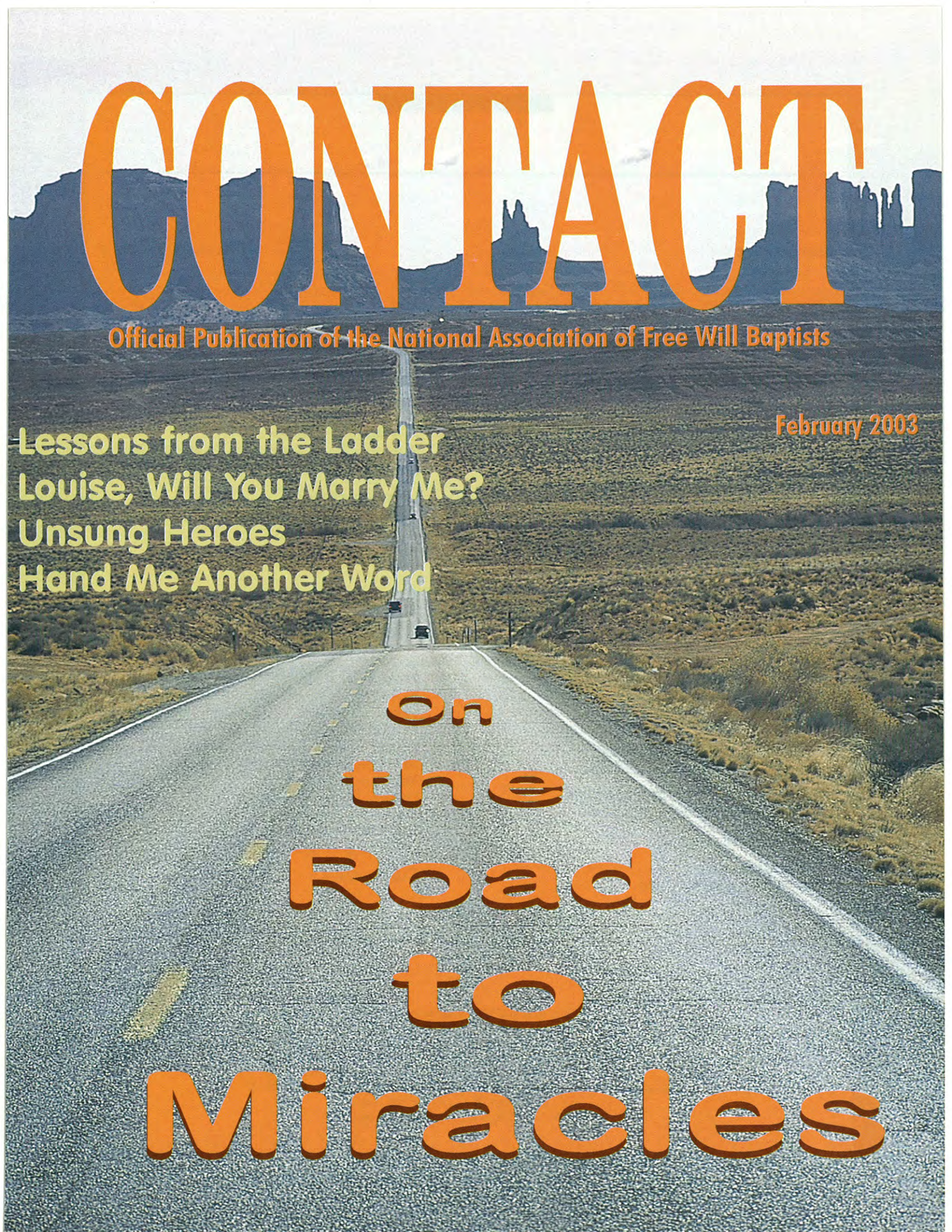


# CONTACT



Official Publication of the National Association of Free Will Baptists

February 2003

Lessons from the Ladder  
Louise, Will You Marry Me?  
Unsung Heroes  
Hand Me Another Word

On  
the  
Road  
to  
Miracles



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VOLUME 50, NO. 2

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## Lessons from the Ladder

**I**t was something I had done successfully a dozen times. I placed the base of an extension ladder on the gymnasium floor in the Family Life Center. The top of the ladder leaned against the wall 17 feet off the floor. I secured the bottom rung to a closet door hinge with a rope and began my cautious ascent.

I don't remember much of what happened during the next five minutes. Apparently, when I reached the top, the ladder shifted and pulled tension on the rope. The rope came untied and the ladder began sliding across the tile floor . . . with me on top!

As I regained consciousness I felt the weight of the ladder on top of me, and a sharp, excruciating pain in my right foot. My daughter, who was in the gym when the accident happened, ran to the church office for help.

Diagnosis: I fractured the calcaneus bone in my right heel. By 5:30 p.m., I was resting comfortably at home (thanks to some pain medication) with my right leg in a temporary cast. Six days later when the swelling subsided, I was fitted with a hard cast that I would wear for four weeks.

During the few days while I was basically immobilized, I had an opportunity to reflect on that experience. Aside from the obvious lessons about taking basic precautions when climbing a ladder, I also learned some practical spiritual truths.

### *Where is your faith?*

I was reminded that my faith is only as good as the object in which I place it. That accident was not the result of a faulty ladder, a loose hinge or a defective rope. My confidence in each of them was well placed and completely justified. In spite of their reliability, I fell.

So, how do you explain what happened? I discovered that the slipknot

I tied in the rope came loose. Even though I had confidence in the knot, the ladder slipped, the rope came untied, and I fell.

Likewise, many place their confidence in church attendance, Bible reading, financial support or Christian service to merit God's favor. As good as those things are in and of themselves, they will never be sufficient grounds for meeting God's perfect standard. Paul reminds us in Titus 3:5 that it is, "Not by *works of righteousness* which we have done, but according to *His mercy* He saved us."

### *What goes up, must come down.*

Another lesson I learned from the ladder is that natural laws apply equally to all men. The fact that I was a preacher climbing a ladder in a church facility with the best of intentions did not suspend the law of gravity.

The law of gravity states: "There is a natural force which causes objects to move or tend to move toward the center of the earth." That law makes exceptions for no one. Although gravity results in the death and injury of many people every day, its force is necessary to hold things together and maintain order in our world.

Similarly, there are certain spiritual laws that apply equally to all men. For instance, Galatians 6:7 states, ". . . whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." That statement needs no qualification. Whether you're a minister or a layman, a teacher or a student, a parent or a child, an employer or employee, that law applies to you. You may dislike it, you may dispute it, but you will not defy it.

### *In everything give thanks.*

The most significant lesson I learned from my ladder experience is that no matter how bad things may seem, there is always something for which to

be thankful. Sure, there were negatives to deal with as a result of the accident.

First, perhaps most obvious, was the pain. Broken bones hurt . . . a lot! Then there were the inconveniences—wheelchairs, crutches, negotiating stairs, getting dressed—not to mention all the wisecracks others make about people who fall off ladders.

### *Look for the silver lining.*

In spite of all the negative elements, there were some positive factors. I am grateful that no one else was hurt. Had my daughter been in front of or underneath the ladder, she could have been seriously injured. Other than watching her father fall, she was otherwise unharmed.

I am fortunate that my injury wasn't worse. The ladder flipped over as I was falling, causing me to land feet first rather than headfirst. It is a miracle that I wasn't killed. Another pastor fractured his skull and lost his life in a similar accident a few years ago. A broken heel doesn't seem so bad when you view it from that perspective.

Other benefits included adequate insurance coverage to pay the medical expenses, friends who mowed my lawn and volunteers who helped cover my pastoral duties until I was back on my feet. Through it all I learned to *bless* the Lord rather than *blame* Him.

I never see a ladder but what I think about my accident. It's a painful, but effective reminder of some lessons I learned the hard way. Sure, my heel still bothers me occasionally and I limp, but at least I'm able to walk. And besides, now I can tell when the weather is about to change. ■



God did more than the unexpected on the road to Honduras.

# On the Road to Miracles

By April Millsaps



If you asked Bill Melendez how he and his family became part of First Free Will Baptist Church in Russellville, Arkansas, he would tell you it was all part of God's plan. When Bill and his family moved to Arkansas, their greatest desire was to find a church where they could feel free to worship the Lord.

Circumstances soon led Bill to a body shop and a man named Steve Hodges. Steve invited Bill to First FWB Church and the rest isn't just history. It's amazing! Not only had God led Bill and his family to the right church, He was developing a friendship that Bill would need along the next year's journey.

Unaware of it when he began attending, Bill soon discovered that missions was a high priority at the church. Steve told him about the church's annual trip to Honduras to provide medical services as well as sharing the gospel. With family in Guatemala, Bill knew about the need and was immediately interested in being a part of this team. He suggested they take a van full of supplies on their next trip, and God took over from there.

## God Does the Unexpected

For two weeks, Bill and Steve actively looked for a van when Steve heard of a church van for sale. When Steve spoke with the church's pastor, he told Steve that a team from their church had just returned from a life-changing trip to Mexico and the van was donated.

Bill and Steve began preparing the

van for its long journey to Latin America. With a new roof, a tune-up and a fresh coat of paint, the van was ready to load. Then word came that Honduran laws were changing—no vehicles over seven years old would be allowed into the country. Their van was too old to cross the border. Then God stepped in.

Things looked dismal until Bill spoke with his cousin, Maybet, in Guatemala.



Arkansas prayer meeting at the body shop before leaving for Honduras.





Bill Melendez (holding cap) and his wife stand behind ambulance.

They talked about Bill's upcoming trip and how they had hit a snag in their plans. Maybet works at a hospital in Guatemala and they were in need of an ambulance. After working out the details, they created a new plan.

Now Bill would drive the van to the Honduran border, drop off the supplies and then leave the van in Guatemala for the hospital to use. Bill and Maybet would then meet Steve and the team from Russellville in Honduras for the week of medical brigades.

### Seeing God Firsthand

During the six months before the trip, Bill and Steve witnessed a miracle from God daily. From parts to convert the van into an ambulance to medical equipment and supplies, items seemed to just bring themselves to Bill and Steve.

"There's a story behind everything that happened," Steve says, "Not a day went by without someone giving something."

One day a medical salesman stopped by the body shop and donated surgical collars and a board with a headrest. A funeral home donated a gurney and money to help pay for Bill's trip. Bill later checked the amount of money donated and it was the exact amount needed to pay for the rest of his trip. Other donated items included a bug deflector, letters and Red Cross graphics, lights, siren, rims and even tires!

It was amazing to witness every-

thing come together. Already praising God for the miracles they had experienced, Bill excitedly headed out of Arkansas for his long journey to the Honduran border. He had no idea what God had in store for his trip.

### Bill's Journey

The United States/Mexico border posed no problems for Bill. He and the loaded down van-turned-ambulance made great time and even better gas mileage. At one point in the trip Bill, says he could feel Jesus sitting in the vehicle beside him. "I was

afraid to look to the right in case He really was there," Bill recalls.

On Father's Day, Bill stopped to go to church in Pijijiapan, Mexico. After the service Bill went with the pastor to the home of five children who attended the church. At their home Bill silently prayed, "Lord, why did you have me come to this home? What do you want me to do?"

As he prayed, Bill reached into his pocket and noticed he had some money he could give their mother. "Here," he said to the woman, "God wanted me to give you this." She thankfully received God's gift to her.

After returning to the church, Bill walked around the building to find a young man sitting under a tree. Bill quietly walked up to him and overheard him praying, "Lord, you know my heart and my girlfriend's heart and we love each other. But, I can't hold my instincts any longer."

Bill calmly asked, "What keeps you from getting married?"

The boy replied that there was a custom that required the man to buy his bride's wedding dress and he didn't have enough money. Bill took the young man to a store and they bought a dress. They returned to the church where the pastor agreed to marry the young couple as long as the young man kept his promise—that he wouldn't touch the girl until after they were married.

The heavenly Father blessed a struggling family, a man and his future wife, and His special deliverer—



The ambulance on the streets of Guatemala.





Jesus loves you.



have a sewing machine."

Her mother had replied, "Keep going, the Lord will provide." Indeed He did.

Another answered prayer came in the form of an ultrasound machine. Thirty-three Guatemalan churches prayed for over a year for the hospital to receive one. Steve was able to find one and it made the trip with Bill.

"It was nothing but blessings, blessings, blessings," Bill explains about his trip. "God is good," he often tells me. That is evident in the miracles He performed on Bill's journey to Honduras and in our church now. In the future we hope to begin taking medical brigades to Guatemala as well as Honduras and our Spanish ministry in Russellville, which kicked off soon after Bill's return, is growing rapidly. ■

all in one Sunday afternoon.

At the Honduran border, tools, medical supplies, sewing machines and more were dropped off. Bill then took the ambulance to its new home. In Guatemala it would not only be an ambulance but a mobile clinic for the extremely poor. Since it is considered a civil service vehicle, the government pays for fuel, tires, up-keep and more.

The van would have cost the Hondurans many fees and taxes. God took a potential burden and turned it into an unexpected blessing. While in Honduras the Russellville team was able to provide medical help to 1,148 people and dental to 187. They washed 1,069 heads for lice and 313 Hondurans joined the body of Christ. "God was

moving all around us," Steve reports.

