

January 2004

Contact

The **CHICAGO** Atheist

A faith encounter with
a surprise ending

Let's Ride the **E-Wave**

How one church harnesses
technology for evangelism

Dad's Toolbox

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Keith Burden

Saga of a Steak Lover

A seventh grader stood at the chalkboard staring at a math problem he should have been able to solve with no difficulty. But he couldn't. That's why he was in a basement classroom being tutored by his seventh-grade math teacher. It was a routine he repeated daily after school. The teacher sat at her desk and graded papers while he struggled with math problems at the chalkboard.

His family had moved away a couple of years earlier. During that time he went to a school that was not as advanced as the one he had been attending. When he returned to his former school, he was behind in several subjects . . . especially math.

Things Didn't Add Up

One afternoon the student was exceptionally frustrated. He desperately wanted to understand how to solve the problems, but he couldn't. The numbers on the chalkboard blurred as tears filled his eyes. He swallowed hard, trying to control his emotions.

Sensing his exasperation the teacher got up from her desk, walked to the chalkboard, turned the student a quarter-turn and placed her hands firmly on his shoulders. There was an awkward period of silence as she stared into his eyes.

"I'm too dumb to work these stupid problems," he blurted. "I can't do math! I just don't understand it!"

She took a deep breath, then as she spoke her tone was stern yet compassionate. "There's not one thing wrong with your mind," she said matter-of-factly. "We're not going to allow some simple math problems to get the best of you. You are *not* dumb. You *can* do this!"

Let's Make a Deal

At the end of that tutoring session she called him to her desk and said, "I'm going to make you a proposition. You will be taking Algebra I in a couple of years. If you can make an A in Algebra, I'll treat you to

a steak dinner." To the student that sounded like an assignment from *Mission Impossible*.

It was a long two years. The student made a D the first semester of seventh grade math. He raised it to a C- the second semester. The first semester of eighth grade math resulted in a strong C. He eked out a B- the second semester. He worked very hard the first semester of ninth grade Algebra, but was only able to come up with a B on his report card.

On the last day of the last semester of his freshman year, he stopped by his seventh-grade math teacher's classroom to tell her the good news—"I did it! I made an A in Algebra I," he said triumphantly.

I honestly believe the teacher was more excited than the student. She gave him a big hug and with a broad smile said, "You see! I told you you could do it! I guess this means I owe you a steak dinner?"

Rest of the Story

That was a turning point in the young man's life. Because the teacher believed in him, he started believing in himself. The teacher eventually retired. Her name? Alma Lou Barber.

The student? He went on to make A's in Algebra II, Geometry and Chemistry in high school. Today he's the executive secretary of the National Association of Free Will Baptists.

Few people have had a more profound impact on my life than Alma Lou Barber. Although it has been more than 35 years since I was her student, I still remember the valuable lesson she taught me—*In order to succeed in life, you must make an effort, not excuses.*

That's what I was trying to do in seventh grade math. I was trying to blame my par-

ents for moving me to an inferior school. I was looking for someone or something to blame for *my* deficiencies.

Mrs. Barber taught me to stop feeling sorry for myself. I learned to accept responsibility for my circumstances and change them through hard work and determination rather than going through life making excuses. She created within me a hunger for excellence and an unwillingness to accept mediocrity.

Where's the Beef?

My experience reminds me of a passage in Matthew 25 where Jesus told a parable about three men who received talents based on their varying abilities. Two of the men doubled their talents . . . one hid his talent in the earth. The two men were rewarded and commended for their *efforts*. The other man was rebuked and condemned for making *excuses*.

More often than not what determines success in life is attitude, not ability. So quit making excuses and start putting forth an effort. Who knows? Your efforts and the steak you eat may be characterized by the same words some day—"Well done!" ■



He went to college four years in preparation for

The CHICAGO

I walked into the small lobby, sat on the couch and wondered, "What's in store for me today?" It's a question I seem to be asking with more frequency after moving to Chicago last March. Every day brings something new and interesting,

this one conversation.

Atheist



By Joshua Crowe

and I was sure today would be no exception. Wow, was I right!

I work for a temporary service that provides employees for companies in various locations throughout the city. Today's assignment was at one of the American consuls on the north side. My temporary service was asked to send three employees to help with a mass mailing. The employees chosen to go were Jamie, Angie (not their real names) and yours truly.

Inevitable Question

Envelope stuffing is boring, repetitious work. I soon discovered that placing three strangers in a room to do a simple, monotonous task creates the most interesting conversations. The three of us covered every topic from the weather in Chicago to the war in Iraq.

Before long, the inevitable question was asked. "So, what brings you to Chicago, Josh?" The answer to this question always seems to change the flow of the conversation. Usually when I explain that I am

involved in an internship with a church, I get one of two responses.

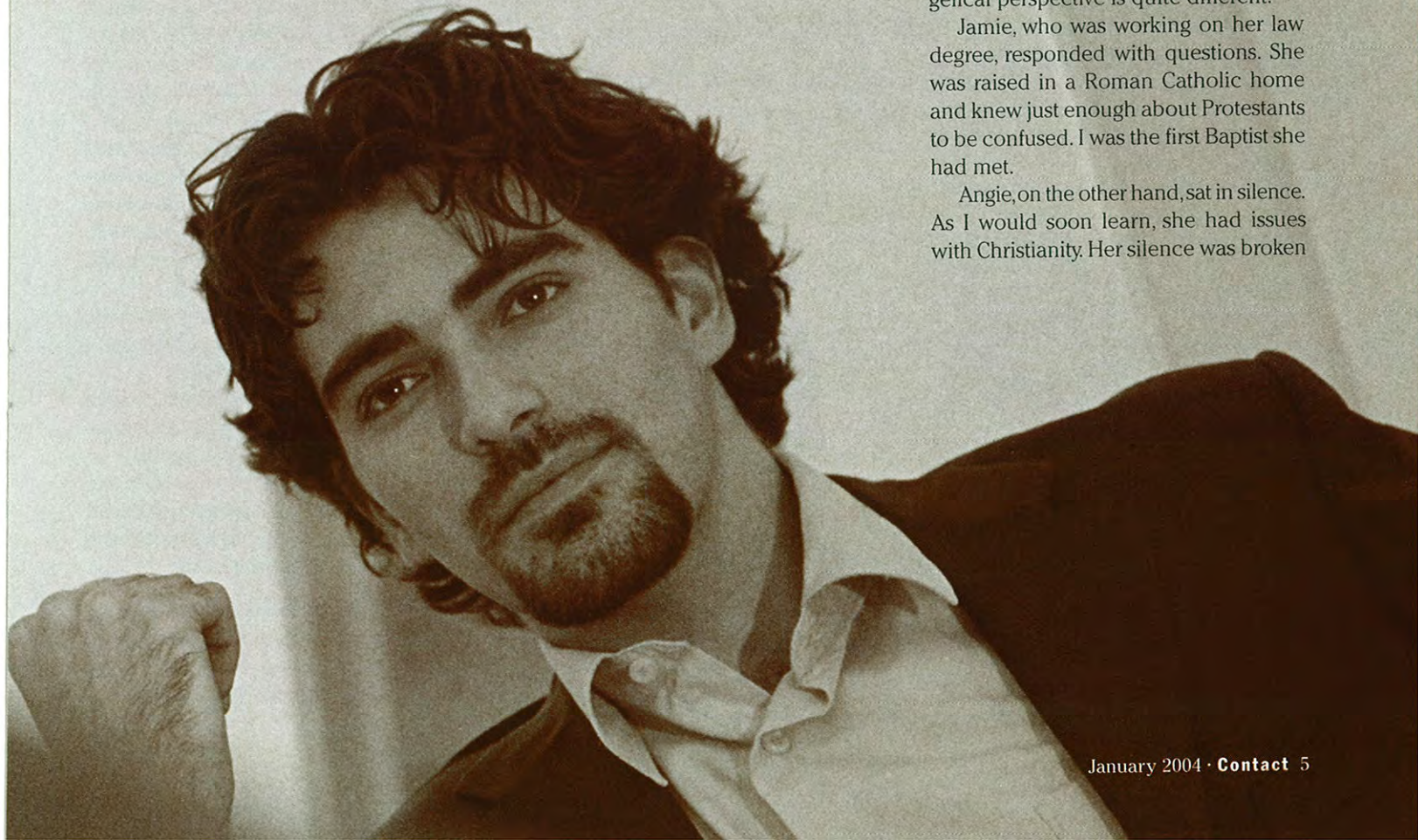
Two Responses

The first and most popular response is silence. Most people we encounter consider religion and spirituality touchy subjects, and they usually shift to a less intrusive topic.

The second response is an unending string of questions. This reaction normally comes from sincere people who enjoy hearing from a different perspective and, trust me, in a city like Chicago the evangelical perspective is quite different.

Jamie, who was working on her law degree, responded with questions. She was raised in a Roman Catholic home and knew just enough about Protestants to be confused. I was the first Baptist she had met.

Angie, on the other hand, sat in silence. As I would soon learn, she had issues with Christianity. Her silence was broken



She thought all Christians were hypocritical, close-minded fools. This wasn't the first time I heard that opinion in Chicago.

by a question. "Have you ever doubted your faith?" she asked. I told her I had and then she said, "How can you be so sure that of all the religions in the world, you have figured out which one is right?"

Her tone shifted and I could feel the tension rising. She proceeded to tell me how she thought all Christians were hypocritical, close-minded fools. This wasn't the first time I heard that opinion in Chicago. I pressed her on the issue and asked her to explain why she felt that way.

Plague of Pluralism

She responded by asking me if I had studied Islam. I thought back to the fall of 2001 at Free Will Baptist Bible College when I spent a semester under Sean

Warren studying the Muslim religion. Thankfully, I could answer her question with a "yes."

She then asked if I believed the message of Islam and I said, "No." Then she said, "What gives you the right to say your belief is better than theirs?"

Angie's issue with Christianity was that she despised any belief system that declared an absolute. Christianity's message is promised in scripture to be offensive to the world. In a pluralistic city, anything that says there is only one answer is hated. By the way, a recent poll describes Chicago as the most religiously pluralistic city in the United States.

I realized this was the moment for which I had been waiting. I went to college four years for this conversation. I moved to Chicago for this experience.

I asked Angie to explain her beliefs. She professed to be an atheist, yet everything she said required a Supreme Being. When I pointed this out to her, she became frustrated. I encouraged her to consider the claims of the Bible. We continued talking and she seemed to contradict herself with every statement. I felt sorry for her and wanted so much to help her find peace through Jesus. The more we talked, the more abstract her thoughts became.

Finally, tired of the confusion, Jamie bluntly asked her, "What do you believe? Who is God?"

Angie said, "Listen, since I was a child I have believed that God was all around me. He is in this table, in the air, in all of nature. That's what I believe. That's who I think God is. He is everything."

BEYOND BELIEF



Anything But Christ

My heart sank. Had she heard anything I said? I explained the gospel in its simplest terms and tried to show her the way to find peace. Was it all for nothing?

Jamie explained to her that she was a pantheist and Angie left the room. I didn't know what to think. This wasn't going according to plan. Angie was supposed to accept Christ and find peace, not forsake atheism only to convert to pantheism. A few minutes later she returned to the office glowing.

She sat down, looked at me and said, "Thank you for helping me understand what I believe. I am a pantheist."

The ride home was long, which gave me plenty of time to replay the day's events in my head. I thought back to when I was sitting on the couch in the office wondering what excitement would come my way. I never expected to convert someone to pantheism! ■

About the Writer: Joshua Crowe is completing a foreign mission internship at Northwest Free Will Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois. He is a 2003 graduate of Free Will Baptist Bible College.



**He hoped his good deeds would outweigh his
bad deeds on the day of judgment.**

**95% GOOD,
100% LOST**

By Howard Munsey

“Mrs. Mary Gilliam of Chattanooga, Tennessee, a mother of grown children had lived a good moral life since professing faith in Christ at age 12. She was baptized and joined the Baptist church in her community. Having been reared by godly parents in the nurture and

admonition of the Lord, she abstained from worldly amusements and sinful pleasures, living as a model Christian most of her life. She considered herself 95% good until one day she came under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and realized she was 100% lost."

