

# the Baptist Voice

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FROM LANCASTER BAPTIST CHURCH  
& WEST COAST BAPTIST COLLEGE



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the  
**BaptistVoice**

**Summer 2023, Issue 36**

*Trust in Him*

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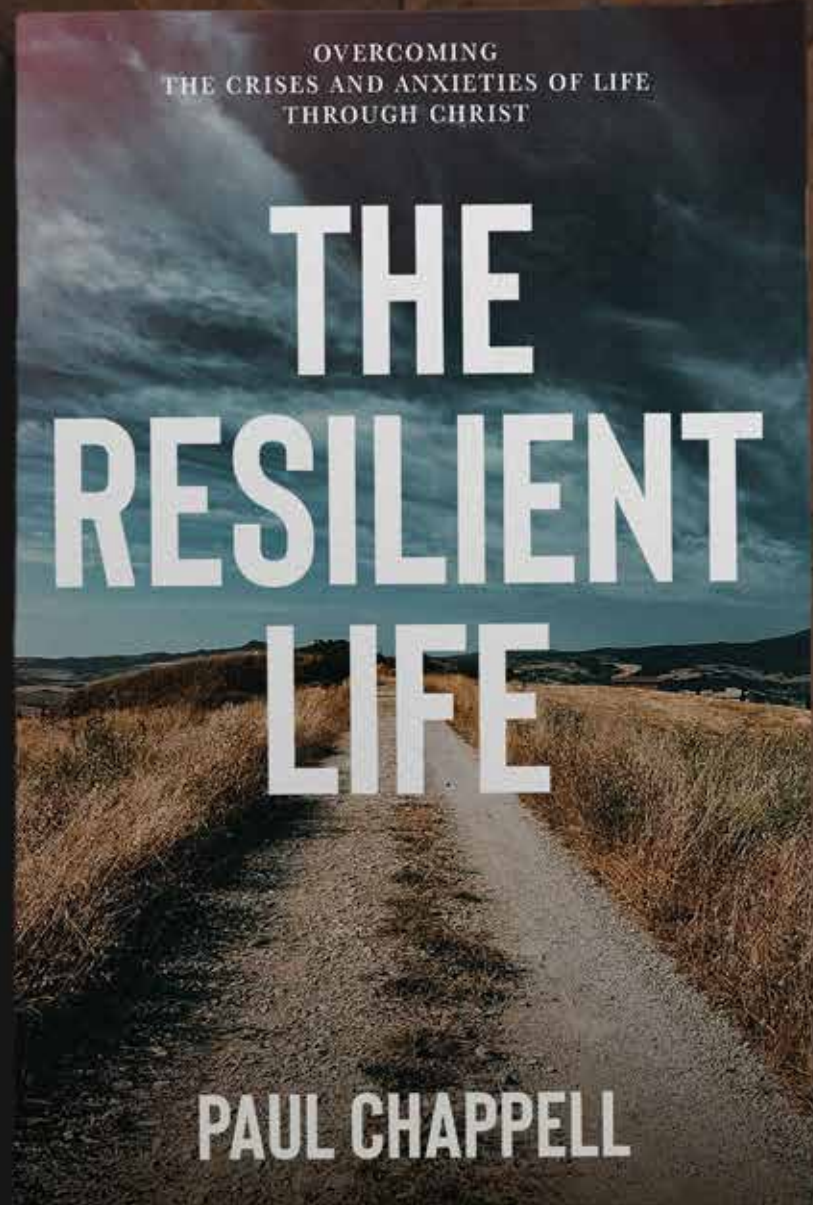
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# EVERYONE NEEDS RESILIENCE.

We all face obstacles, difficulties, trials, and heartaches. Without resilience, we go through life increasingly flattened—beaten down by the multiplied challenges we face. But in Christ, we can experience a resilience that doesn't just get *through* difficulty, but triumphs *over* it.



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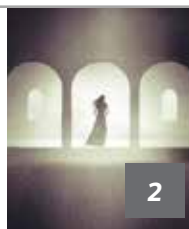
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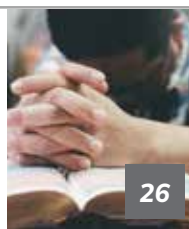
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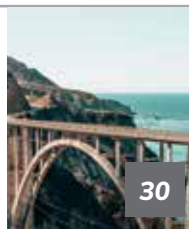
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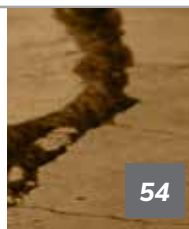
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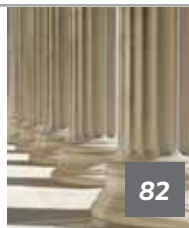
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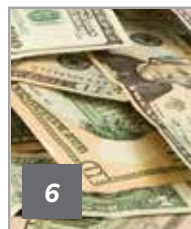
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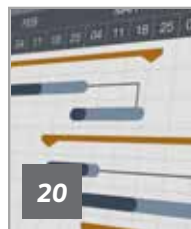
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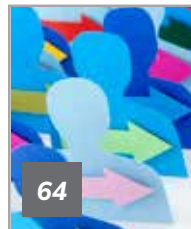
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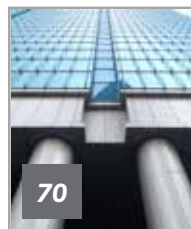
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# GOD'S GOT THIS

**Truths on God's Sovereignty  
from the Book of Esther**



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BY PAUL CHAPPELL

Do you ever feel forgotten by God? Do you wonder if He still knows your address? If He has a plan for your life? If He is able to help with your needs?

Do you ever feel discouraged while looking at the state of our nation? Do you wonder where the speedily declining moral degradation will end?

In short, do you wonder if God is in control?

The doctrine of God's sovereignty is good news for weary, fearful, or discouraged Christians. It assures that our lives and the world itself is not slipping away from a loving but helpless God. It reminds us that He is in control, and He is committed to making all things work together for our good and His glory.

God's sovereignty—His position as Ruler of all—is stated emphatically throughout Scripture. But it is demonstrated vividly in the story of Esther. Remarkably, Esther doesn't even mention God's name, but His hand is so clearly seen in this intricate unfolding of events that it has encouraged untold Christians to trust in the Lord and His good and kind sovereignty.

Notice a few of the truths related to God's sovereignty we learn from Esther's life.

#### HUMAN POWER IS ALWAYS LIMITED

Esther lived in a world of heathen despotism. Worse still, the king who publicly humiliated his wife because she stood up to him became Esther's

husband. And the king's closest advisor, Haman, was a sworn enemy of the Jews. Yet, despite the wickedness of evil men, God had His way. He let Ahasuerus and Haman go just so far and then used their own desires to accomplish His purposes in preserving and prospering His people.

Proverbs 21:1 tells us, "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will."

Here in America, we don't live in a dictatorship, and I believe Christians have the responsibility to participate in electing leaders who most closely align with biblical values. But we also should not wring our hands in despair when ungodly leaders are elected or those in power are corrupt. For there is still a King in Heaven Who reigns supreme. And even the most powerful rulers on earth are limited by the decrees and purposes of God.

"Remember this, and shew yourselves men: bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end

“The doctrine of God's sovereignty is good news for weary, fearful, or discouraged Christians.”

from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isaiah 46:8–10).

## GOD’S TIMING IS IMPECCABLE

The basic story of Esther is simple: a Jewish orphan girl grows up to be the queen of Persia and saves her people from destruction. But the story’s plot is complex, involving multiple subplots that integrate at key moments. For instance, Mordacai was in the right place at the right time to hear the assassination plot of the king’s chamberlains. Furthermore, the king could not sleep on the very night that Haman came for permission to kill Mordacai, and that just happened to be the night Ahasuerus had been reflecting on Mordecai’s kindness. Had

“  
Is it God’s sovereignty  
or our actions that  
make a difference in  
the unfolding of God’s  
purposes? Both!  
”

any one of these—  
or several other—  
events happened  
earlier or later, the  
story could have  
ended differently.

Like many other  
biblical events,  
Esther’s story  
showcases the  
perfect timing

of God. He is never late, and He is never surprised. The God who sent His Son into our world in “the fulness of the time” (Galatians 4:4) is not oblivious to the timing in your life either. You can confidently pray with David, “But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God. My times are in thy hand...” (Psalm 31:14–15).

## YOU GET TO BE PART OF GOD’S SOVEREIGN PLAN

When it comes to God’s sovereignty, we have a tendency to lean to extremes as if all elements are either/or choices. We think that either God will perform His plans, *or* our choices are meaningful. In reality, both are true. God will perform His plans, *and* our choices are meaningful.

Perhaps the most-quoted phrase from the book of Esther is from Mordecai’s encouragement to Esther to act: “For if

thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: *and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*” (Esther 4:14).

Mordecai’s confidence in God’s sovereignty didn’t lead him to a lackadaisical attitude toward the tragically unfolding events around him. Rather, his faith compelled action. He reminded Esther that God *would* keep His promises, but she had a choice in being involved.

For Esther’s part, she fasted and presumably prayed in recognition of her dependence on God’s intervention. And then she acted. Valuing a cause greater than her own life, she went into the king’s presence to make her request. Yet, even in her dependence on God, Esther was perceptive and measured in how she approached the king. Rather than just blurting out an accusation against Haman, she craftily drew out the king’s intrigue and set the stage for a moment that called out his sense of valor.

So is it God’s sovereignty or our actions that make a difference in the unfolding of God’s purposes? Both! The incredible reality is that God uses people—you and me—to make a difference in this world.

God has a purpose for *your* life at “such a time as this.”

When your life seems to be careening out of control, when challenges mount around you, when the choices of others negatively affect you, remember God’s sovereignty. Remember that human power is always limited, God’s timing is impeccable, and *you* get to be part of God’s sovereign plan.

Stabilize your soul in remembering God’s sovereignty, and then, trusting in Him and depending on His strength, choose to engage in making a difference for Christ right where you are.



**PAUL CHAPPELL**

is the Senior Pastor of  
Lancaster Baptist Church  
in Lancaster, CA.





## God's Got This Small Group Curriculum

Life can seem overwhelming and out of control. Challenges mount while our resources dwindle. Others make choices that affect us and which we are powerless to change. But just when we wonder what is going on in our world, the biblical account of Esther compels us to realize that even in unsure times, God *is* working. He has a purpose and is working in and through us at “such a time as this.”

God reigns supreme over every detail of the universe, and He cares about every detail of your life. Nothing surprises or overwhelms Him. Stabilize and settle your soul through an understanding of the sovereignty of God and His commitment to bring about His purposes in your life for your good and His glory.

In this eight-week journey of growth, learn real-life lessons from the life of Esther on the promise of God's sovereignty and what that means for your life.

*Available this fall at [strivingtogether.com](http://strivingtogether.com)*



# You Can Trust God with Your Money:

## WISE FINANCIAL PRACTICES FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN

BY ALAN FONG

Is it not one of the great contradictions of the Christian life that we who have trusted Christ with our eternity sometimes struggle to trust Him with our money? God promises to meet our needs, and we all have testimonies of specific times and ways that He has done so. Yet, we still sometimes find a gap between wanting to trust Him with our finances and actually doing so.

So what are some of the regular financial practices that help us exercise trust in God?

### UNDERSTAND THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE OF STEWARDSHIP

Everything we have—including our earning power and income—is a stewardship from God. Deuteronomy 8:18 teaches us to “...remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth...” It is God who blesses us with jobs and the health to work them. It is the Lord who blesses us with wise choices, good timing, and profitable return on our investments. Everything we have comes from God and belongs to God. He has entrusted us to manage His resources for Him.

### HONOR GOD BY TITHING

The Bible instructs us, “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine

increase” (Proverbs 3:9). We are to set aside the first 10 percent (tithe) of our income and financial increase (passive income and capital gains) to give to the Lord. The tithe is holy and belongs to the Lord (Leviticus 27:30). Giving it back to God allows us to see His continued blessing in our lives in a way we would not otherwise see. “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachai 3:10).

### GIVE GENEROUSLY TO GOD’S WORK

Be ready to give an offering to the Lord over and above your tithe as the Lord impresses upon you to give. This would include participating in special offerings at church as well as regular giving to missions and other special funds through your church. We should “be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate” (1 Timothy 6:18).

### CREATE AND LIVE WITHIN A BALANCED BUDGET

We must live within our means as well as planning for the future. One of the best ways to do this is to create a budget that takes into account our current





income and regular expenditures. Our budget should include categories for both present and reoccurring needs. (For instance, some bills come only once per year, but you can set aside money toward the upcoming bill each month. Additional reoccurring needs that may not be present in every pay check include activities for your children, clothing, etc.) Creating and living within a budget helps guard against impulsive or excessive spending.

### SAVE DILIGENTLY FOR THE FUTURE

Be sure to include savings in your budget. It is wise to save a minimum of 20 percent of your take home pay for emergencies and long-term investments. (Of this 20 percent, many people find it helpful to save up to a certain amount for an emergency fund and then redirect that part of their budget to investments until they need to use their emergency fund.) Any gifts and inheritances you receive can also be saved and invested. If available to you, it's good to participate in your employer-sponsored pretax retirement 401(k) or 403(b) plans, especially when they include matching funds.

Do some research on investing basics to learn how to grow your money, and seek counsel for these decisions. Hard earned money is

what we are paid for our labor. Smart money is when we have our money work for us. It's a good plan to use hard earned money to create smart money. It is important that you establish predetermined checkpoints to see how well you are on track in accumulating money for your future retirement needs.

### PRAY OVER EVERY FINANCIAL DECISION

One of the great indicators of our faith is our prayer life. Part of trusting the Lord with our finances is seeking His direction in them. When it comes to creating a budget, determining your giving, setting up investments, and making large purchases, be sure to seek God's face and ask Him for wisdom.

### ESTABLISH A WILL

It's important that you establish a will and trust for the proper distribution of your assets in the event of your death for the care of your survivors. You should also invest in adequate life and disability insurance to fill in shortfalls in your savings and accumulation goals.

### LIVE FOR ETERNAL GOALS

Be careful that you don't fall into the trap of living for money and riches. First Timothy 6:9 warns, "But they that will be rich fall into

temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

### TRUST IN GOD

It's all too easy to begin trusting in our budget or our income to meet our needs rather than trusting in the Lord. But riches are uncertain. Instead of trusting in "uncertain riches," we should "trust... in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17).

And you *can* trust God. You can be faithful in your tithes and offerings, trusting God to provide for your needs. You can trust Him when you are called upon to make financial sacrifices for the Lord's work or to help someone in need. You can trust God when you have a job layoff. You can trust God when the economy is in a recession. You can trust Him when unexpected expenses arise or when your children go to college. You can trust Him if you are called upon to help take care of your parents. You can trust Him to help you make wise choices. You can trust Him in helping you to manage and steward your finances well.



#### ALAN FONG

is the Senior Pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in San Leandro, CA and Chairman of the Board of West Coast Baptist College.



## Discipleship: Helping New Christians Grow in the Faith

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**BY JACOB BUNDY**

One of the great joys of the Christian life is helping to nurture the faith of young Christians. There's just nothing like leading someone to Christ and then encouraging them as they take steps of faith and grow in the Lord.

In its pure definition, New Testament discipleship means to be a fully-committed follower of Christ. This commitment should be the very DNA of our Christian walk.

Furthermore, as church leaders, developing disciples is our mission—given to us by Christ Himself. Shortly before Jesus ascended into Heaven, He commanded His disciples to go, baptize, and teach (Matthew 28:19–20). Thus, both evangelism and discipleship have been at the heart of God's purpose for the church since its earliest days.



So how do we engage in this essential process of discipleship? And what are its results?

## DISCIPLESHIP HELPS BELIEVERS GROW UP SPIRITUALLY.

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock” (Matthew 7:24).

Spiritual growth takes place as believers build their lives on the rock-solid foundation of the Word of God. This is one reason biblical preaching is so important. Every Sunday, when a pastor preaches, he may not realize it, but he is discipling his people in the Word of God. By the way he handles it, he teaches them how to handle it. By the way he is moved by it, he teaches them to be moved by it. By the way he obeys it, he teaches them to obey it.

But it’s not just the pastor who models how to use God’s Word. When new Christians have the opportunity to meet one-on-one with a “discipler” as they work through a discipleship program, they gain invaluable knowledge from God’s Word. In this setting, a new Christian has the opportunity to ask questions, develop basic, systematic doctrine, learn Baptist distinctives, and be personally encouraged in early steps of Christian growth. (In our church, we use *Continue* by Paul Chappell for our formal discipleship program.)

## DISCIPLESHIP HELPS BELIEVERS GIVE BACK GENEROUSLY.

“And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered

unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:27–28).

One of the challenges of parenting young children is rooting out their innate self-centeredness and teaching them to think first and foremost of others. This task for parents is not always easy, but it is vital if their children are going to grow into maturity. The same can be said of new Christians. It’s important that they learn that the church isn’t just a place where others serve them; it’s also a place where they serve others. It’s important that they learn that it is more blessed to give than receive. It’s important that they learn to give back to the Lord and to others.

Part of discipleship, then, is inviting growing believers to give and serve. I love sharing with newer Christians specifically how God has blessed my family’s giving in the past, and I love encouraging them to take steps of faith in this area of their lives. I also love sharing with them the various spiritual gifts that God gives members within a church body and encouraging them to use their gifts to serve others.

## DISCIPLESHIP HELPS BELIEVERS GO FORTH PASSIONATELY.

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Evangelism is a calling God places on the life of every Christian, and new believers are not exempt from that calling. In fact, new Christians are typically the people in the church that have the most connections to

lost people. What an incredible opportunity that is for those young Christians to see the multiplying effect of evangelism first hand.

As a pastor, I work diligently to engage new Christians in our church outreach. Pairing a new believer with an experienced soulwinner helps the new believer learn how to invite others to church, how to share their testimony, and how to take a lost person through the plan of salvation.

When we, as church leaders, give consistent emphasis to the process of discipleship, God blesses those efforts, and new Christians become mature in the Lord.



**JACOB BUNDY**

is the Senior Pastor of Horizon Baptist Church in Camarillo, CA.



A discipleship curriculum featuring fourteen lessons that cover key Bible doctrines and personal applications, *Continue* is perfect for helping a new Christian become grounded in God’s Word and develop a growing walk with Christ.

[strivingtogether.com](http://strivingtogether.com)



# Five Ways to Be Salt and Light in Today's America

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BY BRANDON CAMPBELL

Here in the United States, we are blessed with an incredible level of religious liberty. But if we do not vigilantly guard this liberty, it will erode and eventually be destroyed. We must use the freedom that we have to be the salt of the earth and shine the light of truth.

Below there are five ways Christians can make a difference for Christ and stay engaged in ways that can preserve our religious liberty.

## **1. Pray regularly for your elected officials.**

As John Bunyan once said, “You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.” We should pray for our leaders and let them know we are doing so. “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (1 Timothy 2:1–2).

