

CREATING A CULTURE OF EVANGELISM • THE DUTY AND DELIGHT OF THE CHRISTIAN

FrontLine

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

May/June 2006 • \$3.95



A LIGHT SHINING IN THE DARKNESS

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We are grateful to Pastor Jeff Musgrave for his editorial assistance with this edition of *FrontLine*.

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Having just read through the November/December 2005 issue of *FrontLine* magazine, I felt compelled to write to you about the issue of worship.

"Worship" in Christian circles has become a catch word and concept similar to what "relationship" is in the non-Christian world. What used to take place in individuals' lives with no fanfare is now discussed, touted, analyzed and subject to instruction by supposed authorities. What is in the last issue of *FrontLine* magazine is a case in point.

The difference between secular authorities' pronouncements and those in your magazine is that your authors claim

infallibility because of their reference to Scripture. The natural cultural bias that affects individuals of every era has clouded their understanding to a great extent. Christians in other cultures and times would perceive it differently.

The Holy Spirit provides guidance to every one of us as to how to please God. For man to step in and dictate what actions we should follow is wrong.

Christians sincerely worshiped God before "worship" became a popular concept, and it is best left to the Scripture to instruct each person on the subject without human intervention.

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A Light Shining in the Darkness

John C. Vaughn

Ye are the light of the world." Christ's declaration in Matthew 5:14 is not without context. If we are truly to be a light shining in the darkness, we must understand what that means and how it is possible.

Matthew's systematic Gospel presents far more than "The Beatitudes," which some think are akin to "plati-tudes." (The "Be Happy Attitudes" is what Robert Schuller calls them.) The first twelve verses of Matthew five are the foundation of the "salt and light" teaching of verses thirteen through sixteen.

In this greatest of introductions to this greatest of sermons is the essence of Christ's message. Soul winning is an activity that can be practiced and learned, of course, but more importantly, it is the reproductive quality of the mature Christian. Mature sheep produce sheep. As we strive for mature behavior, we must strive for the maturity more than the behavior. Like eating without exercising, this emphasis is wrongly used to justify selfishness that loves to listen to gospel preaching but doesn't share the gospel with others. They want to grow, but they won't "go."

Clearly, we are charged with a duty to witness—to win souls. Witnessing alone does not make you mature, but maturity makes you witness. Is there a Biblical basis for this claim? Yes, in the verses mentioned above. Christ opens His sermon by stating that the "poor in spirit" are those who have access to "the kingdom of heaven." Those who have recognized the poverty of their own souls—the bankruptcy of mere self-reliance—have begun to

understand what it means to be subject to Jesus the King. Then they can step into sincere repentance—Biblical mourning that brings the comfort of the Comforter in regeneration.

The regenerate begin to grow as they are meek before God and continue to grow in submissive obedience. Like the Hebrews who entered the Promised Land (cf. Ps. 37:11 for the verse quoted in Matt. 5:5), these who have a willingness to obey "inherit

the earth" as they know blessings that those who die in the wilderness never do. What follows the desire to obey is a desire to know the will of God so that it can be

obeyed. This leads to spiritual appetite, a "hunger and thirst after righteousness" which "shall be filled." A hungry appetite will lead the one who feasts on the Word to an understanding that the whole Book is a message of the mercy of God. When a maturing Christian knows that he has a mercy-filled life, he will always know where to "obtain mercy" when he needs it again . . . and again.

This kind of mature living leads to the maturity of single-mindedness that characterizes the "pure in heart." This purity is an unalloyed heart that no longer seeks both God and the World, a double-mindedness that insures instability (cf. James 1:8). This single-mindedness enables the mature to "see God," or recognize Him in every circumstance and quickly point others to Him. That, in turn, enables them to bring a message to them whereby they can have peace with God through Jesus Christ. As true "children of God" they are recognized by their likeness to their

heavenly Father in seeking the souls of men. Thus the Christian is born as he comes to the end of self-reliance, in sincere repentance before God. In submissive obedience he gains a spiritual appetite that brings him into continued dependence on the mercy of God, until he is single-minded in the matter of living redemptively as a "peacemaker," or soul winner.

But then, Christ tells us what we can expect at that point: persecution here and now, but great rewards in Heaven. With this understanding, mature Christians are serious about spiritual reproduction. They will be salt as they make contact with the corruption of the world, and light as they stand above it to dispel the darkness. If you are not a soul winner, you can easily discover your own point of disobedience or distrust by retracing your steps in these verses. Those who do not seek souls are not true peacemakers—those who help men make peace with God. No one is a faithful soul winner who is not single-minded about it. No one is Biblically single-minded who does not live in the realization of his own constant need for the renewed mercies of God.

No one is conscious of the availability of God's mercies who is not feeding a natural appetite for the God of the Bible. No one seeks this strength for obedience who has no intention to obey. No one intends to obey who has not repented of his disobedience. No one repents of his disobedience who has not come to the end of his own self-reliance. By the grace of God, a man moves from being lost to seeking the lost—from living in darkness to being a light shining in the darkness.

**Maturity makes
you witness**



A LIGHT SHINING IN THE DARKNESS

On Wednesday night we decided to take the old gospel to the streets of Singapore to reach a new generation of young people. Like every major city in the world, Singapore is filled with people of all shapes and sizes from different races and religions. On this particular night one of our witnessing teams approached two men. After passing them a gospel tract, they engaged the men in spiritual conversation.

The two men were Malay by birth and Islamic by religion. They did not speak English well but spoke perfect Malay. The two team members, Singaporeans by birth, spoke perfect English but terrible Malay. But trusting God to do His work of speaking to the hearts of these two men from His own Word, with difficulty they began sharing the Good News. Due to the language barrier they had to present the gospel message in English and broken Malay and with lots of hand and body gestures. After a strenuous two hours these two men placed their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

On the following Sunday morning the two men came to church and brought with them nine of their Islamic friends. That Sunday seven of the nine men were saved, which began for us our Bahasa language service that reaches out to Islamic Indonesians and Malays in Singapore. Rarely a week goes by that we do not see

someone saved in this ministry simply due to the preaching and the power of the gospel.

Paul reminded us of the power of the gospel when he said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). For the last six years I have been doing the work of the evangelist in Southeast Asia. I have had the privilege of preaching to Roman Catholics in the marketplaces, small towns, and cities of the Philippines. I have preached to Buddhists in nearly every major city in Myanmar and to Hindus throughout India. I have declared the gospel to Muslims in Dubai, to atheists in university classrooms, and to the yuppies of sophisticated Singapore. One thing I have learned: the gospel that saved me twenty-five years ago is the same gospel that can save any man at any time anywhere—regardless of race or religion.

I must say that never once have I had to disprove another man's religion or tear down his belief system before he was saved. I have never attempted to discredit Buddhism to a Buddhist or atheism to an atheist before he received the gospel. All we need to do is trust God to do His work of speaking to the hearts of men with His own Word. When we simply present the truth of Jesus Christ we can trust the gospel of Christ to expose man's error and reveal his need

of salvation. Just as a straight line exposes a crooked line, so the truth of Christ exposes the error of man.

It was Jesus who said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). As we honestly, accurately, and dependently lift up the truth of Christ we can trust the Holy Spirit to take that truth and reveal to that man the error of his religious system, eventually drawing him to the Savior.

Some time ago I was helping a fellow missionary plant a church in Singapore. A young professional man, a brother of one of the members, came to church. I had not met the man before. When he entered the church he came straight up to me, introduced himself, and said, "I am an atheist; I do not believe any of this Christianity business. You will never convince me that it is true."

He came for about four Sunday services, and after each service he would quickly rush off. I asked the Lord to give me an opportunity to talk to this man about his salvation. The next Sunday he came again. I caught him before he left and asked him if I could show him from the Bible what it means to be a Christian. He agreed. For the next hour we looked into God's Word, and God's Word did its work. Before he left the building he was saved. Today he is growing in the Lord. When I asked him what brought about the change, he replied, "It was simply God's Word. I just knew when I heard it that it was true."

One of my favorite verses is Matthew 9:37: "The harvest truly is plenteous." This verse is one of those timeless truths—a glorious promise! Right now, all around us wherever we are, in every city, every state, and in every country of the world there are people ripe and ready to be saved.

Sadly, these people will not be reached until we, by faith, believe the gospel is the power of God able to reach all men regardless of race or religion, whether they are rich or poor, educated or uneducated. It was to both the religious and immoral Corinthians that Paul said, "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein you stand; By which also ye are saved" (1 Cor. 15:1, 2). Once we believe in the power of the gospel, we must preach it. It is through the preaching of the gospel that God speaks to the hearts of men and through it alone can we reap the harvest.

Last year I was invited to hold a one-day gospel service in Dubai. Dubai is the playground for Arabs in the Middle East. A Filipino missionary started a church there, and in less than a year it had grown to about twenty-five people. I had never preached in the Arab world and did not know what to expect. I thought we would have to be very clandestine in our ministry. But when I arrived they had placed banners all around and had invited many people. We held our service on Friday morning, which is the Muslim day off. To my surprise or unbelief over 225 people showed up for the service.

Nearly two hundred of them were unbelievers from various religious backgrounds (Roman Catholic, Muslim, and Hindu). I preached a very simple gospel message on "the cross." When I gave the invitation, over thirty-five people stood up and walked the aisle, and for the next hour we had the joy of leading those men and women to the Lord. Many of those who were saved came back, joined the church, and brought friends. Literally overnight that little church grew from twenty-five to one hundred people. That is the power of the gospel.

The missionary-evangelist Jonathan Goforth was a man God used to reach and win thousands in Northern China, and although he passed away nearly eighty years ago, his work and influence remain in China today. My wife Lisa just visited his church in China. As she walked up to the church building that afternoon, a midweek Bible study

was just ending. As the doors opened, over one thousand people spilled out into the narrow street. She stepped back and watched. The people were singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, obviously unconcerned that they were in an anti-Christian country. She was moved to think that many, if not most, of those dear people were products in some way of Dr. Goforth's ministry.

Lisa's visit to Dr. Goforth's church reminded me of a story from his life. When Mr. Goforth first went to China as a missionary, an old experienced missionary came to him with this advice: "Do not attempt to speak of Jesus the first time when you are preaching to the unsaved. The Chinese have a prejudice against

the name of Jesus. You must first confine all your efforts to demolishing their false gods. If you are given a second opportunity, you may then bring in the name of Jesus."

At this Mr. Goforth replied rather excitedly, "Never, never, never! The gospel that saved the down and out in the slums of Toronto, Canada, is the same gospel that can save these Chinese sinners." From the very first, although speaking in broken Chinese, Mr. Goforth preached Christ crucified, buried, and resurrected. And from the very first he saw souls saved.

Late in his life, a young missionary upstart asked Mr. Goforth the secret to his soul-winning power. Mr. Goforth's response was a clear testimony of his trust in God to do His work of speaking to the souls of men through His own Word.

Today it is the same! If our world is going to be reached, we must trust God to do His work of speaking to the souls of men through His own Word. We must truly believe that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation and able to reach any man, at any time, anywhere regardless of race, religion, wealth or fame, poverty or anonymity.

Won't you trust God to do His work? The gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

Mike Redick is a missionary evangelist to Southeast Asia with International Baptist Missions. He and his wife live and work out of Singapore.

*... we can trust
the Holy Spirit
to take that
truth and reveal
to that man
the error of his
religious system,
eventually
drawing him to
the Savior.*

A silhouette of a person fishing with a net against a sunset background. The person is on the left, reaching up with a net that is full of fish. The background is a bright orange and yellow sky over a body of water.

Creating a Culture of Evangelism

Mike Sproul

The culture of a New Testament church must focus on evangelism and discipleship. Every organization, including churches, has an often nonverbalized set of cultural values. I fear many churches have cultures that encourage many good Christian activities but do not have a culture that encourages evangelism. A culture of evangelism and discipleship is one that must be nurtured and developed on a regular basis as core to the life of the church. It cannot simply be talked about. People must see leaders involved and sacrificing for evangelism. A church must think strategically about this culture. That means that at times it does things to re-enforce its culture even if it doesn't achieve immediate results. We believe if we honor God's commands concerning evangelism being core, God will honor us with souls. Tri-City Baptist Church does not have all the answers to being a "disciple-making" church; however, here are a few activities that we do to reach our community.

We spend energy regularly going door-to-door in our neighborhoods. I know the debates about that form of outreach, but we have families in our church whose first contact was a simple knock at their door. But almost more importantly, this activity re-enforces the culture we want to create.

The Phoenix metro area has 3.7 million people, and the average stay in our community is less than five years. Our culture is young, ethnically diverse, and very mobile. Even those who stay in the Valley sell their home and buy another every thirty months. Therefore, we encourage our people to look at their circle of influence for their primary focus in evangelism.

We ask them to start praying for one-to-ten people who are lost. We then give them ideas to create friendships with neighbors and coworkers so they can present Christ. (Members turn in these names to church leaders, and we pray for these friends both individually and as a leadership team.)

We attempt to practice the "7 Touches—3 Hearings" rule. We practice creating friendships, "touches," that give us the "right" to be heard. We encourage our people to "touch" those around them by babysitting, hospitality for a meal, mowing a yard, etc.

We then give our people many different places where their friends can hear. We let our people know that we offer services to those neighbors with a need. We offer family counseling, Christian financial management classes, as well as Biblical child-rearing classes. We train our members through various classes to be soul winners and disciplers in their home or at a standard visitation time. We announce ahead of time services that will be completely devoted to the presentation of salvation. Rarely is there a morning message in which the gospel is not presented. We have yearly evangelistic meetings. We have an annual Missions Conference, which, while not aimed at the lost, does remind our people that we are culturally evangelistic and encourages them to tithe to missions. Again, all of these activities are about creating a culture.

As the senior pastor, I have almost every member of our church on my e-mail list. Every time I hear a story of someone coming to Christ, I ask for a written one-paragraph summary, and I send it to our whole church so we can rejoice and begin to pray for the new believer and discipler—an action that, again, helps create a culture of evangelism. Currently we have about twenty new believers in one-on-one discipleship.

Our Wednesday night service is also geared to evangelism. We have an inexpensive buffet meal from 5:45 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. At 6:15 we open our nursery and have children's choir. Some of our younger couples who want their children in bed earlier will attend one of our Care Groups; many others will spend the next hour visiting. Our teens and college young people will often go out at this time and pass out invitations to church. At 7:15 other Care Groups meet for those returning from visitation, and our teens have their regular Bible study. The evening concludes at about 8:30; younger couples can have their children home by 7:30 by attending an earlier Care Group but can also take a visit that they can make at their convenience during the week.

We also visit every person who visits our church on Sunday morning that Sunday night. Statistics say more people are home on Sunday night than any other night of the week. We have some of our best teams out on Sunday night, and we have seen many souls saved on that night's visitation. That way at our Monday morning church staff meeting we know who needs to follow up on what visitor and we can begin to pray.

It's all about re-enforcing a culture that evangelism and discipleship are core to who we are. It's all about our mission: to Exalt the Triune God, Edify Believers, and Evangelize the World.

Mike Sproul pastors Tri-City Baptist Church in Tempe, Arizona.

Evangelism and Discipleship as a Way of LIFE

Today a new way of thinking has emerged. Our world has undergone a cultural earthquake due to the rise of post-modern culture and ideas. Most postmoderns are not going to be impressed with only our verbal presentations of the gospel. What is needed is a people who live out the gospel in transparent, authentic, life-changing, relationships.

