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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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The Empty Nest

BY ERIC K. THOMSEN

Note from the editor: When the deadlines arrived for the October-November issue of *ONE Magazine*, I found myself sidelined with COVID-19. So, I decided to share the following story from my grandmother. Lillie Thomsen has been in Heaven since 2011, but her heritage of faith continues to reach across the years to make a difference in my life. The following is a poignant moment from her life on a small farm in northwest Arkansas.



On May 28, 1958, our two sons graduated from high school. Both boys had enlisted in the Naval Reserve their senior year. Tommy, the oldest, was scheduled to leave for a training cruise. At the boys' final Naval Reserve class, the officer teaching the class persuaded Tommy to join the regular Navy.

He told Tommy he would stop by the house with the necessary papers and a bus ticket to San Diego. He told him to be ready to go, that he would give him a ride to the bus station. By the time the recruiter arrived, five other young men were waiting at our house with Tommy.

They had just finished signing the necessary paperwork when our younger son Neal suddenly stepped forward and asked the recruiter if he could sign up as well. He was too

young, but my husband Tom signed the necessary papers so he could accompany the others. In a matter of moments, both sons boarded the bus that whisked them away from the farm, some 2,000 miles from home.

It was bad enough to know Tommy was leaving, but Neal's leaving was completely unexpected. As I watched the bus pull out of sight, my spirits crumpled. Suddenly, I dreaded walking into the quiet, deserted farmhouse.

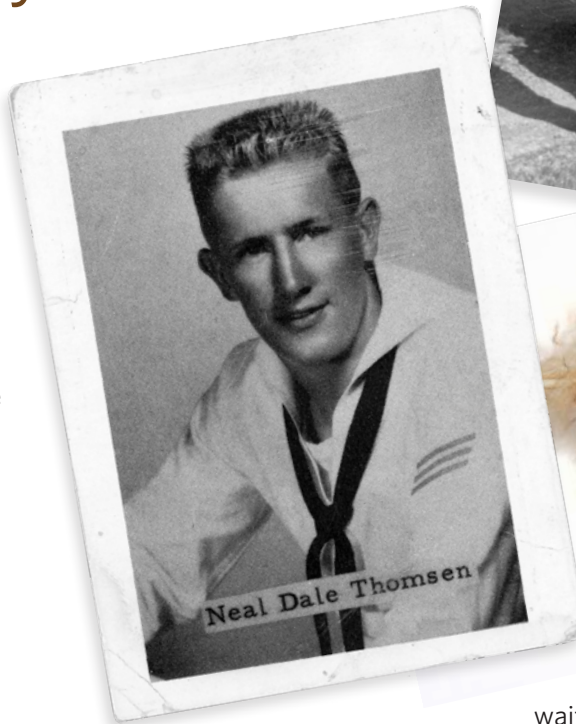
As my steps dragged toward the door, I noticed a nervous, little wren flitting around the clothesline. I went quietly into the house, closed the door, and watched her from the window. She went to a nest

in an abandoned, wooden box where five baby birds waited. Patiently, the little wren guided her babies to a nearby tree, one by one, until her nest was finally empty.

I couldn't help but smile. Her nest was empty; my nest was empty. Life goes on. And, it did. In time, I adjusted to a new life without the boys. They created lives and families of their own, Tom in California and Neal in Florida. Whenever I started to miss them, I remembered the little wren and smiled.

I thank God for that tiny bird He sent to me on that difficult day when my own nest became empty. **ONE**

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



2021 Nominees Requested

Antioch, TN—The 2020-2021 Nominating Committee, which will serve through the national convention in Memphis, Tennessee, is prepared to receive nominees for the 2021 election, according to Jeff Blair (OK), committee chairman.

The committee will meet in December via ZOOM and compile a report offering a single nomination for each position to be filled. The report will be presented to delegates at the 2021 convention.

The following board and commission positions will be filled in 2021: Home Missions/North American Ministries (3), Board of Retirement (3), Free Will Baptist Foundation (3), Commission for Theological Integrity (1) Historical Commission (1), Media Commission (1), Music Commission (1), General Board (11), Executive Committee (3), and General Officers (4).

The following boards do not elect members in 2021: IM, Inc; Randall

House Publications; Welch College; and WNAC.

Nominations, accompanied by a brief resume, must be submitted exclusively to the chairman on or before November 27. Download the nomination form at www.nafwb.org/nominations.

Contact Chairman Jeff Blair: Nominating Committee, 7274 E 570 Rd, Locust Grove, OK 74352 or jablairjr@gmail.com. **ONE**

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ASSOCIATE EDITORS: Ken Akers, David Brown, Kathy Brown, Chris Compton, Danny Conn, Elizabeth Hodges, Josh Owens, Deborah St. Lawrence
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Eternal Dividends

BY SAM MCVAY

North American Ministries (NAM) exists to equip and send church planters and chaplains to plant healthy churches and make disciples in North America. You may ask, *why do we need more churches in North America?* National statistics indicate nearly 50 Free Will Baptist churches close each year, and we lose 2,200 members. According to census data, the United States has grown by nearly 10 million people in the last five years.

We are going in the wrong direction. We should be planting *more* vibrant Free Will Baptist churches focused on making disciples for Christ. At the present rate of new church plants, we are not keeping up with the number of churches we are closing.

If the sheer numbers do not motivate your desire to see new churches planted, consider the following two reasons: first, the Great Commission *commands* us to reach our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. Free Will Baptists always have been about reaching the lost with the gospel, and thousands of people live in neighborhoods without faithful, evangelistic, Bible-preaching churches.

Second, church planting has a profound impact on the local church. Research shows attendance grows significantly, as well as the tithes and offerings, when your congregation is involved in planting churches. Excitement grows as your people are encouraged by the growth of the new church plant as well as the growth in their own local church.

Let me share a few short stories from church planters describing how your investment in NAM is reaping eternal dividends.

Recently, in a conversation with our church planter, Logan Wolf, I learned Utah, where he serves, is the least-reached state in the country, with less than 2% Christians. The county/metro area where the Wolfs live is less than 0.5% Christian. Read what Logan shared about a recent outreach activity:

“We took a group of ten from our church to Brigham Young University for a dialogue with their interfaith club. By the time we arrived, more than 25 students filled the room, along with two professors. We broke into small groups and worked through a list of questions they allowed me to write. I was in a group with one professor, four students, and two women from our church, Darlene and Lucy, both former Mormons. It did not take long before Darlene boldly proclaimed Christ. She started telling her story of leaving Mormonism, having found no hope or peace there, and shared how she came to know the full forgiveness that comes through faith in Christ alone. What is more, this was happening ten times over across the room. Praise the Lord! We baptized more than a half dozen former Mormons in 2019.”

Rejoice with other church planters who shared:

“On Easter Sunday, three people accepted Christ in our online service.”

—*Stephen Kimbrell, Irvine, California*

“Louis lived on the streets, dealt drugs, and ran prostitutes. He began attending our church with his girlfriend and wept during the services. A few months ago, Louis bowed his heart to Christ as his Lord and Savior. Now, he is growing and active.”

—*Daryl Grimes, Erie, Pennsylvania*

“She said it just seemed like something was constantly drawing her back to Cultivate Church. That something drawing her was the Holy Spirit. Then, a few Sundays back, Robin gave her life to Jesus!”

—*Joel Franks, Athens, Alabama*

“At Awaken Church, you know you not only have God on your side, you have a group willing to make you feel accepted when you do not feel accepted, with open arms regardless of what you have been through, where you come from, or where you thought you were headed. It’s wonderful!”

—*From the testimony of Ruben & Merri; submitted by pastors Josh Bennett and Shane Suggs, Tifton, Georgia*

Space does not allow me to share all the stories of how God is using North American Ministries to make a difference in the lives of people who need the gospel. Your generous gift to the Mission North America Offering on November 22, 2020, supports the general fund, which in turn provides for office staff, conferences, recruitment, assessment, training, coaching, managing church-planting teams, and more.

Your gift to this offering provides the support Free Will Baptist church planters need to do the work God has called them to do. We are counting on your generosity to help us *Build Bridges to Carry the Gospel!* **ONE**

About the Writer: Sam McVay is church relations officer for Free Will Baptist North American Ministries. Learn more about church planting: fwbnam.com.



FOR THE WHOLE WORLD

BY STEVE LYTLE

The gospel of Christ is for the whole world (Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15).

No committed, scripturally-informed believer disagrees with that statement. Yet, in practice, the church does not always prioritize missions.

I'm glad to be part of a movement committed to getting the message of salvation through Jesus Christ to lost people everywhere. I was greatly privileged to serve in the country of Panama for almost 30 years. Several thoughts about reaching the entire world have been going around in my mind for some time.

First, let's reach people at home (our Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria). The percentage of non-Christian people is rapidly growing in the U.S. as more and more people turn from biblical faith and say they have no religion. Immigration also contributes to the non-Christian population. I see the sovereignty of God in this; He is bringing the nations to us. The difference between Christ-followers and non-believers is greater than before. What an opportunity for the church.

At the same time, we must be aware of the whole world. Consider the number of unreached (populations numbering less than 2% evangelical believers) and unengaged people groups (those with no effort at engaging a specific people group with the gospel). Of the 6,733 unreached people groups in the world, over 3,000 fit into the category of unengaged people groups. No known church planting effort exists among them. This must become or remain a major priority.

We must always remember our marching orders: "Go into *all* the world and preach the gospel to *every* creature" (emphasis mine). God's heart aches for the entire world. "For God so loved *the world*..." He wants the entire world reached. *All* the world and *every* people group must remain our objective.

Much missionary activity—especially short-term trips and significant financial aid—takes place in "responsive" countries, particularly Africa and Latin America. We rejoice at every effort and initiative to reach people in these regions and every part of the world, but we must also learn to distinguish things that differ. Those countries, and others like them, provide easier access and ministry

opportunities. Please note: I use the word "easy" in a relative sense. No place is easy to do ministry; it's a continual spiritual battle anywhere. Our own country presents difficulties in seeking to evangelize, but many places are much more difficult.

Why are some places "easier"?

1. Overwhelming poverty. It's possible to make a difference in people's immediate physical need by alleviating hunger, dealing with infrastructural needs, or addressing societal problems. As the church goes to those places, both genuine and superficial response occurs.

2. Immigration, tourism, and governmental services function better and/or are more friendly toward the United States and its citizens who visit.

3. A Christian base. Almost always, African and Latin American countries have an established church. I don't think we realize the huge difference this makes. Where the church is established and relatively strong and influential, it's easier to minister, both short term and long term. The likelihood of a bigger response is greater. For instance, an evangelist from the United States—well-known, well-financed, and supported by a team—can go to Latin America or Africa and celebrate a crusade, potentially seeing hundreds respond. That wouldn't happen in the Muslim world or certain parts of Europe.

I want to be absolutely clear: I am *not* saying the church should not go to Haiti, Honduras, and similar places. We should go if God opens the door. I'm suggesting we not opt for these and other countries to the exclusion of more difficult places. I have heard people comment we should not be in western Europe because of the resistance to the gospel found there, or in the Muslim world. We have to learn to differentiate between ignorance and hostile opposition. For my part, I am extremely thankful we, as a denomination, work in western Europe and among Muslim peoples. People are coming to Christ, not in huge numbers, but significantly. Breakthrough is looming on the horizon. More Muslims have come to Christ during the past 50 years than in the previous 20 centuries!

Our efforts to reach the nations and their people groups should be based on leading, burden, opportunity, and strategy.

Papua New Guinea: Don Richardson and his wife were a young missionary couple with a divine call. Their sacrificial commitment led them to a primitive village among the Savi people—a small, stone age, isolated tribal group for whom Jesus died. The result: *Peace Child*. If you have not read the book or seen the movie telling how a church was miraculously born, please do so. God calls His servants to go and prepares people to receive the gospel.

India: Carlisle Hanna made a lifelong commitment. After he had been in India for a number of years with a moderate amount of fruit, some people said, “It’s time to come home; your work’s done.” He responded, “I came to give my life for India.” Today, around 20,000 Indian believers, pastors, and church planters continue to lead godly lives. The Indian church has crossed borders and started churches in neighboring Bhutan and Nepal. Hanna used humanitarian efforts, relief aid, crop rotation, and other innovative agricultural methods as means to gain credibility and access to the hearts and lives of many people. The hostel ministry has educated and evangelized scores of young men over the years, many of whom now serve as pastors and church leaders.

Burma: Adoniram Judson spent nearly 40 years in Burma (now Myanmar). During those years, he took one furlough home. Seven of his 13 children died, and two of his wives died. He saw no converts for the first six years. Yet he persevered, and a church was born.

Panama: Tom Willey told me his initial task was to break fallow ground and sow seed. Conversions didn’t come for some time. But through the years, many people accepted Christ as Savior. Today, the harvest is brighter than ever. The fact is, some fields are more difficult than others, taking longer to see fruit.

We can be thankful for cross-cultural ministry, most anytime and anywhere. However, we must ensure we serve with missiologically-sound guidelines.

1. Avoid creating debilitating dependency. Generosity is a good thing, but we must not let it overwhelm the people we want to help. When hearts are moved,

money is often given to help. Sometimes, this unwittingly creates other problems. Also, the host culture must be considered. We must be wise in helping.

2. View partnership, not control, as the goal. I’m convinced we can help, but we must never “take over.” Those we help need to do their part. A missionary to the Muslim world told of a people with whom he worked who loved and respected one particular missionary colleague. Jealous at first, he determined to learn from it. “Why do you love him so much,” he asked. The answer came, “We love him because he let us help him.”

When a loved one died in the States, the missionary approached the people he was trying to reach. They, in their poverty, raised money to send him home. So often, missionaries come in as the “educated” ones, the ones with means and expertise, and take over. The work never reaches a partnership or collaborative level.

3. Know when to leave. On most fields, the time will come for the mission organization to turn the work over to the national church and pull out. IM did this in Panama in 2015 by strategic decision, and it happened through circumstances and missionary attrition in Ivory Coast. In both cases, the national church was ready and has taken over admirably. This doesn’t mean we walk away forever. We continue to send E-TEAMS to Panama, teachers for the Bible Institute, and the Panamanians welcome short-term teams. The Hanna Project has remained active in Ivory Coast, by invitation from the Ivorian church.

We must, in obedience to the Great Commission, take the gospel to the whole world. Ultimately, that means every tribe, nation, people, and people group all over the planet, regardless of language, ethnicity, culture, or religious background. We must do this with commitment, passion, perseverance, and with great wisdom. **ONE**

About the Writer: Steve Lytle and his wife Judy served IM, Inc. for more than 30 years, as both missionaries in Panama and later in administrative roles for Steve. Judy continues to work part time at IM. Learn more: IMInc.org.

