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FrontLine

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

A New
Beginning
for a
New Year

A New Beginning for a New Year



FEATURES

- 6 Reading Habits of the Wise**
Brock Mawdesley
God's Word is "required reading" for His people. Yet it is also a book that Christians should love to read.

- 8 Our Greatest Need: Transforming Prayer**
Dale Seaman
Prayer is a privilege that is often discussed but seldom practiced.

- 10 Misunderstanding New Beginnings**
Anonymous
For so many of us, the path of sanctification has been filled with disappointment, failure, and often stagnation.

- 12 Biblical Strategies for a Fresh Start**
Dan Fox
Make it hard to sin. Do not deceive yourself about your patterns of sinful behavior and weaknesses.

- 15 Two Views of the Harvest**
Robert Condict
Unless you are a farmer, it is unlikely that you think of the urgency of the various harvests.

DEPARTMENTS

- 5 Mail Bag**
- 20 On the Home Front**
- 23 Wit & Wisdom**
David Atkinson
- 24 The Heart of a Genuine Fundamentalist**
David C. Innes
- 26 At a Glance**
The Story of David, Part 10
Layton Talbert
- 29 Newsworthy**
Robert Condict
- 31 On Language & Scripture**
Mark L. Ward Jr.
- 32 Regional Fellowships**
- 34 Ministry to the Military You May Not See**
Matthew Sanders
- 38 Thirty-Seven Years of Faithful Praying**
Jerry Sivnksty and Martha Huber

Our sincere thanks to Dr. Robert Condict for coordinating this issue of *FrontLine* magazine.

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The end of 2016 brought a national sigh of relief for most Americans, certainly for most believers. The frightful prospect of another Clinton presidency seemed almost certain. Atheistic voters and leftist politicians and bureaucrats were prematurely celebrating what they thought was the *coup de grâce* for any opposition to their godless hopes for America. Regardless of our thoughts on the personalities involved in the outcome of this most unusual election, there is a sense that we have been given a reprieve. It remains to be seen whether evangelism will prevail in the days ahead or whether God's people, having shut off the alarm, will get up and go to work or turn over and go back to sleep.

We dare not squander this opportunity! This is the time to strengthen ourselves, win souls, plant churches, deputize missionaries, and do those things with an eye on the Rapture and eternal life with the Lord. This is not the time for the mere flip side of the coin of public and humiliating despair on display from the left. Now is the time for a new beginning for a new year. Dr. Bob Condict and his team have presented some practical articles to encourage self-examination and spiritual invigoration for the harvest ahead. Find here some peaceful encouragement and convicting examination of truths we need for every tomorrow ahead.

John C. Vaughn

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

January presents a time of new beginnings. We discard our calendars from the

previous year and begin to order our lives on the fresh pages of the new. Our college students embark upon a new semester. Some businesses have closed out their fiscal books and prepare their reports on business past. In many ways the new year encourages us to reflect on the past and prepare for the future. While I have never been a great fan of New Year's resolutions, I do believe in the self-examined life. Paul encouraged the Corinthian believers to the task of self-evaluation before partaking of the Lord's Table: "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Cor. 11:31). David prayed that God would do the work of examination on his life while he lived: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24). Knowing that we must stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, we should earnestly evaluate our hearts, motives, and actions.

In this issue of *FrontLine* Brock Mawdesley encourages us to evaluate our reading of the Scriptures. Dale Seaman shares the journey on which God has led him and his church over the past year and encourages us to employ worship-based praying. One author has shared anonymously his journey of commitment and failure, reflecting on what genuine sanctification looks like. Dan Fox suggests strategies for the walk of sanctification and hope for a new beginning. And Robert Condict shares the vital task of Great Commission living for every believer.

There are many Christian disciplines that remain unaddressed, but we trust these will encourage you to a life of self-examination and growth in our Lord Jesus Christ as you prepare for the coming year.

Robert Condict

The New Testament Baptist Fellowship: A Combined Meeting of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International and the New Testament Association of Independent Baptist Churches

WHOSOEVER

"LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY" - REVELATION 22:17

Will



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I am reading the current issue [Sept/Oct] in my office. I specifically brought it to work today to give it some special attention as I believe the topic ["Convergence"] is extremely applicable and worthy of consideration for Chaplains. With fear of sounding pejorative to past issues (I hope I am not), this issue ranks among the best I have read. It contains so much that is worthy of deeper inquiry. I still have much to read but am thankful for both the spiritual and academic exercise this specific issue presents.

Thank you!

*Tavis J. Long, LCDR, CHC, USN
Bremerton, WA*

I wish to commend Dan Unruh for his insightful article, "Why I Left My Fundamental Church." While I suspect this article inspired some negative responses, I am convinced that the points he makes are valid.

The congregation I have pastored for twenty-two years is a strong, growing church. However, I cannot say that all of those who have joined this church during my tenure have been won to Christ through our outreach or are new to our community. Numerous members have come to us because, as one elderly lady put it, "Your church is what my church was." These disaffected former members of fundamental churches are not stubborn, mean-spirited people opposed to innovation. They are kind, patient, principled people who have had the churches they loved and sacrificed to build co-opted by a new pastor and leadership who were not up-front about their different philosophy and intentions. One man who served on a pulpit committee told me he learned that, although he had asked every question of a potential pastoral candidate he could think of, there was one he did not ask that he should have: "Do you have a hidden agenda, and, if so, what is it?" This man is not a proud cynic. He is a sweet, quiet man, who was broken-hearted to see his church taken by stealth in a new direction—against his and much of the congregation's will.

A warning is in order for all members of fundamental churches to be vigilant. And a question ought to be asked of those who are seeking to affect change in churches that the membership neither seeks or agrees with: "What of honesty?" To subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approveth not. (Lam. 3:36)

*Dr. David A. Oliver
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In light of recent online dialogue sparked by the latest *FrontLine* magazine, would any of the feedback below have merit? [Could there be] a *FrontLine*

issue theme that addresses generational conversation? For instance, a person like you (or someone else from your "generation") could write an article self-diagnosing the strengths and weaknesses of the approach to conversation and leadership style that characterizes your generation. Then someone from the "younger" generation could do the same for us. I'd be willing to contribute such an article perhaps. Someone who understands, but who doesn't have an "ax to grind." This issue could also include other contributors that represent a mixture of generations, providing principles for healthy communication, appreciation for each generation, etc. If the content could avoid unnecessary buzzwords, distracting categorization . . . movement references, etc., that would be ideal. Not sure how possible that would be, though. In summary, I am suggesting a multigenerational effort that exchanges transparent, reflective, and constructive ideas that are principled and biblical, without talking past each other.

Another issue could address the topic of holiness, with an emphasis on holiness as a principle and priority much deeper than groups separating from groups, preachers separating from preachers, and movements separating from movements. Instead, focus on holiness in a principled way, emphasizing the glory and character of God, a desire for what is best over what is acceptable, etc. I am suggesting something that reflects the heart of A. W. Tozer, who appealed to the heart on issues like this.

Another issue could take a unique approach of addressing various key books that have shaped fundamentalist thought in recent decades, giving background for each book, a summary overview of each book, and critiquing how each one helped or hurt our thinking. I am thinking of books like *Grace Awakening* (Swindoll) and *Decision Making and the Will of God* (Friesen), etc. This would be a unique approach. Rather than focusing on movements and groups, it would focus on books and their influence on our thinking. In this issue, we could also provide a catalog of recommendable fundamentalist authors and sources (books, periodicals, publishers, etc.) and provide advice for how to improve in our publishing of excellent materials.

Perhaps these suggestions are unhelpful altogether. Nonetheless, you have them. :) As I track the recent conversation online, I find myself torn. I refuse to disregard the example and input of men from a previous generation who have devoted themselves to Christ and His church. I also empathize slightly with those who are younger, like myself, who struggle to communicate, and sometimes to feel as though they

Continued on page 36

The Reading Habits of the Wise

There is a common dilemma that those who have a love for reading often encounter. That dilemma is making significant progress in reading through an ever-growing stack (or digitally downloaded collection) of books that have attracted their interest. Sometimes there is also a difference between books one would like to read and books that one is required to read. For God's children, however, there is one book that should be a part of both categories. God's Word is "required reading" for His people, as it provides vital spiritual nourishment and guidance to each believer. Yet it is also a book that Christians, including those who don't relish reading in their spare time, should love to read. Scripture provides God's wisdom to direct us through life; to help us understand who He is and what His plan is for our lives. It points us to our need of redemption that is provided through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. A wise response should be one of love and gratitude that fuels a desire for deeper knowledge of the truths of the Bible.

I know that I share a frustration that is common to many other pastors and ministry leaders. It is a frustration of not being able to commit adequate time to a collection of books that we are convinced will prove of good benefit to our ministerial and intellectual development. This collection will many times include books that have been recommended to us, but it also includes others that we have discovered on our own. There are books that we categorize in a "must read" list and others that we have significant interest in but that can be put off awhile longer. It can get discouraging when, through the busyness of our ministry lives as we take care of the innumerable responsibilities in our day, we look back and find that even our "must-read" stack is gathering dust. The loss we sense is that of the wisdom and knowledge that we expected to gain but that we have been hindered from obtaining due to a variety of barriers and circumstances. There certainly is much ministry help to be gained from the incredible amount of resources that we have available to us today. God's people are privileged beyond measure to have access to more



beneficial literature and multimedia than ever in the history of the world! Yet we also sense that we are robbed of the benefits of this wisdom because of the increasing frantically hectic pace of our lives.

Making Time for Reading

There certainly are ways to keep to a regular schedule that consistently allows us time for reading. A wise ministry leader will plan time in a day to spend in profitable reading. Ultimately, though, it always comes back to a matter of priorities. The more strongly convinced we are that a particular book has information that is of great importance for our consumption, the more committed we will be to find time to read the words within. We will make time for what we are convinced is vital for our well-being.

The apostle Paul spent time in reading documents that were important to him. One of the last requests he makes of Timothy at the end of the letter we now know as 2 Timothy is to bring the books and parchments. This description is general enough to include possibly OT Scripture scrolls, legal papers, or other documents important to the apostle in his last days. There is one book, however, that Paul describes earlier in the letter, about which he leaves no doubt as to its vital importance for his own ministry and for Timothy's: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:14-17). Paul clearly states that the wisdom we receive from God's Word is of the most vital nature. It leads us to salvation, the salvation that comes through Jesus Christ alone. Timothy has been privileged to be familiar with the Scriptures since he was a boy, but this is not enough. He must continue to realize the value of God's Word in his current ministry and not neglect regular meditation on its truths.

My children have a wonderful opportunity that they are privileged to enjoy on an almost daily basis. We have four boys, three of whom are of elementary-school age. We have chosen to homeschool each one, in part because my wife is an experienced teacher. She includes in her lesson plans a significant time allotment for reading, which the boys use to its full potential. They enjoy reading; each trip home from the library entails at least a couple tote bags of books. It is our goal to stress to them, however, that in the midst of the multiple selections of books they enjoy reading, that there is one book that far surpasses all the others in its ability to make them wise. The Bible must be read, memorized, and lived out in their lives. It is the vital key in directing them to the only source of salvation for their souls, the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. We pray that each of them will embrace in faith the saving message of the gospel. We impress this upon them in our youth programs at church and in our home. Our desire is for them to be prepared, just like Timothy, to be as useful to God as

possible, equipped for every good work. But we also desire for them to continue on in what they have learned, enjoying the "profit" of God's Word for a lifetime, and thus be trained to live wisely (1 Tim. 4:6).

The Profit of Reading Scripture

The apostle reminds his readers that the reason Scripture must be given great prominence in their lives is because it is "God-breathed." It is the glorious revelation of who He is and of His sovereign plan for mankind that revolves around the precious sacrifice and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. Because He has, in His grace and mercy, provided us with His truth, He expects that we will heed and practice it. Still, God allows us to choose to recognize the profit of Scripture for our lives. Paul gives us many reasons that God's Word is exceedingly profitable for His people. It teaches us doctrine; it provides us the necessary instruction from God that we need to live effectively for Him. It reproves or rebukes when we are in error. It also corrects, or sets us back on the right course, when we stray. Furthermore it instructs, or trains us in righteousness, providing a vital apprenticeship in a pattern of right living that God has commanded of us. This allows the believer to be complete, to be prepared to capably serve God. When Paul says we are equipped for every good work, he is saying that regular interaction with the Scriptures makes us very useful tools for God's service.

I have been recently encouraging the young people in our church that a sincere, wise child of God will desire to be useful to Him in ministry service. All believers should experience some level of desire to be used by God, to be well-equipped to serve Him faithfully. That desire begins by the work of the Holy Spirit when we place our faith in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. It is fueled by faithful, committed interaction with the Scriptures (2 Thess. 2:13-15). Any believer who falls into a pattern of neglecting God's Word will become weak; he is neglecting the fuel that is vital to faithful ministry service. It is unwise in the extreme for any of God's children to become comfortable in this dangerous pattern.

The reading dilemma that many of us face will probably never be resolved to our full satisfaction. The hectic pace of life will still at times crowd out the ability to progress through even the most impressive scheduled reading program. There is one book, however, that no believer should neglect from his "must read" category. There is one book that we must at all costs be disciplined to read regularly and to meditate on continually. It matters not whether one is an infant child of God or a seasoned, mature church leader; all Christians must recognize their lifelong need for Scripture. We must repent when we neglect it; we must pray for God's power to faithfully study it. A truly wise Christian will make sure that the Bible is the one book in a "must read" stack that never is allowed to collect dust.

Brock Mawdesley is the assistant pastor at Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church in Baldwin, Maryland.



Our Greatest Need: Transforming Prayer

Prayer is a privilege that is often discussed but seldom practiced. In a 2005 scientific study it was found that twenty-one percent of pastors surveyed spent less than fifteen minutes a day in prayer and that the average time spent in prayer was thirty-nine minutes a day (Grey Matter Research). God has used the biographies of those who spent their first hours every day in earnest prayer to bring conviction concerning our meager attempts at prayer. God has led our church this past year to adopt the theme “Lord, teach us to pray.” As we have journeyed through this theme together, God has revealed a major obstacle to effective praying in my prayer life.

Effective prayer is thwarted from the beginning when our focus is misplaced. How often have you heard “prayer changes things”? Our focus in prayer, far too often, is just that: “Lord, please change things.” James 4:3 says, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” This is not to say that we pray only for ourselves. Often we are praying for a change in the circumstances of others. Effective praying calls for God’s will to be done on earth, not for our will to be done in heaven. This kind of prayer requires a change in our hearts and lives, since the natural thing is to pursue our own will and plans.

Have you ever spent time in prayer and risen from your knees more burdened, more dissatisfied than when you started? What was the focus of your prayer? Were you focusing on the request (that thing that you wanted changed) or were you focusing on the One who delights in hearing your prayer? Often in our burdened condition we resort to repeating what we want God to change over and over again. Vain repetition will not change the mind of God. Effective prayer will change you, and that is always our greatest need.

