

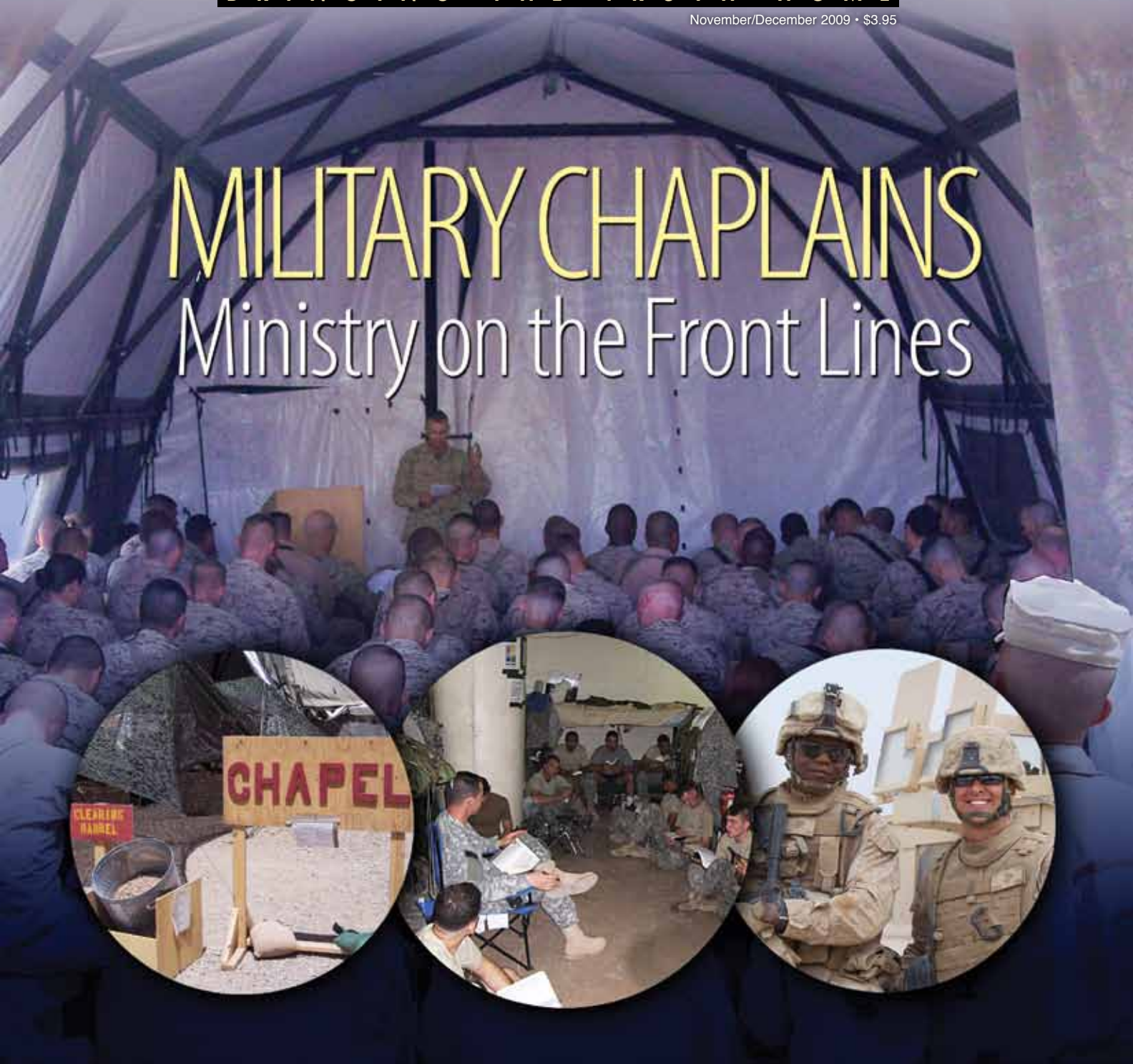
THE MILITARY CHAPLAIN: MISSIONARY, EVANGELIST, OR PASTOR? • HOPE IN A HURRY

FrontLine

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Inherent in the promise of God is the provision to fulfill that promise. Israel had been given the land of promise, but it had to be taken by faith. "Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours." The steps of faith had to be taken in order to possess their possessions.

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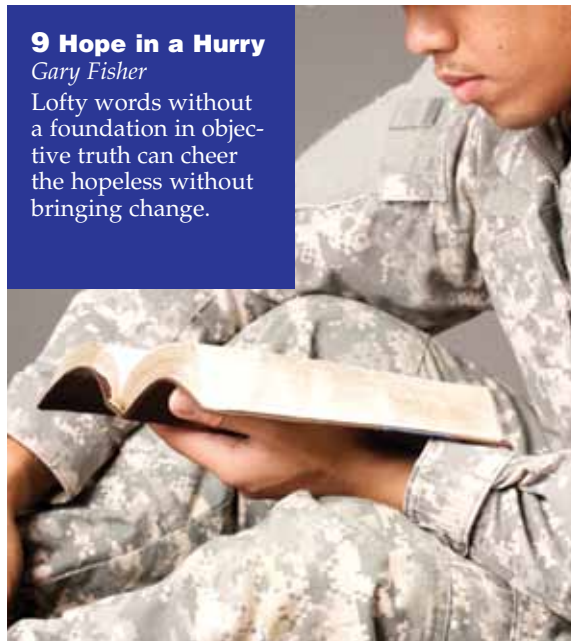
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Visit us on the Web at
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Gary Fisher

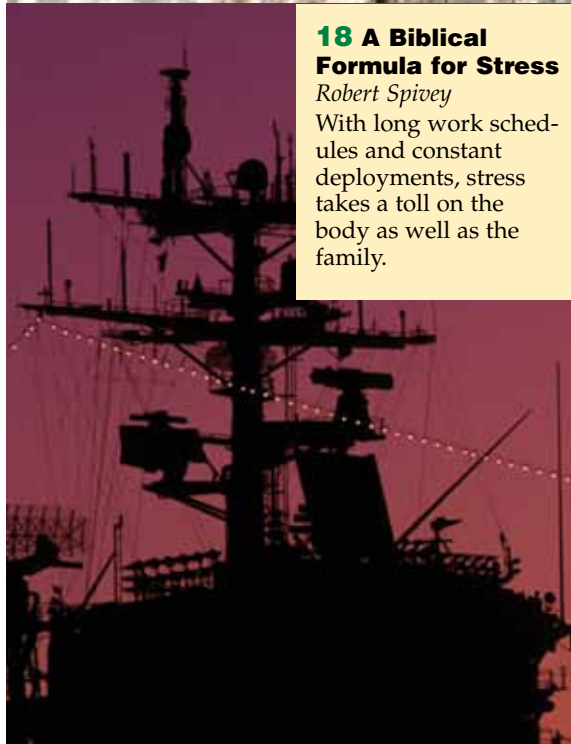
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Taylors, SC 29687 or send them by e-mail to info@fbfi.org.

You may request that your letter not be published or that your name be withheld, but anonymous letters will not be accepted.



As a native Californian from OC [Orange County], and as someone whose ministry includes challenging American believers toward a Great-Commission perspective, I personally want to thank you for your recent issue on "Church Planting in California" [Sept/Oct 2009].

Although my ministry is overseas, I am very burdened for my home state and the way it is largely being ignored by Fundamentalists—and by default being handed over to Biblically compromising and Charismatic ministries.

California was once a bastion of conservative Christianity, but the retreat is deafening and affecting the entire nation (and perhaps the world) in exponential ways.

In spite of humanly impossible odds, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the apostle Paul did not ignore Corinth, but

shined the light of the gospel in that dark culture. Amazingly, some in that coastal city repented, believed, and a church was born. Those believers and that church gave Paul problems, much the same way the authors of this issue describe their challenges. But like them, Paul never let go, and God's glory shone brilliantly in one of the most unlikely places in the first-century world.

Praise the Lord for the authors of these articles, for their vision of God's demonstrating Himself strong in such a moral wilderness instead of picking a place seemingly easier for ministry. I think in many ways the Fundamental church-planters and pastors of California deserve more kudos than we overseas missionaries. May their tribe increase!

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The Asian Pacific*

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As the journal of the FBFI, *FrontLine* Magazine provides a forum for God's people to reverently express a conservative Christian perspective on pertinent issues. In an effort to keep readers informed, quotes and references to many different individuals and organizations will appear. This does not imply the endorsement of the magazine or its board. Unsolicited manuscripts and artwork accepted for review.

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The Importance of the Chaplaincy

John C. Vaughn

The three ministries of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International are *FrontLine* Magazine, fellowship meetings, and Chaplain endorsement. Some have suggested that the chaplaincy is “the most important of all.” The United States Department of Defense (DOD) has long provided uniformed ministers for its personnel, since duty demands their readiness around the world, often away from family and church. DoD must insure that everyone in uniform meets the standards required of their tasks or profession. But DOD cannot, and must not, set or measure the spiritual qualifications of those whose profession is spiritual ministry.

Before a Chaplain is commissioned as a military officer, he must present a certificate of endorsement by a verifiably legitimate ecclesiastical body. Having no denominational structure, by design, independent churches form associations for the purpose of endorsement of Chaplains. Some support missionaries who are connected with missions associations but do not involve their churches in associations of churches. The value of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International, in this regard, is that the DoD has long recognized the FBFI as a Military Chaplain Endorsing Agency.

This provides an opportunity for Fundamental Baptist pastors, by their voluntary personal membership in FBFI, to offer chaplaincy as an option for those who are called to this ministry. Through the sacrificial work of FBFI Board Members who volunteer their services on the FBFI Chaplaincy Commission and the efforts of part-time staff for whom the FBFI is a truly a labor of love, the FBFI Endorsing Agency is practically self-funding. Active Duty Chaplains pay professional dues based on rank, and

part-time and volunteer Chaplains pay an annual fee. Those of us who work regularly with our Chaplains know how important and rewarding this ministry is. The Chaplains are ministers of the gospel who are specialists in military (or paramilitary) culture—missionaries who are paid for their sacrifices for the country but accountable to their home churches for their professional ministry qualification.

Active duty military—Air Force, Army, and Navy—and reserve units are deployed under federal authority. State Guard units are under state authority, although their missions are often closely related. The Navy provides Chaplains to the Marines and Coast Guard. The qualifications for Chaplains in all of these branches of the military are rigorous. The Civil Air Patrol (a civilian auxiliary of the Air Force, which performs search-and-rescue and cadet activities), private and VA hospitals, police and fire departments, and other emergency services agencies all have Chaplains, nearly all of whom are full-time or retired pastors who volunteer their services as an extension of their ministries. The common denominator for chaplaincy is a mission that restricts the opportunity for regular church attendance and presents unusual threats to the physical and family lives of its personnel. This can be taken further than FBFI would be willing to go, of course. We do not plan to endorse any Chaplains for professional sports teams, for example.

Military Chaplains must be seminary graduates with an MDiv or its equivalent in graduate theological training. They must be ordained and have a minimum of two years of full-time experience in the ministry. The Chief of Chaplains of the Army, CH (Major General) Douglas Carver

explains that they want fully qualified men from the endorsers, specifying “two years of full-time *post MDiv* pastoral experience.” That is not a problem for men who choose to enter the chaplaincy after they have already been serving as pastors, but it is a major hurdle for young men who are called to the chaplaincy before or during seminary. Fundamental churches are just learning about the great opportunity to win souls and recruit future preachers that Military Chaplains have. There are many FBFI members who were saved while serving in the military who serve as pastors today. These men, especially, should understand the strategic nature of having Bible-believing men serving alongside our troops.

There are well-educated, highly motivated young men who are as certain of their call to the chaplaincy as others are to a civilian ministry—church planting, missions, or to lead or join a local church pastoral staff. These men often have difficulty finding a place of service when pastors who need help learn that they are looking only for a “two-year position.” A great need in the FBFI is for seasoned pastors to establish full-time, two-year internships for Chaplain candidates. If no candidate is available after such a position is established, there would be no shortage of other young men seeking experience to fill the gap. We have two eager young men who will finish seminary at the end of the current semester who are ready to give you two years of hard work to qualify themselves for work that is harder than you can imagine.

EDITOR’S NOTE: *If you are interested in helping meet this need, please contact the FBFI Home Office by mail (2801 Wade Hampton Blvd., Suite 115-165, Taylors, SC 29687), e-mail (info@fbfi.org), or phone (864.268.0777 or 800.376.6856).*

Tavis J. Long



The Military Chaplain Missionary, Evangelist, or Pastor?

Is the military Chaplaincy a legitimate New Testament ministry? What, if any, is the Chaplain's affiliation with the local church? Does he lead a local church, as does a pastor? Is he a ministry of the local church, as is a "sent" missionary? Is he a tool of the local church, as is an evangelist? Or is his ministry completely manufactured and extra-Biblical? After all, the Chaplain's salary is paid by the United States government, and this can draw him dangerously close to an alliance with the State that can potentially usurp his loyalty and responsibility to the local church.

The answers to these questions can be found in analyzing the four ecclesiastical functions of church ministry as found in Ephesians 4:11: (1) apostle, (2) prophet, (3) evangelist, and (4) pastor-teacher. Therefore, if the ministry of the Chaplain is going to receive God's blessing, the Chaplain ministry cannot usurp any Biblical role but rather must be governed by Biblical principle. Any extra-Biblical creation of ministry is no better than were the scribes and Pharisees in the Gospels who sought out "salutations" (Mark 12:38) and "the uppermost seats in the synagogues" (Luke 11:43). In other words, without Scriptural backing, the military Chaplain is nothing more than a vain position with no Biblical purpose. But into which of the Biblical categories does the Chaplain fall?

Many claim the Chaplain falls into none of the categories, citing the following arguments:

- (1) He is not an apostle or prophet because doctrine teaches that these functions have ceased.
- (2) The government claims that Chaplains cannot be missionaries because that would be a violation of the First Amendment.
- (3) The military warns against Chaplains' being evan-

- gelist because they are not permitted to proselytize.
- (4) Finally, many within the local church say Chaplains are not pastors because they are not working in a local, autonomous church.

Responses 2 through 4 above are based upon misconceptions, and the truth lies in the definition and practical application of each of the functions as seen in Ephesians 4.

The Chaplain as Missionary

The functions of the apostle and prophet have long since passed away. This is because the qualifications for both can no longer be met. However, there is still a practical work of the apostle that comes in the form of a missionary to the foreign field. The word "apostle" is a transliterated word that literally means "a delegate." Both apostles and missionaries are delegated for the same purpose, but both do not have the same sending agent. The original apostles were sent out by God (Gal. 1:1), while missionaries are sent out by the local church (Acts 13:2, 3). This is the impetus of Paul's questions in Romans 10:14, 15: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" The local church has an obligation to continue the ministry, though not the office, of the apostles by deputizing and sending out missionaries to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Since the military positions, pays, and promotes the Chaplain, it is easy to assume that he answers primarily to the military, secondarily to the government, and only has a tertiary obligation to his local church. Nevertheless, the good military Chaplain reverses this order and makes

a strong local church affiliation his priority. Though the Chaplain must receive an endorsement from an ecclesiastical organization (a government requirement), that organization has virtually no authority over the Chaplain. The endorsing agency does have the power to withdraw the endorsement, thus legally disqualifying the Chaplain from military service; but this action can be very problematic, especially for those who believe the authority for ordaining ministers lies with the local church and not an outside organization. The Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International believes this to be true as well. As an endorsing agency, they understand, prefer, and require accountability between the Chaplain and his local church. The FBFH handbook for Chaplains requires that any Chaplain endorsed by the FBFH will be “sent out from his local church.” Every aspect of ministry that the Chaplain performs—from the administration of the ordinances to the Chaplain’s daily interaction through counseling—is done under the umbrella, authority, and blessing of his sending church. The FBFH merely facilitates this opportunity for local churches. The FBFH does not usurp the role of the local church but rather partners (similar to a mission agency) with local independent Fundamental Baptist churches to send men into the armed forces to speak the language of the troops, endure the hardships they endure, and reach them with the Word of Truth.

It is certain that the military Chaplaincy is not the only means to carry this message. Many argue that civilian missionaries who establish servicemen’s centers, Bible studies, and gospel-preaching churches outside the gates of military installations can more effectively reach the military masses with the gospel of Christ. Though all of these are important to spreading the gospel, only the military Chaplain can go with the men and women who receive orders to deploy to the farthest reaches of the earth. It is when those orders come that local churches can be thankful that they deputized men who willingly packed a sea bag and deployed with the unit. Only the Chaplain has the ability to respond immediately with the gospel as the serviceman prepares to enter the “valley of the shadow of death.”

The Chaplain is effectively a foreign missionary. Whether his military community is the United States Army, Navy, or Air Force, each has its own language and culture. There are many similarities between Chaplains and foreign missionaries, but there are differences. The Chaplain ministers in an institution that prides itself on being ecumenical, pluralistic, and universal. Most civilian missionaries are not faced with these types of challenges, though they certainly have their own issues to confront. Chaplains—especially evangelical, Fundamental, independent Baptist Chaplains—find it difficult, though not impossible, to navigate through these treacherous waters while still providing compassionate, faithful ministry. The Chaplain must be careful not to compromise the theological moorings of either his conscience or his sending church. After all, the Chaplain needs the authority of his local church to continue a Biblical ministry. Nevertheless, the commonality of the civilian missionary and the Chaplain missionary is

simple: both are watching for the souls of men. Both have answered the beckoning call: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me” (Isa. 6:8). This is the Chaplain as a missionary.

The Chaplain as an Evangelist

The third ecclesiastical function of the church as outlined in Ephesians 4 is one that also receives discussion regarding its current usefulness. Some believe that the functionality of the evangelist has also passed. However, the reality is that once the missionary has been sent out, he has the sole purpose of preaching the gospel. The word “evangelist” literally means “preacher of the good news.” This is a responsibility of every Christian, though there are those who have specifically dedicated themselves to doing “the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5). It is common for men to travel abroad with the sole purpose of proclaiming the gospel to churches, congregations, or any place that they can gain an audience. These men are fulfilling the spirit of Ephesians 4:11.

The military Chaplain is one who proclaims the gospel to the branch of service which he is assigned. This can present a problem, for the military adamantly opposes proselytizing. However, rather than throwing up hands in defeat because it appears that souls cannot be won for Christ, it is advantageous to understand the mission of the evangelist.

