

THE GLORY OF GOD: THE RIGHT PURPOSE IN BUILDING • UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF BUILDING

# FrontLine

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We are grateful to Mr. Jack Berry for his help with this issue.

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# Mail Bag

## We want to hear from you!

Let us know what you like or don't like about *FrontLine*. Address your comments to **Managing Editor, *FrontLine***  
2801 Wade Hampton Blvd, Suite 115-165,  
Taylors, SC 29687 or send them by e-mail to [info@fbfi.org](mailto:info@fbfi.org).

You may request that your letter not be published or that your name be withheld, but anonymous letters will not be accepted.



**T**hanks for the good issue on church planting in California. It was a delight to read the various articles by men, all of whom I know, some that I've held revival meetings for, and several that have or are planting under the auspices of the GFA Church Planting program.

The GFA program is unique and has helped plant churches from New Hampshire to Florida and from South Carolina to California. As a former pastor and an evangelist, it's a privilege to work with men that have a pioneering, persevering, and evangelistic spirit and to see God doing miraculous things for and through them. This July/August issue of *FrontLine* has captured that dynamic.

Keep up the good work.

*Bud Bierman, D.D.  
Director of Church  
Planting, GFA*

**I** have been receiving the *FrontLine* for many years now and eagerly

devour it from cover to cover, often as soon as it arrives. This July/August issue on church planting was especially dear to my heart so that I wept through most of it. I grew up in a church in Massachusetts that had the vision to plant other churches. My parents were helpers, and these churches are still in existence in a very difficult area of the country.

Not long ago a little church (little is much when God is in it) in Massachusetts began from a Bible study that took place in the home of my husband and me. The Lord called my husband home, and I have moved to SC but keep in contact with Chester Baptist Church. I am sending the pastor this issue of *FrontLine* as an encouragement to him.

One article touched my heart so much that I have added a new church work I read about to my prayer list. The Lord has put it on my heart to pray

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## The Testimony of Temporary Tools in Doing Eternal Work

John C. Vaughn

**T**he mission of the United States Air Force is well known. It depends on air superiority and everything related to that goal—an entire aviation culture of highly trained personnel and sophisticated equipment. Every specialty has its own set of specialized tools to support and maintain the most important tools: the airplanes. During the Vietnam War an effort was made to reduce accidents by attaching a color-coded tape to every tool issued to mechanics. The tape could survive the searing heat of a crash and be traced to the mechanic if a forgotten tool—or piece of one—was found in the wreckage. We never really knew for sure whether the tape was that durable, but it did the job in a different way. The increased level of accountability reduced the number of tool-related incidents. The lesson was clear: we were responsible not only for the larger mission; we were responsible for every tool issued to us to accomplish it.

Physical property, from small hymnbooks to large buildings, is a tool entrusted to us by God to accomplish the mission of the Great Commission. Like the jet aircraft mechanic, Christians are trained to use specialized tools, protecting them for their dedicated purpose. Tools are issued for a technician to use in discharging his duty until he himself is discharged. Anyone with any experience in a church building program has learned from the Lord's illustration about "counting the cost" in Luke 14:28, where He combines the examples of building and battling. Reminiscent of the Hebrews' returning from captivity to rebuild Jerusalem, the lesson is asking a larger question than "Can you afford the cost?" by presenting it as a challenge: "Are you willing to pay it?"

Everyone needs tools, whether

simple hand tools, expensive construction equipment, precision medical instruments—the list is almost endless. Churches also need tools, which vary according to the giftedness of their members and leaders. Facilities for making disciples through preaching, baptizing, and teaching can be as simple as a clearing beside a stream or as complex as a campus of modern, expensive, well-furnished buildings. Motives and purposes vary, and whether our tools are appropriate for the task is determined by many factors. What is appropriate to pack in a small missionary airplane will not equip a jet fighter for its more authoritative mission. Both are designed for specific tasks, and getting those tasks accomplished is the key. A "mind to work" (Neh. 4:6) is the right motive in approaching the selection of tools.

Appropriate tools contribute to good testimonies. They speak of the competence and commitment of the church to its responsibilities but also to its community. Spaces for worship, education, recreation, fellowship, vehicle storage and maintenance, etc., should show the church to be a good neighbor to those it seeks to reach, and a good representative of Christ. Just as individuals are wise to clothe themselves in modesty and propriety, churches are wise to "clothe" themselves in similar fashion. Good taste is always attractive. The testimony of the church building is inextricable from the testimony of the people. When disaster strikes through fire, destructive weather, or vandalism, the community sympathizes with the tears and pain of people who have lost

their property. Onlookers admire the patient courage of those who clean up and rebuild. In normal speech, "I'm sorry you lost your church" is synonymous with "I'm sorry you lost your building." Likewise, "Your church is so beautiful" is a well-intended compliment to a church body on its

building. The tools we buy and the way we treat them are part of our testimony. For decades the leading company in the package shipping industry did not advertise its service except through the cleanliness of its delivery trucks and the prompt, polite behavior of its drivers. Washing every truck every day was their way of saying "This is how we will take care of every package

you ship with us."

Buildings are tools; they are part of our testimony; but they are also temporary. Cathedrals are awe-inspiring works of art, but they do not house evangelistic, Bible-believing churches. Permanence is important, but permanence is not eternality. Tabernacles are temporary—they are "tents of meeting." The buildings we meet in, like the bodies we live in, are inextricably connected to the life within. The value we place on human life will determine how we treat the human body. The value we place on spiritual life is reflected in the value we place on the spiritual body. The needs of the body must be met for it to function well. Balancing the need for proper tools that give a proper testimony, while realizing that they are temporary, will guide us through the necessary lessons of building temporary buildings while doing eternal work.

*Appropriate  
tools  
contribute  
to good  
testimonies.*





# The Glory of God: The Right Purpose in Building

## Glory to God

God's overarching purpose is that all He does is to bring glory and honor to His holy name. God was delighted, therefore, when King David desired to build the temple. However, it was not the fact that David wanted to build a temple that delighted God, but rather in his *purpose* for wanting to build. It was in David's heart "to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel" (1 Kings 8:17). Though his desire and motivation were good, the task of building the temple finally fell to David's son Solomon. It was a construction project dedicated to the name, the fame, the reputation, the testimony, and the glory of the Living God (1 Kings 8:44). Likewise, our purpose as Christians ought to be that God be glorified in all that we do—including in our building projects (1 Cor. 10:31).

Solomon began his building projects with the right goal and purpose: to bring glory to God. However, somewhere along the line, purposes can become overshadowed by ulterior motives: self-aggrandizement and self-glory. When his eyes were not on the Lord, Solomon embarked on multiple building projects, the purpose of which was not for the glory of God but rather for the glory of Solomon. He sought to build monuments to himself. "I made me great works; I builded me houses" (Eccles. 2:4). Because his focus, motivation, and purpose in building were wrong, when the construction was completed, he confessed, "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit

under the sun" (Eccles. 2:11). His elaborate, expensive, and extensive construction plans (not unlike Boston's over-budget "big dig" project) became a huge financial burden on the people, and it eventually led to the division of the nation (1 Kings 12:4, 11, 16). Unless the purpose is right, all that the flesh can build (from Heaven's perspective) is but wood, hay, and stubble (1 Cor. 3:11–15). Surely there are lessons here for us concerning the proper motivation and purpose in our building projects. If we are not building *for His name's sake*, the project is not worth building.

## A Witness to the Community

God has called believers to be living witnesses unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Christ lives in us (Col. 1:27), and we bear witness to His saving grace wherever we are. That is God's purpose for the believer. But inanimate objects can also be witnesses unto the Lord. A heap of rocks was a witness between Laban and Jacob (Gen. 31:48). It bore witness to the covenant they made with each other. An altar was a witness in Joshua 22:27. It bore witness to the fact that the Jews who lived on both sides of the Jordan were God's people. These inanimate witnesses testified without saying a word. Their mere existence testified loudly and continually. A church building can also be a witness to the Living God today.

In New Hampshire we have many beautiful old white-clapboard church buildings which, in their day, testified to the fact that God was working in New England. Many of them have been apostate for generations. Others have been turned into tourist centers or antique shops, selling quilts

and maple syrup. Yet they too are witnesses: they testify to the fact that God's people generations ago were not diligent in fighting the good fight of the faith. They testify to the truthfulness of the warning of our Lord Jesus Christ to a formerly Fundamental church in Ephesus that had left its first love: "I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Rev. 2:5). Yes, buildings can be a witness and testify nonverbally to the community. But what a glorious witness it is to see the Lord working in this region with new Fundamental, Bible-believing churches being built that now testify to the fact that God is still in the business of saving souls, even in the hardest of fields. The mere construction of a building designed to house a body of Bible-believing Christians is in itself a witness to the community.

The Lord saw fit to use the members of Salem Bible Church to do much of the construction of our last project. It was a wonderful time of fellowship and spiritual growth for all involved, but it also served as a witness to the community. Neighbors drove by and spoke with us and discovered that many in the congregation (only a few were skilled carpenters) had dedicated virtually every Saturday for two years to serve the Lord by building the church building. This too was a witness. It testified of the power of God working in the hearts of His people. It testified of the indwelling life of Christ, moving ordinary people to be servants of the Lord, willing to sacrifice for His name's sake. It testified to both men and angels of the manifold wisdom of God in saving, molding, and motivating a body of believers in Christ to be actively engaged in the work of the ministry (Eph. 3:9, 10; 4:12).

If our purpose in a building project includes the concept of the building itself as a witness to the community, then we should be sensitive to the expectations of the community even in choosing the *type* of building to be constructed. For example, a pink stucco building looks great in Florida. Modern, avant garde architecture is appreciated on the West Coast. However, in the small towns of New England, such structures would stick out like sore thumbs. The townspeople would drive by every day wishing that that building were not there because in their minds it ruins the landscape. That too is a witness. It testifies loudly, twice a day as they drive to and from work, that the folks who put up that *monstrosity* do not care about what the townspeople think. Paul's exhortation, "Give none offence" (1 Cor. 10:32) is appropriately applied to every aspect of ministry—including the building project. On the other hand, an attractive, well-kept building designed to "fit into" the community sends forth a positive message. This too is a witness that testifies of care and concern to the very people you seek to reach for Christ (1 Cor. 9:19–23).

## Worship

Worship is fundamental to any Christ-honoring church. It is central to the Christian life now, and it is a joyous activity in which we will be eternally occupied (Rev. 4–5). One cannot discuss the purpose of a church building without discussing worship.

This was especially true in our last construction project. We had been meeting for many years in a long, skinny building that was basically a Sunday school wing with a large open room, which we used as our assembly room for worship. However, that space was also used for church dinners, youth programs, a Sunday school classroom, and any other function we held. There was no foyer, so when you entered the building, you entered into the worship area. With all the extra noise and interruptions, the space was not very conducive to worship. We desperately needed a "sanctuary," a space set apart for worship. Worship is *why* we were building. The fact that the purpose of this space was for worship drove every decision in the planning phase. In light of today's hideous trend in the Neo-evangelical world to change God-centered worship into man-centered entertainment, we did not want the seats in the sanctuary to reek of "theater," the pulpit platform to reek of "stage," or the general atmosphere of the space to reek of "show time." Thus we were led of the Lord to design an old-fashioned, traditional sanctuary to reflect the simple, traditional worship and the conservative Christian music that we intended would fill the space. We were convinced that a church building that resembled a movie theater or an entertainment center might actually encourage wrong attitudes and behavior. When believers enter into this space, we encourage them to sit quietly and reverently, read a portion of Scripture, pray for the ministry of the Word, and prepare their hearts for the worship. God is concerned about behavior in His house (1 Tim. 3:15). If the pur-

## IF THE PURPOSE OF BUILDING A SANCTUARY SPACE IS FOR REVERENT, HUMBLE, SIMPLE, SPIRIT-LED WORSHIP, THE DESIGN OF THAT SPACE OUGHT TO REFLECT THAT PURPOSE.

pose of building a sanctuary space is for reverent, humble, simple, Spirit-led worship, the design of that space ought to reflect that purpose. When answering the question, "Why are we building?" worship ought to be a priority.

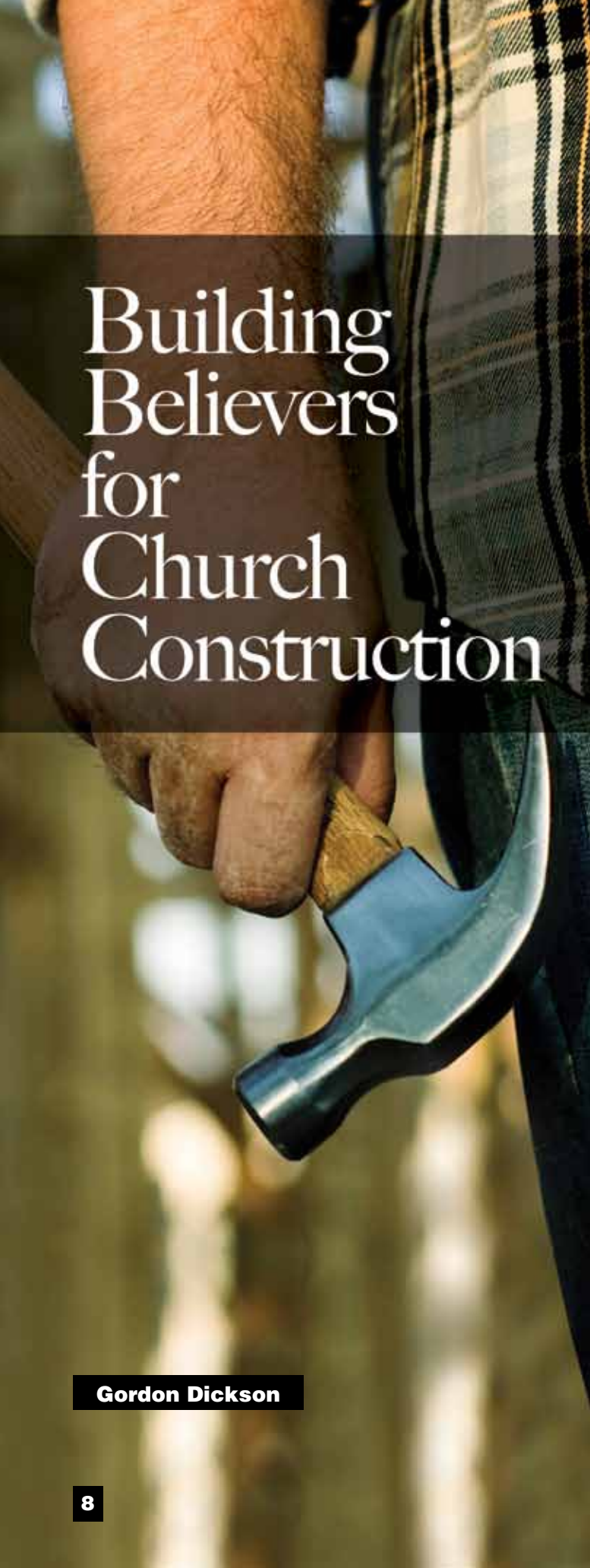
### The Edification of the Saints and Evangelization of the Lost

First and foremost, the purpose of construction ought to be for the glory of God. Secondly, it also ought to be a witness to the community. But there is also a more *practical side* to putting up a church building. One purpose of the local church is to be a center of training and edification of the saints so that that they might be sent out into the world to be a witness for Christ and function as an army of evangelists to proclaim the gospel of God's grace. Physical structures are usually needed for those purposes to be accomplished.

The popular slogan "if you build it, they will come"

continued on page 10





# Building Believers for Church Construction

**Gordon Dickson**

**A**re you considering constructing or renovating a church building? It has been my privilege as a pastor to help to lead two such projects. This article is written from that perspective. Here are a few essential preparations with practical suggestions for the “project pressures” ahead.

## **Preparation: Understanding the Nature of the Church**

What is “the church”? We know that the church is made up of believers, not bricks. Building believers comes first; building with bricks may come later. But Scripture makes it clear that the believers themselves are a building of God:

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Eph. 2:19–21)

In Ephesians the church is pictured as a building, a body, and a bride. As a building the believers are “living stones” (1 Pet. 2:4, 5) in “an holy temple in the Lord.” We are fellow citizens with all the saints as part of the household of God. Built upon the cornerstone of Christ and in the framework of apostolic doctrine, the church is the temple of God’s Spirit! What an unusual building the church is, “being rooted and grounded in love” (Eph. 3:17)! The true “church building” is a living building with roots; it is a giant tree growing on the foundation of the faith. In construction terms, “we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” God’s work in us and our good works are for the “praise of the glory of his grace.” Even our good construction works can point the way to Him!

### **Practical suggestions:**

1. Develop a likeminded spirit in the congregation using this building illustration to explain congregational unity.
2. As part of this, consider teaching through the “one another” passages in Scripture.
3. Knowing the “project pressures” that are ahead, look for ways to heal rifts or divisions within the congregation.
4. Teach the congregation how to think about designing and constructing a building, using theological design statements to picture God’s glory.

## **Preparation: The Place of Leadership Gifts**

Is it possible to maintain unity while cultivating the diversity that will be necessary for a church construction project? You must combine the gifts and talents of a number of individuals to bring about a successful project. As a pastor, you may believe that you have all the necessary gifts to bring your dream to fruition. But the fact that most pastors leave their congregations within three years after a church building project speaks volumes. The pressures on the pastor and his congregation are simply too great to face without these essential preparations. The unity and diversity of the body is the key.

In Ephesians 4 the apostle Paul makes it plain that the



body of Christ must walk in a manner appropriate to His calling. As part of that walk we must be “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). If you had to show the diverse members of your congregation how to “work together,” what illustration would you use? How can very different people possibly work together in unity? (Inquiring minds on church building committees really want to know!) Well, what did the apostle Paul use to teach unity? He used the unity and diversity of the Trinity in Ephesians 4:4–6! God, in three Persons—diverse Persons working together in unity—is the greatest possible illustration of unity and diversity. If the diverse Trinity can work together in essential unity, then so can the members of Christ’s body.

