

March 2004

# Contact



## THE BOUNTY HUNTER

A hundred tanker trucks rolled out of Qui Nhon, Vietnam, destined for an ambush at Bridge 18

## Hunger Pangs

Fasting is about more than pushing away from the dinner table to get God's attention

## The "Free Lunch" That Costs a Fortune

What are the consequences of gambling in America?

Official Publication of the National Association of Free Will Baptists

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Keith Burden

## We're Here!

### Our family moved back to

Oklahoma when I assumed the pastorate of a church in Tulsa. Living in California three years left few opportunities to see my aging parents during that time. It came as no surprise when they called and announced plans for a weekend visit.

Since they lived in a small town and were unaccustomed to city traffic, I thought it might be a good idea to give them a little extra assistance. I sent a roadmap and carefully marked the recommended way with a yellow highlighter, including detailed written directions to our house.

Although there were a variety of routes they could have taken, I suggested the most direct. Many of the roads had four lanes and would take the least amount of travel time. I mailed their itinerary in advance, confident they would have no problem.

### Where Are They?

Their plans called for a Friday arrival. I expected them late morning or early afternoon in order to avoid rush-hour traffic. I grew increasingly concerned as the day wore on and they had not arrived. I paced through the house, occasionally glancing out the window hoping to see their Ford pickup turn down our street . . . but it didn't.

Suddenly, the telephone rang. "We're here!" came the excited response on the other end of the line. It was the unmistakable voice of my mom. "Where's here?" my wife asked. "In Tulsa at the Texaco service station," Mom said matter-of-factly.

After talking to the service station attendant, we pinpointed their location and discovered my parents were on the other side of town. Sensing they were lost and confused, we advised them to

stay there until we could drive over and escort them to our home. That proved to be a wise decision.

### Second Time Around

A few months later my parents made a return visit, but this time they came with friends whose children lived in Tulsa. The route they followed was longer and more time consuming; however, in the minds of Mom and Dad it was much simpler and less stressful. From that point on, they always traveled the longer road.

I learned something from that experience about discerning and following the will of God. Every decision we make isn't cut and dried. Sometimes we face choices that have multiple options.

### Good, Better or Best?

For instance, if there had only been one way from where my parents lived to my house, the choice would have been simple. But there were no less than four routes they could have taken. Was there a "best" way? In my opinion, yes . . . the shortest, most direct route was clearly superior.

That was not the perspective of my parents though. For them, driving farther was preferable to saving time and running the risk of getting lost. The most important thing for Mom and Dad was reaching their final destination safely—not taking the most direct route.

### End Result

Some decisions we make in life are black and white. It's simply a matter of choosing between right or wrong. Occasionally, however, we face situations that offer a variety of alternatives, any of which will lead to our objective. Is there a better or best way? Usually, there is. But reaching your objective is more important than how you achieve it.

Am I advocating the end justifies the means? No. I'm suggesting that viewing God's will from this perspective can take some anxiety out of the decision-making process. Rather than worrying about being in or out of God's will, I can focus my energy and efforts on carrying out His ultimate purpose in my life. I find that liberating.

The next time you find yourself facing a dilemma over which road to choose (physically or spiritually), make sure you identify your destination first. Then select the path best for you. After all, when you reach the journey's end you want to be able to say with a sense of deep satisfaction, "We're here!" ■



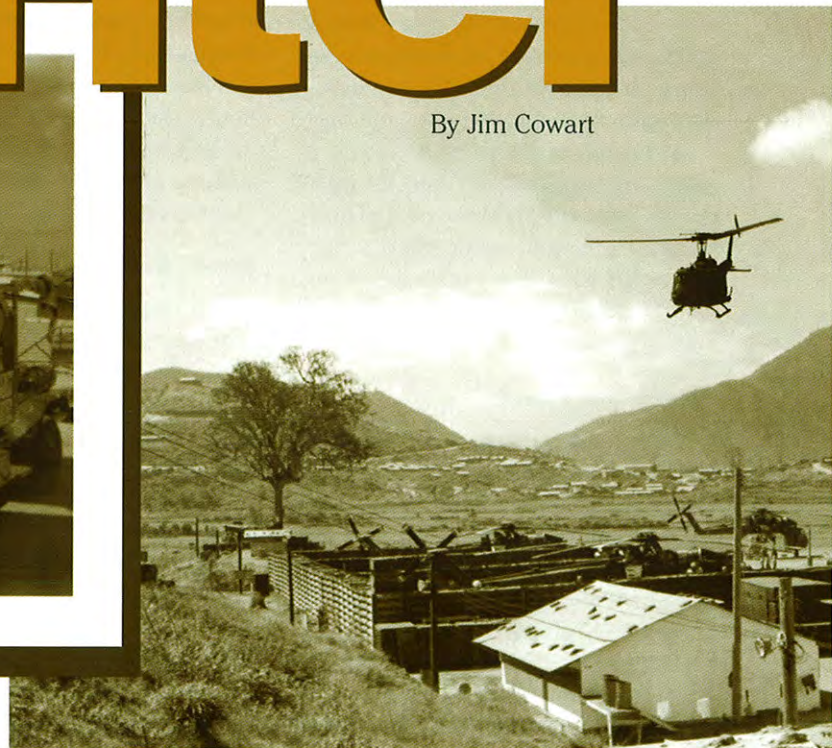
One hundred loaded tanker trucks and four gun trucks rolled out of Qui Nhon, Vietnam, to rendezvous with destiny at Bridge 18.

# The Bounty Hunter

By Jim Cowart



Jim Cowart (L) with turret gunner.



Vietnam began for me in July 1968 when 200 U.S. Army troops stepped off a chartered Braniff airliner into the heat and smell of Cam Ranh Bay. The hair on the back of my neck stood up as heavily-armed soldiers surrounded the plane, and we were ordered to form a line.

## Meeting “Charley”

After we were all accounted for, we stood around for hours at a processing center. Twenty of us were then loaded onto trucks, driven to the airfield perimeter and dropped off beside

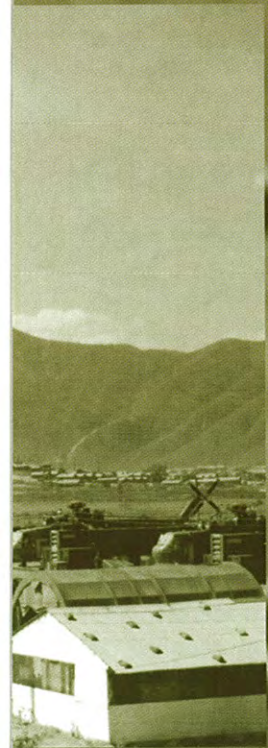
a small building. Nobody had a clue what was happening.

As darkness fell that night, "Charley" came out to play. We were sweaty, tired and getting angrier by the second until the first mortar round exploded. Our official welcome to Vietnam began with a bang. That moment started the process of turning teenage boys into hollow-eyed old men. I spent my first night in Vietnam in a ditch—scared, hungry and alone.

## Looking Back

Throughout that long night, I remembered a May Saturday afternoon when I called Reverend Carroll G. Alexander, pastor of a small Free Will Baptist church in Columbia, South Carolina. I met Brother Carroll when a deacon ministering to soldiers at a local rescue mission brought several of us GIs to Sunday morning service.

Weeks later I rendezvoused with Brother Carroll under an oak tree on Fort Jackson. We drove to the church where he shared the grand old story of our Savior's love, and my life changed forever. Now I lay



in a ditch, Specialist James F. Cowart, 19 years old, watching tracers zip over my head.

## The Bounty Hunter

Time, for a soldier in Vietnam, is a relative thing. Hot monsoon days drag on like eternity. You think you'll never leave, never see home again. Then, in an instant, the world explodes around you, and everything jumps to light speed as men cry out and die.

That's how it was the morning of February 22, 1969, when we left Qui Nhon for the base at Pleiku as part of a security force escorting a 100-truck convoy loaded with fuel and class-5 explosives.

Some months earlier I volunteered for duty on a gun truck, a lean and mean

the kill-zone, engage the enemy and draw fire away from the convoy.

As I drove into the kill-zone, two things happened simultaneously. First, the enemy began walking mortar rounds toward us on both sides of the road in order to bracket us with explosive shrapnel. A mortar shell hit on the right side of the road showering us with dirt and rocks. The next round would land in my seat, but for some reason it never came.

At the same time we were engulfed in machine gun fire. It sounded like a bad hail-storm. Both cannoneers went down severely wounded—one man hit five times, the other three. They survived.

I didn't realize the cannoneers had been hit because the quad kept firing,

the quad fed; I concentrated on keeping one side of the quad active.

## Smitty's Gun

I was opening more ammo cans when something struck the back of my head. I found myself looking up the bore of Sergeant Smith's single-mount .50 caliber gun. Until that moment, I had no idea a half-inch gun bore was so big.

"Smitty" was in a firefight with enemy soldiers advancing on us out of the jungle. He had fired his .50 until the barrel burned out and then dropped it instead of locking the gun in place. We had burned out that .50 before, so we knew what would happen if it wasn't locked down and unloaded. A .50 caliber that

Time, for a soldier in Vietnam, is a relative thing. Hot monsoon days drag on like eternity. You think you'll never leave, never see home again. Then, in an instant, the world explodes around you.

Army five-ton flatbed with a ring-mounted .50 caliber machine gun over the cab and a quad .50 gun turret on the back. We carried a five-man crew—a sergeant in charge, driver, turret gunner and two cannoneers to load the quad. We called her *The Bounty Hunter*.

## Kill-Zone

Half the trucks crossed Bridge 18. We were three-quarters back in the convoy talking about the "world." Then, in one of those eternal moments, the world exploded again.

The first thing I did as driver was raise the armored shield in front of the windshield. Sergeant Smith began calling out fire coordinates. The gunner dropped into his turret and turned his guns forward as the two cannoneers took their station.

I pulled out of the convoy and drove into the kill-zone, the area under enemy fire. Our job was to get to the center of

and I was busy clearing the tall grass around the gun truck with my M-16. My first job in a fire-fight was to make sure anyone near our truck died, thereby protecting us from a close-up attack. In the after-action, I discovered I had been successful.

## Men Down

The first indication something was wrong came when Sergeant Smith slapped my helmet and pointed toward the silent quad. The gunner was outside the turret loading one of the guns. When I saw both cannoneers writhing in pain, I dropped my M-16 and leaped over the support ribs into the truck's cargo area.

There was no time to tend the wounded. I yelled at the gunner to get back on the guns as I popped lids off 100-round ammo cans. The turret opened up again with only two guns because that was all I could feed. One man could not keep

reaches a temperature sufficient to burn out a barrel will cook off (fire) two to three rounds without pulling the trigger.

Each time Smitty's gun cooked off two rounds, it swung to the right. The muzzle blast from the last round fired hit me in the head. That left the gun pointing directly at me heating the next round to fire. I kicked the .50 toward the charging Viet Cong and went back to loading the quad.

## Fire-Fight Aftermath

The enemy broke off and vanished into the jungle. We continued firing a few seconds and then stopped. Taking advantage of the cease fire, I fully loaded the quad in case Charley hit us again. Medical personnel arrived to care for the cannoneers. I grabbed my M-16 and began searching the high grass around the truck in case any Viet Cong stayed behind to catch us with our guard down.

