

FRONTLINE

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME



The Gender Controversy

- ▶ Reaching Those in the LGBTQ Movement
- ▶ Gender, Science, and the Church
- ▶ A Little Compromise Is a Big Deal
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FRONTLINE

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Our sincere thanks to Dr. Gordon Dickson for coordinating this issue of *FrontLine* magazine.



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The gender controversy is the most common public policy dispute of our day. The news is full of terms such as “transgender,” “cisgender,” “puberty blockers,” and “conversion therapy.” Slurs such as “transphobe” and “homophobe” are designed to silence opponents. Those who blur the lines between genders have insisted that biological males can compete in women’s sports and use women’s restrooms. Inevitably, these disputes have invaded churches and warped the very nature of their worship. How should Bible-believing Christians respond to the enormous pressure to conform to this culture? This edition of *FrontLine* magazine will help you address this question. We are, first and foremost, “theo-phobes”—we fear God. These articles will help you know how to apply the fear of God in the gender controversy.

The 1969 riots in Manhattan’s Greenwich Village were a watershed event in the gender controversy. But even there, those who love the Lord are ministering the gospel to those in bondage. Matt Recker’s article on reaching those in the LGBTQ movement will help you reach those in your community as well. But religious leaders are pushing in the opposite direction. They want to change what the Bible says about God in the name of tolerance. Robert Condict’s article evaluating such leaders’ claims will help you sort out your biblical beliefs. And when it comes to public policy, would it be helpful to hear about legislation from an elected representative? Pastor Gary Click is such a representative in Ohio; his article will arm you with necessary information for the legal battles in your area.

Are the Old Testament prohibitions against homosexuality relevant

for today? Ken Burkett’s writing will help you teach the timeless truth from Leviticus 18. But even gospel-preaching churches are beginning to compromise this truth. In this issue Ben Hicks explains the way that this compromise is being portrayed as compassion. He explains how to use biblical discernment to evaluate the changing position of a well-known evangelical pastor. And if you want to grasp the way that contemporary worship is being warped, read Taigen Joos’ book review of *Lovin’ on Jesus*. Inevitably, the current gender controversy has revived the debate about women pastors. Kevin Bauder’s analysis of a key biblical text will give you the answers you need to explain the unique roles of men and women in the ministry.

The gender controversy should not distract you from seeking and finding the lost. Jim Tillotson’s column will help you to maintain the right focus. Jerry Sivnksty explains that you have the God-given power to maintain that focus. Bret Perkuchin’s explanation of how chaplains minister to the families of military casualties will give you a new perspective on an important ministry.

All of the articles in this edition can aid your biblical discernment. Mark Minnick’s column will guide you in how to apply that discernment when you are meeting with small groups of believers. His explanation of 1 Corinthians 14 and the connection between preaching and teaching is worthy of careful reading.

All in all, we believe that you will find this edition of *FrontLine* useful for years to come. The gender controversy is not going away. But beginning with the fear of God and using the Word of God, we have answers for Christians and non-Christians alike.

Gordon Dickson



Reaching Those in the LGBTQ Movement

Our church meets in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of Manhattan, in the shadow of the Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street. In June 1969 riots occurred there that are widely considered a watershed event and landmark moral victory that provided the LGBTQ movement its official beginning. After the “Stonewall Inn Riots,” gay-rights newspapers and organizations were established around the United States and the world. One year after the riot, gay events were held to remember the incident, and to this day, June is Gay Pride month, which concludes with their largest annual event, a parade.

So the neighborhood where we meet every Sunday is the nexus of the modern homosexual movement. I would like to share some insights regarding interacting with and reaching the LGBTQ world.

OBEDIENT COMPASSION

The first thing we have done is simply gone in *obedient compassion* to minister among them. We are in a homosexual community to share the gospel of grace. We must not emulate the example of the priest and Levite in the Good Samaritan narrative, who passed by the one in desperate need on the other side of the road. We can no longer run from the LGBTQ world, because it has grown out of our urban centers into nearly every community in our nation.

Someone may challenge us and say, “What right do you have to go into the heart of a homosexual community?” My straightforward answer is simply, “Jesus has commanded us in John 20:21: ‘As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.’”

FEARLESS COMPASSION

We must also have a *fearless compassion* to stand on the truth of God’s Word in places where many may despise our faith. Here is how a very important man in our church ended up visiting and consequently becoming a core member.

On June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court of our land rendered the Obergefell decision. Falling like a tsunami, it legally established same-sex marriage throughout the United States and its territories. On the Sunday following this decision, I shared a statement communicating a biblical worldview in relationship to the verdict.

I shared that God’s clear definition and design of marriage, a union between a man and a woman, had been rejected by our justices. Demonstrating a spiritual hubris, they set themselves up as chief social scientists. Rulings

such as theirs have historically led to the demise of previous civilizations.

Meanwhile, this brother, who had been a longtime member of a prominent evangelical church in New York City, wondered where his church stood on this important issue. He heard both a strange silence from the pulpit and read conflicting comments from leaders on social media that indicated sympathy for the Obergefell opinion.

One of their church leaders tweeted a picture of the Empire State Building lit up in gay pride colors. Their tweet included hearts in the colors of the gay pride flag and simply said: “Love My city. #pride.”

Her post communicated a pride in her city and a love for its pro-homosexual stance. The ruling, however, did not make this young man happy or proud. Rather, it grieved him.

With prayerful consideration, he found us online and visited our church. After visiting, he went back to our website and looked for my message on the Sunday after the Obergefell decision to see if our church made any public statements about it, and I had. This impressed him, and he continued coming. Over time, he got more involved. He shared his testimony, with tears, to our church family on a Sunday morning. He made friends and brought visitors to our church. He taught an adult Bible fellowship class. He got involved in our Vacation Bible Time. He is an incredible servant and worker in our church, and a key reason for this is because we were not afraid to stand on biblical principles.

HUMBLE COMPASSION

We must also ask God to give us *humble compassion* in speaking with those in the LGBTQ community. While we point out others’ sins, we must remember that we have sinned as well. Sexual temptation is difficult for us too. The sins of adultery, fornication, and divorce are far too common in our churches. We cannot talk to those in the LGBTQ world as though they have sinned but we have not.

In speaking to those who grapple with the sins of the LGBTQ world, let us not forget what it is to struggle against indwelling sin. This sin forges a very deep chain. I had a striking and unforgettable conversation with a man who fell into the sin of homosexuality. He told me that he had done just about every sin you could think of, but there was no sin that generated a heavier bondage of control than homosexuality. He told me about the pain and shame of this sin, and my heart wept for him.



Sexual sin, whether pornography, adultery, fornication, and, perhaps the most difficult, homosexuality, is very difficult to break. We must speak in love and never joke or make fun of their lifestyle. We must not speak in angry or hateful tones. Let us not talk in pride, as if they are too far gone to be saved. Remember that the cure for their sins is the same as anyone's: Jesus Christ. They need to believe in Christ and rest in His infinite grace just as we did! We deserved hell, and God has not dealt with us according to our sins. Speak with Christ's humble compassion, because God can save them too (1 Cor. 6:9–13).

SCRIPTURALLY GROUNDED COMPASSION

We must have a *scripturally grounded compassion* in God's Word and show patience toward all men (1 Thess. 5:14). Some men and women struggle with same-sex attraction more than others do. Many wish they did not. Let's seek to understand their struggle and meet them where they are. Engage them in conversation. Listen to them and pray with them. Take them for

a cup of coffee or a meal. There will be young people who have grown up in our churches who wrestle with this. Make sure they know they are loved and cared for.

We must be grounded in Scripture because many use even the Bible to justify their LGBTQ position. For instance, a common false teaching is that in Romans 1:18–32 Paul is exposing exploitative situations that were not mutual, such as temple prostitution, rape, or pedophilia. Some argue that Paul was not dealing with mutually loving, same-sex relationships, and that he had no concept of a homosexual orientation where two people of the same gender looked for a loving relationship.

But that is not what Paul says. He clearly describes homosexuality as a sinful mutual burning between two people of the same sex (vv. 26–27): "Women did change the natural use into that which is against

nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another." Paul is not talking about rape or temple prostitution but mutually consenting partners which engaged in unnatural intimacy. Paul categorically condemns all sexual relations between people of the same sex, both men and women.

Others say that the sin of Sodom according to Ezekiel 16:49 was not homosexuality but "pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness . . . neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." Ezekiel does not ignore the moral depravity of those in Sodom, however, for in the very next verse he says, "And they were haughty [proud], and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good" (Ezek. 16:50). Thus Ezekiel condemns their "gay pride."

People also justify homosexuality by saying, "Jesus never spoke against it." If the Bible speaks anywhere against homosexuality—and it does—then Jesus speaks against it because His name is the Word of God. Jesus actually did speak against homosexuality by affirming two genders and clearly stating that marriage was between a male and a female (Matt. 19:4–5). Furthermore, Jesus spoke of the sin of "fornication" under which the sin of the LGBTQ movement can be summarized. To say that Jesus never spoke specifically against one sin in order to justify it is ludicrous as well. Jesus never specifically mentioned bestiality (Lev. 20:14–15), but this sin also falls under the category of fornication.

A final argument people give for allowing homosexuality is that "we are not under OT Law, so verses like Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 do not apply to NT living." There is evidence that Paul innovates a compound



Greek word in 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 and 1 Timothy 1:10, *arsenokoitai*, which fuses two of the words found in these very verses in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT (“mankind” and “lie”). It could very well be that Paul took these words for “lie with mankind” to form this creative word in the Corinthian and Timothy passage. This shows those verses from the Old Testament law do apply to walking in the Spirit in these New Testament times.

While it may seem like we are on the wrong side of popular culture, we must

never surrender biblical truth. It is far better to be on the wrong side of culture than the wrong side of God and His Word. We live to please God, not man. Beloved, let us speak to those in the LGBTQ world with compassion that is obedient, fearless, humble, and Scriptural.

Pastor Matt Recker has served the Lord Jesus Christ in New York City since 1984. He planted and has pastored Heritage Baptist Church in Manhattan since 1996.



Insights in Ministering to the LGBTQ Community

- Go in obedient compassion to minister among them
- Have a fearless compassion to stand on the truth of God's Word in places where many may despise our faith.
- Ask God to give you a humble compassion in speaking with those in the LGBTQ community.
- Have a scripturally grounded compassion in God's Word and show patience toward all men (1 Thess. 5:14).

WHILE IT MAY SEEM LIKE WE ARE ON THE WRONG SIDE OF POPULAR CULTURE, WE MUST NEVER SURRENDER BIBLICAL TRUTH.

VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLES

Interactive discussions about thought-provoking missions topics by missionary panelists from around the world



Moderated by Jon Crocker

"The stories helped make learning more about missions applicable."
— PROSPECTIVE INTERN/SHORT-TERMER

"It encouraged my heart to continue praying and seeking God's direction for missions in my own life."
— PROSPECTIVE INTERN/SHORT-TERMER

"Concepts I hadn't considered before."
— MISSIONARY SERVING IN HONG KONG

FOR A LIST OF DATES AND TO SUBSCRIBE, GO TO GFAMISSIONS.ORG/ROUNDTABLES



Evaluating Gender-Neutral Claims Regarding God and Angels

Bishops in the Church of England have announced a project on “gendered language” to diversify the way they refer to God in church services.

The move comes from the belief that “a theological misreading of God as exclusively male is a driver of much continuing discrimination and sexism against women.”¹ News items such as this one are not surprising given the current obsession with gender-neutrality. But we can use faithful biblical exegesis and good theology to respond to the current societal drift toward a gender-neutral God.

GOD IS A SPIRIT

Because God is a Spirit, He is not confined to material limitations. Jesus revealed this most clearly in a discussion with the Samaritan woman (John 4). The woman was asking about the acceptable physical location for worship. She wondered if Jesus would side with the Jews, who favored Jerusalem, or the Samaritans, who favored Mt. Gerizim. Jesus’ response must have stunned the woman. Jesus taught that true worshippers of God would not be confined spatially, because God is a Spirit (John 4:23–24). Part of what is meant when we say God is a Spirit is that He is not confined to a singular location (Ps. 139:7–12).

Other texts teach that because God is a Spirit, He is not to be understood in material terms. John confessed that no man has seen God at any time (John 1:18). Paul referred to God as invisible (1 Tim. 1:17). At the conclusion of that same letter to Timothy,

Paul says Jesus, at His coming, will reveal God as “the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”²

Scripture does reveal that God allowed His servants on limited occasions to interact with Him in physical terms. These events are called “theophanies.” God, who cannot be seen because He is not material, permitted man to see some physical likeness. Moses saw a burning, yet unconsumed, bush. God was neither the bush nor the fire, but He did manifest Himself in a physical way. The Lord spoke to Moses from the bush (Exod. 3). Joshua spoke with the Captain of the Lord’s host (Josh. 5). His initial opinion was that he was addressing another human. But by virtue of the command for Joshua to remove his shoes, it was clear that he was standing before a physical manifestation of God.

None of these theophanies reflected God’s normal existence. They were, rather, a condescending to the senses of man for the purposes of communication.

ANY ATTEMPT TO UNDERMINE GOD’S SELF-DISCLOSURE DOES NOT LEAD US TO THE LIGHT OF REVELATION; IT LEADS US TO THE DARKNESS OF VAIN HUMAN SPECULATION.

Because God is immaterial, His people were commanded never to make a graven image (Exod. 20:4–6). A material representation of God was firmly prohibited because worship of the invisible would naturally migrate to the worship of the visible. Material representations for God horribly misrepresent His perfections. Remember Aaron’s golden bull-calf: the people thought that the power, beauty, and virility of the bull made it a fitting representation of God. But God’s actual power, beauty, and virility far exceed anything that any part of the creation could represent. In such a case, the god worshipped would be too small.

Angels, who are also spirit beings, though certainly not self-existent, have also been manifested to people by taking on a physical form. Abraham, Lot, Zachariah, Daniel, the nativity shepherds, Mary, Cornelius, and the ladies at the garden tomb all saw physical forms. Some, such as Daniel, Zachariah, and the nativity shepherds saw powerful, otherworldly creatures. Others, such as Lot, saw what appeared to be regular humans. The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that it is possible to entertain angels without knowing it (Heb. 13:2). Just as they used masculine pronouns for God, both Old and New Testament writers use masculine pronouns when referring to angels. The word “angel” appears only in its masculine form, and when angels are named, they are always given male names. Like theophanies, these visible manifestations do not reflect normal realities because angels are not material beings—they are spirit (Heb. 1:13–14).



Because God is a Spirit, He must not be described in terms of biological sex. In a physical sense, God is neither male nor female. Neither is God androgenous, because God is not material. A human being's sex corresponds to material, biological realities. But the advocates of a gender-neutral god are trying to apply physical realities to God, who is a Spirit.

For instance, some religionists will encourage a person whose father was austere and abusive to refer to God as a mother; they think that doing so avoids painful memories and misconceptions about God. But God is revealed in the Scriptures as "our Father." Any encouragement to view God in ways that He has not revealed Himself initiates false misconceptions of who God is. Those who insist on these false conceptions about God's gender seek to make way for a more palatable god for current society.

ANY ENCOURAGEMENT TO VIEW GOD IN WAYS THAT HE HAS NOT REVEALED HIMSELF INITIATES FALSE MISCONCEPTIONS OF WHO GOD IS.

GOD COMMUNICATES HIMSELF

Today, society's concept of gender refers to how an individual represents him- or herself: how the individual self-identifies. According to a 2023 sexualdiversity.org article, there are 105 different gender identities.³ It is my conviction that human sexuality (the physical aspect) and gender (the presentational aspect) are binary and have full correspondence in humans.⁴ While there can be cultural and historical nuances regarding gender, there is in every culture a masculine presentation and a feminine presentation. I want to be careful not to be misunderstood here. In our current culture, some wish to present or communicate themselves in a way that does not correspond to reality. God does no such thing. He is not presenting Himself in some imaginary way, but He is revealing Himself in truth. Since God is a Spirit, how does He reveal Himself?

