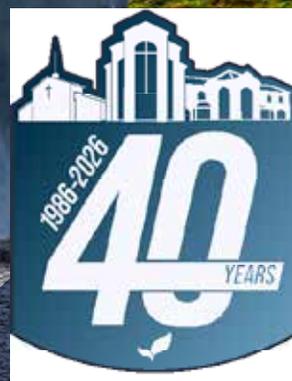


the Baptist Voice

FROM LANCASTER BAPTIST CHURCH
& WEST COAST BAPTIST COLLEGE

2 CORINTHIANS 9:8

GOD IS ABLE



2026, Issue 39

God Is Able

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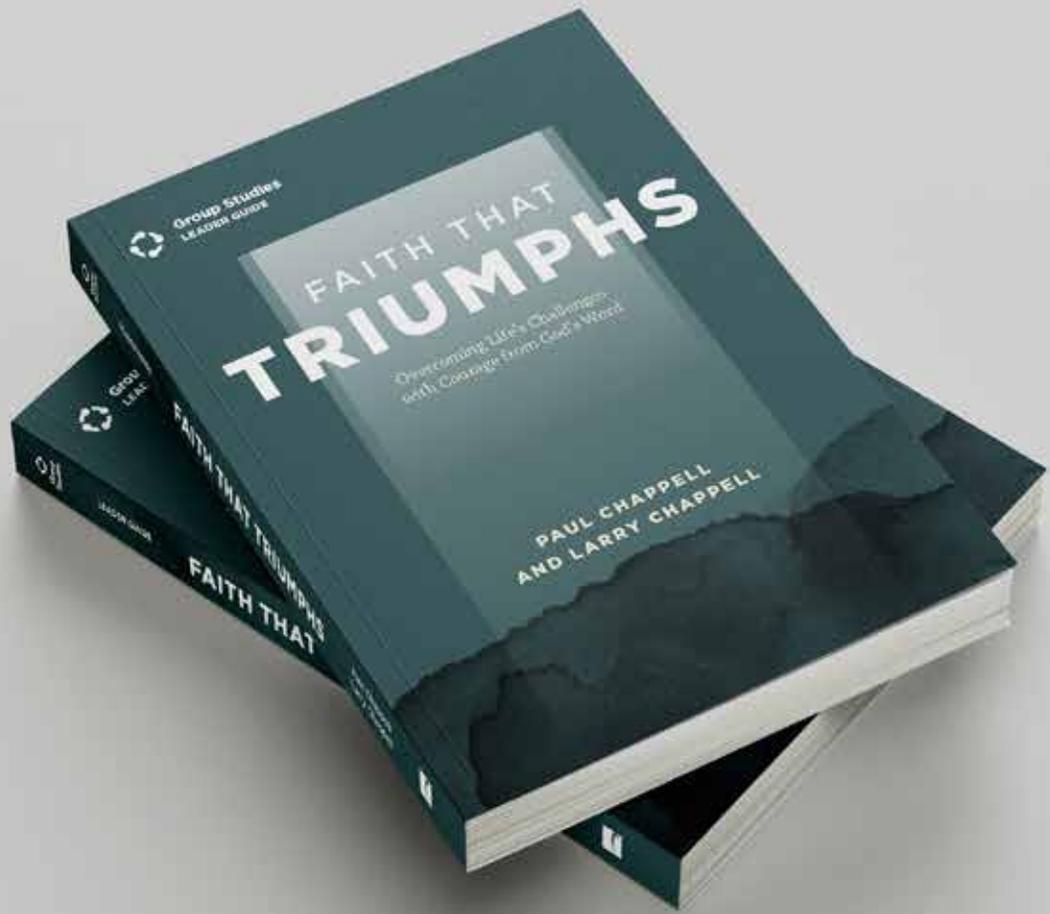
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FAITH THAT TRIUMPHS

Overcoming Life's Greatest Challenges with Courage from God's Word

Faith that Triumphs is a ten-week Bible study designed to help you build a steadfast trust in God. Through clear biblical teaching and practical application, you'll explore what it means to trust God when life doesn't make sense, when provision seems scarce, in times of suffering, and in a world that opposes truth.

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No matter what you face, your faith can triumph.





From the Editor

Every Christian knows what it feels like to stand at the edge of something impossible—a ministry crisis, a personal spiritual battle, a burden that seems immovable. Yet, in those very moments, God specializes in doing what no one else can do. He is able.

This issue of *The Baptist Voice* is built around that assurance. As you read, I trust you'll be encouraged by this theme that echoes through its pages. In a world marked by uncertainty, shifting values, and spiritual opposition, we need regular reminders that the strength of our faith rests not in ourselves, but in the unchanging character of God.

In these articles, you'll find the truth of God's power applied from multiple angles. We begin with a call to live with a renewed focus on Christ—the one who enables us to walk forward with clarity, purpose, and confidence. You'll read stirring biblical insight on the preserving power of God's Word, the restoring grace of Christ in the lives of the broken, and the guiding work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's daily walk. Other pieces highlight God's ongoing work through His people: the legacy of William Tyndale and the English Bible, the importance of Spirit-led ministry teams, and the practical relationships that strengthen a local church. Each article is written with the desire to edify believers and equip churches to stand faithful in their calling.

This issue also reflects a meaningful season for our church family as Lancaster Baptist Church marks forty years of God's faithfulness. We rejoice in what God has done and look with anticipation to what He will continue to accomplish through His Word and His people.

My prayer is that these pages will strengthen your heart, anchor your perspective, and renew your resolve to trust the God who is always able.

Your friend,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Chappell". The script is fluid and cursive.

Dr. Paul Chappell

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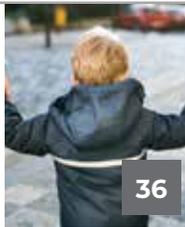
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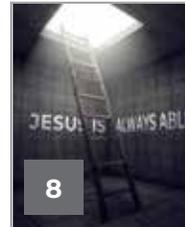


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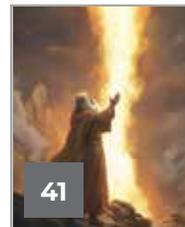
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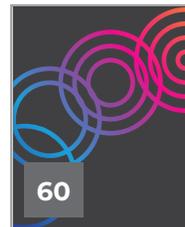
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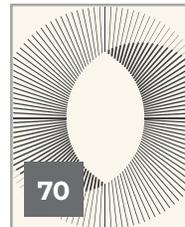
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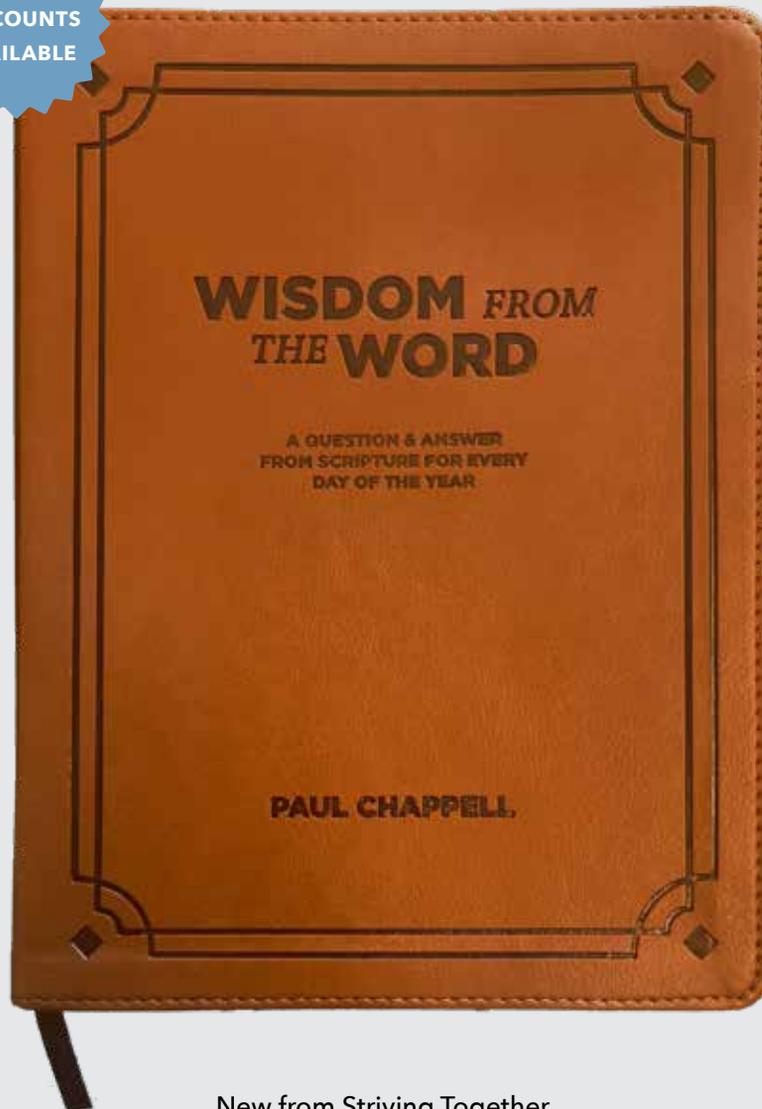
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BULK
DISCOUNTS
AVAILABLE



New from Striving Together

WISDOM FROM THE WORD

While visiting Olney, England—the town where John Newton lived and pastored—I wandered into a small bookstore near his church. On a tucked-away shelf, I found an antique volume titled *The Soul's Inquiries Answered in the Words of Scripture* (1872), a simple devotional, compiled by G. Washington Moon, that posed a daily Bible question and answered it with Scripture.

That concept stayed with me. From it, the Lord allowed me to develop a new devotional: *Wisdom from the Word*. Like Moon's original work, it offers a Bible

question and Scripture-based answer for every day of the year, now paired with devotional reflections and practical applications.

Beautifully bound in synthetic leather with gilt-edged pages and a ribbon marker, *Wisdom from the Word* is ideal for personal devotions or as a meaningful gift.

May the Lord use it to strengthen your walk with Him and draw your heart to His Word each day.

Paul Chappell



THE UNTAPPED POWER OF PRAYER

TYLER GILLIT



Do you remember the first time you heard James 5:16? “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” Chances are, this promise brought great relief as you learned that God’s great power is available through the simple exercise of prayer.

Now think for a moment about the first people who ever heard these words. The scattered believers who initially received James’ letter were living in difficult times. Persecution forced them to flee from their homes. They found refuge in foreign lands that eventually became as hostile to their faith as the place they left. The letter indicates that rich and powerful men oppressed them, even putting some to death. In addition to all the trouble they faced from the culture, there were wars and fights within the congregation. No wonder as James writes to these discouraged and defeated saints, he reminds them of the power of prayer.

History knows James as the pastor and leader of the church in Jerusalem. His peers nicknamed him “James the Just.” According to the historian Eusebius, the church members at Jerusalem had a different nickname for him. They called him “Old Camel Knees.” James spent so much time kneeling in prayer that his knees developed calluses and resembled the knobby knees of a camel. So, when James wrote on prayer, he wrote as someone who practiced what he preached.

James reveals that prayer has two kinds of power. The word *availeth* refers to “inherent strength.” It is the power that makes something sufficient for its task. It is latent power waiting to be unleashed. (Think of gasoline stored in a tank.) The word *effectual* gives us the English word “energy.” It refers to power of something in

use—its effect. (Think of gasoline burning in an engine.) James wants us to know that prayer has enormous power, but it must be activated and unleashed.

I grew up in the oil patches of West Texas. The land is rough and rugged. Vegetation won’t grow, and animals can’t survive. For generations, it was widely regarded as some of the most useless land in the world. That all changed in 1920 when a leasing agent for the Texas and Pacific Land Trust discovered petroleum in the Permian Basin. Since then, West Texas oil has fueled our nation for over one hundred years. There was an ocean of power beneath the surface, waiting for someone to tap into it.

There is an ocean of power in prayer, but someone has to tap into it. When we pray, the untapped power of God becomes the unleashed power of God. How powerful is prayer? It is just as powerful as God. When a righteous person prays fervently in God’s will, latent power becomes effective.

Prayer fuels Bible study and preaching. Prayer fuels soul-winning and discipleship. Prayer fuels the mighty engine of the local church. If there is a power shortage in our lives or churches, we can trace it to a failure to pray.

Hannah prayed, and she got a baby. Joshua prayed, and the sun stood still. Abraham’s servant prayed, and Isaac got a wife. Jonah prayed, and a whale got indigestion. Daniel prayed, and lions got lockjaw. Esther prayed, and she saved a nation. Elijah prayed, and it didn’t rain. Three years later, he prayed again, and it rained. Paul and Silas prayed, escaped jail, and led the jailer to Christ all in the same night.

If prayer could do all that for them, what could it do for you? What marriage could it restore? What prodigal could it bring home?

What family member could it save? What city could it shake? What nation could it revive? Prayer can do anything God can do, but we have to pray.

I once heard a story of a father and son riding bikes together. They came to a place in the trail where a large tree trunk was impeding their path. Instead of going around it, the father used it as a teachable moment. They got off their bikes, and the father said, “I want you to move that tree trunk.” The boy pushed and gave it all he had, but he couldn’t move it. The father said, “I want you to try again.” So the boy did it again. The father asked, “Son, try again. Be sure to use all your strength.” The boy tried for the third time. By this time, tears were pouring down his face. “I’m sorry, Dad. I just can’t do it.” The father asked, “Son, did you use all your strength?” He said, “Yes.” The father responded, “No, you didn’t. Because you didn’t ask me for help.”

Many believers are frustrated and discouraged because they are trying to move an obstacle that will not move. They are trying hard and giving their best effort, but it’s not moving. Remember that your greatest strength is not your intelligence, finances, or problem-solving ability. Your greatest strength is not even your faith. Your greatest strength is your heavenly Father, and in many cases, He’s just waiting for you to ask.

What obstacle in your life needs the power of prayer? Start tapping into God’s power today.



TYLER GILLIT

is the Senior Pastor of Worth Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas.



LIVING WITH A **FOCUS** ON THE **GOD** WHO IS **ABLE**

DR. PAUL CHAPPELL

I love a good photograph. There's something remarkable about the way a picture can capture a moment. My favorite pictures include crisp detail, perfect light, and vibrant color. But every photographer knows the frustration of a picture that's just slightly out of focus. The scene is the same, but the image is blurred. A small shift in focus can change the entire picture.

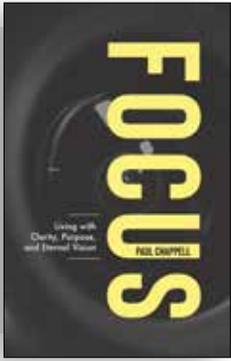
A similar shift in focus happens too often in the lives of Christian servants. We begin our Christian walk with clear focus: our eyes fixed on Christ and our hearts hungry to serve Him. But over time, our attention drifts. Responsibilities pile up, pressures mount, and our focus shifts.

Or, we start out in ministry with a heart full of focused faith, convinced God can use us to do great things for His glory. But as opposition arises and obstacles come, we shift our focus to just trying to survive.

We're a lot like Peter who stepped out of the boat with bold faith. When Jesus called, "Come," Peter did what no one else dared to do—he walked on the water toward Christ. But then his focus shifted, and he once again saw the wind and waves. The Bible says, "But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me" (Matthew 14:30). Peter's faith didn't fail because Jesus changed; his faith faltered because his focus did.

When Peter's eyes were on Christ, he did the impossible. But when his attention moved to the waves, he began to sink. That's what happens to us, as well. The same circumstances that once stirred our faith can begin to stir our fear when we lose sight of the One who called us.

So how do we live each day with clear focus—setting it, keeping it, and regaining it when it drifts—so that our eyes stay fixed on the God who is able?



Learn to identify distractions, realign priorities, cultivate Christ-centered habits, and press forward with joy in Christ.

available at strivingtogether.com

IDENTIFY THE DISTRACTIONS

Focus doesn't fail overnight. It fades through distraction. Sometimes the distractions are obvious—sin, temptation, or worldly priorities. But often they're subtle. We allow the urgent to crowd out the important. We become so busy serving God that we stop spending time with Him.

Distraction isn't always sinful, but it's always costly. In Luke 10, Martha was "cumbered about much serving." She wasn't doing wrong things; she was just missing the best thing—sitting at Jesus' feet.

If your focus feels scattered, take a quiet moment to ask yourself, What is shifting my focus from Christ? It might be an overloaded schedule, misplaced priorities, or simply neglecting time alone with God.

It takes humility to admit when your focus has shifted. You can't fix what you won't face, and you can't refocus while staring in the wrong direction.

REALIGN YOUR PRIORITIES

Once you've recognized the distractions, it's time to refocus on what matters most. Matthew 6:33 reminds us of the importance of choosing Christ-focused priorities rather than just letting life happen to us: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Start by defining the God-given roles you hold in this season of life—child of God, spouse, parent, leader, friend. Then for each role ask, "What does faithfulness look like in this role right now?" Clarity begins with calling.

Next, align your schedule with your priorities. Good intentions don't change your calendar; decisions do. If something is truly important, make room for it before the urgent crowds it out.

Finally, build in regular checkpoints. I have found a weekly review of my roles and priorities with an open calendar to be invaluable.

Priorities shift over time, but focus requires consistent realignment. When your schedule reflects your God-given roles and your heart stays centered on

Him, you'll find peace even in busy seasons—because your focus is on the God who is able.

CULTIVATE CHRIST-CENTERED HABITS

Focus isn't maintained by willpower alone; it's strengthened by habits. The most spiritually focused people you know aren't necessarily the most talented or disciplined; they're just the most consistent. That consistency grows through daily spiritual disciplines.

Godly habits of Bible study, prayer, church attendance, serving, giving, praise, and others are God-given means of setting and resetting our focus on Christ. They are the practical way we obey the admonition, "Exercise thyself rather unto godliness" (1 Timothy 4:7).