As I listened to Pastor M. L. Bowman preach that fateful Sunday night in 1952, I realized something was wrong. Not with the preacher or the Free Will Baptist church I

For the first time in my adult life, I was aware that I was lost and would go to Hell if I died.

attended, but with me. There was something missing in my religious experience and I did not know what it was.

After making a profession of faith when just a boy, I was baptized and joined the Baptist church in my community. I assumed this was all that was required to enter Heaven. Now, for the first time in my adult life, I was aware that I was lost and would go to Hell if I died.

Arguing With God

"But you know, Lord, that I am basically a good person," I argued. "I am an average kind of fellow and have lived a fairly decent life. I have not sinned too much and have been honest and paid my debts."

I consoled myself into thinking if my good deeds outnumbered my bad deeds I would be all right. Surely I would be 51% good. But this was to no avail since the Holy Spirit kept reminding me I had not repented of my sins and received Christ as Savior.

This argument went on between me and the Lord for several weeks while I continued to attend the Free Will Baptist church. Satan reminded me I would be embarrassed if I went to the altar; people would think I was involved in some vile sin.

What would my co-workers think and say of me if I became too religious? Would they think me a fanatic and reject me? What would become of my career at the company where I worked?

The Holy Spirit kept impressing upon me that I must come to Christ and receive Him as Savior. The stigma

associated with doing this was overwhelming. Me! Howard Munsey, be identified with the bloody scene on Calvary?

"Surely," I argued, "It is perfectly all right for others to be saved in this manner, but there must be some other way for me."

All the while the preacher where I attended kept pounding scriptures into me about the necessity of godly living and the new birth. Conviction seized me in such a fashion I could not shake it. I lived with fear that I would plunge into Hell where I would forever suffer the wrath of God. The following scriptures impressed me deeply:

Hearing God's Word

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye workers of iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23).

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come. If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4-5).

"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

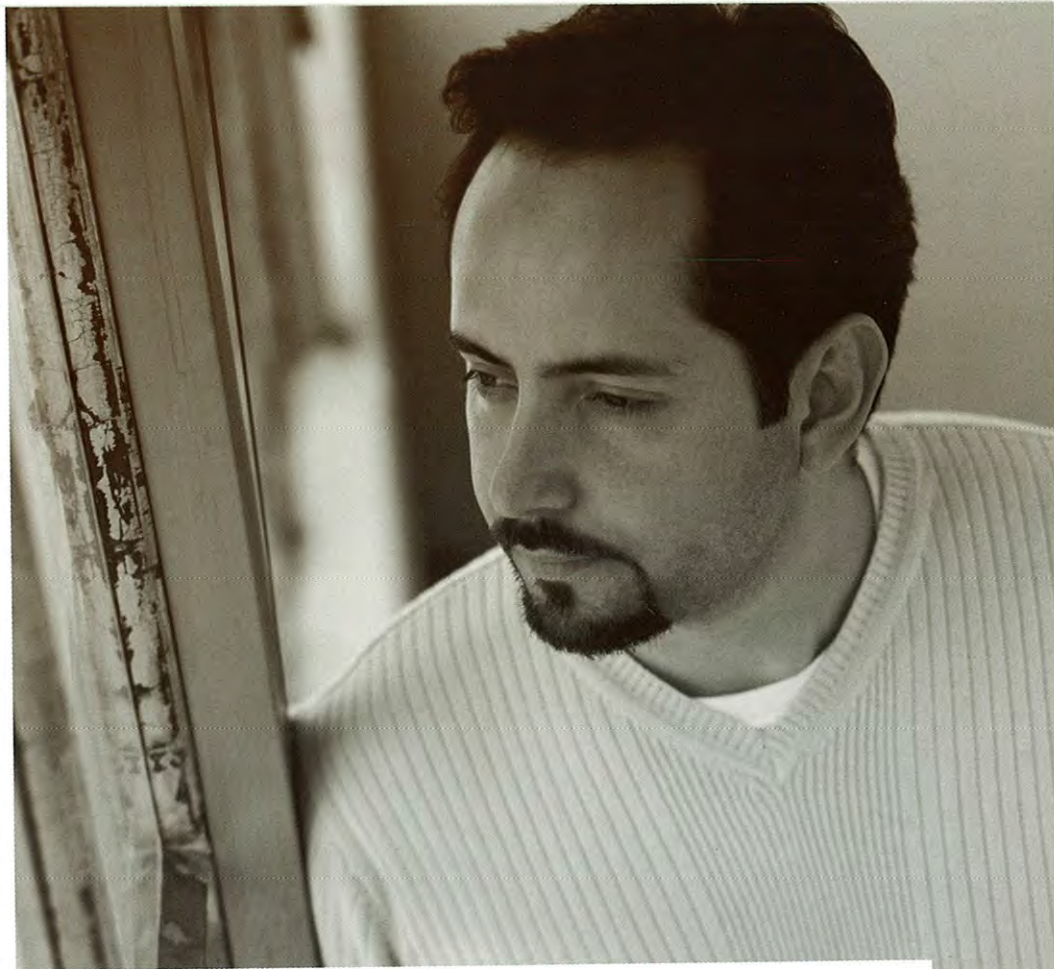
"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

"For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:26-31).

Praying for God's Forgiveness

As a result of the pastor's faithful preaching of the Word of God, I started coming to the altar during the invitation. I came so often seeking peace for my soul that the church people wondered what was wrong with me. One Wednesday night when the pastor was away in a revival meeting, a deacon was in charge of the prayer meeting. The service was unusually dull and no one wanted to testify.

As I sat there, burdened in my soul, I wanted someone to ask for prayer. No one else did, so I asked the prayer leader if we could pray. "Certainly," he



God poured His Holy Spirit into my hungry soul and gave me a vision of a Savior, struggling up a lonely hill called Calvary, dying, not just for a world, but for one man, me!

said, then pointing his finger straight at me, "Brother, you lead us in prayer."

I fell to my knees and began praying. It did not matter who heard me. My soul was desperate for the blessing. God poured His Holy Spirit into my hungry soul and gave me a vision of a Savior, struggling up a lonely hill called Calvary, dying, not just for a world, but for one man, me!

God set that prayer meeting on fire with His holy presence. I could hear people sobbing tears of joy all over the house as the blood of Christ was applied to my soul. It was a night I will remember forever.

When the service ended I vividly recall a full moon shining brightly on Greeneville, Tennessee. It seemed that God had given the whole world a bath. Of course, it wasn't the world He changed; it was me. I was a new creature in Christ. I had been saved, transformed by the matchless grace of God.



My heart now breaks into song as I think of what Jesus did for me. Fifty-two years have passed since that night, but those years have not dimmed the memory of my sins being forgiven. ■



About the Writer: Reverend Howard Munsey is a Free Will Baptist minister who resides in Morristown, Tennessee. He leads Berea Ministries, Inc., a missions effort to establish Free Will Baptist churches in Mexico.



Let's Ride

By Mark Braisher

How one church

Life moves at the speed of light in the 21st Century. No business is any longer only open from eight to five—it's a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week, 365-day-a-year world. Decisions are no longer made next week, but today.

Not only is life fast—it is everywhere, now. At no other time in history have people been able to

travel so many places, so quickly, so often. How will they connect with your church community when work takes them out of town with such frequency?

How will the church minister in this fast-paced, mobile world? Will we fight against these realities? It is not likely that life will slow down any time soon. Will we simply hide and act like it does not exist?

What can we do? I am excited about the world in which we live! No other time has life afforded so many opportunities for so little money. No other time has life allowed us to do ministry 24/7 whether we are physically available or not. God has given us amazing opportunities and tools to carry out His great commission.

There are many tools and opportunities available such as websites (for our church and for outreach), computer-based training and discipling, chat rooms, email and more. Let's look at email. The people in the church where I minister almost all use email and the internet every day and all day. They receive email every few minutes at work, on their palm pilots or in their homes.

Therefore, email has become a wonderful tool that has been used extensively at Southern Hills FWB Church. We are not sure we could do ministry without it. Let me share how this tool has been effective for us and why email is a wonderful tool to build community.

Three or four times each week I send an email to our entire congregation—those who have visited and other interested people across the country and world. These emails consist of everything from devotional thoughts and announcements, to prayer and praise requests.

the *e-wave*

harnessed technology for evangelism.

Building Community

No longer do we wait until someone can be reached by phone for the prayer line. Email makes 90% of our people aware within seconds. No longer does good news have to wait until Sunday to be shared with the family. It is broadcasted all at once in the blink of an eye! Email is the lifeline to family news. It is the lifeline to keep people connected to their spiritual family.

Evangelism

How do you share the four spiritual laws by email? How do you do personal evangelism by email? Let me share my experience. Many non-Christians today are virtually biblically illiterate. No longer can we go directly down the Romans Road to salvation or to John 3:16 to share the gospel. There is much groundwork to lay for these people.

Since they do not believe in a God of creation, how can they believe He has a Son to send? Since they do not believe in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, how can they believe in them for eternal life? Therefore, it often takes long and extended dialogue before they understand enough to believe. Much of this is done face-to-face, but often after face-to-face encounters new questions arise.

Email gives the opportunity for dialogue. One such new convert dialogued with me face-to-face and by email for over six months. We would go to lunch and discuss God's plan for his life. Almost without fail, when I returned to my office there would be another question waiting on my computer. This allowed for an email response or another lunch encounter between him, the God of scriptures and me.

After months of dialogue, I received this email, "It appears that if I fail to accept His Son, I'll reject His love. I can't have that, can I? I always felt I was missing something." Today, this man closes his emails with BIC (for Brother in Christ).

Pastoral Care and Spiritual Maturation

I regularly share devotional thoughts with the church by email. These thoughts may be observations on life in general or sharing something I read recently to

Second, always include an opportunity to be removed from your email distribution list. To not allow this opportunity is rude and reflects badly on your ministry.

Third, the computer will never take the place of face-to-face ministry. It simply gives you more opportunities for face-to-face ministry.

Fourth, do not assume that everyone has read your email. If you make an announcement by email, make sure it is used as a reminder or is followed up with other contacts.

No longer does good news have to wait until Sunday to be shared with the family. It is broadcasted all at once in the blink of an eye.

issues of spiritual development. It is not unusual for someone to reply with something like, "I have wondered about that, what do you think about . . .", or "I have been wrestling with that, do you think we can talk more about this?"

And then, presto! We have opportunity for face-to-face conversation that otherwise would never have taken place. You see, people can often open a topic by email that they would never open face-to-face. They would never reveal these things in person, but once they do by email, it can be handled.

Warnings

Let me offer four warnings about using email for ministry. First, if your church does not use it regularly, please disregard everything I've said. It will not be effective if they do not speak this language. However, you may be surprised at how many do.

We live in a wonderful time. At no other time have more opportunities been given to the church. We will either ride the wave and go bravely where no man has gone before, or we will simply hide with the few others in the world who want to ignore what is happening. Free Will Baptists should be wave riders, not cave dwellers—Ride the Wave! ■



About the Writer: Dr. Mark Braisher pastors Southern Hills Free Will Baptist Church in Overland Park, Kansas.

The Spiral of

How sadly ironic and disturbing to see these two newspaper headlines on the same page (Tuesday, August 5, 2003):

Ten Commandments Ordered Removed

A federal judge ordered the chief justice of Alabama's Supreme Court to remove a Ten Commandments monument from the state's Judicial Building. . . .

Episcopal Leaders Approve Homosexual Bishop

The Episcopal Church voted to approve the election of its first openly gay bishop. . . .

These headlines summarize the entire issue of morality. Once the Word of God is removed, anything goes. Without the authoritative foundation of "thus saith the Lord," there is no basis for moral principles. Jesus Christ explained this truth in the parable of the wise and foolish builders (Matthew 7:24-27). The wise man builds his house on the Rock, while the foolish builds his house on sand.

