaders, then we need to get on our knees and pray ourselves into becoming God's people again."

Allocating some serious knee-time to become God's people is always a good use of a board's time. But notice the language and the tone of hyper-spiritual words: someone who perceives himself to be the parent and not the pastor normally speaks these words. The result of this statement is guilt, not renewal.

Finally, if you are leading a board that has been liberally sending negative body language messages, try *assertive questioning followed by a positive conclusion.* 

Your intervention will sound like this, "As I have been observing us tonight, I sense we are presently uncomfortable creating this new staff position. Tell me, am I reading the board accurately?"

Notice this final question allows the board to navigate through a variety of options. More important, you, the spiritual leader, have been actively observing which elided into verbal interpretations and ended up with concluding.

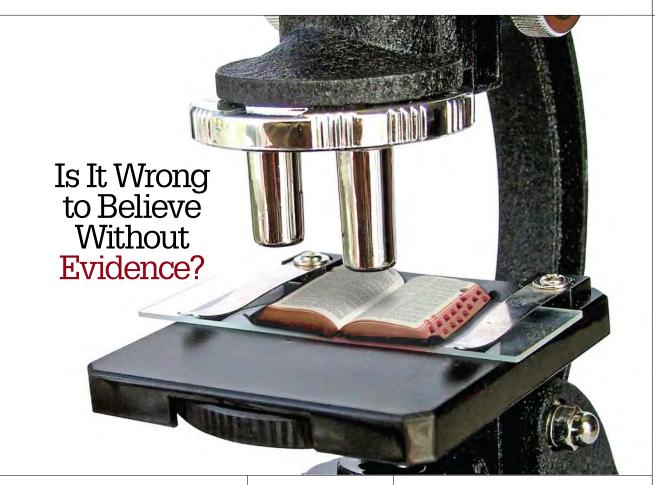
Whatever observations (face-reading, tone of voice, silence, physical distance) you cite, you need to follow up with clear leadership direction. Remember, your board is often screaming messages to you ... without moving their lips.



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## DEALING WITH DOUBTERS



## BY PAUL COPAN

he late Christopher Hitchens — one of the infamous "new atheists" — made this claim: "That which can be asserted without evidence, can be dismissed without evidence." If you have had conversations

with atheists about belief in God, this view known as "strong evidentialism" — probably sounds familiar. In fact, if you hang around skeptics and freethinkers long enough, chances are you will hear about William K. Clifford's essay, "The Ethics of Belief." In it, he claims: "It is wrong, always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence."<sup>1</sup>

Clifford gives the example of a shipowner who contemplates whether his rickety ship is sufficiently seaworthy to transport passengers across the ocean. He does not want to pay the

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If you hang around skeptics and freethinkers long enough, you will hear about William K. Clifford's essay, "The Ethics of Belief." cost of repairs or delay the voyage. So the owner suppresses these concerns and works up a "sincere and comfortable conviction" that the ship would arrive safely at its destination. He sells tickets to the passengers and bids them bon voyage. The ship tragically sinks, sending all those on board to their watery grave — and the shipowner quietly collects the insurance money, because a ship going down in mid-ocean has no tales to tell. Clifford (who himself had experienced a shipwreck) asserts that the shipowner has the passengers' blood on his hands because of his negligence. He failed to investigate the evidence for the vessel's seaworthiness and could have averted this disaster by delaying the journey to make the necessary repairs. The lesson? All such decisions based on insufficient evidence are wrong — "always, everywhere, and for anyone."

What supporting reasons does Clifford give for his claim? Well, for starters, if we do not follow his advice, we will be easily duped like those who check the dictionary after someone tells him that the word *gullible* is not in

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it. Another reason he gives is that society will sink back into savagery because people are blindly following superstitions and traditions instead of reason and evidence.

How should we respond to Clifford and Hitchens? I will look first at some problems with their demand for evidence at every turn. Then I will try to put the legitimate concern for evidence into proper perspective.

## PROBLEMS WITH INSISTING ON EVIDENCE FOR EVERY CLAIM

In my summer 2013 column,<sup>2</sup> I mentioned that atheists, theists, and ornery agnostics make a claim to *know* something. The atheist claims to know God does not exist; the theist claims He does; and the ornery agnostic says, "I don't know if God exists — and you can't know either." Yet all of these are knowledge claims, and stand in need of justification or support in the marketplace of ideas. The atheist should not think he or she is off the hook by saying, "God does not exist" end of story. How does he *know* that God does not exist? What are his specific reasons? The atheist might say, "The arguments for God's existence do not work." Well, which ones? Maybe the arguments he has heard really are not all that good, and perhaps there are better ones to consider. And what level of proof is he insisting on? Is he looking for mathematical certainty or is he content with strong, plausible reasons? Furthermore, even if it turns out that the arguments for God's existence do not "work" (though there's plenty of good reason to reject this notion),<sup>3</sup> this still would not show that God does not exist. After all. it is logically possible that God exists without our being able to produce good reasons. So maybe the atheist needs to rethink his or her rejection of God.

Are we saying that reasons and evidence are not important, that we never need it? Not at all. What Galileo saw through his telescope gave empirical support — evidence — for Copernicus' heliocentric theory. Science is an attempted objective study of the natural world, so scientists rightly seek empirical evidence — evidence that fellow-scientists can test and verify — to help explain what is going on in nature. Yes, evidence has its place. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul gives evidence for the bodily resurrection of Jesus, including a witness list of persons who readers could consult to confirm they saw Jesus alive after His death.

Evidence has its place. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul gives evidence for the bodily resurrection of Jesus. including a witness list of persons who readers could consult to confirm they saw Jesus alive after His death.

And Jesus regularly performed signs so people will believe (John 20:30,31). The question is, Do *all* claims need evidence?

Let's go back to Clifford's (and Hitchens') claim about the necessity of evidence for *any* claim we make. The problem is not with evidence; it's with the notion that we *need to require* evidence for *every* belief. Let's look at four key problems.

The first is the *pragmatism problem*. Clifford's own statement is only a *pragmatic* one — that is, the statement is not necessarily true at all. He tells us that, if we do not follow his advice, there will be negative consequences: we will sink back into savagery. But this is *not evidence* for the *truth* of Clifford's belief. We are only told that bad things will happen to us and to society if we do not believe based on evidence. Not being very democratic in his politics, Plato advocated a "noble lie" by which a ruler could control people. The ruler's belief is false; but, hey, people will fall into line. Right? This illustrates how results do not determine the truth of a belief.<sup>4</sup>

Second is the *regress problem*. Let's say you believe the earth is round. Hitchens would insist that a person can answer the question: "What is the evidence for that belief?" You might offer various evidences based on personal observations — how ships disappear on the watery horizon without falling off the earth or how you have crisscrossed the globe many times; you might appeal to pictures of the earth taken by astronauts or to the geometry of lunar eclipses. Is that the end of the discussion? No. All along the way you are making claims or assumptions that these evidences are reliable. If you follow Hitchens and Clifford to the letter, you will need not only evidence to support Claim A ("The earth is round") with evidence — call it Claim B ("The pictures taken from space show a round earth"). You would need evidence for Claim B — call it Claim C ("The pictures are accurate and were not doctored or photoshopped"). But even with these evidences upon evidences, you are still making other assumptions — that your senses are reliable and that the world isn't an illusion. Do those assumptions need evidence as well? We could go on offering evidence for evidence for evidence, and we would never be able to know anything since there is always more supporting evidence to consider. The demand for evidence for every claim leads to a vicious infinite regress,

making knowledge impossible.

Third is the *incoherence problem*. What is the evidence for the belief that all beliefs require evidence? In fact, in Clifford's own essay, he *never gives evidence* for his own position. He only tells us that bad things will happen. Clifford's belief that every belief requires evidence is self-referentially incoherent. That is, by referring to itself, the claim becomes incoherent. What evidence can you give that all beliefs require evidence? This is like saying, "If you cannot prove something scientifically, you cannot know it." This prompts us to ask: "How do you *know* this? How can you *scientifically prove* that all beliefs must be *scientifically provable*?"

Likewise, the philosopher René Descartes (1596–1650) insisted that knowledge required belief based on what is *self-evident* (e.g., "I have a headache"), *incorrigible* (i.e., it can't be doubted), and *evident to the senses* (e.g., seeing the book you are holding in your hands). The problem with his criteria for belief is that it is *not* self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses. That is, the criteria cannot live up to their own standards.

This does not mean that if I do not have evidence for my beliefs, they are therefore irrational. My memory belief that I had oatmeal and raisins for breakfast last week is quite rational. But it certainly is not self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses. Why think that I need evidence to know what I had for breakfast last week?

Fourth is the *principled-disagreement problem*. What happens when we have honest, principled, reasonable people who may disagree about certain beliefs? What if they come down on opposite sides of the debate regarding, say, capital punishment? Both sides may give fairly respectable reasons for holding to one viewpoint over another. In the face of this disagreement, what is to be done? Do we insist that persons on either side are somehow irrational or even immoral? That's hard to see. Clifford's principle does not really help us very much on such points.

## PUTTING EVIDENCE INTO PERSPECTIVE

Evidence is important and valuable. When someone says, "Green Martians exist," we would want to know on what evidence he is asserting this. But we recognize that What evidence can you give that all beliefs require evidence? This is like saying, "If you cannot prove something scientifically, you cannot know it." This prompts us to ask: "How do you know this? How can you scientifically prove that all beliefs must be scientifically provable?"



insisting on evidence has its limits. So we should try to understand beliefs and evidence correctly. Consider the following points.

First, we should understand *properly basic beliefs*. These are beliefs that arise out of our experience and we have no reason to doubt them. And we do not need further evidence for them. They are fundamental and basic, and to ask for more evidence becomes just plain silly. For example, I have fairly firm memory beliefs from childhood — memories that, for my six siblings, have slipped through the sieve of time. But if I were to try to offer evidence for them beyond my mere memory, I do not know how I would do this. Yes, you could doubt what I say and it's logically possible I could be wrong, but many of these memories are so clear as if they happened last year or last month. We typically take such beliefs for granted without evidence.

The Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga argued in his book *God and Other Minds* that we take for granted that other minds exist — without evidence.<sup>5</sup> This is part of our fundamental experience in everyday life. We assume other minds exist in our daily interactions — a basic belief beyond which we cannot go to offer any more basic evidence. It is like knowing I presently have a headache or that I am now typing on my laptop computer. To deny something so basic would call into question my basic mental function.

Second, we should remember that we commonly assume properly functioning minds without evidence. Whether one is a serious skeptic or a rigid demander of evidence, in each case that person will take for granted that his mind is functioning correctly. He believes — without needing evidence that he can trust his mind, that he is not being systematically deceived. We believe or trust without evidence that our minds are generally reliable.

Third, we believe much based on authority, and we would know precious little if we had to check out the claims of recognized authorities. We take many of our beliefs — whether from parents or the scientific community or television documentaries — on authority without doing further checking of the evidence. One very practical reason for this is that we do not have the time to check out all the claims we believe. We trust the authority of others checking out the evidence directly: we believe historians are telling us the truth that Abraham Lincoln was assassinated; we trust scientists who tell us the universe is expanding or that certain microscopic germs are responsible for a particular disease; we do not doubt anthropology or religion textbooks when they tell us that the inhabitants of the Maldive Islands are Muslims. If we had to investigate or seek evidence ourselves for all the things we read in books or see on the Internet, we would not know a whole lot. Clifford's demand seems quite unreasonable.

Fourth, many atheists and skeptics use a double standard when insisting on evidence for religious truth-claims but seem to have little evidence-based support for their own particular philosophical perspectives — or just whatever they may claim to know.<sup>6</sup> Many are quick to insist on virtual 100 percent certainty about others' beliefs, but they allow their own beliefs a lot of wiggle room. After all, do we not believe many things on the basis of the authority of others? It is very reasonable to follow a credible authority in the area of science or linguistics or ancient history. We often take these authorities as reasonable and find little to dispute because we simply cannot become experts in every arena of knowledge.

Fifth, belief in God can be properly basic, without needing further evidence to be rational. Alvin Plantinga has argued that belief in God is just like belief that the universe is more than 15 minutes old or belief that other minds exist. That is, we can rationally believe all of these things without evidence. If we are designed to know and love God, then belief in God would be properly basic and rational. For example, I may come to believe in God because I have an overwhelming sense of God's presence or of God's forgiveness and grace. These beliefs arise from my own experience, and I have no reason to deny them — or think these are inadequate without supporting evidence.

Of course, if we are in public debate or conversations with non-Christians, we should be prepared to respond to basic objections to the Christian faith as well as defend the Christian faith in the arena of ideas. We should be prepared to give reasons for the hope that lies within us (1 Peter 3:15) — to tell others why we are Christians rather than Hindus, Muslims, or Buddhists. But, contrary to Clifford and Hitchens, this does not mean that evidence is required for every belief we have. ■ Many atheists and skeptics are quick to insist on virtual 100 percent certainty about others' beliefs, but they allow their own beliefs a lot of wiggle room.

#### Notes

- W.K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief," *Contemporary Review* 29 (Dec. 1876-May 1877). This is available at http://www.uta. edu/philosophy/faculty/burgess-jackson/Clifford.pdf. Accessed December 5, 2012.
- Paul Copan, "Atheism and the Burden of Proof" Enrichment journal 18, no. 3, 2013. www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org/201303/ 201303\_026\_atheists.cfm.
- 3. For a sophisticated treatment of arguments for God's existence, see William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009). For a more accessible treatment, see three edited volumes by Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, published by B&H Academic: *Passionate Conviction; Contending With Christianity's Critics*; and *Come Let Us Reason.*
- 4. Some comments in this essay are taken from Jay Wood, *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1998), 107-8; Peter van Inwagen, "It Is Wrong, Always, Everywhere, and for Anyone, To Believe Anything Upon Insufficient Evidence." Available at URL: http://comp.uark. edu/~senor/wrong.html. Accessed December 5, 2012.
- Alvin Plantinga, God and Other Minds (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967).
- Peter van Inwagen, "Quam Dilecta," in Thomas V. Morris, ed., God and the Philosophers: The Reconciliation of Faith and Reason (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 46.



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## IN CONTEXT



BY MARC TURNAGE

n A.D. 6, at the request of the Jewish people, the Romans removed Herod Archelaus, the son of Herod the Great, as ethnarch of Samaria, Judea, and Idumea. At the same time, Rome reorganized Judea as a Roman province with Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast as its headquarters. A Roman prefect, under the jurisdiction of the governor of Syria, presided over Judea.



From A.D. 26–36, Pontius Pilate was the Roman prefect who resided at Caesarea.

In 1961, while excavating the theater of Caesarea, excavators discovered an inscription of a temple to the Roman emperor Tiberius dedicated by Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect of Judea (praefectus Iudaeae).<sup>1</sup>

The Latin inscription reads: [Dis Augusti]s Tiberieum [...Po]ntius Pilatus [praef]ectus Iuda[ea]e [fecit, d]e[dicavit] Tiberium Pontius Pilate Prefect of Judaea [..?..has given] This inscription provides a significant con-

tribution to our understanding of Pilate's character and his seminal role in Jesus' crucifixion (cf. Tacitus, *Annales* XV, 44:2,3).

Pilate's tenure as prefect overlapped with the reign of the Emperor Tiberius. This makes his dedication of the temple to Tiberius, while the emperor was still alive, exceptional. Traditionally people deified Roman emperors after their deaths. In the provinces, local, non-Roman rulers could build temples and sanctuaries to a living emperor as a sign of their devotion and loyalty. For example, Herod the Great built three temples within his kingdom to his patron Caesar Augustus, one of which he erected in Caesarea. The Pilate inscription discovered in Caesarea identifies Pilate as the only known Roman official to build a temple to a living emperor.

Roman emperors reacted differently to the cult of emperor worship; Augustus permitted it within the provinces (e.g., Judea), but did not allow it in Rome. Tiberius, however, did not appreciate the worship of himself. According to the Roman historian Suetonius (*Tiberius*, chapter 26), Tiberius forbade people to dedicate temples to himself. Tiberius would have strongly disapproved of Pilate building a "Tiberium" in Caesarea, especially since Pilate was a Roman official.

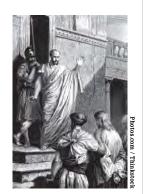
Pilate's dedication of a temple to the living Emperor Tiberius displayed an exaggerated devotion that betrays a certain psychological weakness in Pilate. The ancient historical accounts of Pilate's rule as prefect of Judea attest to other instances of Pilate's exaggerated devotion to the emperor. The firstcentury Jewish historian Philo of Alexandria described Pilate as "a man of an inflexible, stubborn, and cruel disposition" (*Embassy to Gaius* 38:301). Pilate sought to display his strength by being brutal; yet, because of his weakness, others could pressure him to acquiesce and abandon his plans.

Ancient historians also recount Pilate's strong antagonistic feelings toward the Jewish people and Judaism. The coins Pilate minted attest that these ancient historians did not exaggerate their accounts. Most Roman governors were careful not to offend Jewish religious sensitivities when they minted coins. They refrained from stamping their coins with figures of men or animals or of pagan objects connected with pagan cults. Pilate, however, minted coins that bore pagan symbols, like an augur's staff and other sacred pagan vessels. Thus, he sought opportunity to provoke his Jewish subjects by specifically treading on their religious feelings.

Josephus recounts the first serious clash between Pilate and the Jewish masses. Pilate brought military standards bearing the image of the emperor into Jerusalem — an act subverting the Jewish practice forbidding the making of images (*Ant.* 18:55–59). According to Josephus, prior Roman prefects, when entering Jerusalem, used standards that did not have the image of the emperor out of sensitivity for Jewish religious feelings.

In response to Pilate's actions, a large crowd of Jews assembled before him in Caesarea beseeching him to remove the standards. Initially, Pilate refused because to do so would have been an outrage to the emperor; but when he saw that the Jews were willing to die rather than have their faith profaned, he eventually acquiesced and moved the images from Jerusalem back to Caesarea.

On another occasion, Pilate took money from the temple treasury to finance the building of an aqueduct to bring water to Jerusalem (Josephus, Ant. 18:60-62; War 1:175-177). This was an act of sacrilege even from the Roman point of view since the temple tax was untouchable according to law. Tens of thousands of Jews gathered to protest his action. Pilate, however, ordered Roman soldiers to dress in common garb and mix with the crowd. Equipped with clubs, at Pilate's signal, the plain-clothed soldiers struck against the crowd. The result was that many of the unarmed members of the Jewish crowd died. In this instance, Pilate compensated for his character weakness by exercising extreme cruelty and brutality.



The image of Pilate that emerges from the ancient writers, his coins, and the dedicatory inscription from Caesarea present a picture congruent with his actions in Jesus' crucifixion recounted in the Gospels.

Philo of Alexandria records another conflict between Pilate and the Jews (Philo, *Embassy* to Gaius 38:299–305). Pilate dedicated shields gilded with gold to the Emperor Tiberius in Herod's palace in Jerusalem. Again, the Jewish people sent a delegation, including Herod's four sons, to Pilate imploring him to remove the shields from Jerusalem. Pilate, because of his "self-will and relentlessness," refused the Jewish delegation's request. The Jews, however, threatened to make an appeal to Caesar. This threat put Pilate "in a difficult position; for he had neither the courage to take down what he had once set up, nor the desire to do anything which would please his subjects" (Embassy to Gaius 38:303). Pilate was particularly concerned that the Jews would make known his conduct as prefect namely "the briberies, the violence, the robberies, the tortures and wanton injuries, the executions without trial constantly repeated (cf. his actions against Jesus), the ceaseless and supremely grievous cruelty" (Embassy to Gaius 38:302). Seizing on the precariousness of Pilate's situation, the Jewish delegation "wrote a letter to Tiberius pleading their case as forcibly as they could" (*Embassy to Gaius* 38:306). According to Philo, Tiberius responded forcefully, rebuking Pilate and ordering him to move the shields to Caesarea, to be dedicated in the temple of Augustus.

The image of Pilate that emerges from the ancient writers, his coins, and the dedicatory inscription from Caesarea present a picture congruent with his actions in Jesus' crucifixion recounted in the Gospels. In Luke 13:1, Jesus mentioned an unknown event in which Pilate's brutality and anti-Jewish feelings were on display when he murdered some Galileans while they offered sacrifices in the temple. Yet, within the Gospel narratives, when Jewish leaders brought Jesus before him, Pilate acquiesces to the desires of the chief priests and the Sadducean authorities. According to John's Gospel, when Pilate thought about releasing Jesus, the chief priests led by Caiaphas cried out, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar" (19:12). On hearing this, Pilate gave the order execute Jesus.

Roman governors depended on local influential groups, often the local aristocracy, to help them in their mission of governing the territories of Rome's vast empire. In Judea, the chief priests and temple hierarchy — led by Caiaphas at the time of Jesus' death (cf. Luke 3:1,2) — provided the link between Judea and the Empire. This is why Pilate listened to the request made by Caiaphas and his allies.

At the same time, the Gospels attest to the accuracy of Philo's list of Pilate's corruptions, namely "the executions without trial constantly repeated" (*Embassy to Gaius* 38:302), for Jesus never stood trial before Pilate: no verdict was ever handed down. Pilate merely presided over a clandestine hearing in which the chief priests led by the high priest Caiaphas asked for Jesus' execution, a request that Pilate was all too willing to oblige.

Eventually, Pilate's heavy-handed tactics led to his removal as prefect of Judea in either late A.D. 36 or early 37. Josephus records that the end of his tenure came about because of a Samaritan protest brought on by his brutal attack against the Samaritans (Josephus, *Ant.* 18:84–89). The Samaritan council complained to Vitellius, the Roman governor of Syria. Vitellius sent Pilate to Rome to give an account to the Emperor Tiberius concerning his actions against the Samaritans. By the time Pilate arrived in Rome, Tiberius had died; Pilate's final end is unknown.

At the same time that Vitellius removed Pilate as prefect of Judea, he also removed Caiaphas as high priest in Jerusalem. In place of Caiaphas, Vitellius appointed Caiaphas' brother-in-law Jonathan, the son of Ananus, as his replacement. According to Josephus' account of Vitellius' removal of Pilate and Caiaphas, Vitellius sought to restore Jewish confidence in Roman rule by his actions. Clearly, he did not disapprove of the high priestly family, as he appointed Caiaphas' brother-in-law Jonathan to follow him. Josephus does not explicitly state why Vitellius removed Caiaphas; but it seems possible that, as part of his attempt to restore Jewish confidence in Roman rule, he also had to remove Caiaphas, Pilate's loyal ally. To this end, it may be significant that Josephus did not mention Caiaphas in connection with Pilate's actions of bringing the military standards with the busts of the Emperor into Jerusalem (Ant. 18:55-59) or Pilate's use of the funds from the temple treasury to build the aqueduct for Jerusalem (Ant. 18:60–62): two events we would expect the high priest as a leader of the people to play a significant

Jesus never stood trial before Pilate. Pilate merely presided over a clandestine hearing in which the chief priests led by Caiaphas asked for Jesus' execution, a request that Pilate was all too willing to oblige.

part. Pilate's seizure of funds from the temple treasury, which Josephus identifies as "the sacred treasure known as *Corbonas*" (*War* 2:175; cf. Mark 7:11), especially, should have elicited a response from the high priest. Is it possible that Caiaphas played a role in giving Pilate access to the Korban? Josephus does not say, but Caiaphas' silence in the matter is striking.

The connection between Pilate's removal from office and Caiaphas' removal as high priest suggests a closeness in relationship between these two individuals. In describing the career of a later high priest Ananus II (A.D. 48–59), Josephus notes the close relationship between the high priest and the Roman governor of Judea, a relationship cemented through the bribery of the high priest (Ant. 20:205–207; cf. Philo's description of Pilate's corruption, Embassy to Gaius 38:302). It seems that a similar relationship existed between Pilate and the high priest Caiaphas, two similarly motivated individuals who sought to protect each other's spheres of influence --neither of whom was opposed to relying on ferocious brutality to secure their desired outcomes. It is no accident, then, that the early Apostles' Creed names Pilate in connection with the crucifixion of Jesus (cf. Tacitus, Annales, XV, 44:2,3).

#### Note

 The theater of Caesarea, which was originally constructed by Herod the Great, underwent renovations in the 3rd-4th centuries A.D. At this time, Pilate's dedicatory inscription was reused as a step in the renovated theater, where archeologists later discovered it.

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REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM: HOLYLANDSSTUDIES.ORG Whole Genome Sequencing: How Much Information Is Too Much?

### BY CHRISTINA M.H. POWELL

s pastors know through their leadership experiences, good decision making requires the right amount of information. Too little

information can impair a leader's ability to make a wise decision and hinder the problemsolving process. Too much information can obscure the information relevant to the decision, create concerns unrelated to the problem at hand, and waste a leader's time.

In recent years, physicians have looked to a person's genetic blueprint, called a genome, for insights into the diagnosis and treatment of certain diseases. A person's genome functions as a biological instruction manual, or genetic book. First, technology allowed doctors to read a few sentences in the genetic book, then a few pages. Now, scientific advances

Soon reading a person's genetic blueprint will enter mainstream medicine. in both biology and information technology make it possible to read the entire book in a couple of weeks. The book not only provides insight into a patient's current disease, but also reveals the likelihood of medical problems that may occur decades later.

When researchers initially sequenced the human genome in 2003, the effort cost \$2.7 billion.<sup>1</sup> Now the cost of whole genome sequencing is a mere several thousand dollars and growing less expensive each year. Once an option only for wealthy individuals, soon reading a person's genetic blueprint will enter mainstream medicine. The question everyone will face is how much information is too much?

#### **READING THE GENETIC BLUEPRINT**

A person's genetic instruction manual is written with approximately 3 billion letters. These letters are the rungs on the DNA ladder, pairs of the chemical building blocks adenosine (A), thymine (T), cytosine (C), and guanine (G). These letters combine to make words that direct which amino acids need to join together to make certain proteins. These words combine into sentences, known as genes, which direct the synthesis of tens of thousands of proteins in the human body.

Small genetic variations, like a misspelling in a single word of a book, can lead to diseases or create different responses to medications. Finding the misspelling can help a physician accurately diagnose an illness or choose the correct medication for a particular person. This information can save money and prevent more complicated medical problems.

Sometimes the information tells doctors which word is misspelled, but that knowledge cannot be tied to an effective treatment yet. For example, a young girl with developmental delays of unknown origins learned that her genetic blueprint had a unique misspelling, or mutation, that no other person in the world has been reported to have. In other words, the mutation started in her genetic code and her parents did not pass it on to her. While the information did not lead to new treatment options, the knowledge brought relief that the girl's younger brother probably would not experience the disease.

Approximately 50,000 babies are born in the United States each year with difficultto-diagnose disorders.<sup>2</sup> These children often wait 3 to 5 years for doctors to determine the cause of their symptoms. Whole genome

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sequencing, or a similar technique such as exome sequencing, can solve these mysteries in a few weeks. The ability to read the entire genetic book to find the problem is more thorough than guessing which pages might contain important information and skipping through the book to read only those pages. For difficult-to-diagnose disorders, the ability to read the entire genetic book within a short time period prevents doctors from pursuing treatment avenues that lead to dead ends.

#### HANDLING INCIDENTAL INFORMATION

Ethical concerns surrounding whole genomic sequencing involve the extra information produced by the technique that is not immediately relevant to the diagnosis and treatment of the disease that prompted the sequencing. Some of this incidental information may be useful for predicting future medical needs. Many common medical tests often yield incidental information. For example, an X-ray taken to diagnose a broken bone may show the presence of a developing tumor. The concern with genomic analysis is that incidental findings will crop up for every patient tested.

Some of the incidental findings may help doctors prevent diseases likely to occur within the next few years. Other findings may yield ethical dilemmas. Should a doctor tell parents that their baby is likely to develop cancer starting in middle age? If there is no known cure or prevention for the disease, does this information help or harm the patient and family?

In other cases, knowledge of a future risk may enable preventative changes. A person predisposed to develop diabetes later in life might want to change his or her diet and pursue more physical exercise. In some cases, unknown environmental factors may influence whether or not a person ever develops a disease. Would those patients benefit from such a murky prediction, or would the knowledge only create unnecessary anxiety? How much should parents tell children about information they have learned about that child's genome?

### FORMING A PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

The key to interpreting results from genomic analysis involves understanding the difference between probabilities and certainties. In most cases, our genetic blueprint points to likely, but not definite, medical outcomes. From a spiritual standpoint, a pastor can help parishioners remember God has a plan for a person's life beyond the plan written in the genetic code.



In many cases, our environment matters, and often we shape our environment through our own choices. Even with the ability to read our complete genetic book, we cannot fully predict our biological future.

The Bible teaches in Philippians 4:6, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God." Even when a Christian receives disturbing news, prayer can calm an anxious heart. Jesus instructs His followers, " 'Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own' " (Matthew 6:34). Christians can plan for the future, but they should not worry about the future.

In practice, the best way to prevent worry may be to choose not to receive certain information. Doctors may be able to give patients the opportunity to see what information they want to know through a web-based solution that allows patients to learn more about their genetic information over time. A parent could choose not to learn about a child's future cancer risks, but the information would be available if the child wanted to access it after reaching adulthood.

Creative approaches to accessing the data from whole genome sequencing may be the key to solving the problem of too much information. From a spiritual standpoint, a pastor can help parishioners remember God has a plan for a person's life beyond the plan written in the genetic code. " 'For I know the plans I have for you,' " declares the Lord, " 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future' " (Jeremiah 29:11).

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# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

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# THIS STORY IS OUR STORY

The reluctance to give clear, theological definition to the Pentecostal movement misses the fact the Bible shaped the Movement; it also loses sight of a genuine need of the church. We need to know who we are to pass on this legacy.

### By ROBERT P. MENZIES



briend asked,

about baptism in the Holy Spirit?" I suggested he read Acts 2. The Bible, particularly the narrative of Acts, drives and shapes Pentecostal experience and practice. It is impossible to understand Pentecostals apart from this basic, fundamental fact.

Many academics today scoff at the notion that we can identify Pentecostals with any precision. They often ridicule the idea that we can define Pentecostals theologically. If the origins and the central doctrines of the Pentecostal movement are relatively clear, why, then, should it be difficult to define what it means to be a Pentecostal?

The focus on Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity in the largest possible terms is often an extension of researchers' purposes, which generally focus on illuminating cultural trends, and not directly related to the life of the church.

Also, church leaders are not immune from describing the Movement they associate with in the largest possible terms. Many who stress the ecumenical significance of the Pentecostal movement are reluctant to define the Movement in clear, theological language. While precise definitions bring clarity, they also establish limits. Markers that shape identity also exclude. But if everyone is a Pentecostal, then what does this term mean?

There are many theological descriptions we may use to define other groupings of Christians in relation to Pentecostals. I suggest the following definitions as both historically accurate and helpful for our present discussion:

**Pentecostal:** A Christian who believes that the Book of Acts provides a model for the contemporary church and, on this basis, encourages every believer to experience a baptism in the Spirit (Acts 2:4), understood as an empowering for mission, distinct from regeneration, that is marked by speaking in tongues, and affirms that "signs and wonders," including all of the gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10, are to characterize the life of the church today.

**Neo-Pentecostal:** A Christian who agrees and acts in accordance with all of the tenets listed above except the affirmation that speaking in tongues serves as a normative sign for Spirit baptism.

**Charismatic:** A Christian who believes that all of the gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10, including prophecy, tongues, and healing, are available for the church today; but rejects the affirmation that baptism in the Spirit (Acts 2:4) is an empowering for mission distinct from regeneration.