## **2. Stay informed, and vote with a biblical worldview.**

In every election—local, state, and federal—research the candidates and the positions they hold, and vote for candidates with a biblical worldview. We should also pray for more of these candidates to run for office.

## **3. Attend local school board meetings.**

Don't be afraid to speak up regarding biblical issues. Additionally, many Christians should consider running for the school board so they can have a direct vote on important issues.

## **4. Attend local city council meetings or county supervisor meetings.**

Introduce yourself to your mayor, city council members, and county supervisor. Thank them for their service, and let them know you're praying for them. As issues arise, don't be afraid to speak up on concern for religious liberty or public safety.

## **5. Know and reach out to your state representative and senator.**

Look up the names of those who represent your district in your state legislature. Make an appointment to meet them in their local district office. Let them know you are praying for them. And call their offices to voice your approval or disapproval of significant legislation.



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**BRANDON CAMPBELL**  
is the Senior Pastor of  
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# CALIFORNIA FOR CHRIST

I N I T I A T I V E

**TOGETHER WE CAN REACH THE NATION'S LARGEST  
AND MOST INFLUENTIAL STATE WITH THE GOSPEL**

**40M**

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There are 75 cities with a  
population in excess of 100,000.  
There are 1,472 total cities.

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California gross  
state product  
is \$3.2 Billion. If  
California were a  
country, it would  
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Hawthorne (LA Area)



**James Kim**  
Irvine, CA

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## A FIFTY-YEAR VICTORY FOR THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

Since the US Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision of 1973 that denied the personhood of preborn children, Christians have prayed and labored toward a reversal of this decision. That day finally

came on June 24, 2022, when the Supreme Court released their 6-3 decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* in *Dobbs v. Jackson*. This decision did not outlaw abortion but returned the decision to individual states.

Every pre-born child is the creation of God, made in His image, and deserves protection and the opportunity of life. Jeremiah 1:5 says, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."



## COURT RULING FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

After a seven-year saga, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Coach Kennedy and the right to public prayer. Joe Kennedy, a Washington state high school football coach, made it a habit to pray at the 50-yard line after each game, something many of his players appreciated and in which they eventually asked to participate. But when the school board heard of Kennedy's practice, they insisted he stop. Eventually, they suspended and then fired Kennedy over this issue.

With a desire to protect the religious liberties of others, Kennedy decided to take this issue to court. He reached out to First Liberty Institute, and their attorneys represented him. Finally, on June 27, 2022, the Supreme Court released its 6-3 decision in favor of Coach Kennedy. Additionally, beginning with the 2023 season, Coach Kennedy has been reinstated as the assistant coach at Bremerton High School.

His willingness to stand for his faith and for the right to prayer in public places brought a victory for religious liberty that will have implications for coaches and teachers throughout the United States for years to come.

*To hear a fascinating, behind-the-scenes description of all that transpired in this case and the legal implications for religious liberty, listen to the "Interview with Coach Joe Kennedy" episode (October 2022) of the Spiritual Leadership Podcast with Dr. Paul Chappell.*

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## THE DOUBLE STANDARD OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The persecution faced by Isabel Vaughan-Spruce and Adam Smith-Connor in the UK have many questioning the standard of human rights.

In December 2022, Vaughan-Spruce, director of the UK March for Life, stood across the street from the Birmingham abortion center and silently prayed. Police forces approached her and questioned if she was praying. When she responded, “I might be praying in my head,” she was arrested for violating the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO). The PSPO created a zone protected from any form of approval or disapproval of abortion, including counseling or praying.

Similarly, Smith-Connor was fined for praying with his back facing the Bournemouth abortion clinic. When security guards confronted him, he shared his heartbreaking story: “Twenty-two years ago I drove my ex-girlfriend to a facility and paid for her to have an abortion. It was a pivotal moment in my life.

The consequences of my actions that day came back to grieve me years later, when I realized I had lost my son Jacob to an abortion I had paid for. Recently, I stood outside a similar facility and prayed to God for my son Jacob, for other babies who have lost their lives to abortion, for their grieving families, and for abortion clinic staff.” He was then fined for impeding on the “buffer zone” regardless of the reason.

Both of these stories are concerning for religious liberty. Christian persecution is increasing in Western nations under sanitized terms like “Public Space Protection Order.”

### Sources:

Gabriel Hays, “Twitter erupts over clip of UK woman arrested for silently praying across from abortion clinic: ‘Terrifying,’” *Fox News*, December 22, 2022, <https://www.foxnews.com/media/twitter-erupts-clip-uk-woman-arrested-silently-praying-across-abortion-clinic-terrifying>.

“Pro-Life Father Fined for Praying Outside Abortion Clinic,” *Life News*, January 19, 2023, <https://www.lifenews.com/2023/01/19/pro-life-father-fined-for-praying-outside-abortion-clinic/>.

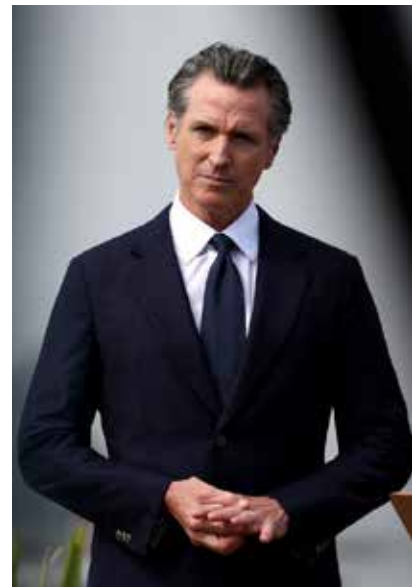


## GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM'S REJECTION OF LIFE

While the victory of the Dobbs v. Jackson case was being celebrated, California Governor Gavin Newsom reached out to women in states across America promising that California “will defend your right to make decisions about your own health.” His campaign even paid for a blasphemous billboard in Texas including the words “Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no greater commandment” to suggest that Jesus would support abortion.

The responses like Newsom's

and others remind us that this victory in the Supreme Court, while meaningful, is only partial. Ultimately, real change in a society comes through the power of the gospel transforming hearts. Although there are many valid common-sense arguments against abortion, the Christian position on it is informed by Scripture which tells us God is the creator of life and that He specifically fashions each life beginning in the womb (Psalm 139:13–16).





## WOMAN DENIED ADOPTION BECAUSE OF GENDER CONVICTIONS

The denial of adoption occurring in Oregon on the grounds of Christian morals is not only infringing on the religious rights of the citizens but is also bereaving children from the opportunity for adoption.

After feeling the Lord's leading to provide a loving environment for children without a home, Jessica Bates decided to embark on the journey to adopt children from the state's foster care system.

However, the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) denied her application on the basis of her religious beliefs, specifically her Christian beliefs regarding

gender identity. Amazingly, the state accommodates many other religious beliefs, for instance, placing Jewish or Islamic children in homes with those beliefs. The state even goes so far as to pair vegan families and children. Meanwhile, children in need are being denied the opportunity to be part of a loving Christian family.

### Source:

Jessica Bates, "I'm a Christian and I'm Suing My State Because it Refused to Let Me Adopt Children," *Fox News*, April 7, 2023, <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/christian-suing-state-because-refused-let-me-adopt-children>.



## WASHINGTON STATE TO ALLOW MEDICAL TRANSGENDER INTERVENTIONS ON MINORS WITHOUT PARENTAL CONSENT

Washington Senate Bill 5599 is criticized by opponents as promoting "child abuse," with good reason. If signed by the governor, this bill, which has already passed the WA House of Representatives, will allow the Washington Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) to provide "gender-affirming care" to minors without notifying their parents. "Affirming treatment" can include puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and gender surgeries.

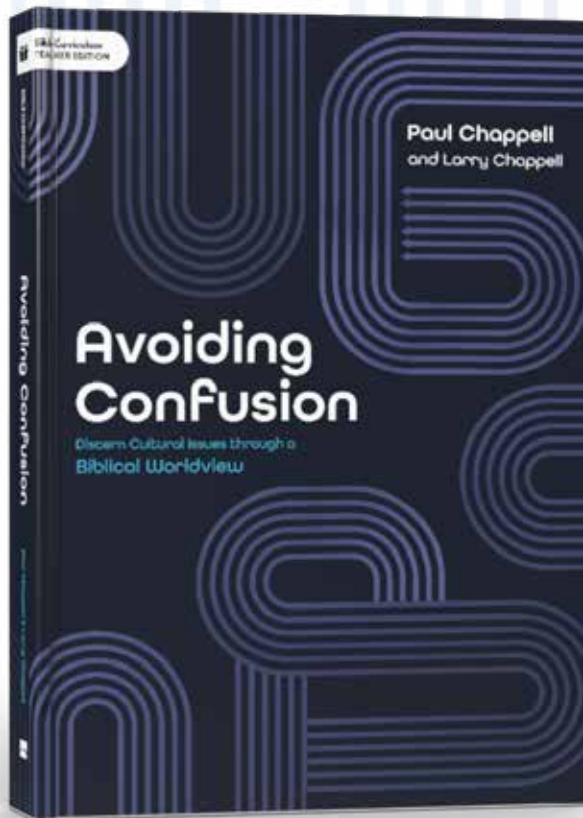
Critics have accused the bill as "state-sanctioned kidnapping." One counselor who testified against it stated, "It is apparent that one result of this bill will be the removal of trans-identified children from the family home."

California is considering Assembly Bill 665, which would have similar results. For the protection of all children, Christians must contact their state legislatures on bills that will promote the medical castration and surgical mutilation of minors.

### Sources:

Hannah Grossman, "Washington bill to allow medical transgender interventions on minors without parental consent," *Fox News*, April 16, 2023, <https://www.foxnews.com/media/washington-bill-allow-medical-transgender-interventions-minors-without-parental-consent>.

Bailee Hill, "Democrat warns California moving toward 'state-sanctioned kidnapping' with mental health bill for minors," *Fox News*, March 29, 2023, <https://www.foxnews.com/media/democrat-warns-california-moving-toward-state-sanctioned-kidnapping-mental-health-bill-minors>.



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# SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

SEPTEMBER 24-27, 2023



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# Project and Process Management

BY TIM CHRISTOSON

When most of us think of ministry work, we think of shepherding people, leading souls to Jesus, and teaching and preaching God's Word. Yet for these essential roles to be successfully fulfilled, there is an unglamorous, easily-neglected side of local church ministry—the administrative side of managing projects and processes. It's the daily grind, and, frankly, it doesn't come naturally for many ministry leaders. But local church ministry benefits from intentional strategies and processes.

Most of us were surprised to discover just how much administrative work there is in local church ministry. Some of us avoid it, others muddle through it, and some even resent it. We can learn to see this labor as part of what it means to be faithful servants of a worthy Savior.

Nehemiah from the Old Testament has much to teach us in this area. A faithful Jew living in Persia, he sensed God's call to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city walls. We can learn much from Nehemiah's character, courage, and leadership. But we can also learn from the details of his administrative processes. Despite limited resources, spiritual opposition, and ongoing threats of violence, Nehemiah led the people to complete their task in a way that gave clear testimony to God's favor: "So the wall was finished . . . and all the heathen that were about us . . . perceived that this work was wrought of our God" (Nehemiah 6:15–16).

What led to this great finish? Earlier in the story Nehemiah said, "The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build" (Nehemiah 2:20). The work began with confidence in God's hand of favor, which led the people to "arise and build." That was the biblical and logical progression: God does what only He can do, and we do what He has assigned us to do. God's enabling *and* our effort go together. We see this pattern also in 1 Corinthians 3:9: "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."

From Nehemiah's example, we see six steps to carefully and successfully steward the administrative work of ministry:

## 1. IDENTIFY

You can't take aim until you know what the target is. Nehemiah "arose in the night . . . and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire" (Nehemiah 2:12–13).

One of the best ways to identify the work is to consider each area of ministry for which you are responsible and ask, "What am I trying to

accomplish?” Paint yourself a picture of the finished product. What does success look like from different angles? Clearly identifying where you are going will give a starting point for the following steps.

## 2. DIVIDE

Nehemiah 3 reveals in surprising detail how the work was divided among the available helpers. There were countless tasks to be accomplished, and Nehemiah broke them down into specific pieces.

Sometimes ministry leaders recoil from this level of detail. But across multiple large projects recorded in Scripture, from the pattern of the Tabernacle to the construction of the Temple to the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls, we discover that attention to detail has a vital place in spiritual work.

Learning to divide large goals into individual steps is a developed skill that contributes greatly to forward momentum in ministry. Similarly, outlining repeated processes for vital areas of ministry leads to consistency and allows involvement from a greater number of people.

## 3. ORGANIZE

Nehemiah 3 also reveals that there was a chronological sequence. The expressions “next to” and “after” are used repeatedly, because certain steps preceded others.

Learn to break things down into parts and arrange them in order. Vincent Van Gogh, the famous Dutch Post-Impressionist painter said it well: “Great things are not done by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together.”

In what sequence will your tasks occur? Are there timelines and deadlines involved? What meetings need to happen? Are there approvals required? Outline the steps, and arrange them in the most efficient order.

## 4. ASSIGN

There are so many names listed in Nehemiah 3 that it’s easy to lose count. But each name was important, and each represented a specific person with a specific responsibility.

Every task needs an owner. And when it comes to the work of ministry, part of our role as local church leaders is to involve and equip others for this work. (See Ephesians 4:11–12.) This means involving our church family in the process.

## 5. COMMUNICATE

Communication is where the details get in front of the eyes and minds of those around you. From the very beginning of the rebuilding of the walls, Nehemiah was careful to communicate with those he was involving in the work: “Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king’s words that he had spoken unto me” (Nehemiah 2:18).

Most of us need to communicate more often than we do, earlier than we do, and more clearly than we do. Everyone is busy and people are distracted, so if your work is going to succeed, it will require thorough, consistent communication.

## 6. OVERSEE

Nehemiah 4 describes how when trouble came and enemies

threatened the work, he tackled the issues, adjusted his plan, and mobilized the people to ensure success. Nehemiah was the overseer of the work. He was responsible and faithful to all the minutia of the tasks that lay before the builders.

Growing churches, as well, need growing overseers. They need servant leaders who are committed to supporting those they lead by providing the resources, information, training, and tools they need to accomplish the work of the ministry.

Jesus spoke of being “faithful in that which is least” (Luke 16:10). This often looks like doing the small things consistently—things that don’t get noticed, aren’t appealing, and may not scream for our attention. Helen Keller said, “I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble.”

May we today do the work of managing projects, stewarding processes, and leading people—as unto the Lord. And I trust one day we’ll rejoice to hear, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21).



**TIM CHRISTOSON**  
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Bible Baptist Church  
in Howell, MI.







# SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP ASIA CONFERENCE

After several years of delay due to the COVID pandemic, God used the Spiritual Leadership Asia Conference 2023 at the SMX center in Manila to encourage and equip ministry leaders throughout the 10/40 region. Throughout late 2021, Brother Niranjan Sundararaj and Kevin Folger worked with several Manila-area pastors to coordinate and help host the conference. Pastor Paul Chappell led a team of thirty conference speakers who are pastors, missionaries and business leaders from America, Australia, and the Philippines.

On Sunday, February 26, conference speakers spread throughout the Philippines to preach in local Baptist churches and encourage pastors and believers to be faithful in their service to the Lord.

On Monday, more than three hundred missionary delegates arrived for a “Missions Connect” dinner where Pastor Chappell brought a missions-centered message. Missionaries, guest speakers, and Christian businessmen enjoyed a meal together and a time of burden-

sharing, goal-setting, and prayer for the conference.

Tuesday evening was the official opening service of Spiritual Leadership Asia Conference. Ten thousand attendees gathered for the evening services including delegates from sixty-one countries. Dozens of churches coordinated to provide powerful music. Attendees were stirred by the overwhelming experience of singing and worshipping together with so many international believers. A group of students from West Coast Baptist College also provided special music in the services.

The preaching of God’s Word was the centerpiece of the conference. Powerful messages were preached in morning and evening services challenging believers to live for Christ and serve Him with their lives. Each service also included a challenge to consider the great spiritual need in Asia, and the 5.4 billion souls in the 10/40 region who need to be reached with the gospel.

Wednesday and Thursday morning and afternoon were full of ministry workshop sessions. Thousands of Christian

workers were equipped and trained on specific topics related to soulwinning, discipleship, missions, church planting, and other practical ministry subjects. Each day there was a dedicated season of prayer.

In addition to the services and ministry workshop sessions, thousands of teens from the Manila area gathered in the afternoons for youth rallies where they enjoyed games and were challenged to surrender their lives to God’s call and purpose. Wednesday afternoon, General John Teichert helped to host a panel with officials from the Philippine National Police on reaching the law enforcement communities for Christ in Asia.

At the conclusion of the conference, more than two hundred people surrendered to full-time Christian ministry and countless others made important spiritual decisions to allow God to use them in a greater way.

Please continue to pray for the spiritual needs in the 10/40 window and the 5.4 billion souls that God has called us to reach there.

1. *The conference emphasized prayer for the 10/40 region.*
2. *Pastor Paul Chappell preached the opening and closing services of the conference.*
3. *Nearly ten thousand people attended the evening services.*
4. *Striving Together Publications distributed thousands of books, discipleship materials, and Christian growth resources.*
5. *Powerful music was provided through a 400-voice choir and 300-piece orchestra.*
- 6–8. *Pastor Kevin Folger (6) and Niranjan Sundararaj (8) worked with several Manila-area pastors to coordinate and help host the conference. Missionary Rick Martin (7) has given 45 years to Christ in the Philippines and also helped to host this conference.*



# Testimonies from Spiritual Leadership Asia



## GERRY NABLE

In 1954, American missionary L.D. Woosley planted the Bethany Baptist Church in Makati, Metro Manila. Today, this church is pastored by Dr. Gerry Nable who was saved in 1974 through the church's outreach ministry. What's more, Bethany Baptist is the home/sending church to fifty-nine missionary families preaching the gospel on foreign soil around the world.

Pastor Gerry Nable and Bethany Baptist Church are a testimony to God's blessing on the labors of multiple generations of American missionary church planting efforts in the Philippines.

Over the past three Spiritual Leadership Conferences in Asia,

Pastor Nable and Bethany Baptist have served as one of the host churches in Manila, coordinating many of the on-site details for the conference and opening their Bible college dorm rooms to house guests. When asked about the impact Spiritual Leadership Asia Conference has made on gospel efforts in Asia, Pastor Nable mentioned the many Christians who have been called to serve as missionaries during this conference. He also said, "I'm thankful especially for the spirit of the conference that is focused on reaching the lost world with the gospel. It has been used in a powerful way to equip, prepare, and hone many leaders."



## NOAH KIM

Noah and Yumi Kim came to West Coast Baptist College from Seoul, Korea, as married students in 2012. Today, they are planting a church in Cebu City, Philippines, for Korean immigrants who live and work in that city.

