

# FRONTLINE

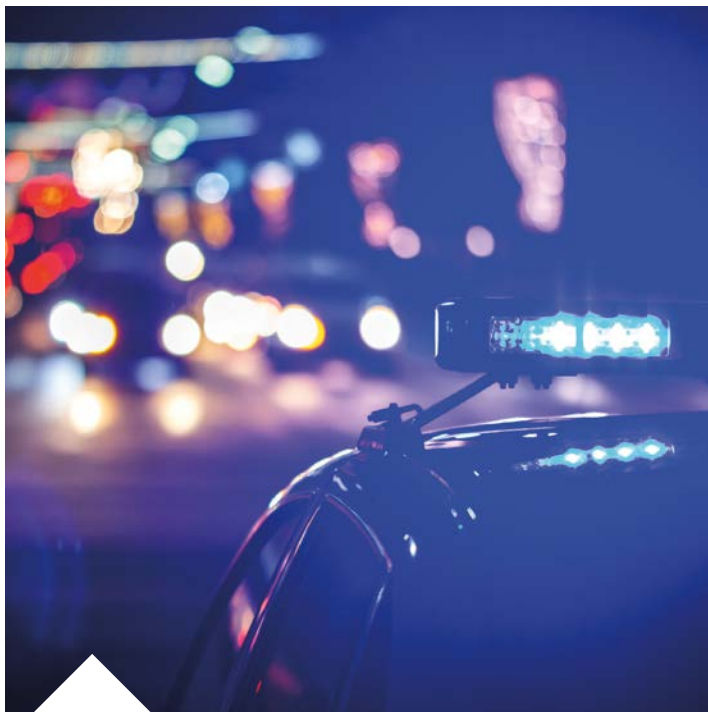
BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

## Emergency Compassion

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# FRONTLINE

Volume 33 • Number 2



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Our sincere thanks to Dr. Bruce McAllister for coordinating this issue of *FrontLine* magazine.



Join the conversation online at [proclaimanddefend.org](https://proclaimanddefend.org)

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# Emergency Compassion

## Inspirational Stories from First Responders

**T**his issue of *FrontLine* is devoted to telling the stories of believers who serve as first responders. The piercing sound of an ambulance, fire truck, or police vehicle frequently reminds us that someone is in serious trouble. If you have spent an evening in a hospital emergency room, seeing the suffering of so many people will awaken you out of your calm comfort zone. Hopefully this issue will awaken in all of us the need for Christlike compassion and evangelistic zeal in a world full of critical needs.

You will not be able to put this magazine down as you learn of the compassionate care of Christian men and women at home and abroad. I know all of these writers. They are superb servants of Jesus Christ. They have kindly taken time at our request to share their stories and insights.

Larry Robbins has served the Lord for many years as a minister of music at Tri-City Baptist Church of Westminster, Colorado. His zeal for community ministry is contagious, a quality you will sense from all the writers. Rachel Langendorfer serves as a missionary nurse in the "Wild West" of the Pacific with a team of devoted, risk-taking servants helping people in harm's way in the sometimes volatile and violently vengeful culture of Papua New Guinea. Merrylee Mullinax is a long-time family nurse practitioner who today specializes in geriatric care.

Her biblical and practical insights into medical issues during the COVID crisis are very perceptive.

After years of faithfully pastoring, Jan Milton now serves with Operation Renewed Hope, a ministry focused upon quick response in national and international natural-disaster relief. Ron Perry serves as pastor of Faith Baptist Church of Folsom, California, where he effectively connects with his community through his special outreach. Jonathan Edwards has served as a church planter and pastor for a lifetime in the intermountain West with Northwest Baptist Missions. You will be hard-pressed to find a more dynamic, visionary servant of the Lord with such a diversity of gifts. Whether he is flying his plane, breaking or training horses, utilizing his spacious Eagle's Nest Conference Center, or starting a vocational college, he and his wife, Chrissa, are always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Perhaps you have been sensing a personal need and burden for deeper gospel penetration into your community or even around the world. May God use this issue of *FrontLine* to open our eyes, stir our hearts, strengthen our praying, increase our giving, and expand our horizons to creatively show Christlike compassion to those in desperate need.

Bruce McAllister

# Unique Opportunities of Community Chaplaincy

It was the fall of 1998 when a fellow associate pastor at Tri-City Baptist Church in Westminster, Colorado, popped into my office.

“Would you be interested in being a police chaplain?” Immediately intrigued by this random question, I wanted to know more. He continued. “I just attended an informational meeting at the Westminster Police Department about the start of a new chaplain program. A second meeting will be this week if you want to attend with me.” Without much thought I agreed to join my co-pastor at the police department, having no idea what to expect.

As I learned over the course of the next several months, a small group of Westminster officers in a Bible study became burdened for their department. They were praying that God “would really *do* something.” With the approval of a rather skeptical chief of police, and after many months of prayerful preparation, the chaplaincy program was started.

Suddenly finding myself in this position of counselor, confidant, and encourager, I recognized my need for additional training. Twenty-five years of ministry experience—serving under godly pastors who mentored me—helped to prepare me to deal with critical incidents and trauma. Taking advantage of every opportunity, I attended classes with several organizations and finally joined the FBFI chaplaincy program for my endorsement.

## ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

I had been a chaplain for about two years when the important role of first responders really came to the forefront in our country. Shortly after the terrorist attacks in New York City in September 2001, God “dropped me” into the middle of Ground Zero for three days, where I received a crash course in grieving and trauma. This experience opened doors of opportunity back in Colorado. The public exposure I received for having assisted at Ground Zero paid big dividends with my previously skeptical police chief. I was now fully accepted into the “thin blue line,” part of the brotherhood of Law Enforcement. I had the unique opportunity to distribute tracts and Bibles and witness freely in our city government building.

## OPPORTUNITIES OUTSIDE THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

It seemed a natural thing following 9/11 to have a special memorial service during National Memorial Police Week each year in May. While officers typically do not like attending special services designed to honor them at churches or organizations outside the department, as chaplain I was able to promote and encourage our officers to attend “Law Enforcement Day” at our church. There we remembered those across the nation who had made the supreme sacrifice—“line of duty” deaths—while serving and protecting American citizens. This annual service grew to become the

largest service of the year at Tri-City Baptist Church.

We also hosted a monthly Bible study luncheon for police officers at the church, providing a home-cooked meal. As influence grew in the department, it also grew in our city government. I was consistently asked to pray at a variety of city events and programs. A culmination of that influence was realized when my wife and I hosted a thirteen-week Christian World View Study in our home. It was attended by the mayor, the police chief, and several other politically influential people in the City of Westminster. I know this impacted our city for years to follow.

Additional opportunities outside of our agency were presented at the massive investigation of the grisly murder of a ten-year-old girl in our city in 2012. I was able to have “life conversations” with members of the Colorado Bureau of Investigations, FBI investigators, and numerous other local agencies in addition to the three hundred employees and officers at the Police Department. Debriefing meetings were held every six hours around the clock for nearly two weeks. Each meeting concluded with an announcement of an available prayer meeting with the chaplain in a room that was set aside.

## PERSONAL OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

Individual opportunities presented themselves as often as I was at the depart-



ment. Because the department was open twenty-four hours a day, it was easy to add time at the department to my busy church schedule. A positive interaction with any officer would nearly always happen with a simple greeting in the hallway. Asking, “How can I pray for you?” would sometimes result in prayer together on the spot.

I would willingly sacrifice some sleep on occasions to spend time with my officers. In addition, I had the tremendous support from my senior pastors (two over the course of my chaplaincy) to take as much time as I would like at the department. They both regarded chaplaincy as my ministry “fishing hole.” They recognized that it was indeed very fruitful. It also became apparent that it was keeping my life as a pastor fresh and vibrant. I was experiencing firsthand the city and culture our congregants actually face in the world outside of our church walls!

Doing regular ride-alongs, which I found exhilarating and interesting, provided a wonderful one-on-one time with my officers. As they learned more about me, their trust grew, and my counsel was welcomed. I hadn’t been a chaplain long before soul-winning opportunities presented themselves.

It was about midnight during a ride-along that I was able to counsel an officer who was struggling

in his marriage. We had stopped during a slow time on the streets to get a cup of coffee. There, at a table right near the cash register, I was able to present the gospel and see this officer bow his head and trust Christ. Over the next several months he went through a painful divorce: his wife (whom I had also counseled) decided to walk away from the marriage.

The pressures on an officer’s marriage are immense. Officers typically do not want to share all the daily trauma and life-threatening dangers with their spouses, and rightly so! But this also conflicts with the need for good communication and transparency that a good marriage requires.

As this burden developed in my chaplaincy, I focused more on healthy family relationships and, most importantly, explaining the necessity of having Jesus

Christ at the center of each home. A theme I regularly drove home before the department personnel comes from Romans 13. The passage clearly teaches that police officers (as well as any authority that God places over our lives) function as “ministers of God” (vv. 1–18). “For he is the minister of God to thee for good. . . . He beareth not

the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God” (Rom. 13:4).

The overriding conflict facing officers is that many do not know the Lord. They are literally serving a living God whom they do not know! This reality gave me a great springboard to present the gospel and explain how they can experience a full, rewarding life as a law-enforcement officer. As their Savior, Christ will guide them through every difficulty and confrontation on the street and in their homes as well.

## LIFE-EVENT OPPORTUNITIES

About eight years ago I received a call from an officer who had recently gotten engaged to be married. Adam asked if I could do premarital counseling with him and his fiancée, Christy. During the first session, as always, I asked about their church background and relationship to the Lord. Christy quickly spoke up explaining she had grown up in a Christian home and had always faithfully attended church. Adam, on the other hand, was attending church now, but was not sure about his relationship with the Lord. With this open door of opportunity, I went through the gospel with Adam, after which he stated that indeed he was a believer and was glad to receive assurance. When I looked back at Christy, tears were streaming down her face, as she confessed, “I’ve never personally trusted Christ!” Both were baptized soon after and began growing in the Lord. Several months later I performed their



Continued on page 22

# Rescue the Perishing

## Ministering the Gospel in Medical Emergencies

**C**hilling screams suddenly awoke me in the night. Although I couldn't make out the words, I could hear the frightened voices of nearby children and the clamor of many neighbors gathering. In the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, violence is frequently the solution to conflict, and I immediately knew we had an emergency coming to our clinic.

### SARLI

Jon and his wife, Sarli, had recently returned to our area after living for many years in the capital city. Several of their children had preceded them to the village and for many months had been lovingly cared for by a Christian couple in our church. The wife, Ambai, often taught the children Bible lessons and faithfully brought them to Sunday school. When Jon and Sarli returned, it was evident that they had many sinful habits and were apathetic toward spiritual things.

That evening, Sarli had confronted Jon regarding his infidelity. In a drunken rage, he brutally attacked her with a machete. Alarmed neighbors carried her to the clinic while her children clung to her. This was a horrific sight—one of the worst cases that my coworker and I had ever dealt with. Our emotions about this inhumane act would have to be dealt with later. Our focus was to save Sarli's life as she was bleeding heavily from multiple wounds.

From trauma, to seizures, to difficult deliveries, our small medical clinic regularly deals with medical emergencies. Both my coworker and I are nurse practitioners specializing in family practice, not emergency medicine. Dealing with serious emergencies with limited resources in a developing country is challenging and overwhelming. Even after a patient is stabilized, patients that need further care must be transported over rugged roads to the nearest hospital more than three hours away.

We worked for two and a half hours repairing the deep wounds on both of Sarli's thighs and the side of her head. Meanwhile, two Christian sisters stood near her head giving





words of encouragement and helping to make her comfortable. My heart filled with joy to hear the two of them sharing Scripture and a summary of a recent sermon. They ministered so naturally to her spiritual needs. Later, when we were finally finished with suturing and bandaging, these two believers accompanied Sarli to the hospital in town for further follow up. Her trip to town was also necessary for her safety, as it put pressure and shame upon her husband for his abuse.

When Sarli returned to our village, our missionary team had many opportunities to minister to her during follow-up visits at the clinic for wound care and physical therapy. Before each visit, she heard a clear gospel message. Additionally, several ladies visited her at home and encouraged her to turn her heart to the Lord, who had graciously spared her life. As she gradually regained her strength, Sarli, with the aid of her crutches, began to walk the short distance to our local church and ladies' Bible studies. Sadly, her interest in spiritual things waned after a few months, but Sarli has been exposed to much truth.

#### **MARGARET**

God has allowed our clinic to minister to a number of mothers facing complicated deliveries that threatened the life of mother or child. As many Highlands ladies do, our patient Margaret had planned to deliver her baby at home in the village. However, the local pastor and his wife were concerned that her labor seemed to be prolonged. They insisted that she come to the clinic and accompanied her. Although everything was moving along normally when she arrived, the prodding of this couple was providential. Shortly after delivering a healthy baby girl, Margaret began hemorrhaging. My coworker exclaimed, "I can't find her blood pressure!" God gave wisdom and much grace as we worked for several hours to stabilize her with medications and intravenous fluids. Another lady delivered a baby just a few hours later, but God orchestrated the timing so that we could dedicate our time to our very sick patient during the most critical period.

This incident gave Margaret the opportunity to hear the gospel again from several Christian relatives who stayed with her until she returned to her home village a few days later. Over the years, God has given us many occasions to speak seriously about eternity not only with her but also with other mothers whose lives the Lord spared during childbirth. Our recurring prayer for these ladies is that the goodness of God would lead them to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

## JENNIFER AND KEN

Jennifer and her five-year-old son, Ken, were visiting our village for the wedding of a relative. After church one Sunday, a group of family members rushed Ken to the clinic in status epilepticus—a prolonged seizure emergency that is unlikely to end without medication.