Interruptions *as Opportunities*

BY CHAPLAIN (CPT) DAVID DODSON

An unwritten rule in my house is the “Interrupt Dad” rule. This rule states, “If at any time you are in need of assistance (for anything) stop right where you are and yell, ‘Dad,’ at the top of your lungs. If Dad does not immediately appear continue until Dad stops what he is doing and arrives to help.”

Quite frankly, I don’t like the “Interrupt Dad” rule because it, well, *interrupts* me. It impedes me from accomplishing the task at hand. Like me, you probably struggle with small, daily interruptions to some degree.

I describe another category of interruptions as *life interruptions*. Life interruptions don’t occur daily, but they are more significant when they happen. On New Year’s Eve, my family experienced a life interruption when my unit was alerted to go to the Middle East to help defend our nation against the growing Iranian threat. Four days later, I was on a plane bound for Kuwait. My first deployment was a “no notice” one, with very little time to prepare myself and my family for an indeterminate number of months separated. Our life as a family came to a screeching halt!

In the spirit of transparency, I admit that many days while in the Middle East I struggled with this unexpected life interruption, but I also learned a great lesson from it. Interruptions can be opportunities in disguise. Throughout the Bible, God interrupted the lives of people like Abraham, Moses, Daniel, Mary, and Peter. Each time, the interruption had opportunities to be taken advantage of for Kingdom purpose. And, so did mine.

On a personal level, God used those months in the desert to stretch my faith painfully, but fruitfully, as my daily

dependence on His strength and grace grew. As a chaplain, I had unprecedented

opportunities to teach the Scriptures and share the gospel with my paratroopers, as I had a more captive and willing audience. One specific opportunity God afforded was to share the gospel with a particular infantryman in his early 20s. Only weeks earlier, this young man held a pistol to his throat, ready to end it all. Thankfully, God sent someone to stop him, saving his life. And, thankfully, God interrupted my life that I might be in the right place and right time to see Jesus Christ save his soul.

God gave me a new perspective in the wilderness: interruptions are opportunities, and we must take advantage. You see, during those months, I realized I have had the wrong attitude when the “Interrupt Dad” rule is used. Instead of looking at these interruptions as annoying, I need to look at them as opportunities—opportunities to spend time with those I love most and pour into their lives. During the months separated from my family, I would have given anything to be interrupted by the sound of one of my children calling “Dad!” **ONE**

About the Writer: Chaplain (CPT) David Dodson serves in the U.S. Army and is currently stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Learn more about Free Will Baptist chaplain ministry: fwbnam.com/chaplaincy.





Building Bridges to My Community

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

It was my freshman year at Beckley Junior High School in Beckley, West Virginia. I was enrolled in a woodworking class, and the instructor, Mr. Anderson, gave us our final assignment. It was unlike any other project we had completed to that point. Working individually and in competition against our classmates, we were to build a balsa-wood bridge. The bridges would be judged based on design, craftsmanship, and the amount of weight the 14” Pratt truss bridge could withstand.

As I recall, my bridge finished in second place, which for me, was quite an accomplishment. Those days of bridge-building, from design to completion, will be etched in my memory forever. The lessons I learned from that project went far beyond physics, engineering, and appearance to the importance and safety of the bridges we cross each day.

Those lessons followed me to the Buffalo, New York, where we currently serve as church planters. When you move into a city where you don’t know anyone, you recognize the value of connecting with your community. Further, when you go into an area with no desire for a new church, especially a Free Will Baptist church, you learn how important it is to build bridges that endure. So, how does one go about building bridges into the community?

We build bridges through relationships. This was a lesson I never truly learned until becoming a church planter. In the early days of NorthPoint FWB Church, some key relationships opened tremendous doors of

opportunity for us. These were open doors in terms of location, the ability to get information into the hands of prominent individuals, and connections to help us move step-by-step along the way.

We build bridges through generosity. In the area we serve, the Roman Catholic Church is predominant. One of the initial complaints I heard about them was they were “money hungry.” While I don’t know whether this is true or not, I do know it is a hard reputation to overcome. For that reason, early on, we decided anything we do, including Easter egg hunts, Family Fun Days, car washes, cups and apparel for our people, and lunches for the community would never have a price tag. We give everything away we possibly can. This has afforded unique opportunities to serve those in our neighborhood and beyond.

We build bridges through compassion. One of the key attributes surrounding the earthly ministry of Jesus was compassion. In Matthew 9:36, when Jesus saw the brokenness and the needs of the people surrounding

Him, He had compassion on them. If we are to build bridges to our community, we must be known as a compassionate people. I want people to see compassion in me personally, but I also want them to see that trait on display in our church family. During these trying and difficult days, when people are hurting and searching for answers, they need to see and experience compassion from the church.

We build bridges by being team players. On Easter

Sunday this year, while the country was shut down due to COVID-19, NorthPoint put together an Easter parade. While initially planned as a small endeavor, with a few people driving their personal cars, it grew into much more. When the event started, the town provided costumes, four fire trucks, two police

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cars, and the mayor himself as a participant. How does this happen? It happened, in part, because we have been team players. We get involved in community events, we volunteer our services to the town, we have adopted a local highway for garbage pick-up, and we show up to pray the invocation at town events. These are only a few of the ways we illustrate to our community that we are team players.

My days of building balsa-wood bridges ended long ago. I still remember vividly the sound and disappointment of the wood cracking when my bridge finally succumbed to the weight in that contest. That bridge may be long gone, but the bridges I am building today, with the Lord's help, will last for eternity.

Let's get out there and build some bridges! **ONE**

About the Writer: Brian Williams is lead church planter at the NorthPoint FWB Church in Buffalo, New York. Learn more: fwbnam.com/church-planting or NPDepew.com.



Church Planting Legacy

Homer Willis succeeded Damon Dodd as general director of Free Will Baptist Home Missions (now North American Ministries) from 1956 to 1973. Under his leadership, the department started churches in New England, Alaska, Hawaii, Colorado, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico, and commissioned the first salaried church planters. Willis never completely retired but continued to preach at churches across the nation, promoting church planting. In 1958, in an open letter to Free Will Baptists, he wrote: "If we would be true disciples of Christ, we should always desire to bear much fruit. Our lives should nourish, enrich, and strengthen all with whom we associate. This is an essential part of discipleship, and it is in this way we glorify God."

Why not establish your own legacy to help plant Free Will Baptist churches with an endowment through Free Will Baptist Foundation?



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Carabajals to Join Virginia Church-Planting Team

Fredericksburg, VA—North American Ministries would like to welcome Thomas and Shalane Carabajal to the NAM team. Tom and Shalane and their family are moving to Fredericksburg, Virginia, from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to join Chris and Megan Davenport at The Bridge FWB Church. Fredericksburg is about an hour's drive from Washington D.C.

Tom will head up the outreach min-

istry of the church, and Shalane will be involved in the music program. The Bridge Church is a joint project with The Donelson Fellowship in Nashville. If you are interested in knowing more about the Carabajals or partnering with them financially, visit their page at www.fwbnam.com/carabajal. **ONE**



Hanna Graduates From War College

Congratulations to CH (LTC) Brad Hanna on his graduation from the United States Army War College. Brad serves in the Oklahoma Army National Guard and was selected to attend the year-long program as a resident student. The student population was made up of military officers from all branches of the military, army civilians, and 79 international fellows from 75 countries. Brad returned home to be with his family and continue ministering to the soldiers and their families in the Oklahoma Army National Guard. **ONE**



Don't Stop Planning!

IM STRATEGIC GOALS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS: 2020-2025
BY CLINT MORGAN

“Plan your life like you will live forever and work your plan like you will die tomorrow” rewords a quote familiar to many of us. The certainty of death makes it imperative we do what we can in the present, because our future on earth is uncertain.

As believers in Christ, we can plan like we are going to live forever, because we are. Yet, our time on this earth is limited. Whatever we hope to accomplish must be done within the constraints of the ticking clock of this life.

In times of crisis—whether economic, health, or social—it is tempting to cocoon and focus all attention on survival. At the beginning of 2020, the entire globe was thrust headlong into the treacherous territory of the COVID-19 pandemic. People suddenly faced the daily task of adjusting to an unending flow of suppositions and truths linked to the spread of this deadly virus.

Simultaneously with this health crisis, racial tensions boiled over due to the horrific death of an African American man by a policeman while fellow officers stood and watched. On the streets of America, and even in Europe,

protests erupted, calling for systemic changes in policing. In some cases, violence, rioting, and looting derailed civil demonstrations. In their wake lay charred buildings, defaced cars, damaged businesses, and obliterated dreams of a better life.

Thinking of the future during times like these is extremely challenging yet imperative. Strategic planning in crisis is a good indicator of organizational health. Even greater, it is an act of faith in God and not in man or our circumstances. Therefore, IM has chosen, even in the darkest hours, to be guided by His Spirit and *“plan like we will live forever and live like we will die tomorrow.”*

Moving forward successfully is dependent on the people

of God doing the work of God in obedience to the Spirit of God. An African proverb challenges us to “**put your faith in God but tie your camel tight.**” We must start by putting our faith in Him, knowing He has a role for every believer in this yet unfinished task.

The Unfinished Task

Looking to the next five years, the leadership team set the following objectives and goals. For these to be realized, the full cooperation and collaboration of Free Will Baptist people everywhere is needed. By December 31, 2025, we want to see the following seven objectives and goals become our new reality.

First, we desire to see a greater number of Free Will Baptists learning about missions and grappling with the question of their personal role in fulfilling the Great Commission. Consequently, over the next five years we will work to:



See 500 pastors, leaders, lay people, and young people participate annually in missional training through GO GLOBAL, Perspectives, and other intensive, missions-focused programs.

Currently, around 200 people each year attend a GO GLOBAL event. Our department of development is determined to make GO GLOBAL—similar to a Missions 101 class—a premier training tool for Free Will Baptists. Through this program, we will offer a missions-formation program and materials to every church desiring to move its congregation from a group that “doesn’t mind missions” to becoming “missions-minded.” This simple shift in mentality will have a monumental effect on what churches do, both at home and abroad.

Several years ago, IM performed an analysis to determine the number of Free Will Baptist churches giving to IM. Of 2,100-plus churches, less than 50% gave anything to our ministries. This caused great concern, and we determined to address it. We have seen a slight uptick and now receive some level of support from just over 50% of the churches affiliated with the National Association. This is not an acceptable level for any evangelical denomination. Therefore, we have set a five-year goal to:



Expand the number of churches giving to IM from 50% to 75%.

Does it seem reasonable to see a 25% increase over a five-year period, when we’ve seen a mere 2%-3% increase in the previous five years? If it seemed reasonable, it would not be faith-based. We want to “expect great things from God and attempt great things for Him” (William Carey). So, the answer is *yes*, we believe it is possible within the realm of faith in Him.

As the number of churches giving to IM increases, we expect to see a significant increase in monthly supporters. This, in turn will affect our World Missions Offering (WMO). Presently, we average around \$600,000 each year in this annual offering. Not satisfied with the status quo, we are setting a goal to:



Grow and sustain the annual World Missions Offering to \$1 million by December 31, 2025.

The budgets for our partnerships are primarily met through the WMO. We hope to add another eight strategically focused partnerships to the 12 we have already. Without a \$1 million WMO, that goal is practically impossible. Consequently, these efforts go hand-in-hand. If one fails, the other fails also. Failure is not a faith option, so we press on, believing we will see \$1 million annual WMOs.

In 2015, our cash reserves rested around 15%. We determined to build it to at least 20% by the year 2020. By the end of 2019, our cash reserves had reached 37%. Due to the pandemic, we came face to face with the question, *is 20% enough?* We decided we need to raise the percentage. Our goal for the next five years is to:



Grow cash reserves from the present average of 37% to 50%, or the equivalent of six months of operational budget.

Having 50% in cash reserves will reduce our vulnerability to economic crisis. The pandemic thwarted giving for many people. Fortunately, we had cash reserves to help us navigate these unstable financial times. Something of this nature can occur again. We will be prepared to better withstand such upheaval with 50% in our cash reserves.

As people learn about missions and engage in giving to missions, they will want to become personally involved. We want Free Will Baptist volunteers learning and ministering on the mission field. Each year, we send 200-plus people for short-term experiences. We are committed to:

5

Grow and sustain the number of short-term team members (ETEAM, CMP, OA, THP) from an average of just over 200 to 350 per year.

The short-term volunteer programs serve as our richest pool for recruiting. Over 85% of our missionaries experienced an IM short-term, cross-cultural trip that influenced their decision to commit to overseas service. By continuing our recruitment efforts over the next five years, we believe God will:

6

Expand our missionary staff from 103 to 125 active IM missionaries.

As we send these men and women to “labor with the Body of Christ to fulfill the Great Commission,” we will see many people become followers of Christ. We are not in a numbers contest, but we love hearing amazing reports from the fields regarding the expansion of His Kingdom. Our 2019 stats revealed over 35,500 Free Will Baptists met in 845 churches outside

North America each Sunday. Through the faithful witness of our missionaries and national Christians we believe we will:

7

See more than 50,000 believers gathering in over 2,000 churches by the end of 2025.

IM has no desire to slow down, rest, or retreat. We certainly do not intend to quit working to reach the nations with the Good News. Our commitment to recruiting, mobilizing, training, and sending missionaries is unwavering and will not be diminished or derailed by a crisis, difficult circumstances, or hostile environments.

He is ours...we are His. His command to go into all nations and make disciples is still an active order. We must faithfully obey until His return or our departure from this earth.

Until then, we will **“plan like we will live forever and work our plan like we will die tomorrow.”** ONE

About the Writer: Clint Morgan has been general director of IM, Inc. since 2011. Learn more: www.IMInc.org.



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Battling the UNEXPECTED

BY CHAPLAIN (MAJ) KEVIN TRIMBLE

Sometimes, things simply aren't what they seem. Sometimes, it's like waking up from a dream and realizing what you're doing and where you are simply wasn't part of last month's plan. I have recently found myself in that place, and I'm sure you have as well.

The COVID-19 crisis has changed everyone's lives. Some of you have lost loved ones, friends, and even endured tragedy just prior to or after the crisis began. On March 10, 2020, I finished a week of training in New York City and came home for the weekend to finish packing. Then, I boarded a plane from Savannah, Georgia, to Warsaw, Poland, for a short three-month training called Defender 2020. My Brigade, the 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, (ABCT) from the 3rd Infantry Division (ID) based at Fort Stewart, Georgia, had been planning this large exercise for over a year. The exercise brought together over 10,000 soldiers from the United States and many NATO partners. Little did I realize I would be one of the last people to leave New York City prior to the closing of all flights in and out of the country for many weeks.

When we arrived at the training area, we did not know our careful planning of the past year was about to change. We had no idea the austere airfield, intended as a temporary base, was about to become our home for the next nine months. Yet, here we are—prepped for three

months, now staying nine. Things definitely didn't go according to plan!

As a runner, it felt as though I had signed up for a sprint or a 5K, only to show up on race day to find myself in a marathon. I hadn't brought enough clothes, didn't have the right shoes, and had so many activities planned for my return home, mid-June.

