

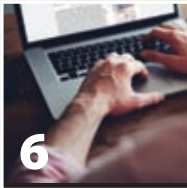
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# FrontLine

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

Proclaim  
and Defend

# Proclaim and Defend



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Our sincere thanks to Don Johnson for coordinating this issue of *FrontLine* magazine.

Visit us on the Web at  
[www.fbfi.org](http://www.fbfi.org)

## Our theme for this issue of *FrontLine* starts

with the words “Proclaim and Defend.” These words are the name of the FBFI blog ([proclaimanddefend.org](http://proclaimanddefend.org)) and sum up the purpose of FBFI. We intend to faithfully proclaim God’s truth to saints and sinners alike and to defend God’s truth when it is under direct and indirect attack. Unfortunately, attacks on God’s truth come from professing believers as well as unbelievers—which makes a ministry based on the truth of God’s Word challenging and at times controversial.

This issue includes an opening article on that theme by the editor of our blog, Don Johnson. Since our activity in this arena is online, most of the rest of our articles are dealing with proclaiming God’s truth online in one fashion or another. Matt Recker gives us an article that explains how you can interact with Proclaim & Defend by your own activity on Facebook. (It is possible to do similar things with other social media as well.) Our friend Greg Baker leads a group blog of a similar nature, Rooted Thinking ([rootedthinking.com](http://rootedthinking.com)). We asked him to explain his vision for an online publication ministry. We recommend his article

and the blog—you should bookmark it and follow it. Thomas Overmiller writes for pastors and churches, giving suggestions for using blogs and online communication as a ministry tool for the local church. Wally Morris, pastor of Charity Baptist Church in Indiana and a frequent contributor to Proclaim & Defend, writes with more of a focus on the “defend” side of the equation—because the Internet is a place where you can find any teaching you want. Pastor Morris writes to give guidelines for discernment. And last in this category, we take a look forward with an interview with Mark Ward on what online proclamation ought to be and how, perhaps, you might serve God by blogging.

We also want to look back—proclaiming and defending is not a new phenomenon in the Christian world. Wally Morris gives us a second article in light of the five-hundredth anniversary of Luther’s Wittenberg theses, with a reminder that God’s light sprang out of a dark place in the Reformation.

Though our times are challenging, we should not give up the ministry of proclaiming or defending. God will use our efforts for His glory, no matter how events turn out in the short term.



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**O**n several occasions over the past few years, *FrontLine* has graciously given me permission to use several articles in our *Wellsprings* pastors' publication. I have been very grateful for that and appreciate the help that those articles have provided for the pastors here in Australia. *FrontLine* has never requested any monetary remuneration for the use of these articles, although I know that *FrontLine* does have expenses in the production of that material. Subsequently, I have enclosed a small gift as an expression of thanks for allowing me to use the material from *FrontLine*. May the Lord continue to bless *FrontLine* for its conservative and strong leadership.

Tracy Minnick  
Australia

**M**ark Ward's article [in the March/April 2017 issue] at the end was terse but outstanding. In my opinion, FBFI should have quit dancing around the KJV-only issue long ago. Jim Singleton was amazingly balanced on the issue, and we do have some good resolutions in the archives on this issue. I would like to see us repudiate the heresy end of it once for all, either by new statements or by reaffirming old ones.

This recent issue talks about "We're Still Here," but I am left with a question after reading the issue twice: Where is *here*? No reference to Niagara 1878. No reference to the founding of the FBF in 1920. No reference to Bob Jones' reasons for founding the University in 1927. No references to historical roots at all. I think this is a weakness of the issue, but there is some good material in it.

Fred Moritz  
Garner, NC

**T**his issue [*Why We're Still Here*, March/April 2017] was excellent! I enjoyed the articles and the candor of the writers. I can personally identify with many of them as the daughter of a fundamental Baptist preacher. It is a blessing and an encouragement to know that I am not alone as a young person who is still a fundamentalist. I am thankful for the heritage I have and for the opportunity to continue that heritage as a fundamentalist on the mission field of England. May the Lord continue to bless the ministry of FBFI for many years to come!

Amanda Baker  
BWM Missionary to England

**I** have just returned from the 2017 Annual Fellowship Meeting. What a blessing it was to

In February 2017 at the Winter Board Meeting of the FBFI, the board voted unanimously to change the name of the FBFI from Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International to Foundations Baptist Fellowship International. The movement for the name change was led by John Vaughn and at the urging of the most senior members of the fellowship. The discussion regarding a name change has continued, off and on, for more than forty years. Wayne Van Gelderen Sr., Frank Bumpus, Dr. Bob Jones III, Rod Bell, and James Singleton were the ones who began the discussion.

The concern is not with the idea of being fundamentalists. That identity is the core of who we are. We are not even shy about using the name or term. We wear it proudly. But in an age when the term is so misconstrued, we want to give ourselves the opportunity to define it.

Within the ranks of professing Christianity, the term "fundamentalist" is widely viewed with disdain. That does not bother us. For the most part, evangelicals understand that a fundamentalist is a person who believes what the Bible says and seeks to apply it consistently to every aspect of life and practice. If we are disdained for that belief and practice, so be it.

It is the use of the term outside the ranks of Christendom that is problematic. The recent name-change discussion started with the request of some of our chaplains. When your mission is to fight against extremists or radical terrorists who call themselves fundamentalists, it can be confusing to use that same term to identify yourself. We know there is a difference, but we do not often have opportunity to explain it. It also helps in our interactions with the secular world elsewhere.

I had to smile during our recent fellowship with the NTA (New Testament Association of Independent Baptist Churches) in Watertown. We were called the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship throughout the entire week. I have a hunch that the new name is going to be hard to get used to. The name change helps us, but make no mistake, we will always answer affirmatively to "Fundamental Baptist Fellowship" when it is used. We are, and will always be, fundamentalists in the same way that our forebears were when they first met as the Fundamental Fellowship within the Northern Baptist Convention. But we are also fundamentalists in the way that the FBF leaders were in the 1950s and 1960s when they chose to denounce and separate from the cooperative evangelism of Billy Graham and all its ensuing compromises.

We have new issues to face, and we will face them with the same biblical principles and fervor that we have in the past.

Kevin Schaal, President  
Foundations Baptist Fellowship International

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# Proclaim and Defend



## In Acts 20:18–35 we find Paul’s farewell address to the

Ephesian elders. These men knew him well: they had been co-laborers during three fruitful years of ministry. Many souls in Asia Minor had come to Christ; many churches had been planted; a thriving ministry had made an impact on the pagan world such that the local idolaters had felt it in that most sensitive of all body parts, the pocketbook. “Now,” Paul says, “[you] shall see my face no more” (20:25). At this leave-taking, Paul gives these Christian workers his final instructions. They are such that they form in brief the summary of all pastoral ministry, whether it be in the intensely local ministry of church planting, evangelism and discipleship, or whether the ministry includes a wider sphere of influence, a national or international stage.

Those of us involved in Foundations Baptist Fellowship International (FBFI) are all involved in local ministries. The words of Paul apply directly to us. Some of us have wider ministries as well as our local ministries. In all these capacities we cannot escape his words. They provide our mandate in just two imperatives, found in Acts 20:28 and 31. The first says:

**Acts 20:28** Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

And the second:

**Acts 20:31** Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

The first has this imperative: “take heed to yourselves” with the explanatory infinitive “to feed the church of God.” The second commands: “therefore watch, and remember.” Watch what? Remember what? *Watch* for the wolves that shall come from within and without (20:29–30) and *remember* how I did not cease “to warn every one night and day with tears.”

We at FBFI have a blog where these imperatives are taken to heart. We call it Proclaim & Defend ([proclaimanddefend.org](http://proclaimanddefend.org)). We think the goals of our blog fit well with our ministry purpose, which could be simply stated this way: “to proclaim and defend biblical Baptist fundamentals.” Let me define what I mean by these terms.

## Defining Terms

### *Proclaim and Defend*

The terms “proclaim” and “defend” may well be defined by appealing to Acts 20. Proclamation is feeding the church of God. Feeding the flock doesn’t merely mean “give them what they want to hear,” but it means “give them what they need.” Why must we give them what we need? “For,” Paul says, in the very next verse, “I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.” The flock needs food that will protect it from the wolves.

So when we say “proclaim,” we mean to edify, but we mean to edify with a purpose. We want spiritual strength to come from that feeding. We want those we feed to get their meat and vegetables. We aren’t really all that interested in providing strawberry shortcake.

Which brings us to “defend.” Paul told the Ephesian elders that his was a ministry of warning (20:31). He called them to that same ministry. He later told Timothy, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). That’s largely a ministry of warning. The ministry of warning focuses on two categories: (1) the grievous wolves that invade from without (20:29) and (2) the perverse self-glorifiers who arise from within, gathering crowds around them at their man-centered conferences and self-help seminars (20:30). (Note that I give a modern context to the ancient instructions of the verse. No doubt there are more manifestations of these self-disciplers than these.)

### *Biblical (as Opposed to Historic) Baptist Fundamentals*

Let me also take care to note what I mean by “biblical Baptist fundamentals.” We are aware that there are certain doctrines that are critical doctrines for Christianity. When we say “fundamentals,” we certainly mean those. You should also be aware that we at FBFI are a *Baptist* fellowship. We are quite taken with that word and what it represents. We hold to those doctrines that represent Christian fundamentals as well as those peculiar distinctives that make us Baptist examples of Christianity. We think that by proclaiming and defending these truths the saints will be edified and equipped to resist the wolves

and charlatans and to be disciple-makers on their own hook, in their own local ministries.

Further, as to the term “biblical.” In my header above I distinguish it from “historic.” There is some merit to calling oneself an “historic fundamentalist,” but there is also some weakness to the term. On the one hand, our forefathers in fundamentalism fought a good fight (with some blemishes) to leave the task to us. We identify with them to be sure. But when someone uses the term “historic,” you also have to ask. “Which history do you mean?” Do you mean pre-1920s history? 1920s history? Post-1955 history? All of the above? Which history?

It is better, I think to emphasize *biblical* Baptist fundamentals. If there are doctrines or distinctives that are unbiblical, we should want nothing to do with them. If the issue is whether the doctrines or distinctives are biblical or not, it matters not whether they are exactly historical. While we may appreciate the energy and heritage of our forefathers, they may have erred at points. We don’t want to repeat their errors. (We would rather not make any errors of our own, either, but alas!) The key concerning our proclaiming and defending is this: *is it biblical?*

### Proclaim: The Ministry of Edification

We set out to achieve the ministry of edification in a variety of ways. Traditionally, our message has been communicated at meetings and in print. We also edify through our chaplaincy endorsing ministry. As Dr. Vaughn likes to put it: “meetings, magazine, and military.” Lately, we have added the medium of the Internet, but we haven’t come up with an “m” for that yet.

There is no doubt that edification is a crying need today. Christianity, broadly speaking, speaks all too broadly with little depth and substance. When the scorching trials of affliction arise (Matt. 13:6), we suspect that many will wither away. Every effort must be sure those who profess the faith possess the faith. Having done with that, we must ensure that the believers are given every possible opportunity to take in the Word of God, building them up in the love and fear of God so they may be able to withstand the attacks of the Devil.

We believe Christians are strengthened by gathering together. That is one of the first points of the local church (Acts 2:42; Heb. 10.23–25). The gathering together and the hearing of the Word builds the strength of the soul. How often have we seen someone waver in his spiritual life when he absents himself from the local assembly? On a wider basis, we think regional and national fellowship meetings can bolster the strengthening of the local ministry. You ought to be faithful in your local Baptist church. You can also be strengthened additionally if you are able

to avail yourself of the preaching in FBFI meetings (and others, too, of course). I hope you can be edified at such meetings when your circumstances permit.

We also believe the printed word has value in stimulating the spiritual lives of believers. We realize we are becoming a much more visually oriented society, but value remains in that old-fashioned artifact, the printed page. I suppose some issues are better than others, but I want to encourage you to make a regular habit of reading *FrontLine*. I am personally blessed without exception by something in each magazine as it comes out. Since this article is appearing in this venue, my exhortation here is likely unnecessary, but do you know someone who could be helped by our magazine? Why don’t you give him or her a subscription?

Recognizing, however, the changing times, we are putting our material out on our blog, Proclaim & Defend. We try to provide material every weekday, and we mean to build the saints up by its use.

Someone challenged me about the ratio of “proclaiming” to “defending” once. I thought about it. If you read our blog, I think you will find a lot of proclaiming going on. I include with this article a graphic of our “tag cloud.” This represents our subject matter graphically, according to the subject tags we put on our articles. The larger the tag, the more frequent its use. While we do have numerous articles dealing with subjects that could be called “defending,” I am satisfied what most of what we do is “proclaiming.”

And this brings me, lastly, to “defend.”

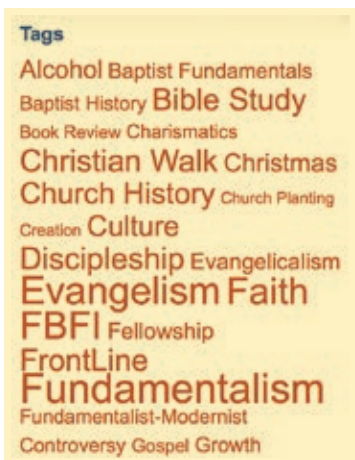
### Defend: The Ministry of Warning

Because of our history, FBFI is well known for defending. We began defending the fundamentals of the faith against the encroachment of liberalism in the days of the old Northern Baptist Convention. We continued defending the fundamentals against the compromise of ecumenical evangelism later in the twentieth century. Today we are faced with different challenges than those of the past. We also have new opportunities. In addition to our traditional mediums, we now *Proclaim & Defend* on the Internet, a tool with which we are slowly coming to grasp. Regardless of the medium, whether speaking or writing, we intend to continue the ministry of warning.

The ministry of warning is the duty of all Christians. We should become aware of the challenges facing us and our churches through the many venues available today. Obviously we can’t all read every word out there or survey every trend that pulses over the airwaves or through the Web, so we need to rely on one another to call attention to trends and troubles that come our way. I wrote more about this duty here: [proclaimanddefend.org/2016/04/15/the-biblical-ministry-of-warning](http://proclaimanddefend.org/2016/04/15/the-biblical-ministry-of-warning). Our intention is to continue to provide a resource through our preaching and teaching that will help God’s people identify and avoid those teachers and teachings that would lead them astray.

Through it all, may our God get the glory for all things He has done.

Don Johnson is the pastor of Grace Baptist Church of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada.







facebook



Matthew Recker

# Proclaim and Defend on Facebook: Is That Possible?

If Facebook were a country, it would be the world's most populated.

Founded in 2004, Facebook has become populated with about 1.7 billion users. No longer are Facebook (and other social media platforms) a fad, but social media is an integral part of many lives. It is clearly not going away. It is free, easy to use, and has international reach.

Facebook can be likened to a power tool of communication and information. The reality is undeniable: 50% of smart phones connect to Facebook every hour of every day. Social media is a huge part of many people's daily lives. On average, those with smart phones interact with their mobile devices 40 to 80 times a day, and 91% of mobile Internet access is for social activities. 73% of smartphone owners access social networks through apps at least once per day. One of the great advantages of Facebook is that it allows rapid two-way communication: people do not merely acquire information for themselves but they can express their own comments or show their appreciation for what they see by liking a page or a post.

Like any power tool, it can be used positively, but it also has obvious dangers. It is vital that we not abuse or misuse this tool of communication or use it to sin. Just as one takes precautions in using a power tool, such as wearing safety goggles or gloves, one must take special care to learn how to use this powerful communication tool. Like new power tools that far surpass the older tools, they must be used carefully.

Just like cars are quite a bit better than buggies, social media can also outstrip older forms of communication. In spite of potential dangers, there are many positive aspects of social media that we can use to promote our goal as a fellowship.

## What's the Goal?

Our goal in FBFI is to use social media to fulfill our mission: "to provide a rallying point for fundamental Baptists seeking personal revival and the opportunity to work with

committed Bible-believers in glorifying God through the uncompromising fulfillment of the Great Commission." The basic usage of our FBFI page is:

1. To post a daily blog from the Proclaim & Defend website.
2. To share pictures from our Annual and Regional Fellowships as they are happening and when they are complete. This puts faces to our fellowship and lets people see our human side.
3. To promote our FBFI fellowship meetings.

## So What?

This is only the beginning. There is even more we can do with our FBFI Facebook page.

We can *connect* with those who are far away in an instant of time in a very inexpensive way. Social media makes the world even smaller. A missionary can communicate freely, at huge savings of cost, with more people over Facebook than by snail-mail prayer letters. For an organization like FBFI, with members all around the world, Facebook can be a tremendous platform to immediately communicate vital information to one another. For instance, prayer requests and other special needs can be shared instantly so that a great number of people can be informed of what is happening in a missionary's life from Japan to Madagascar.