To meet this challenge we have developed a two-phase strategy for evangelism that reflects this "way of life" approach. We use two acronyms. The first is "NOW": *No Opportunity Wasted to reach out to your neighbors, co-workers, friends, and acquaintances*. The second is "NOW for LIFE": *No Opportunity Wasted for Loving your neighbor, Interceding through prayer, Fellowshiping for relationships, and Evangelizing for eternity*. This second phase further defined this culture of evangelism we want in our church.

In our postmodern society with all its "isms" (humanism, relativism, secularism, narcissism, etc.), how can we effectively carry out this ministry of reconciliation? Evangelism and discipleship must become a way of LIFE!

In Matthew 22:35–40 a lawyer came to Jesus, tempting Him with the question, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus surprised him by summing up all the commandments into two, basically, "Love God and love your neighbor." We make evangelism and discipleship a way of life by *loving people*. He was brokenhearted on many occasions as He looked over the crowds of people (Matt. 9:36). Evangelism and discipleship begins when we "love God" and then "love people." How can we love like Jesus loved? It will not be by self-effort! It will be possible only by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5).

A second part of carrying out this ministry of reconciliation is *by interceding through prayer*. Again Jesus set the example for us. Do you realize how much time Jesus spent in prayer?

In Mark 1 we see Jesus having a very demanding, draining, and long day. Jesus healed many that were sick of different diseases and cast out many devils. His ministry had continued late into the night. Yet early the next morning, Jesus got up, left the house, and went to pray. After feeding the 5000 in Matthew 14, Jesus prays. In Luke 6 He spent a whole night in prayer before choosing the twelve apostles. Evangelism and discipleship begins with a love for people,

but must be followed by fervent prayer for those "whom the god of this world hath blinded" (2 Cor. 4:4).

What is your prayer life like? Our evangelism and discipleship must be bathed in prayer. Do we really want revival? Then we must be interceding through prayer.

A third part of carrying out this "ministry of reconciliation" is *fellowshipping for relationships*. Our culture today demands that we break out of our "safe havens" and rub shoulders with the lost world. No longer can we stay within the walls of our churches and homes. We must build relationships with those who do not look and act like we do. Jesus was a friend of sinners!

In Mark 2:15–17 Jesus developed relationships with publicans and sinners. The religious crowd saw Him and offered criticism. As always, Jesus had an answer for His critics: "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." If we are going to be effective in today's culture, we must get over our fear of contamination and rejection and be willing to spend time with the lost and build relationships. We need to be a "friend of sinners" as Jesus was.

The fourth part of carrying out this "ministry of reconciliation" is *evangelizing for eternity*. Having times that are set aside to visit are important to help emphasize the importance of evangelism and give evangelism a structure. Students at International Baptist College are trained in evangelism through door-to-door outreach. Every semester we see people trust Christ as Savior. However, that method cannot be the only way we reach people. Evangelizing for eternity is a commitment to building relationships with unbelievers, which in the context of friendships, leads to a new birth, which culminates in a commitment to building them up in their faith, and equipping them to win and build others.

Dr. Singleton, our founder, once said, "Rather than retreat from society, what is needed is a relevant Fundamentalism that is Biblically based, retains its evangelistic fervor, is true to its Fundamentalist heritage, and works out its theology for a comprehensive world-life view" (*Fundamentalism*, p. 33). His words are still true today.

Paul Warf is Executive Assistant to the Pastor at Tri-City Baptist Church in Tempe, Arizona.



THE DUTY AND DELIGHT OF THE CHRISTIAN

C. H. Spurgeon once wrote these awe-inspiring thoughts: “I do not see how our sense of oneness to Christ could ever have been perfected—if we had not been permitted to work for Him. If He had been pleased to save us by His precious blood, and then leave us with nothing to do, we should have had fellowship with Christ up to a certain point. But there is no fellowship with Christ that seems to me to be so vivid, so real to the soul, as when I try to win a soul for Him.”

To that I say, “Amen, Charlie, amen!” I would agree that there is nothing to compare to the joy of leading a soul to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ to be a means of stimulating new growth and energy in the life of the personal worker. There is no question that the people in our churches need to be soul winners—not just for the sake of the lost, but for their very own sake!

One of my pastoral staff members phoned me early this afternoon. I could tell he was excited. Yesterday, when our pastoral staff went door-to-door soul-winning in an

upscale neighborhood about ten minutes’ drive from our church (year-around we go out as a staff every Monday and Thursday from 1–2 p.m.), he had met a 67-year-old Lutheran man who showed some positive interest in the gospel.

Though the man did not accept Christ at the door on Thursday, he did express interest in our Friday Morning Bereavement Bible Study. We make it a practice always to invite the prospects we meet to come to a specific upcoming event at the church—and we always ask them at the door if we can return again to their house sometime in the future. The man had relayed to the pastor that his wife had passed away almost ten years ago and that he still struggled with bouts of loneliness.

Well, he came to the church this morning for the study, stayed afterwards for some conversation with the pastor, and received the Lord Jesus as his personal Savior! The pastor not only led him to Christ, but also lined him up for baptism on Sunday morning. Save your breath if you’re going to tell me that door-knocking doesn’t work any

more; it does work—if you work it!

Two Saturday mornings ago we were out doing our NETCASTERS “precinct” work. In case you never thought of it, political precincts make wonderful structured harvest fields! This already-set organizational neighborhood division gives “ownership” to personal workers who simply return to “their area,” eliminating the need for maps and wasting time “driving all over creation” looking for specific addresses.

The goal of NETCASTERS is to keep careful records of each house address in the precinct—and then go back to a door as often as possible—rather than trying to get it all done at once on a single visit. Eliminate the pressure to “get everything done at once.”

At Bethel Baptist Church of Schaumburg we have assigned fifty precincts to “fifty-teams-of-two” who go out for about ninety minutes of door-to-door soul winning on Saturday mornings, which is the prime time of the week to start up spontaneous conversations.

We don’t bother to announce the formalities of “who we are” and “where we’re from” at the outset of the conversation either. It wastes time—and the name “Baptist” can erect a wall almost as fast as anything else I know! The real truth is that they probably don’t care who you are and where you’re from. They just want to know why you are standing there on their porch—and so that is why we head right into the soul-winning agenda.

We start with a smile and a friendly “hello” as we hand the attractive literature out to them (most people will open the door and take it out of our hand as we exchange pleasantries), and then we immediately open a bold and colorful gospel flip chart we’ve designed to complement the NETCASTER gospel presentation.

The key is to keep the conversation moving and light. We don’t ask them “for a few minutes of their time” because we’ve learned that busy 21st-century Americans don’t want to give you even a few seconds of their time. So you have to take it from them!

And incidentally, we don’t need their permission to witness to them either—Jesus already commanded us to tell them the good news. We like to think of ourselves as being like water spigots: we start running . . . and we keep on running . . . until they shut us off.

I would remind you that soul winning is an art form, and it is an acquired skill. Not feeling adept at it is no excuse for any believer’s nonparticipation. The longer and harder you work at it, the better you become at it!

Now mind you, this is in no way minimizing the power of God’s Spirit in the process; for without Him we can do nothing. But we do have the personal responsibility to

hone ourselves for His use! A sharp tool generally works much better than a dull one!

So as I was about to say (nine paragraphs back), two weeks ago on a Saturday morning we led to Christ a dear man and woman who were in their early forties, while standing right there on their door stoop in front of their house. As she bowed her head to pray the sinner’s prayer, she began to cry as she thanked God for letting her husband survive a near-fatal heart attack just six months ago.

That was the first that my partner and I knew of that circumstance in their lives. It had not come up in our discussion previously—but it was on her heart—and God used it to prepare them to discuss their eternal destiny. All kinds of folk just like these are out there with all kinds of needs and burdens, needing someone to be willing to come along and tell them about Jesus Christ. We just need to get out there and open our mouths. God will do the rest.

This past September we started an Inquirer’s Bible Study, which is taught by one of our pastoral staff members and meets during our Wednesday night prayer meeting. It is a very natural invite, and almost everyone we meet is a prospect for that study. Even if they are already “churched,” it doesn’t usually conflict with anything going on at their own church. It is a nonthreatening environment where people with spiritual questions can come and learn the truths of God’s Word.

When people do receive Jesus as Savior, we immediately refer them to our Discipleship Ministry. Our Discipleship Pastor teaches new converts during the Sunday school hour. Once they have gone through the discipleship course then they are mainstreamed into appropriate adult Sunday school classes.

One of the greatest sources of soul-winning contacts for us is through our preschool. Literally scores of mostly young parents (and some grandparents too) have been saved through the daily contact our teachers have with the children and their parents. Each child is required to be “walked in” to the classroom each day for drop-off—and picked up the same way at the end of the day. Each teacher is required to make a “home visit” during the fall months to discuss the child’s progress in school—to take the spiritual temperature of the family—and to make a gospel presentation to the parents.

These families are regularly invited to church events such as revival meetings, special services, Inquirer’s Bible Study, etc. It’s a classical “line upon line and precept upon precept” ministry approach with these young families. Again, we never feel the pressure to “get it all done at once.” I am pleased to inform you that formerly unsaved parents are not only productive members of our church,

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but some of them are deacons and members of my pastoral staff.

The objective of this article is to challenge you to be constantly out after lost souls. Unsaved people are everywhere around you, just waiting for a word from you and from your people.

The harvest is indeed plenteous and great. There is no lack of prospects. But there is a lack of laborers. We have many so-called laborers today in our churches who are convinced of the need—but are not convinced enough of the need to be diligently laboring themselves.

I contend that we have many in our Fundamental churches who insisted on being a part of an evangelistic church when they joined, but who are not personally involved in any significant evangelistic endeavor. What's that about?

Let me bluntly ask the question, "How often do you try to win a soul for Him?" I am not referring to good intentions—but actual presentations of the gospel. Is it a totally random event for you—or is it in your weekly routine? When was the last time you took someone through the gospel and urged him to receive Christ? And when was the last time it happened?

While I am not one for necessarily setting soul-winning goals, I am all for setting a soul-winning agenda, both for a church and for a pastoral staff in particular. You must have a soul-winning schedule and strategy if you are

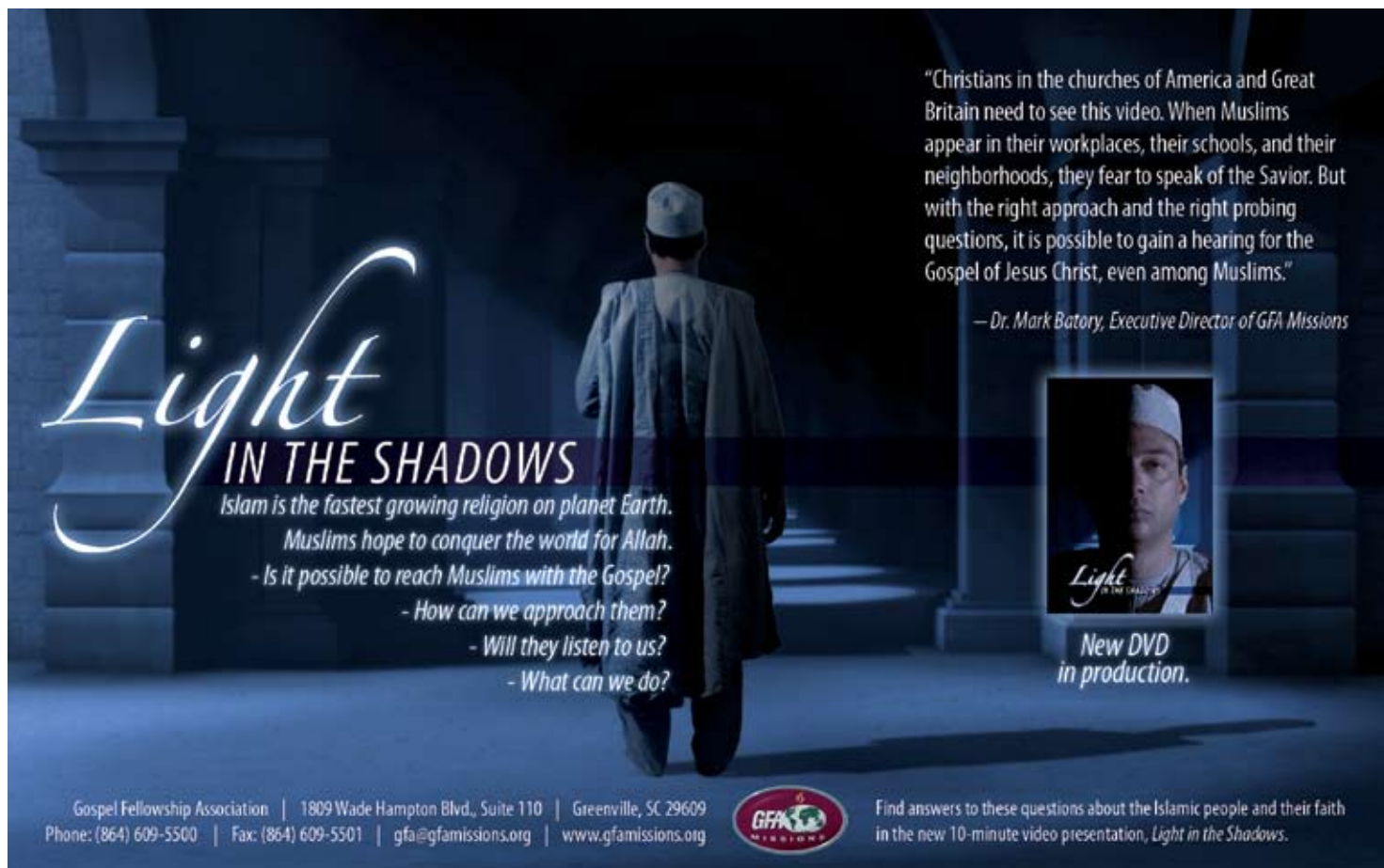
going to have any measure of success. I get out four times per week on average—and so do my assistants. And I can tell you that it's barely enough. You must have a plan for getting out and talking to people about the gospel or it will rarely happen.

On a final note, let me level with you. This is hard labor. You will talk to a lot of people in order to get a few to listen. And from those who are willing to listen only a few will respond. And from those who do respond, only a few will follow-through with Biblical discipleship. Yes, there's a whole lot of hard work to be done, so let's all get busy!

I'll finish the article the same way I opened it, with a few more words from Charles Haddon Spurgeon: "Oh, when I come to battle with that soul's difficulties, to weep over that soul's hardness; when I begin to set the arguments of Divine mercy before it, and find myself foiled; when I am in a very agony of spirit, and feel that I could die sooner than that soul should perish, then I get to read the heart of Him whose flowing tears, and bloody sweat, and dying wounds showed how much He loved poor fallen mankind."

How long has it been since you "got a read" on the heart of Him who came to seek and to save those who are lost? Make that work both your duty and your delight.

Brad Smith pastors Bethel Baptist Church in Schaumburg, Illinois.



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A Change of Focus

Jeff Musgrave

Many pastors have told me that their church's soul-winning program is weak or nonexistent. With the overemphasis of easy-believism and evangelism at any cost, it seems that we have thrown the baby out with the bathwater. While a correction in emphasis was warranted, it is time we readjust our focus to a Biblical rather than a reactionary outlook.

Holy Spirit Conviction vs. Apologetics Alone

Apologetics has its place, but an old-fashioned, confident dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit through the proclamation of the Word of God will serve us well in our churches. John 16:8 teaches us that the Holy Spirit is working with our witnessing. While we teach men about sin, judgment to come, and the inherited righteousness of Christ, He convinces them of what we are saying.

