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Prophecy:*

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD  
WOMEN  
IN MINISTRY

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CREDENTIALLED  
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LORD Almighty.”*

ZECHARIAH 4:6, NIV

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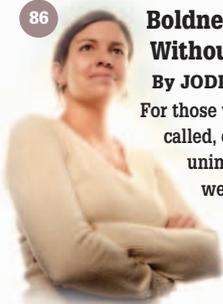
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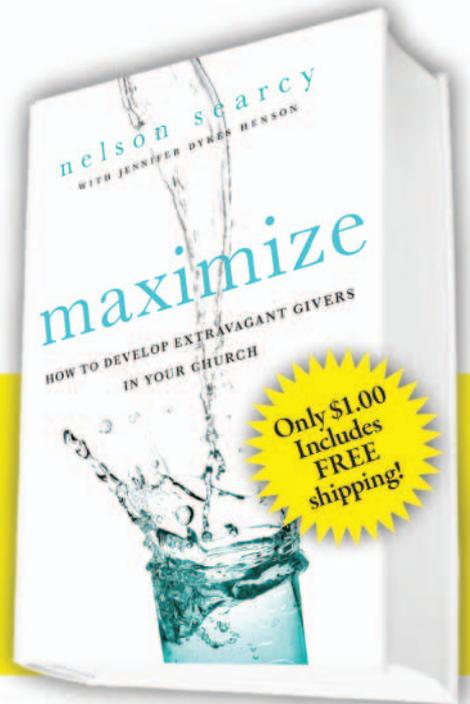
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GENERATIONS AT A GLANCE

**MAKING CHURCH ATTRACTIVE TO GEN Y**

**W**hen Boomer church leaders discuss making changes to attract Millennials, the conversations usually focus on style issues (i.e., louder music, hip preaching, etc.). However, I don't think style shifts are the answer. There are five things about Millennials<sup>1</sup> that inform how we might create an appealing worship experience for them.

**1. Connection.** They want to hang out with each other, as evidenced by their nearly constant interaction on social media. **Answer: Create community.**

**2. Values.** They have a high tolerance for diversity, a strong sense of equality,

and a commitment to social responsibility. **Answer: Love your neighbors.**

**3. Personality.** They value individuality, as long as they're still considered part of the group. When it comes to image, being genuine is more important than being cool. **Answer: Assess spiritual gifts.**

**4. Lifestyle.** Contrary to popular belief, research suggests<sup>2</sup> Gen Ys tend to lead relatively quiet lives hanging out with friends, listening to music, and watching TV. **Answer: Worship in creative ways.**

**5. Trust.** Y'ers are distrustful of most advertisements, which may explain why the opinions of their peers play such a large role in their life choices. **Answer: Solicit their opinions on preaching topics and ministry programs.**

Note the key emphases in the above answers — community, love, spirituality, worship, and participation. These aren't style issues; they are the substance of what church

leaders are called to do. The problem is that we don't make these essentials relevant to Gen Y, mostly because we leave them out of the conversation when we construct our ministry programs and sermon series.

So create an advisory board from the Millennials in your church. Let their voices be heard. That will go a long way toward attracting them to and engaging them in your church life.

— **RANDY WALLS**, director, continuing education, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

**Notes**

1. Nathalie Nahai, "5 Things You Need to Know about Marketing to Gen Y," *Psychology Today Webs of Influence* (May 13, 2013): <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/webs-of-influence/201305/5-things-you-need-know-about-marketing-gen-y>.
2. Linda P. Morton, "Targeting Generation Y," *HighBeam Research* (July 1, 2002): <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P3-135209611.html>.



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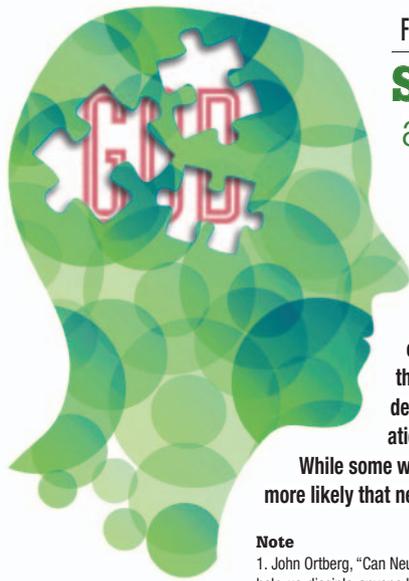
PROPHECIES FULFILLED

**INTERESTING EASTER TRIVIA**

As we journey through spring looking toward Easter, interesting Bible trivia can make interactive quizzes for a youth group or serve as great conversation starters — even with non-Christians.

For example, when the people sang as Jesus entered Jerusalem, it was not by chance they sang, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (John 12:13, Psalm 118:26). These words are part of the *Hallel*,





## FAITH & SCIENCE

# Science and the Soul

The tension-filled relationship between science and faith certainly is not new. As time passes and new discoveries emerge, however, we can glean important information that may help us better understand that tension.

One area that holds potential is the burgeoning field of brain studies.<sup>1</sup> New scientific research often includes an abundance of hype, like the discovery of the “God gene,” or spirituality that humanists reduce to a discussion of brain chemistry. Secular worldviews inevitably strive to frame life in human terms, with plausible human explanations. But beyond the hype, we may gain powerful insights into the spiritual realities that Pentecostal believers have historically experienced and affirmed.

Places like the 500 Room at Angeles Temple during the ministry of Aimee Semple McPherson gave testimony to miraculous healing nearly 100 years ago. The early 20th century Healing Homes of Carrie Judd Montgomery are a type of ministry that is seeing a renewal across the U.S. and around the world. With research now shedding light on mental illness, addictions, and how habits form, the descriptive capabilities of neuroscience will open our understanding of, arguably, God’s greatest creation: the brain.

While some would offer godless explanations of healing or dynamic, life-changing spiritual encounters, it is much more likely that neuroscience will only confirm what we already know: Jesus is the Healer.

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

### Note

1. John Ortberg, “Can Neuroscience Help Us Disciple Anyone?” *Leadership Journal* (July 2014): <http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2014/july/can-neuroscience-help-us-disciple-anyone.html>.

## UTHTRAX

### HOW DO I HEAR?

#### **What am I supposed to do next? What is God’s best for me?**

When swirling emotions mix with life-impacting decisions, quick answers like, “Just ask God,” leave our youth feeling frustrated, fearful, and full of more questions.

The admonition to seek God makes sense to those already praying and patiently waiting for God’s answer. However, for those just beginning to recognize God’s voice, this advice can be maddening.

#### *But how do I hear God?*

Eager to gain independence behind the wheel, learning new skills on the road was exciting. So when an adult compared hearing from God to driving a car, I listened. You can try this explanation with your students as well.

Heading somewhere new, your eyes dart back and forth as you approach an intersection. Looking for landmarks and street signs as clues you’re heading in the right direction, you proceed forward while keeping an eye on the light.

If the light stays green, you’ll keep going. A yellow light

signals you to cautiously head forward while preparing to stop. Nearing a red light, your foot applies the needed pressure, bringing your car to a complete stop.

Students can seek answers from God in a similar way. Encourage them to keep their eyes and ears open, constantly watching for His direction. If they experience peace, and their decision is consistent with His Word, they can keep going. Uneasiness or lack of direction might be God’s way of saying, “Slow down. Proceed with caution.”

When an internal red light flashes God’s signal to stop, go no further.

While this may seem completely feelings based, this simple illustration can be a beginning point to teaching youth how to listen to and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit.

— LYNN COWELL, speaker and author, LynnCowell Ministries, LynnCowell.com



which we know as Psalms 113–118. The Hebrews sang different parts of the *Hallel* during celebrations of the seven Feasts of the Lord.

- The 30 pieces of silver that Judas received for betraying Jesus was not a random number but the fulfillment of a prophesy in Zechariah 11:12,13. It was also the price paid to reimburse an owner for a dead slave (Exodus 21:32).

- Jesus predicted His death at least three times (Matthew 16:21; 17:22,23; 20:18,19).

- In Matthew 26:28, Jesus said His blood would be “poured out,” reflecting prophesies in Isaiah 53:12 and Psalm 22:14. Isaiah also prophesied the Messiah would be an “offering for sin,” or guilt offering (Isaiah 53:10). Moses

gave details of guilt offerings in Leviticus 5:14,15.

- The myrrh Magi gave Jesus at His birth (Matthew 2:11) was symbolic of and prophetic of the myrrh used for His burial (John 19:39).

- Early in His ministry Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days” (John 2:19). He was, of course, talking about His body as the temple, but His enemies twisted this statement and used it to convict Him (Mark 14:57–59).

— DIANNE E. BUTTS, author, Pueblo, Colorado

(From the book *Prophecies Fulfilled in the Death and Resurrection of Jesus*, by Dianne E. Butts.)

FROM BOOMERS TO ZOOMERS

# 5 WAYS TO KEEP MILLENNIALS IN CHURCH

As of 2012, an estimated 80 million Millennials live in the United States.<sup>1</sup> While there are numerous theories about why many of these young people are leaving the church, researchers at The Barna Group recently identified five ways to keep them attending.

**1. Cultivate meaningful relationships.** The most positive church experiences among Millennials are relational. This is a wake-up call to church adults to cultivate friendships with the next generation of believers.

**2. Teach cultural discernment.** Pop culture has become the driver of religion for Millennials, so helping them think and respond rightly to culture should be a priority.

**3. Make reverse mentoring a priority.** In their eyes, institutional church life is too hierarchical. They want to put their gifts and skills to work for the local church in the present — not future — tense.

**4. Teach vocational discipleship.** Millennials who have remained active in the church are three times more likely than dropouts to say they learned to view their gifts and passions as part of God's calling (45 percent versus 17 percent).

**5. Facilitate connection with Jesus.** Millennials who remain active in the church are more likely than those who dropped out to say they believe Jesus speaks to them personally in a way that is real and relevant (68 percent versus 25 percent).

— PATTI ANN THOMPSON  
freelance writer, Kansas City, Missouri

**Note**

1. Dan Schawbel "Millennials vs. Baby Boomers: Who Would You Rather Hire?" *TIME* (March 29, 2012) (accessed May 27, 2013).

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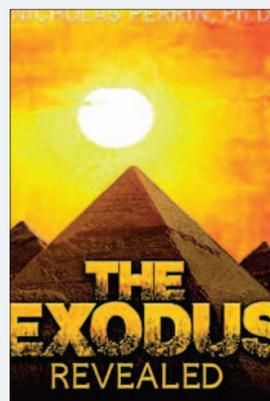
MINISTRY RESOURCES

## Finding Jesus in The Exodus

Recently, Hollywood has released a spate of films with Christian or biblical themes.

Some, such as *Mom's Day Out* and *When the Game Stands Tall*, are entertaining and inspiring with their strong undertones of faith. Others, such as *Heaven Is for Real*, *God Is Not Dead*, and *Left Behind*, have explicit Christian messages. Added to this mix are two epics: *Noah* and *The Exodus: Gods and Kings*.

Bible-based movies can provide excellent material for small group discussions, Bible studies, and Sunday school classes, as well as excerpts and examples for sermons. Most evangelicals recognize that both *Noah* and *The Exodus* stray, in typical Hollywood fashion, from the biblical text, so they may avoid them like the plague.

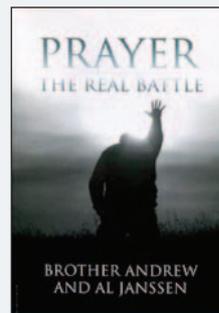


But these films can also be teaching and preaching resources as we push viewers to the Bible to discover what actually happened in each powerful saga and the meaning of these events.

In the wake of *Noah*, Christian publisher Faith+Words decided to be proactive and publish a book that tells the true story of the Exodus. Written by Nicholas Perrin, dean of Wheaton College Graduate School, and Franklin S. Dyrness, professor of biblical studies, *The Exodus Revealed* does just that and is an excellent resource for individuals — biblically literate or not — and for group discussion. The book follows the story through Promise, Prince and Pariah, Prophet, Pharaoh, Plagues, Passover, and Passage and provides intriguing and helpful historical, cultural, and biblical context. Readers learn why Pharaoh felt threatened by the Israelites, how Moses struggled with God's call on his life, the nature of religious life in Egypt, the meaning and power of the plagues, the miraculous deliverance out of Egypt, and the formation of the people of God. In short, they gain a profound understanding and appreciation for God's miraculous work through Moses.

Perrin's companion book, *Finding Jesus in the Exodus*, is also a valuable resource for believers.

— DAVE VEERMAN, co-owner, Livingstone Corp., Naperville, Illinois



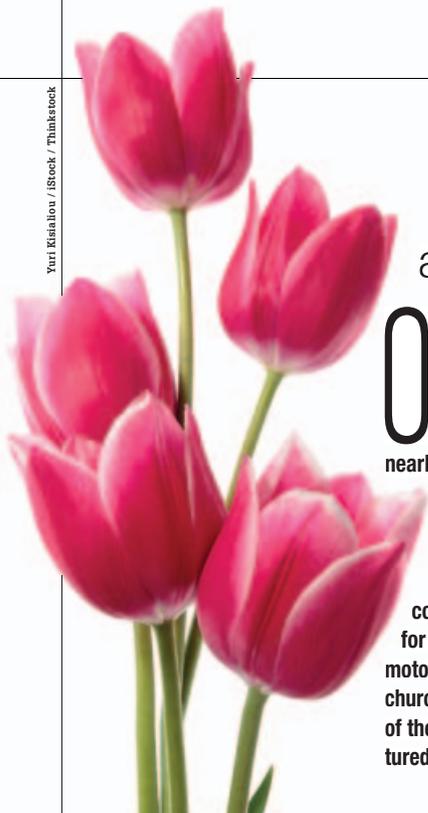
### THE REAL BATTLE

Through his activities, writing, and ministry, Brother Andrew has been a prayer warrior and an advocate for the persecuted Church for more than six decades.

Open Doors International, the ministry Brother Andrew founded, is dedicated to serving persecuted Christians worldwide. The most important way individuals can do this is through prayer. To that end, Brother Andrew and Al Janssen, chief communications officer for Open Doors International, recently wrote an insightful and practical resource: *Prayer, The Real Battle*.

This is not a book but an 80-page booklet — unimposing, easy to read, and portable enough to fit into a No. 10 envelope. The eight sections are titled: "Crisis"; "Watch and Pray"; "Prepare for Battle!"; "A New Time for Daily Prayer"; "Become an Intercessor"; "Wield the Sword"; "Pray With, Not Just For"; and "A Vital Question."

This resource is ideal for church pastors, as well as lay leaders and small groups. The booklets are available at the online store at [opendoorsusa.org](http://opendoorsusa.org). For orders of 10 or more, call 888-524-2535 for special pricing and shipping information.



## NATURE'S SYMPHONY

# Buried Bulbs and Easter Tulips

**O**n Saturday, March 22, 2014, a massive mudslide in Oso, Wash., a rural community north of Seattle, claimed the lives of some 50 people and destroyed as many homes. Les Hagen, an Assemblies of God pastor in nearby Darrington, compared the aftermath to a war zone. For weeks he joined first responders in caring for the physical, emotional, and spiritual wounds left in the mudslide's wake. Buried bodies and leveled homes brought community-wide sorrow that hung over Oso for months following the tragedy. The continual motorcade of funeral cars and hearses from local churches to area cemeteries was a visible reminder of the perpetual pain. Death hung in the air. Fractured dreams lay in the dust.

As I watched the ongoing media coverage of the recovery zone, I thought of the Skagit Valley some 30 miles west of Oso. While reporters' cameras captured the chaos of a collapsed hillside, thousands of digital cameras were clicking at the fields of world-class tulips that draw tourists each spring.

I found the contrast deeply moving. It was, in fact, a dramatization of the Easter message churches will articulate during this Easter's services. What seems buried and gone forever doesn't have to end in hopeless despair. Tulip bulbs lie hidden in the soil. They are not visible. They are as good as dead. But every year around this time, tulips rise from their earthen graves in a brilliant display of color and design. Like a miniature trumpet, each flower bugles an Easter tune announcing the cycle of the seasons. Winter has surrendered to spring. It's nature's symphony that affirms the biblical message that life has swallowed up death.

— GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS, chaplain  
Mercer Island, Washington

**D**uring my pastoral ministry, it always amused me what terrorized some people enough to call me at odd hours. For normal people, this is a call you reserve for that moment when you don't know where to turn and something has gone terribly wrong. A death. An affair. A disaster of some kind.

I found that what constitutes an "emergency" isn't the same for everyone. People often look to their pastor to help them know what is important and what is not. Pastors are often the reassuring voice, the calming presence, and the one person in the room who is not freaking out when the world turns upside down. Of course, pastors are also the ones raising concerns about issues nobody thinks are important. It's a difficult tension between prophet and shepherd.

Setting the congregation's emotional temperature is one of the more underrated jobs of a pastor. One of the ways we set the temperature is through our daily interactions with our staff. If we're always stressing out, furrowing our brows, and worrying about every little detail of church ministry, we

won't have the emotional resources to be the voice people need in the midst of their hectic lives. At the same time, if we're always the coolest person in the room, people may wonder whether we take anything seriously.

We need the Spirit of God to give us wisdom to know when to voice concerns and when to be reassuring. With God's help, our demeanor can point people to the sovereignty of Christ over every situation.

The other way we set this tone is by the way we approach the biblical text in the pulpit. Our emotional temperature should match the ebb and flow of the Scripture itself. There are some messages that should sound a prophetic alarm and fiery calls to repentance, matching the voice of the prophets, the apostles, and Jesus. But not every Sunday can and should be fire and brimstone. This not only wears out our people, but it also shows a distinct insensitivity to their emotional needs.

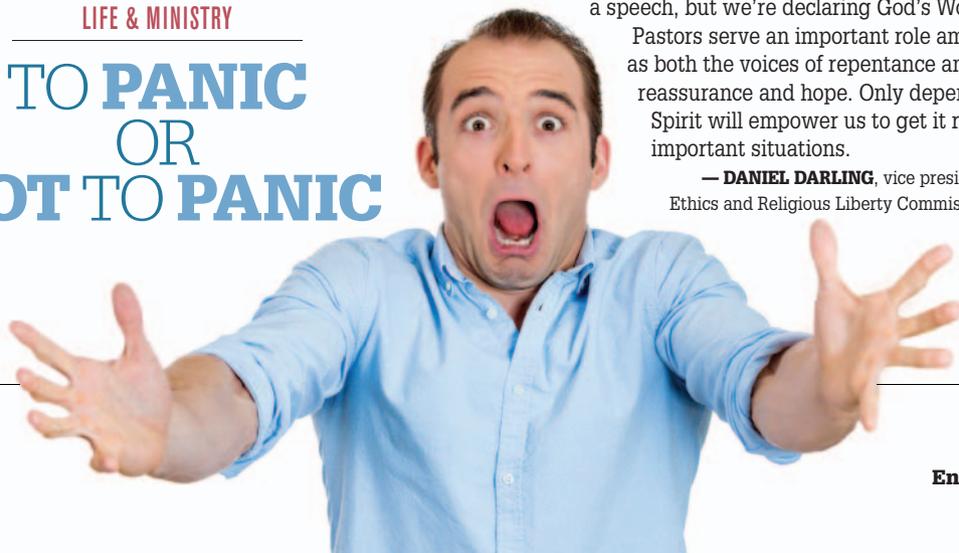
We also want to avoid an aw-shucks attitude with our preaching that never matches the urgency often found in God's Word. Our people need to know that we share Christ's passion about the gospel and that we're not up there simply reciting a speech, but we're declaring God's Word to His people.

Pastors serve an important role among their people as both the voices of repentance and the voices of reassurance and hope. Only dependence on the Spirit will empower us to get it right in the most important situations.

— DANIEL DARLING, vice president, Communications, Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), Nashville, Tennessee

## LIFE & MINISTRY

# TO PANIC OR NOT TO PANIC



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LEADERLIFE

## TRUSTING What He Told You

**I love it when I come across a verse** I've read 100 times, and the Lord illuminates it in such a way that it seems like I'm discovering it for the first time. That happened to me recently as I read 1 Chronicles 11:2: "In the past, even while Saul was king, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the Lord your God said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'"

This verse reminded me of a time when God spoke to my heart about my first ministry opportunity. God closed every door of opportunity I tried to open. I couldn't understand why doors kept slamming shut.

Early one morning on the way to work, the Lord clearly spoke to me that I would be the next youth pastor at the church I was attending. At the time it seemed absolutely ridiculous. The current youth pastor had been there for more than 10 years and was leading a vibrant group. I never told anyone what God had revealed to me.

Much to my disappointment I enrolled in a local junior college and continued to volunteer at the church for the next couple of years, doing everything asked of me. Several years later, what God spoke to my heart previously came to pass: I became the youth pastor at this great church.

What does this have to do with 1 Chronicles 11:2? I believe some who are reading this may be in a place of ministry transition. You are not where

you used to be, but you're not where you want to be — and you don't know how to get there. Here are a few thoughts I pulled out of this verse.

**1. You don't have to be in charge to lead the charge.** Allow your influence to inspire others where God has you right now. Don't withhold your gifting, for your gifts will make room for you (Proverbs 18:16).

**2. If God has spoken, you don't need a title.** Saul had the title of king, but God chose David to take his place. It might not make sense in the natural why God would have you serve under your current leadership, but God sometimes chooses to increase our anointing in difficult seasons.

**3. Don't look for a position when God has given you a promise.** You will be what God said. Don't seek a position; wait for the promises of God to unfold in your life.

Friends, trust what He told you, and do what He says.

— **DEAN DEGUARA**, director of resources, Jesus Culture, Folsom, California

GOOD READS

## DAVID AND GOLIATH

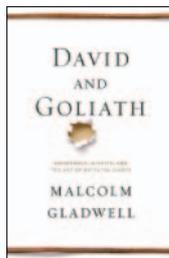
**Readers do not consider Malcolm Gladwell a Christian writer**, and Christian companies do not publish his books. Nevertheless, his best-selling works have much to say to the evangelical community.

A staff writer for *The New Yorker* and former reporter at *The Washington Post*, Gladwell burst onto the scene with his best-selling *The Tipping Point*; other popular and provocative books have followed. His latest, *David and Goliath* (Little, Brown, 2013), has practical implications for our churches.

The premise for this book is that often the little guys — the "Davids" — succeed against the highly favored "Goliaths" of the world. Gladwell explains why the underdogs win battles in spite of, and often because of, their perceived weaknesses and handicaps.

One of Gladwell's most helpful insights is what he calls the "U-curve," a recurring phenomenon in

many areas of life. We may assume, for example, that the smaller the class size, the better the education for individual students. Or that greater annual income leads to greater



happiness and life satisfaction for individuals and families. Or that the greater the prestige of a college or university, the better prepared for life its graduates will be. We imagine all these graphed in a straight, upward trajectory. "No," says Gladwell.

Studies reveal an inverted U in the graph. In other words, the education related to class size, the happiness

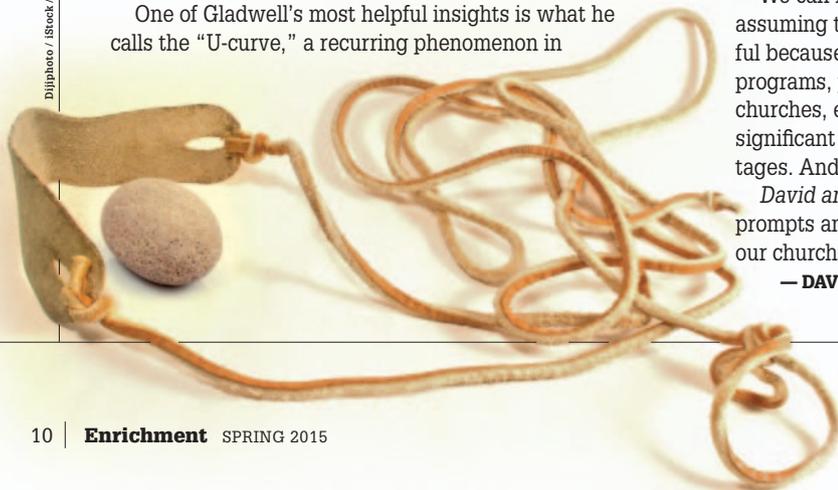
related to income, and the success related to prestige may indeed rise as the class size decreases or the income rises or the prestige increases. However, the graph peaks and begins the downturn sooner than we might expect.

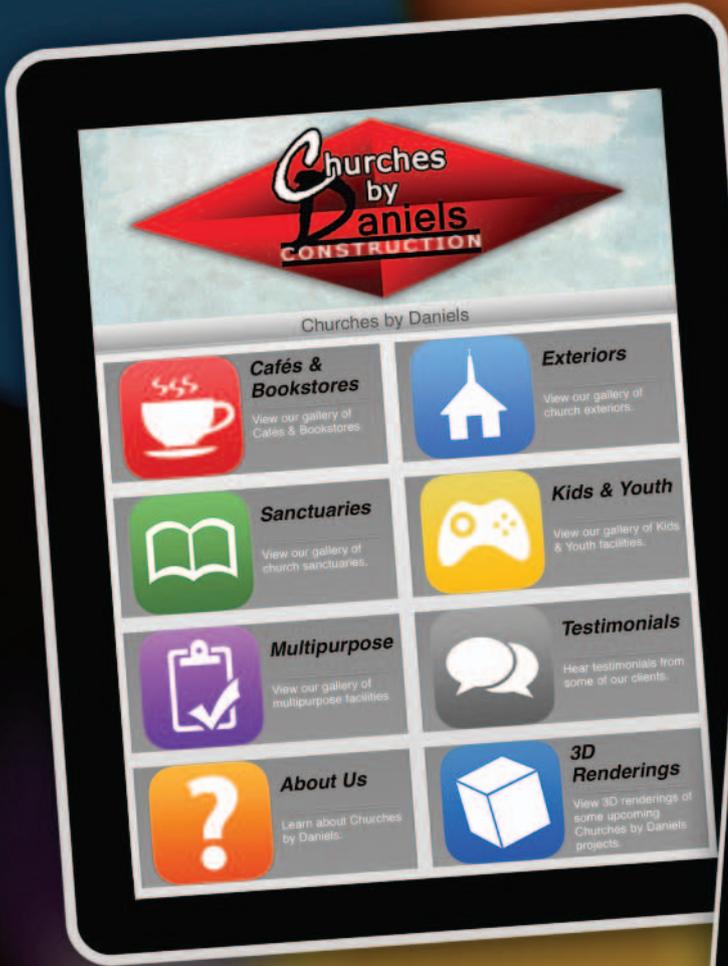
We can make the same mistake regarding church size, assuming that larger churches are better and more successful because of their great number of ministries, exciting programs, potential relationships, and opportunities. But all churches, especially the very small and very large ones, have significant issues and challenges along with their advantages. And we would be wise to identify and deal with them.

*David and Goliath* should provide many discussion prompts and talking points — and help us take a fresh look at our churches.

— **DAVE VEERMAN**, co-owner, Livingstone Corp., Naperville, Illinois

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IN HIS IMAGE

# Picturing Christ Wherever We Go



In 1924, a 32-year-old Chicago illustrator named Warner Sallman sketched a head of Christ with a piece of charcoal. The drawing, which he called *The Son of Man*, appeared on the cover of a Christian periodical. In 1935, Sallman used oil paints to create a version of his Christ on canvas to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Evangelical Covenant Church (the Scandinavian denomination to which he belonged). The freelance artist had no idea how popular his imagined visage of Jesus would become.

By 1940, the painting, known as *Sallman's Head of Christ*, gained commercial licensing. Since then, it has appeared in

more than 500 million reproductions. The Salvation Army and the YMCA, as members of the USO, handed out pocket-sized versions of the painting to American servicemen heading overseas during World War II. In addition to framed prints, the *Head of Christ* has graced greeting cards, church bulletins, clocks, lamps, buttons, and funeral announcements.

Before his death in 1968, Sallman traveled the country appearing in churches, at special evangelistic meetings, and youth camps to do original chalk reproductions of his recognizable brown tone profile. Nearly half a century after his death, when millions of Americans imagine what Jesus might have looked like, they picture Sallman's work.

On the 90th anniversary of Sallman's first charcoal rendering, we would do well to contemplate the image of Christ we project wherever we go. You don't have to be an artist to focus those around you on the Savior you worship. We help others picture Christ by the way we serve Him.

— GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS, chaplain  
Mercer Island, Washington



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## Ministry in Rural America

By Curtis Pryor



Are rural pastors and churches doomed merely to get by the best they can with what they have — to be satisfied with smallness and embrace it?



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## Speaking in Tongues: Its Essence, Purposes, and Use (Part 3)

By George M. Flattery



This third installment examines what Paul writes about tongues and offers practical guidance from 1 Corinthians 14:13–40 for their use in public gatherings.



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## The Perfect Storm

By Ray Gemme

When you are in the midst of the



storm, it is not time for microanalysis. It is time to hold on. Here are important steps to follow that will help you weather the storms in your life.



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## Why Your Church Might Not Be as Good — or as Bad — as You Think

By Chris McMillan

The quality — not the quantity —



of materials is the primary indicator of a healthy and successful church. A day is coming when God will test every pastor's work. Will your church survive?



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## Who's Your Supporting Cast This Week?

By William E. Richardson

Who populates your sermons besides



the Bible's major players? A long line of interesting and memorable individuals outside the pages of Scripture can assist you.



# BETH GRANT

*Author, Speaker, and Cofounder of Project Rescue*

## CONFRONT SOCIAL INJUSTICE GOD'S WAY

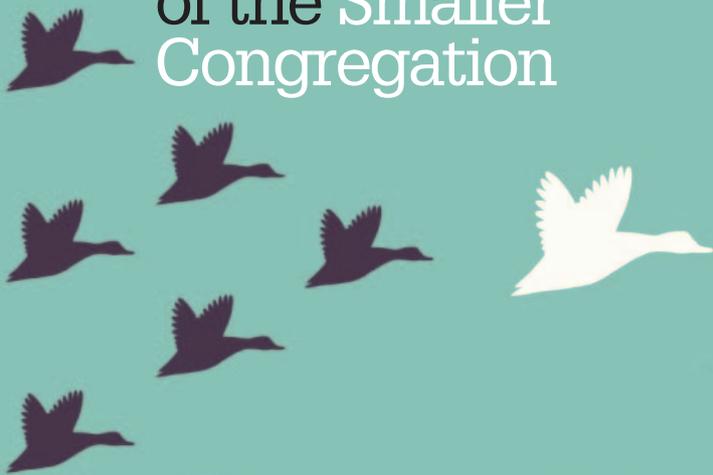


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# The Skills to Become an Excellent Leader of the Smaller Congregation



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BY CAL LEMON

**T**here were typos in the worship bulletin — again. The restrooms, cleaned by a volunteer custodian, did not have hand towels in the wall dispenser — again. The worship leader walked into the sanctuary three minutes before the start of the service — again. And the Christian education class for the four teenagers in the youth group joined the adult class because their teacher did not set her alarm — again.

Sound familiar?

As a former church planter, I have lived in the spiritual euphoria and emotional angst of the emerging congregation. The ultimate challenge was not getting warm bodies into those folding chairs. Rather, my frustration was convincing the new congregants God deserved nothing less than excellence because Christ, the Son of God, was living among us.

Since a church will always reflect its spiritual leadership, I am convinced the



Here are five skills of excellence that will impact the smaller congregation

only option to rediscover growth, renewed worship, and a mesmerizing mission is for spiritual leadership to discover pragmatic excellence.

## LEARNING ABOUT EXCELLENCE

Steve Jobs, founder of Apple Inc., said, “Be a yardstick of quality. Some people aren’t used to an environment where excellence is expected.”

Apple stock split last year, rewarding its investors with six shares for every one they owned. Though Steve Jobs died in 2011, his leadership lives on at Apple.

Lexus is an excellent automobile. Harvard University is an excellent educational institution. And Four Seasons is an excellent hotel. We often do not hesitate spending our money and time on things and people we deem “excellent.” So what about the excellent small congregation?

## THE EXCELLENCE OF THE SMALL CHURCH

The advent of the megachurch has cast the small congregation in the unenviable role of Chicken Little.

How can a congregation of 75 believers compete with 7,500 adherents who have the funds and faith to build a spiritual kingdom complete with 24-hour health clubs, parking lot attendants, and coffee stations in the foyer that strangely mimic the appearance and aroma of Starbucks?

The excellence of the small congregation is the well-established fact that, within a few weeks, everyone will know your name. And they will know your children’s names, your laughter, your tears, and your spiritual challenges. Most importantly, they will know you are growing in your faith — together. Spiritual and social intimacy is the excellence of the smaller congregation.

## THE FIVE SKILLS OF EXCELLENCE THAT WILL IMPACT YOUR SMALL CONGREGATION

**1. Always tell the truth, even when you know the listener will not be happy with what you just said.**

Have you noticed there are few places to hide in the small church?

A leader who says “yes,” and then passively-aggressively acts out “no,” loses credibility.

If you adopt this skill of honesty, you may punctuate your conversations with parishioners with assertive language like, "As I mentioned in our last mission committee meeting, I cannot support sending three of our teenagers to Belize for summer ministry without two adults accompanying them."

Or you may have to use this honest response, "Yes, as your pastor, I will always be available to help you in emergencies. And on Fridays, which is a personal day I spend with my family, I expect our elders to assume their spiritual leadership in my absence."

**2. Send the right message with your body language, eye contact, and verbal skills.**

When you lean back and clasp your arms behind your back or fold them in front of your chest while a parishioner is talking, your body language says, "I'm not listening."

Listen carefully, make eye contact, and ask incisive questions. Say, "Tell me more about that," or, "I sense you are afraid of what God will ask of you. Have I understood that correctly?"

Another question that shows you care is, "How can I help you in this situation?"

**3. Be excellent in your use of time.**

At the beginning of conversations that are not emergencies, you can say, "Before we begin our time together, I need to make you aware of another appointment I have in 30 minutes. Is that enough time? If not, what is another time that will work for both of us?"

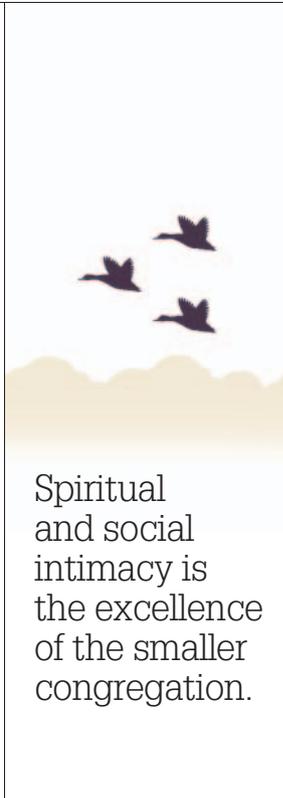
Of course, whatever you promise as a time to meet, keep that verbal obligation.

Always arrive a few minutes early for an appointment. Your ability to surprise the other person with your punctuality will make an impression and win respect.

**4. Proclaim the Word through excellent teaching and preaching.** If you are reading this column, you probably are doing, or will be preparing to do, just that.

In the small congregation, news travels fast. And, count on it, your flock will evaluate, analyze, and score your ability to declare God's Word. Under that kind of scrutiny, people will easily detect your preparation or lack of it.

Read and reread your text, and take process notes without consulting a commentary, lectionary, or concordance. The ease of your communication will come from your



Spiritual and social intimacy is the excellence of the smaller congregation.

outline, not a commentator's. Ask yourself this question while doing your research: *What do I want those who listen to the Word to do as a result of encountering God's Word?*

Create a simple outline of no more than three major points. Write out, verbatim, the entire sermon, but never read the sermon to your congregation. The text of the sermon will come back to your memory as you preach from the outline.

Finally, spend time in prayer, asking the Lord to bathe your hard work with the power of His Spirit.

**5. Lead with love.** Most people will view you as excellent if you genuinely care for those you lead. You are in the wrong place if you are building your own kingdom, consistently directing all the attention to the person you see in the mirror, or if you cannot emotionally handle someone who disagrees with you. Offer them your best, love them just as they are, and encourage them to keep moving forward in Christ. ■



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

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## Taking the Shallowness Out of Your Preaching

BY DOUG GREEN

**P**astor, I like you, but I need preaching that is, well ... deeper."

Ouch.

*Why would you want to swim in the deep end of the pool when you are not spending time in the shallow end? What exactly do you mean by deeper? I prepare my sermon every week. What about it isn't deep enough for you?*

Who wants to come across as a shallow preacher? Not me. Not you.

It's hard to know what someone means when they say our sermons are not deep enough. Yet such painful critiques can help us learn lessons and improve our communication methods.

Every hearer (including you) has a certain set of intellectual and emotional needs. When a message meets those needs, it feels deep. When the needs remain unmet, it feels frustrating. Although we know our congregations ultimately need an encounter with the triune God and a commitment to be doers of the Word, throwing them some "depth" bones will go a long way in helping them sense fulfillment. Consider these suggestions.

**Give them new information.** Let's face it: People want to learn something new. They want to write something meaningful in their notes. It might be a bit of biblical data, such as the modern day equivalency of the 10,000 bags of gold in Matthew 18:21–34. It might be a map of the ancient world compared to the modern world, revealing, for instance, that the seven churches of Revelation 2–3 are now part of modern Turkey. It might be the specific verb tense of a key word. For



Here are four suggestions that will add depth to your preaching.

example, in Romans 8:28–30, "glorified," though it seems to be a future action, is in the aorist/past tense.

All forms of intellectual information, including biblical customs, archaeological finds, ancient weights and measurements, and even Palestinian fashion, can help you open up the biblical text and assist the listener in hearing God's Word for them, in the present day. However, as an additional bonus, such details allow the learner to hear something brand new. This is a terrific technique to add depth to your preaching.

**Give them a sense of completion.** As a remnant of the Fall, we live in a world lacking a sense of completion. The landscape is constantly changing. People live their entire lives lacking full knowledge about almost everything. The constant effort to act despite incomplete information is, at the least, tiring and sometimes profoundly disturbing. Consequently, one of the strongest desires people have is to resolve the gnawing sense of uncertainty.

This is precisely the value of God's Word. There is always a sense of the whole — even in our partial world. While on this side of fullness, we do our hearers a favor to connect them to the bigger story. When you point your hearers toward God's overall redemptive story, your sermon becomes a "completing" event on the weekly calendar.

For example, Ephesians 6:10–18 speaks about an invisible spiritual battle. You could tell the story of a young mother who spends her days doing the mundane only to have a Sunday morning parenting crisis spoil one of her few precious opportunities to reenter the adult world. If you could show how her experience is part of a bigger battle (the one Christ ultimately wins), you give her specific battle meaning. The gospel offers her fragmented world holistic resolution.

**Give them a chance to make decisions.** Don't do all the work for them. Let them exert an effort. A captivating sermon leads to a thought-provoking climax, but it also engages the listener throughout. An engaged audience constantly makes decisions during the sermon. Their participation in the progression of the sermon is what makes the experience fulfilling. They are not daydreaming passengers in the backseat; they are helping drive the car.

Most churchgoers do not know how to

explain why a particular sermon worked for them. They just know they felt engaged and caught up in the journey. They entered the text in a meaningful and personal way. They sensed ownership.

The effective communicator knows the audience needs continuous intellectual incentive — material holding their curiosity and engaging their minds. Help your audience make the big decision by walking them through a series of little decisions along the way. Ultimately, as an expositor of the text, you take your hearers to a place where they, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, wrestle with the truth claim the text is making. This is a meaningful communication device.

**Give them bold confidence and authority.** Sermon content (the written) is important. But nothing trumps bold, confident, and authoritative conviction (the oral). Your passion and your heart communicate what words cannot. Conversely, an absence of authority defuses even the crafted theological masterpiece. The pathos and ethos must flow with the logos.

Scholarship is what you do in the study. A manuscript is what you put on paper. These essential elements will take much of your week to craft. However, what you deliver from the pulpit is what ultimately matters. It's the culmination of your scholarship. Yet it must come not from paper but from your heart — your conviction and passion about the vital significance of God's Word.

If you must choose between scholarship and fire, choose both! A scholar on fire is always your best option.

Sometimes "lack of depth" can be a way to describe a spiritually absent preacher. When you speak without authority, it's an oral report, not a sermon. A sermon is a proclamation of God's Word — a living Word, not just rooted in history but alive and well in churches today.

Here's the problem: The smarter a person gets, the less willing he or she is to proclaim givens. Often, educated people are discreet about advocating absolutes. As a result, many preachers are reticent to speak authoritatively, fearing they might insult the intellects of the hearers.

While you may have doubts about your ideas or my concepts, as a biblical preacher you must unswervingly put all your eggs in

A captivating sermon leads to a thought-provoking climax, but it also engages the listener throughout.

the one basket of Holy Scripture. Hearers need to know the biblical text matters. They need bold confidence and authority. They need to hear Truth with a capital T, not a lowercase one. They need to know God's words are not your words and that you cannot dilute His words at your discretion. They really need prophetic zeal — moments where they hear from the pulpit, "Thus saith the Lord."

With humility of heart and transparency about your own personal brokenness, your congregation needs bold confidence and authority from the pulpit. Besides, if you are truly preaching a biblical message, the thoughts are not yours anyway. They're God's words. He gets the credit for what He says, not you.

"Wow, pastor, your sermons seem so deep lately! What happened?"

When people utter those words, just smile and give God the credit.

He deserves all the attention. 🙏



**DOUG GREEN**, founding pastor, North Hills Church, Brea, California

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"Pretty good sermon, Pastor, even though you're not on Angie's List."



Gen, Yeiko, and Dye Ogata in Minneapolis, 1942

## Institutions Can Network Too

BY JOSEPH CASTLEBERRY

**P**eople connecting to people weaves the net God uses to fish the world and populate the Kingdom. But institutions can practice Kingdom networking, too.

Churches, small groups, schools and colleges, businesses, service clubs, and many other kinds of institutions come together because they have the power to multiply human effort and yield a final result greater than the sum of its parts.

I sometimes say that the only thing worse than organized religion is disorganized religion. When people try to serve God independently rather than as part of a community, their contribution will always yield less



When we fail to network, we miss out on some of the most powerful benefits the Kingdom net has to offer.

benefit than it could have had. Networking for the sake of God's kingdom expresses the very essence of organized religion. People in our time commonly say, "Christianity is a relationship, not a religion."

But they would speak the truth more accurately by saying, "Christianity requires people in vibrant relationship with God to form permanent relationships with each other for living out the kingdom of God."

Christianity goes beyond "just Jesus and me" to embrace Jesus in the form of His body — the Church, as it expresses itself in Christian organizations united to do Jesus' work in the world.

Working the Kingdom net involves our personal efforts, as well as our institutional cooperation. I recently enjoyed a remarkable networking moment when the school I lead, Northwest University, came together with North Central University to do a Kingdom work. But the work we did together in 2014 depended on something we did together in 1942, at the beginning of World War II.

In April 1941, a young Japanese-American woman named Yeiko Ogata gave her heart to

Jesus in Helena, Montana, at First Assembly of God under the pastoral leadership of the late Eugene Born, a member of Northwest Bible Institute's first graduating class in 1937. The Ogata family enjoyed great favor with their neighbors in Montana, and according to the FBI file compiled at the beginning of the war, they were "loyal citizens, smarter than the average people." All of Yeiko Ogata's brothers and sisters would go on to higher education and economic success, and Yeiko Ogata left for college in Seattle in the fall after she came to Christ.

After a quarter at Seattle Pacific College, Ogata transferred to Northwest Bible Institute to pursue a Pentecostal formation that would enable her to serve Christ to the fullest. She transferred to Northwest just a month after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor and America's entry into the war. The city of Seattle had long held people of Asian background in contempt, and its zoning code did not permit her to live in the neighborhood of the college because of her race. But Northwest warmly accepted her and violated the race codes of the day by giving her a room with other students. Her academic records at Northwest clearly reveal her strong intelligence and zeal, as she completed two quarters of study simultaneously with top grades. Although she only studied at Northwest for one quarter, her picture appears three times in the 1942 yearbook, presented affectionately and with pride.

Soon after Ogata began her studies, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order that mandated the internment in concentration camps of Japanese-Americans living on the West Coast. Although Ogata was a natural citizen of the United States, born in Montana, she faced grim prospects if she stayed in Seattle. The deadline for leaving Seattle was April 1, and on March 30 she withdrew from school and took a train home to Helena. With a terse note, "withdrew March 30, Japanese Internment Order," the official records at Northwest fall silent as to her fate.

Seventy-two years later, Devin Cabinilla, a Filipino-American student, discovered Ogata while doing research on the remarkable experiences of Asian-American students at Northwest during the years when they faced official racism in Seattle. Curious about the

Some may fear that cooperating with other churches will expose them to the danger of losing their people, but such a fear-based isolation represents the polar opposite of faith and will always stunt the health and growth of an organization.

mystery of her life after leaving Northwest, he painstakingly followed a trail of crumbs that would turn her up in Minneapolis in the fall of 1942. Her brother Dye Ogata, still living in his 90s, vaguely remembered she had studied at a Bible institute in Minneapolis.

