

Fall
2014



A Journal for Church of God Ministries

engage

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First-Person Sermons

Pastoring Next Door to a Mosque

The Moses Principle

Pastors They Call Chaplain

FALL 2014
VOL. 10, NO. 3

engage



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Small Churches: The Lifeblood of the Church of God

ALTHOUGH I HAVE never served as a pastor, I feel I have plenty of “life experience” growing up in a preacher’s home where, as a family, we planted seven churches. Sometimes in the early days of a church start-up, my dad would preach the sermon, mom would lead the music, together they would sing a duet, my brother and I would serve as ushers, and my little sister was the audience. We always saw incremental growth over time, and dad would eventually hand it off to a new, fresh-faced minister ready to grow the church.

Back in those days if we had 50 people in morning worship, we were ecstatic. Among those 50 were potential Sunday school teachers, ushers, church clerks, and nursery workers. Although I don’t suppose there is an “ideal” number for what makes a successful church, I do know that my memories of how those small churches functioned was one of familial camaraderie and cooperation in knowing that everyone had a place in the life of the congregation.

In this issue of *Engage*, there is an article on the *Vital Initiative*—a ministry founded to address the needs and advantages of the small church, its pastor, staff, and congregation. Most Church of God congregations in the United States and around the globe run less than 100 in attendance. These churches represent the lifeblood of our denomination, and together they produce an army of believers

who make a difference in thousands of cities. Without them, there would be no Church of God as we know it today.

General Overseer Williams has made Vital Initiative and the ministry of the smaller church a priority of his administration. Read more about in this issue and visit the website: www.thevitalinitiative.com. ■

Engage journal is published in the interest of providing resources for Church of God pastors.

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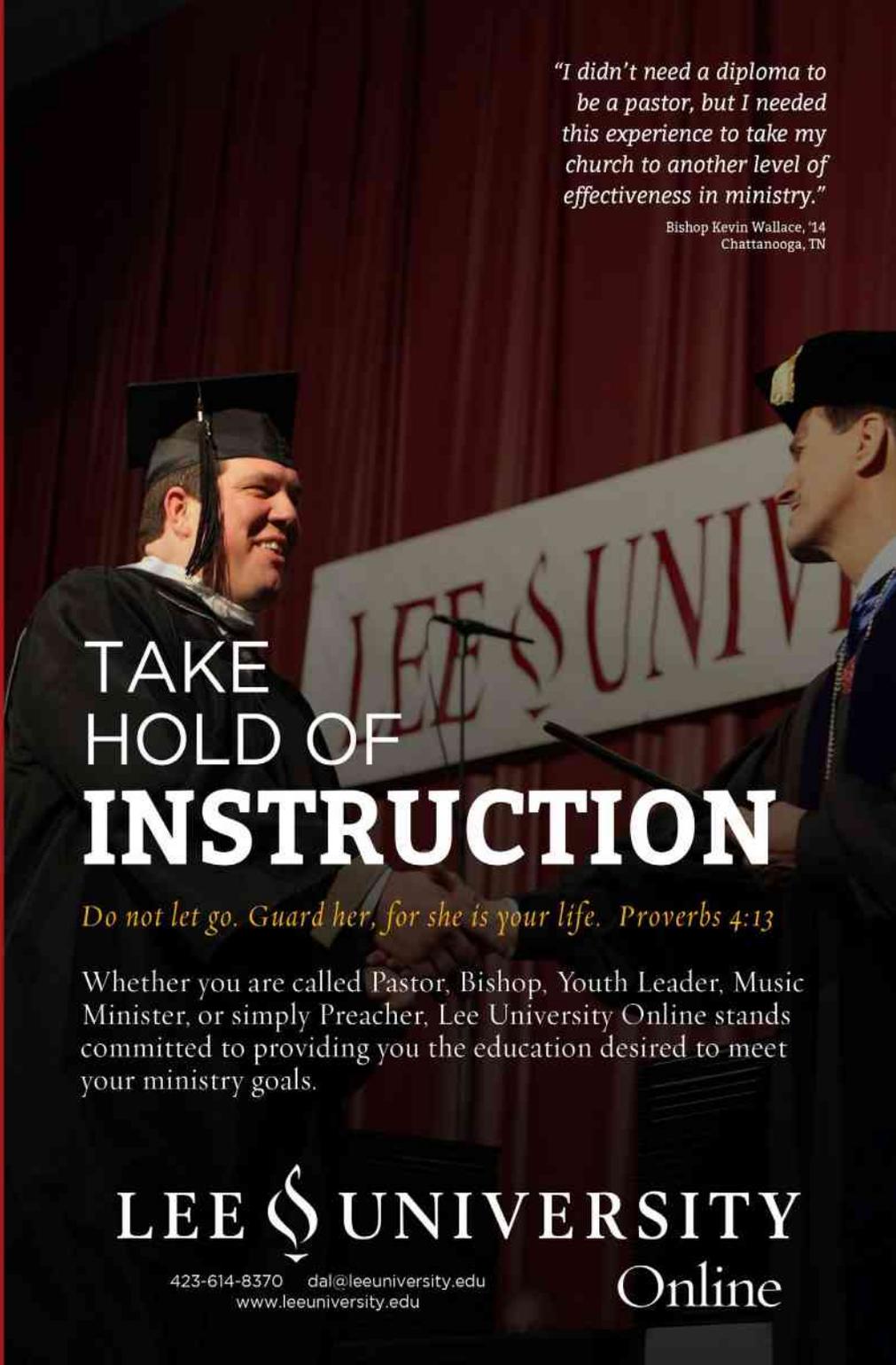
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GA2014 Completes Lengthy Agenda

THE 75TH International General Assembly is now history. The International General Council completed a 59-item agenda, and most of it passed the International General Assembly on Friday, August 1, with no major changes or alterations.

The official opening of the Assembly took place on Tuesday morning, July 29, with the drop of the gavel by General Overseer Mark Williams, serving for his first time as moderator of the Assembly. Three sessions of the International General Council took place that day, beginning three and one-half days of business and deliberation by the ordained bishops.

For the Church of God minister, there were items of interest throughout the agenda, including action dealing with tenure for state overseers/administrative bishops and leaders at the International Offices. For the first time, the International General Council did not go through the process of nominating the International Executive Committee. When they were elected in 2012, the terms were for four years instead of two. Other leadership posts, however, were voted upon and included the renomination of Gary Lewis as director of Youth and Discipleship, David Blair as assistant, Tim Hill as director of World Missions,





and John Childers, his assistant. Later in the week, the International General Council approved lengthening the tenures of these department leaders from two to four years.

The International General Council took the remainder of the first morning session and a portion of the afternoon to elect the Council of Eighteen. Those elected were: Kevin Wallace, pastor of Redemption Point Church in Ooltewah, Tennessee; David Ramírez, field director of Latin America; Raymond Culpepper, former general overseer and now state overseer of Alabama; T. Bryan Cutshall, former pastor of Twin Rivers Worship Center; Víctor Pagán, former assistant director of Church of God World Missions; Thomas Madden, state overseer of Delmarva-DC; Oliver McMahan, vice president for ministry formation with the Pentecostal Theological Seminary; William T. Isaacs, state overseer of Ohio; Dwight Allen, pastor of Cooper City (Fla.) Church of God; Niko Njotorahardjo, pastor of Gereja Bethel

Church in Jakarta, Indonesia; Nick Park, pastor in Drogheda, Ireland; Chris Moody, pastor of the South Cleveland (Tenn.) Church of God; Tony Stewart, pastor of CityLife Church in Tampa, Fla.; David Cooper, pastor of Mt. Paran Church of God in Atlanta, Ga.; Kip Box, pastor of Oak Park Church of God in Mobile, Ala.; Mark Walker, pastor of Mt. Paran North Church of God; G. Dennis McGuire, former general overseer; and Jimmy Smith, state overseer of Western North Carolina.

Following elections, the general overseer delivered his "State of the Church" address.

The agenda was advanced Tuesday evening and in subsequent morning and afternoon sessions on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. The 59-item agenda included several "housekeeping" items, seeking to clarify and contemporize language in the *Minutes* of the Church of God, some portions which had not been updated for decades. Deliberations on the agenda included adding three new

Core Values—Communication, Discipleship and Education—to the Mission and Vision Statement of the Church; seven amendments pertaining to the general requirements of applicants for ministry, qualifications of ordained ministers, and qualifications of exhorters; and definition of the team and program involved in restoring disorderly ministers.

For state overseers, action was taken concerning tenure. The Council moved to give state overseers more time to implement their vision by doubling their term of office to four years. The amendment to the *Minutes* will go into effect at the beginning of the 2016 International General Assembly term. The body of ordained bishops also voted to keep intact 12-year term limits in nonmission states. They referred four agenda items related to state overseer orientation back to the International Executive Council.

An item that did not pass was Item No. 29 in the agenda, which proposed to establish a

Church of God Ministry Operations Manual. This would have modified the *Minutes* into two sections and given the International Executive Council authority to review and revise the section that included the managerial and operational items.

An amendment that opens the door for ministry applicants with more than one divorce prior to their conversion to apply for credentials was debated and passed both the International General Council and the International General Assembly.

A policy statement that reaffirms the church's position against same-sex marriage, upholding the Church of God's longstanding and unwavering biblical view of marriage as a sacred union between one man and one woman was approved by both the International General Council and International General Assembly.

Several innovations were put in place at this Assembly, highlighted by an expanded





online presence allowing more and more people to be engaged. A livestream broadcast was active for the duration of the event and included an anchor desk where live interviews and updates took place. In addition, there was an expanded social media presence with multiple ways to be involved both on and off site. The International General Assembly employed the Twitter hashtags #GA14 and #onecog.

Officially beginning on July 29, many delegates arrived a day early to participate in the LEAD Conference, which featured three outstanding church leaders for an intense three-hour session. Guest speakers in order of appearance included Ed Stetzer, president of Lifeway Christian Research, Haydn Shaw, author of *Sticking Points*, and Reggie Joiner, CEO of Orange Resources. Earlier that morning, former U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft spoke during a special prayer gathering at the convention center. Other

pre-Assembly events included gatherings for chaplains and a World Missions recognition and awards service.

On Tuesday night, a service especially for women was attended by over 2,000 at the Hyatt International Ballroom, adjacent to the convention center. Keynote speaker for the event was Deven Wallace, copastor of Redemption Point Church in Ooltewah. Other keynote speakers during the International General Assembly included Williams, who opened the night worship services on Wednesday with a message on the 2014 theme, emphasizing one, capitalizing on the subtitles of One Faith, One Lord, One Mission. On Thursday, Evangelist Joycelyn Barnett headlined the service which included an extended program of pageantry, parade of nations, and appeal for World Missions. Closing out the Assembly on Friday night was Samuel Rodriguez, director of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. ■

THE IDOLATRY OF NUMBERS

HOW MANY ARE you running now? How many people are going to your church? Are they reaching a good bit now? I remember them being very small in the past.” Oh, yes! These are the inevitable questions and comments that I seem to hear from youth pastor after youth pastor and senior pastor after senior pastor.

I would like to propose that one of the largest idols in the church today is the idol of numbers. Now, don't get me wrong; I've heard it time and time again. “Well, Pastor Craig, numbers represent souls, so we need to be all about numbers. We should all care about numbers. Any church that does not want more numbers is telling the rest of the world, ‘You can go to hell.’” I've heard them all it seems. Of course, each of these statements has a sliver of truth to it. But, these questions are not “cutting it” to cover for or excuse the idolatry that is setting itself up in the hearts of pastors everywhere.

One of the most disturbing things about ministry today is that a large majority of pastors when asked about how their church is doing usually respond with one of three things: attendance numbers, budget numbers,

or facilities. Does anyone find this unusual since not one of those three is ever mentioned in the New Testament? Our religion began by meeting in caves and upper rooms. In Jesus' seven letters to the churches in Revelation, we do not know what one of them was “running” on a Sunday morning. Laodicea could have been “running” 25,000, but it did not matter because God was vomiting them out of His mouth due to apathy. The Smyrna church may have been “running” one hundred, but they were faithful and in tune with God. God was not reviewing quantity or numbers, but quality.

Superficial Christianity and youth ministry today are quite simply eating us alive. America is a psychological society, and its philosophy has seduced the church. Most people in our churches always ask the wrong questions: What can this church do for me? Can I get all my needs met there? How does it make me feel when I leave that church? How can they serve me currently? Does the pastor's preaching make me feel guilty?

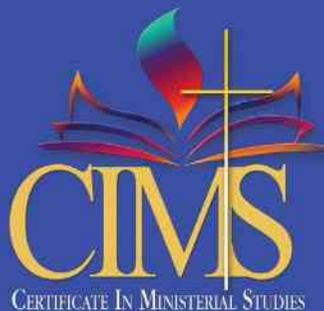
What do each of these questions foster? Self-idolatry. Thus, we have a needs-based theology. We see it everywhere. The most popular theologies today in the church are

those that are directed toward immediate need gratification. Nothing lends to this theology more than TV. Many have called it the healthy-wealthy heresy. God wants to heal you and make you rich. All you need to do is believe. Bill Hull says that following Christ in our nation is just one spiritual buzz after another. If you are poor or depressed, simply close your eyes and believe. By the end of the worship service, everything will be corrected. I think we can agree on one thing—it is not working. What burdens my heart is that a lot of the youth ministry I have interacted with is leading this exact path.

