

ONE LORD ONE VOICE ONE VISION

ONE magazine

FEBRUARY-MARCH • 2022

Past the Offering Plate

**The Disappointing
Call of God**

*Whatever Happened
to Soul Winning?*

The Giving Lamp

Why Is "Legacy Leaving" Important?

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*To communicate to Free Will Baptists a unifying vision
of our role in the extension of God's Kingdom*

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A Different Question

BY ERIC K. THOMSEN

“How did you do it?”

It’s the question I hear most often since reaching several fitness and weight loss milestones. It’s a natural question. After losing 80 pounds, my appearance has changed dramatically, especially for those who haven’t seen me recently.

I’m happy to answer, but the response is rarely the one the asker wants: fresh veggies, lean meats, nothing fried, low sugar, even lower salt, no sodas or sweet drinks, cardio training six days a week, accompanied by at least three days of resistance and weight training. (Not to mention getting more sleep and working fewer hours at night.)

Usually, heads start shaking halfway through my answer. Before I can share the incredible benefits that outweigh the pain of these lifestyle changes, they quietly check out of the conversation. One brutally honest friend stared at me in utter disbelief and bluntly replied, “I’d rather stay fat and die early. At least I would be happy.”

Ouch!

The truth is, I wish they would ask *why* I did it before they ask *how*. Again, the answer is straightforward, though more painful to confess. After decades of yo-yo dieting, working unreasonably long hours, ignoring early warning signs of neglected health, and making food a convenient (though tasty) escape from stress, God convicted me. Deeply. I was not setting the right example for those around me.

Specifically, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 reminded me my body is not truly my own. It is the temple of the Holy Spirit, bought with a price and intended to bring glory to God. Every glance in the mirror or quick jog up a flight of stairs reminded me how far I had fallen short. My physical body wasn’t bringing

glory to God or helping me serve Him effectively.

I repented. And, together, my wife and I made it our goal to be better stewards of our health. Along the way, we learned some hard but important lessons.

- **Find what works for you.** Everyone is different. One may need only cut back on sodas or dial back the caramel frappuccinos to shed excess pounds. Another may need a total lifestyle change. Set simple goals and decide how you will reach those goals.
- **Seek help and accountability.** I turned to a member of my Sunday School class. A personal trainer, Will helped me design a lifestyle of exercise and eating that was attainable, though challenging. Then he pushed... hard. And I’m so glad he did. (He will push you, too. Read his article “It’s Time to Move!” on page 14).
- **Don’t rely on shortcuts.** While I’m not discounting the use of supplements, healthy diets, or fitness regimens, don’t be fooled. There are no shortcuts to good health. All require work, discipline, and self-control.
- With that in mind, be prepared to **commit**. It’s tough. Period. And it takes time. Making good choices after decades of poor ones is hard, especially at first. It takes sheer determination, and some days, even that will not be enough. I suggest a prayer team to pray for you daily and encourage you faithfully.

The journey to better health has not been easy. Nor do I think I have arrived or set myself as an example to follow. The truth is—day in and day out—I battle my ongoing addiction to the sweet and savory. But I have come to see each new day as an opportunity to give my all back to the One who gave His all for me.

Please pray I will have the strength to continue. **ONE**

About the Columnist: Eric K. Thomsen is managing editor of *ONE Magazine*.
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I so-appreciated Judy Combs Puckett covering a much-needed subject with her article, "Can You Hear Me Now?" (June-July, 2021). It resonated so sympathetically with me, I felt like she was reading my mind. I began to lose my hearing in my 30s, and was diagnosed with profound hearing loss by age 50. Even after wearing the most powerful hearing aids available for the past 18 years, I struggle and often give up in a congregational or classroom setting. I've been mislabeled as unfriendly, snobby, and distant, when in reality, I simply cannot hear.

Music has been a huge part of my life, and I miss it so much, as I'm

unable to identify any musical tones at all now. I do recognize there are many serious things worse than deafness (and I'm grateful for hearing aids), but I wanted to thank Mrs. Puckett for writing the article, and *ONE Magazine* for printing it, because it shines a light on the many challenges that hearing-impaired people of all ages are faced with in worship/classroom/social settings.

—Anita Ellis Haney, Cookeville, Tennessee

Read the article: onemag.org/hear_me.htm

Have something to say? Say it! Your feedback, comments, and suggestions are appreciated.

Email editor@nafwb.org or send correspondence to: **ONE Magazine, Letters to the Editor, PO Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011-5002**

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THE Giving Lamp

BY DONNA CRABTREE

“Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the king’s work, offered willingly...Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy” (1 Chronicles 29:6, 9).

I’ll never forget the day from my childhood when Daddy told us we were going Christmas shopping.

I was so excited! He gave my twin sister and me 5 dollars each to buy Christmas presents. I could not wait to see what I could purchase for each of my family members. In 1964, 5 dollars was a lot of money. I remember the car ride to the store vividly. “Silver Bells” played on the car radio, and every time I hear that song, it takes me back.

Do we rejoice when we give our tithes and offerings? Or have we forgotten the promises of God?

We went to Woolworth's first. That's where I saw the lamp. I still see it sitting on the shelf, the most beautiful lamp I had ever seen. It was about 16 inches high and had a white, plastic bubble shade on it. I thought, "Momma would love this" and asked my sister what she thought. She agreed it was beautiful, and we decided to buy it. If I remember correctly, it only cost 3 dollars. I do not remember buying anything else for any other family members that day, though I am sure I did. I was too excited about giving Momma the lamp.

I will never forget the look on her face when Mom opened our lamp on Christmas Day. She smiled and told us how much she loved it. She plugged it in and turned it on. It

was beautiful. Momma kept that cheap lamp for many years, not because she had to, but because we had given it to her. I don't know what eventually happened to it, although I wish she had kept it, and I had it now to remind me of her. Though of little value in 1964, to me, the lamp was priceless. Did it matter that it only cost 3 dollars? No! The joy of giving it to our mom made it priceless.

This memory reminds me of a sermon my husband Jeff recently shared from 1 Chronicles 29:6-9. In this passage, King David told the assembly he had provided means for Solomon to build a temple. He encouraged the other leaders to make their own free will offerings, so a temple could be built.

Following David's example and challenge, Israel's leaders gave willingly and generously. The people rejoiced as they witnessed their leaders giving from the heart. They had not been forced to give an offering; they wanted to. It made them happy—so happy they began to rejoice.

King David also rejoiced at the generosity of his leaders. They did not give for recognition but to make it possible for the work of God to be completed. I suspect some gave sacrificially, understanding Israel needed a temple. The people followed their example, giving generously themselves and sharing in the rejoicing. David was humbled. He thanked God for blessing Israel, so the people could give back to God with such generosity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has left us all uneasy. Inflation is up, supplies are limited, and many are hurting financially. Giving is down in many areas of ministry, from the local church to denominational departments. It is harder to give when times are uncertain or you are hurting financially, but God's Word encourages us to give, trusting God will provide. Scripture provides many examples of God's promise to provide for us if we trust Him (Philippians 4:19; Matthew 6:31-33; Luke 12:24).

Do we *rejoice* when we give our tithes and offerings? Or have we forgotten the promises of God? It is easy to slip into "survival mode," and the continuing chaos in the world can easily draw our minds away from God's promises to protect us and provide for us. We need to pause regularly and remember: while we may not have everything we desire, we have all we need. When I pray each day, I thank God for His provisions and blessings. We have the precious promises that God loves us and cares for us. We should rejoice in those facts.

So, when you look at your paycheck this week and wonder if it will cover expenses, remember God wants us to give. Churches, colleges, mission works, and departmental offices are depending on us and will suffer if we do not follow His leading. We must trust God and give willingly, with a joyful heart. Few of us will be rich in this world's wealth, but we can be rich in God's blessings. Let us give from our hearts and rejoice because we have the means and opportunity to give back to God a portion of what He has given us.

We can rejoice when we give because God's works will continue as He promised. When we give, we join Him in building His Kingdom. Maybe we can't give as much as we gave before COVID-19, but we should give what we can, with gratitude. With the Lord's help, in time we will recover from this seemingly endless pandemic. When it is finally over, we will be able to say, "I trusted God with my finances, and He took care of me as He promised."

Rejoice in giving and being part of God's great work being done. As "the giving lamp" taught me in my childhood, it is *always* more blessed to give than to receive. **ONE**

About the Author: Donna Crabtree and her husband Jeff minister at Serenity FWB Church in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada.



DON'T TAKE THE GAMBLE



ONE PASTOR CONFRONTS THE GROWING PROBLEM OF GAMBLING

BY COREY MINTER

Lately, nearly every ad I encounter on social media centers around gambling. I imagine it is because I fit the target demographic, but my friends who subscribe to cable tell me the assault has been going on for months. In fact, since the Supreme Court ruled prohibition of sports gambling inhibited states' rights in 2018 (*Murphy v. NCCAA*), we all have encountered more than our fair share of betting propaganda.

During the short years since that landmark decision, sports betting has been legalized in 32 states, plus Washington, D.C. I cannot fathom the turmoil this has caused athletic organizations that endeavor to make all sporting competitions fair and unbiased.

The legalization has merely brought to light activities already practiced in the dark. Before the Supreme Court ruling, Americans illegally chanced \$150 billion on athletic competitions. Now, the legalized industry flaunts annual gains of \$165 billion, not including those who continue to gamble illegally.¹

This article is not about the undeniable corruption our favorite leagues face, nor is it a political tirade against a legal decision. While I find those aspects of the issue worrisome, my primary concern is the normalizing of a harmful habit. If viewed often enough, or if the commer-

cial is entertaining enough, I think we all run the risk of being desensitized to a vice hawked as harmless.

The whole industry is passed off as innocent entertainment—just another friendly way to enjoy the games we all love. However, as is the case with all advertising, the glitzy ads don't show the beastly underbelly. Marital strain, reverse mortgages, hungry children, and delinquent bills never make the 30-second commercial cut. I foresee a series of “make-up” ads in future decades like those produced by big tobacco. Why? Because gambling is harmful.

Let's be clear. **Out-of-control gambling is a clinically recognized behavioral addiction.** It has strained many relationships and strangled more. I will never forget when, as a new pastor, a gentleman approached me after a service, completely broken because he had lost so much of his hard-earned money on online poker. He was devastated. But more than that, he was confused, confessing “I don't know where it all went.”

He fell prey to common ploys casinos have implemented for the last century. Distance people from their money by exchanging cash for chips, so they do not see the stack of bills depleting. Front players some chips at the outset to prime the pump. Let them feel they could win it all back with one hand, maybe at a lower buy-in. Foster a disingenuous relationship with them through congenial dealers.

¹ <https://www.yahoo.com/now/large-sports-gambling-industry-america-220053996.html>

Online sports gambling does many of the same things. The online interface additionally makes it a faceless threat, often indulged without trusted friends and family members to hold you accountable. Even when practiced within a community of peers (think fantasy leagues), it is more than likely accompanied by a hefty dose of “friendly” goading to risk a little more.

The sports gambling industry plays on the unhealthy emotional attachment many have with their favorite teams and players. Perhaps you have heard ads do this by calling users “ultimate” fans. The implication? You are not truly a fan unless you are willing to “put some skin in the game.”

Take a moment for a quick Internet search for “sports gambling,” and you will find dozens of articles from reputable sources offering both empirical and anecdotal data demonstrating this vice has not been good for society. Throw a global pandemic into the mix when people were encouraged (or required) to stay home and often glued to their screens, and the result is disastrous. One state with recently legalized online sports gambling registered a 10% uptick in calls to its gambling helpline within a single year of legalization.²

The problem is real, and as with every aspect of life, **children of God ought to view gambling through the lens and filter of God’s Word.** Although the Bible may not outright condemn gambling as a sin by name, many pas-

sages warn the wise against it. “Thou shall not covet” (Exodus 20:17a) and “The love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Timothy 6:10a) are go-to verses that speak in generic terms to our relationship with money. And, honestly, they should be applied to every side-hustle we chase.

But Proverbs 13:11 gets right to the core issue of gambling. In his writings to the wise, Solomon told readers fast money dis-

appears quickly (here today, gone tomorrow), and wealth is best built steadily, over time. In this proverb, God’s wisest man defined both the allures and dangers of gambling. The attraction is obvious: obtaining money quickly without having to work for it. This sounds like the best thing ever. But Solomon warns against this type of windfall. His

warning is valid, considering how quickly lottery winners blow through their winnings. For instance: one study of Florida winners revealed 70% spent every dime of their newfound fortune within five years.³

However, **the greatest danger in getting rich quickly**, whether through risky stock market speculation, the latest financial trends, or online sports gaming **is that it diminishes the merit of a hard day’s work.** Work is good. It was ordained by God before humanity’s fall. Through it, we learn the value of planning for the future and the blessings of generosity. The consistent “clocking in” to work diligently until day’s end reminds the believer work remains to be done for the Kingdom until Christ calls us home. Careful management of work and finances is a key element to a life of stewardship.

Gambling and other risky financial ventures fly in the face of the simple life to which Christ called His Church in the book of Acts, when the early church gathered daily in the temple, enjoyed meals from house to house with gladness, simplicity, and praise. These simple, heartfelt actions won the favor of the community, and God added to the church exponentially (Acts 2:46-47).

If I am in the advertising crosshairs of the gambling monoliths (and I do mean *crosshairs*), I am sure others my age and younger, who are still seeking to establish themselves, are seeing the same ads.

Don’t take the gamble! Don’t fall prey to the seeming innocence of gambling or become desensitized to its perils and pitfalls through engaging advertising. Instead, live by the words of the author of Hebrews. “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5).


Recall the words of Christ Himself that have impacted our finances for the two millennia since He spoke them: “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21). **ONE**

About the Author: Corey Minter, a graduate of Gateway Christian College, has been lead pastor of New Hope FWB Church since early 2014. Corey met his wife Rachel at the church they attended in their hometown of Virginia Beach. They have two daughters, Claire and Naomi. In his spare time, Corey enjoys hiking, kayaking, and trying new local restaurants with his family.

3 <https://www.creditdonkey.com/lottery-winner-statistics.html>

Although the Bible may not outright condemn gambling as a sin by name, many passages warn the wise against it.

2 <https://www.indystar.com/story/sports/2021/10/07/indiana-sports-betting-2-years-after-legalization-addicts-born/5609398001/>



WHY IS “Legacy Leaving” IMPORTANT?

BY JOHN BRUMMITT

Legacy: a gift by will, especially of money or other personal property; something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past (*Merriam-Webster*).

I have been thinking about “legacy leaving” over the last several months. Often, we focus on our legacies and what we will leave to our kids as we get closer to the end of our lives. While the idea of a legacy isn’t something most think about in their 20s, 30s, or even 40s, those are the years we *should* be preparing our legacy.

The financial world includes a legacy-planning industry. For most people of modest means, this looks something like an estate plan, beneficiary accounts, and telling our kids and loved ones what we would like done after we are gone. Most of the time, legacy planning is an after-thought—or not a thought—until retirement years or we near the close of our working careers. Depending on the survey, only 42-45% of adults have a basic estate plan in place.

Leaving a legacy isn’t something that happens accidentally. Most significant legacies are built over years of cultivating and developing a passion for a particular need. Much attention goes to wealthy “legacy leavers,” and people with more modest means probably won’t have the legacy capital to have a hospital named after them. Yet it is individuals of modest means who support and maintain most non-profit and religious organizations. These “average” donors are the lifeblood of those organizations. When they pass off the scene, if someone doesn’t fill their place with the same passion and drive, the ministry or organization begins to struggle and, at some point, if not corrected, will pass off the scene as well.

Therefore, it is crucial to build and leave a legacy!

God has uniquely gifted you and given you passions to support different ministries and organizations. When you are gone, who will carry that torch? Whether financially or by passing your passion to the next generation, a legacy is the best way to move the mission forward.

Both finance and passion can only be passed on through years of work and preparation. We raise our families to carry on specific values and traditions important to our family identity. As we consider those ministries about which we are passionate and have supported and built throughout our lives, we must consider our plan once we

are gone. "Legacy leavers" consider the mission's success after they leave the scene.

*God has uniquely
gifted you and
given you passions
to support different
ministries and
organizations.
When you are
gone, who will
carry that torch?*

Your legacy to your children is to set them up for success after you are gone, and financial legacy is only one part of that equation. Leaving a lump sum isn't a legacy but a simple passing of assets. Legacy leavers give their children *purpose* beneath their gift of assets. For instance: leave financial assets to

your children designated for grandchildren's education or help fund annual family get-togethers to ensure your family remains close after you are gone.

If you are passionate about a ministry or organization, what legacy will you leave? For many, local church congregations are second families. We attend, fellowship, and work together throughout our lives, but what happens after we are gone? Legacy leavers purposefully carry on after they are gone. This purpose could be fulfilled through planned giving through the FWB Foundation to replace tithes or by mentoring others to fill our roles when the time comes.

Planning is the key to leaving a legacy. God uniquely gifts each of us to do and be passionate about different things. Let's make sure those unique gifts and passions do not leave with us when we are called home. **ONE**

About the Author: John Brummitt became director of the Free Will Baptist Board of Retirement in January 2016. He graduated in 2011 with an MBA from Tennessee Tech University. A 2004 graduate of Welch College, he has been with the Board of Retirement since spring 2006. Learn more: www.boardofretirement.com.

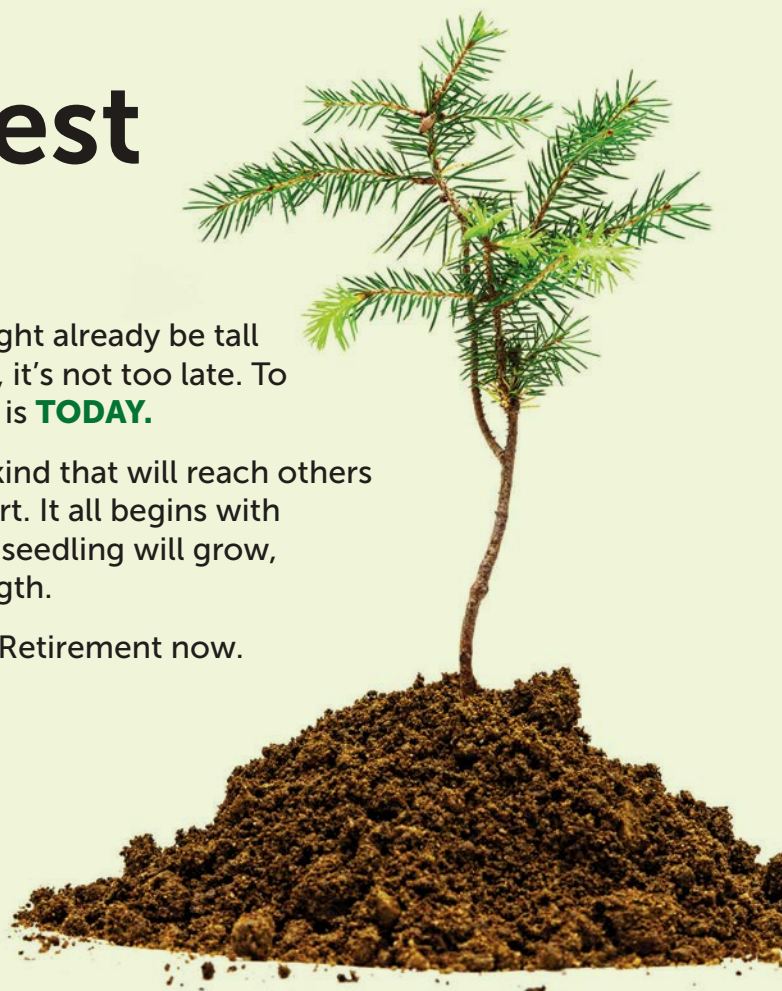
TODAY is the best time to start!

