

MARCH 1994

CONTACT

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
FREE WILL BAPTISTS



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THE SECRETARY SPEAKS



Melvin Worthington

Come Celebrate!

Delegates attending the 1993 national convention in Louisville, Kentucky, designated Tuesday night July 19, 1994, as a time to climax the Capital Stewardship Campaign, "A Million More by 94." The goal of this three-year campaign, launched in 1992, was to pay off indebtedness on the National Offices Building in Antioch, Tennessee.

Convention delegates authorized a committee to assist the Management Committee in reaching the goal. Committee members include Charles Thigpen, Herbert Waid, Connie Cariker, David Joslin, Nathan Ruble, Edwin Hayes and Tom Lilly.

The committee met during the December 1993 Leadership Conference and approved the Victory Campaign. The committee recommended the campaign to Leadership Conference attendees who then adopted it. Consider the following four ideas.

The Challenge

The national offices were relocated to Murfreesboro Road in south Nashville in 1965. During the following years, growth demanded more space and a facility which could utilize modern technology in serving denominational constituents.

Discussion regarding yet another relocation began in 1985 and climaxed with denominational authorization in 1990. The new building was purchased in 1990 and occupied in late August 1991. The total cost, including purchase and build-out, was \$1.475 million.

We sold the Murfreesboro Road property for \$725,000 with monthly payments of \$8,400 from August 1992 through August 1997 and a \$403,160 balloon payment scheduled for August 15, 1997. Total indebtedness on

the new building December 1, 1993, was \$1,343,139.

Our challenge is to raise a balloon payment of \$644,233.18 by July 19, 1994, in order to be debt free. The \$582,718 balance will be paid with monthly payments from the Murfreesboro Road property.

The Campaign

We can meet this challenge. The Victory Campaign goal of \$644,233.18 calls for every member of the National Association of Free Will Baptists to give \$3.93. This will enable us to meet the goal and will prompt celebration during the Tuesday night service in Little Rock.

June 26 has been designated Victory Campaign Sunday. Each local church is asked to take a Victory Campaign offering that day to apply toward the campaign goal.

The Capital Stewardship Campaign goals of "A Million More by 94" have been revised to reflect the Victory Campaign goals. Full credit has been given to each state for contributions which have been given for the project.

The Celebration

The national convention is a special time for Free Will Baptists. We fellowship together and focus on denominational business. During the 1994 convention, we will join together to celebrate paying off the indebtedness on our new office building. This occasion provides opportunity for each of us to do his part to reach this debt-free goal.

We can rejoice together. This campaign can unite us as a people as we rise to reach the Victory Campaign goal. Join us in promoting and participating in this campaign. Give your individual gift so that all of us may rejoice and praise God during the big celebration in Little Rock.

The Contribution

The Victory Campaign gives Free Will Baptists an opportunity to pray, promote and participate in a special event. It provides a goal that we can unite to reach. It promotes the concept of world-wide outreach as we provide a ministry center to serve all associations and agencies of our denomination.

Your personal contribution can help us achieve our goal. We believe that God can and will supply needed funds through you to eliminate the debt on the National Offices Building. Join me in praying, promoting and participating in the Victory Campaign. ■

Secretary's Schedule

- March 6-10** Bible Conference
Free Will Baptist Bible College
Nashville, Tenn.
- March 18-19** Illinois State Assoc.
Benton, Ill.
- March 24-26** Homecoming
Columbia Bible College
Columbia, S.C.
- March 28** Ministerial Restoration Committee
Antioch, Tenn.

Why Do We Attend Church?

By Dann Patrick



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As Home Missions Director Roy Thomas says, "There are three types of church members – those who watch it happen, those who make it happen and those who wonder what's happening." How true that statement is. According to surveys, the ratio in most churches is that 20 to 30 percent carry the load while 70 to 80 percent let them. What

a sad commentary on our view of the local church. If it is the institution we say it is, then it deserves our full support and effort.

Acts 2:42-47 gives us a good description of the activity of this first New Testament Church and provides the basic ingredients for our churches today. God gave us the local church to meet the needs of today's world. In the nearly 2,000

years since the inception of this church, God certainly has not changed and neither have the basic needs of mankind.

I am a strong believer in the ministry of the local church and all it provides for each family and individual. As Dr. Lee Roberson says, "It takes three to thrive." I believe that too, but it meets needs far beyond the scheduled services each week.

Spiritual Needs

First, the local church should help to meet our spiritual needs. This should be foremost on the list. Our church experiences should draw us closer to the Lord. This will not be limited to worship or preaching times only, but will extend to fellowship, recreational activities and anything else done in the name of the church.

Certainly our church services should provide a spiritual lift for the members. People ought to enjoy going to church. The program, the preaching, the participation ought to be enjoyed and not endured. When souls are saved, when hearts are touched, when the services are warm, our spiritual needs are met.

Social Needs

Another great characteristic of the church is its social aspect. The church provides a place whereby one may make new, Christian acquaintances. It is not enough to tell a new convert that he must give up old friends. There needs to be a positive replacement, and, of course, that is where the church fits in.

Small group fellowships may be hosted by individual Sunday School classes. The entire church body may choose to gather at other times. We must learn to open up our own homes for fellowship time with all Christians, but especially the new converts and new members. We live in nicer homes than ever before. We must use them for the glory of God.

The Lord didn't give us \$100,000 homes and not expect us to use them for His glory. Open homes mean open hearts, and as church members we have a wonderful opportunity to reach out by opening up our homes. We all crave and seek social interaction. The right kind of church helps to meet that critical social need.

Service Needs

Finally, the church provides for our service needs. Generally speaking, people of all sorts want to be used in some type of service.

Christians, of course, are commanded to render service to the

Lord, What is my outlet for this service? The local church. God has chosen the local church as the vehicle to be used for service and this is such a great blessing.

I read in the papers and watch on the news as so many of these "nuts" nowadays are out to save this and that. There is the whooping crane, the snail darter and the rain forests. Last year I saw in a news magazine a man chained to a tree holding a big sign that read, "Save A Tree."

Please don't take me wrong, I'm not for the indiscriminate destruction of our environment. But I sure am glad there are opportunities for us to serve the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords and be involved in something that has eternal value. I can't imagine the Lord praising us in judgment because we saved a tree, however, I believe He will say well done for every man, woman, boy and girl that we have helped to get saved.

Something that Matters

In the first couple of years I was in Goldsboro, we had a particularly rambunctious boy who rode one of our buses to church. (He was a virtual demon on wheels.) He was so bad we disallowed him from riding one of our buses for a whole year. We prayed diligently for him during the year and at the end of the year he came back.

In a little while he was saved. Even as a teen there were definite marks of a "new creature." His behavior improved. Then he moved. We lost track of him. A few months ago my secretary called to my office and told me that this young man was on the phone. I picked up the phone and what joy on the other end of the line.

"Preacher," he said, "I got married and I'm going to church regular and guess what?"

"What?" I inquired.

"Last Wednesday night in business meeting the church here voted to

make me the bus director." I was elated.

That's what I want to spend my life doing. Something that really matters. Something that will matter for all eternity. I'm so glad that the local church affords that opportunity. Every Sunday School teacher, every children's church worker, every bus worker had a part in helping that young man. What a joy! That's what I want to spend my life saving, boys and girls and men and women.

Yes, thank the Lord for the church. It meets our three most critical needs. It satisfies our spiritual, social and service cravings. Thank God for the church! ■



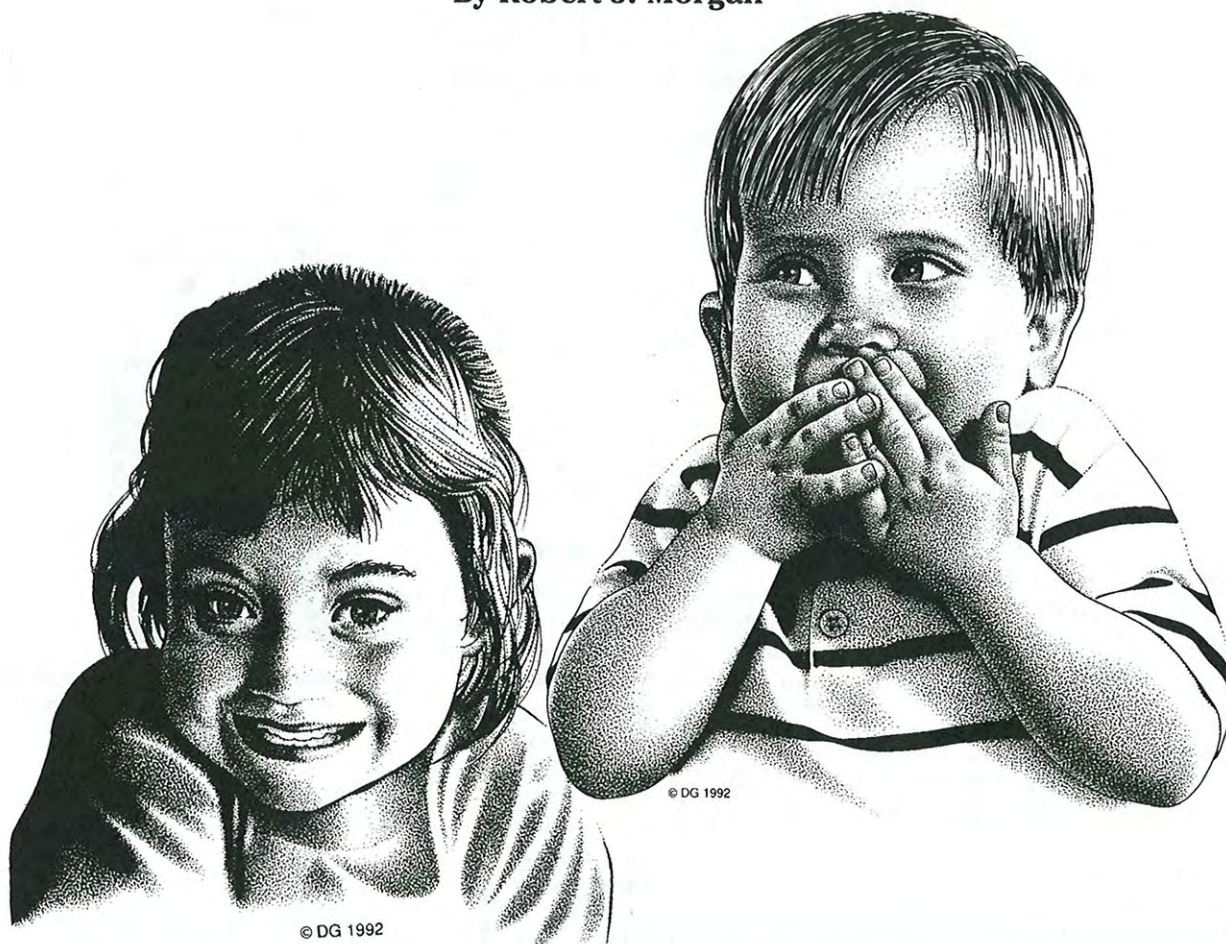
ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Dann Patrick pastors Faith Free Will Baptist Church in Goldsboro, North Carolina.