We later learned he had a history of seizures but had never been started on medications for epilepsy. At the clinic, we administered anti-seizure medications, monitored his airway, and observed him for several hours after the seizure finally resolved. Later, Jennifer admitted that when her son was seizing for so long, she was certain that she would lose him: “I decided that if he died, I was going to jump off the cliff near the clinic.” God intervened and spared Ken’s life, and Jennifer, who would have passed into a Christless eternity had she taken her life, listened attentively as I shared the gospel with her.

Beyond the physical side of responding to emergencies are the emotions that we experience. Lack of resources and poor infrastructure are challenging enough, but domestic abuse, polygamy, malicious assaults, revenge, blatant lawlessness, and lack of justice are heartbreaking. The animistic mindset of the people of Papua New Guinea is quick to accuse an individual (usually a woman) of witchcraft when an unexplained illness, accident, or disaster occurs. Tragically, dozens of women are brutally murdered in Papua New Guinea every year under allegations of sorcery.

## KRISTINA

When a respected village member died a couple years ago, a number of evil men rounded up several local women and at least one elderly couple to interrogate, torture, and “determine” who was responsible for the death. The elderly wife, Kristina, narrowly managed to escape from these violent men, but her arm was cut with a machete in the process. Sadly, her husband was chased down and cruelly murdered. A Christian family put their own lives at risk to hide Kristina and then get her to the clinic in the evening under cover of

darkness. Several of these believers also witnessed and explained to her that it was God who spared her life.

Suturing her injured arm and providing pain medication and antibiotics was simple compared to the long-term decisions that had to be made regarding Kristina’s safety.

But God providentially orchestrated all the details. An airplane was already scheduled to come to our airstrip the next day. Arrangements were made for safe housing for the night. In the morning, she was clandestinely driven up to the airstrip and helped onto a flight to the town of Goroka. A

Christian organization there has a ministry specifically for people whose lives are in danger from accusations of sorcery. I was able to see Kristina in Goroka last year. Although she will never be able to safely return to her rural village, she has healed completely, and her needs are being met.

Ministering in a society that lacks justice, especially for women, can lead to much frustration and even hopelessness. We, like David, must often encourage ourselves in the Lord (1 Sam. 30:6). There are many stabilizing truths from Scripture, but I will share just a few that have encouraged our hearts in times of physical and emotional stress.

1. God does not intend for us to bear all of these physical and emotional burdens ourselves. Rather they are intended to press us to dependence upon Him. “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved” (Ps. 55:22).
2. The Psalms teach us to pray for the afflicted. “Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble” (Ps. 10:12).
3. It is Christlike to feel compassion for those who are both physically and

spiritually oppressed. “But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36).

4. God is the only righteous and perfect Judge. “But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment. And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness” (Ps. 9:7–8).
5. God is a refuge for the oppressed. “The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble” (Ps. 9:9).

## THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

Rescue the perishing,  
Care for the dying,  
Snatch them in pity  
From sin and the grave.

When Fanny Crosby wrote this beloved hymn, she was communicating the need to spiritually rescue lost souls. However, the truths in this hymn can also apply to our medical ministry and specifically to our care for individuals facing serious health crises. Indeed, how can a person on the brink of death be saved from eternal death if his or her physical life is not rescued? God

has given our clinic many wide-open doors to give the gospel through our regular clinic hours and emergency visits. We have had ongoing opportunities with many of these patients as they continue to regularly visit the clinic and hear the gospel. As much as we desire to treat people’s physical ailments or help their family and social needs, our greatest joy is to see lost souls trust the Great Physician who alone can make them whole!

Rachel Langendorfer is a family nurse practitioner ministering in a rural clinic in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. She has served as a career missionary with Gospel Fellowship Association for the last six years.







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# Juggling Caregiving Responsibilities



I have been blessed to be a nurse for thirty-six years. In 1996 the Lord led me to become a family nurse practitioner, and for the last twenty years I have focused on geriatric care. Ten years ago my mom and dad (a former pastor) relocated from Illinois to live with me in South Carolina. While both my parents were in good health at that time, my father was later diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, and the Lord took him home in 2018. My mother started showing signs of confusion, and shortly after my father passed away she was diagnosed with dementia. Although she was initially able to be home by herself for brief periods, her need for assistance progressed, and we managed with sitters while I worked during the day. When COVID hit, caregiving responsibilities between home and work became more challenging.

As we began to hear about the US pandemic in March of 2020, the immediate response of many people was fear. The frustration level for healthcare providers increased as people came for answers and cures—but there were no answers. As the pandemic expanded, caregivers experienced compassion fatigue, as staffing shortages became a statistic and increased reporting requirements multiplied the heaviness of responsibilities.

## REGULATIONS

So many new regulations were placed on healthcare providers! I was fearful for our geriatric residents and their families because of the effects of required isolation. As room numbers were placed on the windows so loved ones could visit from out-

doors, the Lord led me to walk around the building weekly for the first four weeks and to pray for the residents in each room. God answered prayers, and through the first wave of the pandemic, He really protected our residents. While another healthcare community initially lost forty-two residents to COVID, ours was limited to ten lost during that first round of the virus. I believe that was a direct answer to prayer.

Not only were we all learning the new requirements, but we were also trying to figure out how to protect ourselves and our own loved ones with whom we had contact. At home I set up a changing station in my garage. When arriving home from work, I would completely change in the garage and shower inside before seeing my mom. It was hard for her to understand the impact the virus was having on how we lived.

The second round of COVID, the Delta strand, was also very deadly to many of our residents. During this round, my community lost at least fourteen people. But finally, at this point antibody therapy was available, allowing many communities to help their residents. However, this new medical therapy also came with some measure of complexity because families needed to be educated regarding its risks versus benefits. Getting appropriate consents signed in addition to closely monitoring the residents made for very long and demanding days.

## BACK AT HOME . . .

Back at home, Mom started to show declines because of her own isolation. While she had sitters, that just didn't seem

to be enough. Meals on Wheels quit bringing her meals. She even had a fall in our backyard, which I didn't learn about until later. With Mom's progressing needs, challenges in how to provide the best support for her were compounded. I had to try to find new ways to monitor her activities. Through "virtual care" medical providers, she received extra therapy. Although this helped, it reinforced the need for not leaving her alone at home. It also created additional financial expense, but God gave direction, and He continued to provide.

Fears increased not only for us as healthcare providers but also for many of you. Inappropriate fear and anxiety are not emotions from God. Fear is a strange thing. It often hinges more on the things we don't know rather than on what we do know. "What if" statements need to be replaced by the truth of God's Word.

Many verses in the Bible encourage us not to fear or be anxious. Second Timothy 1:7 tells us that "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." In Isaiah 43:5 the Lord admonishes us to "fear not: for I am with thee." First John 4:18 explains that "there is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear." One of the hardest things for the caregivers I knew was overcoming fear. Bringing my thoughts into captivity to the truths of the God's Word gave me strength. That truth helped me continue to minister to the elderly residents in our communities and to my precious mom at home. Focusing on God's nature and His character instead of COVID's challenges and numbers was a significant help to me.



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## PAINFUL LOSSES

For those of us who work in senior healthcare communities, death and dying are part of our daily work routine, but the losses from COVID were rapid and unexpected. One of our communities lost over seventy residents, while another lost around twenty-five. Each loss was hard. We had only limited treatment options available to help. It was difficult for us to have people passing away without family members around them. I remember the exasperation of one dear wife who just could not live without seeing her husband face to face, so she called an ambulance that came and picked him up and took him home. There she could oversee his care, and he passed away at home, which gave her peace. Just recently I spoke with a nurse who lost her eighty-three-year-old mother from pneumonia right after a positive COVID test. She expressed her grief to me and said she felt responsible for her mother's death. Due to working in the ER, she felt certain she had brought the virus home to her mother. I let her talk and tried to encourage her by reminding her of God's sovereign time appointed for all of us. Hebrews 9:27 reminds us of our appointed time. Matthew 6:25-34 encourages us to "take no thought for your life. . . . Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" First Peter 1:24 and Isaiah

40:6-7 compare the brevity of life to the withering of grass. We really cannot lengthen someone's life, because we have no power over life or death. We can provide things that support certain bodily organs, but the timing of death is in God's hands.

As a provider it was very disconcerting not to know who would get ill or who would overcome COVID. Questions of what we could do to possibly prevent the progression or at least try to limit the complications were perplexing. These challenges usually lead the medical community to more research and problem solving, but, even now, answers sometimes seem vague. As providers, all we can do is follow the prescribed protocols while giving our very best efforts to control the symptoms and monitor complications for possible treatment. As Christians we have an Almighty God whom we can first go before and pray for wisdom and strength.

**THE COVID PANDEMIC WAS NOT SOMETHING TO BE FEARED OR ENDURED: IT WAS SOMETHING OUR GOD ALLOWED.**

## WHO IS IN CHARGE?

Focusing on God's sovereignty was the answer to my perplexing questions. God was not surprised by COVID-19. Colossians 1:16-17 explains that "by him all things consist." Luke 9:42-43 gives us the example of those that "were amazed at the mighty power of God." God's power and care continue to be obvious. Medicine doesn't have all the answers, but God does. I don't know all that God intended to teach us through COVID, but we must trust Him every day and strive to do the next right thing He wants us to do.

As COVID rates began to decrease and some of the restrictions in the public arena

began to lessen, some of the restrictions in the medical world lessened too. But some may never go away. In fact, as new outbreaks have been occurring in recent months, there has been another increase in paperwork and forms as well as recurrent isolation. Also, there have been suggestions of required vaccinations, which affect healthcare employment rates. When requirements increased, many people left the healthcare arena to collect government supplements at home, while others just chose not to work in areas of greater risk. Some left the nursing field due to having to choose the care of their children's education over their work. Staffing is challenging. Currently fewer staff are doing more work with more requirements. Because staffing quotas are government regulated, some communities are forced to supplement staffing from outside agencies. Another nurse colleague has called it "caregiver compassion fatigue." Please continue to pray for healthcare workers in all fields. With fatigue or without compassion, it is hard to administer good care. With the recent number of graduates entering the workforce from various programs, the staff supply has been improving. Praise the Lord! He supplies for our needs in unexpected ways.

Philippians 4:19 encourages us that God does supply all our needs. Personally, I am very thankful for God's love and care as well as His faithfulness. He so graciously supplies every day in so many ways. He has provided excellent sitters to help with my mother while I am at work. He has blessed me with supportive coworkers who have significantly decreased my load. I've also been blessed with supportive prayer warriors. The COVID pandemic was not something to be feared or endured: it was something our God allowed. He continues to point to His Word, His truth, and the future hope that He has promised. We shouldn't faint in well doing, but we need an eternal perspective to bring us much peace and joy. As we look at God's blessings, we can be thankful for every day.

Merrylee Mullinax has been a member at Faith Baptist Church in Taylors, South Carolina, for twenty-eight years. She has been a nurse practitioner for twenty-six years. She graduated from BJU with her BSN in nursing in 1988 and her MSN from USC in 1996.





# Operation Renewed Hope and Relief Work

## Joseph Wrote the Book on Immediate Response Disaster Relief

In 1998 Operation Renewed Hope (ORH) engaged its first relief project when Hurricane Mitch struck Central America. Our efforts centered in Honduras, where the slow-moving hurricane dumped massive amounts of water. Our major contribution to relief efforts was the handling and shipping of much-needed relief supplies. ORH shipped many tons of canned foods, blankets, and equipment.

One missionary reported that his church members lost their lives in the flooding, and his plans were to leave Honduras. When he saw all the shipping containers arriving, it was the encouragement he needed to remain in Honduras. His *renewed hope* led him to further ministry.

ORH's work in disasters steadily grew in number and in quality. Gradually, ORH increased ministry capabilities, such as our ministry called "Air Hope." Immediately it became a tremendous benefit to our relief efforts. ORH also developed partnerships with like-minded Bible-based organizations, increasing the relief work and improving the response time.

ORH's foreign efforts have included Japan, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Costa Rica, Honduras, Haiti, Puerto Rico,

Dominica, Bahamas, Pakistan, Lebanon, Nepal, India, Ukraine, and other smaller efforts. Due to COVID-19 lockdown, it was necessary to send funds to pastors and churches in many countries so they could care for their families.

ORH's domestic efforts have included responses to Hurricanes Katrina, Sandy, Irma, Florence, Ida, Ian, and others. ORH has worked in the states of New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Kentucky, West Virginia, Indiana, Iowa, and Kansas. There is never a year that there is not a natural or manmade disaster requiring attention.

Partners, trained directors, and first responders working on our teams are a blessing. We come together in great unity, and the greatest unifying factor is the gospel. Each partner is committed to spreading the gospel through every disaster. As a result, literally thousands have received a gospel witness.

ORH could never be a first responder. We can never be first in the impact area like the local governments and their agencies, larger nonprofit agencies, or local nonprofit and mercy agencies, such as churches, are. They are true first respond-

ers. ORH's role, by the nature of our purpose, is always rapid response.

### OPERATION RENEWED HOPE AND FIRST RESPONDERS

First responders are immediate to the site, knowing much of their role depending on the nature of the disaster event. Without the first responders the impact area would experience more destruction, more loss, and more death.

A sign of the greatness of United States' first responders is the imitation of them by other nations. Without their work, rapid responders could not fulfill their role. ORH, over and over, has been helped and encouraged by these providers.

During Hurricane Sandy, an FDNY firefighter took time to offer a personal thank-you for our efforts in that disaster. During the aftermath of another major hurricane, our supply trucks were allowed to pass through roadblocks into the impact area because first responders recognized the signs on our trucks and opened the blockades as we approached.

First responders stopped at a church that Operation Renewed Hope helped to supply. They praised the church because of its efficient distribution of goods. They



even offered to share goods with the church while watching pastors give the gospel to people driving through the supply lines.

