

CONTACT

Official Publication

Will Baptists

August 2002

A portrait of Dr. Melvin Worthington, a middle-aged man with graying hair, smiling. He is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a patterned tie. The background is white.

Dr. Melvin Worthington
Executive Secretary
1979-2002

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THE SECRETARY SPEAKS



Melvin Worthington

Found Faithful

The Philadelphia church (Rev. 3:7-13) furnishes an example of the patient church, the exercise and training of patience and the perfection of patience in its reward. This church is devoted to Christ, His Word, His work and to one another.

The letter sets forth a commendation for loyalty and patience. It also includes a warning regarding the danger of not holding fast. Christ exhorted this church to keep the word of patience, to maintain its strength and to wait patiently for the Lord's return.

Philadelphia is located in Lydia about 28 miles southeast of Sardis, 105 miles from Smyrna. It was a rich and powerful city although subject to earthquakes. The people lived in the open country and were engaged in cultivating the fertile land.

It was probably a new church and very small.

Inscription

This letter is addressed to the pastor of the church in Philadelphia. The letter introduces Christ as the One who is holy and true and therefore qualified to call the Christians of Philadelphia to a life of holiness and faith in Him.

Christ is presented as the One who has "the key of David." Christ has complete sovereignty; He opens and no man shall shut the door. His authority and right to direct His servants are unquestionable.

Inventory

Christ reminds this church that He has perfect knowledge of their works. He viewed the testimony and witness in Philadelphia as He wrote the words of commendation. He reminds them that He has opened the door and kept

it open in spite of their many adversaries. The testimony of the church continued through the centuries as a fulfillment of this promise that they should have an open door.

Jesus acknowledges their works, and this was enough for cheer and strength till the day of recompense arrived. We would do well to remember that their feebleness did not hinder their testimony and service. True grace will enable the Christian to keep the word of Christ and not deny His name. The presence of the Spirit in the Church is an ever-abiding fact pledged by the Lord Himself.

The church in Philadelphia was recognized as possessing at least a significant degree of spiritual power that comes from God, and this assured them of a continued testimony through the open door. They kept His Word—guarded the truth of God as it was committed to them. They had not departed from the faithful system of doctrine held by the apostolic church.

All efforts to induce the believers in Philadelphia to renounce the name of Christ had failed. They refused to let go of God's Word. They subjected their souls and consciences to the written Word, and this was followed by prompt obedience.

Incentive

Unbelieving Jews opposed this

church. This letter designates them as "the synagogue of Satan." The church overcame this opposition. In spite of satanic opposition through imitation, hypocrisy and religious ritualism, the believers in Philadelphia were faithful.

This church's patience and endurance was tested to the utmost, but the trial brought out perfection of such sort as ascended to God as a sweet savour. Because of their patience and endurance, Christ promises to deliver them from the hour of temptation. Those who are faithful to God are often hidden from the trials and difficulties that fall on those who have opposed God.

Instructions

This church is instructed to hold fast that which they had. Death, desertion and compromise may thin the company and reduce it to an insignificant, feeble few. But all the more need to "hold fast" and not surrender. The character of the times demands unflinching loyalty by the faithful and unwavering devotedness to Christ.

This church was deeply conscious of its responsibility and its insufficient resources from the human standpoint to fulfill the demands laid upon it. It had unusual prospects for service but a distressing inability to meet them.

Christ, in His message, supplies the comfort it needs and corrects the error of its self-judgment. Christ reminds them that to bear quietly may be as divine a call as to hope largely or to be enthusiastic in resolve. Through pains, self-questionings and endurance of insufficiency, we are trained for future usefulness. ■

The Secretary's Schedule August 2002

1-3 CMP Conclave
Pasadena, CA

5-7 Arkansas State Association

Some Highlights From 23 Years

Just a few of the many important events during Melvin Worthington's years as executive secretary of the National Association of Free Will Baptists.

1982

- Fifteen churches from the Primitive Baptist Conference (Canada) join the National Association and become the Atlantic-Canada Association of Free Will Baptists.

1983

- Worthington begins providing leadership in RCMA (Religious Conference Management Association). He will serve as secretary/ treasurer, vice-president and president of RCMA.

1985

- National Association of Free Will Baptists celebrates 50 years with the largest attendance in history—8,340 attendees. Music Commission produces a Jubilee recording; Historical Commission publishes *The 50-Year Record*.

1986

- Worthington earns the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) designation marking him as a leader in the hospitality and convention industry.

1988

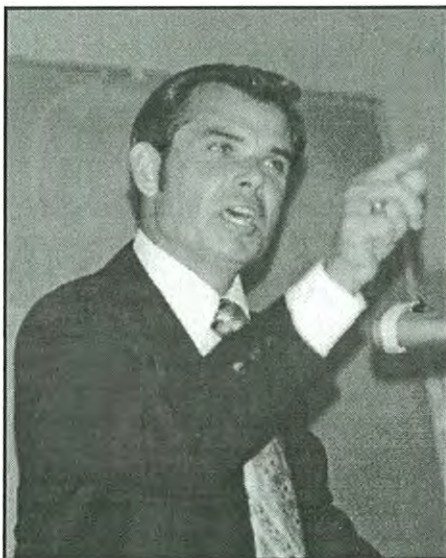
- Publication of *The Free Will Baptist Hymn Book: Rejoice*, the first new denominational hymnal since 1964. The 720-page hymnal sets an industry standard.

1991

- Completion of current National Offices Building in Antioch, Tennessee. The \$1.8 million structure houses seven national agencies.

1992

- Under Worthington's direction, the denomination adopts The Together Way Plan. The plan includes coop-



Something seemed to stir Dr. Worthington in Detroit, Michigan, in 1977.



But he was all smiles at the 1986 convention in Tulsa, Oklahoma.



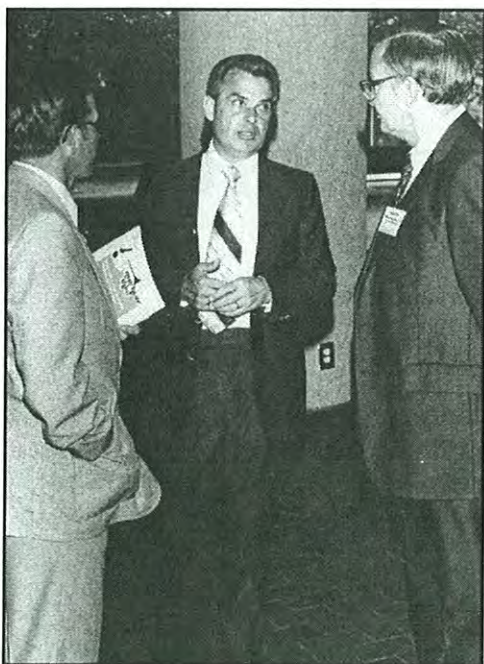
Worthington (r) at 1979 reception welcoming him to Nashville.



1978—Kansas City, Missouri—Melvin Worthington (c) with moderator Bobby Jackson (l) and clerk Waldo Young.



The mayor of Anaheim, California (l), came bearing gifts for Worthington in 1980.



Cornered in Columbus, Ohio, (1981) by Roger Reeds and friend.



Worthington (l) and Bobby Jackson at the 1984 convention in Little Rock, Arkansas.



Melvin reports to delegates in Nashville, Tennessee, 1985.

erative and designated funds for district, state and national outreach.

- Free Will Baptist *Treatise* revised.
- Worthington named to the CMP Board.

1994

- Worthington receives the RCMA President's Award for outstanding service to the convention industry.

1995

- The International Fellowship of Free Will Baptist Churches, Inc., organized. Worthington elected secretary/treasurer.

1996

- Free Will Baptist *Treatise* revised.

1998

- Worthington earns Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree from Vanderbilt University.
- Waldo Young completes 30 years as clerk of National Association of Free Will Baptists.

1999

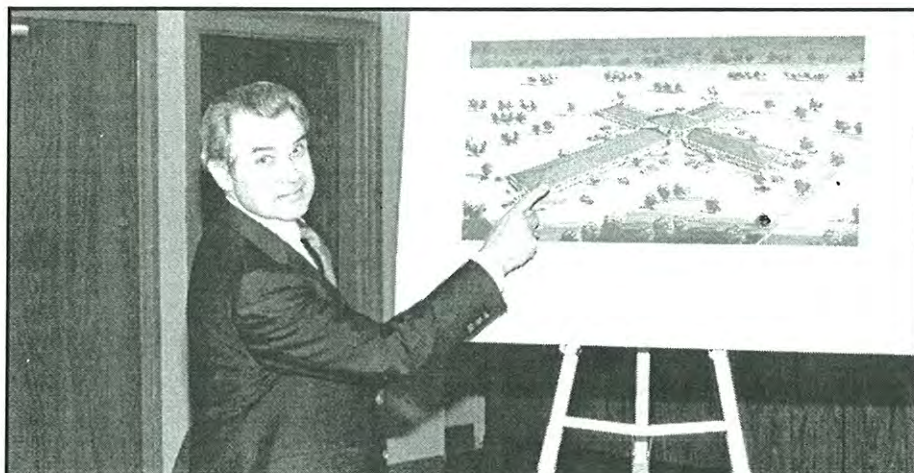
- Worthington chairs the denomination's Educational Task Force.

2001

- Dean Jones employed as convention manager.
- Free Will Baptist *Treatise* revised.

2002

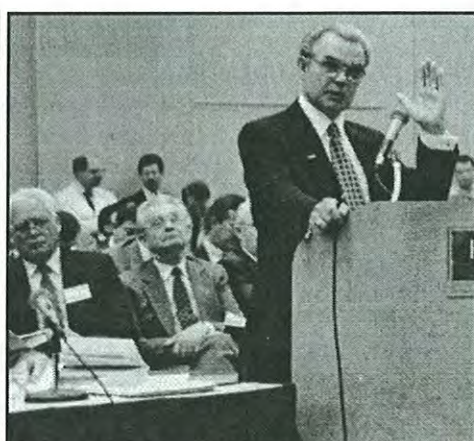
- Melvin Worthington retires after 23 years of service to the National Association of Free Will Baptists. ■



Worthington explains to the Executive Committee why he wants to build a new office complex (1987—Birmingham, Alabama).



Mississippi General Board member J. L. Gore (l) shakes hands with Worthington before the meeting starts in Tampa, Florida (1989).



"And that's the truth," Worthington said in 1993 at Louisville, Kentucky.

Just the Facts About . . .

Dr. Melvin Worthington

Born:	June 17, 1937	Greenville, North Carolina
Education:		
1955	Diploma	Ayden High School, Ayden, NC
1959	Bachelor of Biblical Education	Columbia International University, Columbia, SC
1967	Bachelor of Theology	Luther Rice Seminary, Jacksonville, FL
1969	Bachelor of Divinity	Luther Rice Seminary
1970	Master of Theology	Luther Rice Seminary
1974	Doctor of Theology	Luther Rice Seminary
1979	Master of Education	Georgia State University
1998	Doctor of Education	Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN
Ministry:	Ordained August 16, 1957	
Pastorates:		
1959-1962	Union Chapel FWB Church	Chocowinity, NC
1959-1962	Palmetto FWB Church	Vanceboro, NC
1962-1966	First FWB Church	Darlington, SC
1966-1967	Wesconnett FWB Church	Jacksonville, FL
1967-1972	First FWB Church	Amory, MS
1972-1979	First FWB Church	Albany, GA
Denominational Positions:		
1966	Clerk	South Carolina State Association
1973-1974	Assistant Moderator	Georgia State Association
1975-1977	Chairman	Sunday School & Church Training Board
1975-1979	Moderator	Georgia State Association
1976-1977	Chairman	Graduate Study Committee (NAFWB)
1977-1979	Assistant Moderator	National Association of Free Will Baptists
1978-1979	President	Georgia Bible Institute
1979-2002	Executive Secretary	National Association of Free Will Baptists
1979-2002	Convention Director	National Association of Free Will Baptists
1979-2002	Editor-in-Chief	Contact magazine
1995-	Secretary/Treasurer	International Fellowship of Free Will Baptist Churches, Inc.
1999-	Chairman	Educational Task Force (NAFWB)
Other:		
1955	North Carolina Farmer Degree	Future Farmers of America
1957	American Farmer Degree	Future Farmers of America
1965	Diploma	Imperial Detective Academy (Cincinnati, OH)
1983-	Board of Directors	Religious Conference Management Association
1984-1985, 1996-	Secretary	Religious Conference Management Association
1986	Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) Designation	
1986-	Advisory Board	American Family Association
1986-	Board of Directors	Christian Leaders for Responsible Television
1986-1988	Vice-President	Religious Conference Management Association
1989-1992	President	Religious Conference Management Association
1992	Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) Board	
1994	President's Award	Religious Conference Management Association
Personal:		
1959	Married Anne Katherine Wilson	
	Two children:	
	Daniel Worthington	
	Lydia Worthington Selitto	

What Some Nice People Are Saying About Melvin Worthington . . .

