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Jackie and Pee Wee

BY ERIC K. THOMSEN

In his first seasons with the Brooklyn Dodgers, Jackie Robinson, the first black man to play in the Major Leagues, faced venom everywhere he traveled—fast-balls at his head, spikes on the base paths, brutal curses and racial slurs from opposing dugouts and stands.

In his autobiography, *I Never Had It Made*, Robinson recalls a game when the taunts reached a fever pitch. Another Dodger, a southerner named Pee Wee Reese, left his position at shortstop, walked over to Robinson at second base, put his arm around his shoulder, and simply stood there while the insults rained down. His gesture spoke more eloquently than any words: *this man is my friend and teammate*. In 2005, Robinson's wife Rachel recalled Robinson's reaction to that moment: "It came as such a relief to him [Jackie] that a teammate and the captain of the team would go out of his way, in such a public fashion, to express friendship."

We find another public expression of friendship in Mark 2, when four men brought their paralytic friend to Jesus. These fellows were **compassionate**, that is, they were deeply concerned

about their friend's condition. Many physically handicapped people of that day were forgotten, left to beg by the roadside or in doorways. These friends were unwilling to let their friend suffer that fate.

Their compassion led them to **caring**. Today, when we say we "care" about someone, we act as though care is an emotion, a feeling. But the word *care* is a verb. When we care, we act; we do something about the situation. We step in to say "let me help you" rather than murmuring "let me know if I can do anything."

These compassionate, caring friends were also **committed**. While many of us might have taken the first step to bring a paralyzed friend to Jesus, how many of us would have chalked it up to a nice attempt when we saw the teeming crowd? These men literally

"took it to the next level." Picture them struggling up the narrow stairway to the roof, tearing off thatch, mud, and perhaps stone with bleeding hands, and straining with all their might to lower their friend one tenuous handhold at a time to the feet of Jesus.

What was the result of this compassionate, caring, and committed friendship? In verse 5, Jesus saw the collective faith of these men and their friend and offered healing both physically and spiritually. When I read this account, I am humbled, and I can't help but ask: "When was the last time

I risked rejection, embarrassment, and my own comfort for a friend."

May God help us all be compassionate, caring friends committed to meeting the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of others by bringing them to Jesus. **ONE**

About the Columnist:

Eric K. Thomsen is managing editor of **ONE Magazine** and president of the Evangelical Press Association. Email: eric@nafwb.org.



ONE Magazine is always a great resource for news of what's happening in the denomination, our ministries, conventions, and other activities, and I'm grateful to all who contribute to its pages each issue. However, I thought you might like to know that people of all ages read *ONE Magazine*. My niece (two years old) was recently playing with her car while my sister was in the kitchen washing dishes. My sister thought she was too quiet and maybe got into something she shouldn't have. When she came over to check on my niece,

she was sitting on the floor "reading" the magazine, as you can see in the picture. She enjoys reading her story books every day, but I'm glad to see she is getting into a variety of quality



reading material at an early age! Keep up the good work.

—*Marcus A. Brewer,
Bryan, Texas*



Have something to say? Say it!

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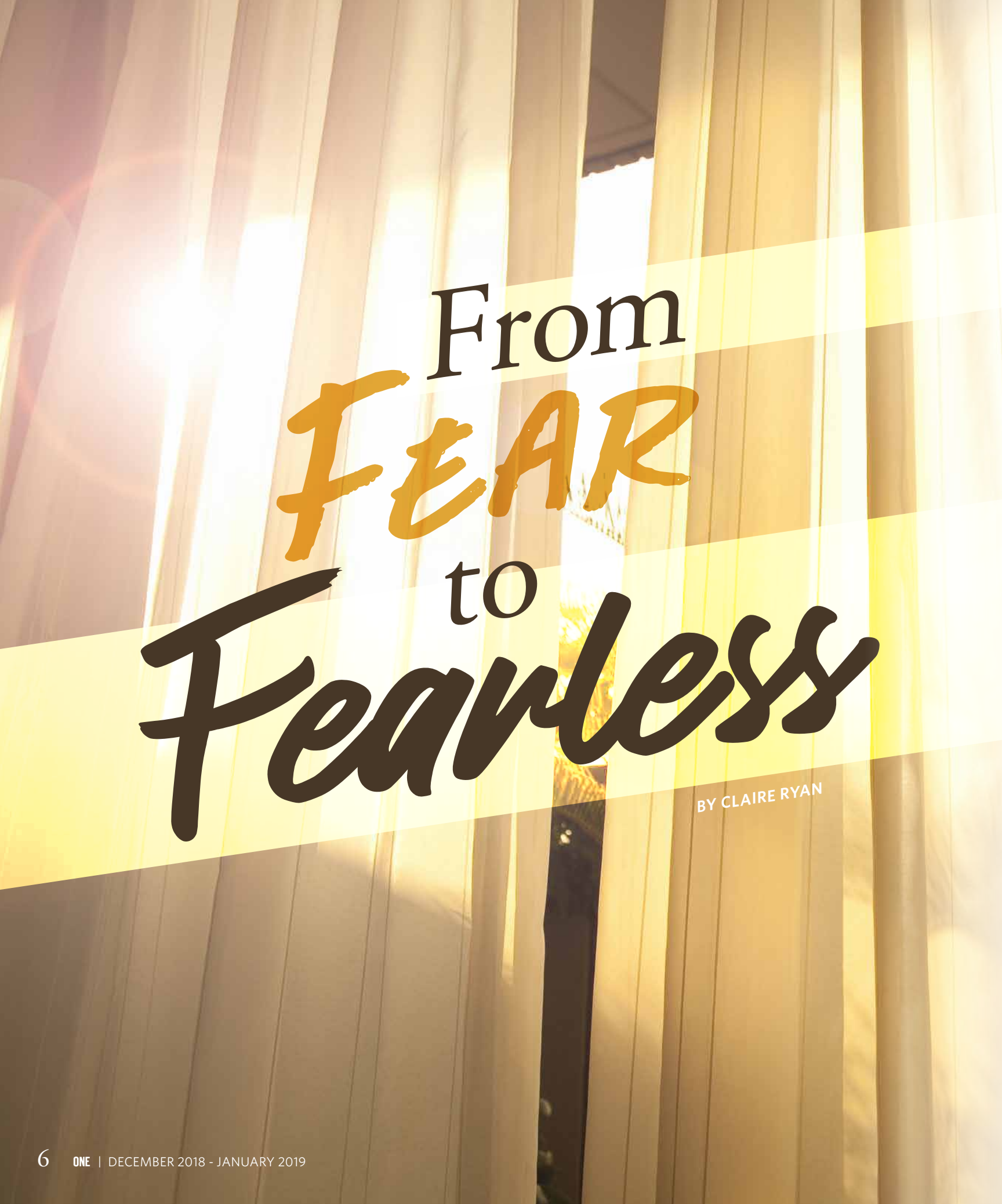
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From **FEAR** to **Fearless**

BY CLAIRE RYAN

Fear. It is the driving force behind almost every irrational action. Its suffocating grip chokes the joy, the peace, and the life right out of you. A never-ending lying voice laughs in your face, making a mockery of who you claim to be. Fear causes you to believe the lies: you aren't qualified; you can't do it; you will, undoubtedly, irrevocably, and unequivocally fail. These lies are constant. If you aren't careful, you begin to believe them. Pretty soon, you haven't the slightest idea what's true and what isn't. Fear is a scary thing.

In May 2017, I graduated from Welch College with a degree in English Secondary Education. The summer was busy. I hardly had time to think between the hours spent driving to church camps. When the reality of teaching did come to mind, I would push it aside or squelch it, pretend “adulthood” was *not* something I had to learn. I would go about my day as a naïve, responsibility-free woman. Then August hit, and things got real. On August 6, I began my first day teaching at Cheatham County Central High School in Middle Tennessee. Today, I began the first day of the second week of my first year teaching.

I AM TERRIFIED. DAILY.

My darkest moments are the evenings, just before I go to sleep. The devil uses those times to attack me, to feed me the lies that I'm not good enough. He knows my insecurities, my weaknesses, and it is his nightly routine to throw them in my face. They hit with a resounding slap I still hear when I open my eyes in the morning. The fear rises within me. That suffocating grip I mentioned earlier? Its wiry hands are knotted tightly around my throat. I fight against it, holding back my tears. But eventually, I can no longer breathe, and what escapes my lips is a strangled gasp, a desperate cry for help in the midst of darkness.

DAILY, I AM TERRIFIED.

In my bedroom at my grandparents' house where I currently live, the window sits directly behind my bed where I lay my head at night. I have blinds, but no curtain blocks out the sunlight in the mornings. And, the sunlight always comes. Each morning starts anew,

the night before having been an uphill battle on a slope ridden with potholes and mud. But the light streaming in does its job to rouse me from my weary, fear-induced stupor, and I trudge half-blindly to the bathroom to begin the day.

The day passes. Alone in my room at school, I often wonder what I had possibly been thinking. Me? A teacher? I shake my head, and those little whispers and lies creep in again. I get home later that afternoon, tired, but relieved I have another day behind me. Only 170 more days to go! Before I know it, night is upon me, and I begrudgingly make my way to the bedroom, knowing what awaits me.

FEAR.

It is a continuous, daily, uphill battle.

I believe the Lord chooses to speak to us in various forms, even today. Obviously, He speaks through His Word, sharper than any double-edged sword. He speaks in song as we worship, using His Spirit to convict and transform us. He sends people and mentors, long or short-term, into our lives to help mold and shape us more closely into His image. And I believe He sends dreams.

The evening after my first day of school, I sat around the table with my grandparents, my aunt, and a few cousins. We enjoyed pizza and fellowship. I say enjoyed, but in all reality, I spent a majority of the time simply trying my best not to cry. You see, at that moment I was allowing fear to control me. That night, I fell asleep quickly and slept hard. It isn't abnormal for me to have dreams.

I dream quite often and usually remember them vividly the next morning. This night was no different:

I was downstairs beside the kitchen table. Pawpaw was seated at the table, his Bible before him. He beckoned me over with a wave, "Claire, take a seat here." I swallowed and quickly sat down. Even in a dream, Pawpaw demands respect. I didn't hesitate to obey in the slightest. He turned the Bible in my direction, pointing to a particular passage. The exact passage escapes my memory, but I remember what it alluded to. The Christian life is not one of comfort; that is not what we are called to. We all face fearful and dreadful times, but the Lord knows all, and we are in His capable hands. As I sat in my chair beside Pawpaw, I read the Scripture through blurry eyes. Pawpaw rapped the table with his knuckle, like he always does when calling for attention, "Look here, Claire." He pointed to his eyes, which I met with rapt scrutiny. "It's not about you," he said. His voice was firm, but loving, and immediately, I woke up.

IT'S NOT ABOUT ME.

When I wake up each morning with the Light Himself pouring through the blinds; when I allow Him to guide me with each step, through every facet of my day; and when I choose to let Him fight my battles, He is also with me in the evenings, when the darkness closes around me.

The other day, a wise man pulled me aside and wrapped me in a hug. I leaned heavily into the protective embrace of my earthly father. "Second Chronicles 20:15," he whispered. "This is what the LORD says to you: Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's."

These are the words Jahaziel spoke to Jehoshaphat when an army from Edom was approaching. But these same words can be applied to us today. I face my fair share of vast armies. Granted, they may not be wielding swords or shouting songs of war, but in my mind they are large enough to cause me to tremble. One of these armies is fear.

My dad was reminding me this battle is not mine to fight but the Lord's. Not only that, I can trust God with *everything*, because He already won the battle. Does this mean all my fear immediately disappears? No. But it means when fear comes, as I know it will, I have a weapon to fight it. I have the Lord, the Victor of all my battles. Isaiah 43:1b reminds us not to fear because He has redeemed us, called us by name, and we are His.

I AM HIS.

When I try to make this life about me, I find myself in the deepest pits of fear. I look around and see myself surrounded by armies. But when I wake up each morning with the Light Himself pouring through the blinds; when I allow Him to guide me with each step, through every facet of my day; and when I choose to let Him fight my battles, He is also with me in the evenings, when the darkness closes around me. When the devil pokes and prods at my weaknesses, when I feel strangled and heavy-laden and lonesome, I make my way to my bedroom, lay down my head, and draw strength from the protective embrace of my heavenly Father. I rest with the God of all Peace and Comfort as my pillow.

FEARLESS. ONE

About the Writer: A 2017 graduate of Welch College, Claire Ryan is a first-year teacher at Cheatham County Central High School in Ashland City, Tennessee.



The Great Generational Divide

BY BRAD RANSOM

Perhaps the hymn writer said it best when he penned the familiar lyrics:

*This world is not my home; I'm just a passing through;
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue;
The angels beckon me from Heaven's open door,
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.*

Unfortunately, these lyrics also depict how many church leaders feel when they look at the world around them. We don't live in the same world we grew up in. The world is changing constantly and quickly. With every new generation, traditions, practices, and preferences change a little more. Our generation made changes previous generations didn't like, and generations following us adopted things we don't care for. Welcome to the great generational divide.

In light of generational thinking, people are asking questions about the church. If someone asked, "How do you build a church?" someone from the Builder generation (born before 1945) would have one answer. If you

asked the same question of a Boomer (born between 1946-1964) you would likely hear a different answer. Asking the same question of a Generation Xer (born between 1965-1976) and a Millennial (born between 1977-1995), will elicit different answers from each group. None of the answers would necessarily be wrong, but all of the answers would be influenced by style, preferences, culture, worldview, and peer pressure. So, the answer to the question, "How do you build a church?" varies based on who you ask. Does that make some answers right and other answers wrong? I don't think so, because practices in the church are based on many external factors such as culture, generational makeup, and sociological implications.

What is the *best* answer? How do you build a church? Most pastors and church planters are working hard to figure this out. Some important preliminary questions must be asked, including: *What is my cultural context? Who am I trying to reach? What does the community around my church need?* These and similar questions must be answered to determine how to build a church.

The one answer I can give you is that building a church is different in every context. This is why we can't (and shouldn't) try to build a church like some existing megachurch. Not only do we need to know our population, growth index, and other demographic information, we need to know our community—exactly who we are trying to reach.

Scripture illustrates this best. First Corinthians 9:19-23 says:

For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

What was Paul saying? First, let me address what Paul *isn't* saying. He isn't saying the gospel isn't important; in fact, he is saying the opposite. Second, he *isn't* saying sin can be ignored. This isn't a passage about sin, morals, or even right and wrong. It's a passage about how to relate to people for the sake of the gospel. Third, he *isn't* saying, it's okay to say whatever you want, or that truth isn't important.

Paul was willing to do *anything* within his power to relate to the world around him so he could reach them with the gospel.

So how do we apply this? First, we need to know those we are trying to reach. This determines our methods to reach them. That's exactly what Paul was saying. When trying to reach Jews, he relied on his Jewish heritage and acted and talked like a Jew. He talked about patriarchs like Abraham, Moses, and David. He would talk about how Abraham was justified by faith, and his Jewish

audience would understand what he meant. It would be relevant to them.

But he didn't talk like this to non-Jews. They didn't know (and probably didn't care) about Abraham, Moses, and David. It didn't matter to them that Abraham was justified by faith. That meant nothing to them. Paul related to them using something they understood, from an idol or pagan religious practice to athletics or cultural traditions. Paul probably learned this from Jesus Himself. When Jesus spoke to the woman at the well, He related the gospel to living water. When He spoke to farmers, He used farming analogies and stories. What Paul and Jesus did is exactly what I'm talking about.

What does this mean for you and your church? It means you need to find out who you are trying to reach to reach them effectively. If the majority of people living in your community are Baby

Boomers, outreach, advertising, and the service style should reflect that demographic. If Gen Xers are your target, gear your methods for them. If you are trying to reach Millennials, it will affect how you do things.

Some Gen Xers, Boomers, and Builders prefer a more traditional service. However, the majority of Gen Xers and Millennials (and the upcoming iGeneration) usually prefer contemporary style and casual dress. That's not an indictment; it's simply the truth regarding generational preferences. What's the real difference between "How Great Thou Art" and "How Great Is Our God?" Musical preference. Both songs are biblically accurate. Both are excellent musically. Both are beautiful, but the truth is, most people prefer one song to the other. Perhaps this preference is personal—they grew up with one, and it's

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more familiar. Maybe their preference is stylistic—they prefer 1885 over 2005. Maybe their preference is sacrificial. What do I mean by that? Maybe they realize the music of the people they are trying to reach is different from their own. Maybe they're willing to sacrifice their own preferences to reach others.