God communicates Himself through direct verbal revelation. The Hebrew language does not have gender-neutral pronouns. Therefore, when using pronouns, God revealed Himself through

the masculine pronouns "He" and "Him." For example, in Genesis 1:27 God creates the man and woman in *His* image (the masculine, third-person personal pronoun). Nowhere in the Old Testament does God refer to Himself using feminine pronouns. In the New Testament, where a neutral pronoun is available in *koine* Greek, God still uses masculine pronouns in revealing Himself. Jesus, the perfect earthly revelation of God, took on flesh as a man and was called God's Son (Heb. 1:2). When theophanies appeared, God always represented Himself in a masculine form.

God communicates Himself through imagery. Because of the limitations of language and human understanding, Scripture uses material descriptions to convey truths about an immaterial God (anthropomorphism). God testified that Moses spoke with Him "mouth to mouth" (Num. 12:8). Yet Moses longed to see the fullness of

God's glory. God's response was that no one could see His face and live (Exod. 33:20). The point of these statements is not that God has a face or a mouth—He does not. The point is that Moses had a degree of fellowship with God that was more palpable than that of any of his contemporaries. Even though God is a spirit, Bible language that speaks of God's arm, His eyes, His face all reflect truths about God's abilities in terms humans can grasp.

God reveals Himself in Scripture in particular ways. Isaiah reveals God as Redeemer (Isa. 47:4, masculine word) and Husband (Isa. 54:5).⁵ The apostle Paul reveals God as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15).⁶ John teaches us that one of Jesus' ministries was the "declaring" of the God no man could see (John 1:18). Jesus reveals God as Father in over one hundred different places (see specifically Matt. 6:9; Mark 14:36; and John 20:17).⁷

Distinction should be made between God revealing Himself *to be something* (Father, King, Husband) and God revealing Himself *to be like something*. When God reveals Himself as something, that thing is masculine. When God reveals Himself

to be like something, that thing could be either masculine or feminine. For example, Isaiah reveals that God gives comfort to His people like a mother would comfort her children. Isaiah does not claim that God is a mother, but that He acts as a mother would. In cases like this, gender is not interchangeable. The masculine or feminine traits are intentionally conveyed and should not be modified.

The Bible includes many feminine images to teach something about God. In Hosea 13:8 God is described as a bear robbed of her cubs. In Isaiah 42 God is described as crying out like a woman in labor. God's care for His own is described like the care of a mother eagle to her eaglets in Deuteronomy 32. None of these images feminizes God. Rather, each uses clear images to describe the way God relates to us.

Even though God is Spirit, He clearly reveals Himself in gender-specific ways. Any attempt to undermine God's self-disclosure does not lead us to the light of revelation; it leads us to the darkness of vain human speculation.

Robert Conduct pastors Heartland Baptist Church in Marysville, Ohio.



¹ Gabriella Swerling, "Gender-Neutral God to Be Considered by Church of England," February 7, 2023, accessed at <https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/gender-neutral-god-considered-by-church-of-england/ar-AA17cFTD>.

² 1 Timothy 6:15–16.

³ <https://www.sexualdiversity.org/edu/1111.php>

⁴ Hermaphroditism is an extremely rare condition (.018% of the population) that results from genetic mutations. People with this condition have some male physical features and some female physical features. It should be noted that it is a physiological impossibility to be both fully male and fully female. The presence of this condition has brought significant difficulty to the person and families affected. The presence of such physical mutations does not validate normative sexual confusion. See the Leonard Sax abstract at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12476264/>.

⁵ See also Hosea 2:2, 16, and 19.

⁶ Paul was not alone in referring to God as King (not queen). See also Psalm 24:10, Psalm 47:2, and Isaiah 44:6.

⁷ Jesus was not the only one to reveal God as Father. See also Deuteronomy 32:6; Malachi 2:10; and 1 Corinthians 8:6.

Gender, Science, and the Church

It has been said that the fastest growing religion is the “Nones,” or those with no religious affiliation. I beg to differ. The fastest growing religious belief today is based on gender ideology. While I’m reluctant to be so blunt, many survivors have branded this movement as a cult. They don’t use that term lightly. These survivors describe how they were warmly received into “glitter families”* when they came into the transgender movement. But, as with a cult, those glitter families set out to ostracize them from their biological families; then these survivors were shunned if they dared to depart from the transgender movement. Speaking out against the movement or even telling one’s own negative experiences is akin to full-fledged blasphemy. But a scientific approach should guide legislatures and, subject to Scripture, churches as well to address gender ideology in order to help these hurting people.

LEGISLATION

These things have come to my attention since I became deeply immersed in this subject as the sponsor of Ohio’s SAFE Act (Saving Adolescents from Experimentation). Approximately a dozen states have passed similar legislation while another twenty are in the process.

Sponsoring and supporting this type of legislation presents serious obstacles for someone like me, who also happens to be a pastor. America was built on religious liberty, and one of my goals is to protect each

individual’s right to worship God according to his or her own conscience. Of course, that includes the right to not worship God at all, if they please. All this means that my approach to the legislation must be built on science, statistics, and the stories of those individuals represented by the data. To the legislature, religious beliefs about these issues are largely irrelevant; in fact, the courts view such beliefs as being detrimental to the law. Therefore, my focus as a legislator has not been to dissect this issue theologically. I can take this approach confidently since true science never contradicts God.

A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

It is indisputable that some children experience gender dysphoria, once called gender identity disorder. The first question is, “Why do they experience this?” The second is, “What should be done about it?”

Gender dysphoria is an extreme discomfort with one’s own sex; it is sometimes accompanied by a desire to be the opposite sex. Advocates of gender ideology presuppose that people are born with gender dysphoria. Some will use the term “two-spirited” to describe it. You may have heard others suggest that they have a girl’s brain in a boy’s body, which is a religious belief; it’s not scientifically possible.

Dr. John Money devised the concept of *gender identity*. He taught that one’s gender identity may be different from one’s sex, which is primarily influenced by socialization. Money conducted experiments on

twin boys, one of whom was the victim of a botched circumcision. Bruce Reimer was transitioned to a female as a toddler and raised as “Brenda.” Dr. Money constantly reported favorably on what was known publicly as “the John/Joan case,” while the truth was that “Brenda” never adapted. As Bruce/Brenda grew older, he never fit in with the girls and suffered emotionally. Finally, his father told him the truth. Rather than reverting to his original name, he chose to be called David after the biblical legend that defeated Goliath. Sadly, David and his brother Brian both committed suicide as the result of Dr. Money’s abuse and experiments. Nevertheless, Money’s concept of a gender identity as distinct from one’s natural sex lives on.

Science teaches us that nearly every child who experiences gender dysphoria experiences one or more comorbidities. These include anxiety, depression, suicidal ideations, autism, ADHD, eating disorders, and more. Some, like Erin Brewer, were the victims of sexual abuse. Erin testified that she was molested as a toddler, while her brother was spared the abuse. As a child, she reasoned that she would be safer as a boy and began identifying as Timmy. Fortunately, ideologues had not yet come to the conclusion that an abused child like her should be affirmed in her “gender.” Others had experiences similar to Kelly’s, but their dysphoria desisted as they matured. In fact, the statistics reveal that 85–95% of children find that their gender dysphoria will desist after puberty.



However, gender specialists now advocate for what they inappropriately label “gender affirming care.” They dishonestly inform parents that their child will likely commit suicide unless they use their preferred pronouns and medicate them with puberty blockers and opposite-sex hormones. It is not uncommon for them to use manipulative language such as, “Would you rather have a living son or a dead daughter?” A significant number of parents will comply because they trust the so-called professionals and love their children. Statistics tell us that 98% of children who take puberty blockers will persist and ultimately take opposite sex hormones before progressing into surgery.

Some individuals say they are happy with gender transition. However, it does not come without its risk factors. Folks who transition are nineteen times more likely to take their own lives. Studies have revealed that transitioning does not remove psychological distress. In addition to infertility, those who transition will experience greater risk of loss of bone density, osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, stroke, genital atrophy, and more.

Children under eighteen years of age are legally incapable of providing informed consent. How would you explain infertility to a twelve-year-old? Most don't care at that age. Many children who experience gender dysphoria are prepubescent and have no sexual attraction. They have identity issues, not sexual issues. But sexual dysfunction

is a consistent result of the use of puberty blockers and opposite-sex hormones.

“Detransitioners” are individuals who have lived as the opposite sex for a period of time and reverted back to their natural sex. These folks are part of the collateral damage of an ideology that is backed by a system of belief, not science.

Chloe began identifying as a boy at the age of thirteen and began taking testosterone. She is on the autism spectrum and felt as though she never fit in. At the age of fifteen she went under the knife for a double mastectomy, otherwise known as “top surgery.” By the time she was seventeen she was standing before my committee describing her regret. She wondered how adults and professionals could allow her to make such a momentous decision at such a young age. Since the day she testified, Chloe has gained national attention.

Prisha had eating disorders and was confused about her gender. Doctors prescribed testosterone for her and performed top surgery. Today, she tells her story on YouTube and gives her testimony of regret,

supporting bills similar to the SAFE Act. No sensitive soul can watch her testimony without weeping.

Helena is a young girl from Cincinnati who was able to get testosterone through a Planned Parenthood clinic just after she turned eighteen. These drugs were provided to her in one visit. She detransitioned after realizing that the drugs made her depression worse rather than alleviating it. (She published a Substack article about her experiences and has since been featured nationally.)

Corina Cohn testified, “I started hormones at the age of eighteen and had surgery at the age of nineteen. I always wanted to live a good long life, but now I know that's not possible because the doctors lied to me.”

These people are part of a hurting generation that needs help. Politically, even the majority of Democrats and Independents agree with Republicans about this, with Republicans being by far the most likely to recognize the hurt and suffering of these kids. But it should be noted that elected officials are often reluctant to wade into the weeds on these issues.

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THESE PEOPLE ARE PART OF A HURTING GENERATION THAT NEEDS HELP. POLITICALLY, EVEN THE MAJORITY OF DEMOCRATS AND INDEPENDENTS AGREE WITH REPUBLICANS ABOUT THIS, WITH REPUBLICANS BEING BY FAR THE MOST LIKELY TO RECOGNIZE THE HURT AND SUFFERING OF THESE KIDS.

Does the Old Testament Law Apply to Sexual Expression for Modern Believers?

In today's moral climate, Leviticus 18 is a very unpopular and controversial Bible chapter because of its prohibitions against certain types of sexual expression (especially homosexuality). Many simply dismiss the chapter as irrelevant for believers today because it is a part of the Mosaic Law, but a basic review of this chapter's content and role in Scripture will illustrate why believers can't be so quick to dismiss it.

THE CONTEXT OF LEVITICUS 18

When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, He defined a twofold mission for the people: they were to be "a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exod. 19:6). Leviticus spells out the details of this calling.¹ Chapters 1–16 focus upon the first aspect of the mission and are commonly called "The Priestly Code." Here the focus is upon matters of the sanctuary, sacrifice, and ritual purity (kosher food, leprosy, bodily emissions, etc.). Leviticus 17–27 focus upon the second aspect and is known as "The Holiness Code."² Within this code, chapters 18–20 form a distinct unit. Chapters 18–19 contain a list of prohibited behaviors, while chapter 20 prescribes the penalty for violations. Moreover, throughout this code the focus is upon the call to live moral and upright lives.³

After a brief transition in chapter 17 from the realm of the priesthood and the sanctuary to the world outside that realm,⁴ the Holiness Code essentially begins in chapter 18 with a call to holiness of home and family, with its related focus on sexual expression, procreation, and children.⁵ A holy nation is rooted in holy families; a moral society stems from private and personal holiness. Chapter 19 then turns the focus to our broader relationships in society. Here we find timeless moral principles and commands such as "Love thy neighbour as thyself" (19:18); "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart" (19:17); and, "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind" (19:14). Here Moses elaborates on seven of the Ten Commandments. The point is that Leviticus 18–20 is not focused upon covenantal ceremonial laws; rather, it is set in the broader context of moral principles that express holiness. While the Priestly Code defines *ceremonial* purity in terms of what contacts, enters, or exits the body, the Holiness Code defines *moral* purity in terms of what one chooses to do with his body.⁶

THE NEW TESTAMENT USAGE OF LEVITICUS 18

The New Testament quotes Leviticus a total of eighteen times.⁷ Of these, only two

quotations are derived from the Priestly Code, whereas the remaining sixteen quotations come from the Holiness Code, of which fourteen quotations come from chapters 18–20! Beyond these quotations, there are about seventy-five allusions or "echoes" of Leviticus in the NT.⁸ Again, the majority of these come from the Holiness Code, with the largest percentage derived from chapters 18–20. Thus, while the Priestly Code—with its focus upon the ceremonial—plays little role in the NT, chapters 18–20 play a significant role in the NT, so it is difficult to conclude that this material is irrelevant to NT believers.

DESCRIPTIVE TERMINOLOGY IN LEVITICUS 18

Not only does Moses prohibit certain conduct in chapters 18–20, but he does so on the basis of the sinful behavior's essential character, which he describes using strong terminology. Both bestiality and incest constitute "confusion" (18:23; 20:12). The term refers to a transgression of natural boundaries, or the mixing together of that which should be kept separate and distinguishable. Ancient Jewish writings also put homosexuality into this category,⁹ and in a similar manner the New Testament condemns homosexuality as "against

nature” (Rom. 1:26–27)¹⁰ and as an “unnatural desire” (Jude 7, ESV, NET).

Moses characterizes homosexual-ity as an “abomination” (18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:17–18). The term refers to that which is morally vile and unacceptable.¹¹ Other “abominable” behavior identified elsewhere in Scripture includes adultery (Ezek. 22:11), cross-dressing (Deut. 22:5), idolatry (Deut. 7:26; Ezek. 14:6), murder (Ezek. 22:2), and child sacrifice (Deut. 12:31; 2 Kings 16:3; Jer. 32:35). Leviticus describes both incest and prostitution as “obscene” (KJV—“wicked,” 18:17; 19:29; 20:14). Moses further characterizes incest as “shameful” (KJV—“wicked,” 20:17).

HOMOSEXUALITY IN LEVITICUS 18

Without a doubt, the most controversial aspect of the passage is Moses’ prohibition against homosexuality (18:22). Defenders of the practice usually try to get around the clear language of the law by resorting to one of three common arguments. The first argument is that this is merely a ceremonial prohibition intended to distinguish the Jews from the surrounding Gentile nations. But if this were so, one might expect to find the regulation in the Priestly Code, along with the other ritualistic prohibitions, and none of the other prohibited activities in this chapter reflect merely ritualistic concerns. For example, the NT explicitly condemns incest and adultery for believers in the church, and who would argue that bestiality and child sacrifice are acceptable today?

In this regard, whenever Paul addresses ceremonial matters of the law, he does so with a degree of ambivalence: if you want to observe a certain day or refrain from eating certain food, it’s your choice (Rom. 14:1–6). Just don’t violate your conscience or cause others to stumble by what you permit (1 Cor. 8:1–13; 10:23–33). But when it comes to the sins identified in Leviticus 18, Paul is most certainly not ambivalent: he condemns incest, adultery, and homosexuality in the strongest possible terms (1 Cor. 5–6)!¹²

Furthermore, not only did the Gentiles engage in the prohibited conduct, but the chapter repeatedly stresses that God is going to punish these nations for this behavior (18:1–3, 24–30). But if these were merely ceremonial regulations intended solely for the Jews as a vehicle of distinc-

tion, then why would God punish the Gentiles? The Canaanites were under no covenantal obligations to the Lord. Thus, it is clear that God’s judgment falls upon them because such conduct is abominable, whether practiced by Jews or Gentiles.