Upon the eve of your reassignment in the Lord's vineyard, several things stand out in my mind as I review the wonderful years of service you have rendered as executive secretary of the National Association of Free Will Baptists. Your ministry has been characterized by faithfulness to the task assigned, fairness to the people you have served and firmness in difficult decisions you had to make.

Your life has reflected accountability to the Master you have served. Your life has been characterized by adaptability to the varied makeup of our diverse denomination. Your life and ministry have reflected an availability to be of service to the total denominational family without showing partiality. This is an admirable trait for those who would lead us.

**Milton Worthington, Pastor
Central Free Will Baptist Church
Royal Oak, Michigan**

You wouldn't think it would be easy pastoring the pastor to our pastors, or preaching week-after-week to the archbishop of alliteration. But it *has* been easy because Dr. Melvin has been so unflinchingly easy-going, supportive, wise and personable.

In 1979, Dr. Worthington was called to Nashville just before I was. He joined the Donelson Church just in time to vote for me (or so he claims). Soon thereafter he was among the ones who came to Greenville to move us and our belongings to our new home. From the first, he and Anne were among our most valued members . . . in the choir, in the children's ministry, on the softball diamond, in the class lectern.

He has deftly kept the whole denomination on an even keel and has mastered the art of weathering storms without becoming waterlogged. He did a lot to keep me on an even keel as well, especially on past occasions when I was tempted to become a little denominationally tense.

I'll miss him holding down his corner seat on the back row with the teenagers. I'll miss his motions to adjourn our business meetings. And I'll miss his reformatting my sermons into acceptable King James alliteration.

**Robert J. Morgan, Pastor
Donelson Free Will Baptist Church
Nashville, Tennessee**

Thank you for 23 years of faithful service as executive secretary. I join with other Free Will Baptists in expressing our profound gratitude for your effective leadership, servant's spirit and significant achievements during your tenure in the Executive Office. Our denomination is better because of you.

I am especially grateful for the support, encouragement and wise counsel you have given to me personally. Working alongside you in the denominational arena has been a special and rewarding experience. I am deeply in-

debted to you for your advice and guidance as my advisor while I worked on my field research project at Moody Graduate School.

Your biblical approach to dealing with denominational problems has been both instructional and inspirational. Your fair-mindedness in your relationship with others—both supporters and critics—has been a testimony to your spiritual maturity and wisdom. Thank you for always conducting yourself as a true gentleman.

You are to be commended for your willingness to be innovative and open to change while holding fast to the immutable principles of scripture. Your love for Christ and commitment to Free Will Baptists have never been questioned. You have represented our denomination well as our chief executive . . . we are proud to have had you as our leader and spokesman.

**Keith Burden, Pastor
Locust Grove Free Will Baptist Church
Locust Grove, Oklahoma**

As a service writer for 30 years, my daily routine did not afford me the luxury of greeting very many exultant people. My normal encounters included irate or disgruntled customers who wanted their vehicles repaired or did not want to make a visit to the service department in the first place. About 15 years ago, that daily routine was made a little brighter. Melvin Worthington began to patronize Crown Ford.

I do not recall anyone as pleasing as Dr. Worthington. Each time he visited, his persona reflected only positive vibes. He was always smiling, always full of joy. He seemed so organized, so on track, that one would almost be envious. That lasts only a moment though, because as a Christian, you know personally what fills Melvin's soul, and you understand fully where his contentment lies.

Negative is not an adjective you would ever associate with Melvin. I'm not even sure negative is even in his vocabulary. It is definitely the furthest thought from my mind when I reflect on him. I pray for his continued prosperity as he opens a new chapter in his life.

**James E. Craig
Service Department, Crown Ford
Nashville, Tennessee**

Since 1979, we stood side by side as we faced both the problems and progress of our beloved denomination. You and I have not always agreed, yet our friendship has never been broken, though it has been bent a few times.

The year 2004 will be my last year on the Executive Committee. At that time, I will have served 21 years on the committee and 29 years on the General Board. All those years on the committee will have been spent with you at the helm, guiding and directing our people. You have had my support, and in turn, I have led the people of Arkansas

in being the #1 supporter of the Executive Office.

**David Joslin, Executive Director
Arkansas State Association of Free Will Baptists**

It is almost impossible to find the words to convey my feelings of admiration and respect. You are a special person to me.

We first met in 1984 as Charleston was bidding for the national convention. I did not realize at the time how important you and other Free Will Baptists would become in my life. I found a home . . . a family that I cherish to this day and often turn to for support.

Dr. Worthington, you will be missed. How satisfying it must be knowing your guidance and dedication will complement the knowledge that your successor brings to the position. You have touched the lives and hearts of so many over the years, and I feel certain you will continue to do so in retirement.

**Judy Ward, Director of Services
Charleston Convention & Visitors Bureau
Charleston, West Virginia**

You have fought a good fight, almost finished the course, and so far kept the faith. Most appropriate is "*the good fight*." Thanks for leading us, the National Association of Free Will Baptists, safely through so many conflicts. You are a good arbitrator and have attempted to be an honest, sincere peacemaker.

The years I worked with you from the position of moderator were a real joy and your administrative abilities made my job easier.

This could go on, but it is over for both of us now and a younger generation will take responsibility for leading our denomination. Whatever accolades come your way on this day of recognition, enjoy them. Tomorrow will have new problems, so take a day off.

**Evangelist Bobby Jackson
Former Moderator
National Association of Free Will Baptists**

I can truthfully say that "I hate to see you go!" For 23 years you have carried the denominational torch—and carried it well! No one has ever done a better job than you as executive secretary of the National Association of Free Will Baptists.

It was under your watch that the new National Offices Building was secured, the annual *Directory* is so much more complete and *Contact* has switched to color! But more than those things, you have given outstanding leadership to the entire denomination. You have been honest, fair and forthright in all of your dealings.

**Dr. Charles Thigpen
Promotional Director
Tennessee State Association of Free Will Baptists**

The woman who knows him best writes about Melvin Worthington.

Dear Melvin . . .

By Anne Worthington



Melvin and Anne Worthington in 1994 photo for their 35th wedding anniversary.

Even after 43 years of marriage, can I say that I know you? Do I know your innermost dreams, desires, goals and ambitions? Do I know your fears, anxieties, stresses, struggles, disappointments, burdens, dashed hopes, failed ambitions?

Can one person wholly know another even though they are one? I think not. Do I know the depth of your love, compassion, commitment, your private walk with God? Again, I think not.

The Apostle Paul says that no man can know the things or thoughts of a man except the spirit within him. I can only judge you by your outward behavior, the fruit you produce and your conduct. That's all anyone can know about another.

Walk With God

Your walk with God is private. You aren't overly emotional or demonstrative spiritually, but stable and unwavering in your beliefs. The Holy Spirit has been your guide. You have yielded to His control. His fruit is evident in your life.

Perhaps your greatest spiritual strength is that you saturated yourself with God's Word. You made it part of you and allowed it to permeate your life. You faithfully committed yourself to its reading and it became your guidebook for life.

The Bible became a lamp to light your way and a mirror to reflect your true inner self. It is God's microscope to see yourself as He sees you and a telescope to look beyond yourself to

others. It is the source of your spiritual nourishment, regulating your life, controlling your motives, manners and principles. You know and understand it and allow it to influence your decision-making processes and your dealings with others.

The Bible tempers your attitudes, disposition and character. It not only illuminates your life but transforms it, so that little by little it increasingly resembles the moral and spiritual character of the Lord Jesus.

You have been faithful to God's call. When He called, you turned your back on your ambitions and faithfully followed His will. You have served tirelessly and joyfully, never considering God's work, boring, hard or drudgery.

You preached with authority and conviction, giving priority to God's Word. You preached it pure and undiluted, without letting criticism or peer pressure affect you. You preached the message God laid on your heart and never fretted about whether it was good or bad, but let the Holy Spirit bring about the results.

Character

I read that the word *gentleman* could be substituted for the word *love* in I Corinthians 13. A gentleman is not hasty, but patient and slow to anger. He is not inconsiderate, but kind, good-natured, gentle, tender and polite. He is not envious of others, but content. He is not boastful, arrogant or proud, but humble, gracious and lowly.

He is not rude, but courteous. He is not self-seeking, but self-forgetting. He is not irritable or easily angered, but good-tempered. A gentleman is not vindictive or malicious and does not retaliate when wronged. He is protective, trusting, hopeful and persevering.

Although you are not perfect, Melvin, these virtues and qualities are evident in your life.

Melvin, "If you speak with the tongues of men and angels," the scriptures say, "but be not a gentleman, you are only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If you have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if you have a faith that can move mountains, but be not a gentleman, you are nothing." You are a gentleman.

Leadership

It is a well-established fact that during your 23-year tenure as executive secretary you have brought stability, dignity, fair play and trustworthiness to the office. You have perceived your leadership role as that of a servant, serving those you were called to lead.

Jesus said that he who would be great among you must be a servant. Authentic, solid leadership comes from those who give themselves to service. Servanthood doesn't depend on education, qualifications, degrees or natural ability. It is a gift from God, to be approached with humbleness and meekness, realizing the awesome responsibility it requires.

As a leader you realized that you be-

longed to those you served. You worked with them and for them. You manifested openness, dependency and integrity. You were steadfast and unwavering, viewing problems as opportunities.

In her July-August 2001 article, "Mystic, Master, Manager," in *CoLaborer* magazine, Brenda Evans used the following words to describe the qualities of a leader: Planner, strategizer, organizer, collaborator, learner, risk-taker, communicator, encourager, motivator and procreator. These adequately describe your leadership qualities.

As a planner, strategizer and organizer you not only looked at the present, but also to the future. As a collaborator you respected, accepted and enlisted the leadership skills of others. As a learner you broadened your horizons through higher education and consultation.

Although risk-taking isn't part of your nature, you took bold steps to better the denomination and to thrust it forward.

Communication has been one of your strong points as a leader. The lines of communication have always been open to any and all.

You have sought to be an encourager, building up, making each pastor and layperson feel that he or she is an important part of the body of Christ and Free Will Baptists.

As a motivator you have encouraged others to take bold steps. And as a procreator you have sought to create more leaders, rather than more followers. You are a leader.

Husband

Patient, gentle, kind, considerate, consistent, reliable, trustworthy, faithful, tender and tough. These describe you as a husband. You're not a flatterer, nor are you romantic, sentimental or gushy, but practical and stable. You're not short-tempered, spiteful, demanding, irritable, moody, accusing or complaining, but happy and content.

You're never demeaning, belittling or critical, but always the encourager. You respect my opinions, and try to understand my womanly feelings and emotions even though they are so foreign to your own. You do not hover over me or smother me, but allow me to pursue my own interests.

You do not take advantage of my timid personality, but protect me emotionally. For that reason, you are not ar-

gumentative. We agreed early on that arguing only leads to distrust and hurt feelings, and things said in anger were destructive and wounding.

Although you are superior to me logically and theologically, you patiently listen to my theology according to woman. Thank you for your kindness, gentleness, patience, understanding and supportiveness.

Children

Our desire for our children was that they not be wealthy, famous, popular or successful, but that they fear and serve God.

What kind of children did we produce? Much like yourself: stable, reliable, hard-working, trustworthy, conscientious, kind, considerate, happy and content. And most importantly, desiring and seeking God's will.

Conclusion

This is how I perceive you, Melvin. Not a perfect man, but one who in measure reflects the fruit of the Holy Spirit and one who lives by the principles of God's Word. Perhaps others do not perceive you as I do, but then, they do not love you as I do. ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Mrs. Anne Worthington has been married to Melvin Worthington for 43 years. She has served as a pastor's wife, executive's wife, mother, Sunday School teacher and office worker. Anne has been active in the Women Nationally Active for Christ at the local, district, state and national levels.

