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We enjoy your magazine so very much. Please continue writing on so many different subjects. Your magazine is really one of a kind!

May our Lord encourage, bless, and supply all your spiritual needs. Keep up the good work.

*Jay & Louise Bryant
Billings, MT*

We appreciate your fine publication as it keeps us up to date with issues facing Fundamental churches in

the US which many times infiltrate the mission field also. Thank you.

*David Lind
Brazil*

I have been a long-time reader of *FrontLine* and am grateful for your influence in my life. My husband is a student at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, and we look forward to using *FrontLine* in our future ministries.

*Trisha Priebe
Allen Park, MI*

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Servant Leaders

John C. Vaughn

On October 28th my role as a Senior Pastor will formally come to a close. That will be my thirtieth anniversary in that role—a milestone which could never have been reached without the faithful support of several godly assistant pastors over these years. As I read over the articles for this issue and was reminded of pastors before me who have ministered to family members in failing health, I was greatly encouraged by the reminder that those needs take priority over other responsibilities.

My role with the FBFI and *FrontLine* magazine will continue, Lord willing, and much of it can be done from my office at home or on a schedule less demanding than that of a Senior Pastor. As Pastor Emeritus, there will be plenty of opportunities to be an encourager to others at church, to assume the role of servant to the new Senior Pastor, and to be more of an encourager to other pastors in the FBFI. This transition has presented new opportunities to reflect on the ministry of servanthood.

A Christlike, servant's heart is the antidote to selfish ambition. Matthew 20:17–28 makes this clear. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem for the last time. The roads were filled with travelers on their way to the Passover. Jesus took the twelve aside and told them plainly that when they arrived, He would be betrayed and condemned to death, but that He would rise again (vv. 17–19). One commentator illustrated it this way: "What if a man

were to tell his family, 'I'm going to Chicago. I'll be arrested and falsely accused, then immediately executed. I'll be home three days after the funeral.' How would they respond? Would they have anything at all to say, or just stand there in confusion?"

The mother of Zebedee's children had a question: "Could James and John sit on Your immediate right hand and left hand when You come back?" The Lord explained that she didn't really understand what she was asking, but she and her sons insisted that they did. His explanation was that they would certainly follow Him in suffering before they would sit with Him in glory. The other ten disciples were indignant at them, probably out of jealousy, for the rebuke to follow was directed to them all. These men had just heard the Lord tell them of impending betrayal, condemnation, mockery, scourging, and crucifixion. These men had seen crucifixion. We haven't. Imagine the sadness and shock of that prophecy.

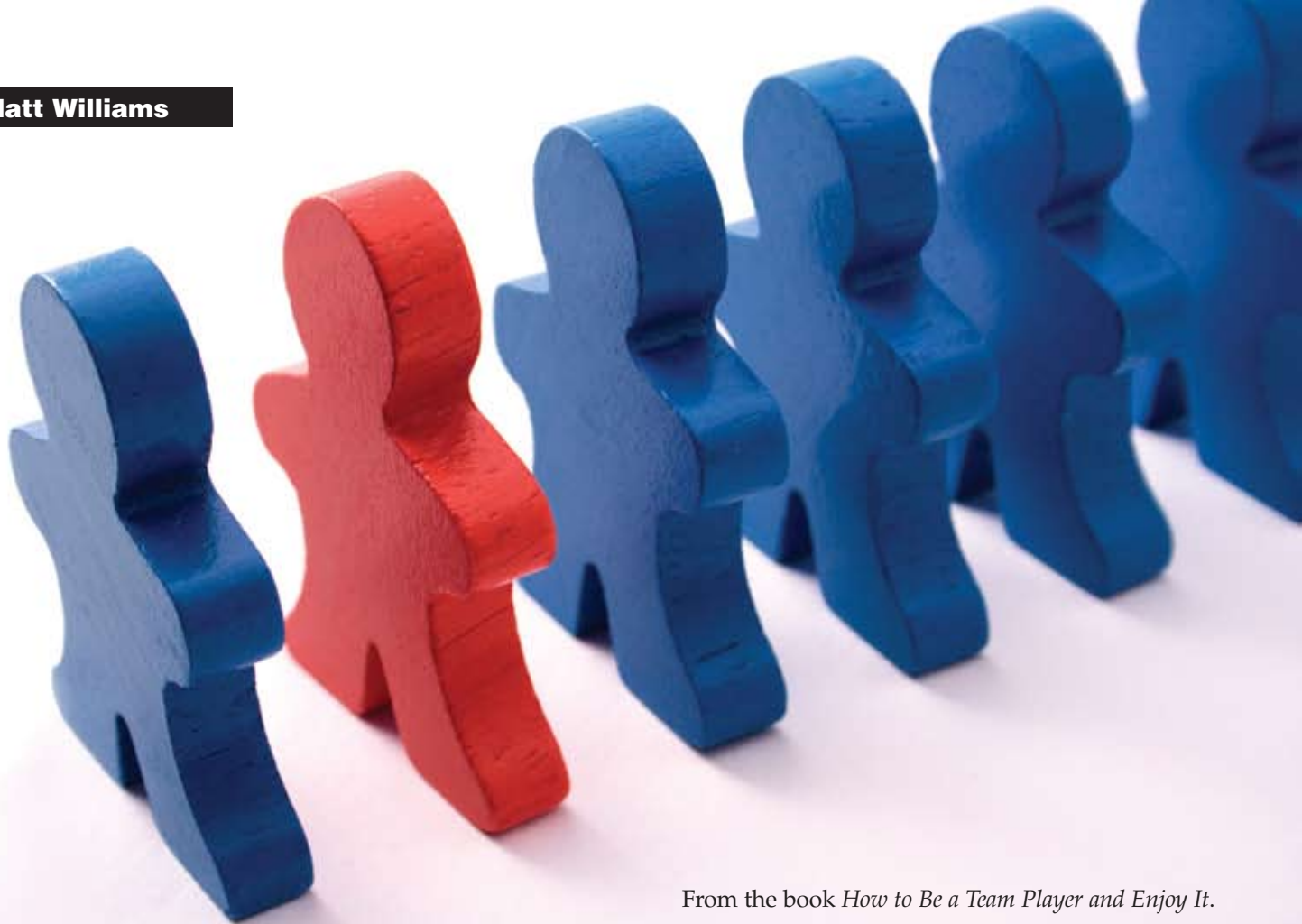
Here were men who were soon to see "the power of his resurrection," that needed to learn "the fellowship of his suffering" (Phil. 3:10). There in that incredible context, the ambition of the two and the indignation of the ten rise to the surface. The Suffering Servant of which Isaiah spoke is before their eyes, yet selfishness is in their hearts. This little band had been together for just three short years. Jesus had called them to Himself, as Mark 3:14 tells us, "that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to

preach." It was time for them to be with Him at the cross, and their personal need for Him to go to the cross is being exposed.

It is an embarrassing moment for them—a time for the truth of servanthood. On the one hand, their great ambition; on the other, His great sacrifice. What a context in which to read, **"But Jesus called them unto him. . . ."** His brief lesson was pungent with conviction. He pointed to authority structures of the Gentiles, reminding them that what they had just heard among themselves was typical of those worldly methods. "Princes . . . exercise dominion . . . and they that are great exercise authority. . . . But it shall not be so among you." "Not so!" He says to our flesh, and "Not so!" our flesh replies.

Has ministerial adoption of Robert Greenleaf's "Servant Leadership" confused us on real servanthood? Can a man think he is a servant-leader, when what he desires is "if I act like a servant, then men will make me a leader"? That was the thinking of James and John and probably what was on the minds of the other disciples. A servant-leader is not an ambitious man who uses servanthood to get ahead; a servant is a Christ-honoring man who simply serves—an undershepherd to the Chief Shepherd. He takes up his cross with Christ. If he is ever "on the front line" for Christ, it is because he is "behind enemy lines" in genuine spiritual warfare.

Continued in *Behind the Lines*, page 39.



From the book *How to Be a Team Player and Enjoy It*.

The Second Man: A Unique Breed

A Study in the Role of an Assistant Pastor

In the age of ego exaltation and media hype, where is the person who will faithfully serve under the leader of a ministry—seeking only to make his superior successful and to see God’s plan promoted? I hope he is the one who is reading this now, and it is my desire to encourage and challenge him in his efforts.

The Call to Servanthood

Understanding Christ’s paradox of a servant-leader is an absolute necessity for success in the ministry. The Lord Jesus Christ often used paradoxes, seemingly contradictory statements, to highlight the differences in divine and human values. He said in Matthew 20:27, 28 that the one to be “chief among you” is really called to be the “servant,” and He demonstrated that leadership in the washing of the disciples’ feet (John 13). Christ, the servant-leader, inspired loyalty and love in His followers. You, who are both servant and leader, are called to do the same.

Consider, by way of contrast, a trip to the driver’s license bureau. Why do I hate going so much? Because of

the way people are treated at this local office in our area. There are long lines, of course: one for this paper, one for that test, and another for that payment. That is to be expected, but no one seems interested in helping anyone. In fact, some seem annoyed at every customer. “Get in this line! No, you need that paper! Go over there!” A lack of a servant spirit makes it a very unpleasant place to be.

Now I believe in policies and procedures, standards and rules. There can be no organization without them; however, it is important for us as staff to have a service-oriented attitude toward those we come into contact with and to train and encourage others in this effort. Whether someone is coming in for counsel or calling in to inquire about the time of a church activity, we must be servants to those whom the Lord brings to us.

A Servant’s Commission

Paul, one of the greatest leaders of church history, had one of the best assistants in church history, Timothy. Timothy was the pastor of the local church at Ephesus,

but why was he there? Paul had given him the assignment: Timothy was a “staff member” (1 Tim. 1:3). In the context of this tremendous leader/assistant relationship, Paul addresses the issue we call “chain of command,” but in true Biblical command he goes beyond the outward actions to the attitude of the heart.

First Timothy 6:1 says, “Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.”

This passage begins with the focus on servants, calling them to honor their superiors and to earnestly serve them. Elsewhere, God’s Word says to serve “heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward” (Col. 3:23, 24).

The chain of command in your individual ministry tells you how to operate and gives you certain special targets of your service: those “above” you and those “below” you on the organizational chart. We must serve our Lord by serving these various people. We must do all that we can to help them to be successful in their responsibilities.

A Servant’s Role

First Timothy 6 first deals with the general subordinate-superior relationship. Then it goes on to an important, specific case: “and they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved.”

With our position, we have three important responsibilities.

■ *Know the pastor’s philosophy.*

When you know your leader’s philosophy, you are in a position to effectively coordinate your work with him. This understanding enhances the mutual effectiveness and builds lasting staff relationships.

You learn the leader’s philosophy both formally and informally. Interviews, orientations, and in-service sessions all deal in part or entirely with philosophy. These are formal sessions, but there are many other ways to see what a leader really believes and what his values are. Preaching deals overtly and implicitly with philosophy. Furthermore, as you work through plans and problems, as you discuss people and needs, as you evaluate projects and progress, you are continually moving back and forth between philosophy and practice.

I served with my first pastor for twelve years. In all that time he never said, “Here is my philosophy.” By the end of those years I knew his philosophy—I knew where he stood on issues and where we stood as a ministry. I knew where he was going because I was under his preaching. I worked with him and I spent time with him. Are you grasping your leader’s philosophy? Could you right now write down several statements that would embody the philosophy of your leader or even your leader’s direction?

Loyalty speaks out for someone, whereas disloyalty speaks against or does not speak at all. Always speak up for your superior.

■ *Believe in the pastor’s direction.*

Philosophy and direction are related, but they are very distinct. Philosophy is a set of beliefs and values that guides a person’s actions. Direction, as I am using the term, is an application of the philosophy, the action resulting from it. One philosophy may have many good applications. A philosophy should be based on God’s Word. Therefore, philosophy is right or wrong to the degree that its beliefs and values reflect the truths of the Bible—not so with direction. Direction can be right or wrong

because of the philosophies they carry out, but more often decisions of direction are matters of God’s particular leading for an individual man or ministry.

Therefore, philosophy is absolutely right or wrong, but direction is variable—it is often a choice between the good and the better.

■ *Stand for the leader’s philosophy and direction.*

You must stand for what your leader believes because you are standing in his place. As you represent him, you should represent him accurately and truly. Loyalty is not a passive quality—it demands action. Loyalty speaks out for someone, whereas disloyalty speaks against or does not speak at all. Always speak up for your superior.

The Call to a Relationship

When we are called to the ministry, we are called to a relationship with our fellow servants. Ephesians 4:1–3 provides a look in that relationship.

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

I do not consider my position as associate pastor as a lesser position—I know that God has called me to this position. Furthermore, I know that I can function in this position on the strengths of my gifts and abilities, that I can glorify God, and that I can be an encouragement and a help to the senior pastor.

To keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, two spiritually-minded people are needed. Who are those two? The pastor and you—whether you are called assistant pastor, associate pastor, youth pastor, or whatever else—a right relationship allows you and the pastor to exercise your individual gifts and abilities for the glory of God.

The Pastor—The pastor needs to be big enough to give authority along with the responsibilities he assigns. Here is a threefold formula for effective relationships:

■ *Responsibility + Authority + Accountability = Success*

When we give someone a responsibility, we must always give the authority needed to get the job done; but with the authority must be accountability. When the pastor

delegates a responsibility, perhaps to run a Vacation Bible School, then he must give that person some authority for running it. There must always be accountability. The one given the responsibility must demonstrate that he is capably carrying through on that responsibility. He should keep the pastor up to date on the progress and problems as well as provide a final explanation of the project.

The Assistant—The leader must be big enough to delegate, but the staff member must be big enough to submit. He has to realize that he is not the person in charge.

Understand the working of God here. God calls a man and develops within him a message. That man then gathers around him people with a similar vision—and together they develop a ministry. We must realize that the vision of the ministry—the direction—largely comes from the leader, the person in charge. As a result, most people will identify the ministry with that person.

Surrender Your Rights

One of the most successful staff members of the Old Testament is Joseph. Despite great difficulties proceeding from grossly unfair treatment, he kept prospering wherever God put him. Joseph had learned to *surrender his rights*. Colossians 3:22 says, “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh.” We are to be in submission to our authority. We are to be servants. Sometimes we expect those under us to obey with right attitudes and to honor our position, but we do not have a servant’s heart for those over us. This does not work. We teach attitudes to those around us far more by what we are than by what we say.

Avoid Focusing on Expectations

Not only should we surrender our rights but also our

We must realize that the vision of the ministry—the direction—largely comes from the leader, the person in charge.

expectations. The pastor must be aware of raising unfounded expectations by big statements or unrealistic optimism. The assistant, however, must not cling to his expectations whether they are accurate or not. He must be willing to be flexible. If he has been given an assignment he has not planned on, he should cheerfully and energetically do it. He will find that God blesses that spirit now as well as He did back in the days of Joseph.

Being on staff of a Christian ministry is a great blessing. We can work full-time for a ministry and have our needs met. The only difference between my ministry now and my

ministry when I was in the business world years ago is that I have more time to serve. I am not restricted to after hours or working around another job. As a result, I should give myself far more to the ministry than others I know that do not have that privilege.

God’s plans are perfect and we will find our Christian service pleasant and profitable as we follow His plans. I believe that the wise pastor will not just use his staff, but will also develop them. I believe that a wise staff member will get much more accomplished if he really believes his role—at least for this particular time—is to carry out the vision of the ministry where God has placed him in a subordinate role. It takes two big people.

Matt Williams served at Tri-City Baptist Church in Kansas City, Missouri, for thirty-four years, first as youth pastor and then associate pastor. In 2004 Matt joined the staff at Northland Baptist Bible College, where he currently serves on the Executive Administrative Staff as Vice President for Ministry Affairs. He also serves as Executive Director of the Wisconsin Association of Christian Schools and Associate Pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Kingsford, Michigan. He has written two books, *How to Be a Team Player and Enjoy It: A Study in Staff Relationships* and *Biblical Leadership: Becoming a Different Kind of Leader*, co-authored with Ken Collier.