The Apostle Paul easily could have said, "I have a message to proclaim. It's the message of Jesus Christ. If you don't know Christ or the background of the Jews, go get the Torah and read it. When you can talk my language, come back, and we'll talk then." No! He didn't do that. But sometimes we do. We cling to our personal preferences and insist others conform to us.

I'm a Boomer. I was born in 1962. I think like a Boomer and act like a Boomer. I can't help it. I am a Boomer. You may or may not be a Boomer. Just remember, not everyone is like you. I can't force everyone to be a Boomer. I can't force everyone to like the things I like.

I don't have to like what they like, but I do have to care about what they think and like, or I will never be able to reach them. Regardless of my likes and dislikes, I must put them aside to reach people who are not like me.

The primary thing we must remember is that everyone, of every generation, shares a universal need—to know Christ. We need to be willing to do whatever it takes to reach them. It may look and feel different than anything we've tried before, but that's okay. The Apostle Paul, once steeped in the tradition of Jews, put his preferences aside to reach others, and we can too! We must not let the fear of change (or trying something new) keep us from reaching the next generation for Christ. **ONE**

About the Writer: Brad Ransom is director of church planting for FWB North American Ministries: www.fwbnam.com.

Now that we have your attention!

Let's face it...no one wants to think about death. But death is inevitable. Have you prepared your estate in such a way that it will benefit your children and the ministries you love? **Free Will Baptist Foundation** recently partnered with **Cornerstone Estate Planning** to provide help in this crucial area of life. Contact the Foundation today for more information:

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Equipping Grandparents for Spiritual Leadership

BY CHRIS SHIRLEY

Equipping grandparents is an important component in any family ministry strategy. Church leaders who ignore this valuable human resource miss the opportunity to harness tremendous potential. With a large and growing population of grandparents in society, the local church and its families can benefit greatly from the wisdom, life experiences, skills, ministry gifts, spiritual depth, and available time of grandparents in the Body of Christ. The following suggestions are just a few of the many ways church leaders can minister to, with, and through grandparents and older adults.

Being Disciple Makers

Equip grandparents for their unique role and responsibilities as disciple makers in the family. While most attention is appropriately directed at parents in this process, church leaders should also challenge and train grandparents to establish a Christ-centered legacy in the lives of their children and grandchildren. Small groups, classes, workshops, retreats, special events, and sermon series are all effective methods for teaching a biblical and practical approach to faith-focused grandparenting. Although resources for training grandparents are scarce, organizations like *The Legacy Coalition* (<https://legacycoalition.com>) sponsor national and regional conferences as well as provide materials for equipping grandparents.

Surrogate Grandparenting

Create a ministry partnership between long-distance grandparents—or older adults without grandchildren—and families with young children who do not have local grandparents. The purpose of a ministry like this would not be to replace the actual grandparents, but to supplement their efforts. Adopt-a-grandparent or surrogate grandparent ministries benefit the child, the parent, and the older adults. The surrogate grandparent becomes a part of the family's home-based disciple-making team, which strengthens the efforts of parents and provides children with the added value of having an older person close at hand to love and guide them as their own grandparents would. *The Christian Grandparenting Network* advocates surrogate grandparent programs and provides helpful information on creating ministries like this (<https://christiangrandparenting.net/should-you-be-a-surrogate-grandparent/>).

Grandparents as Mentors

Being a mentor is one of the roles grandparents play in the lives of their grandchildren. The dictionary definition of *mentor* is “trusted guide, provider of wise counsel, and confidant.” This sounds like a grandparent! Training grandparents and older adults as mentors increases the potential for improving the spiritual and

intergenerational health of the church. The sheer size of the Baby Boomer generation represents an army of mentors who could guide younger generations of parents and children with guidance, wise counsel, and personal example.

Although mentoring may seem like an inherent grandparenting trait, older adults admit to feeling unequipped for the task. Basic mentor training through small groups and workshops provides them with the initial motivation for initiating and maintaining these relationships.

Grandparents as Ministry Leaders

Visit older adult small groups, Sunday School classes, and senior adult activities to find and recruit leaders for preschool, children, youth, and college ministries. Grandparents who spend time investing in younger generations can transfer their experience into the lives of their own grandchildren. These leadership opportunities are also a means for creating natural surrogate grandparent relationships. Once again, training and organization are the keys to success for this initiative. Provide adequate training for older adults to learn how to communicate and minister within the appropriate age group. In addition, consider unique leadership roles suitable for their particular gifts and capabilities.



***Family Ministry
and the Church***
is available at
randallhouse.com

Providing Community and Support

Train leaders in older adult small groups, Sunday School classes, and senior adult organizations with the necessary care skills to minister to grandparents who are physically, emotionally, and relationally separated from their families. Simply providing relational groups for older adults to engage with their peers for genuine Christ-centered fellowship is the first step.

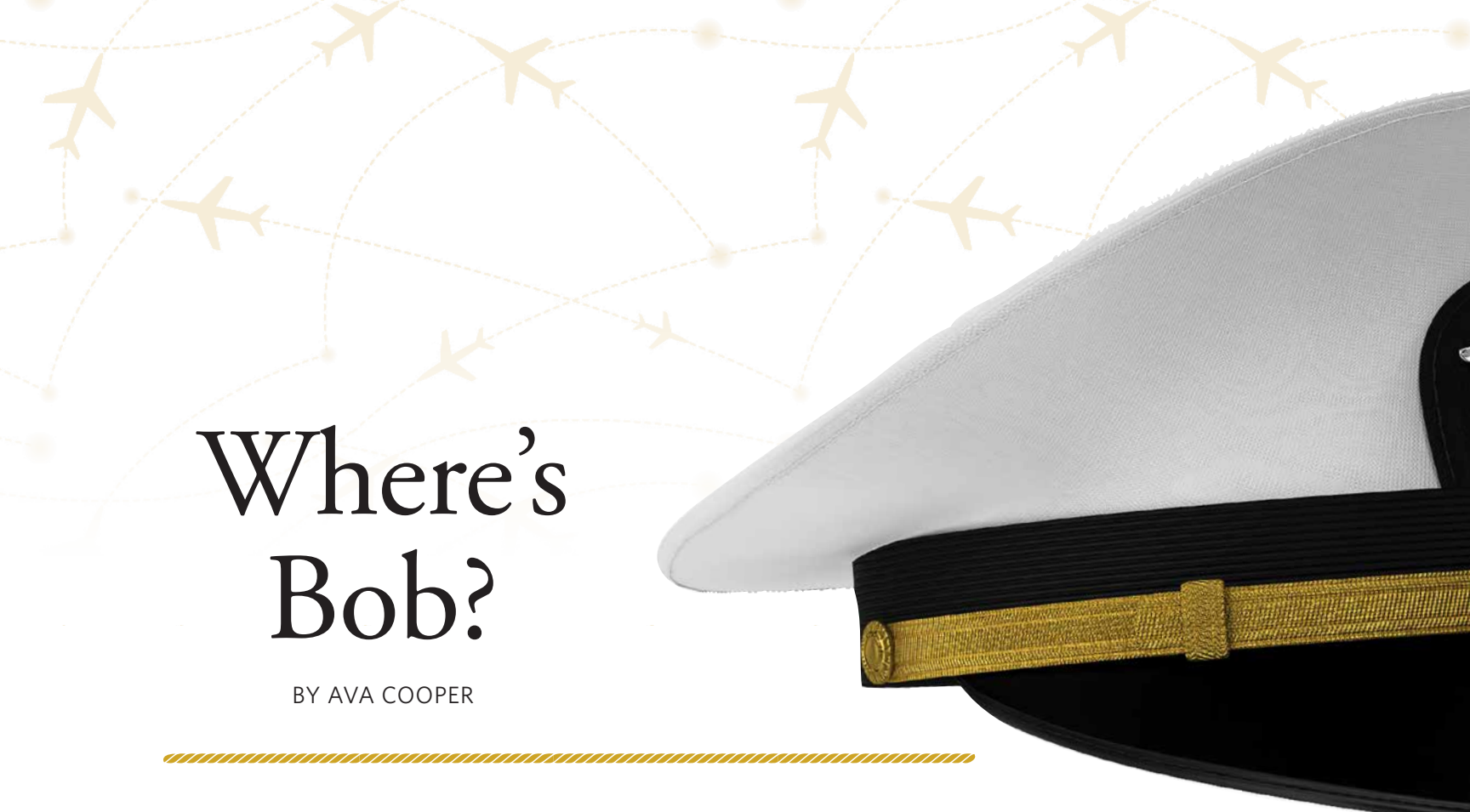
Learning and growing with one another, especially those with a similar life situation, builds a network of support that would otherwise include family. Leaders may also need lay counseling skills and resource information to minister to group members struggling with family problems and emotional separation from their children or grandchildren.

Conclusion

Now, more than ever, the church is looking to the example of its older adults as legacy builders, mentors, guides, and disciple-makers. With the growing number of grandparent-aged adults—fueled by the graying of the Boomers—church leaders should acknowledge the need to encourage and train grandparents to fulfill their responsibility. They are disciple-makers in their extended family and strengthen family bonds among grandparents and their children and grandchildren. In general, Baby Boomers were known as a generation of “hands-on” parents who worked hard to build quality relationships with their children. That same desire can be used to motivate today's grandparents to take up their role as spiritual guides for the upcoming generations.

Training and support for parents as spiritual leaders in the home should be accompanied by intentional ministries directed at equipping grandparents for their spiritual role. More importantly, their potential as family ministry leaders cannot be overstated. The accumulated knowledge, wisdom, and experience of older adults are priceless resources for training newlyweds, young parents, and parents of older children and teenagers. **ONE**

About the Writer: Chris Shirley serves as program director for the M.A. in Discipleship at Dallas Baptist University. Prior to his call to DBU, Dr. Shirley was at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he taught discipleship and family ministry. Dr. Shirley has served over 20 years in Christian camping ministry and in local churches in North Carolina and Texas.



Where's Bob?

BY AVA COOPER

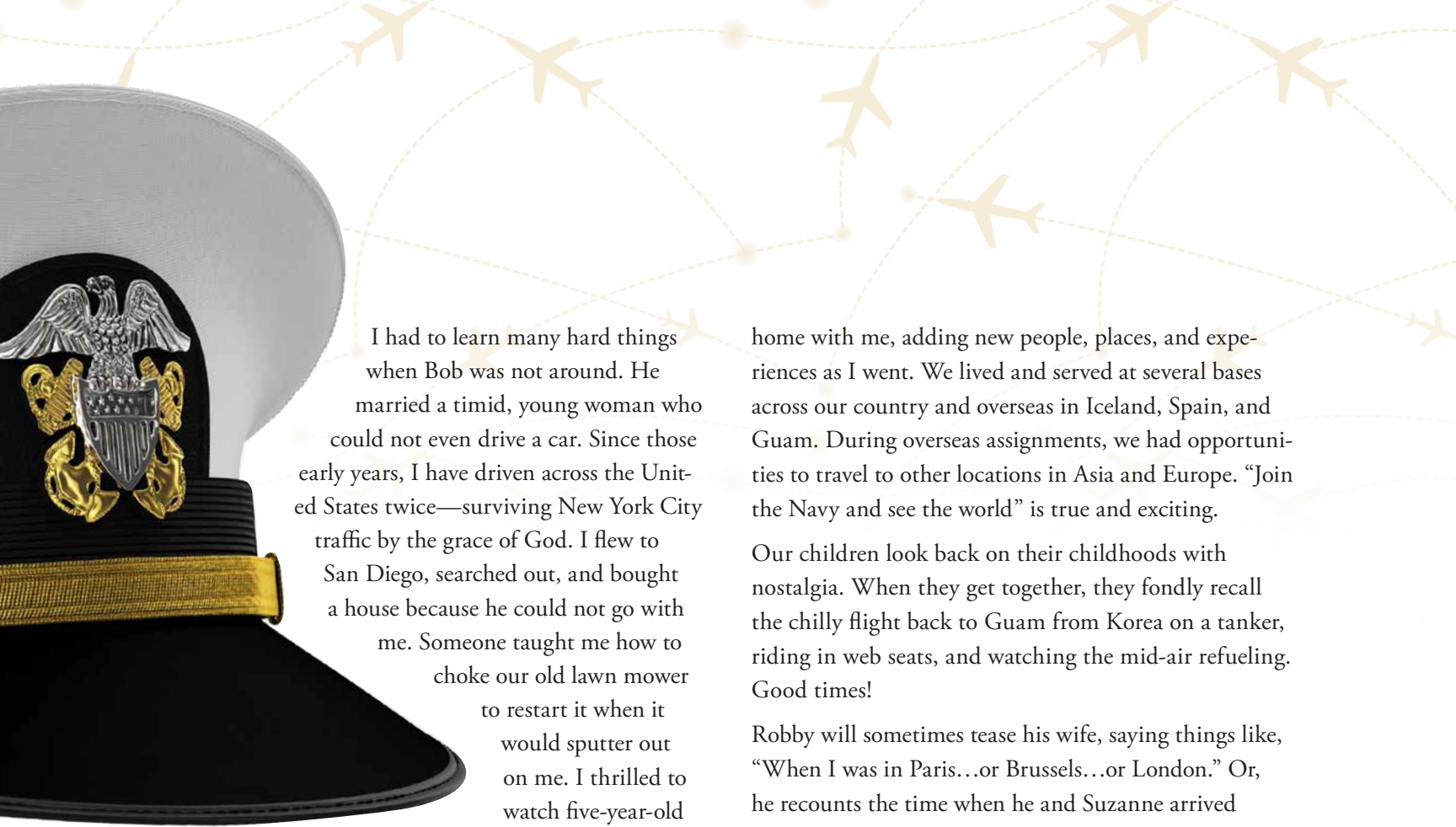
One evening during the spring of 1982, our family was just winding down toward bedtime when I heard a car horn blaring in the neighborhood. I looked outside to see what idiot was blowing his car horn on and on and on. Then I realized it was mine. The noise suddenly seemed louder since I knew I was causing it. I thought to myself, “Bob really needs to do something about that.” That thought was followed quickly by “Oh, yeah, he’s not here.”

My husband Bob had left that afternoon for a six-month deployment to Okinawa with the Marine Corp. After beating on the horn had no effect, I was out of ideas, but thankfully, I had neighbors. I found one, and he quickly disconnected the horn, restoring peace to the street. I pondered, “I never honk at anyone anyway; I can live without a car horn for six months.”

That instance seemed to set the pattern for our lives during deployments. Every appliance seemed to know the moment Bob left, and at least one would give up the ghost completely during his absence. But with the help of the Lord, friends, and great neighbors, we always made it.

It is widely understood that serving in the military has a great impact on families. In our case, the positive far

outweighed the negative. Bob became a chaplain in the Navy when our children were eight, five, and three. They grew up on military bases both in the States and abroad. I don’t believe they felt insecure when their dad was away, because their mom was always there, along with their home, their school, their friends, and their church (called chapel on base). At every duty station, the chapel community took us in. We had no time to ease in and slowly get to know each other, because none of us would be there long. So we talked fast and embraced our differences—race, religious traditions, and backgrounds. The kids’ grandparents were not near to help out, but others stepped up, like a couple who took them to McDonald’s to celebrate when Suzanne completed her first week of kindergarten without too many tears.



I had to learn many hard things when Bob was not around. He married a timid, young woman who could not even drive a car. Since those early years, I have driven across the United States twice—surviving New York City traffic by the grace of God. I flew to San Diego, searched out, and bought a house because he could not go with me. Someone taught me how to choke our old lawn mower to restart it when it would sputter out on me. I thrilled to watch five-year-old Robby, who was used to running to me for praise after hitting a ball off the tee, veer towards his Dad when he suddenly realized he was there.

I would not trade my life for any other. Bob's deployments were difficult, and his absence for six months and more was a struggle. But his homecoming was like Christmas and a honeymoon, all at the same time! Separations and multiple moves are hard, but many things about military life are unique and wonderful. I love moving from place to place. I love creating a home. The military gave me the opportunity to do that many times. I often got to take a white-walled "cracker box" and turn it into a warm, beautiful, and welcoming home. It was always fun to see how my neighbors took their own cracker box and made it different from mine.

