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Roots and Wings

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Remembering the Thigpens

Sharing Your Faith

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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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Hidden Treasure?

BY ERIC K. THOMSEN

A driftwood fire crackled merrily, and the smoky smell of coffee wafted through the cool morning air. Easing back on my elbows in the powdery sand, I waited with a smile for the old, blackened coffee pot to finish perking. I yawned and stretched as I admired early morning clouds tinged with pink on the distant horizon.

After backpacking five miles through soft sand and scratchy underbrush the previous evening, my daughter and I discovered a pristine location near the end of the deserted Gulf island we set out to explore. Tucked into a hollow between two enormous sand dunes, we raised our small, worn tent against an enormous drift log. After scavenging firewood, we spent a fantastic evening roasting marshmallows and drinking hot chocolate. My last thought before drifting off to sleep was how much I enjoyed the sound of crashing waves on the shore. Perfect.

Eight hours later, as dawn slowly brightened to brilliant sunrise, I savored my coffee and simply relaxed as I waited for Sleepyhead to stir. Running my toes through the sand, I wondered for the umpteenth time how sand could be so soft.

"Ouch!" A sudden sharp pain between my toes put a damper on the otherwise idyllic morning. Reaching down, I pulled a short length of corroded chain from the sand. "Litterbugs!" I exclaimed with disgust, rubbing the small cut left between my toes. Shaking my head, I shoved the corroded metal into the side pocket of my hiking shorts to discard later. At that moment, a sleepy face surrounded by tousled blond locks poked from the tent door. "Do I smell coffee?"

We turned attention to breakfast, breaking camp, and retracing our route back down the island. Four hours later, we arrived at the parking area scratched, sunburned, sweaty, and ready for shade. We stowed our gear and, after a last glance at the scenery, prepared to head for civilization.

Remembering the refuse, I stepped over to the drab green trash bin. As I drew back my hand to toss in the chain, I froze. The hours of rubbing back and forth in my pocket had removed the corrosion and turned the links a soft, golden glow. The trash had become treasure! A trip to an antique dealer confirmed it. The buried chunk of corrosion was not only gold, but pure gold—scarred and worn but just as precious.

Jesus spoke clearly about treasure in His Sermon on the Mount. He taught followers one's "treasure" says much about the condition of the heart. Obsession with the material, a lack of generosity, and misplaced confidence in wealth (Luke 12:27-34: Matthew 6:19-21) point to a heart divided, torn between two masters—God and money (Matthew 6:24). In contrast, generosity, careful stewardship of resources, eternal values, and faith God will provide reflect a heart fully devoted to God, not distracted by the glittering baubles of this life.

Most important, we must not bury our most precious treasure: salvation. Christ's gift of redemption is not something to be hidden or hoarded but shared. Like a candle in the darkness or a shining city on a hill (Matthew 5:14-16), God's grace should gleam from our lives, pointing others to a treasure far better than anything marked by an X on some tattered parchment.

Hidden treasure? No way! Not for the Christian. III

About the Columnist: Eric K. Thomsen is managing editor of **ONE Magazine**. Email: eric@nafwb.org.



Every morning when I sit down for my quiet time with the Lord, I have my Bible, a devotional book, my *Rejoice!* hymnal, and a notebook. I am so grateful to the committee who spent hours of research and prayer to compile such an amazing book for worship. Back in the early days, a common complaint was the weight of the book,

but I am thankful for every ounce, because they are gems in my treasure book of praise. Rejoice in the Lord! Rejoice, give thanks, and sing! Thank you to that committee for giving us such a wonderful tool of worship.

—Bernadene Kemble, Texas Via Email



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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ETEAM is IM's premier program for high school students. Those entering their sophomore year may apply for ETEAM. Essentially, ETEAM participants give three weeks of their summer to learn about and experience cross-cultural ministry. Students engage in a full week of pre-field preparation before working alongside a missionary.

I enjoy teaching these students basic principles about sharing their faith. To kick-start this particular class students are presented the following paragraph:

It is imperative we grasp the epistemological underpinnings of our theological position as it relates to soteriology if we are to effectively articulate our faith in the existential milieu in which we live. We must be solidly attached to the nodal point of integration of our belief system in order to establish and live out a worldview that is intelligible and pertinent to today's 'post-modern' mindset. It behooves us to give significant consideration to these issues. We can thereby avoid any postulation of semantic confusion when we truly embrace and declare the truths of His Word. Failure to do so will certainly be detrimental to the expansion of His Kingdom during this 'kairos' in which we live.

Generally, most do not fully understand several important words in this paragraph. The point is not to stump them, but to help them realize the way we present the gospel often becomes an obstacle to the listener. Our presentation of the gospel is many times so esoteric or hard to interpret the unbeliever cannot understand it and, therefore, cannot embrace it.

We may be getting way ahead of the game by assuming all Christians share their faith. It would be presumptuous to think all ETEAM students have a passionate desire to witness to their peers. Research reveals only 8% of regular church attenders believe sharing their faith is "very important." This implies 92% of those in our churches are not committed to obeying the final command of Christ to preach the gospel to all nations. It is reasonable to assume these stats reflect, to some degree, our ETEAM participants.

I don't want to get bogged down in seeking a solution for the 92% uncommitted to evangelism. Instead, I want us to consider a case study and draw out principles to guide those who desire to witness but are hesitant or unsure how to proceed.

A Case Study

It is impossible for me to say how many times I have been asked, "How did you share the gospel in Africa?" I like that **the question assumes I did witness.** Thankfully, it is a safe assumption.

Before answering the particular question addressed to me, I must present two important factors. One, Africa is a large continent; no singular method will effectively communicate the gospel in every setting and among every people group. Second, the methods I used are not necessarily best for everyone in every situation; our unique personalities, gifts, and abilities dictate the methods we use.

However, I do think some foundational principles are transferable and pertinent to all believers, wherever we may be. Let's start with the question asked of me and build from there. We will address broader issues like how I determined the places, timing, manner, and persons with whom to share my faith while serving as a missionary to the Lobi people in Côte d'Ivoire, Africa.

One of the most common evangelistic methods was visiting village markets. We chose market days because those opportunities produced the largest social gatherings available. Also, those coming to market saw it as an all-day event, providing abundant time just to sit and chat. We took full advantage of those cultural norms,

engaging as many people as we could, witnessing when the opportunity arose.

Before going to a market, the Lobi evangelist(s) and I spent time in prayer. We asked God for courage to speak the truth, strength to endure all day in the hot sun, and most of all for His Spirit to lead us to those whose hearts were prepared to hear the Word. We knew our hearts must be in tune with the Holy Spirit to know with whom to share the gospel, what to say, and patience to wait on Him to transform those who believed. After our prayer time, we traveled to market in anticipation of what God had in store.

After arriving, we quickly found ourselves chatting with passersby who stopped long enough for us to engage them. No doubt, being the only American in the crowd was somewhat of a plus factor in attracting people to our little straw-covered booth. We waited in constant anticipation for the right time to share the gospel. Though we felt compelled to share, we did not want to drive people away by "kicking down" the proverbial door to their hearts.

I seized every open opportunity to talk to people about Christ. It was imperative the words I shared be Bible based, Christ centered, and culturally comprehensible. The conversation with a Lobi would go something like this.

Me: Do you believe there is one God?

Lobi: *Absolutely!* (Note: Lobi tradition tells of a god who created all things, walked on the earth, and interacted with people. He eventually left because a woman hit him on the head with a big stick. He gave men idols to communicate with the spirit world and live under their control.)

Me: Do you know everything there is to know about God?

Lobi: No.

Me: Do you believe God can talk to man?

Lobi: If He wants to.

Me: Do you believe man could understand what God said if He spoke to him?

Questions to Guide in Discovering Principles for Sharing Your Faith

- 1. Why is it dangerous to assume one method will work in all witnessing situations?
- **2. What broad principles** should guide us in selecting where, when, and how we share our faith?
- **3. What cultural norms** in your present context open the door to presenting the gospel? What cultural norm presents the greatest obstacle?
- **4. What role(s)** does the Holy Spirit play in sharing your faith?
- **5. What draws people** to your church? To you personally?
- **6. What would you add** to the following principle to make it clearer and more applicable for you? "It was imperative the words I shared be Bible based, Christ centered, and culturally comprehensible."
- 7. What should be the normal progression of moving from unbeliever to committed Christian?

Lobi: If God wanted him to.

Me: Do you think man could write down what God said?

Lobi: *If he knows how to write.*

Me: Well, I believe God did talk to man, man understood what God said, man wrote it down, and we have the words written. Now, if you want to know about America, would you ask me or another Lobi?

Lobi: I would ask you.

Me: If you want to know more about God, would you want to ask me or ask Him?

Lobi: Ask Him?

Me: I have His words about Himself, and I want to share them with you.

Of course, every conversation did not unfold in precisely this sequence. But it was repeated often enough that it stuck in my memory as a means God used to nudge conversations toward the gospel.

My heart's desire was to consistently share the truths of God's Word in a manner people could comprehend and respond appropriately. They had three possible responses: 1) Yes, I understand, and I want to abandon the way of my idols; 2) Yes, I understand, but I'm not going to leave my idols; 3) I really don't understand, but I want to hear more.

We sought to establish ongoing discussions, desiring they would lead to true conversion. In normal progression, the conversion was followed by discipleship, baptism, active church membership, and making new disciples.

Obviously, this dialogue and sequence should not be expected in all witnessing opportunities. In fact, I don't want us to stumble over the method as the key focus of this article. I desire we look at this scenario and discern principles we can apply to the opportunities God provides us to share our faith.

I invite you to go back and reread this article. Then, pull out principles you believe may help you share the gospel when opportunities come your way.

As you re-read the article, take note of phrases in bold. Each of these has a principle to consider. May I challenge you to write down the principles you discover and consider how to apply them in your life? Also, may I ask you to share some of your thoughts with me via email at clint@iminc.org? Thanks, and may He bless you abundantly as you serve Him.

About the Writer: Clint Morgan is general director of IM, Inc. Learn more about the work of Free Will Baptist international missions: IMInc.org.

Rose in the Desert

TRANSFORMATIONAL LOVE

BY TIM AWTREY

Since it was the first time in a long time to meet in the church building, it felt right to celebrate with a special ceremony the first Sunday back. From time to time, we commend someone for faithfully completing our 24-week discipleship course. On this special day, we celebrated Vivka's completion of this life-changing endeavor. Such commitment and faithfulness is rare in Bulgaria, let alone in a 17-year-old.

Ten years ago, when this little girl came to church as a result of Operation Christmas Child, who could have known the transformation that would take place in her life? Like many of us, this transition was not always smooth. For many years, Vivka was distant from the faith. Then her friend had a spiritual dilemma, and Vivka remembered a place where people spoke to her heart and soul years earlier. It was her friend's first time in church and the first in a long time for Vivka. Vivka decided to take part in a summer camp the next week. She heard the good news and gave her heart to Jesus!

This is only the beginning of the story. You see, Vivka lives in a country where **less than 0.5%** of people regularly attend church. Almost no one Bulgarian Christians know goes to church or has ever read the Bible. Bulgarian parents typically forbid their children from attending church. The rare young believer is usually the only follower of Jesus in the entire school. Bulgaria is hard ground and a tough place to live as a new follower of Christ. Yet, Isaiah wrote, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose" (Isaiah 35:1). **Vivka is a rose in this spiritual desert.**

"I used to think people needed to earn my kindness, but in the Bible I learned I should love others because Jesus first loved me," Vivka explained. This transformational love has transformed Vivka. She began studying the Bible and learning about God through a discipleship course with IM missionary Lydia Awtrey. Vivka says, "The biggest challenge for people my age is peer pressure—pressure from other kids to go out drinking and act rudely toward one another.

At the same time, parents apply pressure to stay away from church. They think we will be brainwashed."

The challenges are many and come from all sides. Yet, Vivka will not give in to the pressure. "Even though we, as young Christians, are a small group within Bulgaria, we are alive with faith and will change Bulgaria," she says.

After 500 years of Islamic oppression, 50 years of communism, and 30 years of corrupt politicians, people have lost all hope for the future. Yet, young people like Vivka, who have a strong faith in Jesus Christ exhibit a marked difference. "Bulgaria needs God," says Vivka. She knows God has transformed her life, and He can transform an entire nation.

About the Writer: Tim Awtrey, and his wife
Lydia, initiated a church-planting ministry in Svishtov, Bulgaria, almost 15 years ago. Since then, five other couples and a single woman have joined their efforts and have established churches in three other major cities as well as many outreaches in villages and towns.





CHE in Ecuador

BY ADAM DUNCAN

Jesus identified five aspects of discipleship in Luke 10:27-28: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy *heart*, and with all thy *soul*, and with all thy *strength*, and with all thy *mind*; and thy *neighbor* as thyself. And he [Jesus] said unto him, Thou has answered right: this do, and thou shalt live" (emphasis mine).

These five aspects of our being reflect the Creator in us: *heart*—emotions and motivations; *soul*—spiritual and eternal;

strength—physical; mind—intellect and education; and neighbor—relational. Sin attacks each of these areas and prevents us from being in true fellowship with God and one another. This foundational attack on who we are as eternal beings created in the image of God is the root of poverty, suffering, violence, and famine. When we seek to alleviate human suffering, we must recognize the root cause, not only the effect.

Often, we focus on consequences to individuals or the community as a whole, but they are the fruit, not the root, of the problem. If we picture a cultural or community problem as a tree, we can identify four components to effect lasting change. Fruit grows on the branches of behavior. If we focus only on changing behavior or mitigating the consequences, we achieve temporary change. Those behavioral branches sprout from the trunk of values. Values grow from the roots of belief. Ultimately, the roots have to change for lasting impact. Let's use alcoholism in Ecuador as an example.

The eastern jungle of Ecuador has the highest rate of alcoholism in the region. Visible consequences include malnutrition, chronic dehydration, broken families, sexual abuse, poverty, liver failure, and other physical symptoms. If addressed solely through education, it's like trying to plug holes in a boat while bouncing along a rocky shoal. Each time one hole is sealed, another leak appears. With a slightly longer view, we see alcohol use

as a primary source of nutrition and hydration as deeper causes. These include lack of access to clean water (physical need), failure to understand the effects of alcoholism (educational need), social pressures and cultural norms (relational need), and hopelessness and a sense of futility (spiritual need). Each of these reflect a worldview bereft of God's love, a true sense of community, and an understanding of eternity. How do we mitigate the consequences, while modifying the behavior and grafting the whole tree into roots of eternal significance? That is our task in Ecuador. Remember the alcoholism tree; we will come back to it.