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Assistant Pastors: Pulling Together

Robert Vincent

How does an assistant assist? With what attitude should he labor? Being an assistant pastor can be a rather elusive concept to define, much less to implement or be, and therefore difficult to evaluate objectively. As a result, the relationship between assistant pastors and their pastors often is typified by insecurity—*though it need not be.*

A Yeoman's Role

The role of an assistant pastor is comparable to that of a naval yeoman. I remember first hearing of yeomen in ninth grade when my English teacher illustrated the word's meaning by describing the office of a vice president: "The vice president performed yeoman service for the president." "Yeoman" describes one who serves "in a loyal, valiant, useful, or workmanlike manner, especially in situations that involve a great deal of effort" (*Random House Dictionary*, 2nd edition, unabridged). Yeoman work—like that of an assistant pastor—should exude loyalty, dedication, usefulness, and diligence.

We've probably all heard of Charles Spurgeon, who served God as a Baptist pastor in London from 1854–92. An amazing example of diligence and organizational skills in thirty-eight years of prodigious preaching ministry, Spurgeon founded sixty-six ministry organizations—including a bustling orphanage, an ever-expanding Christian-book supply ministry that employed more than fifty men, and a

still-functioning preacher's college that spawned the planting of more than forty churches during Spurgeon's ministry. In addition, Spurgeon found the time somewhere to publish approximately one hundred books, edit and publish a sermon a week (sixty-three volumes' worth!), pastor 5000-plus people whom he knew by name, and attend caringly to his invalid wife for more than two decades. Though Spurgeon entrusted these ministries to able leaders, after his first thirteen industrious years the church mercifully recommended a full-time personal assistant for him:

The time has now arrived when some permanent help should be obtained to assist our beloved Pastor in the very arduous work connected with the pastorate of so large a church; also that we consider the most likely person to discharge this duty to the comfort of our Pastor, and the lasting benefit of the church.¹

Spurgeon's younger brother, James, filled the needed role admirably, doing "a vast amount of daily routine work . . . of which the outside public heard little and knew less, but in the doing of which proved the most effective assistant to the senior pastor that could possibly have been provided."²

A Complementary Role

My assignment—to write an "article on assistant pastors from the past that encourages assistant pastors and

instructs churches”—poses two sizeable dilemmas, one practical and the other philosophical. First, have you ever read a biography of an assistant pastor?³ Perhaps my teacher’s use of the vice presidential illustration was especially fitting—after all, who writes about vice presidents? Their tenures make great trivia fodder, but unless a vice president ascends to the presidency most of us can barely recall even recent national officeholders. Likewise, unless an assistant pastor ceases being an assistant and accepts a more visible role, he must accept the prospect of vice-presidential anonymity.

For me, the philosophical dilemma is a steeper and more delicate hurdle. By design, assistants are supposed to be secondary and complementary. Their identity inherently comes through their attachment to the leaders they serve. So, though this article focuses on assistant pastors, its goal is not to seek the limelight for them. Assistants should covet and glory in their own pastor’s healthy standing among the church and should seek to bolster it, should it be flagging.

If we desire to honor assistants who have served well, it may help to articulate a governing philosophy by which to gauge them. An assistant pastor, like any other believer, should exercise his gifts for the edification of the church body. However, because of the assistant’s complementary role to the primary shepherd, additional considerations also loom large. Ideally, on the one hand, the relationship of an assistant to a pastor corresponds *structurally* and *attitudinally* to the role of a wife with her husband. An assistant’s function is to arrange himself so as to be the greatest help to his pastor for the good of the body. Though an assistant has freedom to blossom in ministry, he does so primarily as an extension of his pastor—an extension comparable to fingers on a hand or eyes to a mind; an extension that aspires to adjust to fit his pastor’s spiritual vision for the congregation; an extension that attempts to represent the pastor as the pastor should be represented. On the other hand, the relationship between a pastor and his assistant can be long term or short term, but no Scriptural admonition for permanency exists. Assistants may change to serve other pastors or find their own burden for pastoral preaching responsibility compelling them into that wider sphere of ministry.

A Faithful Role

Even in the New Testament, pastors needed and desired ministry help. Early in Acts, the church responded by creating the office of deacon (Acts 6). In later years, to meet the expanding needs of ministries the church wrestled with varying levels of organization. Sometimes the growing organization developed under the pastor (e.g.,

deacons, ministries to widows and unmarried ladies), alongside of him (fellow elders), or over him (e.g., bishops, archbishops).⁴

The modern assistant’s role has grown out of the church’s continuing corporate sense that the pastor-teacher primarily should give himself to the ministry of the Word and to prayer. Qualified men are then chosen to oversee other aspects of church ministry on behalf of a “senior” pastor. To meet those needs, typically, churches have chosen a man either from among a pool of promising “lay” leaders within a congregation or from a pool of men trained specifically for ministry. For example, Anglican churches used university-trained curates to serve as under-shepherds in a parish where they helped the vicar reach those on the fringes of his parish boundaries. In seventeenth-century Kidderminster,

England, Richard Baxter (1615–91) records in his *Autobiography* how he used his assistants in an exemplary systematic community visitation over a sixteen-year period in which God worked a wholesale spiritual transformation of the community.

Are there historical examples of assistant pastors who’ve filled their roles to the delights of the pastors and the congregations they serve? Certainly. Are there books written about them? Not really. Is it still possible then to glean some encouraging lessons and illustrations from studying the lives of men who’ve served in this way? Absolutely.

■ Faithful assistants have been men of personal spiritual initiative. They are men who’ve understood

the importance of keeping their own souls fed in the midst of ministry and who realize that the spiritual success of their ministry depends as much or more on who they are before God and men than the work they attempt to do.

■ Faithful assistants have understood the assistant facet of their role. They are willing and able to bend their energies to advance another man’s spiritual vision. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981) served for six years as an assistant to the esteemed expositor G. Campbell Morgan (1863–1945). Though the two men differed theologically, Lloyd-Jones served faithfully. After Lloyd-Jones succeeded Morgan at Westminster Chapel in London, God blessed him with a number of faithful assistants. One of those was Iain Murray. Murray’s sympathies with his pastor attracted Lloyd-Jones to him, and Murray proved such a loyal assistant that he helped to advance Lloyd-Jones’s ministry during those years and beyond. In fact, Murray was largely responsible for Lloyd-Jones’s exposure to the evangelical world outside of the United Kingdom and enabled him to be a fine pastoral and preaching example to Fundamental men today.⁵

*Though an assistant
has freedom to blossom
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comparable to fingers
on a hand or eyes to a
mind. . . .*

■ Faithful assistants have understood the pastor facet of their role. One dimension of their pastoral role is to be an example to the congregation of how to uphold the senior pastor's arms in ministry. In addition, the assistant also understands that his pastor is a spiritual authority in his own life. Though the assistant's role provides the privilege of closer association with his pastor, it also affords a closer view of the pastor's weaknesses (and exposes some in the assistant's life as well!). However, a wise assistant works diligently to honor the man and view him as his own pastor from whom he can receive pastoral instruction.

■ Faithful assistants have been appropriately loyal. Another interesting "second man" word comes from the Greek stage—a deuteragonist—a word with two meanings and two edges. The word can refer either to a supporting actor who takes the second most important role, or it may refer to the actor who serves as a foil to another. Assistants can work to be loyal members of a congregation, or they can easily stoop to adopt a vision for their place of ministry that conflicts with that of their pastor's. Unwisely, such men begin serving as a foil both to the pastor and to the local church they allegedly serve.

An assistant pastor assumes responsibility to fulfill obligations in a two-way relationship, yet both the pastor and assistant have to nurture the relationship for it to prosper. For the assistant, the biographies of some senior pastors afford brief glimpses into the roles assistants have filled to

support and enlarge the pastor's ministries. While every situation will have its variables and every senior pastor has his own approach to teamwork, hopefully we can glean perspective and attitudinal lessons that will help us serve with integrity. We have the privileged opportunity of learning to play second fiddle (or third or fourth), and may God help us to fulfill our ministry obligations to the men He has given to the church to care for our souls and lead us in watching over His flock.

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¹ C. H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, Vol. 2: *The Full Harvest 1860–1892* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 78.

² *Ibid*, 79.

³ This article assumes a leadership structure under a senior pastor rather than a leadership structure in which multiple pastors may serve together as equals though in different spheres of ministry. In some churches, all pastors participate in and are appendages of the leadership board of their church, although this is not the norm within Fundamentalism. Thus the title "assistant pastor" indicates to most people within Fundamentalism the idea of "assistant to the pastor."

⁴ See T. M. Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*.

⁵ For example, see Murray's two-volume biography of Lloyd-Jones, published by Banner of Truth.

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The Responsibilities of an Assistant Pastor

Mike Stalnaker

When a man in ministry serves as an assistant pastor, he has many responsibilities. He has responsibilities to God, his family, his church, and his community. When he serves with a pastor as an assistant he must remember the specific responsibilities that he has in relationship to the senior pastor. The following four responsibilities are of utmost importance for all assistant pastors.

The Assistant Is Responsible to Assist His Pastor.

In the large scheme of ministry the assistant and his pastor should be striving together to evangelize the lost and equip the saints for the work of the ministry. In the practical day-to-day areas there are many ways that an assistant can be a great help to his pastor. He can assist the pastor by being proactive—the pastor should not always have to tell the assistant what to do. On days services are to be held, the assistant should arrive at the church early and make sure that everything is properly prepared—that the lights are on, the doors are open, and the offering plates are in place. He should greet people as they arrive. The assistant can also shepherd those who are hurting or in need by offering counseling or by visiting them in their home or in the hospital. I remember vividly the late Dr. Frank Bumpus saying to his pastoral staff, “Solve problems: do not create problems for me and the ministry.” Perhaps the best way an assistant can be a help is simply to ask his pastor how he can be a problem-solver for him and not a problem-maker.

The Assistant Is Responsible to Represent His Pastor.

Matt Williams, in his book *How to Be a Team Player and Enjoy It!*, explains what it means for an assistant to be a representative of the pastor. “We are called to be likeminded with those over us. We are representing first of all the Lord Jesus Christ. Second, we are representing our ministries and the pastor. . . . They cannot be everywhere at once, so we represent them in the capacities that we fill.”¹

An assistant pastor represents his pastor to the church and community. First, the assistant needs to remember that he represents his pastor to the church. There are a number of examples of this truth found in the Scriptures. Consider the fact that Timothy (1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:19–29), Titus (Titus 1:5; 2 Cor. 12:18), and Tychicus (Eph. 6:21, 22) represented Paul. Homer Kent states, “Timothy . . . was an apostolic representative. He exercised the guidance and counseling ministry that Paul would have performed had he been present. . . . He was Paul’s official delegate to assist the Ephesian church with its officials in conducting affairs in the proper manner.”²

As the pastor’s representative, the assistant needs to know certain practical truths. He must know the pastor’s philosophy of ministry (2 Cor. 12:18; Phil. 2:20) and be able to answer the following questions: Why does he do what he does? What is his

philosophy of ministry when it comes to the area in which you serve (youth, music, etc.)? What is his philosophy of ministry concerning deacons? What matters most to him? And know and understand what kind of church you serve in.³ Gary McIntosh suggests the assistant know the answers to the following additional questions:⁴ What is your senior pastor's geographic, educational, and professional background? How long has he been at this church and in what capacities has he served? What about work habits? Is he a morning person, an afternoon person, or a night person? What are his career goals, hopes, and dreams?

Second, the assistant pastor needs to remember that he represents his pastor, the church, and the Lord Jesus Christ in the community. The assistant should maintain a good testimony by paying his bills on time, by taking care of his yard, and by being proactive in community events.

The Assistant Is Responsible to Serve His Pastor.

The author believes that the assistant is serving not only the Lord by serving the people in the church, but he is there also to serve the senior pastor. An inference can be made from the example between Aaron and Joshua (Moses' successor). Aaron was called to serve in a particular position, whereas Joshua was called to be Moses' servant. Joshua is seen as one who obeyed Moses (Exod. 17:9, 10; Josh. 1:7), accompanied Moses to the mountain while Aaron stayed back with the people (Exod. 24:13), and accompanied Moses while he went into the tabernacle (Exod. 33:11). Joshua was not called to serve or lead Israel until the transition of leadership occurred upon Moses' death (Num. 27; Deut. 31; 34:9). An inference can also be made from the New Testament with Paul and the many associates who served him (and with him) in ministry (Acts 19:22; 24:23; Eph. 6:21; Phil. 2:25; 2 Tim. 1:18; and Philem. 1:13). Those who traveled with him served and acted at his direction. They ministered to the people as well as to Paul, but Paul was known as the primary leader. Countless examples abound throughout the Scriptures of a younger man serving an older man in ministry. Joshua was Moses' servant (Num. 11:28; Josh. 1:1); David was Saul's servant (1 Sam. 16:19–23); Elisha was Elijah's servant (1 Kings 19:15–16, 21); Timothy, Erastus, and Epaphroditus were Paul's servants (Acts 19:22; Phil. 2:25).

Consider these thoughts from A. W. Pink on the life and ministry of Elisha:

"Then he arose and went after Elijah and ministered unto him" (1 Ki. 19:21). That was the final element in this initial test. Was he prepared to take a subordinate and lowly place, to become a servant, subjecting himself to the will of another? That is what a servant is: one who places himself at the disposal of another, ready to take orders from him, desirous of promoting his interests. He who would be given important commissions must prove himself.⁵

Pastor Bud Steadman has stated that an assistant should place "his personal rights and rewards on the altar of surrender to Christ for the sake of the glory of God and the good of the pastor's ministry" and that the assistant should be willing to sacrifice his potential fame, comparative fortune, and personal freedom.⁶

The Assistant Is Responsible to Encourage His Pastor.

Anyone who has ever served in ministry knows what a blessing it is to have someone be an encouragement to him. One wonders how much the apostle Paul was able to do because of the help and encouragement of God's lesser-known people. A number of people encouraged

Paul in his life and ministry. It is said of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus that "they have refreshed my spirit and yours" (1 Cor. 16:17, 18). Paul stated that he was comforted by the coming of Titus (2 Cor. 7:6–7, 13) and that Onesiphorus "oft refreshed me" by "ministering unto me at Ephesus." (2 Tim. 1:16–18). A wise assistant will learn that the senior pastor faces more pressures in ministry than himself. The pastor faces loneliness and overwhelming expectations from others.⁷

Mary Bouma, in her book *Divorce in the Parsonage*, states,

The demands put on the pastor are perhaps greater than those of any other profession. While doctors and others are on call, it is never twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. . . . Perhaps as enervating as any of the demands that others place upon the minister are the demands he puts upon himself. A large majority of ministers I have met are sensitive, spiritual people with a high sense of calling. They are conscious of being God's special representatives in the world. When people do not respond or things do not go well in the church, they often blame themselves. And because people expect so much from them, they try to live up to these expectations.⁸

An assistant can relieve some of these ministry pressures by his actions and words. He can encourage the pastor by being faithful in ministry responsibilities (Col. 4:17; 2 Tim. 4:5) and by letting him know that he and his family are appreciated.

The Assistant Is Responsible to Protect His Pastor.

The final responsibility that the author proposes is that of protecting the pastor, which can be done in various ways. The first way is to protect him from ministry and philosophical mistakes. Gary McIntosh, in his book *Staff Your Church for Growth*, states, "It is especially important that senior pastors be told about the bad stuff as well as the good stuff. Remember: *You are not doing the senior pastor a favor by shielding him from reality.*"⁹ In private, the assistant should be candid with his pastor about any concerns he may have.

*An assistant
pastor represents
his pastor to
the church and
community.*

Secondly, the assistant needs to help protect the pastor's reputation. Consider Adam Clarke's wise and timely words:

Be very cautious of receiving evil reports against those whose business it is to preach to others, and correct their vices. Do not consider an elder as guilty of any alleged crime, unless it be proved by two or three witnesses. This the law of Moses required in respect to all. Among the Romans, a plebeian might be condemned on the deposition of one credible witness; but it required two to convict a senator. The reason for this difference is evident: those whose business it is to correct others will usually have many enemies; great caution, therefore, should be used in admitting accusations against such persons.¹⁰

A third way to protect the pastor is by helping him protect his time. The assistant can listen to people's suggestions/concerns and interface with those who would want to take time from their pastor. Have people put their ideas in writing and submit the documents to the assistant, who can then summarize them when discussing them with the pastor.

