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Contents

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2010

FRONTLINE MAGAZINE

VOLUME 20 • NUMBER 5

6 Life beyond the Olympics

Janne Peterson

Fleur Wenham is still running the race—but now for an eternal *incorruptible* reward.

8 A Ministry Philosophy for Others to Follow

Gordon Dickson

Biblical principles are attached to both the Person of God and personal practice.

12 The Importance of “Father Time”

Cary Schmidt

Nothing else can be what *you* must be!

14 Let No Man Despise Your Youth

Joe Vaughn

Lessons for a new youth pastor.

16 The Danger of Burnout in the Youth Ministry

Walt Brock

21 The Long Haul

Jeff Webb

22 Integrating the Youth Ministry into the Lifeblood of the Church

Rob Campbell and Victor Irving

32 What? A Youth Pastor’s Wife?

Marilyn Janke

10 Contrasting Characters

Jim Berg

We should not be surprised to see those who imbibe the culture take on the marks of Proverbs’ fools.

18 The Baton of Faith

Daniel Zeller

Each runner must successfully transfer the baton to the next runner, or the entire effort will have been futile.

Departments

4 Mail Bag

5 On the Front Line

No Substitute for Godly Parenting
Joe Vaughn

20 On the Home Front

25 Cogitations

On Our Absence
Warren Vanhetloo

26 Ladies’ Circle

A Healing Hurt
Hannah R. Anderson

27 Wit & Wisdom

David Atkinson

28 Regional Report

Doug Wright

29 The Evangelist’s Corner

What Are Your Goals?
Jerry Sivnksty

30 At a Glance

The Song of Solomon
Layton Talbert

33 Newsworthy

Robert Condict

35 Global Focus

The Student Volunteer Movement’s Detroit Roots, Part II
Pearson Johnson

37 Chaplain News

Bob Ellis

39 Behind the Lines

Parent Ministry
Peter Grant

Special thanks to Joe Vaughn, youth pastor at Faith Baptist Church, Taylors, South Carolina, for his help with this issue.

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Editor's Note: *A lady in an FBFI board member's church undertook the project of finding families in her church to provide FrontLine magazine gift subscriptions to each of their missionaries and a group of Kenyan pastors. The following is from one of the Kenyan pastors who was a recipient of one of those subscriptions.*

My name is Shadrack Munyalo, a pastor of an Independent Baptist church in Kenya. I do not know for sure how I can express my special gratitude to you my fellow co-labourers in the Lord's ministry. Since I began receiving these Christian magazines, they have been of great help not only to me but also to many in the church I am pastoring.

The March/April issue shed much light on the eschatological gray matters that I have been searching for a long time. I now can with much ease open the eyes of many on the topic of the Supra-Religion. That lesson really helped me a great deal.

I receive these magazines with great appreciation, and I would be more thankful to continue receiving them. May God grant you more and

more diligence as you have been faithful to send these magazines to us. Thank you and may God bless you.

*Shadrack Munyalo
Kenya*

FrontLine has become an important source of information and blessing to us. We think the latest issue (March/April 2010) really strikes at the heart of the issues of the hour in which we are living. An important part of our own ministry is printing and distributing pamphlets for evangelism as well as for edification of Christians.

The Lord has given us an increased sense of responsibility to the Jewish people since the New Testament makes God's program for them quite clear. This is well presented by John Huffman in his article, "Salvation Is of the Jews."

*Bob and Geri Clinton
Nashville, MI*

As a missionary in the Far East, I look forward to receiving the *FrontLine* magazine. Because trends and issues in the West have a way of trickling over to Asia, *FrontLine* helps me to focus on the

Continued on page 38

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No Substitute for Godly Parenting

Joe Vaughn

It is obvious to every parent and youth worker that one of the biggest spiritual battles being fought today is for the hearts of teenagers and that the future of the church and the family are at stake. The Devil seems to be attacking the home on every front—from the rapidly increasing divorce rate and the sustained attack on the Biblical definition of marriage, to the lure of libertine Christianity and the prevailing culture of relativism. Tragically, the Adversary has even found an ally in the church among compromised youth programs that cater to teenagers' lusts rather than striving for Christlikeness and faithfulness to God's Word. It is our desire that this issue of *FrontLine* magazine serve as a tool in the hands of youth pastors and senior pastors as they work together to address the needs of the families under their care.

Indeed, families are in mind, rather than teenagers merely. While much of the material in this issue addresses the needs of teenagers specifically, it is important to state at the outset that it is parents who are on the front lines of youth ministry. Regardless of a youth worker's knowledge or zeal, it is the fathers and mothers whom God will first hold accountable for the discipleship of their children before turning His attention to the role of the local church. Youth pastors, sponsors, camp workers, and other mentors enjoy the privilege of playing an important role in the lives of teenagers, but only secondarily to their role of supporting the parents. A strong, Biblically based youth program or a solid Christian school is a genuine blessing when available to parents. Yet without a balanced philosophy of the parents' role in the home, these institutions could incidentally encourage a kind of spiritual "cruise control" among moms and dads.

Unfortunately, it seems that some parents are tempted to reason that as long as they pay their teenager's tuition or see that their teens are present each week for youth group, they are fulfilling their responsibility to disciple their children. Likewise, it is often perceived that the youth pastor's job is simply to help teenagers. In reality his primary job is to help *parents* help their teenagers. If, in trying to help a young person, the youth ministry neglects to incorporate his or her parents into the solution, God's plan for the spiritual development of those parents is neglected, and the number-one disciple-making influence ordained in the life of that teenager is bypassed. In the words of Charles Spurgeon,

Let no Christian parents fall into the delusion that the Sunday school is intended to ease them of their personal duties. The first and most natural condition of things is for parents to train up their own children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. . . . Where there are no such Christian parents, it is well and wisely done for godly people to intervene. It is a Christlike work when another undertakes the duty that the person originally responsible for the task has left undone.¹

May our local churches strive to effectively reach and disciple their young people for Christ—but only as a part of a greater vision to strengthen Christ-honoring families.

In conclusion, as the battle for teenagers rages, "let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Youth ministry can be at once the most rewarding and the most challenging form of ministry. May this issue be an encouragement to

all those who seek to influence the next generation for the cause of Christ, and may their vision for the next generation of spiritual leadership be enlarged! To quote Spurgeon once more,

O teachers, see what you may do! . . . There will come under your teaching, my brother, those who are to bear the banners of the Lord in the thick of the fray. The ages look to you each time your class assembles. Oh, that God may help you to do your part well! We pray with one heart and one soul that the Lord Jesus Christ may be with our Sunday schools from this day and until He comes.²

¹ Spurgeon, C. H. *Spiritual Parenting* (New Kensington: Whitaker House, 2003), 64.

² *Ibid.*, 71.

Cover Story: Passing the Baton, a Reason for Joy

1956 Olympic Gold Medalist Betty Cuthbert begins the final lap of the 400m relay. She had won other gold medals that year and would again in the years to come. One member of the team would go on to become governor. But the theme of this issue of *FrontLine* is written on the face of the smiling lady just behind her, Fleur (Mellor) Wenham. Four years earlier, the Australians were favored to win the gold, but the third member of the team had dropped the baton. In 1956 the Olympics were held in Sydney, and the world knew that with a successful handoff Betty Cuthbert would claim the gold for Australia. Through a combination of unexpected circumstances, the handoff became the task of Fleur Mellor. The smile on Fleur's face tells it all: "Successfully passing the baton is a genuine reason for joy!"



LIFE BEYOND THE OLYMPICS

Janne Peterson

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1, 2

Some of Australia's legendary world-record-breaking gold medalists—women such as Dawn Fraser, Betty Cuthbert, and Marjorie Jackson—are now pretty much household names in Australia. Fleur Mellor Wenham is also a world-record-breaking gold medalist, but one who has *not* received a lot of attention. She doesn't mind that at all. When I spoke to Mrs. Wenham about allowing me to publish her story, she insisted in her gentle but firm manner that she did not want to receive any "glory" from this article. It is very evident that Fleur does not desire any worldly fame or admiration. Such is the unassuming humble nature of a woman who is still running the race—no longer for temporal gold but for an eternal *incorruptible* reward. "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but

we an incorruptible" (1 Cor. 9:25).

Fleur started training seriously when she was thirteen years old after teachers and her parents agreed that she was an exceptionally quick runner with a lot of potential. From then on she took part in many challenging competitions with achievements in state and national titles. The next step in competition at that time was the Olympic Games or the Empire Games (now known as the Commonwealth Games).

For several months just prior to the selections for the Olympics Fleur was suffering from a serious recurring foot injury which hindered her training and at times completely stopped her from running. It seemed as though she would never be able to run again, much less run in the upcoming Olympics.

But just one week before the state championships at the beginning of 1956, as if by a miracle, the problem was finally diagnosed and corrected. Fleur ran so well in the state championship that she was considered for the Olympic training squad, which eventually led to her selection in the women's 4-x-100-meter relay at the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne. "Selection to run in the Olympic relay was a great honor. I didn't expect it," said Fleur.

Then on Saturday, December 1, 1956, the Australian relay team won the gold medal, breaking the world record in the heat and then again in the final. Fleur ran the third leg of the relay, which was her favorite position, passing the baton to Betty Cuthbert who earlier had won the 100- and 200-meters.

"I was ecstatic as we received our gold medals, and I believed God had given me the strength to run well and even to be able to run at all!" said Fleur.

Fleur was one of the fifteen Australian gold medalists in Australia's Melbourne Olympic Games.

Two years after the 1956 Olympics, after maintaining a rigid training program, Fleur was confident she was on her way to the Empire Games in Cardiff, Wales, United Kingdom. This time, however, she suffered a bitter disappointment. She *just* missed selection.

She recalled, "My life almost fell apart. It probably would have if it hadn't been for my very supportive family and a young man, Brian, who had become a very close friend to me."

Although shattered by the disappointment of missing out on competing in the Empire Games, Fleur was freed from the heavy training schedule and was now allowed to accept an invitation to go away to a Christian camp. The camp was organized by the Christian Fellowship of the Sydney Water Board, where Brian worked.

This camp change Fleur's life forever. Although she had been brought up in the Methodist Church, Fleur had never before heard such clear Bible teaching. "As I listened and heard that God is holy and must judge sin, I remember coming to the awful realization that I was not only a sinner but I was a condemned sinner. As I acknowledged my lost condition, the Lord lit up my heart, and I knew then why Jesus had died on the cross. I knew He had died in my place, taking the penalty I deserved for my sin."

As the Bible clearly states, "For Christ also hath once

SOMETHING IMMEDIATELY HAPPENED IN MY HEART. THIS WAS MY MOMENT OF SALVATION. I WAS BORN AGAIN. . . . "THAT DAY I FOUND A JOY BEYOND THE OLYMPICS. IT WAS AND STILL IS THE JOY OF KNOWING JESUS CHRIST AS MY PERSONAL SAVIOR."

suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Pet. 3:18).

Fleur later recalled, "The leaders at the camp thought I was a Christian, and so they asked me to give my testimony. Even though I didn't know what a testimony was, surprisingly, I agreed. I thought I could talk about how the Lord had helped me in my athletics. After telling how God had made it possible for me to run in the Olympic Games, I found myself saying, 'I don't know why I've just missed out on getting to the Empire Games, but I know now I must trust the Lord with all my heart.' Something immediately happened in my heart. This was my moment of salvation. I was born again. I was crying as I sat down, not tears of sadness but tears of relief as 'the burden of my heart rolled away'—the words from that hymn I had sung many times and now understood.

"That day I found a joy beyond the Olympics. It was and still is the joy of knowing Jesus Christ as my personal Savior."

Brian also accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior at the same camp. The following year Fleur and Brian married. Even before their marriage they had both yielded their lives to the Lord's service.

Brian, who at that time was a qualified engineer employed at the Sydney Water Board, felt God calling him to the pastoral ministry. He became an ordained minister in 1963 and has served as a pastor at Condell Park Bible Church (Sydney, New South Wales) for thirty-seven years. Fleur is faithfully serving God as a wife, mother, grandmother, and in the many ministries of the church.

Was Fleur's disappointment God's appointment? The Lord seemed to have a definite plan for Fleur's life that she may never have known had she not missed out on going to the Empire Games and had she not gone to the Christian camp. Was this God's plan for Fleur Mellor beyond the Olympics? It has often been said when God closes one door He opens another!

To God be the glory!

Janne Peterson is the editor of *The Good Report*, an Australian Christian magazine. Fleur Wenham is the wife of Pastor Brian Wenham, Condell Park Bible Church in Sydney, Australia. This article was first published in *The Good Report*, June/July 2000, No. 1, Issue 7, Vol. 2.

Top left photo—Fleur passing baton to Betty as they head to victory in an Australian Championship. Left—Brian and Fleur Wenham, August 2010





A Ministry Philosophy for Others to Follow

As leaders, we desire to commit the things which we have learned “to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). Using three simple steps (*what*, *why*, and *who*), you can express your ministry philosophy so that others can follow it and put it into practice.

In Matthew 5:16 Jesus Christ made a powerful connection that illuminates our lives and the lives of those around us. He commanded, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” With this simple statement He showed the relationship between our methods and the Master whom we praise—between our practice and the Person of God. Making this connection helps those who follow us to walk in the Light of the Lord.

Consider for instance, the way that Abraham responded to his servant’s recommendation in Genesis 24. When asked to find a bride for Isaac, the servant wisely anticipated a particular difficulty: If the bride’s parents would not send their daughter, would the servant be allowed to take Isaac there to meet them? Abraham’s profound response to this suggestion is instructive. In fact, a reading of Genesis 24 will show that the servant continually called Abraham’s instruction to mind to help him turn his problems into projects.

And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father’s house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence. And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again (Gen. 24:6–8).

Notice how Abraham explained the right practice (*what to do*) by describing the Person of God (*who gets the glory*) and connecting these two with the right principles (*why to do it*). He began by warning the servant not to take Isaac out of the land. Then he explained the foundational reasons behind his approach. He explained *who* God is, *why* to do the task, and connected that to *what* to do (and what not to do.)

Let’s walk through a quick overview of these three simple steps and then connect them with other passages of Scripture. In so doing we can teach ourselves how to think through passages in the Word and how to practically apply these (even cross-culturally) throughout the world.

Practice: What to Do

Let’s get practical. What should we be doing? “A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer” (Prov. 29:19). On the surface of it, the servant seems to have a problem. What is the problem? Rebellion? Laziness? Another translation sheds some light on the real issue: “A slave will not be instructed by words alone; For though he understands, there will be no response” (NASB). The problem is not with the servant’s rebellion, it is with his timidity. He isn’t certain that he can put his master’s principles into practice in a manner that pleases his master. He is willing to carry through with good practices, but he isn’t exactly sure how to do it.

This is similar to the instruction given to fathers in Ephesians 6:4: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Using “nurture and admonition” in this way, the apostle Paul was appealing for fathers to set aside children’s frustrations by using both good practices and good principles to instruct them. With this approach, even children can understand how to connect principles to practice.

Principles: Why to Do What We Do

Let's explain the principles behind our practices. Principles are rules or laws by which we govern our lives. These help us make the connection between *who God is* and *what to do*. Biblical doctrine helps us show how the Lord's deity is related to our deeds. In a world that is full of false principles, Scriptural teaching keeps us on track.

In Colossians 2:8, we find these words: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments [principles] of the world, and not after Christ." There is danger here in being carried away. If we do not use Biblical principles, we could easily follow vain, deceptive philosophies that do not honor Christ. But explaining the right motives that attach the right methods to the right Master helps our followers to be faithful.

The Person of God: Who Gets the Glory

Let's plainly declare *who is getting the glory*. The Lord leads us in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake! Wisdom is, first and foremost, a personal characteristic of the All-Wise God. Our principles come from Him. This makes it simple for your followers, because it's easier to follow a person than a set of principles. For instance, James 3 describes wisdom as "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (v. 17). All of these are personal characteristics of our great God. He is the One who receives the glory as we honor Him with the practice of this wisdom. By contrast, the "other" wisdom is "earthly, sensual and devilish" (v. 15). We can joyfully show our followers how to do good works that obey the Word of God, which comes from the God of the Word.

Practicing Your Philosophy

As we meditate upon Biblical principles, we find that we can see how they are attached to both the Person of God and personal practice. Here are a few examples:

Faithfulness: Hebrews 10:23 exhorts us to practice holding firmly to "the profession of our faith without wavering" and then connects this to *who gets the glory*: "for he is faithful that promised." We testify to His faithfulness with unwavering, confident consistency.

Stealing/Giving: What's wrong with stealing? Ephesians 4:28 commands us not to steal, but rather to work and give. Why? Because the God we glorify is a Giver.

Gracious Speech: What's wrong with corrupt speech? It doesn't build others as the gracious God does (Eph. 4:29).

Orderliness: First Corinthians 14:40 reminds us to do things "decently and in order." Why? The God whom we praise is the God of order.

Using these three simple steps (*what, why, and who*) can help you to train "faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

Gordon Dickson is the senior pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Findlay, Ohio. He can be contacted at g.dickson@cbcfindlay.org or www.glimpsesofcalvary.com.



CHAPLAINCY: A MAJOR MINISTRY OF THE FBFI

Your membership in the FBFI allows you to support over 50 chaplains serving the Lord around the world. Although active-duty chaplains are paid by the military, **they are our missionaries to the largest "people group" of Americans under the age of 35.** They cannot serve as military chaplains without the "ecclesiastical endorsement" of a fellowship such as the FBFI.

How do members of FBFI support the chaplaincy?

- By helping to maintain the Home Office through annual membership dues. (Nearly half our time is spent on chaplaincy-related matters.)
- By praying for and communicating with chaplains and their families.
- By inviting chaplain speakers to speak in your churches, missions conferences, and special patriotic events.
- By encouraging young men to consider chaplaincy as a ministry calling.
- By serving as the "sending church" of your chaplain members.
- By providing local church referrals for our chaplains to use with service members, through our membership directory.
- By providing bulk subscriptions of *FrontLine* to chaplains to use in evangelism and discipleship.
- By providing ministry internships for chaplain candidates. (They must have ministry experience to be able to serve).