Worship-Based Praying

One practice that has opened my eyes to effective prayer is praying worship-based prayers. Just as Jesus taught His disciples, we need to begin with hallowing His name—a name that is above every name! We hallow His name by setting Him apart as over and above all—in all His holiness and glory. We see Him high and exalted in His Word! When we are worshipping Him in prayer, we seek His face instead of always seeking the things that He could do for us. When we seek God's face, we are seeking the essence of who He is. If we seek only His hand, we seek only the blessing of what He does. When we come to Him only with supplications, we are seeking His blessing without truly seeking Him. Over and over God's Word promises multiple blessings to those who fear the Lord and seek Him. Living in the fear of the Lord is living with the constant reality of His power and presence. It is far more necessary to know Him than it is to receive good things from His hand.

One benefit we gain in worship-based prayer is that our fellowship with God is deepened. We may miss God's face altogether if all we ever do is seek His hand. When we focus only on what He we want Him to do, we miss all that He has already done and all that He is doing for our good and His glory (Rom. 8:28). However, if we seek His face, He will be glad to open His hand and satisfy the deepest desires of our hearts (Prov. 3:5–6). Needs-based praying is like the letters we receive from our children at college: "Mom and Dad, how are you doing? Please send money." It is apparent that they are more interested in what we can give them than in maintaining our relationship.

Another benefit we gain by worship-based prayer is enablement for transformational prayer. We will be empowered in our prayer life as we consistently seek His face. This approach to prayer always begins with a focus on biblical, Spirit-empowered worship. It will kindle a desire for spiritual intimacy and personal transformation. As we discover these realities we will be empowered and enlightened to pray about issues and needs in a whole new way.

One way to practice worship-based prayers is to pray the Psalms to the Lord. Instead of prayer being a monologue that grows long very quickly, it becomes a dialogue. It is a sweet time of fellowship with our Redeemer as we speak to Him and He speaks to us through His Word. There are many of David's prayers recorded in Scripture for us. In Psalm 17 David is praying for help and deliverance. He closes his prayer in verse 15, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." His focus was to seek the face of God in his prayer, looking forward to the day when he would be

like Him. This gave him a singular focus that brought him through his battles and gave him a heart for God.

Manifold Results

The results of worshipful prayer are manifold. First, when you pray worship-based prayers, your life will be transformed as you seek His face. The hymn writer Helen Lemmel understood this when she penned the words, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace." When was the last time His glory and grace filled your soul to overflowing as you prayed?

Secondly, when you are praying worship-based prayers, you are praying according to God's will. Romans 8 is a great passage that gives us the means of achieving the awesome potential God wants us to have in our prayer lives. In verse 26 the Spirit of God is the One who helps us in our prayers, making intercession "with groanings which cannot be uttered." Have you had those times when you don't know how to pray for the challenges you are facing? When God is your focus, His Spirit leads you in your prayer. He is the almighty, omnipotent, omniscient God who created everything and is in control of everything. He always knows what is best. The Holy Spirit knows the will of God, and that must always be our goal—seeking God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Once we have a right view of our Lord we will want His will to be accomplished in everything. Again, He always knows what is best.

Thirdly, when we are praying worship-based prayers, we are made content regardless of what circumstances take place on earth. Because we have seen God in all His glory, we confidently know that all things will work for our good and His glory, knowing that He has called us and will work through us. God's plans are not to make us successful or comfortable but rather to conform us to His image. Again, He always knows what is best to make us like Him.

Finally, when we pray worship-based prayers, we see that He has not only chosen and called us but that He has justified and glorified us, and, as such, we should be changed by our time in prayer with Him. After Moses came off the mountain, the glory of God shone through his face inso-much that the people couldn't even look at him. Can people tell you have been with God when you finish praying?

If we will truly seek His face first in our worship-filled prayers, we will see success in our time with Him. Success is not necessarily seen in the answers to prayer (although those will come) but in the fact that we are being changed into His image through our time with Him. We will not faint in our prayer ministry because we are "with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, [and] are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). This kind of prayer is not a destination; it is a journey that we will be on until the Lord takes us home. I hope you have been challenged to begin this journey of being changed by your prayer time as you daily seek His face!

Dale Seaman has pastored Calvary Baptist Church of Porterville, California, for twenty-five years. He and his wife, Jane, have three sons, two daughters-in-law, one grandson, and another one on the way.



Misunderstanding New Beginnings

A Testimony



It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22–23

New beginnings. If God provides mercies afresh to His repentant child, then God's children should embrace the process of sanctification with hope and confidence. Yet for so many of us the path of sanctification has been filled with disappointment, failure, and often stagnation. This article is really a testimonial of one of God's children who spent his entire Christian walk in Fundamental Baptist churches—yet rested on the belief that his sanctification would naturally happen if he was saved and that all Christian duties flowed naturally from a saved soul.

I asked Christ to save me when I was a young child. My parents had begun attending a Baptist church shortly after their marriage. This placed me under the faithful teaching of Sunday school teachers, Christian day-school teachers, and a pastor who preached God's Word faithfully. I wish I could clearly remember the motivations and rationalization that I possessed when I cried out to God, but I cannot. The memory of that day is a bit foggy. But it seemed as if I immediately sensed that God wanted me to serve Him with the rest of my life.

Despite that sense of calling, I never possessed assurance of my salvation during my adolescent and young adult years. I often engaged in acts of disobedience and childhood foolishness, and I became increasingly aware that my sin was offensive to a holy God. This led me to doubt that I was truly saved.

Besetting Sins

There were three areas of my walk as a believer that plagued me: I struggled with lust, I struggled to maintain any meaningful prayer life, and I struggled to read my Bible regularly. Some poor preaching and Bible application along the way added to my doubts and confusion. One Bible teacher told the class that if we asked Christ to save us but did not pray that prayer “in Jesus’ name,” then we were not saved. I could not remember what I had said when I prayed to trust Christ as my Savior. Another preacher said that if we had been counseled to receive Christ from a Bible that was not the King James Version, then we were made twice the child of hell. I thought my parents used the King James, but how could I be sure? I would often pray, “Lord, I am not sure what I said or if I really meant it, so if I am not saved now, I really want You to be my Savior and Lord now.”

I was far too ashamed to tell anyone that I struggled with lust. It was safe to tell Christian leaders that I struggled to read the Bible, but I was afraid to tell them that I was not able to pray. After all, prayer should be as natural to the Christian as breathing air is to a living human. I was convinced the problem was that I was really not saved. I prayed to God for salvation many times—each time trying to “really mean it.”

I responded to campfire services, revival services, and regular weekly church services. I came to the altar—correctly convicted by the Holy Spirit that I must wrestle against lust, prayerlessness, and poor Bible reading. I was also deeply convicted during those calendar-turning services too. I made promises to read God's Word every day, to pray faithfully, and to conquer my problem with lust. Sadly, the only counsel I received was to commit and try a little harder. By the time I left for Bible college, I had been unable to read past the book of Leviticus. My prayer life was spotty. I seemed to have made no progress against lust.

God enabled me to read through my Bible for the first time before completing my sophomore year. My prayer life also became more regular—though I never had any peace that it was as good as it should be. I gained a great deal of discipline during those college years but no more confidence about my salvation. It was as if I had passed the point of no return. There was nothing I wanted more than a vibrant Christian walk with God, yet I knew that what I possessed was far from the ideal—and the problem with lust continued to plague me.

My growth in reading and processing the Scriptures showed me many more areas of my life that required sanctification. I was no longer plagued by only three besetting sins. I could now point to scores. My inability to faithfully live out my faith frightened me. My subsequent marriage revealed selfishness and an uncharitable disposition that would require God's work of transformation. The blessing of children into our home also revealed previously unseen areas of spiritual coldness and self-idolatry. God is still working in me, conforming me more to His image. Perhaps, as never before, I am aware of what still needs to be changed if I am to be more like my Savior.

God allowed me to gain security in His glorious work of salvation. I came to understand the difference between my salvation, completed in Christ, and the work of sanctification that God is still doing in me.

I am writing this to you anonymously. Not because I am ashamed of my testimony; rather, I do not want people to think of the pastors who ministered to me, the schools I attended, or the ministries that have done so much good in helping me and others as being in some way deficient. Frankly, it was my own pride and insecurity that I allowed to rule my life and hinder my own walk with God. I am motivated, however, to write this because I am convinced that many of the young people coming out of our churches and schools share a very similar struggle. They need not take the painful road that I have traveled. I also write this because the theme of this issue of *FrontLine* brings different responses from different people who serve the same Lord. There is a growing tendency among some to criticize the ministry of some of our camps and revival speakers. There must be a Scriptural light brought to the discussion.

Victory!

Holy Spirit conviction that identifies the sinfulness in the heart or behavior of the man is the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit's

Continued on page 25

Biblical Strategies for a Fresh Start



Have you ever wondered where to begin when you find yourself trying to help someone break out of a particularly difficult pattern of sinful behavior? Have you ever found yourself stalled out in your own life and wanting to make a fresh start yourself? The following strategies are a simple attempt to answer the question, "How can I help myself, or someone else, break out of a pattern of besetting sin and make a fresh start?"

Establish and Maintain Intentional Personal Boundaries

Make it hard to sin. Even though we fight to overcome our own sinful tendencies through the power of Christ, we are often easily influenced to sinful behavior by the excess of such behavior around us. In order to avoid everyone who is sexually immoral, covetous, an extortioner, or an idolater, we'd have to leave this planet. Because we've been given the command to make disciples of the nations and because we live in a world populated by sinful people (including ourselves), we'll always associate on a certain level with sinful, broken people. It's a dangerous place for a growing Christian to be, but it's the will of God for us to remain in this place. Consider Jesus' High Priestly prayer in John 17:15: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." We are in the world but not of the world.

If we are struggling with a particular besetting sin, we need wisdom for our associations with the people who are in the world. There is a level of association we would be wise to avoid because such an association can sometimes *move us into* participation. When our lost friend's particular kind of sin offers a powerful temptation to our flesh, it can create for our flesh a seemingly overpowering desire to participate *along with him* in his sin. This is especially true when our friend sets his mind to do evil or is in the very act of evil. Even a strong man would do well to avoid the street of an adulterous woman when she's in the very act of finding a man with whom to sin, and a young man would do well to avoid a group of his friends who are on their way to execute an evil plan they have just devised. We must not inadvertently "yoke" ourselves to unbelievers in any way; we must "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."

How can we do this? I offer as a first strategy establishing and maintaining intentional boundaries. Make it hard to sin. Do not deceive yourself about your patterns of sinful behavior and weaknesses. Sometimes they are easy to identify. There may be heart desires and behavioral patterns that you had before you were saved. God requires you to mortify those sins after salvation. At other times, identifying those sins requires deeper introspection. Do you acknowledge your struggle against sin? Has God shown you where you still need to put down some boundaries so you don't keep falling into the same hole in the ground? For some people taking

the step of establishing proper boundaries is simply a matter of admitting they're weak and need to guard their hearts. Remember the Lord's Prayer: "Lead us not into temptation." Our Lord anticipated the world we would live in and taught us to pray continually for a particular kind of leading, a leading away from temptation.

I know some alcoholic brothers and sisters in Christ. They used to be very good at habitually submitting their bodies to the master of alcohol and serving it to their own destruction; then they heard the gospel, repented of their sins, and put their faith in Christ Jesus. He changed their hearts and minds and saved their souls! God imputed the righteousness of Jesus to their accounts and canceled their sin debts, setting them free from the guilt and power of sin! However, some were surprised that their alcoholic desires still lingered. One such friend told me that even after decades of being free from habitually drinking alcohol, his mouth still watered when he smelled it. Should this man sit at the hotel bar during a weekend work seminar when his employer has agreed to pay for all the drinks? Should this man pretend he doesn't have this lingering desire and make no adjustments to the way he associates with people *as they drink*?

It would be far wiser for him to admit continuing personal weakness and create some kind of intentional boundaries. What if the man reasoned something like this: "I'm one step away from plunging back into the abyss, just like I've done many times before. I have to remove myself from people while they're drinking. I don't want to make it easy for me to sin." In the case of this Christian brother, he did maintain these kind of boundaries for many years.

At this point it would be wise to introduce a *spiritual warning*. Don't replace the gospel with "boundaries." We know from the book of Colossians that maintaining boundaries, such as practicing a form of asceticism, does *not* produce power for Christian living. We need to be careful to avoid thinking that the wise boundaries we choose somehow completes the work of Christ in our lives. We're already complete in Him! Taken together, the books of Colossians and Galatians strongly warn us to avoid replacing the person and work of Jesus with our own "person and work." The answer to possessing perfect righteousness before God is to be credited with Jesus' righteousness. The answer for having overcoming power is to be filled by the Spirit of Jesus. Even as we seek to establish boundaries in our lives we should work hard to keep the Person and work of Christ central to our spiritual health for the glory of God. Stay gospel-centered.

This warning does not minimize the value of boundaries! How much longer are you going to allow yourself easy access to your particular besetting sin? What will you tell Jesus when you finally see Him face to face? Why miss out on adding such a simple strategy to your life?

Do you acknowledge your struggle against sin? Has God shown you where you still need to put down some boundaries so you don't keep falling into the same hole in the ground?

Because establishing and maintaining boundaries can be hard work, it's best done with the help of at least one other Christian—and hopefully more! This next strategy supports the first. Someone struggling with a strong besetting sin should become a member of a good Bible-believing and Bible-preaching church in order to get prayer, support, and accountability from someone else—preferably someone older and with spiritual authority in his life.

Walk in the Light with God and at Least One Christian Brother

In the New Testament there are many "one another" passages. Every one of them can be placed under the heading of the new command Jesus gave His disciples during the days of His incarnation. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." The example of Jesus' love was so strong, so vibrant, and so much higher than any other love. He described it as a *brand new* kind of commandment! Fulfilling the one-another commandments of the New Testament is one of the ways we do this in a practical sense.

The one-another commandments can be organized in a number of ways. I like to describe them in terms of *listening*, *talking*, and *giving* within the context of Christian relationships. We're commanded to exhort and encourage one another (listening and talking). We're commanded to pray for and support one another (listening and giving). We're commanded to confess our sins to one another (listening and talking).

First we must practice appropriate confession. This kind of confession has nothing to do with meriting forgiveness with God. This kind of confession takes place within the context of a loving Christian relationship. When someone is struggling spiritually in an effort to overcome past sinful patterns of behavior, his brothers are to come forward for support. This sounds great, doesn't it? A family member is struggling, and his brothers help bear his burdens by providing loving support and prayer!

To enact this strategy, the person struggling must confess his sin struggle to another Christian. As I think through the Christian relationships I have had and have seen through the years, I observe a great shallowness. This shallowness is especially prevalent among men. This kind of relational shallowness makes it very hard for strugglers to come forward for help. We would do well to heed the Biblical warning: "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

To the struggling brother I say: take the risk, go talk to your pastor, elder, deacon, or spiritually mature Christian friend. Get help.

For those who are relatively stable and don't think they need this kind of help, I challenge you. Why do you isolate

yourself? The strong must help the weak. Love is not supposed to sit on the sidelines waiting to be approached. Love is active. It jumps in and seeks a person in need.

