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FrontLine

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

Holy
Bible

Wars and
Rumors of Wars

Wars and Rumors of Wars



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Our sincere thanks to CH (Col) Joe Willis, USAR Retired, for coordinating this issue of *FrontLine* magazine.

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December 8, 1941: The headlines across the country read, “WAR!” and “US at War!” Again our country would find itself in the throes of a worldwide conflict. Whether or not we would be victorious in this conflict, at least part of the outcome would be the same: many American young men would die in battle, and thousands of others would come off battlefields from around the world bearing the scars of war—where countries choose to defend their sovereignty and where kings settle disputes.

War is not new to mankind. It has been a part of our history from the beginning of time and from the introduction of sin into God’s perfect creation, and it will continue to be the norm until the Lord returns. Many look forward to the day when the trumpet shall sound “and the dead in Christ shall rise.” We anticipate this event to occur at any time, and many attempt to calculate the Lord’s return by comparing Scripture such as Matthew 24:6 (“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.”) to current events. But what does this really mean, and what should the role of the Christian be until “the end” comes?

In this edition, “Wars and Rumors of Wars,” we will briefly explore the eschatological premise of this important passage

as well as take an account of what the Lord would have us do until His return. We will also discuss the military’s establishment of the office of the chaplaincy at the onset of the American Revolution and will present instances in which chaplains have made a difference in our society by sharing the truth of God’s Word with men and women who desperately need to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God is still making a difference in the lives of His creation every day, and our mission is quite simple: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” May God find us faithful in the endeavor, whether we are laymen, pastors, evangelists, missionaries, or chaplains serving around the world.

FBFI dedicates this edition to the brave men and women who for centuries have chosen to run into the battle instead of running from it—to the brave men and women who have answered the call of our government to defend the freedoms we so gratefully possess—to the brave men and women who protect our streets, who protect our homes, and who tend to us at a minute’s notice when we find ourselves in danger, unable to tend to ourselves. To them we are eternally grateful!

—Joe Willis



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That we may present every man perfect in Christ
Colossians 1:28-29

I was a house church preacher . . . from China. Thirteen years ago, I went to be admitted into a Timothy & Titus Training program for Chinese house church preachers (also known as 2T program) in a pacific island. Many fundamentalist Baptist pastors from FBFI came to teach us. Their commitment to the truths of the Bible has great impact upon my life. During my stay there, I began to read *FrontLine* magazine online. Recently I have just received a *FrontLine* magazine. I love to read it.

*Jude Yuan
Chantilly, VA*

Just a word of appreciation to Dr. Minnick for the section Sound Words in the *FrontLine* magazine!! For we pastors far from Greenville, in the land of Lodebar, the articles are such a blessing and encouraging. I have just retired after fifty-plus years of pastoral ministry. You have been such an encouragement to my life. Thank you!!

*Pastor W. L. Wade
Danville, VA*

Every article in the September/October 2018 issue on *Making Entertainment Choices* is excellent! These topics have been addressed in realistic, practical ways, with the plumb line [of] Scripture to consider. I have been informed, instructed, enriched, and convicted by the treatment of these relevant topics.

We all need margin in our lives, and some are bound to use social media in their occupation, so there is much food for thought presented. Being reminded of our goal as a believer to glorify God and be an accurate reflection of Him is a constant need for every thought, word, and activity of life.

Thank you, contributors, for pointing us to truth about the use of our resources and energies, giving us good questions to ask ourselves, and Scriptures to consider when making decisions about our choices.

*Carol Mackey
Taylors, South Carolina*

Horkavy is currently working toward the completion of his DMin at International Baptist College and Seminary in Chandler, Arizona, where he also teaches as an adjunct faculty member.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

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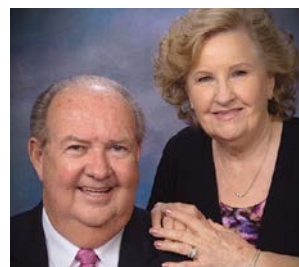


On January 20, 2019, Calvary Baptist Tabernacle Ministries, Carolina, Puerto Rico, honored

Pastor Johnny Daniels

as he stepped down after 38 years as senior pastor. (Pastor Billy White assumed the role as senior pastor.) Dr. Daniels will now be focusing his service as president of the Bible College and presenting this ministry in the United States and other countries. He and his wife, Barbara, will continue to live in Puerto Rico.

For over 20 years, Dr. Daniels served as the FBFI Caribbean Regional Coordinator, working tirelessly to plan and provide annual meetings for pastors from up to 35 countries touched by the ministry of Calvary. In addition to the regular responsibilities of planting and growing a large church and Bible College, he led the rebuilding of Calvary and numerous other Caribbean ministries in the aftermath of devastation from several major hurricanes. Under his leadership, schools and churches have been built and rebuilt, pastors and missionaries have been called and trained, souls have been saved, and islands have been changed for the cause of Christ. To our dear friend in Puerto Rico, all of us at *FrontLine* say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"



Dr. Keith E. Gephart

"retired" from full-time pastoral ministry as senior pastor of Berean Baptist Church of San Tan Valley, Arizona, after serving the church for more than ten years. On the same day the church

installed Pastor Skylar Bernick as his successor. Pastor G. is now pastor emeritus and will remain an active member of the church. Pastor G. has been mentoring Pastor Bernick for the past seven years. Gerald Penny will serve as an assistant pastor under Pastor Bernick.

Ryan Horkavy pastors Crossroad Baptist Church of Arizona in Litchfield Park, which began as a church plant in 2008. Before being called to church-planting work Ryan served as the college/career pastor at Morningside Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, where he and his wife, Jennifer, were accepted as missionaries with Open Door Baptist Missions. Pastor



Continued at left

Wars and Rumors of Wars

Air Force Captain Ben A. Loft was still a new believer. He had believed the gospel about six months ago through the ministry of Chaplain Tom Harris. Now the two met regularly to talk about the Bible and about issues in Ben's life. This time, Ben had a question.

"Chaplain Harris, I've been listening to podcasts about Bible prophecy. They're saying that signs of Jesus' coming are being fulfilled all around us. In fact, they talk about the 'convergence' of the signs—lots of signs are being fulfilled all at once, like wars and rumors of wars. They say that anyone who can discern the signs will know that the Rapture is near. But I never hear you talk about these signs, and I know you believe in the Rapture. What gives?"

Tom Harris smiled. He knew exactly the people to whom Ben had been listening. They were broadcasters and writers whose livelihoods depended on trying to match newspaper headlines with biblical prophecies. He reached behind him and pulled a book off the shelf.

"Here, Ben. Take a few moments to read a chapter of this book and then tell me whether it's the kind of thing you're hearing."

Ben was a fast reader, and he blazed through the chapter in about fifteen minutes. It talked about how all the world's nations were building up their armies and navies, how they had invented new technologies of warfare, how skirmishes

were occurring around the world, and how it looked as if a global conflict were imminent. The author pointed to all these "wars and rumours of wars, nations rising against nations" as signs that the Rapture must be near at hand.

"Yes," said Ben, "That's basically what I've been hearing. But this is an old book."

"That's perceptive of you," said Chaplain Harris. "It's over a century old, published in 1910. The global conflict actually occurred just a few years later. Then there was another one—you may have heard of the First and Second World Wars." He smiled again. "So, Ben, was the Rapture near?"

"Obviously it wasn't. More than a hundred years have passed since then without the Rapture. So how do we know when the Rapture is near, and what does the Bible mean by the signs of Jesus' coming?"

Tom took a deep breath. He was going to have to go deeper into the Bible than he usually would with a young believer; but Ben was smart and very interested.

"Well, Ben, those signs are listed in a speech from Jesus called the Olivet Discourse. You can find it in Matthew 24–25, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Before the speech, Jesus had recently foretold the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. The disciples asked these three questions: (1) 'When will these things be?'—'these things' refers to the destruction of the temple. (2) 'What will be the sign of Your coming?' And (3) 'What will be the sign of the end of the age?' Ben, what age were the disciples living in when they asked these questions?"

Ben thought back to what he and Chaplain Harris had talked about. He knew that the Church began on Pentecost, and he could see that the Olivet Discourse occurred before Jesus went to the cross. "It must be the age when God was dealing with Israel as a nation."

"That's exactly right," said Chaplain Harris. "The church did not yet exist. It had only been hinted at. Nothing had been revealed about a Rapture at all. So at the Olivet Discourse, the disciples weren't asking about a Rapture, and Jesus didn't give them signs of a Rapture."

"But they asked about the Second Coming, didn't they? What are the signs for?"

Tom replied, "Some of the signs were actually for an event that is already past from our perspective. Remember that the disciples asked how they would know when the temple was going to be destroyed. Jesus answered that question in Luke 21:20–24. Those are the signs that Jerusalem was about to fall, and that happened in AD 70."

"But some events are still future, right? Like the Second Coming and the end of the age? What about them?" asked Ben.

"Remember that Jesus' Second Coming occurs in two stages. First, He comes in the air to take His Church to heaven—that's the Rapture. Then, seven years later He comes to the earth to judge the world, establish His kingdom, and rule for a thousand years. Right now, God is dealing with the Church. After the Rapture, God starts dealing with Israel again. It's as if the Church Age is a parenthesis in the middle of the age when God is dealing with Israel. That age will resume when the Tribulation begins. So the signs in the Olivet Discourse are all about the Second Coming to earth, and they all occur during the Tribulation."

"Wait a minute," said Ben. "What about the wars and rumors of wars? Isn't that going on right now?"

"It is," replied Chaplain Harris. "It was going on a hundred years ago. It was going on long before that. Look at the text in Matthew 24:6. Jesus talks about false Christs and about wars and rumors of wars. Then what does He say?"

Ben read aloud, "The end is not yet." He paused, repeated the words, and paused again. "Wait a minute! Jesus is actually saying that these things aren't signs at all. Just because they happen, don't think that the end of the age or the Second Coming is near. The end is not yet."

A grin spread across Tom's face. "You got that quicker than I thought you might, but you're exactly right. Jesus is saying that there will *always* be false Christs, and there will *always* be

wars and rumors of wars. Don't get rattled by those things because they do *not* point to the Second Coming."

"Well, then, what *are* the signs?" Ben asked.

"They fall into three categories. The first category Jesus calls 'the beginning of sorrows.' These signs occur during the first half of the Tribulation, and they mean that the Second Coming is beginning to grow near, but it's not too close yet. The next category is 'great tribulation,' and it begins when the Abomination of Desolation appears in the temple. That's when the Antichrist reveals himself halfway through the Tribulation. If you're on earth and see that event, you can mark off the days until Jesus comes again. The third category includes only one sign, the 'sign of the Son of Man appearing in the heavens.' Jesus appearing in the sky is the sign of the end of the age. When He arrives the new age of the kingdom is about to begin."

Ben's brow furrowed as he looked at Matthew 24. "I see those markers in the text. I'll bet I could pick out which signs go in which category. But you're saying that we're not supposed to be looking for any of these right now?"

"Precisely. The signs begin only after the Church has been raptured into heaven."

Ben still wasn't satisfied. "Then what *are* the signs of the Rapture?"

Chaplain Harris smiled. "There aren't any. The Bible never gives us any signs of the Rapture. Nothing has to happen before the Rapture can occur. We are supposed to be expecting the Rapture at any moment. In fact, our conversation here could be interrupted by Jesus returning in the air, and we'd have no advance warning at all. We always have to be ready."

That remark sobered Ben. "We have an old sergeant who tells his airmen, 'Make sure that when it's your time to die, all you have to do is die.' I always thought that was pretty good advice, but I guess I'm going to have to revise it. I need to make sure that when it's time to be raptured, all I have to do is go to be with the Lord. No loose ends, no unconfessed sins, no unfulfilled responsibilities. I should always be ready."

"Yes, Ben," said Chaplain Harris. "That is exactly what an imminent, any-moment, pre-tribulational Rapture means."

"Hooah!" said Ben. "Heard. Understood. Acknowledged. I won't be looking for any signs. I'll be looking for the Lord."

Chaplain Kevin T. Bauder is a research professor at Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Plymouth, Minnesota. He is also a Civil Air Patrol chaplain and has held pastorates in Colorado, Iowa, and Texas.



Until He Returns

Chaplain in Secular Institutions

An institution is “a complex of positions, roles, norms and values, lodged in particular types of social structures” that is necessary to organize human activity into stable patterns.¹ While there are a variety of social structures that obtain to the definition of institution, some of the most familiar include the military, hospitals, law-enforcement agencies, and prison systems.

People are any institution’s primary capital. Thus, for an institution to be healthy, it must have healthy people, and this includes spiritual fitness.² Traditionally, institutions have not only recognized the existence of this spiritual component but have sought to address it through the employment of chaplains: clergy who are officially attached to an institution. Precisely because of this association, the chaplain is also obligated to the behaviors and beliefs of that institution, even when those norms and values are secular.

At first glance, institutional ministry may seem counter-intuitive for chaplains, especially those like independent Baptists who have historically separated from the secular. Nevertheless, there are many independent Baptist chaplains (and others of like faith and practice) who are firmly embedded in secular institutions.

Thus, we are faced with a fundamental question: “Should biblical Baptists be part of secular institutions as chaplains?” Time nor space allows for a fundamental answer to this fundamental question, so I proffer only the perceived pragmatic consequence of removing Baptist chaplains from institutional ministry: opportunity to reach otherwise unreached peoples with the gospel will be forfeited.

This pragmatic answer may be too simplistic. But, instead of defending it, I will pose a practical question: “Can Baptist chaplains biblically operate within institutional ministry?” I think if we can answer the practical question of “can,” we will also answer the philosophical question of “should.” But what does this behavior look like? How should Baptist chaplains operate within institutions? Knowing theology and understanding doctrine are key, but so is taking that doctrine and theology and having the wisdom to apply it within the institution. This wisdom is manifested in five ethical applications of biblical theology in institutional ministry.

Ethical Rule #1: We will obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29).

Often the dynamic of sacred ministry in secular institutions is misunderstood—people think chaplains must bifurcate the two. But the ministry and the institution are not mutually exclusive. There are not times when the chaplain must act secular and ignore the sacred. Nor does he ever only conduct ministry independent of the institution. The chaplain’s ministry is at all times a sacred duty that must be exercised within the secular institution. In this way, the scriptural injunction “to obey God rather than man” is greater than just a desperate battle cry when things are difficult. Rather, it is the permeating ethic by which the chaplain administers his ministry within the institution at all times.

This is why chaplains cannot forget that their primary vocation is to be preachers of the gospel. Contemporary culture is thirsty for the gospel and not for the distracted preaching against fad issues of the day. When Paul warned the Galatians to beware of those who preach any other gospel, he was not simply alluding to false religions. He was also cautioning against any of those who would change the gospel by adding superfluous issues to its message. Likewise, chaplains must preach the gospel and only the gospel within the institution. They must please God rather than man.

Ethical Rule #2: We will do unto others as we would have them do unto us (Matt. 7:12).

Unfortunately, this axiom is usually considered in light of good works—we want people to be kind to us, so we are kind to them. We want our neighbors to respect our things, so we respect theirs. But within a social institution the “Golden Rule” has deeper meaning.

Consider the Golden Rule within the context of the First Amendment, specifically the Establishment Clause: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” This religious protection is not merely a Christian right; it also protects the rights of the Muslim, the Catholic, the Wiccan, even the Atheist. Thus the Golden Rule becomes an imperative for institutional ministry. I want my freedom to exercise my religion protected, which means I want, if necessary, my neighbors to protect that right for me. Therefore, I will do unto them as I would have them do unto me. I will protect my neighbors’ constitutional rights, for if their rights are revoked, then so are mine.

Ethical Rule #3: In malice we will be children, but in understanding we will be men (1 Cor. 14:20).

An outspoken atheist once complained that “the most hostile of . . . communications have come from Christians . . . who claim to be transformed by Christ’s love.”³ Christians cannot be malicious in their presentation of the gospel. Platitudes such as “loving the sinner but hating the sin” or “having righteous indignation” become white noise if delivered with animosity and belligerence. By no means am I advocating a soft stand against sin and wickedness. Rather, I advocate a better understanding of the people to whom we minister. I like the way the late evangelist Chuck Cofty adapted Carl Sandburg’s description of Abraham Lincoln: “We need men of steel with hearts of velvet.”