The final way in which the assistant can protect his pastor is by protecting his ministry. This can be done by responding properly to conflict and by accepting responsibility when something has gone wrong.

¹ Matt Williams, *How to Be a Team Player and Enjoy It!* (Independence, MO: American Association of Christian Schools, 2002), 9.

² Homer A. Kent Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles* (Chicago: Moody, 1982), 19.

³ Dan Baumann discusses five different church models: (1) the soul-winning church (evangelism), (2) the classroom church (teaching), (3) the life-situation church (application), (4) the social-action church (community involvement), and (5) the general-practitioner church (all of the above). Dan Baumann, *All Originality Makes a Dull Church* (Santa Ana, CA: Vision House, 1976), passim.

⁴ Gary L. McIntosh, *Staff Your Church for Growth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 139–40.

⁵ Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings from Elisha: His Life and Miracles* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 20.

⁶ Bud Steadman, "What Does It Mean to Be a Second Man?" (lecture given at Ministerial Class Forum on 3 October 2003), Bob Jones University, Greenville, SC.

⁷ For specific ministry pressures see H. B. London Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman, *Pastors at Risk* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), passim.

⁸ Mary LaGrand Bouma, *Divorce in the Parsonage* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1979), 51–52.

⁹ Gary McIntosh, 116. For other possible ministry mistakes consult Hans Finzel, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make* (Colorado Springs: Cook Publications, 2000).

¹⁰ Adam Clarke, *1 Timothy*, vol. 6 of *Clarke's Commentary* (New York: Lane Scott, 1849), 611.

Dr. Mike Stalnaker is planting a church in Spring Hill, Tennessee, where he lives with his wife, Deena, and their four children. His dissertation, entitled *A Training Manual for Assistant Pastors*, can be obtained by contacting the J. S. Mack Library on the campus of Bob Jones University.



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The Music Pastor . . .

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Fred R. Coleman

The title of “pastor” is peculiar to the local church. It doesn’t appear on too many doors in the corporate offices of America! How many secular organizations or businesses do you know of that have a *pastor* of book-keeping or a *pastor* of the store room or the break room?

The titles of “manager” and “director,” on the other hand, are not uncommon—“Director of Advertising,” “Manager of Product Development,” “Director of Sales in the Southeastern Division,” etc. Typically, a manager’s or director’s title includes a description of his responsibility. A manager is primarily task-focused. A person can manage or direct things. He can organize books, cards, sheets of music, boxes—but he can’t *pastor* them.

A pastor is primarily person-focused. The very term implies leading and investing in people, not things. A pastor invests his life in leading people to Christlikeness. All pastors should be managers/directors, but not all managers/directors are pastors. A pastor directs people in the accomplishment of tasks. His main focus, however, is leading these people to be more like Christ. Now to do this, he will direct, he will manage, he will educate—he will do all of those things because they are part of being a pastor.

As music pastors, we can organize things such as chairs, books, file folders, octavos, and sheet music, but we can’t *pastor* them. We can’t motivate and lead things, only people.

Ministry is for God and to people. We invest ourselves in helping people learn to access God’s grace and become more and more like Christ. Music can be a venue to accom-

plish our purpose; but it is only a venue and should not be a goal in itself. Music should not be the goal of one’s life; Christlikeness must be. Consider that only people, not things, can become Christlike. So, if ministry is for God and to people, I must invest myself in knowing both.

The Scriptures clearly define the greatest commandments: first, to love the Lord with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our might; and second, to love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves. Although we would all admit that we fall far short in both areas, should not our greatest passion be to pursue Christlikeness and to portray it to others? Should not our focus be on God and on others rather than on the individual tasks?

The Christian musician’s ultimate mission, then, should be to love God with all his being, to be Christlike and portray Him to others, and to seek Him, using music as a tool. I would propose, then, that there’s a difference between using, directing, and managing the music for a local church and being a music pastor. A music pastor should do more than just lead the music. He should constantly be leading people in the pursuit of Christlikeness *using* music. While technical skills in music are essential in his tasks, the music pastor must be more than a *music technician*.

This is not to say that the Christian musician should not serve skillfully or endeavor to do his best in the task of music-making. Unfortunately, there are those who would say they “love the Lord” but offer Him less than their best.

They are too lethargic or too lazy to invest effort, study, or practice in the accomplishment of their tasks. This is incongruent. A person who is passionately pursuing Christ will want to do his best in every task he does, but the task itself cannot be his primary focus, nor can it be the qualifier of spiritual success.

Sadly, too many of us as church musicians are focused on the task of leading music instead of leading people to Christlikeness *using* music as tool to accomplish our purpose. Are we primarily “Christians who also happen to be musicians,” or are we primarily “musicians who happen to work in a church”? I believe the first should be the case. There are many superb musicians in this world who are passionately focused on the pursuit of musical excellence, yet they are not Christians. Musical excellence, then, is obviously not equivalent to spiritual excellence. Musical excellence does not necessarily result in being a better Christian. The Christian’s focus must be on Christ not the task.

As Christians, we say that one of the most important parts of our lives is the corporate gathering on the Lord’s Day. We meet to adore Him in prayer, song, testimony, and offering. We meet to hear God’s Word taught. We meet to thank Him for His obvious blessing and guidance during the past week and to ask for it in the coming week. Does our daily conversation, however, betray other motives? Has the task of preparing and *directing* music in worship become an end rather than a means? Has our music ministry become merely a series of concerts (regardless of whether they use “good” or “bad” music)? Is our passion to create better Christians or better musicians? If our desire is to create better Christians, we must do more than just *direct* music. We must *pastor* using music.

Always emphasize the spiritual nature of your musical work by beginning every choir, ensemble, or solo rehearsal with prayer. As you rehearse, insist upon and help the singers subtext the message of every phrase of every song (this means to personalize it, expand and elaborate upon it, find Scripture to support it, and to make specific application in their personal lives). On his birthday, send each choir member a personal note and birthday greeting in which you express some aspect of his life and ministry that is specific to him. Try to personally coach as many solos and ensembles as you can rather than delegating that responsibility to someone else. It is during these times that much spiritual influence can happen.

Remember that you pastor the congregation as well as the choir members. Encourage thoughtful and purposeful singing with carefully chosen and succinct comments about a doctrine or Scripture passage upon which the song is based. Avoid clichés and predictable Christian rhetoric. Remember John Wesley’s statement that we should “sing spiritually with an eye toward God.”

Much ministry can be done “off the

platform” before and after services. Walk up and down the aisles and inquire about people’s prayer requests and spiritual needs. Too many musicians retreat to the choir room before and after services rather than making themselves available in the lobby where they can interact with the people. Try to remember the wise advice of one businessman: “Walk the halls and linger by the water fountain! That’s where the real influence takes place.”

Our ministry of music and testimony in song should extend beyond church services. While some musicians are willing to share their testimony of Christ in song with those in nursing homes, only a few are interested in sharing it with shut-ins or in hospitals, rescue missions, and jails.

Remember that the Scriptures tell us to first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6). Have we as church musicians misplaced our passionate purpose? Have we allowed the pursuit of excellence in our tasks to take the place of a passionate pursuit of Christ?

We must take great care to pursue Christ more passionately than we pursue musical excellence. We must be sure that our task does not become our goal. May we guard our life’s investment from being one that pursues only the making of excellent music. May we pursue Christ with our whole heart, mind, soul, and strength! May each of us desire an epitaph that says, “He was a passionate Christian . . . who happened to be an excellent musician.”

Fred Coleman and his wife, Ruth, have served local churches together in Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois. Since 1988 he has served as Head of the Church Music Department at Bob Jones University, and for the vast majority of that time he has also served as Assistant Pastor for Music and Worship at University Baptist Church in Clemson, South Carolina.

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Authority: Right or Wrong?

Reynold Lemp

Authority and chain of command are terms we use when we are referring to “who is in charge.” It may be a grocery store owner, a Little League ball team manager, or a big manufacturing executive.

God Himself, and only God, established authority. Even in the heavens the law of authority exists. Our own earth is in submission to the law of gravity of the sun. The moon is in submission to the earth.

Looking at the subject of authority, one must go back before the creation of the world. An interesting event is recorded in Ezekiel 28:11–16. Satan, a leading cherub, became proud of his position and glory, and he lost the significance of his God-given position. In his pride Satan thought he should become the authority god. In so thinking, Satan lost his position eternally. The tragedy was his influence. Satan, sure that he could actually overrule God, convinced one-third of the angels of Heaven to follow him!

We are also familiar with the sad consequences of Adam and Eve’s attempt to ignore God’s authority. God had given Paradise to His creation, but Satan convinced Adam and Eve that they did not have to follow God’s authority. Because of this deceit and lack of submission, the whole human race and creation itself suffer to this day!

The Flood is another example of a consequence of thinking that “what God says is really unimportant.” Man, as it were, shook his fist in God’s face and “did that which was right in his own sight.” However, Noah, a just, humble man, obeyed God, and he and his family were saved. A person who is not submissive to God will never fit into God’s plan and blessings.

A touching example of submission to authority was that of Joshua to Moses. Joshua saw that Moses was God’s man for the day, and he was faithful to Moses for forty

years! Joshua’s submission and loyalty paid off, for God rewarded him with the leadership of the children of Israel. Without a doubt, the children of Israel saw Joshua’s faithfulness, and they were willing to have this kind of

“God-appointed man” over them, even though many times they were rebellious against God and followed their own ways instead of God’s (Deut. 32:5, 6, 28).

When God established authority, He included that of the home. God made man and woman for specific functions. The Biblical home has God’s order, which is discussed quite fully in Ephesians 5:21–6:4. We see that God made the husband the head of the home. This godly position seems to be offensive to our world today. Unfortunately, many homes in our churches are a trash heap because they have listened to the “counsel of the ungodly” instead of the “law of the Lord.” The husband is the head of the home! It has been said that the husband is the gatepost upon which the marriage swings. Take away the function and position of the gatepost and the gate falls. Both the husband and wife are essential to the success of the marriage! Ephesians 5:22, 23 states, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.” The husband is to love his wife “even as Christ also loved the church” (Eph. 5:25). The husband must love his wife as his own body, and the wife must give reverence to her husband. This is God’s order for the husband-wife relationship.

This order deals with authority, and it is essential for a godly home. God does not desire for the husband to exert a dictatorship! In Ephesians 5:21 the Holy Spirit tells us that we must submit ourselves (plural) one to another. God made men and women so different; then He expected us to live together in peace! We can accomplish this only when

we follow the rules and directions of the Commander-in-Chief of all mankind, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

The counsel of the ungodly is everywhere! We have a rash of lawlessness in our country. Employers are complaining about the uselessness of many young employees wanting to be served and paid but failing to produce the work they agreed to. This kind of behavior begins with a violation of Ephesians 6:1, 2. "Obedience" and "honour" are two important words that apply not only to family but to every area of life! When young people are allowed to be disobedient and disrespectful in childhood and youth, they will become an adult generation of the same. The church, home, and workplace are filled with the sowing and reaping process. Consider Proverbs 11:18, 19: "The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward. As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death." Furthermore, Galatians 6:7, 8 instructs us, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Finally, contemplate authority in the church. Who gave to the church the organizational program? Obviously, God did. As we look at the leadership of the church, certain principles must be established. The pastor must have leadership authority! As a rule, an organization can have only one human head. Anything with two or more heads is considered an oddity. Once again it is important to recognize that there is a difference between leadership and dictatorship. A pastor must be willing to listen and learn. No one person has all the answers. Some years ago a young man

who had just completed college was immediately made a lieutenant in the army, thus putting him over sergeants and corporals who had many years of experience in war and maneuvers. On several first maneuvers the new lieutenant felt he had to ask the men under him for their opinion. In the end, the lieutenant was given the highest award for leadership of all the new officers. Listening to the advice of others strengthened his leadership.

In my fifty years as pastor I have seen the need for the same thing in the ministry. Men who thought they were the only one with truth or a good idea refused to listen, forced their way, and eventually failed!

A word of counsel to men working with a pastor: No pastor can work with disloyalty; he must release the disloyal person on his staff! The pastor must be careful how he does this so as not to discourage believers, hurt the cause of Christ, or split the church. The disloyal worker very likely has his own loyalty group in the church, which is an evil tool of Satan to cause a church split. Many churches are started for the wrong reasons, such as splits and personality, rather than principles. It is serious when church members join with a staff member to divide the leadership of a church. They are used of Satan to destroy the work of God! Unfortunately, this happens all too often.

I believe it is safe to say that a person who is out of cooperation with his God-given authority, whether it is in the home, society, or church, is in all probability out of the will of God. God has not excused us from our God-given authority!

Dr. Reynold Lemp is pastor emeritus of Calvary Baptist Church in Winter Garden Florida, where he and his wife, Mary Ann, continue to reside. Dr. Lemp founded the church shortly after graduating from Bob Jones University and retired after fifty years of ministry.

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Closer to the mark may be the fact that more than any other book, Psalms is intensely personal. John Calvin (who preached right through Psalms on Sunday afternoons from 1549 to 1555) described it as *an anatomy of all the parts of the soul*. His explanation is insightful:

There is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated. . . . It is by perusing these inspired compositions, that men will be most effectually awakened to a sense of their maladies, and, at the same time, instructed in seeking remedies for their cure.

Psalms is the book of our soul's maladies and cures. Who among us doesn't tend to be preoccupied with both of those? Perhaps for this reason, Psalms is not only the Bible's most frequently read book but also one of its most frequently preached. Let's explore how to preach it better.

What's a Psalm?

When we distinguish the *proverbs* of Solomon from the *prophecies* of Jeremiah, or the *Gospel* of Matthew from the *epistles* of Paul, we're acknowledging our awareness that these writings are of differing characters.

What, then, are we communicating when we introduce a Bible chapter to our congregation on Sunday mornings with the words, "Would you please open your Bibles with me to the Book of Psalms?"

One clue is that a psalm is a piece of poetry. Of course, the lines aren't related to one another by meter or rhyme, as modern-language poetry is, but by what is called parallelism. To preach Psalms well we'll have to understand this phenomenon of Hebrew parallelism, something that the better sources listed at the end of this article can help with.

One feature of poetry is its intense imagery. Consider, for instance, the reassuring images in the following lines: "The LORD is my *rock*, and my *fortress* [literally, my *masada*], and my deliverer . . . my *buckler*, and the *horn* of my salvation, and my *high tower*" (Psalm 18:2).

Lines like this are for the part of our mind we call imagination. We read and turn on an inner screen to gaze on the pictures in the words. Poetry has the advantage of being able to prompt the inner man to look and see, not merely to read and understand.

A second clue to the question of what the psalms are emerges from their titles. The Hebrew title for the entire book, *Tehillim*, means "Praises." That they're praises for singing is clear from the fact that fifty-five are introduced with *to the chief musician*. One special collection of fifteen (120–134) are *songs of degrees* (ascents). Fifty-seven times throughout the Psalter, *mizmor*, a musical term, is employed. Seven psalms (4, 6, 54, 55, 61, 67, 76) are stipulated to be *on Neginoth*, an ancient stringed instrument, as was *Sheminith*, an eight-stringed instrument specified in the titles to Psalms 6 and 12. No wonder that the Septuagint title to the whole book, *Psalmoi*, connotes "songs to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument" or "twangings."

So what is a psalm? It's an inspired poem, written to be sung and sometimes to be accompanied instrumentally, as an act of worship, generally as an expression of praise.

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

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It's for this reason that Psalms is called "the hymnbook of the Old Testament."

This being the case, one has to wonder how it is that the singing of Psalms has almost entirely fallen out of use in contemporary Christianity, especially in light of the New Testament's directive to sing them (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). For the first eighteen centuries after Christ, the Psalter was the Church's primary hymnbook. By the eighteenth century, not only the variations on individual psalms by writers such as Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley but also entirely new compositions began to supersede the psalms in many Christian congregations. Today, one seldom sings any of the psalms in church, except almost by accident when the selection happens to be a Watts or Wesley rendition of one; even then the congregation is often unaware of the Biblical source.