Walking in the light creates genuine accountability with one or more persons. This person should meet with another regularly for prayer and support. The one who is struggling should be transparent and honestly receive direction. This leads us to one final strategy.

Redirect Your Love, and Replace the Object of Your Desire

This strategy is the final stage to a new beginning. There is minimal intrinsic value in “maintaining wise boundaries” and “walking in the light” if these strategies produce godly change. The believer will be tempted to think when he has substantially reduced besetting sin for a period of time that he has finished the hard work of becoming like Christ. At moments like this we must remind fellow believers of the statements in the New Testament which speak of “putting off” and “putting on.” We must remind them how a demon can leave his house empty and many more demons can return to fill the house, leaving a man in a worse state than he was at the beginning.

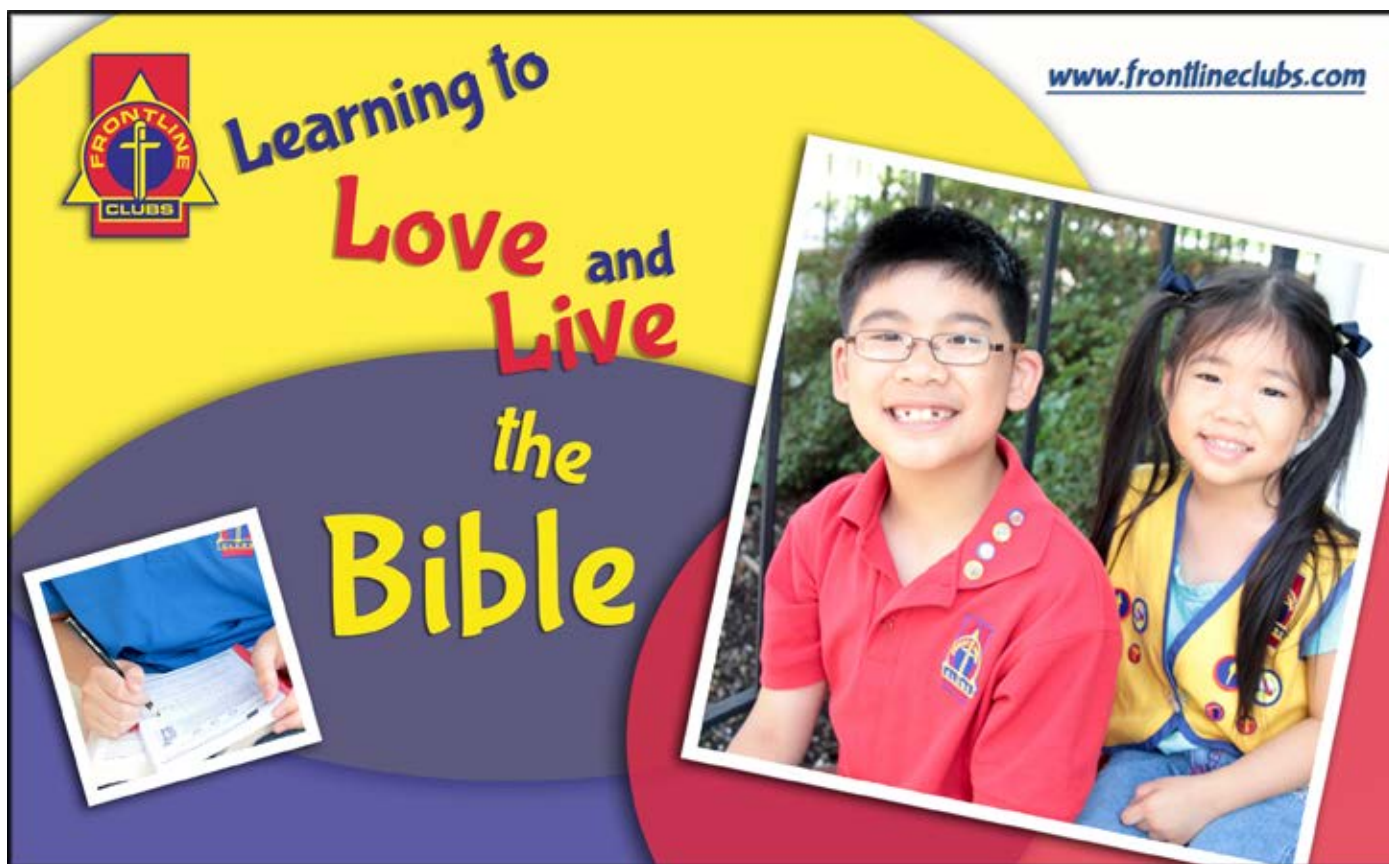
A Christian sins when he voluntarily submits to desires and actions to temptations outside the revealed will of God. God calls the believer to redirect his desire and love and to submit to God’s standard of righteousness. He must redirect himself to glorify God by ignoring sinful impulses and voluntarily submitting to God’s standard of glorious righteousness!

In my home office I have taken two diagrams out of old *National Geographic* magazines and mounted them on my wall. One is a picture of dozens of animals and their migratory patterns; the other is a picture of the layers of life in an ocean. They illustrate the infinite wisdom and power of God. God designed the wings of the Swainson’s hawk, which can migrate up to 8200 miles. God designed the transparent bodies of deep-sea jellyfish, which swim at depths of up to 3000 feet. What kind of mind and wisdom can design such animals? When I look at these pictures my personal estimation of God’s glory and worth increases. God is worthy of my most intense holy desire! He is worthy of diligent and arduous exploration.

While general revelation shows me God’s wisdom and power, it stops short of revealing God’s name and plan. His Word tells me He is infinite and He is love. God sent His Son to die for me. Taken together, general revelation and special revelation reveal truths that warm my spiritual affections and desires. They help me to redirect my love to the only One who is worthy of every ounce of it!

Make use of wise boundaries and walk in the light of healthy Christian relationships, but make sure these lead you to the place of ultimate glory and satisfaction: the eternal Trinity! For what is the use of getting victory over a besetting sin if it doesn’t give you a better view of your glorious God?

Dan Fox has been pastoring Faith Bible Church in Eldridge, Maryland, since 2009 and has a burden for helping Christians grow through practical, gospel-centered discipleship and counseling.



Two Views of the Harvest

Farming technology has come a long way since my boyhood days. My grandfather managed a small family farm, and the produce raised was almost entirely for the hogs and cattle. The two basic staples were corn and hay. My involvement with the corn crop was minimal. Fields were plowed and planted before I was able to escape my academic responsibilities; and they were harvested after I returned to school from summer break. Even though I was not directly responsible, the corn harvest was generally a lackadaisical task. Combines were hired to make silage, and for the rest my grandfather drove an antique corn picker through the dead and dried rows of corn until the corncribs were filled for the coming year.



Making hay was an altogether different experience. With weather forecasts in hand my grandfather would sickle cut fields of timothy and pray that it would not rain. The rows of cut hay would need to be raked twice before we could process them through a bailer or stacker. Perhaps you have heard the expression, "You have to make hay while the sun shines." We knew what that meant all too well. Cut, rake, dry, rake, bail, store, and pray it doesn't rain.

When I read the many agricultural expressions of Jesus, I acknowledge that my farming experience is a bit anachronistic, but I still believe I can identify well with the intent of His words. Jesus told His disciples, as recorded by Matthew, "Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:37-38). Unless you are a farmer, it is unlikely that you think of the urgency of the various harvests. It seems to me that many church members are also not thinking of the urgency of the soul harvest either. Consider some of the lies we are easily led to believe.

The Great Commission is the job of professional missionaries and church leadership. God has brought good Christ-honoring missionaries through our churches. They offer sound messages, accompanied by visually energizing presentations. They present a culture that is foreign to us and demonstrate a passion to go reach that people group. We admire them. We pray for them, and we hope that our church budget or faith-promise program will allow us to "take them on." Our pastors speak publicly several times a week. They have worked carefully through Scripture and theology. Many would say they are best equipped to reach the lost in our community.

Friend, please understand that no person or people group is reached because of a polished presentation. People are reached with the gospel because God works through you. Paul stated clearly to the Corinthian believers, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4). No one is reached apart from a gospel presentation (Rom. 10:13-15). Some doors are open to you only because of the relationship you already possess with those people.

The training required for evangelism is too much for me to handle. We should prepare ourselves as extensively as we are able for the great task given to us (1 Pet. 3:15). It is possible that you have trouble keeping your apologetic arguments clear in your head ("Should I respond with the ontological argument or the teleological argument?"). Never confuse preparation with effectiveness. Souls are not argued into the church, though God may at times use an argument to bring about conviction. When God is working in the life of one yet to be converted, the humble response, "I don't know the answer to your question, but I will seek an answer and get back to you," will not keep someone lost. As Paul instructed Timothy, we must give all serious effort to be approved unto God (2 Tim. 2:15), but our confidence will not be in our preparation; it will be, rather, in the moving of the Holy Spirit (Luke 12:11-12).

There is no role for me in the Great Commission. First, many of us think of the Great Commission in terms of foreign, cross-cultural work. That assessment is only partly true. The Great Commission involves people in our own communities as well as the people living on other continents. Second, we relegate the Great Commission as a task to be fulfilled by the greater church. It is reasonable for some people to work in the nursery, others to mow the grass, and still others to fulfill the Great Commission. Third, for those who attempt to personally engage in the Great Commission, we relegate Great Commission work to an event (an afternoon of soul-winning, a service at a retirement home, or service in a homeless shelter). These three ways of thinking about the Great Commission effectively squeeze out our personal engagement in it, leaving us with rare forays into Great Commission work. Rather, the Great Commission is not so much what we do; it is what we are. So often, crowded by my regular responsibilities, I reduce myself to a "grocery shopper," "slave to home repair," "lawn mower," "husband," "dad," or a "just-trying-to-get-my-stuff-done person." But that is *not* what I am. I am a forgiven child of God who in this vapor of a life has been given by his Savior as a great privilege a Great Commission. Often I will hurry past, even finding to be irritating, the objects of that commission.

Giving and praying satisfy my role in the Great Commission. Since we generally think of the Great Commission in terms of foreign professional ministry, we are prone to minimize our role in it. Of course, one should not identify giving and praying as a minor role, but it is not an exclusive role. In addition to our praying and giving, we need to develop relationships with these missionaries to encourage them in their labors. Satan will attack the Lord's servants with discouragement and doubts. Many missionaries will face these struggles with a very small human network. Personal interest that results in encouraging contact is a ministry from the Lord. Paul demonstrated profound gratitude to the Corinthian church because of the ministry of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, who stood in as surrogates for the church in bringing encouragement (1 Cor. 16:17-18). Frontline missionaries would benefit from your service. You can procure items they are not able to purchase in their country. You could run stateside errands, since they continue to have responsibilities in their country of origin. You could offer to provide teaching opportunities (such as art, math, or music) by using Skype, since many are homeschooling their children while fulfilling their missions opportunities. You could work to help translate useful materials for their use. Many with computer skills could offer to create the teaching charts and illustrations that would enhance their work. You could volunteer to organize and maintain their communications database. These are just some practical ideas for missions service. Talk with a missionary and determine what you could do to serve him or her.

Having addressed the lies that keep us from engaging missions personally, I trust that you, the reader, are convinced that growing in the Great Commission is another

Continued on page 18

Missions

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Two Views of the Harvest

Continued from page 16

area that deserves reconsideration with the turning of the year. I also trust that you are motivated by understanding that the harvest is mature. It is time to make hay while the sun is still shining.

As you evaluate your involvement in the Great Commission, consider what God would have you to do in the following areas.

1. *Plan to live a Great Commission lifestyle.* Purpose to keep gospel tracts in your pocket, purse, or car. Plan to give a certain number of tracts out each week. Pray that God gives you a meaningful gospel conversation each week. Don't forget to journal what God is doing through your yielding to Him. If possible, seek to engage someone in a gospel-centered Bible study.
2. *Earnestly pray for the missionaries that your church supports financially.* Use your mealtime prayers or family devotions to pray for a different missionary each day. Missionaries are glad to add you to their electronic mail lists to keep you current in their work.
3. *Ask God to guide you to participate in your church's faith-promise program or directly support a trustworthy missionary.* If your church does not have a faith-promise program, seek, with your pastor, for a good way to have a direct impact on missionaries.
4. *Choose a missionary family that you will contact regularly for the purposes of encouragement and service.* There are many Internet-based options that allow you to contact missionaries directly for no cost.

The harvest is still great and the laborers are still sparse . . . pray the Lord of the harvest to send and use you in the Great Commission.

Robert Condict is the pastor of the Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church in Baldwin, Maryland. He has served there with his wife, Tammy, for twenty-five years. He also serves on the Executive Board of FBFI.



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SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

Reading for 2017

In December 2015 I offered our church a five-year Christian reading plan. The Scripture text affixed to the top of the plan is Ephesians 3:17b–19.

That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend **with all saints** what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Comprehending and knowing *with all saints*; what an exceedingly broad ideal! It applies, of course, to all saints within a particular church, or even living at a particular time in history. But it also has a justifiable application to the entire Church historically; to all believers, of all centuries, in all places. That all of the Lord's people, regardless of their times or circumstances, come to share the same spiritual knowledge and comprehension.

That ideal can be attained completely only when, in the apostle's grand words, *I know even as also I am known* (1 Cor. 13:12). But along the way, every new generation of believers enjoys an ever-increasing opportunity of happily progressing toward it. How? By reading. Our church members become more unified the more they read—not just the Bible but also spiritually-minded literature that is theologically sound and historically instructive. If some of that literature is from the pages of the past, not just the keystrokes of the present, the more our church members become one in their outlook with the Church of all the ages. That brings glory to the Church's Head, its one Mind, the Lord Jesus Christ. All the Church, past, present, and future, glorifies Him increasingly as it comes to join unanimously with His thinking, while progressing more and more and more toward the full

light of the coming perfect day. Reading rightly has a tremendously unifying potential. So I'm constantly encouraging our church members to read!

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

Why These Titles?

The titles I've included in our church's five-year plan were chosen for at least six reasons. First, they have significantly influenced my own spirit and convictions. Though all of them are highly commended by a broad, spiritually-minded readership including many respected church leaders, these were not chosen for that reason. In all but one case, if I've not been impacted by them myself, they don't appear on the list.

Secondly, they've been singled out because they combine sound instruction with warm, spiritual insight. There are instructive works that pastors must read, even though they lack what, for want of a better word, may be called "unction." They display little of the Holy Spirit's soul-stirring illumination into the significance of the truths they so labor to explain. Charles Spurgeon described such books in a review that he gave of one of the volumes of *The Pulpit Commentary*, authored by H. R. Reynolds and Thomas Cruskery.

The good men who wrote the exposition and outlines have in no case erred on the side of too spiritual an interpretation. John's Gospel is a book in which the teaching is spiritual to a very high degree. And the great qualification for expounding it is not so much learning, but an unction from the Holy One. We will not say that these divines know very little of unction, but assuredly we see small traces of it in their volume. The modern spirit has a tendency to dry up the Scriptures and to leave them like the skins of grapes when all the juice has been trodden out in the winepress. What they have seen and written is good of its sort, but an hour with Hutcheson [a seventeenth-century commentator on John] is worth a month of Cruskery. Commentators of the

Inside

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

present age may be more critical than their predecessors, but they are not more edifying and improving. We are growing so wise that soon we shall be ashamed of everything savoury and sustaining.