To its credit, twentieth-century Fundamentalism emphasized a confrontational approach to evangelism. The gospel will always be confrontational (Luke 14:23). However, there were many within Fundamentalism who went beyond

THE CHAPLAIN MUST BE CAREFUL NOT TO COMPROMISE THE THEOLOGICAL MOORINGS OF EITHER HIS CONSCIENCE OR HIS SENDING CHURCH.

confrontation and emphasized a brash, militant, often rude approach to sharing the gospel. This approach has little effect within the military. When it comes to evangelization, the Chaplain should keep in mind the instruction Christ gave to His disciples in Matthew 10:16: “Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”

The wisdom of evangelism is demonstrated in the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:3–9, 18–23). Some of the seed that the sower cast fell on wayside, some on the stony ground, some amongst the thorns, and some onto fertile ground. However, the most fruit was produced by the seed that fell onto the good ground. The military Chaplain must have a discerning sense of evangelism. This discernment comes by developing a relational ministry. It is vital for the Chaplain to first develop a relationship with the service member before he can provide a meaningful presentation of the gospel. This relationship is formed by the Chaplain doing “deck plate” ministry. He is not afraid to sleep on the ground with the Soldiers, hike

with the Marines, chip paint with the Sailors, or run with the Airmen. When the Chaplain spends time among the men and women in his unit, he shows himself available, approachable, and attentive. When the troops see this, it will not be long before those who are the “good ground” become apparent. The Chaplain is then in a great position to confront them with the gospel in a loving, Biblical, effective manner. This is how the Chaplain preaches Christ—not out of envy and strife with contention but out of good will and love” (Phil. 1:15–17). This is the Chaplain as an evangelist.

The Chaplain as a Pastor-Teacher

The fourth and final function is that of the pastor-teacher. This is combined into one function because 1 Timothy 3:2 says that the bishop, now commonly called a pastor, must also be an “apt” teacher. Ephesians 4:11 is the only time in the New Testament where the word “pastor” is used in reference to a ministerial title; but a pastor is not so much a position or title as it is a function. That is, the title should be conferred only upon those who are actually feeding “the flock of God . . . taking the oversight thereof” (1 Pet. 5:2). “Pastor” is a title based upon action, not merely position. Therefore, it is impossible for a pastor to not be a teacher, because if at any time his congregation fails to learn from the Scriptures, he is no longer pastoring—he is no longer “feeding the flock.”

The converse is also true. Every time a person is teaching the Scriptures, he is pastoring. This means that even a layman can fulfill the function of a pastor. Many fear such ministries among the laity; however, we should encourage any person whose knowledge of the Scripture is such that he can be a teacher (Heb. 5:12). We should enable all those whose “senses [have been] exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14). It does not take a seminary degree for those who love Christ to feed His sheep (John 21:16). It takes mature understanding of the Scriptures that can be attained as easily (and perhaps with greater effect) by years of home study as it can in the halls of academia. Military Chaplains must be teachers.

The Chaplain is often called upon to use pastoral gifts. When any military unit goes forward, it endeavors to embark as a self-sustaining entity. Each provides its own command and control, administration, operations and planning, intelligence, logistics (which includes transportation of personnel and gear, maintenance of equipment, medical staff, mess men [cooks], armory, and supply), and communications. Among the organic staff of a unit, the Chaplain is provided to ensure that the religious needs of the unit are either provided for or facilitated. This means that the young men and women leaving their churches in the continental United States are embarking for a destination where neither pastors nor their staff can go. Would it not be expedient to send a pastor with them to continue to feed them, nurture them, and counsel them in the ways of righteousness? The military Chaplain can accomplish this mission. The plethora of other denominations and religions recognize this and are sending Chaplains by the droves. Therefore, rather than sitting idly by, hoping that Christian young men and women do not get “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14), Fundamental churches must send men into the Chaplaincy to pastor those believers who have vowed to “defend the Constitution against all enemies.”

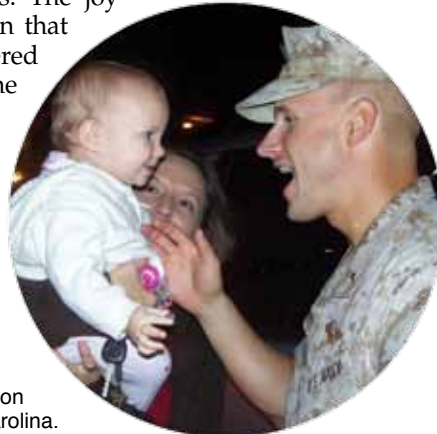
When the unit returns to garrison, the Chaplain coordinates with local, Fundamental, soul-winning, Bible-preaching churches to ensure that the souls he has pastored in combat can assemble with other believers for the sake of edification and exhortation that stems from corporate worship (Heb. 10:25). The relationship between pastors and Chaplains should be complementary, not competitive. Even the Chaplain should find a Fundamental church in which to participate. This way he too can receive regular spiritual nourishment.

By definition, therefore, the Chaplain is a pastor. Whether he is in garrison, assigned to a base chapel, or whether he is operational and deploys with a unit, he still feeds the flock. Though the base chapel is not a traditional “church,” it is still an avenue of ministry where the Chaplain must “preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). And, if he deploys, he goes forward to “give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:13). Regardless of his assignment, the Chaplain must “[hold] fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Titus 1:9). This is the Chaplain as a pastor-teacher.

Conclusion

The ministry of the military Chaplain is unique. In many ways it is truly bivocational: Chaplains are often tasked with collateral duties as military officers that they must deconflict from their ministerial duties. Physical training requirements, community qualifications (e.g., jump school, Fleet Marine Force qualification, martial arts qualifications, aircraft qualifications), social work (e.g., equal opportunity, suicidal ideations, gambling addictions, sexual harassment), and command and staff meetings are among the things that can “distract” a Chaplain from providing ministry to his unit. However, if the Chaplain is vigilant, he will view even these additional responsibilities as opportunities to minister.

The military Chaplain is definitely outside the box of traditional, local church ministry, but his is a Biblically legitimate ministry nonetheless. The Chaplain is the embodiment of a missionary, evangelist, and pastor who wears the cloth of his nation. It takes discernment, vigilance, and discipline to battle the apostasy that is prevalent in institutional ministry, but, then again, civilian ministry also has its daily battles with heresy and wickedness. The joy comes in the realization that both the Christ-centered civilian minister and the Bible-preaching military Chaplain can fellowship together as “labourers together with God” (1 Cor. 3:9).



Lieutenant Tavis J. Long, CHC, USN, is the Battalion Chaplain for 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2D Marine Division in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. In September he returned from a six-month combat tour to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He is married to Kendal and has two daughters, Karalyn and Karsen.



Gary Fisher

Hope in a Hurry

Hope—the word itself has such a positive reputation that there is no shortage of helpful quotations about it. In 1969 Hal Lindsey wrote *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Israel's Six-Day War had provoked a renewed interest in prophecy, and Lindsey's popular style made his book a sensational bestseller. Recent tensions in that region have helped Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins see their popular *Left Behind* series selling in the multiple millions. When war rages in the Middle East, observers around the world are eager for hope. On the battlefield itself, Soldiers are desperate for it.

Lindsey once expressed the view that “we can live forty days without food, eight days without water, four minutes without air, but only a few seconds without hope.” Another popular author wrote of the power of hope as though it were a force in itself:

When we are trapped in a tunnel of misery, hope points to the light at the end. When we are overworked and exhausted, hope gives us fresh energy. When we are discouraged, hope lifts our spirits. When we are tempted to quit, hope keeps us going. When we lose our way and confusion blurs the destination, hope keeps us from panic. When we struggle with a crippling disease or lingering illness, hope helps us persevere beyond the pain. When we fear the worst, hope brings reminders that God is still in control. When we must endure the consequences of bad decisions, hope fuels our recovery. When we are forced to sit back and wait, hope gives us the patience to trust. When we feel rejected and aban-

doned, hope reminds us we are not alone. When we say our final farewell to someone we love, hope in life beyond gets us through our grief. Put simply, when life hurts and dreams fade, nothing helps like hope.*

There may be some encouragement in such a description of hope, but lofty words without a foundation in objective truth can cheer the hopeless without bringing change. Faith itself is often touted as a source of strength by those who fail to base it in truth, and even love is described in terms more accurately describing lust. As an Army Chaplain, I have seen men who need hope in a hurry. They do not need a pep talk; they need truth, sometimes in the final moments of their lives. There is a difference between telling men they need hope and giving them the truth that will bring it. The Military Chaplain ministers hope in the normal challenges of life, of course, but he must be so well-versed in hope that he can hold the hand of a wounded Soldier whose life blood is soaking into the dust around him, his body shaking in fear and his eyes filled with panic, and offer him more than a soothing presence.

Real Hope

There are around 1,300 Chaplains in the United States Army. They represent a wide variety of religions and denominations. The priest who kneels beside the fallen soldier will not hesitate to administer last rites, and the defenders of ecumenism will not question him for it. The Fundamental Baptist Chaplain who is intimidated by the demands of “pluralism” will not be ready when the fallen man needs eternal hope and

needs it in a hurry. It takes presence of mind to focus on the fact that in the moment of truth what is needed is truth. When it is time to tell a Soldier, "There are two eternal things right here, right now: your soul and God's Word; we have just a few minutes to get them together," the Chaplain who knows how to do that has to see it as a God-given opportunity. If there is one thing that should characterize the life of a Bible-believing Chaplain, it is real hope.

As a Chaplain I have the responsibility to reach Soldiers who have no hope, whether they are facing death or struggling with life. Every imaginable problem that life can bring happens to our Soldiers. Crises of every kind—physical, spiritual, financial, family, and every possible combination of them—are present in almost any group. They have tried cheering each other up, drowning their problems in alcohol or drugs, and even visiting the Chaplains, some of whom are helpful and some of whom have problems themselves. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life" (Prov. 13:12). The Soldier who comes for hope should not be turned away heartsick. Many of our young Soldiers are in a desperate struggle for hope. They are chasing empty promises and holding false hope. They cannot find lasting hope in anything they try. They have tried religious fads, psychology, success books, and hammering it out in their own minds, hoping in personal strength and determination. They move from one thing to another like children playing with one toy after another. They indulge in addictions; they move from one partner to another; they are in an endless pursuit to dull the pain of lives that are empty of hope. I have heard them ask, "Is there any hope? Is there any hope? How are we going to get through this?" I must provide a "spiritual presence" in my unit, but that must have meaning. I must be dedicated to the message of the gospel—the only message of true hope. I must be ready with hope in a hurry.

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 15:13). God is the source of hope! He alone is the Creator and Author of hope. Hope is a characteristic of our God. As His messengers, we must be messengers of His hope.

The Hope of the Gospel

Whenever I talk to a Soldier, my focus must be to offer "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). We have no other message. We need no other message. I am not a social worker, even though I may be called upon to provide practical assistance in certain situations. I am not a life coach, even though I may counsel young people about life decisions and coach them toward a positive outcome. (How can anyone attempt effective suicide intervention apart from "Christ in you, the hope of glory"?) I am a Fundamental Baptist US Army Chaplain—I am simply a messenger of the hope of the gospel.

As a Chaplain I try to follow three guiding principles to make me an effective messenger of this hope. First, I want

AS A CHAPLAIN, I'M NOT OFFERING A HOPELESS RELIGION, BECAUSE IT IS "NOT BY WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH WE HAVE DONE, BUT ACCORDING TO HIS MERCY HE SAVED US."

to embody hope in my own life. I care. I want my Soldiers to have hope. I have a bright light that must shine in a dark place. My own hope helps me to be always ready to listen and eager to share the load of a Soldier's burden. My own hope-producing faith is the evidence of the Lord's work in my own life, "knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:3-5).

Second, as a Chaplain I want to be a link to life. The stock-in-trade of the Armed Forces is "armed force." It is unavoidably bound up in the potential for destruction and death. I must be a symbol of all that is good about life—of the values that are worth defending. I must have strong character and unshakable confidence, a good sense of humor, and a current perspective on what is happening in the lives of Soldiers. By God's grace I must show a profound patience with people who are hurting. The ability to form relationships that give meaning and purpose to life is a true link to life for those who are struggling, even with whether to go on living. Never forget that ultimate hope is hope in eternal life.

As a Chaplain, I'm not offering a hopeless religion, because it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5-7). My ministry goal is that my Soldiers will become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

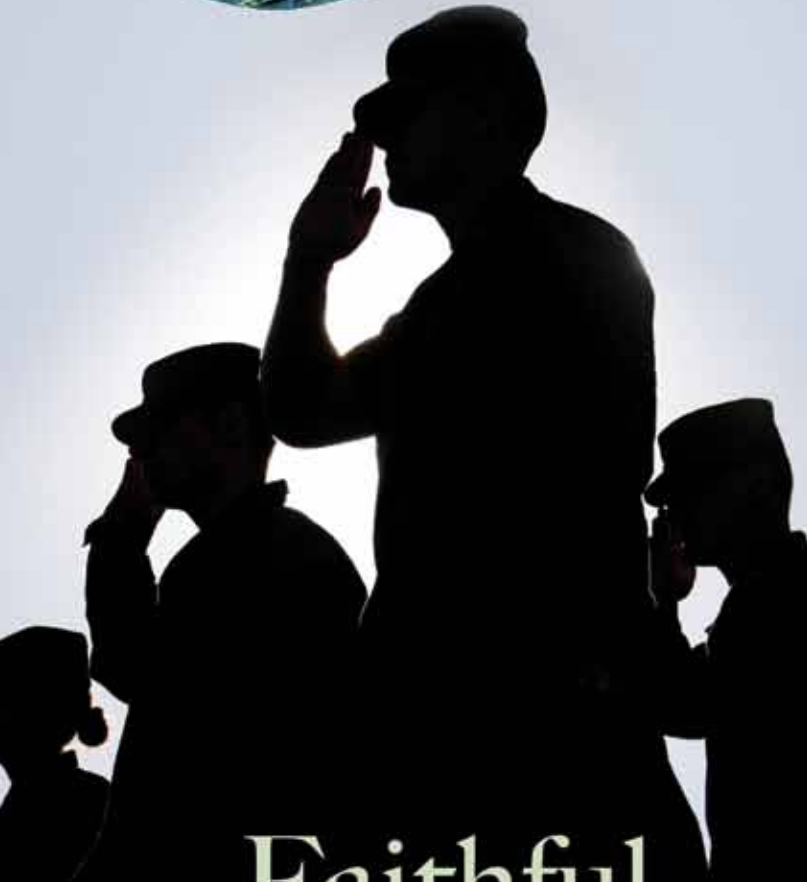
Third, I want to be a Chaplain who has real answers for real questions. I am ready with the answer for the hope which is within me, as 1 Peter 3:15 tells me to be: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." I can be prompt but patient with God's powerful answers. God's Word enables me to turn a Soldier's doubt into dependence on God. Soldiers are often in a hurry—even when they have to obey the well-known principle of "hurry up and wait." I want to be a Chaplain who knows when to tell them to hurry up and wait . . . on God!

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* Chuck Swindoll, *Hope Again* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1996), p. xi.



Scott M. Bullock



Faithful Ministry within the US Military Chaplaincy's Pluralistic Environment

Have you heard about the Muslim imam, Buddhist monk, Jewish rabbi, Catholic priest, and Baptist pastor who all joined together for the same ministry class and coffee?

An Open Minefield

Does this sound like a joke opening, or does it describe a rare interfaith gathering? Possibly both, but where I serve—at the US Army Chaplain Center and School (www.usachcs.army.mil)—this is a regular event. With a cadre of twenty-seven Chaplains, this school trains over four hundred Regular (Active) National Guard and Reserve Component Chaplains and Chaplain Candidates annually. It models an environment of religious pluralism that exists throughout the Armed Forces. Pluralism poses a tremendous challenge for all Chaplains ministering in the military. It tests the limits or resolve of one's faith convictions yet also bolsters the legal basis for the Chaplain's very existence. Fundamentalist Chaplains must wisely maneuver through pluralism's open minefield to avoid compromising Biblical truth. Amid today's rising ecumenical pressure, FBFI Chaplains need your earnest prayer and local church support. Your support encourages our Chaplains to fulfill God's calling as faithful disciplinarians of Jesus Christ in the US Military.

The FBFI¹ must first know and then must articulate to its people how the Department of Defense (DOD) defines religious pluralism. I claim the DOD's definition because Biblical Fundamentalists justly abhor how mainstream *civilian* religiosity defines pluralism. Try googling "religious pluralism" and you will find a plethora of opinions and means to attain it. For example, the Wikipedia entry summarizes religious pluralism as "a loosely defined expression concerning acceptance of different religions." And, further, "the worldview according to which one's religion is not the sole and exclusive source of truth," or, "acceptance of the concept that two or more religions with mutually exclusive claims are equally valid." Additionally, pluralism is ecumenism on steroids. If you have a "coexist" bumper sticker with the various major religious symbols on your car, you advertise yourself as a pluralist. Evangelical apologists such as Ravi Zacharias are justified in refuting this relativism masquerading as pluralism. While I reject philosophical pluralism, I fight to ensure the freedom underpinning it for all Americans.

But it's crucial to note that the DOD does not and will not enforce the above commonly held definition for religious pluralism. Properly defined in the military context, religious pluralism is simply the reality of a constitutionally mandated interfaith body of spiritual leaders providing for the free expression of religion for all servicemen² and their families. This expresses the collective effort to uphold the First Amendment rights for all our citizen-servicemen. The First Amendment to our Constitution states, "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." These precious freedoms act as a dual-edged sword, cutting two ways for Chaplains.

A Dual-Edged Sword

First, like all Americans, our servicemen are free from the establishment of any state religion.³ The existence of compensated Chaplains does not contradict the Constitution's establishment clause. Neither is the military chapel an endorsement of government religion despite enjoying free facilities, utilities, and ministers. Chaplains execute the constitutional intent by representing their faith group or church to the military while providing for the free exercise of religion for all under their spiritual care. They do not establish independent local churches from their sending faith groups. Chaplains are not church planters. They are best understood as what I call *missionary-evangelists* to the military. We are called of God, recognized by Fundamental Baptist churches through ordination to the gospel ministry, and sent to bear the precious gospel of saving grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone to men and women serving in uniform. Most Chaplain ministry is gospel- and discipleship-centered. However, groups such as the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) under Mickey Weinstein chafe and misunderstand the freedom Chaplains enjoy. They determine to censor evangelical Chaplains in particular from any *evangelizing*, equating this with *proselytizing*, which is prohibited. The military defines evangelizing differently from proselytizing. Chaplains are free to evangelize all self-proclaimed unaffiliated, nonreligious members or especially anyone who initiates inquiry about faith. Chaplains may not actively engage to convert those declared members of another faith group to their own church group. Proselytizing happens when I go out of my way to Catholic, Muslim, or Jewish Soldiers and pressure them to convert and join an Independent Fundamental Baptist church outside the post gate.