I enjoyed new foods and new customs in each new place. In Texas, I read Julie's sixth-grade Texas history book, which inspired me to learn the history of each new place we lived. I discovered so many wonderful places and ways to live, each unique and beautiful in its own way. I was never homesick because I carried my

home with me, adding new people, places, and experiences as I went. We lived and served at several bases across our country and overseas in Iceland, Spain, and Guam. During overseas assignments, we had opportunities to travel to other locations in Asia and Europe. "Join the Navy and see the world" is true and exciting.

Our children look back on their childhoods with nostalgia. When they get together, they fondly recall the chilly flight back to Guam from Korea on a tanker, riding in web seats, and watching the mid-air refueling. Good times!

Robby will sometimes tease his wife, saying things like, "When I was in Paris...or Brussels...or London." Or, he recounts the time when he and Suzanne arrived in Keflavik, Iceland, and the base commander came on board to welcome everyone. He said to be careful deplaning because it was "a bit breezy" outside. When Robby stepped onto the ramp with his guitar strapped to his back, the gale force winds caught the guitar and nearly sent him airborne. "Breezy" has a different meaning in Iceland!

Our oldest daughter Julie had a hard time leaving every place we lived. She swore she'd grow up and buy a farm and never leave it, but when she grew up, she married an Air Force boy, and they headed happily off to Okinawa for an adventure of their own.

God has blessed our family beyond measure, and we will always be thankful for the opportunity He gave us to minister to our men and women in the military. **ONE**

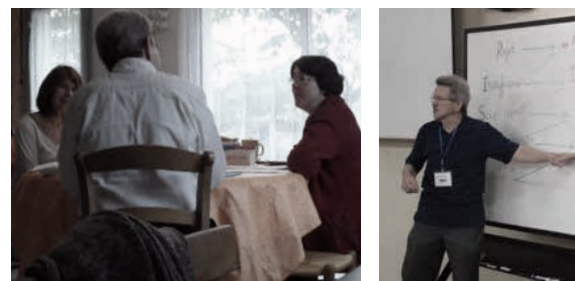
About the Writer: Ava Guinn Cooper is married to Chaplain Robert P. Cooper, Commander, United States Navy, Retired. The couple lives in Jacksonville, Florida. They have three adult children and six grandchildren.



Making Disciples

BY ROBERT BRYAN

When my wife Judy and I assumed the leadership of the Evangelical Publications Center in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in 1984, I felt we had become second-class missionaries. Yes, we sent Bible-based literature into almost every French-speaking country in Africa, but somehow that didn't seem enough. That literature was strengthening, training, and building up Christians all over the continent. Yet, in some way, it seemed our ministry was less valuable than others.



We weren't planting churches, you see. We were no longer on the front lines.

Then the Lord reminded me we had not gone to the Ivory Coast only to plant churches. We didn't go there simply to proclaim the gospel. We didn't even go just to win people to Christ.

All those things are essential, but they were not *why* we went to Africa. We were in Côte d'Ivoire to make disciples of Jesus Christ—fully-devoted followers of our Lord.

The overarching purpose of all missionary activity is to make disciples of Christ. Preaching the gospel so people will place their faith in Christ is essential, but it's not the end we seek. Planting churches is critical, but it's not the goal of our efforts. They serve as ways to help us reach the goal. The end game is to make disciples.

When that truth sank in deeply, it changed my attitude towards "just" publishing Bible-based books. And it also got me thinking. If we're to make disciples, what is involved in moving people from unbeliever to believer to disciple? What does a disciple look like? Can someone not be a disciple and still be a believer? How does a disciple act? How do they react to life events? What characterizes a disciple? And how in the world do you "make" one?

Disciples always exhibit a transformed character.

Their way of living changes—not because they're following rules laid down by their pastor or the prevailing Christian culture, but because they allow God to fundamentally change their character and their way of thinking.

Joseph* started attending the church at St. Sébastien a little over a year ago, but not because he wanted to hear the gospel. He came only because he was interested in Cathy, a believer. After several months (while Cathy and her family witnessed to him and the church prayed), he told Jonathan Chéreau he had many questions about God and faith, and he'd like to talk to someone. Jonathan and I began meeting with him. Joseph hadn't lied. He had a lot of questions!

Using the *How Can Anybody Know if There Is a God?* manual, we read, "Where do you place yourself in relationship to God?" Joseph responded, "Well, two months ago I

would have said atheist. Today, I believe there is a God, and that He is active in the world." About a month later, Joseph put his faith in Christ.

Less than two weeks after his conversion, Joseph called Jonathan with another question: should he attend the rock concert he had attended for years or should he go to the JPENSE meeting? (JPENSE is an event at which non-Christians hear solid reasons faith in Christ is both intelligent and reasonable.) Wisely, Jonathan did not give him the answer. Instead, he asked Joseph some questions and pointed him to the Word.

A couple days later, Joseph called Jonathan to say he was going to JPENSE. A disciple lives differently because God has transformed his character.

Several years ago, a former French government minister said, "France has chosen to live without God." The prevailing culture dictates religion remain a private affair, never intruding into public discussion. That's in complete opposition to what discipleship is—a total transformation of one's character and way of life so as to resemble and reflect Jesus Christ. In France, a disciple definitely swims against the current.

When we first arrived in France, we bought our car from the brother of Yannick Kermorvan, a believer we had known for a long time. My conversations with the brother only confirmed what I had heard: he had no interest *at all* in hearing about Jesus. When I brought up Yannick, his brother almost immediately responded that while he loved Yannick, "Yannick's got to learn to leave his faith at the house when he comes to work."

A disciple is going to live in a way people notice. He's going to do whatever he can to bring people to Christ—even sometimes missing church.

One Sunday several months ago, Cyprien Lebacle approached me after a church service to tell me he wouldn't be at church the following week. "I have a chance to go mountain biking with some unsaved friends," he said, "and I want to take that chance to talk to them about the Lord." His friends would never accept his invitation to come to church, so Cyprien was going to them.

Weak pastor that I was, instead of berating him, I gave him a high five and prayed for him. And I prayed more people in the church would miss occasionally for that reason. ***Bringing people to Christ is a priority for a disciple***, even if it means taking the risk of going against the prevailing culture.

Exactly how do you go about making a disciple? I have come to believe we don't so much do the making, as we prepare the terrain for God to work.

After an LMC** weekend of training and teaching on relationships, Sylvain Warmoës determined he was going to obey the Lord by encouraging and affirming his colleagues in the surgical ward where he works as a nurse. The first reactions weren't positive. Encouragement and affirmation are uncommon in French culture. His coworkers thought he was trying to butter them up, but he didn't let that stop him.

"It took a long time for my colleagues to understand my real intentions, but the perseverance paid off," he told me recently. It has changed the whole atmosphere at his workplace.

Sylvain was teachable. We couldn't *make* Sylvain affirm his colleagues; we could only prepare the terrain and give him the teaching. He chose to obey and left the results in God's hands.

We follow up with each new convert, of course. We preach and teach on doctrine and apologetics. We've found, though, the most effective method of **making disciples almost always involves personal investment in the life of the believer**, spending personal time with an individual—sometimes even before they have taken the step of faith.

Matt Price spent hours with Shuang before she came to faith. She arrived from her native China to study at the University of Nantes. Other Chinese students told her about Christ. Like most of them, she was cautious and wanted to receive answers to all her questions before believing in Christ. When she finally placed her faith in Jesus, she knew what it meant, and she was all in from day one. The transformation in her life was evident. She became a courageous witness immediately. Instant disciple? Not quite. Just a prepared convert who understood

the stark differences between her Communist upbringing and the transformation in Christ, and made the commitment to follow Him.

We've discovered making disciples in France involves much more listening than talking, more asking questions than giving directions. It entails more explaining the logical foundations of why we believe than simply telling them *what* we believe. It requires helping individuals think.

It would be easier just to tell young believers what to do, rather than helping them discover what God wants them to do. It would be easier to give directions than ask questions. It would be easier to say "Do this" than ask "What do the Scriptures say?" and guiding them through their discoveries. It would be easier to push for immediate change than to wait for the Lord to transform them for permanent change. It would be easier...but it wouldn't produce disciples of Christ.

So, we try to make every activity contribute to that goal. We teach and preach and pray and host activities and spend time with people. We ask questions. We listen. We look into the Scripture with them. We show our love. And God transforms them—and us—into disciples, fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

Of course, **the single most important—and most difficult—element in making disciples is my own discipleship**. People learn best by following an example, and their hypocrite radar works 24/7. As I teach forgiveness, do I forgive? As I encourage prayer, do I pray? As I urge generosity, am I stingy? As I tell them they can trust God, do I live in a constant state of worry? I can't very well make disciples of Jesus unless I am one myself. **ONE**

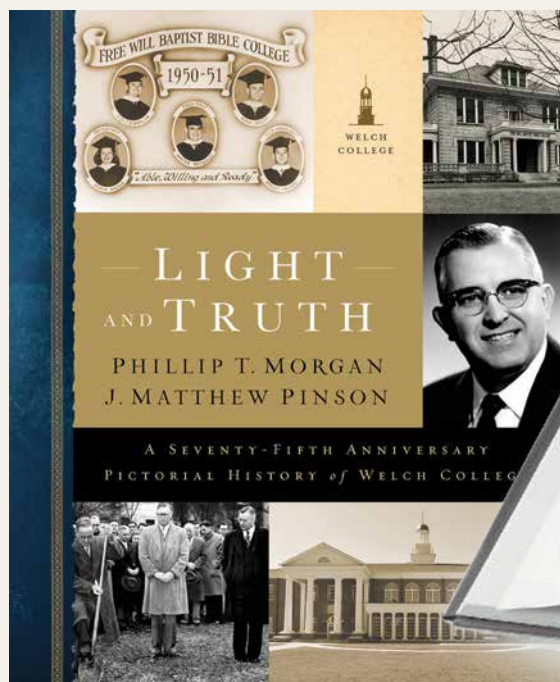
**A pseudonym*

***LMC is the Leadership Matters Course that trains leaders from churches and mission agencies around the world. Robert and Judy were instrumental in putting the course into French.*

About the Writer: Robert and Judy Bryan spent 50 years making disciples in Côte d'Ivoire and France. They will retire from full-time ministry with IM as of December 31, 2018.

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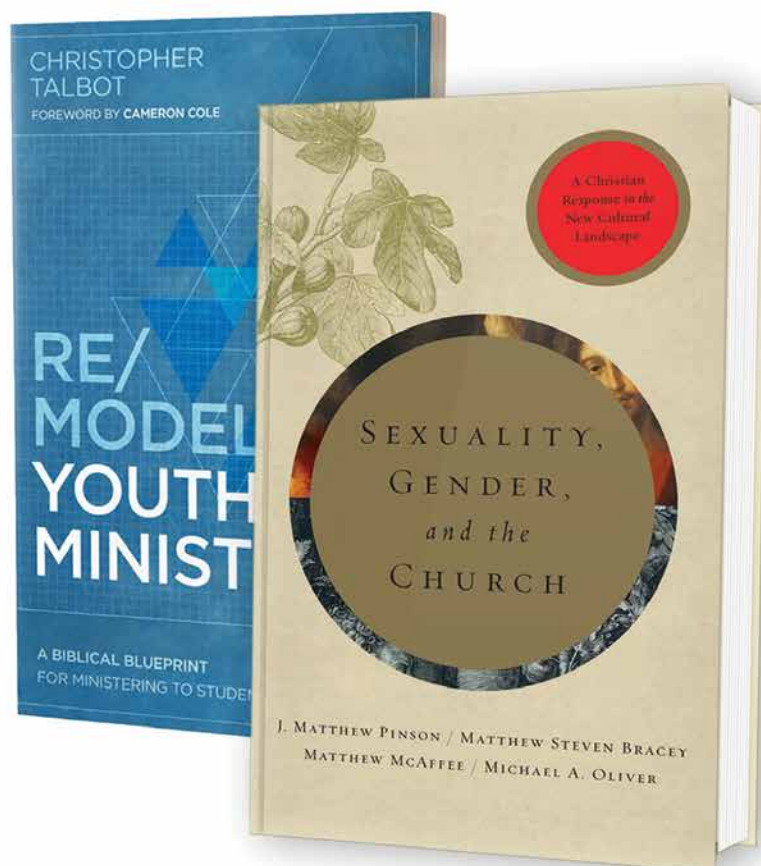
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God Has a Plan

BY THE HANNA PROJECT WORKERS

Thousands of years ago, God spoke to a despondent people through the prophet Jeremiah to reassure them He had a plan: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jeremiah 29:11). The Children of Israel had all but forsaken Jehovah, believing He had forsaken them in captivity. But God had a plan for His people, and it was a good plan intended to bring about “an expected end.”

Often, like the Children of Israel, we can be tempted to think God has abandoned us. But the words of the prophet are just as true for God’s people today as they were for the captive Children of Israel. God has a plan. Though frequently we cannot see His plan at work in the crazy circumstances of our lives, His plan is good and purposeful.

In the fall of 2015, our family arrived in southern Spain full of expectations, hopes, and dreams. God had led us to a new country to labor alongside a great team of people to bring His love to an unreached people. But within months, health issues stripped us of the majority of our team. In a foreign land, where we could not speak the language, we cried out “God, why?” But in those difficult days God whispered, “I have a plan and it is a good plan. Trust Me!”

The following two years were among the most difficult years of our lives. The struggles of learning a new language and understanding a new culture were humbling, to put it mildly. Our inability to accomplish the simplest daily tasks without help reduced us to four-year-olds asking “Why?” about everything. More than once we wondered, “Did God know what He was doing

when He led us to Spain?” But His gentle response remained the same, “I have a plan and it is a good plan. Trust Me!”

As the days and months passed, and we slowly gained confidence in our new culture and language, we began to question what ministry should look like within the reduced nature of our team (our family and an amazing Spanish couple). The original ministry strategy called for us to open an immigrant center from which we would distribute food and offer activities as a platform for the gospel. Slowly the same question formulated in all of our minds, “Can four people successfully operate a ministry of this nature?”

After a season of prayer, we agreed to volunteer at various NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) in our town. We hoped to gain a better understanding of the needs of the community as well as the logistics involved in this type of ministry. During this two-year period,





we volunteered at multiple NGOs and learned about logistics, legal requirements, administration, the ins and outs of the food bank, and so much more. The more we learned, the more convinced we became that four people could not operate a ministry of such magnitude. A growing belief that we were in over our heads began to overwhelm us. But God continued to whisper, “I have a plan and it is a good plan. Trust Me!”

Then, in November 2017, a friend from another mission organization approached us about forming a partnership with the mission community in our city to open an immigrant center. The belief was, through this partnership, we would be able to have a greater Kingdom impact than any of us could working alone. We could not believe what we were hearing! We had long felt a much larger team was needed to be effective in this ministry. In the months that followed, a local partnership made up of eight Christian mission agencies formed with the goal of reaching farther together.



In the development of this new partnership, The Hanna Project was asked to take a lead role, and my wife and I were appointed the directors of the immigrant center known as Diez 42 or Ten 42 (referring to Matthew 10:42: “And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a

cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward”). Slowly, God’s plan began to come into focus. My wife spent the better part of a year assisting the administration team of an NGO as a volunteer. Our Spanish teammate and I spent a lot of time working with a few different NGOs

learning the logistical side of food collection and distribution. Along the way, we met key people who paved the way for the establishment of Diez 42. We even saw God’s faithfulness displayed as He redeemed the years of work our former teammates put into the development of this ministry through connections and resources that exist because of their time in Spain.

We had not been able to see it, but God had a plan. Two very difficult years were not a waste. God had, in fact, been working behind the scenes, pruning and preparing us to accomplish an “expected end.” Diez 42 is now a legally-recognized NGO in Spain. It currently provides food to 120 families each week. In addition to food distribution, Diez 42 offers an array of educational services and is in the process of developing an entrepreneurial training program, all of which provides regular opportunities to live and declare the gospel. God most definitely had a plan, and it was a good plan!

When I reflect on God’s faithfulness to our family and how He was unfolding a good plan, I am reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul: “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor?” (Romans 11:33-34)

We do not pretend to know the depths or the far-reaching implications of God’s plan for our lives or Diez 42. His ways truly are past finding out. What we do know is He has a plan for our lives, and it is a good plan.