Books like Cruskery's have not been included on my list. Only those which tend to move the affections as well as inform the mind are recommended.

Thirdly, many of these titles tend to correct practical or theological misunderstandings, though that may not have been one of the author's intentions at the time he wrote. And then fourthly, they're books that will nurture a certain kind of Christian appetite. A greatly respected, almost revered Christian leader of the past warned about the effects of Christian readers' developing an insatiable appetite for the wrong kinds of reading.

The religious taste of most readers is, we fear, greatly vitiated by works of fiction and other kinds of light reading. Nothing will now please, unless it be characterized by novelty and variety. . . . Our numerous periodicals, coming out weekly, monthly, and quarterly, and often presenting much that is interesting, so occupy our leisure, that works of solid instruction are now read by few. Even the theologian, who is devoted to sacred pursuits, unless he is very economical in the distribution of his time, will find, that after pursuing all the pamphlets which fall from the press in such abundance, he will have a small portion left for the deep and solid works of theology. . . . There is, doubtless, a great increase of reading among the population of this country within a few years; yet we cannot but fear that didactic and practical works of theology have, in too many instances, been excluded by the religious novel and the religious newspaper. . . . In circumstances in which the rising generation are placed, there may be abundance of shallow, showy, bustling, active piety; but the ripe fruits of profound spiritual knowledge, and or deep practical experience, will be rare. In process of time, we apprehend, the strong lines of demarcation between truth and error, on many important points, will become more and more indistinct; and not only so, but many precious evangelical doctrines will be held in low estimation.

That was a concerned assessment by the first president of Princeton Theological Seminary, Archibald Alexander. The date is 1830! What would he write if he were to tour the average Christian bookstore today? What helps to correct this defect is to get our folks to read warm-hearted but substantive books that will stimulate their desire for more of the same.

Fifthly, I've chosen books that are either in print presently, or were very recently. And sixthly, I've attempted to offer titles for more than just one or two categories of interest, such as Christian living or contemporary Christian issues. The list takes into account at least six categories: the gospel, theology, Church history, general Christian living, Bible reading, and prayer.

Titles

Year 1

Evangelistic Sermons, David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

- Exceptional insight into how unbelievers think about life and religion. A stimulating aid to evangelizing the lost.

Pilgrim's Progress, John Bunyan

- Classic allegory of the Christian life. Considered one of the world's greatest works of literature. Certainly a must for all Christians.

The Knowledge of the Holy, A. W. Tozer

- Outstanding reflections on Divine perfections. Perhaps the best place to start in learning to glorify God for His unique attributes.

Five English Reformers, J. C. Ryle

- Ryle asks the question, *Why were our reformers burned?* The inspiring accounts of five of the most influential English reformers during the cruel reign of "Bloody" Mary yield the answer.

Profiting from the Word, A. W. Pink

- Possibly the best instruction in print on how to read the Bible applicationally. Pink was a hyper-Calvinist, but little or no trace of that appears here.

A Guide to Prayer, Isaac Watts

- The essence of what Watts taught a group of young men who asked him how to pray. The book is neither anecdotal nor popularly superficial, but earnestly substantive. It will almost certainly transform the way you pray.

Year 2

The Everlasting Righteousness, Horatius Bonar

- Warm, insightful, pastoral treatment of justification by faith alone. If you read only one work on this subject, Bonar's is the life-changer to digest.

The Ten Commandments, Thomas Watson

- Penetrating exposition of the often-forgotten Ten Commandments. Spiritually warm and God-glorifying all the way through.

The Incomparable Christ, J. Oswald Sanders

- Sanders explained that his work *does not purport to be a theological treatise, but rather a devotional and doctrinal treatment of the great facts of the person and work of Christ*. Thirty-six chapters of inspirational, applied Christology.

Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were, Leland Ryken

- The best corrective of misinformed impressions of some of God's choicest saints. Arranged topically; the Puritans' views on money, family, worship, education, social action, etc.

Call the Sabbath a Delight, Walter Chantry

- Although equating the Lord's Day with a Christian Sabbath, Chantry provides a convicting, practical challenge regarding keeping the Lord's Day *for the Lord!*

A Method for Prayer with Scripture Expressions, Matthew Henry

- The ripe fruit of Henry's lifelong approach to pulpit prayer. He coalesces in expanded outlines of each major type of prayer (praise, confession, intercession, etc.), a total of over 2300 Scripture references. Provides immediately usable Scripture substance for every kind of praying. An unparalleled resource.

Year 3

The Gospel According to Jesus, John MacArthur

- MacArthur's correction of easy-believism. Occasionally a bit overstated, but nevertheless a sobering, scriptural examination of what Jesus Christ preached and taught to be necessary in order to be His disciple.

The Sermon on the Mount, David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

- The most spiritually insightful of all expositions of our Lord's most famous sermon. The engaging pulpit distillations of an unusually keen mind filtered through an unusually warm heart.

Knowing God, J. I. Packer

- Packer's classic explanation of what it means to know God experientially. Appreciative testimonies to its blessed influence would easily fill a large volume, perhaps a set of such volumes differentiated according to writers' nationalities. It's sold over 1.5 million copies and has been translated into over a dozen languages.

Christian Leaders of the 18th Century, J. C. Ryle

- Well-known (George Whitefield, John Wesley, and Augustus Toplady) and lesser-known (William Grimshaw, William Romaine, John Berridge, and others) English and Welsh preaching dynamos of the 1700s. Marked by arresting anecdotes and quotations.

Psalms 119, Charles Bridges

- The single most helpful work on the Bible's longest chapter. Despite the fact that every verse of the psalm concerns the same subject, Bridges' devout, wise, practical applications are seldom redundant.

Letters of Samuel Rutherford, Ed. Andrew Bonar

- No one can ever think of his relationship to Christ in the same way after reading these 365 letters, many of which were written to beloved Christian friends when Charles I's persecution exiled Rutherford far away from his small country church.

Year 4

Revival and Revivalism, Iain Murray

- Factually objective exposé of the gradual change in both the theology and methodology of American evangelistic preaching that occurred over the century following the First Great Awakening. "Provides a key to understanding contemporary evangelicalism and its deep needs" (Sinclair Ferguson).

Spiritual Depression, David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

- Twenty-one sermons originally delivered on consecutive Sunday mornings at London's Westminster Chapel. "The need for them arose as the result of pastoral experience. . . . Unhappy Christians are, to say the least, a poor recommendation for the Christian Faith; and there can be little doubt but that the exuberant joy of the early Christians was one of the most potent factors in the spread of Christianity" (Lloyd-Jones).

The End for Which God Created the World, Jonathan Edwards

- Seminal theology explaining and glorifying the ultimate purpose for our existence. Unequaled on the subject. Best edition is in *God's Passion for His Glory*, with notes by Minneapolis pastor John Piper.

Singing in the Fire, Faith Cook

- One of the earliest of the author's small, excellent paperback compilations of mini biographies. This one, subtitled, *Christians in Adversity*, recounts the extraordinary faith of fourteen otherwise ordinary men and women (Wang Ming-Dao, Susannah Spurgeon, Monica, John Oxtoby, Edward Payson, etc.).

Holiness, J. C. Ryle

- Ryle's irenic pastoral corrective of a common imbalance in understanding sanctification. Challenging appeals concerning practical godliness. Best edition is *Faithfulness and Holiness*, ed. by J. I. Packer.

The Mortification of Sin, John Owen

- The one book on the subject which it is impossible to think will ever be superseded. Truly life altering. Best edition is in *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*, edited by Kelly M. Kapic and Justin Taylor, though even the severe abridgment by Richard Rushing is helpful.

Year 5

Revival, David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

- A series preached on the one-hundredth anniversary of the 1858 awakening. J. I. Packer wrote, "I do not think that our age has seen a more powerful or profound treatment of revival than this book." What would happen if every disheartened pastor, preacher, or missionary shut himself up in a silent room for a week with these sermons?

Desiring God, John Piper

- Argues that hungering for and rejoicing in God are our ultimate means of glorifying Him. Perhaps slightly imbalanced in perspective and application but nevertheless an exceedingly helpful pointer to a theological fundamental lying out in plain view that is somehow often sadly (and to our misery) overlooked.

The Mystery of Divine Providence, John Flavel

- Exalts the inscrutable wisdom of God in how He orders the smallest details of our lives. By

an often bereaved and suffering, persecuted, but triumphant Puritan pastor. Rich with simple analogies.

Hudson Taylor in Early Years, Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor

- Seven years in the writing, this is the first of two volumes on the life of the founder of the China Inland Mission. Subtitled *The Growth of a Soul*, it grows the reader irresistibly. Abounds in inspirational anecdotes. One almost cannot put it down.

A Call to Spiritual Reformation, D. A. Carson

- The subject matter cries for a warm, spiritual unction that is disappointingly missing from Carson's expositions of more than half-a-dozen of Paul's prayers. But his treatment is helpfully enlightening as to using them for a closer walk with God. Some sections of pointed, challenging application.

Morning Exercises, William Jay

- Jay was a pastoral friend of John Newton and other English evangelical leaders of the first half of the nineteenth century. This work of his is similar to C. H. Spurgeon's more widely read *Morning and Evening*. Jay, however, writes just one devotional per day. But his are considerably longer and can be divided easily for both morning and evening inspiration.

Suggestions

The goal of reading titles such as these is growth in grace. Growth from reading increases most naturally by method and meditation. So here are some suggestions for a helpfully methodical approach that will allow time for reflection.

1. *Read these during your normal devotional time.* If you generally read Scripture and pray, try adding something from a sound, spiritually stimulating book. I often begin with a book, rather than my Bible, and find that the book puts me into the spiritually minded frame that enables me to read my Bible better. That's because the Bible is raw food. But a good book is an already prepared meal. I dare not replace the Bible with a book, but a few pages (not the whole meal!) from a devout book can whet my appetite for the Bible.

2. *Read even ten-to-fifteen minutes a day.* We sometimes hesitate to begin a book because we know we can't possibly afford the time. But that may be because we're thinking in terms of long periods of time. Ten minutes in the morning, or even half that spent consistently, will eventually carry you through even large books profitably. Don't despise the days of small things!

3. *Read more intelligently.* One of the reasons we bog down in good books is because we haven't started well. Opening a carefully planned, well-written book and beginning with the first sentence is like pulling out of

your driveway but not knowing where you're going. Or walking into a forest without a map. Take the few minutes necessary to skim the table of contents. Do you understand the chapter headings? The trend today is to title chapters with trendy blurbs that scarcely reveal anything about their contents. The book will be about prayer, and the chapter headings will be something like, "Rollercoaster Rave," "Never Again on My Turf," "Poked, Poking, and Provoking," and other such non-sensical trivia. Really good books, classics, do nothing of this superficial sort. They tell you with each new chapter or chapter division what additional step will now be traveled through the book's "journey."

4. *Thumb through the book.* Once you've taken a minute to read through the contents, ask yourself if you understand the chapter titles. If not, turn to those which are unclear and read a few of their opening sentences or paragraphs. Do you understand them now? If so, flip back to the contents and read your way back down through the chapter titles, asking the same question, and repeating the same flipping ahead to any other titles that are still murky.

At this point, we do well to ask ourselves a few further questions. Now that I know where this book is going, do I want to go there with it? Do I still want to read it? If so, what is in its chapters that I'm interested in? What am I hoping to learn? What questions am I hoping that they'll answer? What use will they be to my walk with the Lord?

Thumb through the chapters a little bit. If they have clearly marked subdivisions, take little forays into them to get a feel for how well they're going to answer these additional questions. Dip into a paragraph here and there to sample the writer's style. In other words, make the book's better acquaintance by letting it introduce you to various of its members. You'll be amazed at how just five-to-ten minutes of poking around in a book will give you a comfortable confidence of readiness to let it lay hold of your mind and lead you to its destination.

5. *Use highlighters.* Good books often have lengthy chapters that need to be cut like pies. Colored highlighters can clearly divide their pieces and subdivide them even further if needed. I use a series of five colors to mark (1) major divisions (green), (2) major subdivisions (orange), (3) smaller subdivisions (blue), (4) smaller divisions yet (pink), and (5) smallest points (purple). Yellow I reserve for general highlighting throughout. Not every chapter, of course, requires five levels of highlighting. But Puritan works, in particular, often do. I find that the effort to locate and mark each level increases remarkably my understanding and retention.

Get Going!

C. H. Spurgeon wrote, *We are quite persuaded that the very best way for you to be spending your leisure time, is to be either reading or praying. You may get much instruction from books which afterwards you may use as a true weapon in your Lord and Master's service. Paul cries, "Bring the books"—join in the cry.*

That's good counsel for a good new year. ☞

Dr. Mark Minnick serves as senior pastor at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina. To access Dr. Minnick's sermons, go to mountcalvarybaptist.org/pages/sermons.

Bring . . . the Books

The Building of the Church
by Charles E. Jefferson

Charles Edward Jefferson was born in Cambridge, Ohio, in 1860. He was educated at Ohio Wesleyan, graduating in 1882, and was ordained into the Congregational ministry in 1887. After short pastorates in New Hampshire and Massachusetts, he went to the Broadway Tabernacle Church in New York City, where he stayed until his death in 1937. You may recognize Jefferson's name from reading chapter 11 of Warren Wiersbe's *Walking with the Giants*. Wiersbe also has a vignette of Jefferson's life and ministry in his *50 People Every Christian Should Know*. It was Wiersbe's recommendation in this latter work which motivated me to read Jefferson's *The Building of the Church*.

The book consists of eight lectures delivered in April and May of 1910 at Yale Divinity School as part of the Lyman Beecher Foundation lecture series on preaching. Jefferson takes the unique view that the preacher finds "his life in the vital relations by which he is bound to other lives"—that is, the lives of his congregation (p. 5). "The sermon is not the voice of an isolated individual, but the utterance of a body of men baptized into the name of Jesus. The sermon comes not out of the preacher alone, but out of the church." Jefferson lamented the "shortening of pastorates" (p. 18), since the job of the pastor requires many years to build up his people. "The crowning and crucial work of a minister is not conversion, but church building" (p. 19). Jefferson was blowing the trumpet of the Great Commission's command to "make disciples" long before it became a common emphasis in seminary training.

In the first lecture ("The Church Building Idea in the New Testament") describes how building the church is not increasing the numbers of attenders, but discipling each member of the church, building up the individual in his most holy faith: "The preacher best reaches the masses who knows best how to reach his church" (p. 12). The second lecture is "Building the Brotherhood," in which Jefferson explains that the preacher's task is building the congregation into a loving church family. He distinguishes an audience from a church: "An audience is a crowd, a church is a family. An audience is a gathering, a church is a fellowship. An audience is a collection, a church is an organism. An audience is a heap of stones, a church is a temple" (p. 67). "The church of Christ if not a brotherhood is a failure" (p. 76).