Sinkhole Society

This parable is illustrated in the history of American society. Our nation was established on the bedrock principles of the Word of God. Our rule of law had a solid platform that supported a glorious structure built stone upon stone. Morals and values were firmly rooted to the commands and precepts of scripture. Though tested from time to time, morality and virtue stood firm.

As America lost its faith in God, a different design was adopted that ignored the confines and restraints of the Bible. Some considered this liberating. Initially, it employed the same morals and values, yet without the support of God's Word. Succeeding generations challenged the old norms and opinions. No one seemed to know why things had always been that way before. With no greater authority than *tradition*, what was the harm in changing? The old ways were discarded as new philosophies and practices were substituted.

Removing the foundation of God's Word created a "sinkhole" effect in social morals and values.

Removing the foundation of God's Word created a "sinkhole" effect in social morals and values. We can see how the winds of time and storms of conflict have eroded the shifting sands of godless morality. We are witnessing a textbook case of the foolishness and futility of building on sand. The glorious structure is crumbling.

Our society is unable to determine what is "right." Ideas and ethics that once seemed firm have collapsed into quagmires. Make-shift "core values" have been erected to shore up sagging morals and

ethics. But these systems are supported by the structure above. Having no solid foundation, they cannot endure.

Four Hearts of Evil

The rejection of the Word of God in favor of unrighteous behavior is the consequence of the *spiral of depravity* as revealed in Romans 1:18-32.

Darkened Heart

God provided special revelation of Himself to man and continues to reveal Himself through His creation. In spite of

man's knowledge of God, *he did not glorify Him as God* (v.21). This first step into the spiral of depravity produces a *darkened heart*. It is witnessed in man's unthankful attitude, futile thoughts and foolish ideas. It results with man changing the glory of God into the image of corruptible creatures. God is degraded.

Lustful Heart

Therefore, *God gives man up to uncleanness* (v.24). This second stage of depravity creates a *lustful heart* where man dishonors his own body and exchanges

Depravity

By Danny Conn

What happens when a society forgets God. . . .

the truth of God for a lie. He begins to worship the corruptible creatures instead of the Creator. God is substituted.

Perverted Heart

For this reason *God gives man up to vile passions* (v.26). At this depth a *perverted heart* develops. The natural use of the opposite gender is exchanged for unnatural behavior. Men burn in their lusts for one another. Shameful acts produce a bitter harvest. Man refuses to retain his knowledge of God. God is forgotten.

Reprobate Heart

Finally, the last step is reached. *God gives man over to a debased mind* (v. 28), which is evidenced by a *reprobate heart*. At this stage man is filled with all manner of unrighteous behavior: sexual immorality, wickedness, strife, deceit, murder, violence and disobedience. He is full of evil emotions and thoughts such as envy, covetousness, pride and evil inventions. He is void of righteous attributes: undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving and unmerciful. He is worthy of death. At this point, God is hated.

Since the fall of Adam, mankind has tried to substitute his own way in place of God's ideal. Humanity has repeatedly changed and exchanged the good things of God for worthless counterfeits. Adultery and other forms of sexual immorality have long been common.

It should not be surprising that homosexuality is becoming more and more prevalent in our society. This sin is just one more step in the descent of unrighteousness revealed by the Word of God. But cohabitation and one-night stands of any gender combination are no match for God's ideal of one man and one woman for life.

The downward spiral of depravity moves man further and further from God. Just as the absence of God is the distinguishing characteristic of Hell, so the absence of God's influence in a society produces hellish conditions in that society. We are seeing a glimpse of a godless world. Man may reject the Word of God and refuse to obey its precepts, but he cannot escape the consequences of his behavior or evade the judgment of God.

God's Solution

But the situation is not hopeless. Departing from the Word of God initiates the downward spiral; embracing the Word of God breaks the cycle. The remedy for moral decay and deliverance from the wrath of God is given in Romans 1:16 . . . *the gospel of Christ, is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.* Jesus Christ forgives sin and restores man's relationship with God. He alone can rescue man from the depths of depravity and set him on solid ground. This is the message we proclaim.

It will do no lasting good to pass more baseless laws. Legislation does have an effect on behavior, but it can not change a heart. Godly morality is a by-product of righteousness. Righteousness is only available through Christ. We must live by the commands and principles of scripture. If God calls it "sin," don't do it.

We must teach the next generation to submit to the authority of God's Word and trust His promises. Building your house on the Rock will enable it to stand even when the world collapses. God said so, and you can take Him at His word.

When the pilgrims set sail for the New World, they were leaving behind a society no less corrupt than ours today. Still, their faith in God and faithfulness to His Word equipped them to establish a new beginning. May God enable us to separate our lives from the immorality of our society and once again consecrate this land for Him. ■



About the Writer: Dr. Danny Conn pastors Soul's Harbor Free Will Baptist Church in Pensacola, Florida. He also serves as editor of **The Co-Ordinator**, publication of the Florida State Association of Free Will Baptists.

He only wanted a bolt for the lawn mower when he opened the old toolbox. He found much more.

DAD'S TOOLBOX

By Mark D. Stooksbury

I recall as a small boy that Dad would pull out his tool box to work on various tasks around the house. Oh, how I loved to dig through his box looking for just the right tools to assist him in his labors. More often than not my assistance caused him

more work, watching to be sure I didn't knock a hole in the wall with the hammer, stick a screwdriver in the electrical outlet or drill a hole through the board and into my shoe.

The distraction I caused usually turned a small task into a major job. Add to that the mess I made pulling everything but the latch out of his toolbox, scattering tools from the house to the barn, and you can see why Dad *really appreciated* my help and expertise.

Regardless of the mess I made or the added work I created just by being there, Dad never made me feel that I was in the way. He patiently worked around me, always watching to be sure I didn't hurt myself or the house. Once the job was completed, we would begin picking up the tools, bolts, screws, nuts, taps, nails, washers and other items I had strewn as far as the eye could see.

Perfect Care

It's been almost four years now since God called Dad home. Yet, sometimes things happen, small things that remind me of those childhood days and how Dad was always there, watching over me, caring for me and making sure I had what I needed.

I was mowing with the small trim mower when one side of the handle came loose. I suppose the mower's vibration loosened the bolt that held the handle in place. I quickly spotted and retrieved the wing nut that had fallen at my feet. The bolt, however, was another story. I looked everywhere but it was nowhere to be found. I may have run over it with the mower, throwing it

across the yard. It was obvious I was not going to finish the yard without another bolt to hold the handle on the mower.

I went into the garage and started looking through various bolts I kept in a small drawer in my stand-up tool chest. They were all too big, too small or too short. Despite all the bolts I had to choose from, none met my needs. Not wanting to drive back to town to buy one bolt, I looked around the garage for an idea to rig the handle until I went to town on some regularly-scheduled trip.

Perfect Bolt

As I scanned the garage, I saw something partially hidden behind an air tank and several assorted tools—a small gray toolbox. I moved the items blocking my way and pulled the toolbox to the front of the workbench. There on the top on a piece of tape, his name had been printed with a magic marker. It was Dad's old toolbox.

As memories came rushing back, I dug through the tools, pulling them out and laying them on the bench. Searching through the nuts, screws and washers, I found one bolt I thought might work. I took it from the toolbox, leaving everything I pulled out on the workbench, just as I did as a child, and got my wing nut. It fit perfectly, but was it long enough?



Regardless of the mess I made or the added work I created just by being there, Dad never made me feel that I was in the way. He patiently worked around me, always watching to be sure I didn't hurt myself or the house.

I went to the mower and slipped the bolt through the two sections of the handle. Perfect! As I tightened the wing nut onto the bolt, I couldn't help but think that even now, almost four years after Dad's death, he was still looking out for me, making sure I had what I needed. In a gesture as natural as breathing, I looked up to Heaven and said, "Thanks, Dad!" It was at that moment I was overcome with emotions, and the tears came.

Perfect Man

Some 2,000 years ago, another Man lived who was much greater than my dad. A Man with whom my dad, despite their age difference, had a close personal relationship. They were able to have this relationship because this Man, who was more than 2,000 years my dad's senior was far more than just a man. He is Jesus, the only begotten Son of God.

Dad introduced me to Jesus when I was just a boy. And I too, many years ago, accepted Him as my Savior. As I think how Dad was always there for me, I am reminded that Jesus promised those who

have accepted Him as Savior that He would be with them always, even unto the end of the world. God's Word teaches me that I am a child of God, that I can talk with God just as I did with my dad, and know that He hears me and will care for me and make sure I have what I need.

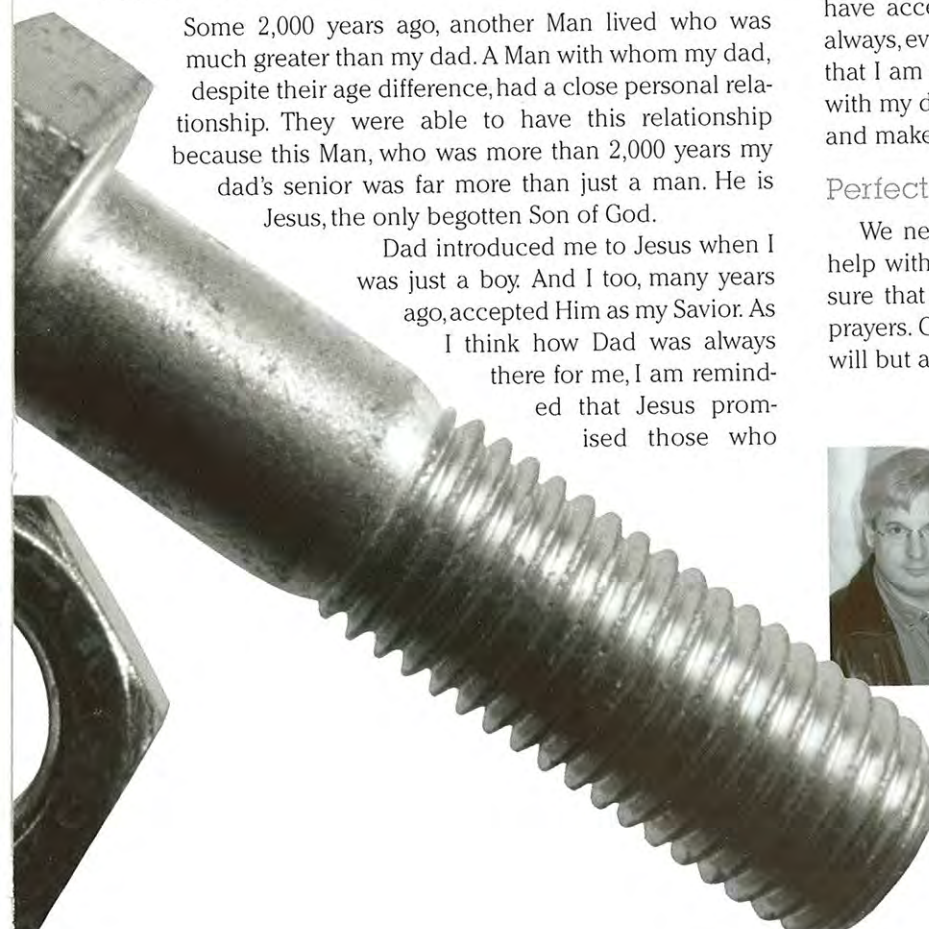
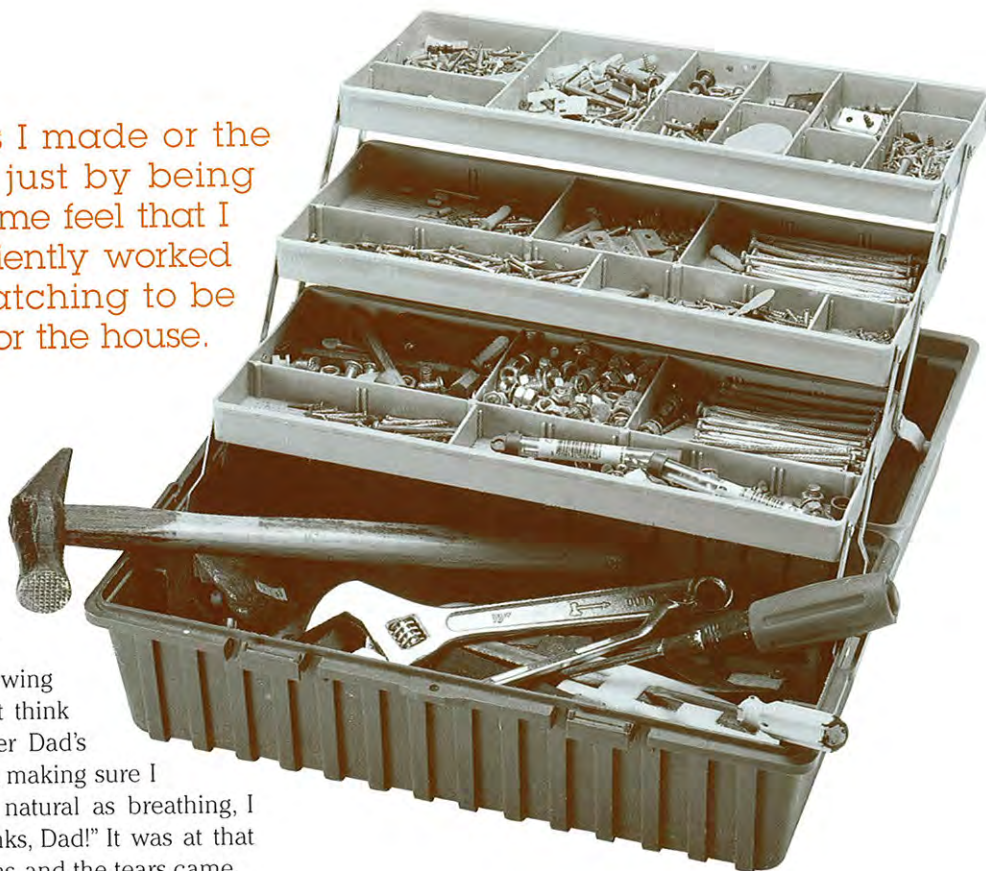
Perfect Answer