Recently, I attended Community Health Evangelism (CHE) training. More than a set curriculum, CHE is an approach to relief work and evangelism built on the foundation of Luke 10:27-28. Recognizing relief work without community growth is not sustainable, CHE seeks to provide long-term solutions based on local community ownership and initiative. Rather than an expert telling a community how it must utilize limited resources to solve a problem, CHE involves the local community in identifying needs and resources in its own unique situation and guides the discussion toward lasting solutions. This wholistic, community-based approach means effective solutions do not rely on outside materials, financial support, or expertise. CHE attempts to achieve a balance between immediate relief (outside materials, finances, and expertise required) and community development (sustainable change achieved without outside resources).

Let's revisit the alcoholism tree. An immediate relief

action might provide a portable water-filtration system and multivitamins to address nutritional deficits. This works in the short term, but without access to these items on a long-term basis, lasting change cannot be achieved. When analyzed from a CHE perspective, we identify several roots and customize solutions to address them.

Emotional: Parents naturally love their children. I may not choose to care for my own health but providing for my children is a great motivator. Discussions regarding the effects of alcoholism and nutrition on children can serve as a powerful motivator. This often falls into the category of felt needs.

Social: Rather than each family having its own well, spring, or rainwater filtration system, communities that share this resource feel a sense of duty to their neighbors to maintain and sustain it. Appealing to civic pride can motivate initial change while building new community values sustains that change.

Educational: Teaching about a balanced diet, proper hydration, the effects of alcohol on the body, and how to sterilize water empowers community members to make personal and group decisions, which in turn, helps the entire community.

Physical: Utilizing local resources, for example sand filtration and ultraviolet sterilization techniques, allows local experts to build new systems and maintain existing systems long after the missionary leaves.

Spiritual: Having addressed clean water issues, the door is open to talk about the Living Water. Having identified alcohol as a poison harming the body, the door is open to talk about sin as a poison harming the soul. Placing this conversation in a spiritual context is necessary for effective disciple making. Just as we train a local expert on clean water and another on health needs, we train a local expert on spiritual matters who then disciples the community.

A team is the best mechanism to implement this plan. Fortunately, we have four vital ministry partners in Ecuador. The first is Antioch Christian Academy and its parent organization Jungle Kids for Christ. These ministries have worked to meet the educational needs of children and families for over 13 years.



The second is the Antioch Missionary Alliance. Since 2015, the Missionary Alliance has planted churches and trained pastors to meet the spiritual needs of communities currently without an ongoing Christian presence.

A third partner is the local health department. Entering a community requires an introduction. One good way to make that introduction is through providing health care. By organizing portable medical clinics in remote villages, we build relationships that can be broadened to meet more than just medical needs.



Our fourth partner is *you!* Reaching a new community takes time, effort, and resources. Often relationships start with an event. When a short-term group from The Hanna Project, College Missions Program, or ETEAM arrives, the participants bring energy, skills, and enthusiasm to kick-start long-term relationships. We encourage you to consider staffing and supporting a short-term team. We would love to show you what God is doing in Ecuador. Even better, some Ecuadoran, Jesus-believing disciples would love to share what God has done in their communities, and we would love to introduce you to them.

About the Writer: Adam and Carol Duncan were approved as missionary interns to Ecuador in December 2019. Adam is an ordained minister, licensed counselor, and former police officer and trainer. Carol is an R.N. in the Family Nurse Practitioner program at Frontier Nursing University. They have two teenage children: Caleb and Moriah. For more information about CHE visit www. chenetwork.org. Learn more about the Duncans at iminc.org.

Roots El Glings

BY DON MATCHETT

Two thousand two was a tumultuous year in Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa. Rebel forces advanced and controlled the northern part of the country while the government retained control of the south. The conflict soon escalated into an all-out civil war. This is important to my story because the Free Will Baptist Bible institute is located in Bouna, in the northern, rebel-held portion of Côte d'Ivoire. Dr. Kenneth Eagleton served as the primary professor and acting director.

During this time, a Ghanaian student named Philip attended the institute. Philip met Clint Morgan in Nantes, France, a couple of years earlier. Clint, seeing the calling on Philip's life, suggested he attend the Bible institute in Côte d'Ivoire. Take this in. In 2000, Philip, from Ghana, lived in beautiful, peaceful Nantes, France, and in 2002, he lived in war-torn Côte d'Ivoire. Why would he give up a comfortable life in France for the hardships of West Africa? Phillip's calling drove him to learn more of God's Word and doctrine. Philip attended the Bible institute to develop *roots*.

Plants derive stability and support from their roots.

Some plants create an "iceberg effect" with more roots underground than plant visible above ground. Roots provide constant nourishment, allowing the plant to do more than just survive. Roots enable the plant to thrive.

Any gardener worth his salt knows what happens if the soil is not prepared correctly. Hardened soil does not allow roots to grow deep enough. Sandy soil allows the roots to grow but may not firmly support the plant. Of

course, the overarching goal is for the plant to mature and reproduce. This cycle continues indefinitely as long as conditions are right.

Philip not only searched for roots; he was also looking for wings. Wings provide freedom to fly. In this case, freedom in ministry and methodology in any direction the Holy Spirit leads.

By the end of 2002, most missionaries had left Côte d'Ivoire, including Dr. Eagleton. Institute students were assigned internships and, by 2003, the institute was under African leadership. Philip finished his degree at the Free Will Baptist Bible institute and acquired a master's degree from the Christian and Missionary Alliance seminary in the capital city of Abidjan. He then moved to a church-planting effort in Ghana. Philip spread his wings.

When discussing roots and wings it is important to remember the four stages of a mission's development:

 Model: open a new field, preferably with an unreached people group.

• **Equip:** present the gospel and, as some become believers, begin the discipleship-intensive stage. The idea is to train towards indigenous leadership.

- Collaborate: indigenous believers work shoulder-to-shoulder with missionaries in all aspects of the mission.
- Entrust: missionaries and mission leaders participate only from a distance. Native leadership has complete authority and autonomy.

Missionaries should always be working themselves out of a job, turning work over to trained leaders. Of course, this is easier said than done. As you can imagine, obstacles arise: lack of leadership (pastors and church leaders), persecution, government regulation, or a field slow to adopt and mature. The list goes on and on. Nonetheless, the goal should be to progress to the fourth stage as quickly as possible. The only way to accomplish this is to allow roots to grow to maturity and wings to spread.

Challenges

Some western ideals regarding missions present challenges to this idea of "roots and wings." Let's discuss three of these challenges.

The first danger is being *too* rooted or *too* winged. An approach too rooted in tradition could turn potential recipients of missionary efforts away. Missionaries simply aren't accessible. A mission designed to immerse in culture ends up in isolation. Equally so, a too-winged mission approach could be so liberal it isn't counter-cultural and may leave out the gospel altogether. Missionaries must find the tipping point. An appropriate balance is rooted in tradition and doctrine but winged enough to allow methodological freedom.

Second, western mission ideals usually find no problem developing roots among evangelized people. However, we are challenged to provide wings. Westerners want to continue their quest of teaching, training, and instilling doctrine—imperative goals. But we should hope, dream, and pray for a day when each field has its own preachers, teachers, church leaders, and scholars. In short, a time comes to get out of the way. The real challenge is allowing mature believers to develop wings and fly.

Third, with the popularity of short-term missions, we face a growing challenge, particularly with motivation and approach. We indeed celebrate the increased interest in going. Yet, sometimes, helping hurts. Much has been written about short-term missions motivations, so I'll ask a question focused on only one element of short-term mission's approach. Are we "doing for" or "being with"? I see a vast difference.

Christ's Example

The incarnation of Christ is a great way to evaluate this idea of "doing for" versus "being with." The incarnation of Christ leads us to believe it was not enough for Jesus to be *for* us. His incarnation insisted He be *with* us. "And they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:23b). Don't get me wrong, God is *always* for us, but isn't the purpose of His creation that He be with us? Only He can do and has done certain things. We celebrate this every Easter. Only the Son of God could perform the events that took place in Jerusalem and Galilee. Only Jesus



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"Doing for" is undoubtedly necessary. The positive side of "doing for" is loving charity. "I do this for you because I have compassion, and I want to help your circumstance." But remember, charity has an ugly, evil twin named condescension. Condescension does missions with pious pity from an ivory tower equipped with a staircase of self-gratification. "Doing for" is undoubtedly necessary, but if it is the sole focus, indigenous leaders cannot be developed, and we risk creating an unhealthy dependency. "Doing for" with the wrong incentives can hinder missions progress and clip the wings of indigenous autonomy.

"Being with" should be mandatory in every mission encounter and engagement. "I want to be with you because you are God's creation, and the gospel is for all. We have many differences, but we can find common ground." "Being with" declares we view every person and people group equal in God's creation. If we approach missions to "be with," condescension finds no room. "Being with" rather than "doing for" will organically manifest indigenous autonomy because all people are viewed as equal brothers and sisters, not spiritual conquests to be lorded over.

The good news: many fields are already rooted in doctrine and winged in methodology. We call them partners. National leaders guide the work in Brazil, India, Central Asia, Russia, Côte d'Ivoire (including BERACA, the NGO overseeing Doropo's hospital), Cuba, and Panama. We participate and support each country, but the leadership has its own autonomous plan of building the Kingdom, both in-country and abroad. We celebrate that they can reach the world in ways we cannot.

So, what happened to Philip? Many years later, Dr. Kenneth Eagleton returned to Bouna to find Philip sitting in his chair. Once the student, Philip was now an assistant director of the Bible institute and a professor. All because, the original goal was to give him roots *and* wings.

You can support "roots and wings" by giving to the World Missions Offering April, 25, 2021.

About the Writer: Don Matchett is director of development for IM, Inc. Learn more: IMINC.org.



Changed Life, Changed Family

BY KENNETH EAGLETON

When Tiago was born 15 years ago, he was extremely sick and required oxygen. On his third day, the doctors called in the family and told them the baby was unlikely to make it through the night. However, God worked a miracle, and 40 days later Tiago left the hospital. Due to his shaky start in life, his mother Laudine overprotected him and wouldn't give him the freedom other children enjoyed.

His Uncle Cláudio and Aunt Glaucia were saved in a Free Will Baptist church in Campinas, Brazil, while Tiago was a young child. His grandmother (Cláudio's mother), a devout Catholic, said Cláudio's conversion was the worst day in her life. She gradually changed her mind as she witnessed the changes God made in her son's life.

As soon as Tiago was old enough, Uncle Cláudio invited him to go to church youth camp. His mother always said no. Finally, at age 15, at the beginning of 2020, just before the COVID-19 epidemic started in Brazil, Tiago's mother allowed him to go. On the last night of camp, during the bonfire service, Tiago trusted Jesus with his life. He immediately began attending church, is being discipled by his uncle, and will be baptized soon.

Tiago immediately began talking to his family about Jesus. Since he holds a special place in the family, it has been easier for him to gain a hearing. His father and mother began attending church with him, although his father, a truckdriver, is frequently out of town over the weekend.

On Saturday, November 7, the family was involved in a car accident. Fortunately, no one was seriously hurt, although all were quite shaken. The next day, Laudine,



Tiago's mother, attended Nova América FWB Church determined to give her life to the Lord. When Pastor Paulo César gave the invitation, she went forward and accepted Jesus as Savior.

The following week, Tiago's father,
Arthur, had a long-distance haul. Yet,
he determined to be back by Sunday. He
drove 32 hours straight to make it home
before Sunday's service. The pastor called
Tiago's father forward and complimented him in front
of the church for having made such an effort. Then he
asked Arthur why he wanted to come to church so badly.
Arthur stated he wanted to give his heart to Jesus. He did

Tiago continues to witness to his family, especially two aunts who don't like to talk about spiritual matters with anyone. But they are listening to Tiago. The family is also praying for Tiago's grandmother, who initially opposed the family's involvement in an evangelical church. We hope to see many more family members saved in the months to come.

so, even before the sermon. There is rejoicing in Heaven!

Praise the Lord for this bold teenage witness and for a Free Will Baptist church witnessing and winning families to the Lord.

About the Writer: Dr. Kenneth Eagleton is director of field partnerships for IM, Inc. Learn more: IMInc.org.

Snapshots Around the World



Bulgaria: Trif and Vanya Trifonov and members of the New Life Varna congregation ministered to children in the village of Nevsha, hosting an Operation Christmas Child shoebox party. About 30 children and 15 adults heard the gospel. The mayor agreed to talk about opportunities to begin a children's club.

Côte d'Ivoire: Initially scheduled for the last week of August, political instability and COVID-19 restrictions postponed the gathering of the National Association of Free Will Baptist Churches in Ivory Coast. Fifty-eight delegates and observers registered for the association business sessions at the Agnibilekrou Church, December 16-17.



Côte d'Ivoire: The week of Christmas, Pastor Konoté Palé held a three-day evangelistic campaign in the village of Barrièra, Ivory Coast, 12 miles from Doropo. Gospel films and preaching led several people to make decisions for Christ. On Sunday, January 10, their first regular service had mostly children and young people in attendance. Dr. Kenneth Eagleton requests, "Pray this new mission church might reach the adults in the village. Pray for Pastor Konoté as he disciples the new believers."



World Missions Offering

Antioch, TN: Don Matchett, director of church relations, reported, "Our goal for the World Missions Offering (WMO) was \$650,000, and we made it to \$595,636.81 by the end of 2020. Thank you for giving to the 2020 WMO." The 2021 goal is \$1 million and is scheduled for April 25. However, churches and individuals may set other dates and give throughout the year.



Côte d'Ivoire: During the final weeks of December and first few weeks of January, a number of believers followed the Lord in baptism in Ivory Coast, West Africa. On Tuesday, December 22, Pastors Alexi Hien (Bougou) and Edmond Kouadia (Nassian) baptized 62 people representing a dozen or so congregations in the Bougou area. Pastor Silas Noufé, from Bouna, officiated the baptism of nine people on Sunday, December 27, at the FWB church in Bouko, between Bouna and Doropo. Pastor Jean-Daniel Doli baptized four people in the Doropo area. Eight people from the village of Ondefidouo were baptized on January 18 at the Providence FWB Church in Bouna, Ivory Coast, by Pastor Silas Noufé, president of the National Association of Free Will Baptist Churches.



Bulgaria: Jonathan and Amy Postlewaite, along with members of their church in Pleven, Bulgaria, shared Christ's love in children's homes in Pleven. The Operation Christmas Child parties took place with a fence separating them. Children in nine homes sang, received shoebox gifts, and heard the gospel.

Maternity Ward at Doropo Renovated

When Dr. LaVerne Miley arrived in Doropo with his family 59 years ago, people had no access to medical care in the northeastern corner of Ivory Coast, Africa. That part of the country also had no known Christians and was steeped in spirit worship.