NAME <b>Cowart James</b>		SLOT NO <b>58</b>
GRADE	SERVICE NO	RACK NO
<b>Pvt E-1</b>	<b>RA 12 891 307</b>	<b>58</b>
UNIT		
<b>Co B 1st Bn 1st <sup>de</sup></b>		
WEAPON NOMENCLATURE & SERIAL NO		
<b>M-6 Baboet</b>		
See instructions and statement on reverse		
3AA Form	Prev ed	WEAPON CHARGE-OUT CARD
1 Apr 62	292 obsolete	



Other soldiers dragged a dead VC out of the grass 20 feet from *The Bounty Hunter*. As they pulled his body onto the road, his leg came off. He had been armed with an RPG (rocket-propelled grenade), a bazooka-looking weapon used to destroy tanks. I must have shot him after stopping in the kill-zone as I cleared the bushes around the truck. Hurray for teamwork.

Cobra gun ships (helicopters) arrived and swept the jungle with cannon and rocket fire. What seemed an eternity to us had been no more than 10 minutes. Those 10 minutes aged me beyond my years, and this was only one day in a year of combat.

### God's Mercy and Grace

How many times that day had the Lord spared not only my life but the soldiers around me? As the men with Paul in Acts 27:22-25 benefited from Paul's relationship with the Lord during the storm at sea, so had the men with me. I'm convinced that without the Lord's intervention we would have died at Bridge 18.

One reason I believe this is the precise manner in which the ambush occurred. We were guarding a convoy of fuel tankers filled with highly flammable aviation fuel, plus other trucks carrying explosives. Why didn't one of those trucks explode setting off a chain reaction killing most of the men?

I saw tracer rounds strike and ricochet off the tankers. The enemy almost never used tracer ammunition for fear of giving away their positions. They had to know what was in the tankers and trucks because of the effort they put forth.

I saw a bullet hole in one of the support ribs directly behind and above the driver's seat. That bullet should have taken off the back of my head, but it had been deflected by a thin piece of metal. The bullet had been fired from high and behind us. Obviously, they had a sniper in place to kill the truck driver making it a perfect target for the Viet Cong soldier hiding in the grass with the RPG.

After the military, the Lord sent me to Free Will Baptist Bible College where He gave me a beautiful wife and three children. While in Bible College, He called me into foreign missions service. My family and I served 22 years overall in Brazil. Until this day, 35 years after the battle at Bridge 18 on *The Bounty Hunter*, God continues to show me mercy and love without limit. ■

**About the Writer:** Jim Cowart is a graphic designer at Randall House Publications.

**Editor's Note:** This story first appeared in an abbreviated format in the Free Will Baptist Bible College *Bulletin* (January/February 1972 issue). Photos courtesy of Jim Cowart.

The U.S. Army awarded the Bronze Star with "V" (for valor) to Jim Cowart.

A citation from the army further describes his actions:

**"With complete disregard for his own safety, he openly exposed himself to enemy fire to perform the hazardous but essential task of loading the quad .50. He remained at this position throughout the remainder of the contact. The quad .50 is directly responsible for repulsing the enemy attack . . . . By loading the quad .50 while the weapons system was receiving numerous hits, Specialist Cowart showed extraordinary courage."**

Part one of a three-part series on gambling in America.

# The 'FREE LUNCH' that costs a FORTUNE

By Dave Nobles

Did you  
hear about  
the widow who lost all her  
deceased husband's  
insurance money  
playing Bingo?

She found herself with  
little means of support  
and had to depend on her  
children or relatives  
to exist.

She remained that way  
until her death a few years  
later.

Maybe you know  
that young soldier on leave  
from base.

With his first paycheck  
in his pocket,



he goes looking for a good time. It does not take long for a pair of dice, a deck of cards, a shell game or a fast-talking con man to leave him broke and confused. He still does not know how it happened, but he lost his entire paycheck in one night.

**“For every dollar gambling produces in taxes, it costs taxpayers at least three dollars.”**

Perhaps you heard about the husband at rope's end concerning his wife's gambling. He makes good money, but their mortgage is behind. The other day he came home to a dark house—the electricity had been cut off because of nonpayment. Every week he brings his check home to his wife to pay bills. She gambles it away.

You might be acquainted with the guy down the street who has lost his business and filed bankruptcy. Because he refused to quit gambling, his wife and family moved out. The house is being sold at auction, and he has disappeared. Some say he is living on the street—homeless.

**The Silent Church**

These are extremes, you say, and should not be used as examples of the destructiveness of gambling. I wish that were true. No, not everyone who gambles becomes homeless, but the number who lose everything dear is far greater than most of us want to admit.

The church as a whole is silent on the matter of gambling. We seem to have done with it what we do with so many other things in today's society. We look the other way in an effort not to seem unloving and harsh. What with the lottery, the increase of casinos and slot machines, the rise in pari-mutuel betting and the onset of Internet, gambling has become an intricate part of daily life. From service stations to convenience stores to supermarkets, gambling is as common as fast-food restaurants. It is almost as though we resigned ourselves to the fact that it is here to stay, so why fight it?

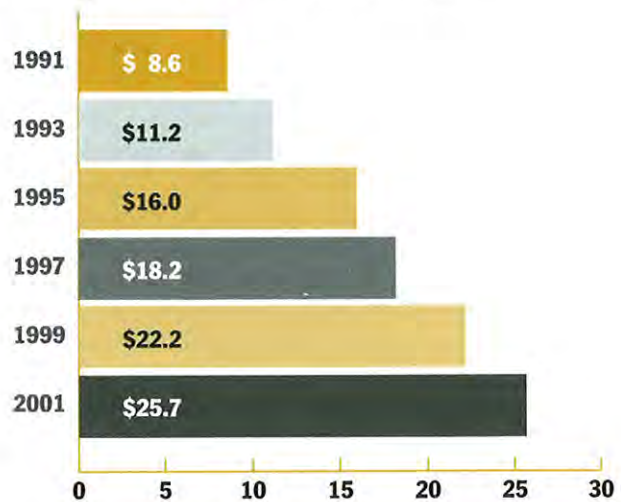
And what about the church? Let me put it this way. I would not be surprised if some church advertised a "Week of Spiritual Growth in Fun-filled Las Vegas." Stranger things have happened.

We do not need to be unloving and harsh, but we must stand against that which is displeasing to God. We cannot sit in the grandstands in this fight. There are no spectators in war, and this is war. Satan is out to win any way he can. His goal is to destroy as many lives as he can and send them to Hell. One of his most effective tools is gambling. Make no mistake—gambling is not just fun entertainment. It is sin—cold, hard, black, damning sin!

**Widespread and Convenient**

How bad is it? Consider these statistics from Dr. Richard Land that may surprise you (I am using statistics that Dr. Land gathered because they are up-to-date):

1. Casinos presently operate in 30 states nationwide, including 11 territories with commercial casinos and 23 with Native American gaming facilities.
2. According to a study by Harrah's Entertainment, 53.2 million Americans (27 percent of the U. S. population over age 21) visited a casino last year, averaging a trip every two months or 5.7 times a year.
3. In a survey released in June 2003, Barna Research found that, among the adult population, 17 percent bought a lottery ticket in a typical week. That is 37 million people. Twelve percent (26 million) said they placed a bet or gambled on something besides a lottery during a typical week.
4. Annual spending at casinos (in billions):



5. John Kindt, professor of commerce and law at the University of Illinois, says gambling should be recriminalized because it is a "catalyst for economic downturn." According to Kindt, a ban on gambling would free up dollars for consumer spending that would boost [the] economy. Kindt says for every one dollar gambling produces in taxes, it costs taxpayers at least three dollars.
6. Northside Lexington stores reported a 17 percent drop in grocery sales when the lottery started in Kentucky. In Chelsea, one of the poorest cities in Massachusetts, per person betting was as high as \$455 per year. Georgia residents living in zip code zones where annual per capita income is less than \$20,000 spend two and a half times more on lottery tickets than residents of zip code zones with an annual per capita income of more than \$40,000.

**Human Face of Gambling**

Statistics tell a story we do not want to hear. This is only the beginning. Time and space do not permit a full bank of statistics to prove the point. Besides, statistics are cold and hard and do not mean as much to us as they probably should.

The real story is when statistics are wrapped in flesh and blood and become the people we love. Here's one man's story.



**After I recently bought my 20-year-old son a car, he asked, “Dad, what kind of car did your father buy you?”**

**I had not thought about it for 30 years, but I replied, “My dad didn’t buy me a car, Son. He stole my car.**

**“My dad was a gambling addict, and he needed to pay loan sharks threatening his well-being. In desperation, he took my \$800 car, forged my registration and sold it.**

**“For a year, I took a city bus to college until I could earn enough money to buy another car.”<sup>2</sup>**

He goes on to tell the sad story of his dad’s addiction and how it destroyed his dad, his family and much of his young life.

When it is your dad or your mom, your husband, your son or your daughter, the matter takes on a different light. It is no longer a statistic; it is your life. It affects you, your family and your children.

Gambling affects all of us whether it is present in our immediate family or not. Gambling affects our nation and our world economically, morally and, most of all, spiritually. The spiritual fiber of America is being ripped apart by the mentality and value system behind gambling.

### **No Free Lunch**

Gambling is only a symptom of the problem. It is the cough and stuffy nose that says we have a cold. It is the fever that says we have an infection. It is the pain in some part of our body that says something is wrong—very wrong.

The value system of our society says, “Get all you can as easily as you can with little or no regard to what it costs or whom it hurts.” Gambling fits right in.

Thirty or 40 years ago, that would not have been the case. People believed in hard work and honest labor. They knew

you did not get something for nothing. “There’s no free lunch,” people would say.

I remember a television program from the 1950s called “The Millionaire.” A fabulously wealthy man would give a million dollars to a total stranger, tax-free, just to see how he would react. It was great entertainment. Everyone knew that *no one* is going to give you a million dollars. Things like that do not happen.

Then came Ed McMahon and the big sweepstakes. With television came the idea that maybe you could get lucky and strike it rich. Gambling became more visible and more available. Not only did we have Las Vegas, but soon the East Coast had Atlantic City. Indian reservations began attracting tour buses full of people (many seniors) for gambling. States adopted the lottery. Ads on television and in newspapers showed instant millionaires. The Internet made gambling private, convenient and anonymous. People who choose to gamble can even use their credit card. *Maybe I’ll get lucky and be that instant millionaire, you say.*

There is just one problem. There really is “no free lunch.” Gambling is always a losing proposition. Think about it. If you go to a casino, everything is free or really cheap. Though I have never been (honest!), I am told you can get the best meals and the best drinks for low prices. Lodging is cheap. The entertainment is often free. Why? Because they make their money from the gambling. The rest is to keep you happy so you will gamble more. The casinos rake in *billions* of dollars a year. How? They win far more than the customers.