Second, the First Amendment forbids prohibiting the free exercise of religion. This central legal right is critical to our Chaplains' legitimate existence. Simply put, how will the military provide for the free expression of religion to servicemen especially when deployed? Good question. This is why the Supreme Court upheld the military's right to employ Chaplains in the 1986 *Katcoff v. Marsh* ruling. If Congress did not establish a Chaplaincy, it would deny servicemen the right to exercise their religion freely, given the deployable nature of the Armed Forces.⁴ This reality describes the military's pluralistic environment. Chaplains are commissioned by Congress to provide for the free exercise of religion according to the Constitution's free expression clause, the primary legal basis for faith-based ministry in the military.

Definition vs. Application

Defining pluralism and its legal justification is simpler than applying pluralism in the military context. The Chaplain's officer commission requires subordination to superior officers and the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Couple this demand alongside faithful adherence to one's divine calling, faith tenets, and ordination vows and you create tension for all Chaplains. For example, all Chaplains must maintain a good relationship with their representative faith group by ecclesiastical endorsement. I am grateful for the FBFI as my own endorser. These endorsers demand accountability of Chaplains through quarterly reports, church membership, and upholding their doctrinal statement. I believe this inevitable tension between our calling as an officer loyal to the president and superior officers and my loyalty to the Holy God is tough but good. It demands our solemn prayer on behalf of Chaplains for wisdom and faithfulness to God first and country. Maybe this is why the Army's Chaplain Corps motto is *Pro Deo et Patria*, "For God and Country."

I asserted earlier that pluralism in the Chaplaincy was like an open minefield. Pluralism's potential application has its obstacles though open to plain sight. I do not believe the military's pluralism sets up our conservative Chaplains for failure. On the contrary, it ensures freedom to minister in addition to providing escape routes from seemingly mandatory compromise. One must simply be wise in maneuvering the obstacles of compromise. To illustrate, I remember time spent with the mechanized combat engineers of the proud 3rd Infantry Division. They used a weapon system called the Volcano Mine Dispenser to deploy airborne-dropped unexploded ordinance called FASCAM (Family of Scatterable Mines). Chaplains similarly face a figurative narrow pass filled with FASCAM lying around while serving in military ministry. But they need not fear when practical solutions abound for those desiring to reflect God's glory.

Tactical Evasion

One means to negotiate pluralism's minefield is what I call *tactical evasion*. First, this does not mean avoiding or eluding any gospel ministry. Neither is this theological or doxological compromise. I do not mean the Chaplain shirking an opportunity to boldly proclaim Biblical truth

[THE MILITARY'S PLURALISM] ENSURES FREEDOM TO MINISTER IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING ESCAPE ROUTES FROM SEEMINGLY MANDATORY COMPROMISE.

out of fear of supervisory Chaplains and superior officers. Tactical evasion means following our Savior's admonition in Matthew 10:16 to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." Just as serpents illustrate knowing their limits and avoiding danger and doves picture a gracious believer who does not forcibly oppose the enemy,⁵ so Fundamental Chaplains must exercise wise discretion in military ministry.

For example, Chaplains typically enjoy the freedom to lead worship at those chapel services they identify with

in faith and tradition. It goes without saying that FBFI Chaplains gravitate toward those services that most reflect their conservative background in both worship style and theology. Yet this is an ongoing challenge. Sometimes there is a void of strong, conservative, evangelical Chaplains nearby at smaller installations or while deployed at various FOBs (Forward Operating Bases). Additionally, the Chiefs of Chaplains' policy for all active-duty Chaplains is to attend at least three chapel services each month. Chaplains may fulfill this obligation while ministering in a solitary role apart from cooperation with other Chaplains in youth ministry, leading the chapel Bible study, or by planning and leading chapel fellowship programs. I am grateful for the current majority of other evangelical men faithful to the inspiration of Scripture, the Bible's place of supreme spiritual authority, and their commitment to faithfully and accurately proclaim the gospel. I can serve on the chapel platform with these men.

Savvy Intelligence

Finally, Chaplains may navigate pluralism's minefield with *savvy intelligence*. Just as British General Sir Bernard Montgomery defeated Germany's *Afrika Korps* in Libya during World War II with superior intelligence in better minefield maps, so Chaplains avoid compromise by knowing and using military policy and regulation. Part of being "wise as serpents" means knowing your limits and rights regardless of the event—whether a simple Bible study, voluntarily attended chapel service, or mandatory military ceremony. For example, there is a difference between the local church and the chapel. Simply, the chapel is not a local church, so I can participate in worship with people whom I would not find in my independent Fundamental Baptist church.

Likewise, there's a difference between voluntarily attendance at a chapel service and a mandatory event such as a funeral ceremony, change of command, or graduation. Chaplains are often called to provide the invocation at such events. Make no mistake about it, Chaplains are free to pray according to their faith convictions. The Army Chief of Chaplains' policy on prayer is "no policy." We cannot regulate prayer. But wisdom must prevail. I believe our FBFI Chaplains should pray in a Christocentric manner. I often pray "in the name of my Lord and Savior" or "in the Name above all other names." I believe that faithfully praying Christ-centered prayers at all events while honoring the Soldiers forced to be in front of me gains Divine favor.

Our FBFI Chaplains must also be savvy about ways out of compromising events. When I served a year away from family in Korea at Camp Humphreys, I was tasked by my supervisory Chaplain to preach at the Easter Sunrise Service. What a privilege, I thought. Then I saw it, a mine right in front of me. I saw the worship bulletin had me following the Catholic priest and the Latter Day Saints Chaplains, who were providing the Scripture readings and prayers in the same service. *What do you do, Chaplain?*

First, I requested a humble release since I cannot worship in good conscience with non-Trinitarians or those who preach another gospel. This did not go over very well. I was rebuffed with "this is your worship obligation." Well. That was patently false. I was finally forced to appeal to Army policy in AR 165-1, where no Chaplain is required to perform worship outside of his or her faith convictions. We teach at the Chaplain School the central doctrine that Chaplains must *provide* for the free exercise of religion but not necessarily *perform* it. We do this by finding an appropriate Chaplain who will meet the worship obligation. For example, in any one of my past eight battalions, if one of my Catholic Soldiers requested the Eucharist, Absolution, or any other sacrament, I simply found the nearest Catholic priest. This is not compromise; it enables Chaplains to fulfill their constitutional obligation while retaining their own freedom of faith and conscience.

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It hath been a frequent observation, that if one Generation begins to decline, the next that followeth usually grows worse, and so on; till God poureth out His Spirit again upon them.

—Samuel Willard
(1640-1707)

Our Hope Is in the LORD

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Contribution without Compromise

Further, we teach our brand-new Chaplains at Ft. Jackson to exercise savvy intelligence amid pluralism by communicating their faith seasoned with grace. Nobody likes arrogant, selfish Chaplains with a “chip on the shoulder” attitude. If you typically pontificate a “my way or the highway” attitude or always draw a circle in the sand as a response to difficult situations, the military will limit your ministry opportunities.

I am differentiating here between a fighting, mean-spirited attitude and one of grace, looking for satisfactory solutions for all. They abound! The bottom line is that Chaplains must find those ways they can contribute to the ministry effort at their installation without compromising the gospel among those who reject it.

Religious pluralism is often misunderstood or feared by those unfamiliar with the military. I am often asked, “How can you serve in the ecumenical military without compromise? Does the military forbid praying in Jesus’ name? Are Wiccan Chaplains coming? How can you work right next to a senior Muslim imam in the cubicle next to you at the Chaplain School?” All these are good questions and merit good answers.

I trust this article fuels more gospel light than needless controversial heat. May this illuminate for our readers the tension and challenges coupled with the joy and opportunities of ministry to the military. Please pray that God would place our FBFI Chaplains in positions of strategic influence to make an impact for Christ in the military. Please pray for

much-needed daily wisdom, discretion, and faithful ministry.

Chaplain (MAJ) Scott M. Bullock currently serves as the Training Developer and a Small Group Leader for the Army’s Chaplain Basic Officer Leader Course (CH-BOLC) within the US Army Chaplain Center and School (USACHCS) at Ft. Jackson, South Carolina. He has served nearly thirteen years on active duty in various battalion and staff assignments including two deployments to Kuwait and Iraq. His e-mail is scott.bullock1@us.army.mil.


¹ I could simply say “Fundamental Christians” instead of “FBFI.” I specifically hold in mind our constituent local church pastors’ ability to grasp and articulate the challenges of pluralism in the military. It starts with a proper definition which then qualifies its application.

² I use “servicemen” collectively for both men and women in uniform as Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen.


³ We know the United Kingdom, like most European nations, maintains a state church. I served with a few Church of England (Anglican) Chaplains serving Her Majesty’s Royal Marine Commandos while deployed to Iraq. They explained the majority of their small Chaplain Corps are Anglican since “that’s Her Majesty’s church,” while others, such as mainstream Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians, were permitted the *privilege* to serve if approved by their Defense Ministry. The US military places all faith groups and endorses on an equal footing. This is a key principle of pluralism.

⁴ Richard D. Rosen, *University of Toledo Law Review*, Vol. 38. See www.usafa.edu/isme/ISME07/Rosen07.html.

⁵ Louis A. Barbieri Jr., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Chariot Victor Publishing, Colorado Springs, 1983), p. 42.



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Combat Ministry

Fifteen Months in Iraq with the 82nd Airborne Division



Doug Nab

As a US Army Chaplain endorsed by FBFI, I returned home in November 2007 after a fifteen-month deployment with an infantry battalion from the 82nd Airborne Division. My hope in writing this is to share both the wonderful blessings of ministry in a combat environment and also some of the tragedies and hardships. I have never experienced the hand of the Lord as I have while serving as a Chaplain. It is certainly a privilege to share with you not what I did in Iraq, but what God has done.

The Army has a philosophy of ministry or mission for Chaplains. Their ministry is threefold: Honor the dead, care for the wounded, and nurture the living. A Chaplain is challenged to bring God to Soldiers and Soldiers to God. I tried to do this as I ministered to the brave young paratroopers in my unit. I tried to share the peace and hope found in the Lord during times of chaos, fear, guilt, and grief.

Nurturing the Living

First of all, I would like to share the blessings of nurturing the living. A large number of young Soldiers whom I serve have little or no church background. They do not understand anything about God except how to take His Name in vain. Yet God has a plan for them, and I believe they need to see a real Christian before they will consider the Christ of Scripture. A “ministry of presence” is how a Chaplain can show his Soldiers a real Christian. I am not referring to the stereotypical “candy man” whom the Soldiers scoff at. I am talking about a Chaplain who will run, road march, and jump out of airplanes with his Soldiers.

The best example of a ministry of presence that I can share deals with a mission involving my Scout platoon.

Our Scout platoon received a mission to go to a place in Iraq before the rest of the battalion. (I have to be vague for obvious reasons.) The platoon had lost its leader to injuries in the previous mission. Our battalion as a whole was a bit shaken up. I asked my chain of command if I could accompany the platoon on the mission. I got the thumbs-up, and so I was an honorary member of the Scout platoon.

That night when we jumped on the helicopter to take off for the mission was one of the highlights of my time as a Chaplain. I was somewhat nervous about getting dropped off in the desert, yet I knew that the Lord was with us. I had prayed with the Scouts before we took off. I trusted the Lord would protect us all throughout the mission. I was sitting in the door of the helicopter as it took off. A young Scout leaned over and shouted above the rotors, “Chaplain, I am sure glad you are with us tonight.” I believe that I was a tangible reminder to these young men that God had not forgotten them and that He was with them in battle.

The mission went as planned that night. As I walked through the desert without a weapon, I thought of how my seminary training had not prepared me for this. Yet God’s grace was sufficient. The words of Hebrews comforted me as we conducted the mission: “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” His presence made all the difference in my ministry to the men of that Scout platoon. Sometimes, the Scouts are considered a bit crazy. I think after that night the Scouts thought the Chaplain was as “crazy” as they were. I was able to have a fruitful ministry in the days that followed with these young men.

Another example of nurturing the living in combat is the chapel service. I preached to over forty men at different



FBFI Chaplain Roger Rodriguez prays with his men before leaving on a maneuver.

times—and sometimes to as few as two. I preached in a tent with no air conditioning in August. I preached to a group of Soldiers with the sound of mortars in the background. I had Bible studies in the living areas of our Soldiers. God opened many doors to share His Word and blessed in spite of circumstances and ability.

One young man who trusted Christ in the chapel ministry was our welder. He was a young Hispanic man who had come from a Catholic background. After his salvation I explained to him the importance of baptism. He was all for it, except we didn't have a place to baptize him. I couldn't take him outside the wire to the Euphrates River. Snipers would have been too strong a possibility. This young man was not to be deterred. He took sheets of diamond-cut metal (the stuff truck tool boxes are made of) and welded them together to make a huge baptistry. He made it right, with no leaks, a cap around the top so I wouldn't cut myself when lowering the Soldiers under the water, and steps so Soldiers could climb into it.

My first line supervisor, the battalion executive officer, hemmed me up in a meeting and asked about all the metal I had wasted. I explained that the metal was not wasted but was now the finest combat-ready baptistry in Iraq. He said that I had better baptize a lot of Soldiers to make up for the use of the metal. I told him I would like nothing better.

Three Soldiers were baptized at our first baptismal service. We set up outside the tent chapel, and many came to see the service, some who didn't come to chapel. The first Soldier I baptized in Iraq was the

young welder. It seemed only fitting that since he made the baptistry that he should be first.

There are many other stories of lives encouraged, souls saved, and reconciliation of wayward believers in the chapel services. I just wanted to share how God worked in the life of one young man and also provided a baptistry for the unit.

The ministry of nurturing the living is a vast area in combat ministry. It consisted of such events as a prayer before a convoy; eating dinner in the chow hall with a group of Soldiers; listening to the struggles of a marriage from a lonely husband; working out at the gym with a platoon leader; providing Scripture verses to begin daily meetings for the commander; and many other ways of being there for the Soldiers. I am so thankful for the privilege of serving alongside the brave young paratroopers of my battalion. I trust the Lord allowed me to make an impression on these young men at some of the most challenging times in their lives.

Caring for the Wounded

Another focus of the Chaplain ministry in combat is caring for the wounded. Our battalion had its share of wounded Soldiers. I traveled to hospitals all over Iraq. For those who lose sight of the great price of war, seeing the torn bodies of young men is an overwhelming reminder. I had previously served as the pastor of a small church in North Carolina. I had been to hospitals and even sat by the bedsides of those who passed away. Yet nothing could have prepared me for what I saw in the hospitals of Iraq.



FBFI Chaplain Michael Barnette participates in casualty care training.

I saw Soldiers who had been burned over most of their bodies. I saw young men who had lost limbs as a result of roadside bombs. I saw Iraqi children burned and injured by shrapnel. I saw one of my own Soldiers who had been shot in the neck and paralyzed from the neck down. I also saw the Lord's mercies amidst all the suffering. He provided strength through the most challenging of times. One morning at the hospital in Baghdad, I sat down and wept. I prayed, "Lord, I don't know how to deal with all of this. These young men are dying and others are hurt so bad." The Lord gave grace, and Matthew 11:28-30 became very real in my heart. I had to give all of my burdens to the Lord to continue ministering to the wounded of my battalion.

One young man whom I ministered to in the hospital had been hit by a mortar blast. A friend of his had been killed in the same attack. I walked into the room where he was lying and held his hand. I could see where shrapnel had torn open his body in many places. I thanked God that he had not been killed. When he opened his eyes, he saw it was his Chaplain. He said, "Chaplain, am I going to die? Don't lie to me, I want to know." I told him that he was not going to die. He was going home, and he would get better in the days ahead. He then asked me to call his mother. "Please sir, she needs to know that I am all right." I had to turn my head because I was crying. How could I talk to this young man's mother? His request was so urgent that I agreed to do it. So after praying with him, I went to the phones.

His mother had been told that her son had been injured, but that was about it. She had a lot of questions. Some answers I could give her, and some I could not. I promised her that her son had come through the surgery and would be back in the States soon. He would have a time of rehabilitation, but he would be able to walk. Before I hung up, with tears in her voice, she thanked me for being there for her son. She asked me to take care of her boy, because he was her only child. I told her I would do my best and that I was praying for her.

I escorted that young man from the hospital to the helicopter that would begin his journey home. He was later medically discharged for the injuries he received. I saw an article about him later on. It was an interview of him and his mother at a hospital here in the States. It was an incredible blessing to see them united again. That event was certainly one of the most difficult I experienced while in Iraq. However, being there for that young man and his mother hopefully helped them through the worst night of their lives.

Honoring the Dead

Chaplains also have the awesome responsibility of honoring the dead. Our battalion lost thirteen Soldiers during the fifteen-month deployment. I was responsible for the planning and performance of memorial ceremonies for these men. I was also a part of rampside ceremonies where the deceased were taken from the battlefield to a casualty reception center. I also conducted follow-on ministry to the families of our deceased Soldiers. Those who fall in service for their country deserve the highest honors. A Chaplain in combat is considered the subject-matter expert on how to render the proper honors.

Our battalion experienced a terrible tragedy in the fourteenth month of our deployment. We lost seven Soldiers in one morning due to a horrendous accident. My chain of command and I rushed to the hospital that morning to see the wounded. I walked into the emergency room as soon as we got to the hospital.

I knew where I was going, and the staff allowed Chaplains a great deal of freedom. As I walked in, I saw one of our Soldiers in the corner of the room. The nurse informed me that he had died just a few minutes earlier. I asked if his friends could see him. They asked me to wait a few minutes so that they could clean him up.

I led a group of five young men into the room to see their friend who had just passed away. These young Paratroopers were consumed with grief. One of the Soldiers asked if I could pray for the family of his friend. So I put my hands on the shoulders of two of the Soldiers and prayed for the Soldier's family, his buddies, and our unit. I sensed God's presence in that hospital room. He gives peace in the midst of storms.

Later that day I escorted the deceased Soldiers from the hospital to the helicopter that would begin the journey back to the States. I watched as the young men wept as they placed their deceased friends on the helicopter. I watched as many of the staff and patients came out to honor these fallen heroes. A crowd of nearly sixty people stood at attention and saluted as these fallen Soldiers were leaving the hospital. One young man saluted from a wheelchair. Our deceased heroes were treated with honor and respect.

The privilege of serving in combat with the members of our nation's military is a tremendous honor. I experienced some of the greatest times and heartbreaking events while in Iraq. I saw souls saved and lives lost in this fifteen-month crucible. God was with us during this long and difficult deployment. His mercy endures forever, and His faithfulness is unwavering.