Construction immediately began on a medical clinic, funded by American Free Will Baptists. In the meantime, Dr. Miley treated patients under a tree. The clinic was built and thrived as a rural hospital with a good reputation throughout the country. Decades later and still staffed by Free Will Baptists, the clinic and hospital have ongoing needs for repairs, updating, and expansion of its buildings and equipment.

The maternity wing saw the most recent renovation. A small inaugural program was held February 1. The quality care women receive at the hospital and the growth of the population have led to a sharp increase in the number of deliveries performed there. In 2019, 928 babies were delivered at the hospital. The prior two years, medical personnel delivered 716 (2017) and 811 (2018) babies demonstrating an average annual growth of approximately 14%.

Dr. Kenneth Eagleton, a former physician at the hospital, wrote, "We are certainly grateful for all who have contributed to the IMpact IC Miley Project, established to help with renovations to the hospital facilities and upgrades in the medical equipment. Your contributions make it possible for women to deliver children safely,



newborn lives to be saved, and patients to hear the gospel while in the hospital. We have been able to help BERACA (the NGO that manages the hospital) construct a new infirmary and now renovate the maternity. Upgrades to the hospital will continue as the Lord provides the funds."

Meeting medical needs softens the hearts of the peoples of the region. Nearly six decades since the hospital



opened, this area represents some of the most fruitful growth of FWBs in the country.

To give online, visit **pushpay.com/g/imimpactprojects** and choose "IMpact Ivory Coast Miley Project" under the fund dropdown menu. Checks may be mailed to IM, Inc. (P.O. Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011-5002) with "IMpact Ivory Coast Miley Project" on the memo line.

IM Shifts Personnel Roles

Antioch, TN—Clint Morgan recently indicated several IM staff members transitioned to new roles. Director of Member Care Neil Gilliland's position expanded to include mobilization. Effective immediately, Neil will lead ETEAM (high school students) and CMP (short-term college teams and college interns/overseas apprentice) programs.

Danny Gasperson will focus full-time on the role of director of THP. Danny said, "I am looking forward to devoting all my time to THP to continue providing help, hope, and healing to hurting people. I want to see THP grow and expand our influence in the world."

Clint Morgan affirmed, "When we hired Danny, we knew his passion was THP. Now that THP is his main focus, we greatly anticipate seeing what God will do through him."

Leslie Nichols, who served as assistant to the mobilization director, transitioned laterally to college (CMP/OA) coordinator. Neil Gilliland expressed, "Leslie has a passion to engage with college students, moving them toward being true disciples of Christ."

BECOME LABORERS BY CLAIRE RYAN

In 1956, five men entered the jungles of Ecuador, determined to win tribes over to Jesus. They moved to Ecuador with their families years before, and their ministry was slowly thriving. These men felt God leading them toward one tribe in particular. They located that lost tribe but were brutally murdered while trying to share their faith.

When their wives heard of the tragedy, they didn't pack up all their belongings and "high-tail it" out of Ecuador. They picked up where their husbands left off and made it their goal to finish the work for which their husbands gave their lives. They returned to the lost tribe and told them about Jesus.

And the tribe *accepted* the good news.

In Matthew 9:37, Jesus told his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few." Those lost tribes of Ecuador needed Jesus. They were a harvest in need of laborers, and Nate Saint, Jim Elliot, and three other men and their families were those laborers.

King David was a man after God's own heart. Yet, his hands were bloody with his mistakes. Because of this, the Lord would not allow him to build His temple. So, David prepared his son Solomon to build the temple of the Lord. David told his son in 1 Chronicles 22:16, "Arise, therefore, and be doing. And the Lord will be with you." In the same way Solomon fulfilled what the Lord called him to, you must also arise and do the will of God in your life. There is work to be done.

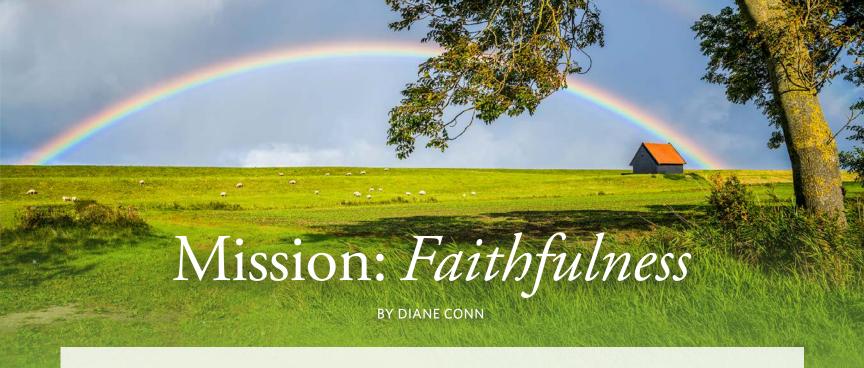
Last year, I had the privilege of going on a trip to Ecuador with The Hanna Project (THP). THP takes multiple mission trips to Ecuador yearly. They help stabilize and expand the Christian school there, complete construction

projects, and visit neighboring jungle villages to provide medical help. This is possible because of the laborers who went on before us—the five men and their families who arose and were doing the work God gave them.

In his journal, Nate Saint wrote, "I'm concerned about safety, but I don't let it keep me from getting on with God's business." These men recognized telling the world about Christ was far more important than their own safety. The gospel was, and is to this day, the single most important truth of this life; they gave their lives expecting others to follow in their steps. They died trusting others would accept the call to labor after them, co-laborers to finish the task God has given us.

I challenge you to follow the example of these men who put Christ above all else, and to be like their wives who pressed on despite their losses. I challenge you to arise and become laborers for Christ and His Kingdom.

About the Writer: Claire Ryan lives in Hendersonville, Tennessee. A 7th grade English teacher, she is in her third-year of teaching. She is the assistant women's basketball coach at Welch College. Her hobbies include reading, writing, athletics, and time spent with family and friends. Coffee is her go-to and donuts are one of the major food groups.



When you search for the word *faithfulness* in the Bible, you find many references about God's faithfulness toward us (Psalm 36:5; 40:10; 88:11; 143:1; Isaiah 25:1; and Lamentations 3:23). Psalm 89:1 states, "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy *faithfulness* to all generations." As His disciples, we must make His faithfulness known and follow His example in our lives.

Paul's letter to Timothy is a prime example of how faithfulness extends to those around us. Timothy witnessed the faithfulness of his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5). Paul encouraged Timothy to continue in their example. The Apostle also charged Timothy to pass to others what he had learned from Paul (2 Timothy 1:13; 2:2).

Faithfulness in the Workplace

Colossians 3:23 tells us to do whatever we do as if doing it for the Lord. God expects our best in *everything*. You cannot share Jesus with your co-workers if you are not faithful to do your best. Your example speaks louder than your words. Work hard!

If Jesus is your joy, that joy will spill over into your workplace. It should not matter whether you are on the lowest rung of the ladder or at the top. A Christian worker should be humble enough to learn from others and teach others patiently.

Christians in the workplace should be a beacon of hope to unbelievers. They see how Christians respond to disappointment, setbacks, hurts, and office gossip. Christians also present a different perspective, a different worldview. Let Jesus shine through you, so you can share about Him with others.

Daniel was recognized for his good work ethic and faithfulness (Daniel 6). Unfortunately, this also made him a target. Christians sometimes face similar challenges in the workplace. With wisdom, we can act on principle as Daniel did, and trust God with the outcome whether we are promoted or face the lions.

Faithfulness in the Church

Authentic is a buzzword today. It means be yourself, be real. Don't try to be something you're not. Along that line, faithfulness in the church involves all believers doing their part, based on their calling, giftedness, role, and maturity. They must be themselves and use the talents and resources God has given them.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul used the body as a metaphor for the Church. We each have a different role in the body. We can't all be the eye. We can't all stand before the congregation, but we can all be faithful in whatever place God has put us. Consider some biblical examples.

In 1 Corinthians 4:17, Paul told the church at Corinth he was sending Timothy to them, because Timothy was "faithful in the Lord." In Romans 16, Paul recommended the church receive Phebe because of her dedicated service. For whatever reason, she was traveling to Rome and the Apostle instructed the believers to assist her however she needed. We don't know what role Phebe served in the church. We don't know anything else about her, but at the beginning of a long list of commendations and acknowledgements, faithful Phebe topped the list.

Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned second in Romans 16. We know more about them. Paul met them in Corinth during his second missionary journey. They provided him lodging and worked with him as tentmakers. They also traveled with him and assisted his missionary efforts. We know specifically that they mentored Apollos and hosted a church in their home.

Much church work is done behind the scenes. On any particular Sunday, nothing will be said about bathrooms being cleaned, chairs arranged, doors opened, heat or air conditioning turned on—that is, of course, unless these things were not done. Those who serve faithfully behind the scenes do it as an act of service and worship toward God. Those on stage should humbly acknowledged their work is facilitated by the work of others. The faithfulness of everyone on the ministry team (which includes the entire congregation) is necessary to accomplish the task.

Faithfulness in the *Community*

If you hear a conversation about unfaithfulness, most automatically think of marriage. Faithfulness in marriage is extremely important, but faithfulness applies to all areas of our lives.

In James 1:17, God is described as "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." God is faithful to His Word, His promises, His laws, and His creation, especially humanity. He loves us and is faithful to us.

According to Ephesians 5:1, we are to follow (imitate) God. Paul's instruction for the Christian was to be like our Father, faithful in all our ways. Serving in the community allows you to demonstrate Jesus' love, even

when you can't speak about it openly. To be an influencer of unbelievers in your community, you have to be with them. How will they know of your Father and His love if you are not serving and working with them?

Christians need to make the effort to be involved in the public school program. This can mean volunteering, attending sporting events (even when you don't have a child on the team), and making yourself available to help however is needed.

Civic organizations need Christian influence. Christians care about the community and can find common ground with a variety of organizations and causes. Be a bell ringer during Christmas. Serve at a soup kitchen. Help stock a food bank. Organize a fundraising drive. Coach a little league or soccer team. Whatever is happening in your community, be involved.

As you develop relationships, you will encounter opportunities to speak into people's lives. And their lives are messy. There are risks, but if you look at the example of Jesus and the early disciples, the risks are necessary. Some may not like your presence, but you cannot allow the wisdom of Christ to be absent from the public square.

You may be asked questions you can't answer. Don't offer lame explanations. You don't have to be the expert on everything. Tell them "I don't know, but I'll get back to you." Then research, talk to your pastor, or seek out another reliable resource. Find good answers to hard questions. Always remember we have the real answer in Jesus Christ. Yet, while salvation is instantaneous, discipleship is a lifelong process.

Christians are called to be *salt* (Matthew 5:13). Scripture doesn't explain everything that involves, but we recognize salt preserves, purifies, and flavors. Scripture cautions us to not lose our usefulness. While working in the community, it is imperative to be faithful in all you do, conscious of what you say, how you act, and how you represent Christ. A bad example is often worse than no example.

Christians are also the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16). To fulfill this role, your light must be visible. You can't hide at home or in the church building and shine

the light of Christ to the world. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Find a candlestick, get out there, and shine!

Faithfulness Around the World

You may have limited opportunities to be actively involved beyond your local region, especially during the global recovery from COVID-19. If that is the case, find cross-cultural opportunities to support or missionaries who need your financial and prayer support. Ask yourself how your faithfulness can extend to the world.

What about the Internet? Technology provides connections literally around the world. Receive updates from missionaries through social media. Join Facebook groups where missionaries share urgent prayer requests, needs, and news. (Some of these may be secret because of the dangerous area of the world where the missionaries serve.)

Communicate through email. Share a word of encouragement. Keep it short. Don't forward junk and don't include them in group emails. Be aware international data plans are often limited, especially in remote locations. Also, be aware some governments monitor *everything*. Check with your missionaries and ask the best way to communicate with them. You can also check with their sending agency, IM, Inc. (iminc.org) or North American Ministries (fwbnam.com).

Social media connections don't have to be limited to missionaries. Become friends with other Christians and even unbelievers around the world. Help someone in a distant country practice English, participate in discussion boards, or share ideas and pictures on Pinterest or Instagram. Thse groups develop friendships around common interests and hopefully provide opportunities to share your faith. Be especially mindful of the need to be nice. Avoid arguments and needless debate. Also, be careful. Don't give out any personal information.

You may also have the opportunity to be involved in short-term service projects. Share your expertise in rewarding ways through The Hanna Project (HannaProject.com); Operation Christmas Child, a ministry of Samaritan's Purse (samaritanspurse.org/operation-christ-

On any particular Sunday, nothing will be said about bathrooms being cleaned, chairs arranged, doors opened, heat or air conditioning turned on—that is, of course, unless these things were not done. Those who serve faithfully behind the scenes do it as an act of service and worship toward God.

mas-child); or WNAC (WNAC.org).

Organize a provision closet drive in conjunction with WNAC to help provide household goods for missionary families. You can also give to the various WNAC scholarship funds that offer educational opportunities to young women. Shine!, another ministry of WNAC, offers blogs, conferences, and resources for teen girls and their moms and youth leaders (ShineFWB.com).

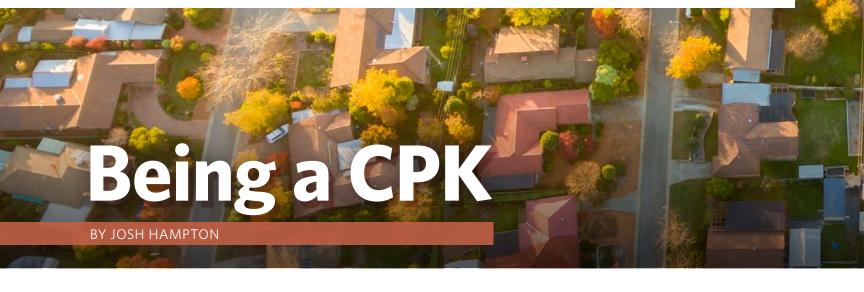
In a parable regarding faithfulness (Luke 12), Jesus told listeners that to whom much is given much is required. By any measure, we all have been blessed. We have the opportunity and responsibility to share the gospel faithfully. Jesus told His disciples to look up and notice the fields are ready for harvest. The harvest is *what you see where you are.* You don't have to go anywhere to be involved in the harvest. Just be involved.

Wherever you find yourself, recognize your purpose as a faithful representative of Jesus Christ. You may have a highly visible role or serve behind the scenes. It doesn't matter. Be faithful! And, be confident, when we are faithful in a little, the Lord will give us opportunities to be faithful over more (Luke 16:10).

About the Writer: Diane Conn is a freelance writer, proofreader, and editor. She lives in Springfield, Tennessee, with her husband Danny and a high-energy yellow Lab named Tuck. Diane is a preacher's daughter, preacher's wife, and she loves Dr. Pepper, Braum's ice cream, and reading on her porch swing. Learn more about Free Will Baptist women's ministry: wnac.org.