Sure, if you planted a tree last month or last year, it might already be tall and strong, with deep roots. But, if you didn't act then, it's not too late. To grow a strong tree in the future, the best time to plant is **TODAY**.

And to have a strong plan for long-term ministry, the kind that will reach others for Christ long into the future, **TODAY** is the day to start. It all begins with establishing your church's institutional investing. That seedling will grow, and over time, it will shade your ministry with its strength.

Pastors and church leaders, reach out to the Board of Retirement now. Because **TODAY** is the best time to start!

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The “Offering Moment”

BY CHRIS COMPTON

After some quick figuring, I estimate I have experienced over 6,500 worship services in my lifetime. This means I also have been a part of 6,500 offering moments. Some offering moments have been memorable, encouraging, and worshipful. However, most were boring or even awkward. Sometimes, the offering moment feels more like a break to collect a toll rather than a moment set aside to worship and give back to God.

The offering moment doesn't have to be this way. It is too important to be a “rest stop” in the service. It is too sacred to be used as a manipulation tool. It is too life changing to be viewed as payment for services rendered. The offering moment should be planned and coordinated like every other aspect of the worship service. This moment is important, sacred, and life changing because it is a stewardship moment for the church and provides the pastor an

opportunity to teach the congregation about their heart of giving and the heart of God.

I think the goal of every church is (or should be) to move its members from passive observance to active participation in worship, and this includes the offering moment. We want our congregations to express a heart of worship like the widow who gave all as an act of worship and expression of trust in God. We want them to experience the blessings of giving back to God who gave so much to us. We want them to go deeper in their discipleship journey.

The question is: how can we move the offering moment from being an awkward break in the service to being an anticipated opportunity for believers to worship God and grow in their faith? It begins with church leadership and how the offering moment is communicated to the congregation. Consider these simple suggestions:

Be clear and transparent regarding how the money is used. Those new to the faith or your church (or even those who have attended for a while) may be skeptical about giving money to a church when they don't know how it

is spent. Sometimes, leaders can be too vague. One way to help with this is to take time during the offering moment to share specific causes to which the money will be directed.

People want to know, and we ought to be transparent with them. The more the congregation knows about how the money they give is spent, the more they trust the church and its leadership, and

the more likely they are to give. And, as people learn to give from a heart of worship, they grow in faith and draw closer to God.

Communicate the impact giving has on people's lives.

The church should talk purposefully about how giving

is changing lives and bringing people to God. Give real examples. Nothing moves people to give more than seeing the impact of their giving.

Remember, the offering moment is not about manipulating people to give. Nor is it about reaching budget goals. Ultimately, the offering moment is about bringing people closer to the Lord. It is about teaching people how we give and why. Let's avoid making the offering moments dull and awkward. Plan them. Use them as stewardship and discipleship opportunities. Communicate how the money is spent and the impact it has.

The better the church plans the offering moment and communicates clearly, the more it will impact people's lives. **ONE**

About the Author: Chris Compton is accounting administrator for Free Will Baptist Board of Retirement. He graduated in 2007 with a M.A. in Bible exposition from Columbia International University. A 1998 graduate of East Tennessee State University, he has over 15 years of administrative/financial experience in varied fields, as well as seven years of pastoral ministry experience.

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IT'S TIME TO MOVE!

A PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER AND PERSONAL TRAINER
REMINDS US TO APPRECIATE AND USE ONE OF GOD'S GREATEST GIFTS.

BY WILL THORNTON

Growing up in the 80s and 90s, Arnold Schwarzenegger was my favorite action hero. I wanted to look like him (or at least have muscles like him). He inspired me to lift weights and increase my strength. More than a decade later, while I still don't have muscles like Arnold, I have made big strides in building my strength, endurance, and cardiovascular health.

My mom gave me my first weight bench for Christmas in eighth grade, but I really didn't use it until the start of my sophomore year of high school when I began "lifting weights" in the basement. Occasionally, a good friend would come over for a "workout." We still laugh about the Friday nights we lifted weights right before football games, so we had more muscles to impress the girls.

Perhaps you noticed the quote marks around "workout" and "lifting weights." This is because our idea of weightlifting included a single exercise: bench pressing. It was all we knew how to do. We didn't even warm up—just loaded up the bar and started pushing. This routine lasted all the way to Christmas break, when I thought, "I've been doing great; I think I'll take a week off." That week off lasted until college! In some ways I'm thankful, because doing nothing but bench pressing for four to five years would have wrecked my shoulders, my posture, and perhaps done more harm than good.

One afternoon during my first semester at Austin Peay University, I decided to work out in the fitness center. After looking around in amazement at all the high-end equipment, I decided I was ready to warm up. I hit the

treadmill for a jog...and lasted about two minutes. I felt like a complete loser and quickly headed home to hide my workout in the basement where so many eyes weren't watching. I should have had a plan.

I did not return to the fitness center until sometime during my second semester. This time, after putting in some hard work in the basement at home, I returned with a new attitude. I was as strong as most of the other people using the facility. And who really cared if I looked silly, anyway?

That experience taught me starting an exercise routine can be daunting, even frightening. For some people, you might as well ask them to get up in front of a room and give a speech. Because they are afraid to start, they don't. They end up with poor health and exercise habits and never learn how much they can do. Is that where you are? Do you need to make some physical changes



to better your health, live longer, and serve Christ more effectively? If so, where do you start? This depends on your answers to four important questions:

What kind of experience do you have? If you have athletic experience already, and have just let things slide, what are you waiting for? Start today. If you have never been involved in athletic activities, hiring a personal trainer or consulting with staff trainers at the local gym may be best. This is especially true if you have pre-existing injuries or health conditions. Find a trainer who is knowledgeable but also who doesn't have all the answers. I know that sounds contradictory, but if someone is too proud to say, "I don't know" he or she is probably not the right person for you.

What type of learner are you? A personal trainer is great if you need hands-on learning and lots of demonstration. However, if you are disciplined to watch video training or read books to get started (or if you can't afford a trainer), you can get by without hiring someone. While I am a personal trainer myself, they are not always necessary. I educated myself about exercise and weightlifting. **One important word of caution:** not all online training videos are created equal. While many are useful, others teach dangerous or unproven techniques, or simply try to sell something. Research the credentials, reviews, and accomplishments of every so-called professional before following their advice. Personally, I think it best to consult many resources and find consensus regarding a training regimen or specific activity.

What's your plan? Sit down with pen or paper at your kitchen table or work with your trainer to define goals and how you will accomplish them. Cardiovascular health? Weight loss? Increased muscle? Better eating habits? Determine goals for a month, six months, a year, five years, and for life. Your goals—your destination—will determine the route you take to reach those goals. And expect your plans to change. As you make better choices in diet

and exercise, you will develop greater capacity, greater strength,

and greater endurance. Adjust your plan accordingly.

How much are you invested? Are you serious about making the necessary changes? I often tell my clients, "Know your why!" Don't be afraid to push yourself and try new things. Stop worrying about what others in the gym think. Truthfully, no one else in the gym really cares what you are doing. They are too busy doing their own workout (or maybe just trying to breathe).

Be realistic. Progress takes time, effort, determination, and much hard work (Proverbs 14:23). Our bodies are resistant to change, even changes for the better. You must be consistent and invest time and effort into your goals to see real progress. Like the famous line from *The Princess Bride*: "Anyone who tells you differently is selling something!" Start with a clear goal and give it all you have for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

I understand long-term (and often difficult) changes toward physical health might not sound appealing. Consider this: God never said "Thou shalt squat 500 pounds," but He gave us an incredible world and a lifetime to enjoy it and to serve Him. We can't do either effectively while stuck on the couch. To be blunt, it's much harder to go and tell the world about the amazing gift of salvation when our bodies are too broken down or out of shape to move.

So, get out and get moving! Go for a walk. Pick up a new sport. Go hiking. Or just go play. When is the last time you played? I do it all the time as a physical education teacher. It is different than when I was a child, but it is still fun.

God made us to think, speak, create, and *move*. He gave us amazing bodies that can run a marathon, deadlift massive amounts of weight, or hike hundreds of miles. We can *move*, and it's a gift. Even if we never strive for "extreme" achievements, we must be good stewards of the gift of health. Don't take it for granted until it's gone. Learn to appreciate and guard your health now and enjoy it for the rest of your life.

IT'S TIME TO MOVE! ONE

About the Author: Will Thornton is the physical education teacher at Pleasant View Christian School in Pleasant View, Tennessee, and an individual personal trainer. He attends Bethel FWB Church in Ashland City, Tennessee, where he works with students.



THINGS

That Went

RIGHT



BY BILL AND BRENDA EVANS

Tokyo prepared 43 venues for the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. But August 24, 2021, the Paralympics opened in the same, almost empty 68,000-seat National Stadium as the Olympics had a few weeks earlier. Yet, a few Americans did attend. Team USA had 239 Paralympic athletes who, over the next 12 days, competed for and won 104 medals—37 gold.

Dr. Bill Nichols, a sports medicine chiropractor from Ashland, Kentucky, was there with a will to do good and a heart for sports medicine. Bill was part of a 16-member staff of USA physicians, physical therapists, athletics trainers, and mental health therapists committed to keeping Team USA's Paralympians healthy, happy, and competing.

Altogether, 4,403 athletes from 163 nations and their support staffs came to Tokyo, poised and eager to compete in 22 sports and 539 events. Paralympic athletes are classified according to functional impairments or disabilities, a cornerstone of the Paralympic movement. To qualify, athletes are first evaluated on Eligible Impairment Types, and if deemed eligible, further designated by Sports Class Groupings.

Eligible Impairment assessment is based on an athlete's muscle power, range of motion, limb deficiency, leg length, height, vision impairment, intellectual impairment, and various other disadvantages related to conditions such as cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury, and stroke. If eligibility is granted, athletes are then grouped by one of 50 Sports Classes. The goal of these complex

eligibility and classification processes is to assure athletes compete equitably.

Nick Mayhugh, a gold medal 100-meter sprinter with a T37 classification, commented on his classification. "It's okay to not be okay. I used to be embarrassed, and I shouldn't have been because look where I am now." Mayhugh, with a form of cerebral palsy that impairs motor skills on his left side, set a Paralympic 100-meter world record of 10.95 seconds.

Bill's first duty in Tokyo was to dive into team health records to assess and "red flag" athletes with cardiac or mental health histories—issues most likely to hinder their competition early on. As competition began, Bill treated Team USA athletes and attended USA events as the on-site physician. He was often ring-side for Tae Kwon Do, for example. As a Black Belt himself (certified by Chuck Norris, no less) Bill was especially interested in the sport. And there were other events such as Goalball for the blind, Women's Sitting Volleyball, Men and Women's Wheelchair Tennis, and others.

“Paralympians are driven,” Bill said, as he described an “amazing” blind male sprinter. “To them, they are less handicapped than inconvenienced.” For example, a male Wheelchair Tennis player in his mid-40s went up against much younger opponents. One Table Tennis athlete with no arms competed holding his racket (paddle) in his mouth. Women’s Sitting Volleyball was played that way—sitting—and Team USA women beat China for gold.

Bill was regularly courtside for Team USA’s Dana Mathewson, a Women’s Wheelchair Tennis athlete. As a child, Dana contracted Transverse Myelitis, a rare neurological disease that attacks the spinal cord, leaving her partially paraplegic. The onset was sudden at age ten. Within 30 minutes, she went from running sprints at soccer practice to lying on the floor unable to move her legs. By 13, Dana was going to adaptive sports camps, dragged at first by her mother, “screaming all the way,” she confesses. Yet within two hours of her first camp, Dana had a “huge smile.” She tried wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby, but wheelchair tennis snagged her for good. After high school, the University of Arizona offered her a scholarship in adaptive sports to play Wheelchair Tennis. There she earned undergraduate and graduate degrees, and later her doctorate in audiology at University College London.

Dana is now 30, a professional female Wheelchair Tennis athlete, and currently ranked first in the world. She has competed at the World Cup, French Open, American Games, British Open, along with many others.

“Dana is just a normal person,” Bill says. “In our society we have this thing about being ‘different.’ Dana’s not ‘different.’ After Tokyo she headed to Sardinia, Italy, for competition. These athletes get focused, find something they like and want to do, and they do it.” Like three-time Paralympian Chuck Aoki who first knew Wheelchair Rugby as Murderball. At 30, he carried the U.S. flag into National Stadium for opening ceremonies and led his team to a silver medal.

Bill understands that urge to focus on a thing you want to do and do it no matter what. He was saved and baptized at eight, and by high school determined to pursue a career in medicine. His grades were above average but not stellar. When he mentioned becoming a doctor, one of his Rock Hill (Ohio) beloved teachers said, “No, way!” half teasing

him. But Bill was not deterred. He headed to Kent State for pre-med and English. After a year, he returned home and enrolled in Ohio University and then Marshall University, still thinking about medicine.

In 1991, Bill’s mother died in an automobile accident, hit by a drunk driver. Her death triggered a renewed focus in Bill. “If I’m ever going to do something, I need to do it now,” he said. In 1992, at age 24, he was in Davenport, Iowa, getting ready to enroll at Palmer College of Chiropractic. By 1998, Bill was back in Kentucky with his chiropractic degree, soon married to Missy—a nurse—and later father of two: Caden and Jenna.

In 2008, Bill pursued yet another dream: Sports Medicine Certification. He jumped into the year-long sports medicine course, passed the national board exam, and is currently team physician for Marshall University and Boyd County High School sports teams. Next, he applied for and was accepted to the Team USA Olympic medical staff, with training in Colorado Springs. In addition to Tokyo, he has served on Olympic medical teams in Bulgaria for boxing qualifications and at Lake Placid, New York, for winter sports.



Bill doesn't mince words about Paralympians: they are *normal, amazing, driven, and special*—all at once. Haven Shepherd was born in Vietnam to parents whose circumstances were so dire, they pledged themselves to a family suicide and strapped bombs to themselves while holding baby Haven. Her parents died, and Haven was blown 40 feet, experiencing severe damage to her legs. At 20 months, Haven was adopted by a Missouri family, learned to swim in their backyard pool, and at age 18 traveled to Tokyo, where she placed fifth in the Para-swimming 220-meter individual medley. Haven calls herself a miracle and being an amputee a gift.

Twenty-one military veterans competed at Tokyo. Swimmer Elizabeth Marks, a combat medic in Iraq, lost her left leg. Blinded in Afghanistan, Brad Snyder won gold in Triathlon. Swimmer Jessica Long, a double amputee and bronze medalist, is still active in the U. S. Army. Triathlete Melissa Stockwell lost a leg to an IED in Baghdad. In recovery at Walter Reed, she felt gratitude: "I lost one leg. Some here have lost both legs, their arms, and are blind.... Instead of finding things that went wrong, I look at things that went right."

And many things also went right for Bill in Tokyo, including pin trading. Athletes, doctors, journalists, and spectators trade pins. Each nation and even individual sports groups bring pins to trade as a good-will gesture. They look like lapel pins but are usually attached to lanyards, hats, headbands, wristbands, jackets, or shirts. Bill came home with 40 or so pins he had traded with athletes. For his next Olympic or Paralympic, Bill wants to have a special USA pin designed with a Christian message or symbol as a way to start a conversation about his faith with international athletes.

Finally, Bill says, "Don't let people dictate what you can and can't do. Paralympians are special people. They have a complication in life but capitalize on it. I understand. When people tell me 'You can't do it,' I do it." Like becoming a Doctor of Chiopractic and sports medicine physician, a thing that went right, even when at least one person said, "No way!" **ONE**

About the Author: Bill and Brenda Evans, along with Dr. Nichols' family, attend Second FWB Church in Ashland, Kentucky. Contact the Evans at beejayevans@windstream.net.

The Lasting Legacy of Stewardship

Free Will Baptists have been concerned about financial stewardship since the beginning. During the 1935 organization meeting of the National Association, delegates appointed a Board of Superannuation, later the Board of Retirement. Guidelines for the board were approved four years later, during the 1939 convention in Bryan, Texas, with Mrs. J. E. Simpson chairing the board. For nearly half a century, the board focused primarily on the pastor's retirement and elder care. However, in 1980, then-director Herman Hersey led the department to establish Free Will Baptist Foundation. The Foundation worked with churches, organizations, and individuals to create perpetual funding for Free Will Baptist ministries through planned giving. **The seeds of stewardship planted during the early years of the denomination have produced a bountiful harvest.** Today, the Board of Retirement and Free Will Baptist Foundation operate independently, and both ministries have assets above \$100 million.

Why not plant your own seeds of stewardship by establishing an endowment through the Foundation?

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Perseverance

BY DAVID BROWN, CPA

**“And let us not be weary in well doing:
for in due season, we shall reap if
we faint not” (Galatians 6:9).**

Jim Elliot and a missionary team arrived in Ecuador in February 1952 and began to reach the Quechua Indians for Christ. They first stayed in Quito and then moved into the jungle. They eventually took up residence at the Shandia mission station. It was there, in 1953, that Jim met and later married Elisabeth Howard. While working with the Quechua Indians, Elliot began preparing to reach the Huaorani.

Elliot and four other missionaries—Ed McCully, Roger Youderian, Pete Flemming, and their pilot Nate Saint—contacted the Huaorani from their Piper PA-14 airplane using a loudspeaker and a basket to pass down gifts. After several months, the men decided to build a base a short distance from the Indian village along the Curaray River. Encouraged by friendly encounters, they began plans to visit the Huaorani. Their plans were preempted by the arrival of a larger group of ten Huaorani warriors who killed Elliot and his companions January 8, 1956.

After Jim's death, his wife Elisabeth and other missionaries, including Nate Saint's sister Rachel, began working among the Huaorani. They continued the evangelistic work started previously, living with the tribe in the jungle. Steve Saint, Nate's son, continued to live in Ecuador with his mom and family and, at ten years old, began to stay with the Huaorani in the jungle during summer months. He learned about living in the jungle and began to develop relationships with many members of the tribe. In June 1965, at age 14, Steve was baptized in the Curaray River (where his dad died nine years earlier) by Kimo and Dyuwí, two of his fathers' killers since converted to Christianity.

Today an evangelical church sits near the beach where the missionaries were killed. The church continues to reach the Huaorani people for Christ to this day. The spear pictured at left was made by descendants of those who killed



the missionaries. I received this spear as a gift because Free Will Baptist Foundation gave grants to the Jungle Kids for Christ ministry, a partner school of IM, Inc. that teaches kids from the jungles of Ecuador.

What does this amazing story teach us? Let us not grow weary in well doing for we will reap if we keep at it.

The Foundation has been around for 42 years, growing from zero dollars to over \$110 million today. I have been associated with the Foundation for almost 30 years, and many times it seemed we were not making much progress. We were weary in well doing, but we did not faint. Today, in a typical year, the Foundation distributes \$1.2 million in endowment earnings to various Free Will Baptist ministries and almost \$1 million in earnings from money management for ministries. And, starting in 2022, we will distribute \$750,000 in grants. The Foundation impacts ministries every year by providing almost \$3 million. We have *reaped* because we did not faint. **ONE**

About the Columnist: David Brown is director of Free Will Baptist Foundation. To learn more about the grants program, visit www.fwbgifts.org.