PRESS FORWARD WITH JOY

Living with focus doesn't mean you'll never lose sight for a moment. We all have seasons when we stumble or grow weary. The key is not to give up, but to look up.

The apostle Paul wrote, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). Notice that Paul didn't say he coasted toward the mark. He pressed forward. There is an intensity of focus and endurance expressed in those words.

When you live focused on the God who is able, you don't have to be controlled by fear of failure or the pressure to perform. You can rest in the truth that God is able to carry what you can't, to guide what you don't understand, and to finish what He began in you (Philippians 1:6).

Even when your focus fades, His ability doesn't. He still sees clearly. He still leads faithfully. He still works powerfully.

KEEP YOUR EYES ON CHRIST

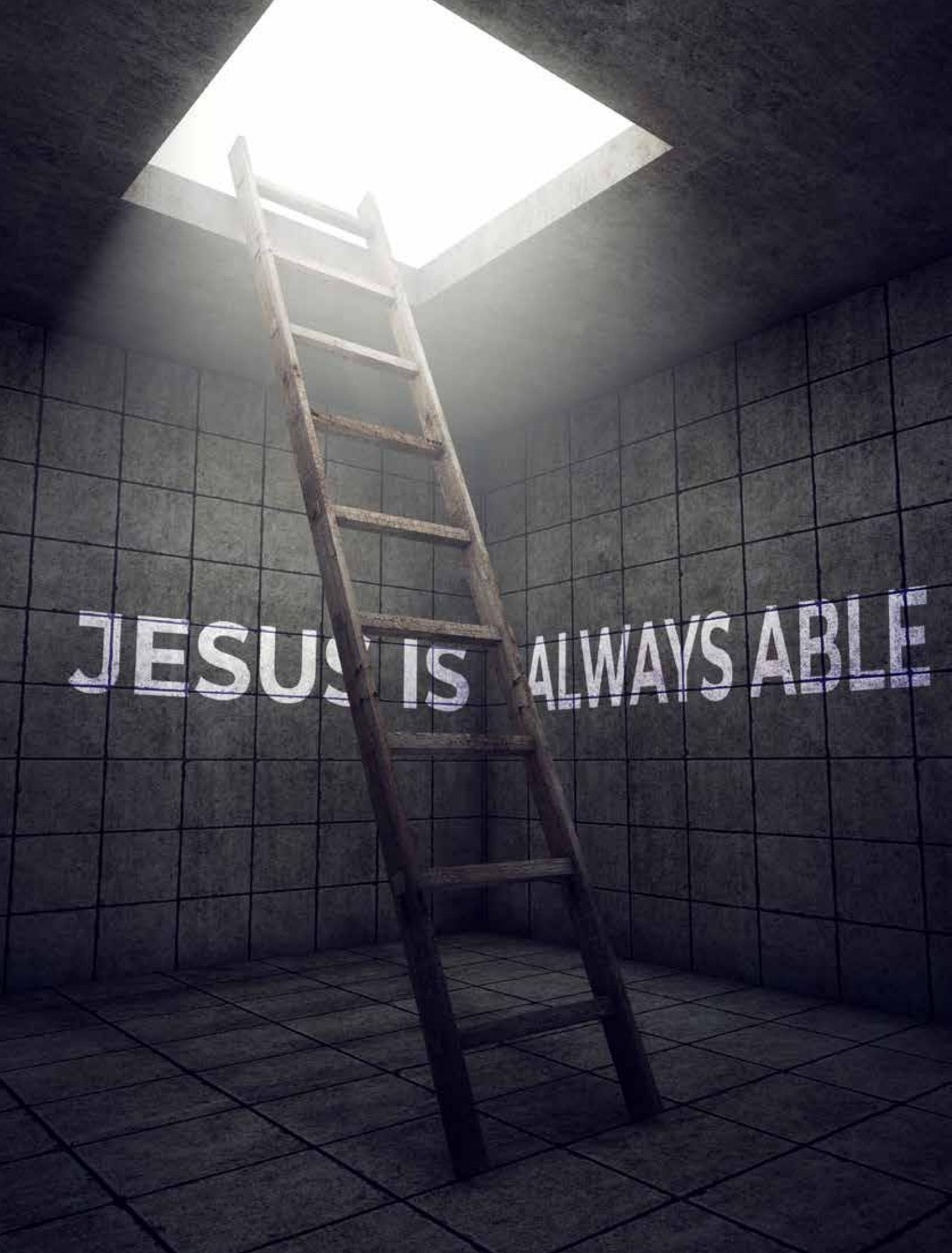
Life will always have storms, distractions, and blurry moments. But the same God who called Peter to step onto the waves is still calling you to trust Him today.

When your focus fades, lift your eyes to God. He is able—able to restore clarity to your vision, strength to your heart, and joy to your walk. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith..." (Hebrews 12:2).



DR. PAUL CHAPPELL

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

A wooden ladder leans against a wall in a dark, tiled room. A bright light source, likely a skylight, is visible at the top of the frame. The text "JESUS IS ALWAYS ABLE" is written in white, bold, capital letters across the middle of the wall.

JESUS IS ALWAYS ABLE

JERRY FERRSO

Have you ever faced a situation that felt beyond fixing? A prodigal who won't listen, a friend trapped in addiction, a heart weighed down by failure? We all encounter moments when it seems that nothing can change, no one can help, and no prayer will reach far enough.

But that's when we remember this simple, powerful truth: Jesus is always able.

When Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee into the region of the Gadarenes, He went to a place most people avoided. It was associated with uncleanness, tombs, spiritual darkness, and fear. It was not the kind of place any respectable religious teacher would go. But Jesus wasn't on a sightseeing trip; He was on a rescue mission. He crossed the sea in a storm to reach one man whom everyone else had written off.

That man lived among the tombs—naked, bleeding, and tormented by demons. He cried out day and night, cutting himself with stones. The townspeople had tried to chain him, but no one could restrain him. Every human attempt to control or cure him had failed. Yet when Jesus arrived, everything changed.

Where man's power stopped, Jesus' power started. What no one else could do, Jesus did in a moment. The man fell before Christ, and the demons that had ruled his life for years were gone. When the people came to see what happened, they found him "sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind" (Mark 5:15). The man who once terrified the town became a living testimony of God's grace.

That's the story of Mark 5:1–20, but it's also the story of many lives today. Our world is filled with people who may not live in tombs but do live in darkness. They are enslaved by sin, addictions, fears, and memories they can't control. Some try to fix themselves with new routines or stronger chains, but no earthly solution can heal a spiritual problem. Only

Jesus can.

The same Savior who delivered the "maniac of Gadara" is still delivering souls today, and He invites us to join Him in His redemptive work.

Let's consider three principles from this powerful passage that remind us that Jesus is always able to reach the unreachable.

1. Sin and spiritual bondage destroy life, but Jesus is able to restore broken lives.

The man in Mark 5 wasn't simply troubled; he was destroyed. Sin and Satan always promise freedom but end in bondage. The demoniac's condition is a vivid picture of what sin does to every heart apart from Christ. It isolates, enslaves, and dehumanizes.

But Jesus came to restore what sin ruins. As He declared in Luke 4:18, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives . . ."

That's still His mission today. Jesus is able to take a person whose life is shattered and make them whole again. He restores marriages, renews minds, and reclaims souls. Every believer reading this is living proof of that restoring power.

2. No power, addiction, trauma, or darkness is stronger than Jesus.

The people of Gadara had done everything they could to subdue the man, but nothing worked. That's because they were trying to solve a spiritual problem with physical tools. Chains can restrain hands, but only Jesus can release a heart.

When Jesus spoke, the unclean spirits had no choice but to obey. Mark 1:27 says, "With authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him." Every evil power is subject to Him. Every

dark force must flee at His command.

Sometimes we face battles that are overwhelming—addictions, fears, or strongholds that seem impossible to overcome. But remember this promise: “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). Jesus doesn’t negotiate with evil; He conquers it. There is no chain He cannot break and no darkness He cannot dispel.

3. Once we go to Jesus, He is able to set us free and make us a testimony of His grace.

When the man was delivered, Jesus told him, “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee” (Mark 5:19).

In one moment, the man who had been a terror became a preacher. He didn’t need to attend seminary or earn people’s respect before he began to share. His transformed life was his message.

That’s what Jesus does. He not only saves us *from* something; He saves us *for* something. He gives us a new identity and a new mission. As 2 Corinthians 5:17 declares, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a

new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

The same Savior who crossed the sea to reach one tormented man is still reaching people today. And He invites you and me to join Him in that mission—to go to the places others avoid, to love those others fear, and to share the good news that Jesus is able.

No one is beyond the reach of God’s grace. No sin is too deep, no past is too dark, and no heart is too hard for Jesus to transform.

So when you see someone who seems unreachable, don’t give up. Pray. Love. Go. Because Jesus is still able—able to do the unbelievable, the unthinkable, and the unimaginable.

There is nothing too hard for Him. Jesus is always able. And because He is, we should always be willing to share the gospel with those in darkness.



JERRY FERRSO
is the Outreach Director
at Lancaster Baptist
Church. He also leads the
Homebuilders Connection
Group.



CALIFORNIA FOR CHRIST

***Praise God for 800+ salvations in 2025
across the five church plants California for
Christ helps support. If you're interested
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Jamie.Smithey@wcbc.edu. or visit***

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CHARLIE KIRK REMEMBERED FOR BOLD FAITH AND GOSPEL WITNESS

Charlie Kirk, the founder of Turning Point USA and a bold advocate for Christian values on college campuses, was assassinated on September 10, 2025, while speaking at an event at Utah Valley University.

More than a cultural voice, Kirk was a young husband and father who knew Christ, loved his country, and stood courageously for truth. He gave a clear testimony of salvation—publicly affirming his faith in Jesus Christ and urging others to trust Him as well.

He took an unashamed stand on moral issues, seeing beyond partisan politics to the deeper spiritual realities of good and evil, truth and error. Regularly engaging young people with the gospel, he consistently pointed to his faith in Christ as the foundation for his

purpose and beliefs.

On October 14, 2025—the day that would have been his thirty-second birthday—President Donald Trump posthumously awarded Kirk the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian honor, in recognition of his influence and legacy. His widow, Erika, received the medal on his behalf.

Kirk’s emphasis on Christian values and his public commitment to the gospel made him an unmistakable figure in both the political and spiritual spheres. His life continues to challenge young believers to stand firm, speak the truth, and boldly live out their faith in every arena.



THE SILENT GENOCIDE IN NIGERIA

The violence against Christians in Nigeria is escalating at an alarming rate. In the first 220 days of 2025 alone, over 7,000 believers were killed, according to the International Society for Civil Liberties and the Rule of Law. These attacks have been carried out largely by radical Islamic groups. Open Doors International, a Christian advocacy organization, reports that nearly 70 percent of all Christians killed worldwide for their faith last year were in Nigeria.

In response to these atrocities, President Donald Trump designated Nigeria a Country of Particular Concern—a title reserved for the world’s worst violators of religious freedom.

This designation opens the door for U.S. sanctions and diplomatic pressure. Yet for Nigerian believers, the crisis continues daily.

Nigeria is now among the most dangerous countries in the world to follow Christ. As Hebrews 13:3 urges, “Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them.” We must pray earnestly and advocate boldly for our persecuted brothers and sisters.

Source: Efrat Lachter, Sophia Compton, “Trump designates Nigeria as ‘country of particular concern’ over widespread Christian persecution, killings,” Fox News, October 31, 2025, <https://www.foxnews.com/world/trump-designates-nigeria-country-particular-concern-over-widespread-christian-persecution-killings>.



CANADA PUSHES TO EXPAND EUTHANASIA TO CHILDREN AS YOUNG AS 12

Advocates in Canada are pushing to expand the government-funded euthanasia program, MAID (Medical Assistance in Dying), to include children as young as 12, even without parental consent. The program already accounts for nearly 5 percent of all deaths in Canada and is scheduled to expand in 2027 to allow assisted suicide solely on the basis of mental illness.

This dangerous shift reveals the moral cost and slippery slope of

taking life and death into human hands. God alone is sovereign over life and death (1 Samuel 2:6), and Christians must speak clearly and compassionately to uphold the sanctity of life at every stage.

Source: Amanda Prestigiacom, "Movement Barrels Forward to Euthanize 12 Year Old Children in Canada," The Daily Wire, November 2, 2025, <https://www.dailywire.com/news/movement-barrels-forward-to-euthanize-12-year-old-children-in-canada>.

DANGEROUS THREATS TO RELIGIOUS LIBERTY EXPOSED

A report from the recently-created Task Force to Eradicate Anti-Christian Bias, formed under the direction of the Trump administration, highlights troubling patterns of government hostility toward Christians under the Biden administration. Examples include federal agencies imposing massive fines on Christian colleges, debanking faith-based nonprofits, and aggressively prosecuting

peaceful pro-life advocates under the FACE Act—while largely ignoring dozens of attacks on churches and pregnancy centers. The report also cites a leaked FBI memo that labeled some traditional Catholic groups as domestic threats, raising serious concerns about religious profiling.

This report, and the ongoing investigation, validates the concerns many Americans have sensed regarding increasing infringements on religious liberty and reveals a growing lack of religious tolerance among the political left.

Religious liberty is not only a biblical conviction historically cherished by Baptists, but it is also a foundational principle in American history—explicitly protected in the First Amendment to the Constitution.

Source: Amanda Prestigiacom, "Bombshell DOJ Report Details Biden-Era Anti-Christian Attacks, Vows To End 'Weaponization,'" The Daily Wire, September 6, 2025, <https://www.dailywire.com/news/bombshell-doj-report-details-biden-era-anti-christian-attacks-vows-to-end-weaponization>.



SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE GROWS

A recent YouGov poll revealed a growing openness to justify political violence. While a majority (72%) said such violence is never acceptable, troubling numbers emerged: 12% of those who identified as liberals said it is “acceptable” in at least some situations, compared to 8% of conservatives. Among self-identified “very liberal” respondents, that number rose to 20%.

This shift reflects a deeper moral unraveling in our culture. As the fear of God diminishes and biblical authority is rejected, society moves closer to chaos. “Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood . . . The way of peace



they know not” (Isaiah 59:7–8). Now more than ever, our world needs the clarity and hope of the gospel.

Source: David Montgomery, “What Americans really think about political violence,” YouGov, September 12, 2025, <https://today.yougov.com/politics/articles/52960-charlie-kirk-americans-political-violence-poll>.

NEW YORK CITY ELECTS SELF-DESCRIBED SOCIALIST MAYOR

In a significant ideological shift, New York City voters elected Zohran Mamdani—an Islamic, democratic socialist—as mayor. Formerly a state assemblyman, Mamdani now leads the largest city in America.

Mamdani campaigned on sweeping socialist policies, including rent freezes, free public transit, universal child care, higher taxes on the wealthy, and expanded government-run housing and grocery programs. His election signals growing concern among voters for immediate affordability—even at the long-term expense of prosperity and liberty. Historically,

socialism has devastated nations that embraced it, often resulting in widespread poverty, suppression of religious freedom, and a devaluation of human dignity.

With New York City moving in a new ideological direction, the need for gospel-centered church planting, discipleship, and faithful witness in America’s urban centers has never been clearer.

Source: Associated Press, “Zohran Mamdani elected mayor of New York City, becomes first self-described socialist to lead nation’s largest city,” AP News, November 4, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/070d5b6e5544cfe6809ade6fa8b8b74a>.





RELATIONSHIPS THAT GROW A HEALTHY SMALL GROUP

GABE RUHL

Every healthy church has systems and structures, but what is sometimes overlooked by leaders is the necessity of nurtured relationships. Simply put, churches grow stronger when relationships grow deeper.

The early believers “continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship” (Acts 2:42). That word fellowship—*koinonia* in Greek—means sharing life together: participating, praying, serving, and encouraging one another in faith. True *koinonia* doesn’t happen by accident; it requires time, trust, and intentional love.

One of the best places for those relationships to flourish is within the small groups of a local church. Whether you are a small group leader or a group member, you can invest in the relationships that help people grow.

FRIENDSHIP: BE PRESENT AND GENUINE

No matter the size of your church or small group, I believe that all people in it long to have a consistent friend who loves them, believes in them, and is continually there for them no matter the circumstances. Smaller groups naturally produce a less formal atmosphere, making them a tremendous place to foster friendships.

Often, the moments when a friend is most valued are the same moments that it is most inconvenient to be a present friend. Ask the Lord to guide you as you show up for others in ways that reflect Christ's love.

Simple actions like remembering a prayer request and reaching out to follow up during the week or acknowledging birthdays can go a long way toward showing genuine care. A quick text to say, "I prayed for you today," or a handwritten note after someone shares a burden, often means more than you know. Take time to sit with someone new at a church fellowship, send an encouraging verse before Sunday, or invite another family to join yours for lunch after church. When someone misses a group meeting, check in to let them know they're missed. Even small gestures—dropping off a meal or celebrating answered prayer—build trust and communicate that relationships in your group are more than surface-level. Little acts of thoughtfulness grow lasting friendships.

MENTORING: INVITE AND INCLUDE OTHERS

Every Christian can mentor. Mentoring happens when you simply invite others to join you in what you are already doing for the Lord. As you serve, go soulwinning, or participate in outreach, invite others along. People grow when they are included. You'll be amazed at how relationships deepen when you make room for others to walk beside you in ministry.

A great rule for every small group leader—or any Christian who wants to invest in others—to live by is this: "Don't do something alone that you could be doing with someone from your group."

Are you wondering who to invite? Look around the next time your group meets and ask, "Who isn't yet involved? Who hasn't joined weekly outreach, ministry, or group activities?" Then walk over and personally invite that person to serve or come alongside you.