We can also *reconnect* with friends from yesterday. Our FBFI Facebook page is a way to continue a connection with those who may be considering becoming active in our Fellowship. It can also help former college friends now in busy ministries to keep in touch with old friends from school. It maintains contact with those who may have drifted away from us, and it also lets those who may not even agree with us see what is happening within FBFI. It gives us a platform for us to proclaim news of our events as well as positions we take on various issues.

Continued on page 24

# Rooted Thinking—

## An Enduring Legacy

It was early summer 1948 when A. W. Tozer finished his preface for *The Pursuit of God*. America's martial spirit was at high tide. Militarily, it had taken four years of American war-making to crush the Axis Powers. Theologically, it had taken fifty years for the fundamentalists to usurp the powerful modernist coalition. Tozer, however, believed something had gone terribly wrong in the fight: fundamentalist leaders were "strangely unaware that there is in their ministry no manifest Presence." He wrote to challenge those for whom "right opinions" had become paramount; he believed that "God's children are starving while actually seated at the Father's table."

We tremble at *what* Tozer wrote. Yet we often take for granted *that* he wrote. Both are vitally important. And it's to this second consideration we now turn.

### A New Endeavor

Joel Arnold and Jonathan Threlfall contacted me in the fall of 2014 to propose a new writing endeavor—I was honored and am very grateful for these godly men. Shortly after the initial conversation, we launched the website Rooted Thinking in an effort to wed thoughtful theology with everyday issues in a format unique to our ministerial friends and colleagues. As a secondary goal, we hoped that one day Rooted Thinking could bridge from short-form blog writing to book-length publication. And even though that goal was (and remains) far into the future, we hope at least to do our part in pushing the ball in that direction.

As Rooted Thinking matured, two interconnected challenges arose. The first and most obvious is time. Quality prose rarely, if ever, flows straight from the pen. Editorial decisions, content selection, careful tone, and providing feedback for fellow writers demand not only intense collaboration but wisdom hard-earned through yet more time spent walking with God. When every contributor is volunteering his or her time in between family and ministry, any commitment to quality crushes the online demand to be current. And this demand for being present brings the second challenge into greater focus: resources.

Finding quality writers willing to volunteer their efforts is a big challenge. Monetizing the website through advertising sounds appealing, but it isn't as straightforward as one might think. The quantity of traffic driven to one's website determines the amount of money it can earn through advertising. As such, a whole host of competing values threaten to undercut not only the product but the entire vision. Sensational headlines, deliberately provocative subjects, and response writing (just to name three) are very



good at eliciting clicks but are also a recipe for half-baked imprecision that undercuts the vision for biblical thoughtfulness and clear communication.

Furthermore, many gifted authors have given up on the prospect of writing more broadly because the publishing industry often places the burden of promotion on the authors themselves. For example, a talented writer may somewhat naively send off an excellent manuscript for publisher review. Except, the publisher first wants to read a prospectus that should answer these questions: *How big is your personal ministry platform? For whom are you writing this book? How many of those people will buy it?* Many potential authors see the challenges of brand development and, unfortunately, conclude it's more trouble than it's worth. Some break through, praise God. Either way, the process is time consuming and demands a large personal investment with no promise of future payoff.

These challenges beg the question, "Is it worth it?" Should fundamentalists in general, or Rooted Thinking in particular, take the time necessary to write and produce material for broader consumption? The answer, in my opinion, is a resounding "yes" for three distinct reasons.

First, fundamentalism boasts a rich tradition in Christian publication. The movement initially distinguished itself from modernism between 1910 and 1915 with a four-volume collection of ninety essays edited by Reuben Torrey and A. C. Dixon entitled *The Fundamentals*. C. I. Scofield's *Reference Bible*, now in its third iteration, did more than any other work to popularize a fundamental approach to Bible interpretation. J. Gresham Machen's seminal work, *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923), set the standard for conservative scholarship for a generation. And these were works that came inside the movement's first few decades. Whatever the reasons for a publishing decline in recent days, I believe it's time to recapture the writing impetus that has traditionally served fundamentalism so well.

Second, writing ministry greatly benefits the church. Writing hones preaching to a razor's edge. Writing can build sustained arguments that relatively short preaching sessions cannot manage. Writing tends to benefit believers beyond the author's own culture. I doubt very much, for example, that John Owen and I have anything in common, but, boy, can he feed my soul. Writing ministry tends to have an exponentially larger influence on the church than does preaching alone. Athanasius of Alexandria single-handedly defeated the Arians with writing. The Puritans, kicked out of their pulpits, sustained their people with writing. Robert Murray McCheyne's brief twenty-nine-year sojourn is familiar to us because he wrote.

Third, distinctly *pastoral* writing has remained a hallmark of Protestant Christianity. William Tyndale and Martin Luther are the foremost examples of pastors who desired to get the written word, and explanations of it, into the hands of everyday believers. Bunyan's pastoral concern bleeds through every page of *The Pilgrim's Progress*; pathos and persecution combine to create the most-published volume in the English language other than the Bible itself. Pastor Spurgeon's sermons grace the shelves of nearly every Bible student. Commentaries, reference volumes,

and academic treatises aimed at important, albeit esoteric, philosophical points all have their place. Nevertheless, God's people place a high premium on heartwarming counsel springing from exegetical precision and delivered in layman's language.

## A Few Encouragements

I firmly believe fundamentalism needs to invest substantially in high-quality, pastoral writing that benefits the entirety of God's redeemed people. Perhaps fundamentalism could find men such as Tozer who display an uncanny ability to diagnose malignance and to prescribe treatment. Perhaps a few encouragements will give wings to this idea.

Publication has never been easier. Ever since Samuel Morse kicked off an ever-expanding communications revolution with the invention of the telegraph, writing opportunities have exploded. As print media transitions to tablets, phones, and other non-paper devices, it's only a matter of time before some publishing houses slash overhead by moving exclusively to the digital format. Fundamentalists have an opportunity to get out in front of this technology and make publication an even greater priority.

Rooted Thinking demonstrates that there is a market for quality material. We took a philosophical stand in choosing quality over currency—many excellent websites have made the same choice. These sites have been rewarded with loyal readers who help improve the overall product. Excellence still has a place. When a contributor for Rooted Thinking writes a fine piece, we don't have to do very much to drive the traffic. The quality commends itself, and God's people respond.

And because pastoral writing has maintained such an enduring legacy in Protestant Christianity, I believe local churches themselves need to empower and commission writing pastors to bless the broader church with their gift. As fundamentalism grew less centralized, independent churches became the norm. And even though independence benefited the church in many ways, publication became strained for the same two challenges that face Rooted Thinking: time and resources.

A conscientious pastor simply feels selfish in asking for writing time, especially when his people do not see themselves as the primary beneficiaries of his writing. It will take courageous lay-leaders to convince their people that writing ministry not only helps Christ's body abroad but has demonstrable and lasting benefits to that pastor's local church.

If fundamentalism is to develop writing pastors, if the movement is to overcome the challenges of time and resources, it's going to take a collective effort among the movement's local churches. I remain hopeful that the payoff will inspire writers and readers alike to create an enduring legacy of biblical faithfulness.

*Soli Deo Gloria.*

Dr. Greg Baker serves as the pastor of Fellowship Bible Church in Eden, Utah.







# Using a Blog in Ministry

## Platforms for Written Communication

In the fourteenth century BC, neighboring statesmen and Egyptian pharaohs used clay tablets to exchange messages. We call these the Amarna Letters. Today people continue to exchange written messages but use different platforms. We've moved from clay tablets to scrolls to parchments to bound books to newspapers to e-readers.

The church is no different. Believers have exchanged important messages since the first century. From the twenty-seven inspired books of the New Testament to the documents of the Church Fathers to Bibles printed on the Gutenberg press to sermons in the newspapers of Colonial America, we have used all available platforms for spreading God's truth in written form. Today, one such method is the blog.

## A Short History of the Blog

Using the Internet, college student Justin Hall launched the first blog in 1994. He called it a personal homepage. Similar websites multiplied and were later dubbed a "weblog." Peter Merholz shortened the word to "blog" in 1999, paving the way for Merriam-Webster to make it their word of the year in 2004.

A blog is a website that shares personal thoughts and comments from the writer. (Sometimes it also shares hyperlinks, videos, and photographs.) You've probably seen them. News sites use them. Sports writers use them.

Hobbyists, businesses, and teachers use them. Anybody can use them.

But should pastors use them? Should they upload personal reflections and resources to a dedicated blog site? I would be naïve to insist that every pastor should do so. But every pastor should consider the possibility.

## Pastoral Purposes for Blogging

Blogs have many benefits. They are easy to use, accessible to your audience, and inexpensive to operate. (My blog, with text and podcast audio, costs a meager \$33 per month.) As such, a blog is an excellent way for a pastor to say things to his congregation apart from the pulpit.

*Feed Your Congregation.* Jesus instructed Peter to feed His sheep (John 21:16). Peter said the same to every pastor (1 Pet. 5:2). But how does this feeding occur? Through biblical thoughts and words (1 Tim. 4:6). Have you met the pastor who writes helpful pamphlets about important topics, making them available on a wall rack in the church foyer? A blog provides a convenient platform for feeding wholesome words to your congregation in a similar way. But as a bonus, you avoid the expense of print publication and gain the convenience of instant digital communication.

*Increase Your Pastoral Presence.* David reminds us that the Good Shepherd places Himself among His sheep (Ps. 23:4). Jesus did this with His disciples, choosing twelve "that they should be with him" (Mark 3:14). Paul also

practiced this, teaching believers “from house to house” (Acts 20:20). You see, feeding a church requires more than sermons from a pulpit. It requires a ubiquitous approach, interacting with God’s children in life, beyond larger church gatherings. Pulpit ministry is essential, and technology can never replace an old-fashioned house visit. But a blog provides words and thoughts from the pastor for every house, computer, and cell phone in your congregation.

*Provide Helpful Materials.* Where do I put study guides for in-home Bible studies? On my blog. Answers to excellent questions? On my blog. Devotional encouragement? On my blog. Responses to newsworthy, trending issues? On my blog. Links to recommended resources? You guessed it. And church members go there to find these things. Furthermore, if you don’t provide these resources, someone else will. And this leads me to another important purpose for a pastoral blog.

*Voice Biblical Fundamentals and Baptist Beliefs.* Important ideas deserve to be heard. More than anything else, this includes the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith. Adding your pastoral voice online to proclaim and articulate this essential truth advances the glory of God in the world (assuming you do so in a wholesome manner). Furthermore, you will agree that Baptist convictions and other distinguishing doctrinal beliefs, though not on the level of gospel fundamentals, should also be voiced in the public arena of words and ideas. You cannot defend the truth in silence. A blog enables you to lend a voice to the truth that you hold dear.

*Counteract Internet Garbage.* How many times have you discovered that a church member Googled his or her way into unfortunate or heretical ideas? Yes, the Internet is a fountain of theological nonsense, to be sure. But rather than complain about this problem, you can counteract it. Provide God’s people with some alternative content. (But please don’t add to the garbage pile!) Write insightful articles and Bible studies of your own, and link to others you recommend. What’s more, you can even produce a quality audio podcast. So what are you waiting for?

*Increase Church Visibility.* Whether your blog is on or associated with your church website, it can increase the odds that people will find your church site through search engines such as Google, Bing, and Yahoo. How does this work? First, write relevant content using keywords and phrases that people are searching for online. Then make it easy for viewers to share and link to your content through social media and other blogs. Keep doing this, and your website will rise in search-engine rankings over time. As you provide your church with helpful, biblical content, you are increasing the probability that new contacts will find your church as well. Now that’s a fantastic bonus.

## Blogging Precautions

While blogging as a pastor yields many benefits, you should exercise appropriate caution, especially as a pastor.

## It provides you with a voice and venue for shepherding God’s people.

One slip of the—um, keys—can damage your role as an example to the church and a herald of the gospel.

*Post Quality Content.* Since your blog will be in public view, post purposeful and presentable materials. People who use the Internet grade the credibility of

a pastor or church, at least in part, on the quality of the content they see. Knowing this, commit yourself to good grammar, clear thoughts, and clean formatting. Also, provide materials that answer real questions, address relevant topics, and provide helpful information. It is regrettable when a pastor uses his blog to vent frustration or launch full-throated diatribes. A pastor should be neither pugnacious nor contentious, even on a blog (1 Tim. 3:3).

*Proofread Your Words.* Before you click “publish,” proofread your content. Check the spelling and grammar. Then review the post to be sure it makes sense and is easy to understand. To help with this, I recommend the service of naturalreaders.com. This free software will read your text back to you audibly, which is an excellent way to evaluate your content with accuracy and honesty. (Be ready to wince and make corrections!)

*Be Aware of Digital Permanence.* What goes online, stays online, even if you delete something after you post it. So ask yourself some hard questions beforehand. Will I hurt the testimony of Christ in any way? Will I harm anyone? Will I cut off legitimate ministry opportunities? Will I regret saying this, in this way, for any reason? Be your harshest critic beforehand and you will never regret it.

*Refrain from Clickbait.* Quality content that helps people is one thing. But content aimed at high-volume traffic using sensational, eye-catching words and topics is another, especially when you sacrifice quality and accuracy. Before you post anything, prayerfully audit your motives. “Am I posting this to help people or to attract attention?” Quality content that meets genuine needs builds quality traffic over time. There are no shortcuts. So stick to your mission and let the results take care of themselves.

## Ask Yourself Some Questions

If you hope to launch your own pastoral or ministry blog, first ask yourself why you plan to do so. Can you explain your purpose, the role it will have in your ministry, and the principles that will guide you? And if you already host a blog, pause to reevaluate your reasons. Have you defined them? Are you faithful to them? Or have you drifted away somehow?

Not every pastor needs a blog. But like any other platform for written communication, it provides you with a voice and venue for shepherding God’s people. As such, it is an opportunity that every pastor should consider in our digital age.

Thomas Overmiller shepherds Faith Baptist Church in Corona, New York (StudyGodsWord.com). He blogs and podcasts at ShepherdThoughts.com.





# Deciding Right and Wrong



Your twelve-year-old son wants to know why cheating is wrong. Your neighbor asks why you believe gambling is wrong and asks you for a Bible verse about it. Your daughter will soon graduate from high school and wants to know whether accepting scholarship money from state lottery activities is acceptable. You've noticed that more people at work are getting tattoos, and someone asks you what you think about it. A friend has a transgender grandchild and asks you if the Bible has anything to say about that.

How will you answer these questions from people who want to know what you think and what the Bible says? Add to this mixture the almost infinite availability of videos, books, blogs, and news on the Internet, and Christians wonder how to sort through all of the opinions and beliefs now openly available with the press of a button or swipe of a finger.

Moral conflicts are very common in the Bible. The midwives' refusal to obey Pharaoh (Exod. 1), Rahab's deceiving of the authorities of Jericho (Josh. 2), and government requirements that conflict with God's expectations (Dan. 3, 6; Acts 4:5–20; 5:17–29) are only a few examples.

The first step in deciding difficult problems is very simple: get someone else to make the decision! As appealing as that might seem at times, every generation of Christians confronts the challenges of their culture and time, and the challenges we face today can seem overwhelming. Yet these challenges can motivate Christians to face moral problems with a better understanding of the Bible and an improved ability to explain what the Bible teaches.

## Where Morality Begins

Morality begins with God. Without God, we do not have any consistent basis for determining right and wrong. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools

despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7). "Knowledge" implies we have something to learn, and "wisdom" implies that some actions are better than other actions. "Fools" implies that some people have character defects that interfere with understanding. Proverbs mentions the "fear of the LORD," a reverence and respect for who God is and what He can do, sixteen times.

The fear of the Lord motivates the Christian to saturate his life with God's Word in order to be "conformed to the image of his son" (Rom. 8:29). Therefore, how we *live* should be consistent with who we *are*. How we live and who we are must be derived from the Bible. Any moral and ethical decision must start with the Bible. The following chart illustrates this process.

### Biblical Standards

(what distinguishes us from others)



### Biblical Convictions

(strong beliefs which will not change)



### Biblical Principles

(concise summary of Biblical truths)



### Biblical Doctrine

(what the Bible teaches about any topic)

Sin makes life confusing and complicated. The life Adam and Eve lived before Genesis 3 was far less complicated than the life they lived after Genesis 3. Since the Bible does not directly and specifically address every possible situation, Christians must learn *biblical principles* from intensive Bible study. These principles can help us navigate



through a constantly changing world. Biblical principles create *biblical convictions* from which we establish *biblical standards*. If biblical convictions are based on proper biblical principles and doctrine, then biblical convictions and standards cannot change. The *application* of those principles, convictions, and standards may change as new or different cultural problems develop.