**Non-Charismatic:** A Christian who rejects the affirmation that baptism in the Spirit (Acts 2:4) is an empowering for mission distinct from regeneration, and who also rejects the validity of at least one or more of the gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10 for the church today.

All of these categories are compatible with the term *Evangelical*. Evangelicals are Christians who affirm: the authority of the Bible; that salvation is found only in Christ; and that evangelism is an important part of the Christian's mission in the world.

The global Pentecostal movement is firmly rooted in Evangelical soil. At its heart, the Pentecostal movement is Christ-centered. The work of the Spirit, as Pentecostals understand it, centers on exalting and bearing witness to the lordship of Christ. Jesus is the One who baptizes in the Spirit. Pentecostal faith and practice flow from the Bible. Although Pentecostals encourage spiritual experience, they do so with a constant eye to Scripture. The Bible, and particularly the Book of Acts, fosters and shapes Pentecostal experience.

Many scholars studying the Movement are generally not practicing Pentecostals. They define the Pentecostal movement largely or exclusively in sociological terms. They identify Pentecostals not by what they believe, but rather by the nature of their experience (e.g., Do they exercise spiritual gifts?) or their behavior (e.g., What differences can we observe in the lives of Pentecostal believers?). While sociological analysis can provide helpful insights, on its own it cannot fully comprehend or adequately describe this profoundly Christ-centered and Bible-based movement. The picture they present of Pentecostals is often a caricature, an image that, while partially true, contains many exaggerations and distortions.

In this article I explain why I am a Pentecostal. My definitions are unapologetically theological. My approach is thoroughly biblical. I show how key passages in the Bible support my Pentecostal convictions. As Pentecostals, we need to reexamine and clarify the rich theological legacy early Pentecostal pioneers have passed on to us. The reluctance to give clear, theological definition to the Pentecostal movement misses the fact the Bible shaped the Movement; and, it also loses sight of a genuine need of the church. We need to know who we are to pass on this legacy.

So, what do we mean when we say, "I am a Pentecostal"? An accurate answer includes three elements. First, Pentecostals read the Book of Acts as a model for their lives. Second, Pentecostals emphasize that we should not confuse the baptism in the Spirit promised to every believer in Acts 1,2 with regeneration or conversion. Third, the Pentecostal movement from its inception (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6), linked speaking in tongues with the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The early Pentecostals thus described tongues as a unique marker, a sign, or evidence of baptism in the Spirit. Many historians insist that without this connection between tongues and Spirit baptism, there would be no Pentecostal movement.

### WHY WE READ DIFFERENTLY

Pentecostals have always read Acts, and particularly the account of the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2), as a model for their lives. The stories of Acts are our stories. Pentecostals identify with these stories. This sense of connection with the text encourages us to allow the narrative to shape our lives, our hopes and dreams, and our imagination. We read them with expectation and eagerness: stories of the Holy Spirit's power, enabling ordinary disciples to do extraordinary things for God.

Pentecostals have never viewed the gulf that separates their world from that of the text as large. Western theologians and scholars of the past two centuries, however, have exerted great energy wrestling with how to interpret biblical texts that speak of God's miraculous activity. As Evangelical theologians sought to explain why we should accept the reality of the IF THE ORIGINS AND THE CENTRAL DOCTRINES OF THE PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT ARE RELATIVELY CLEAR, WHY SHOULD IT BE DIFFICULT TO DEFINE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A PENTECOSTAL?

miracles recorded in the New Testament but not expect them today, Pentecostals were (at least in our eyes) witnessing Jesus perform contemporary "signs and wonders" as He established His church.

The hermeneutic of the typical Pentecostal believer is straightforward and simple: the stories in Acts serve as models for shaping lives and experiences. This simple, narrative approach to the Book of Acts is one of the great strengths of the Pentecostal movement. The simplicity of reading the text as a model for our lives, without angst about the miraculous or how it all fits into complex theological systems, clearly enables people to readily grasp the message.

This suggests that Pentecostals have a distinctive hermeneutic in that they read the Bible, particularly Luke–Acts, in a manner different from non-Pentecostal Evangelicals. I do acknowledge the close link that binds Pentecostals and Evangelicals together. Indeed, Pentecostals generally identify themselves as Evangelicals; yet, they are distinct groups. I use terms here simply to denote Pentecostal Evangelicals on the one hand and non-Pentecostal Evangelicals on the other.

Pentecostals reject two assumptions that shape Evangelical approaches to Luke-Acts. The first assumption is associated with the Evangelical tendency to reject the Acts narrative and the apostolic church it describes as a model for the church today. Evangelicals assume that Luke wrote to provide a historical account of the beginnings of the Church so subsequent readers might have an accurate account of the gospel and be assured of the historical basis on which its stands. Evangelicals also insist that Luke did not present the events he describes as models for the missionary praxis of subsequent generations of Christians.

The second assumption is an outgrowth of the Evangelical tendency to reduce New Testament theology to Pauline theology. In other words, Luke is a historian and Paul is a theologian. Evangelicals assume that Luke's references to the reception and work of the Spirit have essentially the same meaning as similar terms used by Paul and thus we should understand them in the light of these Pauline texts. Evangelicals insist that Pentecost represents the disciples' entrance into the new age, their initiation into the life of the new covenant.<sup>1</sup> Pentecost, they explain, is the birthday of the Church.<sup>2</sup>

Evangelical scholars, with one voice, constantly tell us that Pentecost is a unique and unrepeatable event. In what sense is Pentecost unique? We cannot repeat any event in history, but Luke clearly presents many events in Acts as models for Luke's church. Luke recorded them so they will be repeated in the lives of his readers.

I critique these two assumptions, and particularly the notion that Pentecost is "unique and unrepeatable," by examining various aspects of Luke's narrative.

### THE STRUCTURE OF LUKE-ACTS

Jesus' sermon at Nazareth (Luke 4:16–30) is paradigmatic for Luke's Gospel. This passage foreshadows all of the major themes that appear in the Gospel: the work of the Spirit; the universality of the gospel; the grace of God; and the rejection of Jesus. This is the one significant point where the chronology of Luke's Gospel differs from Mark's Gospel. Luke takes an event from the middle of Jesus' ministry and brings it up front to inaugurate the ministry of Jesus. Luke does this because he understands that Jesus' recitation of Isaiah 61:1,2, and His declaration that He is fulfilling this prophecy in His ministry provide important insights into the nature of Jesus and His mission. This passage, then, provides us with a model for Jesus' subsequent ministry.

Luke provides a similar paradigmatic introduction for the Book of Acts. After the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, Peter delivers a sermon (Acts 2:14–41) that, in many ways, parallels that of Jesus in Luke 4. In his sermon, Peter also refers to an Old Testament prophecy concerning the coming of the Spirit (Joel 2:28–32), and declares that the events on Pentecost fulfilled this prophecy (Acts 2:17–21). The message is clear: Just as the Spirit anointed Jesus to fulfill His prophetic vocation, so also the Spirit anointed Jesus' disciples as end-time prophets to proclaim the Word of God. The text of Joel 2:28–32, like the paradigmatic passage in Luke 4, also shows signs of careful editing on the part of Luke.<sup>3</sup>

One change is especially instructive. In Acts 2:18, Luke inserts the phrase, "and they will prophesy," into the quotation from Joel. This insertion emphasizes what is already present in the text of Joel. The previous verse has already reminded us that this end-time outpouring of the Spirit of which Joel prophesies is nothing less than a fulfillment of Moses' wish "that all the Lord's people were prophets" (Numbers 11:29). Acts 2:17 quotes Joel 2:28 verbatim: " 'I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy.' " In Acts 2:18, Luke echoes

this refrain. Luke highlights the fact the Spirit comes as the source of prophetic inspiration. The church in "these last days," Luke declares, is to be a community of prophets whom God called to bring the message of

# PENTECOSTALS HAVE ALWAYS READ THE ACCOUNT OF THE PENTECOSTAL OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (ACTS 2), AS A MODEL FOR THEIR LIVES.

"salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6; Acts 1:8). Luke reminds his readers that Jesus also promised them power to fulfill this calling. The Spirit will come and enable His church – Luke's and ours – to bear bold witness for Jesus.

Luke's Gospel anticipates this theme of bold, prophetic witness.

The Spirit anointed Jesus so He might " 'preach good news to the poor, ... proclaim freedom for the prisoners,' " and " 'proclaim the year of the Lord's favor' " (Luke 4:18,19). The parallels between Jesus' experience at the Jordan and the disciples' experience at Pentecost are striking and clearly intentional. Both occur at the beginning of the respective missions of Jesus and the Church, both center on the coming of the Spirit, and Luke describes both as a prophetic anointing in the context of a sermon that cites Old Testament prophecy. Through his careful shaping of the narrative, Luke presents Jesus, the ultimate prophet, as a model for all of His followers, from Pentecost onward.<sup>4</sup>

Luke also highlighted this motif of bold, Spirit-inspired witness in the teaching of Jesus. Luke foreshadows events that will follow in his second volume by relating the important promise of Jesus recorded in Luke 12:11,12. Immediately after Pentecost, we see how relevant and important this promise of Jesus is for the mission of the Church (Acts 4:19,20).

In presenting Peter, John, Stephen, and Paul as models of Spirit-inspired ministry, Luke highlights the reliability of the apostolic witness to the resurrection of Jesus. And he wants to be sure we are clear about their message, which we are to hand down until it reaches "the ends of the earth." Yet Luke also sees these end-time prophets as important models of missionary praxis his church needs to emulate. As they face opposition by relying on the Holy Spirit, these end-time prophets call Luke's church to courageously follow the path first traveled by our Lord.

Luke structures his narrative to highlight the fact just as Jesus' experience of the Spirit at the Jordan River serves as a model for the experience of the disciples on the Day of Pentecost, so also the disciples experience at Pentecost serves as a model for subsequent Christians. This is supported by Peter's words in Acts 10:47, "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have."

### THE SENDING OF THE SEVENTY (LUKE 10:1-16)

The account of the sending of the Seventy (Luke 10:1–16) is unique to Luke's Gospel. In Luke 10:1 we read, "After this the Lord appointed seventytwo [some mss. read, 'seventy'] others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go."

A central question centers on the number of disciples Jesus sent out and its significance. Some manuscripts read "seventy," while others "seventy-two." Although we cannot determine the number with confidence, it is important to keep the divided nature of the manuscript evidence in mind as we wrestle with the significance of this text.

Most scholars agree that the number has symbolic significance. Many suggest that the number 70 is rooted in the Old Testament narrative and has symbolic significance. I argue that we find the background for the reference to the "seventy" in Numbers 11:24–30. The Lord "took of the Spirit that was on [Moses] and put the Spirit on the Seventy elders" (verse 25). This resulted in the 70 elders, who had gathered around the Tent, prophesying. However, two other elders, Eldad and Medad, did not go to the Tent; they remained in the camp. But the Spirit also fell on them and they, too, began to prophesy. Joshua urged Moses to stop them. Moses replied, " 'Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!' " (Numbers 11:29).

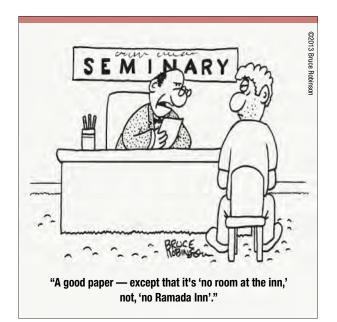
The Numbers 11 proposal has a number of significant advantages over other explanations: (1) it accounts for the two textual traditions underlying Luke 10:1 (How many actually prophesied in Numbers 11?); (2) it finds explicit fulfillment in the narrative of Acts; (3) it ties into one of the great themes of Luke-Acts, the work of the Holy Spirit; and (4) numerous allusions to Moses and his actions in Luke's narrative support our suggestion that we find symbolism for Luke's reference to the Seventy in Numbers 11.

The reference to the Seventy evokes memories of Moses' wish that "'all the Lord's people were prophets,' " and, in this way, points to Pentecost (Acts 2), where the events dramatically fulfilled this wish. This wish continues to be fulfilled throughout Acts as Luke describes the coming of the empowering Spirit of prophecy to other new centers of missionary activity (Acts 8:14–17; 10:44–48; 19:1–7). The reference to the Seventy, then, foreshadows the outpouring of the Spirit on all the servants of the Lord and their universal participation in the mission of God (Acts 2:17,18; cf. 4:31).

God has called (Isaiah 49:6; Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:4-8) and empowered (Acts 2:17-21; cf. 4:31) every member of the Church to be a prophet. Luke emphasizes that the prophetic enabling experienced by the disciples at Pentecost is available to all of God's people.

### ACTS 2:17-21 AND SALVATION HISTORY

We have already noted the important role Luke's edited version of Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:17–21) plays in Luke's narrative. One additional modification of the text from Joel is also important. Joel's text only refers to "wonders in the heavens and on the earth" (Joel 2:30). Yet Luke's skillful editorial work enables him to produce the collocation of "signs and wonders" (Acts 2:19). By adding a few words, Luke transforms Joel's text so it reads: "I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth *below*" (Acts 2:19, emphasis added). The significance of this editorial work becomes apparent when we read the verses that immediately follow the Joel quotation. Peter declares, " 'Jesus ... was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs' " (Acts 2:22). The significance of Luke's editorial work is magnified further when Luke also associates "signs and wonders" with the ministry of the Early Church. Nine of the 16 occurrences of "signs and wonders" ( $\sigma\eta\mu\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\alpha$  $\kappa \alpha i \tau \epsilon \rho \alpha \tau \alpha$ ) in the New Testament appear in the Book of Acts. In Acts 4:30, the disciples ask the Lord to stretch out His " 'hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders' " through the name of Jesus. A few verses later we read, "The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people" (Acts 5:12). Similarly, Luke describes how Stephen, "did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people" (Acts 6:8). The Lord also enabled Paul and Barnabas "to do



miraculous signs and wonders" (Acts 14:3; cf. 15:12).

By skillfully reshaping Joel's prophecy, Luke links the miracles of Jesus and those of the Early Church with Joel's cosmic signs (Acts 2:19,20). These miraculous events are "signs and wonders" that mark these "last days." Luke, then, is not only conscious of the significant role that miracles played in the growth of the Early Church, he also anticipates that these "signs and wonders" will continue to characterize the ministry of the Church in our day. We, too, live in the "last days," that epoch bracketed by the first and second comings of Jesus. According to Luke, it is an era that is to be marked by signs and wonders.

Luke does not rigidly segment the salvation history presented in his narrative into discrete periods. The kingdom of God (or the new age when God's covenant promises begin to find fulfillment) is inaugurated with the miraculous birth of Jesus (or, with Jesus' public ministry, which was marked by miracles) and continues to be progressively realized until His second coming and the consummation of God's redemptive plan. Pentecost is a significant eschatological event, but it does not represent the disciples' entrance into the new age. Rather, Pentecost is the fulfillment of Moses' wish that "'all the Lord's people were prophets'" (Numbers 11:29; cf. Joel 2:28,29; Acts 2:17,18) and, as such, represents an equipping of the Church for its divinely appointed mission. In short, Luke stresses the continuity that unites the story of Jesus and the story of Jesus Christ,"<sup>5</sup> a fact implied by the opening words in Acts 1:1.

One other significant implication flows from this insight: we cannot date the birthday of the Church to Pentecost. Graham Twelftree argues that, for Luke, we must trace the beginning of the Church back to Jesus' selection of the Twelve. Twelftree declares, "Luke would not call Pentecost the birth of the Church. For him the origins of the Church [are] in the call and community of followers of Jesus during His ministry."<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Twelftree asserts that "the ministry of the Church is not seen as distinct from but continues the ministry of Jesus."<sup>7</sup> These conclusions, drawn largely from Luke's portrait of the apostles, are supported by Luke's citation of Joel's prophecy.

### CONCLUSION

One of the great strengths of the Pentecostal movement is that it has read the promise of Pentecost contained in Peter's quotation of Joel as a model for the mission of the Church. This approach to the text, although it runs counter to many Evangelical interpretations and assumptions, captures well Luke's intent. Although Luke is concerned to stress the reliability of the apostolic witness, his purposes go beyond this. Luke's narrative also provides us with much more than merely a summary of apostolic preaching. Through his two-volume work, Luke declares that the Church,

### PENTECOST: THIS STORY IS OUR STORY (continued from page 43)

by virtue of its reception of the Pentecostal gift, is nothing less than a community of prophets. The Spirit of Pentecost comes to enable every member of the Church to fulfill his or her prophetic call to be a light to the nations. ■

## This article is abridged from *Pentecost: This Story Is Our Story* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 2013).

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- 3. When I refer to Luke's editorial activity, I do not in any way wish to imply that Luke's narrative is historically inaccurate. Rather, I merely wish to point out that while Luke writes accurate history he does so with a theological purpose in view. Luke clearly, on occasion, summarizes the speeches or dialogues, and in so doing, utilizes his own vocabulary and style as he presents this material. He also paraphrases Old Testament quotations to highlight important themes that run throughout his narrative. While it is my assumption that Luke's editorial work accurately reflects and emphasizes dominical and apostolic themes, the essential question that I seek to answer centers on the content of Luke's message. It is this message that I believe to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and authoritative for the Church.
- 4. Luke 11:9–13 also indicates that Luke views the prophetic vocation of Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy (Luke 10:1) as applicable to His church.
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**ROBERT P. MENZIES, Ph.D.**, adjunct professor at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in the Philippines and Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

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Δ RSUING HAT

There has never been a time in history where it is so easy for the church to help so many. Are we determined to take advantage of this moment in time to make a difference? By DAVE DONALDSON and TERRY GLASPEY

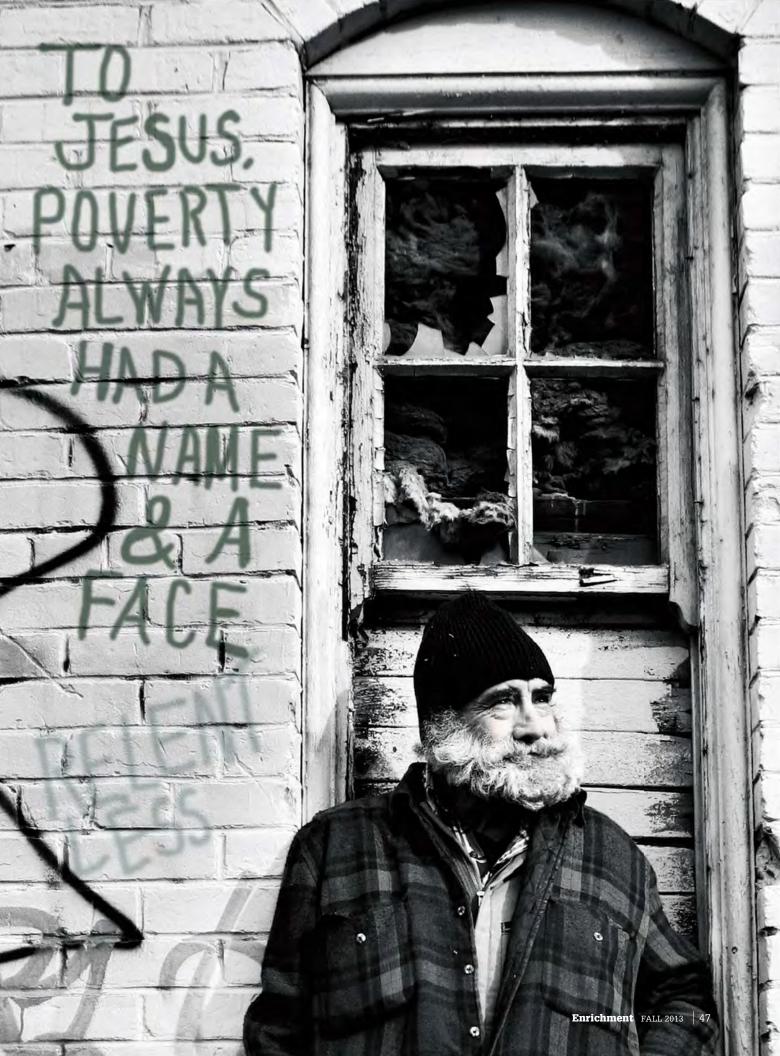


Most of what

# you are about to read I

### have learned from growing up poor

and then learning from the poorest of the poor. Millions of adults and children alike are without adequate food, clean water, housing and shelter, and without much of a future. The needs are vast, and they are urgent. There has never been a time in history where it is so easy for the church to help so many. Are we determined to take advantage of this moment in time to make a difference?



### AMERICA'S HIDDEN OUTCASTS

"Do you know my name?" he asked as he stood before me with a weather-beaten face, matted hair, a toothless grin, and a smell that attacked all my senses.

Moments earlier I had challenged others through a sermon to look for opportunities to reach out to the untouchables. A light chorus of "Amen" followed my challenge from the pulpit. After passing the microphone to the host pastor, I stationed myself at the doors of the foyer to greet people as they left. In my haste, I rushed right past a little cluster of homeless men who had come in off the street to get a preservice meal.

The restroom door suddenly opened behind me, and a homeless man shuffled out into the foyer. He looked ragged and dirty. His body odor cast an unwelcome cloud. I glanced in his direction and then back toward the front of the church hoping to escape his approach.

"Do you know my name?"

I turned again, wondering to whom he was speaking. When our eyes met, I saw that he was talking to me. He approached me and repeated his question. With searching eyes I replied, "I'm sorry, but I don't know your name."

"My name is Joe," he said.

"Hi, Joe, my name is Dave. Nice to meet you." I hoped that would end our exchange and aid my retreat.

"You probably think I only come here to get food, don't you?" Before I could respond he continued, "Dave, I am grateful for the food, but I come here for only one reason." His eyes now filling with tears, he said, "I want someone to remember my name."

Are we willing to admit that people like Joe are less than fully human figures we avoid as we go to the office, school, or church? Jesus never made that mistake. In the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, Jesus spoke of helping those without food, water, clothing, and shelter. He said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).

To Jesus, poverty was personal and relational. Perhaps that is why we feel closest to Jesus when we are with the poor. To Jesus, poverty always had a name and a face.

#### The Expendable Elderly

The way we quarantine some of the poor in America is tragic. Today, the most populous but hidden outcasts are the elderly and homeless.

The elderly are most often neglected, abandoned, and left to die alone. Currently, 3.5 million Americans age 65 and older live below the poverty line.<sup>1</sup> They once served and waited on us, but now many are shut-ins, stowed away in nursing homes and seldom visited by their loved ones. Often unforeseen expense quickly erases their life savings.

Our society sometimes seems to operate on the proposition that if you are not of value to me, then you are expendable. Until we begin to appreciate the legacy a previous generation has left to us and accept responsibility to make sure its members receive good care and are treated with dignity, we have failed. The good news for the elderly is that there are effective models of hope for them in both church-based and for-profit sectors.

### The Forgotten Families

When you hear the word *homeless*, what picture comes into your mind? If you are like most people, you probably imagine someone like Joe, a scruffy bearded man who smells bad and stands on the street corner with a sign. Or maybe you think of a young drug addict who sleeps curled up on a park bench and shoplifts to feed his habit. Or perhaps it is a middle-aged woman with a wild and frightening look in her eyes that mutters nonsense and occasionally yells obscenities at passers-by.

We think of the homeless in this way because this is the segment of the homeless population that is most visible and most unavoidable as we go about our daily activities. But the largely hidden segment of the homeless population is made up of families. The shocking truth is that families with young children account for 41 percent of the nation's homeless.<sup>2</sup> This is a 23 percent increase from 2007.

"A majority of the homeless counted were in emergency shelters or transitional housing programs, but nearly four in 10 were unsheltered, living on the streets, or in cars, abandoned buildings, or other places not intended for human habitation. The unsheltered population increased by 2 percent from 239,759 in 2009 to 243,701 in 2011, the only subpopulation to increase."<sup>3</sup>

The "doubled up" population (people who live with friends, family, or other nonrelatives for economic reasons) increased by 13 percent from 6 million in 2009 to 6.8 million in 2010. The doubled up population increased by more than 50 percent from 2005 to 2010.<sup>4</sup>

These families are largely hidden out of sight. They don't draw much attention to themselves, and they often try to retain their dignity and some small sense of normalcy for their children. They scrape, save, and sacrifice, but they can't seem to get ahead. They float from location to location, looking for work of any sort, and their nomadic lifestyle disrupts their children's educational development.

Those who may suffer most in the wake of this vagabond existence are the children, emotionally bruised from the trauma of roving from place to place and the embarrassment of not having someplace to come home to. They grow up with little security; and, in spite of their resilience, these kids tend to show visible signs of their stressful lifestyle, such as depression, deep-seated fears, anxiety, and even high blood pressure. If they are able to attend school, they usually perform below average.

## TO BRING HOPE AND HEALING AND TO MEET PEOPLE'S SPIRITUAL, Emotional, and physical needs, You must be with them.

Many situations can render a family homeless. The global economic crisis and the resulting foreclosures and high unemployment dropped many from the middle class into a desperate fight for survival. A record number of families now living on food stamps belie the usual stereotypes of the impoverished and homeless.<sup>5</sup> They would be quick to tell you that with one missed paycheck or a major medical emergency, the mounting bills would push them over the edge and onto the streets. Dispirited government officials and church leaders who never dreamed this would become the plight of their American neighbors are accepting this as the "new normal."

### The Homeless Youth

As you widen the aperture for hidden outcasts, you uncover the high number of young people ages 16 to 24 who are on the run. They may comprise as much as 12 percent of the homeless population. Many of these runaways are kids who have fled from home or have been thrown out by their parents. Fueling the upward trend of homeless youth is the disturbing number of high school dropouts. One teen drops out of school every 26 seconds which is 7,200 kids every day.<sup>6</sup> There is no people group in America more hidden and at risk than homeless youth.

### **PROBLEMS OR OPPORTUNITIES**

Sitting on the church platform, I patiently waited for the pastor to introduce me to speak. He awkwardly leaned over the podium and then nervously cleared his throat before dropping a bombshell on the church. The pastor said, "I had not planned to announce this today but my wife and I believe our time as your pastor has come to an end. This morning we submitted our resignation to the church board."

Then without any delay he introduced me to speak. Adding to the

drama my sermon topic was, "Never Quit!" After the service the pastor confided in me that the reason he was leaving was because he believed there are too many problems in his community.

> What a blinded view. What this pastor saw as problems God sees as opportunity for the church to bring hope and healing. I said to this pastor, "God has placed in this church and community more than enough assets to meet every spiritual, emotional, and physical need."

> To bring hope and healing and to meet people's spiritual, emotional, and physical needs, you must be with them. I learned this principle through personal tragedy.

On a hot, August evening in 1969, a pastor huddled with my brothers and me on a sidewalk outside the hotel where my family was living. I could tell something was seriously wrong

by the look in his eyes. He glanced nervously back and forth between the three of us. He cleared his throat and then spoke the words that would change our lives forever.

"Your parents have been in an automobile accident that has killed your father." He searched our faces and found only shock and disbelief. "Your mother is in serious condition, but the doctors believe she will live."

At 9 years old, I didn't know how to process this news. People die in movies, but not in real life. I laid awake on many nights following that tragic day, wondering what would happen to us, where we would live, and who would watch over us. I worried I would be separated from my brothers and sisters.

My grandmother assured us, "God is a Father to the fatherless, and He is watching over you."

"How can God be our Father when He's in heaven?" I asked.

"Just watch," she said, "He will fulfill His promise through His people." That night I heard the words that would begin the healing process in my family's life.

We followed a stone path to a trailer owned by the Davis family. The Davises were faithful members of my dad's congregation. The Davises didn't have a lot of money and lived in a trailer with their two children.

As I walked up the path to the trailer, I clutched my suitcase in one hand and my pillow in the other while trying to chase away the fears that the Davises would come to their senses and send us away. But when I nervously reached up to knock on the door, it swung open. Mr. Davis was there, standing in the threshold with a warm, inviting smile. As we shuffled inside, Mr. Davis embraced each of us and spoke lifechanging words: "Welcome! You are with family and this is now your home." That little word *with* meant that the Davis family was sharing more than their home with us; they were sharing their love. They were willing to share in our loss and in our pain.

The word *compassion* means "to suffer with." Several times the Gospels reveal that Jesus was moved by compassion (Matthew 9:36). The Greek word used in the original text, *splagchnizomai*, speaks of something happening deep inside us — in our intestines, our guts. It is a word of inner upheaval and violence. When Jesus saw needs, He did not simply feel a distant pity. He felt an internal churning of deepest sympathy and compassion. He became grief-stricken with the grieving; He hurt for the hurting. He did not turn away from the poor in disgust; He lived among them.

For Jesus, being with the needy involved a radical sacrifice for others. He taught us in His Word and by His life how to demonstrate compassion.

### 1. To have compassion for people we must be with people.

Many people today work at avoiding unexpected or impromptu encounters with others. Their busy schedules and preoccupied lifestyles drive them to practice being with people without the "with."

My family and I live in a quaint cul-de-sac where we get an obligatory wave from our neighbors when they enter or exit their garages. And through social networking, we can gain thousands of "withs" without "withs" through texting, Facebook, and Twitter. Social networking can be one of the best tools for personal encounters because of the personal and instantaneous messaging. However, it can never substitute for being with a person, especially when that person is in need.

If Jesus had access to social media, He would have used it to fulfill His mission. Because He knew people needed personal touch and warmth, He would have used social media in addition to, not instead of, being with people.

God wanted to know what it is like to walk in our shoes. He was willing to do that so we could have a personal relationship with Him that is absent of fear, guilt, and awkwardness. As we experience a relationship with Him, we will want to relentlessly pursue relationships with others, especially those in need.

In 1979, Mother Teresa was presented with the Nobel Peace Prize. During the Who's Who banquet to honor her lifetime of achievement, she challenged the guests to "find the poor here, right in your own home, first, and then begin to love there, and find out about your next-door neighbor." She then paused and asked the audience, "Do you even know who they are?"

The "with" to which God is calling us may not always require a major geographical change, but it will require a radical commitment to be with the lonely and forgotten of society.

2. Being with people means showing respect for all people. I was running late for a church service in downtown Washington, D.C., dedicated to rallying Christians to help end poverty in America. As I ran up the front steps to the church, two young ladies were waiting outside in the cold. I asked, "Why aren't you going in?"

One responded, "You see, we are lesbians, and the usher told us we were not welcome."

We weaken the power of truly being with others when we hide in our circle of our friends and refuse to venture into a world of lonely and forgotten people. It is a blessing to have friends and spend time together doing the things that you enjoy. But Jesus did not limit His relationships to close friends. His purpose was to "go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in" (Luke 14:23, NKJV<sup>7</sup>).

To Jesus, truly being with people was not an act of bending toward the underprivileged from a privileged position; it was not a gesture of sympathy or pity for those who had failed to make it on their own. Jesus had the widest peripheral vision possible when it came to being with people.

Can we show an attitude of "with" to a single mom who is milking the programs to garner more public funds? Are we moved when we see homeless people who have been hollowed out by drug addiction? Is there any compassion for the prisoner who has committed a heinous crime and now wastes away behind bars? Is there any compassion for the person who has wronged you or a member of your family?

In the ultimate demonstration of compassion, Jesus looked down from the cross and saw the very people who put Him there and prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Aren't you glad that Jesus is relentless about showing compassion to us regardless of what we have done?

### 3. The compassionate attitude of "with" is a lifestyle.

"Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another" (1 Peter 5:5). When Peter said, "clothe yourselves," he was encouraging his readers to make humility an intrinsic part of their lives. When being with people becomes a lifestyle, each day becomes an adventure of divine appointments.