He also has a plan for your life. You may not be able to see it, but that is just the point; His ways will always be beyond our ability to comprehend. When you are in the middle of difficult days and find yourself asking, “God, why?” or questioning His wisdom and leading in your life, remember He has a plan, and it is a good plan! Trust Him; His thoughts and plans for you are good and intended to bring about an “expected end.” **ONE**

Published anonymously to protect the ministry among immigrants in Southern Spain.



Snapshots Around the World

France: Robert Bryan began mentoring two church council members, Jonathan and Michelle Chéreau, through the 15-lesson Perspectives on the World Christian Movement course on August 27. The course gives a biblical perspective of missions and explains the Christian's role in declaring His name to all nations.

Spain: Neil and Mandi Morgan, assisting Pastor José Manuel at the Esperanza Church in Alcalá de Henares, Spain, began a new children's Sunday School ministry in August.



Bulgaria: On Sunday, August 26, Trif Trifonov baptized six people in the Black Sea. Four children, including MK Phoebe Provow, and two women testified of their faith in Jesus through baptism.

Partner Ministry: A two-week Leadership Matters Course was held in El Salvador August 12-25. Jeff and Susana Turnbough and Lázaro Riesgo served as three of the 11 trainers.

The Hanna Project in Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire—Multiple delays and lost luggage did not deter members of the THP team to Doropo, Côte d'Ivoire. All team members made it to Doropo



by August 13. Once on-site, the group split into two teams. One focused on working with the Ivorian medical staff; the other on construction.

The medical team assisted Ivorian medical personnel at the Doropo Hospital with surgeries, delivered babies, and met medical needs of hundreds of patients. The construction group assisted with painting, tile work, installation of an AC unit, and window installa-

tion for the new LaVerne Miley Medical Block as well as general maintenance and repairs of the hospital. THP team returned August 21.

Team members included team leader and THP Director Sam McVay, IM General Director Clint Morgan, physician and IM Director of Field Partnerships Dr. Kenneth Eagleton, and IM Director of Member Care Dr. Neil Gilliland. **ONE**

Three IM Family Members Die

Antioch, TN—IM recently lost three long-time family members. Each contributed immeasurably to overseas missions efforts and the Kingdom.

Paul Wilton Robinson,

pioneer missionary to Uruguay, entered his heavenly home Sunday, August 19, 2018. The 93-year-old died of cardiac arrest.



Appointed as missionaries to Uruguay in 1960, Paul and his wife Amy departed for language school in August 1961. The Robinsons planted churches and developed a camp for church members. A natural evangelist, Paul's love for people translated into a desire to see them know His Savior. Paul believed his layman status encouraged Uruguayan laymen to serve and be witnesses. The Robinsons retired from missionary service in 1992, after 32 years of service with IM. They continued ministering to Hispanics after they settled in Smithville, Tennessee.

Missionaries, missionary kids, and local mourners filled the chapel of DeKalb Funeral Chapel in Smithville, Tennessee, for the funeral service on Thursday, August 23.

Charlie Hingst,

long-time volunteer with IM, was welcomed to Heaven, September 11. Born February 2, 1922, "Mr. Charlie" joined the IM staff as a volunteer the Monday after his retirement from Otis Elevator Company and ministered to missionaries almost 30 years.



At 65 years old, the former WWII Merchant Marine radio officer wasn't ready to sit around all day. Instead, he did "whatever six women" told him needed doing.

He began working full-time with a partial pay package but quickly asked to volunteer. He retired in 2013, at the age of 91.

His funeral was held September 15 at The Donelson Fellowship in Nashville, Tennessee.

Willie Jean (Barker) Deeds

entered life eternal on September 12, 2018. She suffered for several years from Alzheimer's and cancer.



Jean accepted Christ as Savior as an 18-year-old, after hearing the testimony of a Welch College quartet in her native Arkansas. She attended Welch, where she met Earnie Deeds. They married in 1957 and graduated together in 1958. After four years of pastoral

ministry in the States, the Deeds were appointed as career missionaries in 1962.

Initially, they settled in Campinas, strengthening the first Free Will Baptist church in Brazil. Jean played music and developed a variety of ministries for women and children. In subsequent years, they worked in Jaboticabal and Conselheiro Lafaiete where they planted strong churches. Each congregation organized, purchased property, and constructed church buildings under the Deeds' leadership. Jean led church choirs, taught Bible studies, ministered to women, and exercised hospitality while raising their five children.

The couple retired in 1998, after 35 years of ministry in Brazil. Yet, they did not retire from ministry. Serving in their local church, they also were among the first to join the Ambassador program, capably representing IM in Oklahoma churches as they raised awareness of IM's efforts around the world and promoted the World Missions Offering.

Her funeral was held at Randall University in Moore, Oklahoma, on September 17.

Full releases are available at www.iminc.org. **ONE**



HOW TO BRING THE DENOMINATION TO AN END

(IN SEVEN EASY STEPS)

BY J. MATTHEW PINSON

An important disclaimer: the seven steps below are an exercise in satire. I certainly do not think we need to bring our denomination to an end. But I am convinced this is the way to do it. I am concerned we are tempted to be intimidated by the spirit of the age—to panic and thus do these things listed. We are all in this together, brothers and sisters, and we have to think and pray hard about how to overcome this temptation we all face, and which is shared with faithful Christians in other denominations.

We could write on the best ways to strengthen the denomination, to conserve our rich heritage of doctrine and practice, to worship faithfully, to foster growth in our churches, etc. But this article is about one thing and one thing only: the quickest way to bring the Free Will Baptist denomination to an end.

STEP ONE: GET THE ANSWERS WRONG

Jump to conclusions about why people—especially young people—leave or don’t attend church. Then assume from those wrong conclusions why Free Will Baptists have a shortage of ministers or why some of our churches are dying. Assume the reasons young people are leaving Christianity and becoming Nones (those without religious preference or affiliation) are stylistic and cultural. Do everything possible to make preaching, teaching, worship, music, and youth ministry as much like secular pop culture as possible, since you are certain these “missing” features are why young people are leaving the church.

Rely on anecdotal data and miss out on all the credible research conducted by sociologists and scholars like Christian Smith, Melinda Lundquist Denton, Kenda Creasy Dean, etc., and studies by people like Thom Rainer (LifeWay), Ken Ham (Answers in Genesis), the Barna Group, and others. These studies all show that young people are leaving all sorts of churches of all cultural and stylistic types *at the same rate*—traditional to contemporary, rural to urban, liturgical to charismatic, small to megachurch. Misunderstand the *actual* reasons these researchers say young people are leaving the church: extreme segmenting of churches according to age, generation, and cultural preference; the resulting lack of intergenerational relationships and mentoring; shallow teaching from the pulpit and Sunday School; lack of depth, substance, and honest answers to tough intellectual questions, etc.

Fail to engage with studies like the Barna church architecture survey, which indicates two-thirds of Millennials prefer to worship in a traditional worship space and prefer the word *classic* to *trendy* when describing their

church experience.

Continue to rely on the answers from the 1990s non-denominational megachurch movement that failed to produce lasting results in changed lives, growth in holiness, and a well-developed Christian worldview among evangelicals.

STEP TWO: LOSE YOUR NERVE

Panic. Allow these mistaken assumptions about young people leaving church and the swift cultural changes in our secularizing society to throw you into a panic. In your panic, throw various cultural solutions at the problem of how to grow your church, hoping something will stick and work. Lose the courage of your convictions regarding the strong beliefs and practices your Free Will Baptist forefathers taught were biblical, theologically true, and important.

STEP THREE: BECOME A WANNABE

Long to be somebody else. Allow the fear and lack of courage in step two to create a profound lack of confidence in your identity as a Free Will Baptist. This lack of confidence will compel you to a *wannabe* mentality, in which you *wannabe* like others in evangelicalism that seem successful in the cultural subgroup you admire. Fill in the blank: non-denominational, megachurch, Independent Baptist, Southern Baptist, young restless and Reformed, charismatic, quasi-charismatic, seeker-sensitive, liturgical, etc.

(And make sure the people you *wannabe* are Christian celebrities with large, successful churches.) Begin to imitate these individuals, ministries, and movements carefully, downplaying distinctive Free Will Baptist doctrine, practice, and tradition.

STEP FOUR: EMPHASIZE STYLE OVER SUBSTANCE

In keeping with the above strategies, emphasize style over substance. Cling to the idea that tweaking and adapting to cultural preferences that appeal to a particular group of people is the silver bullet that will finally give us a church-growth breakthrough. Fail to understand that remaking church into a cultural experience (whether symphony hall, rock concert, or hoedown)—especially in our increasingly diverse neighborhoods—will further divide the Body of Christ. Thereby, you will create special interest groups that prefer generational or cultural preference rather than the gospel and the Word.

Strongly de-emphasize substance and doctrine, since doctrine divides. Be careful to avoid teaching doctrine in every area of church life. Make sure each sermon you preach, each Sunday School lesson you teach, and each song you sing has a minimal level of theological content. Especially downplay your Free Will Baptist doctrine, practice, and tradition. When you come to a passage that strongly teaches distinct Free Will Baptist doctrine or practice (the possibility of apostasy, the necessity of baptism by immersion for church membership, or the washing of the saints feet for example), you must choose between one of two options. Option one (preferred): preach and teach the passage in such a way that anyone in any audience could agree with it. Option two (while not preferable) will work almost as well: touch briefly on Free Will Baptist teaching and move on to the next point as quickly as possible. Never forget that preaching and teaching Free Will Baptist doctrine and practice will make people from other traditions uncomfortable and therefore discourage them from joining your church, thus cutting down your numbers and hampering church growth.

STEP FIVE: TAKE THE SHORT VIEW

Never take the long view. Always emphasize short-term results. Use only methods that bring the quickest results, even when those methods have never been used in church history, and you have no inkling of unintended consequences. Don't buy into the idea that long-term growth in the number of true disciples comes from church health, from building your church on the sufficiency of Scripture and the ordinary means of grace.

You resolutely don't want to do this. It takes too long. You're going to be retired in 30 years. You don't have time. People will get bored (or leave) without quicker, bigger results. You don't have the luxury of playing the long game. And you can't guarantee how it will turn out. Instead, place a premium on instant results. Lean on the examples of celebrity pastors who have experienced amazing growth in their megachurches, and pattern your church after them.

STEP SIX: EMPHASIZE THE ATTRACTIVE OVER THE MISSIONAL

Engage in consumerism and segmented marketing. Attract people to the church like a marketer attracts customers to a product. Master the science of segmented marketing—according to generational and cultural tastes and preferences—rule number one for getting the customer to buy and sell more. Thus, do everything you can to divide the young from the old, since standard marketing research shows consumers will not buy things as readily if those items do not appeal to their generation, tastes, and preferences.

Never forget the customer is always right, and customers want to be entertained. Give each worship service the highest entertainment value possible. If you lose your edge, you will lose members to churches with bigger and better entertainment. Don't fall for the approach that simply being a church with excellence in vibrant personal evangelism, disciplined prayer, expository preaching, helping hurting people, and engaging in teaching, long-range discipleship and leadership development is the recipe for ultimate, healthy, long-term gospel growth. This sort of missional thinking is the death knell to successful attractional ministry, resulting in members transferring to other evangelical churches.

STEP SEVEN: DEVELOP AMNESIA

Try really hard to forget, and perhaps this should be Step one. Regardless of the order, it's the most essential step. Try really, really hard to forget. Carefully develop in yourself and those around you a systematic amnesia about the Christian tradition, the great cloud of witnesses, the saints and martyrs who have gone before you in the faith. This is especially true regarding the Free Will

Baptist tradition. In every area of church life, emphasize *discontinuity* with the past. Embrace a *revolutionary* model rooted in pop culture and demographic studies in one hand and a Bible in the other. Do not give in to the temptation to adopt a *reformational* model, retrieving forgotten Christian and Free Will Baptist faith and practices and thereby bringing fresh life to the church. Do not reach back to vibrant Christian reformation, evangelistic, and missions movements that emphasized the sufficiency of Scripture for the life and ministry of the church.

When you prepare for sermons, never read commentaries written before your lifetime. Instead, read catchy how-to books. Especially never read books from the Christian past about how to do church. Only read books on church and ministry by living authors. Never sing songs written before your lifetime. And, when it comes to doctrine, especially Free Will Baptist confessional heritage, read only blogs. Don't read books about or by people who lived before you were born. In short,

initiate a clean break with the past in all your church practices.

Carefully cultivate amnesia. Live in and for the present. And never fall for the old line that *only by conserving the riches of the heritage that has been bequeathed to us will we have anything to hand down for our future*, to our children, and their children, and their children's children.

So, let's review the seven far-too-easy steps to bring the Free Will Baptist denomination to an end:

1. Get the answers wrong.
2. Lose your nerve.
3. Become a wannabe.
4. Emphasize style over substance
5. Take the short view.
6. Emphasize attractional over missional.
7. Develop amnesia. **ONE**

About the Writer: J. Matthew Pinson is president of Welch College in Gallatin, Tennessee: www.welch.edu.



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Welch Admits First Students in Master of Arts in Teaching

On September 12, the Welch Graduate Admissions Committee voted to admit the first students to its new Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) degree, according to Dr. Greg Kettelman, vice president for strategic initiatives and graduate dean at Welch College. College officials anticipate program approval from college accreditors in December 2018 and courses for the 33-hour master's program will begin January 19.

"Our alumni and denominational supporters have long sensed the need for a Welch College graduate program in education," Kettelman

said. "Admission of these MAT students is truly a historic moment that demonstrates God's provision for our needs. There has never been a greater need for teachers who have a biblical worldview and who pursue their calling with excellence. Our vision for the Welch MAT is to foster excellence in teaching from a distinctively Christian perspective."

The Welch MAT offers tracks in teaching, special education, and higher education pedagogy. The MAT is designed so all ten-week courses, offered both on campus

and live online, may be completed in 18 months. Scholarships and financial aid are available for qualifying students.

Provost Matthew McAfee said, "I commend Dr. Kettelman for his hard work in getting this program off the ground. We are thankful for the Lord's blessing in bringing the MAT to fruition."

It is not too late to apply for admission to the MAT. For more information go to welch.edu/ma-teaching or contact Dr. Greg Kettelman: gkettelman@welch.edu or 615-675-5312.

Welch College Named 13th Best Regional College in the South

Welch College received notification the institution ranks 13th among "Best Regional Colleges" (South Region) in *U.S. News & World Report's* 2019 edition of America's Best Colleges rankings, according to Welch president Matt Pinson. The numerical ranking of 13 indicates a rise of 13 places above the 2018 edition ranking of 26. Welch had the fifth highest ranking of all colleges and universities in Tennessee

in the "Best Value" category, which combines quality and price.

"This is a tremendous blessing!" President Pinson enthused. "Although one of our eventual goals was to move this high in the rankings, it was a pleasant surprise to do so this year. This ranking demonstrates our quality not only to students and supporters but also those outside the Welch family. It

also reassures prospective students and their parents that Welch remains a top-quality institution of higher learning that delivers on their educational investment, while keeping Christian learning and spiritual formation at the heart of their college experience."

The "Best Regional Colleges" category where Welch is ranked includes 248 institutions that focus

on undergraduate education and offer a range of degree programs in the liberal arts and professional fields such as business, nursing, and education. Colleges in this category are ranked within four geographic regions: North, South, Midwest, and West.

U.S. News rankings offer opportunities to judge the relative quality of institutions based on widely accepted indicators of excellence: peer assessment, graduation and retention rates, faculty resources, student selectivity, financial resources, alumni giving, and more. Welch received especially high marks in four strategic areas—percent of classes with under 20 students (90%), student/faculty ratio (9/1), first-year student retention rate (72%), and freshmen in the top 25% of their high school class (66%). Welch's peer reputation ranking also increased from 2.4 to 2.7.

Provost Matthew McAfee said, "I am excited to see such a remarkable increase in our ranking this year. Welch College is committed to excellence in our academic programs, and our momentous rise in this national ranking underscores our efforts. We thank the Lord for His continued favor upon the ministry of Welch College."