SPECIAL SECTION: Church Planter Kids

Have you ever wondered what childhood is like for youngsters growing up in the homes of church planters, missionaries, or chaplains? This special section of *ONE Magazine* gives you an inside look at the life of a CPK (church planter's kid) from three now-adults with children of their own.



In 1998, my dad walked into my bedroom and told me we were moving to Clarksville, Tennessee, to plant a new church. As a 12-year-old boy, this news was devastating. I couldn't believe my dad was going to uproot us from our home, church, and friends to start a new church. I remember sitting on my bed thinking, "I would *never* do this to my kids."

During the next two years on the road raising money, my disdain only grew. When we began holding services in the year 2000, I honestly felt more like a pack mule than anything else. We met in a conference room at the Wingate Inn in Clarksville, Tennessee. We set up the room and tore it back down every Sunday. This got old after the first week!

In July 2000, at the National Convention in Anaheim, California, things began to change for me. During the Tuesday night teen service, I went to the altar, where Patrick McDaniel prayed with me. That night, I answered the call to preach. I would love to say I went home and loved being a CPK from that moment forward, but that would be a lie. While my desire to pursue God grew, my desire to be a pack mule was still non-existent.

One Saturday each month, the Clarksville Church met at 10:00 a.m. and went door-to-door distributing flyers with our church information. The goal was to pass out 1,500 flyers and then go out to eat. These were good times, even for a reluctant pack mule. But what was never any fun was doing this once or twice a week when it was just

me, my brother, and my dad. He always tried to bribe us with a trip to Pizza Hut or, if we were really lucky, a trip for steak. As a teenage boy, there were a hundred other places I wanted to be, but I had no choice. I was a CPK handing out flyers with my dad, sometimes being cursed at, and occasionally chased by dogs.

The one thing I hated more than passing out flyers was—week after week after week—driving through subdivisions in Clarksville counting houses and praying over neighborhoods. Dad would say, "Hey! Let's run to Walmart." The next thing I knew, we are driving through subdivisions. He would say, "You count your side, and I will count mine." We would write down the number of houses on each street and then move to the next. The whole time I could hear my dad praying over each home and every door hanger left there in the future.

As a teenager, I just wanted to get home to be with my friends and play basketball or baseball. I thought my dad was so inconsiderate to keep me from my friends. On multiple occasions, I remember thinking I would never go anywhere to plant a church; it was way too hard.



Fast forward to 2016. Once again, I found myself in the car with my dad and my brother. At this point in my life, I had been in ministry for several years, and strangely enough, felt God calling me into church planting. Driving across Missouri, on the way to the National Convention in Kansas City, I looked over at my dad and said, "Let's plant a church together."

Dad got a really good laugh out of that and told me I was crazy. I continued to talk, assuring him I was serious. I told him my wife and I felt called to plant a church in the Northwest, and we should do it together. It was the first of many conversations over the better part of two years before my parents, too, felt God's call.

Today, I am doing exactly what I said I would never do! Together with my parents, my wife Kim and I *and* our own church planters' kids are starting the Summit Church in Missoula, Montana. Regular services launched in March. At Summit Church, we tell visitors faith is a process, a journey. I smile as I look back at my life as a CPK and know I have come full circle.

About the Writer: Josh Hampton is co-pastor of Summit Church in Missoula, Montana. Learn more: summitmissoula.com or fwbnam.com.



Josh and Kim Hampton and family

SPECIAL SECTION:

Church Planter Kids

Growing Up Army

BY TABITHA AUSTIN CROWLEY



It is a privilege to support our men and women in uniform, no matter the branch of military they serve. Me, personally? I happen to have a lot of experience with Army life—two very different types of experiences—yet both have been great privileges.

Growing up, my dad was gone a lot. Not that he wanted to be, mind you, but he was an Army chaplain. He went where he was told. Sometimes, that meant he missed a birthday or a holiday, but we still celebrated. Mom made sure my brother and I always had a birthday cake, Christmas stockings, a Thanksgiving meal, or whatever the occasion called for. Sometimes, we waited a couple of days or celebrated a few days early to have our daddy there. If we had to celebrate while he was gone, he would always call to tell us "Happy Birthday" or "Merry Christmas." Family is special whether you're with them physically or halfway around the world.

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

I learned early that we have to celebrate every day we can, but that didn't always matter to me. During my first year in college, my dad was deployed, and I wanted badly for him to make it home for my 18th birthday. Never mind he was halfway around the world serving the country. I was turning 18, and it was all about me. I'm still not

quite sure how he pulled it off, but Dad walked through the front door on my birthday. It was the best present ever, and I'm convinced he did that just for me.

My second year of college brought a change. Chris and I met at church and began dating. Soon, he was my best friend. He got along with my family, and he asked me to go meet his family who lived 12 hours away. Things were getting serious. When he asked my dad for permission to marry me, he was sure my dad would say no. Chris even asked me if I was sure after I had said "Yes!"

Even though I was only 19, I knew I wanted to marry this cute soldier and didn't ever want to live without him. We were young and in love. We began making plans to marry the next year, with no idea what was coming our country's way. It was 2003, and we kept hearing chatter about upcoming deployments, but we weren't at war...yet.

Love sometimes makes you do crazy things. We decided we didn't want to plan a wedding or have to change the date. Rather, we thought, "Why not this Friday?"

It was amazing how our church family pulled together to give us a real wedding in only five days. Honestly, I never cared about a big wedding anyway. I cared about the life we would build together. I cared about wearing a pretty white dress and having my daddy walk me down the aisle to the man I loved. That was all I really wanted. We couldn't have made a better decision.

Two weeks to the day after we were married, Chris left for his first deployment. What was scheduled to be a three to six-month deployment turned into a whole year. People say the first year of marriage is the hardest. Ours was definitely hard, but not the way we would have thought.

There was no infrastructure in Iraq in 2003. We weren't able to email, Skype, FaceTime, or send Facebook messages. There was only a satellite phone the soldiers got to use occasionally, so I only heard his voice a couple of times a month. My phone went everywhere with me. It was never on silent, and I never forgot it at home. We wrote letters—actual letters with pen and paper—and mailed them through the post office. I could get a letter from Chris in a matter of days, but it would sometimes take weeks for him to receive mine. I guess it was difficult to find the right battalion in the desert. It was hard, but we persevered. When he finally made it home the next year, we truly began our married life.

All the lessons I learned growing up Army were put into practice when Chris and I were learning what it meant to be married. We became partners in this crazy Army life.



Whether it was making decisions about the future, money, children, school, or career, we always worked together.

Remember the lesson I learned from my mom? I taught our own kids that celebrating holidays or birthdays isn't exactly about the day, but rather, it's about family. It's about being together whenever you can. It's about knowing you are loved and special. I'm so thankful for the strong family I am from and the strong family we have built. I used to think God wouldn't give us more than we could handle, but now I realize He gives us a little more than we can handle, so we learn to depend on Him.

But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. 2 Corinthians 10:17

Chris and I have been married for 18 years now and have three amazing daughters. He retired from the Army after 20 years, 18 deployments, and innumerable school and work trips. He is now beginning a new career outside of the military, and I am starting graduate school while working in our church's children's ministry. To say I'm proud of the life we have built would be an understatement. Not pride in us, but in what God has done for us and through us.

It is the greatest blessing of all to have such godly, honorable men to love. I am proud of the two main men in my life. I'm proud of their sacrifices and their willingness to serve our country. I'm proud of the example they have shown our daughters. They have honor and bravery, humility and strength, and a love for God, their family, and country. It's no wonder my favorite Bible verse is John 15:13: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

About the Writer: Tabitha Austin Crowley is the daughter of retired chaplain Terry Austin. She is a military spouse married to retired Sergeant First Class Chris Crowley, and is the mother of three daughters. She is currently enrolled in graduate courses and deeply involved with her church. She has been around military life since childhood.

SPECIAL SECTION:

Church Planter Kids

Learning to Bloom Where Planted

BY NICOLE HACKETT

I honestly cannot tell you how many times over the years I have been asked, "What was it like growing up in a pastor's home?" or "What was it like having your father work for a national department?"

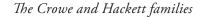
For the longest time, the question actually confused me, because I really did not see how living in the home of David Crowe was any different from living in the home of a banker, truck driver, teacher, or any other occupation.

As a child in a pastor's home, I have many incredibly fond memories of family vacations, meals, and trips with people in the church who felt like family. I remember being loved deeply by the people in my life, both in my own home and in the church. As an adult, I realize this outpouring was in direct correlation to the generosity and grace shown to others by both of my parents. They truly love people and have always tried to teach my brother and I to do the same.

My father has helped those he knew could never return the favor, even when he did not have it to give himself. He learned this trait from my grandparents, who modeled the same characteristics. The sermons he preached from the pulpit over the years were displayed in our home throughout the week. When I think back to the years we lived in Cookeville, Tennessee, I remember how faithfully my dad served his heavenly Father first, his family second, and then, just as passionately, his congregation and the community.

We moved to Nashville after my dad was approached by then-director Trymon Messer about a job at Home Missions, now North American Ministries. To say our lives changed with the move would definitely be an understatement. It was difficult to leave a church family who had been so wonderful to us and to find a new church where we were no longer "the pastor's family."

Through all the changes, some things remained consis-



tent. My father's humility, generosity, faithfulness, graciousness, service, and love did not waver. If anything, they only grew as God expanded his ministry. At this point, I would be amiss if I did not mention the role my mother played in our home. She displayed strength and unconditional love and rose to every challenge brought on by raising two obstinate teenagers while Dad visited churches and encouraged pastors across the country.

Without downplaying my father's leadership abilities or his role at North American Ministries, let me revisit my initial thoughts. One of the most valuable lessons I learned from my parents is to allow God to work in you, no matter where you are planted. Love and minister to the people He places in your life whether three or 3,000. It does not matter your position, occupation, or status, God can and will use those who are genuine and faithful, just as I have seen Him do in the lives of both of my parents.

I have lived a blessed life, not because of what my father did for a living but because of who he chose to be in Christ.

About the Writer: Nicole Crowe Hackett teaches elementary school in Pleasant View, Tennessee. She and her husband Shiloh serve at Bethlehem FWB Church in Ashland City, where Shiloh pastors.

Training and the Local Church Pastor

BY BRAD RANSOM

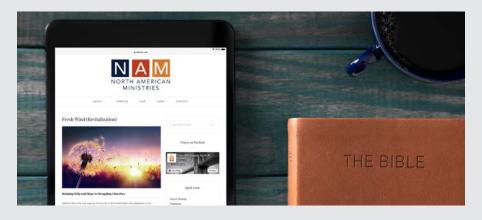
Imagine going to the doctor for an unknown illness and after an extensive assessment and examination, the doctor says, "You have a serious problem. It's not good. If something doesn't happen soon, you won't make it."

In shock, you ask the doctor, "What can I do?"

He replies, "Well, I'm really not sure. I'm not familiar with this condition. It's been a long time since I studied this stuff, and medical conditions have changed over the years."

You would never want to hear that from your doctor, but unfortunately, many pastors live in this paradigm. Anecdotally, they have answers such as: pray harder and preach the truth. Although we certainly should pray hard and preach the truth, we need to remember the culture and times have changed, and people aren't responding to the gospel the same way they did in years past.

In fear of "selling out the message," some have rejected research results and only depend on experience or logical thoughts. Why does this apply so widely in the spiritual realm? We want our doctor's experience to be up-to-date and based on the best recent research. We only want to do things the way we've always done them, but we want and expect different results?



Over the years, I have come to realize there is no sin in learning best practices. Best practices are defined as, "professional procedures accepted or prescribed as being correct or most effective." Somehow, many in the church reject best practices if they don't fit our personal preferences. Some might say, "Just because something is working over there doesn't mean it will work for me," and I totally agree! But if it's working anywhere, we should be willing to consider it and see if it will work for us, too. I'm not suggesting we jump on every bandwagon and do what everyone else is doing, but I am suggesting we be open to what others are doing to reach more people with the gospel.

We expect doctors, airplane pilots, teachers, and even real estate agents to stay up on the best practices of their fields. Shouldn't pastors?

Take advantage of learning oppor-

tunities. The denomination is working very hard to provide new, cutting-edge resources such as the Executive Office's *Better Together Podcasts* and social media posts, articles and features in *ONE Magazine* such as *ReFresh*, NAM's Fresh Wind Resources, and much more.

Why not embrace the idea of examining new ideas and methods? Don't worry if you disagree with something. We all disagree from time to time. The bottom line is, we all need to keep learning. It should never stop. Some best practices are working for others; maybe it is time to try some different things. Who knows? Maybe you'll like it.

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

"Shush! The Adults Are Talking"

and Other Really Dumb Things Adults Say

BY JON FORREST

Have you ever been in a situation like the one in the title? You're in a vital conversation with friends. You know, something super important like the Tennessee Titans' chances in the playoffs. And a kid has the audacity to come say your name just as you get to your soliloquy about Derrick Henry's stiff-arm, which causes you to stiff-arm the kid with a "shush finger" to the mouth, followed by a quick, "Don't interrupt."

Now, don't get me wrong. Kids should learn to be respectful. Interrupting is wrong for anyone, but you can't teach respect by being disrespectful.

Somewhere along the line, we misinterpreted Ephesians 6:1. The simple commands the Holy Spirit gives us through Paul at the end of Ephesians are absolutely beautiful if you look at them the right way: Wives submit to your husbands. Husbands love your wives. Children, obey your parents. Parents, do not provoke your children to wrath.

Each command is given with the weakness of the second party in mind. Husbands have issues with leadership, so wives take note of that and be submissive. Wives generally want to feel loved, so husbands, love them. Parents gauge their success on the obedience of their children, so kids, obey. And kids can misinterpret discipline and become angry and resentful, so, parents, be careful. I confess: Rob Morgan explains this much better than I just did.

My point is somewhere along the way, we started to think "Children obey your parents" meant for kids to turn off their thinkers and their talkers and mechanically follow orders. Have you ever encountered a kid raised this way? As soon as he reaches the age of independence, many times he "lets loose!"

In contrast, children whose thoughts are valued immediately gain respect and affinity for you as a parent and other authority figures.

Don't take my word for this. In Mark 10, people brought children to Jesus, and the disciples tried to turn them

away. Jesus became indignant (Mark 10:14) when the disciples told these kids, "Scram, the adults are talking."

Try this sometime. When a child approaches you, stop what you are doing, bend down or get on a knee so he has your full attention, and respond appropriately with a smile. You will have a friend *for life*. I remember adults who made me feel like I mattered 40 years ago. These moments mold kids.

God never says for us to turn our kids into little cyborgs whose only function is to parrot back the words we download into them. Teaching our kids rules and statutes is only half of child rearing. Look at Deuteronomy 6:20-21.