A pastor reported that his mayor even listed his church, helped by ORH, as a distribution point in one section of their very large city. The pastor's church provided generated power, grilled meals, and supplies. The mayor's kind recognition was overwhelming, and as a result a man from the community sent a thousand-dollar donation to the church to show his gratitude.

A church requested that ORH make a presentation during a church service honoring first responders. Several first responders were present at the morning service. ORH staff showed a video of first responders working in the tornado destruction in Joplin, Missouri. At the close of the service the first responders came to the front, thanking ORH for understanding and accurately portraying their important role. The ORH staff and church were thankful to impact their lives in this way because they make it possible for our ministry to happen.

Sadly, many never recognize but take for granted the work and responsibility of these highly trained first responders. The police guard the homes, businesses, and organizations from looters and scavenger hunters. Debris and partially standing structures can be filled with valuables. Undamaged structures become susceptible to robbery. The police engage in protecting civilians legally entering the area to work or reclaim their property. Their efforts to guard, protect, and supervise access to the vulnerable impact area continue until they are told to stand down.

The fire departments provide prevention services through regular inspections. After the event, they may extinguish

electrical fires, chemical fires, and combustible-materials fires. Because of potential dangers to commercial buildings, manufacturing and storage facilities, or hospitals, departments must have proper firefighting materials and equipment. They are often required to be rescue units that find, assess, stabilize, and transport victims. They are trained to limit destruction as well as prevent destruction.

The water utility workers prevent flooding and restore essential clean water. The electrical utility restores power, prevents harm from downed power lines, and deters home invasions. Utility workers repair gas lines preventing dangerous explosions or harmful exposure to fumes.

Rescue teams search ruins of buildings hoping to find people alive. They look for elderly that might not have known about the impending disaster. Babies and children can be hidden and unable to get attention. These teams save lives which otherwise would be lost.

Clearing crews make areas safe from damaged or downed trees. Tow trucks clear roads, and heavy equipment clears destruction blocking entrance or free movement.

The ambulance crews with medical caregivers move people to care facilities after stabilizing them where medical caregivers work tirelessly to save lives and restore the well-being of others.

FEMA, military, and regulatory agencies are active during the first response

phase. Federal agencies respond because of possible damage to federal facilities that, by the nature of the facility, could pose a danger. In many events, National Guard troops can be mobilized and quickly move to a site to assist local first responders.

The number of first responders necessary to make an area secure and safe is overwhelming. The local and federal government orchestration of this amazing symphony of people is as beautiful as any musical presentation. Operation Renewed Hope is thankful for these people because they make it possible for our ministry to function.



Above left: Larry Ward with loaded trailer going to churches after Hurricane Ian. Above right: Children in a refugee center make bracelets to sell to support the war effort. Above center: Hurricane Ian work team prepares meals. Above bottom: Outreach in Kharkiv: food distribution and the gospel message.



## OPERATION RENEWED HOPE AND JOSEPH

ORH calls itself a rapid-response relief ministry that complements the first-response efforts. Therefore, ORH's Joseph Project is called in after first responders' essential and indispensable work is done. Why "The Joseph Project"? Joseph wrote the book on disaster relief, and ORH uses his example to continue the work begun by first responders.

A major need after stabilization by first responders is goods to distribute, such as food, water, clothing, baby-care products, children's food, and cleaning supplies. However, rapid response is not possible if essential relief supplies are not immediately available, because the time necessary to gather, buy, or ship these necessities at the time of need delays the ministry. If these necessities are on hand, rapid response can be accomplished. This is the heart of Joseph's project in ancient Egypt: to gather necessities in a timely and cost-effective manner.

His example in Genesis 41 has been the foundation of relief work around the world.

Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years

of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine (Gen. 41:34–36).

Joseph's project saved Egypt and was a true immediate response to a great disaster. How?

1. Joseph saw the disaster that loomed ahead and made provision for both leadership and food. For seven years Joseph's leaders maintained their vigilance to supply food for Egypt.
2. Joseph made provision to wisely gather needed relief. Joseph wisely made it possible for Egyptian production to be taxed at a rate that would suffice the coming need while leaving adequate amounts for the need of the moment.
3. Joseph made provision to begin immediately to meet the coming disaster demands. Joseph did not gather when the need was upon the Egyptians; this would have caused more suffering. His *first response* ability would meet the needs immediately.
4. Joseph's preparedness fulfilled his role and saved Egypt from perishing. Unpreparedness causes great harm.

So how does the church follow Joseph's example?

1. Train leadership. The church should train pastoral leadership and lay leaders

to create a relief-work ministry of gathering and storing goods.

2. Gather wisely. The church can gather relief supplies which can be purchased when church families go grocery shopping. The families can buy an extra jar of peanut butter, an extra can of meat, or a bag of diapers. The church can donate the items to a Bible-based relief organization of their choice.
3. Act immediately. Instead of responding at the time of need to raise funds and gather supplies, act immediately, even before the event, if possible. Bible-based organizations can strategically collect goods for rapid response. In many cases, trucks, fully loaded with supplies, can be pre-positioned hours before the actual event with predesignated drop-off points.
4. Prevent perishing. This is the most important part of Joseph's example. He saved the perishing. During the days of difficulty following a disaster, it is possible to give the gospel to the spiritually perishing. Their materialistic obliviousness to God is broken down. The church can reach many with the message of their need and His sufficiency. A disaster is a powerful opportunity to rescue the perishing.

**If you would like to get involved**—ORH can provide more information about church involvement in disaster-relief ministries; please contact Operation Renewed Hope's Director of Disaster Relief, Chris McAviney, at [cmcaviney@teamorh.com](mailto:cmcaviney@teamorh.com) or Jan Milton at [jan@teamorh.com](mailto:jan@teamorh.com) to receive a ministry manual for disaster relief. You may also contact ORH at [www.operationrenewedhope.org](http://www.operationrenewedhope.org).

Jan Milton graduated from Bob Jones University. He has been a youth pastor, Christian school administrator, teacher, and a senior pastor. Operation Renewed Hope was founded in 1991. Operation Renewed Hope has conducted medical clinics, relief work, relief shipping, children's home ministries, and much more, but always with a complete dedication to the gospel. The ministry continues to grow today.





# Who Helps the Helpers?

**A**fter watching the officers deal with a difficult, complex scene late into the night, the compassionate citizen responded, “You guys have been such a help! Who helps you when you need it?” That’s a good question and one that is great for communities and churches to consider on a regular basis. Who helps the helpers?

Being a police chaplain is a way that God has given me to come alongside the officers in my town and help them while they serve and protect others. Today, staggering data reveals that the morale of police officers is at an all-time low. Departments are seeing waves of officers retiring early or quitting the force to enter another line of work. The challenges of our law enforcement officers are many. Every day they respond to scenes of death and injury and deal with every imaginable—and sometimes unimaginable—criminal activity and its victims and the despair that follows. Not only do they interact with these stress-filled scenes, but they also manage them while being observed and criticized by citizens and even local officials. This combination of exposure both to messy scenes and to criticism has an adverse effect on their lives physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and relationally.

While it’s fairly easy for Christians to be convinced that our police officers need chaplains, many Christians who are qualified for the role of chaplain shy away from it because it seems too complicated and difficult. Though there are indeed complexities for which a person must train, the fundamental role of a police chaplain can be summed up in three ministries: presence, service, and words.

## PRESENCE

The ministry of *presence* occurs as a chaplain inserts himself into the company of officers. It happens by attending briefings, ceremonies, and ride-alongs and showing up at especially difficult scenes. With all the complicated issues and wide range of emotions that often happen at the scene of a crime, I have discovered that the calm presence of a chaplain

often makes a tremendous difference. After one particularly ugly call, I found myself riding along with an officer while he processed the previous events. We drove for almost an hour in complete silence. As we pulled back into the department, he said quietly, “I appreciate you being here. I don’t need someone to talk to right yet, but your being here tonight lets me know that when I am ready to talk, you’ll be there.”

## SERVICE

The ministry of *service* occurs when a chaplain just comes alongside and assists officers in their duties. Often these duties thrust the chaplain into the community to serve not only the officers but also the victims. Probably one of the most difficult tasks a chaplain has in this area is the ministry of giving death notifications and helping grieving families. No one ever wants to see a uniformed chaplain and officer approach the door, as it often signals bad news that will forever change their lives. Though it is difficult for a chaplain to do, it is a tremendous opportunity to come alongside a family in need and assist them in the steps that follow the death of their loved one. Numerous times over these last years I have had the privilege to sit with a grieving family and then serve them by officiating the funeral and following up with grief care in the days after. While an officer may deal initially with the fatal scene, a chaplain has the privilege of serving the family throughout the process and sometimes for months after.

In addition to death notifications and assisting officers and families in grief, I find myself also serving them in practical ways. Chaplains and their wives may bring meals for teams at the department, place encouraging notes in their boxes, offer to babysit their children so that they can go on a date with their spouses, or help them move or work on home projects.

## WORDS

The ministry of *words* is my personal favorite ministry of being a chaplain and one in which I’m constantly striving to grow. It is the ministry of bringing words of encouragement,





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truth, and principle into the lives of our officers. A chaplain can encourage an officer after a long shift or an especially difficult call by pointing out the competence and professionalism that he or she displayed on the scene. After hearing an officer talk about his family and the attempts he's making to be a good dad and husband, a chaplain can assure that officer that he's doing a good job at home. Sometimes the words of a chaplain are filled with gospel truth and biblical principles that help officers grow in their spiritual life and walk with God. The political correctness of our society and the different restrictions departments place upon faith-related conversations in the workplace can feel

restricting, but I am constantly amazed at how many ways God creates gospel opportunities that are instigated by the officers. Those gospel opportunities are often the result of many hours of presence and acts of service that built a bridge of trust between the officer and the chaplain.

When a person becomes a police chaplain and begins interacting with the complexities of the role, he will eventually ask the question I asked: "Where does a helper (chaplain) of helpers (officers) find help?" The answer is his local church. A healthy church provides support for chaplains, because it is there that they find life in the midst of the death with which they interact. It is the place where worship lifts their

attention beyond the despair and depravity of the world. And it is the place where the preaching of God's Word reminds chaplains of the hope that is in this world and gives them the truths that equip them to give good counsel in the various situations they face.

Though the role of police chaplain feels complex, it really is just a ministry of taking time to be present, to serve, and to encourage with appropriate words, and it's a role that I have found to be both rewarding and enjoyable. My hope is that this article will spark in a reader a desire to become a police chaplain. Helping others is an honorable role! And to the chaplains reading this article, keep it up! Your labor is not in vain. Your ministry of presence, service, and words is making a difference.

**THOUGH THERE ARE INDEED COMPLEXITIES FOR WHICH A PERSON MUST TRAIN, THE FUNDAMENTAL ROLE OF A POLICE CHAPLAIN CAN BE SUMMED UP IN THREE MINISTRIES: PRESENCE, SERVICE, AND WORDS.**

Ron Perry and his wife, Beneth, have served in California for the last twenty-four years. In addition to serving as his local police department chaplain, Ron is the senior pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Folsom, California.



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# Mailbag

I'm serving with GFA Missions as an interim pastor in Western Pennsylvania (Saegertown, PA).

I'm looking to connect with other pastors in Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio. I noticed a region called "3 Rivers" but [found] no info on the website.

Could you direct me to how I can find a list of pastors . . . whom I can connect with to help in finding a pastor for the church I am helping and for ways in which I can represent the Chaplaincy Program at FBFI?

Thank you.

*Pastor Ken R. Jackson  
Interim Pastor  
Gospel Fellowship Association*

I love your magazine!

*Teresa Raby  
Phoenix, AZ*

I wasn't going to renew because I have not been able to read them lately. Changed my mind.

*Shirley Wolfe  
Puyallup, WA*

**F**rontLine articles are always top quality and timely.

*Mitch Sidles  
Westminster, CO*

Our church will begin to advertise in the *FrontLine* church directory page. How do we go about getting our ad in there?

*Matt Recker  
New York, NY*

Could you assist me in answering the following questions?

What [are] the necessary cost and steps for us to advertise our church with *FrontLine* magazine?

How do I order magazines for a *FrontLine* Promotion Day at our church? How many? Additional recommendations to make a promotion day successful?

Thank you for your help!

*Nathan Steadman  
Westminster, CO*

It is always a blessing and a challenge to receive the *FrontLine* magazine. Within the first two days of receiving it, I read it from cover to cover. I have always found it to be practical and challenging. The latest printing was especially helpful in regard to prayer. It is always a blessing to read other men's perspectives on different topics that we can use in everyday life. Thank you for seeking to put into print the topics that help us to grow and mature in the FAITH,

then be able to pass it on! I pass the magazine on to others when finishing reading it.

*Dan Jeffery  
Retired Missionary Pastor/  
Builder  
Palmer, AK*

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# SOUND WORDS

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

## FIRST PARTAKER

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

### John Owen’s Ordination Sermon on *The Duty of Pastors*

*And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.* Jeremiah 3:15

John Owen (1616–83) is justifiably regarded as one of church history’s foremost English theologians. Almost two hundred years after Owen’s death, C. H. Spurgeon was recommending an assiduous study of his works: *It is unnecessary to say that he is the prince of divines. To master his works is to be a profound theologian.*<sup>1</sup> More recently Sinclair Ferguson has observed from long personal experience with theological literature, *Studying the work of John Owen underlies the principle that when one is able to master the writing of a great theologian, much in contemporary theological literature seems superficial, or even superfluous.*<sup>2</sup>

But John Owen was also a noteworthy pastor. Curiously, this dominant aspect of his life and ministry is generally developed only lightly by lecturers and writers. Yet thirty of Owen’s forty-one years of ministry were spent largely in active pastoring; first in two parish churches in the east of England (1643–50), later as a Nonconformist minister overseeing (sometimes clandestinely) small, outcast house churches (1660–73), and then finally in London as the pastor of the entirely independent congregation that had been led by Joseph Caryl (1673–83). Even during his middle years, during which he was vice-chancellor of Oxford University and dean of Christ Church, Owen kept a consistent schedule of preaching “pastorally”

every other Lord’s Day to the undergraduates of Oxford.