Ethical Rule #4: We will have charity, for without it we are nothing (1 Cor. 13:1).

This precept must logically follow the third rule. We cannot remove maliciousness from our behavior without replacing it with the love of Christ. In college, my General Teaching Methods professor, Dr. Denis McBride, would remind us that our students do not care how much we know until they know how much we care.⁴ The saying is cliché, but it is wrought with the biblical principle found in 1 Corinthians 13 in which

Paul admonishes us that though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels, if we lack charity, we are “become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” As institutional ministers we can say all the right things, even preach the true gospel, but if we do not love people, all is in vain.

Ethical Rule #5: We will do those things that are not only lawful but are also expedient (1 Cor. 10:23).

Just because we can do something in good conscience does not always mean we should. This ethical rule is of tremendous importance to institutional chaplains who daily interact with the social and cultural upheaval that is endemic to a secular society. Too often, why things are said is not emphasized nearly as much as what is said. But, according to 1 Corinthians 10, motive is exactly what determines whether things that are lawful are also expedient.

In institutional ministry, relational ministry has more effect than offensive railing. Recognizing people for who they are, desperately in need of the gospel’s saving grace, is more productive than taking a stand simply because we do not agree with what they believe. We lack expediency if we fail at loving the sinner even while we rail against his sin.

Conclusion

Chaplains do not have a monopoly on unique ministry. But the moral relativism in vogue today, though a concern to churches, has an indelible impact on institutional ministry, since institutions reflect the society from which they are extracted. Therefore, chaplains, cannot ignore the reality that their call to “preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” comes with unique challenges, and in order to be effective they must know how to ethically apply biblical theology within their respective institution.

CDR Tavis J. Long, CHC, USN, is the Force Chaplain at Naval Air Forces, Atlantic, headquartered in Norfolk, Virginia. CDR Long received his MDiv from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary and a PhD from Bethany Divinity College and Seminary. In addition to being a Navy Chaplain, CDR Long is also designated as an ethicist for the United States Navy and holds an MA in Ethics and Public Policy from George Mason University. He resides with his wife, Kendal, and four children in Chesapeake, Virginia.



¹ Jonathan Turner, *The Institutional Order* (New York: Longman, 1997), 6.

² An abundance of data demonstrates the correlation between spiritual health with both physical and psychological wellbeing. While much of this data references spirituality as an end to itself (even though true believers know spirituality is a means that ends in the true worship of God), the point is established that healthy institutions need spiritually healthy individuals.

³ Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), Introduction.

⁴ Denis McBride, “Class Lecture Notes,” ED 201: General Teaching Methods (Pensacola Christian College, 1999).

Starting Off Right

The Choice to Put Chaplains in the Military

The military chaplaincy in the United States began early in our history. Though the idea of chaplains in military contexts existed long before this time, the desire for chaplains took root in this nation during the American Revolution. As men fought for their independence from Britain, they sought the guidance and support of the clergy throughout the Colonies. Though it can be argued whether or not our nation began as a Christian nation, it is clear that religion played a large role. Many in leadership recognized the need of religious support and guidance on the campaign for freedom.

Colonial Times

Early in the American Revolution, no official means of appointing chaplains for the soldiers existed. This problem existed partially due to the lack of the organization of the Continental Army as well as the lack of an organized government at this time.¹ Each state had its own militia with its own way of appointing chaplains. At the beginning of the war, “ministers volunteered to work with the troops, but soon each colony initiated a plan to establish and maintain the chaplaincy. At first, this led to many inconsistencies in the way army chaplains were chosen by various colonies and various divisions of the military.”² In some colonies the chaplains were appointed by government officials, some by commanding officers in a regiment, and others were elected by soldiers.³ Though an organizational structure was lacking at this time, one can see the importance that was placed on the spiritual wellbeing of the soldiers who fought in the American Revolution.


Along with attending to the spiritual needs of the soldiers, chaplains during the Revolution also fought alongside the soldiers. One author recounts when a clergy member serving in the capacity of a chaplain took up arms and fought along with the soldiers that he was serving. He states, “The brave Dr. Latta, of Lancaster Co., Pa., not only served as chaplain, but on one occasion, when an unusual number of his parishioners were drafted into the army, in order to encourage them, shouldered his knapsack, and accompanied them as a common soldier on their campaign.”⁴ This is just one of many stories about a chaplain who fought along with

the men he was supporting, as it was common during the American Revolution.

Though chaplains existed in the ranks of the army from the beginning of the war, they were not officially recognized as such until later. The birthdate of the chaplaincy in the United States is considered to be July 29, 1775. On this date the Continental Congress first recognized chaplains as part of the army by voting to allow each regiment to have a chaplain who would be paid \$20 a month (equal to the pay of an army captain).⁵ Once it had been recognized as a position in the Continental Army, the chaplaincy grew.

Official Recognition

A motivating factor in the official recognition of the chaplains in the army was found in the commander-in-chief himself, General George Washington. Many records exist of Washington’s desire for chaplains to minister to his soldiers. Even before the American Revolution, during the French and Indian War, Washington desired a chaplain for the men he led. He repeatedly requested a chaplain from the governor of Virginia, citing the necessity of the chaplain for the moral and spiritual wellbeing of his soldiers, but he was turned down.⁶ Writing to Governor Dinwiddie, Washington stated, “It is a hardship upon the Regiment I think, to be denied a chaplain.”⁷ Though he faced difficulty in his early years, Washington eventually received his wish for chaplains in the Army when Congress authorized one chaplain in each regiment (comparable to the battalion chaplain in our modern Army). The regimental chaplain would serve a few hundred soldiers. Later in the war, the Continental Congress decided to change the appointment from regimental to brigade. This more than doubled the number of soldiers for whom a chaplain was responsible. With the increase of responsibility came a raise in pay to \$40 (equal to the pay of an army colonel).⁸ John Hancock wrote to General Washington explaining that the change was necessary in order to employ “Gentlemen of superior Learning and Virtue to fill those Stations.”⁹ With this adjustment, Congress recognized the need for high-quality chaplains to fill the positions rather than any clergy member who desired a post. Though they did not allow as many chaplains as Washington desired, Congress still recognized the need and sought to make provision to meet that need.



Throughout the history of the United States Army, the need for chaplains has been recognized and upheld by many commanding officers as well as government officials. Because the need has not changed, the essential roles and responsibilities have not changed. Other than direct participation in combat, the roles and responsibilities of the chaplain in the Continental Army were not much different than those of the modern-day Army chaplain.

Chaplains had a greater variety of duties than one might expect. They educated officers and soldiers through sermons and in conversation, helping them to understand the reasons for the war in order to build morale and instill a sense of patriotism. They served as political advisers to brigade officers. Chaplains not only remained in camp, but also accompanied soldiers into battle and on the march. Among their more conventional responsibilities, they preached, held prayer meetings, wrote letters for soldiers, officiated at marriages and funerals, and visited the sick, wounded, and dying.¹⁰

Chaplains provided an essential element to the Continental Army. While soldiers were away from their hometowns and their churches, the chaplains were able to provide the religious support that they needed. This could be done through regular worship services as well as counseling and other spiritual education. The chaplain also played the important role of advisor to the commander, helping him be informed of any possible negative impact to the soldiers under his command.

Modern Day

The modern-day Army chaplain essentially does the same tasks, though they may look different simply due to the passage of time and changing contexts. Soldiers today are in just as much need of a chaplain as they were in the American Revolution. Chaplains have a unique opportunity to reach the hearts of soldiers. Though the chaplain can no longer fight side-by-side with the soldiers, he is still with them. The chaplain wears the same uniform as the soldiers and goes where the soldiers go. As soldiers encounter unique challenges, the chaplain is able to be there to provide the spiritual help that is needed. It is the chaplain's job to minister to the soul of the soldier. It is also the chaplain's job to be an advisor to the commander. The commander is concerned with the fighting

capability of his soldiers. Part of that capability comes from the spiritual strength of the soldier. The chaplain can assess this aspect of the soldiers in the unit and help the commander in his responsibility to the Army. As independent fundamental Baptist chaplains, we have an opportunity to share the good news of the gospel, which can bring light to the souls of the soldiers to whom we minister. As we perform the duties required of the government, we also can perform the duty required of our Lord and Savior: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:19–20). With a commission from our government and this commission from our Lord, we seek to care for the souls of the soldiers in our care, just as the chaplains in the American Revolution sought to care for the soldiers that fought for their freedom.

Chaplain Matthew Myers is the assistant pastor at Faith Baptist Church in Pensacola, Florida, where he serves with his wife and son. He is also an Army Reserve Chaplain serving with the 350th Civil Affairs Command.



¹ Metzger, Charles H. "Chaplains in the American Revolution," *The Catholic Historical Review* 31, no. 1 (1945): 32. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25014520>.

² "Abraham Baldwin: Revolutionary War Chaplain," Georgia Historical Society, accessed October 25, 2018, <https://georgiahistory.com/education-outreach/online-exhibits/featured-historical-figures/abraham-baldwin/baldwin-revolutionary-war-chaplain/>.

³ Metzger, 32–33.

⁴ Joel T. Headley, *The Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution* (New York: C. Scribner, 1864), 72, <https://archive.org/details/chaplainsandcle01headgoog/page/n72>.

⁵ <https://georgiahistory.com/>

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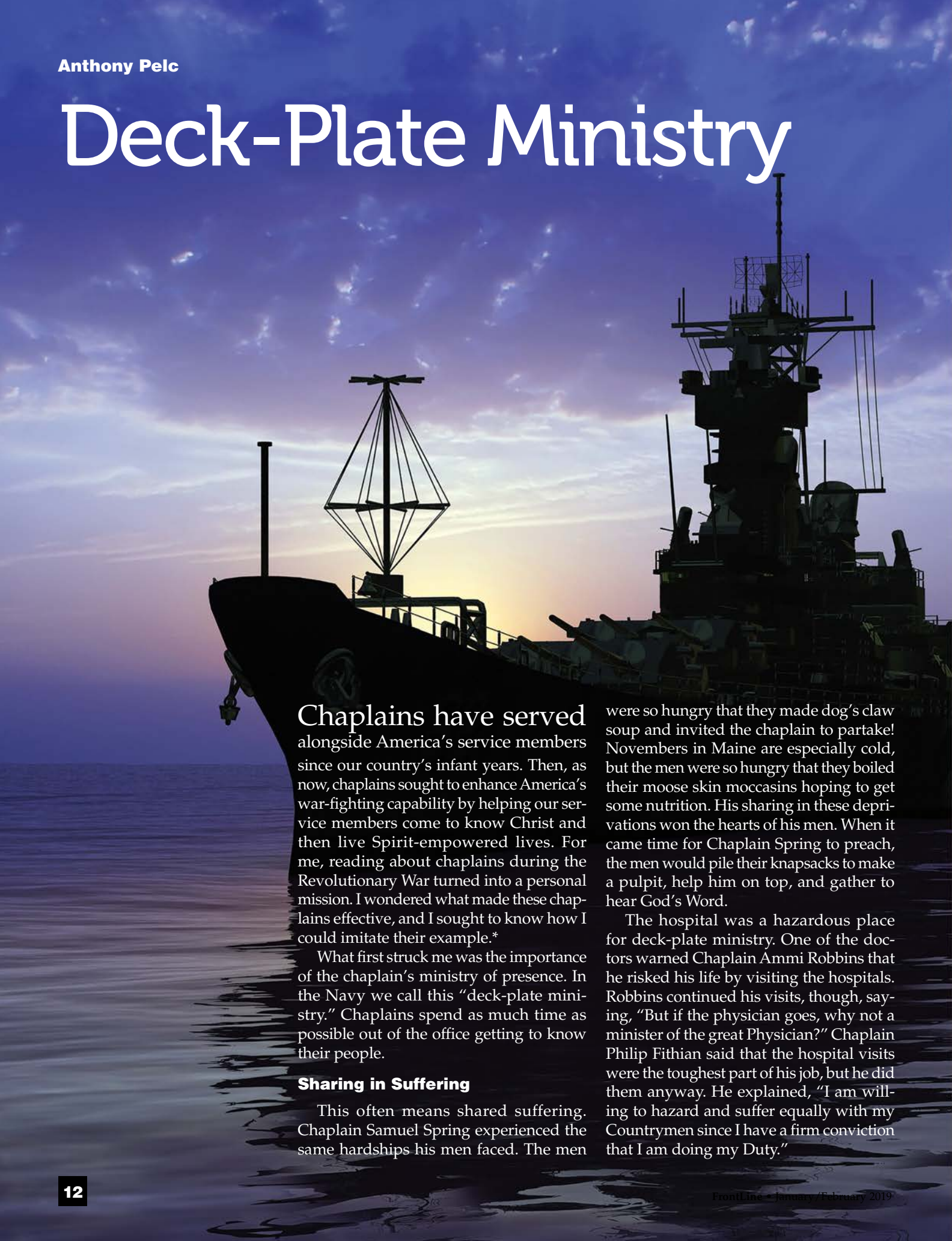
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Deck-Plate Ministry



Chaplains have served alongside America's service members since our country's infant years. Then, as now, chaplains sought to enhance America's war-fighting capability by helping our service members come to know Christ and then live Spirit-empowered lives. For me, reading about chaplains during the Revolutionary War turned into a personal mission. I wondered what made these chaplains effective, and I sought to know how I could imitate their example.*

What first struck me was the importance of the chaplain's ministry of presence. In the Navy we call this "deck-plate ministry." Chaplains spend as much time as possible out of the office getting to know their people.

Sharing in Suffering

This often means shared suffering. Chaplain Samuel Spring experienced the same hardships his men faced. The men

were so hungry that they made dog's claw soup and invited the chaplain to partake! Novembers in Maine are especially cold, but the men were so hungry that they boiled their moose skin moccasins hoping to get some nutrition. His sharing in these deprivations won the hearts of his men. When it came time for Chaplain Spring to preach, the men would pile their knapsacks to make a pulpit, help him on top, and gather to hear God's Word.

The hospital was a hazardous place for deck-plate ministry. One of the doctors warned Chaplain Ammi Robbins that he risked his life by visiting the hospitals. Robbins continued his visits, though, saying, "But if the physician goes, why not a minister of the great Physician?" Chaplain Philip Fithian said that the hospital visits were the toughest part of his job, but he did them anyway. He explained, "I am willing to hazard and suffer equally with my Countrymen since I have a firm conviction that I am doing my Duty."

Chaplains should be ready for anything while they're on deck-plate ministry. Once while Chaplain James Caldwell was on the front lines with his men, he noticed that they were running out of wadding for their muskets. Without wadding, the ball and powder would fall out of the muzzle when lowered. Seeing a nearby church, Chaplain Caldwell ran inside, grabbed as many hymnals as possible, and carried them to his men. He passed the hymnals out, saying, "Giv'em Watts boys!" The men laughed and began tearing the hymnals up, using the pages for wadding.

The men recognized the absence of the chaplain's presence. One winter, Chaplain John Gano decided to go home while his men stayed at Valley Forge. He thought that the men weren't dressed properly to stand in the cold weather and hear him preach. Chaplain Gano returned in the spring and visited with his men. One man said that they had "suffered all winter without hearing the Word of God." Chaplain Gano said that he did what he thought was best for the soldiers. The soldier said, "True, but it would have been consoling to have had such a good man near us."

Deck-plate ministry is vital for all of God's servants today. Chaplains have the advantage of walking into their service-members' workplaces any time they want, but pastors and other ministry leaders need to be more proactive and creative in generating meaningful interaction. Ministry is relational, and it takes time and effort to build relationships.