Redeeming the **TIME**

BY CURT HOLLAND

It's the time of year when we anxiously await the first hints of Spring to spring up from the cold, winter soil. Those of us who enjoy the sand and ocean breezes can become impatient with the snow and long nights of winter. Whether beautiful tulips or bright and happy crocus, our hearts are warmed and encouraged by the explosion of colors around us. However, as the earlier generation has reminded me, things don't just happen. Many hours of hard work and planning take place before a beautiful flower garden appears.

Recently, I have been talking about what a GREAT TIME it is to be part of our IM family of missionaries, international workers, and national leaders. Just like a flower garden, *great* doesn't happen by chance. We know it takes all of us to plant and water, and we count on the Lord for the increase and blessings around us. How do we define great?

GROWTH – IM continues to expand endeavors around the globe with the appointment of new missionaries and

exploration for new fields of ministry. Over the past five years, despite a global pandemic, more than 30 missionaries were appointed, raised funds, began their two-year internship, or moved to career status. During this time, we also added three international missionary couples, supported new churches planted in each of our countries of ministry, and sent missionaries to new countries like Kenya and Ecuador. The

Kingdom continues to grow because these individuals invested their lives for the advancement of the gospel. They can *Go*, and we can *Grow*, because God's people *Give*!



RESOURCES – Despite the economic rollercoaster surrounding global events, God’s people—local churches and individuals—said *yes* when new missionaries asked for prayer and financial support. Because of these partnerships, growth continues. Rich soil grows beautiful flowers. When the soil is continually fertilized, watered, and nurtured, flowers flourish. Our IM family of workers flourish because of the generosity of state plans, associational meetings, local churches, families, and individuals committed to our mission: “*to labor with the Body of Christ to fulfill the Great Commission.*”

EFFORT – When supporters from all walks of life put in long hours of work, care for their families, and attend day-to-day responsibilities, the cycle of living can become exhausting. When new missionaries learn a new language, prepare messages and discipleship materials, and teach English outreach classes, the cycle of ministry may become exhausting. When the effort of *living* and *ministry* are intertwined, those who send and those who go enter a partnership of combined exhaustion for the cause of Christ. The word *labor* in our motto isn’t just a word on a page; it’s an action verb involving goers and senders, each doing their part to make sure the gospel, the Good News of Jesus, reaches the ends of the earth. Effort is our collaboration of labor resulting in the Great Commission.

ATTITUDE – Some gardeners admit to talking to their plants. Some argue the benefit of these conversations is the difference in the attitude of the gardener. If you joined a Zoom call with missionaries serving around the world, you would notice an attitude. If you walk into the IM office, “attitude” is obvious. Every morning, the IM staff prays for the Lord’s global outreach and the teams of support. IM staff chooses to have an attitude of prayer, rather than an attitude of fret or fear. Our field teams of missionaries have chosen an attitude of courage and collaboration.

Why? Because the prayers of God’s people are extremely powerful and effective. In addition to a world pandemic, the enemy has challenged our IM families on many sides. However, the Lord has allowed our missionaries to overcome obstacles and turn them into opportunities!

TIMING – The long winter and the dread of darkness are overcome when flowers flourish and the new season “springs” forth. Scripture reminds us the Lord’s timing is always perfect. He is never late. Even when we can’t see the signs of spring or feel the freshness of His presence, the Lord is making His glory known among the nations. Mark Batterson reminds us: “Sometimes God shows up. Sometimes He shows off” (*The Grave Robber*). The Lord shows His greatness in and through our IM family, because we all have a part to play in the Great Commission. Because God’s people prayed, invested, and partnered with IM, He has done great things.

- At this **TIME**, the doors have closed on some ministries, but new doors and opportunities are open in other areas. With the departure of Brother Carlisle Hanna from India after 70 years of ministry, the national church continues. In addition, the Lord has provided partnership ministries in surrounding countries.
- At the **TIME**, during the beginning of the COVID lock-down, online services were not the norm. However, because of the need to stream worship services, curious seekers had accessible and live worship experiences. The Lord allowed many non-believers around the globe, especially in France, to watch, listen, and learn about the gospel. A number of those were introduced to Christ. God used COVID restrictions as opportunities for untraditional outreach in our churches to call curious seekers and non-believers to Christ! This scenario has been repeated in many of our countries of ministry.



- At the **TIME** new interns were appointed to serve in Japan, ministries were moving at full speed. Then the borders closed and new missionaries could not enter the country. Because of this timing, many Japanese believers accepted the challenge to take on ministry roles and responsibilities, sooner rather than later. This has become true in other countries as well.
- When the **TIME** came for Tyler and Kellie Penn to move to another house, their timing was strategic. They knew the new address would mean their children would have to attend a new school. The commute to their English outreach center would be greater. However, the space their new property provided and the 150-plus international students who attended the first event at their new house delivered great impact.
- At the **TIME** I am writing this article, seven missionary candidates are seeking appointment by the IM board. They will join a new generation of missionaries becoming a part of the IM family at a GREAT TIME! As you read this article, the Lord will continue to do many great things through His people.

- Space and **TIME** make it impossible to share all the amazing stories our missionaries experience daily. However, these stories are efforts of *living* and *ministry* intertwined; those who send and those who go, *combined exhaustion for the cause of Christ*. It is a great time to be part of the IM family!

Those who send and those who go enter a partnership of combined exhaustion for the cause of Christ.

Perhaps the psalmist and gardener could agree, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord, in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD: Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait I say, on the LORD."

Growth, resources, effort, attitude, and timing are a part of the great things God is doing in IM through our partnerships and work around the world. **ONE**

About the Author: Curt Holland is director of field ministry personnel for IM, Inc. Learn more: www.IMinc.org.

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Interns Approved for Japan, France

Antioch, TN—The IM Board approved three young single adults for internships during their December 2021 meeting.



Taylor Pate

Taylor Pate, a Florida native and Tennessee transplant, began hearing God’s call to missions at age 14. As a result, she served three years on ETEAM (France, Japan, and Uruguay) and participated in a CMP internship at Hope Alive Church in Japan during her college years. A 2021 graduate of Welch College in Gallatin, Tennessee, Taylor anticipates serving with Doug and Miriam Bishop and Daniel and Kate Speer as they revitalize New Life Church in Sapporo on the northernmost island in Japan. Taylor stated, “I have a passion for people to know the sweetness, peace, and love that comes when we choose Him.”



Hannah Goucher

A 2021 graduate of Welch College with a B.A. in intercultural studies, **Hannah Goucher** participated in ETEAM Hokkaido in 2017. The Mississippian served a six-week stint in Hong Kong and Cambodia as a college student. She also will work with the Bishops and Speers, with an emphasis on reaching and discipling students. Hannah affirmed, “God has placed a burden on my heart to share the hope within me with others.”



Bryson Foulks

Bryson Foulks, an East Tennessee native, plans to graduate from Welch College in 2022 with a B.S. in theological studies and exercise science. The nature lover served

cross-culturally two summers as a boys’ camp counselor in Alaska and worked with Indian Ministries of North America, sharing the gospel with Native Americans. He joined a CMP team to France earlier this year and will serve his internship in Nantes working with Joel and Lydie Teague and Dennis and Carol Teague, using his love of sports for ministry. “I would love to have your prayers

during this time as I travel to raise support to get to France,” Bryson requested.

“Pray for these outstanding young adults as they begin their journeys,” urged Don Matchett, IM director of development. “Their heart for reaching the nations is evident. Ask God to provide straight paths, enduring partnerships, and clear direction as they seek to follow Him and obey His commands.” **ONE**

Ellis Resigns

Antioch, TN—Annabelle Ellis, missionary intern to Japan, tendered her resignation to the IM board in November 2021. Though fully funded for almost a year, COVID-19



Annabelle Ellis

restrictions prevented her from entering Japan. While waiting for her visa, Annabelle began a relationship that has grown. “I am ‘pushing pause,’ resigning from my two-year term with the hopes of returning as a married couple for an internship with IM,” Annabelle stated. “The term ‘resignation’ best fits my current situation; however, my heart is in no way resigning. God knows what is best, and I will trust Him. I don’t understand why things have worked out the way they have. I know He is worthy of all trust. Thank you for praying for me. Thank you for supporting me. Thank you for trusting the Lord with me.”

The board agreed to suspend Miss Ellis’ mission account with the intent of Annabelle returning to reenter the candidate process with her husband later.

“We are eager for Miss Ellis to return. This has not been an easy decision for her because she just didn’t want to let anyone down. We trust God, His timing, and His direction,” stated Don Matchett, director of development.

Annabelle was approved to serve a two-year term in Tokyo, Japan, with the Hope Alive Church plant on December 11, 2019. **ONE**

Uruguay Missionaries Expand Roles

Antioch, TN—After almost 23 years of missionary service in Uruguay, Jaimie and Tammy Lancaster moved to the Nashville, Tennessee, area in December. Jaimie will continue to work closely with the leadership of the National Association in Uruguay and will assist Director of Field Partnerships Kenneth Eagleton in forming, maintaining, and promoting Free Will Baptist field partnerships. “As the number of field partnerships grow, we need more help,” stated Dr. Eagleton, “The Lancasters will be a great addition to the team.”

Jaimie’s new role will allow him to maintain a strong connection with Uruguay. “Our supporters have much invested in Uruguay. We are not abandoning this mission field,” Jaimie explained. “We will continue as missionaries and be connected to the ministry for the coming years, but our focus will shift. We are excited about helping grow the Kingdom and get the gospel to those who need it the most.”

Steve and Lori Torrison, the other missionaries assigned to Uruguay, have also transitioned to stateside work. The Torrisons started their assignments to the Center for Intercultural Training (CIT) in January. CIT equips people and churches for cross-cultural ministry and plays a vital

role in training IM interns and missionaries.

Steve’s assignment to CIT as a trainer will strengthen that partnership while providing an essential service in training and preparing missionaries to adjust to new languages, cultures, and international communities. In addition to his CIT responsibilities, Steve will continue his relationships with friends, pastors, and leaders in Uruguay. He will also teach in Uruguay’s Bible institute via Zoom. The Torrison family and their daughters Melanie and Abby settled in North Carolina. Steve and Lori began their missionary career in Panama in 2004, transitioning to Uruguay in 2015.

Both couples remain missionaries with IM, Inc. and continue to rely on their missionary account funding. Director of Development Don Matchett requested, “We ask you to continue your financial and prayer support for the ministry of these two couples as they serve Free Will Baptists, Uruguay, and the greater Kingdom in these expanded roles.” **ONE**



Lancaster Family



Torrison Family

IM Board Holds Year-end Meeting

Antioch, TN—Members of the Board of IM, Inc. gathered in the Antioch, Tennessee, office December 7-8, 2021, to review the year and make plans. They listened to director reports, discussed and voted on recommendations, approved three young people for internships, and approved the final budget for 2022. Board actions included:

- Approved the 2022 budget, totaling \$13,020,563.25. This budget includes operational expenses, potential new candidates, THP trips and projects, and IMpact projects.
- Approved three young adults for internships: Taylor Pate, Japan; Hannah Goucher, Japan; and Bryson Foulks, France.

- Approved Josh Provow’s return to Bulgaria for a short-term assignment in Svishtov. He will minister with Tim Awtrey, address residency permits, prepare for in-home visits and documentation for his adopted Bulgarian son, and continue the children’s schooling.

All board members attended: Dr. Janice Banks (TX), Rick Cason (GA), Casey Cariker (OK, present on the 7th only), Will Harmon (AR), Dr. Cameron Lane (AR), Jeff Nichols, Chair (TN), Mark Price, Secretary (OH), Darren Walker (NC), and Rodney Yerby, Vice-chair (AL). **ONE**





Beyond The Façade

BY DEBORAH ST. LAWRENCE

In many ways, Japan seems to have it all together. The island nation is known for its manufacturing expertise, with exports of electronics, appliances, vehicles, and more contributing to a healthy economy. *World Factbook*, and many other sources, tout the superpower's 99% literacy rate. Visitors are impressed with the nation's cleanliness and low crime rate. But beneath the façade of a well-educated, orderly, affluent society lies a shadow of hopelessness, fatigue, and anxiety.

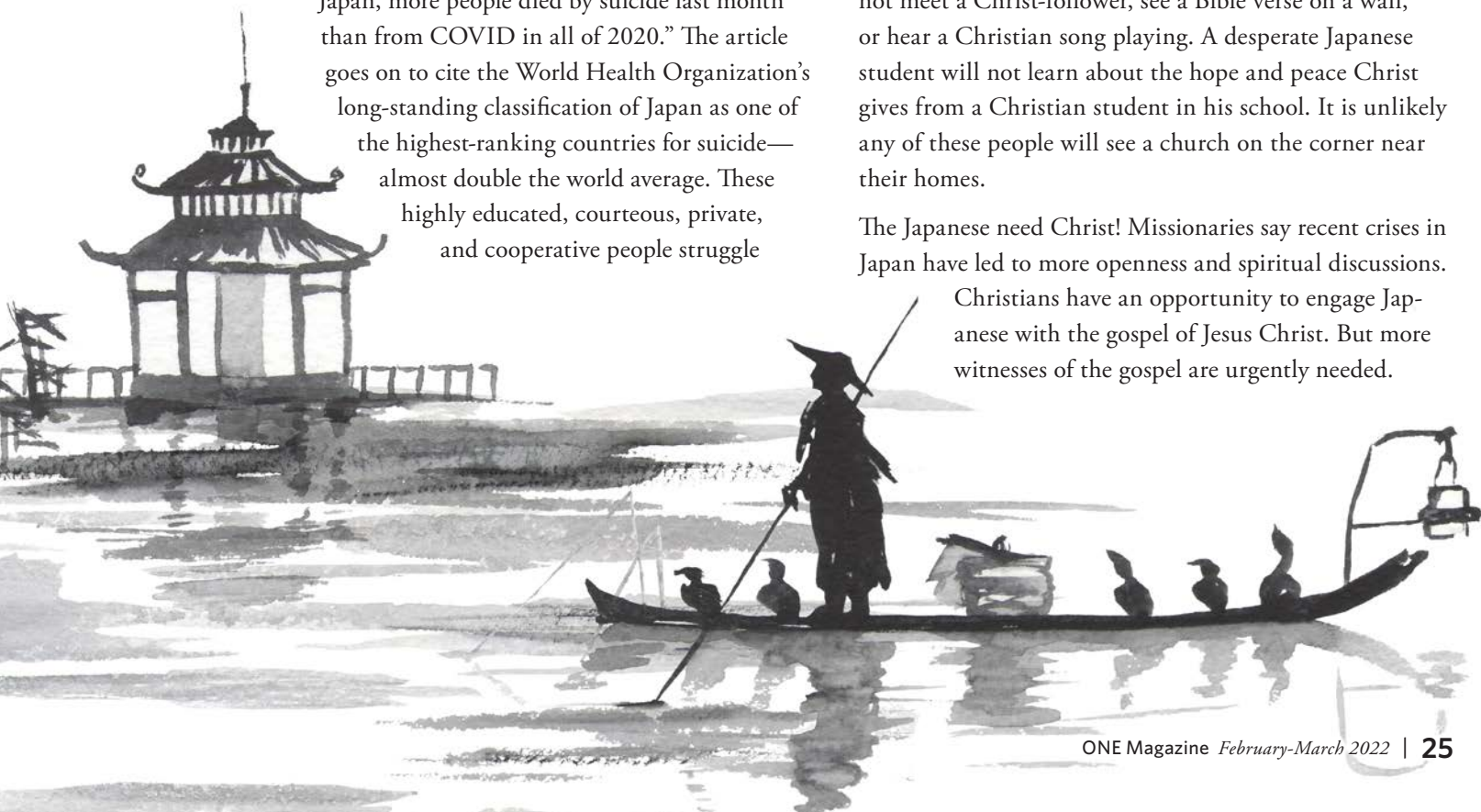
Suicide has become a national epidemic. In November 2020, a CNN headline proclaimed, "In Japan, more people died by suicide last month than from COVID in all of 2020." The article goes on to cite the World Health Organization's long-standing classification of Japan as one of the highest-ranking countries for suicide—almost double the world average. These highly educated, courteous, private, and cooperative people struggle

with long work hours, the weight of pressure to succeed in school and work, the stress of natural disasters, and, of course, the increased isolation and economic woes the pandemic added.

According to Joshua Project, 98% of Japan's 126 million people are unreached with the gospel. They cite 0.57% of the population, less than 72,000 people, as evangelical Christian. When an exhausted Japanese businessman boards a train, he is unlikely to encounter someone who can tell him about the rest Jesus provides. A harried Japanese mom seeking quiet in a tea shop probably will not meet a Christ-follower, see a Bible verse on a wall, or hear a Christian song playing. A desperate Japanese student will not learn about the hope and peace Christ gives from a Christian student in his school. It is unlikely any of these people will see a church on the corner near their homes.

The Japanese need Christ! Missionaries say recent crises in Japan have led to more openness and spiritual discussions.

Christians have an opportunity to engage Japanese with the gospel of Jesus Christ. But more witnesses of the gospel are urgently needed.



Meeting the Challenge

IM is responding to this increased opportunity to share the gospel with the second largest unreached people group. In July 2021, the IM board approved three couples for career missionary service in Japan. All three couples completed internships in Japan before requesting to continue to career service.

One-third of Japan's population lives on the Kanto plain, home to the greater Tokyo metropolis. Two of these newly appointed couples interned with and will continue to work with fellow missionaries at the Hope Alive church plant. The bilingual church is positioned in a bustling area near a train depot in Tokorozawa on the northwest side of Tokyo.

Jack and Ashley Kettelman spent two and a half years working at Hope Alive. Ashley's primary ministry role was children's ministry. She established Hope Alive's main Sunday kids' class, with over 20 elementary-age students attending weekly by the time the Kettelmans returned to the States. By recruiting teams of volunteer teachers and translators, she ensured this ministry will continue during her time stateside. She also organized a Vacation Bible School outreach each summer. To ensure continued growth, she developed two ongoing small group Bible studies for upper elementary and middle school students. These met both in person and via Zoom.

Jack's ministry focused on leading worship through music each week. He selected bilingual songs and Scriptures, prepared slides and music, and coordinated a rotating team of volunteer musicians, readers, and translators. He also led weekly group discipleship classes, weekly one-on-one Bible studies with men, bimonthly Bible studies for seekers, and a monthly music outreach.

The Kettelmans hope to return to Japan before the new school year begins.

Daniel and Shelby Culwell also spent two and a half years working at Hope Alive. Shelby's creative expertise has been used in designing logos and creating signs, brochures, social media memes, and other materials to help the church share hope with those passing their building.

She runs the church website and prepares slides and graphics for services. She also worked diligently with toddler's classes and was responsible for the 2021 VBS/English Bible Camp. The successful event gave 28 children—who had never attended Hope Alive—an opportunity to hear about Jesus.