A second argument is that Leviticus 18:22 is not condemning all homosexuality *per se*, but only when it is performed in the context of pagan worship and idolatry. For this argument, appeal is made to the immediately preceding reference to child sacrifices offered in the worship of Molech (18:21). But this argument has it backwards: child sacrifice is not wrong merely because it is associated with idolatry, but rather this expression of idolatry is especially heinous because it involves child sacrifice! And once again, they cannot make this argument about the other prohibitions in this chapter. Are incest, adultery, and bestiality acceptable as long as a believer doesn’t engage in such conduct within the context of idolatry?

Furthermore, when Moses repeats his condemnation of homosexual practice in Leviticus 20:13, the prohibition is not proceeded immediately by any reference to idolatry, so the argument does not work there. Finally, if the practice of “sacred prostitution” really were the concern of Moses here, he could have used much more specific terminology. In fact, he does so in Deuteronomy 23:17–18, where he limits the discussion of homosexuality to the context of idolatry in clear and unambiguous terms.¹³ By contrast, his choice of vocabulary in Leviticus 18 is not restrictive. In other words, homosexuality is wrong—not *only* when practiced in a religious or idolatrous context—but *also* when practiced in such a context.

The third argument is that Leviticus 18 is not condemning all homosexuality *per se*, but only that form of homosexuality that involves the expression of male dominance against an unwilling victim, or the abuse of minors (pederasty). Thus, supposedly homosexuality is fine as long as it is practiced in the context of a loving, consensual, and committed relationship among adults.

It is true that pagan cultures in the Old Testament world as well as the Graeco-Roman culture of Paul’s day often used sodomy as a means of expressing dominance over those of lower social status.

But Leviticus 18 says nothing about social standing, and none of the other prohibitions in this chapter are based upon social status. Is adultery or incest acceptable as long as it involves social equals?

Furthermore, the text says nothing of coercion. For example, the adultery envisioned in Leviticus 20:10 is consensual, which is precisely why both the man and the woman are to be stoned. Likewise, Moses prescribes the death penalty for both partners in the homosexual relationship (Lev. 20:13). Of course, Moses would not condemn to death the innocent victim of such a crime any more than he condemns to death a woman who has been raped (Deut. 22:22–27).

Therefore the ancient Jews understood and interpreted Leviticus 18:22 as a broad-based prohibition that encompasses both the active and the passive partner.¹⁴ Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 6:9 (where Paul alludes to Leviticus 18:22), Paul’s condemnation of homosexuality is not restricted to the active or dominant partner, for he explicitly includes the passive partner (“effeminate”) in his condemnation.¹⁵ Similarly, when Paul condemns homosexuality in Romans 1:27 he states that both partners in the practice “burned in their lust one toward another.” This is not coercion.

Nor is the issue with the age of the passive partner, as in pederasty.¹⁶ If that were the case, Moses would have condemned a man lying with a “youth” (*na’ar*). Likewise, if this is what Paul had in mind in the NT, he could have used the Greek word that specifically means “pederast” (*paidēastes*). Thus, instead of focusing upon status, consent, or age, Moses focuses upon the *sex* of the partner: he condemns homosexuality as abominable precisely because it involves a man lying with a “male” (Lev. 18:22; 20:13), and for Paul it is against nature because it involves males with males and females with females (Rom. 1:26–27).

CONCLUSION

The sexual ethics of Leviticus 18–20 cannot be dismissed as irrelevant for believers today; these chapters convey moral principles that transcend God’s exclusive covenant with the Jews. That is why Peter reflects Leviticus 19:2 when he writes, “Be ye holy: for I am holy.” As with national Israel, so with the church: we are a “royal priesthood” and a “holy nation”

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A Little Compromise Is a

On my drive home every day I see a small, jet-black sign with a rainbow border at the top and bottom. The text of the sign simply reads, “No slate of hate.” Looking at that sign makes me feel conflicted. As a Christian, I agree with the words themselves. I strongly oppose people showing hatred. Yet the rainbow banner makes clear exactly what “hate” the sign has in mind—any opposition to the LGBTQ agenda. A quick Google search revealed that, sure enough, these signs are responding to bills proposed by my state’s legislators. The “slate of hate” includes things such as prohibiting discussion of LGBTQ issues in K-3 classrooms, preventing schools from secretly affirming a child’s gender identity, and forbidding surgeries that mutilate confused children.¹ To some this is a “slate of hate” which demand citizens stand up to an out-of-control government.

The evolution of the gay agenda has been interesting to watch. What started off as “decriminalize such behavior” quickly became “treat gay people the same as anyone else” and then morphed into “accept them for who they are.” Now if you do not celebrate their lifestyle, you must be

homophobic. Within the church we face pro-gay theologians who argue that homosexuality is compatible with the Bible. And outside the church our society has become increasingly hostile toward those who don’t go along with its most recent opinions on sexuality. For the Christian who simply wants to continue holding to God’s Word and standing for righteousness in the public square, the opposition is becoming quite intense.

But does it have to be this way? Or are we making things harder for ourselves by sticking our nose where it doesn’t belong? Earlier this year Andy Stanley went viral for statements made about the LGBTQ issue. In several short clips he said, “A gay person who still wants to attend church, after the way the church has treated the gay community, I’m telling you, they have more faith than I do. They have more faith than a lot of you. . . . A gay person who knows, ‘You know what? I might not be accepted here, but I’m going to try it anyway,’ have you ever done that as a straight person? Where do you go that you’re not sure you’re going to be accepted and you go over and over and over?”²

In the inevitable social media commotion that followed, old comments from a

2012 sermon highlighted that this position seemed to be a trend. In that message Stanley used the illustration of a gay couple who were refused the opportunity to serve because the divorce for one of the men hadn’t gone through yet. This meant that the couple was in an adulterous relationship, so they couldn’t serve.³ At the time many were asking the burning question, “Well, doesn’t it matter that they were two men living in a homosexual relationship? Wouldn’t that be enough to deny them the chance to serve?”

So what does Andy Stanley think about the Bible’s view on LGBTQ issues? At one point in his recent comments he stated, “I know 1 Corinthians 6, and I know Leviticus, and I know Romans 1, so interesting to talk about all that stuff. . . . But just, oh my goodness, a gay man or woman who wants to worship their heavenly Father, who did not answer the cry of their heart when they were twelve and thirteen and fourteen and fifteen. God said, ‘No,’ and they still love God? We have some things to learn from a group of men and women who love Jesus that much and who want to worship with us.”

So does Stanley think Scripture condemns homosexuality, or does he think



Big Deal

those passages have been misinterpreted? It would seem he does hold to a biblical ethic on these matters, but you could read him either way, and he doesn't really seem to want to answer that question. He wants instead to talk about how welcoming he is to those who are gay, but without calling them to repentance for their sin. Assuming the best, Stanley seems to want to reach people for Jesus and fears that being too strong on this issue will turn them off. But the increasing social pressure we all feel on this issue will make such a position more and more appealing.

After all, maybe it would be easier to just go along to get along. Maybe we use "pronoun hospitality" and attend gay weddings of close relatives and friends. Maybe we say things that are true, such "God loves you and wants a relationship with you," but we don't say *everything* that is true, such as "Homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God." Does the Bible give us any help about how to think about these issues? To answer this question, I want to go to an unexpected place: first-century Corinth. And I want to talk about a seemingly unrelated issue: food offered to idols. As you will soon see, a careful study of this issue can be a big help to us as we find ourselves

increasingly marginalized and tempted to take a softer, more compromising position.

WHAT'S GOING ON WITH CORINTH?

There is much debate about what exactly is going on with Corinth and the food offered to idols in 1 Corinthians 8–10. After much study, I have become convinced that Paul viewed all eating of food one knew had been offered to an idol as an act of idolatry and therefore wrong. To briefly lay out my reasons for coming to this conclusion: (1) Jewish people rejected idol food not simply because it was unclean but because it was idolatry (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16–22); (2) the rest of the NT consistently rejects eating idol food (Acts 15:29; Rev. 2:14, 20); and, (3) the unanimous position of the Early Church was that eating food one knew had been offered to an idol was sinful.⁴

Paul had been in Corinth for a year and a half, and the Early Church's position on Gentiles and idol food was clear (cf. Acts 21:23–25). When Corinth later wrote to Paul about this issue, then, they weren't discussing it for the first time. Paul would have instructed them on this issue when he was there, and likely also in an earlier

letter that he wrote to them (cf. 1 Cor. 5:9). Throughout 1 Corinthians 8–10, Paul seems to be responding to arguments the Corinthians put forward⁵ that go something like this: "We have knowledge." "We know that for us there is one God." "If God is all powerful, and idols are worthless, then I can participate in idolatry and be unharmed!" Paul had told them not to eat food they knew was sacrificed to an idol. They argued they could. Why?

While their arguments might have been theological, their reasons were likely social. Idolatry was woven into the fabric of everyday life. In fact, early Christians as a whole completely avoided idolatry and as a result faced the charge of misanthropy ("hating humanity," the opposite of philanthropy). Their refusal to participate in anything that smacked of idolatry meant they skipped holidays and parties if they knew there would be idol food present. They pulled back from participating in social and political events because many of these events were tied to idolatry. You can almost hear the conversations, can't you? "Come on, you're overthinking this. Why is it you are the only one who has a problem here? You're cutting yourself off from everyone else. Do you really think everyone doing



SO THE CORINTHIANS TRIED TO FIND A MIDDLE GROUND. THEY GRASPED FOR A THEOLOGICAL POSITION THAT WOULD ALLOW BEHAVIOR THAT AN APOSTLE HAD WARNED THEM WAS SINFUL.

this is in sin? What a harsh, judgmental position! Why do you have to make things so difficult?” Jesus warned us that if we follow Him, the world will hate us. Ironically, one of the ways the world hates us is by accusing us of hatred.

So the Corinthians tried to find a middle ground. They grasped for a theological position that would allow behavior that an apostle had warned them was sinful. They took the Bible’s mocking of idols and statements about the incomparable greatness of our God and used those as justification for eating idol food. In the process, they became quite arrogant about their knowledge as they twisted Jewish arguments for staying away from idols into reasons they could participate in idolatry. What they did is something we are all tempted to do: find a theology that allows me to be a little less hated by the world.

DRAWING A PARALLEL

So back to the question at hand, what do we do when the world accuses of hatred? What do we do when we hear,

“Come on, you’re overthinking this. Why is it you are the only one who has a problem here? You’re cutting yourself off from everyone else. Do you really think everyone doing this is in sin? What a harsh, judgmental position! Why do you have to make things so difficult?” We must be careful not to do what Corinth did. We can’t squirm or compromise. We have to know what God’s Word says, and then we must be ready to live and die by it even if it costs us everything.

With the continued cultural battle over the LGBTQ issue, our response is becoming almost as important as what we believe the Bible says. Believers are called to believe the Bible, but they are also called to stand for the Bible as the Bible would have them stand for it. Taking a gracious position and refusing, for example, to sign the company diversity, equity, and inclusion document (aka “DEI”), or refusing to use your boss’s new pronouns might be costly. But it will be more costly to compromise just a little so that following Jesus doesn’t cost us as much. Our salt will become less

salty, and our light will become a little dimmer.

Jesus said plainly the world will hate us. If our goal is to practice our Christianity in such a way that we aren’t hated by the world, the only way to reach that goal will be with a defective Christianity.

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¹ <https://www.aclu-in.org/en/stop-slate-hate-letter-writing-guide>. Accessed April 3, 2023.

² <https://www.christianpost.com/news/andy-stanley-gay-churchgoers-have-more-faith-than-a-lot-of-you.html>. Accessed April 3, 2023.

³ <https://northpoint.org/messages/christian/when-gracie-met-truthy>. Accessed April 3, 2023.

⁴ Two resources that argue this case compellingly include Alex Cheung, *Idol Food in Corinth: Jewish Background and Pauline Legacy* and the Baker Exegetical Commentary on 1 Corinthians by David Garland.

⁵ This is a typical understanding of the passage based on (1) Paul repeatedly using certain words here he rarely uses, likely borrowed from the Corinthians (“liberty”/“power” “know”/“knowledge”); (2) Paul’s habit of stating something and then qualifying it; and, (3) the chapter twice uses the phrase “we know that . . .,” likely indicating a quotation.

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Does the Old Testament Law Apply to Sexual Expression for Modern Believers?

Continued from page 13

(1 Pet. 2:9), and holiness begins at home. Paul argues that if one is not morally pure in his personal and private life, then not only does he sin against his own body and grieve the Holy Spirit within him (1 Cor. 6:18–20), but he also defiles the broader church (1 Cor. 3:16–17).

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¹ Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 49.

² The use of the designations “Priestly Code” and “Holiness Code” is not intended to represent the critical theory that these were originally separate documents. The

entire book is a unity composed by Moses. The designations are simply used here as a helpful means of distinguishing the two halves of the book.

³ Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 282–84.

⁴ Wenham, 240–41.

⁵ Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, NAC 3A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 41–42, 46–47, 240.

⁶ Robert A. Kugler, “Holiness, Purity, the Body, and Society: The Evidence for Theological Conflict in Leviticus,” *JOT* 22.76 (1997), 14–26.

⁷ Leviticus 11:44–45 (cf. 19:2 and 20:7) is cited in 1 Peter 1:16. Leviticus 12:8 is cited in Luke 2:24. Leviticus 18:5 is cited in Romans 10:5 and Galatians 3:12. Leviticus 19:12 is cited in Matthew 5:33. Leviticus 19:18 is cited in Matthew 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; and James 2:8. Leviticus 20:9 is cited in Matthew 15:4 and Mark 7:10. Leviticus 20:10 is cited in John 8:5. Leviticus 24:20 is cited in Matthew 5:38. Leviticus 26:12 is cited in 2 Corinthians 6:16.

⁸ Jeffrey Glen Jackson, ed., *New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2015).

⁹ For example, see *The Sibylline Oracles*, 3:764; and *The Testament of Naphtali*, 3:4–5.

¹⁰ The terminology is not unique to Paul; for example, both Josephus (*Against Apion*, II.38§273–75) and Philo (*The Special Laws*, III:39) use the same phrase to characterize homosexuality.

¹¹ The underlying Hebrew word (*tō’ēbā*) is used to describe that which is *morally* unacceptable, whereas a different word (*šeqeš*)—also translated as “abomination” by the KJV—is reserved for that which is *ceremonially* unacceptable. For a thorough discussion of these terms, see James B. DeYoung, *Homosexuality: Contemporary Claims Examined in Light of the Bible and Other Ancient Literature and Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2000), 48–52; and Robert A.J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 117–20.

¹² Gagnon, 294–97.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 100–110.

¹⁴ For example, see Josephus, *Against Apion*, II.31§215; and the Talmud (*Bab. Sanhedrin*, 7.4).

¹⁵ DeYoung, 175–202; Gagnon, 338–39.

¹⁶ Likewise, the Talmud denies that the age of the passive partner is the issue at stake in Leviticus 20:13 (*Bab. Sanhedrin*, 7.4).

Men, Women, and Their Unique Roles



God did not make men and women identical to each other. They are distinguished by both biology and function. At minimum, men have the role of begetting children and women have the role of conceiving and bearing them. Has God ordained any other roles or authority structures between them?

Egalitarians believe that to recognize any authority structures based upon sex is automatically to deny the equality of men and women. *Complementarians* insist that the fundamental equality of the sexes is not damaged if certain distinct levels of authority are maintained. Most complementarians believe that males are responsible to lead within two spheres: the home and the local church.