We need to go regularly to God's toolbox (the Bible) for help with the situations we face from day to day. You can be sure that if you call on Him, He will hear and answer your prayers. God is always there, waiting to meet our needs if we will but ask. His toolbox is always available to His children. ■



About the Writer: Mark Stooksbury is the son of the late Reverend Homer V. Stooksbury, a Free Will Baptist minister who preached and pastored in Tennessee. Mark is a 19-year veteran of the Columbia (Tennessee) Police Department. He is a widely-used lecturer on law enforcement matters and an oft-published writer.

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Dorothy is not the only person who walks a yellow brick road in search of a way home.

Overcoming the Lions and Tigers and Bears

By Frank Gregory

As the father of three children, I was greeted daily for weeks at a time by the “Wizard of Oz” playing on our videocassette recorder. Yes, I sat down on several occasions, with or without my daughters, and viewed parts of this classic movie that was years ahead of its time.

Each time I watched it, I noticed something I had not seen before such as a wire attached to the lion’s tail as he sings “King of the Forest,” or that the tin man’s bald head is shown only once when he puts out a fire to protect the scarecrow. These things, however, are secondary to the plot of the story.

The Oz Quest

The story plot shows the conflicts that a quartet of travelers encounter on their way to receive something they already have. There was in each of them a potential they never realized was there.

The scarecrow wanted a brain so he would have the ability to think, yet he never realized how he formulated all the plans and made decisions for the group. He was using potential he did not know he had.

The tin man wanted a heart so he could show compassion and experience emotions. This was his desire in spite of the fact that he cried every time the four-some encountered trouble.

The lion sought courage even after he was chosen to lead the way into the witch’s castle. He was later told he confused cowardliness with good judgment.

Last, there was Dorothy. She had begun the quest alone in hope of getting home,

when the power to get home was at her disposal the whole time.

The Christian Quest

The characters in this movie depict many Christians who have not yet realized their position and potential in Christ. Some are still looking over the rainbow for what they already have.

First, we need to realize our position in Christ, that is, forgiven and accepted by God. In his book, *The Search for Significance*, Robert McGee addresses the problems of being both an approval-addict and a performance-addict just to be accepted by others.

The truth of the matter is no one will ever totally accept you except Jesus Christ. McGee wrote that every Christian needs to begin each day saying to himself, “I am deeply loved, fully pleasing, totally forgiven and complete in Christ.” That statement will do wonders for anyone longing for acceptance.

After understanding our position in Christ, we can then begin fulfilling our potential in Christ. Most Christians have untapped reserves of faith within themselves that are never put to work. One must take God at His Word and unleash that faith in obedience to Him.

The Realities

While meditating on this thought, the Holy Spirit reminded me of II Timothy 1:7. Our minds are sometimes taken captive by evil thoughts that harden our hearts to the gentle prodding of the Holy Spirit. Fear of failure can paralyze us from doing anything for God for weeks at a time. In other words, there is some scarecrow, tin man and lion in all of us.

Paul wrote to Timothy that God has not give us the spirit of fear, but of power (for the lion in us), love (for the tin man in us) and of a sound mind (for the scarecrow in us). May our eyes be opened to the potential that lies within each of us.



About the Writer: Reverend Frank Gregory pastors First Free Will Baptist Church in Duncanville, Texas. His first book, *Aren’t You Glad Jesus Asked?*, was published this summer by Randall House Publications.

This article adapted by permission from the October 1989 edition of *The Vision*, official publication of the Arkansas State Association of Free Will Baptists.

Hillsdale College Dedicates Multipurpose Center



Board of Trustees Chairman Will Harmon (L), President Carl Cheshier, Bill J. Barber, Timothy Eaton (Dean), Keith Burden, Moderator Jimmy Holbrook.

MOORE, OK—Seven hundred people gathered at Hillsdale FWB College in Moore to help dedicate the 40,000-square-foot *Bill J. and Alma Lou Barber Center* on October 15. The \$4.3 million brick structure was completed in 12 months, according to President Carl Cheshier.

The Barber Center showcases an 800-seat chapel, a 160-seat music and performing arts theater, three large class-



Bill J. and Alma Lou Barber Center.

rooms, four rehearsal rooms and an executive office suite housing three administrative offices.

A number of service amenities complete the center—10 faculty offices, cafeteria and dining hall, conference room, plus reception and storage areas.

Formal dedication services unfolded

during the Wednesday evening session of the Oklahoma State Association. Executive Secretary Keith Burden delivered the dedication message in a 25-minute tribute to his former teacher (Alma Lou Barber) and challenged hearers to build on the dream come true. Reverend Burden is a long-time friend of the Barber family and former Oklahoma pastor.

President Carl Cheshier and Timothy W. Eaton, dean of academic affairs, presented Bill J. Barber with the first honorary Master of Arts degree. The presentation was a gesture of gratitude for the Barber family's \$1 million gift that launched construction of the new facility.

President Cheshier concluded the evening by preaching the worship service and called on attendees to "Stand in the Gap."

Hillsdale Board of Trustees' chairman Will Harmon pronounced the benediction.

Oklahoma moderator Jimmy Holbrook presided during the dedication ceremony. The Hillsdale music department provided special music for the occasion.

International Fellowship Plans 2004 Session

ANTIOCH, TN—The Executive Committee of the International Fellowship of Free Will Baptist Churches, Inc., met October 3, 2003, in Antioch. Committee members attending the meeting included Daniel Dorati (Panama), president; Jose Manuel Parron (Spain), vice-president; Melvin Worthington (USA), secretary/treasurer. Uri Gonzales (Panama), president of the Panama Association of Free Will Baptists, attended the meeting. Steve Lytle (USA) served as translator.

The committee finalized the program for the October 4–5, 2004, General Assembly meeting in Panama. *Effective Leadership* was selected as the theme for the 2004 General Assembly meeting.

Four papers will be presented during the meeting including: "Leadership Defined" by Melvin Worthington (USA), "Leadership Demonstrated" by Gerardo Aceverdo (Uruguay), "Leadership's Dangers" by Jose Manuel Parron (Spain) and "Leadership's Duty" by Thomas Marberry (Mexico).

The General Assembly will hear reports from member countries and spend time praying for the needs of the countries. The IFOFWBC membership includes Canada, Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, France, India, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Panama, Spain, United States of America and Uruguay. The IFOFWBC was organized in Brazil in 1995. The first consultation met in 1992 in Panama.

The host country, Panama, will provide special music, and each country will be responsible for selecting a preacher to speak during the meeting. Worthington encourages Free Will Baptists to pray for this meeting. Final details on the location and cost will be available in early spring.

For additional information, please contact the secretary/treasurer, Melvin Worthington, by email (mlw@coastalnet.com), phone 252-746-3716 or mail at 4878 Ayden Golf Club Road, Ayden, NC 28513-7423.

Hurricane Isabel Ravages North Carolina Churches



1-2. Photos of flooding courtesy of Pastor Tom Dubose.

3. Outside Stacy FWB Church parsonage.

4. Outside Stacy FWB Church.

5. Inside Davis FWB Church sanctuary.

DAVIS, NC—When Hurricane Isabel plowed ashore last September 18, it shoved several feet of salt water and torrential rains into the eastern North Carolina communities where Free Will Baptist churches minister. Two Free Will Baptist churches located five miles apart (Davis FWB Church and Stacy FWB Church) caught the brunt of Isabel's bad temper.

Pastor Tom Dubose (Davis FWB Church) said on October 17, "It has been a month since the storm devastated our coast and left us with heaping piles of junk. Things that were once our life possessions are all thrown into a pile. It is devastating and depressing."

By press time, work crews from Free Will Baptist churches in North Carolina and other states had arrived to help pastors and members pick up the pieces, move furniture, replace walls and carpet and more.

Pastor Ernest Laxton, Jr., (Stacy FWB Church) said on October 12 that a work crew of 20 men from three Free Will Baptist churches and Southeastern FWB College were on hand to help replace the floor at the church. Nine more men were working at the parsonage tearing out sheetrock and making repairs.

Both the Davis and Stacy FWB Churches were hard hit by Isabel's salt water tidal surge. Sixteen to 18 inches of water wrecked the churches requiring all furniture to be removed, carpet torn out, walls replaced and equipment discarded. Fellowship halls at both churches had extensive damage. Neither church had flood insurance sufficient to cover the damage.

Pastor Tom Dubose lost three vehicles in the flooding. Both church parsonages were under eight inches of water. Carpet, furniture and appliances had to be discarded. The pastors were reduced to living out of cardboard boxes.

Reverend Dubose said, "We have 17 families affected by the storm, some minor and some major. Three families lost everything."

Pastor Ernest Laxton, Jr., wrote in a September 21 e-mail, "This Sunday was the first time since I started that I had no pulpit in which to preach."

Because of limited media coverage in the Davis-Stacy area, help was slow coming to the communities. Federal disaster programs do not assist churches, so the congregations are relying on sister churches for aid.

North Carolina promotional director Jim Marcum has kept a line of communication open between the Davis and Stacy churches and the Free Will Baptist extended family. Much help has been received; much more is needed.

Members of Unity FWB Church in Greenville (NC) sent \$10,000 with Pastor Jeff Manning to be shared by the Davis and Stacy churches. Mission pastor Pat Hall brought \$2,000 from his Wilmington congregation.

Those wishing to respond with cash gifts, equipment, work crews, clothing or anything else are encouraged to do so:

Jim Marcum, Promotional Director
DISASTER RELIEF FUND
 P.O. Box 67
 Goldsboro, NC 27533
 Phone: 919-734-4010
 E-mail: ncfwb@mindspring.com

Walker County Association Forms in Alabama

NAUVOO, AL—Five Alabama churches came together Sunday night, October 12, 2003, after more than three years of planning to form a new association, the Walker County Association. Retired foreign missionary Jimmy Aldridge was elected moderator of the new association.