The FBFI Chaplains Endorsing Agency is like a mission board for missionaries to the military.

Be a part of it: join the FBFI today!



Contrasting Characters

Where Have All the Grown-Ups Gone?

Jim Berg

Increasingly, antitheism is the dominant force in American culture. As the movers and shakers of cultural change in the entertainment industry, in sports, in business, in the courts, in the legislatures, and in the executive branches of government exchange the truth of God for a lie, we should expect to see the effects of that godlessness upon the hearts and minds of the common man. Additionally, if we know the truth about the characteristics of lawlessness and fleshliness, we should not be surprised to see those who imbibe the culture take on the marks of Proverbs' fools.

Two such marks are the pursuit of self-gratification and the rejection of personal responsibility (Prov. 21:25). These are the marks of childhood—the marks of underdevelopment. The god of this world through the culture's influence upon the human heart is effectively keeping most people locked into a perpetual childhood. They never grow up.

The Death of the Grown-Up

Diana West, a syndicated columnist for the *Washington Times* laments this cultural phenomenon in her book *The Death of the Grown-Up*. Though not writing from a Christian standpoint whatsoever, with poignant clarity she shows the destructiveness of this mindset upon the character of men and women today. Several paragraphs from her first chapter show how damaging this perpetual underdevelopment is to society at large—and to the church in particular.

Once there was a world without teenagers. Literally. "Teenager," the word itself, doesn't pop into the lexicon much before 1941. This speaks volumes about the last few millennia. In all those centuries, nobody thought to mention "teenagers" because there was nothing, apparently, to think of mentioning.

In considering what I like to call "the death of the grown-up," it's important to keep a fix on this fact: that for all but this most recent episode of human history, there were children and there were adults. Children in their teen years aspired to adulthood; significantly, they didn't aspire to adolescence. Certainly, adults didn't aspire to remain teenagers.

A lot of things have changed. For one thing, turning thirteen [nowadays], instead of bringing children closer to the adult world, now launches them into a teen universe. For another, due to the permanent hold our culture has placed on the maturation process, that's where they're likely to find most adults.

The National Academy of Sciences has, in 2002, redefined adolescence as the period extending from the onset of puberty, around twelve, to thirty. . . . These are grown-ups who haven't left childhood.

What has also disappeared is an appreciation for what goes along with maturity: forbearance and honor, patience and responsibility, perspective and wisdom, sobriety, decorum, and manners—and the wisdom to know what is "appropriate," and when.

Etched into our consciousness, in the universal shorthand of Hollywood and Madison Avenue, is the notion that life is either wild or boring; cool or uncool; unzipped or straitlaced; at least secretly licentious or just plain dead.¹

How Did We Get Here?

We can trace the disintegration of the human character through the downward progression illustrated in the various kinds of fools in the book of Proverbs.

The Simple Man. This is the beginning, or kindergarten, fool. He is weak since he has little or no allegiance to God's ways. He is easily seduced by the lure of sensuality and the adventure of worldly pursuits. He is not naïve about the appeals and ideals of the world; rather he is quite in tune with the culture around him. He is naïve, however, about the end of those pursuits. He unwittingly follows those lures as an ox to the slaughter (Prov. 7:22).

This is the level of discernment you would expect in the average American junior high youth. His heart is easily captured by the latest fashions, pop and reality-show idols, superheroes, electronic games, sports personalities, junk foods, sexual enticements—both real and virtual—chemical stimulants—both legal and illegal—and the crude and sensual humor and violence of the most popular video clips and blockbuster movies. He is easily bored and increasingly resistant to correction. Work and learning are endured as necessary evils between pursuits of pleasurable experiences offered on the midway of the world's carnival.

In the spiritual realm, this type of believer has little tolerance for preaching unless it is high in entertainment value. He considers anything else irrelevant—which generally means that he does not "like" it. Consequently he is *weak* and *worldly*.

Even some outside the church are noticing that this mindset shows no signs of decline in most young men—and some women—as they grow older. This new phenomenon of "extended adolescence" is not uncommon for thirty-somethings. They not only shun responsibility because it would interfere with their pursuit of pleasure, but they are genuinely afraid of it because they are woefully unprepared for such adult tasks as earning a living, marrying and raising a family, and embracing a life course of constructive impact. Their formative years of youth, which should have been spent in guided preparation for

adult life, were wasted in the pursuit of personal pleasure.

The Fool. Proverbs tells us that “the simple inherit folly.”² The naïve simpleton graduates to the next level of destructiveness. His continued indulgence in the activities described above is not without effect upon his soul. Sustained indulgence leaves him *willful* and *wild*. He bristles at restraint, freely shares his misguided opinions, undermines and deceives the authorities in his life, stubbornly insists on his own way, openly identifies by his fashions and habits with the godless attitudinal and cultural trendsetters and entertainers of his day—all of whom are stuck in the adolescent, pleasure-seeking mindset themselves—and avoids attempts to hold him personally responsible for his actions.

He is not merely wide-eyed about the culture around him as the simple-minded junior higher. The fool knows what he wants and is sneaky and deceptive in his pursuits. His unbridled opinions and rants against the authorities in his life often find their way into his cyberspace postings where most of the adults in his life will never find them. He has effectively avoided earthly accountability and in the process further corrupts others of like mind.

In the process of all this, his conscience is increasingly hardened, and his personality and values become more and more shaped by the world around him.

The Scornor. Proverbs presents the scornor as the end product of this tragic decline. Sin will not leave its victim in a moderately worldly state. The fool eventually becomes aggressively *wicked*, and in the end his life is *wasted*. Only strong

judgments will reach his soul. He is full of anger and violence, and he expresses both when he can contain himself no longer.

What Can We Do?

Paul testifies that those who would become mature must put away childish self-absorption and embrace self-denying adulthood (1 Cor. 13:11). Peter outlines the development of Christlike maturity through his presentation of certain essential virtues that build upon one another. Perhaps we can get a clearer picture of where we should be headed—and where we should be pointing our children—by seeing Peter’s virtues alongside their opposites.

We must become masters at recognizing the imprint of the world upon our own hearts and upon the hearts of those we disciple. We must wholeheartedly pursue Peter’s essential virtues of Christlikeness and reject the appeals and ideals of the world around us. We must grow up in Christ (Eph. 4:13–15) and reject the appeals and ideals of the fallen world around us.

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¹ Diana West, *The Death of the Grown-Up: How America’s Arrested Development Is Bringing Down Western Civilization* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2007), 1, 4, 5.

² Proverbs 14:18.

Contrasting Characters		
	Peter’s Essential Virtues (1 Peter 1:5–7)	The World’s Counterfeit Virtues (characteristics of children)
Peter’s Personal Virtues (loving God with my whole heart)	Pursuing the Excellence of Christlikeness —cultivating a God-mandated purpose to develop and display the excellencies (character) of Jesus Christ	Pursuing Self-Centeredness —cultivating the mindset that life is all about me and how I feel
	Knowledge —cultivating a God-taught understanding of the Person, the work, and the ways of Jesus Christ	Trivia and Trends —cultivating a love for the world by following and embracing what the world considers essential to personal fulfillment: pleasure, possessions, and prestige (1 John 2:15–17)
	Self-Control —cultivating a God-empowered mastery of my internal desires	Self-Indulgence —cultivating a pleasure ethic that evaluates everything by the amount of immediate physical and emotional gratification it brings to me
	Endurance —cultivating a God-sustained faithfulness under external pressure	Irresponsibility —Cultivating an insistence that my immediate satisfaction must be guaranteed or I will reject the demands place upon me
	Godliness —cultivating a God-honoring devotion to Jesus Christ that promotes righteousness and opposes evil	Worldliness —cultivating a love for the appeals and the ideals of the world, opposing any who would challenge my right to live life the way I please, and recruiting others to value the world’s ideals as I do
Peter’s Social Virtues (loving my neighbor as myself)	Brotherly Kindness —cultivating a God-engendered affection for and service to those in the “household of faith”	Disrespectfulness —cultivating an adeptness at putting others down and at trashing those who oppose my ideas and choices through my personal conversations and electronic postings
	Love —cultivating a God-imitating mindset that Scripturally and sacrificially meets the spiritual needs of others	Indifference —cultivating a mindset that doesn’t get involved in the lives and needs of others unless it makes me feel good about myself or advances my pursuit of pleasure, possessions, or prestige

The Importance of "Father Time"



Cary Schmidt

As kids become teenagers in today's society, there is no doubt that families become busier on every level, impacting everyone in the family. Dad is hit with bigger bills, more financial stress, more work responsibilities, and a more demanding schedule. Mom feels the weight of a more demanding home life, more schedule demands with the kids, a busier school life, and so on. And the kids are busier with things such as music lessons, sports practices, games, orthodontist appointments, science projects, and youth activities. And this is just the short list!

The results of all of this can be devastating for a family who allows the schedule to take over. Little by little our "together time" gets overrun by other important or entertaining things. The terrible results of this takeover usually take months and even years to see. Eventually, the whole family is stressed, fragmented, distant, and depleted. Many families chalk this up as "normal"—it is just what happens when our kids become teenagers. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. This is not a *teen* thing. This is a *father* thing, and it can be overcome! Fathers, your kids need you desperately! They were created with a need for "father time."

A Critical Battle

It seems that the most critical battle of my ministry to families has become getting fathers to spend time with their teenagers. Nearly every appointment I have had with a father in the past ten years has begun by talking about a struggling teenager. Without fail, the father eventually says something like, "I haven't been able to spend much time with him since he became a teenager," or, "She's closer to her mother than she is to me."

Fathers, you are essential to your teenager's spiritual and emotional well-being. The pressures of making the business successful and keeping food on the table are real, but if we are neglecting our kids in the process, we are dishonoring the Lord. We are also counterproductive, since the Lord is the one who promises to meet our needs in the first place. If our children are neglected as we work hard to make ends meet, to cover the bases, and to provide a better life, then ultimately the ends do *not* meet, bases are *not* covered, and life is *not* better.

Luke 1:17 says of John the Baptist that "he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children." The word "turn" means to "revert" or "to turn about"—implying that the fathers' hearts are turned away from their children. The word "hearts" refers to the thoughts and feelings. In other words, it was a part of John the Baptist's mission to turn the thoughts and feelings of fathers back to the needs of their children.

I believe this single truth speaks volumes to us as fathers! It demonstrates the priority God has placed on "father time." It reveals that your kids need time with you and that God intends for you to spend time with them. Nothing can replace the value of "father time." A Christian school, church, and youth group are wonderful gifts from God, but none of them can be what you must be! We must consciously choose to resist the cultural trend and take a different path. Like breathing, sleeping, and eating, time with your children must be nonnegotiable. Everything else

in life should line up behind your God and your family.

Let me add that this is a weekly discipline—not monthly or annually. Every week, your teenager needs specific, focused time with you alone. It's not about spending money or finding entertainment. It's about being together—talking, connecting, and relating.

Practical Suggestions

Practically, the question needs to be asked, "What exactly does this time look like and how much is needed to maintain a healthy relationship?" Here are a few suggestions on how to have quality "father time."

Keep it one-on-one. Time with the whole family together is vital, but it should be complemented with one-on-one time with each of your children. This is the time when your heart and focus are completely theirs alone.

Make it frequent. Relationships are dynamic—ever growing and changing. Thus it's hard to give a formula that works perfectly every time. But one thing is certain: one-on-one time should be as frequent as you can possibly make it. I suggest that you think in terms of weeks. Plan your life one week at a time, and determine to give each child some one-on-one time every week. If and when you miss a week, the next week becomes all the more important!

Keep it focused. This is not the time to watch TV together or to be on your cell phone. Beware of these kinds of *pseudo-father time*! Riding in a car together with hearts turned away from one another is as much relational neglect as anything else. This is the time to talk, relate, laugh, and interact. It's a time to ask questions that stimulate the conscience. It's time to understand your teenager's heart.

Seek to be led by the Holy Spirit. This is vital. Only the Holy Spirit knows exactly what's going on in your teenager's life, and He can guide you in your conversation. If you're on the phone or otherwise distracted, the conversation will never develop the way the Lord would lead. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom and to give your teenager openness as you spend time together. Seek to truly minister to your child during this important time together.

Be attentive to your teen's needs. How much time you spend together and how often will be determined by the Holy Spirit's leading in your heart and your wife's heart. My wife always knows how much time our kids really need with me better than I do. She can better read their emotional gauges. She can always tell when they're running close to empty. Seek the Lord's leading and your wife's counsel. When in doubt, do more than you think is required.

Keep it threat-free. Certainly, there is a time for lectures and for discipline, but this is not it! The only way to have a heart connection and strong relationship with your teenager is to balance your times of discipline with a different environ-

FATHERS, YOU ARE ESSENTIAL TO YOUR TEENAGER'S SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING. THE PRESSURES OF MAKING THE BUSINESS SUCCESSFUL AND KEEPING FOOD ON THE TABLE ARE REAL, BUT IF WE ARE NEGLECTING OUR KIDS IN THE PROCESS, WE ARE DISHONORING THE LORD.

ment altogether. This should be a time when your teenager can talk to you without the threat of you digressing into "lecture mode." It has often been said, "Accusations harden the will, but questions stimulate the conscience."

Make it fun. Have you noticed that teenagers like to have fun? And that adults often take themselves too seriously? One of the great delights of parenting our teenagers has been the sense of humor that both of our boys have! They keep us laughing constantly! Find some wholesome things you can laugh at together. Do what they enjoy. Make memories that they will cherish. Few things bond two hearts together like common laughter!

At times it is resolution-oriented. On occasion you will need to use this time simply to restore your relationship and make it right. The Devil brings conflict into every home, but a wise father will not allow that conflict to go unresolved. Sometimes you have to use this time simply to say, "I'm sorry," or, "I just sense there's something wrong between us. How have I hurt you or pushed you away?" You'll be surprised at where these conversations might lead!

Be consistent. This is key. Spending a lot of money on vacation once a year isn't nearly as beneficial as spending a few hours each week. Vacations and family getaways are important, but consistent, day-by-day relationships nurture the needs of the heart one week at a time. Without this, our kids can end up resenting us and whatever takes us away from them.

To put it as powerfully as I can—I do not know of a problem that a teenager faces that cannot be fixed with the right amount and the right kind of "father time." You are the key in every way to your teenager's spiritual and emotional stability. Perhaps the scariest thing is that we are all running *out* of time! Our kids will not be teenagers for long. During these years, give your kids what they need most—"father time"!

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First Timothy 4:12 says, “Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” Every youth group on earth has heard a message at some point from this text, and rightly so. And yet, there are more fitting applications from this verse for youth pastors themselves. Paul wrote these words, not to a seventeen-year-old, but to Timothy, a comparatively young and inexperienced pastor. Great responsibility, he says, lies with the younger and less experienced man in the ministry to counter his youth and inexperience with evident character and humility so as to earn the respect of his flock.

For a youth pastor it is just as important and perhaps more so that he earn the respect of his teens’ parents as it is of the teens themselves. The first year or more of a man’s ministry is largely spent working to build this rapport. While there is no substitute for the time and personal interaction required to do this, having the senior pastor’s support does provide a foot-in-the-door, so to speak. This is only a starting place, however, not an end in and of itself.

Parents rightly assume that before their pastor would be willing to bring a particular young man on staff he would be convinced of the man’s character and calling, having had an opportunity to talk with him or discuss his potential with others who know him well. Yet most of those parents will not have had much opportunity to get to know this young man personally before he begins ministering to their teenagers. Particularly in cases where a man has no prior pastoral experience, perhaps no children yet, and/or is newly married, he is initially trusted by parents mostly because the senior pastor is trusted.

I found this to be the case in my own ministry experience. My introduction to the youth pastorate came with unusual advantages, in that I was at my home church where I had grown up and that my father was the pastor at the time. Because folks trusted Dad and knew me already, they were willing to allow me the opportunity to lead. And yet I was only twenty-three and still four months away from marriage when I started. Being familiar and enthusiastic was helpful but did not negate my obvious youth and inexperience. I had to concentrate, as I still do, on establishing my own credibility with parents.



Let No Man Despise Your Youth

Establishing Credibility as a New Youth Pastor

Joe Vaughn

Building Credibility

Practically speaking, there are a number of things an inexperienced man can do to begin building his own credibility with the parents of his teens. The first and most important of these is to keep a humble spirit. Any self-confidence a man feels upon receiving his diploma from Bible college or seminary is immediately tested and shaken upon entering full-time ministry. The constant “need to know” that full-time ministry impresses upon a man is humbling in and of itself. And yet, being as prone to pride as we are, it is easy to become self-reliant as soon as we sense a measure of success—not unlike King Saul, who “wast little in [his] own sight” when he was anointed King of Israel (1 Sam. 15:17) but was ultimately ruined by pride and stubbornness. A

new man must always pray for the grace needed to be dependent solely on the Lord, both for ability and for success. Unarguably, parents of teenagers have years of experience that a young man simply doesn’t have. Regardless of a parent’s spiritual maturity, a young man does well to maintain a teachable spirit as he relates to them. Self-reliant parents may discredit a young man, however teachable, for his lack of experience; but godly parents will always rally around a man, however inexperienced, who demonstrates humility and dependence on the Lord.

Secondly, it is of great importance to parents that the youth pastor be safe! This includes seemingly mundane things such as driving church vehicles safely—driving within the speed limit, insisting on seat belts’ being used, and not allowing teens to participate in things like the all-too-popular “Chinese fire-drill”! As fun as those kinds of things are to a vanload of teens and as tempting as it is to capitulate in order to be a “fun youth pastor,” it is of greater value to be known by parents as mature and trustworthy. In general, a young man does well to try to anticipate and alleviate parents’ concerns. The more parents see that a young man is conscious of their concerns, the more willing they will be to trust him with the oversight of their teenagers.