When your son asks you in time to come, "What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the Lord our God has commanded you?" then you shall say to your son, "We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand."

We teach them, and we talk to them. I'm 47, and my dad is 74, but to this day when he talks about the way the Lord has been faithful to walk with us and sustain us, it bolsters my faith like nothing else in the world.

About the Writer: Jon D. Forrest has been working with students at Bethel FWB Church near Ashland City, Tennessee, for 25-plus years. He is the author of *Fight! Like Your Life Depends on It* and *Help! My Games Stink*. He spent six years earning a four-year degree from Welch College. His passions include collecting Nerf guns (over 400 in his collection) and lobbying for Chick-fil-A™ to get Honey Roasted BBQ Sauce out of packets and into gallon containers where it belongs. Because he is crazy about students, he loves encouraging fellow youth workers. His wife Carrie and daughter Ellie lovingly put up with him.

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Week 5 - Faith Overcomes Trials (James 1:1-18)

Week 6 - Faith Results In Action (James 1:19-27)

Week 7 - Faith Chooses Godly Conduct (James 3:1—4:12)

Week 8 - Faith Brings Deliverance (Joshua 2:1-24)

Week 9 - God Honors Obedience (Joshua 6)

Week 10 - God Chooses Unusual Leaders (Judges 4:1-16)

Week 11 - God Calls Ordinary People (Judges 7:1-23)

Week 12 - God Uses Flawed People (Judges 16:1-31)

Week 13 - God Provides Redemption (Ruth 4)





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GRADUATES

On Mission

BY KEVIN L. HESTER

God's mission is a promise passed from generation to generation. God gave the responsibility of administering His creation to Adam. He gathered a people to serve as an example to the nations of His love and character. Fathers are commanded to communicate God's promises to their children effectively. Jesus gathered 12 disciples and poured His life into theirs, commissioning them to take God's good news of salvation through His Son to the nations. Everywhere they went, they followed a pattern of pouring the truth about God into everything they did and everyone they came to know. As Paul told his young pastor friend Timothy, what you have heard from me, commit to the faithful, who will in turn teach others (2 Timothy 2:2).

God's mission of building His Kingdom has always been at the heart of the ministry of Welch College. Since its Charter of Incorporation in 1942, the College's stated purpose has been to equip "Christian workers, teachers, ministers, and missionaries of both sexes

for Christian service. The current mission statement resonates with the same spirit of educating "leaders to serve Christ, His church, and His world through biblical thought and life." Service begins in *knowing* the truth but ends in *living* the truth.

Welch College takes this mission seriously but also recognizes graduates are in the best position to judge success in meeting this objective. Welch College regularly surveys its graduates on a number of attitudes and experiences central to its success. During the Fall 2020 semester, Welch College surveyed 225 grad-

uates from the last five years on employment, Christian ministry, continued education, and service. A robust 36% response rate allows the College to feel confident in generalizing the data.

The results from this survey concur with previous findings (2014, 2016, 2018), demonstrating Welch graduates highly value their education MINISTRY IS A
WAY OF LIFE
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BUILDING.

and leverage their degrees into meaningful employment, active ministry, and continued education.

Welch alumni are contributing members of society, with graduates reporting an adjusted employment rate of 95%, two percentage points above the national average reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. More than three-fourths of these graduates are directly employed in the area of their degree, and 90.5% are satisfied in their current employment. They believe their education at Welch College provided excellent preparation for their employment. Graduates argue strongly that classes in Bible and theology (87%) and the liberal arts core (80%), both part of every degree offered by Welch College, "prepared them to be effective in their ministry or as a Christian layperson in general."

Other graduates leveraged their Welch College degrees for further study. Even though Welch College is an open enrollment institution, largely serving low to middleincome students, 38% of graduates over the last five years have completed or are currently enrolled in graduate school. These schools range from seminaries to private colleges and state universities and programs range from apologetics and business to mental health counseling and social work.

Service for our graduates begins in knowing the truth, but this truth is also lived out in service to the church and to others. They are putting into practice what they have learned (Philippians 4:9). Of the respondents, 96% indicate regular worship attendance. Over 50% indicated engagement in teaching ministry, children's ministry, discipleship, and music ministry. More than a quarter of Welch graduates are directly engaged in evangelistic ministry, and 43% of all male graduates over the last five years indicate regular involvement in a preaching ministry. Ministry is a way of life and is not confined to the four walls of a church building. It manifests itself both in jobs and volunteer opportunities as well, with over 25% of graduates reporting regular engagement in community service. Altogether, Welch graduates accumulate more than 3,500 community service hours per year.

What we see in Welch graduates from the last five years is *exactly* what we would hope to see. We see the truth making an impact in lives lived for God's glory. We see faithful men and women who love the truth and are committed to making that truth known in service to others. We see the heart and attitude of Jesus who spoke the truth and lived the truth. God's plan is working, and He gives each of us a role to play in learning the truth and teaching others to live it. We are glad to see Welch graduates involved in God's mission.

About the Writer: Dr. Kevin Hester serves as vice president for institutional effectiveness and is professor of Historical Theology and dean of the Welch School of Theology. Learn more about Welch and its mission: welch.edu.

The True, the Good, and the Beautiful

Charles Allen and Laura Jane Thigpen, in Memoriam

BY MATT PINSON AND PHILLIP MORGAN



During the last week of December, Free Will Baptists and Welch College lost two influential, legacy-building leaders, Charles Allen and Laura Jane Thigpen, both 94 years of age. Mrs. Thigpen died December 28, followed by Dr. Thigpen three days later. Both died of complications from COVID-19.

Few couples have influenced the development of the Free Will Baptist Church in the 20 and 21st centuries as much as Charles and Laura Thigpen. Over four decades of service at Welch College, they shaped the ethos of higher education and leadership development at the denominational higher education institution, and through it, the character of a movement.

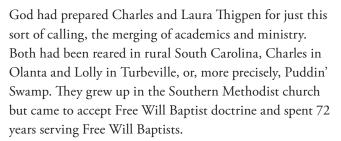
A Call to Service

In 1948, L. C. Johnson, founding president of Welch and consummate developer of leaders, learned of a promising young Southern Methodist couple serving in Tuscaloosa,

Alabama. Thigpen was pastoring a Southern Methodist church there. Johnson telegraphed the couple, gauging their interest in teaching at then Free Will Baptist Bible College.

The couple had graduated from Bob Jones College only the year before, Charles with a degree in English and Bible, "Lolly" with a degree in speech and drama. The Thigpens married the summer after gradua-

tion, a union that lasted 73 years. They took Dr. Johnson up on his offer, and both began teaching at the College in 1948. Thigpen also served in administrative roles as dean of men and registrar during those early years.



Charles and Laura encapsulated what it meant to be a southern gentlemen and lady, mannerly and well-spoken yet down-to-earth and charming. These qualities, along with an uncommonly strong work ethic, were honed in college, and the intellectual curiosity of their youth deepened their interest in the church and its impact on the larger culture, especially through preaching, the written and spoken ministry of the Word, the arts, and culture.

Biblical Education for the Whole of Life

These emphases, which dovetailed with those of L. C. and Ruth Johnson, fashioned a unique combination of biblical and liberal arts education in an era when there was



great pressure in the denomination simply to have a Bible institute to provide basic Bible training, with little or no grounding in the classical liberal arts.

The Thigpens saw no dichotomy between practical ministry training and an emphasis on evangelism steeped in the study of Scripture and doctrine on the one hand, and

reading the great books and learning about classical music and history and Shakespeare on the oth-

er. They believed Christian leaders, whether clergy or laity, should be steeped in the wisdom of the Christian tradition.

Thigpen's heart for preaching and pastoral ministry, which he taught throughout his career, were on full display in a fruitful, four-year ministry at Highland Park (MI) FWB Church from 1953 to 1957, before the Thigpens returned to Nashville to resume their academic calling.

Thigpen served as the college dean (which encompassed both dean of students and academic dean roles in those days) from 1957 to 1967 and as academic dean from 1967 to 1979. In these roles, he marshalled his considerable administrative skills to network with other colleges and universities to transfer the College's credits.

Thigpen also fostered the concern for college accreditation, leading FWBBC to accreditation by the Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges (now the Association for Biblical Higher Education), an organization over which he would eventually serve as president. During these years, he also earned a master's degree from Winona Lake School of Theology (1953) as well as a master's in psychology (1970) and doctorate in English literature (1975) from Middle Tennessee State University.

Dr. Thigpen was elected president of the College in 1979, following Dr. Johnson's retirement. During his presidency he strategically led the College. He stabilized and strengthened it through a difficult time, moving it forward in its unique mission that blended the best of the Bible college and Christian liberal arts college traditions. After retiring from the presidency, he served a year as the College's chancellor, then went on to serve 15 years as promotional secretary for the Tennessee State Association of Free Will Baptists.

That he would finish his career as a state promotional secretary speaks to his ongoing role as a servant to the Free Will Baptist Church, whose traditions of faith and practice he defended for over seven decades. Always active in the life of the National Association, he served as moderator from 1954 to 1960 (the youngest man ever to serve in that role). He also wrote thousands of pages of Bible commentary for Free Will Baptist adult Sunday School teachers through Randall House's *Bible Teacher* books.

A Legacy of Excellence

The Thigpens were instrumental in cementing one of Welch College's touchstones early on: excellence. Their dedication to excellence influenced the lives and ministries of countless graduates of the College who went out as pastors of local churches, missionaries around the world, teachers, business-people, and professionals in a host of other fields.

When they arrived at the College, they taught a wide range of courses. Thigpen began teaching church history and Christian education. Mrs. Thigpen headed up the speech and English courses that dovetailed with Ruth Johnson's work to cultivate in students a concern for beauty and excellence.

Soon after arriving in Nashville, Thigpen realized the College needed to transition from a two to four-year institu-

tion. Johnson and the Board of Trustees embraced the idea, and the College conferred its first four-year degrees in May 1951.

Dr. Thigpen desired the College to display excellence in every way, including administration. For most of his tenure at FWBBC, Thigpen oversaw the academic and social lives of students as well as curricular development and faculty hiring. Under his administration, the



college expanded curricular offerings and mentored and hired several of its most prominent professors.

Early influential faculty members such as Leroy Forlines, Robert Picirilli, Ralph Hampton, and Mary Ruth Wisehart were taught and mentored by the Thigpens. During his tenure, he also hired missionary luminaries Laura Belle Barnard and LaVerne Miley to teach and train missionaries, and distinguished educator William Henry Oliver to lead the fledgling teacher education program.

Charles Thigpen was an innovative leader who always looked for ways to expand the curriculum. He worked tirelessly to develop a teacher education program, ensuring the state of Tennessee would accept graduates in the public school system. However, Thigpen always insisted that expanding curriculum did not mean the College was abandoning its founding purpose. He was committed to keeping the Bible and theology as the integration point for the entire curriculum, and service to the church at its center.

Mrs. Thigpen's influence on the College also was instrumental for its development. She was a demanding professor who expected the best from her students. Her courses were designed to stretch students and introduce them to new ideas. She emphasized aesthetic and academic excellence in every course she taught. In the process, she cultivated an appreciation for the true, the good, and the beautiful. Beyond teaching speech and literature, Mrs. Thigpen shared her passion for drama with the college family.

For Mrs. Thigpen, theatrical productions were more than evangelism and edification but also works of art to the glory of God. Initially, students performed plays under a tent beside Davidson Hall because the college had no auditorium. Mrs. Thigpen creatively worked around these difficulties to provide excellent productions. Later, she developed monthly vespers services for the community, held on Sunday afternoons. These programs incorporated music, speech, and drama to teach biblical subjects.

Out of this work, Mrs. Thigpen developed the *Evangel Players*. She intended for the group to perform dramas that could be adapted for the local church in hopes it would influence churches to perform their own dramas with excellence. Her efforts displayed the purpose of the College before audiences across the denomination.

The Thigpen Presidency

When Johnson retired in 1979, the Board of Trustees tapped Thigpen to serve as the third president. Over the next decade, he led the College through some of its most challenging days. Despite the challenges, Dr. Thigpen moved the institution forward significantly. During his first year, the College initiated its first master's program for ministers, offering courses in biblical studies, historical theology, church administration, counseling, and apologetics. The

next year, 1981–82, marked the highest enrollment in the institution's history with 648 students.

Three years later, Thigpen led the expansion of undergraduate curriculum again, creating missions and physical education majors. The College also formed its first intercollegiate athletic team: the *Flames* (men's basketball). Memorial Auditorium and Davidson Hall underwent massive renovations, and the first computers were purchased for student use. Thigpen managed all of this despite the challenges the College faced.

Exemplary Models

Charles and Lolly Thigpen were exemplary models of Christian marriage and family life. They had four children, Laura (Cannon), Ann (Maines), Ruth (Slaten), and Jonathan, who passed away in 2001. Their children carried on their parents' strong commitment to Christ, service to the church, and leadership. The Lord blessed the Thigpens with 14 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren.

Their daughters Ruth and Ann recently summed up their spiritual legacy to their family with these words: "They lived a life of integrity and were authentic Christ followers in our home in a way that drew us to desire to become like Jesus. In their personal lives, they were soul-winners, always concerned about those around them, meeting their spiritual and physical needs. In our home and family, they were exactly who others thought they were. Their godly legacy has impacted our lives and continues to influence the lives of our children and grandchildren. Our prayer is that this blessing extends throughout future generations."

Welch College and the National Association of Free Will Baptists will be forever grateful to God for the ministry and leadership of Charles Allen and Laura Jane Thigpen, who influenced thousands of people for the gospel of the Kingdom over their 73 years together. Thanks be to God for their legacy of building a faithful institution committed to truly Christian teaching and learning, rooted in their lives of humble service to their Lord.

About the Writer: Dr. Matt Pinson is president of Welch College. Phillip Morgan chairs the Welch College History department. Together, they authored *Light and Truth, the 75 year history of Welch College*. Learn more: welch.edu.

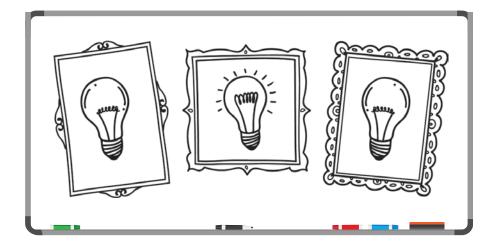
Framing and Reframing Ideas

BY RON HUNTER JR., PH.D.

Placing a work of art in a lousy frame draws attention to the wrong point. A beautiful frame always highlights the painting and causes the onlooker to ponder the artist's intention. Many types of leaders can benefit from framing or reframing: pastors delivering biblical concepts, business leaders casting vision, managers helping employees focus, and parents talking to their kids.