This is part of my story of serving in combat with the brave Soldiers of the 82nd Airborne Division. I encourage you to continue praying for the young men and women of our Armed Forces and the faithful Chaplains who serve alongside them. *Pro Deo et Patria.*

Chaplain (CPT) Doug Nab is currently serving as an FBFI Chaplain in the United States Army Special Operations Command. He is married to his high school sweetheart, Kristi. They have two daughters, Kelli and Kayti, and currently reside in Cameron, North Carolina.



FBFI Chaplain Mike Shellman baptizing in the field.

A Biblical Formula for Stress



Robert Spivey

Stress has become a way of life for many today. We live in a world of stressed-out people. In the military environment, I have Sailors and Marines who come to me all the time who are really stressed out! With the long work schedules and constant deployments, it takes a toll on the body as well as the family. Some people claim that they need stress in order to function properly. They claim that they need stress to push them to excellence. But at the end of the day, they are still stressed out.

We are also living in an age of anxiety. Today we talk about burnout like no other time in history. There are more emotional disorders as a result of stress and anxiety than ever before. What can we do about it? Is it possible to live a stress-free life? Can we rise above the pressures of life?

Does Christ make a difference? Most Christians would say that He does. If He does, then what difference is He making in your life? Does Christ make a difference in how you handle the pressure and stresses of life?

In Philippians 4:4-7, the apostle Paul gives us a number of commands to follow and enlightens us as to the result of following those commands. We find in these commands the keys to stress-free living. As we put these principles into practice, our character is further transformed into the image of Christ. Let's take a look at these five characteristics of stress-free living.

1. A Rejoicing Heart (v. 4)

God wants us to have joy! It is important for us to understand this and to realize that it is true. Not everyone believes this. In fact, some people view God as a killjoy. They see God as someone trying to keep us from having any fun.

But this is a wrong view of God. This should not be surprising, because there are so many wrong views of God. Most people do not really have a proper understanding of the true God. I remember hearing a close Chaplain friend of mine say that whenever someone came up to him and declared, "I don't believe in God!" that he would reply, "Tell me what kind of God you do believe in; I probably don't believe in that kind of God either." The truth is that many people have mistaken notions about God. They get them from many places—sometimes even from Christians themselves.

But we know from the Bible that Jesus wants us to have joy. He tells us in John 15:11, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your

joy might be full." In other words, He has not come to take away our joy but rather to give us joy. In another place He says that He came to give us abundant life. He didn't come to give us the capacity to merely exist. He came to complete our joy, to make it full!

Now, in our text we are told to rejoice always. Always? Is this possible? How can we possibly do this? If Paul means that we are supposed to rejoice *for* everything that happens to us, it is impossible. But that is not what he is saying.

In Thessalonians we are told that we should give thanks in everything. Again, we're not told to give thanks *for* everything. We are told to give thanks *in* everything. There is a big difference. If I were to trip and fall down the stairs and break my leg, I might say, "God, thank You that I didn't break my neck!" You see, in every situation there is something for which we can be grateful.

We can always be thankful for God's mercy, for His grace, for His love, and for His perfect provision for every situation. We are blessed beyond what we realize.

What brings you joy? Think about that. Meditate on that. Focus on that. Write it down. Post it on your bathroom mirror so you can remind yourself of all that you have to be grateful for. And rejoice in it.

As you begin to rejoice, you will begin to be encouraged. Remember, there is always something for which to rejoice. Ask God to give you a rejoicing heart.

2. A Gentle Spirit (v. 5)

The word "moderation" is another word for a gentle spirit. We must develop a gentle spirit. Our gentleness is to be evident to all, characterizing our lives as followers of Jesus Christ. It certainly characterized Christ's life.

Gentleness is not weakness. In fact, I really believe that gentleness is a characteristic of strength. It takes a strong person to truly be gentle.

Gentleness is a lack of striving, of arguing, of demanding, of manipulating. It shows strength of character. It shows that you have security in what you believe. When someone knows what he or she believes, there is no need to argue about it. If someone doesn't agree with us, our faith is not shaken. There is no need to panic. We can be calm and gentle.

Gentleness also helps us communicate God's truth to others. Notice that in 2 Timothy 2:24, 25 Paul instructs his young

apprentice how to communicate God's truth to others: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." You can't argue people into Heaven or into believing the truth. And Jesus never tried to do this. He simply stated the truth and left it with the people. If they believed it, fine. If they did not, He did not shout it a little louder; He simply let them think about it.

When you argue, you simply escalate the stress. In Proverbs 15:1 we are told that "a soft answer turneth away wrath." It takes two to argue.

Remember, a gentle spirit reflects the character of Christ, and becoming like Christ is the goal for every Christian. That is our calling. When the world looks at us, we want them to see something of Jesus Christ in our lives.

3. An Unanxious Attitude (v. 6a)

Another essential element in developing a stress-free lifestyle is cultivating an unanxious attitude. Scripture says, "Be careful for nothing." The exhortation is basically "do not be anxious about anything." In our culture of anxiety, here is another command that sounds impossible.

What do you worry about? What are your anxieties? People worry about so many things today. They worry about their jobs. They worry about money. They worry about their marriages. They worry about their children. They worry about the past, the present, and the future. They worry about paying their bills. They worry about their investments. And they worry about their retirement. They worry about their health. They even worry about their relationship with God.

How much good does worry do? The simple answer is none—none whatsoever. The truth is that you generally can't change the thing that you are worrying about. All your worrying is wasted. Jesus told us in Matthew 6:25, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" The real antidote to worry is simple trust in God. God loves you. God is in control. God wants the best for you. You can trust Him with your life and with your fears. So why worry? Trust God instead!

An unanxious attitude grows out of faith in the goodness of God. As we relax and rest in God's perfect plan for our lives, we will find that worry and anxiety disappear in the light of His love.

4. A Prayerful Lifestyle (v. 6b)

In order to really be free from anxiety, however, we must develop a prayerful lifestyle. This is what makes an unanxious attitude possible.

The message is simple: Don't panic—pray! Take the time that you would spend worrying and spend that time in prayer. Replace worry with prayer. Pray so much that worry has to take a number and stand in line.

We are exhorted to pray about everything. In other words, there is nothing too small to pray about. We are never bothering God with things too small for Him to be concerned about. And we are encouraged to come to Him

and cast all our care upon Him. First Peter 5:7 states that we are to "[cast] all [our] care upon him; for he careth for [us]."

The way you cast your cares on him is by prayer. It is through prayer that we lay our burdens at Jesus' feet. It is much like the release we get when we share a need or burden with a friend. Even sharing the burden makes a difference. A load is lifted from our shoulders. And so it is with God. Sharing our burden in prayer rolls that burden off of our shoulders onto God's.

So don't worry about anything, but pray about everything. Prayer must become a lifestyle for us, not simply an emergency response to a crisis situation. Prayer, you see, brings us into communication with God. By prayer we come to know God personally. By prayer we come to be able to hear His voice. Prayer changes things, and it changes you. And prayer makes things happen. God answers prayer.

James 4:2 states, "Ye have not, because ye ask not." One of the major reasons people do not receive what they need from God is that they do not ask God for what they need. We need to ask. And we need to keep asking until our prayers are answered, either by a no or by a yes. Remember, there is nothing too big for God to handle or too small for you to pray about.

5. A Peaceful Mind (v. 7)

The result of all of this is peace—a peaceful mind, which is a rare thing in our world. We live in a world of turmoil. All you need to do is take a brief look at the nightly news. Bad things happen. They happen every day, everywhere, in our town, in our neighborhood, and to people we know. They happen to us.

But for Christians there is a promise of peace. It is a peace that transcends all understanding. In other words, this is a peace in the midst of turmoil. It is a peace that enables us to rise above the circumstances. Listen to the words of Jesus in John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Jesus wants us to have the kind of peace that sets us apart from others in the world. He wants us to have a peace that amazes the world. He wants His peace in us to be a testimony of His reality and His power. The key is found in Isaiah 26:3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Perfect peace comes when we keep focused on God. We must fix our attention on Him, not on our circumstances. We must pray, read His Word, meditate upon His promises. Verse 7 also promises that God's peace will "keep [our] hearts and minds." The word translated "keep" is a military term that means "guard." It means to set up a garrison around. In other words, God protects our hearts and minds like an army protects its vital resources.

A peaceful mind is a testimony to the world of God's power in our lives. It is the result of a rejoicing heart, a gentle spirit, an unanxious attitude, and a prayerful lifestyle. It is the opposite of the stress-filled life that many live today. Is there a lot of stress in your life today? You can live a stress-free life by trusting Christ for everything.

Chaplain (LT) Spivey is currently stationed at Commander Strike Fighter Wing, US Pacific Fleet, in Naval Air Station Lemoore, California. He and his wife, Sarah, reside in Hanford, California.

2010 Meetings

January 25–26, 2010
Rocky Mountain Regional Fellowship
Faith Baptist Church
833 Fifteenth Avenue
Longmont, CO 80501
303.776.5655

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

March 15–17, 2010
Washington State Regional Fellowship
First Baptist Church
511 State Street
Sedro Woolley, WA 98284
360.855.1100
Rev. Richard Coursen Jr.

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 14–18, 2010
Annual Chaplain Training
Tri-City Baptist Church
6953 West 92nd Lane
Westminster, CO 80021
303.424.2287

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

2011 Meetings

June 21–23, 2011
Pacific Rim Regional Fellowship
Harvest Baptist Church
PO Box 23189
Barrigada, GU 96921
GUAM
671.477.6341

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SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

More Bible, Better Bible in 2010

Maybe you've heard what the Massachusetts Historical Society has done. It's posted online all fifty-one volumes of the private diaries of John Quincy Adams, sixth president of the United States. Unfortunately, they're not yet searchable by key word or phrase. But just today I came across an entry that stood my conscience up straight.

The entry is dated August 31, 1809. Adams, forty-two years old, is crossing the dark Atlantic from Boston to Denmark with his wife, Louisa Catherine, and their two-year-old son, Charles. He's on his way to St. Petersburg, where he will assume the duties of America's first diplomat to Russia. On this day Adams makes notes about how he spends his time aboard ship. *I rise about six o'clock, often earlier, he records. Read ten or fifteen chapters in the Bible. We breakfast about 9.*

Ten or fifteen chapters? Before breakfast? Surely there must be some reasonable explanation that accounts for this remarkable feat. There is. Adams continues, There is much time for study and for meditation at sea, and when the weather is as moderate as we have generally had it hitherto upon this passage, a person capable of useful application may employ his time to as great advantage as on shore.

Oh, so that explains it. Lots of leisurely time on his hands.

But during his years in St. Petersburg, Adams wrote a series of letters to one of the sons he'd left behind in the United States. It has to do with the Bible and its teachings. While urging his boy to read the Bible every day, he relates his own example. *I have myself for*

many years made it a practice to read through the Bible once every year. . . . My custom is, to read four or five chapters every morning, immediately after rising from my bed. It employs about an hour of my time.

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

John Quincy Adams was not a preacher. He never planted or pastored a church. He never served as a missionary on a foreign field. He was never the president of a Christian college or dean or professor of a seminary. But he was busy.

Adams served his country as a member of the House of Representatives; as a senator from Massachusetts; as the United States ambassador to the United Kingdom, Russia, Prussia, and the Netherlands; as the eighth United States secretary of state; and finally as president of the United States (1825–29). And right through his long and eventful life, Adams continued to read the Bible—more of it and with more discipline than many Christians, and perhaps, even some preachers.

Well, a new year is almost upon us. I'm not one to poke fun at New Year's resolutions. To me there's always something welcome about turning the calendar to January and feeling that I have another chance at a new beginning. Maybe my best intentions will be disappointed. But one thing is for sure, it is a *faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance* that everything that will be good and successful in this new year begins with my Bible. Not that we would want to, but we can never get away from that axiom. The Word of God is the beginning of anything good. And this year can be much better, immeasurably better, if with living, hungry faith we'll begin it with less television, fewer DVDs, far fewer games, less sports, less blogging, *much* less trivia, and in the place of all these thieves, more and better Bible reading. I'd like to encourage preachers to challenge themselves to this in 2010.

Reading for Myself First

Let's start with how to frame the goal. It can't be

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first of all pastoral. It must be intensely personal, a matter between my soul and God alone, as if there weren't another person on earth to listen to Him. Our people don't understand how especially difficult this is for preachers. Preachers are terribly tempted to read the Bible professionally.

In the spring of 1969 David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981) delivered a series of lectures at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia on the subject "Preaching and Preachers." Two years later they were published by Zondervan under the same title. Chapter 9, "The Preparation of the Preacher," is one of my favorite sections. It contains Lloyd-Jones's caution against reading the Bible like a preacher instead of like a hungry soul.

One of the most fatal habits a preacher can ever fall into, he warns, is to read his Bible simply in order to find texts for sermons. This is a real danger; it must be recognized and fought and resisted with all your might. Do not read the Bible to find texts for sermons, read it because it is the food that God has provided for your soul, because it is the Word of God, because it is the means whereby you can get to know God.

One of the most fatal habits a preacher can ever fall into is to read his Bible simply in order to find texts for sermons. This is a real danger; it must be recognized and fought and resisted with all your might. Do not read the Bible to find texts for sermons . . . because it is the means whereby you can get to know God (D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones).

Of course, every Scripture that deeply affects a preacher will eventually meld into his sermons. That's the best of both ideals. Lloyd-Jones himself concedes this and even goes so far as to offer suggestions as to how to capitalize on personal Bible reading for further use in the pulpit. But that's different than reading with sermon-making in the *forefront* of my mind.

My first business with a Bible every morning must be to tune my own soul's ear to hear God's voice to *me*, not my people. That frequently takes some deliberate, determined work deep down in my heart. My heart wants to hide like Adam when God calls. It's not that it doesn't want Him to talk. Because I'm a preacher, because every Sunday I have to have something to say, old scaly preachers' hearts are prepared for God to talk, just so long as it's to Eve, or to the serpent, or to their churches. But what preachers' hearts don't want is to be called by name. Then the preacher's heart uncomfortably twists to deflect the Master's words with, *Lord, and what shall this man do?* But, oh, it can seem so earnest as

it rushes to outline the text for someone else!

So I've got to recognize that my heart is deceitful and desperately evasive. It will piously exploit even sermon preparation as a foil against having to turn the Bible loose on myself.

In his book *To My Younger Brethren* H.C.G. Moule (1841–1920), evangelical minister in the Church of England and frequent speaker at ministerial life conferences, passionately addressed our personal need to hunker down with our Bibles in a kind of spiritual solitary confinement.

I put in my plea, he wrote, for such a secret study of the Word of God as shall be unprofessional, unclerical, and simply Christian. Resolve to "read, mark and inwardly digest" so that not now the flock but the shepherd, that is to say you, "may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life." It will be all the better for the flock. Forget sometimes, in the name of Jesus Christ, the pulpit, the mission room, the Bible-class; open the Bible as simply as if you were on Crusoe's island, and were destined to live and die there, alone with God.

Does any preacher dare deny his need for this? Why not, then, renew our resolve to read the Scriptures for ourselves first in 2010? *The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits.* Can it be merely coincidental that in the same breath Paul immediately continues, *Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things* (2 Tim. 2:7)? Preachers must need to be told to think seriously about their need to be the first of their flock to enjoy rich, fruitful, Scriptural things. But evidently even their own serious reflection won't make the case sufficiently. *The Lord*, Paul says, will be needed to give them understanding in this, as in all other things.

Reading More, Much More

At this point I'm on the horns of a dilemma. I can go one way or the other with what to say next, but I can't go both. I'm going to have to focus either on reading the Bible more broadly this year, or on reading it more deeply. It's the daily choice between plow work or spade work, between cutting comparatively shallow furrows across the surfaces of passages or digging deeply into their gleaming, wealthy seams.

This time I'm going to plead for more of the former in the near future, for challenging ourselves to read much more Scripture this year. To traverse the good land "from Dan to Beersheba," as older writers put it quaintly.

Of course, no one can make rules for anyone else about this. It's dangerous enough to attempt rules for oneself in this area. But what preacher doesn't feel that he ought to be reading more of the Bible more of the time?

For most of us the key to doing more of this is intentionality. It's a matter of setting a stated quantitative goal. Here's a minimal one that Lloyd-Jones puts before us: *I cannot emphasize too strongly the vital importance of reading the whole Bible. I would say that all preachers*

should read through the whole Bible in its entirety at least once every year.

For some preachers, who haven't read through the entire Bible for some time, it would be a blessed experience to determine that by God's grace they'll do so in this new year. If you're one of them and are looking for a new approach to systematically getting through the entire Bible, check out the various Bible schedules that are available on the Web. Just type "Bible reading schedule" into Google. All sorts of different schemes will pop up.

Others of us could read through our entire Bible several times this year. In fact, there are probably very few preachers reading this article who couldn't do that if they just made up their minds that it was important and then prioritized it accordingly in their schedules.

There are 1189 chapters in the Bible, 929 in the Old Testament and 260 in the New. I've read through the Bible in sixty days. It takes about an hour per day at pulpit pace. But I once met an Indian pastor who for several years had been reading repeatedly through his entire Bible at the rate of (are you ready for this?) fifty chapters a day. He had a pretty sizable ministry too. Plus a Bible college and seminary. I've never read Scripture at that rate, but what a soul-satisfying and memory-supplying thing it would be to start and finish all of the Bible in just over three weeks. You'd have to set aside about three hours a day to do it. There are preachers whose schedules would allow for something like this, and they wouldn't need to feel guilty about using their time this way. The apostles laid down the ideal long ago: *We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word* (Acts 6:4). *Thou art a preacher of the Word*, said a Puritan, *mind thy business*.

Still, that's setting the bar pretty high. I finished nine chapters at 7:30 this morning. Forty or so more would have taken me until nearly 10:00 A.M. Maybe I could do that a few times a month this year, but probably not more. But think for a minute about even that. Why not? Why not an entire morning once a month spent reading one of the Bible's big fields? Genesis, or the entire life of David, or two or three Gospels, or twice through Acts?

Here's a way it could happen. Take out the calendar and make an appointment for yourself and just your Bible. Schedule a morning in January. Mark it, "Plow work." Now fight like everything to keep that appointment.

The night before, prepare as though the next morning were the opening of deer season. In fact, sure enough, maybe you ought to do what you do when you go hunting. You get your gear together, you pack a nice lunch, a Thermos, some snacks, and you get in your car and drive away. To where? To wherever you're likely to get a shot.

So where are you most likely to be undisturbed and clear-headed for your special morning with your Bible? I confess to doing some of my best reading away from my study. I've read whole books and large parts of Scripture

sitting at picnic tables in parks or with my back against a giant tree in the woods. I once heard another preacher relate that once a month he steals away to the sprawling lobby of a spacious hotel where he buys coffee and lunch to "pay" for spending the day there in a quiet corner and a big, plush chair. I'd have to find a chair that faced the wall or my mind would wander all over the place, but if I lived in the North, I suppose that it would take an arrangement something like that to get away and alone on a cold day in January.