We as a church must not sit back and let it happen without raising our voices in protest. We must warn our congregations about the evil of gambling. Gambling is not the *innocent* pastime its proponents would have you think. Church, it is time to raise our voices *loudly* or face the chastisement of God for our silence! ■

### **Coming Next Month: What the Bible Says about Gambling**



**About the Writer:** Dr. Dave Nobles pastors Bethel Free Will Baptist Church in Woodbridge, Virginia. Dr. Nobles published *Whosoever Will* in 2002, a 132-page review of Arminianism and Calvinism. He has pastored 38 years.

<sup>1</sup>Land, Dr. Richard: *Gambling Fact Sheet—2003*, <http://www.christianity.com/forfaithandfamily>.

<sup>2</sup>D’Alessandro, David F: *The Ugly Side of Gambling*, AFA Journal (reprinted from Boston Globe), June 2003.



The Bible speaks  
**clearly**  
on one of  
**our culture's** most  
divisive  
subjects.

**My, how times have changed!**

Mainline denominations are ordaining homosexuals, the media relentlessly pushes the gay agenda, and public schools are introducing homosexually-friendly texts to the same classrooms that jettisoned Bibles a generation ago. Once Christians were viewed as healthy, and homosexuals were considered immoral. Now Christianity is viewed as dysfunctional, and homosexuality is fashionable.

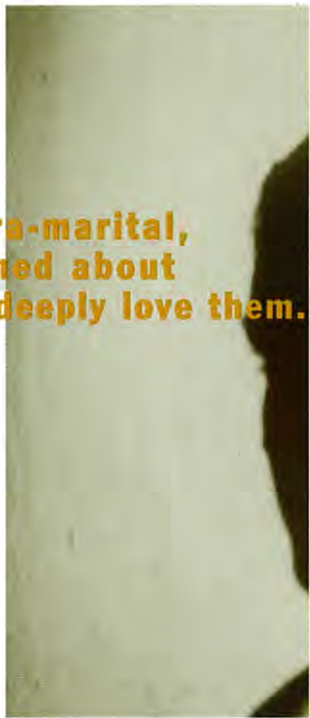
Case in point: Don Pritchett, a Christian software developer in Washington, was recently denied as a mentor in "Big Brothers" because of his biblical standards. They didn't want him "Christianizing" young people. Yet "Big Brothers" now welcomes homosexuals as participants in its mentoring program for boys.

This is perhaps the most definitive moral issue of our times, and it's important to know what the Bible

# GOD'S 7 WORDS ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY

By Rob Morgan

**While we make no apology for opposing pre-marital, extra-marital, post-marital and gay-oriented sex, we are vitally concerned about the well-being of those who engage in these activities. We deeply love them.**



says. What are God's thoughts on this? And are we willing to uphold His values?

Genesis 1 and 2 are foundational for understanding the Bible's views on human sexuality. Here God created a pattern of one man/one woman coming together in a covenant-marriage. From the beginning God ordained that the human race be procreated by men and women in loving, marriage relationships.

Sexual activity outside marriage is consistently viewed as unholy in the scriptures. It isn't just homosexuality the Bible condemns. Ephesians 5:3 says there should not even be a hint of sexual immorality among us. But when we narrow the subject to homosexuality, we find exactly seven passages in the Bible on this topic.

## What God Says

### **Genesis 19:1-11**

This is the ageless story of Sodom. God's two angelic emissaries, appearing, it seems, as healthy young men, entered the city to rescue Lot from impending judgment. When the men of Sodom encircled Lot's house making homosexual advances, the angels struck them with blindness. Shortly afterward, there fell the judgment of a holy God.

### **Leviticus 18:22**

*Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.*

### **Leviticus 20:13**

*If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.*

The Levitical laws were given as Israel grew into a nation under a form of government called *theocracy*—a society in which the government was headed by Jehovah and administered through a judge or king appointed by Him. Since these were national laws for Israel, we shouldn't interpret them as if all the details are required of us today. We don't stone those who pick up sticks on the Sabbath, for example.

But the moral underpinnings of these laws flow from the righteous character of God, and the principles of sexual morality found here are based on timeless ethical principles corresponding to His holy nature.

### **Judges 19:22-30**

This shocking story resembles that of Sodom. A Levite took a live-in woman, a concubine. That was legal in those days but unacceptable in God's eyes. While traveling in Judah, they came to the village of Gibeah where an old man put them up for the night. The men of the city encircled the house, wanting

to sodomize the young priest. As a result, this city, too, faced judgment, not from fire and brimstone this time, but from the disciplining sword of Israel.

### **Romans 1:18-32**

This passage spells out the five downward steps of societal decay. The first is a rejection of creationism (vv. 18-20). That leads to widespread idolatry (vv. 21-23), followed by unbridled sexuality immorality (vv. 24-25). This gradually deteriorates into the "homosexualization" of the culture (vv. 26-27).

The final stage is total moral collapse as the society becomes filled with every kind of wickedness, greed and depravity (vv. 28-32). This is the Bible's description of a nation that descends step-by-step into moral and spiritual ruin, and it's frightening to chart America's place on the list.

### **I Corinthians 6:9-11**

*Be not deceived: neither fornicators (the sexually immoral), nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate (male prostitutes), nor abusers of themselves with mankind (homosexual offenders) . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

### **I Timothy 1:9-11**

*The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient . . . for them that defile themselves with mankind (sodomites) . . . and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.*

## What We Conclude

These are our Lord's seven words on the subject. So what conclusions can we draw?

### **Bible Is Clear**

It seems clear to me that the Bible consistently condemns interpersonal sexual activity outside marriage. The foundational passage in Genesis 1-2 provides a starting place for understanding this.

### **Temptation Not Sin**

It's important to remember, however, that temptation is not sin. In each of these passages, the emphasis is on homosexual activities. It's possible for men and women to feel both homosexual and heterosexual temptations in a confused, sex-satu-



**The cultural elitists in our society will be vicious in attempting to intimate, marginalize and silence us. But the authority of scripture, not political correctness, governs our thinking. Jesus said that if they hated Him, they will hate us too.**

rated culture like ours, yet resist them. We must avoid temptation whenever possible and we must carefully guard our thought-life, but we also know that temptation isn't sin till we give into it.

#### **Genes No Excuse**

Many Christians believe that homosexual tendencies are produced solely by one's environment, but some also believe we may have been genetically damaged by the course of sin in human history. Yet this is no excuse for sinning.

Psychologists Minirth, Meier and Wichern put it this way in their *Introduction to Psychology and Counseling*: "Genes can predispose one individual to getting drunk more readily than someone else, but those genes do not magically get that person to drink alcohol. Genes may give some males fewer androgens than others, but genes do not force anyone to engage in homosexual behavior."

#### **Deliverance Available**

God can free anyone struggling with the temptation and sin of homosexuality. As we saw earlier, some in the Corinthian Church had been involved in homosexuality. But they had been washed, they had been justified, they had been sanctified. The gospel of Christ has enough power to change any soul and to rescue from every sin.

#### **Takes a Community**

Breaking free from homosexuality requires the power of the blood of Christ, the Word of God and the indwelling Spirit. It often requires counseling with wise Christians with a biblical approach to psychology. It involves the support of one's Christian friends and church. But the gospel is powerful enough to pull down strongholds. As Wesley said: "He breaks the power of cancelled sin and sets the prisoner free."

#### **Love People**

We must also remember that our primary job as Christians is to love people whatever their behavior. When we think of what happened to the gay Wyoming student who was tied to a

fencepost and pistol-whipped to death in Texas, it makes our blood boil. While we make no apology for opposing pre-marital, extra-marital, post-marital and gay-oriented sex, we are vitally concerned about the well-being of those who engage in these activities. We deeply love them.

#### **Expect Opposition**

Nevertheless, Christians are going to be persecuted over this issue and increasingly accused of "hate-crimes" against homosexuals. The cultural elitists in our society will be vicious in attempting to intimate, marginalize and silence us. But the authority of scripture, not political correctness, governs our thinking. Jesus said that if they hated Him, they will hate us too.

#### **Everyone Vulnerable**

Here's a final conclusion: We are all sinners. Each of us is capable of any sin, given the right circumstances. Our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. We have fallen short of His glory. Yet Jesus loves us.

Whatever our sins, whatever our past, whatever we've done, He died to redeem us. We are saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is a gift of God; not of works, lest any one should boast. As we work with those struggling with this issue, we do so as redeemed sinners seeking to help other sinners.

I suggest we adopt a different tone on this issue than what the world expects. Let's be both logical and loving. Both courageous and caring. Both truthful and tender-hearted. Let's be bold in our beliefs and broken-hearted in our attitudes. Let's make sure our people understand the Bible's teaching on this subject. Let's proclaim the truth and love the tempted. Then let's open our doors for a coming flood of redeemed sinners of every sort—men and women who have been washed, who have been sanctified, who have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the power of our gospel. ■



**About the Writer:** Reverend Robert J. Morgan pastors the 1,000-member Donelson Free Will Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee, where he has served 24 years. Rob has written 13 books, including the annual *Preacher's Sourcebook* published by Thomas Nelson.

# GET a HANDLE on YOUR ANGER

By Ken Simpson



## Five quick tips to control anger.

**The world has gone mad! Uncontrolled expressions of anger and hatred are exploding in homes, in schools, on the interstate, in office buildings, at stadiums and coliseums and yes, even in the**

Lord's house. It's escalating into an epidemic in our society affecting the way we think, feel and act.

Now it's true that not all anger is sinful. There is a righteous anger modeled by Christ as He cleared the moneychangers from the temple. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:26, "Be ye angry, and sin not." However, the problem comes when we fail to control or manage our temper.

Uncontrolled anger leads to wrath then to malice, all of which we are to put off (Colossians 3:8). It simmers while being suppressed deep within, but eventually rises with an explosive outburst. Raising its ugly head with a frown and clenched teeth, anger forces a mouth to open and moves the tongue to quickly shoot off words that can never be retrieved. Uncontrolled anger always makes the mouth work faster than the mind.

### **Anger Hurts Others**

So let's face it—angry people hurt people. Whether intentional or not, it's a fact. Angry words cut so deep that time may not heal. Many children have thrown tantrums that paralyzed the spirits of their parents. Angry spouses divorce and divide their families, leaving their children angry because they are caught in the middle.

Take for example, Christina, who wrote to me after I preached a youth camp she attended. "My parents are going through a divorce. I don't know what to do. Sometimes I feel it's all my fault and that maybe if I were never born, this would not be happening. It makes me really angry when they put me in the middle of things." Your temper affects more people than yourself, so watch it.

### **Anger Acts Foolishly**

Solomon said that angry people speak and act foolishly. "He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated" (Proverbs 14:17). Have you ever noticed that angry people have few friends? It might be because "An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression" (Proverbs 29:22).

Another possibility may come from this old proverb that says, "The emptier the pot, the quicker the boil." The Bible declares in Proverbs 22:24-25, "Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: lest thou learn his ways and get a snare to thy soul."

It's been said, "The best way to get rid of a hothead is to give him a cold shoulder." Well, the bottom line is, anger is not attractive so watch getting bent out of shape so easily.

### **Five Anger Tips**

Here are five practical tips to get a grip on anger:

#### **Call Time Out and Pray**

Take a walk and think about a proper response. Read and memorize scriptures that speak to anger. This takes extreme discipline. Ask yourself some practical questions—"Is it worth the battle?" "Was I wrong?" "What difference is this going to make in my life three days from now?" Some battles aren't worth fighting; others that were fought may deserve an apology.