The Bible is not asking that we all be alike. The appeal is not for some sort of “cookie-cutter” uniformity. We are commanded to use our diversity (of talents, perspectives, opinions, leadership styles, etc.) to serve in essential unity. This is why Ephesians 4:7 reminds us, “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” To take on projects, including construction projects, you must trust the Lord to grow (or place) gifted servants within your congregation.

#### **Practical suggestions:**

1. Teach a series on the “God is able” passages of Scripture to encourage your leaders in the task before them.
2. “Watch and pray” for gifted servant-leaders who can lead your committees in the areas of creative planning, conceptual design, working with an architect and engineers, physical construction, financial stewardship presentations, and publicity.
3. Develop an “atmosphere” in committee meetings to help that diversity work together in unity.

#### **Preparation: The Nature of Pastoral Ministry**

What is the pastor’s role in the church construction project? Whether it is a building project or a benevolence project, the apostles’ example in Acts 6 is important to remember. They said that pastors should not “leave the word of God. . . . But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:2, 4). In “construction terms” this is “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” What then is the pastor’s role in the building construction? Pray, preach, and perfect the saints who will be used of God to build the structure. In preparation for the “project pressures” ahead, the pastor must remind himself and his church family of his God-given role. As a “believer builder,” the pastor must grow his people to maturity spiritually, socially, mentally, emotionally, and financially for the “project pressures” ahead.

#### **Practical suggestions:**

1. Develop your ministry and preaching plans to use the

building project as an illustration of building believers. (For instance, “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls,” Prov. 25:28.)

2. Teach the people how to make wise financial decisions and pay off debt. Teach them the principles of giving through grace (2 Cor. 8 and 9).
3. Explain some of the great building and renovation projects in Scripture. Your goal would be that as the people see the hand of God in your life, they would know that it is right time to “rise up and build” and “[strengthen] their hands for this good work.” (Neh. 2:18).
4. Constantly watch for ways to include every member of the congregation in the building process—knowing that the Lord can use this to grow them to maturity.

## **THE BIBLE IS NOT ASKING THAT WE ALL BE ALIKE. THE APPEAL IS NOT FOR SOME SORT OF “COOKIE-CUTTER” UNIFORMITY. WE ARE COMMANDED TO USE OUR DIVERSITY (OF TALENTS, PERSPECTIVES, OPINIONS, LEADERSHIP STYLES, ETC.) TO SERVE IN ESSENTIAL UNITY.**

#### **The Nature of Serving Together**

Practically speaking, how will these preparations help you to put a project together? One of the characteristics of the members of your Spirit-filled congregation is that they will be “submitting [themselves] one to another in the fear of God.” (Eph. 5:21) Since this is a “family” project of “the household of God,” you can use your God-given diversity to work together in unity. This means that you will submit yourselves to each other’s perspectives and leadership styles. For instance, building committee members must be taught “in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3). Here are practical suggestions to help you do this:

1. Trust the Lord to give you Biblical principles that naturally spring from your exposition of the Word that you can and should use in your construction project. Teach your leaders to listen to Biblical messages with a heart-cry for wisdom about the building process.
2. Teach your leaders the difference between their identity and their ideas. If the two are entwined, no one will be able to challenge “their” ideas and strife will result.
3. Model servant-leadership by showing your leaders how to disagree (and let them disagree with you).
4. Teach your leaders about the creative process. Two of the best secular books on creativity that I have read are *A Kick in the Seat of the Pants* by Roger Von Oech and

*Thinkertoys* by Michael Michalko. Von Oech's creative process is especially helpful. How many times have you heard someone propose the flickering flame of an idea only to have someone smother it with the wet blanket of "that will never work!" (Hint: This doesn't help a brainstorming session.) Von Oech proposes that there are four steps in the creative process (Explorer, Artist, Judge, and Warrior) and that each step must be fully activated and completed before moving to the next step.

5. Teach your leaders the value of humor in the creative process. When a paint manufacturer was trying to figure out how to remove layers of paint, one wag exclaimed, "Put gunpowder in it and then a spark will blow it right off!" From that funny remark, another engineer got the idea to add an inert chemical to the paint. The paint would then react with another chemical in the removal process and completely dissolve.
6. Teach your leaders that retorts such as "We've never done it that way before" or "What are people going to say about this?" are not adequate responses.
7. Teach your leaders how to set priorities using Biblical principles. Which would you choose to do first: build an interstate sign or undertake a badly needed auditorium renovation? Using the Biblical principle of transformation (Rom. 12), we chose to renovate the auditorium and a main concourse. Now we plan to place a sign on the interstate within the next few months, and the sign will rightly represent the quality of the auditorium.
8. Teach your leaders how to witness to vendors and contractors for the glory of God. Part of our wallboard was installed incorrectly in our auditorium. One of our deacons showed the contractor why it had to be redone by explaining the excellence, beauty, and orderly nature of our God. (Refer to the theological design statements in this edition for more ideas along this line.)

Your construction project may be years away, but it is essential that you begin to prepare now for the "project pressures" ahead.

Gordon Dickson is the senior pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Findlay, Ohio.

## The Glory of God (continued from page 7)

may apply to baseball fields, but it does not apply to churches. Besides, the Great Commission does not say, "Bring the lost to church" but rather "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15). If our purpose in building is based on a hope that a pretty steeple will draw many people to Christ, our hopes are misguided. Attractive buildings don't win people to Christ, as the ornate but empty cathedrals of Europe demonstrate. People are not won to Christ by angels or buildings but by trained, dedicated, zealous, Spirit-filled Christians.

Therefore, an important purpose in building ought to be to establish a suitable structure to facilitate the teaching and training of believers and thus fulfill a key element in the Great Commission. If we are going to send men and women out into the world to represent Christ and preach the gospel, they need to know sound doctrine, how to live the Christian life, and how to spread the good news. The practical reality is that this requires separate classroom space to teach believers in various age groups and maturity levels. This is *why* we build.

And of course, the church body will have many special meetings geared toward evangelism, at which times the lost will be invited to attend. It can be fearful and intimidating to attend a church for the first time, especially if you have never been to any church before and if all you know about church is what you've seen on TV. A well-designed, well-lit, clean, attractive building with an inviting main entrance can be used of the Lord to help alleviate some of those fears. This too is why we build.

In a nutshell, the purpose of a building project ought to reflect the Biblical purpose of the church:

- To glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31).
- To worship God simply, in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).
- To edify the saints to do the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:12).
- To evangelize the lost (Matt. 28:19, 20).

James Delany pastors Salem Bible Church in Salem, New Hampshire.

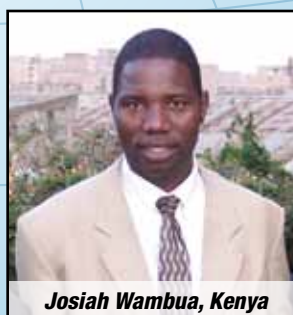
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# Setting Our Sights on Sites



Where should we locate the church facilities? While effective leadership is the first essential for church growth, an appropriate location is the other important consideration. The growth generated by the leadership's ministry strategies must be facilitated if the growth is to be retained and continued.

Church sites and facilities are regulated by community authorities much more than in years past when concessions were granted to churches as significant contributors to community services. Furthermore, the expectations of neighborhood church constituents are greater than in past years.

There is a logical sequence of questions to be considered when choosing the place for building the church facilities:

1. Ministry—What are your ministry goals?
2. Capacity—How large a church do we want to become?
3. Visibility—Should prospects be able to see us?
4. Accessibility—Is the site readily accessible to our targeted constituency?
5. Compatibility—Does the site location meet the expectations of those we are endeavoring to reach?
6. Feasibility—Will the authorities grant permission with reasonable expectations to build a church facility on this

site?

Let's look briefly at each of these considerations.

## Ministry

A demographic study of your community focused on church ministry considerations is a valuable tool for developing effective ministry strategies. These strategies identify targets for Biblical content in the context of a relational community within the church.

The age distribution and preferences of a targeted area must be considered in choosing your church site. You need to be located where your targeted community lives. While large regional churches may draw people from a great distance, commuting churches always struggle to survive.

The regional church begins by reaching the immediate community around the church site and then grows beyond the closer area through a satisfied constituency reaching into outlying communities by word of mouth while remaining strong in the immediate location.

Typically, the commuting church is located in a changing community where the neighborhood church saw its constituency move to the suburbs, with a few people returning because "I was married in this church." If you choose a site in a changing community, seek a location that is safe and rebounding. Determine strategies to reach people in that

location. Avoid being a commuting church through effective ministry planning.

Ministry components should also be chosen before selecting a new church site. For example, if you plan to have a Christian day school on the church site you will need a much larger site. (The minimum recommended K–12 day school site is fifteen acres.)

### **Capacity**

When you speak of master planning an existing site with existing buildings you have, in reality, already master planned the site. Adding additional facilities will likely have to conform to the placement of the existing buildings. Site capacity could be a limiting factor. Costly remodeling and parking renovation may add to the project cost.

Master planning of a new church site is wise stewardship that can assure efficient site development. Long-range planning should include your goal of ultimate church size—unlimited or an established size for the congregation when you will plant a daughter church outside your effective ministry region.

The first phase of construction should accommodate doubling your present worship and education attendance. Phased expansion should reserve the focal point of the site for the main worship center. Will you plan to schedule multiple worship sessions? Or will it be your goal to always have only one morning worship service? This is a critical decision for planning worship, education, and parking capacity.

The selected church site should provide at least one acre of land for each one hundred people. Increased setbacks, expansive landscaping, storm water retention, large recreation areas, day school, wetlands, topography, and multiple services demanding additional parking are factors that will add to the land requirements. The average number of people per vehicle will probably not exceed 2 to 2.5—a more important factor than the off-street parking code in the zoning ordinance.

Ideally, the site depth should not be greater than double the width. Consider only the usable land when calculating the site capacity. It is best to select a level site with one hundred percent usable land. A level site and single-story construction are most economical for smaller churches. The large church can justify the development of a rolling site and multistory construction with an elevator for barrier-free interior access.

### **Visibility**

The greatest potential for church growth is in a new growth area of a healthy community. Demographers identify a growth band around a developed area as a green belt. If you choose a site in the community's inner core or saturated area of growth perhaps twenty-five to fifty years ago, be certain the area is safe, stable, and rebounding. Public school officials, community zoning officials, the chamber of commerce, utility companies, news media, and demographers are good resources for locating growth trends of

the community.

Visibility is very important. The church site should be located on a local arterial road that provides maximum visibility, preferably in a residential area. Site entry, parking, and building entry should be obvious. The worship center should provide the primary curb appeal, establishing the purpose of the church as the worship of God. The site should not appear to be just a school or a commercial building.

### **Accessibility**

The church's outreach goal is not to bring in those travelers who are passing through your city on the expressway. However, local people who drive on the expressway are targets for your church ministry. You can enlarge your growth potential as a regional church if your church is accessible from an expressway that has an exit onto an arterial road where your church is located.

In smaller communities without expressways, be certain you are readily accessible from arterial roads. The typical congregant will not drive more than twenty minutes to attend a church service. Avoid barriers that complicate access to your church. A site may be visible from the expressway but without a convenient access road to the church. Railroads, rivers, lakes, industrial parks, and commercial developments can limit access.

### **Compatibility**

The location of the church must be compatible with the expectations of the community you are endeavoring to reach. Your church constituency should be a reflection of the community's demographics. Upper-income people expect a church setting compatible with their standard of living. They are not likely to come to a church in a low-income, declining neighborhood. Locating in a quality single-family neighborhood means that people from all

## **WHEN YOU SPEAK OF MASTER PLANNING AN EXISTING SITE WITH EXISTING BUILDINGS YOU HAVE, IN REALITY, ALREADY MASTER PLANNED THE SITE.**

income levels will be attracted to the church site.

Avoid industrial areas, commercial development, and declining neighborhoods. If your ministry is targeting an inner-city area, look for a church site in an area that is on the rebound and safe.

The church site should be centrally located for the potential constituency you are endeavoring to reach. Travel time and convenience are factors of compatibility. If you are relocating an existing church, be sure (if at all possible) the relocation will not cause you to lose your present constituency—something most churches can't afford to do if they are going to fund the relocation project. Example: The old inner-city church of commuters should try to relocate to the area where the commuting members have relocated, then reach out into the new community.



## Feasibility

There are many feasibility factors contributing to the place for building the church home. These factors may be summarized under *costs* and *codes*. Most communities no longer consider the church as a contributor of community services exempt from the development criteria applicable to the location. Church facilities are classified as public occupancy facilities for assembly and subject to rigid site and building codes. Consequently, development costs are directly affected by these requirements.

The church must carefully count the total project cost of the new church site and facility development. The project cost includes the cost of the land, site development, building construction, and all fees (architecture, site and building engineering, construction, and funding).

Areas zoned for single-family development (with public utilities) are typically the best choice for the church site. Commercial sites are usually too costly. Agricultural zones on the outskirts of progressing development are good if public sewer and water are available. Extending the sanitary sewer and water to the site is usually very costly. Alternative utility systems for the larger church are very expensive, especially if the building must have a fire sprinkler system (typically required in buildings with assembly capacity over three hundred).

Community zoning ordinances control site development.

Churches are not necessarily permitted in every development zone. When in an acceptable zone, permission is granted through site plan approval or a special use permit often subject to public scrutiny. It is common to see church sites subjected to strict building setbacks, parking setbacks, storm water control, perimeter screening, perimeter and interior landscaping (including the interior of parking lots), and other costly requirements.

Building codes govern the design features of the building, including accessibility, life safety, structural integrity, electrical, mechanical, and plumbing. Local applications of the International Building Code vary according to state and local modifications.

Remember that these are general guidelines for the selection of the church site. There are variations in each community. The complexity of the issue demands professional assistance to safeguard the church's ministry potential, integrity, and finances.

NOTE: For additional information by this author refer to Chapters 16 and 17 in *Building the Church*, Volume II, BJU Press, Greenville, South Carolina. Or go to [www.BuildMyChurch.com/newsletter/archives](http://www.BuildMyChurch.com/newsletter/archives).

H. Joseph Miller is a church development consultant living in St. Petersburg, Florida.



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# Understanding the Process of Building

Jack Berry

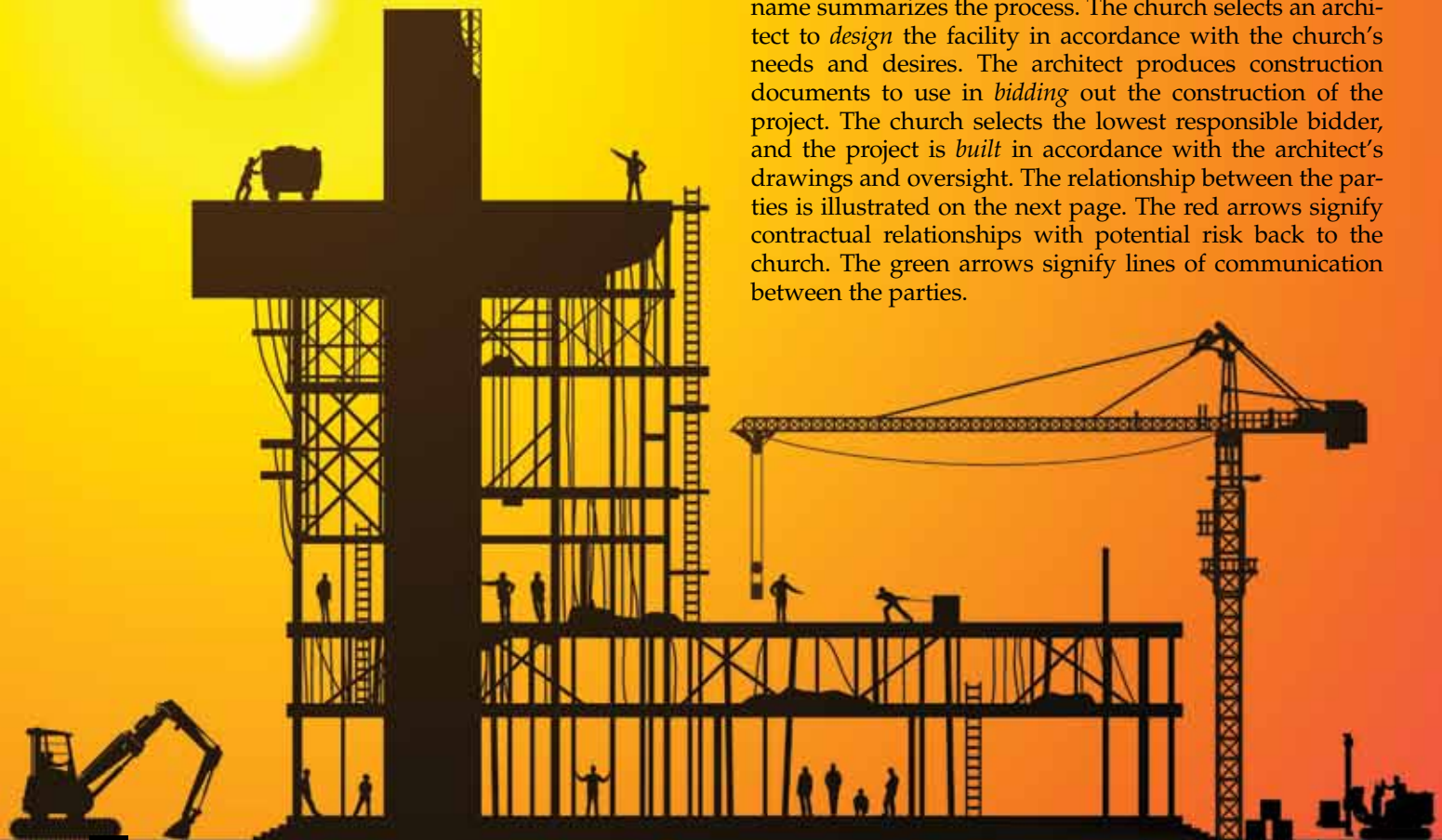
A church decides to build or remodel a facility. The one part of the building that will determine its integrity is the foundation. Just as the quality of a building is affected by its foundation, the success of a building project is greatly affected by the process used in designing and constructing the project. In this endeavor most churches tend to focus naturally on the physical plant instead of the process used to build it. Choosing the wrong process could lead to negative, even heartbreaking, consequences. From unmet expectations, such as inadequate parking to exceeding the budget or even to a church split, the results of inattention to this foundational step can be devastating. God used a methodical process for building His church which can be traced from the Gospels through Acts and the Epistles, culminating in Revelation. In the same way a church needs to be methodical in its process, learning to make good decisions along the way. One of the most important decisions needs to be consideration of the

appropriate process to use. Psalm 90:12 urges us to “apply our hearts unto wisdom.” It is critical to proceed wisely when entering into a building program.