Just like people wrestle with the right frame, mat, color, and size, a good communicator spends a similar amount of time developing an illustration or story. Christ modeled framing in many of His visual parables. He described the sower with four types of soil, faith growing like a mustard seed, and yeast's influence. While Jesus communicated brilliantly, one warning for us is to remember proper reframing of an idea brings attention to the art, not the frame. A pastor's illustration should illuminate Scripture and the Savior rather than his own creativity.

Parents use framing and reframing in teachable moments, so their kids can connect. A few years ago, talking to a teenager who was listening to downloaded music on her iPod, I asked where she got her music. She replied,



"I downloaded it free from a file-sharing site." As a publisher, I knew the music was illegal, not paying any royalties to the writers or musicians, so I asked her if it was wrong.

She replied, "It's wrong, but there's no way I can afford all these songs."

I reframed her reply and said, "Did you know our Founding Fathers also knew owning slaves was wrong but justified it because plantation owners could not afford to pay all of them?"

Her eyes widened as she realized she had no justification. Reframing the idea helped her with the issue. A lecture on intellectual property rights would have fallen on deaf and bored ears. This same story could reframe the theft some Christians justify: photocopying books, software, and choir

music for "Kingdom use."

Spurgeon, Edwards, and other greats incorporated stories, illustrations, and visuals to connect with their congregations. John Bunyan understood the power of framing salvation, justification, sanctification, and discipleship in his best-selling *Pilgrim's Progress*. You can draw from published illustrations, books, news items, or your own life. Frame the idea but keep the original teachable concept as the focal point.

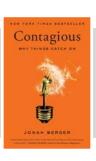
About the Columnist: Ron Hunter Jr. has a Ph.D. in leadership and is CEO of Randall House Publications. You may contact him at ron.hunter@randallhouse.com.

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Leadership Quote

"Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world today."

-Robert McKee



RECOMMENDED BOOK

Contagious: Why Things Catch On

By Jonah Berger

Remembering the Thigpens

BY W. JACKSON WATTS

In 2008, I published the article "Conversations With Charlie" in *ONE Magazine*. Little did I know those "conversations" would continue for years beyond that article. I was reminded of this in late December when Dr. and Mrs. Thigpen—Charles Allen and "Lolly" to those from the Turbeville, South Carolina, community—went home to be with the Lord. They passed only days apart, appropriately reminiscent of the profound marriage they enjoyed in this life as they served Christ and raised a family.

When I first wrote about the Thigpens, I didn't know we would go on to enjoy the personal relationship we did. My first, not-so-chance encounter with Dr. Thigpen happened in the student center on the old Welch College campus. He had spoken in chapel that September day about Christian service and the importance of trying to help someone every day. Ironically, later that day I saw the elderly Thigpen carrying hefty boxes of Tennessee promotional material into the student center. I recalled his words in chapel and quickly went to help him. He even gave me a dollar, which I still have (And, yes, you could still buy something for a dollar in 2003.)

Neither he nor I put the pieces together that day, but he was the "Charles Allen" I had heard so much about during my childhood growing up in his hometown. Moreover, Dr. Thigpen later learned who I was—the grandson of

J.C. Watts, a well-known farmer in his hometown and a beloved former classmate of his Laura. Sometime later, this connection led to many special conversations in the office Thigpen maintained on the former Welch campus during his years as Tennessee state promotional director.

From these conversations and other independent research, I became more aware of the impact the Thigpens had made on Free Will Baptists. They taught thousands of students. They helped mold the Welch College curriculum, moved the school from a two-year to four-year college, formed the teacher education program, and positioned the school to gain credibility in the larger higher educational scene in Tennessee. I continued to encounter former students who shared personal anecdotes of how the Thigpens helped them, both educationally and personally.

Of course, the Thigpens' influence reached far beyond the College. Dr. Thigpen was moderator of the National Association for six years and authored Randall House curriculum for many years. If you've used *Bible Scholar*, you've read his work. Mrs. Thigpen shaped countless pulpits around the denomination by teaching future pastors in speech class and drama. More than one student had to overcome speaking deficiencies or impediments to have effective ministries. Her guidance made that possible. Together, the Thigpens served multiple churches both early and later in life, whether in full-time or interim capacity.

But their greatest impact certainly can and should be gauged on the personal, individual level. I think of my own personal and spiritual formation that required much "heavy lifting" during my first two and half years in college. While the Thigpens already had retired from that era of ministry, their ministry to me continued. On more than one occasion, they invited me to their beautiful Murphy Road home

for a home-cooked meal, conversation, and counsel. More than once, I recall needing their advice about relationships. Once, I even brought a young lady I was dating over for the "Thigpen assessment." Their input, kindness, and

prayers sustained me through some of the bumpiness of those years. And not surprisingly, I have since spoken to many others who indicated the Thigpens were a valued source of advice in this important area of life.

While our communication was a little sporadic in recent years, we remained in touch, often exchanging cards and calls. I still have a voicemail from them saved on my phone, which I simply will not erase. Anything good in my life today is at least partly due to their influence, and I miss them.

In recent months, Free Will Baptists have lost some pillars of the "builder generation," Leroy Forlines and the Thigpens among them. Not only do we owe these individuals a great debt of appreciation, but this is an important occasion to remember they were human beings. They had faults, quirks, weaknesses, and those are as instructive as their achievements and strengths. If they were still with us, they would remind us of things they may have done differently or sacrifices they would gladly make again.

As we prepare for life after COVID-19, this is an occasion of sober rejoicing. We miss these great men and women of God, but we celebrate the end of their suffering. We acknowledge the big shoes we all have to fill collectively.

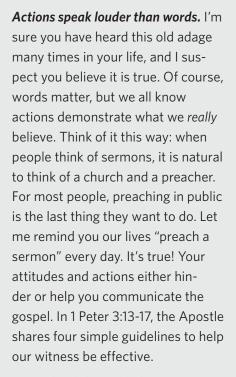
We should also be sure our denominational history—and their individual histories—guide us as we try to build on the foundation they laid.

About the Writer: W. Jackson Watts has served as pastor of Grace FWB Church in the greater St. Louis area since 2011. He also serves Free Will Baptists at the district, state, and national levels, particularly as a member of the Commission for Theological Integrity.

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

BY BARRY RAPER

1 PETER 3:13-17



Keep the right attitude. Even if you have all the right answers and know enough to fill entire books, if you communicate your knowledge with the wrong attitude or spirit, you undermine your own words. In this passage, Peter urges readers to answer with *gentleness* and *respect*.

Gentleness is one of the marks of a

growing Christian. This trait is listed among the fruits of the Spirit that should be evident in the life of every believer. Jesus displayed gentleness throughout His life. Matthew 12:20 reminds us the Savior will not crush a bruised reed or put out a smoldering wick. Instead, He deals gently with the broken and crushed. Following His example, we can (and must) be firm in our opposition to sin, yet, at the same time, be gentle towards sinners.

The word *fear* at the end of verse 15 does not describe terror but indicates respect or reverence (as appears in most translations). This usage matches the instructions Peter offered earlier in his letter, telling servants to respect their masters whether they are just or unjust (2:18) and telling wives to respect their husbands (3:1) for the sake of their Christian testimony.

It is clear Peter didn't mean we should fear people but simply treat them with respect. This is important for at least two reasons: 1) every person is created in the image of God; and 2) we are sharing the eternal matters and words of God with His image-bearers.

Although we may treat others with gentleness and respect, we also must remember communication is a two-way street. You cannot force another person to open "their lane" to your words. But you can do everything possible to remove hindrances or roadblocks to communication. What are these roadblocks?

- Acting as though you know it all
- Not really listening
- Speaking at them rather than dialoguing with them

Effective communication hinges on gentleness and respect.

Live out the right actions. It is hard to miss the emphasis Peter made on the word *good* in connection with how we live. He said be "followers of that which is good." One translation renders this phrase, "Be zealous for what is good." We don't use the word *zealous* much these days,

but the idea behind the word is to be passionate, intensely seeking something or clinging to a position unwaveringly. In Titus 2:14, Paul wrote that Jesus gave Himself for us "to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works." Are we zealous for good works? Are we passionate about doing what is right and good? Not as a means of salvation, of course, but because we have been saved?

Have a good conscience. Right living allows us to have a clean or good conscience. Peter indicates baptism is an expression of a clean conscience before God. Again, this does not mean the act of baptism saves you. Baptism is a *symbol* of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and of our identification with Him and His redeeming work. The Bible is clear—the only thing that can give you a clean conscience toward God is saving faith in Jesus Christ, which results in good works.

At a practical level, a clean conscience comes from doing right. When you have done what you are supposed to do, when you have lived according to God's Word, when you have done right by other

people, the result is a good conscience. A good conscience doesn't require a perfect life; it is the result of a good life, which is made possible through the sanctifying work and power of the Holy Spirit.

Be a consistent witness to those who revile your good behavior.

We must remember our lives are on display for all to see, even those who are antagonistic toward the faith. People can only revile your good behavior if they see it. People cannot see our motives; it is our behavior that matters most. Certainly, motives of the heart are crucial, but this passage emphasizes a simple truth: behavior is what other people see, and in this case, despise. Why? Because it makes them look bad. Because it makes them feel uncomfortable. Because your good behavior is a means of witness. For example, in chapter three, Peter encouraged Christian wives to continue living out a faithful witness before their unbelieving husbands "that they may be won without a word."

In other words, a life transformed and being transformed by Christ can win an unbeliever over to the truth of the gospel without a word. Acts 10:38 says Jesus "went around doing good." Of course, with Him,

perfect was the norm. Still, though you and I will never be perfect, Christ calls us to live the same way. If your epitaph someday reads "He (or she) went around doing good," your life will be a clear testimony to the grace of God.

There's a reason the old adage "You are the only Bible some people will ever read" is so familiar. There's truth to it. While we certainly want people to pick up the Bible for themselves and read it, often what they read first is the life of the person who claims to be a Christian. We have been blessed with the great privilege and responsibility to offer answers to people who are searching and questioning. We cannot lose sight of how important our attitudes and actions are as we communicate with them. If our actions are not in concert with the gospel, our words send a mixed message. If, by the grace of God, we maintain the right attitude and actions, God can use our witness—living and spoken—to help those wrestling with the big questions of life.

About the Columnist: Dr. Barry Raper pastors Bethel FWB Church near Ashland City, Tennessee. He also serves as program coordinator for ministry studies at Welch College and is a member of the Tennessee Christian Education Board.

Is "Opting Out" an Option?

BY CHRIS COMPTON ■ ■

Over the past six years working at the Board of Retirement, I have had many discussions with ministers about opting out of Social Security. Some of those discussions were with young ministers contemplating the possibility, while other discussions were with older ministers who wished they hadn't opted out. In these discussions, I learned most people do not fully understand what it means to opt out of Social Security, and what they should do if they make the choice to do so.

Decision of a Lifetime

This is not a decision to make with haste or to take lightly. It is one of the most important financial decisions a minister will make. The decision lasts a lifetime. Under current law, opting out of Social Security is irrevocable. Because it is irrevocable, it can have great financial consequences. (A bipartisan bill, the Clergy Act of 2020, was proposed last year in the House of Representatives and referred to committee. No action has been taken since then. If Congress passes this legislation, it will be only the second time they have allowed an opt-in window in the past 20 years.)

How Does Opting Out Work?

U.S. tax code makes a provision for ordained ministers to opt out of Social Security using Form 4361, which exempts them from paying the 15.3% self-employment tax on their ministerial earnings. Ordained ministers must do this by the second year in which they had ministerial income of at least \$400. Keep in mind, this is only for ministerial income and not income a minister may earn from a secular job.

Unfortunately, many have chosen to opt out because they listened to bad advice. Many ministers considering it, or who already opted out, did so because they wanted to save on taxes or didn't think Social Security would be around for them to benefit. These are not valid (or legal) reasons to do so. In fact, they both incur perjury.

IRS Form 4361 states:

I am conscientiously opposed to, or because of my religious principles I am opposed to, the acceptance (for services I perform as a minister...) of any public insurance that makes payments in the event of death, disability, old age, or retirement; or that makes payments toward the cost of, or provides services for, medical care. Under penalties of perjury, I declare that I have examined this application and to the best of my knowledge and belief, it is true and correct.

Ordained ministers cannot opt out of Social Security because they think it is a bad investment, or they don't want to pay taxes. The *only* legal reason ministers can opt out is because they certify opposition on the basis of religious principle to acceptance of public insurance. (For more information, see IRS Publication 517.)

What It Means

Ministers need to understand the implications of this irrevocable choice. A minister should not only consider ethical and legal implications but financial ones as well.

It could leave them and their families woefully unprepared financially later in life. When a minister opts out of Social Security, he forfeits much more than a retirement benefit. These ministers not only lose the retirement benefit, they forfeit Medicare coverage, disability benefits if they become disabled, and survivor benefits for their spouse and children.

Ministers who are thinking about opting out (or who have opted out already) should really consider putting the following in place to protect themselves and their families:

- 1. Retirement savings plan. Since you won't be receiving a Social Security check, you will need a retirement savings plan like the 403 (b)(9) at the Free Will Baptist Board of Retirement. You could take the money you are not paying for your self-employment taxes and invest it in a retirement account. Experts suggest you save 15% to 20% for retirement. If that amount is too much at first, start lower but work towards achieving that goal.
- **2. Term life insurance.** If something happens to you, and you have opted out of Social Security, your family will not be eligible to receive survivor benefits. Therefore, you should have term life insurance to help care for your family. It is typically advised to have eight to ten times your annual income in life insurance, but you may need more than the average person.
- 3. Long-term disability insurance. You will be ineligible for the safety net of disability insurance. It would be wise to maintain long-term disability insurance to protect your family in the event of an accident or injury that keeps you from working.
- 4. Long-term care insurance and health insurance.

Opting out of Social Security also means you lose Medicare coverage. Health care costs are expensive and could be your biggest expense in retirement. Consider long-term care insurance to cover the cost if you need to live in a long-term care facility. (You also need to secure health care coverage to replace Medicare.)



300 LATE STRUCTURE

This text is provided with the understanding that the Board of Retirement is not rendering legal, tax, accounting, or other professional advice or service. Professional advice on specific issues should be sought from an accountant, lawyer, or other professional.

About the Writer: Chris Compton is communications officer for the 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 13 years of administrative/financial experience in various fields as well as seven years of pastoral ministry experience.

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FINANCIAL Literacy Month

BY JOSHUA EIDSON

April was first recognized as Financial Literacy Month in the United States in April 2004. This was an effort originated by the National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE). Both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives have passed resolutions in recent years, recognizing this month and promoting the ideals of a financially literate society. Increasingly, more organizations, companies, and governmental agencies have expressed support and created resources to encourage this nationwide initiative. It's good to have this area of our lives encouraged in this healthy way. We can take three steps to make financial literacy a part of our everyday lives.