Regardless of where you go, I don't see why this kind of thing isn't entirely doable. One can only wonder at what the effect might be of such a massive *washing of water by the word* every thirty days or so.

Reading Prayerfully, Dependently

I've left the most important challenge for last. Its imperative urgency simply cannot be overemphasized.

Any fairly well-trained minister can adequately exegete a text, find pertinent cross references, and fit the verse's teaching into an orthodox system of theology. But that's not necessarily spiritual understanding. This latter is nearly impossible to define scientifically, but every preacher, indeed every child of God, can testify to it experientially. It's the exhilarating, faith-producing, peace-bestowing combination of accurate interpretation and insightful applicational discernment, but even something more—something like the experience of standing in a dimly lit room into which, all of a sudden, a shaft of brilliant light bursts through a window. It's illumination. The kind that makes verses glow, even burn. One simply can't explain it. Nor can one command or control it. It's like the wind: *thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth*. But we can pray for it.

My first business with a Bible every morning must be to tune my own soul's ear to hear God's voice to me, not my people. That frequently takes some deliberate, determined work deep down in my heart. My heart wants to hide like Adam when God calls. It's not that it doesn't want Him to talk. Because I'm a preacher, because every Sunday I have to have something to say, old scaly preachers' hearts are prepared for God to talk, just so long as it's to Eve, or to the serpent, or to their churches.

Henry Venn (1724–97), an English evangelical and a friend of such worthies as John Newton, William

Cowper, and Charles Simeon, was a prodigious writer of letters answering Christians of all sorts who sought his counsel about a wide variety of spiritual needs. Among the issues he frequently discussed was this matter of devotional Bible reading. But Venn's counsel almost always included the often-overlooked matter of praying for insight as one reads.

Why not? Why not an entire morning once a month spent reading one of the Bible's big fields? Genesis, or the entire life of David, or two or three Gospels, or twice through Acts?

To one correspondent he wrote in 1776, *I can, from happy experience, assure you, there is one certain way (and I conclude but one) of acquiring spiritual understanding. It is a laborious one, and very contrary to our natural love of ease: you will find it in the 2d chapter of Proverbs, and the first nine verses, compared with the command, Deut. vi. 4–9. From hence it is plain, that much pains must be taken in pondering on the word of God: we must read it with as much attention as we do a mathematical proposition; and add to our attention earnest prayer that our understanding may be opened to understand the Scripture. . . . We often are destitute of the spirit of prayer, and therefore find it irksome to bow our knees; but in this manner of reading the Scriptures I have seldom failed of finding light and love spring up in my heart, and grace to pour out my prayer, as the passage engaging my meditation suggests.*

To another he advised, *I hope you read the Bible with much prayer. . . . As it is written, the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force; so in nothing do we offer violence to our evil nature more than in studying God's holy word, and earnestly praying that the Divine truth it teaches may sink deep into our hearts, work mightily, and produce all those gracious effects for which it was of old written by inspiration of the Holy Ghost.*

Still another received counsel that was reprinted in tract form many times, *Those who dare despise persevering prayer to be taught by the Spirit of God what is contained in His holy Word, as if they knew enough, fall into pernicious errors; wrest some passages of Scripture, to contradict others; or grow violently zealous for doctrines; but very cold respecting that heavenly mind those doctrines are revealed to produce. Our profiting will then only appear, when, after the example of David and St. Paul, we pray from deep conviction that we cannot be properly affected with what we believe, unless we are divinely taught.*

John Owen (1616–83) argued persuasively for this prayerful dependence upon the Holy Spirit as we read. *Shall we think it strange for a Christian, he asked, when, it*

may be after the use of all other means, he finds himself at a loss about the true meaning and intention of the Holy Spirit in any place or text of Scripture, to betake himself in a more than ordinary manner unto God by prayer, that he would by His Spirit enlighten, guide, teach, and so reveal the truth unto him? Or should we think it strange that God should hear such prayers, and instruct such persons in the secrets of His covenant? God forbid that there should be such atheistical thoughts in the minds of any who would be esteemed Christians! Yea, I must say, that for a man to undertake the interpretation of any part or portion of Scripture in a solemn manner, without invocation of God to be taught and instructed by His Spirit, is a high provocation of Him; nor shall I expect the discovery of truth from anyone who so proudly and ignorantly engageth in a work so much above his ability to manage.

I'll close with a helpful anecdote along this line from *Profitable Bible Study* by R. A. Torrey (1856–1928).

Some years ago, accompanied by a friend, I was making a tour of Franconian Switzerland, and visiting some of the more famous zoolithic caves. One day a rural letter carrier stopped us and asked if we would like to see a cave of rare beauty and interest, away from the beaten tracks of travel. Of course, we said, yes. He led us through the woods and underbrush to the mouth of the cave, and we entered. All was dark and uncanny. He discussed greatly on the beauty of the cave, telling us of altars and fantastic formations, but we could see absolutely nothing. Now and then he uttered a note to warn us to have a care, as near our feet lay a gulf the bottom of which had never been discovered. We began to fear that we might be the first discoverers of the bottom. There was nothing pleasant about the whole affair. But as soon as a magnesium taper was lighted, all became different. There were the stalagmites rising from the floor to meet the stalactites as they came down from the ceiling. There were the beautiful and fantastic formations on every hand, and all glistening in fairy like beauty in the brilliant light.

So I have often thought it was with many a passage of Scripture. Others tell you of its beauty, but you cannot see it. It looks dark and intricate and forbidding and dangerous, but when God's own light is kindled there by prayer how different all becomes in an instant. You see a beauty that language cannot express, and that only those can appreciate who have stood there in the same light. He who would understand and love his Bible must be much in prayer. Prayer will do more than a college education to make the Bible an open and a glorious book.

Is there anyone who should or could gainsay that? So brethren, the new year opens before us. Anything of it that will be good must begin with our Bibles. Purpose, really *purpose*, to give it more and better reading this year. It has not entered our hearts, what God could do for us, not merely pastorally as shepherds of other men's souls, but personally, as weak, hungry, desperately needy souls ourselves. ☞

Bring . . . the Books

Go Forward on Your Knees! The Life and Ministry of Jonathan Goforth of China

In the fall of 1888 a letter arrived that directed the future of a young missionary recently arrived in China. The missionary was Jonathan Goforth and the letter was from Hudson Taylor. Upon hearing of Goforth's burden to take the gospel to the hard spiritual ground of Honan, one of China's northern provinces, Taylor wrote these famous lines: "Brother, if you would enter that Province, you must go forward on your knees." Jonathan did, and the gospel was embraced by thousands of Chinese over the course of his life's ministry.

A number of good biographies recount the life and ministry of Jonathan Goforth. Recently I came across an early biography by his wife, Rosalind. It is a wonderful, refreshing review of his through the eyes of one who knew him best. Her biography, *Goforth of China*, was originally published by Zondervan in 1937 shortly after the death of her husband. It went through several printings by 1943. Until very recently, it has been available only on the used book market. However, a new edition has been published by Kessinger Publishing and is available through their website (www.kessinger.net). I was so captured by the story that I read the entire book in one sitting!

Born on February 10, 1859, as the seventh of ten children, Jonathan was raised on a farm in Ontario, Canada. His mother taught him the Bible from his childhood on, and he came to Christ at age 18. Soon after his conversion, he had the opportunity to have a part in leading his father to Christ. Jonathan's life was marked by a passion to share the gospel personally with others, and his efforts were marked by an unusual effectiveness from the Lord.

He attended Knox College, and his dedication to evangelistic endeavor soon impacted the entire campus. In fact, during one summer alone Jonathan visited over 950 homes in the area surrounding the campus and shared the gospel with all who received him. One of the testimonies to his impact came from a close school chum, Charles Gordon, who said, "Twenty-two, I think, were members of our graduating class; the general majority of them volunteered for service in the mission field at home or abroad. Not one of them, I am quite sure, but would greatly love Jonathan Goforth and thank God for his influence on their characters and lives."

In 1885 Jonathan met Rosalind, and it was soon apparent that she was God's appointed helpmeet for his mission in China. On the occasion of their engagement, Jonathan put two questions to Rosalind that set the foundation for their life of devoted service to God in China. "Will you join your life with mine for China?" and "Will you give me your promise that always you will allow me to put my Lord and His work first, even before you?" These sorts of questions are foreign to most modern believers, and some might even ques-

tion the Biblical propriety of such questions. Nonetheless, Rosalind's life is a testimony to her willingness to answer in the affirmative! That resolve was severely tested on a number of occasions throughout their marriage.

One of the first tests came almost immediately after their arrival in China when they faced the loss of all their earthly possessions in a devastating fire. "It was not a pleasant sight to watch wedding presents, pictures [one of them of her father painted by himself], and other precious home things being licked up by the flames, but so it was. Practically everything of real value to them was burnt. Later, Goforth tried to comfort his wife by saying, 'My dear, do not grieve so. After all, they're just things.'" Nor was this the most severe trial they were to face. Taking the gospel to China would bring a rich harvest of souls in time. However, the harvest would be reaped only after five tiny corpses had been sown into cold, hard Chinese soil. Only God knows the anguish that Rosalind and Jonathan endured as they soldiered on through these losses.

The loss of possessions and children were accompanied by physical danger, affliction, suffering, want, and eventually even the loss of Jonathan's eyesight toward the end of his ministry. Yet through all of this the Goforths persevered, and by the end of their ministry many thousands of Chinese souls had been reaped in a glorious spiritual harvest for Christ, and many churches were brought again to know the sweet presence of God in genuine revival.

In a day when believers have comforted themselves with the idea that ministry must never cost them much in terms of family relationships and priorities, it is no wonder that the gospel fails to go forward with the sort of power that accompanied the ministry of Jonathan and Rosalind Goforth and a host of others who were of their same heart and mind! Many have warned that ministry must not become a "mistress" to wife or family. The truth may actually be that wife or family has become a mistress to ministry. To this spirit, the lives, marriage, and family of Jonathan and Rosalind Goforth stand as an eternal rebuke. May God raise up again among us such souls who would do, if necessary, what their Lord instructed in leaving father, mother, husband, wife, and even their own lives for the gospel! ☞

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

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Every time I go to our local shopping mall in Dearborn, I am amazed at the diversity of people in our community. I become aware of a great variety of dress, color, and language—a beautiful mosaic of multicultural tiles right here in our own neighborhood. How can we possibly reach such a myriad of cultures at the same time? The strategies we read about can be complicated and many, but the gospel message is simple and sufficient. Paul faced the challenges we face as he was called to promote “obedience to the faith among all nations” (Rom. 1:5). He put his confidence in the power of the gospel, which can change both the Jew and the Gentile (Rom. 1:16).

In Romans 1:18–20, Paul reveals two certainties about every human being and each one’s basic knowledge of the true God. First, God exists and, second, we are accountable to Him.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it [made it evident] unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

Based on Scripture, we can be confident that God has placed this knowledge of both His existence and our accountability to Him in the heart of every person. Knowing this can help us unashamedly preach the gospel message to a diversity of people.

First, how does man know that God exists? Theologians call truths that are known and available to everyone God’s “general revelation.” Verse 20 teaches that God’s attributes, power, and nature are seen in what He has made. The psalmist wrote, “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Ps. 19:1). In addition to being revealed in creation, God also reveals Himself through His providential dealings with mankind. God oversees the lives of all men. He sustains His creation by providing food and rain for all (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:16, 17). He establishes civil authority and government for the general protection of its residents (Rom. 13:1ff.). Hebrews 1:3 describes Christ’s providence in that He upholds everything by the word of His power.

So if God’s Word assures us of this first truth that all men know that their Creator God exists, then why do our experiences with those who claim to be atheists or worshippers of other deities seemed to contradict this truth? Verse 18 offers an explanation when it describes

them as those who “hold the truth in unrighteousness”—literally, they suppress the truth in unrighteousness. When we fail to remember this, we often feel the need to prove or argue God’s existence in order to be effective witnesses (or even get to a certain level where we can witness), when in fact we need to state the simple truth of the gospel and allow the Holy Spirit to do the convicting and convincing.

The second truth is that we are all accountable to God. This is actually rooted in the first truth that all men know God exists. Because God is clearly seen and understood by all men through His creation, verse 20 says, “they are without excuse.” Some think the purpose or result of general revelation is that man will seek God further or be led to salvation just by knowing through creation that He exists. This will not happen because first, no man seeks God (Rom. 3:11), and, second, a person cannot come to God without a clear presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ in conjunction with the work of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 10:14). General revelation merely holds every man accountable to the God that he already knows exists. Verse 25 further reveals what the natural man does with this general revelation of God: “who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.” God has also given man a conscience, which is another means by which man is assured of his accountability to God. Because man is made in God’s image, he has an innate sense of right and wrong, as Paul explains in Romans 2:15: “[The Gentiles] shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.” Not only does man know right from wrong, but we are also told that sinners know “the judgment of God” will fall on them (Rom. 1:32).

So, how does this provide hope in evangelizing all people—especially those around us steeped in false religion? First, we do not have to go about convincing men that God exists. We can assert His existence based on Scripture. Second, all people know they are accountable for their actions. When you call people to repentance and warn them of judgment, these truths resonate deep within their hearts. We should not be intimidated or hindered because we do not know the ins and outs of every false religion. We need only to proclaim the gospel in its simplicity while praying for the Spirit’s power to be effective. So whether or not your community is greatly diverse, the gospel is the only true good news to all people. Many will still reject it, but some, by God’s grace, will believe and be added to the God-glorifying mosaic which is the Church. ☞

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

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I have had the privilege of serving the same assembly without interruption for the last thirty-three years. I would be less than truthful if I portrayed those years as times totally without conflicts, disappointments, sorrows, and discouragement. Nevertheless, God has always provided the encouragement to continue on. That encouragement has come from a variety of sources including my dear wife, fellow pastors, and members of the local assembly. The most effectual help has come from God Himself through the Scriptures. Second Corinthians is one of those places that God has directed me to that never fails to lift my spirits in the most trying of times. Second Corinthians 2:1–17 is a passage in which Paul speaks of some of the interpersonal conflicts that he himself faced in his relationship with the people who were a part of the church in Corinth.

God . . . Always Caused Us to Triumph

Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ.

The picture here is that of the “Roman Triumph,” the special tribute that Rome gave to their conquering generals. It was their equivalent of the American tickertape parade.

If a commander-in-chief won a complete victory over the enemy on foreign soil and if he killed at least five thousand enemy soldiers and gained new territory for the emperor, then the commander-in-chief was entitled to a Roman Triumph. The procession would include the commander’s riding in a golden chariot surrounded by his officers. The parade would also include a display of the spoils of battle as well as of the captive enemy soldiers. The Roman priests would also be in the parade, carrying burning incense to pay tribute to the victorious army.

The procession would follow a special route through the city and would end at the Circus Maximus where the helpless captives would entertain the people by fighting wild beasts. It was a very special day in Rome when the citizens were treated to a full-scale “Roman Triumph.”

How does this piece of history apply to the burdened believer today? Jesus Christ, our great Commander-in-Chief, came to foreign soil (this earth) and completely defeated the enemy (Satan). Jesus Christ claimed the spoils of battle, namely, lost souls who had been in bondage to sin and Satan. What a splendid victory!

The victorious general’s sons would walk behind their father’s chariot, sharing in his victory; and that is where believers are today, following in Christ’s triumph. We do not fight *for* victory; we fight *from* victory (Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition*

Commentary [Colorado Springs: Victor Press], New Testament vol.1, pp. 635–36).

And Maketh Manifest the Savour of His Knowledge by Us in Every Place

The town in which I live was once home to one of the world’s largest onion dehydration plants. At the peak of its operations it ran around the clock, processing 400,000 pounds of onions daily. Eventually it added garlic to its product line, so that an outsider driving through town on the interstate was overwhelmed by the odor of onions or garlic as it infiltrated the automobiles’ air ducts. During dehydration season there was no place that you could go in the community to escape the smell of drying onions or garlic morning, noon, and night. The employees of the dehydration plant carried with them the odor of the place of their employment. Part of preparing the dehydrated onions and garlic for packing included the chopping of them into fine pieces, creating a powder that permeated the entire work area and everyone in it. When a worker left for home he carried with him the odor of onions and garlic. It was unnoticed by the worker, but it was very evident to all he came into contact with. I had one wife report to me that she made her husband remain in the garage until he had made a complete change of clothes before entering the house lest the home and everything and everyone in it smell like dried onions or garlic.

For We Are unto God a Sweet Savour of Christ, in Them That Are Saved, and in Them That Perish

J. Yoder, the author of the book *The God Dependent Life*, writes the following in a devotional book concerning the thoughts of this verse: “Most of us can think of someone—perhaps a relative or a friend—who is known for a particular perfume she wears. Even without seeing her, we know when she’s nearby. Wordlessly, her fragrance welcomes us into her company.”

Every Christian should also be known for wearing a particular perfume—the fragrance of Christ. But it can’t be bought at a cosmetic counter. It can’t even be bottled and sold by the church. This mysterious perfume rises always and only out of our inner communion with Christ and wafts a subtle yet noticeable influence toward others.

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

Charles Spurgeon

Someone said about a Christian in his small town, "That man never crosses my pathway without me being better for it!" Another remarked of him, "You need only shake his hand to know that he is full of God." Most likely, this admired believer had given a verbal witness at some point. But without the perfume of Christ, his witness would not have been empowered by the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:6).

The apostle Paul asked, "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2:16). The answer is plain: Our fragrance, our entire sufficiency, is from Christ alone, not from ourselves. What fragrance will you be wearing today?

To the One We Are the Saviour of Death unto Death; and to the Other the Saviour of Life unto Life

One Message, Two Responses

I recently read a news story about thirty-four workers in a Ft. Worth, Texas, call center who had to be taken to several area hospitals for what was initially reported as possible exposure to carbon monoxide gas. As the day progressed the firefighters were able to declare the building safe after tracing the incident to its source. It seems that one of the female workers sprayed on some perfume, and two nearby coworkers reported dizziness associated with the perfume smell.

When they reported it to their supervisor, the supervisor announced over the PA system that anyone experiencing dizziness should exit the building to an outside location. At that time many left the building while others remained inside with no ill effects. One perfume produced multiple responses, and not all of them good.