Indicative of Owen’s heart for local church ministry was the fact that one of his first publications was a book titled *The Duty of Pastors and People Distinguished* (1644).<sup>3</sup> Though functioning within a hugely liturgical and overbearing episcopalian system of church order, he made the case for *both the priority of preaching and the duty of private interpretation, and balanced the “ancient dignity” of the “sacred calling” with the “Christian liberty” of the “people of God.”*<sup>4</sup> Three years later he published a brief work consisting of seven *rules of walking in fellowship, with reference to the pastor or minister that watcheth for our souls*, and a further fifteen principles *to be observed by those who walk in fellowship . . . to stir up their remembrance in things of mutual duty one towards another.*<sup>5</sup> By this time Owen had moved from the moderate Presbyterian persuasions with which he had been raised by his father, into convinced Congregationalism,<sup>6</sup> an indication that his heart was engaged with the personal application of New Testament ecclesiology.

Just a year before his homegoing, Owen gave an ordination charge to a pastor whose identity has been lost to history. Any pastor will recognize that the sermon’s insights could come only from one who was himself well seasoned in pastoral ministry. I wish that some spiritually minded publisher would attractively reformat it for distribution among seminarians and at pastors’ conferences. Were it received with humility, there would be every reason to be hopeful for the churches.

The sermon is several thousand words more in number than this column can accommodate. But what follows below, with light editing, is the heart of it. I trust that the Spirit of God will use it to provoke unto ministerial love and good works in this new year of pastoring and preaching.

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Owen's text is Jeremiah 3:15, *And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.* He explains that his intention is not to exhaust all the duties of the pastor or teacher but only to give several examples. His sermon expands upon four pastoral duties, only three of which are included here. The point which I'm omitting is the third, having to do with our pastoral duty to *preserve the truth* by defending it against all opposition.

---

**First**, the duty of a pastor, teacher, elder of the church is that mentioned in the text, *to feed the church with knowledge and understanding.*

He is no pastor who does not feed his flock. It belongs essentially to the office. The apostle says, *We will give ourselves continually to the word* (Acts 6:4). *Labor in the word and doctrine* (I Timothy 5:17). Make all things subservient to this work of preaching and instructing the church. Do it in the frame the apostle mentions in Colossians 1:28. He speaks of his preaching and of the design of it: *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.* How does he do it? *Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which works in me mightily.*

*Kopiō* is to labor with diligence and intention, with weariness and industry. I labor to the spending of myself. *Agonizomenos* is striving as a man that runs in a race, or striving as a man that wrestles for victory. As men did in their public contests. And how? *According to the effectual in-working, or inward operation of him who does effectually work in me.* And how is all this? *With mighty power.*

Here is the frame of the apostle's spirit (it should give dread to us in the consideration of it): *I labor diligently, I strive as in a race, I wrestle for victory, by the mighty in-working of Christ working in me; and that with great and exceeding power.*

What I shall do is to show to you what is required unto this work of teaching or feeding the congregation with knowledge and understanding in this duty of preaching the word.

1. There is *spiritual wisdom* in understanding the mysteries of the gospel, that we may be able to declare the whole counsel of God, and the riches and treasures of the grace of Christ unto the souls of men (see Acts 20:27; I Corinthians 2:1–4; Ephesians 3:7–9). Many in the church of God were, in those days of light, growing and thriving. They had great insight into spiritual things and into the mysteries of the gospel. The apostle prays that they might all have it (Ephesians 1:17–18).

Really it is no easy thing for ministers to instruct to such kind of duties. If there be not some degree of eminency in themselves [of understanding the gospel in depth], how shall they lead on such persons as these to perfection? We must labor ourselves to have a thorough knowledge of these mysteries, or we shall be useless to a great part of the church.

2. *Authority* is required. What is authority in a preaching ministry? It is a consequence of unction, not of [merely holding] an office. Christ . . . had a full unction of the Holy Ghost in his gifts and graces. The Holy Ghost determines the matter. *He preached as one having authority, and not as the scribes* (Matthew 7:29). They had the authority of office, but not of unction. Only Christ had that. And preaching in the demonstration of the Spirit, which men quarrel so much about, is nothing less than the evidence of preaching with unction. It is a vain thing for men to assume and impersonate authority. [Just] so much evidence as they have of unction from God in gifts and graces, [is how] much authority they have, and no more, in preaching.

3. Another thing required hereunto is *experience* of the power of the things we preach to others. I think, truly, *that no man preaches that sermon well to others that doth not first preach it to his own heart.* He who does not feed on, and digest, and thrive by what he prepares for his people may give them poison as far as he knows. For unless he finds the power of it in his own heart, he cannot have any ground of confidence that it will have power in the hearts of others.

*It is an easier thing to bring our heads to preach than our hearts to preach.* To bring our heads to preach is but to fill our minds and memories with some notions of truth (our own or other men's), and speak them out to give satisfaction to ourselves and others. This is very easy. But to bring our hearts to preach is to be transformed into the power of these truths; to find the power of them both before, in fashioning our minds and hearts, and [afterward] in delivering them that we [ourselves] may have benefit.

A man may preach every day in the week and not have his heart engaged once. This has lost us powerful preaching in the world. And so it is come to pass that some men's preaching . . . has lost us the power of what we call the ministry. The nation perishes for lack of knowledge

and is overwhelmed in all manner of sins, and not delivered from them to this day.

4. *Skill* to divide the word aright. This skill to divide the word aright is *practical wisdom* in considering the word of God—to take out not only that which is substantial food for the souls of men but what is fit food for them to whom we preach. And that . . .
5. Requires *the knowledge* and consideration of the state of our flocks. He who has not the state of his flock continually in his eye, and in his mind in his work of preaching, fights uncertainly, as a man beating the air. If he does not consider the state of his flock with reference to [its] temptations, in reference to [its] light or darkness, to [its] growth or decays, to [its] flourishing or withering, to the measure of [its] knowledge and attainments—he who does not duly consider these things never preaches aright to them.
6. There is required, too, that we be activated by *zeal* for the glory of God, and that we have compassion upon the souls of men.

Having spoken these few plain words, I may say, *Who is sufficient for these things?* Hence we see that we have great need to pray for ourselves, and that [our people] should pray for us. Pray for your ministers. This then is the first duty required of gospel ministers.

**Secondly.** Another duty required is *continual prayer* for the churches over which Christ has made them ministers. You know how often the apostle expresses it of himself and enjoins it unto others—to continually pray for the flock.

I will name four reasons why we ought to do so, and four things we ought to pray for.

1. My first reason is—because I believe that no man can have *any evidence* in his own soul that he does conscientiously perform any ministerial duty towards his flock who does not *continually pray for them*. Let him preach as much as he will, visit as much as he will, speak as much as he will. Unless God keeps him up in a *spirit of prayer* in his closet and in his family for them, he can have no evidence that he performs any other ministerial duty in a due manner, or that what he does is accepted of God. I speak to them who are wise and understand these things.
2. This is the way whereby we may *bless* our congregation. Authoritative blessing,<sup>7</sup> as far as I know, is taken from us. Now there is no way whereby we can bless our flock by institution,

but by a *continual praying* for a blessing upon them.

3. If men are [as they are], I do not believe any minister, any pastor in the world, can keep up a due love to his church who does not pray for them. He will meet with so many provocations [from the people], imprudences, and miscarriages, that nothing can keep up his heart with inflamed love towards them but by praying for them continually. That will conquer all prejudices—if he continues so doing.
4. My last reason is this—in our prayers for our people, *God will teach us what we shall preach* unto them. We cannot pray for them, but we must think on what it is we pray for, and that is the consideration of their condition. And therein God teaches the ministers of the gospel. If [for instance], it be so with them [that they are in a certain condition or have a certain need], this [particular thing] is what they should teach them. The more we pray for our people, the better shall we be instructed what to preach to them. The apostles, to take us off from all other occasions [all other kinds of ministry] *gave themselves to prayer and the word* (Acts 6:4). Prayer is in the first place. Not personal, but ministerial prayer for the church and for the progress of the gospel.

What shall we pray for?

1. For *the success of the word* that we preach unto them. We are to pray for the success of the word unto all the ends [objectives] of it. And that is, for all the ends of living unto God—direction in duty, instruction in truth, growth in grace, and all things whereby we may come to the enjoyment of God. We should pray that all these ends may be accomplished in our congregations in the dispensation of the word. Otherwise we sow seed at random which will not succeed merely by our sowing. Let the farmer break up the fallow ground, harrow it, and cast in the seed—unless showers come he will have no crop. In like manner, after we have cast the seed of the gospel, though the hearts of men are prepared in some measure, unless there come the showers of the Spirit upon them there will come no profiting.
2. We are to pray for *the presence of Christ* in all our assemblies. This is that whereon depends all the efficacy of the ordinances of the gospel. Christ has given us many promises of it, and we are to act in faith concerning it, and to pray in faith for it in our assemblies. This

is a great ministerial duty. If we do not do it we are ignorant of our duty. All the efficacy of the ordinances of preaching and praying do not depend upon anything in ourselves; our gifts, notions, parts, fervency. It depends only upon the presence of Christ. Make this your business; to pray mightily for Christ in the congregation.

3. Our prayers should be with respect to *the state and condition* of the church. A minister has some measure of understanding and knowledge of the gospel, he is able to conduct the congregation unto salvation, he knows their measure, their weakness and their temptations. He knows the times and seasons in which they are exercised and exposed; whether times of adversity or prosperity. As far as it is possible he knows how it is with their persons. And we ought to suit our prayers according to all we know concerning them, and be satisfied that Christ himself will come in to recover them who are fallen, to establish them who stand, to heal them who do backslide, to strengthen them who are tempted, to encourage them who are running and pressing forward to perfection, to relieve them who are disconsolate and in the dark. We have all these sorts in our churches, and our prayers should be for a communication of supplies to them continually in all these cases.

**Lastly.** I shall mention one duty more that is required of pastors and teachers in the church; and that is that *we labor diligently for the conversion of souls*. This work is committed to them. I would not mention this except to rectify a mistake in some. Christ has not appointed his ministers to look unto themselves [the churches] only. They are to be the means of calling and gathering the elect in all ages, and this they principally are to do by their ministry.

I confess that there are other outward ways and means whereby men have been and are converted. I find, by long observation, that common light in conjunction with afflictions, begins the conversion of many. And persons may be converted to God by religious conference [with ordinary Christians]. There may be many *occasional* conversions wrought by the instrumentality of men who have real spiritual gifts for the dispensation of the word and are occasionally called thereunto. But principally this work is committed unto the pastors of the churches for the conversion of souls.

Take this observation. *The first object* of the word is *the world*. *Our work* is the same with the apostles'. But the *method* is directly contrary.

The apostles had a work committed to them, and this

was their method—*The first work* committed to the apostles was the convincing and converting sinners to Christ among Jews and Gentiles. To preach the gospel to convert infidels. This they accounted their chief work. Paul made nothing of administering the ordinance of baptism in comparison of it (I Corinthians 1:17). In comparison, I say, preaching was their chief work. And then, *the second work* was to teach those [who were] disciples to do and observe whatever Christ commanded them, and to bring them into church order. This was their method.

Now the same work is committed unto the pastors of churches, but in a contrary method. The first object of our ministry is the church. To build up and edify the church. But what then? Is the other part of the work taken away? That they [pastors] should not preach to convert souls? God forbid. There be several ways whereby they who are pastors of churches do preach to the conversion of souls.

1. When other persons that are unconverted do come where they are preaching to their own congregations. We preach *as ministers* to those to whom we preach, for the conversion of their souls.
2. Ministers may preach for the conversion of souls when they preach elsewhere occasionally. And it is the duty of particular churches to part with their officers for a season, when called to preach in other places for the converting of souls to Christ.

Who is sufficient for these things? Pray, pray for us. And God strengthen us, and our brother, who has been called this day to the work!

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Dr. Mark Minnick pastors Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina. His sermons are available at [mountcalvarybaptist.org/sermons](http://mountcalvarybaptist.org/sermons) and on your favorite podcast app: search for "Mount Calvary Baptist Church" and subscribe.

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<sup>1</sup> *Commenting and Commentaries* (1876; rpt., Kregel Publications: 1988), 95.

<sup>2</sup> *John Owen—The Man and His Theology*, ed. Robert Oliver (Evangelical Press: 2002), 71.

<sup>3</sup> Reprinted in volume XIII of Owen's *Works*.

<sup>4</sup> Crawford Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism: Experiences of Defeat* (Oxford University Press: 2016), 58.

<sup>5</sup> *Eschcol, A Cluster of the Fruit of Canaan*, reprinted in volume XIII of Owen's *Works*.

<sup>6</sup> At this time the Church of England tolerated among its ministers those of both Presbyterian and Congregational leanings.

<sup>7</sup> Owen may be alluding to God's authorizing Israel's priests to pronounce His blessings upon the people (Num. 6:22–27).



## Behind the Ranges by Mrs. Howard Taylor

James Outram Fraser (1886–1938) ploughed unbroken soil among the Lisu tribespeople in the mountains of southwest China and saw thousands come to Christ in his lifetime. The “Fraser Script” remains in use today as the official writing system of the Lisu language, and the Lisu New Testament was translated under his leadership. The first of over one hundred missionaries to the hill people of the Yunnan Province, Fraser left an enduring spiritual legacy in that region. The accounts of Fraser’s life provide a clear window into the soul of a dedicated and greatly used servant of the Lord.