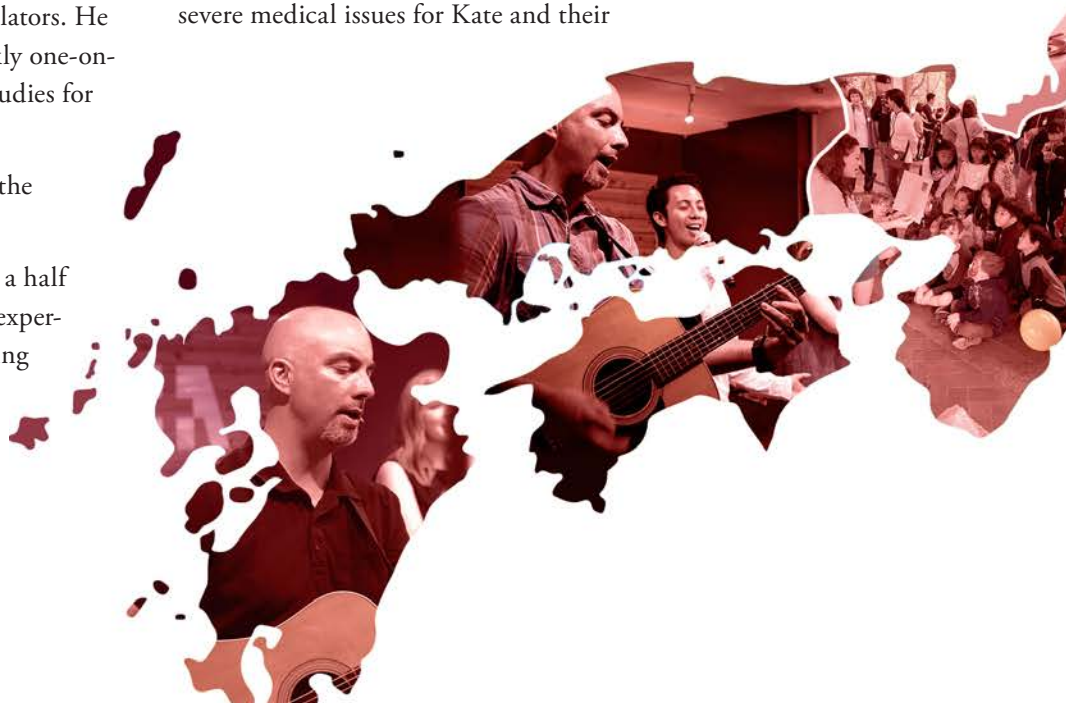
Daniel's construction and business capabilities served the church well as it underwent renovation during the last couple of years. He handles maintenance and finances, as well as working in English outreach and youth ministry.

Due to COVID restrictions, the Culwells were the only Hope Alive team members in Japan for a couple of weeks. They remained to allow senior team members, Heath and Joni Hubbard, to return and exit quarantine.

As new career missionaries, the Kettelmans and Culwells will begin their next term in full-time language school for two years, all while participating at Hope Alive on a smaller scale. They will re-enter full-time ministry better equipped to share the gospel in Japanese.

Daniel and Kate Speer began their internship journey in April 2013. Persevering through several severe medical issues for Kate and their

Missionaries say recent crises in Japan have led to more openness and spiritual discussions. Christians have an opportunity to engage Japanese with the gospel of Jesus Christ. But more witnesses of the gospel are urgently needed.



first-born child Audrey, the couple spent four years in internship in the greater Tokyo area, working with two established church plants: Good News Chapel in Iruma-shi and Kamifukuoka Christ Church in Kawagoe-shi.

The last two years, the couple assisted Ken and Judy Bailey and Rusty and Brenda Carney with church music and helped in outreach efforts at Kamifukuoka Christ Church. Daniel also

preached occasionally. At Good News Chapel, they assisted Don and Ruth McDonald with music for online services. Good News Chapel also served as the location for two series of gospel choir workshops prior to COVID restrictions.

Kate led these outreach efforts and saw several Japanese people move closer to a profession of faith as a result.

Daniel taught weekly English and Bible lessons throughout the pandemic. The Speers desired to be part of the

community into which they moved during their second two years.

Enrolling Audrey into a Japanese public school allowed them to interact on a more personal level with school officials and teachers, other students, neighbors, and the parents of the children.

Daniel studied Japanese for three semesters. Kate, raised in Japan as the daughter of missionaries Don and Ruth McDonald, has proficiency in the language. However, both look forward to taking additional language classes during the first two years of their first full term as career missionaries. Daniel desires to preach effectively in Japanese.

The Speer family will relocate upon their return to Japan. Instead of assisting the works in the greater Tokyo area, they will move to the northernmost island of Hokkaido to work with Doug and Miriam Bishop. Miharashidai Chapel, planted some 30 years ago in Sapporo, has died out. Together, the couples will seek to revitalize those left and build New Life Church. Daniel and Kate look forward to living “on mission” in the community, building relationships and seeking opportunities to intentionally share the gospel with their neighbors. As accomplished musicians, they will head up the weekly worship music as well as participate in other ways.

The need in Japan is great. Daily, Japanese men, women, and children die without ever knowing God loves them, gave His Son to die for them, and longs to embrace them as His children. They need to hear the good news of salvation and hope. They need to hear before it's too late.

Please support these families with prayer and finances, so they can tell lonely, hopeless Japanese moms and dads, teens and children, aging men and women the God of the universe created them, loves them, and desires to have a personal relationship with each one of them. **ONE**

About the Author: Deborah St. Lawrence is the editorial liaison between *ONE Magazine* and IM, Inc. Contact Deborah at: deborah@iminc.org.

GENERATING MOMENTUM: Get Your Church Moving!

BY BRAD RANSOM

Many churches have a rich, bountiful history. I have been privileged to serve at several Free Will Baptists churches in my ministry. All had great histories and fruitful ministries. Each ran strong numbers, saw people saved and baptized, were influential in their communities, and were vibrant and strong. Unfortunately, three of those four churches have since closed or have declined significantly.

How does this happen? How does a church go from vibrant and growing to troubled and trending downward? I know the answer is complex and varies by situation, but I believe the primary reason most churches struggle is they simply lose momentum. I know that's not an earth-shattering explanation, but it is true, and we must recognize it before we can do something about it.

Momentum is defined as the "strength or force something has when moving." To determine where we are, we need to assess our momentum. First, are we moving? For most churches, unfortunately, the answer is no. According to the Malphurs Group, 80-85% of American churches are declining. This means they have zero momentum; they are not moving forward but backward.

To determine whether your church is moving, ask, "Are people being saved? Are lives changing? What are we doing that creates excitement? What is different than last month?"

If people aren't being saved, nothing is different, and no one is excited, your momentum is probably slow, stalled, or even moving in reverse. Your church is likely in preservation mode. In this mode, churches simply exist to hold services and care for the congregation. When this happens, the church must be willing to change, so they can once again reach their community with the gospel.

One of the greatest obstacles to trying new or different things in the church is often resistance from people within. While our greatest duty is to reach the lost and

spiritually dying, we tend to try to keep the church family happy. Jesus shattered this philosophy in Luke 15:1-7 in the parable of the lost sheep. With 99 people safely in the fold, we are tasked to find the single lost sheep. To do that, we must *leave* the 99 (not always physically but perhaps their ideas and preferences) and seek the lost. Don't miss verse 7, which says there will be *joy in Heaven* when one lost person is saved. Heaven is already filled with joy—no tears, pain, or suffering—but when a lost person is saved there will be more joy!

Momentum is fueled by the flames of revival. The water that puts out the fire comes when **people inside the church become more important than the people outside the church**. Don't misunderstand. *Everyone* is important. The church must edify, encourage, exhort, and support believers, but we are called to reach the lost. When the congregation becomes **more important** than the lost community, we have lost our focus, and I guarantee momentum has suffered as well.

When the congregation becomes demanding, self-centered, and inwardly focused, loss of momentum is bound to occur. At this point, churches no longer want a pastor for strong leadership skills and vision; they simply want him to be the caretaker of the flock. When this happens, ministry leaders, including staff and volunteers, become focused only on their own areas of ministry. They guard their "turf" as if they are protectors of the ministry itself. Any sense of vision for the future is lost. In essence, the church becomes preservation-minded, hoping to keep what they've got and keep the bills paid.

Tony Morgan of the Unstuck Group describes it this way: "Everything is pulling to the past. The people who have been around the church for decades remember when the church was vibrant, and they want to take the church back to that time even though the community and the culture continue to move in a new direction."

As a result, Morgan says, churches in decline typically have several characteristics in common.


1. They lack vision for the future.
2. They don't have a clear discipleship path.
3. They have an inward focus.
4. They are structurally complex.
5. They don't have strong leadership (maybe because the pastor has given up).

What is a church to do? Let me suggest four strategic changes to produce a reversal in momentum.

- 1. The pastor and church must fall on their faces before God, repent of past failures and commit to spiritual leadership in the future.** This is, first and foremost, a spiritual endeavor. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us.
- 2. The pastor must communicate an honest sense of urgency to the people.** Time is short, and we have much work to do. Millions of "lost sheep" live in America, many just outside your church doors.

3. The pastor must consistently and frequently cast vision for ways the church can reach people. This takes new ideas and much work, but if everyone catches the vision, the possibilities are great.

4. The church must begin and be willing to implement change. Some in the congregation won't like it. Others will complain. But if the result is souls saved, we cannot let the voices inside the church drown out the cries of the lost outside the church.

I hope this short article motivates you to action and gives you cause for hope. I realize every church and every situation is different, but I also believe most churches can regain momentum. For more help and information on momentum, North American Ministries has produced a video that may prove helpful. Watch it on Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/536916660>. 

About the Columnist: Dr. Brad Ransom is director of church planting and chief training officer for North American Ministries. Contact Brad: brad@nafwb.org.

Are you **ready** for the storm?

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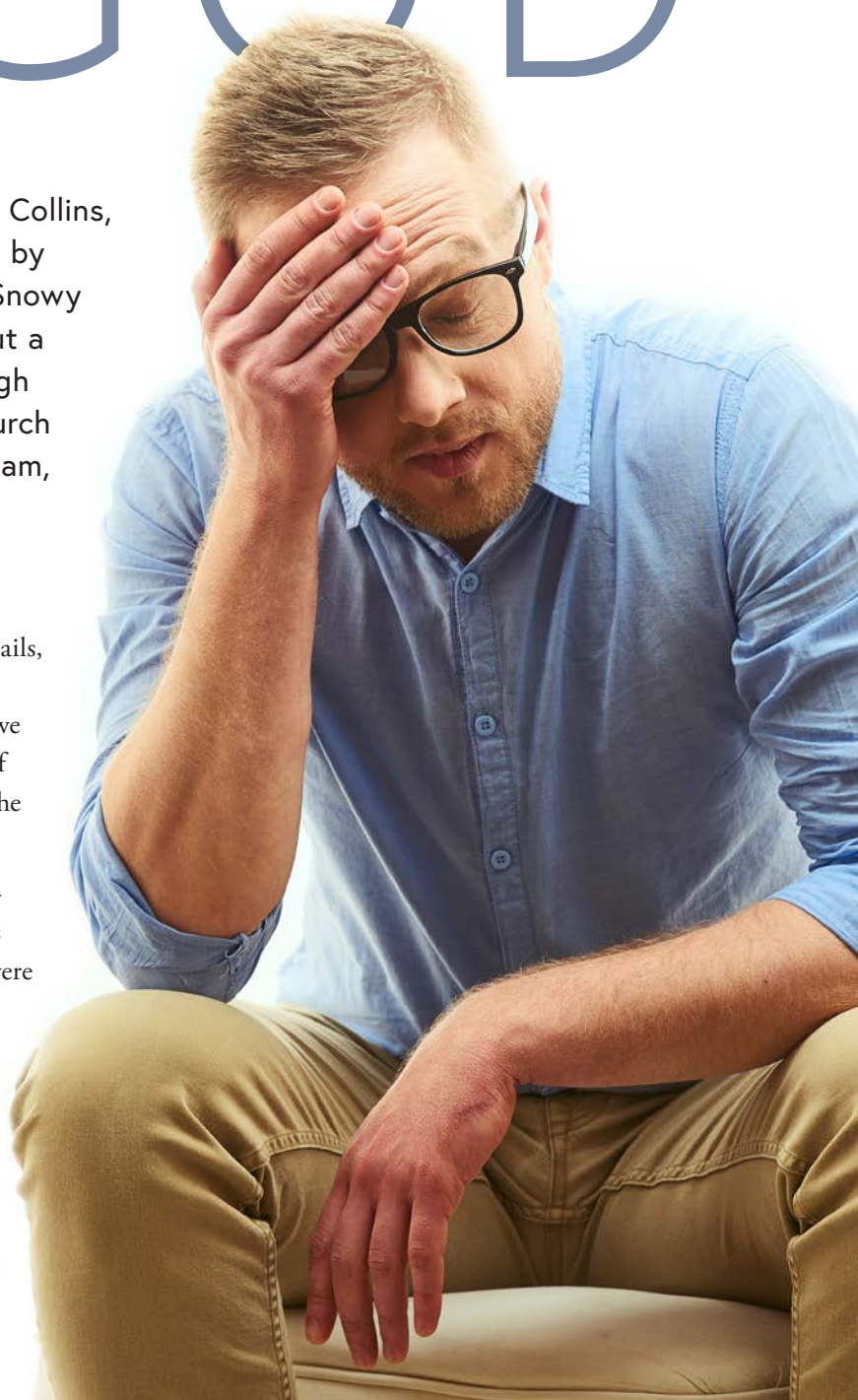
The D S A P P O I N T I N G ↓ Call of G O D

BY TAMMY MILLER

On May 28, 2016, our moving van rolled into Fort Collins, Colorado. My husband Terry had been appointed by North American Ministries to help revitalize the Snowy Ridge Church. The congregation had been without a pastor for almost three years. Excitement was high as we anticipated a great move of God and a church filling up fast due to a productive outreach program, exciting children's activities, and classes for men, women, boys, and girls. Fort Collins had over 150,000 people, after all.

It wasn't long before we ran into roadblocks. I'll spare you the details, but it wasn't long before our dreams for revitalizing Snowy Ridge began a long goodbye. Eventually, the doors closed. This church we wanted to see flourish was gone. It wasn't that we heard the call of God wrong; we *knew* He had called us to this place. But, so far, the experience had become a very *disappointing* call of God.

Fast forward to 2020. While the congregation had stopped functioning as the Snowy Ridge Church, North American Ministries still possessed a beautiful church building and five acres. Plans were underway to restart, to open a brand-new church. The date for the launch service of Waypoint Church was set for April 12, 2020. Enter a global epidemic. On this day, churches across America (and around the world, for that matter) began shutting down in-person services. Rather than giving in to another disappointment, Terry and our son, Jonathan, began sending Sunday morning sermons to a watching world via



Facebook. Many churches were doing the same, but our “church” never even had a chance to meet.

It was tempting to give in to the frustration, heartache, discouragement, and fear that gripped us. At least, I experienced fear. I was discouraged. I was frustrated. My husband, on the other hand, wasn’t. But he has the patience of Job. How does one stay strong—whether patient or impatient—when faced with the reality that the call of God has become disappointing? God did not send us to fail. Yet how could we move forward?

As everyone in ministry knows, we find strength in God and His powerful Word alone. We can trust Him without worry, live courageously without fear, have faith without doubting, and worship in Spirit and Truth without hate. The following men and women from the pages of Scripture all heard and accepted the disappointing call of God. With trust, courage, faith, and worship, they obeyed the One worthy of all glory, honor, and praise. The One who brings us through the valley of the shadow of death to victory on the other side.

Trust, Not Worry

Mary heard the call of God and immediately accepted it as God’s perfect plan for her life. She must have known at once her life would not go as planned. Being an unwed mom would carry stigma and invite judgment. Disappointment, yes. But she only asked for information from the angel. How was this going to happen? As far as we can tell, Mary believed God. She trusted her Creator, pondered these things in her heart, and didn’t worry about the outcome. We should do the same (Luke 1:26-38).

Courage, Not Fear

After 40 long years of disappointment and death in the desert, Caleb was still on fire for God and ready to take possession of his mountain—the mountain the Lord had given him. He still had courage. He was ready to drive out the enemy, “if the LORD would be with him.” He could have lost faith and been discouraged after so much waiting. Though he suffered because of the sin of others, he remained courageous and fearless.

Like Caleb, even in the face of extended disappointment, let us have courage, not fear (Joshua 14:6-15).

Faith, Not Doubt

Eli, the priest, assured Hannah the God of Israel heard her prayers and would grant the petition she asked. Hannah had made her own disappointing deal by promising to return her son to the Lord if He only heard her plea and gave her a son. God heard and answered, and Hannah delivered her son to serve the Lord in the Temple for the rest of his life. Knowing her son would not be hers to raise, she dried her tears, ate some food, put a smile on her face, and traveled home in faith, never doubting the God of Heaven had already fulfilled His promise (1 Samuel 1:9-28).

Worship, Not Hate

David faced many years of trial and disappointment after being anointed by Samuel. He didn’t become king immediately. He kept tending sheep. After his triumph over Goliath, he first served the ruling King Saul and then ran for his life from King Saul. Along the way, he stayed true to God and worshiped Him. Even in this great disappointing call, he refused to hate the king who was trying to kill him or turn his back on the God who allowed it. David spared the life of King Saul when opportunity arose to take matters into his own hands. Instead, David worshiped God and left justice and judgment in His hands, refusing to hate the men or the circumstances God allowed. May we learn to do the same (1 Samuel 24:1-22).

None of these people asked for disappointing lives. They did not ask for the call of God to bring disappointment and pain. They probably had dreams like we all do, each hoping to live their own happily-ever-after.

God sent Terry and me to Fort Collins, Colorado, but He didn’t give us the full run-down of disappointment that was coming. However, He did give us a promise. He gave us His Word that all things work together for good to those who love God and who are called to His purpose (Romans 8:28). **ONE**

About the Author: Tammy Miller and her husband Terry are church planters in Fort Collins, Colorado. Learn more about their work: www.fwbnam.com/miller

Returning *to* Church *in* *a* Post-Pandemic World

BY BRAD RANSOM

According to a March 2020 Gallup poll, church membership continued to decline last year, dropping below 50% for the first time in the eight-decade trend. “In 2020, 47% of Americans said they belonged to a church, synagogue, or mosque, down from 50% in 2018 and 70% in 1999.”

We only *thought* the 2020 pandemic was the problem. Maybe it wasn’t after all. According to the poll cited above, the problem has been brewing for more than a dozen years. Americans who attend church are in the minority for the first time in U.S. history. We have been asking, “Why aren’t more people coming back to church after the pandemic?” We should have been asking, “Where are the true disciples?” No doubt, the pandemic shed important light on the topic, but I believe we need to be looking at a deeper issue.