EDIFYING: BUILD UP, DON'T TEAR DOWN

Choose to believe the best about people. Try to see them as they could be, not as they are. People are more apt to change when someone believes in them than when they are constantly corrected. I've often heard it said, "Acceptance is the optimum environment for growth."

“Churches grow stronger when relationships grow deeper.”

It's true that there are difficult people. Perhaps you have heard of people who are EGRs—Extra Grace Required! But the truth is, God will give that extra grace. And if we're honest, we all need extra grace from others at times too.

If you are a group leader, there will be times when valuing a relationship requires difficult conversations. When a problem or sin issue arises, you must confront it with wisdom. But you must also keep the relationship in mind with a goal of restoration. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness" (Galatians 6:1).

You can't secretly look down on someone and build them up at the same time. Work to unconditionally love people. Of course, this is only possible through the strength of the Holy Spirit as we strive to be Christlike in our relationships.

ACCOUNTABILITY: ENCOURAGE GROWTH WITH GRACE

Friendship and encouragement are vital, but spiritual relationships also require accountability. Be aware of others' attendance and consistency. Are you a friend who encourages spiritual growth in others? A faithful friend notices when someone is struggling and lovingly reaches out.

This is primarily a small group leader's responsibility, but anyone can encourage others to take their next step for Christ. Whether it's baptism, joining the church, or serving in ministry, we can all lovingly challenge one another

to grow in grace. "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:19).

” Relationships that combine warmth with accountability help others take the next step in their walk with God.

RELATIONSHIPS THAT REFLECT CHRIST

Healthy small groups need more than great programs and well-developed lessons; they need strong relationships. Friendship, mentoring, edifying, and accountability all reflect the koinonia of the early church. As you intentionally invest in these kinds of relationships, your small group will not only grow stronger but will also reflect the love and grace of Christ.



GABE RUHL

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4

Priorities for Cohesive Teams

LARRY CHAPPELL

What makes a team great? For some teams, it's easy to name. The 1970s Pittsburgh Steelers built their dynasty on the "Steel Curtain" defense. The 1990s Chicago Bulls found their identity in the triangle offense that revolutionized basketball. The early-2000s New England Patriots became known for their adaptability and discipline. The 2010s Golden State Warriors transformed the game with their precision and teamwork from beyond the arc.

Each of those teams was unified by a shared system or mindset that shaped everything they did. Their greatness wasn't accidental; it flowed from cohesion around clear priorities.

So what makes a *ministry* team great? Romans 12 provides the answer. This chapter lays the biblical foundation for true spiritual cohesion. It reminds us that lasting unity doesn't come from charisma or talent, but from a shared devotion to Christ and a commitment to live out His priorities together. These priorities form the heart of every cohesive team.

1. PURSUE A PERSONAL WALK WITH GOD

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

Romans 12 begins not with a strategy for ministry but with a call to surrender. That's because the starting point of every great ministry team is personal devotion. When each member of a ministry team is walking in fellowship with Him, unity becomes the natural overflow of shared obedience.

Before we can lead others spiritually, we must

nurture our own spiritual health. It's easy in ministry to replace intimacy with activity, to assume that because we're serving, we're growing. But God doesn't bless who we pretend to be; He blesses who we truly are before Him.

A personal walk with God demands intentional focus. It requires guarding time to spend with God in prayer and Scripture.

When we pursue a personal walk with God, we bring something vital to the team: a life aligned with His purposes. A healthy staff culture doesn't begin with policies or programs; it begins with people whose private devotion fuels their public ministry.

2. PRACTICE HUMILITY OVER EGO

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think" (Romans 12:3).

If devotion is the foundation of teamwork, humility is the glue. Pride destroys collaboration; humility fuels it. Paul warns that self-importance has no place in ministry. True humility recognizes both our limitations and the unique strengths of others.

Pride says, "My idea, my agenda, my contribution." Humility says, "Our mission, our gifts, God's glory." Pride kills team culture; humility cultivates it.

The book of Job reminds us that the real target of spiritual attack is not always our circumstances but our perspective. Satan sought to distort Job's view of God. Likewise, the challenges of ministry test our humility and reveal our dependence.

A cohesive team requires leaders who think soberly, who value the insights of others, and who remain teachable.

3. PERFORM YOUR ROLE WITH EXCELLENCE

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness” (Romans 12:6–8).

Romans 12:6–8 reminds us that every member of Christ’s body is gifted by grace to serve a unique purpose. Great teams succeed when each person knows their role and fulfills it faithfully. In ministry, that means serving wholeheartedly in the place God has assigned, using your gifts for His glory and the good of others.

Excellence in ministry is showing up prepared, dependable, and teachable. It’s bringing your best to the assignment God has given you and trusting others to do the same.

Joseph served under Pharaoh. Timothy served beside Paul. Both show that second place isn’t lesser value—it’s strategic support.

The strength of a cohesive team lies in people who understand that every role matters and that significance is found in service, not visibility.

When each person performs their role with excellence, the team thrives. Roles may differ, but the mission is one. Excellence unites what ego divides.

4. PROTECT THE CULTURE OF THE TEAM

Romans 12:9–21 gives four characteristics of a protected culture:

A culture of love: *“Let love be without dissimulation . . . Be kindly affectioned one to another”* (verses 9–10). Genuine love fosters trust and care within the team. It’s more than warmth; it’s commitment. Love chooses patience when opinions differ and kindness when tensions rise. When people truly love one another, unity follows naturally, and service becomes joyful instead of forced.

A culture of integrity: *“Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good . . . not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord”* (verses 9, 11). Integrity means diligence, transparency, and consistency. It shows up in how we work, how we communicate, and how we follow through. Integrity doesn’t demand perfection, but it does require honesty. Teams that value truth over image create trust and advance God’s work unhindered.

A culture of honor: *“. . . in honour preferring one another”* (verse 10). Honor runs two ways: leaders give opportunity; followers give loyalty. When either side breaks that rhythm, trust erodes. Ministry is like looking through a two-way mirror—you only see your side until someone invites you behind the glass. Team members don’t always see the weight their leader carries, and leaders don’t always feel the burdens of those they lead. Honor bridges that gap through understanding, respect, and gratitude.

A culture of excellence and authenticity: *“Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer”* (verse 12). Ministry brings both triumphs and trials, but cohesive teams stay steady through both. They pray, rejoice, and bear burdens together. Excellence without authenticity becomes performance; authenticity without excellence becomes apathy. Together, they form a culture where people serve wholeheartedly and grace fills every gap.

THE POWER OF “SWING”

Cohesion isn’t automatic; it must be developed. Perhaps no sports story captures this more beautifully than that of the University of Washington rowing team, told by Daniel James Brown in his book *The Boys in the Boat*.

During the Great Depression, nine working-class young men—ordinary students from humble backgrounds—learned to row as one. They called it finding “the swing.” It’s that almost mystical rhythm when every oar moves in perfect harmony, the boat glides weightlessly, and the team feels unstoppable. Swing can’t be forced; it comes only through trust, timing, and unity.

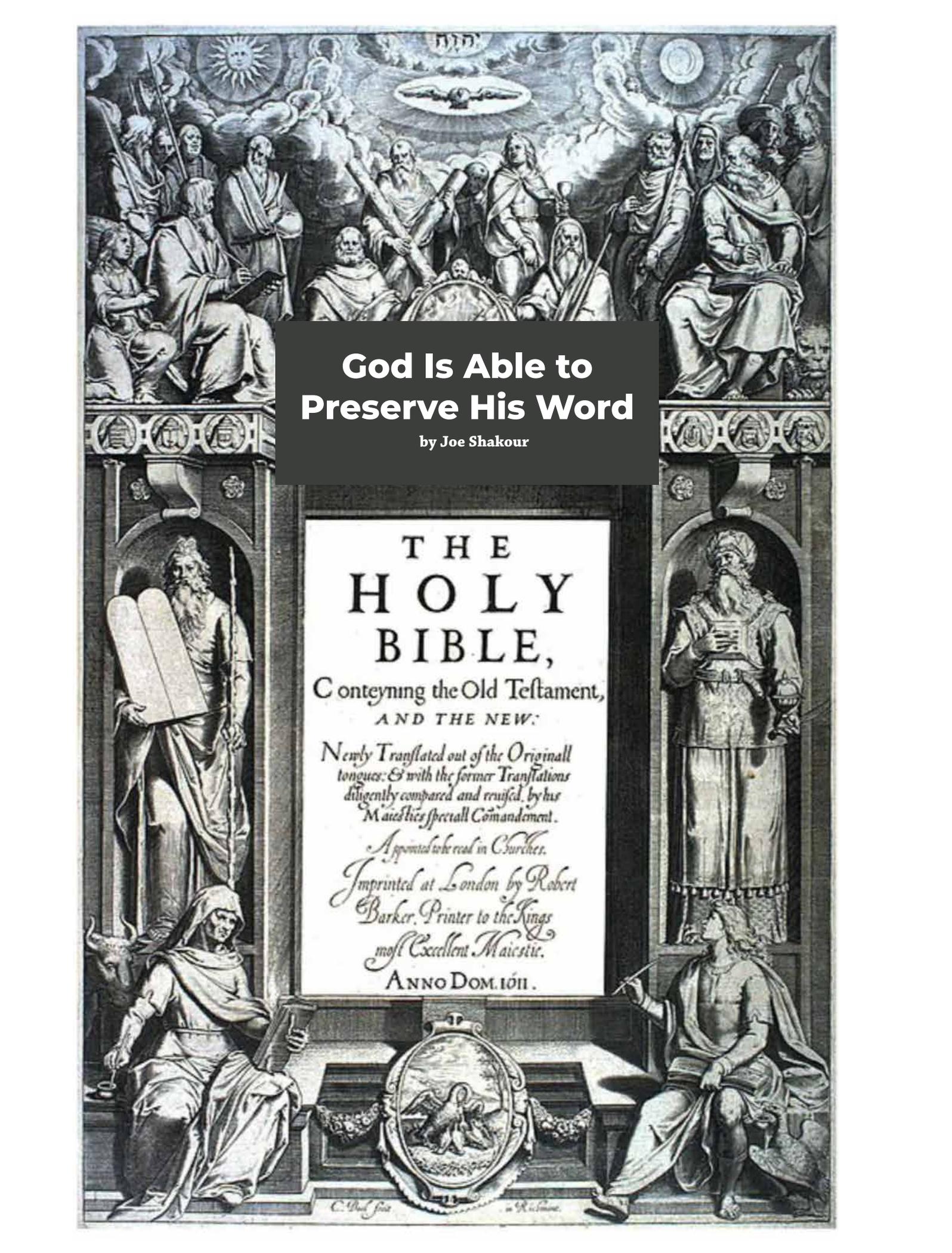
Those boys went on to defeat Harvard and Yale and, in 1936, win Olympic gold before Adolf Hitler himself. They weren’t the most powerful or privileged. They were simply united.

That’s the kind of cohesion every ministry team should pursue. When hearts are aligned to please Christ, when egos yield to humility, when each member owns their role, and when everyone guards the team culture, something remarkable happens. Like those boys in the boat, we find our “swing.” United, we become unstoppable for God’s glory.



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**God Is Able to
Preserve His Word**

by Joe Shakour

THE
HOLY
BIBLE,
Conteyning the Old Testament,
AND THE NEW:

*Newly Translated out of the Originall
tongues: & with the former Translations
diligently compared and revised, by his
Majesties speciall Comandment.*

Appointed to be read in Churches.
Imprinted at London by Robert
Barker, Printer to the Kings
most Excellent Majestie.
ANNO DOM. 1611.

If you've ever paused while reading your Bible and wondered if you could really trust the words in front of you, you're not alone. From the very beginning, Satan has sown doubt about God's Word. In the Garden of Eden, the serpent asked Eve, "Yea, hath God said?" (Genesis 3:1). That question still echoes today. If the devil can make you question what God has said, he can make you doubt everything built on it.

But God is not silent about the permanence of His Word. Again and again the Bible declares, "It is written." The phrase itself—*gegraptai* in Greek—means "it was written, it stands written, and it will always be written."

God's Word is not a fleeting thought but a fixed, immovable reality. It doesn't expire with culture, language, or the passing of centuries.

So how can we be certain, after all these generations, that the words of Scripture haven't been lost or changed? The answer runs through every page of the Bible itself: God is able to preserve His Word.

THE PROMISE OF PRESERVATION

Some suggest that only the *message* of Scripture has been preserved, not its *words*. Yet the Bible teaches otherwise. Proverbs 22:21 speaks of "the certainty of the words of truth," and the psalmist testifies, "Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever" (Psalm 119:152). From the beginning, God promised to keep His words intact: "He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations" (Psalm 105:8).

Biblical preservation isn't about

vague ideas; it's about exact words. Every word matters because every word was given by God.

A MOUNTAIN OF MANUSCRIPTS

Skeptics often point out that we don't have the original manuscripts or "autographs." That's true, but what we do have is overwhelming evidence for the reliability of Scripture—far greater than for any other ancient text.

In *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Josh and Sean McDowell note that for the New Testament alone there are more than 5,800 Greek manuscripts, totaling over 2.6 million pages—enough to stretch more than a mile high. For the entire Bible, that would be more than two miles. By contrast, Plato is represented by seven manuscripts, Aristotle by forty-nine, and Socrates by none. (What we know about Socrates comes from Plato.) Altogether, there are more than 66,000 manuscripts and scrolls for the Old and New Testaments combined.

Does that mean every copy is identical? Of course not. There are differences between manuscripts. But the variations that exist are small and rarely affect meaning. Rather than creating uncertainty, this multitude of witnesses gives remarkable confidence that God has preserved His Word. As Zane C. Hodges observed in *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, "The multiplicity of witnesses is not a weakness but a strength, and the preservation of the text is evidence of God's providence."

GOD'S PROVIDENCE, NOT PROBABILITY

Preservation isn't the product of human skill or chance. It's the fulfillment of divine promise. David Otis Fuller wrote in *Which Bible?*,

"The Bible has passed through the furnace of persecution, literary criticism, scientific discovery, and philosophic doubt, and has lost nothing but those human interpretations which clung to it as barnacles to a ship. The living Word of God stands today as it ever has, indestructible and unchangeable."

THE OLD TESTAMENT: GOD'S CUSTODIANS

Consider the Hebrew Old Testament. Romans 3:2 says that the Jews were entrusted with "the oracles of God." Through centuries of copying, the Hebrew scribes treated the text with reverence: "Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it" (Psalm 119:140).

“**Because God preserved His words, faithful translations that accurately render them are truly the Word of God in that language.**”

The Masoretes, who copied the Hebrew Scriptures from the 500s to the 900s AD, followed a process so careful it seems almost unbelievable. If they wrote one wrong word, they destroyed the scroll. They counted every letter, marked the middle letter of every book, and checked their work again and again. Not a single word was written from memory.

When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, scholars expected to find chaos. Instead, they found that these ancient scrolls (over a thousand years older than the Masoretic Text) matched the Masoretic Text remarkably well.

Such precision shows how carefully God preserved His Word through faithful hands.

THE NEW TESTAMENT: RECEIVED, NOT RECONSTRUCTED

The same providence is seen in the New Testament. The early church didn't invent the text; they received it. As E. F. Hills wrote in *The King James Version Defended*, "The Holy Spirit guided the early Christians to gather the individual New Testament books into one canon and to reject all non-canonical books. In the same manner, the Holy Spirit guided the early Christians to preserve the New Testament text by receiving the true readings and rejecting the false."

The vast majority of manuscripts—over 95 percent—point to a stable, unified text, reflected in the *Textus Receptus* (literally, the "received text"). Hills and other conservative scholars such as Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad have written at length that God's providence operated through the use of these texts by the believing church, not apart from it. The true text was recognized, copied, read, and preached in every generation—not hidden in obscurity.

By contrast, beginning in the nineteenth century, a new school of thought arose that sought to reconstruct the Bible's text based on a few early but seldom-used manuscripts, particularly Vaticanus (B) and Sinaiticus (Ⲛ). Scholars Brooke F. Westcott and Fenton J. A. Hort popularized the theory that these manuscripts preserved a purer text simply because they were older. Their approach, built on principles like "older is better" and "shorter is preferred," became the foundation for many modern critical editions.

Yet it is unreasonable to believe that the true New Testament text was hidden in a few neglected documents while the entire

church throughout history copied, memorized, and preached from a corrupted one. Believers through the centuries have recognized and transmitted the providentially received text that underlies the King James Version—a text confirmed not by novelty or theory but by God's guiding hand through His people.

PRESERVATION MEANS LIFE, NOT JUST HISTORY

All this evidence points to one truth: the Bible is not merely a historical artifact; it is alive (Hebrews 4:12). Jesus declared, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

Dean John William Burgon, in *The Revision Revised*, wrote, "If you and I believe that the original writings of the Scriptures were verbally inspired by God, then of necessity they must have been providentially preserved through the ages."

The Bible repeatedly affirms this promise: "Thy word is true from the beginning; and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever" (Psalm 119:160). "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

YOUR BIBLE, YOUR LANGUAGE

Because God preserved His words, faithful translations that accurately render them are truly the Word of God in that language. We can hold our King James Bible and say with confidence that it is the inspired and preserved Word of God for English-speaking people. Paul told Timothy that even the copies he read were "holy scriptures" (2 Timothy 3:15).

R. B. Ouellette summarized it

well in *A More Sure Word*: "The King James Version is the right Bible for English-speaking people because it is a literal translation of the correct and pure Greek and Hebrew manuscripts."

English Bible translator William Tyndale understood the gravity of this work. Before his martyrdom, he testified, "I never altered one syllable of God's Word against my conscience, nor would I so alter it this day, if all that is in the earth might be given me."

WHY IT MATTERS

Here's what's at stake: if God can create galaxies, part seas, and raise Christ from the dead, is it really difficult to believe He could preserve a book? Because God has preserved His Word, you can open your Bible and know that what you read is what God intended you to read.