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How to Survive Your Kids

Parenting Tips

By Robert J. Morgan



*How do you like to go up in a swing,
Up in the air so blue?
Oh, I do think it's the pleasantest thing
ever a child can do!*

With those delightful words, Robert Louis Stevenson drew an endearing picture of childhood—a stage of life predisposed toward joy, love and security; an age in life preparatory to lifelong self-esteem. By its very nature, childhood promotes positive self-perceptions.

Why, then, is America enduring

epidemic juvenile depression? Why do kids leave childhood disliking themselves?

It's because of our competitive culture, our educational systems, our athletic preoccupations, our questionable peers and the treachery of our media. All these collaborate with a child's sinful nature to scuttle his spirit and spoil his self-image.

The Bible Says

What does scripture say about it? It says, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you" (Romans 12:3).

The Word of God is a two-edged sword, and this verse certainly

flashes and slashes with twin implications. We aren't to think of ourselves too highly, but the wording also suggests we shouldn't think of ourselves too poorly. *Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought....*

How, then, can parents encourage healthy systems of self-respect in their kids?

We must remember that we aren't drill sergeants but divine stewards. Yes, we give direction and require obedience, but we also let our kids know we respect them as treasures from God.

A child draws his self-portrait with colors borrowed from his parents. The greatest catalyst of a child's self-esteem is his perception of what those he loves most think of him. If he feels respected by parents, he'll develop respect toward himself.

I'm a highly imperfect dad, so I hesitate to offer suggestions from my own background. Nevertheless, here are some child-raising practices from my experience that may give you good field position for scoring Romans 12:3 touchdowns.

Simple Practices That Help

First, don't discipline your kids publicly or in front of friends. I've seldom even corrected mine in front of their siblings, for humiliation is never an acceptable discipline.

I've tried to never walk into their rooms without knocking, for children need "alone time." You can't have a good self-image if you don't have sufficient time to get to know yourself, and that requires periodic solitude. Recently, my 10-year-old made this sign for her bedroom door:

You have come to Grace's room.

Rules:

1. Knock.

2. Do not walk in unless I say you can.

3. If I am not in my room, leave; Do not come in and take anything you want unless you have permission (from me).

4. Don't keep knocking while I come to unlock the door.

5. Don't kick or abuse my door.

6. If I say "go away," do so. If I say, "I don't want to talk write [sic] now," leave.

Those are so good I'm considering posting them on my office door!

Although many children don't have a bedroom all their own, every youngster needs places and periods of privacy to develop friendship with his own heart.

I've also never pried through my girls' private papers or read their personal correspondence. They can leave their diary anywhere in the house, and I'll never violate their trust by reading it.

Similarly, I've tried to never betray their confidence. I don't even tell my wife things they confide to me. And she doesn't let me in on their private conversations with her.

Saying No

I've tried to never give "No's" without explanation. I may actually have overdone it, for the other day one of my daughters asked me for something, and I started a rambling explanation as to why I didn't think it was best.

"Dad," she interrupted, "it's all right to say no; you don't have to spend 10 minutes telling me why."

Well, I'd rather they'd have that attitude than be frustrated by rules without reasons and denials without explanations.

I've tried to never "kid" them in a demeaning or sarcastic way. We joke with each other, but never with sarcasm, ridicule, put-downs or cutting remarks. If you raise a child with sarcasm, you'll have a sarcastic adult later on—and I feel sorry for the one he marries.

I've tried to treat my girls' friends with respect, and their friends are welcome at our house. In fact, I'd rather have their friends in our house where we have some control over the standards than to have our children always in another house where we don't know what's going on.

I've tried to never be too busy for them. Sometimes I've said, "I can't take time now." But I try to become available just as soon as possible, for I want them to know they're more important to me than all the other people I deal with, combined.

I've never expected my children to act differently just because I'm a pastor. There is absolutely nothing

they can't do because I'm a minister. If they're forbidden to do something, it's because we're a Christian family; not because we're a pastoral family.

I've tried to apologize whenever I've been wrong, goofed or lost my temper.

And finally, I've always tried to verbally affirm my girls with lots of *You're terrifics*, and *I love yous*.

It's all a part of edification—of building up our kids. The Bible tells us to encourage one another, to love each other, and to raise our children in the nurture and instruction of the Lord.

In a word, parental respect unlocks the door to self-respect.

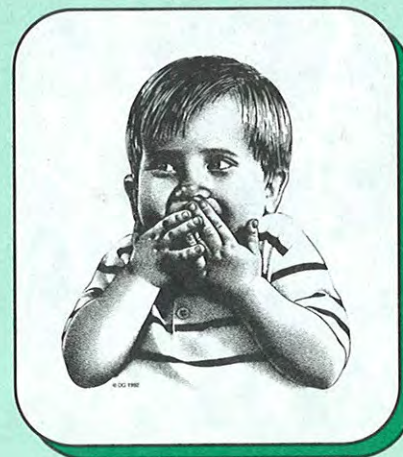
And how does it feel to bear this responsibility? What's it like to hug a child, or tussle his hair or squeeze her hand and say, "You're super! I like you! You're very special to me!"?

It feels *great*. It's a pleasant part of parenting. In fact, from my perspective...

...it's the pleasantest thing ever a dad can do. ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Robert Morgan pastors Donelson Free Will Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee.



Principles on Pain

You Can't Force God's Hand

By Thomas R. McCullough

I talked to her today on the phone. Her husband is days away from surgery that will amputate his leg. He is willing to face that possibility so he can walk again. She is distraught because when this hurdle is over they still face the unknown future of his lung cancer.

Though God's Word does offer eternal hope for such a hurting couple, is there real help to answer their questions about today? Are there explanations beyond the pious pastoral platitudes? Can all their "whys?" be satisfied in this world?

I believe there are answers. Not all of them are satisfactory to our finite minds, but God is not silent when it pertains to the eternal problem of pain.

Are pain and suffering new 20th century phenomena? Not on your life. They are as old as Job himself. In fact, the problem of pain and suffering is the very issue grappled with in that oldest book of the Bible. We have been given the extraordinary privilege of drawing back the heavenly curtain that separated Job from his God and his nemesis Satan. Even a rapid study of only the first few chapters of this classic will reveal several principles on pain by which to live.

No Shield

In the first verse we notice that Job's moral goodness was not an impenetrable shield against pain and suffering. The Bible could not have given us a clearer description of a man who worshipped and served God with all his heart. Job was, "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and shunned evil." Yet we find him later suffering the worst kind of personal pain, having lost his family, his fortune and his health.

The New Testament also gives

several examples of this same truth. In Matthew 14, Jesus' disciples find themselves on the Sea of Galilee in a terrible storm after having specifically obeyed the Lord to set out from shore without Him. Their situation was terrifying and potentially life-threatening, not because of their disobedience but because of their obedience.

In Luke 13, Jesus referred to two historical events in which several people lost their lives due to natural catastrophe. He then asked His disciples if these people suffered because they were greater sinners than those who did not suffer. He did not wait for their response. "No," He exclaimed!

But this truth is best revealed by the response Jesus gave to His disciples when they met a young man who had been blind from birth. "Who did sin," they asked, "this man or his parents?" They assumed there was a direct correlation between one's moral condition and one's personal pain.

Jesus set them straight. "Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents." In other words, bad things do happen to good people.

Misunderstanding Pain

I sat in the living room of René, a man in his mid-40's, with whom I had worked closely to build Christ's Church in St. Nazaire, France. It was obvious that outside of a miraculous intervention by God he had only a few months to live. He had lost a lung and several ribs to cancer a year previous, and now it had spread to his other lung, his liver and his brain.

I did my best to encourage him to be faithful during his remaining days. He, however, was an encouragement to me, as I witnessed him not just coping with his dilemma but rising victoriously above it most of the time.

Another friend of his sat in the same room and made me want to scream and cry at the same time for what he was doing to René.

"God has told me," he began, "that our prayers for your healing are not being answered because of some unknown or unconfessed sin in your life. If you confess it, I am sure God will heal you."

He took the basic truth that unconfessed sin hinders our prayers and twisted it just enough to say that René was personally responsible for the pain he was enduring.

Manipulating God

How could he be so blind and unfeeling? Because his theology was incomplete. Yes, you can be good and be living as closely as you know how to the heart of God and still suffer. It does happen.

This prosperity theology is born from a common misunderstanding that I can control my universe (i.e., manipulate God) if I pull all the right strings and apply all the right principles. If I hurt, they say, it is my fault. As long as everything is smooth, it is because I am living right. Well, I am sorry. Job did everything right and life still went bad for him.

It was Saturday May 15, 1993. The local TV evening news told the story about Steve from Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. He had been mowing the grass while wearing the earphones from his Walkman. He did not hear the falling tree. A 70-foot oak fell directly in his path only two feet in front of his mower. "I'm lucky to be alive," he told the reporter. "That makes three trees in the last two years that have fallen in my yard." Then he mused, "I credit being alive today with having gone to church last Easter."

I credit his being alive to a tremendous portion of God's grace.

If Steve were right, then missionaries and pastors would never die and maybe even never get sick. John and Kay Metcalf would be building churches in Brazil today. Evelyn Hersey would be at her husband's side in Japan. Floyd Wolfenbarger would be pastoring one of the largest Free Will Baptist churches in our denomination. And the list goes on.

The simple truth is that God cannot and will not be manipulated to shine good fortune on us by our adherence to an arbitrary set of good deeds or religious rites. If He assented to such, He would be no different than the idol of the animist. He is not, as some would lead us to believe, a heavenly bellhop. God is sovereign and as such does not always fit into our neat little boxes of cause

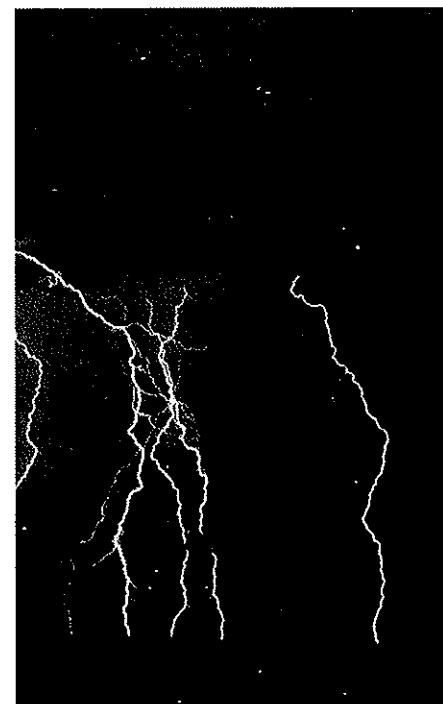
and effect.

This truth might not seem very comforting to you now, but to the parents of a young child who dies after only a few months of a painful stay in this world, it at least resolves the question, "Did my child suffer because of something I've done?" The one whose body is racked with pain from inoperable cancer does not have to also carry that unnecessary weight of guilt due to personal responsibility.

Sure, greater questions still wait to be answered. But at least I know this: Man is not necessarily responsible for his suffering. Even though Job suffered excruciating pain, he was not personally responsible for his pain. Likewise, though God was not the author of Job's suffering, He was still in control. ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Thomas McCullough is a Free Will Baptist missionary to France.



What Can Your Church Do



H. Armstrong Roberts

for the Homeless?