Some 200 people including delegates, ministers, deacons and visitors participated in the two- and one-half hour organizational meeting at New Oak Grove FWB Church near Nauvoo. Host pastor Mickey Crane welcomed worshippers and introduced delegations from the charter member churches.

Following congregational singing and special music, the formal organization proceeded. Dr. Danny Dwyer, moderator of the Progressive Association, officiated. He read from Psalm 133 and spoke briefly to attendees. Reverend Danny Thompson, moderator of the Alabama State Association, read letters from the churches wishing to join the new association.

A motion to adopt the constitution and bylaws passed unanimously. Dr. Dwyer

and Reverend Thompson extended the right hand of fellowship to the new association, followed by an altar of prayer.

Five churches became charter members of the Walker County Association: Dooertown FWB Church and Cordova FWB Church, both from the Progressive Association; Cedron FWB Church and Carbon Hill FWB Church, both from the Jasper Association; New Oak Grove FWB Church, an unaffiliated congregation.

Association officers elected:

Moderator—Jimmy Aldridge
Assistant Moderator—Mickey Crane
Clerk/Assistant Treasurer—Jody Willingham
Treasurer/Assistant Secretary—Richard Griffin

In his moderator's address, Jimmy Aldridge gave a brief history of events preceding the organization. He refer-



Walker County Association planning session—Roy Helms (L), Mickey Crane, Jimmy Aldridge

enced Joshua 3:4 and told delegates, "We've never passed this way before..."

The five churches of the Walker County Association include 370 active members. Moderator Jimmy Aldridge later reported that a sixth church voted to join the new association after the organizational meeting.

The founding service concluded with a sermon by Jack Williams, *Contact* editor.

Arizona Church Celebrates 50 Years



Dr. Malcolm Fry (R) receives plaque from Pastor Eddie Young.

TUCSON, AZ—Guests from eight states gathered in Tucson September 26-28, 2003, to help members at First FWB Church celebrate 50 years of serving Christ, according to Pastor Eddie Young. A specially prepared banner, "A Spiritual Oasis For Fifty Years," welcomed local folks as well as out-of-staters.

Former pastor Malcolm Fry (1964-'71) preached Sunday morning. Because of ill health, Dr. Fry had been unable to preach for two years prior to September 28.

Activities included the unveiling of a plaque citing eight founding members. One of the jubilee highlights came when

the church sanctuary was named in honor of Dr. Malcolm C. Fry. Momentarily speechless, Dr. Fry told attendees, "I don't know when the Lord will call me home, but if it's now, I've left my legacy."

Reverend George Harvey, Jr., moderator of the Arizona District Association, brought commendations. Founding pastor B. W. Hutchinson also attended the celebration. A PowerPoint presentation traced the church's history from a garage to a home to an old barracks to the current facilities.

Pastor Eddie Young and former pastor David Taylor both preached during the three-day event. Master's Men general director Ken Akers and WNAC president Debe Taylor spoke on behalf of the two organizations.

Local officials from the Gospel Rescue Mission, a state senator, representative and city councilman participated. ■

Arkansas: Members of **Glenwood FWB Church** in **Glenwood** honored Deacon **John Plyer** for 49 years of service to the congregation and community. Numerous former pastors and state officials sent congratulatory letters to the 80-year-old churchman. **Terrell Holland** pastors.

First FWB Church in **Hot Springs** celebrated 50 years, according to Pastor **Doug Jones**. The two-day event last fall included a video recap of the church's history, a reunion of former pastors and five rooms filled with memorabilia.

Fifty years ago the late **H. D. Shipley** founded **First FWB Church** in **Greenwood** after he conducted a brush arbor meeting. Member **Gerald Thomas** presented a history of the church during recent jubilee celebration activities. Pastor **Jim Walker** welcomed former pastors **Larry Cook**, **Dale Underwood** and **Raymond Chronister**.

More than 250 people crowded into **First FWB Church** in **North Little Rock** to hear retired pastor **Ben Scott** preach the final service at the 50th anniversary four-day weekend. Former pastors **Jackie Brown**, **Fred Warner** and **Alton Loveless** also preached. Members presented Pastor **Mark Stripling** a check of appreciation.

Director **Pat Baze** reported 133 conversions, 246 rededications and 71 youth who answered the call to service at **Camp Beaverfork** near **Conway**. Seven teens were baptized in the swimming pool. Some 978 campers attended the various camp weeks.

California: Pastor **Joe Govreau** completed 10 years of leadership at **Grace FWB Church** in **Concord**. Members showered the Govreaus with flowers, cards and cash gifts of appreciation. The gifts included a DVD, digital answering machine, acoustic guitar and more.

Canada: Home Missionary **Jeff Crabtree** reports three baptisms and 15 new members at **Serenity FWB Church** in **New Brunswick**.

Colorado: After five years of struggling through red tape, **First FWB Church** in **Fort Collins** received their building permit, according to Pastor **Roger Raper**. He reports three conversions and five baptisms.

Pastor **Bob Lewis** said the old property at **Westgate FWB Church** in **Grand Junction** has been sold and a new location secured. The property includes a partially-furnished 7,200-square-foot building with nine rooms and a lobby. Lewis needs \$70,000 to complete renovations, landscaping and parking areas.

Illinois: Pastor **Jon Cannon** reports five conversions at **Victory FWB Church** in **Mascoutah**. The church's new drama ministry is creating videos that correspond to the pastor's 10 commandment sermon series.

Sixty-three people witnessed two baptisms by Pastor **David Shores** at **Oak Valley FWB Church** in **Geff**. The church celebrated 149 years of service in 2003.

When 17 men from five states showed up in the parking lot at **Heritage FWB Church** in **Springfield**, Pastor **Ken Doggett** called the local television station. A film crew came right out and did a story that night explaining why so many people came to help build the 3,400-square-foot worship center.

Kansas: Pastor **Zane Brooks** reports 10 conversions at **Wellington FWB Church** in **Wellington**. During Pack-A-Pew Day, some 180 people attended.

Five new members united with **Parsons FWB Church** in **Parsons**, according to Pastor **Rhan Bowan**.

Pastor **Clifford Ball** reports six conversions and 16 visitors at **Bethel FWB Church** in **Kansas City**.

Mexico: President **Thomas Marberry** reported 16 students (14 on campus, two external) at **Seminary of the Cross** in **Reynosa**. Opening services attracted large crowds as students began the new semester.

Mississippi: Members at **Eggville FWB Church** in **Tupelo** honored Pastor **Gerald Gann** for 20 years of leadership. Most of Gann's 25-year ministry has been with the Eggville congregation. He reported 15 baptisms and 17 new members this year.

Missouri: Pastor **Craig Bodenschatz** led 82nd anniversary celebration activities at **Leadington FWB Church** in **Leadington**. Executive secretary **Nathan Ruble** preached the morning message.

First FWB Church in **Fredericktown** noted 81 years of service, according to Pastor **Thurman Hoffman**. Guest speaker **Nathan Ruble** offered congratulations for more than eight decades in the Lord's work.

Some 237 people heard Pastor **Gary Michener** preach and saw him baptize six converts during 10th anniversary activities at **First FWB Church** in **Ozark**. Pastor Michener started the church in 1993 and built a 275-seat sanctuary, two-story education building and a gymnasium. The church averages 175 in attendance.

Montana: Pastor **Ron Palmer** reports seven conversions and four rededications as the work at **Cross Roads FWB Church** in **Billings** continues to grow. The congregation rebuilt after a fire did extensive damage to the building in December 2000.

North Carolina: Pastor **Rigoberto Lumbreras** reports 114 present and an offering of \$1,662 at **First Hispanic FWB Church** in **Lincolnton**.



A Different Kind of Break

By Bert Tippet, Public Relations Director

Fall Break. Whoopee! Pile in the cars and head home! Mom's home cooking. Dad checking the oil in your car. Kick back and enjoy the down time. That's what most students do.



But some at FWBBC saw Fall Break in a different light:

"Pass me that shovel."

"Did you give her a tract?"

"I'm ready for a break!"

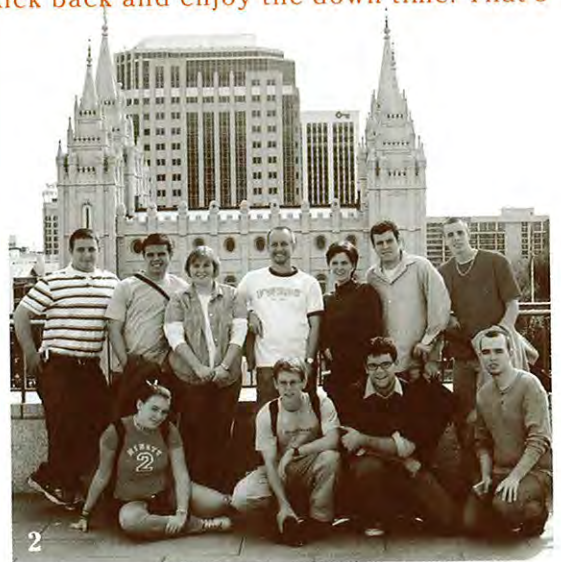
Those are the 22 students and four sponsors who spent Fall Break, October 16–20, helping Free Will Baptists in need.

One group drove east. Twelve students piled into vans with sponsors Jeff and Calisse Caudill, and headed for eastern North Carolina to help repair two churches flooded by Hurricane Isabel. It was a long, 12-hour trip, and what they found was much worse than they expected. Furniture lined U.S. 70 as it winds through Davis and Stacy, ending at the village of Atlantic. Tides from the hurricane flooded homes, businesses and churches.

"The devastation was overwhelming," says Jeff Caudill, FWBBC's director of financial aid. "I was so proud of our students and all of their hard work."

The students split into two groups to assist the Davis and Stacy FWB Churches. "We helped to clean up some and move furniture around and out of houses," says freshman Phillip Kennedy, a missions major. "But our main project was to put down a new floor in the sanctuary. . . and we got that done!"

Pastors and laymen welcomed the groups and treated them to Down East hospitality. "I pray the



Lord will bless them and give them the help they need to get started again," Phillip added.

The other group flew west. Their destination: Ogden, Utah. Ten students and sponsors Michael and Wendy Walker spent their break time helping Free Will Baptist home missionaries Tim and Jessica Lewis.

In addition to canvassing neighborhoods, they passed out donuts and hot dogs, sang and performed skits. Using a more novel approach, while the group ate lunch in the mall, they gave two food vendors \$100 each to cover the costs of food for other customers. A card was given to each customer, explaining the free meal's purpose. Two new people attended services at Summit Chapel FWB Church that Sunday as a direct result of the contacts.

"I have to say that this trip was a great success," says Mr. Walker, chairman of the Business Department. "When the students were asked if they wanted to do sight-seeing on Monday or make another outreach, they all decided on the outreach."

Fall Break takes different forms with different students. Some returned to FWBBC with stories of home cooking, home churches, and home towns. But some came back with different stories. ■



Free Will Baptist
Bible College

Free Will Baptist Ministry Focus

1 Eastern North
Carolina Team

2 Ogden, Utah,
Team



Trust

By David L. Brown, Associate Director

Trust is a word we deal with regularly at Free Will Baptist Foundation.

We manage trusts for a variety of charitable agreements. Gift annuity trusts for individuals that pay a fixed-dollar amount for life; charitable remainder annuity trusts that also pay a fixed-dollar amount for life and possibly for a fixed period of years beyond the life of the donor.

Charitable remainder unitrusts that pay a fixed percentage for life may also add a period of years beyond the donor's life. Endowment trusts are managed by the Foundation to preserve principal and pay out earnings to various Free Will Baptist ministries as directed by the donor. We also manage revocable trusts for both Free Will Baptist organizations and individuals that either directly or indirectly benefit ministries.

While managing these trust instruments is important to us, there is another meaning for the word that is very important. Webster defines *trust* as confidence; reliance or resting of the mind on the integrity, veracity, justice, friendship or other sound principle of another person or thing. Trust is not something that is given lightly.