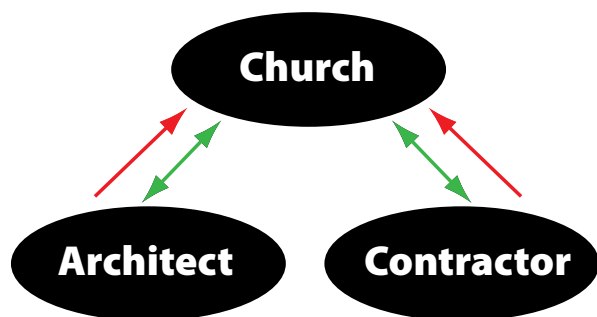
Although there are a number of variations, most of the project delivery methods fall into one of four categories, (1) Design-Bid-Build, (2) Construction Management, (3) Design-Build, and (4) Bridging. In the information to follow, this author will attempt to briefly define these delivery methods individually and help evaluate their strengths and weaknesses as they pertain to church facility development. It is important to remember that due to space, only a brief treatment can be given. It is my intention only to highlight the major methods and their characteristics so the individual church can do further research to find the best combination of process and people to fit their facility needs.

## Design-Bid-Build

This method has been the most common and conventional method for project delivery during recent history. Its name summarizes the process. The church selects an architect to *design* the facility in accordance with the church's needs and desires. The architect produces construction documents to use in *bidding* out the construction of the project. The church selects the lowest responsible bidder, and the project is *built* in accordance with the architect's drawings and oversight. The relationship between the parties is illustrated on the next page. The red arrows signify contractual relationships with potential risk back to the church. The green arrows signify lines of communication between the parties.







It can be clearly seen that the church has two entities working for it, thus creating two contracts and two lines of risk. It is also evident that the designer (architect) and builder (general contractor) may not have adequate communication with each other until after the contract for construction is awarded, so the contractor has little or no input in the design.

### Strengths

- Functional plan and pleasing aesthetics
- Familiarity due to widespread use
- Clearly defined roles assigned to each party
- Design is complete prior to construction
- Linear process

### Weaknesses

- Change orders (increased cost) more likely
- Delays more likely
- Lengthy process
- Restricts optimal communication
- Potential for adversarial relationships

According to statistics, approximately forty-nine percent of churches who invest in architectural services using this method will start construction in five years or less. Of this, only thirty percent of those who do build will construct the original design. These statistics highlight the likelihood of delays and cost overruns that can be associated with this method. That is not to say that this method cannot be used very effectively. Many churches have had very good experiences with this method, but it is vitally important that a highly qualified and experienced church architect is retained. This author strongly advises against searching for “cheap” architectural services if you decide to employ this method.

As mentioned, in this process, the selection of the architect will be one of the most important decisions the church will make. The architect becomes the church’s advocate during the whole process and can assist the church not only in the design of the building but also in the bidding, negotiation, and construction phases for the duration of the project as well. His talent and expertise will play a major role in the success or failure of the project. If this method is chosen for church facility design, the church should be looking for the right qualities in the architect.

**How much church design experience does he have?** The need for design talent goes without saying. You need to be careful here. The architect who claims to have designed three hundred churches may have actually designed six

churches fifty times. This illustrates the importance of asking the right kinds of questions during the interview process. A talented architect with little church experience can get the job done by employing good listening and discovery skills. However, there is no replacement for experience. You don’t want to educate an architect on your time. It is also helpful if he is a believer with knowledge of the church’s particular distinctives.

**Does the architect know what affects and how to control construction costs?** This knowledge and skill will be of little use, however, unless the church has done its homework and knows how much it can afford. Keep in mind that project costs include much more than construction costs. Besides the cost of the building, the church must factor in professional consultants’ fees, permit fees, utility fees, land acquisition and development costs, FFE (fixtures, furnishings, and equipment), AVL (audio, video, theatrical lighting), unforeseen conditions, and so on. Your architect should be knowledgeable and skilled to help the church account for all of these as you “count the cost” for the project. After the church has settled on a realistic construction budget, the architect is able to begin his design work. The church needs to be transparent and forthcoming regarding the maximum dollar amount that cannot be exceeded. Once this has been established, the church should keep the architect accountable to the budget. Make budget accountability part of the architect’s contract! This may be difficult, as many architects don’t have the knowledge of up-to-date construction costs as most contractors do. This author has met with numerous churches who have a set of completed blueprints that were never built, usually due to budget overruns. If the church was anticipating a million-dollar project, this lost investment in architectural services can be anywhere from \$50,000 to \$100,000 or more.

**Third: What is the architect’s “style”?** Many architects can be categorized into one of three styles. “The Black Cape Architect” is the one who has created a “name” for himself, and he will tell you what kind of church building you want. He may not listen well and may not be that concerned about budget. “The Secretary” is the one who only listens, offering very little counsel or advice. “The Coach” is the kind of architect you want. He will ask intelligent questions designed to get the church to think about the best facility design for them. He listens and advises and will employ his talents to align with the church’s goals and dreams.

**Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, etc.** Space prohibits our going into detail about all of the qualities you are looking for in an architect. Suffice it to say that the church must also investigate other qualities. How adept is the architect at working with committees? What are his communication skills (graphic and verbal)? What is his “change order” record? How well does he work with contractors? (The Design-Bid-Build delivery method has the potential to brew adversarial relationships between the architect and contractor.) How busy is he? Is his project load so heavy that he cannot service your church adequately?

Once the church has selected the architect, he will collaborate with the church to develop a design that will fulfill their needs and budget constraints. Detailed construction

documents (a.k.a. CDs—blueprints and specifications), are then developed which are used in the bidding process with the invited contractors. The quality of the CDs is extremely important. Any errors or omissions in the documents may bring unforeseen change-order costs. For example, the architect may mistakenly specify grade 2 door hardware when the church specifically requested grade 1. When the error comes to light, if the church wants to stay with grade 1, who pays for the difference in cost? The contractor is beholden to the drawings, so it's either the church or the architect. More often than not the church ends up paying for such a change, which can run into unforeseen thousands of dollars.

## Construction Management

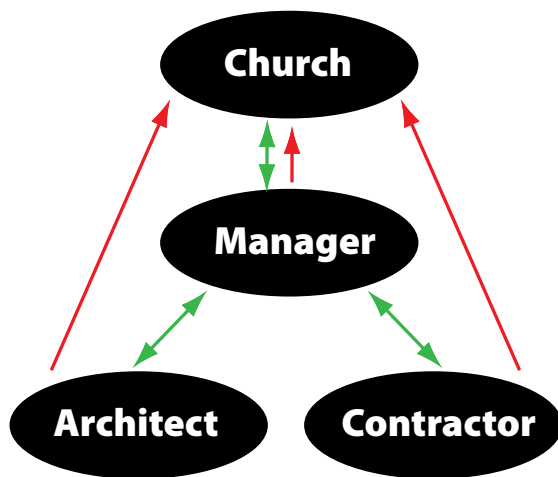
In this method the church hires a construction manager (CM) to oversee the project and coordinate the interaction between the architect and contractor. There are variations to this method. Three of the most common are CM as advisor, CM as agent, and CM at risk.

**CM as advisor:** Acts as advisor to the Owner; the architect and contractor maintain conventional roles.

**CM as agent:** Given the authority of the Owner; allows the Owner to step back from the project; assumes financial authority.

**CM at risk:** Acts as project coordinator and general contractor (GC); includes early cost commitment; CM assumes all liability as the contractor.

The diagram below illustrates the CM as advisor.



This method was devised to better deal with larger, more complex projects that the average Owner may not be able to adequately oversee. This is more appropriate for complex projects such as hospitals, schools, and large manufacturing plants.

### Strengths

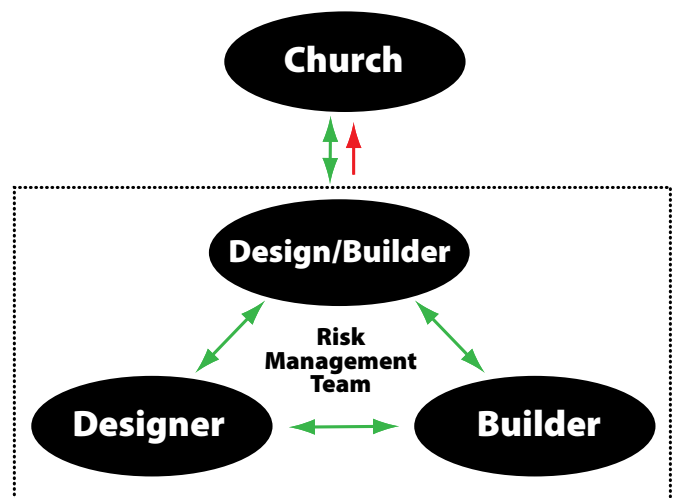
- Careful monitoring of cost and schedule
- Direct contractual relationships with church
- Potential to “fast track”
- Early cost estimating input

### Weaknesses

- Additional cost for CM
- May not provide a stipulated sum or guaranteed maximum price (GMP)
- More complex relationships
- Church may assume more financial risk
- Multiple warrantees
- Construction manager loyalty conflict
- Less direct communication between the church and the architect or contractor.

## Design-Build

Although not as common as Design-Bid-Build in recent history, the Design-Build process actually harkens back to the “Master Builder” concept used to build the pyramids and great cathedrals. In this method the Owner contracts with a single entity, the Design-Builder, who orchestrates the whole design and building process, which many times can reduce risk for the church. This is in contrast to contracting with at least two entities in Design-Bid-Build and at least three in Construction Management. The relationship between the parties is illustrated below. Probably the most attractive aspect of this method is the communication and collaboration between the contractor and architect and the minimized risk for the church.



### Strengths

- Fewer change orders
- Collaboration between architect and contractor maximizes value
- Mitigates church's financial and legal risk
- Best way to manage schedule; fewer construction delays
- Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP)

### Weaknesses

- Lack of direct communication between Owner and architect or contractor
- Potential for compromises in quality to meet budget



## Bridging

This method is a hybrid between Design-Bid-Build and Design-Build and may actually be the best of all worlds for many churches. It incorporates some of the major strengths of each of the delivery systems mentioned.

In this method the church hires an architect (local or national). The important thing is that the architect is an experienced church specialist. The architect then works with the church to develop a preliminary or schematic design in accordance with the church's budget and program requirements. The architect also can act as the church's rep during the design and construction phase. The resulting design documents are used in selecting a local Design-Builder (DB). The DB then develops the design documents into final Construction Documents and provides the church a Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP).

### Strengths

- Better chance of finding a church specialist architect
- Takes advantage of using a local contractor with his established subcontractor relationships
- Provides a single source contract and a GMP
- Incorporates strength of Design-Bid-Build and Design-Build

### Weaknesses

- Potential conflicts between church's architect and DB


It is important to keep in mind that there is no one "best" project delivery method. Some methods are more prone to problems the more complicated they are. This article has limited its focus to the process, but it is important to realize that finding the right architect, contractor, or construction manager is equally important. No process will work if you hire the wrong people. No piece of paper or process will keep a dishonest contractor honest. If you do your homework, get references and put together a good team, your likelihood of success increases. It all boils down to reputation, integrity, trust, and teamwork coupled with fervent prayer, "[letting] your requests be made known unto God." A successful building project (and there are many of them) can be a very positive chapter in the history of a local church. It is also important to realize that even with the best process and best team you must expect some problems.

A wise man once said, "There are two human endeavors that overshadow all others for their complexity, potential for hazards, problems and conflicts, and stress. One is warfare; the other is construction." In either case the battle is the Lord's!

Jack Berry has been practicing architecture for over twenty-five years and is the managing partner in Midwest Church Design, a full-service architectural firm in Perrysburg, Ohio, specializing in church architecture using a Design-Build delivery system. Jack resides in Findlay, Ohio, and is an active member of Calvary Baptist Church.

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# Biblical Principles for Building Projects

Jack Berry

*"We shape our buildings; afterwards, our buildings shape us."*  
Winston Churchill

**B**uildings have a tremendous impact on how we order our daily lives at home, work, school, or in public worship. Let's search the Scriptures to see what principles we can discover that might guide us during a building project. Throughout history churches have met in a variety of venues, including New Testament homes, catacombs and Roman basilicas, ornate cathedrals, congregational meeting houses, and modern megachurches.

It should be self-evident that the early church did not meet in the kind of buildings we have now. They would gather at the synagogue, in a house, by a river, in prison, and so on.

- "And on the sabbath we went out of the city *by a river side*, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither." Acts 16:13
- "Likewise greet the *church that is in their house*. . . ." Acts 16:5
- "The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with *the church that is in their house*." 1 Corinthians 16:19

## What Does the Bible Say?

Should a Christian look to the Bible for direction regarding church design and construction? Since the Bible itself claims to have everything that "[pertains] to life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3), we should be prompted to go there first for instruction in any endeavor. Even though one can search the Bible and discover it has no *specific* instructions on the type of facility we should design and build, we may be able to glean principles to guide our thinking. This lack of specificity contrasts with OT commands, when the Jews were to center their worship around very specific instructions associated with the temple sacrificial system. Today Christ has set us free from the law and has said that we are to worship in spirit and in truth.

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. John 4:21–23

In the church age, the physical aspects of worship are not the focus. Jesus said we are to worship in spirit and truth. The building is no longer "sacred" in the same sense as was the temple. Even though there are no specific instructions on church design for the New Testament believer, God's Word provides many principles to guide the building process.

This lack of specific Biblical instruction may, at first, seem to give much freedom in the type of structure to be designed. Some architects and builders today are employing "architectural evangelism" to attract people, designing facilities to mimic movie theaters, theme parks, or shopping malls. As we will see, our architecture should reflect the order, purity, and beauty of our God in order to honor Him. God has designated the foolishness of preaching (not the architecture) in conjunction with the drawing power of the Holy Spirit to bring precious souls to Himself.

Unfortunately, this author has seen a number of good Bible-believing churches guilty of going too far in the other direction. They err by not paying *enough* attention to the physical condition and design of church facilities that can communicate our view of God and love (or lack of love) toward people. Joe Miller of Discovering Life Ministries encourages churches to be on the lookout for "signs of death" that dishonor God and could be a "turn off" to visitors. These would include poor design and organization; facilities that are run-down or in disrepair; poor acoustics or sight lines in an auditorium; drab, poorly lit, or unsafe nurseries; crowded or dirty restroom facilities; and confusing floor plans. Church facilities should be displaying



“signs of life.” These would include well-designed and maintained facilities; well-located and secure nurseries; auditoriums that are well tuned acoustically and well lit. We would do well not only to make sure our new facilities are well designed and maintained, but also to examine our existing facilities. Have they been allowed to get run down and be in disrepair? What do we communicate about our God by our buildings?

One of the best uses of Scripture to guide church design that I have seen was used during the auditorium renovation of Calvary Baptist Church in Findlay, Ohio. Pastor Gordon Dickson developed a list of design goals that the architect used as a guideline during the design process. The plan employs Scriptural principles for the design or renovation of a facility. These goals are listed below.

Because God is the God of Truth who communicates with us through His Word, our auditorium must provide for the clear transmission of the truth. Special care must be given to making the preaching prominent, audible, and free from distractions.

Because God is the God of Peace who reconciles us to Himself, our buildings must help us to break down the barriers to the people around us.

Because God is Light, our buildings must have adequate lighting and reflect this light well. They must take advantage of natural light whenever possible.

Because God is faithful, our buildings must be built, renovated, and maintained with a careful stewardship of funds, time, and energy.

Because God is eternal, our buildings must have a timeless, stable quality. They should not be faddish or nostalgic.

Because God is holy and transcendent, our auditorium should help us lift our hearts in praise to God.

Because God is glorious, His praise must be heard from every willing voice in the auditorium.

Because God is the Judge, the auditorium must help us command respect for God.

Because God is the God who serves, our buildings must give God’s servants adequate spaces to serve Him well and without distraction.

There are many other Biblical principles one could employ in church design. Churches should try to come up with their own list. Understanding God and employing Scriptural principles help when confronting potentially divisive decisions like, “pews vs. chairs”; “dedicated sanctuary vs. multipurpose space”; “Christian iconography” (crosses, banners, etc.); “Should we or should we not have projection screens?” and so on.

## Practical Considerations

As we consider the Biblical principles mentioned above, how should we decide what type of church to build? The following are some overarching practical concepts that

need to be considered in deciding what to design and build.

***The facility should be a tool for ministry.*** A poorly designed church can be compared to a dull ax (cf. Eccles. 10:10). Good design is one of the many tools in God’s toolbox to be used in the edification of the church. We need to ask ourselves, “How can this building help us reach the lost and edify the church?” Many church mission statements contain some form of these two goals. Design decisions can be made to achieve these goals instead of for capricious or subjective reasons. This will minimize conflicts over sticky issues such as paint color, seating types, and so on.