Cabinilla came to me with his research and pointed out that the State of California had passed a law in 2011 requiring California universities to find Japanese-American students whose studies had been disrupted by Roosevelt's executive order and award them the degrees they had pursued. He asked if we could do the same for Yeiko Ogata, and I agreed that we should award her a posthumous bachelor of arts degree. But we would need to get permission from the board of directors.

With time running out, we worked together feverishly to discover the rest of Ogata's story and take her case to the board. Suspecting that she might have transferred from Northwest to our sister school, North Central, I called President Gordon Anderson and asked him to check their records. Three days later, during our board meeting, he got word back to me that Ogata had indeed transferred her credits to North Central and had finished her three-year diploma on time in 1944.

Our historical research showed that Norwegian immigrant Henry Ness, the founding president of Northwest, had participated in the founding of North Central University along with his friend Frank Lindquist, a fellow Scandinavian and the founding president of North Central. We concluded that Ness must have contacted Lindquist to secure a place for Ogata to continue her studies. Two Pentecostal colleges had collaborated to create a safety net for a vulnerable young woman who loved the Lord and wanted to serve Him.

Seventy-two years later, the same two colleges networked to fulfill all righteousness by honoring Ogata and her family with an honorary degree. Yeiko Ogata was the only member of her family who followed Jesus, but her testimony rang out to her family once again as her alma mater honored her faith three-quarters of a century later.

According to sociological theory, religious movements start institutions — churches, colleges, and the like — because institutions have great power to preserve and extend the cause that drives their movement. When institutions work together, the effect can

be even greater. North Central University, founded in 1930, played an important role in the founding of Northwest University in 1934 when friends helped each other extend the work of God. The same benefit accrues every time leaders connect their institutions to magnify their cause.

Networking goes far beyond personal relationship building. Pastors who do not connect their churches with other churches and institutions miss out on a great opportunity to enhance their work. Some may fear that cooperating with other churches will expose them to the danger of losing their people, but such a fear-based isolation represents the polar opposite of faith and will always stunt the health and growth of an organization.

Consider the following ways of networking with other churches:

- When Christians apply for membership or service in your church, always check with the pastor of their previous church. Pastors used to require a letter of transfer for Christians who wanted to join their churches, and the idea still holds merit. Hearing a previous pastor's recommendation can save a pastor unnecessary heartache.
- Cooperate with other churches to offer Vacation Bible Schools that give unchurched people and their children a chance to hear the gospel. Many churches lose great opportunities to reach young families because they lack the personnel to offer a strong program alone.
- Join with other churches in periodic youth rallies, and invite an outstanding youth evangelist to address them. Shared travel experiences build strong relationships among teenagers, and inviting unsaved friends to attend such meetings increases their evangelistic impact. Teenagers need to make Christian friends inside their churches as well as outside. Coming together to create larger crowds where our youth can build their networks adds powerful benefit to their lives, as well as a fresh spiritual recharging to our youth groups.
- Collaborate with mission agencies like Convoy of Hope to offer your church an opportunity for effective volunteer work for social and evangelistic impact.



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Organizations need partners, too.

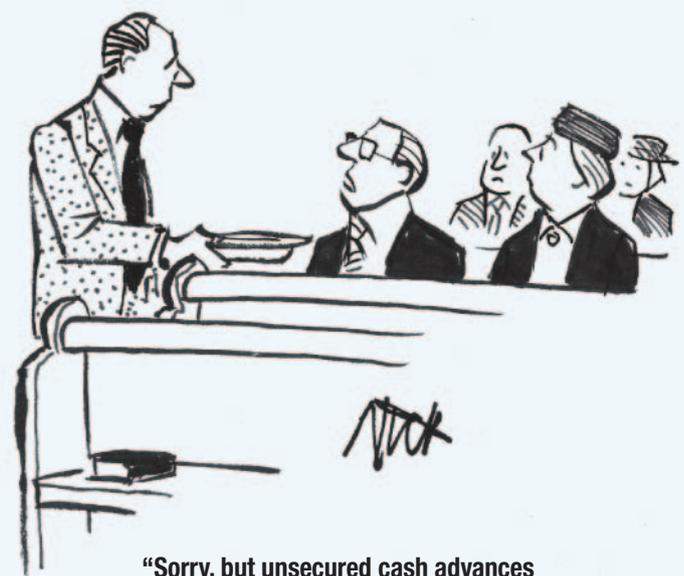
- Take the networking abroad by interacting with the institutions connected with missionaries your church supports.
- Coordinate with area churches to car-pool to a Christian college for campus visits. Helping Christian students find the right Christian college can have a huge impact on their future faith and church participation.
- Consider applying for grants from local and national foundations that support the work of organizations doing work for the social good. Organizations like The C-4 Group ([c4group.org](http://c4group.org)) can also help churches access federal funding for faith-based social services.

When Christian organizations fail to network with each other, they miss out on some of the most powerful benefits the Kingdom net has to offer. Everyone knows they need friends to help them maximize their lives, but organizations need partners, too. Enlightened leaders learn to link them up. ■



**JOSEPH CASTLEBERRY**, president, Northwest University, Kirkland, Washington. He is the author of *Your Deepest Dream: Discovering God's Vision for Your Life* and *The Kingdom Net: Learning to Network Like Jesus*.

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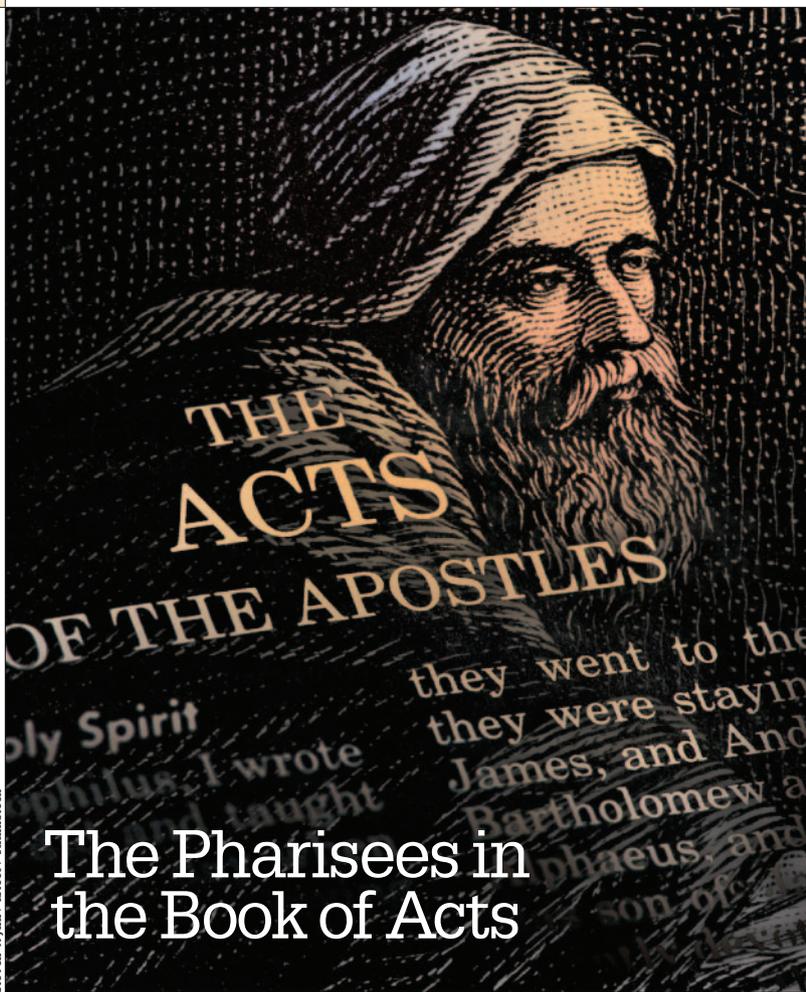
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## The Pharisees in the Book of Acts

BY MARC TURNAGE

*The following article is the third and final installment in a three article series on the Pharisees. The first two installments, “The Pharisees and the New Testament” and “Jesus and the Pharisees” appear in the fall 2014 and winter 2015 issues of Enrichment.*

**T**he Book of Acts offers an important picture of the Pharisees and their relationship to the early Jesus movement. Luke’s testimony in Acts concerning the Pharisees challenges anyone who identifies the Pharisees en masse as the opponents of Jesus and His movement. Luke presents them in a sympathetic light, as defenders of the nascent Christian movement.

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followers came from the chief priests, their scribes, and the Sadducean authorities (Acts 4:1,5–7; 5:17,18,27,28). This was the same group that, according to the Gospels, handed Jesus over to Pilate (Luke 19:47,48; 23:1,10; Mark 11:18; 15:1; Matthew 27:1,2; John 18:28; 19:6). On more than one occasion, the Pharisees defended the apostles against the Sadducees (Acts 5:34; 23:9). The Jewish historian Josephus also described the Pharisees’ defense of Jesus’ followers before the Roman governor of Syria against Sadducean attacks that killed James the brother of Jesus (*Antiquities* 20.200–203).

The Book of Acts mentions Pharisees on four occasions (Acts 5:34; 15:5; 23:6–9; 26:5). In two instances, the Pharisees acted as advocates for Jesus’ followers against the Sadducean leaders. In another, some Pharisees composed part of the Jesus movement. Finally, Paul, toward the end of his life, identified himself as a Pharisee. When compared with what we know about the Pharisees from other ancient sources, like Josephus, Luke presents an accurate portrayal of this movement and its relationship to Jesus’ movement.

### A Pharisee Named Gamaliel

In Acts 5, the “high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees” imprisoned the apostles because they filled all of Jerusalem with their teaching that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah (Acts 5:17). The temple guard brought the apostles before the Sanhedrin without using force “because they feared that the people would stone them” (Acts 5:26).

The people of Jerusalem sympathized with the apostles, as they had with Jesus (Luke 19:48; 20:19; 22:2,53). The preaching of the gospel in Jerusalem could not avoid identifying the active role of the Sadducean high priests in handing Jesus over to the Roman governor Pilate. These Sadducean high priests knew that the crowds of Jerusalem sympathized with Jesus’ followers, so they feared the identification of their culpability and sought to silence Jesus’ disciples by threatening and imprisoning them (Acts 5:27,28).

Against the Sadducean high priest, who became enraged at the apostles and wanted to kill them, stood the Pharisee Gamaliel, who was “honored by all the people” (Acts 5:33,34). The Book of Acts mentions

Gamaliel twice (5:34; 22:3), but he is known throughout rabbinic sources. In the first century, the Pharisees consisted of two schools, or houses: the school of Shammai, which was conservative and rigid and viewed God, not man, as the aim of their religious life; and the school of Hillel, which believed that because humanity bore the image of God, love for one's neighbor (cf. Leviticus 19:18) was the essence of faith and the way to God (cf. Matthew 5:43–48).<sup>1</sup>

Gamaliel was the grandson of Hillel. His defense of the apostles in Acts shows the humane spirit of the house of Hillel, which stood against the cruelty of the Sadducees.<sup>2</sup> He cautioned those in the Sanhedrin that their actions toward the followers of Jesus might be opposing God (Acts 5:39). His passive, wait-and-see approach represents a common Jewish response to messianic movements: "For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God" (Acts 5:38,39). The council saw the wisdom of Gamaliel's counsel and let the apostles go (verses 40–42).

### **Believers Among the Party of the Pharisees**

The early followers of Jesus wrestled with the "Gentile Question" of whether Gentiles must first convert to Judaism to join Jesus' movement. This question swirled among the followers of Jesus because Judaism grappled with the status of the Gentiles during the first century.

In Acts 15, social tensions over the Gentiles led to a council in Jerusalem. In part, this arose because of "some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees" (verse 5) who taught that Gentiles should keep the law of Moses, including circumcision. In other words, these Pharisees wanted the Gentiles to become Jewish proselytes.

Two things stand out about Luke's description of these believers. First, their status as Pharisees did not preclude them from being part of the community of Jesus' followers. They apparently continued to participate socially and theologically within the party of the Pharisees without any problem from the followers of Jesus. The apostles did not demand that they remove their inner

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Pharisee or their outward affiliation with that party. Second, and perhaps most shocking, their status as believers within Jesus' movement did not cast them out of the party of the Pharisees. The Pharisees accepted them and their belief in Jesus as the Messiah. This certainly seems odd if the Pharisees were the mortal enemies of Jesus, but it fits within what we know about the Pharisees in Acts and Josephus.

### **Paul the Pharisee and Their Defense of Him**

When Paul came to Jerusalem (Acts 21:17 through 23:22), his presence in the temple led to his arrest and trial before the Sanhedrin. Paul, after three of his missionary journeys, stood in front of the council and proclaimed, "I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees" (Acts 23:6).

Paul's use of the present tense verb indicates that even after his experience on the Damascus road, after writing many letters as the apostle of the Gentiles, and after traveling thousands of miles proclaiming Jesus as Messiah, he still identified as a Pharisee. Later in the Book of Acts, when he stood before Agrippa II, Paul again identified himself as a Pharisee: "That I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee" (Acts 26:5).

Until the end of his life, Paul saw himself as a Pharisee and did not see this as incompatible with his faith in Jesus as the Messiah. He, like the believers who were of the party of the Pharisees in Acts 15, found no incongruity with his faith in Jesus and being a Pharisee.

As Paul stood before the Sanhedrin, the Pharisees came to his defense against the Sadducees (Acts 23:7–9) as Gamaliel did for the apostles. The Pharisees proclaimed, "We find nothing wrong with this man .... What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" (verse 9).

The Pharisees defended Paul, their fellow Pharisee.

### **The Pharisees and the Death of James, the Brother of Jesus**

Josephus conveyed the story of the death of James, the brother of Jesus (*Antiquities* 20.200–203). The high priest at the time, Ananus, a member of the Sadducees, used a transition among Roman governors in the

region to accuse James and other followers of Jesus and have them stoned. According to Josephus, those in Jerusalem “who were considered the most fair-minded and were strict (ἀκριβεῖς) in observance of the law” challenged this action of the Sadducean high priest before the Roman governor and Agrippa II, who removed Ananus from the high priesthood.

Josephus’s description of those who opposed Ananus as “strict in observance of the law” identified this group as Pharisees. Within Jewish writings in Greek, the Greek word ἀκριβής became a technical term describing Pharisaic piety. Josephus stated that the Pharisees “interpret the laws with strictness” (accuracy: μετ’ ἀκριβείας; *War* 1.162; cf. *Antiquities* 20.17–43).

Paul described his education before the Jerusalem crowd as “brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors” (Acts 22:3). In other words, Paul received a Pharisaic education from the Pharisee Gamaliel. When Paul stood before Agrippa II, he explained that he had lived as a Pharisee according to the “strictest (ἀκριβεστάτην) sect of our religion” (Acts 26:5).

Josephus, then, like Luke, related how the Pharisees defended the followers of Jesus against the cruel attacks of the Sadducees led by the high priest. His external testimony corroborates Luke’s presentation of the Pharisees in Acts.

This picture, however, does not accord with traditional Christian interpretation of the Pharisees and their relationship to Jesus and His movement. Furthermore, it makes no sense that the Pharisees sought to kill Jesus and then defended His followers, even allowing followers of Jesus membership in their party. Perhaps Acts provides the window to read the interactions between Jesus and the Pharisees in the Gospels. Instead of blaming the Pharisees and using their name as a label within inner Christian polemics, seeing them as something to root out and remove, maybe we should recognize the influence the Pharisees had on Jesus, His movement, and Christian theology.

Jesus’ humaneness grew from the soil of the school of Hillel,<sup>3</sup> the grandfather of Gamaliel. Through Gamaliel’s student Paul, the school of Hillel influenced the growing

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Jesus movement, including the Gentiles.<sup>4</sup> And let us not forget that the Pharisees embraced the hope of the Resurrection (Acts 23:6–9), and without that hope, all our belief and hope is in vain (1 Corinthians 15:16–19). ☒

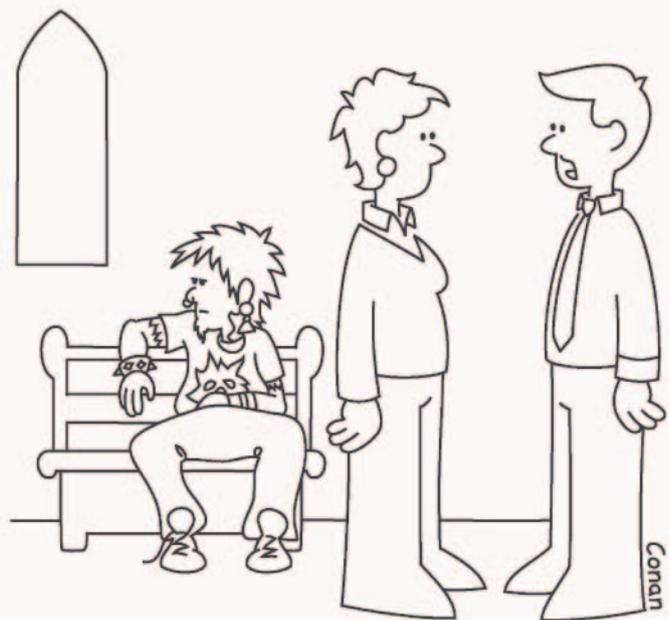
**Notes**

1. David Flusser, “Gamaliel and Nicodemus,” *Jerusalem Perspective* (December 16, 2013): <http://www.jerusalemerspective.com/11476/>.
2. True, Saul the Pharisee participated in the stoning of Stephen and the persecution of the Early Church, but Luke’s generally positive portrait of the Pharisees — including their defense of the Early Church against the Sadducees — seems to indicate that Saul’s actions were uncharacteristic of the entire movement.
3. David Flusser, “A New Sensitivity in Judaism and the Christian Message,” in *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), 469–489; idem, “Hillel and Jesus: Two Ways of Self-Awareness,” in *Hillel and Jesus: Comparative Studies of Two Major Religious Leaders*, J.H. Charlesworth and L.L. Johns, eds. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 71–107.
4. Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).



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“He just needs to find some direction in life — other than straight down.”

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## Why Are Christians Divided by Denominations?

BY PAUL COPAN

**A**s the joke goes, a man was walking along a high bridge over a river when he saw a woman about to jump off. He ran up to her, trying to dissuade her from committing suicide.

"Nobody loves me," said the woman.  
 "God loves you," he replied. "Do you believe in God?"  
 She nodded.  
 He then asked her, "Are you a Christian or a Jew?"  
 "A Christian," she replied.  
 He said, "Me, too! Small world! Protestant or Catholic?"  
 "Protestant."  
 "Me, too! What denomination?"  
 "Baptist."



Are denominations a mark of disunity? Do they diminish the Church's witness?

"Me, too! Northern Baptist or Southern Baptist?"

"Northern Baptist."

He remarked, "Well, me too! Northern Conservative Baptist or Northern Liberal Baptist?"

She answered, "Northern Conservative Baptist."

He said, "Well, that's amazing! Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist or Northern Conservative Reformed Baptist?"

"Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist."

"Remarkable! Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Great Lakes Region or Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Eastern Region?"

She told him, "Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Great Lakes Region."

"A miracle!" he cried. "Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1879, or Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1912?"

She said, “Northern Conservative Fundamental Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1912.”

He then shouted, “Die, heretic!” and pushed her over the rail.<sup>1</sup>

While humorous, this joke can make us feel a bit uneasy because of how territorial some Christians have been — and continue to be. Jesus prayed to His Father that His followers “may be one as we are one” (John 17:11,22).

Yet Christians seem anything but unified. After all, what about all those denominations? Actually, a kind of denominationalism was at work in the first century. There were the Apollos, Paul, Cephas, and Jesus “denominations” — more accurately, “quarrels” — springing up in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:10–17), and it was the result of unspiritual pride.

Are denominations and church fellowships in themselves — Assemblies of God, Baptist, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Methodist, and the like — shameful and sinful? Are they a mark of disunity? Do they diminish the Church’s witness? How should we think about denominations? Let’s explore some answers to these questions.<sup>2</sup>

**1. Not all who declare themselves Christians are true or consistent followers of Christ.** A “nominal Christian” carries the Christian label but has not experienced a rebirth in Christ. And a lot of nominal Christians have done much damage to the cause of Christ in the world. Jesus himself said, “By their fruit you will recognize them ... ” and, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:16,21).

This means there are Christian Baptists, Christian Methodists, and Christian Pentecostals, and there are non-Christian Baptists, non-Christian Methodists, and non-Christian Pentecostals. And even true Christians — those having God’s Spirit (“spiritual”) — may not be living consistently with their calling because they are acting as “natural” (Spiritless) persons (1 Corinthians 2:10–15; 3:1–3).

**2. Hypocrisy doesn’t nullify the truth of the Christian faith.** Hypocritical churchgoers may turn off people to fake Christian faith, but this isn’t an argument against the historical truth of Jesus’ existence or His bodily resurrection from the dead. In fact, every worldview or philosophy of life has its hypocrites. That doesn’t mean we should believe

People in churches that emphasize their doctrinal distinctives are more likely to recognize heresy and doctrinal deviation.

nothing at all. The hypocrisy argument is beside the point. Yet so many people resort to this line of reasoning.

**3. Denominations remind us of a common denominator — a “mere Christianity” that all true Christian groups share.** Consider the realm of mathematical fractions (as opposed to “factions”). For instance, 3/16, 5/16, and 13/16 all have a common denominator. “Denomination” suggests unity rather than disunity, and true Christians can have commonality without compromising the fundamentals of the faith. Think of the *Apostles’ Creed*, C.S. Lewis’s *Mere Christianity*,<sup>3</sup> or N.T. Wright’s *Simply Christian*.<sup>4</sup> These familiar works remind us of the basic beliefs that all genuine Christians share — despite secondary differences.

**4. Denominations don’t necessarily involve disunity, nor does doctrinal uniformity equal unity.** Christians can show love in spite of secondary differences. The problem Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians 1 was not differences, but “quarrels” (verse 11). The problem there was not really minor doctrinal differences, as we’ve seen, but prideful attitudes. In fact, love covers a multitude of secondary doctrinal differences. As the Lutheran theologian Rupertus Mendelius summarizes, “In essential matters unity; in non-essential matters liberty; in all things charity.”

**5. It is believers’ union with the triune God through Christ, not the affiliation with a certain denomination, that links them with “the communion of saints” — living and dead.** Christian unity isn’t found in denominations. It isn’t the product of apostolic succession of authority through popes or bishops. The Church’s unity is rooted in the unity of the triune God. Unity is a gift from God, as well as a human response to God’s calling on us. We are to be diligent to preserve “the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3) and to make visible the invisible unity of believers in God.

As one author observed, “Since God has created one church of Christ on earth, let Christians live up to that fact in empirical life.”<sup>5</sup>

We display this unity by loving one another (John 13:35) — in spite of minor doctrinal differences. Indeed, Paul himself rejoiced that the true gospel was proclaimed, even if by people with wrong motives (Philippians 1:15–18). The union of believers, one theologian wrote,

is inward and spiritual, not outward or denominational.<sup>6</sup>

**6. Denominations serve as a call to humble ourselves and learn from Christians of other denominations, other cultures, and earlier times.** C.S. Lewis said that denominations and local churches are “the only way of flying your flag.”<sup>7</sup>

Lewis didn’t mean denominations should be a point of spiritual pride, but rather that they show their identification with Christ’s Church by being part of a local body — or even a denomination. God’s kingdom is connected to people. Indeed, believers in Christ are a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9) and “a kingdom and priests to serve our God” (Revelation 5:10).

So while theologians refer to the universal or invisible Church, we must remember that God works through local churches — particular manifestations of the body of Christ in specific geographical locations — across Church history.

That said, churches in the present at this or that place can benefit from Christians elsewhere, from different denominations, and from previous eras. With a humble spirit, we can learn much from other traditions, even if we may not wholly adopt their standpoints.

So how can we learn from other Christian denominations? For example, Pentecostal and charismatic churches typically emphasize the importance of prayer, expectant faith, Spirit baptism, and the Spirit’s life-giving and healing power. The Reformed tradition stresses the majestic glory of God and His sovereignty — a helpful corrective to popular, though faulty, theological views that suggest human initiative in salvation. “Free” churches can learn much from liturgical churches that stress the rhythms of the church’s calendar (e.g., Advent, Lent) and their sense of connectedness to the church through creeds and rich traditions. Many such churches have a great sense of history and rootedness, as well as a greater view of transcendence — something missing in many of our American churches.

Given the danger of reading with cultural blinders, we can learn from believers in other cultures — perhaps about money and materialism, the poor, the demonic realm, community, healing and other miracles, hospitality, or dedication to prayer. When possible, we should engage in reading the Scriptures in Christian community, particularly



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the community of internationals.

Also, we benefit greatly by studying theology and the development of doctrine throughout Church history. We should neither be blind traditionalists nor try to avoid all tradition. As the late church historian Jaroslav Pelikan wrote, traditionalism is “the dead faith of the living” whereas tradition is “the living faith of the dead.”<sup>8</sup>

Certain traditions — whether of prayerful meditation, engaging in Lent, or reciting ancient creeds — can enrich, deepen, and stabilize our spiritual lives. As Pelikan pointed out, reciting creeds affirms the universality of faith across space, as well as time. We confess that we are part of a historic community, and such a creed helps sustain us through the fluctuations of our individual feelings, historical limitations, doubts, and questions.<sup>9</sup>

**7. An awareness of our own traditions and denominational distinctives may help us guard against false teachings or heresies that can creep into the Church.** People in churches that emphasize their doctrinal distinctives are more likely to recognize heresy and doctrinal deviation.

**8. There are admittedly risks, challenges, and tensions in showing “theological hospitality.”**<sup>10</sup> As Christians interact theologically with fellow Christians from other denominations, there is a certain risk that one’s doctrinal thinking will be changed, or at least challenged. Some Christians will recoil out of fear or because of a lack of confidence in their own theological beliefs. In such cases, one’s denomination may be more like a self-protective fortress rather than an inviting home.<sup>11</sup>

Changing one’s denomination, however, is different from abandoning the historic Christian faith to embrace, say, Mormonism or some other new religious movement. In fact, compromising on Christian fundamentals — often in an attempt to “get along” or “fit in with culture” — is the surest way to create disunity.<sup>12</sup>

**9. Although tradition can be enriching and can be appropriated by the believer, the Scriptures still have primacy over tradition.**<sup>13</sup> Jesus and the New Testament writers routinely appealed to the authority of the Scriptures to establish their points and to highlight areas where tradition was out of sync with God’s Word (Matthew 15:1–9; Colossians 2:8).

Paul's reference to the Scriptures in 2 Timothy 3:16,17 doesn't mention any other source of authority: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

When push comes to shove, go with Scripture over tradition.

Protestant Christianity has stressed the "solas": by Scripture alone (*sola scriptura*), in Christ alone (*solus Christus*), by faith alone (*sola fide*), by grace alone (*sola gratia*), to God alone be the glory (*solus Deo gloria*). One frequently misunderstood "sola" is *sola scriptura*, and perhaps we should try to clarify an important point. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, which contends that both "Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence,"<sup>14</sup> the Scriptures alone are our infallible guide and norm for faith and practice.

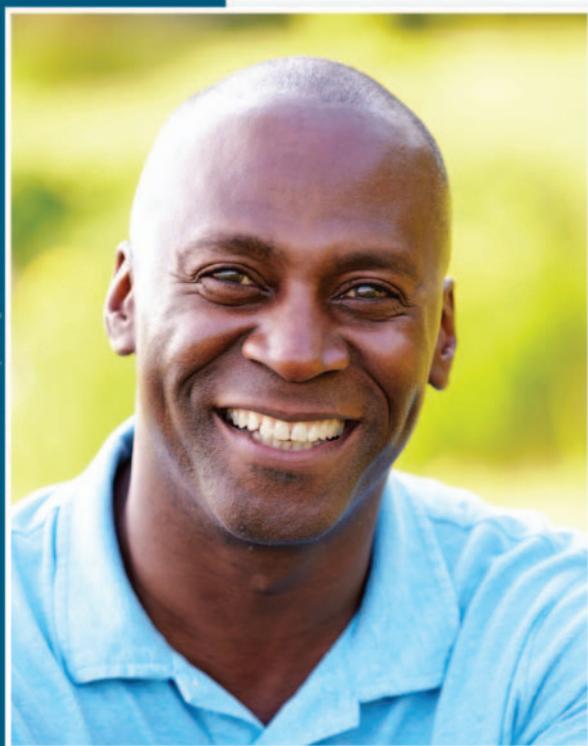
We should  
neither  
be blind  
traditionalists  
nor try to  
avoid all  
tradition.

Let's not misunderstand, however. Scripture doesn't exclude the place of tradition, experience, or reason, which John Wesley emphasized. When Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms took his stand, he asked his challengers to convince him "by the testimonies of Scripture or evident reason."

We shouldn't automatically disregard tradition or creeds. Rather, we can respect, study, and appreciate biblically centered traditions. Indeed, we can appropriate them precisely because they are rooted in the Scriptures.

John Calvin himself said he could "willingly embrace and reverence as sacred" the "ancient councils [Nicea, Constantinople, Ephesus, Chalcedon] ... in so far as relates to the doctrines of faith, for they contain nothing but the pure and genuine interpretation of Scripture."

To this Calvin gave "the highest place." However, just because a council gathers, that is no guarantee of its authority. Calvin



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pointed out the error of the second council at Ephesus (A.D. 449), which accepted the false teaching of Eutyches, who rejected Christ's two natures (divine and human) in favor of one. Calvin boldly declared: "The Church was not there."<sup>15</sup>

Scripture and tradition aren't on equal footing. The Church and tradition have gone wrong in the past. The way to address this concern is not to have an authoritative magisterial interpreter for all Christians, like a pope or council. Instead, the corrective is a humble interpreting of Scripture in community with fellow Christians and in touch with scholarship — with an awareness of history and tradition.

Beyond this, the Church should be an interpretation of authoritative Scripture. As someone once said, Christians are the fifth Gospel — that is, most people will first see who the Jesus of the four Gospels is through the faithful lives of His followers.

As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Corinthians 3:2,3).

The Church should be a commentary on God's Word and a witness to Scripture that is lived out before God and a watching world. When Christians live this way, the denomination question will fall by the wayside. ■

**Notes**

1. Adapted from Emo Phillips, "The Best God-Joke Ever — and It's Mine!" *The Guardian* (Sept. 29, 2005): <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2005/sep/29/comedy.religion>
2. This is a summary from the final chapter of Paul Copan, *When God Goes to Starbucks* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).
3. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSF, 2001).
4. N.T. Wright, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (San Francisco: HarperSF, 2006).
5. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 85.
6. Donald Bloesch, *The Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 43.
7. C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, Walter Hooper, ed., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 61.
8. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 1:9.
9. Interview with Jaroslav Pelikan, "Why We Need Creeds," *Speaking of Faith* (National Public Radio), May 18, 2006, <http://speakingoffaith.publicradio.org/programs/pelikan/index.shtml> (30 May 2007).

Christians can show love in spite of secondary differences.

10. In this section, I borrow from W. David Buschart, *Exploring Protestant Traditions: An Invitation to Theological Hospitality* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).
11. *Ibid.*, 263.
12. Bloesch, 45.
13. In this last section, I borrow heavily from Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 231–7.
14. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 82. Both tradition and Scripture flow from the "same divine well-spring" (par. 80).
15. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, translated by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 4.9.8; 4.9.13.



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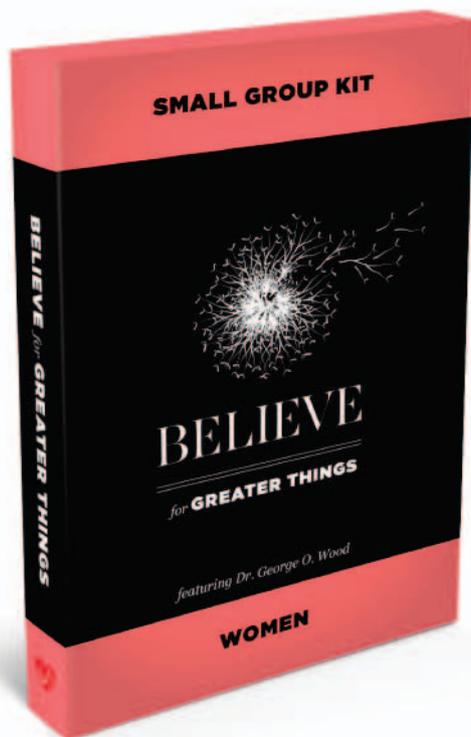
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"Perhaps we've scheduled the early service a bit *too* early."

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## Honoring Elderly Loved Ones: Upholding Dignity as Health Diminishes

BY CHRISTINA M.H. POWELL

**T**oday people are living longer and staying healthier longer. In addition, people experience more opportunities for social and geographic mobility. These positive developments can create challenges for elder care.

Consider Nancy. She is an independent 83-year-old with two children who moved away to different cities after college to launch their careers. Recently, Nancy experienced hearing loss that makes it difficult to understand instructions from her doctor. She also is having trouble moving around



Best ways to minister to those aging and in diminished health.

as freely as she once did and could use help shopping for groceries and taking care of basic chores at home. Her children worry about whether she is safe living alone.

Charles, an 88-year-old resident in an assisted living facility, faces more serious medical challenges. He survived a bout with cancer in his late 60s, and then enjoyed relatively good health until having a stroke six months ago. His daughter is concerned her father may need a higher level of care than he currently receives, but she is reluctant to relocate him to a nursing home.

Pastors minister to people like Nancy and Charles and their families on a regular basis in Sunday services, through counseling, or during visits to residential facilities. Elderly individuals need to process the emotional and spiritual aspects of the losses that come with diminished health. Their families need support as they make difficult caregiving decisions. Let's consider the ethical issues related to aging and the best ways to minister to people at this life stage.

### Biblical Perspective on Aging

The Bible offers hope for fulfillment in old age, as well as guidance on creating caring relationships between generations. While our culture may focus on the contributions the young make to society, these words from the Psalmist promise productivity into old age: "The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green" (Psalm 92:12-14).

Even when physical health begins to fail, the elderly can make important spiritual contributions through prayer and passing on a lifetime of wisdom to younger generations.

Perhaps more than any other season of life, old age is a time for focusing on relationships. "Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children" (Proverbs 17:6).

Being around family members, especially grandchildren, is a joy for the elderly, reminding them that their legacy will live on even as their time on Earth draws to a close. While diminishing health can reverse the parent-child relationship, putting children in the role of caregivers, the final years of a parent's life bring opportunities for deepening

relationships and reconciling previous hurts and misunderstandings.

The command found in Deuteronomy 5:16 sets the tone for the relationship between adult children and their parents: “Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God is giving you.”

Stretched beyond their context, these words can become a source of guilt for children making difficult caregiving decisions. Ideally, there is great benefit when the generations can live close to one another. However, in certain circumstances, for the sake of the safety of the elderly and to balance the needs of all family members, professional caregivers may need to supplement the role of caregiving within the family structure.

### Ethical Issues in Long-Term Care

Caregiving options for elderly individuals have increased in response to the needs of people who are living longer and experiencing more social isolation from loved ones. Someone like Nancy could hire a home care helper to shop for groceries, run errands, and complete chores. Perhaps a friend from church could accompany her on visits to the doctor to make sure hearing loss does not interfere with the communication of medical information.

Nancy also might want to consider independent senior living or perhaps assisted living if her medical needs increase. Continuing care communities, while often expensive, offer different levels of assistance within the same community. If the need for skilled nursing care arises, as it has for Charles, a resident will experience less disruption in his life than a person needing to move to a new community as health diminishes.

The ethical principle in choosing care for an elderly loved one is to pick the least restrictive setting possible that also provides the right level of safety and care. On the least restrictive end of the spectrum of choices is the person's own home, supplemented with outside nursing care or home care help. A skilled nursing home is generally the most restrictive choice, but it provides the highest degree of safety and medical care. Families should consider how a loved one's needs might change in the future, making a choice that does not hamper independence now,



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Elderly individuals need to process the emotional and spiritual aspects of the losses that come with diminished health.

but provides for an easy transition as medical needs increase. Financial realities underscore the importance of not selecting an option that provides more services than needed.

The onset of dementia or the aftermath of a stroke may prompt a caregiver to move a spouse, parent, or elderly loved one from a home filled with a lifetime of memories. Anger and resistance from the ailing family member often compounds the turmoil associated with this difficult decision. Pastoral care can help ease this transition for the patient and family members. Pastoral staff visits in the new location may assure the patient that changing circumstances will not cause people to forget him or her. Pastoral counseling may help the caregiver make wise decisions and process feelings of guilt. After the transition period, the quality of life for patients often increases, and their families have more peace of mind knowing that their loved ones are safe.

In caring for elderly patients such as Nancy, doctors and family members must be careful to remember that a patient retains rights to privacy, to give informed consent for medical procedures, to refuse treatment, to review medical records, and to prepare advanced directives, such as a living will, durable power of attorney, and a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order. No one should mistake physical disabilities, such as hearing loss, for the inability to make treatment decisions.

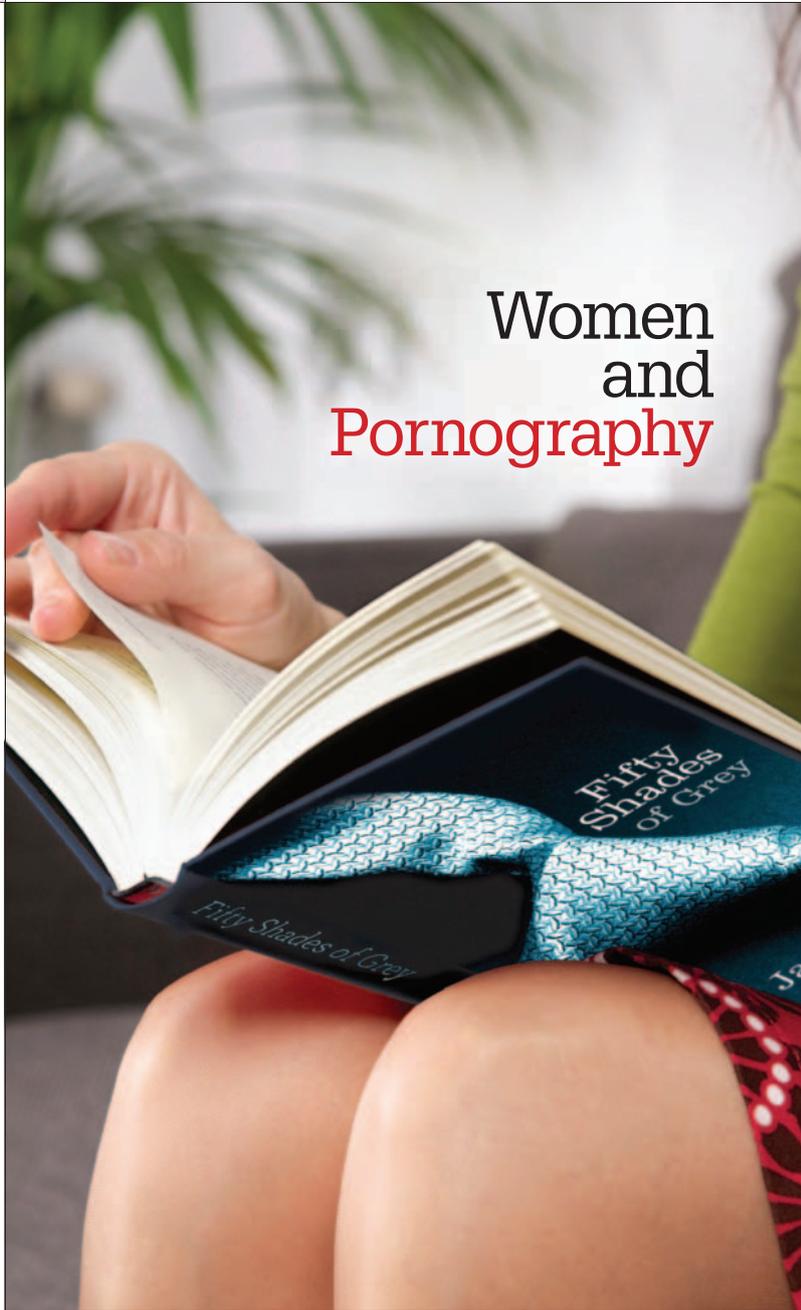
Pastors can encourage families to have the difficult conversations when an elderly loved one is in relatively good health. This is the best time for family members to prepare legal documents so there is no room for misunderstandings when the time comes for making tough decisions. Selecting the right long-term care options and preparing for end-of-life issues are practical ways children can honor their parents and uphold their dignity, expressing gratitude for the ones who gave them life many decades ago. ■



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## Women and Pornography

BY GABRIELE RIENAS

**Q**

community, I am becoming increasingly

**I know there has been a lot of talk about Christian men and pornography, but I want to raise the issue for women. As I interact with the women of my church and**



aware of women who are reading erotic, popular literature, watching sexually oriented television, and viewing Internet porn. It's almost like it has become normalized behavior, and in some circles women freely admit to it. I have heard married Christian women rationalize their behavior by saying that it's no big deal and it even adds spice to their marriage. I have heard that this type of temptation does not draw women, who are supposedly not visually stimulated. However, my current experience tells me otherwise. Am I alone in my concerns about women and pornography?

**A** You are accurate in your observations. Thanks to our current unlimited electronic access to whatever we want to view, new societal challenges are surfacing. Traditionally, pornography has largely been a male thing, and women's voices have been against it.

However, with the growth of Web access and increasing freedom of sexual expression, more and more women are admitting to sexual addictions.

Women, like men, are finding that viewing and reading explicit materials can bring private pleasure without the effort of emotional investment. It provides a temporary escape from the stress and sadness of real life. In turn, the temporary relief creates a cycle of addiction as the person turns again and again to this means of dealing with negative feelings.

Addictive behavior is no new thing for either gender. People have always sought ways to relieve the stresses of life. However, the one-click accessibility of private visual sexual stimulants has increased dramatically, making it so much harder to avoid. At the same time, society has become markedly less abhorrent of this kind of behavior. It is now common in movies and on TV to reference pornography either in a humorous way or as normal (if not slightly awkward) behavior.

While it remains true that women are less visually sexually stimulated than men, purchases of pornographic material by women indicates a marked upswing in this kind of

pursuit. Marketers are learning that women are drawn to fantasies about sexuality by a strong desire for closeness, nurture and connection, and a great desire to be loved. Purchases of pornography by women might take the form of sexually erotic love stories (read or viewed) or even borderline sexual behavior (flirtations, affairs, or one-night stands). Some women engage in dangerous behavior while telling themselves that what they are experiencing is love. They are willing to settle for sexual expression as a substitute for true, covenant love that requires a commitment of one's entire being. Some women fall for the lie that someone desiring them sexually gives them value.

The book series *Fifty Shades of Grey*, sometimes referred to as "mommy porn," has topped the *New York Times* bestseller list. In fact, it has broken records as the fastest-selling Kindle eBook and paperback novel in history.<sup>1</sup> The trilogy is a national phenomenon discussed everywhere from the *TODAY* show to *Christianity Today*. Why are women of all ages in record numbers reading books about a mousy, inexperienced young woman who meets a rich man and then engages in sexually submissive bondage?

Crystal Renaud, a committed Christian, started the first sexual addictions support group for women in the U.S. Former pornography addict and author of the book *Dirty Girls Come Clean*, Renaud is now free from pornography and works as a trained counselor. She characterizes women's involvement with pornography as "widespread and silent."

On her ministry website, she says: "Pornography is not just a man's issue. Twenty-five percent of Christian women are addicted to pornography and sadly, 70 percent of these women will never confide in someone about their problems .... Women turn to pornography for different reasons than men but once addicted feel the same alienation and shame."<sup>2</sup>

Thankfully, the problem is getting more attention. Women involved with pornography often feel very ashamed, believing that they are alone in their struggle and, therefore, abnormal.

*Christianity Today* suggests that pornography speaks to a sexual hunger that is prevalent among believers and nonbelievers alike. An article published in June 2012 noted

With the growth of Web access and increasing freedom of sexual expression, more and more women are admitting to sexual addictions.

that sexuality is a good and healthy gift from God. Yet in the absence of healthy fulfillment, it grows perverse and distorted.

I could not agree more. Society's increasing discard of sexual restraint, combined with increasing relational distance and isolation (in spite of social media), leads to a renewed hunger for meaningful connection. Pornographic materials provide a cheap substitute for the true connection people desire. Sexuality is becoming more and more distorted and shame-based as society becomes less attached to God-honoring, covenant relationships — the intended context for sexuality and the only framework that leads to fulfillment.