### Answered Prayers

One of the sewing machines that made the trip had a special destination. On a previous mission trip, Steve had met a little girl who tugged his heartstrings. He hoped to see her again and be able to give her and her family the sewing machine.

He was able to find her and when they brought the sewing machine to her home, her mother smiled and through tears of joy shared that they had been sending the girl, now 16, to seamstress training.

One day the young lady had asked, "Why am I doing this? We don't even



**ABOUT THE WRITER:** April Millsaps is a member of First Free Will Baptist Church in Russellville, Arkansas, where she operates the PowerPoint presentation every Sunday. She leads a Bible study on Wednesday nights and serves as a strategy planner for the church's global outreach program. April is a 1995 graduate of Free Will Baptist Bible College. She would like to write full time some day.



He looked so deeply into her brown eyes that he drove 50 miles in the wrong direction.

# “Louise, Will You Marry Me?”

By Mark Vandivort

**L**eaving Possum Creek before daylight on August 29, 1959, I promised Mother, “I will have her back here by lunch time.” Pointing the hood of my 1954 Ford east toward Catherine Place near Fredericktown, Missouri, I could barely contain my excitement as my little car seemed to lightly touch the Ozark hilltops.

She was more beautiful than I remembered! A certain sparkle in her eyes hinted that a life-changing decision had been made in her heart since I had last seen her, prior to my venture in Cuba.

With a joyful spring in our steps, we waved goodbye to the gray-haired matriarch of Catherine Place. *She knew.*

The miles of Missouri roads passed by like a scene on a movie screen. The car windows were down as the wind tossed about Louise’s dark brown hair. I kept one eye on the road and the other on the girl of my dreams. *Could this really be happening to me?*

We drove through Ironton and headed north on Highway 21. As it turned out, I should have kept both eyes on the road more of the time because I whizzed past the Highway 32 intersection where I should have turned west toward Possum Creek.

I don’t know how we engaged in such earnest conversation as the wind whistled through the car windows. It was an extremely hot August day. How did Louise stay so fresh and beautiful looking in that heat?

I was more than uncomfortable because I had selected a drab, rust brown long-sleeved winter shirt in order to cover dozens of ugly scratches on my arms. The day before I had helped my dad and brothers load bales of hay. Louise later acknowledged that my long-sleeved shirt puzzled her.

When you are in the presence of a beautiful princess you don’t notice the passing of miles or time. Soon we were at the St. Louis city limits! I had already driven 50 miles on the wrong road—impossible to get to Possum Creek by lunch (“dinner time”). Mother and Daddy didn’t have a phone. I could visualize Mother’s heavily laden “company” table.

What an awkward moment when I was forced to acknowledge to my darling girlfriend that I had driven an hour in the wrong direction. I decided, since we were already in the city of St. Louis, to drive by Uncle Rolla, Aunt Agnes, Linda and Beth’s home. They were all smiles as they greeted us and served us a dish of ice cream.

Linda and Beth tried to hide their young girl giggles. Un-



Louise (then)



Mark (then)

cle Rolla and Aunt Agnes soothed my awkward embarrassment. *They knew.*

What a long afternoon drive from St. Louis to Possum Creek. However, I don’t remember feeling tired or sleepy in spite of being behind the wheel since before daylight.

I pulled over beside the highway. Louise and I exchanged some very personal words and a kiss or two. After that I felt 99.99% confident

that she would say, “yes,” when I asked her to marry me.

I could see the disappointment in Mother’s eyes as we ate leftovers for supper. She had worked to prepare such a beautiful dinner table for my school teacher girlfriend at noon. I think she had a hard time understanding how I could have missed the road. Daddy smiled. *He knew.*

My brothers, Dan and Ben, watched this romantic drama unfold. They were storing up stories to tell later.

I asked Louise if she would like to go with me on church visitation. Soon she appeared in a fresh dress looking as beautiful as a fresh-picked bouquet of flowers from Mother’s garden. Again, Daddy smiled. *He knew.*

Good fortune (or gift from our Sovereign God) smiled upon us when we knocked on the young couple’s door. They weren’t home. Now I could give attention to the real agenda of that Saturday evening!

The doors to the New Rock Springs Free Will Baptist Church (where Mother and Daddy attended) were unlocked. While kneeling at the altar, we prayed, shed tears and kissed.

I asked Louise, “Will you marry me?”

She said, “Yes!” ■



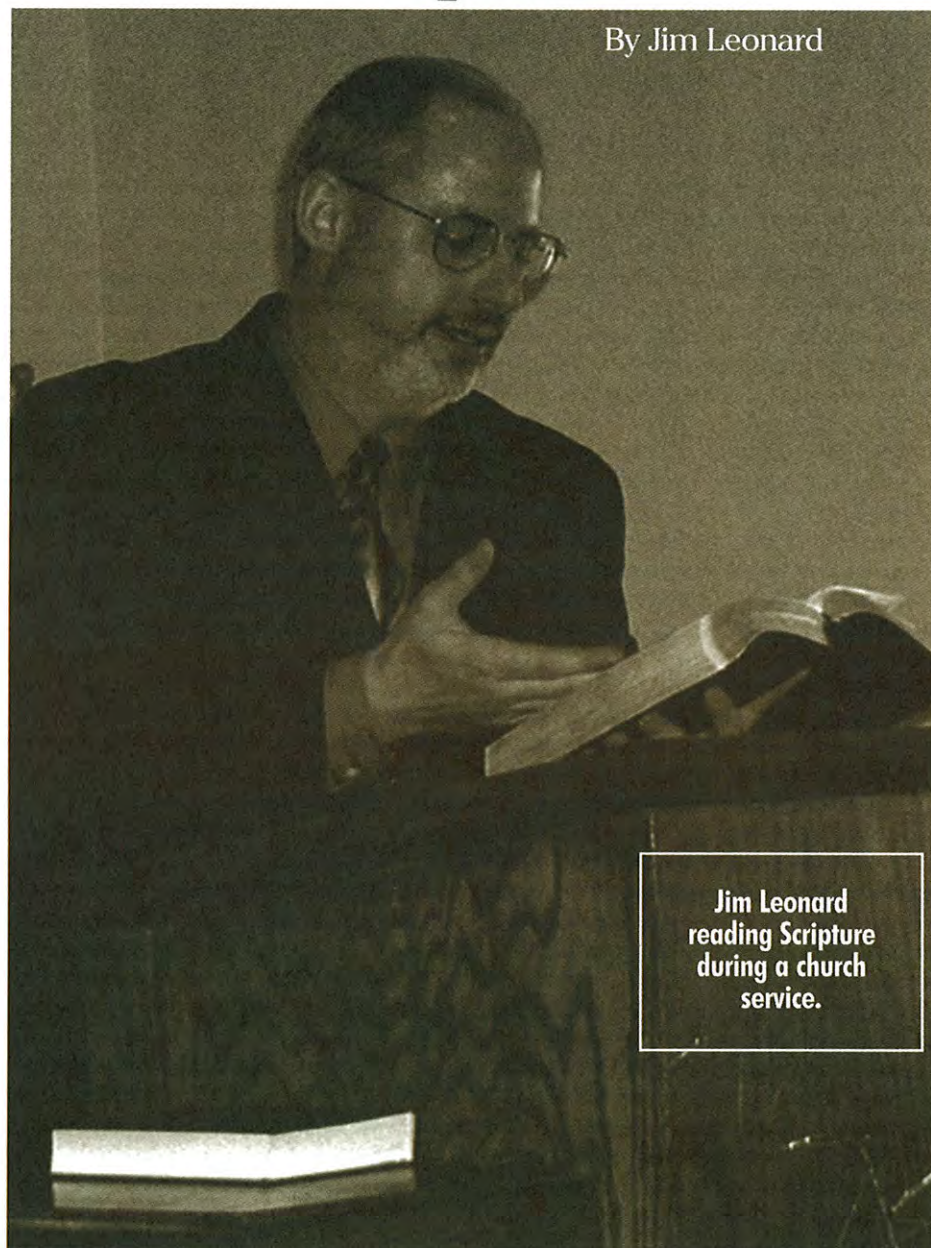
Mark and Louise (now)

**ABOUT THE WRITER:** Reverend Mark Vandivort is a retired Free Will Baptist pastor and home missionary. Mark and Louise have been married 43 years.



# Scripture in Worship

By Jim Leonard



Jim Leonard  
reading Scripture  
during a church  
service.



**M**any Free Will Baptist churches are trying to find ways to make worship more meaningful. One such way is to feature the public reading of scripture for worship.

## Large Portions

The early Christians spent much time listening to scripture in their worship services. Often, whole books were read at a time. Today, few if any of our churches regularly read whole books in a single

service. Nonetheless, reading significant portions of the Bible does reflect our emphasis on the Bible as God's Word.

Many churches have abandoned reading even larger portions of scripture. In previous generations, people read a great deal of the Bible privately or at school. The situation is much different now. The only scripture that many church-goers ever get in a week's time is at church on Sunday. If ever we needed public reading of scripture, we need it now.

Some preachers make no attempt

to preach from larger contexts and select only a single verse for reading, or worse, a single phrase. Doesn't scripture have much more to say than all of our preachers combined? Scripture reading is more than just the premise on which a sermon is based; it can and ought to be an act of worship in and of itself.

## Public Reading

Perhaps the reason why we read so little scripture publicly is because



we have lost much of the fine art of public scripture reading. We publicly read scripture so poorly that reading more than a verse or two at a time puts people to sleep, losing the passion inherent in the text.

The first step toward good public reading of scripture is to practice reading the passage in advance. As part of this preparation, words can be underlined or pauses written in to show how the reader should say the text. Sometimes it may be helpful to break the passage down phrase by phrase.

All this is especially important when children and youth are involved in scripture reading. As a way to bring scripture reading into our worship services, I choose our kids to do the readings. Adults generally are very happy to see the kids involved in worship and this is a good way to include them. I coach our kids individually, and sometimes the Sunday School teachers practice with the entire class.

Whenever the youth do an exceptionally good job of reading to the congregation, I point this out to the adults and encourage them to do the same. After a year's time, good scripture reading has now become an important part of our worship services.

### Other Acts of Worship

Scripture reading can potentially undergird every individual act of worship. For example, instead of the worship leader beginning worship with a hearty "Good morning," the worship service could begin with a Bible verse which calls us to come into the presence of God with praise, thanksgiving and humility.

My favorite scripture to invite the congregation to worship is, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight," (Matt. 3:3; cf. Isa. 40:3) or "Thus sayeth the LORD: Let my people go, that they may serve me," (Ex. 8:20).

A sense of the dramatic can add to the impact of this invitation if someone, perhaps a child or teenager, stands in the back of the sanctuary and says the text in a very loud voice. Such verses can be found throughout the Bible, but especially in the Psalms (e.g., Psalm 100).

Scripture can undergird other acts of worship as well. Our time of intercessory prayer is usually introduced with a scripture such as, "Ask, and it shall be

given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he who seeketh findeth; and to him that knocks, it shall be opened," (Matt. 7:7-8). Other texts include James 5:13-16; I Thessalonians 1:2-3; Psalm 28:1-3; and many others.

Scripture can be especially useful in introducing the time of offering. Many people charge that churches preach too much about stewardship. Reading scripture texts dealing with stewardship prior to the offering can be a powerful way to teach Christian giving without making people feel like they're being nagged. See for example, Malachi 3:10; II Corinthians 9:6-8; Philippians 4:10-19; and many others.

Often churches conclude their services with a simple prayer that God would keep the members of the congregation safe, empower them to be good witnesses in the world, and to bring them back together for the next appointed time for worship. This is a good prayer. However, it can be supplemented with scripture.

One of my favorite ways to conclude worship is to recite the exciting benediction of Jude 24. Many other scriptures could be cited (e.g., Num. 6:24-27; Luke 2:29-32).

Scripture can also introduce hymns. Our Free Will Baptist *Rejoice* hymnal includes appropriate scripture texts on the same page as the hymn itself. Introducing hymns in this way not only gets more scripture presented to the congregation, but also makes the congregation more eager to sing the hymn worshipfully and in light of its biblical context.

Scriptures can also be shared during moments of quiet reflection during a worship service. They can be spoken aloud or read quietly. One of my former pastors read scripture while the Communion elements were being served, often with recorded music or the piano playing quietly to underscore the text.

### Maximizing Impact

The effectiveness of scripture presentation can be enhanced if delivered by memory. Sometimes I have used the time set aside for the children's sermon to help the kids memorize verses pertaining to Christmas or Easter. Also, those churches who have children doing CTS competitive activities can let

them present memorized scriptures as acts of worship during church services.

As a matter of fact, the whole congregation can get involved in scripture reading as an act of worship. The scripture can be read in unison or responsively, with the worship leader and the congregation reading alternating verses. Our own Free Will Baptist hymnal, *Rejoice*, has selected responsive readings for use in our worship services.

There are some simple things that can also highlight scripture reading in a worship service. Some congregations always give a hearty "Amen" when the scripture reading has been concluded. Some congregations stand for the reading of scripture. Many congregations have a large Bible on public display in the sanctuary to symbolize the importance of scripture in worship.