When we see poverty and misfortune, we are tempted to pretend we don't notice. We may justify our inaction and think that by writing a check to an organization we have fulfilled our duty. But God expects more from us. He wants us to enter into the spirit of with, to personally identify with the needs of our friends and of those we don't even know. To embrace the spirit of with as a lifestyle can be challenging because — like the Davis family — it shares in people's pain and sorrow.

The willingness to identify with others by its very nature is contagious and multiplies the love of God like nothing else. The greatest way to bless the Lord is to share compassion with others.

### SHOWING COMPASSION BY SHARING Sharing Is Strategic

Sharing is the only solution to bridging the gap between the rich and the poor. By sharing we can rescue our brothers and sisters from injustice, teach them to fish, and show them where to find the pond of opportunity. By sharing our time, expertise, and resources, we can save and improve lives.

Sharing is God's plan for church growth. Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. ... Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14–16).

Paul started a relief program to help the Jerusalem church alleviate poverty in the city. To fund the initiative, Paul traveled throughout Asia Minor asking Christians to donate funds to feed the hungry (Romans 15:26). As a result of Paul's journeys to help the suffering, he planted churches in Asia Minor, and the gospel spread throughout the world.

The only way most people in the world will discover Jesus' love is when they see it demonstrated by the offer of a cup of water to the thirsty or a piece of bread for the hungry. Mother Teresa said: "Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness: kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile."

Paul declared there would be eternal results from sharing: "Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God" (2 Corinthians 9:13). But sowing is a verb and requires obedience: "Others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ" (2 Corinthians 9:13).

### **Sharing Is Obedience**

**1.** *It is the mark of a true follower of Christ.* The apostle John wondered if people who failed to be generous had experienced God's love in their hearts (1John 3:17).

**2.** *It should be guilt free.* "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:6–8).

**3.** It requires responsibility for the giver and receiver. Sharing, if not offered wisely, can become counterproductive to the long-term good of the receiver. Irresponsible compassion can have a negative effect on how the poor estimate their personal value and place in society. Irresponsible sharing – whether by the government or the church – will breed a welfare mentality that erodes the self-worth of those we are helping.

There is also a place for no-strings-attached sharing where you bless someone even if the help is unappreciated or wrongly used. At times I have given money to a person pleading for bus fare who squandered it on smokes, a six-pack, or a lottery ticket. I have loaded free groceries into cars nicer than mine. Yes, these things are hard to understand, but each response was an opportunity to help someone see the love of Jesus. **4.** *It is one way to give thanks.* "This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God" (2 Corinthians 9:12).

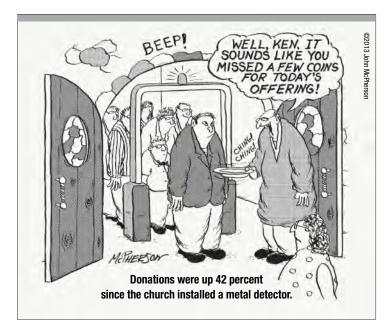
God wants us to share with others out of a heart of thanksgiving. We

give not out of guilt or manipulation but as an offering of praise to the Lord for providing us with food, clean water, clothing, shelter, and opportunity to improve our standard of living.

### CONCLUSION

Are we satisfied with living ordinary lives – holding tightly to everything we have, keeping it all, playing it safe? Or, do we yearn for extraordinary lives? Are we eager to experience the adventure of giving it all away to Jesus and watching Him multiply our lives to touch the multitudes with compassion?

Will you and your church leave the world a better place than when you entered it? Will you have lived for yourself, or will you have given yourself for others? Mother Teresa reminds us, "At the end of life we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, or how many great things



### **RELENTLESS: PURSUING A LIFE THAT MATTERS** (continued from page 51)

we have done. We will be judged by, 'I was hungry and you gave me food to eat, I was naked and you clothed me, I was homeless and you took me in.' "<sup>8</sup> 📾

### This article is abridged from *Relentless: Pursuing a Life That Matters* (Springfield, Missouri: Influence Resources, 2013).

#### NOTES

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# CREATING A CHURCH OF DIVERSITY THROUGH AUTHENTIC LOVE

Taking bold steps of inclusion and equality to change your church's culture can be challenging. The following five principles will guide you during the process.

By J. DON GEORGE





**confused.** For years our church had not grown. We produced magnificent pageants, conducted powerful outreaches, and invited gifted speakers. Each time we experienced brief spikes in attendance and then settled back to the status quo. Nothing seemed to get us out of our stagnant condition. I prayed fervently for God to break the impenetrable barrier to our church's growth. For years, however, the heavens were silent.

In 1995, while attending the biennial General Council of the Assemblies of God in Indianapolis, God gave me clear insight. In one service the speaker asked us to look around the auditorium. He then made a polgnant observation: "Do you see many people of color?" No, this denomination — this church — is too white."

I then realized I saw a sea of white faces at our church every Sunday. It felt as if a dagger pierced my heart. The Holy Spirit whispered, "Your church is too white."

The truth was undeniable. I thought, *How could I have missed this? What was I thinking?* I answered God with a simple prayer, "Yes, Sir. When I get home, I'll do something about it."

The concept of inclusion was not new. From my earliest days at Calvary Church, I told our congregation, "This church must be greater than a single denomination, race, creed, color, culture, or socioeconomic group. We must go beyond the narrow practices of the past." I had been actively engaged in addressing every aspect of exclusion in the church — with one exception. I had avoided the issue of race.

Inclusion is high on the list of God's priorities. Before we explore pursuing racial diversity, let me share some experiences that shaped my life and role as a pastor.

### My Dad's Example

My father, Roy F. George, was an itinerant church planter who pastored from east Texas to northern California. Almost every year he either planted a new church or revitalized one that was floundering. He would build a church to a point it could financially support a pastor, and then the Lord would lead him to do it again in another town.

Sociologically, my dad was ahead of his time. Even in fiercely segregated, small Southern towns, he loved and reached out to people of color. He became close friends with black pastors. He often preached at their churches and invited them to preach in his.

My father's warm relationships with black church leaders stood in stark contrast to the prevailing mood. For many years, a sign across the major street in a neighboring town proudly proclaimed, "Greenville, Texas: Home of the Blackest Land and the Whitest People."

My father's positive example showed me the evils of segregation. I saw a clear difference between his warm acceptance of black people and the angry, superior stares of other white people in our community and church. My dad was a pioneer in race relations.

### **Pushing Too Hard**

After a decade of pastoring in Plainview, Texas, I accepted the call to pastor Central Assembly of God in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. During the years in west Texas, God gave me a vision to build a dynamic, growing church in a city.

Pride and arrogance became the twin culprits that kept me from fulfilling my vision. Rather than leading confidently with the passion and skill of a loving shepherd, I pushed and drove my plan with relentless abandon. The result was chaos. My pastoral tenure in Baton Rouge lasted just under 1 year.

In spite of the difficulties, I learned a lot. I learned that good leaders don't run over those who are reluctant to embrace their vision. I also learned that wise leaders do not resort to power plays to get their way. At this critical juncture, conflict and failure became two of my most effective teachers, although it caused me much pain to learn in this manner. Still, God used failure to make me a better pastor.

### **Even Harder Lessons**

One year later, a small church in Fort Worth, Texas, asked me to be their pastor.

Things were going well until I got a call that our 7-year-old daughter had been rushed to the hospital. When my wife, Gwen, and I arrived, the doctors told us Vanessa had suffered a massive cerebral hemorrhage at school.

For 30 days, Vanessa lay in a coma. During those weeks, we poured out our hearts to God and trusted Him for a miracle. Vanessa died on February 19, 1972. Gwen and I were devastated. Where was God when we needed Him most?

Conflict and failure in Baton Rouge. Now death and despair in Fort Worth. Gwen and I believed that surely God would use these difficulties to accomplish something good ... to soften our hearts and deepen our trust in Him. Surely He wouldn't waste our pain.

Six months after Vanessa's death, the door of ministry opened at Calvary Temple in Irving, Texas. I was ready to leave Fort Worth and make a fresh start. God gave me a sense that He was going to use me in a significant way.

### It Just Shouldn't Be This Way

In Plainview, Baton Rouge, and Fort Worth I sensed that someday I would pastor a church that welcomed people of color and treated them as equals. My father's love for black people was etched in my memory and became part of my ministry DNA. When I was in Fort Worth and in the first years in Irving, I realized I needed help to be an effective pastor for people of color. I did not understand the hopes and fears of black people.



### WHAT ARE THE DIVIDING WALLS IN OUR CHURCHES? HOW DO PEOPLE OF COLOR FEEL WHEN THEY WALK THROUGH OUR DOORS? WHAT SEPARATES INSIDERS FROM OUTSIDERS?

I enrolled at the University of Texas at Arlington to study Black History and Culture. I wanted to know what people of color have been through so I could understand how they think, feel, and act.

When I began to understand the distinctions between cultures, I saw that the black community perceived many statements and actions by white people as deeply offensive. People of color look at life through a different lens.

After I took this course, I at least had a road map to show me the way forward.

Few people in predominantly white churches are hardened racists, and few blacks are militant against "white oppression." But many people are suspicious and feel superior to those who are not like them. Fear and pride are common to human nature, but they are poison to the cause of Christ. When we explore Scripture, we see God's open, inclusive heart for all people. When we study the Gospels, we find Jesus reaching out to people despised by those around Him. And when we analyze the Early Church, we realize God went to great lengths to welcome outcasts and foreigners into His family. Fear and pride may be common traits in people across the world, but they have no place in the kingdom of God.

Today we have dividing walls in our culture and churches. We feel more comfortable with "people of our own kind," and we assume people from other cultures would rather be with people like them. We may not hate blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and other ethnic groups, but we often tolerate suspicion, division, and distance — we are not actively tearing

down walls between others and us.

What are the dividing walls in our churches? How do people of color feel when they walk through our doors? What separates insiders from outsiders? Which of these divisive attitudes are blatantly racist, and which are benign neglect? What does it mean to take the initiative to love, welcome, and accept people of other cultures? These are not comfortable questions, but they are essential if we are going to follow Jesus' example.

Attitudes of superiority grieve God's heart. We need to identify barriers, courageously address and abolish them by the cleansing, compelling love of Christ. People's culture and skin color do not determine their value. Every person has inherent value to God. Jesus died for everyone. What's important to God needs to become important to us.

Our love for other believers is the clearest signal to the world that Christ's presence makes a difference

in a person's life. The world is looking for authentic love. What does "everyone" see when they look at how we love others? Do they see preference and prejudice, or do they see us knocking down barriers to care for people of color and others who feel overlooked or criticized?

For years I had good intentions to reach out to every person in our community, but I didn't take action. I can find plenty of excuses for my passivity, but none of them impress God. When the Lord spoke to me that night at General Council, I knew it was time to change. At the same time, God gave me a promise that has guided my life and ministry since that day: If I would reach out to the people no one seems to want, God would also bring to our church people all church leaders want. God has fulfilled this promise.

### BLINDNESS

On my first Sunday as pastor at Calvary, the attendance was 59 people. They were surprised when I declared that I believed God would allow us to build a great church of at least 10,000 in attendance.

### AGAINST THE WIND: CREATING A CHURCH OF DIVERSITY THROUGH AUTHENTIC LOVE (continued from page 57)

My big dreams, however, were coupled with a limited budget. God gave me a simple and inexpensive strategy of reaching people. I committed to visit 500 homes each week. My walks through the neighborhoods of Irving put me in touch with thousands of people.

My days of walking the neighborhoods turned into weeks and then to months. I walked the streets for 3 years, and our church grew because I connected with people and invited them to come. action to protect the innocent and help the needy. What would God say to us today about how we neglect our neighbors? It is not enough to say, "I didn't notice their need," "I'm too busy," or "What's the use?" As leaders, we are supposed to notice the condition of our flocks ... and those who might join our flocks. When we fail to do what God has called us to do, we experience His curse to some degree. The teaching of Scripture is clear. Apathy and complacency may seem totally reasonable, but they

prevent people from standing strong for God and His cause.

Do we love people of other races and cultures the way Christ loves us? Token attempts aren't enough. Some pastors and church leaders claim, "We have some black people and Hispanics in our church. We are reaching out. That's all we can do. That's plenty."

Is it enough? Is it a full-throated invitation?

Is it sacrificial love? Is there an understanding of these cultures so we tear down barriers and build relationships? It's easy to say, "It's enough," but are we actively, prayerfully, and lovingly entering their world so we can really know them? That's the measure of our sacrifice and love.

I have talked to many pastors who are content to claim they have done something to reach out to people of color, but I would like to ask people in their community if they feel honored and understood by these pastors and churches. Being valued means a lot more than just being welcomed. Welcoming is superficial; understanding and trust are deep, rich, and life-changing – and costly. It takes courage and honesty to admit our preference for our own kind and the fact our barely buried prejudice alienates people for whom Christ died.

If we wait until it feels right to take bold steps of inclusion and equality, we may never take them. Taking bold steps to change your church's culture can be challenging. The following five principles have guided Calvary Church and me during this change.

### FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES The Power of Prevailing Prayer

Prayer puts us in touch with God. We can go to seminars and conferences, read books, and try the latest strategies. But if we are not intimately connected with God in prayer, all these things are only window dressing – or worse, they are idols we trust instead of God.

Fervent, believing prayer must take place at all levels: in worship, in groups and other events, in staff meetings, and throughout the church's life. Nothing, however, is more important than the pastor carving out time to fall before the feet of Jesus to ask for wisdom, power, and direction.

# STORE OF

### THERE IS ONE THING YOU CAN KNOW FOR Sure: Creating A "Big umbrella church" IS Absolutely in Line with God's Heart.

My strategy wasn't designed to impress anyone. Visiting door to door was simply the way God led me to touch people in Irving. God had given me the strategy, and I was following His lead.

Gradually, the demographics of Irving and the surrounding area began to change. By the early 90s, a cultural shift had occurred – but I didn't notice. I was too preoccupied with "bigger and better things."

Our church was on an expansion trajectory. We built a new building and soon outgrew it. We constructed another building on Airport Freeway.

In 16 years, we grew from 59 to 3,500 members and active attendees.

I was sure I was in the center of God's will, work, and power, but I failed to realize what was happening around me. When people of color moved into our community, I was so busy doing God's work that I didn't notice them.

I can find plenty of excuses for not reaching out to people of color during the years our church grew so fast. But the painful fact is: even when they were there, I didn't see them. My focus was on growing our church as big and as fast as possible. I simply didn't need people of color to fulfill the vision I thought God had given me.

As I look at that time in our church's history and my leadership, I also realize another flaw: I didn't pray specifically and diligently that people of color would come to our church. I prayed for growth, and I prayed for many other things, but I didn't ask God to make our church a kaleidoscope of colors and cultures.

As leaders, we may want to excuse our blindness, but there's a price to pay. God holds us accountable for our sins of omission as well at those of commission. Apathy erodes compassion and blocks effective We can delegate a lot of things, but not this.

There is an enemy who does not want us to reach the community, welcome a diverse population, or create a culture of inclusion in our churches. Satan isn't too worried as long as we sit self-righteously in our churches feeling superior to the people Jesus died to save. But Satan fights back when Christ captures our hearts, when we change plans, and when we love those we previously saw as unlovely. We simply cannot fight and win the conflict without the power and grace of God through prayer.

### The Necessity of the Spirit's Anointing

During the years of transition toward ethnic, gender, and age diversity at Calvary, every day I came face to face with my deficiencies. I desperately needed the Spirit of God to lead me into uncharted waters. I needed the Spirit's anointing as I chose new staff and board members. I was aware that I did not have the skills and experience to make this work, but I was equally convinced that God was clearly leading us to reach out to a far wider audience. The anointing of the Holy Spirit is not reserved for 30 or 40 minutes on Sunday morning. I need Him all day, every day to be the preacher, leader, shepherd, husband, father, and friend God wants me to be.

### The Requirement of Strategic Planning

For many years, I considered planning to be one of my strengths. Then some young leaders joined our team and gave me new insights regarding strategic planning. They showed me the necessity of planning 3, 5, and 10 years into the future. The planning process always starts with the mission. What has God called us to be and do? What are the nonnegotiable values and goals the Lord has given us? What is our time-tested mission statement? These don't change, and they are the benchmark by which we measure every part of the plan.

If a church has been too white, too old, and too male-dominated, the default mode will always cause the leader to drift back to old habits. Strategic planning drives a stake in the ground: God is leading us to go in a different direction. How are we going to get there? Good planning helps us get connected and stay connected to God's heart.

Embracing diversity took painstaking efforts in strategic planning. We have seen God at work in every step.

### The Need for Cultural Awareness and Relevance

One of my chief concerns is that I might be preaching but no one is listening because they consider what I'm saying to be irrelevant. Relevance, though, doesn't necessarily imply validation or conformity. Today, some churches are so focused on being relevant they have lost their evangelistic edge. It's our task to speak God's truth, hope, and power into the culture so the church impacts the community.

It takes work to become relevant. I took university courses to help me understand a segment of our community, and I spent time getting to know people of other cultures. I had to do the hard work of research and the fulfilling work of making new friends.

Study the demographics of your community, especially a 3-mile radius around your church. Notice patterns and groupings. Ask questions, and

listen carefully. Ask people to introduce you to their friends of other races and lifestyles. Be a great listener. If you win their hearts, they will listen to your message. Building relationships is plowing ground. Be a diligent farmer.

Create a comfort zone for the people you plan to invite to your church. Construct an environment — an ethos — where they feel welcomed, comfortable, and valued. Consider





### AGAINST THE WIND: CREATING A CHURCH OF DIVERSITY THROUGH AUTHENTIC LOVE (continued from page 59)

the faces of those on your platform, the music you play in the lobby, your worship style, the types of games for kids, and everything else that happens on your campus.

In our transition, we dismantled and reassembled every aspect of Calvary's culture. We addressed leadership roles and personnel, staff meetings, how we talk, and how we could foster a dynamic, faith-filled atmosphere. We carefully analyzed everything to make sure we connect with the people in our community.

To find out more about the different cultures in your community, go to their stores, eat at their restaurants, walk through their parks, attend their concerts, listen to their radio stations, go to their sporting events, and read their publications. When you preach, use lyrics from their music and lines from their movies to illustrate your points.

Connecting with other cultures is one of the most challenging and demanding tasks I have undertaken in my life, and one of the most rewarding.

### Develop an Utter Disdain for the Status Quo

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He didn't leave the world in its status quo. He stepped out of heaven to make a difference. It cost Him dearly. Are the people in our communities worth the price we have to pay to reach out to them? We must overcome old, suspicious, stiff, self-absorbed, lethargic ways.

Many pastors see a few black or Hispanic faces in their congregations on Sunday and assume they are reaching these cultures. They may be doing a great job of connecting cross-culturally, but they may be doing nothing at all. We need to gauge the effectiveness of our cultural awareness and outreach by the comparison of our church demographics with community demographics. In 1995, Calvary was 98 percent white. Today, we are a clear reflection of Irving and the surrounding community: 30 percent white, 30 percent black, 30 percent Hispanic, and 10 percent Asian.

Love propels action; but, when love is absent, we withdraw into the safe confines of the status quo. We are glad when someone responds to the gospel, but we seldom invest our time, energy, or reputation in pursuing outcasts, sinners, or foreigners.

We need to ask penetrating questions:

- Do we see people of other races, cultures, genders, and ages as annoyances that ask too much from us?
- Do we see them as projects to pursue?
- Or do we love these people so much that we're willing to take any risk and pay any price to reach them?

### YOUR TURN

If God has touched your heart and you want to build a church of radical love and diverse cultures, get ready for the ride of your life. You will experience God's blessing, and you will encounter the resistance of the enemy.

You must carefully plan and deliberately implement any new strategy for growth or outreach. You can change the color of your church bulletin in a flash, but changing the culture of an organization takes far more time and attention. Don't rush the process. Pray diligently, do research, make new friends, invite young leaders to join you, and listen to people all along the way.

One thing you can know for sure: Creating a "big umbrella church" is absolutely in line with God's heart. Jesus reached far beyond the synagogues and safe Jewish communities, and Paul went to the ends of the earth to touch every life.

In Jesus' prayer before His arrest, He prayed to the Father, "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18). The Father sent Jesus to die for us; He's sending us into the world to die to our selfishness, arrogance, and apathy so we can live for Him and be partners in His cause. It's the heart of the gospel, and it's the heart of real ministry.

### This article is abridged from *Against the Wind: Creating a Church of Diversity Through Authentic Love* (Springfield, Missouri: My Healthy Church, 2012).

NOTE



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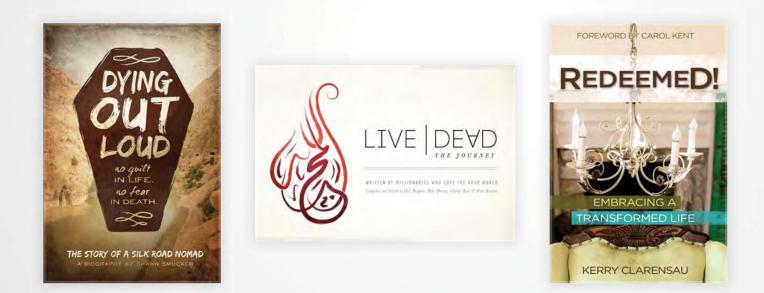


J. DON GEORGE, senior pastor, Calvary Church, Irving, Texas

In recent years, people have used different terms to describe ethnic groups. For a while, "African-American" was in vogue, but it left out those whose origins were from other countries or continents. Some have capitalized Blacks, and others leave it in lower case. For our purposes, I often use the broader term "people of color," though I sometimes refer specifically to blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and other ethnic groups.

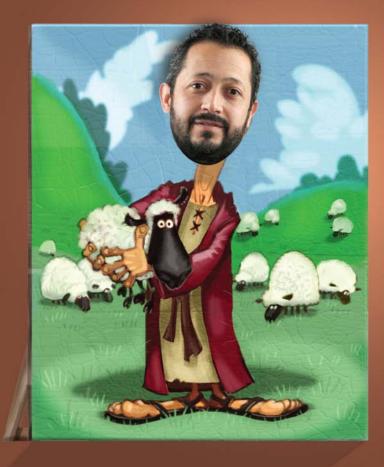


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### FACES R F W H S A HURCH MO E Y R C FORWARD V

Four Faces of a Leader speaks not only to where you are as a leader, it will summon you to a leadership journey that can potentially move you from simple survival ... to success ... and on to significance.

### By H. ROBERT RHODEN with DEAN MERRILL

Illustrations by Gary Locke Photos by Lane Simmons



**leader?** If you are like most in ministry, you first check attendance. "How many are coming on Sunday morning?" "What's my percentage of increase compared to last year?"

Next, you look at your church's financial record. "Are all the bills paid? Have we stayed on budget? Will the fiscal year end in the black?"

What if I measured myself by standards that told the real truth? Am I passionate about holding true to my original calling? Am I regularly doing acts of practical service? How good am I at casting vision and bringing about necessary change? These tell much more than a weekly head count or dollar total. The Library of Congress has some 32 million books. Which world leader commands the most shelf space? George Washington? Abraham Lincoln? This may surprise you, but this auspicious place holds more books about Jesus Christ than any other person.

This confirms my inclination to use Jesus as a benchmark for effective leadership. In just 33 years, He accomplished *more* that has lasted *longer* with *greater* impact and *wider* reach than any leader in history. How did He do it?

In this article, I explore the four leadership faces of Jesus — the shepherd, the servant, the steward, and the seer. I summon you to a leadership journey that can potentially move you from simple survival ... to success ... and on to significance.

### THE FACE OF A SHEPHERD

Jesus viewed himself as a *shepherd* (Greek: *poimēn*). He knew what He was called to do. The true shepherd focuses on the sheep (John 10). The sheep's potential is the shepherd's sole mission. The true shepherd stays with this mission rather than looking for ways to advance his or her personal career.

### **The Calling**

To be an effective Christian leader, we must function within the borders of our calling. The point is not to move up some ladder; it is to fulfill what God has ordained for us.

Psalm 78:70–72 describes our calling. We are shepherds. We watch over groups of not-always-bright, not-always-strong creatures. We take care of them, providing what they need to become what God meant them to be.

This is not a glamorous job. It doesn't put us among the elites. So why do we do it? Because it's our calling. Like David, we seek to do our work "with integrity of heart" — an *undivided* heart.

The phrase "skillful hands" (verse 72) is about knowing what to do. We learn some skills, while other skills are intuitive. Effective leaders have both learned skills and intuitive decision-making insights that accrue over time.

There are challenges in ministry. There are cantankerous sheep that won't follow directions, who get into the mud, who even bite. But we must shepherd them. Why? Because God has entrusted them to us. God commended them to our care. They are His sheep, not ours. They need a caregiver.

*A calling or a career*? Christ "gave ... *pastors* ... to equip his people for works of service" (Ephesians 4:11,12). Paul used the Greek word *poimēn* — "shepherds" or "feeders." Jesus called himself "the

good shepherd" in John 10:11 and this entailed "lay[ing] down his life for the sheep." No claim of privilege, no angling for an easier way out. The Son of God freely took up His calling as the Shepherd.

If we are career-motivated, we will not focus on the sheep; we will be too busy looking for what will advance our career. A call-motivation responds to the Chief Shepherd, "Lord, I want to be where You want me to be. I will focus on the sheep You've called me to."

Calling is not about who has the bigger flock. It is about knowing God's assignment and willingly embracing it.

My first commitment as a leader must be to value the face of a shepherd. The extent to which I am a *devoted shepherd* has a lot to do with my effectiveness.

### What Shepherds Do

The shepherd metaphor has a long history in Scripture. But we need to get down to specifics on what it entails. Four tasks come to mind:

*Feeding.* Shepherds *feed* the flock. They search out the right pastures. They find fresh water. They nurture their growth.

Providing the congregation's *nutrition* is our primary job. Our people are looking for fresh, nourishing food. They want to know, *Do you have a word from the Lord for me?* 

**Adding Value.** Shepherds seek to add value to their flock, to bring them into a healthy state, to guide them toward maturity (Ephesians 4:12–15). If sheep are healthy, they will reproduce. They will bring new lambs into the world. This is the kind of value shepherds seek to add to their flock. This doesn't happen all at once; it is a process.

**Bonding.** Shepherds do not just treat a sheep's occasional illness, like a veterinarian, and then jump back in their pickup truck to drive away. They *live with* their sheep. Jesus said, "I know my sheep and my sheep know me" (John 10:14).

People want someone to hear their worries and also their joys. To the members of a flock, the pastor's support is spelled p-r-e-s-e-n-c-e. How can we lead the sheep if we are not with them?

Bonding with the sheep is a central part of our calling to be shepherds. This is not just a technique; it is a lifestyle.

**Protecting.** The final thing shepherds do is create a safe place for their sheep. If people are afraid of how the pastor will react to them

... or how he will speak about them behind their back ... they will not feel safe. If a minister is flirtatious or sarcastic, people will question his or her sincerity.

When religious fads come, the wise shepherd keeps the people from chasing tangents. Pastors also need to manage certain excesses. The congregation needs to know that their pastor will guide things appropriately. When there is disruption or dissension in the fellowship, you cannot shrug and walk away.

### Sacrifices of a Shepherd

Nobody said that shepherds have a soft life. If you make a list of the hardships ministry entails, you quickly identify with Paul's list in 2 Corinthians 4:8–11. Our list as modern-day shepherds:

*Long (and odd) hours.* Ministry is not a 9-to-5 job. It involves nights and weekends, with emergencies coming at all hours. Ministry is an irregular lifestyle. It always will be.

*Isolation.* Long hours are worsened by the fact a shepherd works in relative isolation. With 84 percent of American churches being under 200 in attendance, the majority of pastors have a limited team.

*Low pay.* The average evangelical pastor in America earns \$38,000 a year. Hard work in the ministry doesn't necessarily get you a raise.

**Constant availability.** The sheep need you when they need you. The fact you are on vacation, or sound asleep, is beside the point.

*Limited privacy.* Closely related to availability is the fact ministers have limited privacy. You are a public figure. Your life and activities are on display. So are your spouse and children.

High expectations (even perfection). Sheep expect shepherds to know what they are doing, to make good decisions, to keep their word, to act honorably.

When people trust us and follow us, they

are affirming our call. They are saying that we have earned the place of leadership.

**Negative feedback.** When we fall short — or even when we don't — those who watch us are quick to say so. Being in the ministry is not always popular.

### THE FACE OF A SERVANT

Jesus called himself a *servant* (Greek: *doulos*). This part of Christian work has to do with character. To possess a humble character will not by itself qualify you for the ministry – but the lack of it will torpedo what you hope to do in ministry.



WE WILL NOT FOCUS ON The Sheep; we will be too Busy looking for what Will Advance our career.

### **Strange Combination**

The words *servant leader* is a jolting phrase, an oxymoron. These words do not fit together. In the past, leaders were the top dog.

In 1970, Robert K. Greenleaf, a wellrespected business thinker, published his essay "The Servant as Leader." Greenleaf, however, didn't invent this idea. It goes back 2,000 years to the iconoclastic Rabbi who said to His followers: "'You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them. and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' " (Mark 10:42-45).

We can assume that Jesus' listeners didn't fully get His point, at least by the way they reacted at the Passover meal. The borrowed room they were using did not come with a *servant* to wash everyone's dusty feet. And none of them was about to volunteer. So their *leader* – the Son of God – did (John 13:4,5).

When Jesus finished, He asked: "Do

you understand what I have done for you?" (verse 12). Unspoken answer: *Not really.* So He spelled it out: " 'You call me "Teacher" and "Lord," and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them' " (verses 13–17).

What a bold instruction. Jesus was not just putting on an act; He meant for this behavior to continue in the lives of His disciples.

*Who is worth following?* Insecure people have trouble being servants. They worry they will get walked on. The *lack* of servanthood, however,

### FOUR FACES OF A LEADER (continued from page 65)

has a way of torpedoing leadership. People do not respect stuffed shirts. They warm up instead to those who are willing to get their hands wet, dirty, or calloused.

Jesus walked among ordinary people. Some wanted to crown Him, but He kept placing himself on ground level, tending to their practical needs for food, companionship, a gentle touch. He expects the same of us.



TO POSSESS A HUMBLE CHARACTER WILL NOT BY ITSELF QUALIFY YOU FOR THE MINISTRY — But the lack of it will torpedo what you Hope to do in Ministry.

The apostle Paul specifically and clearly applied this to church leaders: "An elder is a manager of God's household, so he must live a blameless life. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered; he must not be a heavy drinker, violent, or dishonest with money. Rather, he must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must love what is good. He must live wisely and be just. He must live a devout and disciplined life" (Titus 1:7,8, NLT,<sup>1</sup>

italics added).

Stewards or managers understand that the operation is not theirs. They are to run it well on behalf of the true owner, which in the church is God.

Stewardship means that we give every effort to fulfill what God has in mind for us. He sets the

### **Getting Practical**

So how do we practice servant leadership? The key is to focus our attention on *people* and *mission (purpose)* as opposed to *systems*. Systems and structures are important, but they are not what Jesus died for.

Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 12:22,23, that "the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor." We confuse *prominence* with *significance*. Not everyone in the church is made for prominence, but everyone is significant. We must treat each person that way.

If you have a sense of entitlement, people smell it. If you neglect to thank them for what they do, they will quickly sense who's on top of the pyramid and who's holding up the bottom. But if you treat them the way you like to be treated, they will respect you ... and follow you.

### THE FACE OF A STEWARD

Jesus showed the face of a *steward* (Greek: *oikonomos*). Jesus was careful about what He did. He never quit halfway. On the cross He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). He had done what He came to do.