The Kims went to Cebu City in February 2020. Two weeks after their first church service, the Philippines shut down due to Covid-19. Yumi and their three children had to return to Korea because they could not get visas to stay. The next two years were lonely and slow going for Noah. Making connections was hard because of the pandemic, and many of the Koreans went back to Korea when their jobs shut down. But as Noah's outreach efforts began to see fruit, he would meet with inquirers and new Christians in local coffee shops to explain the gospel and disciple new believers. Little by little, the Lord grew this fledgling church.

Noah attended Spiritual Leadership Conference Asia. When asked how the conference has impacted him, Noah shared this testimony: "I'm not a strong person. Being alone in Cebu City for so long was very discouraging. I missed my family. And then other churches in the city told Koreans that we were a cult. I came to this conference discouraged. But hearing Pastor Chappell preach and attending the sessions encouraged me to keep soulwinning, discipling, and trusting God."

The Sunday after SLC Asia, the Cebu Baptist Church celebrated its third anniversary. They meet in a rented conference room on Sundays, and the Kims (now reunited in Cebu City) continue to hold Bible studies and discipleship meetings in their home throughout the week. God continues to work through the Kims to reach Koreans in Cebu City.

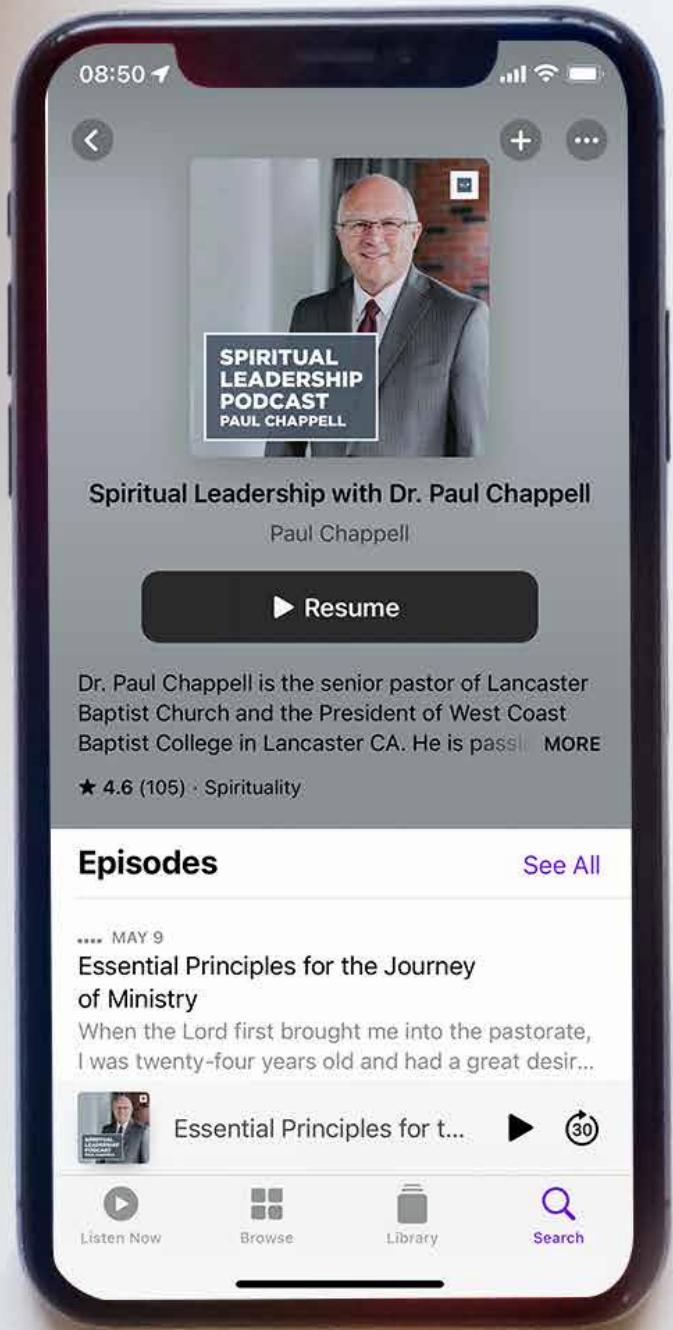






## SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP PODCAST

Encouraging and  
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## Rediscovering the Power of Prayer for Local Church Ministry

BY CLARK GRAHAM

Ministry is filled with unexpected moments of crisis. In these times, we find ourselves praying for God's miraculous intervention. Throughout the New Testament, however, we see that *crisis* prayers are often ineffectual without being preceded by *communion* prayers.

For instance, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus engaged in a season of unimaginable, agonizing prayer (Matthew 26:36–44). However, John 17 records that Jesus had prayed in the upper room just *before* Gethsemane. These two prayers—Gethsemane and the upper room—are profoundly different. While the garden prayer was about *imminent crisis*, the upper room prayer was about *intimate communion*.

In June of 2017, twenty-one-year old Alex Honnold climbed the world's most famous climbing rock: El Capitan in Yosemite National Park. He ascended the three thousand-foot face in just three hours and fifty-six minutes. But his real achievement was not just in *what* he did, but in *how* he did it. Honnold specializes in a climbing technique known as free solo climbing, meaning he does not use any ropes or equipment. His climb was celebrated as one of the greatest athletic feats of any kind because it would either be a perfect climb or death.

But Alex Honnold didn't just wake up one day and decide to scale El Capitan without a rope. He went through a two-year preparation process. On the day

of his climb, every hand hold, foot placement, and body movement had been carefully choreographed in precise detail. Alex's *preparation* had determined his *performance*.

In Mark 9, while Peter, James, and John are on the mountain with Jesus witnessing His transfiguration, the remaining disciples find themselves in a situation for which they are wholly unprepared (Mark 9:14–29). A man whose son has been suffering day and night because of demon possession approaches the disciples begging for help. Despite all their efforts, they are powerless to cast out the evil spirit. Jesus arrives on the scene and miraculously heals the boy, ministering to the once-hopeless father in the process. After the ordeal is over, the disciples ask Jesus privately why they were not able to cast out the demon. Jesus' answer is simple but soul-shaking: "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29).

The disciples were certainly praying men, but they lost, or perhaps had not yet discovered, power in their praying.

When we find ourselves in such a place—serving and yet unequipped and powerless in ministry—how do we rediscover the power of prayer? Here are three ways:

## REGAIN THE FOCUS OF OUR IMPERATIVE MISSION

The church's mission was defined by Jesus in Matthew 28:18–20. At the very core of this mission, two actions are essential: to represent the Savior and recover sinners.

In Mark 9, the father of the demon possessed boy came to the disciples because he had heard of Jesus. In Jesus' absence, the man naturally looked to His disciples who were ministering in His name. Sadly, the disciples

did not represent the Savior well nor were they able to recover sinners from the grip of Satan. "And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not" (Mark 9:18).

Paul explained that God has given all believers the "ministry of reconciliation." We are able to carry out this mission as we remember that we represent the Savior. We "are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:18, 20).

## REMEMBER THE FUTILITY OF IMPOTENT MINISTRY

Before this father begged the disciples for help, the disciples had already been sent out to preach the gospel and were given authority to cast out devils and heal the sick (Luke 9:1–2). Why then were they not able to minister to this family when they had been given the authority to do so? Jesus had given authority to His disciples, but that authority was only effective when exercised by faith. Christ has given His church the authority to minister for Him, but our authority will be ineffective and lack power when we operate faithlessly: "He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me" (Mark 9:19).

Jesus warned against trying to produce results on our own: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

## RENEW OUR FAITH IN AN IMPECCABLE MASTER

Faith unlocks the invisible and completes the impossible. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Jesus affirmed this to the desperate father in Mark 9: "Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23). When we put our faith in Jesus Christ, we can *ascribe limitless possibility* to God by completely trusting Him.

If we are to truly live by faith day by day, we will need to, like the desperate father, acknowledge that we are a limited people: "And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

Some of the greatest prayers in the Bible were motivated by an acknowledgment of one's human limitations. Moses prayed for mercy (Numbers 14:11–20). David prayed for cleansing (Psalm 51:2–12). Solomon prayed for wisdom (1 Kings 3:5–12). The apostles prayed for courage (Acts 4:23–31). These men, and countless others, could have full assurance and confidence in their *crisis* prayers because they regularly had *communion* prayers.

That power is for us, too. When we regain focus, remember the futility of ministering in our own power, and daily renew our faith in our impeccable Master while we commune with the Lord in prayer, we will discover or rediscover the free-flowing power of God upon our lives, ministries, and churches.



**CLARK GRAHAM**  
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Church in Kent, WA.





*Pastor Chappell and Deacon Dave McCollum cut the ribbon as deacons and contractors watch*



*Sunday night attendees enter for the first time*



*Unveiling the rock memorial in the connector walkway*





## Kid City Building Opens

**T**om Malone used to say, “When God wants to do something wonderful, He starts with the difficult; when He wants to do something miraculous, He starts with the impossible.” Building a 6.8 million dollar children’s building in Los Angeles County in

the midst of a global pandemic, supply chain breakdown, and world-wide inflation is impossible. Yet, Lancaster Baptist Church saw God’s faithfulness every step of the way.

This state-of-the-art building has been designed and built specifically

for the needs of children’s ministry. We pray that God uses this building to reach many families for Christ and that in these walls many children will hear the gospel and be disciplined in their faith.

# TRUST IN HIM

THREE CHARACTERISTICS  
OF A TRUE TRUST IN GOD



Trust in him at all  
times; ye people,  
pour out your heart  
before him: God is a  
refuge for us. Selah.

**Psalm 62:8**

---

**BY PAUL CHAPPELL**

**F**or as often as I have gone to the book of Psalms in times of fear or stress, I'm always amazed when I read a psalm which I've read many times but its truths meet my need as if I had never read it before. That was the case when I came to Psalm 62.

Terrie and I had just completed a ministry trip to the Middle East in which God's blessing had exceeded our expectations. The night before our final flight home we were required to take a PCR Covid test before re-entry to the United States. We had already taken several required tests throughout the trip. We took what we expected to be our last test, retired to our room, and finished packing for our homeward flight.

A few hours later, we received a paper under our hotel door with results from our tests. Both of us were positive and were immediately mandated to isolation in our room for ten days of quarantine.

It was the most disappointing news we could have gotten. Not to be dissuaded, however, I moved quickly into "fix it" mode. For the next two days, I researched guidelines, made phone calls, sent emails, and reached out to anyone and everyone I could think of who might be able to help us out of our confinement and back home where I just knew we needed to be.

I prayed, too. That's what pastors do. But I leaned pretty heavily on my frantic efforts as well. Learning to trust is hard for planners.

Eventually, I turned my attention to reading through Psalms. As I read chapter after chapter, my soul began to calm. As my focus returned to the Lord, my efforts were redirected. Instead of incessantly calling the front desk to ask about the finer points of quarantine guidelines and retesting, I found myself with a burden to talk to our Muslim hosts at the hotel about Jesus. (As a result of these conversations, at least one man trusted Christ in the weeks following. He even sent me a picture of himself at church a few weeks later.)

As I reached Psalm 62, God did something remarkable in my heart. As I sat in that dark hotel room with the Muslim qibla arrow pointing toward Mecca on the ceiling above me, I read about God being the rock of my salvation. I read from a king who trusted God as his salvation even when beset by ruthlessly competitive enemies. And then I came to verse 8: *"Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah."*

It was as if every word of that verse seeped into my frustrated, restless soul. I read it again. And again. I pulled out a pad of paper and began writing.

Truth be told, most Christians assume they trust God because they believe they should. If you had asked me early in our foreign quarantine if I was trusting God, I would have said, “Yes, of course.” And then I would have turned my attention to the next phone call I could make to get out.

But the reality is that times of challenge or crisis often reveal undeveloped trust in our lives. It is at these moments that God desires to strengthen our faith. But it all begins with a choice to trust in God instead of trusting in self.

And Psalm 62:8 reveals three important characteristics of true trust in God that the Lord showed me that memorable day in a Middle Eastern hotel room.

“  
God wants us to trust Him  
when the way is clear and when  
the night is dark. He is always  
worthy of our confidence.  
”

### A CONSTANT TRUST

There in the hotel room where I didn't want to be and had spent the past few days unsuccessfully trying to escape from, I was struck first by the word *all*. “Trust in him at all times.” There are some times when it seems easy to trust the Lord: when He answers your prayers, when you see fruit for your labors, when hope surges and you can envision how God will bless in the future.

But there are other times when it is harder to trust the Lord: when you've prayed for a long time and there is no answer, when anxiety is wrapping its grip around your



mind, when you've labored and served but see no fruit, when obstructions rise in your path and it seems impossible to move forward, when you are stuck in a foreign hotel room unable to get home to preach on Sunday.

God wants us to trust Him when the way is clear and when the night is dark. Faith in God is an abiding duty and a perpetual privilege. He is always worthy of our confidence.

I've sung the hymn “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms” since I was a child. But those everlasting arms aren't just a hymnwriter's well-worded phrasing. They are a spiritual reality, always available to God's people: “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deuteronomy 33:27). When your faith is weak, you can lean into God's everlasting arms. They do not, indeed they *cannot*, fail.

Sometimes we think of trusting God as more of a passive decision—something we just sort of do in the background while at the same time exhausting all other

options until something works out. *Oh yes, of course I'm trusting the Lord. But I just need to also . . .*

That's not, however, how the Bible pictures trust. Throughout God's Word, especially in Psalms, we see trust as an active decision of faith. Notice the choice to trust that is voiced in these verses:

“O Lord my God, in thee *do I put my trust*: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me” (Psalm 7:1).

“And they that know thy name *will put their trust* in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee” (Psalm 9:10).

“In the Lord *put I my trust*: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?” (Psalm 11:1).

“Preserve me, O God: for in thee *do I put my trust*” (Psalm 16:1).

When you are besieged by trouble, when you can say with the apostle Paul, “without were fightings, within were fears” (2 Corinthians 7:5), when darkness surrounds you and anxiety grips you, that is when trust is an active choice of faith.



David's choice to trust God at the Psalm 62 moment in his life—likely during Absalom's rebellion and attempt to take the kingdom—shows us a man experiencing stillness under stress. He chose to wait silently on the Lord, not even trusting himself to answer his tormentors.

Those who trust in the Lord at all times develop a patience that is a testimony to the grace of God at work in their lives. They are willing to take decisive action, but only under the direction of the Lord and in dependence on Him through their action.

Earlier in this chapter, David expressed this patient expectancy: "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him" (Psalm 62:5).

An expectant trust in God is never disappointed. We can trust His faithfulness. We can trust His unfailing love. We can trust His promises. And we can trust His plans for us. "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).

### A COMPLETE TRUST

Not only does Psalm 62:8 instruct us to trust in God, but it invites, "pour out your heart before him."

The language of pouring out your heart conveys holding back nothing. A true trust in God is complete. It is the emptying of one's soul to God.

Have you ever had a friend with whom you felt you could fully and freely share your heart without fear of being misunderstood or judged? These kinds of friendships are rare. For me, my wife Terrie is this confidant. I know I can tell her the most personal thoughts and struggles of my heart and be met with love and encouragement. The Lord has blessed me also with a few other friends with whom I can speak freely without needing to first contextualize or defend my perspective. I'm thankful for them.

God is the friend with whom you can fully unburden your soul. You don't weigh Him down with your

confession of sin or burdens. He will never push you away because of something you share with Him. In fact, He knows it before you tell Him and still invites you to share it. He has the ability to lift your spirit and meet the deepest needs of your heart.

So empty your soul before the Lord. Turn the vessel of your soul upside down, and give Him your thoughts, desires, fears, and anxieties. Hide nothing from Him. Confess your sins, knowing that He stands ready to forgive (1 John 1:9). Share your needs, assured that He is a present God who helps (Psalm 46:1). Tell Him your worries, confident that He is able to give you peace (Philippians 4:6–7).

In Psalm 139, David began by exalting the thorough intricacy of God's knowledge of him: "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me." Over the next sixteen verses, David describes how God knows everything about him, including his whereabouts, activities, and even his thoughts before he thinks them. He describes God's care in creating him and the greatness of God's presence to envelop him.

Is it any wonder then, that after David establishes the kind sovereignty and interested attention of God to search and

“  
As we develop a complete trust in God, moments of trial become a motivation to seek the Lord rather than a reason to stop serving Him.  
”

know him that he concludes with a prayer fully exposing the deepest parts of his heart and thoughts to God? "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there



be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23–24).

God is a safe confidant. You can empty your soul before Him and earnestly place your trust in Him.

In fact, the very process of pouring out your heart before God actually builds your trust. It is exactly what an anxious, frazzled soul needs.

## A CONFIDENT TRUST

I love that Psalm 62:8 not only says that God is a refuge, but that it adds “He is a refuge *for us*.” It’s personal.

It’s amazing to see how many times in just eight verses David refers to God as his rock, salvation, and refuge—not just in a general sense, but in a personal sense:

“Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved. . . . He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah” (Psalm 62:1–2, 6–8).

In every storm of life, God offers us the shelter and security of His presence. We can stew in our anxiety and unrest of spirit, or we can run to Christ, unburden our souls to Him, and find peace in His shelter. Missionary Amy Carmichael wrote of the settledness that comes as we fix our hearts on the Lord and seek

Him as our refuge. “Blessed are the single-hearted,” she wrote, “for they shall enjoy much peace. If you refuse to be hurried and pressed, if you stay your soul on God, nothing can keep you from that clearness of spirit which is life and peace. In that stillness you know what His will is.”

What did God as His rock, salvation, and refuge mean for David? It meant God was his place of stability and safety.

When difficulties arose, enemies assaulted, or his footing slipped, David could run to the Lord for security, protection, and rescue.

To us who know Jesus, there is an added richness to these words. Jesus is our refuge and redeemer. He bore the full wrath of God for our sin. He saved us from the eternal penalty of sin and rescues us today from the power of sin’s hold in our lives. We have free access to the presence of God, our refuge, through Christ. Psalm 91, which also speaks of God as our refuge, is especially meaningful when we remember that we dwell in the secret place of the most High by abiding in Christ: “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust” (Psalm 91:1–2).

People who don’t know Christ as their refuge feel the need to hide from God when their soul is troubled. But we who know Him can rejoice in pouring out our hearts to Him and finding in His presence the love, forgiveness, and assurance that we need.



God is our refuge, and His Word is our resource. It is in the written Word of God that we find His promises and sustaining grace to confidently trust Him.

David knew this, and he relied on God's Word: "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God" (Psalm 62:11). Indeed, God's written Word is the record of His spoken—inspired by His very breath—Word. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Do you want a more confident trust in God? Turn to His Word. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

## SELAH

So there I was, held against my plans in a hotel room in the Middle East. I had tried everything I could to reverse the situation. But instead of rescuing me from an unwanted quarantine, God was rescuing me from the frustration and anxiety that had insisted on my plans above His. And He had done it through one short verse in Psalm 62. In these words, He had brought me back to a place of trust.