Contrary to the messages we get from the general media, pornography is neither humorous nor benign. It is destructive to deep, committed relationships. Its consumption leads to emotional issues associated with depression, and it correlates with sexual dysfunction in people who are addicted to it. It also prepares the way for a fantasy life people cannot reproduce in real-life relationships. It is a cheap substitute for the unity of body, soul, and spirit God designed as the union between a committed-for-life man and woman.

For the woman who struggles: If you recognize that the problem is a symptom of a deeper longing, you must get to its root. That means going to the source of your wound and discovering what drives you. It means examining where you have substituted other things for the grace and sufficiency of God in your life. This journey of repentance and exploration almost always requires the wise input of a counselor, mentor, or support group. Healing begins by admitting you need help and revealing your struggle to a qualified person.

For those stuck in the cycle of addiction, repenting and seeking help are not optional. The Scriptures are quite clear on the matter. This sinful behavior must be rooted out by the grace of God and the assistance of others who can help you.

First Corinthians 7 calls us to mutuality in our sexual expression. Within the bonds of marriage, a husband and wife must abstain from sexual immorality and mutually submit to one another.

Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept

pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.”

Remember Jesus’ promise that the pure in heart are blessed and will see God (Matthew 5:8).

Those of us in leadership should first examine our own lives. Then we must warn others about the pitfalls and dangers of viewing and digesting erotic sexual images. We must continue to point others toward purity of thought and expression as God’s best for our lives.

We should engage in honest conversations about the realities and pitfalls of these behaviors. We also need to seek out and provide resources and help for those who find themselves swept away. Women need to know that they are not alone in their sexual temptations and that pure, God-honoring sexuality is possible if they are willing to pursue it.

Remember Philippians 4:8: “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever

Women need to know that pure, God-honoring sexuality is possible if they are willing to pursue it.

is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.” ☒

**Notes**

1. Kirsten Acuna, “By the Numbers: The ‘50 Shades of Grey’ Phenomenon” *Business Insider* (June 2012) <http://www.businessinsider.com/by-the-numbers-the-50-shades-of-grey-phenomenon-2012-6?op=1>
2. Crystal Renaud, Dirty Girls Ministries, <http://dirtygirlsministries.com/dgcc/>
3. Jonalyn Fincher, “Is There Anything Redeeming in the ‘50 Shades’ Trilogy?” (June 2012) <http://www.christianitytoday.com/women/2012/june/is-there-anything-redeeming-in-50-shades-trilogy.ht/>



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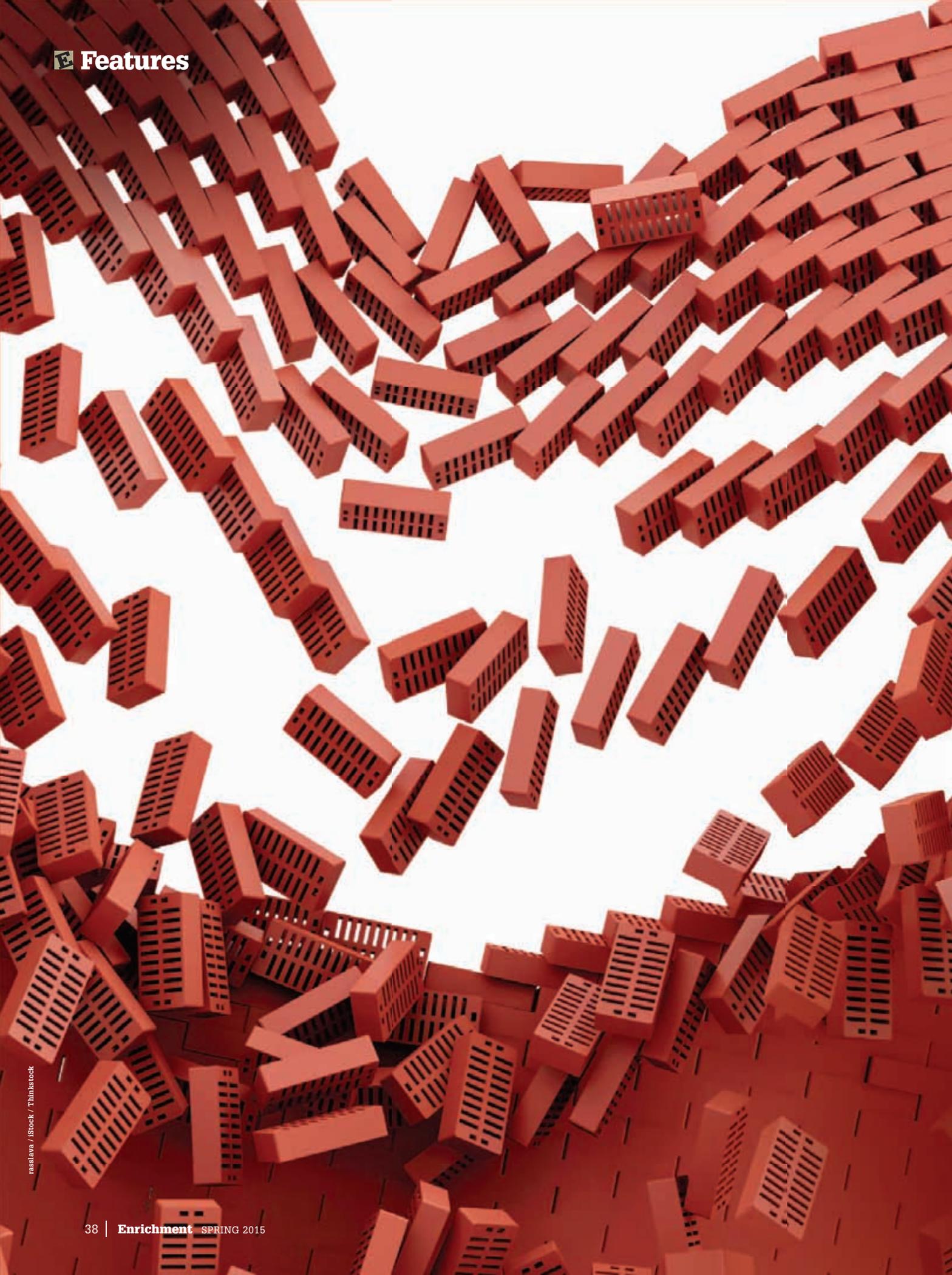


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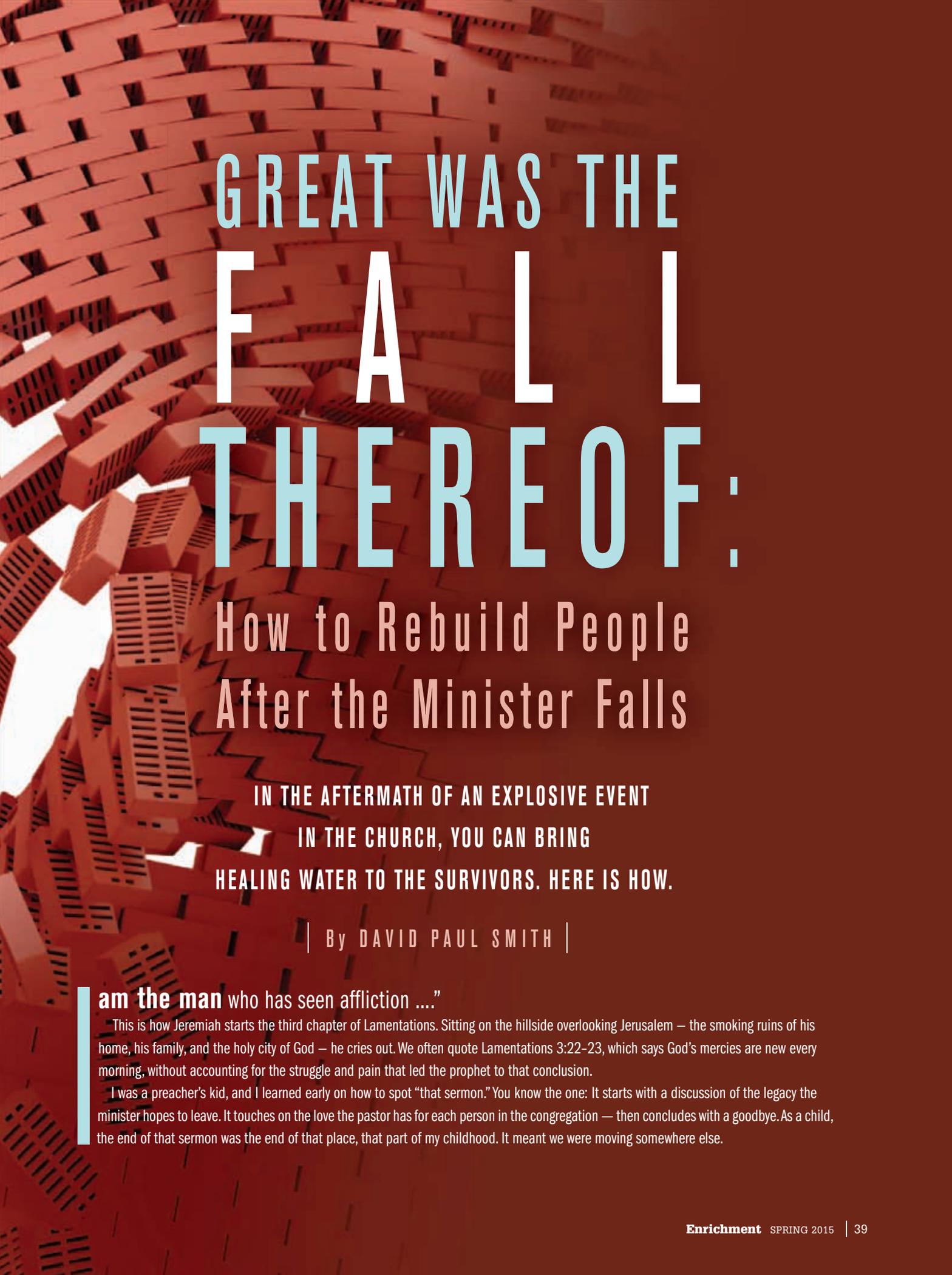


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# GREAT WAS THE FALL THEREOF:

## How to Rebuild People After the Minister Falls

IN THE AFTERMATH OF AN EXPLOSIVE EVENT  
IN THE CHURCH, YOU CAN BRING  
HEALING WATER TO THE SURVIVORS. HERE IS HOW.

| By DAVID PAUL SMITH |

**am the man** who has seen affliction ....”

This is how Jeremiah starts the third chapter of Lamentations. Sitting on the hillside overlooking Jerusalem — the smoking ruins of his home, his family, and the holy city of God — he cries out. We often quote Lamentations 3:22-23, which says God’s mercies are new every morning, without accounting for the struggle and pain that led the prophet to that conclusion.

I was a preacher’s kid, and I learned early on how to spot “that sermon.” You know the one: It starts with a discussion of the legacy the minister hopes to leave. It touches on the love the pastor has for each person in the congregation — then concludes with a goodbye. As a child, the end of that sermon was the end of that place, that part of my childhood. It meant we were moving somewhere else.

I was never able to see what happened after that sermon until I was old enough to be on staff after a minister stepped down. And while I earnestly wished the circumstances were positive, the truth is a good friend of mine fell.

Do I need to tell you how he fell? I'm pretty sure you can guess. Sexual sin is burning through our churches and pulpits, bringing down servants of God, and destroying families — along with our witness as a Church. In Mathew 24:22, Jesus says of the last days: "If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened."

We may well be in those days.

The sad reality is more ministers will fall, people will be hurt, and the media will be there to document every stumble by anyone who dares carry the title of pastor. Smite the shepherd, and the sheep will scatter. But what happens after the explosion? Is that where the story ends? It may surprise you to find that even after the cameras stop rolling and the dust has settled, the church itself still stands, tomorrow still comes, and someone is needed to bring healing for those who survive and are wandering around in the wreckage.

## RECOVERY

When I was a child, I was foolishly playing with firecrackers when one exploded in my hand. For what seemed like forever, the whole world became ringing and pain. I saw people talking but couldn't

hear what they were saying. My only goal was to get my burning hand to water. I had to push past everything else and get to something that would stop the hurting.

Trauma, whether spiritual or physical, is similar. Like wounded animals, we try to distance ourselves from the source of the pain. We aren't being rational; we're acting on instinct.

Many pastors entering a new assignment like to preach on Nehemiah. They talk about rebuilding walls and returning to the Promised Land. But it's a long road from the destruction depicted in Lamentations to the recovery recorded in Nehemiah, and it's important to assess where your new congregation is in their journey. It's hard to convince hurting people to get back in ministry and work again when they feel as though they are still sitting in the ashes of expectations left behind by the last ministry — especially if that ministry ended in the fall of the minister.

It's easy at times like these to avoid the subject. It's always easier to keep the peace than

it is to make peace.<sup>1</sup> The danger is that an infected wound doesn't heal. We need the Holy Spirit's guidance to search the wounds of the church. In the past, many churches cauterized wounds, thinking it was better to cut off the hand than risk the infection spreading. This left us in a country filled with the "ex-churched," a generation that stumbled and was left behind. In every age, the Church must grow in the Lord. It must learn to reach a new generation, and one thing every heart touched by sin needs is healing.

## RESTORATION

If you asked your congregation, how many would say they've experienced emotional wounds in church? The number is probably high. The reason? Hurting people hurt people. This is especially true of a church that has been through a trauma. When entering this situation, you must first decide to be intentional in your purpose. You are like the first responders running toward danger, into burning buildings, or into the line of fire. Brace yourself; this is going to get messy.

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Church would be easy except for the people, right? People have defense mechanisms.<sup>2</sup> They act out. They deny. They complain. They blame. Some of them may even act like jerks. They basically act like people — people God called you to pastor. And like a police negotiator, it's your job to talk them in off the ledge, and to move them from defense mechanisms into a supernatural healing. So where to begin? How do you engage them?

Sometimes you have to start by letting them complain. Complaining gets a bad rap. There's a difference between a "complaining spirit" that seeks to accuse and tear down and a "contrite heart" that breaks open before the Lord in lament and complaining. The latter understands that while no one else may care, there is One who hears and is touched by the feelings of our weakness. The strong do not need a savior. And sometimes the most powerful thing you can

tell a person is that it's OK if it hurts. It's supposed to hurt, and it's supposed to heal. Physical hurt is the body's signal that something is wrong — something is broken. Depression, anxiety, anger, and fear can all point toward a spiritual infirmity that needs attention. Anyone who has ever dislocated a joint knows even the healing process often hurts.

The goal is turning complaining into confession. Confession is one of the strongest coping mechanisms available to the body of Christ. Alcoholics Anonymous encourages participants to confess their problem to themselves, to God, and to one other person. Confessed anger calms us, confessed anxiety comforts us, and confessed fear gives us courage. Confession disarms our natural inclination to isolate or lash out. When someone complains to you, find the intention and emotion behind that complaint, and bring it into the light. How? Pray.



## The Idolatry of Expectation

**In *A Grief Observed*, C.S. Lewis provides a beautiful illustration** of the way he remembered his deceased wife. He admitted his idealized vision of her wasn't a true image. He said snowflakes had fallen across his memories — snowflakes of things he misremembered or parts of her personality he exaggerated. He knew that if she were to come back to him for even a moment, reality would blow away all the snowflakes, and he would again see her as she truly was. But as soon as she left, the snowflakes would again begin to fall.

We also build in our minds images of our heroes and people we respect. We tend to assume that because of the title or position they hold they have character

we do not possess and are above the temptations we face. But those images are idols, not the real person.

Some in your congregation earnestly believe you never sin, never have a bad thought, and never suffer discouragement. Many young ministers fall into the trap of compromising themselves to meet those expectations. Others may actually believe they are above sin, and thus fall into pride.

The secret is in embracing both confidence and humility. You need to allow in some criticism so you never get "too big to fail." Of course, too much criticism leads to discouragement, and you need to keep encouragers in your circle of friends as well so that you're not too small to succeed.

Someone once said: "The best things to have are a kid who thinks you're hero, a wife who thinks you're a rock star, and a friend who thinks you're an idiot."

**DAVID PAUL SMITH**, Louisville, Kentucky

Don't just promise to pray at some indeterminate time in the future. Instead say: "Let's you and I agree in prayer right now that God will do a work in you so that you can be healed and restored as a vessel of honor for His use."

Call me Pentecostal, but I find that bringing a brother or sister into the throne room of God right then and there is more powerful than a glorified system of well-wishing. Anytime you can bring the situation before God, good things are going to happen.

And confession is far from the only means of bringing water to the wounded. In fact, while the secular world has only recently coined the term "coping mechanisms," we in the church have known for a long time about a far more powerful set of tools: the fruit of the Spirit. Now my worry is that you will read that last sentence and roll your eyes. After all, we usually relegate Galatians 5:22-23 to the Rainbows class memorization list. But sometimes we miss the power in a passage not because it's hidden, but because it's too obvious. One of the more important things to remember about the fruit of the Spirit is that they are all decision-based and not optional.

"In your anger do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26) is a principle that tells us that we will be subject to the same emotions post-salvation, but now the Lord expects more of us. And you should cultivate spiritual fruit in your congregation, because often someone will use the fact that a minister fell as justification for their own sins.

I experienced this once while talking with a dear friend who was reeling from the fall of a minister. He and his wife were both young in the Lord and took the fall very hard. In fact, his statement about that minister was, "He deserves hell, and I wouldn't mind sending him there."

I wish I could say I found the right words in the right moment to bring him to a place of forgiveness, but it doesn't always work that way. I used the physical distance between us to ignore the problem and hoped it would heal itself in time. We moved away from each other, and he fell into alcoholism, using the hurt the church had inflicted on him to justify his descent. Then one night as he was driving home drunk, with his pregnant wife in the car, he lost control and flipped their vehicle into a ditch. When he came to, he turned and shook his wife, who was sleeping and wouldn't wake up. She was in a coma from her injuries. I don't have space here to describe all the absolute miracles of God that it took to heal her body (and the miracle that paid their medical bills as well), but the end result was a man broken enough to forgive the preacher he

despised. He ultimately found that forgiveness comes to those who forgive. It's a hard lesson to share, but your confrontation of sin may be the only thing standing between someone you know and the wages of that sin.

If your church doesn't offer something more effective than alcohol for getting a person through hard times, it is unable to compete in the cultural marketplace.

This brings us to the most vicious hurdle you will face.

## **BLAME**

You will encounter blame at every corner when people are trying to recover. But the first and only rule of blame is, "Don't do it."

You generally have two camps in this area. The first group uses blame as a "get out of jail free" card. They insist the pastor was always a monster. They never did anything about it, but they supposedly knew the whole time. If only their discernment had kicked in earlier, perhaps the church could have avoided all the trouble. Yet these same people are sometimes involved in the sin or guilty of similar sins. Their eagerness to put all the blame on one person gives them a cover behind which to hide. Be cautious of people who fling bitter accusations. If they will throw one person under the bus, what is another to them?

The second extreme is just as wrong, but in a different way. Just as children internalize blame to justify their parents' actions and behaviors, so at times members blame themselves for the actions of others. They wonder whether they could have stepped in and prevented the problem — if only they had been more diligent, more loving, or more alert. Assure them of two things. First, the person made that decision of their own accord, and they will stand before God for it. Second, God most certainly sent that person many warnings before the fall occurred.

To properly assign blame, you must possess all the facts of the incident and know the hearts of those involved. If that sounds impossible, there is a reason. It's why Christ told us that sometimes the tares grow with the wheat, and sifting may not come until the harvest is taken in. But it will come. Never be led into the trap of blaming the man or woman before you for all that is wrong — fall or no fall. It's easy, but it's wrong. One day you too may leave for another place of ministry, and you will want the same grace to follow in your steps.

Hang in there. The finish line is in sight.

## FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is the great slayer of blame and the great salve of wounds. It is the goal of every minister stepping into a wounded church — no matter how grievous the sin or how far the fall. It's not going to be easy. It is going to hurt.

Loving God means that sometimes you have to forgive a monster.

Two years ago I sat in a restaurant across from someone I had known for a long, long time. It was a conversation I wanted to end. Every word of it was a dagger to my heart. I remember looking at the doors and wondering how long it would take me to get to the exit, into my car, and far away from this place. But there was no escaping the harsh reality that was before me: The man across the table had not just committed a sin, he had also committed a crime. He had taken foster children into his home. Over the course of time, he had developed an inappropriate relationship with one of them, a young girl.

I had talked to fallen men before, but this person was different, and it wasn't just the cold detachment with which he recalled the relationship. It wasn't that he spent as much time in the conversation blaming those around him as he did defending his actions. It was that this was a man I loved. When I was young in the Lord and struggling with the infilling of the Holy Spirit, hearing this man pray in tongues convinced me the gift is real and I should seek it. Before I was saved, when I was running from the Lord and leaving a trail of destruction in my wake, this man cried out in great sobs and groaning for my soul, for my calling. This man was my father.

The sad fact is I have had more than one close friend and minister forced out of ministry due to a moral failure. A common feeling is that of wanting to help the ones they left behind, and knowing that because of the broken trust, they can't. The more lives they touched, the more brutal the fall is — especially to those closest, who often had no idea of what was going on behind the scenes. And as with any family matter, it is the youngest members of the family who suffer the most. Remember that the same person who fell was also the one who dedicated their children, cried with them at the altar, and perhaps spent many sleepless nights in prayer for them.

I'm reminded of a story of an atomic bomb

survivor who still goes every day to the graves of people she knew who died in the blast. She brings them water because many of them begged her for cool refreshment as they breathed their last words.

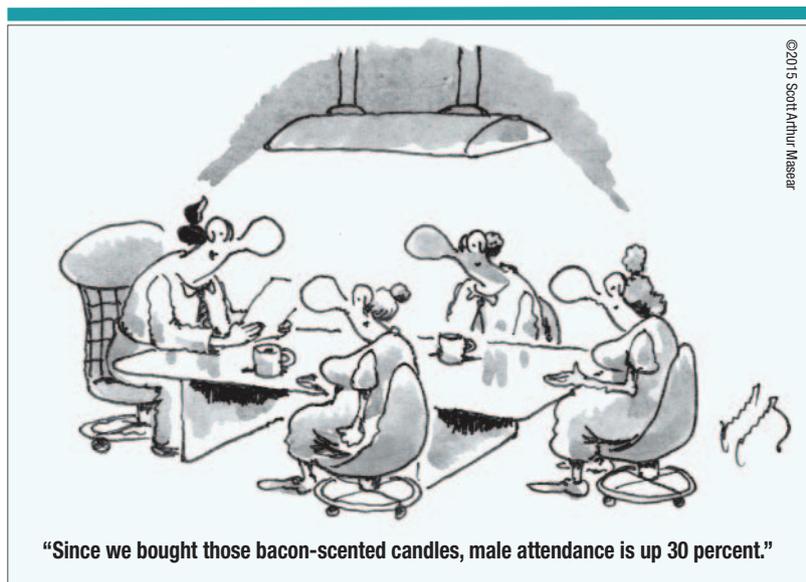
In the aftermath of an explosive event in the church, you can bring healing water to the survivors. Many of them may not even know how to ask. Follow as the Holy Spirit leads you to the ones who need help the most. Remember that God chose you for the job. He will provide everything you need to get it done. 📖



**DAVID PAUL SMITH**, bivocational evangelist and business process analyst, Louisville, Kentucky. He uses his experience with business and technology to create a unique approach that helps churches minister to a post-Christian culture.

### Notes

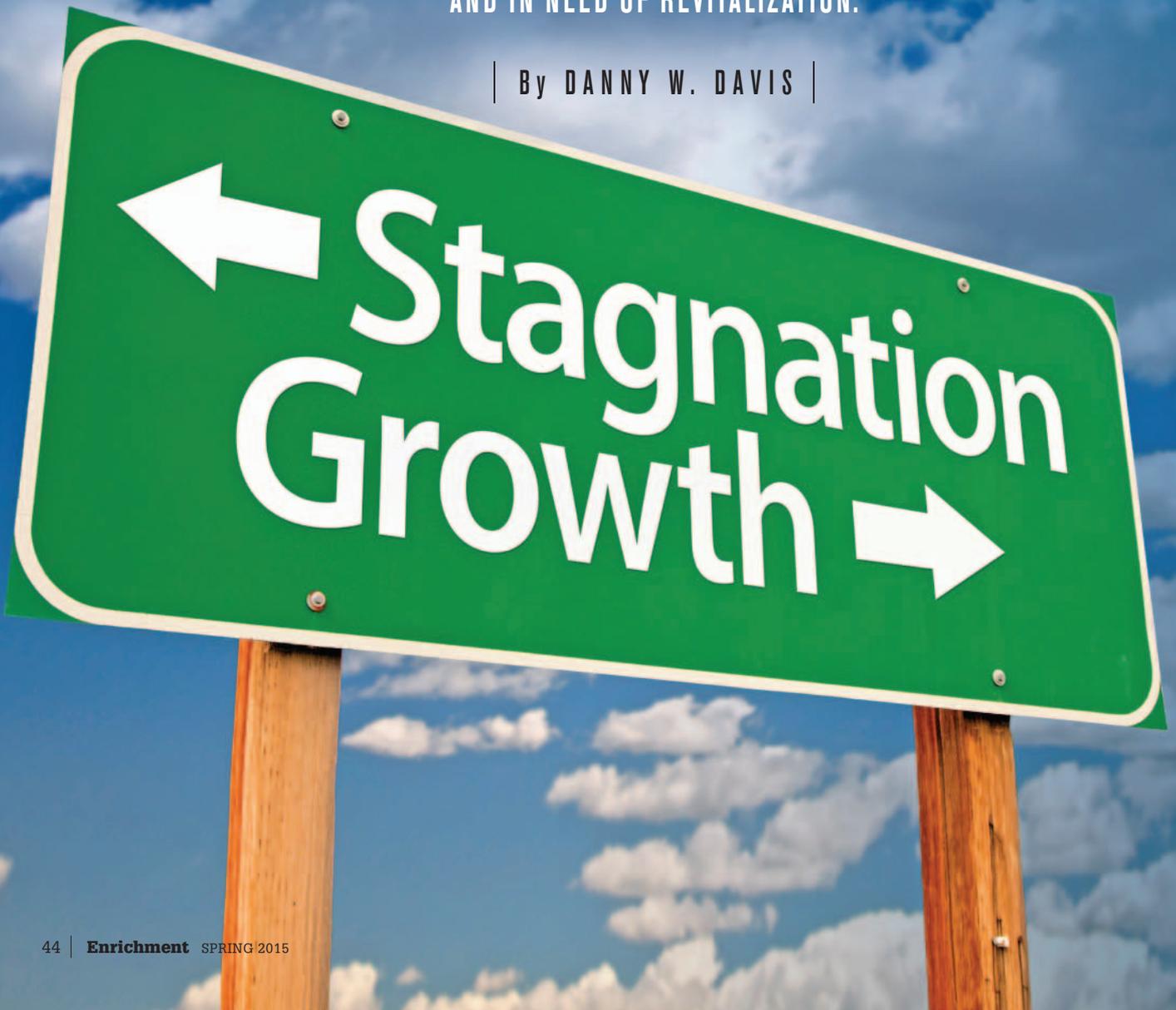
1. For more information on this subject, I highly recommend the book: Van Yperen, Jim. *Making Peace: A Guide to Overcoming Church Conflict*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2002.
2. Modern psychology is useful for diagnosing natural human issues, as long as we approach it with the knowledge that we serve a supernatural God. For a quick reference on various types of natural defense mechanisms, see J. Grohol's list at <http://psychcentral.com/lib/15-common-defense-mechanisms/0001251>.



# GRASPING AT GROWTH

HERE ARE THREE SIGNS SIGNALING YOUR CHURCH MAY BE IN TROUBLE  
AND IN NEED OF REVITALIZATION.

| By DANNY W. DAVIS |



**I've spent the majority of my ministry planting local churches.** I have an entrepreneurial bent and find the challenge of church planting exhilarating. When God presented me with an opportunity to revitalize an established church, I was a bit apprehensive.

I had heard the horror stories of churches controlled by power-hungry deacons and family groups. I'd also heard about burned-out pastors exhausted from constant and sustained conflict. In prayer, the Holy Spirit assured me He was orchestrating this season of my life. So, with that confidence, I accepted the pastorate of the church, and God has blessed. Since that time, I have given myself to thinking and learning about church revitalization.

Let's begin with this truth: All churches need revitalizing to some degree. Every pastor sees areas of his or her church in need of help. Perhaps the youth team needs leadership training. Maybe the women's ministry requires a structural overhaul to sustain its rapid growth. The list of ministry areas in need of constant support is unending. There are times, however, when a church (for reasons we will examine) has lost its way and needs total revitalization.

The obvious outward sign of a church in need of revitalization is a consistent stagnation or decline in membership and evangelistic effectiveness. In reality, decline and ineffectiveness are only the fruits of larger problems. Somewhere in the local church's history, it drifted from its vision for the community. No one intended for it to happen. The drift was slow and virtually unnoticed by many. Then suddenly the local church found itself in a leadership or financial crash. Fingers point, and feelings are hurt. Sadly, some wash out and never again connect with a local church.

I want to explore three marks signaling a church is in trouble. While there may be more marks, my involvement in and research of churches requiring revitalization has led me to see these three as chief. The ordering of these marks is purposeful. They paint the picture of a church moving away from vision toward decline and death.

### **THE CHURCH IS LED BY CRISES, NOT VISION**

A church is a candidate for revitalization when it follows the lead of crises, rather than God-given vision.

All churches — even healthy ones — experience times of crisis. A leading member of the church becomes ill and dies. Unexpected

expenses push the limits of an already tight budget. These are among the myriad problems church leaders face. The church's business is building people. This comes with a certain amount of unpredictability. Unpredictability can cause seasons of crises.

Healthy churches navigate crises through their God-given vision. A sense of mission articulated in their unique vision helps them stay on track. A crisis does not equate with confusion in the healthy church. Because of its vision, a healthy church has systems and policies in place to guide the leadership team. When it encounters situations the current system doesn't address, vision provides a framework for formulating and implementing new policies. God-given vision becomes a source of stability and comfort when confusion and chaos are at the door.

Unhealthy churches often fail to establish a guiding, God-given, central vision. I am not saying they do not have a vision statement. They may have a beautifully crafted set of words hanging on the wall. There is certainly no shortage of pithy and pleasant statements to borrow and tweak to give the facade of vision. The problem is this: The posted vision statement is peripheral, not central, to the life of the church. The statement has no influence on the culture of the unhealthy church. Instead, the latest crisis creates, sustains, and drives this church's central vision.

Let me reiterate: Crises come to every church. The difference between the healthy and unhealthy church is what happens during and after a crisis. In the unhealthy church, a crisis provides momentary vision to fill the otherwise visionless vacuum. In a time of crisis, both types of churches may form classes to equip people. Pastors may prepare sermons to encourage the congregation. The church may develop policies for circumventing future problems. But when the unhealthy church comes to the end of a particular crisis, another vacuum develops. Without a central, God-given vision, the only option left is waiting for the next crisis. In no small way, crises become the purpose of the church.

I have been in churches where the above scenario plays out so

often it becomes part of the leadership DNA. The congregation views the pastor's role as a crisis manager, not as a shepherd. This type of culture impacts the church's ability to have sustained growth. Newcomers may stick around for a while. They may even endure a few crisis moments, thinking they are the exception rather than the rule. Eventually, the roller-coaster motion of crisis-vacuum-crisis leads to nausea, and people leave. The kinds of people who do stay are those who thrive on crises because crisis moments give the people a sense of purpose. This only perpetuates the problem.

A church with no central, God-given vision has no choice but to follow the lead of one crisis after another. The result is a chaotic atmosphere in which most newcomers cannot thrive. Because the church struggles to attract and retain newcomers, it becomes inward focused. In time, the congregation ceases to reflect the community God called it to serve.

### **THE CONGREGATION NO LONGER REFLECTS THE COMMUNITY**

The town I live in and pastor has a population of about 5,300 people. It is predominantly white with slightly more women than men. The town has a wide variety of ages, but the median age is 35. The congregation God called me to serve is predominantly white, has more women than men, and has a median age of 60. Recently, a church member came to me and said, "Pastor, our church is only a few funerals away from dead!"

I assured her the situation was not that dire and the leadership team was well aware of what was happening. We engaged in long discussions about how we are and are not reflecting the larger community. We discussed how we are working to find solutions and build a strategy to remedy the disparity. But it was one of the major factors leading to the decision to undergo the process of revitalization.

Whether your church is in a large city or rural village, change is

inevitable. People come, and people go. Organizations thrive and die in big cities and small towns. The pace of change differs from one population group to another, but community change is a constant. The shifting sands of our community makeup cannot be ignored for the sake of comfort or tradition.

While serving as a non-Assemblies of God missionary church planter in the Republic of South Africa, I received a request to assist a dying congregation. The church had at one time been a thriving part of the local community. But something happened. An era of deep racial segregation came to an end, and people in the community began to leave. Over the course of a decade, the community underwent dramatic change.

Most whites left, and a whole new ethnically diverse population took their place. This meant the community no longer spoke one language. Instead the streets were filled with a host of languages and colors representing the new South Africa. But the church ignored the change even as its membership rapidly declined.

As I spoke to the 80-year-old pastor, he assured me the community had not changed. He patted me on the hand and explained that everyone in the community would always speak his language. I wanted to cry. The church no longer reflected its community. Sadly, the church had no desire to change so that it might reflect its community. Instead it moved from one crisis moment to another until the pastor died. Because of the church's poor record keeping, the building was lost to a religious group whose primary concern was money rather than souls.

Though the names and situations are different, this scenario plays out daily in churches around the world. Instead of embracing change and asking God for renewed vision, things plod along as usual. Then one day a dear saint steps up to the pastor and says, "Our church is only a few funerals away from dead." These words should ring like an alarm clock in the ear of any pastor.

If the pastor and church leadership are prone to crisis management, the reality of death is cause for yet another crisis. Panic ensues, sparking a flurry of research and reading. The goal becomes finding churches with sustained growth and copying these models. Instead of relearning the community and how to serve it, leadership reaches for growth models to implement.

### **GRASPING AT CHURCH GROWTH MODELS**

The logic seems reasonable: What works in one city or town will work in another. But this is not necessarily true. Adoption of a certain model



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— or a hybrid of several models — offers temporary relief at best. The introduction of a new growth model and a new banner may cause short-term excitement. It is not a long-term solution, however.

I will be the first to admit I am guilty of grasping at models. Like most pastors, I want to see the local church thrive. I attend conferences and read books to further my passion for the local church. Inherent in the good desire for Kingdom expansion is a temptation to grasp at the latest trend or church growth product offered.

A healthy church does not ignore trends and church growth models. The visionary pastor constantly looks for equipping tools to build people. When a particular idea or product seems useful, the pastor and leaders investigate what makes it successful. They also consider whether it will work within the God-given vision of that local church. If the program obviously benefits the central vision, they adapt it to fit the needs of that local context. It is not just a photocopied vision.

The unhealthy church does not ignore trends and church growth models. The pastor reads many of the same books and attends similar conferences as other leaders. The breakdown occurs in how the leader of an unhealthy congregation processes the trends and church growth models. The unhealthy church devotes little time to understanding the principles. The pastor adopts a new slogan, vision, or values statement and presents it to the church with some tweaking. New banners and signs highlight the presentation.

After rolling out the “vision,” the pastor provides church leaders with a notebook. The contents spell out how Church ABC carries out its vision in ABC city. There are sections illustrating how the youth, small groups, and other ministry areas are fulfilling that vision. Leaders catch a glimmer of hope as they see a chance for a better future. The pastor then instructs them to implement this model into their particular ministry. This is where things move toward frustration.

If the pastor did not include church leaders in the visioning process, they may have no idea why he or she chose a particular model. They likely had no time to process the proposed change or ask questions. Implementation takes place on the fly. How-to questions quickly overwhelm the pastor. The whole effort bogs down, and frustration becomes the order of the day.

Weeks into implementation, everyone — including the pastor — has wandered from the new vision. Church leaders have done what they could to accomplish their tasks, but they were unsuccessful. A slow drift back to “what used to be” occurs. In many cases, the answer to the frustration is finding another church growth model to implement. The cycle of frustration continues until church leaders and members lose trust in their pastor.

A strange thing happens at this point. Leaders begin to shield themselves

## REVITALIZATION AND PRAYER

In his book, *Turnaround Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can, Too*, Ed Stetzer writes a chapter titled, “Top Ten Most Common Transformations for Comeback Churches.”<sup>1</sup> Prayer is number one. The most radical element of transformation in declining churches is a new attitude toward prayer. Churches committed to revitalization must make strategic prayer a priority.

### EMPHASIZE AND TEACH PRAYER

One of the first things I did after becoming the pastor at our church was to start teaching about prayer.

Our church has a Wednesday Bible study and prayer meeting. We spent several weeks talking about and doing prayer. Over a 12-week period, we worked through two courses centering on prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit. But we did not simply learn and fill in blanks. We set aside time during the Wednesday service to pray. It has brought us a renewed faith and drawn us together in unity.

### RECRUIT A REVITALIZATION PRAYER TEAM

Prayer is the vehicle to winning the spiritual battle in any church effort.

Wednesday night prayer is wonderful. It helps model prayer for all who attend. This should not be the only prayer emphasis in the church, however. Every pastor needs to recruit a group of intercessors for his or her church. Let this team know how to pray. Trust the team will help you and the leaders hear from God.

### ASK THE COMMUNITY WHAT TO PRAY

Our strategy for revitalization includes greater community involvement.

Part of this strategy is being available to pray for community needs. Do not be afraid to ask your local government leaders about prayer needs. I read the local newspaper with an eye for opportunities for our congregation to pray for our community. God is now opening doors of influence for our church and me.

**DANNY W. DAVIS**, Odessa, Missouri

#### Note

1. Ed Stetzer, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can, Too* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 192.

by building silos around their ministry areas. Housed within these ministry silos are multiple — and sometimes conflicting — visions for the church. Tensions rise as ministry leaders compete for an already limited number of resources. Cliques and factions arise from the multitude of visions. Members feel pressured to choose a side. Many simply choose another church. The attempt to bring health to the church results in more dysfunction and decline.

## CONCLUSION

As stated earlier, all churches require some degree of revitalization. The picture I have painted above illustrates a church where drastic change is required if it is to survive. It is a sad picture, but it is not a hopeless one. God intends every local church to be healthy. He has given us the Holy Spirit to empower the fulfillment of His intention. God has also placed within every local church the spiritual and ministry gifts necessary for success. It may not seem like it, but He has.

All churches share the same mission. How each church carries out that mission is the stuff of vision. Every local church deserves a God-given vision. Such vision dares leaders and churches to be creative in developing relevant strategies to reach its community. It creates dissatisfaction for irrelevant, ill-fitting, copycat programs. Vision gives leaders the option to say “no,” because they know exactly what “yes” looks like in their context. God’s vision for a city calls a pastor to take risks. Tearing down silos is not safe. Navigating through the complexity of human emotion tied to programs and people is dangerous. Yet at the risk of sounding cliché, the risk is worth the reward.

Revitalizing a declining church demands pastoral commitment. The pastor carries the responsibility of empowering his or her church to discover its God-given vision. Finding vision is not an easy task. It forces the pastor to look outward and see the reality of the community. It challenges the pastor to look inward to see if the church reflects the community it is rediscovering. Vision also demands the pastor spend time asking the Holy Spirit to search his or her heart. The Spirit’s work

in revitalization begins with the God-called leader.

Partnership is vital to turning around a church that is in trouble. A pastor committed to seeing his or her church move from illness to health understands he cannot do it alone. In our situation, we partnered with the Healthy Church Network’s Acts 2 Church Initiative. This partnership challenges our leadership team to discover our unique calling. We are progressively seeing the big picture of how God wants to use us in our community. Together we have faced some tough realities about our church. Having a partner guide us in this journey of discovery has been invaluable. ■



**DANNY W. DAVIS**, lead pastor, Odessa First Assembly of God, Odessa, Missouri

### Note

1. Thom S. Rainer, “Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 11 Things I Learned,” Thom S. Rainer blog, Lifeway Christian Resources, <http://thomrainer.com/2013/04/24/autopsy-of-a-deceased-church-11-things-i-learned/> (accessed: April 24, 2013).





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# HOW TO KEEP YOUR STAFF FOCUSED AND ENGAGED

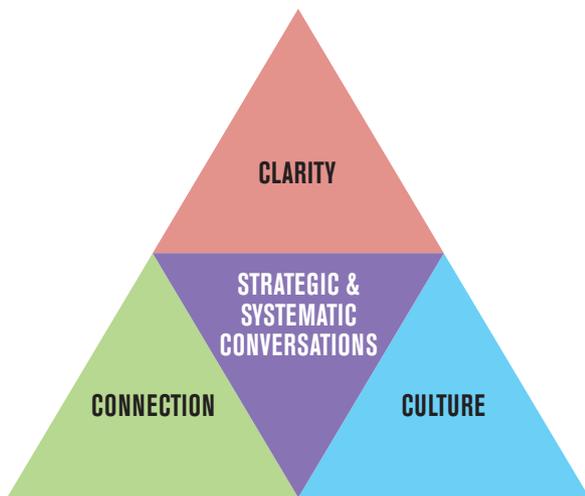
| By STEPHEN BLANDINO |

## Why do pastors lose their best staff?

That question is a source of frustration for thousands of pastors. Some staff members leave because they want to be closer to family. Some accept an opportunity better aligned with their gifts and passions. Others are emotionally spent and need time to recharge. And, of course, some claim God told them to go. (Like it or not, sometimes He actually does.)

While all of these are legitimate reasons for staff transitions, there's one reason we don't like to admit. Sometimes our best staff members leave us because they're disengaged from their work — and we're often to blame.

So what can we do about it? In a world where opportunities abound, organizational Attention Deficit Disorder is rampant. As I've led staff in both large and small churches, I've come to the realization that focus and engagement sharply increase when a triad of elements converges around the power of conversation. These three elements — clarity, connection, and culture — held together by the glue of strategic and systematic conversations, form what I call The Focused Engagement Pyramid.



Each element in The Focused Engagement Pyramid has three unique strategies driving its effectiveness. When all of the elements come together, teams gain extraordinary levels of focus and engagement.

### CLARITY: IS OUR CHURCH FOCUSED?

The first element in keeping your staff focused and engaged is clarity. At the risk of sounding painfully obvious, your team can't focus if you're not focused. As the lead pastor, it's your job to ensure clarity in three ways.

**1. Develop a clear and contagious vision.** Unclear vision is the biggest complaint I hear from staff members in local churches. Unfortunately, committees often hijack vision formation, producing a bland, vanilla-flavored rambling of foggy verbs and adjectives. More times than not, the vision looks like a carbon copy of another church. To capture a clear and contagious vision, consider Nehemiah's story.

Nehemiah asked his brother two soul-stirring questions: What's the condition of the Jews who returned to Jerusalem, and what's the condition of the city (Nehemiah 1:1,2)? God used those inquiries to deposit vision in Nehemiah's heart. What questions in your soul, and needs in your community, are unsatisfied?

Next, Nehemiah discovered the intersection of problems and passions. When Nehemiah heard the condition of the city and its people, he wept (Nehemiah 1:3,4). The weight of the problem intersected his passion for the people. The same will be true for you. Vision is like a Venn diagram with three intersecting circles: community problems, personal passions, and church passions.

Finally, Nehemiah spent time fasting and praying. The prayer recorded in Nehemiah 1:4–11 is likely a summary of a four-month season of prayer. This solidified the vision in Nehemiah's heart, and God opened the right doors, with the right people, at the right time (Nehemiah 2:1–8).

**2. Determine your strategic disciplines.** Answer this question: "What must we do every day or week to ensure we're making progress toward our God-given vision?"

We've identified six strategic disciplines at 7 City Church that align with our vision to see cities transformed by inspiring community and influencing culture. Every week we strive to do these things:

- Identify, pray for, and connect with the influencers of our city.
- Develop people over programs.
- Produce weekend experiences that inspire people to know God, engage in community, and influence culture.
- Help guests make 7 City Church their community of faith.
- Encourage people to take their next step.
- Relentlessly execute with excellence.

Consistently carrying out these strategic disciplines leads to systematic progress toward our vision. Later I'll explain how to keep these disciplines in focus.

**3. Identify short-term thematic goals.** The final piece in gaining clarity is what author and consultant Patrick Lencioni calls a "thematic goal." A thematic goal answers the question, "What is most important right now?" It's a singular, qualitative, temporary goal the leadership team shares. It's the one thing you must accomplish in the next predetermined number of months.<sup>1</sup>

At 7 City Church, we've adapted this idea into a single, unifying, short-term goal chart. In the example given, the goal is to: "Develop a relationally-driven guest and next-steps experience." The thematic

goal includes specific objectives. Under each staff member's name, we list tasks to accomplish the objectives.