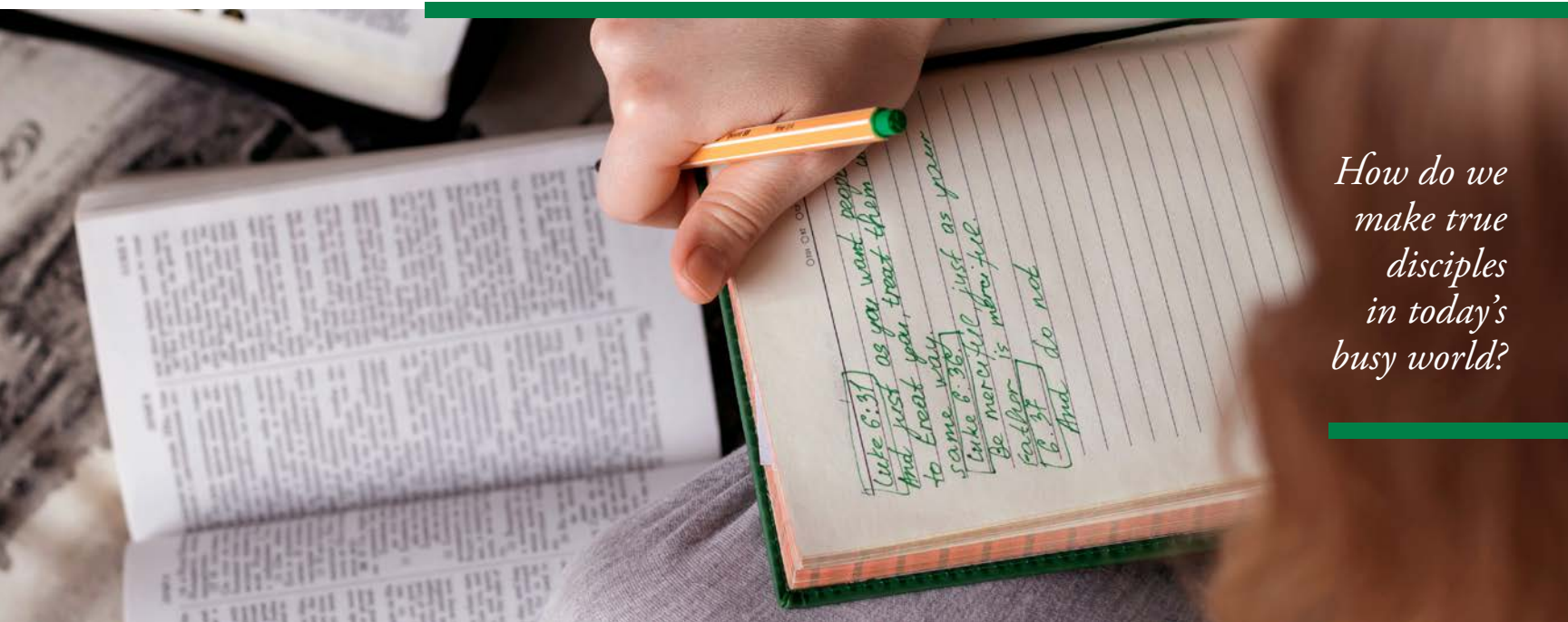
The church’s interpretation of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) may be the real problem. It seems many churches have focused on getting *more* church members, when they should have been focused on what it means to *make* true disciples. If we make true disciples,

we will automatically have more church members, but the opposite is not necessarily true.

According to Matthew 28:19-20, we are to make true disciples (following salvation and baptism) by teaching them to obey everything the Bible teaches us. This is the true challenge. Churches have whittled away their ministries, schedule of services, and activities to allow families more time together for school functions, extracurricular sports programs, gymnastics, and a plethora of other things. But where has that left churches opportunities for true discipleship? Randall House points out this important concept with their slogan “1/168.” What does this mean? We all have 168 hours each week. Most Christians only give one hour a week to church. And one in 168 is not enough!

True discipleship cannot happen in an hour per week. It takes more—much more. Although I am not against churches streamlining the ministry menu and not expecting members to be at church or church activities three to four nights per week, I am against the idea of immature, baby believers who stay that way.

*How do we
make true
disciples
in today’s
busy world?*



So, how do we make true disciples in today's busy world? Though I cannot offer an exhaustive plan, consider some simple steps to help most churches improve their discipleship.

Develop a plan. Your church needs a plan for how it will disciple people. If you don't have a system or written plan, it won't happen. Some may get haphazardly led through a process, but more won't without a defined plan. Too many people slip through the cracks without a plan that guides everyone through the same steps. I suggest LifeTrack or another similar class to get people started.

LifeTrack is typically one hour per week for three to four weeks so you can introduce new Christians or new members to the beliefs, mission, vision, and values of your church and get them plugged into small groups and discipleship. If you are unfamiliar with LifeTrack or how it works, here is a helpful link: <https://restore.church/life-track>.

In addition, downloadable resources are available at <https://restore.church/resources>. For ongoing discipleship, I suggest you watch the video: <https://vimeo.com/552387179>.

Start people where they are. In today's postmodern world, churches cannot assume every person who comes through the doors believes the same way. Some will have a church background while others will not, and they won't all have the same worldview. Discipleship for former skeptics, agnostics, or atheists may begin with an apologetic look at creation, the fall of man, the inerrancy of Scripture, the physical death and resurrection of Christ, and other fundamental issues. Discipleship for those from a church background who already believe the fundamentals can start elsewhere. Therefore, your discipleship program must adapt to individuals. A prepackaged discipleship program with 13 lessons may not be right for everyone.

Hold people accountable. Do everything you can to ensure everyone in your church goes through the discipleship process. Before people are allowed to serve, make sure they are on a discipleship pathway. Certainly, before anyone leads or is appointed to a committee, he or she should go through the discipleship process. Celebrate it and make it a "big deal" when people complete various stages. Acknowledge them before the congregation, so everyone will see the value your church places on discipleship.

Preach for discipleship. Use your valuable pulpit time to disciple people. Teach them the Bible! Preaching expository sermons and using the text as the content of the message is the best way to teach the Scriptures systematically. Don't shy away from truth or hard topics but read what the Bible says and preach "thus saith the Lord!"

Make discipleship something everyone in your church does. If your church values discipleship, people will notice. If you talk about it, invest money in it, and celebrate it when it happens, it will eventually become the culture of your church. And that is when discipleship really takes place because culture wins every time.

Everyone should know they can't serve unless they commit to discipleship. Leaders know they can't lead unless committed to discipleship. New people quickly learn they are expected to commit to discipleship. And more will. True, everyone won't, but most will. What would it mean to your church if 80% of your people committed to ongoing discipleship?

Discipleship is a lifelong process. LifeTrack and discipleship groups are a great place to start, but they are not a comprehensive plan. Being a true disciple means growing in Christ for the rest of our lives. If more churches focus on making true disciples, our churches will be healthier, and they will grow numerically because making true disciples means teaching them to make disciples. This is an ongoing process that should never stop.

No doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic caused much stress in the church, but maybe God can use it to throw light on the deeper and more pressing need for discipleship in most churches. Making disciples is the essence of the Great Commission, and every church should make it a priority.

Start by seeking God regarding how your church can effectively implement discipleship as a regular part of its DNA. Talk to the leaders in your church and help them understand the importance of discipleship. Develop the resources you need and then take the leaders through those resources first. Implementing a new idea is never easy, but it's worth the prayer, time, money, and effort if it results in true and growing disciples. **ONE**

About the Author: Dr. Brad Ransom is director of church planting and chief training officer for North American Ministries. Contact Brad: brad@nafwb.org.

A Brilliant Beginning



BY SUHEY CORREA

Christ's ministry was one of service. While Jesus carried His message of salvation, He also extended His hands to the needy, sick, poor, and helpless. He made it clear that after He returned to Heaven, our job would be to bring the good news while serving our fellow men (Luke 22:27).

Genesis Academy is a ministry of the Free Will Baptist Church of Puerto Rico. It began seven years ago, with a deep desire to reach children and young people by bringing them the message of God through serving. Unfortunately, in Puerto Rico, private Christian education is available only for the wealthy. Yet, those without economic resources also need to hear the message of the Lord.

Genesis Academy began by assisting children and young people in their studies, giving them a place to ask questions and feel comfortable learning. After several years of permits, research, and—above all—prayer, Genesis Academy became the first private Christian school in Puerto Rico that did not charge students. Social class or academic level did not matter. Students at Genesis find a refuge of love and learning where all are welcomed. In this way, God has added mothers, teachers, and students to this ministry to make it a reality. Partners in faith and private companies also support it.

Genesis tests our faith every day. Believe me; it is tested! We must pray and trust God will bring both the people to do the work and the people to support it. In recent years, dozens of Puerto Rican schools have closed due to an economy greatly affected by natural disasters. In September 2017, a hurricane hit the island, destroying homes, and leaving much of the island without electricity and drinking water

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for more than six months. During this time, children did not attend classes, and nearly an entire year of education was lost. In January 2020, a magnitude 6.4 earthquake affected multiple structures around the island, including schools. Again, children could not attend school for some time. Then, in March 2020, COVID-19 arrived on the island, once again paralyzing education. All this resulted in an economic deficit on the island. Many schools closed, and many teachers relocated to the United States for better job opportunities.

After the pandemic, many young people did not return to school, increasing the already-high percentage of dropouts. The situation is even higher in poor communities where 46.1% of the population do not have a diploma. At Genesis Academy, we want to help young people obtain their diploma. Working in conjunction with the virtual school of Puerto Rico, we have already graduated three students during these two years by paying for exams and helping them with exams. These students are currently working for the glory of the Lord.

Since the school started, we have received students with various learning difficulties or with problems in their homes. We have seen how these children and young people have made their school a place of learning and wellbeing. They know it is a place the Lord provided for each of them. Knowing many children do not have financial resources, Genesis provides uniforms, books, and school supplies so they can complete their studies without feeling different from others who can afford the necessary supplies.

Every morning students learn the Bible. They begin each day with a prayer and a quick devotion or reflection. In addition to their main classes, they take music classes. They are taught to love and respect fellow men, to strive to achieve their goals, and to trust the powerful God who can meet their needs.

To many, supporting a school only with donations sounds crazy! But two years ago, the school had three students, and today we have 21. We started with a single teacher and a dining room employee. Today, we have seven teachers, two dining room employees, a secretary, and a maintenance employee. Two years ago, we taught around a dining table, and today we have six classrooms, a chapel, a dining room, and a kitchen.

We have learned when God calls, we must persevere in His call, no matter what we may face or what our eyes can see. It is God who gives us the strength and security everything will work according to His will, and we are very sure this ministry is part of God's purpose.

The church of Christ is called to work as a body, to work together for the same purpose—to carry the message of the good news to the world. Over the years, I have learned great things happen when the church comes together. When the church demonstrates the love of Christ, He oversees and adds to His work. This ministry impacts both believers and non-believers—not only with words but with deeds. How is Genesis sustained? Through the faithfulness of God.


“Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” (Matthew 6:26)

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit” (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

As Christians, it is our duty to teach the next generation about the great God full of love and forgiveness. We must teach them another way to live this life, a life of holiness. Young people are bombarded mercilessly by our culture, and it is the duty of the church to stand in defense of children and young people—not only with words but with works. We invite you to be part of this “brilliant beginning” and sponsor this beautiful ministry. Through North American Ministries, you can help us make a difference in the lives of these children and young people.

Thanks to all who pray for us, and who have visited the island to contribute to this work. Also, thanks to those who support us financially from a distance, making it possible to continue providing a refuge in chaos, a brilliant light in the darkness. **ONE**

About the Author: Suhey Correa and her husband Jose are church planters in Puerto Rico. Learn more: www.fwbnam.com.



Through the Eyes of Love

Part 2

BY TIM AND AMANDA YORK

As you read through the Gospels, it becomes apparent Jesus displayed a great love for everyone He met. As He journeyed through deserts, villages, and cities, He demonstrated His love in tangible and substantive ways. He showed no partiality between Jews and Gentiles, men and women, rich and poor.

Matthew 9:35-38 describes Jesus' love as persistent as He "went about all the cities and villages." In other words, He was not content to minister only in His hometown or "preferred" locations. He ministered to all the cities and villages. How far does your personal ministry reach? Admittedly, not everyone is called to the traveling-style ministry of Jesus, but do you reach beyond the familiar?

Matthew went on to inform us that Jesus went into these cities and villages "teaching and preaching." Both words are interesting in the original language. *Teaching* (διδάσκων) means to provide instruction while *preaching* (κηρύσσων) describes heralding or proclaiming truth, especially in a religious sense. This passage clearly drives home the point that Jesus went to all these locations with the purpose of instructing the people and proclaiming the good news of the gospel.

Matthew concluded his broad summary of Jesus' ministry by saying Jesus healed every sickness and disease among the people. Jesus not only traveled and preached, but He also healed individuals as part of His loving ministry. While we do not wield the same authority over sickness Jesus did, we can learn from His example of helping people. Meeting the physical, mental, and emotional needs of

people creates an environment where they hear the truth of the gospel in a different way. The familiar adage is true: people don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care.

Are you in touch with the needs of your community? How do you alleviate the hurts of those around you? Are you consumed with your own pain and needs, or are you focused on the pain of others?

As North American Ministries church planters, we look for every viable opportunity to interact with those we hope to reach. This interaction makes us aware of the hurts and issues these individuals face. Amanda has focused on families in our neighborhood, befriending a Muslim woman from Yemen who lives two doors down. This friendship has provided multiple opportunities to meet their needs. In fact, Amanda is the only American woman to whom this lady has been permitted to speak by her husband.

Many hurdles existed between the two (language, religion, culture), but Amanda noticed the children playing with a flattened soccer ball and with a simple act of kindness found a way to demonstrate the love of Jesus to this family. Now, our neighbor fixes dinner for us at least once a week, and she and Amanda spend time together as friends talking about life.

More From Matthew

Matthew moved from the general ministry pattern of Jesus to specific details. Verse 36 says, "But when he [Jesus] saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."

Matthew strategically moved from the *what* of Jesus' ministry to the *why*. *Why* did He travel to all the cities and villages? *Why* did He take the time to teach and preach? *Why* did He heal every sickness and disease? The answer is clear: "He was moved with compassion" (ἐσπλαγχνίσθη). His heart went out to them. The literal meaning of this Greek word is "to feel in the bowels." As Americans, we describe our emotions as coming from the heart, but the connection between our stomach and our feelings is not totally lost on us. We've all described "gut-wrenching emotions" or experienced feelings that literally made us "sick to our stomach."

Matthew explained that Jesus looked at the Jews, and what He saw and heard from them created such strong emotion that He felt it in His stomach. When you consider the culture around you or observe the lives of the people in your town, what emotions do you feel? It's easy to feel anger or disappointment towards the lost world, but was this what Jesus portrayed? Absolutely not. He felt compassion.

What was it about their condition that stirred these deep feelings? These people were lost. They lacked good spiritual leadership. The Pharisees and Sadducees had abused their authority as spiritual leaders in Israel by exploiting the poor and rigging the religious system to keep them in power. Jesus looked upon the people and felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

These counterfeit religious leaders pretended to be the shepherds of Israel, but they lived in stark contrast to Jesus, the real Good Shepherd. Jesus' concern for the spiritual wellbeing of people is apparent on every page of the Gospels.

This passage concludes with two famous statements. In the first—the *harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few*—Jesus changed the metaphor from shepherding to farming but the heart of the passage remains the same. This "harvest" clearly refers to unbelievers in the context, the same people for whom Jesus felt compassion.

Jesus emphatically acknowledged insufficient laborers to bring in the robust harvest. The problem was not that people *wouldn't* believe in Jesus; the problem was an insufficient number of workers. The clear implication is the world is ripe with those ready for the gospel, but the work stalls due to insufficient workers. Have you ever considered how plentiful the harvest is around you?

In the famous statement completing the passage, Jesus urged His disciples, "Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into the harvest." With the harvest ready and waiting, Jesus made it clear we are to pray for more workers. What do you think is the connection between your prayers and God sending out laborers? How do you think praying for laborers affects the way you engage those around you?

Our church seeks every possible means to demonstrate care and compassion for our community. We host two events annually, a family carnival and an Easter egg hunt. Both are free of charge and designed to bring joy to those who attend. We also adopt a section of local highway, provide free lunch for employees of local businesses, provide breakfast to schoolteachers, and offer the Financial Peace University course, along with many other tangible demonstrations of Christ's love. We do this because we are convinced this was the ministry Jesus modeled.

Remember, Matthew started this passage by describing Jesus traveling throughout the region healing, teaching, and preaching. However, simply doing good was not enough. Jesus loved on people *as* He presented the truth to them. The concept of sending laborers into the field is an interesting one, especially when this illustration is brought into the real world through discipleship. For too long, the modern church has viewed evangelism and discipleship as separate exercises. That thought process goes something like this: evangelist reaches the lost one (conversion) and a teacher comes along and discipless them (sanctification). However, this two-pronged approach is foreign to Scripture. Acts 18 offers a fitting example of the correct approach. In verse 8, Paul preached and many of the Corinthians "heard, believed, and were baptized." Yet three verses later, in verse 11, we learn Paul stayed in Corinth 18 months, teaching the word of God among them.

The Great Commission requires all believers to "go and make disciples of all nations," very different from "go and make converts." The heart of the Lord of the Harvest is that all nations become *disciples* of Jesus. Could it be the laborers are few in our generation because we have failed to disciple properly those who decided to follow Jesus? Could our prayer for more laborers be answered by taking seriously the command to make disciples?

Continued on page 44



Whatever Happened to *Soul Winning?*

BY ROBERT E. PICIRILLI

One of the nice things about living to a ripe old age is you see many things come and go. However, one thing I miss in today's church life is soul winning. What happened to it?

I came of age in the middle of the last century and was a student at Free Will Baptist Bible College (now Welch) from 1949 to 1953. That was a transitional time, not only for me but also for the entire denomination. The College, founded in 1942, was beginning to influence Free Will Baptists in several ways, including leadership, concept of ministry, understanding of the Christian life, and even—to some extent—theology.

One of those areas was soul winning. I had never heard the word, much less what it represented, before I stepped on the campus in September 1949. Oh, I had experienced some inner promptings on my own. I remember a revival meeting at my home church, Mt. Elon, in Florence County, South Carolina, when I was 14 or 15. Fall revivals were times for “getting saved.” As far as I knew at the time, you could only “get saved” during revival meeting. (And truthfully, I “got saved” at more than one of them!) The time I’m remembering, I was already saved. I had a friend who wasn’t, and during the invitation one night, I went to

him and put my arm around him. “What?” he whispered. I didn’t know what to say. But he went forward.

That was all I knew about soul winning. But on my first day on campus, even before registration, a bunch of returning fellows said, “Let’s go have a street meeting.” I had no idea such a thing existed, but I went along and was baptized into street evangelism. As the year progressed, I was assigned to first one and then another “practical work group.” Everybody understood the underlying purpose of all the groups was to identify somebody for a personal witness.

We had no choice but to take a semester of personal evangelism, using William Evans’s book *Personal Soul Winning*. We learned to present the gospel in one-on-one encounters, how to answer objections, and how to seek a decision. We learned that one needs to exercise *tact*, but not to be so tactful there is no *contact*. Brother J. P. Barrow, the teacher of that course, required us to memorize roughly 100 Bible



verses we could use. We had no uncertainty about what all of this was for. It was for soul winning.

One of the verses we memorized was Proverbs 11:30: “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.” Another verse was Daniel 12:3: “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”

We quickly formed the notion that personal soul winning was our responsibility, ranking right up there with daily Bible reading and prayer in terms of what it means to live a dedicated Christian life. Soul winning was for *every* Christian, male or female, and it didn’t matter whether you were called to preach or not.

Speakers invited to the college hammered this truth home: we ought to be out soul winning. One would share that he had covenanted with the Lord to witness to somebody every day. Another described different methods to start the conversation. We had demonstrations of how to present the gospel, with one acting out the part of the sinner and another the part of the witness. The faculty participated, often accompanying us on practical work assignments and taking part in distributing tracts or dealing with an inquirer. I well remember J.P. Barrow and Charles Thigpen with us at times. I also remember LaVerne Miley heading off by himself with a pocketful of tracts to find *somebody* with whom he could share the gospel.

Our consciences bothered us if we weren’t making efforts to win souls. I still remember a city bus ride back to campus with my girlfriend after a church service. A teenaged boy sat across and back a few seats. I felt I should witness to him and didn’t. My girl asked me what was wrong, and I was almost in tears because of my failure of nerve. (Or

maybe I just didn’t want to leave her!)

When I began graduate school at Bob Jones University, the emphasis on soul winning continued there and perhaps increased. Even graduate ministerial students were required to take a Tuesday-Thursday morning course, every semester, that everybody called “Preacher Boys.” Every class opened with the class singing a song that somebody at Bob Jones had written:

“Souls for Jesus” is our battle cry.