Trust Constantly: *Trust in him at all times;*

Trust Completely: *ye people, pour out your heart before him:*

Trust Confidently: *God is a refuge for us. Selah.*

But God's work in my heart

wasn't done. As I finished the verse, I saw that single, final word: *Selah*.

If you don't know what *selah* means, that's because it isn't an English word. It's a Hebrew word that, rather than being translated into English was transliterated—spelled out with English letters so we can pronounce it. Bible scholars assume it's meaning is one of two possibilities: a musical notation (remember, the psalms were Israel's songbook) or a word that means, "pause and reflect." It seems to me that either of these possible definitions are the same. Whether it calls the musicians to pause or the reader to pause, the end result is a rest.

Rest—even the word sounds calming to a chaffed, anxious soul. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him," Psalm 37:7 admonishes.

Rest takes time. Pouring your heart out to the Lord isn't done in thirty seconds. Usually when I'm anxious, I also feel rushed. There's this building sense of hurry in my spirit that doesn't allow me to really pause, to enjoy a *selah*.

But the process of pouring out my soul to God settles my spirit. It realigns my perspective so that I take more delight in God's presence and am less focused on my performance.

One of the best cures for anxiety is worship. After we empty our souls before the Lord, it is good to turn our attention on who He is and simply rejoice in His greatness. When we feel stressed and hurried and pressed up against the clock, it's good to lift our eyes to the One

who transcends time and space and yet cares deeply for our needs. As we fill our minds with the realities of God and lift our hearts in praise to Him, anxiety's grip weakens its hold on us.

“When we feel stressed and hurried and pressed up against the clock, it's good to lift our eyes to the One who transcends time and space and yet cares deeply for our needs.”

The rest that comes through seeking God as our refuge and laying down our anxieties in His presence brings a soul-rest. It's deeper than a vacation, deeper than sleep. It's an abiding rest in God.

Lay down like a lamb in the green pasture, and bask in the care of the Shepherd. He is a good shepherd who "maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul..." (Psalm 23:2–3).

This kind of rest is what every anxious heart needs. A rest to pause, reflect, renew, refresh, receive inner resilience.

Selah.



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# Jesus' Answer to Overcoming Anxiety

## BIBLICAL COUNSELING

BY DR. GEORGE CRABB

All of us desire to live with greater faith in God. We want to “trust in Him”—not just as a mantra, but as a way of life. Yet, for many believers, crippling anxiety has become their norm. Over and over, anxious worries play at their minds, stuck on an unwelcome repeat.

Where do we turn when anxiety takes hold? And how can those of us who serve as biblical counselors guide anxious Christians to a renewed trust in the Lord?

There are many passages throughout God’s Word that redirect our thoughts from worry to trust, from fear to faith. But perhaps my favorite passage to turn to and to walk others through is Matthew 6:25–33. In fact, I would encourage you to take a moment to read this passage before reading the rest of this article.

One encouraging observation from this passage is that the very fact Jesus included this topic in His “Sermon on the Mount” in Matthew 5–7 tells us that worry and anxiety are common struggles and ones that God cares to help us overcome.

### THREE GENTLE REMINDERS

Jesus begins with statements and rhetorical questions

*Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.—Matthew 6:25–33*

that point to the futility of anxiety. Read through the passage, and then notice these points He makes:

**Anxiety is senseless.** Anxiety is a lot of work for no positive return. We expend an enormous amount of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual energy when we allow anxiety into our lives with no benefit gained. Anxiety drains and immobilizes us. It doesn't empower or motivate us.

**Anxiety is sinful.** According to Jesus in Matthew 6:30 anxiety is a fruit of unbelief. It is a

“**Anxiety envisions circumstances which may never occur while forgetting the realities of God's nature which has never changed.**”

forgetting the realities of God's nature which has never changed. God's provisions are powerful and plentiful. God deserves more than little faith; He deserves our complete trust.

**Anxiety is slanderous.** A continually anxious Christian is a poor witness to a watching world. It indicates that God cannot or will not provide for our needs. In reality, God will always provide for our needs. In fact, remembering His plentiful faithfulness is part of the answer to overcoming anxiety.

### THREE NEEDFUL ACTIONS

Thankfully, Jesus didn't only point out the shortfalls of worry; He also prescribed a treatment for the anxious mind. Notice these three parts to the prescription:

**Renew your mind.** Throughout this entire passage, Jesus renews our thinking as He puts our anxious thoughts into a perspective of the faithfulness of God. (Philippians 4:4-8, another passage that is so helpful in fighting anxiety, follows a similar pattern.)

A stable, non-anxious mind thinks biblically; it rests upon the sure foundation of God's Word. On the other hand, an anxious mind dwells on things that are not God-centered or Christ-exalting. We must move toward a mind that is settled upon the truth found in God's Word.

Isaiah 26:3 makes a similar point: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." As we focus our mind on God, He gives us peace.

**Reevaluate your priorities.** Jesus began with the admonition, "Take no thought for [all of the things you tend to worry about]." And then He pointed His listeners instead to consider the "fowls of the air" and the "lilies of the field." And why are we to consider these things? Because God meets all their needs without their help worrying. Jesus then poses the question, "Are ye not much better than they?"

Our Savior's argument is simple: anxiety arises when we place a high value on the wrong things. This is further seen as the passage closes with a verse many of us know but sometimes forget its context: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Jesus is instructing us not to overvalue the temporal and undervalue the eternal. The disciples were anxious about food and clothing instead of about their lives and walk with God. They needed a fresh understanding of what God deems significant which is a deep, dynamic, and daily fellowship with Him. When we grasp this truth, it will stop our fussing and fretting.

**Remember your Heavenly Father.** As Christians, we have a relationship with God the Father through the finished work of His Son, Jesus Christ. We are His children, and, as Jesus pointed out earlier in the same sermon, He is "Our Father which art in heaven..." (Matthew 6:9).

Remembering the relationship we have with our Heavenly Father builds our faith. "And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee" (Psalm 9:10). As we focus on God's lovingkindness and faithfulness, we realize we have no need to be anxious. Our Heavenly Father knows what we need, and He has the ability to supply it (Philippians 4:19).

More grace is what we all want and need, and God will give us the perfect amount of grace at the perfect time (2 Corinthians 12:9). In light of this, we can live moment by moment without anxiety, because the same Father who takes care of all creation knows what we need before we are even conscious of it. Our Heavenly Father will breathe out grace upon

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As we focus on God's lovingkindness and faithfulness, we realize we have no need to be anxious. Our Heavenly Father knows what we need, and He has the ability to supply it.

”

us, perfectly proportioned to cover our needs as we prioritize Him in our lives and passionately pursue fellowship with Him.

### CAREFUL OR CONSIDERING?

Perhaps because of the commonness of anxiety or perhaps because of the stranglehold it so easily develops on our minds, many Christians write anxiety off as something to simply be endured.

Yet, the Bible is clear that we are to “Be careful for nothing...” (Philippians 4:6). The word *careful* means “to be full of care.” It’s the perfect word for what Jesus warned against in Matthew 6. There are no *ifs* or *buts* in this command. Anxiety is not a personality trait; it is a lack of trust in God. It amounts to a kind of functional atheism—thinking and living as if God does not exist, or at least as if He is not concerned with my needs.

The way to combat this anxious, full-of-care tendency so many of us fight is to instead consider what is true. Consider God’s care for the birds and the lilies and His love for you. And then, with these realities in mind, follow the instruction of Philippians 4:6 to take every one of your cares to Christ in prayer: “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

When you find yourself full of care, remember instead to consider your Father’s faithfulness and His care for you.



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# GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS

**Truths about Trust Learned through Cancer**

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**BY R.B. OUELLETTE**

“**R**ene, you have stage three cancer.”

My dear wife, Krisy, was seated next to my bed waiting for me to wake up from the biopsy on my throat. We knew this diagnosis was a possibility. In fact, the doctor had said he had “a strong suspicion” that the tumor on my larynx was malignant. But we had hoped and prayed for better news.

Prior to the procedure, I had asked my pastor to gather the staff and deacons and pray for me. In obedience to James 5:14–15, he had anointed me with oil, and several men prayed aloud for my healing.

Dr. John R. Rice taught that there were three possible outcomes after such a prayer meeting: God could heal by miraculous means. God could heal by medical means. Or God could allow us to remain sick or take us Home for His glory.

As I was waking up from anesthesia and heard the doctor’s stage three cancer news, it appeared Dr. Rice’s second or third proposed options would be ours. Krisy says my response was, “Well, it’s no surprise to God. And it is a great opportunity to glorify Him.” I’m not sure because my memory of that moment is clouded. But I think I said, “I’m thirsty. Could I please have a drink of water?”

In any case, we began our journey through radiation, chemotherapy, and daily 150-mile round trip visits to the University of Michigan Hospital. The path was paved with bloodwork, loss of appetite, difficulty swallowing, bodily weakness, wracking coughing fits, uncertainty, faith, doubt, divine assurance, and the unfailing, immeasurable, unending, undeserved, amazing grace of God.

Before we knew whether or not the tumor was cancerous, I told Krisy that there were four possible outcomes: The best possible result would be that the tumor was benign. The second best was that it was malignant but treatable. The third best potential outcome was that my larynx had to be removed, in which case my job, serving God, would remain the same but my assignment would change. (More writing, little if any speaking.) The worst thing that could have happened would have been that I died and went to Heaven, which was really the best thing that could have happened. What a deal! I remembered the words of the old song, “Things are getting better either way!”

Krisy and I were mindful throughout the treatments that our main responsibility was to glorify God. You may remember from the book of

Job that Elihu charged Job with one fault: he justified himself rather than God. We didn't want that to be true of us.

It is the privilege of every Christian in a difficult time to tell everyone possible how good our God is. We had the chance to pass out hundreds of gospel tracts. We took a box of chocolates with us each day to the treatment center and offered the workers a chocolate along with a tract. They almost always took both.

The opportunities to actually go through the plan of salvation with someone were limited, since I was not usually around any single patient or hospital employee for more than a few minutes at a time. I did get to speak with one fellow patient who was originally from Iraq. He trusted Christ. A couple of weeks later I ran into him again. He said to me, "How do these other people do this? We have Jesus!"

We learned much about the grace and goodness of God. I had moments of fear, but I experienced many more occasions when my spirit was overwhelmed by the assurance of God's love and my certain eternal destiny.

We saw the Lord wonderfully provide for us. During the eight weeks I was unable to travel and preach, I never asked for assistance. I did not so much as say to a soul, "Pray that God will take care of our finances." I simply trusted God. Churches spontaneously sent generous offerings. Individuals, some of whom I did not even know, sent kind gifts. An insurance policy I had forgotten came to my attention, and I had it paid out in full.

Even more of a blessing than the financial provisions were the prayers and encouraging words of the people of God. Letters, cards, texts, phone calls, and offers to help came in abundance. Many of the good people of our church brought small gifts and treats to us. One ministry friend sent a nice pen over to thirty preachers, asking them to pray for my healing each time they used it. A pastor in Texas texted, "You have dozens of people here on a fourteen-day fast praying for you." We were blown away by all that the Lord used His servants to do for us.

By the grace of God, we never blamed or questioned God. One preacher asked, "Do you wonder, 'Why me?' After all, you're trying to serve the Lord." My immediate response was, "No. Why *not* me? Nearly two million people in the United States get cancer annually. Why should I not be one of them?"

The best part of our experience was the opportunity to learn more about our God. The disciples knew that

the Lord Jesus could give sight to the blind, strength to withered limbs, cleansing to lepers, and hearing to the deaf. But when they saw Him command and control the wind and the waves they were astounded: "...What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (Matthew 8:27).

I have heard people say of their time of trial, "The Lord was testing me to see how I would respond." Wrong. God already knew how they would respond. He is God. He has always known everything. Think again of the disciples in the storm. When the storm was over, the Lord Jesus didn't know one thing about the disciples He had not known previously. But they knew a whole lot more about the Lord.

As I write, it is a little more than four months since the treatments ended. My three-month scope and scan showed no

signs of cancer, praise the Lord. My voice continues to improve gradually. The doctors cautioned me that the two weeks after radiation and chemotherapy ended would be some of my worst. The last treatment was September 12, so I didn't preach out until September 14. I had frequent coughing fits and could not speak above a whisper. Nobody thought it was a good idea to start traveling so soon. But I told Krisy that we had prayed for God's healing, and it would be a lack of faith to not accept the opportunity to preach. Since then, He has allowed me to keep a full schedule, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve His people.

As I look back to that day when the doctor announced I had cancer, I can't help but praise God for His great faithfulness and for the opportunity He has given me to experience it in a fuller way. All in all, I consider my trial to have been mild, my burden to have been light, His grace to be abundantly sufficient, and His name to be worthy of the highest glory.

“It is the privilege of every Christian in a difficult time to tell everyone possible how good our God is.”



#### **RB OUELLETTE**

served as the Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church of Bridgeport, MI, for forty-four years, and now travels in a full-time itinerate preaching ministry.





# The Pastor's Toolbox

by R.B. Ouellette

## MINISTERING TO PEOPLE IN TIMES OF TRIAL

One of the great privileges of the pastor is to shepherd church members through difficult seasons. What can you do as a pastor to help and encourage?

**1. Point them to the Lord.** We can and should pray for people. We can and should encourage them. We can and should share biblical truth with them. But their primary relationship is not with us but with the Lord. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3).

**2. Give them regular attention and encouragement.** A phone call, text, or note will mean a great deal. It tells them you have not forgotten them and reminds them of God's care as well. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Hebrews 6:10).

**3. Teach them to be alert for what God is doing in their lives.** During my recent battle with cancer, my instinctive approach to the side effects of chemotherapy and radiation was to "tough it out." I tried not to complain and hesitated to let people know what I was experiencing. There came a point when it was extremely

difficult to swallow. I considered it a major accomplishment to take my pills. I didn't want to eat. It was a chore to drink water. On a pain scale of 1–10, each swallow was a 6 or 7. One Sunday morning my pastor preached from Matthew 7:7: "Ask, and it shall be given you . . ." As I listened, the Spirit of God said, "Why don't you ask Me?" So, I did. I went to the altar during the invitation and prayed, "Lord, would you please relieve the pain in my throat." He did! From that Monday forward, my pain greatly diminished to a 3 or a 4. And I was blessed with a strengthened confidence in God.

**4. Mobilize others to help.** At my pastor's request, my wife organized a caregiving ministry in our church called "Just Because." Those in need are assigned a volunteer who will make them meals, send notes or texts, bring treats, and pray for them. Al and Kim Badour took this role for me during my illness. Their thoughtful, generous, faithful help was a constant blessing.

**5. Encourage them to glorify God through their trial.** Some people spend more time talking about their burden than they do about the Burden Bearer. They seem more concerned that you know how hard things have

been on them than sharing how good God has been to them. The focus should never be on our hardships but on God's help. First Corinthians 6:20 tells us, "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

I once listened to the testimony of a young believer who was drafted into the US Army and stationed in Vietnam. His efforts to witness to his fellow soldiers earned him the nicknames of "preacher," "missionary," and "evangelist." He good naturedly responded by calling his three most vocal critics "pervert number one," "pervert number two," and "pervert number three." One day while on patrol, a phosphorous grenade exploded in his hand. The blast blew away all the fingers on his right hand, his ear, his nose, and three fingers on his left hand as well as engulfing him in flames. The first words out of his mouth, shouted as he jumped into the water of a swamp, were "God, I still love you!" You can imagine the impact his testimony had on his previous critics. Our message must always be that we serve a good and wonderful God who is always worthy of our private adoration and our public praise.



Welcome!

How Can  
I Help?



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# How to Serve the Volunteer Teams You Lead

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BY JACOB FLEMMING

Nothing compares to the privilege of serving in the house of the Lord! My heart echoes David's: "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psalm 84:10).

Along with that privilege comes responsibility; and when that responsibility includes leading others, it is imperative that we have a plan. My pastor, mentor, and friend, Dr. Paul Chappell, says, "Churches struggle when they establish goals without a strategy and ministry without structure." Unfortunately, many times our volunteer teams never reach their full potential because of a lack of structure.

Following are five simple principles that can help you serve the volunteer team you lead and establish a culture that promotes the forward momentum of God's work.

## STRATEGICALLY RECRUIT

To lead a volunteer team, we must first have willing and able volunteers. Some volunteers will do just that—volunteer. Others, we need to recruit. And then, we must have the wisdom to place each volunteer where they will have the most impact on a weekly basis.

As leaders, we should have a personal goal to set each volunteer up for success. One of the most helpful ways to know where specific volunteers will be successful is to learn what their spiritual and natural gifts are and then involve them in areas where their gifts will be put to the best use. In addition to gifting, different areas of ministry require different levels of oversight and discernment. For instance, stocking guest tables or preparing refreshments for an event wouldn't involve the extensive background checks verifying childcare workers would require.

The fact is, God has created every person precious and unique, fitted to serve Him. As ministry leaders, we want to help our volunteer teams reach their potential by serving in their naturally gifted areas. Generally speaking, it is much easier to take a little time and effort to discern the right position for a volunteer than it is to make an adjustment when someone is already actively serving in the position that you have (mistakenly) placed them in.

Think, for example, of a church member volunteering for "whatever you need me to do." At the moment, you happen to need door greeters



for the first impressions team. This volunteer, however, has an introverted personality. Should you place this volunteer in the door greeter position? Most likely, that wouldn't be the best fit. But this volunteer could shine in many other areas. Perhaps they could still be on the first impressions team, but doing the work of stocking supplies, treats, etc. On the other hand, there may be more extroverted people who would be happier to greet, knowing that the more tedious work of stocking supplies is cared for.

## EQUIP WITH RESOURCES

As ministry leaders, we are to equip "the saints for the work of the ministry" (Ephesians 4:12). One of the greatest ways you can encourage your volunteer team to reach their potential is to equip them with the training and resources they need to excel in that specific ministry. Here are four areas in which you can equip your volunteers:

**Job descriptions:** Write out a purpose statement for each ministry with key responsibilities for each volunteer position. (The book *Order in the Church* by Paul Chappell has some helpful sample descriptions.) If you have not provided clear communication to a volunteer, don't get frustrated when they don't serve exactly how you desire.

**Clear expectations:** Volunteers want to be told what is expected. A great way to frustrate your volunteer team is to leave your expectations open-ended or fuzzy.

**Contact information:** If a volunteer has questions or an emergency on the day that they are serving, who do they call? Give

them your phone number and the phone numbers of any other people they should turn to for help.

**Periodic training:** Strategically schedule ministry meetings throughout the year during which you can provide further training. For instance, you may train your first impressions team three weeks before Easter so everyone has a fresh reminder of the ways to serve first-time guests.