I don't want to stray too far afield from the issue of preaching the psalms, but perhaps part of the answer to the vexing debate over acceptable church music would surface through deliberately turning the church back to regularly including psalm singing in its services. Perhaps the elevated nature of the psalms' content would help provide the necessary governor on the character not just of our musical texts but even of the tunes to which we sing them.

What about a Structure to the Psalter?

Preachers stay alert to good outlines for Bible books and passages. But although nearly every other book of the Bible has an inherent structure, there seems to be little hope of discovering such a skeleton to the Psalter. It's thought that there may be five recognizable "books" to it, since five similar doxologies (Psalms 41:13; 72:18–20; 89:52; 106:48; 150:6) may conclude five distinct divisions. But there's little indisputable evidence of any distinctive content to those divisions.

We can say that the book commences with the ultimate individual (Psalm 1) and national (Psalm 2) choices and then climaxes with five summons to praise (Psalms 146–150). There's also the collection of *songs of ascent* mentioned earlier (Psalms 120–134), a group of eight by the *sons of Korah* (Psalms 42–49), and another collection of eleven called *Asaph psalms* (Psalms 73–89). But apart from general divisions such as these, discovering an inherent outline for the book as a whole seems unlikely.

Probably Psalms isn't intended for outlining. It's actually a collection, like cookbooks and phone books are collections. Their value is in filing similar materials together but without arranging them rigidly.

If that's the case, then the way to preach the Psalter that best aids both logic and memory may be topically, by styles or subjects some psalms have in common. Recognizing these makes preaching the book more manageable.

Preaching Categories

Lament. There are perhaps a dozen different distinctive contents to the psalms, the largest of which is *lament*. In these, the writer will be "troubled by his own thoughts and actions. He may complain about the actions of others against him (the 'enemies'). He may be frustrated by God himself" (Tremper Longman III, *How to Read the Psalms*, 26). The telltale elements of lament are at least seven, although not every lament carries all of them. But generally the following pattern emerges, illustrated here by Psalm 69.

- i. Invocation (v. 1)
- ii. Plea to God for help (v. 1)
- iii. Complaints (vv. 1–4)
- iv. Confession of sin or assertion of innocence (vv. 5–11)
- v. Curse of enemies (imprecation; vv. 11, 12, 14, 18, 22–28)
- vi. Confidence in God's response (v. 29)
- vii. Hymn or blessing (v. 30)

Some of the better known laments are Psalms 3, 12, 17, 22, 26, 42, 43, 54, and 83, but actually, about a third of the psalms can be tucked into this category, a fact that argues for a preacher's subdividing this division still further where he can.

Hymn. A second easily recognizable category consists of *hymns*. These begin with a call to worship, continue with reasons that God should be praised, and conclude with yet another call to worship. Psalms 103, 113, 117, and the concluding five psalms of the Psalter (146–150) are *hymns*.

Thanksgiving. A closely related genre is the *thanksgiving*. It differs from the hymn by giving praise for a direct answer to prayer. Look, for examples, at verses 5, 6 of Psalm 18, verses 2, 3 of Psalm 30, verses 3–5 of Psalm 32, verses 4 and 6 of Psalm 34, and verse 9 of Psalm 56.

Remembrance. Another definable category is the *remembrance*. Check these psalms for their recall of distinctive Divine activities in history (Psalms 77, 78, 89, 105, 106, 132, 135, 136).

Torah. How about a series on the *Torah* psalms (Psalm 19, 119)? What they lack in numbers of psalms within the category is definitely compensated for by the one hundred seventy-six verses of the second of them. I wish I had space here to discuss Psalm 119. I'll at least suggest that Psalm 119 is very likely a carefully crafted personal testimony to one man's attempt to govern his entire life by Scripture, a journal of walking the way of the Word. I was first made aware of this through a little-known work by Augustus Prichard, entitled *Christ in Psalm CXIX*. He entitles the psalm *The Alphabet of Spiritual Progress*, arguing that the *man in the Psalm, having caught a vision of the blessedness of the stainless life, admires it, hears God calling him to it, desires it, resolves to pursue it, anticipates with praise and commits himself to it with prayer*. Interestingly, after I had suggested this possibility to a group of pastors in a summer graduate class at Northland Baptist Bible College, one of them kindly

sent me as a gift George Zemek's recent work, *The Word of God in the Child of God* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), which argues something of the same thing.

Penitence. One of the most well-known categories consists of the *penitential* psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). I once heard a preacher testify that at one point in his ministry he had experienced personal revival from praying through these on his knees. What might the effect be of a preacher's following that with a series on these same passages that put the church down on its knees?

Messianic. Of course, the most important of all the categories (if one may use the words "most important" of any portion of Scripture) has to be the *Messianic* psalms. There are at least thirteen of these, distinctive because all of them except one (Psalm 72), contain verses quoted by New Testament authors as having their fulfillment in Christ. In some, He is spoken about in the third person (Psalms 8, 72, 89, 109, and 132). In some He is spoken to in the second person (Psalms 45, 102, and 110), and in five He speaks in the first person (Psalms 2, 16, 22, 40, 69). Augustine observed that *the voice of Christ and his Church was well nigh the only voice to be heard in the Psalms*. Another ancient author said that we won't go far wrong in our interpretations if while we keep our left eye on David, we keep our right eye full of Christ. For an example of a really devout attempt to do this without overly spiritualizing, see Andrew Bonar's *Christ and His Church in the Book of Psalms*.

Imprecation. The most difficult category to preach and explain is the *imprecatory* psalms. There are at least four of these psalms, containing prayers for God to avenge the persecuted supplicant. How do we reconcile these with the spirit and content of the New Testament? I've found the following observations to be helpful.

First, take into full consideration their historical background. C. H. Spurgeon calls attention to this in his treatment of Psalm 137:

Let those find fault with it who have never seen their temple burned, their city ruined, their wives ravished, and their children slain; they might not, perhaps, be quite so velvet-mouthed if they had suffered after this fashion. It is one thing to talk of the bitter feeling which moved captive Israelites in Babylon, and quite another thing to be captives ourselves under a savage and remorseless power, which knew not how to show mercy, but delighted in barbarities to the defenseless.

Second, evaluate them in light of their theological context. In Psalms 69 and 109 the psalmist clearly stated that it was for God's sake (69:7; 109:3, 21) that he prayed. We sometimes forget that God's reputation is intricately tied up with ours. Thus the larger context of these psalms is God's own nature and Kingdom (C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books*, 145).

A necessary third consideration is the nature of these psalms. They are desperate cries for justice and, as such, reflect one of God's own preeminent perfections.

Fourth, one must also factor in the prophetic spirit of these psalms. Take note of the way in which the New Testament authors point to the fulfillment of some of the imprecatory passages within the life of the Messiah:

- *And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up* (John 2:17, quoting Ps. 69:9).
- *But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause* (John 15:25, quoting Pss. 35:19; 69:4).
- *For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take* (Acts 1:20, quoting Pss. 69:27 and 109:8).
- *And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway* (Rom. 11:9, 10, quoting Ps. 69:22, 23).
- *For even Christ pleased not himself; but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me* (Rom. 15:3, quoting Ps. 69:9).

Most important of all, we must insist with both ourselves and our listeners that, in the final analysis, the Scriptures are not the mind of man but the mind of God.

Making Use of the Titles

Another way of grouping psalms is by facts revealed within their titles. I've mentioned the fifteen psalms introduced with *a song of ascents* (120–134). They were apparently sung and shared by God's people going up (ascending) to Jerusalem at Israel's festival times (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles), and are therefore sometimes called the pilgrim songs. I once took our church through a series by that same title and emphasized our living for another time and place, just as Israel's pilgrims did as they joyously anticipated all the blessings of festal times in the city of the great king.

There are at least five psalms whose titles actually state their intended purpose. Psalms 38 and 70 are *to bring to remembrance*. Psalm 92 is *for the Sabbath day*, Psalm 100 is a *psalm of praise*, and Psalm 102 is a *prayer for the afflicted*.

Then there are Asaph's psalms (50, 73–83). These tend to have similar themes. Several refer to Yahweh's mighty deeds in history: creation (74), the exodus (77, 78, 80, 81), the conquest of Canaan (78), and the period of the Judges (78, 83). Most strikingly, the theme of Divine judgment threads through them all: either upon Israel (50, 77, 78, 80, 81), Jerusalem (74, 79), other nations (75, 76, 83), wicked individuals (73), or pagan deities (82). A good title for a series on these might be *Our Help in Ages Past—Our Hope for Years to Come*.

Certainly one of the most rewarding groupings comes from isolating those psalms whose titles refer to events in David's life. There are fourteen.

- Psalm 3—David's flight from Absalom (2 Sam.

15–16)

- Psalm 7—Concerning Cush the Benjamite (unknown event)
- Psalm 18—David's deliverance from Saul (1 Sam. 24, 27)
- Psalm 30—At the dedication of the house of David (2 Sam. 5:11)
- Psalm 34—David feigns madness (1 Sam. 21)
- Psalm 51—Nathan confronts David over his adultery (2 Sam. 12)
- Psalm 52—Doeg betrays David (1 Sam. 22)
- Psalm 54—The Ziphites betray David (1 Sam. 23)
- Psalm 56—The Philistines take David in Gath (1 Sam. 21)
- Psalm 57—David's flight from Saul (1 Sam. 22)
- Psalm 59—Saul sends men to kill David in his house (1 Sam. 19)
- Psalm 60—David's wars against the Arameans and Edom (2 Sam. 8, 10)
- Psalm 63—David in the wilderness of Judea (1 Sam. 23–24)
- Psalm 142—David's flight from Saul (1 Sam. 22)

Alexander Maclaren did a marvelous work on the life of David as revealed in his psalms. He notes that they

have, on the whole, a marked similarity of manner. . . . They correspond, too, with the circumstances of his life as given in the historical books. The early shepherd days, the manifold sorrows, the hunted wanderings, the royal authority, the wars, the triumphs, the sin, the remorse, which are woven together so strikingly in the latter, all reappear in the psalms. The allusions, indeed, are for the most part general rather than special, as is natural. His words are thereby the better fitted for ready application to the trials of other lives.

Preacher Helps

Here are some of the best by category.

Introductory

Bullock, C. Hassell. *Encountering the Book of Psalms: A Literary and Theological Introduction* (called a “gold mine”)

Longman, Tremper, III. *How to Read the Psalms*

Psalm Titles

Bullinger, E. W. *The Chief Musician: Studies in the Psalms and their Titles*

Commentaries

I have ranked these in order of their usefulness to me.

Kidner, Derek. *Psalms 1–72; Psalms 73–150*

Alexander, Joseph Addison, *The Psalms Translated and*

Explained

Plumer, W. S. *Psalms*

Leupold, H. C. *The Exposition of the Psalms*

Spurgeon, C. H. *The Treasury of David*

Goldingay, John. *Psalms 1–41 (BCOT); Psalms 42–89* (due out Nov. 2007)

Van Gemeren, W. A. “Psalms” in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*

Ross, Allen P. “Psalms” in *Bible Knowledge Commentary*
Maclaren, Alexander. *The Book of Psalms* (three vols. in *Expositor's Bible* series)

Individual Psalm Studies

I'm including those I've found to be the best.

Psalm 23

Davis, John J. *The Perfect Shepherd*

Keller, Philip. *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*

Myer, F. B. *The Shepherd Psalm*

Stalker, James. *The Psalm of Psalms*

Psalm 42

MacDuff, John R. *The Hart and the Water-Brooks* (deeply spiritual)

Psalm 51

Lloyd-Jones, David Martyn. *Out of the Depths*

Psalm 73

Lloyd-Jones, David Martyn. *Faith on Trial* (exceptional)

Psalm 119

Bridges, Charles. *Exposition of Psalm CXIX*

Manton, Thomas. *Psalm 119* (3 vols.)

Prichard, Augustus Bedlow. *Christ in Psalm CXIX*

Psalms 120–134 (Pilgrim Songs)

Kaiser, Walter G. *The Journey Isn't Over*

Cox, Samuel. *The Pilgrim Psalms*

Sermon Series

Chantry, Walter. *Praises for the King of Kings* (excellent work on Psalms 2, 45, 110)

Boice, James Montgomery. *Psalms* (3 vols.; very devotional)

Specialized Studies

Christ

Bonar, Andrew. *Christ and His Church in the Book of Psalms*

David

Maclaren, Alexander. *The Life of David as Reflected in His Psalms*

Psalms in Human History

Prothero, Rowland. *The Psalms in Human Life*

Imprecatory

Adams, James E. *War Psalms of the Prince of Peace*



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Bring . . . the Books

Living in the Shadow of Grace: Meditations from G. Campbell Morgan

At the end of last April my wife, Beth, was diagnosed with a fairly advanced case of aggressive breast cancer. The ramifications of that discovery launched our family on a journey down the dark path of suffering traveled by so many of God's faithful people in the past. One such individual who journeyed down this terrible but wonderful path was G. Campbell Morgan, whose musings and meditations along the journey were preserved in his journals and messages. Fortunately for God's people, his grandsons have labored to collect and arrange those musings into a short book, *In the Shadow of Grace: The Life and Meditations of G. Campbell Morgan* (Baker, 2007).

The work relies heavily on the well-known biography by Jill Morgan (*A Man of the Word*), but also draws from many private letters and other material not readily available to the general public. One of the editors, Howard Morgan, is currently the chairman of the Chicago Theological Seminary and has arranged for the seminary to house a collection of Morgan's books, periodicals, unpublished manuscripts, and other materials. Unfortunately, some of the seminary's theological leanings filter into the book. One wonders whether Morgan would have been as excited as the editors about the prospect of an award in his name going to two women preachers. Additionally, some of Morgan's lesser-known theological oddities are presented in an arguably different light than Morgan would have chosen, often in highly elliptical paragraphs. One example is Morgan's view regarding the eternal destiny of the lost (pp. 48, 69). No theologically conservative reader of this column would agree with Morgan on this issue. However, having read many of Morgan's published works and sermons, I was surprised to see how boldly this view was presented. Ministering during a time of war, Morgan was answering questions related to the fate of sons and fathers of members in his congregation. Though the error of his views can't be defended, understanding their historical context provides some balance for understanding Morgan's approach to this issue.

Blemishes aside, the rest of the book is a wonderful example of Morgan's pastoral ministry to people in times of struggle or suffering. To those afflicted by doubt, Morgan speaks from personal experience. Early in his ministry he passed through a time when his faith was almost eclipsed by rationalism. He advises fellow pilgrims, "Find your way to Christ for yourself, not to the Christ of the preacher, or of the schoolmen, or of ecclesiastical systems, or the Christ of the whole Church, but the Christ of the New Testament. Tell Him all your doubts, and griefs, and fears, and you will know He is the living One speaking through His Word as surely as He spoke directly to Thomas;

and in Him alone, you will find the rest for which you are seeking" (p. 26).

To those facing serious illness or even the loss of a loved one, Morgan had passed that way ahead of them as well, leaving behind this choice reflection.

Affliction is that experience of the soul in which a man is brought to the end of self-confidence, because he is brought absolutely to the end of his strength. Sometimes the experience is wrought physically; sometimes without physical disease, it is wholly mental and spiritual. But whether by this method or by the other, the consciousness is that of the destruction of strength, of being weakened by the way, of being brought into that position where hope for the moment dies out. The great procession marches on without you; you are left wounded, halted, bruised, and helpless in the way. There is a sense in which hope is not dead in your heart. You believe the thing for which you hoped will yet to be achieved, but you yourself are left at the point where there is no more strength in you, and all self-confidence naturally and necessarily dies.

Another section describes Morgan's struggle with growing old in which "God brought him to realize his own weakness, and revealed to him the secret of all strength" (p. 99).

In one of the final sermons he preached at Westminster shortly before his death, Morgan again touched on the theme of suffering. From that message comes fitting counsel to those traveling the dark path in different ways and at different seasons of life.