#### **Accept the Inevitable**

Accept things you can't change and don't fret about them. I will never forget the first funeral I preached. It was my rookie year as pastor. Within my first month, one of our charter members passed away, a frail 92-year-old lady who loved the Lord. The visitation and the service were both scheduled the same morning at the church.

The funeral director was the first to arrive and quickly brought the body into the sanctuary before the family visitation. When he opened the casket, he yelled, "Oh my!" I quickly asked from the rear of the auditorium, "Is there a problem?" "Yes," he said, "We have the wrong body!"

You have heard that you will never be late for your funeral. I learned that's not always true. The funeral director was embarrassed by this situation but thankful that the grieving family accepted the situation and even found some humor in it. They accepted a situation they couldn't change. Remember, sometimes it's proper to just laugh and go on.

#### **Guard Your Thoughts**

Referee your thoughts and actions. When your anger begins to fly out of bounds, yell, "Foul!" Don't chase after those thoughts and actions that seem to bring revenge—they're just not worth it. Some things don't deserve a response. An escalating argument can reach a point of diminishing returns.

One of the worst times to respond to something is when you are angry. Cool off and count to 10. If you are really angry, count to 100, then don't speak. Remember, "A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards" (Proverbs 29:11). Pay attention to what is going on in your mind.

### **Maintain Self-Control**

If it were essential for our mental health to express all anger by shouting, screaming or punching something, then the Word of God would be mistaken in urging us to develop self-control. This doesn't mean you swallow anger and pretend everything is fine when it isn't. You must be disciplined enough to control your actions and reactions.

Proverbs 20:3 states, "It is honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling." Proverbs 15:1 says, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." Anger will put your Christian testimony and reputation on the line, so deal with it properly before it gets out of control.

### **Deal Promptly with Your Anger**

Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:26, "Be angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Timing is everything. The sooner you deal with your anger the healthier you will be. Don't nurse a grudge. Nothing justifies an attitude of bitterness. Suppressed anger has led many people to have headaches, high blood pressure, stomach disorders and other physical ailments. Anyone who angers you controls you.

Yes, the world has gone mad—easily angered, seeking revenge and retaliation. That is why Christ has called us to be salt and light. Christians must season the world. There is no place for chronic anger in

Anger forces a mouth to open and moves the tongue to quickly shoot off words that can never be retrieved.

the life of a healthy Christian. If you find yourself easily angered, seek help. Talk to a close friend, confide in your pastor or seek professional Christian counseling; do something. Chronic anger is unattractive, explosive and deadly. People who easily fly off the handle usually have a bad landing. ■



**About the Writer:** Reverend Ken Simpson pastors Beacon Free Will Baptist Church in Raytown, Missouri.

# A professional woman learns that fasting is more than she thought . . . after she tried it.

**I would never** name my child Jehoshaphat. Not only does the name sound horrible, but he would be the object of kids' jokes from the time he entered preschool. And can you imagine trying to teach a kindergartner to spell *Jehoshaphat*?

Now don't get me wrong; Jehoshaphat was an all right guy—four syllables and all. In fact, this odd-named fellow taught me a thing or two.

You see, I've been pondering the topic of fasting. I flipped through New Testament passages that deal with this subject and nothing hit the spot, really answered my questions. I was interested in fasting not because I wanted to write an article or increase my biblical knowledge, but because I was hurting.

## Last Resort

Maybe you know what I'm talking about. Here's the picture: Serious prayer requests gone "unanswered," life takes crazy, confusing turns, disappointment looms every day. And I had tried everything to fix it. Praying. Waiting. Wailing. Pleading. Plotting for a solution. Nothing changed. So, desperately scanning my mental checklist, I realized fasting should be my next attempt.

Since my experience with fasting consisted of the 30-Hour Famine from my youth group days, I decided to see what God said about it. I was serious. I was in an emotional and spiritual whirlwind, and I wanted to do everything I could to get God to understand that I was serious about needing His help.

## Old Resource

As the pages of the Old Testament turned, I happened across the story of Jehoshaphat in II Chronicles 20. Immediately I related. Jehoshaphat had followed the Lord's directions, but now found himself in a disturbing situation. The Ammonites and Moabites, whom the

Lord previously told him not to harm, were on their way to attack.

I'm sure he thought, "What's going on? This was *not* in my plans." So what did Jehoshaphat do? He decreed a nationwide fast and prayed to the Lord.

Jehoshaphat humbly, but confidently, reminded God and more importantly himself who God was and what God had promised. The last recorded sentence of that prayer jumped out at me: ". . . for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee" (v. 12).

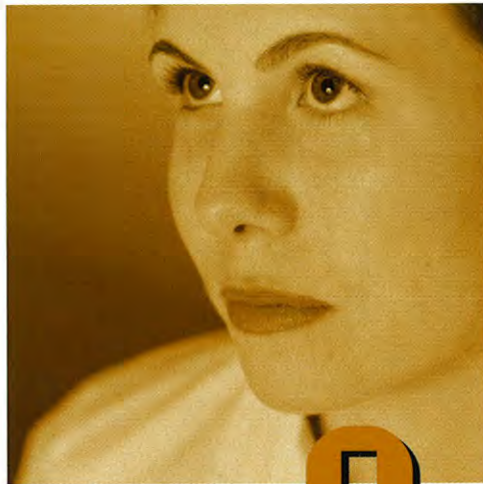
## New Perspective

Then it hit me. Fasting is about more than pushing away from the dinner table to get God's attention; it's about fasting from self. No faking it. No half-hearted business. No "look at me." Fasting is the physical action of a spiritual state. It's realizing my complete dependence upon God. Fasting allowed the time my stubborn self needed to concentrate and focus on the right perspective—God's perspective.

Jehoshaphat realized this battle was not his to scheme and solve, but it was God's battle. The Lord told Jehoshaphat, ". . . Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's" (v. 15). Sure, the circumstances were overwhelming, but God was really, truly in control. No cliché. Just the truth.

This wasn't just true in Jehoshaphat's case. Ezra displayed his dependence on God when he prompted his numerous companions to fast and pray before they





# Hunger Pangs

By Emily D. White

began their 900-mile trek back to Jerusalem. He understood that guidance and protection would only come from God.

Esther encouraged her extended family to fast before she went to the king. David fasted and prayed during one of the most heart-wrenching experiences of his life—the serious illness of his child. David wasn't fasting because of ritual or routine. He fasted because he knew the child's only hope for living was found in the Maker of Life.

And it's important to understand that my desires and your desires are not always granted because there is a bigger picture. Sometimes the Ammonites win. Sometimes the baby dies. But one thing never changes; God can be trusted because He is in control.

## A Date with God

The New Testament Pharisees were a lot like me. They thought “doing” something brought results. They missed the mark and starved themselves because they thought they could convince God to do what they wanted if they were religious enough. But they (and I) forgot about God and how much He loves relationships.

God, the Lover of my soul, wanted me to see that I needed to focus on Him. When that happens, the problems shrink and the relationship grows. Fasting is like a

date with God. It's me understanding (as much as I can) how amazing He is, and God reminded me how much He loves me . . . so much that He won't let me drown.

Jesus tried to get the Pharisees to understand that. He told them not to look like they lost their best friend when they fasted, but to go on as normal. He called them hypocrites, which makes sense. If you are fasting, surrendering yourself and focusing on God, then the reasons to pine away diminish.

Yes, fasting is serious business. But it's more than forfeiting the fork, evading entertainment or taking a break from the caffeine buzz for a few hours. I've learned from Jehoshaphat that I should also fast from my self-centered nature and learn to trust God when I'm hungry and when I'm not. ■



**About the Writer:** Emily White, editorial assistant at Randall House Publications, has published two books—*Hot Links* and *Within Reach*. She is a 2003 graduate of Free Will Baptist Bible College.

The average church is wide open to dangerous legal liabilities.

# YOUR CHURCH'S LEGAL RISKS

By Robert Hidde

Almost every pastor has been tempted to write this kind of letter at some point in his ministry. The letter, written by Jerrold Swinton, a United Methodist district superintendent, urged the Shell Rock Church

to "acknowledge they allowed the spirit of Satan to work in their midst, express some contrition and seek help."

A small group of members led by Jane Klienbenstein refused to accept a new minister and began a campaign of rumors against the pastor. The district superintendent's letter was sent to the church's mailing list (which included members and non-members who had requested to receive mail from the church).

In the letter, the superintendent wrote, "When will you stop the blaming, negative and unhappy persons among you from tearing down the spirit of Jesus Christ," and added, "You know whether a person has the spirit of Jesus or Satan by their fruits." He also announced a congregational meeting to deal with the problems and the people causing them.

The Klienbensteins sued Swinton and the conference for defamation. The county district court ruled in favor of the church. The Klienbensteins appealed to the Iowa Supreme Court and prevailed. The Iowa

Conference has appealed to the United States Supreme Court.

## Rethink Liability

While this case may not be typical of the liabilities that concern a church, there are myriad sources of liability for congregations. These range from the traditional risks from accidents on church property, fire, vandalism and theft to allegations of sexual abuse by volunteers and the clergy. It should be obvious to us that churches need to rethink their way of doing things, as well as reevaluate the type of insurance coverage they have.

If we were to ask most people what the four most important documents in the church were, we would get several different answers. The Bible would probably rank first, with the *Treatise*, hymnals and Sunday School literature competing for the next three positions. While the Bible should always be the most important document in the local church, the second, third and fourth most important

documents in the church are its articles of incorporation and bylaws, written policies and procedures, and insurance policies.

## Articles of Incorporation

An unincorporated church may be legally recognized as a religious organization, but in most instances this recognition does not create the legal entity necessary to protect those who make up its membership and are responsible for decision making. Regardless of its size, every church should be incorporated in order to protect its officers and members from liability.

When a church, business or ministry incorporates, it becomes a separate entity that, among other things, can own property, incur debt, transact business, execute contracts, and sue and be sued. This separate entity is governed by its members and those to whom it grants specific authority through its bylaws.

This legal standing can help protect the assets of individual officers and mem-

bers in the event it defaults on financial obligations or in the wake of lawsuits resulting from accidents or allegations of misconduct. The limits to which individuals are protected depends to a large extent on the wording of the church's bylaws.

The church's bylaws establish the way the church is governed. They clearly define the distribution of authority for decision making, how finances are handled, and the method for the selection of officers and staff. The bylaws should also identify the limits of personal liability incurred by employees, unpaid staff and officers, volunteers and board members, as well as provide clear procedures for dealing

This manual does two things for the church. First, it lays out a systematic plan for handling all personnel (paid and unpaid) matters, and second, if properly written and followed, it can provide a means of defending against negligence and negligent staffing claims.

Areas that should be covered in the manual include a requirement that anyone handling church finances or working with children and youth undergo a thorough reference and background screening. In the case of individuals working with children and youth, it is imperative to check the registered sex offender listings in addition to the standard background check.