Willing to Witness

Next, I noted how chaplains had the boldness to open their mouths for the Lord. Chaplain Gano was especially bold and quick-witted. He once walked into a conversation where a soldier was swearing and quipped, "I see you pray early." The soldier was embarrassed and asked Chaplain Gano to pardon him. The chaplain turned it into a gospel moment: "Oh! I cannot pardon you. You must carry your case to God." On another occasion Gano was near some soldiers who were ordered to cut wood. One of the men was so angry that he was cursing as he began his job. The chaplain offered to cut the wood, but the soldier wouldn't allow it, saying that an officer shouldn't have to. Chaplain Gano warned the man about his words and then said, "And I had rather do it for you than that you should be made miserable forever."

Such opportunities abound in the military, but chaplains need the boldness to open their mouths and engage people. The same can be said for all of God's servants. We all need discernment and boldness to speak for the Lord when we have opportunity. If we don't speak up for the Lord's cause, who else will? Even Paul asked people to pray "that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19).

Brave in Battle

Finally, I was entertained by the variety of servants that God uses. Some of the chaplains were men of valor who could hold their place on the front line. While today's chaplains are forbidden to bear arms, nothing prevented chaplains in the Revolutionary War from joining the fight.

Chaplain David Jones was both a chaplain and a doctor for a Pennsylvania regiment. His superiors trusted him to deliver messages from General Wayne to George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. General Wayne wrote to Benjamin Franklin, "Not one letter, or the least intelligence of anything that's doing with you can reach us. Through the medium of my Chaplain I hope this will reach you as he has promised to blow out any man's brains who will attempt to take it from him."

Chaplain Jones took his place on the front lines too. Once he had his horse blown out from under him. On another occasion Jones armed himself with two pistols and captured a British soldier. (General Wayne laughed aloud when he heard what his chaplain had done.) Later the British soldier recognized Chaplain Jones, tipping his hat to Jones as the chaplain rode by.

Jones went on several scouting assignments near Valley Forge, since he had grown up in that area. He spent one night in a tavern. Seeing a suspicious stranger, Chaplain Jones drew his pistol, approached the stranger, and put him under arrest. Later, they learned that the man was a British officer.

Samuel West differed from David Jones in many ways. Chaplain West was known for being absent-minded and for standing by himself lost in his own thoughts. On one occasion General Washington seized a ciphered letter but didn't know who could break the code. Someone suggested that the chaplain might be able to do it. General Washington ordered Chaplain West to work alone, and he brought in two code breakers to work together in another area. Chaplain West worked all night on the letter and presented his work in the morning. To check the men's accuracy, Washington checked Chaplain West's work with the other men's and found them to be identical!

Samuel West's forgetfulness only worsened after he left the military. Once, he preached the same sermon three weeks in a row! Nobody wanted to tell him. Next Sunday, West's daughter noticed his Bible was opened to the same passage. When he wasn't looking, she flipped the Bible to another page. When West returned to the pulpit, he looked confused but finally preached something different!

God uses more than one mold when He makes military chaplains, and He uses a wide variety of people to play different roles in His kingdom. Reading about the different personalities and talents of the Revolutionary War chaplains was a refreshing reminder that God can use anybody.

I enjoyed reading about the rich heritage of our military chaplains. One note of encouragement I gathered was the impact that a faithful servant of God can have on the people around him. Nobody may ever write a book on our lives, but let's pray that the Lord would use us as He used those who have gone before us.

Anthony Pelc is the ship's chaplain for USS *New York* (LPD-21) at Naval Station Mayport in Jacksonville, Florida.



* All the chaplains I mention can be found in Jack Darrell Crowder's *Chaplains of the Revolutionary War: Black Robed American Warriors*. Crowder covers the chaplains of the Revolutionary War in alphabetical order.

The numbing stigma of World War II hung wearily over the American population

from December 8, 1941, to September 2, 1945; it was unlike anything future generations have experienced. Deep within the fabric of the wartime experience, military ministers—chaplains—sought to bring the reality of God to the hearts of American military. As the clashing political machines of nations and strategists pitted soldiers against one another, service members struggled to maintain a semblance of humanity in the fire of inhumane war. Military chaplains sought to meet that need.

The Impact of Pearl Harbor

The picture painted by one author describing chaplaincy during the days of the Revolutionary War holds true for the courageous military ministers of World War II.

The government offered to each regiment one man to be a friend to every man. While other officers might be good friends, this man was to make a business of kindliness. Not a commander, not a fighter, not hemmed in by any rules or any rank; left to himself to reach men by their hearts if he touched them at all, and by their hearts to make them better soldiers; a man to be sought in the hour of need; to stand for truth, purity, and all righteousness; for honorable living and hopeful dying; and having done all to stand by, in the spirit of service, according to the pattern of the Master (Brinsfield, 126).

Since the inception of the Chaplain Corps in 1775, current operations have shaped ministry programs, but the heart of military ministry has remained the same—namely, to bring the truth of God to soldiers who face the possibility of their own suffering and death—and the suffering of those they have killed.

Prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, the size of the US Army, along with the existing chaplain support, was skeletal. Even more alarming, the American public was not ignorant of the ongoing conflict in Europe; they were simply indifferent. If at all passionate, most American public opinion dramatically opposed the idea of going to war—and American churches and clergy were not resisting this mindset. With overwhelming and sudden contrast, the events of December 7, 1941, at Pearl Harbor reversed the tide of American determination to avoid the war. The incomprehensible transformation of the US Army from 175,000 troops to over 1.4 million in merely two years clearly depicts the social upheaval that occurred. Before Pearl Harbor there were only 137 active-duty army chaplains and 770 reserve chaplains available to be called into active duty. That would all change, seemingly overnight.

While the incorporated military draft brought in waves of enlisted soldiers and officers, clergy could not be drafted but rather needed to be recruited. The coinciding dynamic of recruiting chaplains during WW2 between December 7, 1941, and August 31, 1945, exploded. More than 9000 new chaplains entered the military as army chaplains, and the navy gained more than 2700 new chaplains (Uldrich 31–33).



The Second

The Army required many more chaplains than the Navy since more than three-quarters of military personnel served in the army. Military leaders determined that one chaplain should be required for every one thousand soldiers (Dorsett, 27). To compound the matter, in comparison to modern recruiting efforts, the military relied on only a few religious denominations to issue the call for chaplains (principally Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish organizations). Unlike today's American denominational landscape, where patriotism is an assumed trait of conservative Christianity, a crippling condition existed in prewar America in that most denominations largely opposed the idea of entering the war. While this mindset transformed in the months following the Pearl Harbor attack, the denominational vetting processes, coupled with federal bureaucracy, presented staggering obstacles to meeting manpower needs (Dorsett, 22–23).

Chaplains assisted in the crucial transition stage when young men were arriving from a prewar, anti-engagement society to be trained as lethal combatants. Chaplains helped soldiers from strong social-moral backgrounds as they trained to kill. Much of this social and moral framework stood upon an upbringing received as part of a society firmly and popularly affected by church attendance. The parallel to modern military ministry translates only partially. Today, killing remains a stark social wrongdoing, but the increasingly anemic religious backdrop of our nation has mostly stolen any religious framework from today's younger generations. This factor has deeply impacted the work of chaplains among



Great War

service members and their families just as any civilian church-planter in our nation experiences.

Monuments of the magnanimous ministry of World War II chaplains remain standing today in some army installations. More than six hundred army chapels were built in 1942, much to the credit of then-General George C. Marshall, architect of much of the personnel and infrastructure expansion during World War II. Largely identical, these mass-produced chapels were

made of wood and usually painted white . . . designed to seat 350 people, were furnished with oaken pews, two tables, and pine podiums or pulpits. The front area could be converted for Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish services within minutes. . . . These mass-produced chapels had office space in back for a chaplain and his assistant, outfitted with wooden desks and a few bookcases and storage shelves (Dorsett, 41).

Chaplain ministry during World War II, as is the case today, was shaped by the individual beliefs of the chaplain and dictated by the beliefs of their identified religious organization or denomination. A common misconception concerning chaplains in the past and current military service is that chaplains must serve as a chameleon-type minister, adapting to become a be-all, do-all as far as faith is concerned. In reality, "No one in the military command structure expected these men to conduct formal worship services that included all faith traditions. To be sure, chaplains were representatives of their own traditions" (Dorsett, 35). The same principle applies today as chaplains

are expected to support their soldiers but all the while being faithful to the dictates of their respective endorsing agency.

Overcoming Difficulties

In spite of ballooning numbers of army chaplains in World War II, ministry often ranged from difficult to impossible because of logistics, movement, or location. "In the most ideal conditions during World War II a battalion of one thousand to fifteen hundred men would have two Protestant, one Catholic, and one Jewish chaplain. But placing even one chaplain among scattered and constantly moving companies became almost impossible, especially in such difficult terrain" (Dorsett, 66). Serious chaplains found creative ways to find their way to troop locations and to provide individual and group ministry regardless of the location. Today, much of the logistical nightmare of ministry in the midst of military action is overcome by the efforts of the Religious Affairs Specialist, the enlisted military professional who assists the chaplain in administrative, combat, and logistical tasks.

The difficulties and sacrifice of WW2 military ministry resulted from the unusual location and circumstances of combat, such as the invasion and defense of Guadalcanal.

Many veterans of Guadalcanal testified that even more devastating to morale than constant harassment from the Japanese, and from mosquitoes, reptiles, leeches, and jungle vegetation, was the knowledge that they had been abandoned. . . . And they were running dangerously low on food—they survived only by drastically cutting rations and foraging rice and canned fish from Japanese outposts and camps they could overrun. . . . Evidence reveals that the Holy Joes (Chaplains) jumped into the most dangerous places, by day and night, bringing what seemed to many combatants the very presence of God, to soothe men's souls with words of assurance, hope, and encouragement" (Dorsett, 77).

The great generation of Americans who faced World War II with relentless pursuit of victory were impacted by the ministry of military chaplains who wore the same uniform and lived the same life. Today, wars have a different feel and perspective from World War II. What has not changed, however, is that people die; and those who do not die often come home with scars that run deep. Our nation needs military chaplains who will answer the call to go wherever service members go and to point them to the one true Savior.

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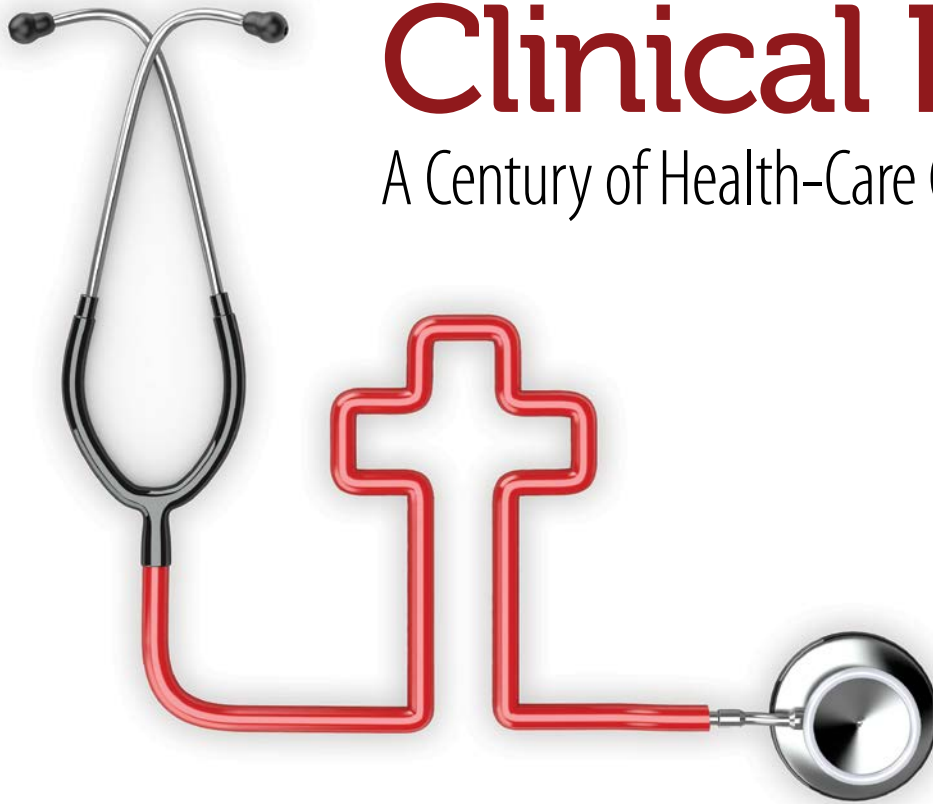
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Chaplain (Captain) Matthew Sanders is the OIC (Officer in Charge) at the Army Southeast Chaplain Recruiting Station in Morrow, Georgia. Matt and his family worked as church-planting missionaries in Peru, Venezuela, and Uruguay before entering Army Chaplaincy in 2010.





Clinical Pastoral

A Century of Health-Care Chaplaincy

In the 1920s a physician and adjunct divinity lecturer suggested that “every candidate for ministry [should] receive clinical training for pastoral work similar to the clinical training offered to medical students.” Over the last century that idea has developed into what is now known as Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), the standard program leading to certification of ministers for professional health-care chaplaincy, for advancement in military chaplaincy, and as a common professional practicum for pastoral care in general. Several FBFI chaplains are certified in CPE, but all chaplains have, to some degree, been impacted by CPE because it has helped to shape the modern concept of chaplaincy. However, what is sorely needed after a century of health-care chaplaincy is a better understanding of the biblical basis of chaplaincy, and more committed men to prepare themselves for this strategic outreach.

How We Know That Chaplaincy Is a Biblical Expression of the Ministry

Chaplaincy is different from pastoral ministry in much the same way that missionary work is different from pastoring a local church. Ephesians 4:11 mentions four kinds of leaders originally given “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” The list includes apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers. Clearly, apostles and prophets were temporary offices created for the establishment of the New Testament

church. But when the New Testament was completed and the Church was established, its leaders were called and qualified to serve in the two remaining categories of ministers: pastor/teachers and evangelists.

But what about the missionaries? Are they pastors or evangelists? And where do we find the chaplains? Posing the question, “Where are the chaplains in Ephesians 4:11?” is a necessary inquiry. This author is convinced that both chaplains and deputized missionaries are included in the class of ministers called “evangelists.” This is a helpful explanation because it is based on their relationships to the local church.

Of course, the functions of all ministers overlap and are at times, indistinguishable. But the basic distinction is in their practical relationship to their own local churches. If we envision the local church as a flock tended by a shepherd called the pastor, it is helpful to see that shepherd as one who provides pastoral care to the flock—staying with the flock to build it up: “edifying the saints for the work of the ministry.” Similarly, if a local church sends forth preachers to make disciples, edifying the saints for the work of the ministry, with the aim to plant new churches and bring them to self-sustaining maturity, the basic distinction between the pastor and the evangelist/missionary is that one stays with the church and the other goes from the church. Within this construct, the chaplain clearly is a kind of evangelist—a missionary.

We know that chaplaincy is a biblical expression of Christian ministry because all Christian ministers of the local church share the common goal of “perfecting the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of

Education

Christ.” Some stay with the local church serving there. Others are sent out from the church to strive for this same goal in places beyond the reach of their local churches.

How We Prepare to Serve as Professional Chaplains

It is not difficult to become a professional chaplain, but it does take a lot of time and education. Of course, like other professions such as law, medicine, or accounting, there is significant graduate education beyond the basic college degree. Professional chaplains generally hold at least seventy-two hours of graduate work in theology. Most would have an MDiv or its equivalent. Many continue their education through a doctorate, and—in the case of health-care chaplains—will complete at least one year of residency in Clinical Pastoral Education and a year or two of fulltime ministry after completing their formal education and ordination. The minister who seeks to serve as a professional chaplain should expect to complete five or six years of additional education and training. Of course, it is possible for a pastor to find an opportunity to serve in chaplaincy with no training at all. He can be a servant to his local law enforcement agency, correctional facility, or with other first responders. In small communities, there might be opportunities to serve with health care, nursing homes, hospice care, sports teams, industry, or business. However, chaplaincies like these are generally volunteer positions. The chaplain would need a separate source of income and the time to serve as a volunteer.