One of the key qualities necessary in this process is wisdom. Since the Bible does not specifically address many modern issues, Christians need wisdom to apply biblical principles to specific issues. Many times the question to ask ourselves is, “What is the wisest action to take?” In order to answer this question, you must be growing in your understanding of the Bible. There is no substitute for personal knowledge of the Bible. More often than not, first-time visitors to our churches do not bring a Bible with them, which reflects the growing unfamiliarity with the Bible among Christians and the wider culture.

The following principles can be helpful when faced with moral questions and conflict.

*All moral laws are based on God’s character.* Leviticus repeats the phrase “I am the LORD your God” as the basis for the moral laws given to Israel (18:2, 4, 5, 6, 21, 30; 19:2, 3, 4, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 25, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37; and many more). Since God’s character does not change, fundamental moral law does not change and is therefore absolute. The first place to begin when navigating our way through the multitude of voices, all claiming to be correct, is with God Himself and what the Bible tells us about God. Practically, this means that a Christian should be immersing his life, heart, and mind in God’s Word to grow in his knowledge of God.

*Circumstances and situation do not determine right and wrong.* Instead, circumstances and situation help you to discover which Biblical teachings apply to your circumstances. Once we understand the particular situation, and once we know what the Bible says, we apply that biblical teaching to the situation. For example, Internet access exposes people to almost every kind of good and evil. YouTube, Vimeo, Amazon, Netflix, and other video websites almost make movie theaters obsolete. Many movies have interesting plots but also have open sexuality and filthy language. Far too many Christians use situational ethics to justify watching inappropriate videos. Instead, once we are aware of the inappropriate content, we follow Biblical principles regardless of personal attraction or what other people believe. For example, Christ taught us to be willing to take drastic steps to guard our thoughts (Matt. 5:27–30). David refused to expose his eyes to what was worthless and evil (Ps. 101:3–4). Paul taught to avoid all forms of evil (1 Thess. 5:21–22; notice this avoiding occurs after a thorough evaluation of evil). Paul also taught that we should saturate our life with what is good (Phil. 4:8).

*How will this affect my relationship with Christ?* This question may be difficult to answer, but it is still worth thinking about. Will involvement with a certain activity promote, threaten, or interfere with my relationship with Christ? Does this activity involve sin or exposure to sin? Paul taught that the purpose of his life was Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:21) and to

please Christ (2 Cor. 5:9). Therefore, any activity that interferes with that relationship must be avoided.

## Additional Considerations

In addition to these basic principles, we should consider some wrong methods that people often use for making decisions. Some wrong methods which people often use are

- Majority opinion: how many people support or oppose something (Exod. 23:2)
- Personal peace: the degree of internal peace (Jer. 17:9; internal peace may be subjective and deceptive)
- Results: if the results are good, then it must be good (Num. 20)
- “Loving thing to do”: an improper, subjective view of love which is basically emotionalism and avoiding bad feelings (John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10)
- Human wisdom: what seems right to me (Prov. 3:5–6; 12:15; 14:12; 16:25; the Book of Judges [everyone doing what is right in his own eyes])
- Personal likes and dislikes: if something appeals to me or if I like it, then it must be right (Gen. 3)

One important factor to remember is that our sin nature permeates everything we do. We can easily deceive ourselves about our motives and our ability to withstand and resist wrong influences. Do you know yourself so well that you are sure of your motives? How do you know that you do not have a hidden, subtle sin motivation for what you read, watch, or do? Our sin natures affect what we like and dislike. For example, we may like a certain musical style because it appeals to our sin nature, and we may dislike something good because it contradicts our sin nature. Therefore, personal peace and personal likes and dislikes are not reliable methods for determining right and wrong.

One fundamental principle to remember is that *your personal character and integrity must be protected*. The Bible tells us to examine everything carefully, hold tightly to what is good, and avoid every form of evil (1 Thess. 5:21–22). Isaiah recorded God’s warnings about the world and its philosophies by using Egypt as the example (Isa. 30). Sometimes Christians allow what is improper into their lives in an attempt to influence people. The Bible does not tell us to “engage” the culture into which the Lord has placed us. Instead, the Bible tells us to give people the gospel and witness to people by challenging the assumptions the culture has given them. The gospel itself will “engage” the culture as people come to know Christ as Savior and as the Lord transforms their lives.

Much more can be said about the complexities of deciding right and wrong in a world where access to what is wrong is very easy. Perhaps this basic introduction can help you begin to think through your own personal life and responsibilities in a world that increasingly makes following Jesus Christ essential.

Dr. Wally Morris has pastored Charity Baptist Church in Huntington, Indiana, for twenty-two years. He is the author of *A Time to Die: A Biblical Look at End-of-Life Issues*, published by Ambassador International, 2014.



# To Blog or Not to Blog

## A Case for Christian Online Proclamation

An Interview with Mark Ward

**FrontLine Magazine:** Mark, thank you for your time in giving us your own personal perspective on blogging. We know you make your living online, especially through your work with Logos software; how long have you been blogging?

**MW:** I've been blogging for almost ten years at (what is now) ByFaithWeUnderstand.com, and I make a living writing twice weekly for a digital Bible-study blog.

**FLM:** How has blogging been received by pastors and church leaders?

**MW:** A few years ago I started to notice how often pastors I respect made negative references to blogging. In fact, some of them made *only* negative references. It pricked my conscience: was I doing wrong to blog? This is what I heard:

"What I'm about to say is just for this room; I don't want anyone going and blogging this."

"We were handling the problem just fine until the bloggers picked it up and splattered it all over the Internet."

"The bloggers are making hay over this rather than addressing the article's author directly as Matthew 18 commands."

"There are so many valuable books out there to read—I don't know why guys want to waste their time with blogs."

I can't say these are verbatim quotations, but I have definitely heard statements like them on numerous occasions and from people of all generations.

**FLM:** Why do you think you got that reaction?

**MW:** Bloggers have a disruptive and gossipy reputation, a reputation which some of them deserve. But not all. And this is what I was told when I asked mentors whether I should stop blogging. They said what I was doing wasn't objectionable (though neither did they say it was worthwhile!).

**FLM:** So, do you think blogging is worthwhile?

**MW:** I'm convinced that blogging is a worthwhile ministry within Christ's body, and that though there's wisdom in the cautions I just quoted, some Christians should blog.

**FLM:** Tell us why you think blogging is good.

**MW:** Blogging is good for certain kinds of theological points and cultural punditry. A good blog post makes one pretty brief point. That point may be split into three sub-points, but the one overall point is generally too short or

too time sensitive for a full magazine article—or it's too narrowly focused on the interests of a given audience. If you're in that audience, that's helpful. I remember reading blog posts on small but significant points of Bible interpretation, posts that helped me get something right that I used to get wrong.

**FLM:** Is that generally what bloggers do?

**MW:** Not all bloggers do quite what I've described. Some are better at linking to good articles or book deals. Others are better at giving good book recommendations or helpful insights from their reading. Others are good at cultural commentary. Others summarize longer articles with their own interspersed analysis and evaluation. Some bloggers write all these kinds of posts.

**FLM:** Do you see summarizing and recommending as an important part of the good impact of a blog?

**MW:** Bloggers are often like fish, swimming around the Internet, slurping up what's good; they are information filters in the vast online ocean. When you find a filter who does a good job of finding stuff that interests you and, further, helps you really process that stuff, you hold onto him or her.

**FLM:** Do you find blogs entertaining?

**MW:** John Frame is right to call moral decision-making three things: (1) a person (2) applying a norm (3) to a situation. And that means I need to give attention not just to (1) my soul and (2) my Bible (though I must certainly "take heed unto" those things!) but to (3) my world. And it's a confusing world. I find longtime Christian literature professor and prolific blogger, Alan Jacobs, helpful in processing the intellectual currents that are battering me. But I also find Doug Wilson's cleverness so entertaining as he cuts to the heart of the gender-bending going on in our culture.

**FLM:** So how many types of blogs are out there?

**MW:** Many types! I need my New Testament Greek nerds, linguistics nerds, culture watchers, fundamentalism-definers, typography buffs, resource recommenders, book-worms, homileticians, free-book theologians, and higher education watchdogs.

**FLM:** There must be a lot with which you disagree.

**MW:** Needless to say, I agree with everything every single one of these bloggers ever says. Okay, maybe not. But over time I've found the writers who help me live faithfully in our times, fulfill my callings, and develop my gifts.

**FLM:** How can the blog medium be bad?



lived by Newton's wise, scriptural advice for fifteen years of public theological writing.

**FLM:** Is there anything we missed?

**MW:** "Blog" is a neat word etymologically; it's the stepchild of a portmanteau. A "weblog" ("web" plus "log," as in "ongoing record") was originally conceived as something of a public diary. And because the "weblog" lives on, I am sure I am the most frequent reader of *By Faith We Understand*. I use my blog to jot out—and therefore work through—my thoughts on various topics, thoughts I'll come back to later for bigger writing projects, for sermons, and for personal correspondence. My blog is a clearing-house for working out ideas. If others find them edifying, then all the better. My five-year-old post on "ESV vs. NASB" gets dozens of hits a week from people Googling assistance on that rather narrow question. I'm very glad to help them. But those thoughts will benefit others even if no one reads them, because they enriched me. In turn, anything I do for my local church or for all of Christ's body is made—I pray—more edifying.

**FLM:** What prompted you to start blogging?

**MW:** I first started thinking about blogging around 2002, my first year in seminary. I knew, however, that I would not want to read a blog written by someone who knew as little as I did. So I waited to actually launch my blog until late December 2007. And I stuck to what I felt I could talk about with some knowledge: mostly nerdy stuff. My initial tag line was "Bible, tech, Bible tech."

**FLM:** Should bloggers stick to subjects in which they have expertise?

**MW:** I have definitely seen bloggers who were foolish enough to try to discuss the controversial topics before they had established a right to be heard—through education and through evident love for God and neighbor. What matters is not merely that you have something to say but that it is truly "good to the use of edifying" others. Blogging often attracts novices, people who really shouldn't be talking on such a public platform lest they puff themselves up and explode.

**FLM:** Is it hard to keep a blog going?

**MW:** Most of the novices, in my experience, either wise up or flame out. The landscape is littered with dead blogs. I tell pastors whose websites I host, "I won't set up a blog for you unless you make me, and I'll shut it down in six months if you haven't posted."

**FLM:** Any last word?

**MW:** You either have blogging in your blood or you don't. But I hope this article has injected blogging into the bloodstream of someone out there who will write us all a good blog.

Mark L. Ward Jr., PhD, serves the church as a Logos Pro at Faithlife, makers of Logos Bible Software. Before that he worked for BJU Press as a Bible materials author for nine years.



**MW:** I don't think everyone is called to read the signs of the times. Keeping up with the latest news can become an unhealthy fascination, a "chronological snobbery" that acts as if no one ever said anything important until the day before yesterday. I'll admit that I regularly conclude, "I need to cut back on blogs and start spending more of my reading time on books." Blog-reading can become a dopamine shot that keeps you floating on the surface of the up-to-date and never diving to the depths of the lastingly valuable.

Blogging has some other downsides. It's a great equalizer, which is great for small Christian college graduates like me who would have few outlets otherwise. (Who would ever have cared what a fundamentalist seminary grad thought about David Brooks' latest *New York Times* column before the Internet gave me a platform?) But it's also great for conspiracy theorists and gossipers and rabble-rousers and irresponsible hacks and pastors who should be pastoring instead and moms who should be "momming." Not everybody should blog. But I'm glad for certain gifted pastors and moms who blog, because I benefit from their work.

**FLM:** Any other concerns?

**MW:** Blogs can and do get gossipy. But in my experience, it's pretty easy to spot and avoid those blogs. They don't attract me anyway. I'm hungry for edification, and I know good meat usually by the first or second chew.

**FLM:** What about Matthew 18?

**MW:** Public statements justify public comment or even rebuttal. If you write an article or post a sermon online and a blogger takes you to task, don't pull out the Matthew card. All the same, bloggers would often be wise trying e-mail before an exposé, especially if they have a personal relationship with the writer.

**FLM:** Would you suggest any resources for a guideline for online disputes?

**MW:** I hereby decree that all Christian bloggers must read John Newton's "Guide to Holy Disputation" before critiquing anyone else online. It's gold. I have by God's grace



# The Protestant Reformation

## 500 Years

On a Wednesday in late October, several weeks into the cool fall season, Catholic monk, theology professor, and pastor Martin Luther, with his thirty-fourth birthday only a few days away, nailed ninety-five theses to the wooden door of the Imperial Church in Wittenberg, the city where Luther taught in the university. The church door was the bulletin board where public notices and other important information were posted for people to see. This particular day was the time for posting theses for debate. And Luther wanted people to see what he was concerned about.

The Ninety-Five Theses were written in Latin, the language of scholars. Luther intended a public debate

concerning his theses, which concerned certain practices of the Catholic Church that Luther believed were wrong. As a pastor, he was concerned that people were being misled by the church. Although the debate did not happen, copies of the Theses were quickly translated, printed, and distributed throughout Europe. Luther became a celebrity almost overnight, and October 31 would now be a day many would remember as the start of the Protestant Reformation.

This year is the five-hundredth anniversary of that day. Five hundred years ago, the Roman Catholic Church dominated and controlled almost all of secular and religious life. The church heavily influenced politics, government, business, and, of course, religion. People depended on the church and its representatives for much of their daily life.

Yet the winds of change had been stirring for many years, and Luther's timing was perfect.

### An Issue of Authority

The fundamental issue of the Protestant Reformation was authority—who or what has the final, authoritative word in Christian doctrine and life. In 1517 the final authority was the pope and the church councils. For several years Luther had slowly begun to question the authority of the pope and the traditional teachings of the church. Luther's job was to teach theology, and his preparation for his classes involved studying the Bible. He lectured on the Psalms (1513–15), Romans (1515–16), Galatians (1516–17), Hebrews (1517–18), and again on the Psalms (1518–21). By simply studying the Bible, Luther began to see how the practices of the Catholic Church and what he was learning in the Bible were not compatible. In 1513 Luther began to learn Greek from one of the other teachers in the university. Luther had also begun to use the printed Greek New Testament which Erasmus published in early 1516. Luther began to see that the Latin Vulgate, the version used by the Catholic Church for centuries, was inaccurate in key areas, such as the meaning of repentance and justification.

Although Luther mentioned the issue of repentance at the beginning of his Ninety-Five Theses, the main purpose of the Theses was an attempt to discuss one practice which bothered him most as a teacher and as a pastor: the sale of indulgences. An indulgence is a grant by the Catholic Church that eliminates some or all of the penalties and consequences for sins in exchange for some good deed or, more commonly, money given to the church. Luther openly questioned the validity of indulgences over a year before he posted the Ninety-Five Theses. Luther was beginning to understand that God's grace could not be bought by good deeds and money. He thought that if the pope had the power to forgive sins and their consequences, then why should the pope wait for money? Could not the pope just forgive sins completely? Additionally, Luther challenged the pope and others in leadership for their lack of pastoral concern for people in the churches and also wondered where the Biblical and historical support was for the supreme authority of the pope.

These questions eventually brought Luther under excommunication from the Catholic Church. Pope Leo X signed the first papal document of excommunication in June 1520. This document offered Luther the opportunity to recant his beliefs, but Luther had decided that he could not accept several major Catholic teachings and therefore did not recant. So in January 1521 the pope signed a second document of excommunication. In April 1521 Luther appeared at the Diet of Worms to defend his writings before the Catholic and political authorities. At this meeting, Luther spoke these famous words:

Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.” (Roland

Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* [New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950], 185)

The earliest printed version of Luther's statement also adds that he said “Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise.”

### Scripture Alone

Over the next twenty-five years Luther and others began to think through, preach, and write about what we call today *sola scriptura*, Scripture alone as the final authority in Christian doctrine and life. A combination of political and social events allowed the teachings of the Reformation to grow and become established in Germany. For example, the growing threat from Islamic military forces against

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and councils, for they  
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other—my conscience  
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Eastern Europe kept the Catholic Church and the political rulers from aggressively confronting Luther and other reformers. After Luther's death, the Catholic Church, with its power upon the political institutions, forced a retreat of Reformation influence but was not able to eliminate that influence completely. Eventually the teachings of the Reformation became accepted, promoted, and established by many in Europe and beyond.

The Protestant Reformation is about the Bible. The battle has always been about the Bible and the role the Bible should have in the church and in the wider society and world. The Protestant Reformation rejected papal authority and the Catholic Magisterium (the group who decides what the Bible means) because they are variations of human authority. Yet many churches today have replaced biblical authority with modern versions of human authority, the reverse of the Protestant Reformation. What Luther and many others struggled and sacrificed for is being rejected today, even by some who claim to be evangelicals.