I was talking to a suicidal man in the psych ward of a local hospital who asked me how I knew what I was telling him was true. I responded that all I had to do was to tell him what the Bible said and I was sure that the Holy Spirit would speak to his heart and convince him that it was true. I explained to him that the Holy Spirit didn't speak out loud but was like a still, small voice inside of him telling him, "What that man is saying is true." I further explained that sometimes it feels like He is squeezing our heart. He looked at me strangely and said, "That explains it! I have felt weird ever since you came in here." The next day he was gloriously saved.

Last month I got a thank-you note from my friend Karlton Childress. He wanted to write on the first anniversary of beginning his new relationship with Jesus. The first question Karlton had asked me when I visited in his home was, "So, do I have to believe this Adam and Eve stuff to have a relationship with this God of yours?" He told me that he felt that God was a creation of weak men because they needed a crutch. Those Nathaniel-like statements were not the only thoughts in his mind, though. Karlton had developed the belief that men are basically good and there is no such thing as God or inherent evil. I discovered that it was a look of rebellion in his two-year-old daughter's eyes one day when he was trying to correct her several months earlier that set him to questioning these basic atheistic tenants.

Though Karlton seemed very skeptical, his questions were sincere, and after our initial visit Karlton and his wife Michelle agreed to do the Inquirer's Bible Study with my wife and me. After our first Bible study Karlton was so skeptical, his wife apologized to us, and my wife suggested that I get him a book on apologetics that might lend some credibility to our witness. We reminded ourselves of God's promise to convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment and that the Word of God was alive and powerful to bring men to faith. We were meeting every week, and Karlton continued to be in church each Sunday, so we agreed to stay the course and let the gospel show itself powerful in Karlton's life.

The following Sunday I preached a biographical message on Noah. In passing, I mentioned the Lord's statement, "My spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen. 6:3). I

explained how the Spirit of God spoke with a still, small, inaudible voice, squeezing our hearts, confirming the Word of God and convincing us of our need of Him. That Sunday morning found Karlton walking to the front during the invitation. His first statement this time was very different. He calmly said, "I don't need to finish the Bible study. I know God is real and is speaking to me, and I don't want to risk that He will stop. I want to make the exchange with Jesus now."

He bowed his head and humbly told Jesus that he couldn't get to Heaven on his own, that he believed He had died in his place, and that he wanted Him to forgive his sins and exchange his sinful record for Christ's holy one.

Karlton has since completed Learning to Live with God, has been baptized, and is continuing to grow as he faithfully attends our church. Though apologetics has its place, an old-fashioned, confident dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit through the proclamation of the Word of God will serve us well in our churches.

Relationship with a Person vs. Response to a Plan

Rather than being intent on getting through a presentation of the *plan* of salvation, may we remember that what people really need is an introduction to God as a *person* with whom they can have an intimate relationship. They need to know that He is holy and cannot tolerate their sin. He is just and cannot overlook their sin, but He is loving and has reached out to them. He has provided a way for them to be close to Him that satisfies His holy, just nature. They need to know that He is gracious and offers salvation as a gift. When we introduce salvation as a relationship with a holy, just, loving, gracious God, it is not difficult for them to see that just like any relationship, once it has begun, time and effort must be put into the relationship in order for it to grow.

Multiplication vs. Addition: Making Disciple Makers

If we will see our end objective as making disciples instead of just seeing people saved, it will help. It is true that if everyone would win one and teach that one to do the same, we would reach the world in our lifetime. Two gifted evangelists adding a thousand souls to the Kingdom every week would see 1,664,000 people saved in sixteen years. Two determined disciple-makers following the "each one win one and teach that one to do the same" method successfully every six months would see over 8 billion saved in the same time period using multiplication instead of simple addition. Note the change of the word "added" in the early chapters of Acts to "multiplied" from chapter 6 to the end of the book. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

Go, Find, Invite vs. the Success Syndrome

Some Christians avoid witnessing, believing they

We cannot afford to view the Great Commission as purely an obligatory responsibility.

won't succeed or that people will reject them. While it is true that every determined disciple-maker will face rejection, it is also true that "success" is not necessary for us to have obeyed the Lord. By not obeying the Lord in our soul-winning responsibilities we are in effect saying that our Lord's command is an unreasonable one. Through a parable in Matthew 22:9 Jesus teaches our responsibility. "Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall *find, bid* to the marriage." This is the simple task He has given to us. While I am con-

vinced that those who consume their lives going, finding, and inviting men to meet Jesus will see hundreds come to Him, simple obedience is all He asks of us. If no one ever responds positively, we have done what our Lord has commanded.

Theme of Themes vs. Pure Obligation

We cannot afford to view the Great Commission as purely an obligatory responsibility. The following story of an early twentieth-century soul winner ought to help motivate us.

As a young professional, Clay H. Trumbull worked as an office clerk and lived in a boardinghouse. One day he got a letter from a friend back home. He went to a small map-closet at work where he could be alone while he read the letter. It told him clearly how to be saved and made a personal appeal to receive Christ. He knelt on the floor of that map-closet and readily prayed the sinner's prayer. The next day on the way to work he took the opportunity to introduce a coworker to his newfound joy and urged him to make the same decision.

The man's response burned another decision deep into Trumbull's heart. He answered with shame and conviction, "I've been a Christian since a child, but never said a word that caused you to suspect it. I see now that you would have no doubt received Christ if I had but opened my mouth." That day Clay Henry Trumbull made this resolve that he kept the rest of his life.

Whenever I am in such intimacy with a soul as to be justified in choosing my subject of conversation, the theme of themes shall have prominence between us, so that I may learn of his need, and if possible, meet it.

Let's analyze his resolve. In what way does this resolve guard against haphazard or discourteous efforts? In what circumstances does this resolve call for boldness? Why should each Christian make this same resolve? What is this resolve's definite and declared purpose?

Here is the resolve simplified.

I resolve to direct every conversation I possibly can to the theme of themes, learn of that soul's need, and if possible meet it.

Will you make this your life's resolve? In what ways do you think it will change your life?

Jeff Musgrave pastors Highlands Baptist Church in Centennial, Colorado.

We all struggle with our responsibility to evangelize. If I asked, “Is your church evangelistic?” you might reply by mentioning your latest rousing sermon on evangelism or your recent Bible study series on soul winning. Maybe you would refer me to your well-written blog post where you analyze postmodernity’s effect on evangelism and then offer some outside-the-box, culturally relevant methods of evangelism. These evangelistic activities are helpful and necessary—but do you think God is pleased when they take the place of actually *doing* evangelism? Maybe I should ask this tough question: When was the last time you personally won a soul to Jesus Christ?

God says it is wise to win souls. “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise” (Prov. 11:30). Matthew Henry commented on this verse: “He that is wise, by communicating his wisdom, wins souls. . . . The wise are said to turn many to righteousness (Dan. 12:3), and that is the same with winning souls here.”

As an evangelist, I have preached in many churches. It seems that the spirit of a church that *does* soul winning is different from the spirit of one that just *talks about* it. People sing and respond to preaching with an openness and an expectancy that are often absent in a Biblically awake but evangelistically asleep church. That may partially be what Evangelist Bob Jones Sr. meant when he said, “It takes evangelistic unction to make orthodoxy function.”

There is wonderful joy in winning souls. It brings blessings both eternal and temporal. Here are some blessings enjoyed by churches and individuals who are not just soul-conscious, but soul winning.

Joyful Obedience

Christ commands us to be witnesses. His heartbeat—His main burden—is bringing lost souls to salvation. That is, after all, why He died on the cross. He gave us His Great Commission in Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15; and Luke 24:46–49. In Acts 1, He restated His command and told His disciples (including us) to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit for soul winning: “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me.”

In recent history, Fundamentalists have been accused (rightly so?) of preaching sermons that have little to do with the text, being ignorant, unlearned “Fundies,” and failing to offer patient Biblical counsel to needy church members. Are we now overreacting to these criticisms? Certainly we need to be accurate preachers, studied theologians, and Biblical counselors. If, however, we overreact to our critics, we may miss the blessing of sharing in the great passion of Christ—winning souls.

Christ did not die to make us into skilled expositors,

brilliant theologians, or effective counselors. Of course, He is honored as we use these ministry tools. They are part of His plan to glorify Himself. But He died on the cross to provide salvation, and we are primarily called to be individual witnesses of that message.

Continue to exegete the Bible carefully, study the truth, and counsel those in need. But don’t let Satan, the despiser of the cross, rob you of the greatest joy of all: being used by your sovereign God to find that one soul who is ready to repent.



The Promised Fruit of Soul Winning

Dave Barba

Enlightening Testimony

Paul noted in I Thessalonians 1:8, “For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.” It amazes me that he could say, “Everywhere I preach the gospel I find those who heard it through the testimony of your church.” That church had a wonderful public testimony.

When someone hears the name of your church, what comes to his mind? Accurate exposition (which we love and need), captivating oratory, skilled counseling, glorious music, and impressive crowds? Does he also think of people who witness to the lost—of church members whose hearts beat with that of the Savior who died for souls? He is no doubt blessed by accurate preaching, music, and fellowship, but His heart yearns for witnesses. After all, it was for souls that He bled. Churches that labor at soul winning will shine as a gospel light in their dark communities.

Christlike Compassion

Because of media and communication overload, most of our emotions are overworked. At the end of the day, after hearing about and observing the many problems of others, we struggle to care about

anybody but ourselves. Jesus, however, had a tender heart. “When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion” (Matt. 9:36). Soul-winning efforts turn our attention from ourselves to the real need of others: salvation.

I have always felt lacking in compassion. I have rarely wept in the night over lost souls. However, I have found that if I try to win souls anyway, God softens my heart. There were times as a pastor when I did not feel like going visiting. I’d reluctantly get ready and stumble out to my car. After all, this was my job. I was supposed to do this. Quoting John 3:16 over and over as spiritual motivation, I would drive to a prospect’s home, walk up the sidewalk, and knock on the door. Once I was seated in the house, looking into the eyes of a lost soul, then God would break my heart.

Compassion for souls may be the reward for witness-

ing when you do not feel like it. Go soul winning. Work to build a soul-winning church. As weightlifting builds muscles, your disciplined efforts to win the lost will produce a compassionate heart in you and in your people.

Fruit that Multiplies

Christ said in John 15:16, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." That promised fruit includes the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23) and souls that God wins through you. God will give fruit to those who witness (Gal. 6:9).

Years ago I preached in a seminary chapel on the Great Commission. I thought the message went well. But after the service, the seminary president said to me, "Brother Barba, you should have finished your sermon by telling us about three people you personally led to Christ." His statement was a kind and wise rebuke, a reminder that evangelism is more than sermonizing.

Maybe recalling the fruit of soul winning will encourage all of us to do it. Please pardon me for doing what that man of God suggested. Here are the stories of three souls that God won to Himself when I happened to be the soul winner.

The telephone rang one afternoon when our Wisconsin church plant was a few months old. The caller, Jim G., identified himself as a devout Catholic who was looking for a wife. "I am a moral man, and I cannot seem to find a moral lady in my church. Do you have any in the Baptist church?" I chose not to make recommendations, but I did ask permission to tell him of Someone who could help him. He listened to the plan of salvation on the telephone and prayed to receive Christ. Jim was part of our first baptism at Falls Baptist. He later became a teacher, a soul winner, and a deacon. He eventually married a lovely Christian girl. Their daughter is now a sweet, godly teenager, eager to do the will of God. Soul winning produces fruit that multiplies.

One cold winter Sunday morning I preached a message in a series on Revelation. Unsaved Jim K. was in the crowd with his dad, who had recently trusted Christ. Jim did not respond to the invitation, so I spoke to him after the service. "Jim, you have heard what God says about salvation. Would you like to talk about it?" He responded positively, and in a few minutes, in my office, Jim received the Savior. God called him to the ministry, and he graduated from Maranatha Baptist Bible College. He is now a faithful missionary in Hungary, winning souls and reproducing churches. Soul winning produces fruit that multiplies.

Then there was the time my wife invited salesman Paul C. to visit us and espouse the merits of his miracle-working product. We didn't buy, but as I walked him out to his car, I spoke to him about his soul and invited him to church. He came on Sunday. On Tuesday, I led Paul and his wife to Christ in their home. Several years later they moved to the Chicago area and served in the bus and senior ministries of Bethel Baptist in Schaumburg, Illinois. Paul later became an assistant pastor in Indiana. I recently trained him and his wife in the phone program that we use to start churches. In 2006 they will be planting a new church in Illinois. Soul winning produces fruit that multiplies.

Want to ease your conscience and appear evangelistic? Preach about evangelism, teach about evangelism, write articles about evangelism, and make allusions to evangelism. But never *do* evangelism.

Want to please God? Keep tracts in your car and don't leave the car without one. Don't just wander around the mall. Make it a witnessing tour and look for lonely souls. Soul winning conversations will come if you ask the Holy Spirit to open the door—and then look for the doorknob! Don't just talk about soul winning—do it! Challenge others to do it. God promises fruit that will remain and multiply.

Dr. Dave Barba and his wife Claudia assist church planters in the USA through *Press On! Ministries*.

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REACHING AND KEEPING THE 21ST-CENTURY TEENAGER

Her name was Judy, and she was a part of our youth group. I loved having her with us because she was one of those teenagers who truly enjoyed her time in our youth group family. You see, she didn't receive any verbal encouragement or support from her parents to attend church; she simply came on her own choice. She got to come only on Sunday mornings when we supplied her with transportation help.

One day Judy noticed that a family that included another teenage girl was moving into the vacant house next door to hers. Judy immediately went outside and introduced herself to her new neighbors. Within this initial conversation, Judy discovered the new girl—Stacy—had no church affiliation; therefore Judy quickly invited her new friend to come with her next Sunday.

Stacy was not that enthusiastic about coming to church. In fact, she put Judy off for an entire year. Finally, just to get Judy off her case, Stacy visited our church youth group and found herself deeply enjoying her experience. She returned the following week and soon discovered that we had scheduled other youth events. Stacy got thoroughly involved with every event we had going.

Through these months of getting to know Stacy, we discovered that she had been led to Christ earlier by her godly grandmother. She simply had no walk with the Lord and no knowledge of the Scriptures. In our church she began to blossom as a new believer should. This eventually led

to Stacy getting her unsaved parents' permission to leave the public school and start attending the Christian school associated with our church. When she graduated from our school, she went off to a Christian college, received her education to prepare herself to become a Christian school teacher herself, and came back to our ministry—where she taught in our elementary school.

How did this wonderful life change occur in this young girl? It took place simply as a result of the interest of a next-door neighbor who had caught the truth that we are all responsible for rescuing lives for Christ. Judy had been a part of an "atmosphere" where it was a common occurrence for teenagers to come to Christ and become disciples of His.

Most youth ministries in Fundamental churches have done well at the edification portion of the Great Commission—that is, we do well at making disciples for Christ; however, we must remember the command also includes the winning of the lost. In this day of Christian schools and home education, the average teenager knows very little about winning other teens to Christ. In fact, we aren't helping them with this commandment if we do not supply opportunities to find the lost, reach the lost, and then develop the convert.

Jesus' story of the prodigal son (Luke 15) is a very familiar one to us. The story of the prodigal's rebellion, repentance, and return home is as vivid to us as any.

However, I believe there is a sometimes-overlooked lesson to be learned from the prodigal's father. The real hero in the story is the father. He is found looking down the highway for the return of his boy, and as soon as he sees him coming, runs to him, embraces him, and receives him into the home with a joyful feast. Those of us who have the privilege of working with teenagers could learn a lot from the heartbeat, the spirit, of the father.