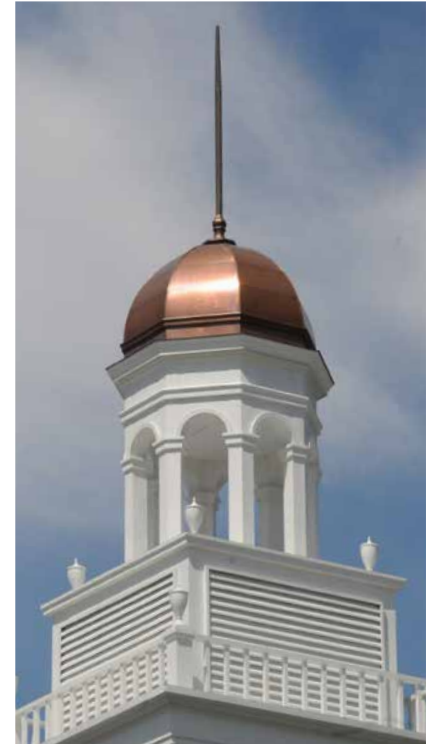
More information is available about the rankings and methodology in the annual America's Best Colleges guidebook at: www.usnews.com/collegemeth. For more information about Welch, email gotowelch@welch.edu or visit www.welch.edu.

College Marks Highest Enrollment in 34 Years

For the Fall 2018 semester, Welch College enrolled the highest number of students in 34 years, according to Provost Matthew McAfee. Total enrollment statistics indicate 404 students from 22 states and five foreign countries. "I am delighted to see this impressive increase in our enrollment numbers," McAfee said. "We pray the Lord will continue His transformative work in the lives of these students He has entrusted to our care."

McAfee further indicated excitement regarding the number of new students, both freshmen and transfer. This fall, 93 new students enrolled in on-campus programs at Welch, a 21% increase from last year's new freshman and transfer enrollment of 77. A total of 116 new students joined the student body for the new school year, including graduate, online, and adult studies enrollments. This is the highest enrollment since 1984, when students numbered 417.

At press time, the college reported 200 dormitory students, 53 commuter students, 27 graduate students, 18 enriched adult studies students, 38 online/lifetime learning students, and 68 dual enrollment students. The fall's full-time equivalency (FTE) is 300 students, the highest in 12 years.



President Matt Pinson said, "We're thankful to God for this blessing of *another* increase in dormitory and FTE enrollment. This is the most dormitory students we've had in many years, and we're grateful to the Lord for His providential blessing. In a time when most college and university dorm enrollment is flat or declining, it's wonderful to see ours going up."

To contact Welch College for more information, email recruit@welch.edu or visit the college's website at www.welch.edu.



Just a Little Stone

BY DAVID WILLIFORD

It was just a rock. It had been in the stream for a long time, the constant flow of water shaping it smooth and round. Many had walked by or over it as they forded the small stream, paying no attention.

Then one day, a young man stopped and examined the stone. He picked it up, along with four other stones, and put them in his bag. That small stone no one had ever noticed was about to change history. It would be remembered forever because David the shepherd picked it up and used it to destroy a giant.

Few people, as they surveyed the battle that day, saw deliverance in the shape of a small, round stone. But they forgot God delights in using small, insignificant things that few notice to make huge impacts. We're guilty of the same thing. We get excited about the big, the spectacular, the flashy, and we forget that often, the greatest impact is made by the small and ordinary that God uses to do spectacular things.

For example, Welch College typically raises more than \$1.3 million in gift income each year. Would it surprise you to know the median gift amount to Welch is \$25? Yes, you read it right—\$25. Welch has some donors who make large contributions each year, but the reality is most of our gifts come from people of modest means who give consistently because they believe in the mission of Welch College. That is, they believe in the young people at Welch College.

For many years I signed the gift receipt letters for our donors, and there were names I came to know well, because they gave every month. Most of those who gave monthly did so through a bank draft or recurring credit card gift. We knew we could depend on them. They showed their faithfulness month after month.

In a staff meeting earlier this year we were talking about those folks and the impact they make in the lives of students. They have impacted pastors who continue to fill pulpits, missionaries scattered around the world, and laity who serve their local church as deacons, Sunday School teachers, worship leaders, children's church workers, and in a myriad of other ways. My local church has numerous laymen, graduates of Welch, who serve in many areas. Each was touched by the faithful giving of individuals who consistently invested in the lives of Welch students.

As an advancement team, we decided we wanted to do two things: 1) honor these faithful givers and 2) encourage others to join their ranks. To do that, we are forming *The Torchbearer Club*.

Torchbearers are individuals or families who commit to become monthly donors through a bank draft or automated credit card gift of at least \$25 per month. *The Torchbearer Club* members are honored by the college by receiving a Welch College tee shirt, discounted admission to Flames athletic events, a special reception at the annual Bible Conference/Forum event, and an e-newsletter to keep them apprised of what is happening in the college community.

Monthly giving allows you to give larger gifts than you might imagine. A \$25 per month gift allows you to give \$300 per year. \$50 per month provides a \$600 annual gift. And a monthly gift of \$83.34 lets you make a \$1,000-per-year contribution!

Honestly, I realize many people can't write a check for a one-time gift of \$300, \$500, or \$1,000. But when those amounts are broken into monthly sums, they become

much more doable. Why not join this group today? I'm a member, and I'd like for you to join me.

Together we will make an eternal difference. Lives will be changed and eternities altered because of our giving. Our team would like to invite you to be a part of this special group. Enjoy the satisfaction of knowing you are touching the lives of young people who, in turn, touch the world around them with the good news of Jesus Christ. To join, simply email Derek Altom at daltom@welch.edu or call him at 615-675-5262. He will be more than happy to help you.

You may think your gift is small and will not make a difference, but that's not true. Like the small, smooth stone in the hands of David, your faithful gifts to Welch College will be empowered by the hand of the Lord, and He will use them to defeat spiritual giants, tear down strongholds of Satan, and bring victory to the Kingdom of God.

Join us. And together, let's go destroy some Goliaths. **ONE**

About the Writer: David Williford is vice president for institutional advancement at Welch College. Learn more: www.welch.edu.



To join
The Torchbearer Club,
contact Derek Altom
at daltom@welch.edu
or 615-675-5262.

Contending for the Faith, Part 2

BY MATTHEW MCAFFEE

Jude 3, 17-20

The early church faced similar problems to those confronting the church today—both internally and externally. Jude urged these believers “to contend for the faith” (verse 3). In the last issue, we described what it means to contend and identified those things against which we must contend. In this issue, we turn our attention to how the church today should respond:

Part 2: Contending for the Faith Today

Outside the church, just as in Jude’s day, there is growing hostility toward the Christian gospel. Jude exhorted believers to live a consistent Christian life rooted in the gospel handed down to them. This is the exhortation we need to heed in our own world today.

Consider Francis Schaeffer’s transformational apologetic in *The God Who Is There*:

It is not enough for the church to be engaged with the state in healing social ills, though this is important at times. But when the world can turn around and see a group of God’s people exhibiting substantial healing



in the area of human relationships in their present life, then the world will take notice. Each group of Christians is, as it were, a pilot plant, showing that something can be done in the present situation, if only we begin in the right way (page 166).

For us to have a faithful witness toward the outside world, we must hold fast from within. In verse 21, Jude urged readers to keep themselves in the love of God.

What is the love of God? Certainly, this references our love for God, but love for God has outward manifestations toward those around us. It is loyalty for God and His ways, which, in turn,

extends to every relationship. As the two greatest commandments summarize the whole of God’s law, it is loyalty in our devotion toward God (love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, and might) and loyalty in our devotion toward others (love your neighbor as yourself).

In John’s letters to the church, the Apostle spends much time commending the love of God as his antidote for false doctrine. Notice the following statements on love:

- “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16).

- “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him” (1 John 5:1).
- “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).
- “This is love, that we walk according to the commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it” (2 John 6).

John has much to say about love. Like Jude, John’s letters demonstrate a connection between right doctrine (love for God) and sacrificial love for one another. It flows directly from the gospel message itself.

In short, we must affirm this orthodox faith, both in belief and practice, if we are to affect the world for Christ. Furthermore, our zeal for right doctrine fans the flame of love for one another. Without love, doctrine becomes cold and detached from reality. Without doctrine, love becomes self-serving and driven by the passing fancies of culture. It is a subjective, emotional affirmation of others void of any objective standard of love. In essence, it is no love at all.

A problem in Jude’s day, false teaching is also a problem today. This generation of believers needs to embrace the whole counsel of God, internalizing the principles of His truth so it can be applied to the challenges of our world. We do this both verbally and in practice. We can’t have one without the other.

So what does this look like, specifically? Jude explains:

- Build yourselves up in the most holy faith.
- Pray in the Holy Spirit.
- Await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

As we do these things, we are enabled to minister to hurting members of the community, both inside the community of faith and in the world of chaos around us. Again, Jude defines our love toward others:

- Have mercy on some who doubt (verse 22).
- Save some by snatching them out of the fire (verse 23).
- Have mercy on some with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh (verse 23).

This is the call of the gospel, and it is the call we are attempting to answer at Welch College. We are

answering the call to *contend for the faith*. This involves articulating the truth of the gospel verbally, and exhibiting faithful obedience to that truth in practice.

As leaders of the church today, we must continue to commit ourselves to the task of contending for the faith. It is our calling to hand down what was given to us. We need to do so within the unique contours of our culture, recognizing the unique challenges this generation faces. We must embrace the faith “once delivered unto the saints.” Receive what is being given. Believe it. Live it in the church and in the world. Internalize it and allow it to transform your thinking and behavior. Only then will you be able to pass it along to the generations to come.

This is how we can make a difference in this world, contending for the faith once delivered to the saints. May God help us as we join together in the work of His Kingdom, “awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternity.” **ONE**

About the Columnist: Dr. Matthew McAfee is provost and professor of biblical studies at Welch College: mjmcafee@welch.edu.



Adding Up the Numbers

BY BRENDA EVANS

“This makes 843 sticks,” Mama Eliza, my paternal grandmother, wrote in her diary on September 17, 1934. She meant the sticks of tobacco hung up in the barn that cutting season. It mattered. She needed to know. Standing in plain sight was a long winter without her husband, my Granddaddy D. Without his oversight; without his income from hauling jobs in their beat-up old truck; without him to provide for her and their eight children.

Granddaddy D died four months earlier in a freak farm accident, a hundred steps from their front door. He lost his balance climbing over a hog-wire fence. The tobacco stick he carried impaled him during the fall, and he died two days later in a Nashville hospital. Selling a jag of dark-fired tobacco over the next few months would be her main cash income without Granddaddy D.

Every part of raising dark-fired tobacco in Middle Tennessee in 1934 was labor intensive. After the leafy stalks were cut in the field, heavy four-foot sticks were hung high on the barn’s tier poles. Within a few days, firing began.

Long rows of hickory slabs were set afire on the barn’s dirt floor then smothered to a smolder with hardwood sawdust. Acrid smoke and ventilation in the barn drew out the tobacco’s moisture, leaving supple rust-colored leaves to be stripped from the stalks, tied into bundles

called “hands,” bulked, and sold. If the price stayed high enough, it meant good cash for the winter months.

Granddaddy D was gone, but the work had to go on. Their son Tal, age 20, began the firing. Mama Eliza and her daughters hauled hickory slabs for him. On October 12, she wrote: *This is D’s birthday he would of Been 50 if he had Lived untill today.*

She bought a neighbor’s milk cow and hired a man to plow *on the lower side of the road Breaking up ground to sow Oats*. She and her five girls dug sweet potatoes and made green-tomato catsup. Hay was cut and brought in. Corn picked. Fires built and allowed to die down in the tobacco barn, then rebuilt. And on it went.

Over the next 40 years, Mama Eliza records her life in numbers and figures—accounts of how many, how much, who, and what. At the end of 1934, the year Granddaddy D died, she compiled a list of deaths and

dates for 17 relatives and friends (including Granddaddy D), a practice she continued until her death 40 years later. She noted births, too, and eight marriages, including three of her oldest children: Guy (my father), Irene, and Lucille.

She tallied buckets of blackberries bought from neighbor children over nine July days, 15-and-a-half gallons for \$2.52. She recorded pains and pleasures as well: a storm ripped the canvas off Irvin Groves' tobacco plant bed on March 31. Two neighbors traded cars on April 1. Another came home from the U.S. Marines on April 10. "Old Jersey" birthed a calf on May 19, and the red sow had pigs on October 28.

As the years passed, her records became more detailed. In 1936, she wrote, *I got white face cow from Dick* [a son-in-law]. Four years later, she sold the cow's second calf for \$41.70. She kept records of debts and loans, too. *Leslie* [her third-born son] *Let me have 16.00 at Xmas*, she recorded. Later, *Leslie paid for my overshoes 1.98. I owe Leslie \$9.00 on hauling Ties*. Below that list of debts to Leslie, she listed nine payback entries, all debts settled with her third-born son. Another June she wrote that Guy, my father and her first-born, finished shearing all the sheep and *Robbed one stand of bees. We set tobacco. Up to 90. No rain.*

On a summary page, she added up baby pig births: *The Little spotted sow has 7 pigs. the Big spotted sow has 5 pigs. The old red sow has 11 pigs*. Another notepad is devoted to measurements for her 20 or 30 sewing clients. A woman named Jeanette measured waist 30, skirt length 24, ruffle 10, waist back 15, hips 38, bust 35, sleeve from top 4. Another lists hours and payments for six workers she hired for farm and timber work, and \$1.75 she paid the peddling Rawleigh man for ointments and liniments.

A red and orange notepad from Armour's Big Crop Fertilizers has 16 pages of debts and payments and two pages of handwritten prayers for 1940. Some months she

borrowed from my father, Guy; other months she lent him money—back and forth, they went. Cash was hard to get, hard to keep. Whoever had it lent it; whoever borrowed it repaid. She kept the record.

Near the middle of that notepad she wrote two prayers to pray publicly at Rock Springs FWB Church. One is for the FWB League that had recently begun:

Dear Heavenly Father we...come to this place to worship thee, and we hope for no other purpose only to serve a true and Living God....Bless this league and each and ever one takes part. Bless the officers and teachers. Bless everybody thats our duty to pray for.

The next page lists grocery items: pineapple, coconut, oats, salt, soap, and fuses.

Beginning with her first diary in 1932, Mama Eliza recorded weather conditions: temperatures, drought, rain, wind, dust, lightning strikes, and thunderstorms. Forty years later, in her last entry, she wrote five words: *temp 61 cloudy & cool*. That day—May 24, 1973—she laid down her blue ink pen and diary for the last time. Five days later she died. With pencils and pens on 22 small notepads and diaries over 40 years, Mama Eliza wrote about a quarter million words and numbers.

Why did she write, and why so preoccupied with numbers? I don't know, but I've drawn some conclusions that may or may not be right.

The 843 sticks of tobacco in September 1934 looked like hope to Mama Eliza, a door flung open for her and the children to walk through during the long winter ahead without Granddaddy D. It meant cash until their spring garden came in. The 23 piglets from

SHE HAD GONE
FROM EMPTY
TO FULL. HER
GRATITUDE
ACKNOWLEDGES
HER FULLNESS
WAS FROM
THE LORD.

three sows was another door. They would provide meat in a few months. One or two would grow into sows or boars in the years to come. Several would be sold at the stockyard. Her numbers were about hope.

Numbers were her pile of rocks, too, her “twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan” (Joshua 4:5-11). Stones of remembrance of her awful misery when Granddaddy D died; a reminder she had not stopped and proof that she could and would go on. Numbers were a scotch between her and her fear of what was ahead.

Good numbers were also proof of the fruit of her hands and a cause for celebration of what was physically measurable: bushels of sweet potatoes, quarts of black walnuts, 12 new lambs, three dozen eggs, quarts of cream, pounds of butter. Mama Eliza was practical, not philosophical. She was a mother hen, turning her eggs to make them hatch. Many chicks meant good success.

Her figures were about gratitude as well. In her second

handwritten prayer, she began with *Heavenly Father We are so thankful...* She had gone from empty to full. Her gratitude acknowledges her fullness was from the Lord.

On a Saturday, one week before Granddaddy D’s fall, Mama Eliza wrote that he bought seven pounds of fish to fry for supper. Later that night, he took his two oldest daughters frog gigging. The next day, they went to church. For 40 years she kept a record of her simple pains and pleasures. I’m so glad. They are a model for me: work, add up the numbers, keep account of good times and bad, and say with Mama Eliza, *Heavenly Father, I am so thankful.* ONE

About the Writer: Brenda Evans is a freelance writer living on the edge of Appalachia in Ashland, Kentucky. You may contact her at beejayevans@windstream.net.