I arrive nowhere but that God has been ahead of me. . . . [T]here is some man, some woman, some youth or some maiden, buffeted, broken, perplexed, lonely, almost mad with the agony of life. . . . God was ahead of you. Out of the terror of the hour He is creating forces of triumph in your life which would always have been missing, had you not pitched your tent right there where He has appointed the place.

Reading Morgan on any topic is always profitable. However, in this particular area of the Christian journey, Morgan's flashes of insight are particularly laden with blessing. May you find the comfort Morgan found as he points you to consider well the grace of God that shines in dark places from His Word. ☞

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

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Straight Cuts

If the Foundations Be Destroyed, What Can the Righteous Do? (Psalm 11:3)

One of the principal laws of hermeneutics is to interpret in light of context. Sometimes we neglect this principle when a Biblical expression is so familiar that it gains a proverbial quality. One such expression is found in Psalm 11:3: "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" We often hear this expression applied to the breakdown of the social order. If the fabric of society is rent, then it will be difficult if not impossible for God's people to accomplish anything. Interpreted in isolation, the verse may support this application. In the context of the psalm, however, the import is the opposite. Rather than counseling flight in time of crisis, the Lord intends for His followers to continue to trust and serve Him.


The statement in verse 3 is not overly problematic. The majority of modern versions read essentially the same way: "If (or, When) the foundations are (being) destroyed, what can the righteous one [singular] do?" The word translated "foundations," derived from the verb "to place or put," is generally thought to refer in this verse to the principles of just, theocratic government or to the noble and influential people on whom the system of state depends (F. Delitzsch). Whether the verse refers to persons or to principles, the basis of justice in the government of society was being demolished. In such a circumstance, the questioner wonders despairingly what a righteous person could hope to accomplish by leaving himself in such grave peril.

Before leaping to application, however, we must observe how the verse functions within the psalm as a whole. The superscription cites David as the author but does not specify the occasion. Nevertheless, the language of the psalm indicates that David was in grave danger. He begins by expressing his confidence in the Lord despite the peril. "In the LORD put I my trust" (v. 1a). The verb "trust" connotes taking refuge. Based on this affirmation, David challenges the voices of panic and despair: "How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?" He treats the suggestion to take flight as unworthy of consideration. The singular noun "bird" can refer to a single animal or to a group (e.g., "flee as fowl"). The verb "flee" is a plural imperative (the *qere* has the verb in the imperative singular) and may be addressed to David and his compatriots. The Hebrew root (*nûd*) means to "wander aimlessly or homelessly" (TWOT). Consistent with the plural verb is the plural pronoun in the phrase "*your* mountain." The image is not one of an orderly tactical retreat but of incoherent panic: "Flee away like

birds to your mountain!"

An important interpretative key to the psalm is the understanding that the counselors of fear continue speaking in verses 2 and 3. Most versions that use quotation marks place them to reflect this understanding. (An exception is the NKJV, which attributes only the words "Flee as a bird to your mountain" to these counselors.) In verse 2, the voices of panic conjure the image of the wicked in the dark, ready to strike David dead without warning. The enemies have bent their bow (literally, stepped upon it in order to string it) and have placed the arrow upon the string so that they are ready to shoot at any moment. Imagine the sensation of walking through a modern city street with the knowledge that a sniper is hiding in an alley or behind a window ready to pull the trigger. Finally, the advisors of cowardice assert the hopelessness of continued resistance: "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

However frightful this scenario may appear, it omits the essential truth: for the believer in Jehovah, the true foundation can never be destroyed. In verse 4, David asserts, "The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven." This parallelism indicates that the "temple" is not the earthly structure but Yahweh's celestial throne room (cf. Isa. 6:1). The believer's hope is not in earthly institutions but in the immutable sovereignty of God. God in Heaven (David continues) knows perfectly well what is going on down here: "His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men." Although the wicked seek the cover of darkness from which to assassinate the upright, God sees their every thought and action. David proceeds to reveal God's purposes in the present world (vv. 5, 6). God is testing (same word as in verse 4) the upright, but bringing the ungodly to judgment; the Lord is righteous and the upright will surely see His face, despite the threat posed by the arrows of the wicked in verse 2. (According to Delitzsch, the singular substantive, "the upright," is a collective and therefore can go with the plural verb "will see," and the word translated "face" "is always used only as that which is to be seen, not as that which itself sees.")

Proper interpretation of this verse within its context directs our focus not upon our imminent peril but upon God's righteous power. As a practical matter, it may well be difficult for the righteous when human systems of justice are crumbling (cf. 1 Tim. 2:1-4). The believer's trust and courage, however, does not rest upon earthly circumstances, but rather upon divine sovereignty. 

**"Rightly
dividing
the Word
of Truth"
(2 Tim. 2:15)**

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Windows

Windows into the Life of a Pastor and His Assistant

This issue's *Windows* emphasizes the theme of ministry assistants. Both the senior pastor and assistant pastor are to be faithful in their obligations.

The Foundation of a Ministry Assistant

George Ella tells of a time when the members of John Gill's church encouraged him to hire an assistant pastor:

By 1 April 1771, however, Gill was growing noticeably weaker. This caused some disquiet amongst a number of young people in the congregation who felt that as their pastor could now only preach once on Sundays, he should at least take on a young co-pastor to assist him as a son would his father, or as Timothy helped Paul. The church was gradually reaching the stage, they argued, when all the "hearers" i.e., the unconverted and non-members, were being "drawn off." Twenty-two of them, supported by two deacons Button and Warne, who eventually left the church after Gill's death, thus conveyed their views to Gill in a letter, arguing that the deacons were not answering the needs of both members and hearers. Unusual for such a letter was the fact that ten sisters signed the letter first, this being always the prerogative of the brethren.

This move strengthened Gill's determination to resign as he realized that the time was more than ripe to hand his mantle to a younger person. His reply was read out to the full church on 29 April.

Dear Brethren and Sisters,

... That Christ gives pastors to churches is certain, but that he gives Co-pastors is not so certain: a Co-pastor, you seem to be desirous of, is an Officer the Scripture is entirely silent about; and which is much the same thing, as if a man should take to himself another wife; whilst his first wife is living; or rather, as if a woman should marry another man, whilst she is under the law, dominion and power of her former husband: the instance of Timothy serving with the Apostle Paul as a son with a father is not the case; for they were neither of them pastors of any particular churches much less co-pastors; the one was an apostle, the other an evangelist—both extraordinary Ministers; the one accompanied the other in his travels into different countries and was sent by him into different parts, but stayed not long in any place: It would therefore, be more clear and unexceptionable, for me by consent to lay down my Office as Pastor, when your way will be plain and open to chuse another, and when you come to such a choice, may you be directed to chuse one who is sound in the faith, studious and diligent in his work and exemplary in his life and conversation; and may

you have one to preach the gospel to you as faithfully as I have done, according to the best of my lights and abilities; I can't say, I wish he may serve you, as long as, I have, for perhaps that may be but to his disadvantage and yours, but I wish he may serve you with greater success.

There my dear friends, are my best wishes for you, Who for the present am, but not long expected to be your Pastor, Elder and Overseer

John Gill¹

Unlike Gill, who resisted the office of an assistant pastor, his successor, C. H. Spurgeon instated his brother James to serve as his assistant. It was said of James that "during the remainder of his brother's life 'he did a vast amount of daily routine work at the Tabernacle, of which the outside public heard little and knew less, but in the doing of which proved the most effective assistant to the senior pastor that could possibly have been provided.'"²

Godly assistants are still needed today, and their ministry can greatly bless senior pastors, as well as impact the cause of Christ in local churches. As James Stalker wrote,

The average man cares little for the future, except so far perhaps as his own offspring may be concerned: if he is happy, what does it matter to him what the state of the world will be after he is dead? But to a Christian it does matter. *The faith and love in his heart bind him to the saints yet unborn. He is interested in a cause which is to go on after he has left it, and which he is to meet and take up again at a subsequent stage of his existence. It is almost as important to him how the work of Christ will be prospering when he is in his grave as how it is prospering now. This ought to make us think anxiously of those who are to be doing the work after we have left it. Christ thought of this from the very commencement of His own activity; and it was not too soon. A man may do more for a cause by bringing younger forces into its service and training them to their work than by lavishing on it every moment of his own time and every atom of his energy.*³

The Importance of Training Ministry Assistants

Commenting on pastors who were successful in training younger men in the ministry, Spurgeon said,

Those pastors or shepherds always have a younger brother to travel with them wherever they go. He

"To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, 'A window shalt thou make in the ark.'"

Charles Spurgeon

watches the elder pastor, observes his ways, listens to his holy prayers, is inspired with his spirit, learns to tread the craggy mountains with him, learns to defy the enemy through the course that he sees in his elder brother. He learns lessons of wisdom that are not to be learnt from books, lessons of practical pastoral training that are not to be gathered from the best professors of the best colleges in the world.⁴

Even before he started a college, Spurgeon felt such a burden about training men that he challenged his church to realize their responsibility to train the next generation:

The church of God, not a college, is the pillar and ground of the truth. Every church should itself see to the education of its own young men. It should look out for its own evangelists. It should train its own soldiers and send them forth to the fight. . . . The church, then, has no right to delegate to another her own work. Let her bring forth her own children; let her give them nourishment; let her train them up; let her send them forth to do the Master's work. . . . Let the church of Christ train her own citizens for the battle of Christ. Let her bring up her own young warriors for the defense and maintenance of the truth.⁵

This is not to say that there is no need for further education in a college setting, but to challenge pastors to help train younger men for ministry. Spurgeon was clearly not opposed to colleges for training men for the ministry.

Be a Principled Assistant

Be a servant.

A leader in the Church of Scotland said to Mr. Taylor: "You must be sometimes tempted to be proud because of the wonderful way God used you." Hudson Taylor replied, "On the contrary, I often think that God must have been looking for someone small enough and weak enough for Him to use, and that He found me."⁶

Be willing to sacrifice.

People talk about sacrifice. Can that be called sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of our debt owed to our God which we can never repay? Away with such a word, such a view, such a thought. It is emphatically no sacrifice, say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering danger now and then, the foregoing of the common charities of this life may make us pause and cause the spirit to waver and sink, but let this be only for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed in and for us. For this we ought not to talk when we remember the great sacrifice which He made Who left His Father's throne on High and gave Himself for us.⁷

Be careful. "The young man who cannot distinguish

Dr. Mike Stalnaker is planting a church in Spring Hill, Tennessee, where he lives with his wife, Deena, and their four children.

between the wolves and the dogs should not think about becoming a shepherd."⁸

"A bad dog sees not the thief. We have plenty of bad dogs nowadays. Ministers will not see the error which abounds; statesmen wink hard at vice; and religious people sleep while Satan plunders the church."⁹

Be candid. Timothy Tatum served in the U.S. Military as a chaplain for almost thirty years. "Military commanders," he observes, "have found that a staff that thinks like them will praise a decision that may lead to destruction. They need men on their staff that see the world differently and react differently to the world around them. . . . Like the general, we need people on our staff who see the weakness in our position or who use their intuitive strengths to see a different picture."¹⁰

Be faithful.

If you hired a gardener to take care of your lawn and then went past his house and saw that his own yard was sloppy and unkempt, would you trust him with the care of your lawn? Or, if you went to the dentist to get your teeth checked and sat down in the chair only to look up to see that the dentist had a mouth full of rotten teeth, would you trust him to work on your teeth? How can a minister expect any positive response to his ministry if his life is not holy?¹¹

It was said of Alexander Whyte, after "he went home to be with the Lord each of the younger men gave thanks for the privilege of having worked with such a leader. They all appreciated his letting them do the work in their own way, without suggestions or criticisms."¹² May God help all pastors—senior and assistants—to make an impact on others for the glory of God and not our own!

Dr. Mike Stalnaker is planting a church in Spring Hill, Tennessee, where he lives with his wife, Deena, and their four children.

¹ George M. Ella, *John Gill and the Cause of God and Truth* (Durham, England: Go Publications, Bath Press, 1995), 240–41.

² *Ibid.*, 79.

³ James Stalker, *Studies on the Person of Christ* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1995), 274–75; emphasis added.

⁴ Charles H. Spurgeon, "Church Conservative and Aggressive," *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1976), 7:367.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 363–64.

⁶ Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1932), 201–2.

⁷ David Livingstone, *Livingstone's Private Journal: 1851–53*, ed. I. Schapera (London: Chatto and Windus, 1960), 108.

⁸ Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1985), 917.

⁹ Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Wit and Wisdom of Charles H. Spurgeon* (Baltimore: R. H. Woodward and Company, 1891), 201.

¹⁰ Timothy C. Tatum, "What We Can Learn from the Military about Pastoral Leadership," *Voice of the Alumni*, May/June 1999, 32.

¹¹ Michael P. Green, *1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 242–43.

¹² Andrew W. Blackwood, *Pastoral Leadership* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), 89. ☞

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Layman's Page

by Doug Wright

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting [equipping] of the saints [comma intentionally deleted] for the work of the ministry [service], for the edifying of the body of Christ."
Ephesians 4:11, 12

One of the definitions of "layman" is "a man who is not a professional." In religious circles the primary definition from the *American Heritage Dictionary* is more fitting: "a man who is not a cleric." These definitions are actually derived from an artificial distinction made in A.D. 95 by Clement of Rome. Clement designated the term *laikos* (from *laos*, "people") as a reference to believers in general.* Clement's distinction between church members and the clergy is one that Bible-believing Christians must be wary of. Scripture clearly teaches that men are called into the ministry, but it does not exclude those who are not "called" from serving the Lord. As a matter of fact, the Scripture assumes that the "work of the ministry" will be done by those we often term *laymen*.

Laymen in Action!

Biblical Examples of Laymen Serving the Lord
Bezaleel (Exod. 35:30; 36:2)

One of the greatest examples of laymen in action is found in Exodus. God had equipped Moses for the job of leading the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt. As Moses met with God on Mount Sinai, God gave him a detailed description of the tabernacle. In Exodus 25–28 God minutely prescribed the construction of the edifice and its furniture. Chapters 35–40 go on to describe the execution of the task.

Can you imagine Moses' human reaction as God delineated for him the details of how His place of worship was to be constructed? His likely response would be that God had already called him to a leadership position he didn't think he could handle, and now God expected him to learn how to do intricate woodwork, tan goats' hides for the covering of the tent, and fashion the top of the golden candlestick into the image of a flower blossom ready to burst into bloom! How was he supposed to do all of that work himself?

The simple answer is, he wasn't. God had prepared a *layman* to do the work. God says specifically of Bezaleel that He has "filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; And to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, And in the cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work" (Exod. 35:30–33). Two verses later God also explains to Moses that Bezaleel has not only been equipped for the task but that he will also teach Aholiab how to do the work. As far as we know Bezaleel never preached a sermon, oversaw a sacrifice, or delivered a great prophetic message directly from the mouth of God, but he will receive a reward just as those who did all of those things.

Bezaleel would be classified in our society as a layman. He was not called to the ministry, but there is no doubt that he was critical to the ministry. Had Bezaleel not been a faithful layman, Moses' work would have been hindered. This is the point that we wish to make. You

may be repairing a leaky toilet, painting the nursery, or decorating the interior of the church, but it is all part of the ministry. You can honor and serve God by using your talents in your local church. Your pastor will appreciate your service, but God will reward your service!

Parenting Tips

Pastor John Mincy
Heritage Baptist Church, Antioch, California

Many modern-day parents seem to be confused about what they can expect from their children. The Bible is very clear that children are to obey their parents. Parents should expect their children to obey clear instructions immediately and with the right attitude. This is a matter of training and discipline, but the time and effort will pay off for the rest of your lives.

Churchhouse Manners

The sermon is not finished until the "amen" is said!

It is an awful habit and distraction that could have an impact on someone's eternal destiny. The habit I am talking about is putting things away and getting ready to leave when you know the end of the sermon is near. When you zip your Bible cover, put your coat on, stack all your stuff, etc. it means that you have stopped listening, and have probably caused others to stop listening, as well. **Good manners would mean that you wait just a little while longer.** I promise you will still get out of the building in about the same amount of time!