Another practical consideration is for a young man to move forward at a reasonable pace. He should be patient enough to build trust with parents and teens before seeking to implement too many changes in program or philosophy. It takes time to familiarize oneself with more sensitive areas

or “sacred cows” that will need to be approached more carefully than other issues. A new man will serve himself and his youth group better by keeping a more long-term view in mind than to be in a hurry to develop a more exciting program without the support of his families.

Building Rapport

Lastly, a young and inexperienced man should build rapport with parents by always bolstering their role in their teenager’s life. Parents need to know that the youth pastor is “on their side.” Because a young youth pastor is so much closer to the teens’ age and perhaps more in tune with their world, teens can naturally gravitate toward him more than they do their own parents. If a young man is not careful, he can end up encouraging a teen’s distance from his parents rather than turning “the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers” (Mal. 4:6). A young man should instead look for practical ways to reinforce the parents’ role in their teen’s life and not allow his flesh to cater to the popularity that comes with being young and new. For instance, when a teenager approaches his youth pastor with a spiritual question, an instructive response is, “What do your parents think about this?” This question will not only shed light on what is going on at home but will safeguard a man from becoming complicit with a teen’s questioning of his parents’ wisdom. Another practical idea is for a man to poll parents from

time to time in parent meetings as to what issues he can be focusing on with their teenagers. This demonstrates that the youth pastor is concerned about what they as parents are concerned about.

Again, having the pastor’s support is a starting place for all of this, but only that. Parents are willing to allow a young man the opportunity to prove himself on the basis of their pastor’s recommendation; once in place, that man must work hard to prove the pastor right.

Lastly, while having the recommendation of the senior pastor is a great blessing, it should be added that it is also an important stewardship. In presenting a young man to his congregation, the senior pastor is, in essence, lending some of his own credibility to this man for safekeeping! If this youth pastor then exercises poor judgment or allows his character to be called into question, he may ultimately return his pastor’s credibility to him with a few new dents and scratches!

Parents and teens alike will be most impacted by a man they respect more than by a man who is merely impressive or energetic. Even a young, inexperienced man, despite the learning curve he is subject to, can have an impact in the lives of families if he strives to be above reproach and honorable.

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The Danger of **Burnout** in the Youth Ministry

The term “burnout” is almost always perceived in a negative fashion, connoting an unintentional or involuntary extinguishing of a flame. Maybe the flame was used too long, was used improperly, or burned too brightly and was damaged or destroyed. A light bulb is a good example of this. A porch light left on all night, every night, will have to be replaced long before a light that is used for just an hour or two each night. A light bulb’s life expectancy will also be cut short if it is constantly being flipped on and off, but the light bulb that has the shortest life span is the one that is connected to too much voltage. It may burn bright, but not for long. Plugging in a 120-volt floodlight to a 220-volt receptacle makes a bright light . . . for about thirty seconds!

Christian workers must learn to conduct their lives and their work for the Lord so that burnout will not occur. With too few in ministry already, we cannot afford to lose any of God’s servants through unwise practices, which were not intended by the Manufacturer (Creator-God).

Some ministry workers decide to voluntarily turn off the light and call this desire to alter their lifestyle or leave the ministry “burnout.” If they have found themselves in full-time ministry without God’s call and power, leaving the ministry is understandable and even desirable. If, on the other hand, they are looking for an excuse not to fulfill God’s call, they are setting up themselves and their families for chastisement and heartache. They need to honestly face the true reason for their struggles and their decisions.

The world’s misconceptions of causes of burnout often create some challenges for the Christian in dealing with it Biblically. Our society would say that burnout has to do

with the type of work we do (e.g., the youth ministry is a high-stress occupation) or with one’s age (midlife crisis). Some types of compulsive behavior, such as perfectionism or workaholic lifestyles, are also seen as causes rather than symptoms. These Scripturally inaccurate views lead to uses of the light bulb in ways God never intended, thus exacerbating the problem, rather than helping. If we as the ministers of Christ are going to solve this problem as it begins or even before it begins, we must do so Scripturally, using the tools and methods given to us by our Creator and Lord. This is often extremely difficult, for we live in this world and its philosophy permeates everything. Our challenge is to learn to “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7).

Lessons I’ve Learned

Having been in the ministry now for almost four decades and still excited about serving Him and others, I’ve learned a few things about longevity that might be helpful to others as well. God’s Word has a solution for every malady of life. It is one thing to say that; it is quite another to live by it.

Have enough faith to let God do the heavy lifting. Until I learned to take God’s Word at face value, believe what it says, and trust God, there was no peace and there was no rest for my laboring body and mind. It was hard to take Him at His Word when He said in Matthew 11:28–30, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

The yoke He is speaking of here is an old-fashioned wooden harness used to connect two beasts of burden so

that they can work in tandem. The picture here is of God and man yoked together, doing the work together. I've watched too many teams of horses pulling a load together to not know that, in reality, the stronger of the two is always doing more of the work than the weaker. The true picture here is that when we voluntarily get into the yoke with Christ, we must learn to rely upon His strength to pull the load, His direction in which to pull it, and His pace in the effort. In the end, we must come to the conclusion that He meant it when He said in John 15:5, "Without me ye can do nothing."

Realize that you can't do everything, and God never intended you to. This deals with my priority arrangements in life. What comes first? Family, self, God, work, or church? Everyone who believes he has this all figured out has his reasons, and they all sound good. The book that really helped me on this issue was J. Grant Howard's *Balancing the Demands of Life*. The author was able to get through my thick skull that the way I put God first in my life is through finding out what He commanded in each area of responsibility in life and then obeying what He said about what I should be doing in each area. Howard did not list priorities in a sequential list with God at the top but rather illustrated them in a circle with God in the middle. This illustration helped me to see how all my responsibilities fit together and related to one another.

One other helpful thought was that God created me with limitations, never intending me to do it all. Logic would prove this: God created me with the need to sleep, rest, and recuperate. He also created me with a limited lifespan; therefore, my duty is to find out what He wants me to do in each area of responsibility and simply to do what I can, with His help, in each area. If God wanted me to do more, He could have created me with more ability, less need for rest, and a two-hundred-year lifespan. But He didn't, so I must be content to diligently do what I can with what He has given me.

Apply the Sabbath-day principle. Take your day off; use it and your vacations to recuperate, not to wear yourself out more. The Sabbath-day principle should be applied in spirit, if not in the letter of the law.

Avoid the "cookie cutter" syndrome of leadership. This is thinking everything has to be done your way or no way. You must get help; you must delegate. But when you do, don't try to control it all to the point that it is all done just like you would have done it. Control-type perfectionists have a tendency toward burnout because perfection is an impossible goal. God created us to work within a relationship model, in the home, at work, and in the church; don't resist this by believing you have to do things yourself if they are going to be done right. Right relationships will do more than anything else to rejuvenate your emotional energy.

Proper communication, the number-one need in relationships, will replace expended emotional energy. The Bible gives us the following guidelines:

1. It will build others up.

Ephesians 4:29: *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that*

it may minister grace unto the hearers.

2. It will add health.

Proverbs 12:18: *There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.*

3. It will make one glad.

Proverbs 12:25: *Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.*

4. It will renew joy.

Proverbs 15:23: *A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!*

5. It will improve attitudes and views of circumstances.

Proverbs 15:30: *The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat.*

6. It will provide life's dessert.

Proverbs 16:24: *Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.*

7. It will help us put everything in the proper perspective.

Proverbs 25:11: *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.*

8. It will help us have a love for life and a positive attitude.

1 Peter 3:8–10: *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.*

Be confident in your call. Avoid the temptation to quit; that is what is at stake when we start talking about burnout. It is really quite simple once you've gotten over the hurdle of self-absorbed, humanistic doubt.

Philippians 1:6: *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

Do not neglect your time with the Lord. Spiritual rejuvenation is as important, or more so than physical or emotional rejuvenation; therefore, do not neglect your time with the Lord.

2 Corinthians 4:16–18: *For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

Walt Brock and his wife, Betty, have been in ministry for over thirty-five years, working with all ages of children and teens along with parents. After serving several years as a youth pastor and Christian school teacher, in 1973 Walt cofounded Ironwood, a western Christian camp in the high desert of southern California, where he continues to serve as executive director.

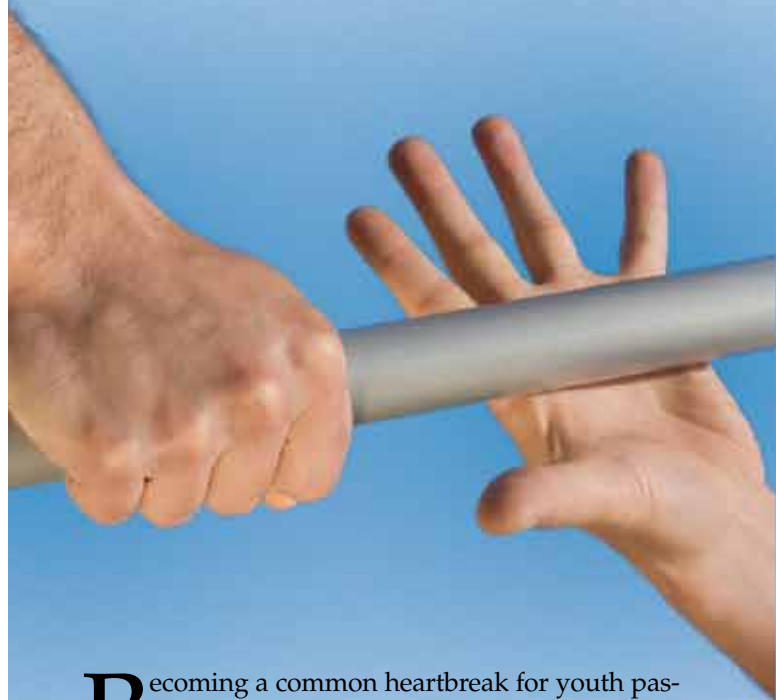
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Twenty Practical Ideas for Beating Burnout in the Ministry (by Walt Brock)

1. Control the phone.
 - a. Turn off at key times.
 - b. Have answering machine without message capability with weekly details on it. They call it, not you, for questions about events.
 - c. Use a different number for youth and for home.
 - d. Don't return thirty calls; maybe discontinue voice mail.
2. Limit involvement by your youth leadership team to one or two extra functions per month. Don't chase off your help.
3. Take your family with you on some youth activities; add fees for you and them to group fee.
4. Do some things with your family without any youth present.
5. Does the youth ministry fit you now? Is your interest level still high? Consider your changing family needs and make needed adjustments.
6. Avoid the "bigger, better, and more syndromes." Just do some things over and over; people will provide their own variety.
7. How old were you when you felt the "call" to the youth ministry? Some have gone into the youth ministry because it was the glory position to them at the time of their call. Be confident in God's call. Fulfilling your call should be enjoyable.
8. Set attention limits—no total attention to youth ministry. There is more to life, even for the single youth leader. Do some "church" without youth motivation.
9. Control the calendar; don't let it get too full. Never plan two big activities that require a lot of your labor and time back to back. (There should a ministry-wide calendar policy established).
10. Learn to say no without guilt.
11. Have a hobby completely unrelated to the youth group; refuse to mingle it with youth group activities.
12. Establish and foster adult friendships apart from the youth group.
13. Refuse to allow yourself to yield to the temptation to become the kids' "Messiah." Christ is their Savior, not you. You can't save, rescue, or determine anyone's destiny. You can help and be God's servant, but salvation is a work of God, not of man (Eph. 2:8, 9).
14. Avoid the "Holy Spirit" complex. You do not know God's specific will for them; you are not the one to convict them of sin, righteousness, and judgment. They must eventually decide for themselves what their convictions and standards are; help them to look to the Bible and the Lord.
15. Know what you are responsible and accountable for; don't assume duties not given to you or burdens God didn't intend for you to carry.
16. Work within the context of your God-given "body stamp" and pace yourself physically.
17. Don't spin your wheels; spend most of your time on your core group—which was Christ's example.
18. Follow David's example of encouragement "in the LORD his God"—1 Sam. 30:6.
19. Avoid wrong thinking patterns.
 - a. Nobody likes me; or, They won't like me if . . .
 - b. Greener pastures.
 - c. No one appreciates me.
 - d. This is a duty.
 - e. I have to be just like the kids.
 - f. If it is going to get done right, I have to do it myself.
 - g. I don't have enough time.
 - h. Time is the enemy.
20. Set your expectations in the Lord, not in methods and others—Psalm 62:5.

Daniel Zeller

The Baton of Faith



Be-coming a common heartbreak for youth pastors are young people who, though having been reared in a Christian home, come up through years of Sunday school and church but fail to really embrace the Faith. They squander their teenage years, coming to church out of obligation and staying on the periphery, absorbed in self or tantalized by the world. Discerning whether these kids need to be evangelized or revived is not the point of this article; rather, we seek here to present another perspective on a familiar passage of Scripture that may reach a young heart for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Consider Hebrews chapter 11. Often called the "Faith Hall of Fame," it stands as a passage in which

God honors a relatively short list of faithful servants, preserving their names forever in His Word. There is a tendency among men to create lists of people whom we choose to honor. Whether Nobel Prize winners, Academy Award winners, Heisman Trophy winners, or honored dead whose names are engraved in black granite, those whom we wish to honor are added to the lists we have created for that purpose.

God tells us in His Word that He will one day judge the earth with fire and that the very elements will melt with fervent heat. Every movie Oscar, every blue ribbon, every trophy, and every granite slab will be destroyed beyond recognition. Every hall of fame will be obliterated—except the one found in our passage in Hebrews. That list of the faithful will stand throughout all of eternity. Our young people need to understand that they, too, can throw their lot in with the faithful servants listed there.

Consider the list. Starting with Abel, God builds an honor roll of individuals noted for their faith as demonstrated through their actions: Abel offered a sacrifice, Enoch was translated, Noah prepared an ark, Abraham obeyed and went, Sarah judged God faithful, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, Jacob blessed Joseph's sons, Joseph looked forward and gave instruction regarding his bones, Moses' parents hid him, Moses sided with God's people rather than the world, and many others who both triumphed and suffered in faith.

And then we come to Hebrews chapter 12 where we are admonished to run the race before us. Did you ever wonder what kind of race the writer of Hebrews had in mind? There were foot races, chariot races, horse races, and maybe even marathons. Perhaps the type of race in view here, though, is a relay race, the most critical point of which is the handoff. That is where the race is won or lost. Each runner must successfully transfer the baton to the next runner or the entire effort will have been futile.

That same faith observed in Abel has been passed down through the ages. It passed from generation to generation, through Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Moses. It was shared and passed down through priests, prophets, and common folk. It survived those silent years between Malachi and Matthew. It was clarified and validated by the Lord Jesus Himself and then scattered in the face of persecution to spread like wildfire across the face of the earth. It survived the attacks of both the world and religion through the Dark and Middle Ages. It continued to propagate through the Reformation and the Age of "Enlightenment." It was carried by desperate pilgrims to the shores of a new world. It brought revivals and sustained the world through global conflict. It has survived the onslaught of secularism, and now it is offered to the next generation. What will they do? Take it and run? Or drop it on the track?

Consider the track. There are many kinds of tracks—Olympic tracks with great crowds of spectators, high school tracks with other field events underway, and county fairs with vendors hawking every sort of food and trinket in the infield. See your young people there on that track. To their right the stands are filled with their family and church, many of whom are burdened for them and praying. To

their left is the infield. From there they are bombarded by the allure of the world. On the track they stand. Some are faithfully watching behind them for the coming runner with the baton. Some are not quite sure what to make of the race. Some cannot decide if they want to be in this race at all. Some have left the track are off to explore the offerings of the infield.

What is the remedy for the lack of interest in spiritual things? How do you encourage your young people to take up the Faith and walk in God's Kingdom? What does the passage say? "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." We must encourage our young people to recognize and to keep their eyes on the goal. Toward this end, we offer a couple of practical applications.

We must show them Jesus Christ in our lives. Growing up, I was privileged to have one or two godly examples in my life. If I had any doubt about how Jesus would handle a particular circumstance, I had but to look at the lives and manners of these men. They had "put their faith in overalls," as my pastor likes to say. So we must also become practically skilled in the ways of God. The kids in our care should never need to look far for a godly example—no further than our lives.

We must also encourage our kids to keep their eyes cast in the right direction. My own kids have heard me say to them, "Keep your eyes down the road." Often this admonition came within the context of a driving lesson. When I was sixteen and learning to drive I developed a bad habit of looking at the road immediately in front of me. Not seeing oncoming traffic issues early enough, I continually adjusted the steering wheel too late, resulting in awkward and exaggerated course corrections. Not until I learned to keep my eyes down the road did my driving improve.

Your kids need to keep the future in view. Remind them that their days of being a child are over and that there is a future at stake. "Young man, what kind of wife will you be looking for?" "Young lady, what kind of father do you want for your children?" "One day, you will look down the track and see your own son or daughter standing and deciding whether to take up your faith, and every fiber in your being will be struggling to make the exchange soundly." Remember that the goal of youth work is to produce young adults who love God and are walking in the light of His Word. While exciting activities are fun and certainly have a place in your ministry, do not remain content merely to feed their passion to remain a child. Keep their eyes—and your own—down the road.

There is much at stake. The world pulls hard for the lives of your teens. The genuine gospel of Jesus Christ is marginalized and ridiculed in our culture. We must be the heroes that our teens see putting our faith in overalls. We must give them a vision for life beyond the present. You hold the baton that they so desperately need. Pray that the kids in your care will embrace it securely and run.

Dan Zeller is an automation systems engineer in Greenville, South Carolina. He and his wife, Terrie, have eight children, all home schooled. Dan is a deacon and Sunday school teacher at Faith Baptist Church in Taylors, South Carolina.