Jesus was not competitive or jealous. He did not compare himself to others. He was too busy being a good steward, and He expects the same from us. We are to take conscientious care of what He entrusts to us.

### **Performance Does Count**

The face of a steward has to do with our *competence. Competence* means the ability to do a job properly. For Christian leaders, competence is the combination of knowledge, skill, and behavior under the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. agenda, and we follow it. We are members of His staff. Stewards in God's kingdom are summoned to a higher standard.

The first step toward competence is to clarify the *mission* (or *purpose*). What is a church supposed to be? If we do not understand this, we will never get the right things done. Every leader has to come to terms with what is the purpose of the church.

Once the mission is clear, the next step is to nail down our *core values.* What do we believe? What are the nonnegotiables? Five to seven core values should be enough.

*Mission* and *values* are diachronic. They remain constant for long periods and are revised only as the environment demands. They are permanent anchors for good stewardship.

Next is *vision. Vision* is what we see as a possibility to fulfill our mission. The vision incarnates the mission and the mission informs the vision.

Concurrent with rolling out the vision, we set specific goals. We deduce we need to tackle certain activities in a certain order. If we do them successfully, we will bring the vision to reality ... and advance the mission in a manner consistent with our core values.

*Vision* is synchronic. It changes from season to season, as do the *goals* that measure it.

### Six Arenas to Manage

The call to be a competent steward/manager in God's work has many facets. Here are some of the most important:

Speaking on God's behalf. To open our mouths (or create text for any display, print or electronic) as a steward of the Almighty is a serious responsibility. It calls for far more diligence than the average conversation.

God lets us choose our nouns and verbs – and we should do so with excellence. But the content must always be His.

Serving as God's diplomat. Another major part of stewardship is serving as the voice of reason and enlightenment to those who are in conflict with one another, or with you.

Since conflict is endemic to human nature, we must learn to manage it in the church. The church can only fulfill its mission when there is unity of spirit and purpose.

**Managing God's time.** There are many things that clamor for our time. We talk about "prioritizing our schedule" — but we need to be more proactive; we need to schedule our priorities.

**Delegating and organizing.** One of the best things Moses did as a leader was to listen to Jethro and act. What a lesson — listen to good advice.

Moses selected capable men who walked with God and gave them a clear job description. The results saved his life and ministry.

*Managing God's money (at church, at home).* A church seldom has enough funds, but it will have even less if leaders do not manage with wisdom. Church funds are "someone else's property," namely, God's. They are not ours to manipulate.

Second is *personal* money management. If we cannot exemplify responsible spending with our money, how can we take care of a church budget? And how will people be inspired to follow our example?

*Managing our personal walk with God.* Finally, stewardship is about staying aligned with the One we serve. The steward holds to

certain basic rhythms, as Jesus did: reading Scripture, praying, giving. It is easy to crave the big stage, the dramatic event. But underlying these we must have a consistent personal walk with God. God will fan into flame the fire of His presence in our life and ministry each day if we make time for Him.

### THE FACE OF A SEER

Finally, Jesus was called a prophet, a *seer* (Greek: *prophetes*). He was the greatest change agent who ever lived. It was not easy for Him. He came into a world filled with conflict. The times in which we live are no more challenging than those Jesus faced. Jesus was a transformational leader, and He expects us to be the same.

### Do You See What He Sees?

God's work stands in need of those who can *see* what others miss — opportunities, hazards, societal trends, future attacks, and coming waves of revival and renewal. Whenever God gives us a new level of ministry, it demands a new level of growth from us. Change is often unsettling – and this is when the ability to *see* is most crucial.

*Implementing God's idea.* Sometimes the new vision is a sovereign initiative from God. What is it that God might want to shake up in your situation? What would He like you to *see* about the future that is unlike the past?

Trying to bring back yesterday will not produce a visionary tomorrow. You should bless the past and use it as a teaching tool to present a visionary future, an extension of the past. The future of your church or



"After much prayer and deliberation, I believe the Lord is not guiding you to seek a call in this church."

organization begins in the prayer closet of the seer.

### Needed: New thermostats.

The pastor is not simply to keep a lid on things, to maintain the status quo, to keep the wheels greased. A leader is to be a thermostat, not a thermometer. Leaders seek to know what is in God's heart, then set the tone of the discussion. This calls for boldness, for being secure in one's calling. But that's the essence of leadership — courage in action.

*Cultural winds.* It is important to keep current with the shifting cultural winds — so long as they

do not become our master. If we become obsessed with chasing whatever is "hot" at the moment, we will lose our tie to the One who called us to serve *His* interests.

The family of God desperately needs wise, perceptive leadership to bring diverse people together under the common rule of Christ.

TO OPEN OUR MOUTHS (OR CREATE TEXT FOR ANY DISPLAY, PRINT OR ELECTRONIC) AS A STEWARD OF THE Almighty IS A SERIOUS RESPONSIBILITY.

### Advancing the Bigger Picture

The need for vision, for farsightedness, comes up in multiple aspects of church life. Here are several:

*New populations (faraway, but also nearby).* When we think about missions, we naturally affirm that God wants people in Bolivia and Botswana and Bulgaria to know about His saving love and grace. But we need vision that will touch new populations in our own backyard. The leader who is a true seer

takes stock of who in the community is *not* receiving the gospel.

*Music styles.* Another area of church life that is taxing many current congregations' ability to be family together is worship repertoire and styling. Many pastors are struggling to accommodate strong opinions on this subject. Others have simply opted to go with one genre and dismiss all others as unimportant or impractical.

A pastor must say repeatedly, "I am the shepherd of *all* the sheep." Part of discipleship is to model and teach mutual respect for those who do not share your style preferences.

Conflicts can arise if *methods* get turned into *values*. Sometimes managing change is simply a process of building a consensus in advance. The seer does not always need to come thundering off the mountain

with a unilateral word of direction. Though he or she may know on the inside what God wants, it's helpful to bring others gradually to the same understanding.

**Potential leaders for the future.** One of the most important — but often neglected — things for a seer to notice is God's call on a person's life for ministry. It may be a gangly teenager; a 20-something already in the early stages of a career; a soldier finishing active duty; a married couple approaching early retirement. Part of the prayer needs to be for us to *see* those individuals God wants to develop.

I want to be part of that effort. I want to stay connected to the next generation of leaders. They don't want me to be *like* them. But they crave the experience and wisdom that the years have brought. They are looking for models.

### Where Do You Stand?

One or two of these faces motivates most people. But it is important to embrace all of them.

People can be servants — but if they can't shepherd the flock or be a steward or a seer, their leadership is severely crippled. Christian leaders do not get the luxury of specialization. If we're going to follow the Jesus model, we can't say, "Well, my strong face is such-and-such ... and the rest of the church staff will have to pick up the slack on the other three faces." We are leaders of people, not directors of programs. Mature leadership involves all four.

When you and I finally admit to ourselves and to God that we don't have all the answers ... but we want them, He will guide us. We must be still and wait, however. We must listen for His instruction — then take appropriate action. ■

This article is abridged from *Four Faces of a Leader: What It Takes to Move Your Church Forward* (Springfield, Missouri: My Healthy Church, 2012).

NOTE



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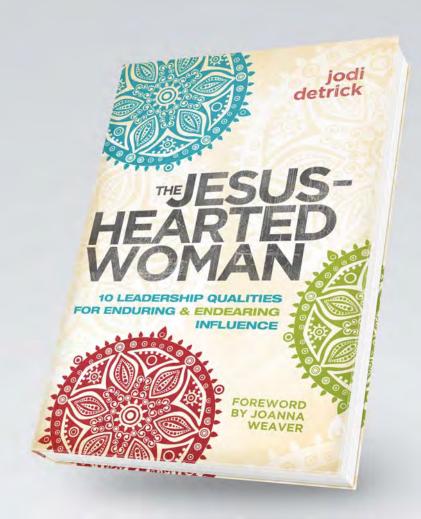
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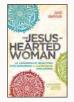
# TEN LEADERSHIP QUALITIES FOR Enduring & Endearing Influence

By JODI DETRICK

Wherever you are in your leadership journey, being a Jesus-hearted woman is possible by embracing these 10 leadership qualities.



## THE JESUS-HEARTED WOMAN: TEN LEADERSHIP QUALITIES FOR ENDURING & ENDEARING INFLUENCE (continued from page 70)



Women look for ways to use their God-given leadership

gifts. But leadership for women comes with a unique set of challenges. Many women

who have the potential to be great leaders turn back in discouragement or defeat, leaving others

without their influence.

Our broken world needs women who are Jesus-hearted leaders. In this article I present 10 qualities of Jesus-hearted leadership.

## Confidence

A leader from our denomination called me. The woman, who had served as Women's Director for our churches in Washington and northern Idaho, had resigned. Would I consider having them nominate me to fill her position?

The word *no* immediately popped into my mind. But since it was an honor to be considered, I promised to talk with my husband, Don, and to pray about it. *That* was my first mistake if I wanted to maintain a comfortable status quo and stay off the path to growing as a Jesus-hearted leader.

With Don and my family cheering me on, and with the encouragement of a few, trusted friends, I accepted.

None of my leadership growth would have happened had I followed my fears and said, "No thank you." When we walk in too-big shoes, despite the difficulties and challenges, our gait gradually changes from an ungainly, self-conscious toddle to a poised, purposeful stride that inspires trust in those who follow.

Insecurity is not humility. Insecurity is *me*-focused and is more concerned with self-protection. Knowing my inclination toward personal insecurity, I pray: "God, please give me the gracious confidence required to lead."

Presumption is not confidence. I need to discern whether I have the latent, perhaps underdeveloped but God-given capacity to do the thing I'm considering.

Gracious confidence means I take the gifts God has placed in me and develop them as fully as I can. It means doing my best as I offer those gifts back to God in service to others.

Occasionally I ask, *On what am I basing my confidence?* I can get in trouble if I base my core confidence on my natural abilities, cleverness, charm, appearance, history of success, titles and positions, academic accomplishments, affiliations with the powerful and privileged, or human acclaim.

I have learned not to underestimate the experiences God has given me along the way. To do so is to throw away the confidence He is building, layer by layer, through the years. Corrie ten Boom said, "Every experience God gives us, every person He puts into our life, is the perfect preparation for the future that only He can see."<sup>1</sup>

I am not a better leader because I have been given bigger responsibilities and a few outstanding opportunities. I am a better leader because I stepped forward into the next thing God called me to.

## Authenticity

My husband and I sat in silence at the crowded table. As a young couple who had recently begun life in the pastorate, we were thrilled to be at this conference and to glean from other leaders who had experience and wisdom. It wasn't long, however, before their dismissive looks and clipped answers told us we were not in their league and should just mutely bask in their glory.

I wrote in my journal: "Note to self: if, by God's grace, I am ever in a position of leadership or influence where others might want to be in my presence, I will treat everyone the same. I will ask personal questions and be interested in the lives of those within my proximity, knowing that no one is unimportant ... that every person is of value and can teach me something."

Many eyes on us can tempt us to develop a stage presence around friends we want to impress, leaders we want to sway, even strangers we want to outdo.

What, then, does authenticity look like in the life of a Jesus-hearted woman? An authentic Jesus-hearted woman tells the truth about the messy parts of her life. What is the appropriate amount of transparency for any given situation? Here are some guidelines I follow: (1) when I think it will benefit others who are struggling in the same areas; (2) when my vulnerability paves the way for others to relate to a bigger message God wants to speak through me; or (3) when I need help and am pretty certain those who are listening to my muddy side are spiritually healthy people who can handle my struggles with godly care and confidentiality.

Live your life as if there were no secrets, because some day that will be true. And if you have lived a life of secret integrity and authenticity, you will have cause for open celebration for all those hidden moments when your actions revealed a Jesus-heart that beat for God's glory.

## Humility

Colossians 2:18 talks about people *appearing* humble, but it was a false humility. These folks combined legalistic rules with severe, self-imposed bodily discipline to show how humble they were (in a spiritually superior way). Verse 23: "Such regulations indeed have an *appearance* of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their *false humility* and their harsh treatment of the body, *but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence"* (emphasis mine).

Being humble is a spiritual posture — an internal bending of the knee, the heart bowing in honor and service, both to God and others.

Don't let titles trump the task of serving from the heart. Be a servant and then do what a servant does ... from your heart. That's where humility starts.

You are no better or worse, above or beneath, anyone else. Jesus said, "all of you are on equal level as brothers and sisters" (Matthew 23:8, NLT<sup>2</sup>). He also said, "The greatest among you will be your servant" (verse 11).

Humility is *huge* if you are serious about being a Jesus-hearted leader. Pride can disqualify you from long-term, effective ministry quicker, and more permanently, than just about anything.

## Stamina

I call some people elevator leaders. They want a quick and easy ride to the top. But you build strength to lead well when you get to the top — and the stamina to stay there — by taking the stairs, dealing with incremental levels of leadership.

Some women linger in front of that magic elevator door of prospective leadership, hoping it will open for them. They wait for the perfect position or ideal ministry opportunity. They are frustrated and disappointed when the doors don't open right away.

With stair leadership, you don't wait for the doors to open; *you* open the door yourself and start to climb step by step. Stair leaders start where they are, with what is in front of them.

If the elevator malfunctions, you are stuck. But with stairs, you are only stuck if you choose. As long as you keep putting one foot in front of the other, you'll eventually get to the place God wants you to be in your ministry and leadership.

Stairs build stamina. People who use them regularly develop muscles that serve them well on the level they arrive at after their climb.

When it comes to developing as a leader, there are two major staircases – education and experience. Credibility comes from taking the long climb up the steps of academic studies. While educational



BEING HUMBLE IS A SPIRITUAL POSTURE — AN INTERNAL BENDING OF THE KNEE, THE HEART BOWING IN HONOR AND SERVICE, BOTH TO GOD AND OTHERS. opportunities, however, may be limited for some, the staircase of experience is available to all. Sometimes when we view a person at certain levels of leadership, we forget the years of unseen and unapplauded struggle in her history. But God doesn't waste even one thing we go through in a life surrendered to Him.

Some of my most valuable lessons have come through painful experiences. I would have taken an elevator past those learning levels had I been given the choice. But I would have missed developing some of the character qualities that have served me best in leadership and ministry. The things that give

us staircase stamina can also help us on our long, sometimes grueling climb as leaders.

## Resilience

In ministry leadership, you may look back at things you or others have done and cringe. Leaders are learners, and learners make mistakes. But great leaders overcome regret with resilience.

*My bad* has become modern vernacular for "it was my fault," or "my mistake." Some regrets become heavy blankets of depression that bury the glow of future ministry potential. But *there is no rewind; there is only redemption.* A redeemed life is *better* than a rewind because through it Jesus showcases hope to others who feel their mistakes have left them unqualified for significance and service.

## THE JESUS-HEARTED WOMAN: TEN LEADERSHIP QUALITIES FOR ENDURING & ENDEARING INFLUENCE (continued from page 73)

Your last big mistake does not define you. If it was sinful, repent and stop it. If it was stupid, learn from it and figure out how to keep from repeating it. deflate our capacity to live courageously? If those in ministry don't deal with their personal fears, they will be stunted as leaders — or possibly taken out of the game altogether — no matter how gifted.

## FAITHFUL AND FAITH-FILLED WOMEN REMIND US WE NEED COURAGE TO DELIVER THE DREAM, TO PROTECT THE POWERLESS, TO WIN THE WAR. TO HOLD THE HOLY. AND TO TRANSPORT THE TRUTH.

Some people seem to have it in for us and find ways to create misery in our lives. I call this *their bad*. And the more active you are in ministry leadership, the more of a spite-target you become. Most people, even when they inadvertently hurt you, have good intentions.

We should strive to resolve conflicts and work to live at peace with everyone as far it depends on us (Romans 12:18). We must be willing to work hard and show patience with the process. But sometimes conflict is beyond us. We cannot fix everyone's negative opinion of us, but we can use up every last drop of energy trying.

While I may need to have tough skin, I never want to develop a hard heart. I could pretend that the vitriolic comments don't sting. But, if I acknowledge the hurt and stay tenderhearted, without being moved from what God has called me to do, then I can be a Jesus-hearted woman who also happens to be an endearing and effective leader.

God has called us to a life of resilience even when things are *too bad.* With His strength and with help from friends and family He will pull us out of the mire and we will soar again.

As Jesus-hearted women, we know we haven't reached the end where everything will be okay. And until we do, we move forward steadily. Resilience makes that possible.

## Courage

Courage is a necessary leadership quality. Great leaders take risks, even when the odds are overwhelming and the outcome uncertain.

Some people seem to have a plucky disposition from birth. However, disposition alone cannot account for the bravery displayed by ordinary people. We can nurture and develop courage without fanfare.

Faithful and faith-filled women, past and present, remind us we need courage to deliver the dream, to protect the powerless, to win the war, to hold the holy, and to transport the truth. But the call to gather our nerve and step up doesn't stop there.

But what do we do with the pinpricks (or gaping holes) of fear that

God has a message for frightened people. My favorite courage verse is Isaiah 41:10: "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." The word *dismayed* means, "to look around in a panic."<sup>3</sup>

God, *my* God, is with me. He is not only *with* me, but *for* me. I follow His mission, and His presence

and influence slowly infuse steel into my otherwise cowardly heart and helps me dare things I wouldn't dream of on my own. And, as our adventure together unfolds, He also chooses the most unexpected times, places, and ways to teach me lessons about overcoming fear.

## Self-Awareness

As followers of Jesus who are leading others, we can spend an inordinate amount of energy trying to safeguard our power or position.

Healthy loyalty toward healthy leadership is good. But some define loyalty as unquestioning compliance and absolute protection from those who might question their motives, methods, or outcomes. They expect their team to act as human shields to ward off any arrows of criticism or perceived opposition. This assures the stunting of self-awareness, which is one of the main components of emotional intelligence<sup>4</sup> and so crucial to healthy leadership. Those without this quality will not know who they are or how their leadership affects others. A Jesus-hearted woman in leadership will guard against defensiveness and self-protectionism.

Leaders love to hear compliments. But at times we need a rebuke more than a compliment. And there are moments when a challenge to our ideas and desires benefits everyone if we respond with insightful leadership.

My concern is for ministry leaders who stunt their growth in self-awareness when they hide behind the out-of-context quotation of "touch not God's anointed" (1 Chronicles 16:22; Psalm 105:15), or when they claim that those who see things differently have a "Jezebel spirit." Too many people with great leadership potential sabotage themselves and wound others with self-protectionism.

Are you willing to include people on your team who are stronger than you in some areas? Do you encourage them to use their gifts freely, even when it may seem they are showing you up? Who you invite to serve alongside you says much about your security as a person and your degree of self-awareness as a leader. When you filter out everyone who seems risky, you build a wall of protectionism that blocks out valuable input from those who have much to offer.

In the end our own best efforts at self-awareness will still fall short. We must take an even bigger step of vulnerability and ask God to examine our hearts and show us what is there. Using His Word as a mirror for the soul is one way to make that happen.

## Kindness

Paul instructs us to "be kind and compassionate to one another" (Ephesians 4:32). But I am discovering new perspectives about what kindness in leadership looks like. If I am a Jesus-hearted leader, I must practice kindness by omission when I overlook someone's fault. Not every typo, not every poor choice of words, not every mislocated Scripture reference or slight flaw in biblical application requires our deft hand of correction. There is a time for instructive words to rectify an error or to help others improve, but being endlessly nit-picking is not kind.

We've all seen those with a "move over and let a pro show you how it's really done" attitude that smacks of competition and pride. Sometimes it is kind to shine less for a while so others can shine more.

It's easy to show kindness to people who think and act like us. When someone comes along with an outside-the-border idea, we may find our capacity for kindness diminished. We need to give others the freedom to lead differently and minister from the perspective of their unique calling, and cheer them on.

Acts of kindness, big and small, help us fulfill the demands of love on any given day. And while our words are significant, it is our actions that



make the message of God's love legible to others.

God calls us to lives of intentional spontaneous kindness. That may sound paradoxical, but when we plan ahead and make provision for kindness and generosity, we are prepared to act in spontaneous obedience to the promptings of God's Spirit.

## Soul Care

Stressed-out, burned-out, worn-out describe too many women who are on their way out when it comes to leadership. They long for their own green room - a place offstage, that quiet room graciously appointed with deep cushions of privacy, thoughtfully stocked with personalized refreshments for mind, body, and spirit.

If you, too, long for a life with ease, there are three crucial components of soul care to consider: limits, boundaries, and replenishment.

Establishing healthy personal limits is tied to perhaps the most overlooked fruit of the Spirit: self-control. We sometimes live as if we have no limits. We act as if we have an endless supply of energy, emotional capacity, physical and spiritual stamina, and time. But deep inside, we know better.

Learning how to practice portion control is crucial. When I have the Lord as my portion, He teaches me how to apply portion control to the other things on my daily plate. I learn how to divide what is mine from what should go to someone else - what is for today and what should belong to tomorrow. As I listen to His Spirit, He coaches me on what is too much, or not enough, to take on. With His help, I have been learning to say these words: What I have done is enough for now.

> God doesn't ask me to solve everyone's problems. I must understand my limitations and establish boundaries with those who would drain me. While I give my light freely, I guard my fuel fiercely so I can burn brightly in a grace-deprived world that has lost its shine.

Jesus-hearted women *must* be replenished. Jesus knew our strength and stamina would dwindle with use. What a refreshing invitation He gives to us who are bone dry and bone weary (John 7:37,38).

No matter where you are on the leadership iourney, invest in learning all you can about caring for your spirit (as well as your body, mind, and emotions). It can keep you from ending up with no lamp oil and a flame that fades away to darkness.

## Vision

As Jesus-hearted leaders, we often need spiritual

## THE JESUS-HEARTED WOMAN: TEN LEADERSHIP QUALITIES FOR ENDURING & ENDEARING INFLUENCE (continued from page 75)

corrective lenses to read the fine print of how God is at work in the circumstances around us and how we fit into His plan to transform lives. God sometimes conceals, and also reveals, secrets in smallness – if only we have the vision to see.

Some visions in the Old and New Testaments were divine revelations. But Scripture implies another kind of vision that is less about supernatural revelation and more about catching sight of what God might want to do through us.

We catch that vision through the inner desires God places in our hearts, by outer circumstances that stir us, and through our God-given talents, abilities, and interests that beg us to use them as an expression of our faith and love. Usually it's a combination of all the above. Once a vision captures your heart and stirs your passion, it becomes a rudder that steers the course of your life.

So, what is *your* vision? In Matthew 6:10, Jesus prayed that the Father's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. With that as the backdrop, consider this: If you could do anything you wanted (no limitations) to make this world a better place for people and more in line with God's will, what would you do? Make a list of your God-given talents, abilities, and interests. How could you use those gifts to make a difference?

Once you've identified a Jesus-hearted vision you can get behind (yours or someone else's), there are things to keep in mind if you want to see it endure and flourish.

First, the right vision starts and ends with seeing God more clearly. Will achieving this vision help me and others see God more clearly?

Second, don't let others define or limit your God-given vision. Input from wise spiritual advisors about your vision can be good, but don't let others define or limit a vision you know is from God.

Third, vision requires feet. God doesn't give us glimpses of possibilities so we can sit around years later and think what could have been. Vision requires us to act on what we see.

Fourth, Jesus-hearted leaders keep their vision open to course correction. Sometimes God waits to close the door behind us before He opens the door of opportunity in front of us. He knows that if we don't close the door to the past, we'll lose the beauty and wonder He's prepared in the space ahead.

Second Corinthians 4:18 says, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." We are to have the kind of vision that looks for the invisible God underneath, below the surface of life's more obvious layers. Often, without even realizing it, we're walking on mystery.

## Epilogue

Many times while writing about these 10 qualities so crucial to being an enduring and endearing leader, I've discovered something that startled my predictable way of thinking, encouraged the deeper places in my heart, or inspired my sagging hopes.

There were also times when the bigger revelation was just how *Jodi-hearted* I am, instead of how *Jesus-hearted* I should be.

Yet, I take heart in this: all these leadership qualities (and infinitely more) are personified in Jesus. Colossians 2:9,10, gives me hope: "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness."

As we make more room for Jesus in our lives, He transforms our hearts, develops the qualities we need to serve Him best, and ultimately brings us to fullness. This, too, is a long journey with many twists and turns. But His Spirit is navigating our steps, and He knows just how to get us there. ■

## This article was abridged from *The Jesus-Hearted Woman: Ten Leadership Qualities for Enduring & Endearing Influence* (Springfield, Missouri: Influence Resources, 2013).

#### NOTES

- 1. Corrie ten Boom, The Hiding Place (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2006), 12.
- Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.
- Information from Barnes Notes on the Bible http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/cmt/barnes/ index.htm, which is part of the Biblos website commentaries: http://bible.cc/isaiah/41–10.htm

4. Daniel Goleman, Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ (New York: Bantam, 2006).



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## **Believing God** for Greater Things

INTRODUCTION By **George Paul Wood** 



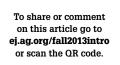
people. At the 2nd General Council in 1914, at the Stone Church in Chicago, they committed

themselves and the Movement to Him "for the greatest evangelism the world has ever seen." That

was big talk coming from a few hundred people with limited resources, education, and opportunities.

Ninety-nine years later, the Assemblies of God worldwide is no longer a few hundred people but approximately 65 million strong. We are part of an uncoordinated revival — uncoordinated by men and women, anyway — that had multiple starts in many places around the world: Wales, India, the Korean peninsula, and, of course, Azusa Street. Today, one of every four Christians in the world is Pentecostal or charismatic. The growth of the Assemblies of God specifically and Pentecostalism generally is impressive. Arguably, the Pentecostal revival is one of the greatest people movements in history.

There is a tendency in people movements, including spiritual revivals, to lose momentum over time. They are birthed, they grow, they stagnate, they decline, and then they die. From a historical perspective, this seems natural because it happens





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so often. The question the Assemblies of God — especially in the United States, but also around the world — needs to ask itself as it approaches its centennial is whether this tendency will be our own.

I hope, for the sake of the world, that we answer with a resounding "No!" Pentecostals and charismatics may number approximately 1 out of every 4 Christians globally, but approximately 2 out of 3 people in the world are not Christians. There is no pride in being the growing piece of a shrinking pie.

Instead, I hope we offer a resounding "Yes!" to God and to His mission for us to the world. I hope, in other words, that as we end our first century and begin our second, the same Spirit that fanned into flame the faith of the Assemblies of God founders will also fan into flame that same faith in us. The greatest evangelism the world has ever seen is not over; it has barely begun.

The theme of the 55th General Council is *Believe*. In line with that theme, we asked the Executive Leadership Team of the Assemblies of God to share with you what they are believing God for. We asked them to share these things because they lead our Fellowship. But we also want their essays to spark a fire of faith in your own heart. It is not enough to follow the faith-filled dreams of your leaders. You must have faith in God for your life, your home, and your ministry.

The founders of the Assemblies of God were audacious people. We need to be audacious people in our own generation. So, what are you believing God for?



**GEORGE PAUL WOOD**, director of Ministerial Resourcing for the Assemblies of God and executive editor of *Enrichment* journal, Springfield, Missouri





with Dr. George O. Wood

## he theme of the Assemblies of God's 2013 General Council

**is "Believe."** It is also the catchword of a multiyear emphasis as the AG gears up for its centennial in 2014. In keeping with this theme, Enrichment interviewed General Superintendent George O. Wood, focusing on what the Assemblies of God is believing God for as it enters its 100th year of ministry.

## The theme of the 2013 General Council (GC13) is "Believe." What message do you hope this theme communicates to AG ministers and churches?

**wooD:** At the 2nd General Council in November 1914, our forefathers and mothers in the faith unanimously passed a declaration resolving to do the greatest work of evangelism the world has ever seen. What tremendous faith they had. At the time they made that amazing statement, any observer would have laughed at the audacity of their faith. Yet, look what has happened. The Bible says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). What if every minister and church made this amazing statement during this centennial: "We resolve to ..." You can fill in the blanks. It is really all about reaching lost people — and we must believe that the Holy Spirit will empower us as we release our faith to believe God for greater things. After all, He is able to do "*immeasur-ably* more than all we ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20).

"Believe" is not merely the theme of GC13. It is a multiyear emphasis, especially as we head into our centennial year (2014). At a programmatic level, what does "Believe" look like in the months/years after GC13?

**WOOD:** At the National Leadership and Resource Center we are doing our best to resource the Fellowship, to stimulate faith among us. However, we cannot program the Holy Spirit. Instead, we must depend on Him. We must recognize anew that, although the Lord uses the skill sets we offer, in the last analysis — it is His work. He does the calling, the equipping, the empowering. I believe it is well for each of our districts and churches to set aside time — perhaps in a retreat setting — to fast and pray about what we are to believe for in all our individual settings. If we are content with the status quo, then God simply cannot use us.

At a programmatic level, we have developed two digital tools to help Assemblies of God folk pray and believe.

Like a lot of people, I always have my smartphone with me.

I use it for e-mail, Web browsing, Facebook, Twitter ... you name it. In fall 2012, we realized that we could use smartphones as an aid to prayer, so we developed the 7:14 Prayer app, which takes its name from 2 Chronicles 7:14. The app is set up to alert you to pray at 7:14 in the morning and eve-



ning, though you can also set up a custom alert time. It includes a daily Scripture reading and devotional, and users can manage prayer request lists. My favorite feature is the live map that shows the city and state of people across the nation who are checking in to pray at the same moment you are. You are not alone in your prayers. You are part of a concerted prayer movement.

Another digital tool is BelieveCampaign.org. When we pray, God gives us dreams and visions for how to reach a lost and dying world. BelieveCampaign.org harnesses the power of Facebook and Twitter to help Assemblies of God people share their dreams and visions with others. Like the 7:14 Prayer app, BelieveCampaign.org has a map that shows what people are believing God for, and where they are from. This time, however, the map is global. Can you imagine the power of an online map that showed hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of God-given dreams and visions?

What do you see as the greatest opportunities for the Assemblies of God as we enter our 100th year of ministry?

**WOOD:** Our greatest opportunities are so many I cannot articulate them all. Let me highlight just a few.

*Youth.* We continue to have the strongest percentage of youth under 25 than perhaps any other church organization -33



percent. We must conserve this generation and make every effort to evangelize and disciple the youth in our churches and in our communities.

**Diversity.** We are a multiethnic fellowship, now comprising about 40 percent ethnic minority. A great opportunity lies in reaching the ethnic peoples within our own country.

**Church planting**. The most effective way to reach America with the gospel is to plant churches. Our

district superintendents set goals in 2010, believing God that we would have over 14,000 churches in America by 2020 with over 4.4 million believers in them. Let's see it happen.

**Church strengthening.** Why not believe that every Assemblies of God church will be a growing church and a missionaryminded church. We are a Spirit-filled people. The Spirit has been poured out to empower us as His witnesses. A nongrowing Pentecostal church is a contradiction in terms. Let us see the great opportunity before us in strengthening every church.

**Leadership development.** The Lord has always used leaders. It seems He has designed for everything to rise and fall on leadership. The great opportunity before us is to believe God that a new generation of young people will hear the call of God, offer themselves to be trained to fulfill that call, and be mentored as they assume places of responsibility in the Kingdom. A challenge before every pastor is to challenge the youth in the church to seek God for His call on their life, and to encourage young people who feel a stirring to vocational ministry to follow that call.

**Colleges.** The next generation of leaders will come, to a great degree, from our endorsed postsecondary schools and Chi Alpha. The young people are the gold mine for the future of the Assemblies of God. A great opportunity lies before us to throw our hearts and wallets, as never before, behind our schools and Chi Alpha workers.