### Planning

An obvious assumption in all this discussion has been that these steps will require some advance planning. Steps won't be taken if worship service planning is left undone or haphazard. This planning will take some time and effort each week. The rewards, though, are more than enough to justify the extra work. ■

ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Jim Leonard is a 1984 graduate of Free Will Baptist Bible College (B.S. in Church Music and Bible) and a 1994 graduate of Regent College (M.C.S. in Biblical Studies). He has taught at John Brown University in Arkansas and recently completed an interim pastoral ministry near his home in Roane County, West Virginia. He has taken short-term mission trips to Africa and India to teach biblical studies and ministry to national pastors and other church leaders. He has been married to his wife Angie for 17 years and has two children.





# Media and the Message

A collage of vintage electronic devices. In the background, a person is silhouetted while walking on a treadmill. The foreground features a large black boombox with a carrying handle, a small portable television with a VCR on top, a car stereo with a digital display showing '106.1', another car stereo showing 'FM 3 106', a CD, a VCR, a cassette tape, a digital clock showing '12:00', and a small screen. The entire scene is set against a textured, light brown background.

## Radio Program

minute format and Bob Shockey became the preacher for the program. James Vallance loaned his experienced radio voice as the host of the program, and introduced a Free Will Baptist musician before introducing Brother Shockey as the speaker.

the internet and more media changes, the Commission felt the need to modify its direction while maintaining the focus of ministering to the denomination through means of media.

## Name Change

Therefore, the National Association, while in session in Cincinnati, Ohio, (1997) approved a name change. No longer would it be referred to as the Radio-Television Commission; but would be called the Free Will Baptist Media Commission. This kept the door open to



continue working in the fields of radio and television, while at the same time opening the gates of other opportunities to minister.

### TV-Radio Commercials

Since that time, the Media Commission has produced several products to assist both the local church and denominational agencies. In 1997, with help from the Florida State Association, the Commission produced the first television commercial for Free Will Baptists.

In 1998, again with financial assistance from the Free Will Baptists in Florida, the second 30-second television commercial was unveiled. At that same time, Tennessee Free Will Baptists jumped on the bandwagon and funded the production of four radio commercials. The Media Commission expanded to produce one of those commercials in Spanish.

### Video Brochure

Since that time, the Commission has produced camera-ready ad slicks, numerous logo designs as well as stationery and business cards, even tickets and brochures to a living Christmas tree production by a church in Oklahoma. From the concept to the finished product, the Media Commission has strived to produce professional quality work designed specifically to make God's work stand head and shoulders above the rest in the business world.

Other products the Commission has provided include an innovative six and one-half minute video brochure. With financial assistance from the Home Missions Department, this video is used

to introduce Free Will Baptists to those who may not be familiar with our background and doctrine. Initially produced as a customized video, the Media Commission now offers a generic version that includes a brief plan of salvation at the end of the tape.

### Website Design

The Media Commission partnered with a group to design websites for Free Will Baptist churches. Designed for the church that wants an internet presence but lacks either the time or technical knowledge to design a website from the ground up, a Free Will Baptist template is provided and the church can fill it the content while maintaining a professional look and feel to the website.

### Homecoming Series

The Media Commission realized a need to preserve Free Will Baptist history with its music. Seeing the success of the *Homecoming Series* by Bill Gaither, the Commission produced a Free Will Baptist version called *A Free Will Baptist Gathering: He Keeps Me Singing*. The live project features over 50 musicians from several generations and backgrounds across our denomination. That concert is available in cassette, CD and video formats.

For information on any or all of the products and services offered by your Media Commission, please contact us through the National Offices in Antioch.

### The Next Step

God has blessed our denomination

down through the years. We have the best doctrine, the best people and the best preaching. In our organizational structure, we have the best missions organizations, the best men's and ladies' groups, and the best available retirement and savings programs. We have tremendous colleges and Christian schools. Our music, historical and theological commissions do their jobs with the utmost knowledge and capabilities.

Those who have served on the Radio-Television or the Media Commission (depending on the era) have shared dreams and ambitions for ways God can use our denomination. The Media Commission has been blessed to serve the Lord through Free Will Baptists in ways some may have never thought possible. Those who have served down through the years have brought their capabilities and expertise to further God's Kingdom through Free Will Baptists.

God has been so good and brought us this far these first 20 years. With changes in the field of media happening at warp speed, just imagine what can happen over the next 20 years! ■

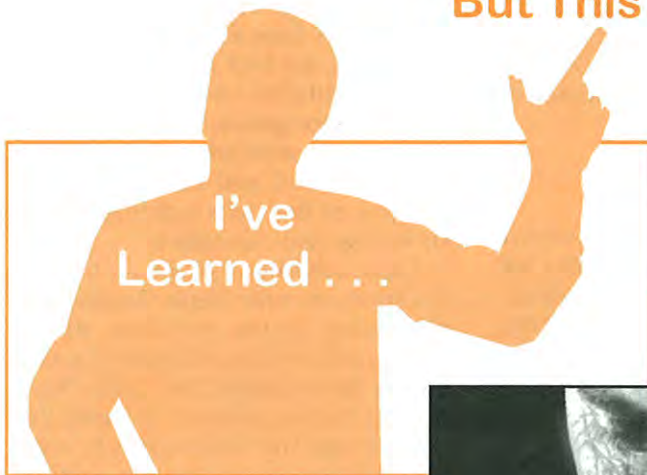
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ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Steve Faison chairs the Media Commission. He pastors Bloss Memorial Free Will Baptist Church in Arlington, Virginia.





I May be Young,  
But This

Part two of an 11-part series.



# About Grief

By Terry Eagleton



**E**arly in my ministry I received a Sunday morning phone call notifying me of Mrs. T's death. She was a grandmother to five teens in the church where I served. I called the family, expressed my condolences and made arrangements to drive them to the funeral that was scheduled for 1:00 p.m. that day.

My mind raced. I was not prepared for the kind of day rapidly unfolding. My agenda was made more complex by the six baptisms scheduled as the last event in that morning's service.

At 12:50 p.m. we arrived at the cemetery gates and found the chapel just in time for the funeral services. There was no music, no movement, no indication of what the congregants were to do. Five long minutes after 1:00 p.m., the father of the teens

began to make his way toward me.

When he reached where I was standing, he leaned forward and whispered in my ear, "Pastor, you know I'm not a religious man. No one in my family, except my children, is religious. But at a time like this, we think someone ought to say something. Would you mind preaching Mother's funeral?"

My life's experience was wholly inadequate at that time. I was 25 years old and the sum total of all funerals I'd attended was one. From that abrupt introduction to interaction with the grieving, I have added 20 years of observation. I'm young, but this I've learned about grief:

## Grief Has its Function

God did not intend for His creation to experience pain, suffering or grief. Yet,

our first parents insured sorrow would be our constant companion when they introduced sin into the human experience. Through the years, I have come to understand grief as the sorrow that accompanies the loss of a relationship.

In the deep end of the pool of pain we often find divorce, loss of a job and death. Of these, the loss of a job is the least acknowledged, while the most intense anguish is reserved for the death of someone we love. Whether the grief is mild and relatively brief, or despotically and lengthy, there is value in mourning separation.

John gives us insight that is reassuring on this point. John states simply that the Perfect Man was, moved, troubled, and cried when His friend Lazarus died (11:33-35). Jesus' response is a beautiful model for all mortals.



By experiencing grief Jesus authenticated the value of life with its relationships while demonstrating the appropriate response to their loss. If someone experiences the loss of a nourishing relationship and does not grieve, they need help.

### Grief is a Healthy Response

Divorce has shown itself to be a particularly complex source of anguish. To those who are acquainted with scripture, a rapid recall of Jesus' words is not unusual, "... what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder," (Matt. 19:6).

However, our perplexity begins when we conjoin that statement with Moses' acquiescence and Jesus' acknowledgment that at times we humans choose the anguish of dismemberment by the extermination of certain unions (see Matt. 19:8). How could this be any more of a recipe for grief?

While I understand that Hollywood's cowboys are not permitted to experience grief, the rest of us are better served by common sense. God created us as social beings. We are made to function through relationships. As such, we can only be socially healthy human beings when nourishing relationships connect us. The deeper and more mature these relationships, the better adjusted we are. I am convinced this explains why the suspension of a relationship naturally brings grief.

### Grief is Personal

Every time I think on the subject of grief, I am reminded of a conversation with a teen shortly after the funeral service for her grandfather. With profound consternation she related how a well-meaning peer of her late grandfather offered condolences. In his desire to express his concern, he told her that he, "knew what she was going through."

As much as she wanted to give the consoler the benefit of the nice gesture, she just couldn't accept his insensitivity to her personal grief. That grandfather and granddaughter shared what no other two humans could share—hope of many more years together, dreams of her future fairy-tale wedding.

Aspirations held between them were sacred and should not have been trampled, especially by good in-



tentions. From that day forward, I have made every effort to never forget the personal nature of grief.

### Grief Needs Individual Expression

Like snowflakes that gather in a winter storm, the collection of individuals forms the human race. In both cases, as we've all been told, no two are alike. We must express ourselves as individuals through our uniqueness. Grief is no exception.

I've attended funerals in North, Central and South America. I've sat with the bereft in Europe and Africa. I've observed some to be outlandishly expressive, while others silently contort with inner pain. Though all cultures have unspoken but acceptable public expressions of grief, everyone in every culture ultimately grieves as an individual.

Thus, it seems tragic when someone becomes uncomfortable with an individual's expression of grief and commences to encourage the brokenhearted to squelch their emotions. Attempts to guide the mourning by only

making use of personal mile markers is certain to prove inadequate to many. No two people will ever grieve exactly the same, so it is admirable for us to comfort one another while simultaneously permitting individual expression.

### Healthy Grief Eventually Subsides

Unfortunately, not everyone experiences beneficial grief. The Apostle Paul alluded to those who sorrow with no hope. I've known some who mistakenly have concluded that unrelenting grief is their duty—proof they truly loved the one lost. This is neither true nor restorative. True love is most clearly evidenced when grief, having run its due course, gives way to honoring memory and achievement.

Others convince me they have no expectation of ever knowing any healing of their pain. All who feel no relief of their grief should seek qualified help. Healthy grief, in due time, gains perspective and the sharp pain subsides. Jesus says, "Come to me . . . I will give you rest," (Matt. 11:28). ■



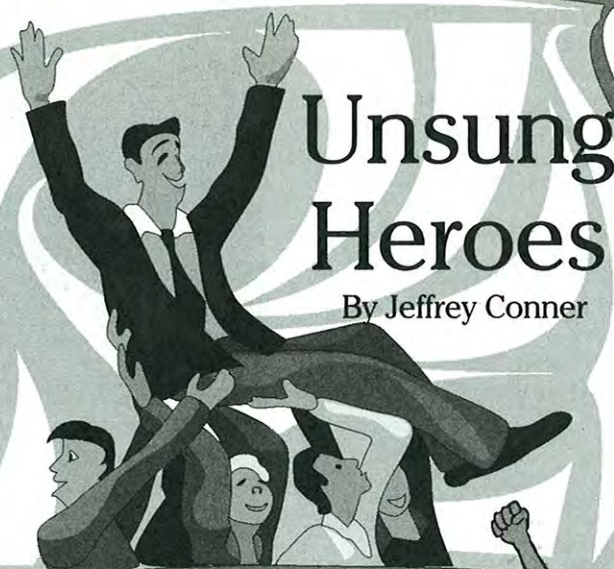
ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Terry Eagleton pastors Horton Heights Free Will Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee.

## Coming... Next Month

- ✎ Layman Calls for Expository Preaching
- ✎ Third Commandment
- ✎ Reaching Mrs. Dorothy
- ✎ Murder in the Sanctuary
- ✎ The Church
- ✎ Dad and Me

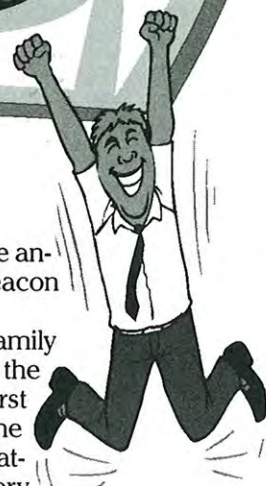


A pastor calls for "Deacon Appreciation Month."



# Unsung Heroes

By Jeffrey Conner



**M**any times over the years I have been the recipient when our churches participate in Pastor Appreciation Day. There have been skits put on in my honor, gifts given, dinners of recognition. All have been wonderful and a real encouragement to me and my family. Some very thoughtful people have also recognized my wife which touched my heart even more.

However, there are others I consider unsung heroes of the faith. They have labored equally hard in the fields white to harvest. They have been jacks-of-all-trades, roofers, plumbers, carpenters, Sunday School teachers, board members, conflict managers, counselors, friends, project managers, pulpit search committees, fill-in pastors, prayer warriors and encouragers.

But most important they have been faithful, loving leaders at church as well as in the home. Dedicated and committed to the cause of Christ, they serve their tenures for a lifetime. They are just as called as the pastor and just as dedicated to the Lord's service.

Put all those people together and you will find one person. That's right, just one man. Almost every church has one, and if they don't they should. That person is none other than the *Deacon*.

It is time to give honor unto whom honor is due. So in June 2001 we began putting together a special day in honor of our deacons. We celebrated the first annual "Deacon Appreciation Day" in January 2002.