A Legacy of leadership...

When L.C. Johnson resigned as president of Free Will Baptist Bible College in 1944 to reenter the pastorate, the college board turned to L.R. Ennis to serve as president. Though he served only three years, Ennis made significant advances that benefited the school for decades to come. He hired professor Jesse P. Barrow, who later served as dean of students, and Jesse’s wife Anna as the first librarian. The college purchased a second building October 23, 1945, when the Board of Trustees paid \$10,000 for a home at 3533 Richland Avenue. The nine-room residence, known as the Sword Building, was eventually renamed Ennis Hall. It provided much-needed housing and more classrooms. Although the college grew, both in enrollment and facilities under his leadership, Ennis resigned after three years to return to the pastorate.

Help Welch College train new generations of leaders by establishing an endowment through FWB Foundation to benefit students and scholarships.



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The Invisible Hand

BY DAVID BROWN, CPA

The Wealth of Nations, by Adam Smith, is considered the first book on economics. Published in Great Britain in 1776, it includes references to the “colonies” in America. Over a thousand (sometimes dense) pages deal with topics such as the division of labor, the origin and use of money, taxes and public debt, and many other broad topics. Reading even a portion of the book provides a new perspective on freedom and the reasons our ancestors were willing to risk everything to come to America and start a new life.

Almost all of the land in Great Britain was owned by a handful of lords, so acquiring property for a family farm or ranch was practically impossible. The idea of going to America and acquiring land was a dream almost beyond imagination. The dangers of an ocean voyage and fighting to get and keep the land they received did not deter these dreamers. Freedom to own land and make choices about how to use it was a magnet too powerful to resist. In Great Britain, it was also difficult to start your own business. Professionals like carpenters, tai-

lors, cobblers, and other small business occupations were highly regulated by local governments and trade organizations. For instance, if you wanted your own tailor shop, you were required to complete a long apprenticeship. After serving that apprenticeship, the new tailor could not just start a business anywhere he wanted. Trade organizations and local governments tightly controlled how many tailor shops could be located in a particular village or town. This created an irresistible appeal to start a new life in a new country where you could start any business, in any town you wanted, without interference.

Perhaps one of the most quoted passages is in a chapter about restraining imports. Smith refers to an “invisible hand” that leads people in their decisions. In the context of the book, he is referencing being led by the invisible hand to balance supply with demand, a fundamental principle of capitalism. Great demand and



limited supply lead to price increases. Less demand and too much supply lead to price decreases. The “invisible hand” keeps demand and supply in equilibrium and thus prices are stable.

As a Christian, I certainly agree an invisible hand guides men, communities, and nations. That invisible hand is the hand of God who, in addition to keeping all natural systems functioning, also intervenes in our lives—even in the economic and financial aspects. Thank God for His invisible hand! **ONE**

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

Don't Touch Your Retirement Money (Early)

BY CHRIS COMPTON



If I had it to do over again, I would leave my retirement savings alone. I was 24 years old and thought I had no other choice. I was getting ready to make a big transition. God was leading me to move to Nashville to attend Welch College and prepare for the ministry. This meant I needed to find a new job and a place to live (on my own). The prospects and costs seemed daunting at the time. I knew I would take a big pay cut, and I knew my housing expenses would increase dramatically. In my mind, withdrawing my retirement savings seemed like the only logical thing to do.

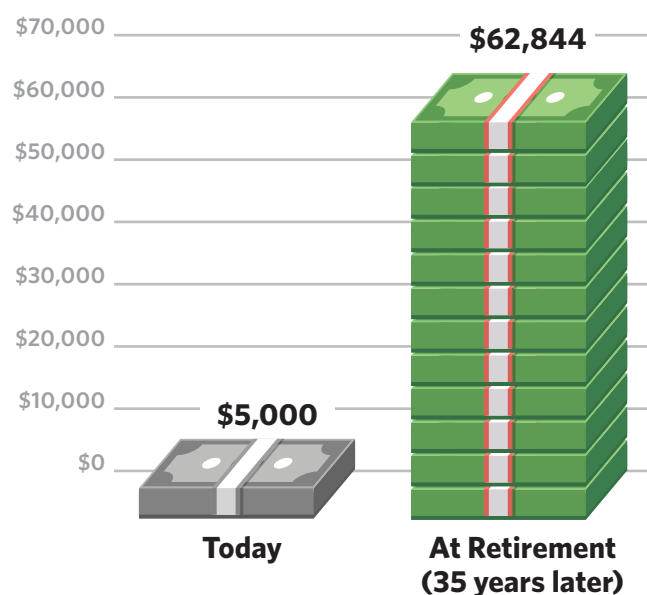
It was not. It was a terrible decision. In fact, it was a financially painful one. I withdrew a little over \$3,300. While that amount didn't seem like a great deal of money at the time, if I had left that money alone, it would have grown to today, 20 years later, to over \$14,000 (assuming a 7.5% annual earnings average). By the time I turn 65, it would expand to over \$68,800. The early withdrawal potentially cost me \$65,500 in future earnings (and this doesn't include the 20% tax and 10% penalty I had to pay).

Financial crises arise in everyone's life. Good financial wisdom tells us we should have an emergency fund for those rainy days. But that's a tall order for many, especially in today's economy. More and more people are making the same painful mistake I made. They cash out their retirement funds early. For many, cashing out their retirement seems like a relatively easy way to solve a short-term problem, whether to pay down debt, cover a home repair, help with children's college tuition, or

increase cash flow after losing a job. Others cash out just because they are changing jobs. While doing so may provide a pool of money, an early withdrawal (before age 59 ½) is very costly.

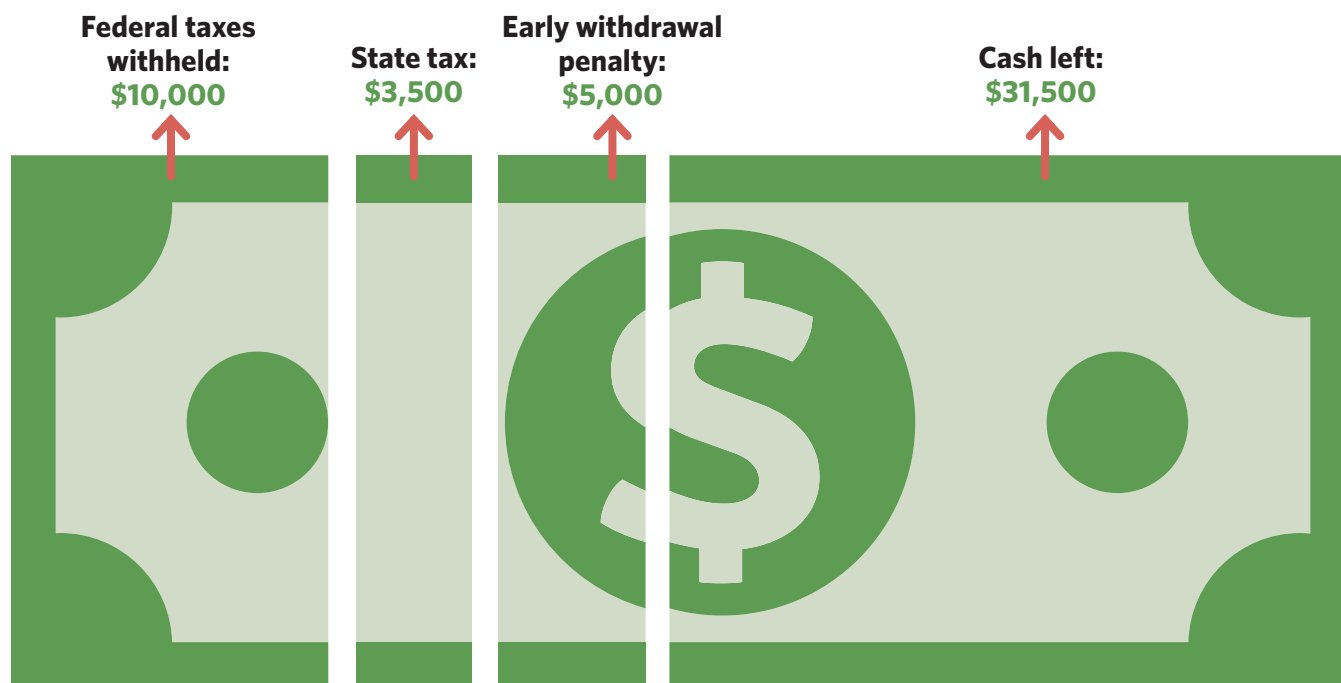
One long-term consequence of cashing out early is the loss of future growth. After you cash out those retirement savings, they're gone, and they can be very challenging to replace. With retirement plans, your contri-

Why Every Year Counts (Hypothetical pretax growth)



This is a hypothetical example that illustrates the future value of \$5,000 in 35 years. It assumes an average annual return of 7.5%. It is presented for illustrative purposes only and does not reflect actual performance or predict future results.

A \$50,000 cash out prior to age 59 ½ could cost \$18,500 in penalties and taxes.



This example assumes the following: a hypothetical 20% federal return marginal income tax rate, a hypothetical 7% state income tax, and a standard 10% penalty for early withdrawal. This example is for illustrative purposes only.

butions have the potential to compound without taxes eroding their growth. Over time, earnings generate their own earnings, gradually building your retirement savings. Remember, seemingly inconsequential dollar amounts compounded over many years can grow into significant retirement savings. (See the illustration on previous page.)

You also face an immediate consequence for withdrawing your retirement early: taxes and a penalty. When you cash out before age 59 ½, your plan administrator is required to withhold 20% of your withdrawal for taxes to the IRS. (And, depending on the state where you live, you may owe state income taxes.) In addition, cashing out early means you will have to pay a 10% early withdrawal penalty. That is a big chunk (30%) of the money you have saved for retirement that's gone and will never have the ability to grow.

When you're backed into a corner, it may be tempting to fall back on an early withdrawal from your retirement account. Don't give in to temptation and devastate your future earnings. It's your retirement account for a reason. Carefully consider the consequences of taking an early withdrawal so you don't lose money and time for potential growth like I did. Stay invested, keep saving, and plan ahead. Your future self will thank you. **ONE**

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 various fields as well as seven years of pastoral ministry experience.

Understanding Basic Investment Principles:

THE RISK/REWARD TRADE-OFF

BY JOHN BRUMMITT



Most of us have heard the advice: “Save 15% of your income to maintain your current lifestyle in retirement.” Since everyone’s situation is different, how does this work out to be good general information? Most people need 55% to 80% of their pre-retirement income to maintain their lifestyle in retirement. The 15% comes in when financial analysts assume you start saving at age 25 at a lower rate, say 6%, and then build up to 15% over the next few years.

The problem is most of us *don’t* start saving at age 25, and end up behind the curve. A 35-year-old should have a full year of income saved in his or her retirement account. By age 50, that number should increase to five times his or her annual salary saved. If you are making \$35,000 per year at age 50, you should be sitting on a nest egg of approximately \$175,000. Since the average Baby Boomer has less than \$70,000 squirreled away, it is easy to say we are missing the mark...by a long shot.

Even Millennials are not in a much better position. Their suggested savings rate has increased from 15% to 22%, a figure brought on by lagging investment markets over the last decade. Again, these numbers assume savings start at age 25; if you wait until age 35, this number jumps to an unsustainable 34% of income.

When financial analysts put these numbers together, they rely upon some things as constants. Things like in-

terest rates will stay at a constant rate over time. History has demonstrated the stock market is the best return on your investment dollars compared to any other long-term investment. Gold, land, rental homes, etc. are good diversification options but don’t carry the same track record the stock market has kept for a century. However, before you rush out and start buying stocks, let me explain. If you invest in one company or one mutual fund, you may or may not be outperforming other investments. When most people use the term stock market, they are referring to the S&P 500 Index. This index is merely a selection of companies that make up a diversified portfolio of stocks only. It doesn’t change often, when it comes to the companies inside of the index, so it makes a good reference point for people to judge the overall market. This is what most people consider when they refer to returns of the stock market. But, picking a single company or even a single mutual fund may not be enough to correlate your portfolio positively with the overall stock market.

Another issue: most of us look at the short-term when evaluating long-term investments. This means we want to capture significant growth but avoid downturns in the market. This is why most investment advisors build blended portfolios for their clients. Setting up portfolios to hold stocks, bonds, and other investments allows in-

vestors to capture the growth of positive returns and simultaneously protect against downturns in the market. This mixture of stocks, bonds, and other investments changes as you draw closer to retirement. By the time you are ready to retire, you are not looking for growth as much as you are looking for protection for previously accumulated assets.

Investments can be complicated and time consuming to weed through and select on your own. The chances of picking a single stock that will make you wealthy are not much greater than winning the lottery without buying a lotto ticket. The problem is your timeline. Most people could have bought into Amazon when it was \$1.50 dollars a share in 1997, but it took 21 years to see those share prices grow to a staggering \$1,950 per share in 2018. Twenty-one years of ups and downs, sometimes selling off over half of the value in a few days' time.

Remember, hindsight is always 20/20, and no one can pick the right investment 100% of the time. Knowing these things up front helps you make better decisions in the long run. No matter when you start saving, or at what amount, be consistent in your contributions and make sure your investment mix is appropriate for your age and timeline. Making those things constant will put you in a much better position when your retirement date arrives. **ONE**

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



Curriculum Discipleship Plan 2018 Scope and Sequence

January 2019 New Testament

Romans (Part 2)

- Week 1 - Living in the Spirit
- Week 2 - Transformed Living
- Week 3 - Submissive Living
- Week 4 - Selfless Living

February 2019 Special Topic

Authenticity and Accountability

- Week 1 - Authentic Faith
- Week 2 - Biblical Accountability
- Week 3 - Disciplined Living
- Week 4 - Intentional Faith

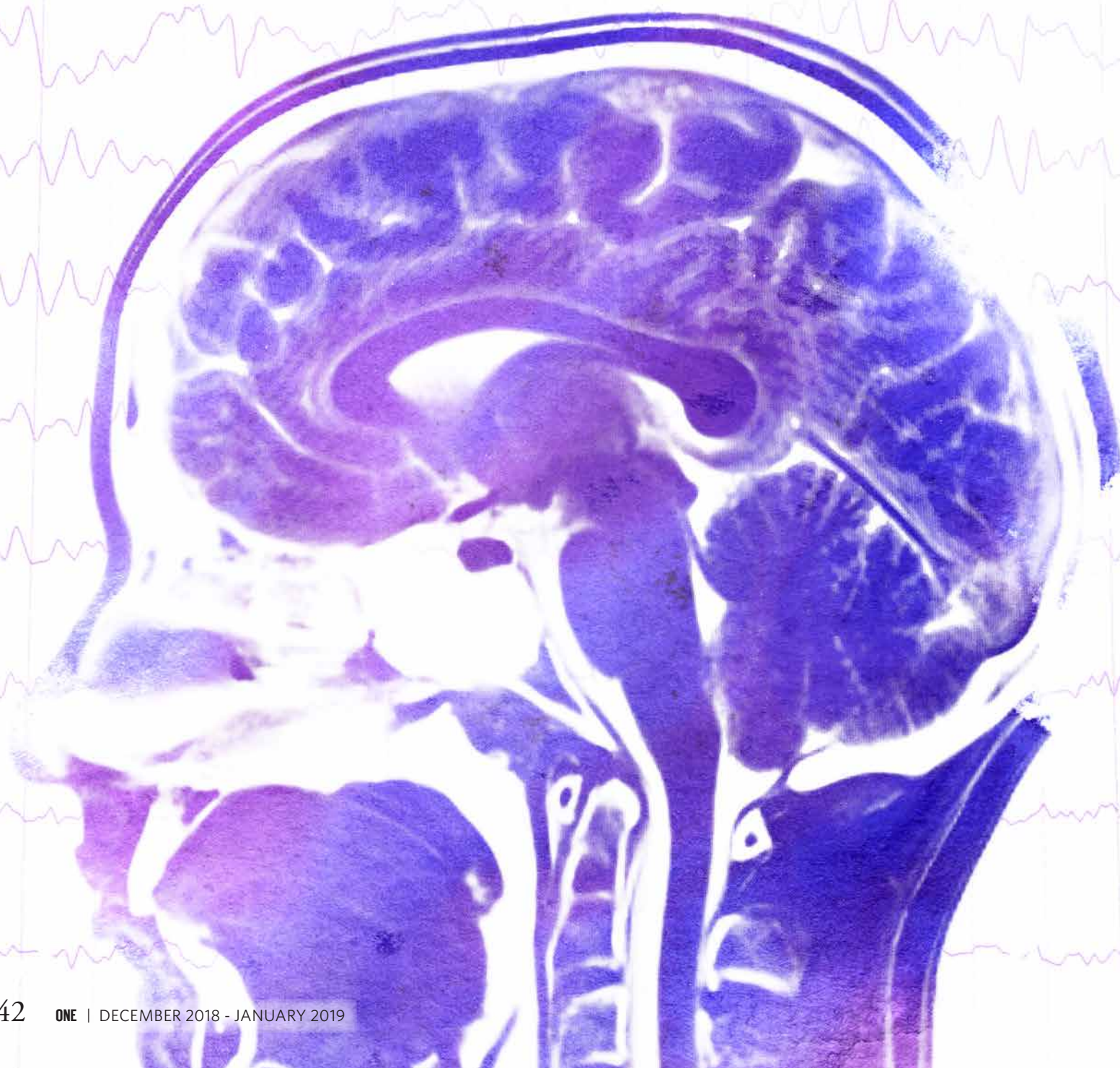


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Even If...