## REWARD REGULARLY

It is impossible to encourage the wrong person. Volunteers sacrifice time and often finances to actively participate in serving our Lord. It's a good thing to recognize their sacrifice and encourage them to keep up the great work. Regular recognition can put wind in the sails of your team members. Here are some suggestions:

**Yearly:** Recognize a ministry team in a Sunday night service.

**Quarterly:** Write a thank you note with a candy bar.

**Monthly:** Have a bite-size treat, waiting at their serving station.

**Weekly:** Verbalize your gratitude with a heart-felt "thank you."

## VALUE THE TEAM'S RESPONSE

Your volunteer has strategically been placed, equipped with resources and training, and is feeling encouraged by serving. By now, there's a great chance that they have gleaned knowledge in their ministry and have ideas that can make their specific ministry even better. To be effective leaders, we must take the time to listen to their input.

It's easy to receive compliments. But leaders are willing to receive complaints too. Make sure the compliments don't go to your

head, and make sure to handle the complaints prayerfully and responsively.

## EMPOWER RESPONSIBLY

The purpose of delegation is not for you to do less, but for you to get more done effectively. The leader should always be watching for a volunteer team member that potentially could step up and help co-lead a part of the ministry. Be willing to share the ministry and allow well-trained volunteers to be empowered to help make decisions.

The person who builds by himself won't accomplish nearly as much as if he had a team of leaders helping him build. Can you imagine Nehemiah building the walls by himself? He would have ended up in the place many of us have found, or nearly found, ourselves: blown up, burned out, or quitting in discouragement. Build your volunteer team, and build *with* your volunteer team.

It is my prayer that these five principles will encourage you as you *serve* your volunteer teams.

**Strategically Recruit**

**Equip with Resources**

**Reward Regularly**

**Value the Team's Response**

**Empower Responsibly**



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## The Patient Soulwinner

BY JERRY FERRSO

**P**atience! Does any Christian not need to grow in this area? We want our questions answered immediately, our trials resolved quickly, and every irritation removed yesterday. It doesn't matter if we are at Costco trying to figure out which checkout line will be the fastest or at a restaurant wanting our food at lightning speed. We have an agenda.

This impatience can creep into our soulwinning as well. We want to share the gospel and see instant fruit, and we grow weary when we don't see the results that we desire in the time frame that we desire them.

Yet, God doesn't seem to be in the hurry that we are in. I am often reminded of the truth that is uncovered in 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." I'm thankful the Lord is patient in His dealings with me. I'm thankful He gave me time to hear the gospel—multiple times—and trust Him. May we exhibit that same spirit toward those whom we long to see to come

to the saving knowledge of Jesus.

One of the ways that we express trust in God and in the power of the gospel is by committing to the process of a harvest.

To be clear, I've never lived on a farm. (I haven't even been successful in planting a garden.) But I do know that farmers don't just plant seed and see a harvest tomorrow. They participate in a process that creates favorable conditions for the seed to flourish. The gospel is a seed, and God calls us to plant it. But rather than becoming discouraged when we don't see immediate results, we should commit to the process of cultivating, planting, watering, and harvesting.

### CULTIVATING

Before a farmer plants a field, he takes time to prepare the soil by plowing and fertilizing. We do something similar in our witness when we establish a friendship relationship with the one with whom we want to share the gospel. I'm not suggesting a long, drawn-out process—just that we take a few minutes to build rapport, treating them as someone we care



about rather than simply another set of ears to hear our message.

The best way I have discovered to do this is by asking questions. These questions will vary with each person, but they should convey genuine interest. Through this “pre-conversation,” the person with whom you are talking begins to feel comfortable. They begin to “let you in,” as the invisible barrier between you begins to disappear. So, have the patience, and take the time to cultivate a relationship.

We see an example of this in Jesus’ conversation with the woman at the well. Rather than immediately sharing the gospel with her, He first connected with her as a person and even created a curiosity for what He had to tell her: “Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. . . . Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water” (John 4:7, 9–10).

## PLANTING

The whole purpose of cultivating soil is to plant seeds. We catch a glimpse of this in the parable of the sower: “And other [seed] fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold” (Luke 8:8). Ultimately, it is the Spirit of God who prepares people’s hearts to receive the seed of the gospel. The Spirit does, however, use people—like you and me—in this process.

And an essential part of this process is that we actually plant the seed—that we share the gospel. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:13–14).

## WATERING

As diligent and earnest as we may be in cultivating and planting, many people do not trust Christ the first time they hear the gospel. Some people, like some seeds, require time. Some people need to work through questions and ideas that have filled their minds through the years.

This is where patience on our part comes in. If the person doesn’t immediately trust Christ, are we going to leave the “field” of their life, unwilling to wait for the harvest? Or are we going to prayerfully and persistently water the seed?

This persistence is often called “follow up,” and I believe it is essential to a fruitful soulwinning ministry. Our church takes these efforts so seriously that we emphasize them in our outreach program and encourage our church family to practice it in all their gospel outreach endeavors—including when witnessing to friends, family, and coworkers.

If someone has listened to the gospel—including by attending a service at your church—but has not made a decision to trust Christ, don’t give up on them. Rather, water the seed by continued prayer and ongoing outreach. Invite them again to church. Offer to answer questions. Stop by to visit with another printed gospel resource. Send texts and notes to let them know you’re praying for them. Keep inviting them to special events at church, and continue with a readiness to share the gospel. Most of all, pray diligently for God to work in their lives.

## HARVESTING

Have you ever shared the gospel with someone and the person received Christ as their Savior immediately? When this happens to me, I usually walk away thinking, “Wow! That person was ready to be saved!” But do you know why they were ready? Usually it is because someone else put in all the labor. I may have had the opportunity to see the person trust Christ, but their “instant” decision was the result of the previous witness of a coworker, prayers of a grandmother, or the gospel efforts for someone else in their life. Others did all the cultivating, planting, and watering. I came along, and God used me to do the harvesting.

Jesus described this scenario to His disciples just after the woman at the well left to bring everyone she knew to hear Christ: “One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours” (John 4:37–38).

If you aren’t currently seeing the harvest you would like from your gospel witness, don’t get discouraged. Just be sure that you are faithfully cultivating, planting, and watering. God will tend to the seed, and He may even use someone else to do the harvesting. However, you’ll be rewarded in Heaven for your faithful work as one of the Lord’s laborers.



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## Five Spiritual Disciplines to Strengthen Your Faith

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BY PAUL CHOI

When I was in junior high, I had a fervent desire to become a great basketball player and one day possibly be drafted into the NBA. Now that never became a reality (not even close), but my love for the game was sincere.

I had posters of NBA athletes on the walls of my room; I watched the Chicago Bulls religiously on television; and I wore t-shirts with my favorite players imprinted on the front. Although my desire was genuine, I didn't get very far in my basketball "career," because I wasn't faithful to implement the disciplines needed to improve my skills. My ambitions never amounted to much because they didn't fuel real action.

Most believers have a sincere desire to be strong in their faith. We desire to live a victorious life in our Savior and be confident in our doctrine. We want to be "ready always to give an answer" to gainsayers and earnest inquirers that ask us for a reason regarding our beliefs.





But heartfelt aspirations alone will not lead us to become who we desire to be without implementing spiritual habits and disciplines. Only as we develop and practice spiritual habits will we be strengthened in our faith by God's grace.

So what are some practical disciplines that we can implement today to strengthen our faith?

## READ GOD'S WORD

"But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:2-3).

According to Psalm 1, we cannot experience a blessed and prosperous life without daily saturating our minds in God's Word. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul told Timothy that the Scriptures are able to make one spiritually mature and fully equipped for life and ministry. Without daily reading the Word of God, we will become spiritually anemic and fruitless.

## STUDY GOD'S WORD

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

Every Christian must heed the admonition of "rightly dividing the word of truth." This requires us to study and diligently exegete the truths contained in the Bible. A good practice would be to periodically select a subject (e.g. the deity of Christ, salvation by faith, a current social issue, etc.) to systematically study and develop a biblical understanding of God's teachings on the matter.

## MEMORIZE GOD'S WORD

"Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write

them upon the table of thine heart" (Proverbs 7:2-3).

Memorize verses that answer the questions you have had in doctrinal questions. As you commit God's Word to memory, you'll be better equipped to give a defense for your faith to others who ask you.

## HEAR GOD'S WORD

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2).

We must never grow weary of listening to the teaching and preaching of God's Word. As we receive truth from biblical teachers who "rightly divide the Word of truth," our theological understanding will be strengthened. Be faithful to every service and Bible study at your church, and make it a regular habit to read God's Word throughout the week.

## SHARE GOD'S WORD

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

As we teach what we are learning to others, we become stronger in our faith. When we prepare to teach a class, preach a sermon, disciple a new believer, share the gospel, or teach our children, it compels us to do some critical thinking in order to intelligently explain our theology. It is often the questions that we receive in these settings that drive us to further study the Scriptures which in turn will strengthen our faith.



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# FRACTURED TRUST



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BY JOHN GOETSCH

Every relationship is formed and perpetuated by an invisible link called trust. That binding link is forged through loving communication, meticulous integrity, and honest transparent motives.

Trust is defined as “confidence, faith, belief, sureness, reliance, certitude, and conviction.” By its very nature, trust is generally built over time, yet it can be fractured instantaneously by a single word, action, or attitude. Though it’s not impossible to rebuild trust, once it has been fractured, it’s like a fractured bone—it doesn’t heal immediately, and it has a huge impact on every aspect of one’s life.

Our relationship with Jesus Christ is built on this trust factor. Most of us did not get saved the moment we first heard the gospel. It took some time for the Holy Spirit to gently draw us to the honest truths of God’s Word as they were preached or shared with us. We listened to others share their testimonies of their confidence in God and eagerness to grow in their relationship with Him. We realized something was missing in our life, but we wanted to be certain that our faith was based on something concrete, real, and trustworthy. We recall the overwhelming assurance we received from God the moment our sins were forgiven and we became a child of God. Our trust then grew as we worshiped Him, obeyed Him, and served Him.

Satan knows that the only way we can truly please God is with this whole-hearted trust and unwavering faith. “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). Because Satan knows this, he is wholly and completely set on fracturing our trust in God. Note that he is not content with a slight stress fracture of your spiritual pinky finger. He has a sledgehammer, and

he wields it with every intent to break every bone in your spiritual being. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

How exactly does Satan go about fracturing our trust? Let’s go back to the beginning. God provided a beautiful place called the Garden of

“  
**It is impossible to love God and live wholeheartedly for Him with a fractured trust.**  
”

Eden for the first man and woman to live. After placing them there, He gave them a commandment: “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17). This was a simple command, and in it God emphasized the freedom He was giving man: of all these trees “thou mayest *freely* eat.” God was in no way prohibiting man, but rather protecting him through His guidance and instruction.

When Satan enters the Garden in Genesis chapter 3 his strategy is quickly seen. He begins by planting a doubt in Adam’s and Eve’s minds about God. “... Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Genesis 3:1). He plants the thought in their minds that God is not trustworthy—that He is perhaps withholding something good from them and that He really does not have their best interest in mind. Satan then proceeds to suggest the opposite of God’s words: “And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely

die” (Genesis 3:4). He is slandering the very character of God by challenging His holy integrity and the trustworthiness of His Word. Adam and Eve took the bait, and the entire human race plunged into sin. All because of a fractured trust!

Now let’s be honest: we are not looking at a myriad of trees in a garden trying to figure out what we can eat and what we cannot. But the subtle strategy of Satan never changes, and we must likewise guard against a fractured trust.

We clearly read in God’s Word that God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1), but we entertain thoughts of perhaps other possibilities based on scientific theories.

We read that God made two genders—male and female (Genesis 1:27)—and we look in the mirror and *know* that we are one or the other yet *wonder* if perhaps we should choose the opposite.

We read that “marriage is honorable” and sanctioned by God (Hebrews 13:4), but we imagine we might be missing out on something by remaining faithful to our spouse.

We read that God founded, empowers, and protects the local church (Matthew 16:18), but we think we might be happier with less involvement or commitment.

Once we allow ourselves that sliver of doubt, uncertainty, question, fear, suspicion, or distrust—we are in trouble. We then begin to look at everything in God’s Word through that lens of uncertainty.

So, what do we do when we have allowed Satan to fracture our trust in God? What do we do when we find ourselves with doubts that are

subtly displacing the solid trust we had in God?

The answer is simple: we go back to the truth. We remind ourselves that it is never *God* who fractures our trust. “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” (Numbers 23:19). Indeed, we serve a God who “cannot lie” (Titus 1:2).

Jesus Himself is the truth: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Rebuilding

“  
**We go back to the truth. We remind ourselves that it is never God who fractures our trust.**  
”

trust in God is a matter of turning to Him in faith and getting to know Him as He is. “And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee” (Psalm 9:10).

Just as it would be nearly impossible to walk a mile with two broken legs or to carry a heavy object with two broken arms, it is impossible to love God and live wholeheartedly for Him with a fractured trust. But when we turn in trust to God, we are blessed. “O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him” (Psalm 34:8).



**JOHN GOETSCH**

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## Four Challenges Missionaries Face

### AND HOW YOUR CHURCH CAN HELP

BY ADAM FRIDENSTINE

We read in Philippians 4:10–19 that the Philippian church greatly encouraged Paul. What was it that was so meaningful to him? It wasn't just their financial support, but it was also their continued care for him and their desire to be part of his work.

As missionaries, Esther and I have often been incredibly blessed by churches who encourage us in our work here in El Salvador. The prayers, support, and communication from state-side churches has often come at just the right moment to lift our spirits and strengthen our hands in the work of the Lord.

Churches who support missionaries *want* to be a blessing. But sometimes well-meaning people in those churches don't know how specifically to do that. Life on a foreign field is full of challenges many Christians back home never face. Understanding these challenges can help supporting churches know how to help their missionaries.

#### CULTURAL ADJUSTMENTS

Learning a new language and culture is more challenging than anyone who has not experienced

it can comprehend. At the same time a missionary family is struggling to learn a foreign language, they are usually working through complicated legalities and often spending 20–40 hours per week navigating paperwork, foreign bank transactions, immigration, paying bills, and more. It's frustrating for them to have so much time eaten up by these necessities that would be non-existent or far simpler in their home country. Especially at the beginning, the missionary will often feel as if they are not fulfilling the Great Commission due to all the time these needs require.

Pray diligently for your missionaries during this time, and communicate that to them. Be patient with them, as they would rather be doing other things as well. Recognize that it may take months or even years to see an established work, depending on the language and culture.

#### BALANCING MANY ROLES

As missionaries strive to make a difference in the place that God has called them, they are often involved in many outreach ministries as well as building





the church. Depending on the situation, they may have no trained help for several years, and there are no Bible colleges from which to hire help. There is a constant pressure to always be ready for the next church service, the next event, the next witnessing opportunity. Did they know this was part of what they signed up for? Absolutely! But it is still a lot on one's plate!

You can help by initiating communication with the missionary, even when you are not asking something from them. Reach out with love and encouragement. Ask direct and love-loaded questions about the missionary and his family, marriage, health, etc. Give time and reminders when you are asking for a special update or personal communication.

## DISCOURAGEMENT AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Though not exclusive to foreign ministry, your missionaries will undoubtedly experience a multitude of discouragements and emotional needs on the field. The difference for missionaries is that there is likely a greater lack of a support team on the foreign field. Sometimes there are no other mature Christians nearby to help through their valleys. A missionary

should never come off the field feeling lonely or unloved.

Purpose to be a support team for your missionaries. Ask your church members to adopt a missionary family. (We have had many churches do this, rotating missionaries each year. Through the years, the missionary family has been loved by several families, and eventually the whole church feels as though they know the missionaries personally.)

## FINANCIAL BURDENS

Missionaries will spend many months on deputation raising funds to go to the field. They try to anticipate all financial needs for the foreseeable future in a place they have never previously lived. Although it is true that the income of a foreign missionary will often be higher than the nationals living in that same area, there are also many ministry expenses that a national would not have. Even with the best laid plans, good stewardship and constant support, things like inflation can make a huge difference in the monthly budget of a missionary. And even when churches always support on time and faithfully send the same amount for many years, those support dollars do not go as far as they used to depending on the economy in that particular country.

The cost of living continually rises, while the missionary's support generally remains unchanged.

How can your church help with the financial burdens of missionaries?

Be sensitive to the economic challenges of living internationally on a fixed income. We have been blessed on a couple of occasions when a church reached out and purchased a new appliance to replace a broken one we were not able to replace at the time. Washing machines and refrigerators are luxuries, but they sure are blessings!

You can also plan for occasional unannounced offerings for special projects. Communicate with your missionaries about their needs, and evaluate adjusting your support levels according to those needs.

Without the financial support of churches, missionaries couldn't go. Without the prayer support, emotional support, and encouragement, missionaries will seldom go as far as they could.



### ADAM FRIDENSTINE

is a WCBC graduate and a missionary to El Salvador. He and his wife, Esther, have been serving there faithfully for twelve years.