A key text in this debate is 1 Timothy 2, where the apostle Paul makes a number of claims that appear to support the complementarian position. He also offers certain observations that many Christians find puzzling. I wish to explore this debated passage to examine its implications for relationships between men and women. I will provide a survey of the answers that I think are best to the questions that matter most.

BACKGROUND OF THE PASSAGE

Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus to bring that church to full order (1 Tim. 3:14–15). The church likely met in large homes throughout the city. Timothy found the congregation facing false teachings (1:6–7). Paul expected Timothy to oppose the false teachers (1:18–20).

In 1 Timothy Paul hopes for circumstances both outside and inside the church to favor the proclamation of the gospel (2:3–7). The church is to pray for external circumstances that would permit peaceful evangelism and orderly living (2:1–3). Furthermore, Timothy is to order the internal activity of the church so that it will not create an obstacle to the gospel

(2:8–15). Part of this ordering involves specific patterns of conduct for both men and women.

A REQUIREMENT FOR MEN

Paul specifies that he wants the men in every place to offer (public) prayer (2:8). The word for “men” means “adult males,” and “every where” most likely points to the various household gatherings. Paul does not say exactly what he wanted them to pray for. Most likely he was simply emphasizing that men should lead the church’s prayer life. This instruction does not mean that women are forbidden to pray publicly—elsewhere Paul endorses that practice (1 Cor. 11:5–6). Yet men must take responsibility for public prayer.

When men pray, their attitude should be “lifting up holy hands.” Lifting up one’s hands is a gesture of dependence and submission. Paul is not obligating men to raise their hands physically whenever they pray, but to adopt humble, submissive attitudes. Furthermore, their (metaphorical) hands must be holy. In other words, Christian men should devote themselves to God in love and obedience as they petition Him.

REQUIREMENTS FOR WOMEN

Paul’s primary requirement for women can be summarized as *modesty* and *self control* (2:9–11). Modesty is not primarily the opposite of indecency, but of ostentation. It is not mainly about displaying too much skin or accenting the wrong body parts, but about not seeking attention, whether through appearance or through activity. When women go to church, they should not be trying to put themselves on display through either dress or deportment. The most conspicuous thing about them should be their good works and their pursuit of godliness.

Modesty is a virtue for both sexes. Neither men nor women can make God seem glorious by placing themselves on display. Yet Paul was not requiring drabness or dowdiness. One can assert oneself as conspicuously by frumpiness as by glittering self-display. Either is a form of ostentation that will obscure genuinely Christian character.

Paul wants this attitude of modesty to carry over into the way that women learn—and he did want them to learn. The basic command of 2:11 is “let the woman learn,” still with a focus on the public ministry of the church. This verse is not granting permission but stating a requirement. Women are supposed to advance in learning just as men are, and nowhere does the Bible limit the level of biblical or theological knowledge that women might achieve.

Paul did say that women are supposed to learn “in silence with all subjection.” The word for “silence” does not mean absolute silence, but quietness. “Subjection” is simply submission to rightful authority. What this text requires of women is the virtue of docility, of being teachable. Incidentally, this is a virtue that men need to learn as well. Every teacher has had show-off students who thought that they should run the class. Neither women nor men should exhibit that kind of conduct within their local congregation.

PROHIBITIONS FOR WOMEN

To this point in the passage Paul has delivered no instructions that cannot apply to both sexes. Now, however, he lays down two prohibitions that apply only to women. He refuses to allow women “to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (2:12).

The close connection of teaching and authority here implies that this is not just any teaching. Women may certainly teach children and other women. They may teach men in private settings, as Priscilla did with Apollos (Acts 18:24–26). Throughout 1 Timothy 2 Paul is focusing on the church’s public meetings. What Paul prohibits is the kind of authoritative, public teaching that pastors must do.

Pastors exercise spiritual authority over congregations and will someday answer for the wellbeing of those congregations. Consequently, congregations must submit to pastors and obey their biblical teachings (Heb. 13:7, 17). When women (and men who are not pastors) share their spiritual insights, they must never do so as if they had a right to expect that kind of submission and obedience. By implication, 1 Timothy 2:12 prohibits women from ever occupying the pastoral office.

“THE WOMAN BEING DECEIVED”

Paul gives two reasons for refusing to allow women to teach or govern in the local church. The first is that God made a man as the first human, and then the woman. In other words, some structure or order is built into and signified by the original creation. To allow women to exercise spiritual authority over men in the church subverts this order.

The second reason is that the woman, and not the man, was deceived and fell into transgression. Paul’s point is certainly not that women are more gullible than men. Rather, Adam and Eve were together during the temptation (Gen. 3:6). Eve might have deferred to her husband, but she took it upon herself to respond, thus subverting the creation order. Adam was equally guilty because he should have intervened to halt the temptation. Both were out of order, and the result was great evil.

These verses draw a direct analogy to women teaching authoritatively within the church. When women preach, teach, or exercise spiritual authority over men in the church, they, too, violate God’s intended order. This is what Paul refuses to allow.

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THE STAY-AT-HOME MOM HAS JUST AS MUCH DIGNITY AND RECEIVES AS MUCH OPPORTUNITY TO BRING GLORY TO GOD AS THE MINISTER DOES WHEN HE PROCLAIMS THE SCRIPTURES.

FRONTLINE

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Mailbag

A word of encouragement. Variety and quality of *FrontLine* articles (or is it articles?) are great blessings!

*Mitch Sidles
Outreach Tracts
Westminster, CO*

Today I received your March/April *FrontLine* magazine. Thank you. I always enjoy it.

For many years we've subscribed, but this octogenarian can't remember how long it has been since I last paid for a subscription. Please find enclosed a small check to help with your publication.

*Marjorie Earwood (Mrs. Chester)
Greenville, SC*

Dear Malinda Duvall . . . I want to acknowledge and thank you for the *FrontLine* magazine I have been receiving and would like to continue to receive the magazine.

Thank you for those who have been helping in getting the *FrontLine* to Zimbabwe.

Thank you very much.
*Friday Njovu
Zimbabwe*

Hello Mr. Schaal, I assume you are the organizer behind the FBFI Conference coming up in Iowa. Though I am only a few hundred miles from there, . . . I don't have the days off to attend. But I have a suggestion since

"Reclaiming the Great Commission" is the theme.

You have seven pastors/ministers listed on p. 19 of the current *FrontLine* magazine. What if you added to that someone or two that is on the front line in the work place, someone who has a proper balance between boldness and submission to supervision there, someone that can pass on to laymen (or to laymen through attending pastors) helpful advice? Although I appreciate the preaching by pastors to give out the gospel, hand out tracts, I have in my church-life received little advice in regard to being in the workplace or in communication with workers if working from home (like I do now), and frankly I have had to go it alone since I haven't had fellow Christian workers. That in itself (being alone) is a worthy topic, I feel. There have been some slight examples of laymen teaching Sunday school that have given helpful testimony though.

But how do I handle casual conversations where I want to bring up the Bible or salvation when the boss says, "Don't discuss religion and politics at work"? Can I have more freedom at breaks and lunch? What can I say when a fellow worker says "OMG" or even [takes Christ's name in vain]? One pastor said, "I wouldn't jump all over him, that's all he knows," and I agree, but I can take that too far and never say anything.

Do I handle things differently in an individual conversation vs. a group meeting? Should I pray at lunch? If at a restaurant, should I ask that we all pray, even though they wouldn't think of it otherwise? (I

have done this, though usually just pray on my own.)

Should I realize that my coworkers were brought up in a school environment where religion was prohibited, and therefore they think it is wrong to talk about anytime? How can I dispel this prevalent thought?

Thank you. If something comes out of this and is in written form, I might like a copy.

*Michael Fox
Alton, Illinois*

I always enjoy seeing what "our" chaplains are doing when reading the "Chaplain's Corner" in the *FrontLine* magazine. In the May/June 2023 issue my fellow chaplain in the Chesapeake Police Department, Mike Ascher, wrote the article, so it was of great interest to me.

He referenced Retired Sergeant TJ Myers. At the time, TJ was a Uniform Patrol Officer; shortly after I joined the Chaplain Unit of the Chesapeake Police he became one of my favorite officers. At that time, TJ was assigned to the Community Based Policing Unit of the Second Precinct. His direct supervisor was First Sergeant Gary McClenney (now with the Lord) who was a fellow pastor, a graduate of Bob Jones University, and he had a great influence on me to join the Chaplain Unit.

*Donald Karnes
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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)

The Distinctiveness of Preaching, Part 2

Just before its closing, 1 Corinthians 14 describes meetings in which many of a church’s members are speaking individually. One is bringing a psalm, another a teaching or a revelation. Two or three of the prophets speak, and others are judging what they say (i.e., assessing the content). Likewise, two or three with the gift of tongues are speaking one after another, and then yet another of the brothers is interpreting. What would you call this kind of meeting?

My reason for asking this is to expose that what this passage describes seems to be the closest thing in the New Testament to the arrangement that we call a small group: an informal gathering for spiritual purpose during which many of the members say something about the Lord or His Word. A small group isn’t, of course, a mirror image of what the passage describes (especially in that vv. 34–35 direct the women to remain silent), but it is nonetheless a parallel.

But what is not present in what 1 Corinthians 14 describes? And what is not present in our small groups? The thing that is missing in both is preaching.

Corinth knew about preachers firsthand: Paul, Apollos (Acts 18:27–28; 19:1), Timothy and Silvanus (2 Cor. 1:19), and maybe Peter (if 1 Cor. 1:12 reflects his having visited Corinth). But at the time Paul writes to the Corinthians there was apparently no one among them who was a recognized preacher of the Word. Paul addresses no one individual in the way that he did when he penned what we call the Pastoral Epistles.

But if there had been a preacher at Corinth, how would his own speaking have differed from that of these others whom Paul is directing in this chapter, especially those to whom he refers as “prophets”? This is an important question for assessing the issue raised in my last column. I had asked whether we do well to relinquish preaching for the sake of anything else, even small groups. But to get an answer to that question, it’s necessary to find out what distinguishes preaching from the other kinds of speaking described in this chapter, some of which continue in our small-group Bible studies and Sunday school classes today.

I noted last time that preaching is marked by two things in general. One is that a single individual is doing all the speaking. The other is that the people are listeners only. The communication is one way. Participation, interruption, or even asking for clarification doesn’t take place. Preaching is recognizably distinctive for being entirely a monologue.

If this arrangement were to be questioned, we saw that it is actually a scriptural one. Bible characters functioned in this way. They were divinely appointed to it. The Holy Spirit characterized it with the word “to herald” (2 Tim. 4:2). I’m not aware of anyone within our circles who would even hint at doing away with this arrangement entirely.

But there is a trend toward relinquishing at least one, if not two, of our traditional preaching services for the sake of making time for more meetings that are something like what 1 Corinthians 14 describes. Is this a good thing? The answer should be informed by what we understand preaching to be. So I’d like now to move beyond generalities to certain specific factors that are *heightened* in preaching. These factors are not always absent in other ways of presenting Scripture publicly. Generally, however, they are not present, and even

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when they are, it is generally not to the same degree as in preaching. But in preaching, they are factors almost always both present and considerably enlarged. It is this that helps to distinguish heralding of the Word from any other way of speaking about it.

One of the best ways of exposing these factors is by comparing preaching with the form of communication that is its closest parallel: teaching.

A PREACHER IS A TEACHER

In drawing this contrast between a preacher and a teacher, it is necessary to note that without question, a preacher is and must first of all be a teacher. This is because of what teachers do. They deal in the realm of knowledge. They make things known. They impart facts to the minds of hearers and explain the relationships of those facts to one another and to the world around.

This, of course, is precisely what preachers do. Timothy was a preacher, and Paul admonished him to “give attendance to . . . **doctrine**,” and to “take heed unto . . . **the doctrine**,” and to “preach the word . . . with . . . **doctrine**” (1 Tim. 4:13, 16; 2 Tim. 4:2). Many other well-known Scripture passages could be cited to confirm this same fact: preachers are teachers. They impart the knowledge of the mind of God.

YET PREACHING CAN BE DISTINGUISHED FROM MERELY TEACHING

It is apparent from the biblical descriptions of the public ministry of our Lord that there must be some distinguishable difference between merely teaching doctrine and preaching (heralding) it. Note this in these passages.

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching [heralding] the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23).

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching [heralding] the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 9:35).

He departed thence to teach and to preach [herald] in their cities (Matt. 11:1).

Unless it could be proven that the words “teaching” and “preaching” are being used entirely synonymously in these passages, they lead us to think that whatever overlap there may be between them, there is also some distinguishable difference (like a double Venn diagram). This same conclusion is the most natural from similar descriptions of the apostle Paul’s ministry.

Paul . . . [was] preaching [heralding] the kingdom of God and teaching (Acts 28:30–31).

I am appointed a preacher [herald], and an apostle, and a teacher (2 Tim. 1:11).

So if a preacher is actually a teacher, yet his preaching can be distinguished from his merely teaching (as in the cases of our Lord and of the apostle Paul), what are the discernible differences? We’re back to the word “heightened” (or “intensified”).

HOW DOES PREACHING HEIGHTEN TEACHING?

The foremost way in which preaching heightens teaching is through various ways of applying it to the listeners. Spurgeon said that where the application begins, the sermon begins. Three sorts of application are specified in Paul’s charge to Timothy regarding his preaching: “reprove, rebuke, exhort” (2 Tim. 4:2). It is noteworthy that this last way of speaking, *exhorting*, is what Paul specifically distinguishes from *teaching* in Romans 12, where we’re given the first New Testament list of spiritual gifts: “he that teacheth . . . Or he that exhorteth” (Rom. 12:7b–8a).

Evidently, some believers are gifted teachers. Others are gifted exhorters. Of course, it isn’t that the two never overlap in a single person. But evidently there are men and women who are gifted to be almost pure teachers; others, almost entirely exhorters. But the charge in 2 Timothy 4:2 commands that preachers do both: “Preach the word; . . . reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” What does preaching consist of? Reproving. Rebuking. Exhorting. But notice that all three are to be with *doctrine*, that is, *teaching*.

A preacher labors in the field of doctrine. But when he delivers the fruit of it to a congregation, he intensifies its significance by adding exhortation. What is the difference between the two? A way that it is sometimes put is that when a teacher is finished people say, “I see that,” but that when an exhorter finishes, they say, “I’ll do that.” Of course, people have to *see* the truth before they are going to be willing to *do* it. In other words, they have to be taught first, and both preachers and teachers do that. But a preacher adds the factor that pushes people to act. He urges them. He presses them. He drives for a verdict.

Peter’s preaching on the day of Pentecost is a lucid example. For over twenty verses he taught. Then, “with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation’” (Acts 2:40, NASB1995). Here is the enlargement, the heightening of the teaching through exhortation.

But then, in addition, a preacher heightens the doctrine with two very specific kinds of application: he reproves and he rebukes. “Reprove” is a word that is used uniformly in the New Testament for telling someone that

he (or she) has done wrong. “Rebuke” is a word that is sometimes used not just for telling someone that what he is doing is wrong; it also charges him to do what is right (e.g., Matt. 16:20; Mark 9:25). Reproof and rebuke work in tandem to show people their wrongdoing and to admonish them to begin to do right: “Cease to do evil. Learn to do well” (Isa. 1:16b–17a).

In his book *Preaching and Preachers*, David Martyn Lloyd-Jones referred to this as the *element of attack*. Not, of course, that the preacher intends harm to the congregation. But a teacher may often discuss truth as if it were something lying on an invisible pedestal around which he and the class have gathered for an hour. He attempts to lead their minds into analysis and discussion. He is primarily concerned to guide them into understanding. A preacher is concerned for this as well. In fact, it is his first intent. But he must never stop there. His calling is to take that teaching, now newly understood, and with it to *do something to the listeners*. He must never leave the truth merely lying in front of them, dissected and carefully labeled. He must launch it upon them. This is something which exhortation does which is beyond even mere application. Application may remain somewhat theoretical. But exhortation lays strong, insistent hands upon the congregation. In this sense, preaching truly can be said to amount to something of a campaign.