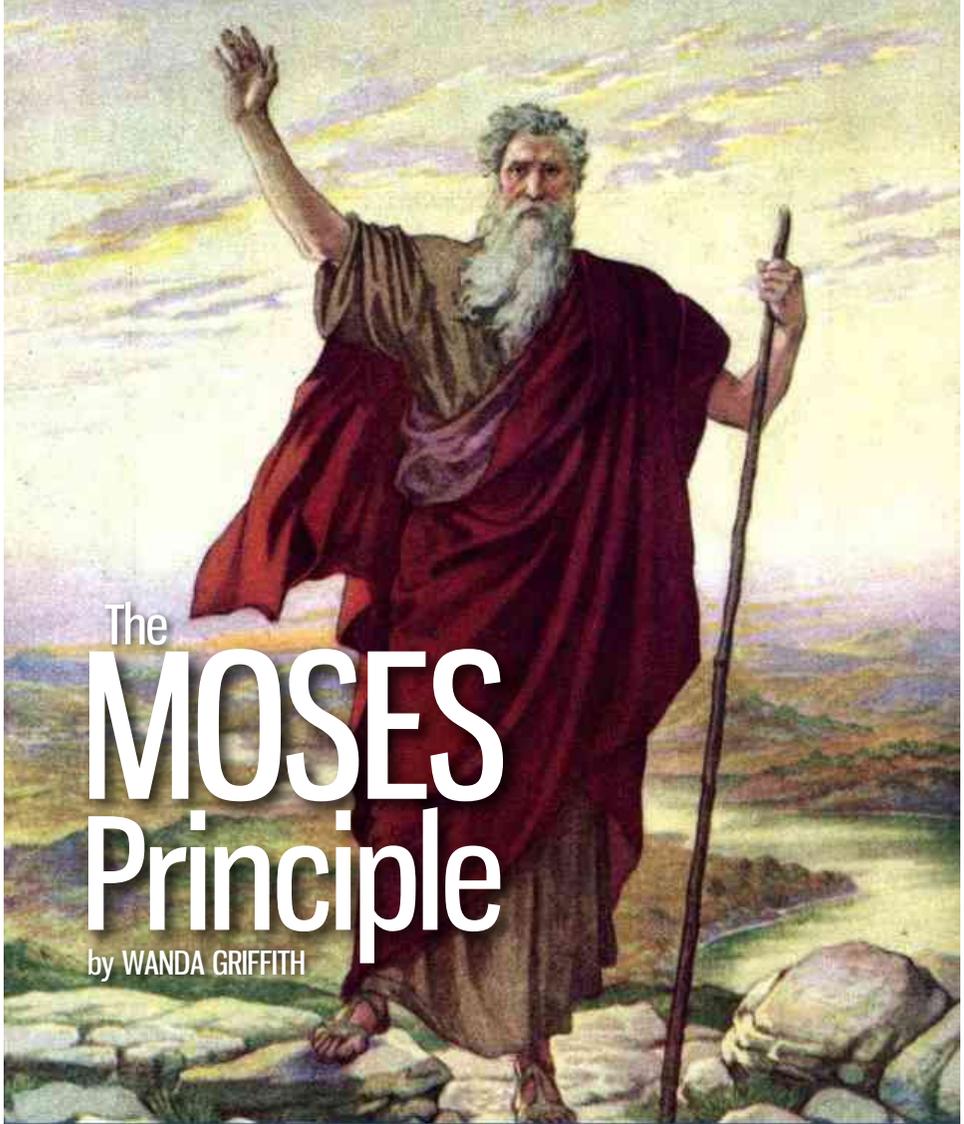
When is the last time you asked a pastor how the church was doing, and he/she responded in this way: “Well, we have two of the fivefold functions (Ephesians 4:11) functioning within the priesthood of believers here, and we are striving to get the others oper-

ating”? Very rarely, right? It is time for youth pastors and senior pastors alike to examine again the calling on their lives. Our ministries should not just produce decisions for Christ, but rather disciples of Christ. The people we minister to today need a strong spiritual experience that is built upon the foundation of objective truth that we find in the Bible. Youth pastors, if you will, are deprogramming students to unlearn the superficial “gospels” of the twentieth century and learn for the first time the teachings of Jesus.

Will it be easy? Never. The church never gets easy. The temptation will constantly be placed before you to reduce your goals and “lighten up.” Consumerist Christianity in our nation will always challenge the biblical standard. But we can’t give into it. We will have to answer to God himself one day soon about the quality of our work. ■



Prepares You for Ministry in the 21st Century



The
MOSES
Principle

by WANDA GRIFFITH

WHEN YOUTH PASTORS and leaders are added to the church staff, they are often burdened with other duties—filling in for the pastor, Sunday school teacher, and worship leader in their absence; counseling, leading small-groups, subbing for the visitation pastor, and sometimes, even serving as janitor. I could

have included more, because as impressive as the list is, it does not quite cover the waterfront of leadership. Even though one person cannot do all these things effectively, some try.

Maybe we need to take a lesson from someone who was called by God to lead His people (see Exodus 18). Moses was trying to meet everyone's needs when his father-in-law,

Jethro, confronted him. “What you are doing is not good,” Jethro told him. His advice to Moses is a biblical case study in good management.

DELEGATION

Jethro convinced Moses to delegate most of his work to “capable men” (v. 21) who supervised groups of 1,000, 100, 50, and 10. “Have them serve as judges for the people at all times,” Jethro advised, “but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. This will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you” (v. 22).

How does this work? In addition to the regular duties, the youth pastor or leader becomes responsible for recruitment, training, and selection of the volunteers to help him or her. Only cases too hard for the subordinate get bumped to the superior.

For many overworked youth leaders today, the Moses Principle is a great step forward. One facet of this principle is the importance of youth pastors relinquishing lay pastoral ministries for which they are neither called nor equipped.

Today’s youth leaders are not merely frustrated in their attempt to follow Biblical models, but they are impacted by powerful social forces in modern society. One is the search for excellence in everything, including pastoral care. This has led to a specialization mania even in ministry.

SPECIALIZATION

At a time when the general physician is frequently viewed as a mere referral center,

the over-worked, “omnicompetent” youth leader seems as antiquated as the medicine man in a modern Western city. So wherever possible, we hire a team with one of the team members designated as the minister of . . . let’s say, pastoral care. That person quickly realized, however, that the job is still too big for one individual, so we hire a subspecialty professional, or so we think.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Added to the specialization frenzy is another problem Moses and Jethro didn’t have to deal with. In this social media-obsessed age,

the greatest time-wasters at work are not pointless meetings or the typical water-cooler banter. According to a recent survey by *Discipleship Journal*, almost 60 percent of workplace distractions involve social networks, text messaging, IMs, or email. In fact, navigating between multiple tabs and windows to keep

LEADERS HAVE
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an eye on a wide variety of apps is a huge distraction in itself.

In the end, almost half of the employees in this study said they worked just 15 minutes or less without getting interrupted or distracted. More than half said they wasted at least one hour every day because of distractions. Social media is here to stay, but it doesn’t have to control the workplace. Leaders have to choose and decide to be in control of their time and their social media usage. That’s a modern-day principle to add to the Moses Principle. ■

Wanda Griffith is an author and inspirational speaker. wgriffith@bellsouth.net

HOPE, the Shadow of Things to Come

DREAMS, PLANS, and hopes are all part of life. Sometimes, they are very clear, and it is as if we can touch them with our hands. At other times, they seem to be caught in the mist or fog almost out of view, like our shadow—just when we think we are there, it has moved.

Life often seems like that shadow, and sometimes there are days we cannot even see the shadow—either the sun is so bright overhead, or the clouds are extremely heavy. The difference is that often when the sun is shining that brightly, we do not seem to miss the shadow of hope; all seems well. On the other hand, on the cloudy days when the shadow is missing, it may seem the hope will never become a reality—the absence of the shadow seems overwhelming.

The promise of a Savior and Redeemer came in Genesis 3; the fullness of time did not arrive for several thousand years later in the New Testament Gospels. Throughout that time, there were bright days in the history of Israel—the nation followed God from the king down to the common man. God spoke with the leaders, and the leaders spoke the message to the people; the presence of God even filled the Temple.

There were, however, also very dark days and hope seemed almost gone. The Temple was destroyed; the people were taken captive; and sometimes many were killed—the sun was not shining, and God seemed very far away. While in captivity, it seemed they had even lost their song of hope. They hung their harps and hopes in the willow and wept.

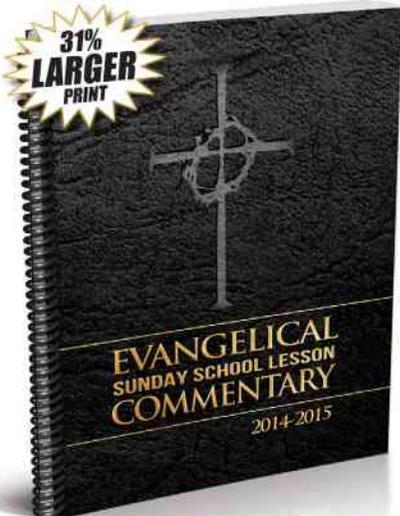
There are times in our lives when it would seem to be easier to hang our harps and our hopes in the willow, or maybe just trash them, with the thought of, “What is the use?” The “use” is that if you have presented your hopes to God and He has chosen them to have a part in His purpose, don’t ever give up on them. There will come a fullness of time; it just may not be our time.

We need to also remember that even after the Savior and Redeemer came, the Hope had arrived; yet not everyone received Him. Some even doubted He was the Hope they were seeking. There were still days when it seemed all could be right. However, with the world, there were and are, still days that can seem very dark—a jet plane flies into a building; an armed gunman enters an elementary school; a truck loaded with explosives is parked outside a building and detonated; a loved one dies from an accident with a drunk driver or from cancer; a spouse walks away and says, “I don’t love you anymore, I don’t know if I ever did”; or a child is stillborn.

Yes, there are things in life that are hard to understand, and sometimes it may seem we have been taken captive, yet there is still God. He cares, He understands, and He has a plan for your dreams, and He can give life to your hopes. In His perfect plan, there are no more shadows—we will no longer look through the darkened glass; we will see clearly. So, take your hopes from the willow and polish and tune them up; you could have the next solo.

The Son is about to shine! ■

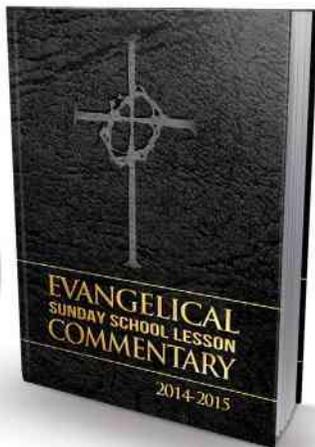
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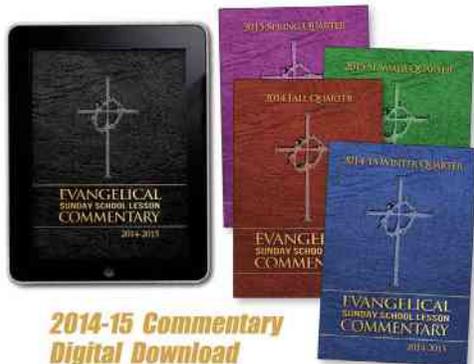
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by GAIL LEMMERT, M.A., NCC

HEALING for the HEART



I. THE HEART

God's Word, mentions the *heart* many times—as many as 570 times in the NIV. From Genesis to Revelation, the heart is mentioned and defined.

- Gen.6:5: "The human heart was only evil . . ."
- Gen.6:6: "The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled" (NIV).
- Exod. 7:13: "Pharaoh's heart became hard."
- Lev. 19:17: "Do not hate [your brother] in your heart."
- Deut. 2:30: "Sihon's . . . heart [was] obstinate."
- Deut.8:14: "Your heart will become proud . . ."
- Deut. 11:13: "Serve [God] with all your heart . . ."

The Word mentions: A grudging heart; despairing heart; a heart that turns away; take to heart; searching the heart; praying in her heart; his heart feared; lose heart; despised him in her heart; whose heart was like the heart of

a lion; discerning heart; God knows our heart; heart of integrity; your heart's desires; David's heart was not fully devoted to the Lord; the heart was responsive before the Lord; devote your heart and soul in seeking God; glad in heart; wisdom God put in his heart; etc.

- 1 Sam.16:7: "The Lord looks at the heart."

The Word further speaks of a devoted heart; the heart that was proud; with all his heart; whose heart God had moved; sadness of heart; people worked with all their hearts; a faithful heart; guilt in my heart; an upright heart; wise in heart; their hearts are filled with destruction; the upright in heart; sorrow in my heart; my heart rejoices; my heart instructs me; etc.

The Book of Psalms mentions a number of times...the desire of my/his/your heart; my heart trusts in God; my heart sings; my heart will not fear; my heart has turned to wax; upright in heart; anguish of heart; my heart grew hot within me; my heart is steadfast; sin in my heart; a broken heart; strength of my heart; my heart was grieved; an undivided heart; and my heart is secure.