Continued on page 25



## 2017

### July 31–August 2, 2017

Alaska Regional Fellowship  
Immanuel Baptist Church  
7540 E. Cottrell-Campus Dr.  
Palmer, AK 99645  
907.745.0610  
akbeb.com/akfbf.html

### September 12, 2017

NYC Regional Fellowship  
Hosted by Heritage Baptist Church  
Held at Grace Baptist Church  
798 Hempstead Turnpike  
Franklin Square, NY 11010  
212.947.5316

### September 16, 2017

New England Regional Fellowship  
(Meeting with the New England  
Foundations Conference)  
Heritage Baptist Church  
186 Dover Point Road  
Dover, NH 03820

### September 18–19, 2017

Northern California Regional Fellowship  
Faith Baptist Church of Folsom  
335 E. Bidwell Street  
Folsom, CA 95630  
http://folsom.church/

### September 18–19, 2017

New Mexico Regional Fellowship  
Charity Baptist Church  
5501 Obregon Road NE  
Rio Rancho, NM 87144  
Keith Skaggs, Host Pastor

### October 16–17, 2017

Central Regional Fellowship  
Faith Baptist Church  
1001 S. Scenic Drive  
Manhattan, KS 66503

### October 23–27, 2017

Caribbean Regional Fellowship  
Calvary Baptist Tabernacle  
PO Box 3390  
Carolina, PR 00984

## 2018

### January 29–30, 2018

Rocky Mountain Regional Fellowship  
Westside Baptist Church  
6260 West 4th Street  
Greeley, CO 80634  
970.346.8610  
rockymtnfbfi@hotmail.com

### February 12–13, 2018

FBFI Winter Board Meeting  
Colonial Hills Baptist Church  
8140 Union Chapel Road  
Indianapolis, IN 46240

### April 9–11, 2018

South Regional Fellowship  
Swan Creek Baptist Church  
2501 Swan Creek  
Jonesville, NC 28642

### June 11–13, 2018

98th Annual Fellowship  
Tri-City Baptist Church  
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# SOUND WORDS

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

## First Partaker

### For the Weary and Heavy-Laden

*I*s there anything that you like to read for a devotional tonic when your mind is too tired to focus on anything deeper? Going back as far as my seminary years there has been a warm, cheerful writer whose many books of sermons have been just the thing for me at such times. On both sides of the Atlantic he was one of the most sought-after conference speakers of his day. Pleasant, kind, sympathetic, tinged with just a touch of mysticism, he authored over seventy-five titles, many of which remain in print. You undoubtedly own one or two of them yourself and know his name: F. B. Meyer, Frederick Brotherton Meyer (1847–1929), British, Baptist pastor, Bible teacher, evangelist, and Spirit-filled counselor to many hundreds of other Christian workers, pastors, and missionaries.

I don't recall the first time I read something by Meyer, but I know the first of his books that really helped me. *Saved and Kept: Counsels to Young Believers* (Revell, 1897) encouraged and directed me with a simplicity that was refreshing to a graduate student wrestling with the labyrinth of the Hebrew verb system, inscrutable writers of contemporary liberal theology, and other fairly esoteric subjects. Meyer's *The Secret of Guidance*, *A Castaway*, and *Meet for the Master's Use* all followed, and then at some point I became aware of his delightful studies of Bible characters: Abraham, David, Elijah, John the Baptist, and others. All were characterized by Meyer's flare for fresh spiritual insight into commonplace biblical themes, simple illustrations, and gracious but candid application. Quickening is a word that comes to mind for describing his effect upon me to this day.

Sitting here beside me as I write is W. Y. Fullerton's biography of Meyer. I find from the end paper that I purchased it in 1988 for \$8.50. There's a little card inside on which I jotted page numbers containing anecdotes I thought would make good sermon illustrations. There's one on pages 65–66 that I used many times while teaching undergraduate Bible classes at Bob Jones University.

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

Meyer was eventually a frequent speaker at the Keswick conferences held yearly high up in England's Lake District. But previous to those days, he passed victoriously through a crisis while merely an attendee in 1887.

Before I first spoke on the platform I had my own deeper experience on a memorable night when I left the little town with its dazzling lamps, and climbed the neighboring hill. As I write the summer night is again casting its spell on me. . . . The breath of the mountains leads me to yearn for a fresh intake of God's Spirit. May we not count on the Anointing Spirit to grant us a fresh infilling when we are led to seek it? May we not dare to believe that we have received, even when there is no answering emotion? Do we not receive by faith? These were the questions which a few of us had debated far into the night, at a prayer meeting convened at which a number of men were agonizing for the Spirit.

I was too tired to agonize, so I left that prayer meeting and as I walked I said, "My Father, if there is one soul more than another within the circle of these hills that needs the gift of Pentecost it is I; I want the Holy Spirit but I do not know how to receive Him and I am too weary to think, or feel, or pray intensely."

Then a Voice said to me, "As you took forgiveness from the hand of the dying Christ, take the Holy Ghost from the hand of the living Christ, and reckon that the gift is thine by a faith that is utterly indifferent to the presence or absence of resultant joy. According to thy faith so shall it be unto thee."

So I turned to Christ and said, "Lord, as I breathe in

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this whiff of warm night air, so I breathe into every part of me Thy blessed Spirit."

I felt no hand laid on my head, there was no lambent flame, and there was no rushing from heaven: but by **faith**, without emotion, without excitement, I took, and took for the first time, and I have kept on taking ever since.

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***I felt no hand laid on my head, there was no lambent flame, and there was no rushing from heaven: but by faith, without emotion, without excitement, I took, and took for the first time, and I have kept on taking ever since.***

*Fullerton characterized Meyer's preaching as less theological and didactic . . . more human and sympathetic than other preachers of his day. And that's what has made him a welcome ministry to my fatigued spirit all these years. The portion of a sermon that follows is an example that I trust will meet someone's need today. It's taken from The Call and Challenge of the Unseen, a selection of evening messages delivered in 1925 and 1927 at summer conferences for Christian workers held under the auspices of Missions of Biblical Education in Canada.*

An inheritance was once given to men, an inheritance which stood for three things, harmony with God, harmony between man and man, harmony with the wonderful world of nature in which our home is found amid the myriad orbs of space. But it is a lost, a forfeited inheritance! Paradise has vanished from the earth, like a picture of a landscape in a calm lake, which is suddenly lashed into foam by a hurricane. The twin rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris, flow past what was once its site, but is now a barren waste of sand.

As the literal Eden has vanished, so man's harmony with nature, with himself, and with God has also vanished. The one thing that stands between us and despair, as we look out on the world of today, is the person and work of Jesus Christ. Everything depends on whether our Lord in those distant spaces of heavenly purity and order will stand true to the race with which he is so closely connected, and whether he will succeed. But we can have no doubt whatever! As Boaz claimed Naomi's forfeited estate and made it a valuable addition to his own holding so we may dare to believe that Jesus Christ will never rest till this sin-stained, distracted, and devil-cursed world is restored to her primitive order and beauty! Let each repeat to his or her troubled and anxious heart those words of Naomi, giving them their furthest reference to our great kinsman, Christ! "Sit still! Sit still! Jesus will not be at rest until he has finished the work which the Father has given him to do, and to

which in the eternal council chamber, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, he pledged himself."

He is our near kinsman by his definite choice to descend to the cradle at Bethlehem and become flesh of our flesh. He went so far as to die for our redemption! His bloody sweat and the blood and water of his broken heart have consecrated his union with our race. He need not have died, but might have stepped into heaven from the transfiguration mount. He has carried our nature to heaven, and that is the indissoluble bond between him and us. "Sit still! Sit still! He will make all things new! He will not rest until he has finished the great purpose which he has been steadfastly pursuing from eternal ages!"

**I. Our Prayers.** But there is a personal aspect of the matter, on which we desire to insist. We must calm our anxious, restless, tumultuous souls by resting on Christ in respect to our personal needs. When once we have thoughtfully, deliberately, and prayerfully handed over to him some matter of vital interest, we must dare to believe that he has taken it in hand, and that, though he may keep us waiting, he will not be at rest until he has finished yet. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth us; his mercy endureth forever, and he will not forsake the work of his own hands." There are three levels in prayer, which correspond with the three levels of life; the child, the wrestler in mid-current, and the mature believer.

The first of these is unfolded in the Sermon on the Mount. We ask for things we need. We seek for truth, and right understanding as a man seeks for goodly pearls. We knock for admittance into personal fellowship and communion. All through our life we require these; but they are very characteristic of the child's simplicity.

The second we find in the story of the widow's conflict with the unrighteous judge. She united herself with the authority of his judicial position against the high-handed injustice of her oppressor. Thus did Luther wrestle against the pope, and Wilberforce against the slave dealer. Thus do holy souls contend against the wrongs perpetrated on the helpless.

The third we find often referred to in the closing months of our Lord's life. "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." "He shall have whatsoever he saith." "Believe that ye have received, and ye shall have." "Have faith in God," which as Hudson Taylor was wont to say, is equivalent to "Reckon on God's faith or faithfulness to you!"

These latter quotations clearly indicate that there is something more in prayer than we have been accustomed to think. Prayer is the cooperation of the human spirit with the Divine. As a slight noise will sometimes dislodge an avalanche, so the prayer of faith sets in motion the power of the ascended Christ. Believing prayer supplies the Almighty with the fulcrum on which he rests the lever of his omnipotence. Prayer is the union of the Divine and human, so that, as the human body of our Lord was the channel through which Divine

life power was able to flow, so the prayer of faith opens a fresh channel for the grace and help of God to come to man.

But prayer of this kind has two characteristics. First, we wait for the Holy Spirit to teach us what to pray for. He must make intercession for the saints according to the will of God. We cannot impose our thoughts and wills on God, but must seek for him to impose his upon us. Only thus do we know that we are in the line of his purposes, and that we have our petitions.

Second, we cease to worry. However long the interval, however strong the combination of adverse circumstances, we can sit still with the patience of an unwavering faith, being assured that Christ will not rest until he has finished the thing with which we have entrusted him. The climax of the life of prayer is that sense of fellowship between Christ and us. It is the communion of the Holy Spirit. We reckon on God's faithfulness to so large extent that definite asking is exchanged for quiet waiting.

May the simplicity of the following illustration be forgiven. Years ago we owned a favorite dog. It used to leap up at us when we sat at meals, with a boisterous appeal for remembrance that became troublesome. By strong action on our part we convinced him that this behavior must cease. But then, he was cunning enough to invent a method of appeal which was absolutely irresistible. He would sit under the table and place one little padded forefoot on my knee. That tiny pressure has so often returned to my mind when I have prayed, and come to know that I had obtained the petitions that I had asked. The actual moment of reception might not have arrived, but it was impossible to go on asking. To do so would invalidate the assurance of having obtained one's petition: but the restful attitude of the soul is assured. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." "So the woman (Hannah) went her way and did eat, and was no more sad."

Build your nest high in the mountains of God's faithfulness, above the mists and joys of the lower plains! Get your assurance direct from the lips of the Lord! Then you will have sure anchorage, which will hold though long years intervene! Sit still, yes, sit still!

**II. Our Life Problems.** They are set before us to test us. Each has its purpose! Some muscle or aptitude has to be tested and strengthened by use. It is thus that character is developed and impulses become principles. Our attitude to our fellow men, the distinctions between different forms of recreation and amusement, the choice of companions, the supreme choice of marriage, the principles to be observed in business, the perplexity of determining on our life-course, and, most difficult of all, our behavior toward members of the family-circle with whom we have to live, but with whom we have no sympathy: these are our problems. On these and many similar matters we may consult confidential advisers, but the results disappoint, and we recall Job's verdict on his friends.

From the experience of long life I urge that the best confidant and adviser is Christ Himself. The wisest and safest course is to place the whole case in his hands, asking him to advise and control. "Roll thy way upon the LORD," says the Psalmist, "trust also in him." He is the wonderful Counselor, says the Prophet. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding," says the Book of the Wise; "in all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths." He may suddenly put in your way a sagacious and experienced friend. You may, accidentally as it appears, overhear a conversation in a railway carriage, or come across a paragraph in a newspaper, or meet a friend in the street, and you will recognize that the clue to the maze has been placed in your hand. The extraordinary series of events, which Samuel predicted as way-marks to Saul, will have their counterpart in your experience (see I Samuel 10). But always when these incidents arise, you must wait for their confirmation by the inner witness. The outward incident will often substantiate a growing suspicion or hesitation, which has instinctively arisen in your mind; or a flash of light will illumine the road along which you have been groping your way. "Lo, all these things doth God work, twice, yea, thrice with a man, to bring his soul back from the pit and that he may be enlightened with the light of life." Outward incidents combine with the inner light as the gleam of the lighthouse tallies with the readings of the charts in the captain's room. Christ has definitely promised that they who follow him shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.

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***Build your nest high in the mountains of God's faithfulness, above the mists and joys of the lower plains! Get your assurance direct from the lips of the Lord! Then you will have sure anchorage, which will hold though long years intervene! Sit still, yes, sit still!***

There is an immense realm within us, known as the sub-conscious self. It has been suggested that as much of this is concealed, as seven-eighths of an iceberg are concealed beneath the surface of the ocean. By our surrender to him, our Lord has access to this vast capacity of knowledge, and in these depths can formulate resolutions, decisions and judgments which are absolutely right. When once a decision has been arrived at which is confirmed by some outward incident and the teaching of Scripture, be sure to follow it out though the heavens threaten to fall.

Our vision is often misled by wrecker's lights. Our judgment is apt to be unjust because we seek our own



way and whim instead of the glory of him who has sent us forth. We lay too much stress on expediency and the possible immediate consequences instead of taking the far view. The fruit of our own wisdom is always bitter. Christ permits us to learn by hard experiences that we may be driven back to the guidance of his good Spirit. The future is not ours, but his! We may never have a future, or it may be quite different from what we think. The sea is very wide; the cross-currents very treacherous; our barque very frail. It is best to take the Pilot on board, then the captain may go down from the bridge and rest. Don't worry. Don't anticipate. Don't fear. Don't, like Saul, be precipitate and offer the sacrifice before Samuel arrives. "Sit still, my soul, sit still. Jesus, whom thou hast trusted, will not fail thee. He will not rest until he has finished that which thou hast committed to his care!"


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***Our one act must be to obey. We must keep our souls before him as a still lake. We must throw on him the entire responsibility of opening the way, providing the funds, and inclining our friends to acquiesce. The route, the hour, the companionships, the minding of things behind, the preparing of things before must be absolutely committed to his grace. He must open the way and go in front and bring up the rear. Everything will be deftly and abundantly arranged. All we have to do is follow where he leads, quieting our souls by the refrain, "Sit still, my soul, sit still, for he will not be at rest till he has perfected that to which he has put his hand."***

**III. Our Purposes.** The servants of Christ will often become aware of a purpose steadily forming in their hearts. Paul kneeling in the temple becomes aware that henceforth his life-work must be among the Gentiles. Philip discovers that he must leave the revival which has broken out in Samaria and go to wait on a bit of wilderness-track for a certain purpose which is not further disclosed. Paul arrives at Ephesus just as Apollos

leaves it. Carey is impressed to go to India, Judson to Burma, John Williams to Raratonga, Mary Slessor to Western Africa. Tens of thousands whose biographies have never been printed have felt the urge of the Spirit of Christ and have dared to obey to their everlasting joy.

At first the suggestion arises in the heart like a tiny cloud no bigger than a man's hand which Elijah's servant descried on the horizon of the Mediterranean. At first it is put away as preposterous and out-of-the-question. Then it comes again and again with growing persistence. A voice behind us says, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Then, as it persists, we begin to advance our contrary reasons. We have not the necessary funds. We think that the ties of home and business prevent. We put the suggestion away as needing gifts with which we are not endowed. Like Moses we argue that we have not the necessary gifts of speech; like Jeremiah, we argue that we are as an ignorant child. Perhaps, then, physical illness overtakes us and seems to render obedience impossible. But is the voice of the Good Shepherd, who is calling one of his own sheep by name and putting it forth. The Spirit of Christ is designating another Barnabas and Saul to the work for which he has called them. And when Jesus calls, it is at our infinite loss that we hold back.

Our one act must be to obey. We must keep our souls before him as a still lake. We must throw on him the entire responsibility of opening the way, providing the funds, and inclining our friends to acquiesce. The route, the hour, the companionships, the minding of things behind, the preparing of things before must be absolutely committed to his grace. He must open the way and go in front and bring up the rear. Everything will be deftly and abundantly arranged. All we have to do is follow where he leads, quieting our souls by the refrain, "Sit still, my soul, sit still, for he will not be at rest till he has perfected that to which he has put his hand." 

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Continued from page 6 of Pastor's Insert

This is the grace for which the church at Corinth prayed. They joined with the prayers of the apostolic company for God to grant mercy, endurance, and deliverance. Beholding these graces gave birth to abundant thanksgivings. This brings glory to God and is man's chief end.