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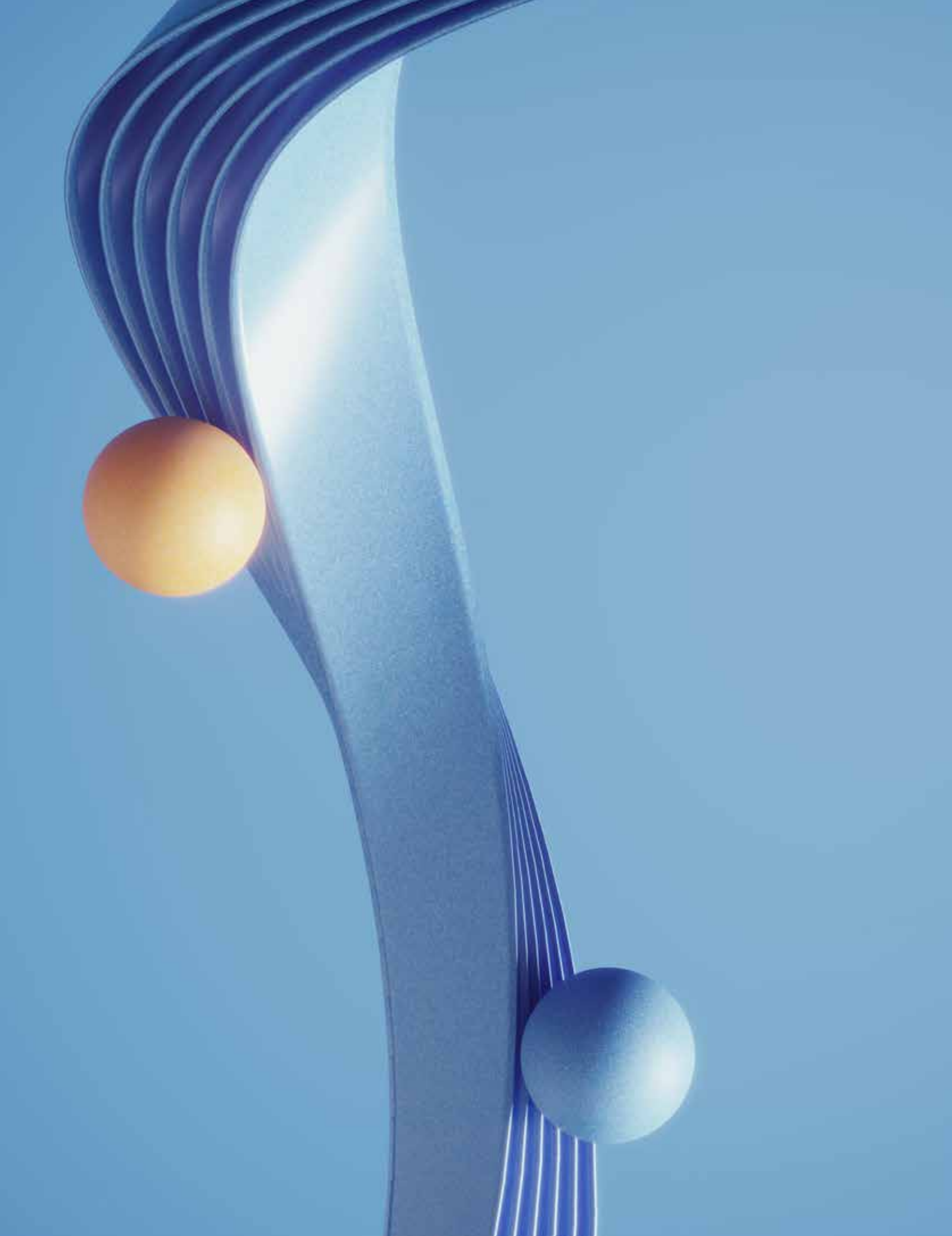
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# The Transition Position

BY PAUL CHAPPELL

When we hear the word *position*, we think of something fixed. But our culture is turning *position* into *transition*. From the definition of male and female to the meaning of marriage or the philosophy of the church, pastors are taking “the transition position.”

Transition isn’t wrong when perhaps changing a method or reassigning staff or moving facilities. In regards to these changes, I have often reminded our church family, “A growing church is always in transition.” But, transitioning in doctrine or biblical principles is concerning to a biblically-discerning Christian.

Here are a few thoughts I taught our students at West Coast Baptist College this spring about biblical ministry positions:

**1. The predominant theme of biblical ministry exhortation is not centered on transition; it is centered on remaining.** “Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

**2. Methods are many, principles are few; methods may change, principles never do.** Not everything new is sinful, and some functional transitions are needful. Much of the transition of philosophy in church life today is not helpful. “For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law” (Proverbs 4:2).

**3. Men given to transition seldom transition in only one area.** Pragmatism is a philosophical tradition which often proliferates. “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8).

**4. There are many published books and articles on how to transition to a seeker philosophy. A Savior-sensitive church will focus on the immutable attributes of God.** “For I am the LORD, I change not...” (Malachi 3:6).

**5. The transitions you make in moderation will be made in excess by the next generation.** I wonder what some churches and families will look like should the Lord tarry. Strong leaders tend to remain with proven truth and methods for the sake of the next generation. “That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? Then ye shall

answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever” (Joshua 4:6–7).

**6. Transition is often employed in the process of syncretism.** The “perilous times” of 2 Timothy 3 are times of unraveling from the top down. Spiritual leaders must provide consistent, eternal-minded direction. “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.” (2 Timothy 3:1). “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1–2).

**7. In the Bible, the men and women who changed the world were the men and women the world could not change.** “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7–8).

**8. If a transitioning leader is offended or argumentative on his journey, it is often revealing that his seeking a differential from previous mentors is more based in pride than in necessity.** “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18).

**9. While we should be careful not to elevate preferences to the height of Scripture, we must not transition from convictions based in Scripture.** “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Is transition your position?



**PAUL CHAPPELL**

is the Senior Pastor of Lancaster Baptist Church and the President of West Coast Baptist College.





# Disagreement without Disunity:

## THOUGHTS FOR PASTORS

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BY DON SISK

I am nearing my ninetieth birthday. I made public my call to preach on Thanksgiving night of 1954. A few days after that I preached my first sermon in the prayer meeting service of the Black Oak Baptist Church in Gary, Indiana. Two years later, I began pastoring. I have been in full-time ministry since 1956—nearly seventy years.

Because of the various ministries I have served in, I've preached in literally thousands of churches all over the world. Being in so many churches is a blessing because I get to meet men and women who are faithfully serving Christ all around the globe. But going to so many places does have a downfall: I sometimes see the sad disunity among God's people. Churches, Bible colleges, mission organizations, preachers, and ordinary Christians find reasons to quarrel with one another.

Of course, every church or organization has some differences with the next organization. But among the independent Baptist places where I am privileged to serve, most have so much more in common than different. Yet, for some reason, we emphasize our differences more than our common practices and beliefs. Would it not be wonderful if we would emphasize our commonality rather than our differences?

Many years ago when I became the Far East Director of BIMl, my pastor, Dr. Lee Roberson, was generous in giving needful advice—principles by which to conduct my ministry. One night as we were driving together back to Chattanooga from a meeting, he said to me "Don, you go anywhere that you believe God is leading you to go and minister. Some of the places you

go to some of the brethren will criticize you. Don't fight with them; just keep going where you know God wants you to go." Of course, Dr. Roberson was speaking about doctrinally-solid Baptist churches. And that was good advice. He was right on both points—some brethren criticized me, and I learned not to spend valuable time defending myself.

For the first eight years of my ministry, I was a Southern Baptist. When I began to see the liberalism and compromise taking place in the Southern Baptist Convention, I became an independent Baptist by conviction. I'm grateful for that decision, and I would do it all over again—even today. I soon learned, however, that independent Baptists sometimes aren't very independent in their relationships with one another. If I did things the way they wanted me to do and went where they wanted me to go and refused to

go where they did not want me to go, I was accepted. But when I didn't meet those criteria, I was not always accepted.

“  
The reality is that we must  
each answer to God—not  
to each other.  
”

Over my nearly seventy years in the ministry, I have seen several leaders try to be a Baptist pope (although not, of course, with that title). None of them have succeeded. The reality is that we must each answer to God—not to each other. “Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. . . . But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:4, 10).

When biblical doctrine or sin is involved, of course we must separate. And yes, we all have our preferences. We have a right to have them. However, pastors, in particular, have a responsibility to establish leadership guidelines for their church workers. But, pastors do not have the right to determine preferences for other churches.

I realize we must not call the violation of biblical principles a preference. We are commanded to “contend for the faith” (Jude 3). But we need not be contentious about matters not pertaining to the faith.

Throughout the New Testament, we have examples of the conflict that comes through pride and the good that comes when people who have differences give deference to one another.

## JOHN THE BAPTIST

“And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:26–30).

Some of the disciples of John the Baptist realized that when Jesus began His ministry, people were going to Him instead of to John. They told John, “all men come to him.” (By the way, *all* of the people were not going to Jesus. We often unwisely exaggerate when we want to make a point.)

The answer that John the Baptist gave to his disciples was classic: “He must increase, but I must decrease.” John did not become jealous or competitive. In fact, he was not trying to make disciples for himself in the first place; he was pointing people to Christ. So rather than feeling insecure, he *rejoiced* in what Jesus was doing and how the people were following Christ.

I fear—and I can speak from experience—that we have a tendency to criticize others not because of something bad they are doing, but because they are doing more and are seeing more results than we are. In short, we become jealous.

None of us are in competition with other good Bible believing organizations or individuals. We are on the same team. Their success is our success, and it's all for the glory of God. But when team members become jealous of one another, we all lose.

## JOHN THE APOSTLE

“And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us” (Luke 9:49–50).

Basically, what John was saying was, “They didn't graduate from our college” or “They weren't with our mission organization” or “They are not in our camp” or “They aren't doing things like us.”

And what did Jesus tell John? “Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.”

To allow others to do things differently than we do without criticizing them is *Christlike*. And to attempt



to be an enforcer of others is *Johnlike*—the immature, pre-resurrection version of John.

## PAUL AND BARNABAS

Paul and Barnabas were a wonderful team who were greatly used of God. In Acts 13, they were sent out as missionaries from the first organized church missions program. Throughout Acts 13 and 14, we read of the amazing ways that God used them. Then, when they returned to Antioch, they continued to work together, including speaking to the Jerusalem council in Acts 15.

But when it came time for their second missionary journey, they had a falling out.

“And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God” (Acts 15:36–40).

Because we know this story of Paul and Barnabas’ disagreement, we aren’t surprised when we read it. But if we had known Paul and Barnabas before this incident, we would never have suspected that they would have parted ways.

Perhaps the most amazing thing about this separation, however, is not that it happened, but what did *not* happen—specifically that they did not spend time criticizing one another. In fact, you do not find one word in Scripture of Paul speaking poorly of Barnabas or Barnabas of Paul. They parted ways, but they did not spend the rest of their ministries criticizing one another. And they did not draw John Mark into tests of loyalty over their disagreement. In fact, just before Paul was martyred, he makes the statement, “Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry” (2 Timothy 4:11).

There are things that happen that make it nearly impossible for particular people to work together. But even if two Christians can’t work together, they can be kind to one another. If we have differences with a brother, we can determine, “Even though I cannot work with this person, I am not going to be critical of him.”

## PAUL IN PRISON

“Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice” (Philippians 1:15–18).

Paul was in prison for no other reason than preaching the Word of God. He did not look at his prison time as a hindrance to the ministry, but as an opportunity to preach to the other prisoners, to the people in authority, and to all of the other leaders. No doubt, many of them were converted.

Because of Paul’s boldness, many other leaders became bold in preaching the gospel. Some of these were sincere. And evidently, some of these were just trying to irritate Paul. Yet, Paul’s conclusion was that regardless of the preacher’s motives, he would rejoice that Christ was being preached.

Years ago, I determined that I, too, will rejoice when others are preaching the gospel. When God’s Word is preached and people are getting saved, baptized, and added to the church, I am going to rejoice. Rather than being jealous or critical, I am going to rejoice.

I think we independent Baptists need to take Jesus’ words in John 13:35 more seriously than we do: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

If you are preaching the gospel, winning people to the Lord, discipling believers, and training leaders, you are my brother in Christ, and I love you, appreciate you, and will gladly pray for you. We can be brothers without being identical twins.

“Even if two Christians can’t work together, they can be kind to one another. If we have differences with a brother, we can determine, “Even though I cannot work with this person, I am not going to be critical of him.”



### DON SISK

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## Walk by Faith: Choosing Faith on a Daily Basis

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BY TERRIE CHAPPELL

**T**ake a walk with me through what many have called “the great hall of faith”—Hebrews chapter 11. The men and women listed in this chapter are people whose lives were pivot points in Bible history.

Notice the portraits lining the walls in this hall of faith. Here we find Abel, whose faith to obey God’s command for a blood sacrifice singled him out as the first martyr. Here is Enoch—a man who by faith, walked with God so closely that he was privileged to skip death. Here is Noah, whose faith changed the entire course of human history.

We move on and see Abraham and Sarah, the father and mother of God’s chosen people. The landscape of the Old Testament was shaped through the faith of this couple. Then there are Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph—three more great heroes in Scripture. Further on we see Moses, Rahab, Gideon, David, Samuel, and others—all people we recognize and admire.

All who are portrayed in this chapter lived lives of great significance, not because they were powerful people who could control others and manipulate their circumstances, but because of their extreme faith in

God. Most of them were ridiculed, misunderstood, and knew what it was to suffer defeat. Most of them started as *insignificant* and would have been labeled as very *unlikely* to succeed. They just didn't have what we think people need to favorably shape their destinies.

So how did they do it? The key is faith. These people lived and walked by faith. A life of godly significance is always a life of faith. And this faith is developed one day at a time.

## EXERCISE YOUR FAITH TO SEE IT GROW

Perhaps you've heard the statement, "Faith is not a pill you take; it is a muscle you use." As we *exercise* our faith, it grows.

True faith moves beyond belief to action. Faith is not simply a feeling, but rather a choice to obey God and trust that He will come through.

I've been privileged to closely observe a man of great faith—my husband. In the forty-two years of our marriage, I've watched him over and over seek God's vision for our family and our ministry and then by faith move forward into humanly impossible undertakings. And every time, I've seen God honor his faith.

I know that *my* faith often isn't great. Sometimes when I see the great faith of others, I question if my faith is too small for God to even bless. Matthew 17:20 gives a promise that I have learned to love and claim: "...verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

The very essence of faith is remembering our great God and trusting Him to do what we

cannot. When we place our focus on how little our faith is, we forget to focus on how great our God is. Furthermore, if we wait to use our faith until it is great, we will never do anything by faith. Faith grows through use.

## NURTURE YOUR FAITH BY WALKING WITH GOD

From our earliest years we've learned to be cautious of trusting those we don't know. We drill this into our children as soon as they are old enough to walk and wander away from us in public places. Many times this caution explains why we struggle to trust the Lord. We simply don't know Him.

Notice in Psalm 9:10 that the people who *trust* God are the people who *know* God: "And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." We may know in our head that God is absolutely and completely trustworthy, but until we grow in our relationship with Him, we will struggle to trust Him.

Faith doesn't come just because we *want* it. Faith comes as we read God's Word and discover who God is. As we grow in our knowledge of Him, we learn that He can be trusted. Romans 10:17 explains, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Additionally, there's nothing like seeing God answer prayer to increase your faith. I've found over the years that keeping a prayer journal provides a written record of God's answers and becomes a great faith-booster. I simply record the date I begin praying for a particular request. Then, when God answers, I record that date and a brief description of how He answered.

## BUILD YOUR FAITH BY CLAIMING GOD'S PROMISES

When you are faced with overwhelming circumstances, open God's Word and remember the unchanging promises of God.

There are two important keys to claiming God's promises.

First, we must *know* God's promises. For many women, the promises of God mean nothing—simply because they don't know them. As you read your Bible, begin marking the promises that speak to you. Write them down in a journal. Memorize them. Make them accessible for easy reference when you need to claim them.

Second, we must *use* God's promises. Like a check that is only valuable when cashed, God's promises do not help us unless we trust them.

## TRUST GOD ONE DAY AT A TIME

Walking by faith is a daily journey. As A.W. Tozer said, "Faith is not [just] a conclusion you reach; it is a journey you live."

God calls us to a continuing journey of faith as we grow in our relationship with Him. Hebrews 11:6 reminds us that the diligent exercise of faith is key to our growth in the Lord: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." God desires to reward *your* life as you pursue Him in faith one day at a time.



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# What Is the State of Your Foundation?

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BY TIM RASMUSSEN

Due to a population explosion in Southern California in the early 1920s, plans were made to create a large reservoir to help meet the region's growing water needs. Engineer William Mulholland had achieved a great deal of recognition and respect among members of the engineering community when he supervised the design and construction of the longest aqueduct in the world at that time—the Los Angeles Aqueduct, and he was chosen as the chief engineer for the new project.

After conducting a thorough study of the topography and geological features of the area, Mulholland was convinced that San Francisquito Canyon, about forty miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles, was the ideal site. Design and construction began in 1924, and at its completion on May 4, 1926, the magnificent St. Francis dam rose to a height of 185 feet above the canyon floor. The dam was an engineering marvel—the crown jewel of Mulholland's career.

But there was a problem. Although Mulholland wrote of the unstable nature of the face of the schist on the eastern side of the canyon, he either misjudged or ignored it. As water began to fill the reservoir, several temperature and contraction cracks appeared in the dam, and seepage began to flow from under the abutments.

Mulholland and his assistant chief engineer Harvey Van Norman inspected the cracks and judged them to be within expectation for a concrete dam the size of St. Francis. Workers were ordered to seal off the leaks, but they were not entirely successful. Late in 1927, a fracture appeared that ran diagonally across the dam. Mulholland inspected the cleft, judged it to be another inconsequential contraction crack, and left it alone.

On March 7, 1928, yet another leak was discovered by a dam employee. He was concerned not only because there was a new leak but also because the water in this runoff was muddy, indicating possible erosion of the dam's foundation.



Mulholland and Van Norman inspected the dam and its various leaks and seepages, finding “nothing out of the ordinary or of concern for a large dam.” Both Mulholland and Van Norman made it clear that there just wasn’t anything to worry about. Mulholland had a reputation to uphold. Surely there couldn’t be any critical issues with his masterpiece. Acknowledging major engineering shortcomings would have jeopardized his hard-earned position and reputation.

Two and half minutes before midnight on March 12, 1928, the St. Francis dam catastrophically failed. Within 70 minutes of the collapse, the reservoir was virtually empty as 12.4 *billion* gallons of water began surging down San Francisco Canyon becoming a 140-foot high flood wave traveling eighteen miles per hour. Countless workmen and their families were never found. The flood left an appalling record of death and destruction, with hundreds of lives claimed. The St. Francis Dam disaster, which effectively ended the career of William Mulholland, remains the second greatest loss of life in California’s history, after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire.

Cracks in any foundation can have catastrophic effects, and the most catastrophic tragedies of all are the results of cracks in the foundations of lives. These cracks affect not only us but also those we know and love. In the busyness of life and with all the responsibilities of family and ministry, we need to ask ourselves if we are ignoring foundational issues of the heart that could lead to disaster.

These cracks may not be visible yet to our family and

friends, but the cracks are there nonetheless and have the potential to cause irreparable harm if not properly addressed. This is why Paul warned Timothy, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16).

A wise man will faithfully and conscientiously inspect his foundation and will be honest with himself and God when cracks are discovered.

We would demonstrate great wisdom to inspect our lives for the following cracks, all indicators of a deeper spiritual need:

- We no longer have a vibrant and growing walk with the Lord.
- We have stopped guarding our hearts from temptation.
- We have allowed our thought lives to wander.
- We rationalize thoughts and behaviors that previously would have convicted our conscience.
- We put a priority on temporal things such as money, position, or recognition over essentials like holiness, godliness and integrity.
- We emphasize the public over the private.
- We dismiss “small” sins in order to protect our reputation.
- We stop seeking counsel from others and discourage others from requiring accountability of us.
- We begin to pridefully look to ourselves rather





than focusing on Jesus.

If we continue to ignore cracks in our integrity, we are positioning ourselves for an inevitable and monumental collapse, bringing great reproach—to our families, to our congregations, and to the cause of Christ. We are in grave danger of not finishing the race God has given us to complete.

My oldest brother, Mark, has often challenged me with the following statement: “People remember how you start, and they remember how you finish.”

Paul wrote of his daily decision to inspect his foundation and prevent cracks in his life: “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Are there cracks forming in your life—cracks that reveal deeper foundational issues? Let us take whatever steps necessary to shore up our foundation and seal up the cracks so that our lives will bring honor and glory to our Lord who saved us.