***It must align with Biblical ministry goals.*** Because a church building is a tool for ministry, we need to know what the specific goals of our ministry are. Proverbs 22:3—“A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished”—illustrates the importance of looking ahead. Which direction do you sense God taking your ministry? How is the local economy? What is happening with the demographics of your town? All of these things require observation, analysis, and judgment and will affect your building project. James warns us against presumption. He doesn’t forbid planning, but he encourages flexibility based on God’s leading.

How has God directed you in your ministry? This may depend on the church’s location, the church’s emphasis, or even the personality and giftedness of the leadership. In order for a building to be of greatest use, we must know what our ministry goals are before we can plunge into a design. For example, a church may desire to reach inner-city youth because of its location in an area where there is a lower-income urban population. Such a church may decide to go with a multiple-purpose worship space instead of a dedicated auditorium. A multipurpose space may be more cost effective because it can be employed for “double duty” instead of a separate auditorium and gym. The church may have a vibrant basketball outreach for inner-city youth, and this type of space can be extremely valuable. Chances are such a population will have no problem if there are no pews, stained-glass windows, or padded carpet in the worship space.

Ministry goals also should dictate and drive building design. A distressed pastor that had attended an all-day workshop on ministry planning stated after the workshop, “I’m sick. We have just completed our new facility and are now in debt over \$6 million—and I think we built the wrong building.” Not many problems are as dramatic as that, but it does help to illustrate the importance of paying attention to God’s leading regarding the direction of the ministry.

***It must be a “container for the congregation.”*** Buildings contain people, and in our case churches contain redeemed people along with those who we hope are to become redeemed.

“Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both

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### 2009 Meetings

#### October 19–20, 2009

##### Central Regional Fellowship (North)

Community Bible Church  
401 East Park Avenue  
Norfolk, NE 68701  
402.371.5000

#### October 22–23, 2009

##### Central Regional Fellowship (South)

Westside Baptist Church of Houston  
3883 Lakes of Bridgewater Drive  
Katy, TX 77449  
281.492.3448 • 832.573.7843

#### October 26–27, 2009

##### New Mexico Regional Fellowship

Scripture Baptist Church  
4440 Elks Drive, Las Cruces, NM 88007  
575.642.3607

#### October 26–30, 2009

##### Caribbean Regional Fellowship

Calvary Baptist Tabernacle  
PO Box 3390  
Carolina, PR 00984  
787.750.2227

#### November 9–10, 2009

##### Southern California Regional Fellowship

Camp Ironwood  
Newberry Springs, CA 92365  
760.272.1350  
smithafb@ccis.com

#### November 12–13, 2009

##### Northern California Regional Fellowship

Cornerstone Baptist Church  
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523  
925.825.4787

### 2010 Meetings

#### February 16–18, 2010

Winter Board Focus Meeting  
Embassy Suites—Atlanta Airport  
404.767.1988 (FBFI Group Rate)

#### February 18–27, 2010

##### Pastors' Israel Study Tour

Dr. Craig Hartman  
Dr. John Vaughn

#### April 2010

##### South Regional Fellowship

Due to the close scheduling of other nearby conferences, the South Regional Fellowship has been postponed pending discussion of a recurring annual date that is open for more participants.

#### April 19–20, 2010

##### Three Rivers Regional Fellowship

Faith Baptist Church  
809 Greenbag Road  
Morgantown, WV 26508  
304.292.9872

#### June 15–17, 2010

##### 90th Annual Fellowship

Tri-City Baptist Church  
6953 W 92nd Lane  
Westminster, CO 80021  
303.424.2287

#### July 26–28, 2010

##### Alaska Regional Fellowship

Immanuel Baptist Church  
855 South Trunk Road  
Palmer, AK 99645  
907.746.0402  
<http://home.earthlink.net/~akbeb/akfbf.html>  
akfbf@earthlink.net

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# SOUND WORDS

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

## First Partaker

### On a Believer's "Frames"

In May of 2000, while leading a tour of church history sites in England and Scotland, I made arrangements for our group to visit London's National Maritime Museum. Late that afternoon one of our tour members found me musing over a naval gunboat or some such thing and excitedly tugged my sleeve to accompany him to another gallery to see an exhibit he'd discovered which had to do with Britain's infamous eighteenth-century slave trade. There behind the glass of a conspicuous wall cabinet lay the open sea journal of the captain of a slave ship. To my great surprise and delight, the journal turned out to be that of John Newton, the notorious profligate and subsequent trophy to God's amazing grace. There it was for tens of thousands of tourists a year to see, a startling witness to the life this man had lived before Christ rescued him from sin and shame.

That very morning, back across the Thames in the older part of London, we'd been visiting the parish church of St. Mary Woolnoth, where Newton had pastored for the last twenty-eight years of his life. A few days later, west of Cambridge, we'd be visiting the country town of Olney, where the first sixteen years of his pastoral labors were spent. It was truly a remarkable week to sample John Newton's slaver's journal and also to visit the two churches in which he so faithfully preached the gospel that had miraculously transformed his own life.

*If ever I reach heaven I expect to find three wonders there, Newton once wrote. First, to meet some I had not thought to see there; second, to miss some I had expected to see there; and third—the greatest wonder of all—to find myself there.*

### Newton the Letter Writer

During his first year at Olney (1764), John Newton published an account of his dramatic early life, miraculous conversion, and improbable call to the ministry under the title *An Authentic Narrative*. Combined with his enormous capacity for friendships, this account so widely popularized him that it generated what eventually grew to be a considerable correspondence. Much of it solicited his spiritual counsel. The former slave dealer's replies became treasured for their unusual sympathy and sound spiritual advice.

Newton soon became aware that his ability to minister through correspondence was an unusual stewardship from God. He conscientiously persisted in it throughout his ministry and issued several volumes of his letters under various quaint titles. The most widely read of these is *Cardophonia*, or "utterances of the heart." *Heart-anatomy is my favorite science*, he wrote. *I mean, the study of the human heart, with its workings and counter-workings, as it is differently affected in the different seasons of prosperity, adversity, conviction, temptation, sickness, and the approach of death. I aim to speak plain truths to plain people!*

Remarkably, Newton came to feel that letter writing was actually the most useful part of his work. *It is the Lord's will*, he remarked on one occasion, *that I should do most by my letters*. Others agreed. Richard Cecil, his close ministerial friend and earliest biographer, predicted, *His letters will be read while real religion exists*. A generation after Newton's death, C. H. Spurgeon observed, *In few writers are Christian doctrine, experience and practice more happily balanced than in the author of these letters, and few write with more simplicity, piety and force.*

Many of Newton's letters were counsel to fellow ministers. *Cardophonia* alone contains over sixty of these. Another volume, *Forty-One Letters on Religious Subjects*, by Omicron and Vigil, includes others, such as "To a Student of Divinity" and "On the Snares and

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

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Windows—Themed sermon illustrations . . . . .	7

Difficulties attending the Ministry of the Gospel.”

One that has ministered to my heart on several occasions was written to a pastor who was struggling with the common malady of not always *feeling* fervent, devout, or even spiritual, especially when he was out of the pulpit. While preaching he felt spiritually alive, but rarely experienced this “frame” when he was not.

Eighteenth-century Christians spoke of their feelings and dispositions as “frames.” This particular letter, “On a Believer’s Frames,” contains insight about this phenomenon which I’ve not found elsewhere. Some of it is exceptionally thought-provoking. For instance, I confess that I’ve had to meditate long on his suggestion that it actually may be self-righteousness that fuels many of our most fervent desires for an increase in a comfortable and warm spiritual frame. But I’ve come to believe that Newton has a point.

I trust that this excerpt, edited ever so lightly, will provide some answers for men who are unduly distressed over this struggle to *feel* spiritually fervent at all times. Perhaps it will also provide all of us with some counseling content for others.

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***Remarkably, Newton came to feel that letter writing was actually the most useful part of his work. It is the Lord’s will, he remarked on one occasion, that I should do most by my letters. Others agreed. Richard Cecil, his close ministerial friend and earliest biographer, predicted, His letters will be read while real religion exists.***

*Forty-One Letters on Religious Subjects, “Letter XVII”*

You describe a case which my own experience has made very familiar to me. I shall take the occasion to offer you a few miscellaneous thoughts upon the subject of a believer’s frames . . . because I apprehend the exercise you speak of is not peculiar to you or to me, but is in a greater or less degree the burden of all who are spiritually minded and duly attentive to what passes in their own hearts, whether they are in the ministry or not.

As you intimate that you are in the main favored with liberty and usefulness in the pulpit, give me leave to ask you, “What you would do if you did not find yourself occasionally poor, insufficient, and, as you express it, stupid, at other times?”

Are you aware of what might be the possible, the probable, the almost certain conse-

quences if you always found your spirit enlarged, and your frames lively and comfortable? Would you not be in great danger of being puffed up with spiritual pride? Would you not be less sensible of your absolute dependence upon the power of Christ, and of your continual need of his blood, pardon, and intercession? Would you not be quite at a loss to speak suitably and feelingly to the case of many gracious souls who are groaning under those effects of a depraved nature, from which, upon that supposition, you would be exempted? How could you speak properly upon the deceitfulness of the heart, if you did not feel the deceitfulness of your own; or adapt yourself to the changing experiences through which your hearers pass, if you yourself were always alike, or nearly so? Or how could you speak pertinently of the inward warfare, the contrary principles of the flesh and spirit fighting one against another, if your own spiritual desires were always vigorous and successful, and met with little opposition?

The Apostle Paul, though favored with a singular eminency in grace, felt at times that he had no sufficiency in himself so much as to think a good thought. He saw there was a danger of his being exalted above measure if the Lord had not wisely and graciously tempered his dispensations to prevent it. By “being exalted above measure,” perhaps there may be a reference not only to his spirit, lest he should think more highly of himself than he ought, but likewise to his preaching, lest, not having the same cause of complaint and humiliation in common with others, he should shoot over the heads of his hearers, confine himself chiefly to speak of such comforts and privileges as he himself enjoyed, and have little to say for the refreshment of those who were discouraged and cast down by a continual conflict with indwelling sin.

The angel who appeared to Cornelius did not preach the Gospel to him, but directed him to send for Peter. Though the glory and grace of the Savior seems a fitter subject for an angel’s powers than for the poor stammering tongues of sinful men, yet an angel could not preach experientially, nor describe the warfare between grace and sin from his own feelings. And if we could suppose a minister as full of comforts and free from failings as an angel, though he would be a good and happy man, I cannot conceive that he would be a good or useful preacher. He would not know how to sympathize with the weak and afflicted of the flock, or to comfort them under their difficulties with the consolations wherewith he himself, in similar circumstances, had been comforted of God. It belongs to your calling of God as a min-



ister, that you should have a taste of the various spiritual trials which are incident to the Lord's people, that thereby you may possess the tongue of the learned, and know how to speak a word in season to them that are weary. It is likewise needful to keep you perpetually attentive to that important admonition, *Without me ye can do nothing*.

Thus much considering you as a minister. But we may extend the subject so as to make it applicable to believers in general. I would observe, therefore, that it is a sign of a sad declension, if one, who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, should be capable of being fully satisfied with anything short of the light of his countenance, which is better than life. A resting in notions of Gospel truth, or in the recollection of past comforts, without a continual thirst for fresh communications from the Fountain of life, is, I am afraid, the canker which eats away the beauty and fruitfulness of many professors in the present day. If it does not prove them to be absolutely dead, it is at least a sufficient evidence that they are lamentably sick.

But if we are conscious of the desire, if we seek it carefully in the use of all appointed means, if we willingly allow ourselves in nothing which has a known tendency to grieve the Spirit of God, and to damp our sense of divine things, then, if the Lord is pleased to keep us short of those comforts which he has taught us to prize, and, instead of lively sensations of joy and praise, we feel a languor and deadness of spirit, provided we do indeed feel it and are humbled for it, we have no need to give way to despondency or excessive sorrow.

Still, the foundation of our hope and the ground of our abiding joys is the same. The heart may be as really alive to God, and grace as truly in exercise, when we walk in comparative darkness and see little light, as when the frame of our spirits is more comfortable. Neither the reality nor the measure of grace can be properly estimated by the degree of our sensible comforts. The great question is, "Are we practically influenced by the word of God, as the ground of our hope, and as the governing rule of our tempers and conversation?" The Apostle exhorts believers to rejoice in the Lord always. He well knew that they were exposed to trials and temptations, and to much trouble from an evil heart of unbelief; and he prevents the objections we might be ready to make, by adding, "And again I say, Rejoice:"—as if he had said, I speak upon mature consideration; I call upon you to rejoice, not at some times only, but at all times; not only when upon the mount, but when in the valley; not only when you conquer, but while you are fighting; not only when

the Lord shines upon you, but when he seems to hide his face.

When he enables you to do all things, you are no better in yourselves than you were before; and when you feel you can do nothing, you are no worse. Your experiences will vary, but his love and promises are always unchangeable. Though our desires for comfort, and for what we call lively frames, cannot be too importunate while they are regulated by a due submission to his will, yet they may be inordinate for want of such submission. Sinful principles may, and too often do, mix with and defile our best desires.

I have often detected the two vile abominations Self-will and Self-righteousness insinuating themselves into this concern. Like Satan, who works by them, they can occasionally assume the appearance of an angel of light. I have felt impatience in my spirit, utterly unsuitable to my state as a sinner and a beggar, and to my profession of yielding myself and all my concerns to the Lord's disposal. He has mercifully convinced me that I labor under a complication of disorders, summed up in the word sin. He has graciously revealed himself to me as the infallible physician and has enabled me, as such, to commit myself to him, and to expect my cure from his hand alone.

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*Still, the foundation of our hope and the ground of our abiding joys is the same. The heart may be as really alive to God, and grace as truly in exercise, when we walk in comparative darkness and see little light, as when the frame of our spirits is more comfortable.*

Yet how often, instead of thankfully accepting his prescriptions, I have foolishly and presumptuously ventured to prescribe to him and to point out how I would have him deal with me! How often have I thought something was necessary which he saw best to deny, and that I could have done better without those dispensations which his wisdom appointed to work for my good! He is God, and not man, or else he would have been weary of me and left me to my own management long ago.

How inconsistent! To acknowledge that I am blind, to entreat him to lead me, and yet to want to choose my own way, in the same breath! I have limited the Holy One of Israel, and not considered that he magnifies his wis-

dom and grace in working by contraries, and bringing good out of seeming evil. It has cost me something to bring me to confess that he is wiser than I. But I trust, through his blessing, that I have not suffered wholly in vain. My sensible comforts have not been great. But the proofs I have had of the evils of my sinful nature, my incapacity and aversion to good, have neither been few nor small. But by these unpromising means I hope he has made his grace and salvation precious to my soul, and in some measure weaned me from leaning to my own understanding.

Again: self-righteousness has had a considerable hand in dictating many of my desires for an increase of comfort and spiritual strength. I have wanted some stock of my own. I have been wearied of being so perpetually beholden to him, necessitated to come to him always in the same strain as a poor miserable sinner. I would have liked to have done something for myself most of the time, and to have depended upon him chiefly upon extraordinary occasions. I have found indeed, that I could do nothing without his assistance, nor anything even with it, but what I have reason to be ashamed of. If this had only humbled me, and led me to rejoice in his all-sufficiency, it would have been well. But it has often had a different effect. It has made me sullen, angry, and discontented, as if it was not best and most desirable that he should have all the glory of his own work, and I should have nothing to boast of, except that in the Lord I have righteousness and strength.

I am now learning to glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me; to be content to be nothing, that he may be All in All. But I find this a hard lesson. And when I seem to have made some proficiency, a slight turn in my spirit throws me back, and I have to begin all again.

There is an inseparable connection between causes and effects. There can be no effect without a cause, no active cause without a proportionate effect. Now indwelling sin is an active cause. Therefore, while it remains in our nature, it will produce effects according to its strength. Why then should I be surprised, that if the Lord suspends his influence for a moment, in that moment sin will discover itself? Why should I wonder that I can feel no lively exercise of grace, no power to raise my heart to God, any farther than he is pleased to work in me mightily; any more than wonder that I do not find fire in the bottom of a well, or that it should not be day when the sun is withdrawn from the earth? Humbled I ought to be, to find I am so totally

depraved. But I ought not be discouraged, since Jesus is appointed to me of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, and since I find that in the midst of all this darkness and deadness, he keeps alive the principle of grace which he has implanted in my heart.

As to Mr. Rutherford's expression which you mention, that "there is no temptation like being without temptation," I allow it in a qualified sense. That is, it is better to suffer from Satan's fiery darts, than to be lulled asleep and drawn into a careless security by his more subtle, though less perceptible devices. Thus one grows indifferent to the means of grace and sinks into a worldly spirit, or, like the church of Laodicea, imagines himself rich, and increased in goods, and in need of nothing.

But I advise you to be cautious how you indulge a desire to be exercised with Satan's temptations, as supposing they would be conducive to make you more spiritual, or would of course open up to you a way to greater consolations. If you have such a desire, I may say to you, in our Lord's words, "You know not what you ask."

He who knows our weakness, and the power of the adversary, has graciously directed us to pray that we enter not into temptation. Have you considered what the enemy can do if he is permitted to come in like a flood? In one hour he could raise such a storm as would put you to your wit's end. He could bring such a dark cloud over your mind as would blot out all remembrance of your past comforts, or at least prevent you from deriving the least support from them. He could not only fight against your peace, but shake the very foundations of your hope, and bring you to question, not only your interest in the promises, but even to doubt of the most important and fundamental truths upon which your hopes have been built. Be thankful, therefore, if the Lord restrains his malice.

A young sailor is often impatient of a short calm; but the experienced mariner, who has been often tossed with tempests, and upon the point of perishing, will seldom wish for a storm. In a word, let us patiently wait upon the Lord, and be content to follow as he leads, and he will surely do us good.