By Don Worrell

Tragedy strikes on the river, more after this from our sponsor." When the anchor of the 10 o'clock news returns, he tells us that earlier in the evening a cardboard shack on the river bank caught fire and burned. A homeless man, woman and child are dead while two other children are hospitalized

in critical condition.

Or we pick up the morning newspaper and the headline blares, "Homeless man found frozen." The article reveals that his body was found by the person who empties the trash container behind one of the local night spots.

Neither of these events has happened yet, as far as I know. But simi-

lar events have happened.

How should we react to the tragedy which these stories report? Can we continue deceiving ourselves into thinking that the homeless are only a big city problem? The fact is that the homeless population is increasing daily.

It now affects nearly every city and town without consideration of size,

economic status or social and racial make-up. According to reports, between 500,000 and 3 million men, women and children will be homeless without adequate food or shelter somewhere tonight. Some of these people will be homeless in your city or town.

Who Are the Homeless?

They come from every walk of life. They range in age from babies to grandparents. Some held jobs as recently as yesterday, while others have never worked a day in their lives. One report says about 23% of all homeless are employed at least part-time.

The male drifter once dominated the homeless scene, but today women with children and children by themselves are the two fastest growing categories. Some estimate that children make up 20% of the homeless population. Now many intact families live on the streets.

Educationally, they span the illiterate to the college-trained. They are from every known nationality. One agency which reports on the homeless states that 30-40% are mentally ill while another 20-30% are addicted to drugs and alcohol. They are lost and saved, yes some of them do profess Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Do We Have a Biblical Mandate Concerning the Homeless?

The Bible does not contain a verse that says, "Thou shall help the homeless." It does, however, present a principle which teaches that we do have a definite responsibility to help those in need.

Leviticus 25:35, "And if thy brother hath become poor, and cannot support himself among you, then you shalt relieve him; yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner, that he may live with you."

Proverbs 28:27, "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack, but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse."

Jesus clearly explained helping others in Matthew 25:35-40. Please read this important Bible passage.

The Old and New Testaments speak of the *poor, needy, hungry, stranger* and *hurting*. These words

are still used to describe homeless men, women and children today.

The word *poor* is found over 200 times in the Bible. In the majority of these references, God commands that the poor are to be helped by those who have anything to share. To gain a better understanding of our biblical mandate to help the homeless, study the above words with your concordance and Bible. Your study will show that God has given us a mandate to help "the least, lost and lonely," or in other words, today's homeless.

What Should I or My Church Do for the Homeless?

There are no easy answers to this question. In fact, there are no answers at all, only suggestions.

Right Attitude

First, your attitude. Don't judge the homeless. They smell and look dirty, but remember that they may not have a place to shower. The clothes they wear may be the only ones they have. It's hard to keep clothing when you have to carry it everywhere you go.

If they smell of alcohol, don't be turned off. They may not know the true answers to all their problems. Maybe no one has ever introduced them to Jesus, or maybe they just haven't accepted Him yet. What would you do if you didn't have Jesus to help you over the rough spots? Alcohol is often used to help deaden the homeless person's pain.

In order to help the homeless, you must recognize that they were created by God and affected by the fall of man just like you. With many homeless, sin affects their living and thinking daily. Some of them have had to live by their wits to just secure food and shelter.

Alert to Problems

Dishonesty and crime have become a way of life for some who have been on the streets. Others have become distrusting because of what has happened to them since they lost their homes. Often, agencies, both private and government, force the homeless into humiliating positions.

Some have been forced to place their children in foster care. Some have had to sell every possession they own. Some are talked into believing that jobs are in the next town or city and move there only to discover the jobs were just talk. Most are looked upon as second class citizens. Many have been robbed, hurt and raped.

Teenage children are forced into making adult decisions. Adults are treated as teenagers. Teenage girls and boys are preyed upon by pimps and perverts. Quite often, the homeless person has no idea what it is to be loved and wanted. Their entire network of help has mostly disintegrated by the time they are living on the streets.

Compassion

In your attitude, they must see hope, love and a sincere compassion. The homeless person will never overcome his or her problems until they are sure they can trust you. Compassion is defined as feeling their hurt in our hearts. This doesn't mean we are to accept wrong thinking and sinful behavior. We should and biblically must correct them, but only in love.

Patience

Patience is absolutely a must when helping the homeless. Your help can never be preconditioned. You must accept them where they are and through prayer, love and encouragement move them higher both spiritually and physically. Success will come as you help the homeless, but you will frequently look through a mountain of failure to find the success.

Most of the homeless didn't become homeless *yesterday*. The problems which made them homeless have often been affecting their lives for months or years. There is no definite reason which caused them to be homeless and there will not be any quick fixes to them. It will probably take many days, weeks, months and in some cases, years, to get them off the streets and back into society.

Ten Ways to Help

While working with the homeless

for nearly eight years, God has allowed me to gain some practical experiences. Not everything that follows will be correct every time. But they are good guidelines with which to begin.

1. Don't be too trusting. Some homeless, really only a few, are dishonest and dangerous. Treat every homeless person exactly as you would any other stranger who comes to your church or home. Be cautious concerning your safety. Do show the homeless person compassion, concern and love. Never show fear or distaste.

2. Don't prejudice those asking for help. Do verify what they are telling you. Ask them questions about their family, home, job, relationship with the Lord and why they need help. Giving food or money may not be what they need.

3. Don't precondition your help. Decide what the boundaries are concerning your help. If you decide that no one under the influence of alcohol will receive any help, then don't help anyone under the influence of alcohol. Draft guidelines concerning who you will help and under what conditions you will help them. Then go by these guidelines.

Don't decide on the conditions under which you will help a person when that person reaches your door. Personal convictions, standards, common sense and prayer should help you set guidelines. Some homeless are professional panhandlers and will trick you into helping them. Don't allow the dishonest homeless person to stop you from helping all the homeless.

4. Don't give them cash unless you are certain it will be used as you intended. Try to buy the items they need yourself. If you buy a bus ticket, have it marked *non-refundable*. Take them to the gas station yourself. Be sure they have adequate means of cooking food before you give a food basket. Giving food and blankets to people who live on the river bank or in their car isn't helping them. Do give those seeking help plenty of love, concern and time.

5. Don't believe everything they tell you at first. Some homeless have

learned that lies and exaggerations will get better and quicker results. Verify as much of what they tell you as possible. If they are truly seeking help, they won't mind.

Do take the time to listen to their stories, no matter how far-fetched they sound. You may find that every word they tell you is true. Just listening as they explain their problems and lives sometimes soothes their pain.

6. Don't try to become a professional. Many people have worked with the homeless for years and still don't know all the answers. However, do everything you do in a professional manner.

7. This don't is one of the hardest. *Don't become too emotionally involved.* When children are involved this gets really tough. Don't always trust your emotions. Sometimes the best thing you can do for the homeless is deny their request. Don't always give them exactly what they want. Sometimes, you might need to help them help themselves. Do have compassion and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

8. Don't get upset with the system which is in place in your town or city to help the homeless. Most systems have problems. Social services in most cities fail miserably. What you can do is use the system's failures as ministry opportunities.

Attend town meetings, become involved in the planning of different ways to operate the system. Make your ideas known. Everyday people like you often have the answers to complex problems.

9. If there is one *don't* that may offend you, this will be the one. *Don't become too preachy.* Beating them over the head with the gospel will not work. Often, the homeless person at your door has never heard anything from the church except "thou shalt not." Some have been involved with churches which preach health, wealth and prosperity.

Many have tried Jesus for the wrong reason and have been turned off by, at least in their minds, His lack of concern or His failure in solving their problems. The concept of God and the church to some of the homeless is totally warped. Take the time

to tell them what God has done in your life and the lives of others. Open the Bible and show them the love of God. Follow the leading of the Holy Spirit as you minister.

10. Finally, don't become discouraged when failure comes. You or your church might invest many hours and hundreds of dollars in a family. You might even get them housing, jobs and a good start in rebuilding their lives just to see them leave town in the middle of the night.

Maybe you will befriend a drug user or alcoholic, and then a few months or even years later he returns to his old habits. These things happen. Do continue helping the homeless. Never allow today's discouragement to rob you of tomorrow's joy.

A man once said, "There is enough gold in those hills to make me rich. The problem is I am not willing to move enough dirt to find it." Success will only come to those who pray for success.

Hopefully, this will be enough to help you formulate a plan to help the homeless in your city or town. If there is a shelter in your area, contact them; they will have plenty of good ideas.

When is Enough Enough?

In Mark 14:7, Jesus said, "For ye have the poor with you always...." From this verse we learn that the need will always be with us. You will meet the needs of one person and another one with needs will take his place. Some estimate that by the year 2000 there will be 20 million homeless in America.

When is enough enough? You decide. Ask God to lead you and your church as you consider this great problem of homelessness. ■

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Rev. Don Worrell is director of education at Nashville Union Mission in Nashville, Tennessee. He graduated from Free Will Baptist Bible College and began his ministry in 1985.

The Fruit of Laboring Together

By Roger Lucas

"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1).



Ephesians 4:3 reminds us to "keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." What a thrill to see first hand on Tuesday evening at the 1993 national convention in Louisville, Kentucky, all four Free Will Baptist colleges combined to present special music for that evening's service.

As I sit in my office on Wednesday afternoon (after the national convention), I am again reminded of the tremendous theme for last year's convention, "Laborers Together with God." How much more could be accomplished within our denomination if we would forget about petty differences and go on with the fundamentals.

Just over two years ago, after becoming pastor at Eastside FWB Church in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, I met Royce and Gerlon Sparks. Not long after, I learned that Royce had been diagnosed with cancer. He was in the hospital in Biloxi, Mississippi. It would have been a five or six hour drive for me to visit him.

Thanks to the vision of Mississippi Free Will Baptists and the Home Missions Department, I was able to get then-missionary Ralph Hester to visit Royce in the Navy hospital there. Not only did

Brother Hester visit him but won him to the Lord as well. Royce died less than a year later.

Because of that visit and those we made here at home, Mrs. Sparks, two of her sons and her mother now attend our church. Two weeks ago on Sunday night Mrs. Sparks' other son, Keith, and his wife were saved in Chula Vista, California, because of the contact we made there with the First FWB Church. To that I say, "Praise the Lord!"

Our pastors can be used to encourage and comfort. One of my former pastors, Dr. Billy Sharpston, visited a hospital in Macon, Georgia, to assist a man that I didn't know. His daughter, her husband and son now attend our church.

One of our youth directors recently warned a young man in the Navy that he needed the Lord because he could very quickly leave this world. He left the states and went to Puerto Rico. While in Puerto Rico, he and some friends were attacked by a gang that placed a gun to his head. He survived the ordeal. After returning to the states, he met with a chaplain and gave his heart to the Lord.

My point is this: as the music departments from all four of our colleges united their voices to sing and minister, may we all across our denomination, as did the missionary in

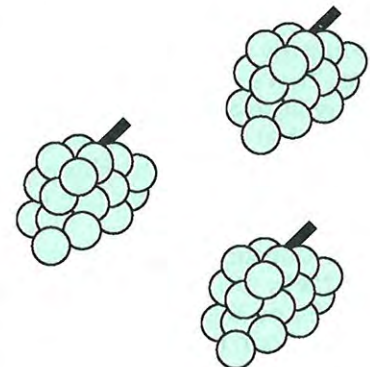
Mississippi, the pastor in California, the chaplain in the Navy, and Sherry the youth director in our church, reach out in a cooperative effort to reach men, women, boys and girls with the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

None of those I called on asked me which college I supported, whether I was pre-, post- or amillennial. All they said was, "I will be glad to help any way I can."