HOW ELSE DOES PREACHING HEIGHTEN TEACHING?

In his preface to *Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded* (found in *Works*, volume VII), John Owen wrote of the two things by which he had regulated the whole course of his ministry. The first had been *to impart those truths of whose power I hope I have had in some measures a real experience* [emphasis his]. Notice the point: conveying truths which he himself had experienced powerfully.

He then continued with the second consideration which had governed his ministry: *To press those duties which present occasions, temptations, and other circumstances, do render necessary to be attended unto in a peculiar manner* [emphasis his]. Again, notice the point. He had been concerned to *press . . . duties*. Which ones? Those made necessary by certain contemporary factors: *occasions, temptations, and other circumstances*.

Here we have Owen pointing to two things—the preacher’s personal experience of the truth and then current factors to which truth obligates duties. Both of these expose a further way in which preaching heightens the teaching of truth. It is the *personalizing* of truth’s applications. This is no surprise. It is, in fact, almost always inherent when a preacher’s applications begin to taper down in any pointed ways. He’s gotten personal.

This is absolutely essential to preaching. Owen went on to admonish, *We are not to fight uncertainly, as men beating the air, nor shoot an arrow at random, without a certain scope and design*. Shooting an arrow at random is the nature of pure teaching. It’s like the man who “drew a bow at a venture.” It was only by a direct act of God that it struck home between the chinks in Ahab’s armor. But preaching, Owen said, shouldn’t be like that. It shouldn’t be without the preacher’s having aimed with *a certain scope and design*.

The preacher, of course, doesn’t single out individuals in the congregation. But he should address categories made up of certain kinds of individuals. Puritan preaching, following a grid described in detail by William Perkins in *The Art of Prophesying*, distinguished seven such categories of hearers and explained the ways in which the truth should be applied to each. In the Puritan ideal then, preaching wasn’t merely teaching, nor even teaching followed by application or exhortation in general. Preaching was application and exhortation crafted with certain kinds of individuals in view.

This can be done to some extent, of course, by Sunday school teachers and small-group leaders. But the very fact that it is a smaller group argues for less pointed applications, lest individuals feel uncomfortably exposed. Even in the preaching services of a large congregation this is a danger, and the smaller the congregation, the more this is the case. But the point stands. Preaching may be distinguished from teaching in that it requires the applicational personalizing of the truth, sometimes uncomfortably so.

Because of this, preaching usually is done most effectively and acceptably by pastors such as Timothy, whose shepherding role gives to them an intimate knowledge of the sheep. Owen stated that for us to be able to minister with “scope and design” requires *knowledge of the flock, whereof we are overseers, with a due consideration of their wants, their graces, their temptations, their light, their strength and weaknesses*. And, on the other hand, it is the people’s experience of the unique love of a pastor that helps to open their hearts to accepting personalized applications. These two things, a pastor’s knowledge of the sheep and their love for him, create together a maximum possibility for teaching to be applied pointedly. It’s a related factor that argues for not relinquishing preaching services.

ANOTHER WAY IN WHICH PREACHING HEIGHTENS TEACHING

In his letters to Timothy and to Titus, Paul taught that all of those occupying the office of an elder are to be “apt to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2) and to be “able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Titus 1:9). This is an important consideration for

churches with lay elders, or with deacons whom they authorize to function in essentially the same way as a lay elder. If they are to be skilled at teaching and must be able to exhort convincingly, why would anything critical be lost if a preaching service were relinquished in order to make way for them to teach and to exhort in small groups?

Part of the answer to this is in yet another way that preaching heightens teaching. It has to do with the distinguishable position of an elder set aside to “labour in the word and doctrine,” as Paul puts it in 1 Timothy 5:17. The whole verse must be viewed in order to see this: “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.”

The word “especially” indicates that there are men who are a subset within the larger group of elders. All elders rule: that is, they govern. But among them are some whose calling it is to work hard at ministering the Word of God and its teaching.

Timothy was such a man. At the time that Paul writes to him, Timothy is in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3). There were other elders there, and it was to them that Paul gave the lengthy charge recorded in Acts 20:28–35. It included the admonition “to feed,” or to shepherd the church (v. 28). But it was to Timothy that Paul’s pastoral letters were written. And when he does so, he charges Timothy with responsibilities that he does not assign to the other elders at Ephesus. For instance, note these commands addressed to him.

Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. (1 Tim. 4:13–16).

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. (2 Tim. 4:1–5).

These commands speak to Timothy as though he had a unique authority and responsibility in the church at Ephesus, even among the other elders. It is this special authority, vested in a man who is called by God to labor in the Word and its doctrine which heightens all his preaching and distinguishes it to a peculiar degree. John Bunyan captures this strikingly in his portrait of the preacher. Pilgrim is shown

the picture of a very grave person hang up against the wall; and this was the fashion of it: He had eyes lifted up to Heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth written upon his lips, the world behind his back. He stood as if pleading with men, and a crown of gold hung over his head.

Interpreter, the gentleman showing Pilgrim this sight, explains,

I have showed thee this picture first, because the man whose picture this is, is the only man whom the Lord of the place whither thou art going hath authorized to be thy guide in all difficult places thou mayest meet within the way.

People may have never analyzed what it is that gives added weight to truth when it is proclaimed by a preacher, as distinct even from the teaching and exhorting of other elders. To a large degree it is this element of authority. A man called and equipped by God to be the leading pastor-teacher in an assembly has a power, a kind of command that is uncommon. It isn’t self-produced. It is God given. And it noticeably deepens the impressions that truth makes upon the souls of his hearers.

I’d like to conclude with questions posed by David Martyn Lloyd-Jones when he delivered the lectures that are now printed in his *Preaching and Preachers*.

Is it not clear as you take a bird’s eye view of church history, that the decadent periods and eras in the history of the church have always been those periods when preaching declined? What is it that always heralded the dawn of a Reformation or Revival?

The answer that he gave was, *Not only a new interest in preaching, but a new kind of preaching*. Surely we would do well to give at least some consideration to that fact while we’re entertaining the question of whether to relinquish preaching, even for other good ministries.

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

Lovin’ on Jesus by Swee Hong Lim and Lester Ruth

“Contemporary Worship is not going away.” So write Swee Hong Lim and Lester Ruth in their insightful book *Lovin’ On Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship* (Abingdon Press, 2017). The existence of Contemporary Worship is the reason for the so-called “Worship Wars” which have raged for the past half-century, and for just cause. The subject of Lim and Ruth’s book, however, is not the wars between the worship styles, but rather the historical and philosophical underpinnings of what is simply identified as Contemporary Worship. Lim and Ruth write as participants within the movement. However, their purpose is neither to promote it nor to reject it but merely to give a concise history and understanding of it.

The book discusses the use of time and space in Contemporary Worship, the role of music, prayer, and Scripture, and the sacramentality of Contemporary Worship. I will highlight only elements from the first chapter, which lays out the key description of what Contemporary Worship is, and forms the foundation for the rest of the book. The authors identify nine elements of Contemporary Worship categorized under four headings.

FUNDAMENTAL PRESUMPTIONS

The first defining element is the use of contemporary, non-archaic English. One of the earliest cries in the history of the movement was for songs with up-to-date language. This desire for updated language not only applied to music, but also led to the production of many modern translations of Scripture. Second, it is important to be “relevant” in the content of a worship service. This includes the use of pop culture references, addressing current events, and even using modern movie video clips in sermons. Third, targeting specific people groups is the norm. Rather than expecting people to adapt to the style of worship, the style of worship is adapted to fit the desires and even the demographics of a particular area.

MUSICAL QUALITIES

The fourth defining element is the virtually exclusive use of “pop music.” The genre and style of music can vary between churches but constants include the use of instruments such as guitars and drums in place of piano and/or organ. The “pop” style extends to the vocal techniques as well as the way the lyrics express ideas, and even how the songs used for worship are structured. Fifth, extended time for singing is standard. Usually Contemporary Worship plans “sets” of songs that are purposefully ordered before the sermon. This has become so prominent that services are often divided into times of “worship” and times of “preaching.” Sixth, the musicians are central in the context of the service. Rather than a single song leader, there are praise bands and “worship leaders.” Instead of perhaps a few hymns carefully placed throughout a service, contemporary worship

songs led by the praise band dominate the liturgy of the service. In short, one could argue that without contemporary music there would be no Contemporary Worship.

BEHAVIORAL QUALITIES

Seventh, there is usually a much higher level of physical expressiveness than what has been historically practiced, most notably the raising of hands during singing. Eighth, informality is virtually assumed. Casual dress for pastors and congregants is the most obvious expression of informality. Gone are the suits and ties; blue jeans, untucked t-shirts or button-down shirts are accepted and expected.

KEY DEPENDENCY

The ninth element of Contemporary Worship is what the authors call its key dependency. It is utterly dependent upon technology. Special lighting, video walls, electronic instruments, microphones, and amplification, even smoke machines all suggest that technology rules. In the words of the authors, “Contemporary worship unplugged today is not itself.”

The rest of the book takes time to further unpack many of these elements, giving us the history and philosophy behind them. To read this book is to look behind the curtain of the contemporary music and worship world and gain insights from those who are a part of it.

Every pastor who calls himself a fundamentalist or seeks to stand for conservative worship but who needs to have a better understanding of why he is against Contemporary Worship should read this book. Conservative pastors must involve themselves in this war, seeking to understand it from a biblical, philosophical, and musicological perspective. One does not need to be a trained musician to stand knowledgeably for conservative music and worship, but one needs to be able to articulate arguments which go beyond the normal talking points of the last half-century.

I highly recommend this short book for ministers and laypeople alike. I also encourage Christian parents to use this book to teach their children about this important issue. If we do not seek to cultivate in them a love for conservative worship, giving them the theological and philosophical tools to cogently argue for it, they will easily fall prey to that which most appeals to their passions, and we will lose more of our young people in the process.

Contemporary Worship may not ever go away, but that doesn’t mean we have to embrace it. May this book help in our desire to cultivate conservative worship for the glory of God.

Taigen Joos pastors Heritage Baptist Church in Dover, New Hampshire.

Everyone Did What Was Right in His Own Eyes (Judges 17:6; 21:25)

This tragic description of the Israelites in the days of the judges is a theological commentary on the desperate condition of the nation religiously and morally. Both occurrences in Judges are accompanied by the phrase “In those days there was no king in Israel.” The lack of a king in Israel is an important factor in interpreting the phrase, “every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” Elsewhere in Judges the lack of a king is tied to moral disasters such as the tribe of Dan’s unbiblical worship and the Sodom-like behavior of the town of Gibeah (Judges 18:1; 19:1).

Doing what was right in one’s own eyes contrasts with another phrase found in other Old Testament narratives, when someone “did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD” (1 Kings 15:5, 11; 22:43; 2 Chron. 14:2). Doing what was right in the eyes of the LORD is a description of godly kings like David or Asa. They recognized the LORD as the true King and themselves as mediators of God’s regal authority (1 Chron. 29:12; Zeph. 3:15). In the days of the monarchy there were kings who did what was right in the eyes of the LORD rather than in their own judgment. By contrast there were many kings who did evil in the eyes of the LORD (1 Sam. 15:19; 1 Kings 11:16; 16:30; 2 Chron. 21:6). Sadly, that is the Bible’s assessment of most of the kings of Israel and Judah. Tragically, they often brought the nation along with them into their sin. Having a king was by no means a guarantee that Israel did what was right in the eyes of the LORD.

Understanding the message of the Book of Judges is crucial to understanding this key phrase. The message deals with the tragic state of the nation in those days. Why were things so bad during the days of the judges? Simply, the Israelites were living and worshipping like the Canaanites rather than fearing the LORD. This is illustrated in the lives of the judges themselves. We know they were men who acted by faith in a tragic time (Heb. 11:32–33). However, we also know from Judges that they were flawed leaders who themselves behaved at times like the Canaanites around them. This is evident in Barak’s refusal to go to battle without Deborah, in Gideon’s irregular worship of making an ephod, in Jephthah’s foolish vow, and in Samson’s immoral lifestyle. This is also illustrated in the narratives of the last chapters of Judges.

Like the judges, the everyday Israelites were living like Canaanites and not like God’s people. This is evident in the theft and idolatry of Micah, the irregular worship of the tribe of Dan, the wicked immorality of the town of Gibeah, and the civil war with the tribe of Benjamin. The message of Judges is that

when God’s people live like the pagan Canaanites, they come under God’s judgment, and their lives get far worse. By doing what was right in their own eyes they were disregarding God’s commandments and living like Canaanites, thereby bringing God’s chastening.

The author of Judges is unknown, but there is evidence as to when the book was written. First, since the book mentions the kings of Israel, it must have been written after the institution of the monarchy. Second, Judges 18:30 refers to the captivity of the land; the Assyrian Empire took the northern kingdom of Israel captive in 722 BC. Judges 18:30 indicates that the tribe of Dan had gone into captivity before the writing of Judges. Therefore, Judges was probably written around 700 BC, which would be around the reign of the wicked king Manasseh of Judah.

Manasseh led the nation into the worst forms of idolatry and immorality. The LORD, through His prophets, said that Manasseh did more evil than the Amorites whom the LORD drove out of the land (2 Kings 21:11). The Amorites and Canaanites were driven from the land because of their iniquities, and the LORD would do the same to Israel (Gen. 15:16; 1 Kings 21:26). The account of Manasseh in 2 Kings makes a direct connection between the sins of Manasseh and the sins of the Amorites.

In the historical context of Manasseh, the phrase “there was no king in Israel” means that it did not take a king to lead them into idolatry. An Israelite in the days of Manasseh reading the phrase “there was no king in Israel” would not understand those words as an apologetic for the monarchy but as a parallel with their own evil day. Whether led by a king or by their own judgment, when the people lived like Canaanites, it brought God’s chastening, and their lives were far worse. By application, the same thing is true for believers today. If believers mimic the spiritual Canaanites (the world) around them, they will find themselves in a spiritual predicament like the days of the judges or the days of King Manasseh.

Judges 17:6 is a sad commentary about Israel in those days. However, it is not only a longing for a godly king like David or David’s greater son, Jesus. It is a warning to believers not to reject God’s good commandments and thereby live like the unbelievers around them. It is a warning against living and worshipping like the world.

T. J. Klapperich pastors Calvary Baptist Church in Winter Garden, Florida.

Scripture: The Ultimate Source of Illustrations (Old Testament)

Locating sermon illustrations is like mining for treasure, and the Holy Scriptures are the ultimate source from which to mine the best treasures. Charles H. Spurgeon confessed to having read John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* more than any other book. Since *Pilgrim’s Progress* is one sustained illustration (an allegory), no wonder the Prince of Preachers had such unusual illustrative powers: the most influential book of his life (other than the Bible) was jam-packed with biblically inspired illustrations.

Focusing on Old Testament illustrations, I’ll draw on four major sections: (1) Portraits of Christ from the Pentateuch, (2) Highlights of Horror from the History, (3) Silhouettes of Sorrow from the Poets, and (4) Evocative Images from the Prophets.

A brief word about a proper method is in order. There are three keys to using Scripture well. The first is full acquaintance with the specific **details** of the illustration; avoid mechanically reading the passage—cite it from memory when possible. Be fully immersed in the content of the passage. Not relating the appropriate details can cause the illustration to fall flat. The second is **summation**; highlight the relevant portions and avoid getting bogged down. Finally, be short and **pithy**, concise and forcefully expressive!