The day was filled with activity, laughter, tears and a few surprises. We began our services as usual while surprise number one was unfolding in the church foyer. We had arranged for the family of our deacon to be present. It was great!

I asked our deacon and his wife to sit in two special

chairs on the platform. Then we announced that today was "Deacon Appreciation Day."

About 30 of the deacon's family members and friends entered the sanctuary and sat in the first three rows of pews. One by one they made their way to the platform and told a humorous story or fond memory. There was plenty of laughter and tissues for the tears.

We presented our deacon with a special plaque to remember this day. We presented his wife a bouquet of flowers. They each received \$100 gift certificates to their favorite stores. Since his gift certificate was for Bass Pro Shop, he received a few offers from his friends to help him make the right purchases.

We also presented them both with a gift certificate to their favorite restaurant. When they thought it was over, we gave them a gift certificate for a bed and breakfast. Then we closed out the service and had a dinner in their honor that afternoon.

Now some people may think we were frivolous, that we went overboard. I say, "No it wasn't," not when you consider how a deacon serves the church for many years, always behind the scenes. Our deacon has served almost 30 years. A gesture of thanks has been long in coming.

So here is my challenge to our Free Will Baptist churches. Let's find a month to set aside as national Deacon Appreciation Month. January works well at our church. What works for you? ■

ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Jeffrey Conner pastors Bethel Free Will Baptist Church in El Dorado Springs, Missouri.



## Florida Names Randy Bryant to Top Post



VERO BEACH, FL—Reverend Randy Bryant, 45-year-old pastor of Ryanwood Fellowship FWB Church, has been named executive secretary of the Florida State Association, according to the Florida Executive Committee. Bryant succeeds David Williford who now serves at Free Will Baptist Bible College.

In addition to his pastoral and executive duties, Bryant also serves as assistant clerk of the National Association of Free Will Baptists and moderator of Florida's Indian River Association. He chairs the 2003 Steering Committee for the national convention which meets in Tampa this July.

Brother Bryant was licensed to preach in 1976 at age 19 and ordained in 1977. He grew up in Jacksonville, Florida, as a member of Immanuel FWB Church. He answered the call to preach at age 16.

After graduating from Free Will

Baptist Bible College in 1979, Bryant pastored First FWB Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana (1979-'81). He then pastored Unity FWB Church in Bradley, Illinois (1981-'82). He accepted the call to Ryanwood Fellowship FWB Church in May 1983 where he has served 20 years.

The denomination has called on Randy frequently to lead at local and state levels. He served as Florida's General Board member (1989-'93), editor of the state paper, *The Coordinator* (1986-'92), clerk of the state association (1987-2002), and meeting planner for the state association (1990-present). He is a member of the Religious Conference Management Association (RCMA) and is pursuing his Certified Meeting Planner (CMP) designation.

Bryant served 17 years as Florida's youth camp director (1985-2002) and chaired the Indian River Christian Education Board 14 years (1983-'97).

Diana (Mrs. Randy) Bryant is president of Florida Women Active for Christ. The Bryants' two children, Paul and Rachel, are students at Free Will Baptist Bible College.

Reverend Bryant said, "I look forward to working with Florida pastors and people as well as the boards and committees of our state association."

## 229 at FWBBC Welcome Days

NASHVILLE, TN—The fall Welcome Days at Free Will Baptist Bible College attracted 229 young people from 78 churches in 18 states November 14-16, according to Matt Markins, director of enrollment management. Of the total, 85 were high school seniors. This is the largest registration in at least five years, he says. The total for last fall was 194 and spring 2002 enrollment was 210.

The largest state representations were North Carolina (46) and Virginia (21). The most from any church was 15 from Virginia Beach FWB Church in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

"Students, faculty and staff hosted the future students and shared with them what Free Will Baptist Bible College is about," Mr. Markins said. He also commended pastors, youth pastors and parents who worked hard to bring their young people to Welcome Days.

FWBBC's spring Welcome Days is scheduled March 27-29. For information, call 800/76-FWBBC or email [recruit@fwbbc.edu](mailto:recruit@fwbbc.edu).



## Tornadoes Hit Alabama Free Will Baptists



Pastor Charles Fowler's home in Vernon, Alabama.

CARBON HILL, AL—A line of tornadoes that swept northward from Louisiana to Ohio November 10, 2002, left decimated homes, damaged and destroyed churches among Alabama Free Will Baptists, according to Rick Cash, promotional director for the Alabama State Association of Free Will Baptists.

Six churches in North Central Alabama were in the tornadoes' paths. Reverend Cash reported seven homes destroyed, others damaged and two people killed who attend Calvary FWB Church in Carbon Hill. The Calvary Church was leveled by the tornado (see photo at right).

The Eugene Wright family (members of First FWB Church in Fayette) lost their home. Pastor Charles Fowler's home was destroyed (see photo above), his

barn demolished and damage to both vehicles in the garage. Fowler pastors Union Chapel FWB Church in Vernon.

While attempting to remove a tree which had fallen at Cedrom

Grove FWB Church in Carbon Hill, Pastor John Warren fell from the church roof and broke his leg. He required surgery November 13.

Two members' homes were destroyed at New Liberty FWB Church in Bankston and another was damaged. Darren Pollard pastors.

Promotional director Rick Cash is coordinating relief efforts in the tornadoes' aftermath. "We are setting up the Tornado Relief Fund," Cash said. "All funds will be divided among Free Will Baptists who suffered losses during the storm."

### Tornado Relief Fund

Reverend Rick Cash, Promotional Director  
Alabama State Association of Free Will Baptists  
P. O. Box 9

Guin, AL 35563

Email: [rcashfwb@aol.com](mailto:rcashfwb@aol.com)

Office: 205/468-3897

Cell: 205/932-0263

Home: 205/904-9402



Calvary FWB Church in Carbon Hill, Alabama.

## 2003 Yearbooks Available

NASHVILLE, TN—The 2003 Free Will Baptist Yearbook is off the press! The Yearbooks will be mailed to district association clerks for distribution to local pastors. If you are interested in purchasing a copy for personal use, call Randall House Publications at 800/877-7030.



## Texas Church Honors A. F. Ferguson

CEDAR PARK, TX—Members of Lakehills FWB Church in Cedar Park set aside November 24, 2002 to celebrate the life of 93-year-old A. F. Ferguson, a Free Will Baptist preacher whose ministry spans 70 years and 17 churches in four states.

Pastor Keith Woody, who met A. F. (Allie) Ferguson in the 1950s when Reverend Ferguson and his late wife Jessie were planting a new church in Odessa, worked behind the scenes with family and friends to bring the day's events together.

The special day included a guest speaker Sunday morning, Brother Ferguson's oldest friend, Reverend Clarence Hearron. The two ministers met when Hearron was five years old and have been friends 75 years. They preached and served together in Texas and Oklahoma.

Reverend Ferguson's son Norman sang a medley of three songs. Ferguson's daughter, Mrs. Glenna Cravalho and her husband Frank, created a time line of pictures and events marking Reverend Ferguson's life. The time line stretched 42 feet on the wall of the church's new 7,800-square-foot fellowship hall.

Allie Ferguson's ministry has been one of sermons and songs. He is as well-known for his singing ability as for his faithfulness to the Word in his preaching. He recorded a group of songs at age 83.

Glenna Cravalho said, "One of

Dad's most requested songs was 'I'd Rather Have Jesus.' It was more than a song to him; it was a way of life."

Reverend Ferguson grew up as the oldest son of a carpenter/sharecropper farmer. He has retired three different times and now continues prayer ministry for younger preachers and missionaries. He just finished reading the Bible through for the 38th consecutive year.

Lakehills member Ann Thompson said, "Today, Brother Ferguson's eyes are bright with expression and his countenance one of settled peace. He is an avid reader; he loves Scrabble, conversation with visitors and is content with today's blessings. He is much loved by all of us at Lakehills FWB Church."

Clarence Hearron's sermon addressed how many people are blessed by God for the sake of a righteous man. He commended Ferguson for being "a persistent preacher of the gospel in spite of disappointments."

Contact editor Jack Williams wrote, "Thank God for the A. F. Fergusons who broke the ground, laid the foundation, planted the crop, worked in the shadows . . . and let guys like me stand on their shoulders."

The day's events celebrating the ministry of Reverend Ferguson closed with a dinner in his honor.

## Reverend Herbert Vandivort, 93, Dies

MOUNTAIN GROVE, MO—The Reverend Herbert S. Vandivort died

November 16, 2002, at age 93. He was preceded in death by Bessie (Scott) Vandivort, his wife of 68 years. At age 21, Herbert was saved



and baptized while attending a Baptist church in Kansas City, Missouri. He later became a member of the newly-organized Oak Grove FWB Church near Cabool, Missouri.

Herbert was ordained as a Free Will Baptist minister on September 27, 1935. He served as pastor of Union Chapel, Number One, Providence, New Home and Union (Gladden) FWB churches in Missouri. He also served as interim pastor of other churches. The churches grew in number and their buildings were improved during his ministry.

After health problems hampered him from continuing an active pastoral ministry, he remained active for many years in Missouri's Mission Association.

The Reverends Max Courtney, Bill Vandivort and R. E. Helsley conducted his funeral services. Rev. Vandivort was remembered for being faithful to his local church and being a peacemaker in denominational meetings.

Herbert Bessie lived most of their married life on a farm near Houston, Missouri, where they produced Grade A milk for 40 years. Herbert is survived by sons J. Mark and wife Louise, Noble, Oklahoma; Dan and wife Brenda, Edgar Springs, Missouri; Ben and wife Janet, Mountain Grove, Missouri; 12 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren.



(L) Clarence Hearron, A. F. Ferguson, Keith Woody.



## Arkansas Minister, Reverend Lewis Barker, Dies

MOORE, OK—The Reverend Lewis P. Barker (89), a Free Will Baptist minister for 64 years, died on his birthday, November 24, 2002. One of the sturdy bi-vocational pastors in Arkansas for decades, Brother Barker was a pastor, church planter and encourager.

Early in his ministry, he pastored churches that paid no salary or a small salary. He supported his family by working at times on his father-in-law's farm, and then by working in sawmills.

During World War II, Barker became a finished carpenter and led a building crew. He was foreman of a crew that built an underground munitions facility for the U. S. government. He had to negotiate for time off to preach funerals or attend church-related activities.

In time, Reverend Barker pastored 14 churches in five associations. His six-decade ministry focused on the state of Arkansas where he served on local, district and state levels as clerk and moderator. His service on the Arkansas State Missions Board and Youth Camp Board encouraged participation in the fledgling Cooperative Plan that supported state and national outreach.

Before he was called to service in full-time churches, Barker frequently pastored two or more churches at once, preaching Saturday nights and twice on Sunday, often many miles from home. He occasionally had to walk to keep his appointments.

Arkansas' Saline Association adopted Barker's innovative idea to conduct revival meetings as a means to start new churches. The concept reached into Northern Louisiana. Barker frequently participated in a new church's organization and then accepted a call as its first pastor.

Reverend Barker's daughter, Mrs. Earnie Deeds, served as a missionary to Brazil until retirement.

Funeral services were conducted November 26 at First FWB Church in Moore, Oklahoma, with Pastor Dan Farmer officiating. Tributes to Reverend Barker's ministry and life were given by Rev. James Puckett, director of missions in Oklahoma; by his son, Dr. Robert L. Barker; by his oldest grandson, Lyndon Deeds; and by his son-in-law, Rev. Earnie Deeds.

## Michigan Pastor Celebrates 50 Years in Ministry



Gene and Jane Norris

CLINTON TOWNSHIP, MI—Reverend Gene Norris, long-time Michigan pastor and state leader, celebrated 50 years in the ministry in 2002. He has pastored the same church for the past 19 years—Riverside Fellowship FWB Church.

He is Michigan's promotional secretary and chaired the 2001 national

convention Steering Committee. Norris also edits *The Menorah*, Michigan's state paper, and serves as meeting planner for the state association.

Gene has pastored seven churches in Illinois, Missouri, Arizona and Michigan. Ordained to preach in 1954, he moderated the Arizona State Association and served as promotional secretary for both the Illinois and Michigan State Associations.

One of Norris' most satisfying moments came when he returned to his hometown and started First FWB Church in Benton, Illinois. He moved from there to Clinton Township in Michigan where, for nearly two decades, he has been reaching out to that suburban Detroit community.

Deacon David Symington said about his pastor, "Although Pastor Norris is a very humble man, he has to be proud of the fact that he has been married for 46 years to his loving wife, Jane, and that both of his sons Kevin and Jeff, along with their entire families, are all active members in the church. It would be difficult to imagine what Riverside Fellowship FWB Church would be like without the Norris families."