- Ps. 119: “An upright heart; hide your word in my heart; set my heart; and the heart of fools. . .”
- Prov.14: “Even in laughter the heart may ache; the wise in heart; and a wise man’s heart guides his mouth . . .”
- The Gospels—in Jesus’ words: “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
- Acts 4:32: “. . . one in heart and mind.”
- Rom. 2:5: “. . .your unrepentant heart.”
- 1 Cor. 14: “. . . secrets of his heart; do not lose heart; the eyes of your heart.”
- Philem. 20: “. . .refresh my heart in Christ.”
- Heb. 4:12: “. . . thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”
- Rev. 1:3: “Blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in the words of this prophecy because the time is near.”

Nelson’s Commentary defines the *heart* as “the *central part* of humankind; the inner self that thinks, feels, and makes decisions.”

According to *Easton’s Bible Dictionary*, the heart is the center, not only of spiritual activity, but also of all the operations of human life. Heart and soul are often used interchangeably. The heart is the “home of the personal life.” Man is designated, according to his heart, wise, pure, upright, righteous, pious, good, etc. The heart is also the seat of the conscience. It is naturally wicked; hence, it contaminates the whole life and character. The heart must be changed and regenerated before a man can willingly obey God.

The process of salvation begins in the heart by the believing reception of the testimony of God; while the rejection of that testimony hardens the heart (Ps. 95:8; Prov. 28:14; 2 Chron. 36:13).

According to the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, the heart represents the bodily organ, and those experiences which affect the body. Fear, love, courage, anger, joy, sorrow, hatred are always emotions that are ascribed to the heart. The heart has come to stand for humanness itself—the seat of the emotions, passions, and appetites.

The radical corruption of human nature is clearly taught in Scripture and brought into connection with the heart. It is described as being uncircumcised, hardened, wicked, perverse, godless, deceitful, and desperately wicked. However, the law of God is written in the heart, and there the work of grace is wrought; for the heart may be renewed by grace (Ezek. 36:26), because the heart is the seat of sin (Gen. 6:5, 8:21).

But heart renewal is indicated by the removal of a stony heart. It becomes clean and fixed through the fear/reverence of the Lord, and “with the heart man believeth” (Romans 10:10 KJV).

Johannes I. Marais said: “The heart is the innermost, hidden, deepest part of anything, the very center of things in all language.” The Bible has a much broader meaning for HEART than does the modern mind. These are the more current definitions of the word.

1. A blood-pumping organ of the human body situated in the center of the chest . . . the left side of chest.
2. The basis of emotional life, source and center of emotional life, where the deepest and sincerest feelings are located and where a person is most vulnerable to emotional pain.
3. Character . . . somebody’s essential character; for example: “He has a very good heart.”

4. Compassion—the ability to feel humane and altruistic feelings; for example: “If she had any heart, she would forgive him.”
5. Affection—love, or warm admiration; for example: “The choir’s singing won the hearts of the audience.”
6. Spirit—the capacity for courage and determination; for example: “She put her whole heart into making a go of the business.”
7. Central part—the distinctive, significant, and characteristic center of something.

this shall all men know you are my disciples, if you have *love* one to another” (KJV).

Salvation and healing many come instantaneously and progressively. The Greek word for salvation can literally mean healing—body, mind, and spirit.

The power of the Holy Spirit brings comfort, guidance and healing to the emotions and the heart.

First Cor. 2:4-5 says: “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power” (NIV).

Information alone cannot satisfy the deepest hunger of the human soul, nor can it bring about the kind of personal renewal needed in our lives and in others. We need to experience the power that raised Christ from the dead. As Pentecostals, we claim to know this power. It was given to us, not just to be blessed in church, or feel good, but to GO and proclaim the truths of the gospel.

Healing of the heart comes through and by the body of Christ. It has been said: “We need the Word of God, the Spirit of God and the people of God to be saved and healed. I believe this. The people of God—the body of Christ—are to be part of the healing, the accountability, and encouragement to one another. That is part of the reason for not forgetting the assembling of ourselves together—to worship corporately, to enrich and affirm each other in the faith, to share burdens, and to pray at the altar for one another. The Lord equips His people to bring His healing presence into places of pain and wounding. We, as a denomination, believe in divine healing, and I suggest there is healing for the heart—physically, mentally, and emotionally. ■

II. DAMAGE TO THE HEART

Because of a sin-cursed world, our hearts can be wounded and scarred by words, life experiences, and loss.

- A. Life experiences leave deep wounds that compromise well-being.
- B. Sin wounds us.... Satan comes to rob, steal, kill, and destroy. Jesus said: “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10 NKJV).
- C. These hurts give birth to false beliefs, emotional upheaval, and destructive behaviors.
- D. There is a need for a new birth—salvation.

III. HEALING FOR THE HEART

Christ came to redeem and heal the brokenhearted as recorded in Isaiah and Luke.

I recommend a wonderful book to you, *Healing Care, Healing Prayer* by Terry Wardle from Ashland Theological Seminary in Ashland, Ohio, that teaches about healing.

Love, acceptance, and forgiveness come from God’s Word. First John 13:35 says: “By



bless a child with a shoebox gift



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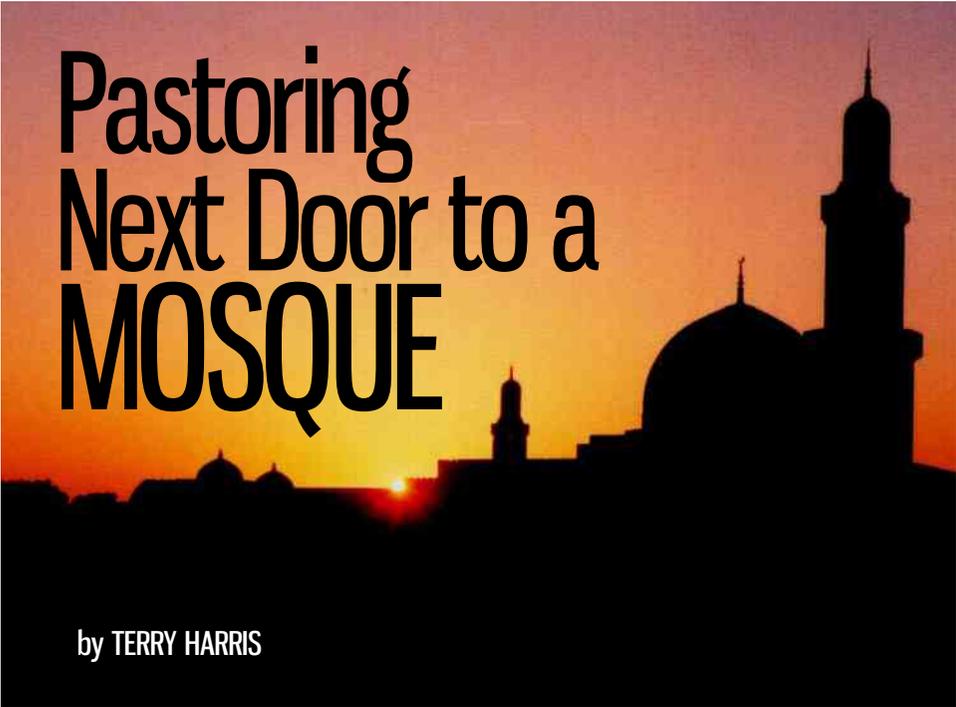
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Pastoring Next Door to a MOSQUE

by TERRY HARRIS

A MERICAN CULTURE has changed. Previous generations were accustomed to their cities and communities consisting of local businesses, schools, fire halls, police stations, playgrounds, churches, etc. In the past, local citizens were all acquainted with what went on in each facility and there was a commonality among us that provided a more intimate sense of community.

Those days no longer exist. Our society has diversified due to globalization. What we used to have to look up in the encyclopedia to even know exists has now come to live next door. This is the new American culture, and church life has not been exempt from these changes. In 2010, an attorney friend contacted me to inform me of a Muslim school/mosque that had quietly been approved to be built within

a stone's throw of our church, The Crossing Church, in Chattanooga, Tennessee. It would be a quite sizable structure. At that time, the Chattanooga area had a dozen mosques where local Islamic faith individuals worshiped. They were all quite small meeting places. The new school/mosque would be the central place for education, worship, and prayer for the local Muslim community. This certainly got our attention, and we began to pray concerning this project. Before long, the key leaders and businessmen responsible for building the mosque asked to meet with me. A meeting was arranged, and my wife and I hosted these men at our church.

National news had been tracking an ongoing scene in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, where another Mosque that was proposed to be built

encountered a lot of opposition and even vandalism in the community. The Chattanooga mosque leaders were concerned they might also face such opposition, and therefore requested the meeting with me.

In the meeting, they wanted to convince me that we all worship the same God. They also wanted to have healthy relationships with us and our community. Kaye and I assured them we would not be orchestrating any opposition against them, because we understand that our country offers each of us equal rights of worship. I asked some pointed questions about their resources, as well as certain questions about the Quran's position on important issues. Their answers were as I had anticipated. Therefore, I clearly reiterated our understanding of who Jesus is, as well as our total support for Israel. The meeting ended with them being assured of our commitment

to be good neighbors. The school/mosque is now built and in full weekly operation. There have been no community issues, and I do not anticipate any in the future.

What does a Christian church do in such situations? We began with praying for the constituents, meeting with their leaders, and then being friendly neighbors. We realize God has placed a harvest field at our doorstep. We know that to have any hope of being an effective witness for Christ, we must love and respond with authentic Christlikeness. With that being said, we must educate ourselves concerning Islam and how to most effectively share the life of Jesus with our new neighbors. This is an opportunity for us that we want to faithfully fulfill. Several years ago, I sensed the Lord saying to me that as a pastor I was called to raise up missionaries for America. It's obvious to me that the mission field has come to America. ■

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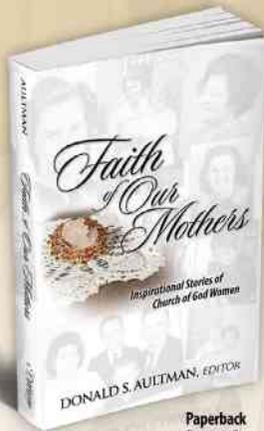
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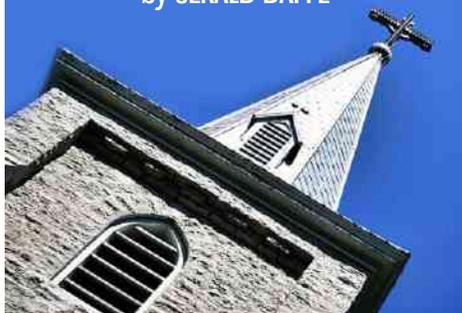
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THE EMERGING MOVEMENT/ CONVERSATION

by JERALD DAFFE



MARK DRISCOLL, Doug Pagett, Dan Kimball, Rob Bell, Tony Jones, Brian McLaren, Tim Wells, John Burke, and Phyllis Tickle have become familiar names since the turn of the century. They are a broad cross-section of pastors and writers who have been linked to the emerging church movement or conversation, as some refer to it.

Nearly two decades have passed since a small group of youth pastors concerned about the exodus of younger people began discussing what could be done to stem the tide. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, they and others founded congregations and a movement which eventually became known as “the emerging church.” Some of these congregations are closely aligned with denominations while others are interdenomi-

national. They range in size from under 100 in attendance to large multisite and multiple Sunday-service churches.

It wasn't long, however, until controversy began to swirl due to some of the liberal views and unconventional methods which permeated the leadership and their congregations. Rob Bell's book, *Love Wins*, definitely resulted in a firestorm. As frequently happens in church circles, many Christians tended to lump all of them and dismiss the movement from being part of legitimate Christianity. But in the process, the terms “emerging” and “emergent” were used interchangeably without any attempt to discern the conservative streams who genuinely were reaching the younger generation (18-35) for Christ and His kingdom.

EMERGING

To begin with, it is vital to have an accurate understanding of these terms. Emerging is both an umbrella term and a specific designation for part of the movement. As an umbrella term, it is used as a broad, inclusive description of those churches which reflect new expressions of thought and practice. They are missional communities utilizing new methodologies and believe there must be change to meet the promises and perils of the future.

A narrower definition reflects “those who are seeking and developing new approaches to ministry but are theologically conservative, adhering to the orthodox doctrines of historic Christianity.” They work toward making their worship and outreach more contextual to our rapidly changing culture.

EMERGENT

The term *emergent* describes the “liberal” wing of the movement. A distinctive of this

segment is that they not only are seeking new methods to reach a postmodern culture, but also they are wide open to rethinking theology and Scripture even to the point of abandoning the absolute truths of historic Christianity. An unusual characteristic in this group is their not emphasizing being in agreement with each other. Their emphasis is on raising questions and then dialoging in community. Membership rolls and distinct doctrinal commitments are not the adhesive. The emphasis on community provides the glue.

OVERVIEW

Though poles apart in their beliefs both groups have one characteristic in common. Each one under this emerging umbrella is looking for new methods to meet the challenge of ministering in a fast-changing, post-modern culture.

In reality, this is a task which all congregations and denominations should be considering. Failure to do so will result in our churches being comprised mainly of middle-aged and senior citizens within a relatively short period of time. It is, however, vital that as we seek for “new boxes” that the same Jesus be shared along with the doctrinal truths of Scripture!

KEY WORDS

Further understanding of the emerging movement/conversation is gained by considering five key words or concepts which are part of their activities and dialogue. As will be noted, each side does not hold to all five or have the same interpretation.