PORTRAITS OF CHRIST FROM THE PENTATEUCH

Seeing Christ as the central storyline of Scripture becomes clearer with each reading. Tapping into this is vital. Illustrations for *obtaining righteousness through faith* alone shine with a particular brightness in **Genesis**. From the beginning of redemptive history men receive righteousness through faith alone. This is sketched out by a set of contrasts between the righteous and ungodly lines. Cain, seeking acceptance through a humanly conceived approach, is contrasted with Abel who “by *faith* . . . offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he *obtained the testimony that he was righteous*” (Heb. 11:4 NASB). When expounding on the judgment of God on the antediluvian world, quoting the ground of Noah’s justification illustrates *the brilliance of the gospel* in this early period of revelation: “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen. 6:8). Who can forget the basis of Jacob’s acceptance reflected in the divine commentary: “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth” (Rom. 9:11)?

In **Exodus**, parallels between Israel’s deliverance from bondage to Egypt and the *deliverance of Christians from enslavement to sin* are apparent. Israel’s emancipation is an illustrative goldmine. From John 8:34 (“Whosoever commits sin is the servant

of sin”), draw a straight line back to Israel’s enslavement. The groaning of Israel under slavery to their brutale taskmasters is analogous to the sinner’s groaning under bondage to Satan: “The children of Israel *sighed* by reason of the bondage, and they *cried* . . . by reason of the bondage” (Exod. 2:23–25).

After God persuaded Pharaoh to “let my people go,” Moses demanded even more of Pharaoh (a type of Satan) than he wanted to give. Moses demanded freedom for all adults, freedom for all children, provision for sacrifices, and freedom for all cattle. This last demand was to make emphatic that God’s deliverance of the redeemed is *comprehensive*: “And Pharaoh . . . said, Go ye, serve the LORD. . . . And Moses said, you must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the LORD our God. Our cattle also shall go with us; *there shall not an hoof be left behind*” (Exod. 10:24–26). Charles Spurgeon entitled a sermon on this text “Full Redemption”: “This grand quarrel of old is but a picture of God’s continual contest with the powers of darkness. . . . Christ will have the whole; He will not be contented with a part, and this He vows to accomplish.”

A glorious illustration of *Christ’s sacrifice for sin* is the live goat and scapegoat sacrifice made on Yom Kippur in **Leviticus**. This ceremony foreshadowed what Christ did to pay the price for our sin.

He shall take . . . two male goats for a sin offering. . . . Aaron shall offer the goat on which the lot for the LORD fell and make it a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot for the scapegoat fell shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, to send it into the wilderness. . . . Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions . . . and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness. . . . The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness. (Lev. 16:5–10, 21–22 NASB)

What a powerful illustration of the great transaction! The placing of the hands of the priest on the goat and the release of the scapegoat foreshadowed not only the imputation of our guilt to Christ but also the transference of Christ’s righteousness to His people. Like the scapegoat, our sins are now in the vast wilderness of God’s forgetfulness and moved beyond the recall of His memory. “Gone, gone, gone, gone; yes, my sins are gone! Buried in the deepest sea . . .”—in the Sea of Forgetfulness.

HIGHLIGHTS OF HORROR FROM THE HISTORY

The Historical Books offer *examples of depravity and the consequences of sin*. While references to the event must be used wisely, **Judges** records the gang rape of a Levite's concubine by vile men. It describes in brutal detail the Ephraimite's unspeakably ghoulish reaction, cutting the victim into twelve pieces and dispersing her body parts through the twelve tribes. He dismembers her body to graphically illustrate the level of depravity into which the entire nation had sunk.

And they raped her and abused her all night until morning. . . . His concubine was lying at the doorway of the house with her hands on the threshold. He said to her, "Get up and let us go, but there was no answer. Then . . . the man arose . . . took a knife and laid hold of his concubine and cut her in twelve pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout the territory of Israel. All who saw it said, "Nothing like this has ever happened or been seen from the day when the sons of Israel came up from the land of Egypt to this day. (Judges 19:25–30 NASB)

SILHOUETTES OF SORROW FROM THE POETS

Psalms 66:11 ("Thou broughtest us into the net") clearly indicates *God's sovereign design to intentionally place believers in a position of helplessness*—to trust Him alone. Citing selected portions of Lamentation 3:1–14 makes the point in the most visceral way imaginable. Highlighting the familiar context about the steadfast love of the Lord and His never-failing mercies, you can ask, "Have you ever noticed what precedes those statements?" Then, carefully choose from the lamentation the points that most effectively illustrate helplessness:

I am the man who has seen affliction because of the rod of his wrath. He has . . . made me walk in darkness and not in light . . . caused my flesh and my skin to waste away . . . broken my bones . . . encompassed me with bitterness and hardship . . . walled me in so that I cannot get out . . . made my chain heavy . . . [shut] out my prayer . . . has made my paths crooked. . . . He is to me like a bear lying in wait, like a lion in secret places. . . . My soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten happiness. . . . From on high he sent fire into my bones. . . . **He has spread a net for my feet.** (Lam. 3:1–10, 17; 1:13 NASB)

Psalms 69, which is Messianic, gives a sketch of *the enormity of Christ's suffering* through the miniature portrait of David.

I sink in deep mire. . . . I am come into deep waters. . . . Floods overflow me. I am weary of my crying. . . . For thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. . . . The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me (Ps. 69:1–3, 7, 9)

Willard Wigan creates some of the world's smallest sculptures. The sculptures, such as the Statue of Liberty, sit within the eye of a needle and are visible only by magnification. Similar to these tiny works of art, David's suffering in Psalm 69, as a miniature

portrait of suffering, requires a magnifying glass to see. But the suffering of Christ is sketched out in colossal form. You must stand back to visualize its scope.

EVOCATIVE IMAGES FROM THE PROPHETS

"A picture paints a thousand words." The prophets paint word pictures by the thousands! Neil Postman observed that "we are an image-defined generation." The way the Lord projects images into our minds is not by media but by inspired words. Such images imprint truth on the mind in unforgettable ways.

Isaiah likens *national sin* to a diseased body: "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores" (1:6). To humble the arrogant Assyrian king, Isaiah underscores *God's sovereignty* in the most picturesque way: "Is the axe to boast itself over the one who chops with it? Is the saw to exalt itself over the one who wields it?" (10:15 NASB). In the language of a lawsuit, Isaiah depicts God as a plaintiff *calling His people to admit guilt* so that He may forgive them: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (1:18).

Jeremiah uses graphic images *warning of judgment*: "Behold, I am going to feed them wormwood and make them drink poisonous water" (23:15 NASB). **Ezekiel's** imagery emphasizes *personal accountability*: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (18:2). **Hosea** expresses the language of *parental love*: "I took them in my arms . . . healed them . . . led them . . . with bonds of love . . . lift[ed] the yoke from their jaws . . . bent down and fed them" (11:3–4 NASB).

Zephaniah's images of judgment are powerful: "I will remove [ESV, "sweep away"] man and beast . . . the birds . . . the fish. . . . And I will cut off man from the face of the earth. . . . I will search Jerusalem with lamps. . . . And their blood will be **poured out like dust** and their flesh *like dung*" (1:3, 12, 17 NASB).

But images of love are also woven seamlessly into Zephaniah's language. O. Palmer Robertson observed, "Zephaniah's . . . penetration into the love of God reached dimensions that stagger the imagination. Even in the context of coming devastation because of sin, the redeeming love of God for His people shall prevail."

Zephaniah's language (3:17 NASB) eloquently describes an *emotionally joyous outburst* of God ("He will exult over you with joy"), an *immense depth of feeling* experienced by God ("He will be quiet in His love"), and a *startling act of praise* expressed by God ("He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy").

Harnessing Old Testament illustrative language has its challenges, but a growing mastery of the contents of the Old Testament makes it effective and a pure joy.

Todd Nye has pastored in South Carolina and Ohio and has travelled for the last six years doing Bible conferences, evangelistic meetings, and church assessment and revitalization. He is currently seeking a full-time pastorate.

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News From All Over

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Fredericktown, OH 43019

September 12, 2023

NYC Regional Fellowship

Bethel Baptist Fellowship
2304 Voorhies Ave.
Brooklyn, NY 11235
718.615.1002

September 26-27, 2023

Southwest Regional Fellowship

(Combined with Northwest Baptist Missions)
First Baptist Church
982 E 700 N
Nephi, UT 84648
435.843.7570

October 14, 2023

New England Regional Fellowship

(Meeting with the New England Foundations Conference)
Heritage Baptist Church
186 Dover Point Rd.
Dover, NH 03820

October 16-17, 2023

Central Regional Fellowship

Village Bible Church
1301 Osage Ave.
Salina, KS 67401

October 19-20, 2023

New Mexico Regional Fellowship

Manzano Baptist Church
12411 Linn Ave. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87123
Coordinator: Dan Mauldin

2024

January 30, 2024

Rocky Mountain Regional Fellowship

Westside Baptist Church
6260 West 4th St.
Greeley, CO 80634
970.346.8610
Coordinator: Dan Unruh

February 5-6, 2023

FBFI Winter Board Meeting

Northwest Valley Baptist Church
4030 W Yorkshire Drive
Glendale, AZ 85308

March 11-12, 2024

Northwest Regional Fellowship

Westside Baptist Church
1375 Irving Rd.
Eugene, OR 97404

March 11-13, 2024

South Regional Fellowship

Catawba Springs Baptist Church
6801 Ten Ten Rd.
Apex, NC 27539-8692

April 18-19, 2024

Northern California Regional Fellowship

Campbell Bible Church
151 Sunnyside Ave.
Campbell, CA 95008

April 29-30, 2024

Wyoming Regional Fellowship

TBD

June 10-12, 2024

FBFI Annual Fellowship

Tri-City Baptist Church
6953 West 92nd Ln.
Westminster, CO 80021

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Ron "Patch the Pirate" Hamilton recently went home to be with the Lord he faithfully served. FrontLine asked his widow, Shelly, to write a few words about his life, which we are grateful to share below.



Ronald Allen Hamilton was born in South Bend, Indiana, on November 9, 1950, to Melvin Hamilton and Leota Marie Hamilton. Ron was the oldest of a sister Marty and a brother Terry.

Ron remembered at a young age kneeling by his bed and accepting Christ as his Savior. In high school Ron became an accomplished musician as well as a track star, gymnast, swimmer, and bicyclist. One summer Ron rode his bike across the United States with the Wandering Wheels organization.

In 1969 Ron came to college at Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina. It was at BJU that Ron met his lifetime partner, Shelly Garlock. They tied the knot on May 31, 1975.

At a routine eye exam in 1978 an ophthalmologist discovered melanoma cancer in Ron's left eye. Surgery followed to remove the eye. Ron, being the adventure-driven, fun-loving individual that he was, opted to wear a leather eye patch permanently. This earned him the title known by children everywhere of "Patch the Pirate."

Following Ron's eye surgery, he composed his most well-loved song, "Rejoice in the Lord." In 1979 Ron's first "story 'n' song adventure," "Singalong with Patch," was

produced. Since then, one Patch adventure has been produced each year—totaling forty-three adventures. These audio recordings include fun characters and teach biblical lessons and share the gospel.

God gave Ron a forty-year window to write and publish 995 adult and children's songs, included in children's adventures, hymnals, solo recordings, and Christmas musicals.

Ron and Shelly have five children, Jonathan (PeeWee), Tara (Pixie), Alyssa (Peanut), Megan (Princess), and Jason (PJ). When their oldest son Jonathan was eighteen, an antibiotic for acne sent him into schizophrenia. He tragically took his life when he was thirty-four.

In 2010, when Ron was just sixty years old, he started showing early signs of dementia. Several years later, he was diagnosed with frontotemporal dementia, or FTD. Ron's health, due to his declining condition with dementia, took a downward turn in April of 2023. He passed away quietly on April 19, surrounded by his family.

Patch the Pirate albums have sold over two million copies. Many of the adventures and Hamilton songs are featured on over 600 radio outlets, Spotify, YouTube, and other digital sources. To date, over a million streams of Patch are reported every month. To the glory of God, countless children and adults have come to Christ through Ron Hamilton's ministry.

Many have said, "Patch has become the soundtrack of my life."

Continued on page 24

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Pastor Brian Ernsberger was installed as the pastor of Wheatland Baptist Church of McPherson, Kansas, on May 28. The church was planted by Pastor Terry Post and his wife, Roberta, in 1982. Pastor Post retired in 2022 after a fruitful forty-year ministry. Pastor Joe McNally (alongside his wife Becky), a GFA interim pastor, served as their interim pastor. Brian and Lynn are excited about the opportunity of continuing to build on the Posts' and McNallys' solid foundation at Wheatland.

Randy Boardman recently accepted the call to pastor Central Baptist Church of Dothan, Alabama after serving in his home state of Vermont for the last eighteen years. He and his wife, Amy, have longed to live in the South as they've grown older, and they believe God has "hand-picked" this sweet congregation just for them.



Men, Women, and Their Unique Roles

Continued from page 19

"SAVED IN CHILDBEARING"

To conclude his argument, Paul says that women will be saved in childbearing. What does this mean? We begin by eliminating the impossible: childbearing cannot be a means of having one's sins forgiven.

Rather, God calls people to occupy different stations and to fulfill different roles. Every calling includes its own ways of "working out your own salvation," or placing salvation on display. A pastor who faithfully preaches the Bible and cares for his people is obviously displaying salvation. So is a businessman who sells excellent products and refuses to participate in shady deals. So is a farmer who takes good care of land and livestock. But what about the stay-at-home mom? How does a woman display salvation while changing diapers and wiping noses? Our culture sneers at maternity and domesticity, gibing that women who accept this role are "bare-foot and pregnant."

The truth is that a stay-at-home mom can still work out her salvation, making God's dealings evident within her calling. She can keep house and rear children to the glory of God, and God will be glorified. The vocation of maternity and domesticity is no second-rate, backseat, bargain-basement calling. The stay-at-home mom has just as much dignity and receives as much opportunity to bring glory to God as the minister does when he proclaims the Scriptures. She puts her salvation on display through faithfully performing the tasks of wife and mother with an attitude of "faith and charity and holiness with sobriety."

CONCLUSION

Both men and women are called to unique roles. Since Paul grounded his understanding of men's and women's roles in the created order, it seems likely that his understanding applies to all churches throughout the present age. God is glorified when we are satisfied and faithful in the roles that He has given us.

Kevin Bauder serves as Research Professor of Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Plymouth, Minnesota.





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How Do You Stand Against Evil?



The sordid men of ancient Sodom surrounded Lot's home, pounding on the door. From every sector of the city they had come to commit unspeakable atrocities on Lot's two guests. What would you do if you were Lot at that moment? In this story we learn how to respond—and how not to respond—to such wickedness. But, unlike Lot, we would do well to remember the place of safety, for the fear of God is our greatest fortress.

None of those who knew Lot would have characterized him as one who feared the Lord. He had moved his family to Sodom even though “the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.”¹ Yet we find no record of Lot prayerfully interceding for Sodom as Abraham would do.² Would the Lord have listened to the prayer of backslidden Lot? Yes! When Lot later asked the Lord to spare the nearby city of Zoar, the Lord preserved it. That's a wonderful comfort even to the weakest Christian: God answers the prayers of His children. But was Lot really a child of God? Yes, Peter later explained that the Lord “delivered [righteous] Lot, vexed with the filthy [conduct] of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds).”³

Lot tolerated the sins of Sodom continually; he actively tormented his righteous soul. Then the violent mob came to his door. Without the fear of the Lord, foolish Lot offered the mob what he thought of as the lesser of two evils. He pled, “I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.”⁴

Instead of a perverted abomination, Lot offered to let the mob abuse his daughters! This is what happens when one thinks of sin from a merely human perspective: everything is negotiable. Without the fear of God, Lot tried to justify a horrible, evil alternative. (His daughters did the same thing to him a little later on in the story.) Ultimately, God delivered Lot from Sodom by blinding the mob. But there is no indication that Lot had asked the Lord to do so.