May each of us offer ourselves to "extend the influence of Christ in society."

I am glad to be a co-laborer with all Free Will Baptists. ■

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Roger Lucas pastors Eastside Free Will Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. He also serves as secretary-treasurer of the Alabama Free Will Baptist Board of Missions and Church Extension.





Why Do We Wash Feet Anyway?

By Randy Wilson

Washing the Saints' Feet—this is a sacred ordinance, which teaches humility and reminds the believer of the necessity of daily cleansing from all sin. It was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ, and called an "example" on the night of His betrayal, and in connection with the institution of the Lord's Supper. It is the duty and happy prerogative of every believer to observe this sacred ordinance.

— Treatise

Every year or two I ask the people of our church to jot down any questions they would like to have answered by their pastor. Then I preach an "Ask the Pastor" series of sermons, doing my best to answer their questions. That's why I've preached sermons trying to answer such questions as "What Happened to the Dinosaurs?", "Does God Have a Dress Code?" and "Is There Life on Other Planets?"

Another question that has been asked is, "Why Do We Wash Feet Anyway?" Since the questions are anonymous, I don't know who asks what. In this case, however, I think it's safe to assume it could have been

asked by just about everyone.

One of our denomination's distinctions is the practice of washing the saints' feet. While most other denominations and Baptists teach only two Gospel ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, we Free Will Baptists, along with a few others, believe and practice three ordinances.

I was glad to have an opportunity to answer this question in a sermon and deal with the subject of feet washing at a time other than when we were actually observing the ordinance. There were numerous people in attendance who were much more at ease than if we had been washing feet.

The question reminded me that

not everyone in our church may really understand why we wash feet. My biggest question about this third ordinance had been whether to call it feet washing or foot washing. But others, not growing up accepting the practice, can, and often do, find it mysterious and strange. It also reminded me that people may also be wondering why not all Christians wash feet or if they are better Christians if they do wash feet.

Command of Jesus

The reason we wash feet is because we believe it is an ordinance of the Gospel, just as baptism and the Lord's Supper. An ordinance is an outward, symbolic act estab-

lished by Christ to be perpetually observed by the church as a visible sign of the saving faith.

Jesus clearly stated that we ought to wash one another's feet, and He gave us an example to follow (John 13:14-15). Even more emphatically than baptism and the Lord's Supper, it could be said that feet washing is commanded by Christ and intended to be perpetuated in the church.

Example of Jesus

The focus of John's account is on Jesus' washing the disciples' feet. He didn't always wash their feet, or they wouldn't have been so surprised that night when He took a towel and knelt before them. When He washed them this time, it was a deliberate act, done during the meal, not upon arrival when feet would normally be washed. This was not just a simple act of courtesy. It was a foreshadowing of the cross itself.

The spiritual truth that feet washing sets forth is that the voluntary humility of the Lord cleanses His loved ones and gives them an example of selfless service to follow. Later that final evening, Jesus gave His followers a new commandment.

"Love one another," He said. "As I have loved you, you must love one another" (John 13:34). Christ had demonstrated that kind of love for them just moments earlier.

Service of Others

Mary Magdalene washed Jesus' feet with her tears and hair, in essence saying, "I'll give my very best for your lowest." Before washing anyone else's feet, we must first wash the feet of Jesus. Then we can love and serve other people.

When we wash another person's feet, we are not serving that person. We are serving the Savior who told us we should wash one another's feet. In feet washing, we are giving ourselves to the Lord in service to others.

Some Do, Some Don't

Not all Christians, not even all Free Will Baptists, wash feet. While Christ gave an example to follow, there is not always agreement on how that example is to be followed. Many in-

terpreters of John 13 summarily state that a third ordinance was not being instituted by Christ and go on from there with little or no explanation for their interpretation.

Feet washing has been practiced by many groups throughout the history of the church. Even the first Baptists believed in three ordinances and practiced feet washing. So while we are in a minority today, it should be remembered that feet washing is not some aberration of Christian faith and practice.

To secular-minded people, all the ordinances appear silly. People watching a friend being plunged beneath water, or gathering around to eat bites of dried bread and drinking little cups of grape juice is just not normal. However, taking off your shoes and socks and washing off another person's feet may seem strange even to other Christians.

Reformers' Reaction

One reason feet washing is not a greater part of Protestantism today is largely due to the negative reaction of the reformers to the ceremonial washing of paupers' feet by the Pope on Maundy Thursday. The reformers considered this nothing more than ceremonial comedy and shameful mockery of Christ. Luther condemned the practice as "an abominable papal corruption." As a result, the example Christ gave to follow has come to be seen as an example of attitude and inner humility and not as an ordinance to be practiced.

For the first disciples, nothing could have dramatized the role of a servant more forcefully than the washing of their feet. But since feet washing is not part of our culture, it can seem to be very peculiar to even those in Free Will Baptist churches. Many don't wash feet for that very reason. It is too embarrassing, they don't understand it, or they are just afraid. And of course, there are always those whose pride keep them from it.

Right Attitude

There is always the subtle danger that those of us who wash feet in humility will wear that distinction

with great pride. Washing feet really does not make anyone a better Christian, just an obedient one. The ordinances are symbolic acts and do not convey any more grace or faith to the believer practicing them. However, there is a special blessing promised to those who wash feet (John 13:17).

Personally, I would never want to be argumentative or dogmatic with other Christians about this ordinance. That seems to be contrary to everything that feet washing means and teaches. Only someone with dirty feet or a dirty heart would want to do that.

The challenge for me as a pastor is to make feet washing meaningful and to remove the mystery from it. One way I've tried to do this is to wash someone's feet before the entire congregation. People could see what it is and how to do it. It seemed to help put some anxieties to rest.

I also invite people who may not want to wash feet to come and watch. That way they can see what goes on in a feet washing service and don't feel pressured to do something that they are uncomfortable doing. After a few moments, many will want to participate. It is also helpful to teach and preach about feet washing at other times than when observing the ordinance.

"Do you understand what I have done for you?" Jesus asked the disciples after washing their feet. Maybe we should be asking that question again next time we wash feet. ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Randy Wilson pastors Bethany Free Will Baptist Church in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.





Preventing Spiritual Anorexia Nervosa

By Dennis L. Peterson

Do you know what anorexia nervosa is?
Perhaps you know someone who is a victim of this
subtle and debilitating disease.
But there is a spiritual anorexia nervosa too.
Are you a victim?

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When popular rock singer Karen Carpenter died, the attention of thousands of people across the nation was suddenly focused on a growing problem: anorexia nervosa. This disorder is causing an estimated one percent of U.S. women 12 to 25 years of age—about 280,000—to literally starve themselves to death.

The significance of this problem, which is reaching epidemic proportions, is compounded by a related disorder, bulimia. Characterized by the habit of gorging oneself on food and then inducing vomiting, bulimia affects an estimated 20 percent of all college women. By her third year of college, for example, one attractive, 110-pound woman victim resembled a 70-pound Nazi war prisoner.

Behind this physical starvation and rejected nutrition is a simple phobia: the fear of fat. Surprisingly, however, those most vulnerable to these disorders are the active, physically fit and athletically inclined. Regardless of how thin they become, they are obsessed with the perceived need to lose still more weight.

This malady affects others in addition to its original victims. As many as 10 percent of the mothers or sisters of victims will generally develop related eating disorders. Tragically, an estimated 20 percent of these victims die either by starvation or contraction of other diseases as a result of their weakened condition.

Something Worse

As tragic as the phenomena of anorexia nervosa and bulimia are, there is an even more tragic problem raging in Christian circles today. It is less obvious and more subtle, perhaps, but the end results are proportionally far worse. There is rampant a spiritual form of anorexia nervosa, a self-induced starvation for spiritual food, the Word of God.

Our present fast-paced lifestyles leave little room or time for more than an occasional nibble at spiritual food. Modern forms of entertainment, many of which require little or no mental exercise, dull our sense of duty and personal involvement or responsibility. Our minds become lazy, and we shirk anything that re-

quires spiritual effort.

Soon, spiritual feeding takes second place to other “more important” involvements. Rather than eating and gaining nutrients from God’s wholesome provisions, we prefer to fill ourselves on the more tasty “fast foods” of this world.

Modern society encourages spiritual starvation. Labels such as “fanatic” are enough to prevent many from feeding on God’s spiritual food. The pressures are especially great on teenagers and young adults, but no sex, age group or denomination is immune from the pressures to skip spiritual mealtimes.

The Old Testament prophets foresaw this spiritual anorexia nervosa thousands of years ago. Amos wrote: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord” (Amos 8:11).

Sadly, this is a condition most people seem content to have. Rather than seeking out and rallying around teachers who will feed the flock spiritually profitable food, they “heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (II Tim. 4:3). They prefer the valueless leeks, onions, garlic and cucumbers of Egypt to the manna of heaven (see Num. 11:5).

Victims of Spiritual Anorexia Nervosa

Who are the victims of spiritual anorexia nervosa?

The unsaved, unchurched are the most obvious victims. They have heard little or none of the gospel message. Many who have heard it have been led astray by cults and apostate sects. Others either are not interested or are ignorant of the source of the divine solution to life’s problems.

Most tragic, however, are the victims who are born-again believers. They may be undedicated, untaught or apathetic. Or they may be dedicated church “workaholics” who have become too busy in the work of the Lord to take time to sup with the Lord of the work.

This latter group of victims is the most pathetic of all, for they are inadvertently passing their condition on to those whom they teach. Sadly, many of these victims think they are

spiritually well fed. Someone once said, however, that when they miss one spiritual feeding, God knows it; when they miss two meals, they know it; and when they omit three or more meals, those around them know it.

Although Amos’ prophecy is surely a reminder of today, it does not present a fatalistic outlook for the individual. One who sincerely wants to avoid being ruined by this spiritual anorexia nervosa can find nourishment. It is not, however, an easy, something-for-nothing task.

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,” Christ offered (Matt. 7:7).

Preventing Spiritual Anorexia Nervosa

The first step of prevention is to develop and maintain a time of devotion for prayer and the personal, systematic reading and study of God’s Word.

Personal Devotion

This will of necessity take time and effort. Most of us, however, get so wrapped up in our mundane affairs that we unwittingly starve ourselves spiritually. Humorist Will Rogers noted this in his autobiography: “I expect there is [sic] a lot of lessons in the Bible that we could learn and profit by . . . but we are just so busy doing nothing we haven’t got time to study ‘em out.”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon warned, “He who rushes from his bed to his business, and waiteth not to worship, is as foolish as though he had not put on his clothes . . . and as unwise as though he dashed into battle without arms or armor.”

Watchman Nee, Chinese Christian martyr, was so profoundly influenced by this realization that he made his motto “No Bible—no breakfast!”

When Martin Luther was overwhelmed by daily tasks, he declared, “I have so much to do today I must spend five hours in prayer.”