A Changing Culture

Most of us realize that our culture has changed through the years, leading us away from the Judeo-Christian ethic. We've even moved from the "post-Judeo-Christian era" to another level: the "anti-Judeo-Christian era." How can we effectively reach and keep teenagers in this new cultural shift? In this time when immorality is accessible, entertained, and expected; when suicide is a growing epidemic of the rock music culture; and when innocence and decency become matters to be laughed at, *how can we reach another generation for Christ?* With so many other types of churches available for young people to attend (where they will be entertained and spiritually unaffected), what can we do to get teenagers into our churches and, more importantly, into a relationship with Jesus Christ?

The answer, I believe, is found in the heartbeat of the prodigal son's father. He reveals what is desperately needed in our Fundamental youth ministries. Catch the father's spirit and energy.

A Spirit of Expectancy

The father was focused on the son's return. He *expected* his son to return! He was looking for him "when he was yet a great way off." This expectant atmosphere affects everyone in the "house." When the youth leader exudes this desire to see people come to Christ, it will spread to others.

No one learns in or enjoys an atmosphere that is negative and/or boring. Our youth meetings, activities, Sunday school classes, and teen events must radiate a sense of godly expectancy that communicates, "God is still in the business of winning souls and making disciples, and we expect Him to do so today . . . in YOUR life."

Youth pastors and leaders must first of all examine their own hearts and determine whether they are expecting and striving toward the winning of the lost. This will lead to *praying* with expectancy, *preaching* with expectancy, and *pursuing* with expectancy. To pursue teenagers with this attitude means that youth leaders must set the pattern of finding lost teenagers in their communities and winning them to Christ. They must schedule regular times of getting out of the office and into the byways where they can find lost teenagers, seeking an opportunity of witness.

Attendance at local public school ballgames can possibly open an opportunity for witness. You can host

an annual outreach event at your church that provides games, competition, and food. At this event, a brief gospel message should be preached and an opportunity to accept Christ should be given. Monthly outreach opportunities such as door-to-door canvassing and witnessing should be arranged for the youth group. Of course the youth must be trained in proper evangelism at someone's door. This continues to develop a "rescue mode" of thinking on the part of the teenagers.

Spiritual Exhortations

In a matter of moments, the prodigal son went from being a ragged, sorrowful, hopeless boy to a new position. His father expressed a message of hope and dressed him in a new robe, new shoes, and a new ring and held a feast of rejoicing for him. I am convinced that most teenagers live in a dismal world of hopelessness, sorrow, and discouragement. Young people need salvation and a new identity. This, of course, is found in Jesus Christ. We must preach a message of hope.

Psalm 146:5, 7, 8—"Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God. . . . The LORD looseth the prisoners: The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down."

I'm saddened to say this, but the average youth ministry is composed of fun activities, great game

rooms, and neatly packaged programs but very little emphasis on preaching. Teenagers respond to preaching, and we must continue to proclaim the hope that is found in Christ. When teenagers visit our churches, they must recognize that they are in the presence of someone who truly loves them, cares for their life, and communicates the Word of God clearly and decisively.

When youth pastors clearly preach the Word, the brethren will be strengthened and the lost brought to Christ. Another wonderful byproduct of this environment will be the duplication of others wanting to surrender their lives to the harvest field of ministry.

Once we in youth ministry establish an atmosphere of *expectancy* and proclaim the *exhortation* of hope in Christ, we will find that this will result in . . .

A Saturated Environment

Others will catch the vision of reaching the teenager of the 21st century. Even though the prodigal had an angry older brother who did not approve of his return and the corresponding feast, there was still a household full of celebrants participating in the prodigal's return to the father. The household and servants responded in kind with the father's attitude of forgiveness, mercy, and care.

When someone asks the question, "How do I get

Continued on page 22

. . . the average youth ministry is composed of fun activities, great game rooms, and neatly packaged programs but very little emphasis on preaching.

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SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

First Partaker

Concentration in Prayer

I first began to read the sermons of Alexander Whyte over twenty-five years ago. Though no expositor, Whyte nevertheless touches my heart, sometimes more than any other preacher I read.

Alexander Whyte (1836–1921), an illegitimate child, became the most renowned Scottish Presbyterian preacher of his age. *The pulpit is a jealous mistress, and will not brook a divided allegiance*, Whyte once warned. For nearly forty years he packed Free St. George's in Edinburgh with an appreciative, responsive congregation. Multiple heart attacks in his 80s finally forced his reluctant resignation.

From his youth Whyte was described as being a young lion in the pulpit. This vigor he combined with one of the most penetrating imaginations ever to be employed in preaching, especially in his lengthy series on Bible characters, the best and most often reprinted in the history of English preaching.

Apart from the series on Bible characters, Whyte is most remembered for a series on prayer, *Lord, Teach Us to Pray*. There's nothing like it in the literature on prayer. The following is the almost complete text of one sermon in the series, based on our Lord's admonition, *When thou hast shut thy door* (Matt. 6:6). Like a skilled composer, Whyte orchestrates multiple variations on the same theme, each new return to it provoking the conscience afresh, until finally he relieves its reproaches by climaxing with encouragement from a surprising text about making a prayerful use of our closets.

Though not addressed exclusively to preachers, the

personal illustration that dominates the last half of the message makes the message a powerful appeal to those of us whose job description was long ago fixed like an ancient law of the Medes and Persians: *we will give ourselves continually to prayer.*

"The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits"
(2 Tim. 2:6)

We shut our door when we wish to be alone. We shut our door when we have some special work to do that must to-day be done, some piece of work that has been far too long postponed. *I must have some time to myself to-day*, we say to our household. *Tell those who ask for me to-day that I am so occupied that my time is not my own. Tell them to leave their message, or to write to me. Tell them that I hope to be free, and at their service, any time to-morrow.*

We have put off and put off that imperative duty,—that so distressing entanglement,—till we can put it off not one hour longer. And then it is that we shut our door, and turn the key, and lock ourselves in and all other men and all other matters out, till this pressing matter, this importunate business, is finished and off our hands. And then, as soon as it is finished and off our hands, we rise up and open our door. Our hands are free now. Our heart is lightened, and we are the best of company for the rest of the day.

Nothing could be plainer, and more impressive, than our Lord's words to us in the text. *Just as you do every day*,—He says to us,—*in your household and business life, so do, exactly, in your religious life. Fix on times; set apart times.* He does not say how often, or how long. He leaves all that to each man to find out for himself; only He says, *When you have, and as often as you have, real business on hand with heaven; when the concerns of another life and another world are pressing you hard; when neglect and postponement will do no longer; then, set about the things of God in a serious, resolved, instant,*

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business-like way.

Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret.

Our Lord does not mean that our Father is not in the synagogue, or even in the corners of the streets where the hypocrites of His day were wont to pray—much less that He is not present with us when our families meet together morning and evening for prayer. There is no family altar, and no prayer-meeting, and no church, and no street corner even, where God is not to be found of them that diligently seek Him. But God is present to His children in a special and in a peculiar way when they enter their closet and shut their door. The shortest, the surest, the safest way to seek God is to seek Him *in secret*.

It is not that God is any more really in secret than He is in public, but we are. God is wherever we are. And God is whatever we are, in street, in synagogue, at the family altar, in the closet. It is not that God is one thing on one side of a door of wood, and another thing on the other side of that door: it is that we differ so much

Nothing could be plainer, and more impressive, than our Lord's words to us in the text. Just as you do every day,—He says to us,—in your household and business life, so do, exactly, in your religious life. Fix on times; set apart times. He does not say how often, or how long. He leaves all that to each man to find out for himself; only He says, When you have, and as often as you have, real business on hand with heaven; when the concerns of another life and another world are pressing you hard; when neglect and postponement will do no longer; then, set about the things of God in a serious, resolved, instant, business-like way.

according to which side of that door we are on.

We all feel it the instant we turn the key, and go to our knees. In that instant we are already new creatures. We feel that this is our proper, and true, and best place. We say, *This is the house of God: this is the gate of heaven*. And if you keep the door shut, and give things

time to work, very soon your Father and you will be the whole world to one another. And if you pursue that; if you lay out your life to be a man of prayer; you will make continual discoveries of practices and expedients of secret devotion, such as will carry you up to heights of heavenly-mindedness that, at one time, would have been neither believable by you, nor desirable to you. You will find out ways that will suit you, and that could not suit anyone else—ways of impressing your own heart with the Being, the Greatness, the Grandeur, the Grace, the Condescension, the Nearness, and then the Inwardness of God. Your imagination, when you are on your secret knees, will sweep through heaven and earth; not so much seeking God as seeing Him and finding Him in all His works. You will drop down Bible history from Adam to yourself, seeing God's shining footsteps all down the way. You will see Jesus Christ also; and will speak with Him with an intimacy and a confidence and an experience not second to the intimacy and the confidence and the experience of the disciples themselves. You will positively people your place of prayer with Jesus Christ and with His Father and out of your place of prayer you will people your whole life, public and private, in a way, and to a degree, that would make your nearest friend to think that you had gone beside yourself, if you began to tell Him what God has done for your soul.

If we were to go over our accounts, and to arrange our disordered papers, and to write our most private letters in as short time as we give to our secret devotions, we should not need to shut our door. But our affairs are in such disorder, and in such arrears, that we must allot some time to set them right. And our Lord assumes in the text that the accounts and the correspondence connected with our religious life will need some time, and will take some trouble. We do not need to go farther than our own consciences for the proof of that. There is perhaps no man in this house who would not be put to shame if it were told what time in the day, or in the week, he gives to secret and inward prayer. Godly men go no further than their own closets for the proof of their depravity, and misery, and stupidity. Their restraint of secret prayer; their distaste for secret prayer and a shut door; and, with that, their treatment of their Maker, of their children, of their best friends, and of their own souls,—all horrify them when they come to themselves, and think of themselves in this matter of secret prayer.

And, even after we have taken all that to heart, and have begun to shut our door, we do not keep it long enough shut. It is quite true that secret prayer is the most purely spiritual of all human employments. Secret prayer is the last thing to be shut up to places, and bound down to times. At the same time we men, as Butler says, are what we are. And it is just the extreme spirituality of secret prayer that makes time, as well as seclusion, absolutely indispensable for its proper performance and for its full fruit. If we rush through a few verses of a familiar psalm, or a few petitions of the Lord's Prayer, and then up and out of our door as we should

not be allowed to do in the presence-chamber of our sovereign, then we had as well,—nay, we had better, not have gone to our knees at all. But if we enter our closet with half the fear, with half the wonder and awe, with half the anxiety to be recognized and addressed with which we would enter the palace of a prince on earth, then, so willing is God to be approached that He will immediately meet with us and will bless us. Hurry, then, in our secret devotions, is impossible. If you are in such a desperate hurry, go and do the thing that so hurries you, and God will wait. He is in no hurry. He will tarry your leisure. No! Let there be no hurry here. God is God; and man is man. Let all men, then, take time and thought when they would appear before God.

And then, it sometimes takes a long time even to get the door shut, and to get the key to turn in the rusty lock. Last week I became very miserable as I saw my time slipping away, and my vow not performed. I therefore one afternoon stole into my coat and hat, and took my staff, and slipped out of the house in secret. For two hours, for an hour and three-quarters, I walked alone and prayed: but pray as I would, I got not one step nearer God all these seven or eight cold miles. My guilty conscience mocked me to my face, and said to me: *Is it any wonder that God has cast off a minister and a father like thee?*

For two hours I struggled on, forsaken of God, and met neither God nor man all that chill afternoon. When, at last, standing still, and looking at Schiehallion clothed in white from top to bottom, this of David, preached after a holiday at Bonskeid shot up into my heart: *Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* In a moment I was with God. Or, rather, God, as I believe, was with me. Till I walked home under the rising moon with my head waters and with my heart in a flame of prayer; naming and describing, first my own children to God, and then yours. Two hours is a long time to steal away from one's books and companions to swing one's walking-stick, and to utter unavailing pleas in a wintry glen: but then, my two hours look to me now—as they tasted to me then—the best strength and the best sweetness of all my Christmas holiday.

And then, when secret, mental, and long-accumulated intercession is once begun, it is like the letting out of waters,—there is no end to it. Why, my children almost made me forget you and your children. And then, our friends! how bad we all are to our friends! how short-sighted, how cruel, how thoughtless, how inconsiderate! We send them gifts. Our children cover their Christmas tree with Christmas presents to our friends. Our friends cost us a great deal of thought and trouble and money, from time to time. We send them sheaves of cards with all manner of affectionate devices and verses. We take time and we write our old friends, at home and abroad, letters full of news and of affection on Christmas Day and on New Year's Day. But we never pray for them. Or, at best, we pray for them in a moment of time, and in a great hurry.

Why do we do everything for our friends but the best

thing? How few of us shut our door during all the leisure of the last fortnight, and deliberately, and particularly, and with discrimination, and with importunity prayed for our dearest and best friends! We discriminated in our purchases for our friends, lest we should slight or offend our friends: but not in our prayers. Who in the family, who in the congregation, who in the city, who abroad, will be surprised with some blessing this year? Surprised with some unexpected providence, some despaired-of deliverance, some cross lifted off, or left and richly blessed, some thorn taken out of their flesh, some salvation they had not themselves had faith to ask for? And

When a minister, going out for a long walk, takes his sick-list in his pocket; or his visiting-book; or his long roll of young communicants, no longer young; or when an elder or a deacon thinks of the people of his district; or a Sabbath school teacher his class, and the fathers and mothers of his class; or a mistress her servants; or a father his children; or a friend his friends; or an enemy his enemies;—many a knock will come to his door before he is done: many a mile will he have walked before he is done.

all because we asked, and importuned, and shut our door upon God and ourselves in their behalf. A friend of any kind, and to any extent and degree, is something to have in this cold and lonely world. But to have a friend who has the ear of God, and who fills God's ear from time to time with our name and our case,—Oh, where shall I find such a friend? Oh, who shall find such a friend henceforth in me?

When a minister, going out for a long walk, takes his sick-list in his pocket; or his visiting-book; or his long roll of young communicants, no longer young; or when an elder or a deacon thinks of the people of his district; or a Sabbath school teacher his class, and the fathers and mothers of his class; or a mistress her servants; or a father his children; or a friend his friends; or an enemy his enemies;—many a knock will come to his door before he is done: many a mile will he have walked before he is done. Our Lord took all night up in a mountain over the names of His twelve

disciples. And since the day of His ascension nearly nineteen hundred years ago He has been in continual intercession in heaven for all those who have been in intercession for themselves and for other men on earth. Day and night,—He slumbers not nor sleeps: keeping Israel by His unceasing, particular, discriminating, importunate intercession.

Secret prayer is such an essentially spiritual duty that the Bible nowhere lays down laws and rules either as to times or as to places for such prayer. The Bible treats us as men, and not as children. The Bible is at pains to tell us how this saint of God did in his day; and then, that other saint in his day and in his circumstances: how Abraham did, and Jacob, and David, and Daniel, and Jesus Christ, and His disciples and apostles. The Bible is bold to open the shut door of all these secret saints of God, and to let us see them and hear them on their knees. Abraham for Sodom: Jacob at the Jabbok, Daniel with his open window: Jesus on the mountain all night, and in the garden at midnight: Peter on the housetop: and Paul, in the prison and in the workshop, for his hearers and for his readers. And then, we are left free to choose our own times and places,—few or many, open or secret, vocal or mental, just as we need, just as we like, and just as suits us. Only, surely nature itself, common sense itself, old habit from childhood itself, must teach and constrain us to keep our door shut for a moment or two in the morning: a moment or two alone and apart with Him Who is about our path and about our bed. And if we once taste the strength, and the liberty, and the courage, and the light of God's countenance that always streams down on him who is found of God on his secret knees early in the morning, then that will be a sweet and a happy day that does not send us back to our knees more than once before it is over.