Isaiah declared, "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isaiah 40:8). Peter echoed that truth: "The word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:25).

Preservation is not just a doctrine to debate. It is the reason you can trust, obey, and proclaim God's Word with confidence. As one writer said, "If God inspired but did not preserve His Word, He wasted His breath. But God did not waste His Word; He kept it."

The God who spoke the first word is able to keep every last one. That is the miracle you hold in your hands.



DR. JOE SHAKOUR

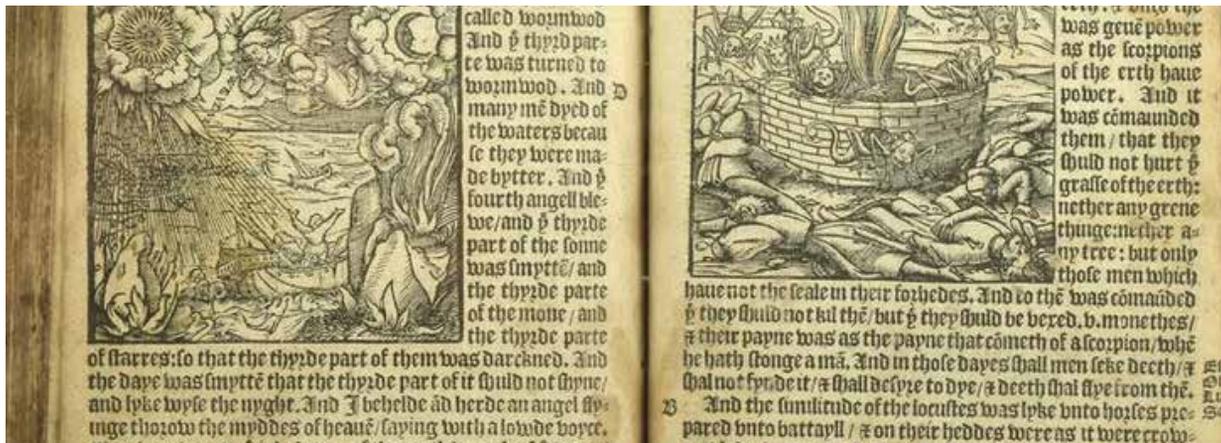
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Five Hundred Years of Light

WILLIAM TYNDALE AND THE
ENGLISH NEW TESTAMENT

PAUL CHAPPELL



If you stand on the bank of the Thames River in London, you're near the spot where the first English New Testaments, translated from Greek, passed in 1526. Hidden in sacks of flour, bales of cloth, and barrels of oil—and carried ashore by faithful merchants and Lollard believers—London was soon flooded with an outlawed book: God's Word in English.

How did it happen? The story goes back to one man—courageous, brilliant, and unshakably convinced that the Bible should speak to every heart in the language of the people.

William Tyndale was born in Gloucestershire around 1494. Educated at Oxford and Cambridge, he mastered Greek and later taught himself Hebrew. A gifted linguist, he eventually became so fluent in eight languages that John Foxe wrote, "Whichever he spake, you would suppose it his native language."

Through reading Erasmus's *Greek New Testament*, Tyndale discovered and believed the simple gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Christ. As Tyndale studied God's Word, he became convinced that

the spiritual darkness of England could only be lifted by giving people the Bible in their own tongue.

In sixteenth-century England, ordinary people had almost no access to Scripture. The Catholic Church held copies of the Bible in Latin, but they were inaccessible to common people, and translating the Bible into English was forbidden by law.

When a Catholic clergyman once argued that it would be better to go without God's Word than to oppose the Pope, Tyndale replied, "I defy the Pope and all his laws. If God spare my life, ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scripture than thou dost."

Because state officials refused him permission to translate, Tyndale fled England in 1524 and began his work in exile. Two years later, his completed New Testament was printed in Worms, Germany, and secretly shipped to England on the Thames River. For the first time, ordinary men and women could read the words of Christ in their own language.

The church authorities responded with fury, burning

copies of the book and hunting its translator. But God's Word is not so easily silenced. As Isaiah 55:11 promises, "It shall not return unto me void." The New Testament spread quickly, fueling revival and reformation across England.

Tyndale was eventually captured, imprisoned near Brussels, and executed in 1536. His dying prayer, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes," was soon answered. Within a year, an English Bible was authorized for public reading, drawn largely from Tyndale's work. Nearly ninety percent of his translation would later appear in the King James Version of 1611.

Five centuries later, the light that Tyndale kindled still burns. Every time we open an English Bible, we read words shaped by his sacrifice. He gave his life so that every believer—from the plowboy to the preacher—could hold in their hands the living Word of God.



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40 YEARS OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS



What began in 1986 as a handful of believers trusting God for the impossible has grown into a vibrant church family and a global ministry rooted firmly in God's Word. The story of Lancaster Baptist Church is a story of repeated exclamation points on the truth that God is able. It is a story of God providing, leading, and multiplying beyond anything we could have imagined. As we celebrate forty years of His goodness, our vision remains strong: to reach souls, train laborers, and advance the cause of Christ in our generation.



In 1987, Eldon Lofgren approached Pastor Chappell and asked if he could begin a bus ministry. A short time later, Eldon and his son, Jeremy, went out on a Sunday morning in a van. They returned a short time later with three children—the first “bus-kids” to attend Lancaster Baptist Church.



In 1988, Pastor Chappell asked Pastor Rick Houk and his family to consider coming to Lancaster to join the pastoral staff and to take on the task of giving birth to Lancaster Baptist School. The Houks prayerfully responded to this call of God, and the school officially began in the fall of 1989 with forty-seven students. Since that time, the school has grown to over 400 students with thirty-five staff members and has been used of God to prepare more than 800 graduates for a life of service to the Lord.

1986

1988

1991

1987



With few belongings packed into a moving truck, Paul Chappell and his family moved by faith to serve a small, struggling church. While the church was eager to have the family come, they could not provide a salary, moving expenses, or housing.

1989



The “Giving by Faith” building banquet in 1988 and the down payment on the first twenty acres a few days later were just the beginning of an unfolding miracle. No one could have guessed from those early days how God was going to fill this new campus with growth. Ever since the first banquet, Lancaster Baptist Church has been in some program of expansion to make room for the work God is doing here in the desert.



In 1991, when Pastor Chappell led a Spanish-speaking couple to the Lord, he had a burden to begin a Spanish ministry. Soon, a Sunday school class was formed and taught in Spanish. A few months after the class began, Sunday services were held in Spanish. More Spanish-speaking people were saved and baptized, and in those first few years, the congregation grew to about 200 people.



July 12, 1992, marked the sixth anniversary of Lancaster Baptist Church. It was a wonderful day of celebration, preaching, and people being saved. After the morning service, history was written as the entire church family gathered expectantly for the groundbreaking at the corner of 40th Street East and Lancaster Boulevard.

1993



Dedication Sunday for the North Auditorium was held on January 9, 1994. The 1,150-seat auditorium that had seemed so large when the church first drew the building plans was filled and overflowing. The attendance that morning was over 2,600, with 1,000 first-time visitors. Many of these visitors were saved. It was a historic day for the church that God blessed in a unique way.

1995



In 1996, the name "The Mid-Summer Pastor's Fellowship" was changed to "Spiritual Leadership Conference," and since that time thousands of guests and hundreds of churches around the world have been influenced and encouraged through this annual conference.

1996

1992

1994



In March of 1993, Dr. David Gibbs preached at the "Heart for God" building banquet, and the church family gave and committed \$418,000 that evening. It was a miraculous night of rejoicing and anticipation. Just a few weeks later, 3,100 people attended the final Open House Sunday in the old building, and over 200 of them trusted Christ as Savior. God taught this church that if they would continue to build hearts for Him, He would build the building.



In the fall of 1995, West Coast Baptist College opened its doors to forty-three students. Pastor and Mrs. Chappell led the way, adding to their already heavy responsibilities. Through giving and serving well beyond what could be expected, the church family actively supported the purpose of the college. Staff from the church and Christian school provided classroom instruction while Ken Jones and Rick Houk provided administration and day-to-day leadership for the student body.



The Baptist Voice is a magazine of biblical exhortation from the ministries of Lancaster Baptist Church. This dynamic publication was first produced in 1998 and features thought-provoking articles from ministry leaders, as well as encouraging reports on what is happening in churches around the world.



In January of 2002, the church began construction on the Worship Center balcony. On the sixteenth anniversary, the church broke ground on another eighteen-month construction project—the Music and Administration Building.

1997

1999

2004

1998



July 13, 1997, was the church's eleventh anniversary with 3,000 in attendance. Dirt was already moving, and a building pad was already in place for the new Worship Center. It was time to rise up and build again. Having come through a very trying season of trials and spiritual attacks, the church family staked their claim once again upon the promises of God and the faith of their pastor.

2002



Construction on the Worship Center was concluded in March of 1999 at a total cost of \$8.5 million. The theme at that time was "Let God Arise."

Striving Together Publications was founded for the purpose of publishing biblically sound books, curriculum, and resources. Thousands of churches across the country use small group studies, discipleship, soulwinning, and ministry materials from Striving Together Publications every day.



This three-story office tower was completed in January of 2004 at a cost of \$4.2 million, and to God's glory, fourteen months later, the church was able to completely pay for this building through the "Grow in Grace" offering which exceeded \$2 million. It was a miraculous victory for the entire church family to the glory of God.



In 2005, *Truth for Today* became *Daily in the Word* with Dr. Paul Chappell and was coupled with the daily devotional website of our ministry. *Daily in the Word* has more than 500,000 visitors to the website every month, 33,700 subscribers to the free daily devotional, and tens of thousands of daily listeners around the world.

2007



In July 2008, Enoch and Grace Kim began our Korean ministry by holding a Korean Bible study every other Friday in their home. Enoch and a few Korean college students would also interpret Pastor Chappell's Sunday morning messages. About a year later, a core group formed an adult Bible class that met on Sunday mornings, and full Korean services on Sunday mornings followed nine months later.

2012



On August 30, 2015, Lancaster Baptist Church and West Coast Baptist College celebrated the Grand Opening of the Walther Center—a building named in memory of our dear friend, Leo Walther.

2015

2005

2008



The Revels Building opened during the fall of 2007 and is used seven days a week for college classes, Sunday school classes, and many other ministry functions. It features a spacious lobby, a large bookstore, a coffee shop, twenty-one classrooms, a science lab, two computer labs, a piano lab, and a home economics lab. Every day it is used to train hundreds of students who are preparing to serve in churches around the world.



On September 30, 2012, Lancaster Baptist Church marked the next stage of growth with the grand opening of the West Wing expansion. Adults and teens gathered together for prayer and the dedication of this new worship and education space. Their prayers that day were not for the building itself, but that they would bring glory to Christ and welcome people from the community into a place where they can hear the Word of God and grow in their relationship with Him.



The Eldon Lofgren Transportation Facility was dedicated in October of 2019. This much-needed facility allows us to keep our bus fleet up to date with maintenance. This facility also houses the Striving Together Publications warehouse.



Lancaster Baptist Church saw many ministry milestones, including the start of on-campus midweek Connection Groups, the Declare the Gospel relaunch, and the dedication of new college offices that cleared the way for the Kid City Building groundbreaking. The church celebrated its 35th anniversary, partnered with local leaders for a large community food distribution, hosted the Spiritual Leadership Conference, and ended the year with a Christmas Light Drive-Thru featuring over a quarter million lights.

2016

2020

2023

2019



Over the past decades, the Lord has called many missionaries who are investing their lives in planting churches and training national pastors across Asia. Today, the Philippines is one of the highest missionary-sending nations in the world. Many of these missionaries, and especially national pastors, are not able to attend the Spiritual Leadership Conference held each year in Lancaster, California. Thus, we hosted Spiritual Leadership Conference Asia held in Manila in February of 2016.

2021



The Kid City Showcase and the Reaching Forth Banquet raised over \$2.6 million toward the Kid City project. When COVID-19 hit in March, the church shifted to online services and adjusted ministries, yet God provided as WCBC broke ground on new administration and faculty offices in July. That summer included the church's first outdoor services and eventual return to indoor worship. The year ended with participation in Operation Christmas Child to share the gospel worldwide.



The Kid City Building was opened and dedicated in the Spring of 2023. This building is dedicated to training the next generation with the truth of God's Word.



**SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP
CONFERENCE**

GOD IS ABLE

September 27-30



POWERFUL EVENING SERVICES

The evening services are the highlight of Spiritual Leadership Conference. The preaching from God's Word is challenging, faith-building, and renewing.

Your heart will be stirred through the uplifting music of the choir, orchestra, and congregational singing. Your spirit will be encouraged through powerful presentations and testimonies. You will also be challenged through recognitions of impactful, faithful Christian leaders.

PRACTICAL WORKSHOP SESSIONS

At the Spiritual Leadership Conference, our daytime workshop sessions are designed to train and equip ministry leaders through targeted breakout workshops and discussion panels. These sessions offer practical tools and biblical insight for pastors, youth leaders, children's ministry workers, administrators, and more. Attendees participate in multiple tracks, sharpen their leadership skills, and connect with like-minded servants for mutual encouragement and growth.

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SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE LATIN AMERICA

In November 2025, Pastor Paul Chappell led a team of pastors and missionaries to El Salvador for Spiritual Leadership Conference Latin America. This regional conference was coordinated in partnership with several West Coast Baptist College graduates serving throughout Central and South America, including Adam Fridenstine, Luis Montaña, Jason Tate, and Ricardo Portillo.

A few days prior to the conference, Jamie Smithey, director of the WCBC Missions Department, led a team of WCBC students to minister in El Salvador and to assist with preparation for the conference. These students ministered in six different churches, led a children’s outreach and teen rally, and went soulwinning throughout local neighborhoods. Several preached in Spanish for the first time, and many shared testimonies of salvation and God’s call upon their lives. A special highlight for many students was singing and sharing their testimonies live on radio and television,

reaching hundreds of thousands of listeners. Through these opportunities, they saw many souls trust Christ as Savior.

The conference opened Tuesday evening with uplifting music—including a combined choir from five churches—and powerful preaching. Throughout Wednesday and Thursday, missionaries and national pastors gathered for full days of ministry workshops focused on soulwinning, discipleship, preaching, teaching, and ministry administration.

More than one thousand Christian workers from fifteen countries attended this conference, including over four hundred delegates who traveled twelve hours each way by bus from Honduras. The Lord blessed with hundreds of spiritual decisions for surrender and renewed dedication. Please pray that the gospel will advance across Latin America as these leaders return to their fields strengthened and encouraged in the Lord.



LANCASTER BAPTIST CHURCH HOSTS TOWN HALL EVENT

Lancaster Baptist Church recently hosted a community Town Hall with Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan Hochman. He spoke candidly about public safety challenges in the county—including the fentanyl epidemic, retail theft, and the need to hold offenders accountable—and took questions from those in attendance.

The evening provided helpful insight for local families and ministry leaders. Pastor Chappell also emphasized the importance of praying for and encouraging elected officials as they work to uphold justice and protect our communities.



Pastor Paul Chappell on the corner of Lancaster Blvd and 40th St. E in 1990

CHURCH EXPANDS CAMPUS WITH ADDITIONAL FIVE ACRES

Thirty-eight years ago, Lancaster Baptist Church purchased its first twenty acres on an empty desert corner. Since then, through God’s grace and the faithful giving of His people, a thriving multi-million-dollar campus has grown on that once-barren land. Over the years, the church has expanded that original parcel into more than one hundred acres—securing three corners surrounding

the main entrance. Recently, God enabled our church to purchase an additional five acres, completing all four corners of the Lancaster Boulevard and 40th Street East intersection. This new parcel will provide valuable long-term flexibility for future ministry expansion as the Lord continues to open doors.

WORSHIP CENTER REMODEL UPDATE

Work continues steadily on Lancaster Baptist Church’s Worship Center remodel. This project represents a significant, multi-phase effort to renew the Worship Center where our church family gathers each week. In the months ahead, planned phases will include major auditorium updates, including new seating, improved lighting and acoustics, upgraded media infrastructure, and refreshed finishes, so that our worship space can continue to serve our church effectively for decades to come.

The first phase lays the groundwork by creating new, dedicated spaces for baptism and by renovating key support areas around the auditorium, including the construction of a new courtyard baptistry and the full remodel of the choir room into expanded changing areas.

After months of planning, it has been exciting to watch visible progress take shape.



Construction crews have been advancing the exterior and interior work, with each week bringing another step forward.

The new courtyard baptistry—expanding from 650 gallons to more than 3,000—will offer a warm, welcoming, and more functional environment for this important church ordinance. We are grateful for the steady progress and ask our friends to pray with us for God’s provision and for timely completion as we move forward with this significant step in restoring our Worship Center for future generations.



LANCASTER BAPTIST HIGH SCHOOL EAGLES WIN CIF CHAMPIONSHIP

Lancaster Baptist School’s football team capped an unforgettable 2025 season by winning the CIF 8-man championship. This year’s team demonstrated remarkable humility and grit as they faced significant adversity, growing stronger together both on and off the field. Their Christlike testimony was evident throughout the season, and several players made life-changing spiritual decisions, surrendering their lives to the Lord and expressing a desire to attend West

Coast Baptist College. The church family rejoiced to recognize the team and thank the godly coaches who invest faithfully in these young men.



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APRIL 15-17



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HOW CHRISTIANS AND CHURCHES CAN CREATE **BELONGING** FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

DR. DAVE DELANEY

One of my favorite sounds in our house is the laughter that fills our dinner table conversations. I'm not sure how dinner works in your home, but in ours, everyone has "their seat." This is not because we ever assigned seats but because, for one reason or another, that's where they decided they belonged.

"I sit next to Dad."

"I always sit by Mom."

It's funny how those little habits form, but that's part of what makes home feel like home. It's knowing there's a seat with your name on it, a place where you're wanted, and people who are glad you showed up.