Honesty

The Foundation has been working hard for 23 years to earn your trust. We have done this in many ways. We strive to be completely above board in all we do. We believe it is best to always tell the truth even when the truth hurts. The markets have been on quite a roller coaster the past few years. We have invested the various funds we manage in an appropriate manner to achieve the goals of the trusts.

We sometimes err on the side of investing too conservatively; even so, we have had negative earnings from time to time. Whether the earnings are positive or negative, our pledge is to report them to you just as they are. Thankfully, our history shows a reasonable rate of return through the years.

Confidentiality

We earn your trust by being confidential with your personal information. Planned gifts require

us to accumulate a great deal of information. Some of it relates to what the individual wants to do through his gift; other items are required for accurate calculations. We also need detailed information concerning your financial position. This information is not disclosed to anyone for any reason.

We earn your trust in that we never try to tell an individual which ministry they should benefit. The donor is always in the driver's seat. You tell us who you want to benefit and we help you find a way to do so.

Professionalism

We earn your trust in the conduct of our office. We operate the Foundation according to sound business practices. We will act as a fiduciary for your planned gift. Our job as a fiduciary is to walk the tightrope of managing trusts in such a way that we are equally responsible to benefit the donor and at the same time deliver to the ministry the original value of the gift or more.

Proven Track Record

We work to earn your trust by doing a good job and providing a track record of good returns. Many ministries and individuals have had trusts with the Foundation for a long time. We have earned their trust through performance. We manage funds for all the departments of the National Association. State associations also have trusted us with various funds as well. Chances are one of your favorite ministries has already placed their trust in the Foundation. We encourage you to ask them about our performance.

At Free Will Baptist Foundation, trust is not just what we do but what we are. We are trustworthy. Call 877-336-7575 about trusting us today. ■

Free Will Baptist Ministry Focus



THE
FREE WILL
BAPTIST
FOUNDATION

- Whether the earnings are positive or negative, our pledge is to report them to you just as they are.
- We never try to tell an individual which ministry he or she should benefit.
- We work to earn your trust by doing a good job and providing a track record of good returns.

Operation Saturation— A Shenandoah Success

By Paul Collins, Home Missionary

Several years ago the Home Missions and Master's Men Departments joined forces to implement a project called Operation Saturation. The concept spread as pastors, laymen and national workers participated with home mission churches on a designated weekend. This is what happened during Operation Saturation at Harrisonburg FWB Church nestled in the Shenandoah Valley in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Planning and Preparation

For three months, our church made preparations for big days full of activity they hoped would impact our mission work and help us win new families. They prepared the new land by mowing and building a road to the top of the hill where a tent would be raised and a parking area set aside. The materials already on hand were organized and new brochures printed to be distributed. The following organizational groups were formed.

The *Set-Up Group* was responsible for small tents, portable lavatories, camper, chairs, sound system, generator, pulpit and anything else needed, along with wood shavings for the floor of the tent.

The *Hospitality Group* geared up to cook hot dogs and man the hospitality tent. We advertised and invited everyone in the neighborhood to meet the new church people who would soon be their neighbors. A free hot dog and drink along with music sung by the Gateway Christian College choir awaited all who came.

The *Food Group* took care of the food and set up tables for those who came to help knock on doors. The *Visitation Group* would knock on doors and place door hangers when a visit was not possible. The *Coordinator's Group* directed people to their areas of service, mapped out visitation and provided necessary materials.

Our goal was to knock on 2,000 doors in two and a half hours, followed by special singing for the big Operation Saturation Rally and our land dedication. Fifty people came and assisted the Harrisonburg church members in knocking doors, conducting surveys and distributing door hangers on 2,487 doors.

Looking Back and Forward

The results were immediate and wonderful! This mission church now has 57 good prospects. We saw three saved that Saturday, and five people rededicated their lives on Sunday. Many who came for a free hot dog and drink stayed for the special singing and the keynote message by Pastor Hal Jones of Great Bridge FWB Church in Chesapeake.

Things got better Sunday when 89 people attended morning service under the tent. Fourteen were first-time visitors; three of those first-time visitors rededicated their lives to Christ. Sunday afternoon was a time of celebrating with lunch under the big tent, gospel singing and preaching. Several came from other churches and joined in the festivities.

Our people were so excited about what God might do on that special day, and now they are even more excited because our church was almost full a week after the Operation Saturation weekend. Many plan follow-up visitation. Two committed to teaching, and we started a teen Sunday School class as a direct result of the tent revival.

Two of our junior girls, Kasey Dean and Nikki Hottinger, wanted to knock on doors and hang door hangers, so I took them to do just that. I watched as they introduced themselves and our church to people who needed Christ; I watched as those people listened to two young girls who cared deeply for souls. Two of them came to church Sunday because two junior girls had a vision.

Operation Saturation 2003 will have a lasting impact on our church because God sent many to help us make the event a success. Those who came from sister churches will never know how much it meant to us. Commit your church to a mission trip. Your people will become missionaries where they are and your church will be blessed. ■



HOME
MISSIONS

- "Commit your church to a mission trip. Your people will become missionaries where they are and your church will be blessed."
- For more information about Operation Saturation, contact Home Missions at 877-767-7674.

Free Will Baptist Ministry Focus

The Scholars

By Ron Hunter, General Director

Scholar. We normally attribute this title to a person with great knowledge and education. Most of us have limited interaction with true scholars. However, Free Will Baptists have been privileged to have a scholar as our “personal tutor” on a weekly basis for decades. Of course, I am referring to *The Bible Scholar* and *The Bible Teacher* Bible study guides published by Randall House. It is my opinion that we significantly underestimate their worth and impact. In my own life in many ways, these aids have been my greatest teachers.

In the early 1980s, Terry Forrest, then pastor at the First FWB Church in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas, gave me opportunity to teach a new Sunday School class for those who came early for service or late for Sunday School, but who were not attending class. The purpose of the class was to provide a non-threatening environment that would familiarize people with Sunday School to the degree that they would become a part of the regular program.

Although nervous, I was excited about the challenge and potential of such a ministry. I had no Bible study aids. All I had to study was a *Thompson Chain Reference™ Bible* and *The Bible Teacher*. To my dismay, the first week no one came to the class. Consequently, Brother Forrest went to the women’s class and recruited four of the older ladies for me to teach.

As a new teacher, I prepared by poring over the scriptures and reading and re-reading the teacher’s book. Pastor Forrest gave me a call after each les-

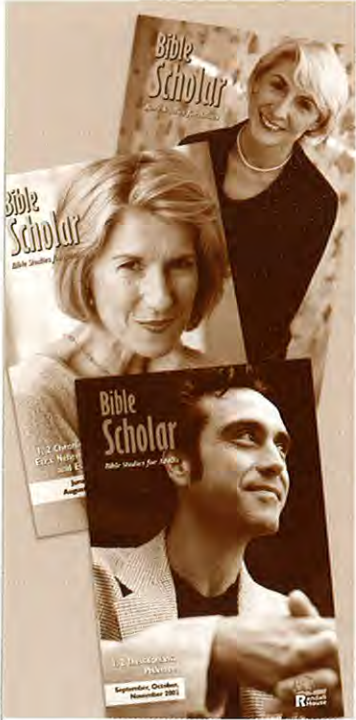
son I taught and gave me pointers to help me improve my teaching. Each week I studied six to eight hours for my lesson. I wrote everything I was going to say in full manuscript and then read my notes to the class.

Later I bought some additional Bible study helps and theology books, but my main Bible study help continued to be *The Bible Teacher*.

God blessed the class, and before long I had 50–75 people attending each week. I was thankful for the growth, but I began to notice something that had never occurred to me. I was the one who experienced the most growth. While studying my Sunday School lesson, a new world of biblical knowledge and spiritual insights opened up in my life. I began to get a grip on history, doctrine and application.

I have sat under many capable teachers, preachers and professors over the years who influenced me greatly. But I must say the teacher that gave me my real biblical foundation was “The Bible Teacher.”

I am thankful for the “scholars” among us. *The Bible Scholar* and *The Bible Teacher*, as well as many other Randall House Bible study guides used in our Sunday Schools, continue to be tools in the hands of God’s servants. ■



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PUBLICATIONS

Free Will Baptist Ministry Focus

- In my own life in many ways, *The Bible Scholar* and *The Bible Teacher* have been my greatest teachers.
- While studying my Sunday School lesson, a new world of biblical knowledge and spiritual insights opened up in my life.



Shara Bevan

She's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Jesus

The holiday season is almost

over, but one unanswered question remains before we're ready for 2004. *Did you decorate a Christmas tree in your home this year?*

While some of our trees are bright and beautiful, others are plagued with the Charlie Brown Christmas tree syndrome. A well-dressed Christmas tree draws people to it and each other. Plus, when we see a Christmas tree we say, "It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas!"

Are people drawn to us when they see the branches of our lives? Are we decorated in such a way that we attract others to us and in turn they see Jesus? Are our branches laden with ornaments of service, love, peace and hope? Are we beginning to look a lot like Jesus?

Directory Update

Alabama

James Carrington to Liberty Church, Guin

Arkansas

Kevin Riggs to First Church, Russellville from Franklin Church, Franklin, TN

Georgia

Benny Lafferty to Bay Spring, Eastman from Cornerstone Church, Perry as associate minister

Robert Robinson to Mt. Ararat Church, Eastman

Harold Williams to Traveler's Rest Church, Newton from Baker's Branch Church, Tutor Key, KY

David Amburgey to Philadelphia Church, Folkston

Bill Barksdale to Spring Hill Church, Baconton from Poulan Church, Poulan

Indiana

Kevin Flannagin to First Bible Church, New Castle from Shiloh Church, Bratt, FL

North Carolina

Jeff Skiles to Ahoskie Church, Ahoskie from Liberty Church, Guin, AL ■

Ornament of Service

Acts 10:38 says that Jesus "... went about doing good." He healed broken bones and cured broken homes. How does this relate to pastors' wives?

We too should be doing good in our words and our deeds. We can each do something, even though we may not feel talented. Hudson Taylor once said after a formal introduction, "Dear friends, I am the little servant of an illustrious master."

As little servants, we must train ourselves to look around and see what we can do today for our Master. We begin by serving our husbands as homemaker, peacemaker and love-maker. We serve our children as we pray, play and stay with them. We serve the Lord with a perfect heart and willing mind.

The point is this—when a pastor's wife serves, she begins to look a lot like Jesus.

Ornament of Love

Jesus came to earth because He loved us. He loved the widow, the maniac, the sick and those sorry for their sin. He loved His disciples though they doubted and betrayed Him. He loved the different, the poor and the lonely, and He loves all us preachers' wives.

If there's anything better than being loved, it's loving someone else. In our ministry we encounter many who have never known true love. We get to tell them about someone who'll love them like they've never been loved before. But we can't love like this on our own. The scriptures must stretch us to be like Christ.

When a pastor's wife loves, she begins to look a lot like Jesus.

Ornament of Peace

Did you dash through the holiday season with "No Room" for the peaceful place? We made time to go to the toy store, but did we also go to the joy store? We

must make time for quiet sessions with God. Jesus did! Read carefully the words of Mark 1:35, Luke 6:12 and Mark 6:31. Without solitude, prayer and a peaceful place, the troubles of this world bog us down until we can't see or feel Him.

We must connect with God at each opportunity. When we are in His presence, our faith reignites, our focus reasserts itself. It is like sitting near your earthly father to be comforted by his strength, which is what every woman needs.

Here in the peaceful place we find peace in the parsonage and in the parish. Here our Heavenly Father enfolds us in His arms and gently encourages, corrects and shows us how incapable we are without Him.

When a pastor's wife finds her peaceful place, she begins to look a lot like Jesus.

Ornament of Hope

Adam and Eve were crushed when they sinned, until God in His love picked them up with a promise, a hope, that one day a Savior would come. Jesus was born to give us second birth. This hope is worth sharing!

We can bring good tidings to the hurting and soul-sick. To those sinking in sin we can say, "Sister, have I got a Friend for you." Sharing the hope is the best part about being a pastor's wife.