2010 Meetings

October 18-19, 2010 North Central Regional Fellowship

Abilene Bible Baptist Church
409 NE Van Buren
Abilene, KS 67410

October 21-22, 2010 South Central Regional Fellowship

Westside Baptist Church
3883 Lakes of Bridgewater Drive
Katy, TX 77449

October 25-26, 2010 New Mexico Regional Fellowship

Manzano Baptist Church
12411 Linn Avenue NE
Albuquerque, NM 87123
505.325.7802

October 25-26, 2010 New England Regional Fellowship

Cornerstone Baptist Church
415 U.S. Route 1
Scarborough, ME 04074
207.885.5123
cbcscarborough.org

October 25-29, 2010 Caribbean Regional Fellowship

Calvary Baptist Tabernacle
PO Box 3390
Carolina, PR 00984
787.750.2227

November 2, 2010 NYC Regional Fellowship

Grace Baptist Church
798 Hempstead Turnpike
Franklin Square, NY 11010-4321
516.564.1038

November 8-9, 2010 Southern California Regional Fellowship

Camp Ironwood
49191 Cherokee Road
Newberry Springs, CA 92365
760.272.1350 (Ron Smith)

November 15-16, 2010 Northern California Regional Fellowship

Calvary Baptist Church
PO Box 889
160 Seaside Court
Marina, CA 93933
831.384.7743

2011 Meetings

March 7-8, 2011 South Regional Fellowship

The Wilds
1000 Wilds Ridge Road
Brevard, NC 28712-7273
919.846.5483

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SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

Burning Lights

He was a burning and a shining light. (John 5:35).

In the last issue of *FrontLine* I undertook to give serious attention to the eighteenth-century revivals of religion which church historians refer to as “awakenings.” The barren state of spiritual life in Europe, the British Isles, and the American Colonies that preceded these awakenings was proverbial even to the world. It was death, everywhere death, nothing but death. That column in the last issue was entitled “Dark Days.” It attempted to make the case that if we feel we have cause for despair today, there was even more cause just previous to the First Great Awakening.

Few Christians in those days would have possessed a faith sufficient to venture pleading for anything like the kinds of mighty works that God eventually unleashed. But He Himself purposed to revive His dead church in stupendously glorious ways. They were so many and so varied that the eighteenth century proved to be one of the most divinely favored periods in all of church history. And what needs to get our attention is that this favor was manifested first when He stirred the hearts of individual men and women who, initially, were little known and had little influence.

These people were not all of the same denominational persuasions. That’s important for us to note. Though those of us who are Baptists believe firmly that we’re holding to the right denominational positions, we cannot dictate to God that He must use Baptists alone.

Nor did all these people possess the same wattage of spiritual light. They certainly did not advance reformation to the same lengths within their respective spheres of influence. But those limitations or failures should not

prejudice us against gratefully acknowledging God’s use of them and taking both instruction and inspiration from their examples, just as we do from Bible characters whose lives were sometimes a mixed bag of bewildering contradictions.

These men and women were all true believers whose hearts God filled full with an identical burning passion—to awaken that branch of the church of Jesus Christ in which they were providentially embedded and to go on from there to make His name known to all the peoples.

If God sees fit to recover the church today, He may do it in a similar ways. He may use a Baptist or a Methodist or a Church of England clergyman or someone from a Brethren background or no background. Or He may use men and women from all of these and others simultaneously. They may hold widely differing convictions about many things. They may eventually denounce one another vehemently, just as did (tragically!) some of the eighteenth-century awakening preachers. But the Spirit of God *bloweth where it listeth* (wishes). Our challenge is to keep on repenting and humbling ourselves and believing and working and praying until, *peradventure* (perhaps; 2 Tim. 2:25), at last He again *blows*!

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

A Glean in Germany

Ultimately my focus will center on events in the British Isles and America. But our understanding of how God sometimes works will be defective if we fail to take into account certain happenings elsewhere.

Some of the most profound expressions of spiritual dissatisfaction surfaced first in Germany. Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705), a Lutheran pastor in Frankfurt, had keenly read seventeenth-century Puritan works even from his youth. Lewis Bayley’s *The Practice of Piety* (1610) and Richard Baxter’s *The Necessary Teaching of the Denial of Self* (1650) were among them. But Spener’s favorite book was by the German Lutheran John Arndt.

Inside

Bring . . . the Books—Key books for the pastor’s study	5
Straight Cuts—An exegetical study	6
Windows—Themed sermon illustrations	7

Published in four volumes between 1605 and 1610, its English title was *True Christianity*. You get the essence of Arndt's emphases from his chapter headings.

How the Life of the Men of the World is contrary to Christ and his Life. And the Vulgar Christianity no Better than a False Christianity.

Whosoever doth not imitate the Life of Christ, hath not yet seriously repented, neither is such an one to be reputed a Christian indeed, or a true Child of God.

The true Christian's Contempt of the World, and Hatred of his Own Life for Christ.

The continual Combat of the Flesh and Spirit.

The extravagant Madness of preferring temporal Things before eternal.

Around 1675 Spener was invited to write the preface for a new edition of Arndt's sermons on the Gospels. After consulting with fellow ministers equally distressed over the condition of the Church in Germany, Spener penned it, pouring out his heart for spiritual reformation in its pages. The groundswell of enthusiastic response soon motivated the publisher to issue it separately with a dedication to "all officials and pastors." Reprinted in several editions, it came to be called *Pia Desideria* ["Pious Desires"], or *Heartfelt Desire for a God-pleasing Reform of the True Evangelical Church*.

In *Pious Desires* Spener quickly tracked the problem in the church down to the root.

Just as you know, when you see a tree whose leaves are faded and withering, that there is something wrong with the roots, so, when you see that the people are undisciplined, you must realize that no doubt their priests are not holy. Although, according to the common estimate of men and as seen through eyes captivated by the fashion of the world, they may seem to be blameless, yet their lives reflect (subtly to be sure, but none the less plainly) a worldly spirit, marked by carnal pleasure, lust of the eye, and arrogant behavior, and so it is evident that they have never taken even the first practical principle of Christianity seriously, namely, denial of self (44-45).

In the midst of this sweeping indictment Spener clarified his estimation of his own personal need.

I do not exclude myself from the number of those in our estate who are lacking reputation we ought to have before God and the church. On the contrary, I recognize more and more how deficient I myself am, and I am prepared to be fraternally corrected by others. Indeed, nothing grieves me more than this: that I can hardly see how, in the face of such frightful corruption, such a one as I am can possibly recover a good conscience (45).

Nevertheless, after surveying the corrupt condition of both the clergy and the people, Spener insisted, *If we consult the Holy Scriptures we can have no doubt that God promised his church here on earth a better state than this* (76).

One of Spener's primary suggestions, in fact the one for which he became most well known and often quoted, concerned the part all Christians could have in recovering Scriptural holiness within their congregations. He urged common Christians, not merely ministers, to evangelize and to *consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works* (Heb. 10:24).

Every Christian is bound not only to offer himself and what he has, his prayer, thanksgiving, good works, alms, etc., but also industriously to study in the Word of the Lord, with the grace that is given him to teach others, especially those under his own roof, to chastise, exhort, convert, and edify them, to observe their life, pray for all, and insofar as possible be concerned about their salvation (94).

Following the publication of *Pious Desires* Spener gave more and more attention to this concept. He came to feel that if the true Christians in a church, or at least the most pious of its members, would gather in private homes for edification and renewal, they would soon leaven the church toward godliness. Such meetings could be held after services on the Lord's Day. In a sermon preached in 1669 he reflected,

How much good it would do if good friends would come together on a Sunday and instead of getting out glasses, cards, or dice would take up a book and read from it for the edification of all or would review something from sermons that were heard! If they would speak with one another about the divine mysteries, and the one who received most from God would try to instruct his weaker brethren! If, should they be not quite able to find their way through, they would ask a preacher to clarify the matter! If this should happen, how much evil would be held in abeyance, and how the blessed Sunday would be sanctified for the greater edification and marked benefit of all!

Those who followed Spener's suggestions grew in their understanding of the true state of their churches. In some cases they discovered that their ministers were themselves unconverted. Not surprisingly, the conclusion was to separate and form new churches, often in members' homes. And, of course, this eventuated in rancorous controversy.

Spener himself took the unscriptural position of encouraging earnest Christians to remain in the pews of apostate or unconverted ministers rather than separating from them. Nevertheless, the spiritual hunger fed by his writing, preaching, and personal example became the principle means by which God infused a measure of new life into Germany. Church historians refer to it as the beginnings of Pietism. In many ways it fell short.

But it possessed at least four general traits characteristic of a movement of genuine renewal within a moribund church:

- (1) *An experiential character*—Pietists are people of the heart for whom Christian living is the fundamental concern.
- (2) *A Biblical focus*—Pietists are, to paraphrase John Wesley, “people of one book” who take standards and goals from the pages of Scripture.
- (3) *A perfectionistic bent*—Pietists are serious about holy living and expend every effort to follow God’s law, spread the gospel, and provide for the needy.
- (4) *A reforming interest*—Pietists usually oppose what they regard as coldness and sterility in established church forms and practices.¹

With these as its central concerns, eighteenth-century Pietism gave rise to some remarkably energetic endeavors. August Hermann Francke (1663–1727), the successor to Spener’s leadership in Germany, molded the University of Halle into a nursery for a missions movement that was unparalleled. The Moravians were also strongly influenced by Pietism. Under the leadership of Count Nicholas L. von Zinzendorf (1700–60) they founded the Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed and wore rings inscribed *No one liveth to himself*. They established a 24/7 prayer meeting that persisted for over one hundred years. Most impacting of all upon the cause of Christ, they founded a missionary movement that in time numbered one missionary for every sixty of their members. Unfortunately, the Moravians were not lacking in glaring blind spots. Zinzendorf himself drifted into extreme expressions of mysticism for at least a time.

The point, then, isn’t to promote Pietism. It’s simply to note that in one of the church’s darkest hours God began to work, and one of the ways in which He did was to turn the hearts of a few hungry men to the state of their own lives. When they responded to the promptings of His Spirit, combined with the standards for holiness that they found in their opened Bibles, the result was a measurable reform that rallied the hearts of many.

Pia Desideria (Wipf and Stock Publishers) is available through Amazon.com. I’d caution readers to beware of some of the assessments of Pietism’s reactions that are expressed by the translator, Theodore G. Tappert, in his “Introduction.” But I felt when I read the book early last year that it had been some time since I’d been as powerfully challenged about the spiritual state of my own life and of the church I pastor.

Pulpits Ablaze in the British Isles

The pulpit . . .

Must stand acknowledged, while the world
shall stand,

The most important and effectual guard,
Support, and ornament, of Virtue’s cause.

There stands the messenger of truth: there stands
The legate of the skies!—His theme divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear.
By him the violated law speaks out
Its thunders; and by him, in strains as sweet
As angels use, the gospel whispers peace.
(William Cowper, *The Task*, book ii)

When they responded to the promptings of His Spirit, combined with the standards for holiness that they found in their opened Bibles, the result was a measurable reform that rallied the hearts of many.

God’s work in Germany emphasized a believer’s interior life and was driven to a large degree by earnest laymen. In the British Isles revival had a related but broader emphasis and was fanned by a different means. The emphasis was the gospel for the lost and the means God used was preaching.

The instrumentality by which the spiritual reformers of the last century carried on their operations was of the simplest description. It was neither more nor less than the old apostolic weapon of **preaching**. The sword which St. Paul wielded with such mighty effect, when he assaulted the strongholds of heathenism eighteen hundred years ago, was the same sword by which they won their victories. . . . They wisely went back to first principles, and took up apostolic plans. They held, with St. Paul, that a minister’s first work is “to preach the Gospel.”²

The Two Brothers

After two tumultuous years in a futile attempt to do spiritual good among the Indians of England’s eighteenth-century colony in Georgia, a thirty-four-year-old clergyman mused in his diary on January 24, 1738,

My mind was now full of thought, part of which I write down as follows:—I went to America, to convert the Indians; but oh! who shall convert me! Who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion; I can talk well; nay, and believe myself, while no danger is near: but let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, “To die is gain!” I have a sin of fear, that when I’ve spun My last thread, I shall perish on the shore!

His name was John Benjamin Wesley.

Exactly four months later, May 24, 1738, John Wesley experienced the satisfying of his longing for full confidence of a secure standing in Christ. It occurred during an ever-after famed evening meeting in London of a few sincere Moravians (the fruit of God’s work in

Germany). As a member of the little society read from the preface to Martin Luther's commentary on the *Epistle to the Romans*, Wesley was mysteriously changed. *I felt my heart strangely warmed*, he testified. *I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation, and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.*

Three days before John experienced deliverance, his brother, Charles, had also been converted. Though John was the more popular preacher, Charles's preaching too was signally blessed by God. And who can even begin to estimate the powerful influence of his hymns?

If anyone wants to acquaint himself with preaching that has awakened the dead, the Wesleys' sermons are invaluable, almost unparalleled in the history of preaching. In a seminary class that I teach on the history of preaching, I ask the men to read a sermon that John preached at the University of Oxford in 1744. It's entitled simply, "Scriptural Christianity." In it Wesley seized the opportunity to distinguish sharply between the shell and the meat of a true Christianity. The last part of the message consisted entirely in what he termed "plain, practical application." Turning the sermon on his audience like a repeating rifle, rapid fire, he questioned and questioned and questioned the reality of his audience's religion.


Ye venerable men, who are more especially called to form the tender minds of youth, to dispel thence the shades of ignorance and error, and train them up to be wise unto salvation, are you "filled with the Holy Ghost?" with all those "fruits of the Spirit" which your important office so indispensably requires? Is your heart whole with God? full of love and zeal to set up his kingdom on earth? Do you continually remind those under your care, that the one rational end of all our studies is to know, love, and serve "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent?" Do you inculcate upon them day by day, that love alone never faileth . . . and that without love, all learning is but splendid ignorance, pompous folly, vexation of spirit? Has all you teach an actual tendency to the love of God, and of all mankind for his sake? Have you an eye to this end in whatever you prescribe, touching the kind, the manner, and the measure of their studies; desiring and laboring that, wherever the lot of these young soldiers of Christ is cast, they may be so many burning and shining lights, adorning the gospel of Christ in all things?

. . . Many of us are more immediately consecrated to God, called to minister in holy things. Are we then patterns to the rest, "in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity?" (1 Timothy 4:12) Is there written on

our forehead and on our heart, "Holiness to the Lord?" . . . Do we forsake and set aside, as much as in us lies, all worldly cares and studies? Do we apply ourselves wholly to this one thing, and draw all our cares and studies this way? . . . Are we dead to the world, and the things of the world, "laying up all our treasure in heaven?"

Once more: What shall we say concerning the youth of this place? Have you either the form or the power of Christian godliness? Are you humble, teachable, advisable; or stubborn, self-willed, heady, and high-minded? Are you obedient to your superiors as to parents; or do you despise those to whom you owe the tenderest reverence? Are you diligent in your easy business, pursuing your studies with all your strength? Do you redeem the time, crowding as much work into every day as it can contain? Rather, are ye not conscious to yourselves, that you waste away day after day, either in reading what has no tendency to Christianity, or in gaming, or in—you know not what? Are you better managers of your fortune than of your time? Do you, out of principle, take care to owe no man anything? Do you "remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy;" to spend it in the more immediate worship of God? When you are in his house, do you consider that God is there? Do you behave "as seeing Him that is invisible?" Do you know how to "possess your bodies in sanctification and honor?" Are not drunkenness and uncleanness found among you? Yea, are there not of you who "glory in their shame?" Do not many of you "take the name of God in vain," perhaps habitually, without either remorse or fear? Yea, are there not a multitude of you that are forsworn? I fear, a swiftly-increasing multitude. Be not surprised, brethren. Before God and this congregation, I own myself to have been of the number, solemnly swearing to observe all those customs which I then knew nothing of; and those statutes which I did not so much as read over, either then, or for some years after. What is perjury, if this is not? But if it be, O what a weight of sin, yea, sin of no common dye, lieth upon us! And doth not the Most High regard it?

Not surprisingly, Wesley was deeply resented. His brother, Charles, recorded in his journal that after the sermon, *The little band of four Methodist clergymen walked away in form, none daring to join them* (I, p. 380). John's reflection on the event reads, *I preached, I suppose the last time, at St. Mary's. Be it so. I am now clear of the blood of these men. I have fully delivered my own soul* (Works, I, p. 443).

(To be continued.) 

¹ Mark Noll, "Pietism," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, 855–56.

² J. C. Ryle, *Christian Leaders of the 18th Century*, 23–24.

Bring . . . the Books

Psalm 119 for Life: Living Today in the Light of the Word

For some time I have been part of a group of men who gather together for Bible study and prayer on Friday mornings. Together we have been working our way carefully through the twenty-two stanzas that comprise the 119th Psalm. On a personal level the study of this psalm has been among the richest spiritual experiences of my ministry. I don't think I am exaggerating when I say that this psalm has shaped my thinking and sustained my mind during some of the darkest and most difficult days of my entire ministry thus far.

Each month I prepare a detailed exposition of the stanza we will be studying for the coming month. To be honest, I was surprised at the dearth of useful material available on this incredible portion of Scripture. Willem VanGemeren's volume on Psalms in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* series is among the most helpful. Michael Wilcock has written a brief but helpful commentary in the Bible Speaks Today series. One of my favorite commentaries is George Zemek's *The Word of God in the Child of God*. However, I recently came across a small but delightfully helpful commentary on this psalm by Hywel R. Jones entitled *Psalm 119 for Life: Living Today in the Light of the Word* (Evangelical Press, 2009).

The author was formerly a pastor in London, principal of London Theological Seminary, and editorial director for the Banner of Truth Trust publishing house. His commentary on Psalm 119 was originally developed as a series of chapel addresses for Westminster Seminary in California, where he currently serves on the faculty. Here in his own words is his purpose for the book.

Psalm 119 can be described as having a "timeless" quality, in the sense that it transcends the time and place of its composition and speaks naturally to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ in any age and culture. Remarkable poetic skill is wedded to heartfelt devotion to the Lord and his word, in order to send a message to the people of God about the Word of God and the way of the godly as they live in a fallen world. The message of this psalm is one of pressing relevance today and every Christian should give it serious and regular attention. The truths and convictions which formed the mind-set of the psalmist, as he looked upward to the Lord and forward to the coming of Messiah, should characterize every Christian as he or she looks back to the first coming of Jesus Christ and forward to his return.