## BEYOND BELIEF





## 2003 State/District Association Meetings

| State                           | Date/Time        |          | Location                                   |
|---------------------------------|------------------|----------|--|
| <b>Alabama</b>                  | Starts: Nov. 5   | 7:00 pm  | First FWB Church                           |
|                                 | Closes: Nov. 7   | 4:00 pm  | 54 Twin Street<br>Sylacauga, AL            |
| <b>Arizona</b>                  | Starts: Mar. 8   | 10:00 am | First FWB Church                           |
|                                 | Closes: Mar. 8   | 3:00 pm  | 2565 E. 18th Street<br>Tucson, AZ          |
| <b>Arkansas</b>                 | Starts: Aug. 5   | 7:30 pm  | Conway Public School Auditorium            |
|                                 | Closes: Aug. 6   | 9:30 pm  | 2300 Prince Street<br>Conway, AR           |
| <b>Association of Mexico</b>    | Starts: Aug. 1   | 10:00 am | El Uro Camp                                |
|                                 | Closes: Aug. 3   | Noon     | Monterrey, Nuevo Leon<br>Mexico            |
| <b>Atlantic Canada District</b> | Starts: Jun. 28  | 9:00 am  | St. John Valley Bible Camp                 |
|                                 | Closes: Jun. 28  |          | Hartland, New Brunswick<br>Canada          |
| <b>California</b>               | Starts: May 1    | 7:00 pm  | California Christian College               |
|                                 | Closes: May 3    | 11:30 am | 4881 University Avenue<br>Fresno, CA       |
| <b>Colorado</b>                 | Starts: May 3    | 9:30 am  | Highland Hills FWB Church                  |
|                                 | Closes: May 3    | Noon     | 59th Avenue and 21st Street<br>Greeley, CO |
| <b>Florida</b>                  | Starts: April 30 | 7:00 pm  | Jacksonville Marriott                      |
|                                 | Closes: May 3    | Noon     | 4670 Salisbury Road<br>Jacksonville, FL    |
| <b>Georgia</b>                  | Starts: Mar. 13  | 7:00 pm  | Calvary FWB Church                         |
|                                 | Closes: Mar. 15  | 11:00 am | 6165 Billings Road<br>Columbus, GA         |
| <b>Idaho</b>                    | Starts: May 16   | 7:30 pm  | Rupert FWB Church                          |
|                                 | Closes: May 17   | Noon     | 206 E. 6th Street<br>Rupert, ID            |
| <b>Illinois</b>                 | Starts: Mar. 21  | 9:00 am  | Northwest FWB Church                       |
|                                 | Closes: Mar. 22  | 3:00 pm  | 5318 W. Diversey Avenue<br>Chicago, IL     |
| <b>Indiana</b>                  | Starts: Jun. 20  | 7:00 pm  | Liberty FWB Church                         |
|                                 | Closes: Jun. 21  | Noon     | 2900 E. 1150 N.<br>Wolcottville, IN        |
| <b>Kansas</b>                   | Starts: Jun. 5   | 7:30 pm  | Living Hope Ministries FWB Church          |
|                                 | Closes: Jun. 7   | Noon     | 735 East 5th Street<br>Hutchinson, KS      |
| <b>Kentucky</b>                 | Starts: Jun. 20  | 7:30 pm  | Lovely FWB Church                          |
|                                 | Closes: Jun. 21  | Noon     | Lovely, KY                                 |
| <b>Mexico Association</b>       | Starts: ?        |          | Altamira, Tamaulipas                       |
|                                 | Closes: ?        |          | Mexico                                     |
| <b>Michigan</b>                 | Starts: May 16   | 7:00 pm  | Community FWB Church                       |
|                                 | Closes: May 17   | 4:00 pm  | 6975 McKean Road<br>Ypsilanti, MI          |

| State                        | Date/Time       |          | Location                                    |
|------------------------------|-----------------|----------|---|
| <b>Mid-Atlantic District</b> | Starts: Nov. 1  | 9:30 am  | New Castle FWB Church                       |
|                              | Closes: Nov. 1  | 12:00 pm | 409 Moore's Lane<br>New Castle, DE          |
| <b>Mississippi</b>           | Starts: Nov. 7  | 9:00 am  | Corinth FWB Church                          |
|                              | Closes: Nov. 8  | Noon     | 2426 Camp Eight Road<br>Waynesboro, MS      |
| <b>Missouri</b>              | Starts: Jun. 2  | 7:30 pm  | Cowan Civic Center                          |
|                              | Closes: Jun. 4  | 9:00 pm  | 500 E. Elm<br>Lebanon, MO                   |
| <b>New Jersey District</b>   | Starts: Mar. 14 | 7:00 pm  | Centerton FWB Church                        |
|                              | Closes: Mar. 15 | Noon     | 110 Dealtown Road<br>Pittsgrove, NJ         |
| <b>New Mexico District</b>   | Starts: Apr. 10 | 7:00 pm  | Lighthouse FWB Church                       |
|                              | Closes: Apr. 12 | 4:00 pm  | 403 N. 8th Street<br>Carlsbad, NM           |
| <b>North Carolina</b>        | Starts: Jun. 2  | 9:00 am  | Cramerton FWB Church                        |
|                              | Closes: Jun. 3  | 1:00 pm  | 426 Woodlawn Extension<br>Cramerton, NC     |
| <b>Northeast District</b>    | Starts: Jun. 13 | 4:00 pm  | Heritage FWB Church                         |
|                              | Closes: Jun. 14 | Noon     | 360 Union Avenue<br>Laconia, NH             |
| <b>Northwest District</b>    | Starts: May 16  | 7:30 pm  | Northside FWB Church                        |
|                              | Closes: May 17  | Noon     | 375 Irvington Drive<br>Eugene, OR           |
| <b>Ohio</b>                  | Starts: Jun. 27 | 9:30 am  | Gahanna FWB Church                          |
|                              | Closes: Jun. 28 | Noon     | 3868 Stygler Road<br>Gahanna, OH            |
| <b>Oklahoma</b>              | Starts: Oct. 14 | 7:00 pm  | Hillsdale FWB College                       |
|                              | Closes: Oct. 16 | Noon     | 3615 S. I-35<br>Moore, OK                   |
| <b>South Carolina</b>        | Starts: Feb. 27 | 9:30 am  | Peace FWB Church                            |
|                              | Closes: Feb. 28 | 4:00 pm  | 897 Third Loop Road<br>Florence, SC         |
| <b>Tennessee</b>             | Starts: Nov. 10 | 7:30 pm  | First FWB Church                            |
|                              | Closes: Nov. 12 | Noon     | 833 Willow Avenue<br>Cookeville, TN         |
| <b>Texas</b>                 | Starts: Jun. 4  | 7:00 pm  | San Antonio, TX                             |
|                              | Closes: Jun. 6  | Noon     | No location determined as yet.              |
| <b>Virginia</b>              | Starts: Jun. 12 | 10:00 am | Virginia Beach FWB Church                   |
|                              | Closes: Jun. 13 | 5:00 pm  | 210 S. Witchduck Road<br>Virginia Beach, VA |
| <b>West Virginia</b>         | Starts: Jun. 6  | 9:30 am  | Central FWB Church                          |
|                              | Closes: Jun. 7  | 3:00 pm  | 451 6th Avenue<br>Huntington, WV            |



## Leadership Conference Meets in Nashville

NASHVILLE, TN—More than 140 Free Will Baptist state and national leaders met at the Millennium Maxwell House to discuss "Laborers Together." The December 2-3, 2002, Leadership Conference featured three sessions by Indiana-based Patrick McLaughlin, president of The Trinity Group.

Four other plenary sessions included presentations and challenges from denominational leaders: Kenneth Akers, Master's Men director; Ron Hunter, Sunday School and Church Training director; Matt Pinson, Free Will Baptist Bible College president; Keith Burden, executive secretary.

The Publications Committee met with denominational editors Monday afternoon. The committee's work is on-going concerning the feasibility of combining several national publications into one enlarged monthly publication.

The National Association's Nominating Committee met Tuesday afternoon to consider board and commission vacancies for the 2003 national convention. Nathan Ruble (MO) chairs the committee.

The 2003 Leadership Conference will meet December 8-9 at the Millennium Maxwell House.



Keynote speaker Patrick McLaughlin (R) looks up to California moderator Millard Sasser.



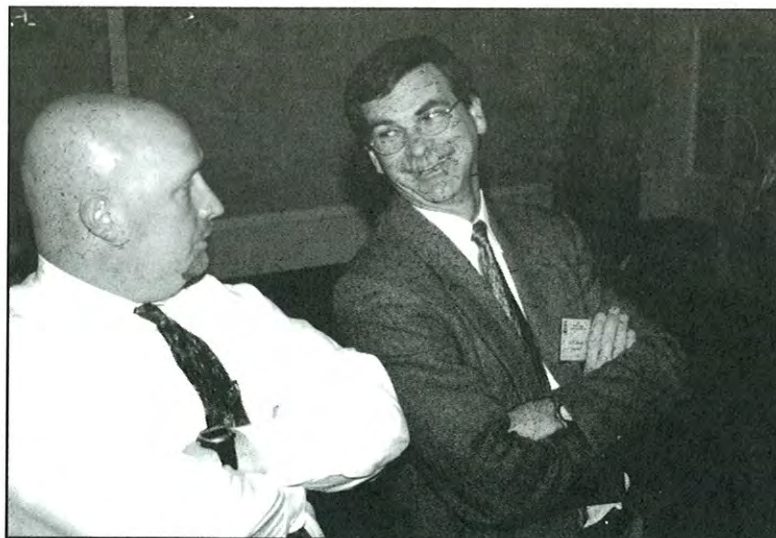
Randall House marketing manager, Eric Thomsen (L) and Board of Retirement staffer David Brown.



South Carolina moderator Sherwood Lee (R) shares a book.



North Carolina promotional director Jim Marcum (L) and FWBBC Trustee/Missouri pastor Gary Fry.



Foreign Missions staffers Rob Conley (L) and Neil Gilliland.





**Arkansas executive director Tim Campbell (L) and Louisiana pastor Ron Parker.**



**Moderator Carl Cheshier (L) is entertained by Milton Worthington.**



**Bible College president Matt Pinson watches from a stuffed chair.**



**Michigan pastor Loyd Locklear (L) and FWB Family Ministries staffer Ralph Dingus.**



**Master's Men director Ken Akers.**



**Arkansas pastor Will Harmon (L) and moderator Carl Cheshier.**



**(L) James Puckett (OK), Tim York (KY), Robert Prichard (OH).**



**WNAC president Debe Taylor (L) and WNAC Executive Committee member Yvonne Brown.**



# currently

**Tennessee's Cumberland Camp** (ministry of the Cumberland Association) involved 478 participants in 2002, according to Jerry Whitworth, camp director. Thirty salvation decisions highlighted the results. The volunteer kitchen staff prepared more than 10,000 meals during six weeks of camp.

**Arkansas** is different, even when it comes to pastor appreciation. Members of **Woodlawn FWB Church** in **Russellville** gave Pastor **Mike Phillips** a muzzle-loader rifle and charged him to "Go get 'em!" He did. Phillips reports six new members and two rededications. Maybe they're onto something that works as well on Thursday night visitation as it does in deer season.

Fortieth anniversary activities dominated the homecoming celebration at **Green Rock FWB Church** in **Colona, IL**. With six founding members present, the congregation enjoyed a photographic trip of memories, videos from the church's yesterdays and the dedication of the new wing of Faith Fellowship Hall. **Lamar Cox** preached the morning message. Former pastor **Wayne Martin** summarized the first 20 years; current pastor **Sam Henderson** handled the last 20 years.

**Freedom FWB Church** in **Marion, IL**, honored long-time member, **LaVerne Fosse**. Brother Fosse has been a member of the church 64 years. He has served as Sunday School superintendent, trustee, General Board member and now chairs the General Board. The church was built on land donated by one of his ancestors. **Gilbert Craig** pastors.

Former pastor **Bill Adcock** was guest speaker for the 105th anniversary celebration at **Blue Point FWB Church** in **Cisne, IL**. The church's teens remain active in state and national outreach. **Ernie Lewis** pastors.

Pastor **Larry Cook** reports five baptisms at **Bear Point FWB Church** in **Sesser, IL**. During the month of September, a different class was designated each Sunday to express appreciation for the pastor. Classes through the sixth grade made gifts and unfurled banners;

teens gave cards and gift certificates; single adults cooked for the church staff all week; the adult class gave a plaque of appreciation; the entire congregation roasted the preacher on the fifth Sunday.

The **Illinois** Board of Missions awarded the annual William Mishler Missions Scholarship to **Julie Potete**, a Chicago freshman at Free Will Baptist Bible College. The \$1,000 scholarship is awarded to an Illinois student at FWBBC on the basis of character, references, stated goals and desire, need and academic experience. **John Hollis** chairs the Board of Missions.

Members of **Trinity FWB Church** in **Bridgeton, MO**, held a five-day celebration to commemorate 40 years of ministry. Former pastors **Millard Sasser**, **Mike Garner** and **Lynn Davenport** preached a three-day revival. More than 200 people gathered for the Sunday morning service. Missouri's executive secretary **Nathan Ruble** delivered the morning message. The church began in January 1962, acquired four acres that June and dedicated their first building January 27, 1963. The congregation built a 525-seat bi-level sanctuary in 1969. **Kenny Panduku** pastors.

**South Charleston FWB Church** in **South Charleston, OH**, observed 35th anniversary services, according to Pastor **Homer Brooks**. Pastor Brooks and **Don Hix** preached the day's sermons. Six conversions and four baptisms at **Victory FWB Church** in **Marengo, OH**, have Pastor **Brad Duncan** smiling. Duncan began a young converts class to orient new believers.