1. Kingdom. God’s kingdom is understood as being “now, but not yet.” This isn’t to be confused with the “kingdom-now” theology of the latter decades of the twentieth

century which emphasized social and political actions which could possibly lead to utopia. Instead, their emphasis is on our world being the theater of God’s “redemptive” and “restorative” work. They reject the emphasis on a Kingdom emphasis which appears to be an escapist action fulfilled in the Rapture of believers.

2. Authenticity. Emerging leaders and congregations recognize how much the younger generation despises hypocrisy, even more than previous generations. There are two dimensions. One “is shedding carnality, impurity, greed, materialism, complacency, and secret sins to claim the relationship of believer. Another dimension of authenticity is to accept people for who they are in spite of their faults, inadequacies, failures, and differences.” Quite a possibility is found in the second dimension. What does acceptance entail?

3. Humility. We understand humility as a distinctive of Christian virtue and character. However, the emergent have an unusual twist to it. Since they reject the absolutes of systematic theology, humility to them means taking the position of saying you might not have a correct view or be wrong on some of your positions. That isn’t to be interpreted as not holding strongly to them, but recognizing the possibility of error.

4. Deconstruction. This concept plays “an important part in the emergent view and interpretation of Scriptures.” Deconstruction denies words or language having fixed meanings. Thus, there is no absolute truth, since meaning is dependent on time and the social community in which you participate. Holding to this position allows one to disregard the “historical and grammatical background in which Scripture was written.” In turn, it provides the

opportunity to reinterpret Scriptures and the foundational doctrines of the Church.

5. Authority. Conservative emerging churches see authority as established by Scripture and also in their leadership. Emergents see authority as founded in the community as together they attempt to find truth. Holding to deconstruction allows for a great amount of leeway for experience and personal opinions to be key factors in crafting their positions.

COMMUNITY

A quick review of almost every website of emerging churches will reveal the word *community* in some context. As might be expected, there is no unified opinion as to its value and intent.

One concept of community is to provide a place for believers and unbelievers alike to seek the way of Jesus. The negative here is when unbelievers are given “speaking rights” in the group. This amounts to “belonging before believing.” They become full members of the body without having made a commitment to Christ. Emergents are most likely to accept this position.

A second perspective of community emphasizes developing the members of the body. They are to be equipped to benefit the whole world, specifically those in their own neighborhoods. It emphasizes going where people are rather than attempting to develop programs which attract individuals to the church. It is this concept which causes an emphasis on lifestyle evangelism rather than specific evangelism programs.

The third emphasis on community is found among emergent. Community is seen as “being the environment in which biblical and theological interpretation and reinterpret-

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tation for today’s context takes place.” This assumption rests on the thought of God in the community of the godhead—created and residing in the community of the believers. Therefore, they in turn as a community are able to contribute new ideas.

EVALUATION

The ongoing chapters of this movement/conversation are still to be written. Inherent weaknesses are readily apparent. At the same time, the strengths need to be emphasized. Consider these three. First, they are reaching their targeted age audience which has been leaving all denominations during the past two decades. Second, one segment of the movement has demonstrated you can use new methodologies and still present Jesus and His teachings as viable for this time and culture. Third, they have managed to push away the temptation of spending large sums of money on “brick-and-mortar” buildings and church campuses! There is something to be learned from these strengths. ■

All quotations are taken from *Crosses, Coffee, Couches, and Communion* by Jerald Daffe, Pathway Press.

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THE VITAL INITIATIVE



■ by MICHAEL NATIONS

RESearchers at Hartford Institute for Religion Research tell us that ninety-four percent (94%) of all existing churches have less than 500 attendees, and two-thirds of these have less than one hundred, and mega-churches (those with more than 2,000) represent less than one-half of one percent (1%) of all churches in the United States. These findings are reflected in the Church of God, even after 40 years of emphasizing church growth methodologies and models. Eighty percent (80%) of Church of God congregations in the United States and Canada have less than 100 attending Sunday worship. That translates to 5,260 small churches scattered across the country. Eight out of every ten Church of God pastors serve a congregation of less than 100. How we process this information is critically important! If we promulgate the idea that these small churches are failed large churches and that the pastors of these churches are somehow deficient and cannot impact their communities, then we negate the ministry of over eighty percent (80%) of the Church of God. There is a better way.

Into this quandary comes *The VITAL Initiative*. Responding to the obvious need and vast opportunity, Church of God General Overseer Mark Williams has commissioned *The VITAL Initiative* to move across the United States and Canada to help the Church of God realize and utilize the place and power of small churches in the mission task that God has set before us. We place high priority on the importance and necessity of small churches in twenty-first-century Kingdom work. Author Paul O. Madsen says, "The small church has a place in the mission task that can be filled by no other group." Church consultant and author, Kennon L. Callahan asserts, "Small is strong. The 21st century is the century of small, strong congregations. More people will be drawn to small, strong congregations than any other kind of congregation. Small, strong congregations are where we are headed in the 21st century." Christian Schwartz, the founder of the Institute for Natural Church Development wrote, "The importance of celebrating small churches and aiming to multiply small churches is strategic. And it will increase."

In order to accomplish its mission, *The VITAL Initiative* is currently focused in two areas. First, we are striving to create a new ethos (the underlying sentiment that informs our beliefs, customs, and practices) within our movement that sees the small church as vital to the cause of Christ in the earth. How we view the small church and the pastors serving these churches must change. This change must happen at every level in our church from the local pastor, to the local church, to state and international administration. The question for the church is not the size of the church, but the eyes of the church. Is it possible that God in His sovereignty has blessed the Church of God with over 5,000 small churches to reap a twenty-first-century harvest? We simply do not see them that way. How we, as a denomination, view our small churches will determine, to a great extent, our effectiveness in mission. We need every church operating as an outpost of the Kingdom to their community from the largest to the smallest.

Second, we are building a movement of pastors serving small churches and others who see the small church as vital and necessary to fulfill what God has commissioned the Church of God to accomplish in the twenty-first century. From our birth, the Church of God has been a movement of small churches, not a denomination/institution with a predominance of small churches. A movement requires involvement and investment. We need everyone to join us to see what God will do with over 5,000 mission stations across the United States and Canada! ■

Visit www.thevitalinitiative.com.

Michael Nations is the founding director of The VITAL Initiative and a Church of God ordained bishop and pastor of a small church making an impact.



Creating a Self-Sustained, Christian-Based CHILD CARE for the Local Church

by
AMANDA
K. HURT

OPENING A CHILD-CARE center in your local church takes effort, stamina, and capital. At Princeton Church of God, located in Princeton, West Virginia, we opened a small center in October of 2004. The lead pastor hired a young, inexperienced teacher to fill the role of creator and administrator of Lifeline Childcare Center. Given three months and \$500 to start a fully functioning childcare center became my goal.

The first step to creating a business of any kind is to research and then research some more. However, that may not be possible if you are under a deadline. Planning each day according to the deadlines set by your pastor means setting aside time each day to, (1) visit area centers to get a feel for the expectations of your community and the services already available, (2) understand

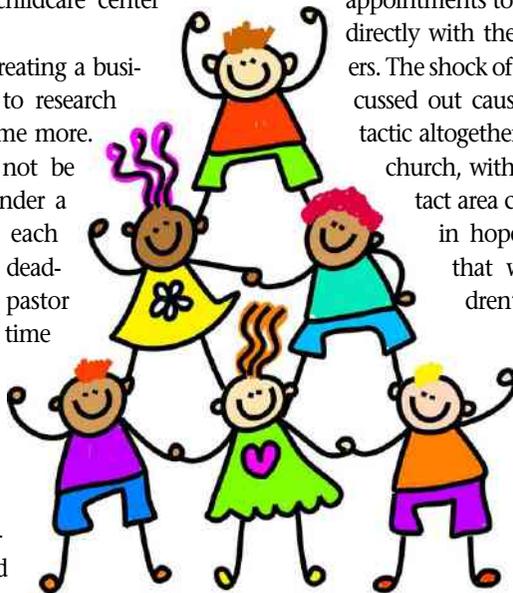
the state and local regulations under which you must operate, and (3) begin a daily prayer regimen that asks God for success, favor, and peace.

Visiting other child-care centers can be very tricky. I found other child-care owners and operators tended to be uncooperative with anyone interested in opening another center. I remember trying to call and set up

appointments to visit centers and meet directly with the managers and teachers. The shock of being hung up on and cussed out caused me to try another tactic altogether. I asked a lady in our

church, with two children, to contact area centers to do a site visit in hopes of finding a center that would meet her children's needs. This woman

needed immediate care and was willing to allow me to go with her to her site visits. Through this slightly sneaky means of surveillance, I found that



we needed a new type of child-care center—one that honored Jesus Christ, encouraged its employees to grow emotionally and academically, and one which would give quality care to the children.

After checking out the child-care centers in our area, I began researching the regulations and restrictions that our state places on child-care centers. Each state has a different set of standards of care that must be followed. I learned that if the standard was written as a regulation, then if some accident or problem occurred, it would necessitate the implementation of the regulation. Check with your local Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), Health Department, and the State Fire Marshall to become licensed. Each group will have a set of regulations, normally in booklet form, which must be followed before they will grant your center a license. Be prepared for some of the regulations from each department to clash or even countermand one another. Do not struggle with the illogical demands that the state will put on you and your center; it's the officials' job to see where mishaps *might* occur and to try to regulate your center to keep accidents from happening.

Something imperative for a successful launch of any Christ-centered business is integrity. Christian standards must not be swept aside in order to add capital to the church. If the regulations say you must have one adult to every four infants, then that is the ratio you use daily; no exceptions should be allowed. If the fire marshal tells you to take down your decorations, then take them down immediately. There is a reason for every regulation and rule, and as Christians, we must "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew

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22:21 KJV). I choose to believe Christ would have us follow the rules our government sets forth in all areas that do not hinder or destroy our faith. We must show everyone that we are set apart. In our area, it is common practice to deceive government officials. Everything from altering attendance records to hiding children in adjoining buildings during inspections takes place in order to fool the DHHR into believing the centers are following the regulations. From Lifeline Childcare's inception, we demanded integrity and honesty of all our staff. We want to show the community that we can follow the rules and still come out on top.

With integrity in mind, you must set your fees to pay all your expenses. Above all else, the child care cannot be a drain on the finances of the church. Most families are willing to pay a higher price for child care when the care is exceptional. Quality care is always needed and demanded. Be very careful about creating discounts for members of the congregation. Unfortunately, I had families tell me that they *deserved* free care because they attended the church. I could not allow myself to be swayed by their impassioned demands. You can give

a small discount to financially supporting members of your church, but be certain to create a policy that is backed by the lead pastor and your Advisory Board. Always stick to your policies. You will need to be in contact with the clerk of the church to determine who is a financially supporting member. Remember, people are very sensitive about their giving records; don't share the information with anyone. In fact, confidentiality must be a priority for your center in every area. Only share information with your lead pastor and Advisory Board. No one else needs the information; they are just curious. In some cases, there can be legal consequences for sharing confidential information.

When you begin a ministry like a child care, you must expect Satan to attack every avenue of your life. The Enemy does not want you to succeed. Why would he care about childcare? Satan hates anything that allows children to hear about a loving, merciful Savior. He wants children to grow up fearing God and hating churches, so they will avoid God as adults. I tell my staff regularly that we might be the only Bible that these children ever read. They may never go to a service, hear a lesson in Sunday school, or attend a Vacation Bible School. We share the story of Jesus every day at Lifeline Childcare. It is amazing to watch children who have only heard the name of Jesus taken in vain begin to understand who He is and want to know Him. Since 2004, many children have made a decision to follow Christ because they attend Lifeline Childcare. Whole families have been saved because of a ministry many viewed as simple babysitting. Never forget your impact! Your influence is far-reaching and stretches beyond the individual you touch to their

families and friends. An entire community can be changed for the better through the influence of a Christ-centered, Christ-blessed childcare ministry.

My father says over and over, "preparation prevents problems with people." Be prepared for the Enemy to attack. Where will he attack? There is really no way to determine the answer to that question, but I can tell you where he attacked Lifeline. First, he attacked from within the organizational structure. We hired a church member to oversee the day-to-day running of the center. This individual presented her credentials well, but proved to be unorganized. She lacked leadership abilities, such as communication with staff and parents, balancing financial statements, and reporting for duty. The Enemy used this individual to slow and impede the growth and development of Lifeline. Eventually, this person left the organization. Several months later discrepancies were found in the financial accounting of the center, and monies were missing. Also, the former employee contacted every government agency that could possibly create trouble for the center. We were visited by the State Labor Board, the Civil Rights Commission, and the State Child and Adult Food Program manager, to name a few. It was a very trying time, but our God is faithful, and we were exonerated of any misdeeds. God won the battle, but we still had to "Fight the good fight"

(1 Timothy 6:12). We were attacked through our health. Every member of our staff developed severe health issues over a year's time. From heart failure to anemia, we



facéd health issues in every employee. Also, finances were very tight for the first three years of operation. Every employee worked for minimum wage and did not receive benefits, bonuses, or raises until the fourth year of service.