The introductory chapter, though brief, is worth the purchase price. I found it to be one of the most helpful sources on gaining a grasp on the overall structure and theme of the psalm. He is one of the few commentators I discovered who see the psalm as consisting of a series of forward-moving stanzas that chart the progress of the psalmist's spiritual journey. He concedes David could have written the psalm but argues that a more likely probability


might be a Davidic descendant. He sees an important connection between the psalm and the monarchy of Israel. In other words, the author of the psalm was more than an individual follower of God; he was a Davidic monarch (either David himself or one of his descendants). As

such, he stood in the Messianic line, and the psalm describes the relationship between the Davidic monarchy (and eventually Messiah) with God's covenant law. A son of David would love the Law of God with whole-hearted devotion. He would follow its dictates with glad-hearted submission. He would face his enemies with assurance in God's ability to deliver him, a confidence gained from the promises in God's Word. This psalm therefore depicts what a true leader is like as he shepherds Messiah's people while waiting for Messiah's appearance.

The introduction is followed by twenty-two brief chapters (four or five pages each at most) that lay out the material of each stanza in expository form with a devotional flavor. Without spoiling the reader's pleasure of personal discovery, let me give a sample from the particular chapter I am presently reading.

The chapter on the 19th stanza (vv. 145–52) is only five pages long, but each page is loaded with expository and devotional gems. He observes the important vocabulary in this stanza (*keep, guard, hope, meditate, call*), but also notes that

there are words that appear here for the very first time as this verbal symphony draws to a conclusion. They are the words "far" and "near", which are used in two interconnected ways. First, the wicked, who are "far from [God's] law" (v. 150), "draw near" to the righteous. Secondly, the psalmist knows that the Lord is near to him, a representative of the righteous in Israel (v. 151). That is the picture drawn out in the latter part of the section, while in the first we have the psalmist (the righteous) drawing near to the Lord (vv. 145–149). Perhaps James, the Lord's brother, had these verses in mind when he wrote, "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you."

From these initial observations, Jones develops the rest of the chapter along these lines: the wicked (who are far from God) draw near to the righteous. The righteous (who are far from wickedness) draw near to God. God (who is far from the wicked) draws near to the righteous. These three lines of thought would not have occurred to me on my own, and they provide a helpful framework for this stanza. 

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

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

Straight Cuts

What Were the Sins of Sodom?

Christians today face an onslaught of homosexual propaganda in our nation. David Kupelian of WorldNetDaily has written a solid response to the promotion of various moral evils in our culture. His book, *The Marketing of Evil* (WND Books, 2005), opens with a chapter on “Selling Gay Rights in America.” Kupelian (pp. 22–23) documents the work of two homosexual authors, Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen, who advocate the use of propaganda to make Americans more accepting of homosexuality. In their book *After the Ball*, these two homosexual activists admit, “The campaign we outline in this book, though complex, depends centrally upon a program of unabashed propaganda, firmly grounded in long-established principles of psychology and advertising.”

One aspect of the homosexual propaganda campaign is an assault upon traditional interpretations of Scripture. The New Testament warns us about twisting Scripture to justify wickedness. The apostle Peter warns us about people who take Scripture and “wrest [them] . . . unto their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:16). He urges believers to “beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness” (3:17).

Gary DeMar of American Vision has written a number of articles defending the Biblical view that homosexuality is a sin and challenging errors in our culture about the subject. He recently wrote an article critiquing the comments of a professing Christian who claims she is homosexual and a Christian (www.americanvision.org, May 3, 2010, “Jennifer Knapp’s Justification for Homosexuality”). In this article he also gives a solid Biblical rebuttal to arguments from a book by John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, that attempts to reinterpret and twist Biblical condemnations of homosexuality.

One of Boswell’s arguments is that the sin of homosexuality was not the sin of Sodom. What was the sin of Sodom? Boswell dwells upon Ezekiel 16:49. This verse states, “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.” The sins of Sodom included pride, materialism, idleness, and lack of concern for the needy. The verse does not mention homosexuality.

However, this verse does not exhaust the sins of Sodom. The very next verse, Ezekiel 16:50, states, “And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good [or, fit].” Note that the verse begins with “and.” In addition to the sins of pride, materialism, idleness, and lack of concern for the needy, Sodom also committed “abomination.”


What was the “abomination” that Sodom committed? An abomination is a sinful act that the Lord hates (Prov. 6:16). The same Hebrew word that is translated “abomination” in Ezekiel 16:50 is used in Leviticus 18:22 in reference to homosexuality: “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with woman-kind: it is abomination.”

This sin of homosexuality is so serious that God pronounces that He destroys nations for such immoral practices: “Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants” (Lev. 18:24, 25).

Genesis 18 and 19 record God’s judgment upon Sodom and surrounding cities. God described Sodom’s sin as “very grievous” (Gen. 18:20). The angels that God sent to Sodom encountered homosexual advances from men from all over the city (Gen. 19:4–7). God’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah followed shortly (Gen. 19:13).

Jude’s epistle makes it clear that homosexual sin was a key reason for God’s judgment upon Sodom: “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (v. 7). Scripture is clear that widespread sexual sin in Sodom brought God’s judgment. The description of “going after strange flesh” aptly describes the sin of homosexuality that occurred in Sodom. (Compare Gen. 19:4–7 and Rom. 1:26, 27.)¹

The Bible clearly teaches that the unrepentant practice of male or female homosexuality brings God’s judgment (Rom. 1:26, 27). The unrepentant practice of homosexuality will keep a person out of the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9, 10). However, Christ can forgive and deliver from the sin of homosexuality: “Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate [i.e., homosexuals], nor abusers of themselves with mankind [i.e., sodomites] . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified” (1 Cor. 6:9, 10, 11).

What were the sins of Sodom? Homosexuality was definitely one of them. It clearly was a grave sin that brought God’s judgment. No amount of Scripture twisting can do away with that clear fact. 

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

Dr. Tom Wheeler has been involved in full-time ministry over the past twenty-five years as a Bible college and seminary teacher, pastor, and assistant with Bible curriculum development.

¹ John MacArthur, *2 Peter & Jude* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005), p. 166.

In John 13 the apostle tells how Jesus humbly served His disciples by washing their feet. Jesus said, “If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13:14). If the Lord of Glory stooped to wash dirty feet, His servants on earth will certainly find themselves performing many other similar acts of servitude. In fact, the apostle Paul taught that our freedom in Christ liberates us for that very purpose. He said, “Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13).

The following experiences paint inspiring portraits of loving service. As you read these vignettes, perhaps you will think of ways that you can serve the Lord by serving others. Certainly you will notice that even though “foot washing” can sometimes be stinky business, it often opens up splendid opportunities for witness and learning.

Dirt in a Handkerchief

While serving on a mission team in Haiti back in the 1970s, I experienced a beautiful act of humble service that made an indelible mark on my memory. We were holding a street meeting on the muddy bank of a creek. As we ministered to the small, shabbily dressed crowd, I noticed a thin, severely stooped, sickly looking woman slowly lumbering toward us. She had what looked like a small handkerchief in her hand, and wrapped up in that cloth was some dirt that she proceeded to spread near our feet. Though I did not immediately understand what she was doing, I later realized that this precious, frail woman was providing *dry dirt* for us so that we could spread it around on top of the mud and avoid getting our shoes dirty. Her humble act was small and brought her no fame or fortune—but it will not be forgotten. The words of Jesus in Mark 14:8 can be appropriately applied to this thoughtful human being: “She hath done what she could.”

Sitting in the Missionary’s Lap

Sometimes Christians avoid opportunities of ministry because of unpleasant or unsanitary conditions. The following is an account written in a prayer letter by Len Dunphy, missionary in South Africa. It clearly illustrates that loving service sometimes requires that we forfeit our personal preferences and comforts. Len wrote,

Hot, steamy, sticky and sluggish. . . . When we met for prayer meeting a while back the air was so heavy and sticky it felt like wading through warm milk. We entered the church and sat down as Pastor Bheki began his teaching. As I sat there,

my sweat glands opened full tilt, pouring forth rivulets of sweat racing down my back, saturating my shirt. Soon after sitting down, I noticed one of our little guys saunter in and plop down behind me. I guessed him to be three or four years old. Since he couldn’t see over me, and I was half suspecting mischief, I reached around and clutched his arm bringing him around to sit on my lap. He was more than happy to do this. He was wearing only a pair of very soiled, almost-too-big navy blue trousers. His ten grubby little toes peered out from beneath the baggy trouser legs. The garment hung low below his protruding belly out of which his “outie” belly button conspicuously stood. As he sat on my lap, his large glistening brown eyes focused their gaze on Bheki. He began to dig for something in his mouth with his filthy fingers and grime-packed fingernails. I wondered how long it had been since those little hands had been washed. As he sat there, the steamy ambience gave new aromatic life to the dried but urine-saturated trousers. The pungent aroma rose slowly into my breathing space. The way my eyes were beginning to burn I thought it might be ammonia! I tried to turn my head and take shallow breaths to avoid inhaling the acrid smell. As I reflect on that incident, I know that it will only take a little soap and water to change things for this little guy. I also know it will only take the washing of the water by the Word to cleanse him spiritually—and that is why we are here. We do long to see the people of Embo, even the little ones, escape the spiritual cesspool. That escape can only come through the message of the gospel.

Midnight Mercy

The following is a brief summary of an account written by Phil Callaway in his book *Who Put the Skunk in the Trunk?* (Multnomah, 1999). The story graphically illustrates that when we serve others in earthly, material circumstances, we earn the privilege of ministering to them regarding heavenly, spiritual concerns. It also demonstrates that anyone can serve others; it does not require any special talents. It requires only love, humility, and sacrifice.

Born in 1942 and saved after a drunken night as a college student, Doug Nichols ended up serving the Lord as a missionary in the Philippines for twenty years.

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

Charles Spurgeon

He also served in India, where he developed a serious cough and was ultimately diagnosed with acute tuberculosis. While recuperating in a sanatorium, he did his best to distribute gospel booklets to the many patients that shared the large room with him. In spite of his diligent efforts to evangelize, Doug was totally unsuccessful—so much so that not even one person would accept the literature that he offered.

One night, unable to sleep because of his constant cough (and thoroughly discouraged because of his failed efforts to share the gospel), Doug lay awake. He became aware of another patient who was struggling. It was a fragile old man who was too weak to sit up. The poor soul would try but would fall back in bed weeping with frustration and exhaustion. At first Doug did not understand what was happening, and therefore he missed a wonderful opportunity to serve. In the morning however, Doug put the pieces of the puzzle together when he noticed that many of the other patients in the room were insulting the old man because of the foul stench that came from his bed. Doug realized that the poor fellow simply did not have enough strength to take himself to the bathroom. The very next night (about 2:00 AM) Doug again noticed the same elderly man making another unsuccessful attempt to get up from his bed. Immediately Doug went to the bedside of his fellow patient, picked him up and carried him to the primitive bathroom. After the old man had finished, Doug lovingly carried him back to the ward and gently put him in bed. The smiling and grateful man jabbered a few words that Doug could not understand and then kissed him on the cheek. Doug returned to his own bed and went to sleep.

In the morning Doug awoke and found himself being served a steaming cup of tea by another patient—and that patient asked for a gospel booklet! All that day, many others (including doctors, nurses, and hospital interns) came to Doug asking for booklets that they had previously refused to take. Over the next few days, several of these people came to Doug and told him that they had trusted Jesus as their Savior. Doug looks back on that experience and says, “I simply took an old man to the bathroom. Anyone can do that.”


Thistles

Sometimes our effort to serve others involves taking time to teach when we might prefer resting. If we elect to rest rather than teach, we miss the opportunity to teach and learn! The following story involves a dad taking time to serve his child by teaching truths about creation. It also illustrates that sometimes our extra effort to teach ends up producing a great sermon illustration! In this true story, I am the dad—and in this instance, my service did *not* require unpleasantness or sacrifice of any kind.

When our daughter Brittany was about four years old, my wife, Elaine, and I took a day off from ministry responsibilities in Bowling Green, Kentucky, and headed for Nashville. As women often do, my wife went shopping. As men often do, I decided to remain outside the store and take a leisurely stroll. With my daughter along I noticed that the lawn in front of the clothing establishment had not been well kept. There were huge thistles all around. I knelt down and cut one of the thistles off with my pocket knife and displayed for my daughter the moist insides of the weed. This was a great “teaching moment” so, in the tradition of Moses (Deut. 6:6, 7) I eagerly explained to my little girl, “You see, God sends the rain down from the sky and the water goes into the ground; the plants drink the water through their roots and they grow!” It was then that my perceptive and logical daughter asked: “Daddy, why does God water the thistles?” Those few words uttered by a four-year-old child expressed a theological question with which finite sages have grappled for centuries. Why *do* bad things and bad people often flourish and prosper in this world?

Jeremiah queried God with the same question: “Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?” (Jer. 12:1). Job debated the subject with Zophar the Naamathite:

Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave (Job 21:7–13).

The psalmist uncovered his troubled soul with these words: “I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked” (Ps. 73:3ff.). Habakkuk also wrestled with the same conundrum (Hab. 1:2–4). All of these prophets were simply asking, “Why does God water the thistles?” We know the answer. The presence of thistles in this world is the direct result of sin (Gen. 3:18), and God “sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45). Therefore we should not be discouraged because we know that this fallen world is only temporary. “For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be” (Ps. 37:10). Meanwhile, we should “rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: [and] fret not [ourselves] . . . because of him who prospereth in his way” because we are assured that the “evildoers shall be cut off . . . [and] those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth” (Ps. 37:7, 9). One day, “the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.” Therefore we should “be strong, [and] fear not: . . . [because our] God will come” (Isa. 35:1, 4). 

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Early in ministry I believed one of the most unpleasant things an older, more experienced person could say was, “Just wait until you . . .” (get married, get a real job, have children, have teenagers, teach children, teach teens, teach adults, become a real pastor, reach thirty, reach forty . . .). I was always waiting to have or achieve something else to legitimize my ministry. I suppose what people meant is that life experiences teach better than a classroom ever can. In regards to being a full-time youth pastor in one location, experience has taught me that longevity is not accidental, but deliberate. There are blessings and blisters along the way, yet the fruit far outweighs the hardships, time, and incredible energy expended on behalf of other people’s children.

If you intend to remain long-term with your church as the youth pastor, here are some things to consider.

Some statistics distract. Whether youth pastors typically stay eighteen months or eighteen years is of no relevance to simply determining by God’s grace to invest yourself in the hearts of teens. The key is being certain of your calling. If you are looking at youth ministry as a steppingstone to greater, higher venues, then you are on precarious ground already. In some cases a youth pastor may feel it necessary to chart how long he stays in one position and in one location. In that case, I would recommend a minimum of six or seven years in one location before considering a ministry shift. A youth pastor should provide stability to the youth group and their families by being available to them all the way from the awkward junior high years to the life-launching senior year.

Don’t kid yourself with all the attention. Too much attention from the opposite sex in particular is to be expected *mainly* because you are in a position of authority. Being too familiar with the girls in your group is a hazard to avoid. Let your wife be inquisitive about all of the ins and outs and details of their lives; the youth pastor should safely employ the tact of just knowing their names. Our wives should be the ones to enlighten us on the important things in the lives of the girls.

Be prepared not to be the popular man. As youth pastors we have to make judgment calls from time to time that can make teens and parents none too pleased. For instance,

when a girl comes to teen meetings dressed inappropriately and you know that confronting the matter will drive the family away, what will be your strategy? Are you prepared to be verbally challenged in the presence of others?

Don’t have a know-it-all attitude, but be a semi-know-it-all regarding Biblical and functional matters. Inevitably a situation will occur where someone will know better than you in a particular Biblical or functional matter. Be prepared. The young youth pastor needs to start and maintain his ministry

with a teachable spirit. There are men today who seem to think they know everything about shepherding teens and families. They emphasize the all-important truth of 1 Timothy 4:12—“Let no man despise thy youth”—while at the same time neglecting the truth of Psalm 25:9—“The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.” One may say, “I don’t mind if *the Lord* is teaching me,” yet fail to realize that the Lord often uses Spirit-controlled senior pastors, parents, and even teens—as well as flesh-controlled senior pastors, parents, and teens—to teach us. It is how one responds in these situations that tests his meekness. The operative word to bind to your heart is “teachability.” The way you receive instruction will do more to build your trustworthiness with your pastor and parents than having all the answers.

Fruit takes time to mature. Understand this truth, and frustration will be minimal over the long haul of youth pastoring in one location. On one occasion I was contacted by a college student who commented that I had had an impact on his life when, while he was a “lowly” underclassman, I took him out for a Coke and showed a little interest in him. The blessings will come; it just takes time. Some other blessings to look forward to are having the opportunity to perform weddings of former teens, having teens return to serve in the same youth group they grew up in, or seeing them launched into ministry around the world. All of the time, tears, pizza, and pop will have been well invested when you see them serving God!

Support your wife. Your wife is the most important person in your ministry. She provides help, protection, and insight. However, many young youth pastors fail to heed the Biblical command to “dwell with them according to knowledge” (1 Pet. 3:7). If you intend to serve long-term

Integrating the



as a youth pastor, you need to know how to care for your wife. Know when your wife needs rest, listen to her when she offers advice, and do not let the expectations of others decide her level of involvement. It is easy, early on in ministry together, to spend all hours of the day and night hanging out with, counseling, and generally being available to teens. However, as your family grows, your wife will take on new and even more demanding roles, not just as a wife but also as a mother. Remember that your first ministry is your family. If you fail to be their shepherd, then you will jeopardize long-term ministry. Burnout is not a threat just to the *men* in ministry.