THEMATIC GOAL				
Develop a relationally-driven guest and next-steps experience				
Target time frame: January–March				
OBJECTIVES	Staff Member	Staff Member	Staff Member	Staff Member
Review and refine guest assimilation process (January) 1 2 3 4 5				
Conduct 10 guest lunches (January–December) 1 2 3 4 5				
Create “Next Steps” area in lobby and website (February–March) 1 2 3 4 5				
Promote and launch 14 comm. groups (January–February) 1 2 3 4 5				
Implement Next Generation Assimilation (March) 1 2 3 4 5				
PROGRESS & PROFICIENCY SCALE				
5 = We're ahead of schedule, and things are great.				
4 = We're on schedule, and things are good.				
3 = We're doing okay, but we're not where we should be.				
2 = We're falling behind, and things aren't looking good.				
1 = We're way behind, and we may not catch up.				

This has proven to be an extraordinarily effective tool in keeping us focused and aligned with our church's priorities. It eliminates silo thinking and gets everybody pushing in the same direction. I'll explain later how we use the progress and proficiency scale.



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Each element — vision, strategic disciplines, and thematic goals — is essential to establish clarity. Without them, your team will lack focus and wonder what constitutes a “win.”

### CONNECTION: IS OUR TEAM ENGAGED?

The second ingredient in keeping your staff focused and engaged is connection. Connection is all about employee engagement. Considerable research suggests that disengaged employees significantly reduce forward momentum. Here are three steps to ensure your staff is connected and engaged.

**1. Establish strengths-based, vision-centric roles.** Your team will deliver its best outcomes, and exhibit the greatest engagement, if it gets to play to its strengths while focusing on a unifying vision.

The building of the tabernacle in the Old Testament is a perfect example. God used Bezalel and Oholiab “to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood and to engage in all kinds of artistic crafts” (Exodus 35:32,33).

The roles of the tabernacle team leveraged their strengths while remaining true to the vision God gave Moses. When roles are strengths-based and vision-centric, staff members make meaningful contributions that are actually needed and necessary.

**2. Develop team-friendly systems.** Author and pastor Nelson Searcy says a good SYSTEM “Saves You Stress, Time, Energy, and Money.” Systems impact the behaviors of your staff – and volunteers. If you don't like their behaviors, examine your systems.

A great biblical example of systems is the structure Moses established with the help of his father-in-law, Jethro (Exodus 18). This system saved Moses, and the people, significant stress, time, and energy. It successfully met the needs of the people and helped Moses focus on his highest priorities as a leader.

You have systems for hiring staff, communicating with volunteers, assimilating guests, and a hundred other things. The question is: Are your systems efficient, effective, and team-friendly?

As you evaluate and create systems, ensure they deliver three things: effective results aligned with your vision, greater employee engagement, and efficient use of your church's time, energy, and money.

**3. Measure employee engagement.** Paul wrote, “And masters, treat your servants considerately. Be fair with them. Don't forget for a minute that you, too, serve a Master — God in heaven” (Colossians 4:1, *The Message*).<sup>2</sup>

The only true way to know how you treat your staff, and how engaged they are in their work, is to ask them. Assuming you've developed a trust-filled culture (which I'll address shortly), you can usually measure employee engagement by asking a series of questions about how energized, encouraged, equipped, and empowered they feel.

### CULTURE: IS OUR CULTURE HEALTHY?

The third ingredient in keeping your staff focused and engaged is culture. When you enter a foreign country, you're immediately introduced to their culture. Language, customs, and laws contribute to how a country does things.

The same is true in your church. Your church has a way of doing things that shapes its culture. But is it healthy? To develop a healthy culture, embrace three practices.

**1. Foster staff relationships.** Nothing builds morale like healthy relationships. While it takes time, the fastest way to develop relationships is to model trustworthiness and have fun together. Trustworthiness encompasses character qualities such as truthfulness, respect, forgiveness, and empowerment. Having fun together builds cohesion and a sense of family. Remove either of these, and your staff relationships will become nothing more than a professional formality.

**2. Cultivate a culture of candor and care.** Teams tend to fall to one of two extremes. At one extreme, staff members are so blatant about their opinions that everyone feels guarded or downright angry. At the other extreme, team members don't share how they truly feel for fear of causing offense, being humiliated, or arousing accusations of disloyalty. Good leaders cultivate an appropriate balance of candor and care.

The best way to move toward a culture of candor and care is to allow your team to push back on your ideas without you barking back. Swallow your pride by giving them permission to challenge your perspective and stretch your thinking with new ideas. Proverbs



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27:6 says, "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." An honest staff is not your enemy.

**3. Develop an aggressive learning environment.** The final part of a healthy culture is a growth-focused learning environment that makes everybody better. Empower staff members to create a self-directed personal growth plan, engage in staff-wide growth activities, and access practical coaching.

WHEN ROLES ARE  
STRENGTHS-BASED  
AND VISION-CENTRIC,  
STAFF MEMBERS  
MAKE MEANINGFUL  
CONTRIBUTIONS THAT  
ARE ACTUALLY NEEDED  
AND NECESSARY.

### CONVERSATIONS: ARE WE HAVING SYSTEMATIC, STRATEGIC DISCUSSIONS?

The final ingredient in keeping your staff focused and engaged is conversations. As the centerpiece of the pyramid, conversations are the glue that holds the entire process together. Clarity, connection, and culture contribute to long-term focus and engagement only through strategic and systematic discussions. You can foster these conversations around the three corners of the pyramid.

**1. Clarity: Leverage strategic conversations in weekly staff meetings.** While many leaders dread weekly staff meetings, they can be among the most effective way to create focused, aligned movement toward your vision, strategic disciplines, and thematic goal.

We use the following two-hour agenda to maintain clarity:

- Staff prayer: We allocate 30 minutes every week to staff prayer. This isn't part of our staff meeting, but it happens 30 minutes prior to our staff meeting.
- Metrics: We take the first 5 to 10 minutes of the staff meeting to do a quick review of our weekly metrics, such as attendance, salvations, and baptisms.
- Rapid fire: The next 15 to 20 minutes is a rapid discussion of housekeeping items, such as the calendar or topics relevant to the entire team. This is where most teams spend their entire meeting, but it has the least engagement.
- Strategic reviews: The next 15 to 30 minutes is dedicated to

a review of one of four strategic areas: personal growth plans, vision and values, staff development, and strategic disciplines. Some of these discussions are opportunities to share stories of life change and churchwide wins, while others focus on personal development. We rotate through the four areas once per month.

- Focus: The next 25 to 40 minutes are dedicated to our current thematic goal. Each staff member uses the progress and proficiency scale to rate our performance on each objective from one to five. Then everyone quickly shares his or her scores, and we discuss our progress. This weekly practice forces us to have candid conversations about our most important priority. It keeps everybody focused, clarifies next steps, and increases the speed of overall progress.
- Next steps: We devote the final 5 minutes of the meeting to clarifying next steps. We answer the question, “Who will do what by when?”

Using this format focuses time on your priorities. Your job as the pastor is to ensure you don't drift.

**2. Connection: Leverage strategic conversations around staff reviews.**

The second type of conversation measures employee engagement. This conversation happens through an annual or semiannual review. A good review evaluates employee progress with church goals, personal growth, and leadership competencies.

You should also use a review to seek written feedback about how energized, equipped, encouraged, and empowered your staff members feel in their role and work environment. Finally, discuss how you motivate and demotivate your staff, their present concerns, future goals, and how you can help them.

**3. Culture: Leverage strategic conversations around cultural dynamics.** Three cultural dynamics contribute to this final conversation: relationships, feedback, and coaching. First, provide fun opportunities for staff members to develop

relationships with each other so they can build memories and cultivate heartfelt conversations. Second, seek genuine feedback during meetings on the most important issues facing your church. Third, spend time formally and informally coaching your staff in areas that will enrich their lives, leadership, and ministries.

By leveraging The Focused Engagement Pyramid, you'll gain clarity, improve connection, create a healthy culture, and foster strategic and systematic conversations. As you do, your team will increase in focus and engagement. This will reduce staff turnover and keep your team aligned with the church's God-given vision. 📖



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**Notes**

1. Patrick Lencioni, *The Advantage* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 121–22.
2. Scripture taken from *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.



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# Women in Ministry: A CALLED COMMUNITY

By **Judy Rachels**

*Today's women are courageously, creatively answering the call to serve.*

## M inisterial ordination

happened to me this year. The event was steeped in challenge, meaning, and symbolism. I received a mantle, a staff, and a Bible — symbols of servant ministry.

When it was time for the laying on of hands, our presbyter son, Scott, who had interviewed, approved, and, recommended me for ordination, created a dramatic moment. He put in front of me an iPad with a 1992 video of my mother, Ruth Homer, quoting Mary's Song from Luke 1 (one of the more than 25 chapters she had memorized). She has been in heaven with the Lord for 11 years; yet she still speaks.

“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me — holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors” (Luke 1:46–55).

My mother planted a church while she was pregnant with me, and she planted in me the absolute assurance that God uses women in the extension of His kingdom. She thrived on presenting Christ through the unseen habits of her servant life, as well as her powerful preaching.

All those years later, she reminded me, as a woman in ministry, that God is mindful of His servant. He is merciful to those who fear Him. He lifts up the humble. He fills the hungry. He keeps His promises.

My mom would want me to remember from Mary’s Song that the qualities so necessary to being an effective minister are: servanthood, God-awareness, humility, and spiritual hunger. These are compelling spiritual virtues for those who will serve and lead in His name.

The Assemblies of God is committed to developing, mentoring, and resourcing vocational women ministers and women preparing for ministry.

On the Day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter, quoting Joel 2:28, said, “Your sons and daughters will prophesy” (Acts 2:17).

Jesus fulfilled — and continues to fulfill — God’s promise of an eschatological outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit calls and empowers both men and women to exercise prophetic ministry in the last days.

Historically, the Assemblies of God has recognized that this Spirit empowerment opens the doors of credentialed ministry to all qualified applicants, whether women or men. The rise of the so-called New Calvinism, which often teaches that credentialed ministry is open to men only, is causing many young men (and a few young women) to step back from our historic commitment to equality in ministry.

Nevertheless, women are increasingly seeking credentials with the Assemblies of God. In fact, women completing degrees in theology and seeking credentials are outnumbering men in some areas of our country.

Today’s women in ministry are planting churches and serving as chaplains — in prisons, hospitals, industries, and even military combat zones. They are pushing back the darkness, “living dead,” and confronting strongholds. They are in your city, your county, and your state. They are courageously, creatively answering the call to serve.

Servanthood, God-awareness, humility, and spiritual hunger make up the shared language of credentialed women ministers in the Assemblies of God. Look around, and you will see them leading churches, serving as executive pastors, directing university ministries, and moving into difficult places around the globe. They boldly serve in obscure mission stations, where they lift up the fallen, administer compassion, and often paint with a softer brush. They faithfully do whatever is possible while trusting the One who calls them to do the impossible.

This issue of *Enrichment* promotes awareness of credentialed women ministers within the Assemblies of God (USA). The issue explores our history, searches the Scriptures, and evaluates our contemporary practice through the lens of our Pentecostal commitments. It further examines why women’s perspectives and voices on issues are important, and how male leaders can promote the value of credentialed women ministers across the Assemblies of God Fellowship. ☑



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**JUDY RACHELS**, chairperson, Network for Women in Ministry, the General Council of the Assemblies of God, Huntington Beach, California.





Grant



Wood



Bradford

The Best Is Yet to Come:

# WHY CREDENTIALALED WOMEN MINISTERS MATTER

to the Assemblies of God

**D**r. Beth Grant has served as an Assemblies of God missionary to Eurasia for thirty-seven years. She speaks frequently at women's retreats internationally, inspiring women to recognize their identity in Christ and be empowered to fulfill their God-given purpose. Her vision is to mobilize a generation of young women to fulfill God's transforming mission in our twenty-first-century world.

On behalf of *Enrichment* journal, Dr. Grant interviewed Dr. George O. Wood, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, and Dr. James T. Bradford, general secretary of the Assemblies of God, on a very relevant topic: women in ministry.

**M**any conflicting voices exist within evangelical and Pentecostal churches on the role of women in ministry. What is the official Assemblies of God position on women in ministry?

**WOOD:** The official position is that there is no position that is off-limits to a woman in credentialed ministry in the Assemblies of God. This has been a historic position. My mother went out as a single minister to northwest China in 1924 when the Assemblies of God was only 10 years of age. We've had not only women missionaries but also women pastors. We've had women evangelists. We've had women scholars, professors — you name it.

I'm very unhappy when I hear in our own Fellowship those who don't hold to what is our historic position on women in ministry. The Assemblies of God is a Pentecostal body. We have a very distinct view of the role of women in ministry and the prophecy of Joel that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. I'm personally very concerned about the incursion into the Pentecostal movement and the Assemblies of God of persons who are not Pentecostal, who bring reformed theology and their view of highly hierarchical structure — whether it's through seminars they've attended, or whatever — and miss utilizing well over half of the workforce that is available to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our position is very clear. We have a position paper on women in ministry. We have written great books on women in ministry. I personally wrote an article several years ago in *Enrichment* called, "Why Pentecostals Think the Way We Do About Women in Ministry." It lays out the whole hermeneutic for why we have the position we have.

**BRADFORD:** It really goes back to our Pentecostal hermeneutic: "I will pour out my Spirit on all

people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy" (Joel 2:28).

There's no qualification on the follow-through to that. It's an accepted fact that God's Spirit anoints men and women for ministry. Throughout the New Testament record built on the example of Jesus' words, He was constantly bringing women into His inner circle and elevating their status and advocating for their equality. And then there is the apostle Paul. He has this very long list of significant people in his life. An amazingly large number of them are women. Look at Romans 16. Close to half the names of all of his ministry partners in Romans 16 are women.

In the New Testament, there is a pattern of equality with men and women in the ministry. You do have a New Testament context where it's a bit of a patriarchal society, and so that is always an issue within that larger cultural context they can't

change. They're just trying to elevate the role of women. And then Paul ultimately saying that in Christ there is neither male nor female, "for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

**WOOD:** In Romans 16:1, where Phoebe is referred to in the King James as the deaconess, King James translators absolutely botched that one because there was no room in their theology for a woman deacon. Even though the word is the same one that's used for male deacons,

they had to put "deaconess" on it. In Romans 16, Paul talks about Andronicus and Junia as being fellow apostles. Well, Junia is a feminine name.

When you look at the development of the New Testament within culture, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female. That's Paul's statement in Galatians. When the gospel came within culture, it did not come in an attempt to politically revolutionize and overturn the social system overnight. The first thing that began to go was the nondistinction between Jew and Gentile. We know from the New Testament what a struggle this was for the Early Church.

Paul didn't even really tackle the issue of the injustice of slavery except to say what the proper relationship was between the slaveholder and the slave. The letter to Philemon gives us a paradigm for that. In the Church, there was equality, even though the social structure was not yet there.



**As a national leader, it is frustrating to recognize there are still glass ceilings.**

— WOOD



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But the seed of the gospel in terms of it being good news to the slave ultimately came to pass.

Well, the third link then is male and female. In Christ, there is neither male nor female. That is one of the few times in the history of Christianity where the culture got ahead of the Church. The culture was not ahead of the Church on Jew and Gentile. The culture was not ahead of the Church on the matter of slave and free. But the culture, at least in the West, got ahead of the Church on male and female equality. The Church, because of patriarchal models, lagged somewhat behind on that. The good thing is that in the outpouring of the Spirit with the modern Pentecostal movement, we jumped past the culture theologically. And our practice is now seeking to catch up to what our theology has been consistently saying for 100 years.

**Wherever you see a move of the Spirit — regardless of the cultural structure as it relates to male and female roles — you see women and men called to ministry. Young women will say: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to preach. He has anointed me to teach.” How many women currently serve as ministers in the AG?**

**BRADFORD:** As of this week, there are 8,189 women serving as USA Assemblies of God ministers. It’s about 23 percent of our roughly 35,800 credentialed ministers.

The trend is growing, however. Even though 23 percent of all of our ministers are female, we’re trending higher in terms of our new credential applicants. In this category, we are trending closer to 50 percent being female. For over 20 years the number of credentialed women has been growing sequentially every year. We’re starting to see women serve in our districts as executive officers. Presently, we have four districts where women are district executive officers. That trend is really encouraging. Also, three of our college and university presidents are women.

**How can denominational officials at national, district, and sectional levels promote the value of women in ministry? It seems that’s not always consistent in practice across our Movement.**

**WOOD:** The Assemblies of God is structured in such a way that there is broad autonomy given to the local church level and the district church level. So the General Council officers can teach, inspire, and try to motivate and educate, but we



**There is a pattern throughout the New Testament of women being partnered equally with men in the ministry.**

— BRADFORD

cannot dictate. That is, you can’t, as a General Council officer, go into a district and say, “There’s a way, and you’re going to do it,” unless the district is aberrational in a statement of fundamental truths.

You can’t do that with a local church either. So it becomes a matter of the General Council leadership pushing the envelope, so to speak, and saying, “This is important.”

It takes time to change perceptions, depending upon who is in district leadership and who is in local church leadership. Since the Assemblies of God has always been somewhat porous in terms of having the input of other people from outside the Assemblies of God, a lot of ideas come into the AG at the local or district level that do not represent what our best biblical understanding conveys.

At times, as a national leader, it is frustrating to recognize there are still glass ceilings in place in some quarters of our Movement on the role of women in ministry. And certainly these six to seven years now I’ve been general superintendent, I’ve tried everything I know to use the powers of persuasion — including the Women in Ministry task force, which has been so critical in enhancing the role of women in ministry — to advance this proposition that God equally calls and gifts women for ministry.

**BRADFORD:** For the past 20 years, in one position or another, Dr. Wood has been in a General Council executive office. He’s always been a very firm voice, along with others, on the issue of women in ministry. We should not underestimate the power of the bully pulpit that the General Council can have. We want our voices to continue to be strong. That’s why we’re doing another issue of *Enrichment* journal on women in ministry.

Increasingly districts should have female speakers at district council and leadership events. Use the power of appointment where there are nonelected positions, but significant leadership positions. We are wanting at every level for districts to continue to model diversity in terms of gender, similar to what we want to do at the General Council level. We must keep encouraging our districts and churches that there are some wonderful ladies who could be pastors. We have about 515 lead pastors among our credential holders right now. Over 800 missionaries and nearly 150 evangelists are among our female credential holders.

Dr. Wood is right that we can’t dictate what things should happen in our structure and our body. We simply need to be become cheerleaders in growing ways, and keep putting women in front who are highly gifted.

**WOOD:** I learned something very valuable as a pastor who helped walk a congregation through transition on the local church board.

Our board, by historical precedent, was an all-male board. I recognized that was in contradiction to our understanding of women in ministry on the local church level. Most church bylaws are gender specific; they are masculine. So rather than making the mistake that some younger pastors do of overturning the tables, trying to change overnight, we established a committee to study this issue. They were so divided after one year I asked them to serve a second year. I always like a committee to come back unanimous. If they're not, a congregation gets divided.

The second year it was all but one or two people on the committee who were for making the bylaws gender-inclusive and making it possible for women to serve on the board of elders of the church. I tried to make it an issue that was not a break-fellowship issue in our church. But there were some who attended Bill Gothard seminars and other kinds of venues — where there was just a clear model that women are subservient — who brought that theology into the church.

The congregation, by an overwhelming vote, adopted the change. And then over the course of time, women came onto the board of elders of the church. And the difference that it made in the conversation at the table was enormous. What we had done by our restrictiveness was lose the voice of a significant part of our congregation that had insights that the male members did not necessarily have. But it also gave a visible representation to the congregation.

Participants in our services were a mixture of men and women. We gave the visible representation of the integration of women with men in ministry. We did the same with the board of elders. I wish that every Assemblies of God church would take a look at their constitution and bylaws and eliminate a barrier on the local level to women serving in even lay leadership positions in the church. We're a Pentecostal body, and that ought not to be.

It's not that we were pushing a so-called feminist agenda. We had the agenda from Galatians: "Nor is there male and female ... in Christ Jesus."

We had the agenda from Joel 2 and Acts 2 before the feminists ever caught the idea of women serving alongside men. So it's not that kind of an issue. We're trying to say, "What does the Scripture teach us, and how do we live out the model of Christian community?"



**Our practice is now seeking to catch up to what our theology has been consistently saying for 100 years.**

— WOOD

**That's a critical point for young women who are very sincere and see this servant model of leadership in Christ and are not comfortable with a rights issue. This has nothing to do with rights for men or women in ministry. That's not the rationale for following Jesus in leadership in ministry. Don't we cripple ourselves in the Kingdom by not empowering both men and women to use their God-given gifts?**

**WOOD:** I'll tell you a sad story. Just a few months ago, a very competent, young, ordained, seminary-trained, female graduate interviewed for a pastoral position of a church of about 100 to 150 people. At the end of a process, the board said they were not going to recommend her election to the membership of the church. Two of the board members came to her privately and said, "You know, we all realize you're the most qualified person to be pastor. But two of the

board members are opposed to having a woman as pastor. Therefore, the person we're going to recommend is not as qualified as you."

My heart just sank at that. I thought, *That is not right.*

I feel passionate about changing the situation at the local level. Now, if the woman candidate had been less qualified than the male candidate, I would feel equally upset if they said, "We're going to choose you because you're a woman even though you're less qualified."

Either way, that has to be taken off the table. The bottom line is: Is this person qualified? Is she gifted? And what's the Spirit saying? Let's not use artificial, secular means for making decisions in the body of Christ.

**Throughout our history, we have an amazing legacy of powerful women of God who were pioneers in the U.S. and around the world. I believe God has a similar future for us. As we recognize the hand of God on young women and encourage and equip them, I believe the best is yet to come. If a young woman approached you today for advice about embarking on ministry with the Assemblies of God, what would be your advice to her?**

**BRADFORD:** My wife is not a credential holder, but she is very passionate about women in ministry. She is part of a team of women that provides content to a website: [womeninministry.ag.org](http://womeninministry.ag.org). I would first of all direct a young woman to this site so she knows she is not alone. Many people are cheering her on. She will find excellent resources on this site that will answer many of her questions and provide her with wonderful

encouragement and insights from other women ministers. The majority of people accessing the site are credentialed women in the Assemblies of God.

I get letters from women seeking pastoral positions outside the Assemblies of God just because doors would not open in our Fellowship. I want to caution these ladies: As hurtful as that experience can be, don't turn it into a crusade. Don't try too hard to prove something. They should just do what God has called them to do. Somehow, in God's sovereignty, the gifts these women possess will be recognized. It's not an easy road.

I would encourage them to persevere. Let God raise them up, and trust their calling to Him.

**WOOD:** Changes like this don't happen overnight. I realize there is frustration. I've lived long enough to know also that sometimes a "no" or a "wait" is part of God's plan. And I don't want that "no" or "wait" to be for improper reasons, but that sometimes occurs. If I were a young woman setting out in credentialed ministry in the Assemblies of God, I would network among my friends and other women in credentialed ministry, and I would say, "What are the spots within the Assemblies of God where I will be most welcome? What districts are most welcoming? What set of churches seem to be most welcoming?"

I think I would try to head for those places, unless the Lord specifically said, "No, you go to this very hard place though they haven't had a woman pastor in that district in 100 years."

The Lord can tell you to do that.

There also is a wide-open doorway for church planters in the Assemblies of God. Through the processes of the Church Multiplication Network, which is at our offices, we would be delighted to partner with qualified women church planters who feel the call of God to get a team together and go plant a church somewhere. So that door would be open.

I'm probably more focused on the senior pastor's position, where the door seems to be opened the narrowest. However, there are many open doors, especially in staff positions. The door is wide open for women who feel called to be missionaries, youth pastors, children's pastors, executive pastors, staff pastors, counselors, and teachers in our schools.

### **What can male senior pastors do in their leadership roles to mentor women for ministry?**

**BRADFORD:** If senior pastors are in a position to hire staff, they should make an intentional decision to balance their staff

with men and women. Allow significant volunteer leadership positions in the church to be filled by women as well. If the bylaws restrict board members to males only, lead the board through the process Dr. Wood described earlier with his church when he was pastoring. It takes courage to do this in some settings.

**WOOD:** I think it is word and deed. Of course, by word, give appropriate biblical teaching on the subject of women in ministry.

Deed is in little things. For example, who serves Communion? We had a practice in the church I pastored of all men serving Communion. I mean, that's what the men do. So we integrated that by including women. Who received the offering? It was all men. We changed that so that during the liturgy or worship, there was a visible representation of the presence of women. I didn't have to say a word to do that. That was by deed.

It frustrates me when I'm in a church and one person does all the talking from behind the pulpit. The pastor gives the welcome. The pastor gives the appeal for the offering. The pastor prays. The pastor preaches. The pastor prays at the end. It's helpful to have as many voices as possible within the time strictures so that you are visibly representing the beautiful nature of the body of Christ.

### **Dr. Wood, could you close with a prayer, especially over the women ministers in the Assemblies of God?**

**WOOD:** Heavenly Father, we thank You that Your Spirit has called women, as well as men, to serve You in vocational ministry. We ask Your favor and Your blessing to rest upon each.

I pray especially for young women, that this discussion would strike a resonant chord in their own hearts and lives that this Fellowship called the Assemblies of God is a welcoming place for women in ministry. Our hearts' desire is to celebrate, affirm, and lay hands upon the calling that You have placed upon women in ministry.

Lord, it was never Your intention that half of Your workforce be unemployed, so we pray for full employment in the kingdom of God for all those whom You have divinely called to be in vocational ministry, whether male or female. We ask for the continued outpouring of Your Spirit upon this Assemblies of God family so that we would see in the days to come a continuation of the greatest work of evangelism the world has ever seen — one that employs both men and women in the harvest fields of America and this world. In Jesus' name. Amen. ■



***If you're in a position to hire staff, make an intentional decision that you will try to balance your staff with men and women.***

— BRADFORD

# YOUR DAUGHTERS WILL PROPHECY:

## The New Testament Case for Women in Ministry

By *Kari Brodin*

In three critical, revelatory moments we see most clearly the shared place of women and men in fulfilling the work of God's people.





From its inception, the Assemblies of God has experienced and recognized the Holy Spirit's empowerment of both men and women for

gospel ministry. As a Pentecostal New Testament scholar quipped, when our efforts in hermeneutics fully developed to catch up with our Spirit-inspired experience, we discovered that our understanding and practice were in fact thoroughly biblical.

Many capable scholars have set forth in detail the New Testament case for women in ministry.<sup>1</sup> I will highlight the contours of this case by means of a threefold, and indeed Trinitarian, framework: creation, Christ, and charismata (gifts of the Holy Spirit). In these three critical, revelatory moments we see most clearly the shared place of women and men in fulfilling the work of God's people.

### Creation

Since the New Testament is firmly rooted in the Old Testament, beginning with creation is appropriate. Through the Son and with the Spirit, God the Father brought the universe into being and formed in His image the human beings, male and female, who were creation's crown. To them jointly He gave dominion: the responsibility to act as His stewards in righteous rule, caring for the Earth and its creatures (Genesis 1:26,27).

Creation displays no hint of hierarchy or subordination in ontology or function between the man and the woman. In Eden we see God's intent for the harmonious mutuality of relationship between the man, incomplete alone, and the perfectly corresponding woman who would share in his task — a God-given helpmate.

Not until the Fall do we see the marring of God's harmony, with dire consequences for the pair. Into what was once a shared dominion, sin introduces domination (Genesis 3:16). In the remaining Old Testament story, we observe evidence of, and response to, this sin-spoiled relationship. For example, as Jesus told the Pharisees, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning" (Matthew 19:8).

### Christ

"He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found." Isaac Watts' beautiful carol proclaims the joy we celebrate at Christmas: Christ "reverses the curse" of sin at every turn. If God's intent was truly the mutual partnership of His male and female co-image-bearers, we may expect to see this in the life

and teaching of Jesus, and in those under the influence of His advent. We do.

The Gospels bear witness to the new creation ethos of the kingdom of God inaugurated in Jesus' first coming. Luke's birth narratives are among the first signals of its significance for women: Elizabeth, Mary, and Anna take their places alongside Zechariah, Joseph, and Simeon as the prophetic voices of women are lifted in Spirit-inspired speech heralding the upside-down Kingdom that stands worldly values and hierarchies on their heads (Luke 1-2).

Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3) and first sermon at Nazareth (Luke 4) announce the anointing of God's Messiah and the agenda of His Spirit-filled ministry that is good news for the oppressed who turn to Him. As the narratives of His life unfold, many women are among those who do turn to Jesus.

Jesus not only treats women in remarkably affirming ways, He also calls them to share in His mission. Women in various healing accounts (e.g., the woman subject to bleeding, the Syrophenician mother) and other encounters with Jesus (the widow's offering, the women who anointed Him for burial) serve as models for faith and discipleship.

In John's Gospel, two women are favored with participation in perhaps the most theologically profound of Jesus' conversations. The woman at the well in Samaria (John 4) keeps pace with Jesus' intriguing references at least as well as Nicodemus a chapter earlier. What is more, she continues her probing inquiries to the point not only of her own discipleship but also of evangelistic activity. Her testimony brings an entire village to faith. Later, Martha responds to Jesus' revelatory words with a confession of Him as Messiah and Son of God (John 11:27) that parallels Peter's great statement recorded by the other three evangelists.

Mary, Martha's sister, earns Jesus' praise for choosing "what is better" by sitting at His feet in the customary position of a disciple, counter to the prevailing norms for women (Luke 10:38-42). Like the Twelve, many women accompanied Jesus as disciples throughout His itinerant ministry (Luke 8:1-3). Those with the financial means were able to contribute support, in a manner corresponding to the discipleship sacrifices made by the Twelve (Luke 18:28,29).<sup>2</sup> It stands to reason that women such as these were among the 72 Jesus sent out, two by two, to announce the kingdom of God (Luke 10:1-16).

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Why, then, did Jesus not select any women as part of the Twelve? A specific answer could only be conjecture, but perhaps it was due to practical concerns, or to their symbolic mirroring of the twelve sons of Jacob (Matthew 19:28).

Certain women disciples who had followed Jesus from Galilee were present at His crucifixion: Mary Magdalene, Mary of Clopas, Salome, Mary the mother of James and Joses, Joanna, Mary the mother of Jesus, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.<sup>3</sup> And in a striking move that could not have escaped notice in the first century Jewish context where a woman's testimony was not admissible in court, God entrusted the initial witness and proclamation of Jesus' resurrection to women. The commands of the angel at the empty tomb and of Jesus himself to "go and tell" (Matthew 28:7,10) essentially make Mary Magdalene and the "other Mary" apostles to the apostles.

While taking care not to misrepresent the historical-cultural context of the first century as unremittingly misogynistic, one must not overlook the tremendously uplifting and empowering message of Jesus for women.<sup>4</sup> With the incarnation of Christ, the light of God's self-revelation is shining full beam. Jesus' treatment of women, His acceptance of them as disciples, and His commissioning of them to bear witness make plain the egalitarian nature of relationships and of ministry calling and service in God's economy.

### Charismata

The events and effects of the Day of Pentecost provide a climactic demonstration of God's intention that women and men jointly minister in the new covenant. The Holy Spirit fell on the men and women (Acts 1:14) who waited in Jerusalem in obedience to Jesus' command and in expectation of His promise. They spoke in languages they had not learned, declaring the wonderful works of God to the gathered representatives of the nations.

Peter identified this event as the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy" (Acts 2:17,18).

The time of fulfillment of God's promises, the eschatological era ("last days") has arrived, and this quotation from Joel is programmatic for the mission of God's prophetic people, His Church. Craig Keener says, "Joel's prophecy declared the eradication of any gender barrier in the Spirit of prophecy."<sup>5</sup>

Later in Acts (21:9) we learn of the four prophesying daughters of Philip, and when Paul writes to the Corinthians some

years later, his regulations prove that in the gathered assemblies women are indeed prophesying alongside men (1 Corinthians 11:2-16). That this is a crucial and authoritative ministry in the Church is clear from Paul's statements in Ephesians that prophets along with apostles are the foundation for God's household (2:19,20) and that Christ gives them to equip His people (4:11-13).

*Jesus not only treats women in remarkably affirming ways, He also calls them to share in His mission.*

In 1 Corinthians 14:26, all in the body of Christ — "each of you" — may not only prophesy but exercise all the charismata, the Holy Spirit's gifts. Giftedness, not gender, qualifies God's servants to minister. As F.F. Bruce says, "The Spirit, in his sovereign good pleasure, bestows varying gifts on individual believers ... with 'undistinguishing regard,' on men and women alike — not on all women, of course, nor yet on all men."<sup>6</sup>

In the New Testament we encounter a number of women ministering in the churches.<sup>7</sup> In Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila, the wife and husband tent-making ministry team, taught Apollos, explaining to him "the way of God more adequately" (Acts 18:26). The placement of Priscilla's name first in five of the seven mentions of this couple, uncommon for the time, may suggest that she acted in a more prominent ministry role than her husband. At any rate, she was certainly a known leader who, with her husband, worked alongside Paul in Corinth, hosted house churches in Ephesus and Rome, and taught Apollos.

In Philippi, where a number of prominent women were among Paul's first converts and where Lydia likely exercised a leadership role (Acts 16), Paul addresses two women, Euodia and Syntyche, who he says strove alongside him in the gospel (Philippians 4:2,3). The verb conjures up the athletic image of team members working together. Their disagreement, which is sometimes depicted dismissively as a petty squabble, was likely a substantive dispute over theology or practice between two leaders Paul calls upon to agree with one another in the Lord (Philippians 4).

Paul describes Phoebe (Romans 16:1,2) as a *diakonos* in the church at Cenchrea, near Corinth. Paul uses this term of other ministers (Tychicus in Ephesians 6:21 and Colossians 4:7; Epaphras in Colossians 1:7; and Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:6) and of himself multiple times.<sup>8</sup> Paul's commendation of Phoebe, who was entrusted with carrying Paul's letter to the Romans, may well authorize her to speak authoritatively regarding his meaning in this powerful epistle. Her further designation as a *prostatis*, or patron/benefactor, of "many people" suggests substantial influence and an authoritative role without reference to gender.<sup>9</sup>

Nine of the 25 individuals Paul greets *by name* in Rome are women (Romans 16), and his descriptions affirming them as his co-workers "in the Lord" parallel what he says of the

men. Most notable is Junia, whom Paul describes along with Andronicus (her husband, perhaps) as “outstanding among the apostles.” Those who approach this text convinced that Paul could only have considered men to be apostles have two basic responses to the difficulty it presents them. Some claim the second name is a man’s name, either positing the existence of an otherwise unknown masculine name Junias or arguing that it

reflects an otherwise unattested shortening of the known Greek masculine name Junianos. Others focus attention on the meaning of the descriptive phrase “outstanding among the apostles” and maintain that this doesn’t mean Andronicus and Junia are included as members of that group. They instead argue that it means only the apostles knew the couple. Although the complexities of the original language allow that either of these

profile

SILVIA CARRIZO, district official

## Bringing Down the Walls

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**S**ilvia Carrizo knows what it’s like to face barriers to ministry. But like Joshua at the gates of Jericho, she has learned to march on and

trust God to bring down the walls.

Soon after she accepted Christ at a Pentecostal church at the age of 20, Carrizo set a course for ministry. In her native country of Argentina, church leadership opportunities for women are limited. Nevertheless, she answered God’s call by serving wherever she saw a need she could meet. She worked with the children’s ministry, led worship, and served as a youth pastor at her church. She eventually became an ordained local preacher — the highest ministry position the church structure allowed a woman to fill.

In 1993, sensing God’s call to further her Bible training, Carrizo attended the Center of Theological Preparation in Santa Fe, Argentina. In 1997, she left her country to continue her ministerial studies at Latin American Bible Institute College (LABI) in La Puente,

Calif., and further her education at Vanguard University in Costa Mesa, Calif.

Carrizo obtained her ministerial credentials with the Assemblies of God and in 2006 became an ordained minister. During the district council where she received her ordination, she was also elected as the Women’s Ministries director for the Southern Pacific District, making her the youngest director yet. Six years later, the district elected her to serve as secretary-treasurer, making her the first woman to hold such a position.

Carrizo, 47, has faced opposition as a single woman in ministry. She has overcome numerous limitations — from age to marital status — that hold back some women from service. When people tell her she can’t do something, she instinctively turns to God for help.

“The only thing I can do during those times is

call out to the Lord,” Carrizo says. “I have prayed, ‘Lord, You called me. Give me the favor and grace I need to do the job.’ I have to let God be the One who tears down those walls.”

Carrizo serves on the faculty of LABI and speaks at women’s conferences throughout the nation and around the world. She has preached in Africa, Japan, Cambodia, Spain, and a number of Latin American nations.

Carrizo says barriers of cultural tradition and gender bias still keep many women from serving in ministry, but she believes these walls are beginning to fall across the globe. She encourages women to persevere in their God-given calls — even when the mission seems impossible.

“We need to free the dreams God has placed in women and let His plan become a reality in all our lives,” Carrizo says. “I believe God is calling on women to make a difference. By releasing them to fulfill that call, we have exciting opportunities to impact generations to come.”

**CHRISTINA QUICK**, freelance writer, Springfield, Missouri



possibilities could be true, by far the most natural and straightforward way to understand the text is that Paul describes a man and a woman, Andronicus and Junia, as apostles. This was the uniform understanding of the passage from the patristic period onward until conjectures for masculine names began to arise in the 13th century. (The only exception is the 4th century bishop Epiphanius, whose credibility is weakened by his description of Priscilla, too, as a man.)<sup>10</sup>

Although the context of Galatians 3:28 is not one of ministry, Paul’s resounding statement as to unity surely has some bearing in the matter: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

It is not coincidental that Paul addresses the three chief divisions of his day and age. As the apostle to the Gentiles, his mission was chiefly shaped by the first of these divisions, but all three received his attention and in all three he acted out of a new creation paradigm in Christ. His concerns were not restricted to the sphere of salvation. Consider his resoluteness over the eating situation at Syrian Antioch (Galatians 2) and his admonitions to Philemon regarding Onesimus. Similarly, Paul’s affirmation of and cooperation with women ministers of the gospel spring from his conviction that this profound unity in Christ reorients life and ministry in the age of the Spirit.<sup>11</sup> (Regarding Pauline texts that appear to limit women’s roles in the churches, see the article in this issue of *Enrichment* by George Paul Wood.)

### Conclusion

Amid the Bible’s grand, sweeping narrative of God’s story, three moments stand out for their revelatory clarity: the Father’s creation, the Son’s redemptive ministry, and the Spirit’s outpouring. It is in these moments that we should expect God’s plan for humankind to be most clearly exhibited. And it is in these moments that we most unequivocally view the mutual and equal partnership of women and men in all the good works God has for them both to do.

I am deeply thankful that the Assemblies of God officially — and so many of my pastors, teachers, colleagues, and other mentors personally — affirm the scriptural validity of my calling as a woman who teaches the Bible. My heart and prayers go out to my sisters in other situations whose gifts and potential contributions in ministry may be truncated or untapped altogether. ☑



**KARI BRODIN**, professor, Northwest University, Kirkland, Washington

### Notes

1. See, for example, the excellent biblical overview by two noted scholars in our own Movement: Deborah M. Gill and Barbara Cavaness, *God’s Women — Then and Now* (Springfield: Grace & Truth, 2004).
2. English translations may obscure the direct parallels between the Twelve and the women in this passage. See Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 110–113.
3. Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 21, argues that the gospel writers usually preserved the names of Jesus’ disciples who were well-known in the early Christian communities, and suggests that the numbers (nine women and about 24 men) may be roughly indicative of the ratio of female and male leaders at the time.
4. David M. Scholer, “Women,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Joel B. Green, et al., eds. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 880–887.
5. Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, Volume 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 882. See also the full chapter in his introduction titled “Luke’s Perspective on Women and Gender” (597–638), where he concludes: “Luke expects women . . . to declare the word of the Lord and regards this as normative.”
6. F.F. Bruce, “Women in the Church: A Biblical Survey,” *Christian Brethren Review* 33 (1982): 11–12. See also Gordon D. Fee, “The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, Ronald W. Pierce, et al., eds. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 241–254.
7. Kenneth Bailey, a New Testament scholar who applies his extensive study and experience in Middle Eastern cultures, argues that the expansion of leadership activities for women explains their inclusion in Acts 8:3 as targets of persecution. While women had earlier appeared at Jesus’ crucifixion without risk, when apparently the male disciples could not, authorities now perceived and knew the women as leaders. See further his “Women in the New Testament: A Middle Eastern Cultural View,” in *Theology Matters* 6 (January–February 2000): 1–10.
8. First Timothy 3 translates the plural *diakonoi* as “deacons,” and the nearly parallel descriptions in verses 8 and 9 (deacons) and verse 11 (women) probably indicate that verse 11 describes women deacons in Ephesus.
9. Lynn Cohick, “Benefactors and the Institution of Patronage,” in *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 285–320.
10. Eldon J. Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).
11. David M. Scholer, “Galatians 3:28 and the Ministry of Women in the Church,” *Theology, News and Notes* (June 1998), 19–22.





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# WHAT PAUL REALLY SAYS ABOUT WOMEN IN MINISTRY

By **George Paul Wood**

A closer look at key Pauline passages reveals that egalitarian interpretations make better sense of Paul's instructions. Historically and presently, the Assemblies of God official position on women in ministry supports the egalitarian interpretation. In fact, Scripture itself provides the best argument against complementarian interpretations.

**D**oes the New Testament limit the ministries women can perform in the church?

Bible-believing Christians divide into two camps in answer to this question. The first camp is complementarianism, also known as "biblical manhood and womanhood." It teaches that God created men and women equal in dignity but distinct in roles, both at home and in church. Thus, while it affirms that all Christian women have ministries of some kind, it denies that they can teach or lead the church as a whole. Only men can perform certain roles of teaching and leadership. The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood<sup>1</sup> is a representative complementarian institution; and "The Danvers Statement"<sup>2</sup> and *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*<sup>3</sup> are representative publications of the complementarian position.

The second camp is egalitarianism, also known as "biblical equality." It teaches that God created men and women equal in all things. Thus, while it affirms that men and women are distinct from one another, it denies that these distinctions warrant exclusively male leadership in the church. God can call and empower any person, regardless of gender, to fill these roles. Christians for Biblical Equality<sup>4</sup> is a representative egalitarian institution; and "Men, Women, and Biblical

Equality"<sup>5</sup> and *Discovering Biblical Equality*<sup>6</sup> are representative publications of the egalitarian position.

Though both camps appeal to the entire Bible for support of their position, their debate centers on a handful of passages in Paul's letters that expressly limit women's ministries in some way: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:34-35; and 1 Timothy 2:11-15.<sup>7</sup>

However, a closer look at these passages, and the Bible as a whole, reveals that egalitarian interpretations make better sense of Paul's instructions. Historically and presently, the Assemblies of God official position on women in ministry supports the egalitarian interpretation. In fact, Scripture itself provides the best argument against complementarian interpretations.

## **1 Corinthians 11:2-16**

According to complementarians, women may perform public ministries in the church as long as they minister under the "headship" of male leaders. The proof text of this position is 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, which states, "the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (verse 3).

For example, complementarian Thomas R. Schreiner writes: "The fundamental principle is that the sexes, although equal, are also different. God has ordained that men have the responsibility to lead, while women have a complementary and supportive role. More specifically, if women pray and prophesy in church,

they should do so under the authority of male headship.”

Schreiner further says, “The women in Corinth, by prophesying without a head covering, were sending a signal that they were no longer submitting to male authority. Paul sees this problem as severe because the arrogation of male leadership roles by women ultimately dissolves the distinction between men and women.”<sup>8</sup>

First Corinthians 11:2–16 contains numerous words that scholars continue to debate, not only in commentaries but also in contradictory translations. For example, the New International Version (NIV, 2011) consistently translates the Greek words *anēr* and *gynē* as “man” and “woman,” respectively. The English Standard Version (ESV), on the other hand, variously translates them as “man”/“husband” and “woman”/“wife.” Paul uses the word “head” (*kephalē*) both literally and metaphorically in this passage, but scholars debate whether the metaphor means “source” or “authority.” The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) speaks in terms of women veiling and unveiling, but the NIV and ESV speak more abstractly of covering and uncovering, which may refer to women pinning up their hair or to veiling their heads. Even the one explicit use of the word authority (*exousian*) in verse 10 translates variously: “a woman ought to have authority over her [own] head” (NIV) or “a wife ought to have [a symbol of] authority on her head” (ESV). (The brackets here isolate those words translators added to the underlying Greek.)

How should we work our way through this welter of conflicting interpretations and translations? There are four important points to consider.