That is what every child longs for. It is written into the human heart this desire to be known, loved, and kept. But for many children in foster care, belonging

has been broken. Foster care, by its very nature, disrupts a sense of belonging. It uproots a child's world, their school, their friends, their routines, and often the very people they trusted most.

Loving Christians can't erase that pain, but they can answer it. If the local church is meant to be God's family on earth, then the church ought to be the one place where belonging is restored. It should be where kids who have been moved, shifted, and overlooked can finally find a seat.

Here are a few ways Christians and churches can create belonging for children in foster care:

NOTICE A NEED

When Jesus saw the crowds, Matthew 9:36 says He was "moved

with compassion." Before He preached or healed, He took the time to notice people. He looked at people others overlooked. He saw their pain and responded with mercy.

That is where creating a place of belonging begins for us as well. Before we can help a child feel at home, we have to see them through the eyes of Christ—not as a project, a case, or a ministry opportunity, but as a person made in the image of God.

I learned early in ministry that small talk has a big impact. The moments that seem ordinary, such as taking the time to ask someone their name, remembering what they told you last week, or simply stopping to make eye contact, can open the door to trust. Those

small conversations say something bigger than words ever could: “You matter here.”

Jesus did not overlook people; He looked right at them. And when His people learn to do the same, churches will become places where displaced children feel they belong.

NURTURE THE FAMILY

Creating a place of belonging happens when a church comes alongside families. Strong families create stable homes, and stable homes provide a space for children to feel a sense of belonging. In other words, if you help a family, you inevitably help a child.

When a mom feels cared for, she has more emotional space to care for the child in her home. When a dad feels supported, he has more strength to show patience. When a church steps in to support parents, the whole household becomes a kinder and stronger place.

Every family needs encouragement, but families who open their homes through foster care need it in a special way. Their willingness to create belonging for children comes with unique challenges and emotional strain. Between caseworker visits,

for you.” These aren’t small gestures to emotionally-exhausted parents; they’re lifelines.

NAME THE TRUTH

Children in foster care often wrestle with questions no child should have to ask: Why didn’t they want me? What did I do wrong? Where do I belong? Those questions cut deep because they’re really about identity.

That’s where a church gets to step in and speak a different message. We remind them they are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14).

That God knows their name and calls them His own (Isaiah 43:1).

“**Simple words of biblical truth and loving encouragement can rewrite what trauma has tried to engrave.**”

That their story doesn’t end in loss, because Christ is a Redeemer who makes broken things new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Every servant in the church—every Sunday school teacher, nursery worker,

youth leader, greeter, or friend—has the opportunity to speak life into a child who may have never heard it before. Simple words of biblical truth and loving encouragement

can rewrite what trauma has tried to engrave.

NORMALIZE THE PRACTICE

Look for ways to make foster care and adoption a regular, visible part of church life. Does your church host baby

showers for expectant moms? Most do, and that’s wonderful. But what if we also celebrated foster placements and adoption days with the same kind of excitement?

At our church, we’ve hosted baby showers for new foster moms and hosted adoption parties for families and children. Why? Because we want foster care and adoption to be part of the culture we talk about, pray about, and celebrate. When the church honors those moments publicly, it sends a clear message: this matters to God, and it matters to us.

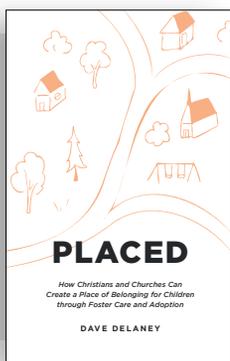
But creating a place of belonging is not just about celebrating; it is also about equipping. Equip volunteers to understand foster needs and respond with grace. Teach nursery and Sunday school volunteers what to say and what not to say when it comes to a child’s story, appearance, or background. Words meant as curiosity can sometimes reopen wounds. Sensitivity and training help make the church a safe place to grow and heal.

Every child needs a seat not just at the table for dinner, but at the table of God’s people. When Christians open their homes through foster care, motivated by the love of Christ, they reflect the heart of the gospel—an invitation to belong, to be welcomed, loved, and made part of a family (Ephesians 1:5). And when the church comes alongside those families with prayer, encouragement, and support, that gospel picture becomes even clearer. Something sacred happens: kids begin to see God’s heart in real time. They find a seat. They find safety. And maybe, for the first time, they find home.



DR. DAVE DELANEY

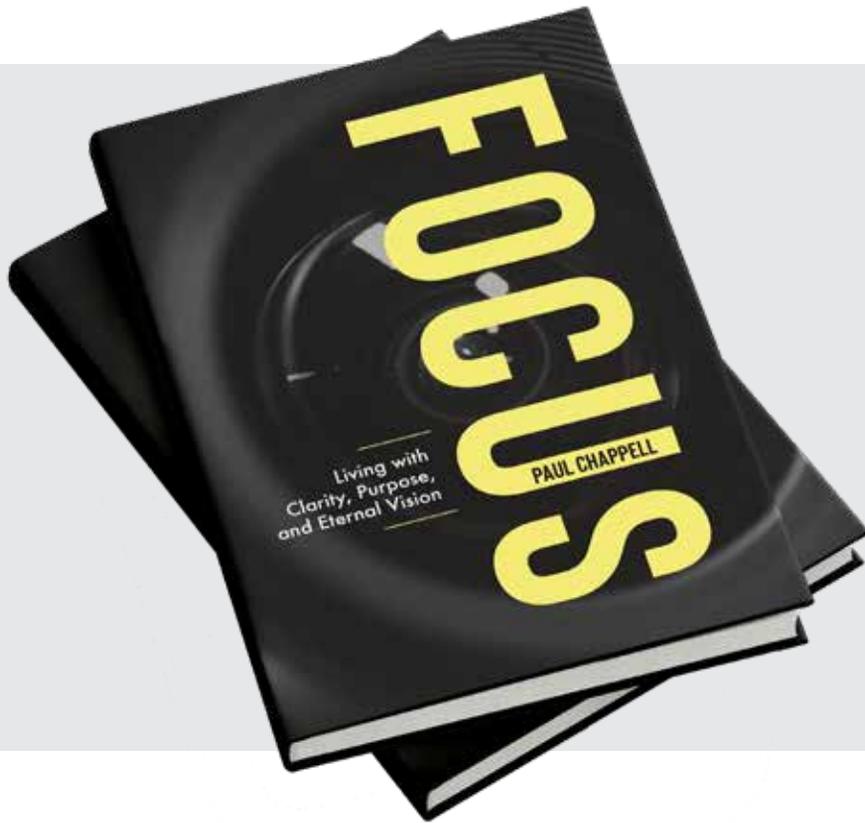
is the Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church in Long Beach, California, and is an adjunct instructor for West Coast Baptist College.



Discover a biblical, personal, and practical vision for responding to vulnerable children in modern society with God’s love and care. These pages are a call to share more than just temporary housing; they are a call to share the love and belonging that flow from the heart of Christ.

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therapy appointments, and emotional exhaustion, many foster parents live in a constant state of fatigue. That’s where a church can make all the difference. Schedule a foster family day off, have a meal dropped off on a Tuesday night, offer to babysit so parents can rest, or send a text that says, “We’re praying



FOCUS

Living with Clarity, Purpose, and Eternal Vision

In these pages, Dr. Paul Chappell explores through the lens of Scripture what blurs our spiritual focus, how to regain clarity, and how to live each day with joy, endurance, and purpose. Each chapter includes biblical truth, practical insights, and inspiring snapshots of focused Christians whose lives made an eternal difference.

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ONLY JESUS

The Savior Who Forgives, Rescues, and Gives Eternal Life

Only Jesus offers a fresh look at the person who claimed to be God, died for sinners, and rose again to offer eternal life. Through stories of three people who met Jesus face-to-face—a religious man, a dying thief, and a grieving woman—you'll discover who Jesus is, why He came, and what He offers you today.

This small book is a great tool for soulwinning and makes a wonderful gift for unsaved family and friends, as well as for first-time guests to church.

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A CHANGED MIND

Winning the Spiritual Battle for Your Thoughts

In *A Changed Mind*, Dr. Paul Chappell draws from Scripture and decades of pastoral insight to help you recognize the battle in your mind, root out destructive thought patterns, and replace them with truth. Whether you're wrestling with anxiety, temptation, or discouragement, you'll find practical help and lasting hope in God's Word.

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God Is Able to Renew

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF ELIJAH

TERRIE CHAPPELL

Years ago, a friend taught me how to coupon shop, and I was hooked! At the time, with careful clipping and strategizing, I could get nearly four hundred dollars' worth of groceries for about twenty. The catch was that I had to buy three Sunday newspapers each week to gather the coupons.

So there I was early one Sunday morning at a local grocery store to pick up my papers. I paid and had just stepped out the door to run to my car. (Of course I was in a hurry since it was early Sunday morning.)

It was just then that I saw a lady from church. I turned to wave, but when I turned back, I lost my balance. I reached for the sidewalk newspaper stand to steady myself, but it was lighter than I expected, and now it was falling with me. The whole time, I was doing what could only be described as a Tarzan yell.

Finally, I gave up and landed flat

on my face. My purse flew open, and its contents scattered across the sidewalk. For a moment, I couldn't (or maybe didn't want to) move. I felt like that lady in the commercial who says, "I've fallen, and I can't get up!"

Then, a sweet ninety-year-old man came hobbling over, helping me gather everything from my purse. He bent down, smiled kindly, and said, "Honey, it happens to the best of us."

Sometimes life knocks us down like that—not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually. We're doing our best to keep up with everything—serving, working, caring for others—and then, suddenly, we find ourselves face down in discouragement, wondering how we got there.

The good news is that God is able to lift us up. He renews.

You remember the story of Elijah

in 1 Kings 19. After his incredible victory on Mount Carmel, where he called down fire from heaven, Elijah should have been rejoicing. But when Queen Jezebel threatened to kill him, fear took over. He ran for his life, collapsed under a juniper tree, and prayed, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life."

Even God's strongest servants can get to a place of complete exhaustion. But the wonderful truth is that our weakness never takes God by surprise. He doesn't scold us for being human; He renews us. And from Elijah's story, we learn how that renewal takes place.

GOD GIVES REST

When Elijah collapsed under that juniper tree, God didn't say, "Get up and stop feeling sorry for yourself." He sent an angel with

food and let him sleep. Then He did it again.

Before God addressed Elijah's fear, He tended to his fatigue. Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is take a nap. That truth hits close to home for a lot of us. We push ourselves to the limit—serving in ministry, raising kids, working long hours—and then wonder why we're weary.

God built rest into the rhythm of creation. He knows our limitations, even when we ignore them. When you're weary, don't feel guilty for slowing down. Rest isn't failure; it can be faith. It's a quiet way of saying, "God, I'm not the one holding everything together. You are."

As Elijah slept and ate, his strength returned. It wasn't instant. God often restores us layer by layer, until the burden that once felt unbearable begins to lift.

GOD SPEAKS IN THE QUIET

After Elijah regained his strength, he traveled to Mount Horeb. There, God met him in one of the most remarkable moments of Scripture. First came a great wind that tore through the mountains—but the Lord was not in the wind. Then came an earthquake—but the Lord was not in the earthquake. Then came a fire—but the Lord was not in the fire. Finally, came a still, small voice.

That's when Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle and stepped out to listen.

God's greatest work in our hearts doesn't usually happen in the dramatic moments but in the quiet ones. We often look for God in the fire—the big moments, the emotional highs, the unmistakable signs. But renewal comes when we quiet our hearts enough to hear His still, small voice. This is why God admonishes us, "Be

still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

It's easy to let noise fill every moment of our day. The news, the phone, the chatter—it all leaves little room for quiet. But when you deliberately make time to be still before God, you discover that His Word and His presence are enough.

When your heart feels overwhelmed, open your Bible, pour out your heart in prayer, and let His Spirit whisper truth back into your soul.

GOD REMINDS US WE'RE NOT ALONE

Elijah's next words reveal the depth of his despair: "I, even I only, am left." He felt isolated and useless. Discouragement often does that. It magnifies our loneliness.

But God gently corrected him. He reminded Elijah that there were still seven thousand people who had not bowed to Baal. Elijah wasn't as alone as he thought.

I love how tenderly God handled Elijah's discouragement. He didn't lecture him; He lifted him. And He turned Elijah's attention to other godly people.

Over and over, I've seen how loneliness can magnify discouragement. Sometimes we convince ourselves that no one understands or cares. But God has placed us in His family for a reason. We need the fellowship of other believers to remind us of truth and to help carry our burdens.

The same passage that instructs us to not forsake "the assembling of ourselves together" describes the kinds of relationships in which we should be engaged: "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together . . . but exhorting one another . . ." (Hebrews 10:24–25).

If you're walking through a hard

season, don't isolate yourself. Call a friend. Attend your small group. Ask for prayer. And if you know someone who's struggling, reach out. Send a text. Drop off a meal. Let them know they're not forgotten. God renews us through relationships that encourage and strengthen our faith.

GOD STILL HAS A PLAN

Once Elijah's heart was quiet and his perspective restored, God gave him a new assignment. "Go, return on thy way," He said, and then gave specific instructions for what came next. In other words, "Elijah, you're not done yet."

That's what renewal does—it gets us back up and moving in God's purpose. When He restores your strength, it's not just so you can feel better; it's so you can move forward again in His will.

Maybe you've been under your own juniper tree, whispering like Elijah, "It's enough, Lord." When the weight feels too heavy and the strength feels gone, remember: that's where God's renewing power shines the brightest. He doesn't leave His children lying in the dust of defeat. He meets us there with rest for our bodies, truth for our hearts, and purpose for our days.

God is still able. He will renew your strength, revive your spirit, and remind you that He is not finished with you yet.

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).



TERRIE CHAPPELL leads the Ladies Ministry of Lancaster Baptist Church and teaches the fourth grade girls Sunday school class.



GOD IS ABLE TO DELIVER FROM ADDICTION

DR. GEORGE CRABB

Recently, I met an assistant pastor—we'll call him Mark—through my roles as both a biblical counselor and a physician. His wife had brought him to my medical clinic seeking help for an addiction that had taken root in his life.

Several years earlier, a friend

the brain's prefrontal cortex.

Mark began taking one pill a day, convincing himself it was only for headaches. Over time, one became two, then four, then eight, then sixteen, and finally thirty pills a day. Deep down, he knew he was on a dangerous path. He tried to

quit many times but always failed. He was living the experience the psalmist described, "They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken

man, and are at their wits' end" (Psalm 107:27). The addiction was destroying his life, his marriage, and his ministry. At his lowest point, his wife intervened and brought him to my office.

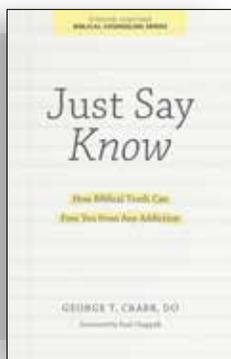
After evaluating Mark's condition, we began a plan to end his dependence on narcotics and to help him find freedom in Jesus

Christ. One of the first verses we looked at together was Jesus' promise in John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Following two difficult weeks of withdrawal, Mark and I began meeting weekly for counseling and discipleship. Our goal was to rebuild his spiritual foundation around twelve core biblical truths—truths he had known for years as a pastor but had not been applying personally. Week by week, we opened Scripture together, discussed how each principle related to his struggle, and prayed for the Holy Spirit's help to live it out in daily obedience.

As Mark learned to apply God's Word to his specific battle, the truths he had once only preached became deeply personal. Over time, he discovered genuine liberty and renewed fellowship with his Heavenly Father.

In our sessions, we focused on twelve core biblical truths—principles that not only anchored Mark's recovery but can bring



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had given Mark a hydrocodone tablet—a narcotic pain pill known by brand names such as Vicodin, Norco, or Lortab—to relieve a headache. The medication eased his pain, but it also produced an unfamiliar sense of well-being. That feeling, called euphoria, results from the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter in

lasting change to anyone who applies them. (These twelve statements are the core truths used by the Bridge to Recovery Program, recovery-bridge.com/core-truths.)

1. My recovery depends on my relationship with God. “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).

2. I will never make progress until I become honest about my struggle. “For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me” (Psalm 51:3).

3. Victory begins with surrender. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1–2).

4. In Jesus, I can have freedom and forgiveness. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7).

5. Meditating on God’s Word will help me find victory and freedom. “But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psalm 1:2).

6. Fixing the root will change the fruit; genuine change comes from the inside out. “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war

after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 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 10:3–5).

7. The priorities in my life dictate the progress of my life. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

8. Life is not made by my desires but by my decisions. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

9. My past does not need to determine my future. “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13–14).

10. True success is not achieved by keeping rules, but by maintaining a right relationship with God and others. “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments

hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37–40).

11. My choices affect me and also those around me. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

12. My friends will affect my future. “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful” (Psalm 1:1).

Addiction often feels like a hopeless pit to those who are trapped inside. But the God who is able to save us from Hell is also able to deliver us from addiction.

Today, Mark is walking in freedom. His marriage has been restored, and he is faithfully serving the Lord once again. In one of our final counseling sessions, he shared two verses about God’s power to deliver that had become especially precious to him: “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8). “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ephesians 3:20).

There is hope and there is help, for our God is able.



DR. GEORGE CRABB is a board-certified Internal Medicine physician who specializes in Addiction Medicine. He also serves as a biblical counseling instructor at West Coast Baptist College.



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An aerial photograph of a powerful waterfall cascading down a steep, moss-covered cliff. The water is white and turbulent as it falls, creating a misty spray at the base. The surrounding landscape is lush green with dense vegetation. The text "GOD IS ABLE" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters on the left side of the image.