Support your pastor. If there is anyone who faces more criticism, frustration, and discouragement than you do, it is the senior pastor. Even if such problems are brought on by his own actions or decisions, make sure you are supporting him in public and encouraging him in private. Let the Lord work out the sticky details; your job is to stay loyal. You may one day be called to be a senior pastor and will want men by your side to support, defend, and encourage you.

Support the parents. This will come in the most unlikely ways at times. For instance, after a particularly nerve-racking and unpleasant confrontation with an immodest girl at our youth meeting, a father of a teenage boy in our group approached me and thanked me for dealing with the issue. I told him at the time that I was trying to protect the men and boys in our classroom. When meditating on the whole scenario later, it occurred to me that in fact what I was doing was supporting the parents.

Support your sponsors. Thank them often and publicly; they are the backbone of youth ministry. Without the volunteer service of sponsors, we have no longevity in local church ministry—we simply cannot do everything ourselves.

When things get tough, don't abandon the ship. There may be a time when you find yourself in a church that has compromised its doctrinal, philosophical, or moral standards. These can be strenuous, decision-making times when a man may need to look elsewhere. However, I suggest that these situations are rare, not the norm. More often, when a youth pastor starts looking elsewhere, it is because of the current stress he is under or some fashionable ministry ambition that has not been verified by God's will. In those instances the green grass on the other side becomes even greener. Be sure you are being called *to* another ministry by God, and not *from* a stressful, unpleasant, or unfulfilling situation by your own aspirations.

Lastly, in the adventurous and rewarding world of shepherding teenagers, remember the admonition in Hebrews to "[look] unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

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“When I look across this crowd there is one word that comes to mind . . . **POTENTIAL!** What could God do with your life, young man or young lady, if you were surrendered to Him? God *wants* to use your life!”

I don't know about you, but every time I heard a youth speaker say those words as a young person it impacted my soul—and still does as an adult. Usually that type of pronouncement was given in a camp setting or at a youth retreat. What if, though, as a pastor, you were giving that challenge on a regular basis from your pulpit? What if the teens in *your* church believed that their pastor really believed that *they* had potential to impact their world for Christ? It is those types of questions that have pushed me to consider how to make youth ministry an integral part of church ministry and not merely one of the many programs we have as a church. Consider the importance of investing in the next generation by these sobering and stirring words.

Judges 2:6–8: And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

Now, read these next set of verses and think about

Youth Ministry into the Lifeblood of the Church



the young people in your church:

Judges 2:10, 11: And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim.

This article's focus is on some practical thoughts for integrating youth ministry into the very lifeblood of the church. If there were a way to do a DNA test on my church, I want youth ministry to register as part of that DNA. *Harnessed strength can produce powerful momentum by God's grace and the Spirit's enablement.*

The first and most important challenge regarding youth is who is overseeing them. Some may have the ability to have a full-time

youth pastor, and others may have that responsibility as a lay youth leader. Regardless, you can emphasize youth by having someone in that position who is rock solid in his philosophy of discipleship and loves teenagers. I am talking about someone godly who is willing to give lots of time to one-on-one, getting-in-with-teens kinds of stuff. The kind of person who models 1 Thessalonians 2:8 by imparting his own soul to others. If you have that already, awesome! You are already well on your way to impacting another generation of lives.

The next area to consider with this process of integrating youth ministry is the relationships that your youth leader has with other folks in the church. Sometimes a youth pastor is perceived as a "Lone Ranger." That should not be. He must have a vital understanding of the importance of some critical relationships.

His Relationship to His Pastor

- The youth ministry is an extension of the pastor's vision. Don't seek to gain the pastor's support for the teen ministry. Seek to support the pastor's vision with the teen ministry. I've never seen a supportive youth ministry that lacked reciprocal support from its church. Pass out fliers and sign-up lists in your teen meetings and Sunday school classes for major church events.
- It is the responsibility of the youth pastor to draw out his pastor's vision. Pray for wisdom in asking the key questions that refine your understanding of the pastor's vision.

His Relationship to Other Ministries

- Don't compete, complement. Refuse to believe that other ministries are hindering your ministry. Be patient and trust that God is situating you and your teens for the most possible growth right now. Trust His timing. Pray for and look for ways to assist other ministries.
- One of the most common strains in church work in this regard is the tension between school ministry and youth ministry. Sports calendars and youth activities collide like an Eagles and Cowboys game in December. The pastor needs to set the agenda for the vision of the ministry and then work with these ministries to help toward peaceful solutions. If you as the pastor simply let people come to their own solutions while remaining distant, you could be missing a good opportunity to strengthen your vision and ministry mission.

To Senior Saints in the Church

- Sometimes youth ministry can be very distant from your senior saints. The youth pastor should be teaching teens to honor age and be respectful. I would strongly encourage you to have older folks help from time to time at an activity. We have begun a monthly senior saints luncheon, and we have our young people serve, play instruments, and mingle with our older adults.
- Teach the young people to honor and care for their godly heritage. Blatantly praise long-lasting marriages. Lift up men they can learn from. Invite teen guys to breakfast with older men in the church. Teach them to honor, respect and emulate these godly examples.

The third major area to consider for your integration endeavor is the longevity of both the pastor and youth leader. If there is one thing here we could stress with lots of exclamations it would be that synergy of youth ministry into the overall philosophy of a church takes time. *Lots of time.*

It's one thing to have a philosophy. It's another thing all together to stay long enough to implement it. Few things are more rewarding than leading a teenager from start to finish—except maybe marrying him off to a godly mate!

Sometimes an all-but-forgotten area of developing strong teen ministry is the quality of our children's ministries. When was the last time you had a seminar or equipping day for your children's workers? Children's work is the foundation for youth work. Rarely will you see a high-quality teen ministry without a strong children's ministry that has momentum and health. We suggest that you take a month of Sundays and Wednesdays and just walk around and visit your children's ministries. We have one Saturday a year called the Children's Ministry Enrichment Seminar to enhance and energize our children's workers.

Take an interest in ensuring that the children's ministry is dynamic. If possible, speak regularly in the children's

meetings. Constantly tell the young people that you can't wait to have them in youth group.

The next major assessment to be made is to evaluate the impact your teen ministry is making to the church as a whole. There are a couple of key areas that will affect that impact:

■ What is the quality of your youth staff?

Look for *faithful* people who already reflect what you are trying to produce. Train those faithful people to train faithful teenagers (2 Tim. 2:2).

■ Jim Collins in his book *Good to Great* emphasizes the need for "First Who? Then What?" That is not how much of church work is conducted. We want to know *what* to do, and then we find someone to do it. If your youth leader asks you for a spiritually minded person to be on youth staff, I would think long and hard before saying "No."

■ How does the church view your teens?

Strive to be known as a pastor to families, not just teens. This will preempt the perception that you lead a rogue group within the church.

Finally, if you are going to integrate youth ministry into church DNA you need to assess parents' evaluation of the youth leader and ministry. If parents are behind your youth program and its leaders, they are really behind the pastor. They will sacrifice their time, energy, and money to get their teen to your activity. They will rearrange their

vacation so their teen can go to camp or the mission trip with you. The two questions below are vital—you could write them on a card and review them regularly.

■ Do parents trust you?

Are you credible in areas of communication, organization, integrity? Do you encourage parents with positives as well as concerns you see in their teen's life?

■ Do parents want their teen to be like you?

Youth pastors don't *produce* teens; they *reproduce* teens. The most accurate way to project what your finished product (graduated teenager) will look like is to look in the mirror.

A properly integrated youth ministry will invigorate the church. Be patient, be diligent, be intentional, and be in prayer for God to raise up a generation of Joshuas and Daniels within your church.

Rob Campbell is senior pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Sellersville, Pennsylvania. After graduating from Bob Jones University he and his wife, Rochelle, moved to Colorado where Rob served as the youth pastor at Highlands Baptist Church in Centennial for nine years. Rob, Rochelle, and their four children came to Bethel in 2005.

Victor Irving serves as student ministries pastor at Bethel. After graduating from Bob Jones University he and his wife, Hannah, spent seven years ministering at Oakwood Baptist Church in Anderson, South Carolina, where Vic served as the youth pastor. The Irvings arrived in Pennsylvania in January 2010, where they promptly added a fourth boy to their family.

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On Our Absence

God is the God of the living! What a simple declarative assertion! God is alive. God cannot die. Those who know God are alive. Animals have life, but man has that type of life that can commune with the Creator. Because of Adam's sin, all men are spiritually dead. When we are born, we do not know God nor do we have that spiritual life which is necessary to interact personally with our Creator. When we are born again, we are "born again," not once more physically, but differently, in that we have a new life that functions separately from sin. We know God and are known by Him. That's what this existence here on earth is all about, to know Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Our life is not what it should be until we come to know Jesus personally and begin to live in intimate alignment with Him and the Father. Humans born dead to God who live without ever coming to have life in Him, die physically and will thereafter suffer physically, never knowing the reality of true life. Our future lives after we die physically can be known for sure by that one test: do we have only physical life, or do we have the spiritual life that God gives freely to all who come unto Him in true faith?

During His three years of public preaching, Jesus of Nazareth apparently taught simple truths about knowing God and walking with Him various times and in various ways. On one occasion He taught an important truth in a situation such that three biographers (Matthew, Mark, Luke) explain what led up to His clear declaration, "God is not the God of the dead but of the living" (Matt. 22:32; Mark 12:27; Luke 20:38). Jesus had been approached by Sadducees, who denied a resurrection. They set before Him a clever question regarding a woman who had had seven husbands: In the resurrection, whose wife would she be (Matt. 22:28)?

Consider carefully the answer of Jesus: "You do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29). Their Bible study was deficient, and their theology was faulty. Both are divinely given ways of knowing truth and thereby coming to know Him who is the Truth. God Himself clearly gave personal witness concerning the resurrection of the dead, saying, "I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob," speaking to Moses (Mark 12:26) many generations after those patriarchs had left this earth. God did not say, "I was their God." He was not relating history or commending past conduct. God is now and will be until the new heavens and the new earth, not a God of those who are dead, but the God of the living, both of those who have eternal life

even while physically alive and of those who are absent from the body and in the presence of the Lord.

God had created angels as ever-living individuals. God made humans a race, male and female. Jesus taught that earthly race relationships do not carry over into the next life. All redeemed humans will be like the created angels. He explained, "When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven" (Mark 12:25). Luke gives His response more fully: "And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:34-36). All who personally know God are alive unto Him (Luke 20:38).

So, what of soul sleep? Being dormant is not like being alive in the Lord. What will we really be like without bodies? In God's sight, little different. Will we actually be alive? If we accept the authority and the teaching of Jesus, we will be more alive than we are now while we are confined to these bodies and subject to sin. What of . . . ? If God had thought it at all important for us to know the details ahead of time, He would have given us more information. As it is, we cannot imagine the real glories of passing on into His presence. We live by faith. We die physically with a living faith. God is not the God of the dead but of the living. If He is our God now, He will be our God then.

Yes, you can know where you will be while others are attending your funeral. It's not some feeling or a guess. If you are still spiritually dead in your trespasses and sins when you leave this life, you will be experiencing that unquenchable fire Jesus described. If you are alive in Christ, walking with Him, talking with Him, endeavoring to serve Him, you should have the confidence that being absent from the body is being present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8). So long as God leaves us in this life, He has work for us to do. Then, when we are absent from the cares of this world, we will fully enjoy the presence of Him who loved us and gave His Son that we might have life.

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A Healing Hurt

Hannah R. Anderson

It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. Psalm 119:71

"No! Please stop. Help me! Mommy!" There was nothing I could do. My beautiful four-year-old daughter was terrified, screaming, and begging me to intervene. But I could not stop the chain of events from unfolding. Worse than that, I was the cause of them.

"No, no!" she screamed. "Please. Lemme go!" Enormous tears rolled down her chubby cheeks. She struggled against my grip, twisting and turning, attempting to escape. Every second revealed a new and desperate panic in her dark brown eyes.

"Mommy, stop," she begged. "Pleeease! Stop!"

I continued. Tears welled in my own eyes as I forced her into a position where she couldn't break free. Determinedly I seized her ankle and turned the sole of her foot toward the light.

And there it was—the offending splinter.

In the cold fluorescent light, I could see a small, rough piece of wood lodged in the soft flesh of her foot. The surrounding skin was red and swollen. She must have picked it up earlier on one of her customary shoeless adventures. My daughter had spent her formative walking year in New Zealand where shoes are, at best, an accessory. In an exercise in cultural adaptation, she rarely wore shoes as she learned to walk; but even since returning to the States, it's become clear that for my Kiwi baby, walking means walking *barefoot*, and shoes are still a luxury.

This night she came limping into the kitchen as I was cleaning up dinner.

"Oww, Mommy, owww. My foot hurts. I think it needs a Band-Aid. Not the brown ones. The *pink* ones."

After a quick inspection I knew it required more than a Band-Aid. And soon enough I found myself with my arms and legs wrapped around a squirming, wailing four-year-old, attempting to perform a delicate podiatric procedure. As I probed her foot, her pleas increased.

"It's okay Mommy. Just leave it alone. It doesn't hurt. OWWWW!"

I slipped the tip of the needle into the red, tender skin, creating an exit for the splinter. Then slowly and cautiously, I forced the splinter toward the opening, grasped it with the tweezers, and, with one quick pull, put an end to all of our suffering. A douse of peroxide, a swab of ointment, and one pink bandage later, she was ready to be back to her barefoot ways.

I've often marveled at the havoc one small piece of

wood can wreak on our peaceful family, and I wonder if it's really worth it. I'd much rather spend my evening cuddling my daughter than wrestling her; it's tempting to ignore it, minimize its seriousness, and rely on time to work it out. But I also know that if left unattended, a seemingly insignificant splinter can fester, cause considerable pain, and even lead to serious infection.

So I hold my daughter down and, despite her protests, do what's best for her.

It's no different in our spiritual lives. We often walk around spiritually "barefoot," picking up splinters as we go. Perhaps it's simply a momentary unkindness or an indulgent conversation, but left to themselves, these sins can develop into the full-blown infections of mean-spiritedness and a gossiping tongue. What begins as a misstep eventually irritates and hobbles our Christian walk, leaving us effectively lame for the cause of Christ.

Thankfully when the Spirit's conviction discomforts us enough, we run to our Heavenly Father for relief. But just as a four-year-old doesn't realize what she's asking for when she complains of a splinter, we don't always know what we're in for when we ask God to free us from sin.

Allowing God to do this work means submitting not only to His loving hand but also to His probing needle. When a sin is engrained in our life, it often requires creating a wound to remove it. Just as I had to break open the tender skin on my daughter's foot, God may bring difficulties upon us to force out the sin that has become trapped in our life.

We can easily misinterpret these difficulties as God's afflicting us, to see Him as vengefully punishing us for our sin rather than lovingly freeing us from it. But despite our panicked screams and attempts to escape, He will persist and remove the real source of our pain—our sin. Then with the same hand, He will cleanse, anoint, and bandage the wound, restoring us to health and usefulness.

Of course, as my daughter will learn, the best way to avoid having to remove a splinter is not to get one in the first place. Still, there will be times that we stumble and pick up thorns and splinters in this world. In those times, we must remember that the Hand that removes them is the Hand of a loving God who hates our suffering more than we do and will do anything to free us from it.

Hannah R. Anderson spends her days in rural Pennsylvania loving her husband and three rambunctious children. Between home-schooling and supporting her husband as he pastors Flatwoods Baptist Church, she can regularly be found at her computer trying to squeeze in a moment to write.

The accent is on youth, but the stress is on parents.
—Unknown

Parents wonder why the streams are bitter when they themselves have poisoned the fountain. —John Locke

The devil entangles youth with beauty. —Henry Bohn

Adolescents: those who are quickest to discern hypocrisy.
—Eugene E. Brussell

I remember my youth and the feeling . . . that I could last forever, outlast the sea, the earth, and all men.
—Joseph Conrad

The destiny of any nation depends on the opinions of its citizens under twenty-five. —Johann Von Goethe

The isms of youth are the wasms of age. —Unknown

With the Hebrews . . . age was looked upon as a sign of favor. Whenever a nation becomes unspiritual . . . the demand is not for old age but for youth. This reversal in the modern life of today is indicative of apostasy, not advance.
—Oswald Chambers

Level with your child by being honest. Nobody spots a phony quicker than a child.
—Mary MacCracken

Youth shows but half; trust God: See all, nor be afraid.
—Robert Browning

The thing that impresses me most about America is the way parents obey their children.

—The Duke of Windsor

The sins of youth are paid for in old age.
—Latin proverb

Whatever prosperity, success, and honor have attended my life, I attribute it to the fact that when I was fifteen years of age, I gave my heart to God.
—Sir James Falshaw

Young people do the impossible before they find out it's impossible—that's why God uses them so often.
—Loren Cunningham

A suspicious parent makes an artful [deceptive] child.
—Thomas Haliburton

In his youth, everybody believes that the world began to exist only when he was born, and that everything really exists only for his sake. —Johann Von Goethe

Youth would be an ideal state if it came a little later in life.
—Earl Asquith

Young people . . . are so idealistic. When they learn that a god has clay feet, they do not merely demote him, they designate him as the devil incarnate!
—Sydney J. Harris

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

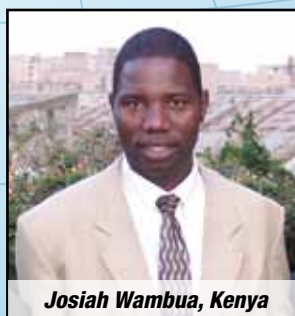
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FBFI National Conference

Tri-City Baptist Church
Westminster, Colorado

Pastor Will Senn, the pastoral staff and the people of Tri-City Baptist church in Westminster, Colorado, excelled as hosts of the 90th FBFI Annual Meeting. The annual meetings afford the membership with a wonderful opportunity to do just what our name says—fellowship. As is the case each year, the occasion lent itself to both meeting new friends and renewing old acquaintances.

One hundred fifty-six people were registered for the conference, which included both those who attend every year and several new faces. Having the conference in the Denver area allowed some people to come that are normally hindered by distance. While that is true for the attendees from the Denver area, the opposite is true for some in the eastern part of the country. The distance and cost are prohibitive. The FBFI's long-term plan is to hold the conferences in different areas of the country. This should allow people from different regions to attend.