Yes, that dripping wet minister is Pastor **Wiley Perkins**. He recently baptized 16 converts and welcomed four new members at **Samantha FWB Church** in **Leesburg, OH**.

Everybody left happy when **Pleasant Valley FWB Church** in **Pedro, OH**, closed out their Vacation Bible School. Pastor **Jessie Sizemore** said that nightly attendance surpassed 100, and 27 people were converted.

He has only served at **Canaan Land FWB Church** one year, but Pastor **Mike**

**Blanton** could not be more pleased. During the past 12 months, the church witnessed 67 conversions, baptized 40 converts and received 40 new members.

**Mississippi** executive secretary **J. L. Gore** was honored by two churches he began as mission works. Gore preached the homecoming sermon at **First FWB Church** in **Booneville** where Rick Powers pastors. Gore also conducted special services at **First FWB Church** in **Pearl** where **David Nicholson** pastors.

Reverend **Lewis T. Woodall** (76) died August 4, 2002. The **Keota, OK**, native served in the U.S. Army during World War II. The long-time Free Will Baptist minister pastored churches in Lawton, Duncan, Comanche and Countyline. His son, Rev. **Mark Woodall**, officiated during the funeral services.

**Donelson FWB Church** in **Nashville, TN**, reports 11 new members. **Robert J. Morgan** pastors.

The children at **Murry Spur FWB Church** in **Spiro, OK**, collected money in a fish bowl for the state's Total Support Program. Pastor **C. L. Thomas** said the \$509.44 that the youngsters raised outweighed them . . . and he has pictures to prove it.

**Kansas** youth camp director **Jim Brewer** reports 26 conversions and 22 rededications among the 225 attendees. Nineteen acknowledged calls to special service. ■



# Classic Car Evangelism

By Cliff Donoho

**G**et ready to share one of the most exciting days of ministry ever with the people in your life. Do you know a guy who doesn't know Jesus? He may be someone at work or a neighbor. He might be your husband, son or father. Whoever he is, I have some really exciting news for you. You can reach him on Father's Day 2003.

**M**ake Father's Day 2003 a powerful day of outreach ministry. Let's do more than participate in uplifting praise and worship. The pastor, of course, will have a powerful sermon where the unredeemed can listen to a message of hope. Let's reach beyond the walls of men in our "own" church circles. Father's Day 2003, we are going to reach beyond the walls of Cornerstone FWB Church (Nashville, TN) to people, especially men who need Christ. We plan to have a car show immediately following the morning worship service.

The heartbeat of God has become our heartbeat. Our pulse quickens as we approach great opportunities to reach beyond the church walls to people in the Nashville area. There is not one single thing that attracts every guy, but there is one thing that makes a man's heart beat a little quicker. It seems to me that a huge number of men are attracted to machines. I'm talking about the kind that propels a set of wheels down the highway of life. It may be the rumble of a Harley or an old T-bird or '57 Chevy. What guy hasn't had his head turned by a shiny Corvette?

You may be thinking, *What in the world has this got to do with church?* The key words are "What in the world," because that is who we are trying to reach—the people of this world.

**T**he Apostle Paul taught us the importance of becoming relevant to people outside the faith. "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some," (1 Cor. 9:20-22).

I love what Paul is saying here: Paul entered people's lives "... in order to reach a wide range of people: religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, the defeated, the demoralized—whoever. He

didn't take "on" their way of life. He kept his bearings on Christ—but he found a way to approach them in their world. He did all this because of the message. He didn't just want to talk about it; He wanted to be in on it!"

**Y**ou see, so many people have a view of the church as irrelevant to their daily lives. They have no idea what goes on in a church. But they are convinced that there is nothing here that they need. Far too many people look at the church as a place with a few out-of-touch people huddled in pews listening to a preacher trying to get into their wallet. Our intention at Cornerstone is to race past the false impressions people have about spiritual things, and influence them for the cause of Christ.

How can we change this perception? Actually, there are two things we can do. We can go where the people are, and we can open the doors of our church with worship opportunities that are attractive to people who are far from God. So, let's do it! We can do both of these things.

Paul said, "I didn't just want to talk about it; I wanted to be in on it!" Here is your opportunity. We can go and invite people, and here is a tool to open the conversation. Look those guys in the eye and say, "You're not going to believe what we're going to do at our church!"

**T**ell the guys in your world that the building is going to be surrounded by really hot cars and motorcycles, classics and show cars. We are all going to be filled with the joy of the Lord as meaningful ministry happens, touching every person who walks (or drives) through these doors. Gentlemen (and ladies), start your engines and race toward a thrilling day of life-changing ministry! You might be able to get someone to attend this special event who would not darken the church doors any other time. Let's be innovative with methods, but never change the message. ■

Father's Day is recognized by the National Association of Free Will Baptists as the day to receive a free will offering for the support and promotion of the Master's Men Department. We ask each pastor to consider receiving a love offering on Father's Day.

**ABOUT THE WRITER:** Reverend Cliff Donoho chairs the Master's Men Board. He pastors Cornerstone Free Will Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee.

## Master's



## Men



## One Pastor's Opinion

By Roy Harris

**W**here would we be without the ladies in our churches? After pastoring four full-time churches in three states, I understand better that the contribution of women is both obvious and indispensable. We often refer to the women's organization by its old name, the Woman's Auxiliary. Certainly the formal organizational structure would qualify it for such a designation. But to consider the women's group as something separate from the church is a misconception.

**O**ur ladies teach Sunday School and CTS classes. They pray for and financially support our missionaries at home and abroad. They adopt, promote and fund projects in their local associations and state works. Many of our churches would have difficulty operating if it were not for the hard work of our ladies.

**S**ome may look at our women's groups with suspicion. Not this pastor. Experience has taught me that women in our churches get things done. The Women Active for Christ groups that I have known have been both friend and ally to their pastor.

**H**ow do you marshal the collective resources of hundreds of local groups with thousands of members? There must be leadership on a national level and a means of organizing women into a force with the vision and purpose of reaching souls for Christ. Our national organization, Women Nationally Active for Christ, provides this leadership. I have the privilege of pastoring three of the four ladies who work in our WNAC office. All three are ladies in the truest sense of the word. Even more importantly, they are faithful to the Lord and to our church.

**W**orking for our denomination is not just a job, it is a ministry. They see it as their ministry. But they see their responsibilities to God as more than

this. They have found their places of service in their local church as well. You can find them singing in the choir, preparing meals for the sick and shut in, serving in the nursery, teaching in children's church and wholeheartedly supporting their local Women Active for Christ. On any level, a program, department or agency can be measured by the quality and integrity of its personnel. WNAC receives high marks on both counts.

**W**hat about financial support? WNAC is the only program on a national level that directly encourages and helps Free Will Baptist women. Money is a sensitive subject, and we tend to shy away from mentioning it. Our society has changed from families who eat at home to families who eat many meals out. The decision is not whether we eat out, but which restaurant this time. We do not give a second thought to spending \$10 for a meal at our favorite restaurant. Our WNAC office operates on a "bare bones" budget and they continue to scale back, cutting even more. Surely the valuable work they are doing is worth forgoing one trip to Cracker Barrel or even McDonald's.

**W**hat about prayer support? I know I can count on the ladies in my church. They pray for their pastor and the work of God on local, state and national levels. We are instructed in scripture to pray one for another. Women Nationally Active for Christ needs our prayers. The work they do is spiritual work. They need spiritual help from on high. They need the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They need the direction of our Lord as they seek to fulfill their mission within our denomination. We can pray. We should and we must. Just one pastor's opinion. ■

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Roy Harris pastors Woodbine Free Will Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee.

**Women Nationally  Active for Christ**



# Dangerous Decisions

By David L. Brown

**We** make decisions all the time. Will I wear a blue shirt or a white shirt today? Will I take the freeway or drive through town? Will I have Mexican or Japanese food for lunch? Many decisions are simply personal preferences and may not have a huge impact on our lives one way or the other. However, decisions regarding retirement may have a severe impact on our prospects for an adequate retirement.

It is important to make a good decision when you are ready to settle your Board of Retirement account. We offer many choices in an effort to meet the needs of every individual. Let's examine some of the possible choices.

**You** may decide to take complete control of your retirement account by choosing to take a lump sum settlement. Lump sum settlements carry some distinct disadvantages. As a general rule, most of your funds will immediately be taxable. By IRS rules we are required to withhold 20%, which will greatly reduce the amount left to live on. When you are dealing with a large lump sum settlement, the size of the settlement may push you into a higher tax bracket and reduce your funds even further.

**You** may decide to rollover your account to an IRA and again take complete control of your retirement. A rollover will avoid the tax problem since you are moving sheltered funds into another sheltered environment. However, all of your future withdrawals will be fully taxable.

In many ways, taking control of your retirement funds means less freedom rather than more. It is true that you have the freedom to make your own retirement decisions. It also means that you must do some research on your own and make good decisions about how you want to invest your funds.

**Many** want to spend their retirement years doing things other than making investment decisions and worrying if the choices they made are good ones. In addition to researching, retirees must also constantly monitor their portfolio to see if they are meeting the objectives they have set for the funds.

We have recently seen that these decisions must be made in light of good and bad market conditions. We all

look like geniuses in the middle of bull market run up, but how will we fare when the bear market comes calling? We must make decisions that will be good for the complete market cycle and be careful to not jump in and out of the market at the wrong times and further erode our assets.

Others may decide to be too conservative and only invest in fixed returns that do not provide growth to offset inflation. This decision can cause a nest egg to shrink too rapidly and jeopardize retirement income.

**While** some are accustomed to making these decisions, many are not and may be influenced by advisors or brokers who are more interested in a commission than what is the best investment decision for a particular individual. All investment decisions should be made in light of the fact that when a couple retires at age 65, one or both may need income for 20-25 years.

We may think we would like to control our retirement funds, but if we make bad decisions our retirement funds may control the financial quality of our retirement. Anyone who chooses to make their own decisions must do so carefully.

**The** Board of Retirement offers annuities that allow you to enjoy your retirement without making additional investment decisions. There are several types of annuities to meet individual needs. You can spend your retirement making decisions about how you want to continue serving the Lord rather than spending time making investment decisions.

Annuity funds are professionally managed to provide guaranteed retirement benefits. You can depend on your monthly annuity check as long as you (or in the case of a joint annuity, you and your wife) live without worrying that you may run out of money. Annuity payments may be designated as housing allowance up to your actual housing expenses in retirement if you are an ordained minister. Only church-controlled retirement plans can offer this benefit.

The Board of Retirement is ready to assist you as you make settlement decisions concerning your retirement funds. Call toll free 877-767-7738 to discuss fully your options in settling your retirement account. ■

## Retirement & Insurance



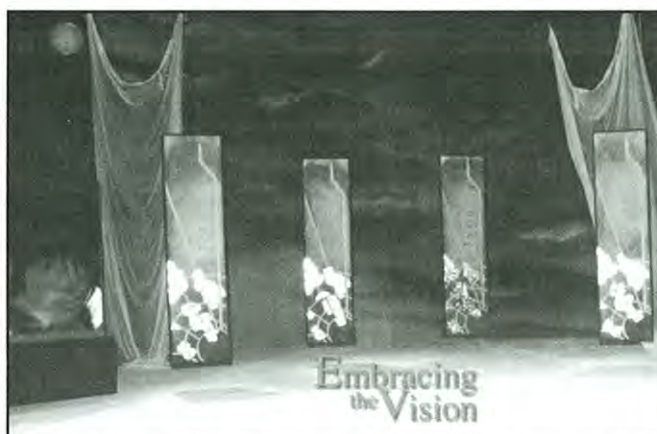


**G**et in on the action! The Foreign Missions video staff has put together another video in the *Embracing the Vision* series.

*Embracing the Vision III (ETV III)* focuses on what is happening in our churches and globally as people are becoming more aware of God's vision and more involved in world outreach. Entitled "**Acts 1:8 in Action**," this is a one-session video differing from the previous two four-part video presentations. However, it is expected to be about 22-30 minutes in length.

The purpose of the video is to say "it's working" and "thanks for proving it will work." Highlighting the fields of India and Cuba, the production shows the value of continued support, prayer and involvement. People have seen that God is interested in our participation in gathering worshippers from all parts of the globe. Local churches demonstrate the Acts 1:8 model and individuals testify concerning benefits they have received through missions participation.

This session should stimulate churches to even greater involvement as they see what is already being accomplished because some have taken the challenge seriously.



## Is It Really Working?

By Don Robirds

Narrated by Kenda Benward of *Embracing the Vision II* and Jeff Nichols of Donelson Free Will Baptist Church, this video promises to be a blessing to all who see it. The professional appearance is impressive and the content should make Free Will Baptists rejoice in God's work among us.

**T**his video will be available upon request at no cost. As with *ETV I* and *II*, Foreign Missions anticipates the response of recipients to include a generous World

Missions Offering toward mobilization efforts.

"**Acts 1:8 in Action**" should be available by mid-February, for use during April, Foreign Missions Month. A preview video was projected to be sent to all churches in January with details for ordering this third video setting forth God's vision of a world turning to Him in worship and praise.

While somewhat tentative due to time restrictions and financial constraints, a children's program is planned for those who want something special for the children during the video presentation.