Lecture 3 is "Building the Individual." "That man preaches most searchingly, most persuasively, and most effectively who knows best and loves most the individual" (pp. 86–87). Lecture 4, "Building Moods and Tempers," offers advice on various parts of the worship service (prayer, music, Bible reading), while Lecture 5 ("Building Thrones") describes the "seven forms of power which a Christian church should be possessor of": worship, teaching, evangelism, philanthropy, reformation, politics, and missions.

Explaining the local assembly's relation to other local churches in the universal assembly of God, Lecture 6 ("The Holy Catholic Church") clearly reveals Jefferson's ecumenical scope. "The Roman Catholic and Episcopal churches, no less than the Methodist and Baptist churches, are sects, sections of the great Church of God" (p. 202). The reader, however, should not lose sight of the organic union of all genuine believers simply because the author has adopted the flawed vision of so many others of his age.

Lecture 7, "Building the Plan," will be the darling of all administrators, though many pastors will smile at the following advice from Jefferson: "Nothing less than a month deserves the name of vacation for a preacher. If church officials are unwilling to grant one month in twelve, they should be instructed. Men who mean well often crucify God's servants, not knowing what they do. Pastorates must of necessity be short, if ministers are not given reasonable spaces for recuperation. It should be the ambition of every church and all pastors to make the pastorate long" (p. 238). The series closes with "The Building of the Builder" and Jefferson's focus on the needs of the preacher himself.

Occasionally, Jefferson's imprecision and lack of explanation leave the reader wondering exactly what he means. For instance, when he speaks of "missionary endeavor" (p. 188), the context leaves the reader wondering if he is speaking of evangelism or social work. But Jefferson is a wordsmith *par excellence*. You will need to keep a dictionary handy if you want him to improve your vocabulary. He is intimately acquainted with Scripture; constant biblical allusions populate his writing. Memorable statements include: "No man has a right to chide or condemn men, unless he has won the right by loving them" (p. 18); "A man conscious of what he has is stronger than a man conscious of what he lacks" (p. 274); "A sermon is an exhalation, a spiritual vapor emerging from the oceanic depths of the preacher's soul" (p. 287). The final lecture, "Building the Plan," was my personal favorite. Oh, that I had read this at the beginning of my first pastorate! ☞

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

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Straight Cuts

Wait for It—Habakkuk 2:3–4

“For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:3–4).

Habakkuk prayerfully protested both the iniquity of his Judean countrymen and the injustice of the coming Chaldean invasion (Hab. 1:1–2:1). In response, the Lord did not justify Himself to Habakkuk; God emphasized the need for each man to be justified in God’s sight. His gospel answer focused on that message: “the just shall live by his faith.” This central phrase in Habakkuk explains God’s way of righteousness. To show its importance, it is quoted at pivotal places in the New Testament (Rom. 1:16–17; Heb. 10:36–38; Gal. 3:11). Respectively, these passages emphasize “the just”/ “shall live”/ “by faith.” Hebrews quotes Habakkuk 2:3–4 to encourage each believer to patiently persevere while watching for Christ’s coming.


Yearning for His Coming

“The vision” stirs up eager anticipation. The semantic range for the Hebrew verb (*püach*) includes “speaks,” and “pants” or “puffs” (e.g., Ps. 10:5). When applied to “the end,” the “appointed time,” the usage indicates that the vision “yearns” or “pants.” Since the God-breathed vision pants for the appointed time, believers also yearn for Christ’s coming. The vision is true; it will not lie. But the misuse of biblical prophecies has stirred up hysteria. When leaders set dates for the end of the world and interpret recent events as the complete fulfillment of prophecies, confusion results. This is not a new phenomenon; it springs from an old, familiar yearning. Martin Luther sighed, “I am sluggish, tired, cold—that is, I am an old and useless man. . . . It looks to me as if the world, too, has come to the hour of its passing and has become an old worn out coat which soon has to be changed.”¹ He believed that the Lord would return no later than the year 1600.² Cotton Mather predicted that the world would end in turn in 1697, 1716, and 1736. John Wesley predicted that Christ would come in 1836. So what lesson should we learn from the mistaken predictions of these worthy men? In the words of Habakkuk 2:3, “Wait for it!”

Waiting for His Coming

The “wait” in “wait for it” is an intensive, imperative verb. We are commanded to wait. Yes, we may wish

to give more concrete answers to the lustful scorners (2 Pet. 3:3–4). But God is glorified by patient believers who take heart in God’s answer: “Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come”! By doing this, we testify to the sinful “soul which is lifted up,” and encourage the just who are living by faith. This places us on the razor’s edge of eagerness and endurance, looking for the Lord’s return. Our Lord stressed both of these in the Olivet Discourse. You should watch for His coming at any moment, for you do not know when He will come (Matt. 24:42–43). The Lord could come back sooner than you think. But according to the parable of the virgins (Matt. 25:1–13), He could come back later than you think. So we are patiently waiting while eagerly watching. Hebrews 10:36–38 uses Habakkuk 2:3 to instruct each believer: learn to patiently endure. “For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come”! We must embrace this endurance with eager expectation. This is the “righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith” (Rom. 1:17). In the Book of Romans, Paul demonstrates how faith is fleshed out in faithfulness. How appropriate that this message should come through Habakkuk, whose name means, “one who embraces.” This sentiment is found throughout the Scriptures. Initiated by Genesis 3:15 and borne along by Romans 16:20 (“the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly”), we “wait for it.” Our hope harmonizes with the waiting chorus of Psalm 25:3, 5, 21; 27:14; 37:7, 9, 34; 62:5; 130:5; Isaiah 40:31; Lamentations 3:25; Romans 8:23–25; 1 Corinthians 1:7–8; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:5; etc. Here are the voices that help us to abide as we await His appearing (1 John 2:28).

The Bible is the “wait for it” book. Even the glorified saints in heaven (Rev. 6:10) ask expectantly, “How long, O Lord?” Habakkuk 2:14 is God’s promise to both the just and the unjust: “For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” 

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

¹ Michael Parsons, “The Apocalyptic Luther: His Noahic Self-Understanding,” *JETS* 44:4 (Dec. 2001).

² Eugen Weber, *Apocalypses: Prophecies, Cults, and Millennial Beliefs through the Ages* (Random House of Canada, Sept. 21, 2011), 66.

Windows

Legalism or Love?

There was a time when there was only one rule. God declared to Adam, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, **thou shalt not eat of it:** for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:16–17, emphasis added). So that is the rule that became the focus of Satan’s questions and Eve’s demise. Famously, when asked about the prohibition, Eve replied, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, **neither shall ye touch it,** lest ye die” (Gen. 3:2–3, emphasis added). What is to be made of the fact that Eve added to God’s rule? Further, what are we to think of the fact that God chose to forever inscripturate her addition?

At first glance, a reasonable conclusion is that Eve wrongly added to God’s Word. Perhaps it could be argued that she was a legalist focused on rules. Fixating on rules is a problem.

Fixating on Rules

Some time ago, zoo officials in Kirby, Misperton, England, had to pay visitors for articles stolen by monkeys. But what puzzled them was the favorite item the animals snatched: eyeglasses. An investigation revealed the reason. The monkeys grabbed the glasses when visitors leaned over to read a small sign on the wall of the cage. The sign said: “Beware! These monkeys steal spectacles.”

Glenn Cunningham relates, “Africa’s Victoria Falls produces a cloud of mist that is often heavy enough to impair visibility. While I was walking the path that skirts the gorge into which the Zambezi River tumbles, I noticed a sign on the rim but could not make it out. Not wanting to miss whatever it might be noting, I slithered and slid through the mud out to the very brink only to read the message: ‘Danger! Crumbling Edge.’”

When we focus on the rules, we risk missing the bigger picture. Discernment is the skill that enables us to differentiate. It is the ability to see issues clearly. We desperately need to cultivate this spiritual skill, which will enable us to know right from wrong. We must be prepared to distinguish light from darkness, truth from error, best from better, righteousness from unrighteousness, purity from defilement, and principles from pragmatics. Lack of discernment leads to mistakes.

Alexander de Seversky, US aviator and engineer, was once visiting a fellow flyer in the hospital. The young man had just lost his leg. De Seversky, who had had an artificial leg for some time, tried to cheer him up. “The loss of a leg is not so great a calamity,” he said. “If you get hit on a wooden leg, it doesn’t hurt a bit! Try it!” The patient raised his walking stick and brought it down hard

on de Seversky’s leg. “You see,” he said cheerfully. “If you hit an ordinary man like that, he’d be in bed for five days!” With that he left his friend and limped into the corridor, where he collapsed in excruciating pain. It seems the young man had struck de Seversky on his good leg! He made a mistake.

A person on railroad tracks hears a train approaching, looks behind him, sees the train, and then freezes on the tracks in fear. The train “outruns” its sound—which means that by the time you hear it, it is virtually on top on you. If a train engineer sees you on a track, he or she will blow the whistle. Often it takes more than one blast to get the average person’s attention, say train engineers. But trains can’t stop the way motor vehicles can. A freight train has about a hundred cars, weighs twelve million pounds, and takes a full mile to stop. An optical illusion happens with tracks. When you see a train coming, it looks as if it is traveling half as fast and is two times farther away from you than it really is. For example, if it is going sixty miles per hour and is half a mile away, it looks as if it is traveling thirty mph and is one mile away.

A man became envious of his friends because they had larger and more luxurious homes than he did. So he listed his house with a real-estate firm, planning to sell it and to purchase a more impressive home. Shortly afterward, as he was reading the classified section of the newspaper, he saw an ad for a house that seemed just right. He promptly called the realtor and said, “A house described in today’s paper is exactly what I’m looking for. I would like to go through it as soon as possible!” The agent asked him several questions about it and then replied, “But sir, that’s your house you’re describing.”

An angel appears at a faculty meeting and tells the dean that in return for his unselfish and exemplary behavior, the Lord will reward him with his choice of infinite wealth, wisdom, or beauty. Without hesitating, the dean selects infinite wisdom. “Done!” says the angel, and disappears in a cloud of smoke and a bolt of lightning. Now, all heads turn toward the dean, who sits surrounded by a faint halo of light. At length, one of his colleagues whispers, “Say something.” The dean looks at them and says, “I should have taken the money.”

Heeding Wise Precautions

Clearly the only prohibition in God’s original command was against eating. One could reasonably argue that it was no violation to touch. But would anyone conclude that touching would be righteous? In fact, to quote from a poor example of linguistic gymnastics, isn’t

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

Charles Spurgeon

the issue what the definition of “eat” is? Adding to the absurdity, would it be right for Eve to take of this forbidden to make a fruit decoration for the kitchen table? How about making a fruit smoothie so as to drink rather than “eat” the fruit? Would prohibiting any of this indicate being guilty of legalism? Or does taking wise precautions deserve consideration?

A former police officer tells of the tactics of roving bands of thieves: “They enter the store as a group. One or two separate themselves from the group, and the others start a loud commotion in another section of the store. This grabs the attention of the clerks and customers. As all eyes are turned to the disturbance, the accomplices fill their pockets with merchandise and cash, leaving before anyone suspects more. Hours—sometimes even days—later, the victimized merchant realizes things are missing and calls the police. Too late.” How often this effective strategy is used by the Evil One! We are seduced into paying attention to the distractions while evil agents ransack our lives. In times when well-publicized sins have captured our attention, we do well to check our own moral pockets to see if we have anything left.

Our ability to think clearly yet wrongly was demonstrated tragically in 1969 at Pass Christian, Mississippi. A group of people were preparing to have a “hurricane party” in the face of a storm named Camille. Were they ignorant of the dangers? Could they have been overconfident? Did they let their egos and pride influence their decision? We’ll never know. What we do know is that the wind was howling outside the posh Richelieu Apartments when Police Chief Jerry Peralta pulled up sometime after dark. Facing the beach less than 250 feet from the surf, the apartments were directly in the line of danger. A man with a drink in his hand came out to the second-floor balcony and waved. Peralta yelled up, “You all need to clear out of here as quickly as you can. The storm’s getting worse.” But as others joined the man on the balcony, they just laughed at Peralta’s order to leave. “This is my land,” one of them yelled back. “If you want me off, you’ll have to arrest me.” Peralta didn’t arrest anyone, but he wasn’t able to persuade them to leave either. He wrote down the names of the next of kin of the twenty or so people who gathered there to party

through the storm. They laughed as he took their names. They had been warned, but they had no intention of leaving. It was 10:15 pm when the front wall of the storm came ashore. Scientists clocked Camille’s wind speed at more than 205 miles per hour, the strongest on record. Raindrops hit with the force of bullets, and waves off the Gulf Coast crested between twenty-two and twenty-eight feet high. News reports later showed that the worst damage came at the little settlement of motels, go-go bars, and gambling houses known as Pass Christian, Mississippi, where some twenty people were killed at a hurricane party in the Richelieu Apartments. Nothing was left of that three-story structure but the foundation; the only survivor was a five-year-old boy found clinging to a mattress the following day.

What Is the Point?

Focusing on rules and the possibility of legalism misses the point. God created a universe which He Himself described in just two absolute words: “very good.” This universe included a garden so very good that one result of sin was that humanity was banished. And yet, while enjoying the abundance of this now-unimaginably-good garden, God said, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat.” This is the essence of the glorious freedom God created for the enjoyment of His image-bearers. So why the rule? Ah, the rule. The rule is not the point. God is the point. When any heart fails to radically love, worship, and enjoy God, that heart may not have “eaten the fruit,” but the greatest commandment is already violated.

Spurgeon tells of a doctor’s helpful practice. “When I was in Belfast I knew a doctor who had a friend, a leading surgeon there, and he told me that the surgeon’s custom was, before performing any operation, to say to the patient: ‘Take a good look at the wound, and then fix your eyes on me, and don’t take them off until I get through the operation.’ I thought at the time that was a good illustration. Sinner, take a good look at the wound tonight, and then fix your eyes on Christ, and don’t take them off. It is better to look at the remedy than at the wound.”

The purpose of God’s first rule and all rules is the same. God deserves our highest love. All is designed to lead us there. ☞

Dan MacAvoy pastors Hanover Baptist Church in Glen Allen, Virginia.