BY MARIE DRAKULIC



“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. **But if not,** be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Daniel 3:16-18; emphasis mine).

On March 3, 2017, we learned our son Austin had a spot on his brain that might be a tumor, a reoccurrence of the disease he has battled for several years. A little over a month later, days before Easter, the doctor called to tell us it was indeed a relapse of *medulloblastoma*—brain cancer.

The days and weeks between those moments were filled with multiple visits to the children’s hospital, tests, calls, excruciating waiting, and more fear than I had ever experienced in my life. I knew too little about what was going on inside Austin’s brain, but having been through this before, I knew too much about the possibilities. I was petrified.

One day, somewhere in that painful mix of waiting in limbo and everyday life, I heard a song on the radio. It came on just as I was pulling into the driveway, and I simply sat and listened. After the song ended, I raced into the house to look it up and play it again, but the video wasn’t even available on YouTube. I googled the lyrics and was blown away as I read:

*I know You’re able, and I know you can
Save through the fire with Your mighty hand.
I know the sorrow, and I know the hurt
Would all go away if You’d just say the word,
But even if You don’t...My hope is You alone.*

Even if—even if it was cancer...even if He didn’t heal Austin. I listened to the song over and over. I watched the backstory of the song. (Check it out here: https://youtu.be/E3wH_srDZ8k.) The more I listened, the more I learned, and the more I loved the message.

Several months ago, I purchased a coloring Bible, and I often take it with me to the hospital to color a Bible verse while I’m waiting. On April 12, 2017, while Austin was getting the MRI that would reveal the relapse, I colored and meditated on these words:

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: **Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,** I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds’ feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments” (Habakkuk 3:17-19, emphasis mine).

Even now, with one failed chemo attempt and a tumor that continues to grow slowly, I know God is able. Jeremiah said, “Ah Lord God! Behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee” (Jeremiah 32:17).

Miracles still happen, and I am hoping and praying that one day, I will be able to share the miracle at our house with you. But here’s the thing I don’t want you to miss: we don’t have to wait for the miracle to know God is good. He is good now. He is faithful today.

Even if the story doesn’t end like my heart desperately wants. *Even if* I am more broken and angry than I thought possible. *Even if* I can still say God is good. Always. No matter what! His love is constant, and His grace is big. I don’t have to understand or even like what He is doing or allowing to know that is true.

Even if... **ONE**

About the Writer: Marie and Tony Drakulic are team members with Daryl Grimes, planting Flagship FWB Church in Erie, Pennsylvania. Learn more at: www.flagshipchurch.com.



Confronting 40

BY JEREMY ESTEP

I have never understood the term *mid-life crisis*. By definition, it is an *emotional crisis of identity and self-confidence that can occur in early middle age*. Some people go through this stage of life, and it has zero effect on their lives; some struggle a bit with the dreaded turn of the decade. For others, turning 40 has detrimental consequences on everyone around them. My dad provided a tragic example when he was about my age. Sadly, it broke our home and led my parents to divorce.

I have determined to make my marriage work, and to understand the darker side of confronting 40. I always thought I would age gracefully and respectfully, handling the “old man” jokes and barbs well. It truly doesn’t seem possible that I have reached this moment—the Big 4-0. But here I am. I spend evenings doing “old man” things like sitting on the porch, mowing, puttering around the house—simply enjoying life with a loving wife and three awesome boys. Life is awesome, and even at age 40, I enjoy every minute of it.

Recently, my wife Becky and I were enjoying a beautiful evening on the porch of our eastern Kentucky home. I looked over at her and said, “I am going to tell you something crazy, and it has nothing to do with my love for you...I think I am going through a mid-life

crisis.” She just laughed and said, “What makes you think that?”

I still find myself amazed at God’s hand. I am enjoying the seventh year of my current pastorate. I work a secular job, pastor the church, serve as state moderator, and strive to be the best husband and father I can. Still, I can’t help but wonder, “Am I doing enough?” I ask this question in response to Paul’s admonition to Timothy to make “full proof” of his ministry. Burnout has no place in my thoughts, and the thought of a mid-life crisis seems foolish to me. I want to make God proud of me, and I want to fulfill His calling in my life—the driving force in everything I do.

To call turning 40 a crisis, in my opinion, sadly discounts the power of God in my life and ministry. The

term *crisis* is defined as *a time of intense difficulty or trouble*. Wow! My life isn't difficult or troubled. The adjectives happy, blessed, peaceful, and miraculous are far better descriptions of my life as I approach mid-life. I have returned to Galatians 2:20 numerous times during the past few weeks, remembering, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." When I read that verse, my restless spirit is humbled. How ironic I could have a moment of spiritual doubt when the power of God is evident in my life and His ministry.

I have spent the better part of my life outrunning this term *mid-life crisis*. I have seen the effect it can have, and

TO CALL
TURNING 40
A CRISIS, IN MY
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MINISTRY.

I have never wanted to let it influence me for a second. I live by the "faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." This is a beautiful reminder I am not going through a mid-life crisis; I am going through a mid-life *transformation*. God is preparing me for the next leg of my race as He guides me into middle age.

If you are pushing 40, 50, or even more, stop worrying about your work, performance, desires, pulpit ministry, prayer life, singing, and teaching and simply remember this advice from Isaiah 49:11: "And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted."

If you are struggling, remember where God brought you from...and where He is going to take the faithful. I'm not only confronting 40, I *welcome* 40! **ONE**

About the Writer: Jeremy Estep is pastor of Baker Branch FWB Church and moderator of the Kentucky State Association. He is a field representative for Randall House Publications.

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Skipping Stones

BY KENNETH AKERS

It is in my opinion that every young boy has in his DNA the need to throw rocks. Many times, with no regard for their surroundings, they just can't help but pick up a rock and throw it. My older sister learned this the hard way. Sorry Karen! As I've gotten older, I have come to understand there is a place and time for everything. When you find yourself standing on the bank of a creek, pond, river, lake—anything with water—you find a flat rock and skip it.

Growing up in the hills of Eastern Kentucky, with few entertainment options, skipping rocks was a great pastime. You couldn't throw just any rock, because throwing rocks was, and always will be, a competition for boys. Distance and accuracy are important. Selecting the right skipping stone is an art. It must be flat and smooth with nice tapered edges, not sharp edges.

And while distance was important, the number of skips was king. A good skip would hop across the water 15 to 20 times, but when the surface of the water was smooth, and you held the perfect stone, 40 to 50 skips were not out of the realm of possibility. Now, I know it is almost impossible to count the ripples accurately, but as a young boy, you just knew. And let's be honest, guys, we still enjoy that feeling of watching the stone zip across the water.

In John 8, Jesus addressed "throwing stones." As a trap, religious leaders took an adulterous woman to Jesus. They were trying to find any reason to accuse Him of wrongdoing. If you are familiar with the story, Jesus stooped and wrote something in the dirt.

Then He told the accusers that whoever had not sinned could throw the first stone. Then He knelt and started

writing again. While we don't know what He wrote, some speculate it may have been sins of the group. Whatever it was, the Bible says they were convicted and left.

I wonder in my own mind, if the circumstances were different, could Jesus have said, "Whoever has never made a mistake, let him throw the first stone"? Don't get me wrong, I mean a mistake, not a sin. I've often heard it said the only people who don't make mistakes are those who never do anything. Far too often, we are quick to throw stones at those who make mistakes because they are doing their best to accomplish something for God.

Could Jesus have said, "Let him who has never been jealous of another's success cast the first stone"? For some, the way to look better is to tear down those around them. Or, He could have said, "Let him who has never been envious of God's blessings on others cast the first stone." Why can't we be glad when God blesses others, rather than asking, "Why them and not me?"

I could go on and on, but you get the point. So, let me challenge you: next time you find yourself ready to throw a stone, just skip it. **ONE**

About the Writer: Ken Akers is director of Free Will Baptist Master's Men. The ministry, a part of North American Ministries, is responsible for disaster response, works closely with church planters in Operation Saturation, which helps get out the word about new churches, and oversees Impact outreach and ushering for the annual convention. Learn more: fwbmastersmen.org

Introducing New Church Planters



John and Kayla Newland are newly appointed associate church planters assisting Chad and Paula Kivette in Sevierville, Tennessee, in a joint project with the Tennessee State Mission Board. John (J.D.) comes to North American Ministries after serving as minister of music and youth at Good Springs

FWB Church in Pleasant View, Tennessee. J.D. is a Welch College graduate with a B.S. in music performance (piano) and a minor in organ and theological studies. Kayla graduated from Welch College with degrees in theology and biology. She currently teaches high school science.

New Team Members

Thomas and Shalane Carabajal have joined the team in Albuquerque as Associate Church Planters. They will oversee the welcome, children's, and discipleship ministries. Thomas and Shalane were both raised in the San Francisco, California, area and are life-long Free Will

Baptists. They bring 12 years of experience, starting at Grace FWB Church in Concord, California, and Fairfield FWB Church in Fairfield, California, as youth leaders. In 2015, they began pastoring New Life FWB Church in Antioch, California. They have been married 13 years and have



three children: Darren, Rebecca, and Krysta. They look forward to moving to Albuquerque in June 2019 and immersing themselves in the culture and community.

NAM Reaches Record High in Church Plants

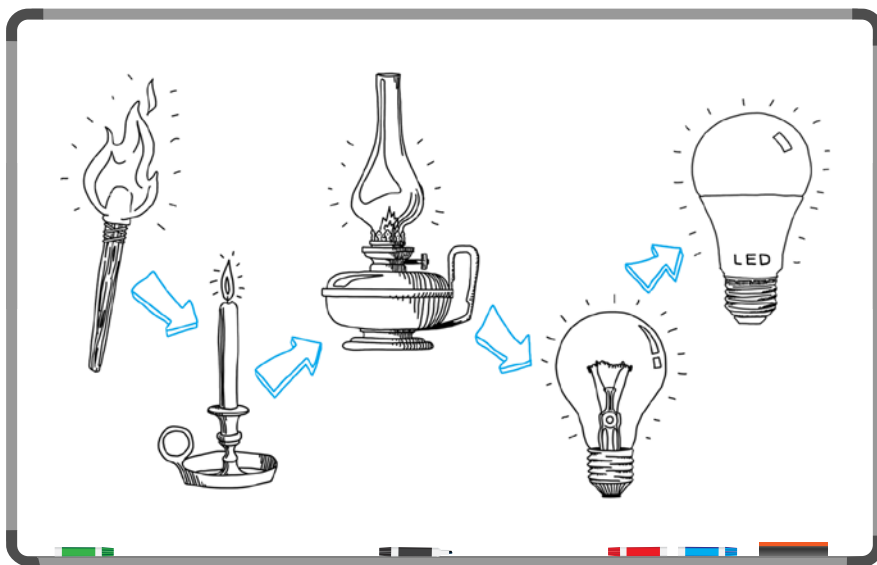
An exciting event for any church-planting agency is the launch of new churches. Each year, North American Ministries (NAM) sees several new churches launched, but during the fall and winter of 2018, NAM experienced a record number of new churches being planted. Below is a list of recent launches with church names, church planters' names and locations. Please

keep these new churches in your prayers and help them financially. Prayer and financial support is a vital part of their success.

- **Awaken FWB Church**
Tifton, Georgia
Josh and Ashley Bennett;
Shane and Jamie Suggs
- **The Bridge FWB Church**
Champaign, Illinois
Jamie and Heather Lee
Adam Garrett
- **CV FWB Church** (relaunch)
Princeton, Texas
Randall and Colette Wright;
Chris and Beth Willhite
- **Connection FWB Church**
Louisville, Kentucky
Rodney and Ashley Brazil
- **Cultivate FWB Church**
Athens, Alabama
Joel and Melanie Franks;
B.J. and Joann Eaton

The Formula for Change

BY RON HUNTER JR., PH.D.



Why do we have phones no longer connected to the wall or GPS rather than maps? Do you love emailing more than faxing? When visiting Mount Vernon recently, I was reminded the kitchens were detached from the home in the 18th century because of the fear of fire. I often recall the familiar story of the Boeing engineer who bragged about the safety of jet engines over propellers, but when asked how many flights he had taken, reluctantly admitted none.

We easily forget how difficult it was to adopt each gadget, invention, or innovative way of doing things. People naturally reject change, because they have a history with something else that worked

well. Ordering someone or some group to change brings little success because followers were *forced* to comply rather than choosing the new direction. A column like this cannot teach change but can introduce the basic ideas.

First, before people change, they must see the need for (or urgency to) change. This must come from more than just the leader; others need to echo the rationale for

change. Leaders should enlist next tier leaders (deacons, staff, key volunteers) to buy in before rolling out change to the entire group. Creating buy-in requires the second tier understanding, discussing, and improving the proposed change. When sharing the change with each group, demonstrate two major points: what will happen if change does not occur, and the advantages of the change.

If possible, demonstrate how other groups or churches have adopted the change and benefitted as a result. Consider a trial period—for the summer or for a month—so they are not committing to the change permanently.

Remember, start by asking what will happen if change does not occur? With a little work, you can help people enjoy indoor plumbing, a good sound system, air-conditioning, and family ministry that works at church *and* at home.

LEADERSHIP QUOTE

"Change is hardest at the beginning, messiest in the middle, and best at the end."

—Robin Sharma



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D6 Conference: Connecting Church and Home

BY ERIC K. THOMSEN

2018 D6 CONFERENCE | GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA | SEPTEMBER 19-21

The third week of September 2018 was a memorable one in North Carolina. Hurricane Florence slammed into the coast with tropical storm-force winds extending 335 miles, covering more than 15,000 square miles. The super-storm dumped record rainfall across the Carolinas, drowning the region in floodwaters and changing the landscape forever. Volunteers quickly arrived from across the nation bringing relief and aid. Friends, neighbors, and complete strangers worked hand-in-hand to help the region recover.

While Hurricane Florence was catastrophic, in time, another—and much different—kind of spiritual storm will also be remembered. This “storm” started September 19-21 at the D6 Conference in Greensboro, flooding the church with waves of generational discipleship and changing the landscape of ministry forever. “Years from today starts today!” exclaimed conference emcee Tommy Swindol, as he encouraged 1,214 attendees from 38 states and four countries to make D6 2018 the moment they became intentional about discipling the next generation. Friends, neighbors, and complete strangers came together to help the church recover the hearts of the next generation by connecting church and home.

Connecting on the Main Stage...

Using nostalgic “tiny green army men” as an analogy, **Dr. Ron Hunter**, executive director of Randall House and director of the D6 Conference, challenged listeners to keep the “end game” of discipleship in focus, living with the awareness that life will eventually come to

an end. “If you knew that spot—when and where it was—would you live differently? Disciple differently?” With this sobering reality in mind, Hunter redefined discipleship as a way of life, not an event. He offered simple lessons from the little green army men: recognize children and grandchildren are unique, with differing gifts and personalities. Training (discipleship) never stops, and commanding officers (church leaders) cannot do all the training. Leaders are most effective when they train *others* to train others. Hunter challenged listeners to prepare the next generation for battle, understanding that if they go untrained, they may lose the battle against a skeptical generation.