God has blessed the Church richly through the writing gifts of Mrs. Howard (Geraldine) Taylor: at least twenty books on missions flowed from her pen, especially those connected with the China Inland Mission, including her father-in-law, Hudson Taylor; William Borden of Yale; and John and Betty Stam, among others. In 1944 she completed her final work, *Behind the Ranges*, the first chronicle of the life of James Fraser.

Fraser prepared himself diligently for what could have been a lucrative engineering career in England, but God was outfitting him throughout his youth for pioneer missionary service in China. He was *physically fit*, a quality which served him well for his years of service in the high elevations of the mountains of southwest China. “He once walked to London and back, forty-four miles in one day” (17). Furthermore, he was *mentally strong* (as the twelfth-highest score among his precollege peers in England and an honor graduate in engineering), putting him in a prime position for years of groundbreaking linguistic work among the Lisu tribes. Additionally, since he was *musically skilled* as a classical pianist and organist, he was more than able to teach former demon-worshippers how to sing to the one true God.

Fraser’s persistence is demonstrated early in his steady *language acquisition*. He wrote during his first year in China,

This mountain is called The Chinese Language. It is very steep at first, but gradually seems easier as you go up. Then, just when you feel you are getting on, another peak comes into view, rising up higher than the first, but all part of the same mountain. This also has to be climbed. It is called Chinese Thought and Modes of Expression. You had been told about it before you began to scramble up the first mountain, but you did not see it then. And the first glimpse shows you how far it is above you. (29–30)

He not only mastered Chinese but went on to forge new ground with the Lisu language. But his persistence is displayed predominantly in his work of *opposing demonolatry*. Early in his ministry, every member of the Koh family seemingly turned from the “rulers of the darkness of this world” to serve the Lord—an

exciting breakthrough for Fraser. However, when one of the Koh sons became sick and died and when a daughter-in-law took her own life, the family members connected the events to their religious turnabout and quickly reverted to their demon-worship. “It was a crucial hour in Fraser’s experience—face to face, as never before, with the stark reality of demon-power” (72). Regarding this trial he wrote in his journal, “Satan raged. He got his knife into those who dared to question his authority in his Lisu kingdom. He was successful. Old habits and superstitions got the better of feeble faith. . . . His rebels gave him back their allegiance” (73). The relapse shook other tribespeople as well, and the situation was far from isolated. Undaunted, Fraser refused to give up; God had designs for his spiritual growth through such ministerial hardship.

God wanted to teach Fraser the importance of prayer more than anything else, it seems. When most members of the Tsai family in Six Family Hollow turned back on their prior professions of faith in Christ, Fraser wrote to his lifelong prayer partner, his mother, “I cannot tell you how I feel about it—you must use your imagination. But I am going to pray for them as much as ever. Will you?” (74).

The centerpiece of the book (Chapter XII: The Prayer of Faith) contains a ten-page quotation of a letter Fraser wrote to his British prayer partners on October 9, 1915. In it he contrasts “general prayer” and “definite [specific] prayer” (108). Fraser’s main point in the letter, revisited by Taylor throughout the remainder of her book, is that Christians ought to respond to a genuine God-given burden by bringing petitions to Him in faith: a conviction that requests have not only been heard by God, but have also been answered. General prayers are important, but specific prayers are essential to ministerial success. When continually faced with the reality of demonic opposition to the gospel work, he wrote

I know enough about Satan to realize that he will have all his weapons ready for determined opposition. He would be a missionary simpleton who expected plain sailing in *any* work of God. I will not, by God’s grace, let anything deter me from going straight ahead in the path to which He leads, but I shall feel greatly strengthened if I know of a definite company of pray-ers holding me up. I am confident that the Lord is going to do a work, sooner or later, among the Lisu here (87).

God did a great work through James Fraser, and this account inspires God’s prepared servants to persist in the ministry of the Word and in prayer.

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## Romans 10:5–8—Does Paul Accurately Exegete Moses?

Among the many precious passages of Scripture that promise a righteous status obtained by faith alone to those who will believe, Romans 10:5–13 stands tall in its vast scope and universal promise. No human (Jew or Greek) who believes in Jesus for salvation and confesses Him will ever be disappointed (v. 12). If a person calls on the name of the Lord for salvation, then that person will certainly be saved (v. 13).

When a student of Scripture comes to understand how Paul under the direction of the Holy Spirit argues from the Torah itself for the universal invitation of the gospel to all mankind apart from works, that "workman" (2 Tim. 2:15) realizes more fully what it means to be a "scribe . . . which bringeth forth out of his treasure things [both] *new* and *old*" (Matt. 13:52, emphasis added).

The pathway to this blessing lies through understanding how Paul uses the Old Testament (Lev. 18:5; Deut. 9:4; 30:12–14) in Romans 10:5–8, but that path is challenging. Paul seems to use Deuteronomy 30:12–14 to state the exact opposite argument from what Moses states in the verse right before that passage (30:11): "This commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you." Moses appears to be telling the people that they *can* keep the Law because it is easily accessible to them, even in their memories ("in thy mouth and in thy heart," 30:14). Paul instead turns the references to the Law into references to the Messiah.

How should we explain this bold interpretation of Moses? Is Paul practicing *eisegesis* here instead of careful *exegesis*? Is he simply using phrases from Moses to argue his desired point without intending to explain the passage in Deuteronomy fully and accurately? Or, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, is Paul now revealing the ultimate fulfillment of this passage in the Messiah, "the *telos* of the law unto [*eis*] righteousness to everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:4, literal)?

In order to come to the right conclusion to these questions, we are going to examine the three citations in order and determine how they support Paul's main thesis in this letter to the Romans. First, Romans 10:5 cites Leviticus 18:5 where Moses states, "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD." In the broader context (Lev. 18), God warns His people not to commit certain abominations as did the Canaanites before them. This passage (18:5) therefore promises that a choice to keep God's laws will result in life. A choice to break those laws will result in death. The problem lies in humanity's

universal rejection of God and His laws. The sad history of Israel's failure to keep the land through its persistent idolatry underscores Paul's stark statements in Romans: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold [suppress] the truth in unrighteousness" (1:18), and, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (3:20). Paul then states that most of Israel seeks to establish their own righteousness (10:3) by pursuing a "law of righteousness," but they have not arrived at that "law . . . Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law" (9:31–32). Only one Man, Jesus the Messiah, has ever practiced the righteousness of the law. The first citation leaves all others hopeless apart from His work.

The next citation is found in Romans 10:6 ("Say not in thine heart"). This quotes Deuteronomy 9:4, where Moses warns the people not to think that their own righteousness has gotten them the land. God never intended for even His holiest saints to trust in their own works to obtain His favor.

Finally, Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 30:12–14. Moses told the people that God had given them a Law that could be taught ("in thy mouth") and memorized ("in thy heart"). That Law brings universal condemnation, but it also provided a way of reconciliation with God through the sacrificial system. This system pointed to Christ "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation [sin offering] through faith in his blood" (Rom. 3:25). Therefore, it is appropriate for Paul to replace the Torah with the Messiah in this citation because the Messiah is the fulfillment of the Law (Rom. 10:3–4). The Israelites did not need to search for the Law in an inaccessible location in heaven or beyond the sea. Neither can anybody else ever do what Christ accomplished for us to secure our righteous status before God ("ascend into heaven" or "descend into the deep [abyss]," Rom. 10:6–7). Just as the words of the law belonged to Israel forever to keep them (Deut. 29:29), so the word that brings faith in the Messiah's completed work is available to all, Jew and Greek (Rom. 10:8–13). Truly, "now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets" (3:21).

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## What’s in a Name?

The suspense in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* centers on a name problem. Romeo is a Montague, and Juliet’s father will not allow her to marry him because of his family name. Juliet doesn’t see that the real problem is the hateful feud between their two families. Instead, she determines Romeo’s *name* is the enemy. “What’s in a name?” she says. “That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” Her reasoning is that if Romeo could exchange his name for another, the problem would be solved, and they could wed. Admittedly, a person’s good name and reputation can be hurt by the decisions of others, but most often the name represents what someone really is. What’s in a name? The Bible teaches that our name represents who God knows us to be.

### NAMES MATTER TO GOD

Have you ever considered that it was God’s idea to use names? God has given Himself names to reveal His Person to us (Exod. 3:13–14; 6:3; Phil. 2:9–10). He is offended at the misuse of His name (Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). Psalm 147:4 says, “He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.” God named Adam and Eve at the dawn of Creation. He assigned names to the angels (Luke 1:19). The name of every human soul is recorded in the Book of Life or “the book of the living” (Ps. 69:28; Exod. 32:32; Rev. 3:5). God directed some parents to give specific names to their children (Gen. 16:11; 17:19; Hosea 1:2–6), and He changed the names of others (Gen. 17:5; 32:28; Matt. 16:18).

Names are used by God to express His desire for close fellowship with His people. Though the Jewish nation was far away from the Lord in Isaiah’s day, God used their names to call them back to Himself: “But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine” (Isa. 43:1). As the Shepherd of the sheep, Jesus told His disciples that “the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out” (John 10:2–3). Since God so loved the world and desires to have a relationship with every person through saving faith, God’s opinion about your name matters.

### GOD’S OPINION ABOUT YOUR NAME MATTERS

Proverbs 22:1 says, “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.” The word “good” is in italics because it isn’t in the original (though it is certainly implied). However, this translation is accurate for

two reasons. First, the Hebrew word *tob* translated “loving” in the second half of the verse is also translated “good” (or “better than”) in the Old Testament. The verse could be translated, “A good name is better than great riches, and good favor is better than silver and gold.” These are parallel thoughts. You cannot have a good name in the minds of others without having their favor, and you cannot have their favor unless they think well of the person your name represents. A good name and good favor are to be desired more than wealth because a good name matters far more to God.

The King James translation of Proverbs 22:1 is accurate for a second reason. Solomon revisits the theme about a good name in Ecclesiastes 7:1: “A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one’s birth.” The smell of a costly perfume and the mention of a good name both bring pleasing responses to our minds, but God says a good name is far better. Though everyone is given a name at his or her birth, the reputation of that name at one’s death is what really matters to the Lord. Since we were created for God’s glory through worship, fellowship, and service, Scripture reveals that He views the names of each of us differently based on our willingness to do His will. There are names that God accepts in the Bible, there are rotten names, and there are names God chose not to mention at all.

### CATEGORIES OF NAMES IN SCRIPTURE

*The Accepted Names.* Hebrews 11:6 reminds us, “But without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Faith in God’s redemptive plan determines whether someone’s name will be accepted by Him or not. Hebrews 11 goes on to list several names of Old Testament saints who through faith pleased God. God’s Word also teaches that the names of those who trust Jesus Christ alone for salvation remain eternally in the Book of Life. Moses believed his name was in this book (Exod. 32:32). Paul told the Philippian church that the names of his “fellowlabourers” in the gospel were written in the Book of Life (Phil. 4:3). Seven times in Revelation the Holy Spirit had John refer to this book (Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; 22:19). Jesus declared in Revelation 3:5 what He had previously taught the disciples in Matthew 10:32 and Luke 12:8. He will confess before His Father in heaven the names of those who confessed His name before others here. Because of the finished work of the Savior at Calvary, anyone can be redeemed and named with the saints in heaven.

*The Rotten Names.* Some names God accepts, some names are rotten to Him. If this sounds extreme, consider Proverbs 10:7: “The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.” The Hebrew word translated “rot” speaks of something decayed and worm-eaten. A Google search lists past monarchs whose very names reveal personal problems: Charles the Simple, Louis the Sluggard, Ethelred the Unready, and Louis the Fat. A Bible search also reveals monarchs whose names remind us of their wickedness, and their memory is still repulsive. Ahab and Jezebel, Athaliah, and Herod are all names that live in infamy. Do you remember the name of the man who first called himself the “king” of Israel? Abimelech’s story is told in Judges 9. To make a name for himself and remove any threat to his plans of greatness, he slew seventy of his own brothers. How did he die? One of the most humiliating ways for a warrior to be killed in ancient times was at the hands of a woman. Judges 9:53 says, “And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech’s head, and all to brake his skull.” Essentially a housewife hit Abimelech over the head with a kitchen appliance! Verse 54 indicates that God made sure he saw it coming since he knew a woman had thrown the millstone. What comes to your mind when you think of these names: Satan, Judas, Hitler, Stalin, and Ted Bundy? These names turn our thoughts foul and sour our emotions. And yet, any fallen individual who turns to a life of wickedness can have a name that stinks to God and others.

*The Unnamed.* An individual’s name can be acceptable to God or be a stench to Him; but there is a third category in Scripture: the unnamed. Sometimes God chose to withhold someone’s name altogether because he proudly defied God’s law in order to promote his own name. The closest kinsman-redeemer in the book of Ruth is such an example. According to Deuteronomy 25:5–6, it was the responsibility of the closest male relative to marry Ruth and raise up children in her deceased husband’s name. Ruth 4:6 tells us what the disobedient kinsman was thinking as he spoke to Boaz: “I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it.” He knew that if he married Ruth, their offspring would bear the name of Ruth’s husband who had died,

and not his own name. Certainly this man had a name many in Bethlehem knew, but his arrogance caused that name to be withheld from the biblical record.

Another “no-name” is the lying Amalekite in 2 Samuel 1 who boasted to David he had killed King Saul on Mt. Gilboah. The reason he made this false claim is obvious. He wanted to make a name for himself and gain the favor of the next king of Israel. There is no doubt this man was given a name at birth, but God chose to allow his name to die with him.