The article brought to mind a recent study in the Book of Acts. While surveying the results of the preaching of the gospel by the apostle Paul, I found it interesting to note the varying responses of multiple hearers to the same message given by the same messenger. In Acts 17 we are told that when Paul preached in the synagogue in Thessalonica that at the conclusion "some of them believed and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto themselves certain lewd fellows of the baser sort . . . and they troubled the people." *Some believed and some troubled the people.* When Paul traveled to the city of Corinth he preached the same message, and the text tells us that when the people "heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. . . . Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named

Damaris, and others with them." *Some mocked, some believed.*

One Fragrance, Two Responses


My maternal grandfather died when I was a young child. My only memory of the memorial service was a gardenia blossom that my mother took from one of the floral sprays and placed between the pages of a large family Bible that was placed on the table in front of the sofa in our living room. The aroma of that pressed gardenia blossom stayed in the pages of the Bible for a long time. I can remember thumbing through the pages from time to time, seeing and smelling the flower and being reminded of the death and funeral of the only grandfather I ever knew. Some fifty-plus years later the smell of the gardenia still takes my thoughts to the death of my beloved grandfather.

Then this past spring a young man in our assembly named Robert died after a seven-year battle with cancer. I first met Robert when he was an active four-year-old. He, his mother, and his older brother began attending our fellowship at the invitation of another church family. Robert's father had died when he was a toddler, and over time I became a second dad to him. I watched him grow from a child into young adulthood and mature in his faith. During the final months of his battle with cancer I was blessed to be able to spend many hours with Robert, his mother, and his family. We prayed, cried, laughed, waited, and trusted God in the trials that he faced on a day-to-day, week-to-week, and month-to-month basis.

Eventually God allowed the cancer to take him, and on the day of his memorial service I remember walking up two short steps to my office and brushing against a shrub that had been planted in the flowerbed in front of the door to my office. It was a gardenia shrub, planted by Robert and his mom several years before. I had never told them that the gardenia, when in bloom, reminded me of death, the death of my beloved grandfather. Now, here it was covered in buds and blooms and putting forth an inescapable aroma. Only now it reminded me of the courageous life that this young man lived out before his family, friends, and especially those who gave him care in the hospitals.

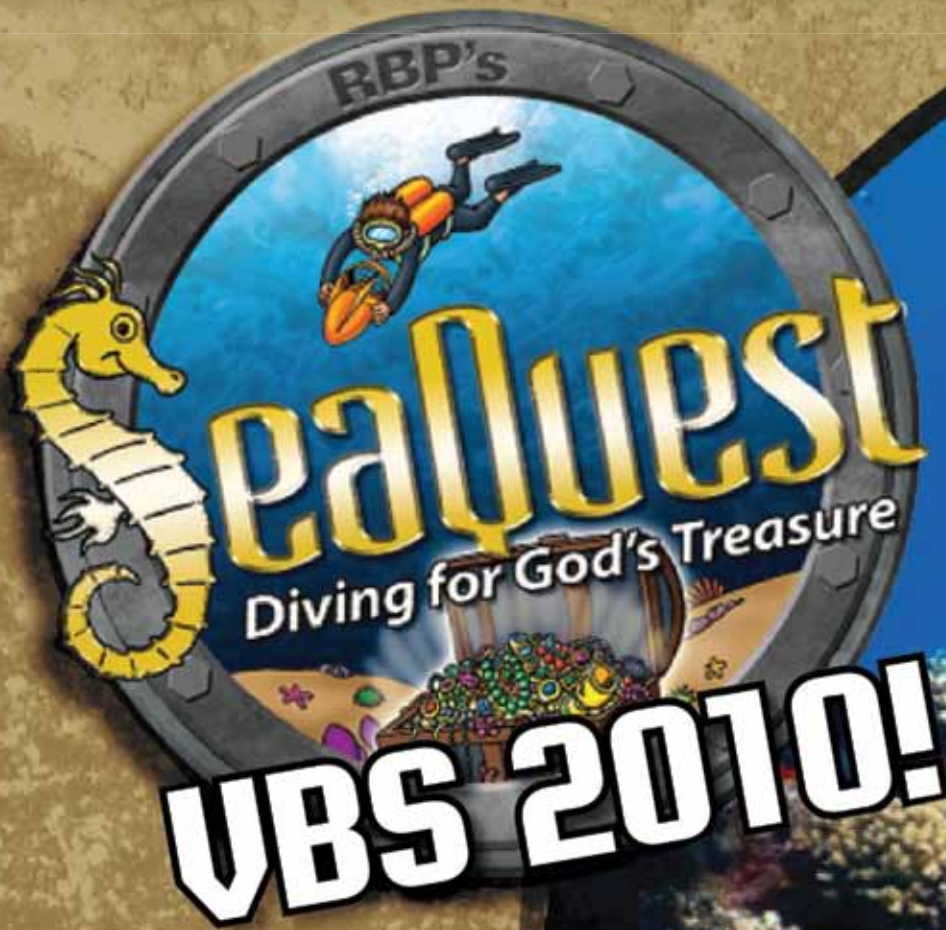
And Who Is Sufficient for These Things?

Think about it:

- God's always causes His servant to be in the triumph parade.
- God's servant has the privilege of making His knowledge known in every place.
- God's servant is a sweet savour unto Him no matter the response to his preaching of the truth.
- And God accomplishes it all by His power and because of His marvelous grace since we are not sufficient in ourselves. 

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Alone in a Crowd

I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts; . . . and I, even I only, am left (1 Kings 19:10).

Elijah was a mighty prophet before the Lord who accomplished amazing things for God's glory, yet he came to a point in his ministry where he felt alone. I am by no means of the same caliber of godly character as Elijah. However, at a difficult time in recent months I found myself feeling *alone*. I've experienced times of loneliness in the past, and the Lord has always been my comfort. There were times in my teens when I was alone amidst burdensome trials, and the Lord established in my heart then that I must rely on Him for fellowship. My husband and I were engaged for two-and-a-half years and saw each other only twice a year during that span. I've also faced many separations from my husband when he deploys or goes to training, and I feel an acute loneliness from those temporary separations from my spouse. However, this loneliness was a very deep one. It was a separation from the comfort of the Lord and those He had placed in my life.

I believe the loneliness of a woman is different from a man's. Women, as a whole, are much more social creatures who have need of interacting with other ladies. We feel keenly the neglect of friendships, whereas our husbands can seem to go longer bouts without socializing with other men. Being a Chaplain's wife I am surrounded by many people who know *who* I am but who do little to find out who I *really* am.

A Long, Lonely Winter

It is very humbling to admit that I sank into a loneliness that affected my ministry. It was a long, lonely, New England winter. I would overhear people at church discussing all of the weekly outings with each other, and I so greatly desire to be included. There was a distance barrier with many of the people I attended church with, and the winter was hard. I became selfishly consumed with my loneliness and felt, as Elijah, that I had been doing the work of the Lord only to feel left all alone. I am often needed to help young military wives and encourage them only to be left feeling like a sponge dried out on the kitchen shelf for the next use.

Again, it is a humbling reminder to admit that I outright accused my God of not caring. Sure, I was facing a few trials in my life at that time: extended family stressors, a pregnancy, a long winter, military friends moving away, and the daily grind of caring for the family and encouraging my husband's ministry. But my God was faithfully abiding by my side even when I wanted to creep away and have a pity party.

The Lord got hold of my heart when I finally humbled myself to ask for prayer during a prayer meeting. I was with another lady from our church and shared my heartache. To my surprise, she was also facing loneliness and asked that we hold each other up in prayer. Through the next few weeks I discovered through talking with other ladies that they, too, were lonely. Once the realization of my sin of pride and selfishness came to me, I quickly repented of my sins and truly sought the Lord's help to overcome my loneliness. By revealing to me how many people I knew were hurting, the Lord made me realize that I had been so consumed in myself that I could not reach out to help them. I was not alone! I felt like God had shown Himself to me, much like he had to Elijah, to remind me that He was God Almighty and a tender Father.

My husband, knowing of my struggles, also encouraged me with a verse. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). What a gentle rebuke and loving reminder! I coveted the friendships others had, and I envied more social interaction in spite of the Lord's promise that He was always by my side. I also came to grips with how I had caused undue pain to my husband through my attitude that he was not enough of a companion to ward off my loneliness. He, surely, faces loneliness too and needs me to help lift his spirits.

Loneliness: His and Hers

As a Chaplain's wife I face reestablishing myself and my family every few years in new areas. Coming with a title to any new church brings with it heavy responsibility. It takes time to find someone to be able to share my spiritual struggles. Often my husband and I find ourselves being each

I OUTRIGHT ACCUSED MY GOD OF NOT CARING. BUT MY GOD WAS FAITHFULLY ABIDING BY MY SIDE EVEN WHEN I WANTED TO CREEP AWAY AND HAVE A PITY PARTY.

other's accountability partners. However, when he is gone I must reach out to someone else to help me through difficult spiritual times. He, too, faces a loneliness that I cannot help to meet at times. It is difficult for him to have the time necessary to build edifying relationships with other men. Not to mention the fact that when he is deployed it adds a new dimension to the whole dynamic of being alone in a position of leadership. From a human perspective we are truly sometimes *alone*.

In the ministry there is going to be loneliness. I think of David being chased by Saul and how lonely and afraid he was. The Psalms that he wrote during that time express his reliance on the Lord. The Lord also sent him friends at the necessary time: "Jonathan . . . strengthened his hand in God" (1 Sam. 23:16). Even Christ surrounded Himself by His closest companions the night He was betrayed.

It hurts to be lonely, and it is hard to bear at times. As a woman I find myself longing for fellowship with godly women who face similar issues in daily life. (I actually start planning for the annual FBFI meeting right after the previous one simply because I know that it is such a great time of fellowship with other ladies who truly understand!) Primarily we must step out of the shyness or awkwardness of meeting new people and reach out to others in order to establish friendships—"A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly" (Prov. 18:24). In becoming more aware of my own loneliness and that of others I also see the task of edifying the saints as being much more precious (Eph. 4:12). To get out of the loneliness and into the ministry of edifying I recommend a few things:

1. Repent of selfishness and pride. I am a Chaplain's wife, and I am called to serve the Lord in whatever place I am with a joyful attitude. Even if I face a lonely situation, I do not have the right to be consumed with myself. God must be the center of my focus.

2. Pray. "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms" (James 5:13). God desires us to be content with our situations and to find our solace in Him. And once we have that solace we are to share it with others.

3. Change your focus from self to others.

a. Write edification notes. In high school some friends and I used to exchange "edification notes." We would write a verse, a short note, anything to someone to let her know we were thinking of her, and we would try to secretly drop it in her locker.

Take the time to write a note or letter to others whether or not it is anonymous. I have personally been blessed with these at times when I need them, and your note will certainly reach others in God's timing. One of my oldest son's teachers from when he was a toddler continues to write me every couple of months just to let me know what is going on with the family and to let me know she is thinking of me. I'm thankful to receive these letters from her!

b. Contact someone. We live in a great age of technology where calling or e-mailing someone is easier than ever. Be willing to admit to a friend that you need encouragement and ask her to pray *with* you. These moments of fellowshiping with the Lord and a good friend can be times of refreshing.

c. Open your home to hospitality. "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:13). You do not have to spend a lot of money to open your home to others. Invite someone over for an afternoon coffee or a dessert after dinner. Try to find someone you can be a blessing to.

d. Support your spouse. We often say, "Support our troops," and I have the joy and struggle of doing this on a daily basis. Your spouse needs to be able to meet the needs of others without concern of the weight of your loneliness on his mind. He also wants to share in easing your loneliness so do not shut him out or, on the other hand, prevent him from sharing his loneliness with you. It can be an opportunity for your friendship with your husband to reach a sweeter level.

c. Share your struggles and triumphs in the Lord. People need to see that those of us in the ministry have difficulties. It makes us more approachable. Second Corinthians 1:3-5 shows us that when we reveal how the Lord works to change us through tribulation, we can reach out to others to comfort them in their trials. When we are open it helps us to remain accountable and to squash the pride that likes to sneak in. It also provides deeper friendships that can help ward off loneliness in the future.

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On Righteousness

Truth and righteousness are unchanging attributes of God. God is unfailingly right in all He thinks and does. God expects such flawless conduct from His creatures. Adam as created had an untested righteousness, but by one sin lost all true righteousness. Human righteousnesses are as filthy rags in God's sight. But God had devised from eternity a provision for us to be right in His sight. He would send His Son to live a perfect human life as a Substitute that He might impute His righteousness to our account.

Every human being has two serious flaws: we have sinned, and we lack righteousness. Our Substitute has provided for both. When Jesus submitted Himself to physical death on the cross, He served as God's appointed offering for sin. When we are saved, the benefits of His death are imputed to us, and the benefits of His life are as well. Jesus lived a sinless life to qualify as a sinless offering. His righteous life enables righteousness to be imputed to all who accept Him. His death is called His passive obedience in our stead; His life was His active obedience that we might be reckoned righteous in Him.

We do not, however, receive the very nature of the eternal Godhead. Jesus the Son was always God; He did not "become" God. When we are saved, we receive an unending (eternal) life which has a beginning in time. The divine attribute of righteousness is not imputed to our account, but rather the righteous obedience of Him who became flesh and lived and died under the Law for our benefit. During the days of His flesh, He remained a Son (unchangeable, eternal, holy), and, serving on our behalf as a high priest, in the flesh, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation for all who obey Him (Heb. 5:5-9).

We have naught of which to boast. Our imputed standing before God is of the grace of God the Father, of the substitutionary work of the Son, of the applying task of the Holy Spirit. We did not in any way achieve it; we received it. That is, it was imputed (judicially reckoned to our account).

Earthly judges are to execute justice (not invent it or add to it). History records very few instances of a judge accepting a substitute to pay a penalty. In America there have been few if any since the Civil War. Such a judicial decision is always optional; it is never necessary for a judge to accept a substitute. If one steps forward to offer to pay the penalty for another, his standing must be examined to determine whether he qualifies. He must be one whose court record is clean. His position must be that of one fully free from the law.

If he qualifies, and if the judge accepts him as a substitute, by action of the court his freedom is exchanged for the penalty of the law assigned to the other. He goes to prison (if that is the penalty), and the guilty man goes forth free. His status of freedom, by court action, is assigned to another, whereas the penalty for the guilt of the other is borne by the substitute.

Some detail of this is interesting. The law does not consider the substitute in any fashion guilty of the crime; he is only bearing the guilt of the crime. When he comes forth from the prison, no record shows him as guilty. Similarly, our Lord Jesus Christ was not flawed in any way by taking our sin upon Himself. The full penalty of our iniquity has been paid. The man for whom a substitute went to prison in his stead can show for the rest of his life that, though he was guilty, the penalty has been paid.

We are guilty sinners, but we are forgiven sinners. The full penalty of our guilt has been paid, and we are now free from the law. That expression, "free from the law," needs also to be understood correctly. We stand before God in the Beloved; we walk here on earth subject to the entire law of God. If we function counter to His law of gravity, we will pay the consequences here on earth but will be no different in our legal standing before God.

If we transgress His moral law, the consequence of His displeasure may be immediate and may even affect our continuing fellowship with Him, but it does not remove us from our position judicially in the Beloved. We are not free from any law in the sense that we are now free to ignore or disobey as we wish. Our new freedom includes a power to live above the law, to obey in a fashion we were not able to do prior to conversion. As saved, we are now able not to sin.

Abraham was not justified by his works, but by faith (Rom. 4:1-4), and righteousness was reckoned to him (4:5). Similarly, David described the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputed righteousness without works (4:6). Believers are now in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). We have naught of which to glory save that which our Savior earned in our behalf. His earned righteousness stands written to our account, but a life of righteousness is not yet fully experienced here in this life. Here, we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon (2 Cor. 5:2-4), which one day we shall be.

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And Jesus came and saying, All things have been fulfilled upon you in earth, Son, Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and, lo, I am with you unto the end of the world.



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Support Tactics

Jill Hamilton

I pressed my back to the bark of a small, tree trying my utmost to take advantage of the shade. It was well over one hundred degrees and very humid. I sat along the edge of a very large open field. Two Blackhawk helicopters circled above me and landed. For the next couple of hours I watched hundreds of Soldiers, in groups of four, rappel from the helicopters overhead to the safety of the ground. The heavier Soldiers nearly flew down their ropes, while the lighter ones had to kick their legs to gain momentum. (I think my 6-foot-5-inch husband broke records with the speed of his descent.)

Overall, each wave was more of the same . . . until one Soldier attempted to exit the chopper. He prepared himself like all of the others, backed out of the aircraft, and with knees bent leaned back waiting for his signal. On command he pushed off. Quick as lightning his feet shot up in the air. Limbs dangled precariously as the poor guy hung helplessly under the Blackhawk ninety-five feet up in the air. Soon I saw another Soldier in the helicopter scoot on his belly as far out the door as he could and pull his buddy to safety.

Military personnel spend years preparing for battle. They get to practice their responses over and over so that they react correctly when under fire. They fix their mistakes and improve their weaknesses so that when they are in life-or-death situations, survival is possible. They also work in teams, even as small as two, so that they can support and protect each other while trying to survive under a barrage of bullets.

Likewise, husbands preparing for the ministry or ministering "full time" are often on the front lines of the battle, spiritually speaking, and yet they don't get to practice and drill for years to prepare. They are living out the battle each day, and it is real life. If they make mistakes or find themselves having a bad day and "dangling from a Blackhawk," everyone is watching; some are laughing, and others are criticizing. We wives have the opportunity to be their comrades and that second set of hands to help "pull them back into the chopper." We have the privilege of sharing their foxhole with them, of supporting and protecting them while they seek not only to survive the barrage of bullets but to rescue others and bring them to safety.

As my husband is in the "preparation for ministry" stage, I am sensing the battle heating up and am constantly aware of his need for my support. I have my own set of what I call Support Tactics. Though I still make mistakes and have areas of weakness in which I need to improve, I attempt to put these tactics into

practice daily so that no matter the fire on our ministry and marriage, I will respond rightly.

Support Tactic No. 1: Never Criticize Him. According to my husband, the most important way I support him is by never criticizing him and by backing him one hundred percent even if he makes a mistake. When he blows it, he already feels like an idiot and does not need additional demeaning remarks from me. Instead of being critical, I just put my arms around him to let him know that everything is all right and that it is still "us against the world."

Support Tactic No. 2: Understand His World. Supporting my husband is much easier when I understand his world. Knowing his daily schedule and the accompanying pressures helps me to know how to pray for him and enables me to be more aware of his needs.

Right now, on the kitchen table we keep a monthly desk calendar that lists his classes and assignments. He highlights tests and projects so that I know when he is under pressure. Excessive yellow highlighting means "make sure he has time to get to the gym" and "feed him hefty portions of man food."