And then at night,—what an indecency it is, what folly! How we shall gnash our teeth at ourselves one day to remember how a dinner party, or music in our neighbor's house or in our own; a friend at supper; a late talk; a storybook to finish before we sleep;—how such things as these should have been allowed to rob us of our nightly self-examination, of nightly washing from the past day's sin, and of our nightly renewed peace with God! What do the angels and the saints think of our folly? If our fathers and mothers are let to look down to see what their children are doing,—would anything darken heaven to them like seeing the things that serve their children for an excuse to go to sleep without self-examination, confession of

sin, and prayer? Whether they see us or no, there is One who says over us many a graceless and prayerless night: *Oh! if thou hadst known! even thou in this thy day!*

Let us begin this very Sabbath night. Let us shut our door tonight. We are in no hurry of business or of pleasure to-night. Let us go back upon the morning, upon the forenoon, upon the whole day, upon the week, upon the year. Let us recollect for whom, and for what, we prayed in secret this morning, or did not pray. Let us recall what we read, what we heard, and with what feelings: with whom we conversed, and about what: all the things that tried us, tempted us, vexed us, or helped, comforted, and strengthened us.

Let us do that tonight, and we shall not want matter for repentance and prayer tonight: nor for prayer, and purpose, and a plan of life for to-morrow. *And thy Father, Which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*

There is nothing that more humiliates us; there is nothing that more makes us blush for shame than the way our Lord sometimes speaks about rewarding us for what we do. His words about our wages and our rewards shock us and pain us exceedingly. We know well,—we shall never forget,—that, after we have done all, we are still the most unprofitable of servants, and the most deep of debtors. At the same time,—there it stands: *Thy Father shall reward thee openly.* Where? When? How shall He reward us openly? Perhaps in our children, perhaps in our children's salvation; their eternal salvation, to which they might never have attained but for our secret, unceasing, mental prayer. That would be a reward we could not refuse! Nor feel any humiliation for, other than a most sweet and everlasting humiliation! On the other hand, what would a kingdom be to us if anything had gone wrong with our children? What would heaven itself be to us, if our children were not there with us? And what a reward, what wages, if they are all there!

Or perhaps this may be it, that when all shut doors are opened, and all secrets told out, we may be allowed to see what we owe to one another's intercessions. It may be part of the first joyful surprise of heaven to see what we did for other men and what they did for us. *Pray for them that despitefully use you,* our Lord advises us. Well, what a surprise it will be to you and to him if some one is brought up and introduced to you whose secret prayers for you have been your salvation all the time you were thinking he was your enemy, as you were his.

But who shall tell all that is in our Lord's mind and intention when He says: *Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly?* And when He goes on to say, *For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed: neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.* ☞



Mark Minnick is pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, where he has served on the pastoral staff since 1980. He speaks frequently in churches and at conferences across the nation and ministers regularly on mission fields around the world.

Bring . . . the Books

Martyn Lloyd-Jones: A Family Portrait by Christopher Catherwood

Twenty-five years ago this past March, Martyn Lloyd-Jones finished his earthly ministry and went home to be with the Lord at eighty years of age. His ministry spanned over half a century, and more than thirty of those years were spent ministering at Westminster Chapel in London. His ministry greatly shaped and preserved conservative evangelicalism in England during the first half of the 20th century. Perhaps the definitive biography on his life is Iain Murray's two-volume work. As a member of the family, however, Christopher Catherwood's biography introduces his grandfather's more private and personal side.

My hope is that having read this biography, you will have a much better sense of the man: who he was, what made him what he was and what he was like in private away from the public gaze. He was a remarkable man by all accounts, a larger-than-life figure of the kind by which we are seldom blessed. To have known him as we did within his family was the rarest of privileges, and we shall not see his like again. If you get only a small sense of the bigness of the man—of the breadth of his vision, of his compassion, his wisdom, his sheer warmth and depth of affection, and above all his ability to give one a sense of the glory of God and the greatness of our salvation in Christ—then my writing this book and your reading it will not have been in vain.

Catherwood's work is brief and readable. He introduces his readers to ten different spheres in which Lloyd-Jones lived and ministered. For instance, in the section on "The Early Years," Catherwood recounts the time when Lloyd-Jones as an eleven-year-old boy left home to attend school in a town so distant from home that he was able to see his parents only on weekends. "This gave him a lifelong antagonism to the strange English upper-class habit of sending their children, often at a tender age, away to boarding school." Lloyd-Jones believed that this had a negative effect on British evangelicals, given the number of evangelical leaders who were products of such a system. "The Doctor felt that it bred a very superficial type, often unable to cope with normal emotions, as the ethos of the 'stiff upper lip' demanded that all such emotion be crushed."

Catherwood's treatment of his grandfather's appointment as assistant to the Queen's physician and his subsequent decision to abandon such a high honor for the sake of the gospel illuminates Lloyd-Jones's commitment to preaching. But Lloyd-Jones never lost his interest in medicine, and at times his knowledge in this area would open doors of ministry that would have otherwise remained shut. His medical background proved to be helpful in the writing of *Spiritual Depression*.

Lloyd-Jones had very definite ideas about the nature of ministry, and he remained passionately committed to the centrality of the Word as the exclusive ground on which the work of the ministry must be carried out.

*"... when
thou comest,
bring with thee
... the books"
(2 Tim. 4:13)*

To start off with, he scrapped a lot of the social functions of the church, many of which had no doubt been established to win people into coming. Out went the sports club, the drama group and the temperance league. As he himself put it, "The business of preaching is not to entertain, but to lead people to salvation, to teach them to find God." Only preaching based on Scripture would do this, and he began as he meant to continue.

Lloyd-Jones was passionately dedicated to his family. Catherwood provides a multitude of rare examples where Lloyd-Jones is seen interacting with his children and grandchildren. On one occasion, his daughter, Elizabeth, was asked by a college professor to critique Chaucer's *The Miller's Tale*. She promptly wrote a stern essay that was more moral rebuke than literary critique. She was less than happy with the results. Her father suggested that she offer a proper critique along the lines expected by her professor then, after having examined it carefully as literature, she might add her observations on the moral nature of the story and the author at the end. It was sound advice.

Many have noted his sternness in the pulpit and his impatience with foolish and tiresome people. However, with his family, there were no questions that were out of bounds. His family was intimately involved in dinner-table discussions regarding whatever issue was occupying the Doctor's mind at the time. Hence, they had a unique perspective on matters that were later to be very public issues: charismatic gifts, the nature of English Evangelicalism, the breaking of fellowship with friends in ministry who were remaining in apostate denominations. The section on "Unity and Schism" uncovers some interesting and little-known facts that enlarge one's appreciation for Lloyd-Jones's stand for truth in a time when it would have been easy to compromise.

A Family Portrait is a delightful and informative portrait of an important facet of Lloyd-Jones's life. It is not intended to displace fuller biographies but to complement them. In this, Catherwood has succeeded. My heart was warmed as I read this, and I was reminded again of how thankful we can be for men like Lloyd-Jones upon whose shoulders we stand. ☞

Dr. Sam Horn is Executive Vice President of Northland Baptist Bible College in Dunbar, Wisconsin.

The relationship between Law and Grace has been hotly debated since the time of the Apostles. Paul battled those who distorted the gospel by demanding Law observance as a means for justification (cf. Gal 1:6–9; 2:16). There can be no mixture of law and grace in the plan of salvation—embracing one excludes the other (Gal 5:2–4). Whatever else we conclude about the Law, it plays no part in our justification.

Some, however, see the Law as important for evangelism. It is commonly argued that we must preach the Law to sinners before we preach the Cross and grace. Galatians 3:24 is often cited as proof: “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” While there may be other places in Scripture where this truth is taught, this is not the point of Paul’s teaching in this verse.

The KJV uses italics for the words “to bring us” (indicating they are not in the Greek text), but the addition of these words shifts the meaning of the text in a direction that is not consistent with the context. The translation would be more accurate if they were omitted: “the law was our schoolmaster unto Christ” (*unto* really means *until*, a temporal use of the *eis*).

The context indicates that Paul is addressing two distinct eras in God’s dealings with humanity. According to verse 19, the Law was given by God to function “till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.” This seed is Jesus Christ (v. 16). The Law was designed by God to function from Sinai until the coming of Jesus Christ. Verse 23 also makes the time element prominent by using the phrases “before faith came” and “unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.” Paul is not speaking of personal faith in verse 23, but of the unique characteristic of the time following Christ’s coming.

Paul is not saying that there was no faith prior to the coming of our Lord. His whole argument in this chapter contradicts that—he has made the case that Abraham was justified by faith. The point of this contrast between the Law and faith is not personal in nature; it is corporate—Israel was under the Law until the Messiah would come. Paul is not speaking of law as a general principle, but of *the* Law, that is, the Mosaic Law which was given “four hundred and thirty years after” the promise to Abraham. The Mosaic Law was a temporary administration by God

over His people. It served as a schoolmaster (vv. 24, 25), but since Christ has come we are no longer under its rule.

It is incorrect, therefore, to claim that verse 24 teaches the evangelistic principle that we must preach the Law because it leads us to Christ. The text is describing the historical reality of God’s plan for Israel. God provided the Law at Sinai so that it would serve as a tutor or schoolmaster until Jesus Christ came in fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham. Christ has come, so the Law no longer serves as our schoolmaster. This is true for all people, saved or not. Nothing in this text warrants the conclusion that gospel preaching must start with the Law.

This is significant for a few reasons. First, it helps explain why the gospel preaching recorded in the book of Acts does not concentrate on the Law. If Paul were teaching that we must preach the Law before we can preach the cross, we must ask why he did not do so himself (nor Peter, Stephen, or Philip). Second, it guards against the mistaken notion that believers are obligated to keep the Law as a rule for life after conversion. If we preach the demands of the Law as binding upon lost people, can we really avoid the conclusion that we are obligated to those same demands? If it is a permanent moral standard, how can it apply only to lost people? Granted, genuine believers would never demand that we keep the Law in order to be justified, but many do claim that we must keep it as evidence of our conversion. But Paul is very clear that we are no longer under the Law; the time of its rule is past.

If we don’t preach the Law, then does that mean we ignore sin? Absolutely not. It is clear that our message, empowered by the Spirit, will include conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8–11). We should follow Paul’s example and preach the truth that God is our Maker, that we have sinned against Him by refusing to honor Him as God, and offer the thanks which He rightly deserves (Rom. 1:21). This is what he did in Lystra and at Mars Hill (Acts 14:15–17; 17:22–31). The call to proclaim God’s wrath against sin is definitely needed in our day, but we must be careful to base that call on Biblical texts properly understood. If we don’t, we open the door for greater problems down the road. I believe Paul would be surprised that anyone would use Galatians 3:24 to argue for preaching the Law; he might wonder whether such a person isn’t actually guilty of the very thing which he was opposing. ☞

“Rightly
dividing
the Word
of Truth”
(2 Tim. 2:15)

From 1940 to the mid 1980s the program *Truth or Consequences* aired on American radio and television. Contestants were asked silly, “trick” questions that were phrased in such a way that wrong answers were usually given. The emcee then told the participants that since they did not tell the truth, they would have to face the consequences. The “consequences” were most often humorous, elaborate stunts designed to embarrass the contestant while entertaining the audience. The show’s popularity reached such a level that a town in New Mexico even changed its name to Truth or Consequences!

A study of “truth” in the Scripture sets a far different tone from what is portrayed in the modern world. What a person does with *truth* and the resulting *consequences* are no laughing matter. Even simple admonitions, such as “[put] away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour” (Eph. 4:25), can have colossal ramifications if ignored. Consider the following example:

In 1899 four reporters from Denver, Colorado, met by chance on a Saturday night in a Denver railroad station. Al Stevens, Jack Tournay, John Lewis, and Hal Wilshire worked for the four Denver papers: the *Post*, the *Times*, the *Republican* and the *Rocky Mountain News*. Each had the unenviable task of finding a scoop for the Sunday edition. They hoped to spot a visiting celebrity arriving that evening by train. However, none showed up, so the reporters wondered what on earth they would do. As they discussed options in a nearby saloon, Al suggested they make up a story. The other three laughed—at first. But before long they were all agreed—they would come up with such a whopper that no one would question it and their respective editors would congratulate them on their find. A phony local story would be too obvious, so they decided to write about someplace far away. . . . “What if we say that some American engineers, on their way to China, told us they were bidding on a major job: the Chinese government is planning to demolish the Great Wall?” Harold was not sure the story would be believable. Why would the Chinese ever tear down the Great Wall of China? “As a sign of international goodwill, to invite foreign trade.” By 11 P.M. the four reporters had worked out the details, and the next day all four Denver newspapers carried the story—on the front page. . . . When the citizens of China heard that the Americans were sending a demolition crew to dismantle the Great Wall, most were indignant, even outraged. Particularly angry were members of a secret society made up of Chinese patriots already against any kind of foreign intervention. Moved to action by the news story, they attacked the foreign embassies in Peking and murdered hundreds of missionaries from abroad. In the next two months twelve thousand troops from six countries, working together, invaded China to protect their

countrymen. The bloodshed of that time, born out of a journalistic hoax fabricated in a saloon in Denver, was . . . the Boxer Rebellion (R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, 129–30).

We should not be surprised that one lie could cause the upheaval mentioned above, when it was the questioning of God’s word (“Hath God said?”) and a lie that plunged our race into deadly sin. We should be sobered, however, as we watch the reaping in a “postmodern” world where all truth is considered relative, and the only idea that will not be tolerated is *intolerance* itself. Because few voices plead for the truth, “judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter” (Isa. 59:14). In these last days, evil men who deny the truth will “wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13). While their disregard for truth and the resulting consequences will be seen in government, education, the media, the courts, and society overall, the child of God who thinks what is true and lives accordingly will know true spiritual freedom and blessing (John 8:32, 36).

Defining “Truth”

God’s Spoken Word A word study of “truth” in the Bible will quickly reveal its definition. The psalmist declared, “thy law is the truth,” and “all thy commandments are truth” (Ps. 119:142, 151). The prophet Isaiah said, “Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth” (25:1), and twice in Isaiah 65:16 he calls the Lord “the God of truth.” In Ephesians 1:13 Paul defines the “truth” as “the gospel of your salvation.” James adds that “of His own will begat he us with the word of truth” (1:18). “Truth” is whatever God speaks. If man speaks in contradiction to what God has said, “let God be true, but every man a liar” for God will be “justified in [His] sayings” (Rom. 3:4). A. J. Gordon put it this way: “If you tell the truth, you have infinite power supporting you; but if not, you have infinite power against you.”

God Himself God’s spoken word is truth, because all truth is bound in His Person. Hence, “God . . . cannot lie” (Titus 1:2), and His “word is settled [set; it stands without change] in heaven” (Ps. 119:89). Jesus Christ is not only God the Son, but He is also the “Word” (John 1:1, 14), God’s communication of Himself in human flesh. Hence, He is Truth personified (John 1:17; 14:6), and whenever He speaks He also bears witness to the truth (John 18:37). God the Holy Spirit is called the “Spirit of truth” three times in John’s Gospel (14:17; 15:26; 16:13). His primary responsibilities involve the truth in that He testifies of Christ (John 15:26) and works to “guide [disciples] into all truth” (John 16:13)

“To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, ‘A window shalt thou make in the ark.’”