Once again, I was reminded that much of life is like this. You sign up for a happy marriage, only to find out your spouse is unfaithful. You're stuck. You work hard for a college degree only to graduate and realize jobs are scarce. You're stuck. You long for a beautiful baby, and life takes a painful turn. You feel stuck. Repeatedly, we sign up for a sprint and find ourselves running a difficult marathon.

Contemplating this dilemma one morning during a long run, the Father began to speak to me, reminding me there are ways to deal with this situation. I can complain, whine, cry out, and make myself and others miserable. Not a good choice! Instead, let me suggest simple ways to battle the unexpected in our lives:

PUSH AHEAD. Over the next few weeks, as reality sank in for our brigade, my ministry team (one chaplain and one chaplain assistant) stood in the gap to bring hope and grace to families at home and abroad. I found solace in the great truths of God's Word. When I am most weak, isn't God stronger (2 Corinthians 12:9)? I remember committing Scripture to memory morning after morning and reminding myself of passages I had already memorized. In times of need, I also cling to the great hymns of the faith.

PACE MYSELF. As is true in any marathon, it is foolhardy to begin running at top speed. A long-distance race requires nine months of training, and I learn to pace myself. The same is true in life. It requires a deliberate time in the Scriptures, a plan to reach out to family, a rest cycle, and strategies for self-care. The Apostle Paul reminded me several times over the last few weeks: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus..." (Hebrews 12:1, 2a). Pace is important.

PAUSE TO THINK. The last five years of ministry in the chaplaincy have proven very tiring for my wife Darla and me. We have gone from the fast pace of Green Beret School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to a year of schooling at Fort Leavenworth, to the last year of incredibly busy ministry at Fort Stewart. Field time, pastoring a chapel on post, leading seven teams, and creating small group ministries has left us very busy.

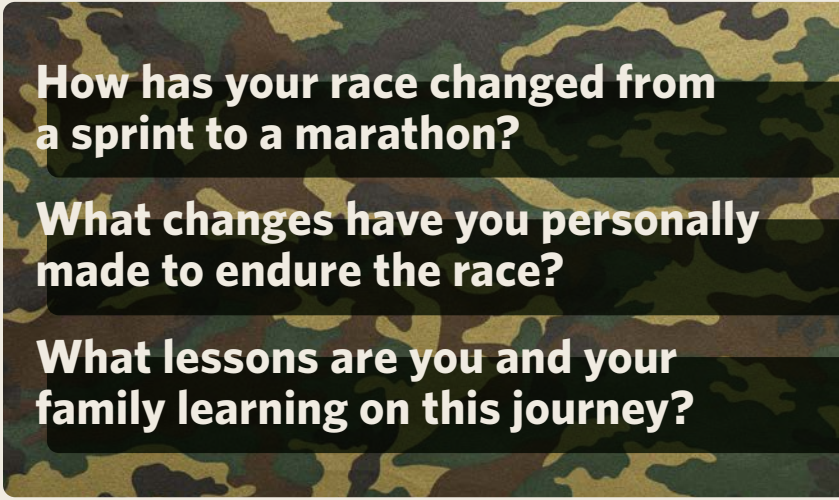
However, a marathon gives you time to think. Sometimes you pray, sometimes you reflect, sometimes you sing, and yes, sometimes you wonder why you signed up. This rotation, difficult as it has been, has given me time to think. I find great strength when I "think on these things" (Philippians 4:8-9).

FOCUS ON PEOPLE. During a long race, you meet people you never see again, or you find a new friend and run with him or her a while. Sometimes, you find someone running at your pace, who will encourage you to the finish line. One would naturally think I am focusing on people all the time, and yes, I do. Too often, we focus on

the process, the plan, the building, the initiatives, but we forget to focus on people.

At the battalion level, I have had many opportunities for ministry: to reach out to people, to get to know them and truly pastor. At the brigade level, I am a staff officer. Yes, still a chaplain, but I have people to supervise and train, concepts to create, presentations to build—you know how it goes.

As I reflect, I'm learning to praise the Father in new ways. I am also enjoying and listening to the beauty of nature as the Lord is teaching me so many new truths that are to His glory and ultimately, the benefit of the Kingdom.



How has your race changed from a sprint to a marathon?

What changes have you personally made to endure the race?

What lessons are you and your family learning on this journey?

As I stood with my commander, I realized our present situation in Poland was touching everyone. All had been affected. Every family somewhere would have a reaction, and yet, all were in this race together. My goal for the balance of this deployment will be to "run alongside" others on this journey, to share the courage and encouragement of Christ. **ONE**

About the Writer: Chaplain (Major) Kevin Trimble is currently stationed at Fort Stewart, Georgia. Trimble holds a doctorate in Theology and, while deployed to Afghanistan, completed an M.A. in Religion from Randall University. He has earned numerous awards including the Bronze Star and the Army Achievement Medal. Learn more about Free Will Baptist chaplain ministry: FWBNAM.com/chaplaincy.

Snapshots Around the World

Japan: Ken and Judy Bailey met with a former Kamifukuoka Christ Church “Mommy and Me” class family on September 14. The family transferred from the area a year ago, but just moved back and wanted to meet with them. The Baileys left Tokyo two days later, September 16, for stateside assignment. Rusty and Brenda Carney assumed Ken and Judy Bailey’s responsibilities at the Kamifukuoka Church in Tokyo while the Baileys are stateside.

Côte d’Ivoire: Three men finished their classroom work at the Bible institute in Bouna, Ivory Coast, in July. They will complete a year of pastoral internship before their training concludes.

France: After 11 weeks of closure due to COVID-19, The Hanna Project center in southern France reopened



Côte d’Ivoire: The First FWB Church in Bouna, Ivory Coast, baptized 32 people on Sunday, July 5.

for English classes on June 2. The team followed government regulations for social distancing and sanitization. Grateful students participated in classes until July 15, when the center closed for summer break. New computer and English classes began in September.

Spain: Spanish national missionaries, Manu and Noemí, welcomed their son Benjamín into their family on August 6. The family ministers to immigrant families in southern Spain and has one other son, Levy.

Bulgaria: E., a friend of Josh and Lydia Provow, recently made the commitment to follow Christ. At first, he kept his decision secret, because every member of his extended family is Muslim. Recently, he decided to tell everyone. Outside of church family, he has received almost zero support. His parents are debating whether or not to kick him out of the house. In the midst of this, his faith continues to grow, and he wants nothing more than for his entire family to experience the salvation available only through the Son of God!

Victoria Little Granted Leave of Absence

Victoria Little requested a leave of absence effective September 1, 2020. Victoria stated, “This has been a



very different year for me as I navigated the waters of returning from Kenya, moving to Nashville, and continuing to invest in an ever-growing relationship with my now fiancé, Bryse Paffile.”


The couple married September 18. Bryse, a physical therapist, and Victo-

ria will live in Vancouver, Washington. Victoria plans to brush up her nursing skills and keep her license current.

When asked about returning to the mission field, Victoria answered, “Our hearts are for others to know Christ, and we both desire to work overseas using our medical skills to meet physical needs to reach spiritual ones. We do not know exactly what that looks like, but know the Lord will guide us as we faithfully pursue Him.”

Victoria added, “I want to give a very special thanks to every person who

gave with their finances, prayers, and encouragement. I’ve learned so much about the Body of Christ and love how I have experienced Him working among FWB.”

Clint Morgan commented, “Victoria served in Kenya in an exemplary manner. Her commitment to Christ, passion for souls, and love for people endeared her deeply to the Samburu people and the whole IM family. We anxiously await the day God directs Bryse and Victoria to their next cross-cultural ministry and pray, somewhat selfishly, it will be with IM.” 

Sandra Bishop With the Lord

Sandra Ogletree Bishop entered her Savior's presence Saturday, July 18, 2020, after a brief battle with cancer. Born August 27, 1949, in Tift County, Georgia, to Julia Faye Franks Ogletree and the late Leonard Ogletree, Sandra was 70 when she transitioned to life everlasting.

Sandra received her bachelor's degree from Welch College in 1971. The following year she served on a short-term mission team to Sapporo (Hokkaido), Japan, to minister during the 1972 Winter Olympics.

In May 1973, Sandra married Dale Bishop. Three months later IM, Inc. (formerly Free Will Baptist International Missions) appointed the couple as career missionaries to Japan. Loved, admired, and appreciated by both missionary colleagues and the Japanese people, Sandra is remembered by her associates as humble, fun loving, kind, hard-working, determined, committed,



Sandra Bishop

and hospitable, among many other admirable qualities. At the time of her passing, Sandra resided in Tifton, Georgia. The couple retired on December 31, 2017, after 44 years of faithful service in Japan.

Her son Doug and his family presently serve as missionaries in Japan.

They arrived in the States only a few days before her passing to spend precious moments with Sandra and the family.

In addition to her father, Sandra's brother Derrick Ogletree preceded her in death. She is survived by her mother; husband Larry Dale Bishop; her sons Jeffery Bishop of Atlanta, Georgia; Kevin Bishop of Denver, Colorado; and Douglas (Miriam) Bishop of Japan; her daughter, Jennifer (James) Cornelius of Nashville, Tennessee; seven grandchildren—Alex, Oliver, Abby, Scarlet, Hazel, Felix, and Arthur; and one brother, Gregory P. Ogletree of Tifton, Georgia.

Corinth Free Will Baptist Church, Sandra's home church, hosted a private memorial service Tuesday, July 21, in Tifton. The family requests donations to IM, Inc. in Sandra's honor, by mail (PO Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011-5002) or online (iminc.org/give). **ONE**

Church Planters See Fruit in Brazil

Clóvis and Cristina Leandro, church-planters in the state of Alagoas, Brazil, have seen God move in hearts and experienced several salvations and baptisms in recent weeks. Among those, Ednaldo committed his life to Christ in early August. Three adult sisters who accepted Christ as Savior completed discipleship studies in August in

preparation for baptism.

The couple ministers through a partnership between IM, Inc. and Free Will Baptists in Brazil to plant a church in a community with no evangelical church of any denomination. This partnership allowed them to buy property to build a multi-purpose church building in



the future. For now, they hold home services in different areas of the community. **ONE**

Assessment and Pastoral Leadership

BY BRAD RANSOM

Every time you go to the doctor you fill out paperwork. Questions include symptoms you are experiencing if you are sick, medications you take, previous surgeries, and on and on. When you finally get into the patient room, and the nurse comes in, she often asks the exact same questions. When the doctor enters, he asks the same questions again! Have you ever wondered why?

Your doctor and his staff are assessing you and your situation. Assessment can save hours of time and a possible misdiagnosis. By asking questions about your symptoms, they can often diagnose you accurately and prescribe the appropriate prescription moving forward.

Assessment sometimes seems bothersome and unnecessary. As church planting director, I was introduced to the idea of church planter assessment many years ago. After I was exposed to it, I realized the great value in assessment. Assessment is hard because it forces us to take a critical look at ourselves. It often exposes weaknesses and points out areas we need to improve. No one likes to experience

that, but it's helpful and necessary if we want to get better.

Have you ever wondered why some pastors do well everywhere they go, and others always seem to struggle? I realize sometimes churches are difficult, and no pastor can lead them, but other times, the problem lies with the leader. Please don't be offended if you are a pastor struggling at a church. I'm not saying you aren't the right guy, or you aren't valuable to ministry. I'm simply suggesting you should assess yourself and identify your strengths and weaknesses. By doing so, you can identify where you can grow, and where you may need to be coached and helped. Many different types of assessments are available, from ministry preference and experience to spiritual gifts, personalities and others.

I have been passionate about assessment for more than a decade. I am so convinced assessment is necessary I have pursued training and certifications, giving me necessary tools to help in my ministry roles. As a certified practitioner of the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and DISC Personality As-



essment, I have assessed hundreds of ministry leaders over the years. Understanding our personalities gives us keen insight into leadership style and abilities, as well as where we might need to work to improve how we communicate with others. Knowing my personality also helps me know my own limits, how I process information, and what I can do to prevent burnout or a nervous breakdown.

Don't misunderstand. There aren't any "right" or "wrong" personalities. In fact, God created us individually and hard-wired us in unique ways by His divine plan. We know God doesn't make mistakes. However, the more we understand ourselves, the better we can understand our strengths and weaknesses to best lead others. By identifying our



Recommended websites for the
Myers Briggs & DISC assessments:

Myers Briggs: truity.com
DISC: discpersonalitytesting.com

particular personality type we can better understand how we receive and process information, and how we navigate that information. It makes us better leaders and helps us make better decisions.

I challenge every leader to take the MBTI and/or DISC assessment to understand yourself better. If I can

be of help or assistance, please let me know. [ONE](#)

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

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Navigating the Call

BY BRAD RANSOM

The “call” on a person’s life is often the highlight during revival services, youth camp, summer mission trips, or the National Convention. I still remember God’s call on my life nearly 40 years ago. It thrills my heart to hear a young man say, “God has called me to preach” or “God has called me to missions.”

God’s call is the highest call on our lives. We can follow our hearts, accept job promotions, or continue our education, but nothing is greater than the call of God. Without the call, I always urge young people, *don’t do it!* If a person tries to preach, plant a church, or go to a faraway land without it, it won’t be a good experience.

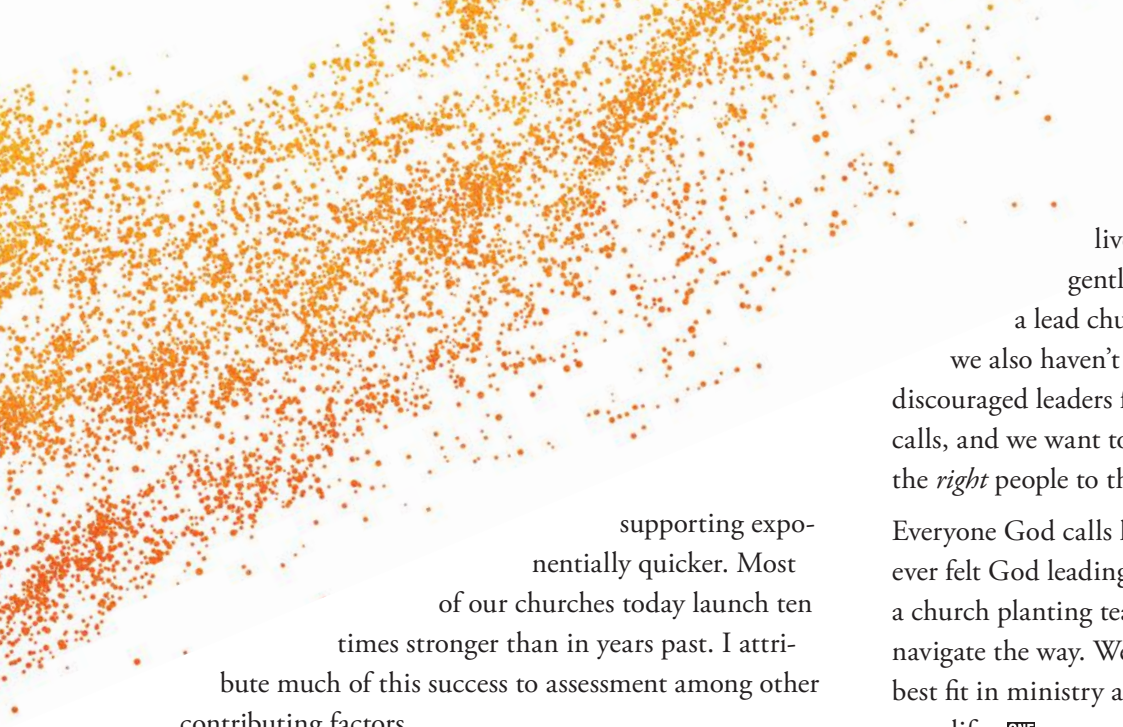
However, just because God calls a young person into ministry doesn’t necessarily mean He has called them to do a specific thing. What I mean is, young men who are called to preach sometimes assume every man God calls to preach should be a pastor. Or, that every pastor could be a church planter or missionary.