Have you stopped to consider there is a group in Scripture who will go unnamed for all eternity? Revelation 3:5 reveals that those who have not received Christ are blotted out of the Book of Life, and Jesus will not confess their names before the Father and His angels. Many will have their names erased from the Book of Life because they thought others would not approve of their name here if they believed on Christ. Some of the most fearful words any mortal could ever read are found in Matthew 7:22–23: “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Religious people can do good works in Jesus’ name, but if they have never repented of their sin and put their faith in His finished work at Calvary, it will be as if the Son of God never knew their names.

## CONCLUSION

What’s in a name? The Bible reveals that the name of every human being matters so much to God that He has placed those names in an eternal book that will be heaven’s eternal roster unless a person chooses to reject the gift of His Son. Second Timothy 2:19 reminds each Christian that “the Lord knoweth them that are his.” He knows their names and how their reputations reflect on His name. Therefore, “Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Tim. 2:19).

Mike Ascher pastors Good News Baptist Church in Chesapeake, Virginia, and is an FBFI-endorsed police chaplain.

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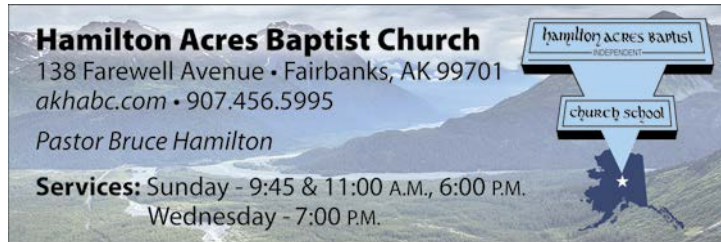
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Continued from page 5

wedding ceremony, and today they have two beautiful daughters. Adam has been promoted to police commander now and enjoys a full career and a happy home. His love for the Lord and his testimony at the department are growing and strong.

Following the suicide of one of our dispatchers (who had previously been a police officer), I had the opportunity again to address matters of life and death with everyone at the department. Shortly afterwards, I visited the dispatch call center where I was asked a question about suicide: “Can a person be forgiven after killing himself?” Understanding that a significant percentage of the employees and officers have a Catholic background, I began to explain from the Scriptures the timing of God’s forgiveness. Immediately, about eight dispatchers quickly drew their chairs in a circle around me to hear how the Lord Jesus forgave all sin for those who trust in Him when He died on the cross two thousand years ago. *All* our sin was in the future! So, when I prayed and asked Him to forgive my sin and come into my life, it was all forgiven—past, present, and future. And yes, even if I were to take my own life, that was also forgiven. “Does this make sense to you?” There were expressions of relief and joy as several understood for the first time the finished, saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

On another occasion after arriving at the department one morning, I learned that a police sergeant’s young daughter was being rushed to the hospital for a heart transplant. Ten years earlier, I had been at the hospital shortly after she had been born and diagnosed with a hole in her heart. At that time I prayed with the family before her heart surgery. Now, ten years later, she faced critical surgery once again. A prayer meeting was announced in the training room of the police department. More than forty personnel filed into the room where I shared Scripture. I led in prayer along with several other people, which God wonderfully answered that same day.

### MY OPPORTUNITY AS A POLICE CHAPLAIN

At the age of forty-seven, I had no idea what God had in store for me over the course of the next twenty-three-and-a-half years. *Was I ever in for a ride!* Officers often refer to their job as “a front row seat to the greatest show on earth,” seeing humanity at its worst and sometimes at its very best. In a real sense, I had the privilege of sitting back (doing my best to stay out of God’s way) and seeing the greatest show in the universe, watching the living God of the Bible miraculously working in circumstances and lives at the Westminster Police Department . . . as a community police chaplain.

Larry Robbins has served on the pastoral staff at two churches during his nearly fifty years of ministry—ten years in Augusta, Georgia, and thirty-nine-plus years in Westminster, Colorado, where he continues to serve at Tri-City Baptist Church in a limited role. Larry recently retired from the Westminster Police Department after serving as the department chaplain for over twenty-three years.



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## EMS Evangelism

**T**he abrasive sound of the pager went off at about midnight, a sound designed to wake the dead, if that were possible. “Salina ambulance, you are needed at. . . .” Years of working as an emergency medic had prepared me for routine medical emergencies (heart attacks, strokes, broken hips, drug overdoses, etc.). This late-night page would be anything but routine.

This event is part of the narrative of God calling our family to the small, rural town of Salina, Utah, to plant a church in 1982. Chrissa and I had been missionaries with Northwest Baptist Missions since 1975 (and we still are). Salina was a town of 2300 people at the time, coupled with two smaller neighboring communities, which brought the local population to a little over 5000. There was no biblical church of any sort within even a much larger radius, making the LDS Church (Mormon) the only alternative.

Faith Baptist Church was born in 1982 with the American Legion Hall as our first meeting place. This building was in

an excellent location but was very old and smelled decidedly of stale beer, hardly a welcoming place for the predominant religious community that was accustomed to the finest of buildings. A realtor in our church helped us find and purchase a property in foreclosure that had a decent modular home on it, which we remodeled into a small church building. Later, with the help of a Mission Trade Team from Bob Jones University, we were able to construct a new auditorium on the property. Finally, we had a place that was modern and welcoming.

### CERTIFICATION CLASS

One day, while reading through the local paper, I noticed that an EMS (Emergency Medical Services) training and certification class was soon to start. How does one reach into a community like this with the genuine biblical gospel? I would classify our coming into this town as the biggest shock Salina had ever experienced. We had a profound sense of what it was like to be a leper in biblical times. Becoming an emergency medic seemed

like a segue for presenting the gospel by providing a service that would be welcomed and appreciated in our larger community. It proved to be exactly that.

After a time of prayer, I enrolled in the class, graduating in about three months’ time as a basic EMT. One of my first calls was to help deliver a baby on a bathroom floor. Actually, the baby kind of delivered herself, and I just assisted with cutting the cord and cleaning up. The well-to-do parents were quite embarrassed not to have made it to the hospital!

I rather imagine it was due to my being in a leadership role as a pastor that I became the go-to guy for triage when we would pull up on a chaotic scene where multiple people were injured. Cohorts who had far more experience than I began looking to me for assignment to a task. In time, this led to my becoming the training officer for the one hundred or so EMTs in our county for two years and the president of the agency for one year. Right now, years later, I constantly run into people with whom I worked for a decade, still



providing many opportunities to witness for Christ. The dividends of a ten-year investment keep rolling in.

## **A PLEDGE AND A PLEADING LOOK**

As I reflect on this chapter of life, I think how like the heart of Jesus is the work of emergency medics. Acts 10:38 records Peter's impassioned presentation of the gospel to a Roman centurion named Cornelius and friends. Regarding the character of Jesus, Peter mentions that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." In fact, the Gospels are replete with true stories of Jesus healing not just demon-possessed folk, but those with all manner of physical maladies.

The oath that every EMS practitioner takes is, "I solemnly pledge myself to the following code of professional ethics: To conserve life, alleviate suffering, promote health, do no harm, and encourage the quality and equal availability of emergency medical care." The obvious difference, however, is that EMTs just patch people up, while Jesus healed completely even the most hopeless cases.

Hundreds of times I walked into a home where a medical emergency was taking place or pried my body into a mangled vehicle to make contact with a conscious accident victim. "I'm Jon. I'm an emergency medic. May I help you?" Invoking consent from a conscious victim before administering medical aid is an important legal requirement. If the person is unconscious, we operate under "implied consent" to "conserve life, alleviate suffering," etc. As I would utter those words, "May I help you?" the look and the positive nod I would receive are still etched on my memory.

"Yes, please help me." As Jesus looked into the eyes of hundreds of desperate people, He must have experience the same pleading look.

## **ANYTHING BUT ROUTINE**

"Salina ambulance, you are needed at [an address near the four-way stop]. We have an auto/pedestrian accident!"

As I hurriedly pulled on my clothes and donned my medical smock, I was thinking that this was probably going to be a tough call. My two coworkers and I really had no idea, however, how crazy our night was about to become. I kept the ambulance at my house for rapid response purposes—plus, Salina did not have a dedicated building in which to keep it. Welcome to Small Town, USA!

If I remember correctly, my two partners arrived on the scene at about the same time as I did with the ambulance. The city police had the main road blocked off just north of the intersection in the middle of town with a body under a blanket lying in the roadway. I thought, "This really doesn't look good." (Did I mention that it was about 0 degrees that night?)

Surprisingly, when we pulled the blanket back, the man, who recently left a local bar at closing time and managed to step off the sidewalk into the path of a car, was conscious and in obvious pain. He willingly gave us consent to begin care. We removed the blanket further, and a twisted leg revealed the fact that he had a badly broken femur (the big bone between hip and knee). A person can easily bleed to death internally from such a catastrophic injury. In times like this, protocol, which would have mandated a thorough patient assessment, goes out the window.

The three of us opted to apply a Hare Traction Splint, which is basically a winch device which pulls the mangled leg back into alignment. I wince when I think about how painful this must have been for our patient, but it was our only option. Splint on in record time, carefully loaded onto the gurney and into the warm confines of the

ambulance, the patient could now be thoroughly assessed. He was obviously in deep shock, and our medical authority thought we needed to begin IV therapy before we made the twenty-mile drive to the hospital.

It so happened that I was the only one that night who was certified to do the stick, that is, to start the IV. Making a successful needle stick on a person in such a serious state of shock is like trying to thread a dehydrated earthworm onto a two-inch fishhook. My habit was to pray audibly over my patient in the hearing of partners. I prayed, "Lord, please help me be successful with this stick," as I punctured the skin. With God, all things are possible—it was a successful stick, and life-giving fluids began to flow. The call was made to inform the hospital that we were on our way with pertinent information relayed about the patient. I opted to stay in the back with our patient while another partner assumed the driving duty.

## **A NIGHT TO REMEMBER**

We were seconds away from moving out when a city police officer opened the back door and announced, "Guys, we have another emergency here! A lady is having a baby in a car right behind the ambulance!" The ambulance was parked at an angle in the road with all the lights flashing, and, it seems, a migrant couple who worked on a ranch twenty miles away realized they weren't going to make it to the hospital and thought the ambulance was a good alternative. I jumped out and ran back to the yellow two-door Ford Pinto, peered into the small window, and saw the wife stretched out across the back seat. I could clearly see about a half-dollar size portion

**"I'M JON. I'M AN EMERGENCY MEDIC. MAY I HELP YOU?" ... "YES, PLEASE HELP ME." AS JESUS LOOKED INTO THE EYES OF HUNDREDS OF DESPERATE PEOPLE, HE MUST HAVE EXPERIENCE THE SAME PLEADING LOOK.**



of the baby's head! I remember thinking, "This can't be happening!" The immediate thought was, "We need more help!" The police officer called two other medics who lived nearby. By now it was about 1:30 a.m., and it was very cold.

"I need an OB kit!" I shouted to my comrades. Fortunately, one of them was able to locate one of the two kits we had on board and hand it out to me. About that time, one of the backups showed up. He was, thankfully, a seasoned veteran of EMS. Neither of us had delivered a baby in the back seat of a two-door Pinto before; in fact, I think we are part of an exclusive fraternity. We may in fact be its only members!

Our first action was to ask the husband to stand outside in the frigid temperature

while we sat on the backs of the two front seats. My partner and I are both about 6'4", and here we were, all hunched over with our backs pressed against the roof administering aid to this woman and her baby. The car heater was running full bore. The illumination from the dim dome light was a joke. We clenched our penlights in our teeth, which freed our hands to tear into the OB kit. Oops! I just dropped the string used to tie the cord. Hunting for it in the dark abyss under our feet proved futile. "Bring us another OB kit!"

Between the two kits and the baby's desire to make a hasty entry into the world, we got the job done, cord cut, and the baby suctioned and handed out into freezing air and hustled into the ambulance. We now

had two patients successfully loaded in the wagon. The third patient remained in the back seat as I wondered, "How does one get a woman who just delivered a baby out of the back seat of a two-door Pinto?" I don't recall reading any protocol about that. With one foot in the car and one foot outside, I motioned for the new mom to put her arms around my neck. (Did I fail to mention that my patient spoke no English?) I was able to hoist her out and onto a waiting gurney.

While this was a night to remember, our main task was to just be that reassuring presence in our service area. As a result of this service, we had some epic attendances at Vacation Bible School, for example, all because people in town came to trust us. Many of our VBS kids now have families of their own, and some of the parents who allowed them to come are still living. My prayer is that they will even now remember the acts of compassion they witnessed and be drawn to the Savior whom we ultimately served and continue to serve.



Dr. Jonathan Edwards has served with Northwest Baptist Missions since 1975, planting and revitalizing churches in Utah. He serves on the boards of NBM, Utah Independent Baptist Camp (UTIBACA), and Grace Reigns (an outreach to polygamist Mormons), and he chairs the board for Eagle's Nest Baptist Ministries, a Christian Conference Center in Marysville, Utah. Along with his wife, Chrissa, he currently serves as the director of recruitment for NBM. The couple also anticipates starting a new church plant near Bryce Canyon in Utah.

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# Seek the Light



*In him was life; and the life was the light of men.* John 1:4

Once, when I was a teacher, we had an intruder: a large moth that made its way into the classroom through the open door. Perhaps it was originally seeking warmth on a cold, dim morning. Then it started bumping the plastic ceiling panels that shielded the lights. Bump, rattle, bump, rattle. I had to do something quick, or it was clear that no learning was going to happen. I didn't want to kill the moth because it was big and quite beautiful—big enough that the students and I felt compassion.

Someone tried to capture it in his hands, but the moth was too agile, and the ceiling was too high. I opened the door, thinking that the moth would naturally rather be outside. But the moth kept slamming itself into that same ceiling panel, over and over. Someone said, "He's going to the light." That's when I knew what to do—I turned the ceiling lights off. Let me tell you, that moth didn't care a bit about the plastic panel; it just cared about light, any light, and once the room was dark, the moth was out the door towards the sun in two seconds.