God is faithful. *God is for us.* Paul had a growing trust, in his suffering, that God would bring life out of death. This growing expectation prepared the apostle for a pilgrim's best day (his death). As Jesus trusted the Father in His death, Paul trusted. As Paul trusted God at the time of his death, so every believer will be brought to increasing assurances that God is "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25-26). Dying, yet living, is gospel living.

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\* Hafemann, Scott J. *The NIV Application Commentary: 2 Corinthians* (Zondervan, 2000), 62.

# Bring . . . the Books

*The Practice of Godliness* by Jerry Bridges

The many moral failures and weaknesses in our day create the vital need for an encouragement to live godly. There is a lot of talk about growth in the church but very little about growth in our personal lives, especially in the area of holiness. *The Practice of Godliness* by Jerry Bridges is a great help to this vital need. This book is a sequel to his earlier work, *The Pursuit of Holiness*. While *The Pursuit of Holiness* dealt largely with putting off the old man and dealing with the sin in our lives, *The Practice of Godliness* deals with putting on the new self.

Jerry Bridges served the Navigators in a variety of positions before his death in 2016. He was a former officer of the United States Navy. While doing a series of Bible studies on Christian character he became interested in the subject of godliness. He states, “Godliness covers the totality of the Christian life and provides the foundation upon which Christian character is built.”

The first four chapters deal with the general theme of godliness, and the remaining chapters consider important character traits of the godly person. His organization in the remaining chapters is unique in that he deals first of all with our relationship with God in the traits of humility, contentment, thankfulness, and joy. Next he gives us the qualities that will require us to deal with ourselves: holiness, self-control, and faithfulness. The last six qualities enable us to deal graciously and tenderly with others: peace, patience, gentleness, kindness, goodness, and love.

Bridges’ stated goal is to “create an awareness of the importance of each of the aspects of godliness and provide some practical suggestions for growing in them.” When he began to write the book he was surprised that so little had been previously written at that time. This forced him to rely on the Scriptures. His one qualification for writing this book was his thirty years of personal Bible study using methods and tools available to any layman.

The first chapter deals with one of the misconceptions about holiness. It is not just an optional spiritual luxury for a few quaint Christians of a bygone era or some group of super-saints of today. “It is both the privilege and duty of every Christian to pursue godliness, to train himself to be godly, to study diligently the practice of godliness.” He reminds us that God has given us “everything we need for life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). He defines godliness as “devotion to God which results in a life that is pleasing to Him.”

He goes on to describe this devotion to God as having three parts: the fear of God, the love of God, and the desire for God. He uses a triangle to show the


placing of these parts. The fear of God and the love of God form the base while the desire for God is the apex. The fear of God is discussed extensively for seven pages with a great biblical definition and application.

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

There is a tendency for extremes in the practice of godliness. Some would say that you have to just let go and let God do it all. Others will say that it is all about our efforts. Bridges is able to present a balanced approach of all that God will do and what our responsibility is. In covering our responsibility he brings out the need for a consistent commitment to Bible study. In the process we see the great influence of all the work of the Navigators in Scripture memory and meditation.

This is a very practical book. Bridges gives specific activities that will help us grow in our devotion to God—prayer, meditation on the Scriptures, worship, and the quiet time. The ultimate test of our fear of the Lord and the only true response to His love for us is our obedience to His will. According to Bridges, “Godliness consists of two distinct but complementary traits, and the person who wants to train himself to be godly must pursue both with equal vigor. The first trait is God-centeredness, which we call devotion to God; the second is Godlikeness, which we call Christian character.” He then gives six principles of godly character which are the backbone of the book and a great study in themselves for one who is seeking to live a godly life.

While the main part of his list of Christian character traits comes from Galatians 5:22–23, he also uses Colossians 3:12–16, Ephesians 4:2–3 and 32, James 3:17, and 2 Peter 1:5–7. He takes each trait by itself, defines it, develops it, and then challenges the reader to practice it. The introduction to holiness is 89 pages; his treatment of the traits occupies 169 pages. It is essential to fully grasp the Introduction first and then take each trait step by step.

Bridges says that this book should be studied more than read, and I would agree. Each chapter is a challenge that can keep you busy for many days. Bridges urges readers to ask the Lord to lead them to work on individual traits and not try to do them all at the same time. This book has been a daily encouragement to me as I seek to serve my Lord and Savior. 

Dale Seaman has pastored Calvary Baptist Church of Porterville, California, for twenty-five years.

# Straight Cuts

## Gospel Life in the Apostle (and Us)

*For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead (2 Cor. 1:8–9).*

A dangerous thought can come to the minds of believers that the sufferings of Christ come only upon special or extremely dedicated brethren. Another such thought is that Christ suffered so that believers do not have to endure similar afflictions. Both are subtle deceptions that do not reflect the gospel of Christ. Suffering comes to every believer in differing measure. We suffer with Christ so that we may be also glorified together (Rom. 8:16–18). Ours is a union in Christ (Rom. 6:3–6). In His death, we died. In His burial, we were buried. In His resurrection, we have been risen to walk in newness of life (Rom. 7:1–5). In like manner, we endure the sufferings of Christ.

Paul does not merely acknowledge the gospel. *Paul lives the gospel.* The apostle calls the living manifestation of Christ's gospel "my ways" (1 Cor. 4:17), the way of Christ (Phil. 3:10). Paul did not ask for afflictions; they were gifted to him (Phil. 1:29–30). Paul did not glory at suffering but glorified God in his tribulations. "Blessed be God" was Paul's thanksgiving (2 Cor. 1:3). How can Paul endure these afflictions and still abide in the faith? The power and life of the risen Christ are the answer.

The Father's mercies and comfort (lifting of the downcast, granting encouragement, strength, and endurance) bestowed to Paul a thankful assurance of God's commitment and ability to deliver him, even in death (2 Tim. 4:17–18). The Lord does not always remove the trials that cause inner stress, anxiety, pain, crushing pressure, or a depressed heart. He will *always* lift our spirit and grant us courageous strength (2 Cor. 1:5; 12:7–10; 13:4). These merciful comforts arrive in just proportion to our affliction. Paul, in turn, gives the same merciful comfort to the church of Corinth that is being afflicted by false brethren (2 Cor. 11:13). "What God did for Jesus in his suffering, Paul is confident God will do for him, and what God will do for Paul, he will do for all who trust in God."\*

### Gospel Intensity

Paul illustrates gospel living by relating a trial that his apostolic company had encountered in Asia (2 Cor. 4:7–12). They were being delivered unto death in order that the life of Christ would be manifested in their bod-

ies. Of interest is that he does not give the details of the trial but only its *intensity*. This intensity was of such a measure that the company had no expectation of survival. It is described in four aspects. (1) The external and internal nature of the affliction was of an extraordinary degree. (2) The trouble was beyond their ability and strength to endure. (3) Death seemed certain. (4) The reception of the sentence of death was upon them. The situation was, by human evaluation, without hope. Yet it is in these circumstances that believers learn the love, mercy, and care of God. This is the way of Paul and of Christ.

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

### Deliverance and Destruction

There is purpose in our sufferings. The Lord is both building Paul's faith and destroying something internally. *God is destroying his self-confidence.* God is building his God-ward confidence. This is the purpose of the "sentence of death." We should not trust in ourselves. We should trust in the God of all mercy that He possesses the power of life out of death. The Lord delivered Paul. The Lord was delivering Paul. The Lord would deliver Paul in the future. This deliverance builds great faith that glorifies the living God!

We believers, come to know our self-confidences in our response to adverse providences. We are inherently full of fears and insecurities. Our first reaction is to be untrusting and suspicious of God. We then seek deliverance (salvation) and security in this visible life. However, this self-confidence is exactly what the gospel is saving us from (1 Cor. 1:19ff; Jer. 9:23–24). Trust and deliverance should not rest in intellect and education, in human strength and power, or in wealth and materialism. Security and salvation are of the Lord. Believers are to rest in their knowledge and understanding of God and His ways. The Lord is exercising His righteousness, justice, and love toward His Son, toward Paul, and toward every believer. God delights in this sanctifying and saving work in the earth.

### Gospel Thanksgiving

As the Lord destroys our self-confidence, He builds faith in His power to bring life out of death (Rom. 4:17). Belief in resurrection is the foundation of our faith. As the Lord destroys human wisdom, He grants courageous endurance to trust Him. We may feel as if the Lord is destroying us. However, He is destroying what is destroying every believer—human self-reliance and self-trust. None of our afflictions are intended for any believer to seek another human scheme or solution.

Continued on page 4 of Sound Words

Frank Jones has pastored Faith Memorial Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia, since 2001.



She summoned him to her home on the pretense of seeking counsel but then attacked him, threatening his life. The same man became deeply infatuated with a beautiful young woman but was given counsel to end the relationship. Within two weeks of his quitting his pursuit of her, she was married to another. Later in life, this minister exchanged verbal commitments of intention to marry with a woman who soon after suddenly married another man. When a series of relationships of this nature occur in a person's life, that person may be fairly judged to have a problem with discernment regarding the opposite sex. Wisdom and discretion in forming relationships are an important part of a Christian's life and may make all the difference in one's fitness for ministry.

The experiences mentioned above happened in the life of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. His influence on the eighteenth-century revival in Great Britain cannot be overstated. However, Wesley's weakness in relationships with women is a startling example because he was such a powerful and influential preacher and leader. If a man like Wesley struggled with this weakness and acted unwisely, then anyone can suffer from a lack of discernment. Please understand, however, that Wesley is not being charged with immorality in his relationships but with a weakness of quick infatuation that was prone to blindness regarding the character of some women.

### Blinded by Flattery

In October 1635 John and Charles Wesley joined the fifth group of settlers to accompany James Oglethorpe to the Georgia colony in America. John intended to be a missionary to the Native Americans while Charles, freshly ordained a priest in the Church of England, was to be Oglethorpe's secretary. The journey on the *Simmonds* took nearly four months. Mrs. Welch and Mrs. Hawkins and their husbands were among the eighty English colonists on board. These women frequently sought out John and Charles on the pretense of seeking religious instruction and counsel. They were likely only seeking some mischief or amusement. Mrs. Hawkins especially clung to John and expressed to him her desire to take communion. John was taken with excitement about what he saw as a convert. Charles, however, was more discerning and cautioned John about the questionable intentions of Mrs. Hawkins. John was offended at his brother's warning.

Upon their arrival in Georgia, John took up ministry in Savannah while Charles went a hundred miles south with Oglethorpe to Fort Frederica. Oglethorpe was building a village and fort on St. Simon's Island. Charles quickly provoked the colonists by his attempts to press his highly structured religious discipline on the village. Mrs. Welch and Mrs. Hawkins were at Fort Frederica,

and they resented Charles both for his enforcement of religion in the colony and for his suspicions on board the *Simmonds*. They invented and spread a rumor that Charles was going around accusing Oglethorpe of committing adultery with them. Oglethorpe heard the rumor and began to treat Charles harshly. When Charles became ill, John came down and quickly cleared up the falsehoods and effected reconciliation between Charles and Oglethorpe. After only three months at Fort Frederica, Charles left and would never return.

John, feeling the need to fill the vacancy left by Charles at Fort Frederica, made a ministry trip to the fort. While there, Mrs. Hawkins sent word to John that she wanted him to make a pastoral visit. When John arrived at her house, he found Mrs. Hawkins in a state of fury. She vented her anger by attacking John with a pair of scissors and a pistol. John, no doubt, joined Charles at this point in questioning the spiritual sincerity of Mrs. Hawkins.

### Blinded by Youth and Beauty

During John Wesley's time in Savannah, Oglethorpe was convinced that John needed to marry and introduced him to Sophie Hopkey. Sophie was eighteen years old and the prettiest woman in the colony. John was thirty-three. John and Sophie began to spend time together. She attended church services and engaged John as her French tutor. Wesley had daily meetings at the parsonage which she attended. Sophie even altered her manner of dress to conform to what she thought John preferred. At one point the pair spent six days onboard a boat on a journey from Fort Federica to Savannah. Their closeness grew, but the relationship was not without difficulties. John's ministry companions were alert to indications that Sophie was not as genuine as she seemed to John. The intensity of his attraction is revealed in his journal entries from February 1737:

Calling at Mrs. Causton's [Sophie lived with her aunt and uncle], she was there alone. This was indeed an hour of trial. Her words, her eyes, her air, her every motion and gesture, were full of such a softness and sweetness! I know not what might have been the consequence had I then but touched her hand. And how I avoided it I know not. Surely God is over all. . . . After all the company but Miss Sophy was gone, Mr. Delamotte went out and left us alone again. Finding her still the same, my resolution failed. At the end of a very serious

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

*Charles Spurgeon*

conversation, I took her by the hand, and perceiving she was not displeased, I was so utterly disarmed, that that hour I should have engaged myself for life . . . . A moment's reflection when she was gone convinced me that I had done foolishly. And I once more resolved by God's help to be more wary for the future. Accordingly, though I saw her every day the following week, I touched her not.

This episode of unchaperoned courtship and hand-holding may well have changed the history of the world and certainly the history of the revival of the eighteenth century. About these events, Wesley confessed that he was ready to abandon all his ministry plans for this relationship. Sophie was the one true love of Wesley's life when considered in terms of the heart-throbbing passion he felt for her. Providentially, he was delivered from this mistake. In the light of some misgivings about Sophie, Wesley sought counsel from the Moravians at Savannah. The Moravian band had been a great help and source of fellowship for John and his group. After committing himself to follow their counsel, the Moravians advised him to end the relationship completely. Acting on his commitment, but with intense emotional distress, he broke his relationship with Sophie. In a matter of days she was engaged and four days later married Mr. Williamson.

In the months following, Wesley took an opportunity to speak to Sophie and rebuked her for some of her recent behavior. She was very angry and abruptly left him. Asked to put his concerns in writing, John sent her a letter listing her failings. Later he refused to serve her communion. These actions resulted in a civil lawsuit against John drawn up by her husband and her uncle. It was this lawsuit that drove Wesley's sudden departure from the Savannah colony and his return to England.

### **Blinded by Covetousness**

In 1749 John Wesley entered into another relationship, this time with Grace Murray. Grace was a widow, attractive, in her early thirties, and a real worker among the Methodists at Newcastle. The previous year she had nursed John Bennett for about six months through a serious illness. During that time she and Bennett fell in love and decided to marry, but before it could come to pass she met John Wesley. She also nursed Wesley through an illness. Wesley saw what a promising young woman she was and enlisted her to assist him in his ministry. She traveled with Wesley to his meetings and ministries. Affection grew between the two. Grace was conflicted in her commitments, being divided between her promise to Bennett and her growing fondness for Wesley. She continued to correspond with Bennett. When Wesley conceded to Bennett's claim on Grace, she cried out for Wesley. Then she and Bennett submitted to Wesley their request to marry. Wesley was very harsh with Bennett and took Grace with him on a ministry trip to Ireland. It


appears that Wesley used his position and power to override Bennett. In Ireland Wesley and Grace vowed a commitment of marriage. They waited to actually be joined in marriage so that Wesley could inform his brother Charles and the Methodist leaders of his intentions.

Grace Murray had real affection for Wesley, and he for her. She probably would have made him a good wife and ministry companion, but it was not to be. The delay in seeking marriage after the Ireland trip provided time for disruption. First, Grace was still connected to John Bennett. Second, when Charles Wesley learned of John's intention to marry, he was furious and sprang into action. He believed strongly that John as the leader of Methodism should not marry. He also objected to Grace, seeing her as a lower-class person (having once served as a domestic). Charles pressed Grace and John Bennett into marriage. John Wesley was devastated, claiming it was the worst trial of his life. A strong resentment developed between Charles and John. Only George Whitefield's efforts to reconcile the brothers saved Methodism from a split. John missed out on what could have been a great relationship, but a relationship that did not belong to him.

### **Blinded by Disappointment**

Rebounding from his disappointment over Grace Murray, John Wesley did marry on February 18, 1751, to Mrs. Vazeille, a widow with four sons. How this relationship developed is unclear, but John informed Charles on February 2 of his intention and was married before Charles could interfere again. John fell and injured his leg on February 10. He was taken to Mrs. Vazeille's house to recuperate. While John was still unable to walk, they married on February 18. Two weeks later John was off again on one of his ministry tours.