“Souls for Jesus”—we’ll fight until we die.

We never will give in while souls are lost in sin.

“Souls for Jesus” is our battle cry.

Singing those words twice a week for several years makes an impression. That impression was reinforced by speaker after speaker, challenging us preacher boys to win souls. One of the requirements of the course was to write up accounts of our efforts to win somebody to Jesus. I can still remember a time or two, when the reports were due and I had not met the required number, going downtown to find someone to talk to about becoming a Christian. You didn’t necessarily have to succeed, but you had to try.

When I returned to the College in 1955 to teach, that was still the culture among us, at least among the newer preachers and leaders who had gone to the Bible College or were influenced by those who had. When I became interim pastor at Cofer’s Chapel in 1962, I decided to get things started and inaugurated a “Visitation Corps,” borrowing from the new “Peace Corps” plan of John F. Kennedy.

When Eugene Waddell became pastor, he began a regular Thursday evening visitation, and I was happy to be among those who went every week to try to win someone to the Lord and bring them to church. Brother Waddell

also started a bus ministry that systematically combed the streets and brought children to church. Those on visitation followed up by witnessing to their parents. Some people in our North Nashville community made it a point to be away from home on Thursday nights to avoid us!

I had been indelibly marked by an obligation, one I have never escaped, even though I've often failed to meet the obligation. And I was by no means the only one. Soul winning was, indeed, a culture among Free Will Baptists.

What happened to it?

Sure, I know not *everything* about that period was ideal. There were abuses, to be sure: silly things like climbing church steeples or swallowing live goldfish to entice crowds. Did we think, as we rid ourselves of those abuses, that we had to do away with the soul winning, too? Did we think the idea of soul winning was responsible for *The Gospel Blimp*? Or did we, to use an old saying, “throw out the baby with the bath water”?

I remember some saying “soul winning” wasn't a good *biblical* term, that it should be changed to *witnessing*. Was this an underhanded way not just to lose a word but to lose an uncomfortable responsibility?

Somebody else said we had exalted soul winners to the status of “high priests” among us, and we ought not do that. Soul winning was not for everybody, they said, but that it was a gift for a few (*evangelists* in Ephesians 4:11). They were quick to point out that this gift made them no better than anyone else in the church. I'll agree some believers are gifted to win people to Jesus better than others, and this doesn't make them superior to other believers. But does that awareness lead to canceling out soul winning as a Christian responsibility? Scripture describes the gifts of *giving* and of *showing mercy*, too (Romans 12:8), but *all* believers share these obligations.

These days, many say only “relationship evangelism” works. Does that do away with soul winning? I challenge folks who believe in relationship evangelism: how many relationships with the unconverted are you actively cultivating? And how long does it take before you work your way around to sharing your faith?

I know the usual response to these questions is, “Society has changed,” or “You can't do that sort of thing now.” Is anybody trying? Or did we just quit because somebody told us soul winning doesn't work anymore? I fear we have given up entirely.

Of course, I know society has changed. For one thing, everybody is “saved” to hear them talk (or to hear preachers doing their funerals). It hasn't been long since I tried knocking on doors, by myself, in the community around our church, on Saturday afternoons. *All* of those I met professed to be Christians and to have some sort of tie to a church they rarely attend. Jesus Himself said those who aren't sick (by their own measure) have no use for a physician. It didn't take me long to give up that approach.

I also admit I no longer visit someone at night without first making an appointment. People don't even come to the door anymore. I understand that. Often, they live in apartment buildings and gated communities closed to random visits. Sure, these problems exist.

As a result, for one reason or another, we've given up on soul winning. Perhaps it's because we didn't really want to do it anyway; it's too uncomfortable. Perhaps it's because we got discouraged when the old methods no longer worked, and we were unwilling to find new ways. Perhaps we thought we could escape the responsibility by giving to other organizations working directly with lost people. That's always an easy way out.

I remember when Billy Morris, a college-mate and friend (now deceased), told on himself. He pastored a church in Durham, North Carolina, that had experienced a long, dry spell. He attended a soul winning conference and was challenged. Over the next three months, he personally won six young couples to Christ and to active membership in the church. What made the difference? He *worked* at winning people to Christ.

I don't have all the answers and perhaps not *any* answers. But this old geezer would like to start a discussion. **What-ever happened to soul winning?** If that very question makes you cringe, put it another way: whatever happened to focusing on sharing the gospel with the unconverted and appealing to them to accept the saving work of Christ? If the old methods won't work, whatever happened to figuring out new ways we *can* reach the lost? **ONE**

About the Author: Dr. Robert E. Picirilli is an author, retired college professor, and Free Will Baptist historian. He completed degrees at Welch College (B.A.) and Bob Jones University (M.A., Ph.D.), and spent his career teaching and in academic administration at Welch, specializing in the Greek New Testament. He has authored or co-authored numerous books. Dr. Picirilli lives in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee.



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THE **LEAP** THAT LANDED ME IN PRISON

BY FRANK GREGORY

I have always been intrigued by the life of Johnny Cash. I grew up listening to his music and singing his songs. I have read several of his biographies, some of which he co-authored. My daughters, who also grew up listening to him, were a little annoyed when the popular movie *Walk the Line* was released, and resulted in legions of new Johnny Cash fans. His earthiness and ability to engage made a tremendous impact on me.

When he seemed to be on the brink, going into prisons basically resurrected his career. He was quoted as saying, “I had to go to prison to get a TV show.” Although he never did hard time, he will be forever linked to the lives of the incarcerated. Part of that mystique drew me to prison ministry at an early age.

I was a junior at Hillsdale College (now Randall University) when Shirley Combs approached a group of students about going to a nearby prison to minister. Her husband Jim was the prison chaplain. This was just before the Combs returned to Brazil to finish their service as missionaries. Becky and I were not yet married, so we were roughly 20 years old at the time. We went with a few other students and ministered on a Sunday afternoon. It made a profound impact on me. That was in 1982.

Fast forward to 2010, 27 years later. My second book, *Never Alone*, was about to be released. The book deals with abandonment, which I experienced at an early age when my father died in 1971. I had a huge desire to get the book into prisons wherever I could. I knew many inmates suffered from “absent father syndrome.” I had lived with the demon of abandonment for decades and experienced powerful healing and deliverance during a pastors’ prayer summit in Texas in 1999. When the book made its way into several prisons, I was hooked on prison ministry for life.

Becky was already a “badged” volunteer, singing in a choir that visited correctional facilities. I was badged in 2010 after volunteer training and going into prisons with the choir. I did not preach or have a significant role in the beginning. It appeared God was testing me to see if I would simply go and prayer walk the sanctuary before worship and attend faithfully. Before long, however, an opportunity opened, and I was able to share my story.

In 2015, Mike Wade, Oklahoma promotional director, asked me to consider helping a church in Paden. At the time, I was working in management at Reasors grocery store. The church was independent, not a member of any association, but I saw great potential there. The campus also was located only eight miles from John H. Lilley Correctional Center. I provided interim ministry at the church for six months and left after they called a pastor, only to return in June 2016 and become the pastor the following December.

The next year, September 8, 2017, my world imploded when my mother died on my birthday. Her death shook me to the

core because she was all I had for 46 years after my father died. I knew there must be some significance to her death on my birthday, that God was trying to communicate something to me in a very specific way.

In August 2019, God began to deal with me about leaving the grocery store. I was being asked to perform duties that would not allow me to maintain my integrity with God. The Lord spoke extremely clearly during one of my own invitations that it was *time*

to leave. Completely knocked out of my comfort zone that morning, I was prompted by the Holy Spirit to share with my people how conflicted I was about working at the store as I attempted to be their spiritual leader. Reasors had begun requiring employees to hold a liquor license, and I wanted no part. God made it clear that it was time to leave,

even though I would not have a job when I left. I cried all the way home from church (an hour’s drive) but knew God would take care of me. Becky did not feel well that day and did not go to church. But when I called her and shared my decision, she was completely supportive.

My birthday fell on a Sunday that year, and I felt God leading me to do something unique with the opportunity. I reached out to my family in Arkansas and told them I wanted us to remember our mother on that day—the two-year anniversary of her heavenly journey. About 30 family members made the trip to my church that weekend. I preached about our mother’s tremendous legacy and how she always lived out the call to holiness, including her abhorrence of alcohol. I took the liquor license I had recently obtained, placed it on the altar, and proclaimed it was time for God to do a new thing.

The next morning, I took the leap that landed me in prison! I walked into the store office and put in my notice. As God had revealed to me, and despite my best efforts, I did not have a job when I walked out of the store for the last time.

A week later, a man from my church who worked for the Department of Corrections told me a chaplain position had become available. God was at work! I immediately went to the website and applied for the position. Two weeks later, I interviewed in Oklahoma City for the chaplaincy at Eddie Warrior Correctional Center. Although I did not get that post, they offered a position about to open at John Lilley. After a final onsite interview on December 18 (my anniversary), I began working as chaplain in January.

In the middle of March, with the rise of the COVID pandemic, all prisons closed to volunteers. By the first week in April, we were in complete lockdown. In the fall, we suffered over 500 cases of COVID among the inmates, including ten deaths. Our staff was also ravaged by almost 50 cases, and I was included in that number. The chapel where I am writing this article was used to quarantine inmates, with beds even set up in the sanctuary! We weathered the worst of it by December and eventually opened the doors to volunteers in May 2021.

Through all this, God worked tremendously, and we are beginning to see sparks of revival on the yard. We anticipate the Lord’s plans for the coming year. By the time you read this, I believe God will have done a transformative work unlike any previously seen behind these walls. We have seen someone saved out of a gang. Although the decision resulted in severe beating—two concussions, several broken

*Prison ministry
is a challenge
that will reshape
you like few
other ministries.*

ribs, and other injuries—he is faithfully walking with God and playing in one of the chapel bands.

Are you ready to join a team that pierces the darkness like no other? Here is what you can do.

Pray! Pray for the staff that works tirelessly to help inmates. Pray for inmates to have a favorable disposition to the gospel. Pray for the officers who protect the inmates from each other and from the outside world.

You can also be instrumental through giving **finances and resources**. Prison ministries operate totally by the donations of God’s people. Chaplains are paid by the state, but those are the only funds provided. All literature and worship resources are donated by individuals and other ministries. Inmates give tithes and offering as well.

Get badged and become a volunteer. Prison ministry is a challenge that will reshape you like few other ministries. Find out what you must do in your state to get involved and begin the process of getting trained.

We also desperately need churches to help former inmates

assimilate into culture after release. This is by far the biggest obstacle our society faces. How willing are you to reach out to a felon and help him or her get started again in life? I do not have to remind you, but much has been written about redemption in a book called the Bible.

I am still active as a pastor in local church ministry, but I have never seen a larger need than reaching inmates with the love of Jesus. It literally can change the future of our nation. Pray for the courage for God to use you in a way you never fathomed.

Take the leap that will land you in prison! You will never be the same again. **ONE**

About the Author: Frank Gregory answered the call to preach at 17 and began his first pastorate at 21. He has since pastored churches in Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. Currently, he is the chaplain at John H. Lilley Correctional Center in Boley, Oklahoma. He earned a B.A. in Theology at Randall University, and an M.A. at Wheaton College. He and his wife Becky have been married nearly 40 years and have three daughters: Bethany, Stephanie, and Tiffany, and seven beautiful grandchildren. He has published two books: *Aren't You Glad Jesus Asked?* and *Never Alone*.

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Who discipled you and what did that process look like? Who is currently discipling you and how teachable are you? Who are you actively discipling? How closely are you monitoring their life for the purpose of feedback and intentional spiritual growth?

Our church has adopted a three-point strategy in the discipleship process of our people. The first step comes in Sunday Celebrations, where we try to be quite conscious of our audience. For those who haven’t surrendered to Christ, we seek to expose them to Scripture so they come to know the truth.

The second step is small groups. These small groups are based around the Sunday sermon, so the text is driven deeper. Small group discussion centers around the head, heart, and hands as it relates to the passage. “Head” questions are information-based—what we want them to know. “Heart” questions are emotional and internal and focus on what we want them to feel. “Hands” questions are action-related and explain what they should do.

The third step in our discipleship strategy is “d-groups.” This term is not unique to us, and you can find various

models for these gatherings. D-groups consist of three to five people who spend 18 months studying the entire Bible together. They journal every day, memorize Scripture, hold one another accountable, and work toward the goal of starting their own group when the current group completes the study. D-groups are slow to start, but once you see the ripple effect of the second, third, and fourth generations, the methodical pace of discipleship is well worth the benefits!

For too long, the church has neglected the commission to “go make disciples.” The number of believers who go through daily life without engaging others with the gospel is frightening. As we see the world around us in turmoil and pain, we can’t stand by and watch others spiral into eternity without Christ.

Pray fervently that God sends workers into the harvest. Ask Him to open *your* eyes to the harvest around you. **ONE**

About the Author: Tim and Amanda York are church planters in Depew, New York, near Buffalo. They were commissioned by North American Ministries to plant a church with an emphasis on the large Deaf population in that area. Tim and Amanda have three sons, Bryson, Haddon, and Judson.

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Reaching

GEN

Z

BY J. MATTHEW PINSON

Part One



As a college president (and father of young adults), I think a great deal about Paul's teaching in Ephesians 6:4 about bringing young people to maturity in the training (*paideia*) and counsel (*nouthesia*) of the Lord. So, I was very interested in a First Things podcast shared with me recently by Dr. Barry Raper, the coordinator of ministry programs at Welch College and Welch Divinity School.

The podcast is entitled "The Loneliest Generation." It's about Generation Z, which most researchers say includes young people born between 1997 and 2012. Every pastor, youth leader, and teacher should listen to it. In it, Mark Bauerlein interviews sociologist Dr. Josh Packard of the Springtide Research Institute on the organization's wide-ranging study, "The State of Religion and Young People 2020."

Why Young People Leave the Church

The study reinforces things I've shared in several forums. Even though many evangelicals have been late to get on board, the consensus of research, whether by sociologists like Christian Smith and Melissa Lundquist Denton, or researchers such as Barna, Thom Rainer, Lifeway Research, Ken Ham, or the Fuller Youth Institute's Growing Young project agree. The reasons young people leave the church—regardless of size, style, or geographical location—have little to do with programs, facilities, or worship style. These were the things 1990s seeker-driven evangelicalism said were the *only* things that would keep and draw young people.

Instead, the reasons young people leave the church have everything to do with lack of depth and transcendence, lack of serious teaching from the pulpit, emphasis on programs not people, lack of strong intergenerational relationships, and the dearth of intentional mentoring by one or more adults.

A Lack of Trust in Social Institutions

This First Things podcast and the study it references bear this out. The main two words of the research project are “relational authority.” This is what the study says Gen Z wants more than anything else. The concept is set against the backdrop of the eroding lack of trust young people have in social institutions.

The study reveals that, on a scale of one to ten, the members of Generation Z trust social institutions (e.g., government, corporate world, schools, churches, military) at a level no higher than 5.5. Yet “trust levels for relationships were at 90% or higher.”

Bauerlein and Packard say the temptation is to yield to this anti-institutional mindset by de-emphasizing institutions. But this would be a huge mistake. Driving a wedge between institutions and relationships is a false dichotomy. Institutions, they explain, are indispensable. What is needed is not to *de-emphasize* institutions, but to *restore trust* in institutions by re-emphasizing relationships.

The study describes this balance as “relational authority.” Young people not only need but want relational authority. They need and want institutions and authority structures.

They just need and want them to be characterized by 1) deep integrity and 2) authentic personal relationships.

The importance of not driving a wedge between relationality and institutions has recently been underscored by social observers like Robert Putnam and Malcolm Gladwell. Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam became famous for his book *Bowling Alone*. That volume used the decline of bowling leagues as an illustration of the decline in social and civic association in traditional social institutions and groups. In it, Putnam sounded the alarm about the harm that individualism brings—not only psychologically but also sociologically—and that such individualism is a threat to democracy.

A few years ago in *The New Yorker*, Malcolm Gladwell said social media is in danger of replacing real community, and that is a bad thing. Gladwell went on to say social media will never be effective at large-scale social reform. That's because it's oriented toward “weak ties” rather than “strong ties.”

Sustainable social change, Gladwell argued, is inherently institutional. It always presupposes what he calls “hierarchy” or organization. And such organization always arises from strong ties of friendship or embodied community. These strong ties are necessary for any movement to catch on. And the reason social media can't make that happen is because it breeds the opposite: weak ties.

Gladwell is saying the time-honored practice of mentoring, in the context of thick, embodied relationships, is a necessary ingredient to any successful social movement. And eventually, such mentoring, such friendships, must take shape in organizational ways. This certainly goes against the grain of the anti-institutional mentality of some popular evangelical thought. Yet I believe Gladwell is right.

Relational Authority

These points Bauerlein and Packard discuss on their podcast are further underscored by the Springtide Research study: young people long for relational authority. Their distrust of institutions arises not from the fact that they are institutions but from the fact they are impersonal and untrustworthy. The answer is not de-institutionalization. Instead, the answer is reinvesting our social institutions

with 1) deep, authentic, personal relationships with
2) adults who have integrity.

Relational authority requires tension between the two poles of relationship and authority. As I listened, I couldn't help but think the 1990s seeker-driven, non-denominational mentality, which still holds sway in some quarters of evangelicalism, combined the worst of both worlds of institutionalism and anti-institutionalism—the two things Gen-Z dislikes most.

The seeker-driven, non-denominational movement emphasized programs, corporate management (imitating big box stores rather than the mom-and-pop boutiques Gen-Z prefers). Gen-Z perceives these churches as marketing or “selling” religion like big business sells products—a feature of contemporary life in the West that Gen-Z loathes.

Yet these marks of “institutionalism” were at the essence of much of the church growth movement. The “big box” mentality made young people feel lost in the shuffle, not receiving the personal attention and mentoring they craved.

Yet the “authority” side of “relational authority” members of Gen-Z crave—things that traditionally characterized social institutions—were carefully de-emphasized by the seeker-driven non-denominational movement. Things like depth and transcendence and solid teaching and preaching were replaced by cultural gimmicks, flashy event planning, and large-group fun activities.

What many thought the only answer to the problem of our youth losing their religion—stylistic tinkering, entertainment, fun, and dumbing things down—was not only the wrong answer, but it is also what young people identify as the heart of the problem. Instead, they want grown-ups with integrity forging personal relationships with them and teaching them the truth and how to be grown-ups.

In saying this—and I'm sure Bauerlein and Packard would agree—I'm all for getting kids together to have fun, cut up, and be goofy; just ask my kids! But I think you get my point. We're talking about the lack of balance.

Lest we think the seeker movement is the only culprit guilty of not ministering to the real needs of today's young people, it must be pointed out that some languishing evangelical congregations with a “we've always done it this way” mentality are equally guilty of not providing depth

and transcendence, solid preaching and teaching, and rich, intentional, intergenerational mentoring. Further, many times they put just as much emphasis on pragmatic, attractional, and entertainment-centered methods, just from an earlier era.

The Rise of the “Nones”

Another thing we need to bear in mind is that many of the “nones”—those who check the “no religious affiliation” box on societal surveys—are skeptical of hypocrisy in the church and have intellectual questions about Christianity being raised at their schools and colleges. However, they feel they're being overlooked. These are the students leaving our churches fastest—the ones who want depth, transcendence, a sincere adult mentor calling them to maturity, and honest answers to tough questions and objections.