**1. The issue for Paul is how women ought to pray and prophesy, which are public ministries, not whether they should do so.** The fact that Paul validates the prophetic ministry of women is important. Paul rates prophecy highly, placing it after “apostles” but before “teachers” in his list of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:27–31. In 1 Corinthians 14:1, he writes, “eagerly desire gifts of the spirit, especially prophecy” (emphasis added). And in 1 Corinthians 14:29, he says, “Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.”

Regarding this last verse, we should assume that Paul means spiritually gifted women both prophesy and evaluate the prophecies of others, including male prophets. From all three verses, we learn that women can exercise public speaking ministries in church, just as men can.

**2. Throughout this passage, Paul uses the terminology of honor and shame.** Just as there is an honorable way for men to perform the ministries of prayer and prophecy (verse 4), there is an honorable way for women to

perform them (verse 5). The honorable way for women is to “cover” their literal heads lest they shame their metaphorical head. Paul gives no hint that women must do more than this, however. For instance, he doesn’t say they should ask their husbands for permission or get their male pastor’s prior authorization to speak. Thus, with Schreiner, we believe that Paul wants the Corinthians to dress in ways that demonstrate the differences between men and women, thus showing respect to the opposite sex. However, unlike Schreiner, we do not believe that men’s authority over women is part of this text or a necessary component of masculinity. Surely it is possible both to maintain sexual distinction and promote sexual equality!

**3. Even if *kephalē* elsewhere has the metaphorical meaning of “authority,” its most likely metaphorical meaning in verses 3–5 is “source.”** What Paul does in verse 3 is offer a Christological reading of the creation narratives of Genesis 1–2.<sup>9</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, a fifth-century church father, offered this kind of reading in his comments on verse 3: “Thus we can say that ‘the head of every man is Christ.’ For he was made by [*dia*] him ... as God; ‘but the head of the woman is the man,’ because she was taken out of his flesh .... Likewise ‘the head of Christ is God,’ because he is of him [*ex autou*] by nature.”<sup>10</sup>

Interpreting *kephalē* as “source” in verses 3–5 is consistent with verses 7–9, where Paul alludes to Genesis 2 when he writes: “For man did not come from woman, but woman from man” (verse 8). On the other hand, interpreting *kephalē* as “authority” is inconsistent with verses 11 and 12, where Paul writes: “Nevertheless, in the Lord [i.e., in Jesus Christ] woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.”

After all, if authority is based on creation order, what happens to the authority when the order is reversed?

**4. The only explicit connection of *kephalē* with authority in this passage is Paul’s use of *exousia* in verse 10.** But as Gordon D. Fee points out, the normal way to read this Greek verbal construction is that “the subject has the authority ‘over’ the object of the preposition.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, the woman has authority over her head. The complementarian translation — “a sign of authority over her head” — both adds words not present in the text and transforms a woman’s “authority” over her own head into “submission” to another person.<sup>12</sup>

The issue in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 is proper social decorum, not male permission. Paul wants men and women to present themselves publicly in ways that are culturally appropriate to their gender. In short, men should look like men and women like women. Their gender determines how they appear when they minister, not whether they minister in certain ways.

### 1 Corinthians 14:34–35

The next passage we must consider begins in 1 Corinthians 14:34: “Women should remain silent in the churches.”

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Interpreted absolutely, this prohibition contradicts Paul's permission of women's praying and prophesying in the church (1 Corinthians 11:5). Since neither complementarians nor egalitarians believe that the inspired and inerrant words of an apostle can contradict themselves, we cannot interpret this prohibition absolutely. In other words, it does not prohibit speaking per se. Rather, it only forbids certain kinds of speech.

But what kind?

Complementarian D. A. Carson outlines his position: "Paul has just been requiring that the church in Corinth carefully weigh the prophecies presented to it [1 Corinthians 14:29]. Women, of course, may participate in such prophesying; that was established in chapter 11. Paul's point here, however, is that they may not participate in the oral weighing of such prophecies. That is not permitted in any of the churches.

In that connection, they are not allowed to speak — 'as the law says.'"<sup>13</sup>

However, as egalitarian Craig S. Keener writes: "Perhaps the greatest weakness of the position is that there is nothing in the text that specifically leads us to suppose that 'judging prophecies' is the particular sort of speech in view.... What in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 specifies 'judging' prophecies? And where does the text suggest that 'judging prophecies' reveals a higher degree of authority than prophesying God's message itself?"<sup>14</sup>

The answers to Keener's rhetorical questions are: nothing and nowhere, respectively.

First Corinthians 14:26–40 offers clues as to the specific kind of speech the apostle prohibited in verses 34 and 35. It contains three pairings of the Greek verbs *laleo* ("to speak") and *sigāō* ("to be silent"):

1. Verses 27,28: "If anyone speaks [*lalei*] in a tongue ... [but] there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet [*sigatōsan*] in the church."

2. Verses 29,30: "Two or three prophets should speak [*laleitōsan*] ... [but] if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop [*sigatō*, literally, 'be silent']."

3. Verses 34,35: "women should remain silent [*sigatōsan*] in the churches. They are not allowed to speak [*lalein*]."

In the first two pairings, Paul prohibited speech that disrupted "fitting and orderly" worship (1 Corinthians 14:40). Given the conjunction of *laleo* and *sigāō* in the third pairing, it is likely that what Paul prohibited was disruptive women's speech, not women's speech per se.

What kind of disruptive speech? Paul identifies it in verse 35: "If they [i.e., women] want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home."

This implies that women were interrupting the services with

questions. Since women in Paul's first-century world were socially and educationally disadvantaged, they likely would have had many more questions than men. Further, since Paul's preaching was less of a monologue than a dialogue (see Acts 17:2, which uses a form of the verb *dialegomai*), and since prophets were supposed to publicly weigh putative prophecies (1 Corinthians 14:29), it is likely that the worship services of Paul's churches involved conversation from pulpit to pew and back, so to speak. If less-educated women got lost in the dialogue, became bored, and asked questions that led the congregation down conversational rabbit trails, their speaking might cause an impediment to the achievement of "the common good" (12:7), which is the goal of all spiritually gifted ministries. Therefore, as with tongues-speakers and prophets, so now with women: Paul requires that their participation be done "in a fitting and orderly way" (verse 40).

***It is likely that what Paul prohibited was disruptive women's speech, not women's speech per se.***



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1 Timothy 2:11-15

To this point, we have seen that Paul does not limit the ministries women can perform in the church. Paul's concern in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is social propriety. In 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, it is fitting and orderly worship. Both concerns are consistent with an egalitarian understanding of the ministry of women. Neither passage explicitly teaches men's authority over women. Indeed, neither passage explicitly limits the speaking ministries of women at all. The former passage deals

with how women should speak in church; the latter addresses how they should learn, not whether they can teach.

The first — and, as far as I know, the *only* passage in either Paul's writings or the rest of the New Testament — that explicitly limits the kinds of ministry women can perform in the church appears in Paul's first letter to Timothy. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:11-15. "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. For Adam was

profile

DONNETTE BOYD, chaplaincy

Chaplain Lt. Col. Donnette Boyd remembers her first encounter with the Air Force Chaplain Corps as a young recruit. Incredulous that anyone could accept the Bible as the literal Word of God, she argued with a chaplain for more than two hours.

"I was like many of the young people coming into the military now," Boyd says. "I wasn't raised in the church. I didn't understand who Jesus is."

Boyd's interest was piqued, however. During an overseas deployment, she picked up a Bible and started reading it, beginning with the Book of Genesis.

Boyd attended several church services off the military base, but she felt like an outsider and never became part of a congregation. Then one day she sensed God urging her to make a decision for Christ.

"I went to the base chaplain and said, 'I'm here to be saved because the Lord told me to get right.'"

Shortly after her conversion, Boyd again heard God speak. This time He was calling her to the very ministry she once spurned: military chaplaincy.

Boyd has been a chaplain for 14 years now. She has ministered around the world, including stints in Iraq and Afghanistan.



U.S. Air Force photo / Airman 1st Class Deana Heitman

ages 12 and 17, Boyd balances family obligations with her military career and ministry. She says she could never manage without her family's support and God's grace.

"My kids are strong in the faith, and my husband and I pursue ministry as a partnership," Boyd says. "Those things enable me to keep doing what I do."

Boyd has never felt hindered in ministry because of her gender. She says many soldiers, both male and female, request her for counseling because they feel more comfortable opening up to a woman.

The Jamaican-born chaplain views the components of her identity as tools God can use.

"I see barriers as opportunities," Boyd says. "As a woman, a minority, and a naturalized citizen, I fall into a lot of different categories, but I find those helpful in terms of outreach and ministry. If those things help others identify with me or allow me to connect with someone, so be it. Paul said he could be all things to all people. That's what I want to do — so that I might reach some."

CHRISTINA QUICK, freelance writer, Springfield, Missouri

She has preached in body armor, read Psalm 91 as bombs exploded nearby, and comforted troops huddled in a flimsy shelter in the midst of a rocket attack.

"Those moments are opportunities for ministry," Boyd says. "When people are afraid, I can offer them hope and encouragement. We're visible reminders of the holy presence of God in the midst of chaos. That's why I cherish being a chaplain."

As a wife and mother of two children,

formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing — if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.”

Of this passage, egalitarian Linda L. Belleville writes: “Despite a broad spectrum of biblical and extrabiblical texts that highlight female leaders, 1 Timothy 2:11–15 continues to be perceived and treated as the Great Divide in the debate.”<sup>15</sup>

So, how do complementarians interpret this passage? Douglas Moo writes: “We think 1 Timothy 2:8–15 imposes two restrictions on the ministry of women: they are not to teach Christian doctrine to men and they are not to exercise authority directly over men in the church. These restrictions are permanent, authoritative for the church in all times and places and circumstances as long as men and women are descended from Adam and Eve.”<sup>16</sup>

By contrast, egalitarian Philip B. Payne writes: “[First Timothy 2:12] does not support a universal prohibition of women teaching or having authority over men. Nothing in this passage states that women are inherently unsuited to teach or exercise authority over men in spiritual or any other matters. Nor does Paul universalize this particular prohibition for all churches and all times.”<sup>17</sup>

The “Great Divide” between complementarians and egalitarians centers around three questions:

1. What is the context for Paul’s instructions?
2. What did Paul command?
3. Why did Paul command it?

To answer the first question, we must realize that Paul’s overriding concern in 1 Timothy is rebutting false teaching at Ephesus. Thus, as in his letter to the Galatians, Paul skips his standard statement of thanksgiving in 1 Timothy and gets

right to the point: “command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer” (1:3; cf. Galatians 1:6).

He ends the letter on a similar note: “Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have departed from the faith” (6:20–21).



***It is one thing to prohibit women from acting in a domineering manner or from usurping authority; it is another thing entirely to prohibit them from having any authority in the first place.***

Paul returns to this concern throughout the letter (1:18–20; 4:1–8; 5:11–15; 6:9–10). It is likely that women were involved in teaching false doctrine.

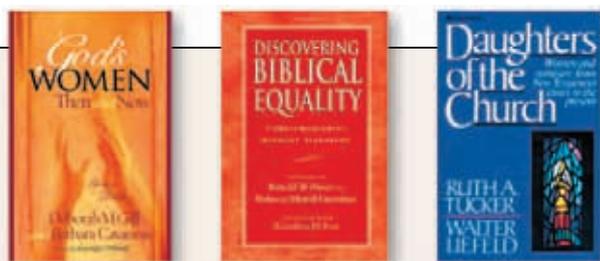
Payne notes, “Paul repeatedly describes women using identical or similar expressions he uses to describe false teachers.”<sup>18</sup> As specific examples, Payne cites 1 Timothy 5:12–15 and 1:20; 5:15 and 1:6; 5:11–12 and 4:1–2.

That brings us to the second question, which must be answered by focusing on verses 11, 12. Given women’s role in promulgating false doctrine, it is not surprising that Paul commands them to “learn in quietness (*en hēsychia*) and full submission” and to “be quiet” (*einai en hēsychia*). (“Learn” is the only imperative verb in verses 11 and 12; “I do not permit” is an indicative verb.) The prepositional phrase *en hēsychia*

functions as an inclusio here, indicating that learning in quiet is Paul's primary concern in these two verses. Such quietness is appropriate to those who need to learn, obviously — especially if they have been talking “nonsense, saying things they ought not to” (5:13). It is also a demeanor appropriate to all Christians, whom Paul says should aspire to live “quiet lives” (2:2, *hēsychion bion*) — not just Christian women.

So, Paul commands women to “learn in quietness” (verse 11). He goes on to prohibit them from *didaskēin* and

*authentein* in verse 12. *Didaskēin* means “to teach.” Regarding this prohibition of teaching, Paul cannot prohibit here what he permits elsewhere. Paul greeted Priscilla in 2 Timothy 4:19, which means she was present in Ephesus when Paul's letters to Timothy arrived. Paul expressed high praise of her in Romans 16:3–4. Along with her husband, Aquila, Priscilla had led the Ephesian congregation in Paul's absence (Acts 18:19–21), a congregation that met in their home (1 Corinthians 16:19–20). While in Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila took



## ESSENTIAL RESOURCES

### Supporting Women in Credentialed Ministry

Women have served in credentialed ministry in the Assemblies of God since the founding of the Fellowship in 1914. Since then, credentialed women ministers have become more common, and their ministries more accepted, within the Pentecostal and evangelical communities. In the past two decades, however, there has been a noticeable revival among evangelicals of complementarianism, the belief that while men and women are equal in Christ, only men can lead the church.

The leading institutional proponent of this outlook is The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, which published *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* in 1991.

Although the Assemblies of God agrees with complementarian evangelicals on a wide range of doctrines (e.g., Scripture, Trinity, Incarnation, Atonement), we believe that God calls and empowers both men and women to all levels of credentialed ministry. The following is a list of recommended readings (print and online) that support an egalitarian understanding of credentialed ministry.

- Assemblies of God General Presbytery, “The Role of Women in Ministry As Described in Holy Scripture” ([ag.org/top/Beliefs/Position\\_Papers/pp\\_downloads/PP\\_The\\_Role\\_of\\_Women\\_in\\_Ministry.pdf](http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Position_Papers/pp_downloads/PP_The_Role_of_Women_in_Ministry.pdf)). This position paper is a succinct presentation of what Scripture teaches about women in credentialed ministry. “The Bible repeatedly affirms that God pours out His Spirit upon both men and women and thereby gifts both sexes for ministry in His Church. Therefore, we must continue to affirm the gifts of women in ministry and spiritual leadership.”
- Assemblies of God Network for Women in Ministry ([womeninministry.ag.org](http://womeninministry.ag.org)). This ministry of the AG national office is

committed to “developing, mentoring and resourcing vocational women ministers and women preparing for ministry.”

- Christians for Biblical Equality ([cbeinternational.org](http://cbeinternational.org)). The mission of this nondenominational parachurch ministry is to affirm and promote “the biblical truth that all believers — without regard to gender, ethnicity, or class — must exercise their God-given gifts with equal authority and equal responsibility in church, home, and world.” CBE publishes both *Mutuality* (a magazine for a popular readership) and *Priscilla Papers* (an academic journal).
- *Enrichment*, spring 2001, “Women: Embracing the Ministry Call” ([enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200102/index.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200102/index.cfm)). This issue

of the Assemblies of God's professional journal for ministers includes numerous articles on the topic of women in credentialed ministry.

- Deborah M. Gill and Barbara Cavaness, *God's Women Then and Now*, rev. ed. (Hyderabad: Authentic Media, 2009). A short, readable introduction to what the Bible teaches about the role of women in home, church, and society. The authors are both Assemblies of God ordained ministers and respected Pentecostal academics.
- Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee, eds., *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2004). The egalitarian counterpart to *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, this book examines what the Bible teaches about male-female relationships and roles from historical, biblical, theological, philosophical, and cultural perspectives.
- Ruth A. Tucker and Walter L. Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987). This book is both “a history of women in the church” as well as “a history of changing perspectives about women.” Among other things, it concludes that “women were very prominent in church history.”

For a more extensive list of resources on women in credentialed ministry, please visit the Network of Women in Ministry website ([ag.org/wim/resources/](http://ag.org/wim/resources/)).

GEORGE PAUL WOOD,  
Springfield, Missouri

the gifted Alexandrian evangelist Apollos under their wing and “explained to him the way of God more adequately” (Acts 18:26). (Notice that Luke lists Priscilla first, suggesting that she took the leading role in teaching Apollos.) In Acts 28:23, Luke uses the same Greek word — to describe Paul’s public teaching. Both men and women, then, served as teachers in the Early Church.

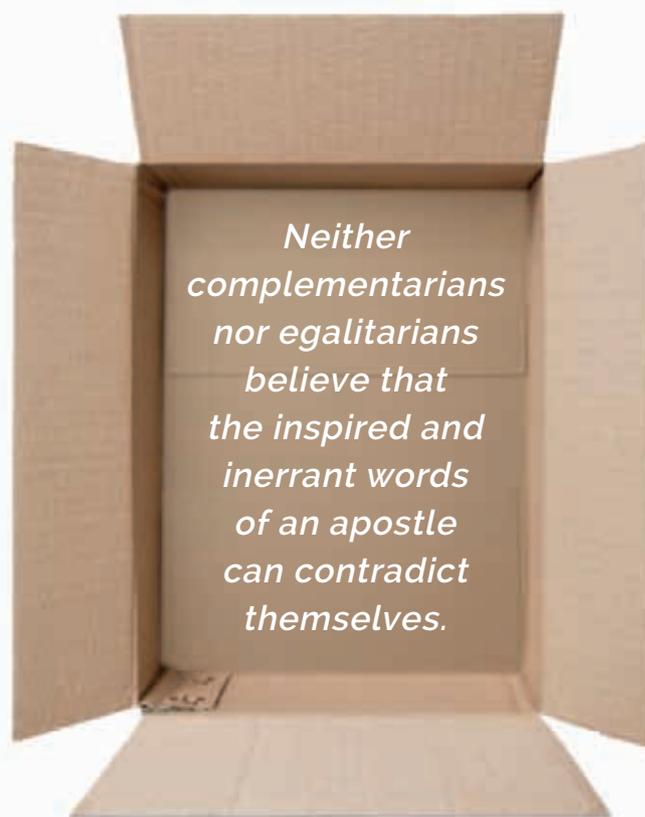
Moreover, we have seen that Paul accepted the prayer and prophetic ministries of Corinthian women (1 Corinthians 11:5), a role that would have included publicly evaluating prophetic messages (14:29). Given that Paul mentioned prophesy prior to teaching in his spiritual gifts list (12:28) and encouraged the Corinthians to seek spiritual gifts, but “especially prophecy” (14:1), it is unlikely that he would have allowed women to prophesy publicly but not teach publicly.

Given Paul’s praise of Priscilla and what he says about women prophesying at Corinth, then, it is likely that he permitted women to teach men. Why, then, does he seem to prohibit it in verse 12?

That brings us to *authentain*. Does it mean (a) “to exercise authority” (ESV), (b) “to control,” in the sense of domineering (CEB, Common English Bible), or (c) to “usurp/”assume” authority (KJV/NIV)?<sup>19</sup>

It is one thing to prohibit women from acting in a domineering manner or from usurping authority; it is another thing entirely to prohibit them from having any authority in the first place. I believe that the best translation of the Greek verb *authentain* is “to assume or usurp authority.” This is not a modern, egalitarian invention, by the way, as the 400-year-old KJV translation of verse 12 indicates. Lexicographers have long known that the Greek verb *authentēō* has negative connotations, including “to murder,” “to domineer,” and “to usurp.”

The reason complementarians believe that *authentain* does not have negative connotations here is because it is paired with *didaskain*, which does not have negative connotations. Grammatically, however, the not/neither (*ouk/oude*) construction in Greek may function “to define a purpose or goal”<sup>20</sup> or “to merge [two verbs] together to convey a single more specific



idea.”<sup>21</sup> This would render the meaning either “to teach in order to dominate” or “to assume authority to teach.” In either case, the issue is not that women teach men but how they do so. As long as they do not teach in a domineering manner or assume authority to teach, women are free to teach.

That brings us to the final question, which must be answered by focusing on verses 13–15. All commentators agree that Paul grounds his commands in verses 11–12 by appealing to creation (verse 13), the Fall (verse 14), and redemption (verse 15)—in other words, the events of Genesis 2–3. The agreement stops there,

because it is now clear how the grounding relationship works.

Complementarian Moo, for example, understands verse 13 (viewed in conjunction with 1 Corinthians 11:3–10) to mean that “the man’s priority in the order of creation is indicative of the headship that man is to have over woman.”<sup>22</sup>

The problem with this interpretation is that (a) it’s not obvious that “head” means “authority” in 1 Corinthians 11:3, and (b) Paul himself subverts such an interpretation in 1 Corinthians 11:11–12, when he writes, “Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as a woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.”

If, as I argued above, Paul’s point in 1 Timothy 2:13 is similar to his argument in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16, then proper social decorum is the point at issue, not male permission. Ephesian Christian women were not demonstrating proper respect to their male teachers. That would explain why Paul emphasized learning “in quietness.”

Moo interprets verse 14 to mean, “Eve was deceived by the serpent in the Garden (Genesis 3:13) precisely in taking the initiative over the man whom God had given to be with her and to care for her. In the same way, if the women at the church at Ephesus proclaim their independence from the men of the church, refusing to learn ‘in quietness and full submission’ (verse 11), seeking roles that have been given to men in the church (verse 12), they will make the same mistake Eve made

and bring similar disaster on themselves and the church."<sup>23</sup>

But the serpent didn't tempt Eve to take the initiative over Adam. He tempted her to eat the forbidden fruit — the same fruit God commanded Adam not to eat (Genesis 3:1-7; cf. 2:5-7). Moo is reading hierarchy into the temptation narrative. In reality, the first explicit mention of a husband's "rule" over his wife comes in Genesis 3:16, where it is mentioned as a divine judgment against Eve for her transgression. Hierarchy, in other words, belongs to the order of the Fall, not the order of creation.

Paul cites Eve's deception in warning Ephesian women to avoid false teaching. In 2 Corinthians 11:3, he pointed to Eve's example to caution the entire Corinthian congregation: "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

Why did Paul write, "Adam was not the one deceived"? It cannot mean that men are less gullible or prone to false teaching. After all, the only named false teachers in 1 Timothy are men: Hymenaeus and Alexander (1:20). Moreover, if Adam was not deceived (cf. Genesis 3:6), then he sinned willfully. It makes little sense to prohibit women from exercising teaching/authority roles because Eve was deceived, but to allow men to exercise them despite the fact that Adam knew what was right and did wrong anyway. Perhaps Paul, by contrasting

Adam and Eve in verse 14, is simply providing warrant for why men such as Hymenaeus and Alexander are being "handed over to Satan" (1:20), while women are enjoined to learn "in quietness" (2:11). The men knew better and abused their positions of authority; the women didn't and were trying to usurp positions of authority. The better way for all is to learn the truth first and then teach it.

Finally, regarding verse 15, Moo writes that it designates "the circumstances in which Christian women will experience ... their salvation — in maintaining as priorities those key roles that Paul, in keeping with Scripture elsewhere, highlights: being faithful, helpful wives, raising children to love and reverence God, managing the household (cf. 1 Timothy 5:14; Titus 2:3-5)."<sup>24</sup>

By contrast, Payne concludes, " 'The childbirth' makes best sense in this context as a synecdoche referring to Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:15, cf. Genesis 3:15).

The problem with Moo's interpretation is that it's difficult to square with Paul's preference for celibacy in 1 Corinthians 7:1,8. If women need not marry in the first place, then why must — or how can — marital roles confine their ministries? Indeed, isn't it possible for women today to follow the example of Priscilla, who was both a faithful, helpful wife and a teacher of doctrine to men like Apollos?

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The difficulty with Payne’s interpretation, on the other hand, is in seeing how a reference to the Incarnation grounds the command to learn in quietness and not to assume authority to teach.

These difficulties remind us that no interpretation of verses 13–15, whether complementarian or egalitarian, is without problems. Interpreting Paul in these verses is like listening to one half of a phone conversation. You hear the response, but you don’t know what questions prompted it.

For Paul, creation, the Fall, and redemption provided grounds for his commands to Ephesian Christian women to learn in quietness and to refrain from assuming the authority to teach. They do not prohibit women from exercising rightly established authority to teach, as Priscilla’s instruction of Apollos reminds us.

### Conclusion

And so we return to the question I asked at the outset: Does the New Testament limit the ministries women can perform in the church?

In all the New Testament, the passages most commonly cited as affirmative answers to this question are 1 Corinthians 11:2–16; 14:34–35; and 1 Timothy 2:11–15. The first addresses how women minister in the church, not whether they can minister. The second addresses how women should learn in the church, not whether they can teach. And the third prohibits assuming or usurping the authority to teach, not teaching per se.

Consequently, a negative answer to the question is the best answer. God both calls and empowers men and women to minister in His churches. Let all of us — men and women alike — carry out this mission in the power and love of the triune God for the common good!



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

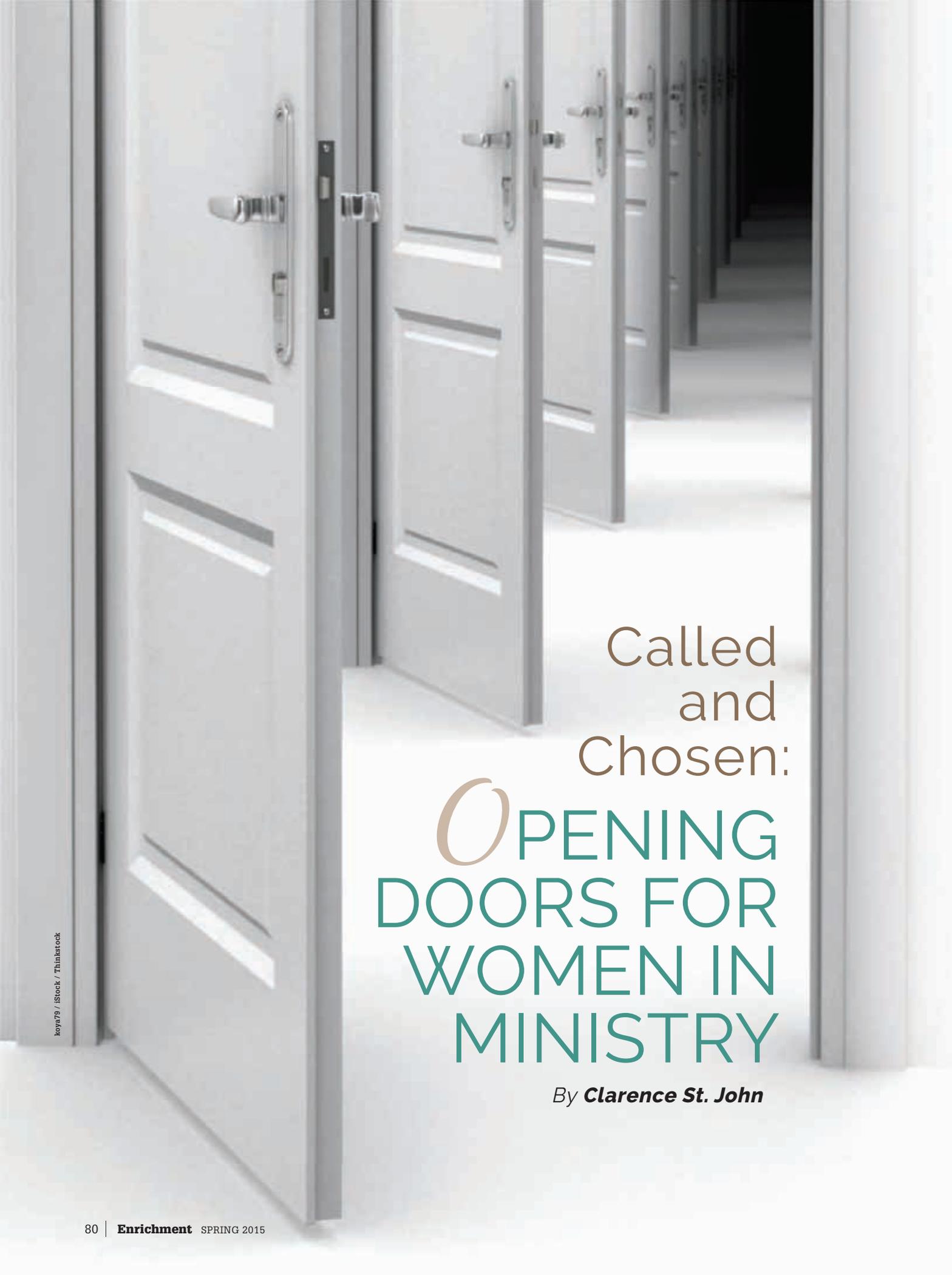
### Notes

1. The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, <http://cbmw.org>.
2. The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, “The Danvers Statement,” <http://cbmw.org/uncategorized/the-danvers-statement/>.
3. John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, rev. ed., (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2006). Hereafter, *RBMW*.
4. CBE International, <http://www.cbeinternational.org>.
5. CBE International, “Men, Women, and Biblical Equality,” [http://www.cbeinternational.org/sites/default/files/english\\_0.pdf](http://www.cbeinternational.org/sites/default/files/english_0.pdf).
6. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee, eds., *Discovering Biblical*

*Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004). Hereafter, *DBE*.

7. Both *DBE* and *RBMW* include chapter-length articles about these passages, which indicate that they constitute the crux of the debate concerning women in ministry. I am not including 1 Timothy 3:1–13 and Titus 1:5–9 for three reasons: (1) Although this is not apparent in English, in Greek, neither passage uses the male pronoun *autos*, preferring the indefinite pronoun *tis*. (2) The best reading of 1 Timothy 3:11 is that it refers to women who serve as deacons, such as Phoebe in Romans 16:1 — not to the wives of male deacons. (3) The only use of “man” (*anēr*) in either passage (1 Timothy 3:2,12; Titus 1:6) — “the husband of one wife” — cannot be interpreted to exclude women because they are not a husband any more than it can be taken to exclude bachelors because they also are not husbands. Taken together, these three reasons suggest that the ministries of overseer and deacon cannot be off limits for women, especially since we have explicit evidence of at least one prominent woman deacon: Phoebe.
8. Schreiner, “Head Coverings, Prophecies, and the Trinity,” in *RBMW*, 138–139, *passim*.
9. Cf. 1 Corinthians 8:6: “yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.”
10. Ad Arcadium et Marinam 5.6, quoted in Gordon D. Fee, “Praying and Prophesying in the Assemblies: 1 Corinthians 11:2–16,” in *DBE*, 151.
11. Fee, “Praying and Prophesying,” 156; cf. 1 Corinthians 9:4–6, where Paul repeatedly points out that he and Barnabas have rights (*echomen exousian*) to food, drink, and marriage. Even if they do not exercise this *exousian*, it remains theirs.
12. *Ibid.*, 155–156.
13. D. A. Carson, “‘Silent in the Churches’: On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b–36,” in *RBMW*, 151–152.
14. Craig S. Keener, “Learning in the Assemblies: 1 Corinthians 14:34–35,” in *DBE*, 163.
15. Linda L. Belleville, “Teaching and Usurping Authority: 1 Timothy 2:11–15,” in *DBE*, 205.
16. Douglas Moo, “What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men? 1 Timothy 2:11–15,” in *RBMW*, 180.
17. Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2013), 444.
18. *Ibid.*, 299.
19. Moo, “What Does It Mean,” 186–187 argues for (a); Belleville, “Teaching and Usurping Authority,” 209–217 argues for (b); and Payne, *Man and Woman*, 361–397 argues for (c).
20. Belleville, “Teaching and Usurping Authority,” 219.
21. Payne, *Man and Woman*, 359.
22. Moo, “What Does It Mean,” 190.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*, 192.





Called  
and  
Chosen:

**O**PENING  
DOORS FOR  
WOMEN IN  
MINISTRY

By **Clarence St. John**

## Too often we fail to include women ministers in the church's leadership pipeline. Here are five practical ways to open doors of ministry for the called and chosen women among us.



### When Jesus rose from the grave, He chose women

to deliver the news to His other followers. Similarly, some of the first people who pointed me to the risen Christ were women.

Ruth Jackson, my third-grade Sunday School teacher, made a point of telling me she prayed daily for God to guide my steps. As an 8-year-old boy, that made a profound impression on me. When I prepared to leave home to attend North Central University in Minneapolis, I stopped by Ruth's house for a visit.

She took me to her sink, pointed to it, and said, "Clarence, every time I do dishes, I pray for you."

I saw Ruth again a few years ago when I returned home for my father's 90th birthday party. She greeted me with a tender smile, put a frail arm around me, and whispered, "Clarence, I still pray for you every day."

Each day for 50 years, Ruth had made an altar at her kitchen sink and brought my name to the very throne of God. There's no question her intercession, her teaching, and her example have made a difference in my life and in the lives of countless others.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of knowing many godly women — lay people as well as credentialed leaders — who poured their prayers, wisdom, and anointing into my life.

When I think of the vital contributions of women in ministry, it's not a matter of academic debate. It's clear to me from Scripture as well as personal experience: God powerfully uses women to accomplish His kingdom purposes.

I think of women like Ruth. And I think of my senior high Sunday School teacher, a dear lady who refused to give up on students in the throes of adolescent rebellion.

I think of a pastor's wife and elementary school teacher named Norma who helped me along when I took on my first Sunday School teaching assignment as a college student. The rowdy gaggle of second-graders met in a furnace room stairwell because there was no other space for us in the small church. Norma sat at the top of the stairs, maintaining order as I taught, and graciously offered me invaluable advice at the end of each lesson. Through her words and actions, Norma

instilled confidence in me as a young minister-in-training. When I graduated and became the church's youth pastor, she taught me how to greet newcomers and extend the same Christlike warmth she shared with everyone around her.

I think of another kind and patient sister in the Lord, named Gerri, who taught me how to manage a Vacation Bible School with 400 kids in attendance — my first week on the job.

Needless to say, I believe in women in ministry.

### Called and Chosen

The history of the Assemblies of God is replete with examples of women who not only served in ministry but also led the charge on many fronts. Our Movement started with ladies stepping up as missionaries, evangelists, and church planters. They were aggressive, and they were prophetic and apostolic.

In the Fellowship's early days, women were often the catalysts of new initiatives. They started orphanages and were some of our first missionaries. They took the gospel to places it had never before gone. These Spirit-filled women sprinted past social impediments and boldly stormed the gates for Jesus. Nothing could stop them from doing what God had put in their hearts to do or going where He had told them to go.

We need such workers in this generation, called and chosen women who will dare to follow Jesus wherever He leads — from pulpit to polity to the ends of the Earth. There should be no limits in Christ's kingdom because there are no limits in Christ.

Of course, the reality is there is still room for progress. Women, responding to God's call, are eager to enter the harvest fields. Yet some doors of ministry remain closed to them. For instance, while women today assume a variety of other pastoral roles, many congregations are reluctant to consider a woman candidate for the position of senior pastor. Others forbid women from serving on deacon boards.

Some argue that the Bible excludes women from certain ministry positions. However, when you look at the whole volume of Scripture, you see women playing a prominent role in the Early Church. Paul refers to women again and again in his greetings to the churches. He didn't greet these women just because they provided him a meal. I believe they were involved in actual ministry and service. They were prophets, teachers, and house church leaders. The gospel opened doors of opportunity for women. Who are we to slam them shut?

I'm not suggesting we always favor women over men when

making hiring decisions. Rather, we should seek the most qualified person for each job, whether that individual happens to be a man or woman, single or married, young or old. More specifically, we should seek the person God has chosen for the job. Paul taught that every member of the Body brings something special to the table. We must make room for a person's gifts and calling, regardless of gender or any other physical attribute.

Overlooking and underestimating the contributions of half the Church population is a mistake. For instance, the most powerful intercessors in many congregations are women. A woman who knows how to reach the heart of Christ and reach out to others with the heart of Christ is a mighty ministry force. God often calls women to do new things for Him because their ears are attuned to Him, and they are ready to step out and take risks.

### Keep Knocking

Exciting things are happening for women in ministry. More doors are swinging open every day. But change takes time. Some women may grow weary knocking at iron portals that never seem to budge.

Allow me to offer some words of encouragement for women standing at these thresholds: Keep knocking. Whatever dream God has given you, don't give up on it. Realize, however, that it might not happen overnight. Few women — or men, for that matter — start at the top of their professions. Ministry is no exception. It can take years to accomplish goals and realize dreams. Wait on the Lord, and serve where you can. Preach where a pulpit is open to you. Teach where a classroom is available. Meet a need where you encounter one. Reap a harvest where you stand. Find an open door, and walk through it.

Be willing to go into breakthrough areas like church planting. We have three women church planters in Minnesota who are doing very well. A lot of people think church planting is for

*Our Movement  
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They were  
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and they were  
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apostolic.*



ministers who can't do anything else. We don't look at it that way at all. We feel church planters are on the cutting edge of ministry.

Early in my ministry I wanted to plant a church, but I couldn't get the green light because I was young and single. Fortunately, I was also passionate and determined. For two years, I kept knocking. Finally, the district superintendent told me to go start a church.

I could have given up and said, *I'm single; they're not going to let me do this.* But I never lost my dream. If God put it in your heart, He will help you find a way to do it. Push hard. Keep at it. Don't take no for an answer.

A century ago, ladies were leading the way because no one else was doing it. I want to challenge women leaders today to take the initiative again. Be bold, and plow the way for new beginnings.

### Leadership Pipeline

In the business world, the leadership pipeline model is a plan for building managers within the corporation. This practice helps ensure the company's long-term health and survival by nurturing a pool of talent from which to recruit new leaders.

Long before corporate America discovered this model, it was deeply embedded in the fabric of the Church. As we continually disciple, train, and send out leaders for

ministry, the gospel advances from one generation to the next. This is a good thing. But it can be better.

Too often we fail to include women ministers in the equation. Here are five ideas for bringing women into the Church's leadership pipeline.

**1. Let them lead.** This seems obvious, but we have to be intentional about it. Women know how to take steps of faith. They are willing to take chances when others are willing to let them try.

Ask God to give you discernment to see His hand and His call on the lives of those around you. When you identify a woman emerging in leadership, continue to give her opportunities.

Women sometimes lead in the prophetic and in the apostolic in ways that are scary to men. But when the Lord is working through someone, we need to step back and let God have His way.

**2. Begin at home.** Some pastors have daughters God is calling to serve in some area. These pastors could model the value

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KAROLIN MARAKOOL, *associate pastor*

## Changing Minds in Middle Eastern Culture

**K**arolin Marakool is an unlikely candidate to lead the way for women in ministry.

Her Iranian Assyrian culture dictates that females and young adults quietly remain in the background. Yet the outspoken 34-year-old is at the forefront of what God is doing in Southern California's Persian Christian Church.

Marakool was one of the first Iranian women to become an Assemblies of God minister, a pursuit that raised eyebrows from the beginning.

"When people heard I was studying theology, that was OK — with the big check mark that I shouldn't expect anything from it," Marakool says. "In Middle Eastern churches, the idea of a woman having any kind of pastoral title was absurd. There was a lot of pushback when it came to even thinking about getting credentials."

However, by the time Marakool completed the process, she experienced what she considers a miracle.

"All of a sudden, I saw God working in the lives of the people around me," Marakool says. "By the time I was on my last book, I was receiving encouragement to finish my studies. Instead of being pushed back, I was getting pulled up."

Marakool now serves as associate pastor of the Persian Christian Church in Irvine and the San Fernando Valley, a position she has held since July 2013.

"God had a plan to transform and bring about a whole new way of thinking for our society — to not only accept women who



have a calling, but also younger people," Marakool says.

Marakool, who grew up in Australia after her family fled Iran when she was a toddler, is one of only two AG-credentialed Iranian women worldwide. The other, Rhoda Nazanin, is also an associate pastor at the Persian Christian Church. (Nazanin holds the distinction of being the first Iranian woman to receive AG credentials, while Marakool was the first to become a licensed AG minister.) These leaders are helping pave the way for women of Middle Eastern descent to proclaim the gospel in their communities.

The Persian Christian Church established a Global University study center called IGNITE College in 2010 with Marakool and Nazanin as the first students. IGNITE now has 12 students enrolled, six of whom are Persian women pursuing credentials. The courses are for English speakers, but in the coming months, PCC is also preparing to launch classes in Farsi, a language widely spoken

in Iran, Afghanistan, and parts of Armenia and Turkey. Marakool says as many as 10 women are set to enroll in the Farsi classes, and at least six of them plan to pursue ministry credentials.

"This would have never happened 40 years ago," Marakool says. "What has happened in the last three years alone has broken down walls that have been fixed for centuries."

Marakool says when the church asked her and Nazanin to help perform water baptisms in 2013, she knew the culture had reached a turning point in its growing acceptance of women in ministry.

"That was the first time a female has been involved in any baptism in the Iranian community," Marakool says. "It was really a spectacular thing. When I think about what God is doing with women in the Middle Eastern community, it is mind-blowing."

**CHRISTINA QUICK,**  
freelance writer, Springfield, Missouri

of women in ministry by using these young women in their gifts.

Others have wives who are ministers. Seven of our church pastors in Minnesota are co-pastoring with their wives. These women are ordained and preaching alongside their husbands.

They are flowing in their gifts and learning to complement each other in ministry. Together, such a husband and wife team can accomplish three or four times as much as an individual could manage alone.

**D**eborah Tannen, author of *He Said, She Said: Exploring the Different Ways Men and Women Communicate*, nailed the truth about the diverse communication skills of men and women. She says medical research suggests that long before birth, girl babies exercise jaw movement and practice tongue thrust, preparing for a lifetime of talking, bonding, and making friends. When I read that, I finally understood why being married to a member of the “silent majority” was absolutely normal.

A road trip with several women in ministry validated for me the reality of Tannen’s findings. A driver suddenly and recklessly cut off our vehicle on one of the busiest Southern California freeways. After the stunned silence, one friend spoke up: “That driver shouldn’t have a license.”

Another said, “Bad drivers should be sent to another planet.”

Soon the car was abuzz with accusations for the offending driver and affirmations for our friend at the wheel. Women use language to bond, network, affirm, teach, heal and delight.

When the cell phone lights up with the announcement that a friend is calling, it warms my heart. I immediately anticipate that she will be available to bring perspective, encouragement, confidentiality and safety to my journey.

Of course, Jesus is the provider of all instruction, inspiration, and perspective. Phone calls, emails, and visits to Starbucks should never take the place of prayer and meditation. Yet social connections certainly have their place in the life of a woman in ministry.

Networks spring out of shared interests, mutual passions, and similar callings. They are based on support, connection to reality, advocacy, understanding, and life integration that transcends time and



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## Why Women Ministers Should Network

place. Networks provide easy access, continuity, and familiarity.

Recently, I met with a group of credentialed women ministers from across America. We were diverse, speaking with unique regional dialects and representing different generations, experiences, and perspectives. However, we also discovered common ground, including mutual friendships, common relatives (that’s something to be careful about), shared histories, and similar journeys. When people connect, the world becomes a smaller place — perspectives grow, and realities yield wider truth.

Networking isn’t just a recent idea. God’s Word has a lot to say about the benefits of

working together. Consider these scriptural realities.

**1. Networkers take risks together.** Read about Deborah and Barak in Judges 4. This Old Testament wartime duo was courage to the second power.

**2. Networkers keep each other safe** Ecclesiastes 4:9,12 says, “Two are better than one. . . . Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.”

God never intended for people to do life alone. There is power in community and safety in numbers.

**3. Networkers gain perspective from one another.** See the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38–41. Mary’s nontraditional approach provided an opportunity for Martha to learn a valuable lesson from Jesus.

**4. Networkers are more fulfilled.** Numerous studies have shown the benefits of living in community, from better mental health to greater longevity.

No wonder God’s Word encourages us to come together and encourage one another. Networking gives us a chance to point one another toward the blessings of knowing and serving God in ministry.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Paul says, “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

Attending local ministers’ meetings is one way to interact with friends and build your network.

Read articles written by and for women ministers on the Women in Ministry website ([womeninministry.ag.org](http://womeninministry.ag.org)). You may also

enjoy reading and posting on the Women in Ministry Facebook page.

Better yet, get acquainted with your peers locally and regionally. I’m on my way to coffee with a friend now. Catch you later!

**JUDY RACHELS,**

Assemblies of God minister and national chairperson, Network for Women in Ministry, Huntington Beach, California



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We can multiply our efforts by including our wives in ministry. Many of our pastors' wives are becoming ordained or licensed because they feel as called as their husbands. We have two churches in Minnesota where the wife is the stronger preacher and does most of the pulpit ministry while the husband manages the other church business.

**3. Create a mentoring environment.** Most of ministry is about building relationships. The Minnesota District's women in ministry director travels around, section by section, and meets with women to build relationships with them.