**GOD IS
ABLE**



Pastor Paul Chappell with his wife, Terrie, and their children: Danielle, Larry, and Kristine in 1986

DR. PAUL CHAPPELL

When Terrie and I first drove through the Antelope Valley in early 1986, we were on vacation. A friend asked if I would preach a Sunday evening service while our family passed through, and I gladly agreed. After the service, he asked us to step outside for a moment while the church conducted a brief business meeting. When he joined us a few minutes later, he told me that he had resigned and the congregation had just voted for me to be their pastor.

I was twenty-four. Twelve people had cast the vote. And I hadn't even known I was candidating.

Initially, Terrie and I said we couldn't come. We were happily serving on a church staff in Northern California. But God changed our hearts, and before we had even left town, He gave us a burden for this desert community and the small church who had asked for a shepherd.

In those early days, Terrie and I poured our hearts, energy, and meager savings into a struggling flock. But it was God who did the miraculous. We watched as He brought people to Himself, restored families, and transformed lives by His grace.

Looking back now, I can only marvel. The same God who called us then has proven Himself faithful at every turn. He has done far more than we ever dreamed.

There is only one explanation for what God has done here: God is able. He is able to take twelve people and a failing property and build a thriving church. He is able to bring fruit from desert places and strength from

weakness. He is able to take small offerings, humble service, and persistent prayer and make them abound to His glory.

Through every need and every new beginning, God has proved what His Word declares: “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8).

God is able to work in your life too. He is able to renew what has grown weary, to enlarge what is limited, to strengthen what is fragile, to multiply what is small, and to sustain what we entrust to Him. The work of God has never depended on the ability of man; it has always depended on the sufficiency of His grace.

GOD IS ABLE TO RENEW YOUR SPIRIT

Every Christian who has served the Lord for any length of time knows what it feels like to grow weary in well-doing. Fatigue settles in quietly—spiritual fatigue, emotional fatigue, sometimes even physical fatigue. The heart that once burned bright for God can cool under the winds of opposition or the weight of routine.

But God specializes in renewal. The same power that raised Christ from the grave is able to breathe new strength into tired servants. Paul prayed for the Ephesian believers to know “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead” (Ephesians 1:19–20).

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “God is able to make all grace abound toward you.” That word abound means “to overflow.” His grace doesn’t trickle; it pours. When our strength is spent, His supply is full.

For an example of God’s ability to renew your spirit, consider the prophet Daniel. Daniel’s life in Babylon was marked by loss, hardship, and personal attacks. Yet Scripture says he had “an excellent spirit” (Daniel 5:12). His circumstances didn’t define his attitude; his God did.

The same renewing grace that sustained Daniel works today. God is able to renew your spirit with faith when you’re surrounded by fear, with humility when pride creeps in, and with joy when duty begins to feel heavy.

History is full of examples of believers whose renewed spirits changed everything around them. One of the early Anabaptist pastors, Michael Sattler, knew his ministry would likely end in martyrdom. When arrested for his faith, he prayed for his persecutors



Monday evening service of Spiritual Leadership Conference 2025

and reminded his congregation that God’s grace would be enough, even in death. As the flames rose, he lifted two fingers—the sign he had promised his church to show that God’s grace was sustaining him. What courage. What grace. What renewal.

That same renewing grace is available to every believer who feels pressed, forgotten, or discouraged. You may not face what Sattler faced, but you may face your own fires of disappointment or fatigue. God has not changed. His mercies “are new every morning” (Lamentations 3:23). His Spirit still whispers hope where the world speaks despair.

When God’s grace renews your spirit, Christ will be magnified in and through your life.

GOD IS ABLE TO ENLARGE YOUR VISION

When God renews your spirit, He doesn’t do it merely to comfort you; He does it to expand your faith. Renewal always precedes vision. A refreshed heart begins to see possibilities that a weary heart could never imagine.

Biblical vision is not human ambition; it is spiritual sight. It’s the ability to see what God can do when His grace goes to work in impossible places. Proverbs 29:18 tells us, “Where there is no vision, the

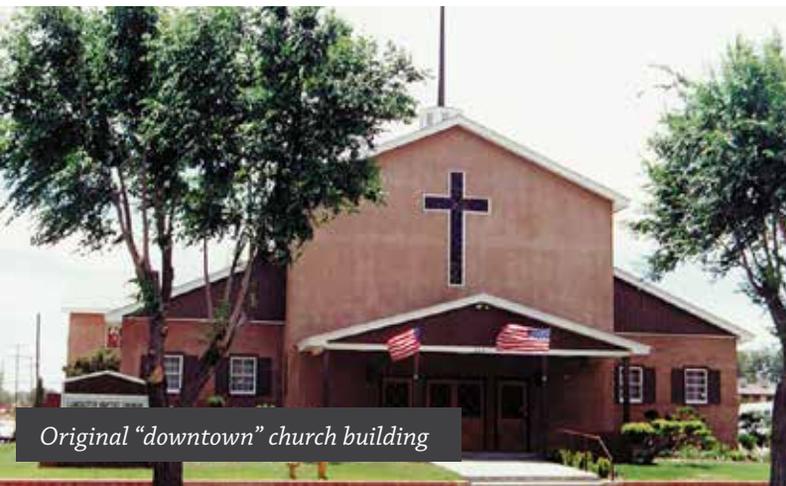


our church family a vision for our fortieth year of ministry. That vision includes audacious goals related to outreach, discipleship, missions, and more. Yet each of these goals is rooted in Christ's Great Commission and fueled by His promises and power.

Indeed, God delights in giving His servants a fresh view of His power. Sometimes vision begins with a burden, a prayer, or a dream that seems far beyond reach. David looked across the valley and saw a giant. While others saw a fearful threat, David saw an opportunity for God's glory. Nehemiah looked at the crumbled walls of Jerusalem and saw what could be rebuilt. Every great work of God begins with someone who dares to believe that God is able.

Vision, however, does not come without challenge. The moment you begin to see what God could do, the critics begin to speak. Eliab mocked David's motives. Sanballat and Tobiah ridiculed Nehemiah's efforts. Yet those who fix their eyes on God's promises instead of man's opposition find the courage to keep trusting that God is able.

Every generation needs fresh faith. Every local church needs renewed vision. Every Christian needs to look beyond what is and believe again in what God could do. We must have faith to believe, make time to pray, exercise courage to do, and anchor our hope in God to endure.



Original "downtown" church building

GOD IS ABLE TO STRENGTHEN YOUR HANDS

When God enlarges your vision, He also equips your hands. His calling never comes without His enabling. Yes, every new opportunity brings its own set of challenges, but every challenge becomes an invitation to experience God's strength in fresh ways.

In Scripture, we see this pattern often. When Nehemiah saw the broken walls of Jerusalem, he didn't stop at vision; he picked up a trowel and invited others to join him. The people responded, "Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work" (Nehemiah 2:18). Their renewed vision gave way to renewed effort, and their effort was sustained by grace.

Serving God is not for the faint of heart. It takes endurance to build, courage to adjust, and faith to keep rowing together when the winds of adversity blow.

Forty years ago, on my first Sunday night as pastor of Lancaster Baptist Church, I stood before fewer than twenty people and preached a message titled "Striving Together" from Philippians 1:27: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent,

people perish." The opposite is also true: where there is vision—rooted in God's Word and led by His Spirit—people flourish.

Spiritual vision is viewing my life and ministry through the lens of God's Word. It comes from reading in His Word what He has commanded us to do, seeing in His Word what He is able to do, and believing by faith what He desires to do through me. Thus, the implementation of vision is primarily an act of obedience to the Word of God.

For instance, as a pastor, I have shared with

I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

As a young pastor, I longed for a church that would strive together to reach our community for Christ—to see people saved, added to the church, and growing as spiritual Christians who would love and labor alongside one another. At the time, I could never have imagined the incredible ways God would work through such a church.

The Greek word translated “striving together” comes from the athletic term *synathleō*. It refers to rowing or contending side by side toward a shared goal.

There’s something powerful about believers pulling in rhythm. When one side rows ahead in pride or lags behind in discouragement, the whole boat veers off course. But when every heart beats to the rhythm of grace—when we serve humbly, give faithfully, and pray fervently—God strengthens the entire team.

Sometimes His strengthening grace takes the form of growth. He gives grace to grow spiritually when you feel stagnant, to grow relationally when unity is strained, and to grow in stewardship when faith is tested.

Other times His grace helps you adjust. When, like the early church in Acts 6, we find ourselves at

capacity, we need to adjust our methods without compromising principle. You may be in a season that requires new rhythms, new partnerships, or new perseverance. Don’t retreat from the work. When your hands tremble, His hands hold you. When your strength fades, His grace abounds.

As we labor together in God’s vineyard, the goal is not comfort but faithfulness. We are not here to maintain; we are here to build. God is able to strengthen your hands to do what He has called you to do.

GOD IS ABLE TO MULTIPLY HIS GRACE

The grace of God is never stagnant. It doesn’t stop with one generation, one ministry, or one life. When God strengthens your hands, it’s not only so you can build; it’s so you can invest in others. The same grace that renews and sustains us is meant to multiply through us.

Paul wrote to Timothy, “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 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 2:1–2). That’s the divine pattern of multiplication: grace



received becomes grace extended.

Every Christian is both a recipient and a steward of grace. We're not meant to hoard it; we're meant to pass it on.

In ministry, this happens when we intentionally invest in people. Training others is not just about transferring knowledge; it's about transferring a heart. It's teaching truth and modeling faith. It's helping others see the sufficiency of Christ in both victory and hardship.

Sometimes that work feels slow. But there is no success without succession. The healthiest ministries are not those that depend on one person's strength but those that rest on God's grace multiplied through many hands and hearts.

If God has placed someone in your life to mentor, encourage, or equip, remember that you are part of His multiplying work. You're investing in what will outlast you.

GOD IS ABLE TO SUSTAIN YOUR FAITH

The longer you serve the Lord, the more you realize that strength for the journey doesn't come from within; it comes from above. The same God who renews, enlarges, strengthens, and multiplies His grace also sustains His people when the winds of adversity blow hardest.

Paul urged the Thessalonian believers, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). In every generation, the call remains the same: stand fast in truth and steadfast in grace.

To stand for truth in an unstable world takes courage, but to do it with grace takes maturity. It's easy to grow sharp in conviction but cold in spirit. Yet the grace that strengthens our stand also softens our hearts.

Standing in truth has always required grace. The balance of conviction and compassion marks true spiritual stability. Jude 3 calls us to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," and Romans 14 reminds us to walk in love toward one another. We must hold our doctrine tightly while relating to our co-laborers in the gospel graciously.

True faith doesn't waver with every cultural trend or theological debate. It endures because it rests on the unchanging character of God. He alone is faithful through every season of ministry, every moment of uncertainty, and every transition still to come.

Maybe you're walking through a trial that has tested your endurance. Maybe you're facing a future that feels uncertain. Remember, "Faithful is he that calleth

you, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24). Faith doesn't survive because we hold tightly to God—it survives because He holds tightly to us.

GOD IS STILL ABLE

Forty years ago, a handful of believers gathered in a desert town with little more than faith in their hearts and God's Word in their hands. They didn't see what was coming—the lives that would be changed, the families that would be restored, the students who would be trained, the missionaries who would be sent. But God saw it all.

Every answered prayer, every changed life, every milestone of ministry is living proof of one truth: God is able.

He has been able to renew our spirits when we were weary, to enlarge our vision when our sight was small, to strengthen our hands when the work was great, to multiply His grace through generations of faithful people, and to sustain our faith through every trial.

The same grace that carried us yesterday is the grace that will carry us tomorrow.

And He is able still.

There are more souls to reach, more children to teach, more cities and nations to touch with the gospel. There are new battles to fight and new leaders to train. There is another generation rising who must see in us the same confidence we found in Him—that God is able.

If these years have taught me anything, it is that God's ability never diminishes with time. His grace is as boundless today as it was when we first believed.

Whatever season you're walking through—whether you're planting a new work, enduring a desert season, or simply trusting God to meet a personal need—His promise to you is the same: "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you."

Look back with gratitude. Look around with grace. Look ahead with faith.

Our sufficiency is not in our wisdom, planning, or strength. It is in our God. The God who began the work is able to finish it. The God who met every need in the past will meet every need in the future.

So keep believing. Keep building. Keep standing. Because whatever comes next, God is able.



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WHEN YOU ARE WEAK, GOD IS STRONG

DR. R. B. OUELLETTE



I have always been strong. In my sixties, I could lift the full stack of weights on most of the Nautilus machines at the YMCA. I could preach out of town on Monday and Tuesday, take the red-eye flight home, grab a shower, head straight to the office, go soulwinning that afternoon, preach the Wednesday night service, and still not go to bed until midnight. I had a strong voice and could fill a good-sized auditorium without a microphone.

But God was never impressed with my strength. And He certainly never needed it.

It's good to be strong. God commanded Joshua to be strong (Joshua 1:9). Moses exhorted Israel to be strong (Deuteronomy 31:6). David instructed Solomon to be strong (1 Chronicles 28:20). And the apostle Paul urged the believers at Ephesus to "be strong in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:10). But we sometimes focus on the words "Be strong" in Ephesians 6 and forget that the next three words are "in the Lord."

In June of 2022, I was diagnosed with laryngeal cancer and prescribed seven weeks of daily radiation and weekly chemotherapy. For the first time in my life, I became weak.

After a period of remission, the cancer returned. In November of 2023, I underwent a complete laryngectomy. I became weaker still.

“
No matter how big your problem, how dire your emergency, how extreme your dilemma, God’s grace is greater.
 ”

It was a blessing. I experienced personally what I had long known biblically: “When I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10).

We have a tendency to rely on our strength. Paul had enjoyed great privileges. He saw the Lord Jesus on the Road to Damascus. He was an apostle. He was the leading theologian and most prolific church planter of his era. (That is quite a combination.) But those privileges could lead to pride. And so, God gave him a trial: “Lest I should be exalted above measure . . . there was given to me a thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7).

Paul did not initially embrace his trial. He did not welcome it. In fact, three times he asked the Lord to remove his trial. Some might be quick to judge him: Paul, you’re not a very good Christian. You should immediately accept whatever the Lord gives you. You should be like Jesus. (Incidentally, according to Matthew 26:36–46, Jesus prayed three times to avoid the crucifixion. Weakness is not sin.)

But God was not interested in removing the trial. He was teaching Paul a truth. Paul learned that God’s grace is sufficient. Grace is supernatural enablement—a divine influence on the heart and its reflection in the life. The Lord wanted Paul to know that His grace was sufficient. It is enough.

We don’t need to be healthy, but we do need God’s grace. We don’t need to be financially secure, but

we do need grace. We don’t need to be honored, to receive attention, or to be recognized, but we desperately need the grace of God.

And, praise God, His grace is both available and abundant. It will never run out. There will always be enough. No matter how big your problem, how dire your emergency, how extreme your dilemma, God’s grace is greater. And it is absolutely free.

Paul also learned a lesson about God’s glory: His strength is made perfect in our weakness. Our Lord doesn’t need strong people to help Him do His work; He is looking for those who recognize their weakness and give Him glory for using them.

As a result of this divine lesson, Paul decided to trust. He willingly chose to take pleasure in infirmities (bodily weakness), reproaches (insults), necessities (times of need), persecution and distress (affliction and calamity).

This passage teaches us three important truths:

1. All of us are weak; some of us just won’t admit it.

2. Weakness is not an excuse to avoid serving God; it is the very condition for His blessing.

Gideon saw himself as the least of the least (Judges 6:15). David was a shepherd boy (1 Samuel 16:11). Amos said he was not a prophet nor the son of a prophet (Amos 7:14). Yet all were mightily used of God.

3. God delights to empower the weak for His glory.

In April of 1989, our Christian school presented the musical *Patch the Pirate Goes to the Jungle*. The missionary-themed play featured an older missionary in poor health, ready to hand off the work to a

younger servant. It was a major production with detailed sets and costumes. The actors and crews practiced for months, put in untold hours, and spent themselves in preparation.

We dedicated it to the memory of Jessica Powell, the seven-year-old daughter of our music director and his wife, Joy. Jessica had dreamed of becoming a missionary but was killed in a car accident in December of 1988. Her picture was on the program, and we prayed God would use her story to inspire others to serve in her place.

The climactic line came from the old missionary encouraging the young man: “If God could use me, I know He can use you.” Our student actor delivered it perfectly with great emphasis in every rehearsal. But on performance night, he said, “If God can use you, I know He can use me.” I couldn’t believe it—he completely reversed the meaning!

Yet, when I gave the invitation at the close of the evening, a young man named Rodney Ruppell came forward. “Preacher, I think God wants me to be a missionary,” he said. Right behind him came a young lady, Becky Swain. “God wants me to be a missionary too.”

Rodney and Becky later married, and for nearly thirty years they have faithfully served in Cambodia. All three of their children are in the Lord’s work.

The misspoken line did not hinder God’s power. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. God’s strength is available for your weakness too.



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The Pastor's Toolbox

by R. B. Ouellette

LEADING WITH FAITH THROUGH FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Pastors often preach that God is able to meet our needs. But sometimes the greatest test of that belief comes when finances are tight.

When I was a young married man, I saved nothing. I tithed, gave an offering, and spent the rest. I often joked, “God pays better interest than the Second National Bank.” If we had a few extra dollars after paying bills, I’d take my wife Krisy out to eat. I was making car payments and carrying credit card debt equal to nearly a month’s salary.

Then one day, two verses from Proverbs changed my thinking—and my life:

“There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up” (Proverbs 21:20).

“A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just” (Proverbs 13:22).

Those verses taught me two simple but life-changing truths:

First, the reason I didn’t have any money was because I spent it all. That may not sound profound, but it was revolutionary to me. No one can save anything unless they spend less than they make. While God is able to meet our needs, He expects us to steward wisely what He provides.

Second, I realized I could be neither wise nor good if I left nothing behind for the next generation.