I know the moth didn't actually care about light. This was pure instinct on display, and it was pretty impressive. Nocturnal moths may employ their light sensitivity to navigate by the moon and stars, but artificial light is often a dead-end for moths because their instinct keeps them spiraling toward it, ever closer. They

can get burned or eaten by other flying things who come to the impromptu feast.

Scripture abounds with references to light. Christ Himself is the Light of the World which the spiritual darkness of the world is not able to overcome (Isa. 9:2; John 1:5; 8:12). Light always vanquishes darkness.

Scripture itself gives light, understanding about God, the world, and our life in it.

- "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105).
- "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Ps. 119:130).

People who are walking in the light of God have spiritual understanding, are blessed by Him, have real fellowship with one another (1 John 1:6–7), and walk consistently in God's ways. Is not this a picture of a completely happy person? It's what all Christians have a deep longing for—unhindered communion with God, peace that we are following His path, and real heart-deep fellowship with others.

Our problem, though, is similar to that of the moth—there's the Light . . . and then there's "light"—pleasures that we pursue in a desperate attempt to make ourselves happy. These could be overtly sinful things such as sexual sins or drunkenness. They could be things on which we spend an inordinate amount of time, such as reading, hobbies, exercise, video games, news, movies, or social media. Even though we genuinely know God, we can end up like the moth, tempted by an illusion, seemingly compelled

to seek the artificial light because it is the brightest thing around.

The Lord has shown me over and over that I have sought experiences to bring satisfaction and happiness rather than finding satisfaction and joy in my relationship with the Lord. Happiness cannot be found by striving for it; it can be found only in fellowship with God. Our deepest need is to chase the true Light: bathe our minds with Scripture, cleanse our souls through confession, and experience joyful communion with God in prayer.

In Ephesians 5:8 Paul says to those believers, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." He is saying, "You have been changed spiritually; now let the way you live demonstrate this change." This is a timely message for our time as well. Have the pleasures of the world, legitimate or illegitimate, captured your attention? Moths act merely on instinct. They can't choose, but we can. We are embedded in a culture full of distractions and chaos. Do you need to turn off or turn away from those things that distract you and replace them with the Word? The turning away might be painful, but when you turn to the Light, you will see with a new clarity and find real joy. Choose the true light of God and His Word, and then walk continually in it.

Linda Shumate is married to David Shumate, the chief academic officer at International Baptist College & Seminary in Chandler, Arizona. Linda loves working in the Admissions office at IBCS and enjoys writing, studying the Bible and music at IBCS, doing grandma things, and hiking.





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**T**he name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Prov. 18:10). The “name of the LORD” is a metonym for the person and character of God. It is God Himself, His character, that is the refuge of the righteous. God has filled His Word with words about His character.

Where I grew up in the Carolina Low Country, we have Southern live oaks. They’re not extraordinarily tall (maybe sixty-five feet). The girth, while respectable (twenty-five to thirty feet in some specimens), is nothing like that of the redwoods and sequoias in California. But their glory is their spread. Their canopy is enormous: huge limbs that spread out laterally from the trunk, often lowering to rest their weight on the ground. They can cover up to 17,000 square feet or more. I live on a half-acre lot with several large trees on it, but if one of these trees were on my lot, its canopy would envelope nearly my entire lot, house and all.

When I was growing up we used to play tree tag in oaks like these; you weren’t allowed to leave the tree or touch the ground—you could jump from limb to limb, or run up one limb to the trunk and then get on another. It was a mother’s nightmare, but I suppose none of our mothers knew what we were doing. We climbed all over those trees.

The character of God is like one of those massive oaks. Each gigantic limb is like one of God’s attributes, and all the leaves on all the branches of each of those limbs are like the words of God declaring and displaying each of those attributes. And that expansive canopy covers all those who take their refuge in Him. So search Him out! Climb all over this giant tree of God’s character, and find your confidence and your refuge in His words about Himself. Because He will always live up to them.

The previous column began with just one of those branches, God’s declaration to Moses of His glory expressed primarily in terms of His goodness (Exod. 34:6–7). We then explored Naomi’s discovery of one of God’s attributes in particular, His faithful lovingkindness. This column investigates the dilemma we face when God’s actions (or inaction) seem to contradict the loving compassion He says He has for His children.

### QUESTIONING GOD’S TIMING

We know God loves and cares about His children. He says so. Repeatedly. But sometimes His timing, His delay, His apparent

# Trusting God’s

absence in the very time our time of need seems to contradict all His assurances. John 11 records just such an experience.

When Mary and Martha’s brother, Lazarus, fell ill (v. 1), his sisters sent an urgent appeal to Jesus: “Lord, behold, he whom thou *lovest* is sick” (v. 3). This was no seasonal virus. This was life-threatening. They were clearly concerned for their brother’s life. Oddly, Jesus seemed not to be. “This sickness is not unto death,” Jesus assured those present, “but for the glory of God” (v. 4). His response seems so casual that we might suppose He felt no particular attachment or obligation to this family. But John corrects that misimpression: “Now Jesus *loved* Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus” (v. 5).

Knowing that Lazarus was ill, and loving them as we are reminded He did, what did Jesus do? He stayed put (v. 6). For two more days! John offers no defense; he doesn’t suggest that Jesus would have gone immediately, but other pressing business prevented him. Jesus just decided *not* to go. When those He loved found themselves in the midst of a genuine crisis, and earnestly pleaded—on the basis of His love—for Him to come, He decided to delay.

Jesus loved . . . *and yet* . . . He *stayed*? How do you explain that? How do you interpret that? Those two statements seem to clash. That’s why I connected them with the phrase “and yet.” But that’s not how John connects those two verses. Look closely at the conjunction he uses in 11:6. (And if you think conjunctions are insignificant, think again! Even a conjunction can carry significant theological freight.) John’s connector between verses 5 and 6 is not the kind of contrastive term we would expect—like “yet” or “despite” or “nevertheless”—as though Jesus’ action was somehow paradoxical to His love. John uses a matter-of-fact term of explanation (*oun*): “*So / Therefore / Accordingly / Consequently / That being the case*, when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was.” The narrative reads as though, upon hearing that a dear friend was deathly ill, remaining where He was for two days more was the most natural, obvious response we should have expected.

The word “therefore” is a grammatical rearview mirror. It prompts you to look backwards in the narrative for the causal link. It is this: **Because Jesus loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus, when He heard Lazarus was sick, He stayed where He was two more days.** Or to state it more directly, **When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He stayed where He was two more days because He loved them.** In fact, Jesus stayed where He was until He *knew* that Lazarus had died (11:14)! And if He knew Lazarus was dead, He

# Character (Part 2)

certainly knew the grief and pain and tears . . . and *confusion* . . . that Martha and Mary would experience *because* of His delay! *What* kind of love is this?

John's choice of words is utterly counterintuitive—which is additional evidence that it was deliberate and significant. It simply means that (1) Jesus' delay was intentional, and (2) Jesus' delay was specifically *prompted* by His *love*. That connection of thoughts jars us precisely because it is so counterintuitive. True love always acts *immediately* and races to the rescue, doesn't it? Not necessarily. Not *omnipotent* love. Not *omniscient* love. Not *sovereign* love that is also in complete control.

It is no stretch to draw a parallel between this passage—Martha and Mary appealing to the absent Jesus via a messenger—and prayer. Especially the kind of prayer that seems to be answered by silence. The conditions are exactly the same: you pray and appeal, but nothing seems to happen, nothing seems to change—just like Lazarus's sisters sitting helplessly at home, waiting for Jesus. What answerless questions hounded their days and nights while they waited for Jesus to come? Days passed. Jesus didn't arrive. Lazarus died. More days passed, and Lazarus was buried. And *still* Jesus didn't come. When He finally arrived, it was four days too late. They must have talked about this around their lamplit kitchen table each night after the messenger returned, and Jesus didn't come. You can hear the echo of those late-night talks when both of them, independently, greeted Jesus with the same words, because they'd both been thinking the same thing: “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” (11:21, 32). They had no doubts about His power (“my brother *would not* have died”). But they could not fathom His unexplained timing: “*if You had been here*” is a implies a question about timing, about delay.

Have you ever noticed the apparent utter contradiction between 11:4 (“This sickness is not unto death”) and 11:14 (“Jesus told them plainly, Lazarus is dead”)? It's not clear whether the messenger heard, and delivered to the sisters, Jesus' assurance that Lazarus's illness was not terminal. If it did, think of the profound confusion and consternation that would have caused for those four days that Lazarus lay in the grave before Jesus came (11:39)! Even if it didn't, it certainly must have puzzled the disciples. But nothing is necessarily final where God the Son is concerned—not even death.

Some commentators make an issue of exactly where Jesus was when He received the initial message from Lazarus's sisters. Some think He was only a day's journey away, just across the Jordan

in the south, and therefore that Lazarus may well have died even before Jesus received word of his illness (Leon Morris). Others think He was far up in the northeast region, as much as four days away, so that even if Jesus *had* left immediately, He would still have arrived after Lazarus died (D. A. Carson). In both cases, the point seems to be to exonerate Jesus by finding some plausible geographical explanation for His delay and late arrival. But that's not how John explains the delay. John feels no obligation to try to cover for Jesus or explain Jesus' action. The structure of John's account is plainly calculated to call attention to two seemingly contradictory realities: (1) the purposefulness of Jesus' *timing*, and (2) the certainty of Jesus' *love*.

It's true that neither sister overtly questioned Jesus' compassion, like the disciples did on another occasion (“Master, carest thou not that we perish?”). But I suspect that John anticipated that *we* might question Jesus' compassion or concern and was guided by God's Spirit in not just *what* he wrote but *how* he wrote this narrative. That's why the narrative takes pains to point our attention to Jesus' love for this family, not once or even twice but three times (11:3, 5, 36). *We* need that reassurance. Because on the front end, delay never looks like delay; it looks like *failure*. It looks like dereliction, desertion. Delay on the front end looks and feels like God is just absent, uninterested, unaware, uncaring, *not coming*, *not answering*. But as Martha and Mary discovered, delay is not at all the same thing as desertion.

In 11:25 Jesus countered Martha's words by grounding her hope not just in a future event (“Thy brother shall rise again,” v. 23) but in *Himself*: “I am the resurrection, and the life!” (11:25). And He followed it with a pointed and personal question—to Martha, *a believer*—that you have to answer for yourself as well: “Believest thou this?” (11:26).

To say that there is no such thing as unanswered prayer is not a mere truism; it is a truth. Every prayer is always answered, and you know all the possible answers: *Yes*, *No*, and *Not Yet*. But again, on the front end, *Not Yet* looks to us just like *No*. Almost always, the difference is apparent only in retrospect. Lying right on the surface of this passage is the assurance that God's timing never negates His love. We can be confident of that because that's the way God says He is, and His testimony to His character is always trustworthy, no matter what our circumstances make it look like.

Dr. Layton Talbert is professor of Theology and Biblical Exposition at BJU Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina.

## Eight Hindrances to Answered Prayer (Continued)

In case this is your first issue of *FrontLine* magazine, let me explain that I am writing a series on eight hindrances to answered prayer. In the last issue, we gave the first three hindrances, which were (1) we don't pray; (2) unconfessed unrepentant sin; and (3) not listening to God's Word. If we want a powerful prayer life, then we must address the issues we are told in Scripture that hinder our prayers.

### 4. WRONG MOTIVES

The fourth hindrance to answered prayer is wrong motives. James 4:3 states, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." Why do you pray for what you are praying for? If you're praying just for you to be more about you, do not expect that prayer to get answered.

### 5. FAILURE TO FORGIVE OTHERS

The fifth hindrance to answered prayer is a failure to forgive others (Mark 11:25–26; Matt. 18:21–35). Bitterness has been defined as harbored hurt. When we get hurt, we will either get better or we will get bitter. Hebrews 12:14–15 challenges us to pursue peace and warns that bitterness defiles many. I have found that bitterness defiles the closest people to the person who is bitter.

The aim of hockey is to score goals. When you see an opposing player coming to check you into the boards, your coach wants you to step aside and start skating the other way. However, if that player has been taking cheap shots at you the whole game, you want to get low and flip him over your back. Better yet is to drop your gloves and educate him on the finer points of hockey, which will then require you to

spend some time in the "sin bin" (penalty box). However good that would make you feel at the time, you would hurt the team because now they are a man short. Romans 12:19–21 makes it clear that vengeance is God's—He will repay. We are not supposed to waste time trying to get even with people; we are to forgive.

Have you noticed that forgiveness is a great concept until you have to do it? When asked by Peter if forgiving seven times was enough, Jesus stated, "No, it should be seventy times seven." The point was not to keep track and that on the 491st time we don't forgive anymore. Aren't we all glad that God forgives us more than 490 times? The point was after 490 times, we would be in the habit of forgiving. When we refuse to forgive, God says He won't forgive us, and thus our prayer life is hindered. If we accept God's forgiveness for all the sins we have ever done and all the sins we will do, we must be willing to forgive those who hurt us. That was the whole point of Matthew 18:21–35. When we refuse to forgive someone over a past hurt, that continues to hurt us in our spiritual walk. The hurts of the past have caused enough damage. Forgive the other person and experience the joy of a powerful prayer life.

### 6. POOR MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

The sixth hindrance to answered prayer is a poor marriage relationship. First Peter 3:7 states, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." This is the only hindrance to prayer that is specifically addressed to married men.

A husband is to be an expert on his wife. It's a command that takes time and study. I have a helpful tool, if you are interested, called "50 Questions to Ask Your Wife." Most husbands do not get fifteen out of fifty right. If you e-mail me at [president@faith.edu](mailto:president@faith.edu), I would be happy to send it to you.