Charles Spurgeon

of which He is the Author (2 Pet. 1:21). Lord Chesterfield was correct in stating: "Every man seeks for truth, but God only knows who has found it" ("Open Quotations," Power Bible CD, Version 4.0a). A man or woman's response to truth is really his or her response to God, and certain consequences will follow.

Truth and Personal Consequences

As a pastor, hardly a week passes when I do not find myself quoting Philippians 4:8 to someone I am counseling. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are *true* . . . think on these things." Most problems that people face are the consequences of thinking that is contrary to what God says is true and honest. This is why Paul admonished the Corinthians to "[Cast] down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and [to bring] into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). Believers who "renew" their minds by thinking only that which is consistent with Biblical truth (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23) will be equipped for spiritual battle (Ps. 91:4; Eph. 6:14), and will be "established" by the truth in their spiritual walk (2 Pet. 1:12). A. T. Robertson said this: "It is not the number of books you read, nor the variety of sermons you hear, nor the amount of religious conversation in which you mix, but it is the frequency and earnestness with which you meditate on these things till the truth in them becomes your own and part of your being, that ensures your growth" (Ibid.).

Many have learned the hard way that *God's truth is always better obeyed the first time*. One man who operated a small grocery store in Sheridan, Arkansas, was asked by one of the local women for a "large chicken," since she expected guests from out of town. When the storeowner placed a frozen bird on the scale, the woman replied: "I need one larger than that." The owner returned the chicken to the freezer below, but to his dismay there was no other chicken. After some quick thinking, he pulled the same chicken out of the freezer, put it on the scale, and with the help of a hidden finger on the back of the scale, produced a "larger" chicken. Imagine his grief when the local woman saw the scale and declared, "I'll take *both* chickens" (Elbourne. org/sermons/index+t).

In Psalm 51:6 David identified one of the primary causes of his sin with Bathsheba. Though God desires "truth in the inward parts," David chose to follow what his lusts and his reasoning told him to do. Simply put, he hadn't been *honest* with what he knew to be true! The words of R. E. Neighbour accurately express this important truth:

It is not what you say that counts,
Nor merely what you do;
Your words may all seem genuine,
Your works be not a few.
Yet, after all, God looks within,
And sees the inner "you."
Your doctrine may be error free,
Your creed be all so true.
Yet, God looks past all these to see
If you, indeed, are true.

(Walter B. Knight, *Knight's Treasury of Illustrations*, 168.)

As David reaped the tragic consequences of his sin, he discovered that it is better to listen to truth the first time. Joseph, on the other hand, exclaimed in Genesis 39:9 the internal truth that kept him from moral failure with Potiphar's wife: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" His right thinking led to right actions!

Truth and Universal Consequences

Of course, the most sobering aspect of God's truth is the fact that what we do with it *always* has eternal ramifications, and no one is exempt. When an individual hears "the word of truth, the gospel of . . . salvation" and chooses to place his trust completely in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:13), he is saved eternally. According to 1 Timothy 2:4, God wants "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Yet, 2 Thessalonians 2:12 says that the eternally "damned" are those "who believed not the truth." This group has had their minds blinded to the gospel by the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4) and ungodly men who seek to "hold [suppress, conceal] the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). So when Mahatma Gandhi told the people of India, "I believe in the message of truth delivered by all the religious teachers of the world" (Ralph L. Woods, *The World Treasury of Religious Quotations*, 1010), he was not delivering a message of truth at all, but a false message of darkness that has had eternal consequences for millions of precious souls.

Those of us who have been born again must not forget that our daily response to truth also has eternal consequences. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). To a large degree, our accounting as Christians will be about how seriously we took our responsibility as "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15) and were willing to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3).

Conclusion

The first two verses of Psalm 2 are a commentary on the history of civilization: "The heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing[.] The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed [literally, His Messiah]." Listen to the attitude of the heathen toward the truth of God in verse 3: "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."

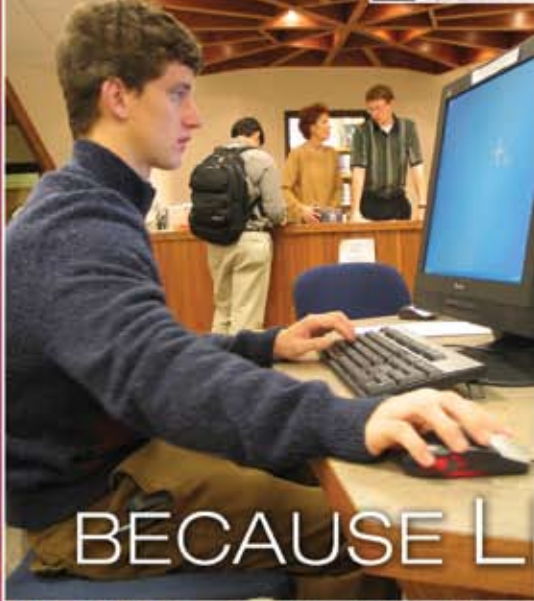
In verse 8 God makes this promise to His Son: "I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." The fulfillment of this passage is Christ's return to earth in Revelation 19:11ff. Take a moment to consider that the Conqueror who rides the white horse is called "Faithful and True." For millennia mankind has doubted and denied the words of the "Word made flesh." At His second coming Christ will prove definitively that His word "liveth and abideth forever." ☞

Mike Ascher is pastor of Bible Baptist Church in West Chester, Pennsylvania (www.bbcwccs.com).



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Reaching and Keeping the 21st-Century Teenager

Continued from Page 19

my youth group to win souls?" my immediate response is, "It starts with the leader." When you have a youth group filled with divisive cliques and when visitors feel unwelcome, I say, "It starts with the leader." Again, the rest of the household responded like the father who rejoiced at the son's homecoming.

If we in leadership show a burden and desire to win lost teenagers to Christ, it will spread. May I ask you a question? Can you remember the first time you wept over a teenager's spiritual condition? Here is a harder question: Can you remember the *last* time you wept for a teenager's spiritual condition? Do you still possess a broken heart for teenagers, or have you forgotten Proverbs 24:11, 12: "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the

heart consider it?"

A young Catholic boy visited our youth group at the invitation of another boy in our church. After realizing he was loved and after hearing the gospel and the Word of God proclaimed, the teen was finally led to Christ by the young man who had originally invited him. Over a period of months this new convert became an active witness for the Lord as well, showing others a passion for souls everywhere he went. God called him to the ministry, and he went to Bible college to prepare. Upon graduation, he got married to one of our young ladies who had also come through our youth group. I mentioned her earlier: Stacy. Yes, Stacy and her pastor-husband now serve their Lord together, seeking to teach others the need to reach, keep, and train others for Christ.

It is possible to reach and make disciples for Christ—even in the 21st century!

Morris Gleiser is an evangelist who is on the staff of Burge Terrace Baptist Church in Indianapolis, Indiana.



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Methinks if by faith we did indeed look upon them as within a step of hell, it would more effectually untie our tongues. —Richard Baxter

Soulwinning is the sob of God. It is the anguished cry of Jesus as He weeps over a doomed city. —Unknown

Just as one digit is valuable in the multiplication table, and one letter in the alphabet, far more valuable is just one soul in God's sight. —Robert G. Lee

It has been estimated that 95% of all church members have never led anyone to Christ. —Paul Tan

All my desire is the conversion of sinners, and all my hope is in God. —David Brainerd

I can do better. I will stay in London and try to win 50 souls. —Charles Spurgeon when rejecting an American lecture bureau's offer of \$50,000 for 50 days' public speaking

O Lord, give me souls, or take my soul. —George Whitefield

My ambition is the souls of men. —General William Booth when requested to write in King Edward VII's autograph album

Go for souls, and go for the worst. —Unknown

I am the happiest man in London, England, today! —Prime Minister William Gladstone, after leaving the writing of an important speech to win a dying boy to Christ

I have had many thrilling experiences, but that one outranks them all. —U.S. President Benjamin Harrison, after leading a young skeptic to the Lord at 1 o'clock in the morning

We're no longer fishers of men, but keepers of the aquarium, and we spend most of our time swiping fish from each other's bowls. —Dr. Kermit Long

Leon Trotsky was in frequent contact with Christians in New York in his young manhood—but no one ever tried to win him for Christ. —Selected

If you believe the Word of God, why do you not bestir yourself to the helping of others? Do you not care who is damned, so you be saved? If so, you have sufficient cause to pity yourselves, for it is a frame of spirit utterly inconsistent with grace. —Richard Baxter

[Evangelist] had his eyes up to heaven, the best of books was in his hand, the law of truth was written upon his lips, and he stood as if he pleaded with men. —John Bunyan

The old cannot live long, the young may die very quickly. —John Rainolds

Why should a few hear the Gospel so often when so many have never heard it once? —Oswald J. Smith

One eye-witness is better than ten ear-witnesses. —Thomas Adams

They forget a main point of the Church's glory, who pray not daily for the conversion of the Jews. —Robert Leighton

Soulwinning is the cry of John Knox, 'Give me Scotland or I die.' It is the declaration of John Wesley, 'The world is my parish.' It is the sob of parents in the night, weeping over a prodigal child. —Unknown

Compiled by Dr. David Atkinson, pastor of Dyer Baptist Church, Dyer, Indiana.

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Ministering to the Community

Linda Hull

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:10

My family and I were at a yard sale near our church where we happened to overhear some people discussing our church and pastor. We didn't recognize them. In fact, it was doubtful that they had ever visited our services, yet they had formed some rather damaging opinions. We were surprised at the scornful tone and the supposition that we were just another "social club." Obviously, our church body had failed to identify or meet their needs. I confess that I was curious to find out how they had come to their conclusions. Later, thinking over the conversation I had heard, I realized that people need to know that they matter. They need to know that God doesn't have an exclusive club, and that the doors to His kingdom are open to all who will come in. By going out into the community, we can aid in alleviating the pain and suffering of the lost world and earn the right to witness of Jesus Christ and to demonstrate His love.

When Jesus commanded the disciples to evangelize the world, He didn't tell them to build a building and invite people to come. Instead, Matthew 10 tells us that He sent them out to various towns and villages in Israel. He gave them specific instructions: preach, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out devils. They were to take no pay, and if they were not well received, they were to move on. So the disciples went out into the community at large to meet needs and preach. Today we would call them missionaries. The "harvest" that Jesus speaks of in John 4 will not come automatically to the Church. We have to bring them in, not wait for them to show up.

It has been my experience that reaching into the community involves a "lifestyle" evangelism mode of thinking. I like to think of it as being on call at all times to share the message of Jesus and to demonstrate His love, grace, and mercy where opportunity presents itself. I like Ecclesiastes 9:10: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." This verse reminds me

that time is short, and soon the opportunity to make a difference will be lost. If we are open to the leading of the Holy Spirit and earnestly seek our Lord in prayer, He will direct us.

While living in Ft. Lauderdale, my husband and I met a homeless man, slightly mentally disabled, fresh from New York. He delighted in attending church services, hoping for a handout. Most people were very uncomfortable with him, being put off by his clothes and his behavior. Of course, since he didn't know the routine of the service, he was often disruptive—on purpose I suspect! I have always believed that our Lord had sent him to our church just to test us to see whether we truly loved His "sheep." He took a particular liking to my husband, envious that he was

from Texas. So we spent many hours with him and witnessed the change in him when he received Jesus as his Savior. Miraculously, he was also reconciled with his wife.

During a door-to-door evangelism campaign, I met an elderly lady who lived all alone. We chatted for a little while, and I discovered that her family lived far away. She was basically all alone, stuck in her apartment day after day, with little opportunity to interact with others. I invited her to attend our worship service, and so began a wonderful relationship. It became my habit to

pick her up for services and to take her shopping once a week. As I got to know her better, I was also able to help her find a more suitable apartment and help her with some basic housekeeping chores. I came to love her very much and rejoiced when she made a decision to receive Jesus as her Savior!

When my husband was in the Navy, we enjoyed inviting a serviceman from the nearby military base to come for a home-cooked meal. I'll never forget the Thanksgiving that the oven went out! Our guests were very understanding when dinner was a bit delayed while we tried to figure out a way to get the turkey done!

For three years I had the privilege to serve as a volunteer counselor in a Christ-centered pregnancy center. Not only did I have the opportunity to counsel young women making a choice about their pregnancy, but I also was able to share how Jesus Christ had pro-

*Jesus is the
answer to all of
life's problems,
and when people
are desperate,
they will listen.*

vided forgiveness and a place in His kingdom to all who would believe.

People with problems are looking for answers. Jesus is the answer to all of life's problems, and when people are desperate, they will listen. By placing myself in an organization sponsored by like-minded believers, I had the liberty to share my faith. I was available to offer hope and encouragement through Jesus Christ, testifying of the work that Jesus had done in my life. As a result, seeds were planted and cultivated and the harvest was reaped in changed lives.

The harvest truly is white! There is much that can be done by individuals and by the local church. When you decide to reach out into your community, start small. You may want to participate in a para-church organization doing volunteer work, or participate in a ministry sponsored by your church.

Pray and seek God's will and direction for any ministry undertaking. Remember that the purpose in ministering outside the church walls is to earn the right to be a witness of Jesus and His love. As relationships are built through ministry, the people will be more likely to come into the church.

To discover opportunities for ministry, look around your community. What needs do you see on a regular basis? Consider the population. Is there a low employment rate? What is the income level for your community? What services are already being provided? Who is providing these services? What is the attitude or tone of your community? Is there a sense of discouragement and despair, or is the outlook hopeful? Ask our Lord to open your eyes to the needs of your community.

Concentrate on one area of need, rather than taking on several ministries at one time. Share your vision with your congregation. Let the people know how they can help. Also, don't assume that because no one has stepped up to the plate to participate, that no one is interested. Maybe they just haven't heard of the plan! Advertise, advertise, advertise! Provide training where needed, and pray constantly for divine assistance.

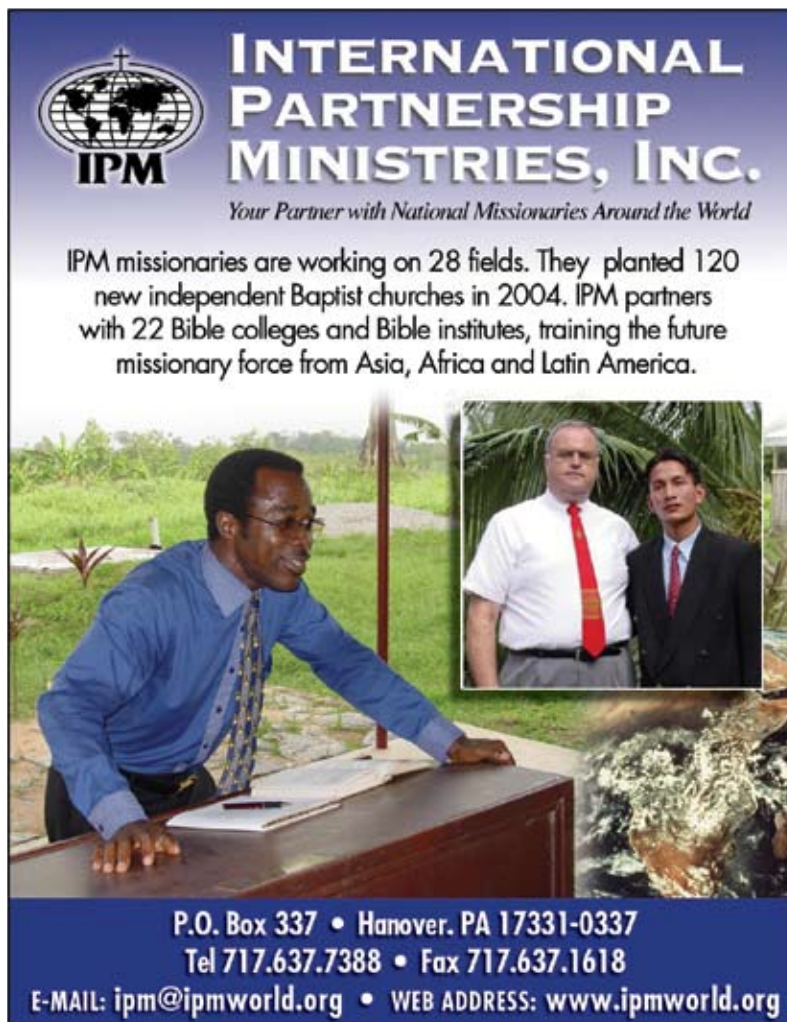
Be faithful to follow through on commitments that you make. It is not unusual to begin programs in the community that people become dependent upon, only to quit when it ceases to be convenient. I recall an incident several years ago in a church I served in where the missions committee had agreed to provide Christmas baskets to underprivileged families in a nearby community. Plans were a bit slow getting off the ground, so I contacted a committee member to find out if all was ready, only to discover that they had changed their mind. They just hadn't gotten around to telling anybody yet. Community officials had already been alerted to our provision, and people were counting on our church's participation. Thankfully, the committee members were willing to be persuaded, and Christmas was saved for several needy families. Before making

a commitment to a ministry, make sure your congregation will be willing to support it.