If you'd like to receive more of Newton's sage counsel to ministers and other Christians, his collected letters can be read in the six-volume *The Works of John Newton* (Banner of Truth) and are also downloadable on numerous websites. Just type "John Newton's letters" into Google to find them. An inspirational and informative introduction to Newton's personal daily, weekly, and monthly devotional exercises, as well as to his letter writing, is in D. Bruce Hindmarsh's *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition*, "The Spiritual Life." ☞



# Bring . . . the Books

*Heroes* by Iain H. Murray

I recently spent an afternoon with a close pastor friend, and one of the topics of conversation was the ministry and writing of Iain Murray. Murray ministered alongside D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones at Westminster Chapel from 1956 to 1959. He later helped found the Banner of Truth Trust and has had an extensive writing ministry. After lunch my friend took me to the bookstore in his church, where I found a copy of Murray's newest book, *Heroes*, published just this year. It is one of his finest works! I devoured its pages in a single afternoon and marked my copy with many potential illustrations drawn from the lives of the seven Christian heroes of yesteryear that Murray includes in his book.

After making a passionate case for the spiritual benefit of reading the history of great Christian men and women who went before us, Murray introduces the reader first to Jonathan Edwards. Despite several full biographies on Edwards (including one by Murray), this vignette condenses Edwards's life into the span of forty-five pages. The highlights of Edwards's ministry are followed by several important life lessons (a feature included for each biography and worth the price of the book). Edwards's legacy "was to teach the church again what a great thing conversion is; it is a real turning from sin to God, it is an end of the reigning power of sin, it is the recovery of the image of God in men. True grace reaches to the very bottom of the heart."


Murray follows Edwards with a sketch of George Whitefield, focusing particularly on Whitefield's concern and contribution to Christian unity in the church of his day. Murray is careful to distance Whitefield's call for unity from the ecumenism prevalent in our day.

Another sketch surveys the life of Thomas Charles of Wales, which, during Charles's early years of ministry (ca. 1780), was a spiritual wasteland. It was as though the revival that swept southern and western Wales had stopped short of the northern provinces. When Charles moved to northern Wales and began looking for a pastorate, he received invitations to come to preach. On at least three occasions after two or three sermons he was told not to come back. The final time was brutal: "They insisted on my preaching no more in their church; for they added, 'You have cursed us enough already.'" He eventually found a ministry in Bala, and God used all of the difficult preparation to bear rich fruit for the rest of his life. His effective ministry was partly due to four important qualities: benevolence, genuine spirituality, affable approachability, and humility.

One of the most fascinating sketches is the life and ministry of Charles Jones, a plantation owner in Georgia before the time of the War between the States. Jones, a devout Christian scholar with a powerful ministry as a pastor and educator in both Northern and Southern

churches, is best known for his ministry and care toward the slaves who worked on the Southern plantations, including his own. "It was probably without precedent for a plantation owner to become a missionary to slaves," Murray writes. "Nor was any other Presbyterian minister in the South employed in such work." Murray recounts the arguments of outstanding conservative theologians to defend or rebut the practice of slavery. Jones came down on the side of the slave owners, but he certainly did not advocate the cruelty commonly associated with the institution. Jones simply argued that since the New Testament writers do not forbid the owning of slaves, neither would he. Moreover, the New Testament writers gave ample instruction on how God expected Christian masters to act toward their servants. Jones owned slaves, but he treated them as part of his own family. He evangelized them, catechized their children, built meeting houses, preached for them, and in every regard attempted to shepherd them as brothers and sisters whom God had placed under his care. Murray includes several poignant illustrations of the love and care that Charles and his wife, Mary, showed to their servants. Additionally, Jones began to rally support for the evangelization and spiritual development of slaves. Murray includes a citation from his last public address to the Augusta Assembly in 1861.

They share our physical nature, and are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; they share our intellectual and spiritual nature; each body of them covers an immortal soul God our Father loves, for whom Christ our Saviour died, and unto whom everlasting happiness or misery shall be meted in the final day. They are not cattle upon a thousand hills, to be taken, worn out and destroyed in our use; but they are men, created in the image of God. Shall we reach the Bread of Life over their heads to far-distant nations, and leave them to die eternal deaths before our eyes?

Tozer once said, "Next to the Holy Scriptures, the greatest aid to the life of faith may be Christian biographies." Murray has done us great service in bringing before us the lives and lessons of these worthy heroes of the Christian faith. They stir us to do something worthy with our lives. 

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

Dr. Sam Horn is vice president of Ministerial Training at Northland International University in Dunbar, Wisconsin, where he and his wife, Beth, have served since 1996. He also serves as senior pastor of Brookside Baptist Church in Brookfield.

# Straight Cuts

## Second Corinthians 5:10: Good or Bad?

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10).*

Consider the following scenario: You are a relatively new believer and excited about the Bible. Future things interest you, and it's not long before you start hearing about the Rapture, the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Tribulation Period, the Second Coming, and the Millennium.

The Rapture and the Judgment Seat of Christ really interest you because they focus particularly on believers. You know that 2 Corinthians 5:10 is a key verse about the Judgment Seat of Christ, but something worries you. It's the phrase "whether it be good or bad." You think, "I'm saved now. Doesn't that mean I'll never face my sins again?" But the word *bad* gives a different impression, one intensified by several other words in the immediately surrounding verses.

In verse 9 Paul says, "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." You wonder, "Am I not saved by grace as opposed to works, and once saved, am I not fully accepted?" In verse 11 Paul continues: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." More uneasiness: terror is what you felt when you were under conviction before you were saved. Having accepted Christ, you thought you were relieved of that forever.

It sounds as though you've got some real questions for your pastor. As a pastor, let me share how I'd respond.

First, I'd want to use this as an occasion to remind my inquirer about a very important principle of Bible interpretation. Scripture never contradicts itself, so if I've arrived at a conclusion about the meaning of a verse that is at variance with other clear passages, my conclusion is wrong. In the case at hand, any number of verses could be used to establish the fact that believers are forever delivered from the condemnation of sin. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1; see also John 5:24). Additionally, there is Paul's treatment of the Judgment Seat of Christ in 1 Corinthians 3:12–15. Even of the believer who loses rewards, he clearly says, "but he himself shall be saved."


Next, I'd enjoy explaining what the several words in question mean. First let's consider the word rendered "bad." In English the word "bad" has various senses. In Greek there are several words for "bad" that distin-

guish these senses. First, there is *paneros*, whose particular niche is to describe active, malicious evil. So, for instance, it is especially appropriate in referring to Satan as "the evil one" or "the wicked one" (cf. John 17:15; Eph. 6:16).

Next there is *kakos*. Its distinctive is to refer to something that is inherently evil. Then there is *phaulos*, and it designates something that is bad in the sense of worthless. (Think of our expression, "gone bad," often used of spoiled food.) In our text, it's this third word that's used. A work may be tainted and thus not deserving of reward. There is no thought of facing judgment in the penal sense over bad things. As Philip E. Hughes says, "The judgment pronounced is not a declaration of doom, but an assessment of worth, with the assignment of rewards to those who . . . deserve them, and the loss or withholding of rewards in the case of those who do not" (*The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 182).

The two words from verse 9 are "labour" and "accepted." There is no implication whatever of working to be saved in the word "labour." It's simply the Greek verb *philotimeomai*. It occurs additionally in the NT at Romans 15:20 and 1 Thessalonians 4:11. It simply means "to be ambitious" (in a good sense) or "to make it one's aim." The latter is the marginal reading often provided and serves well in any of the three verses where the word is used. Similarly, "accepted" carries no connotation of the possibility of rejection. It is the Greek *euairetos*, which simply means "well pleasing." Many newer versions relieve the possibility of misunderstanding by rendering this as "please" or "well pleasing." Further, Ephesians 1:6 leaves no doubt about the believer's full acceptance by God in Christ. Put all this together and we readily see that Paul is just saying that in view of the Judgment Seat of Christ his goal in life is to please Christ.

Finally, there is "terror" in verse 11. Here is the Greek *phobos* (English "phobia"). A little study here confirms that this is a broad term for fear with meanings ranging all the way from dread and terror (Rom. 13:3) to reverence (Eph. 5:33, verb form). Context and the teaching of Scripture as a whole must govern the meaning. In 2 Corinthians 5:11 "fear" is probably the best translation. Among other motivators, the Judgment Seat of Christ promotes a wholesome fear of God, but Romans 8:15 and 1 John 4:18 assure the believer that there is no longer a reason to dread God.

The purpose of the coming Judgment Seat of Christ is not to make believers fear for their salvation but rather to motivate them to live in the light of it. 

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

Dr. Tom Coleman is the senior pastor of Calvary Independent Baptist Church of Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, where he has now completed twenty years of ministry. He and his wife, Rebecca, have three children.

# Windows

## A Lover of Books (Part Three): More Suggestions for Reading

This column is part three of a three-part series on reading. The first dealt with the importance and benefits of reading. The second and this third article offer suggestions as we read.

### Treasure Quality Books

Adler tells of the test of a generation ago: “Suppose . . . that you know in advance that you will be marooned on a desert island for the rest of your life, or at least for a long period. Suppose, too, that you have time to prepare for the experience. There are certain practical and useful articles that you would be sure to take with you. You will also be allowed ten books. Which ones would you select?”<sup>1</sup>

“An earnest scholar will sacrifice much that is useful in inferior literature, if his knowledge of it be purchased at the cost of acquaintance with names which must outlive it a hundred years. . . . Once more: not merely worthless literature should be sacrificed, but for the sake of the best, we must sacrifice much which would be very valuable to us if we had not the best. . . . Otherwise we shall be very large readers of comparatively small thought.”<sup>2</sup>

“If a man can purchase but very few books, my first advice to him would be, *let him purchase the very best*. If he cannot spend much, let him spend well.”<sup>3</sup>

Oswald Chamber’s “love for books came in part from sitting at the feet of the Scottish preacher Alexander Whyte, who taught a series of classes that Oswald attended as a young man. Many times, Oswald saw Whyte hold up a battered old book, telling the students, ‘Sell your beds and buy it.’ Afterwards, Oswald never went anywhere without a book. Once, while traveling, he wrote his sister . . . saying, ‘My box has at last arrived. My books! I cannot tell you what they mean to me—silent, wealthy, loyal lovers. To look at them, to handle them, and to re-read them! I do thank God for my books with every fiber of my being. Why, I could have almost cried for excess joy when I got hold of them again. I see them all just at my elbow now. . . . I wish you could see how they look at me, a quiet, calm look of certain acquaintance.’”<sup>4</sup>

“The old books remain while everything else passes away. The chances and changes of this mortal life do not touch them. The fields in which we picked flowers and played cricket when we were boys are covered with dreary streets. The houses in which we lived have been pulled down. . . . The churches in which we worshipped have been enlarged or rebuilt. The preachers to whom we listened are dead. . . . We ourselves are conscious, as the years drift by, that our strength is not what it was; that there is less elasticity in our step; that we are more easily tired; that our sight is at times a little dim and our hearing a little dull. But we open our books, and the vanished years return.”<sup>5</sup>

### Reread Quality Books

“There is a wonderful charm in reading a book every line of which is familiar to you. It is like talking over school days and college days with an old friend. You have heard him tell every one of his tales a dozen times; you know as soon as he begins a story how it will end; you anticipate his look when he comes to his comic passages, and the tone in which he will tell them, and the precise point at which he will explode in irrepressible laughter; but the old stories from the old friend have a greater charm than the fresh wit of a stranger.”<sup>6</sup>

Sir William Robertson Nicoll believed that great books must be reread for their many advantages. He states, “The first advantage of rereading is that it gives one the true possession of a book. Most memories are exceedingly treacherous. Even when the memory is strong in certain directions, it is apt to be weak in others.”<sup>7</sup>

“Master those books you have. Read them thoroughly. Bathe in them until they saturate you. Read and reread them, masticate and digest them. Let them go into your very self. Peruse a good book several times and make notes and analyses of it. A student will find that his mental constitution is more affected by one book thoroughly mastered than by twenty books he has merely skimmed. Little learning and much pride comes by hasty reading. Some men are disabled from thinking by their putting meditation away for the sake of reading. In reading let your motto be ‘much, not many.’”<sup>8</sup>

### Read Consistently

“There is hardly any man of business who could not find time for at least ten pages a day in some solid book of history, science, art or religion; and so read as to master it. Let him actually do this, and at the end of the year what has he accomplished? He has made himself the master of thirty-six hundred and fifty pages. Continuing to do this a few years, he has not only acquired a habit of method and of economy of time which is invaluable, but has qualified himself to stand alongside with intelligent men. He is prepared to make an honorable and useful mark in the world.”<sup>9</sup>

### Take Notes

“When you buy a book, you establish a property right in it, just as you do in clothes or furniture when you buy and pay for them. But the act of purchase is actually only the prelude to possession in the case of a book. Full ownership of a book only comes when you have made it a part of yourself, and the best way to make

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

*Charles Spurgeon*



yourself a part of it—which comes to the same thing—is by writing in it. Why is marking a book indispensable to reading it? First, it keeps you awake—not merely conscious, but wide awake. Second, reading, if it is active, is thinking, and thinking tends to express itself in words, spoken or written. The person who says he knows what he thinks but cannot express it usually does not know what he thinks. Third, writing your reactions down helps you to remember the thoughts of the author.”<sup>10</sup>

“If the books which you read are your own, mark with a pen or pencil the most considerable things in them which you desire to remember. Thus you may read that book the second time over with half the trouble, by your eye running over the paragraphs which your pencil has noted. It is but a very weak objection against this practice to say, ‘I shall spoil my book;’ for I persuade myself that you did not buy it as a bookseller, to sell it again for gain, but as a scholar to improve your mind by it; and if the mind be improved, your advantage is abundant, though your book yields less money to your executors.”<sup>11</sup>

## Index Your Books as You Read<sup>12</sup>

“One of the most important decisions which a minister must make is how he is going to keep the material which he thinks is worth preserving, that he may easily draw upon these resources, all that he had read and annotated. It is only a few rare people who can remember everything they have read.”<sup>13</sup>

Alexander Whyte believed, “Always read with your pencil in your hand.” Whyte shares his method and passion for indexing in a letter sent to his nephew who was beginning his studies in ministry: “I send for your acceptance today an Interleaved Study Bible. I have used such a Bible ever since I was at your stage of study, and the use it has been to me is past all telling. For more than forty years, I think I can say, never a week, scarcely a day, has passed, that I have not entered some note or notes into my Bible: and, then, I never preach or speak in any way that I do not consult my Interleaved Bible. I never read a book without taking notes for preservation one way or other. And I never come in my reading of anything that sheds light on any passage of Scripture that I do not set the reference down in my Bible over against the passage it illustrates. And, as time has gone on, my Bible has become filled with illustrative and suggestive material of my own collecting.”<sup>14</sup>

“Mr. Evans . . . a lover of books . . . seized and devoured with avidity every interesting volume that fell in his way. He never resorted to reading, however, as a mere pastime. He sought for mental and spiritual treasures to enrich his sermons. For this he beat the fields and dug the wells of knowledge. Everything was made subservient to his holy calling. Everything was pressed into preparations for the pulpit. His authors were selected with prudent discrimination, and perused with earnest attention, indicating an intense desire to be

thoroughly furnished for his work. He studied what he read. . . . There is one volume which he referred more frequently than to all the rest, the book of books divine. He was emphatically ‘a man mighty in the Scriptures.’ From the word of God he derived the principal matter of preaching.”<sup>15</sup>

“In preparing, two or three years ago, a series of lectures on the Atonement, I was able to save myself a large amount of labor by using notes of this kind which I had written sixteen or seventeen years before. If as you read you discuss in your notes the author’s arguments and criticize his theories, you will obtain at the time a more complete mastery of his position, and your notes will be more useful to you afterwards.”<sup>16</sup>

Spurgeon encouraged men who did not have many books to borrow books from their friends; but he added this advice: “I specially advise you, in order to borrow again, to return whatsoever is lent, promptly, and in good condition . . . for I have personal acquaintance with several young men who have borrowed books and never returned them.”<sup>17</sup> ☞

<sup>1</sup> Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, *How to Read a Book* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 344.

<sup>2</sup> Austin Phelps, quoted in Wilbur Smith, *Profitable Bible Study* (Boston: W.A. Wilde Company, 1939), 204–5.

<sup>3</sup> Helmut Thielecke, *Encounter with Spurgeon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 196.

<sup>4</sup> David McCasland, *Oswald Chambers: Abandoned to God* (Oswald Chambers Publications, 1993), 156–57, 108–9.

<sup>5</sup> R.W. Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1890), 105.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>7</sup> W. Robertson Nicoll, *A Bookman’s Letters* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1913), 229.

<sup>8</sup> Thielicke, 197.

<sup>9</sup> H. M. Grout in Elon Foster, *6000 Classic Sermon Illustrations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 657.

<sup>10</sup> Adler and Van Doren, 49.

<sup>11</sup> Watts, in Elon Foster, *6000 Classic Sermon Illustrations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 656–57.

<sup>12</sup> I suggest pursuing the books listed in these footnotes. See also Mark Minnick’s *First Partakers* column “Big Farms . . . Well-Stocked Barns” in *FrontLine*, March–April 1997.

<sup>13</sup> Wilbur M. Smith, *The Minister in His Study* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), 82.

<sup>14</sup> G. F. Barbour, *The Life of Alexander Whyte* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925), 289–90.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Cross, *Sermons and Memoirs of Christmas Evans* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1986), 288.

<sup>16</sup> Dale, 73.

<sup>17</sup> Thielicke, 197.