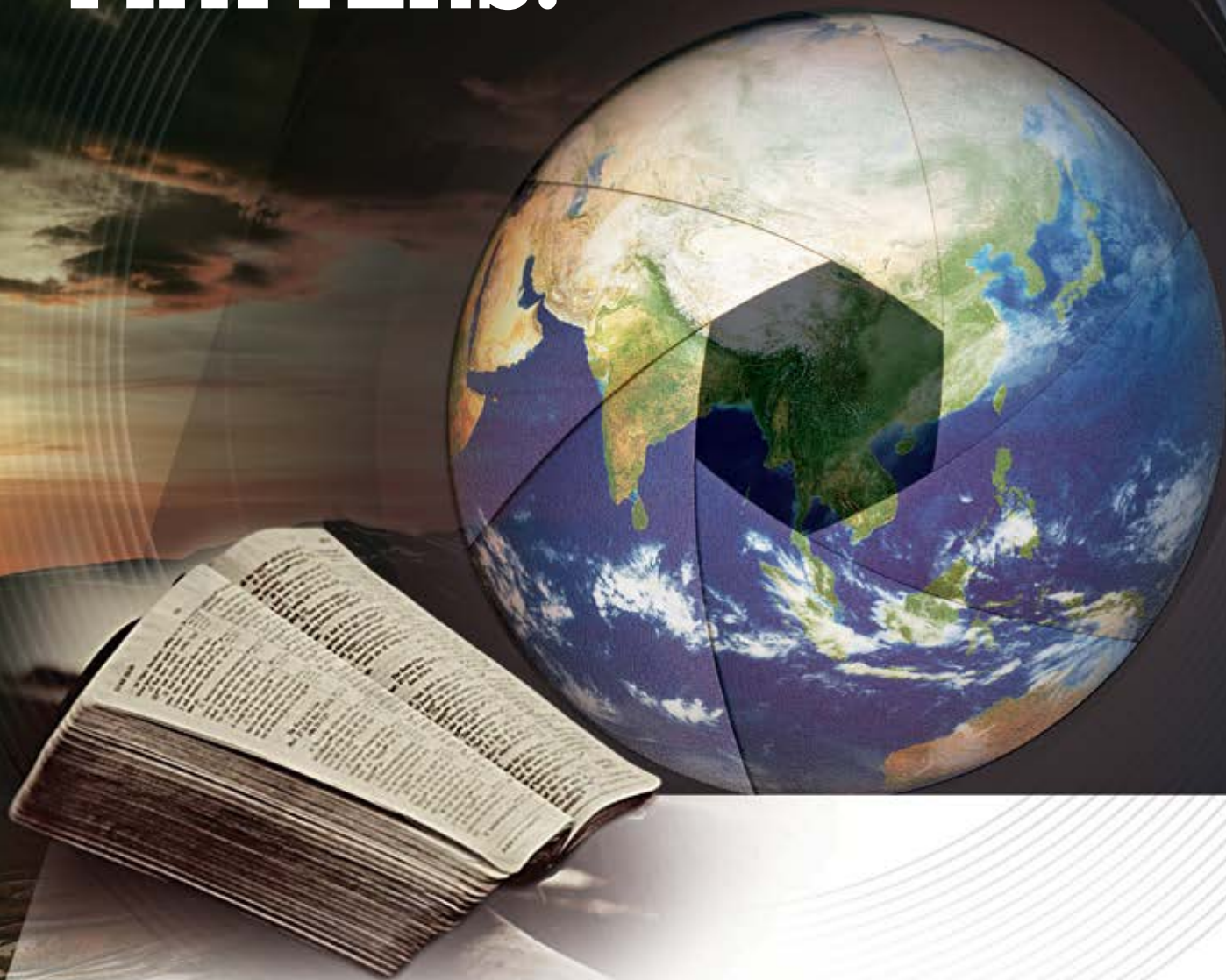
John's marriage was a shock to many in Methodism, and his choice of a wife was questioned by those who knew her. She had no outstanding ministry gifts, and she was an unhappy person. Her unhappiness with John began to show only a few months after the marriage. She attempted to accompany him on his itinerant ministry during the first four years, but she finally declined, being unable to adjust to the rigors of eighteenth-century travel. John's failure to give her the needed attention and devotion was partly responsible for her discontentment, depression, and irrational jealousy. Mrs. Wesley was prone to fits of fury. John Hampton reported entering a room where he found Mrs. Wesley in a rage. John Wesley was on the floor; Mrs. Wesley had been dragging him by his hair, some of which was still in her hand. After twenty years she left John; he did not stop her. She returned to him on brief occasions in later years. Mrs. Wesley spoke ill of John publicly, gave his private correspondence to the press and read them to his society groups. She was an enormous hindrance to John personally and to his ministry as well.

Wisely selected relationships are as beneficial as unwisely chosen relationships are harmful to a godly, peaceful life and ministry. 

Tom Sims founded West Ashley Independent Baptist Church in Charleston, South Carolina, where he has pastored for thirty-seven years, and he loves to lead tours of Charleston's rich church history.

Sources continued on page 36

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He never had a bad day, who had a good night; nor a miserable life who died the death of the righteous.  
—James Meikle

With an orthodox profession, but still holding their old philosophy of naturalism, the Modernists lacked the conviction to proclaim their new message and refill their churches. . . . Many gifted Liberals were able to adapt, but few could sound a positive note; they had spoken too long in the accents of surmise and speculation. —Monroe Parker, on the origins and matrix of New Evangelicalism

In this matter of separation, it is important to recognize the fact that separation from bad things will have no vital influence for God unless we are separated unto someone, and that one is Jesus Christ. —Fred Howard

Preaching, then, is more than teaching; it is more than oratory; it is more than lecturing; it is the declaration of God's grace on the authority of the throne of God, and it demands a verdict. —Charles U. Wagner

The New Testament church is the depository of the Word of God. The church is to glorify Christ by upholding the Word to a gainsaying world. . . . The Word of God is upheld and supported by its profession, proclamation, and practice. —Wendell Zimmerman

A Chicago daily newspaper once editorialized, "We are struck with the hypocrisy and treachery of the attacks on Christianity. This is a free country and a free age and

men can say what they choose about religion, but this is not what we arraign these Divinity professors for. Is there no place to assail Christianity but a Divinity school? Is there no one to write infidel books except professors of Christian Theology? Is a Theological Seminary an appropriate place for a general massacre of Christian doctrines? We are not championing either Christianity or infidelity, but only condemning infidels masquerading as men of God and Christian teachers." —W. E. Dowell

President William Howard Taft went into office by a majority and went out with universal consent.  
—William Jennings Bryan

The quest for power in preaching . . . involves ceaseless vigilance to keep intact within the soul the citadel of faith both in the gospel itself and in preaching as God's supreme method in its proclamation.  
—William Edwin Sangster

What is history, but God's unfolding of Himself.  
—Oliver Cromwell

If you as preachers would speak a bracing, reinforcing word to the need of the age, there must be no place for the disillusioned mood in your own life. Like your Master, you will have meat to eat that the world knows not of; and that spiritual sustenance, in so far as you partake of it daily, will strengthen your powers of resistance to the dangerous infection.  
—James S. Stewart

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

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## Proclaim and Defend on Facebook

Continued from page 9

Facebook allows us to *announce* important events and meetings that will be taking place around the country from our annual fellowship to regional fellowships. It can also be a platform for FBFI members to announce special revivals, missionary conferences, family conferences, or other special events that others can either attend or pray for. We want our FBFI Facebook page to be used as an opportunity for you to inform people of a special need or to ask for special prayer.

### What Can You Do to Help?

FBFI members are prayerfully invited to use our Facebook page for the growth of FBFI and of our Facebook page and for the blessing and benefit of your ministry. The way our FBFI Facebook page can grow is if our members get involved in our page by doing some of the following:

**1. Give Us a "Like."** First, we ask all of our members and friends of FBFI to "like" our Facebook page. This button is located just below the large cover photo at the top of the page. "Liking" our page will exponentially increase the number of people who will see our posts and thus increase interest in FBFI. When you "like" our page, the new posts we make will appear on your friends' newsfeeds so others can read the daily blog of Proclaim & Defend, see pictures of Regional or Annual Fellowships, and read other posts we make.

We also strongly encourage you to invite your friends to "like" our page. This takes just a few moments and can be tremendously helpful to the growth of our page. To do this, locate the link that says, "Invite Friends to Like This Page." When you click on that, all of your friends will come up. You can either search for a specific friend to invite or scroll through all your friends and invite many in just a few minutes. Please invite those in your church or acquaintances who may be interested in our page.

You can also "like" individual posts, articles, or pictures on our FBFI page. When you "like" a specific post, it will

also increase the number of people who can potentially see it.

Every "like" is important, so please "like" our page and individual posts.



**2. Share One of Our Posts.** If you have a church Facebook page and wonder how you can keep it fresh with at least one post each day, you can share the Proclaim & Defend blog from either our FBFI Facebook page or directly from [proclaimanddefend.org](http://proclaimanddefend.org). This will keep your church page on your friends' newsfeeds. The more posts you make, the better chance others will "like" your page and also grow your church Facebook page. So please use the daily posts on the FBFI Facebook page on your church or personal Facebook page to promote the work of the gospel through FBFI. We desire that our page would be a tool to keep your own church page updated with new posts.

**3. Let Us Know What Is Happening.** If you have a special prayer request or special event such as a revival meeting or a family or missionary conference that we can promote as well as pray for, please send your request to Matt Recker at [info@hbcnyc.org](mailto:info@hbcnyc.org). We can announce special events that FBFI members are having and can ask the Lord to work mightily in your church ministry. I believe others will be encouraged to know what is happening in your ministry and to see the blessings of your special meeting.

**4. Write an Article.** You can write an article for our Proclaim & Defend website, and we will then post it to our FBFI Facebook page. You can then post this on your church Facebook page or share it with others. We can use articles you've already written, perhaps from your personal or church blog, your church bulletin, or whatever you've done. Submit your ideas to [editor@proclaimanddefend.org](mailto:editor@proclaimanddefend.org) for consideration. See [proclaimanddefend.org/about-2/](http://proclaimanddefend.org/about-2/) for the link to our writers' guide. We'd love to hear from you.

Matthew Recker is the pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in Manhattan and has established urban churches in New York City. He has authored two books, *Behold the City* (2002) and *Living on the Edge of Eternity* (2007).



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Ironically, five hundred years after Luther's Ninety-Five Theses, many are seeking reconciliation with the Catholic Church. Although the Catholic Church has made cosmetic changes since the 1960s, it has not changed its doctrinal beliefs concerning justification, sacraments, and other important beliefs. Documents such as *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (1994) and the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (1999) are attempts to promote more unity between Protestants and Catholics. During this anniversary year, the Catholic Church and some Protestant denominations are hosting joint commemorations of the Reformation.

The Protestant Reformation teaches believers today many lessons, and one very important lesson is particularly relevant. Only a few months after Luther's death, political and social events worked against the Reformation and its supporters. Political authorities who had supported the Reformation were forced to accept Catholic control. Luther's family faced poverty, and the followers of Luther were divided over doctrinal beliefs and practical issues. For a few years the future of the Reformation looked very bleak. But as the years progressed, the biblical truth that Luther and others had taught spread throughout Europe, Britain, and the New World. No matter how negative and hopeless the spiritual situation appears, the truth of the gospel cannot be stopped. Christ is building His church, and the gates of hell cannot withstand the battle (Matt. 16:18).

Although Martin Luther receives the bulk of the attention during this five-hundredth anniversary year, many other men and women worked to bring a gospel message, free from the restraints and errors of Catholicism, to people all over Europe and beyond. John Hus, John Calvin, Jacob Arminius, William Tyndale, Myles Coverdale, Balthasar Hubmaier, Conrad Grebel, and many others also confronted the political and religious authorities. Hus lived several decades before Luther, taught many of the same doctrines which Luther would later teach, yet was burned at the stake. Hubmaier and other early Anabaptists helped moved the Reformation beyond the beliefs of Luther and others toward a more biblical doctrine and practice, from which today's Baptists benefit. Several of the Reformers would continue to be influenced by Catholic teaching in some areas, and some of the Reformers persecuted other Reformers with whom they disagreed. Yet we should understand and appreciate the significant steps they made away from Catholicism.

Many people today ask, "Is the Reformation over? Hasn't the Catholic Church changed enough and haven't social problems become serious enough that Protestants and Catholics can now forget our differences and work toward unity?" The answer to both questions is "no." With the passage of five hundred years, the Catholic Church still officially holds to the same fundamental beliefs that caused the Reformation to begin. Baptists should focus on bringing the gospel to all people, includ-

ing Roman Catholics, many of whom (including priests and nuns) have never read very much of the Bible at all. The primary reason for the Reformation, the authority and supremacy of God's Word, is still the issue today.

Baptists have debated for decades about our origins and history. Regardless of how, when, and where Baptists originated, we owe gratitude to those who sacrificed and struggled to bring the truth of the gospel to all people and who resisted entrenched political and religious powers for the gospel of Jesus Christ. During this five-hundredth anniversary year, their sacrifice is worth remembering and following.

Wally Morris is pastor of Charity Baptist Church in Huntington, Indiana. He is a graduate of University of Georgia in political science and received his MDiv and DMin from Bob Jones University. He has been married thirty-nine years and is the author of *A Time to Die: A Biblical Look at End-of-Life Issues*.

## Reformation Resources

*The Annotated Luther* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), 2015–17, various editors. A six-volume series focusing on Luther's major writings, with helpful background and comments.

Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press), 1950. The classic biography of Luther.

Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, tr. James L. Schaaf, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), 1985–93. Thorough multivolume biography.

Christopher Catherwood, *Five Leading Reformers* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications), 2000. Brief summaries of Luther, Cranmer, Calvin, Knox, and Zwingli. (Catherwood is the grandson of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones.)

William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans), 1975. A well-written review of early Anabaptist history, beliefs, and personalities.

Diana Kleyn and Joel Beeke, *Reformation Heroes* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books), 2009. Brief chapters on many influential men and women of the Reformation.

James Reston Jr., *Luther's Fortress* (New York: Basic Books), 2015. Very readable biography of Luther by the son of the famous journalist.

# Regional Fellowships

## Pacific Rim

John C. Vaughn

On May 23–25, 2017, the seventh Pacific Rim FBFI Fellowship was held in Cebu, Philippines. It was hosted by Pastor Rogelio Baladjay and the Bible Baptist Fellowship Church in Mandaue City. Speakers from the United States, the Philippines, Japan, and elsewhere presented soul-stirring messages, and children's and adult choirs provided beautiful, edifying special music. (A favorite was the children's ukulele choir!) Ladies' speakers included Beneth Jones and Becky Vaughn. Dr. Phil Kamibayashiyama invited the attendees to join the Bob Jones Memorial Bible College for the next fellowship to be held in Manila in 2019. Large numbers of pastors, missionaries, and many others expressed their deep appreciation for the meeting in Cebu.

## Annual Meeting

Don Johnson

"The New Testament Baptist Fellowship is not an organization, it is an event," said Dr. John Vaughn, outgoing president of the Foundations Baptist Fellowship International. (Dr. Vaughn announced in February his decision to step down as FBFI president. His ministry is taking a new focus after many years as the face of FBFI, but he will continue to serve on the board. We are very grateful for the leadership he has provided.) Together with the New Testament Association of Independent Baptist Churches, FBFI held a joint Annual Meeting at Maranatha Baptist University in Watertown, Wisconsin. It was an eventful event indeed.

For FBFI the opening day included our board meeting, where we appointed Dr. Kevin Schaal, pastor of Northwest Valley Baptist Church, Glendale, Arizona, as our new president. Kevin has been chairman of our board for a number of years. Dr. David Shumate, director of MGM International in Phoenix, Arizona, who has been secretary, will replace Dr. Schaal as chairman.

Dr. Vaughn was awarded the Torch Bearer Award from the leadership and membership in appreciation of twenty years of faithful service to FBFI as executive director, president, chaplain endorser, *FrontLine* editor, counselor, sacrificial leader, encourager, and friend. The chaplains expressed their love and appreciation to him by giving him a beautiful shadow box and a signed wooden American flag—as well as an emotional farewell salute.

We were blessed by the gracious hospitality of both MBU and Calvary Baptist Church and the messages. You can watch the evening services replayed at Calvary Baptist's Livestream site (see [cbcs.org/resources/livestream-services](http://cbcs.org/resources/livestream-services); look for services marked NTBF). Audio is available on [proclaimand-defend.org](http://proclaimand-defend.org).

We were blessed by fine messages from Mark Poorman of Woodcrest Baptist Church,





Minneapolis, Minnesota; John Monroe, pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Taylors, South Carolina; Mike Sproul of Tri-City Baptist Church in Chandler, Arizona; Bud Steadman of Baptist World Mission; and Bob Loggans of Calvary Baptist Church in Watertown, Wisconsin.

During the practical workshop sessions, the ladies heard from Miriam Marriott and Claudia Barba. Dave Barba and Jeff Musgrave

offered practical evangelistic advice for all.

Mike Sproul reminded us that our conference next year (June 11-13, 2018) is scheduled for his church in Chandler, Arizona. You should start thinking about attending now.

The week was a blessing, with good fellowship, renewal of friendships, and the making of new ones. You really should come to Arizona next year!