We also have a workshop where women just starting in ministry can hear from our director of women in ministry. She always asks, "Who wants to be mentored?"

This year she is mentoring four women. It is key for women ministry leaders to mentor the younger women. (See the article in this issue, "Mentoring: A Nonnegotiable Toward Empowering Women in Ministry," by Karen Yancey.)

**4. Encourage equality.** As soon as a pastorate opens up, I always tell the congregation, "You might want to hire a single man, a young pastor, a seasoned pastor, or a woman. Many churches are hiring women. I think you should be open to that."

We have also spent a lot of time talking to churches about including women on their boards. We talk about the wisdom of having a woman's voice on the board. If the church is not yet open to that, we suggest having one board meeting per quarter where the board members' wives come and sit in. After hearing the wisdom the women bring to the conversation, deacons often consider opening board membership to women.

**5. Empower and release them.** As a leader, I look for people who excel in areas where I'm weak. I want to empower and release them to exercise their God-given gifts. That's the beauty of the diverse kingdom of God.

In the Minnesota District, we have a motto: "Reach up, reach out, and reach down." The idea is to reach up to people ahead of you and learn from them. Have several mentors or coaches in your life. Then reach out to colleagues who are your equals. Notice what they're doing that works, and ask them questions to find out how they're doing it. Finally, reach down to bless, lift up, and help out ministers who are just getting started. Senior pastors and district leaders need to create opportunities for women to participate in that process.

### Roll Out the Welcome Mat

The Holy Spirit is a great recruiter.

He isn't restricted to the narrow confines of cultural conventions and human expectations. First Samuel 16:7 says, "The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

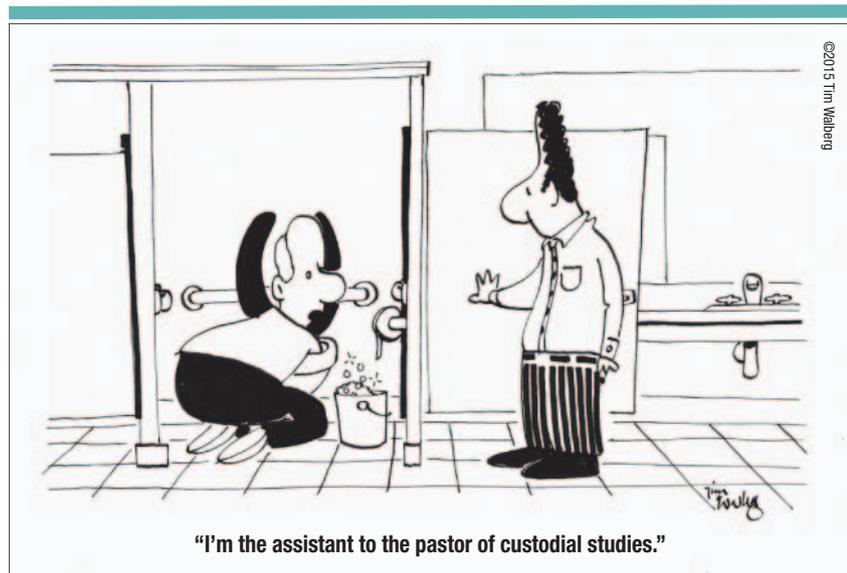
Stroll across the grounds of our Bible college campuses, and it becomes apparent God is recruiting women in large numbers. I think anyone heaven recruits should have the opportunity and privilege to serve in our churches. Our goal should be helping facilitate what the Holy Spirit is calling people to do. We need to find out what their ministry dreams are and help them reach them.

Our younger leaders are already doing this. In many cases, they're the ones opening doors for women. Our youth director in the Minnesota District is excited about women becoming youth pastors. Our district children's director is a woman. All of us in ministry should be delighted to see the landscape changing and the entrances no longer barred.

A vast mission field stretches before us in these last days, and God is sending His work crew. As they come knocking, will we open doors? We need every available laborer. Let's roll out the welcome mat, roll up our sleeves, and work together to carry the good news of Jesus Christ to all creation. ☒



**CLARENCE ST. JOHN**, Assemblies of God North Central area executive presbyter and Minnesota District superintendent, Minneapolis, Minnesota



# BOLDNESS WITHOUT BITTERNESS

By *Jodi Detrick*

For those who choose to live as called, courageous women — unimpeded by the leaden weight of resentment — here are a few things to consider.

**B**old women. Some consider the combination of those two words as oxymoronic — or perhaps the description of a spiritually flawed female subgroup.

If those two words make a few people squirm, it might have to do with their definition of boldness. Or maybe they've developed a scriptural perspective that characterizes truly godly women as ultra-soft-spoken, always-compliant, fade-into-the-background people with divinely imposed limits on the range of their ministry callings and spiritual leadership capacities.



But whatever our reaction to bold women, they can't be ignored. We read about them in the pages of the Bible, in history textbooks, and in today's news headlines. Bold women stride with gracious confidence, coupled with compelling humility, into some of Earth's most daunting circumstances. There they use their God-given gifts, honed by training and experience, to make an eternity-shaking difference.

I'll tip my hand and say it: I love bold women. They challenge and inspire me. They also make me smile. I meet them frequently and love hearing their stories of spiritual derring-do as I travel and speak to various groups in all kinds of settings.

I've also learned that boldness is not limited to a certain personality type. Whether an introvert or an extrovert — or somewhere in between — each woman wears her boldness wrapped in a temperament cloak unique to her.

### **Boldness Brings Courage**

I met Denise Dvorscak and Jamie Weflen on a recent trip to North Dakota. Both are pastor's wives and women in ministry. (Weflen is a credentialed minister who recently stepped into a new role as women's ministries director for her district.)

But don't let their softer side and girl-shoes fool you — these women are bold! They are part of a ministry called Dakota Pearls that reaches out to female strip club workers. Dvorscak gets a little teary-eyed talking about the relationships she's made with the often-young and always-hurting sex industry workers she affectionately refers to as "my girls."

Something that happened on their

long drive to the retreat where I was speaking illustrated to me the boldness of these two women. They were running late as they passed a young woman whose abusive boyfriend, at that very moment, had put her out on a lonely stretch of road miles from the nearest town. Immediately sensing the urgency of the situation, they whipped around their vehicle. Their hearts pounded as they approached the woman and prayed for God's help. They

arrived just ahead of a semi-truck, which had also pulled to the shoulder.

"Get in our car, honey!" Denise urged, wrapping the sobbing girl in a mama bear hug.

The shaken young woman finally relented and climbed into the vehicle that would take her to the safety of extended family and others who would follow up with her care.

"Do you have any idea how much Jesus loves you to send us along at exactly the right time?" they asked her. "Do you realize what a treasure you are?"

No, she didn't. But through the courageous actions and loving words of these two bold women, she was starting to get a glimpse into God's heart for her and the hope of a different future.

*Our culture often calls men who speak up leaders, while labeling women who do so as pushy or aggressive.*



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### **Boldness Is Not Brashness**

Bold can, indeed, be beautiful. I like the first definition dictionary.com gives for this valiant adjective. Bold: "not hesitating or fearful in the face of actual or possible danger or rebuff; courageous and daring."

Too many of us have come to equate boldness — especially in females — with brashness or a hard-edged, abrasive version of assertiveness. Unfortunately, we've all encountered women (and men) with a chip on their shoulders who fit this harsher description.

When I was in my early 20s and working as a dental assistant, a high-powered businesswoman

came into our office as a patient. Part of my job that day entailed going over the best practices of dental hygiene with her, something I'd done successfully with hundreds of people. Not so with this woman. She challenged me on every point, scoffing at my instructions and ridiculing me in a very personal manner until I was almost in tears.

Later, as I recounted this incident to the dentist I worked for, he chuckled.

"Oh, yeah," he said, grinning. "She told me afterward that she'd just taken an assertiveness training course, and she was practicing on you."

*Ouch!*

Decades later I can laugh at the absurdity of being an assertiveness training guinea pig — and I'm quite sure not all

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# On Addressing Temptation — Without Resorting to Segregation

*My Dear Brothers,*

There is something we need to talk about. It is the elephant in the room. Viral movements such as #YesAllWomen and #NotAllMen reveal how our culture continues to view both men and women as sexual objects.

As ministers of the gospel who desire to live above reproach, one question remains: In an erotically charged world, how can we, as women called by God in ministry, walk and work alongside you?

Together we are on a wonderful adventure of ministry. When people unjustly view either of us as dangerous temptations, it severs ministry. It cuts off half the body of Christ from the other half, violating the reflection of purity and unity God intended.

Our Fellowship believes God is an equal opportunity employer. We are so thankful to receive the same levels of credentialing and educational opportunities you do. What a privilege it is to be in the Assemblies of God!

While the Assemblies of God will credential any qualified woman, the reality is that some AG pastors and churches won't hire or work with those women because of the unspoken fear of sexual temptation or salacious gossip. We understand that you are concerned about your reputation in the church and community. We are, too. We understand that you want to protect your purity. We do, too.

Contrary to popular belief, it is possible to work together and still be above reproach. Here are some positive ways we can do this in the church and community.

**1. Invite us to join your table for lunch at ministers' meetings, even if it might be awkward.** If you see us sitting alone, invite us to join your group. If you provide leadership in this area, others will follow your lead. Soon it will not be awkward at all.

**2. When a female missionary calls, please feel free to meet with her.**



Take along your wife or another member of your staff to meet this servant of God along with you.

**3. Receive our emails and texts in a professional manner, you would from any other ministry colleague, knowing that we are valued partners in mission with you.**

**4. Talk lovingly about your spouse often, and keep her picture on your desk.** This communicates to us and to others that you are a man who values his marriage.

**5. Hire us for the positions for which we are trained.** The atmosphere of your staff and church will change — for the better. Both men and women will reap the benefits.

**6. Remember that we are all still human and, as such, are subject to human temptations.** While you are able to work with most women without any issues, there may be a few who put you on red alert. When that happens, remember that even this attractive woman is a sister first and is deserving of your kindness and respect.

Be honest with yourself, with God, with a trusted friend, and with your spouse. Be diligent with your boundaries at the beginning, stay accountable, and stay prayed up. Don't feed it; starve it. With God's help, this, too, shall pass.

We read the same articles you do about Billy Graham choosing never to travel, meet, or eat alone with a woman other than his wife. He is a proven role model of integrity from whom we can learn. It's wise to take common sense precautions to protect the integrity of marriage and ministry. We also understand that some believe that the threat of temptation outweighs any benefits of working together as brothers and sisters. But is this the biblical approach?

As stellar as Billy Graham's ministry is, this is not the model Jesus followed. Jesus met freely with women (John 4:5–27). He allowed them to touch Him in public (Luke 7:36–50). Women travelled on His ministry team (Luke 8:1–3).

Jesus never seemed to avoid people or places just because it might lead to gossip. How could He do this in a culture that was even more sensitive to gender relationships than the one in which we live? I think the answer to this question lies in how Jesus viewed women. When He looked at them, He did not just see a female body; He saw a beautiful sister.

Paul's advice to Timothy gives us a lot of clarification on the biblical interaction when he said, "Treat ... older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity" (1 Timothy 5:1,2).

The answer is not avoiding women but learning how to relate to them as a brother to a sister on a common mission that displays to a terribly confused world that men and women, redeemed by Jesus Christ, work together with joy, freedom, and purity — and it's a beautiful thing!

We want to do God's will alongside you.

*Sincerely,  
Your Sister in Christ*

**RUTHIE OBERG**, lead pastor,  
First Assembly of God, Council Bluffs, Iowa

assertiveness training has intimidation and humiliation of the “assertee” as its intended outcome. But my guess is that this businesswoman was not acting out of boldness (i.e., courage and daring) but out of bitterness. And bitterness most often arises from unresolved, or improperly resolved, hurts.

### Life Can Diminish Boldness

Let’s be honest. The emotional and physical bruises individuals, institutions, systems, and cultures inflict on women are real and painful. Even within the greater Church, called and capable women are often limited, and sometimes belittled, when they seek to find roles that allow them to use their God-given gifts and fully live out that calling. I have sat with a number of these women, seeing the pain in their eyes and listening to their frustration as they wondered why the many doors they knocked on remained firmly shut.

In an earlier article, “The Man in the Back of the Room,”<sup>1</sup> I wrote about a guy who leaned against a wall in the rear of the room, arms crossed and glaring at me, while I spoke to a group of women who were meeting to encourage one another and study the Bible together. After a few minutes, this uninvited stranger walked forward, grabbed my Bible from the podium, opened it to the verse about women being silent, slammed it back down in front of me, and then stomped out. It was pretty obvious that this man thought

it was out of line for me, a woman, to teach from the Bible, even to an all-female group. It would be many years before I could stand before any group, especially if men were present, without remembering that livid man in the back of the room.

It doesn’t help to deny the stings that come our way, or to pretend that gender bias is a thing of ancient history. At the same time, it’s so important not to allow our wounds to fester and infect us with bitterness — which could easily end up being the most limiting thing of all.

Hebrews 12:15 offers a strong caution about bitterness: “See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no ‘root of bitterness’ springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled” (ESV).<sup>2</sup>

If I am going to be a woman who courageously lives out my calling in spite of the obstacles human or spiritual forces put in place, I must consistently weed my heart of any roots of bitterness growing in past pain. God is responsible for dealing with those who may wrong me. I am responsible for maintaining the landscape of my heart.

### God in Us = Boldness

God’s grace received and extended, in each moment and every circumstance, is our best source of boldness without bitterness. For those who choose to live as called, courageous

## profile

LINDA SEILER, *Chi Alpha campus pastor*

# Answering the Call



**L**inda Seiler doesn’t shy away from controversy. In some circles, being a woman in ministry is enough to stir debate. But Seiler’s testimony of personal transformation has drawn criticism from those outside the Church as well.

As a youth, Seiler struggled with homosexual and transgender desires. Though she encountered God in her teenage years and devoted her life to Him, she did not know about His sanctifying power.

In college, Seiler attended religious services while trying to keep her inner turmoil a secret. When Seiler confided in a campus ministry mentor that she felt called to ministry, her mentor rebuked her and showed her passages in Scripture she claimed disqualified women from church leadership. Seiler reluctantly wrote off her desire to minister as gender confusion rather than a genuine call from God.

“I figured I probably didn’t hear God right, so I died to the call,” Seiler says.

During her senior year in college, Seiler became so depressed about her sexual struggles she tried to pry open a high-rise window, intending to jump to her death.

women — unimpeded by the leaden weight of resentment — here are a few things to consider:

*God loves bold women.* Scripture is replete with the stories of daring women who stepped forward, spoke up, and acted courageously. Rahab (also listed among the faith heroes in Hebrews 11), Abigail, Huldah, Deborah, Ruth, and Esther are just a few of the bold women we read about in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, Jesus honors Mary of Bethany for her daring choice to take a seat with the men to learn at the feet of their great Rabbi-Messiah (Luke 10:38–42).

The Gentile woman in Matthew 15:27 responds to the seeming rebuff from Jesus with an unflinching counter: “She said, ‘Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table’ ” (ESV).

Rather than rebuking her for her boldness, Jesus said, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire” (verse 28, ESV), and answered her appeal by healing her daughter.

And who can forget the Acts 2 account of the women who were part of the Upper Room gathering on the Day of

*A woman who is bold in her calling will always rankle some who mistake strength for stridency.*



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Pentecost? Verse four makes it clear that “all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues.” Later, the text explains that when these Spirit-filled believers spilled out into the streets (3,000 became believers after hearing Peter preach, so it’s apparent that they didn’t stay in the Upper Room), those gathered from many nations heard about God’s great works in their own languages. You can be sure the Spirit-filled women didn’t remain in the Upper Room doing

the dishes but that they were a part of those bold proclaimers. It makes no sense that God would give them this special language gift and then refuse to let them use it.

Peter confirms that women were, indeed, a part of the public expression of Pentecost by twice mentioning both genders when he explains (in verses 16–18) that the crowd was witnessing the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy: “Your sons and daughters will prophesy. ... Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy” (Acts 2:17,18).

Seiler later got involved in a Chi Alpha Campus Ministries group, where — to her amazement — she met a female preacher. The woman approached Seiler during the service and uttered a prophetic word.

*“A lot of students are hurting, and the Church needs to know how to reach them with the love of Christ.”*

“She asked what my name was, and in a very discreet and loving way, she looked at me and said, ‘The Lord wants you to know that when you were born, He wanted a girl and not a boy. You can do anything a man can do in the kingdom of God.’ That lodged a supernatural seed of faith in my spirit that God sees me. I knew God was going to set me free.”

Seiler remembered that promise for the next nine years as she sought healing while

continuing to struggle with sexual sin.

Finally, at the age of 32, Seiler experienced a deep inner healing and radical transformation.

“I was so transformed and healed I hardly recognized myself,” Seiler says. “I felt con-

tent in my physical body for the first time. I wasn’t attracted to women anymore.”

Seiler came to realize her call from God was real. She sought ministerial training, eventually earning a master’s degree from Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in Springfield, Mo., where she is also pursuing a doctorate.

Seiler launched Chi Alpha at Purdue University in Lafayette, Ind., in 2007. Last year, she began sharing her testimony of

deliverance from homosexuality. When she spoke at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, gay demonstrators staged a protest.

Seiler is helping train faculty, staff, and students at Evangel University to address the issue of homosexuality and minister to the gay community.

“This is becoming a prevalent issue in this generation because of the brokenness in today’s families,” Seiler says. “A lot of students are hurting, and the Church needs to know how to reach them with the love of Christ.”

Seiler doesn’t mind causing a little contention if that’s what it takes to point people to Jesus. She is unapologetically His messenger — and she knows that’s what she was created to be.

**CHRISTINA QUICK**

freelance writer, Springfield, Missouri

Go ahead. Be courageous in your Spirit-filled service to Jesus, my sister. God is smiling.

**Boldness must always be tempered by humility.** It's true that a woman who is bold in her calling will always rankle some who mistake strength for stridency. Our culture often calls men who speak up leaders, while labeling women who do so as pushy or aggressive.

**Boldness keeps a broader ministry focus, preventing us from getting stuck exclusively on gender matters. The world and the Church need to hear Spirit-empowered female voices on so many crucial matters, not just this one.**

The misperceptions of others do not let us off the hook, however. God expects us all to walk in humility (Philippians 2:3–8) and requires His servants, both male and female, to speak with graciousness toward others (Proverbs 16:24; Ephesians 4:29), even when we disagree. Don't speak to a group in a mean-spirited way out of bitterness toward one. Don't let troubled souls make *you* a troubled soul.

So, my bold sisters — and brothers, too — be aware of what you are projecting. Realize that believers with different views on gender issues are still brothers and sisters you should treat with kindness. Don't stoop to the level of those who demean and disrespect

others because of their views. Paul makes it pretty clear in 2 Timothy 2:24: "And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful."

**Speaking up doesn't mean you are bitter.** Jesus made a point of using a bold, insistent widow who cried out for justice in one of His parables that encourages us to be persistent in prayer (Luke 18:1–8). She was the protagonist of the story — someone to emulate.

There are times when we can and must speak up, with conviction, about the scriptural truths regarding the full inclusion of women into ministry and leadership. But even then, it's important to do so with the right spirit and the right intention.

Bitterness seeks blame. Boldness seeks solutions. Bitterness often uses inequities as an excuse not to keep trying. Boldness doesn't wait for ultimate resolve to find ways to serve God and others. Bitterness can narrow our focus to one issue: gender inequality. Boldness keeps a broader ministry focus, preventing us from getting stuck exclusively on gender matters. (Personally, this is one reason why I make it a point to write, speak, and teach on many topics and resist letting all my energies go into this one issue, even though I care about it greatly.) The

world and the Church need to hear Spirit-empowered female voices on so many crucial matters, not just this one.

Let Jesus remove any bitterness and refine your boldness. Forgive those who have bruised or limited you, and let the Great Physician heal your hurts. Realize that everyone deals with roadblocks of one kind or another, from cultural biases to physical limitations. But God has never needed ideal circumstances or perfect people to accomplish His purposes on this planet. Let Him define your significance. Beautiful boldness is always the next trusting step forward, the next "yes" to Jesus.

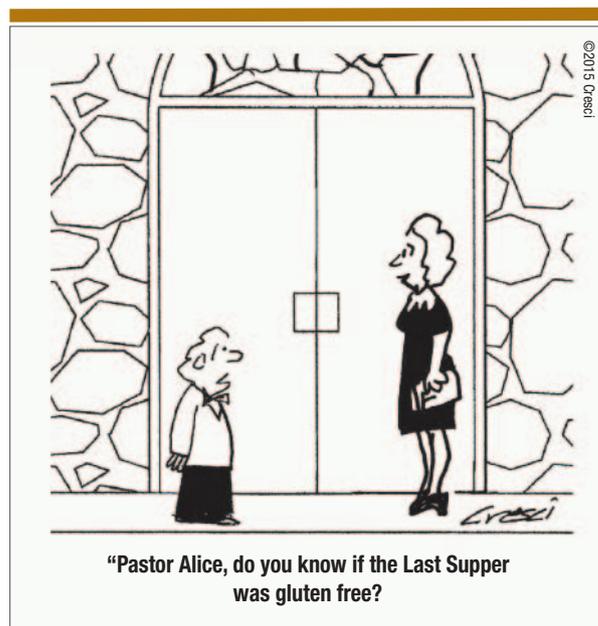
And on some days, it might even mean making a U-turn on a lonely road to break the cycle of pain and bitterness in someone who has suffered abandonment and loss of trust — maybe even a broken woman who needs to know that Jesus loves her, boldly. 📖



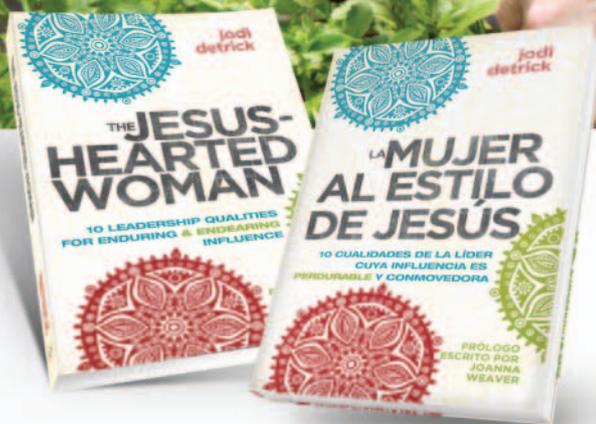
**JODI DETRICK**, author, *The Jesus-Hearted Woman: Ten Leadership Qualities for Enduring & Endearing Influence* (Influence Resources, 2013). North Bend, Washington

#### Notes

1. Jodi Detrick, "The Man in the Back of the Room: and Other Issues Facing Women Preachers," *Enrichment* journal 18, no.1 (Winter 2013): 56.
2. The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. Scripture quotations marked ESV are taken from The Holy Bible: English Standard Version, © 2001, Wheaton: Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



# Courageous Leadership. Inspired Servanthood.



See [MyHealthyChurch.com](http://MyHealthyChurch.com) for ancillary items.

When it comes to leadership, author Jodi Detrick believes if you have the heart, you can learn the skills. *The Jesus-Hearted Woman* is her guide to helping women develop ten essential qualities for dynamic leadership. In this study that's ideal for small groups, Jodi weaves together memorable stories, biblical insights and real-life wisdom from her own leadership journey.



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*P*ARTNERING  
FOR MINISTRY:  
Challenges, Opportunities,  
and Strategies

By *Mike and Kerry Clarensau*



Wise strategies can minimize the unique challenges of tandem ministry and help ministry couples realize the amazing opportunities such partnership affords.

**S**hould husbands and wives work together? Since women began joining the work force more than a half-century ago, many industry leaders have simply said “no” and established corporate policies to prevent such situations. Even today, a quick search of articles on the subject seems to offer two “no” votes for every thumbs-up to this challenging question.

Yet somehow pastoral ministry and congregational life have generally managed a very different answer. Pastoring, at least in Assemblies of God churches, reveals a husband-wife partnership more often than not. Just over 3,300 of the Fellowship's credentialed women (41 percent) are married to credentialed men — and this is only the tip of the iceberg. In thousands of other congregations, husbands and wives minister together, though one or even both may lack official recognition of their ministry.

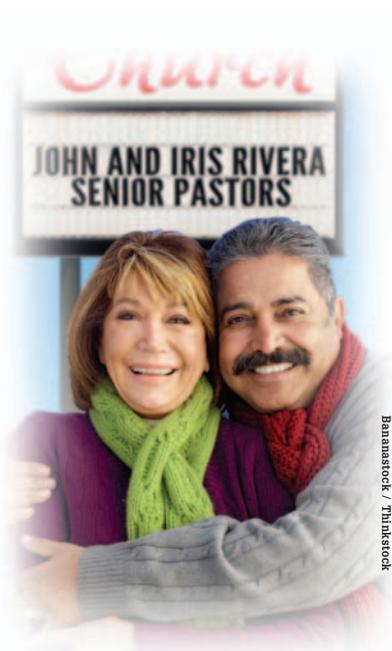
It's easy to idealize the image of a husband and wife, with sleeves rolled up, working alongside one another in ministry. Yet making this tandem idea work isn't always easy. Leading a church together requires intentional effort. Wise strategies can minimize the unique challenges of this assignment and help ministry couples realize the amazing opportunities such partnership affords.

### Challenges

While living and working together presents marital challenges in any setting, leading a local church offers its own unique slate.

First, the often-overwhelming pace of ministry life can seem doubled with both husband and wife immersed in the schedule. Even when a couple divides tasks and responsibilities, the stream of phone calls, committee meetings, counseling appointments, hospital visits, and hectic Sundays have a way of piling up. When both husband and wife bring their primary focus to local church ministry, these schedule demands, and the expectations that accompany them, can add great stress to life in the parsonage.

Team ministry can also bring unhealthy congregational attitudes to the surface. Once or twice we had to deal with the dislike some people have for women in the pulpit — the old, "if that's the kind of church this is, our family will worship elsewhere" conversation. While we have little difficulty answering such statements, it's disappointing not to have the



*While living and working together presents marital challenges in any setting, leading a local church offers its own unique slate.*

opportunity to lead people past such blind spots.

Third, a pastoral marriage's plan for managing relational conflict requires a different set of rules than other couples live by. Common marriage issues don't just sweetly skip past the pastor's house. When disagreements over ministry direction and responsibilities join the fray, it can magnify disagreements at home. Most couples need their marriage as a refuge when workplace conflicts intrude into their off-hours. Ministry couples lack such an outlet. When a spouse is also a co-worker, and off-hours are virtually nonexistent, it blurs the boundaries between work and home.

Finally, ministry life exerts an enormous emotional toll. Times of loss may touch one church family at a time, but pastors engage every grief journey up close. Family crises, failed marriages, conflicts between members, financial uncertainties, and the occasional choice some make to worship elsewhere are just a few of the regular heartaches. Pastors may rejoice in their people's best moments, but they also spend a lot of time with them in their worst. The emotional toll often doubles when both members of this husband and wife team experience the trauma.

### Opportunities

These challenges, and perhaps many others, can make ministering together difficult at times. However, the perks significantly outweigh the potential struggles. Pastoring together offers enormous fulfillment and can benefit your congregation in many ways.

Most couples begin their ministry careers with the dream of serving together. While some pastors' homes are "single-calling" households — where the pastor serves the church, and the spouse pursues a different life path — a great many of us originally engaged ministry life with a shared sense of purpose. In most cases, both must possess some sense of divine direction to survive full-time ministry's often-arduous road.

But it's more than surviving. Serving together can mean thriving. This is the life we hoped for — side-by-side, caring for people, and connecting with those beyond our walls. The idea that "we are pastor" reveals the first and most valuable ministry team in the church. When husband and wife work together for God's kingdom, their relationship can deepen as

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they live God's calling together. It's hard to imagine a more wonderful partner in ministry than the partner you've chosen for life.

A second benefit of this shared sense of calling is the chance to model ministry together. While most churches

try to create a sense of family, the truth is many families don't engage the local church with a shared sense of zeal. Serving together in the role of pastor shows other married couples how to make their own spiritual connections work more effectively. When we commit to doing church together,

## When Your Spouse Is Not a Minister

**T**he purple, flower-covered invitation to a "Pastors' Wives Retreat" arrived in my mailbox at the church. As a pastor serving on staff, I smiled. It wasn't the first time I'd been mistaken for a pastor's wife. My fingers slipped through the envelope's seal as I turned the invitation over. Surprise! The invitation wasn't for me at all — it was for my husband!

Moments like these illustrate the unique position of credentialed women in the Assemblies of God, especially those whose husbands are not ministers. Of the 8,189 credentialed women in the U.S. Assemblies of God, 2,300 (28 percent) said they were married but not to another Assemblies of God minister. Of all credentialed ministers in the

*Ministers and their non-credentialed husbands must discover and embrace the call of God on their lives as individuals and as a unit.*

Assemblies of God, these 2,300 women represent just a slim 6 percent of the total.

While the joys and blessings of ministry abound, the unique status of these credentialed women and their spouses can result in challenges on several levels.

Professionally, when it comes to filling or creating a space for ministry, ministers and their husbands may find that their marital and professional roles do not meet the initial

expectations of potential churches or supporting organizations.

Socially, both ministers and their husbands can feel somewhat out of place as traditional ministerial gatherings or meetings tend to cater to the majority.

Practically, juggling the demands of marriage and ministry is often challenging. Husbands with careers and regular schedules may not always understand the flexibility that ministry demands.

Thankfully, spouses who are mutually supportive of one another and make communication a priority can overcome the challenges this ministry scenario presents.

Couples who are openly supportive of one another's roles may strongly influence those with questions or reservations. For example, people may recognize an encouraging husband as an active partner even if he is not in full-time ministry.

Couples who communicate in advance of ministerial meetings and social events can share their plans for the event, when to attend together or separately, and how to

prepare themselves for the possible feelings that may arise in social settings where they are in the minority.

Calendars and computer or mobile phone applications that synchronize events can help ease practical challenges. Beyond the calendar, taking time to communicate expectations spouses have for one another will alleviate many of the tensions that can arise with a complex schedule.

While challenges do exist, credentialed women whose husbands are not ministers enjoy opportunities particular to them. For example, their husbands may provide fresh, outside perspectives to issues, conflicts, and challenges. The work and social relationships these men establish outside the church could lead to significant community connections and ministry opportunities.

Like all ministry couples, ministers and their non-credentialed husbands must discover and embrace the call of God on

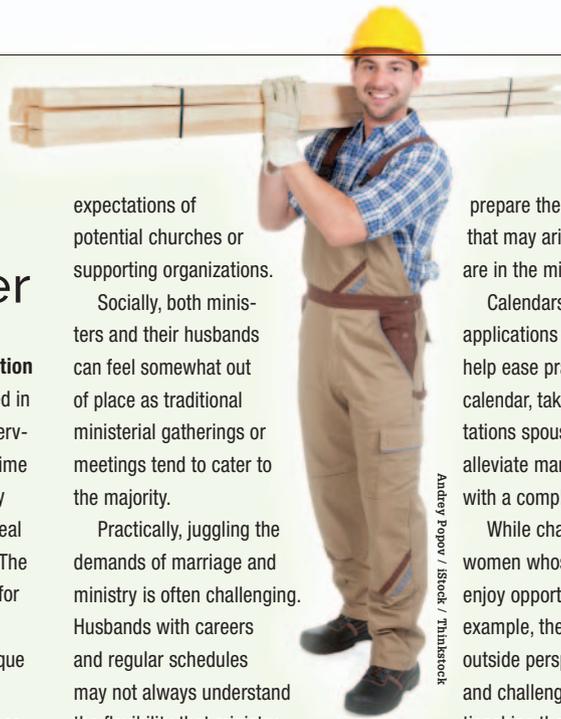
their lives as individuals and as a unit. Caring support and intentional communication go a long way toward alleviating

the challenges of life and ministry.

The status of these couples is unique, and they may not find an easy fit among the majority, but both ministers and their husbands who are not ministers are warmly invited to serve in the Assemblies of God.

The invitation is addressed to both!

**JENNIFER GALE**, vice president of Student Life, University of Valley Forge, Phoenixville, Pennsylvania



Andrey Popov / iStock / Thinkstock

husbands and wives will more easily see the path to serving God together themselves.

Of course, the greater modeling opportunity is the chance

to demonstrate a healthy marriage. We always told our staff members and other leaders that the greatest gift they could give our church is a healthy marriage. In healthy ministry, a lot

profile

LINDA ADKINS, *senior pastor*



**L**inda Adkins is a pioneering woman in ministry. When she and her husband, Howard, planted Words of Light Church in Jacksonville, Fla., in 1982, she was the only female senior pastor in town and the only one in the Assemblies of God Peninsular Florida District. When she was ordained in 1986, she stood alone among the district's male ministers receiving the same distinction.

The 67-year-old has held the church's senior pastor position for 32 years.

"Most people who meet us for the first time assume my husband is the pastor," Adkins says. "We never try to correct them. They figure it out eventually."



Over the years, Adkins has gained widespread respect and appreciation in her community. But charting new territory is never without its challenges. Early in her ministry, Adkins encountered bitter criticism from people opposed to the idea of a woman in the pulpit.

"People left letters on the church door," Adkins says. "They said things like, 'You're going to cause people to go to hell. You have no right to preach.' I just had to pray through those times. I had to have such a knowing in myself that God had called me to do this. That gave me courage to continue, and God has blessed us."

Adkins was a homemaker with three small children in 1979 when she began sensing God's call to full-time ministry.

Howard had a good job as a supervisor for a store chain, and the family lived in a sparsely populated rural area.

"I said, 'God, I'm not going to tell this man what to do; you'll have to tell him,'" Adkins recalls. "God did speak and made it real to both of us. We knew we were called to do this together."

After Adkins earned credentials through Global University, Howard retired from his job, and the couple launched Words of Light.

"We've had a lot of years filled with sorrow, pain, happiness, and joy unspeakable — and we're still going," Adkins says. "The Lord has kept His hand on us, and I don't feel like the anointing He called me with has ever waned."

The church operates a recording studio and has maintained a radio presence for 27 years. It added weekly television broadcasts in 2005.

The pioneer pastor's confidence and tenacity serve as a model for other people of faith who dare to go where God leads.

"I have been able to encourage other women to step out in their calls from God," Adkins says. "A woman senior pastor is not something you see all the time. But in the face of all the opposition and criticism, I knew I was called and sent. Failing or quitting was never an option."

**CHRISTINA QUICK**, freelance writer, Springfield, Missouri

of ministry strength comes from your marriage relationship. As you minister together, people can observe and learn from that strength. The more visible your healthy marriage is to your church, the more likely congregants will be to build healthy marriages themselves.

If a pastor ministers alone, the strength of his or her marriage will be less visible.

Ministry together also opens doors for effective gender-based discipleship. When a couple shares ministry and visibly works together in serving the church, both the

men and women of the church have a mentor to follow. Less healthy scenarios can occur when the women of the church see a male pastor as their primary role model or the men try to follow a female pastor in their pursuit of Christian manhood. When both husband and wife are visible in church leadership, healthier discipling can occur.

We're not implying that a pastor leading ministry alone creates unhealthy discipleship patterns in the church, but ministering together offers a great opportunity. As we ministered together in our congregation, both men and women could connect to a ministry leader who understood their daily lives from experience.

A great benefit of pastoring together is the balance of gifts the partnership produces. Few husbands and wives are identical in their personalities or leadership styles. Seeing traits we wish we possessed is often what attracts us to our spouses. An outgoing, friendly person may draw an introvert. Or an emotion-driven person may come to love the steadiness of a less-expressive individual. There are hundreds of other possible combinations that make life together something we chose to pursue. The point is that when we minister together, the church gets the full complement of traits the husband and wife team brings. Perhaps he's the stoic scholar, and she's the relational glue. Maybe she's the amazing organizer, and he's fun-loving but a bit scattered. We've seen such a variety of ministry couples; there seems to be no limit to the unique gifts God may bring together. Whether you're like Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth, Andronicus and Junia in Rome, or you bring your own unique marital blend to the parsonage, together you offer so much more than either of you could on your own.

That gift balance also can potentially lighten the load. Shared ministry not only brings our differing gifts to the table, but it increases our ability to operate in those gifts while allowing our partner to carry the load in areas where we are weak. There are many occasions where his abilities fit the need of the

moment, but just as many settings where her gifts should take center stage. When we work together, we can take advantage of this variety and avoid the exhaustion that often accompanies functioning in our weaknesses.



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*The same God who called you is the One who put the two of you together. Your side-by-side ministry is His great purpose for your lives and your church.*

Finally, partnering in pastoral ministry allows husbands and wives to share the rewards together. While working together can strengthen our bond, celebrating victories together goes even further in cementing our relationship. There are many rewarding moments in ministry, and the apostle Paul tells us that sharing them doubles the joy. Experiencing this compounded blessing with the person who shares life's journey makes it that much sweeter.

### Strategies

Clearly, the opportunities of ministry together can easily outdistance the potential challenges, but how do you make it work? After many years of uniting our sense of calling under the roof of a local congregation and watching amazing couples whose ministry together has demonstrated true partnership, we suggest a few best-practice strategies to help maximize your experience.

**Prioritize your marriage first.** Ministry life has a way of consuming every available minute and even trying to steal some you can't afford to give. For your ministry together to stay healthy, your marriage must keep growing. Plan regular time away from ministry responsibilities. We changed the name of our day off to "family day" because we wanted our congregation to know how we'd be spending it. A few of our folks weren't convinced that pastors needed days off, but no one wanted to intrude on our needed family time.

While a full list of healthy marriage steps isn't possible here, it's critical that you invest in your marriage's intimacy — what we call "just us" time. These are the things you don't share with anyone else. It may seem silly, but you need your restaurant, your vacation spot, your song, your inside jokes, and a few other things of your own. These are the places you don't take church friends and the stories you don't tell them. Ministry can drain the time and life from your marriage, so you have to be intentional about pouring time and life back in.

**Clearly discern your gifts and abilities.** Know where each person is strongest, and assign tasks appropriately. If she's the more effective communicator, let the preaching schedule reflect that, or find other ways to benefit from that capacity. The New Testament has a lot to say about Christians exercising their unique gifts. Be sure the pastors are a living demonstration of that idea, and you'll see your people start using their gifts, too.

There will always be necessary ministry tasks that aren't our favorites, but each of us should spend significant time doing what we love — the things God created us to do. Work together to discover what those things are, and then take steps to help each other spend more and more time doing them.

**Always stay on the same page with good communication.** Keep each other up-to-speed on important information, even if your spouse isn't really involved in that area of the church. Remember that when you pastor together, your people will see you as a team — maybe even as "one" — and they will assume you know everything your partner knows. Your circle of confidentiality should never exclude your spouse if you're truly pastoring together.

Staying on the same page isn't just for informational purposes either. When you communicate direction, decisions, and the "why" behind the "what," you will want to speak with one voice. When you minister as a team, every word you speak can be viewed as coming from the inside, even if you weren't a part of that particular meeting with your spouse. Good communication between you, then, requires careful communication with others.

**Visibly value each other.** Publicly applaud your spouse's contribution, and affirm his or her value to the church's ministry. Since you're a team, the more you build up your spouse, the more your own ministry efforts will benefit. Don't tease or ridicule your spouse in ministry settings. She may laugh with you, or he may be a good sport, but those they lead may interpret your fun jabs in different ways. Show your high respect for your spouse's ministry, and don't let anyone treat him or her differently. You're a team, so attitudes toward your partner reflect on you as well.

**Establish no-church-talk zones.** Because work among the congregation consumes both your lives, church issues — even the good ones — may dominate much of your conversation. Since you minister together, and ministry is the kind of work one often takes home, you'll have to be intentional if you're going to talk about something else. Regularly decide that tonight's dinner or tomorrow's family day is a no-church-talk zone. If your spouse is people-weary or tired of an issue, let him or her call a no-church-talk zone for a few hours. Don't make your spouse have to get away from you to get away from the church. Go off the clock together so you can rejuvenate together.

**Keep disagreements private.** You may have different ideas about how to handle church-related situations. You may wish your partner had dealt with a certain circumstance in a

different way. Yet such conversations must remain between you. At all times, put your ministry together ahead of your personal opinions. You can debate and disagree on various issues, but never do so with an audience.

**Celebrate victories together.** Don't just talk about what went wrong on Sunday. Celebrate what went right. Rejoice together in the people you have at the church instead of just strategizing how you can get more. Remember that victories play a major role in our encouragement, so build each other up with the reasons you see every day for rejoicing.

Never forget that the same God who called you is the One who put the two of you together. Your side-by-side ministry is His great purpose for your lives and your church. Give your best to Him by giving your best to each other, and embrace the amazing joys ahead as you find creative ways to serve Him together. ■



**MIKE and KERRY CLARENSAU** live in Waxahachie, Texas, where Mike serves as dean-elect for Southwestern Assemblies of God University's College of Bible and Church Ministries. Kerry

serves as director of the National Women's Department for the Assemblies of God.





# Discover a Truly Beautiful Life

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Serving in ministry for over 25 years, **Kerry Clarensau's** honesty and integrity have made her a well-loved leader of women. In her new book, *A Beautiful life*, stories and personal experiences combine with strategic advice to explore our calling to selfless love. Kerry will help you discover some simple changes you can make today to grow love in your life.



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# MENTORING: A Non-Negotiable Toward Empowering Women in Ministry

By **Karen Yancey**

The Book of Ruth provides an excellent DNA model for intentionally mentoring other women. Her story provides nine character traits of intentional mentoring.

**T**he 10-day missions experience went well, with opportunities for humanitarian and compassionate ministry leading to numerous children, women, and entire families accepting Jesus as Savior.

Amid friendly laughter, warm hugs, and heartfelt tears, the team of women said a final goodbye to our host missionary. We boarded the plane and arranged our belongings for the lengthy journey ahead. As the plane left the tarmac and began its flight toward home, my mind raced over the past week and a half.

I marveled at how God allowed 20 ordinary women, with individual personalities and varied strengths, to minister tirelessly for 10 days without one word of complaint. I scanned the plane and counted team members. Most had already fallen into a deep sleep brought on by sheer exhaustion.

I positioned myself for some rest, not realizing the life-altering God-moments about to transpire in row 39, seats E and F. Just as my head hit the airline pillow, a team member sitting next to me asked if we could talk. I'm so thankful I shook myself out of my blurry state of mind and said, "Of course!"

She confided, "I feel called to ministry. Would you be my mentor?"





That one question many years ago changed the trajectory of her life — and mine. She gained a mentor, and I experienced a revelation God had built into me — in spite of my flaws — an innate desire to connect intentionally with women experiencing uncertainties in ministry and hungering for continued spiritual formation.

While the recent resurgence and unfortunate influence of Calvinism in the United States propagates the idea that full ministry leadership is open only to men, current statistics reveal a growing number of women receiving credentials with the Assemblies of God. We must ready ourselves to prepare, encourage, and mentor these young women who are new to vocational ministry.

Mentoring is an opportunity for younger women in ministry to tap into the reservoir of experience, empathy, maturity, and spirituality that tested women in ministry can often provide.

In the past three decades, the concept of mentoring has gained acceptance. Yet it remains somewhat ambiguous in practical application. Is mentoring formal or informal? Is it structured or unstructured? Is it intentional or organic? For me, the answer is yes to all.

I did not grow up in vocational ministry, and because of regulatory bylaws, my father never served as a deacon or elder. However, my parents' significant devotion to God, participation in church gatherings, and loyalty to our pastors provided a healthy foundation for my spiritual walk.

God called me into the ministry when I was 16. I married at 18. I gave birth to my first baby at 19, and I served as first lady of the parsonage at the ripe age of 22. These milestones occurred long before the idea of mentoring blipped on my radar. In reflection, I credit my ministry survival and any significant contribution exclusively to an all-sufficient God and a remarkable husband.

### Why Mentor?

I gradually matured as my years in ministry advanced. Now, as a more seasoned credentialed woman, I look back and speculate about potentially different outcomes in my ministry if a mentor had come alongside me in those days. Would I have more

quickly conquered the sabotage of self-loathing born of unhealthy comparisons and unrealistic expectations I placed on myself? Would I have dealt better with the surprise that Christians don't always behave like Christians? Would I have been equipped to release the pain and aggravation that swelled within me when people unjustly treated my husband? I wonder whether I would have understood I could say "no" from time to time without guilt or explanation. Perhaps a

more experienced woman in ministry could have intentionally helped me navigate these unknowns in my life.

What about accountability in a Bible reading plan, study habits, and the ability to correctly exegete Scripture? Would I have handled the criticism about women teaching men differently if a mentor had journeyed with me? Absolutely!