I do not believe this is necessarily true. While I do not believe God has made me a prophet to confirm or justify His call on someone’s life, I do believe God has wired us or gifted us to do certain things in ministry better than others. Some are better administrators, while some are better at working with people. Some are natural-born leaders while others do better following the lead of someone else. These things are not good or bad, better or worse. They are how God wired us. We need to know how God has gifted us, so we don’t seek ministry situations that are not a fit. Too many great men and women of God have been injured in ministry unnecessarily. The call was correct, but the ministry fit was not. This is why I believe in ministry assessment.

Assessment looks deep into the calling, but it also examines personality, skills, philosophy, and the heart of an individual to identify the best fit for ministry. Assessment can be carried out in a number of ways. For church planters, the most comprehensive way is an onsite church planter assessment center. I have been involved in church planter assessment for over a decade. My first such assessment experience was going to an onsite assessment center to examine potential church planters. During that first trip, my flight was delayed overnight because of weather, and I missed the new assessor orientation. I felt like a fish out of water that first time, but, over the years, God has shown me the value of assessment.

After coming to North American Ministries, our team began using assessment as a tool to help us send out church planters. NAM recently launched an on-site assessment center that gives us an in-depth look into gifts and abilities. Since implementing assessment, we have seen an increased success rate of launching strong churches and church plants go self-

WE ARE
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AND WE WANT
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WHAT GOD
GIVES US.



supporting exponentially quicker. Most of our churches today launch ten times stronger than in years past. I attribute much of this success to assessment among other contributing factors.

It is very expensive to launch a new work anywhere in the United States. We are stewards of God's resources, and we want to make sure we are doing the best we can with what God gives us. We don't always get it right, and assessment is no guarantee of success. However, it is a way to help guide those who have God's call on their

lives. After assessment, sometimes, we gently tell someone he isn't gifted to be a lead church planter. That is never easy. But we also haven't seen the numbers of wounded and discouraged leaders from times past. We know God still calls, and we want to be a part of the process of getting the *right* people to the *right* places.

Everyone God calls has a place in ministry. If you've ever felt God leading you to plant a church or work on a church planting team, contact us and let us help you navigate the way. We would love to help you find your best fit in ministry and put the call of God to action in your life. **ONE**

About the Writer: Dr. Brad Ransom is chief training officer for North American Ministries. Interested in church planting? Visit fwbnam.com/church-planting to get started today.

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Sabbath Rest

BY ELIZABETH HODGES

The doctor's warning still echoes in my mind: "Elizabeth, I can give you medicine, but your body needs rest...an extended period of rest. What are you going to do about it?"

After traveling internationally, a parasite's visit sharply curtailed my ministry responsibilities. Unable to carry out my normal hectic routine, I sought professional help. Born into a ministry family and marrying a pastor means ministry life is all I have ever known. On call 24/7, your body craves seasons of rest. Sundays are often the busiest day of the week. Even as a high school student, the typical Sunday involved teaching Sunday School, singing in the choir, and Bible Bowl practice followed by choir practice just before the evening service, with a youth activity afterwards. Youth Bible study was Monday night, visitation Tuesday, prayer meeting Wednesday, and a youth activity Friday or Saturday night. Taking college prep classes demanded hours of homework and paper writing outside of the regular school day.

During college, I carried 15-20 hours per semester and worked as many or more hours each week to pay the bills. As a pastor's wife and educator, I remember decades of Sundays filled with services, guests for meals, extra church meetings, and choir practices. Though I became

more aware of this tension as I aged, I was 63 years old before I reached this dangerous crossroads.

The canon of Scripture begins with the creation story. Genesis 2:2-3 shares the culmination of that incredible week, "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." Nestled within these verses we find the timeless principle of Sabbath rest—a crucial life principle that seems so difficult to achieve.

With the doctor's admonition ringing in my ears, I canceled travel commitments for six weeks, worked shorter hours in the office, and simply rested. It was difficult, but to serve Him most effectively, I had to incorporate Sabbath rest into my schedule and routines. This required being attuned to my body and its need for rest.

God began to orchestrate reminders. I heard Jonny Diaz sing, "Breathe, just breathe; come and rest at my feet and

be, just be. Chaos calls, but all you really need is to take it in, fill your lungs, the peace of God that overcomes. Just breathe; let your weary spirit rest; lay down what's good and find what's best. Just breathe." The entire song begs for God to order life, so He alone gets glory. He worked six days and rested. Why did I ever think I could improve on His design? Yet, that is how I lived the majority of my life.

The reminders continued. Rest appeared often in my devotional readings. Several leadership books mentioned rest. Friends mentioned the need for rest in casual conversations. The American lifestyle is fast paced, with overcommitted schedules, incessant deadlines, etc. We are pulled in all directions and unable to balance the plethora of plates we keep spinning. I found myself doing some deep soul searching. Did God want me to do all of these things? Had I assumed responsibilities that really belonged to someone else? Had I been still, so He could speak to my heart? Did I just give Him the leftovers of my allotted time each day? I was reminded I cannot know His heart and will for me if I do not know His Word, and that takes time, energy, and determination.

During this season, I talked with Leanne, a fellow educator. She began describing her life, and I was amazed. Her school year had been crazy, her husband had experienced a cancer scare, and her mother's death was preceded by months of life-consuming caregiving. To help her husband's grandson with alcohol issues, he moved into their home, adding another layer of stress. She confessed she was "making it one day at a time by leaning heavily on God" but did not take care of herself. At this point, she realized changes had to occur, and she begged God for help.

She had no idea I had embarked on a similar journey. I shared what God had been teaching me, and we agreed to hold one another accountable, to check in frequently, to ensure we instituted rest into our routines and schedules. Leanne said, "It was incredible you and I were on

the same journey. I had not shared where I was with anyone else. I started praying for God to help you, and He keeps reminding me of my own need for rest."

This was not the first time God made me aware of this important principle, but I did not listen. When my mother's health broke, her doctor told us her crisis was "50 years in the making, a result of stress." From that point forward, she suffered with various health issues until her death. After college, our daughter learned to practice Sabbath rest and often reminded me I was not allowing myself to rest. "Mom, you can't keep this pace." Sadly, I did not heed the advice, thus my doctor's warning.

Today in the Word, the daily devotional from Moody Bible Institute, concentrated a recent entry on Hebrews 4:9: "So then, there remains a Sabbath-rest for the people of God." The devotion began, "Many people joke that they need a vacation after their vacation." That short reading hit a nerve!

In a world of frenetic activity—multiple jobs, volunteer activities, church work, social media—the idea of rest hardly seems attainable. Yet, Scripture calls us to strive for true spiritual rest in God, anticipating the final rest we eventually will know in Him. Find time to put away distractions today and ask God to help you experience a taste of His promised eternal rest. Remember Diaz's challenge and "breathe, just breathe."

The Psalmist David penned these memorable words: "Thou are my God. My times are in thy hand... Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake" (Psalm 31:14-16). As I practice this well-known truth, He will enable me to incorporate seasons of Sabbath rest so I can serve Him to the best of my ability. My times are in His hand, and so are yours.

It's time to seek Sabbath rest. **ONE**

About the Writer: Elizabeth Hodges is director of WNAC, overseeing all ministries and office operations. Elizabeth is a pastor's wife, a mother and grandmother, WAC leader, and for many years served as educator and school principal. Learn more: www.WNAC.org.

The Goals of Worship

BY MATTHEW MCAFFEE AND BARRY RAPER

Our previous two articles explored the *what* and *how* of worship. The *what* focused on worship as it is biblically defined. The *how* introduced the regulative principle, which attempts to allow Scripture to govern our worship practices. The third article is an effort to consider briefly the role worship plays in the life of the local church. Another way of articulating worship's role would be its *goals* or focus. What is the end or goal corporate worship is supposed to accomplish?

Worship in Spirit and Truth: Vertical and Horizontal

One particularly helpful passage from the New Testament on Christian worship comes from the book of Colossians. It helps clarify the role worship fulfills in the local church. In Colossians 3:16 we read, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with rejoicing in your hearts to God."

As we mentioned regarding the regulative principle, it is important to let the Scriptures drive our practice of corporate worship. Paul urges the Colossians to allow the Scriptures to dwell within them *richly* as a corporate body (the *you* here is plural). Corporate gatherings ought to be richly saturated with Scripture. This

corporately indwelt Word is to be in accord with all wisdom. It brings to mind the Old Testament teaching on wisdom, which essentially referred to the faithful application of God's scriptural revelation to all of life. Paul likewise applies this concept to corporate worship—our corporate gatherings must be patterned after the ways of God. There has to be some measure or guide for our religious practice; otherwise, it has no grounding except the subjective self. When grounded in our subjective experience, worship devolves into disunity and chaos, as each individualized self competes with another.

Another important aspect here is the horizontal sphere of worship. The indwelt Word that accords with divine wisdom yields teaching and admonition for "one another." The manner of this teaching and admonition is through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. There is great debate about the nature of these three items. Do we only sing biblical Psalms? What are hymns and spiritual songs? Regardless of these questions, the main point is clear: corporate worship (in this case, corporate singing) must teach and admonish believers in the faith. We should not think of this aspect of worship as an intellectual exercise alone, since it is to be practiced "in our hearts to God." But neither

is it an emotional frenzy, since such a spectacle is void of both teaching and admonition. The mind, governed by Scripture, informs the emotions. We hear the words of Christ upon the lips of fellow believers in our corporate singing. It nourishes our souls to feed on the redemptive truth resounding from the voices of those singing with us.

Colossians 3:16 holds in proper balance both the vertical and horizontal aspects of our worship: it is from the heart to God, yet it also produces teaching and admonition toward one another. The parallel passage in Ephesians 5 brings yet another aspect to bear on our worship—the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 5:18-19, Paul warns the believers not to be drunk with wine, but rather to be filled with the Spirit. What is the outcome of a Spirit-filled life? Paul answers: "speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord" (verse 19). The point of this comparison is to show the union between the Holy Spirit's work in worship and the Scriptures. In some measure it explains Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman about worshiping God "in Spirit and in truth" (John 4:23). The more the Scriptures are manifested in corporate worship, the more evidence there is of the Spirit-filled life.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with rejoicing in your hearts to God.

COLOSSIANS 3:16

Planning Worship for the Local Congregation

What does this look like in practice? How do we allow the Scriptures to inform our corporate worship practices? Elsewhere, the Bible teaches us everything in the church “should be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). In the context of this command, we find Paul dealing with disorderly worship and self-ish/erratic displays of spiritual gifts, both out of step with Colossians 3:16. One of the ways to ensure corporate worship is practiced with decency is to practice proper *planning of worship*. While many factors are involved in planning worship, the following are essential.

First, we must start with the overarching goal of worship—to worship God! This is the vertical dimension. We must plan worship so God’s grace and glory is brought before

His people (through the means He has established in His Word). To put it bluntly: He must be the center of attention. Our primary question isn’t, “What do people want in a service?” or “What type of worship service is pleasing to me?” Rather, our goal is to worship in Spirit and in truth—to worship God in ways clearly stated in His Word.

The next thing to keep in mind is another controlling principle from Paul’s lengthy discussion mentioned above (from 1 Corinthians). Whatever is done in the church should be done with the edification of believers in mind. This is the horizontal dimension. The mutual building up of the local body of saints is to be at the forefront of our minds when we plan worship. We certainly want to be mindful of unbelievers and people often classified as “seekers.” Sometimes, we fail to sense their fears, or we are unaware of a huge communication gap, or just flat-out forget what it was like to be new to the church. We can and must be sensitive in these ways and others. Yet, the biblical evidence is clear that our gathering each Lord’s day is primarily for Christians to worship the Lord. We must think carefully about how our corporate worship gatherings actually foster teaching and exhortation. Without this component, true biblical worship is not taking place. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is not in it.

We must be clear, however: evangelism also has a place in worship. Just as a sermon should bear witness to Christ, so the entire service should

point people to Jesus, including the unsaved. Thus, worship isn’t planned as an evangelistic event, but when we worship in Spirit and in truth, evangelism should happen naturally. J. I. Packer referred to the ministry of the Holy Spirit as a “floodlight ministry.” His role is to focus attention on the person of Jesus Christ and to draw people to Him. Our role is to join Him and lovingly pray for people and plead with them to come to Jesus.

Worship Is Both Vertical and

Horizontal. True biblical worship is offered as humble service to God in Heaven, but cannot be void of our corporate reality. Worship teaches and admonishes. And, the only way this can happen is when the people of God allow His Word to dwell in them richly.

Worship is not simply a privatized experience relegated to our prayer closets. No! It has to be on full display in the midst of the gathered body. When this happens, it provides evidence of the divine work of the Holy Spirit as He nourishes and builds up the Body of Christ to spiritual maturity. **ONE**

About the Columnists: Dr. Matthew McAfee serves as provost and professor at Welch College. He has ministered in Free Will Baptist churches in Virginia, Tennessee, Illinois, and Canada.

Barry Raper serves as program coordinator for Ministry Studies at Welch College. He pastors Bethel FWB Church in Ashland City, Tennessee.



CHRISTIAN COLLEGES, DISTINCTIVE COMMUNITY, *and the* TRANSFORMATION OF STUDENTS

BY J. MATTHEW PINSON

The COVID-19 crisis has me thinking a great deal about the idea of *community* for the Christian college or university. The concept of the college as an ecclesial community of teachers and learners, mentors and mentees, has long been at the heart of Christian higher education. The present crisis bears out how important community continues to be for the sort of “value-added” education Christian colleges and universities provide.

Christian higher education at its best stands in stark contrast to a shocking statistic reported by Gallup just a few years ago. This poll indicated only 14% of college graduates had even one professor “who cared about them as a person, made them excited about learning, and encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams.”¹ This shocked me because personal investment into the lives of our students is so essential to the vision of Christian higher education at Welch that we can’t conceive of a collegial educational mission without it.