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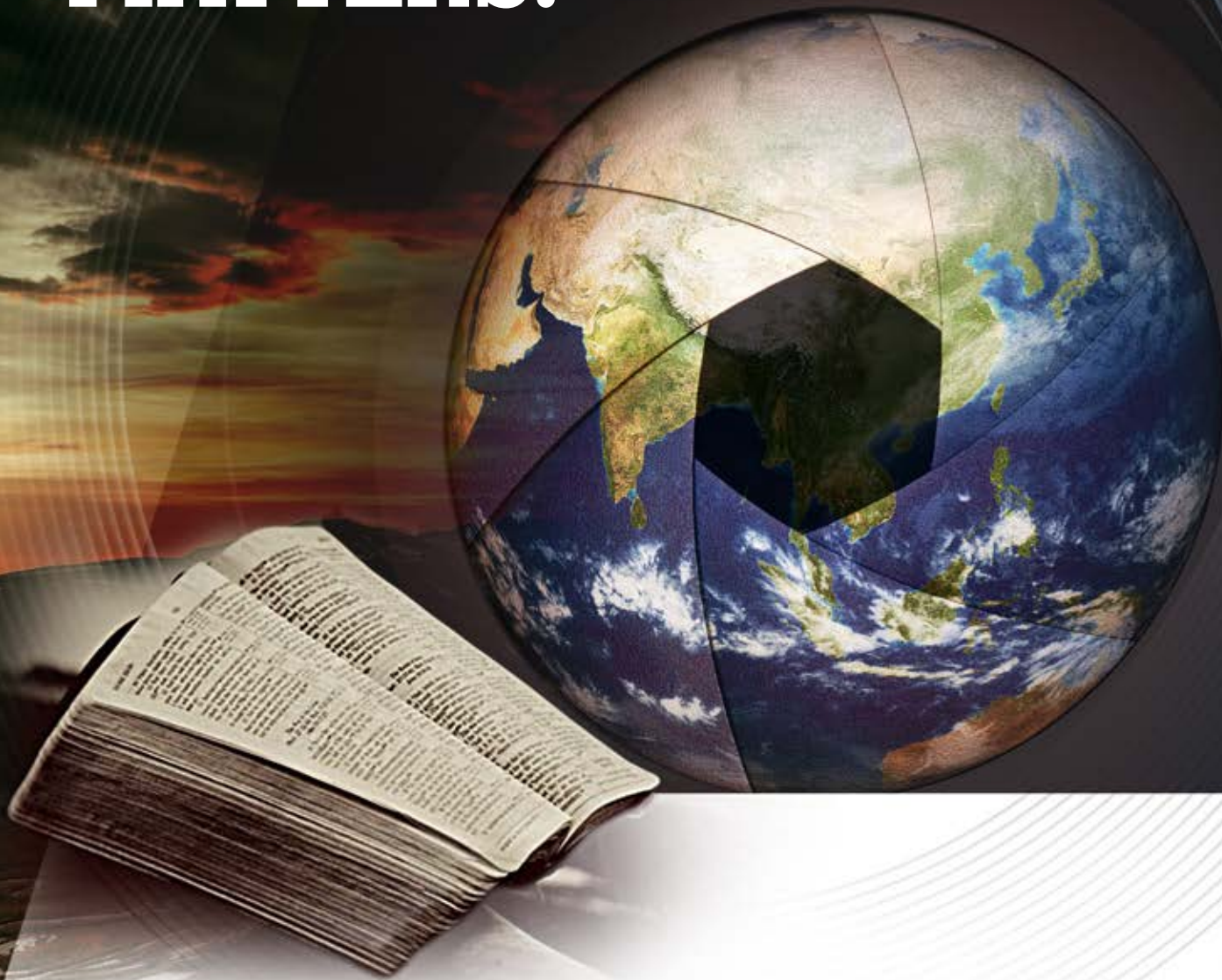
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If I were two-faced, would I be wearing this one?
—Abraham Lincoln

They kill good trees to put out bad newspapers.
—James G. Watt, Secretary of the Interior, 1982

The old year died in giving birth to the new, as the life of Jane Seymour, the English queen, departed when that of her son, Edward VI, dawned.
—T. DeWitt Talmage

I won't say the papers misquote me, but I sometimes wonder where Christianity would be today if some of those reporters had been Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
—Barry Goldwater

If I look into the future world, I will see of how great importance every moment of my time is, who therein must prepare for this everlasting fixed state.
—James Meikle, December 31, 1758

Just because you are having a bad day, this does not mean that the Kingdom is having a bad day.
—Lee Atkinson

All this year I pray that you may abide by the well of this text: "My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
—Charles H. Spurgeon

One must spend time in order to save time.
—James Hastings

Toward what destiny are you tending, and how fast are you getting on toward it?
—T. DeWitt Talmage

On the threshold of this new year . . . I would have you pause and rejoicingly remember that . . . amid the many new, untried and changing things, we shall have no new or untried Bible, no new or untried Gospel, no new or untried God!
—T. T. Shields, January 1, 1899

Each day the bank named "Time" opens a new account with you. Each night it burns the records of the day. If you fail to use the day's deposits, the loss is yours.
—Robert G. Lee

Each moment is the meeting place of two eternities.
—Unknown

The most lasting duration of time is but short, and its greatest prolongations come to a period.
—James Meikle

Fifteen minutes a day devoted to one definite study will make one a master in a dozen years.
—Edward H. Griggs

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

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The Heart of a Genuine Fundamentalist

Out of the heart proceed the issues of life. The heart is the fountain of our life and conduct. It must be guarded carefully, especially in the light of issues all of us face in the ministry. A man can have a good heart and do foolish things or a man can do the right things with a wrong heart.

The heart of Fundamentalism is more than a position. It is a personal relationship to God and His Word and requires a profound love both for God and for His Word. *A Fundamentalist, then, is one who fully and joyfully embraces the absolute authority of the Bible over every dynamic of his life and ministry.* Our positions, doctrinally and otherwise, need to be right, but our heart also needs to be right.

It is out of a heart of love for God and His Word that the Fundamentalist so submits to the Scripture's authority, not because of external pressures such as peer pressure or reputation. He does so from within his own heart.

The central focus of the glory of God is absolutely essential to genuine Fundamentalism. A genuine love for God makes the glory of God central to all that we are and all that we do. Love is the primary motivation that causes us to embrace a full devotion and loyalty both to God and His Word. This becomes the governor that dictates and controls everything that we are and everything we do.

In addition, biblical *agape* love both gives and serves God and man with no expectation of recognition or reciprocal benefit. It was the foundation of the work of the Lord Jesus in saving us from sin. From Philippians 2:5–8 we learn of the choices our Lord made on our behalf:

- He deliberately chose not to forcefully hold on to that which was rightfully His—*equality with God!* Even though He was, in essence, God.
- He deliberately chose to empty Himself—of Himself.
- He deliberately chose to take on the function and life role of a bondsman.
- He deliberately chose to assume human flesh and become like us—except for our sin.
- He deliberately chose to humble and humiliate Himself.
- He deliberately chose to become obedient (regardless of the consequences)—and He chose the extent of that obedience—death on the cross.

To the Fundamentalist, this kind of love sets a standard for life and ministry that is worlds above those set by men

and human institutions. Love will require of us sacrifices and standards of life and ministry that are worlds above any that legalism would impose. The bottom line of biblical love is *selflessness*. (On the other hand, sin is inextricably connected to *selfishness*. They are part and parcel of one another.)

It is selflessness that enables God in Christ to love us and to save us from our sin. The bottom line of selflessness is a deliberate personal determination that the welfare and benefit of others will predominate over our own personal desires, feelings, plans, and welfare. Selflessness is a highly disciplined effort to pour our lives into others at whatever cost is necessary to obtain the outcome—their blessing!

This selfless kind of love for God and His Word causes us, at whatever personal cost, to refuse to compromise fundamental teachings and commands of Scripture. It is this selfless love for God and His people that causes us to separate—not to have common cause with those who deny God or His Word. Selfless love for our congregations causes us to be careful in what we allow and in the directions we take. Selfless *agape* love isn't preoccupied with looking for loopholes. It gives everything with joy to its object. Interestingly, "the Apostle of Love," John, had more to say about obedience than the other Gospel writers. Genuine biblical love demands that we require that which is right!

So, how does this selfless love work itself out in a practical way in our life and ministry? We will, therefore, give ourselves and our world completely to God with no expectation of return. All of our life and service will be given in the service of our Creator to fulfill His pleasures, His plans, and His purposes. Our life will belong completely to our Creator. In dying to self for Him, we will find the richest, most abundant, most fulfilling, and most joyful life possible. Loving God with all our mind, soul, and strength is really our greatest personal need. This provides purpose, focus, meaning, identity, joy, confidence, stability, and power for life and service!

The issues of separation, personal associations, and personal standards of living and ministry are profoundly impacted by a genuine love for God and His Word—by a focus on the glory of God in every issue of life.

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



Misunderstanding New Beginnings

Continued from page 11

ministry through sound preaching. Paul declares plainly that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). When God’s Word is rightly proclaimed, the Holy Spirit convicts the hearers of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). Convicting us of sin, He draws us to the only right solution (John 12:32). There are two key elements to conviction: faithful proclamation of God’s Word and the drawing ministry of the Holy Spirit. No form of human manipulation accomplishes eternal spiritual work. But when the Word of God is rightly proclaimed, we would expect the Holy Spirit to work and the sinner to experience conviction.

When God works in the heart of a man, a humble response is always expected. We do not accept silent, sullen behavior from our children once they have been reprovved. God will resist the proud and give grace to the humble (1 Pet. 5:5). Proverbs 29:1 states, “He, that being often reprovved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” When God’s Spirit works in our hearts, we can—we *must* respond with humility. A good way of walking in humility is to respond to a public invitation or to talk with a pastor, counselor, or mentor. There can be no rationalization or excuses.

Submission and obedience are the only right response to the Word of God. God’s Word is truth. Convinced by truth, we must obey.

Success in walking with the Lord begins only with a response to God’s Word. The humble trek down the church aisle does not sanctify or save. The humble prayer of brokenness only acknowledges the work that lies ahead. Do not be deceived into thinking that now that you have publicly acknowledged a struggle or prayed with a Christian worker that sanctification is both initiated and completed. Rather, think strategically about the battle that you are now engaging. If you need counsel, do not be afraid to get counsel from your pastor, mentor, or godly parent. If you need accountability, seek a trustworthy friend who will commit to sharpen you. If you need to set a plan of action, invest the time in God’s Word to determine what you must do and how you must act.

Commitment to obey the Lord is a commitment to walk in God’s grace—not a determination to try harder. Remember those who function in the flesh cannot please God—even if you are using your flesh to do what is right (Rom. 8:8). Our sanctification comes as we immerse ourselves in God’s Word, delight ourselves in His truth, allow God’s Word and godly friends to reprove our darkness, and to pray without ceasing.



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THE STORY OF DAVID, PART 10:

This is the final installment of a survey of David's life. Why spend so much time on David? In short, because God does. Over 7% of the entire OT is about David; add to that the portion of Psalms written by David, and you have approximately 10% of the OT written by or about David. Of the whole segment of the OT devoted to recording the history of the monarchy (the books of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles), 34% is devoted to the story of David. And guess whose name appears in Scripture more than anyone else's? More than Abraham (311x), or Moses (848x), or even Jesus (949x), David's name appears 1189 times in Scripture. David is a central figure in biblical revelation.

Our journey through the life of David brings us at last to 2 Samuel 24—a remarkable passage of Scripture for its anticipatory explanation of an event of massive significance. The event it records occurs within the final decade of David's reign. But the passage, when compared with its parallel, opens with a theological conundrum:

2 Samuel 24:1—"And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah."

1 Chronicles 21:1—"And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."

The KJV translates these verses differently from one another ("moved" vs. "provoked"), but they are exactly the same the same verb in Hebrew. The bigger question is, who moved (incited, enticed, provoked, prompted) David to number Israel, God or Satan? In a word, the answer is "yes." But what were the mechanics of that arrangement? Was it like 2 Chronicles 18, where God is described as soliciting strategies for luring Ahab into battle, and the job is given to a demon who will be a lying tongue in all his Baal-prophets to persuade Ahab to go to battle? Or, was it like Job 2:3, where Satan moved God to destroy Job "without cause"?

In both cases the context makes it clear that God is ultimately in charge, orchestrating and accomplishing His purposes. In both cases the context is clear that the actual agent of evil is Satan. And in both passages before us the context is clear that David is, himself, freely choosing his

own course of action at the time. Perhaps this is not so rare a dynamic as we might suppose.

The Six-Day War: An Illustration

Let me illustrate these three dimensions, in reverse order, from Israel's 1967 Six-Day War. In 1967 no one forced Egypt's President Nasser to expel the UN forces in Sinai, amass his forces along Israel's border in the Sinai Peninsula, and shut off Israel's access to the Gulf of Aqaba. That was a freely chosen course of action on his part—prompted by certain factors, but a freely chosen action nonetheless. At the same time, other forces were exerting what some might consider almost "irresistible" pressure. For one thing, Russia had been prodding Egypt in that direction by insisting that their intelligence indicated that Israel was massing its troops in the north for an imminent strike against Syria (when, in fact, they weren't). So Nasser's decisions were being influenced by Russian misinformation (or disinformation). Nasser also felt pressured from another quarter: the anti-Jewish fervor that was rampant on the Arab "street" at the time. The hatred was so rabid, incoherent, and inexplicably gullible that it actually seems demonically driven. (This will not sound strange to anyone who understands the reasons that Satan would wish Israel exterminated.) And yet, despite being surrounded and vastly outnumbered by hostile enemies bent on not just defeating Israel but annihilating her, and through a whole chain of utterly unplanned and fortuitous events, these hostilities resulted in Israel's tripling her territory in a humiliatingly brief period of time. (There's a reason the Arabs do not call it the Six-Day War.) Jewish historian Michael Oren can offer only one explanation for this remarkable confluence of events and their outcome: chance. But that is never the Bible's explanation.

So our passage really should be no mystery at all. Perhaps the precise mechanics are, as to exactly how God does this and controls that. But the concept should not surprise. Still less should we see this as in any way a contradiction. What we have in these two complementary passages is a full-orbed expression of what is going on in a realm that is unseen but very real. God is

PROPHETIC WORDS, PROPHETIC ACTIONS (1 SAM. 24)

involved because He has purposes—both negative and positive. Satan is involved because sin and destruction and temptation are his business and specialty. And David is involved because he is not a robot; he willingly makes this choice for his own reasons, just as freely as you and I choose to sin in the face of temptation, or to do things that we realize in retrospect were just plain dumb.

God's Dealings with His People

Now, why was God angry with Israel? Commentators speculate, but the text never spells that out as far as I can tell, so it must not matter. But even Joab senses this is a bad idea and counsels David against it; but David insists (24:3–4). So the census is taken and the number determined (24:5–9). Then David immediately recognizes his folly (24:10). He describes his action in three words: “sin,” “iniquity,” “foolishness.”

Exactly why the census was wrong or how David knew it was wrong is not explained; we’re simply told that his “heart smote him.” Again, the commentators do their best to speculate here. But since the text does not explain, it must not be pertinent in terms of where the story is going. Since there is no express command against census-taking, even for military service, it may be that David’s personal motive was what made the census sin for him. The three options God offers David by way of chastisement (24:11–15) seem designed to display (through David) a model mentality and response to chastisement—not a calculating, self-serving attitude toward our sin and its consequences, but a childlike, confident reliance on the Lord to do what is right and best and most merciful.

It is when we come to 2 Samuel 24:15, however, that we begin to see exactly where this story has been heading. Everything up to this point has aimed at constructing this precise scene at this precise location. Biblical stories are not just echoes from the past; they are shadows of the future. The arrival and pause of the Angel at the outskirts of Jerusalem is no happy coincidence; and the wrath of the Lord at Israel that led to all this is no whim of a capricious God. David, of course, thinks this

is all about his sin of numbering the people (24:17). But we know that all this is bigger than David and his sin. God is actually dealing with His people through David.