### Mentored From a Distance

A few years into ministry, I vividly recall God challenging me to focus on seasoned women ministers who exemplified desirable qualities. I intentionally observed the way these notable women carried themselves. They taught me to seek God unreservedly with my heart and my intellect — not just with emotion. They taught me to live holy and wholly, disregarding unfounded criticism while remaining kind and loving. By example, they honored their husbands, sought out dynamic balance in family and ministry, and served selflessly. They dressed modestly, used a sarcasm-free vocabulary, and attentively listened to people around them. These imperfect women leaders unknowingly mentored me from a distance. That same substantive mentoring now looks unstructured, informal, and organic. Though subtle in context, this informal mentoring created lasting fruit in my life.

Nevertheless, informal mentoring does not exclude the need for an intentional and structured approach. Intentional mentoring holds promise of inoculating women ministers against the dangerous virus of isolation.

Relational connection provides the most meaningful pathway for ministry to follow. Somehow in modern society we have lost the spontaneity we find in the Bible where a more experienced person helps another gain skills or understanding. Computers and the Internet open a treasure trove of information but eliminate the relational aspect of learning in face-to-face encounters. In a world where the seemingly omniscient Google can provide endless information, some knowledge comes best through relational experience.

### Mentors Create a Culture

Mentors establish a kind of relationship DNA. In John Ortberg's book *Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them*, he cites a study on relationships that tracked 7,000 people over nine years. Researchers found that the most isolated people were three times more likely to die than those with strong relational connections. People with unhealthy habits (e.g., smoking, making poor food choices, staying overweight, or consuming alcohol) but strong social ties lived significantly longer than people who had great health habits but were isolated. In other words, it is better to eat Twinkies with good friends than to eat broccoli alone! The point seems clear: We need strong, intentional relationships. Trying to make it through life without them is detrimental.

In the Book of Ruth, Naomi provides an excellent DNA model for intentionally mentoring other women. Her story

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provides nine character traits of intentional mentoring.

**1. Naomi honored authority in her life.** She dutifully followed her husband to Moab (Ruth 1:1,2). The Assemblies of God holds an egalitarian position on women in ministry leadership (a belief that since men and women are all one in Christ, there are no gender distinctions when it comes to functional roles in the church), but that view does not validate either females or males who usurp authority and create discord in pursuit of their rights. Therefore, mentors must first model submission to authority.

**2. Naomi valued relationships.** She initially rejected isolation by maintaining important relationships, even while she endured life's most difficult tests. Her husband and sons died in Moab (Ruth 1:3-7). She kept her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, close by, and they observed Naomi processing her unspeakable grief.

Mentors do well to understand their examples speak in all seasons.

**3. Naomi trusted her historic roots for support.** When the time was right, she prepared to return to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:7). Her roots represented the truth that mentors never outgrow the need for personal reinforcement.

**4. Naomi was honest with herself and others about her emotions.** At the border, she expressed her deepest internal pain and confessed her bitterness to the younger women (Ruth 1:11-13).

Healthy mentors strategically reveal layers of transparency. They recognize that mentees readily identify with a mentor's pain. Naomi's behavior contradicts conventional wisdom that leaders should never allow followers to get close. Naomi allowed it, and so did Jesus.

**5. Naomi knew her own limitations.** In her discouraged state of mind, she urged the young women to go back, knowing she could not give them a husband (Ruth 1:11,12).

At this point, Naomi misunderstood what the mentees most



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## Effective Mentoring Through Relational Connection

This role is about accepting *responsibility* and embodying *availability*.

### 2. Develop a peer-to-peer relationship.

Key principle: *inspect*

Scripture anchor: "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17).

The relationship is built on *peer accountability* and *mutual dependability*.

### 3. Gain knowledge as a mentee.

Key principle: *invite*

Scripture anchor: "Walk with the wise and become wise . . ." (Proverbs 13:20).

The mentee must embrace *teachability* and value *reliability*.

In the early iterations of this initiative, 53 pairs of women participated. As time passed, we saw the wisdom of creating further options with less structure and formality. We call our most recent effort of intentionally promoting informal mentoring, Space for Grace.

We introduced Space for Grace at the Women in Ministry Breakaway in 2014, with

the tagline: Help Us Eliminate Isolation. We asked women to choose a friend, keeping chemistry in mind. We told them to connect as frequently as they wanted — making time for prayer, coffee, laughter, dialogue, and input — with encouragement as the ultimate goal. We look forward to hearing from these women at the next breakaway as they share how it went.

Supportive relationships provide the foundational value for formal and informal mentoring in our Ministry Network. Six related values deepen the mentor-mentee arrangement:

- 1. Intentionality:** Place it on the schedule.
- 2. Connectivity:** Enjoy shared experiences.
- 3. Confidentiality:** Trustworthiness fosters depth.
- 4. Transparency:** Get real.
- 5. Diversity:** Embrace relational uniqueness.
- 6. Accountability:** Expect mutual personal growth.

**KAREN YANCEY**, Maize, Kansas

**Lead the Network Development Department** for the AG Kansas Ministry Network, and in 2004 I launched a mentoring initiative called WMBA (Women in Ministry Being Accountable) with the tagline: Nurturing Community Versus Going It Alone.

In this ultra-structured, formal approach to mentoring, I recruited experienced women in ministry to serve as mentors. I provided training and prepared to facilitate opportunities to pair up women during our annual Women in Ministry Breakaway. This formal arrangement encouraged women in ministry to make, intentionally, one of three specific relational connections.

#### 1. Serve as a coach or mentor.

Key principle: *invest*

Scripture anchor: "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

needed. Orpah clearly loved Naomi, but she left the mentor-mentee relationship because Naomi could not give her the husband she thought she needed. However, Ruth wanted what Naomi could provide, which included a true God, a chosen people, and a place in a godly lineage.

Mentors should recognize and acknowledge what they can't do. But they can trust God to accomplish His purposes in spite of their limitations.

**6. Naomi invested time in Ruth.** She accepted the request of her mentee and allowed Ruth to press close and spend time with her (Ruth 1:16–18).

Mentoring requires intentionally modifying personal boundaries but maintaining autonomy and personal identity (Ruth 1:19).

**7. Naomi gave direct counsel to Ruth.** She provided specific instructions, telling Ruth to go to the threshing floor and what to do there (Ruth 3:3).

Healthy mentors understand that hints, example, and self-discovery all have their place, but they also discern when the mentee needs clear direction.

**8. Naomi enjoyed the reward of her investment.** She received a unique blessing as a faithful mentor when she held

profile

KELLY PRESTON, church planter / lead pastor

## A Leading Woman

**L**eading women are nothing new to the residents of Gahanna, Ohio. The mayor, several council members, and a number of prominent business leaders are female. So when Eastside Community Church opened its doors in the Columbus suburb in 2012, Kelly Preston — a wife, mom, and the fledgling congregation's lead pastor — quickly gained acceptance.

It wasn't always so easy for Preston, however. Growing up in church, she believed she could pursue any dream God gave her. Yet she rarely encountered female ministry leaders.

"I never met a woman pastor until I was an adult," Preston says. "Still, the more I grew in the Lord and my understanding of the spiritual need in the world, the more I felt I wanted to pursue ministry."

Preston and her husband, Greg, served seven years as missionaries in the Eurasia region. There she met gifted women whose skills the male-centered Arab culture did not recognize or utilize.

"I was frustrated because I wanted to lead people and care for them," Preston says. "I wanted to preach and be myself rather than feeling inhibited by my gender."

At one point, when Preston accepted an

offer to preach at an international church in North Africa, part of the congregation vowed to stay home rather than listen to a woman.

After returning to the U.S. in 2007, the couple began fasting and seeking God about their next steps. Preston felt called to preach, while Greg preferred serving in other areas of church ministry.

"I had never seen a married woman serving as a church's lead pastor, so I never even considered it," Preston says.

Nevertheless, as she and Greg planted a church together, their unique gifts and roles became increasingly apparent.

With Preston settled in as lead pastor, and Greg serving as executive pastor, the congregation is growing and thriving. The church that started as a home Bible study now meets at the local YMCA, with a weekly attendance of 80 to 100.

The couple have three children: two sons and a daughter. Preston says she hopes they will learn by example that every worker is wanted and needed in God's kingdom.

"I don't even want this to be an issue for her when she's 25," Preston says of her 4-year-old daughter, Claire. "I hope by that time everyone is out in the harvest field because we have released

all of our workers rather than holding half of them back. I want her to know that whatever God puts in her heart, whatever her passions are, she can achieve them. He didn't give her skills because someone else wasn't available. He purposely gave her those to use for His glory."

**CHRISTINA QUICK,**  
freelance writer, Springfield, Missouri



a grandson, a child born in the lineage of King David and Jesus the Messiah (Ruth 4:13–22; Matthew 1:5,6).

Healthy mentors recognize the powerful potential of spiritual multiplication in the relationship.

**9. Naomi bore fruit through the life of another person.** Ruth 4:14,15 says, “The women said to Naomi: ‘Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.’ ”

Healthy mentors do not claim credit for their mentee’s accomplishments, but they bask in the joy of having contributed to the success of another woman in ministry.

### Three Cords Convey Strength

Naomi and Ruth’s relationship demonstrates, “Two are better than one. ... Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:9,12).

Ecclesiastes tackles hard issues about life and the search for meaning in our daily challenges. The Teacher considers the emptiness of so many things we pursue. Yet the key concept, the strength of a three-strand cord, merits close study. Hope surfaces when the divine Third Strand enters the equation. God’s inclusion in a mentor-mentee relationship does not guarantee lifelong friendship, but when two hearts remain open to the Spirit, the mentor and mentee find mutual benefit.

Credentialed women need a three-strand cord of godly mentorship. When faced with trials, many people typically get a solo survival plan in place and move forward for a time. Eventually, new battles arise, and repeated trauma beats the person down. This reminds believers of the strong possibility that without the help and encouragement of others, they may survive but not thrive. Mentors, then, must step into the role of encourager. Leaders — women and men — need others in the trenches alongside them.

God has placed a new covenant in our hearts. His unconditional promise enables us to yearn for a life with dynamic balance instead of instability. Yet newly credentialed ministers may misunderstand the lack of predictability in ministry and face unexpected instability and angst. Anxiety often lurks in the shadows of our thinking. Disappointment, frustration, and anxiety flare when women ministers sense that God created them for more. Perhaps they feel unappreciated or stymied in their calling. As they face criticism and obstacles, these women need encouragement to produce fruit in the ministry leadership roles to which God has called them.

The founders of the Assemblies of God established an organization of men and women ministers and churches to function as a network. From the Fellowship’s inception, shared spiritual experience and relational devotion to each other was elevated, regardless of gender. Men and women in ministry

need healthy relationships.

In a mentor-mentee relationship, shared burdens feel lighter and more manageable as participants encourage one another through authentic accountability and support that mirrors the stability of the Godhead. A woman in ministry standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two women, with God in the center, can stand back-to-back and overcome every barrier.

The woman on that airplane who requested that I mentor her remains a dear friend to this day. During the first five years of our relationship, she looked to me as her mentor. Due to proximity, we took many morning walks together and shared life. She asked multiple questions, we did Bible studies together, and the relationship grew into a cherished friendship. Years later, we stood at our local airport, and I waved goodbye with tears streaming down my face. I had mentored her to the point that she could lead the women’s missions team while I strategically stayed behind.

The final stages of mentoring include empowering and releasing. Truly, that day at the airport remains one of the most precious days of my life. It was the day mentee changed to peer. ☑

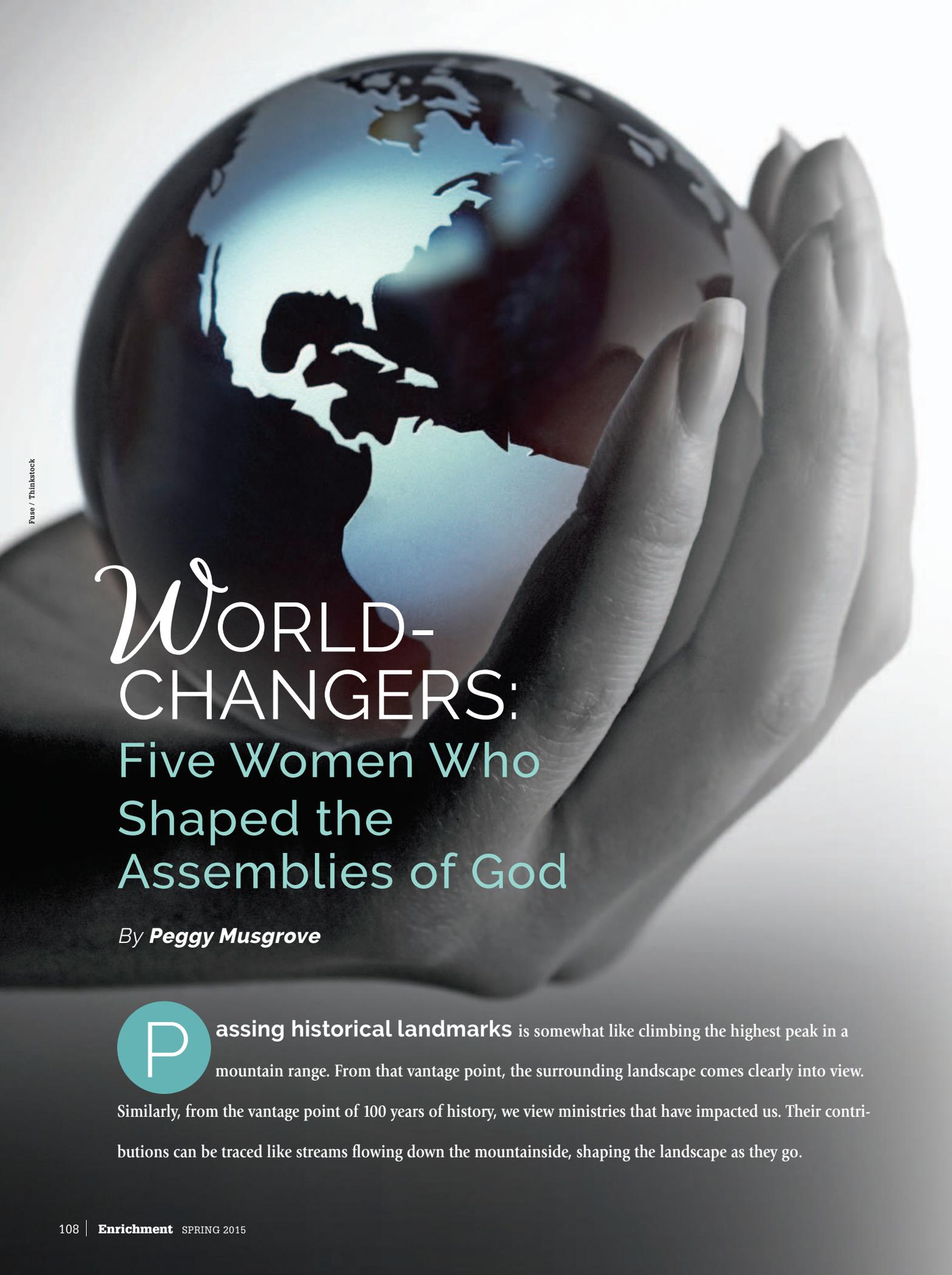


**KAREN YANCY**, director, Kansas Network Development Department, AG Kansas Ministry Network, Maize, Kansas

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**KAREN YANCEY**, Maize, Kansas

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a glowing, translucent globe of the Earth. The globe is illuminated from within, casting a warm, golden light. The hand is positioned on the right side of the frame, with fingers gently cradling the globe. The background is a soft, out-of-focus gradient of light colors.

# WORLD- CHANGERS: Five Women Who Shaped the Assemblies of God

By **Peggy Musgrove**

**P**assing historical landmarks is somewhat like climbing the highest peak in a mountain range. From that vantage point, the surrounding landscape comes clearly into view. Similarly, from the vantage point of 100 years of history, we view ministries that have impacted us. Their contributions can be traced like streams flowing down the mountainside, shaping the landscape as they go.

This article explores the lives of five women whose ministries have shaped the Assemblies of God. They come from different family backgrounds, and one is from a different country. They also have different ministries. They began ministering in the same era, the early years of the last century. Their common denominator is the dynamic change in their lives that came after receiving the infilling of the Holy Spirit. They did not intend to become world-changers; they simply followed the flow of the Spirit. The rest is history.

## Alice Reynolds Flower

**W**hile doing research for this article, I sometimes mentioned it in casual conversation to friends. Then I would ask whom they thought I should include. Without fail, the name Alice Reynolds “Mother” Flower came up first.

Charles and Mary Alice Reynolds came from New England Quaker families. By the time their daughter, Alice, was born, the family had migrated to Indiana and affiliated with the Christian and Missionary Alliance. In 1907, some Alliance church members were receptive to the Pentecostal message brought by ministers from Azusa Street. These meetings had dynamic influence on two teenagers: Alice Reynolds and J. Roswell Flower.<sup>1</sup> In 1911, they married and began their ministry together.

Years later, in recalling her Pentecostal experience, Alice Flower emphasized that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was the introduction to the Spirit-filled life. She wrote: “This is what the baptism of the Holy Spirit should be — the opening of the door of a vital and continuous communion with God for effectual prayer, worship and service for Him.”<sup>2</sup>

Walking through the door of continuous communion opened many doors for Alice Flower. After her marriage, she began ministries that would shape the Assemblies of God. Together, she and her husband enrolled in Bible school and were ordained in ministry. In 1913, they began writing and distributing a weekly magazine, the *Christian Evangel*, forerunner of the *Pentecostal Evangel*. When her husband became secretary of the newly formed Assemblies of God, they continued the publication of this magazine.

Her writing ministry continued throughout her lifetime. She gained a reputation not only for books and articles but also for poetry. Even at age 98 in a nursing home, she continued to compose poetry. Someone nearby recorded one poem that spoke of receiving “daily manna” from the Lord, an indication of her continuous personal communion with Him.<sup>3</sup>

Pulpit ministry opened for Alice Flower when her husband was a pastor. Though they had six children, she held revivals and spoke on family-related topics. One poster advertises her as “A Little Mother with a Burning Message.” The public ministries did not distract from her



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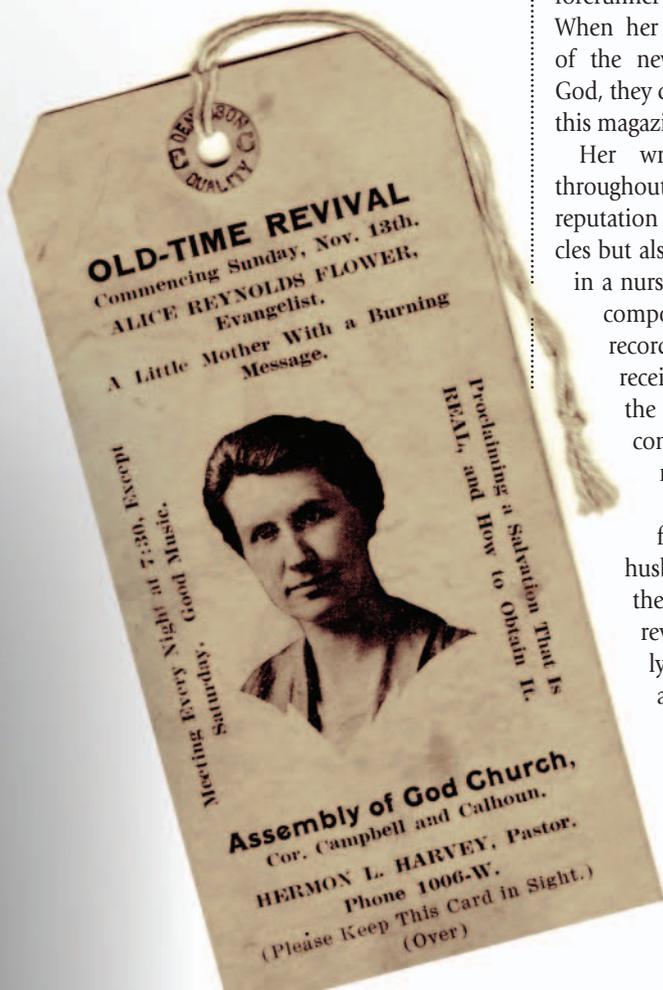
role as wife and mother. Five of her six children entered the ministry, becoming leaders in the Assemblies of God. The other child died of an accident



while training for ministry at Central Bible Institute. Several grandchildren entered vocational ministry as well.

David Flower, her youngest son, recently gave his mother a tribute in a message to Maranatha Village chapel. After complimenting her, he concluded by appealing to the crowd “not to exalt a person, but recognize the power of a godly influence.”

Even today the Assemblies of God still feels the godly influence of Alice Flower.





## Alice E. Luce

**S**hortly after the teenaged Alice Reynolds received the baptism in the Holy Spirit in Indiana, halfway around the world in India a young Anglican woman also heard the Pentecostal message at Pandita Ramabai’s mission. Alice Luce, a British missionary, converted to Pentecostalism and felt called to missions among the Hispanics in North America.

Luce came to the United States soon after the organization of the Assemblies of God. In 1915, she hoped to go to Mexico as a missionary. When civil war in that country kept her from going, she went to Los Angeles to work with Hispanics where Azusa Street ministers had preached earlier.

Luce’s personal ministry was varied but dynamic. Her public ministry included open-air evangelistic meetings, Bible studies, and Sunday School teaching. When not holding public meetings, she led door-to-door tract distribution and prayed for the sick. Ultimately, she was instrumental in establishing the Latin America Bible Institute in San Diego (now located in La Puente, Calif.).

According to Gaston Espinosa, Luce represents “one of the clearest examples of a prophetic woman in ministry in early Pentecostalism.”<sup>4</sup>

Mentoring other missionaries was important to Luce. She met a young missionary, Henry C. Ball, when she was ordained, and later joined his mission in Mexico. Luce’s ministry impacted not only the missionary but also the entire Fellowship.

Bruce Rosdahl wrote: “From January to September Luce and Ball worked together, and the veteran missionary surely influenced Ball’s thinking. Luce was forty-four, and Ball was twenty-one.

She was well educated and a veteran missionary; Ball had no formal training and his ministry was still in its infancy. Luce’s impact could be viewed as providential, not only on Ball, but on the broader AG. Luce’s articles on indigenous church administration and planting helped to set the trajectory for the Fellowship’s missiology in the United States and abroad.”<sup>5</sup>

Rosdahl was referring to Luce’s *Pentecostal Evangel* articles describing Paul’s missionary methods.<sup>6</sup> A recent article traced present AG missions strategy to her influence: “The AG committed itself in 1921 to a missions strategy of establishing self-governing, self-supporting, and self-sustaining churches in missions lands. Alice Luce



... influenced the AG to adopt this indigenous church principle long before it was embraced by most mainline Protestant groups.

“Missions leaders such as Ralph D. Williams, J. Philip Hogan, and Melvin L. Hodges helped to implement the indigenous strategy ....”<sup>7</sup>

Alice Luce is still highly respected among Hispanics. Efraim Espinosa, director of the Office of Hispanic Relations, quickly named Alice Luce when asked what woman historically influenced Hispanic churches. Espinosa called Luce a “testimony

of the significant role of women in ministry among the Hispanics.”

“She left a legacy of dedicated servant leadership,” Espinosa said.<sup>8</sup>

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Alice Luce with students at Latin American Bible Institute in California, circa 1930s.



## Lillian Trasher

**B**efore the Spirit moved the Flowers to publish literature and Alice Luce to become a missionary, another stream was flowing, shaping the Pentecostal movement. A talented young woman, Lillian Trasher, was at a train station in North Carolina when she met Mattie Perry, a Pentecostal woman who ran an orphanage. This encounter changed Trasher's life and the lives of thousands of others.

Trasher planned to go into journalism. Instead, she joined Mattie Perry and learned to care for orphans by faith. Later she felt called to missions and broke her wedding engagement. Accompanied by her sister, Jennie Benton, she responded to the invitation to join missionaries in Egypt in 1910,<sup>9</sup> before the Assemblies of God was organized. She became a member of the Fellowship in 1919.

Assiout Orphanage came about through another unexpected encounter. Shortly after Trasher arrived in Assiout, she responded to a call to pray for a dying woman. She took the woman's infant back to the mission, but a baby was incompatible with the mission's operation. Unwilling to give up the child, Trasher rented a home, and soon people brought other children to her. Unintentionally, the orphanage began.

In the early days, Trasher rode a donkey through villages collecting money for the children, earning the title "Lady on a Donkey." Other names were "Nile Mother" and "Mama," the name the children fondly called her.

Establishing an institution that, 50 years later, would house over 600 children in 13 buildings on 12 acres of land was not a project without obstacles. Trasher had no pledged support from America; her first offering was 35 cents from an Egyptian boy.

Trasher said, "I believed that if God wanted an orphanage, He would supply its needs. My family has never missed a meal."<sup>10</sup>

Other obstacles included cultural resistance to her as an American woman, religious opposition, serious illnesses among the children, and losing buildings by fire. Trasher persisted for 50 years in spite of these challenges, providing care and education for more than 8,000 orphans. An article in *AG Heritage* remembered her orphanage as "an important symbol of the power of faith."<sup>11</sup>

Trasher indirectly influenced the

Assemblies of God in other ways. In 1925, Etta Calhoun,<sup>12</sup> a Pentecostal woman who had been involved in women's organizations, felt, according to one historian, "that God had spoken to her heart to employ the 'machinery' of Spirit-filled women in missionary efforts at home and in the foreign fields ....

national organization providing items for missionaries needing supplies for an entire term.

Later, Trasher also inspired Gladys Hinson, who felt called to China. She began preparation for a home similar to the one in Egypt, but the attack on Pearl Harbor closed that door. Rather



"The burden of Etta Fields Calhoun, (Mrs. John C.) quickly inspired these ladies, and their first project was to make garments to clothe about three hundred of Lillian Trasher's orphans in Assiout, Egypt."<sup>13</sup>

This group was the first Women's Missionary Council, which became a

than giving up, Hinson sought approval to establish a children's home in America. After she obtained the necessary denominational and legal approval, Hillcrest Children's Home in Hot Springs, Ark., opened in 1944. Trasher's influence extended not only throughout Egypt but also to America.<sup>14</sup>

## Marie Burgess Brown

**T**he year Alice Reynolds received the baptism in the Holy Spirit in Indiana, another young woman from Zion City, Ill., opened a mission in New York City. Charles Parham, founder of Bethel Bible School in Topeka, received a request from Lucy Leatherman, who had visited Topeka, for someone to come to New York with the Pentecostal message.<sup>15</sup> He offered to pay the fare for two young women if they would go. Those women were Marie Burgess and Jessica Brown.<sup>16</sup>

Burgess's mother earnestly prayed for one of her nine children to go into ministry. The woman's only son, a talented musician, seemed to be the one, but he died near his 21st birthday, regretting that he would have no sheaves to lay at Jesus's feet. Before his death, Burgess pledged to win many souls to the Lord and share her reward with her brother. Upon hearing this promise, the brother began singing and quietly went to be with Jesus.<sup>17</sup>

Marie started attending home prayer meetings where people sought the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Charles Parham had come to Zion City to conduct the meetings. Sensing God's presence, Marie began seeking and received the Spirit baptism on her birthday.

With that experience, "a remarkable vision followed, lasting several hours."<sup>18</sup> She recalled the Spirit seemingly transporting her to China, then to India, Africa, and Japan. She assumed God was calling her to missions, but He had other plans. Instead, He would send her to New York City to establish a church with a heart for missions. Burgess entered the ministry, the living answer to her mother's prayers.

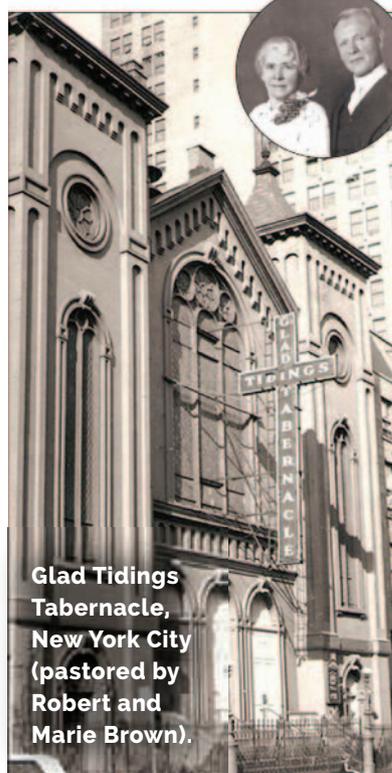
The first service in New York City was at the Holiness Mission on 41st Street. Only eight people were in attendance, but Marie shared her testimony of receiving the Holy Spirit. Many more came to the next service, and the women continued ministering for four weeks. Then the pastor of that mission discontinued the meetings because he did not approve of the Pentecostal message.

Burgess did not plan to stay in New York. After the Holiness Mission closed her meeting, she wrote those who asked her to come, "I'll open a mission for you and stand with you until you get somebody."<sup>19</sup>

So she opened Glad Tidings Mission on 42nd Street — and stand with them she did, for 64 years.

Marie singly led the mission until her marriage to Robert A. Brown, a young

Wesleyan minister who received the baptism in the Spirit during Burgess's meetings at the Holiness Mission. They continued together as co-pastors until his death in 1948.



In 1921, the couple led the group from a mission hall to the present location on 33rd Street, changing the name to Glad Tidings Tabernacle. As co-pastors, they shared the preaching assignment with her preaching the main service on Sunday afternoon and him preaching on Sunday night.



As pastors, the couple helped spread the Pentecostal message into numerous ethnic communities in multicultural New York City. They encouraged Ellsworth S. Thomas, the first black Assemblies of God minister, to join the fellowship in 1915. Through their ministry, Ivan Voronae, a Russian Baptist minister, received the Baptism in 1919 and became a missionary to the Soviet Union the following year. He became the most prominent Pentecostal pioneer in Slavic lands before his imprisonment and martyrdom.

Robert and Marie helped Lillian Kraeger start a home missions work in the African-American community in 1918. Kraeger's Bethel Mission is now known as Bethel Gospel Assembly, one of the largest congregations in the United Pentecostal Council of the Assemblies of God, an African-American fellowship that united with the AG last year.

After Robert's death, his nephew Stanley Berg joined Marie as co-pastor.

I talked about Marie Brown with Robert A. Berg, Evangel University professor, son of Stanley Berg, and namesake for Robert A. Brown. About Marie's influence, he said, "She was a role model as a woman pastor when women were not usually accepted as pastors. She thought she would be a missionary, but instead, as a pastor, she led that church to be a great missions church, influencing the entire world. She was very much a leader and the respected matriarch of that congregation."



## Rachel Sizelove

**T**he year Marie Burgess went to New York City, another young woman traveled from California to Missouri to share the happenings at Azusa Street with her family.

Rachel and Josie Sizelove, Free Methodist evangelists, preached in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. They went to California in 1903 to put their children in the Free Methodist School. In June 1906, they heard about unusual events at an old mission on Azusa Street.

Rachel Sizelove wrote: "My husband told me he had just passed by and heard such wonderful singing. When he came home, he said to me, 'Rachel, I just now passed by the Azusa Street Mission



**Rachel and Joseph Sizelove, 1915.**

and heard such singing as I never heard in my life before. It was like angels singing."<sup>20</sup>

Of the first mission service they attended, Rachel wrote: "My very soul cried out, 'O! Lord, the people have something I do not have.'"<sup>21</sup>

After being convinced of the biblical

basis for the Baptism, she received the infilling of the Holy Spirit in July 1906.

The Sizeloves continued attending the mission, but the next year the Lord began speaking to Rachel about her family in Missouri. In writing about this urgent impression, she wrote: "In May 1907, the Lord showed me I must

go back East and tell my mother and brothers and sisters what the Lord had done for me . . . I hurried down to the Azusa Street Mission and had some of the saints pray with me for the Lord to make His will plain. The evidence came so clearly, 'My child, you may go and go quickly, for I am with you.'"<sup>22</sup> →

## The Single Female Minister: Challenges and Opportunities

**I'm a photo bomber.** A friend recently tagged me on Facebook in a family picture where I randomly appeared in the background, forever captured in their beautiful family portrait.

Single female ministers often feel like photo bombers. Surrounded by ministry couples, male leadership, and family-focused churches, the single woman can wonder if she stumbled upon a scene in which she doesn't belong.

Luke, the Evangelist, captured a sacred moment in Jesus' life, intentionally inserting the prophet Anna into the narrative's background, like a first-century photo bomber. Anna became a widow at a young age. Whether by choice or circumstance, she remained single and served God in the temple. On an ordinary day, Anna happened upon a sacred family moment where Simeon stood before Joseph and Mary, prophesying over Jesus. Whatever challenges Anna had experienced as a single woman in God's service no longer mattered. She had witnessed the Christ.

Being a female "party of one" in ministry comes with its challenges. Some of the challenges may not be unique to single women, but single women uniquely experience them. Unmarried female missionaries explore the nation's winding and vast road system, driving thousands of miles, with no spouse to share in the emotional ride of itineration. Forces to be reckoned with, many of these women know they follow the Spirit into dark, unsafe places. Unfortunately, single female pastors too often discover the only church doors open to them are financially unstable

and district-dependent churches. Single women do what it takes to pay the bills by delivering pizzas or serving lattes between pastoral duties, surviving on little sleep. Some of these women burn out and leave the ministry or transfer to denominations with more opportunities.

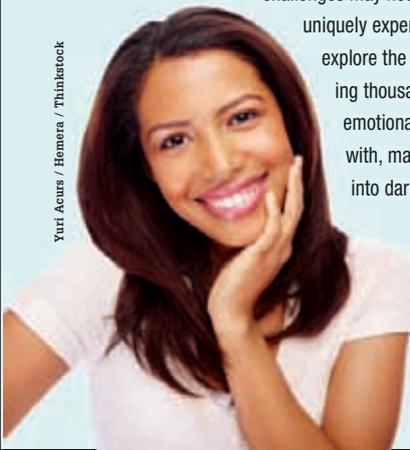
While God may not sanction human-imposed limits, He often utilizes them to help these women reimagine ministry. This moves the single female minister outside the box to untraditional contexts, leading to a greater expansion of God's kingdom. Church planting, healthcare ministries, missions, chaplaincy, and academia offer single women opportunities. Such ministries allow them to use their ministerial gifts while influencing culture and future generations toward change.

Opportunities also exist for other ministers to encourage their single female colleagues:

- Support them. Financially back single female missionaries and church planters. Also pray for enriching relationships, financial provision, and physical safety.
- Hire them. Take the résumés of single female ministers under serious consideration, and influence change.
- Preach them. Congregations need to hear from female ministers, single and married. In sermons, highlight women from the Bible and Church history.
- Include them. Sit down with them, listen to their stories, and ask questions. Invite them into ministerial networks, helping them create a solid support system.

God strategically positioned Anna to witness and proclaim the long-awaited Messiah. Today, He continues to position single female ministers for His purposes. Their complete devotion to God's service leads them to places society does not expect and allows them to see Christ's presence in moments others may not witness. Photo bombing can actually be quite exciting.

**STEPHANIE NANCE**, communications strategist, Network for Women in Ministry, Springfield, Missouri



Yuri Acurs / Hemera / Thinkstock

Rachel arrived in Springfield and immediately began sharing testimonies from Azusa Street. Her sister, Lillie Corum, received the Spirit baptism on June 1, 1907, the first known person in Springfield, Mo., to have a Pentecostal experience.

News spread, others came to hear reports of what God was doing, and special meetings took place in various locations. The Sizeloves went back to California. A small group of people formed a church, which became Central Assembly of God.

In August 1913, the Sizeloves returned to Springfield. One day in prayer at Lillie Corum's home, Rachel Sizelove had a vision. She wrote: "One afternoon, I was alone in my sister's home, and I was carried away in the Spirit, and the Lord gave me a vision. There appeared before me a beautiful, bubbling, sparkling fountain in the heart of the City of Springfield. It sprang up gradually but irresistibly and began to flow toward the East and toward the West, toward the North, and toward the South, and kept flowing until the whole land was deluged with living water."<sup>23</sup>

This vision came before the General Council formed in 1914 and before the Flowers brought their printing operation to Springfield in 1918. Springfield, Mo., later became the base for the Assemblies of God, an international ministry that has reached around the world.

### Conclusion

Here we have accounts of five women who historically influenced the Assemblies of God. In studying their stories, I wondered, *Are these the five most influential women in our history, or does that credit belong to the women who influenced them, or who were influenced by them?*

Mary Alice Reynolds, a godly mother, taught Alice Flower. Pandita Ramabai in India led Alice Luce into Pentecost. Mattie Perry witnessed to Lillian Trasher, and her life changed. Lucy Leatherman asked for workers in New York City; Marie Brown responded to that request. Lillie Corum readily accepted Rachel Sizelove's message and went on to help establish a great church.

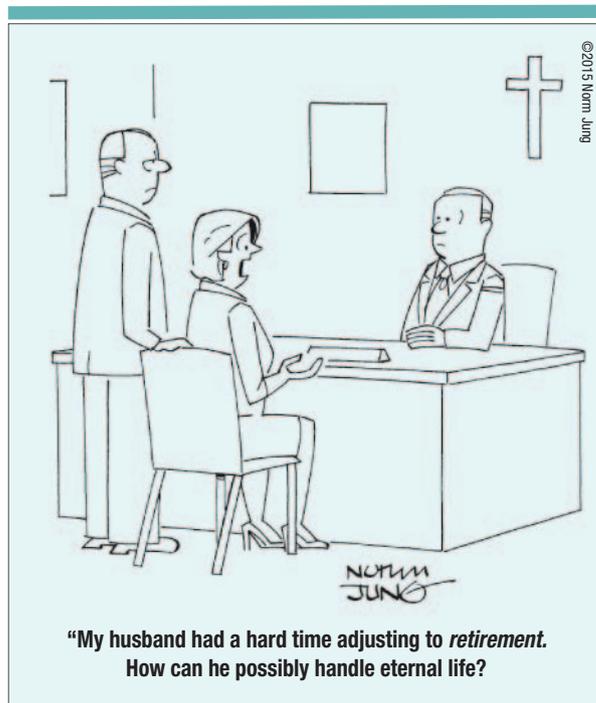
Are Flower, Luce, Trasher, Brown, and Sizelove the most influential women in shaping the Assemblies of God, or should that recognition belong to Reynolds, Ramabai, Perry, Leatherman, and Corum? The reader may decide. ❏



**PEGGY MUSGROVE**, retired director, National Women's Department, Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri. She has written several books and magazine articles, some of which are available on her website, [www.peggymusgrove.com](http://www.peggymusgrove.com).

### Notes

1. Edith L. Blumhofer, "Pentecost in My Soul," *AG Heritage* (Winter 1997–98): 13.
2. Alice Reynolds Flower, "My Day of Pentecost," *AG Heritage* (Winter 1997–98): 19.
3. Connie Hove, "The Voice of the Spirit," *The Pentecostal Evangel* (November 19, 1989): 5.
4. Gaston Espinosa, "Liberated and Empowered: The Uphill Ministry of Hispanic Assemblies of God Women in Ministry," *AG Heritage* (2008): 45.
5. Bruce Rosdahl, "Whatever the Cost: The Formative Years of H.C. Ball, Pioneer of Hispanic Pentecostalism," *AG Heritage* (2011): 10.
6. Alice E. Luce, "Paul's Missionary Methods," *The Pentecostal Evangel*, (January 8, 22, 1921; February 5, 1921): 6, 6, 5.
7. Darrin Rogers, "Fully Committed," *The Pentecostal Evangel* (April 13, 2014): 26.
8. Efraim Espinosa, personal correspondence, May 14, 2014.
9. Beth Baron, "Nile Mother: Lillian Trasher and Egypt's Orphans," *AG Heritage* (2011): 32.
10. Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions, *Letters from Trasher*, (1983): 13.
11. Beth Baron, "Nile Mother: Lillian Trasher and Egypt's Orphans," 39.
12. Account of Etta Calhoun's Spirit baptism, *AG Heritage* (Winter 2005–06): 27.
13. *WMC History: 1925–1975*, compiled by Anabel Manley, 14.
14. Laurie Jones, "Hillcrest: A Mission Field for 60 Years," *AG Heritage* (Summer 2004): 15.
15. Barbara Cavaness, "Spiritual Chain Reactions," Women in Ministry Network, [http://womeninministry.ag.org/history/spiritual\\_chain\\_reactions.cfm](http://womeninministry.ag.org/history/spiritual_chain_reactions.cfm).
16. Jessica Brown was unrelated to Robert A. Brown, according to his grandnephew, Robert A. Berg.
17. Zelma Argue, "Chosen of God — The Story of Mrs. Robert A. Brown," *Christ's Ambassadors Herald* (June 1940): 3.
18. "A Herald of Glad Tidings, The Life Story of Marie Brown," *Bread of Life* (May 1954): 8.
19. *Ibid.*, 9.
20. Corum and Associates, *The Sparkling Fountain* (1983), 56.
21. *Ibid.*, 57.
22. *Ibid.*, 110.
23. *Ibid.*, 180. basis for the Baptism, she received the infilling of the Holy Spirit in July 1906.



## WISDOM FOR COOLING THE FLAMES

### Are You an Angry Pastor?

**P**astor, you seem angry,” stated the woman in front of me at the end of our Sunday morning service.

I didn't feel angry, but I was a little mad that she thought I was angry.

I thought about her question. Was I an angry pastor? Soon after this question, my board fired me, even though the church had grown to just under 1,000. Now I was angry for sure.

As I sat in a counselor's office, trying to sort out my broken life, I again faced questions about anger. This time it was my therapist who asked. I had to admit I was angry. It was a painful revelation.

If you are leading a church, you are going to deal with personal anger. If you say you're not, you're probably in denial. Pastors are ripe targets for the arrows that come our way. Many of these arrows are the basis of our anger. If we don't learn to manage our anger, we'll be ineffective at best, and end up

leaving the ministry or hurting someone else at worst.

I have identified three lies I told myself that perpetuated my pastoral anger to unhealthy levels.

**Lie #1: It's OK to be angry and not deal with it.** Yes, it is OK to be angry. Ephesians 4:26 tells us to manage anger without sinning. The verse goes on to say: “Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.”

This is God's way of saying our anger has a shelf life before it goes toxic on us. God wants us to deal with our anger because that's what He does.

**Lie #2: I have a right to be angry.** Maybe so, but you don't have a right to remain angry. If you hold onto your anger, you end up nursing your hurt feelings, cursing those who hurt you, and rehearsing the incident over and over again.

**Lie #3: I can keep my anger secret.** Wanna bet? The Arbinger Institute's book *Leadership and Self Deception* deals with this issue. This book says that people can feel what we think about them, regardless of what we say or how we act. If that is true, we may be blind to our own anger while others see it. They can feel when we're angry, even if we're not angry with them.

I have learned to process my anger with trusted friends and with Jesus through prayer. I'm not always successful, but it's better than not processing it at all.

Remember, we all need an internal turnaround before we can lead an external one in our church. Facing our anger is a big part of that.

— DONALD E. ROSS, pastor  
Creekside Church (AG), Seattle, Washington

## IN THE RED ZONE

### FOLLOWING UP AFTER A VICTORY

In football, one touchdown doesn't win the game. Sometimes it takes hard slogging through the mud to continue making progress.

Though a new believer has tremendous reason to celebrate after crossing the line of faith, that's only the beginning. Promoting four follow-up strategies during outreach training will empower your congregation to help new believers move forward.

**1. After an individual enters into a relationship with Jesus, encourage that person to read God's Word.** A great starting place is the Gospel of John, progressing

through one chapter per day. If the convert does not have a Bible, provide a paperback New Testament with study notes for new believers.

**2. Offer easy-to-read Christian material.** Books like *My Heart, Christ's Home*, by Robert B. Munger or *Beginning with Christ*, by the Navigators can provide a new Christian with powerful and relevant descriptions of how to grow in Christ.

**3. Help the new convert find the right church.** As a shy new believer, Patti needed a church where she felt at home. Her neighbor wisely pointed her in the right direction rather than insisting she fit into her church where the worship style made her uncomfortable.

**4. Maintain an ongoing relationship.** Even if the only contact is through social media, Christian friends can encourage new believers to keep growing in godliness.

Giving your congregation a game plan for how to follow up with new Christians will keep the celebration going. For a complete kit on Red Zone Evangelism training, visit [shareyourfaithministries.com/the-complete-kit](http://shareyourfaithministries.com/the-complete-kit).

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

RULES TO LIVE BY

**FOUR REASONS TO RETURN CHALLENGING PHONE CALLS**

**V**irtually everyone encounters phone calls that could lead to challenging conversations. Such moments aren't pleasant, but unless you're a monk they are part of life in the modern world.