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# The Jehoshaphat Principles

## Lessons from the Life of Jehoshaphat, Part 2

The life and accomplishments of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, are recorded in 1 Kings 15 through 2 Kings 8 and in 2 Chronicles 17–21. The history of Judah was profoundly impacted by his godly life and reign. One seemingly small but tragic error assumed unanticipated proportions in the final outcome of his reign—he allied himself with wicked King Ahab through the marriage of his son to Ahab’s daughter (2 Chron. 18:1). The biblical injunctions concerning the matter of separation from evil and its many dynamics make a critical difference from a historical perspective.

There are several important lessons that become evident from the life of Jehoshaphat.

1. You do not have to be a wicked man to do untold, immeasurable damage to the cause of Christ. You can be a godly, sincere, doctrinally correct revivalist and still set a disaster in motion.
2. Everyone’s ministry is multigenerational; therefore, every present course of action will have enduring consequences on many generations to come.
3. Sowing and reaping always take place in a framework of time.
  - The production of fruit is a long, slow process. The present may be a very faulty indicator of that which is yet to come.
  - That which is sown will become magnified and multiplied many times over. Something seemingly insignificant can ultimately have enormous consequences.
4. History many times tells an entirely different story than the contemporary account. Outward appearances in the present can be very deceiving.
5. Discernment is the ability to see the long-term consequences of a present course of action.
6. Alliances, associations, and companions are always a critical factor in our ultimate destiny. The prophet did not reprove Jehoshaphat for doctrinal matters but for a moral failure in the matter of making common cause with the wicked—a failure in the matter of separation from evil.
7. Alliances always give birth to accommodations that can and do lead to dangerous commitments.
8. Jehoshaphat’s alliance with Ahab, though well intentioned, was described by the prophet as “[helping] the ungodly and [loving] them that hate the LORD,” and as that which brought the wrath of God

upon him. God’s ways are never a matter of indifference to Him!

9. The ultimate outcome is always determined by the principles that govern the immediate course of action, not by our intentions—however noble they may be.

10. The long-term consequences of a man’s life and ministry are not ultimately determined by “what a man teaches but by what a man tolerates” (Dr. Les Ollila). Great Bible teachers can and do create spiritual disasters for the generations that follow them.

11. God is the only One qualified to define for me who is and who is not wicked. Wicked men can be very nice men. The seeds of destruction are sown without exception when godly men are yoked together with wicked men in spiritual enterprise.

12. Ahab’s greatest wickedness was in the spiritual realm. False gospels and false doctrines are never a matter of indifference with God. They are a direct assault on His character and His truth, and they are wicked. The Kingdom of Judah never fully recovered from the tragic results of Jehoshaphat’s failure to separate himself from wicked Ahab.

13. Going into apostasy and idolatry is very easily and quickly done. Recovering from apostasy and idolatry is almost impossible.

14. Carelessness by one generation can produce untold damage on many generations to follow.

15. Those who insist on peace at any price will ultimately lose everything.

Fundamentalism is about guarding and laying the right foundation for the future. Without right principles guiding and controlling the present activities and actions of our lives and ministries, the blessings of the future will always be sacrificed. Dr. Bob Jones Sr. wisely observed, “It is always wrong to sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate.” This is exactly that which King Jehoshaphat did. And the Kingdom of Judah suffered the tragic consequences for the rest of its duration.

May the dear Lord give us the grace to so conduct our ministries in accordance with the principles of His Word so that generations to come will inherit from us the blessing and power of God undiluted and uncompromised.

Dr. David C. Innes has served as senior pastor of Hamilton Square Baptist Church in San Francisco, California, since January of 1977.



## "Fact Sheet"

Harvard University has made another attempt to normalize depravity with the publication of a document whose thesis is that "sex assigned at birth and gender identity are not necessarily the same." In fact, the pamphlet draws distinctions between sex assigned at birth, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, and how one is perceived in daily life.

Citing a study by the organization Intersex International, it claims that two percent of the population is born with "conflicting characteristics." "For many," they write, "identity, and self-understanding can change from day to day."

The document also goes on to highlight the violence that many gender-confused people face.

Read more at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/harvard-university-lgbt-fact-sheet-claims-gender-can-change-from-day-to-day-181401/>.

## Religious Liberty Means Intolerance

In a September 2016 report, the Federal Civil Rights Commission issued a stunning opinion:

The phrases "religious liberty" and "religious freedom" will stand for nothing except hypocrisy so long as they remain code words for discrimination, intolerance, racism, sexism, homophobia, Christian supremacy or any form of intolerance.

Following in the pattern of Mao and Stalin, Martin Castro, chairman of the US Commission on Civil Rights, accused lovers of religious freedom of speaking some depraved code. This is perhaps a shining example of calling evil good and good evil. Religious freedom is a cornerstone of our republic. Bureaucrats should not be permitted to redefine language. By assigning a twisted definition of what we hold dear, Mr. Castro demonizes our position and marginalizes our good.

Read more at <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/09/us-commission-civil-rights-religious-liberty-report/499874/>.

## Concerning the Unaffiliated

New numbers are being discussed by the Public Religion Research Institute concerning the religiously unaffiliated. Millennials are the highest percentage of unaffiliated at thirty-nine percent. Twenty-nine percent of people ages 30–49 are unaffiliated as are seventeen percent of those ages 50 to 64 and thirteen percent of those over the age of 65.

The largest reason (sixty percent) given for people leaving their childhood faith is that they no longer believe what their church taught. Thirty-two percent indicate that their family was only marginally religious in the first place. Twenty-nine percent indicate that the church's negative teaching concerning gays and lesbians is their

reason for breaking affiliation with the religion of their youth.

The unaffiliated have been divided into three categories: (1) Rejectionists (fifty-eight percent), who believe that religion is not personally important and is more damaging than good to others; (2) atheist (twenty-two percent), who believe that religion is not personally important but is generally beneficial, at least to others; and (3) unattached believers (eighteen percent), who believe that religion is personally important and is generally beneficial both for themselves as well as others.

Pew Research conducted a similar study in 2014. The numbers of unaffiliated have grown an additional two percent since then.

Read more at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/4-in-10-millennials-religiously-unaffiliated-39-percent-left-church-over-teachings-homosexuality-survey-finds-169986/>.

## Australia Census

The results of the 2016 Australia census have recently been released. Societal and cultural changes are noteworthy. A little more than one in four Australians have been born elsewhere. England continues to be the largest external country of origin, but the numbers of people from Asia (Philippines, China, and India) have shown a dramatic rise.

Since 1966 the numbers of Australians that have self-identified as Christians has dropped from 88.2 percent to 52.1 percent.

Roman Catholics claim the highest percentage of the religious at 22.6 percent, followed by Anglicans at 13.3 percent. The other groups followed as "none stated" (9.6 percent), the Uniting Church (3.7 percent), Muslim (2.6 percent), Buddhist (2.4 percent), Hindu (1.9 percent), Other (0.8 percent), Sikh (0.5 percent), and Jewish (0.4 percent)."

Nearly 30 percent of Australians claim no religion (compared to 21 percent in the US and 48.5 percent of the UK). All this has taken place as population growth has expanded in Australia. The number of the lost is staggering.

Read more at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/australia-census-one-third-identify-no-religion-christians-drop-36-percent-189925/>.

## Religious Morality in the UK

Moral opinions and trends in the UK continue to decline among the religious. According to a recent survey, seventy-three percent of Anglicans have no moral reservations regarding sex before marriage. Catholics surveyed revealed that seventy-six percent approve of sex before marriage. Back in 2012 this survey revealed that fifty-four percent of Anglicans approved of premarital sex. The large shift in thinking is shocking!

Regarding same-sex relationships, Anglicans approve of them by a margin of fifty-five percent and Catholics by sixty-two percent. Atheists approve

by a percentage of seventy-five percent. Sixty-seven percent of Anglicans approve of “a mother being allowed to abort her child if she does not want it.” In spite of a strong anti-abortion stance by the papacy, sixty-one percent of UK Catholics approve of it.

Over sixty percent of those who consider themselves religious also approve of some form of euthanasia.

The study points to the passing on of older church matriarchs as a possible reason there has been such a dramatic shift of the moral reasoning of UK’s religious community.

Read more at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/most-anglicans-in-uk-see-nothing-wrong-with-premarital-sex-gay-relationships-despite-church-doctrine-189941/print.html>.

### Forced Conversions?

Seventy-two children were detained by Indian authorities—some for as many as twenty-five days. Six Christians were charged with kidnapping and attempted forced conversion.

This drama began when seventy-two church children went to a Vacation Bible School camp in the Madhya Pradesh state, India. All the children had been granted parental permission to attend camp. Authorities, however, considered the children to be Hindu children because their parents did not convert correctly. All the parents had converted from Hinduism to Christianity but did not fill out the appropriate forms.

One fifteen-year-old boy was sent to a juvenile detention center. He insisted that he was a Christian and that he was born to Christian parents. Hartesh Singh Gundia, the boy’s father, placed the blame on Hindu extremist

## NOTABLE QUOTES

**S**alvation would be a sadly incomplete affair, if it did not deal with the whole part of our ruined estate. We want to be purified as well as pardoned. Justification without sanctification would be no salvation at all. It would call the leper clean, and leave him to die of his disease; it would forgive the rebel, and allow the rebel to remain an enemy of his King. It would remove the consequence but overlook the cause, and would leave an endless and hopeless task before us. It would stop the stream for a time, but leave an open fountain of defilement which would sooner or later break forth with increased power.

—C. H. Spurgeon

**H**umility is the ability to see ourselves as God describes us.—Henry Jacobsen

**C**haracter cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experiences of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved.—Helen Keller

**F**or my part I am persuaded the more light we have, the more we see our own sinfulness: the nearer we get to heaven, the more we are clothed with humility.—J. C. Ryle

**S**orrows will, if we let them, blow us to His breast, as a strong wind might sweep a man into some refuge. I am sure that there are many who can attest that they were brought nearer to God by some short, sharp sorrow than by long days of prosperity. Take care that you do not waste your sorrows: that you do not let the precious gifts of disappointment, pain, loss, loneliness, or similar afflictions that come into your daily life, mar you instead of mending you. See that they send you nearer to God, and not further from Him.—Alexander Maclaren

**M**any pray with their lips for that which their hearts have no desire.—Jonathan Edwards

**T**he greatest thing anyone can do for God and for man is to pray. You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.—S. D. Gordon

groups for putting pressure on civil authorities.

A lawyer for the families indicated that all the parents have signed an affidavit affirming that all seventy-two children were born to Christian families and that all the VBS volunteers came from their churches.

Read more at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/6-christians-charged-forced-conversions-taking-72-children-vacation-bible-school-189757/print.html>.

### Hate Policy

Twitter has denied advertising to a pro-life group, citing its hate and sensitivity policy. A pro-life group, Live Action, has had their tweets flagged by the company, and Twitter will not accept advertising from them.

Live Action presented three potential ads; one showing an ultrasound image, one fact-checking Planned Parenthood, and a third discussing the beauty of prenatal life. “Twitter,” according to the article, “particularly took issue with a proposed ad that showed a photo of a baby in the womb with text that read: ‘I Am Not a Potential Human’ at the top and ‘I Am a Human With Potential’ at the bottom.”

Planned Parenthood has not had any difficulty with their advertising, but the Susan B. Anthony List, a political action committee that works to get pro-life women elected to Congress, has not been permitted any advertising space with the media outlet.

Read more at [http://www.christianpost.com/news/twitter-censors-ads-showing-unborn-babies-citing-hate-policy-lila-rose-190144/?utm\\_source=newsletter](http://www.christianpost.com/news/twitter-censors-ads-showing-unborn-babies-citing-hate-policy-lila-rose-190144/?utm_source=newsletter).

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

Compiled by Robert Conduct, FBFI Executive Board member and pastor of Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church, Baldwin, Maryland.



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# ON LANGUAGE & SCRIPTURE

There are always people who are smarter than you and me. Or than you and me . . . am? Oh, those smart people make me so nervous, make me mind my grammatical p's and q's!

But there are also always some people whose SAT score is below 200, or who never won a spelling bee like me (did). Hookt on Fonics never werkt 4 them. These are the people who write articles entitled "Armenianism and the Five Tenants of Calvinism." Or they publish books—*publish* books—that begin with a "Forward." Ack!

The correct words are, of course, "Foreword," "Arminianism," and "Tenets." But you can see why their respective malapropist/misspelled versions are appealing. I guess. If you're one of *those* people.

No, no wait. . . . I'm lapsing into a supercilious linguistic attitude up with which you should not put. People who are saved by grace should thereby be inoculated against every kind of pride, even word-nerd pride. (And, just to be clear, I was joking when I talked about "*those* people.")

How should Christians, who are told to consider others to be more significant than themselves, respond to orthographic failures? Not to trivialize the question, but How Would Jesus Grammar?

It's a short column, so here are just two points. (1) Think about 1 Corinthians 1 and the kinds of people Paul said God calls. Not many are wise, not many are noble, not many powerful. It's not an accident that so few Ivy Leaguers are regenerated Christians. One of the ways God makes foolish the wisdom of the world is by saving poor spellers and, sometimes, doing so at an age after which their spelling is unlikely to improve. One of the most gifted and earnestly Christian educators I know is dyslexic and can't spell her way out of an Armenian.

(2) But there's a flip side to point 1. The same God who calls a lot of dunces from the back of the class also calls us to subdue the earth and have dominion over it (Gen. 1:26–28). And this task unavoidably requires language, particularly the use of language to persuade and instruct and manage and encourage and inspire other people. Some Christians, such as Paul himself, *are* called out of nobility and wisdom and great education—and into it. The very Paul who insisted he didn't trust to rhetoric but to God's power was a great user of rhetoric. Christian education is a noble task that should comb the linguistic kinks out of our heads as much as possible, because the greatest message on earth is worthy of the best English.



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# The Progress of Doctrine in

*Note: The content of this column is highly condensed from T. D. Bernard's nineteenth-century classic, The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament. For the sake of readability, the following excerpts do not mark ellipses.*

## LECTURE IV: THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES (Part 1)

With [the words of Luke's prologue (Acts 1:1–4)] we enter on a new stage of history and of doctrine; they are words which connect it with the past, throwing back our thoughts on "the former treatise of all that Jesus began both to do and teach." Thus the history which follows is *linked* to the past; and the founding of the Church in the earth is presented as one continuous work, begun by the Lord in person, and perfected by the same Lord through the ministry of men. "The former treatise" (Luke's Gospel) delivered to us, not all that Jesus did and taught, but "all that Jesus *began* both to do and teach, *until* the day when he was taken up." The following writings (Luke's Acts) profess to give us that which Jesus *continued* to do and teach *after* the day in which he was taken up. There are then two points which claim our attention as we enter on the second stage of New Testament doctrine. One is that *the authority is continued*; the other is that *the method is changed*.

### 1. Evidences That the Authority of Doctrine in Acts Is the Same

**1.1. Acts is a record of the personal action of Christ in the advancement of his gospel and the formation of his church.** The doctrinal writings of the Apostles are prefaced by the book of Acts. The function of this book in the scheme of Scripture is of high importance. [Christ departs,] and they are left to their work. Yet they do not begin it till the promised Spirit is come. Acts 1:24 shows their own assurance that he who directed them [before] intends to direct them still. But soon the promised gift is bestowed, and the dispensation of the Spirit has begun. What in their view is the dispensation of the Spirit? It is the agency and gift of Jesus (2:33). This view of the operation of the Spirit, as the medium through which the Lord Jesus wrought and taught, is carried through the whole course of the history which follows. On critical occasions the hand of the Master is made distinctly visible (7:56; 8:26; 9:4–6, 10–15; 10:13–15; 18:9–10; 22:17–21; 23:11). His Apostles act not only on his past commission, but under his present direction. The ship rushes on its way, shunning the breakers, dashing through the billows, certain of its track. The crew work it, but do not guide it. We can see the strong movements of the helm, and

from time to time discern a firm hand which holds it. No chances, no winds or currents, bear it along at their will, but he who has launched it guides it, and he knows the course which it takes.

The divine direction exhibited in the book of the Acts is the direction of a course of *action* rather than a course of *teaching*. Yet in the apostolic period these two kinds of progress co-exist; and the outward divine direction of the one is offered as surety for the inward divine direction of the other. The things which Jesus *continued to do* in the acts of his Apostles is the pledge that in their *doctrine* also it was he who continued to teach. *If the introductory historical book manifests the direction of the Lord in the acts of these men, then in the subsequent doctrinal books we must own his direction in their teaching.*

The facts recorded in the book of Acts are not only a pledge of the divine authority of the doctrine in the Epistles, but are also the *means* through which that doctrine was perfected. Questions arose which compelled decision, new applications of truth, issues to be settled. Under these circumstances, a divine guidance of events was a means for the divine guidance of doctrine. We pass from Acts to the Epistles with the fullest assurance that the doctrine which they contain is given by the Lord Jesus. Is *the voice of Paul* speaking in the Scriptures to be taken by the Church as *the voice of Jesus*? This question has been answered by the history in the Acts.