1 Mark William Roche, *Realizing the Distinctive University: Vision and Values, Strategy and Culture* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 53.

President James Garfield once said all you really need to have good education is “a log hut, with but one simple bench, Mark Hopkins on one end and I on the other.” (Hopkins was president of Williams College, Garfield’s *Alma Mater*.)² That is still really what is at the heart of the most effective methods of education, regardless of delivery system: people who think, feel, and make free choices communicating wisdom and knowledge to other people who think, feel, and make free choices.

Obviously, when we frame education in this “total-personality” context—to use a phrase my own academic mentor Leroy Forlines used constantly—we see that it is in the context of authentic human relationships that effective teaching and learning most naturally occur.³ That’s because we are created in the image of God as persons—thinking, feeling, acting beings—who, because we are personal beings created by a personal being, long

2 Burke Aaron Hinsdale, *President Garfield and Education* (Boston: J. R. Osgood and Company, 1882), 43.

3 F. Leroy Forlines, *The Quest for Truth: Theology in a Postmodern World* (Nashville: Randall House, 2001), xii–xvi.

for personal relationships. That is the way the personal God designed us.

I have a story I often share with students to illustrate the *community* aspect of what Welch College describes as our “Christian community of faith and learning.”⁴ As a freshman having a particularly hard time “finding myself,” one day I was talking with a fellow student, Tim Caldwell, in Goen Hall, the men’s residence hall at Welch. During the course of the conversation, Tim said, “Matt, I know somebody who can help you with your problems.”

“Problems?” I shot back. “I have problems?” He chuckled wryly and said, “Yeah. You need to go see Leroy Forlines.”

“Leroy Forlines?” I replied. “How can a 65-year-old, gray-haired, theology professor who uses words like *epistemology* and *traducianism* help an 18-year-old kid with his ‘alleged’ problems?”

Tim, however, convinced me, and I’ll never forget the spring day I went to Professor Forlines’ office on the second floor of the Johnson Academic Building and sheepishly knocked on his door. He answered, “Come in,” in his melodic eastern North Carolina accent and his iconic soft voice. I went in, and he said something he has said a hundred times since: “Whatcha got on your mind?”

Now, mind you, this was not just an ice breaker. He really wanted to know what I had on my mind.

That day, in his office, he began a relationship with me that provided what 86% of college graduates say they never had: “a professor who cared about them as a person, made them excited about learning, and encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams.” Yet, he did this in the context of what he calls “the inescapable questions of life.”⁵ He spurred me on to explore those questions from the vantage point of a distinctively Christian worldview. His investment in my little world had a life-changing

4 With a nod to Arthur F. Holmes, who uses the phrase “community of faith and learning” to describe his vision for Christian higher education in *The Idea of a Christian College* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975). See esp. chapter 7, “College as Community.”

5 Forlines, 1–2.

ing impact on me, and today, 93-year-old Leroy Forlines is one of my best friends in this world.

Every graduate of Welch has experiences like the one I just shared. This is seen across the world in Christian colleges and universities. That’s why that sector of higher education scores so high in nationally normed surveys of student satisfaction with the college experience: We pour our lives into students. And the reason we do this is because we have discipleship in view, discipleship of the whole person—intellect, affections, and will. We get this vision of discipleship from Jesus Christ, as He is presented to us in Holy Scripture.

It’s a tragic fact of higher education reality in our late-modern context that only 14% of college graduates can say they had only one professor “who cared about them as a person, made them excited about learning, and encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams.” Christian higher education is different, because it remains committed to the vision of providing truly Christian communities of faith and learning that have a transformative impact on the “total personalities” of students for the sake of the gospel of the Kingdom. May we, in this hectic time of the COVID-19 crisis, recommit ourselves to these distinctives. **ONE**

About the Writer: J. Matthew Pinson has been president of Welch College since 2002. To learn more about Welch College, visit Welch.edu.





Welch Congratulates 2020 Graduates

The year 2020 has been filled with many challenges. COVID-19 altered normal life for everyone, which was no less true for Welch College. Nonetheless, one of the bright spots in all of this has been our 2020 graduates. In the midst of great adversity, these individuals have demonstrated resilience and unwavering commitment to God's calling on their lives. As our college community was forced to vacate campus and move to online classes, our graduates pressed on to the finish line.

We commend their hard work and determination to press through great odds. We thank the Lord for extending his sustaining grace to these individuals. Please join us in congratulating them for a job well done. **ONE**

Associate of Science Degrees

Tanner Michael Carson
Gallatin, Tennessee
Business

Jakob Matthew Gates
Pleasant View, Tennessee
Biology

Kiera Kiyomi Jorden
Grand Junction, Colorado
Biology

Daniel Scott Kilgore
Bakersfield, California
Business

Caroline Grace McDonald
Tokyo, Japan
Biology

David Andrew Syck
Gibraltar, Michigan
Ministry

Robert Michael Mackinley Waddell
Joelton, Tennessee
Biology

Angelina Belle Ann Waller
Hendersonville, Tennessee
Biology

Associate of Arts Degrees

Michelle Elaine Bigelow
Petaluma, California

Jalynn Nicole Hood
Dickson, Tennessee

Micah William McClintock
Alma, Georgia

Bachelor of Science Degrees

*Matthew Curtis Barnett***
Pocahontas, Arkansas
General Christian Ministry

*Joshua Lee Burgus****
Westmoreland, Tennessee
Music Performance

*Elisha Kenneth Cameron***
Macon, Georgia
Worship Ministry

Nikolette Jones Collier
Tuscaloosa, Alabama
Child Development and Learning
Licensure K-5

*Whitney Lauren Crank***
Smithville, Mississippi
Psychology

John Robert Cummings, Jr.
Nashville, Tennessee
General Christian Ministry

*Emilee Savannah Davis***
Charlotte, North Carolina
Psychology

*Brenton Lee Driscoll***
Sapporo, Japan
General Christian Ministry

Hannah Elizabeth Duncan
Valrico, Florida
Business Administration

Ryan Alexander Erb
Knoxville, Tennessee
Business Administration

*Meagan Marie Fulcher**
Ayden, North Carolina
English, Licensure 6-12

Matthew Aaron Gedeon
North Kingstown, Rhode Island
General Christian Ministry

*Jacklyn Rachel Grizzle****
Bristol, Tennessee
Business Administration

*Emma Elizabeth Guthrie**
Hartford, Illinois
Psychology

*Christy Lynn Harris****
Greenville, North Carolina
Business Administration

*Chelsea Nicole Holesapple**
Koshkonong, Missouri
Business Administration

*Daniel Kent Hubin****
Franklin, Tennessee
History, Licensure 6-12

*Avery Noell Jones***
Owasso, Oklahoma
Business Administration

*Kinsley Victoria Kivette****
Sevierville, Tennessee
Child Development and Learning
Licensure K-5

*Michael Kip McNeill**
Ashland City, Tennessee
General Christian Ministry

*Dan Kosta Pappas**
Turbeville, South Carolina
Biology

Allison Marie Pogue
Wentzville, Missouri
History, Licensure 6-12

Kelsey Lynn Reed
Perryville, Missouri
Business Administration

Hannah Noel Reynolds*
North Kingstown, Rhode Island
Exercise Science

Daniel Alejandro Rojas***
Prosser, Washington
History, Licensure 6-12

Justin Eugene Scott*
Raleigh, North Carolina
Pastoral Ministry

Matthew Chance Stone
Mount Carmel, Tennessee
Pastoral Ministry

Newman Maxwell Ward
Mount Juliet, Tennessee
Exercise Science

Adriana Araceli Wright**
Hendersonville, Tennessee
Business Administration

Bachelor of Arts Degrees

Jerushah Micah Blackburn*
Gallatin, Tennessee
English

Daniel James DeCresie
Greenville, North Carolina
Intercultural Studies

Debora Trifonova Driscoll***
Varna, Bulgaria
English

Abigail Caitlin Fawbush*
Greenbrier, Tennessee
Humanities

Jacqueline Abigail Hunter**
Pleasant View, Tennessee
Humanities

Sarah Elizabeth Pierce*
Mount Vernon, Illinois
Intercultural Studies

Craig Lee Pope
Wabash, Indiana
English

Morgan Blake Riffey
Bluff City, Tennessee
English

Master of Arts Degrees

Joshua Blake Alderman
Dothan, Alabama
Theology and Ministry

Benjamin Glynn Campbell
Hoxie, Arkansas
Theology and Ministry

William Ross Hicks
West Plains, Missouri
Theology and Ministry

Laurie Beth Kagay
Nashville, Tennessee
Theology and Ministry

Brandon Kyle Presley
Knoxville, Tennessee
Theology and Ministry

Matthew John Saunders
Dover, Tennessee
Theology and Ministry

Master of Arts in Teaching Degrees

Rejyna McClure Beck
Cottontown, Tennessee
Teaching

Joshua Patrick Burba
Nashville, Tennessee
Teaching

Cassie Morgan Davenport
Gallatin, Tennessee
Teaching

Christine Ruth Lewis
Chicago, Illinois
Special Education

*Cum Laude - 3.25 **Magna Cum Laude - 3.50 ***Summa Cum Laude - 3.75

Welch Alters Fall Schedule

Welch College has altered the Fall 2020 schedule in light of COVID-19 concerns, according to Provost Matthew McAfee. Fall face-to-face classes began Monday, August 24, one day earlier than originally scheduled.

All class meetings will be completed before students leave for Thanksgiving break, which begins November 25. Students will not return to campus after Thanksgiving break. Final exams will be administered remotely December 1-4. Fall break, originally scheduled for October 23-26, will also be canceled.

"Welch College is taking proactive measures to ensure the safety of our

students should there be a spike in COVID-19 cases in late fall," McAfee said. "Finishing our class meetings before students leave for Thanksgiving break will eliminate the possibility of an outbreak occurring on campus following Thanksgiving travel."

President Matt Pinson said, "We are making every effort to provide the highest quality of education to on-campus students, while taking every precaution to ensure their safety and security."

For questions related to the fall schedule, please contact the academic office (provost@welch.edu). **ONE**

Step Aside, Excuses!

BY CHRIS COMPTON

You know the drill.

Retirement is coming. It is best to start early saving for retirement. The more time you have to save, the more your money will add up over time because of compounding interest. Your money earns on its earnings. Perfect!

Yet, something keeps holding you back. We know this is true, because nearly half of Americans are not saving anything for retirement. Those saving are not saving nearly enough.

Retirement may seem a long way off, but it is coming faster than you think. If you do not believe me, ask those hitting retirement now. One of the most common refrains I hear when talking with people about to retire is “I wish I had started earlier.” No one comes to retirement thinking they have saved too much. It is always the opposite.

Saving for retirement is one of the most important things you can do for your family’s financial future. So, why are more people not planning (or planning well) for retirement years? Here are a few of the top excuses people make about putting off saving for retirement.

“I can’t afford to save.”

I get it. Budgets can be tight, especially if you have kids. If you feel short on funds today, imagine what it will be like in retirement, when all you have to live on is Social Security. The average Social Security check is around \$1,300 per month. Could you live on less than \$16,000 per year?

Do yourself a favor and add retirement savings to your budget. Start with small contributions. Even a small amount can have a big impact on your retirement savings over time. Then as you go along, look for ways to increase the amount you are saving.

“It’s too early in my life.”

I have been there. When you are young, saving for retirement is not at the forefront of your mind. The thinking is “I will do that later.” The problem is many push “later” *too far* down the road.

You do not want to miss out on the very best years of your life to save. The earlier you start saving, the less work will be required to build your savings to a comfortable amount. The best



time to start saving is when you are young. The second-best time is now.

"I am too old to start saving now."


You are never too old to start saving for retirement. You may not have as much time or be able to save as much as you might wish, but you will be better off saving *something* over nothing. A small retirement savings could make the difference in paying off a debt or having funds for an emergency.

You also may be able to save more than you think. Once you turn 50, you can make "catch-up" contributions to your retirement account above your regular contributions. You can save more over a shorter time to help build up your nest egg.

"I don't plan to retire."

It is a good thing to enjoy your work. And, you may want to work forever. However, your employer may not pay you to work forever, or your body may not allow you to do so.

As we age, we face many uncertainties. Many people retire years earlier than planned. It is better to save money for retirement and not need it. You can work as you wish rather than being forced into retirement financially unprepared.

Perhaps one of these excuses is yours. Or maybe it is another. Regardless, there is still time for you to make a positive change and start saving for your financial future. Tell those excuses to step aside and begin your journey of retirement savings. You will be glad you did! 

About the Writer: Chris Compton is communications officer for the Free Will Baptist Board of Retirement. He graduated in 2007 with a M.A. in Bible exposition from Columbia International University. A 1998 graduate of East Tennessee State University, he has over 13 years of administrative/financial experience in varied fields as well as seven years of pastoral ministry experience. Learn more: BoardofRetirement.com.



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Clarity From Crisis

BY JOSHUA EIDSON

"For now we see through a glass, darkly..." (1 Corinthians 13:12a)

During the height of crisis, it is hard finding a way forward, as if we are looking through a darkened window. Most people are ready for 2020 to be over. It has been a hard year for most everyone. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the world to its knees in many ways, at least for a time. It has been challenging to focus on much long-term planning, as we are all just trying to stay healthy both physically and fiscally.

These are the two areas most widely impacted by this global crisis. Whatever your views on the pandemic, there is no denying it has upended our normalcy in numerous ways. This pandemic is the latest large-scale reminder that our future is unknown (by us) and we actually control little. But there is One who knows our future and is not surprised by today and tomorrow's challenges. He's got this!

With that assurance, let us not lose hope, but also not become complacent. We do have some level of control over many details of our lives, and it is in these details we can become more resilient when the next crisis hits.

A few years ago, Rahm Emanuel made the statement, "You never want a serious crisis to go to waste." While I thought the statement was in poor taste regarding how the phrase was being used, there is some value in it given the recent challenges we have faced. As we consider how

this pandemic impacted our lives, we will do ourselves and our communities a great disservice if we do not learn from the challenges it presented.

We must not generalize this review either, but look for specific pain points, or even areas of success in your own life during the pandemic. This reflection will reveal areas where we need improvement and the areas upon which we have a good grasp. What could I have done better to improve my family's comfort or resiliency to face this situation or others that will come? An intentional, honest, and specific review will allow us to find a better way forward.

Once we identify the lessons we need to learn, it is time to put a plan into place to address those areas. For many of us, those lessons involve improving our physical health, staying well stocked on supplies, and improving our financial well-being. We may need to ensure we eat a

healthy, balanced diet and are being physically active. It may involve ensuring we have adequate supplies on hand or have alternate channels of resources planned when

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supply channels are limited. It could be ensuring your family has multiple income streams in case of job loss. Or surplus savings/investments that are accessible when your primary income source is reduced.