I can't tell you how often in marriage counseling I have heard the wife say, "I don't feel loved," and the husband has responded by saying, "Well, I love her." I would then ask, "How do you show that?" and the husband would reply, "Well, I provide for her." The problem is that most wives could do that for themselves. They got married for companionship, not just to be provided for.

**WHEN WE REFUSE TO FORGIVE, GOD SAYS HE WON'T FORGIVE US, AND THUS OUR PRAYER LIFE IS HINDERED. IF WE ACCEPT GOD'S FORGIVENESS FOR ALL THE SINS WE HAVE EVER DONE AND ALL THE SINS WE WILL DO, WE MUST BE WILLING TO FORGIVE THOSE WHO HURT US.**



The other thing about the “50 Questions” is that you will have to go through them with your wife about every three years because her answers will change. Just like most of us do not have ten-year-old cell phones or laptops, we must dwell with our wife with current information.

If you asked your wife privately if she feels loved by you, what would she say? Anything besides “yes” is hindering your prayer life. Male callousness equals spiritual powerlessness. Dr. McLaughlan stated, “God will become as insensitive to a husband’s needs uttered in his prayers as the husband is insensitive to the needs of his wife whispered in his ears. The sighs of an injured wife come between God and the husband.”

How are you doing on the honey-do lists at home? Has your wife ever asked you to change the lightbulb in the fridge? You tell her you will do it, and she learns braille before you put a new bulb in. She can reach in and find anything in the dark. That is not dwelling with your wife in an understanding way. Most husbands would say that if someone broke into their home trying to hurt their wife or kids, they would give their life if necessary to protect them. However, when a wife asks for daily help and the ballgame is on, you can forget that. It seems odd to me that so many husbands are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice that realistically they will probably never in their lifetime be asked to make, but they are unwilling to make the smaller daily sacrifices they need to make. God is clear in this text: if we do not dwell with our wives in an understanding way and honor them, our prayer life is hindered.

We will look at the last two hindrances to answered prayers in the next issue. May we all consistently work on these issues so our prayers will not be hindered. As TV’s Red Green often says, “Keep your stick on the ice. We are all in this together.”

Jim Tillotson has served as the president of Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary in Ankeny, Iowa, since June 2015. Previously he was the senior pastor of Meadowlands Baptist Church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, for eighteen years. During his time in Canada he led Meadowlands Baptist in planting three new churches and helped start a Christian school and a Bible institute.



## IF YOU ASKED YOUR WIFE PRIVATELY IF SHE FEELS LOVED BY YOU, WHAT WOULD SHE SAY? ANYTHING BESIDES “YES” IS HINDERING YOUR PRAYER LIFE. MALE CALLOUSNESS EQUALS SPIRITUAL POWERLESSNESS.

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## Regional Reports

### ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL FELLOWSHIP

Larry Robbins

While cold weather is not unusual for the annual gathering of pastors and church folk at the Rocky Mountain Regional Fellowship in Colorado, this year's meeting on January 31 began with a temperature of minus ten degrees under sunny skies. At the Westside Baptist Church in Greeley, Colorado, it had actually warmed from the previous day's temp of 24 degrees below zero!

With only a couple individuals unable to make the journey from Wyoming, over sixty were registered for the one-day conference. With a good group of volunteers from Pastor Dan Unruh's church and several church members, the attendance was very good.

Powerful messages from Dr. Bruce McAllister and Pastor Unruh revolved around the selected theme of "Tranquility in Time of Trouble." The ladies also had their own session led by Juanita Unruh, Dan's wife.

After a video presentation from the FBFI on the chaplaincy ministry, Pastor Unruh's message on "Three Troubling Words for

Those Who Trouble Christians," from 2 Thessalonians 1, dealt with Paul's "rest with us" in view of the coming Revelation of Jesus Christ. Dr. McAllister's messages focused on the reality of "Ministry Trouble" and our response to it, and having tranquility in "Personal Trouble."

The day ended with a wonderful meal catered by Olive Garden. The fellowship was sweet, and all who attended left encouraged and challenged, looking forward to next year's gathering.



### 2023 WINTER BOARD MEETING

Doug Wright

Information is critical in making wise decisions. The Winter Board meeting is a day-and-a-half event that has become more and more important to our organization. Colonial Hills Baptist Church (Pastor Chuck Phelps) in Indianapolis hosted the 2023 FBFI Winter Board meeting from February 6-8.

Four presentations anchored our discussions. The first was a paper written by Pastor Ben Hicks called "A Closer Look at Christian Liberty." The paper has been presented on couple of occasions. Ben revisited the question of eating meat offered to idols (1 Cor. 8-10).

His presentation was excellent and gave listeners much to consider. The other three presentations dealt with "Religious Liberty and the Marriage Restoration Act," "A Strategy for How to Interact with SBC Refugees", and "Considerations for Pastors and Congregations in This Time of Financial Uncertainty." As you can see, each of these topics is of interest and value to any ministry.

In addition to the informational presentations, the Winter Board Meeting is a time for the various committees to meet and make their presentations. Those committees met on Tuesday afternoon and reported in the official business meeting that night. We were able to review everything from finances, to Proclaim & Defend, to the subjects for the Position Statements, and much more.

The meeting serves as a vehicle to plan for the future. FBFI officers are elected on a rotating basis. Gordon Dickson has done a great job as chairman, but he let the board know he wishes to end his term as of the summer meeting. A new chairman will be elected at the next board meeting.

## **AFCB DC TRIP**

*Joe Willis*

During January 8–12, 2023, I traveled to Washington, DC, to participate in several key leadership meetings discussing chaplaincy issues with members of Congress and the Department of Defense (DoD). Representing FBFI, I attend these meetings as a part of a larger group of conservative evangelical endorsers called the International Conference of Evangelical Chaplain Endorsers (ICECE). Each year we spend the first two days on Capitol Hill sharing our concerns with various Senators, Congressmen/women, and their staffs. Many of these elected officials are on key committees that are responsible for policy and laws that govern how our military functions from year to year. Our main emphasis this year was addressing the policies that pertained to the COVID-19 vaccine mandate and the impact that this mandate has had on our military as a whole. The other issue pertained to “religious liberty/freedom” language that has been left out and/or neglected in past National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) documents.

During the two-day period we talked with staffers from the senate offices of Ernst (IA), Langford (OK), and Lee (UT). The following day was spent with Representatives Self (TX), Johnson (AR), Aderholt (AL), and Griffith (VA). It was tremendous to realize that many of these men and women are born-again believers who truly feel that they are in these positions because God has placed them there for “such a time as this.” We prayed with many of these men and women, and they ask us to continually pray that God would give them divine wisdom, discernment, stamina, and endurance.

Ironically, the day after our meetings, a new policy was issued by the Secretary of Defense to terminate the COVID-19 vaccination mandate for all personnel in the military (Active Duty, Guard/Reserves). The following day, the DoD published a document to remove/expunge any negative paperwork from a serviceman’s personnel file that had been issued during the vaccine mandate period. What an answer to prayer. More work needs to be done, but we praise the Lord for His intervention.

The following day, we conducted in-house meetings with ICECE and then attended a meeting with each of the Chiefs of Chaplains from the three services (Army, Air Force, and Navy). This is where the Chiefs give us an update on the past year and also a vision for the year to come. Sometimes these meetings are difficult because of all of the ecumenical viewpoints in the room as well as an abundance of political correctness and wokeness. It is a blessing to represent our FBFI chaplains in these meetings each year.

The highlight of my trip was to spend time with three of our chaplains who serve there in the DC region: LCDR Plais Hoyle (Navy), Maj. Alan Findley (Air Force), and CPT Jonathan Yarbrough (Army).



# Staying Connected When Your Husband Is Deployed

*But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.* 2 Thessalonians 3:13

Just the thought of a long separation resulting from your husband's deployment can bring many stressful emotions. It is challenging to have the family unit split for any length of time, and the thought of his being in danger can be an added stress. Over the years I have found some activities that lighten the stress. Doing these activities can't and won't take all of the stress away, but bringing joy to your family during an emotional time can help alleviate some of it for a while.

Any of these activities done regularly, whether daily, weekly, or monthly, can bring anticipation and excitement before the event. These activities have no cost or, at the most, very little money involved. But the memories you make will last a lifetime and may start traditions that will continue in your future.

One of the activities that we enjoyed in our household was the anticipation of "Friday Night Sleep Wherever You Want." The kitchen was always a favorite place to set up camp. We made pallets, pulled sleeping bags through the house, and had a night of laughing and very little sleep. This activity began and ended at a specific time,

so the fun didn't drag on into the next day. Having a beginning and an ending time keeps the activity special.

Another activity was letting the children pick a favorite meal for one day of the week. This spurred many activities and built life skills, from making a grocery list to letting the children find the groceries themselves in the store and preparing a nutritious meal. No extra cost is involved because you are buying ingredients that you would be using for a meal that week anyway.

We also enjoyed going to many local playgrounds. We would go to three or four playgrounds in a day and stay for only thirty to sixty minutes and then move on to the





when Alan, our deployed loved one, would call. Therefore, we came up with a schedule so everyone would get a chance to talk without interruptions from others. One person got to speak on one call; the next call, it would be someone else's turn. Each person felt special and got the full attention of the caller. Of course, we parents sometimes needed time to discuss family

issues, but the children still had their time, and they felt the call was just for them.

One family activity has turned into a monthly event as the children have grown older, not just during separations but any time: family members try to find a dish that no one has tasted before, and the "finder" has to prepare the meal or item for the rest of the family to try.

A tradition that continues still today is evening prayers. Once it was announced that prayers were starting, there would be a mad rush to get the best spot on the bed. Who determined which spots were the best

was beyond me, but the children knew. The children would gather on my bed. We would first talk about anything that might be on anyone's mind, and we would share prayer requests and then go around the room by age, youngest to oldest, and praying. This made for a great way to end the day.

As a couple, we read books together. My husband and I would read a chapter, and, when we could have a more extended time talking together, discuss the chapter and any notes that had come to mind. You can also do this with books of the Bible.

Finally, being involved with your military installation's events for families during these times is a great way to stay connected with other families going through the same trials you are.

I know that these activities won't stop the pain and the loneliness that accompany deployments, but being distracted for a short time can bring joy.

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LaWanda Findley has been a homeschool mom for over thirty years and is now substitute teaching in Texas. She is the wife of Ch, Maj. Alan Findley, who serves as the Deputy Chief of Chaplain Accessions Officer in the Active Duty Recruiting Office.

next park. We could do this activity often, but it was never the same twice. We changed the order of the parks and even did only certain things at specific parks. We also did these types of visits with our local libraries.

Local libraries and schools and community centers are also a great source of special events. Sometimes we could see short plays or hear authors speak on some of our favorite books. We even took sign-language classes. This is a great way to find special events to enjoy.

A matter of contention over the years was that everyone wanted to speak on the phone

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## Evangelist's Perspective

Jerry Sivnksty

# Speak Out for the Lord

**W**e read in Psalm 107:2, “Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.” I am afraid that many of the redeemed have put a spiritual muzzle over their mouths. They are silent; they never speak out and declare what the Lord has done for them. It is not right for anyone who is born again to refrain from broadcasting what Christ has done for him. This really is our privilege and honor. As the little chorus says, “Stop! And let me tell you what the Lord has done for me.” The world is waiting for someone to tell of God’s love for them. It reminds me of a man I witnessed to several years ago who said to me, “I never knew that God loved me! No one has ever told me.” Someone has said, “Gratitude which never says, ‘Thank you!’ has a very precarious life.” Dr. Bob Jones Sr. used to say, “When gratitude dies on the altar of a man’s heart, that man is well nigh hopeless.”

In Luke 17 Jesus Christ cured ten men of leprosy. In verse 13 these lepers said to Jesus, “Master, have mercy on us.” Verse 14 says, “And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.” What a great miracle! The Lord healed these men of an incurable disease; however, what happens afterward is shocking. We read in verses 15–18,

And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud

voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

Only one out of ten came back to glorify God and thank Jesus for healing him. What a manifestation of ingratitude on the part of the other nine men. But before we become too critical of these nine men, perhaps we should ask ourselves, are we like them in that we never thank Christ and proclaim to others what He has done for us? Now, I don’t know your testimony, but the Lord knows if you are like the one grateful man or like the other nine ungrateful men. The truth of the matter is that probably the vast majority of professing believers fit in the category of the nine ungrateful lepers.

Recently I was in a revival meeting and a dear friend of mine asked me if I would be willing to go and visit a friend of his to whom he had been witnessing for years. I told him I’d be glad to. My friend has faithfully witnessed to this man for many years and clearly presented the gospel to him. When we arrived at this unsaved man’s house, he cordially invited us inside. After introductions, we began having a casual conversation, which led to my asking him if I could share my testimony of how I came to Christ. He said that would be okay.

He listened with great interest as I told him how one day when I was a teenager someone showed me some things from the Bible. I then asked this unbeliever if I could show him what that man showed me, and once again he agreed. I shared the gospel from the Scriptures; when I was through, I asked him if he would like to ask the Lord to save him. He said yes! He bowed his head and prayed out loud for Christ to save him. Then he said to us, “I know I should have made this decision a long time ago.” We then invited him to come to the revival service that night. My friend offered to pick him up and drive him, but the man said that wouldn’t be necessary and that he would be there. Sure enough, he showed up at the meeting. What an encouragement it was to the congregation!

The apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:6–7, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.” My friend did all the planting of God’s Word. I came along and watered the seed, but God gave the increase! May we be like that one grateful healed leper and praise God for what He has done for us, and may we also be faithful to tell others.

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

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