To order *ETV III* call toll-free 1-877-767-7736, e-mail Foreign Missions at [heartbeat@nafwb.org](mailto:heartbeat@nafwb.org) or check our Web site—[www.nafwb.org/fm](http://www.nafwb.org/fm).



**Help your pastor and his wife visit the Free Will Baptist work in Cuba! Just give to the . . .**

**Laura Belle Barnard  
World Missions Offering  
April 27, 2003**

**If your church gives (undesignated) . . .**

**\$10,000 or more**—The pastor and his wife receive an all-expense-paid trip to Cuba where "Mom and Pop" Willey labored and where the work is flourishing. The church receives a beautiful framed collage of Laura Belle Barnard and other pioneer missionaries.

**\$5,000 or more**—The church receives a beautiful framed gemstone wall map (left) and the pastor receives a nice framed collage of Laura Belle Barnard and other pioneer missionaries.

**\$1,000 or more**—The church receives a nice framed collage of Laura Belle Barnard and other pioneer missionaries.

*Pastors of churches giving \$1,000 or more will be recognized during a special dinner at the 2003 National Association in Tampa, Fla.*

*Offerings must be received by Foreign Missions, P.O. Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011-5002 before June 30 to ensure a reservation for the recognition dinner on Wednesday evening.*



Foreign



Missions





Garnett Reid

## Worth More than Mr. Brown (Ephesians 1:1-14)

**S**ometimes we wonder of wealthy folks, "How much is he worth?" Lists of the world's richest people emerge every so often, highlighting such names as Bill Gates, Warren Buffet or the Sultan of Brunei.

Mr. Brown was the richest man we knew in my childhood blue-collar, Chevy and Ford neighborhood. Even though he lived in a modest bungalow a couple of blocks over, I assumed that because he owned a chain of local drugstores he must be fabulously wealthy, a latent Jed Clampett soon to emerge from humble surroundings and put our little community on the social register. Alas, he never did.

Since then I've come to understand that we seldom recognize true "wealth" for what it really is. Ephesians 1:1-14 unfolds the riches we have in Christ. This opening section of the letter is so vast and profound that any attempt to explain it seems meager at best. Yet it will do us much good to explore these exalted words and meditate on the truths they offer.

After Paul's greeting in vv. 1-2, the rest of the section takes the form of a formal "blessing" (also called a benediction or eulogy). Jews and early Christians referred to such a pronouncement as a *berakah*, after the Hebrew word for "blessing." The blessed God has "blessed us with all spiritual blessings," Paul emphasizes in v. 3. He sees these blessings as evidence of the "riches of his grace" which he lavished upon us (vv. 7-8).

Although there are many ways to approach this passage, as I read it I keep coming back to a central phrase. "In Christ" or its variants "in him," "in whom" or "in the beloved" occur 11 times in these opening 14 verses. Clearly, then, Paul's intent is to attribute these great "blessings" to our union with Christ. Because we are "in Him," we enjoy fabulous spiritual rich-

es. Consider these benefits as we examine the "in Christ" phrases.

**Loyalty in Christ (2).** As part of the typical greeting in his letters, Paul opens Ephesians by addressing these "saints" as "faithful in Christ." He thus emphasizes Christ as the object of their faith as they continue to trust Him.

**Blessing in Christ (3, 6).** Paul's celebration of "blessings" in Christ takes us all the way back to Genesis. There God blessed His creation in chapter one, enriching it beyond what was merely "good." In Genesis 12, He purposes to renew His relationship with fallen humans by blessing the world through Abraham's family. In Christ, the Lord now closes the circle by blessing us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places.

**Election in Christ (4-5).** In eternity past, God decided to make us holy as we are joined to Christ. He determined that in Christ we would be full-grown, mature heirs (the meaning of "adoption" in Paul's writings).

**Redemption in Christ (7).** God accomplishes His purpose of making us holy through "redemption." The idea behind this great word has to do with the freeing of a captive by payment of a price. In this instance, the price is nothing but the blood of Jesus; it alone provides abundant grace in forgiving our trespasses (KJV, "sins").

**Enlightenment in Christ (8-9).** With redemption comes understanding. God works in our minds to give us wisdom—clearer insight into the "mystery" of His plan. This "mystery" (a term used 21 times in Paul's writings), veiled in the shadows of the Old Testament, now stands fully revealed in the light of Christ's gospel.

**Fulfillment in Christ (10).** Although our knowledge of salvation's complete story is still limited by our finite human nature, God tells us His ultimate plan. All things in the cosmos will find their place as they relate to Christ. When God's time is right, Christ's pre-eminence as King of the universe will be absolute.

**Inheritance in Christ (11, 14).** God's will or purpose (vv. 5, 9, 11) is to give those in Christ all He

has promised "for the praise of his glory." As Hebrews 11-13 reminds us, God's people in the Old Testament looked for that ultimate inheritance not in this world, but in the next. Their portion is ours as well.

**Hope in Christ (12).** The word translated "first trusted" in v. 12 comes from a root that involves "hope." Here Paul likely refers to the Jewish believing community as those who "first hoped" in Christ. In the New Testament, this "hope" is a confident word of certainty. We need this reminder that our hope in Christ is not misplaced.

**Assurance in Christ (13).** Closely linked with our hope in Christ is the assurance we have in Him. By "ye also," Paul now links the Gentile Christians he addresses in the letter to those Jews he mentioned in v. 12. We were "sealed with the holy Spirit of promise," Paul assures us. In New Testament times, this "sealing" involved a mark of identification on an official document. Similarly, the Holy Spirit's work in our lives is evidence that we belong to Christ.

**Belief in Christ (13-14).** The Holy Spirit's role as a down payment or guarantee ("earnest") of our inheritance follows only as we believe in Christ (v. 13). This section of the opening chapter now concludes as it began: affirming faith in Christ as the only access to spiritual riches—a fortune worth more than Mr. Brown, Mr. Gates or anyone else could provide. ■



# THE PREACHER'S PERSPECTIVE



Randy Sawyer

## The Blessing of Being Criticized

**O**n November 20, 1863, a *Chicago Times* reporter offered his evaluation of a speech given the day before over the freshly dug graves of the Gettysburg battlefields. He expressed his embarrassment at the weak, "dish watery" style talk, and further lamented the fact that the appearance of the speaker, Abraham Lincoln, was so crude and unbecoming that foreigners had to be convinced this country bumpkin was actually President of the United States.

Today, of course, the words spoken on that occasion are highly regarded as the classic address that gave definition to the struggle in which the country was then engaged, and words that served to begin the healing of a broken nation. Furthermore, Lincoln himself has gone down in the annals of American history as our greatest President.

### Criticism Is Common

From our vantage point, it is difficult to imagine that during his lifetime Lincoln was subjected to constant criticism and personal attacks. However, leadership does inherently carry with it the scourge of criticism, and even the greatest statesmen cannot escape negative evaluation at times.

Sooner or later every man of character will have that character questioned. Every man of honor and courage will be faced with just and sometimes unjust criticism. The only way to avoid criticism is to do nothing and be nothing. *Criticism is painful, but it is not always bad for us.*

### Criticism Is Painful

Now don't get me wrong. I, along with almost everyone else I know, find criticism difficult. The unhappiest days of my life and ministry have been those times when I felt the sting of disapproval and the harshness of negative words.

Criticism almost always leaves me sleepless, frustrated and even angry.

When I was younger in ministry, the mere suggestion that criticism might offer some hidden blessing seemed like empty bravado and meaningless banter. When my judgment, actions or motives were challenged, my only thought was self-defense and righteous reprisal. But now mid-way on life's journey, I have come to realize that criticism does offer a much-needed benefit to my life and work.

To what do I owe this happy disclosure? Have I learned that criticism isn't as painful as I once thought? No, indeed. These days a negative evaluation leaves me even more melancholy than before.

Did I finally develop that rhino-like toughness that older preachers counseled us to cultivate? Maybe that's part of it, but I hope not all of it. I certainly pray that I've not become so hardened that I've lost my sensitivity and kindness. I still believe there is never a reason to display a hateful, bitter disposition, even toward our harshest critics.

### Criticism Can Be Profitable

So what is the blessing of being criticized? Somewhere along the road I've learned there is something far more painful than the lack of peer approval. *To be disapproved by God is far worse*, and God is never pleased when pride rules the heart. Pride is one of those seven dreadful things that God despises, and He affirms repeatedly throughout His Word that *His glory will not be shared with any man*.

Deep inside all of us there beats the consistent thumping of rebellion. This prideful rebellion is at the core of humanity's curse. Until we reach the place of submission, we cannot know His pleasure. Without brokenness there is no dependence, and without dependence there can be no usefulness. So the vessel must be broken to allow the

sweet aroma of faith to fill the world.

Faith smells sweet and is pleasing to the Creator. It smells of humility, trust, grace, kindness. It smells like Jesus, and its offering fills the nostrils of God with the fragrance He enjoys most. Our Lord delights in using the weak, in filling the empty, in working miracles through society's outcasts.

But only when we know our weakness can we experience His strength. So the proud, rebellious will must be broken, and one of the most effective weapons in heaven's arsenal against a proud heart is criticism.

### Motivates Me to Look Inward

Criticism becomes a blessing when it drives me to self-evaluation. Were they right about me? Did I display a lack of integrity? Did I compromise my convictions or violate my principles? Was I harsh and unfeeling? Did I neglect my duty? Have I grown weak and soft and mushy? I don't always know my own heart as I should, and anything that motivates me to search my life for mistakes is good for me.

Criticism becomes a blessing when it delivers me from selfishness. I am painfully aware of the fact that I am imperfect, and often it has been the criticism of others that awakened me to the reality of my failure. Not every negative evaluation is incorrect. Not every critic is an enemy. The wounds of a friend are a great blessing indeed.

### Motivates Me to Look Upward

Criticism becomes a blessing when it moves me to seek the face of my Lord. Whether the accusation is right or wrong, if it moves me to my knees the benefit received is greater than the wound inflicted. Tozer taught us that He, our Savior, "waits to be wanted."

But why must He wait? Why do we desire Him so little? Why do we seek



Him so infrequently? We seek Him only when something creates within us a hunger for His companionship. So He hurts to help us; He wounds so to heal us. He allows us to face unpleasantness, that we might find our comfort and rest in His loving embrace.

### *Motivates Me to Look Outward*

Criticism becomes a blessing when it opens my heart to the pain others may be feeling. Because I have been afflicted with the spears and arrows of the critical, I can more easily and more readily sympathize when my brother is wounded. Once I have bled from the thoughtless attacks of another, I should be less likely to treat someone with the same disdain.

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not inviting criticism. I'll not be waiting anxiously for your negative comments on this article. I do not enjoy being thus afflicted. But if it comes and when it comes, I want to learn what I can from the experience and be the better for it. ■