The minister who finds himself in the role of chaplain will be serving in a distinct culture. Military chaplains, for example, do their work in a military context with its distinct culture and discipline. Community chaplains adapt their ministries to the specific needs of the cultures that have opened their doors to their services. Emergency services, such as fire departments, law enforcement, and EMS, specialize in particular threats to human life. The circumstances in which they work present incredible stress on rescue workers and victims who are suddenly thrust into crises where a calm voice of hope and stability is needed. While these well-trained experts focus on rescuing and healing human bodies, the specialized chaplain gives his full attention to human beings. Together with the agencies they serve, community chaplains like these remind us that we are not just focusing on living bodies, but on living souls. Like their military counterparts, these chaplains must understand and adapt to the culture where they serve, particularly when they serve an agency whose stock in trade is a matter of life and death.

Like the military chaplain, the health-care chaplain must complete the necessary clinical training to be certified to work in the setting of hospitals, hospice care, or other licensed health-care facilities. A limited number of parttime chaplaincy opportunities may be available to ministers with very little clinical experience, but the standard is certification of successful completion of four units of Clinical Pastoral Education, usually obtained in an educational program in a hospital approved by the ACPE (Association for Clinical Pastoral Education), which in turn is approved by the US Department of Education. There are other smaller associations that provide training for health-care chaplains, but the standard certification is through ACPE. These smaller associations offer paths to achieve ACPE certification eventually, which opens many more doors of ministry opportunity.

Of course, the robust clinical experience can be limiting. ACPE offers certification to ministers from a broad theological spectrum, which could be an unbearable burden to some. Others might not be able to find the time or financial resources to spend fifteen months completing the four units, which include a three-month internship and a twelve-month residency. Some seminaries offer or even require the internship for most or all their MDiv candidates, whether the student plans to pursue health-care chaplaincy or not. The clinical experience usually proves invaluable to the seminarian. Although some seminaries seek local church internships for their students, there is no real comparison to the clinical internship. A church internship may help interns to learn the administrative functions of a local church, but the clinical internship provides a comprehensive experience in understanding and ministering to people representative of the culture and community where the hospital is located.

There are around sixty chaplains endorsed by FBFI alone. They include military chaplains in all branches, police and fire-service chaplains, and other community and emergency-service chaplains. Now, healthcare chaplains are increasing in number. It is not an easy path to become a professional chaplain, but it is a rewarding call. Could the Lord be calling you to walk this path? Might you someday be sent out as a missionary /evangelist to serve as a health-care chaplain?

John C. Vaughn is the past president and chaplain endorser of FBFI. He holds the Doctor of Pastoral Theology degree and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree, both from Bob Jones University. He is certified for hospital chaplaincy by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE).



Chaplaincy and Evangelism

D. L. Moody once approached a man

leaning against a lamppost and asked him if he was a Christian. Offended, the man responded, "Mind your own business!"

Moody replied, "I'm sorry if I've offended you, but that is my business."

The desire to "mind my business" and be a strategic Christian witness was primary motivation for my becoming a fire-service chaplain. However, some consider this approach to

chaplaincy to be wrong. Regarding chaplaincy, Paget and McCormack assert, "Because Americans enjoy the right to the free exercise of religion, proselytizing—intentionally trying to convert someone to one's personal religious belief or belief system—is highly unethical."¹ Along the same lines, the *Southern Baptist Disaster Relief Chaplain Training Manual* says, "Because victims are highly vulnerable, proselytism is unethical—chaplains must not proselytize."²

Certainly, it would be both unwise and unethical for a chaplain who is ministering to people who are confused or in a highly emotional state to attempt to manipulate them in an overzealous effort to convert them to Christ. Yet the question remains—can a chaplain share the gospel with those under his care?

Ministry in a Pluralistic Environment

Chaplaincy is ministry in a pluralistic environment—the members of whatever institution the chaplain is associated with, as well as the people the institution serves, represent a plurality of religions. Government agencies institute chaplaincy programs to achieve secular purposes (crisis management, death notification, etc.) and to accommodate the religious needs of their constituents. An American governmental body cannot employ someone from a particular religion to attempt to convert people of differing faiths. To do so would be an obvious violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of the Constitution. Because of this, most institutions (certainly all United States government institutions) plainly prohibit their chaplains from proselytizing.

However, the restriction against proselytizing by chaplains in government service does not mean that the Christian chaplain is altogether forbidden from sharing his faith. "The idea that Christian chaplains cannot share their faith is perhaps



the most widespread misconception regarding the chaplaincy."³ How can this be if proselytizing is prohibited? There are several ways. First, the Christian chaplain is free to minister the gospel to those under his influence who already profess to be Christian. This often accounts for a large portion of those under the chaplain's care. Second, the chaplain may share the gospel with anyone of any faith who invites a gospel presenta-

tion through questions or discussion. As long as another person broaches the subject, the chaplain may speak freely of his faith. The experienced chaplain knows that this happens frequently. Third, there may be opportunities for the chaplain to conduct religious services. In emergency-service chaplaincy there may not be a regularly scheduled voluntary Sunday chapel such as there is on a military base or in a prison, but this does not mean that one cannot be initiated. Also, with permission, informal Bible studies may be conducted so long as participation is strictly voluntary. Chaplains are expected to conform to the form and doctrine of their own faith. In such situations a fundamental Baptist chaplain is expected to conduct a fundamental Baptist chapel service just as a Roman Catholic chaplain is expected to conduct a Catholic service. In this kind of setting the gospel may be freely preached to all who choose to attend.

Wisdom and Restraint

A prospective chaplain may perceive any restriction at all regarding evangelism to be an infringement upon his faith and a violation of his conscience. If that is the case, then, quite frankly, he should not become involved in it. However, the restrictions under which the chaplain functions are much the same as the limitations with which Christians live in the normal course of life. Christians must always exercise wisdom and restraint as they attempt to influence others for the Lord. The chaplain must be tactful and demonstrate respect for the rights of others. He must be innovative in seeking and creating opportunities to speak for the Lord. The chaplain who is present in strategic situations provides help to those in need and develops relationships with those serving the chaplain's governing institution will find ample opportunities

Continued on page 26



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SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

Disengage, Get Away, and Contemplate

Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. (Luke 10:41)

Living in the outer court and living not before God, but before "the saints," to please them, are both sad ways of declining. (Andrew Bonar)

In a small navy-blue leather notebook in which I carefully copy quotations and anecdotes which affect me for good, I often reread the gently prodding assessment of a nearly unknown English author, Thomas Reade.

How needful to the real Christian, surrounded as he is by sensible objects, which have so powerful an influence on his mind and affections, are seasons for retirement from the hurry and distracting cares of the world. . . . Those people who are most engaged in active labors for the benefit of others will find peculiar need for frequent retirement. . . . It is no uncommon thing to hear excellent people complain that their whole time is nearly divided between their own jobs and the claims of multiplying religious societies, thus leaving little or no leisure for the important duty of Christian retirement.¹

Reade dedicated his book and these words to a pastor. Over many years of fellowshiping with other pastors I've found that what he calls *Christian retirement* is one of our most seldom practiced of all critical spiritual disciplines. Perhaps we scarcely even know what it is.

Christian retirement is more than a daily devotional time. It is a season of solitude. Its purpose isn't merely to read and to pray but also to reflect. Richard Baxter

called it *contemplative devotion*.²

Testifying to the way it was practiced by his assistant, Joseph Alleine (author of the classic *Alarm to the Unconverted*), the Puritan pastor George Newton described it as spending a considerable part of his time in private converses with God and his own soul.³ Note those elements: *considerable time* (seasons), *in private* (solitude), *converses with God* (Bible reading and prayer), *converses with his own soul* (reflection/contemplation).

Christian retirement isn't merely time; it's a lengthened amount of time: *considerable time*. Christian retirement is done in private, in solitude. We may listen to an audio Bible in the car or pray even in a restaurant, but neither of these circumstances provides the privacy that Christian retirement seeks. Christian retirement craves isolation. And in that solitude Christian retirement seeks a kind of fellowship with God that is unusually heightened—fellowship with an experiential plus! Last of all, Christian retirement converses with self. This, of course, is something all people do all the time. The running conversation in our heads with ourselves, about ourselves, is virtually unstoppable (a reason people resort to suicide). But Christian retirement is for intentionally altering the character of that conversation. Retirement recalls what actually merits remembering, reflects upon what really needs assessing, and recalibrates for a closer walk with God. *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies* (Ps. 119:59).

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

The Need

The need for such deliberate times scarcely needs arguing. Someone has said, *As long as my mind is raging with thoughts, ideas, plans, and fears, I cannot listen significantly to God or any other dimension of reality*.⁴ But our frenzied culture presses us relentlessly to accelerate to its own frenetic pace. So we regretfully but unreflectively yield to its expectation. We capitulate to the pressure to understand reality quickly, know God's mind imme-

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diately, and then to move right on to the next insistent thing. But the consequences of this conformity to our driven age are costly.

Thomas Reade warned, *Spirituality of mind is much injured from the constant bustle in which some benevolent people live.*⁵ This witness is true. But the injury may be nearly imperceptible, even to otherwise discerning people.

We capitulate to the pressure to understand reality quickly, know God's mind immediately, and then to move right on to the next insistent thing. But the consequences of this conformity to our driven age are costly.

Seventy years ago A. W. Tozer was lamenting what he saw of this in Fundamentalism.

Every age has its own characteristics. Right now we are in an age of religious complexity. The simplicity which is in Christ is rarely found among us. In its stead are programs, methods, organizations and a world of nervous activities which occupy time and attention but can never satisfy the longing of the heart. The shallowness of our inner experience, the hollowness of our worship, and the servile imitation of the world which marks our promotional methods all testify that we, in this day, know God only imperfectly, and the peace of God scarcely at all.⁶

Tozer diagnosed the problem as being *due at least in part to our unwillingness to give sufficient time to the cultivation of the knowledge of God. We of the nervous West are victims of the philosophy of activism tragically misunderstood. Getting and spending, going and returning, organizing and promoting, buying and selling, working and playing—this alone constitutes living. If we are not making plans or working to carry out plans already made we feel that we are failures.*⁷

Could it be that the neglect of intentional seasons of time alone with God may very well be at least one strand of the mysterious root of a great many of the ministry's defeats, discouragements, and stunningly misplaced values? When the Gibeonites successfully worked their deception, it was because Joshua and the men of Israel discussed with all seriousness the Gibeonites' moldy bread, torn wineskins and worn sandals, but *asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD* (Josh. 9:14).

Did Joshua know no better? In his earlier days, after the idolatry at the foot of Sinai which nearly cost Israel the presence of God forever, he had watched Moses erect a tent a good distance outside the camp. Moses called it *the tent of meeting*. Anyone who truly hungered for the Lord could abandon himself for a time to this

isolated space to seek God's presence. But when Moses did so, the Lord would speak to him *face to face as a man speaketh unto his friend*. Then when Moses would return to the bustle of the Israelite camp, Joshua, still a young man, remained behind; he would not leave the tent (Exod. 33:11). What is suggested by that vignette, so intentionally embedded by the Holy Spirit in our Bibles? Should we not go and learn what it means? *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope* (Rom. 15:4).

It often takes time and solitude and silence to consider our ways aright (Haggai 1:5, 7). To assess, not with the *spirit of the world*, but with the Spirit given to us of God, *comparing spiritual things with spiritual* (1 Cor. 2:12–13), why we've sown so much and reaped so little. To perceive the significance of our *ceiled houses* by contrast with the unfinished works of God and then with a justly chastened spirit to hear the word of the Lord for the times.

L. E. Maxwell, founder of Prairie Bible Institute, wrote the searching work *Crowded to Christ* (pause for a second to consider that insightful title). His first two chapters are titled "Shut Up to Faith." *Shut up*. To what? Maxwell takes Jacob's desperation (Gen. 32:9–12) as an example.

You may be a minister. If you are indeed like Jacob, you cannot say with Paul that you have "bidden farewell to the things of shame." You manage, manipulate, promote, pull wires; you know how to "put it over." Professor Denny says of some ministers: "They have recourse to arts which shame bids them conceal; they become diplomatists and strategists. . . ." In conversation once with "an Israelite indeed" I mentioned that certain leaders wished me to get together with them in order that we might frame our policy. To my remark this man of God replied, "Brother, these men have something to promote. You and I have nothing to promote but Christ."

May I ask you again, Have you met your Esau? Has your desperation reached the point of despair? . . . Have you ever had God lay hold of you in the wee hours and reduce you until you had

Nothing left to do but fling

Care aside and simply cling?

No longer anxious about tomorrow's Esau, have you as a poor clinging cripple cried and prayed and prevailed?

What are we to learn from this? *And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day* (Gen. 32:24). When it was all over, Jacob limped. (Oh, for such a limp!) But what a blessed release from the snare of self, that he would be called *heel-snatcher* no more, but would be known down through the centuries as *he who strives with God*!

A still, small voice once came to a young, talented preacher. Sitting alone in his study and heard as clearly

as though it sounded in the room, “What are you going to be, a preacher, or My messenger?”

For a moment I knew not what it meant, except to realize that the Spirit of God had created a crisis. I stood at the parting of the ways. Presently I began to ponder that night’s sermon—to review my ministry. To my dismay I discovered that the desire to become, and be known as a great preacher, was beginning to get the upper hand.

For hours I sat, vainly endeavoring to answer the question, but not until the night had died down, and the light of morning glinted through my study-window, did I arrive at a decision. It was a night of conflict between a man and his God. It was my brook Jabbok—the place where God met me face to face. Just as the light of morning scattered the darkness of the night passed, so did the light Divine stream into my soul, and joyously I cried out, “Thy Messenger, my Master—Thine!”

But the victory was won, only when the ashes of a bundle of sermons lay in the study fireplace. The work of many years was destroyed on that golden morning, when I stepped out to follow God at all costs, determining to do so without those sermons. During the night hours I came to see that they had been moulded and made so as to include a large element of self. For that reason they were destroyed. As they burned, I said to my Master, “If Thou wilt give me Thy words to speak, I will utter them, for this day forward, adding nothing to them, taking naught away. Thine whole counsel I will declare, so help me God.” So did the Lord prevail.⁸

I almost hesitate to mention the name of this transparent brother, lest knowing it return us full circle in some subtle ways to seeking God because we’re seeking self. But this was the experience of G. Campbell Morgan (1863–1945), whose preaching was blessed to hundreds of thousands and whose books are today on nearly every preacher’s shelves.

The big lesson here, however, isn’t the size of his subsequent ministry, but the entire night required to reflect, assess, and recalibrate in the stillness with God. *It will cost something to walk slow in the parade of the ages while excited men of time rush about confusing motion with progress*, Tozer wrote in 1950. *But it will pay in the long run, and the true Christian is not much interested in anything short of that.*⁹

But we protest. We have no time! Yes, we do. If not, we should cease singing of even the average Christian’s need to *take time to be holy*; of the world rushing on when we ought to be spending *much time in secret with Jesus alone*. Where’s the sincerity in solemnly urging hard-pressed people in our pews to sacrifice to practice idyllic fantasy that we ourselves say just simply can’t be done? We should reckon with the failure ourselves or else stop singing. But we’ll also have to submit to the consequence of the perilous void. *We seldom read of God’s appearing . . . to any of his prophets or saints in*

a crowd, Richard Baxter observed.¹⁰ Our lives may be a very dervish of animation, a great wind, a veritable earthquake, a fire ablaze! Yes, . . . but will the Lord appear?

A Hermitage

A hermitage is a place to which religious people retire to live as an escape from temptation. The objective is vain, of course, for our strongest seductions lie within. Nevertheless, the Lord Himself called Moses to the very summit of Sinai for a full forty days. The result was a shining face.

It will cost something to walk slow in the parade of the ages while excited men of time rush about confusing motion with progress (A. W. Tozer).

Is there a hermitage somewhere within your driving distance to which you could retire on occasion for some sustained, serious reflection on life and ministry? Years ago I added a study off the bedroom of our home. I can truly say that is the most precious spot on earth to me. But it doesn’t work well for a hermitage. It contains a land line phone, computers with Internet and e-mail, files and files and more files arranging the records of our family’s earthly cares and necessities, and the invasive sounds of the household and the busy street outside.