When a pastor's wife shares the Hope, she begins to look a lot like Jesus.

So how did you do this Christmas season? Do your ornaments of service, love, peace and hope need readjustment? This is a new year—give the Master Designer full control. He can and will make us beautiful in His service. ■

About the Writer: Mrs. Shara Bevan is a member of Camden Free Will Baptist Church in Kingsland, Georgia, where her husband, Reverend Billy Bevan, Jr., pastors. The Bevans have two children, Bradley and Brandon.



Randy Sawyer

Surviving Ministry Stress

A few days ago I received the following correspondence from a brother in ministry.

More has happened since my last e-mail. One of the leaders decided to stay and continue the fight. Tonight I gave notice to our leaders that I'm burned out and have no fight left. I have struggled for two years and I'm done. I asked for a three-month sabbatical effective immediately. I know you understand. Concerning the ministry... it is now up to God. Unless the Lord changes hearts I will be seeking other employment. I'm not sure about staying in the ministry.

Here is a good pastor, capable leader and gifted speaker whose only goal is to spend his life in ministry. Yet after being assailed by so many for so long, he has decided to seek *other employment*.

Everyone in ministry at some time or another feels this way. Stress drives dozens out of the ministry every year, and dozens more remain in the work only because they aren't trained to do anything else, or to save face with their peers. The admission that we have reached our limit should not solicit the scowl of self-righteous disapproval.

The apostle Paul knew stress in bringing the gospel to the gentile world. One of the most inspiring passages on ministry is found in II Corinthians 2:12-4:6. The whole section is set against the backdrop of ministry stresses.

Acts 18 tells the story of Paul's 18-month ministry in Corinth that resulted in the establishment of the Corinthian church. From there he moved on to Ephesus, and finally to Jerusalem.

Five years later a conflict broke out between Paul and the Corinthian believers. The struggle was due, in part, to infiltration by certain teachers who challenged Paul's apostleship, integrity, theology, style of preaching and ministry and personality. These events caused him much grief.

He wrote three, perhaps even four letters seeking reconciliation with brethren there. In II Corinthians 2:12-13 he writes,

"Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother...."

Paul had sent Titus to Corinth to ascertain their response to his last correspondence. When he arrived in Troas, though the door for ministry was wide open, he could not continue the work, because he had not heard from Titus. Things in Corinth were still confused.

Sovereignly Guided

Eventually, Titus did arrive with word that the Corinthians had received his pleas with a repentant spirit (II Corin. 7:5). In 2:14-17 Paul responded to the difficult situation. It's almost as if, somehow, between verses 13 and 14 he regained his perspective. Maybe Titus came in at that time. Whatever the case, in spite of the immense stress he was able to shout,

"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place."

Here the embattled apostle shows us how we can be confident in a day of confusion. He tells us that in spite of the chaos of the age, and the stresses of life and ministry, we can have confidence, because in Christ we are sovereignly guided. The text actually reads, "thanks be unto God who always leads us...."

Paul was confident that nothing in life is beyond our Lord's control. Sovereignty is not a word Free Will Baptists use often. Because of our inability to totally understand the inner workings of the sovereignty-free will dynamic, we are often pushed to one of two extremes: either we give away free will to protect God's sovereignty, or we surrender divine sovereignty to defend

man's freedom. Regardless of the battles we face, our Lord is never taken by surprise nor rendered helpless.

Supremely Victorious

Further, Paul's words teach us that we can be confident amid confusion because in Christ we are *supremely victorious*. Verse 14 continues, "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." With this expression the apostle illustrates the truth that no matter what the circumstances, believers are always victorious in Christ. He compares the Christian's victory with the spectacle of a Roman victory triumph.

A victory triumph was an awe-inspiring parade awarded to commanders who successfully prosecuted war against a foreign power. The imperial city was treated to a procession which included standard bearers, followed by the conquered general and his defeated troops, then priests swinging incense pots, and bulls and other stock ready for sacrifice to Jupiter, and finally the conquering general riding on a golden chariot drawn by four gallant steeds, followed by his family, and the Roman legions garbed in their regimental regalia. The crowd, by then whipped into a frenzy of emotion chanted, "Lo, triumph; Lo, triumph."

With this imagery, Paul declares that the Christian warrior is always triumphant in Christ. By His death, burial and resurrection, Christ guaranteed victory for God's children. In sickness or death, success or failure, advance or withdrawal, acceptance or rejection, the conclusion is the same: "Lo, triumph!"

Singularly Profitable

Paul encourages confidence in the day of confusion because in Christ we are *singularly profitable*. He writes, "...And maketh manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place...."

Singularly means wondrously. Paul says that in wonderful ways we are all profitable in the ministry. Such an attitude must have been easy for Paul. And others may also be able to feel positive about their contributions, but what about me? What about my work? The answer is found by looking once again to the Roman triumph.

Each procession included the pagan priests swinging incense pots as an offering unto the gods. As the incense wafted over the proceedings the aroma announced death to the captives and life to the victors; or as the text suggests, "life unto life and death unto death." In a fantastic and wonderful way, each believer is a "sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish."

To some, the fragrance of our lives and ministries announce life, to others death. Some respond in the affirmative and receive life, while others reject grace and experience death. But in either case, God is using us for His glory.

Sincerely Motivated

Finally, Paul says we can be confident in a day of confusion because in Christ we are *sincerely motivated*. Verse 17 states, "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God, but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we the word." God knows the motivation of our hearts. Others may, and will at times challenge our purposes, but He alone knows for certain. We preach *coram deo*, before the face of God. If what we have done has been for His greater glory, let friend and foe alike challenge us. We are accepted of Him, and in Him we are sincerely motivated. That ultimately is what keeps us faithful in the work. ■

Receipts:			Year To Date	Year To Date	Year To Date	
State	Designated	CO-OP	Total	Designated	CO-OP	Total
Alabama	\$ 1,021	\$ 304	\$ 1,325	\$ 4,836	\$ 1,591	\$ 6,427
Arizona	0	13	13	330	298	628
Arkansas	16,219	18,689	34,908	109,709	175,098	284,807
California	42	1,508	1,550	231	12,135	12,366
Colorado	0	0	0	0	0	0
Delaware	0	0	0	114	0	114
Florida	0	0	0	379	9,072	9,451
Georgia	46,148	1,740	47,888	343,461	17,552	361,014
Hawaii	0	0	0	0	0	0
Idaho	0	0	0	0	0	0
Illinois	12,600	2,299	14,899	122,836	27,379	150,215
Indiana	1,494	140	1,634	19,450	1,995	21,445
Iowa	0	0	0	0	65	65
Kansas	0	0	0	0	540	540
Kentucky	100	599	699	3,286	12,707	15,993
Louisiana	0	0	0	0	0	0
Maryland	0	0	0	0	0	0
Michigan	19,254	2,249	21,503	215,590	23,609	239,198
Mississippi	11,661	649	12,311	106,267	6,013	112,280
Missouri	45,967	16,603	62,570	430,490	165,910	596,400
Montana	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nebraska	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Jersey	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Mexico	869	24	893	5,289	268	5,557
North Carolina	1,482	2,296	3,778	15,303	26,281	41,584
Ohio	19,524	2,814	22,339	166,499	36,558	203,057
Oklahoma	59,683	8,235	67,918	586,134	106,693	692,826
South Carolina	60,432	403	60,835	463,155	661	463,816
South Dakota	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tennessee	14,956	214	15,170	122,070	14,069	136,139
Texas	10,368	274	10,642	105,016	2,978	107,995
Virginia	10	0	10	1,948	481	2,429
Virgin Islands	0	0	0	25	0	25
West Virginia	741	265	1,005	9,259	1,453	10,712
Wisconsin	0	0	0	0	0	0
Canada	770	12	782	7,780	140	7,921
Northwest Assoc.	0	0	0	1,029	0	1,029
Northeast Assoc.	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	\$ 323,340	\$ 59,332	\$ 382,672	\$ 2,840,487	\$ 643,546	\$ 3,484,034

Disbursements:						
Executive Office	\$ 1,254	\$ 26,699	\$ 27,954	\$ 14,995	\$ 289,596	\$ 304,590
Foreign Missions	196,280	7,506	203,786	1,704,476	81,409	1,785,884
FWBBC	26,285	7,506	33,790	231,768	81,409	313,177
Home Missions	85,185	5,874	91,059	786,651	63,711	850,362
Retirement & Insurance	303	4,569	4,872	3,699	49,553	53,252
Master's Men	382	4,569	4,950	6,687	49,553	56,240
Commission for Theo. Integrity	51	163	214	554	1,770	2,324
FWB Foundation	235	1,958	2,193	2,259	21,237	23,496
Historical Commission	51	163	214	554	1,770	2,324
Music Commission	79	163	242	371	1,770	2,140
Media Commission	339	163	502	1,251	1,770	3,020
Hillsdale FWB College	2,111	0	2,111	21,181	0	21,181
Other	10,785	0	10,785	66,043	0	66,043
Totals	\$ 323,340	\$ 59,332	\$ 382,672	\$ 2,840,487	\$ 643,546	\$ 3,484,034



Garnett Reid

Come and Listen to My Story

[T]he Old and New Testaments ...

are a sufficient and infallible rule and guide to salvation and all Christian worship and service." So reads the opening paragraph of Chapter One in the Free Will Baptist *Treatise*. In response, we could echo an early confession of the church: "Thus we all think; to this we all agree."

Seeing the Need

There's a problem, though. Many Free Will Baptists—many Christians in General—don't know what the Bible says! Researchers note it; preachers realize it; teachers confront it—the shocking ignorance of Bible basics today. To see it for yourself, ask the average church member to name the 27 New Testament books, let alone the 39 of the Old. See how many can name the Ten Commandments, in order or not—or the 12 disciples or the 12 tribes of Israel, and on and on.

Sadly, the church's deficiency in Bible knowledge mirrors American society at large. Check out the numbers at the Barna Research website (www.barna.org) to see how bad it is. Some 40 years ago, Dr. Andrew Holt, then president of the University of Tennessee, contended that people who do not know the Bible are uneducated, no matter how much schooling they may have had. By Dr. Holt's standard, American society today flunks preschool.

We must confess with humility and honesty that one can study the scriptures for a lifetime and not begin to comprehend all the treasures they offer. That's not what I'm talking about, though.

My point is we claim to base our entire worldview, our philosophy of life and our eternal destiny on the truths of one book, but we don't even know what they are!

How, then, can the Bible be our "infallible rule and guide" in doctrine or in practice when we lack even a basic understanding of what it contains?

Moving Toward an Answer

Fifteen years ago the book *What Every Christian Should Know* listed some 1,800 details (mostly biblical phrases and facts) reflecting a guide to what the compilers thought essential Christian knowledge. While I am concerned with the specifics of Bible knowledge, my purpose here involves what I'll call the larger picture, a primal grasp of the Bible's "story-line."

Simply put, I am convinced that everyone who relies fully on the Bible's truth claims as the only source of faith and practice should master a brief plot summary of what it says. Such a statement should serve as a basic, seminal answer to the question, "What is the Bible all about?"

In constructing such a "creed," we should be sure it is:

- **Clear**—not mired in unnecessary jargon; not needlessly complex so as to be confusing;
- **Summary**—not detailed; as short as possible to communicate accurately the Bible's message;
- **Representative**—not contrived so as to distort the story-line; accurate in reflecting what the Bible says;
- **Inclusive**—not representative of just part of scripture; every book should find a niche somewhere in the statement.

Two simple illustrations show the value of such an abstract. As a Civil War enthusiast, I enjoy studying specific details of individual battles—the generals, corps commanders, regiments and brigades,

strategies, troop movements, artillery, casualty lists and other particulars. Yet a student of the war must also set those details within the larger context of the entire war, its causes and prosecution, its moral and social impact, and its political effect on the nation and the world.

Consider also a friend who attended a major league baseball game in Cincinnati several years ago. He related to me all the details of the game between the Cubs and the Reds: who the pitchers were, key plays in the contest, and the exploits of players such as Ernie Banks, Ron Santo and Pete Rose.