In order to get the most from our Bible reading and prayer, we must take them in daily doses. Occasional megadoses will not suffice. Their exercise must become a regular,

habitual part of daily life.

We are daily and hourly bombarded by the influences of sin. To ward them off we must gain spiritual strength. "Feed the spiritual man," Lester Roloff was fond of saying, "and he'll knock out the carnal man." Lives that are rooted in and daily watered by God's Word will not be uprooted by the world's influence.

Church Attendance

The second step is to regularly gain strength and encouragement through fellowship with a body of like-minded believers in a local church.

The primary functions of the local church are to edify believers, build up their faith, and perfect them for Christ's service (see Eph. 4:12). At services, believers admonish and encourage one another by the preaching of the whole counsel of God and by the singing of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph. 5:19).

Bible teacher Paul R. Van Gorder showed the potential effect of such fellowship and edification when he wrote: "Just as the accumulation of many tiny snowflakes can create great havoc, so also the united efforts of 'little' Christians can bring great blessing."

This is not to say that church services will always be enjoyable. Sometimes God uses them to "step on our toes" and to point out our failures and weaknesses. It is our responsibility to recognize our need for the spiritual food offered in the services.

As Roy L. Smith said, "No food tastes good to those who are not hungry, and no sermon sounds good to the man who has no sense of need."

But regular church attendance does more. It provides an appropriate setting for our reverent worship of God.

There have been a wide variety of excuses offered to counter the need for formal worship. Even President Theodore Roosevelt had to contend with them.

"I know all the excuses for not going to church," he wrote. "I know that one can worship the Creator and dedicate oneself to good living in a

grove of trees, or by a running brook, or in one's house, just as well as in a church. But I also know that as a matter of cold fact the average man does not thus worship or dedicate himself."

Regular attendance at a Bible-preaching church will provide much strength to overcome our natural tendency toward spiritual anorexia nervosa.

Obedience

The third step in avoiding this disorder is to be obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit as evidenced through God's Word and the ministry of the local assembly.

Regardless of how many times we read the Bible through, the Lord will not reveal to us any more of His truth until we are obedient to what He has already shown us. The degree of our obedience is the yardstick of our spirituality. The greater our obedience, the less vulnerable we are to spiritual anorexia nervosa.

That great man of prayer, George Mueller, summed it up this way: "The most intimate knowledge of God is possible on one condition—that we search His Holy Scriptures, prayerfully and habitually, and translate what we there find into obedience."

Meaning of Obedience

Obedience to God means growing daily in the grace and knowledge of Christ. This is done in three steps.

First, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5).

Second, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. . . . And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:1-2).

And third, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God" (II Tim. 2:15).

Anorexia nervosa is a terrible condition that does not spring up overnight. It happens so slowly that even its victims do not realize they are starving.

Similarly, starvation in the Christian life is seldom a blowout; it is

usually a slow leak. It is a malnutrition that is only gradually recognized, seldom diagnosed and even less frequently cured.

Spiritual anorexia nervosa has no "quick fix" cure. It takes alertness and discernment on our part and much love, grace and mercy on God's part. It requires that our lives be focused on Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith, dedicated to His service, and disciplined to do His perfect will.

The effort required is not meant to make it impossible for us to maintain a well-balanced spiritual diet. It is meant to perfect us for Christ's service.

Whenever Christ expects something of us, He provides the means to accomplish that expectation. He said that "all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23). And as Christian counselor Jay Adams has stated, "Wherever the Spirit is at work, change is inevitable."

If we commune with God through daily prayer and Bible reading, value highly the encouragement of fellow believers within the local church, and obey God's commands and expectations, we won't have to worry about becoming victims of anorexia nervosa. Rather, we'll become "paramedics" with the Great Physician, helping heal those who are its victims. ■



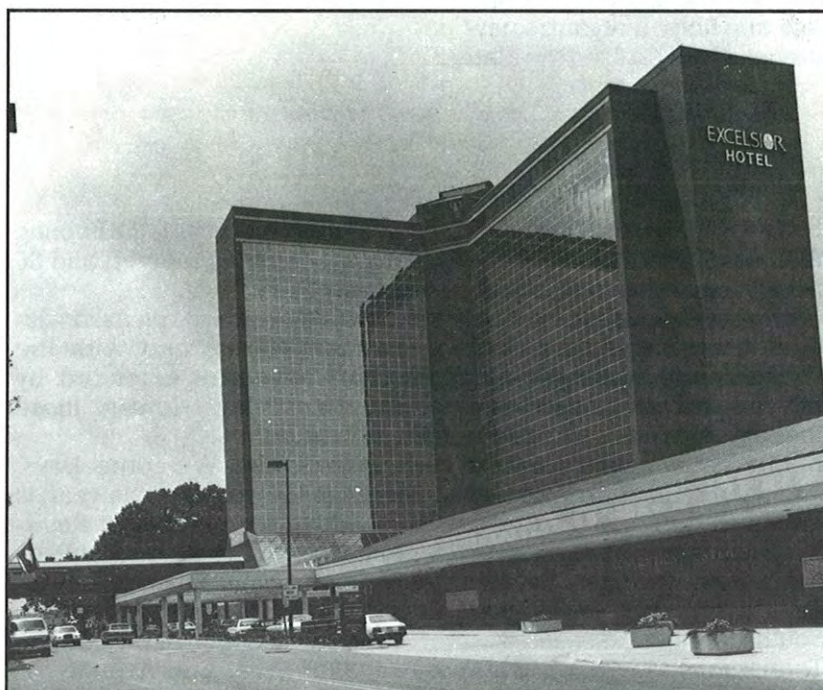
ABOUT THE WRITER: Dennis L. Peterson, a free-lance writer, is a graduate of a Christian university. He resides in Powell, Tennessee.



58th Annual Session
National
Association of
Free Will Baptists

Little Rock, Arkansas
July 17-21, 1994

Theme:
“We Preach Christ”



Statehouse Convention Center

Gary Fry
Missouri



Kenneth Frisbee
Ohio



Dean Dobbs
North Carolina



Don Guthrie
Texas



Mark Paschall
Michigan



FREE WILL BAPTIST NEWSFRONT

Reverend Roy Pembroke Dies



CAMINO, CA—The Reverend Roy Edgar Pembroke, a retired Free Will Baptist minister of Camino, California, died December 10, 1993, at age 76. Funeral services

were conducted at Memory Chapel in Placerville with Dr. Larry Condit and Revs. Nuel Brown and Raymond Sanders officiating.

Brother Pembroke was converted at age 12 and answered the call to preach at age 15. He was ordained in Missouri on August 17, 1934, at Mountain Grove FWB Church. He was a native of Watson, Missouri. In his early ministry he preached at various churches and held revivals in Missouri.

After moving to California, he served on the Executive Committee and helped organize new churches. He organized the Mar-

tinez FWB Church in 1952. He started a mission at Brentwood in 1955. In 1956, he organized the Antioch FWB Church and pastored there 11 years. He served as pastor of the Pleasant Hill FWB Church two years. His favorite scripture was II Timothy 4:7, 8.

He is survived by his wife Jeaneta (Zirschky) Pembroke, a daughter Verla F. Blowe, three granddaughters—Jeanna Town-er, Tammy Westerman and Tan-dra Blowe; two sisters—Clelia Pierce, Cabool, MO, and Myrtle Reeds, Nashville, TN.

290 Attend Bible College Welcome Days

NASHVILLE, TN—Free Will Baptist Bible College registered 290 visiting students and sponsors for its fall "open house" November 18-20, according to Neil Gilliland, recruitment director. The occasion was the first of two Welcome Days the college holds each year.

Visitors came from 63 churches in 17 states. The leading state was Illinois, with 54. Camp Creek FWB Church, from Huntington, WV, brought the largest delegation, with 17. It was followed closely by a group of 13 from Decatur FWB Church, Decatur, IL.

State registrations were:

Alabama	24
Arkansas	35
California	1
Florida	8
Georgia	14
Illinois	54
Indiana	7
Kentucky	40
Michigan	10
Missouri	4
Mississippi	6
North Carolina	14
Ohio	10
South Carolina	8
Tennessee	24
Virginia	14
West Virginia	17

The group included 81 young men, 123 young women and 86 sponsors.

Mr. Gilliland was pleased with the attendance and with the warm welcome extended by FWBBC students toward those who visited.

The spring Welcome Days, usually the largest of the year, is scheduled for March 6-10. Registration materials are available by writing or calling:

Welcome Days
Free Will Baptist Bible College
3606 West End Avenue
Nashville, TN 37205
1-800-76-FWBBC

Church Honors Deacon

RICHMOND, VA—Members of First FWB Church of Richmond, Virginia, honored Deacon Bruce Smith and his wife Mary for serving over 25 years as chairman of the church's deacon board. Brother Smith stepped aside November 1, 1993, as chairman of the deacon board.

The emeritus deacon of the church, M. E. Howard, presented the Smiths a plaque for years of faithful service to the cause of Christ. Church members gave testimony to the Smiths' faithfulness. After the service, the Smiths were honored guests for a meal and time of fellowship.

The deacon board elected Jerry McPeak as its new chair-

man. Reverend Larry Russell pastors the church. First FWB

Church is a member of Virginia's Tidewater Association.



Deacon emeritus M. E. Howard (L) presents plaque to Bruce and Mary Smith

Church Displays Large Christmas Mural

MOBILE, AL—Members at First FWB Church in Mobile are not sure if they set a record, but they do know that their December 1993 Christmas mural is big. Designed by Pastor Greg Holli-

"It did not end with a cradle nor a cross but a crown, and one day He will be back."

Pastor Hollifield explains, "The Christmas story is just the opening chapter on the life of Jesus.

wanted to remind everyone that Jesus was born in order to die for our sins. Beyond that, we hoped to say something about Jesus' present Lordship and imminent return."



Christmas mural at First Free Will Baptist Church, Mobile, Alabama.

field, the mural stands eight feet tall and 28 feet wide depicting scenes from the life of Christ.

The message of the mural is,

Unfortunately, many churches leave the impression that Christ's birth was an end in itself. It wasn't. It was a means to an end. We

is so little decoration which depicts the real meaning of Christmas and its complete story."

Church members contributed to a special fund to underwrite the Christmas project. It cost less than \$300 to design, paint and erect the mural. Church song leader and resident artist Gerry Cannon painted it. Sunday School superintendent W. C. Weaver assembled it.

One member, Mrs. JarmaLee Jones Young, said, "Our church feels it's most appropriate to display this mural at Christmas, since there

Bible College Names Conference Speakers



NASHVILLE, TN—Dr. James Draper, Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, will headline a list of speakers for Free Will Baptist Bible College's spring Bible Conference, March 6-10, according to Dr. Robert Picirilli, academic dean.

Other speakers include Rev.

Henry Horne, Rev. Vernon Barker, and Rev. Terry Forrest. Two students will also be included on the program.

Dr. Draper, an Arkansas native, brought 35 years of pastoral experience with him when he became the eighth president of the Baptist Sunday School Board in 1991. He left the 8,200-member First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, where he served for 16 years as pastor, to direct the work of one of the largest religious publishing houses in the world. Dr. Draper also served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1982-84.