*Women in ministry.* At long last, we are beginning to fulfill the promise of Pentecost in recognizing that the Spirit

is poured out on women as well as men. The opportunity before us is to make sure we are opening doors for women — especially young women — whom God has called to vocational ministry, and to recognize as well that God calls women also to be senior pastors.



### How are we seizing the initiative in these areas?

**woop:** I often say that leading the Assemblies of God from my chair is like pushing a string rather than pulling it. We are NOT a top-down-driven organization. If it does not happen at the grass roots, it cannot happen. All those of us in leader-ship can do is "blow the trumpet" — to provide inspiration, encouragement, motivation, and resources.

We are making progress in all the areas I have talked about above. I just wish the progress could be faster. We are an eschatological movement and that means we believe the Lord's coming is near. As such, it's time to be wide awake and working hard to fulfill the Master's business.

That said, let me highlight a few initiatives:

**Kids:** My grandson, Reese, is a digital native. He does not know what it's like not to have a smartphone or tablet device. If we are going to reach kids like him, we need to utilize digital technology in our kids' curriculum. This General Council, we are unveiling several products that do precisely that. The Kid Bible Heroes app tells the stories of biblical kids, such as David, who did great things for God. It includes games and other activities.

are creating new, dynamic, and Spirit-inspired music in our Assemblies of God churches. It is an exciting time. Our goal is to bring those songs to the global church to be shared and celebrated and to help unite us in worship. We are releasing the inaugural release, entitled *We Believe*, on August 6 in a partnership with Integrity Music.

There are other initiatives I could highlight if space were not



56

We must conserve this generation and make every effort to evangelize and disciple the youth in our churches and in our communities. limited: the ongoing consolidation of the national schools, our continuing efforts to plant new churches and revitalize existing ones, and the important task of funding these initiatives through AG Trust. The important thing in all these initiatives is that we be on the leading edge, not the lagging edge, whether it is in technology, crossdenominational cooperation, or innovation in how we carry out our four reasons for being: evangelism, worship, discipleship, and compassion.

The Fire Bible for Kids Companion app includes puzzles, memory verses, and other interactive activities. Its coolest feature is its 3D images and scenes. You simply point the camera of your iPad over the chapter intro pages in the *Fire Bible for Kids* (NIV), and 3D images — like a 3D replica of Solomon's temple — appear on the screen. I might also mention Incredible Islands, which is an online virtual world that churches and families can use to extend the typical Sunday learning experience throughout the week. We have also teamed up with Veggie Tales creator Phil Vischer for *What's in the Bible? Church Edition*, a fully customizable small group DVD resource. Vischer's partnership also brings Jelly Telly to our market. Jelly Telly is a tiny TV network for kids with over 100 hours of videos for Christian families.

**Publishing:** My Healthy Church is quickly becoming the premier resource provider for churches, not only in the Assemblies of God, but also for other Pentecostal denominations. We are publishing a broad range of resources from Spirit-filled authors for the Spirit-empowered church. In addition to publishing, we are partnering with new groups to bring the best resources to our Fellowship and beyond.

I am excited that, in addition to our core curriculum offerings, we are publishing great books that are available through My Healthy Church. People can also find these products in Barnes & Noble, Books-a-Million, and other brick-and-mortar retail stores.

One of our most exciting developments has been our renewed effort to expand our reach in the United States and Latin America with *Mi Iglesia Saludable* (My Healthy Church — Spanish). This increased focus allows us to better serve the fastest-growing segment of the church that represents one-third of the Assemblies of God worldwide.

*Worship Music:* Influence Music is our new worship label. God is raising up a generation of worship leaders who

## What do you see as our greatest challenges?

**WOOD:** I go back to our original reason for being. The founders felt, for example, that we should come together so we could do missionary work more effectively. As a result, we developed the missiology from the Book of Acts of the indigenous church. This has produced amazing results. One of the challenges we are facing is to not forget this. Many churches today are essentially developing their own missions program — with heavy emphasis on the popular compassion and justice causes of the day. Don't mistake me — these are important. But there is no substitute for establishing the national church and equipping its leaders to do the work of evangelism, discipleship, worship, and compassion. It is easy to raise money for some projects — but we continue to place greater emphasis on putting missionaries on the field as "boots on the ground."

Another reason for our founding was to provide schools for the youth of our Fellowship. I am now going to be very direct: It is easier to raise money for a water well than supporting one of our schools or a Chi Alpha worker. This ought not to be. We can do both. But, if we are not putting substantial resources in our schools and Chi Alpha, we are forfeiting our future. It is just that simple. As a pastor, my church gave approximately 20 percent of its missionary budget to our endorsed schools because of our commitment to plant "seed corn" for the future.

We are facing a massive and rapid cultural shift. I am experiencing that right now in terms of statements I have issued on homosexuality.<sup>1</sup> I do not want us to be known for what we are against, but there is also a time when we must stand our ground on moral issues. I believe a day of persecution is coming for Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians. That persecution starts with marginalization as the secular worlds of politics, entertainment, and media seek to push us behind the four walls of our churches, out of the public square. We are going to be increasingly called bigots and hate mongers for our not accepting immoral behavior. The secularist would like to believe that the first amendment means only freedom of worship; but it says instead "freedom of religion." Christians are facing a culture that is increasingly more hostile. We need a Great Awakening in America.

Another huge challenge is the breakdown of the American family. The promiscuity rate and divorce rates among Christians do not differ much from those who do not claim Christ. Churches are going to be increasingly challenged to teach morality while, at the same time, minister to those who are the result of the brokenness in marriage and family.

### How are we rising to meet these challenges?

**WOOD:** That depends on whom you mean by "we." In my opinion, the National Resource and Leadership Center can provide ministers with the resources they need to address these challenges. But it is pastors in churches who will determine how well the Assemblies of God meets these challenges. What they do determines whether or not we rise to the challenges.

I would ask them three diagnostic questions: First, are you filled with the Holy Spirit? Second, are you leading your church to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Third, are you leading your church for mission or for maintenance?

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is an initial event — but life in the Spirit is meant to build on that. This is why our pioneers talked about the Baptism and fullness of the Holy Spirit. Throughout the Book of Acts, we see the early Christians being filled with the Spirit again and again as need and opportunity arose. It is not enough to say, "I was baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues many years ago." You and I and those in our churches need to be filled today. We need to cultivate a vital relationship with the Spirit of Jesus Christ every day of our lives. So, how are you doing in your walk with God? How is your prayer life? Are you growing in your knowledge of Scripture? God cannot use you to accomplish His mission in the world if your heart is busy with other things than Him.

But if your heart is full with the Spirit of Jesus Christ, then you will go where the Spirit leads. Where is that? Wherever there is a lost sheep, a lost coin, or a lost son (Luke 15). Jesus said, "there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent" (Luke 15:7). The great temptation of pastors, however, is to focus their energies on the 99 rather than on the one. The 99 are maintenance; the one is mission. Obviously, I believe that the church is called to do more than evangelism. We have four reasons for being in the Assemblies

All God asks us is to pray hard, work hard, believe hard — and then leave the results in His hands.



of God, not one. But evangelism is the crucial factor. If we are making new converts, we are gaining ground on the culture, for a true convert is also a worshipper, disciple, and compassionate person. If we are not making new converts — if we are just maintaining what we currently have — then we are actually losing ground. The only way forward in an increasingly post-Christian nation is mission.

So, once again, I would ask pastors whether they are filled with the Spirit right now, are they leading their people to be filled, and are they leading their church toward the lost?

## What are you personally believing God for in this season of ministry?

**WOOD:** Several months ago I had a dream in which I sensed the Lord asking me, "If I could do one thing for you, what would it be?" I thought of Solomon's request for wisdom and Jabez' prayer. But another alternative came quickly to my mind. I said, "Lord, if You could just give me one thing, I ask for Your favor." So, I am believing for God's favor on my life and family, my work and ministry, and upon this Assemblies of God fellowship.

## Any final words of encouragement for pastors who are struggling to "believe" in this current season of ministry?

**WOOD:** My parents were pioneer ministers in the Fellowship. Their names were never in the "lights." They were not well known. They were never asked to speak at a district council or General Council — in fact, they could not even afford to go to most of them. They labored in hard places with little visible result. But today the works they established are all flourishing — and some with amazing results. My mother used to say to me, "On that day, God will not ask us if we have been successful, He will ask us have we been faithful." That's a word of encouragement I constantly give. All God asks us is to pray hard, work hard, believe hard — and then leave the results in His hands.

#### Note

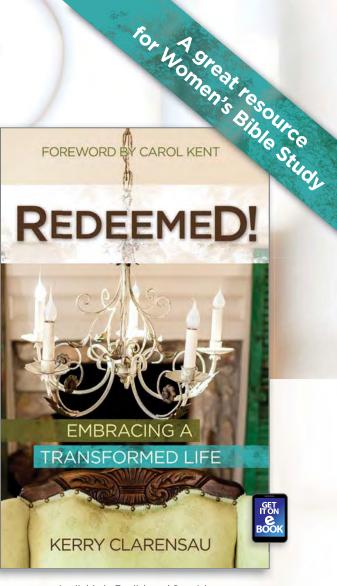
See, for example, George 0. Wood, "Open Reply to Phil Snider's 'Open Letter,' " http:// georgeowood.com/open-reply-to-rev-phil-sniders-open-letter/.

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## BELIEVING GOD for SPIRRIE EMPOWERMENT

By L. Alton Garrison

Are believers in the church abandoning Spirit-empowerment because of our failure to give them access to it in the first place?



e seek extraordinary experiences. We reflect our passion for a life beyond the mundane in everything from our quest for career success to our entertainment priorities and even to what we expect in our corporate worship.

#### **Believing God for Spirit-Empowerment**

(continued from page 85)

Regarding that second category, John Bevere tells us, "The most loved popular films that have captured the hearts and attention of the public involve extraordinary powers. There's *Spider Man, Superman, The Incredible Hulk,* the *Star Wars* saga, the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. ... Add to this mix the movies with extraordinary heroes who do remarkable feats and live exceptional lives. ... As of 2009, 17 of the top 25 all-time blockbuster movies fall under these categories. That's almost 70 percent, and the percentage varies only slightly if you extend the poll to the top 50."<sup>1</sup>

This generation seems preoccupied with the paranormal. From films such as *The Avengers, The Twilight Saga,* and the *Harry Potter* series — to the books and comic books on which producers based these films — superheroes, vampires, young wizards, and other characters beyond the natural realm monopolize the attention of millions.

Young audiences are well aware of the mythical nature of such stories, but Hulk, Ironman, Thor, and the like still entertain them. Why? I believe they understand an underlying life truth — that there is a reality beyond the material world, and that a greater power is at work in this universe. Think how privileged is the church. Beyond gleaning symbolic truth from mythical characters, as followers of Christ we can experience a very real presence and power beyond human capacity. We can be Spirit-empowered.

The primary purpose of Spirit-empowerment is to carry out the transformative mission of God among the lost. With the challenges facing the church today, attempting to affect change in the lives of people by merely using our own ingenuity, intellect, and human effort is senseless.

God has not abandoned us to that fruitless recourse. When we take hold of the Spirit's power, He fully equips and emboldens us to confront our lost world with the hope of the gospel.

## **PART-TIME PENTECOSTALS**

Sadly, it appears that believers in many corners of the church



are either abandoning Spirit-empowerment or have failed to access it in the first place. I fear that if the Holy Spirit were taken completely from a church, many elements of the work of that church would go on as if nothing had happened.

What a travesty of what every church was meant to be. And can this also be true of our personal lives? Are many of us in our area of ministry calling churning out "Christian" activity day to day that has no touch of God on it?

Without that touch, most powerfully brought about through the Holy Spirit's infilling and influence, believers hobble their effective participation in the Great Commission. A.W. Tozer offered this observation, counterintuitive

at first blush to the follower of Christ anxious to be of service in the Kingdom: "The popular notion that the first obligation of the church is to spread the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth is false. *Her first obligation is to be spiritually worthy to spread it* [emphasis his]. Our Lord said,



'Go ye,' but He also said, 'Tarry ye,' and the tarrying had to come before the going. Had the disciples gone forth as missionaries before the Day of Pentecost it would have been an overwhelming spiritual disaster."<sup>2</sup>

I believe churches that have diluted the original mission statement of our Lord merit the warning issued to the prophet Jeremiah: " 'My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water' " (2:13). Such churches have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof in their half-hearted acquisition of the Spirit's leading and power. These churches have cut themselves off from the spring of living water and subsequently have nothing with which to fill their cisterns. What is left is an empty shell, merely an empty hull of theology.

These churches are Pentecostal sometimes — when it is convenient, when it is safe, when it is socially correct. Such believers are part-time Pentecostals. They have traded holiness for hype; they have forgotten righteousness in their pursuit of ritual; they have mastered the form of religion while sacrificing the force of the Spirit.

Part-time Pentecostals are high-maintenance/low-impact Christians. They boast of great authority, but are devastated at the first attack of the enemy. They know all their biblical rights, but recognize few of their responsibilities.

There is only one antidote to such a crisis. It is breathtaking in its possibility, it is awesome in its power, and it is liberating in its effect. It is quite simply the anointing. The anointing is the power of the Holy Spirit. At the end of the day there is no better definition. The anointing is the power of God to do the work of God in an ungodly world.

Steve Franklin, founder and president of Covenant Heirs International, defines the anointing succinctly: "The anointing is supernatural ability for a specialized assignment."3

What is your specialized assignment? What is the specialized mission statement of your church or ministry? Where precisely do you fit within the divine framework of the Great Commission? The anointing will lead you to identify that assignment and will empower you to fulfill it.

## A SPIRIT-EMPOWERED CHURCH IS A MISSIONAL CHURCH

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8, ESV<sup>4</sup>).

I fear that if the Holy Spirit were taken completely from a church, many elements of the work of that church would go on as if nothing had happened.

## THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT IS NECESSARY FOR THE CHURCH TO REACH ITS POTENTIAL

When we think of an assignment, we naturally envision a goal. We understand the task we are to achieve. It lies ahead of us as our God-created potential. We need to be Spirit-empowered if we are to fulfill that potential and realize that goal.

The Early Church was not great because of its prosperity, planning, size, or structure. The Book of Acts does not glamorize the Church or create the kinds of myths discussed above. Early Christians were very ordinary people dealing with the kind of ridicule and opposition the church continues to face.

Their leaders had questionable backgrounds and most were not well educated (4:13).

They had limited financial resources (4:32).

Jealousy plagued them (5:17; 17:5).

They met in houses (Acts 5:42).

They faced racism (10:15).

Superstition was prevalent (14:11).

They struggled with legalism (15:1,2).

They encountered paganism (17:22,23).

They confronted witchcraft (19:19).

The Early Church was great because of the presence of God. The Spirit empowered these followers of Christ to impact and shape a world that, instead of recognizing the Messiah, believed the Romans had crucified a Jewish teacher from Nazareth. It took the power of the Spirit to break through this deceptive ignorance and carry the gospel — as communicated by Peter, Paul, Apollos, and Priscilla and Aquila — to the hearts of lost multitudes. Luke mentioned the Holy Spirit (or Spirit) 55 times in 28 chapters; the Holy Spirit is the central character in the Book of Acts. The Spirit made the Church's potential become a world-changing reality. One of the Articles of Faith included in the Cape Town Commitment — the document created at Cape Town 2010: The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit to the mission of the Church. "We love the Holy Spirit within the unity of the Trinity, along with God the Father and God the Son. He is the missionary Spirit sent by the missionary Father and the missionary Son, breathing life and power into God's missionary Church. We love and pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit because without the witness of the Spirit to Christ, our own witness is futile. Without the convicting work of the Spirit, our preaching is in vain. Without the gifts, guidance and power of the Spirit, our mission is mere human effort. And without the fruit of the Spirit, our unattractive lives cannot reflect the beauty of the gospel."<sup>5</sup>

The esteemed missiologist Arthur Glasser put it this way: "So then, we do not want to limit the Holy Spirit only to the work of awakening faith (justification) and to the work of perfecting faith (sanctification). The Spirit must primarily be seen as the driving force behind any and all movements of the people of God outward, beyond the frontiers of faith, to share the gospel with those who have not yet heard it. Mission means movement from Christ by His Spirit to the world He reconciled. As such it stands in sharpest contrast to the individualistic or ecclesiastical introversion so common in large segments of the contemporary Christian scene."<sup>6</sup>

My friend Denny Miller has written extensively about the Holy Spirit and the mission of God. In his book, *The Spirit of God in Mission*, he writes, "The church faces a great challenge. More than 2,000 years ago Jesus commissioned His church to take the gospel to every nation and people on earth (Matthew 28:18–20; cf. 24:14). Today, as never before, that goal is within reach. Missiologists today talk of *closure*,

## **Believing God for Spirit-Empowerment**

(continued from page 87)

or completing Christ's commission."7

How could that happen? Is it possible? It is only possible with God's enabling.

When Luke wrote to the Early Church, many had lost their spiritual fervor and missionary zeal. The divine prescription for missional effectiveness Luke recorded was for God's people to be empowered by the Holy Spirit and radically committed to Christ's mission. We are empowered as a result of a spiritual experience called the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

"Just as Jesus had demanded that His disciples be filled with the Holy Spirit before they began their ministries, the apostles demanded that their disciples be filled with the Spirit before they began their ministries. In that way, the work would continue to progress and move forward unabated."<sup>8</sup>

Let's believe for a fresh renewal, a mighty outpouring of God's power.

## THE BENEFITS OF SPIRIT-EMPOWERMENT

"For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them" (Romans 12:4–6, ESV).

"You have an anointing from the Holy One. ... The anointing you received from him remains in you" (1 John 2:20,27).

"Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

Consider who Christ is. He is the Anointed One. That is what His name means, that is how He lived and ministered, and that is how the Holy Spirit empowered Him to carry out His life-giving mission. How will you succeed? You must integrate with the Spirit's anointing every gifting God has given you, every measure of wisdom

with which you are blessed, every human resource put at your disposal.

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To understand how the Holy Spirit helps each one utilize his or her gift, think about electricity. Electricity is generic in its flow, but specific in its output. When electricity flows into your house, it is generic; but whatever you plug into the current determines its output. If you plug in a heater, you get



Beyond gleaning symbolic truth from mythical characters, as followers of Christ we can experience a very real presence and power beyond human capacity. We can be Spiritempowered. heat. If you plug in an air conditioner, you get cool air.

When the Holy Spirit anoints you, you clarify and accentuate your gift. If you are a teacher, you teach better. If you lead worship, you will worship better. Preachers preach better, givers give more and give with greater joy, and every lay minister moves into his or her responsibilities with vision and excellence.

## THE ANOINTING WILL HELP YOU BE MORE THAN YOU ARE

Acts 1:8 promises, "But you will receive power. ..."

The Spirit helped a shepherd boy become a king, fishermen become disciples, a murderer in Egypt become a deliverer of a slave nation, and a carpenter become a Messiah.

Prayerfully consider the tasks God has placed before you. Do the obstacles seem like mountains? The same Spirit of power promised in the Old and New Testaments desires to give you what you need to do what God needs you to do.

" 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty" (Zechariah 4:6).

## THE ANOINTING WILL HELP YOU SAY MORE THAN YOU KNOW

In Acts 2:4 when the 120 spoke in tongues, the Spirit anointed them to speak. The word is *apopthengomai*. They spoke in languages they did not know. It means "Spirit-inspired speech."

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter stood and addressed the crowd and in his mother tongue he preached what in the Greek is called "Spirit-inspired speech" (Acts 2:14). The

word is *apopthengomai*. In the same way the Holy Spirit inspired tongues — languages we do not know — Peter spoke his own language and the Spirit of God equally inspired him.

When the Holy Spirit anoints us, He takes our words and uses them supernaturally. As a response to Peter's sermon, the people were cut to the heart and had to respond. The crowd went from "What does this mean?" to "What shall we do?" Three thousand were saved. When you are anointed by the Holy Spirit what you say in the marketplace or in the pulpit does not need to be your own words, but what you say is Spirit-inspired speech.

This journey with the Holy Spirit in Spirit-inspired speech begins with the initial baptism He brings with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. Make no mistake — an intense emotional experience in prayer is not the biblical evidence for Spirit baptism; glossolalia is. And that gift of tongues should continue throughout your spiritual growth and ministry.

Melvin Ho notes: "Essentially what the Holy Spirit teaches through Luke and Paul is that the baptism in the Spirit with tongues as the initial evidence is both a normal and normative experience (Acts 2:4; 1 Corinthians 14:5); the relation between the gift of tongues as a grace and ministry is that of continuum. The former is the initiation of the latter resulting in a growing edification of the body and the expansion of the kingdom of God."<sup>9</sup>

Some of you feel inadequate, unworthy, guilty, and unprepared because of past failures. But when you witness to a friend, teach a class, or make a decision in the market-

place you can give forth Spirit-inspired speech. You say what you have not studied, about things you have not learned, to people who know you do not know, and yet prophetically you are correct with your assessment.

When you meet those who are bruised and broken and open

your mouth, you need the Spirit's anointing to reach the world too wounded to ever be healed through human wisdom and eloquence. The anointing will help you speak more than you know.

## THE ANOINTING WILL HELP YOU DO MORE THAN YOU CAN DO

When you are anointed you can win battles against impossible odds.

Samson killed 1,000 with a jawbone; Shamgar killed 600 with an ox goad; Gideon overcame odds of 450 to 1 when 300 Israelites defeated 135,000 Midianites with trumpets, clay pots, and lamps.

What vision has God given you? Is He multiplying your passion for your neighborhood? Your community? Your world? In the same way that God could multiply human ability in opposition to human foes and let one man defeat hundreds or even 1,000, the Spirit of God can multiply human ability in the rescue of lost souls.

As you reaffirm your belief in the Spirit's empowerment of your life and ministry, there is truly no limit to what God can do through you.

## **CALLED TO PROCLAIM THE COMFORTER**

"And I will pray the Father," Jesus promised, "and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16, KJV).

Jesus was not merely promising the disciples a new source of power to be active in His own absence; He was directing them to receive the very empowering presence they had already observed in His own life and ministry.

Jesus was ... Begotten by the Spirit (Luke 1:35).

Empowered by the Spirit (Matthew 12:27,28). Led by the Spirit (Luke 4:1). Anointed by the Spirit (Luke 4:18). Baptized by the Spirit (John 1:32). Raised by the Spirit (Romans 8:11). Made our atonement by the Spirit (Hebrews 9:14).



Thus, in all that you communicate to your congregation about Christ, about His mission, and about His commission to His church, you have the additional responsibility and opportunity and privilege to call the church to be filled with and led by the Holy Spirit just as the Savior demonstrated throughout His life.

## **INTRODUCE THE PERSON OF THE SPIRIT**

The Holy Spirit is a Person, not an "it" and not merely a presence. He is not an attitude, atmosphere, or environment. He is a Person who talks, thinks, plans, and is infinitely wise and articulate. "He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak" (John 16:13, KJV).

The most important aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit is not His gifts, His inspiration, His enabling, His manifestation, or His miracles — but His personality. He is the executor of the Godhead, our Helper in our weakness, the

#### **Believing God for Spirit-Empowerment**

(continued from page 89)

source of power for our godly lifestyle, the revealer of God's will, the power of our intercession, the Spirit of our regen-eration. In each capacity, He is active as a divine Person in our lives.

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the Early Church in the most personal manner possible. To connect your church intimately with the Person of the Holy Spirit, you must determine to create an atmosphere of invitation to seek the Baptism. This does not require a special sermon series, a guest speaker, or a call to revival (although each of those strategies has a value of its own). If you will be intentional about placing the Baptism before your church in your preaching, in your altar invitations, in your Sunday School classrooms, in your small groups, and even in your church bulletins and other publications, that saturation strategy will yield results. You will see a multiplication of Spirit baptisms, and your church will experience the power for effective ministry attendant with that blessing.

## **PROCLAIM THE TRUTH OF THE SPIRIT**

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever — the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16,17). As you communicate the truth of God's Word in the many venues of your pastoral service, take hold of each opportunity to point to the Spirit who enlivens that truth.

In an age and a culture that has hijacked, diluted, and relegated truth to relativism, insist that a daily relationship with the Person of the Holy Spirit will inject clarity of vision and purpose into believers' lives.

## **ENDORSE THE TEACHING OF THE SPIRIT**

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26). Our age is one of ever-expanding sources of information. And yet, with billions of facts at our fingertips, our knowledge can become a mile wide and an inch deep.

Confront your congregants with a renewed vision of the Spirit as divine Teacher. He can direct and lead more concisely and effectively than every self-help best-seller, every self-identified expert, and every mass media talking head combined.

## LIVE IN THE VICTORY OF THE SPIRIT

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18,19).

Every time you stand before your church, you look out over a sea of life challenges and assorted sorrows. But no obstacle is insurmountable to the Spirit, no heartache too great to receive His supernatural comfort.

As you call for a full-time focus on the Spirit, you will

release a new anointing to proclaim the good news and enrich the spiritually impoverished. You will proclaim freedom from every form of bondage. You will point the spiritually blind to a new vision of the Father's love and the Savior's sacrifice. You will destroy the oppression of the enemy.

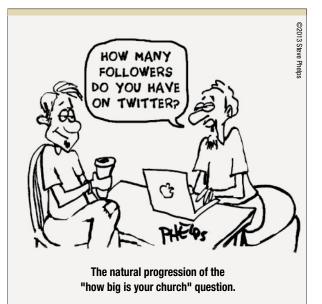
In the Spirit's power, you and your church can embark on a year of the Lord's favor never before experienced.



**L. ALTON GARRISON**, assistant general superintendent for The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri

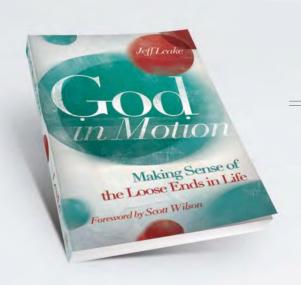
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## Seeking More of God's Presence?

IT'S ALL ABOUT SHOWING UP.



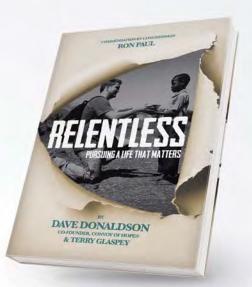
"In every situation – good times and bad, joy and grief – God is always at work."

~JEFF LEAKE

God in Motion offers a compelling response to the question, "Where is God?" Combining a winning honesty with captivating real-life stories and biblical references, Pastor Jeff Leake inspires encouragement by reminding us that even when God seems still, He is constantly moving on our behalf.

## "The Relentless will stop at nothing short of changing the world."

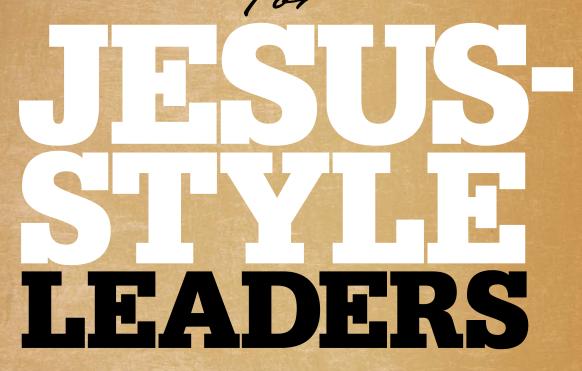
Relentless takes an honest look at some of the tragic problems faced by people across the globe, and introduces the Relentless Generation, who are joining forces around the world, allowing God to do something great in and through them to ease suffering and make the world a better place.





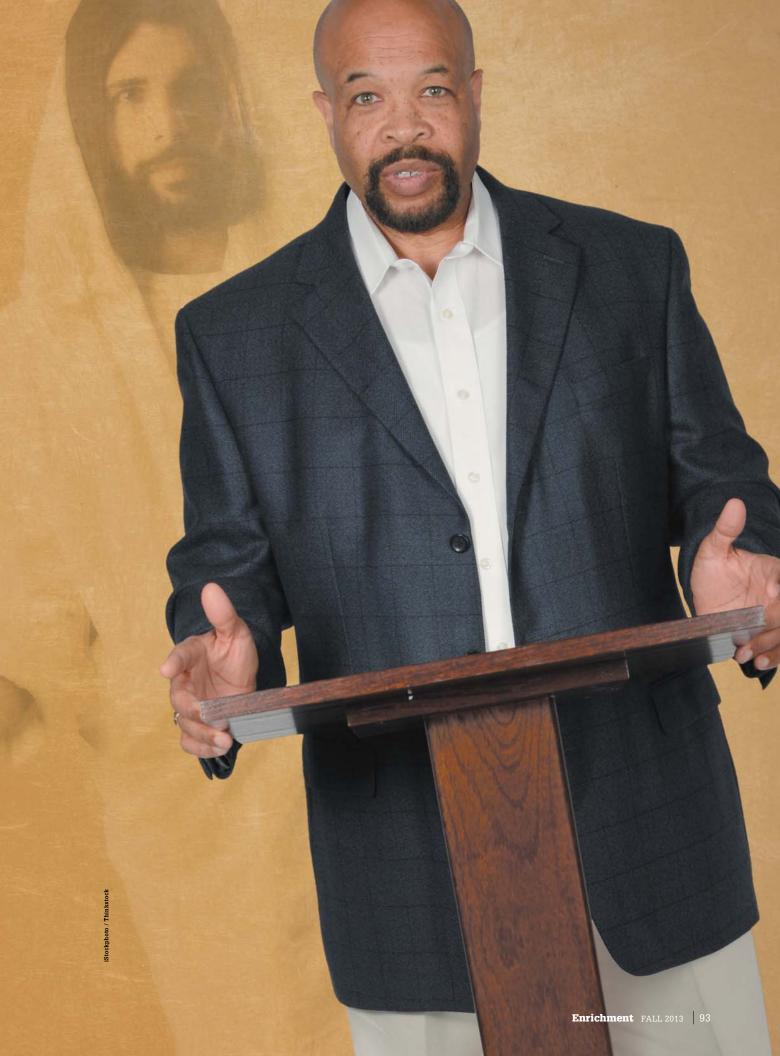


# BELIEVING GOD



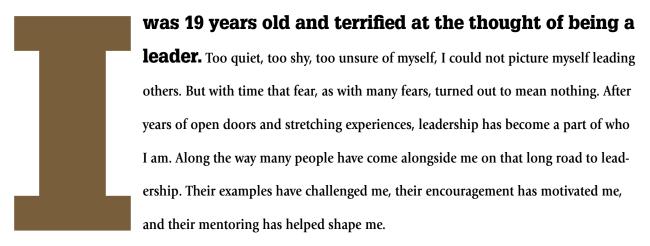
By James T. Bradford Photo by Lane Simmons

Where do you find a template for a better way to lead? Jesus modeled three defining characteristics of Pentecostal leadership.



### **Believing God for Jesus-Style Leaders**

(continued from page 93)



Next to loving Jesus, leading well and passing the baton of leadership on to the next generation are among our top priorities as the Assemblies of God steps into its second century. Our future rests both on God's enabling favor and on the emergence of healthy, transformational leaders who will build missionally fruitful, high-impact churches and outreaches.

Leadership is much more than simply surviving ministry from week to week. Leadership sees the big picture. Leadership peers into the future and points the direction to go. Leadership lifts people up and helps them achieve their Godgiven potential. Leadership encourages people to work in teams and gets out of the way to enable others to use their ministry gifts.