With today's technology, it's easier than ever to avoid uncomfortable situations simply by ignoring certain calls. Yet ministers are to speak the truth in love — even when it's difficult. So next time you're tempted to delete the voicemail, prayerfully consider these reasons to call back:

**1. You can help someone out.** Unless it is a social call, people connecting with you by phone generally want to ask something or share something. You may not always be able to meet the needs of those requesting your help, but you can find ways to share the love of Christ. Though this requires time, it opens up additional opportunities for ministry.

**2. You demonstrate professionalism.** Refusing to respond to someone who reaches out is disrespectful. If someone leaves a message, call back. Having the courtesy to return phone calls demonstrates a strength and professionalism all people in leadership and ministry should have.

**3. People can handle your response.** It's hard for many leaders to say, "No." Yet avoiding contact to sidestep

an unpopular answer is discourteous, as well as cowardly. In fact, I'll call it just plain wimpy! Whatever the situation, people can handle your response. The worst answer is no answer at all. Don't let your fear of rejecting someone's request get in the way of doing the right thing and communicating honestly.

**4. Every caller is important.** I know pastors who only return calls from people they consider important in the church world. This sends the message that common folks are unworthy of their time and attention.

In God's eyes, everyone matters. We should view people as He sees them. Besides, you don't know the future. Someday the "less important" individuals will have something to offer. An old adage says: "Be nice to the little guy on his way up because you'll meet him on your way down."

Leadership and ministry are all about people, and phone conversations are an important form of communication among people. Returning calls is essential to your success as an individual, and your reputation rests on it.

How can you go wrong? Even in the hardest of conversations, at least you know you did what is right. In the end, you will be glad you did.

— **DICK HARDY**, founder, The Hardy Group, Springfield, Missouri



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THE HEALTHY LEADER

**BAD MEMORIES TO HEALTHY THINKING**

**E**veryone has challenges with thinking. Bad memories, harmful relationships, trauma, and the enemy's attacks can monopolize thoughts and, at times, make you wonder whether you will ever get your head together.



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Negative patterns and bad habits — such as eating disorders, sexual addiction, pornography, alcohol abuse, inappropriate language, and uncontrolled anger — leave some people feeling out of control and continually defeated.

Daniel Siegel's project called Mindsight<sup>1</sup> deals with this topic through ongoing research that continues to discover how the mind develops thinking patterns. Siegel studies how bad experiences, abuse, and harmful relationships can affect thinking and behavior.

"Interpersonal experience plays a special organizing role in determining the development of brain structure early in life and the ongoing emergence of brain function throughout the lifespan," Siegel writes.<sup>2</sup>

While the mind often develops negative patterns of thinking, or "bad thoughts," Siegel says it is also possible to repattern thinking.

Does this sound familiar? Paul wrote in Romans 12:2, "Be transformed by the renewing

of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is ...."

Harmful relationships, trauma, post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD), past behavioral activities, and shocking experiences can certainly create challenges in our thinking. But, as even the secular experts have discovered, it is possible to transform the mind. We accomplish this through the help of the Holy Spirit, as well as by forming positive relationships and making healthy decisions. As theologian Bernard Ramm observed, "The Spirit establishes the direct connection from the mind of God to the mind of the Christian."

As leaders, God will help us model healthy thinking to the people we serve.

— **WAYDE GOODALL**, dean, College of Ministry, Northwest University, Kirkland, Washington

**Notes**

1. Daniel Siegel, clinical psychiatrist at UCLA School of Medicine, executive director of Mindsight Institute.
2. Daniel Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2012).

## THE CHURCH THAT WORKS

# HOW CHURCHES BECOME DEACON-POSSESSED

**C**hurches may get upside down in authority when the pastor misunderstands or abnegates the role as overseer. Problems begin when a pastor trains or conditions board members as representatives of the people, with the mindset: The board will be here though pastors come and go.

The pastor means well. Such a democratic approach may seem to work in his or her context — usually a long tenure — but it plants dangerous seeds for succeeding pastors. Board members erroneously groomed in this manner may refuse to submit to a new pastor's vision. Ultimately, the church splits or becomes stifled because a misguided leader started an unhealthy process.

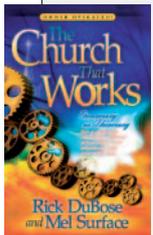
The present pastor can use his or her reservoir of good will to help avoid this kind of problem. The pastor should instruct and equip deacons and other leaders for the ongoing work of God, cultivating a commitment to biblical ministry roles and the flow of authority.

In times of transition, pastoral candidates and pulpit committees must candidly explore, understand, and mutually commit to biblical responsibilities. Counsel and orientation from outside oversight authorities (such as AG district

leaders) for pastor-board relations and a healthy church are helpful.

When pastors lead well as good shepherds, and deacons wrap their hands and hearts around their role of helping, the whole church walks in blessing.

— **MEL SURFACE**, Crowley, Texas, and **RIK DUBOSE**, Hurst, Texas  
Adapted from *The Church that Works* by Rick DuBose and Mel Surface



## PROVERBIAL INTAKE

# Inspiration

goals, finding my way through life tends to be difficult at best.

Goal setting often fails when we don't start with the end in mind. In other words, we never spend enough time determining where our real inspiration originates. So we repeatedly fail to reach our goals, which leads to frustration. Eventually, we may quit setting goals and accept mediocrity in our lives. Solomon must have understood this when he wrote, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life" (Proverbs 13:12).

To achieve your goals, be sure they are congruent with your desires. Then act daily toward these goals. When your actions don't align with your desires, you'll miss your goals. This defers hope and brings dissatisfaction.

Whether we are business owners, clergy, or professionals in some other field, worthwhile goals and dreams are vital to happiness and success. I coach many financial services professionals on reaching new heights in their practices, and it all starts with an initial step.

That first step is taking the time to determine what inspires us — what makes us tick every minute of every day. Then we start to align our actions with our true inspiration. The goal in this process is clear: We realize our hopes, and joy fills our hearts.

— **JAMES L. CASTELLANO**, owner, Seedmin Financial Services, Waco, Texas

**Studies suggest those with written goals achieve more than those without them. Setting proper goals helps me prioritize my daily activities, contributing to success now and in the future. Without worthwhile**

## Goals

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



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## WISDOM TO LIVE BY

### PURPOSE IN EVERY STEP

**O**n a recent trip to Myrtle Beach, S.C., I saw a guy shadowboxing as he jogged down the beach, pretending to look like Rocky from the movie series. It reminded me of how we sometimes think we can fake it in our spiritual lives. The devil uses this trap to leave us weak when a real opponent steps into the ring with us.

That opponent might be a person who knows just which buttons to push in our lives to lure us away from kindness, graciousness, and patience. Or it might be a distraction to get us off God's path of success.

When facing such opposition, shadowboxing faith is of no value. The apostle Paul gives us this insight in 1 Corinthians 10:26: "So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing" (NLT).<sup>1</sup>

Running with purpose means paying attention to the people and things God places in our lives.

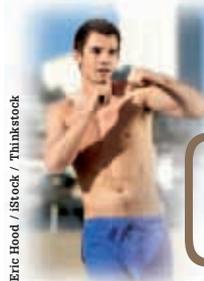
Strive to think first about what most glorifies God. Forgive when you've been insulted. Love, exercise patience, and let people know you care for them. Give when you have the ability to share. Abstain when it would display morality and self-control to others. Confront when apathy would endorse evil. Purpose in every step — it's what being a Christ follower is all about.

— **PATTI ANN THOMPSON**  
freelance writer, Kansas City, Missouri

#### Note

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

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## CHURCH SIZE DETERMINING FACTOR IN PASTOR SALARIES

**P**astors looking for the highest pay should consider signing on with a megachurch in the South.

Leadership Network, a Dallas-based church innovation firm, in conjunction with Vanderbloemen Search Group, a pastoral search company in Houston, conducted a survey of 727 congregations with a weekly attendance exceeding 1,000.

The study found that for 70 percent of all congregations, church budget size and attendance were the strongest predictors of senior pastor salary levels. Unsurprisingly, the bigger the church, the more the senior pastor is likely to make.

But the region of the country where the church is located was the top determining factor for 20 percent of congregations. Big churches in the South provide the largest salaries to senior pastors, followed by churches in the Northeast. Midwest churches pay ministers the least. The survey didn't reveal specific figures.

The senior pastor's salary averages 3.4 percent of the total church budget. The survey revealed that the senior pastor is the highest-paid staff member virtually all the time, although on occasion another pastor receives equivalent compensation.

The second-highest paid position is nearly always (92 percent of cases) the executive pastor. On average, executive pastors or church administrators receive 70 percent of the senior or lead pastor's salary.

The most common pastor salary hike in 2014 was 3 percent, although 18 percent of churches kept pay the same from 2013.

Big churches employ a variety of options to receive donations. Online giving is the top method (81 percent), surpassing even the traditional passing collection plates (80 percent). Among churches of 1,000 or more attendees, 37 percent have a donation box in the lobby, while 25 percent have an electronic kiosk available.

Megachurches with 10,000 or more attendees are least likely to pass collection plates. As might be suspected, the larger the church, the lower the per-capita giving.

Churches that promote online offerings have higher giving rates than those that don't. Online giving has been increasing in popularity for seven straight years, according to Leadership Network.

Almost one-third of large churches contribute 10 percent or more to the senior pastor's retirement plan. The survey indicated 14 percent of large churches have a financial bonus structure in place for the top leader.

## Authors Urge Church Leaders to Slow Down

**U. S. churches have succumbed** to the culture's worship of speedy church growth without proper roots, according to the new book, *Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus*.

C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison critique American congregations for giving in to the allure of the "McDonaldization" of the faith. The authors urge repentance for an industrialized approach to church life that emphasizes programs over people.

"Many churches, particularly those driven by church growth models, come dangerously close to reducing Christianity to a commodity that can be packaged, marketed, and sold," the authors write. "Instead of cultivating a deep, holistic discipleship that touches every aspect of our lives, we've confined the life of faith to Sunday mornings, where it can be kept safe and predictable, or to a 'personal relationship with Jesus Christ,' which can be managed from the privacy of our own home."

While shortcuts to get the unchurched to attend services or the lost to make a salvation decision may yield short-term results, in the long run they can leave people spiritually unfulfilled and disillusioned, Smith and Pattison argue.

In *Slow Church*, the authors urge churchgoers to be intentionally aware of their interdependence on others and attentive to what is happening in their neighborhoods.

Congregations must figure out what methods best fit their location rather than applying a one-size-fits-all model, the book recommends. Rather than trying to fulfill the quest of attendees for instantaneous spirituality through a light show, exotic music, and dynamic preaching, Pattison and Smith suggest pastors encourage congregants to take time to get to know one another in relationships.

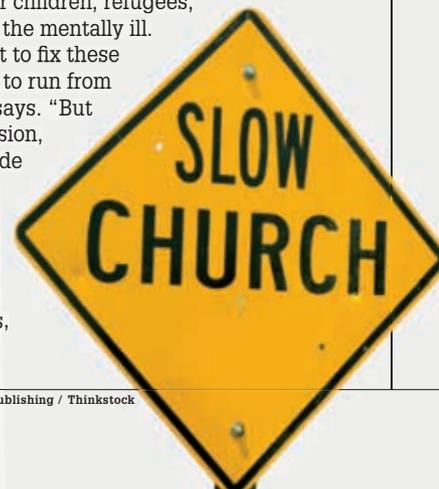
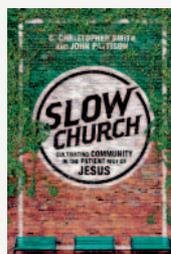
The authors are particularly suspicious of the ability of in-depth contacts to form in megachurches that spawn satellite sites relying on sermons piped in from a home campus.

"When we can't enter into the sufferings of our sisters, brothers, and neighbors, the Christ we embody in our neighborhoods is a shallow distortion of the Jesus we encounter in Scripture," they write.

That suffering may include financial difficulties, pornography addiction, and marital infidelity. Christians need to slow down to engage the same people Jesus sought out: the poor, unemployed, single parents, foster children, refugees, the physically disabled, and the mentally ill.

"It's natural for us to want to fix these struggles from a distance or to run from them altogether," the book says. "But we learn patience by immersion, journeying faithfully alongside those who are suffering."

The simple act of sharing a meal is one of the best ways to extend hospitality and engage in meaningful conversation with neighbors, the authors suggest.



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## POLL SUGGESTS PASTORS UNINFORMED ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**D**espite recent high-profile cases involving domestic violence, few Protestant pastors often speak about the topic from the pulpit — and most feel ill-equipped to handle such incidents among their parishioners.

An unprecedented survey of 1,000 pastors, conducted by LifeWay Research on behalf of IMA WorldHealth and the social justice organization Sojourners, found that three-fourths of pastors underestimate the level of sexual and domestic violence experienced within their congregations.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that one in three U.S. women and one in four men experience intimate partner violence. Numerous studies suggest that incident rates among active churchgoers are nearly the same as those in the general population.

However, a majority of pastors said they believe less than 10 percent of the adults and children in their congregations had ever been victims of

domestic violence. As with abortion, pornography, and alcoholism, pastors tend to think people in their congregations aren't engaged in such activities.

Two-thirds of pastors in the “Broken Silence: A Call for Churches to Speak Out” survey said they speak about domestic violence once a year or not at all. Among pastors who do address the topic, three-fourths acknowledge domestic and sexual violence is a problem in their community, but only 25 percent say it is an issue in their church.

“This is a conversation the church needs to be having but isn't,” said Sojourners founder Jim Wallis. “We cannot remain

silent when our sisters and brothers live under the threat of violence in their homes and communities.”

Slightly more than half of

pastors indicated they are adequately familiar with local resources, such as a rape crisis or domestic violence center that specifically addresses the aftermath of abuse. Four out of five pastors said they would take appropriate action to reduce sexual and domestic violence if they had the training and resources to do so.

But for now, the survey indicates pastors who have encountered incidents of violence might be doing more harm than good with the advice they dispense.

Experts say the top priority for abuse victims is gaining immediate access to safety. Yet the poll suggests such thinking is counterintuitive for many clergy who believe that family matters are private, families should maintain “stability” while working out problems, and women should always submit to their husbands. More than 60 percent of clergy said they had provided counseling to couples dealing with domestic or sexual violence situations.

Churchgoing women often seek help from their pastors after abuse. The first disclosure is critical because research consistently shows that advice from the first person a victim tells will, in large measure, determine her next steps.

**Pastors who acknowledge domestic and sexual violence is a problem in their community:**

**75%**

**Pastors who say it is an issue in their church:**

**25%**



## Americans Embellish Church Attendance



**Even though it has become more socially acceptable to be an atheist or agnostic** in recent years, Americans still tend to exaggerate how often they attend church, a recent study has found.

People are more honest about religious activities in online surveys compared to telephone interviews, according to a Public Religion Research Institute study, “I Know What You Did Last Sunday,” compiled

by Daniel Cox, Robert P. Jones, and Juhem Navarro-Rivera. “Traditional survey questions that measure religious service attendance produce inflated rates of religious participation,” the trio reported.

Much of the previous work on why Americans overestimate their religious participation has to do with the perception of

social desirability — people tend to deny acting in ways that are inconsistent with prescribed norms or values. But the PRRI poll found that posing the question without a live interviewer yields results that are more truthful.

PRRI posed identical questions to respondents via a live phone interview and in the relative privacy of a self-administered online survey. By phone, 36 percent of Americans reported they attend church at least once a week; by computer, 31 percent said they do. In addition, 43 percent of online respondents indicated they seldom or never attend church, versus only 30 percent of those interviewed by phone.

PRRI found that every religious subgroup of Americans inflates their level of churchgoing, but the pattern is particularly acute among Catholics and white mainline Protestants.

Young adults ages 18 to 29 showed a noticeable disparity regarding low levels of commitment. In the phone survey, 31 percent said they rarely or never attend, but 49 percent admitted that online. Likewise, those living in the Western U.S. showed a noticeable discrepancy, with 33 percent of phone respondents indicating they seldom or never attend services, in contrast to 52 percent of those replying by computer.

“Despite the shifting cultural and religious contours, there are powerful social incentives for Americans to embellish their religious résumés,” the study concludes. “Americans continue to over-report their religious attendance on telephone surveys.”

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# Book Reviews



## America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation

GRANT WACKER

(Belknap Press, 448 pp., hardcover)

**A**merica's Pastor is not a conventional biography of Billy Graham. It does not narrate Graham's life in chronological order, in other words. If you're looking for such a book, read Graham's memoir, *Just As I Am*, or William Martin's magisterial biography, *A Prophet with Honor*.

Instead, *America's Pastor* is a biographical study that centers around three questions:

1. How did Billy Graham become the voice of American evangelicalism?
2. Why did evangelicalism become so pervasive in the second half of the twentieth century?
3. And what does it say about the relation between religion and America itself?

To each of these questions, Grant Wacker, a noted evangelical church historian at Duke University Divinity School, offers a single answer: "From first to last, Graham displayed an uncanny ability to adopt trends in the wider culture and then use them for his evangelistic and moral-reform purposes."

Wacker goes on to say that Graham "possessed an uncanny ability to speak both *for* and *to* the times."

Graham's "uncanny ability" explains why ministers would do well to read this book. We, too, need to speak *for* and *to* our times. And Graham's life and ministry presents us with both an inspiring example ... and a cautionary tale.

The inspiring example is what Christian pastors know best. In his personal life and public ministry, Graham and his evangelistic team set the gold standard of integrity. Much of this arose from a commitment to the so-called "Modesto Manifesto" of 1948, in which the Graham team set out rules of personal and organizational integrity.

Building on this integrity, Graham traveled the globe, using every available media to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. He preached large evangelistic crusades, wrote a spiritual advice column, spoke on radio, appeared on television, produced evangelistic films, and stayed in the public eye. In addition, he helped found institutions that continue to shape evangelicalism: *Christianity*



*Today*, Fuller Theological Seminary, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and the Lausanne Movement, among others. Graham was so involved with, and so central to, the postwar American evangelical revival that it is difficult to imagine it without him. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine postwar American history without him.

This doesn't mean Graham's ministry

— or the mainstream evangelicalism he represented — was without flaws. The most glaring was his penchant for partisan politics. Perhaps nothing discredited his ministry more in the eyes of many than his too-close relationship with, and post-Watergate defense of, President Richard Nixon. And we might also ask how America would have been better off had he cooperated more closely with Martin Luther King Jr. and led white evangelicals in a greater support for African-American civil rights.

Historical counterfactuals such as this are interesting to ponder, but we cannot change the past. We can only learn from the past in order to do better in the future.

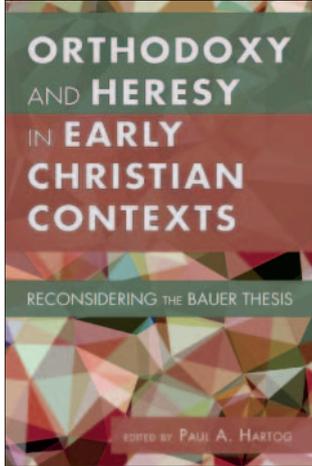
Grant Wacker has penned an interesting, informative, and, in many ways, authoritative interpretation of Billy Graham's influence on American Christianity and the American nation. Those of us who, like Graham, are called to minister the gospel would do well to use the book as a mirror of self-reflection, asking questions such as these:

- Do we conduct our lives and ministries with integrity, and is this integrity obvious to all?
- Do we lament the baleful effects of contemporary media — television, film, social media, etc. — or do we leverage them to produce better effects?
- Do we exercise a prophetic ministry within our society, or have partisan interests captured us?
- In an increasingly secular society, do we cooperate with as wide a circle of fellow Christians as possible, or do we retreat into small circles of like-mindedness?
- Most importantly, do we preach through our words and demonstrate with our lives the good news of Jesus Christ, calling nonbelievers to faith in Him, and believers toward a closer following of Him?

America may never see another Billy Graham — an evangelist who has influenced both church and society. It will see us, however. Are we, like him, speaking both *for* and *to* it in our own, much smaller circles of influence?

## Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christian Contexts: Reconsidering the Bauer Thesis

PAUL A. HARTOG, ED. (*Pickwick, 288 pp., paperback*)



Even if you never have heard of Walter Bauer or his book, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (1934), you probably have heard of the “Bauer thesis,” or at least a corrupted version of it. The corrupted version underlies Dan Brown’s atrocious novel, *The Da Vinci Code*. Academically respectable and up-to-date versions of the Bauer thesis can be found in books by Bart Ehrman and Elaine Pagels.

Paul A. Hartog summarizes the Bauer thesis under four heads:

1. In many geographical regions, what came to be deemed as “heresy” was the original form of Christianity.
2. In many locales, the “heretical” adherents often outnumbered the “orthodox” adherents.
3. As one form of Christianity among many, “orthodoxy” suppressed “heretical” competitors, often through ecclesiastical machinations and coercive tactics, and especially through the powerful influence of the Roman Church.
4. “The “orthodox” parties then revised the Church’s collective memory by claiming that their views had always been the accepted norm.



Bauer

In short, far from being historically original or theologically normative, orthodox Christianity was simply the team that won. Such a cynical view — orthodoxy as will to power — calls into question the very possibility of an authoritative, normative form of Christianity.

Without denying that diversity present in earliest Christianity — both *within* orthodoxy and *between* orthodoxy and heresy — the contributors to Hartog’s book

“expose Bauer’s numerous claims that fall short of the historical evidence.” The historical evidence, in other words, suggests that orthodoxy “won” not because it was the most powerful but because it had the greatest claim to being the original form of Christianity.

In the conclusion, Hartog states what’s at stake in this debate: “The ultimate question is not the chronological precedence [of orthodoxy or heresy] in a particular locale, nor the diverse plurality of religious communities arising from similar roots, but

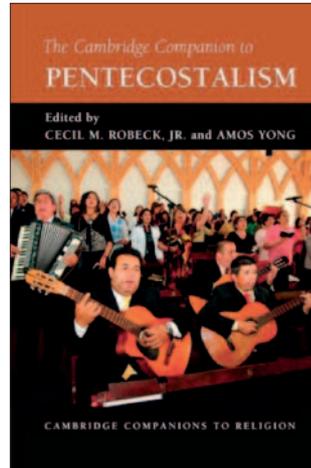
the nature and possibility of normed unity — whether a focused normativity is possible. Those early followers who believed that Jesus had risen from the dead would naturally be inclined to think that such a norm was available.”

And so should we.

## The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism

CECIL M. ROBECK JR. AND AMOS YONG, EDS.

(*Cambridge, 356 pp., paperback*)



*The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism* is a scholarly introduction to global Pentecostalism. The authors, Cecil M. Robeck Jr. and Amos Yong, are leading Pentecostal academics and Assemblies of God ministers. They divide the book’s essays into three categories: “Historical Considerations,” “Regional Studies,” and “Disciplinary Perspectives.”

The articles under “Historical Considerations”

examine the histories of classical Pentecostalism, the charismatic renewal, and Oneness Pentecostalism. These essays focus on the origins and growth of these movements, as well as changing understanding of their histories over time.

“Regional Studies” examines Pentecostalism — which is defined broadly to include numerous renewal movements alongside classical Pentecostalism — in North America, Europe, the former Soviet Union, Latin America, Africa, and Asia. These essays helpfully survey the origins and varieties of renewal movements within these areas, as well as conflicts among them.

Finally, “Disciplinary Perspectives” examines global Pentecostalism through the lenses of politics and economics, cultural anthropology, sociology, spirituality, theology, ecumenism, and encounter with world religions.

A dominant note that sounds throughout the book is the problem of unity and diversity within global Pentecostalism. Stated as a question, the problem is this: How can we speak of global Pentecostalism (singular) when the histories, theological emphases, organizational structures, social locations, and political-economic commitments of its constituent members are diverse and plural? Within the World Assemblies of God Fellowship, of course, this problem is less pronounced because of historical, doctrinal, and organizational ties among the member churches, but even so, it is not entirely absent.

These scholarly essays thus present Pentecostal ministers with a pastoral challenge: To maintain the unity of the Spirit with other believers without diluting their own principled convictions about the meaning and practice of the Full Gospel.

## Book Reviews



### In Brief

#### **Churchless: Understanding Today's Unchurched and How to Connect with Them**

GEORGE BARNA and DAVID KINNAMAN, EDS.  
(Tyndale Momentum, 224 pp., hardcover)

Though churchless Americans are a minority, they are a country-size minority, and their share of the population is increasing rapidly. "If we hope to stem the swelling tide of churchless adults," the authors write, "we must make a compelling case for the value of church life." This book will help your church make that case.

#### **The Big Ten: A Quick-Access Guide to Ten Youth Ministry Essentials**

SCOTTY GIBBONS  
(My Healthy Church, 128 pp., paperback)

"You love God. You love students. You want to make a difference," writes Scotty Gibbons. But you don't know how to lead a youth ministry. *The Big Ten* doesn't answer every question you might have, but it offers "field-tested, practical advice" that will help you with the essentials.

#### **Good Kids, Big Events, and Matching T-Shirts: Changing the Conversation on Health in Youth Ministry**

DAVID HERTWECK  
(My Healthy Church, 208 pp., My Healthy Church)

Churches often evaluate their youth ministries based on the wrong metrics. Rather than promoting moralism, big events, and happy groups, David Hertweck encourages youth ministries to pursue gospel fluency, Spirit dependency, and biblical community. "What our students need more than good advice is good news. And the best news is the gospel.

#### **Preventing Suicide: A Handbook for Pastors, Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors**

KAREN MASON  
(IVP Books, 233 pp., paperback)

Pastors and other ministers stand on the frontline of mental health issues in the church. Unfortunately, they often feel unprepared to deal with these issues, especially when it comes to suicide. This book helps them

think theologically about suicide, identify warning signs and intervene with those contemplating it, and minister to family and friends in its aftermath.

### Seconds and Thirds

#### **Christian Theology, 3rd ed.**

MILLARD J. ERICKSON  
(Baker Academic, 1200 pp., hardcover)

For 30-plus years, Millard Erickson's systematic theology has been a standard in seminary classrooms. Though written from a moderately Calvinist, Baptist perspective, it provides a fair-minded treatment of theological issues. Pentecostals will disagree with some of his statements about the Holy Spirit, but on the whole this is a useful book of evangelical doctrine.

#### **Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, 2nd ed.**

JOEL B. GREEN, JEANINE K. BROWN, and NICHOLAS PERRIN, EDS.  
(IVP Academic, 1088 pp., hardcover)

Since its publication in 1992, this dictionary has established itself as an authoritative compendium of information about Jesus and the Gospels. With new articles and updated bibliographies, it is a must-have for pastors and teachers who desire a better understanding of the history, theology, ethics, and scholarly interpretation of Jesus and the Gospels.

#### **The First Epistle to the Corinthians, rev. ed.**

GORDON D. FEE  
(Eerdmans, 1044 pp., hardcover)

First Corinthians is a foundational text for Pentecostal theology and spirituality, and Gordon Fee's magisterial commentary belongs in every Pentecostal pastor's library. This revised edition uses the NIV 2011 text and incorporates scholarly writings about 1 Corinthians that have been published since the first edition.

#### **An Introduction to Biblical Ethics: Walking the Way of Wisdom, 3rd ed.**

ROBERTSON MCQUILKIN and PAUL COPAN  
(IVP Academic, 669 pp., hardcover)

This helpful, one-volume introduction to ethics divides its material into two sections. The first deals with "foundational considerations," such as theology and ethical theory. The second deals with "applying the Bible to life," on a variety of issues, including sex, abortion, poverty, and the relationship of church and state.

HEATH ADAMSON



# The Bush Always Burns

Jesus in the Unannounced  
Moments of Life

JESUS IN THE UNANNOUNCED MOMENTS OF LIFE

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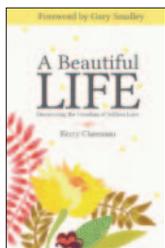
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## 2015 National Women's Ministries Theme

**A**ssemblies of God churches around the nation can celebrate the ministries of women in their congregations at any time throughout the year. The 2015 theme is "A Beautiful Life," based on the Bible study *A Beautiful Life: Discovering the Joy of Selfless Love* by Assemblies of God National Women's Ministries director Kerry Clarensau.

A Women's Ministries service provides an opportunity for every church to honor its women and encourage them to expand their ministries, and it is also an ideal time for each congregation to give an offering to support the Assemblies of God National Women's Department. These offerings help continue the ministries for women everywhere. Churches can send offerings any time during the year.

*Ministering to Women in 2015*, a resource magazine which includes information for planning a Women's Ministries emphasis, is available from the National Women's Department at 800-448-2235.

The National Women's Department exists to help equip churches to minister to women. For more information, visit [women.ag.org](http://women.ag.org), email [women@ag.org](mailto:women@ag.org), or call 417-862-2781, extension 4060.

## The Role of Women in Mentoring the Next Generation

**Today's girls need people they can look to** for support and encouragement in challenging times.

The statistics are sobering. Nearly 35 percent of girls in high school have felt hopeless almost every day for at least two weeks. About 11 percent of adolescents have a depressive disorder by age 18. Eating disorders are now the third most common chronic illness in adolescent girls. One in 10 young people self-mutilate. One in three girls has had sex by age 16, and two-thirds have had sex by age 18.<sup>1</sup> In 2007, suicide was the third leading cause of death for teens and young adults ages 15 to 24.<sup>2</sup>

What young people are missing is one significant relationship. To help members of the next generation grow into Spirit-empowered believers, godly women must step up as mentors.

Girls Ministries is combating the problems these statistics represent by empowering women across the nation to guide the next generation through the unique challenges of womanhood. Girls Ministries is equipping leaders to impact girls by understanding their needs, challenging them intellectually, helping them develop healthy peer relationships, holding them accountable, and — most importantly — pointing them to a personal relationship with Jesus.

For more information, visit [ngm.ag.org](http://ngm.ag.org).

### Notes

1. Jimmie Davis, *Girls Ministry Handbook* (Nashville: Lifeway Christian Resources, 2007).
2. National Institute of Mental Health, Science Writing, Press & Dissemination Branch, "Depression in Children and Adolescents Fact Sheet," <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression-in-children-and-adolescents/depression-in-children-and-adolescents.pdf> (accessed June 30, 2014).

## Mega Sports Camp Unveils New Theme

**My Healthy Church** recently introduced the MEGA Sports Camp theme for 2015: Get Ready. Churches nationwide have successfully used MEGA Sports Camp to reach their communities for Christ.

This resource is a four-time winner of *Outreach Magazine's* Best Children's Outreach Resource of the Year. Churches report that more than 50 percent of attendees are guests, many of whom do not regularly attend church anywhere.

Churches may use MEGA Sports Camp outreaches as a VBS alternative, neighborhood blast, back-to-school kick-off, missions trip, or Saturday day camp.

Geared for first through sixth grade, MEGA Sports Camp allows kids to sign up to practice sports skills and then learn how to "Get Ready"

to be a better athlete by developing Bible-based character traits. The starter kit includes detailed instructions for three sports: basketball, soccer, and cheerleading. Optional baseball and flag football playbooks are also available.

Each session includes group rally times during which kids enjoy interactive worship and Bible stories and small group huddle times that help them apply lessons from the playing field to life. In addition, stories about real athletes, such as Jeremy Lin, Kevin Durant, and Anthony Robles, help kids apply lessons from the playing field to life.

For more information, visit [megasportscamp.com](http://megasportscamp.com).

## AGTrust: Revitalizing Existing Churches



**Nearly 400 Assemblies of God churches** in at least 20 districts are benefiting from the Acts 2 Journey (A2J), a one-year process to church health sponsored by the Healthy Church Network.

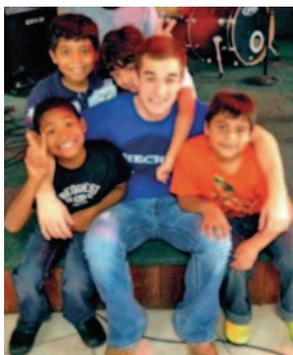
Approximately a third of the participants received scholarships from AGTrust.

"One of the core values I added to my list after elected general superintendent was to revitalize existing churches," says George O. Wood, Assemblies of God general superintendent and chairman of AGTrust. "It is often more difficult to revitalize a church than plant a new one, but because a task is difficult does not mean we should abandon it. The Holy Spirit has infinite capacity to renew a church, and the Acts 2 Journey is a proven tool to help a church assess its needs and find fresh vision."

About 95 percent of pastors whose churches have completed Acts 2 say they feel better equipped to lead their congregations. Ninety percent say their leadership team relationships have grown stronger.

"No matter what stage your congregation is now, the Acts 2 Journey will greatly benefit your church and your city," says Terry L. Davis, senior pastor of Rock Solid Church in Conway, Ark. "Our church was established in the 1930s as First Assembly of God. Today, we believe God has given the church a new vision for discipleship and reaching the lost and hurting."

For more information, visit [healthychurchnetwork.com/acts2](http://healthychurchnetwork.com/acts2).



### AGWM Opens Doors for Studying and Serving Abroad

An Assemblies of God World Missions program is giving college students a chance to participate in missions assignments around the world.

Engage My Life immerses students in culture, language, and missions ministries as they continue their college educa-

tions. Assignments range from two months to two years.

Engage Panama launched last May with six students working with site directors Gerritt and Tara Kenyon. Engage students led teams into local high schools to tell thousands of young people about the love of Jesus.

“Since arriving in Panama, we have been leading teams and going into schools doing programs where we share Christ’s love,” said Jareb, an Engage student. “I enjoy so much going into these schools and building relationships with these students. Young boys, girls, and teachers in each of these schools are finding hope, love, peace, joy, healing, and so much more in Jesus Christ.”

Engage is not only seeking students who will go, but also partners who will spread the word about opportunities and pray for the missions work.

For information, visit [engagemylife.com](http://engagemylife.com), call 417-851-7775, or e-mail [questions@engagemylife.com](mailto:questions@engagemylife.com). Follow the online link to apply. Engage is also on Facebook and Twitter.

### Network211 Adds Prayer Feature

Network211 recently added a new feature to **Project100million.com** that equips prayer partners to pray with focus for people searching for truth online.

The feature presents live information in the following areas:

- It displays information about visitors, including the number of users currently on Network211 sites.
- It shows active websites. Partners can see the names of the Network211 sites visited.
- It reveals the countries the visitors represent. It lists nations that are open to the gospel, as well as those that are hostile to Christianity.
- It lists the pages visitors from around the world are using.
- There is also a map of where visitors live.



Please pray for visitors to the site as they search for truth and answers to their life issues. For example,

you can pray for the one in China and the one in Iraq. You can pray for the one reading, “How to Know God” and the one searching for answers on [Pasokhha.com](http://Pasokhha.com) (Journey Answers in Farsi).

As you view this new feature, consider joining the Network211 Prayer Task Force at [Project100Million.com/prayer](http://Project100Million.com/prayer). You will find a list of current prayer requests from people around the world. You can make a difference today through the power of prayer.

### Global Christian Center

Network211’s online church is helping believers grow in relationship with Christ by delivering quality biblical content through the **Global ChristianCenter.com** site.

As people encounter Jesus through Network211 evangelism sites, such as **JourneyAnswers.com** and **WhoJesusIs.com**, the ministry directs them to Global Christian Center to begin a discipleship process.

The key features of Global Christian Center include the following:

- The Jesus Path leads people through a series of discipleship steps.
- A weekly inspirational biblical message and a series of reflection questions are available online. Visitors in locations where they cannot worship openly especially appreciate this service.
- **Family-Relationships.com** addresses key issues that help solidify Christian marriages and family relationships.
- Thousands of Christian living articles are available to help believers in all life stages, equipping them to understand and apply God’s Word.
- Quality resources help leaders in the local church in areas such as leadership, church management, theology, and the Holy Spirit.

Content on Network211’s Global Christian Center is available for syndication to websites of local partner churches. This helps church websites develop vibrant online ministries that will attract visitors to local congregations. For more information, visit Content Syndication at [Network211.com](http://Network211.com) or email [info@network211.com](mailto:info@network211.com).

### Sustain Hope

**Sustain Hope, a compassion ministry** of Assemblies of God World Missions, is planting seeds of truth around the globe through a unique outreach.

Sustain Hope works worldwide alongside AG missionaries to provide training in various appropriate technologies and agricultural techniques. The ministry forms relationships and touches lives through community-initiated, sustainable solutions to grow crops, provide fuel, water, and sanitation.

Sustain Hope restores dignity, allowing people to help themselves and then train others. As local churches learn these simple technologies, they can offer practical life workshops to their communities, changing lives by introducing people to the love of Christ.

“I thank God for this moment,” said an attendee in a sensitive south Asian nation. “I decided to teach my neighbors about the Moringa tree. It is a good way to make enemies friends.”

In India, practical training touched Muslim communities with the compassion of Jesus. Sustain Hope and Global Teen Challenge partnered in Eurasia, teaching skills to help the people of those nations build better lives — physically and spiritually.

For more information, write Sustain Hope, P.O. Box 8374, Springfield, MO, 65801 or call 417-866-1292. Online, visit [sustainhope.org](http://sustainhope.org) or email [info@sustainhope.org](mailto:info@sustainhope.org).



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## Muslim Awareness Curriculum Announced

At the beginning of 2016, Global Initiative: Reaching Muslim Peoples will release a new curriculum to equip Christian laity for evangelistic outreach among the Muslims of America's neighborhoods, schools, and businesses.

The six-lesson course, *A Guide to Faith Interactions with Muslims*, will include true stories of how the biblical message has changed attitudes of Christians toward Muslims. It will also feature testimonies from former Muslims whose newfound relationship with Christ replaced fears of God and eternity.

The objectives for this curriculum include: overcoming the fear of befriending and engaging Muslim people; understanding the "lostness" of Muslims; experiencing the enabling of the Holy Spirit in witnessing; discerning an appropriate evangelistic message; and effectively discipling Muslim converts.

Just as God called Jonah to minister to the Ninevites, the Lord calls us to reach Muslims. But as the story of Jonah illustrates, God cares deeply about our attitude toward the lost.

For more information, visit [globalinitiativeinfo.com](http://globalinitiativeinfo.com) or email contact @globalinitiativeinfo.com.

## Global University Study Groups Equip Lay Leaders for Ministry

Recognizing that distance learning has more staying power when students share in class discussions, Global University is encouraging local churches to establish study groups.

The study group network is a powerful resource to lead Global

University students through courses. Thoughtful and interactive dialogue expands the learning experience and offers greater insight into the author's words. The dynamics of group interaction enhance each student's educational experience, and the accountability of learning together motivates students.

In addition, students can immediately apply the concepts they learn as they serve their local churches and communities. Study groups are ideal for laypeople seeking greater involvement in local church ministry or personal biblical enrichment as they assist their lead pastors in various lay ministry roles.

For more information about Global University's study group network, visit [globaluniversity.edu/studygroups\\_index.cfm](http://globaluniversity.edu/studygroups_index.cfm) or call 800-443-1083.



**Need help?**  
 Confidential phone counseling  
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**1.800.867.4011**  
 Monday-Friday, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time

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# A New Beginning



**“There is a time for everything,”** the Teacher writes in Ecclesiastes 3:1, “and a season for every activity under the heavens.”

*Enrichment* has added incredible value to our workaday lives as Assemblies of God credentialed ministers over the past 20 years and 79 issues. Now, however, the time has come to cease publication of *Enrichment*. The spring 2015 issue you hold in your hand will be the last.

With every ending, however, comes a new beginning — a new season. Therefore, I am pleased to announce that the Assemblies of God is launching a new leadership magazine later this year. (We’re finalizing the name as this *Enrichment* reaches you.) This is not merely a new magazine; it is a new brand, and it therefore has a new purpose. The first print issue will arrive in your mailbox this summer, though its website will come online later this spring.

You’re probably asking yourself: *Why do we need a new magazine?*

To answer that question, I need you to draw four concentric circles. In the innermost circle, write the words “AG ministers.” In the next circle out, write “church leaders.” In the next circle out, write “church members.” And in the outermost circle, write “community.”



Our mission as Assemblies of God credentialed ministers is to lead local fellowships where worship, evangelism, discipleship, and compassion are the primary reasons for being. In other words, our work can be pictured as an arrow that begins in the bull’s-eye of those four concentric circles and moves outward. As we respond to God’s work of grace in our own lives, our ministries touch the lives of leaders in our churches, whose ministries touch the lives of members in our churches, whose ministries touch the lives of members of our communities.

To date, Assemblies of God publications have focused on church members (*Vital*) and credentialed ministers (*Enrichment*, *Called to Serve*). *Vital* helps church members understand what spiritually healthy Christianity looks like. *Enrichment* and *Called to Serve* have helped credentialed

ministers understand what healthy pastoring looks like. Do you see which group we’re missing?

Church leaders. These people aren’t senior pastors. They can be staff pastors and employees. They aren’t necessarily credentialed ministers; they’re often lay volunteers. These church members are far more numerous than credentialed ministers, and they exercise face-to-face leadership throughout the ministries of the church. They are youth Sunday

School teachers, small group leaders, youth ministry volunteers, bus ministry drivers, etc. They have a lot of influence, and to maximize their influence, we need to resource them, too.

That’s the purpose of our new leadership magazine: to provide resources for leaders in our churches, from the lead pastor to the lead volunteer. Think of the incredible opportunity this magazine will give us to provide ongoing education on a bimonthly basis to our church’s leaders — training that is Bible-based, methodologically sound, and thoroughly Pentecostal! If you’ve been looking for a training tool for your staff and volunteers, our new leadership magazine is it. And as far as we know, the Assemblies of God is the only organization providing such a comprehensive resource for church leaders.

As a credentialed minister, you’ll receive a complimentary subscription to our new leadership magazine. I want to encourage you to purchase a reasonably priced, bulk subscription to the magazine for your non-credentialed staff members and leading lay volunteers. Begin using the magazine to start conversations about sound theology and best ministry practices with the people who lead your church’s ministries on the ground.

And now you’re probably asking yourself: *What about resources for me, as a credentialed, Assemblies of God minister?* As credentialed ministers, we face issues that are unique to us. Therefore, in addition to our new leadership magazine, we are transforming *Called to Serve* from an 8-page quarterly newsletter to a 28-page quarterly magazine, which you’ll also receive free. The new ministers magazine, which is as yet unnamed, will dive deep into issues related to theology, pastoral leadership, church administration, and cultural analysis, so that you will feel confident as you minister the Word of God to your congregation. The first issue will arrive in your mailbox this fall, and the associated website will go online this summer.

In sum, *Vital* for all church members, our new leadership magazine for all church leaders, and the as-yet-unnamed magazine for Assemblies of God credentialed ministers. I trust that these new publication brands will contribute to more effective ministry in and through the church you lead and the community you serve.

If you’d like to receive email updates about our new leadership brand, please go to the following link to provide your name and email address or scan the QR code: <http://ej.ag.org/newleadershipmag>.



To share or comment on this article, go to [ej.ag.org/spring2015finalword](http://ej.ag.org/spring2015finalword) or scan the QR code.



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



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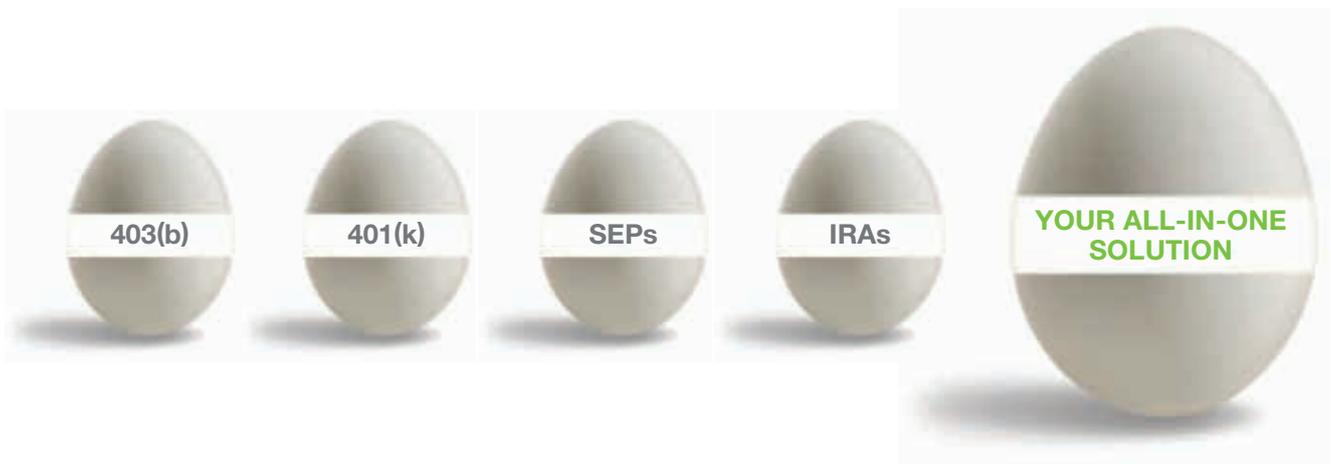
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