## Sources of liability for congregations range from the traditional risks from accidents on church property, fire, vandalism and theft to allegations of sexual abuse by volunteers and the clergy.

with disputes within the church (simply stating that "all disputes will be handled according to scripture" or citing a passage is not sufficient).

Unfortunately, the bylaws of most churches are the product of simpler times and usually fail to address important issues that can help protect the pastor, staff, unpaid workers and congregation from liability. Church bylaws should be carefully reviewed and thoughtfully revised with the assistance of an attorney.

### Written Policy Manual

The next document in importance for a church is a written policy manual outlining guidelines for staff and officers (paid and unpaid). This manual should include rules for working with children and youth, procedures for responding to complaints about staff, officers and volunteers, and limitations on church-sponsored events. Every staff member and officer should have a copy of the manual and be required to attend group orientation sessions to ensure their understanding of the policies.

State laws regarding background checks and the waivers required before performing them vary widely; it is recommended that the church obtain the services of a firm that specializes in performing these checks. One individual in the church should be assigned the task of handling all paid and unpaid personnel issues and screening, and receive training on the legal requirements for obtaining, safeguarding and using the information.

To further protect the church against liability from child abuse allegations, the guidelines for working with children should discuss issues such as limits on the workers' authority to discipline children, a rule that two adults (preferably not related) be present at all children's activities, as well as establishing an adult to child ratio for classes and activities.

The policy should also discourage the practice of a non-custodial adult being alone with a child for any reason. Other topics should include a requirement for written waivers from parents or guardians for trips and activities, as well as a list of activities not covered by the church's general liability insurance policy.

### Insurance Policies

This brings us to another set of documents that are important to the church, its general liability and property damage insurance policies. The church's designated representatives (usually the Trustees or General Board) should meet with the church's insurance agent annually to review their coverage.

In addition to ensuring that coverage is adequate to cover losses by fire or vandalism, this review should address other areas including hired and non-owned vehicle coverage, accidental medical coverage for volunteers, spe-

cial events coverage (including coverage for events taking place off church property), errors and omissions, and coverage for theft and embezzlement.

The Apostle Paul reminded us that we are in the world but not of the world. The unfortunate fact is that being in the world means the church in a post-modern world faces many legal concerns unheard of 50 years ago. For that reason, every church should protect itself before the need arises by investing in a legal review of its bylaws, obtaining legal assistance in formalizing procedures and policies relating to staff and volunteers, and minimizing risks through increasing and improving its insurance coverage. ■



**About the Writer:** Reverend Robert Hidde, a Free Will Baptist pastor in Tulsa, Oklahoma, serves as senior partner at Hidde and Associates, a consulting firm specializing in human resources issues.

## Oklahoma Adopts \$5 Million Budget



**MOORE, OK**—More than 600 people gathered October 13–16, 2003, on the Hillsdale FWB College campus for the

95<sup>th</sup> annual Oklahoma State Association. Clerk James Coffelt reported 607 registered attendees including 157 ministers, 49 lay delegates, 43 deacons, 10 missionaries and 349 visitors.

Moderator Jimmy Holbrook was elected to a second term. Delegates approved a \$5.1 million budget for state and national ministries. The Hillsdale College budget topped \$3.4 million. The \$560,000 Cooperative Plan funds will be allocated: State Executive Office (22%), State Mission Board (15%), Christian Education Board (6%), Hillsdale College (33%), national ministries (24%).

One of the state association highlights came Wednesday evening when 700 people assembled in the 40,000-square-foot *Bill J. and Alma Lou Barber Center* to dedicate the \$4.3 million brick structure. Free Will Baptist executive secretary Keith Burden and Hillsdale president Carl Cheshier addressed the worshippers.

## Convention Housing Update

Housing reservations for the 2004 Free Will Baptist national convention in Kansas City, Missouri, can be made beginning 8:00 a.m. CST on April 1. Hotels will not accept reservations in our housing block until that time. The April issue of *Contact* will contain convention housing information. That information will be available on the convention website ([www.nafwb.org/convention](http://www.nafwb.org/convention)) beginning March 15.

## New CD Honors Roy Thomas

**GOLDSBORO, NC**—Free Will Baptist song writer, author and retired pastor Reverend George C. Lee produced a CD in 2003 titled *What a Happy Day*. One of the 15 original songs by Reverend Lee on that CD is a tribute to the late Home Missions director, Dr. Roy Thomas, who died March 23, 2003, at age 72.

When Reverend Lee learned of Dr. Thomas' last words before his death, he wrote a song with that title, *I'm Not Afraid to Cross the River (For He Owns the Land on Both Sides)*. The song is also included in Lee's songbook, *I Love Shape Note Singing*.

### CHECK IT OUT!

Have you seen the 2004 National Convention webpage?  
Check it out! [www.nafwb.org/convention](http://www.nafwb.org/convention)

The association theme, "Apply Thine Heart," was developed in sermons by Clinton pastor Charles Murphy, Crossland pastor Wade Jernigan and Hillsdale administrator Timothy Eaton.

Delegates adopted three resolutions, two of which expressed appreciation for the state office staff and the Hillsdale College staff. The third resolution placed the association on record in support of the proposed Federal Marriage Amendment.

Some 161 attended the Tuesday morning Ministers' Conference which met at nearby Heartland FWB Church. Messages by Shelby Greeson (First FWB Church, Oklahoma City), Kenny Myers (Hillsdale staff) and Doug Little (Foreign Missions Department) welcomed hearers.

The Oklahoma Women Active for Christ conducted their annual business meeting Tuesday with President Jean Marie Rogers presiding. Guest speaker for the session was Debbie (Mrs. Keith) Burden.

President Carl Cheshier delivered a sermon during Monday evening's Master's Men session.

The 2004 state association will meet October 11-14 at Hillsdale FWB College.

## Attention All Clerks

Need a reporting form?

Download and print church/association letters from the National Association of Free Will Baptists' website. Go to [www.nafwb.org](http://www.nafwb.org) and click on "Reporting Forms."

Copies of the *What a Happy Day* CD may be ordered from George Lee for \$11. Send orders to:

**Reverend George C. Lee**  
**303 Veronica Avenue**  
**Goldsboro, NC 27534**  
**Email: [GLEE63@nc.rr.com](mailto:GLEE63@nc.rr.com)**  
**Phone: 919-734-7670**

Reverend Lee's book, *The Musings of a Man*, was reviewed in the September 2002 issue of *Contact*. The autobiographical volume contains 276 pages of anecdotes and observations from Lee's boyhood in rural Mississippi and his 50-year ministerial career as a Free Will Baptist church planter and pastor.

## Randall House Dedicates New Press

**NASHVILLE, TN**—Two hundred Leadership Conference attendees and Randall House staff gathered Tuesday, December 9 for a dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony marking the acquisition of a large press that will boost the denomination's publishing potential.

Randall House director and CEO Ron Hunter said the 1997 Heidelberg 74 Speedmaster allows the agency to bring in-house most of the \$400,000 out-sourced jobs they could not handle the past two years.

The festive occasion included lunch for everybody as well as bus transportation for Leadership Conference attendees who were meeting across town at the Millennium Maxwell House Hotel. The Randall House staff greeted their 140 guests and gave them guided tours of the facility preceding the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

CEO Ron Hunter said the press which sells new for over \$1 million was purchased at less than \$400,000. The arrangement became possible when the state of Minnesota discontinued their print shop and agreed to sell at the negotiated price.

After lunch and introductions of guests, including AmSouth banking officials who assisted in the financial arrangements, Mr. Hunter and members of the Sunday



**Board members and CEO Ron Hunter at ribbon-cutting. (Left to right) Jeff Crabtree, Edwin Hayes, Ron Hunter, Dennis Wiggs, Will Harmon, Nuel Brown, Michael Waddell, Danny Dwyer.**

School and Church Training Service Board led in the formal presentation and dedication of the press.

Mark Trotter, printing production manager, prayed the dedication prayer and then ran the press to demonstrate its potential.

The Heidelberg press replaces a Solona two-color press. Officials expect the new press to be paid for in five years.

Ron Hunter said, "It (the press) will be a key component in saving money and bringing more full color to our new

CLEAR Sunday School curriculum coming in September 2004. We want to be the denomination's printer, and with this move, there will be little we can't print for any national, state or church ministry."

As guests exited the event, they were handed a commemorative timeline titled "From Gutenberg to Heidelberg: Taking God's Word to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." The timeline detailed the impact of the printing press on the gospel since the 1400s.

## National Convention Announces College Intern Program

**ANTIOCH, TN**—The Free Will Baptist national convention will sponsor a learning opportunity this summer for Free Will Baptist college students. The unique intern program will offer a behind-the-scenes look at convention operations, logistics and organization, according to Dean Jones, convention manager.

The program allows up to eight students to work on staff during the annual July convention which meets in Kansas City, Missouri. Participants will work in one or more of eight areas:

registration, audio/visual production, technical set-up, stage management, exhibition, ushering, publications and safety/security operations.

Selected participants will receive pre-convention training and on-the-job experience, as well as room and board during their July 15–22 stay in Kansas City.

College students are encouraged to request more information by contacting Dean Jones, convention manager, via e-mail at dean@nafwb.org or calling 615-361-1221. ■

**Arkansas:** Deacon **Wendell Payne** received a plaque for 25 years of service at **Oak Grove FWB Church** in **Lake Village**. **Philip Payne** pastors.

A youth group from **Chapel Lane FWB Church** in **Searcy** traveled 15 hours to Mexico where they painted two churches, repaired fences and enjoyed the fellowship in worship. **David Copeland** pastors.

**California:** **Shafter FWB Church** in **Shafter** mothered a mission work in the Rosedale area of nearby Bakersfield, according to Pastor **Dean Long**. The new work (**Gospel Light FWB Church**) began last September with 31 people in the opening service. **Gary Long** leads the congregation.



**Pastor Cheatham baptizes Lori Mizell.**

**Colorado:** Pastor **Scott Cheatham** reports an attendance increase from 22 to 66 at **Mile High FWB Church** in **Northglenn**. Eight new families now worship with the church. Pastor Cheatham baptized three converts.

**Illinois:** **Waltonville FWB Church** in **Waltonville** baptized 14 converts, according to Pastor **Mike Newman**. Seventy people attended the baptismal service that took place in a borrowed baptistry at **Ina FWB Church**.

**Kentucky:** The grand opening of **Lighthouse FWB Church** in **Elsmere** featured a big dinner and fellowship and included the mayor. Pastor **Bobby Courtney** said the church also sponsored an appreciation dinner for the men who helped in the construction of the church, fellowship hall and Sunday School rooms. Guest speaker for the grand opening celebration was **Roland Luthy**. A harvest

party for youth included activities ranging from pumpkin carving to a Bible-oriented scavenger hunt.

**Missouri:** **Myrtle FWB Church** in **Myrtle** celebrated 100 years of service with 170 people attending. Missouri minister **Dale Skiles** served as master of ceremonies. Former Pastor **Ben Scott** preached a stirring message. Reverend Scott is one of 26 ministers who have pastored the congregation that began in 1903 with 15 charter members and was known as Mill Creek FWB Church. The name changed in 1970. **T. L. Taylor** donated land for the first building in 1907. A new rock building was constructed in 1943 at a cost of \$3,000. The church's first pastor was **T. J. Dunkin**.