The attacks hurt from every angle, but the benefits outweighed them all. Seeing lives changed and enhanced made the trouble worth it. After three years of financial struggle, the childcare began to pay off for the church; we purchased a minibus for the church and childcare, all maintenance for the child-care side of the building (over 20,000 square feet) is paid for by Lifeline, and we pay rent and utilities for our usages. In addition, this year alone, Lifeline provided Princeton Church of God with \$75,000 to go toward the new Ministry Center adjacent to our current property. God has blessed Lifeline Childcare, and now we can bless those around us. Lifeline Childcare employees 25 people who care for over 100 children daily, making Princeton Church of God one of the largest employers in our county; this may not seem like a benefit; but in our area, people are moving away in droves to find work. Lifeline helps keep men and women in the area. God is allowing us to change our community for the better.

One proven method for success is to begin a daily prayer routine that asks God for victory, approval, and serenity. Giving the process over to God may seem like an obvious part of creating a Christ-centered child care, but our human hearts and minds think we can do the work all on our own. We stress and press until we can hardly stand; that's when we finally turn it over to the Lord. I struggled the first year Lifeline operated, because I tried to depend on my own abilities and talents to get us through the rough times. I didn't try to

CREATING A CHILD-CARE CENTER FOR A LOCAL CHURCH IS A DAUNTING TASK, BUT IT IS WELL WORTH THE STRUGGLES. LIVES ARE CHANGED AND RENEWED EVERY DAY.

ask for God to fight for us and give us victory; I was too busy stressing out to ask Him for help. I would have saved myself a lot of grief and pain if I had put God at the center of the process instead of myself. Praying for the favor of God is something Christians should do regardless of the aspirations of opening a business. We need government officials, church committees, and our employees to look on us through the lens that God places in front of them. God can hide our flaws and failures! Why don't we let Him? God's favor is given to all His children, but we need to consciously ask Him to bestow that favor. Praying for peace is often the last thing I think to do, yet it is the most necessary item on my list. I need a supernatural peace when the DHHR drops by for a surprise inspection or the fire marshal tells me to renovate the sprinkler system.

Creating a child-care center for a local church is a daunting task, but it is well worth the struggles. Lives are changed and renewed every day. Additionally, the church benefits from the extra income. But for me personally, the greatest benefit of opening a self-sustaining child care for our local church has been learning to depend on God for His success, His favor, and His peace. (ahurt@pcogwv.com) ■

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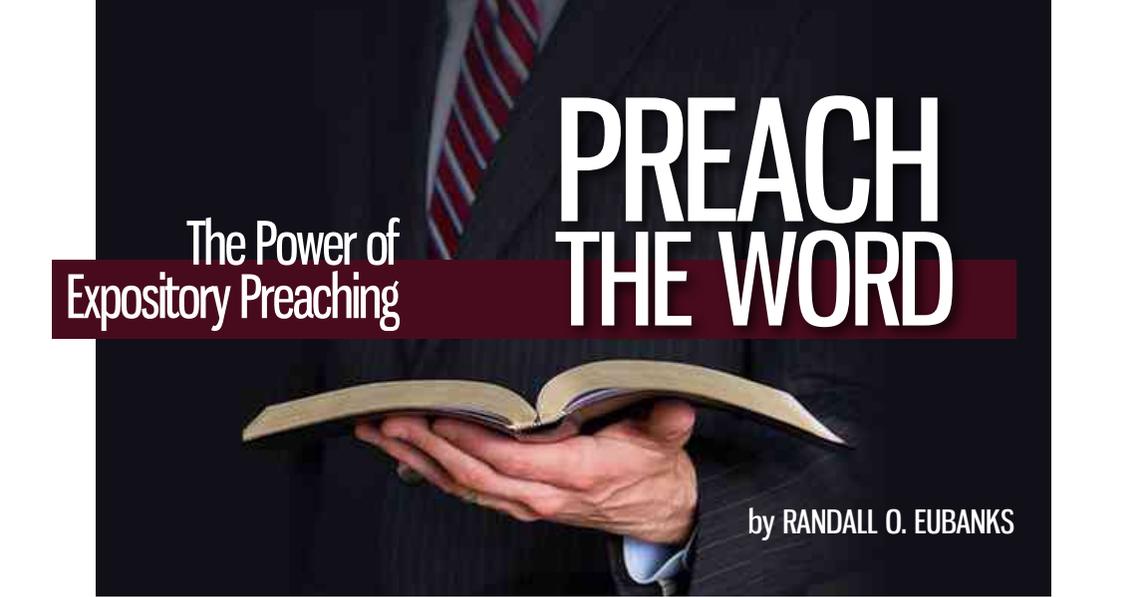
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The Power of Expository Preaching

PREACH THE WORD

by RANDALL O. EUBANKS

AT THE YOUNG AGE of thirteen, I was called to preach. That was the call that was acknowledged and accepted. At that time, you were not called to youth, children, or pastoral ministry—only to preach. After completing studies at Lee College (now Lee University), the one place that provided a guaranteed place to preach was the pastoral ministry, so I became a pastor.

The way I learned to preach was by listening to preachers. Camp meetings, prayer conferences, and district meetings all afforded me the opportunity to hear fellow ministers and to copy their styles. We prided ourselves in being biblical preachers, but all that meant was that one placed a verse of Scripture with each point of the outline and it did not matter that the verse was used in context. We preached our topics and proof-texted each point as if we were lawyers declaring some fine point of the law.

In 1978, I attended the Church of God Theological Seminary (now Pentecostal Theological Seminary). I will never forget the day I walked into F.J. May's class on exposi-

tory preaching. A new world was opened to me as I learned to delve into the Scripture for its meaning and to open the Word of God for the people I served. It was difficult at first to change old habits, but I began to understand as week after week Doctor May took us into the Scriptures, preparing a new sermon each week for his Wednesday night Bible class at North Cleveland Church of God.

From that point, it has been nothing but exciting to plumb the depths of the Word of God. Dr. May introduced me to a book called *Expository Preaching Without Notes* by Charles W. Koller. Not only was the concept of expository preaching introduced, but also the method that opened up the Bible to a student of the Word and a preacher of the Word. With this method, I was able to preach from any text in the Bible.

In my almost 35 years of expository preaching, I have gained many benefits I wish to share with you. First, as a student of the Word of God, the Scripture opens up in a new and living way. The heart of each text becomes a living reality in your own life. Second, every preparation

feeds the soul of the preparer. As you feed on the Word, your hearers know that it has been made alive in you before they hear it. Third, those who hear are enabled to remember what the Scripture says for the outline is directly from God's Word. Fourth, people learn what the Bible says rather than what you say about the Bible. What the preacher says will be forgotten, but what the Word of God says will last long after we are gone. The congregant will look at that scripture years later and see the message that you preached. Finally, application is able to be made immediately. By that, your people will be able to take the Word of God and live it out in their lives, rather than having to reinterpret its meaning and then attempting to apply it to their situation.

Expository preaching normally leads to preaching through the books of the Bible. The advantage of this is that the preacher knows where he/she is going each week. There is nothing more frustrating than trying to think of something to preach week after week. But expository preaching helps the pastor know that behind this week's message will come another one as each message is built upon the other. Also, expository preaching through the books of the Bible causes the preacher to deal with subjects that he would not normally preach. After I began to preach expositoryly, I went back and looked at the sermons I had preached before and I found that I had certain subjects that I preached repeatedly and did not realize it. I did not deal with many difficult subjects that needed to be addressed. It was always amazing to me that when I went through a book of the Bible that the passage was just what was needed at the time in my congregation though the section of Scripture had been outlined months before.

Let me further share my deep conviction that expository preaching lends itself to spiritual empowerment. Without the Holy Spirit to guide and anoint our preaching, the preacher, however skillful in preaching techniques, would be only "a homiletical carpenter producing and delivering wooden sermons" (Charles W. Koller). Proper structure of a sermon does not supply the life of holiness that is the basis for power in the pulpit.

The following two incidents will testify to the power of expository preaching. Several years ago, I was at camp meeting and the wife of one of my students (I have taught expository preaching for more than 30 years at both Lee University and the Ministerial Internship Program) approached me and thanked me for teaching her husband expository preaching. She said that his preaching was greatly improved and that she actually enjoyed hearing him preach. Not long ago, I was at a minister's graveside service and a ministerial couple approached me and both of them thanked me for teaching expository preaching, for it changed their entire ministry. Over the years, I have had students return and express gratitude for the biblical method of preaching. I know exactly how they feel, for I am greatly indebted to Dr. Joe May for the investment he made in my life and ministry.

May we remember what the great evangelical teacher of preachers, Haddon W. Robinson, said, "If you don't preach the Bible, you have nothing to preach." My desire is to preach the Bible and to preach it the very best that I can. Expository preaching allows me to do that and to do it consistently. ■

Randall O. Eubanks is senior pastor of Church at the Brook in Millbrook, Alabama.

Pastors They Call CHAPLAIN

WHAT DO YOU DO when you have the heart of a pastor and you believe God is calling you to a ministry setting other than the local church? You could do what the three successful Church of God pastors highlighted below did when the Lord led them out the door of their churches into the heart of society to serve as chaplains.

A few months ago, *Pastor* Harold Jones was completing 43 years of pastoral ministry. Today, *Chaplain* Harold Jones ministers as the new chaplain for Barney's Pharmacy, Inc. When asked how chaplain ministry compared to pastoral ministry, Chaplain Jones said:

Basically, I am doing some of the same things I did as a pastor. I am visiting the sick, visiting families when there is a death, and counseling with those who come for support. People have the same basic needs, and they need someone who will listen to them, pray with them, and help them. The biggest difference between being a chaplain and being a pastor is not being able to have close fellowship with staff and members of the church on a weekly basis.

After serving as a successful pastor for 33 years, Chaplain Dwight Wilson transitioned to a full-time position as a hospice chaplain. Changing his title from pastor to chaplain felt comfortable for Chaplain Wilson. He stated,

"From the time I began my ministry in 1971, I visited nursing homes and hospitals. My heart as a pastor has always been to minister to the sick and those who couldn't get out and about. I thought that was what a pastor was supposed to do."

Chaplain Wilson describes God's leading to become a hospice chaplain in this way: "God spoke to my heart that He was leading me into something new. It was like a light turned on in my heart that I could be in full-time ministry, even though I was not serving as a pastor." During the past eight years ministering as a chaplain, he observed, "I have won more people to God through ministering in hospitals and hospice than I did in the church." He added, "I even had the opportunity to meet two atheists through my chaplaincy duties whom I befriended and later led both to the Lord. I have never felt more fulfilled in ministry since I obeyed God's leading and accepted a position as a hospice chaplain."

Army Chaplain David Redden served as a pastor for 17 years before following the leading of the Lord to serve as a pastor to soldiers and their families. Describing his transition, he stated: "As a pastor, I found that being part of people's lives was an important aspect of pastoring, and in the Army it is the same way. I would say that a chaplain is actually a field pastor." There are two differences Chaplain

Redden identified between pastoring a church and pastoring soldiers. First, he observed, "As a pastor, my biggest focus was on Sunday. Now I am doing active ministry every day. I can talk to a soldier anywhere, anytime, and they are open to talk to me." Second, he said, "My congregation has grown from around 200 in my church to over a 1000 in my unit. They see me as their pastor. They call me "Chaplain," but what they want from me is what a pastor offers."

A chaplain is a pastor by another title. Most organizations who hire chaplains require them to have successful pastoral experience. Chaplain Redden added, "Chaplaincy looks different, but in many ways, it is the same as pastoring. It is the same calling, but with greater opportunity."

Chaplain Jones gives this advice to pastors considering chaplaincy, "I would pray for the Lord's direction and for God to open doors. We are living in a day when God is giving

A CHAPLAIN IS A PASTOR BY ANOTHER TITLE. MOST ORGANIZATIONS WHO HIRE CHAPLAINS REQUIRE THEM TO HAVE SUCCESSFUL PASTORAL EXPERIENCE.

insight on how to minister outside the four walls of the church in order to reach all kinds of people."

Many organizations value the positive influence that pastoral care offers to their members. Pastors who become chaplains catch a fresh vision of how they can fulfill God's calling in His world. ■

Richard Pace, D.Min. serves as the endorser and coordinator of Vocational Chaplaincy for the Church of God Chaplains Commission.



by FRED GARMON

ETHICS in PREACHING and PASTORING

“It is bitterly disappointing to enter a room full of people whom you have every reason to expect to share the quest and commitments of pastoral work and find within ten minutes that they most definitely do not. They talk of images and statistics. They drop names. They discuss influences and status. Matters of God, the soul, and Scripture are not grist for their mills.”—Eugene Peterson

THE ALARMING LACK of personal conscience reflected in Peterson’s quote is often overlooked as are certain other ministerial practices that somehow become accepted as a norm among ministers, but in reality, actually work to whittle away at what is all too often an already shaky ministerial foundation.

I remember sitting in Sunday church as a college student listening to a trio known as “The Churchmen,” who had popularized a moving and inspiring song titled, “The Long and Winding Road.” The words aptly say,

“I know I must be traveling right, for I remember passing Calvary. Although this road is dusty and its old, for years it’s borne the travelers’ load; someday this road will turn to gold.”