How can we take steps to strengthen the foundation of our lives?

**By acknowledging cracks and sincerely seeking God in repentance:** “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).

**By determining to live according to the Word of God:** “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105).

**By attending church and exhorting others:** “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

**By seeking God in prayer:** John R. Rice said, “All of our failures are prayer failures.” “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice” (Psalm 55:17).

**By reading God’s Word daily and committing it to memory:** “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11).



**By sharing our testimony with a lost and dying world and pointing them to Jesus Christ:** “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise” (Proverbs 11:30).

**By intentionally meditating on God’s standards:** “But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psalm 1:2).

**By guarding our thought life:** “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

**By loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and loving our neighbor as ourselves:** We desperately need a great commitment to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-38).

Paul admonished us to build properly, from the ground up: “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon” (1 Corinthians 3:10).

When we lay a proper foundation and continually build on it, we can look forward to one day hearing Christ say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”



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## Cultivating Friendships in Ministry:

### AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. MIKE NORRIS

*Dr. Mike Norris is the senior pastor at Franklin Road Baptist Church in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, where he has served for the past twenty-three years. Recently, we sat down with Pastor Norris to talk about fellowship and relationships in ministry.*

#### **What is the significance of relationships and friendships for pastors?**

From the very beginning, God made us for fellowship with not just Himself, but also with others (Genesis 2:18). Pastors are no different; we need relationships.

Sometimes people think of relationships as fluff—non-essential additions to life to enjoy when there is time. But notice in Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 the emphasis

on friendships as an essential help to our work: “Two are better than one; because *they have a good reward for their labour*. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.”

When pastors close themselves off from relationships with others, it makes it very difficult to obey the Great Commission. Most obviously, this is because churches need to partner together

to send missionaries and are greatly aided by other collaboration as well. But more personally this is because pastors need the support of friendship from other pastors.

In a church family, pastors usually work very hard to treat everyone the same. There are naturally some people they will spend more time with, such as the staff or deacons, because of the nature of their responsibilities. But generally speaking, I have found that if you get especially close to some church members, others may not understand and feel isolated. This is where friendships with other pastors are such a blessing. There are ways another pastor can understand your burdens and provide encouragement or advice that is needful.

**We've recently read statistics of a high percentage of burnout for pastors due to stress, partly from the pandemic. What role do you believe a lack of relationships may have in this?**

The isolation that happened during the pandemic wasn't good for anyone. And among pastors, a lot of fellowship was lost. We would talk on the phone, but there were several factors that limited even that. There was this incredible weight that came with trying to minister in and navigate through such unprecedented times. It was time consuming and draining.

On the other hand, the pandemic also focused the conversations that did happen into a shared dependence on the Lord. Our fellowship wasn't surface, "Howdy, what's going on with you?" It became, "What do we do now? How do we honor God and serve our church family in this?" Fellowship was no longer lighthearted, because our hearts were all heavy.

I remember times during this season when I would call Pastor Chappell, and we would just pray on the phone. We didn't used to call each other just to pray. And it's not that we weren't spiritual before. It's just that the urgency and heaviness of the pandemic brought spiritual needs to a new intensity and the forefront of our conversations.

But not everyone had these kinds of relationships. In some way that I still can't quite put my finger on, the pandemic crushed relationships for so many people—including, but not limited to, pastors. There was a lot of fear, and that surely played a role. But there was a lot of isolation that people have just struggled to come out of—not as much physically, but emotionally. I think people need to be reminded of their need for relationships—both in giving and receiving friendship.

**What if I am a pastor who doesn't have ministry friendships? How can I develop them?**

Realizing you need friendships is a good start. Independent Baptists too easily become isolationists. You need to recognize too that social media is not a replacement for these kinds of relationships. With social media, we can find out everything we think we need or want to know without having to ever talk to a person. It becomes information-based. But we need personal relationship and friendship.

One of the best ways to develop these relationships is to simply reach out to another pastor to offer encouragement or to ask for prayer. That will often start a conversation. Attending an event, like Spiritual Leadership Conference, that is focused on providing fellowship can also be helpful.

**What are important qualities in a ministry friend?**

There are three qualities that come to mind. And these are important not only when you are looking for friends, but also as you seek to *be* a friend to others.

**Confidential:** Your friends shouldn't worry that what they tell you will "make the rounds." And you need men to whom you can look for confidential counsel without everyone else hearing about it.

**Available:** Friends should answer texts and return calls. Responsiveness and availability go together. At the same time, it's good to remember that pastors *are* busy. So appreciate your friends' availability, but don't demand that it be constant. When you have a need, speak up and share it.

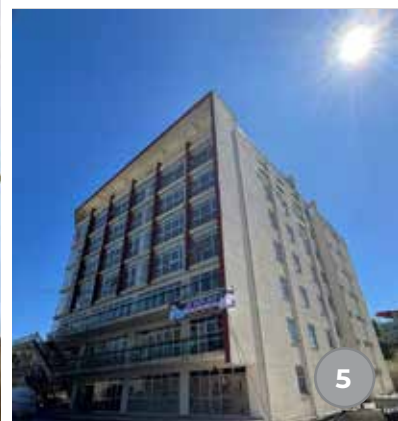
**Faithful:** When someone shares a need with you, do your best to not only respond as the Lord leads in the moment, but also to check in with him again in a few weeks or months. I sometimes fail on this front. But being on the receiving end of someone else's faithful friendship always makes me want to be more faithful to follow up on others' needs.

**Is there anything else you would like to share about ministry friendships?**

Yes. I would like to encourage any pastor who feels alone and questions if he can go on to do two things: 1) turn to God for strength and 2) reach out to an older pastor for encouragement.

God gives strength to the faint: "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength" (Isaiah 40:29). And he gives us one another to point each other toward Christ and toward increased faith in God.





## Joshua and Ruth Lovegrove

### WCBC ALUMNI INTERVIEW

Joshua and Ruth Lovegrove are serving the Lord as missionaries in Ethiopia. They have three sons: Jeremiah (12), Joel (10), and Jonan (8).

#### **Joshua, what year did you graduate from WCBC, and what led you to Ethiopia?**

I graduated with my bachelor's in 2008 and master's in 2009. God clearly led me to WCBC to train to go back to Ethiopia as a missionary. When I was thirteen, my parents brought our family of six to Ethiopia as missionaries. We all loved it. But just over six months later we had to suddenly leave due to terrorism threats and a violent war. While I was at a Christian camp in high school, the Lord confirmed His call to return to Ethiopia. Shortly after I graduated from WCBC, Ruth and I met. We were married in 2010, and we have loved serving the Lord together in ministry ever since.

**Ruth, you have an unusual salvation testimony. Would you share that?**

As a young adult, I started and ran a successful business for some years. When I was twenty-four, the business collapsed. At the same time, the weight of previous traumas caught up to me. I found myself in an incredibly low place and was dealing with extreme anxiety. I had no religious background, but I did find that listening to Christian radio while I was driving to and from work (a time when my mind was particularly vulnerable) had a calming effect. One of the programs I loved was *Daily in the Word* from Pastor Chappell. It was through hearing preaching on the radio that I understood my need for a Savior and what Christ did for me on the cross. After a few months of questioning if I was really deserving of this free gift of grace, one day, I finally pulled my car over to the side of the road and trusted Christ as my Savior. From that day forward, everything began to change—including much of the anxiety I was dealing with. I remember praying that day in the car, “Okay, Lord, I’ve lived the past twenty-four years for me. I just want to fully give You whatever I have left.”

Soon after, the Lord led me to an amazing church, and my pastor and his wife fed that desire God had placed in me to serve Him. Their investments over the next five years—discipleship, biblical counseling, loaning me missionary biographies, and opportunities to serve the Lord—were so instrumental in my spiritual growth.

**How do you stay encouraged, energized, and compassionate in the midst of relentless poverty and need?**

God has called us to Ethiopia, and our hearts are there. That makes all the difference. We love the people and ask the Lord to help us see every person as someone Jesus loves and died for. The love of Christ compels us, and the call of God reminds us to stay faithful to God.

[Ruth:] Early on, there were cultural differences that aggravated me. I couldn’t understand why people would behave certain ways. But then the Lord showed me, “You’re not there to change that, but to show the love of Christ.” That was a turning point for me in learning to love both the people and the culture.

**How do you minister effectively in a place that can be very dangerous?**

There are many difficulties here. The deadliest war in the world in the twenty-first century took place in Ethiopia over the last two years. We had to leave the country for a few months due to the proximity of this war to our home and ministry. We saw the buses

packed with thousands of young men passing by our house heading to the war front. Thankfully, a peace agreement was signed just a few months ago.

We do everything we can to be safe and wise. But in all reality, we just trust the Lord. We want our children to sense joy, not fear, in serving the Lord. We have put our roots down deep, and our entire family loves the people we serve.

**What has the Lord allowed you to accomplish in these past five years, and what are your goals for the future?**

Our life verse is Jeremiah 33:3, “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” We have called, and God has truly answered and done *great and mighty* things here in a very difficult country with very few Baptist missionaries and churches. We praise the Lord for over 250 Ethiopians who have come to know Jesus as their personal Savior.

The Lord allowed us to plant the first-ever Baptist church in our area of Ethiopia just over four years ago. God has blessed our church, and it has grown every year—both numerically and spiritually. We have had visitors almost every Sunday thanks to the faithful outreach efforts of our church family. Our services now include three languages and many ethnic groups. We praise God for the work He is doing here.

Our goal is to see many more saved, baptized, and trained up to serve God so we can multiply like-minded Baptist churches all over Ethiopia for the glory of God!

1. *On the church’s fourth anniversary Sunday in March 2023, they had a record attendance of 414 people with several professions of faith in Christ.*
2. *Out sharing the gospel on a Saturday. The Lovegroves regularly have 40–50 church members who come out to pray and share their faith on Saturdays. They have been able to pass out over 30,000 gospel tracts and have seen hundreds of visitors come to church because of this.*
3. *Dressed up in traditional Ethiopian clothes for the church’s second anniversary, March 2021.*
4. *The first five students at the first class of the Bible institute.*
5. *On the fourth anniversary of Bread of Life Baptist Church in Legetafo, Ethiopia, the church also celebrated the grand opening of their new church space, which takes up almost the entire top floor of this new building. God miraculously provided over 10,000 square feet of space in a location right off the main road through their area.*

# WCBC Commencement Exercises



When Jesus saw multitudes of people, He saw their spiritual needs and “was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.” And it was in that context that Jesus gave His one prayer request: “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:36–38).

The purpose of West Coast Baptist College is “training laborers for His harvest.” Our work is to

enter the laborers of parents and pastors who have already invested in students who enroll in WCBC and to prepare these students to go into the harvest fields of the world with the message of Jesus Christ. In this process, we equip them with skills in pastoral theology, church and school administration, Christian education, visual arts, music, missions, and more. But the driving purpose is always to train laborers for gospel ministry.

This spring, WCBC held its twenty-eighth commencement exercises. By the grace of God and

to His glory, there are currently over 3,000 WCBC alumni serving the Lord around the globe. Please pray for all of our alumni, and especially this graduating class, as they labor in the needy harvest fields of this world. Pray they will stand firm on God’s truth against the onslaught of sin. Pray they will retain biblical convictions in the midst of corroding compromise. Pray most of all that they will maintain a close daily walk with the Lord and will minister to others in the power of His Spirit.



# WCBC Alumni Highlights

Pray for the  
**3,056**  
WCBC Graduates serving  
in the harvest fields around  
the world



**Anthony ('11)  
and Alaina Aiken**

Currently raising money to replace their parking lot after having renovated the entire church property.



**Caleb ('16) and  
Kelsi Caviness**  
Graduated from language school and are preparing for their move to Congo.



**Sam ('14) and  
Sarah ('17) Hoffman**

Have had many recent opportunities to disciple newly-saved Koreans and bring understanding through God's Word.



**Andrew ('11)  
and Amy ('11)  
Wolfenbarger**  
Pastoring at Joshua Baptist Church in Joshua, TX, and continuing to see God work in his home town.



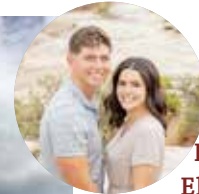
**Mason ('18) and  
Sarah Higgins**  
Accepted the pastorate at Central Baptist Church in Hayden, CO, where they are already seeing God's blessing.



**Ericka ('13) Wright**  
Serving as a missionary in Sabanagrande, Honduras, teaching as well as serving in many outreach ministries for children, including bus routes and evangelism Bible clubs.



**Jamil ('16) and Karla Hadad**  
Held their first baptism in Syria, where they had the honor of seeing seven people publicly profess faith in Christ.



**Reece ('22) and  
Elana ('22) Alvarez**  
Recently became the youth pastor at Lighthouse Baptist Church in Cortez, CO, pastored by WCBC graduate, Bruce Burkett.



## GOSPEL LIGHT BAPTIST CHURCH

Gospel Light Baptist Church in Rogers, AR, is reaching Northwest Arkansas with the gospel. Pastored by Noel Cwenar, Gospel Light is one of many churches across the nation where several WCBC graduates serve the Lord together as they impact their region for Christ. Joel Jessup, the first WCBC grad on this team, serves as the outreach pastor, David Johnson serves as the youth pastor, AJ and Samantha Solis manage the church website and graphics, and Nicole Torbertson is the office manager.

The mission of WCBC is “training laborers for His harvest,” and it is a joy to see these laborers serving the Lord together through this local church.



*WCBC alumni serving at Lighthouse Baptist Church in Rogers, AR: Samantha and AJ Solis ('15), Joel and Kerstin Jessup ('06), Nicole Torbertson ('08), and Becky ('12) and David ('14) Johnson.*



## TRACS Accreditation Site Visit

West Coast Baptist College hosted an accreditation evaluation team from Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools. This site visit was an important step toward the reaffirmation of the college's accreditation status later this year. Educational experts from multiple colleges reviewed the educational rigor, faculty credentials, leadership integrity, financial soundness,

and evaluation process of the college. Their report provides both guidance to assist the college in future development as well as information for the accreditation commissioners. College leadership was encouraged by two commendations the evaluating team gave regarding both the clarity of mission and ongoing culture of assessment at WCBC.

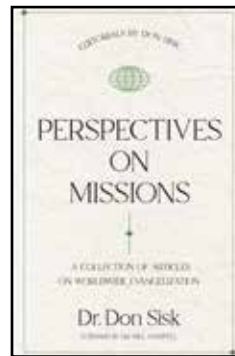




**THE RESILIENT LIFE**  
OVERCOMING THE CRISES  
AND ANXIETIES OF LIFE  
THROUGH CHRIST

Paul Chappell | Hardcover | \$22.95

We all face obstacles, difficulties, trials, and heartaches. Without resilience, we go through life increasingly flattened—beaten down by multiplied challenges. But in Christ, we can experience a resilience that doesn't just get through difficulty, but triumphs over it.



**PERSPECTIVES ON MISSIONS**  
A COLLECTION OF ARTICLES ON  
WORLDWIDE EVANGELISM

Don Sisk | Softcover | \$11.95

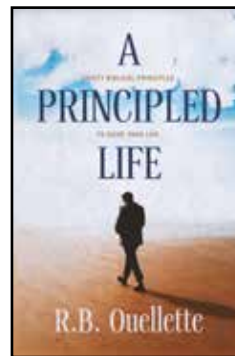
If you desire a greater understanding of God's plan for missions, a greater compassion for lost souls, a greater prayer life for missionaries, a greater optimism for how God is already working around the world, and a greater ability to make a difference for the cause of worldwide evangelization, you will be blessed by this book.



**SEE NO EVIL**  
EXPERIENCING VICTORY OVER  
PORNOGRAPHY + SEXUAL  
ADDICTION

George Crabb | Softcover | \$12.95

Few people realize how addictive pornography and other unbiblical sexual behaviors really are... until they are trapped in bondage. This book is written to help those who are addicted as well as those with a heart to assist through biblical counseling.



**A PRINCIPLED LIFE**  
THIRTY BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES TO  
GUIDE YOUR LIFE

R. B. Ouellette | Hardcover | \$22.95

Each chapter of this book provides a definition for a principle, biblically develops its need in our lives, and includes scriptural instructions. Each chapter concludes with thought-provoking questions to prompt your discernment and application.

13-WEEK  
GROUP  
STUDY



**AVOIDING CONFUSION**  
INTERPRET CULTURAL ISSUES  
THROUGH A BIBLICAL  
WORLDVIEW

Paul Chappell | Leader Guide  
Softcover | \$24.95

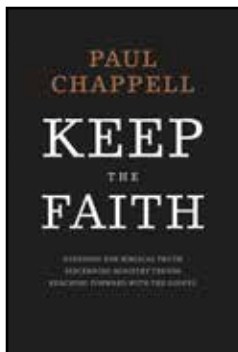
In a culture in which the Bible is scorned and Christianity is disdained, Christians need to understand the biblical position on cultural issues. (Companion resources also available: Study Guide, Media Download)



**HOW TO GET THROUGH WHAT  
YOU'LL NEVER GET OVER**  
WALKING THROUGH GRIEF BY THE  
GRACE OF GOD

Bill Prater | Softcover | \$3.95

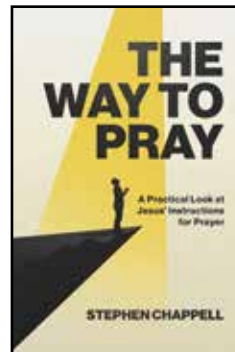
Have you ever experienced a grief so deep that you knew it would forever change you? In these pages, Pastor Bill Prater shares from his own experience of losing his adult son in an accident and how God's grace is enough to lead you through grief and loss.



**KEEP THE FAITH**  
STANDING FOR BIBLICAL TRUTH,  
DISCERNING MINISTRY TRENDS,  
REACHING FORWARD WITH THE  
GOSPEL

Paul Chappell | Hardcover | \$22.95

Explore the historical shaping of our spiritual heritage and examine current ministry trends and terms. Each chapter places an emphasis on Scripture as our final authority, Christ as our target, and reaching others with the gospel as our calling.