The Father I Know

By Daniel Worthington

Retirement testimonials, remembrances and tributes are a tricky business. Some degenerate into irreverent celebrity roasts, while others become an exercise in sentimental nostalgia or hagiography. If the following appears overly hagiographic in tone, I beg your forbearance. It reflects the admiration and respect I have for my father, his work and his legacy.

Others can speak more authoritatively to Dad as a husband, friend, brother, pastor, colleague and denominational leader, but as his son I can speak to him as a father, teacher, counselor and mentor. As in all aspects of his life, Dad allowed the scriptures to guide him in his role as husband and father.

In his epistle to the church in Ephesus, Paul admonishes parents to provoke not their children to wrath. He completes this thought in his letter to the Colossians, warning parents to avoid inciting their children to anger lest they become discouraged. Positively, Paul urges parents to raise up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, training and instructing them in the ways of our Heavenly Father and Savior.

As I grow older, I marvel at how close my mother and father exemplify Paul's prescriptions for Christian parents. I often comment to friends and associates that my childhood was comparatively idyllic. I credit that memory and reality largely to the influence of my parents.

Neither is perfect; both have strengths and weaknesses but, thankfully, they compliment each other perfectly. Mom and Dad created an environment where my sister (Lydia) and I had discipline, structure and order, but where there was also an abundance of affection, love and security.

Balanced

In characterizing my father as a par-

ent, I am impressed with the balance he brought to fatherhood. As Paul wrote to the Ephesians and Colossians, parenting involves both the negative and the positive. Negatively, parents must correct and discipline their children—correction that must be stern enough to affect the necessary modification in behavior but not so stringent as to dispirit or discourage the child.

Between the extremes of permissiveness and strictness, Dad always charted a mediating course. Discipline, responsibility, correction and, when necessary, punishment characterized our home life, but it all came cloaked in love, forbearance and patience.

Dad had standards and convictions that he believed, preached and lived; we were expected to respect those beliefs and obey his dictates. Dad was strict, but never draconian or rigid; if Lydia or I disobeyed or misbehaved, he would correct us, but always in love and with mercy and compassion.

Dad never raised his voice, spoke harshly or harangued; he rarely got angry. If we disagreed with a house rule, he patiently listened to our point of view. Lydia and I usually left those discussions crestfallen, but it was nice to know that he respected us enough to listen.

Dad's rules and regulations—they always seemed to have a mysterious force of reason behind them that made them irritatingly difficult to argue against or disobey—had one purpose: to provide guidelines for Christian living in a fallen world.

A Teacher

Dad balanced discipline and correction with training and instruction. Paul urged fathers in Ephesians to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Throughout our years at home, Dad strove to direct Lydia and me toward the right

ambitions and goals. He accomplished this directly through instruction, in the pulpit and at home, and indirectly through his own example.

In the pulpit, he taught us to love the Lord above all else, to care for and serve others, and to exhibit attitudes and behaviors consistent with a godly life. He taught us to view everyone, regardless of race, creed, color or political persuasion, as children of God worthy of respect.

An accomplished Bible student and expositor, Dad never allowed his knowledge to become abstract; he always demonstrated the ability to present his insights in a form that communicated both the simplicity and complexity of the Christian faith. His sermons and lessons were clear and concise, but never patronizing; he never diluted the message, but always trusted that the Holy Spirit would open our eyes, ears and hearts to God's truths.

At home, Dad taught us to love our neighbors, pray for our friends and enemies alike, and to treat everyone with kindness and respect. He instructed us in the ways of righteousness, and provided object lessons to reinforce appropriate and inappropriate behavior. He taught us responsibility, accountability and self-sufficiency. He strove to prepare us for the day when we would leave home and start our own families.

Generous

Dad reinforced his instruction by being generous and unselfish in his commitment to our maturation. Though busy with pastoral duties, revival meetings and denominational responsibilities, Dad always found time to spend with us. He took us to the golf course with him, even when we could barely swing a club and when he, an accomplished player, could have had a more enjoyable round alone or with

friends. He coached ball teams, went to football games, attended band concerts and cheered us on through more graduation ceremonies than I choose to remember.

Dad was also generous with finances. Money was never an obstacle in our home; if Lydia and I wanted to attend school, Dad provided the financial support. At a time when costs for higher education were escalating, Dad put two children through college—on one salary without financial aid.

When I chose to go to the University of Illinois, he supported me until I could secure enough funds to underwrite my tuition and fees. I will always be thankful for his willingness to sacrifice for my happiness and well-being.

Optimist

Optimism ruled our home; pessimism and cynicism found little fertile soil in Melvin Worthington's house. Dad urged Lydia and me to pursue God's will for our lives, to immerse ourselves in His Word, and to seek His presence through prayer and meditation.

Educationally and vocationally, Dad encouraged us to seek opportunities that would maximize our talents, not pad our bank accounts. Committed to education and intellectually curious, Dad urged us to expand our minds through reading, travel and formal training. He never feared that education would hamper our Christian faith; he believed correctly that education would strengthen our understanding of and commitment to God.

Dad encouraged us to follow our dreams, and reassured us when things did not go according to plan. An optimist to a fault, Dad never allowed us to get discouraged; he assured us that our goals were reachable with perseverance and hard work. Comfortable with himself and his calling in life, Dad created an environment where we had room to mature and find our way.

He never put undue pressure on us or pushed us beyond our capacities. Dad wanted us to be happy, content and fulfilled, and he directed us along paths he felt would achieve those objectives. Dad never asked when we would finish degrees or find employ-

ment; his faith and belief in the Lord's direction was sufficient to convince him that we were on the correct path. He simply encouraged us to do our best and trust in the Lord for our future. In all things, he exhorted us to be obedient to God's call on our lives and have faith in His guiding hand.

Example

As Lydia and I charted our course through the difficult years of adolescence and young adulthood, Dad served as a shining example of Christian devotion and commitment. Self-disciplined, dedicated and confident of God's call on his life, Dad made serving the Lord his paramount concern. He read and studied the scriptures; he prayed and meditated on the Lord's teachings and he applied them to his life as a denominational executive, friend, neighbor, parent and pastor.

Dad always identified himself with God's interest in other people rather than identifying God with his interest in other people. Regardless of circumstances or position, Dad stayed true to his faith, beliefs and commitments, even in the face of changes within and without the church.

Following Christ's example, Dad treated everyone who came into his life equally, without prejudice or affectation. He rarely spoke a negative word against anyone, even when provoked. He was unfailingly fair, honest, just and tolerant with friends and enemies alike. As a pastor and later denominational executive, he befriended all, even his critics.

A peacemaker by nature if not creed, he strove to promote peace and harmony in his home, churches and denomination, believing that advancing God's kingdom superceded internecine strife and conflict. In a time when many ministers were becoming bitter, cynical and disillusioned with the ministry, Dad remained positive, upbeat and optimistic. He never appeared discouraged or disillusioned; "burn out" simply was not in his vocabulary. Dad always put service and responsibility ahead of his personal or financial well-being, convinced that the Lord's provision was sufficient.

There is no greater testament to Dad's Christian walk than his relation-

ship to his mate. As a husband, Dad exemplified Paul's admonition for husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the Church. Dad was always kind, caring, patient and loving; he never chastised, criticized or belittled Mom, either publicly or privately. Not one for outward displays of affection, Dad nevertheless showed that he was devoted to Mom and appreciative of her role as mother and mate. I regularly thank God for the wonderful example he proved.

No Greater Legacy

As I have grown older, Dad has become a trusted and wise counselor, a confidante and a friend. His wisdom and counsel have often served me well as I have charted the uncertain course of adulthood. He does not force his counsel on me; he allows me to be my own man, but is always willing to offer a word of advice or a helping hand if needed. I am proud to bear his name and follow in his footsteps.

Dad has done exceptional things for the Lord and his Kingdom, but to my mind his greatest accomplishment is that he proved exceptional in ordinary things, remaining holy through trying times and circumstances, living the life of a disciple through the drudgery of life. Most of his accomplishments are visible, but his lasting contribution to my life is that he led a Christ-filled life not only in the Church but also in his neighborhood, community, city, state, nation and world. A man can have no greater legacy. ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Dr. Daniel E. Worthington is the son of retiring executive secretary Melvin Worthington. While a student in college and graduate school, he served as security officer at the annual Free Will Baptist national convention.



The daughter who hoped he would lose the election remembers Melvin Worthington.

Dear Daddy . . .

By Lydia Worthington Selitto

I can hardly believe it is time for you to retire. Could it really be 23 years ago that you were elected executive secretary? It seems as if it were only yesterday. I can vividly remember exactly where I was when I first heard the news.

It was the last day of the 1979 Free Will Baptist national convention. The business meeting was about to be over and all important business decisions were ready to be finalized. They were electing a new executive secretary and you were one of the nominees.

I remember feeling proud that you were one of the nominees, but at the same time I hoped you would not be chosen. You have to understand that I was thinking like a 17-year-old whose life was about to be changed forever.

I was standing in the back of the convention center when I heard that you had been elected. My first reaction was total devastation and denial. How could this be happening to me! I know it was a selfish self-centered thing to think, but when you are 17 and about to enter your senior year of high school, all you can think is, *My life is ruined!*

Grandmother's Advice

I was feeling mighty sorry for myself when I ran into my Grandmother Worthington. She took one look at me and knew what I was thinking. She looked me right in the eye and said something to me that instantly straightened me up.

She said, "Now Lydia Anne, you know your father is doing the Lord's work and he is going to go wherever the Lord leads him." Boy, did that stop me in my tracks.

I knew that doing the Lord's work and seeking His will was something valuable to you. I also knew that you would not consider any change unless you had prayed about it and done some serious soul-searching. I reluctantly accepted the fact that we would be packing all our belongings and memories to move eight hours away to Nashville, Tennessee, to begin a new chapter in our lives.

Getting Lost Together

Moving to Nashville was a big change and adjustment. It was overwhelming to move to big city after living in a small town. I was overwhelmed by my new school. I had attended a school of 800 students in Albany, Georgia, and now I was going to a school that had 2,800 students.

To make things worse, the school was so large that the walls were color-coded so that you could find your way around! One wrong turn down the wrong colored set of stairs and you missed your bus and were stranded. I prayed that would never happen to me. But one day it did.

I took the wrong turn and ended up at the back of the school instead of the front. By the time I got to the front of the building, the buses had pulled out and all that was left was a puff of exhaust. I remember feeling panicky, and then I realized I'd just have to call you at the National Offices.

When I reached you, you assured me that you would be right over to get me. You came to pick me up, we started for home . . . and promptly got lost. You never got frazzled. We just rode around until we eventually figured out the way home. Your calmness and unfailing confidence made me realize that everything—the move and the new school would be all right.

Fair to Everybody

As you prepare to leave Nashville and begin a new chapter in your life, there will be many others with memories of your time as executive secretary. Some will be serious, some will be funny. I will always be reminded of the fact that you were a strong leader who treated everyone with fairness and kindness. You never spoke harshly to anyone even when they were not kind to you.

When faced with adversity and criticism, you would rise above all that and treat your adversaries with loving kindness, fairness and humility. It takes a great man to treat others with gentleness and love when they are not being treated the same way.

As leader of Free Will Baptists, you spent many tireless hours heading committees, solving conflicts and visiting churches. You rarely missed any state meeting. You were always present to lend support and be a leader the people could go to for advice. You were a peacemaker in difficult situations. Your unwavering calmness and keen sense of fairness enabled you to listen to both sides of any situation and help all involved come to a workable compromise.

These strong leadership abilities were evident to others also. You were chosen to be president of RCMA (Religious Conference Management Association) because of these qualities. People look for a leader who deals with situations fairly and makes wise decisions. You were that man.

Always the Preacher

Although you were very busy, you still found time to go to churches and preach God's Word. This is something I know you loved and missed. Preaching God's

Word to others was something you held dear, and you took each opportunity to share the Word with others.

As a father you treated Daniel and me with the same sense of fairness, gentleness and love. There were never any raised voices or harsh words spoken. Your unconditional love and support were always evident in the way you treated us. You showed us through your actions the importance of seeking and following God's plan for our lives.