**North Carolina:** Work continues on the flood-damaged **Davis FWB Church** in **Davis** months after Hurricane Isabel devastated the area, according to Pastor **Tom Dubose**. A lady from Raleigh read about the church's dilemma in the newspaper and purchased new carpet. She was not a member of the congregation.

Long-time North Carolina minister and pastor **Larue Davis** died at age 71. Brother Davis attended FWBCC and pastored five churches in North Carolina. He was also a former teacher at Faith Christian Academy in Goldsboro.

**Ohio:** Pastor **Richard Burns** reports five conversions, two rededications and three baptisms at **Hillsboro FWB Church** in **Hillsboro**.

**LaGrange FWB Church** in **Ironton** welcomed six new members. **Chad Pemberton** pastors.

Pastor **Robert Holbrook** has spent time in the creek and the lake baptizing six converts. He leads **Lucasville FWB Church** in **Madison**.

Five conversions and six baptisms at **Bloom FWB Church** in **S. Webster** have Pastor **Roger Lavender** smiling. Church youth ministries conducted a VBS with 123 attendees and 40 adult helpers.

**Oklahoma:** The state Christian Education Board reports 1,393 juniors and teens in youth camps last year. Promotional secretary **Darryn McGee** did not give specific numbers but did cite "numerous salvation decisions, rededications and calls into the ministry."

**University FWB Church** in **Durant** marked 50 years of service to the community, and celebrated by dedicating a fellowship hall and classrooms. Pastor **Raymond Coats**, the church's first full-time minister, preached the message. The church organized with 14 charter members in 1953.

Pastor **Mike Wade** reports four baptisms and four new members at **Calvary FWB Church** in **Norman**.

Members of **First FWB Church** in **Sulphur** dedicated their new 8,000-square-foot sanctuary in a two-hour special event, according to Pastor **Brad Ransom**. Mayor **Ducky Day**, a member of the church, was on hand as Pastor Ransom baptized six converts on dedication Sunday. The mayor spoke about the church's history. The Oklahoma Legislature declared that Sunday "First Free Will Baptist Day." Governor **Brad Henry** sent a certificate in recognition of the church's 82 years of service. Some 365 people viewed a 14-minute video detailing the new structure.

Seventeen charter members met in a rented garage in November 1933 and began **First FWB Church** in **Wewoka**. Seventy years later, the church has logged three building programs. **Arlie Atchley** pastors.

Pastor **Homer Young** of **First FWB Church** in **El Reno** celebrated 50 years in the ministry. Members from the nine churches he pastored were on hand to salute Brother Young. In addition to pastoral duties, Homer has served as Oklahoma's executive secretary, a church organizer and sings in the Minister's Quartet. ■

# BASF and Free Will Baptist Foundation

By David Brown, Associate Director

**The BASF company airs television commercials about different products. Their tag line at the end of the ads says, "We don't make a lot of the products you buy. We make a lot of the products you buy better." For instance, they say, *We don't make the carpet; we make it softer. We don't make the paint; we make it brighter.***

They describe themselves as the world's leading chemical company. They are a manufacturer of chemicals, plastics, colorants and pigments, dispersions, automotive and industrial coatings, agricultural products, fine chemicals, crude oil and natural gas.

Companies that market a solvent might buy some of the chemicals they need from BASF to make their product. A car manufacturer may need to coat their steel panels with an anti-corrosive compound they get from them. BASF produces raw materials that many companies use to produce a product. They are only indirectly involved in manufacturing.

Free Will Baptist Foundation's ministry is similar to the way BASF operates. We are not directly involved in sending missionaries to foreign fields. We do not directly send home missionaries to cities and states in America. We do not directly educate students on the college level. We do not produce Sunday School materials. We are not directly involved in helping our women's or men's ministries fulfill their mission.

However, by helping manage existing funds for these ministries and helping them discover future funds through planned gifts and endowments, we are making their ministries better for the future.

Most ministries require at least three raw materials to be successful. They need the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit which comes through prayer. They need willing individuals to help the

ministry fulfill its goal. They need money to fund the ministry and pay the employees. This third raw material is where the Foundation finds its purpose.

All ministries can and do raise funds for current needs. At the same time, they may need help raising funds for future needs. Endowment funds need to be procured and managed. Planned gifts that provide a benefit for the donor today and produce future funds for the ministry tomorrow must be discovered and managed. Many ministries also need help managing their day-to-day excess funds that will be used for future projects.

Free Will Baptist Foundation helps provide ministries with one of the raw materials needed to do their mission—money. It is through helping provide this raw material that the Foundation helps other ministries operate better. We come alongside and help Free Will Baptist ministries do what God has called them to do.

We are all called to individually do our part in reaching the world for Christ. However, in order to better concentrate our efforts, we have sub-divided different aspects of the Great Commission to various Free Will Baptist ministries. They each do a portion of fulfilling the Great Commission. The ministry of the Foundation is not directly involved in any of these ministries, but our ministry makes theirs better. You can learn more about Free Will Baptist Foundation by visiting our website [www.fwbgifts.com](http://www.fwbgifts.com). ■



**THE  
FREE WILL  
BAPTIST  
FOUNDATION**

**Free Will Baptist Ministry Focus**

• **Ministries require 3 raw materials to be successful.**

**1 The power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.**

**2 Willing individuals to help the ministry fulfill its goal.**

**3 Money to fund the ministry and pay the employees.**

# In Search of John Colby's Grave

By David Crowe, Director of Church Growth and Evangelism

**Four years ago I began a quest to locate the grave of John Colby, one of the greatest evangelists to walk on American soil . . . and he was a Free Will Baptist! Colby made such an impact on New England in eight short years that six publishers**

printed the *Life of Colby* taken from his journals. The first was printed in 1815 (two years before his death) and the sixth in 1854 by the Freewill Baptist Printing Establishment at Dover, New Hampshire.

The book tells that Colby died in Norfolk, Virginia, on his way to Charleston, South Carolina. He had been instructed by his doctor to travel south for health reasons, and had met William Fauquier on the ship to Norfolk. Mr. Fauquier was a Baptist deacon and invited Colby to stay at his house until his health improved and he could continue his travels.

The Baptist church that Mr. Fauquier attended was without a pastor, so Colby preached there three times before his death at Deacon Fauquier's home November 28, 1817. Colby had requested that Deacon Fauquier gain permission to bury him next to the church in the yard. After some persuasion, this was granted.

This is all the information provided by the book regarding John Colby's death and burial. The name of the Baptist church was not given, nor the location of the church in Norfolk. This began my search.

I began to pull records from different sources to find more information that might lead to Colby's grave. Everything gave the same information found in the book, *Life of Colby*. I asked Free Will Baptist historians; none of them had any new information. Dr. Alton Loveless did mention an Episcopal church cemetery. After two years of searching, I began to narrow the possibilities.

I discovered that in 1817 there were two Baptist churches in Norfolk, Virginia. (Both were Calvinistic). I then began to trace the history of those two churches. One had been originally founded as an Episcopal church in the mid-1700s. The church saw a decline in membership until the

early 1800s when the Episcopal congregation moved out and a Baptist congregation occupied the building. The Baptists occupied the building from 1805 until about 1830. Colby's death happened in that time frame.

Three years into the search I noticed a link for *Names on Tombstones in Cemetery of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Norfolk, Virginia*. The link connected me to a site hosted by the church that lists the names and date of death for every person in the church cemetery. As I began to scroll down, there it was! *Rev. John Colby died, November 28, 1817, aged 30 years.*

Let me show you how God does things. I was flying into Norfolk just two weeks from the day I discovered the location of John Colby's grave. While I was in Virginia, Dr. J.D. Norris took me to St. Paul's Episcopal Church in downtown Norfolk. We stood at John Colby's grave, and I was allowed the privilege of praying as I have at the graves of other great Free Will Baptist men and women.

I thanked God for men the caliber of John Colby and for preserving his life and ministry for the encouragement of Free Will Baptists. Then I asked God to give us more young men like John Colby.

I hope you have already read *Life of Colby* and that it challenged you like it did me. My life will never be the same after reading about a Free Will Baptist like John Colby. This is the purpose of the *Free Will Baptist Heritage Series*. Home Missions wants to place in every Free Will Baptist home these wonderful old publications that tell of our grand heritage.

For more information on this series, please contact the Home Missions Department at P.O. Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011-5002. ■



HOME  
MISSIONS

- The purpose of the *Free Will Baptist Heritage Series* is to place books such as the *Life of Colby* in every Free Will Baptist home.

Free Will Baptist Ministry Focus



# Are We Losing Our Future?

By Bert Tippett, Public Relations Director

**If Dr. Steve Henderson is right, Free Will Baptists are losing some 1,000 college-age young people every year. Not to Independent Baptists or Pentecostals. They are dropping out of church altogether.**

Last August, during faculty in-service, we had a series of sessions with Steve, who is founder and president of Christian Consulting, based in Fayetteville, Arkansas. He is not a novice to colleges. He has worked at Portland Bible College, Pittsburg State and the University of Arkansas. He was vice president of Noel-Levitz, a recognized name in student recruiting.

He gave us a lot of advice on how to recruit and retain students. But one part of his presentation hit home with me and has kept me disturbed for the past several months. Dr. Henderson has worked in both Christian and non-Christian institutions, but makes no bones about his preference for Christian colleges and universities. He backs that up with long-term research that reveals alarming evidence of what happens to good, solid Christian young people who attend non-Christian schools.

He says that when Christian young people attend non-Christian schools:

- **There is a general decline in their religious values, attitudes and behaviors.**
- **They will tend to reflect the values of the faculty where they attend.**
- **Changes in their religious values that occur in college persist into the adult years.**

But one result hit me hard; harder than any of the others. Dr. Henderson's studies show that, after college graduation:

- **52% of all born-again students who attend non-Christian colleges no longer identify themselves as born-again and/or have not been to any religious services in the past year!**

At that point in his presentation, FWBBC President Matt Pinson raised his hand to make sure he understood. "Our surveys show that this fall about 2,500 Free Will Baptist high school seniors will be going to college somewhere. How does that translate into what will happen to them?"

"How many will be going to a Christian college, any Christian college?" Dr. Henderson asked.

"About 300, according to our research."

"That means that of the 2,200 that remain, about 1,100 will essentially leave the church."

I was stunned! Eleven hundred Free Will Baptist young people. Four years from now, they will have forsaken all they have been taught. I pictured our college auditorium. We could fill it—twice—with that many! And the same thing will happen next fall. And the next.

Enrolling at a Christian college does not guarantee spiritual endurance; we know that. But the odds of success are greatly improved.

But what can we do about those who choose to attend a state university or other secular institution? Dr. Henderson had some concrete suggestions:

- **Going to a Christian college for your first year will improve your odds of surviving if you transfer to a secular one.**
- **Get in a church and stay involved.**
- **Keep up your devotional life.**
- **Surround yourself with Christian friends.**
- **Connect with any Christian teachers you can find.**

He also recommends the book *How to Stay Christian in College*, by J. Budziszewski.