Unfortunately, that is not always the way it is with leadership in the church. In his book, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*, Scottish preacher James S. Steward surveyed the landscape of religious leadership in Jesus' time and summarized it this way: "The Pharisees had externalized religion ... the scribes had professionalized religion ... the Sadducees had secularized religion ... [and] the Zealots had nationalized



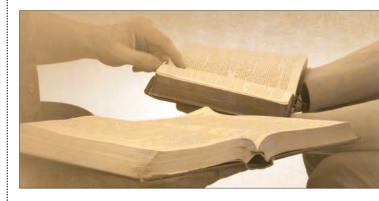
religion." It struck me one day that if I was not careful, vocational religious leadership could do the same thing to me. Unchecked, it had the toxic power to leave me externally superficial, professionally detached, hopelessly cynical, and far too political.

Where do we find the template for a better way? In Luke 6:12–19, Jesus answers this question with His own example. Here, at a pivotal moment early in His ministry, we encounter Jesus the leader. In three sequential events Jesus timelessly modeled the three defining characteristics of Pentecostal leadership — leadership that is spiritual, leadership that is relational, and leadership that is missional.

## PENTECOSTAL LEADERSHIP IS SPIRITUAL

"Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God" (Luke 6:12).

Jesus engaged issues spiritually before He did anything else. Authentic Pentecostal leaders do the same. Our motto is more than just rhetoric: " 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty" (Zechariah 4:6).



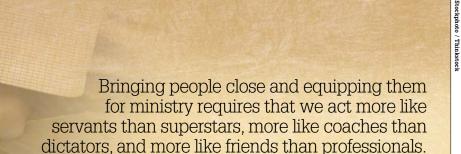
Regrettably, it is an all too human tendency to decouple public leadership from personal spirituality. Chuck Miller, in his book *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders*, describes the problem this way: "The church has tended to move type A people into leadership and the more reflective people toward prayer and spirituality. We end up forcing people to make an unnecessary choice between spirituality and leadership."

That, however, is an artificial and unnecessary bifurcation. Personal spirituality and public leadership must walk hand in hand. Many of us in leadership pray too little and work too much. But Jesus' prayerful lifestyle reminds us that leadership in His church is first of all a spiritual activity. It demands we go deep before we go wide. Men and women of God throughout history have believed that, if we will take care of the depth of our lives, God will take care of the breadth of our influence. This is deep before wide, intimacy with Christ before work for Christ.

This intimacy, in turn, fuels supernatural ministry. Miles Sanford, in his book on discipleship, lists the names of many great heroes of the faith from the past 200 years — people like Jonathan Goforth, D.L. Moody, Amy Carmichael, John Hyde, Hudson Taylor, George Mueller, and many others. He then makes the insightful observation that, on average, it took 15 years for these great spiritual leaders to go from "working for Christ" to "Christ working through them."

That is also our journey as Pentecostal leaders. Having been Spirit-filled, we are pruned so we bear more fruit (John 15:2). We become increasingly unimpressed with ourselves and ever more convinced that without Jesus' life we can do nothing (John 15:5). As a result, we come to delight in abiding in Christ (John 15:7) through dying to ourselves, hungering for God, immersing ourselves in His Word, and walking in the resurrection power of Christ. In short, we shift from depending on ourselves to living by His Spirit, from focusing on our efforts to walking in His life.

At a particularly plateaued time in my pastoral ministry, the Lord spoke to me to go into the church sanctuary several days a week, walk the rows of seats, and do nothing but pray in the Spirit for an hour. The church was doing fine, but I had come



to the end of my creativity and had run out of ideas. I was maintaining but felt at a loss as to how to lead the church to the next level.

By obediently walking that sanctuary and praying in tongues, the Lord was making it possible for me to meet Him at the end of myself. He was offloading from me the pressure of the church's future and taking it onto himself. The Holy Spirit was praying through me the mind of the Father (Romans 8:27) when my mind had no idea how to pray anymore. It was God's mercy to bring me to this place. In the years following I experienced a certain effortlessness and fruitfulness in leading that church that I had not experienced earlier.

Pentecostal, Jesus-styled leadership is first of all spiritual. It is praying hard and having faith. That is where Jesus started first the 40 days in the wilderness and then specific nights of prayer before any ongoing, strategic next steps in ministry. For the Early Church that would later come to mean the Upper Room before the outer courts, the Day of Pentecost before a legacy of world-changing ministry.

## LEADERSHIP IS RELATIONAL

"When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles" (Luke 6:13).

Jesus knew that preaching to large crowds alone would not serve His larger mission. In his classic book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, Robert Coleman writes: "While the church is looking for methods to move the multitudes, God is looking for men [and women] whom the multitudes will follow." People are God's agenda. So immediately after spending all night in prayer, Jesus chose 12 men to be with Him and to share His authority.

I have often heard our general superintendent, Dr. George O. Wood, say "ministry flows out of relationship." The kingdom of God is relational to its core. Jesus understood that and lived it. At some point early in our leadership lives we, too, need to take responsibility for having people around us who know us well, know how to pray for us specifically, and know how to partner with us in ministry. These are the inner circle of

> people we live with at home, serve with at church, and network with as peers. They may also include ministry coaches and even non-Christians who can help keep us grounded and in touch.

> Clarence St. John, superintendent of the Minnesota District, has adopted a wonderful relational strategy for the ministers in his district. He has built it around the symbolic visual of putting one hand up, one hand out, and one hand down. The hand up

is to receive from leaders more experienced in ministry. The hand out is peer mentoring, reaching out to fellow ministers at similar levels of experience. The hand down is investing in someone with less experience.

Although our time is limited and we may be separated geographically, we need each other. Technology is making this easier and we have few excuses. We dare not lead alone. What would happen if every leader put a hand up, a hand out, and a hand down? Jesus reached His hand toward 12 men in Luke 6, after praying all night, and in so doing set an example of leadership for all who would follow Him.

### **Believing God for Jesus-Style Leaders**

(continued from page 95)

As leaders, Christ's example radically reorients the way we understand our roles and spend our time. Bringing people close and equipping them for ministry requires that we act more like servants than superstars, more like coaches than dictators, and more like friends than professionals. Our leadership styles will need to become less personality-driven and more people-centered. Jesus' example strips away our sense of entitlement and makes us servants to the spiritual potential of those we lead. and become far too controlling. This, in turn, devalues and demotivates gifted people and pushes them away. As one pastor friend put it, "We take the smartest people in our churches and put them in the most mindless roles."

Jesus modeled a better way to lead. Early in His ministry, Jesus decided He would balance the demands of the multitudes with time to build friendships, personalize ministry, equip potential leaders, and trust people to serve. The ministry-empowering fire

Jesus' prayerful lifestyle reminds us that leadership in His church is first of all a spiritual activity. It demands we go deep before we go wide.

Frustratingly, this is where our egos and insecurities get in the way. Except for praying, getting the right people around us doing the right things is some of the hardest and most important work we do as leaders. But when we lead out of our insecurities, we become too self-protecting and undermine the potential of everyone around us. Intimidated by having strong individuals on our team, we hold on to ministry too tightly of Pentecost would later fall on all who were gathered, not just a few leaders. Jesus decided, in essence, to not only minister *to* people, but *through* people. To this day the growth of many churches is dependent on that pivotal leadership decision.

## PENTECOSTAL LEADERSHIP IS MISSIONAL

Immediately after praying through the night and then

## A Commitment to Holistic Pentecostal Leadership

In our focus on praise,

... we will not forget prayer;

In our focus on leadership,

... we will not forget love;

In our focus on ministry models, ... we will not forget the Spirit's voice;

In our focus on creativity,

... we will not forget a spiritual encounter;

In our focus on social justice,

... we will not forget a verbalized gospel.

choosing His closest associates, Jesus "went down with them" into a large crowd (Luke 6:17). "Those troubled by impure spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all" (Luke 6:17,18). Leadership that is spiritual and relational must ultimately become leadership that is missional.

Jesus, in Acts 1:8, firmly linked Spirit to mission: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." We cannot be Pentecostal in identity if we are not missional in priority and activity. The baptism in the Holy Spirit leaves us no alternative but to be mission-minded and mission-involved, both locally and globally.

After the spiritual and the relational — praying all night and selecting the Twelve — Jesus descended into the crowd "with them" to where people were sick, demonized, and lost, but where "power was coming from him and healing them all" (Luke 6:18). His example calls us as missional leaders to go with Him as well, and change the world. Inwardness and lack of vision to reach lost people misses what God is doing and is fatal to our future.

Louis Pasteur lived at a time when thousands of people died each year of rabies. Pasteur, a scientist, had worked for years on a vaccine. Just as he was about to begin experimenting on himself, a rabid dog bit Joseph Meister, a 9-year-old boy. The boy's mother begged Pasteur to experiment on her son. Pasteur injected Joseph for 10 days, and the boy lived.

Decades later, of all the things Louis Pasteur could have asked to have written on his gravestone, he asked for just three words: Joseph Meister Lived. Those words frame the legacy of Christ's living church. People will live eternally because of our investment in Christ's mission. Our calling is not to focus on ourselves or play to the preferences of people who think more like spiritual consumers than servant ministers. It is to proclaim the gospel and mobilize Christ's church to do all it can to reach spiritually lost people.

The great missionary pastor from Canada, Oswald J. Smith, wrote in his convicting book, *The Cry of the World*, "We should have kept before us our Lord's post-Resurrection commands. We should have evangelized the world. Otherwise we have no ground for our existence as a church. There is no reason why we should have churches unless they are reaching out to those who have never heard."

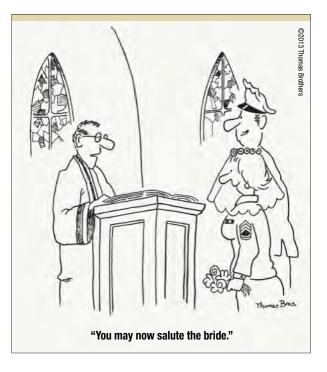
Change is difficult in many of our churches, and change for change's sake is a useless exercise. But change that is motivated and necessitated by our mission to effectively reach people is change that we must never give up on. Missional leaders courageously solve problems and remove obstacles to reaching lost and hurting people. Missional leaders relentlessly seek results and find ways to get things done. Missional leaders never take refuge in the predictable or the familiar or the safe. Jesus said, "Go," so they do not "sit."

Worldwide, the Assemblies of God fellowship has grown by over 40 million people in the last 25 years. Every 25 seconds someone comes to faith through the witness of an Assemblies of God ministry somewhere in the world, and we plant a new church every 42 minutes. God's Spirit is moving, and through Spirit-empowered, missional people Jesus is still keeping a promise He made 2,000 years ago — "I will build my church."

We thank God for what He has done to bring us this far as a Fellowship. But there is a sense among us that we have yet to see our greatest days, should Jesus tarry. Essential to that future will be a generation of empowered leaders whom God will raise up. These will be Jesus-styled leaders, humble leaders, Pentecostal leaders, who are authentically spiritual, personally relational, and actively missional. May we surrender ourselves to such ends and commit ourselves to be Pentecostal leaders who holistically serve and mentor in the power of the Spirit, shaping a future dedicated to God's glory and the building of Christ's church.



JAMES T. BRADFORD, Ph.D., general secretary for The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri





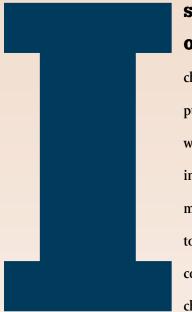
By **Doug Clay** Photos by Lane Simmons

When you think of prophetic relevance, think in terms of four key principles.

# NEED HELPI GODBLESS

PHILIPPINE T

Believing God for a Prophetically Relevant Church (continued from page 99)



## s it just me, or does it seem like churches are

**obsessed** with applying corporate labels into the description of their churches? From emergent to classical Pentecostal, from seeker sensitive to purpose driven, I do not think God ever intended the church to be a place where we divide people into "worship warfare sects." Likewise, God never intended the church to be a business with a steeple on its roof, where people merely filter in and out of the doors. The church is a place where we minister to people, applying Acts 2 principles into the 21st-century context. It is my conviction that we should have a sense of prophetic relevance — a call for the church to be wholly biblically relevant and culturally literate.

When you think of prophetic relevance, think in terms of four key principles.

## **GENUINELY LOVE AND ACCEPT PEOPLE**

As a pastor, do not view people as a means to an end, but as the entire reason why we do church.

I recently spoke at a church; and, as I engaged the pastor in conversation about the health of the congregation, he excitedly told me, "We process about 1,500 people a week."

The Christian church is not a manufacturing plant. We serve people. We minister to people. We present the gospel to people, believing it will transform them. I grew up in a church environment where spiritual leaders and elders saw me for who I could be, not just who I was at the time.

This is my prayer for our churches: that we do not simply



view people as a statistic for an attendance goal; that we realize our pews are filled with more than figures to be filed in an annual report; and that we recognize each individual as being prepared by God to make an impact on culture. It is a prayer for prophetic relevance as our leaders cannot help but focus on the inherent and divine value placed in all people to whom they minister.

The Early Church was

relevant because it was committed to several core ministry functions. Those who came together were committed to worship, discipleship, fellowship, evangelism, and ministry. Those functions were a natural part of the DNA of the church. They did not need a particular brand identity to influence society. These people worshipped and did not have to say they were purpose driven. They loved and did not have to call themselves seeker sensitive. Changed lives, not just contemporary labels, should characterize our brand. If we ever have to modify our theology to fit into culture, we are in a dangerous place.

When you think about it, the culture has never embraced the message of the Cross. I do not want to be so preoccupied with trying to fit into culture that I am viewed as superfluous.

Os Guinness, in his book, *Prophetic Untimeliness*, maintains that there is a link between the irrelevance of the church today and the pursuit of relevance by church leaders:

"By our uncritical pursuit of relevance, we have actually courted irrelevance; by our breathless chase after relevance without a matching commitment to faithfulness, we have become not only unfaithful, but irrelevant; by our determined efforts to redefine ourselves in ways that are more compelling to the modern world than we are faithful to Christ, we have lost not only our identity, but our authority and our relevance. Our crying needs us to be faithful as well as relevant."

The Bible transcends cultures, fads, and trends. Scriptural truths remain relevant for the 21st century. Prophetic relevance starts with, sustains through, and will always be supported by the truth in Scripture.

## **CONSISTENTLY FEED PEOPLE**

One of my overriding concerns for our church today is biblical literacy. For instance, we tend to believe our experiences produce faith, but that's not biblically accurate. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). God's Word has the ability to protect our thinking and anchor our emotions when we experience those "why is this happening to me?" moments.

Scripture has an incredible sustaining ability. For example, college students may leave the comforts of home and their church and become enmeshed in secular surroundings that challenge their values. The question at that point is not just about their experiences, but whether they have the biblical literacy necessary to handle the new climate in which they find themselves.

It is particularly important that churches provide basic scriptural literacy — not just entertainment — for their attendees. This particularly becomes important when you consider that we live in a time where culture places a higher value on tolerance than it does on truth.

There is a growing demand for people to connect with authenticity in the church. Most people, especially younger people, want authenticity and sincerity and biblical clarity. At times, hype and energy might attract them, but such elements will not keep them. And it is not so much the intensity of our presentation that draws them. Deep down, they are interested in knowing the answer to the question, "Does this church help me grow deeper in my faith and become better able to do what God intends me to do and be who He intends me to be?"

Part of the pastor's job is to help people become God reliant, not church reliant. We have all seen the negative ramifications of those who have become more addicted to the church than they are to the Lord.

Let us not lose the centrality of the Word of God as our foundation. It is one thing for society to reject displaying the Ten Commandments in government places, but I do not relish the idea of a biblically illiterate church. I do not want to be known as part of the generation that essentially let go of the Word of God.

Such a scenario happened before.

When Josiah became king, he inherited a nation (a church, if you will) that had lost the Word of God. Consider his heritage. Josiah's grandfather, Manasseh, sacrificed his own sons to Molech and instituted fortune telling. Amon, Josiah's father, was one of Israel's most wicked and despicable kings. Two of his own servants killed him.

But part of Josiah's legacy was the rebuilding of the temple and, in doing so, he rediscovered the Word of God: "The high priest Hilkiah said to Shaphan the secretary, 'I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord.' When Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, he read it" (2 Kings 22:8, NRSV<sup>1</sup>).

Is it really possible to lose the Word of God in the House of God? Long before there was an Occupy Wall Street movement, Martin Luther staged one of the most important protests in history. He was upset because Roman Catholic officials were promising people forgiveness or early escape from purgatory in exchange for money. So, on October 31, 1517, Luther nailed a long list of complaints on the door of a church in Wittenberg, Germany.

Luther's famous 95 *Theses* spread like fire. Just as the prophet Jeremiah did during the reign of Josiah (Jeremiah 1 and 2), Luther dared to ask questions people had never asked. Through Luther, the Holy Spirit sparked the Protestant Reformation and restored the doctrine of grace to a church that had become corrupt, legalistic, dysfunctional, and spiritually dead. Prophetic relevance had returned once again as people grasped the timeless and enduring Word of God.

It is no different today. If people in the church do not anchor their lives and value systems in Scripture, their feelings and human logic instead of the truth of the Bible can easily sway them.

I sometimes see it happening in my life — when I go through the tough times and my "self" starts to lie to me. My

emotions do not always tell me reality and life becomes a little less clear. In those moments, I have learned that I need something far beyond myself, something whose wisdom is high above that of this world. I need the Truth — the Word of the Living God.

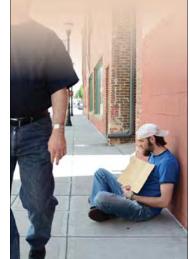
## EQUIP PEOPLE TO DO MINISTRY

The strength of the church is tied to how effectively those in the church are using their gifts in ministry. First Peter 4:9–11 illustrates this principle. We should use the gift God provides without grumbling, but with the complete assurance that He will give us the strength needed for the occasion.

Engaging people in ministry is as much for their benefit as it is for the benefit of the church. After all, doing ministry can contribute to their spiritual growth and serve as a remedy against spiritual fatigue.

We often think that we only need to pray and read Scripture for spiritual development to happen in our lives. But there is a third and essential element of engagement: use your gift.

By building a bridge out of these three elements courtesy, sympathy, and honesty we can establish an element of trust with people.



### **Believing God for a Prophetically Relevant Church**

(continued from page 101)

Jesus warned us in a parable that if we sit on our gift, we are in danger of losing it (Matthew 25:14–30).

Christians who have been saved for a long time sometimes get frustrated with ministry changes and cultural shifts because they feel they can no longer use their gifts. However, I have observed that intentionally staying involved in ministry can not only bring continued fulfillment; it can actually keep you young. My 81-year-old mother, Audrey Clay, is an example of this reality. Even though the church she attends has significantly changed with the times, she remains faithfully engaged in ministry. She and her friends have developed an "As Unto the Lord" club. Every day this group looks for an area of ministry where they can serve somebody. Through this endeavor and others, I have watched my mom stay involved at Bethany Assembly of God, a church my parents pastored for over 20 years in Adrian, Michigan. Though my dad went to be with the Lord more than 40 years ago, and though the church has gone through many changes, my mom continues to use the gifts God has given her, without grumbling, and with the strength He alone provides. As a result, she is encouraged, full of joy, and has the energy of a 50-year-old person. As the church intentionally equips people in their gifting, it will not only see those individuals grow in the faith, but help them combat the spiritual fatigue that can hinder some of their greatest achievements.

## **MODEL CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR**

How can a prophetically relevant voice build a bridge rather than be a barrier to the unchurched? The best way the church can build a bridge to its community is to model Christian behavior. In most communities, unbiblical values are the norm and are culturally accepted.

When Christians demonstrate courtesy instead of rudeness, we can begin to have a prophetic voice in the world around us. Proverbs 11:11 declares, "Upright citizens are good for a city and make it prosper, but the talk of the wicked tears it apart" (NLT<sup>2</sup>).

The Bible repeatedly teaches us we can speak into the lives of those around us by using the right type of speech. Proverbs 18:21 says, "Words kill, words give life; they're either poison or fruit — you choose" (*The Message*). But we also can gain influence by using the right kind of manners. First Peter 2:17 advises, "Treat everyone you meet with dignity" (*The Message*).

We live in a rude, self-centered and, at times, obnoxious society. Paul counters the prevailing mood of the culture: "Believers shouldn't curse anyone or be quarrelsome, but they should be gentle and show courtesy to everyone" (Titus 3:2, *God's Word Translation*<sup>3</sup>). There is that word *courtesy* again.

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There is nothing more contradictory to the testimony of a Christian than seeing someone who is wearing a WWJD bracelet and treating someone with impertinence.

When you think about it, the people, places, and institutions we encounter in culture are sometimes the very ones that need to hear and to see a respectful disposition. And we can gain that opportunity by being courteous. If the body of Christ would lace their actions with dignity toward bank tellers, store clerks, and restaurant servers, what kind of an impact would that make?

Another way the church can model Christian behavior to a culture with different values is to express sympathy appropriately. Colossians 3:12 instructs, "As holy people whom God has chosen and loved, be sympathetic, kind, humble, gentle and patient" (*God's Word Translation*).

I am not just talking about token sympathy. On the contrary, this involves really empathizing how people feel in the midst of a crisis. By doing this, you put yourself in a position to better understand and affirm another's feelings, what that person is going through at that moment — even if you do not necessarily experience it yourself. Such sympathy provides relief to the person in need of understanding. Galatians 6:2 says, "Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ."

A third way we give prophetic voice to the culture is by learning how to bless others by speaking honestly, even if it's inconvenient or even if we would rather ignore the situation entirely. If we value relationships, our friendship can draw someone who isn't following Christ closer to Christ. Too many relationships are carried out at a superficial level, ultimately destroyed by dishonesty. But Proverbs 24:26 declares, "It is an honor to receive an honest reply."

Of course, speaking the truth in love does not give me license to lambaste people; relationships need trust. The apostle Paul notes in Ephesians 4:15 that speaking the truth in love does not give us permission to verbally assault them. We must earn the right to be able to speak the truth in love in a secular culture.

By building a bridge out of these three elements — courtesy, sympathy, and honesty — we can establish an element of trust with people.

Prophetic relevance does not mean reciting a litany of passages from Minor Prophets in the Old Testament about God's judgment on people. It does not mean getting in the face of others with a bullhorn to your mouth and a placard in your hand. It does not mean standing on the steps in a sports stadium shouting "Repent or die!"

No, the practical way to have a prophetic voice in a secular culture when the world's values are not the same is learning the art and practicing the science of demonstrating courtesy, expressing sympathy, and speaking honestly.

Sometimes our mere presence can make a deep and lasting impression. Job's friends did the right thing the first 7 days after he went through his series of horrific events. They just stayed with him and wept. They said nothing (Job 2:12,13).

Before we try to change culture by passing out tracts to strangers or conducting mass evangelism rallies, perhaps a better method is to develop a relationship with one or two people. Before we start railing on them about their advocacy of cultural issues that are not aligned with our values, we should show them courtesy, express sympathy and speak honestly — and thus earn the right to present the gospel to them.



**DOUG CLAY**, general treasurer for The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri

#### Notes

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is the same, but I do believe the pocket lint has doubled."







# BELIEVING GOD for UNREACHED IIOIIII CROUPS

By Greg Mundis

## You don't measure yourself by your success but by the unfinished task.

## hat we believe shapes our priorities and determines how we live.

We believe, as the founders of our Fellowship did, that our Lord commands us to proclaim His gospel and establish His church in all the world. We also believe, as our early leaders did, the Lord's promise that His Spirit would empower us to accomplish that mission.

#### **Believing God for Unreached People Groups**

(continued from page 105)

Recent statistics reveal that the worldwide Assemblies of God now numbers 65 million. We rejoice in the church growth that has taken place in the last 100 years. Yet we know, as former Assemblies of God World Missions Executive Director Loren Triplett said, "You don't measure yourself by your success but by the unfinished task."

More than 4 billion people have not yet had an adequate witness of our Lord's saving message. The purpose of AGWM is "so all can hear." We must pay any price to keep fulfilling that purpose.

I recently preached at a new church plant in Istanbul, Turkey. Among those in the small congregation were 22 Muslim visitors. As I was sharing the message of salvation, the Islamic call to prayer rang out over the city. Although the call to prayer sounded in our ears, the visitors remained seated, listening attentively. The contrast was almost overwhelming. The message of Christ drowned out the Islamic call to prayer.

Several years ago I shared Christ with a Buddhist from Mongolia, and he became a believer. Many Hindus heard the gospel and several came to faith when I preached in Mumbai, India. At the request of a new believer in another location, I participated in a renaming ceremony during which he took a Christian name. This brother wanted this new name so he could be a witness in his community. In Africa, I have preached to animists who forsook their beliefs to receive Christ. In Europe, I have often shared the gospel with people bound by secularism and a Christless Christianity.

Every day AGWM personnel around the world confront people trapped in Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, animism, spiritism, Christless Christianity, and secularism. However, almost 3 billion people who adhere to the three largest pagan religions — Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism — live in places that are difficult to reach with the gospel. The descriptive term for those who are not easily accessible to the gospel is *Unreached People Groups* or *UPGs*.



## THE LOSTNESS OF HUMANITY

Before we can fully grasp the need of UPGs, we must understand the lostness of mankind and the biblical meaning of "peoples." Both are foundational to our understanding of the unreached.

The concept of lostness does not fit well into a seeker-sensitive paradigm. However, understanding that man is lost without Christ is fundamental to preaching the gospel. We must draw our conclusions of lostness from Scripture, and particularly from the words and example of Jesus.

Luke 19:10 states, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." Jesus' parable in Luke 15:4–7 compares the lost to sheep that have gone astray. Nothing is more important for the Shepherd than retrieving the lost sheep. In Luke 15:24, Jesus compares lostness to death and states that when a sinner repents, there is great rejoicing in heaven.

In Luke 5:31,32, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." We must renew our understanding that people without Christ are lost, and an eternity of suffering in hell awaits them. When we firmly grasp this concept along with Jesus' message, we can better appreciate the task of reaching the unreached.

## **REACHING UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS**

Unreached people groups have been a hot topic for evangelical Christians since Ralph Winter coined the term in 1974 at the Lausanne Conference for World Evangelization. This concept has had a profound effect on the mission strategy of evangelicals.

How do we define UPGs? Assemblies of God World Missions agrees with this widely accepted statement: "An unreached people group is an ethnolinguistic population among whom there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate number and resources to evangelize the rest of its members without outside (cross-cultural) assistance."

In 1921, our founding forefathers formulated our missiological stance, stating, "We will seek out neglected regions where the gospel has not yet been preached" (1921 Assemblies of God General Council resolution). We reaffirmed this stance in our statement of basic values in 1988: "Every person should hear the gospel in his own language and cultural context. The General Council of the Assemblies of God USA is a mandated steward of God's grace to disciple the people of all nations and cultures. This is our objective and urgent task before Jesus returns."

As recently as November 2011, the AGWM leadership team confirmed a commitment to reach the unreached with the gospel, acknowledging that an estimated 86 percent of Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists have never met a Bible-believing Christian. Former AGWM Executive Director John Bueno stated it clearly: "Many of our pioneers questioned the fairness of ministering to and nurturing Christians when so many people had not heard the name of Jesus even once. Jesus wants us to look beyond those who are already in the fold and reach out to those who need a clear witness of the Savior."

AGWM Communications Director Randy Hurst summarized the need well: "It's about access." We need to reach out to all people who have no or very limited access to the gospel.

The concept of limited access is hard for the average American Christian to understand. Why? Because in America there are 2,400 Christian radio stations, more than 100 Christian television stations, numerous Christian cable television networks, more than 1,000 Christian bookstores, and more than 130,000 evangelical churches that are proclaiming the gospel.

Such accessibility to the gospel is a stark contrast to what I saw in Istanbul, Turkey, a city of 18 million people. Fewer than 1,000 believers worship in the city, and accessibility to the gospel is limited. The same condition is true in many major cities around the world.

Our commitment to reach the unreached

and least reached grows not only out of a present-day understanding of lostness and unreached people groups but also out of our historically recognized precedence of pioneering the gospel in neglected regions. A Spirit-led, impassioned understanding of the opportunities and stewardship responsibilities we have as a mission has reignited this commitment to the unreached.

Several facts are important to remember:

Our commitment to reach the unreached and least reached grows not only out of a present-day understanding of lostness and unreached people groups but also out of our historically recognized precedence of pioneering the gospel in neglected regions.

**First: We recognize we are living in the age of an unprecedented outpouring of the Holy Spirit.** Since the initial 20th-century outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity has grown worldwide from less than 1 percent of Christianity to more than 27 percent. Pentecostals have an inherent responsibility to preach the gospel because we have been empowered to do so according to Acts 1:8.

### Access — Shouldn't Everyone Have a Chance?

Why should missionaries cross the sea when their next-door neighbors don't yet know Jesus?

It's about access.

The apostle Paul explained the challenge and responsibility faced by the Church, saying: "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? (Romans 10:14,15).

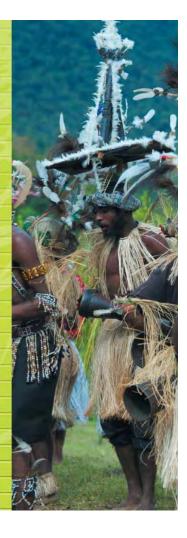
The desperate urgency of those who have never heard and the divine compulsion to tell them determined Paul's mission. The simplicity of salvation, the urgency of proclaiming the gospel, and the plight of those who had never heard formed the course of Paul's life and what he believed to be his future ministry.

He fully preached the gospel in unreached regions, not wanting to "build on another man's foundation" (Romans 15:20).

Of the nearly 7 billion people on earth today, more than 4 billion have not had an adequate witness to the gospel. Of this number, 3.6 billion live in countries that restrict access to Christian missionaries.

How can any of us who have experienced the blessed assurance of sins forgiven and everlasting life be unmoved by the desperate need of those who have never heard? We must do all we can to reach those who have no access to the gospel. Shouldn't everyone have a chance to call on the Lord's name and be saved?

RANDY HURST, communications director for Assemblies of God World Missions



#### **Believing God for Unreached People Groups**

(continued from page 107)

**Second: God has favored our mission.** Our history is full of stories of pioneers penetrating new territories with the gospel. The number of missionaries and missionary associates serving with AGWM has grown to more than 2,700. They reach into 252 countries, territories, and provinces and involve more than 65 million members of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship. With more than 355,000 churches — a number that grows by one church every 42 minutes — our

With our resident missionaries, developed partner network, and the outreaches of ministries with an international focus, such as Global Initiative and Global University, we are equipping and empowering believers around the world.

In many countries, it is difficult if not impossible for U.S. missionaries to acquire resident visas. However, our partners do not face this issue. For example, the Romanian fellowship started sending missionaries to other countries only 6 years

> have since sent out more than 35 missionaries, the majority of whom are serving in the 10/40 Window where it is difficult to acquire a visa for a U.S. citizen. This mission agency came about because of years of investment by our resident missionaries and Global Initiative.

ago. Believers there

Since the initial 20th-century outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity has grown worldwide from less than 1 percent of Christianity to more than 27 percent.

stewardship responsibility is continually increasing.

Third: AGWM partners with other AG and AG-affiliated movements that have sent more than 4,800 missionaries to other nations. Our sister fellowships around the world are mandated by the same Great Commission we follow. Worldwide, our partner fellowships are as committed to taking the gospel to unreached peoples as are we. The desire to preach the gospel to those who had never heard drove the apostle Paul. His words in 2 Corinthians 10:16 echo through the centuries to our modern spiritual ears: "so



### **The Gospel for Everyone**

The New Testament is the record of a mission. That mission, revealed in Jesus coming to earth, is reflected in the lives of Paul and the other apostles. The goal of the mission is this: God intends for the gospel to reach everyone.