You instilled in us a desire to live a Christian life and taught us to be strong individuals with high standards and morals and gave us life-long Bible-based skills that enabled us to cope in a secular world. Many times I would think to myself and sometimes even say, "Why can't I do that; everybody else does?"

You'd say, "Well, you're not everybody else." I now find myself saying that to my children. I have to smile as the words come out of my mouth. Your godly life helped mold and shape me into the parent I am today. I am thankful for the example you set for us as we were growing up.

Now it is time for you to once again pack up your belongings and memories and move. This time you will be going home to the place you love: Peaceful Acres in Ayden, North Carolina. You can look back on your time as executive secretary and know that you did your best. You worked hard to unify our denomination and bring great dignity to the office you held. You touched many lives and I know that you will be missed.

Daddy, I wish you well in your new journey. Enjoy your retirement. It is well-deserved and long overdue.

Your loving Daughter,

Lydia



ABOUT THE WRITER: Mrs. Lydia Worthington Selitto is a wife, mother of two and a school teacher. She is also the daughter of Dr. Melvin Worthington.

A minister remembers his Free Will Baptist classmates from Ayden High School.

The Buckle on the Bible Belt

By Wil I. Jackson



Peaceful Acres—The Worthington Home, established 1936.

Jesus said that a city set on a hill cannot be hidden (see Matt. 5:14). There was scarcely a hill to be found in the town of Ayden, North Carolina. The land of my origins is flat; the soil is rich and fertile. When it rains, water stands in the fields, and the dirt roads are horrendous to travel. Still, for those of us who grew up there, it was a little bit of heaven on earth. My father stated his belief that the spelling had evolved from E-D-E-N to A-Y-D-E-N over the long years since the creation story in Genesis.

The Bible states that the village of Bethlehem was “little among the thousands of Judah” (see Micah 5:2). Nonetheless, from the Bethlehem of seemingly unimportance came the greatest birth ever celebrated! Certainly no one has ever emerged from Ayden’s population that can come anywhere close to matching the Christmas story. In history, Ayden would be considered “little among the thousands” of towns across America.

Pickles and Collards

Ayden was incorporated in 1892 and

was a trade town for farmers. Down-town consisted of about four square blocks during the days of my residency. Though there were only two stop lights, there was considerably more light in this little hamlet than at first glance. The population of less than three thousand people both lived and worked in Ayden.

For a number of years, Ayden had a thriving pickle business. But today the town may be best known for its annual Collards Festival, a week-long celebration around Labor Day.

The favorite native son was always the late Loonis McGlohon, pianist and composer. In 1998, Loonis was inducted into the National Academy of Television and Arts Hall of Fame.¹

Paul Miller, while playing for the Ayden High School Tornadoes, was featured in *Sports Illustrated* after a remarkable winning streak of 58 straight games in three different sports—football, basketball and baseball—plus two state championships.

Hometown Heroes

While I appreciate the talents of these notables and others, two things

prompt me to write about Ayden. First, I recall a man saying that we need to resurrect our heroes of the past.

Second, since the terrorist attacks of planes crashing into the twin towers at the World Trade Center in New York and at the Pentagon in Washington, a lot of heroes have been cited. For the most part, they had never been head-liners before. They were air flight passengers, family members, firefighters, police officers and EMTs, possibly others.

The earliest heroes for most children, like Ayden collards, are the homegrown variety. Without a doubt, Ayden’s citizens were its greatest asset in regards to its children and youth. The inhabitants of our little hamlet had much to do with the shaping of our lives and of our value system.

They were people who stood by to comfort and support when a neighbor was in a pinch. Besides our parents and pastors, there were public school teachers, Sunday School teachers and our high school coach who touched our lives in ways worthy of mention.

As children growing up, we played with a sense of security in our own yards and in our neighborhoods. As we

continued to grow, we were free to roam all over town. There was not as much sense of danger as there is today. Most parents helped look out for each other's children. It certainly did not take long for parents to find out if we were doing something wrong. The grapevine encircled Ayden.

North Carolina natives pretty much know what you mean when you say, "It was a typical eastern Carolina town." There was a rural flavor to those towns and a strong resistance to change. But they also were known, and still are, for their southern hospitality and for their adherence to biblical principles. Ayden could have been the buckle on the Bible belt.

Free Will Baptist Influence

Ayden's light was great, and her contributions toward the betterment of the world were numbered beyond our ability to count them. I can count, however, at least 22 men and women, nurtured in the soil of Ayden's style of Christianity, who entered church-related vocations within the same time frame about which I am writing. Eight found their early nurture in the Free Will Baptist denomination.

Of the total number, eleven became pastors, two directors of Christian education and one a music minister. Two of the men sold established businesses to return to college and/or seminary in preparation for their new calling from God.

Three sets of brothers were among those who heeded the tap on the shoulder, summoning them to service in God's vineyard. One was a missionary in Japan for 23 years; another was a military chaplain who served in two combat zones—Korea and Vietnam—and then was called up from active reserves to serve during the Gulf War.

Of particular mention from out of the Free Will Baptist tradition are: The Rev. Dr. Jerry Ballard—executive director of World Relief Corporation who moved that agency from a \$1.6 million operation to more than \$20 million annually with more than 1,200 employees. In all, his efforts resulted in raising more than a billion dollars for humanitarian causes. Jerry also carried out special assignments at the United Nations and in Vietnam for Presidents Carter and Reagan.

The Rev. Dr. Bill Davidson—professor of church history at Columbia Bib-

lical Seminary at Columbia International University, Columbia, South Carolina. Bill has also written a history of the Free Will Baptists in America, which is now in its second printing after revisions and updates.

Finally, the Rev. Dr. Melvin Worthington has been the visionary executive secretary of the National Association of Free Will Baptists since 1979. He and his twin brother, Milton, also a pastor, will be retiring this year and relocating to newly-built retirement homes on the family farm near Ayden.

City of Light

Those Aydenites of yesteryear may not have been head-liners, but Jerry, Bill, Melvin and I, and a host of others, owe them a deep debt of gratitude. They were for those who sought ordination, and for other children and youth as well, a vessel of God's love and grace.

Ayden always will be remembered by me as a place where the light that came into the world in Jesus shone brightly. His glory was reflected in the lives of those good people, and they nurtured us as we let that light filter into the dark reaches of our souls. Finally, that light emerged as the real presence of Christ in our hearts.

I see Ayden as drawn out of the heart of God. God made His imprint on the life of every man, woman and child and on some more deeply than on others. Granted, people the world over have a measure of goodness in them that

seems to surface when human need is most evidenced. But Ayden looms in my mind as a tiny village figuratively set on a hill, making its light shine into the near reaches and the far corners of the earth. Ayden—speaking for Melvin and me, we are thankful to have been reared in those environs identified as the buckle on the Bible belt! ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Wil I. Jackson retired after 40 years as a United Methodist Church pastor. Then he promptly accepted an interim appointment to Bethesda UMC in Durham, North Carolina.

Reverend Jackson preached his first sermons in Free Will Baptist churches near Ayden—services arranged by Jerry Ballard and Bill Davidson. He played on the Ayden Tornadoes football team with Melvin and Milton Worthington.

Endnote

1. Mangum, William, *Carolina Preserves*, Cynthia Adams, Editor, Published by William Mangum, Fine Art, 2182 Lawndale Dr., Greensboro, NC 27408.



Gunfight at the Worthington Corral—1948. Melvin (L) and Milton Worthington.



Part eight
of an eleven-part series
on
"Habits of Highly Successful People"

Pure in Attitude and Action

By Kevin Riggs¹

**Habit #7 –
A Successful Person
Remains Pure in Both
Attitudes and Actions.**

Radio personality Paul Harvey tells the story of how Eskimos kill wolves. The account is grisly, yet it offers fresh insight into the consuming, self-destructive nature of sinful lusts . . . the sin at the heart of the Seventh Commandment:

First, the Eskimo coats his knife blade with animal blood and allows it to freeze. Then he adds another layer of blood, and another, until the blade is completely concealed by frozen blood. Next, the hunter fixes his knife in the ground with the blade up. When a wolf follows his sensitive nose to the source of the scent and discovers the bait, he licks it, tasting the fresh frozen blood.

He begins to lick faster, more and more vigorously, lapping the blade until the keen edge is bare. Feverishly, now, harder and harder the wolf licks the blade in the arctic night. So great becomes his craving for blood that the wolf does not notice the razor-sharp sting of the naked blade on his own tongue, nor does he recognize the instant at which his insatiable thirst is being satisfied by his own warm blood. His carnivorous appetite just craves more—until the dawn finds him dead in the snow.²

No one sets out to destroy lives through adultery, but it happens. Immorality starts slowly until the appetite for more overpowers the will to say no. More than once I have had people say to me, "I didn't mean for it to happen. We just let ourselves get out of control."

The Seventh Commandment

Commandment Seven states, "Thou shalt not commit adultery."³ No explanations and no excuses—just plain, simple and straightforward. The word "adultery" is a specific word referring to sexual intercourse between one man and another man's wife. The prohibition is not against sex itself, but against the misuse of sex. The absolute truth behind this Commandment is that any type of sexual activity outside of, or in addition to, a covenant marriage relationship is sin.

Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to

lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."⁴ Adultery is as much an attitude of the heart as it is an action of the body.

Adultery starts in the mind, continues through flirtation and ends in the bedroom. The person who says, "We didn't mean for it to happen," committed adultery long before the physical act.

The Big Question

The question is: *Why does God reserve sex for marriage only?* The answer goes beyond, "Because God said so." God has at least two reasons why He reserved sex for marriage.

Protection.

Once I realize that God loves me, wants what is best for me and doesn't want to see any harm come my way, I realize all His commands are for my benefit. How does the Seventh Commandment protect me?

First, it protects me from defying God. God created sex;⁵ it was His

idea. God commanded Adam and Eve to have children; He knew what they would have to do to procreate, and He called that act "good."⁶

Furthermore, since God created sex, He has the right to place it within boundaries. God says that within marriage sex is beautiful,⁷ but outside of marriage it is a sin.⁸

Second, God also wants to protect me from defiling myself. Immorality is no worse than any other sin, but no other sin affects me like immorality. All sin destroys, but immorality has the potential to create life. Furthermore, the root cause of many people's emotional problems can be traced to an abuse or misuse of sex. God knows this and wants to protect me from harming myself.

Third, God wants to protect me from destroying my family, the end result of adultery.

Provision.

Somehow the union between husband and wife is symbolic of a believer's union with Jesus Christ. Marriage was designed to teach me about God. Satan knows this; he also knows if he can harm the marriage relationship, he harms my understanding of God.

For example: Through faith I became one with Christ. Through the marriage act I became one with my wife. The latter is an illustration of the former. If I misuse the oneness of sex, I harm my ability to understand what it means to be one with Christ. Marriage is sacred, the oneness of the marriage relationship is holy.

Sex is more than physical; it is emotional and spiritual as well. Within marriage the sexual act draws two people together, outside of marriage it pulls two people apart. In the Old Testament, God used two different words to describe this truth. One word referred to sex within marriage, the other for sex outside marriage.

Within marriage the word used was *yadah*. The root meaning is "to know," "to experience," "to understand" or "to commit oneself to another." In Genesis 4:1 the Bible reads, "And Adam *knew*⁹ Eve his wife; and she conceived." By using the word *yadah*, God was saying that within marriage there is an intimacy—a knowledge, an experience, an

understanding and a commitment of one another—that cannot be achieved outside marriage.

Outside marriage, the word used was *shacab*, meaning, "to lie with." There is no sense of intimacy or closeness in *shacab*. *Shacab* is a cold, unfeeling word, nothing more than physical contact. By using these two words, God was saying the result of sex within marriage is one thing—intimacy; while the result of sex outside of marriage is another thing—loneliness.

God desires to provide me with the most loving, intimate, exciting relationship in life. He provides that relationship through marriage where both partners are committed to God and to each other. In that relationship, not only do I grow closer to my wife, I also grow closer to God.

Habit #7

The Seventh Commandment is straightforward, "Thou shalt not commit adultery."¹⁰ The seventh habit is a combination of the Commandment and the teaching of Jesus.¹¹ The seventh habit states: *A highly successful person remains pure in attitudes and actions.*

If I desire to be successful, I must commit myself to obeying God's Word when it comes to my sexuality. I must make the choice to remain abstinent outside marriage and faithful within marriage. If I desire to be successful, I must understand sex to be both a spiritual and physical act. I must guard my thought life, and I must be careful what I watch, read or listen to. If I desire to be successful, I will remain pure and I will hold God's standard of morality high.