There are a few nonnegotiables to a hermitage. It is a place *away*. Not necessarily a great distance away. But definitely removed from our normal context. It’s also a solitude. It gives the feeling of being alone. It’s quiet. And it’s undistracting. There’s minimal clutter; perhaps even very simple furnishings.

A few times I’ve withdrawn for two or three days to a tiny hotel that virtually hangs off of the side of a mountain. The rooms are probably only half the size of my study. But they contain no phones, no televisions, and have no Internet access. It’s quiet and undistracting. I can read and write and pray and think God’s thoughts after Him for hours at a time with no intrusions.

More often, however, if I can get an occasional day away or even a sizable part of one, that can meet my need. There are state parks with picnic tables, some of them with shelters if it’s raining, where I can enjoy the same feeling of being away that I do in a hotel room, plus be free to walk and pray out loud. The expansive spaces free my spirit.

In his *Lectures to My Students* Spurgeon has a chapter (“A Minister’s Fainting Fits”) about this needful use of the outdoors. He warns that a man’s study can become his prison, and *his books the warders of a jail, while nature lies outside his window calling him to health and beckoning him to joy*.

He who forgets the humming of bees among the heather, the cooing of the wood pigeons in the forest, the song of birds in the woods, the rippling of rills among the rushes, and the sighing of the wind among the pines, needs not wonder if his heart forgets to sing and his soul grows heavy. A day's breathing of fresh air upon the hills or a few hours ramble in the beech woods calm would sweep the cobwebs out of the brain of scores of our toiling ministers who are now but half alive.

If you read the lives of Jonathan Edwards, Andrew Bonar, Francis Ridley Havergal, William Cowper, John Newton, Samuel Rutherford, and others, you will discover, here and there, delightful comments about their use of the outdoors for extended times of quiet with the Lord.

George Newton, quoted earlier, said that Joseph Alleine needed sometimes to get out of the single room in which he studied. He had friends who made available a house standing empty, to which he would retire. But he liked the outdoors, *in the view of heaven, and the open air*.¹¹

Another Puritan, Isaac Ambrose, had the exceptional practice of taking a full month annually for a spiritual retreat. Christ's forty days in the wilderness were his general model. *I know not what others' experiences may be*, he wrote, *but if I have found anything of God, or of his grace, I may thank a wood, a wilderness, a desert, a solitary place for its accommodation; and have I not a blessed pattern here before me?*¹²

Early in his ministry in Chicago, A. W. Tozer would sometimes ride the morning streetcar out to the shore of Lake Michigan. With only his Bible, he would spend the entire day alone with the Lord. Other times he would purchase a round-trip train ticket in order to secure several hours of privacy for study and prayer. *The cost is worth it*, he answered someone who questioned it, *and besides, I like riding the train!*

The value of that last example lies in its testimony to the necessity of creativity in this matter. I have a friend who pastors in Lubec, Maine, a lobster-fishing village sitting at the tip of the farthest-most eastern portion of the United States. Lubec averages 67 inches of snow a year. The average temperatures for winter months are below freezing or very near it. And when it comes to seasons, my friend says that there are just two in northern Maine: winter with that frigid cold and deep snow, and getting ready for winter!

What's he to do for a hermitage? For most of the year it certainly can't be outside. I'll have to ask him sometime. But I'll bet that if he has one, he has to get creative.

The Quest

All decays begin in the closet, John Berridge warned.

*No heart thrives without secret converse with God, and nothing will make amends for the want of it.*¹³ That last sentence seems to distill the very essence of what we are seeking in a time of extended solitude. It's soul saturation with *converse with God*. Not merely Bible study, the reading of devotional literature, the solving of some intriguing theological question, or even ordinary prayer. Andrew Murray was able to express the difference.

Christian! There is a terrible danger to which you stand exposed in your inner chamber. You are in danger of substituting Prayer and Bible Study for living fellowship with God. . . . Your needs and their expression, our desire to pray humbly and earnestly and believingly may so occupy you, that the light of His countenance and the joy of His love cannot enter you. Your Bible Study may so interest you, and so waken pleasing religious sentiment, that—yes—the very Word of God may become a substitute for God Himself, **the greatest hindrance to fellowship because it keeps the soul occupied instead of leading it to Himself.**¹⁴

I think we understand his point. The Lord once said reassuringly to Aaron the High Priest, *I am thy part and thine inheritance* (Num. 18:20). That's the quieting sense of things that we seek. Murray adds,

Of more importance than all your requests, however urgent, of more importance than all your earnestness and effort to pray aright, is this one thing—the childlike, living assurance that **your Father** sees you, that you have now met Him, and that with His eye on you and yours on Him, you are now enjoying actual intercourse with Him. ☞

¹ Thomas Reade, *Spiritual Exercises of the Heart*, 1. This excellent work, published in 1837, has been reprinted by Reformation Heritage Books.

² See his chapter "Heavenly Contemplation" in *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*.

³ *The Life and Letters of Joseph Alleine*, 50.

⁴ Morton Kelsey, as quoted by Bruce Demarest in *Satisfy Your Soul*, 127.

⁵ *Spiritual Exercises of the Heart*, 1.

⁶ *The Pursuit of God*, 17–18.

⁷ cmalliance.org/devotions/tozer?id=634.

⁸ G. Campbell Morgan, John Harries, 45–46.

⁹ Quoted by James L. Snyder in *In Pursuit of God: The Life of A. W. Tozer*, 135.

¹⁰ *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* (Benjamin Fawcett abridgment; 1835), 202.

¹¹ *Life and Letters*, 50.

¹² *Looking unto Jesus*, 235.

¹³ *The Letters of John Berridge of Everton*, ed. by Nigel R. Pibworth, 334.

¹⁴ *The Inner Chamber*, 16–17.

Bring . . . the Books

James Sherman, *A Guide to Acquaintance with God*

Years ago I had the opportunity to visit London. I sought out church historical sites and traipsed through cemeteries in search of the tombstones marking men and women of the past. One nondenominational resting place, Abney Park Cemetery, marks the burial plot of the Reverend James Sherman (1796–1862), an English Congregationalist preacher. This abolitionist minister wrote the preface to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852).

My grandfather, Elon Lee Wood, owned a copy of Sherman’s devotional book, *A Guide to Acquaintance with God* (4th ed., 1829), which I acquired. Inside the front cover there is a personal address from 1850 to one in my family lineage.

The Reverend James Sherman captured his book title with the words of Eliphaz, “Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee” (Job 22:21). He acknowledges Eliphaz’s zealous discourse to be an improper exhortation to Job, but nonetheless the words ring true for addressing the young believer, hesitant believer, or nonbeliever. After the introduction, the book is broken into five parts on acquaintance with God: the nature, the essential means, the subordinate means, the best season for commencing, and the advantages of acquaintance with God.

Sherman establishes the fact that “acquaintance” in this case should not be superficial or casual but of an “intimacy which subsists between one friend and another” (11). There is no greater joy, no deeper fount of pleasure, and no fuller satisfaction than what can be obtained in God. To know God is to hunger for closer acquaintance. But to gain this access to God, the relationship must be initiated through the mediation of Christ. Penance, rituals, works of charity will not suffice. It is through the cross of Jesus alone that we are ushered into the holy sanctuary of God’s presence. There is no other way. The author seeks to woo the unbeliever and backslider with God’s love. “One beam of Divine love, darting into the heart of the backslider, will more effectually melt it than all the flames of Sinai.” Christ’s love is the way.

Not only is Christ indispensable for acquaintance with the Father but so also is the work of the Holy Spirit—this One who illuminates our hearts concerning our own condition, convicts us of sin, and comforts us in the midst of suffering. Suffering Christians are unique because their strength and joy are displayed through setbacks, trials, and terrible pain. The beauty of a relationship with God is revealed most poignantly through life’s difficulties. “He will show you that the rod in his hand is a pencil by which he draws God’s image in fairer lines upon your soul” (60).


In moving from essential means of acquaintance with God to the subordinate means, the author directs

us to listening to the friends of God and poring over the Scriptures like Bereans. “The Scriptures do not conduct us to an airy, metaphysical, speculative knowledge of the Deity; but to this one point, What is God to me? What has he done for me? Is this God my

God?” (77). Reflect on His power, His love, His wisdom, His omnipresence, and His faithfulness. Also, pray. “If he seem to depart the further from you, it is only to provoke you to follow him, or to increase your importunity for his presence. As the disciples at Emmaus, who, as St. Luke reports, when the Saviour came thither, and ‘made as though he would have gone further—constrained him, saying, Abide with us’—Luke 24:28, 29” (89). And not only are we to read God’s Word, we are to meditate and to position ourselves in daily walking with a holy God.

Now some might be hesitant to pursue an acquaintance with God. Life is so busy. Men and women have so much to preoccupy them in the pursuit of material gain. Is there not time later to consider God? There might be a nudging in our spirits to probe the metaphysical purposes of our lives. We do have fleeting thoughts about the existence of God. But too often the voices of skeptics and our secular culture crowd out these thoughts. Yet our author pleads that we acquaint ourselves with God. And we should begin *now*. The Lord is passionate and persuasive. And when He invites you to come to him *now*, there is nothing else that could be more urgent. There is good reason why this book was published one hundred and ninety years ago by the American Tract Society. And we are no different today. Our culture is desperately sick, and human souls are at a crossroads.

The author concludes with the advantages for an acquaintance with God: peace, delightful freedom from the accusations of conscience, a holy serenity of mind in the troubles of life. “Unless our minds are taken away from the second causes, and fixed on the great First Cause, we shall know little of peace” (134). When we know the Lord’s presence, there is a blessedness attached to our lives and possessions, whether we are rich or poor. And most of all, we gain eternal life in the now and will be in the presence of our God forever.

I highly recommend this classic gospel book. Scripture bleeds on every page. The tone is warmly evangelical, taking us directly to the chief treasure of all—God Himself. And for those in acquaintance with God, the Lord is their portion forever. Acquaintance with God is to live your days in awe. 

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

Pastor Todd Wood is the chaplain for the Idaho Falls Rescue Mission and serves on the pastoral staff of Providence Downtown Church in Idaho Falls.

The timing of the rapture is a complicated subject because conclusions about it depend on interlocking interpretations of various passages. First Thessalonians 4:13–17 is the key rapture passage since it is the passage about saints' being caught up into the air to meet the Lord. And yet, this passage, on its own (arguably) reveals nothing of the timing of the Tribulation.¹ The timing of the rapture must be discerned by relating this passage to other Scriptures.

Post-tribulationists make two major arguments. First, *apantēsis* ("meet") is said to be a technical term for meeting a dignitary and leading him back to the city. This points toward a rapture in which the saints immediately return to earth with Christ after having been caught up to meet Him in the air (though Beale and Weima, in their commentaries, take the clouds and the snatching up to be apocalyptic imagery rather than an indication of actual movement).

But while *apantēsis* can be used to indicate going out to meet a dignitary with the purpose of bringing him back to one's city, it is not always used in this way. One dictionary observes, "The evidence (Peterson [TDNT] 683–92) is not so much proof for a t.t. [technical term] . . . as for the existence and form of an ancient custom" (EDNT, 1:115). Whether that ancient custom is in view in a particular text depends not on the presence of the term but on "the exegesis of the respective contexts" (ibid.). In this case, it is not a delegation that meets Christ; all those in Christ meet Him. Nor do they go out to meet Him; they are caught up to meet Him. It doesn't seem that the exegesis favors the post-tribulationist understanding of *apantēsis*.

Second, post-tribulationists argue that parallels between Matthew 24 and 1 Thessalonians 4 indicate that both passages deal with the same event, the Second Coming. Greg Beale lists the following parallels in his commentary on the Thessalonian epistles: "[1] Christ returns [2] from heaven [3] accompanied by angels [4] with a trumpet of God [5] believers gathered to Christ [6] in clouds."²

But points 1, 2, and 6 would, in the nature of the case, be the same at the rapture and at the Second Coming if these two events are distinguished. Point 4 is a more exact point of comparison, but if one sees the events as distinct, there is nothing to prevent a trumpet sound at both. With regard to point 3, the Thessalonians passage merely mentions the voice of an archangel, while Matthew mentions accompaniment by angels. With regard to point 5, the Thessalonians passage has the saints caught up to meet Christ in the air while Matthew has the angels collect the elect from the four winds. These differences can be harmonized, but they are differences rather than similarities. The

similarities are not of the nature as to compel Matthew 24 and 1 Thessalonians 4 to refer to a singular rapture/Second Coming.

There seem to be two major arguments in favor of a pretribulation reading of 1 Thessalonians 4. The first argument is the lack of harmony between the sequence given in 1 Thessalonians 4 and the sequence given in Revelation 19–20. The sequence of events in 1 Thessalonians 4 is significant because it is at the heart of the argument that Paul is making in that passage. Revelation 19–20 also gives a sequential description of future events.

Revelation 19 narrates the return of Christ and His dealing with the beast and the false prophet. But Satan, a key opponent of Christ, is not dealt with until the beginning of chapter 20 (recall that chapter breaks are superimposed, not original). But the sequence that runs from Revelation 19 through Revelation 20 does not harmonize with the sequence in 1 Thessalonians 4.

In Revelation Jesus returns with the armies of heaven, casts the beast and his prophet into the lake of fire, chains Satan in the abyss, sets up his throne on earth, and then raises saints from death. In 1 Thessalonians 4, Jesus appears in the clouds, raises the dead saints to life, and catches all the saints, living and resurrected, into the clouds. The inability to harmonize these two sequences supports viewing these passages as referring two separate events.

In addition to this, the only ones identified as being raised in 20:4 are the martyrs who did not worship the beast. Verse 5 says the rest of the dead are not raised until after the Millennium. This makes sense if all other believers were already raised at the (pretribulation) rapture, but it would seem to be a difficulty for any post-tribulationist premillennialist.

The second argument in favor of a pretribulation reading of 1 Thessalonians 4 relates to what Thessalonians itself says about wrath and the Day of the Lord. In the context of the Day of the Lord, which is a day of wrath, 1 Thessalonians 5:9 says that Christians are not destined for wrath (cf. 1 Thess. 1:10). Given the context, it is more likely that wrath refers to the Day of the Lord than to hell alone. This understanding of 1 Thessalonians 5:9 would also harmonize with Revelation 3:10, in which the ascended Christ promises to keep Christians from the hour of testing that will come upon the whole world. ☞

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

¹ D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1996), 218.

² G. K. Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series, ed. Grant Osborne (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 137.

[NOTE: The following was originally published in the January/February 2009 issue of FrontLine magazine.]

A new year presents a menagerie of new scenarios for many people. New diet and fitness plans are implemented, new goals are set, and new resolutions for personal changes are some of the many ways that people plan for renewal in their lives. The Bible talks about *new* things 150 times in over 131 verses. An examination of these occurrences enables one to see the true value, or lack thereof, for those things that are deemed new.

"New" That Is Priceless

The Bible proclaims the importance of *new* with regards to one's spiritual standing. First, it is imperative that each person have a *new birth* in Christ (John 3:3). Nicodemus could not understand how this could possibly happen, but Jesus explained that the birth was from above, supernatural. By comparing eternal life to human birth, Jesus was impressing upon Nicodemus the definite nature of salvation. You would think it strange if you asked someone when he was born and he responded by saying he was born the whole month of January. It would be equally odd if he were to say that "I have always been alive. There was never a time that I was born." Jesus is letting us know that salvation is a specific change to the inner man; we are made new.

As a result of the new birth, a *new life* begins. This new life is referred to in John 3:15 as "eternal life." A new life is not made up and acted out. Instead, a transformation takes place inside of an individual, and he is completely changed. A young mother does not look at a list of activities which are normal for infants to see if what she has qualifies to be a baby. She knows that she is holding a new life because of the child's activities. If there were no sign of physical life, there would be grave concern for the well-being of the child.

Upon arriving home from work one day, a father was given an excellent opportunity to explain to his son the difference between real life and artificial substitutes. The father came home to find apples tied to their silver maple tree in the front yard. "Wow," exclaimed the father as the son ran to meet him in the driveway, "look at those beautiful apples on that tree." Embracing his father the son said, "Daddy, I know you love apples, so I made an apple tree for you." Of course, tying apples to a tree does not make it an apple tree; in the same manner, outward conformity or added activity to a life does not make one a Christian.