Doug Wright is an FBFI board member and pastors Keystone Baptist Church in Berryville, Virginia.

**New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, vol. 2, pp. 456–57.*



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Leadership

I received the following correspondence from an older reader, and I thought his “cogitations” were worth passing along.

Van: I have enjoyed reading the input from many (mostly pastors, I presume) on the subject of “pastor run, pastor led,” etc. Maybe it is timely to add input from a layman, businessman, long-term deacon and deacon chairman, Sunday school teacher, pastor’s son, and one who has earned an MDiv and is ordained but does not pastor.

To begin, the pastor of a church is often likened to the “line” supervisor in a business while others, including deacons, are likened to a “staff.” An old adage says, “Line tells ‘em and staff sells ‘em,” indicating that line authority is vested in the pastor while others are support personnel with expertise in individual areas. Those under the pastor have authority based on what they know and how they perform. If both line and staff are focused on the “upper Shepherd,” there is no conflict. Daniel and John the Baptist are good examples of excellent staff men. To borrow from a radio preacher, “John the Baptist proclaimed the way, prepared the way, and then got out of the way.” He had a job to do and did it, but he did not conflict with Jesus’ mission nor accept glory for himself. In one sense a staff person’s role is to make his boss look good—especially the ultimate “Boss.”

Further, no one knows it all. Good leaders in business hire people smarter than themselves and employ multiple areas of expertise to further the business. It has been said that more pastors fail in administration than fail in preaching. I have been witness to that. Seminaries generally spend far more time teaching languages, theology, hermeneutics, counseling, etc., than they do teaching planning, personnel management, financial systems, etc. Yet a relatively small percentage of a pastor’s time is spent preaching or teaching.

According to Ephesians 4:12, pastors are to prepare laymen for the “work of the ministry.” The most effective, balanced pastors with whom I have labored have built on the gifts of lay people, and in the process of that development have enhanced their own skills while building the church. The result is synergism. Whether in nations, business,

or churches, dictatorship is more efficient in the short run. However, it limits the growth of the enterprise over time—witness the USSR!

Young preachers need to understand the difference between *delegated* and *earned* authority, especially for those who want to race through seminary and pastor a church before age twenty-five or so! Delegated authority may come with the title as it does to a policeman with a brand-new, pressed uniform, but such authority is just a symbol at that point. Only after putting himself at risk, serving the citizens, saving lives, and so on, does he have earned authority. At that point his delegated authority is almost incidental. So it is with most titles.

Also, since we are all to be on the same team, a good lay person can provide great support as a team player. Just as a good pastor’s wife can often sense trouble before her husband can, so alert laymen can head off surprises before they become broad-based difficulties.

Last, at this stage in life I am old enough to have children the approximate age of my pastor. If he is smart (and he is), he has available a “sounding board” in multiple areas. That role is often served without any fanfare or visible recognition. The goal is to enhance the local church and its witness.

My response: This all sounds right and helpful. Thank you. I’m glad to share it.

Warren Vanhetloo, A.B., B.D., Th.M., Th.D., D.D., is Adjunct Instructor in and Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at Calvary Baptist Seminary in Lansdale, Pennsylvania. He now resides in Michigan.



General Robert E. Lee did not appoint his generals on the basis of the absence of every weakness. He appointed them on the basis that each one appointed had one area of real strength. . . . Lee's men were men of narrow but very great strength. —Peter Drucker

And Aaron and Hur stayed up [Moses'] hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. —Exodus 17:12

Caesar treated his men graciously and . . . bestowed awards without stint. —Plutarch

If you do something wrong, a good commander will allow you to correct it so you won't make the same mistake again. He'll let you down easy, too, won't let you make a fool of yourself. —General Nathaniel Thompson Jr.

Followers want to go someplace where they are appreciated, where once in a while someone says, "Good job," or "Come in and let's talk about this problem." —General William F. Ward

No one likes a hatchet man, even the person who hands him the ax. —James Newman and Roy Alexander

What has been lacking in edification has been compensated for in noise. —Dalton Camp

Many assistant pastors sit on the platform while their Pastor preaches. While their Pastor does his best to "fire and stir" the congregation, some of these assistants look like know-it-all, unresponsive corpses. —Al C. Janney

The thing that delights us will direct us. —James O. Phillips

Must one point out that from ancient times a decline in courage has been considered the beginning of the end. —Alexander Solzhenitsyn

Truly great men and women are never terrifying. Their humility puts you at ease. If a very important person frightens you, he is not great; he only thinks he is. —Elizabeth Goudge

When someone demands blind obedience, you would be a fool not to peek. —Jim Fiebig

Faith in flesh produces insecurity. —Les Olilla

Some people can stay longer in an hour than others can in a week. —Unknown

Peter followed afar off because he was a rebuked, embarrassed, pouting staff member. His feelings had been hurt. —Bob Jones Jr.



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

Shattered!

Marilyn Vaughan

In Quest of a Miracle

Years before the advent of modern safety standards for toys, I received as a birthday gift a large glass pegboard with a colorful assortment of pegs. Although I was very young, my parents trusted my judgment—a *serious mistake*. Following a brief lecture on safety, I began to play with my new toy.

Oh, the designs I made! No patterns accompanied the pegboard to stifle my creative instincts. Artistic possibilities were endless. In clear weather I brought it outdoors and played with it on the lawn. With sunlight dancing on them, my creations sparkled like miniature rainbows. It was the most elegant plaything I had ever owned. *I would never have deliberately destroyed it!*

My developing flair for design was matched by curiosity and intense preoccupation with the miraculous. Every evening Mother read at least one Bible story to us from a treasured volume. The realistic illustrations of Jesus' miracles fueled my imagination. Frequently, before curling up for an afternoon nap, I reverently removed the book from its place on the bookshelf to gaze at the lifelike pictures. *How exciting it would be to watch Jesus perform a miracle!*

In my childhood fantasies it didn't seem at all unreasonable to request some kind of "miracle" to confirm my budding faith. I didn't know any blind or lame people, so perhaps some minor miracle would do. Hmmm . . . If my pegboard were to fall—*accidentally*, of course—the Lord Jesus could protect it! If such a miracle were too small to require His personal attention, I was confident that my guardian angel could handle it.

My favorite chorus, "Jesus Loves Me," provided the unlikely rationale behind these foolish speculations. *Since He loves me, He won't allow my pegboard to break as long as I truly believe.* Surely, such a small miracle didn't require too much faith for a little girl. Then, I realized that *accidents* cannot be planned; I must *force* God to do my bidding by deliberately dropping the plaything.

Having convinced myself that God would be so pleased with my faith that when I dropped my pegboard that *He would make it float above the ground*, one bright spring morning I marched outside, my treasure clutched firmly in both hands. Pausing just a moment, I held it at arms' length as a nagging doubt surfaced. What if I was wrong, and my pegboard actually broke? To quiet my fears, I determined to drop it "ever-so-gently" on the sidewalk below.

Eyes tightly closed, I relaxed my grip. A sickening crash followed an instant later as my beloved pegboard

shattered into a million pieces at my feet! I fled to my room, heartbroken, to sob out my inconsolable grief and disillusionment. My "miracle-on-demand" had been denied! Mother cleared away the debris wordlessly and wisely never asked for an explanation. Nor did I find the courage to confess the true nature of the "accident."

I suffered a triple loss that day: a shattered toy, a shattered faith, and—I knew instinctively—I had also sacrificed something else very precious to me. It would take a long time to rebuild my parents' shattered confidence.

Faith or Presumption?

Every day countless precious things are shattered through the same hideous sin that impairs my judgment. It is imperative that Christians learn early to apply Biblical principles to distinguish *genuine faith* from its ingenious counterfeit, *willful presumption*. To avoid the cleverly disguised pitfalls of presumption in our daily walk of faith, we must learn to recognize both.

Although outward circumstances vary greatly, *genuine faith* is always grounded in truth, whereas *willful presumption* invariably springs from error. Faith is the outgrowth of studying God's Word under the direction of His Spirit (1 Pet. 2:2; Rom. 14:17). Such faith results in a pure life of loving obedience (1 Pet. 1:22). Presumption, however, issues from unrestrained imaginings, fueled by self-will. Those who act presumptuously court certain disaster—as I did that day.

Fleeing Presumption

David's soul-stirring appeal for deliverance from "presumptuous sins" in Psalm 19:13 reveals "great transgression" as a close companion of presumption. When Paul was accused of preaching grace as a "license to sin," he emphatically denied it: "God forbid!" (Rom. 6:1, 2, 15). Such distortion would have forever shattered the gospel of grace, replacing it with the gross error of presumption.

In order to preserve that which is precious, we need to determine what is truly precious from God's perspective. The world's false system devalues the things of God. We must prize highly what God considers precious: God's promises are "great and precious" to believers (2 Pet. 1:4). Our faith is far "more precious than . . . gold" (1 Pet. 1:7). God's Word is precious (1 Pet. 1:23–25). He sets a high price tag on the Christian's virtues listed in 2 Peter 1:5–8.

Continued on page 38



The Leadership of the Second Man

Bradley Smith

To some, the title of this article may seem like an oxymoron, tantamount to advertising for a plate of “jumbo shrimp” or of filing a “tax return” or claiming that something is really “pretty ugly”! Honestly, who thinks much about the leadership of the second man? After all, isn’t the second man supposed to be all about building the leadership of the first man? Well, yes, he is, but I believe our conventional wisdom along these lines in most cases needs some tweaking. The general lack of concern about developing the leadership of the second man has undoubtedly hindered many men and many ministries.

Give Him Direction

Now obviously the leadership development of the second man rides largely upon the philosophy and goals of the first man. So this article is primarily aimed at the first man—and to challenge the way he views his assistant(s).

Let’s begin with something you already know: A Biblical philosophy emphasizes the idea of “investing yourself in a few good men.” After all, that is exactly what Jesus did. He was with His disciples almost constantly. He rarely went anywhere alone. He was the quintessential People Person! He was definitely “highly relational.” We need to be that way with an assistant.

A wise senior pastor may effectively double his productivity with a good assistant—an assistant of his own making! The apostle Paul spoke very highly of John Mark, saying, “He is profitable to me” (2 Tim. 4:11). So it is the job of the senior partner to make the junior partner someone who is profitable to him. And that rarely happens by accident.

No senior pastor should be frustrated because an assistant is not doing what the leader wants him to do. That detail is always the full responsibility of the leader! Do not make an assistant guess at what you want him to do. Begin with a simple job description that has

plenty of elasticity built into it, and then from the very start set goals for him to achieve.

Give Him Ownership

This is not to say that he will do it exactly as you would do it. While there should be basic agreement and understanding on the process of how to get the job done (and more importantly, what the job is, and most importantly why the job needs to be done), give as much flexibility and latitude to your assistant as possible.

This will give the assistant ownership of the task. You always want to let a guy go with his strengths, even though his strengths probably will not be your strengths. And it is usually better if they aren’t! It doesn’t have to be completely your way; in fact it will probably be better if it’s not! While being completely closed to theological compromise, be very open to new ideas and even new methods, especially if they come from your assistant.

If you are inclined to think that you presently do not have a valuable second man, then first of all make very sure that the problem is not your lack of developing him! Again I would remind you that nothing in this realm happens automatically. Recognize that training an assistant *is your job*—and that it is really a never-ending job. You cannot train a man to be a valuable assistant in a week, or a month, or even a year. For a man to represent you in the church and in the community he must really know you—and that is going to take significant time.

Training as to *why* you want something done is probably the most important step of training, and it probably will take the longest time to communicate. The best leadership training is from the heart, not from the head. The head communicates *what* needs to be done and the process of getting it done. But *why* we want it done is going to be communicated from the heart—and it is the heart that provides

by far the best motivation.

It is also important to communicate your vision continually—where the ministry is going and where the assistant fits into that picture—and how exciting it is going to be for everyone involved. Constantly resell your assistant on the future. Most people will buy into a vision, and that includes staff members too. A leader must also communicate to the assistant about what we often call “the bottom line.” Every organization has one. The bottom line at our church is “to make and to mature disciples.” If we’re doing something that does not fit into that idea, then we should probably stop doing it.

Give Him Your Time

And another thing is that you must be readily accessible for him. You must cultivate a real relationship with him. You must be able to be serious and then be able to be not-so-serious too. Informal and relaxing times must be interspersed with the intense times that come along in normal gospel ministry.

Within reasonable means and parameters, provide your staff with what they need in order to perform at an optimum level. This might include sending them to an out-of-state conference or seminar; it might include hardware, software, or subscriptions to helpful resources. Be sure they have the tools they need in order to grow in their ministry.

One very important tool is time. Be fair with your assistant about schedules, and be aware of the time constraints they have. Different families at different phases of life have different needs. Be sensitive to that. Your assistant needs to have time to properly relate to the Lord and to his family too. Help him to build those things into his schedule. Be concerned about your staff member’s total development as a person. It’s not just about what you are getting out of him; it’s really as much about what you are putting into him that ultimately matters.

Another important factor is communication. Give him plenty of it. And above all else, communicate your assistant’s worth to him and to others. A paycheck at the end of the week is not enough thanks. The value of expressing appreciation cannot be overstated. Be generous with the “Atta boy!” Everyone needs a pat on the back regularly. Be alert to opportunities to pay him a compliment—or to shoot off a heartfelt memo of positive reinforcement. In other words, if he is growing in his position as an assistant to you and is genuinely helping you in your ministry, then affirm him by saying things like, “We make a good team,” “You’re making a difference,” “You’ve added real value to this work.”

In addition to giving your assistant these kinds of supportive messages, give him systematic and specific feedback too. It is often tempting to bypass this critical step because it is not always pleasant—but sometimes you have to be critical. We fail our assistants when we do not give them the feedback they need to make the adjustments we want. So establish systematic reviews into your annual schedule, sitting down with your staff member and talking about what he has undertaken and what he has accomplished in the last quarter or the last six months. Be specific about what you like and what you do not like about his performance. This is not just a nicety for the two of you—it is a necessity for both of you to grow.

Give Him Empowerment

To recap and summarize, let me say it this way: learn to empower your assistant. When he has handled previous assignments or authority well, then reward him. When he has proven that he is not on an ego trip and has willingly completed an unwanted task requested of him, give him a fresh opportunity to succeed. When he has accepted a refusal from you for a viable request of his, then acknowledge his cooperative and understanding spirit. When he has proven loyalty to you and earned the confidence of others, then I would say that he has demonstrated that he is ready to be empowered.

You can now confidently begin to raise your assistant’s leadership level. How can you do that? Here’s how: include him at important meetings, and if someone asks a question about his particular area of endeavor, let him answer the question. Let him be a viable part of what is going on. Do not block him out of significant meetings unless you have a really strong reason for doing so. Allow him to observe how you work and how you arrive at decisions. Involve him in the problem-solving and give him a voice in the process.

You can also empower him by communicating his success to key people in the church. Brag about the things that are good. As much as you can, and as soon as you can, direct other people to him. Think about it. Getting your people confident that they can go to this man allows you to be free to do the things that you need to do. After all, isn’t that why you have an assistant? Empowering him will actually empower you.

Last but not least, give financial compensation to a valued assistant. If he is giving you great work, then give him a pay raise. Raises are very powerful symbols, and the amount of the raise is not always the most important part. Actually, more frequent smaller raises would be more effective than less frequent larger ones. Our people are certainly not in this line of work for the money, but still, money is always appreciated.

Unfortunately our failure to train people is huge. That is what this article is really about. Since my effectiveness in ministry is closely linked to the effectiveness of those who are the closest to me, then that is where my biggest personal investment needs to be.

It is often true that the average pastor spends an inordinate amount of time with people who are neither faithful nor able to teach others. Paul told Timothy: “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).

We need to make our strongest commitments to the faithful and capable men whom God has placed beside us, who *are* able to teach others also. Our responsibility is to develop those types of people to the fullest. Besides, raising the level of our assistant will raise our own effectiveness. It’s a win-win situation, or as one radio spot announcer says, “It’s the biggest no-brainer in the history of all mankind!” So stop missing the obvious and start taking the leadership of your assistant to the next level.