Sometimes understanding his world also involves trying something new—such as a twelve-mile ruck march. My husband had to "qualify" for Air Assault School by performing the march ahead of time and reporting as to his completion. As witness, I offered to march with him rather than sit by watching. Experiencing the burning leg muscles and blisters sure aided in my understanding!

Support Tactic No. 3: Be Genuinely Interested in His World. While understanding his world is important, a genuine interest in his world is *vital*. (After all, it is my world too!) I am constantly asking my husband questions about his world. Sometimes it is as random as, "I can't remember which is larger, a battalion or a brigade?" Other times it is a simple, "How did class go?" after a grueling two hours of Greek. When he volunteers information regarding historical battle tactics or mentions in passing bench-pressing over 350 pounds that day, it is an opportunity for me to respond with interest—or to reach over and grab his bulging muscles and tell him how massive he is. No matter the topic, it is all important in his world, which means it should be important in mine.

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Christ did not only come into our flesh, but also into our condition, into the valley and shadow of earth, where we were, and where we are, as we are sinners.

—John Bunyan

All history is incomprehensible without Christ.

—Ernest Renan

At Bethlehem God became what He was not before, but did not cease being what He always was.

—Paul Lowenberg

God clothed Himself in vile man's flesh so He might be weak enough to suffer.

—John Donne

Christmas is the day that holds all time together.

—Alexander Smith

Christmas ought to be a time of settlement and establishment in the faith to believers, [for] we celebrate another anniversary of the divine faithfulness manifested in the fulfillment of His Word.

—T. T. Shields

Christ clothed Himself with our lowliness in order to invest us with His grandeur.

—Richardson Wright

His life is the highest and holiest entering in at the lowliest door.

—Oswald Chambers

God has two thrones, one in the highest heavens, the other in the lowliest heart.

—D. L. Moody

The cuddly, cooing infant in the manger may evoke warm feelings and sentimental thoughts at Christmas time. But the Man of Galilee has a message and a mission which we dare not lose in an ocean of wrapping paper.

—Erwin A. Britton

Some businessmen are saying that this could be the greatest Christmas ever. I thought the first one was.

—Hal Roach

But when God sent His Son into this world, then the angels saw the spirit of self-denial in God, the spirit of self-sacrifice in God.

—T. Dewitt Talmage

If we could only grasp the significance of the Incarnation, the word "sacrifice" would disappear from our vocabulary.

—Nate Saint

Filling the world He lies in a manger.

—Augustine

A man's concept of God creates his attitude toward the hour in which he lives.

—G. Campbell Morgan

Christmas is the season for kindling the fire of hospitality in the hall, the genial flame of charity in the heart.

—Washington Irving

He stretched skin over spirit like a rubber glove, aligning Trinity with bone, twining through veins until Deity square-knotted flesh.

—Marjorie Maddox Phifer

Christmas is a time for giving, not swapping.

—Anonymous

The poverty surrounding the birth of our Lord is a sufficient answer to a thousand groveling maxims about wealth, which pass current among men.

—J. C. Ryle

Only God could have thought of Christmas. When man invents a super being, he comes up with a Superman, or a Captain Marvel. God gives the world a baby. And in that baby is tied up the whole destiny of mankind.

—Richard C. Halverson

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

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Greg Rogers

An Old Church with a New Building

Most true believers believe that “God is able to make all grace abound,” as 2 Corinthians 9:8 says, but many wonder whether He will do it for them. At Grace Memorial Baptist Church in Bedford, Virginia, we found out by experience that God *is* able and *will* make all His grace abound toward folks who are willing to step out by faith to do His will.

Convinced that God was directing me to lead the church into a building program, I asked the Lord to build our faith as He helped us build our new facilities. Our sanctuary had become crowded, and there were other facility needs, so after many months of prayer and careful planning, we master-planned our whole property with the help of an architect. We stepped out by faith and broke ground on August 13, 2006, to build a new, larger sanctuary: phase one of the master plan. Our church started this project with no debt; the architect fees and other preconstruction costs (a total of \$108,000) paid for; \$75,000 in a cash reserve; and \$250,000 that we had saved up for the project. We hired a construction management company to oversee stage one of the sanctuary project, which included the site work and the outside-finished shell of a 10,000-square-foot building. Upon completion of the “shell” we assumed the oversight of stage two: the finishing of the inside of the building, landscaping, sidewalks, and paving. Many graciously and sacrificially gave of their time, money, and expertise to help with this work, and through these God has provided all but \$500,000 of the needed \$1.6 million for this project, and we still retained our cash reserve, which is now about \$80,000!

Some of the key components we considered in our project were space, beauty, comfort, functionality and versatility, efficiency, good lighting and sound, and, of course, cost. We wanted to be good stewards of all God provided. Our new building has a spacious, welcoming lobby, nursery, bathrooms, and sanctuary. The fan-shaped sanctuary has seating for 350 and a sixty-seat choir loft. There are six classrooms in the back of the sanctuary designed with retractable walls, allowing our sanctuary to enlarge to seat 514 within fifteen minutes if needed. We love the versatility

of this design. Knowing the importance of energy efficiency and comfort, both now and in the future, we spent extra time, effort, and money to put in a state-of-the-art HVAC and air filtration system. With well-regulated temperature, comfortable seating, good lighting, and a good sound system, people can more easily sit and listen to God’s Word being preached without distraction.

The theme we chose when we started this project was “Building to Abound” in every good work, claiming 2 Corinthians 9:8 as our theme verse: “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.” God *did* help us build a building, and He used this building project to help build the faith of many in our congregation, including mine.

We are focusing now on “Abounding in Every Good Work.” A building is a tool for us to use to reach souls for Christ and edify the believers. Just as God helped

us build it, He will enable us to use it for His glory. Ephesians 3:20, 21 says, “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” We

have learned that God’s only limitations are the limits that we put on Him due to our lack of faith. I wonder how many marvelous things we miss out on that the Lord wants to do for us because we are too much like the ten spies whose

focus was on the problems that might be encountered, rather than on the promises that God had given. In time, and as God allows, we plan to build the rest of our master plan, which includes classroom and office wings on this new building, and a gym/fellowship hall with more classrooms. As we look with human eyes it all seems impossible, but we have seen over and over again that God *is* able!

Greg Rogers serves as pastor of Grace Memorial Baptist Church, in Bedford, Virginia.



The Biblical Teaching of Hell (Part Two)

In Luke 16 we have an account of two men who died. We read in Luke 16:22, "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried." The Scriptures solemnly declare the certainty of death. Second Samuel 14:14 says, "For we must needs die." Psalm 89:48 states, "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?" Job 30:23 declares, "For I know that thou wilt bring me to death." Hebrews 9:27 says, "And . . . it is appointed unto men once to die."

Death is a universal reality that no one can escape or avoid. Death is no respecter of persons. Genesis tells of great men who lived hundreds of years on this earth.

- Genesis 5:5, "And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died."
- Genesis 5:27, "And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died."
- Genesis 9:29, "And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died."

These men lived long years on this earth, but they all died. And if the Lord tarries, there is coming a time when all of mankind will walk through the door of death. Ecclesiastes 8:8 says, "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death." Psalm 39:5 states, "Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand breadth." And Job 14:1 reminds us that "man that is born of a woman is of few days." The brevity of life is a certainty!

People must be told the truth of the Scriptures concerning life after death. In John 5:28, 29 Jesus Christ said, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." In Luke 16 two men died, but they went to different locations. The Bible tells us that the beggar died and "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." This was the place of the person who was trusting in the future coming Messiah as his Savior. Abraham's bosom would be done away with when the Lord Jesus Christ arose from the grave. However, the location of the rich man in Luke 16 has not been changed. Verse 23 says, "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." Notice that the word "torments" is plural. First, there was the torment of thirst. Verse 24 says, "And he cried and said, Father

Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue." Second, there was the torment of fire. The end of verse 24 says, "For I am tormented in this flame." Third, there was the torment of remembrance. Abraham responded in verse 26, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things."

I heard a song many years ago, and one of the phrases was, "Oh, how awful Hell must be!" In Luke 16 Hell was so awful for the rich man that he wanted Lazarus to leave Abraham's bosom and go warn his five brothers about it. He said in verses 27 and 28, "I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." If this rich man in Hell had such an intense desire to have Lazarus warn his brothers, how much more should the Lord's people desire to warn others about this terrible place!

Another horrifying teaching about Hell is what Jesus taught in Matthew 8:12: "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Many years ago, when I was about twelve years old, my older brother Michael had two boils, one on each of his hips. These boils needed to be lanced, so we took him to our doctor. Dr. Hixson had both of us come into the room and had Michael lie down on the table. He then instructed me to sit on his arms and grab the bar on both sides of the table and not let go. When Dr. Hixson began to cut into the boils, my brother was in such extreme pain that he was grinding his teeth and had tears in his eyes. I have never forgotten that experience. But as awful as that was, it cannot even come close to the horror of Hell. Mark 9:46 says, "Where their worm [soul] dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

The Lord does not desire that anyone go to Hell. Second Peter 3:9 teaches, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." We have the glorious message of salvation. Let us be stirred to share the Lord Jesus Christ with those who are lost and headed toward an eternal Hell.

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READING THE BIBLE

Note: This column is guest-written by Dr. Ken Casillas, professor of Old Testament at Bob Jones Seminary.

Believers intuitively understand what the Bible states explicitly—that their relationship with God and their growth in Christlikeness are inseparably connected to their interaction with Scripture (Ps. 19:7–14; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Yet we all struggle to maintain a regular, fresh, and profitable practice of meditation. We can easily fall into a mechanical routine that saps our passion for discovery. One step toward more vibrant study is learning to read the Bible from multiple perspectives.¹

An Objection

Talk of multiple perspectives seems dangerous. It may initially smack of postmodern relativism. Doesn't a Bible passage have only one, fixed meaning? The single meaning of Scripture is a nonnegotiable presupposition. But what do we mean by "meaning"? God's revelation tends to be multifaceted. First, each passage is surrounded by *layers of context*—not just the immediate context, but the contexts supplied by the section of the book, the whole book, its Testament, and ultimately the entirety of Scripture. We may discover any number of connections between a passage and these contexts.

Second, we should allow for *implications* about subjects beyond the strict scope of a passage. Jesus' response to the Sadducees regarding the resurrection demonstrates the validity of drawing inferences from Scripture (Matt. 22:23–33). That He equated such inferences with the Scriptures themselves (v. 29) motivates us to think God's thoughts after Him even about topics He may not directly address in a passage.

A third consideration is the need for *application*. It is a mark of immaturity to insist on a black-and-white verse forbidding a particular practice before we are persuaded that the practice is wrong. The Bible is not an exhaustive encyclopedia on ethics. It is a foundation and model for doing ethics. If we desire to use Scripture as the Lord intended, we must use our minds to work out its practical ramifications for the choices we face in our present culture. Without this step, we have not ultimately understood the Bible.²

The Value of Perspectives

Multiple perspectives on a passage need not contradict or compete with each other. Rather, they *complement* each other. They work together to produce a better understanding of the complete message God has for us.

A perspectival approach can also keep us from artificially limiting our study to viewpoints toward which we may naturally tend. Whether because of our theological

tradition, our spiritual experience, or even our personality, we likely have a propensity to read Scripture through the lens of certain truths.

Have you ever wondered how some preachers seem to turn every passage to the theme of soul-winning? Or how others find the sovereignty of God in just about any text? Reading the Bible from various perspectives will help keep us from imbalance by encouraging us to think outside our proverbial box (or soapbox).

Five Perspectives

These perspectives are not esoteric or even that profound. We just need to reflect on them intentionally. Let's deal with five in particular. They are not airtight compartments, but prayerfully considering each one individually will enable us to grasp the breadth of God's revelation.

Literary. This is not only a starting point but also a check on all other viewpoints. They must all be consistent with this one if we want any sense of certainty about our understanding. We're talking here about the basic intention of the Spirit-directed human author. We deduce authorial intent by a careful study of historical background, genre, structure, grammar, word meanings, and the like. For this task, commentaries and study Bibles are extremely helpful.

Redemptive-historical. We should constantly remind ourselves that whatever book we are reading is also a chapter in the bigger Book we call the Bible. That Book is fundamentally a narrative, and every narrative has a storyline. The storyline of Scripture is the magnificent work of God in restoring His Kingdom through the promised Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ.³ In some way, every passage fits into and contributes to this story. Detecting these connections demands an understanding of Old Testament background in particular, and cross-referencing is of great value in this regard.

Doctrinal. Certain major themes surface repeatedly throughout Scripture, and our passage may add—explicitly or implicitly—to the total package of truth about these themes. Does the passage provide insight into the character and works of God? Does it shed light on the nature of man? Does it teach something about the application of salvation to individuals? Does it contribute to our knowledge of Israel and/or the church? We could multiply such questions. Doctrinal study entails various challenges: synthesizing varied strands of Biblical teaching, drawing proper inferences, and determining the relative importance of a theme. But the benefit of a more comprehensive view of God's ways surely outweighs the difficulties!

Devotional. Here we ponder the relevance of what we have learned for our personal communion with God. This step demands spiritual sensitivity and keeps our study

FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

from becoming academic. We review our findings and ask what kind of response to God they demand. We turn these truths into personal worship, confession, or intercession. Perspectival reading can revitalize our prayer life as well as our Bible study.

Ethical. This takes us out of our closet fellowship with God and onto the street. Our interaction with a passage is incomplete if we have not grappled with the “so what?” question. How does it teach, reprove, correct, or train us, so that our conduct is more righteous and we are more useful to God (2 Tim. 3:16, 17)?

A Sample Study

How does all this “work” in Bible reading? A sample from the Gospels is ideal because the four Gospels are themselves perspectives. God, the ultimate Author of Scripture, gave us four distinctive portraits of Jesus, four different angles on reality. Let’s consider the one miracle of Jesus recorded in all four Gospels—the feeding of the 5000 (Matt. 14:13–21; Mark 6:32–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–15).

A *literary perspective* notes that this feeding occurs in contexts dealing largely with Jesus’ training of the Twelve for their new ministry in advancing His kingdom program. In Mark and Luke, it appears shortly after the disciples’ initial “mission trip,” for which the Master had told them not to take material provisions. Now they are faced with a hungry multitude! Then follow famous discipleship passages on self-denial and the Transfiguration. Even John’s unique account emphasizes the feeding miracle as a training exercise: Jesus asked Philip, “Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove [test] him: for he himself knew what he would do” (6:5, 6). Jesus designed this incident to build His disciples’ faith and to show them how He intended to use them in spite of their meager resources.

A *redemptive-historical perspective* uncovers some fascinating Old Testament connections. Jesus’ miracle is reminiscent of an earlier provision in a desolate place when Yahweh sent manna for Israel (Exod. 16). This incident likewise occurs in a context of God’s training of His people through testing (Exod. 15:25; 16:4; 17:7; cf. Deut. 8:2). John seems to highlight the Exodus/wilderness background when he introduces the feeding story by saying that the Passover was near (6:4). There may also be an allusion to Elijah’s miraculous distribution of food (2 Kings 4:42–44). So Jesus is continuing and climaxing God’s way of growing His people’s trust. The fact that there were exactly twelve remaining baskets of food for twelve disciples corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel further links this passage with Old Testament history.

A *doctrinal perspective* takes this and all other miracles

of Christ as pointing to His deity (John 20:30, 31). Christ Himself draws a further implication. In John’s Gospel, the Bread of Life discourse follows shortly after the feeding of the 5000 (6:22ff). And confirming our earlier conclusion, the discourse includes a specific and extended link with manna (vv. 30–58). Clearly, Jesus’ provision of bread to sustain physical life suggests His work of giving spiritual life to those who come to Him to be fed.

A *devotional perspective* compels us to bow before Jesus as Yahweh! We trust in Him as our Life-Giver! Yet there is more. Mark introduces his account with a statement about Jesus’ compassion for the shepherdless people. Reflecting on this compassion in action should warm our hearts. Furthermore, in Matthew and Mark, the feeding story is preceded immediately by Herod’s banquet, which resulted in John the Baptist’s execution. Maybe it is not a stretch to see a contrast between the sumptuous but deadly feasting of the world and the simple but satisfying intimacy that believers can enjoy at Christ’s “table.”

From an *ethical perspective*, the application is probably not that we need to share our lunch—though that is a good thing to do! We ought to be thinking primarily in terms of our discipleship. Have you ever thought that God has called you to an impossible task? Get used to it! Whether in our struggle with sin or our ministry efforts, the Lord loves to magnify Himself through our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9, 10). Jesus’ miracle urges us to step out in faith and serve Him in spite of our inadequacy. That the disciples still doubted when confronted with the second feeding incident rebukes our own slowness to accept this (Matt. 15:32ff; Mark 8:1ff).

Perhaps there is even an application to our discussion of Bible study. Does this kind of study seem impossible? Are you overwhelmed by the diligence required to understand all these perspectives? Just take what the Lord has already put in your hands and watch Him deepen your insight and develop your walk with Him beyond what you can imagine!

¹ The seed thoughts for this essay come from Vern S. Poythress, *Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2001). For a fuller discussion, see John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1987).

² I question the rigid distinction often made between the *meaning* of a passage and its *significance/application*. For a thought-provoking discussion, see Daniel M. Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2001).

³ For a helpful analysis of the Bible’s storyline, see Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991); compare Thurman Wisdom, *A Royal Destiny: The Reign of Man in God’s Kingdom* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2006).

Support Tactic No. 4: Work Hard. Whether it is because a theology professor has piled on the homework or because a Drill Sergeant has piled on the pushups, my husband works hard. Often we wives can slack off because we don't have deadlines to meet and there are no pushups if we don't get our work done.

A year ago I was simultaneously caring for my four-month-old and working eight hours a day as a paralegal in a local law firm. At 5:30 P.M. the last thing on my mind was supper. I discovered that making my husband wait an hour or more while I scrounged up a meal or his having to prepare supper while I fed the baby was fast becoming the norm. That had to stop! My husband deserved better. I started meal planning for the next week on Friday night, grocery shopping on Saturday morning, and spending four to five hours in meal preparation on Saturday afternoon. While this routine requires a long day in the kitchen on Saturday, supper is no longer a two-hour ordeal five days out of seven.

Support Tactic No. 5: Trust God to Meet Your Needs. One of the greatest pressures my husband faces is financial. As a wife, I am living out one giant opportunity to watch God meet our family's needs instead of expecting my husband to do so. I keep a running journal of God's provision, which is a constant motivation to continue trusting Him. When the car breaks down, our shoes have holes in the soles, or we are about out of money and the school bill is due, God has provided a car for our use, a gift card to a shoestore left anonymously in the church bathroom, and an extra job enabling us to pay for the next month's tuition.