There are few sites more beautiful than the Mississippi River. Every time I cross the bridge in Memphis from Tennessee into Arkansas, I marvel at the power and majesty of that river. For centuries it has been the lifeblood of commerce and transportation in mid-America. Most of the time this mighty river flows peacefully and calmly, within its banks, towards the Gulf of Mexico.

Periodically, however, the river rises, causing severe flooding. At times the Mississippi runs wild, overflowing its banks, destroying farms, homes, lives. Within its banks the river has tremendous benefits. Outside

its banks it is extremely dangerous.

God's gift of sex is like that river. When it is kept within the banks of marriage it is holy, beautiful, wonderful. When we let it flood and overflow its banks, it becomes ugly, perverse and dangerous. God loves me and wants what is best for me. He had good reasons to command, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and a highly successful person will obey that command. ■

Endnotes

1. I would love to hear from you with your questions and comments. Please feel free to email me at kevin@franklincommunitychurch.org.
2. Quoted from *Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching From Leadership Journal*, ed. Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 146.
3. Exodus 20:14.
4. Matthew 5:27-28.
5. Genesis 2:24.
6. Genesis 1:28-31.
7. Hebrews 13:4.
8. 1 Corinthians 6:18.
9. The Hebrew translated "knew" is *yadah*.
10. Exodus 20:14.
11. Matthew 5:27-28.



ABOUT THE WRITER: Dr. Kevin Riggs pastors Franklin Free Will Baptist Church in Franklin, Tennessee.

Clarence Newman, Ohio Pastor, Dies



PLAIN CITY, OH—The Reverend Clarence J. Newman (76) died May 18 after an extended illness. He was senior pastor of Marysville FWB Church in Marysville, OH, at the time of his death.

During a phone interview a month before his death, Newman told *Contact* editor Jack Williams, "My pastoral ministry has been to hurting people, and to hurting and weak churches. The Lord has allowed me to go in where a small church was in trouble and lead them back to health. I've done it over and over again. My final project was at the

Marysville Church in 1995."

Former home missionary Mark Vandivort agreed with Newman's evaluation of his ministry: "Brother Clarence took two of Arizona's small, weak churches and led them to self-sufficient strength. He was an excellent builder of the kingdom as well as physical structures."

Reverend Newman was born September 30, 1925, in Huntington, West Virginia. Converted at age 12, he was called to preach in 1957 and ordained to the ministry in 1958.

A powerful preacher with a distinctive voice, Newman conducted revivals in 16 states. He said, "I never preached a revival in 45 years without at least one person being saved. My best revival was at the Cleveland FWB Church (Ohio) in the 1960s. We had 75 people saved in one week."

Most of his 45-year ministry was spent in Ohio, with 10 years in Arizona sandwiched between his Ohio pastorates. Newman will be best remembered for his work with Ohio's West Jefferson FWB Church and Marysville FWB Church.

"I couldn't say no when the

Marysville Church called me in 1995," Newman said. "We paid off a \$46,000 indebtedness, remodeled and built a new auditorium, and conducted the first service in the auditorium on Easter Sunday 2001."

Brother Newman served as moderator for the Ohio State Association and as promotional secretary. During World War II, he served with the Merchant Marine. He was a classic car collector and was the 1969 Grand National winner with his 1969 Mustang convertible.

Funeral services were conducted May 22 at Marysville FWB Church. Reverends John Mountjoy, Sterl Paramore, Bill Pitts, Billy McCarty, Forrest Dyer, Dan Booth and Wiley Perkins officiated. Thirty ministers gathered for the funeral along with friends and family.

Reverend Newman is survived by his wife of 57 years, Ollie McGlone Newman; three daughters, Diana Pirkey, Debi Paramore and Denise Raburn; two sons, Jerry Newman and Jim Newman; 16 grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren, one sister and two half-brothers.

Florida Hears David Gibbs III

JACKSONVILLE, FL—Delegates to the 58th annual Florida State Association got a surprise when Christian Law Association attorney David Gibbs III showed up to speak twice and lead four hours of seminars. He was a last-minute substitute for his father, Dr. David Gibbs, Jr., who had a heart attack.

The May 8-11 meeting at Jacksonville Marriott Hotel registered 135 people for the state association, 275 for the youth conference and 60 for the Florida Women Active for Christ session. Thirty-five ministers attended.

Moderator Tim Owen led business sessions that saw delegates adopt a \$460,000 state budget, including a \$134,000 Together Way Plan budget. Together Way funds will be allocated to the National Association, Florida Executive Office, State Missions Board, Youth

Board, C. E. Board and the Alabama Children's Home.

Florida executive secretary David Williford resigned after two years to accept a position at Free Will Baptist Bible College. He received a plaque and a check from attendees. The executive secretary's post remains open for the moment.

The Florida Women Active for Christ met Thursday for business, fellowship and worship. Lea Edgmon spoke at the FWAC luncheon with 70 people in attendance. FWAC members raised \$5,200 in six weeks for the Dennis and Trena Owen account, and brought the offerings to the state meeting.

The 2003 state association will meet April 30-May 3 at the Jacksonville Marriott Hotel.

Bible College Hires Advancement Director

NASHVILLE, TN—Rev. David Williford, a veteran Free Will Baptist pastor and an alumnus of Free Will Baptist Bible College, will be the new director of institutional advancement, according to President J. Matthew Pinson.

He replaces Roy Harris who, after 17 years at the college, has been called to the pastorate at Woodbine FWB Church in Nashville.

Rev. Williford has broad denominational experience. Over a span of nearly 30 years, he has pastored in Florida, Tennessee, Alabama and Arkansas. He has been at his present pastorate in Chipley, Florida, for 12 years.

Williford (48) has been a member of the Foreign Missions Board since 1996 and served as executive secretary of the Florida State Association for the past two years.

"FWBBC has had a tremendous impact on my life," he says. "I consider it a great honor to be a part of a ministry that has touched so many lives over the years. I am convinced that a strong and vibrant FWBBC is es-



sential to a strong and vibrant Free Will Baptist denomination.

"President Pinson has indicated that, more than ever, he wants to find creative ways to allow FWBBC to be a service institution to our pastors and churches. Many of our men have not had opportunity to attend the college but are open to ways the college can help them be more effective in their ministries. We have unprecedented opportunities to serve our churches and help them fulfill the task God has given them, and I'm excited to be a part of that."

Converted at age nine, he was ordained to preach at age 20. He completed the B.A. and M.A. degrees at FWBBC and FWBBC Graduate School, and subsequently did graduate work at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Rev. Williford moved to Nashville in June to assume his new duties.

Free Will Baptist Bible College Graduates 33

NASHVILLE, TN—Thirty-three seniors graduated in commencement exercises at Free Will Baptist Bible College on Thursday morning, May 16. Dr. Melvin Worthington, executive secretary of the National Association of Free Will Baptists gave the challenge.

The Class of 2002 includes one Associate of Arts, one Associate of Science in

Business, 25 Bachelor of Science and six Bachelor of Arts recipients. They represent eight states and the Virgin Islands.

The following graduates are commended for completing this portion of their training and should be in our prayers as they pursue the Lord's will:

Associate of Arts

Matthew Turnbough
Nashville, TN

Associate of Science in Business

Crystal René Elkins
Clintwood, VA

Bachelor of Science

Heather Renee Asbell
Hendersonville, TN
Brandon M. Atwood
Huntsville, AL
Brooke Michelle Atwood
Huntsville, AL
Sheri Kay Bagwell
Nashville, TN
Aaron Randall Barnard
Kinston, NC
Henry Gowdy Cannon
Turbeville, SC

Ralanna Gale Currin
Nashville, TN
Frances Elizabeth Edwards
Kinston, NC
Kelly Jo Guyton
Colona, IL
William Bryan Hughes
Nashville, TN
Michael D. Hutton
Columbia, TN
James Lewis Kessinger
Springfield, TN
Jenny Dale Lewis
Nashville, TN
Mark Woodrow Littlefield
Moore, OK
Amy Rene Lytle
Nashville, TN

D'Andra Kay Robinson
Nashville, TN
Barbara Deanna Short
Ashland City, TN
Christina Nicole Smith
Nashville, TN
Jennifer Stone
Hampton, VA
Joy Elizabeth Taylor
Cisne, IL
Joni Lynn Thomas
Albany, GA
Angela Beth Thompson
Kennedy, AL
Jonathan Lee Turnbough
Nashville, TN
Brett Micheal Weaver
Locust Grove, OK
Donna Jo Williford
Nashville, TN

Bachelor of Arts

Charles B. Chay
Nashville, TN
Christopher Adam Clagg
Hixson, TN
David Matthew Dodson
Christiansted, VI
Jennifer Lynn Dycus
Bonnie, IL
Vera Lucia Eads
Monterey, TN
Joshua Aaron Smith
Nashville, TN



currently

Retired **Oklahoma** minister **Ray Gwartney** celebrated 50 years in the ministry. He preached his first sermon November 15, 1951. He has served as moderator of **South Grand River Association** since 1988. Gwartney pastored five Oklahoma churches, served 14 years on the Hillsdale FWB College Board and served on the Executive Board. Executive Director **Ernest Harrison** presented a plaque to Brother Gwartney for 50 years of faithful ministry.

Pastor **Kenneth Edwards** reports 12 baptisms at **Harmony FWB Church** in **West Frankfort, IL**. The church conducted day-long homecoming services on May 5.

Contact welcomes the **Bloss Beacon**, newsletter of **Bloss Memorial FWB Church** in **Arlington, VA**. Steve Faison pastors.

Members of **West Tulsa FWB Church** honored Pastor **Connie Cariker** for his 40 years in the ministry. The event included testimonies and personal thanks to the Carikers, music featuring a Cariker family choir and trio, a sermon by the honoree and an afternoon video presentation. The church sponsored a barbecue lunch and a reception for Connie and Glo Cariker.

Pastor **Matt Crain** welcomed five new members to **Johnston City FWB Church** in **Johnston City, IL**. The church now offers van transportation to worship services.

Pastor **Frank Young**, members of **First FWB Church** in **Ardmore, OK**, and Oklahoma executive director **Ernest Harrison** conspired to surprise Reverend **Albert Collier** with a 50th-year ministry celebration. They succeeded. When Harrison presented a plaque to Brother Collier, he reminded guests that Albert Collier was a church planter, church organizer, church builder and a man known for his wisdom and kindness.

Trinity FWB Church in **Bridgeton, MO**, turned 40 in June and celebrated with three nights of revival preaching

featuring **Lynn Davenport**, **Michael Garner** and **Millard Sasser**. Missouri executive secretary **Nathan Ruble** was the Sunday keynote speaker. At press time, the church was between pastors.

When Pastor **Glenn Lewis** retired in January, members of **First FWB Church** in **Pryor, OK**, honored him with a retirement celebration that included a video of his ministry years. Then they gave Glenn and his wife Pat an Alaskan cruise. Brother Lewis has pastored in Missouri, California, Arkansas and Oklahoma. He has preached 92 revivals.

Jessica Barnett, a high school student who is a member of **Cross Creek FWB Church** in **Olive Branch, MS**, took first place all-round honors at the Mississippi State gymnastics competition. Pastor **J. L. Gore** thinks that's great. The church now has a van ministry.

Tupelo FWB Church in **Tupelo, MS**, began a Master's Men chapter with 20 members. The men have begun a scholarship fund to assist youth from church who attend Bible College. Pastor **Terry Pierce** said that 80 new people visited the church in one month recently.

Reverend **Joseph F. Wukitsh**, a Free Will Baptist minister for 46 years in Michigan died October 16, 2001. During his ministry, he was an evangelist and pastor, serving three churches over the years. He had been pastor of **Seventh Street FWB Church** in **Ecorse, MI**, for 24 years when he died. One of his most remembered qualities was his willingness to encourage young preachers. Joseph and Ruby Wukitsh were married 47 years.

He's perfect! **Jimmy Collins** has not missed Sunday School for 30 years at **Shiloh FWB Church** in **Detroit, MI**. **Earl Plemmons** pastors.