Rev. Horne is a 1979 FWBBC graduate. He is currently in his seventh year as pastor of Union Chapel Free Will Baptist Church, Chocowinity, North Carolina.

Rev. Barker is an evangelist

who makes his home in Joelton, Tennessee. He is a 1974 alumnus of Free Will Baptist Bible College.

Rev. Forrest served for 20 years as a Free Will Baptist pastor before he moved to Nashville in 1991 to serve as dean of students at FWBBC. He is a 1971 graduate of the Bible College.

Two student preachers—José Rodriguez and Mark Kiepke—will each speak once during the conference.

The FWBBC Alumni Association will hold its annual business meeting during the week and will elect officers.

The college welcomes all visitors to the 1994 Bible Conference, March 6-10.

New Church to Join Idaho District

NAMPA, ID—Pastor Delmar Hopkins said he plans to lead Nampa FWB Church in Nampa to petition the Idaho District Association in March 1994. The Nampa Church began in July 1992 and met in an American Legion Hall before relocating to a rented church building.

The church organized in November 1992. The two-story structure where they meet contains eight classrooms upstairs and four downstairs.

Reverend Hopkins reported 20 conversions and five rededications. The group averages 48 in worship service and 32 in Wednesday prayer meetings.

Hopkins said that when the Lord led him to Nampa, he prayed for three things—a building in which to worship, a piano player and a bus. He found a building the first day. A piano player showed up at church on the first Wednesday night in their new building. Someone gave a



Nampa Free Will Baptist Church, Nampa, Idaho

\$1,200, 1978 Ford bus.

The group ordained their first deacon, 40-year-old Steve Hopkins, the pastor's brother. On a somber note, Reverend Everett Hopkins, 75, died in March 1992. He had been a Free Will Baptist

preacher since 1965. He preached Wednesday night and died on Friday.

The Idaho District Association contains five churches and about 200 members.

Eight months ago, the **Santa Paula FWB Church** in **Santa Paula, CA**, began a Spanish-speaking adult Sunday School class. Pastor **Rick Scroggins** said the class averages 15 and has generated six baptisms and five conversions. The Sunday morning service is now bi-lingual with a Christian dentist translating via a wireless intercom system with ear-phones for each listener.

For more than 40 years, Mrs. **Elsie Kemp** has collected Free Will Baptist historical materials for the state of **California**. The Kemp files have been given to the California FWB Historical Commission and will become a permanent part of the collection housed at California Christian College in Fresno. **Rodney** and **Elsie Kemp** have been members of **Kerman FWB Church** since 1945. He died in 1992.

Need a Christmas idea for 1994? Here's a winner. Pastor **Wayne Bookout** gave *Contact* gift subscriptions to six of his deacons. Bookout pastors **First FWB Church** in **Blackwell, OK**.

Contact welcomes **The Encourager**, publication of The Barnabas Project Sunday School Class at **Donelson FWB Church** in **Nashville, TN**. **Don Redden** serves as editor for the eight-page newsletter. **Rob Morgan** pastors.

Gloryland FWB Church in **York, SC**, purchased a one-acre tract of land in 1993. Members paid just over \$71,000 for land and a building which they renovated. Pastor **Phil Lemmons** said the congregation now has a 126-seat sanctuary and four classrooms. The church is barely two years old.

The new mission church in **Rock Hill, SC**, began on March 21, 1993, with 18 in attendance. Pastor **Daggett Duncan** said the group now averages 27 in attendance. They recently negotiated the purchase of a five-acre tract and selected the name for their church—**New Vision FWB Church**.

Members of **Lockhart FWB Church** in **Lockhart, SC**, celebrated their 77th anniversary and dedicated their new fellowship hall, according to Pastor **Danny Keen**. Thanks to a \$259,000 investment, the group now has a 220-seat fellowship hall and an enlarged parking lot with 100 parking spaces.

Hurricane Hugo swept across **Andrews, SC**, in 1989, heavily damaging **Black River FWB Church**. Pastor **John Hudson** said members completed a \$107,000 remodeling project in time for their 1993 homecoming.

When two men interrupted the morning service at **Olanta FWB Church** in **Olanta, SC**, and entered the sanctuary carrying a recliner chair, Pastor **Murrell Young** knew that he was in for a surprise. The men gave the recliner to Pastor Young as a gift and then members filed by and presented him with \$265 in cash. SC Promotional Director **Norwood Gibson** attended the Pastor Appreciation Day and brought the morning message.

New Prospect FWB Church in **Pamplico, SC**, dedicated their new gymnasium, according to Pastor **Joe Cagle**. The project cost \$90,000, took five months to complete and resulted in 8,800 square feet of basketball court, bleachers and stage. The old gymnasium was renovated into six classrooms. Pastor Cagle has served 26 years at the church.

Carlisle Jones served 38 years as clerk-treasurer of **South Carolina's Eastern Conference**. Conference officials recognized and honored Brother Jones for his faithfulness and presented him with a plaque of appreciation.

Gwen Hendrix, president of the **South Carolina State Auxiliary Convention**, said the group raised more than \$6,000 for missionaries **Ron and Linda Moore**.

Pastor **Dale Burden** said 310 children rode busses to **Gateway FWB Church** in **Virginia Beach, VA**, on a recent Sunday.

Pastor **Danny Gray** said **Pittsburgh FWB Church** in **Pittsburgh, IL**, was on fire—quite literally. A member driving by the church one Friday at 3:00 p.m. detected smoke coming from the west side of the building. Volunteer firemen responded immediately with fire trucks coming from nearby communities. The fire burned a large hole through the nursery, but the church was not destroyed. The group began a children's church ministry which averages 30 in attendance.

Contact welcomes **c c rapp**, quarterly newsletter from the children's church at **Cofer's Chapel FWB Church** in **Nashville, TN**. The four-page newsletter first appeared in November 1993. **Larry Powell** pastors.

Missouri has a new Free Will Baptist church. It's the **Bethel FWB Church** at **Northview**, east of Springfield. Executive Secretary **Nathan Ruble** delivered the organizational message. **Dale Skiles**, director of Missouri Home Missions, moderated the meeting. **James Crawford** pastors.

Pleasant Hill FWB Church in **Thayer, MO**, celebrated 75 years in the community. Pastor **Walter Simpson** said eight men have been called to preach from the church ranks. The church organized in 1918 with 17 charter members. The congregation erected a new sanctuary in 1978.

Pastor **Kent Barwick** reports five new members and three baptisms at **Homer-ville FWB Church** in **Homerville, GA**.

The primary Sunday School class at **Arnett Chapel FWB Church** in **Arnett, WV**, got involved in the flood-relief program. Class members did chores, gave offerings and talked three other Sunday School classes into helping their project. They raised \$70 for the **Hannibal FWB Mission** in **Hannibal, MO**. **Terri Jarrell** teaches that innovative primary Sunday School class.

Ohio evangelist **Clovis Vanover** reports 36 conversions and rededications in eight revival meetings that he has preached.

Pastor **David Schug** said, "I have never seen anything like it in my lifetime." He made that statement regarding a tent revival sponsored by **Woodland Chapel FWB Church** in **Ironton, OH**. More than 2,000 people attended the five-day meeting. Evangelist **Calvin Evans** led the services. ■



THE FREE WILL BAPTIST FOUNDATION

Can Your Church Benefit From A Revocable Trust?

By David L. Brown

The Free Will Baptist Foundation has designed a special revocable trust for local churches, associations and/or other denominational organizations. A minimum deposit of \$1,000 will establish a trust. Deposits of any size may be added from time to time.

A revocable trust is a simple legal instrument with two basic features. First, it gives directions for the management and distribution of the assets. Second, these directions include the right to change or terminate the instrument by revoking it.

The Foundation invests the trust funds and pays income directly to the church or adds it to the trust to compound. Interest is earned monthly and compounded semi-annually. The church or organization may, with a short notice, withdraw part or all of the funds at any time.

Although these revocable trusts do not have a guaranteed earnings rate, the average return for the last 13 years has exceeded passbook savings account rates. The Foundation paid an average rate of 5.25% for the past year. All investments are made in agreement with our Church Covenant.

Revocable trusts should not be considered a checking account. They are designed to serve projects that involve accumulating funds for six months or more. The Foundation currently manages revocable trusts for churches in several states. Some are serving as building fund accounts, others as reserve funds or project accounts. A few churches have established a revocable trust to serve as a perpetual fund for present needs with future access to the principal.

Often a church needs to accumulate funds for a project requiring large sums of money. Yet the treasurer may not have the expertise to invest these funds and, therefore, simply deposits them into a passbook savings account earning 2-3%. With no directions from the church, some simply leave the funds in the checking account earning no interest. Seeking higher returns, others may lock up the funds in long-term certificates of deposit with signifi-

cant withdrawal penalties.

Your church may benefit by establishing a revocable trust with the Free Will Baptist Foundation.

CONSIDER:

- Earnings rates are generally higher than bank rates.
- Funds are prudently managed.
- Access to part or all of the funds is available on short notice without penalty.
- Deposits may be added in any amount and earn interest from the day of deposit.
- Through the Foundation these trusts benefit our denomination. ■

Is your church or organization interested?
Call or write the Free Will Baptist Foundation.

HOME MISSIONS



The Blessings of Roll Call Sunday

By Roy Thomas

Mark your calendar! Roll Call Sunday is coming. Free Will Baptists will observe the eleventh annual Roll Call Sunday on March 27. This is a special day when Sunday morning worship attendance for every Free Will Baptist church is reported.

Almost 400 contact men will call Free Will Baptist pastors on Sunday afternoon to get the church attendance that day and the number of people saved. This represents a lot of work for these contact men and several state promotional men who graciously give of their time to get the figures. Roll Call Sunday involves several thousand dollars expense for the Home Missions Department, plus many weeks of work to tabulate the figures and compile the reports.

Roll Call Sunday is always observed the last Sunday in March to correspond with the final day of the Spring Sunday School Enlargement Campaign sponsored by the Sunday School Department. This gives Free Will Baptist churches the opportunity to work an entire month to build up to a record-breaking crowd on Roll Call Sunday.

The Home Missions Department believes Roll Call Sunday is a worthwhile endeavor. It has been a tool that pastors and churches have used to persuade people to attend church for the first time. *No one can come the second time or become a regular attender and faithful member until he attends the first time.* Attendance of newcomers encourages everyone and strengthens the faith of the congregation.

Some first time attenders, because they heard the gospel, were saved on Roll Call Sunday. A total of 706 conversions were recorded on this special day last year. Others were saved later as pastors and churches worked with them to lead them to Christ.

Roll Call Sunday has been used effectively

to round up "strays" and bring them back into the fold. Absentees are a big problem for most churches, but many have been brought back to church through the efforts of past Roll Call Sundays. As congregations have visited absentees and urged them to be present for this special day, the Holy Spirit has dealt with their hearts, and many of them have rededicated their lives to Christ to become faithful workers in the church.