Having a new life means the individual is now a *new creature* in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Once a person accepts Christ as his Savior, the changes from within the heart begin to manifest themselves in outward

attitudes and actions. Ephesians 4:24 calls this the act of putting on the "new man." Areas of the life which were once motivated by selfishness are now motivated by pleasing the One who gave this new life. These changes involve, among other things, our music; when Christ enters the heart, a person is given a "new song" (Ps. 40:3). Such changes will also include our attitudes and our lifestyle choices (1 Cor. 6:19–20).

When Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you" (John 13:34), He was implying that *new instruction* would be given to those in Him. In John 10:27 Jesus states, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." A person with new life is attentive to what Christ, the Good Shepherd, is instructing. The Epistles give the completion of the instruction needed for living a life as one of Christ's sheep. If a person has no desire to follow the voice of the Shepherd, then that person very likely does not belong in the sheepfold and does not possess this new life.

Those who have the new life in Christ are gathered by God into one *new body* called the church. Ephesians 2:15 calls this gathering a *new man*. Distinction is not made between Jew or Gentile, male or female, rich or poor. The body should be focused on Jesus Christ and His purpose for their unity. The body or church is following the "new testament" (Matt. 26:28) that we have been given by our Savior. The local gathering together of believers is commanded by our Savior to demonstrate the sacrificial love of Christ (Heb. 10:25).

What is the future for these new people in Christ? God's Word instructs us that Christ Himself is preparing a dwelling place for them (John 14:2). In this abode, each will have a *new name* (Rev. 2:17) or a new means of identity. On earth we are identified by our physical features, but in Heaven there will be a new means to identify each believer. They will live and move about in a *new heaven and a new earth* (Rev. 21:1). Here God declares that He will "make all things new" (Rev. 21:5).

Because of the redeeming work that Christ has done for all of mankind, every believer should demonstrate to others the new life in Christ. Being an example of the believer will involve choices which represent the new creature that we are in our Savior. We should consider making some personal resolutions to help us remember that all things are new in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Jonathan Edwards (1703–58) set some good examples for us to follow in resolutions he set for himself. Here are some:

- Resolved, That I will do whatsoever I think to be

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

Charles Spurgeon

most to the glory of God, and my own good, profit, and pleasure, in the whole of my duration; without any consideration of the time, whether now, or never so many myriads of ages hence.

- Resolved, To do whatever I think to be my duty, and most for the good and advantage of mankind in general.
- Resolved, Never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can.
- Resolved, To live with all my might, while I do live.
- Resolved, Never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.
- Resolved, Never to do anything out of revenge.
- Resolved, Never to speak evil of anyone, so that it shall tend to his dishonor, more or less, upon no account except for some real good.
- Resolved, To study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly, and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive, myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.
- Resolved, Never to give over, nor in the least to slacken, my fight with my corruptions, however unsuccessful I may be.
- Resolved, After afflictions, to inquire, what I am the better for them; what good I have got by them, and what I might have got by them.
- Resolved, Always to do that which I shall wish I had done when I see others do it.
- Resolved, To let there be something of benevolence in all that I speak.

"New" That Is Worthless

The Bible also clearly proclaims the potential spiritual harms with regards to some types of "new." For example, any new doctrine should be avoided (Gal. 1:9). God has revealed the truth to man through His written Word. If a person chooses to live according to the world's standards, he is literally going against God. No matter how tempting a seemingly harmless worldly practice might be, it always results in disaster. A simple lesson in home cooking can illustrate this truth.

Beatrice did not have baking soda that the recipe called for, and a trip to the store seemed to be too much trouble. So she substituted cornstarch in its place. As a result, the cookies she made were the oddest she had ever baked; needless to say, her guests at the meal that night did not ask for seconds. In the same way, believers are never to substitute any details of the gospel for a more appealing or less confrontational message. Such substitutes will not produce the new life one receives at salvation. The end result will be devastating—and the soul will spend eternity apart from Christ.

In addition, new methods that are contrary to God's clear delineations are always wrong. King David tried a new method—that of imitating the Philistine way of

transporting the ark of the covenant (2 Sam. 6). David's method was direct disobedience. As a result, one of the individuals helping with the ark died. God is never pleased when we attempt to do His work using the methods or ways of the world.

In Christianity today, some feel it is their responsibility to create some new way to worship God. They construe new methods and programs that often violate the foundational response of man humbly seeking God above anything else. Such was the case with Nadab and Abihu in the Old Testament; they used a new fire source (Lev. 10) which was not according to that dictated by God to Aaron. God judged these two men with death. In his day, Jeremiah cried out against the same mindset of false worship (Jer. 6:16).

Christianity is not a sparsely written musical composition in which random notes are placed on a page in hopes that a blended work will be the result. God's salvation is a masterfully created symphony where each note is perfectly placed in the composition. Any attempts at rearranging the notes in this musical piece destroy the masterpiece. The New Testament instruction for Christian living is solely prescribed by God; when followed, the resulting melody is a perfect harmony for believers of any time period.

Some in Christianity today ignore what the Bible exalts as new that is honorable, and they pursue after the new that is considered dishonorable. Some actually downplay the new birth and the new life in Christ. Such weak teachers fail to even mention that one born into the family of God is a new creature and should walk in newness of life.

Having forsaken the old paths, such false teachers emphasize new teaching such as prosperity theology or that of joining the world to win the world. Such individuals are using new methods to propagate that which undermines the clear teachings of Scripture. Bible believers should have nothing to do with these new ideas or approaches.

Some do not like the Master's idea of gathering together for collective worship. Ryan did not like following instructions for setting up his computer desk. It just was not "macho." After hours of unsuccessful labor, producing an assembly of parts that did not resemble the desk in the picture on the front of the box, Ryan decided that instructions were necessary after all. In the same manner, we need to realize that the instruction from God in the Bible is always best; any teaching that contradicts God's commands will never work.

Christians must be careful to examine the value of "new" in their personal lives and in their service for the Lord. Just because something is new does not make it wrong. Scripturally sound new methods can further the cause of Christ. We must be careful, however, to keep God's Word as our guide and not seek ways which will undermine His clear instruction. Let's make sure that we emphasize the "new" that is of priceless worth and that we always avoid the "new" that is worthless.



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He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;
he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;
he burneth the chariot in the fire. —Psalm 46:9

It is well that war is so terrible. We should grow too
fond of it. —Robert E. Lee

History is littered with the wars which everybody knew
would never happen. —Enoch Powell

The nuclear arms race has no military purpose. Wars
cannot be fought with nuclear weapons. Their existence
only adds to our perils. —Earl Mountbatten of Burma

Nothing unites the English like war. Nothing divides
them like Picasso. —Hugh Mills

There is no such thing as an inevitable war. If war
comes it will be from failure of human wisdom.
—Andrew Bonar Law, in a speech given before World
War I

War would end if the dead could return.
—Stanley Baldwin

In time of war the first casualty is truth. —Boake Carter

War settles nothing. . . . To win a war is as disastrous
as to lose one! —Agatha Christie

And blood in torrents pour
In vain—always in vain,
For war breeds war again. —John Davidson

Actors are the only honest hypocrites. —William Hazlitt

The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but
safety is of the LORD. —Proverbs 21:31

Today the real test of power is not the capacity to
make war but capacity to prevent it.
—Anne O'Hare McCormick

War is a terrible alternative and should be the very,
very last resort. —Robert E. Lee

We make war that we may live in peace. —Aristotle

Alexander, Caesar, and I have been men of war, but
Christ was the Prince of Peace. The people have
been driven to us; they were drawn to Him. In our
case this has been forced conscription; in His there
was free obedience. —Napoleon Bonaparte

O God, assist our side: at least, avoid assisting the
enemy and leave the rest to me.
—Prince Leopold, according to Carlyle, *Life of
Frederick the Great*

One of the miseries of war is that there is no Sabbath.
—Robert E. Lee

Good kings never make war, but for the sake of
peace. —Unknown

In peace sons bury fathers, but war violates the order
of nature and fathers bury sons. —Herodotus

There are no atheists in foxholes.
—William Thomas Cummings

You can't say civilization isn't advancing; in every war,
they kill you in a new way. —Will Rogers

War is the most ghastly experience that can come
to any country. And always it is the people—not the
handful of men in positions of power—who must pay
the full price. The price in dollars and cents. The price
in dismembered families. The price in heart agonies.
The price in bodily suffering. The price in numbed
minds. The price in precious human lives . . . always it
is the masses who pay. —Robert Marion LaFollette

And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and
their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up
sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any
more. —Isaiah 2:4

Compiled by Dr. David Atkinson, pastor emeritus, Dyer Baptist Church, Dyer,
Indiana, and itinerant preacher.

David C. Innes

How Can I Decide What Is Right for Me in These Changing Times?

Timeless Biblical Principles That Define Right and Wrong for the Believer

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. (Eccles. 1:9–10)

While it may seem that we are facing new and unusual challenges in our present day, the truth is that while the packaging and presentation of temptation may be different, the challenges are the same no matter when or where they arise.

Times may be changing, but we are facing the same old temptations in new wrapping. Are we being faithful to the timeless truths provided by our unchanging God? In the last issue we looked at the need to identify clearly as a child of God and our responsibility to set an example that will help keep others from stumbling into sin. Here are some more tests to consider when discerning right and wrong in those areas that seem questionable.

The Testimony Test

Can the thing I am considering easily be construed to be evil or wrong? Scripture clearly teaches in 1 Thessalonians 5:22 that I am to “abstain from all appearance [form] of evil.” Literally, the wording is “from every *outward appearance* of evil abstain.”

I must purpose to live in such a way that there is not even a hint of sinful negativity overshadowing the good thing that I am attempting to do. Romans 14:16 says, “Let not then your good be evil spoken of.”

The Edifying Test

As a believer, I have been commanded to strengthen and build my life spiritually. My spiritual life should be like a strong tower that visibly stands for God. Not everything I *could* do with my life does that. “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient [advantageous, profitable, beneficial]: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify [build up, help, strengthen] not” (1 Cor. 10:23). We don’t often use the word “expedient.” It means “to confer a benefit, to be advantageous or profitable or useful.”

The writer of Hebrews reminds us that the way we live is constantly on display: “Wherefore seeing we also are

compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses. . . .” Because our lives are always on display, we are admonished to “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1). Anything that hinders me from finishing the race well must be eliminated. I want to finish strong!

But my responsibility goes beyond what I think will build me up. I am commanded to take my responsibility to my Christian brothers and sisters seriously. Is what I am doing contributing positively to building and strengthening them in their walk with God? In Romans 15:2, the apostle Paul commands us (under inspiration of God), “Let every one of us please *his neighbour* for *his good* to edification.”

It is an evil thing to selfishly live without regard to the effect of my life choices on my brothers and sisters. “Let us therefore follow [pursue] after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence” (Rom. 14:19–20).

The Clear Conscience Test

Is there even a shade of doubt that what I am considering is sinful? In the context of eating meat that has been offered to idols, we must have a clear conscience. To proceed otherwise brings a strong and fearful condemnation! Romans 14:23a: “And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith.”

I must have absolutely no reservations that what I am doing is acceptable to God “for whatsoever [everything] is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23b). The “it’s easier to seek *forgiveness* than to ask *permission*” attitude must go. God must get the benefit of the doubt.

The only way to get better at making wise decisions regarding right and wrong is to work at it: “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16).

Like running in a footrace, living a life that is pleasing to God is not always an easy thing. But the effort to live with a clear conscience, to build a life that has a strong

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Understanding Chaplain Endorsers

Articles on chaplains and chaplaincy appear frequently in *FrontLine*, and “endorsers” are often mentioned. But it might be helpful to provide another explanation of who they are and what they do to promote chaplaincy. As this issue of *FrontLine* goes to press, chaplain endorsers from nearly all Christian denominations and other major religions are gathered together in Washington, DC, for annual meetings to maintain their proficiency to serve as endorsers. These meetings present an opportunity for endorsers to interact with other endorsers, conferences and associations of endorsers, and the leaders of military, VA, and civilian agencies that certify the qualifications of the chaplains they endorse.

Certification is based on combinations of character and compatibility for the chaplaincy sought, ministry preparation based on education and experience, and other requirements specific to the group the endorser represents. Endorsers are individuals who hold the authority of their agencies to provide or withdraw certification—endorsement—and to advocate for their chaplains when necessary. Although these rights and responsibilities pertain mostly to the federal agencies, other agencies employing chaplains generally follow the same standards. For example, healthcare chaplains must be endorsed by a DoD—Department of Defense—recognized endorsing agency.

Endorsers are usually chosen by their faith group because they have served as military chaplains or because they have worked closely with military chaplains. At the very least, they must have good standing and ample experience and education to be trusted to represent their group in this way. To maintain their status as endorsers they must be fully aware of the expectations the military or other agencies have for their chaplains so that they can prepare their candidates and monitor their progress. To maintain their ongoing qualifications and to stay informed, they usually associate with a group of their peers who, together, provide updated training. The largest and most well-known chaplain peer group is the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces, or NCMAF. It welcomes all religious groups that can reasonably demonstrate that they are, at least, a religious group. For some, this progressive approach is not just too broad, but often foolish.

For example, during the Clinton administration, an aggressive emphasis on the rights of Muslims to endorse chaplains gained momentum, with the result that the first Muslim endorser was not only

on the Clinton staff but was later discovered to be a member of Hamas and Hezbollah. When these facts were exposed at the endorser’s trial for crimes unrelated to his role as an endorser, he was replaced. Nevertheless, a prevailing posture was to handle Muslim chaplains with kid gloves. This absurdity and others rendered NCMAF unacceptable for many Bible believers. Thus, some endorsers avoid NCMAF and either “go it alone” or assemble in smaller but purer groups, such as the International Conference of Evangelical Chaplain Endorsers, or ICECE, which was formed by a small group of fundamental endorsers that included FBFI, AGC (Associated Gospel Churches), ACCC (American Council of Christian Churches, not to be confused with the National Council of Christian Churches), and the Unaffiliated Baptist Churches of America. Since its founding in 2004 when twelve men met to organize ICECE, other like-minded groups have either joined or met with ICECE.

At the recent events in Washington, DC, ICECE spent two days visiting Congressmen and Senators to discuss matters of religious liberty important to chaplains, one full day in session (simultaneously but separately from NCMAF), plus a full day at the Pentagon for a conference held by the Armed Forces Chaplains Board (AFCB). On Wednesday, during its business meeting, ICECE elected former FBFI President and Chaplain Endorser Dr. John Vaughn to serve as Chairman. As well, in a special ceremony, current FBFI Endorser and long-time chaplain, Joe Willis, COL, USAR Ret., received an End of Service award from the US Army, the coveted Legion of Merit.



Left to right: Jim Poe, Steve Brown, John Vaughn, Ron Benzing, Art Schulcz, Joe Willis, and Marshall Tipton

to evangelize. Chaplain Tavis Long wisely wrote, "When it comes to evangelization, the chaplain should keep in mind the instruction Christ gave to His disciples in Matthew 10:16, 'Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.'" ⁴

One other thing that should also be kept in mind is that evangelism does not mean promoting the chaplain's particular church. It means telling the good news of Jesus Christ. However, if individuals inquire as to the specifics of the chaplain's personal religious affiliation, he may tell them.

Unfortunately, some Christian chaplains have allowed their ministry to be diverted from evangelism into strictly social service. The fundamental Baptist chaplain must be cautious about maintaining the priority of reaching others with the gospel. Evangelism is a vital part of our Christian faith, and need not be divorced from chaplaincy. All aspects of ministry, including deeds of charity, ultimately have value in their relationship to Christ and the gospel. Laing pointedly observes, "The most important function of ministry is leading souls to peace with God through faith in the crucified and risen Christ. If this end goal is not kept in mind, the chaplain may find that he has contributed little to the kingdom of God."⁵ By serving soldiers and sailors, comforting the hospitalized, counseling prisoners, or helping the victims of

disaster and aiding firefighters in their work, the Christian chaplain is attempting to adorn the gospel (Titus 2:10) and find an open door to present the message of salvation. Just as in local church ministry, the Baptist preacher who serves as a chaplain can and should "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5).