My father-in-law, a financially prudent man, gave me advice that changed the way I handled money. He



“
Wise stewardship doesn't limit God's provision; it positions us to see it.
”

told me to make double payments on my smallest bill until it was paid off, then apply that amount to the next smallest bill, and so on until I was debt free. (He taught me this over fifty years ago, long before I ever heard it called “the snowball method.”)

As I began following biblical principles and my father-in-law's counsel, I also started teaching our congregation what I was learning. I encouraged our members to avoid debt for items that don't appreciate in value. I wanted them to be financially strong for their own families, not just so our church could be debt free. Financially weak members seldom make a financially strong church.

When I counseled individuals who were struggling financially, I used a simple system that was almost always successful:

1. Gather the facts. We listed every bill, expense, and source of income.

2. Track every payment. I had them keep a notebook with one page per expense—like a checkbook ledger—with columns for date, deposit, withdrawal, and balance.

3. Divide and set aside. We divided monthly expenses by four and set that amount aside weekly.

4. Withdraw for payments. When a bill came due, they withdrew from that specific account.

5. Limit discretionary spending. Whatever was left after all “deposits” was their only spending money for the week.

6. Build a surplus. Since there are fifty-two weeks in a year, setting aside money weekly meant that four times a year they “overpaid” their expenses—creating a small cushion for emergencies.

7. Adjust if necessary. If income truly wasn't sufficient, we discussed a temporary consolidation loan or additional income sources.

In forty-four years of pastoring, I only had one family I couldn't help. When we went over their finances, I said, “You're giving too much.”

They smiled and said, “No, that's just what it comes to—our tithe, our missions, and our building fund offering.”

“Are you sure God wants you to give that much?” I asked.

“Yes,” they replied.

“Well then,” I said, “I can't help you—but you'll be all right.”

And they were. Not long after, they purchased a nicer home. Later, the husband started a business. Today they're financially stable and still generous to the Lord, who continues to bless them.

That family reminded me of something I've seen again and again: God is able—able to meet our needs, to give wisdom when finances are tight, and to bless those who honor Him with their resources. Wise stewardship doesn't limit God's provision; it positions us to see it.

10 STEPS

FOR
PREPARING
CHRIST-
CENTERED,
TEXT-DRIVEN
SERMONS

DR. PAUL CHAPPELL

After forty years of pastoral ministry, I remain convinced that the greatest need in any local church is biblical, Christ-exalting preaching. Programs matter, planning matters, and leadership matters; but nothing shapes a congregation more deeply than what happens when the Word of God is opened and Christ is proclaimed.

Paul's charge to Timothy makes this plain: "Preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2). He didn't instruct Timothy to offer opinions or cultural analysis. He instructed him to preach Scripture.

Biblical, expository preaching simply means allowing the message of the text to set the message of the sermon. The church does not thrive on the creativity of the pastor but on the clarity of the Scriptures. God blesses His Word—not our cleverness.

As Dr. John Goetsch wrote in his tremendous book, *Homiletics from the Heart*, “God may bless our homiletical outline, our illustrations and stories, but He does not promise to do so. He only promises to bless His Word.”

Biblical preaching begins by standing under the authority of Scripture and letting the passage itself determine both the substance and the structure of the sermon.

But biblical preaching does more than explain the text. It points us to Christ, because Scripture itself is Christ-centered. Jesus said of the Scriptures, “They are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). And on the road to Emmaus, “beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27).

When we faithfully preach the Bible, we inevitably preach Christ. “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord” (2 Corinthians 4:5).

As I have taught on preaching over the years, including to students at West Coast Baptist College, I have worked to summarize the process of developing sermons that are faithful to the text and focused on Christ. The steps below are not a formula but a roadmap. I pray they encourage and strengthen your ministry of the Word.

1. Prayerfully Select the Text

The most important aspect of any sermon is the text of Scripture. Beyond anything we say, God’s Word alone has power to change lives. So begin by prayerfully asking the Lord to direct you to the passage His flock needs.

A few times a year, I set aside time to seek the Lord about upcoming sermons. Typically, I preach a themed series on Sunday mornings and a verse-by-verse study on Sunday nights. Midweek

studies vary. Expository book studies make weekly text selection simple, while themed series allow me to plan several messages at once.

Planning never replaces sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. Even with a schedule in place, I remain open to the Lord leading me to adjust a text according to the needs of our church family.

Above all, treat the text with reverence. G. Campbell Morgan said he read his text at least fifty times before preaching it.

2. Schedule Sufficient Time for Study

Nothing meaningful in preaching happens accidentally. Study takes protected, prioritized time. Spurgeon wrote, “Your pulpit preparations are your first business.”

Give your best hours to your study. Dr. W. A. Criswell called his early hours “mornings to God.” Whether your strongest hours are early mornings, late evenings, or uninterrupted afternoons, devote them to hearing from the Lord through His Word.

Interruptions will come. Crises will arise. But a pastor who routinely prepares sermons at the last minute cheats his congregation of a well-studied message—and forfeits the clarity that comes through lingering in the Scriptures.

3. Study the Context and Historical Setting

A text cannot mean something today that it did not mean when it was first inspired. Before outlining or applying, understand the book, paragraph, genre, and historical moment surrounding the passage.

Helpful questions include these:

- Who is speaking, and to whom?
- What issues frame this passage?
- When was it written, and

who was the dominant governmental leader?

- What historical or cultural details matter?
- How does this text fit within the message of the book?

Good expository preaching begins by entering the world of the text.

4. Discern the Theme of the Passage

After understanding the context, determine the passage’s central message. This is not something we impose on the text, but something we discover in the text.

Look for these:

- Repeated words or ideas
- Commands, promises, contrasts, transitions
- Grammar and structure (subject, verb, modifiers)
- Tone: warning, prophetic, comforting, edifying

The clearer the central idea becomes, the clearer the sermon will be.

5. Develop Main Thoughts from the Passage

Every passage has a central idea, but most also contain several supporting truths. These natural divisions form the main points of your sermon. J. C. Ryle observed, “If you study the sermons of men who have been and are successful preachers, you will always find order, and often divisions, in their sermons.”

Once these divisions become clear, shape your outline around them. Alliteration or parallel phrasing can make a sermon more memorable, but they should never be forced onto a text.

A good outline is not decorative; it is functional. It helps the preacher and the listener follow the flow of God’s Word with clarity and conviction.

6. Show How the Passage Exalts Christ

All Scripture points to Christ—not by artificial insertion, but by divine design. Whether through prophecy, typology, doctrine, or application, the entire Bible presents Christ as the fulfillment of God’s redemptive plan and the center of the Christian life.

As mentioned earlier, expository preaching is Christ-exalting preaching because the Bible itself is Christ-centered revelation.

This means that to interpret a text accurately, you must consider how this passage points to Christ.

- **In an Old Testament narrative**, Christ may be seen in God’s covenant faithfulness, redemptive foreshadowing, or human need for a Savior.
- **In a Psalm**, Christ may appear in fulfilled prophecy, the expression of His attributes, or in how He leads His people through suffering.
- **In a doctrinal section of an epistle**, Christ is explicit—His work on the cross, His resurrection, His lordship, and His grace that empowers obedience.
- **In passages addressing Christian living**, Christ is our example, our power, and our motivation for holy living.

The goal is not to “force” Jesus into the sermon but to show how the truth of the text finds its ultimate meaning in Him. “. . . that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18).

7. Find the Application

Once the central idea is clear, ask:

- What truth is God impressing on His people?
- What response does this text call for—repentance, faith,

obedience, worship?

- How should this reshape our thinking, affections, or actions?

Biblical application is specific truth producing specific action. A clear sermon purpose answers this question: What should God’s people do in response to what God has said?

8. Add Helpful Illustrations

Illustrations let light into the sermon, helping listeners see truth clearly. Without them, even strong exposition can become dense and out of reach.

Purposeful illustrations—stories, testimonies, historical examples, personal experiences—give the mind space and the heart clarity. They don’t replace truth; they serve it.

Maintaining a simple filing system of illustrations can provide rich material when crafting a message. Their value lies not in entertainment but in how effectively they illuminate the text.

9. Develop an Introduction and Conclusion

A strong introduction arouses interest and directs attention toward the text. This opening “hook” might be a compelling historical story, a thought-provoking question, or a concise statement that highlights why the passage matters. Whatever form it takes, the introduction should prepare the listener to engage with Scripture.

The conclusion is equally vital. Many good sermons lose their force because of an unfocused ending. The conclusion brings the message back to its central idea and calls the listener to respond. You might briefly recap the main points or focus on one key application.

Preach toward a response. Call God’s people to action, faith, obedience, or worship.

10. Edit and Refine the Message

Finishing the conclusion isn’t the end. Careful review and editing bring the message to final clarity. Tighten transitions, eliminate rabbit trails, and ensure that every part of the sermon supports the central truth of the passage and points to Christ.

One of the goals in editing is to purge the message of self and ensure that it is centered on Christ. Galatians 6:14 guides my heart in this phase: “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .”

A Final Exhortation

Preaching is hard work, but it is holy work. God has entrusted us with the stewardship of His Word, and faithfulness demands diligence.

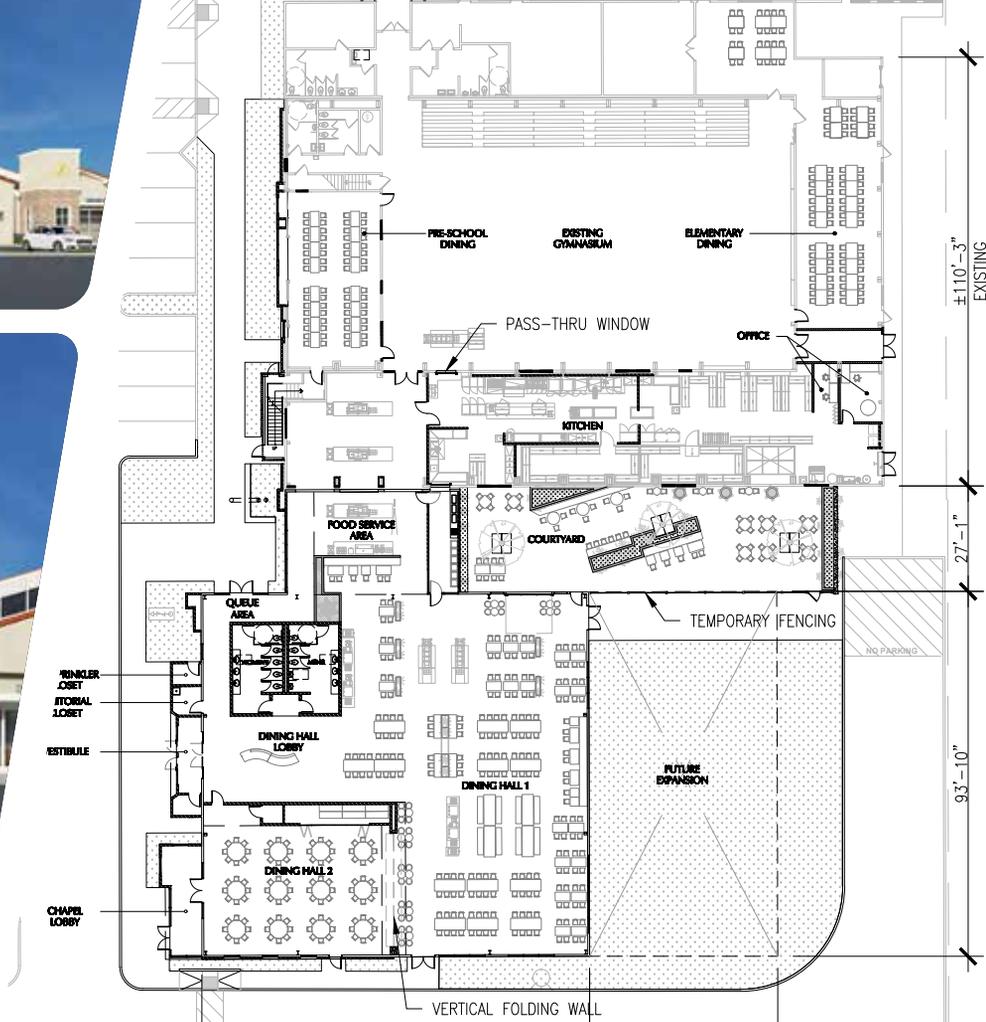
Scripture repeatedly urges ministers not only to preach but also to cultivate their calling: “Neglect not the gift that is in thee” (1 Timothy 4:14). “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them” (1 Timothy 4:15). In other words, develop the call God has given you. Strengthen it. Practice it. Grow in it.

When preaching is driven by the text and centered on Christ, the church is fed, hearts are changed, and Christ is exalted.



DR. PAUL CHAPPELL

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



FUTURE WEAVER COMMONS DINING FACILITY

Help WCBC serve your church and students in this generation



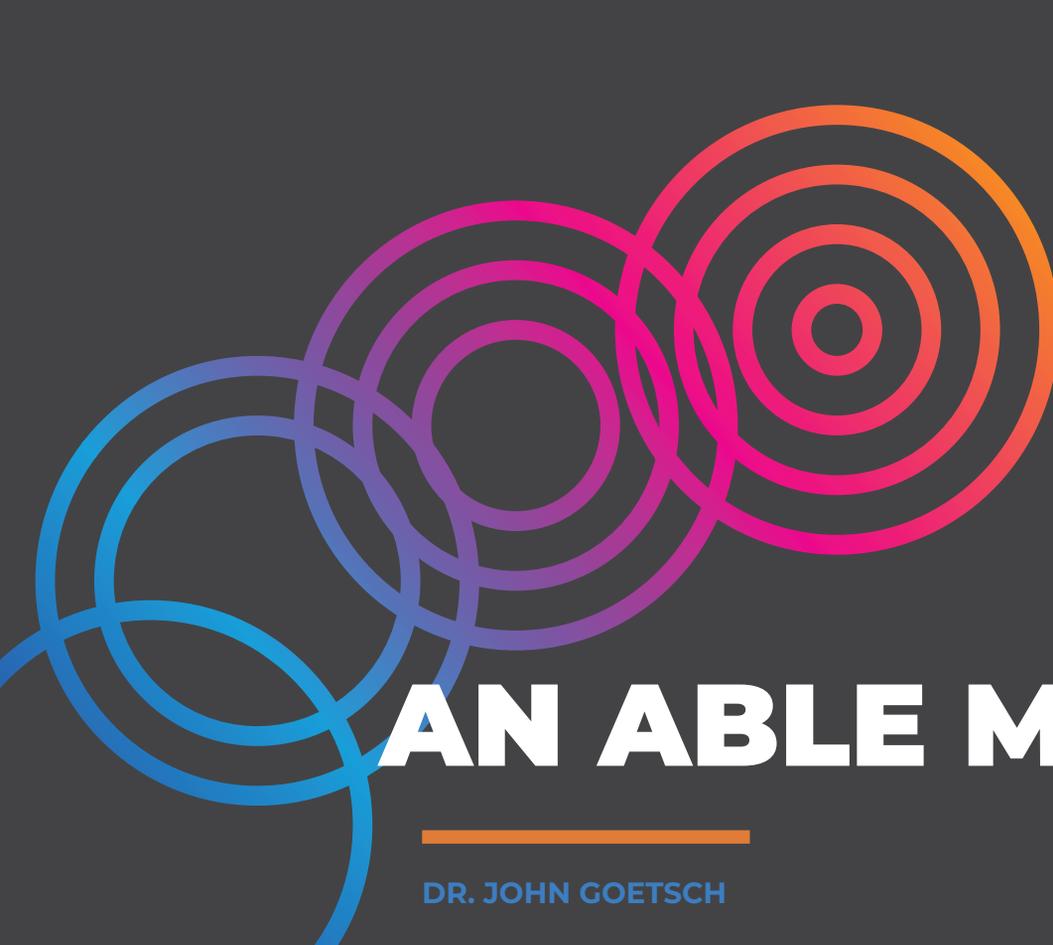
The dining hall has always been more than a place for meals; it's where relationships are built and mentoring takes place. Few embodied this more than Dr. Toby Weaver, who for nearly twenty-five years faithfully served as a teacher, administrator, and encourager to students and staff alike. A familiar sight through the years was Dr. Weaver sitting with students in the dining hall, encouraging them, sharing stories, and investing in their lives. His Christlike spirit and passion for souls

left an indelible mark on thousands, and it is because of his enduring influence that we have felt led to name this new facility the Weaver Commons in his honor.

On August 20, 2025, after a brief battle with an aggressive brain cancer, Dr. Weaver was called to be with the Lord. In the weeks since his homegoing, texts, emails, and letters from alumni serving around the world poured in, each sharing how he loved and encouraged them in college and in ministry. We believe the Weaver Commons will continue the legacy of fellowship and mentorship that Dr. Weaver exemplified.



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AN ABLE MINISTER

DR. JOHN GOETSCH

The Apostle Paul was not one to glory in himself. He never forgot where God found him and continually recognized that it was only by God's grace that he had any hope of being an effective servant of Christ.

Nowhere does Paul sum up these thoughts more succinctly than in 1 Corinthians 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Although Paul possessed some natural abilities of leadership, organization, and communication, he was quick to point out that any success was not a result of human ingenuity or talent but rather an enablement granted by God only. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament" (2 Corinthians 3:5-6).

The Apostle seems constrained to set the record straight as to the true source of his enablement. Perhaps there were those who thought he operated under the influence of Satan, for Jesus Himself was accused of such. No doubt others pointed to his

unusual discipline of life and tenacity through trials as the secret to his success. Maybe others attributed his effectiveness to his study and obedience to the Old Testament law as a devout Pharisee.

Paul, however, left no doubt as to the source of his usefulness in ministry as he pens his letter to the church at Corinth. While others needed to provide some validation for success, Paul points first to the **exhibit of people.**

"Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (2 Corinthians 3:1-3).