Dr. Henderson also recommends that when children enroll at a non-Christian school, their parents should:

- **Keep involved with their children.**
- **Ask them about their spiritual activities; don't get snowed by rhetoric.**

Don't relax and get complacent.

- **Pray for them!**

Our youth are our future. You can help to direct some high school young person to a good Free Will Baptist college. Use your influence on your children and grandchildren. It isn't just the denomination's future that is at stake. It is theirs. ■



Free Will Baptist  
Bible College

Free Will Baptist Ministry Focus



Garnett Reid

## “Thy Kingdom Come” The Bible’s Story-Line, Part II

**In our day of spin and 30-second** sound bytes, we need to *study* God and His masterwork of redemption closely, reflectively, in detail. Each part must engage our thought as it fits into the whole of His eternal purpose. All the while, though, we must do so on our knees with due reverence, confessing that we are unworthy of gazing on such pure light. For now, the truth is that we actually see “through a glass darkly.”

Yet we *do* see. God has revealed to us enough of Himself and His great work that we are accountable for our

response to truth. In this month’s study, we consider the first two lines in the opening stanza of the Bible’s story-line introduced in February.

**“God is establishing His kingdom rule over all that He has created.”**

The Bible is all about God’s work of kingdom-building. This concept of God’s “kingdom” is a way of communicating to us the fullest expression of God’s glory and sovereignty. In His kingdom, the Lord receives unrivaled worship from His redeemed creation. He is the great

King, the central being of the universe. All of scripture, beginning with the Old Testament, testifies to His majesty.

Jesus comes preaching the kingdom of God (Mk. 1:14–15), both a present (Lk. 17:21) and a future reality (Lk. 22:16). Paul also affirms this “now/not yet” dynamic of the kingdom (Col. 1:13; II Tim. 4:1).

Moreover, kingdom and creation are companion themes. Genesis 1:26–28 uses kingdom language to describe man’s delegated role of “ruling” and “subduing” the earth under God’s dominion. Just as the scope of His creation embraces “all things” (Col. 1:16), so, too, His eventual rule will extend to every thing (Phil. 2:9–11).

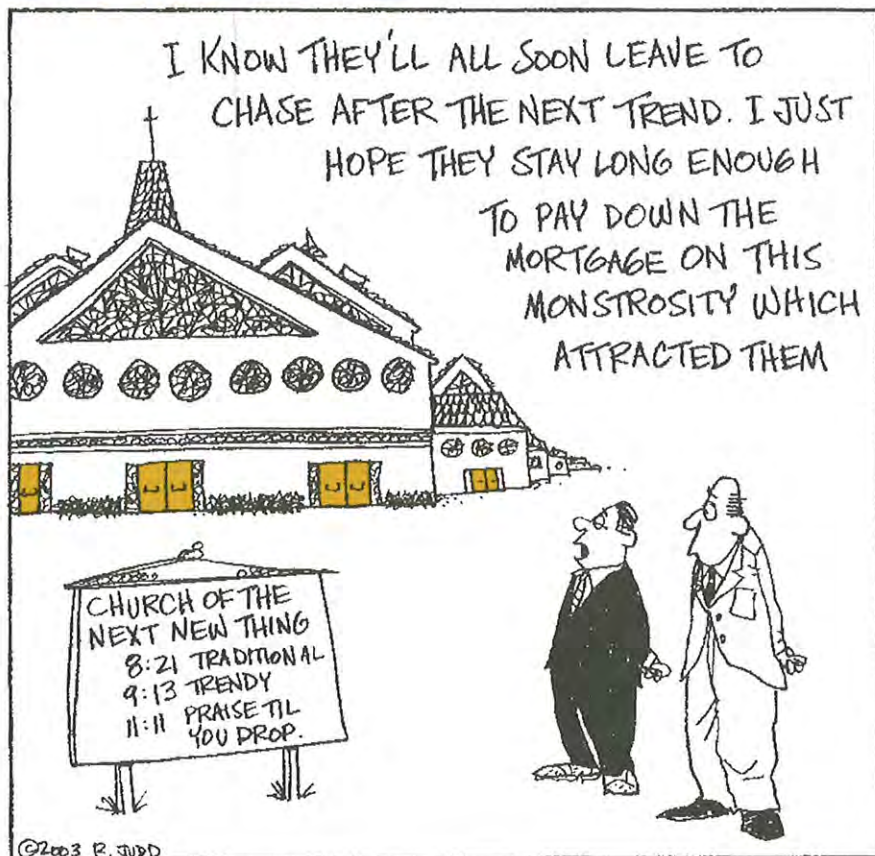
In fact, God’s original design of dominion in creation will find fulfillment when the “kingdoms of this world” become the “kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ” (Rev. 11:15) and “his servants,” once guilty of rebellion against Him, reign with Him forever (Rev. 22:5).

**“He purposes to bring all creation into complete submission under His sovereignty.”**

As we just noted, however, the present manifestation of God’s kingdom still harbors rebels. At present, we do not see everything in subjection to him, Hebrews 2:8 reminds us. Indeed, all of creation feels the shock waves that continue to emanate from Genesis 3.

Humans, made in God’s image, with the freedom to choose to trust God or not, chose poorly. Out of selfishness we gave our loyalty to another. “The whole world lieth in wickedness” (I John 5:19) as a result. In violating this relationship with our Creator, we have brought on ourselves His judgment and our ruin. Even the physical world reels from the effect of human sin (Rom. 8:19–22).

## BEYOND BELIEF



God's plan, though, is to restore the relationship with His insurgent creation. "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet," Paul declares; "all things shall be subdued unto him . . . that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:27-28). God the Father will make Christ's enemies "his footstool," David avows (Ps. 110:1; Heb. 10:13), as every person finds his or her destiny resolved in Christ (Eph. 1:10).

Perhaps no book in the Bible portrays the supremacy of God's kingdom as decisively as Daniel. In chapter two, Daniel attests this great kingdom of the true God as he interprets Nebuchadnezzar's vision. In it the Babylonian king sees a massive statue representing earth's empires. Suddenly a stone "cut out without hands" rolls over the statue and smashes it to bits.

Daniel explains: "The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed . . . It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever" (2:44).

Later Daniel decodes Belshazzar's dream. He sees the "Ancient of days" enthroned. What a great King! What a great God!

How urgent is our work in light of the King and His kingdom. To this Daniel also speaks: "They that turn many to righteousness [shall shine] as the stars forever and ever" (12:3b). If you are living your life or spending your time for anything other than the King, you're wasting the little time you have. ■

Receipts:				YearToDate	YearToDate	YearToDate
State	Designated	CO-OP	Total	Designated	CO-OP	Total
Alabama	\$ 399	\$ 171	\$ 570	\$ 5,729	\$ 1,913	\$ 7,643
Arizona	0	0	0	330	298	628
Arkansas	62,192	11,488	73,680	184,307	206,494	390,801
California	0	1,183	1,183	231	14,435	14,665
Colorado	0	0	0	0	0	0
Delaware	0	0	0	114	0	114
Florida	125	4,536	4,661	504	13,608	14,112
Georgia	36,561	1,962	38,523	410,403	20,711	431,114
Hawaii	0	0	0	0	0	0
Idaho	0	0	0	0	0	0
Illinois	15,614	1,973	17,587	151,518	31,367	182,885
Indiana	1,961	150	2,111	22,964	2,290	25,254
Iowa	0	0	0	0	65	65
Kansas	0	103	103	0	794	794
Kentucky	225	1,390	1,615	5,660	15,228	20,887
Louisiana	0	0	0	0	0	0
Maryland	0	0	0	0	0	0
Michigan	19,604	1,898	21,502	263,970	30,012	293,982
Mississippi	12,812	640	13,453	130,728	7,177	137,905
Missouri	38,644	15,091	53,735	503,410	194,259	697,669
Montana	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nebraska	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Jersey	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Mexico	917	57	974	6,206	325	6,531
North Carolina	614	85	699	20,444	32,071	52,516
Ohio	23,408	4,696	28,104	206,752	44,710	251,461
Oklahoma	53,075	9,097	62,172	703,718	129,623	833,341
South Carolina	100,248	20	100,268	593,584	701	594,285
South Dakota	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tennessee	14,065	1,885	15,951	150,245	18,227	168,472
Texas	9,583	391	9,974	130,852	3,942	134,794
Virginia	259	131	390	2,254	744	2,998
Virgin Islands	0	0	0	25	0	25
West Virginia	754	74	828	10,607	1,598	12,205
Wisconsin	0	0	0	0	0	0
Canada	985	30	1,014	9,706	190	9,896
Northwest Assoc.	0	0	0	1,029	0	1,029
Northeast Assoc.	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	10	0	10
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$ 392,045</b>	<b>\$ 57,052</b>	<b>\$ 449,097</b>	<b>\$ 3,515,300</b>	<b>\$ 770,781</b>	<b>\$ 4,286,081</b>

Disbursements:						
Executive Office	\$ 1,910	\$ 25,673	\$ 27,584	\$ 17,989	\$ 346,852	\$ 364,841
Foreign Missions	242,656	7,217	249,873	2,106,267	97,504	2,203,771
FWBBC	26,495	7,217	33,712	278,709	97,504	376,212
Home Missions	110,232	5,648	115,881	989,413	76,307	1,065,720
Retirement & Insurance	361	4,393	4,754	4,408	59,350	63,758
Master's Men	473	4,393	4,866	7,409	59,350	66,759
Commission for Theo. Integrity	51	157	208	652	2,120	2,771
FWB Foundation	213	1,883	2,096	2,650	25,436	28,086
Historical Commission	51	157	208	652	2,120	2,771
Music Commission	24	157	181	418	2,120	2,538
Media Commission	49	157	206	1,433	2,120	3,553
Hillsdale FWB College	1,913	0	1,913	24,770	0	24,770
Other	7,616	0	7,616	80,531	0	80,531
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$ 392,045</b>	<b>\$ 57,052</b>	<b>\$ 449,097</b>	<b>\$ 3,515,300</b>	<b>\$ 770,781</b>	<b>\$ 4,286,081</b>



Carolyn Dwyer

# Who, Me? Yes, You! Couldn't Be!

**When I was young, I played** a game called *Who Stole the Cookie from the Cookie Jar?* I would choose a partner and begin the recitation while clapping alternately one of my friend's hands. Other girls waited to jump in when their names were called. It went like this . . .

**Who stole the cookies from the cookie jar?**  
**You stole the cookies from the cookie jar.**  
**Who, Me? Yes, you! Couldn't be! Then who?**  
**Susie stole the cookies from the cookie jar!**  
**Who, Me? Yes, you! . . . and thus it would go.**

Little did I know that I would later ask the Lord a similar question. "Who, me?" He would say, "Yes, you!" And in shock I would reply, "Couldn't be!"

### Reality of the Call

My husband and I were saved early and later rededicated our lives. We were growing in the Lord spending hours with our pastor and his wife who poured their lives into us as we studied the Word of God together. Danny and I were excited about living the Christian life, but I knew nothing of what was happening in my husband's heart.

One afternoon he came home from work and announced that God had called

him to preach. "You have got to be kidding! I can't be a preacher's wife!" I said. I ran to the bedroom in tears.