The theme of the conference was "The Blessed Hope." A variety of preachers, several from Colorado, expounded the Scriptures from various angles of "the blessed hope." The sermons were a helpful blend of exhortation, information and encouragement. Fellowship and preaching were supplemented by great meals and some wonderful excursions planned and led by Tri-City Baptist Church.

In addition to the fellowship aspect of the conference, this is the annual gathering and training for the FBFI-endorsed chaplains. There are currently forty-eight men endorsed and serving as chaplains. This year the secular training sessions were targeted toward the influence of Islam in America. The nature of the topic allowed the Fellowship to expand the offering not only to chaplains, but to others who wished to learn about the influence of Islam on our culture. Four sessions totaling over eight hours alerted the audience to the influence, dangers, and systematic plan the Muslim contingency has for infiltrating the United States. The most striking point stressed

by the speakers was that none of this agenda is hidden. The speakers clearly showed how and where the material is readily available in print and on the Internet.

We extend our thanks to Tri-City Baptist Church and look forward to the 2011 Annual meeting scheduled for June 14-16.



What Are Your Goals?

In Hebrews 11:10 we read of Abraham, "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Abraham was a man of vision, and his goals were eternal in nature. Every child of God should live his life in light of eternity as Abraham did. I believe the reason many of the Lord's people fail to do this is because they have forgotten that they are pilgrims. First Peter 2:11 says, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."

Many years ago I was preaching in Massachusetts. While I was there, I went to the town of Plymouth and toured the *Mayflower II*, which is a replica of the ship in which the Pilgrims came to America. I was shocked at the small size of the ship; it held 112 passengers. When I went down to the bottom of the ship where they slept, I was again shocked that so many people could sleep in such a tight space. The Pilgrims were people who had a goal and final destination in mind. The problem with so many Christians today is that all they live for is this life; and since this is so, they become very possessive. This shows itself first in childhood—youngsters will bite, scratch, and fight for their toys. As these children become teenagers, they get upset when a brother or sister gets into their clothes or personal belongings. This continues through college as young men want to be great athletes and young ladies want to be known for their beauty. It gets even worse as they become adults. They want to possess fine clothes, expensive cars, attractive homes, and a comfortable retirement. But these earthly goals will never satisfy.

King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, had everything a man could ever want. He had servants, singers, musical instruments, gold, silver, gardens, vineyards, orchards, cattle, and beautiful houses. Solomon had everything he desired, yet listen to what he said in Ecclesiastes 2:10, 11: "And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." Here is a prime example of a person living with limited vision whose goals are fixed upon this life. Remember, we are pilgrims! That means we are to live our lives with a final destination in mind—Heaven! What should be our goals as pilgrims on this earth?

One goal should be to put spiritual matters first in our lives. Jesus Christ said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first

the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Many of the Lord's people struggle between the physical and the spiritual. The apostle Paul declared in 2 Corinthians 4:18, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." As a farmer puts blinders on his horses so they will not be distracted by surrounding objects, so must a Christian put on spiritual blinders so he will not be tempted to turn to the lures of this world. All of our material possessions are going to be left behind when we leave this world. First Timothy 6:7 says, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." Many years ago, a man gave me this piece of advice: "Don't get a tight hold on the things of this world, because they have a way of getting a tight hold on you." I have often stated that people possess possessions, and then possessions possess them.

Another goal we should have as pilgrims is to lay up treasures in Heaven. Christ taught in Matthew 6:20, 21, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Someone has said, "We only take to Heaven what we sent ahead." Therefore, we need to invest what the Lord has given us in things of eternal value. Financial giving is one way we can do this. We read in 1 Corinthians 16:2, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." Proverbs 3:9 says, "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase." Our heart's desire should be that every tithe and offering we give will be used for His glory and for the furtherance of the gospel around the world. Remember, our Lord sees our hearts in our giving. The Lord said to His disciples in Mark 12:43, 44, "And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." We should give with the realization that the Lord knows if we are giving sparingly or bountifully.

Lay up treasures in Heaven—"for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21).

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THE SONG

The Song of Songs is generally politely ignored in public preaching, for fairly obvious reasons. And yet it is in our Bibles. Solomon was unashamed about writing it, God's Spirit about inspiring it, and both Israel and the Church about preserving it. So why is this "Best of Songs" (as the title literally means) in our Bibles? What is its purpose? What does it do?

Lots of theories have been proposed to answer that question. This column will approach the question from a canonical standpoint. How does this book—its focus and its message—function theologically within the larger context of the OT and, indeed, of the entire Bible? One of the commonest views is that the book is designed to picture the relationship between Christ and the Church. Granted, it does picture Christ and the Church insofar as it is portrays a profoundly intimate marriage relationship—a relationship God Himself employs to illustrate the connection between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5). But this unique book serves a multifaceted role for God's people.

Model Marriage

First, it is a celebratory description of marital love from divine viewpoint, expressed in highly metaphorical and exquisitely poetic language. Most of the metaphors are drawn from nature, and many of them are strange to our ears, but they celebrate the sheer delight each spouse finds in the other. That delight is characterized by:

Exclusivity—One reason for the intensity of the delight is the exclusivity of the relationship: one man and one woman.

Purity—The delight described is utterly innocent and appropriate and therefore unashamed, because it is within the context of marriage.

Mutuality—The Song describes a reciprocity of relationship between the two; each is fully satisfied in the other.

Intensity—The Song sustains a high level of passion, each spouse for the other; the majority of the Song is the expression of this passion. However, this desire is not focused on an event. When you listen to the words of these two people, it's clear that *their consuming passion is not for an act, but for the person*. This is significant not only for a healthy view of marriage itself, but for the theological role played by the marriage metaphor in Scripture.

Everything we learn about the nature of the human marriage relationship through this inspired text has per-

sonal spiritual and theological significance for the divine-human marriage relationship that exists between God and His people, both corporately and individually. I already alluded to the fact that God uses marriage as an illustration of the relationship between Himself and His people, but that illustration is not limited to Ephesians 5 or even to the NT; nor is it limited to the positive features of that relationship. It is a metaphor that runs from Genesis to Revelation and surfaces in almost every literary segment of the Bible along the way—Pentateuch, Historical Books, Poetical Books, Prophets, Gospels, Epistles, and Apocalypse.

Model Passion

The Song is a *drama* celebrating the exclusive, pure, reciprocal, and intense *passion for a person* that characterizes a healthy marital relationship. It is a highly programmatic poem with multiple characters. Most study Bibles identify who says which lines.

In understanding and interpreting any drama, the dialogue is crucial. Who gets the most "press" in this drama? Which side of the relationship receives more emphasis? Who says more, the man or the woman? The Bride gets the first word (1:1, 2). The Bride gets the last word (8:14). And if you take the time to analyze the dialogue to determine who says the most in this Song, you would discover that about 8% of the dialogue is spoken by various minor characters (daughters of Jerusalem, the Shulemite's brothers, etc.), 31% is spoken by the man (the "beloved"), and 61% is spoken by the woman (the Shulemite).

In any literary creation, dialogue does not happen by accident. Who says what and who talks the most is significant for some reason or other. The Song gives virtually twice as much space to her as to him in terms of dialogue, so that we will *hear her talk about how much she loves him, and why, twice as much as the other way around*. More than anyone or anything else, the Song rivets our attention on the Shulemite bride and her devotion and passion for her Beloved. That's purposeful and significant for the larger purpose of the Song as it stands among all the other books of the Bible. It gives the Shulemite a loud, clear voice down through the ages of Biblical revelation and the history of God's people.

Model Contrast

Marriage had its genesis in the mind of God (Gen. 2), with the creation and union of one man and one woman. The exclusivity of monogamy is built into the created order by God. With that background, the OT proceeds to record the unfolding relationship between God and His people in

OF SOLOMON

terms of the marriage metaphor. The negative side of that metaphor—spiritual adultery, even prostitution—is God’s chosen principal analogy for the idolatrous unfaithfulness of His people. It is an analogy that recurs with disturbing frequency throughout the Bible.

Exodus 34:14–16 introduces two important dimensions to this theme. (1) *Divine jealousy*. God expresses His right of possession over His people in a term that sounds strange to us. We think of (and often experience) jealousy in terms of suspicion, distrust, paranoia. But in certain contexts, jealousy is an entirely appropriate emotion. How *we express* it can sometimes be sinful, but the expectation of loyalty and devotion from someone with whom we have a covenant or family relationship is a righteous expectation. And displeasure at anything or anyone that perverts that loyalty and devotion is a righteous displeasure. (2) *Sexual metaphor for spiritual infidelity*. As Bible readers, we are so accustomed to this metaphor that we hardly blink at it. But have you ever stopped and really thought about *why* God would choose *this* metaphor so consistently and repeatedly throughout Scripture to describe how He views the spiritual unfaithfulness of His people—or those who claim to be His people? (See also Lev. 17:7; 20:4–6; Num. 15:38–40; Deut. 31:16; Judges 2:16, 17; 8:27, 33.)

The same metaphor punctuates the language of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and Micah. It is important to remind ourselves that this is not the opinion of a few disgruntled prophets. They are quoting God’s words and viewpoint. No one elaborates on this image more famously than Hosea. But no one elaborates on this image more graphically than Ezekiel. The description of God’s people as His beautiful, favored bride-turned-prostitute in Ezekiel 16 and 23 is the ultimate antithesis to the Shulemite in the Song of Songs. The language in Song of Songs, though often sexual, is poetic and discreet. The language in Ezekiel is shockingly explicit: “No one presses the margins of literary propriety as severely as Ezekiel” (Block, *Ezekiel*, 466). It is extremely difficult to convey the force of God’s own language without offending sensibilities. God *means* it to be offensive because *He* finds it offensive.

In Ezekiel 16:1–14, God’s love and favor toward Jerusalem is personified and allegorized. Then something very ugly starts to happen. God begins to describe Jerusalem’s arrogant conceit and her ungrateful betrayal (16:15ff.). The language gets exceedingly graphic—more so in Hebrew than in most translations—as God proceeds to describe Jerusalem’s

incurable infatuation with the surrounding culture under the metaphor of a wife-turned-prostitute. The verb *zanah* (“play the harlot, prostitute oneself”) appears 21x in this chapter alone. His people have prostituted themselves to the Egyptians (v. 26), the Assyrians (v. 28), and the Chaldeans (v. 29). God is not describing literal forays into sexual immorality (although that’s probably a side-effect of their idolatry); He is using immorality as a metaphor to describe how He views their defection from Him, from His word, from His exclusive claim on their devotion and affection and allegiance, from His calling on them to image His character and truth to the world around them. But they’ve *left Him* and *joined them*, with an obsessive, dysfunctional passion that sickens and disgusts not only the Holy One their Savior, but even the nations that they want to be like, and be liked by.

But it gets even worse. In 16:30–38, God describes Jerusalem as a desperate dysfunctional nymphomaniac in her relations to the surrounding nations. In so many words God says, “A prostitute at least does it for money; but you’re so desperate to be like them *you* pay *them* for the privilege.” Jerusalem has taken her unique identity (which she has by grace) and loyalty (which she has by covenant) to the one true and good God, and exchanged it for an insatiable lust to be like—and be liked by—the surrounding nations. Again, the sin God is addressing is not ultimately sexual, or political, or even doctrinal—though there are moral and political and doctrinal effects in the behavior of His people. The sin is deeply religious and spiritual in nature.

How does this kind of frenetic, obsessive, idolatrous, adulterous behavior start? And what form, more precisely, does this kind of infidelity take in practical, behavioral terms? We’ll explore that in the next column.

Conclusion

Look back in time and Scripture, and you can see and hear the Shulemite Bride modeling the ardent devotion that God’s people should have had for Him alone. It’s no wonder that God delights in, and that the Best of Songs emphasizes, the pure passion and admiration of such a woman for her beloved—because He never got it from the nation that He chose out of all others and for whom He had done everything. Does He get it from us?

The Song of Songs has a very earthy message for men and women in terms of God’s view of the marriage relationship. But it also speaks eloquent practical theology as God’s premier model of the kind of exclusive devotion and preoccupied passion His people should have for Him.

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Philippians 2:3

Some girls *just know* from the start that they will marry a pastor. Some *tell the Lord* that they will marry a pastor, and some say they would *never* marry one. I had never done any of the above, though as a child I had told the Lord I'd be willing to go to the mission field. So, by dating a missions major, I did greatly increase my opportunity of marrying *some* kind of pastor.

During our engagement, assuming we would be traditional missionaries, we prayed about where the Lord would send us. Though not knowing when, where, or how the mission field would fit in, I envisioned us working with a remote people and living in some type of thatched environment, and I determined to do without superfluous wedding gifts—so I shunned fine china from the bridal registry. (After all, where would you fit a hutch in a hut?)

After our wedding, we did travel, but only a few states away. Dave was accepted, not by a mission's agency, but as youth pastor of a church. At that point I did what every wife does . . . I went along. This was my mission field, but my name tag read "Marilyn Janke, Youth Pastor's Wife."

The last youth pastor's wife (YPW) must have taken her shoes with her, for when I went to fill them, they were nowhere in sight. Filling my own shoes was challenge enough. From our wedding two weeks previously, I went from *something old* to *several things new*: new husband, new part of the country (from West-Coast girl to humidity, lightning bugs, and copious amounts of snow), and new ministry. Though not expecting to use my elementary education major that first year, I was hastily called into service a few days before school began, so . . . new teacher as well.

What *does* a YPW do, besides caring for her youthful husband? Along with youth meetings and activities and school-related functions, there are always plenty of places to serve and things to attend in a large church. Don't forget the parade of youth through the house, and even the occasional teen crashing on the living room couch overnight.

I also learned what a YPW does *not* do. At our first service—a Wednesday night—the song leader asked me to fill in for the regular pianist, and I quickly said, "No." However, when you're in the ministry, there is little time to nurse the fear of making mistakes and, in the future, I

was treated to *plenty* of other opportunities to share my keyboard—and other—foibles. As a nongregarious girl, though, I developed a bad habit that stood in the way of our new ministry.

For a while on Sundays I did my best to avoid small talk (and *any* talk) by zipping back to hide out in my husband's office after the service. I didn't have a phobia of people, nor did I dislike them. But there I was in a new church, not knowing anyone (except the youthful youth pastor).

I felt unsure of myself as a conversationalist, and I worried about interrupting, making foolish comments, stumbling over my words, and initiating unintelligent or boring conversations. Also, with people often in a hurry to get *somewhere* after the service, I wondered who would have time to stop and chat with *me*.

The Lord had to work with me awhile on this, and He helped me see my fear as sin, selfishness, and, more specifically, as pride—not a pretty thought for a YPW. Oh, I knew of the ongoing battle we as Christians have with the old sin nature. I just wasn't prepared for the Lord to call me up as part of the object lesson.

At first I cheated a bit and looked for people who were sitting or standing by themselves, simply because

I would not have to approach a group. Gradually, however, I saw them as individuals rather than a mass of church members, and I had a desire to find out what was happening in *their* lives. It became more than just, "OK, I need to be talking to *someone* . . . whom can I find?" I realized that this was my mission field—getting to know the people in my new church.

As well as getting to know the adults, there were endless opportunities to practice this ministry with the youth. You can't be around them long without talking about their lives, families, dreams, and of course, boys and girls. The greatest part was seeing their thirst for the Word and for

spiritual things and listening to (and attempting to answer) their endless questions.

The Lord *did* move us on to the mission field, but I look back often—and gratefully—on those few short years in the youth ministry. This time, when accepted by a mission board—though I still had no fine china to pack—I *did* get to take along (and practice) those early lessons. And I daily see that there are always plenty more where those came from!

Marilyn Janke and her husband, Dave, are missionaries in Mission, British Columbia, where they have served since 1998. They have four children. You may read more of Marilyn's articles at www.ribtickler.org.



What?

A Youth Pastor's Wife?

Marilyn Janke

Muslim Enclaves in the US

While the presence of Muslim enclaves has been a widely publicized issue in Great Britain and France, such enclaves are being formed in the United States as well—most without public scrutiny. An enclave is an area that is governed by Islamic principles (sharia) with minimal interruption from US or local law.

The article referenced below tells of the example of Gwynn Oak, Maryland—a Baltimore-area community made up of Muslim immigrants and other converts to Islam. The region contains an estimated four hundred Muslim people. John Yahya Carson is leading the area Islamic Education and Community Development Initiative and the bringing of that community under sharia law. He argues that such Muslim communities are ruled by “Western societal tenets, many of which clash with Islamic norms.”

This article can be referenced at http://frontpagemag.com/2010/07/09/muslim-enclaves-u-s-a/?utm_source=Page+Magazine&utm_campaign=806d38e0e6-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email.

Changing Landscape of Teenage Faith

Barna has released a study regarding the faith of America's youth. Study results show that this group is the most spiritually active group surveyed. Six out of ten engage in some sort of spiritual activity every week.

However, the types of spiritual activities have changed significantly over the same group studied twelve years ago. The six activities that have seen the most significant decline are “small group attendance, prayer, Sunday school participation, donations to churches, reading sacred texts other than the Bible, and evangelism by Christian teens (explaining their belief in Jesus Christ with others who have different faith views).” Three areas seem unchanged—church attendance, youth group attendance, and Bible reading. These external issues may cause churches to miss the more private changes that make up the teenaged believer's walk.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.barna.org/teens-next-gen-articles/403-how-teenagers-faith-practices-are-changing>.

After-Effects in the ELCA

One year after adopting an open position on homosexual clergy, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) has noted a 91,000-person drop in membership and has lost forty-eight churches.

Mark Tooley is the president and chief spokesperson for the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD). The IRD is an advocacy group that seeks to promote the church's “biblical and historical teachings.” In the IRD's monitoring of Protestant mainline denominations, Tooley finds a direct correlation between

the denomination's loss of membership and their aberrant views on human sexuality and marriage. He is quoted in the article as saying, “Theologically orthodox church members and theologically orthodox congregations have a hard time ignoring that new stance in the same way that they ignored for many decades a whole host of liberal political positions by their church hierarchy.”