David’s response to commanded consecration and worship is striking (24:18–25). David was king; he owned everything. And Araunah offered everything to him freely. But David refused to offer any sacrifice to God that cost him nothing. Later, on that same hill, the Son of David offered a sacrifice to God that cost Him everything. David offered a sacrifice to stay the just wrath of God on His people. Later, in that same place, the Son of David offered Himself as the sacrifice to stay the just wrath of God.

Why do I say “the same place”? Because of 2 Chronicles 3:1—“Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.” (2 Chron. 3:1). Mount Moriah? In the same place where God spared Abraham’s son, He “spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all” (Rom. 8:32).

Moreover, if the view is correct that the Angel of the Lord is a preincarnate appearance of Christ, then the one who stayed Abraham’s knife from slaying his son Isaac (and provided a ram in the thicket as a substitute), the one who directed David to erect an altar on this threshing floor of Araunah and to choose this as the site of the future temple, the one executing the wrath of God there where He would, Himself, absorb God’s wrath as our Substitute—that same one would become David’s descendant and would Himself die on this same hill as the fulfillment of all these images.

For centuries to come, the sacrifice of innocent animals in that place would serve as a continual reminder that God’s wrath against sin is a clear and present danger barely averted only by temporary sacrifice until His own Son, David’s greater son, would offer Himself as the ultimate and only sacrifice that could stay the sword of God’s just wrath once and for all. “The events that led to the choice of this place were of God’s doing. This was the place where divine wrath and divine mercy would meet” (Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles*).

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Worship Team Standards

The New Creation Church in Hillsboro, Oregon, used to have the guidelines for worship team members posted on line—that is, until someone from outside the church began to take note. Among its many requirements that are typical to Pentecostal churches (such as demonstrating that one has been able to speak in tongues), the guidelines stated that excessive weight is unacceptable for worship team members. Part of the church's rationale is that excessive weight hinders the anointing from flowing through the team members.

"We want the worship team to look the best they can! Remember that the way we look is of utmost importance. We are the first thing the congregation sees. People do judge by appearance. We never get a second chance to make a first impression. Please be sure that your style and clothing bring glory to God, isn't excessive and doesn't draw unnecessary attention to yourself."

The church did quickly respond with an apology a few days later.

Read more at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/church-bans-fat-people-from-worship-team-because-they-would-interrupt-flow-of-anointing-170814/> and <http://www.christianpost.com/news/church-apologizes-asks-for-giveness-for-banning-fat-people-from-worship-team-170924/>.

Human Rights Campaign Threatens Johns Hopkins

As reported in the last edition of *FrontLine*, two

medical researchers from Johns Hopkins University published *Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the Biological, Psychological and Social Sciences*. In that work the researchers concluded that there was very little evidence in the "born that way" theory of sexual orientation.

Quickly the backlash began. An op-ed was run in the *Baltimore Sun* that indicated Hopkins faculty members found the study "troubling." The Human Rights Campaign (HRC), "America's largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer civil rights organization," stated that nearly 700 members of the Hopkins community found the study to be misguided. Yet the study was scientific and called for further study when its researchers thought the evidence was not sufficient to make conclusions.

The HRC hinted rather directly that Hopkins would be downgraded in its Healthcare Equality Index unless the institution chose to denounce the study. Hopkins did attempt to distance itself from the study, highlighting the active support that they gave to the LGBT community in the past and present but would not remove or censure Mayer and McHugh, in the name of academic freedom.

Clearly, facts must not be allowed to influence opinion.

Read more at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/lgbt-human-rights-campaign-threatens-johns-hopkins-report-science-born-gay-transgender-new-atlantis-170770/>.

Tony Campolo: A Self-Assessment

Tony Campolo is a well known preacher and professor of Sociology at Eastern University. He repudiates many conservative views. He is so removed from Baptist Fundamentalism that many readers of *FrontLine* may hardly give him serious thought. *Christian Post* reporter Michael Gryboski interviewed Campolo, not only highlighting statements he has made, but also what he intended to convey with those statements.

Many Campolo statements on and off the record appear to support universalism, even though in the interview he denied universalism. For example, in 2005 he identified a Muslim who served his fellow man as he ought as having "a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, you just did not know it." Campolo acknowledged that that statement alone deserves the criticism it received, but he insisted in the broader context of his words, that is not what he meant.

He also attempts to define Evangelicalism by three character traits: (1) salvation comes by having "a personal transformative relationship with the resurrected Christ"; (2) acknowledging and agreeing with the Apostles' Creed; and (3) "believing the Bible was written by men into whom the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity, invaded and

possessed them, and guided what they wrote."

Read more at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/tony-campolo-on-theology-i-am-an-evangelical-interview-170538/>.

Sermons Subpoenaed

Dr. Eric Walsh is a Seventh-Day Adventist lay minister who also worked for the Georgia Department of Health. *FrontLine* carried an article regarding his employment termination last year.

Homosexual activists, being offended at a public graduation speech given by Walsh at Pasadena College, brought pressure to bear on the Georgia Department of Health. An investigation was launched one week later. Walsh alleges that Georgia Department of Public Health employees were required to listen to hours of his sermons to determine whether he was discriminatory in them. On September 28 of this year, as part of preparation for trial, the State of Georgia subpoenaed the sermons or their transcripts. The state denies that it fired Walsh over his sermons, so it is hard to fathom why they would need them in court.

Walsh is being represented by First Liberty and has resolutely declared he will not turn over his sermons unless forced. This is now the second time public officials are calling to scrutiny the preaching of a pastor.

Read more at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/georgia-demands-pastor-surrender-sermons-after-filing-federal-religious-discrimination-claim-171121/>.

What Does an Atheist Church Look Like?

The Rev. Gretta Vosper continues to make headlines. She presently is facing the possibility of what is equivalent to defrocking in the United Church of Canada. In 2001 she announced to her congregation that she did not believe in a "supernatural, interventionist, divine being." Apparently it took her until 2013 to realize she was an atheist. It did not escape the notice of her congregation, though. Her congregation dwindled from 324 that year to around 100 this past fall.

Today, services rarely reference the Bible. Vosper has rejected the unique inspiration of Scripture and is more likely to reference something else in her "sermons." The Lord's Prayer was also replaced with something she wrote entitled "As I Live." Services center on some discussion point that she wants to talk about—love, justice, care, compassion, or responsibility.

To date there has been no formal hearing to start the disciplinary process, though the process was recommended by the Conference Interview Committee. Apparently this is not a very urgent issue for the United Church of Canada.

Read more at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/canadian-church-led-by-atheist-minister-rarely-reads-the-bible-replaces-lords-prayer-with-secular-mantra-170505/>.

Parental Rights Questioned

A case is coming out of the UK that has huge ramifications for parental-rights advocates. Names in this story are withheld because the case involves a minor.

A fourteen-year-old girl wants to begin the process of gender reassignment. Her parents have not given consent,

NOTABLE QUOTES

I believe the holier a man becomes, the more he mourns over the unholiness which remains in him.—C. H. Spurgeon

If we were to remove the Bible from public schools, we would be wasting so much time punishing crimes and taking so little pains to prevent them.—Benjamin Rush

No matter who or what we are, God restores us to right standing with Himself only by means of the death of Jesus Christ.—Oswald Chambers

In weighty matters wait on God. And count nothing too light to be brought to the mercy seat.—C. H. Spurgeon

He that has trained his children for heaven, rather than earth—for God rather than man—he is the parent that will be called wise at the last.—J. C. Ryle

In the moral conflict now raging around us, whoever is on God's side is on the winning side and cannot lose; whoever is on the other side is on the losing side and cannot win. Here there is no chance, no gamble. There is freedom to choose which side we shall be on, but no freedom to negotiate the results of the choice once it is made.—A. W. Tozer

Now the crooks of this kind are not of God's making, in the same latitude as those of the former: for he neither puts evil in the heart of any, neither tempteth he any man (James 1:13). But they are of his making, but his holy permission of them, powerful bounding of them, and overruling of them to some good end.—Thomas Boston

Continued from right

murderer. One telegram was sent out saying, "God bless the person who did this blessed act." Members of the IS have demonstrated absolute brutality to fellow citizens who do not share their religious persuasion. In February of last year, the IS produced a video displaying the beheading of twenty-one Coptics.

Coptics make up about ten percent of the Egyptian population.

Read more at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/isis-celebrates-egypt-terror-attack-coptic-church-blessed-act-172059/print.html>.

citing that their daughter is too young to make such a decision.

Her school guidance counselor thinks otherwise. The counselor has already identified her relationship with another thirteen-year-old girl as "heterosexual." The parents' lawyer warned that if the family failed to follow the recommendations of the child's social worker, their daughter could be taken away from them.

Recently, similar statements were made regarding North Carolina's introduction of the Gender Unicorn, a cartoon character designed to introduce children to transgenderism. Comments were reportedly made that parental involvement may not be necessary regarding issues of gender dysphoria.

Read more at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/christian-parents-warned-14-year-old-daughter-taken-away-banning-gender-transition-171085/>.

Islamic State Attacks Egyptian Coptics

Egyptian president Abdul Fattah al-Sisi has called for three days of mourning after a bomb exploded in a Coptic Church. The Sunday, December 11, 2016, explosion was the result of a device containing more than twenty-six pounds of TNT. In the confusion of a crowded church facility, someone placed the bomb under the pews of the women's seating area of the church and then left.

It is not clear at this point who is responsible for the blast, but immediately members of the Islamic State took to social media praising the deeds of the

Continued bottom of center column

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

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ON LANGUAGE & SCRIPTURE

I think it's time we end the custom of capitalizing deity pronouns. I write about the Bible for a living, and up until a few years ago I dutifully capitalized "Him" and "His" when referring to Jesus, God, or the Spirit—I generally capitalized other pronouns, too, such as "You," "Me," or "Whom." But I've come to see that these capitalization practices create some unnecessary problems. Consider this statement, made by the Pharisees to Jesus (author's translation): "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true!" (John 8:13).

By capitalizing "Yourself" and "Your" we are implying that the Pharisees actually believe Jesus is who He says He is—because what does it mean to capitalize a non-initial pronoun when reporting direct speech? We're attributing some sort of intentionality to the Pharisees, something that can put us on dangerous mind-reading ground. The NASB has the Pharisees saying to Jesus, for example, "We wish to see a sign from You" (Matt. 12:38). Wouldn't those Pharisees have a right to tell the NASB translators, "That's not what we meant!"

I'm afraid our capitalization of deity pronouns has become like my wonderful, godly grandmother's practice of refusing to put anything on top of a Bible. After a time it almost became a superstition rather than a meaningful way of glorifying God. Not so incidentally, Muslims won't put the Quran on the ground. But the physical object we call a Bible is not sacred. It's okay to throw one away when it's in tatters. It's okay to do the same with deity-pronoun capitalization. It's a tool I'd like to keep in my writerly toolbelt for special situations and not be forced to use every time.

The venerable King James Version did not capitalize deity pronouns. I don't think we should feel bound to do it either.

I will observe that almost all Christian books published today—that I read anyway—have dropped the practice of capitalizing deity pronouns. I'm talking about books by doctrinally sound people who believe and love the word of God (notice: I didn't capitalize "word" either).

Capitalization in English does not communicate respect. Yes, we capitalize "God" and "Jesus," but we also capitalize "Satan" and "Pol Pot." Capitalization distinguishes individual entities from general categories. My goal in writing is clear communication, not maintenance of typographical traditions.

I don't like destroying traditions for no good reason; I'm a conservative. I simply think this is one tradition that has outlived any usefulness it once had.

Dr. Mark L. Ward Jr. is a Logos Pro at Faithlife.



Regional Fellowships

Caribbean FBFI Regional Fellowship

The Caribbean FBFI Regional Fellowship was held on October 24–25, 2016, at Calvary Baptist Tabernacle, Carolina, Puerto Rico, with a total of seventy guests at the meeting. There were thirty national pastors from Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Haiti, St. Vincent, Barbados, Grenada, Anguilla, Guyana, and Antigua. The theme was “Sacred Worship.”

Dr. Pete Davis (coordinator of the Piano Department at BJU) blessed the conference with his daily devotions on sacred worship and also gave a mini piano concert during the meetings. The theme was very well presented by the speakers, and there was a sense of true worship and gratitude towards our Savior. We feel all in attendance were blessed and refreshed to go back and continue to serve in their ministries.

The expenses of the meeting were met through the generous love offerings from those present at the meetings. There was a goal to collect \$3000 for a national pastor from the Dominican Republic who needed an urgent cornea transplant. Thank God, it was accomplished. We also took a love offering in support of the *FrontLine* magazine.



2016 Northern California Regional Fellowship

On November 17–18 the annual Northern California Regional FBFI met at Iglesia Bautista Fundamental Buenas Nuevas in San Carlos. One of the best features of the meeting was the great participation of the members of the host church. Pastor Jose Talavera set a wonderful example by encouraging his members to attend both to be a blessing to the guests in attendance as well as to get a blessing from the meeting. In addition, the children from the church’s school, La Escuelita Christian Academy, ministered to the pastors and other guests who came.

The theme, “Timothy, My Son . . .”—Mentoring the Next Generation,” was ably presented in every

session by the main speaker, Dr. Mike Sproul, pastor of Tri-City Baptist Church in Chandler, Arizona. Tri-City is the home of International Baptist College and Seminary, the theme of which is “Mentoring God-Fearing Leaders.” Dr. Sproul is a Chaplain Colonel in the Air National Guard. His fellow chaplain and college pastor CPT Nathan Mestler presented a workshop on Volunteer Youth Ministry in churches where it is not feasible to have a youth pastor on staff.

Pastor Rick Armstrong, a veteran missionary to the Hispanic community in California, presented the results of a poll of GFA missionaries on what local churches can do to help that community. Compiled from eighty letters of response, the list of factors that helped to that end was quite valuable. Pastor Ron Perry’s workshop on “How to Understand and Mentor Millennials in the Local Church,” based on his years of work at Ironwood Christian Camp, as a pastor in Folsom, as well as his giftedness in reaching and discipling Millennials struck a chord that is greatly needed—not only in California, but throughout the country.

Approximately half the crowd in attendance plus the school children showed up for Seth and Allison

Armstrong’s workshop, which had to be moved at the last minute to accommodate the crowd. This young ministry couple teach at Heritage Baptist Academy in Antioch and lead the youth ministry at Iglesia Biblica Bautista de Antioquia, where Rick Armstrong is the pastor. Their unique workshop was designed specifically to encourage young people who have surrendered to full-time Christian service.

This well-planned and much appreciated Regional Fellowship was enhanced by Pastor Kevin Schmidt, who promoted the meeting and led the charge to collect books and other materials for the young people in attendance.

Southern California Regional Fellowship

We had a good meeting with at least fifteen different ministries represented. A potential military chaplain was in attendance and had opportunity to talk with Colonel Willis. He found us via the FBFI website! Mark Brock “tweaked” our schedule, and Walt Brock taught on various aspects of Strategic Planning. Most of the men in attendance have not been able to hear of what goes on in the planning aspects of Ironwood. Mark Brock and Tim Lovegrove also spoke. Great Fellowship is always our goal as we gather in the beautiful Mojave.