Bradley Smith pastors Bethel Baptist Church in Schaumburg, Illinois.

I Have Kept the Faith

Jerry Sivnksty

In the last two articles we have looked at Paul's two statements in 2 Timothy 4:7: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course." Now I want to address the last statement from that verse: "I have kept the faith."

As we have already observed, fighting a good fight requires dedication; finishing the course requires endurance. Now Paul climaxes by saying, "I have kept the faith," and keeping the faith requires obedience. We are living in a time when many Christians fail to see how crucial obedience is in serving the Lord. It is the key ingredient in living for Him! First Peter 1:14 says, "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance."

We know that in the sports realm all games have referees or umpires to make sure that the game is played according to the rules. For example, let's say that in a basketball game one of the players keeps pressing another player on the opposing team all throughout the game. The guy who's being pressed goes up for a rebound and notices that his opponent is directly behind him. As he comes down with the basketball, he rams his elbow as hard as he can into this player's mouth. The other player begins spitting out teeth one by one, and the referee blows the whistle and calls a foul on the player who hit him. This guy looks at the referee, throws his hands up in the air and says, "I didn't do anything!" Oh, really? He just knocked out another man's teeth!

Frank Shorter, the first American to win the Olympic marathon, was getting ready to enter the stadium for his victory lap. All of a sudden, a man who was dressed like a runner jumped out of the stands and began running in front of Shorter, waving to the crowd. Of course the officials and police grabbed him and hauled him away. You don't run one hundred yards and expect to win a 26.2-mile marathon. This man didn't obey the rules and was therefore disqualified.

God's children must realize that the foundation of a life conformed to Christ is obedience. Obedience has always been the criterion for the Lord's blessings and approval—there are no exceptions! In the Old Testament, we find the Lord commanding King Saul to destroy the Amalakites.

In 1 Samuel 15:3 we read, "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." The Lord made it unmistakably clear that there was to be total annihilation. However, the Scriptures state in verse 9, "But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them." King Saul disobeyed and did not do what the Lord had commanded. Therefore, Samuel declared in verse 22, "Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Samuel didn't say, "Okay, Saul, because you're the king and we cannot survive without your leadership, we'll make an exception this time." Rather, Samuel said in verse 26, "For thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel." We as Christians must take heed to not follow Saul's example but rather obey God in every area of our lives. There is no way God will bless us if we go contrary to the clear instructions in His Word.

Many years ago I had a major decision to make regarding an opportunity that would give me a lot of recognition as an evangelist. It involved my preaching with a nationally known speaker in a citywide crusade, and I really wrestled with this decision. I knew if I accepted the invitation it wouldn't please the Lord because of this man's ecumenical associations. I wrote to the committee in charge of this crusade and said, "I cannot accept the invitation because a door is not an open door if it leads to confusion and compromise of Biblical principles." I am so glad I made that decision based upon obedience to God's Word, because that speaker's ministry has strayed even farther to the left.

May I challenge those who read this article to be like the apostle Paul, who kept the faith based upon his total obedience to the Lord.

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

ESTHER, PART 1:

The last four installments of this column have surveyed the late historical books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The chronological companion of those two records is the book of Esther. This column has already addressed Esther, but that was over thirteen years ago (March/April 1994). To round out this survey of these late historical books, then, it will be worth revisiting Esther now. This two-installment column, however, will be much more than a mere rerun.

Background

Historical Setting. The story of Esther is set in Susa, the capital of the Persian Empire, during the reign of Ahasuerus (his Aramaic name), better known by his Greek name of Xerxes (485–464 BC). The events of Esther spanned about a decade of Xerxes' reign (482–473)—a timeframe that fell between Judah's first return to Jerusalem and completion of the temple (536–516) and the second return under Ezra to Jerusalem (458). The dates may be traced from the following texts:

- 1:3—482 BC, Xerxes deposes Queen Vashti
- 2:16—478 BC, Xerxes makes Esther his queen
- 3:7—473 BC, Haman plots Jewish genocide

Extrabiblical history tells us that Xerxes' massive military campaign against the Greeks fell between the events of Esther 1 and 2. In fact, Xerxes' feast in Esther 1 may have doubled as strategy sessions for the upcoming Greek campaign. Xerxes' initial success at Thermopylae was followed by a stinging defeat in the famous battles at Salamis (480) and Plataea (479). It was not until after his return from this campaign that Xerxes turned his attention again to the domestic issue of choosing a new queen.

Prophetic Setting. A remarkable angelic prophecy revealed to Daniel sixty years earlier predicts the royal succession after Cyrus (10:1), in whose first year—539—the Jews returned. The prophecy passes over “three kings” to focus on “a fourth” who “shall be far richer than they all” and would “stir up all against the realm of Grecia” (Dan. 11:2). History fills in the names of those kings. The succession of rulers following Cyrus was as follows:

1. Cambyses—a cruel tyrant (530–522 BC)
2. Pseudo-Smerdis—reigned only one year (522)
3. Darius I—under his reign Persia flourished (522–486)
4. Xerxes I—Ahasuerus of the book of Esther (485–464)

The prophetic mention of Xerxes' great wealth corresponds to the descriptions in Esther 1. Xerxes also “stirred

up all against the realm of Greece” by leading a huge but disastrous expedition against Greece in 480 (partly to avenge his father Darius' defeat at Marathon in 490). As the Book of Esther opens, Xerxes is laying plans that will fulfill, directly and voluntarily but unwittingly, a prophecy revealed to and through Daniel sixty years earlier. These military pursuits explain his rather odd distraction from the Vashti affair hinted at in Esther 2:1. Xerxes' campaign against Greece fills the gap between the opening feast in chapter 1 (in Xerxes' third year, 482) and the accession of Esther as queen in chapter 2 (in Xerxes' seventh year, 478).

Cosmic Setting. The earthly events of Esther unfold against the prophetic background of the prophecy in Daniel 11:2; but Daniel 11:2 is unveiled against the cosmic background Daniel 10:12, 13, and 10:20–11:1. These verses describe the cosmic warfare over angelic influence of earthly rulers and affairs. The danger encountered and recorded in the Book of Esther is not just about a genocidal threat posed to God's people by an arrogant and angry upstart prince. The larger invisible dimension of spiritual warfare must never be forgotten or underestimated, especially when God's people and purposes are involved. Just as more was at stake in the establishment of the Jews' temple in Ezra and the Jews' city in Nehemiah, the human confrontation recorded in the story of Esther is the earthly reflection of a spiritual war in the heavens. Satan maintains an intense interest in disrupting the plans and promises of God rooted in the ongoing existence and welfare of Israel. This is not just ancient history; regardless of one's ecclesiological orientation (whether covenant or dispensational), no one who believes in the providence of God can dismiss the events since 1948 as accidental, insignificant, or unremarkable.

Structure

Esther is a multilayered literary tapestry. Though non-fictional, the book's organization follows a standard narrative structure, crafted along the lines of what we would call a dramatic short story.

Exposition (1–2)—*sets the stage for the story*

- After a six-month “open house,” King Xerxes throws a lavish weeklong feast and calls for Queen Vashti to appear. When she refuses, the humiliated and enraged monarch deposes her and makes her a public example (1).
- Xerxes seeks new queen and chooses Esther, who happens to be a Jew (2:1–20).

SETTING, STRUCTURE, AND THEMES

- **Foreshadowing Incident:** Mordecai uncovers assassination plot against Xerxes and saves the king's life, an act recorded in the royal records but not rewarded (2:21–23).

Crisis (3)—*the inciting incident that creates tension/conflict*

- **Crisis Incident:** Haman promoted; Mordecai offends; Haman plots (3:1–6).

- Haman casts the lot (Pur) to determine the most auspicious timing for his pogrom (3:7) and receives the backing of Xerxes' irreversible decree (3:8–15).

Resolution (4–9:19)—*rising action sustains suspense, peaking toward resolution-climax*

- Mordecai discovers plot and exhorts Esther; Esther resolves (4).
- Esther, granted an audience with Xerxes, invites him and Haman to a banquet, where she invites them to a second banquet the next day (5:1–8).
- Haman gloats over his honors, grumbles over Mordecai's snubs, and has a gallows constructed for Mordecai (5:9–14).
- **Pivot Incident:** Xerxes' insomnia, reading, and question; Haman's arrival, humiliation, and (wife's) prediction (6).
- Esther's final banquet, announcement, and accusation (7:1–6).
- Xerxes' wrath, misapprehension, and sentence (7:7–10).
- Original decree countered; Jews delivered and feared (8:1–9:19).

Denouement (9:20–10:3)—*rapidly descending action and tying up loose ends*

- Feast of Purim instituted and explained
- Exaltation of Mordecai

Thematic Elements

Repeated words and events comprise the major thematic building materials that hold the structure of Esther together. These include *feasts, wrath, reversals, and destruction*.

Feasts

A prominent structuring principle in Esther is the Hebrew word *mishteh*, translated “feast” or “banquet.” The term appears twenty times in the book—almost half of all OT occurrences. The entire story is structured around the celebration of pairs of feasts, arranged in a roughly

concentric pattern (cf. Jobes, *Esther*, 155):

A: Xerxes' feast for the nobility throughout the empire (1:2–4)

a: Xerxes' and Vashti's feasts for Persians in Susa (1:5–9)

B: Feast in celebration of Esther's accession (2:18)

C: Esther's first feast for the king and Haman (5:1–8)

C': Esther's second feast for the king and Haman (7:1–9)

B': Feast in celebration of reversal (8:17)

A': Feast of Purim feast for the Jews throughout the empire (9:17, 19)

a': Feast of Purim for the Jews in Susa (9:18)

Wrath

Each occasion of wrath initiates a shift in the direction of the story. These displays of human wrath—that seemingly most unpredictable and uncontrollable element in our experience—are the providential hinges on which the story of Esther turns.

- Wrath of King against Vashti (1:12; 2:1)—*creates Esther's accession*
- Wrath of Bigthan and Teresh against King (2:21)—*creates Mordecai's exaltation*
- Wrath of Haman against Mordecai (3:5; 5:9)—*creates Jews' crisis*
- Wrath of King against Haman (7:7, 10)—*creates crisis' resolution*

Reversal

The most striking feature of the book is the complete reversal of a hopeless situation against all expectation. It is, in fact, a complete shift or transfer of power from the Jews' enemies to the Jews. The irony of reversal is underscored in a variety of ways in the book.

Incidental Reversal

- Haman hates Mordecai (3); Haman honors Mordecai (6)
- Xerxes gives Haman his ring (3); Xerxes gives Mordecai his ring (8)
- Haman's decree published (3); Mordecai's decree published (8)
- Decree against the Jews (3); Decree against the Jews' enemies (8)
- Shushan perplexed (3:15); Shushan rejoices (8:15)
- Jews mourn (4:3); Jews rejoice (8:17)

Continued on next page

At a Glance Continued

- Haman rejoices and boasts (5:9–12); Haman mourns and fears (6:12; 7:6)
- Zeresh advises Mordecai's death; Zeresh predicts Haman's downfall (6)
- Haman makes gallows for Mordecai (5); Haman hanged on gallows (7, 9)

Structural Reversal

That the turning point of the action is a remarkably unremarkable event—royal insomnia—again underscores providence.

A: Prologue (1)

B: First decree (2–3): *danger*

C: Clash: Haman/Mordecai (4–5)

D: "On that night . . ." (6:1): *crisis*

C': Triumph: Mordecai/Haman (6–7)

B': Second decree (8–9): *deliverance*

A': Epilogue (10)

Stated Reversal

What is implicit hinted throughout the story is explicitly stated twice. In both cases, the Hebrew verb *haphak* indicates "to overturn completely, to turn upside down":

- "In the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it *was turned to the contrary*, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;)" (9:1).
- "As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which *was turned unto them from sorrow to joy*, and from mourning into a good day" (9:22).

Destruction

The predominant thematic crisis in the book is encapsulated in the word *destruction*. The eight references to Haman's plot to *destroy* the Jews (3:6, 9, 13; 4:7, 8; 7:4; 8:5, 6) are answered by eight references to the Jews' *destroying* their enemies (8:11; 9:5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16).

These motifs (and others) are woven into an overarching emphasis: *the vital interplay between divine intervention and human activity in the world*. Part 2 of this focus on Esther will further develop the theme and theology of Esther and will also offer answers to some perturbing questions raised by this book.



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The True State of Evangelical Ecumenism

In a July 10th article AP writer Nichole Winfield wrote of Pope Benedict's view of the ecumenical movement. The pope approved a document from his old offices at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that restates the Catholic Church's teaching on relations with other Christians. "It was the second time in a week that Benedict has corrected what he says are erroneous interpretations of the Second Vatican Council, the 1962–1965 meetings that modernized the [Catholic] church."

"Christ 'established here on earth only one church.' . . . Other communities 'cannot be called churches in the proper sense' because they do not have apostolic succession—the ability to trace their bishops back to Christ's original apostles—and therefore their priestly ordinations are not valid."

"The Rev. Sara MacVane, of the Anglican Centre in Rome, said that although the document contains nothing new, 'I don't know what motivated it at this time. . . . But it's important always to point out that there's the official position and there's the huge amount of friendship and fellowship and worshipping together that goes on at all levels, certainly between Anglicans and Catholics and all the other groups and Catholics.'

"The document said Orthodox churches were indeed 'churches' because they have apostolic succession and that they enjoyed 'many elements of sanctification and truth.' But it said they [lack something because they] do not recognize the primacy of the pope—a defect, or a 'wound,' that harmed them, it said.

"Despite the harsh tone, the document stressed that Benedict remains committed to ecumenical dialogue."

I am indebted to Roger Bergman for sharing this article. **Find this article at** <http://www.wtop.com/?sid=1184542&nid=105>.

Wrongful Birth Ruling

A jury awarded Daniel and Amara Estrada more than \$21 million from two separate doctors in a wrongful birth case. Their now two-year-old son, Caleb, was born with Smith-Lemli-Opitz syndrome, a birth defect that does not allow the child to produce or synthesize cholesterol. The case insists that if the doctors had properly diagnosed their first son's genetic disorder, test would have indicated that their second son had the disorder as well. Had they known this information they would have chosen to terminate the pregnancy. The money was requested to provide care for their second child.

This article was taken from www.comcast.net/news/national/index.jsp?ca

[t=DOMESTIC&fn=/2007/07/24/72206](#).

Scriptures Delivered with the Newspaper

The American Bible Society in conjunction with the International Bible Society and Send the Light have targeted eight city communities in a plan to include a copy of the Scripture with the newspaper to those who subscribe. For example, in Fort Worth, 200,000 copies of the New Testament were delivered with the last Sunday paper in 2006. The ABS has received some complaints—surprisingly, they have come largely from Christians who are concerned about the way many will be discarded or abused.

Access this story at http://www.christianpost.com/article/20070813/28889_Bible_Society_Defends_Newspaper_Scriptures.htm.

A Not-So-Shocking Admission

We have become accustomed to the regular attacks of pro-homosexual groups pushing their agenda into sex education programs in our public schools. For example, a Maryland-based program is being instituted in the Montgomery County schools that was initially rejected because of its overtly anti-Christian rhetoric. Now that it has been reworked, the Montgomery County Board of Education says that it would reverse

its decision to use the materials only if the curriculum violated the law. The curriculum has the support of the state board as well.

The school board has rejected all concerns about curriculum content, pointing to the fact that parents must give their children written consent to take the curriculum. In a written response from the school board it was noted that parents do have the right to control the upbringing of their children, but "that right is not absolute. It must bend to the State's duty to educate its students."

Find this article at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/03/AR2007070300991_pf.

ETS President Frank Beckwith Resigns

Dr. Frank Beckwith resigned his position of president of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) on May 5, 2007. His resignation was a voluntary response to his receiving "full communion" with the Roman Catholic Church. While members of the executive board offered gracious words to their departing friend, they did find his resignation to be an "appropriate" response based upon the doctrinal basis for membership with ETS. Beckwith's full embracing of Roman Catholic theology is not coherent with the ETS position that "the Bible alone and the Bible in its entirety,

is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs." "Confessional Catholicism," according to the ETS response to Beckwith's resignation, "as defined by the Roman Catholic Church's declarations from the Council of Trent to Vatican II, sets forth a more expansive view of verbal, infallible revelation."