I asked him, "Who won? What was the score?" "Uh... I don't remember," he confessed.

To be sure, we need to know details about Absalom and Apollos, who the Pharisees and Sadducees were, and Romans 10:9–10 by heart. But we also need to know how all the parts contribute to this story—the greatest story—God has so graciously performed in history and recorded in human language.

Over the next several months we will examine that story-line—not in small details, but in broad strokes. As we do, we must meditate on the story to keep ourselves true, communicate it to keep others from death, and apply it to keep the church advancing for the glory of its Author. ■

Next Month: *Tracing the Story-Line*



Thomas Marberry

Whosoever Will

Arminianism and Calvinism from a Free Will Baptist Perspective

By Dave Nobles (White House, TN: Sow the Seed Ministries, 2002, paperback, 132 pp., \$10)

The author of this new book

is a veteran pastor who leads Bethel FWB Church in Woodbridge, Virginia. He holds a B.A. from Free Will Baptist Bible College, as well as a M.Div. and Th.D. from Covington Theological Seminary in Rossville, Georgia.

This work is an introduction to and summary of what Free Will Baptists believe about salvation. It is designed for the pastor who has not had extensive theological training or for the layman who wants a better understanding of our beliefs.

Nobles notes that there are basically two concepts of salvation among traditional Protestants in the United States—Calvinism and Arminianism. The first traces its heritage to Swiss reformer John Calvin. The second is derived from the work of Dutch theologian, James Arminius.

Both schools of thought have influenced what Free Will Baptists believe about salvation, but we do not strictly follow either approach. According to Nobles, our view of salvation is a modified form of Arminianism. We believe this approach is more true to the teachings of scripture than either strict Calvinism or strict Arminianism.

The author begins with brief histories of Calvinism and Arminianism. He notes, quite correctly, that all the major reformers including Luther, Calvin and Zwingli emphasized God's role in salvation. They stressed that salvation is by the grace of God and not by any human works or merit. They developed this belief in response to the Roman Catholic system which made salvation something that could be earned.

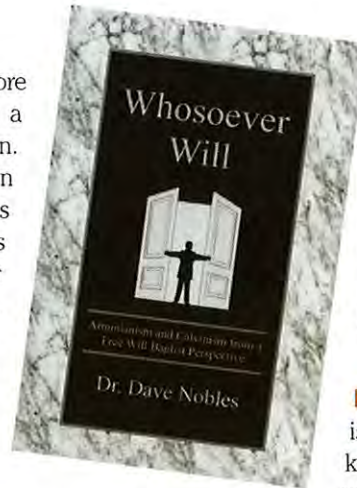
James Arminius was born in Holland about 1560. The dominant church in Holland at that time was the Dutch Reformed Church that was thoroughly committed to the teachings of John Calvin. Arminius went to study

in Geneva under Theodore Beza who had been a famous student of Calvin. During his time in Geneva and after his return to Holland, Arminius began questioning major teachings of Calvin. Based on his study of the scriptures, he came to believe that Christ died for all men and that all men could be saved.

The five points of Calvinism were drawn up about 1619. They are: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace and Perseverance of the Saints. These points teach that God makes all the decisions in salvation. He elects those who will be saved and those who will be lost. Christ died only for the elect; there is no provision for the salvation of the non-elect. God's saving grace cannot be resisted; if He determines to save someone, that person will be saved. There is no possibility that a saved person can ever be lost because he will be kept by God's sovereign power.

Arminius found several of these teachings to be in conflict with the scripture. He taught that all can be saved and that God's election is based on His foreknowledge. He also taught that God's grace can be resisted. In order to be saved an individual must voluntarily accept God's saving grace.

In the final section of his book, the author examines what Free Will Baptists believe about salvation. He summarizes a modified Arminian approach (which



Free Will Baptists accept) under five categories. They are:

Total Depravity—

The entire human race participated in the sin of Adam. All have been infected with a sinful human nature.

Conditional Election—Man's election is based on God's foreknowledge and not on his arbitrary choice. Election is

conditioned upon man's repentance and faith.

Unlimited Atonement—God's plan of salvation is not limited. The benefits of Christ's atoning death are available to all but effective only for those who believe.

Resistible Grace—The Holy Spirit convicts men of sin, but men can resist God's call to salvation if they choose to do so.

Perseverance of the Saints—Unbelievers do not go to Heaven. We must continue in the faith. As Nobles explains, "We are not saved by faith and then kept by works."

This is a most useful book. It is brief and easy to follow. The author is careful to explain key theological terms that the reader needs to understand. Nobles analyzes the key passages of scripture we use to defend our understanding of salvation. The book is privately published. It can be ordered from the author at Bethel FWB Church, 3713 Pennington Lane, Woodbridge VA 22192. ■



The Year in Preview

Make plans now for your youth workers, children's workers, students and children to be a part of the exciting events Student and Children Ministries has planned for 2004.

- January 31** Truth & Peace Student Leadership Conference application kit deadline
- February 1** National Youth Day
- February 6-8** National Student and Children Workers Conference—Branson, MO
- February 20-22** National Student and Children Workers Conference—Glasgow, KY
- March 11-14** Springboard Jr. High Conference—Camp Beaverfork, Conway, AR
- April 1-4** Springboard Jr. High Conference—Camp Hope, Ewing, IL
- April 22-25** Springboard Jr. High Conference—Camp Echeeconnee, Lizella, GA
- June 1** Deadline for Creative Writing entries to be submitted to National Youth Conference office
- June 15** Deadline for state entries to be submitted to National Youth Conference office
- June 18-27** National Youth Evangelistic Team Tour
- July 7-22** Truth & Peace Student Leadership Conference
- July 18-22** National Youth Conference—Kansas City, MO
- September 15** See You at the Pole



SCM Idea of the Month

Student Prayer Cards

We take digital pictures of every student and have each student complete a "Prayer Card Information Form." This includes: Name, Address, Phone, Grade in School, School, Birthdate, Email Address, Things I'm Involved in at School and Special Prayer Request.

All this information is put on a card with the student's picture (some of the info goes on the back to avoid overcrowding the front). We also place small magnets on the top corners on the back.

We spread the cards out on a table and ask our adults to go by and "adopt" a student for the school year. When they choose their student, they sign their name on a list beside the student's name, so we'll know who is praying for whom. These adults pray for the student regularly, they send birthday cards and notes of encouragement. They also try to get to know that student more personally. The magnets allow them to place the cards on their refrigerators so they will see them often and be reminded to pray regularly.

If a student is going through a particularly difficult time, I can call his or her prayer partner and let them know. This helps keep their prayers focused specifically on the needs the student is experiencing.

When we first started this a few years ago, I was amazed at the reaction from the church. Now, our adults can't wait for the school year to start so they can adopt a new student. This has certainly been a blessing to the student ministry here. ■

Submitted by Curt Gwartney, youth pastor at Locust Grove FWB Church in Locust Grove, Oklahoma.

If you want to submit an idea for this column, please email it to youth@randallhouse.com.



Jack Williams

Sweating at the Dojo

Becky turned me into her private chauffeur twice a week during a five-week stretch last fall while she taught a four-hour night class at Free Will Baptist Bible College. Daughters can do that to a fellow, you understand, and mine did.

We were half-way through her 10-night course which met 6:00 p.m.–10:00 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays when she let the cat out of the bag. I almost had a runaway right there on I-440. Let me explain.

Becky, her husband Recardo and one of their sons take karate lessons at a local dojo. For eight months, Recardo and his workout partner named Mike kicked and tossed one another around on the mats.

No one bothered with last names. They were there to beat on each other under the demanding eyes of hard-fisted instructors. Recardo knew two things about Mike—he was working toward a purple belt and had a teenage son with whom he shared karate grunts.

Mike mentioned between chops and leg sweeps that he worked in music, but that was as far as it went. At least it was until a flyer arrived at Recardo's home advertising a musical concert at FWBBC. To his surprise, the guest musician was Mike his karate-kicking dojo buddy.

That was when he realized for eight months he had been body-slammng an internationally-known Christian artist. His karate buddy "Mike" had a day job as *Michael Card*, and Michael gave concerts!

So while I chauffeured Becky to a particular Tuesday night class, Recardo slipped into FWBBC's auditorium and listened to Mike present a two-hour, one-man concert using guitars, a banjo and a piano. Mike didn't need karate chops to subdue the banjo or tame the piano.

Later Recardo told me, "You know, Mike is such a humble man in what he does. He didn't want people at the dojo to know

he was a professional musician. He wanted to be just a dad doing something with his son."

Humility notwithstanding, Mike and Recardo went back to sweating at the dojo the next Monday night. The point is we never know who we may meet in the grocery line, at the bank or bouncing around the mall on Saturday night. Better pay attention. The most important people in the world cross your path while you're looking the other way.

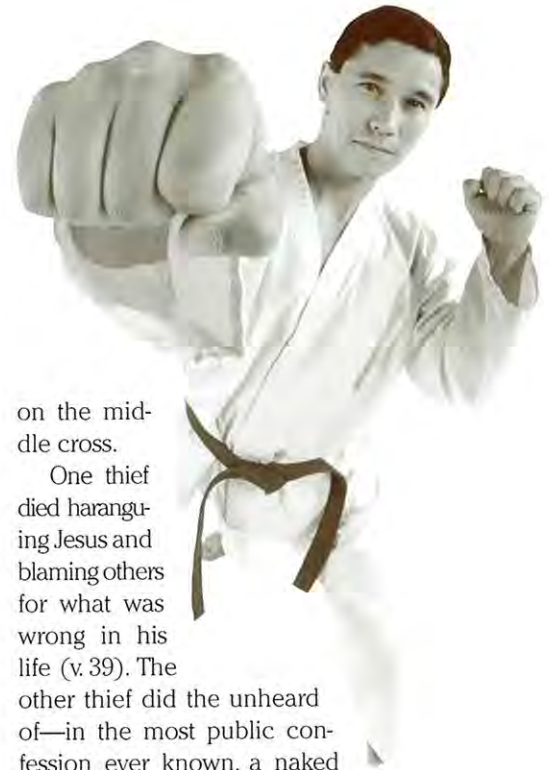
Take, for instance, the oft-married woman who was in no mood for conversation with a strange man and sassed him when he asked for a drink of water (John 4). Little did she know that day when she started out on another boring trip for water that she would leave her water pot (v. 28) and take the well home.

That brief exchange beside the road forever altered her life and made her part of history. We don't know her name. We do know she was important enough for Jesus the Messiah to detour through Samaria in order to keep a divine appointment with her (v. 4).

The Stranger at the well was changing the world, and it didn't take Him long to make a new person out of the maligned, surly woman. When God speaks and we listen, the impossible becomes ordinary.

Or consider the most unlikely scenario of all. Two death-row inmates minutes away from a horrible end get into a dispute. Why would two men condemned by society clash in their final moments, you ask?

They were arguing about a third man who was dying alongside them (Luke 23:39–43). The two nameless men were convicted thieves. But for six hours on the most important day in human history, they played supporting roles in the ultimate drama while Jesus Christ died



on the middle cross.

One thief died haranguing Jesus and blaming others for what was wrong in his life (v. 39). The other thief did the unheard of—in the most public confession ever known, a naked and dying man asked the Son of God to remember him when the day was done (v. 42). Jesus' response to that most public of all confessions shattered 4,000 years of bondage to sin (v. 43).

Jesus wrapped His heart around the dying man, made him a promise for the ages and leaped into eternity where He waited at the front gate of Paradise for the thief's arrival. What a conversion story!

We often meet the unexpected while doing the ordinary and the commonplace. Recardo met Mike the famous Christian musician in a dojo on a side street in Tennessee. A bitter, hopeless woman and a dying thief both met Jesus when and where they least expected it.

The new year arrives bursting with ordinary events that glitter with extraordinary possibilities. So keep your eyes open today, especially if you're sweating at the dojo. You may find yourself rubbing shoulders with majesty. ■

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