The irony is, when we target students who are likely to remain in the faith but are looking for the bigger, flashier youth group in town and adapt our ministries to them, it turns out we're aiming right past the ones most apt to become “nones” in the first place.

Restoring Trust Is the Strategy

The big takeaway from Packard's research is that restoring trust in religious institutions is the strategy for retaining and bringing young people into the church. The study examined the trust young people have for certain adults “who act in a particular way.” As Packard said, “If you can get the right qualities and characteristics in your interactions with young people, they express trust levels for relationships at 90% or higher. The implication is pretty clear for where we should be spending our time—building relationships as opposed to building programs.”

All this is good news for parents, pastors, youth leaders, and teachers, who often feel the only influences students pay attention to are their peers. Yet, as Packard notes, “Peers can often be a source of tension and anxiety as much as comfort.”

In the next issue, we will turn attention to the challenges and opportunities this understanding of Gen-Z presents the church. **ONE**

About the Author: J. Matthew Pinson has been president of Welch College since 2004. Learn more: www.Welch.edu.

Welch Accreditation Reaffirmed for Ten Years

In a meeting held December 2, 2021, the Board of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) voted to reaffirm the accreditation of Welch College for ten years until 2031, according to Dr. Kevin Hester, vice president for institutional effectiveness at Welch. The reaffirmation decision was announced in the annual delegate assembly held Tuesday, December 7. SACSCOC is the primary institutional accreditor for higher education in the Southeast region.*

“This reaffirmation by SACSCOC reflects the outstanding work done by Welch College’s administration, faculty, and staff to meet rigorous standards of compliance,” said Hester, who led the reaffirmation process. “This decision serves as an important external confirmation of what every employee and student associated with Welch College knows, that Welch is fully committed to excellence in biblical higher education. I would like to express my deepest thanks to the members of the Compliance Committee for their dedicated work in shepherding this successful reaffirmation process.”

Welch College has a long history as an accredited institution. The college has been accredited by the Association of Biblical Higher Education’s Commission on Accreditation (ABHECOA) since 1958 and first received accreditation by SACSCOC in 1996. This makes the third successful reaffirmation decision for Welch College by this body (2001, 2011, and 2021).

Provost Matthew McAfee, chief academic officer at Welch,

said, “The reaffirmation process is long and arduous in the best of circumstances. This particular accreditation cycle has been especially challenging in light of COVID-19 realities. For these reasons, we are especially thankful to the Lord for bringing us through it successfully!”

Welch President Matt Pinson said, “This vote is the final act following an intensive, multi-year, peer review process to verify the institutional quality of Welch College, its facilities, staff, and educational programs according to 14 rigorous principles of accreditation. The decennial review is a comprehensive examination of the College that engages the entire campus community in documenting compliance with these principles.”

The Compliance Committee began its work in the spring of 2019 and subsequently submitted a compliance certification report, and a focused report in advance of a virtual on-site committee visit April 5-8, 2021. During this visit, Welch College board members, administrators, faculty, staff, and students engaged with the visiting committee in validating the quality of the institution and its academic programs.

For more information about Welch College and its academic and student life programs, visit www.Welch.edu.

Welch College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award associate, baccalaureate, and master degrees. Questions about the accreditation of Welch College may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097, by calling (404) 679-4500, or by using information available on SACSCOC’s website: sacscoc.org. **ONE*

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Are You the One in Ten?

BY BARRY RAPER

Luke 17:11-19

When my former pastor Tom Scott retired, the church hosted a special service to honor him. Over the years, he had led many people to Christ, including me and my family. During the service, the song “Thank You” was played, which includes the phrase, “Thank you for giving to the Lord, for I am a life that was changed.” When we came to that line in the song, everyone saved under Pastor Scott’s ministry quietly stood to their feet. It was moving to see people across the room stand and express appreciation for his part in their salvation story.

The sad truth is, we don’t always stop to thank the people who help us along the way. Since we have fallen, imperfect hearts, we are prone to accept blessings from others without pausing to say thanks. In chapter 17 of his Gospel, Luke contrasts the differing responses from people who had been blessed by Jesus. He begins by introducing ten men and ends with one. Along the way, he provides a helpful example for the proper attitude of thanksgiving.

Healing Experienced (verses 11-14)

Two passages in the Gospel of Luke tell the story of lepers being cleansed. In Bible times, the term leprosy was used to indicate many skin diseases. The Jews considered leprosy synonymous with God’s displeasure. Practically speaking, the law demanded lepers be separated from the rest of society. In public, lepers were required to signal their disease to passersby with the declaration, “Unclean, unclean!” We find this reflected in the text with Luke’s description of men “who stood at a distance.”

We are far more understanding of this problem since social distancing has become part of our lives over the past two years. Keep your distance! Stay away! Be safe! The messaging has been everywhere and affected us all.

This isn’t the only encounter in the Gospels between Jesus and lepers. On another occasion, Jesus ministered to a leper who came, knelt before him, and declared in faith, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” Immediately, Jesus touched him and healed him.

The common denominator between the healing in that account and the one here in Luke 17 is the authority of Jesus. In one story, He touched and pronounced healing; in the other, He commanded the ten lepers to go, and the healing took place as they were going. Both stories demonstrate the compassion Jesus had for lepers and their difficult situation and His power to do something about their problem.

These men had been identified as lepers by the priests, but human priests had no power to heal. Only Jesus, our great high priest, had both the compassion and the power to do something about their condition. Once they had been healed by Jesus, human priests could pronounce them clean once again, but neither the human priests nor the leprous men could do anything to heal themselves.


Leprosy was a dreaded disease of that day, and it has become symbolic of the problem we all face as humans. We are all, apart from Jesus, unclean. Sin affects our entire being, rendering us totally depraved. Sin impacts every aspect of our lives and shapes our thoughts, our affections, and our choices. We can do nothing to heal ourselves. We all stand in need of healing from Jesus.

Gratitude Expressed (verses 14-19)

I find it intriguing the only leper who returned to thank Jesus was a Samaritan. Today, we hear the word *Samaritan* and associate it with the word *good*, as in *The Good Samaritan*. But the Jews of Jesus’ day would not have even used the word *good* and *Samaritan* in the same sentence. They viewed Samaritans as physical and spiritual half-breeds—people who did not worship according to God’s revealed will. Therefore, it is ironic the only grateful leper Jesus healed was a Samaritan. How did he express his gratitude?

He turned back. He received the healing he wanted, but so did the other lepers. The priests confirmed they had been cleansed and healed from this dreadful disease.





But nine simply kept going. Not the Samaritan. The most pressing thing on his personal calendar was to return to the source of his healing, his transformation.

He glorified God with a loud voice. To be sure, we have individual personalities. Some are quiet and reserved. Others...well, let's say they do not fit that category. Not only do individuals have specific temperaments, tendencies, and personalities, but churches do as well. Some congregations aren't expressive when it comes to singing or public worship. I'm so glad God accepts loud voices, soft voices, and all other kinds of voices between, no matter *how* they express praise.

While all the lepers had loudly cried for Jesus to have mercy on them and to heal them (and He did), only one voice continued with praise for Jesus—the voice of the Samaritan. I pray that we all have this Samaritan's desire to express praise and thanksgiving to the One who changed our lives. As the old hymn says,

*Come thou fount of every blessing
Tune my heart to sing thy praise
Streams of mercy never ceasing
Call for songs of loudest praise.*

He fell on his face at Jesus' feet. His posture was an expression of humility. When people encounter God in the Bible, their response was to fall in worship, faces to the ground. When people are fully conscious of themselves and fully conscious of who Jesus is, humility is the natural response.

Finally, he gave Him thanks.

"Oh, give **thanks** to the LORD, for *He is good!* For His mercy endures forever (1 Chronicles 16:34).

"And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving **thanks** to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17).

"In everything give **thanks**; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Ask yourself: Am I like the nine? Do I receive the blessings of God without taking time to turn back and give thanks? Do I have a sense of entitlement that says I deserve whatever I want? Do I have a worldview where the whole world revolves around me rather than God and the needs of others?

I hope we can all be more like the grateful leper who returned to the source of his healing to give thanks, and expressed that gratitude with the utmost humility.

This word translated *giving thanks* indicates it was ongoing, continual. This is the way it should be for us. If the Lord demonstrates tender mercies for us each day, and He does, each day we have reasons to give thanks. We must learn to carve out time each day to thank God for His blessings, big and small. This is an important lifestyle to establish and maintain in our lives.

Conclusion

Jesus asked, "Where are the nine?"

Who was this question for? It certainly wasn't for Jesus. He *knew* where the other men were. Perhaps others were in the crowd. Or perhaps he asked for the benefit of His disciples. But the question also benefited the Samaritan.

While we aren't given tone and inflection, I can't imagine Jesus asked the question with outrage or snarkiness: "Was no one willing to return except this despised foreigner?" Of course not!

Surely Jesus was not labeling the Samaritan as an outsider but signaling to His disciples an outcast had been welcomed into His family. His last phrase might also have been translated, "Your faith has saved you."

All of the men received physical healing. But only this man heard Jesus speak about salvation. Sure, he was a Samaritan, but it makes no difference who you are, what you have done, how other people view you, or even how you perceive yourself. Jesus can and will save you, make you clean, and give you a place of personal and close fellowship with Him. He makes you family.

This man had two strikes against him—leprosy and nationality. But through the compassion and power of Christ, he was brought into fellowship with God, an adopted son in the family.

Sinclair Ferguson once pointed out that, in this story, ten men cried out from a distance and, as they went away, they were cleansed. But this man, who started from a distance, returned cleansed and became close to Jesus.

And that is the best place to be. When you are clean and close to Jesus, you have all the reasons you need to be thankful. **ONE**

About the Columnist: Barry Raper pastors Bethel FWB Church near Ashland City, TN. He is associate dean of Welch Divinity School.



One Nine-Year-Old, Third-Grade Boy at a Time

BY DEREK ALTOM

When I was nine years old, my parents divorced. As you might imagine, this was an extremely difficult experience for a third grader to process and navigate. I was fortunate to have a wonderful extended family, a loving and caring church family, and many friends to help guide me. It truly was a beautiful picture of the church and the home working together. Let me explain.

My mom made sure we were at church every Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. On occasions when she had to work weekends, my aunt, uncle, or grandparents would fill the gap since we all attended the same church. My mom worked hard to make sure our home was a safe place. She encouraged us kids to adopt biblical values into our DNA. Generational discipleship took place in our home, and for that I am forever grateful.

While at church, I received intentional discipleship training from passionate Sunday School teachers, youth ministry volunteers, and a wonderful pastor who preached biblically-sound, expository sermons. Members of the congregation gave sacrificially, so my siblings and I could attend youth camp every summer. It was during a summer youth camp in 1993, at age 11, that I gave my heart to Jesus, and it would not have happened if it were not for their generosity.

Throughout the last 15 years of serving in ministry, the values instilled in me by my local church and at home have guided me as I seek to instill them in others. The biblical principles that shaped my life help me as I also impress them on the hearts of the four boys the Lord has given my wife and me.

What I experienced through my most formative years is exactly what Randall House and D6 Family Ministry is

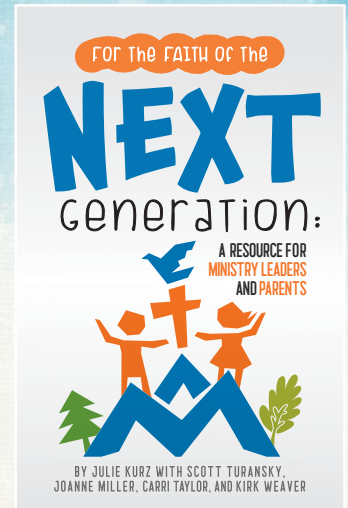
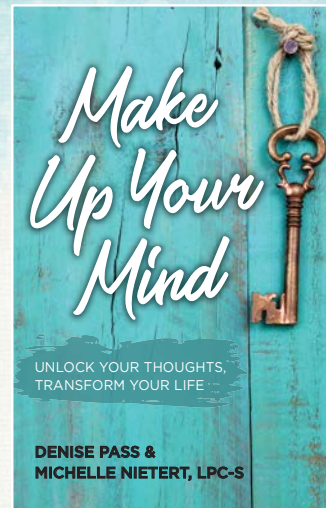
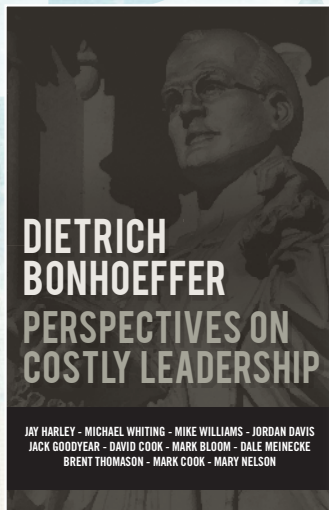
all about—**helping you build believers through church and home.** It is our aim to create resources to help guide you, ministry leaders and parents, on this journey. We want to equip ministry leaders with the resources needed to train parents to be the primary disciple-makers in the home. We want to equip parents with the resources needed to impress biblical truth on the hearts of their children, so they may do the same with their children.

For us to achieve this mission, we need your help. We need churches and individuals to partner with us financially to ensure this mission continues. At Randall House and D6 Family Ministry, we refer to these financial partners as “D6 Heroes.” D6 Heroes are men and women, churches, and organizations that believe home is the primary place where generational discipleship takes place. D6 Heroes believe the role of the local church is to come alongside parents in this pursuit.

Would you consider becoming a D6 Hero? To join the ranks of our heroes, please visit D6Hero.com. Together, we can impact both the church and the home one nine-year-old, third grade child at a time. **ONE**

About the Author: Derek serves as the director of events and development at Randall House and D6 Family Ministry. You can reach Derek by email at derek.altom@randallhouse.com.

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Spring 2022 Scope and Sequence



- Mar. 6** Set Free From Sin (Romans 6:1-23)
- Mar. 13** Led by the Spirit (Romans 8:1-39)
- Mar. 20** The Transformed Life (Romans 12:1-21)
- Mar. 27** Submitting to Authority (Romans 13:1-14)
- Apr. 3** Surrendering Our Rights (Romans 14:1-15:7)
- Apr. 10** The Crucified Christ (Matthew 27:11-54)
- Apr. 17** The Risen Christ (Matthew 28:1-15)
- Apr. 24** The Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:6-11; Romans 10:13-14)
- May 1** The Search for Meaning (Ecclesiastes 1:1-18)
- May 8** The Purpose of Man (Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:14)
- May 15** Representatives of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:1-21)
- May 22** Set Apart for Christ (2 Corinthians 6:1-7:1)
- May 29** Strength in Christ (2 Corinthians 12:1-10)



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Celebrating Two Decades With My Dad

BY LAUREN HUNTER BIGGS

I was only six years old when my dad began working at Randall House in March 2002. Over the last two decades, churches around the world have heard my dad talk about generational discipleship and Deuteronomy 6 principles. Growing up, I truly did not know all my dad did—not entirely. Like any other dad, he left for work or travel, returned home, helped my brother Michael and me with homework, took us to school, and did other typical “dad tasks.”

Despite the busyness of life, both my dad and my mom (Pam) continuously and intentionally found ways to connect our faith to everyday activities through our developmental years. It has always been clear my parents wanted us to develop a walk with Christ more than anything else in life.

I easily can picture God thinking, ‘My Spirit will make D6 burst into flame and quickly spread through thousands of churches. I can hand this gift only to someone who loves Me passionately, is humble enough to believe D6 is from Me, and desires that this movement build My Kingdom and not his. I choose Ron Hunter.’

— Richard Ross, Student Ministry Professor, Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth, TX (mainstage speaker at the first D6 Conference)

This mindset of generational discipleship has been the driving force behind Dad’s time at Randall House.

Because I was young when he started, many details in this article do not come from my own observations. He was just “Dad” to me, not the CEO of a publishing house. While I admittedly write with a daughter’s perspective, I wanted to balance that view and share important details. So, I interviewed nearly 20 individuals: past board members, current and former employees (team members), denominational leaders, and publishing industry leaders.

Ron Hunter has the unique ability to push the envelope, stretching us without tearing the paper.

— Clint Morgan,
General Director, IM, Inc.

My dad’s journey to Randall House started long before he got the job. He pastored 11 years before starting his role at the publisher. During those years, he watched teens in his church get their driver’s licenses and seemingly “drive away” from God and church. Michael and I were only

168/168—the number of hours Ron Hunter is thinking about family ministry and discipleship.

— Benjamin Crabtree, Executive Secretary of Ohio State Association of Free Will Baptists

In addition, he worked for a major television network and later managed his own advertising agency. He served as a consultant, regularly helping numerous clients spend hundreds of thousands of dollars for media placement. Looking back, he now realizes these roles prepared him for where God would lead.

Dad has always been a strategist and visionary. I've heard him say many times God has woven the fabric of his experiences together to prepare him for what he is doing. He even planned out his education carefully, from Bible and pastoral studies at Welch College with a minor in Christian education to a nonprofit management master's degree from the University of Colorado, and ultimately, a Ph.D. in leadership from Dallas Baptist University. He would say we are the combined total of our experiences, reading, relationships, and most importantly, our moments with God.

The original board members who hired my dad still remember the interview. One was amazed when Dad submitted much more than a résumé. He submitted a 32-page vision statement! (If you know my perfectionist dad very well at all, this will not surprise you.) Those pages contained the foundation upon which D6 was later built, because his vision included Deuteronomy 6, church and home intentionality, excellence in design, and moving Randall House and Free Will Baptists to a place of greater respect within the Body of Christ.

grade-schoolers at the time. Dad recalls that he did not want that for us, and he did not want that for the teens in his church, or any other church for that matter.

Back then, he did not understand why the first seven years of his ministry were bi-vocational. But today, in retrospect, he sees God's hand at work. He worked in advertising, marketing, print design, and layout.



Lauren (Hunter) Biggs, Kinsley Biggs, and Ron Hunter, Jr. at D6 Conference 2021

At the first offsite vision retreat in fall 2002, my dad challenged the Randall House team to create a learning system and a family-aligned curriculum. Those present included editors, designers, and managers. Before leaving the two-and-a-half-day event, the concepts and details for CLEAR Curriculum were born. Over 18 months, every department within Randall House worked tirelessly to roll out a revolutionary new curriculum that facilitates discipleship reaching both church and home.

CLEAR Curriculum, based upon the principles of Deuteronomy 6, was launched in fall 2004, the first of three subsequent generations of curriculum: D6, D6 2nd Gen, and the current D6 EveryDay. Through the years and evolution of D6 Curriculum, many families, pastors, and leaders have cultivated cultures of generational discipleship in both their churches and homes.