What would a God-fearing response have looked like? Lot would have fallen on his face and cried out to Almighty God for deliverance. He would have faced the mob the way David later faced Goliath. David boldly said to the giant, “I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts.”⁵ The fear of God was the only fortress

that David needed to face the giant. But we find no record of Lot mentioning the name of the Lord or praying for boldness.

Without the fear of God, Lot's hollow protests sounded silly to the citizens of Sodom. Later, when Lot tried to warn his sons-in-law about impending destruction, they thought he was joking.⁶ Solomon wrote, “In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.”⁷ Lot had no confidence, and his family found no safety in his response.

Were this the only time that an atrocity such as this occurred in Scripture, we might rationalize. After all, Sodom sounds like the worst case scenario, confronted by a shallow believer. But almost exactly the same thing later occurred in Gibeah during the time of the judges.⁸ And in that case, it almost led to a civil war. That historic echo teaches us that these atrocities could split apart our own society.

When believers fail to show the world the fear of God, the world sees no God to fear. Those who water down their response to wickedness don't want to be called “judgmental.” But Lot's feeble attempt to restrain Sodom's wickedness brought the accusation that he was acting like a judge.⁹ See the point? We will be accused of “being judgmental” even if we mildly disagree with evil. So why not introduce them to God, the Judge of all? In fact, that is the safest approach a believer can take. As Solomon wrote, “The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.”¹⁰ Then, unlike Lot, we will run to the place of safety, for the fear of God is our greatest fortress.

Gordon Dickson has served as pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Findlay, Ohio, since 1994.



¹ Genesis 13:13.

² Genesis 18:22–33.

³ 2 Peter 2:7–8. This is a believer's recipe for misery.

⁴ Genesis 19:7–8.

⁵ 1 Samuel 17:45.

⁶ Genesis 19:14.

⁷ Proverbs 14:26.

⁸ Judges 19–20.

⁹ Genesis 19:9.

¹⁰ Proverbs 29:25.



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Blueprints: A Parable

Once upon a time, a young woman stood on the building site of her life, blueprints in hand. She began drawing them as soon as she learned to hold a crayon, and though modified and refined over the years, they are now complete and highly detailed.

She rarely needs to refer to them anymore, for they are deeply engraved in her mind. She knows (more or less) which perfect, handsome man she will marry and what sort of job he will have, with sufficient income to pay for the house she has already designed. She has planned how many children she will bear (equal number of boys and girls) and at what intervals. She has decided they will be healthy, happy, intelligent, obedient children with flawless manners.

She was a little surprised when she realized who her husband was going to be, but she was able to incorporate him into her blueprints without much trouble. Their marriage, she decided, would be a model for others to admire and imitate. She would be a flawless wife, a model mother, a perfect homemaker, a modern Proverbs 31 woman. The whole world would rise and call her blessed! It was all right there in her blueprints.

But then the oddest thing happened. Building materials she hadn't ordered and didn't even like began arriving on her construction site—which, by the way, was nowhere near the lot she had staked out

much earlier. She watched in dismay as the Master Builder began using them to construct a house quite different from the one she'd sketched into her meticulous plan book.

She was sure that if she drew God's attention to His errors, He'd fix them, so she showed Him her blueprints. "Excuse me, Lord, but I believe You have made some mistakes. See right here, according to my plans . . ."

The Builder listened as His daughter listed her grievances. Then He said gently, "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me. My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure. I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end. In this place, I will perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you" (cf. Isa. 46:9–11; Jer. 29:11; 1 Pet. 5:10).

Then He picked up His tools, and following the flawless blueprints drawn by His higher-than-human thoughts and ways, built her a home that didn't conform to her plans. Not at all. Despite her best efforts, it's messy. The people who live in it aren't the ones she dreamed of. These people have flaws, faults, and imperfections, and much to her consternation, she has discovered she does too.

Now she has a choice to make. She can live a joyless martyr's life in her unwanted abode, grimly accepting her fate and silently indulging her self-pity, convinced she deserves better. She can plop down in the front yard, pout, and complain to any passerby who will listen—including the Builder. Or she can shake her fist at Him and stomp off in fury to construct her own life all by herself, following her own blueprints. (God may allow her to do that, but that kind of story never has a happy ending.)

There's one more possibility, and I'm glad to say that's what she decides to do: she takes one last, longing look at her beloved blueprints, then with a deep sigh of surrender, tears them into tiny pieces.

As the shreds blow away, so does her misery. She turns and walks serenely into the house God built just for her. She still lives there, in her unexpected but happily-ever-after, custom-built home.

Claudia Barba is familiar with the demands and joys of ministry. After growing up as a pastor's daughter, she married Dave Barba, who during their fifty years of marriage has been a pastor, church planter, and itinerant evangelist. Claudia and Dave now travel helping new and struggling churches through Press On! Ministries. Claudia is the author of five Bible-study books and *The Monday Morning Club*, a book of encouragement for women in ministry. The Barbabs have three adult children and seven grandchildren.





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The Hebrew title of Genesis is the first phrase of the Hebrew text: *In the Beginning*. That fits the contents pretty aptly. The Hebrew title of the second book of the Pentateuch, also taken from the opening phrase of the book, is not quite so captivating: *And These Are the Names*. The opening verses rehearse the names of Jacob's children and grandchildren who journeyed down into Egypt at God's direction, to be under Joseph's provision and protection. The same phrase in Genesis 46:8 introduces a list of those who went to Egypt with Jacob. This suggests that "Exodus was never intended to exist separately but was thought of as a continuation of the narrative that began in Genesis and was completed in three more books" (Kaiser, "Exodus," *Expositor's Bible Commentary* 2:287).

It was the Septuagint—the Greek translation of the OT—that first named the book after its central event. "Exodus" means "exit," "departure," "a going out." The word for "exiting" or "going out" occurs over 40 times in Exodus with reference to God's *bringing out* Israel from Egypt. A synonymous expression occurs another 15 times with reference to God's *bringing up* Israel from of Egypt. The Greek word *exodus* occurs in 19:1 ("In the third month of the exodus of the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt . . .").

The exodus event is accomplished within the first third of the book; it happens in chapter 13. Yet that event keeps being referenced throughout the rest of the book and, in fact, throughout the rest of the OT. Like Genesis records (and reiterates) the Abrahamic Covenant, Exodus introduces the establishment of the second great Judeocentric covenant: the Mosaic/Sinaitic Covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant changes the course of the story in Genesis. The Mosaic Covenant changes the course of the story in Exodus and the rest of the OT, which plays out in the shadow of that Mosaic Covenant. It's what the NT calls the *Old Covenant* (aka the Old Testament).

THEMATIC OVERVIEW: THE SELF-REVELATION OF GOD

The central event of the book of Exodus is the exodus—the deliverance of God's people from Egypt. The *reason* for that deliverance is because of His compassion and His covenant relationship and promises to the descendants of Abraham (2:23–25). But what does God Himself say regarding the *purpose/goal* of the Exodus? He sums it up in one key word: the Hebrew verb "to know" (*yada*). Exodus emphasizes a knowledge of God that is not merely intellectual but experiential.

First, God says He is delivering His people so that the *Egyptians* will know who He is (5:2; 7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 29; 14:4, 18). In fact, God broadens this goal beyond just Egypt. He intends to make Himself known to all nations: "that my name may be declared throughout all the earth" (9:16). The ultimate purpose of all God's works is to glorify and reveal Himself among the nations (18:10–11). Did it work? Listen to Rahab in Joshua 2:9–11. Because word of God's greatness had reached all the way up into

Canaan, Rahab became a follower of the true God and even ended up in the Davidic and Messianic line.

Second, God also intends that the exodus experience lead the *Israelites* to know Him as Yahweh (6:3, 7; 10:2; 11:7; 16:6, 12; 29:46). One feature of knowing God that is underscored in Exodus is His *glory* (e.g., 16:7, 10; 24:16, 17; 28:2, 40; 29:43; 33:18–22; 40:34–35). In Genesis God reveals Himself to individuals. In Exodus God reveals Himself to an entire, chosen nation in ways and to degrees He never did in Genesis.

And yet, interrupting all this phenomenal divine self-revelation is a jarring, discordant note, this weird recurring anomaly of *complaint* (14:10–12). So God opens the Red Sea to save them and destroy their enemies (14:31). They sing a song about God's deliverance (Exod. 15), then suddenly they are complaining again, this time because they're thirsty; so God miraculously provides water (15:24–25). Soon they're complaining again about food, so God provides bread (16:1–21). Then they're complaining about water again, so God again miraculously provides for them (17:2–3). All they have seen God do doesn't curb their proclivity to complain at the drop of a sandal—any more than all we have seen God do doesn't stop us from grumbling.

THEOLOGICAL CONNECTIONS TO THE BIGGER STORY

Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility. Three human actors dominate the stage in the book of Exodus: Moses (291 times), Aaron (116 times), and Pharaoh (115 times, all in chs. 1–18). The monumental confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh dominates 8 chapters in Exodus (5–12), though the reader is conditioned for that confrontation as far back as 4:21 and even 3:19–20. That human confrontation represents the more direct confrontation between God and Pharaoh. God already knows Pharaoh's inclinations and actions and will respond in kind with judicial hardness. First, however, God uses Pharaoh's freely chosen refusals to manifest His glory and make Himself known.

In Romans 9 Paul elevates that historical confrontation to theological proportions as a confrontation between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, specifically in the context of soteriology. Pharaoh represents the recalcitrance of human will in its depravity and hardness against God when we are left to ourselves. God does not create Pharaoh's hardness; He does not need to! Only after Pharaoh has amply demonstrated his own hardness and willful defiance of God does God judicially harden Pharaoh in keeping with Pharaoh's own native predisposition.

Two Tabernacles. Exodus gives a lot of space to God's meticulous instructions and Israel's equally meticulous attention regarding the construction of a tabernacle—a glorified tent, in which God would reside and be present among them. God did not supernaturally create the tabernacle and send it down from heaven. It was a carefully crafted and manmade structure (Exod. 36–39) which God supernaturally inhabited (Exod. 40).

Sanctification, and Self-Revelation

When the NT reveals Jesus' incarnation, it does not describe a supernaturally created physical body sent down from heaven. The body was a normal, physical, "manmade" structure crafted in Mary's womb. When John describes the Incarnation theologically, he uses an unusual but significant expression: "the Word was made flesh, and *dwelt* [literally, *tabernacled*] among us, (and we beheld his *glory* . . .)" The word "dwelt" is the verb form of the very word that occurs 99 times in Exodus (LXX) for the Tabernacle. And the word "glory" is the same word used to say that "the *glory* of the LORD filled the *tabernacle*" (Exod. 40:34–35, LXX). The OT Tabernacle was a picture of the NT Incarnation.

Two Exoduses. Of all the historical incidents in the OT, the central *event* in all of the OT is the exodus. How do we know? The existence of Israel as a distinct and identifiable nation, and not just a huge body of individuals who happen to be related to Abraham, is dependent on and rooted in this event. It was the only historical *event* to be festally memorialized and celebrated throughout all their generations—Passover (Exod. 12:14). Everyone in the OT keeps talking about it; the psalmists, the historians, the prophets all keep referring back to it as the seminal, central historical-theological event in their history. Every segment of the OT (Pentateuch, History, Poetry, Prophecy) keeps referring back to the significance of the fact that God brought Israel "out of Egypt" (at least 70 times). The exodus was the basis for Israel's existence, the ground of their responsibility, the rationale for their chastisement, the reason for their restoration, and the root of their future hope.

What are the central components of the exodus?

1. *The exodus is repeatedly described as a work of deliverance/salvation* (e.g., Exod. 3:8; 14:30; 18:8–10; Judges 6:8–9; 1 Sam. 10:18; Ps. 106:21; Isa 43:3; Hos. 13:4).
2. *God saved only His own people with whom He was in covenant.* When God said to Pharaoh, "Let my people go" (5:1; 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3), they were already *His people* even before Sinai. How did that happen? God had already *chosen* Abraham and his descendants and made certain promises to him and to them. Granted, there was a mixed multitude that came along with Israel, who might be described as collateral beneficiaries of God's grace to His people; but they end up either as converts or as thorns in the sides of God's people.
3. *God saved them in order that they should be a holy nation* (19:4, 6).

What about the NT? Of all the historical incidents in the NT, the central *event* of the NT is the crucifixion. How do we know? The existence of believers and the church is dependent upon it and rooted in it. Everyone keeps talking about it—the evangelists and the apostles keep pointing to it as the seminal, central historical-theological event. Every Gospel devotes 25%–33% of its content to recording this one-day event. It is the centerpiece of the message proclaimed throughout Acts. Every doctrine unfolded in

the Epistles is rooted in the reality and ramifications of that event. Every doctrine and exhortation is in some way rooted in the sacrifice of Christ. Even Christ's glorified right to judge and rule the earth is linked to it (Rev. 1:18; 5:5ff.; 22:1).

What are the central components of the crucifixion? No verse compresses and expresses them more succinctly than Matthew 1:21: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for (1) *he shall save* (2) *his people* (3) *from their sins.*" Let's fill those out just a little. (1) *The crucifixion is repeatedly described as a work of deliverance/salvation* (Matt. 1:21; Rom. 3:24, 25; 1 Cor. 1:18; 15:1ff). (2) *God saves only those who are His own people* (Matt. 1:21; Acts 15:14). Who are they? Those whom He chooses and effectually calls out of the world to become His people by faith. (3) *God saves us in order to make us holy* (Matt. 1:21; 1 Pet. 2:9–10).

The NT itself connects these two events—the exodus and the crucifixion—in Luke 9:28–31. At the transfiguration, Jesus is visibly glorified while speaking with Elijah and Moses about Jesus' "decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." Almost every version translates it as His "death," "departure," "decease." That's a valid translation; but the Greek text reads that they were discussing "His *exodus* which He was about to fulfill at Jerusalem." That's an odd way to describe a death! This is no theological accident or linguistic coincidence. The language clearly refers to the event of His death ("decease"); but just as clearly—by a deliberately unusual choice of words—it alludes to the redemptive dimension pictured in the OT exodus.

Consider the parallels between these two events—Exodus and Calvary. Both were based on the necessity of shed blood; both involved substitutionary sacrifice; both displayed judgment on "firstborn"; both happened at the same time (and there's a reason the crucifixion happened at the Passover commemoration of the exodus); both events inaugurated the constitution of a people of God; both appear early in their respective testaments; both become the seminal, defining event for the rest of their respective testamental revelation; both are central to—and, in fact, *constitute*—their respective testaments: the Old Testament/Covenant and the New Testament/Covenant.

At the theological center of both the Old and New Testaments is a divine historical exodus-event. But at the theological center of both of those exodus-events is the Person beyond history who acts in history.

The exodus is the most significant historical and theological event of the OT because it marks God's mightiest act in behalf of his people which brought them from slavery to freedom . . . from a people of promise to a nation of fulfillment. . . . In the final analysis, the exodus served to typify that exodus achieved by Jesus Christ for people of faith so that it is a meaningful event for the church as well as for Israel. (Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*)

No wonder A. M. Hunter described the Bible as "the book of the two exoduses."

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Intentionally Seeking—and Finding

I recently had the privilege of speaking at a Wild Game Dinner with around four hundred men in attendance. It was designed to be an evangelistic outreach, and eleven men indicated they trusted Christ as their Savior that night. We had a visitor to our campus get saved this past Friday. Most of the churches in our circles are not hyper-Calvinists in doctrine, but I wonder if that is true in practice. Somehow, the elect will get saved. Many churches have gone years without seeing an adult saved, baptized, and added to the church.