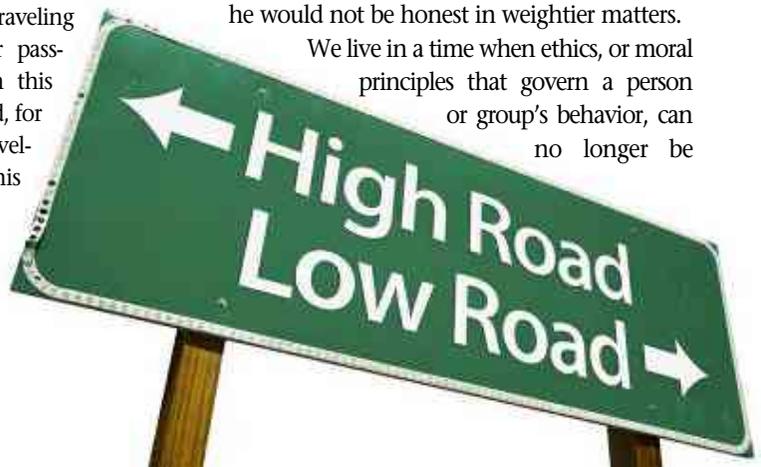
I’m not sure where, but some place along the way, people decide

to swerve away from “traveling right.” And this choice begins with incremental decisions that over time add up, influencing our pulpits and pews, and leaving in their wake collateral damage at various levels.

Within the scope of my own personal ministry, I have encountered no greater problem than the mysterious predicament of ministers who fail the test of even basic ethical situations and moral standards.

One incident I heard about involved a young aspiring applicant to a Fortune 500 company position. The interview had extended into the lunch hour, so the executive took the applicant down to the cafeteria. While going through the line, the executive noticed the young man placing two pats of butter under his bread plate. At the checkout counter, the applicant never made mention of it. To say the least, the young man did not get the job. The executive rightly concluded that if he would steal two five-cent pats of butter, then he would not be honest in weightier matters.

We live in a time when ethics, or moral principles that govern a person or group’s behavior, can no longer be



assumed. Even *Christian* ethics cannot guarantee the likelihood of more integrity, and *ministerial ethics* must be questioned and brought into suspicion as well.

Our suspicions are warranted due to situations where we feel let down or disappointed by someone we trusted, or by the man or woman who mentored us—when someone we looked up to or admired was suddenly found to have feet of clay. And yet that doesn't explain the enigma. Most of us were never so naïve as to actually think our heroes were anything less than human. But the lack of continuity between talk and behavior still leaves us in a spiritual and emotional state of vertigo, rocking and reeling from the startling revelation of what turns out to be less than ethical behavior.

What has gone wrong? What happened to our moral compass? What has happened to principle-based decision making? What happened to common sense and simple due consideration of others? What happened to that “still small voice” that kept our character intact even in the dark when no one was looking?

The verdict is in. We are no longer in the age of enlightenment—we're in the age of not knowing what to do. Or better said, not willing to do what we know we should do. This season in which we find ourselves sounds amazingly like the one described in Judges 21:25: “In those days there was no king in Israel, every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (KJV). It's a time where there is no king, no leader, no standard, no compass or ethical gauge properly functioning. There is a north star, but we seem to have lost the ability to follow it.

Maybe George Barna, a prominent Christian sociologist, pegged it right when he wrote:

The thorn in our flesh is not our theology, but our failure to apply what we believe, not the content of our message, but our inability to practice what we preach.

I think we would all agree that the church must internalize and portray a different set of convictions and behaviors from the ones adopted by most of society. But to the average bystander, Christians behave no differently than anyone else—and pastors are no exception to this observation. If this is true, then our faith is simply a theoretical construct, an emotional decision, and a psychological prop that eases our consciences but does not have the power to transform who we are, how we behave, or to sustain us through the various seasons of life.

I would like to report that none of this “stinking thinking” has found its way into the Church of God, and surely not into the ministry. I would also like to report that all ministers have turned the corner and now make consistent, practical, ethical, and moral decisions, resulting in staying on that “right road of Calvary.” But, we all know the sad answer to that romantic wish. Individualism, relativism, self-promotion, self-protection, and self-deception followed by an independent spirit of arrogance have replaced humility and confidence in God. The character ethic built upon the sure foundation of factors like integrity, fidelity, courage, justice, patience, industry, modesty, and the Golden Rule has given way to a personality ethic built upon the moving sands of selfish ambition, public image, politics, gimmicks, skills, and techniques.

It, therefore, doesn't take long in ministry for a person to realize that he or she can enjoy a fairly reputable ministry without giving very much attention to authentic Christian actions called "quiet acts." These behaviors require self-discipline, trust in righteous principles, and a mature personal relationship with Jesus Christ—a relationship that keeps calling one back to faithfulness in the small things, a relationship that keeps pulling one back to that long and winding road.

So, let us conclude these thoughts with a discerning question, a sobering warning, and a challenge.

Question: What happened to Jesus' words of John 17 that describe us as "in the world," but "not of the world"? As the great preacher and communicator Chuck Swindoll once said, "Our boat is supposed to be in the water, but

the water isn't supposed to be in our boat."

Warning: It's a terrible thought, but it's true. Many aspects of a minister's profession that have to do with meeting the expectations of people can be faked. As one person cautioned, "We can impersonate a pastor without being a pastor."

Challenge: In a pastor's heart, he or she almost always knows the right course of action. My suggestion is a simple one: Adopt the Nike motto—"Just do it." ■

Fred Garmon is the executive director of People for Care and Learning (www.pcl.is) and holds a Ph.D. in organizational leadership from Regent University. His M.Div. thesis at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary focused on the renewed need for a ministerial code of ethics. His book on ministerial ethics is scheduled to be published in 2014.



Trains Local Church Leaders in the 21st Century

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by JOHN A. LOMBARD JR.

First-Person SERMONS

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN involved in a ministerial challenge that seemed so overwhelming that you wanted to go somewhere else and do something else? Well, I have! I felt lonely, incompetent, and discouraged as I considered the task. The people in the place where I ministered were described by one of their own prophets as ‘always liars, evil brutes, and lazy gluttons.’ My own response was ‘I don’t want to be here!’”

“I was on the island of Crete. My name is Titus.”

This is a possible introduction to a first-person sermon concerning Titus. A first-person sermon is a sermon presented from the perspective of a biblical character or from an eyewitness of a biblical event. This approach capitalizes on the natural interest that most have in “story.” The listeners can enter into the story intellectually and emotionally, and the story can have transformative power.

The purpose of this article is to offer some basic tools to put into your “quiver of possibilities” so you will be prepared if and when the Holy Spirit prompts you to use this approach. First-person preaching is not intended to take the place of basic deductive preaching—reading a text and expounding its truth. It offers variety and freshness periodically, as the Holy Spirit directs. First-person preaching is saturated with the Word of God. Most first-person sermons come from biblical narrative.

The first step is prayerfully to choose the person whom you will portray. You then research the character and learn as much as you can about him/her. This study includes historical background, customs, cultural understanding, literary context, etc. Sometimes, the meaning of the person’s name adds insight. For example, Barabbas means, “son of the father” whose place was taken on the cross by the true “Son of the Father.” At Peniel, Jacob had to identify himself as “heel-grabber, supplanter,

and deceiver” before he could receive the blessing and a name change from God.

The next step is to decide the boundaries of the story. For some, the sermon will include everything the Bible reveals about the person. For others, such as Simon Peter, about whom much is written, you choose one event or two to be the basis of the sermon. You use only the material pertinent to your sermon.

Identifying the purpose of the sermon is also an important step. The first-person sermon should be more than simply interesting or entertaining. It should help to bring positive changes in the hearers’ attitude and behavior. Is the purpose to challenge to action, encourage the discouraged, or equip for spiritual warfare? The purpose will help guide what should be said and how it should be said. The narrative includes lessons and principles.

Determine the central idea, the controlling idea, or the big idea of the passage. Communicating the big idea is the ultimate goal of the message. The story moves toward this goal. Reaching this goal is the climax of the sermon, leading to the resolution.

The story starts with a problem, tension, or conflict. This conflict connects the character and the hearers. The conflict is elaborated on and intensified. The hearers experience the questions, concerns, and emotions of the character in dealing with the dilemma. The preacher chooses the plot (the arrangement of the scenes) so that he/she moves through this conflict toward resolution. The resolution should not be reached prematurely.

What about the application? Should it be implicit (unstated and left to the hearers to determine) or explicit (some possible applications stated)? If you are going to offer some applications, will you do it “in character” or

TO PREPARE YOURSELF TO PREACH THE **FIRST-PERSON SERMON**, ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT TO GIVE YOU INSIGHT INTO WHAT THE CHARACTER WOULD THINK AND HOW THE CHARACTER WOULD FEEL.

“out of character?” If you offer application while “in character,” you could offer reflections. For example, “As I reflected on this experience, God reminded me...” You could end the character sermon and then offer application. Application could come from failures and/or successes of the character or merely rehearsing God’s blessings and provisions.

To prepare yourself to preach the first-person sermon, ask the Holy Spirit to give you insight into what the character would think and how the character would feel. You engage your imagination, guided by the facts, not fantasy. Guided by the facts, your imagination is within the realm of possibility and probability.

Internalize the message. Saturate yourself with the message. You know your own story, so if you are presenting another person’s story from his/her vantage point, you need to know their story. You probably will need to memorize certain details such as names, dates, and places, but the message can flow out of the internalized, not memorized, message.

When it’s time to deliver the first-person message, get into character. It is more important to be “in character” than to be “in costume.” You do not need costume and props if you get into character and stay in character throughout the sermon. Personally, intellectually, and emotionally—enter into character.

Attempt to experience what the character experienced, and then your hearers can also enter the experience.

To introduce the first-person sermon to the congregation, I usually say something like, "Today I'm going to attempt to present the sermon from the perspective of a biblical character. Instead of preaching *about* the person, in this first-person sermon, I'll attempt to preach *as* that person." Then, I usually move to the front of the pulpit to preach the sermon. At the conclusion of the sermon, I then move back behind the pulpit to indicate visually and verbally that I now am sharing from my own perspective.

The first-person sermon is not "in your face," so it is safe for the hearers to enter into the story. It is probably in conversational tones since you are sharing a story. It is shared enthusiastically and personally. Your body language should reflect the tenor of the message, relaxed and appropriate to the content.

Most of the content of the message arises directly from the Word of God, even though you state it in your own words. Even with very familiar biblical characters, you can include some details that will challenge the hearers to consider again the message of this person.

Following the introduction to a first-person message from Titus, with which this article began, I could continue, "Crete was a beautiful island with very fertile soil. There was a prominent mountain range in the middle of the island with Mt. Ida as the highest peak. There were many towns and a couple of well-known harbors. You probably have heard of Fair Havens, the place that Paul convinced the ship captain to winter when he was being taken to Rome.

In contrast to the beauty of the island was the bleak spiritual condition of the people. Idolatrous worship prevailed. Crete was known as the birthplace of Zeus. In addition to the idolatry, Jewish influence was large and they were aggressive against Christians. The Christian congregation was small and unorganized with a lack of spiritual leadership." Notice that some historical facts are important to set the scene, but irrelevant facts can be misleading and boring.

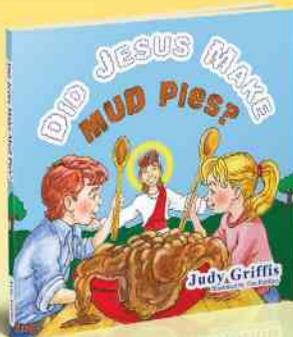
After sharing further, I come to the main theme of the sermon.

At the very time that I was feeling all alone and distressed, the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Paul to send me a letter. He said, "For this reason I left you in Crete that you might set in order the things remaining to be done and that you might appoint elders in every town as I directed you." I was reminded of my assignment. My mission was clarified. I was encouraged that Paul still believed in me and that God had not forgotten me. I was not only encouraged and challenged but the letter also gave me vital instructions to guide me in carrying out my mission.

The preacher could then include from the Book of Titus whatever is pertinent in fulfilling the purpose of the sermon.

Having the guidance and anointing of the Holy Spirit throughout this process is imperative. We depend upon the Holy Spirit to enlighten and empower us and the hearers so that the outcome of the first-person sermon is a demonstration of God's transforming grace and power. ■

Comments or questions may be addressed to Dr. John Lombard at jlombard@leeuniversity.edu.



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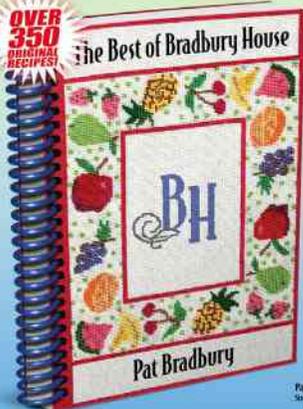
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PAT BRADBURY





by H. LYNN STONE, D.MIN.

How Local Leaders Are Trained Through MOBILIZE

ONE OF THE GREATEST demands on the life of a pastor is *time*. Therefore, Mobilize is designed to help pastors to maximize the use of their time by providing a structure and resources for mentoring local church leaders in small-group settings on a once-a-month basis.

Mobilize is a mentoring program that establishes a bond of loyalty and a relationship of cooperation between the pastor and members. It is a pastor's tool for motivating and training members for spiritual leadership and ministry together.

Through Mobilize, pastors can effectively and efficiently mentor church leaders into successful ministry roles that help the church grow. Attendance increases as more needs are

met. Mobilize provides the curriculum and seminar materials which enable the pastor to lead participants in a half-day seminar once a month for one year.