**1.2. Acts is a record of the normal, habitual guidance of the Apostles by Christ through the indwelling Holy Spirit.** The guidance of the Apostles by their Lord was not merely occasional but habitual, through the Holy Ghost dwelling in them. The Day of Pentecost is the opening of the second period of the New Testament dispensation. New apprehensions of truth now burst in a moment on their minds, and from that moment continued to grow more distinct and more extended before their now enlightened eye. God at that time not only stirred but also taught the hearts of his faithful people, and sent to them not only the warmth but "the light" of his Holy Spirit.

From the moment when they saw their Lord ascend, they were in full possession of all the external facts of which they were appointed to bear witness. But they were not in possession of the spiritual meaning, relations, and consequences of those facts, and therefore the hour of their testimony was not come, and the interval was passed not in preaching but in prayer. As soon as the promise is fulfilled they lift up their voice and speak. Never were men so

# the New Testament, Part 3

changed. We pass into the second stage of New Testament teaching with adequate assurances that he who before taught us on earth now teaches us from heaven, and that we still “hear *him* and are taught by *him*.”

## 2. Reasons That the Method of Doctrine in Acts Has Changed

**2.1. The change in method was necessary because Christ was now in heaven.** It may be said that the change was simply a matter of necessity, because he who had spoken with his lips was now to be received up into glory, and could no longer talk with his servants on earth. But the change was also expedient: “it is good for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you” (Jn. 16:7). The change then takes place as an *advantage*. For them a stage of revelation has come which demands a method of teaching more penetrating and internal.

**2.2. The change in method was superior because it was internal.** “He dwelleth *with* you, and shall be *in* you.” Here are two methods of New Testament teaching; and it is clear as day that the second is an advance upon the first. In the one, the teaching power is separated from and external to the mind which is being taught; in the other, it is interfused and commingled with it. The teaching power has thus changed its method, in order to meet the exigencies of a more difficult stage of instruction.

**2.3. The change in method was appropriate because the facts of the gospel were finished when Jesus was glorified.** The time is come for the full interpretation of the facts. The same clear view of the way of salvation and of the unsearchable riches of Christ which gladdened the soul of St. Paul, might gladden the soul of one who heard his words, and may now gladden the soul of one who reads them. For both there is the same Spirit and the same testimony; but the Spirit is given to the one that he may originate that testimony, and to the other that he may receive it. For you, for me, (thank God!) the teaching of the Spirit remains. And many an obscure and lowly brother in the streets around us can say for himself, as truly as St. Paul could say, “I have received the Spirit that is of God, that I may know the things which are freely given to me of God.” But one who thus speaks can know that his convictions are really the teaching of the Spirit of God only by acknowledging that the things which those appointed teachers wrote to us are “the commandments of the Lord”; for the gift of the Holy Ghost to others is not a gift whereby they

originate the knowledge of new truths, but a gift whereby they recognize and apprehend the old unchanging mystery, still receiving afresh the one revelation of Christ, the faith once delivered to the saints. This is the gift, the only gift, which we desire for our Church and for ourselves; for it is one which makes the written word a living word, which fills a Church with joy, and seals a soul for glory.

## LECTURE V: THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES (Part 2)

It is not the function of a historical record to work out expositions of doctrine, but such a book may be expected to present *the general character* which the doctrine bore, and *the agencies and the stages* by which it was matured. This is precisely what is done in the book of Acts. It is the purpose of the book to do it, a purpose which ought to be more fully recognized than it is. When we look at it in its place in Scripture, observe its function there, and its relation to the books which follow, we see most clearly the definite purpose with which it [presents] that particular line of historical fact which involves the progress of doctrine.

It may be said that this is claiming too much; that whatever amount of design may be attributed to the author, we cannot ascribe to him the prophetic purpose of fitting his book to its present place in Scripture. No, not to him; but the Church has ever held that another Mind presided over what was written in these pages, a Mind which purposed that we should have a Bible and which, guiding the production of its component parts, has made it what it is. I speak in accordance with this view of Scripture when I ask, *What role does the book of Acts fulfill in the progress of doctrine in the New Testament?*

## 1. The General Character of the Apostolic Doctrine in Acts

**1.1. They preached the doctrine of Christ’s Person.** “They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus the Christ” (5:42). Similar expressions continually recur (8:5, 35; 9:20; 11:20; 17:18). No such announcements as these are heard in the Gospels. The preaching there is not of the person but of *the kingdom*. The change in the key-note of the preaching is significant. In Acts the two expressions are sometimes united (8:12; 28:23, 31). The two expressions are combined in the final summary (28:23, 31) to show that the preaching of the kingdom and the preaching of Christ are one. In the conjunction of these words the progress of doctrine appears. The manifestation of Christ being finished, the kingdom is already begun. Those who receive *him* enter into *it*.



**1.2. They preached the doctrine of Christ's Work.** But what was this preaching of Christ? The Christ who was now proclaimed was one who had died and risen again, and whom the heavens had received till the time of the restitution of all things. It was the "Prince of life" who had risen from the dead, the "King of glory" who had passed into the heavens, [who alone is able to grant] the forgiveness of sins (2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38–39). Such is the burden of the apostolic preaching, as exhibited in the rapid sketches and brief summaries given in this book. It is a doctrine of "redemption by his blood, even the forgiveness of sins," conveying, through the simple act of faith, a present cleansing to the conscience, as the necessary qualification for the glory which is to follow. Thus does the preaching of the Apostles sum up the result of all that the Gospels have disclosed, by the direct preaching of Jesus to men's souls.

## 2. The Historical Development of the Apostolic Doctrine in Acts

**2.1. Acts forms a crucial historical-theological bridge from the Gospels to the Epistles.** Acts carries us straight from the Gospels to the Epistles, as the span of some great bridge. Take it away and what a chasm appears! "Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to saints that are in Rome, in Corinth, Thessalonica, Philippi, Galatia, Ephesus, Colosse." Who is this Paul? How is he an Apostle? How came the Gospel to these places? And is it the same Gospel for these Gentiles as it was for the Jews?

By means of this information [supplied by Acts], we can open the apostolic writings with a due sense of their divine authority and with a sufficient acquaintance with the persons, scenes, and facts with which they are connected.

**2.2. Acts forms a crucial historical-ecclesiological bridge from the Gospels to the Epistles.** It begins at Jerusalem, it ends at Rome. The relations of the Gospel to Jew and Gentile have been fixed forever. [Acts explains the shift from the Gospels' focus on the Jew to the Epistles' focus on the Gentile.] First Hebrew (Acts 2–5), then Hellenist (Acts 6), then Samaritan (Acts 8), then Peter goes in to men uncircumcised (Acts 10–11). Then we pass from the side of Peter to that of the new Apostle, to whom the carrying out of this principle is committed. Christianity itself has been finally drawn out of Judaism.

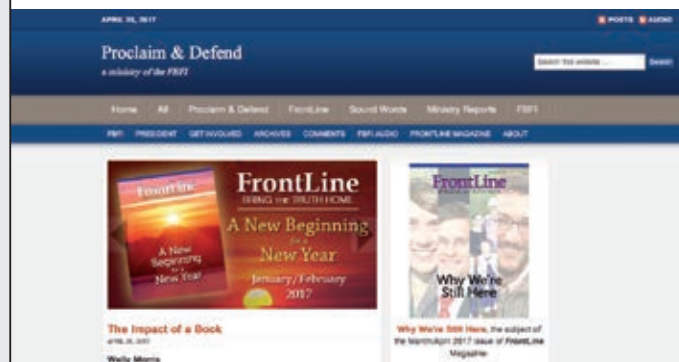
**2.2.1. The Gospel is the substitute for the Law.** The Gospel provides for individual souls the means of justification and the title to eternal life. This the Law had not done, had not been meant to do, and by Prophets and Psalmists had been asserted not to do. Yet it had sunk deep into the mind of those who were under it, that this was the very thing which it did. Here was their pride and boast, and the prerogative

which severed them from all mankind. They looked for a Messiah who was to perfect the keeping of the Law, and to save other nations by reducing them to its obedience. But when the death of Jesus was preached as procuring eternal life, and when the simple act of faith in him was proclaimed as the means of sharing it, the antagonism of the two doctrines appeared. In the Acts we are carried through the period of this contest, and when the history ceases in the hired house at Rome the Gospel has fought itself free from Judaism, proclaiming salvation by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and not by the works of the Law.

**2.2.2. The Gospel is the heir of the Law.** The Law had created a vast and closely-woven system of ideas—an elect nation, a miraculous history, a special covenant, a worldly sanctuary, a perpetual service, an anointed priesthood, a ceremonial sanctity, a scheme of sacrifice and atonement, a purchased possession, a holy city, a throne of David, a destiny of dominion. Were these ideas to be lost, and the language which expressed them to be dropped, when the Gospel came? No! The Law had prepared these riches, and now bequeathed them to a successor able to unlock and to diffuse them. The Gospel claimed them all, and developed in them a value unknown before. It asserted itself as the real and only fulfillment of all which was typified and prophesied. As St. Peter expressed it, "Not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven" (1 Pet. 1:12).

To us they preach him still; a Christ "who died for our sins and rose again for our justification"; a Christ who saves without the Law, yet one who is witnessed by the Law and the Prophets. So they preach, and so we believe.

## Join the conversation online



[proclaimanddefend.org](http://proclaimanddefend.org)

# Just Look at His Eyes

Some people tend to think that our national leaders are “out of touch” with the mainstream population, but that is not always the case. As a chaplain assigned to a four-star level command in Florida, we had the privilege of hosting the president of the United States, also known as POTUS, on a few occasions. Usually it was for a high-level meeting with the “top brass.” The POTUS would pop in, meet with the generals, and pop out again. However, one occasion when then-President George W. Bush flew into Tampa and spent the morning with some “very important people” was quite different from those.

The command was alerted that the POTUS was on his way to have a situational awareness briefing with all the senior leaders of our foreign coalition forces. At first it seemed just like any other visit. However, we were then asked whether we had any local families who had recently lost a loved one in combat, and we knew there was something different about this visit. The president himself wanted to meet with a few of those families and spend some time with them. So we began the process of identifying about six-to-eight families in the area to see whether they would be available and willing to meet with the POTUS. One of those families was from my own church. It included a young lady from my church to whom only a year before I had delivered the death notification concerning her husband. (See “Death Notifications,” May/June 2017.) I had watched this single young mother raise one of the cutest and sweetest little boys all by herself. She was a great inspiration to many of us in that church and a true example of God’s amazing grace.

Since there were a number families, each of the chaplains in the command was assigned to host one family. I was honored to host the family from my church. We met the family early in the morning and took them to the designated meeting place in the back of the building where the POTUS was briefing the coalition leaders. Our orders were to stay with the family until the POTUS was ready to meet them. At that point we were to go out of the room and wait until his time with that family was finished and then return with them until he was done with all the families.

## A Knock at the Door

We knew the president was in the building because of all the special agents and extra security. I had met the president during another event, but this time it was going to be a life-changing experience. I heard the applause from the coalition leaders, indicating that the POTUS was finished with his speech. He would soon begin meeting the families. I wasn’t quite sure how this was going to take place, so I just waited with the family until I received further instructions.

There was a knock at the door, and I moved quickly to open it. To my amazement, I was standing face to face with

one of the most powerful men on the planet. I did not speak to him this time as I had the last time I had met him. Instead I just nodded and slipped quietly out of his way. Instead of just going in, the president stood there momentarily, reading a card with some information about this family. Then he looked up and reached for the door. As he hesitated, I looked into his eyes. I did not see a man who was putting on some game face to go in and tell this family how grateful he was for this young man’s sacrifice. I saw the eyes of a truly saddened man, a man who was feeling the very pain of this family’s grief and loss. I saw in his face a softness, a compassion, and a sense of humility that were absolutely overwhelming. This was not only my commander-in-chief, my president, my boss, but this was a very gracious *man* who was taking time out of his extremely demanding day to spend with some very important people who knew what real sacrifice was all about.

As he went in, I could hear him greet the family one by one until he got to the young toddler in the room. Then I heard the laughing of a child and the laughing of other family members in the room. I thought he would stay for just a moment and depart quickly from one family to the next, but not so. Unbeknownst to the rest of the world, our president spent a good amount of time with each family in that back hallway of that building that day. I was dumbstruck at what I was witnessing that morning. When I was able to go back into the room with my assigned family, I asked them how it had gone. They all had smiles from ear to ear, and then one of them showed me the picture. It was my president sitting in a sofa with legs crossed and big cowboy boots extending out of each pantleg. But on one knee, there was a little boy with dark eyes and curly brown hair bouncing up and down laughing and having the time of this life. I cannot begin to tell you what respect I have for this man. What a wonderful show of gratitude to a patriotic family who had experienced one of the toughest challenges in life!

## Honor Where It’s Due

I have not seen that president again, nor will I probably ever see him again on this side of heaven. But I cannot begin to tell you what that little gesture of kindness has meant to me all these years. To the world, he was one of the most powerful men on the planet, but to me he was a tenderhearted, gracious husband and father who took time to show honor where honor was due.

So now, when people “bad mouth” this president and say mean and hateful things about him, I stop them and tell them they have no clue of what kind of a man he really was. He was a big man with big boots and a big heart who took time to give a little boy the horsey ride of his life.

Joe Willis serves as chaplain endorser for Foundations Baptist Fellowship International.

interact with the people present and be at Maranatha Baptist University for the first time. Their hospitality was much appreciated during our stay there. I am encouraged for the future of the FBFI and will support and pray for the new leadership of the Fellowship.

It has been my privilege to be an endorsed Community Chaplain for a dozen years now, and [I] am proud to be affiliated with an organization that I can without hesitation support. You are known by the company you keep, and the people of the FBFI are the people with which I want to be known.

*Rev. Donald E. Karnes*

*Pastor, Grace Baptist Church, Norfolk, VA  
Chaplain (Chesapeake, VA, Police Department)*

#### CORRECTION

We regret that we mistakenly credited Dave Barba for Gary Kramer's *Windows* column in the May/June 2017 issue.

#### Discernment in Relationships

Continued from Sound Words page 8

#### Sources

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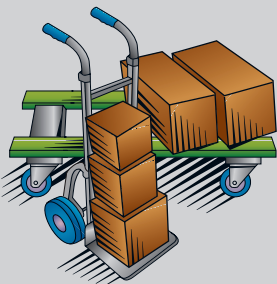
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# Focusing on Circumstances or Communion with the Lord

There is a tendency in the lives of the Lord's people to become distracted with the circumstances they encounter every day. Throughout the Scriptures we have many examples of individuals who made the choice of either focusing on their circumstances or on communion with the Lord. Let's look first at those who focused on the circumstances of life.

When the Lord led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, the Egyptians pursued after them. Seeing the dire situation of the huge army approaching them, they focused on the circumstance and cried to Moses in Exodus 14:11-12: "And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." But what did the Lord do? He opened the Red Sea and destroyed the entire army of Pharaoh. The children of Israel rejoiced for a brief time. Then, when there was no water, how did they respond? We read in Exodus 15:24, "And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" The Lord miraculously made the bitter water sweet, and they rejoiced for a brief period of time again. Then, when they had no bread, how did they respond to Moses? We read in Exodus 16:2-3, "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger." The Lord graciously gave them manna from heaven—bread that angels eat! As Psalm 78:25 says, "Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full." So the Lord gave them protection, water, and bread! But since their lives were governed by focusing on circumstances, we see the tragic outcome of their lives. We read in Psalm 106:13-15, "They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel: But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul."

In the New Testament we have the example of the apostle Peter, whose focus was also on the circumstances of life.

When the Lord was walking on the water in Matthew 14, Peter said to Him in verse 28, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." The Lord Jesus answered: "And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Peter focused on his circumstances, just like many of the Lord's people do today. The results are always devastating! Then there is the example of Demas. We read the heartbreaking words about this man's life in 2 Timothy 4:10: "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica."

On the other hand, we have the wonderful examples of those in the Scriptures whose focus was on communion with the Lord. In Luke 10 we see the testimony of Mary, who desired fellowship with the Lord. We read in Luke 10:38-42,

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

This was a gentle rebuke by the Lord . . . and is likewise a rebuke to many of us who are burdened with the cares of this life! I am deeply touched by the life of the apostle John, where the Scriptures speak of him in John 13:23: "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved." Oh, what a need for the Lord's people to focus on their communion with Him! I trust this article will encourage you to draw near unto your heavenly Father in deeper, more intimate fellowship with Him!

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



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