Twenty-six students at **Free Will Baptist Bible College** made straight-A averages for the spring semester. Ninety-nine students made the Dean's List—26 seniors, 27 juniors, 26 sophomores and 20 freshmen. The Dean's List includes students who finished with all grades of B or higher.

Pastor **Fred Crank** reports 14 new members and four conversions at **Mansfield FWB Church** in **Mansfield, OH**.

Thirteen conversions and nine new members have Pastor **Dick Cozad** smiling at **Petra FWB Church** in **Jackson, OH**. He's also happy about the new church sign out front and the pastor appreciation day that honored his work in the community.

Gahanna FWB Church in **Gahanna, OH**, has 20 new members. That's the word from Pastor **Curtis Booth**.

Pastor **Tim Stout** baptized eight converts and welcomed 11 new members at **Heritage FWB Church** in **Columbus, OH**. During 50th anniversary activities, former pastor **Paul Thompson** preached to more than 400 attendees.

Pastor **William Chadwick** reports seven conversions and four baptisms at **North FWB Church** in **Columbus, OH**.

Members of **Carolwood FWB Church** in **Northport, AL**, dedicated the first-phase completion of their family life center. Some 250 people attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony led by senior member **Millard Austin**. **Jerry Montgomery** pastors.

Pastor **Jack Whitley** reports 220 people present when **Bethlehem FWB Church** in **Pontotoc, MS**, dedicated their new sanctuary.

Members of **First FWB Church** in **Peoria Heights, IL**, dedicated their new auditorium. Guest speaker was founding pastor **Joe Wallis**, now in North Carolina. Pastor **Dan McEvers** has led the congregation 27 years. ■

WNAC 12th National Retreat

Ridgecrest, NC
September 19-21



Hartley

Freeman

Theme: For Such a Time as This

Scripture: Esther 4:14

Hymn: "For Such a Time as This"

Music Coordinator: Rebecca Pugh

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

3:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Registration and check-in

5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. Dinner

7:00 p.m. - 7:15 p.m. Prayer Time

7:30 p.m.

General Session

Special Music: Mini Concert—Ronda Freeman

Speaker: Ashley L. Hartley

"Climbing Life's Mountains"

11:30 p.m.

Quiet Time

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

7:15 a.m. - 8:15 a.m. Breakfast

8:45 a.m.

General Session

Special Music: Ronda Freeman

9:15 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. Speaker: Ashley L. Hartley

"The Hand of God" (Part I)

10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. Break

10:30 a.m.

General Session

Special Music: Ronda Freeman

10:45 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.

Speaker: Ashley L. Hartley

"The Hand of God (Part II)"

12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m.

Lunch

1:00 p.m.

Your Choice: Missionary Displays /
WNAC Literature Room / Recreation

5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Dinner

7:00 p.m.

General Session

Missions Service: Joanne King and Laurie Horne

Missionary Offering

Two-by-Two Prayer Time

11:30 p.m.

Quiet Time

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

7:15 a.m. - 8:15 a.m. Breakfast

8:30 a.m. - 9:15 a.m.

General Session

Congregational Singing

Special Music: Ronda Freeman

9:15 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Speaker: Ashley L. Hartley

"God's Hand on the Journey"

Register Today: Online: www.nafwb.org/wnac (click on announcements).

By phone: 1-800-588-7222.

By mail: see registration form in May/June CoLaborer.

Women Nationally **WNAC** Active for Christ

\$101,986.21 in Unclaimed Funds

By D. Ray Lewis

Ever wonder why you receive all those requests from our office for verification of the information we have on you? How many times have you thrown these forms in the trash without verifying the information?

It is important for you to check these forms for accuracy. Several things might change from year to year. It may be something as small as a new area code or a new zip code. But the change may be a new spouse or the loss of a spouse, a new beneficiary, a new address, a new employer, etc. It is important to make sure we have your correct information so you won't join the list of 41 people below.

People frequently move and forget to notify our office of their new address. Others die and their heirs either don't know about these funds or they just overlook them. When this happens, these funds sit here earning the current rate of interest, waiting to be claimed.

So please take time (when you see an envelope from the Board of Retirement in the next few weeks) to look at all the information and make sure it is correct. Then, whether there are corrections or not, put the form in the self-addressed envelope that will be included, and return it to us. It is amazing how few people return the forms to us, even when there are significant changes that could affect their retirement account.

With every mass mailing that we do, the post office returns several pieces of that mailing to us because the participant has moved and either left no forwarding address or the forwarding order with the post office has expired.

Today we are holding \$101,986.21 for forty-one (41) people who have money invested in the retirement fund, and we do not have an address for them. The balances in these accounts range from a low of \$59.62 to a high of \$25,766.82. Some of these funds would be available immediately to the participant without any penalty or tax liability. Many of these accounts have significant balances. Our problem is, we don't know how to contact these people.

We need your help! We want these people to have their funds. If they are no longer employed by Free Will Baptists, no matter their age, they have immediate access to their funds. Below is a list of the participants with

invalid addresses. If you have any information about one or more of these people, please contact our office by calling us at our toll-free number, 1-877-767-7738.

Michael DeWayne Aldridge
Norma Alexis-Dolor
Johnnie F. Aricer
Theresa Hensley Beam
Jenita Casilla Benjamin
Jessie Ray Carothers
Magella Bibiana Chooran
Jimmy Grey Cone
Charles William Crenshaw
Kevin Lee Douglas
Randy Dean Durham
Gary Wade Fields
David Lee Filkins
Daniel Ray Fitzgerald
Mark Alan Harrison
Bethany Allison Hood
Roger Kyle Hood
Mindy A. Howell
Linda Irene Lee
Robert Wayne Lee
Frances Mae Love
Stephen Marcel
Linda Diane McCarter
Charles Wayne McReynolds
James Calvin Mosley
Timothy Allen Murfin
Pamela Quinones
Bencie Mitchell Rasnake
Veda Lynette Richards
Reed Linn Resinger
Sharon Jeanette Sanhueza
Sandy K. Shaffer
Pamela Susan Shoemaker
Marjorie Simon
Patricia E. Skinner
Shermin Smith
Faith Thompson
Edward Lee Turnage
Dennis James Williams
Ronald W. Wood ■

Retirement



& Insurance

Living in Brazil is often a lot of trouble. But mostly we (our family) just cause others A LOT OF TROUBLE. We have good friends, close friends and very special friends. But, lately I have been thinking about our "A Lot of Trouble" friends. These people are unique and everybody needs friends like them. To be perfectly honest, missionaries can't do what they do without this kind of friend.

Until you have been in the situation of packing up life in one country and moving life to another, you may never understand. These friends say, "Don't worry about your house. We know you haven't slept in three days. After you leave we'll come over and clean the house and clear out all the stuff that is left." Then they actually do it!



The David Aycock Family

"A Lot of Trouble" Friends

By Annette Aycock

When we were to leave the U.S. to return to Brazil on December 28, 2000, some of these special friends took a day off work to drive us 1 1/2 hours to Knoxville, Tenn., to catch the plane. After unloading our 18 bags and six carry-ons we were told, "Our airplane won't hold all this luggage. No airplane leaving from Knoxville can handle your luggage." David told the attendant he had called and confirmed this amount of luggage a few days earlier, but it made no difference.

At about 2:30 p.m. an airline agent said a flight was leaving Atlanta for Brazil at 6:30 p.m. The men reloaded all the luggage, we hurriedly said goodbye to family and friends, and we sought to abbreviate the four-hour trip. We arrived at the Atlanta airport at 6:30 and David ran to the ticket counter shouting, "Hold the plane!" Too late! They had shut the doors, and were preparing to depart.

After little or no help from the airline, we changed carriers and booked a flight for the next day. At 11:00 p.m. we found a hotel and our friends left around midnight. They arrived home about 5:00 a.m. and had to be at work in a couple of hours. That was quite a sacrifice.

We are very thankful for our "A Lot of Trouble" friends. They are the friends that you hand the registrations and keys to the cars and say, "Sell them, please." They are the ones

that agree to do your stateside banking while you are out of the country. They pay the bills that keep coming for several months after you have left. They are the ones you write and say, "Will you please send out our newsletter? We only have 1,000 on our mailing list. And oh, could you include a picture this month!"

"A Lot of Trouble" friends are those you call when you are thousands of miles away and say, "I need a favor." These friends offer to keep your dog because

you can't take her with you. They are the ones you call when you are broken down on the road after midnight. They come and get you.

Winter before last, while living in our house in Tennessee, a big storm came through. David and I were lying in bed and I heard a noise that sounded like a freight train had just passed through the house. I reached over and grabbed David's hand. "What was that?" He replied, "I think a branch fell on the roof."

Our house is surrounded by huge oaks. We got up to investigate. Sure enough, a 50-foot tree (a "branch") had fallen on our house. So on one of the coldest Saturdays of the year our "A Lot of Trouble" friends were there freezing and sawing wood for hours!

I know what you are thinking. You're glad you are not one of our close friends because we are A LOT OF TROUBLE! But I want to challenge you. If God gives you the opportunity to be this kind of friend—especially to a missionary—grasp the opportunity. Take the challenge!

We pray for this group of friends on a regular basis and trust that God will just pour out blessings on them. Perhaps an extra reward awaits them in heaven! They are special to us. After all the trouble we cause, "thanks" just doesn't seem to be quite enough.

If you ever visit East Tennessee, attend Limestone Free Will Baptist Church on a Sunday. Look closely at the faces and you will be looking directly into the faces of many of our "A LOT OF TROUBLE" friends! Then, give them big hugs from all of us! ■



Working Together

By Kenneth W. Akers
General Director, Master's Men

As I study God's Word, I have found the phrase, "with one accord," several times. And it seems that each time the words occur, something big has just happened or is about to happen.

Since I began with Master's Men, I have had the opportunity to be in several states and many of our churches. While it seems that we hear a lot of negative comments about our denomination, as far as I can tell, there isn't that much fussing going on.

Of course, there will always be disagreements among brethren over certain issues, but for the most part we get along.

Throughout my life I have been involved with several groups, some in the Christian realm and some in secular areas. I've noticed that most of the problems come when someone feels threatened by someone else.

When I started with Master's Men, I came with a servant's heart. I want Master's Men to be servants to our denomination. Since I have been working at the National Office Building, I haven't found any competition among our departments. As a matter of fact, I have seen our national departments working hand-in-hand with each other.

At the present time, Master's Men is working on projects with most of the other departments. In April we joined with WNAC to co-sponsor a National Marriage Enrichment Conference. For the third year we will be working with Home Missions concerning Operation Saturation on September 28. We recruit Free Will Baptists to go to a Home Mission church and help that missionary. We will also be taking a group in September to Canada and New Hampshire on a mission trip in conjunction with Operation Saturation.

Last year I had the opportunity to go to Nantes, France, to help Steve Riggs on the renovation of his new building. We are working with Foreign Missions and Free Will Baptist Bible College on the renovation of Boyce House on the campus to be used as the Missionary-in-Residence home there.

This is what just our department is doing. Other departments are working together also. This is all being done to further the cause of Christ.

Let me assure everyone that there is unity and cooperation between our national departments. Let me also say that I believe in Free Will Baptists. I believe that when our denomination works together, God will bless our efforts and He will be exalted. ■

Master's



Men



Garnett Reid

"Sez Who?" (Job 31, Part II)

Last month we noted that Job 31 offers unique insight into the moral dimension of human personality. Three factors contribute to this uniqueness. First, these words are very early in history, pre-dating the moral code of the Decalogue by some six centuries.

Second is the context of Job 31. After the book's prologue and three rounds of dialogue (chs. 1-27) comes a great wisdom hymn (ch. 28) serving as its axis. In spite of wisdom's intervention and counsel, Job struggles to resolve his suffering with God's purpose. He remembers how rich God's blessings were in days gone by (ch. 29), then laments his horrific losses that have brought him to the ash heap (ch. 30). His "oath of innocence" in chapter 31 thus emerges from the painful fire of adversity.

The third factor marking Job 31 as a singular chapter involves its setting in ancient Near Eastern culture. In Job's day a person suffering hardship because of another's accusations could request a trial or hearing. At this inquest the law demanded that the "plaintiff" produce evidence to support his allegations or drop all charges.