It does not help to acknowledge these potential pain points if we do not respond with plans to meet those areas of need

during future crisis. No one wants to find himself in these kinds of situations, and many times these crisis situations are beyond our control. But, with planning,

and maybe even short-term sacrifices, we can become more self-sufficient in times of need. With hard work and wisdom, we can narrow the gap between challenge and triumph.

Even though we may still be in a fog from the turmoil of this past year, do not lose hope. We must learn from the challenges we face, and then apply these lessons learned to bolster our success during the challenges sure to come. Let us not waste this opportunity to learn, to grow, and to serve. It will give us clarity from crisis. **ONE**

About the Writer: Joshua Eidson is accounting administrator for Free Will Baptist Board of Retirement. A native of Middle Tennessee, Joshua graduated from Welch College in 2007, where he earned a B.S. in Business Administration. He and his wife Rachel have four children.

Is your church or organization looking for a place to invest funds for future ministry?

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On the

BRINK

BY BRENDA EVANS

In a rhythmic Southern drawl that fell away on the last word, Shelby Foote said, “Man is the only animal that knows he is going to die.” Mr. Foote was 85. A novelist, historian, and human being, he seemed to know he was on the brink, a half-step from a drop-off, a verge and portal to somewhere else. He lived four more years.

A brink can feel ominous. The first time I stood at the edge of a mile-deep precipice was the summer of 1970 at the Grand Canyon. The calves of my legs felt weak, unable to hold. I saw I could topple, fall into it. The Canyon is spectacular and unforgettable, but plunging head-first into it is another thing altogether. The same is true with death. I’m on its brink.

Recently in the Pentateuch and Joshua, I was reminded the Israelites knew a lot about death and also what a brink is. By my count, from Exodus to Deuteronomy the people mention death or dying more than two dozen times. Moses mentions death more than a hundred.

In Joshua, they were on the brink of the Jordan, ready for Canaan, and they are reminded to watch the Ark of God’s presence, “for you have not passed this way before” (Joshua 3:4). I like the parallel. On the threshold, not of death but of a new land and new life, the Lord showed them the way to go. Wherever we Christians are in this crowded world, we are on a brink of one kind or another. We older folks believe we are near the brink of death. We have not passed this way before, but we will be shown the way.

At the brink of the waters, the priests were to stand still. Waiting on the edge of death for safe passage is an action of faith. And, waiting does not mean doing nothing. Today, I plan to cook, do laundry, do dishes. Maybe I’ll start the research for an anthology project due late this year. Then there is the 1000-piece jigsaw puzzle spread out across the dining room table, 200 pieces still remain to be inserted in the right places. It’s Machu Picchu—all browns, tans, grays, with variated greens here and there. Complicated, confusing. A piece seems to fit but doesn’t—like life on the brink.

Wait is a hard word. When there’s a dilemma, we “fixers” get fidgety. But on the brink, we’re told to wait, to hold our peace. It’s even harder on the verge—whatever that verge is. Not all verges forebode death. Some may be harder than death.

Every few years, I read actuarial charts, which may or may not be a good idea. Death is not a taboo subject at our house. I won’t die sooner just because I talk about it. Today, I read the chart. I’m expected to die in 10.8 years. Recently, Bill and I revisited our dying plans. We do that periodically. This time, we gathered and made copies of the documents our executor son Lee will need when we die. We spent several hours with him. He is legally prepared for our deaths.

In addition, we reviewed the two-page list of 20-or-so things I’ll need to take care of if Bill dies before me. The list has helped me emotionally and spiritually. It is a comfort. Statistically, widows outnumber widowers in the U.S. The last census revealed 11 million widows and 3 million widowers. Bill is “predicted” to die before I do. If he does, I will become what one writer crassly called “that surplus of women.”

Whatever the case, the number 10.8 glares at me from the white page of the Actuarial Life Table. It’s from the Social Security Administration, downloaded from the web. SSA labeled it a life table, but it’s a death table to those of us who read it.

So, what is 10.8 years, or what is any number? I looked up *number* in my old, red Webster’s.

As a noun, Webster defined *number* in 333 words in fine, fine print, most so technical I don’t understand them. As a verb, *number* is simpler. It means to count, enumerate, total. Until today, I’d never thought about how abstract or non-representational a number is. If I paint a huge

WE HAVE NOT
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BUT WE WILL
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THE WAY.

RIGHT NOW, DEATH DOESN'T FEEL IMMINENT, THOUGH IT MAY BE. SO, WHAT SHOULD I DO ON THE BRINK?

10.8 on my office wall, it doesn't depict what my life will be the next 10.8 years.

It's a symbol that represents time, not me, the person.

But if I reduce 10.8 years to weeks, it somehow feels less abstract—but also short. In fact, 570 weeks feels *very* short.

Mulling too much on 570 weeks could make my days a “troublous time,” to use an old John

Maynard Keynes term. Actuarial charts are statistical estimates or calculations about probabilities or possibilities. More than a guess, but not a certainty. Whatever the years or weeks, studying a mortality chart too glumly can be dabbling in mud and getting smeared with the stuff. I must admit my mortality, but I don't have to wallow in it.

Right now, death doesn't feel imminent, though it may be. So, what should I do on the brink? You may thumb your nose at my opinions, but here are six of them anyway.

1. Grow—don't fall—into old age and death. Near the end of his life, Shakespeare's hard-nosed King Lear tells his daughter Cordelia he will ask forgiveness, laugh and talk, and pay attention to the “mystery of things.” But Lear had waited too late. His end-of-life plan failed. He quickly fell into death. I want to grow toward death, to be a tree beside a stream, to leaf out and bear fruit to the end (Psalm 1:3).

2. Live in hope. That means ditch my dismal worst-case-scenario attitude. Instead, decide God will do a good thing in me. Whether we walk, run, or wheel, we can move along in hope, for now, not just for the future.

On a blizzard day in 1980, we buried my 70-year-old father. Snow was eight inches deep in Middle Tennessee. Blood-red clay mud rose in mounds around the grave. Flowers froze into pink and yellow and purple ice crystals. Friends and relatives gathered under a green tent. Mother, my sister Grace, and I shivered and wept quietly. Yet, the resounding gong of God's Word rose in my head: *we sorrow not as others who have no hope* (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Hope did not arise on the day Daddy was buried. It was already there—in Daddy and in us. Someone rightly called hope a high form of faith, a rational confidence in the now-and-forever work and presence of a loving, Almighty God.

3. Copy down the Lord's promises. I've written 92 Bible verses in a tiny notebook. It's three-quarters full. I'll start another when these pages run out. The notebook is small, but the promises are large. They keep my eyes on the God who has my name written on His palms (Isaiah 49:16).

4. Wait—pause in readiness. We may be at the brink of death, or we may not be. How can we know? Either way, *wait* doesn't mean hang around expecting the worst. It means growing in confidence that while I wait, the Lord sees and upholds me with His righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:10).

5. Speak gratitude. Gratitude is a practice, an attitude, a settled way of thinking, and not just a feeling. It is not about bucking up; it counts blessings, not burdens. Gratitude looks back and up. With clear eyes, gratitude recollects, gives thanks for the Lord's gifts of every imaginable sort, in the past and now.

6. Pray the Hebrews 13:20-21 benediction (paraphrased): God of peace, equip me, and work in me that which pleases you through Jesus Christ. Amen. **ONE**

About the Writer: Brenda Evans lives on the banks of Rockhouse Fork Creek in Ashland, Kentucky. You may contact her at beejaevans@windstream.net.

Men at Work

BY DAVID BROWN, CPA

The role of the minister has changed throughout Free Will Baptist history. Many years ago, almost all our pastors worked a secular job and also pastored a church. Today, we call these men bi-vocational pastors. According to recent studies from the Committee on Denominational Research, even today around 35% of our pastors are bi-vocational. While they are sometimes called “part-time pastors,” I prefer to say a pastor who is *paid* part-time pay. The percentage of these pastors varies by state and regions. Some state promotional men report percentages closer to 50/50 in their states.

What do we know about these guys? They are hardworking men who usually have a full-time secular job and yet devote as much of their free time as they can to the duties required of a pastor. They often pastor small congregations, but some pastor large churches. Sometimes, these men are unable to attend district and state meetings because they would have to take time off from their secular jobs. (Perhaps district and state meetings should consider their schedules when planning their meetings to fit in with a bi-vocational schedule.) Even while pastoring a small congregation they want to feel like they are a part of a much larger work.

Many times, these churches are bypassed by missionaries or church planters who need to raise a lot of money in a fixed amount of time,

and therefore concentrate on larger congregations with a full-time pastor. These pastors would like to be aware of what is happening at Welch and other colleges, but again, may not receive promotional visits.

Bi-vocational pastors are underappreciated as a group. The amount of money given to denominational causes from this group as a whole is considerable, but individually, they will rarely show up among the top 50 churches giving to a particular ministry.

You may be wondering: “So how do you, a layman, from a financial field, who never pastored any church know *anything* about bi-vocational pastors?”

I know, because my dad, Donald Brown (pictured above), was one of these guys for over 35 years. In his case, he regularly attended and participated in district, state, and national meetings. For him, it was important enough to use vacation days. Even though he never pastored a church of more than 50, he wanted to know he and his congregation were a part of what IM was doing in the Ivory Coast, Brazil, Japan, or any other field. He was interested in Home Missions and volunteered his time to build churches. He was also interested in Welch College, and while he didn’t attend, he made it possible for me to graduate, and regularly supported the college financially. He even helped build the National

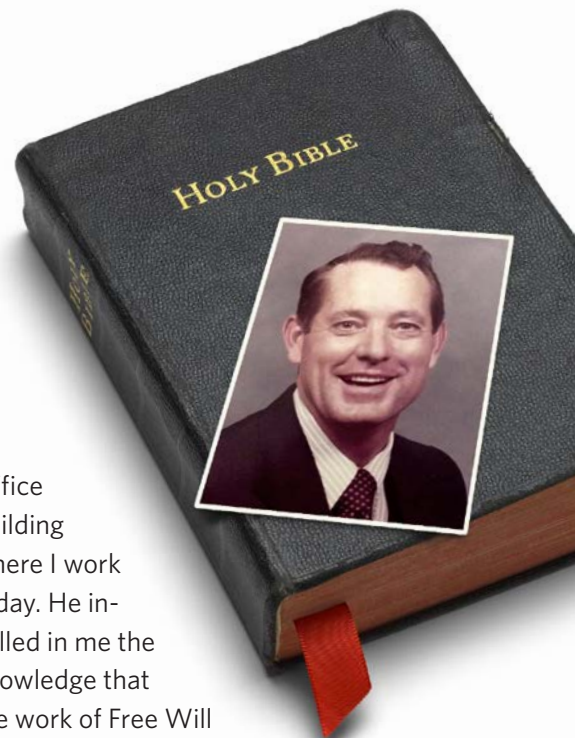
Office Building where I work today. He instilled in me the knowledge that the work of Free Will Baptists and the Kingdom is much bigger than what we say or do individually.

Therefore, I salute all the bi-vocational pastors and encourage them to continue their important ministry.

He and Mom wanted to make sure the ministries they loved while they were alive continued to be supported after they left this world. So, they tithed on their estate. The amount of money they left in a planned gift continues to provide the same monthly support to missions and Welch College they were giving when they were alive. And, it will continue until Jesus returns.

Thanks, Dad, for what you did for me, our family, and your churches, both for Free Will Baptists and for the Kingdom. **ONE**

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



When Even Our Heroes Are Flawed

BY JESSE OWENS

Few things are more discouraging than learning one of your heroes had significant flaws, erred theologically, or committed grievous sin. Even when your heroes are historical figures, such a discovery can leave you feeling disoriented and potentially unsure about the otherwise valuable contributions that person made. “If my heroes did this or thought that,” we might ask, “then does it discredit all of the other things I love about them?” That is a question worth grappling with.

In the United States, many are reevaluating the record of some of our nation’s heroes, particularly on their views related to race and the treatment of minorities. We’ve seen video after video of rioters toppling or defacing monuments and statues around the country, in many but not all cases because of those historical figures’ racist views or actions. Certainly, America has a sad history of mistreatment of minorities. For many, the killing of George Floyd exemplifies this. The frustration is palpable.

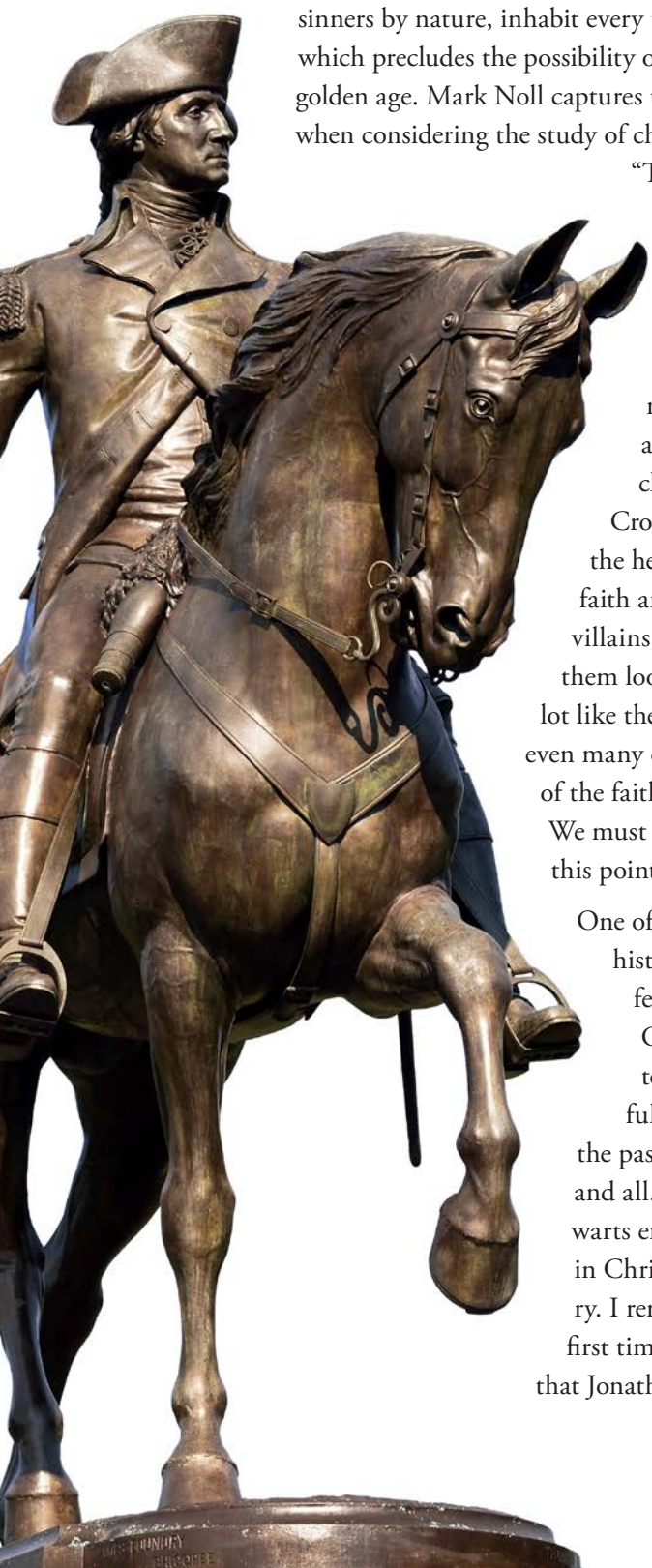
One question I’m not sure we’ve equipped ourselves to answer in this moment of great tension is whether any historical figure can fully meet the modern ethical standard we’ve set. Do we have too idealistic expectations for national heroes or even Christian heroes? Have we set a standard of perfection none of us would be able to meet? Or have we come to a place when the standard is set, and our heroes are examined, no monument will be left standing and no new monuments erected in their place? These are questions we as a nation, and particularly we as Christians, need to consider. This article will focus on a Christian approach to our heroes in the faith.