AWARENESS

It starts with awareness: awareness of the need for a healthy understanding and use of our financial resources and subsequent stewardship. We must examine our money habits. Why do we think the way we do about money? Who has influenced our thoughts and habits on how we utilize these resources? We must not be afraid to think critically about this subject and our behavior in this area. I do not mean critically, in a negative way necessarily, just a discerning and intentional examination of this subject.

Before we can begin to grow our understanding of healthy money habits, we need to know where we are. We need a baseline from which to measure, or we will not be able to tell if we are improving. This is especially important for parents. We must have a clear understanding of why and how we handle our finances before we can properly begin to teach and demonstrate for our children how they can have a healthy relationship with money.

CONVERSATIONS

Once we have a clear, or at least clearer, awareness of why and how we do the things we do with money, we can begin to share principles and practices we've learned with family and friends. Finances remain a "taboo topic" in some relationship circles. Hopefully, these conversations will center around best practices and where or how we've learned to be wiser with money management. If we expect young people to practice healthy financial management, but we never share what that means, how can we expect the next generation to be wise with their blessings and resources? The amounts don't matter; the principles of healthy stewardship do.

What are those healthy stewardship principles? First, we must learn to spend less than we make. That's the foundational formula for building wealth. But this conversation is not primarily about wealth. That must not become the universal financial goal. Still, we must enact this principle to build up enough to share in ways that bring us joy and hopefully glorify God. That equation helps us build margin to accomplish our "higher" financial goals, our stewardship responsibilities.

We cannot be afraid to share our failures and successes

in financial matters with those we care about. If we want them to succeed, we must start the conversation. Talking about these things makes no difference, though, if we fail to put these principles into action.

ACTION

If we never implement these healthy financial principles, what good was the study or conversations? Words do not change our bank accounts. Words do not change our

work habits to bring more financial resources. We must practice the principles we learn from Scripture about financial stewardship. We have to implement the practices we share with one another.

Some may have expected this article to spell out steps or list resources for living a financially successful life—how-to for money management. The Board of Retirement does have resources to help in that way, but the aim of this article is to make us aware of our need for financial literacy and provide a general starting point for how to get there.

If you have questions, or if you are looking for resources about specific financial

FINANCIAL EMPHASIS DAYS

APRIL 1: National One Cent Day (American Bankers Association)

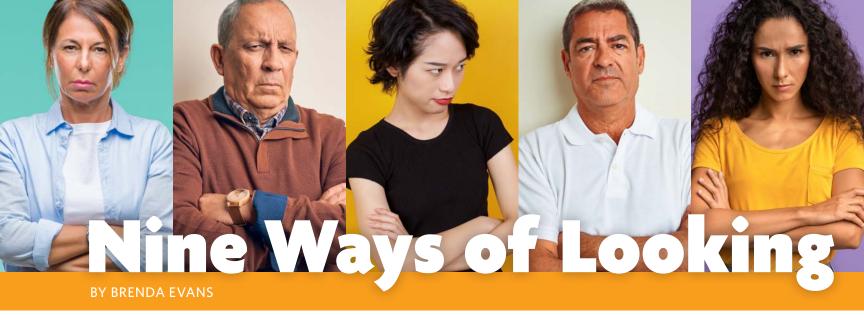
APRIL 5-9: Financial Literacy Week (TN Bankers Association, other states also observe)

APRIL 15: National Tax Day (American Bankers Association)

APRIL 22: National Teach Your Children to Save Day (American Bankers Association)

topics, contact our office and we will be glad to assist in any way we can. Awareness + Conversation + Action = Change. Make it a positive change.

About the Writer: Joshua Eidson is accounting administrator for the Free Will Baptist Board of Retirement. He graduated in 2007 with a B.S. in business administration from Welch College. He has over 13 years of experience in finance and accounting.



I prefer not to look at contempt, but I do because it's close. In me. What do I mean? I mean it's what Dallas Willard said in *The Divine Conspiracy*: a studied degradation of another person. Add Psychologist Paul Ekman's description: feelings of dislike for and superiority over another person, as in "I am better than you, and you are lesser than me."

Jesus gave *raca* as an Aramaic example of contempt in Matthew 5:22. It is a label meaning empty-headed fool. One linguist indicates *raca* may have originated from the sound we make collecting spittle in our throat, so we can verbally spit on someone.

What does contempt look like? There are at least nine ways to see it for what it is.

1. Contempt exudes superiority and breaks relationships into "them" and "us" (or really "me"), an unspoken ranking system about who is better. So, I push the "lesser" person away, leave him out of my "better" circle. Paul explains that a person who dares to classify or compare himself that way is "without understanding" (2 Corinthians 10:12). This superiority mode, as A. W. Tozer said in *The Pursuit of God*, is a "close-woven veil of the self-life." We may feel qualms about self-exaltation, but not openly acknowledge it, even to ourselves. Still, it is there in our interior history.

In *Orthodoxy*, G. K. Chesterton approaches superiority another way. When we consider ourselves "supermen" and in fact are "rotters," it's both a weakness and a sin, he says—a sin that is "a fact as practical as potatoes." Self-superiority is ugly, and we don't like to look at it. Remember Jesus' words about how we ignore our logs but

not their specks? And there's my mother's admonition not to act "uppity." Feelings of superiority are hard to acknowledge, even to our bathroom mirror.

2. Contempt is a poison, a sap that oozes through our bark and kills. Russian author Aleksandr Pushkin wrote a nine-stanza poem about a tropical Asian tree, the Upas:

Deep in the desert's misery, far in the fury of the sand, there stands the awesome Upas Tree lone watchman of a lifeless land.

The poisonous sap of the Upas is a temptation. It "oozes through its bark" and "gleams thick and gem-like in the dark." Contempt likewise attracts and entices us, as the gem-like Upas sap did a peasant man who plucked it and brought it to his lord. The peasant quickly fell dead while his master soaked arrows in the poison and killed "his neighbors in their own domains."

Contempt destroys both the injured one and the one who plucks its dark, "thick and gem-like" sap. The legends and facts about the Upas remind me of Moses' various warnings in Deuteronomy 28. For example, "Beware lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, one who, when he hears the words of this sworn



covenant, blesses himself in his heart, saying, 'I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart."

Impudently practicing contempt is a similar and dangerous sin. Consequences under the law were curses, confusion, frustration, fevers, blight, losses, horror, drought, blindness, and on and on the list goes. "And there shall be no one to help you," Moses warns at the end (28:29). We're forewarned, but go on, casual and indifferent, assuming we are safe.

- **3. Contempt does collateral damage, including "friendly fire."** Botanists two centuries ago claimed virulent Upas' poison spread to the soil and killed plants that tried to grow beneath its branches in a kind of biological friendly fire. Contempt spreads beyond its intended target. James reminds us when a fiery tongue ignites a small campfire, it may spread to the whole forest (3:5-6). My contempt can consume more than I intend.
- 4. Contempt plays God. It judges from a "superior" position. Jesus warned against this black art. "Judge not," He said in Matthew 7:1. Judging is a deeply rooted human practice, even among Christians, for we are "those who are of the dust" (1 Corinthians 15:48). We "straighten out" someone, degrade, reject, or exclude them. Dallas Willard warns us to "beware of believing that it is okay for us to condemn as long as we are condemning the right things. It is not so simple as all that. I can trust Jesus to go into the temple and drive out those who were profiting from religion...I cannot trust myself to do so." I am not God.

- **5. Contempt desires to hurt.** It knifes into a person's vulnerable heart and spirit. We Christians are not immune to it. As Willard said, it is such a "handy way of hurting people." And, so, we speak unkindness from a position "above" our victim. We draw out his anger or pain, as well as our own shame for being the kind of person we are. Paul warns, "If you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another" (Galatians 5:15).
- **6. Contempt tears down.** It is demolition, not construction. Tearing down goes quickly. Building up does not. One of my dad's jobs in the mid-1950s was tearing down old barracks at Fort Campbell, a U.S. Army base on the Kentucky-Tennessee border. With permission from the contractor, Dad and others salvaged the good wood. Demolition took a few weeks. Later, when Daddy used some of the salvaged wood to frame up his and Mother's new house, construction took almost a year. Building up is like that.

To knock people down, wield a 12-pound sledgehammer—wham, wham, wham—or a motorized wrecking ball. Words demolish...quick. New Testament letters urge at least 13 times to build up the people whose lives we touch—encourage, help, speak peace, bless, give grace, speak gently, comfort, speak truth, season with salt, stimulate to love and good deeds. That's not even considering Jesus' words in the gospels or the Old Testament Proverbs, Psalms, and Deuteronomy. Building up one another is a spiritual art we are commanded to practice.

- **7. Contempt is a smoldering volcano,** a slit in the crust of our soul through which hot, sulfurous emotions rise like steam or smoke. Maybe there are no visible flames or flare-ups, just a slow burn or smolder that chokes off and smothers kindness and "sweet reasonableness," as Dr. Robert Picirilli would say. Or, maybe we feel self-satisfaction and a comfortable warmth, while deeper down, a volcano waits to erupt.
- **8. Contempt leaves ghosts**—hauntings of things I have or have not said but thought. Contempt leaves us with troubled feelings of guilt. William G. Justice, Jr. said guilt is "a painful conglomerate of emotions" that may include anxiety, shame, dirtiness, grief, loss of self-worth, the need to hide. But guilt has value. It is an "internal alarm system" of the Holy Spirit's dwelling with me and in me, as Jesus promised. He teaches, convicts, convinces, and guides me to repent and grow (see John 14-16).

9. Contempt's enemy is my prayer for my victim.

Here's what I mean. Pray good things for the person for whom you feel contempt. Write his or her name in Paul's prayers in Colossians 1, Philippians 1 and 2, Ephesians 3, or others of your choice. Then pray the prayer. Be serious, mean it, because you hate your contempt.

Kneel to wash her feet as in John 13. Do it literally if COVID-19 is gone; if not, imagine you are at her feet to wash them. See how the Lord changes you there on your knees with basin and towel. Also, pray these paraphrased lines from Deuteronomy 32:1-2 and insert her/his name in the blanks: "Lord, make my words and thoughts drop as refreshing rain upon _______, my speech distill as dew upon _______, like gentle rain upon tender grass. Amen."

About the Writer: Brenda Evans lives in Ashland, Kentucky. Contact her at beejayevans@windstream.net.

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Stay the Course

BY DAVID BROWN, CPA

Last year (2020) was one of the wildest years ever for the stock market. Reaction to the pandemic caused the S&P 500 (the market) to drop 28.7% from the previous year's close (on March 20) before roaring back to finish 16.3% positive for the year. Many people get nervous during these market gyrations and wonder what they should do with their retirement funds. Perhaps a little history of the S&P might be helpful.

A review of the last 93 years of the S&P reveals some interesting trends. The period reviewed is from 1928 (just before the Great Depression) through 2020. Over that period, the S&P finished 62 years with a positive return and 31 years with a negative. This is exactly one-third negative years and two-thirds positive years.

The overall average return for all of these 93 years is 7.7%. The 31 negative years averaged a negative return of 13.8%, while the 62 positive years averaged a positive return of 18.5%. The worst return ever was not surprisingly during the Great Depression in 1931 at -47.07%. The second worst was also during the Depression in 1937 at -38.59%. It may be surprising that the third worst year came recently, in 2008, at -38.49%. The best year the S&P ever had was also during the Depression years at 46.59% in



1933 and another 41.37% increase in 1935. Besides those years, there was a 45.02% increase in 1954, a 38.06% increase in 1958, and a 34.11% increase in 1995.

Why are these numbers important? Generally speaking, the market is positive seven out of ten years for any given ten-year period except for the depression years. From 1929-1938 the S&P was negative six of the ten years. When negative years come, they usually don't happen for three or more years in a row, but the S&P was negative during the first four years of the Great Depression, from 1929-1932. Three negative years have happened in a row only two other times. As the U.S. was headed for World War II, the S&P was negative from 1939-1941. This also occurred from 2000-2002.

However, the S&P has had three or more positive years in a row nine times, with the longest streak being eight years from 1982-1989. On two other occasions, it was positive for five years in a row (1995-1999 and 2003-2007).

So, what does all this mean? For long-term investors like those investing for retirement, with at least a ten-year time horizon, it means stay the course. For the Foundation, with endowments that also have an indefinite time horizon, it also means stay the course.

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

Hodges Announces Retirement From WNAC

Antioch, TN—During its monthly WNAC board Zoom meeting January 19, the WNAC Board accepted a notice of retirement from Executive Director Elizabeth Hodges, effective December 31, 2021. Elizabeth submitted the official letter stating, "For several years, I have talked about God's timing. In recent weeks, He has made very clear the time is now. It has been my honor and privilege to serve Free Will Baptist women for these ten and a half years."

After serving as an educator and administrator for 29 years, Elizabeth changed roles in 2010 to become the sixth executive director of WNAC, the Free Will Baptist women's ministry department. Having recently reached "official" retirement age, she has prayerfully decided it is time to pass the baton.

During Hodges' tenure, WNAC became a national department, the eighth agency of the National Association. Elizabeth was an important guide during this transition, leading Free Will Baptist women through waters they had not crossed before. As a

direct result of her leadership, WNAC has seen new ministries blossom and bloom in Free Will Baptist women's ministry, both at home and abroad.

Shortly after being approved as executive director in 2010, Elizabeth stated "WNAC offers fertile ground for older women to mentor younger women, passing the baton of faith given to us. However, we need the help of younger women as we seek to engage the culture where we have been placed to serve."

Over her decade in the office, this quote has taken shape as she sought to implement her vision, guiding and working with the WNAC board, state leaders, and many others to Thrive, Shine, and Flourish (three areas of ministry identified and named during a brainstorming session). WNAC will continue to *Thrive* in the long-standing ministries of WNAC, such as the Lucille Stewart Missions Provision Closet, serving and supporting our missionaries. We will Shine as we help young women realize their worth, and we will continue to Flourish as we provide opportunities for each woman to



Elizabeth Hodges

fulfill the Great Commission through her God-designed roles at home and abroad.

WNAC Board Chair Amy Johnson stated, "A true student of the Scriptures and a lifetime learner, Elizabeth Hodges has given above and beyond during her years as executive director. She has helped encourage, uplift, and lead ladies throughout this denomination. I've had the privilege of serving beside her on mission trips in three countries, and she is the real deal!"

While we honor and celebrate the tenure of Elizabeth Hodges, we also must turn our attention to the transition ahead. The WNAC Board has developed a profile for the next executive director, and applications will be accepted from March 1, 2021 to May 15, 2021. To examine the profile or to apply for the executive director position, visit www.wnac.org/director-search

Dates for 2021 Theological Symposium Set

Gallatin, TN—The Commission for Theological Integrity has begun planning for its 2021 Theological Symposium on the campus of Welch College in Gallatin, Tennessee. The

dates are tentatively set for October 4-5. Dr. Jackson Watts, program chair, invites those interested in submitting a paper proposal to send it to fwbtheology@gmail.com by June

15. Questions may be submitted to this same email address. This year's program is an open theme, so papers on all matters biblical and theological are welcome.