The drop in membership has also equaled a three-percent drop in giving. This has forced the ELCA to amend its budget and plans for 2011.

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

American-Latinos Less Catholic

An Associated Press Univision poll demonstrates that young Latinos are less likely to associate with Catholicism than do their elders.

Overall, 62 percent of Hispanics identify themselves as Catholic, but that includes only 55 percent of young adults 18 to 29, compared with 80 percent of elders 65 and over.

One-third of the respondents claimed to be “born again” or “evangelical.”

This article can be referenced at <http://www.onenewsnow.com/Church/Default.aspx?id=1120008>.

Martyred for “Preaching Christianity”

Ten members of a medical mission team

were gunned down by Taliban terrorists as they were returning from helping remote villages in north Afghanistan. Six of the team members were American, two were Afghan, one was British, and one was German.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid told the Associated Press in Pakistan that they killed the foreigners because they were “spying for the Americans” and “preaching Christianity.”

According to an eyewitness account, each member was individually robbed and then murdered. The two Afghans were said to have shouted, “I am Muslim. Do not kill me.” But to no avail.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/british-woman-among-10-medics-killed-in-afghanistan-2045910.html>.

Radical US Islamic Schools

Madrasah is the Arabic term for Islamic schools. Eighty-five such schools have been started here in the United States under the leadership of Turkish Muslim Fethullah Gulen. Since these schools have been set up as “charter schools,” they receive millions of dollars from the public treasury. Yet these schools are designed to promote the universal caliphate (Muslim world domination). This is the educational branch of jihad.

The article below gives the example of Tarek ibn Ziyad (TIZA) Academy

in Inner Grove Heights, Minnesota. The school is named after Tarek ibn Ziyas, the Muslim warlord who conquered Spain. This school is designated as a charter school and is as such eligible for federal and state funds. So when TIZA was established in 2003, the school received \$4.7 million in state funding for fiscal 2008–2009.

Consider the unique structure supplied for TIZA students. Students pray Islamic prayers; the cafeteria serves halal food; the buildings and grounds are marked with inscriptions from the Qur'an and the Hadith. One faculty member even acknowledged helping female students perform their required washings for Friday Islamic rituals.

Given the radical nature of this school it is not surprising to see that the ACLU has initiated a lawsuit to shut it down. Still the Minnesota Department of Education insists that the school is neither religious or subversive.

This article can be referenced at http://www.familysecuritymatters.org/publications/id.6035/pub_detail.asp.

The WCC Turns 100

On June 2–7 of this year the World Council of Churches (WCC) met for its 100th anniversary in Edinburgh, Scotland. Twelve hundred delegates attended the WCC's first meeting in 1910. Today there are only three hundred.

The meeting is an evidence of how far ecumenicism has progressed. The makeup of the 1910 group included evangelical churches (usually mainline), but today the WCC includes representatives from Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Seventh-Day Adventist, Protestant, and Evangelical churches. The keynote speaker was Dr. Dena Robert, a United Methodist professor from Boston

NOTABLE QUOTES

He who rushes into the Presence of God, to hasten through a few formal petitions, and then hastens back to outside cares and pursuits, does not tarry long enough to lose the impression of what is without, and get the impress of what is within the secret chamber. He does not take time to fix his mind's gaze on the unseen and eternal. Many a so-called "praying man" has never once really met and seen God in the closet. The soul, disturbed and perturbed, tossed up and down and driven to and fro by worldly thoughts and care, can no more become a mirror to reflect God, than a ruffled lake can become the mirror of the starry heights that arch above it. He who would look downward into his own heart-depths, and see God reflected there, must stay long enough for the stormy soul to get becalmed. Only when He first gives peace is the nature placid enough to become the mirror of heavenly things.—A. T. Pierson

Iam persuaded that I shall obtain the highest amount of present happiness, I shall do most for God's glory and the good of man, and I shall have the fullest reward in eternity, by maintaining a conscience always washed in Christ's blood, by being filled with the Holy Spirit at all times, and by attaining the most entire likeness to Christ in mind, will, and heart, that is possible for a redeemed sinner to attain to in this world.—Robert Murray McChesney

What we need very badly these days is a company of Christians who are prepared to trust God as completely now, as they must do at the last day. For each of us the time is surely coming when we shall have nothing but God! Health and wealth and friends and hiding places will all be swept away and we shall have only God. To the man of pseudo faith that is a terrifying thought, but to real faith it is one of the most comforting thoughts the heart can entertain. It would be a tragedy indeed to come to the place where we have no other but God and find that we had not really been trusting God during the days of our earthly sojourn. It would be better to invite God now to remove every false trust, to disengage our hearts from all secret hiding places and to bring us out into the open where we can discover for ourselves whether we actually trust Him. This is a harsh cure for our troubles, it is a sure one! Gentler cures may be too weak to do the work. And time is running out on us.—A. W. Tozer

University School of Theology.

A greeting from Pope Benedict XVI was read, stating in part, "May we all renew our commitment to work humbly and patiently, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to live again together with our common apostolic heritage."

A detailed commentary on the centennial meeting can be read in the special report from the American Council of Christian Churches written by Dr. Ralph Colas.

This article can be referenced in the ACCC Special Report, Summer 2010.

Pakistani Martyrs

On July 20, 2010, two Christian brothers were gunned down outside the court where they were being tried for "blasphemy." Human rights officials insist that the two brothers were framed because of their Christian faith. Pastor Rashid Emmanuel and his brother Sajid were accused of writing a pamphlet that was critical of the prophet Mohammed. The pamphlet not only listed their complaints but their names and address as well.

According to Pakistan's blasphemy law, those who commit blasphemy against Mohammed or Islam may be executed. At this point no one has been executed, but the ten accused and brought to trial to date have been murdered before their trials were completed. According to the BBC, dozens are living in exile to avoid punishment under the new legislation.

This article can be referenced and the video feed viewed at <http://www.religionnewsblog.com/24797/pakistan-christians-shot-dead-by-pakistan-militants>.

Compiled by Robert Conduct, FBFI Executive 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.

The Student Volunteer Movement's Detroit Roots, Part II

In the last issue, we saw in the life of A. T. Pierson the progression from a minister satisfied with a prominent church in a wealthy neighborhood to a gospel-burdened shepherd of a community. What steps took him from that point to an advocate for world evangelization and the founding of the Student Volunteer Movement?

During the rebuilding of the Fort Street Presbyterian Church in 1877 the Evangelical Alliance met in Detroit. Pierson challenged the Alliance with the need to evangelize the cities of the world. He said, "Population tends to the cities, and hence the evangelization of the cities is of the highest moment. . . . The tendency of all religions is to grow away from the common people as they acquire prestige and culture."¹ Pierson became convinced, in opposition to the growing social gospel movement, that cities needed "evangelistic solutions." He also became a strong proponent of getting the Scripture to the populace. Rather than stand between God and the people as Romanism did, particularly in Detroit, Evangelical Protestants, he argued, needed to get the Bible into the hands of the common people.²

In the following year, 1878, Pierson was vacationing in California, where he providentially met George Müller of Bristol, England, on the return train trip. Müller and Pierson became fast friends. (Pierson would later pen Müller's most well-known biography, *George Müller of Bristol*.) In their discussions and prayer together, they began sharing their millennial views. Pierson was a post-millennialist and Müller a premillennialist. Müller's words got A. T.'s attention: "My beloved brother . . . not one of [your arguments for postmillennialism] is based upon the Word of God." Müller showed Pierson how the Bible taught that society could not be changed through human effort but only through the gospel, and that the Kingdom would come only with the personal return of Jesus Christ, not through human effort. Pierson was convinced.³

Through these and other experiences and influences, Pierson came to the growing conviction that

waiting for Christ's return inspired evangelism because it did not depend on the conversion of the world to succeed. The Great Commission commanded Jesus' followers to proclaim the gospel to the world, not to convert everyone or to bring in Christian civilization. Rather, the purpose of missions was to gather out Christians from all the nations, not to Christianize

the nations themselves. [He] emphasized the duty of Christians over the results.⁴

In the 1880s Pierson began giving more energy to foreign missions, believing that the foreign field was needier and that God was opening providential opportunities for missions. It was in 1886 that he received a telegram from evangelist Dwight L. Moody to come help with "a summer Bible school Moody was holding for leaders of the collegiate YMCA" consisting of "two hundred fifty young men from ninety colleges." They had come to Northfield, Massachusetts, for a month to hear from Moody.⁵ On July 16 Pierson, with young Robert Wilder and John Mott at his feet, in the words of Mott, "gave a thrilling address on missions. He supported, by the most convincing arguments, the proposition that 'all should go and go to all.'" He also popularized the phrase "The evangelization of the world in this generation."⁶ A week later, one hundred men, "the Mt. Hermon One-Hundred," committed themselves to foreign missions, and the Student Volunteer Movement for foreign missions was launched.

I am often asked what a pastor can do to help his church be more involved in missions. I think A. T. Pierson's life reflects what each of us can do. Do not get comfortable with the busyness inside your church, nor its prestige—maintain a humble burden for all of the souls in your community. Found all of your activity on solid Biblical and doctrinal convictions. Depend on God as you obey Him. Finally, determine to reach the world and promote the cause of missions to the next generation. May God be glorified as we seek to spread the gospel!

¹ Dana L. Robert, *Occupy until I Come: A. T. Pierson and the Evangelization of the World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 82–83.

² *Ibid.*, 80, 83.

³ *Ibid.*, 106. Pierson's convictions and accomplishments were many and varied; most of them were agreeable to this author, although some were not, such as his becoming an advocate of the Keswick movement.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 136–37. Expressed as Pierson addressed the Niagara Bible Conferences.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 149–50.

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Chaplain News

Bob Ellis

In these troubling times in which we live, chaplains, just as pastors, spend many hours counseling. Navy CH (LT) Trenton Long reported that in the first six weeks of his active duty time he had twenty-five scheduled counseling appointments. In the following article, Army CH (MAJ) Roger Rodriquez (Peterson AFB, Colorado Springs, Colorado) shares some of his thoughts and experiences as a counselor.

A frantic, panic-stricken young Company Commander scurried around the corner of my cubicle and cried out, "Chaplain, I need your help to talk to a spouse. Her husband is deployed, and she just can't take the separation any more! Can you help her?" "And his name shall be called . . . Counsellor."

The phone rang. I answered, "Good morning, Chaplain Rodriquez speaking. May I help you?" A familiar voice replied, "Chaplain Rodriquez, can you go and talk to a couple whose baby was born dead?" I asked, "What

happened?" He then said, "The baby was born with the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck." "And his name shall be called . . . Counsellor."

We just finished having our chapel service, and a senior chaplain approached me and said, "Chaplain Rod, you are the 'On Call' Duty Chaplain, aren't you?" "Yes sir," I replied. He hesitantly said, "A soldier's wife just committed suicide. Can you go and talk to him?" "And his name shall be called . . . Counsellor."

These are just a few samples of what today's Army chaplains are dealing with, and no seminary training will adequately equip them to counsel in such situations. What makes it even more difficult is when the soldier in need does not wish to hear about God, for he is not "religious."

A chaplain, in order to be an effective chaplain for his unit, must be a *skilled* counselor. If he is not, the news will get around through the "Joes," and he will

lose his credibility. Let's face it, soldiers need help. They need counseling. Many will refuse to see a civilian counselor because he will not *understand* the life of a soldier. Therefore, they go to their chaplain, in whom they hope and trust to help them. The chaplain must be a *wise* counselor.

The Army chaplain is extremely busy as a staff officer. Many times he will get an emergency visit from a soldier in dire need of help. "Chaplain, can you help me?" A chaplain dare not reply. "I'm too busy right now. Can you come back later?" The chaplain must be a *compassionate* counselor.

Please pray for us chaplains. Pray that the Lord will give us wisdom. Many times the soldier's pain and sorrows become the chaplain's pain and sorrows. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (Isa. 53:4).

Dr. Bob Ellis, National Field Representative, Commission on Chaplains, is available for speaking in local churches and can be reached at 850.261.6647.



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*Dolly Wong
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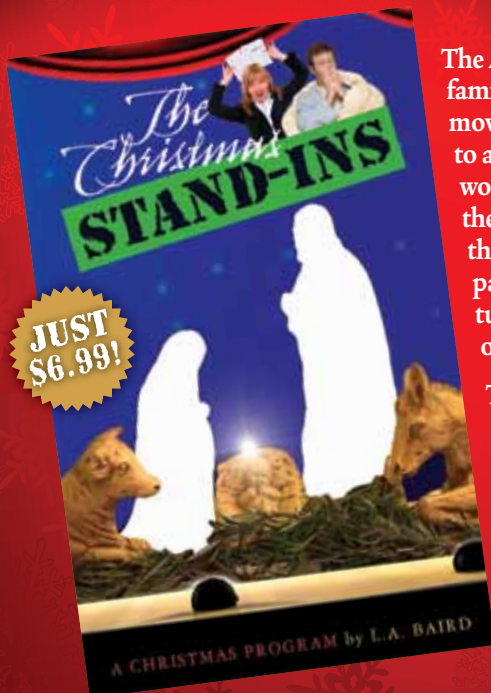
Thank you for the May/June *FrontLine*. Many of the articles touched my memory—I have been under the weather for several

years—got a valve out of a pig put in my heart—and regained a lot of my memory. Your current *FrontLine* touched on a lot of the old battles I was involved in here in Arizona.

For many years I published our Fellowship's newsletter and hired a lobbyist from Texas to fight our legislature, especially in alcohol matters. Thank you for your words that touched my memory in several areas. I am passing it on to my pastor.

*Wesley Darby, Pastor Emeritus
West High Baptist Church
Phoenix, AZ*

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Parent Ministry

Peter Grant

One of the most rewarding aspects within the student ministry is the parent ministry. It can also be one of the most overlooked areas. Youth pastors concentrate so much time and energy on the teenager that many times they neglect the needs that Mom and Dad have in raising that teenager. I have found in my ten years of youth ministry that the parent has as many needs, if not more, than the teenager himself. We can make a decision to overlook that and leave that burden on their own shoulders, or we can decide to design our ministry to equip and educate these parents so that we may edify the home. My desire is the latter part—to build the home to be stronger and more pleasing to the Lord. It is my goal to encourage other youth pastors, youth workers, and volunteers to see the importance of ministering to the parents.

Not the Enemy

Many youth pastors go into the youth ministry with a preconceived mindset that the parents will be their biggest enemy. Some parents may have proven that true through the years, but as a general statement this is false. The parents will be your greatest asset. You are pursuing after the same goal: not just to get that young person out of the teen years alive, but to help him or her grow closer to God and become excited about serving Him (Eccles. 9:10). It is important that the parents understand your vision and philosophy for ministry. When they begin to see that your ministry is geared not to be an entertaining babysitting club but rather a disciple-building, servant-minded youth group, they put their trust in what you do. They will put their support behind you and your ministry, they will pray for you and your family, and they will stand up and defend what your youth ministry is all about. Not every parent will have this perspective. Some will still look at you as someone who is trying to

replace them (remind them constantly that you are not), some will think you don't want them involved in your ministry (look for ways to reassure them of their importance on the team), and others will not like the way you do things (simply stay Biblical). The important thing to remember is that you cannot concentrate on that part of your parent ministry because there are others who humbly accept what God is doing in and through your ministry. Design your program to meet the needs of the parents who are hungry to grow.

Equip the Parents

As we traveled this past summer to Argentina for a mission trip, I had the opportunity to see firsthand that it doesn't matter what culture, country, or even class you come from; parents are hurting everywhere. They are searching for answers on how to raise their family. They want to know how to Biblically deal with their rebellious teenager. They desire to do things God's way but often wonder what that might be. We have a responsibility within the youth ministry to equip our parents and help them to live God's way. Marriages are falling apart, families are getting further into debt, spirits have become bitter, attitudes have developed into rebellion, and teenagers are learning the wrong way to deal with the realities of life. But it is not a lost cause, we are not hopeless, nor should we throw in the towel. We know who the enemy is—Satan—and we know his strategy (Eph. 6:10–18). That is why we teach and train our parents so that they might do the same with their families. Here are some thoughts to share with parents:

- Parenting teenagers can be one of the most challenging tasks as a parent, and it takes a lot of prayer, teamwork, and consistency.
- Do not give up!
- Don't forfeit to Satan and don't allow him to reign in your home.
- Be patient, forgiving, and faithful!

- Be transparent and let your prayers be fervent before God that He might do a great work in your family (James 5:16).

Look for ways to help your parents. You can schedule quarterly meetings that not only have a time of fellowship but also provide helpful information about your ministry and instruction from the Word of God. Encourage your families to attend conferences that will help their marriage, families, and relationships with their teenagers. Share a list of recommended books that will help them in their Christian walk. Challenge your dads to be spiritual leaders in their homes and have family devotions on a regular basis. Teach parents and teenagers how to deal with conflict in a Biblical manner. And pray for the families in your youth ministry. Pray that God will protect them from Satan's attacks, that God will provide wisdom and knowledge in dealing with day to day life, and that God will prove Himself real to these families.

Rewarding Ministry

The youth ministry is full of joy and sorrow, triumphs and trials. At the end of the day you look back and see teenagers who are allowing God to do something special in their lives, and then you see others who had such great potential but chose to go another way. Your labor of love and dedication of service never go unnoticed (1 Cor. 15:58). Thankfully we don't serve families and teenagers for their approval, but rather God's alone (Col. 3:23, 24). When you find yourself willing to put time and effort into a very rewarding ministry—you actually see that it is not the youth ministry . . . it's the parent ministry within your church.

Peter Grant has been the youth pastor at Mikado Baptist Church in Macon, Georgia, for almost nine years. He and his wife, Natalie, have one daughter, Bailee. Peter's ministry responsibilities include overseeing all student ministries from children to college and career ministries.

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