# AN ARMY FOR THE LORD

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are preserved" (Matt. 9:17). This verse states that we should judge righteous judgment. The container should be appropriate to what is going inside. Not only should church buildings reflect the nature of God, but they must address the needs of the people occupying them. What are the demographics of the congregation? What kinds of functions will they be performing? What is their tolerance for discomfort or expectations of comfort? How many people will it be expected to contain? What are the adjacency issues?

There are many questions that need to be addressed thoroughly before one line is to be drawn. This requires a "programming process." Architect Gary Larson describes programming as,

The first steps in the architectural process are information gathering and needs assessment. Early on, the church knows much more about the history, vision, site, budget, needs, and organization of the project than the architect. The church must find an organized way to communicate this information to the architect, or crucial data can be lost in translation.

In describing the importance of programming he says,

In short, there are two types of information needed: quantitative and qualitative. By quantitative we mean the hard data about who you are, what you do, how you do it, with whom and in what kind of spaces. This information is crucial to the needs assessment process. Without it, an aesthetically pleasing facility may be produced that does not meet the practical needs of its occupants. There are many beautiful buildings in the world that just don't work.

Programming is affected by the demographics and quantity of the congregation. What is the makeup of your assembly and the people you are trying to reach? Are they mostly white collar or blue collar? Is the congregation young, old, or mixed? Is the area urban or agrarian? What is the climate? Should you have a "campus" concept, or does the weather mandate that all the buildings be connected? Make sure that as you develop the facility, balance is built into every phase.

***It must be a witness to the community.*** The church structure communicates something to the community.

"Ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8). This verse is both a fact and a command to obey. We are witnesses by our very existence. Are we a faithful or an unfaithful witness? Be intentional and purposeful about what you desire to communicate.

The word "witness" was used many times in the OT to describe something that testified of something else. In Genesis 31 the term refers to a heap of stones that testify of an agreement between Laban and Jacob. In Exodus 22 it describes a torn carcass that testifies that the borrowed

animal was torn by beasts and not eaten by the borrower. In the same way the church building project should be a witness to the community of the church's view of God.

The design and appearance of a church building communicate in much the same way as words, clothing, gestures, and music. A famous eighteenth-century writer and philosopher even described architecture as "frozen music." We want church facilities to communicate very clearly. Ephesians 3:21 says, "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." What does the building, the "clothing of the ministry" communicate about our glorious Lord?

A church is also a witness by how it chooses to conduct itself during the building process. God is bringing a mission field to the church's doorstep. Building projects can produce an unparalleled level of stress and strain. This can be a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate honesty, integrity, patience, perseverance, and God's grace and love while operating under these pressures.

A church in the United States is just as much of a mission outpost as is one in Africa or South America. Just as the buildings used for overseas missions will take on the flavor of the culture, so must our homeland ministries. This helps the church decide on the level of quality for the facility.

## **BUILDING PROJECTS ... CAN BE A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE HONESTY, INTEGRITY, PATIENCE, PERSEVERANCE, AND GOD'S GRACE.**

Obviously, budget plays an important role in that decision, but there are at least four other factors that impact how we look at quality as well.

- Do a survey of recently constructed homes and commercial buildings in the area. This will provide clues as to what the expectations may be of the public at large.
- Determine expectations and then exceed them. This is because over time expectations rise (especially in our American culture) and the quality of existing materials goes down (due to wear and tear).
- Pay attention to preschool and nursery space. This tends to be the area of highest expectations and lowest tolerance for problems. Young families seem to be the most reachable because of the changes they are going through in life.
- Look at the building as a guest might see it for the first time.

Several books could be written on this subject. Hopefully some of the thoughts above will be helpful in navigating through what could be either a hazardous venture or a very rewarding chapter in the history of a local church. May the Lord grant wisdom and grace to all who seek to undertake a building project for His glory!



# Consider the Following

**Jack Berry**

Here is a list of things to consider in a church building program. For further amplification of these and other issues, contact the author, Jack Berry, at 567.208.9330 or via e-mail at [jvberryjr@gmail.com](mailto:jvberryjr@gmail.com).

## **Address church health issues.**

- Spiritual health
- Financial health
- Missional health

## **Plan properly.**

- Ministry planning
- Financial planning
- Site master planning (build for growth)

## **Address money issues.**

- Teach stewardship on a regular basis.
- Know how to use debt.
- Know the difference between an “expense” and an “investment.”
- Go to the bank early.
- Check the budget at every design phase.

## **Protect the church leadership.**

- Don’t leave the ministry of the Word and prayer to wait tables.
- Delegate, delegate, delegate.
- Maintain an appropriate chain of command and proper communication.

## **Prepare yourself as a client.**

- Learn to read drawings and specifications.
- Ask lots of questions and demand clear answers.
- Stay fully involved.

## **Choose the appropriate project delivery method.**

- Design-Bid-Build
- Construction Management
- Design Build
- Bridging

## **Build the right thing for the right reason for the right time.**

- Poor site/poor facilities (building alone won’t solve problem)
- Poor site and good facilities (building won’t solve the problem)
- Good site and poor facilities (building is needed)
- Good site and good facilities (need a good reason to build)

## **Pay attention to some of the most important spaces in a church facility.**

- Parking
- Worship space
- Lobby space
- Nursery space
- Women’s restrooms

## **Follow a logical design and decision-making sequence.**

- Site feasibility
- Programming (space needs analysis)
- Master planning
- Schematic design phase
- Design development
- Construction documents

## **Pay attention to the legal issues.**

- Consider using standard contracts.
- Hire an attorney early.
- Don’t sue believers; use Christian arbitration.
- Keep the architect accountable to the budget.

## **Be a good neighbor.**

- To the zoning department
- To the building department
- To the community

## **Hire church experience.**

- Architect
- Contractor
- Consultants

## **Think before you “self perform” any work.**

- Is there really a cost or time savings?
- What about warranties and sub-par work?
- Don’t interfere with the GC’s “critical path.”

## **Beware of changes/substitutions.**

- Changes made early are cheap.
- Changes made late are expensive.

## **Know your property.**

- Get a thorough survey (utilities, easements, accuracy).
- Know the zoning restrictions.
- Consider a feasibility study prior to purchasing land.

## **Don’t listen to the wrong people.**

- Listen to experience.
- Beware of “agendas.”
- Get references.

## **Verify the financial health of the contractor.**

- Consider payment and performance bonds.
- Ask for a Contractor’s Qualification Statement.
- Get bank references for the contractor.

## **Know what your project really costs.**

- Does it include site work?
- Does it include FFE (fixtures, furnishings, equipment)?
- Does it include AVL (audio, video, lighting)?
- Does it include all fees, permitting, and utility costs?

## On Valid Baptism

Some groups still have extensive discussions over whether certain “baptisms” are valid. There was little discussion among most Reformers about the validity of their baptism. The church of their day was wrong and much in it needed to be corrected. The hierarchy was wrong. Much of the doctrine was wrong. Five of the seven sacraments that had been held for centuries were eliminated by the Reformers, but two “sacraments,” baptism and the Lord’s Supper, were commanded in Scripture, and so Reformers thought they should be kept. Priests were offering elements of the Lord’s Supper daily, and even often through the day. Calvin and those with him considered that once every three months was a proper “remembrance.” I have had courses in the lives of both Calvin and Luther, and I don’t recall any mention that either one ever doubted the validity of his own baptism in the apostate church.

Because church and state were interconnected, radical groups endeavored to throw off both, causing serious disruptions in several Germanic states. Several of these agitators insisted on re-baptism along with political and hierarchical changes. They and others were grouped as “ana-Baptists,” re-baptizers, and possibly may have included some who might qualify as Baptists today. Most antecedents of today’s Baptists appeared in England at a later date. Rather than attempt to reform or purify (Puritans) the existing church, they were mostly of the separatists, who felt a new beginning was necessary. Even among them, believers’ immersion was not immediately or universally adopted.

Is a “baptism” to be judged valid according to who performs it, by the authority they represent, by certain words they speak, by certain actions they take, or even by the intent of the one being baptized? How and by whom is validity to be decided? Does an “in-valid” baptism thus require that a proper, appropriate baptism should be now be administered? Is such a second baptism really a re-baptism? If the first was not valid, is not a second really a first? Does a second baptism invalidate a first baptism? My, what problems to have to solve! Can Scripture help? Comparison to a re-circumcision is of little help.

There is just one occurrence of a re-immersion in the Word of God. (See how much is clarified in using a translation instead of a transliteration?) Twelve men (plus women?) at Corinth had been immersed by John’s immersion (Acts 19:1–15). The form was correct, but the significance was not complete. John had predicted a Messiah to appear, a Lamb of God, One who would immerse by the Holy Spirit (v. 4). When they heard the gospel message, they believed. Without discussion or hesitation, these were then re-immersed—or immersed for the first time as Christian believers. As Paul laid his hands on them, the immersing by the Holy Spirit and the promised indwelling

of the Holy Spirit became evident, even a visible filling of the Spirit (vv. 5–7). John’s immersion as they had heard of it was not a “wrong” immersion, only a deficient teaching of the message of John. A second immersion in water was obviously a second act of dunking them, but the immersion in water witnessing to having received Spirit immersion was a “first” Christian immersion of these twelve.

What of one who as an early teenager was sure of having trusted Christ as personal Savior and submitted to immersion, and then a few years later experienced clear conviction by the Holy Spirit and a new changed life—should that one be re-immersed? Was his earlier immersion only a form and not Christian believers’ immersion? And who is to decide? Not all will answer alike. My answer is really both a yes and a no. Depending on the persuasion of the candidate and the judgment of others of such a spiritual turning, the first act was of proper form but was not Christian immersion. His immersion thus would not properly be a re-immersion but a first Christian immersion. That would seem undebatable and surely to be recommended.

The “no” part of my judgment is to caution against too readily reacting to an emotional impression. God can more clearly speak to us at several times through our Christian lives, and we can easily consider the force and directness of such as greater than when He first convicted us of our need for salvation. It seems best to suggest that one might wait a while to judge whether there has been a true change from death unto life in the recent experience. Many will realize that they were spiritually born earlier but had grown little until God stirred them unto dedication.

Another situation was presented recently, that the immersion of one Baptist church would not be considered a valid immersion by another Baptist church! The objection was not in regard to form or words said or the administrator, but a matter of polity, an aspect of “separation.” I can imagine no Scripture to justify such action, and would recommend to persons facing such a choice to endeavor to find another “local” church for fellowship, or at best just to attend and not get too involved in such a group.

Can a sprinkling be accepted as an immersion? Can an infant sprinkling be acknowledged as a valid immersion? To ask is to suggest the obvious answers. There is one Spirit immersion, and that is, in this dispensation, portrayed by water immersion. It seems obvious that there should be no confusion. Getting the lost to turn to Christ is our major task, but obeying the Gospels’ commands regarding immersion and observance of communion seem an important aspect of the gospel.

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## Do You Have Any Anesin?

Marilyn Janke

Tylenol, Roloids, a bar of chocolate . . . there is a whole wad of things “out there” that are touted to give relief from whatever internal angst we suffer from at the moment. In the following account, the apostle Paul needed relief from anguish, but he chose something far stronger than these.

In 2 Corinthians 2:12 we find him looking forward to his visit to Troas: “Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, . . . a door was opened unto me of the Lord.” He thought he would be walking through a great open door to preach the gospel and minister together with his fellow-servant, Titus. One small problem though—Titus didn’t show up. Had he been attacked by bandits? Was he hurt? Why hadn’t he come? “Who or what caused these two men—Paul and Titus—to ‘foul up’ their plans is not revealed here.” Regardless of what had happened, Paul would not be preaching as he had thought.

Paul went on to tell about lacking that peace of mind (*anesin* in the Greek)—or relief in spirit—for his anguish. Was it the Lord’s will for him to leave Troas without preaching and without knowing what had happened to Titus? Here was an apparently perfect open door which soon slammed shut, bringing with it nothing but distress. Humanly speaking, it seemed like a ruined opportunity. Had the Lord diverted Paul in order to accomplish another divine purpose or simply to teach the apostle more about His peace during the waiting time?

Nothing man-made will take care of the self-imposed agony we may fall into when waiting for the plan of God to become clear. Have you ever prayed for the Lord to show you His will for a particular need or desire (perhaps a new job, a ministry change, a move, adopting a child, an educational opportunity, or a missions endeavor)? You seem to eat, sleep, and live those prayers. When your mind boots up in the morning, it’s the first thing on the screen. A door might even seem to be opening up, but quicker than it opens, it closes. Then questions come: Could this *really* be the Lord’s will? Something isn’t quite right. Was this just the answer I wanted because I’m asking *selfishly*? As this door closes, will an opportunity like this *ever* come again? Am I lacking faith? Is this just a test to see what I’ll do?

When the Lord presents us with an opportunity and a door closes, how do we react to this “change in plans”? Is our mind stayed on Him because we trust in Him, knowing that He will keep us in that perfect peace? Do

we view it as the Lord’s will—disappointments and all—or quickly Google for “UMatter—Let Us Plan Your Pity Party Today!”? Do we lose face (after all, we *are* in a prominent position in the church—or school or garden club or local Mensa group—and what *would* people *think*?) or lose sight of what is ahead for us (as we pick up a mirror and sadly gaze into it, just missing the next set of directions the Lord is holding *right in front of us*)? Thankfully, because of his confident faith, Paul was led to write 2 Corinthians 2:14: “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.” It did not take long for Paul to relinquish any despondency. He would set out for Macedonia confident that his God was still in control. He was working all things “together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (that oft-quoted but less-often-claimed Romans 8:28).

The Lord may let us undergo similar turmoil in our own lives for various reasons. It may be simply to encourage someone watching us from the “back row of the balcony”—someone whom we may never know but who is, at that very moment, looking to *us* for a godly example for his *own* questions about the Lord’s will.

Though society would have us believe otherwise, this torment we may experience cannot be cured by Anacin, Tums, or anything else. Paul realized his human limitations, shown by his words in 2 Corinthians 7:5, 6: “For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus.”

So we see that Titus *did* eventually meet up with him (minus beatings and robbings). Paul *did* return to Troas where the Lord used him greatly (Acts 20:5–11). In this case, the closed door was simply a delay.

We may not know why a door has closed until we get to Heaven. Our thoughts are not His thoughts, nor are our ways His. But the Lord is with us at this present moment, and He desires to give us His *anesin* any time we are ready to give up our *plans* for His *will*.

Marilyn Janke and her husband, David, are missionary church planters in Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada, with GFA Missions. You can read more of Marilyn’s articles at [www.ribtickler.org](http://www.ribtickler.org).

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The New Park Street Chapel appeared to be as dull and gloomy within as it was black and uninviting without.—G. Holden Pike on Charles H. Spurgeon's first impression of the facility where he would have his start in London

The location of the New Park Street Chapel appeared more suitable for a tallow-melter's business than a meeting house. . . . If they had taken thirty years to look around them with the design of burying a church alive, they could not have succeeded better. . . . They were penny wise and pound poor.  
—Charles H. Spurgeon

The crowds [that began to attend the New Park Street Chapel] soon created a problem. . . . The place became unbearably hot, and the oxygen was used up. . . . The windows had not been constructed to open. Spurgeon repeatedly suggested to the deacons that the small upper panes of glass be removed, but they did nothing about it. One morning it was discovered that the panes had been smashed out. Spurgeon was delighted and proposed that "a reward of five pounds should be offered for the discovery of the offender, who when found should receive the amount as a present." Of course, he had removed the glass himself. Years later he said, "I have walked with the stick which let the oxygen into that stifling structure." —Arnold Dallimore

Before you pastors rush out to call for the election of a building committee, you might do well to recall that many a pastor is reading his resignation about four months after the dedication of the new building.  
—David M. Atkinson

Building programs do not create a healthier environment for a church but actually magnify the positive (or negative) state of the congregational health.  
—Jim Couchenour

The more members of the church that can be involved in the final decisions [regarding the new building] the greater will be their support and interest.  
—W. A. Criswell

The main benefit of conducting a major capital campaign in tough times is that it forces the congregation to focus on the spiritual aspect of giving rather than the financial aspect.  
—Jim Sheppard

We tried for years to pay for a building program from the regular giving budget, but we failed. A separate and special appeal for the expansion effort is needed.  
—W. A. Criswell

Floating safely in his ark, no one understood the destructive potential of water like Noah. But it doesn't take forty days of rain for water to have its way with your church campus.  
—Ryan Palm

A bank loan is one obvious financing option available to churches that are building. Loans, however, come at a cost. Closing costs to obtain the loan will not be recovered. . . . In most cases, 50% of the interest is paid in the first five years of the loan.  
—Doug Turner

The imperative of every church in a building program is to avoid the waste of valuable resources. The best way to ensure this is through responsible planning as you begin such a journey.  
—Bill Chegwiddden

Consider a building design that is flexible and adaptable to your ministry needs in the years to come. . . . A building that can be re-invented will enhance ministry in the future.  
—Jim Couchenour

Do not just build a marvelous sanctuary. Make ample provision for educational activities as well.  
—W. A. Criswell

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

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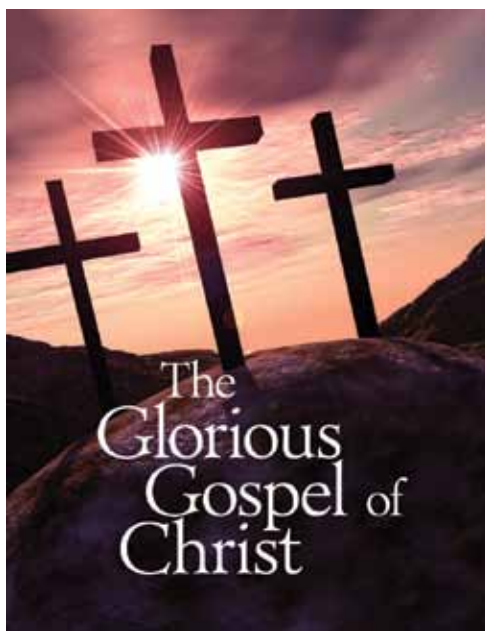
Doug Wright

## 2009 Annual Fellowship

Dr. Brad Smith and the Bethel Baptist Church of Schaumburg, Illinois, continued their tradition as first-rate hosts as they welcomed the 2009 Annual Fellowship on June 15–19. The week began on Monday, the first day of the Annual Chaplains' Training, which continued through Friday. The FBFI Chaplaincy is a flourishing ministry and was highly visible this year, with Chaplain (COL) Joe Willis leading an extended session on Thursday morning. Testimonies from Chaplains (MAJ) Gary Fisher and (MAJ) Mike Shellman about their ministries to our troops in actual combat were very moving. The flag presentations and introduction of chaplains in attendance were a strong reminder to pray for our chaplains and those they serve. We rejoice that the number of FBFI-endorsed chaplains continues to grow. It would be a wonderful idea for pastors to invite an FBFI chaplain to speak at a patriotic service if at all possible.