Beckwith was replaced by president-elect C. Hassell Bullock of Wheaton College.

Find this article
at http://www.etsjets.org/?=abnnouncements/frank_beckwith_resigns.

If Not a Mixing of Religions, Then . . . What?

"Our goal is not to mix our religions and build a new global one, but to understand each other's identity better," [said] the Russian Orthodox Christian Morris Gagloev."

Gagloev was attending an event sponsored by the World Council of Churches in which twenty-one Muslims, Jews, and Christians gathered for the purpose of understanding each other's faith. Although their stated intent was not to erase religious distinctions and build a new, larger religion, in essence that is exactly what their forum accomplished. Participants were required to prepare a Shabbat meal and participate in prayer traditions from each of the different faiths. While the putative objective was to get each person to appreciate his own spiritual roots, in typical postmodern fashion the gathering emphasized relationship apart from dogma. For example, "Steven Bell, who is awaiting ordination as a priest with the North American order of the Paulist Fathers next summer, . . . was impressed by the richness of song and chant in Judaism and by the discipline of Muslim prayer."

NOTABLE QUOTES

This Word of God is the means by which God accomplishes his saving work in his people, and this is a work that no evangelist and no preacher can do. This is why the dearth of serious, sustained biblical preaching in the church today is a serious matter. When a church loses the Word of God it loses the very means by which God does his work. In its absence, therefore, a script is being written, however unwittingly, for the Church's undoing, not in one cataclysmic moment, but in a slow, inexorable slide made up of piece by tiny piece of daily dereliction.—David Wells

God calls a man and develops within him a message. That man then gathers around him people with a similar vision, and together they develop a ministry. We must realize the vision for the ministry—the direction—largely comes from the leader, the person in charge. As a result, most people will identify the ministry with that person.—Matt Williams

It has been well said that the future is with the disciplined, and that quality has been placed first in our list, for without it the other gifts, however great, will never realize their maximum potential. Only the disciplined person will rise to his highest powers. He is able to lead because he has conquered himself.—J. Oswald Sanders

You will not have been long in the ministry before you discover that it is possible to be fussy about the Holy Place and yet to lose the wondering sense of the Holy Lord. We have much to do with religion and yet not be religious. We may be mere guide-posts when we were intended to be guides. We may indicate the way, and yet not be found in it.—J. H. Jowett

Leadership is not how many serve you, but how many you serve. It's being excited about seeing the Master successful in the lives of other people. And with each position of leadership comes a greater responsibility to serve those under our authority. This makes our influence a great training ground for future servant-leaders.—Matt Williams

Truly, brethren, a man may as certainly, and more slyly, make hast to hell, in more earnest preaching of the gospel, and more seeming zeal for a holy life, as in a way of drunkenness or filthiness. For what is holiness, but a devotedness to God and a living to him? and what is a damnable state, but devotedness to carnal self and a living to ourselves? . . . The work may be God's, and yet we may do it, not for God, but for ourselves. . . . But woe to him that takes up the fame of godliness instead of godliness!—Richard Baxter

So how did this experiment succeed in creating a "new" religion? It did so by removing dogma that defines. The conclusion that these students were led to is that each of these "Abrahamic rooted faiths" will eventually lead them all to Heaven.

Find this article at <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/all-news-english/display-single-english-news/article/1637/young-muslims-jews-and-c-1.html>.

Church Health

A new Barna poll shows evidence of a shift in priorities when comparing Evangelicals with non-Evangelicals. When asked, "What changes are 'absolutely necessary' for the United States to address in the next ten years?," the overwhelming favorite at 82% of those polled was care and resources devoted to children. Evangelicals, however, responded a full 20% lower on that particular issue.

On the other hand, Evangelicals listed enhancing the health of our churches as one of their highest priorities, while that topic was the lowest priority of those polled overall.

And on issues such as improving families, marriages, and the spiritual climate of our nation, Evangelicals were 30% more likely to identify these issues as necessary than their non-Evangelical counterparts.

Access this story at http://www.christianpost.com/article/20070821/28993_Survey%3A_Evangelicals_Worry_Most_Over_Health_of_Churches.htm.

Compiled by Robert Conduct, Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International Advisory Board member and pastor of Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church, Baldwin, Maryland.

Newsworthy is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of the FBFI.

Building Effective Spiritual Partnerships in Cambodia

Forrest McPhail and Chris Seawright

The country of Cambodia is experiencing great mercy and grace from the Lord Jesus Christ. Most countries within the 10/40 Window either forbid or greatly restrict any form of organized Christian missionary work. Most Buddhist countries are closed to foreign missionary efforts and actively seek to hinder conversion to Christianity. Cambodia, however, with its fifteen million people, is both within the 10/40 Window and Buddhist—and it is completely wide open to church-planting missions—for the time being.

Christians from all over the world have responded quickly to this fairly recent open door in Southeast Asia. Beginning in the mid 1990s, a large wave of Christian missionaries and organizations began to pour into Cambodia. Alongside these, the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'i faith, and radical Islam also are aggressively seeking converts. One bright spot is that the Lord has raised up a significant number of Fundamental Independent Baptist missionaries in Cambodia, and these are all fervently laboring for the gospel, though most have been there for less than five years and are still learning the Khmer language.

Because Cambodia is such a poor country, both Christian and secular organizations are spending enormous sums of money and manpower on social aid and development. Because of its fascinating past (with its ancient temples), its involvement in the Vietnam War, the ensuing Khmer Rouge holocaust, and its current underdevelopment, Cambodia is very popular.

There has been an evangelistic explosion with numerous evangelistic tracts being published and distributed. Bibles are plentiful, Christian radio is heard, and Christian movies are broadcast regularly on television. The "Jesus Film" seems to have been in every corner of the countryside. Many church buildings are going up all along Cambodia's roadways, even in remote places. The capital city of Phnom Penh has various forms of Christian activity "on every corner" so to speak.

Yet even with all this activity, the professed Christian population is still around one percent. The greatest tragedy does not lie here; the vast majority of that one percent does not understand the true Gospel of Jesus Christ! Charismaticism rules professed Christianity, and most ministries are supported through foreign funds. A great majority of the followers follow Christ in order to obtain financial benefit. There are very few local churches that are in any way close to the New Testament church example,

either in faith or in practice.

What then is the greatest need for the country of Cambodia in its present situation? What is the best way for American Fundamental churches to help spread the gospel and to help foster a Fundamental, indigenous, church-planting movement in Cambodia (and other Two-Thirds World countries)? We believe very strongly that the answer lies in Western churches' building effective spiritual partnerships with the national church through sending God-called cross-cultural workers who will commit themselves to learning the language and understanding the culture. These cross-cultural missionary/evangelists should in turn build spiritual, not financial, partnerships with the national churches and their leaders.

What do we mean by "spiritual" as opposed to "financial" partnerships? The New Testament describes the ministries of missionaries such as Paul as purely spiritual ones. Paul was never a sponsor of mission churches, nor was he financially dependent on them. Paul went out of his way to maintain this purely spiritual relationship with his flocks. His authority and influence over the believers came only from the Scriptures he preached and practiced, not from the money he was giving.


We believe that churches in America can best help the cause of Christ in Cambodia by financially partnering with American missionaries—ones who will strive to understand the language and culture of the national believers and who will conduct their ministries in an indigenous fashion from the very beginning. It is the missionaries, those who have immersed themselves in the language and culture, who are in the best position to understand the true needs of the national church. They are the catalyst between the Western church and the national church. By assisting in evangelism, church planting, and discipleship, missionaries can develop strong spiritual partnership with the national churches by their teaching and example.

Our desire is to see others who have this burden join our ministry team here in Cambodia. We are praying that the Lord would raise up *four* more American couples with this same desire of *building effective spiritual partnerships* with the national church in Cambodia and thus help lay a solid foundation for the gospel in this special place.

Forrest McPhail and Chris Seawright are missionaries to Cambodia under Gospel Fellowship Association Missions. They can be contacted via e-mail at cseawright@gfamissions.org and fmcphail@gfamissions.org.

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Dr. David Innes, Pastor

Encouraging Those on the Front Line

Bob Ellis

Everyone in a distant and strange place, even under the best circumstances, longs for and rejoices when news and encouragement arrive. Imagine the loneliness and homesickness of being in a foreign country with a lot of people yet at the same time alone. Add to that your location being a battlefield, in a desert, in the summer where temperatures are in triple digits. According to Chaplain Gary Fisher, a troop commander once said, "Being in Iraq in the summer is like being stuck in an oven on broil, and just for fun, someone every so often opens the door and throws sand in your face." Many American military personnel will be in such a place this holiday season, including chaplains.

The FBFI Commission on Chaplains, in partnership with Fundamental Baptist churches, has sent men (military chaplains) to serve and minister in distant and often dangerous places. FBFI-endorsed chaplains are godly, dedicated, and faithful men who are serving God and their country with distinction, men who deserve and need the prayers and encouragement of God's people.

The coming holiday season provides an opportunity for Christians to be a blessing to our military personnel who are serving at home and on the front line. Using the following suggestions, individuals, families, churches (Sunday school classes, senior saints, a group of veterans), or Christian schools can be used as instruments of encouragement and help to FBFI chaplains.

Care Packages: How to Send and When to Send

Using small boxes, such as shoeboxes, make care packages. One box should be marked for the chaplain. All other boxes should be gift-wrapped and marked "male" or "female." Place the small boxes (ten to twelve) in a large box and send it to the chaplain. Fill each box and pack it so the items will not move and be damaged. The chaplain will give the boxes to the military personnel of his choice. *Plan ahead, since it can take up to a month for overseas military personnel to receive packages.*

You may send such materials to the following chaplain, who is deployed overseas:

CH Chris Melvin
TF Diamondbac
HHC, 1-158th IN
FOB Mehtar Lam
APO AE 09354

Suggested Items

Written materials

- A note of encouragement giving brief information about you or your family, Sunday school class, school class, or group
- An attractive gospel tract that gives the plan of salvation, a copy of John/Romans combination, a small pocket-size New Testament
- *Do not* send any materials that criticize the Muslim religion.

Personal items

Practical, durable items such as toothbrush, toothpaste, stick deodorant, disposable razors, shaving gel, shampoo, bars of soap, comb, hairbrush, lotion, lip balm, wet wipes, and other practical items. Items such as shampoo and lotion that might leak should be put in a Ziploc bag.

Food items

Hard candy (individually wrapped pieces), chewing gum, canned nuts, etc. Do not send items that will melt, spoil, or become stale. (It is okay to send chocolate December to February.) Do not pack food items in boxes with soap, shampoo, or items with fragrances since the fragrance will affect the flavor of the food items.

Include your name and address; also include the name of your church, pastor, and the address and phone number of the church. If your church has a webpage, include the Web address as well.

FBFI-endorsed chaplains are among the best educated, most dedicated chaplains in our armed forces. Your participation in project "Encouraging Those on the Frontline" will enable them to minister in another way, thereby opening the door for witnessing. All will be very thankful for your concern and effort in helping to encourage and reach those to whom they minister. If they could speak with you personally, their request would be "Brethren, pray for us" (1 Thess. 5:25).

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. . . . As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country. Proverbs 25:11, 25.

Bro. Bob Ellis is the National Field Representative for the FBFI Commission on Chaplains. He travels extensively, visiting Fundamental Christian colleges and seminaries, promoting the FBFI chaplaincy ministry. He is also available to speak in churches and can be contacted at 850.261.6647.

Guarding Our Treasures from Breakage

Fits of rage, evil speaking, broken promises, and bitterness are examples of sins that shatter testimonies, lives, homes, and churches. Secret and public transgressions against sexual purity have reached epidemic proportions among professing Christians: promiscuity, fornication, adultery, and homosexuality have gained a degree of respectability when prefixed with the adjective "consensual." This is only a partial listing of the sins of the flesh enumerated in Galatians 5:19-21. One misstep into any of these sins shatters trust and a lifetime of purity. "God is not mocked" (Gal. 6:7).

"Private" sins of the heart shatter the precious joy of unbroken fellowship with the Lord. We can no more expect to evade the consequences of breaking God's immutable laws than that little girl half a century ago could hope to avert the tragic loss of her precious plaything while foolishly disregarding the law of gravity. Let us then determine to "put away childish things," taking great care not to shatter precious lives and testimonies by callous disregard for God's precepts. While a true child of God need not fear the shattering loss of his salvation (1 Pet. 1:5), the principle of God's grace within works in concert with our "blessed hope," producing the joyous response of loving obedience to Christ's commandments. Titus 2:11-15 forever settles the issue.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Marilyn Vaughan is a freelance writer living in Columbus, Ohio.

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Leading Servants

Continued from *On the Front Line*, page 5.

If you are reading this article last, you have already seen in this issue of *FrontLine* that nearly everything that applies to the Assistant Pastor in his relationship to the Senior Pastor applies to the Senior Pastor in his service to the Lord. Every minister is to be a servant (Matt. 20:26, 27), and every Christian is to be in the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:12). Servant-leaders are to be “leaders of servants” as well as servants themselves. *On the Front Line* introduced the lesson that Christ taught His disciples about servanthood in response to their ambition.

In the context of the naïve request of James and John to be honored in Christ’s kingdom, Christ reminded

the twelve of the authority structure of the Gentiles (vs. 25). The contrast in His kingdom couldn’t be clearer: “But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister [*diakonos*: servant]; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant [*doulos*: slave].” The greater the leadership, the deeper the servanthood. Thus, the Greatest Leader of all was the Greatest Servant. “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Christ’s command cuts beneath the method and exposes the motive. The man who craves authority or position kneels in vain. His service is mere “eyeservice.” He is a “menpleaser.” Paul’s admonition to the Ephesians

(6:5, 6) was to Christians serving their human authorities: “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.” The servant of Christ who is not “doing the will of God from the heart” is not “obedient.” He may be doing the

right things, but he is not doing right. Christ was not making a word play in Matthew 20:26–28; He meant it, literally. Often He taught this way. To live, you must die; to be exalted, you must be abased; to become rich, you must forsake your possessions; to be a leader, you must be a servant.

Men long for the happy ending in this life. We read the Book of Job and expect soon to have “twice as much” (Job 42:10) as we had before our suffering. But *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* tells of those who knew the happiness was yet to come. The heaviness of human burdens wears us down; we would not be warned about being weary in well-doing if we were not susceptible to fainting. Wrong motives are exhausting; they rob us of peace and contentment. Godliness must be accompanied by contentment (1 Tim. 6:6). That is impossible without the mind of Christ.

Philippians 2:1–11 reveals the mind and motives of Christ. Christ was already “in the form of God,” already “equal with God,” but He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon

him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” He was “obedient unto death.” My father’s tombstone is engraved with the reference to Philippians 3:14. If the Lord tarries, until we are laid in our own graves, we must “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”: obedience, as servants. It is tempting for a man who holds authority in the ministry to focus on the obedience of those he leads. God would have us obey Him, and to lead others into obedience by our own obedience.

Fundamental Baptists must never forget this. If anyone is disaffected with Baptist Fundamentalism because of carnality in leadership, then leadership must be humble before God and confess any failure that is a stumbling block to others. But the disaffected must never forget that Biblical Fundamentalism is the truth, so they may actually be disgruntled with God Himself. Complaints about Biblical obedience are complaints about the authority of God. The authority of God’s servants and leaders is not in titles but in teaching. Whether we lead or serve or lead men to serve, we must “confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

There is much to overcome in the present world, but one of the most important is human ambition—the corrupting, carnal pretense of righteous flesh. The man who seeks to make a name for himself dishonors the name of Jesus Christ. Twice it was said to John (Rev. 2:17; 3:12) that the overcomer will receive a new name that no one else will know. He will be like a pillar in the temple of God, on which is written only the name of God.

The man who seeks to make a name for himself dishonors the name of Jesus Christ.



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