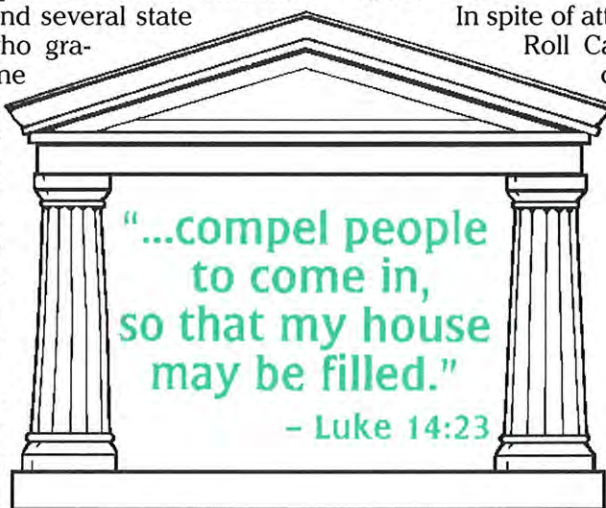
In spite of attendance being down on Roll Call Sunday last year because of bad weather in some areas which kept people from attending church, there was a total attendance of 224,547 in 2,640 Free Will Baptist churches. But this was up significantly from our first Roll Call Sunday in 1984 when 2,584 churches reported a total attendance of 198,239.

Roll Call Sunday is a special day the Home Missions Department

promotes each year to help pastors and churches have a record attendance. Many churches have reported record-breaking attendances and several conversions. For the churches which have worked at it, this special day has worked for them.

Will you accept the challenge to help your church break its attendance record on Roll Call Sunday? The Sunday School Department will be sending literature about the Spring Enlargement Campaign. Home Missions will send promotional literature about Roll Call Sunday to every pastor. There is a variety of attendance campaigns and promotional materials available to help every church have a record-breaking crowd.

The denominational goal for Roll Call Sunday is 270,000. I realize this is more than we had last year, but this goal is attainable, for we had 273,718 on Roll Call Sunday in 1991. Let's do it again! ■



FREE WILL BAPTIST BIBLE COLLEGE

Preaching Is Still Top Priority

An interview with Rev. Ralph Hampton, Chairman, Biblical & Ministry Studies Department

Has preparing preachers always been a priority at the Bible College?

Hampton—It has been the number one priority since the first class in 1942. It was the need for a prepared ministry, more than any other thing, which prompted the founding of the College. Without men of vision and wisdom in our pulpits, missions and other enterprises will die on the vine.

With so many new programs being offered, is training preachers still a priority?

Hampton—As the College has grown, many programs have been added, such as Business, Education and Sports Medicine. Does this mean we have changed our priorities? No. Our mission has always been to produce educated, dedicated, godly Christian workers, whether ministers or layworkers. We are still convinced that our main job is to train God-called preachers.

What is your goal in preparing preachers?

Hampton—Our goal is to equip them for leadership and ministry so that they can effectively serve Christ in their generation. We believe that means they must be spiritually equipped to minister in a pagan age. It means they must master the Word and be mastered by the Word. They must be men of vision, understanding and discernment in a world that is changing so rapidly it borders on chaos. Our goal is to help them become the kind of men the times require, then to give them the skills and tools they will need for their work.

Is one thing a "Top Priority"?

Hampton—Absolutely. Our top priority is the preparation of the heart to know and to do the will of God. All of the preparation we might provide a ministerial student will be nothing unless he allows God to give him a heart of love and passion—a holy man with a love for Christ, a burden for those who do not know Him, a compassionate shepherd of the sheep who has the fire of the Lord in his bones. That

is our number one priority.

But it is only half of the matter. The other side is this: we want him to preach the Word faithfully, compassionately and boldly—to fulfil his calling from God.

Is the College changing its program to prepare preachers for the 21st Century?

Hampton—The pastoral program has undergone many changes since 1942. Courses undergo continual revision and new courses are being created. We are determined to provide training for the future. Our commitment is first to the changeless Christ and the unchanging principles of God's Word. Second, it is to provide the training needed by tomorrow's preachers.

Recently, we combined the Bible and ministry faculties to provide a closer integration of the Word and ministry. We conduct Visiting Pastor Seminars, where ministerial students learn from men on the front lines of ministry. In March, we will send a group of young men to work with Home Missionary David Potete to plant a church in urban Chicago. We have two trips for our preachers planned this semester to give them both experience and exposure.

What dangers do you see for young preachers?

Hampton—Young ministers face the same kinds of perils their predecessors faced and a whole lot more. Confusion about the ministry can lead to overwork, discouragement and defeat. The pressures on the preacher and his family are tremendous. Denominational strife and confusion only add to this problem. The emphasis on success as defined by the world provides a strong temptation to substitute pop psychology and sociological strategies for the preaching of the Word and the power of the Spirit.

The ultimate danger is that the preacher will cease to be a man dominated by the Spirit and the Book: his voice silenced by doubts, fears, or his own moral failures. That would be the greatest tragedy of all. ■

Capital Stewardship/Victory Campaign

December 1993

Update

State	Goal	Gifts	Balance
Alabama	\$76,397.63	\$ 1,000.00	\$75,397.63
Arizona	1,228.93	1,800.00	(571.07)
Arkansas	76,860.94	27,720.44	49,140.50
Atlantic Canada	1,570.51	.00	1,570.51
California	17,216.76	5.00	17,211.76
Colorado	789.18	1,005.00	(215.82)
Florida	20,703.30	2,516.36	18,186.94
Georgia	38,179.19	16,730.03	21,449.16
Hawaii	184.54	500.00	(315.46)
Idaho	353.37	.00	353.37
Illinois	16,176.29	945.00	15,231.29
Indiana	7,868.27	1,200.00	6,668.27
Iowa	266.99	.00	266.99
Kansas	1,287.82	.00	1,287.82
Kentucky	35,454.34	2,877.29	32,577.05
Louisiana	94.23	1,020.00	(925.77)
Maryland	6,812.10	150.00	6,662.10
Michigan	15,116.19	1,680.00	13,436.19
Mississippi	15,559.86	895.00	14,664.86
Missouri	60,484.40	23,854.75	36,629.65
Montana	27.48	50.00	(22.52)
Nebraska	102.08	.00	102.08
New Mexico	596.80	.00	596.80
North Carolina	59,118.06	1,250.00	57,868.06
Northeast Assoc.	883.41	.00	883.41
Northwest Assoc.	1,087.58	.00	1,087.58
Ohio	40,923.66	6,617.61	34,306.05
Oklahoma	92,271.60	2,896.50	89,375.10
South Carolina	18,335.75	100.00	18,235.75
Tennessee	78,557.09	21,886.71	56,670.38
Texas	11,547.20	5,130.52	6,416.68
Virginia	24,323.33	405.00	23,918.33
West Virginia	46,204.51	320.00	45,884.51
Other	.00	2,978.85	(2,978.85)
Totals	\$766,538.39	\$125,534.06	\$641,049.33

Directory Update

CALIFORNIA

Patrick Palomo to First Church, Salinas from South Union Church, Bakersfield

FLORIDA

Mike Dankson to First Church, Auburndale

MICHIGAN

Mike Trimble to Kirby Church, Taylor from Camp Caleb, KY

NORTH CAROLINA

David Hutchinson to Oak Grove Church, Elm City from Swainsboro Church, Swainsboro, GA

SOUTH CAROLINA

Lester Hughes to Bethel Church, Fort Mill
David Austin to Liberty Church, Orangeburg
Troy Baldwin to Trinity Church, Una



December 1993

RECEIPTS:

State	Designated	CO-OP	Total	Dec. '92	Yr. To Date
Alabama	\$ 6,057.09	\$.00	\$ 6,057.09	\$ 118.89	\$ 86,917.99
Arizona	835.83	73.30	909.13	601.58	2,842.75
Arkansas	16,666.83	7,729.93	24,396.76	6,300.08	322,134.63
California	400.00	907.11	1,307.11	60.00	9,207.43
Colorado	.00	.00	.00	.00	250.00
Delaware	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Florida	.00	1,813.92	1,813.92	2,838.18	24,085.31
Georgia	14,388.64	1,437.14	15,825.78	15,917.74	133,253.35
Hawaii	.00	.00	.00	.00	500.00
Idaho	.00	.00	.00	.00	93.62
Illinois	10,482.16	3,084.87	13,567.03	11,302.43	90,923.04
Indiana	.00	.00	.00	659.52	7,942.78
Iowa	.00	.00	.00	.00	450.00
Kansas	.00	.00	.00	36.16	243.13
Kentucky	265.00	278.08	543.08	1,691.26	11,101.93
Louisiana	.00	.00	.00	.00	40.00
Maryland	.00	75.00	75.00	75.00	1,050.00
Michigan	20,373.48	2,771.18	23,144.66	16,141.58	175,819.96
Mississippi	15.00	168.49	183.49	549.56	6,500.50
Missouri	8,745.61	.00	8,745.61	10,999.97	126,188.12
Montana	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
New Jersey	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
New Mexico	.00	.00	.00	.00	768.68
North Carolina	347.00	26.00	373.00	916.00	15,987.32
Ohio	2,791.18	4,527.19	7,318.37	6,299.94	49,374.97
Oklahoma	53,512.53	199.82	53,712.35	56,020.12	522,545.10
South Carolina	23,749.60	98.17	23,847.77	22,261.67	216,355.33
Tennessee	9,596.65	979.92	10,576.57	8,141.18	95,363.02
Texas	8,781.72	849.39	9,631.11	10,087.94	105,806.04
Virginia	87.74	.00	87.74	562.50	10,320.19
West Virginia	3,799.53	.00	3,799.53	2,177.14	49,099.47
Canada	.00	.00	.00	.00	26.88
Northwest Assoc.	.00	.00	.00	.00	93.07
Other	.00	(.04)	(.04)	.00	168.87
Totals	\$180,895.59	\$25,019.47	\$205,915.06	\$173,758.44	\$2,065,453.48

DISBURSEMENTS:

Executive Office	\$ 9,611.63	\$15,711.47	\$ 25,323.10	\$ 25,323.09	\$ 303,877.07
Foreign Missions	107,814.27	2,140.84	109,955.11	84,161.05	1,077,695.39
FWBCC	9,978.87	2,140.84	12,119.71	9,316.54	129,418.91
Home Missions	44,539.70	1,675.43	46,215.13	41,516.10	387,350.94
Retirement & Insurance	620.65	1,303.14	1,923.79	2,236.05	26,882.13
Master's Men	1,329.53	1,303.14	2,632.67	2,399.97	35,345.43
Commission for					
Theological Integrity	67.79	46.53	114.32	168.50	1,787.08
FWB Foundation	1,175.06	558.49	1,733.55	1,331.12	17,512.05
Historical Commission	61.48	46.53	108.01	151.47	1,637.80
Music Commission	67.78	46.53	114.31	145.82	1,536.73
Radio & TV Commission	67.78	46.53	114.31	155.78	1,655.69
Hillsdale FWB College	1,652.70	.00	1,652.70	1,967.20	21,477.65
Other	3,908.35	.00	3,908.35	4,885.75	59,276.61
Totals	\$180,895.59	\$25,019.47	\$205,915.06	\$173,758.44	\$2,065,453.48

YOUTH UPDATE

Join Us for the 1994 National Youth Conference



**July 17 – 21, 1994 in
Little Rock, Arkansas**

This year you'll find excitement and enthusiasm as soon as you enter the Camelot Hotel and the Robinson Center. Hundreds of young people will gather from across the nation to learn about the strength and courage they can have through Jesus Christ. We've designed our worship services just for you. We'll search the Scriptures for those who found their strength in the Lord, and learn valuable lessons from their lives. Teens and children alike will not want to miss this uplifting event of the year!