The meeting of the full membership of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International began on Tuesday with the annual board meeting. Lively discussion continued throughout the afternoon, and business was conducted in a brief meeting after the opening service that evening. The consensus of the discussion was that FBFI is and will continue to be "separated unto the gospel." The evident need to discuss how we can represent Fundamentalism accurately has led the board to plan an extended Winter Board Meeting involving all board members who can attend, including the Cooperating Board of State Representatives.

The general sessions and workshops were well attended. Evangelist Mike Schrock presided over an energetic music program and preached after our luncheon on Wednesday.



Evangelist Will Galkin was unable to open the conference as planned due to the sudden physical decline of his father-in-law, and another scheduled general session speaker, Dr. Stephen Jones, president of Bob Jones University, was taken ill after his arrival in Schaumburg. We greatly missed their preaching, but the cancelled sessions were quickly filled with good fellowship and extended discussion. FBFI Vice President Dr. Chuck Phelps stirred our hearts with a powerful message drawing our attention back to the need to win souls. Board member and *FrontLine* contributing editor Dr. Mark Minnick delved deeply into the meaning of the gospel, and many other speakers thoughtfully, carefully, and powerfully preached God's Word. In addition to the general sessions, there were two opportunities to attend workshops, choosing from the following:

1. The Gospel vs. the Apostasy—Robert Congdon
2. Seeing Lives Transformed by the Gospel—Jeff Musgrave

3. Organizing the Church for the Great Commission—David Pennington
4. Multiplying Christlike Leaders for the Worldwide Harvest—David Shumate
5. Factors Hindering Evangelism in Fundamentalism—Wayne Van Gelderen
6. Grief Support: Reaching People in Their Brokenness—Brad Wilkinson
7. Women's Session: Life Stewardship—Beth Horn

The conference concluded with a question-and-answer symposium: "Let's Discuss Conservative Evangelicals." General session and workshop speakers able to attend the session participated, with FBFI President Dr. John Vaughn moderating. There was good interaction on audience-generated questions and panel comments. The format was greatly appreciated, with the common response was, "Next time let's get to the heart of the issue more quickly and allow more time for discussion."

Thirty-four exhibitors and many members from the Bethel church family attended and benefited from the conference. The stated mission of the FBFI is "to provide a rallying point for Fundamental Baptists seeking personal revival and the opportunity to work with committed Bible-believers in glorifying God through the uncompromising fulfillment of the Great Commission." This year's Annual Fellowship was great opportunity to "seek personal revival." The frontline soldier in Satan's battle against Christianity is the Bible-believing preacher. I trust you will make plans to refresh yourself at next year's Annual Fellowship hosted by Tri-City Baptist Church, Westminster, Colorado, June 15–17, 2010.



## The Biblical Teaching of Hell (Part One)

The preaching of death and Hell has always been a means of bringing many individuals to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. However, many preachers have been scorned for their message of Hell-fire and damnation. Multitudes of the unsaved have voiced that preachers are trying to scare them into becoming Christians. But the preaching of death and Hell is not a scare tactic—it is the solemn teaching of Scripture. We dare not be silent in our preaching about this place called Hell.

The greatest Preacher and Teacher about Hell was our Lord Jesus Christ. He said in Matthew 5:22, "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." Again the Lord taught in Matthew 5:29, 30, "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

Many years ago I was witnessing to a young man in the city of Chicago. I asked him, "If you would die today, do you know where you would go?" He said, "Yes, I would go to Hell." I said, "Do you know what Hell is like?" "No, I don't," he sneered, "but you don't either." I noticed that he had a box of matches in his shirt pocket. I asked him, "May I teach you something right now?" He said, "Sure." I asked him to first of all give me his box of matches. When he gave them to me, I said to him, "Stick out your finger." He cooperated by holding out his index finger. Then I lit a match and started toward his finger with it. The young man said, "What are you going to do?" I answered, "To teach you this lesson, I must first burn your finger." He quickly pulled his hand back and said, "Don't you think it would be foolish for me to stand here and let you burn my finger?" I blew out the match and said to him, "Don't you think it would be foolish for you to die and burn in the fires of Hell?"

Second Thessalonians 1:8, 9 says, "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Hell is a literal place of fire! I urge those of you who are saved to contemplate the destination of those without Christ. Psalm 9:17 says, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." We as God's people need to sound the alarm of this Biblical teaching. We keep our mouths shut when it comes to telling the lost about this literal place of fire; however, we are quick to yell at the top of our lungs when we see a physical fire that may cause great damage to someone.

When I was a senior in college, I delivered newspapers in downtown Greenville, South Carolina. One very early morning as I was walking down a street, I suddenly saw a new car dealership whose building was on fire; flames were billowing from the roof. I panicked—I didn't know what to do since it was so early and no one was around. I glanced across the street and saw a fire station. I couldn't believe it! I ran there as quickly as I could and began to beat on the doors. A fireman came sliding down a pole, and I called out, "There's a fire right across the street at that car dealership!" The fireman sounded the alarm, more men came down the pole, and soon fire engines were at the dealership. I probably woke up most of the people in that vicinity of Greenville, but you know what? I didn't care! The place was on fire, and I wanted to sound the alarm regardless of how many people I disturbed. Now, do you think the owner of that dealership thought I was a nut because I caused such a ruckus? No, he was probably very grateful. By the way, to this day that owner doesn't know that I was the one who helped save his business. I didn't do that to get a reward; I did it because I knew if I didn't sound an alarm his property would be destroyed by the fire.

Just as I was determined to alert someone about that physical fire, so all of us need to be determined to take action about warning the unsaved of their certain fate in Hell apart from salvation in Jesus Christ.

Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty may be contacted at PO Box 141, Starr, SC 29684 or via e-mail at [evangjivn@aol.com](mailto:evangjivn@aol.com).

## THE BOOKS OF KINGS

The books of Kings are, from a narrative standpoint, less about Israel's kings and more about Israel's God—specifically, about the reliability of His words expressed through His prophets. Far from abandoning the theocracy, Yahweh kept a firm hand on the helm of the monarchy of both Judah and Israel—deposing and replacing whom He would in the north, and maintaining His promises even to the wickedest of David's heirs out of loyalty to His covenant with David.

Why, then do we need a second record in the books of Chronicles? Both Kings and Chronicles are theological history, “a historiography which accurately reports the facts to be sure, but which is fundamentally concerned with the theological meaning of those facts” (Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 428). But important theological themes cannot be exhausted in a single selective perspective. No historical record includes *all* the facts. Even though many of the same characters and events from Kings are acted out on the stage of Chronicles, the literary chemistry is very different, the theological commentary distinctive. Kings and Chronicles display vital theological truths at work in historical context—but not the same truths. Thus, the selection of material and of method, of factual content and of thematic emphasis, of what is said as well as how it is said, become central to the purpose of both the human author and the divine Author. This column focuses on the Books of Chronicles.

### Date and Authorship

Many have noted linguistic and stylistic similarities between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. Differences from Kings include its lengthy opening genealogy, its focus on the southern kingdom (Assyria's conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel is referenced only obliquely in passing, 2 Chron. 30:6, 7), and its emphasis on the temple, worship, and priestly ministry. Though more recent scholarship has inclined toward the mid-fourth or even third century B.C., Chronicles is conservatively dated at about 450–425 B.C. Chronicles' temple-oriented content (see below) suggests a priestly author and, according to Jewish tradition, Ezra had a hand in its authorship. When, by whom, and under what conditions Chronicles was composed sheds light not only on *what* was written but on *how* it was recorded.

*Historical Context.* The Jews were back in the land after the Babylonian exile, but amid hostile neighbors, under foreign domination (Persia), and still showing the same old proclivities toward the same old sins of intermarriage and other kinds of accommodation to the surrounding pagans, covenant disloyalty, sabbath-breaking, failure to provide for the temple ministry, insincere worship, dis-

gruntlement with God, and other sins recounted in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi.

*Ezra's Calling.* Ezra's purpose in returning to his homeland in 458 under the commission of Artaxerxes was “to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 7:10)—to instruct the re-established Israelite community in the principles of their covenant with Yahweh that would bring their spiritual welfare and prosperity.

*Theological Motivation.* The purpose that becomes apparent in the content, arrangement, and focus of the writing of Chronicles is to display from its own history the means whereby the covenant community can expect the presence and blessing of God. At the heart of this display is the confirmation of the Davidic covenant, the vital importance of the prescribed corporate worship of Yahweh, the equally crucial element of genuine *personal* worship of Yahweh, and the timeless certainty of divine response to human actions.

### Themes in Chronicles

What are the distinctive themes and emphases in Chronicles, and what are the recurring words and phrases that emphasize those themes? At the center of the theology of Chronicles is worship. (Note: For the distinctiveness of these themes in Chronicles, see the chart below to contrast the comparative scarcity of these emphases in Kings.)

#### Proper Corporate Worship

The Books of Chronicles—penned after the return of the Babylonian Captivity as an encouragement to the struggling remnant back in the land—lay enormous stress on the importance of temple worship. Its attention to the Levites (100x), the *priests* of Yahweh (71x in the Divided Kingdom portion of Chronicles), and on worshiping Yahweh in *song* (31x) is unparalleled in Kings. Good kings of Judah are repeatedly gauged in terms of their furthering the work and worship of the temple or the ministry of the Levites (David, Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah). God must be worshiped Scripturally.

#### Genuine Personal Worship

Several phrases that rarely if ever occur in Kings surface frequently in Chronicles: *seek/inquire* after Yahweh (39x); *humble oneself* (19x); *loyalty* (15x); *rely* on Yahweh (5x). At the same time, negative examples of personal relationship to God are expressed in terms equally rare in Kings: *forsake* Yahweh (17x); *(be) unfaithful/transgress(ion)* (17x). Emphasis on having a *perfect heart* or serving God with *all the heart* also reverberates through Chronicles' account of the Divided Kingdom (23x), but not Kings' (5x). God must be worshiped personally.

## AND CHRONICLES (PART TWO)

### Godly Example

Chronicles focuses on kings who enjoyed prosperity because of their heart for Yahweh. Out of 65 chapters, 38 are devoted to just 5 of the 22 Davidic kings: David (19 chs.); Solomon (9 chs.); Jehoshaphat (4 chs.); Hezekiah (4 chs.); Josiah (2 chs.). The other 17 Davidic kings receive a total of 17 chapters. Chronicles avoids diluting the positive exemplary value of, for example, David and Solomon by mentioning their sins. This is not idealistic or misleading; every historian selects his content to best accomplish his purpose (no history is entirely “objective” in that respect). The chronicler is no different. He is not reconstructing history or rewriting the Books of Kings; he is supplementing it with a consciously theological narrative that focuses the attention of his audience (the post-captivity remnant back in the land) on examples and principles that are most crucial and most relevant for their spiritual welfare and success.

### Divine Response

Like the worship theme, this theme has both a positive and negative side. Chronicles emphasizes positive reward with terms such as *help* (26x), *prosper* (13x), and *rest* (7x). The author frequently inserts editorial explanations of the theological causes for many incidents.\* A summary expression of this theme is 1 Chronicles 28:9: “Know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.” That this expresses a key theme in Chronicles is clear from the fact that this charge is reiterated elsewhere in Chronicles almost verbatim—for example, to Asa: “And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you” (2 Chron. 15:2).

### Message of Chronicles

The post-exilic community manifested ambivalent religious affections and mixed future expectations. The Davidic dynasty was in eclipse. The Solomonic temple had been replaced with a mere shadow. The remnant is weak and surrounded by enemies. Ezra needed to minimize the gap between the pre- and the post-exilic community. His goal was to both encourage and warn the struggling remnant by highlighting the attitudes and actions that brought either divine help and prosperity or displeasure and chastisement to the covenant community.

This historical setting, coupled with the differences

from Kings, suggests that Ezra desired to underscore for his audience the continuity of God’s purposes and principles on which the welfare and prosperity of His people depend.

The thematic emphases combine to formulate the message of Chronicles as a whole: *In any generation, Yahweh leaves to themselves those who forsake Him, but helps those who humble themselves to seek Him sincerely and worship Him Scripturally.*

### Themes of Kings and Chronicles Compared

	Themes in Chronicles	Kings	Chron
<b>Corporate Worship</b>	Levites	1x	100x
	priests (Divided Kingdom portion)	37x	71x
	“sing/song” (temple worship)	2x	31x
<b>Personal Worship</b>  (Positive)  (Negative)	“seek/inquire” (after Yahweh)	7x	39x
	“humble” (oneself)	3x	19x
	“loyalty”	5x	15x
	“rely” (on Yahweh)	0x	5x
	“(perfect/all the) heart” (Divided Kingdom)	5x	23x
	“forsake” (Yahweh)	7x	17x
	“(be) unfaithful/transgress(ion)”	0x	17x
<b>Reward</b>	“prosper”	2x	13x
	“rest”	1x	7x
	“help”	3x	26x
Themes in Kings			
<b>God’s Prophets</b>	“prophet/prophesy/prophecy”	89x	40x
	“man of God”	55x	7x
	Elijah	66x	2x
	Elisha	58x	0x
<b>God’s Words</b>	“(according to) the word of the LORD (came)”	55x	20x

\*For editorial explanations of theological causes, see Saul (1 Chron. 10:13, 14), David (1 Chron. 14:17), Solomon (1 Chron. 29:25), Rehoboam (2 Chron. 12:2, 5, 12), Abijah (2 Chron. 13:18), Asa (2 Chron. 14:6, 14; 15:15), Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 17:3, 5, 10; 20:30), Jehoram (2 Chron. 21:10, 18), Ahaziah (2 Chron. 22:7), Joash (2 Chron. 22:24), Amaziah (2 Chron. 25:20, 27), Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:5, 16), Jotham (2 Chron. 27:6), Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:19, 22), Hezekiah (2 Chron. 31:21; 32:25, 26), and Manasseh (2 Chron. 33:12, 13).





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## More Anglican Apostasy

On July 15 of this year the Episcopal Church gave final approval by vote to allow homosexual men and women to be ordained as clergy in the Episcopal Church. The slide toward this decision was begun in 2003 when V. Gene Robinson was consecrated as bishop even though his open homosexual lifestyle was clear to those making the decision. That decision has splintered the denomination.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.ksl.com/?nid=576&sid=7151750>.

## Jesus Was a Palestinian?

Dennis Ybarra and Dr. Gary Tobin, president of the Institute for Jewish & Community Research, teamed up to co-author a study of twenty-eight accepted public school textbooks on the subjects of history, geography, and social studies. The results of the study revealed an anti-Jewish, anti-Christian bias and obnoxious misinformation. The authors found textbooks that stated or suggested:

Jesus was a Palestinian, not a Jew.

The Arab nations never attacked Israel. Arab-Israeli wars "just broke out," or Israel started them.

Arabs nations want peace, but Israel does not.

Israel expelled all Palestinian refugees.

Israel, not Arab

governments, put the Palestinians in refugee camps in Arab lands.

Palestinian terrorism is nonexistent or minimal.

Israel is not a victim of terrorism, or terrorism against Israel is justified.

US support of Israel causes terrorism, including 9/11.

The intifadas were children's revolts that did not involve adults or terrorism.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.wnd.com/index.php?fa=PAGE.view&pageId=76671>.

## Ida-ology

Darwinian evolution has a new poster child. Paleontologist Jorn Hurum showcased a "47 million year old" discovery from a dig in Germany this past spring. "Ida, properly known as *Darwinius masillae*, has a unique anatomy. The lemur-like skeleton features primate-like characteristics, including grasping hands, opposable thumbs, clawless digits with nails, and relatively short limbs."

This, they claim, is a critical "missing-link species in primate evolution." There are admittedly still very few fossils from this era, most of which exist only as a tooth or tailbone. This fossil, he says, "bridges the evolutionary split between higher primates such as monkeys, apes, and humans and their more distant relatives such as lemurs."

This article can be referenced at <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2009/05/090519-missing-link-found.html>.

## NEA Takes the Gloves Off

In July of this year the National Education Association (NEA) held its national meeting in San Diego. Part of the conference highlighted the retirement of General Counsel Bob Chanin. His departing speech and the response of the delegates ought to be a wake-up call for all God-fearing Americans who seek to have influence in the public education scene. His speech can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqn1rvv7Fis>.

(WARNING: There is a good deal of crude speech.) Mr. Chanin makes no apology for his philosophy, which seems entirely unrelated to what a union for educators should really be about.

Two more issues of note should be recognized from the national meeting. The NEA turned down a resolution to take "no position" on the abortion issue. Rather, they used their clout and financial resources to continue to advance pro-abortion causes. At the same time, they voted to throw their clout behind homosexual marriage and against anything that is perceived as opposed to the homosexual lifestyle.

The organization receives annual dues from 3.2 million people, which leads its organizers to believe they have the support of all those members.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.onenewsnow.com>.

[com/Education/Default.aspx?id=603580](http://www.onenewsnow.com/Education/Default.aspx?id=603580).