It does matter whether you share the gospel or not. We know that not everyone who hears the gospel will get saved and go to heaven, but we also know according to Romans 10:14–17 that one hundred percent of the people who never hear the gospel will die and go to hell. Many people would be fine sharing the gospel if someone came to them and asked them how to be saved. The problem is that that is very rare today.

There is a passage of Scripture that gives some great insight into how to reach out and share the gospel with others. It is the passage in John 4 regarding the woman at the well. Most of the time in Scripture people came seeking Jesus Christ. In this passage, Jesus comes seeking the people of Samaria. There are several lessons in this text that we can apply when we must make the first move to share the gospel.

INTENTIONALITY

First, be intentional. In John 4:4 we read that Jesus needed to go to Samaria, and in verse 7 we read, “There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.”

How many of us are at the coffee shop, walking in the neighborhood, sitting on an airplane, or working out, and we act as though we were in an elevator? The unwritten rule on an elevator is that you do not make eye contact, and you do not talk. But we will not reach the lost around us if we are not intentional. Jesus intentionally

struck up a conversation with this woman. He came to seek and to save those who were lost. What are you doing on purpose to reach the lost around you? Someone once said, “If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time.” This is often the case in our evangelistic efforts.

GODLY PASSION

Second, we must have a God-aligned passion for lost people. The Bible says in verse 4 that Jesus needed to go through Samaria. Most Jews went around Samaria. It seems clear from the text that the reason Jesus went through Samaria was because there were a lot of people there who needed to be saved. Often in the Gospels you read that Jesus was moved with compassion. True love and compassion are action words. You can’t say you care yet do nothing. As James says, “Faith without works is dead.” To say you care about lost people and do nothing about it is worthless. What have you done in the last two months that proves you care about lost people?

TIME

Third, we must spend time with lost people. In John 4:6–7 Jesus intentionally went to the well and struck up a conversation with this Samaritan woman. In verse 40 we read that Jesus spent two more days with the Samaritans and that many more believed. This seems obvious, but it is amazing how many Christians don’t spend any time with lost people outside of work. Who are you praying for and intentionally spending time with so you can share the gospel with them? When is the last time you invited a lost person over to your house for dinner? Do you greet first-time visitors at your church, or are you so busy catching up with your friends that you don’t have time? The number-one reason lost people go to church is to find a friend. Are visitors convinced your church is one of the friendliest places they have been in a while? They should be.

OPPORTUNITIES

Fourth, take opportunities to share the gospel. Jesus does this masterfully in verses 8–27. If you are a friend, a coach, or a coworker but you never give the gospel, you are like a salesman who uses a product and demonstrates how beneficial it is but never asks if the customer would like to buy it. We need to be creative in steering the conversation to the gospel. We need to earn the right to be heard, and then we need to speak up.

We all naturally talk about what we love. If a golfer gets a hole in one or a hunter a trophy buck, he will talk about that over and over again the rest of his life. What grandmother never talks about her grandkids, or what father never talks about his kids? Yet we go to church and sing “Oh, How I Love Jesus” and never talk about Him to lost people throughout the week. So often we love God in a different way than we love the other people and things in our life. We naturally talk about what we love, whether it is work, sports, family, etc. The same should be true of Christ.

URGENCY

Fifth, we must be urgent in sharing the gospel. Jesus challenges the disciples in verses 34–36 to lift up their eyes, and look on the fields, for they were white already to harvest. The disciples, who have seen miracles, go into town and come back with bread. The woman, newly saved, goes into town and brings many to Christ. Good intentions must not be our evangelism strategy. We must be urgently looking for and taking advantage of opportunities that come our way.

May we be active in taking the Word to the World!

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.





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Regional Reports

WYOMING REGIONAL FELLOWSHIP

Jay Sprecher

The **Wyoming Regional FBFI Fellowship** was held April 24–25 at First Baptist Church in Pinedale, Wyoming. The theme was “Even in a Changing World, ‘The Counsel of the LORD Standeth For Ever’” (Ps. 33:11). Spot-on messages were delivered by Pastor Dan Unruh (Westside Baptist Church, Greeley, Colorado), Rev. Mike Smith (Legacy Trade College, Marysvale, Utah), Pastor Joe Lacy (Grace Baptist Church, Rexbury, Idaho), and Pastor Ron Fanning (Big Horn Baptist Church, Worland, Wyoming).

Lori Loftus (Red Cliff Bible Camp, Pinedale, Wyoming) led a ladies’ session as well. Pastor Ted York and First Baptist Church were extraordinary hosts, and we send our grateful thanks to them. Approximately twenty-five ministry individuals attended. Next year’s fellowship is scheduled for April 29–30.



FBFI PHILIPPINES CONFERENCE

Phil Kamibayashiyama

Bob Jones Memorial Bible College hosted the **FBFI Philippines Conference** May 9–11, 2023. There were 254 registrants, not including additional attendees who came to the evening services. Thirty-four pastors were able to pay for at least a portion for their travel (by plane, bus, jeepney, train, or private vehicle) because of funds donated for that purpose. During these days we had nine plenary sessions with nine different speakers; three breakout sessions for men, women, and musicians; and three panel discussions. The theme was “Strengthen Your Core,” focusing on key areas of character, relationships, and ministry.



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FBFI ANNUAL FELLOWSHIP REPORT

Doug Wright

Jim Tillotson, president of Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary, served as the public face and host for FBFI's 102nd Annual Fellowship, which took place June 12–14 on the school's campus. The staff there were wonderful hosts—gracious, pleasant, and successfully meeting every need. Faith Baptist Bible College hosted the Fellowship ten years ago, and many who attended this year were

pleasantly surprised by the updates to the facilities. The campus is well cared for and up to date and is producing graduates that have been exposed to a biblical philosophy of ministry.

The theme was “Reclaiming the Great Commission.” Kevin Schaal, Jim Berg, Dennis Wilkening, Tim Potter, Jim Tillotson, Nathan Mestler, and Josh Crockett each led a General Session in which they focused on a particular aspect of evangelism (and discipleship). In addition, the participants had a full slate of workshops to choose from in the Tuesday

and Wednesday afternoon Breakout Sessions. As usual, the chaplains arrived early and began their training sessions on Monday, then joined us in the Fellowship sessions. Their attendance and participation show how strong and effective this aspect of the FBFI has become. The chaplain corps continues to grow.

One could not leave the Fellowship this year without assessing his or her own effort and participation in the Great Commission. Covid caused many to draw inward and fear interaction. The result has been a hesitancy to witness. Many people got out of the habit of talking with others about their faith. The preaching and workshops at this Fellowship reminded hearers of both their opportunities and responsibilities. It was well worth the time and investment to attend.

If you could not attend this year, perhaps you can put June 10–12, 2024, on your schedule. Next year's Annual Fellowship is “Called to Summit” and will be held at Tri-City Baptist Church in Westminster, Colorado.



FBFI Chaplains

A Chaplain for the Fallen

Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations (AFMAO), located at Dover Air Force Base in Dover, Delaware, is the Department of Defense's (DoD) only support mortuary. AFMAO's sole mission is to repatriate our nation's fallen and their personal effects back to their families, and this mission is sacred. The personnel who serve at AFMAO are hand-selected from each of our nation's military branches.

The Army, as do the other military branches, depends on AFMAO to repatriate their fallen soldiers. The entire process of bringing a body from theater to AFMAO and then to the soldier's final resting place is known as a Dignified Transfer. When the remains arrive in Dover, a chaplain is present to provide pastoral care to families who have been invited to the Air Force base to witness the arrival of their loved one. Very few chaplains have personally witnessed a Dignified Transfer at AFMAO, and I am honored to have been assigned this mission.

CONSOLATION AND CHALLENGES

Having a Bible-believing chaplain accompany the bereaved and comfort them in their pain exemplifies the consolation found in Christ that Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians 1:5. There is no better companion than the Holy Spirit for these remarkable people. Though nothing the chaplain does or says will take away the pain or bring back their loved one, the chaplain still walks alongside them, sharing hope and comfort in their grief. Often, these Dignified Transfers also bring Distinguished Visitors. From the US president down, Distinguished Visitors render condolences to the family and express the gratitude of a grateful nation for their loved one's honorable service. It is humbling to be part of a mission that reaches both the

highest offices in the nation while touching the population of our vast country.

As you might imagine, ministry at AFMAO brings challenges. Though families are certainly in need of care while they are at the Fisher House, the staff also bears a tremendous burden as they carry out this sacred mission. Each fatality comes with unique trauma and psychological, spiritual, and emotional duress. Because we are a small Army unit assigned to an Air Force base, we receive little funding from the Army. As a chaplain of this small group of soldiers with a big mission, I don't have a budget to purchase Bible study materials for our unit staff members and families to navigate these traumatic events. Yet, God in His faithfulness has provided unique opportunities to minister in this austere environment.

A key organization aboard Dover AFB that is vital to the mission of AFMAO is

the United Services Organizations (USO). While the USO provides meals for grieving families as well as food for those who support the Dignified Transfer, finding a way for my small team to partner with them remained elusive. Then, through a prayer partner, a retired Navy contractor, we have been able to enlist the help of an Air Force Chaplain who liaised with the USO to give us space in the base terminal for a Bible study. Now we can provide free refreshments and a comfortable setting for our ministry to our personnel and their families.

THE EXCHANGE

Also, in the beginning of 2023, God sent a missionary from Armed Force Baptist Missions, a mission agency headquartered in Chesapeake, Virginia, who helps missionaries plant and grow local churches to reach the armed forces. These missionaries helped us launch a Bible



Maj. Bret Perkuchin, an Army chaplain, talks with Air Force chaplains at Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations, Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, May 8, 2023. Perkuchin is one of three chaplains who support families of the fallen who travel to Dover to witness the dignified transfer of their loved one. Perkuchin is a reservist on year-long active orders. He is assigned to the 360th Civil Affairs Brigade in Fort Jackson, South Carolina. (U.S. Air Force photo by Jason Minto)



In front of the Fisher House, where we receive and send off family with a three-second salute, an emblem of the nation's care and respect for the Dignified Transfer they have to attend.

study featuring “The Exchange Message.” The Exchange, for short, is an evangelism curriculum written and produced by FBFI Board member Jeff Musgrave. The underlying concept of The Exchange is to comprehensively train believers for relational evangelism. The Lord has been using The Exchange to help us build relationships with soldiers, which has helped us more effectively minister to the spiritual needs of

the staff. We have found the staff is becoming better prepared for their Dignified Transfer experiences. We look forward to the way in which this ministry will grow. We envision Air Force chaplains taking The Exchange to the flight line where maintainers, loaders, and aviators work. When troops feel comfortable enough to record themselves presenting The Exchange Message, the ministry will repro-

duce itself. This replication is vital. I am a reservist on one-year mobilization orders. I do not have the longevity others do.

In less than a year, my ministry at AFMAO will be over. In such a short time, though, I have seen God work. Though the mission of AFMAO is somber and, at times, heavy to bear, my God is greater, and I enjoy serving Him. Time and time again, I have seen Him demonstrate that when I am weak—He is strong.



CH (Maj) Bret Perkuchin serves as Army Liaison Chaplain on orders at Army Casualty and Mortuary Affairs Division (Dover AFB). He and his wife, Amanda, have three children.

Gender, Science, and the Church

Continued from page 11

THE CHURCH

Thus far, I have shared no religious content in this article. The SAFE Act is based on science, not religion. However, that does not mean that the church has no role. In fact, we should ask ourselves, “What is the role of the church?” We must shed the instinct to condemn and avoid these issues. Instead, let’s return to God’s basic purpose.

“Deadnaming” is the practice of calling someone who identifies as the opposite sex by their birth name. This colloquialism itself gives us some insight. So many of these children are attempting to run away from themselves. They hate themselves for some reason. Sometimes it is abuse. Other times it is because they feel insufficient.

Perhaps young people do not feel that they meet the stereotypes of their sex. Maybe they were bullied. Perhaps they simply lack confidence. Shunning them with guilt only

magnifies the feeling of rejection. This can exacerbate their gender dysphoria and drive them away from God. But we can help them return to God’s purpose for their lives.

One young man stated that he was afraid to speak to his spiritual leaders because he feared being branded and demonized. At the same time, he feared secular counselors because he knew that they would lead him down the path of gender affirmation. He knew that God had a plan, but he didn’t feel like there was anywhere he could go for help. His statement taught me that I must be careful with the words I use from the pulpit and in other public places while at the same time holding to the truth of God’s design. When a person comes to me, I want him or her to feel loved while I deliver the truth, and I want to be able to offer reassurance that each one of us is a special design created by God and affirmed by science.

A scientific approach to the issue of gender ideology should guide legislatures and churches to help these hurting people. The church’s role should be that of

unconditional love and personal affirmation—but we don’t affirm the dysphoria as others would. We affirm the person as who he or she truly is. We affirm them as being loved by God unconditionally. We don’t have to make girls prissier or boys tougher. We need for them to know that God loves them just as they are, and so do we.

Many professionals advocate a course of watchful waiting. This approach gives the child time to overcome a phase and time for puberty to play its God-given role. Children ought to learn that God created and designed them—including their sex—for His purpose.

Gary Click is the pastor of Fremont Baptist Temple in Fremont, Ohio, and serves as an Ohio state representative.



* “Glitter families” is a description used by those who detransition from the transgender movement. They note that they were received with glittering fanfare when they joined the movement, but they were despised and scorned when they left it.



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Power to Control or Controlled to Have Power?



From the very beginning of time, there has been a desire for power to control. We see this manifested even before the creation of the world. Satan desired to have power to be like God. In Isaiah 14:13–14 we read of Lucifer, or the Devil, “For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.” Satan’s sinful desire for power to control caused him to be cast out of heaven. Jesus said in Luke 10:18, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” Isaiah 14:12 says, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!” It is this same selfish desire to have power to control that has also been the downfall of many individuals since then.

Napoleon was consumed with having power to conquer and control the known world of his time. It is said that at one point while in his thirties, he sat down and wept because he had nothing else to conquer. Hitler was also insanely consumed with having power to conquer and control other countries. The list is endless of other men and women throughout history who have craved the power to control.

We see this desire manifested in the political realm. The power to control dominates many politicians. They want that power at any cost, even if it means lying,

deceiving, twisting facts, attacking their opponents’ views, or slandering their character. To them, it’s fair game as long as they win. What a tragedy to see this take place in so many politicians’ lives.

But for the child of God who is truly born again, this will not be his desire or goal. In fact, his heart’s desire will be just the opposite. He will want the Lord to control him, for he realizes that power comes only when his life is controlled by the Lord. Scripture reveals this truth in three ways.

First, God’s power comes to us when we are controlled by the Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” When God’s Word controls every decision we make, we will have power to live a life of victory. And Psalm 119:11 tells us, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” Psalm 119:105 says, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Psalm 119:140, “Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.”

Second, the Lord’s power comes to us when we are controlled by the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus said in Acts 1:8, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.” When we are saved, we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit. First Corinthians 6:19 says, “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have

of God, and ye are not your own?” Since the Holy Spirit indwells us, we must walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:16 states, “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” We must be very careful how we live so we will not grieve the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:30 warns, “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” There needs to be a conscious awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. When the Holy Spirit controls us, we will experience God’s power. First John 4:4 assures us by declaring, “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”

Third, God’s power comes to us when we exalt the Lord Jesus Christ. We read in Romans 1:16, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” We know that when we preach the Lord Jesus Christ, we are declaring God’s power to save mankind. Acts 4:12 says, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

May we always share the great proclamation found in 1 Corinthians 1:18: “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”

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