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Have you found the Reservists and National Guardsmen living near you? Thousands live in the shadow of Fundamental churches and yet far from any military base. If you think that ministry to the military is geographically irrelevant to your church, think again. You will find Reservists and National Guardsmen not only living throughout our neighborhoods but often already attending our churches.

One of the overwhelming challenges facing Reservists is scheduling and the constant change of professional roles. Understandably, church leaders normally limit ministry participation or leadership to those who will rarely miss a Sunday. Should this mean that Reservists and Guard members cannot be encouraged to take on ministries due to attendance records made messy by military obligations? Many monthly Battle Assemblies are now three days, and the old “two weeks in the summer” for Annual Training has ballooned to three weeks. There are other requirements ranging from one week to several months in order to continue in the military. If you have a faithful member who is a Reservist, consider encouraging him or her to serve in a ministry with full acceptance. They too need a place to grow by serving.

Deployment has become a normal part of serving as a Reservist in post-9/11 America. Deployment implies re-deployment (i.e., returning home) and re-integration to civilian culture, employment, and even their own families. Some assignments within the US also require separation from families. Re-integration is not always a honeymoon, with yet another change of routines and roles. A wise pastor will take these dynamics into account when ministering to military families.

Financial woes are common among Reservists, as shown by an incredible twenty-one percent unemployment rate

among its largest demographic of eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-olds. A monthly tragedy occurs at Reserve Centers across the nation when any given Battle Assembly will potentially be attended by a Reserve Soldier who is currently homeless—a great opportunity for community outreach and Soldier support by churches.

For example, churches may need to actively support Reservists/Guardsmen in their congregation in much the same way as they would minister to single parents. My recent mobilization as a Reservist included a great deal of travel, and my wife daily shouldered the task of managing our home by herself. A very special set of friends frequently stepped in to help. One neighbor would occasionally mow our lawn or bring his snow blower in the winter when I was out of town on duty. Another friend retrieved our broken lawn mower and took it to a repair shop. Others have provided countless rides for our children when my wife could not. These acts of kindness probably seemed small to them, but to us they were enormous.

An important ministry to Christians in the military is to simply listen and seek to understand the current moral challenges they face. Many of us would like for the military to reflect Christian values. But as is the case in much of corporate America, the demand for absolute respect of all beliefs is reality. Have you listened to their thoughts on the challenge of balancing a sincere desire to defend our

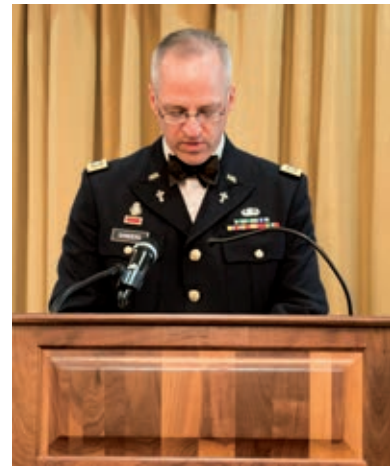


Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army





nation, support their command, and faithfully live out the calling God has placed upon their lives as Christians? Do you understand why they may not speak or even listen to disparaging commentaries about the military leaders to whom they are subordinate?

As well, there is a strong emphasis placed on teamwork in the military—a valuable dynamic seldom experienced equally in the civilian sector. This requirement, while beneficial and necessary, brings its own challenges. Team commitment may imply additional time requirements, presence in gatherings that would not otherwise be considered, and full acceptance of individuals with whom they would not necessarily associate outside of the work environment.

Also, a common misunderstanding of modern military demographics relates to the ever-increasing number of female personnel. Not long ago, a well-meaning pastor-friend sought to encourage me by promising that he would be praying for me as I minister to “the men.” Was this an example of how many Christians may be unfamiliar with the degree to which women serve in our military today? The men who serve often do so alongside, or in subordination to, female officers and NCOs (Non-Commissioned Officers). There are also countless female service members seeking to balance career demands with family needs, often as single parents. How should ministry to female military leaders look? Maybe it would look the same as always, but a more accurate awareness would surely help churches minister to their military personnel.

Finally, while engaging Reservists and Guard members, it would be helpful to avoid the assumption that all commanders are determined to wipe out any trace of Christianity within their ranks. In reality, serving in the US Army as a Chaplain affords us opportunities that would be unheard of in many civilian corporations. I praise God for the Commanders who have provided an open door to support their Soldiers.

Needs represent opportunities, and those who are “Twice the Citizen” are practically everywhere. How could you sharpen a ministry focus to those in the military already attending your church? Ask questions. Pray about effective ministry to the individuals and families who are serving our country—and living next door.

Chaplain Matthew Sanders currently serves as Chaplain for the 7227 Medical Support Unit (Army Reserve Medical Command) and may be reached at msanders55555@gmail.com.



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Mail Bag

Continued from page 5

are being heard. In the end, I do not find myself falling squarely into any one side of the discussion, but rather find myself wishing for better.

God bless!

Thomas Overmiller
East Elmhurst, NY

This and other helpful recommendations have resulted in a shuffling of the FrontLine production schedule for the March/April issue. Although the January/February issue was well underway when the responses to "Convergence" started coming in, we have worked with Dr. Mark Ward to produce what we hope will be the first of other FrontLine issues like the ones suggested above. The FBFI has always had a ministry of "warning," and FrontLine is one of its major forums for that ministry. We will publish letters of objection as well as support for our articles. So far, only the letter above and one below have been submitted to FrontLine that express views otherwise confined to the Internet. It is impossible to interact with online discussions in a magazine that takes months of preplanning to produce. We do urge readers to review that issue carefully and to discern that we suggested "Convergence" as a more accurate term to describe a moving away from separatism, to diminish the careless use of "buzz-words" that slander legitimate positions. Also, note the reference to the upcoming March/April issue of FrontLine in the letter from Dr. Ward here in Mail Bag. Ed.

Thank you for your leadership. I recently joined the FBFI after reading the most recent issue of *FrontLine* ["Convergence"]. I was so overwhelmed with its graciousness, firmness, and accuracy that I figured it was time for me to get on board. Pastor Taigen Joos is a very close friend, and Pastor Chuck Phelps is my mentor. Taigen's leadership here in New Hampshire will be excellent, and I seek to support him in any way that I can. [Taigen has accepted the role of Regional Coordinator for New England. Ed.]

In a recent conversation with him, he mentioned that you shared with him a few simple points on how to define "Convergence" or a "Convergent." Would you be willing to share them with me as well? I am not an online critic or adversary. I am just a small-church pastor in NH battling these issues in my own church. I have dear friends and sheep who insist that they are committed to the fundamentals, yet are on the fence with New Evangelicalism. This breaks my heart. This morning in Sunday school, I am beginning a twelve-week series on church history and plan on ending the twelve weeks with the current state of Fundamentalism and our church's role in preserving sound doctrine. Any advice or thoughts from you would be greatly appreciated. Thank you again for your ministry. God is using you mightily. I pray for you weekly.

Pastor Tim Lewis
New England Shores Baptist Church
Hampton, NH

In His article, Dan Unruh makes the claim that "Convergents" are men who quietly "adapt." I'm not sure it's fair to say all of us have been "stealthy." Just a point. Straight ahead!

Joel Tetreau
Chandler, AZ

"Discernment in Music," wow! What an article! Brothers, you sure hit the nail on the head. We admire your research, accuracy, and agonizing before going to print. You must have worked on it for many hours and days. Know this: your bravery is showing. We know of three churches that the SG [Sovereign Grace] music was brought into with strategic planning by the pastors.

Our thoughts about the carnal craving: it exists in the hearts of the leaders and those who rewrite SG music as well as in young people's hearts. How else can this sweeping plague be explained?

May God bless you and yours. We remain with you.

Wayne and Jane Camfield
Travelers Rest, SC

Iam really enjoying the current issue of *FrontLine* ["Convergence"]. I am the deacon chairman of a wonderful church that is facing a number of the things covered in this issue while we are searching for a new pastor. I would like very much to share this issue, at least with the other deacons and pastoral staff at our church. I am interested in possibly getting a blanket subscription that would allow the leadership of the church to read each issue of the magazine online, or perhaps a bulk subscription that would get a quantity of the magazines for each issue.

Is there anything currently set up that would allow us to do that? My hope is that these men will appreciate what *FrontLine* has to offer, investigate FBFI because of that, and perhaps join and become involved in helping to preserve and promote fundamentalism. At the very least I would like to find out about ordering a quantity of the September/October issue for 2016.

Will DuBois
Anderson, IN

We received many requests for additional copies and bulk orders for that issue. Single copies may be purchased from the Home Office at the cover price of \$3.95 plus S/H. You may purchase a ten-copy minimum for \$30 (which includes S/H) or fifty copies at cost for shipping and handling for \$120. Online and regular subscriptions are available for purchase at fbfi.org. Ed.

To Pastor Unruh,
I just wanted to say hello and express my agreement with your recent article, "Why I Left My Fundamental Baptist Church." I have noted the critical remarks about that article on Sharper Iron and the Tyler Robbins blog and was puzzled by them. Maybe I am

Continued on page 39

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Recently I met Mrs. Marsha Huber, who told me the wonderful account of her father's salvation. I was so moved by her story that I asked her permission to use it, and she graciously told me that I could. I trust it will be a blessing to you and that you can share her story with others.

"Dear God, it's me again for you-know-who. Lord, please save my father for Your honor and glory. Please grant him one more day so that he may accept you." I wept as I had done so many other times through the past fifteen years. As I blotted the wetness from my eyes, my mind wandered back to days long past. I could hear my mother's voice pleading, "Joe, do you have to go to the bar tonight?" Father didn't answer, and he slammed the door behind him.

It was an all-too-familiar scene at our house in the coal regions of central Pennsylvania. Although I was showered with love and gifts of food, clothing, and a warm place to sleep, our home was void of the close bond that a Christian family shares. Mother did her best to teach me the ways of God. Father taught me how to shoot pool and sip beer. There were very few things we did together as a family because of the spiritual darkness in my father's life. That stubborn German had come from a family of ten children. When his mother died in her early forties, Father set out on his own. He forsook his religious training and parochial indoctrination and had, quite dogmatically, no use for the church or God. Joe became a self-made, proud, hard-working man.

Mother prayed faithfully for the Lord to touch his heart. People at the church had his name on their prayer lists. There were times when he was so bitter he would not allow Mother to even mention Jesus' name. "Grace," he would say harshly, "you have your religion, and I have

mine. Just leave me alone." And she did. Mother never nagged, content to allow the Lord to do His own work.

I left for college. As God intensified my burden for Father, I joined Mother in daily prayers for his salvation. Even after I was married, the first name mentioned in my prayers was Father's. Our new church family added his name to their prayer sheets. That was so long ago. Now a new year had just been ushered in, with no change in my father's heart. As I knelt against a cushioned pew, warm salty tears trickled down my face. "Dear Lord," I pleaded, "Please save my father."

In his "good" times, Father was very receptive to the gospel. He listened to radio preachers and read Christian magazines; sometimes he even discussed spiritual matters. We could sense that his soul was close to salvation. I wrote him letters and told him of my love. Mother prayed and waited. "God, give Joe one more day . . . just one more day."

Father's "bad" times were bad for all of us. Satan's power seemed to woo him beyond our reach. Nothing satisfied him except beer and bars, and the insatiable desire to win the lottery controlled Father's every thought. His attitude grew worse every time he slid into this hostile pattern.

Hopeless as it seemed, we prayed for twelve more years. Mother was so wise, knowing when to speak and when to be silent. One wintry evening she gave him a Christian magazine that made plain the way of salvation. She said nothing. Alone at the kitchen table on a bitter cold February night, my father's heart was broken. He acknowledged his sin, repented of it, and trusted in Jesus Christ to be his Savior. Father knew what he needed to do next. Impetuously, he rushed down to the basement and came back up carrying a case of beer. He opened each bottle and

poured it down the kitchen sink. Back he went to the basement until every bottle of beer and wine had been emptied. The work was finished—Jesus' sacrifice for my father was complete. Being a proud man, Father did not announce his decision to anyone. The next few weeks, however, revealed a change in attitude that only God could have made. Mother called me often and reported subtle ways his lifestyle was changing. One sunny Tuesday afternoon, Mother surprised me with a visit to my church schoolroom. With a smile on her face, she handed me an eight-page letter from Father. I ripped it open and read it hastily. "... What I am trying to say, dear daughter, is that I am born again." I grabbed my mother and hugged her for all I was worth. "Mom, it's here! It's finally happened—Dad is saved!"

"Yes, dear, it's done for good."

I clasped the letter and ran around the church, telling everyone that Father had come to the Lord. Those who had been praying for years rejoiced and wept with me. I had to see Father. "Mom, I'm going home with you right now." The hour it took

to drive home seemed like a year. I hurried into the house. There he was, my new father, sitting on the sofa with a smile from ear to ear. "Father, dear Father!" I wept, and we embraced. We ate, laughed, and took pictures. Father re-enacted for me his conversion, then showed me how he'd poured all his beer down the drain. We worked together to make a scrapbook of his conversion, complete with pictures of his first Sunday at church.

"I've got some more things to put in this, Marsha," he said, handing me a sheaf of letters. I looked at them and wept again. My father had saved all the anguished letters I had written him, letters expressing my love and yearning for his salvation. I'd thought them ignored, wasted. But he had saved every one of them.

This has been a tremendous testimony! I pray it will encourage you to never give up on your loved ones who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

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

Mail Bag

Continued from page 36

missing something, but I don't understand what their problem is with your article.

I regard it as a matter of courtesy and common sense for any candidate for pastor to advise the church if he has an agenda for change, before the church calls him. I don't have a big problem with a pastor with an agenda for changing the church's affiliations, music, eschatology, polity, stand on Bible versions, women's slacks, Calvinism, or whatever, as long as he clearly and publicly states that agenda in advance. Failure to do so is unethical, impractical, and might lead to a mass exodus or to the new pastor being fired. I think that is what you were trying to express in your article, and I am with you on that.

*Thomas Williamson
Chicago, IL*

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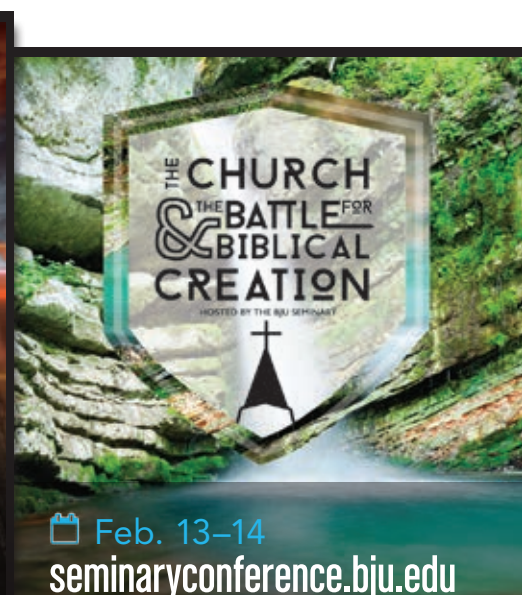
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