“Are we preparing our kids?” he asked in conclusion. “When their faith is attacked, do they have the ability to defend their faith confidently? Or have we left them vulnerable?”

Rob Rienow, author and co-founder of Visionary Family Ministries, confessed that in his early days of ministry, his primary focus was discipling other people’s children.



Today, he is focused on discipling his *own* children and helping other parents disciple their own children. Using Deuteronomy 6, Rienow defined a simple strategy for generational discipleship: teach the next generation to love God and Scripture by making your faith an everyday part of life. “Family worship is the engine that powers the Christian family,” he told listeners. He admonished attendees to embrace their part in the generational discipleship movement, advancing the gospel to the ends of the earth through effective partnership between church and home.

Best-selling author **Lee Strobel**, a former atheist turned Christian apologist, addressed the “virus of doubt” infecting today’s generation. He noted the epidemic of young people leaving the church as they fall prey to predatory skeptics and atheists who target young Christians. Strobel offered simple advice for ministering to young Christians struggling with the faith: give them the okay to ask questions or have doubts as long as they are seeking honest answers and teach them that science and Scripture are not at odds but complement one another.

Strobel encouraged listeners, “We have an unfair advantage in the marketplace of ideas; we have truth on our side.” He challenged parents to give children a safe space to ask tough questions, thus stripping away the power of doubt like daylight strips fear from a nightmare, and teaching young people we have a “defensible faith.”

Author, pastor, and educator, **Dr. Eddie Moody**, shared the story of Jeng Yoong Tan, who nearly died after experiencing cardiac arrest while eating out with his family. Thankfully, a bystander was prepared and equipped to offer first aid, and her intervention saved Jeng’s life. Moody reminded listeners that just as it is important to be prepared to offer physical aid, it is also crucial to be prepared to help those struggling mentally and emotionally. He offered familiar yet important tools to assist Christians in helping those in crisis: prayer, the Word of God, the church, and relationships. He warned listeners to fight the “bystander effect,” understanding if one person stops and responds, others will respond as well.

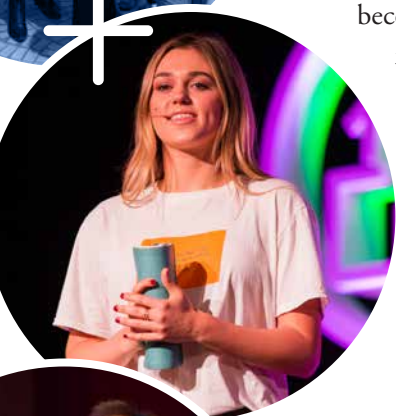
Comparing church leaders to a house painter whose own home needs a paint job, **Kyle Idleman**, best-selling author and teaching pastor of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, admonished listeners not to get so caught up in ministry they neglect their own families. Instead, he urged all parents to be intentional in discipleship and to make those intentions reality. Citing Galatians 6:7, he advised planting faith at home to reap the benefits of spiritual growth. This natural and spiritual law of sowing and reaping *will* produce harvest from seeds planted in the family, whether anger, bitterness, and lust or joy, faith, and love. With this in mind, parents must be careful to plant the right seeds in their children.

Businessman **Mike Lejeune** and daughter **Nikki** shared memories from life in the Lejeune home—that is, before a painful divorce Nikki blamed on her father. Mike warned listeners that busyness is a choice, and his choice eventually cost his marriage. Nikki recounted the long and difficult path to forgiveness and the restoration of her relationship with her father, acknowledging, “Forgiveness is a *decision*, not an emotion.” Today, the two have a strong relationship fueled by little things and little moments. Together, they offered a simple formula for building a strong relationship: clear purpose, right priorities, letting go of the past...and occasional sticky notes to say *I love you*.

“BAPTISM
IS NOT THE
FINISH LINE
BUT THE
STARTING
LINE IN THE
FAITH.”
—ROBBIE
GALLATY

Sadie Robertson, the energetic 21-year-old author and star of A&E’s hit reality series *Duck Dynasty*, offered a unique perspective on youth today. While her generation is widely acknowledged as the most connected generation, Sadie emphasizes that being connected does not make it the most *unified* generation. She encouraged leaders to help young people identify their desire for change, the things they want to change, steps toward that change, and the power of God to fuel the change. Sadie concluded that working together in sacrificial unity results in great things for God.





During the Friday evening main stage session, **Robbie Gallaty**, senior pastor at Long Hollow Baptist Church, Goodlettsville, Tennessee, offered advice for living a “normal” (or what *should* be normal) Christian life of disciple making. Based on 2 Timothy 2, Gallaty encouraged listeners to abide in Christ, invest in other believers, share the faith, and, ultimately, make disciples. He warned church leaders against reducing the gospel to a list of questions answered correctly. He challenged listeners to stop telling converts what they are saved *from*, instead emphasizing what they are saved *to*. Otherwise, they will remain stuck in Christian infancy, with spiritual growth stunted. “The Christian life is either easy or impossible,” Gallaty concluded. “It’s impossible if you try to do it in you own strength, but becomes easier as you allow Christ to work in and through your life.”

Using the backdrop of Exodus 33 and Israel’s great golden failure at Mount Sinai, **Dannah Gresh**, best-selling author, speaker, and creator of *Secret Keeper Girl*, exposed two lies capturing the hearts of today’s families. The first: *we need to be normal*. In contrast, Gresh reminded listeners God *wants* Christians to stick out, to be distinct in our godless culture. “We should be so different that we shine like stars on a dark night,” she urged, noting that this seeking generation should find what they are seeking reflected in our lives. The second lie: *we can go without God*. In reality, Gresh noted, God’s presence is what we are missing in our lives and ministry. She warned against the busyness trap and encouraged listeners to be deliberate about *abiding* in Christ.

Connecting Through Minis...

For the sixth year, four rapid-fire main stage sessions appropriately called **D6 Minis** gave speakers an opportunity to deliver short, powerful messages with a single point. **David Prince**, assistant professor of Christian Preaching at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, challenged listeners to **take every thought captive**—from big moments to breakfast table conversations. Drawing upon the athletic analogies used by the Apostle Paul, Prince explained this requires discipline and deliberate, careful attention to discipleship.

Dale Hudson, author and founder of Building Children’s Ministry, compared generational discipleship to a baseball season, with countless daily discipleship victories as singles and doubles—small, steady advances in the faith of kids. However, Hudson also advised church leaders to **make the most of four crucial moments to help parents “hit a home run”** in their discipleship at home: 1) when a child is dedicated to the Lord; 2) when a child goes to school; 3) when a child accepts Christ; and 4) when a child starts middle school or high school. These crucial moments can have a profound impact on a child’s faith.

Conference worship leader **Meredith Andrews** reminded listeners, “Worship is not necessarily music but a posture of the heart.” After reading the description of worship around the heavenly throne in Revelation 4-5, she told the audience that everything in this life is a grand rehearsal for worship in the next. So, we should **align our priorities with preparing for that moment and teaching children and grandchildren to worship** in ways that are costly, heavy, liberating, and even undignified. Andrews concluded, “Our children not only need to know about God but to *know* God...It is my greatest desire that my children become worshipers who not only know *how* to worship but know *who* they worship.”

Tim Goodyear, chief operating officer of HomePointe, explored the challenge of getting families to engage in discipleship at home. **Part of “equipping the saints” (Ephesians 4:12) is providing tools parents and grandparents need for successful discipleship.** What are these tools? Share a clear vision (and repeat it often);

create a new culture of discipleship through training and tools; and coach parents along the way.

John Stonestreet, president of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview, warned that Christian parents today are not “parenting in a vacuum” but raising children during enormous cultural shift, when influences align openly against Christian discipleship. When discipling the next generation, we must remember two things: 1) we are not saved to escape, and 2) we are not saved to accommodate. **While we cannot escape culture, we must not be assimilated by culture but influence culture for Christ as “hopeful restorers.”**

Also Connected Here...

D6 offers far more than main-stage speakers. Attendees participated in 80 intense breakout sessions covering topics ranging from marriage to manhood, effective grandparenting, technology, and everything between. Attendees wandered through a wide variety of exhibits exploring the latest Christian resources and ministries. They renewed friendships over coffee, discussing common challenges, sharing ideas, and praying over ministry burdens.

Conference emcees **Tommy Swindol**, lead pastor at The Donelson Fellowship, Nashville, Tennessee, and **Jeff**

Wallace, executive director of the Youth Pastor’s Summit for Student Leadership University joined **Jon Forrest**, youth pastor at Bethel FWB Church in Ashland City, Tennessee, in keeping the crowd guessing with videos, icebreakers, crazy games, and candid interviews with speakers. Comedian **Jonnie W.** brought razor-sharp wit and offbeat comedy for a truly unique humor experience. Between main stage speakers, attendees worshiped enthusiastically with **Meredith Andrews**, Christian music artist, songwriter, and worship leader at Harvest Bible Church in Chicago, Illinois.

As the conference came to a close, attendees were challenged to consider the incredible amount of information received during the intense, three-day meeting and narrow it down to simple, achievable steps and then deliberately pursue those steps in their homes and churches.

Hunter introduced the 2019 theme *reCalibrate*, to be explored when D6 meets in Florida, September 26-28. For more information, visit www.D6Conference.com. **ONE**

About the Writer: Eric K. Thomsen is managing editor of **ONE Magazine** and president of the Evangelical Press Association. Email: eric@nafwb.org.

A vibrant, hand-drawn style graphic for the D6 Conference 2019. The background is a light blue sky with white clouds. On the left, the text "D6" is written in large, bold, yellow letters with a black outline, and "CONFERENCE" is written below it in smaller, red, block letters. To the right of "D6", a green starburst shape contains the text "SAVE THE DATE!". Below "CONFERENCE", the text "is heading to" is written in a cursive font, followed by a small airplane icon. In the center, the text "Sunny ORLANDO Florida" is written in a playful, bubbly font. To the right of the text is a red map of Florida, which is filled with various icons and labels representing different locations and themes, including "PENSACOLA", "Panama City Beach", "TAMPA", "ORLANDO", "St. Petersburg", "West Palm Beach", "MIAMI", "EVERGLADES", "JACKSONVILLE", "OSCEOLA NATIONAL FOREST", "DAYTONA BEACH", and "GATOR". At the bottom left, the text "September 26-28 2019" is written in a yellow, cursive font. Below this, the text "Register now at" is written in a black, sans-serif font, followed by the website "www.D6conference.com". At the bottom right, the D6 conference logo is displayed, featuring a red house icon, the text "D6conference", and another red house icon. Below the logo, the text "BASED ON DEUTERONOMY 6" is written in a small, black, sans-serif font.

D6
CONFERENCE
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Sunny ORLANDO Florida
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100% Preventable

BY KEITH BURDEN

My wife and I were driving home after shopping in a neighboring community. It was a sunny but brisk autumn day. Road conditions were perfect for driving. Alone with our thoughts, neither of us spoke as we enjoyed the scenery and beautiful weather. The silence was broken as my wife called out frantically, "What's wrong with that driver?"

A split second after an approaching pickup shot past us at high speed, I glanced in my side view mirror to see the motorist erratically swerve from one side of the highway to the other. It was clear the driver had lost control of the vehicle.

What I witnessed sent a chill down my spine. The pickup exited the pavement and began rolling along the ditch, leaving a trail of dust and debris. Although my heart was racing, I managed to slow down and turn around at the next exit. In short order, we returned to the scene of the accident.

After calling 911 to report the incident, I rushed to the pickup now resting on the passenger side. The motor was still running, and gasoline fumes were strong. I reached inside the cab and switched off the ignition. In the mangled wreckage, I could see more than one passenger but no signs of life.

In a matter of minutes, the highway patrol and emergency workers arrived on the scene. They converged upon the vehicle to try to save any survivors. Tragically, there were none. The occupants, two men and one woman, were pronounced dead at the scene.

After giving a statement to the law enforcement officer, we resumed our journey, struggling to process what we had witnessed. For obvious reasons, the patrolman did not identify the victims or share details about the cause of the crash.

Eventually, information was released about the individuals who lost their lives because of three contributing factors: 1) the use of illegal drugs; 2) the passengers were *not* wearing seat belts; and 3) the vehicle was traveling at an unsafe (and unlawful) speed.

Any one of these three factors places the operator of an automobile at great risk, not to mention those who share the road with them. Put the three factors together, and you have a deadly combination. Sadly, this situation was 100% preventable.

That raises a question that begs to be answered: why would any rational person attempt to drive a vehicle under the influence, without a seat belt, and at a dangerous rate of speed? Frankly, I don't

have an answer.

But an even more perplexing question also needs to be answered: why would anyone choose to live without God? Frankly, I don't have an answer to that question either. It doesn't make sense.

If you are not trusting Christ as your Savior, you are on a crash course with eternal destruction. Fortunately, that situation is also 100% preventable. You need only surrender your life to Christ. It's as simple as ABC:

- **A**dmit you are a sinner and you cannot save yourself.
- **B**elieve Jesus is God's Son, and He chose to die on the cross in your place.
- **C**ommit yourself to a life of following Jesus and serving others. [ONE](#)



Keith Burden, CMP

Executive Secretary
National Association of
Free Will Baptists

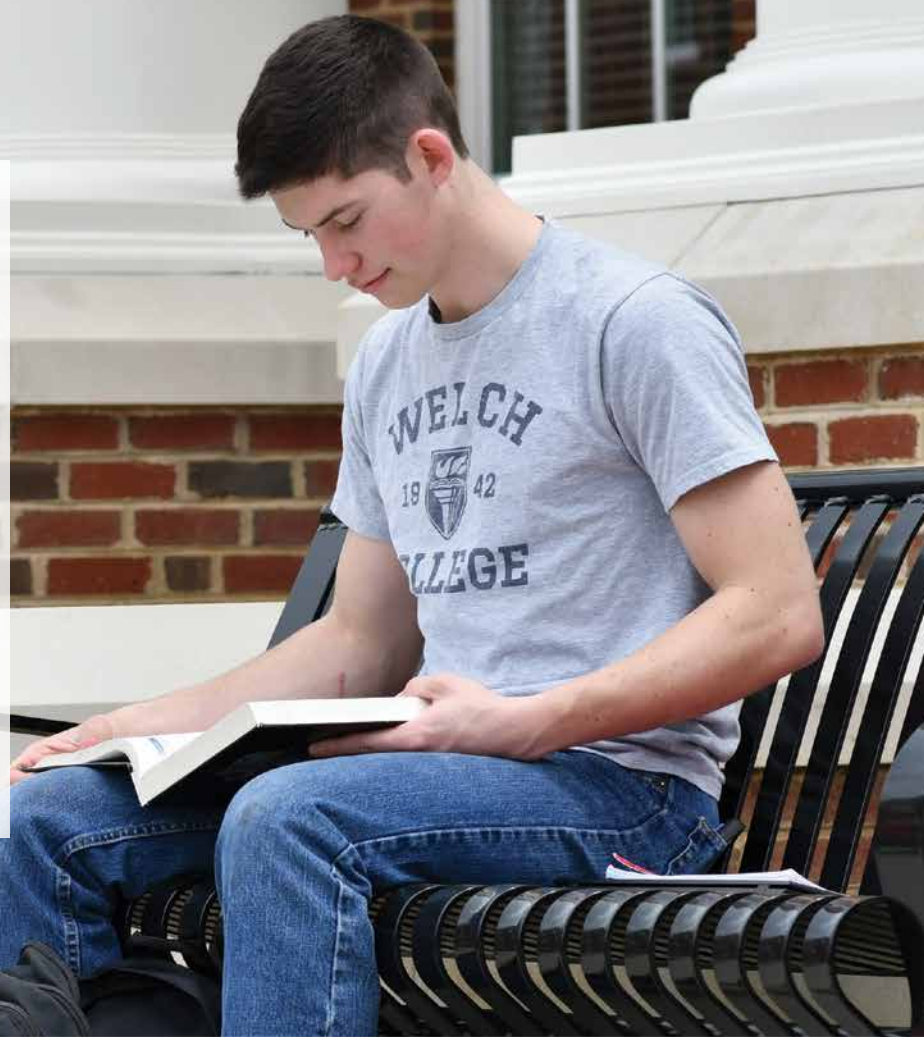
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