We can't wait for everyone in a city or nation to be reached before we extend ourselves to those who have never heard. If a solid nucleus of believers exists in a particular area, then we need to press forward to reach others who have not yet heard. Increasingly, God is showing us that we must intensify our efforts to take the gospel to unreached areas of the world.

The New Testament church greeted each other with the word *maranatha*, which means "the Lord is coming." God gave a sense of urgency to New Testament Christians and to believers at the beginning of the 20th century when our mission came into being. If that urgency doesn't remain with us today, we will lose God's perspective. The knowledge that Jesus could come any day should be the impulse for Christians to act upon God's Word and proclaim His message.

Our mission is urgent, both in its eternal value and in the nearness of its fulfillment. Jesus wants us to look beyond those who are already in the fold and reach out to those who need a clear witness of the Savior.

L. JOHN BUENO, former executive director, Assemblies of God World Missions, Springfield, Missouri

that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you." With this in mind, AGWM has launched *BEYOND* — *the unreached peoples imperative* to empower our regions and International Ministries to do all they can to go beyond.

The Europe region is reaching out to culturally diverse communities. The Asia Pacific region is gearing up to send teams into Buddhist strongholds. The Africa region has developed the Live/Dead concept. The Eurasia region has sent teams to the least-reached in North India and instituted Live/Dead in the Arab world. The Northern Asia region has instituted Apostolos to reach unreached peoples. The Latin America region has missionaries serving among the leastreached tribes on the continent. Missionaries with International Ministries, which includes Network 211, Global University, Life Publishers, and Global Initiative, are proactively going to the regions beyond with electronic media, training, and equipping.

BEYOND — the unreached peoples imperative has a website (www.beyond.ag.org) for our constituency to track what AGWM is doing. Users can also direct specific inquiries to a particular region or ministry.

Our research department, in conjunction with the regions of AGWM, is tracking our efforts among the unreached of the world. Of the more than 6,000 unreached people groups, AGWM is currently working among more than 200. Pray for them. AGWM has committed approximately 34 percent of its finances to these neglected regions. We need more. Over the past 20 years, the Spirit of God has been leading personnel into "regions beyond," and the number of missionaries to unreached areas has more than tripled. Still we need more.

#### PARTNERING TO REACH THE LOST

Our mission in 252 countries and territories of the world is possible because of the committed partnership of thousands of churches in America. What can churches in America do to help reach unreached peoples?

**1. Engage your congregation in prayer for unreached peoples.** Our new AGWM website, www.agwm.com/pray, features a prayer focus for a specific region, nation, and unreached people group each day. The AGWM app for iPhone, iPad, and Droid also includes a "pray" section that reflects the website. Members of your congregation can visit the app store, search "AGWM," and download the app free.

**2. Give to the Unreached Peoples Fund.** Possibly you could receive one offering a year for this fund or even support it monthly. Specify "Unreached Peoples, account #42468646 (40)."

**3. Send people from your congregation as the Holy Spirit calls them.** Young people especially may get a burden for unreached peoples if they contact www.wideo penmissions.org. This site gives information on shortterm missions opportunities as well as needs for career missionaries among unreached peoples.

4. Utilize resources produced by AGWM to apprise your congregation of the issues of lostness, people's eternal destiny, and the vast unfinished task. Beyond.ag.org has a wealth of information on the hundreds of unreached people groups our missionaries and national churches are engaged. As you communicate missions in your church, the Spirit will speak to people's hearts to respond.

#### CONCLUSION

Our responsibility is to take the whole gospel to the whole world. We will not compromise. Our purpose is so all can hear.

The Spirit has been leading our AGWM executive team to employ every means possible to reach those who have the least or even no access to the gospel. We believe we can proclaim Christ's message in *all* the world because of His promise of the Spirit's enablement. ■



**GREG MUNDIS, D.Min.**, executive director, Assemblies of God World Missions, Springfield, Missouri





By Zollie L. Smith, Jr.

The Church is poised like never before to be the key rescuer to redeem America — that is, if the church will be the Church.



ith over 300 cultures and subcultures, America has become a nation of diversity. Not only has it evolved as one of the most diverse nations in the world, but four unique people groups spanning various cultures have developed within America as well.

Enrichment FALL 2013 | 111

# Believing God for a Mobilized Church: Reaching the Lost, Helpless, Hurting, and Oppressed (continued from page 111)

The first people group includes those with escalating social ills such as abortion, religious discrimination, racism, alcohol and drug abuse, human trafficking, gambling, gangs, etc. These ills denote circumstances that result in suffering and distress within our society that quickly define our nation. They affect victims' quality of life and require strategic economic efforts, trained personnel, and facilities to eliminate their sources or causes. In all cases, these social ills overflow adversely into society. These ills directly or indirectly affect everyone. I love the analogy of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:26 where he compares the church to the human body: "If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad" (NLT<sup>1</sup>).

The second group includes those who have special needs. Some physical or mental debilitation impedes these individuals' quality of life. The government officially defines them as Americans With Disabilities according to the government's Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA).

The third group contains those Jesus called, "the least of these my brothers and sisters" — the hungry, thirsty, homeless, underprivileged, destitute, infirmed, incarcerated, widows, and orphans.

The fourth group is those who have no relationship with God. I call them *the perishing*. This group includes some from the previously mentioned groups who assume they are living with a good-to-great quality of life. Little do they know, however, that they are the most dysfunctional group in America. They are lost and destined for eternal destruction.

### THE CRISIS IN AMERICA

To fully understand that America is indeed a mission field, please note some startling statistics. According to the United States Census Bureau U.S. & World Population Clocks, on January 25, 2013, the United States had a total population of 315,217,466, making it the third most populous country in the world.<sup>2</sup> Now, let's see what helplessness looks like in America.



1. The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty states that an average of 3.5 million people will be victims of homelessness, including 1.35 million children in a given year.<sup>3</sup>

2. According to the Bureau of Justice statistics there were 6,977,700 offenders at year-end 2011, per the "Correctional Populations in the United States, 2011 Report."<sup>4</sup>

3. Approximately 56.7 million people living in the United States had some kind

of disability in 2010, making them the largest minority group in the nation, as published by the U.S. Census Bureau 2011.<sup>5</sup>

4. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2011, the percentage of adults 18 years and over who were current drinkers totaled 51.5 percent of the population; the number of annual alcohol-related liver disease deaths totaled 15,990; and the number of alcohol-induced deaths totaled 25,694.<sup>6</sup>

5. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau, The AFCARS Report: "Preliminary FY 2011 Estimates as of July 2012," reports that approximately 400,540 children are in foster care.<sup>7</sup>

6. The 2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health reported that 22.5 million Americans, ages 12 or older (8.7 percent of population), had used illicit drugs in 2011. The survey also reports 6.1 million Americans abused a psychotherapeutic medication and 18.1 million Americans were current users of marijuana.<sup>8</sup>

7. In 2011, 329,797 babies were born to women aged 15–19 years, for a live birth rate of 31.3 per 1,000 women in this age group.<sup>9</sup>

8. In 2008, 1,212,400 induced abortions were performed in America.  $^{\rm 10}$ 

9. Life-Way Research conducted a study on Christian discipleship and reported that 80 percent of those who attend church one or more times a month believe they have a personal responsibility to share their faith, but 61 percent had not told another person how to become a Christian in the past 6 months.<sup>11</sup>

10. The USA Today published an article written by Cathy Lynn Grossman on October 9, 2012, headlined: "The Emerging Social, Political Force: 'Nones'." According to Grossman, these individuals are atheists, agnostics, and those who believe nothing in particular. The "Nones" are the second largest religious group in the nation at 19.6 percent and growing.<sup>12</sup>

These statistics clearly communicate that America is in crisis because of the abundant challenges it faces. I am convinced that the only solution is Jesus Christ through His church. The Church is poised like never before to be the key rescuer to redeem our great nation — that is if the church will be the Church.

As we can attest, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people" (Proverbs 14:34). The righteousness of the Church is the answer to an oppressed people. Jesus' prayer of unity on behalf of the Church has become my focal point, and I am more committed than ever to see it fulfilled.

The challenges we face in America are going to require the services of every Christian becoming unified in the war against sin. We must clothe ourselves with the garment of love and reach out to the lost in every people group by showing grace and being Good Samaritans — that none perish. When we mobilize as one, with each member doing his or her part, nothing can stop us.

The Church is the property of Jesus Christ, and He has

grown it with quality, gifted people: the laborers added by God to work in the fields, and the gifted equippers given by Christ to His church to train the workers to build the Church through reconciliation. God reconciled the world unto himself through Jesus Christ. He commissioned the Church to go into the world and share the good news that Jesus has provided the way for them to be redeemed and restored.

### MOBILIZING THE SAINTS

What does a mobilized local church look like? A mobilized church can only exist when it allows the Holy Spirit to lead, and God alone gets the glory. It is a church unafraid to strategically network and collaborate with other religious and nonreligious organizations, as well as federal, state, and local governments, to take advantage of the many resources essential to liberate the oppressed and hurting. We must utilize every opportunity to plant and water the seeds of God's love in everyone's life, and there is no better chance to do this than when one's quality of life is diminished. The only response is to minister with compassion to alleviate the need.

We must believe that every church leader will purposefully take to heart Ephesians 4:11–16 by implementing the fivefold

office or ministry gifts given to equip God's people to do the work of ministry. These verses communicate the necessity of diversity in training the church to be effective and efficient in fulfilling its ministry. Every church should identify ministry potentials in its community and strategically plan to address them.

We must realize that these are our communities, and God has given them to us. Go take back what the devil has stolen. Prepare your army for battle, feed the hungry, and help

the underprivileged and disadvantaged. Visit the prisons, jails, and detention centers — they are yours. Get involved with merchants, support police and fire personnel. Work alongside school boards, principals, and teachers to increase opportunities for learning. Develop alternatives to abortions rather than simply castigate. Reach out to gays and lesbians with compassion by walking them through their challenges. Meet with gang leaders and embrace them with compassion. This is God's plan, and it is attainable by equipping and training saints who have compassion for ministering to unique people groups.

Equipping is as simple as identifying those whom God has gifted and who have proven ministries serving unique people. We equip pastors when experienced pastors mentor and/or coach younger or challenged pastors, but we must also shift our focus to people in our pews by coming alongside them and equipping them to serve others. They are in our pews waiting for us to call them to duty. I am convinced that the next great revival in America will not take place until every saint is sharing Jesus through servanthood. We would then see evangelism and discipleship as an integrated divine endeavor as we train every believer to share the good news of Jesus and disciple those who believe. We can invite equippers who have experience in reaching unique people groups, and the least of these, to come alongside believers to equip them with the practical applications essential to reaching these groups. Forget the titles; get everyone involved.

We must reach people everywhere — in nursing homes, hospitals, college campuses, and motor clubs; the homeless, abused, victims of human trafficking, victims of dysfunctional families; those in foster care, those in failed marriages, those caught in homosexuality, those abusing drugs and/or alcohol, and those feeling isolated and alone because they have had an abortion. The orphans need families who will adopt and love them, and the widows and seniors need to know they are not forgotten. Rich or poor — those who are perishing need Jesus. The answer lies in our gifted frontline warriors known as missionaries, chaplains, and volunteers who stand ready to partner with pastors and leadership to assist in mobilizing the army of saints to do the work of the ministry.



We must work together in developing a strategy that none perish. We must believe that mobilizing the body of Christ into the harvest is possible by serving others where they are. By intentionally planting seeds and watering them together, knowing that God will give the increase, we can rejoice together.

### GOD'S VISION OF THE MOBILIZED CHURCH

In Joshua 6, God gave Joshua a plan to conquer the fortified Jericho (just like our communities occupied with social ills). God instructed Joshua on every detail of the plan, which included mobilizing all of the Israelites (the Church). Essential to the plan was God's spoken word to Joshua, "Then the Lord said to Joshua [a Christian leader], 'See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men' " (verse 2). God informed Joshua the battle was already won if he would just obey.

What awesome assurance it is to know that God has already

## Believing God for a Mobilized Church: Reaching the Lost, Helpless, Hurting, and Oppressed (continued from page 113)

delivered our communities into our hands. The only thing required of us is to mobilize the saints to break down the fortified walls of darkness around our city that are oppressing God's people. The walls are not the focus point, however, but the oppressed and needy people behind the walls who need our help. When we deploy an army of saints to rescue the perishing and hurting, God will fulfill His promise and bring down those walls of separation.

God again shows His desire for the mobilized church in Luke 10 when Jesus sent 72 saints to go as laborers because the harvest was plentiful. Their assignment was to connect with hurting and needy people (like those in our communities) and become the healing presence of God. Evangelism and discipleship are easy when we equip the saints to reach out relationally and love others where they are.

### FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION

Mobilizing the saints to do the ministry is both challenging and exciting. I recall my first pastorate in the inner city of Plainfield, New Jersey. When God called me, I had no formal pastoral training, but what I did have was the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, prayer, and my military and law enforcement training. The mission statement of Jesus (Luke 4:18), and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19,20) were enough for me. I immediately organized the church into a soul-winning army. The strategy was simple: prepare for war. We began with prayer and fasting, and members stood before the congregation and shared their testimonies of how Jesus had made the difference in their lives. This built confidence because this prepared everyone to evangelize by sharing his or her testimony. As a result, we formed The God Squad Ministry. We became difference makers.

To improve our effectiveness, we needed assistance in equipping the saints to impact our community. We brought in people with experience in tract attacking and telephone evangelism to train those not able to be involved in some of our street ministries. We placed tracts everywhere we wanted to make a difference: the marketplace, the workplace, and the neighborhood.

In my second pastorate, we expanded our reach to prisons, nursing homes, hospitals, and college campuses through prayer walks and feeding and clothing drives. We developed 22 ministries in the church led by individuals who had the passion to start them. When I saw a need in the community, we pursued a person to lead it. This brought excitement and energy.

What was crucial, however, was finding equippers like Ingrid Johnson, a U.S. Missions hospital chaplain, who trained those interested in hospital and nursing home ministry. Her training resulted in our forming two nursing home teams and a hospital visitation team that impacted our city. I was actively involved

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ASSEMBLIES of GOD WORLD MISSIONS with the principals of local schools. As a result, we had many opportunities to be involved. I became friends with the chief of police. When his father died, he requested that I officiate the funeral. I later became the police chaplain, counseling and offering advice in challenging circumstances.

On July 4, our church honored our city officials at a service. This endeavor was fruitful as our presence in the city grew. Playing a role in the health of our city created many opportunities to share the love of Jesus. Because of our committed, active presence in our city, I was invited by the city administrator to serve on the board to select the new chief of police.

#### THE CHALLENGE

When we allow our light to shine in our cities for the lost and hurting, God's favor will open doors. When we are committed to claim our cities and devote them to God through mobilizing

the saints, we will meet needs and witness salvations. Proven ministry has convinced me that, if we are serious about the return of Jesus, we must mobilize the saints. We need every saint on the battlefield. We can and must do it together.



**ZOLLIE L. SMITH, JR.**, executive director of Assemblies of God U.S. Missions, Springfield, Missouri

#### Notes

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"So, Pastor, what were you asking us about the odds of you getting a raise?"

# **Clergy**Craft

# Millennials at Work

The volume of online and print publications about Millennials in the workplace is abundant. It appears that an industry is being born around providing Boomer managers with tools to deal with the influx of workers from this generation. Boomer managers tend to have a work first, play second mentality that mandates conformity to the rules of the workplace. These rules include a nose to the grindstone, unquestionable loyalty to the company, bide your time until you move up the chain of authority mindset. Boomers say, "Amen."

The problem is that Millennials approach their work life and the workplace with a different set of lenses that automatically create a dissonance between their own expectations and those of their bosses. The boss, who has earned the right to rule, comes to the work environment mostly clue-less about this Millennial mindset. So, he/she keeps on perpetuating the kind of environment, with

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its attendant Boomer-oriented worldview, to the dismay of the Millennials who simply want someone to explain how things work, provide the structure in which the work is done, and appreciate and reward their efforts with benefits packages that guarantee their future well-being.

> The implications of this contrasting work-view for a church staff should be obvious, but judging the current state of many staff, these implications are not. So, lead pastors continue trying to mold younger staff into their own image. Is it any wonder that these younger staff are resistant? Moreover, is this commitment to a way of doing ministry part of the reason fewer Millennials are considering full-time vocational ministry as an option for their life's calling?

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

### TECHNOLOGY AND THE CHURCH

USING THE WISDOM OF DATA TO MEASURE RETURN ON MINISTRY

### n my summer 2013 Technology

and the Church article about data, I emphasized how accurate data at the individual level can be used in ministry to help people in need. Once a church has established the discipline of maintaining accurate data, a church can then begin to aggregate that data to help make better decisions.

We have learned from the business community that organizations focus on what they measure. By "rolling up" the data associated with the various parts of your ministries, a church can begin to measure what is important and then improve in those areas. By measuring the "desired" outcomes, a church can begin to determine whether or not it is being a good steward of the resources it is applying to various ministries. We refer to this as the "Return on Ministry," or ROM. Like return on investment (ROI) in the business world, churches can use ROM to prioritize its limited resources to determine where best to allocate dollars and people based on achieved results.

Using ROM measurements, church leadership can go beyond the number of salvations and baptisms to hold the ministry leadership accountable for added metrics such as number of lives touched, number of lives impacted, and even families restored.

Measuring outcomes like these can be beneficial in determining who is performing their duties well. Choosing the right metrics can propel your service to the congregation to the next level, and thus, grow your congregation in many ways.

To download the free ebook *Return* on *Ministry*, visit fellowshipone.com/ ROMe-book.

> — JEFF HOOK, ACTIVE Network (www.activenetwork.com), San Diego, California

SOWING AND REAPING

UST BEFORE TH

**s you give this morning**, your gifts will be a blessing to many. But, more than that, your giving also benefits yourself. You ask, "How can giving benefit my own life?"

Giving makes us more like God, draws us closer to God, provides an antidote to materialism, strengthens our faith, and makes an investment in eternity. But, giving also blesses us in return.

Proverbs 11:25 states, "A generous person will prosper: but whoever refreshes others will be refreshed." Whatever you give, you are going to get back. If you are generous with criticism, you are going to get a lot of criticism. If you are generous with gossip, you are going to get gossip back. If you are generous with encouragement, you are going to get encouragement back. It is the law of sowing and reaping. If you are generous with your money, you are going to get money back. It's a law of life. The generous man will prosper. "Whoever refreshes others will be refreshed."

So, this morning, I encourage you to enjoy the benefit of giving by believing that God will bless you in return as you give.

> — GLENN REYNOLDS, Hampton, Virginia

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### TO ILLUSTRATE

### **THE BATTER'S EYE**

**y son's little league team recently toured** the Texas Ranger Ballpark in Arlington. As we walked onto the field, our tour guide asked the team if they know where the batter's eye was located. Standing in the awkward silence I was glad he did not ask the parents that question.

Then, with the skill of an old storyteller, our guide leaned into the circle he had formed around home plate and revealed to us the location and purpose of the batter's eye. He explained that if you look past the pitcher's mound and above the center field fence you will see a large area of green grass. "That's the batter's eye," he said in a whisper, "and every big league ballpark has one, and they are all located in the same spot. They are extremely important and the batters are thankful for them."

"The purpose for the batter's eye," he continued with some steel in his voice, "is to give the batter a clear and undistracted view of the ball as it leaves the pitcher's hand. It is to protect the batter from being hit by a ball he is not able to see or cannot locate."

I thought how the Psalmist used an analogy to explain how the Lord provides a clear and undistracted view of the path He has chosen for each of us. Psalm 119:105 explains that the Word of the Lord is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Major league batters may use a blank background to gain clarity as to which pitch they will swing at — either the split-finger, fastball, or slow curve. As Spirit-led believers we have the Word of the Lord to bring a clear and undistracted view of the way we are to walk — either by still waters, or in the paths of righteousness, or sometimes through the valley.

— DAVID PAUL APPLEGATE, Arlington, Texas



### PREACHING JESUS AS ...?

### An Inspirational Example

**have witnessed four ways** leaders often preach Jesus to teenagers. I have done these too many times. Maybe you have too. The first is *Jesus as an inspiration example.* The main idea: Jesus did it, you can do it too.

**The problem:** This appeals to a student who measures his or her worth in terms of accomplishment, spiritual or otherwise. It works on the will but not the heart. If Jesus is only an example, then the average teenager is in a lot of trouble because, well ... Jesus was perfect. Your teenagers need much more than an example to inspire them (or eventually crush them). They need a Savior to rescue them.

**The result:** You might get teenagers to change their behavior but it will be in their own strength and with a hint of moralism. This is not the gospel. Jesus did not die on a cross to give us a second chance to get things right. He did it because He knew we never would.

The next issue of EJ will discuss the second way Jesus is preached to teenagers. — DAVID HERTWECK, Clay, New York

### APP TIME



### THREE APPS TO WATCH FOR

### ■ Bible Study With Accordance

The one-tap Accordance app provides access to enough original language materials to make it a Bible study essential. Other prominent features include study notes parallel with Scripture text and the ability to sync notes across platforms. For the more advanced user, Accordance offers premium packages for purchase to add to the study experience. Obtain a free study package by registering at the Accordance website. Available free in the App Store.

#### ■ 7:14 Prayer App

The development team at the Assemblies of God's National Leadership and Resource Center produced this cutting-edge prayer tool. Based on the 2 Chronicles 7:14 call to prayer, this app provides daily prayer alerts at 7:14 in the morning or evening. A national heat map indicates which areas of the country people are currently praying. Daily devotions are provided from *God's Word for Today.* Advanced options include subscribing to national prayer lists or setting up your own prayer lists to assist you in your commitment to prayer. Available free in the App Store and in Google Play.

### 🔳 iTunes U

iTunes U gathers podcasts from leading colleges and universities into an amazing collection of educational content. Using iTunes U, a user can virtually audit free courses from prestigious universities such as Oxford, Yale, or UC Berkeley. New note-taking features allow users to take notes while watching videos or listening to lectures. Should you choose to purchase course textbooks, they seamlessly integrate into the iTunes U app through iBooks. Available free in the App Store.

— MARK FORRESTER, Springfield, Missouri

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### UTHTRAX

### Keep Parts of Your Heart a *Secret*

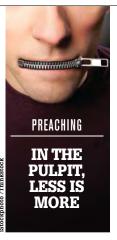
f you follow some of your students on Facebook and Twitter, it's easy to follow each detail of their sometimes roller coaster lives. Girl flirts with boy. Girl chases boy. Boy returns the favor. Girl spills her guts to said boy. Boy breaks up. Girl spills more — only this time it is pain. This scenario isn't just girls; it could easily be reversed.

Because youth now have access to each other 24/7, the "getting-toknow" each other period is now on steroids. A girl and guy can literally know everything there is to know about each other in just a matter of days. This lack of "becoming a couple" positions our students in a place of extreme vulnerability. Yesterday they were strangers and now they hold another's deepest and darkest secrets.

When two people spend large amounts of unhurried time together, it builds relationship. But when they cram that unhurried time into too short a time period, they also build a false sense of safety. The new hotter-than-hot relationship turns cold incredibly fast as one of them discovers there are things they didn't know ... and don't like. Similar to standing outside in a snowstorm without gloves, your student's heart is now completely exposed to whatever may ensue.

It is imperative that we teach our youth to guard their hearts; it is their greatest asset.

> — LYNN COWELL, Charlotte, North Carolina



#### he first verse in James chap-

ter 3 contains a warning to those tasked with publically teaching the Word: "Not many of you should become teachers ... because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly."

James directed the warning about sins of the tongue at Bible teachers. The words pastors say in the pulpit under the auspices of God are powerful. They can turn lives in two directions: toward God or away from Him.

Those who teach the Bible must be careful about the words they say when speaking for God.

This passage should guide our pulpit ministry. It tells us that preaching is, at the very least, communicating what God has already said. Those who sit under our preaching carry a hidden assumption: What we say in the pulpit is from God. This means that less is often more; less of our opinion and more of God's. And we should be clear when expressing our own opinions, so people do not confuse our preferences and hobbyhorses for God's own revealed Word.

Preachers must strongly resist the impulse to parachute into the text their own opinions or biases. They must resist the sin of the Pharisees who taught "merely human rules" (Matthew 15:9).

I have not always gotten this right, but I am earnestly trying to be faithful to the intent of James 3. It has been a good antibody against the enemy of legalism.

— DANIEL DARLING is author of Teen People of the Bible; Celebrity Profiles of Real Faith and Tragic Failure. Visit http://www.danieldarling.com

# MINISTRY LIFE

# Seasons of Transitions

n Ecclesiastes 3:1, Solomon states that there is a time for everything. This includes transitions. Transition is the passing from one state or place to another.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, transitioning people from one state to another was His goal, whether it was in thought, deed, health, or word.

Throughout 2013-14, some will be transitioning into new areas of ministry and/or relationships. Others will transition out of fear to faith, from despair to joy, from debt to freedom, from brokenness to wholeness again.

God does not measure seasons with clocks and calendars, but through truth and revelation. He gives truth and



revelation to propel us into new seasons. Why? We are creatures of habit. If He did not change things, we would become complacent.

Often, before transitions take place, God prepares us through times when we are sitting on the bench. In those still times, He is changing our hearts for what is to come, preparing us to let go of the past and move forward in trust. It is the perfect time to ask God for a new vision of family, work, and ministry.

Are you currently facing a transition? What do you sense God is doing? Be sensitive to His activity and leadership. God will give you the grace to match every transition you face.

> PATTI ANN THOMPSON, Kansas City, Missouri

# With Christ

Joe K. Adcock Paragould, Arkansas

Richard Andreozzi, Jr. Haverhill, Massachusetts

M. Alvin Askins Orangevale, California

Vicente T. Ayala Denver, Colorado

Violet F. Bluhm Lakewood, Colorado

Robert D. Bornert Springfield, Missouri

Joan L. Bowers Springfield, Missouri

John E. Bowersock Phoenix, Arizona

George P. Brown Bakersfield, California

Victor C. Brown Wesley Chapel, Florida

Violet E. Camp Brookings, South Dakota

David E. Campbell Douglas, Wyoming

Arcadio R. Castro Somerset, New Jersey

Maurice A. Caudill Reno, Nevada

Willard T. R. Chapman Modesto, California

Donald Childress, Sr. Rio Vista, California

Troy A. Coberly Eufaula, Oklahoma

Leon Connell Lemitar, New Mexico

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Emilio Garcia, Jr. Commerce, California

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**Athalee Greer** Hattiesburg, Mississippi

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**Owen A. Harrison** Walnut Cove, North Carolina

Cleveland, Tennessee Reid A. Holderby Junction City, Oregon

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George W. Lee Stockbridge, Georgia

Margaret Lemberg Janesville, Wisconsin

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> **Dorsey E. Marshall, Jr.** Princess Anne, Maryland

Howard W. Marshall Kansas City, Kansas

Sam A. Mask San Antonio, Texas

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**Orville F. Whitacre** Phenix City, Alabama

George C. Woods North Little Rock, Arkansas

Enrichment FALL 2013 119

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### **Book Paints Statistical Portrait of Typical Pastor**

A new book that extensively surveyed pastors around the country has found that clergy must be all things to all people. Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce extrapolate findings from the U.S. Congregational Life Survey in their book, Leadership That Fits Your Church: What Kind of Pastor for What Kind of Congregation.

"The pastor's skill set reflects that of a 'generalist,' including the multiple roles of scholar, preacher, worship leader, teacher, spiritual leader, counselor, church administrator, and community leader," the authors write. "Now every savvy pastor must adapt to new social media and worship technology."

A whopping 47 percent of conservative Protestant full-time pastors worked in at least one other occupation before entering the ministry, researchers found. And 59 percent of conservative pastors were raised in a different denomination from the one in which they serve. The average age at ordination is 43. The median age of pastors is 55. Just 12 percent of pastors are age 40 or younger.



THE TYPICAL CONSERVATIVE PROTESTANT PASTOR IS 54 YEARS OLD, HAS BEEN IN MINISTRY 24 YEARS, AND HAS SERVED THREE CHURCHES.

For conservative Protestant pastors, 19 percent are bivocational, the study found, and three out of four congregations have only one full-time ordained pastor.

Compensation is closely tied to congregational size, with the average conservative Protestant pastor earning \$49,758 annually. The average conservative Protestant church has 90 attendees.

Statistically, the typical conservative Protestant pastor is 54 years old, has been in ministry 24 years, and has served three churches, the book states.

Three quarters of pastors reported that their congregation experienced conflict recently. The most common reason pastors cited for conflict with the congregation involved pastoral leadership style, followed by finances, changes in worship style, and a new building or renovations. Yet the more years pastors have served in local church ministry, the more highly they rate their satisfaction with their personal life.

"Pastors, who can remain enthusiastic about their work, feel a sense of accomplishment in their ministry, and nurture a strong spiritual life seem better able to buffer the impact of negative experiences," the authors note. Indeed, most pastors report they are highly satisfied, regardless of church size, location, or time on the job.

Part of that sense of well-being comes from food. The study found 38 percent of conservative Protestant pastors are overweight and another 38 percent are obese.

Unsurprisingly, job stress is lower for pastors who regularly take a day off each week, and 70 percent of conservative Protestant pastors do.

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### EVANGELICALS STRONGLY BACK HOUSING TAX EXEMPTION

n overwhelming number of evangelical leaders believe that the U.S. government's clergy housing allowance policy is fair. A massive 93 percent of those surveyed by the National Association of Evangelicals think that

excluding organizationally approved housing expenses from a minister's taxable income is equitable. "While some may question whether ministers should get a tax break on their housing — a policy that dates back to the

early 1920s soon after the income tax was instituted — most evangelical leaders don't question its merit," says NAE President Leith Anderson.

Many evangelical leaders believe the housing benefit not only is a boon to clergy but to the fabric of the nation overall as well. "The government has historically believed that the society will be benefited if the church is strengthened," says John Hopler, director of Great Commission Churches. "The clergy housing allowance and charitable deductions for contributions to churches are two ways in which the church is strengthened, leading to the overall betterment of the society."

George O. Wood, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, agrees that a social benefit is derived to society through having churches, and those churches require leadership in the form of ministers.

"The overwhelming number of clergy are paid less than comparable professions, with similar educational requirements," Wood says. "Throughout American history, it has been perceived as a societal benefit to provide the ministerial housing allowance as a means of ensuring that these religious institutions can continue to make substantial spiritual and humanitarian benefit to their communities."

Doug Beacham, general superintendent of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church, likewise notes that many pastors who serve in small churches don't receive a competitive salary.

There have been few updates to the clergy housing allowance policy since its implementation more than 90 years ago. In 2002, Congress clarified that the exclusion is limited to the fair rental value of the minister's house.

Recently, the exemption has come under fire from various atheist groups. Some lawmakers looking to generate additional revenue also have suggested eliminating the housing break.

MANY ATTENDEES UNAWARE OF MEMBERSHIP OPTION

A recent study of regular churchgoers has revealed that many of them are confused or ignorant regarding whether their congregation offers membership. A survey by Grey Matter Research of Phoenix asked Americans whether their place of worship offers "any kind of official membership."

All 10 of the largest U.S. denominations, including the Assemblies of God, offer some form of official membership. Even so, among attendees of these groups, only 44 percent said their church offers official membership. Thirty-nine percent mistakenly said their denomination didn't offer membership, while 17 percent said they weren't sure.

The perception that their house of worship offers membership is much more common among older Americans: 59 percent of those 65 and older versus 45 percent who are younger. In addition, evangelicals are particularly likely to believe their church offers official membership, 72 percent compared to 44 percent of worshippers overall.