Support Tactic No. 6: Be Content. It is amazing what we can do without if we are willing to improvise. While a grill would be nice,

it is possible to grill a steak over an open fire in the yard. A little water can extend the life of a tube of mascara. While hosting supper for six in a ten-by-twelve-foot kitchen is a tight fit, it can be done. When I am content, grateful, and creative, it takes the pressure off my husband. And when I'm smiling, my husband says I'm irresistible!

Support Tactic No. 7: Communicate. Due to my husband's schedule I don't see him nearly as much as I wish. However, we make it a priority to talk and listen whenever possible—including at 2:00 A.M. when he returns from studying and the caffeine from his coffee is still wearing off. We make it a priority to talk about our perspectives on a given situation, daily happenings, frustrations, humorous moments, our expectations, spiritual struggles, mental attacks, lessons learned, physical needs, pressures we are under, ways God is working in our hearts, and our likes and dislikes, just to name a few.

Because we communicate constantly about everything, we can immediately sense when something has come between us. We have never had "big problems" or "big discussions" because we deal with each issue that comes up when it is still very small. Usually it is a matter of our needing to understand the other person or to simply ask forgiveness for selfishness. This can be accomplished in a few minutes.

With the help of these Support Tactics, I am able to anticipate my next support maneuver so I can be where my husband needs me the most. Currently, he is "flying down the rope" while I cheer him on. What about your husband? Are his "boots safely on the ground" or is he "flailing under the Blackhawk"? Or do you know?

Jill Hamilton is married to Chaplain Candidate Seth Hamilton. They currently live in Greenville, South Carolina, where Jill works as a paralegal for Patterson & Associates, P.A., while Seth finishes his last semester at Bob Jones Theological Seminary.



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ELCA Statement

In their annual meeting in Minneapolis this past summer, the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America) delegates moved to a more reconciled posture regarding the homosexual community. The entire amended document that is official record from the meeting can be accessed at <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Secretary/ELCA-Governance/Churchwide-Assembly/Actions.aspx>.

Also on the agenda was whether or not to allow clergy in "same-sex relationships" to continue to serve as Lutheran ministers. By a margin of 559 to 451 sanction of homosexual clergy was given. Before that issue was raised, a resolution was adopted to "respect the differences of opinions on the matter and honor the 'bound consciences' of those who disagree." This vote was overwhelmingly approved 771-230.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Communication-Services/News/Releases.aspx?a=4253>.

File to Appeal

It comes as no surprise to many that President Obama has filed a legal brief in support of repealing DOMA (federal Defense of Marriage Act). In a written statement, President Obama states that he has "long held that

DOMA prevents LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered] couples from being granted equal rights and benefits." The president believes the act is "discriminatory and should be repealed by Congress." This is no less than he claimed to desire when he was still a senator from the state of Illinois.

This article can be referenced at <http://onenewsnow.com/Politics/Default.aspx?id=647470>.

Mojave Cross Case

An eight-year old court case has finally made its way to the Supreme Court. The case (*Salazar vs. Buono*) concerns an eight-foot-tall cross in southern California that was erected on Sunrise Rock in 1934 as a World War I memorial. In 2001 the ACLU filed suit in federal court to have it removed not only because it stands on federal land but also because, they say, it honors only the memory of those veterans who would have called themselves Christian. The monument is currently covered with plywood to remove the offense.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.huliq.com/3257/87315/supreme-court-hear-case-mojave-cross#>. See also <http://www.snopes.com/politics/religion/mojave.asp>.

Human Rights Campaign

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the largest homosexual rights group in the nation, met in Washington, DC, on October 10 this year for its thirteenth national dinner. The keynote speaker was

President Barack Obama.

The president did not use the occasion to announce any new policies or initiatives, but he did express his plan to sign hate crimes legislation when it comes to his desk. He also said, "My expectation is that when you look back on these



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years, you will see a time in which we put a stop to discrimination against gays and lesbians, whether in the office or on the battlefield. . . . You will see a time in which we as a nation finally recognize relationships between two men or two women as just as real and admirable as relationships between a man and a woman.”

This article can be referenced at <http://www.floridablade.com/2009/10-15/news/national/6375.cfm>; see also <http://www.onenewsnow.com/Politics/Default.aspx?id=712174>.

Court-Ordered Public Education

A New Hampshire court was asked to settle a dispute between divorced couple Martin Kuroski and Brenda Voydatch regarding the education of their daughter. Amanda, now ten years old, has been home-schooled since first grade. According to court documents, Amanda was using curriculum approved by the local school district and created by certified teachers. She was regularly evaluated by standardized achievement testing. She has taken public school classes for art, PE, and Spanish. Even the public school evaluation noted that she was well-rounded in her social skills.

The court order, though, specifically stated, “According to the guardian ad litem’s further report and testimony, the counselor found Amanda to lack some youthful characteristics. She appeared to reflect her mother’s rigidity on questions of faith.” Thus the order declared that Amanda’s “interests, and particularly her intellectual and emotional development, would be best served by exposure to a public school setting in which she would be challenged to solve problems

NOTABLE QUOTES

Religion is no such easy thing. Men would gladly compound by external acts of beneficence, or by penances, for a change of heart; but the thing is impossible. Thousands indeed are deluded on this point, and think that they can substitute what is outward for what is inward, but God requires the heart, and without holiness the most liberal giver or the most suffering ascetic can never see God.—Charles Hodge

Cheer up dear brethren and sisters. Take comfort, I entreat you. Look at the bright side of your position. Be encouraged to fight on. The time is short. The Lord is at hand. The night is far spent. Millions as weak as you have fought the same fight. Not one of all those millions has been finally led captive by Satan. Mighty are your enemies—but the Captain of your salvation is mightier still.—J. C. Ryle

The common policy of our churches is that of great prudence. We do not, as a rule, attempt anything beyond our own strength. . . . We accomplish little because we have no idea of doing much. I would to God we had more “pluck.”—C. H. Spurgeon

Iwould rather be the means of saving a soul from death than be the greatest orator on earth. I would rather bring the poorest woman in the world to the feet of Jesus than I would be made Archbishop of Canterbury. I would sooner pluck one single brand from the burning than explain all mysteries. To win a soul from going down into the pit, is a more glorious achievement than to be crowned in the area of theological controversy as Dr. Sufficientissimus.—C. H. Spurgeon

Iam not sure which of the two occupies the lower sphere, he who hungers for money or he who thirsts for applause.—J. H. Jowett

Atrue and safe leader is likely to be one who has no desire to lead, but is forced into a position of leadership by an inward pressure of the Holy Spirit and the pressure of external situation. Such were Moses and David and the Old Testament prophets. . . . The true leader will have no desire to lord it over God’s heritage, but will be humble, gentle, self sacrificing, and altogether ready to follow as to lead, when the Spirit makes it clear that a wiser and more gifted man than himself has appeared.—A. W. Tozer

presented by a group learning situation and . . . Amanda would be best served by exposure to different points of view at a time in her life when she must begin to critically evaluate multiple systems of belief and behavior.”

This article can be referenced at <http://www.onenewsnow.com/Education/Default.aspx?id=659638#>.

No Practice of Conscience

The California Supreme Court ruled at the end of September in favor of Guadalupe Benitez, who had been denied artificial insemination because of her doctors’ moral convictions. (Benitez is a lesbian.) The bottom line for the courts was that California’s antidiscrimination laws trump personal convictions based on faith. If discrimination must occur, the courts deem it must be against people of faith and moral conviction. They must be made to do that which they cannot in good conscience perform.

Brad Dacus of the Pacific Justice Institute did not believe the ruling ended the issue: “The big question is the extent to which religious objection will be defeated in the future in other cases where you have institutions having religious convictions against providing other services. . . . For example, a religious hospital not wishing to provide abortions, even though [abortion could be] potentially mandated by some future law.”

This article can be referenced at <http://www.onenewsnow.com/Legal/Default.aspx?id=703322#>.

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— The Slough of Sin We Are All Born In

In last month's *Global Focus* we began looking at practices in missions and evangelism that seek to find common ground—areas of philosophical, scientific, religious, or emotional agreement upon which we can build discussions with unbelievers. It is my contention that there are no areas of neutral common ground upon which we can build. Furthermore, if we do try to build on areas of agreement rather than emphasizing the areas of disagreement where repentance is needed, we will do more harm than good. This month, we want to focus briefly on the Scriptural teaching of sinfulness that explains why there is no neutral common ground. This understanding lays the proper foundation for how we approach unbelievers with the gospel.

All people everywhere are born sinners and are, therefore, subject to the depraving effects of sin. These effects are devastating. Genesis 6:5 says, "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." One may argue that this verse is true only of those living pre-Flood—that they were worse than people today. Romans 3 says otherwise when Paul states, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one" (vv. 10–12). All people are sinners, and their sin causes them to go "out of the way" toward becoming "unprofitable." They do not seek God. This is the plain truth. What affect does sin have on the people we are trying to reason with?

First, we need to ask this question, "What effect does sin have on their acceptance of truth they already know?" The Bible is clear that sin causes people to respond to truth they know by ignoring it or perverting it. Apart from the work of the gospel and the Spirit, which we will advance later, the Bible tells us how men respond to the truth seen in nature or known in their innermost beings. Romans 1:18–20 tells us that all men everywhere know certain truths from creation, yet they suppress these truths in their sin: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth [suppress the truth] in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal

power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." All people have been given in creation enough revelation to know that there is a Creator God who is eternally powerful and to whom they must give an account. Yet, in their sin, people suppress that truth and refuse to worship God. Instead, they worship a god they manufacture, either spiritually or physically, and ultimately they worship themselves and their own lusts, as Paul goes on to say in Romans 1.*

There is nothing we could present to a lost person by way of fact, logic, or argument that could be even nearly as persuasive, effective, or foundational as the general revelation of Himself that God has already given. God has made Himself known to all people in nature, in their consciences, and in their very constitution as humans. Sinners reject this truth and stand condemned.

Why do they reject the truth? Part of the reason lies in the purpose of this revelation. God's general revelation is given to all people so that they are personally guilty for their sin of rejecting Him. As Romans 1:20 says, it is given "so that they are without excuse." Ephesians 2:1, 2 says, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." People are truth-deniers and walk in the course of this world of truth-deniers. They are, as Colossians 2:8 states, "spoil[ed] through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world."

The Bible paints a bleak picture of the sinner. So, is there hope to see sinners transformed? Is there hope in presenting more facts about nature or about creation? Is there hope in better logic? Is it in showing more compassion? Is it in meeting physical needs? No. God's answer to mankind's rejection of His truth is through the confrontational yet hope-filled message of the gospel. The gospel message itself is their only hope, and it is our only hope. We will turn our global focus to this glorious message next month.

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.

* See this month's *Straight Cuts* article for a fuller explanation of this text.

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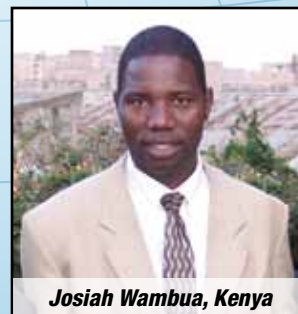
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Military Family Christmas Abroad

Ivey Palmer and Carissa Fisher

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to have Christmas in another country? What if it was in another country without your husband? We have experienced both, and our memories are of times both challenging and strengthening. For a few moments we invite you into the world of a military family spending a Christmas away from extended family and friends in a foreign country. These experiences will be different for every family, but here are a few of our stories.

Carissa writes,

I spent three Christmases in Germany. We arrived in Germany in August of 2002. Our youngest child was just six months old, and my husband was to be deployed. His orders were cancelled, though, and God allowed us to spend that Christmas together as a family. One of my first memories of a German Christmas was being invited to a German army unit's Christmas party, where we were introduced to the German version of Santa Claus: a tall, skinny, rather scary character with a big stick!

Ivey continues,

I spent almost three Christmases in Germany also. In 2004 we spent Christmas Day with my parents in North Carolina before driving off to the airport to begin our journey to Germany. I was almost six months pregnant when we arrived there on December 27. I remember being so surprised by the lack

of outdoor Christmas decorations around the town and wondering whether Germans even celebrated Christmas.

Our second Christmas in Germany was spent basking in the joy of family as we spent what was to be our last weeks with our husbands for a while. Both of our husbands deployed to Iraq for the first time soon after our second Christmas in Germany. While any time together as a complete family unit is a happy time, this was also an anxious time as we contemplated being left alone for the first time with our children in a foreign country and our closest family over 4000 miles away.

For both of us, our last Christmas in Germany was spent with our children, trying to maintain the family's traditions and making it as positive an experience as possible without their daddy. It is interesting how similar our way of spending a holiday away from our husbands turned out to be. For both of us during this time, our church was our family. We both found it easier to cope with the holiday "alone" by investing our lives in others. Carissa directed a Christmas program at church. Ivey planned and led a group of Christian ladies in an outreach project to the American military wives in our town, col-

lecting and distributing thousands of items lovingly donated by churches and organizations all over America. Both of us chose to invite a young childless Army spouse into our home to spend Christmas Day with us.

Looking back to those days, we fondly remember the excitement of the Christmas season in Germany. No German Christmas is complete without visits to the *Weinacht* markets (outdoor Christmas markets), the purchase of a new nutcracker, and enjoying the beautifully quaint German villages. But what we remember most is that military families are truly there for each other during the holidays. There is a giving and loving spirit that spills over from most everyone because we all understand, without the need for words, that we must be each other's family during this unique time in our lives.

God has been gracious to our families. We saw God's hand at work so clearly in our lives during our time living abroad. Our faith grew deeper, and it is no doubt that even the trial of a Christmas away from our Soldier husbands and extended family was a tool God used to refine us and conform us to His image.

Ivey is married to Army Chaplain CH (CPT) Brian Palmer, stationed at Fort Wainwright, Alaska. She received her BS in Mathematics from Bob Jones University. She currently home-schools their two boys, Nathaniel and Micah, and is actively involved in church, community, and Bible study ministries on and off post.

Carissa has a BS in Elementary Education and currently teaches third-through-fifth graders at Abilene Baptist Academy in Abilene, Kansas. She and Chaplain (MAJ) Gary Fisher have been married for nineteen years and have five children.



A photograph of two men in white shirts standing waist-deep in a river. The man on the left has his right hand raised, and the man on the right has his arms crossed. The water is murky and reflects the men. The background is a blurred green landscape.

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Ministry behind the Lines

Mike Shellman

Serving as a military Chaplain is more than a privilege and honor; it is a calling from God. When God called me into the Army Chaplaincy, I entered by faith, not knowing all that God had planned for me. We were a nation at peace when I reported for duty on September 11, 2000. Exactly one year later God revealed to me why He had called me into the military. After the terrorist attacks early that day, I gathered my family together for prayer for our country and those directly affected. We knew that life as we had known it had changed.

I have now served in seven deployments and have come to know ministry opportunities and challenges literally *behind the lines*. My mission is clearly defined by the United States Army: "the US Army Chaplaincy provides religious support to America's Army while assisting commanders in ensuring the right of free exercise of religion for all Soldiers. In short, we nurture the living, care for the wounded, and honor the fallen." The role of the Chaplain is crucial on the battlefield. He serves as eyes and ears for his commander. He assesses and builds morale, provides encouragement, support, prayer, counsel, teaching, and preaching. His own faith must be unwavering. The Chaplain accompanies his troops into battle with a solid plan to touch each Soldier's life with a message from God. My theme is always "Strengthening the Soldier's Spirit," and my plan involves the following duties.

Battlefield Circulation requires a fluid plan to circulate to the location of every Soldier, providing sufficient time to build relationships and conduct ministry. During Operation Anaconda, one of the first large-scale missions conducted in Afghanistan, I was ordered to link-up with another company that had taken several casualties. When I reached the company's location, I could smell the burnt flesh from shrapnel wounds and found fear in the eyes of the men. I went to each fighting position with a message of hope from God. I

then spent time with an officer who was a self-proclaimed atheist. He looked incredibly fearful and confessed his fear of dying. He then asked me to share with him how he could have a relationship with God and everlasting life. Within an hour, that young officer took a knee in front of his men and accepted the Lord as Savior. He was baptized immediately after the mission.

Mission Prayer is conducted each day prior to conducting a mission. I take much time in preparing my prayer and the Scriptures I will use. To me, this is one of the most important times I will have with my Soldiers, speaking God's Word, knowing that we are going into harm's way with the possibility of death. If I'm with my Soldiers for five days and I conduct five mission prayers and challenges taking five minutes, this means I have twenty-five minutes of the Soldiers' undivided attention.

Word of the Day is given each day at the Commander's Update meeting. I include a quote and also a key verse that will encourage and challenge our leaders for the day. Some may never attend the worship services, but God will use His Word to work in lives.

Advisor to the Command is a responsibility of assessing the needs and reporting the condition of our troops to my commander.

Worship Services are conducted at each location. My mission is to provide one solid worship service at each location with maximum participation.

I travel with the mindset that "every day is Sunday." I'm always ready to preach the gospel, no matter what day of the week. I can't order my Soldiers to attend; I must challenge them and encourage their participation. Most will attend the service. There is a real hunger for the Word of God, and Soldiers have many questions about eternity and the role in which they serve. During my last deployment I saw several come to know

the Lord as Savior. Recently I conducted a funeral service for one of our Rangers who was killed in action. The Ranger's mother had received a letter telling her that he had attended the Chaplain's worship service and accepted the Lord as Savior. I was able to reassure her that he is now in Heaven.

Bible Studies are a key to discipleship. Since I can't remain at one location, I organize Bible study groups, training a key leader and providing a quality study Bible for each participant. They try to meet every day for a time of teaching, praying, and growing. In this way, our warriors encourage each other in their faith in God and have a time of accountability to remain faithful.

Ministry of Presence is about building relationships to enable ministry opportunities, which can occur almost anywhere—eating a meal together, during conversation or exercise—any time that will open the door to further conversation about God.

Memorial Services are an important way to honor the fallen and to reaffirm the value of sacrifice, giving strength to those who must continue to fight. It's never easy to lose a Soldier, and during each deployment several Memorial Services will be conducted. Even when I feel inadequate with my words and abilities to bring comfort to those who are hurting, as I depend on God's Word, His power and presence to bring healing and comfort, Soldiers who come with questions and doubts

are reassured of God's presence and reminded of His great love. Many of them come to know Christ and have the hope that only He can give.

Chaplain (MAJ) Mike Shellman is a graduate of Maranatha Baptist Bible College.

He presently serves at the Ranger Training Brigade located at Ft. Benning, Georgia. He has served in seven deployments in support of the Global War on Terrorism (Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom) and has earned five Bronze Stars for his courageous ministry in combat.



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