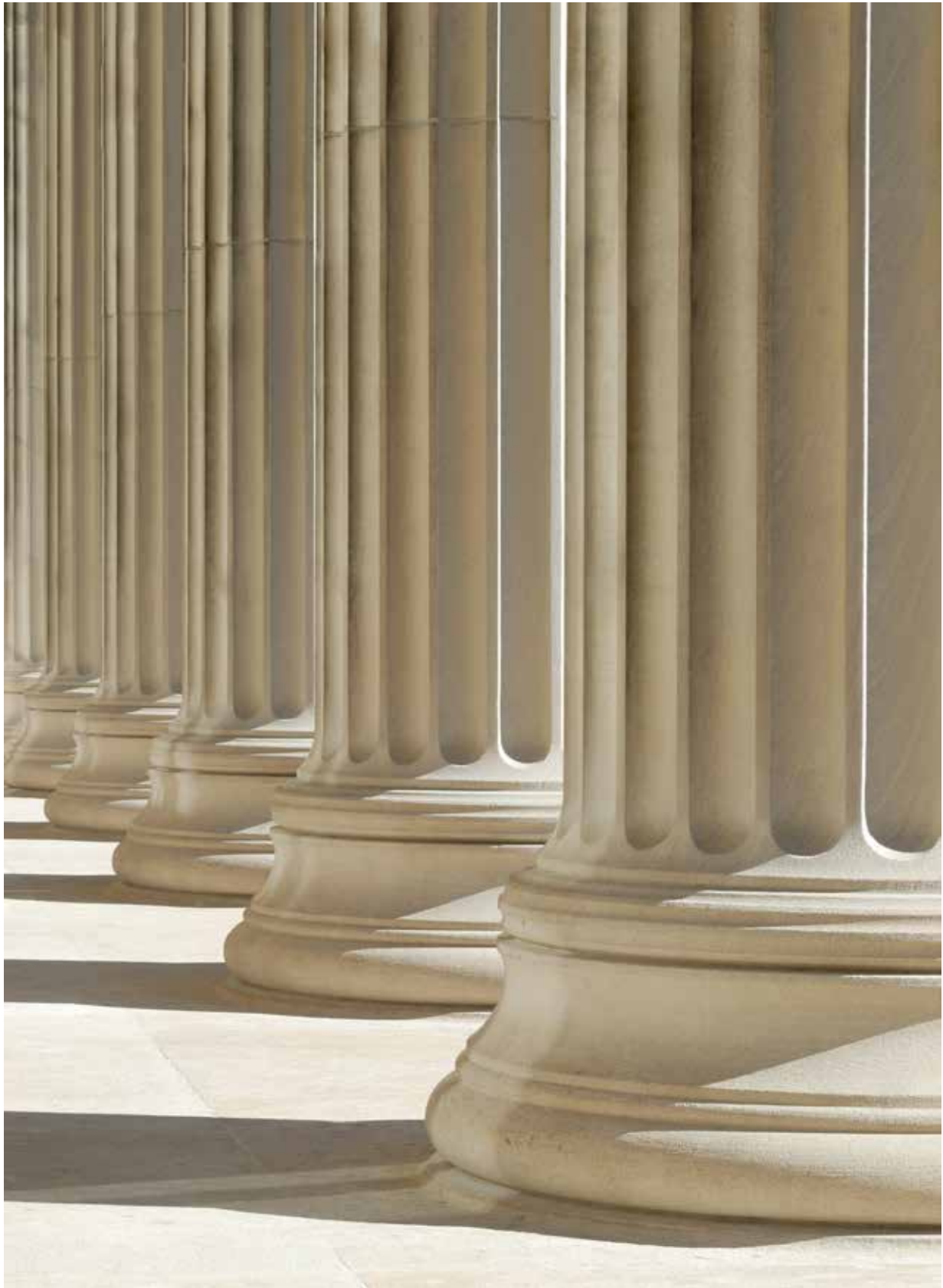


**THE WAY TO PRAY**  
A PRACTICAL LOOK AT JESUS'  
INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRAYER

Stephen Chappell | Softcover | \$6.95

This book is a thorough but practical look into the model prayer of Jesus Christ. Whether you already have a fervent prayer life or are just starting your walk with Christ, these pages will give you biblical principles for drawing closer to God through prayer.





# Holding Fast the Faith:

## HOW UNDERSTANDING “THE FAITH” STRENGTHENS DAILY FAITH

BY RICK HOUK

Many Christians think of doctrine as irrelevant to their daily lives. They hope their pastor studies it, but they don't think of it as having practical importance to the average Christian on a Thursday afternoon.

In reality, nothing could be further from the truth. You see, it is understanding and believing “the faith” that allows us to exercise daily faith.

When Jude wrote to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3), he addressed his epistle “to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” In other words, that's every Christian.

So, if strong doctrine leads to strong faith, what should we know about developing strong doctrine?

### OUR FAITH RESTS ON THE WORD OF GOD

For a Christian, all doctrine comes from one final authority: the Word of God. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine...” (2 Timothy 3:16).

God revealed His truth that he wanted us to have, recorded it in the inspired words of Scripture, and preserved it for all generations.

Jesus told His apostles that He would give them His truth and they were to pass it on to the early church. In Acts 2:42, we learn that after three thousand souls were saved on Pentecost, the

believers “continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship...” The moorings of the early church and the rapid spread of the gospel was dependent upon sound doctrine to unify the believers in the local churches.

The early church delivered the gospel and the faith to their generation, who in turn passed it on to the next generation, and now we have these precious truths today. All of this transfer happened through the written Word of God. What God delivered to us through “holy men of God” who “spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21) is all we need. It is final, complete, infallible, inerrant. It is absolute truth.

Our *understanding* of truth may grow, but the Word of God itself is, like God, immutable, infallible, and eternal.

### OUR FAITH IS KEPT BY SOUND THEOLOGY

The faith once delivered to the saints can only be maintained and grow when we live and practice sound doctrine. Paul told Titus in Titus 1:9, “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.”

Without sound doctrine, would we know the truth about salvation, eternal life, and eternal security? Would our faith have any stability

or confidence? Would we be able to adequately give godly counsel? Would we be able to witness to the unsaved with confidence? Would we be able to defend our faith? Would we not be deceived by false teachings? Would we know how to walk in the Spirit and live a holy life? The answer to all of these is “no.” To live and propagate our faith it must be built upon the sound teachings of the Scriptures.

### OUR FAITH SHOULD LEAD TO DAILY APPLICATION

A.W. Tozer said, “There is scarcely anything so dull and meaningless as Bible doctrine taught for its own sake. Truth divorced from life is not truth in its biblical sense, but something else and something less.” Our doctrine should affect our behavior. James 1:22 admonishes us, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” A wealth of theological knowledge is practically meaningless unless we are regularly applying truth to our daily lives. Then, and only then, will our theology bring growth to our lives.



**RICK HOUK**

serves as the Chair of the Bible Department and as an instructor at West Coast Baptist College.

# Athlete Outreach:

## A MINISTRY TO REACH PUBLIC SCHOOL TEENS

BY JUSTIN ENGELMAN

It doesn't take long to notice the great spiritual needs at the average public high school. But getting into a local school with a gospel ministry can be challenging. One avenue few churches consider is through the athletic programs. In most public schools, athletics is a hub for student life. Ministering to the athletes and their friends is a way to serve a large percentage of a school.

In 1982, my father, Bruce Engelman, witnessed a fatal car accident that involved youth under the influence of alcohol. Through this tragedy, the Lord gave him a burden to reach teens with the gospel. He had a career in sports broadcasting, so athletics was an easy way for him to connect with teens. He began a ministry that he called "Athlete Outreach."

Our Lancaster Baptist Church youth staff began a similar ministry here in Lancaster, California, in the fall of 2015. Over the past eight years, we have had tremendous opportunities to minister to high school students and have seen players and coaches accept Christ as their Savior. Additionally, we've been able to counsel players through tragedy, depression, and addiction. We've conducted Bible studies in players' homes. And we've seen many come to church as a result of these contacts.

Here are five suggestions—all of which we have used at different times—that you can use to begin a ministry to high school students

and coaches in your city.

**1. Offer to provide a chaplain to your local high school sports team.** Being a team chaplain usually involves attending team practices at least once a week throughout the season and giving motivational challenges and prayer. The advantage of being a chaplain is that you are with the team so much that you have more personal and quality time to build relationships with the players and coaches. We make sure to present the gospel to the entire team at least once a season. But the contacts you make with the players and coaches allow you to share the gospel personally as well.

**2. Provide and serve a team meal to a local high school team.** Most coaches and booster clubs welcome any support from a local organization that will donate a free game day team meal. This opportunity can get you an open door to teens and coaches. And remember, many coaches are also teachers and leaders in the school.

Serving a team meal is a perfect opportunity for a youth pastor to introduce himself and his youth group as a friend in the community and also to invite the players to a scheduled youth activity.

**3. Provide Gatorades or protein bars at a team practice.** This is a simpler method to have an initial contact, and we have seen a



*WCBC student TJ Clay speaks to the Palmdale High School varsity football team about Christ.*

simple team snack before or after a practice go a long way in starting relationships.

**4. Provide a breakfast or snack to the coaches at your local high school.** Contact the athletic director of your local school and offer to bring breakfast or snacks to the coaches or teachers' lounge one morning. Coaches and teachers are often overlooked and underappreciated. We have found this well received and very appreciated.

**5. Invest in athletic advertisement for your church at your local school.** Many high school athletic programs have sponsorship fundraisers that are open to the community. This is a great opportunity to support your local school while also advertising your church. Additionally, it's a good way to begin relationships with school leaders.

These five ideas can be adapted to your needs. You might even use two or more simultaneously—either in the same school or in multiple schools in your area.



**JUSTIN ENGELMAN**

is the Athletic Director at Lancaster Baptist School and leads the Athlete Outreach ministry of Lancaster Baptist Church.





# Reflections on 250 Years of “Amazing Grace”

BY TYLER JOHNSON

On New Year’s Day 1773, John Newton preached from 1 Chronicles 17:16–17. It was during this message that Newton introduced to his congregation a special song—arguably the most well-known hymn of all time—“Amazing Grace.”

In 2023, some two-hundred fifty years since “Amazing Grace” was first sung, the message of God’s grace is still powerfully ministering through this hymn to people all over the world. But why? Why has “Amazing Grace” resonated within the hearts of so many since its writing?

## DELIVERANCE FROM SPIRITUAL DARKNESS

You may know that the lyrics to “Amazing Grace” were birthed out of personal testimony. When Newton was just six years old, he lost his mother to tuberculosis,

and at only eleven years of age, he joined his father at sea. In years to come, Newton’s life took a sharp downward trajectory as he participated in the slave trade, transporting people from the African continent.

It was during a particularly stormy journey from Africa to Europe in 1748 that Newton, fearing for his life, began reading the Scriptures and contemplating his faith in God in an attempt to find some comfort for his soul. Although his mother had died early in his life, she had instilled in his heart a scriptural foundation that John remembered then, even within the darkness of the slave trade. God did rescue Newton and the entire crew in that storm. But more significantly, it was through this experience that Newton placed his faith in Christ as his Savior.

Newton eventually rejected the ills of the slave trade and became a respected voice in his day against the

evils of slavery. Ultimately, he pursued a ministry life in the small English town of Olney.

It was in Olney that Newton worked together with his friend William Cowper to produce the well-known collection *Olney Hymns*. It was in this book that “Amazing Grace” was first published.

The song “Amazing Grace” was birthed against the backdrop of the personal testimony of John Newton and God’s great salvation from sin. Light is more readily appreciated in contrast with darkness. Goodness is seen more vibrantly in the face of evil. The beauty of God’s grace is demonstrated more dramatically against the ugliness of sin. Shortly before Newton’s death, he said, “My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Savior.”

On Newton’s tombstone is the following inscription: “John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy.”

## DELIVERY OF SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE

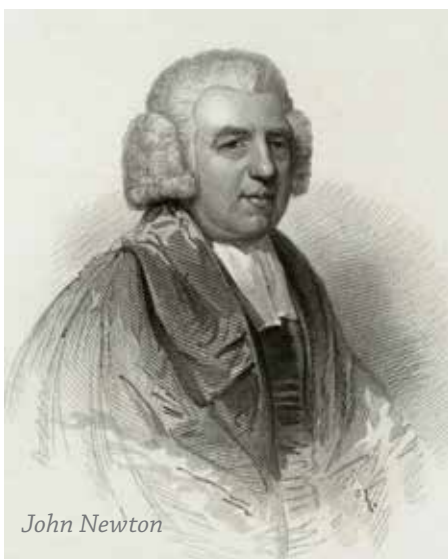
Scriptural worship always begins with properly understood truth. Truth ought to be the driver of our affections and should generate a response within the heart and life of the believer. These responses—whether of praise, surrender, giving, or serving—are the sacrifices of worship we offer to God.

The essential nature of truth in our worship is seen in Jesus’ words in John 4:24, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

It is the beautiful communication of truth in “Amazing Grace” that has made it resonate so deeply in the hearts of Christians over the centuries. We sing in this hymn the wonderful realities we as Christians hold dear: the depth of our sin; the richness of Christ’s grace and love; the comfort of God’s presence, goodness, and care in our lives; and the ultimate hope for the believer in Heaven with God for all of eternity.

The truths expressed in “Amazing Grace” are

ultimately a reminder of the unlimited reach of God’s grace in our salvation. This is reminiscent of the apostle Paul’s encouragement in 1 Corinthians 6:11: “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”



John Newton

## INTERGENERATIONAL TIMELESSNESS OF TRUTH

Great songs are not relegated to a specific time period. In fact, wonderful and doctrinally rich songs communicating truth from God’s Word can and are being written today.

Even so, I am appreciative of the heritage that we as believers have in many great songs of the faith. One of the enduring values of a hymn like “Amazing Grace” is that it appropriately and excellently expresses truth about Who our God is, what He has done and desires to do, and what

He has given us in Scripture. When we as believers understand these truths and the immeasurable value of our personal relationship with God, our hearts overflow with a desire to sing praise to God.

There is great beauty in multiple generations participating in singing corporately to the Lord. “Amazing Grace” contains timeless truth through which both the old and the young, the time-tested Christian and the new believer, and those of any and all cultural and ethnic backgrounds can participate in worshipping the Lord.

Isn’t that the heart of God’s grace? God loved the world (John 3:16, Ephesians 2:4–5, 1 John 4:10), He gave His Son for the world (Luke 19:10, John 1:17, John 3:16), He extends His grace to the world (Luke 19:10, 2 Corinthians 8:9, Ephesians 2:4–9), and He desires “that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17, Romans 5:8–11, 2 Peter 3:9).

May our hearts rest in and be refreshed by His amazing grace, and may we be encouraged to share the story of God’s grace with the world!



**TYLER JOHNSON**

serves as the Chair of the Music Department and an instructor at West Coast Baptist College.



# Outsiders Tour

May 13-25, 2024

Touring sites significant to church history and Bible translation with Dr. Paul Chappell

## Overview

On this ten-day tour through Great Britain, we will visit the sites where our spiritual forebearers loved and served God, and we'll learn the historic context in which they stood for Christ. From London to Oxford to Bedford to Olney to Cambridge to Edinburgh—and many places in between—see the locations and learn the history of our King James Bible, the martyrs for the gospel during the Reformation, and the many influences on our own faith from men such as John Bunyan, George Müller, Charles Spurgeon, and more. *Final itinerary and pricing are pending.*

## Destinations include:

- Bunhill Field cemetery
- Smithfield Martyrs' Memorial
- Hampton Court Palace
- Westminster Abbey
- Metropolitan Tabernacle
- Tyndale Monument
- Edinburgh Castle



Sign up to receive updates as details become available  
[wcbs.edu/bhtour](http://wcbs.edu/bhtour)

## Tour Hosts



*Paul Chappell*  
Lancaster, CA



*Scott Wendal*  
Valley Forge, PA





*Pastor Chappell  
at LBS chapel*



## Four Ways Christian Education Strengthens Families

BY ERIC LEE

The objective of all true educators is to provide learning to students. But the framework in which that takes place in a Christian school is clearly distinctive from its secular counterparts. Our colleagues in the arena of public education see the state as the party responsible for educating a child. As Christians, we view this responsibility differently because we see it through the lens of Scripture which plainly declares that this weight rests on the shoulders of parents: “And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deuteronomy 11:19). “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

A Christian school can assist parents as parents delegate part of this responsibility to trustworthy educators. Christian education, rather than

competing with parental responsibility, can greatly aid parents. Here are just a few of the ways that Christian education strengthens families.

## 1. A BIBLICAL WORDLVIEW

“Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, *who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ*, as I teach every where in every church” (1 Corinthians 4:16–17).

Godly teachers can reaffirm the biblical worldview already being taught in the home. The student’s forming and acceptance of biblical beliefs is aided by the compounding effect of hearing the same truth from multiple angles and perspectives. When the message from Sunday is echoed by the math teacher on Monday, its ability to penetrate the heart is enhanced. When the verse discussed during family devotions Thursday night is the memory verse in Bible class, there is a cumulative effect.

Conversely, a number of competing secular influences consistently attempt to chisel away at the biblical foundation laid in a Christian home. Sunday’s message and Thursday’s family devotions can be drowned out by the varied opposing voices of the secular world. The Bible warns that a young person is not to listen: “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge” (Proverbs 19:27). Parents are in a key position to protect their children from those voices.

## 2. DAILY EXPOSURE TO GODLY MENTORS AND ROLE MODELS

“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Proverbs 13:20).

The mentors and role models a young person is exposed to on a daily basis in a Christian school can be spiritually strengthening. The coach of the sports team, school administrator, cafeteria volunteer, music teacher, classroom instructor, and guest chapel speaker are just some of the individuals God can use in a young person’s life. These servants of God can inspire transformation in the lives of students. God certainly worked in my life this way, and I am eternally grateful for the influence of men like my high school coach who God used to call me into that same ministry.

## 3. WHOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52).

Mankind is a multi-faceted creature with physical, emotional, and social needs. Sports, music, and extracurricular opportunities are key components in most schools. A wholistic development, though, must include spiritual development. Christian education not only provides Bible classes, but it also infuses and integrates Scripture and a biblical worldview into every aspect of education. Christian education strengthens families by providing an education of the total student in a wholistic way that education which deemphasizes the spiritual nature of man and often promotes anti-Christian views cannot provide.

## 4. A NURTURING ENVIRONMENT

“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

It would be foolish to claim that Christian education is immune from sinful behavior. Unfortunately, the sins of society penetrate the walls of a Christian school too. But Christian education actively seeks to create a habitat that exposes these destructive attitudes and actions for what they truly are. In a biblically-based way Christian education provides a nurturing environment that is the kind of spiritual soil necessary for young people to experience consistent growth. This Christian greenhouse is extremely beneficial for a young person as they establish their foundation for life.

While this brief list is far from exhaustive in outlining the benefits of Christian education to the Christian family, it does provide a taste of the type of joy-filled partnership that can result from this biblical model. The fruit of this partnership between parents and Christian educators is well worth the time, money, and energy involved in laboring to train the next generation of Christian leaders. Together the home and Christian school can experience the incredible blessing of seeing God continue to develop laborers for His harvest.



**ERIC LEE**

is the Principal of Lancaster Baptist School in Lancaster, CA.



For more information about LBS or to register a student, visit [lancasterbaptistschool.org](http://lancasterbaptistschool.org), or email [school@lancasterbaptist.org](mailto:school@lancasterbaptist.org).



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