Ministers who have utilized Mobilize give passionate endorsements. Bishop Danny Kyei-Poakwa, Southern New England Director of Education, said: "The Mobilize program is the best on the market. I have friends in other denominations who want our Mobilize program. We need to utilize these resources for the healthy growth of our local churches." Pastor Paul Keeter in Fayetteville, North Carolina, said: "The Mobilize program is one of the best-kept secrets in the Church of God. I use Mobilize every year, seeing many members become strong ministry leaders."

God never intended for pastors to do ministry alone. Jethro counseled Moses in Exodus 18:14-18 not to try to handle the entire load of ministry by himself. God wants a support staff to grow up around the pastor to help bear the overwhelming burden of the church's ministry. As Bishop J. David Stephens emphasizes, "Mobilize has an answer for unlocking the potential of the many capable people sitting on your pews."

The biblical foundation for Mobilize is summarized best in Romans 12:1-8. In this passage, Paul urges all believers to present their bodies as a "living sacrifice" to be used by God. Furthermore, he says that every believer has received a charismatic gift (that is, "a gift of grace") from the Holy Spirit as a member of the body of Christ.

But in order for all the gifts to be properly manifested in the local church, Paul explains that the entire body of believers—the pastor, the leaders, and the members—must experience a transformation in the way they think about "ministry." Note carefully his words.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being

many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness (Romans 12:1-8 NKJV).

For a local church to reach its full potential as the body of Christ, its pastors, church leaders, and members must experience a new "mind-set." This "transformation of thinking" (literally, a "metamorphosis") involves three essential truths which enable all believers to find their place of ministry in the body of Christ.

1. All persons are equal. This truth is based on Paul's words, "God has dealt to each one a measure of faith" (v. 3). Only two groups of people exist in matters of eternity: (1) those who believe and are members of the body of Christ; and, (2) those who do not believe and are not members of the body of Christ. Through the Holy Spirit, all believers are equal in the grace of Christ as sons and daughters of the heavenly Father.

2. All believers are gifted. This truth is based on Paul's words: "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us" (vv. 5, 6). All believers have received grace (*charis*); therefore, all believers have received "gifts of grace" (*charismata*). These seven spiritual gifts enable the church to function as the one body of Christ in the community.

3. Every believer is called to minister. This truth is based on Paul's use of the word "ministry" (*diakonia*) as a spiritual gift. Every member of the body of Christ is called to serve

even as Christ served (Matthew 20:28). In Acts 6, the words for “serve tables” (*diakoneo* in 6:2) and “ministry of the word” (*diakonia* in 6:4) come from the same root word (*diakonos*, “servant”). Every believer is called to the ministry of serving.

In Mobilize, these essential truths are emphasized through: (1) at-home, informative textbook reading; (2) personal, engaging Bible study; (3) twelve monthly seminars, reviewing the textbook, and Bible studies; and, (4) weekly ministry assignments.

The one-year Mobilize program is divided into two six-month sections that are called *Level One: The Foundation* and *Level Two: The Ministry Plan*. Each level is then subdivided into two parts.

In *Level One: The Foundation*, the pastor guides participants in becoming workers for Christ through two, three-month series of studies: Part A: Leadership Skills—Enabling members to become leaders; and, Part B: Character Formation—Discipling members into Christlikeness.

In *Level Two: The Ministry Plan*, individuals choose, in consultation with the pastor, a specialization area of ministry that they personally desire to establish in their church. Level Two studies are divided into two, three-month sections: Part A: Ministry Foundations and Principles—Discovering key information about their specialized ministry; and, Part B: Ministry Skills and Practices—Acquiring abilities for specialized ministry.

Specializations include twelve areas of ministry: Cell Group Ministry, Children’s Ministry,

Christian Education, Counseling, Evangelism, Marriage and Family (a *focus-group* specialization), Music, Prayer, Stewardship, Teaching, Women’s Ministry, and Youth Ministry.

Student and pastor resource manuals are provided by Mobilize for each one of the four three-month studies. Each manual contains a “Guide for Daily Reflections” which leads the student through daily assigned textbook readings, Bible reading, and personal reflections.

The textbooks for Mobilize comprise some of the most excellent resources available. These include such books as those which are used in the first three-month study:

- *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work* (Timothy Keller);
- *The Next Christians: Seven Ways You Can Live the Gospel and Restore the World* (Gabe Lyons);
- *The Volunteer Revolution: Unleashing the Power of*

Everybody (Bill Hybels); and,

- *Lead Like Jesus: Lessons for Everyone from the Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Time* (Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges).

The seminar resource for *Leadership Skills*, prepared by former General Overseer Paul L. Walker, Ph.D., typify the resource for all four sections of the program. The three monthly seminars are titled: (1) “How Do I Think?” (2) “What Do I Do?” and, (3) “What Does It Require?”

When compared to any other mentoring, educational, or learning experience, Mobilize is an excellent and cost-efficient opportunity for pastors to train their church leaders for ministry. For more information, pastors are encouraged to go to the Division of Education Website at www.cogdoe.org, or call 423-478-7011. ■



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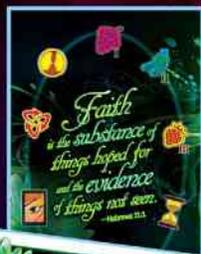
COMPLETION BADGES

Yearly completion badges are available for purchase.

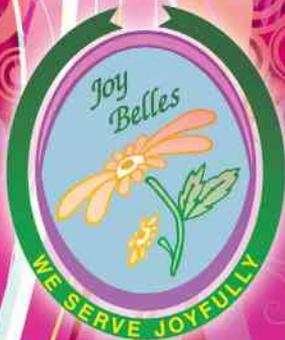
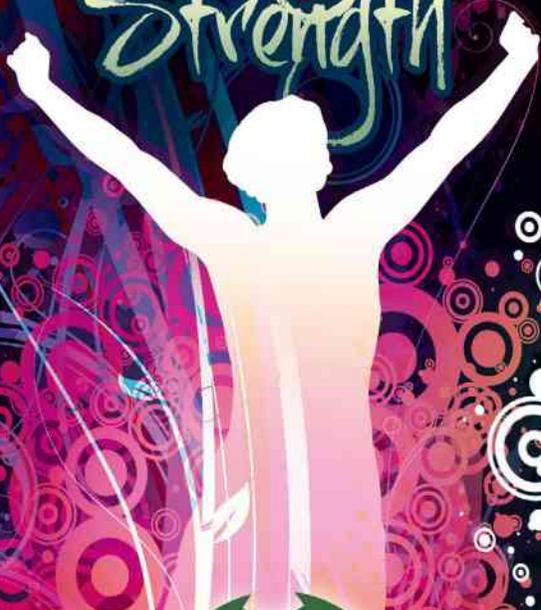


ONLINE RESOURCES.

Links for FREE graphic resources (such as clipart, slides, certificates, etc.) are provided at www.girlsministries.org under Clubs, Joy Belles that can be downloaded and personalized for your club.



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423.478.7824

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www.pathwaybookstore.com
800-553-8506



LEGAL NOTES
Dennis W. Watkins

Church Daycares and Nurseries: A Legal Perspective

CHURCH DAYCARES and nurseries offer opportunities for churches to expand their ministries and influence, while at the same time presenting unique challenges and considerations in their operation.

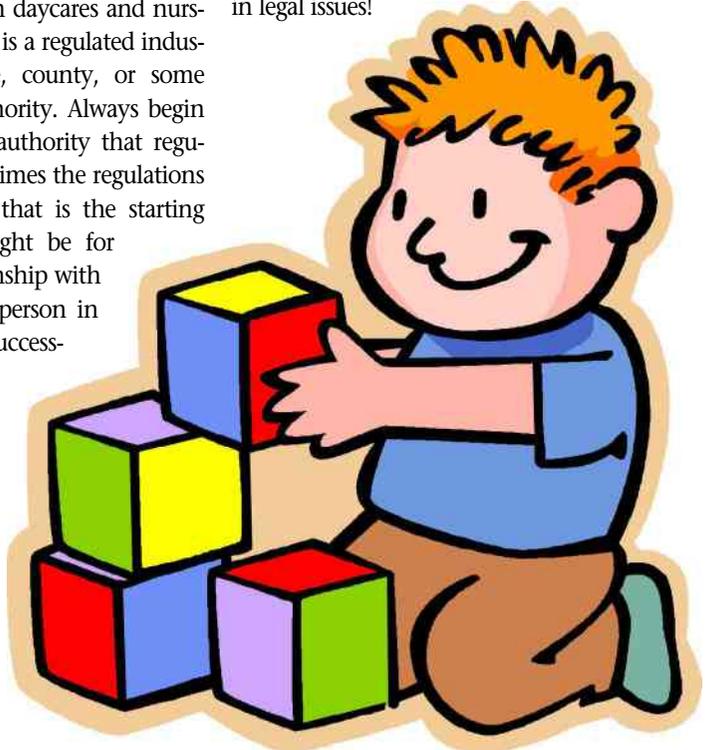
A REGULATED INDUSTRY

In considering church daycares and nurseries, remember that this is a regulated industry, either by the state, county, or some other governmental authority. Always begin your research with the authority that regulates this industry. Sometimes the regulations may seem endless, but that is the starting point. Another idea might be for you to establish a relationship with and consult with some person in another church who successfully has done this form of operation, and try to glean as much as you can from that person, regarding regulations.

LIABILITY ISSUES

Church daycares, nurseries, and schools present a unique area

of liability issues for churches. For that reason, you need to pay an early visit to your church's insurance carrier. Try to give a full explanation and description of all that you plan to accomplish in your daycare, and then find out what insurance needs you may have. Remember, insurance is always your first level of insulation in legal issues!



IT IS VERY IMPORTANT
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ENGAGE IN PROPER
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In considering insurance for church daycares and schools, the subject of sexual misconduct insurance always comes to the front of my mind. This is an area of operation where employees are working with children on a daily basis, and sometimes in very intimate surroundings. It is very important that your church engage in proper selection and screening of employees. Background checks for all workers are not an option; they must be used extensively.

Also important in consideration of liability issues for church schools and daycares are other “supervision” types of issues. There likely will be numerous activities that involve recreation or other physical participation by children, which requires making sure that there are enough workers to properly supervise children in various settings. Always make sure that the ratio of the number of employees to children is reasonable under the circumstances.

Consider the facilities and basic layout of the church properties for daycares and schools. Most churches utilize their own church facilities to house the daycare and nursery school as well, so careful precautions should be made to eliminate hazardous conditions on the build-

ing site. An “insurance audit” by a professional can be very helpful to a local church. Simply ask your insurance agent or representative to visit your church and to observe and point out areas of potential liability that he/she may see. It might surprise you to know what issues these individuals may discover.

Another potential area of problems for church daycares and schools is the area of transportation. Make sure that your church vehicles are properly maintained and that you have proper staff to drive them.

INCORPORATION OR NOT?

Sometimes, I am asked about my opinion regarding whether or not a church daycare, nursery, or school should be separately incorporated from the church. If the daycare or school is a functioning department of the local church then it derives a nonprofit status by virtue of being so. However, sometimes daycares or schools can become so large that they are an entity unto themselves, and for liability and operational reasons, it might be advantageous to consider incorporating the daycare or school separately from the church. If you find yourself in this situation, you might consult a local lawyer to determine what is most advantageous for you and your church.

RESOURCES

Here is one final potential resource—consult the websites of all the major church insurance companies on this subject. ■

Dennis W. Watkins is legal counsel for the Church of God. The writer is not engaged in rendering legal or other professional services herein. If legal advice or expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.



MONEY MATTERS
Art Rhodes

No Pretax Reimbursement of Certain Health Insurance Policies

WHILE MOST CHURCHES thought that they were exempt from the major impacts of the Affordable Care Act (often called “ACA” or “ObamaCare”), a seemingly innocuous Internal Revenue Service notice, issued a year ago in September 2013, is now being interpreted to place many churches and businesses in the crossfire of the Affordable Care Act.

According to IRS Notice 2013-54, employers may no longer reimburse employees for, or directly pay, the cost of *individual* health insurance policy premiums and exclude such amounts from the employee’s gross income. Effective January 1, 2014, these “employer payment plans” must be paid with “after tax” dollars, rather than with “pretax” dollars. The employer is allowed only to use “pretax” dollars to pay for health insurance premiums if the employer offers a *group* health insurance plan.

Since an IRS revenue ruling in 1961, churches and businesses have been able to structure compensation plans where employees could obtain their own individual health care plan, provide documentation and substantiation of such to the employer, and

the employer could reimburse the employee for, or directly pay, the cost of the individual health insurance policy premiums and such amounts were excluded from the employee’s gross income. Under IRS Notice 2013-54, the Affordable Care Act no longer allows such an



arrangement to occur with pretax dollars. An employer can still withhold funds and transmit those to pay the premiums on the individual health insurance policy, but the amounts must come from after-tax funds.

Consider the following examples:

- A local church agrees to pay a pastor \$40,000 a year salary, plus pay another \$10,000 a year toward the pastor's individual health insurance premium. According to IRS Notice 2013-54, the pastor would have taxable income of \$50,000 in the year in question. It should be noted that the amount designated for insurance must be taxed whether the pastor has secured the health insurance independently or through the government-operated Health Care Exchange.