I am glad God was not finished with me because I was unprepared to receive the news. I had preconceived ideas about what a preacher's wife should be and didn't feel that I could measure up. After my initial crying and questioning, I concluded that since God called my husband, He certainly knew I came with the package and would be my strength and help (Phil. 4:13).

### Joys of Ministry

Those frightful first days turned into years of joy. One of those joys has been the friendships made. In every church where we ministered, great Christians crossed my path enriching my life. What a treat to have missionaries, evangelists, preachers and Christian college students in our home as positive influences for our children.

The adventure of moving to different states has been challenging. I learned to adapt with plenty of opportunity to develop my decorating skills. From Tennessee to Mississippi to West Virginia to Virginia Beach to North Carolina to Alabama, I found that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof."

The greatest joy has been seeing people get saved (my children included), mature in Christ, raise families of their own and observe them rear their children to honor Christ.

### Stablizing Factor

The stabilizing factor bringing contentment to me as a pastor's wife has been the never-changing truth of God's Word. I found that truth comforts, encourages, corrects and instructs when taken

to heart. Perhaps you can identify with me in these encounters.

I needed reassurance when we first left our home area following the Lord's will. I missed my parents and other family members. Our children eventually married and started their own families. Now they are in Christian ministry living hundreds of miles away (Matt. 19:29). I still remind myself of God's truth to take the edge off the "missing family syndrome."

I shall never forget the first time I was asked to speak at a district Woman's Auxiliary meeting. I had only taught children's Sunday School classes and given the program at auxiliary meetings with about five people present. I was struggling trying to be friendly to people I didn't know (Prov. 18:24). But God has a way of stretching us, challenging our faith. I made it through even though my legs were like spaghetti.

Parenting can try the best of saints. That's why I took Deuteronomy 6:6-7 to heart. I wanted my children to grow up and follow Christ. Our supper table was not only for eating, but for devotional and instructional time as well.

When hurt by words spoken in haste, I remember that "A soft answer turneth away wrath . . ." (Prov. 15:1a) and honestly try to "overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21).

If I am called to identify with Christ through physical or emotional suffering, Jesus whispers, "My grace is sufficient for thee . . ." (II Cor. 12:2a).

"Who, me? A pastor's wife?" "Yes, me!" ■

**About the Writer:** Mrs. Carolyn Dwyer is a member of First Free Will Baptist Church in Florence, Alabama, where her husband, Dr. Danny Dwyer, pastors.

### Directory Update

#### California

Darius Wentz to Farmersville Church, Farmersville

#### North Carolina

Larry Collins to Cedar Hill Church, Asheville, from Living Hope Church, Hutchinson, KS

#### Tennessee

David Weeks to East Nashville Church, Nashville



**Thomas Marberry**

## Hechos De Los Apostoles in Comentario Biblico Iberoamericano

By Justo González (Buenos Aires, Kairos Ediciones, 2000, 446 pp., paperback, \$20.95.)

**Dr. Justo L. González is a native** of Cuba who has lived in the United States for many years. A well-known and versatile scholar, he has published books both in English and Spanish dealing with the study of the New Testament, historical theology and church history. He holds a Ph.D. from Yale University and serves as a visiting professor at Princeton Theological Seminary. He is a founding member of the Association for the Hispanic Theological Education.

This volume is the latest contribution to an important commentary set designed to meet the needs of Spanish-speaking Christian workers in the United States and Latin America. The fact that such a commentary has been written is evidence of the growing importance of the Hispanic Christian community. Hispanic theologians are beginning to make a significant contribution to current theological discussion.

In many ways this is a traditional commentary on Acts. The author does not advocate radical positions or novel interpretations of difficult passages. In the introduction, he carefully considers the date, authorship and purpose of the book. He notes, quite correctly, that the authorship of Acts has been much debated in recent years. After considering the evidence, he accepts the traditional view that Luke the companion of Paul is the most likely author.

There is also considerable debate on the date of Acts; suggested dates range from the 60s to the 80s of the first century. González, for several different reasons,

argues for a date around 80. The first generation of Christians was rapidly passing away, and it became increasingly important to preserve the early history of the Christian movement.

González's treatment of the purpose of Acts is insightful. It is obvious that Luke is writing a history of primitive Christianity, but his history is a very selective one. He concentrates on particular individuals and certain important events. Luke is often content to summarize important developments in a few brief words. González considers the important question of why Luke has chosen to narrate certain events and omit others.

González concludes that Luke wrote the book to meet the needs of Christians living about A.D. 80. He argues that these believers were entering into a period of serious conflict with a pagan Roman Empire and that they needed the encouragement and instruction that the book of Acts could provide. González suggests that Acts can also be of great value to Hispanic believers today as they enter into a period of increasing conflict with pagan cultures in which they minister.

This commentary explains clearly the original meaning and context of Acts, but its greatest strength lies in the area of application. González devotes considerable attention to how Hispanic believers can apply the teachings of this book to the contemporary situation.

In Acts 2:42-47, Luke gives a powerful summary of the faithfulness of the

early believers. He explains how they "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." González interprets, "The 'teaching of the apostles' is not simply the repetition of what the apostles' taught. It is above all the teachings and the learning that permits us to fulfill our 'apostolate', our mission today."

According to González, the key word in understanding this passage is "perseverance." These early Christians persevered together in learning, in communication, in worship and in prayer. They worked and served together to accomplish a common goal.

González comments, "It should not be forgotten that the Christian faith is a communal faith. It has, to be sure, a profoundly personal dimension. But a private faith, no matter how orthodox it may be, is not Christian faith." One reason for the success of Hispanic churches is that they have maintained this spirit of mutual cooperation and commitment to ministry.

This valuable commentary by González illustrates an important fact about commentaries. As a general rule, commentaries are written to meet the needs of a specific audience. This commentary is written for the Hispanic pastor or missionary in the United States and Latin America. It is designed to give him an understanding of the message of Acts that he can use both in his own life and in his preaching and teaching. ■

# 2004

# National Youth Conference



Students and youth workers will not want to miss the great line-up of events scheduled for the National Youth Conference this summer in Kansas City. We've planned several Xtreme events to challenge, encourage and train you in July.

## Invited Speakers

- Trula Cronk, veteran missionary to India**
- 1 LT Steven Pierce, U.S. Army stationed in Iraq**
- Craig Portell, missionary in Mongolia**
- Neil Gilliland, director of missionary care, FWB Foreign Missions**

## Join our Series of Xtreme Events

- Xtreme Concerts of Prayer**
- Xtreme Outreach opportunities through Reach That Guy**
- X-Games – exciting after service events**
- Cause & Cost Daily Bible Studies**
- Xtreme Time Morning Devotions for Students and Workers**
- Xtreme Amusement Park – discount tickets for Worlds of Fun**

For more info, email us at [youth@randallhouse.com](mailto:youth@randallhouse.com)

## SCM Idea of the Month

Consider using the National Youth Conference theme in your spring youth meeting times. Explore the concept of the cause of Christ and the extreme sacrifice of serving Him. Incorporate Matthew 10:38 into your devotional times personally and encourage students to do likewise.

Preparing your heart for receiving His challenge in the months leading up to our July conference will place you and your students in a position to receive the Lord's plan. Plan a monthly prayer time to pray for the upcoming conference. You'll find more ideas for using Matthew 10:38, plus a monthly prayer calendar on the SCM webpage at [www.randallhouse.com](http://www.randallhouse.com). ■





Jack Williams

## The Unexpected

**One of the elements that made** Jesus' ministry so spectacular was His willingness to do the unexpected when critics and friends alike thought they finally had Him boxed and pegged. His words as well as His actions left the good guys and the bad guys shaking their heads.

The feeding of the 5,000 in Matthew 14 is a case in point. Cut the sermon short and send the people home was the obvious solution to the hungry crowd's needs (Mt. 14:15). But Jesus didn't do that. Instead, He did something better.

**The unexpected part** of this miracle may not be the fact that He fed the multitude from five loaves and two fishes (Mt. 14:17). That was the miracle, of course. But the "unexpected" dimension was the way He involved the 12 disciples in the process.

Jesus did not personally place bread and fish in the hands of 5,000 men. Rather, He divided it among the 12 and told them to give it to the multitudes (Mt. 14:19). And wonder of wonders, they did it!

**Do you think those** men ever forgot the smell of the miracle bread and fish as they kept giving and giving and giving? They would tell the story for years to come. And with each retelling, the miracle of the bread and fish also became a miracle of cooperation between 12 ordinary men in the right place at the right time doing the right thing for the right reason.

They could no more explain the endless supply of bread and fish than they could explain the 12 baskets of fragments left over. Their part in the miracle was obedience to Jesus' command. The miracle was His. Their unexpected participation was a uniquely Jesus moment. And for what it's worth, those Jesus moments still happen today.

**When you're God** (as Jesus was), you're not concerned about your next

meal. When you're 30 and in robust health, you don't worry about a supply of insulin for your diabetes. When you can walk on water, the storm does not concern you. But our hunger and our failing health and our uneasiness with the storms of life do concern Him. He uses our fears and flaws as bridges to reach us in unexpected ways.

When you can read the minds of people (as Jesus did), you're never snookered by deceptive hucksters—religious or otherwise. When you know a person's innermost secrets, you can create the perfect opening from which to launch a witness. Jesus creates those unexpected openings for us in the great task of world evangelism.

**When you can call** 12 legions of angels to your side (as Jesus could), you do not flee a demon-possessed man who threatens you. When you know at Friday noon that you can and will rise from the dead before dawn Sunday, the power of that knowledge prepares you to face crucifixion.

When Moses and Elijah unexpectedly consult with you on a hillside (Mt. 17:3), you don't need reaffirmation of your calling. When Heaven opens at your baptism, the Holy Ghost descends like a dove on you in full public view, and a voice from above proclaims your obedience level as off the charts, there's no need to question the authenticity of your ministry (Mt. 3:16–17).

When you speak and dead men live, blind men see and the crippled take up their beds and walk, there's not much left to fear. When you're the master of the unexpected, those who follow you learn to look for the different and the unique.

**And yet...** here's another of those spectacular Jesus moments. And yet, that Man drew back from the *cup* in Gethsemane and spoke of being forsaken on the cross (Mt. 26:39; 27:46). He was that much like

us, and He understands our dread of pain and death. Now that's an unexpected bonus for believers.

Here's another. The Man with the perfect speaking voice, the strength of a sinless life, the understanding of every theological issue and the answer to the creation-evolution debate found it necessary to come to terms with limitations.

For you see, not even perfect knowledge enabled Him to explain truth so persuasively that every unbeliever who heard Him repented. Not all false teachers gave up their errors after hearing Him preach.

That's why He understands when we try so hard and fail. He knows that the rejection of our message often has nothing to do with it being communicated inadequately. Rather, it's a matter of sin and personal choice by others.

**Just as Jesus' life** sparkled with the unexpected, yours can too. Always look for the options, even in simple matters. For instance, those traffic mechanisms hanging above the streets are *go lights* (green), not *stop lights* (red).

Lives marked by the unexpected are eager to try again. Corrie Ten Boom said, "You are on the road to success if you realize that failure is only a detour." So relax—one of God's unexpected detours may turn out to be the ride of your life. ■



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