Dr. David A. Oliver has been the pastor of Ashley Baptist Church in Belding, Michigan, since 1994. He has also served as chaplain for two west Michigan fire departments for twenty years.



¹ Naomi K. Paget and Janet R. McCormack, *The Work of the Chaplain* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2006), 16.

² *Southern Baptist Disaster Relief Chaplain Training Manual* (North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, http://www.namb.net/atf/cf/%7BCDA250E8-8866-4236-9A0C-C646DE153446%7D/DR_Chaplain%20Training%20Manual_2008.pdf), 61.

³ John D. Laing, *In Jesus' Name: Evangelicals and Military Chaplaincy* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2010), 188.

⁴ Tavis J. Long, "The Military Chaplain: Missionary, Evangelist, or Pastor?" (*FrontLine*, November/December 2009): 7.

⁵ Laing, 187.

How Can I Decide What is Right for Me in These Changing Times?

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testimony is worth the effort. And that benefit is multiplied as I strive to set a good example for my brothers and sisters who are observing my Christian life. The most important asset I have is my good testimony. Lost sinners will notice the difference. God will be glorified, and I will have peace in my soul as I put these principles into place in my life.

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



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We make hundreds, if not thousands of choices every day: What should I eat for breakfast? Should I wear my black shoes or my navy shoes? Which earrings look better with this outfit? What should I make for dinner? Should I walk home or take the bus? Should I get up a little earlier so that I can read my Bible? Should I skip the gym?

Many times we don't really put a lot of thought into choices we make because they are not all that important in the grand scheme of life. There are other times, however, when we face important decisions that cause us to pause and think and pray about making the right choice.

When my mom passed away, I considered all the choices she had made that greatly impacted my life. My mom was not raised in a Christian home and had a rather difficult childhood. Her dad passed away when she was young. Grandma remarried. He was not a good man. My mom left home as a teenager because her stepfather was abusive.

Two years later my mother accepted Christ as her Savior, which led to her mother's salvation and later to my own salvation. Other spiritual decisions followed.

One particular choice that my mom made tremendously affected my own life. Our youth pastor's wife taught at a Christian school thirty miles away from my home, and when I was in eighth grade, she took some kids and me from our church to visit the school. I had never seen a Christian school before, but after that visit I decided that that was where I wanted to attend high school. When I asked my mom if I could attend the Christian school, she immediately said "no." They did not have the money to send me. Transportation was also an issue because our youth pastor and his wife were leaving for another ministry.

However, I was persistent, and asked again about attending the Christian school. God began working in her heart, and Mom made the decision to trust God to make a way. Philippians 4:19 says, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

God answered her prayer. Our church purchased a small schoolbus so that several of our families could send their children to the Christian school. God moved in the heart of

another lady from our church who taught in the Christian school. She agreed to take on the responsibility of driving us to school every day.

My first year at the new school had its challenges, but I loved it! My brother and sister saw how much I liked my new school, so they too asked my parents if they could transfer. Mom prayed, "Lord, what do I do now? How do you tell one child she can go and the other two they can't?" My parents were barely making ends meet. My mom claimed Isaiah 55:8, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD." She trusted God to provide a way.

My mom worked at a shoe store near our home. While her manager was away on vacation, the phone rang at the store. The boss from the home office called my mom, telling her that her manager would be leaving the store. He wanted her to be his replacement. It would mean additional responsibilities, but it would also mean a substantial raise in pay! Mom took the job. Once again, God rewarded her choice to trust Him. That fall, all three of us attended the Christian school.

Choosing to trust God to meet our needs was not always easy, but I am so thankful for the example my mom set for me. My sister and I met our husbands while attending that Christian school. In fact, we married brothers! God taught us many lessons and gave us ministry opportunities because of my parents' choice to send us to a Christian school. We all graduated from Christian colleges and have served the Lord in full-time ministry.

What if our mother had not chosen to trust God? I praise the Lord that she did! The end of our story has not yet been written, but I am sure Mom had no idea how her choice to trust the Lord would change our lives. Her godly example has challenged me to be the type of mom and grandmother who makes godly choices. Now I have the privileged responsibility of touching the next generation for Christ and passing along a godly heritage. We never know how our choices will affect others, but yielding to God and trusting Him is always the right choice. What will you choose?

Chris Pelletier and her husband, Dan, serve at Hamilton Square Baptist Church in San Francisco. They have an adopted daughter who is married and has one child.



New England Regional Fellowship *Taigen Joos*

On Saturday, September 22, 2018, about 160 believers from around New England gathered at Heritage Baptist Church in Dover, New Hampshire, for the third annual New England Foundations Conference. About twenty-five pastors representing churches from five New England states were included in the event. Both FBFI members and nonmembers were invited to attend this day of preaching, teaching, fellowship, and mutual encouragement. Dr. Gary Reimers, pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, was our main speaker for the day, preaching messages on the theme of the "Standing on the Foundation of the Word of God." Believers from around New England were encouraged to stand faithfully for the truths of the Bible in a world where truth is questioned and the authority of the Word of God is ignored. It was a fantastic day of learning, growing, and encouraging each other in the faith.



Central Regional Fellowship *Dave Byford*

The FBFI Central Regional meeting was held October 15–16, 2018. Attendees included pastors and others from Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska. Dr. Dale Heffernan and Midland Baptist Church in Wichita were marvelous hosts. All the meals were provided by the church, which allowed

more flexibility in the schedule. Brother Heffernan organized the meetings to allow for plenty of fellowship and prayer. There was also plenty of time for testimonies from the pastors and their wives. Those testimonies proved to be very encouraging.

The preaching on the theme of "The Sufficiency of Scripture" was encouraging as well as powerful. Dr. Ben Heffernan from Fort Scott, Kansas; Pastor Dan Unruh from Greeley, Colorado; and Chaplain Joe Willis, FBFI chaplain endorser, were our speakers. Dan Unruh preached three excellent messages on the sufficiency of Scripture for doctrine, for the church, and for our future hope. His emphasis on being brutally honest in our preaching was very helpful. Chaplain Willis preached a wonderful message on what the Bible teaches about fellowship. He also gave very practical helps on how to counsel people who are dealing with problems. Ben Heffernan, as a young pastor, gave strong biblical arguments on how younger fundamentalists need to respect and follow the godly models of older fundamentalists.

The fellowship of pastors in our region looks forward each year to the Central Regional Fellowship. We have scheduled our fellowship for next year on October 21–22 at Harvest Hills Baptist Church in Yukon, Oklahoma.



Southern California Regional Fellowship *Mark Brock*

The FBFI Southern California Regional Fellowship was a great joy as pastors gathered together over Monday and Tuesday, December 10–11. Unlike past meetings, this gathering allowed for pastors to have a focused time of group Bible study and prayer for one another's ministries. We also had several round-table discussions dealing with current pastoral problems, counseling issues, leadership, and polity. It was refreshing and spiritually uplifting. Thanks to the pastors who made this meeting rich and encouraging!

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NOTABLE QUOTES

When pondering the mysteries of life, hold on to what you know for sure, and never doubt in the darkness what God taught you in the light.—Warren Wiersbe

If you would carry on the work of meditation in such a way as it may be done with sweetness, be sure that it be bounded with the Scripture; and let nothing fall within the compass of your meditation, but what falls within the compass of the Scriptures.—William Bridges

Do not try to pry further than God hath revealed; your thoughts must be bounded by the Word. There is no duty that a fanatic brain is apt to abuse more than meditation. . . . Do not leave the bread and wine and gnaw upon a stone.—Thomas Manton

We can say, “Blessed is the night, for it reveals the stars.” In the same way we can say, “Blessed is sorrow, for it reveals God’s comfort.” Give me a stout heart to bear my own burdens. Give me a willing heart to bear the burdens of others. Give me a believing heart to cast all burdens upon Thee, O Lord.—John Baillie

But what is this fear of the Lord? It is that affectionate reverence, by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father’s law. His wrath is so bitter, and His love so sweet; that hence springs an earnest desire to please Him, and—because of the danger of coming short from his own weakness and temptations—a holy watchfulness and fear, “that he might not sin against Him.”—Charles Bridges

God promises the Christian Heaven after death, not before it.—John Blanchard

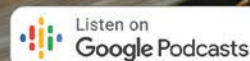
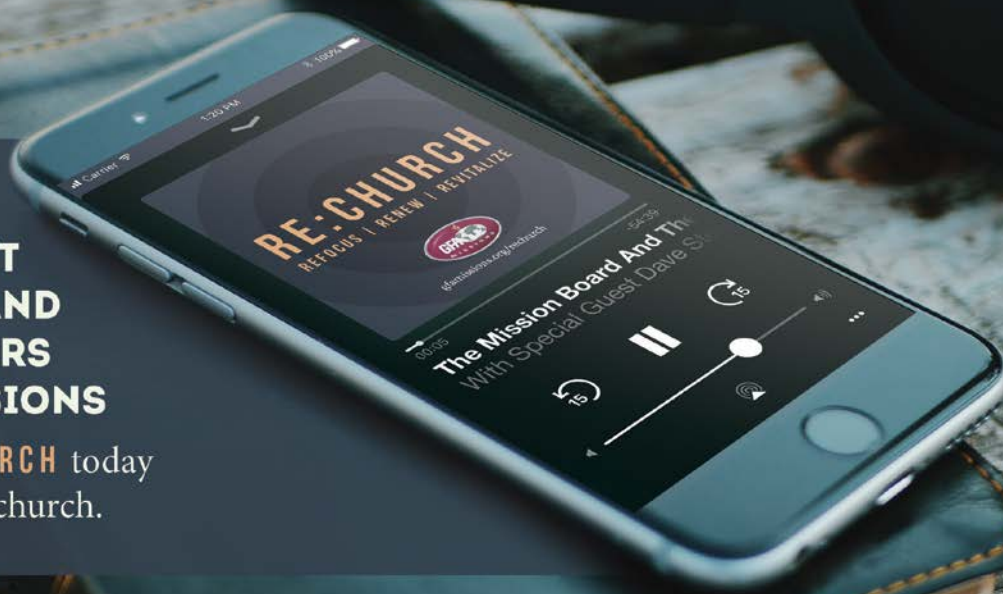
I have been endeavoring to keep up prayer at this season every hour of the day, stopping my occupation, whatever it is, to pray a little. I seek to keep my soul within the shadow of the throne of grace and Him that sits thereon.—Andrew Bonar

I ought to spend the best hours of the day in communion with God. It is my noblest and most fruitful employment, and is not to be thrust in any corner.—Robert Murray M’Cheyne

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

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language | noun 1.a. Communication of thoughts and feelings through a system of arbitrary signals, such as voice sounds, gestures, or written symbols.

ON LANGUAGE & SCRIPTURE

I'm a writer and editor of theological English: I live at the nexus of language and Scripture. I just worked on a big project for Logos Bible Software version 8 called the *Lexham Survey of Theology*, and it was a delight (and a resource you should get!). I was able to work with gifted writers who displayed a rich depth of biblical, theological, and historical knowledge. Some writers had better English than others, some were more skilled at theology; but all intuitively grasped a distinction that I think needs to be stated outright in this column: *written language and speech are, in a way, different languages*.

I noticed this when I began editing a few "articles" that were actually transcribed speech. This speech came from a brilliant theologian who knows the Bible well. I sat in the room as he recorded his talks for a camera, and they were all clever, engaging, and substantive—right off the top of his head. Amazing.

But when, months later, and after editing hundreds of other short (written) articles, I sat down to edit those transcriptions, I had a hard time making sense of a lot of the sentences. I had forgotten the intonation, the pauses, the facial expressions that enabled me to grasp those words easily in the moments in which they were spoken.

I noticed, too, that *as writing*, these brilliant thoughts from this incandescently smart guy were, well, kind of a little bit not so great. It was hard work to translate his speech into the written version of English. He repeated himself a lot within sentences that went on too long; he also used a lot of clauses connected by "and" that are simplistic-sounding in writing. He had unclear pronoun references that were clear when he spoke (emphasis helped, I assume?). Perfectly good speech. Bad writing.

The Bible contains instances of reported speech, but not (I think!) any of bad writing. And I just want to make a small observation: many of these instances of speech were actually translated, in two senses, before they made it into inspired Scripture. First, some of these were spoken first in other languages: Pharaoh presumably spoke not in biblical Hebrew but in the Egyptian dialect appropriate to his time and station. Second, many were "translated" from speech to writing. Aside from little phrases that sound like speech—such as "Arise, let us go hence" (John 14:31)—most reported speech in Scripture sounds like written language to me. I can't know that with certainty. What do you think? But it's perfectly consistent with the doctrine of inspiration to think that in some places we have divinely ordained, perfectly accurate summaries of reported speech, "translated" into writing.

Dr. Mark Ward is an academic editor at Lexham Press.



As dominant as the concept of the church is throughout the New Testament (the Greek word *ekklēsia* refers to the church over 110 times in the NT), it's somewhat surprising that it doesn't show up at all in the Gospels—except for three brief mentions by Jesus in Matthew (16:18; 18:17). The first of these is foundational: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.” Christ is clearly using “rock” in the sense of a foundation; the question is, who or what is the rock on which the Christ builds His church?

Interpretational Options

Historically, interpreters have offered three major options.

1. *Christ*. This view has been defended by (among others) Augustine, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Matthew Henry, Barbieri, and the *New Scofield Reference Bible*.

2. *Peter*, either personally or positionally or representatively. This view is by no means limited to Romanism; other defenders include R. T. France, Robert Saucy, and Charles Ryrie (in *Basic Theology*). Baptist theologian John Broadus was so certain it was Peter that he remarked, “No other explanation would probably at the present day be attempted, but for the fact that the obvious meaning has been abused by Papists to the support of their theory. But we must not allow the abuse of the truth to turn us away from its use; nor must the convenience of religious controversy determine our interpretation of Scripture teaching.”

3. *Peter's confession*. This view has been defended by Chrysostom, Alfred Edersheim, J. C. Ryle, A. B. Bruce, Charles Ryrie (in *Ryrie Study Bible*), and Allison (in his excellent theology of the church, *Strangers & Sojourners*). Ryle insisted that “there is nothing modern or peculiarly Protestant” in this interpretation; in fact, he notes, it was even maintained by the well-known sixteenth-century Franciscan preacher named Ferus.

A few have suggested a composite view that the intended referent actually involves all three: Christ, Peter, and Peter's confession (Pentecost in *Words and Works of Jesus Christ*; Clowney in *The Church*).

Exploring Other Passages

If Scripture is to interpret Scripture, what other passages might be relevant to interpreting Matthew 16:18?

First Corinthians 3:11–15, at first glance, seems to settle the issue decisively in favor of Christ as the foundation. A closer look, however, reveals that this passage is not talking about building the church, nor about individual believers' building in their own lives, but about ministers building in

other people's lives. In addressing the subject of ministers and ministry (vv. 1–9, esp. 4–8), Paul lays the foundation (v. 10) then others build on that foundation (vv. 10, 12)—referring to ministers, missionaries, preachers, teachers. So this passage is somewhat related to Matthew 16 in that it teaches that Christ is the foundation being laid by ministers in the lives of people. But is any version of “Christ” acceptable or any doctrine about “Christ” okay so long as it is connected to Him?

Ephesians 2:19–20 is also clearly relevant (“ye . . . are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone”). But the genitive (“foundation of the apostles and prophets”) could be apposition (the foundation which *is* the apostles and prophets) or subjective (the foundation laid *by* the apostles and prophets). In either case, Christ Himself is described not as the foundation but as the “chief cornerstone”—the keystone that governs the rest of the building.

Let's factor these observations back into the original passage in Matthew.

Examining the Context

Matthew 16:13 begins the context and sets the stage with a key question: “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” The disciples recount the current public speculations—all favorable and flattering opinions, but all infinitely inadequate. Christ then turns the question on them: “But whom say ye that I am?” Peter famously replies, “Thou art the Christ (*su ei ho Christos*), the Son of the living God.” Jesus identifies the divine origin of Peter's comprehension, then adds, “And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter [*su ei petros*, stone], and on this rock (*petra*, slab) I will build my church.”