The "defendant" could respond with an "oath of innocence," affirming that he was not guilty of the charges. Often this oath took the form of an "if... then" statement: "If I have committed this particular wrong, then may judgment come to me." Note this feature here in verses 9-10, 21-22, 26-28, 38-40, and in Psalms 7:4-5 and 137:5-6.

In his testimony, Job lists several (the usual count is 14) sins he has not committed. He does so not to parade his self-righteousness as though he is without sin; Job 7:21, 9:30-31, 14:16-17 and 15:14-16 testify otherwise. Instead Job is searching for answers, desperate to know God's purpose in his life. In the process he provides us with a portrait of right-

eousness, denying that he is guilty of:

Lust (vv. 1-4)

Job had made an agreement ("covenant") with his eyes not to look longingly at a woman. Since God knows everything, He would surely see this "iniquity."

Deception (vv. 5-6)

In this "if/then" statement, Job denies that he has lived in "vanity"—a word that involves falsehood, often used of idols in the Old Testament. Instead, his life has modeled integrity (see Job 2:3, 9).

Greed (vv. 7-8)

The expression, "mine heart walked after mine eyes," echoes Eve's experience in Genesis 3:6. In the New Testament, John likewise warns of the "lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:16) and the danger of covetousness. The "blot" mentioned in verse 7 is likely the contaminating effect of taking what we covet.

Adultery (vv. 9-12)

Some of the strongest language in the chapter condemns marital unfaithfulness. It is a "heinous crime," a fire that destroys. Job reminds us here that both husband and wife suffer when one betrays the other.

Abuse of servants (vv. 13-15)

Verse 15 is extremely significant. Though the Old Testament regulates slavery, it never recognizes one person as essentially inferior to another. "Did not he that made me in the womb make him (the servant)?" asserts Job.

Disregard for the poor (vv. 16-18)

Job recognizes his responsibility to share with those in need (see Job 29:11-20). To "cause the eyes of the widow to fail" has the idea of not providing what she is looking for so that her countenance falls.

Failure to clothe the poor (vv. 19-20)

Along with concern for those in need comes the necessary action taken to help them. In this case, Job affirms that he has provided warm clothes for those who needed them. The New Testament shares this concern for love in action (James 2:15-17; 1 John 3:17-18).

Perverted justice (vv. 21-23)

"Lifting up a hand" against an orphan likely carries the idea of voting to indict an innocent party. Note the full statement of judgment for such a crime (vv. 22-23).

Trust in wealth (vv. 24-25)

Similar to the condemnation of greed in verses 7-8, this censure emphasizes the heart attitude of "trusting" (Hebrew *bthach*) in wealth.

Astrology (vv. 26-28)

Again Job focuses on the heart in warning against worship of the heavens (see Rom. 1:25), one of the most common perversions of worship in the ancient Near East. The effect of such misplaced worship is to deny God (v. 28).

Delight over an enemy's fall (vv. 29-30)

Jesus' teaching to "love your enemies" stems from such Old Testament passages as this one, Leviticus 19:18 and Proverbs 25:21-22.

Lack of hospitality (vv. 31-32)

Job had welcomed travelers into his home, fed them generously and provided them with lodging. Such provisions were essential in ancient cultures (see Rom. 12:13; 1 Tim. 3:2; Heb. 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9).

Concealment of sin (vv. 33-34)

Even when he had sinned, Job had not hidden his crimes out of fear of what people might think of him.

Abuse of land (vv. 38-40)

God's gift of land is a prominent Old Testament theme. Job refers here to mismanagement of the land so as to cause abuse of its provisions. In his culture, defiling the land would bring defilement to a community. God provides land for sustenance (Gen. 1:28-29), not exploitation.

These words form the heart of biblical ethics, stressing such fundamental principles as loyalty, love, worship, equity, justice, compassion, honesty and accountability. They merit more attention in the life of the church. ■

THE PASTOR'S WIFE



Shirley Thomas

To Tell the Truth

By Shirley Forbes Thomas

The Lord must have had a good laugh when He picked me to be a preacher's wife, a mother and a professor/administrator at a Christian university. Even though I had great parents, I wasn't even a slightly-well-behaved child. In one of my worst moments, I took a bunch of girls for a midnight ride in a school bus when I was 12. I eloped at age 16.

To the joy and relief of our families, my husband Loyd and I became Christians shortly after our marriage in 1956. Not long after that, Loyd answered the call to preach; so we went to Nashville for him to attend Free Will Baptist Bible College.

God Can Use You

If any young pastor's wife ever finds herself wondering how on earth God can use her, given her faults and weaknesses, I can assure her that if God has used me He can surely use her.

I was once given a pile of Popsicle sticks at VBS to help my class make "a cabin in the corner of gloryland." At the end of a full week of all-day VBS, my class had a pile of glue-encrusted Popsicle sticks that illustrated "God likes Popsicles better than cabins and anyway we want a mansion."

Learn to Laugh

The longer I live and serve Christ the more I realize that it's best just to be one's self in the parsonage, the church, the classroom or wherever—that is, pastors' wives shouldn't be afraid to be transparent. Let people get to know you. And, please, don't be afraid to laugh at yourself.

I have fallen inside and out of so many moving vehicles—ranging from a toilet on a Greyhound bus, to a tent camper, to a van, to a motorhome—in various stages of undress that I've decided that those episodes are the

Lord's way of giving me a metaphor for my life as a preacher's wife: *exposure*.

Incidentally, the Greyhound happening was on the way to my husband's ordination, a divine omen of what was to come.

Get a Grip

Two scripture verses have played a significant part in helping me come to grips with our calling. The first is, "There is none righteous, no, not one," (Rom. 3:10). Coupled with the knowledge of my own nature, that verse has made me aware that, given other circumstances, I could have been guilty of anything anybody else has done, no matter how revolting or disgusting. Therefore, I have absolutely no right to turn my back on anyone.

The second—"Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these . . . you have done it unto me," (Matt. 25:40)—has helped me realize that in opening our doors and our hearts to others—whether they are the battered and buffeted children we have adopted in addition to our two birth children, lonely non-Christian Chinese college students or homeless people with strange tattoos—we are serving our Lord when we serve "the least of these."

Be Yourself

So, I strive to be myself as the Lord leads me. Last year, after I told the story of our life—warts and all—to a women's group at a local Southern Baptist church, one woman paid me the highest compliment I've ever received. She said, "Good grief! You tell the truth about yourself *even in church!*"

I suddenly realized that I'd probably lied more in church than anywhere else by pretending to be better than I am and that this time I'd simply been too tired to get the holy-Shirley mask in place. Since then,

I've made it my goal to tell the truth about myself—*even in church*.

Whatever is worthwhile in our lives comes from Christ, and we never know which experiences of our lives the Lord may use. After all, although Loyd never let me near *his* school buses, I can double clutch an old church bus if I'm ever needed. ■

ABOUT THE WRITER: Dr. Shirley Forbes Thomas retires this year as dean of undergraduate studies at John Brown University where she has been a professor 33 years. The mother of nine (two by birth, seven by adoption) is a grant-writing consultant at Free Will Baptist Bible College. Her husband, Reverend Loyd Thomas, has pastored West Ridge Free Will Baptist Church in Fayetteville, Arkansas, since 1968.

COMING NEXT MONTH

- ☐ National Convention Recap
- ☐ NYC Pictures and Coverage
- ☐ WNAC Review
- ☐ Election Report



Randy Sawyer

Building Mature Men (Part II)

Ken Revis, the leader and driving force behind our men's ministry team, likes to call it a "God moment." One long-time member of the church said of the experience, "I've never seen anything like it." I would have to agree. For nearly two hours, we knelt in prayer and worship. Men wept and groaned as they begged God for forgiveness, healing and strength.

The prayer meeting that morning started with breakfast. Sixty men of the church had gathered for fellowship, Bible study and prayer. Following the meal, Ken called for the men to stand up and be counted, to assume their God-given roles as "priests of the home, servants in the church and examples in the community." His appeal was emotional, passionate and in-your-face. He pulled no punches and offered no middle ground.

While the men were still considering the impact of what they had heard, we moved into the chapel for a time of prayer. Just before the prayer session began, Ken asked if I had anything to share with the men. With an overwhelming sense of the importance of this particular meeting, I laid my own heart bare before them.

I asked them to pray with me that as their pastor I would have a pure mind, a clean heart and a surrendered will. I shared specific moments in my own life when temptation was so strong that if it had not been for God's grace I would certainly have fallen into some terrible sin. I wept, and as I wept so did they until our collective groaning could be heard nearly all over the church.

Then it happened. It was truly a "God moment." One by one men began to confess, I mean openly and honestly to share the deepest, darkest secrets of their lives. One confessed to an addiction to pornography, another that he struggled with alcohol, another that he could not get control over his temper,

and so it went for nearly two hours.

I didn't have to urge them to be honest with one another, nor did Ken attempt to stir up some type of emotional display. It was simply a spontaneous reaction to the presence and power of God.

That season of prayer marked a turning point in our ministry to men, and really in our church as a whole. The following Sunday evening, for the first time the men stood before the entire congregation and committed themselves to become Pastor's Prayer Partners (PPP). Though prayer meetings like that one have been rare indeed, the PPP ministry continues to provide prayer support for our church staff and families, and serves as an essential element in our program of building mature men for God.

A Key Layman

In order to build an effective PPP ministry, a key layman must step forward to lead the way. The pastor simply cannot inspire the men of the church to pray as effectively as one of their own can. Everything about our PPP is planned and directed under the leadership of Ken Revis. In fact, the whole thing was his idea in the first place.

Over lunch one day he told me that God had given him the burden of starting such a ministry. I gave him my blessing, of course, and then sat back to watch it unfold.

Ken put together an outstanding leadership team with men who have a heart for God and our church. In addition to overseeing PPP, the men's ministry team plans an annual prayer retreat, quarterly breakfast meetings, an annual men's conference and lay-led ministry projects. These *key laymen* are inspiring and inciting others to join them in becoming mature men for God.

A Strategic Layout

After studying the PPP ministry of

several other churches, Ken decided on a simple, yet effective program. The men (we started with about 60 the first year) were divided into four teams, with a team captain assigned to each squad. Then the teams were given a particular week of the month to be "on call" for prayer.

The specified team meets at 7:00 a.m. on their Sunday for an hour of prayer, and then remains on call when special prayer needs arise during the week. Additionally, each man agrees to pray for the pastor, staff and staff families everyday he is on call.

The next team then steps forward for week two, and so on. On fifth Sundays all teams meet for a collective season of prayer. Also, PPP may be called into full session when special services or events are planned, and prayer intensives and fast days are initiated periodically.

The benefits of this *layout* should be obvious to see. It provides accountability, develops spiritual discipline, encourages prayer support for church leadership, and nurtures spiritual maturity. It's been an absolute joy to watch men mature in the faith through their involvement in PPP.

A Word of Caution

When men start praying, spiritual attack is imminent. Not only has our church encountered several specific spiritual challenges since the development of PPP, but my own period of stress and depression occurred shortly after our men committed to pray. "Satan trembles to see the weakest Christian on his knees," we are told. So when men accept the challenge to the discipline of prayer, Satan will inevitably launch a counter attack. But remember, the very activity that gets Satan's attention, will not go unnoticed by our Heavenly Father, and "greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world." ■

Let Your
Pastor Know
that You
Appreciate
Him.