Ron Sellers, president of Grey Matter Research, says the findings show that many religious groups aren't doing enough to make membership relevant to people, or are failing to communicate how it is important. Sellers says some religious bodies talk about membership but don't really define what that means.

"Even when we look just at the largest Protestant denominations that offer membership, about a third who attend are unaware membership is even an option, and four out of 10 people attending those churches claim not to be members," Sellers says.

Certainly some denominations, especially those with dwindling followers, count more members than actually exist. Some churches take years to accurately update the loss of members through death, moving away, or simply quitting.

The Assemblies of God keeps accurate annual statistics through local churches reporting to the General Secretary's Office. Pastors are instructed to report adherents (the *total* number of persons who consider your church their home church whether or not they are enrolled as members) as well as members.

Subsequently, the AG has  $1.76\ million\ members\ but\ more\ than\ 3\ million\ adherents.$ 

### YOUNG ADULTS ARE DRAWN TO CERTAIN CHURCHES

or several decades, congregations have dealt with the reality of a vast number of young adults dropping out of church life once they reach college age. Traditionally, many of these people return to church after they marry and start to have children.

Now many young adults appear to be disappearing from church altogether. However, a study by Faith Communities Today of the Hartford Institute of Religion Research has examined the 16 percent of congregations that continue to attract a higher than average number of young adults than other churches. The research revealed multiple common characteristics of those churches that draw at least 20 percent of attendees in the 18- to 35-year-old range.

One factor is location. These congregations are nearly twice as likely to be in suburbs or urban areas, as compared to small towns or rural areas.

Another mark of such churches is that they are ethnically diverse. The congregations with exceptional numbers of young adults are almost twice as likely to have an ethnic minority comprise its majority — or have no ethnic majority at all.

Young adults likewise are more likely to be drawn to recently formed congregations. Churches started since 2000 are more than three times as likely to have an aboveaverage number of young adults as those organized prior to 1976.

There also is a clear correlation between attracting young people and using newer technology. Almost one quarter of congregations making major use of new technology have exceptional numbers of young adults, while less than 10 percent of those making only marginal use of new technology do.

Most U.S. churches today have more women than men attending, but the Faith Communities Today study showed that congregations with more men among active participants are more apt to bring in those ages 18 to 35.

Worship is another piece of the puzzle. Churches that appeal to young adults are twice as likely to use guitars and drums as a regular part of worship music. Featuring electric guitar or bass also correlates with the presence of increased young adults, but not as strongly.

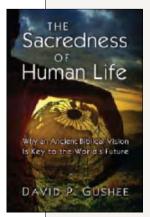
A final characteristic that is a magnet for young adults is church staff size. They are significantly less likely to attend a church where there is a solo full-time clergy versus two or more full-time clergy.



# Books

### The Sacredness of Human Life: Why an Ancient Biblical Vision Is Key to the World's Future

DAVID P. GUSHEE (Eerdmans, 478 pp., hardcover)



any American churches observe the third Sunday of January as Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. Ronald Reagan established this observation by executive proclamation in 1984, calling on all Americans "to give thanks for the gift of life, and to reaffirm our commitment to the dignity of every human being and the sanctity of each human life." For most churches, this Sunday provides opportunity to affirm the inestimable value of unborn life, to teach why Christianity opposes abortion, and to promote pro-life ministries that help pregnant moms to choose life.

In *The Sacredness of Human Life*, David P. Gushee argues that being *for* life entails far more than being *against* abortion. He offers a practical and a theological reason for speaking of a "sacredness of life" ethic rather than a "sanctity of life" one. Practically, in the public mind, "sanctity of life" terminology is too narrowly associated with opposition to abortion and, perhaps, certain biotechnological innovations (embryonic stem cells, cloning, etc.). Theologically, "sanctity" connotes "character qualities *achieved by the person*," where "sacredness connotes "*ascribed status*, referring to something or someone having received special status through consecration by another." The latter term more accurately captures the gist of the biblical narrative, whereby human beings have special status because God created them in His image and likeness, among other reasons. Thus, Gushee provides this definition of human life's sacredness: "*God has consecrated each and every human being — without exception and in all circumstances — as a unique, incalculably precious being of elevated status and dignity.*" This "moral reality" entails the "moral task" of "*adopting a posture of reverence*" and "*accepting responsibility for the sacred gift that is a human life.*"

The bulk of Gushee's book is a study of the biblical foundations and shifting historical fortunes of this sacredness-of-life ethic. Early Christianity showed its commitment to the sacredness of human life through opposition to war, abortion, infanticide, torture, and the Roman arena; as well as through affirmation of peace, piety, impartiality, and help for the poor. The conversion of Constantine to Christianity in A.D. 312 muddled the waters by harnessing Church to State. This resulted in a "Christendom divided against itself," illustrated by the contrasting approaches of Francis of Assisi versus the Crusades, Bartolome de Las Casas versus *La Conquista*, and Baptist Richard Overton's advocacy of religious freedom versus Christendom's systematic persecution of Jews. Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke and Immanuel Kant tried to retain the substance of Christian morals without its theological foundation. But as Friedrich Nietzsche argued, "When one gives up Christian belief one therefore deprives oneself of the *right* to Christian morality." As the 20th century unfolded, the cost of the loss of a Christian moral vision was measured in millions dead because Nazi (and Soviet) depredations.

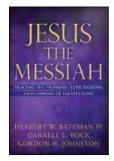
The Sacredness of Human Life concludes with brief chapters devoted to ethical and environmental issues. My guess is that many evangelical readers will cheer Gushee's pro-life commitment but question his antideath-penalty stance. I certainly hope they are challenged by his presentation on women's rights, which are routinely violated worldwide through sex-trafficking, gender violence, and maternal mortality due to lack of basic healthcare.

Regardless of occasional disagreements with Gushee about specific issues, I highly recommend this gracefully written and thought-provoking book. May God use it to expand our moral vision, help us grasp the moral reality of the sacredness of human life, and empower us to fulfill the moral task of loving the unborn and the born, whether neighbor or enemy.

> Reviewed by George Paul Wood, director, Ministerial Resourcing for the Assemblies of God and executive editor of *Enrichment* journal, Springfield, Missouri.

### Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King

HERBERT W. BATEMAN, IV, DARRELL L. BOCK, and GORDON H. JOHNSTON (Kregel Academic, 2012, 527 pp., hardcover)



In Jesus the Messiah, three authors trace the kingship of Israel's Messiah through three eras: Old Testament, the Intertestamental period, and the New Testament. Each section builds on the preceding section and adds to the understanding.

Gordon H. Johnston, professor of Old Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary, first makes the noble attempt to read Old Testament texts without reference to the New Testament (chapters 1–7). I say "noble" because so many similar studies seem to be exercises in finding not the Jewish Messiah, but the New Testament Jesus. While we understand them to be the same Person, it is important to examine Old Testament texts while putting aside what we know from the New Testament, so we do not color what Israel understood the text to say. This does not mean that an Old Testament text can have deeper development of meaning in later generations or in the coming of Jesus, but that is not the starting point.

Johnston labels what the Old Testament writers do as *trajectories*. Theology is never static; it is always unfolding as more and more understanding comes into being and is compiled into a more complete picture. He does a very good job of this.

Next, Herbert W. Bateman, professor of New Testament at Southwest Baptist Seminary, surveys the beliefs present in the Intertestamental period (chapters 8–11). Those who consider this period as the "silent years" will be tempted to ignore this section, but they should not. The New Testament did not spring solely from the arrival of Jesus nor is it always connected directly to the Old Testament. The ideas present in first-century Judaism are present in the New Testament presentation of the Messiah. These were the concepts on the minds of those first hearers of the gospel. We will never come to full grips with the New Testament without understanding this period. For this, Bateman uses both apocryphal writings and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Finally (chapters 12–15), Darrell L. Bock, research professor of New Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary, demonstrates that Jesus is the kingly Messiah by working backward through the New Testament (which he calls *Second Testament*). His purpose is to work from descriptions of what the Messiah was and did to the self-identification of Jesus as Messiah.

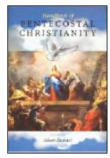
This is a serious work on the subject that brings enlightenment to a difficult subject — in what way was Jesus the Messiah and what did that mean? This book is a great place to start that discussion.

— Reviewed by Bob Caldwell, Ph.D., theologian-in-residence, Network 211 and adjunct professor, Global University, Springfield, Missouri.

### Handbook of Pentecostal Christianity

ADAM STEWART, editor

(Northern Illinois University Press, 238 pp., paperback)



Adam Stewart's book is a handbook, not an encyclopedia. As such, it covers a selection of broad topics in minimal words. Fifty short essays by 24 qualified contributors tell the basic story of Pentecostalism. Because it is limited to 50 topics, the choices are debatable. But the 50

chosen are important selections. Though basic, the book is not simplistic. It showcases scholarly disagreement and alternative views.

The 24 authors are scholars from varied disciplines and five continents. Thus, the vantage points represented include geographical differences as well as disciplinary — anthropology, biblical studies, black church studies, history, religious studies, sociology, and theology.

Because of this, some of the writing seems somewhat uneven. Some chapters are clearly more academic, while others maintain a more popular flavor. *Eclectic* would be an appropriate word, and one not usually attached to most handbooks.

Easy to refer to and enjoyable to read, the book's subject order is alphabetized, though it contains a helpful suggested order for use in teaching.

I chose to read the book through in that suggested order and thoroughly enjoyed the refresher. There was considerable overlap, which is understandable in a handbook. Some duplicated information could have been consolidated or referred to, such as material in the William Howard Durham and Finished Work chapters. This does let you see the subject from two different vantage points, but the information is so basic that this is not too significant.

This handbook will serve a variety of readers as an excellent introduction, refresher, or reference work. It is a good book for the bookshelf of layman, pastor, or scholar.

- Reviewed by Ken Horn, editor, *Pentecostal Evangel*, Springfield, Missouri.

### Cure for the Common Church: God's Plan to Restore Church Health BOB WHITESEL

(Wesleyan Publishing House, 176 pp., paperback)



In *Cure for the Common Church*, Bob Whitesel, professor of Christian ministry at Indiana Wesleyan University and longtime church consultant, asserts that a disease ails the North American church that significantly reduces its influence in society. Whitesel's book is a church-health intervention guide to assist church leaders and members with diagnosing and applying prescriptions to cure the "common church"

disease. The four diseases he specifically identifies as basic symptoms of the common church include: the tendencies of most churches to grow inward in their focus with the passing of time; the practice of copying attraction strategies from megachurches rather than emphasizing small-group dynamics; becoming diverted from the church's primary calling to make disciples; and attempting to revive the local assembly by adopting new organizational dynamics instead of consistently walking individuals through a transformational encounter with Christ.

Different from most books in the church health/growth genre is Whitesel's emphasis on employing congregational members to help diagnose and administer the cures. While pastoral leadership certainly has a role to play in overseeing the process, if health is to return to a local church, the primary drivers of the revitalization must be the members of the congregation. Thus, the book's primary intended target is the church member. The book's content is an easily digestible basic guide to church disease diagnosis and intervention. The format provides a "Quick Guide" which allows readers to quickly identify specific problems within their church and fast-forward to chapters having to do with those challenges without reading the entire book.

*Cure for the Common Church* does not address every disease that might plague the local church, but it does provide a detailed prescription concerning four basic problems that suppress church health. The book will be most helpful to congregations that are struggling to break out of long periods of decline or stagnancy, but could also serve as a check-up for congregations who seek to maintain current healthy dynamics as they move into the future.

— Reviewed by Rich Coffelt, D.Min, lead pastor, North County Christian Center, Castroville, California, and adjunct professor, Regent University, Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Menzies has provided a valuable work for those who have experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This book will encourage them to continue to walk in their Pentecostal experience. For those who are interested in knowing more about Pentecostals, the author has provided a valuable tool for this journey.

In his final chapter, Menzies summarizes some of these important Pentecostal distinctives to show why the Pentecostal church is growing. He writes: "If we are to understand why Pentecostal churches are growing, we above all will need to understand what Pentecostal Christians believe, what energizes their lives and witness, what sets them apart and makes them unique. In short, we need to understand why Pentecostals are

The clear message of the Pentecostal church emphasizes a vital experience with Christ and the Holy Spirit. Pentecost is more than a biblical event

An important aspect of Spirit-baptism is speaking in tongues — something Pentecostals identify as initial physical evidence. Again, Luke is not just writing historical narrative. This is an experience for contemporary believers. Menzies skillfully examines whether "tongues" are languages or unintelligible utterances. Moving beyond the IPE debate, the author explores the role of tongues in the church — as a type of prophecy — by examining how Peter, on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17–21), used Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28–32). Also, by examining several passages from Luke where Jesus teaches on the Holy Spirit, Menzies applies the continuing work of the Holy Spirit to individual believers. In an excursus on this chapter, the author discusses a popular question in evangelical circles: Can those who have not yet spoken in tongues experience Pentecostal power? Signs and wonders are another important aspect of Pentecostal theology. Keith Hacking, a protégé of James Dunn, claims that Third Wavers (and by inference Pentecostals) have simplistically read the Gospels and Acts and have "foisted their agenda upon the New Testament texts." (94) Menzies examines Hacking's position and responds with clarity to show the parallels between Jesus' reception of the Spirit at Jordan and the 120 on the Day of Pentecost. He also demonstrates that Luke's writing shows that Jesus intended for the signs and wonders of the Early Church

- Reviewed by Richard L. Schoonover, associate editor, *Enrichment* journal, Springfield, Missouri.

Books

## **Pentecost: Their Story Is Our Story**

**ROBERT P. MENZIES** (Gospel Publishing House, 150 pp., paperback)

THIS STORY IS OUR STORY

ROBERT P. MENZIES

munity empowered for a missionary task. (59)

to continue in today's church.

obert Menzies, along with his late father, William Menzies, are well-known in Pentecostal circles for the articulate way they have promoted Pentecostal scholarship, especially as it relates to Spirit baptism. In his latest book, Robert Menzies further explores our Pentecostal hermeneutic.

Many in the evangelical world criticize our Pentecostal hermeneutic. Others want to describe Pentecostals in such broad terms that water down our Pentecostal distinctive. Menzies brings sharp focus to this distinctive. He states: "In the pages that follow, I would like to explain why I am a Pentecostal. My definitions are unapologetically theological. My approach is thoroughly biblical. I will attempt to show how key passages in the Bible support my Pentecostal convictions. I believe that we as Pentecostals need to re-examine and clarify the rich theological legacy that the early Pentecostal pioneers have passed on

to us. The reluctance to give clear, theological definition to the Pentecostal movement misses something extremely important: it not only misses the fact that the movement was shaped by the Bible; it also loses sight of a genuine need of the church. We need to know who we are. We need to pass on the legacy." (19)

Pentecostals read the Book of Acts as their stories. They believe there should be no disconnect between the supernatural activities of the Early Church and the pres-

ent Pentecostal church. Thus, their hermeneutic is straightforward. The church of Acts is our church — a model for present-day Pentecost. This view brings strength to the Pentecostal movement. Menzies supports this view as he describes the structure of Luke-Acts and significant events — such as the sending of the seventy — to show the Pentecostal emphasis in these books.

As Pentecostals, we need to reexamine and clarify the rich theological legacy early Pentecostal pioneers have passed on to us. – Menzies



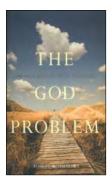
Seventy — to show the Perfectostal emphasis in these books. The author devotes a chapter to examine one of the key doctrines of Pentecostals — the baptism in the Holy Spirit. He examines the theological intent of Luke as he writes Luke-Acts. Luke is not merely writing history — he is writing theology. Menzies responds to those who confuse Paul's theology concerning the Spirit with Luke's. Luke clearly portrays the Spirit — not in salvation terms — but in terms of empowering and prophetic enabling for witness (Acts 1:8). "When the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit is understood in soteriological terms, Luke's missiological focus and our expectation of it is lost. For it is always possible to argue, as many do, that while all experience the soteriological dimension of the Pentecostal gift at conversion, only a select few receive gifts of missiological power. Yet Luke calls us to remember that the church (every member, not just the clergy!), by virtue of its reception of the Pentecostal gift, is a prophetic com-



different." (103)

### The God Problem: Expressing Faith and Being Reasonable

ROBERT WUTHNOW (University of California Press, 344 pp., hardcover)



How we talk about things — including how we talk about God — matters. Robert Wuthnow, the Gerhard R. Andlinger professor of Sociology at Princeton University writes his latest book, *The God Problem: Expressing Faith and Being Reasonable,* as an academic engaged in qualitative research. He also writes in an accessible manner that challenges the reader to consider how Americans makes sense of God. Wuthnow contends that "well-educated, thoughtful Americans

have found a way of having their cake and eating it too" when it comes to how they talk about God and the role of religion in their lives. They affirm their faith while also maintaining a belief in reason. These same Americans, Wuthnow argues, are not without doubt, but they find ways within that doubt to also express faith. Critics, he argues, are correct: there is a God problem, but that problem is not in keeping religion and intellect separate, but rather in adopting subtle uses of language that keep them from making unreasonable claims about God.

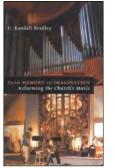
Taking an ethnographic approach through in-depth interviews with more than 200 participants, Wuthnow reveals an intricate pattern of rhetorical negotiation that American's use to be religious and maintain a level of rationality that is currency in the modern world. What Wuthnow reveals in his text is that despite these rhetorical negotiations, tension exists between faith and reason among even the most faithful practitioners. The implications of this tension reveal the greatest God problem: how the devout shared their faith with those who do not believe. According to Wuthnow, people avoid saying things that are seemingly unreasonable and learn to talk in ways that appear more reasonable; they do not want to appear "spooky or weird." This may seem an overly simplistic approach to a much more complex structure of what passes for reasonable and rational. Understanding the complex linguistic and neurological processes that account for this rhetorical acrobatic maneuver requires a more in-depth and thoughtful reading of Wuthnow's research.

Wuthnow provides insightful and challenging research that is useful in understanding the unique paradox of American religious adherence and a commitment to reason as a matter of faith. This book serves both as revelation of the complex rhetorical negotiation that maintains this paradox, but also provides insight into how people of faith may understand the tension that exists in their own congregations and the greater community they seek to serve.

> — Reviewed by Joy E.A. Qualls, Ph.D., assistant professor of Rhetoric and Communication, Evangel University, Springfield, Missouri.

### From Memory to Imagination: Reforming the Church's Music

C. RANDALL BRADLEY (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 251 pp., paperback)



This is an important book for pastors and music/worship leaders who seek a reformation of public worship. Sometimes people "feel" about worship more than they "think" about it. Leaders must learn to think deeply and biblically about worship.

Dr. Bradley's book presents clear thinking on worship. His writing style is direct and inviting as he offers wisdom he gained from both academic study and ministry experience.

The author opens and closes his book with chapters on the meaning of his title. "Memory" refers to worship with minimal creativity. "Imagination" refers to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in creative worship leadership.

I recommend reading chapters 1 and 11 first. Chapters 2–4 give a clear analysis of the conflicts. Chapters 5,6 form the heart of the book. Bradley explores paradigms, myths, and clichés that plague the worship reformer today and examines what the Bible does and does not say about worship and music. Chapters 7–10 apply the biblical principles to the mission of the church. Here Bradley challenges leaders to become communicative in more than one musical language.

This book will challenge leaders looking for affirmation in their attempts to change everything in worship. Likewise, this book will disappoint those who are looking for affirmation in their resistance to change. Leaders who desire worship renewal according to biblical principles and in view of behavioral and societal factors will find this work to be a valuable source of guidance.

> — Reviewed by Stephen Phifer, DWS, orchestra director, Church at the Mall, Lakeland, Florida.



### JAMES RIVER, OZARK, MO. WINS TEEN BIBLE QUIZ CHAMPIONSHIP

**T**he 2013 Bible Quiz National Finals capped off another great year of Teen Bible Quiz across the country. Hundreds of teams and quizzers memorized the entire book of Matthew during the 2012-2013



quizzing season, with the top 40 teams participating in the national event.

Teams converged in Chicago at the Hyatt Regency, O'Hare hotel for rigorous

James River Assembly team: Coach, John Porter, Natalie Garrison, Devin Colegrove, Kacie Garrison, Chris Knoth, assistant coach, Danielle Brozovich.

quizzing June 30 – July 3. The top four teams were: Cedar Park Assembly in Bothell, Washington; Owasso First Assembly in Owasso, Oklahoma (last year's champions); Bellevue Neighborhood Church in Bellevue, Washington; and James River Assembly in Ozark, Missouri. The semifinals saw Cedar Park Assembly and James River Assembly quizzing each other while Owasso First Assembly quizzed Bellevue Neighborhood Church.

From being behind 150 points, the James River team won its match. In the championship round, the Cedar Park quizzers edged out Neighborhood Church for the 3rd place spot after having been defeated by Owasso in the semi-final match. James River, down once again, overcame a 50-point deficit to seal the victory over Owasso.

In the Challenger Division, Evangel Church from Kansas City, Mo. came out on top with Bethany Church from Wyckoff, N.J. coming in just behind. The 2014 National Finals event will be held June 27 – July 5 at the Bonaventure Resort and Spa in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.



Dave Johnson, Assemblies of God missionary to the Philippines and coordinator of the Cebuano FireBible project, presents a copy of this Pentecostal study Bible to Pastor Real Semaprangka.

### Bible Alliance Launches Cebuano *FireBible*

# "Seeing the excitement on the faces of pastors and

**church leaders** as they receive their first copy of the *FireBible* in their language is something you never forget," says Edgar Reed, *Fire Bible* director at Assemblies of God Bible Alliance."

In two recent launches in the Republic of the Philippines — Cebu City and Davao — 468

church leaders, pastors, and guests received their first copies of the Cebuano *FireBible*. Members of the Cebuano translation team express their personal gratitude for this Pentecostal study Bible with commentary, articles, concordance, and study helps. "The Cebuano *FireBible* is the perfect tool God has given to each and every one of us. This Bible will be a very powerful tool for the ministry," said Filipino pastor Real Semaprangka, a minister among the Cebuano-speaking grassroots population.

Bible Alliance is grateful to Assemblies of God churches, districts, and individuals who have generously helped make available the *FireBible* in Cebuano and 39 more language editions for overseas pastors and laypersons in many countries.



### Sustain Hope — Impacting Lives Sustain Hope is a Christ-centered, best practice approach to improve lives through community-initiated sustainable

solutions. Partnering with local missionaries and responding to the identified initiatives of national churches and communities, Sustain Hope provides on-site consulting, research, training, assessment, pro-

gram design, and evaluation. Sustain Hope recently worked with Global Teen Challenge Honduras to teach leaders and provide an assessment of the Teen Challenge facilities as well as helping them focus on projects that could assist them in becoming more sustainable. The high point of the trip was to witness the "harvest" at the center's graduation ceremony and to see the families impacted by the transformed lives of the students.

Partnering with AG Pacific Oceania Area Directors Jerry and Karen Jacob, Sustain Hope provided training to approximately 1,000 people at Mercy School in the Solomon Islands. Sustain Hope teachers presented the gospel in each training session, and an opportunity for prayer with a local pastor was given to all those in attendance.

For more information, contact: Sustain Hope, P.O. Box 8374, Springfield, MO 65801; phone: 417-866-1292; E-mail: info@sustainhope.org. Visit Sustain Hope's website: **www.sustainhope.org** or on Facebook, **www.facebook.com/SustainHope**.

### Network211's Project 10Million Approaches Goal

**Network211 projects that by August 1, 2013, 9 million people** will have viewed a gospel presentation on one of their evangelism websites. Every 8 seconds one person views the gospel. Each visit represents a person who has reached out for spiritual help using the Internet. Every visitor who responds is contacted personally within 48 hours with discipleship information.

A woman from Fiji found answers via JourneyAnswers.com. Filled with depression, emptiness, guilt, and fear she wrote: "I can't get over what I did in 2006, [with] my boyfriend, who is now my husband. I was pregnant and we had an abortion. After 5 years of marriage, our lives are full of emptiness ... having miscarried twice ... is God punishing us? ... Will God ever forgive us?"

After receiving counsel from a volunteer Connector, she replied the next day:

"[There is a] smile and joy in my heart reading through your encouragement e-mail. I thank God and Jesus for someone like you who can understand and help me go through this kind of thing. I feel so good ... I knew God led me to this website. Right now I feel the peace that I never felt before. I never discussed it to anyone after so many years."

To learn more about Network211 and Project10million and to see the latest results, visit **www.project10million.com**. Consider joining team 10 million to provide prayer and financial support needed to continue this great evangelism effort.

### Network 211 New Website, Family-Relationship.com

**Network211 announces a new website, Family-Relationships. com.** This site is designed to help build strong family relationships based on biblical principles and to lead people to Jesus. Over 9 million people from 236 countries and territories have visited a Network211 evangelism site such as JourneyAnswers.com or WhoJesusIs.com. Of these 9 million, 540,000 responded to the gospel and more than 160,000 wrote to Network211 to begin a discipleship connection.

Family and interpersonal relationship issues are frequent themes in the praver requests and comments that Network211 receives. Even though visitors come from many nations, cultures, and languages, a large number of them need healing for broken relationships, an understanding of genuine love, and want to know how to relate properly within a family.

Family-Relationships.com is based on Dr. Wayde Goodall's book, Marriage and Family. The site features seven teaching videos on family matters presented by Goodall. Articles on family issues from Network211's online church, GlobalChristiancenter.com, are also presented on the site.

Pray that this website will be used by the Lord to lead people to Jesus and that it will impact relationships and families for generations.

### **Pentecostal Pastoring 101 Helps Provide Enrichment for European Ministers**



Goran Punda, pastor of a Pentecostal church in Zagreb, Croatia, has partnered with Life Publishers to help produce 26 quarterly issues of Duhovno Vrelo (Spiritual Spring). This abbreviated edition of Enrichment iournal in the Croatian language is a ministry resource for hundreds of pastors and church leaders in Croatia.

Ivan Glavacko, a second-generation Pentecostal pastor in Zagreb, stresses the impor-

tance of having access to Enrichment articles written by highly gualified theologians and proven pastors: "Competing religions are coming into Croatia, even by Internet, and bringing many false teachings. Duhovno Vrelo is like a sword guided by the Holy Spirit; it helps our Croatian pastors separate truth from false teaching. My dream for Croatia is that our pastors will preach and teach with the same authority that the apostles did in the Early Church."

For several years Life Publishers helped produce *Enrichment* editions in a few languages for Europe, both in print and digital formats.

"Recently, national church leaders in Europe have made us aware of the critical need to restart our efforts and help produce more *Enrichment* journal issues for thousands of European ministers, including some in post-Communist nations," says Jeff Dove, director of Life Publishers. "We are calling this project Pentecostal Pastoring 101. When we provide Enrichment's quality resources to help build Pentecostal leaders, the leaders then will build the church and the church will build disciples."

Life Publishers is appealing to U.S. churches and individuals to help provide 3 years of quarterly issues of Enrichment journal in six languages for thousands of ministers in these eight nations: Albania, Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Switzerland. For more information on the Pentecostal Pastoring 101 project, go to www.LifePublishers.org.

### **U.S. Missions** Compassion Ministries Website U.S. Missions recently launched a new

Compassion Ministries website, coinciding with its new compassion ministries initiative. Resources on compassion ministries topics, books, articles, speakers, and a calen-

dar of upcoming events can be found at www.



U.S. MISSIONS ... that none perish

agusmresources.ag.org. The Compassion Ministries is a foundational initiative that will:

- bridge efforts in combating the ills of society.
- formulate dialogue, identify and provide resources to agencies and organizations involved in ministries.
- plan strategies for prevention and collaborative initiatives.

- assist in developing best practices for different compassion areas.
- enhance support for outreach opportunities.
- promote engagement, awareness, and collaborative partners to effectively fulfill the Great Commission in America — making disciples for Jesus Christ ... that none perish.

U.S. Missions Executive Director Zollie L. Smith, Jr. says the compassion ministries website will provide information and connect people to maximize their potential, opportunity, and to aid in fulfilling the Great Commission within the United States.

# **Ad**Index

#### Assemblies of God

• AG Trust	7
Aged Ministers Assistance	13
Assemblies of God Credit Union	2
<ul> <li>Assemblies of God Theological Semi</li> </ul>	nary 53
Bible Alliance	
Financial Solutions inside back / or	utside back cover
<ul> <li>HelpLine (phone counseling for mini</li> </ul>	sters) 125
Holy Lands Studies	35
• 7:14 Prayer App	inside front cover
• U.S. Missions	44, 127
World Missions	
Jacob's Hope	
Network211	
ChurchLeaderInsights.com	3
Churches by Daniels Construction	45
Enrichment journal	52
FireBible	
Global University	
Influence Resources	1
MyHealthyChurch	
Dying Out Loud	1, 61
God In Motion	61, 91
Live/Dead	61
■ The Jesus-Hearted Woman	61, 69
Redeemed!	61, 83
<ul> <li>Relentless</li> </ul>	61, 91
• 7:14 Prayer App	inside front cover

### A Final Word

# I Am Believing God for ...

By Richard L. Schoonover

### y now you probably have finished reading

through this issue of Enrichment.

So, what did you dream?

No, I am not talking about the dreams you had after eating too much pizza before going to bed. I am talking about

the dreams you have for your ministry. What are you believing God for in your church and community? What would you like to accomplish if you had the money, people, and resources?

Sometimes dreaming can be discouraging. We dream but do not believe we can see the fulfillment to our dreams. There seems to be too many obstacles. We don't have enough people, money, or resources to accomplish our dreams. We have too much opposition from others. We sometimes focus on what we don't have rather than what we do have. So, we dream, but resign ourselves to the status quo. Or, we give up dreaming



altogether. But life and ministry do not need to be this way.

The executive leadership of the Assemblies of God — Dr. George O. Wood, L. Alton Garrison, Doug Clay, James T. Bradford, Zollie Smith, Jr., and Greg Mundis — believe you can dream. They stand behind your big dreams. But more than this, they invite you to believe that God can help you make your dreams come true. Some of our dreams are personal. We have goals and desires for ourselves. What will it take for you to have the Spiritempowerment needed to reach your community? How can you become a Jesus-style leader? What is keeping you from pursuing these dreams? The Holy Spirit wants to empower you to make a difference in your church and community. Allow the Holy Spirit to give you a fresh touch as you see this dream fulfilled in you.

What are your dreams for your church becoming prophetically relevant? To be prophetically relevant, you need to be making an impact on your community. As you look around your community, you know people and families who are in need of spiritual and physical help. How can your church address their needs? Ask your leaders to join with you as you dream and believe God for creative ideas to become prophetically relevant to your community.

What aspect of your church needs spiritual renewal? How will your church be a part of an unparalleled spiritual awaking? Will you believe that God will continue to do immeasurably more than you can ask or think?

Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18). You have the Owner of the church and all His power behind you. Remember, then, Jesus' words: "You may ask me for anything in my name." What is it you want to ask of Him? Who in your community needs to hear the gospel? How will you and your church help complete the Great Commission?

So, what are your dreams? What are you believing God for? The editors of *Enrichment*, along with the ELT, encourage you to believe God for even greater things. Allow God's power to flow through you and your church to see your dreams become reality as you take part in this spiritual awakening.

**Editors' Note:** Also included in this issue are excerpts from four new books from My Healthy Church, Influence Resources, and Gospel Publishing House. Not only do we trust these articles will help you in your ministry, we hope you will take advantage of the full resources found in these books to inspire you and your church to become all God wants it to be.



**RICHARD L. SCHOONOVER**, associate editor, *Enrichment* journal, Springfield, Missouri



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