For some, physical handicaps or restrictions prevent an active ministry. However, the most important aspect of any ministry is prayer. Becoming a prayer warrior—actively interceding on behalf of those who are in need of Jesus—is a ministry in itself. As you publicize your willingness to pray, your prayer list will grow! Another good outreach tool is the telephone. Make yourself available to be part of a prayer chain. Contact shut-ins who would just like to chat. If you are truly interested in serving the Lord, there will always be an opportunity.

Don't be discouraged if you have a vision but that it doesn't seem to be shared. Recognize that for most churches, taking on a ministry is a huge commitment of resources, time, and personnel. Remember that we have a mandate to go out into the world anyway: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19, 20).

Linda Hull authors and publishes a monthly e-zine titled *Words of Encouragement* (<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/WordsOfEncouragement>). She and her family reside in Walden, New York.



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Enjoying the Ministry (Part Two)

Jerry Sivnksty

I knew of a pastor many years ago who bragged that he had never taken a vacation in more than thirty years. Well, that sounds spiritual and pious, but in reality it's ridiculous—we all need times of rest and relaxation. Dr. Bob Jones Sr. once said that many Christians are rushing through life so fast that they never stop to smell the roses. A time of vacation should be a priority in our lives.

In my own family I've kept a special tradition for years with my three sons and daughter. In fact, I felt so strongly about this time we spend together that I told my sons that when they took the position of a youth pastor, they had to make one request of their pastor—to be home for the entire week of Thanksgiving. Why? Because every Thanksgiving my sons and I go deer hunting. Now, I wanted my daughter Jennifer to go hunting also, but my wife kind of squelched that idea.

We've had some wonderful times together and have made a myriad of special memories. For example, when my youngest son Scott was going to go hunting for the first time, he was so excited that he probably didn't sleep an hour the whole night. The next morning when I walked into his room to awaken him at 4:30, I noticed that his eyes were squeezed shut, and I knew he wasn't asleep.

At breakfast I asked him, "Scott, how did you sleep last night?"

He said, "Dad, it was worse than the night before Christmas!" I could relate many other stories about my other two sons, but I will restrain myself.

By the way, our schedule has been packed all these years in evangelism; but we always set aside this particular week for our family and made it the highlight of our year. This has bonded me with my children in a special way, because we not only hunt but we also meet and talk about the ministry during that time. (All three of our sons are in full-time evangelism.) I wouldn't trade that week for anything!

A couple of years ago a young man became interested in my daughter; he was a youth pastor in Indiana. I told him he couldn't marry my daughter until he killed a deer. He came down for Thanksgiving and hunted hard all week but didn't get anything.

The next week he called me after returning to Indiana and told me excitedly, "Mr. Sivnksty, I killed a deer last night!"

I said, "You did?"

He said, "Yes, I was driving the church van home last night and a deer jumped in front of me and I couldn't stop. I killed a deer, and you didn't say how I had to kill it!"

I told him I guessed that would count. He married my daughter and is the youth pastor with Pastor Bud Steadman in South Bend, Indiana.

I trust that these personal experiences will encourage you to develop special times with your own family. I know that hunting is not for everyone; others enjoy fishing, golfing, biking, and a host of other good activities. Remember, the Lord said in Mark 6:31, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while." Someone has wisely stated that if we don't come apart we may fall apart.

I have often said that activity is not a sign of spirituality. We can be so active in doing things that we drain ourselves of the spiritual vitality to be productive for the Lord. With this in mind, I would encourage many to ponder the following suggestions.

I have found it helpful in my studying and sermon preparation to take breaks every now and then. I'll get up from my desk and walk around for two or three minutes; I'll get my mind entirely off of my studies and just enjoy God's creation by looking at the trees, flowers, and birds before going back to work. Those small breaks are very enjoyable, and I feel they make me more productive in my studies. Other times, when I feel like I'm getting tired, I'll do a set of push-ups and crunches to get the blood circulating and heart rate up—this takes only two or three minutes also.

I am thrilled that I have not lost the joy of the ministry. Of course, this doesn't mean everything always goes smoothly and I'm smiling all the time; sometimes it means sweat and toil, but it's sure worth it when you live your life in light of eternity! The apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7, 8, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." May we have a ministry that reflects the joy of the Lord to our family and those around us.

Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty may be contacted at P.O. Box 141, Starr, SC 29684 or via e-mail at evangisivn@aol.com.

COMPLAINT: THE BLACK

Even a black sheep is still a sheep. And even complaint or grievance, directed *to* God (rather than *at* God or *about* God) is a natural, helpful, healthy, and *Biblical* aspect of our prayer-conversation with God. This final column of a miniseries on prayer returns to one form of conversation with God mentioned only in passing in the first column: complaint or grievance.

If I am interested in a genuine relationship with my children, I want them to feel the freedom to say *to me* anything they want to and need to—as long as it is said respectfully. I don't want them secretly to think for months or years that I'm a hypocrite; I want them to tell me. I don't want them to harbor a buried anger or disappointment with me for some failure, whether real or perceived. Healing, reconciliation, and restoration cannot begin without frank openness.

By "complaint" or "grievance," I do not mean mere whining or griping. *Complaint* derives in part from a term for beating one's breast in pain or lament. The link between *grievance* and *grieve* is self-evident. Both words convey deep feeling and genuine passion.

Although *grievance* or *complaint* is often misunderstood and misrepresented, it is a vital form of frank communion with God displayed in the prayers of Moses, Elijah (1 Kings 19), Jonah (Jon. 4), Jeremiah (Jer. 12), Habakkuk (Hab. 1–2), the psalmist Asaph (Pss. 73, 77). Perhaps the best-known example of this type of prayer is the man who had the most to complain about: Job.

Job's Complaint

Satan had said Job would curse God. Is Job 3:1, 2 a capitulation? The object of Job's cursing is not God, but the day of his birth. Still, by cursing "his day," isn't Job indirectly cursing the act of God in bringing him into existence? Job's lament is not an expression of emotional revolt against God's control of the past in allowing him to be born (as a kind of substitute for "cursing" God). Rather, he is venting a sentiment that he expresses repeatedly in the book: in light of his (apparent) loss of God's blessing, he longs for death. It would be better never to have been born at all than to have God turn against him so inexplicably. Far from cursing God, Job's lament ultimately magnifies God by articulating the immeasurable value of His blessing and the irrelevance of life without it. Job's lament divides naturally into three movements.

Why Was I Born? (3:3–10). "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived." Job's passionate expressions are in vain; he cannot turn back the clock nor alter the past.

Consequently, such wishes are not only impossible but also illogical. But logic is not necessarily a priority for people in pain. Passion is more instinctive—whether expressed openly or in the silent cry of the soul to God. No animal with its foot in a claw-trap patiently pauses to consider its predicament and weigh all its options. All is a frenzy of commotion and flying fur. That is animal instinct. Humans tend to have similarly instinctive reactions to pain.

Why Did I Live? (3:11–19). Job reasons how much better off he would have been if, having been born, he had at least died at birth (3:11) or been stillborn (3:16). Then he would have been able to bypass all this suffering and to "rest in peace" with kings and other great ones of the earth. At least in the grave there is deliverance from the wicked, rest for the weary, freedom from oppression—and no suffering. This part of Job's lament introduces us to the recurring interrogative that defines his dialogue for the next thirty chapters. *Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish when I came from the womb?* "Why?" is the question he reiterates at least once in almost every one of his speeches. It is the question with which we immediately connect, because in even remotely similar circumstances it is our instinctive and immediate question, the involuntary impulse of the suffering soul.

Why Can't I Die? (3:20–26). Job complains that, having been born and survived to endure such humiliating suffering, he is not allowed a swift and merciful end. Job's longing for death may seem morbid to those who have not attempted sympathetically to imagine the level of anguish he was enduring. Incidentally, his expression here is a powerful argument against suicide. He refuses even to contemplate taking his own life, and leaves it entirely up to God.

Throughout the dialogue, Job frequently extends his prayer-complaint (see 10:1) directly to the Lord (e.g., 7:17–21; 10:1–21; 13:17–28).

Is Job a Good Example?

Some think that truly godly people never grieve or complain, doubt or despair. By God's own standard, Job is a spiritual giant. His initial response in the face of personal devastation is heroic and exemplary (1:21; 2:10). Being the man he is reputed to be, we almost expect this. The Job of chapters 1 and 2 sounds settled and resolute, suffering yet serenely confident. Isn't this the only mature and truly spiritual response, immediately accepting devastating losses with quiet dignity and spiritual nobility? The Job of chapter 3 (and following) is jarring and unsettling. Suddenly Job no longer sounds like the spiritually mature believer we thought he was. He unleashes a spirit

SHEEP OF PRAYER

of despair (if not anger) that seems to contradict his earlier resolutions. (Eliphaz calls attention to Job's anger [18:4], and Job expressly admits his own despair in 6:26.)

Is Job—both here in his initial lament and throughout the book—a good prayer example? Is Job a positive or negative example of grieving? His is a *realistic* example drawn from the personal experience of one of the Bible's godliest examples—especially when it comes to the issue of prayer and intercession (Ezek. 14:14, 20).

Some have argued that Job's reaction may be understandable for an Old Testament believer (given the sparseness of revelation he had to bolster his faith), but that Job is not a model for how a Christian should respond to even the severest trial. "It is inconceivable that a New Testament believer, even under the strongest temptation, should utter such imprecations," says one commentator. Such doubt on the part of an Old Testament believer "may be accounted for by the absence of any express divine revelation to carry his mind beyond the bounds of the present." For at least four reasons, this view seems to be unrealistic, unhelpful, and Biblically shortsighted.

First, the argument that Job's grief can be excused only because he did not have access to Scriptural truth *underestimates the astounding amount of truth that Job possessed about God and His ways*. Walvoord correctly observed that the Book of Job "furnishes sufficient material in itself for a well-rounded systematic theology." If Job is to be excused only because he antedated the Scriptures, what was Jeremiah's excuse? In terms of Old Testament revelation history, Jeremiah lived at the opposite end of the chronological spectrum from Job. Jeremiah had the Pentateuch, the Psalms, most of the Prophets, and even the Book of Job itself. Yet Jeremiah, too, cursed the day of his birth in terminology strikingly similar to Job's (Jer. 20:14–18). The similarity between the language of Job and Jeremiah suggests another reason that Job's reaction should not be construed as sub-Christian.

Second, *human nature remains fundamentally unchanged*. The weaknesses of our flesh are not eradicated by the possession, or even the persuasion, of more truth. When tranquil faith meets harsh realities that seem to bend belief to the breaking point, the thoughts and feelings that often result are intensely, entirely, and appropriately *human*. Being a modern Christian in possession of a New Testament does not alter our common humanity. Such expressions of soul-wrestling may not fit some people's sanitized ideas of what a Christian "ought" to think and feel. But when the lightning bolt of catastrophe rips ragged holes in the lives of previously serene saints, God has preserved the grief of godly saints for our consolation that

such sorrows and questionings are not wicked. They are human. And they are shared by some of the best of God's people. That, in turn, leads to another consideration.

Third, *the experiences of past saints are recorded for our instruction and encouragement in our times of suffering* (Rom. 15:4). The Book of Job fleshes out the value of frankness before God. "Job is determined to be absolutely honest with God. Job tells God everything, every fear and every doubt. . . . God prefers we speak with him honestly, even in our moments of deepest gloom, than that we mouth innocuous clichés far removed from reality" (Smick). There is nothing spiritual about "making" yourself feel and say and pray all the "right" things that you know you are supposed to say, while ignoring or pretending away the inner rumblings of questions, doubts, confusion, and raw pain simmering below the surface of your Christian piety. But there is virtue—and *healing*—in honesty before God, expressing freely and frankly to Him your innermost thoughts. It is this spirit of frankness that distinguishes Job from his friends. "Whatever 'resolution' the Book of Job provides turns on Job's questions and God's responses. Without the questions, there would have been no responses" (Carson). The relief and security of knowing that you can set aside all pretenses with God and bare your whole heart to Him is priceless. How absurd to do anything else! He's already read your spiritual MRIs and knows every thought and doubt. Only when we are brutally honest with ourselves and with the Lord can He heal whatever disease He finds there, whether pain or bitterness, doubt or anger, confusion or lingering questions. Pious denial is the subtle enemy of the soul's healing and restoration. But one final truth brings us full-circle around to the starting point of faith and revelation.

Fourth, *Job finally found peace and resolution not by receiving any new truth, but by coming to a deeper and more personal understanding of the truths he already knew*. We may indeed learn new things about God, and about ourselves, through suffering. But much of what happens through that process is a deepened understanding of what we already knew, a firming up of faith in what we already believed, the transference of truth from impersonal theory to personal reality. The issue in suffering is not how much we know. The issue is personal faith—how deeply do we really *believe* what we know, even when all appearances argue to the contrary.

When theology and experience clash in the sea of inexplicable catastrophe, faith holds fast to a theology rooted in revelation; it is not afraid to ask questions and express grievances to God, but in the end it is content to wait on God for final answers.

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Get Your Ticket to Heaven

Robert Schuller's website now offers a Ticket to Heaven. The "ticket," available at <http://www.hourofpower.org/misc/ticket.html>, is said to be "your personal ticket." The site explains: "Once you make a decision to accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, just sign you [sic] name and it's guaranteed that when you come before Christ, in that day in which there is no sunset and no dawning, He will open His arms and He will receive you with a loving embrace that only comes from Jesus Christ." The web page goes on to explain that if you want to get your ticket by some other means than the Internet, you can write to Crystal Cathedral Ministries in Garden Grove, California.

Gaither on Gays

Marsha Stevens, the lesbian author-composer of the popular gospel song "For These Tears I Died," owns a ministry called BALM (Born Again Lesbian Music). In a remarkable account at www.christiangays.com (New Year's Eve, 2002) she recounts her visit to a Gaither Homecoming concert where she was praised by Bill and Gloria Gaither. She was initially met by Mark Lowry, a longtime member of the Gaither group. Lowry approached her and

praised her work. "You know what I'm doing now?" she asked. "I sure do and I wish the fundamentalist [sic] would find Jesus. They're going to have a lot to answer for, leaving out people that Jesus died for." A photo at the website shows Stevens and her partner with Bill Gaither and Mark Lowry.