“We’re Not Setting the Bar That High.”

Our culture and its values change with lightning speed. Just earlier this year, Democratic presidential candidates were throwing President Obama under the bus for being behind the times on key issues during his administration. These criticisms were intended to impugn the character of Joe Biden, who served as President Obama’s Vice President. The same thing happened during President Trump’s campaign when he scorned Republican leaders such as George W. Bush and John McCain. The culture moves quickly and leaves even recently lauded figures in its wake.

Some might object that the bar hasn’t really been set that high: don’t be a misogynist; don’t be a racist; don’t be xenophobic (many might add: don’t be homophobic or transphobic). These examples might seem like rather simple criteria to the broader culture in 2020. Yet, it’s easy to see that those who think these are simple criteria haven’t studied history closely. Few historical figures (at least those who left behind much writing) meet modern standards on these issues.¹





Flawed (and Sinful) Heroes

I want to focus primarily on those we as Christians might lionize. In an essay several years ago entitled “There Is No Golden Age,” I tried to remind readers no previous generation or era is without significant flaws and grievous sin. That’s due to the fact that human beings, sinners by nature, inhabit every time period, which precludes the possibility of any truly golden age. Mark Noll captures this insight when considering the study of church history:

“The golden ages of the past usually turn out to be tarnished if they are examined closely enough.

Crowding around the heroes of the faith are a lot of villains, and some of them look an awful lot like the heroes.”² But even many of the heroes of the faith are flawed. We must reckon with this point.

One of my favorite history professors, John Carter, used to say we must fully consider the past—warts and all. Plenty of warts emerge, even in Christian history. I remember the first time I learned that Jonathan Edwards

owned slaves; I wasn’t completely surprised, considering the age in which he lived, but I was nonetheless disheartened. I am an alumnus and current student at Southern Seminary, whose founders defended slavery and owned slaves. Christians have obviously sinned grievously on matters related to race and slavery.

But our sins don’t just pertain to race. We could even include things such as theological error. The great Baptist historian Tom Nettles once wrote: “We enter it [historical-theological dialogue] respectfully but with frankness. Where we can detect missteps, we seek to point them out and help provide corrective; where we see change that is more clearly in a biblical direction, we admire with joy the providence of God and the clarity of Scripture; where we see decline, we look for reformers.”³

Even when I read some of my favorite English General Baptist theologians, I find myself grimacing at times, wishing they would have said something differently or nothing at all! The same could be said of many of the reformers and other well-known Protestants over the past 500 years.

We could also consider the lives of some admirable 18th and 19th century missionaries. For example, Adoniram Judson was dedicated to taking the gospel to the people of Burma. He bravely traveled to Burma with his wife Ann in 1812. Ann died, and Judson later married Sarah Boardman. Sadly, Judson’s second wife, Sarah, died due to illness during their voyage to America in 1845. Three of the Judson’s children were on the voyage with them. With his newfound circumstances, Judson was unsure that he’d be able to adequately care for his children in Burma. He felt that he had no choice but to leave his children with family and friends in America. We could view his action as a noble sacrifice, but many might view it instead as neglecting his responsibilities as a father. Even our heroes are not perfect.

Assessing Our Heroes and Their Work

Christians must be able to do two important things at the same time: condemn the sin and theological errors of those they admire, while also acknowledging the valuable contributions those individuals made. We cannot be sat-

ified with simply doing one or the other. We must deal honestly with the sins and shortcomings of our heroes in the faith. We cannot act as if Edwards and the founders of Southern Seminary weren't wrong on the issue of slavery. They were. It will do us no good to deny their sins and shortcomings. But we also shouldn't just reject their theological writings altogether. We must be able to see the valuable contributions they made, by the grace of God, while also reckoning with their sin.⁴

I often think of assessing the works of Christian heroes in terms of the great hymns of the faith. There's reason to be concerned with Isaac Watts's views on the doctrine of the

We must be able to see the valuable contributions they made, by the grace of God, while also reckoning with their sin.

Trinity, which seem suspect in some of his writings. But surely, we wouldn't advocate for not singing great hymns such as "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" or "Alas, and Did My Savior Bleed?" Horatio Spafford, who penned "It Is Well with My Soul," later veered from biblical doctrine, but it is difficult to imagine we'll stop singing his

marvelous hymn. We won't stop singing these hymns because truth is God's truth. And, even when people stray from the truth or are guilty of great sin, the truth in their songs remains.

Psalm 106 details the many sins and failures of God's people. They forgot God while they were enslaved in Egypt. They worshiped idols in the wilderness. They sacrificed their children to the idols of the Canaanites. Consequently, they were oppressed by the nations. But the psalm begins and ends with praise to God for His faithful covenant love toward His unfaithful covenant people. The sins of His people are not concealed; rather, they are recorded for our benefit as they highlight the love and mercy of God. We could say the same for the

Patriarchs, David, Paul, and many others. These are far from perfect people.

I will not attempt here to speak for the broader American culture and the toppling and defacing of monuments. I am not without opinion on that subject. But I want to speak more directly to fellow believers. **Christians must reckon with the fact that even our heroes are fraught with grievous sin—as are we.** We should not dismiss their sin or their contributions to Christ's Church. We should not demand perfection from historical figures any more than we demand it from ourselves. I suppose our deep disappointment with our heroes and their shortcomings is intended to lead us to long for One who is truly without flaw, failure, or sin. **ONE**

About the Writer: Jesse F. Owens, his wife Tiffany, and their sons Gavin and Carter live in Gallatin, Tennessee, where Jesse serves as pastor of Immanuel Church and adjunct faculty member at Welch College. Jesse is also a Ph.D. candidate in historical theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Read more from Jesse: TheHSF.com.

1 Consider Frederick Douglass, an American icon who advocated for the equality of black Americans. In his Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of Douglass, historian David Blight details Douglass's seemingly racist critique of natives: "Blacks had achieved the 'character of a civilized man,' and Indians had not. The Indian, said Douglass by one invidious distinction after another, is 'too stiff to bend' and 'looks upon your cities . . . your steamboats, and your canals and railways and electric wires, and he regards them with aversion.' The Indian 'retreats,' said Douglass, while the black man 'rejoices in modernity.'" Douglass's views wouldn't have been noteworthy in his time, but Douglass employs arguments for the superiority of black Americans over natives with the intent of gaining equal treatment for black Americans. See David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2018, 486.

2 Mark Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Press, 2012), 9.

3 Thomas J. Nettles, "John Calvin's Understanding of the Death of Christ," in *Whomever He Wills: A Surprising Display of Sovereign Mercy* (Cape Coral, FL, Founder's Press, 2012), 293.

4 We might also consider our posture when assessing historical figures. We should not act as if we live in the most enlightened age in human history, and therefore stand in judgment over the past. We must consider the past and our heroes in context and with utmost empathy. For we too are but mere mortals marred by sin and are oblivious to many of the blind spots of our own age. One day future generations will consider our shortcomings as well. We do well to take all of these things into account when considering the past.

How to Hire

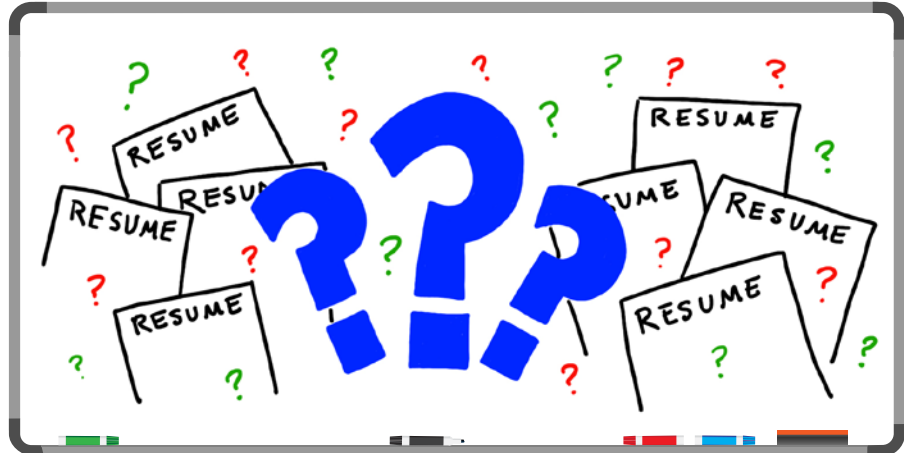
BY RON HUNTER JR., PH.D.

Hiring great people occurs when you combine science and discernment, covered with 100% prayer. The typical hiring process follows the sequence of reading a resume and conducting a phone interview, followed by a face-to-face interaction. Remember, a resume is the best “paper view” of one’s self. The traditional means of hiring is almost completely subjective. This candidate positions his or her experience in the best possible light, and then you weigh the phone and in-person interview based on personality.

Science helps alleviate the misalignment of a bad hire 18-24 months later. For example, churches hire pastors based upon preaching their best sermon, “talking the talk” for an hour or two and being super-likable. Is it coincidental that many pastors change churches every two years? How can science help?

First, before ever seeking names, determine what the position needs and list complementary talents, experience, and characteristics. This list forms a scorable matrix to rank candidates. Do the same for the face-to-face interview. Rather than base evaluations on conversational skills, examine tasks, philosophies, leadership styles, and methodology you expect after the hire.

Such appraisals take time and creativity. Prior to any phone interview, create a list of questions candidates will answer in writing, so you can score and compare the responses



to other candidates. Personality assessments also provide incredible insights. Talk to those who provided a reference. Science helps turn subjectivity into objectivity.

Science also informs discernment. Hiring requires due diligence to ensure the correct match. Let the questionnaires, scoring, and list of the position’s needs inform who moves to the next stage. Very few times will someone meet all your dream needs or necessary experience. You must hire someone who has capacity and potential, knowing past performance predicts future effectiveness.

Discernment steps in where science stops. The one hiring knows the complete needs: experience, capability, capacity, potential, character, and chemistry. Sometimes, the most capable person may be toxic in your environment, and you must evaluate chemistry with interpersonal and directional relationships. Discernment clarifies leaders among a capable field.

Science and discernment are nothing without prayerful dependence upon God. Pray through the discovery process seeking spiritual and practical discernment. See what the Holy Spirit does with the answers provided by the candidate or candidates. When you listen to the crowd instead of God, you will most likely be re-hiring for the same position all too soon. The art of hiring includes science, discernment, and prayerful deliberation. **ONE**

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.

LEADERSHIP QUOTE

“Do not hire a man who does your work for money, but him who does it for the love of it.”

—Henry David Thoreau

A Button That Gives

Randall House recently installed a new website option for donations, as a result of the COVID crisis. Two factors contributed to the new DONATE button. First, a number of churches used their spring curriculum for the summer quarter, creating a \$400,000 shortfall in curriculum orders for the summer and fall quarters.

Second, Randall House faces an additional loss of \$75,000 due to the cancelation of the Vertical Three Conference, Truth & Peace, YET, and CTS events this summer.

Pastors noted the generosity of Randall House providing numerous free resources during the pandemic. Now, Randall House needs your help. Dr. Ron Hunter requests churches who have not experienced major declines in giving consider donating the equivalent of their curriculum order if they did not buy the summer or fall quarter. Many who benefited from Randall House's free curriculum for church plants or chaplains, from the experience of Truth & Peace or YETeam, or love the global work in family ministry may want to see these continue and

donate a reoccurring gift.

Go to **RandallHouse.com/donate** to give. Because Randall House is a religious 501-c3, your gift qualifies as a charitable contribution and a receipt will be generated automatically. **ONE**

Discipleship Spanish Edition Now Available

***El Disciplado:
La Expresión De
La Fe Salvífica***

(Spanish edition of *Discipleship: The Expression of Saving Faith* by Dr. Robert E. Picirilli) was

released by Randall House, July 14 due to a grant by the FWB Foundation. This is an excellent resource for the Spanish-speaking members of your congregation.

Dr. Picirilli provides practical answers and applications through an exhaustive study of the New Testament requirements for salvation. He offers sound, comprehensive exegesis demonstrating repentance, obedience, and discipleship are biblical expressions of saving faith.



D6 Podcast to Feature New Hosts

As the weekly D6 Family Ministry Podcast starts its fifth year, Randall House adds two new cohosts. Dr. Ron Hunter, one of the hosts who launched the podcast back in 2016, will continue hosting, along with two new voices, Marianne Howard and Josh Wooten. Marianne Howard brings the perspective of a pastor's wife, mother, and one who works with teenage girls in her church. Josh Wooten offers the experience of a youth pastor and more recently, a family minister.

All three voices will bring more ministry diversity and content that surround the rich interviews of



*Marianne
Howard*



*Josh
Wooten*

major speakers and authors. The D6 Family Ministry Podcast has featured such personalities as Richard Ross, Pam Tebow, and Lee Strobel. You can listen to all future and archived episodes on D6Family.com/podcast or on your podcast app, iTunes, Stitcher, and others. **ONE**

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Neighbors and Providence

BY JOY CORN

Pal Marshall. Not a name you hear every day. I think “Pal” was short for Palmyra, but she was a pal to many. I knew her as a grandmotherly figure, a fixture in my home church, Horton Heights Free Will Baptist in West Nashville, Tennessee. Her hallmark ministry was sending postcards to *everybody* who ever missed a service. That included my family.

For us, missing church was a *rare* occurrence, usually tied to the 450-mile trip to visit grandparents twice a year. Still, I was deeply impressed by Mrs. Marshall’s consistency to let us know our church family missed us when we were gone. But God used Pal Marshall in a much more significant way in my life, totally without my knowledge or awareness until many years after the fact. Let me explain.