Pastor
Appreciation
Day is
September 8



May 2002

Receipts: State	Designated	CO-OP	Total	Year To Date Designated	Year To Date CO-OP	Year To Date Total
Alabama	\$ 403.29	\$ 158.56	\$ 561.85	\$ 2,199.69	\$ 1,200.92	\$ 3,400.61
Arizona	.00	.00	.00	.00	154.40	154.40
Arkansas	11,128.17	11,692.12	22,820.29	56,820.72	85,491.80	142,312.52
California	.00	1,027.57	1,027.57	.00	5,138.83	5,138.83
Colorado	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Delaware	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Florida	.00	.00	.00	270.64	2,268.00	2,538.64
Georgia	44,507.65	1,258.48	45,766.13	166,505.01	8,204.73	174,709.74
Hawaii	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Idaho	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Illinois	15,844.15	1,524.78	17,368.93	60,962.09	10,063.13	71,025.22
Indiana	1,826.16	217.65	2,043.81	9,690.85	1,093.04	10,783.89
Iowa	.00	.00	.00	.00	2,058.78	2,058.78
Kansas	.00	280.66	280.66	26.55	436.92	463.47
Kentucky	444.30	773.52	1,217.82	1,128.66	4,796.41	5,925.07
Louisiana	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Maryland	.00	.00	.00	.00	131.25	131.25
Michigan	23,251.36	6,513.29	29,764.65	102,776.53	14,774.66	117,551.19
Mississippi	.00	.00	.00	52,853.41	2,882.17	55,735.58
Missouri	44,472.47	16,085.12	60,557.59	214,226.36	83,610.50	297,836.86
Montana	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Nebraska	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
New Jersey	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
New Mexico	686.58	19.54	706.12	3,517.06	207.80	3,724.86
North Carolina	2,333.50	2,173.72	4,507.22	7,135.49	16,929.31	24,064.80
Ohio	22,903.26	4,837.83	27,741.09	83,302.89	17,138.87	100,441.76
Oklahoma	56,570.02	12,953.04	69,523.06	275,729.37	62,005.78	337,735.15
South Carolina	46,614.35	37.99	46,652.34	169,175.56	205.51	169,381.07
South Dakota	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Tennessee	22,989.17	1,588.14	24,577.31	61,862.20	6,882.71	68,744.91
Texas	7,941.33	447.58	8,388.91	54,152.36	2,130.79	56,283.15
Virginia	111.65	265.24	376.89	1,148.05	396.49	1,544.54
Virgin Islands	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
West Virginia	2,697.67	310.13	3,007.80	8,817.05	635.79	9,452.84
Wisconsin	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Canada	559.13	12.50	571.63	3,042.19	59.12	3,101.31
Northwest Association	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Northeast Association	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Other	.00	(.13)	(.13)	.00	(.21)	(.21)
Totals	\$ 305,284.21	\$ 62,177.33	\$ 367,461.54	\$ 1,335,342.73	\$ 328,897.50	\$ 1,664,240.23

Disbursements:

Executive Office	\$ 1,801.83	\$ 27,979.85	\$ 29,781.68	\$ 9,895.14	\$148,003.98	\$ 157,899.12
Foreign Missions	175,690.18	7,865.44	183,555.62	760,926.58	41,605.51	802,532.09
FVBC	31,815.60	7,865.44	39,681.04	127,388.76	41,605.51	168,994.27
Home Missions	83,122.16	6,155.59	89,277.75	382,861.29	32,560.88	415,422.17
Retirement & Insurance	449.55	4,787.64	5,237.19	1,929.59	25,325.15	27,254.74
Master's Men	435.53	4,787.64	5,223.17	2,027.51	25,325.15	27,352.66
Comm. for Theo. Integrity	82.39	170.97	253.36	383.93	904.42	1,288.35
FVBC Foundation	376.94	2,051.85	2,428.79	1,603.48	10,853.64	12,457.12
Historical Commission	62.84	170.97	233.81	276.10	904.42	1,180.52
Music Commission	34.14	170.97	205.11	138.97	904.42	1,043.39
Media Commission	103.71	170.97	274.68	616.82	904.42	1,521.24
Hillsdale FVBC College	2,240.56	.00	2,240.56	11,823.95	.00	11,823.95
Other	9,068.78	.00	9,068.78	35,470.61	.00	35,470.61
Totals	\$ 305,284.21	\$ 62,177.33	\$ 367,461.54	\$ 1,335,342.73	\$ 328,897.50	\$ 1,664,240.23



Thomas Marberry

Grace, Faith, Free Will

By Robert E. Picirilli

(Nashville: Randall House Publications, 2002, 245 pp., paperback, 19.95).

Dr. Robert E. Picirilli is well known in Free Will Baptist circles. He is former academic dean and professor of Greek and New Testament at Free Will Baptist Bible College and the author of several books, articles and monographs on various aspects of New Testament studies.

This work contrasts the Calvinistic view of salvation and the traditional Arminian view of salvation as originally developed in the writings of James Arminius. Picirilli recognizes that Wesleyanism is the most common form of Arminian theology today and that it differs in significant respects from the original form of Arminianism found in the writings of Arminius and his earliest followers.

The author mentions two specific purposes for writing this book. First, he seeks to contribute to the debate between Calvinism and Arminianism over the nature of conversion. This debate has been going on periodically since the time of the Protestant Reformation, and Picirilli's work makes a significant contribution to this continuing discussion.

The author's second purpose is to bring to the attention of modern readers the traditional form of Arminianism developed in the Reformation era by Arminius and his followers. This form of Arminianism has been largely overlooked in modern scholarship.

Picirilli divides the work into five parts. Part one examines the historical roots of Arminian theology. Part two analyzes the plan of salvation as presented in Calvinism and classical Arminianism. Part three discusses the extent of the atonement. Part four outlines the application of salvation. Part five confronts the issues of perseverance and the possibility of apostasy.

Arminius was born in Holland, probably in 1559. He enrolled in the University of Leiden in 1576. After completing his studies there, he went to Calvin's academy in Geneva, Switzer-

land, to continue his studies. For a time he left Geneva and studied at Basel, but he returned to Geneva where he continued his studies until 1586. Then he returned to Holland where he became a popular preacher and pastor.

Before long he became involved in the ongoing theological debate within the Dutch Reformed Church. He soon became one of the leaders among those who rejected the hyper-Calvinistic teachings that were then widely held. In 1603 he became a popular but controversial professor of theology at the University of Leiden where he continued teaching until his death in 1609.

In 1610, the Synod of Dort condemned the views of Arminius and his followers. Pastors with Arminian views were deprived of their pulpits, many were banished and some were executed. This period of persecution continued until approximately 1625.

Calvinistic theology is double predestinarian; that means that God predestines both the saved and the lost to their appointed eternal destiny. As Picirilli explains, "Election is unconditional. Not even 'foreseen faith' can be a condition for election; it depends solely on the sovereign good pleasure of God."

Arminius and his followers taught that election is based on Jesus Christ. God, in His infinite knowledge, knows what decision an individual will make even before the decision is made. This foreknowledge does not, however, destroy human freedom. Man remains both morally free and morally responsible for his decisions.

The atonement is always a major topic in any discussion of the doctrine of salvation. Calvinism has traditionally taught a limited atonement, that Christ died only for the elect. Calvin himself gave little attention to the subject of atonement and there is some doubt whether he himself taught a limited atonement. This belief was soon incorporated into the Calvinistic system by his

followers and became one the principal teachings of this school of thought.

The Arminian position, according to Picirilli, is "that Christ died to provide equally for the elect and those who will certainly be eternally damned. That by His redemptive work salvation was made accessible to all."

One of the most difficult areas in the debate between Calvinism and Arminianism is the perseverance of the saints. According to the Calvinistic position, "Regenerate persons cannot become unregenerate."

"They will certainly persevere. This means that the Holy Spirit will so continue to operate within the believer that the gracious work begun in regeneration will necessarily be brought to successful completion in sanctification."

Arminius presented a quite different approach to the issue of perseverance. He denied that believers could be "seduced or dragged out of the hands of Christ." He felt the need to make "a diligent inquiry from the scriptures whether it is not possible for some individuals through negligence to desert the commencement of their existence in Christ . . . to lose a good conscience and to cause Divine grace to be ineffectual."

Arminius recognized that certain passages of scripture seem to teach that a believer can fall away from the faith. The followers of Arminius continued to develop their theology in this direction; today the possibility of apostasy is one of the key doctrinal differences between Calvinists and Arminians.

This book is a significant contribution to the already large body of literature on the subject of salvation. It is one of the clearest and most readable studies of Arminianism that is currently available. In particular, it helps the reader understand the various forms of Arminian theology and how those forms have developed. Picirilli's book is one of the best descriptions of traditional Arminian theology available today. ■

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Oh, that thou wouldst
rend the heavens,
that thou wouldst
come down,
that the mountains
might **flow** down
at thy presence! ...that
the nations may
tremble at thy
presence!

Isaiah 64:1,2



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Jack Williams

Mr. Free Will Baptist

The president of Free Will Baptist Bible College introduced the 2002 commencement speaker, a man he had known 20 years at district, state and national meetings, this way: "When I was growing up, to me he was 'Mr. Free Will Baptist'."

The speaker President Matt Pinson described as "Mr. Free Will Baptist" was Melvin Worthington, now completing the final days in his 23-year tenure as executive secretary of the National Association of Free Will Baptists.

The First Man. When he relocates to his retirement home later this fall, Melvin will be the first executive secretary to retire in office at age 65. Although seven other men have served as executive secretary, four resigned while still in their 30s, one at 48, another at 52.

The rigors of the position have not been kind to the office holders. Pressures from endless travel and criticism from every quarter caused half of the eight executive secretaries to serve four years or less. Only one served as many as 12 years. The Tar Heel from Ayden stands alone with more than two decades at the helm.

The Generous Man. In his 45 years as a preacher, pastor and denominational servant, Dr. Worthington has been the most generous man I've ever known. He averaged giving 25 percent of his income to the Lord's work for four decades, one year giving an astounding 43 percent.

When he challenged Free Will Baptists to pay for the national office building in 1991, Melvin led by example. He will be surprised to see this in print, but perhaps it's time that others knew. Melvin personally pledged (and paid) \$50,000 to help furnish the building. One of his goals is to give back to the denomination every dollar he has been paid as a pastor and executive.

Contact now has 38 lifetime subscriptions that cost \$500 each. Unknown to anyone except the Execu-

tive Office staff until now is that 17 of those lifetime subscriptions were paid by Melvin Worthington. He gave one to each church where he pastored, one to each staff member, one to each family member and more.

The New Man. Dr. Worthington has been an innovator, a visionary and a builder. He leaves in his wake a string of "new" accomplishments. The most obvious, of course, is the \$1.8 million national office complex in Antioch. The 30,000-square-foot structure houses seven national agencies.

He championed publication (1988) of *The Free Will Baptist Hymn Book: Rejoice*, a bold 720-page project that sold nearly 100,000 copies. It was our first new hymnal in 25 years. Groundwork has been laid to publish another one.

Under Melvin's direction, the denomination revisited its financial program in 1992 and adopted "The Together Way Plan." The plan includes cooperative and designated giving scenarios, and undergirds district and state programs as well as national outreach.

In 1995, he was the architect for a new organization, worldwide in scope—The International Fellowship of Free Will Baptist Churches, Inc. The IFOFWBC meets triennially; its members are countries where Free Will Baptist churches exist.

The Scholarly Man. It isn't often that a fellow gets to be on-site when a buddy defends his doctoral dissertation. Because I drove Melvin to Vanderbilt University on December 18, 1997, I was standing 20 feet away when he won his second doctorate—the doctor of education degree.

Before he became "Dr. Twice," Melvin jumped through the usual academic hoops in college, graduate school and seminary. He earned seven degrees from four colleges in a 39-year period from 1959 to 1998—three bachelor's degrees, two master's degrees and two doctorates. He

never stopped learning.

However, one item shows up in his *Who's Who in America* biographical entry that intrigues me. It's a 1965 diploma from the Imperial Detective Academy. A young Columbo? Perhaps that's a story for another day.

The Lead Man. Wherever the Lord placed him, Melvin has been tapped for leadership by his peers. He chaired the Sunday School and Church Training Board (1975-'79), the Graduate Study Committee (1977) and now chairs the Educational Task Force (1999-).

He was assistant moderator of the National Association of Free Will Baptists when he was elected executive secretary in 1979. At that time, he was also moderator of the Georgia State Association and the first president of Georgia Bible Institute. But Free Will Baptists weren't the only ones to see possibilities in him.

For 20 years, he has given leadership to the Religious Conference Management Association (RCMA), a professional organization for meeting planners. Since 1983, he has served on the RCMA Board of Directors and as the organization's secretary, vice-president and president. He earned his Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) designation in 1986 and has served on the CMP Board since 1992.

The Talented Man. Those of us who work closely with him take for granted Melvin's talents as a preacher, organizer, writer, singer, meeting planner and peace maker. That's easy to do when you serve beside a man who thinks the work is more important than he is.

Melvin has written 276 editorials in his "The Secretary Speaks" column. Most were good, some better than others. A few were great. They were all too long. At first, He trusted me to edit what he wrote, and that may be his finest gift to me. Matt Pinson was right. The title fits. Melvin Worthington is "Mr. Free Will Baptist." ■

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