In the last part of the concert later that night, Gaither invited the crowd to sing along to "For Those Tears I Died." He then said, "You know, the young woman who wrote that song is here with us tonight, and maybe you're like she was and you've heard about God who would reject you for who you are or who might turn you away for something you've done or where you've come from. Well I want you to know that I don't know that God. The only God I know is the one in this song that she wrote. The one that says, 'I am right here for you.' The one who sent His Son. The one who says, 'You are my child, I love you, come stand by my side.' So sing with me again!"

Evolution Sunday?

According to an article in the *New York Times*, several hundred ministers at churches around the U.S. preached against recent efforts to undermine the theory of evolution. Choosing Charles Darwin's 197th birthday, these religious

speakers conducted "Evolution Sunday" to discredit recent attempts to overturn evolutionary teaching in schools. (http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/13/national/13evolution.html?_r=2&th=&adxnnl=1&oref=slogin&emc=t&adxnnlx=1140108996-iloljIw8Fi/tFv7zYP8HVg, accessed 02.16.06)

Muslim Cartoon Protest

Many nations recently experienced riots supposedly brought on by the publication of Danish cartoons that were critical of Islam. "Dr Azam Tamimi, a senior figure in the Muslim Association of Britain, which staged the event. . . . told Sky News: 'The publication of these cartoons will cause the world to tremble. Fire will be throughout the world if they don't stop.'" (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/02/12/ncart12.xml>, accessed 02.16.06)

Federal Faith-Based Hurricane Relief

After seeing the pioneering efforts of many "faith-based organizations" involved in hurricane relief, President Bush has added a "faith-based initiative office" to the Department of Homeland Security. The move has sparked a debate among observers. Those who are critical of the move say that no

disaster victim should be required to hear a religious speech before receiving tax-supported relief. While some religious groups praised the decision, others are wary. The general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee on Religious Liberty admitted that, to receive such government help, "many groups have formally, and effectively, separated their religious activities and humanitarian relief efforts. . . . Churches that enter into a financial arrangement with the government need to be very cautious about government regulations and be careful that they are being invited into a situation that might compromise their own integrity, their ability to provide the services they have been." Catholic Charities USA and the Baptist World Alliance are among groups that have already received federal dollars. (<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,190243,00.html>)

Bring World Religions Together?

FaithJam 06: Let My People Sing is a 9-Day Passover celebration in Los Angeles attempting to bring together Islamic, Jewish, and Christian groups. A multi-religious prayer service will precede comedy and musical performances. "What better way to

show these diverse people the beauty of other faiths than through music and laughter,” commented Craig Taubman, festival producer. Performers at the event include the praise team from Christ Our Redeemer Church. The performance will take place at the Islamic Center of Southern California. (<http://www.religionnews.com/press02/PR032306.html>)

On a more international scale, a *Christianity Today* article reported that Jesus Music is going to Morocco. Last May in Marrakech, Morocco, a three-night performance drew a crowd of 85,000. Big names in “Christian” music, including the Newsboys, Delirious, Phil Keaggy and Rock, Out of Eden, and Roll Worship Circus drew this large crowd in a predominantly Muslim country. The producers attempted to “use the universal language of music to bridge cultures and make friends, to show that people of different cultures and faith traditions can be friends and live in harmony with one another. . . . American Harry Thomas, one of the festival planners, said some Moroccans initially showed resistance. “There was pressure being placed on the people of Marrakech saying, “Maybe you shouldn’t do this event. You shouldn’t trust these Americans.”” But Thomas alleviated their concerns, assuring them that proselytizing wasn’t on the agenda. (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/music/news/2005/jesusmusicgoestomorocco.html>, accessed 02.16.06)

In a remarkably transparent portion of this *Christianity Today* article

NOTABLE QUOTES

It all comes back to his disciples. They were the vanguard of his enveloping movement. “Through their word” he expected others to believe in him (John 17:20), and these in turn to pass the word along to others, until in time the world might know who he was and what he came to do (John 17:21, 23). His whole evangelistic strategy—indeed, the fulfillment of his very purpose of coming into the world, dying on the cross, and rising from the grave—depended on the faithfulness of his chosen disciples to this task.—Robert E. Coleman

In fact, on the occasion of the feeding of the five thousand, when the crowd rushed to make him king, Jesus withdrew from them (John 6:15). Jesus’ intention was to make disciples, not simply enthusiasts. . . . Jesus called people to exchange the allegiances of this world for following him. Obeying Jesus’ call to follow him was to make him the central focus of one’s life. Whatever kept a person from following Jesus must be considered, as the apostle Paul would say later, as loss, as rubbish “compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Philippians 3:8)—Michael J. Wilkins

If your life is producing only a whine, instead of the wine, then ruthlessly kick it out. It is definitely a crime for a Christian to be weak in God’s strength.—Oswald Chambers

We have but one great task, and God’s Word, “his blood will I require at thine hand,” will apply to us if we withhold the Gospel.—Oswald Smith

Soulwinners are not soulwinners because of what they know, but because of Who they know and how much they want others to know Him.—Dawson Trotman

A good barometer of your spiritual temperature is how many good friendships you have with non-Christians with a vision of leading them to Christ. . . . What greater thing could be written on anyone’s tombstone than the label ascribed to Christ: “friend of sinners.”—R. Larry Moyer

They [the tears of Christ] signify how very intent He is to save souls, and how gladly He would save thine, if thou wilt accept of mercy while it may be had. For if He weep over them who will not be saved, from the same love that is the spring of these tears, would saving mercies proceed to those that are become willing to receive them. And the love that wept over them that were lost, how will it glory in them that are saved!—John Howe

Compiled by Robert Condict.

the real truth came out for both sides of the world: “But the musicians didn’t exactly water things down on stage. Though they couldn’t explicitly *talk* about Jesus, they weren’t prohibited from *singing* about him. Newsboys and Delirious, known for their stadium-sized worship set lists, didn’t change a thing from their normal shows. ‘We did what we normally do,’ said Delirious frontman Martin Smith. ‘If the music is good, people will respond to it. In our set, people were jumping up and down, faces were beaming.’” Perhaps “people jumping up and down” with beaming faces is their view of Christian conversion. According to a press release on the Friendship Fest website, the event is scheduled again for May 5–7, 2006, in Marrakech. Scheduled musical guests are Audio Adrenaline, the Crabb Family, American Idol finalist George Huff, and Jaci Velasquez.

PCUSA and Homosexuality

Jack Rogers, the former moderator for the Presbyterian Church (USA) “argues unequivocally for the ordination and marriage of people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) in his new book, ‘Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church.’” The press release from John Knox Press insists that Rogers is a “life-long theologian and a respected theologian.” So the horrible spiral delineated in Romans 1:21 continues in the PCUSA.

This news is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International.

Is Your Vision in Balance?

Pearson Johnson

Astounding advances in vision correction have been made in recent years. People who depend on eyeglasses to see undergo LASIK surgery that will correct their nearsightedness almost immediately. Likewise, farsightedness is also correctable. My wife recently underwent a surgical procedure to correct her nearsightedness. Hours after surgery, distant objects had become clearer. However, during the healing process, her vision of near objects blurred. We have realized that being able to focus on distant objects is of limited use without being able to focus on things that are near.

Memorial Baptist Church faces the same struggle that my wife faced. They found themselves lacking a global focus, so they did surgery to correct their vision. They held a missions conference touting the needs of the regions beyond. They hung a map of the 10/40 Window on the foyer wall. Classes adopted people groups for which to pray. One businessman even took a job in the Middle East with hopes of evangelizing the lost. Two international mission trips were organized, and the missions offering was the largest ever! MBC became a church on the move—a church with God's mission as their mission: "Taking the Word to the Ends of the World."

After a while, the pastor noticed a subtle change. Memorial's global vision was corrected, but the church was losing focus on their surrounding community. For example, on the way to the airport, mission team members would drive by hundreds of neighbors who had never heard the gospel. While praying for their adopted people group, members failed to pray for their acquaintances at home. While growing in their global focus, they were now losing their local focus.

This is a struggle that our churches often face. We are committed to the Great Commission, both locally and globally, but we tend to overemphasize one to the neglect of the other. What are some practical ideas to help get us back into focus—to achieve 20/20 vision both near and far?

First, have your vision tested! Check your focus regularly. Make sure your church's mission statement or philosophy of ministry outline includes proper emphasis on both local and global outreach. Second, if it is an option, consider hiring a new staff member with giftedness for

local outreach. His passion for evangelism will be contagious in your church.

Third, set specific goals for your church to advance both locally and globally—measurable and attainable goals. For example, locally, start an English-as-a-Second-Language outreach in a nearby ethnic community, or plan an outreach event and mail invitations to everyone within a two-to-five mile radius of your church. Globally, set specific goals such as supporting a new pioneer missionary or preparing a team of church members to assist a particular missionary on their field. Fourth, pray for local outreach and global missions expansion alongside one another. Both are vital to fulfilling the Great Commission.


Strengthen both aspects of your vision simultaneously. Make local focus a vital part of your mission team training. Before taking a trip to Mexico, take the gospel to a nearby Latino community. Before you get on a plane or cruise ship to China, try to establish a relationship with a Chinese family in your community. After a mission team returns, use their enthusiasm as a catalyst for outreach to internationals in your neighborhoods.

Finally, establish a prayer partnership with your missionaries, and pray for mutual outreach. Ask them to pray for people you are trying to reach with the gospel, as you do the same for them. In addition to the accountability, you'll benefit from the faithful, fervent prayers of your missionaries. Be certain to send them updates so that you can rejoice together at how God has answered prayer in saving some here at home and some around the world.

How's your vision? Are you seeing clearly both locally and globally? With God's help and some effort, we can keep the two foci in a relationship that sharpens each other. As one pastor said, "The light that shines furthest shines the brightest close to home." May God be glorified and Christ proclaimed around each corner and around the world!

Pearson and Ben can be reached at pjohnson@intercity.org. They would welcome your input and interaction.

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Chaplain's Wife Prepares for Husband's Deployment

Ivey Palmer

It was Christmas 2004. Our worldly possessions were en route to our next duty station. I was six months pregnant. We packed up the remainder of our suitcases and our eighteen-month-old child and headed to Germany. I moved to a foreign country, got a new driver's license, integrated myself into a new church congregation, learned my way around a new town, and had a baby in a German hospital—all in less than half a year. God wouldn't ask any more of me this year, right?

Only weeks after arriving in Germany we learned that my husband's unit would deploy to Iraq in January 2006. Almost immediately, I questioned why God would ask any more of me in one year. I wondered how I would manage two children under the age of three by myself in a foreign country! How does one prepare for this? Long-term military families told us to spend the precious time we had together joyfully while we had it. I knew it was not that easy and that I should do something to pre-



pare, but the year continued to pass, and we lived life normally for most of it—the looming deployment pushed to the back corners of our minds.

As December approached, it was impossible to avoid the topic of deployment any longer as the unit pushed us from one briefing to another. Of course, there were many practical things to be done, such as updating wills, powers of attorney, and the like. But I quickly realized that this was a tough time and I *had* been preparing all along, though I didn't realize it. God had been preparing me for this deployment in a most important way—spiritually.

When December came along and fears arose, God reminded me that He had “not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim 1:7). When January of this year came and despair set in, God lovingly taught me through verses like Isaiah 61:3 that He would give “beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness . . . that he might be glorified.”

Brian has now left, but with God's help, a feeling of normalcy has pervaded our home again. Some have asked why I stay in Germany while my husband is gone. The answer is easy—God's joy and His message are needed in this place; the spouses left behind need Jesus; and this is my mission field!

I was left well prepared for this year as God prepared my heart with His words and wisdom. There are still difficult days, as I am only human, but God's grace is enough for me!

Ivey Palmer is the wife of FBFI Army Chaplain (Capt) Brian Palmer, who is currently deployed to Iraq.

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Discipleship Is the Key

David Jaspers

I am thrilled that the focus of this edition of *FrontLine* is on local church evangelism. I have enjoyed the privilege of spending the past twenty-one years actively engaged in the ministry of local church evangelism as an itinerant evangelist. This gives me a unique perspective into the effectiveness of our evangelistic efforts. I have preached now in over 1200 churches and 400 Christian schools. I think it would be fair to say that I have seen it all! I do not come to my conclusions in an unrealistic, idealistic mindset. I grew up in a pastor's home. I spent ten years as a senior pastor prior to entering the ministry of evangelism. I worked closely with local churches through a very evangelistic camping ministry for five years and have worked since 1998 with local churches through my leadership role at Maranatha. I love the local church and am committed to the Biblical principle that evangelism is best carried out through the local church.

I wish that I could report that our Fundamental Baptist churches are alive with evangelistic outreach and fruitfulness. Unfortunately, that is not the case. While I am committed to our heritage as Fundamental Baptists, I am alarmed at the lack of vibrant fruit in many of our churches. I know this does not seem fair to some of you who will read this column. As an evangelist, I don't get to see the whole scope of your ministry, and I would never claim to be an expert,

but from where I intersect with the local churches, it seems evident that we have a great need to take giant steps forward in the area of soul winning through our churches.

Leading a church to be a soul-winning church is not a role that the pastor can delegate. It is a role he must model. I know the reality of busy schedules. That has been my lot for over thirty years. But busyness does not excuse any of us from being faithful witnesses nor from the responsibility to lead by example. Along the same lines, simply scheduling a time for soul winning or incorporating a soul-winning training program will not solve the problem.

Discipleship is the key to every aspect of our local church ministries, including the ministry of soul winning. If we give careful attention to any of the New Testament texts that call us to soul winning, we can quickly see that it is, above all, a call to discipleship structure and activity. Matthew 28:18-20 majors on discipleship. The concepts of going, praying, seeking, and witnessing are inferred in the text, but they are not commanded. The matter of discipleship is the only imperative in the text. Why? It is because discipleship is the key to producing a soul-winning structure and climate in the local church.

A disciple is a learner. A disciple must be taught. The Great Commission clearly tells us what must be taught if our ministries are going to experience His favor and

abiding presence. It is important that our ministries seek to be Word-centered. Are we consistently teaching *all things* that Jesus commanded His disciples? Not if we are failing to lead our people to be consistent in soul winning. It is not normal Christianity when the average church member in the typical Fundamental Baptist church has never led a soul to Christ. It is not what Jesus modeled when He purposefully reached out to those with whom He came in contact. Is this assessment unfair? Take some time to go through your church role. How many of your church members engage in soul winning? How many of the members of your church are actively engaged in soul-winning-related activities? When did you last lead a soul to Christ? When did you last purposefully initiate a gospel conversation with someone who is connected to your life? An honest answer to these questions will, in most cases, reveal an embarrassingly low level of activity among our people.

This is not an activity in which we can expect others to involve themselves when we are not leading the way, both by example and through direct, deliberate teaching emphasis in our ministries. There is no easy way to lead a church in this endeavor. There is no program you can plug in that will transform your church into a soul-winning hotbed of activity. It is time consuming. It can be messy. It will increase your workload as the pastor because of the baggage that sinners bring with them; however, it is the greatest privilege of our lives to be used of God to point others to the way of salvation.

Dr. David Jaspers is the President of Maranatha Baptist Bible College in Watertown, Wisconsin.

Discipleship is the key to every aspect of our local church ministries, including the ministry of soul winning.

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