Pal and her husband Ed lived on Osceola Avenue in West Nashville in the late 1930s with their two young daughters, Joyce and Loyce. They faithfully attended East Nashville FWB Church. It was a natural thing, then, when new neighbors moved in down the street to invite them to church. These neighbors had two young daughters about

the age of their girls, and the girls hit it off. Their friendship made it easy for the neighbors’ busy mother (not a stay-at-home mom) to agree the girls could ride to church with the Marshalls each week, though the mom felt her work schedule would not allow her to attend.

This arrangement continued for years. The Bass girls, Joyce and Helen, rode with their friends, Joyce and Loyce Marshall, to East Nashville Church almost every Sunday. They enjoyed Sunday School and heard the preaching of pastors like Clarence Bowen, Damon Dodd, and Henry “Pop” Melvin. Over time, both girls gave their hearts to Jesus. Pal and Ed consistently provided the means for these girls to be under the sound of the gospel, and it bore fruit in their lives.

Though in their late high school years, the Marshall girls moved to Charlotte Park, and the Bass girls moved to the country, the two families remained close. Tragically, Joyce Marshall died of leukemia when she was only 21, and the Bass girls grieved with the Marshall family as though she were a blood relative. Helen Bass and Loyce Marshall maintained their close friendship far into adulthood, a relationship strengthened by their common church experience and their common faith.

When Helen Bass married at age 20, Ed Marshall performed the ceremony at East Nashville FWB Church. Because of Helen's close connection to the East Nashville Church, her husband Gilbert was not opposed to attending there once they started their own family. (Though the church was across town from where they lived, and they passed at least three other Free Will Baptist churches en route.)

After Helen and Gilbert's first two sons were born, Charles Thigpen and Leroy Forlines (members at the East Nashville Church) came to their home on visitation, and through their presentation of the gospel, Gilbert accepted Christ as his Savior. The young family continued to make the weekly trek across town to East Nashville Church. They added two more children over the next ten years, and the four children grew up in church and were saved and baptized at East Nashville FWB Church.

When the middle son, Randy, graduated from high school, it did not surprise his family when he announced he would be the first in his extended family to go to college, but what did surprise his parents was his request to attend Welch College (then Free Will Baptist Bible College). Having grown up attending church with men like L. C. Johnson (first president of the college), William Henry Oliver, and Henry Melvin, along with countless others in the "Who's Who" of Free Will Baptists, it seemed a natural next step for him. His parents agreed to pay for the first year, which turned into four, at the college. God called Randy to preach his junior year.

A freshman girl at the college caught Randy's eye about that time. And this is where the stories begin to merge. I was that freshman girl. Our first "date" consisted of a walk around the block before supper, where I learned that

Randy was a Nashville native, so we shared a hometown, and I heard a little about his home church.

When we were married at Horton Heights FWB Church four years later, I began to get the fuller picture of how our steps had been ordered of the Lord. Randy's mother's childhood friend, Loyce Marshall Holloway, was the organist at *my* church throughout my childhood. In fact, she was also *my* mother's good friend, since together they accompanied our church services at the piano and organ.

The Marshalls, Besses, Corns, and Kettmans had overlapping layers spanning three generations.

Our stories were intertwined from the start. The fingerprints of God were all over our families. God used Pal Marshall and her heart for her neighbors to set in motion the events that led to our paths crossing in this big world. But the intricate details of *how* they crossed continue to

amaze me. Randy's desire to attend Bible college, his call to ministry, our courtship and marriage, and our pastoral ministry together could have taken a different course if not for the influence and actions of a Christian neighbor more than a decade before Randy and I were born.

We recently celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary. As we reflect, we see God's hand of protection and direction in countless ways throughout our marriage and ministry. The Bible makes it clear God's ways are past our finding out, He leads us for His name's sake, and He is in control in the affairs of men.

That causes me to think of times in Scripture when God orchestrated "coincidental" intersection of individual timelines. Think of how unlikely that the paths of Ruth and Boaz would cross. But in God's providence, Boaz took note of Ruth's diligence in the fields and her respect for her mother-in-law; then, critically, he took action as

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IN THE AFFAIRS
OF MEN.

the near kinsman required to meet Ruth and Naomi's needs. Ultimately, God used this foreign woman in the lineage of Christ.

Think of the Hebrew maid whose captivity led her to Naaman's house at the time he needed a good referral for treatment of leprosy. God, in His providence, direct-



ed the steps of the maiden in a way that allowed her to become the ultimate good neighbor who introduced a man of power and influence to Elisha and the power of his God.

Or, think of God's providence in bringing Esther to the palace for "such a time as this." Or think of God's hand in Joseph's winding steps to his role as second-in-command over Egypt. On and on the examples go.

In each case, God connected the pieces in such a way a beautiful tapestry could be formed. But, of course, He used willing people. An act as small as inviting a neighbor to church can have eternal ramifications beyond what we can imagine. God can and does work through ordinary people every day.

I am thankful for God's providence and for the neighbors who have been His willing servants in shaping my family's path. **ONE**

About the Writer: Joy Corn teaches at Pleasant View Christian School. She is president of Cumberland Association Women Active for Christ. Learn more about WNAC at www.wnac.org.



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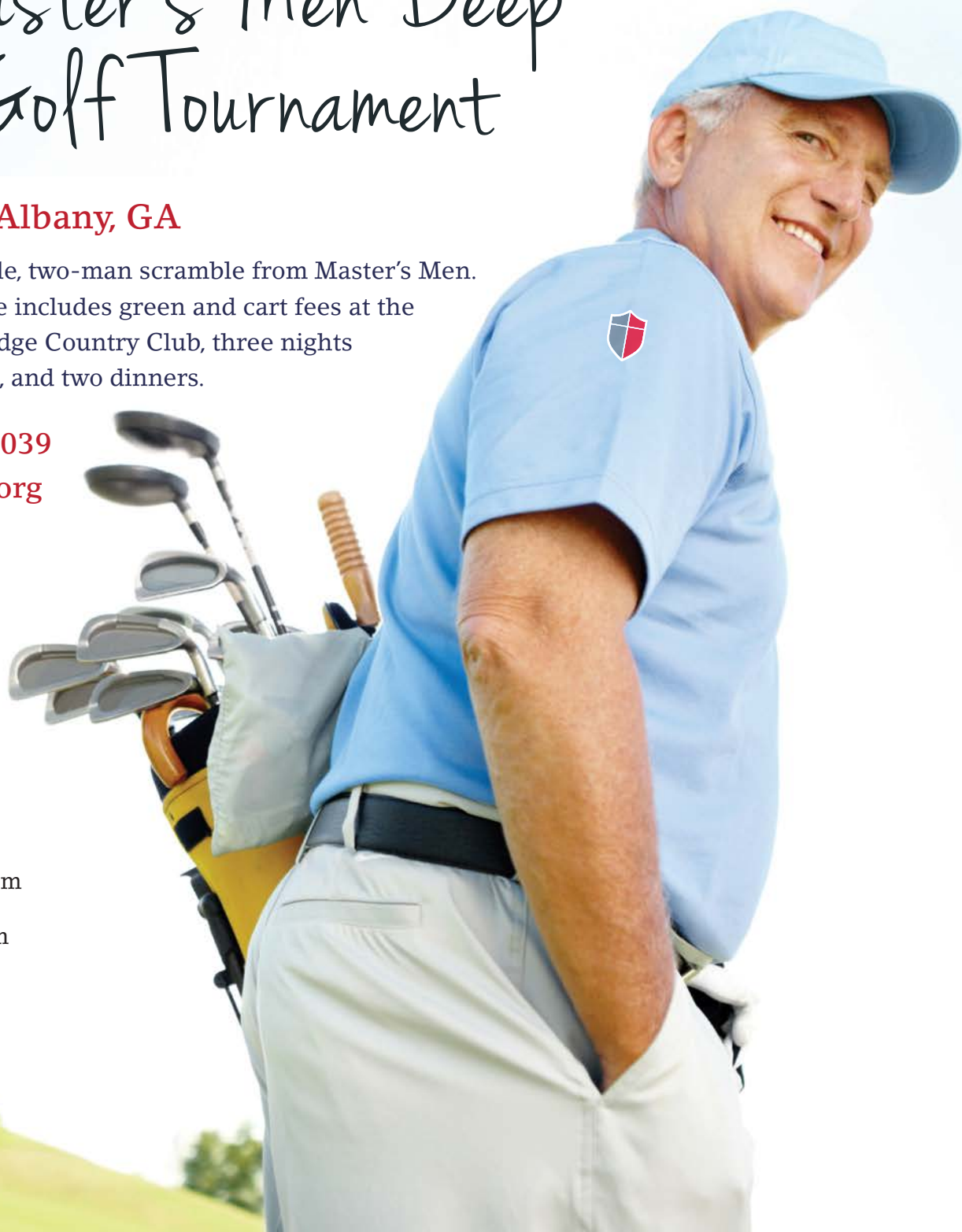
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Thom Rainer to Keynote 2020 Leadership Conference



Nashville, TN—The 2020 Free Will Baptist Leadership Conference returns to Nashville Airport Marriott December 7-8. Pastors, church leaders, and denominational leaders from across the country will gather to explore the theme “Refresh,” with an emphasis on church health.

Monday and Tuesday evening keynote sessions will feature Dr. Thom S. Rainer, founder and CEO of Church Answers, an online community and resource for church leaders. Prior to founding Church Answers, Rainer served as president and CEO of Life-Way Christian Resources and was the founding dean of the Billy Gra-

ham School of Missions and Evangelism at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Rainer is a 1977 graduate of University of Alabama and earned M.Div. and Ph.D. degrees from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has authored more than two dozen books, including *I Am a Church Member*, *Breakout Churches*, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, *Simple Church*, *Raising Dad*, *The Millennials*, *Simple Life*, *Essential Church*, and *Who Moved My Pulpit?*

“Dr. Rainer is regarded as one of the leading voices in church health and revitalization,” notes Executive Secretary Eddie Moody. “We are glad to

welcome him to the Leadership Conference, and we encourage all Free Will Baptists to take advantage of this opportunity to hear him speak.”

On Tuesday, a broad slate of training seminars will offer practical instruction on a number of topics important to building and maintaining a healthy church. Throughout the two-day conference, attendees will renew friendships during banquet-styled meals and enjoy their stay in the award-winning Marriott property.

Find regular updates on the conference at www.nafwb.org/leadershipconference.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

MONDAY, DECEMBER 7

- 3:00 p.m. Registration
- 5:30 Supper
- 7:00 Evening Session
Speaker: Dr. Thom Rainer
- 8:30 Refreshments

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8

- 8:00 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:00 Workshop Block 1
- 10:00 Workshop Block 2
- 10:50 Refreshment Break
- 11:10 Workshop Block 3
- Noon Lunch
- 1:30 p.m. Workshop Block 4
- 2:00 Nominating Committee Meeting
- 2:30 Workshop Block 5
- 3:30 Workshop Block 6
- 5:30 Supper
- 7:00 Evening Session
Speaker: Dr. Thom Rainer
- 8:30 Refreshments

TUESDAY WORKSHOPS

Block One - 9:00 am

- Best Practices for Better Boards: Five Best Practices and Five Worst Habits (Ron Hunter)
- Gospel Unity in Cultural Diversity: A Biblical Approach for the 21st Century American Church (Jose L. Rodríguez)
- Can Churches Do Bible Clubs in Public Schools? (Jeff Nichols)

Block Two - 10:00 am

- Creating a Strong Social Media Strategy for Your Church (Lena Wooten and Lauren Biggs)
- Implementing Discipleship Groups (Jeff Jones)
- Our Skeptical New Generations: Revitalizing the Church as a Place for Wonder (Pedro García and Aaron Pontious)

Block Three - 11:00 am

- Revitalizing Associations (Matt Pinson)

- Changing Our Tone, Not Our Tune: Moving the Church Past the Rhetoric to Relevant Pro-Life Ministry (Jim McComas)
- Women in the Church: A Free Will Baptist Perspective (Christa Thornsbury)

Block Four - 1:30 pm

- How to Recruit Volunteers (Dr. Brad Ransom)
- Faith and Science: The Responsibility of the Church in the 21st Century (Dr. Ian Hawkins)

Block Five - 2:30 pm

- Creating a Wow! Factor for Your Church (Dr. Brad Ransom)
- Off the High Dive: Beyond the Basics of Church Promotion (Eric Thomsen)

Block Six - 3:30 pm

- Generating Momentum (Dr. Brad Ransom)
- Three for Thirty (Dr. Eddie Moody)

3 for 30: Reach, Train, Give

BY EDDIE MOODY

Almost a year ago, the leaders of our denomination began to answer questions about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to our denomination. It soon became clear there was a desire for some overarching goals the entire denomination could work toward. As a result, we began to develop the **3 for 30 Plan**—three goals on which we can focus for this decade.

3 for 30

Though the denomination has many areas where attention could be focused, three key areas emerged. Unsurprisingly, Scriptures teach every Christian should excel in all of these. If we focus upon these together, the outcome will be an increasingly capable denomination.

Reach

Influence others by loving and sharing. All Christians are called to reach those in their community, country, and the world with the gospel (Acts 1:8). The key is *all* (Mark 16:15). We must reach out to those who look and think like us, but also to those who do not. Wherever we go and whatever we do, the Light and the Truth must go forward (Psalm 43:3). As a result, eyes will be opened to the gospel, and people will be turned to God (Acts 26:18).

To excel in this area in this decade,

we will strive to become effective in reaching an increasingly biblically illiterate, religiously averse, and ethnically diverse population like the one the early church reached in the book of Acts.

Train

Grow by discipling and equipping (Matthew 28:19-20). We succeed in reaching others only if we train to do so (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). We begin by focusing upon our own children and immediate family (Deuteronomy 6), but each church, association, and national agency plays a role in helping believers grow into effective servants of the Lord.

What kind of training is needed? We start with the basics of the Christian faith, including how to live a pure life, understand and live out biblical gender and sexuality, and how to use the specific, individual gifts God has given to us.

We must identify the challenges faced across the lifespan. Training for the emerging adult (18-29) surrounds marriage, purity, and family relationships. Late/early middle adulthood (30-45) years are often the most stressful. This age range needs training for marriage, child rearing, and getting established in one's career. Late middle adulthood (45-65) is a very active period, though less stressful. We must help this age range become

established in a fruitful ministry. Old age range, which includes postretirement (66-89) and very old age (over 90), is a bit unique to our time period. People are living longer and enjoying healthier lives than in the past. This creates opportunities for service in the church, but also raises unique challenges such as widowhood and the loss of mobility and, for some, memory. We must seek to provide training for each of these stages of life.

Give

We all have resources and talents we are called to use (Matthew 25). In an environment increasingly hostile toward Christianity, it will be especially important to give (Matthew 5:16). We also have multiple opportunities to bear burdens (Galatians 6:2) because of the great needs around us (James 2:14-17). We must expand upon this, giving with generosity, which is well-pleasing to the Lord. **ONE**



Eddie Moody

Executive Secretary,
National Association of
Free Will Baptists

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