The D6 Conference launched in 2009 and has since expanded to eight countries, five hosting annual events. To date, D6 Curriculum has won 160 awards for content and 50 awards for design and print excellence. D6 Curriculum addresses one of the greatest needs in the local church: preventing the loss of teens and young adults. This revolutionary generational discipleship approach disrupted the Christian curriculum industry. Before long, other major publishers, including Lifeway and David C. Cook, began

A Short Timeline

- **March 2002** – Ron Hunter hired
- **Fall 2002** – First vision retreat
- **2003** – New design department serves all departments of Randall House
- **2003** – First TEAM Church (regional training)
- **2004** – Book division created
- **Fall 2004** – CLEAR Curriculum launched
- **2005** – Dave Ramsey signed to write columns for teen and adult devotional magazines
- **Spring 2005** – First issue of *ONE Magazine* printed
- **2005** – First book on Amazon (*The Case of Stuart's Ship*)
- **2006** – Ron coins the name “D6” in his hotel room during the NAFWB, Birmingham, Alabama
- **2007** – Dedicated marketing department created
- **Fall 2009** – CLEAR rebranded to D6
- **Fall 2009** – First D6 conference
- **2011** – Randall House presents 400th Anniversary KJV Bible exhibit at the NAFWB
- **2013** – Events department created
- **2013** – First international D6 Conference in Norway
- **Fall 2015** – Gen 2 of D6 Curriculum launched
- **2015** – *DNA of D6* published
- **2015** – D6 Podcast launched
- **Fall 2016** – D6 Plus launched
- **July 2019** – New Testament Bible Commentaries completed
- **2019** – D6 Family App launched
- **Fall 2020** – D6 EveryDay Curriculum launched
- **December 2020** – Kinsley, Ron's first grandchild, is born
- **2021** – Development department created
- **March 2022** – Ron's second grandchild will arrive



Ron Hunter and I have worked together for nearly two decades through the trade organization PCPA: Protestant Church-owned Publishers Association. I quickly learned to respect him for many reasons, including his collaborative nature, his attention to learning and growth, and his generosity in sharing his wisdom and experiences with others.

– Beth Lewis, Executive Director, PCPA: Protestant Church-owned Publishers Association

producing a similar style of curriculum, emphasizing discipleship at church and home.

Over the past 20 years, Randall House has also taken great strides in other areas. Denominational publishers are known for works detailing the doctrines and historical beliefs of their movements. This is certainly true for Randall House, which has published numerous works on church history, theology, Christian living, standalone Bible studies, and numerous family ministry titles. In 20 years under my dad's leadership, three talented acquisition editors of the book division have produced 151 titles.

While it is hard to single out any favorites, it is noteworthy to recognize several titles completed in the past 20 years: *The Randall House New Testament Bible Commentary Series*, several printings of *The Rejoice Hymnal*, numerous works by Free Will Baptist theologians, as well as *The D6 Family Ministry Academic Journal* series. In addition, Dad opened the door to authors beyond the denominational movement.

Additionally, during his tenure, Randall House's books began being sold on Amazon, all e-book distribution points, and Lifeway and other family bookstores

Not many people care more about effective discipleship at home than Ron Hunter. In fact, from the outside looking in, it appears he has given his life for the cause.

– Brian Haynes, Lead Pastor, BayArea Church, TX



(while they were still open). Today, 30 of Randall House's book titles have been translated into one or more languages (a total of 56 translations) and are being distributed internationally. These carefully selected titles have been beneficial for Free Will Baptist international missionaries and other international family ministry partners.

My dad is part of Generation X, meaning he was born in an analog world that gradually transitioned to a digital world during his teen years. His vision and leadership in the digital arena were vital to guide Randall House into digital file-keeping, app development, complex websites with digital storefronts, and a strong social media presence. At the same time, he maintained the tradition of analog and print publishing, which continues to be a staple for the industry.

'Leading is serving.' This is not just a cliché with Ron. It was his mantra long before he earned his doctorate. He leads by sharing his concern, wisdom, and expertise, thus serving many of us. I am a grateful recipient.

— Elizabeth Hodges, Former Director, WNAC

From early elementary days, my brother and I were blessed that Mom prepared lunches, and Dad drew pictures and wrote notes on our napkins. When Mom took us to school each day, as she dropped us off, she told us, "You go be Jesus to someone today."

In retrospect, one could say my brother and I were "at-home experiments" for generational discipleship. Today, I realize those intentional teaching moments at home were not a new concept. Those connections were what God always intended for the family, and what my husband Austin and I now intend for our own daughter Kinsley. The past 20 years have taught me discipleship happens in every moment of life—not just at church. I suspect many of you have been reminded of that principle because of Randall House and D6 Family Ministry.

How does one measure these past 20 years for my dad and Randall House? Is it by growing income from \$1.9 million to a high of \$4.6 million? Maybe by earning many awards of excellence for books and curriculum? Or maybe it is how many countries are now reached with generational discipleship materials?

I think my dad would argue it is not about the achievements. I think he would say our effectiveness is measured in *generations*. So, the value of his 20 years may only be evident in the generations to come. **ONE**

Ron Hunter has been a friend to me, making himself readily available personally—not just professionally. I'm convinced he genuinely cares about me, my ministry, and our church families.

— Jeff Manning, Lead Pastor, Unity Church, Greenville, NC

About the Author: Lauren (Hunter) Biggs is the Media Connections Coordinator at IM, Inc. She loves Starbucks iced coffee, being a social media manager and consultant, traveling anywhere tropical, and hanging out with her husband Austin and daughter Kinsley. Learn more about Randall House and D6 Family Ministries at D6Family.com.

It has been my honor to work with a number of different publishers during 40 years of writing and ministry. If I were asked who I would put on my 'Mt. Rushmore' of Christian publishers, Ron Hunter would be on that very short list. Character, creativity, courage, vision, integrity, optimism, leadership, encouragement and lived out commitment to Christ. These are all constant qualities I've seen in Ron's leadership and I'm grateful to say friendship over the past 20 years.

— John Trent, President and Founder of Strong Families

The Value of Experience

BY RON HUNTER JR., PH.D.

We have all heard those consoling words: “experience is the best teacher.” I suspect many of you are quickly quoting John Maxwell’s retort: “Experience is not the best teacher, *evaluated* experience is.”

Taking the extra step to revisit experience can be painful, as Oscar Wilde observed, “Experience is the name everyone gives to their mistakes.” I once saw a guy in the gym wearing a shirt proclaiming, “Pain is weakness leaving the body.” While it may be painful to evaluate a difficult experience, only a fair assessment can give you proper perspective.

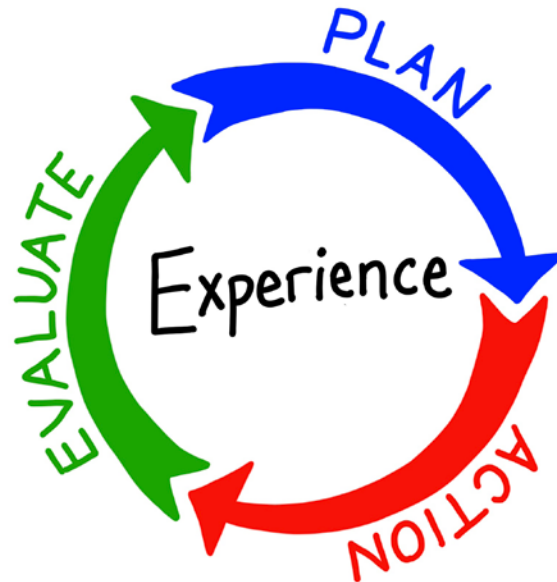
The military conducts **after action reviews (AARs)**. After any exercise, like a rehearsal of an ambush, they stop afterward to review every step and ask, “What went well?” and “What went poorly?” followed by “What needs to change?”

For the past two decades, the team at Randall House has undergone multiple AARs each year, when we launched a curriculum, completed a D6 or Vertical Three Conference, or some other endeavor. We gather those involved and dissect each element, from preparation to execution, always critiquing the process, not the people. Those evaluated experiences turn weakness into strength.

The true strategist will plan, implement, and evaluate, so the next plan is built on the lessons of the past. During the evaluation stage, be cautious not to be overly critical, but equally, don’t sweep issues or problems under the rug. Likewise, don’t ignore responsibility, but walk away with action steps. If you walk away from an AAR and never revisit or implement the lessons learned, all the review is for nothing.

When I pastored, I started a habit that has become a life-long routine; I turn my drive home every day into an AAR: what I accomplished; what I did not do; what I did not do well. Then, I begin to consider action steps for the following day.

To cast this concept theologically, remember God wants us to confess our sins, an evaluation of our sinful experience.



ence. We acknowledge wrong, confess, and repent, which carries the expectation of learning from past mistakes and turning away from those sins in the future in pursuit of holy living. Owning our mistakes in business, church, and among family and friends should be no different. While it may be painful, it also will be profitable.

Honest evaluation requires putting yourself under the microscope, with numerous eyes taking close observations. Healthy counsel provides honest feedback for your benefit and growth. We all need experience, but all experiences need evaluation.

Immanuel Kant described it this way: “Experience without theory is blind, but theory without experience is mere intellectual play.”

ONE

About the Columnist: Ron Hunter Jr. has a Ph.D. in leadership and is CEO of Randall House and D6 Family Ministry. You may contact him at ron.hunter@randallhouse.com.



BIBLE VERSES

Hebrews 10:32-39
Lamentations 3:40
1 Corinthians 13:12
2 Corinthians 13:5
Ephesians 4:22-24
Deuteronomy 4:9
2 Timothy 3:16

LEADERSHIP QUOTE

“Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first, the lesson afterward.”

—Vernon Law

Equipped for His Work: 2021 Leadership Conference

Antioch, TN—The 2021 Free Will Baptist Leadership Conference met at Sonesta Nashville Airport Hotel December 6-7. One hundred ninety-five pastors, church leaders, and denominational leaders from 25 states and a Canadian province gathered to explore the important theme “Equipped,” considering new ways forward in post-pandemic ministry.

Monday and Tuesday evenings were highlighted with sessions featuring Dr. Thom Rainer, founder of ChurchAnswers.com, an online forum for church leaders. The prolific author and former CEO of Lifeway encouraged healthy churches to consider “adopting” or “fostering” a struggling church. The primary goal is to help that church return to a place of health where assistance is no longer needed. In some cases, however, the helping church may ultimately “adopt” the struggling congregation, bringing the two churches together permanently.

Why adopt this strategy rather than just merging from the outset? “I grieve when God’s Church loses a presence in a community,” Rainer noted. “I want every church to continue being a lighthouse to the families and neighborhoods around it.”

During a packed Tuesday schedule, 16 speakers presented training seminars and workshops over a wide spectrum of topics, ranging from “Developing a Sending Culture in Your Local Church” to “Hispanic Ministry as a Tool for Church Revitalization.” For the first time, a portion of seminars were provided by and for Spanish-speakers, and keynote sessions were

translated into Spanish.

The conference additionally featured two panel discussions. Danny Baer (NC), Jeff Blair (OK), Doug Carey (OK), Ron Hunter (TN), Jeff Manning (NC), and Mike Trimble (MI) addressed the important question, “What Does ‘Husband of One Wife’ Really Mean?” Following the Tuesday service, Executive Secretary Eddie Moody, Dr. Robert E. Picirilli, and Dr. Danny Dwyer explored the important subject, “Facing the Pastoral Shortage,” and identified the growing need for revitalized churches.

The two-day conference featured much more than strategy and training, however. The ballroom buzzed with conversation during banquet-styled meals, and in-depth discussions continued long after each meal concluded.

Several national boards, committees, and groups met in conjunction with the conference, including the Board of Retirement; the Executive Committee; Free Will Baptist Foundation; IM, Inc; North American Ministries; Randall House; Welch College; state leaders; and the 3 for 30 Task Force.

Reflecting on the conference, Executive Secretary Eddie Moody said, “I think we were all able to come away with actions we can take to help our churches be healthier and more effective in reaching their communities, discipling other believers, and giving themselves completely to the Lord. I was encouraged by the inaugural meeting of the 3 for 30 Task Force, and by meeting with state leaders. I look forward to seeing the ideas discussed this week put into action across our movement in the coming days.”

Moody announced December 5-6, 2022, as the dates for next year’s conference. Best-selling author and pastor Robby Gallaty will be the featured speaker as the conference addresses the theme, “Discipleshift.”

Visit www.nafwb.org/leadershipconference throughout the year for more updates regarding the 2022 conference.

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Foundation Updates 2022 Grants Program

Antioch, TN—Following its December board meeting, the Free Will Baptist Foundation announced it will expand its grants program in 2022. “Thanks to the continuing growth of the Foundation, we will expand grants from a half million in 2021 to \$750,000 in 2022,” said Director David Brown.

Brown encourages Free Will Baptist organizations to prepare grant requests to meet the March 15 deadline.

The program, begun in 2017, has grown consistently. Any ministry connected to the National Association of Free Will Baptists (NAFWB) is eligible to apply for a grant. This means all state and district associations and state and district-owned ministries are eligible if they report directly to the NAFWB or are members of Free Will Baptist associations. Local churches also may apply if they belong to a district association that is a member of a state that belongs to the NAFWB. We encourage those interested to visit our website to download the rubric to help guide their grant request.

Until 2016, the Foundation largely served as a channel for individual endowments and planned gifts to fund ministries perpetually. However, the grant program allows the Foundation to fund the needs of ministries directly.

The program is not designed to support a ministry’s general fund or “shore up” annual budgets. Instead, grants should be invested in projects with long-lasting impact on ministry and the denomination as a whole. All ministries awarded a grant must file follow-up report(s) with the Foundation to verify how the grant funding was used.

More information regarding grant applications can be obtained by contacting the Foundation office at 877-336-7575, by emailing foundation@nafwb.org, or by visiting fwbgifts.org (grants tab). **ONE**



.....*News Across the Nation*

Don Ellerd With the Lord

Mariposa, CA—Don and Teresa Ellerd recently were commissioned as church planters by North American Ministries in a joint project with the California Mission Board. In a unique situation, Don was the part-time director of The Barrier, a Free Will Baptist non-profit organization that owns and operates Sweetwater Christian Camp. The plans were to plant a church in nearby Mariposa.



Don Ellerd

However, after a short battle with COVID, Don passed from this life November 7, 2021. Born in Modesto, California, January 24, 1974, He served as pastor of LifeGate FWB Church in Turlock, California, for more than two decades, first as youth pastor and then as lead pastor. He was known for wanting everyone to know that no matter how much a person was loved, Jesus loved them even more.

A celebration of life service was held November 20, 2021, at LifeGate FWB Church in Turlock. Don is survived by his wife Teresa, two children, and one granddaughter. **ONE**

Pre-Registration

2022 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FREE WILL BAPTISTS

NAFWB | V3 | BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA | JULY 24-27

One Form Per Person | Register Online: www.nafwb.org | Name Badges Required for All Convention Events

First Name _____ Last Name _____
Home Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Country (if outside USA) _____ Email _____
Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____
Church You Attend _____ Church City _____ State _____

National Association (All voting delegates must be members in good standing of a FWB church.)

Voting Delegates

- ☐ National Board/Commission Member
- ☐ Ordained Minister
- ☐ Ordained Deacon
- ☐ State Delegate (Authorization Required)
- ☐ Local Church Delegate (Delegate Card Required)

Non-Voting

- ☐ Attendee (All Ages, Including Infants and Toddlers)

Tickets (More information available at a later date)

WNAC Laughter and Latté
Monday, July 25, 8:30 p.m.

Welch Alumni & Friends Luncheon
Wednesday, July 27, noon

National Association Info: 877-767-7659 | www.nafwb.org

Vertical Three Conference

Preschool

- ☐ Ages 3-5, Attending Preschool Worship - \$25 (\$35 onsite)
- ☐ Ages 0-5, Not Attending Preschool Worship - NO FEE

Students: \$25

Any student or competitor* attending any CTS competition or event
MUST pay \$25 V3 conference fee (\$35 onsite).

- ☐ Grades K-3
- ☐ Grades 4-6
- ☐ Grades 7-12

*Competitors must pay this V3 conference fee **in addition to**
CTS competition fees already paid.

College Age | Adults: \$20

Adults attending any competition or event MUST pay \$20.

- ☐ Adult Attendee

V3 EventQty_____ x \$13 = _____
(Featuring Byron Trimble | Comedian, Speaker, Mammal)
Tuesday, July 26, 9:00 pm (\$15 onsite/at the door)

V3 Information: 800-877-7030 | www.verticalthree.com

Register April 1 - June 24 | No Refunds After June 24

Payment Options:

- + Check (Payable to FWB Convention)
- + Visa, Discover, or MasterCard only (both debit and credit cards accepted)

Card # _____

Card Holder _____ Exp ____/____

Signature _____

NAFWB Questions: 877-767-7659 | convention@nafwb.org

Return to:

Convention Registration

PO Box 5002

Antioch, TN 37011 / FAX: 615-731-0771



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The Good Life

BY EDDIE MOODY

"He lived more in twenty years than some who live to be eighty."

I have heard these types of statements often after the death of a young person. In essence, they mean the person lived his or her fullest life, even though it was short. Isn't that what we have been considering in this issue of *ONE Magazine*? How to make the most of our lives for God?

Most people are searching for "the good life." Some pursue pleasure, others a successful career. Still others view the good life as doing whatever they want in retirement.

What is the good life, really? Solomon struggled with this question throughout his life, as recorded in the book of Ecclesiastes. His conclusion? "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Jesus also alluded to the good life in the Parable of the Talents. He indicated we all have varying resources and abilities, and if we use them well, we will hear "Well done!" when we stand before God.

It is good for all of us to examine our lives from time to time, consider our talents and resources, and ask ourselves if we are stewarding them well.

- **Time.** We don't know how much time we have, but as good stewards we must do our best to *redeem the time* and use well the time we are given.
- **Health.** Some are genetically predisposed to conditions or maladies. However, we all can steward our health by not overeating, consuming healthy foods, and staying active.
- **Relationships.** Each of us has family, friends, fellow congregants, co-workers, classmates, and neighbors with whom we can develop meaningful relationships. We can share the gospel with them and pray for them regularly.
- **Spiritual gifts.** Every Christian has at least one. We can use our gift(s) in our churches, our homes, and

throughout our lives. When we retire, some may devote even more significant time to using their gifts in ministry.


What does it look like to steward life well?

I can't help but think of Landen, son of North Carolina pastor Luke Johnson and Amanda. Landen did not have much time on this earth. In fact, he lived only 3,519 days. From the beginning, he was plagued by health problems. He was born with the rare condition primordial dwarfism, with only 30 known cases in the world.

In spite of his daunting health challenges, Landen developed many friendships. Though only a child, he had a rare talent for spreading joy, noting a merry heart is good medicine. He lavished that joy upon others. When he passed at age nine, a local reporter noted, "A much-loved little boy is gone, and an entire community is grieving."

You might say Landen lived more in nine years than some who live to be ninety.

What do we learn from Landen? When we use our time, talents, and treasure for the Lord, we truly live "the good life," no matter what challenges we face.

*Read Landen's story: http://www.onemag.org/johnsons_journey.htm 



Eddie Moody
Executive Secretary,
National Association of
Free Will Baptists



We make the **whole** team better!



Offensive linemen don't get a lot of credit for a touchdown. But without them, the stars wouldn't stand a chance. **The line is the foundation of the team.** The same is true of **Free Will Baptist Foundation.** No, we don't travel the world as pioneer missionaries, start churches, or teach future pastors. But, like football linemen, **we work hard to make your ministry possible.**

GRANTS | PLANNED GIVING | ENDOWMENTS
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FREE WILL BAPTIST
FOUNDATION

foundation@nafwb.org | www.fwbgifts.org | 877-336-7575

TODAY...the very best time to start!

Sure, if you planted a tree yesterday, last month, or last year, it might already be tall and strong, with deep roots. But, if you didn't act then, it's not too late. To grow a strong tree in the future, the best time to plant is **TODAY**.

To have a strong plan for long-term ministry, the kind that will reach others for Christ long into the future, **TODAY** is the day to start.

It all begins with starting your church's institutional investing **TODAY**. Your seedling will grow, and over time, it will shade your entire ministry with its strength.

Pastors and church leaders, reach out to the Board of Retirement now. Because **TODAY** is the best time to start.



Free Will
Baptist
Board of
Retirement

BoardofRetirement.com