Introducing 2021 Nominees for Standing Boards and Commissions

Antioch, TN—The 2020-21 Nominating Committee presents the following nominees* to be considered for the 2021 convention election, according to Jeff Blair (OK), committee chairman. Please note: IM, Inc., Randall House Publications, Welch College, and WNAC do not elect board members in 2021.

North American Ministries (2027 term)

Marshall Bonéy (VA)

Mike Cash (AZ)

Jose Rodriguez (TN)

Marshall Bonéy is the founding pastor of RelGNITE Church in Virginia Beach, Virginia, taking the church plant to self-supporting status in four years. Bonéy retired from the U.S. Navy as a chief petty officer after 22 years of service. He earned a Bachelor's in Christian Ministry at Welch College and Regent University and later completed a Master of Divinity and subsequent Doctorate in Ministry Leadership and Coaching from Regent Seminary.

Jose Rodriguez was born and raised in Communist Cuba but made America his home at age 19, where he has lived for the past 34 years. He holds a B.A. from Welch College, a M.A. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and a M.Div. from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where he is currently completing his Doctor of Ministry degree. After pastoring Free

Will Baptist churches in South Florida for 27 years, Rodriguez and his family relocated to Gallatin, Tennessee, for Jose to become the founding dean of Welch College Spanish Institute.

Board of Retirement and Insurance (2027 term)

Joel Franks (AL)

Clayton Hampton (MT)

Brent Nix (NW)

After 17-plus years of pastoring, **Joel Franks** is currently planting Cultivate Church in Athens, Alabama. Joel holds an MBA from Alabama University and studied theology at Welch College.

After 35-plus years as pastor and church planter, **Clayton Hampton**, along with his son Josh Hampton, recently began holding services at Summit Church in Missoula, Montana. Clayton earned a Bachelor's in Christian Education and a Master's in Ministry from Welch College. He has been active in denominational leadership on the local and state levels in Tennessee and Michigan and served as the first alumni affairs director at Welch College 1994-95.

Brent Nix has pastored Riverside FWB Church in Sumner, Washington, since 1993. A 1985 graduate of Welch College, he holds a Bachelor's in Bible and Pastoral Training. Nix has been active at every level of denominational leadership, serving as moderator of the Northwest Association and as a member of the General Board of the National Association.

FWB Foundation (2027 term)

Lee Allen (AR)

Gene Williams (NC)

Scott Coghill (NC)

Lee Allen has been a deacon at First FWB Church in North Little Rock, Arkansas, for seven years. Holding a Bachelor's in Business Administration, Lee has a broad range of experience in the business arena. He has been active in denominational leadership, serving three years as the moderator of the Central Association of Arkansas, ten years as a Master's Men officer, and participating in missions trips with both IM, Inc. and North American Ministries.

Media Commission (2026 term)

Adrian Holland (OK)

Adrian Holland served as student pastor at Calvary Church in Norman, Oklahoma, for seven years before recently accepting a position at Allen FWB Church in Sapulpa, Oklahoma. He graduated from Randall University with a B.A. in Youth Ministry. Adrian is an accomplished AV specialist/technician with 15-plus years of professional experience in installations, setup, repairs, troubleshooting, presentations, and production management.

Commission for Theological Integrity (2026 term)

Jackson Watts (MO)

(2024 Term)

Cory Thompson (OK) replacing Thomas Marberry, deceased

Cory Thompson has been pastor of First FWB Church, Poteau, Oklahoma, for seven years. He is additionally an adjunct professor at Randall University, where he teaches Biblical Greek. Prior to this current ministry, he served as pastor of Beacon FWB Church in Kansas, City, Missouri. Cory earned a B.A. from Randall University and a M.Div and Th.M from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is the assistant moderator of the Oklahoma State Association and served as a member of the Missouri State Association's Christian Education Board (2009-2014), A member of the Evangelical Theological Society, Cory is a regular attendee of the Free Will Baptist Theological Symposium and presented a paper in 2019.

Historical Commission (2026 term)

James R. McComas (TN)

James (Jim) McComas has been CEO of Free Will Baptist Family Ministries for two years. Prior to accepting this position, he served five years as director of church revitalization for North American Ministries and 21 years as a pastor in Ohio. A long-time student of Free Will Baptist history, McComas co-authored *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*, the 200-year history of Ohio Free Will Baptists.

Music Commission (2026 term)

Joshua Riggs (OK)

Joshua Riggs has been leading worship for Bethany Church in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, for ten years. He also heads up the audio visual production, technology, media, and communications teams for the church. Joshua graduated from Welch College in 2005 with a B.A. in Missions and a minor in Music. He has been serving as the orchestra director for the National Convention since 2010 and plays a key role in planning and implementing convention worship services.

Executive Committee (2024 term)

Chris Dotson (TN)
Chris Todd (SC)
Reuben Cason (NC)

Reuben Cason is the promotional director of the North Carolina State Association. Prior to accepting this role, he pastored churches in Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina over three decades. After attending Welch College, Cason completed a Bachelor's degree from Emmanuel Baptist University. He has been active in denominational ministry at every level, including chairing district and state missions boards in all three states where he pastored, serving youth and camp boards in South Carolina and Georgia, moderating the South Georgia Association, and serving as both clerk and treasurer of the Randall Association of North Carolina. Cason has been active in the community, serving as a hospital and a hospice chaplain and hosting a daily radio program based in Smithfield, North Carolina.

Chris Dotson is the state director of the Tennessee State Association. Prior to accepting this role, he pastored Peace FWB Church in Morristown, Tennessee (1990-2019) as well as advancement director for Harvest Childcare Ministries in Duffield, Virginia. He earned a Bachelor's in Religion and Human Services from Carson Newman University, a Master's in Ministry from Bob Jones University, a MBA from Quantic School of Business, and received an honorary Doctor of Divinity from Bethel College. Chris has been active in denominational ministry at every level, serving as president of Berea Ministries, clerk and moderator of the Central Quarterly Meeting of Tennessee, moderator of the Tennessee State Association, and a member of the General Board of the National Association. He is active in the community, serving locally, regionally, and nationally as a police chaplain and chaplain trainer, including his current role as chaplain for the U.S. Secret Service.

General Officers:

Moderator - Tim York (TN)

Assistant Moderator - William Smith (GA)

Clerk - Randy Bryant (FL)

Assistant Clerk - Ernie Lewis (IL)

Members of the 2021 Nominating Committee include: Jeff Blair (OK); Diana Bryant (FL); Rufo Gomez (TN); Wayne Hale (Mid-Atl); Steve Lindsay (AL); Terry Motte (NW); and Terry Pierce (MS).

*Biographical information included for new board candidates only. IIII



2021 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FREE WILL BAPTISTS

NAFWB | V3 | MEMPHIS, TN | JULY 18-21

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 vot	ing delegates must be memb	ers in good standing of a FW	'B church.)
Voting Delegates	Tickets		
☐ National Board/Commission Member	WNACTau	ghter and LattéQ	v x \$20 =
☐ Ordained Minister		ly 19, 8:30 p.m. (\$25 onsite;	
□ Ordained Deacon□ State Delegate (Authorization Required)		nni & Friends LuncheonQ	
☐ Local Church Delegate (Delegate Card Required)			o tickets will be sold between
	•	tion closing and convention;	
Non-Voting ☐ Attendee (All Ages, Including Infants and Toddlers)	National A	National Association Info: 877-767-7659 www.nafwb.org	
Vertical Three Conference	Register	· April 1 – June 18 N	Io Refunds After June
Preschool		Payment Options:	
☐ Ages 3-5, Attending Preschool Worship - \$25 (\$35 onsite)		-	
☐ Ages 0-5, Not Attending Preschool Worship - NO FEE		Payable to FWB Convention)	n debit and credit cards accepted)
Students: \$25			
Any student or competitor* attending any CTS competition or eve MUST pay \$25 V3 conference fee (\$35 onsite).			
Grades K-3	Card Holder_		Exp/
☐ Grades 4-6	Signature		
☐ Grades 7-12	NAFWB (Questions: 877-767-765	9 convention@nafwb.org
*Competitors must pay this V3 conference fee in addition to	Return t	01	
CTS competition fees already paid.		o. n Registration	
College Age Adults: \$20	PO Box 5002	2	
Adults attending any competition or event MUST pay \$20. Adult Attendee	Antioch, TN	37011 / FAX: 615-731-0771	
V3 Event			
Tuesday, July 20, 9:00 pm (\$15 onsite/at the door)			Amon /
		Overc	
V3 Information: 800-877-7030 www.verticalthree.	com	40000	



Sheraton Memphis Downtown Hotel

(Connected via skywalk) 250 N Main St Memphis, TN 38103 901-527-7300

Rate: \$142

Valet Parking: \$26 daily No self parking available



Crowne Plaza Memphis

300 N 2nd St Memphis, TN 38103 901-525-1800

Rate: \$145 Parking: \$15 daily



Courtyard by Marriott Memphis Downtown

75 Jefferson Ave Memphis, TN 38103 901-522-2200

Rate: \$130

Valet Parking: \$25 daily Self Parking: \$10 daily



Moxy Memphis Downtown

40 N Front St Memphis, TN 38103 844-378-8786

Rate: \$130

Valet Parking: \$22 daily No self parking available



Springhill Suites by Marriott Memphis

85 W Court Ave Memphis, TN 38103 901-522-2100

Rate: \$130

Valet Parking: \$25 daily Self Parking: \$10 daily



Comfort Inn Memphis Downtown

100 N Front St Memphis, TN 38103 901-526-0583 (Option 2 - Front Desk)

> Rate: \$139 Parking: \$10 daily

2021 Convention Housing Information

1. Prepare Personal Information.

You will need the following:

- + Name(s), address, city, state, zip
- + Phone/email
- + Credit card information
- + Special requests: accessibility, rollaway, or crib

2. Contact the Hotel.

- + Online reservations open Monday,
 May 10, 9:00 a.m. CDT. Links to make reservations will be available at nafwb.
 org. No phone reservations will be accepted on this day.
- + Phone reservations open Tuesday, May 11, 9:00 a.m. CDT. Online

reservations are encouraged to avoid long waits.

3. Things to Remember:

- + Hotels have been instructed **NOT TO ACCEPT** reservations before opening day.
- + Hotel rates do not include 18.25% tax plus \$2 per night Memphis TID fee.

NOTE: The first night's room and tax will be charged for canceled reservations.

The charge is non-refundable, but reservations are transferable. Available rooms may be posted at **nafwb.org** for transfer. **Note:** Convention policy supercedes hotel policy.



The Renasant Convention Center

recently opened, featuring floor-to-ceiling natural light, panoramic views of downtown and the Mississippi, free wi-fi in public areas, covered connections to the Sheraton Memphis Downtown, and easy access to the vintage trolley system.

Reservation cut-off date: Friday, June 18, 2021

Visit www.nafwb.org for more info.

V/// CONFERENCE

JULY 18-21, 2021 MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE



DANIEL **RESOLVED** THAT HE WOULD NOT DEFILE HIMSELF... (FROM DANIEL 1:8).

SUNDAY A.M.: DAVID MIZELLE (VA)

SUNDAY P.M.: QUINN NORMAN (OK)

MONDAY P.M.: VICTORIA PAFFILE (WA)
AND TREVOR HOLDEN (TN)

TUESDAY: JON FORREST (TN)

V3 EVENT TUESDAY @ 9:00 P.M.:

JONNIE W - JOKE TELLER & MUSIC MAKER

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR THE LATEST INFO REGARDING CORONAVIRUS SAFETY MEASURES + PRECAUTIONS

CTS
MINISTRY
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GUIDELINES,
2021
EDITION:

FOR PURCHASE JULY 2021

WWW.VERTICALTHREE.COM

LIFE IN HD

BY EDDIE MOODY

Do you remember when high-definition television (HDTV) arrived on the scene? Suddenly, some of the people we watched for years on television were no longer perfect in appearance. HDTV brought every flaw to life, from wrinkles and laugh lines to lint. With HDTV, you get so close you see all the flaws.

As a pastor, I often thought being part of a church was a bit like HDTV. When you are faithfully involved in a church you get to know one another really well, flaws and all. You see people at their best, and sometimes at their worst. You know their idiosyncrasies. You don't really know a person until you have worked together in the nursery or conducted church repairs that didn't go so well.

From the outside, Christianity and the church can be a bit like life before HDTV when it comes to well-known singers, pastors, and theologians. If we take those images with us to church, we may wonder why our leaders and fellow church people can't be more like MacArthur, Keller, Ramsey, or (insert your favorite Christian celebrity here). Sometimes, we may even be turned off when those at our church do not seem to live up

to the Christian celebrities of our day. I fear many Christians today are in danger of missing what it really means to be part of the church because they are unwilling to love others despite flaws and imperfections.

Church life in high definition is never clearer than at a funeral (obviously, the funerals prior to COVID-19). Over the years, I saw large crowds attend funerals for folks long past their prime (from the world's point of view). In the early days of my ministry, a deacon named J.P. Seley often came to me after each funeral to say, "You did a fine job on that funeral, but you did have a good product." His point was that the person, though imperfect, followed the Savior and really preached his or her own funeral. In most cases, he had known these individuals for decades. He knew their imperfections and idiosyncrasies and yet referred to them as a "good product."

Mr. Seley was not the only person who felt that way. Though they may not have said it, the rest of the congregation demonstrated their feelings, too. Often during funeral songs, I could not help but notice the reactions of those in

attendance. Their faces and body language in unguarded moments said it all. Yes, they knew the person was in Heaven, but they also knew there would be no more Sunday School classes, keeping the nursery, working on the building, or serving in this life together. It was clear they loved their departed friend in spite of flaws, and they would deeply miss him or her.

Really, that is what the Christian life, and being a part of a church, is all about. We grow to love people—often much different than ourselves—as we grow together in Christ. We must take full advantage of opportunities to grow together in life. May we persevere with other believers in spite of their imperfections...and ours. Life in HD is better.



Executive Secretary,
National Association of
Free Will Baptists

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Contact the Foundation for more details:



foundation@nafwb.org | 877-767-7575 www.fwbgifts.org





UNFIN SHED TASK

GIVE in obedience to

the Great Commission.

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has an impact:

lives are changed,

people find

hope, churches

are planted,

and

discipleship

begins.

APRIL 25TH

CHURCH **Planting**

National Youth Camps

Pastoral Training

> National Missionaries

Training

IM iminc.org/wmo