- A pastor's wife has health insurance through a *group* plan at her employment and her company pays the entirety of her premium. Such amounts paid by her company are not taxable income to her since she is covered by a *group* plan that meets the requirements of the Affordable Care Act. In addition, her company offers full family coverage but the employee must pay the difference between the company provided employee group coverage and the family coverage premium. If the pastor's church offers to pay the additional \$500 per month to cover the pastor and the pastor's children, the \$500 per month is taxable income to the pastor.

As noted above, IRS Notice 2013-54 took effect **January 1, 2014**. Therefore, any premiums paid or reimbursed by a church to a pastor or staff member for that person's *individual* health insurance plan must be treated as taxable income. Treating such amounts as taxable income means that the amounts are subject

to federal income taxes, state income taxes, and self-employment taxes (Social Security and Medicare taxes). Using example one above, and assuming a 20 percent federal income tax bracket, the pastor would be subject to federal income taxes of \$2,000, plus SECA taxes of \$1,530, as well as any state income taxes.

Because the Affordable Care Act has converted the policy premium payments from pretax to after-tax funds for individual health insurance plans, the self-employed minister stands to lose forty or so percent of this benefit that was previously considered a fringe benefit, assuming state taxes are due.

While these rules are currently in place and effective, the conversations with Congress, the U.S. Department of the Treasury, and the Internal Revenue Service continue, simply because most believe that this is an unintended consequence of the Act. The hope is that corrective notices will be issued to revert back to the rules that have been formally in place since at least 1961. The Internal Revenue Service contends that the new policy is necessary to prevent "double dipping" from a person receiving insurance premiums paid with pretax dollars and additionally the new "premium tax credit" available under the Affordable Care Act.

Therefore, as of now, the bottom line is that churches may no longer reimburse employees for, or directly pay, the cost of *individual* health insurance policy premiums and exclude such amounts from the employee's gross income. ■

Art Rhodes is president and CEO of the Church of God Benefits Board, Inc. The Board of Trustees and the staff of the Benefits Board are not engaged in rendering financial advice, legal advice, or other financial planning services.



BOOK REVIEWS

THE DIAMOND LIFE Reveals Powerful Principles for Radiant Living

IN THE INTRODUCTION to his book, *The Diamond Life: You Are More Than You Have Become*, author Tony Scott states: “What you are about to read is not just theory; it’s been lived. Get ready for an incredible journey that has life-changing potential on every page.

Regardless of where you are, regardless of your past, your sins, your failures, you too can live *The Diamond Life*.”

The book is based on the premise that your life is created as a “diamond in the rough.” The purpose of your life can only be revealed as you

experience the “diamond-life formula.” You are to be “shaped, cut, chiseled, refined, and polished” in order for your true value and beauty to be seen.

Heat, pressure, and time are the key ingredients in the formation of a diamond. In our lives, we must deal with these same phases. How you handle these phases of life and how

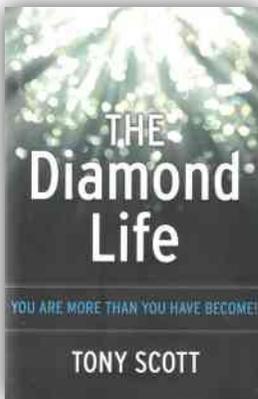
you process each phase will determine the significance of your life.

The Diamond Life is a simple, how-to map toward life transformation that leads to self-actualization—you becoming who you really are! As the author says . . .

Certainly, in lucid moments of discernment, you may see yourself as an ugly lump of coal. Life seems without shape and seemingly without value. Forces have affected who and what you have become. Suddenly, however, the realization dawns that you do not have to remain who you are. There is more to life than what you have discovered. At that point, you can begin the process of realizing the diamond life.

Tony Scott, pastor of The Church on Strayer in Toledo, Ohio, is recognized nationally and internationally as a teacher, mentor, visionary leader, and successful author whose message centers on the balanced life—spirit, soul, and body.

His travels have taken him to some ten nations on five continents. Hundreds of thousands of people have been impacted by these practical principles for living a life of significance.



Dr. R. Lamar Vest, president of Pentecostal Theological Seminary, says, “The incredible testimonies and insights shared in this book reveal that anyone can attain radiant living through the transforming power of Jesus Christ. It’s time for each of us to expand our sights and embrace God’s bigger picture for our lives. All it takes is firmly placing the raw material in the hands of the Master and trusting Him for the rest.”

Jentezen Franklin says, “If you have ever wondered about your true identity, your earthly purpose, and even your ultimate destiny, this is the book for you. Tony Scott defines in simple language powerful, practical principles that can produce within you the diamond life.”

And, Dr. Paul Conn, president of Lee University, states, “Tony Scott has a gift for

treating difficult problems in a simple, inspiring style. *The Diamond Life* is filled with helpful reflections from God’s Word and his lifetime of rich experience.”

The book can be used effectively for either personal enrichment or as the text for a study group. The twelve chapters are easily adaptable to a weekly study, either as a Sunday school elective or a weeknight study group. Preachers and teachers will also find the book to be a valuable source of ideas and illustrations.

The Diamond Life: You Are More Than You Have Become (ISBN 978-0615654744), published by Color House Graphics, is available in a hardcover edition and a Kindle edition from Amazon.com. For more information, or to download the eBook, go to www.thediamondlifebook.com. ■ —Tom George

WHAT WOMEN WANT: Pentecostal Women Ministers Speak for Themselves

IN *WHAT WOMEN WANT*, a groundbreaking study of Pentecostal women ministers, authors Kimberly Ervin Alexander and James P. Bowers provide readers a unique window into the reality of the lives of licensed female ministers in the Church of God in the United States. The objective of the book is to give voice to these sisters of the faith and to hear their stories in their own words. Specifically, the authors are concerned with learning more about the women’s attitudes about achieving full equality with their male ministerial colleagues, the women’s ministry experiences, and identifying recommenda-

tions for better supporting these women who serve in ministry within the Church of God.

The majority of the content of *What Women Want* is derived from the findings of a 45-question “Women in Ministry” survey administered in 2012, which was made available to all of the licensed female ministers in the Church of God who had an email address on file (2,379 women). A large number of the women responded (726 women or 30.5 percent) and represent various age groups, geographies, and ethnicities. Due to the success of the survey, the data is believed to reflect accurately the views and experiences of licensed women ministers

in the Church of God. A parallel survey was also administered to 1,000 randomly selected ordained bishops in the Church of God to compare perspectives. The response rate from this pool was lower (160 men or 16 percent). This smaller sampling is indicative of the larger population of ordained bishops, but is not conclusive.

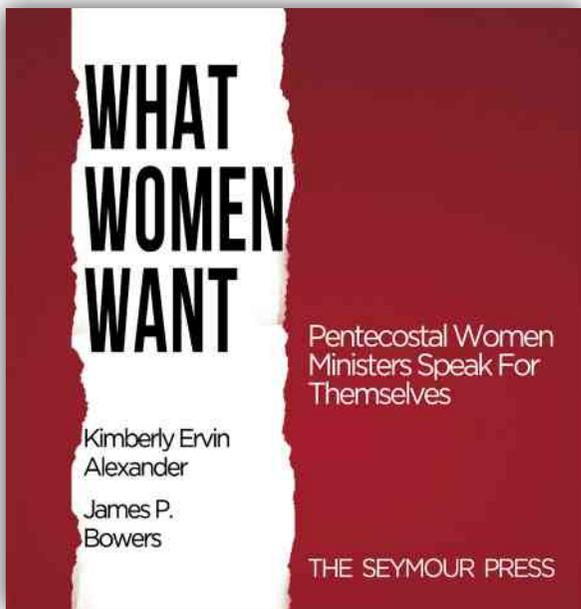
Alexander and Bowers present the findings of the survey thematically, with a chapter devoted to each of the following concerns: family values, power and leadership roles, vocational wellbeing, and women's compensation and advancement within the denomination. In an endeavor to begin dialogue about these issues, two short responses from various women ministers are included at the end of each chapter, as is a concluding chapter with reflections by Cynthia Woolever (research director of the U.S. Congregational Life Survey,

Presbyterian Church USA) who represents an outsider's perspective.

What Women Want brings a myriad of issues to light and helps to debunk a number of myths surrounding the issue of women in ministry; two such examples are: (1) equality for women ministers is motivated by a liberal political agenda, and (2) compensation guidelines apply equally to men and women ministers. Although readers may at times be tempted to rush through or skip over the statistics in order to get to the "good" part (as one respondent in the book notes), this would inevitably result in missing part of the story that is being told. The statistics are not merely data, but represent *real* people. People called and gifted by God, who labor in the harvest field and deserve to be recognized, respected, and heard. While the authors realize that the survey research is not meant to be a substitute for Scripture, the

Holy Spirit, or church teaching, they do hope that it will provide a "reality-based context in which to appropriate their guidance."

What Women Want is a rewarding and necessary read, though not always easy, as the sadness and pain that some of these women express can be disheartening. It is time for us to give ear to what the Spirit is saying to the churches, especially through the mouths of these women. Ultimately, the purpose of this book is not just for reading pleasure, but to prompt all of us into action. This we should do, not for the women's sakes alone, but for the good and health of church and the kingdom of God. ■



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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Mark Williams



Tim Hill



David Griffiths



J. David Stephens



Wallace Sibley



John Gregory



Mathabo Tsepa



Richard Baker



Agnes Kor Tole



Kevin Wallace



Chuck Quinley



Deven Wallace



Tony Brock



Gordon Banks



Julie Martinez



Travis Johnson



David Ramirez



Dr. Fred Garmon,
Executive Director

For information regarding the May 2015 trip to Cambodia (itinerary, accommodation, airfare, payment schedule), contact our office or visit our website: pcl.is/trips

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IT
STARTED
AS A
DREAM

CHURCH OF GOD HIGHLIGHTS

News from around the denomination between April and August 2014

Lee University Nursing Program Gets Green Light

Lee University's plan for establishing a School of Nursing got a big boost when its two accrediting agencies gave approval for a fall 2014 start date. Lee made the announcement that the new program received the "green light" from the Southern Association (SACS) Commission on Colleges to add two nursing tracks—a traditional four-year program and a bachelor's degree



Sara Campbell

completion track for students who are already practicing nurses—to its existing programs.

Dr. Sara Campbell, dean of nursing at Lee, also received a positive review from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), which is the national accreditation body for schools of nursing, based in Washington, D.C. Campbell emphasized that the action by CCNE does not confer a status of accreditation, but is a "necessary first step" which will lead to a thorough review of its program and an on-site evaluation in the fall semester of 2015.

Nearly two dozen students enrolled full time in the Lee nursing program in August, and plans are underway to begin construction on a building devoted strictly to nursing.



Widows Ministry Center Transitions to SpiritCare Center

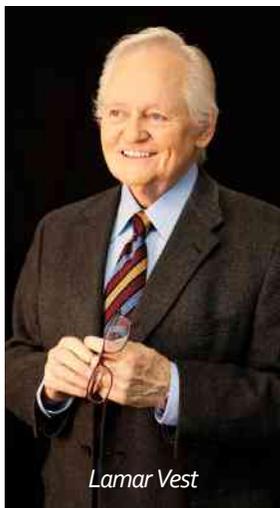
The Iris B. Vest Widows Ministry Center in Sevierville, Tennessee, has transitioned to the Iris B. Vest SpiritCare Center. Since its opening in 2003, the center has been a haven for widows, but now the new SpiritCare Center will house retired ministry couples as well.

Leaders of the Church of God believe this will definitely be a season of significance for this ministry. The SpiritCare Center is an independent living center designed for comfort and convenience. Each apartment has over 525 square feet of living space, and an individual can enjoy all the benefits of independent living along with the close companionship of other friends and neighbors.

The Center is named for the late Iris B. Vest, who passed away in 2001 while serving as First Lady for the Church of God. Her widower, former General Overseer R. Lamar Vest said, "The Vest Family could not be happier. We believe this is the will of God—to join hand in hand the ministry to ministers and the ministry to widows."

Vest Selected to Serve as President of Pentecostal Theological Seminary

Dr. Mark Williams, general overseer of the Church of God, announced to graduates and friends gathered at the 39th commencement exercises for the Pentecostal Theological



Lamar Vest

Seminary that Dr. R. Lamar Vest had been selected to serve as the tenth president of the Seminary. Vest follows Dr. Steven J. Land who announced in January his intention to transition to a new role.

Vest is a former two-time general overseer for the Church of God serving from 1990–1994 and 2000–2004. He also served as president of Lee University (1984–1986) and most recently led

the prestigious, worldwide organization of the American Bible Society as its executive director.

General Assembly Headed to Nashville in 2016

For the first time, the Church of God International General Assembly will be held in Nashville, the capital of the state in which the church was founded in 1886. The 76th Assembly (GA2016) will be conducted on July 19–22, 2016, at the brand new Music City Center (MCC) in the heart of downtown Nashville.

In a special video greeting on Friday night of the International General Assembly, Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam gave an invitation to all prospective delegates to, “come back to Tennessee,” for the first International General Assembly to be held in the Volunteer State since Memphis fifty years ago in 1966.

The gleaming new convention venue has 1.2 million square feet of floor space on three levels, with two major ballrooms and more than 60 breakout areas that can be converted to accommodate all sizes of events—all under one roof. To learn more about the GA2016 convention venue, visit www.nashvillemusiccitycenter.com.



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