## Directory Update

### ALABAMA

Mark McCraney to First Church, Fayette from U. S. Air Force

### MISSISSIPPI

Terry Booker to Fawn Grove Church, Mantachie from Victory Church, Jackson, TN

### SOUTH CAROLINA

Todd Black to Converse Church, Spartanburg from St. John Church, Patrick

Mikell Edge to New Covenant Church, Spartanburg from Unity Church, Johnsonville

### TENNESSEE

Jamie Florence to Pleasant Hill, Dover ■

# THE TOGETHER WAY

November 2002

| Receipts:             | Designated           | CO-OP               | Total                | Year To Date Designated | Year To Date CO-OP   | Year To Date Total     |
|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Alabama               | \$ 553.70            | \$ 140.65           | \$ 694.35            | \$ 4,785.28             | \$ 2,215.57          | \$ 7,000.85            |
| Arizona               | .00                  | .00                 | .00                  | 100.00                  | 269.60               | 369.60                 |
| Arkansas              | 3,920.45             | 7,969.06            | 11,889.51            | 120,093.24              | 181,009.90           | 301,103.14             |
| California            | .00                  | 1,137.37            | 1,137.37             | .00                     | 11,640.06            | 11,640.06              |
| Colorado              | .00                  | .00                 | .00                  | .00                     | .00                  | .00                    |
| Delaware              | .00                  | .00                 | .00                  | .00                     | .00                  | .00                    |
| Florida               | .00                  | 6,804.00            | 6,804.00             | 527.36                  | 12,474.00            | 13,001.36              |
| Georgia               | 33,868.84            | 1,491.32            | 35,360.16            | 346,500.47              | 17,835.14            | 364,335.61             |
| Hawaii                | .00                  | .00                 | .00                  | .00                     | .00                  | .00                    |
| Idaho                 | .00                  | .00                 | .00                  | .00                     | .00                  | .00                    |
| Illinois              | 16,592.19            | 1,819.54            | 18,411.73            | 136,517.38              | 22,305.67            | 158,823.05             |
| Indiana               | 1,581.79             | 267.56              | 1,849.35             | 21,444.66               | 2,114.19             | 23,558.85              |
| Iowa                  | .00                  | .00                 | .00                  | .00                     | 2,058.78             | 2,058.78               |
| Kansas                | .00                  | 145.98              | 145.98               | 26.55                   | 650.51               | 677.06                 |
| Kentucky              | 650.00               | 1,103.60            | 1,753.60             | 3,115.36                | 11,509.83            | 14,625.19              |
| Louisiana             | .00                  | .00                 | .00                  | .00                     | .00                  | .00                    |
| Maryland              | .00                  | .00                 | .00                  | .00                     | 131.25               | 131.25                 |
| Michigan              | 23,564.82            | 3,808.06            | 27,372.88            | 209,360.69              | 27,742.29            | 237,102.98             |
| Mississippi           | 12,849.27            | 758.77              | 13,608.04            | 116,483.37              | 6,655.71             | 123,139.08             |
| Missouri              | 31,710.06            | 13,896.05           | 45,606.11            | 446,523.14              | 170,746.56           | 617,269.70             |
| Montana               | .00                  | .00                 | .00                  | .00                     | .00                  | .00                    |
| Nebraska              | .00                  | .00                 | .00                  | .00                     | .00                  | .00                    |
| New Jersey            | .00                  | .00                 | .00                  | 77.00                   | .00                  | 77.00                  |
| New Mexico            | 825.33               | 66.17               | 891.50               | 7,606.89                | 490.75               | 8,097.64               |
| North Carolina        | 2,843.67             | 4,373.85            | 7,217.52             | 16,727.41               | 34,898.05            | 51,625.46              |
| Ohio                  | 45,627.27            | 7,951.25            | 53,578.52            | 188,558.46              | 34,110.52            | 222,668.98             |
| Oklahoma              | 58,561.61            | 9,909.25            | 68,470.86            | 580,104.97              | 127,162.79           | 707,267.76             |
| South Carolina        | 40,170.46            | 41.66               | 40,212.12            | 422,785.33              | 555.03               | 423,340.36             |
| South Dakota          | .00                  | .00                 | .00                  | .00                     | .00                  | .00                    |
| Tennessee             | 12,046.02            | 447.09              | 12,493.11            | 156,910.19              | 14,230.97            | 171,141.16             |
| Texas                 | 15,837.87            | 643.12              | 16,480.99            | 106,618.67              | 4,047.02             | 110,665.69             |
| Virginia              | 151.49               | 74.82               | 226.31               | 3,468.08                | 765.52               | 4,233.60               |
| Virgin Islands        | .00                  | .00                 | .00                  | .00                     | .00                  | .00                    |
| West Virginia         | 270.00               | 163.87              | 433.87               | 23,001.41               | 1,349.76             | 24,351.17              |
| Wisconsin             | .00                  | .00                 | .00                  | .00                     | .00                  | .00                    |
| Canada                | 677.14               | 9.78                | 686.92               | 6,845.88                | 127.84               | 6,973.72               |
| Northwest Association | .00                  | .00                 | .00                  | 1,179.42                | .00                  | 1,179.42               |
| Northeast Association | .00                  | .00                 | .00                  | .00                     | .00                  | .00                    |
| Other                 | .00                  | .04                 | .04                  | .00                     | (.22)                | (.22)                  |
| <b>Totals</b>         | <b>\$ 302,301.98</b> | <b>\$ 63,022.86</b> | <b>\$ 365,324.84</b> | <b>\$ 2,919,361.21</b>  | <b>\$ 687,097.09</b> | <b>\$ 3,606,458.30</b> |

| Disbursements:            |                      |                     |                      |                        |                      |                        |
|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Executive Office          | \$ 2,458.44          | \$ 28,360.26        | \$ 30,818.70         | \$ 21,503.43           | \$ 309,193.78        | \$ 330,697.21          |
| Foreign Missions          | 176,899.27           | 7,972.40            | 184,871.67           | 1,702,828.10           | 86,917.72            | 1,789,745.82           |
| FWBBC                     | 25,196.06            | 7,972.40            | 33,168.46            | 269,531.35             | 86,917.72            | 356,449.07             |
| Home Missions             | 86,176.30            | 6,239.27            | 92,415.57            | 803,463.89             | 68,022.63            | 871,486.52             |
| Retirement & Insurance    | 422.43               | 4,852.77            | 5,275.20             | 4,309.56               | 52,906.55            | 57,216.11              |
| Master's Men              | 425.79               | 4,852.77            | 5,278.56             | 5,612.56               | 52,906.55            | 58,519.11              |
| Comm. for Theo. Integrity | 61.81                | 173.31              | 235.12               | 1,302.94               | 1,889.48             | 3,192.42               |
| FWB Foundation            | 386.08               | 2,079.75            | 2,465.83             | 3,920.30               | 22,674.22            | 26,594.52              |
| Historical Commission     | 61.80                | 173.31              | 235.11               | 626.39                 | 1,889.48             | 2,515.87               |
| Music Commission          | 37.87                | 173.31              | 211.18               | 307.75                 | 1,889.48             | 2,197.23               |
| Media Commission          | 177.87               | 173.31              | 351.18               | 1,519.30               | 1,889.48             | 3,408.78               |
| Hillsdale FWB College     | 1,977.98             | .00                 | 1,977.98             | 24,320.68              | .00                  | 24,320.68              |
| Other                     | 8,020.28             | .00                 | 8,020.28             | 80,114.96              | .00                  | 80,114.96              |
| <b>Totals</b>             | <b>\$ 302,301.98</b> | <b>\$ 63,022.86</b> | <b>\$ 365,324.84</b> | <b>\$ 2,919,361.21</b> | <b>\$ 687,097.09</b> | <b>\$ 3,606,458.30</b> |





Thomas Marberry

## Inside Afghanistan

By John Weaver

(Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2002, 201pp., paperback, \$14.99).

**J**ohn Weaver grew up in northern Virginia, the third of three brothers, followed by two younger sisters. Life was not always easy around the Weaver household. His parents divorced, leaving his mother to raise his two sisters, one still in diapers. He writes, "I felt abandoned and betrayed, because I suddenly found myself, with mixed emotions, as the man of the house. I hurt for my mother having to raise my little sisters by herself."

He describes his rebellious years of adolescence, "My decent school grades covered my confusion and self-destructive behavior, but I knew more about alcohol and drugs from personal experience than I should have."

Even these difficult years proved to be a benefit to him in his future ministry. He explains, "The only upside to those rebellious days is that along the way I developed survival instincts and attitudes that have kept me alive more than once in Central Asia."

Through the influence of a friend, he came to know Christ in the fall of 1984 while he was still in high school. At first his spiritual growth was slow; he had little opportunity to grow in the faith. That changed in November 1988 when he attended a conference. The speaker, a Christian who had lived for years in Uruguay, opened John's eyes to what God could do in the world.

In January 1989 he enrolled at Free Will Baptist Bible College. He speaks highly of the impact the college had on his life. "Several of my professors had extensive experience in overseas work, and they definitely encouraged my adventurous attitude." After leaving FWBCC, he went on to get additional cross-cultural and language training which have served him well during his ministry in Afghanistan.

In February 2000 he attended the Central Asian Conference in Thailand. While in Thailand he met Norm

Leatherwood, director of Shelter Now International, a Christian relief organization working in northern Afghanistan. Through a series of steps, God opened the door for John to become a part of this ministry.

He flew into Afghanistan on what was planned to be a brief exploratory trip; he stayed. He had no luggage, no computer and no winter clothing. It took only a few minutes to move into a house with no electricity, no running water and no telephone.

John Weaver was soon immersed in relief work in one of the neediest countries in the world. He lived among the people, learned their language and became, as much as he could, one of them. He soon began to coordinate distribution of food. They arranged with a local baker to prepare large amounts of bread for those who had fled from the fighting further south.

The ministry was difficult and dangerous. The country was embroiled in a civil war. John describes the situation, "Before the Taliban or Al Qaeda exported their malicious hatred and evil acts of terrorism to the rest of the world, they practiced them for years in Afghanistan. In fact, during the last several years, humanitarian aid workers have frequently evacuated from northern Afghanistan because of the Taliban's savage treatment of anyone they perceived as an enemy."

He helped develop camps that provided shelter, food and clothing to thousands of refugees. Their organization distributed tons of food, repaired roads and built hundreds of latrines. This small group of dedicated individuals saved the lives of thousands of men, women and children.

The world changed on September 11, 2001. Before long, American bombers were attacking Taliban strongholds in Afghanistan, and American ground troops arrived to help the Northern Al-

liance forces. John Weaver remained in the country during this difficult time doing what he could to help those in need.

The people of Afghanistan know that John Weaver is a Christian. They know he is not helping them for purely humanitarian reasons. He is seeking to obey the call of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the present time, Christian evangelism cannot be done publicly in Afghanistan; it is a thoroughly Moslem country.

People in that part of the world are often taught that Christianity is wrong and that Christians are out to take over the Moslem world. John Weaver has shown through his humanitarian work that Jesus Christ is not the enemy of the Moslem world. He is its greatest friend. Distributing food, repairing roads and building latrines may not win anyone to Christ today, but they may open the door for thousands to know Him in the future. ■





Jack Williams

## Hand Me Another Word

**S**amuel Stone served 24 years as editor of *Christian Standard* magazine. He began one of his editorials with a delightful story verifying that not everyone has a high opinion of editors.

In a small Southwest town years ago, the local newspaper editor died suddenly. Since he had no family and little money, residents took up a collection for his funeral expenses. They asked the mayor, "Would you give \$5 to help bury the editor?"

He quickly replied, "Here's \$10—bury two of them!"

**Those who handle words** do amazing things with slogans, speeches and articles. Give them an audience and then step back while they work their magic.

This sign caught my eye as I drove past a miniature golf course: "Buy one adult. Get one child free."

I don't think they were giving away free kids if you bought a large person. The clever play on words gave me a chuckle.

**One Thursday morning** as I opened mail at the office, a woman's voice behind me said, "Do you want to see my fornication dress?"

We were both surprised at how quickly I turned around. A co-worker held up a bright red sheet of paper with the outline of a dress drawn on it. Printed on the dress in bold, black letters was the word, *Fornication*.

She also showed me her green *Covetous* dress, her yellow *Evil Desires* dress and her hot pink *Uncontrollable Pleasures and Passions* dress. She was preparing a lesson from Colossians titled, "Off with the Old and On with the New." It sure got my attention.

**Words require a context** to be understood. Take the word *qualified*, for instance. A qualified audit is a problem, while a qualified physician is just what the doctor ordered.

Even short words demand a context, like the three-letter word, *hit*. A website hit makes the sponsor smile. A boxer who takes a hit flinches. If a singer has a hit, he's rich. But a submarine that gets a hit is in big trouble. Same word, different meaning.

Fun words like *chopper* can put the bite on you. To a Vietnam veteran, *chopper* means transportation out of a fire-fight. But an aging Hippie knows that *chopper* is a customized motorcycle. Your grandmother's *choppers* spend the night in a glass beside her bed.

Let's keep it simple. Think you can describe a *horse*? To a cowboy, a horse means a ride home. To a junky, horse is a ride of a different kind. To a basketball player, H-O-R-S-E means five misses and you lose.

**My homiletics professor** was right. "A text without a context is a pretext." He was talking about sermons. We get in trouble when doctrine is built on words excerpted from the Bible with no thought for their context.

Never argue with the guy who spouts, during a discussion about God's existence, that the Bible says, "There is no God." He's right. It does say that. What he doesn't mention, of course, is the context of those four words.

Psalms 14:1 says, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is not God . . ." In this case, what you don't know can really hurt you.

**Does God have feathers?** He does according to Psalm 91:4. Five other Psalms refer to God's wings (17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7). The context of those verses lets us know that we're reading poetry where writers take literary license to make a point.

We dare not build doctrine on feathers that turn God into a giant bird because someone doesn't understand the historical and literary context. Poets use literary devices to

paint soaring word pictures. We expect that, and we understand it.

We base our views of God and His person on clear teachings of scripture. At the same time, we enjoy the pageantry of apocalyptic literature and the majesty of poets writing under divine inspiration who make language swell and rise and crescendo.

Jesus told the woman at the well in straightforward words, "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth . . ." (John 4:24). No feathers here. No symbolism. Just truth that stands the test of time and context.

**Which brings us to you** and me. We live with non-stop talk radio, TV programs filled with many words that say little, books and newspapers, and an internet that never sleeps. We are word-weary, staggering through verbal storms that threaten to unhinge us.

Jesus cautioned those who use words to hurt and deceive. He understood the responsibility of words. "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words, thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned," (Matt. 12: 36-37).

**Jesus entered history** at Bethlehem as the Word (John 1). What a dazzling and revolutionary idea for those of us surrounded by instant communication. He was relevant 2000 years ago clothed in a concept both ancient in design and modern in application. The Living Word of God is even more relevant today.

Our world has never been darker, which makes this the perfect moment for the church to open the Word to the nations. Remember the promise from Psalms: "The entrance of thy words giveth light . . ." (119:130). ■



CONTACT

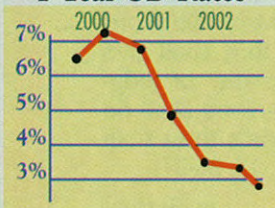
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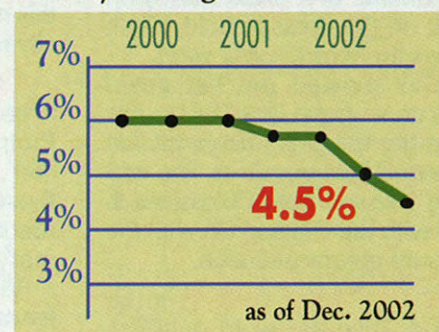
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