Be looking next month for more!

Prophecy: 14 Essential Keys to Understanding the Final Drama

John W. Walvoord

(Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993, 195 pp., paperback, \$9.99)



Thomas Marberry

John F. Walvoord serves as chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary. He is the author of many books and is recognized as an outstanding dispensational premillennial scholar of this generation.

This work is a non-technical survey of the major elements of dispensational eschatology. It is written in clear, understandable style and can easily be read by ministers and laymen who do not have advanced theological education.

This work begins with an analysis of certain basic principles of biblical interpretation such as the sovereignty of God, the accuracy of scripture and the understandability of prophecy. Dr. Walvoord briefly summarizes the major systems of eschatology (premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism) found today in American protestantism.

Most of this work is devoted to a summary of the major features of the dispensational system of interpretation. He explains the role of Israel and the role of the Gentiles in God's plan for the world; he outlines the

relationship between Israel and the Church during the millennial reign of Christ.

One of the most useful sections is chapter eight which discusses the intermediate state—the time between the death of the individual and the Second Coming of Christ. Biblical material on this subject is not extensive; the author does an excellent analysis of what the Bible does say.

For this writer, the most valuable part of the book was chapter 13 which examines the concepts of resurrection and judgment from a dispensational perspective. Walvoord argues that there are seven resurrections and that the first two have already occurred. He outlines when each resurrection will occur and which groups will be resurrected in each one.

Walvoord also argues that there are two different judgments, one for believers and another in which several different groups will be judged.

The final chapter is rather brief. It deals with the eternal state focusing on the new heaven, the new earth and the New Jerusalem. He argues (quite correctly) that the Bible teaches

that Heaven and Hell will last forever. There is no idea in the scripture that the wicked will be either saved or annihilated at some future time.

This book is a good brief presentation of the dispensational premillennial point of view. Those from other schools of thought will question certain assertions.

Many interpreters of scripture do not see the sharp differentiation between Israel and the Church which is one of the key ideas of dispensationalism. Other interpreters find no biblical evidence for a rapture or multiple resurrections and judgments.

Many Christians find quite troubling the teaching that people will have additional opportunities to accept Christ during the Tribulation and the Millennium.

Dispensational Premillennialism is an important school of thought today; it has many adherents in our denomination. Yet, it is a system of thought which is not always easy to understand. This small book is a good overview of this school of thought; it deserves to be read. ■

BEYOND BELIEF



RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY NEWS

Iranian Christian Faces Death Because of His Faith

TEHERAN, Iran—A Christian man in Iran who has been imprisoned for almost nine years is preparing to face possible death because of his faith.

Christians from Iran reported in late December that the fate of Mehdi Dibaj was unknown. They feared the worst following the December 3 trial, during which Dibaj refused to renounce his Christian faith.

Security concerns delayed getting news of Dibaj to the outside world, but a written copy of his message to the court was sent to churches in the West.

Once a nominal Muslim, Dibaj became a Christian and served as an evangelist. He also worked on the translation of the New Testament into Farsi, the main language of Iran.

Dibaj was arrested and charged with apostasy from Islam.

In his trial, Dibaj stated, "I have been charged with 'apostasy!' The invisible God who knows our hearts has given assurance to us Christians that we are not among the apostates who will perish but among the believers so that we may save our lives. In Islamic law an apostate is one who does not believe in

God, the prophets or the resurrection of the dead. We Christians believe in all three!"

He continued, "They say, 'You were a Muslim and you have become a Christian.' No, for many years I had no religion. After searching and studying I accepted God's call and I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ in order to receive eternal life. People choose their religion but a Christian is chosen by Christ. He says, 'You have not chosen me but I have chosen you.' From when? Before the foundation of the world."

Iranian Christians fear for Dibaj's life because Iranian law was changed in 1993 to prescribe death for Muslims who openly declare that they are Christians. Now, under Islamic law, a judge is required to issue a death sentence against converts convicted of apostasy—defined as "blaspheming the Prophet Mohammed."

According to Baptist Press, Christians outside Iran who follow events there have feared the policy change will make evangelistic outreach even more difficult. No reports of wide-spread executions of Christian converts have followed the law change, but such a sentence has been carried out before.

A recent known execution of an Iranian Christian occurred December 3, 1990, when

Hoosein Soodmand, an Assemblies of God pastor, was hanged.

In November the Iranian government demanded that all Christian congregations sign declarations promising not to evangelize Muslims. Some signed, according to reports, but the Assemblies of God and Brethren churches refused. The issue reportedly is causing friction among some of the groups.

At the same time, ministers are being intimidated. Some have received threats by phone that their children will be kidnapped. Some churches have been ordered to discontinue worship on Fridays and have been told that Sunday worshipers would have to show identity cards indicating their religious affiliation—Christian or Muslim.

Reports of Christian growth continue to filter out of Iran, despite the increased persecution of recent years. Some Iranian Christian leaders claim Iranians are the most responsive to the gospel of people in the region. But the Islamic hold on government continues to wage a fierce, violent battle against Christianity as well as more moderate Islamic factions.

Get rid of this magazine!

No, we don't want you to trash it—we want you to pass along this *Contact* to someone else. A friend or relative, perhaps. Or to someone you'll never meet in a laundromat or waiting room. With a little help from you, this very magazine might make a big difference in someone's life.

Here's another way for *Contact* to help someone: Give a gift subscription. Share *Contact*.

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Whose Move is It?

The December 1993 issue of *Association Meetings*, a bi-monthly publication for the meetings industry, features a lead article titled, "Game Plan 1994: Get a Strategy." It's a gloves-off search for winning strategies regarding the toughest issues facing meeting sponsors and planners.

But that's not what caught my eye. What drew me to the article was the cover art depicting end-game play in a chess match. The black queen has the white king in check, while the white bishop, threatening the black queen, is itself endangered by a black pawn.

Is the game over? It all depends on who has the next move. Apparently, the artist thought so, because when the cover story begins on page 20, the white king has capitulated.

My question: Since it was obviously white move, why didn't the white bishop take the black queen and eliminate the greatest threat?

Life is like that. We meet people on the job, at church or in a crisis situation who think they have only one choice left—capitulation. Caving in to the pressure or the demands of circumstances, or giving up in face of what appears to be insurmountable odds.

They have stared at the squares of life so long that all they can see are the terrors closing in on them. Their choices have become narrower and narrower until the only thing left appears to be divorce or suicide or adultery or bankruptcy or a hundred other decisions of despair.

When trouble traps us in the corners of life, we sometimes get desperate, and desperate people do desperate things.

You've seen it before—the teen who feels rejected and misunderstood at home turns to the worst

possible solution, drugs or alcohol. The young wife who feels neglected by her busy husband finds plenty of attention in the arms of a gigolo. The pastor at the end of his rope financially takes money from the church treasury.

The names change, the circumstances shift, but desperate people have one thing in common. They cut themselves off from the resources that could help them avoid a cynical attitude, avoid giving in to the lure of greener pastures, avoid buying into the materialism of this age.

Everybody has choices. The good news is that there are far more people out there who want to help you than who want to harm you. The bad news is that those who want to help usually wait for you to request it. Those who want to hurt you are the predators who can sense a person with problems, and then stalk them without shame.

Is there a solution? Yes, it begins here.

Don't be a loner. We need each other. The strongest among us eventually need somebody to say it's all right, to hold us when the night is darkest. That instinct to seek solace in the company of others is God's built-in survival mode for us. It's normal.

You don't have to face whatever it is that's terrifying you alone. But you've got to *tell* people that you hurt, that you feel alone, that you need financial help, that you can't face your abusive childhood.

The Christian always has one move left. He can turn to God. God told Jeremiah, "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?" (32:27). God has the power to change what can not be changed, to open what's locked shut.



Jack Williams

The Christian can turn to God's people. The people of God care when the rest of society gives up. They trust us when nobody else will. They believe in us when nobody else does. They accept us even when we show up at the church door straight from the far country reeking of the hog pen.

The Christian can turn to God's Book. The Bible speaks directly to every problem that men face. Its principles provide solutions to life's wrongs. The Bible offers hope for those in despair. It offers relief for those struggling with the cares of life. It promises eternal life to those who believe in Jesus.

Do you feel trapped by circumstances, hounded by events you cannot change, betrayed by your own emotions or loved ones you trusted? Take heart; there is a Power, a people and a place that want you and love you. Yes, you are important enough to claim the attention of Heaven.

Ignore those who insist that you can never do better or be better. You *can*, by God's grace. You may have done all you can do at the moment financially or emotionally, and still it isn't enough. Even though circumstances may have you in check, you have another resource to remove your greatest threat

. . . . That resource is God.

Is the game over for you? Maybe, but it doesn't have to be, because . . .

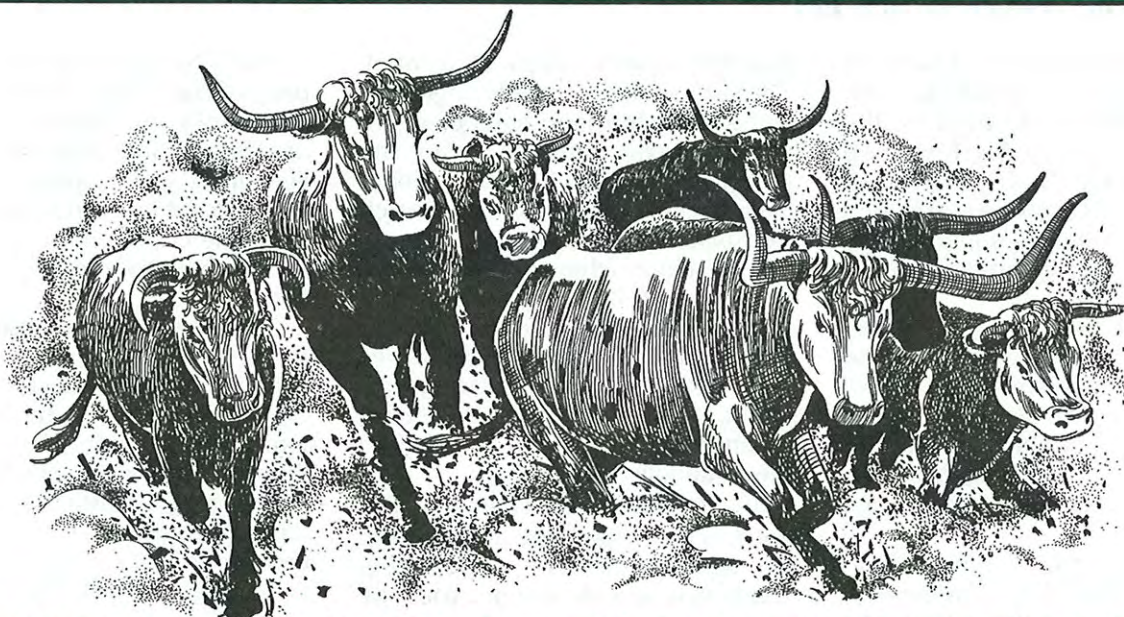
. . . It's your move. ■

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