## Do Scriptures Have Free Course?

The Rappahannock County Regional Jail is coming under fire for alleged letter censorship of mail coming to prison inmates. The jail does have a policy limiting certain Internet material and religious material received from inmates' homes. Books sent from home often need a full inspection, and many times are simply returned or discarded. But what makes this case unique is that it is alleged that portions of inmate letters are removed because they contain Scripture.

Inquiries from Prison Fellowship, the ACLU, the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, and others have prompted an internal investigation.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.onenewsnow.com/Legal/Default.aspx?id=598800>.

## No Room for Conscience

Washington law requires pharmacists to dispense medications regardless of personal religious convictions concerning that medication. That law was just reinforced by the Ninth US Circuit Court of Appeals. The case began because some pharmacists did not want to carry what has become popularly known as the "morning after" pill. Medical professionals insist that this pill induces an abortion.

There is hope that this case will be heard by the US Supreme Court. The present ruling is causing

alarm that doctors may be required to perform medical procedure over which they conscientiously object. This article can be referenced at <http://www.onenewsnow.com/Legal/Default.aspx?id=597878>.

### **A Christian-Muslim Partnership**

Rick Warren does not seem to know how to keep himself out of the news. Warren was invited and accepted the opportunity to address the annual convention of the Islamic Society of North America. He addressed the “two largest faiths on the planet” hoping they would work together to solve the world five “global giants”: war, poverty, corruption, disease, and illiteracy.

Warren attempted to justify his appearance in his speech. “It’s easier to be an extremist of any kind because then you only have one group of people mad at you,” he said. “But if you actually try to build relationships—like invite an evangelical pastor to your gathering—you’ll get criticized for it. So will I.”

This article can be referenced at <http://www.faithnews.cc/2009/07/06/warren-calls-for-christian-muslim-partnership/>.

### **Hispanics Departing Catholicism**

A recent Barna Group survey found that Hispanics in America answer questions very similarly to their other North American counterparts. They generally acknowledge that faith is an important part of their lives. Sharing their faith with others is important, and they were likely to have read their Bible in the past week.

What was new is that Hispanics have dropped their alignment with the Roman Catholic Church by nearly twenty-five percentage points within the last fifteen

## **NOTABLE QUOTES**

**H**oliness does not consist of mystic speculations, enthusiastic fervours, or uncommanded austerities; it consists in thinking as God thinks and willing as God wills.—John Brown

**I**n Germany they came first for the communists, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn’t speak up because I was Protestant. Then they came for me, but by that time there was no one left to speak up.—Martin Niemöller, German minister

**M**inisters’ shortcoming cannot be concealed. Even the most trivial soon get known. . . . However trifling their offenses, these little things seem great to others, since everyone measures sin, not by the size of the offense, but by the standing of the sinner.—John Chrysostom

**H**ypocrisy can be the failure to practice what one preaches; it can also entail an attitude of rigorous moral scrupulosity in one area coexisting with an attitude of libertarian indifference in a comparable area. Hypocrisy may consist in a failure to carry through the implications of one’s moral stances consistently.—Richard Higginson

**I** do not understand how a man can be a true believer unto whom sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow, and trouble. . . . Did Christ die and sin live? Was He crucified in the world, and shall our affections to the world be quick and lively? Oh, where is the spirit of him, who by the cross of Christ was crucified to the world, and the world to him!—John Owen

**A**ll justified people are sanctified, and all sanctified are justified. What God hath joined together let no man dare to put asunder. Tell me not of your justification unless you have also some marks of sanctification. Boast not of Christ’s work *for you*, unless you can show the Spirit’s work *in you*. Think not that Christ and the Spirit can ever be divided. I doubt not that many believers know these things, but I think it good for us to be put in remembrance of them.—J. C. Ryle

years. Catholicism is still the predominant faith of Hispanics, but things are changing. This article can be referenced at <http://www.onenewsnow.com/Culture/Default.aspx?id=601896>.

### **Chaplains Needed in the Guard**

While recruitment goals for the National Guard are at 100%, chaplaincy slots are filled to only 70% of the National Guard’s goals. Each of the other branches of the military seems to meet their recruitment expectations, but not so for the Guard. Chaplains did increase their ranks from 52% to the present 70% since 2000. Nevertheless, today there are 200 open positions in the Army National Guard and 45 in the Air National Guard.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,252105,00.html>.

### **Stimulus Money for Pornography**

The National Endowment for the Arts has never been a conservative group, but its gross mishandling of taxpayer dollars should be an alarm to Christians and to all Americans. According to a news report, recent specific projects and their funded amounts were both obscene. (Descriptions of the pornographic content of the projects are too obscene to print in this publication.) The NEA received \$80 million of the \$787 billion stimulus package passed by Congress earlier this year.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.onenewsnow.com/Culture/Default.aspx?id=625302>.

Compiled by Robert Conduct, FBFI 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.



Pearson Johnson

## Common Ground or Missions Quicksand?

We have all read a book or seen a film about the adventurer who walked through the jungle, over many obstacles, and onto what he thought was a patch of dry ground. Suddenly he found that instead of walking on level ground he was being sucked under by it. He had discovered quicksand!

Much current writing and practice in evangelism and missions focus on finding, in discussions of life and eternity, places of “common ground,” where we agree on certain basic principles. If we can find points of agreement, then we can build a case for the truth from there. For some, common ground is philosophical: agree that the rules of logic follow for all people, so use logical arguments to convince others of the truth. For others, common ground is scientific: if we adhere to the scientific method, and provide enough evidence, then someone can be convinced. Others seek common ground where religious principles agree, as in the monotheism of Islam and Christianity. Dialogue can occur upon this agreement. Still others find common ground in their emotions or felt-needs. They appeal to the heart and the feelings. In all of these approaches, many people believe there is a neutral area at some point. If we can get down to that common point, then we can build our gospel approach in a way that is more acceptable to lost people.

In the brief space that we have, I would like to begin to show that, Biblically, there is no neutral common ground outside of Scripture that we can build our proclamation of the gospel upon. Beyond this, the search for common ground and the process of an objective, two-way conversation or dialogue can lead to missions quicksand, where the truth is sucked under by the ground we had hoped to build upon. Common-ground approaches lead easily to syncretism, or the mixing of religions, philosophies, and worldviews, rather than to conversion to the truth.

By warning about the dangers of seeking common ground in gospel witness, let me tell you what I am *not* saying. First, I am not saying we have nothing in common physically with unbelievers. We share a common humanity in many ways. I am not saying we do not have or should not have anything in common socially with

unbelievers. We cannot become like unbelievers to witness to them, but we must have contact with them if we are to share the gospel. Our purpose is not to stand in judgment on unbelievers, but in compassion to proclaim the good news of escape from judgment. We don’t even mean that we have nothing in common psychologically or culturally or even, in some ways spiritually (in that we are spiritual creatures in need of God’s grace). We have a lot in common with all of humanity.

Also, I am not questioning the genuine love for souls and desire for evangelism that is at the heart of the methods of many missionaries and evangelists. I am sure people have been genuinely converted using approaches focused on finding common ground because they were drawn by the Spirit through the Word spoken, not through arguments, logic, evidences, or feelings. I do hope being more Biblical in our approach can lead to greater, more long-term effectiveness.

What I am saying is when it comes to the claims of Christianity and their being proven as true and verifiable, there is no neutral ground for both the Christian and non-Christian to stand upon outside of the Scriptures. Some assume that many people can and will make up their own minds in favor of the truth if presented with enough extra-Biblical data—that good information will lead to good conclusions. Others think that if we can focus on areas of agreement without using the Bible as our starting point, then logic, study, and/or evidence will eventually lead to overall agreement. Biblically, however, these approaches start at the wrong point. Christians and unbelievers have a clash of worldviews that goes to the very heart of who we are.

In the next issue of *FrontLine*, we will look at the Scriptural teaching that outlines this worldview clash and how that guides and guards our approach to evangelism and missions. Following that, I will propose a way forward in evangelism and missions that I trust is wholly Biblical, cross-centered, and theologically driven.

Pearson Johnson is the pastor of Missions and Evangelism at Inter-City Baptist Church. You can e-mail him with questions or comments at [pjohnson@intercity.org](mailto:pjohnson@intercity.org).

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# Chaplain News

Bob Ellis

God continues to call and thrust Gout into the ministry godly chaplains. Army Chaplain Brian Palmer is in Iraq for a second tour of duty; Army Chaplain Michael Barnette reported for active duty early this year. Both write of God's blessings on their ministry.

Army Chaplain Brian Palmer (1-24 Infantry Battalion, 1SBCT, 25 Infantry Division) writes,

I have been blessed to be able to hold two to three services a week at various remote locations. We are now moving out of the cities and villages so I am now holding one consolidated service a week and a Wednesday night Bible study. The service currently has around twenty-five people in attendance, and the Bible study has about twelve. I hope to see growth in both areas.

One of our interpreters has been coming to me to ask about Christianity and what we truly believe. I was thrilled to talk with him about Christ. Unfortunately, he was killed recently in a suicide vest attack. Once again, the urgency of our eternal message was brought back to me. We never know how much time we have to make a decision.

To add some good news, one of our Lebanese workers who attends services asked to be baptized as a believer. He has truly put his faith in Christ and wanted to be baptized. His act of public confession has caused some of his friends to attend services. One of them has confessed his faith and has decided he also needs believer's baptism. More good news in this is that my US soldiers are also taking notice of this and are putting more emphasis on their own faith, which has often gone neglected. I would say we might be on the verge of a mini revival. God is great to us even in the desolate places where I find myself.

Army Chaplain Michael Barnette writes as follows from Fort Stewart, Georgia:

This past month also included a week of field training in which I conducted a worship service and spent a number of hours in counseling and witnessing to soldiers. The field time is hot this time of year and heat casualties are high, but thanks be to God I was not one of the heat casualties, staying hydrated and staying in the shade as often as possible (which, by the way, is a good place to find soldiers to talk to).

My duties include not only conducting worship services and counseling but also assessing and advising the commander on the moral and morale issues of the battalion. That, however, becomes more ministry opportunity as I spend a good deal of time with the soldiers in the various training events, side by side with them as they sweat through it. It is necessary and rewarding to be where they are: walking the IED training lanes in dismounted patrols through the sweltering heat of south Georgia, watching for the IED's (training devices only) that have been set up along the road. The soldiers are in full "Battle Rattle" (40-50 pounds of extra gear) as we walk along the road keeping watch for explosives as well as enemy combatants. The mosquitoes are so thick in places along these trails that you can literally reach out and grab a handful. But our soldiers do a great job and successfully complete the training in 100+ heat.

Earlier in the month I had a soldier come to my office who was hurting badly over his wrecked marriage and the physical abuse which his estranged wife had committed against their children

(whom he now has as a single-parent soldier). As I spoke with him and shared that it was my faith in the Lord that helped me through life's difficult times, he looked at me with tears in his eyes and said, "Chaplain, I know that. I was saved several years ago, and I know that once you are saved you are always saved, but I have been wrong. I have a Bible on my dresser that I ignore because I know I've not been doing right. I've done so much wrong these last few years I just don't know if God can help me." I told him about Peter, who had denied the Lord three times and yet Jesus had come to him by the sea that day and restored him to service,



forgiving his failure. The soldier, who had been listening to me for several minutes, said, "Chaplain, while you were talking, I went ahead and rededicated my life to God. I know that I need Him and I do believe He has forgiven me and can help me."

We talked about church and getting involved with worship and fellowship for spiritual growth. He told me of a church he had visited before and wanted to go to again that coming Wednesday. On the Thursday after, I saw him and asked how it went. "Yes, I took my children, and we went last night," he answered. He had shared his testimony in the service, and the people had responded with love and encouragement. Now, that is what being a chaplain is all about!



## Mail Bag (continued from page 4)

every Saturday night for specific churches and pastors that the power of His Spirit will be evident in the preaching and in the hearts of the people on Sunday.

We are spiritually a very needy country in America. There are so many areas where there is a famine of God's Word being preached, and souls are dropping off into Hell. So it has encouraged my heart to read that there are new churches starting and others being revived. May the Lord use this issue to encourage many to pray for these works and to pray that there will be others that catch the vision and go plant churches in America.

*Martha Mazzaferro  
Greer, SC*

**W**hat a job to publish a magazine for Fundamental Baptists—thank you! Please explain your page numbering system with “Sound Words” (pages 1–8) between pages 20 and 21. I have trained some seventy young people—some now retiring—but they have made a worldwide impact for Christ. Anyway, can you send me the complete series of “Sound Words”?

*Wesley Andrew Darby,  
Pastor Emeritus*

*The page numbers of “Sound Words” stand alone from the rest of the magazine because the central section of pages is designed to be removed for filing and future reference. The copyright to “Sound Words” is retained by Dr. Mark Minnick. Readers of FrontLine will be thankful to know that he hopes to publish them in a separate collection someday.*

**I** do appreciate so much your helping me and making known to other friends my need of music. I thank

everyone who sent me cassette tapes. Thank all of you who show your love to participate in the ministries in Haiti. The Lord bless America and the people living in your country.

Here in Haiti, I ask you please do not stop praying for us. We need faith and to be strong to fight the false doctrine—Charismatic movement and Catholic opposition to the Doctrine of Christ. So much compromise among us today, we must not be slack. They seduce the people to send the sinners into Hell. It is profitable for false teachers here. Charismatics join the ecumenical movement with the priest. So, as Fundamental Baptists, everywhere we are we must take our stand and fix our conviction to the higher ground of the Bible. . . . If God is Authority, His Word also has authority. We should not be afraid of the activities of Satan but earnestly contend for the Faith. I encourage you. Do not be discouraged. Do good job for Our Lord. He soon [will] come.

*Rev. Octave Jerome  
Port de Paix, Haiti*

**O**n the weekend of 4–5 April 2009, congregations throughout the Army received designated offerings to support Endorsing Agents' ministry to their active duty Army Chaplains. It is my pleasure to distribute these funds among Endorsing Agents in hopes that it will support your ministry to your chaplains. We deeply appreciate your work and the ministry you provide to and through your chaplains. God bless you in your ministry to chaplains to our Soldiers and their families.

*Douglas Carver, Chaplain  
(Major General, US Army, Chief of Chaplains)*

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## Much More behind the Lines

Nathan Asire

As architectural lines converge to form a building, a message is displayed that tells of the owner, the function, and the value of that structure. In a church building particularly, there is real significance behind its design and appearance. As God's house, it must not merely function—it must also serve as a display of God's character and His work. There is theology behind the lines of each church building.

### God as Architect

*"And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it" (Exod. 25:8, 9).*

God is the Designer and Creator of the natural world and its accompanying laws. The Lord took on the role of Architect as He laid out the divine plans for several significant structures that are described in great detail in the Biblical record. During the wilderness years He gave Moses specific instructions for the tabernacle (Exod. 25–40). He gave inspired plans for the temple to King David, which was later constructed by King Solomon (1 Chron. 28–29; 2 Chron. 2–7). God opened Ezekiel's eyes to behold a vision of the heavenly city and its temple (Ezek. 40–48). And finally, God granted the apostle John a view of His design for the New Jerusalem as described in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 21).

There is meaning bursting forth from each of these sacred buildings. With great care, God specified the materials, the dimensions, the connections, and the ornamentation. There is significance and symbolism behind each detail, and God anticipates that we will learn more about Him by carefully observing His designs.

These passages are preserved and included in Scripture to further reveal our God. This serves as proof that theology can indeed be displayed in architec-

ture. A church building has the capacity to say something very meaningful to its observers and inhabitants. God has clearly shown that He cares about the design and embedded meaning for the buildings that bear His name.

### God's House

Although the Shekinah Glory of God does not come to dwell in our church sanctuaries in the same way that it did in the tabernacle and temple, the church building today is still a sacred place. It is a place where spiritual lessons are learned and decisions are made. In the church sanctuary, God Himself meets with us as we gather together to worship in His name (Matt. 18:20).

If, then, it is really God's house and not merely a convenient place in which to worship Him, any true architectural expression must recognize the qualities and character of the real Owner. If someone builds a house for me and builds it without recognizing anything of my character and tastes, to say the least, he is an unfaithful steward of my funds. To build the house of God and make beauty, dignity and spirituality, as expressed in architecture, entirely secondary to good heating and acoustics, is to build God's House without God (Von Ogden Vogt)

Ultimately, the church building does not belong to its people. Every aspect of our ministries, both spiritually and physically, belongs to the Head of the Church.

### God as the Focus

Success in building, especially for worship, depends largely upon how and where you begin. And, you don't begin with architecture! Of course, there comes a time in the building program when there must be architectural thinking,

but this is not at the beginning. At the beginning of building for worship, everyone should be a theologian (Edward Frey).

God has designed the physical world to be a picture of the spiritual world and has enabled us to derive truth from the design of our surroundings. Just as Christ often taught spiritual lessons with physical metaphors, we can evince spiritual concepts as architectural realities. The challenge for church architecture today is to take spiritual principles and find their architectural manifestations. Each church must determine how to accomplish what is a God-glorifying and God-proclaiming architecture in their own unique situation and with the resources that God has given them.

It is abundantly clear from Scripture that God is not primarily concerned with our outward appearances but that He instead values the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). As we consider what it is about God that can and should be expressed through a church building, we make God the central part of a process from which He is too often excluded. To endue architecture with meaning will require meditation on God and His attributes. The result will not only be a building that communicates truths about God but a congregation who knows Him more fully.

As we strive, sometimes with great difficulty, to represent God and His work in our earthly buildings, we can look forward to a city built with no constraints of budget, space, or time. It is a city designed by the Architect of all things. There is meaning behind each line, and through it we will observe His glory for all eternity.

Nathan Asire is a building committee member at his church, Faith Baptist Church of Taylors, South Carolina, and is currently completing graduate studies in Architecture at Clemson University. His wife, Robin, works for Freeman & Major Architects in Greenville, South Carolina.

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