Robert Reymond argues that the parallel *su ei* clauses suggest that just as Peter was identifying Christ not by name but by title, Jesus was responding in kind, using *petros* not as a proper name but as a descriptive title (“you are a rock”).* If Jesus had meant to distinguish Himself in contrast to Peter, a “but” (*alla*) would have been more appropriate (“You are a rock *but on this bedrock* I will build My church”) than the “and” (*kai*) in the text.

There are necessary reasons for Christ's choosing a different word (*petra* vs. *petros*) other than the assumption that He is identifying Himself as the foundation instead of Peter:

- He could not say, “Thou art *Petra* and on this *petra* I will build my church” because He couldn't nickname Cephas as *Petra* in the first place (*petra* is feminine in gender).
- He could not say, “Thou art *Petros* and on this *petros* I will build My church” because a *petros* is not an adequate term for a foundation.

An In-House Discussion

The Church's One Foundation

- Nevertheless, He chooses to use a term (*petra*) that does express an unmistakable link of some kind and to some degree to Peter (*petros*).

The Significance of the Keys of the Kingdom

But then comes the earth-shaking announcement: “And I will give unto thee [singular, Peter] the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (16:19). The ramifications of that are massive. Peter obviously figures prominently in Jesus’ plans for the church. Finally, that last statement makes it clear that “church” and “kingdom of heaven” are closely connected somehow.

The *symbolism* of the keys conveys access and authority (Luke 11:52; Rev. 1:18; 3:7; 9:1; 20:1). The *possessor* of the keys is both Peter (Matt. 16:19; 18:18) but also the church (note context of 18:15, and the plural pronoun “you”). Matthew 18 prevents any singular exaltation of Peter above the other apostles and cuts the knees out from under Rome’s doctrine of a Petrine papacy; even though Peter later is the principal instrument for the initial introduction and expansion of the church, all the apostles exercise the authority connected to the keys. The ultimate *authority* of the keys resides not in the church itself. Note terminology carefully—heaven does not ratify what we say or proclaim, but vice versa. The construction in 16:19 and 18:18 is a future perfect passive periphrastic, translated “will have been bound” and “will have been loosed.” In other words, it is the church on earth carrying out and declaring heaven’s decisions, not heaven ratifying the church’s decisions. The authority rests in God and in His Word (cf. John 20:23).

To possess and use the keys of the kingdom of heaven, then, involves (a) defining for people the conditions of entrance/exclusion from kingdom, (b) warning of the consequences for failing to meet the conditions, and (c) excommunicating from fellowship those who disqualify themselves from being part of the church (Matt. 18). The use of those keys of the kingdom of heaven is demonstrated when Peter opens the church/kingdom to the Jews (Acts 2:38) and to the Gentiles (Acts 10:42–43).

What gives Peter—or you or me—the right to make such confident assertions about the eternal destiny of people, to presume to dictate what they must do to be accepted by God, to warn what will happen if they do not meet the conditions? The authority of our message rests in the words of Christ himself in Matthew 16 and 18. Every time you declare the terms of the gospel, you are using the keys of the kingdom.

A Strange Command

Jesus then issues a very strange command (16:20). He commends Peter for his confession but then immediately commands the disciples *not* to publicize that very confes-

sion of Christ’s identity! Until when? Only until *his work is accomplished*. After the resurrection and ascension, then, Peter begins publicizing that confession at Pentecost: “You took Jesus of Nazareth and crucified him, but God raised him up” (Acts 2:22–32). “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (2:36). Now, listen closely here, and you can hear the jingle of the keys: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ *for the remission of sins*” (or, “and your sins will be remitted”) (2:38)! The confession of who Jesus is and what He does is the basis for the use of the keys and entrance into the church.

So What Is the Rock?

A defensible argument can be made for any of the positions outlined above; none is impossible or inherently heretical. The exegetical data seem (to me) to suggest, however, that the “rock” Jesus had in mind is not Peter or himself but the truth Peter had just confessed about him—the divinely-revealed truth of Jesus’ identity. Correct confession of Christ is the basis on which we accept someone into church membership, which is a local manifestation of Christ’s church-building work.

Perhaps the clearest clue comes at the commencement of the conversation. *Jesus initiated the entire discussion with a question about people’s confession of Him* (“Whom do men . . . whom say ye *that I am?*”). The various confessions about Christ—John, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets—however flattering, were all infinitely inadequate. The Father-revealed identity, to and through Peter, of Jesus of Nazareth as “the Christ, the Son of the living God” is what prompts Jesus’ “upon this rock” remark. The correct confession of the true identity of Christ is the foundational assertion of the gospel and the bedrock truth of the Church of Jesus Christ. It is meaningless to claim the person of Christ without a correct confession of who He is; no one gets into the Church who thinks that Jesus was just a great teacher and prophet like Elijah or Jeremiah.

The identity of Jesus (as Son of the Living God) and His work (as Messiah) is the cardinal doctrine of Christianity, the ground of the Church, and the hope of mankind. Confession of that divinely revealed truth gets one into the Church that Jesus is building.

* Reymond adds that “by capitalizing the Greek word *Petros*, the Greek translation of the Aramaic *kepha*’, which Jesus almost certainly used, the editors of our critical editions of the Greek Testament may have misled us” (cf. *A Systematic Theology*, 819–22). This seems additionally corroborated by Jesus’ use of Peter’s proper name (Simon Bar-Jona) in 16:17 before switching to the “title” (*petros*) in 16:18.

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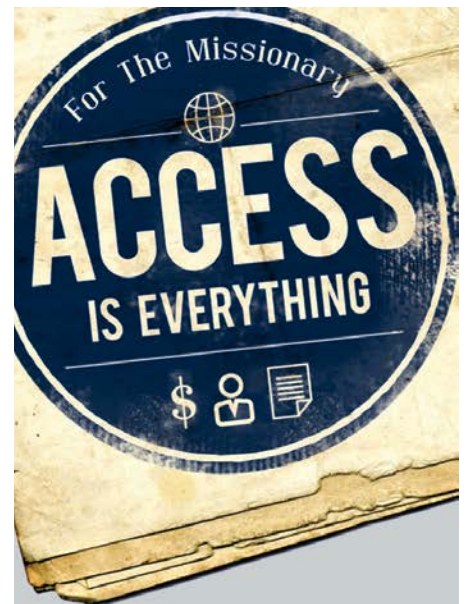
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—Dr. Daniel R. Brown

Balancing Chaplaincy and Church Responsibilities

It is 11:30 on a Saturday night, and I am already resting in preparation for the coming Lord's day and my pastoral responsibilities. The phone rings and caller ID shows that one of our police sergeants is trying to reach me. My first thought is, "This can't be good." The sergeant is a fellow believer and a close friend. He informs me that he is working a hit-and-run accident on the other side of the city where a man crossing a street was struck and killed by a seventy-year-old drunk driver. I am jolted by what he says next. The man who was killed is one of our young, off-duty officers. The sergeant explains that he couldn't reach the chaplain on call and then he tells me, "Mike, I knew you would help me." I get into uniform and a half hour later the sergeant's squad car pulls up in front of our home. The time is now 12:15 a.m. After praying together, we make the fifteen-minute drive to the deceased officer's home where I inform his wife and young son that their husband and father has been killed. As I grieve with them, I am also aware that in just a few short hours I'll be teaching the young married couples in our church who are the same age as this grieving widow. At 2:00 a.m. I am back in bed, physically and emotionally spent but unable to sleep.

The preceding event would be similar to what other pastors face when they are called out to a death in the church or a member is being rushed to the hospital with a medical emergency. However, being a local church pastor and a community or military chaplain is essentially having another part-time job with more responsibilities and another flock. This leads to the question, "How does a pastor balance the chaplaincy and the ministry?"

Know You Are Called by God

It is important for a church leader to know that he is called of God to the chaplaincy because of the additional burdens he will carry, including

added pressure on his schedule. Fire chaplain David Oliver made this observation: "The most effective resource the chaplain has to stay composed is his faith in God."¹ Foundational to his faith is the specific call of God and the assurance that whenever he is deployed or on call, God is in absolute control of the circumstances he will face and the tasks he must put on hold. King David must have wondered at the timing and uncertainty of events in his life, but he said in Psalm 56:3, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." Moses also experienced personal feelings of inadequacy, resistance from those he was called to serve, and the weight of everyday responsibilities (Exod. 18:18). Yet, God's call in Exodus 3:10 was accompanied by the promise in verse 12: "Certainly I will be with thee."

Depend Completely on the Holy Spirit

Every chaplain must acknowledge that he is absolutely dependent upon the indwelling Spirit of God to fulfill the ministry. Not only does our authority for service come from the Holy Ghost (Acts 1:8), but our leading also comes from Him (John 14:26; Acts 13:2; 16:6). A pastor cannot balance church ministry and the chaplaincy without the Spirit's guidance. "As a gentle supportive wind, the Holy Spirit offers guidance and direction... [This] comes from prayer and placing our trust for the success of ministry squarely on



[Him].”² God has already established the priorities for His servants in His Word, and His Spirit leads us into the next task if we are listening.

On a cold winter evening our department was notified by authorities in Canada that a man in their jurisdiction had committed suicide and that his parents lived in our city. I was called out to make the death notification. On the way to the police station I asked the Holy Spirit to work through me to help the parents and the officer who was to be my partner. After the notification the officer invited me to ride the remainder of the shift. Clearly, the incident was troubling him. The lack of calls that night indicated to me that God was working. As we sat together in the parking lot of a business on his beat, he opened up about his own spiritual concerns, and I was able to share the gospel. I was grateful that he already professed faith in Christ. Weeks later this twenty-seven-year-old officer died of a heart attack. I was his last ride-along. It is truly amazing to watch how the Holy Spirit brings His will to pass when we commit our ways to Him and rely on His strength (Ps. 37:5).

Have the Support of Your Family and Church

I could not balance pastoral ministry and the chaplaincy without the wonderful support of my family and our church family. Before a pastor accepts a chaplain position, he should seek the assent of his family and God’s flock to acknowledge that they support him and believe he is doing God’s will.³ Local church endorsement was the practice of the early church in Acts 6:6 and 13:3. Supporting a chaplain also requires commitment from his family and church in the following areas.

Spiritual commitment. A pastor who is also a chaplain needs to be encouraged by other believers and know that they are praying for him. His effectiveness, ability to stay balanced in his ministry responsibilities and his safety depend on prayer. If your pastor serves as a chaplain, take a personal interest in what God has called him to

do so that you can intercede knowledgeably for him and his family.

Time commitment. Chaplain work will draw a pastor away from his home and flock. He needs to know that his family and his church support him in this. He can also help them by remembering that his primary ministry is his family and then his church. The chaplaincy should be viewed as another opportunity to build Christ’s church by evangelizing the world. I am thankful for our excellent church staff who also commit extra time to cover pastoral tasks when chaplain work calls me away.

Financial commitment. Since most community chaplain work is volunteer, annual ministry resources will be required from the church. The church I pastor budgets for chaplain expenses including travel and training, resource literature and occasional meals with officers that I ride with. Funds are set aside every other year for an Emergency Services Sunday to honor first responders and their families. A pastor who is called to be a chaplain may struggle to maintain balance in the ministry if he is having to support the chaplaincy out of personal funds alone.

In 2 Corinthians 11:23–28, the apostle Paul recounted his abundant labor for the Lord that included “the care of all the churches.” He also listed many of the dangers he faced in the ministry. Yet he used those opportunities to reach those in law enforcement (Acts 16:23–34), the military and in government (Phil. 4:22), and the sick (Acts 14:9; 28:8–9). What allowed Paul to balance the varied opportunities and challenges of ministry? He understood that he could do all things through Christ’s strength, and he had other believers who helped shoulder his burdens and afflictions (Phil. 4:13–14).

Mike Ascher is the senior pastor of Good News Baptist Church in Chesapeake, Virginia. He has over twenty years of experience as a law-enforcement chaplain and is chairman of the Chaplaincy Commission for the FBFI.



¹ David A. Oliver, *A Manual for the Ministry of Fire Service Chaplaincy for the Fundamental Pastor* (doctoral thesis, Bob Jones University, 2011) p. 83.

² Larry Vandecreek and Sue Mooney (editors), *Parish Nurses, Health Care Chaplains and Community Clergy: Navigating the Maze of Professional Relationships* (New York: The Haworth Press, 2002), p. 122.

³ Because FBFI is committed to the authority of the local church, chaplains seeking endorsement are required to have a letter of recommendation from their church.

The Marvel of Conversion

It is truly amazing when a person is born again by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit—and may I strongly state that no one is saved apart from it—no exceptions! Our Lord Jesus Christ said this of the Holy Spirit in John 16:8: “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit convicted the hearts of three thousand people of their sin and need of a Savior. As the apostle Peter preached the gospel in Acts 2, verse 37 says, “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” The word “pricked” in this verse means they were deeply convicted of their sin, and this conviction led them to ask, “What shall we do?” Peter gave them this powerful answer in verse 38: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” We see the results when these people turned to Christ in verse 41: “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

The Lord Jesus Christ referred to the Holy Spirit in John 14:17 as “the Spirit of truth.” He is the Spirit of truth who always points mankind to God’s truth, which is none other than Jesus Christ. He said in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” He said to Pilate in John 18:37, “Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” Every person who is converted to Christ is the result of the working of the Holy Spirit.

It is interesting to study the Scriptures and observe what happens to the lives of those who are born again by God’s Spirit. In John 4 Jesus talked to a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well. In the course of their conversation, He revealed her entire past and present lifestyle. She was astonished that He knew her so completely, and then she recognized Him as the Messiah and became truly converted. Notice the first

thing she did in verses 28 and 29: “The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” She immediately wanted to tell others about Jesus.

Here’s another example from Luke 19. When Zacchaeus came to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, he said in verse 8, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” Zacchaeus wanted to make things right with those whom he had wronged. The Lord said of him in verse 9, “This day is salvation come to this house.”

I want to relate the conversion of one of our grandsons this past summer. One of my three sons is the staff evangelist of a youth camp during the summer, and his wife is the camp nurse. At the end of one of the evening services, my grandson rushed home and announced, “Mom, we have to talk right now.” My daughter-in-law replied, “We can talk later.” My grandson insisted, “No, Mom! We have to talk now, this is serious. And you better bring your Bible!” He was under deep conviction of his sin and realized he needed to be saved. So his mom took the Scriptures and led him to Christ. After my grandson prayed he said, “Mom, I’ve got to tell my brothers that I just got saved.” Then he said, “And I need to go see Mr. So-and-So and tell him I stole some candy from the snack shop!” As my daughter-in-law told me all this, I was thrilled to hear what he wanted to do after he got saved. First, he wanted to tell his brothers. Second, he wanted to confess his stealing and make it right. I believe you will always see this kind of change when a person is truly born again! The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 18:3, “Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

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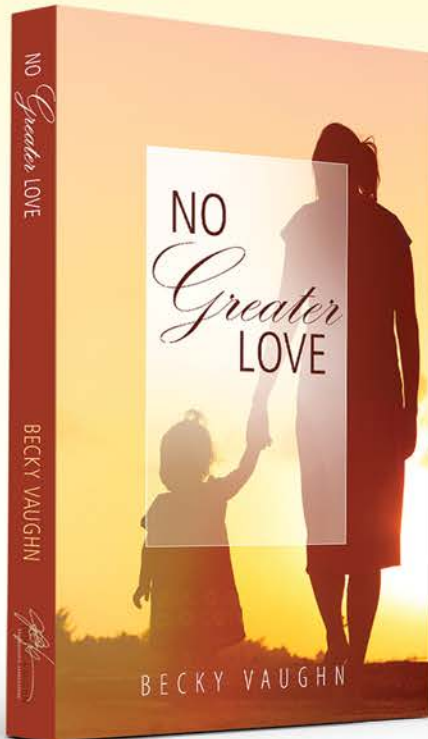
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