The Corinthian church was "Exhibit A" of the enablement of ministry. These people were surrounded by a wicked culture, and fleshly lusts had guided their lifestyle prior to conversion. No human energy or charisma could change the heart saturated with selfish ambition and sinful activity. Paul pointed out that it was God who had changed them: "But we

all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

While the change in these Corinthian believers was obvious, there were no doubt some still questioning the reason for this transformation. Surely the apostle had brainwashed these followers, causing them to blindly follow a man. Paul shoots down that argument once and for all:

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:1–5).

Paul knew he was weak, but he also knew how to lean on **exceptional power**.

In a small town in Minnesota, I was asked to come for a week to preach a revival meeting each night and conduct a Vacation Bible School in the mornings. The congregation was older, and on Sunday morning there were only four children in attendance. I asked the pastor if we could take the bus out early each morning and try to gather children for the Bible School. God began to work as those children came, trusted Christ, and then brought their friends. By Friday, we had seen fifty-two children trust Christ.

I rallied the kids to bring their parents on Friday evening for a special service in which we would sing our songs, say our memory

verses, and I would preach to their parents. I was shocked as I entered the tiny auditorium that had chairs for fifty packed with seventy-five children and seventy-five adults! When the children finished their songs and verses, I stood up to preach. Five minutes into the message, children began making their way to the restroom. It wasn’t long until there was a line from the bathroom to the auditorium doors. A drunken man had come in, and he began yelling at me as I preached. Many of the adults were Spanish-speaking people, and they began to say things to one another out loud in Spanish. It was utter chaos.

I raced through the message, hoping to simply survive the mess I had created. At the close, I simply said, “If you want to be saved tonight, raise your hand.” Five men raised their hands. I assumed they did not understand the question and told them to put their hands down. But after restating the question, the same five hands lifted. As we began to sing the invitation, not only did those five men immediately respond, but their wives and then many other couples came forward. As I looked across the altar where dozens were kneeling and trusting Christ, the Holy Spirit reminded me of John 6:63: “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” Like Paul and even Christ Himself, we must rely upon the Holy Spirit’s power.

Surely God needs gifted men to bring about revival today, does He not? Must we not have men of education, experience, and eloquence to reach the sophisticated age in which we minister?

Notice Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 3:12: “Seeing then

that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.” God empowers the preacher who has an **eloquence of plainness**.

Dr. Monroe Parker, who was a gifted and uniquely witty evangelist, was preaching on a Tuesday evening at a meeting where a large number of preachers had been invited to attend. Dr. Parker desired to be a blessing to these ministers and designed a very expositional and homiletically correct message for them. During the song service, the pastor whispered to the old evangelist that a large number of lost people were in attendance. Dr. Parker dismissed the thought, desiring to tickle the ears of his fellow preachers.

The final congregational hymn before the message was announced: “Christ Receiveth Sinful Men.” The words of the chorus stung the heart of Dr. Parker: “Make the message clear and plain; Christ receiveth sinful men.” As he approached the pulpit, he folded his notes and placed them in his suit pocket and opened his Bible to John 3:16 and preached the simple gospel. Many were wonderfully saved, and the preachers were more than encouraged. God’s power rests on the eloquence of plainness.

Is God able today? The answer is found in an **exhibit of people** who have been changed by the **exceptional power** of the Holy Spirit as able ministers preach with an **eloquence of plainness** the truth of God’s Word.



DR. JOHN GOETSCH serves as Executive Vice President of West Coast Baptist College where he also teaches classes in Homiletics and Evangelism.



God Is Able to Use You

HOW A YEAR OF BIBLE COLLEGE CAN STRENGTHEN YOUR FAITH

DR. NICK PIERVICENTI

When Jesus called His first disciples, He used just two simple words: “Follow Me.” Those words changed everything for Peter, James, John, and others who left behind their plans to follow the Savior who would change their lives.

Today, that call still echoes. And all over the world, young people who want their lives to count for God are hearing the invitation.

Think about it. Everyone follows someone—athletes, influencers, friends, trends, personal goals—but Jesus invites you to follow Him.

If you’re a high school student or young adult considering your future, one of the best choices you can make is to give God one focused year at Bible college to grow your faith. A year at Bible

college isn’t just about preparing for ministry; it’s about building your walk with God, strengthening your convictions, and discovering His direction for your life.

1. A YEAR OF BIBLE COLLEGE CAN DEEPEN YOUR WALK WITH GOD

Before Jesus ever sent His disciples out to preach or serve, He first called them to be with Him. Mark 3:14 says, “And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him.”

Every great step of faith begins by spending time with Jesus. And Bible college gives you the opportunity to do just that. For one year, your schedule, your friends, and your focus revolve around growing in your relationship with God.

Through daily classes, chapel messages, ministry opportunities, and quiet moments in God’s Word, you’ll learn what it means to walk with God personally—not just know about Him, but truly know Him.

Psalm 1 says that those who delight in God’s Word are “like a tree planted by the rivers of water.” When you give God a year to grow your roots deep in His Word, you’ll find strength and stability for every part of your future.

2. A YEAR OF BIBLE COLLEGE CAN STRENGTHEN YOUR CONVICTIONS

We live in a world of shifting opinions, loud voices, and constant pressure to blend in. If you want to stand strong for Christ, you need



solid convictions from God’s Word that you know, believe, and live by.

That’s what a year at Bible college helps build. You’ll study Scripture deeply, learn how to apply it personally, and grow confident in what you believe and why. The Bible says, “Study to shew thyself

“**To stand strong for Christ, you need solid convictions from God’s Word that you know, believe, and live by.**”

approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed” (2 Timothy 2:15).

In class discussions, chapel messages, and conversations with teachers and mentors, you’ll learn to think biblically about real-life issues. You’ll see how God’s truth speaks into every decision—from your relationships to your future career.

When your convictions are grounded in God’s Word, you don’t have to fear the world’s opinions. You can walk with confidence,

knowing that your life is built on unchanging truth.

3. A YEAR AT BIBLE COLLEGE CAN CLARIFY YOUR DIRECTION

When I was seventeen and got my driver’s license, I looked for any excuse to drive. If my mom needed milk, I volunteered. If my brother needed a ride, I was ready. But one day on a family trip, we drove straight into a downpour so heavy I could barely see the road. I slowed down and focused on the one thing I could see—the taillights of the car ahead of me. As long as I followed those lights, I stayed on the road.

Sometimes life feels like that. You’re not sure what’s ahead or what God wants for your future. That’s why it’s so important to fix your eyes on Jesus.

A year at Bible college helps clear the fog. It’s a time to seek God, grow in His Word, and let Him direct your next steps. Proverbs 3:6 promises, “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”

When you give God time and space to speak, He makes His direction clear—whether He leads you into full-time ministry or strengthens your faith for any path He calls you to take.

ANSWER THE CALL

God is still calling young people to follow Him. He doesn’t just call the most talented or confident; He calls those who are willing. If you’ll give God one year of focused time to grow in His Word, strengthen your convictions, and clarify your direction, He can use it to shape the rest of your life.

You don’t have to have everything figured out to take the next step. Just start by saying, “Lord, I’m willing to follow You.”

God is able to use your life, and one year of Bible college may be exactly what He uses to prepare you for all He has planned.



DR. NICK PIERVICENTI is the Director of Admissions and an instructor in the Bible and counseling departments of West Coast Baptist College.

SAVED TO THE UTTERMOST

JAMIE SMITHEY 1232

One of the most encouraging verses in all of Scripture is Hebrews 7:25: “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

This verse tells much about Jesus and His love for those who are often viewed as unlovable. It also tells us that He is powerful, that His salvation is complete, and that no matter who you are or where you have been, Christ can save and keep you forever.

Many missionaries have anchored their hope in reaching people in the uttermost parts of the world to this verse. Indeed, this verse gives the missionary confidence when he witnesses, comfort when he counsels, and assurance when he struggles. Let us take a look at what it means to be saved to the uttermost.

JESUS SAVES COMPLETELY

When the Bible says Christ saves “to the uttermost,” it means that He saves completely. He leaves nothing left to do, and He does not leave anything undone. His salvation is complete.

Imagine hiring a contractor to remodel your kitchen. You pay him, he tears down the cabinets, lays out some tools . . . and then disappears, never finishing the job.

Something like this happened to my family while serving in Santiago, Chile. We hired a man to build cabinets for our home, and we paid him up front to complete the job. However, he only did seventy-five percent of what we paid him to do. He left the job incomplete.

Thankfully, this is not how Jesus saves. He saves to the “uttermost,” which is to say He completely saves. He finishes the job. When we go to Him, He saves us all the way. Our past sins are forgiven, our present

sins are forgiven, and our future sins are forgiven. He seals us with His Holy Spirit until the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:13–14) and secures us a place in Heaven (2 Corinthians 5:1). His work is complete, not partial.

One day, while serving in Santiago, Chile, I went into a barber shop to get a haircut. My family had only been in the country for a few weeks and had just started language school. I entered the shop and asked if anyone spoke English. The owner greeted me and informed me that she spoke English. Her name was Anita. I was excited that Anita could speak English. Honestly, I was concerned about what kind of haircut I was going to get if I had to explain to someone in Spanish how to cut my hair.

As Anita cut my hair, she asked why I had moved to Chile. This question unlocked the door of opportunity to share the gospel with her. I told her that my family had moved to Santiago to tell people about Jesus and how they could have a personal relationship with Him. She began to weep. I thought to myself, “What have I done?” Anita went on to explain that she came from a home where one parent practiced Catholicism and the other attended a charismatic church. She shared how growing up she was confused and had a difficult time understanding which parent was correct. She further explained that because of this uncertainty she had just recently started a Bible study with a Mormon and a Jehovah’s Witness.

My heart ached for this lady. She said that what she was receiving in those Bible studies did not seem right and that she did not feel like she was getting the complete truth. I shared with Anita what the Bible says and invited her to

attend a service at our church. She came the very next Sunday with her daughters, and they all trusted Christ as their Savior.

Soon, her husband, Andy, trusted Christ and was also saved. The complete family was saved, their home was restored, and they brought more people to Christ than anyone else in the church. When Christ saved this family, He saved them to the uttermost!

“**Because Jesus is able to save to the uttermost, we must be willing to go to the uttermost.**”

JESUS SAVES ANYONE

“Uttermost” also means “to the farthest extent.” In other words, no one is beyond Christ’s reach.

Think of the Apostle Paul. Before he became a preacher, he was Saul, the persecutor of Christians. If you or I were picking candidates for salvation, Saul would have been at the bottom of the list. Yet God saved him and used him to write much of the New Testament.

Why? Because Christ saves to the uttermost. No matter how deep the pit, God’s grace is deeper still. That’s encouraging for us because sometimes we’ll meet people who seem so hard-hearted or so far gone. We must remember—Jesus is able to save anyone.

JESUS SAVES FOREVER

The verse also says Christ “ever liveth to make intercession” for us. That means not only did He save us, but He keeps us saved. The security of the believer is not dependent on the believer, but rather on the Savior.

Christ has promised to keep us.

We do not have to be concerned with losing our salvation if we do not do everything completely correctly because we have been saved completely and forever.

If you have flown on a plane, you have probably experienced turbulence. The bumps make you grip the armrest tighter. But what keeps the plane in the air? It’s not your grip. The engines, the design, and the pilot keep the plane flying.

In the same way, what keeps us saved is not our grip on Christ, but His grip on us. He is alive forever, praying for us, holding us fast. We are not hanging on for dear life because we know that He is holding us for all eternity.

JESUS SAVES

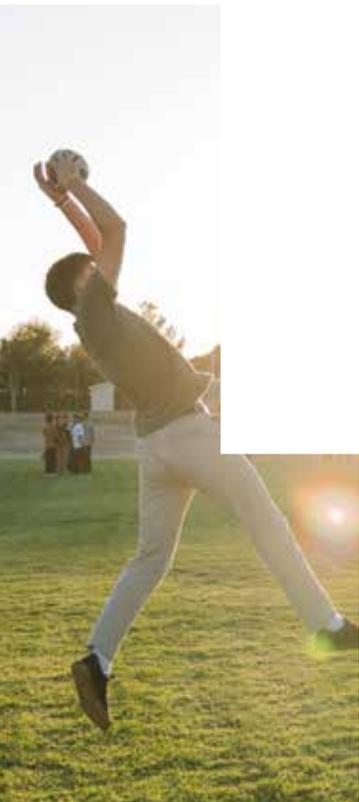
Hebrews 7:25 is a verse worth memorizing, quoting, and applying every single day. It reminds us that there is no one beyond the reach of Christ’s saving power and no sin beyond the reach of His grace. Because Jesus is able to save to the uttermost, we must be willing to go to the uttermost.

Whether you are a missionary on a foreign field, a church planter in the United States, or a Christian sharing Christ in your neighborhood, this verse gives confidence to witness, courage to keep going, and compassion to reach those who seem far from God. The One who saves—completely, anyone, and forever—is still saving today. And He has called us to tell others of His power to save.



JAMIE SMITHEY

served as a church planting missionary in Chile for eight years. He now teaches in the Missions Department of West Coast Baptist College.



EQUIPPING THE NEXT GENERATION TO CHANGE THE WORLD

DR. JIM SCHETTLER



I have never been more encouraged about young people than I am of this generation in youth groups today. As I preach in summer camps, teen retreats, Christian school chapels, and evangelistic youth events, I'm moved at the enormous potential this generation possesses to change the world.

It's always easy to look at young people and see their inadequacies. But the truth is, God can use this next generation in spite of their youth, inexperience, or lack of ability. They don't know everything, but neither did David, Daniel, or Josiah. Age has never limited God's power to work through a yielded heart.

But I believe God is going to use today's young people because of what this generation uniquely possesses—their faith, their humility, and their honesty. They believe God can do great things. They respond tenderly to His Word. They're searching for what's real and genuine, not another performance or program. Like Josiah, they have a heart that is sensitive to truth and ready to obey it.

That's why I believe God can do something special through this generation. The question for youth leaders is: How do we help them?

1. PROVIDE ENCOURAGEMENT

Young people need leaders who believe in them. When God called Gideon a “mighty man of valour” (Judges 6:12), Gideon certainly didn’t feel like one. But God saw what Gideon could become. That’s the kind of vision youth leaders must have.

Your encouragement gives teens confidence that God can use them. Speak faith into their lives. Remind them that the same God who used Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon can use them today. See something in them that they don’t yet see in themselves.

Faith-filled encouragement can turn insecurity into confidence and doubt into direction.

2. PROVIDE INSTRUCTION

Encouragement is vital, but it’s not enough. If we want this generation to change the world, we must equip them with God’s Word.

Paul told Timothy that Scripture is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). That phrase “instruction in righteousness” is key for youth ministry. Young people need spelled-out instruction on what it means to live a godly life in the many challenges of this culture. They don’t just need you to tell them what to do; they need you to show them, from Scripture, how to live it out.

True equipping means giving young people more than general truth; it means giving them specific truth for the specific battles they face.

We can’t just tell a teen, “Stop being depressed.” We must show

them from Scripture how to think biblically about hope and joy. We can’t simply say, “Stand for truth.” We must give them verses,

“**Faith-filled encouragement can turn insecurity into confidence and doubt into direction.**”

principles, and steps that show them how to do it.

For example, a question I’m often asked by teens is, “What do I say to friends who claim to be Christian but claim to be trans?” I usually begin by showing them Psalm 100:3: “It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.” I’ll tell them that they can tell their friend, “You’ll make thousands of choices in your life, but one choice you’ll never make is your gender. God has already determined that.”

Equipping means showing them what the tool is (the Word of God) and how to use it. It’s training them through discussion, role-play, and application so they know how to handle real-world questions and struggles with biblical confidence.

When teens leave your youth Bible study or weekly meeting, they should walk away holding something solid—specific truths that address the real issues they face and a clear plan of action for how to use those truths in daily life.

3. PROVIDE AN EXAMPLE

The most lasting lesson you’ll ever teach your youth group is the life you live before them.

Be an example in your home. Love your wife. Cherish your kids. Let your students see a joyful, godly marriage and a home filled

with grace and truth. When they watch you, they should think, “That’s the kind of family I want someday.”

Be an example in your attitude. Psalm 100:2 says, “Serve the LORD with gladness.” If you don’t serve with joy, you’re not helping the cause of Christ—you’re hindering it. Your spirit will either draw young people closer to Christ or drive them away. They’ll follow someone who serves with gladness long before they’ll follow someone who serves out of obligation.

Be an example in your walk with God. Every teen in your group should know that the most important thing in your life is your personal walk with the Lord. They should see a consistent Christian testimony that flows from that walk.

GOD IS ABLE

If you believe God is able, lead like it. Encourage your teens by believing in them. Equip them with truth that meets their real struggles. And live as the example they need to see.

God is raising up a generation that can change the world. Let’s make sure we’re the kind of leaders who help them do it.



DR. JIM SCHETTLER

serves as an instructor at West Coast Baptist College, teaching classes in Bible, Youth Ministry, and Counseling.



1. Sovanny and Edgl Has

2. Ryan and Elisabeth Strother

3. Ricky and Caitlin Lowe

4. Scotty and Allison Thompson

5. Evans and Regina Tambunan

6. Abe and Kaylee Kurtz

7. Michael and Joanna Moyer

8. Ronnie and Wendy Reynoso

West Coast Baptist College Alumni Updates



SOVANNY ('05) AND EDGL HAS

After two decades of faithful service in his home church—working with teens, driving a bus route, and teaching Sunday school—Sovanny and Edgl have answered God’s call to full-time missions in Southeast Asia. Following a five-week survey trip through Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam, the Lord confirmed His direction for them to serve in a restricted-access nation. Their burden is to reach the unreached, strengthen national pastors, and help plant churches in areas with little gospel witness. The Has family is currently raising support for this new ministry.



ABE ('22) AND KAYLEE ('21) KURTZ

Abe and Kaylee serve at Mansfield Baptist Temple in Mansfield, Ohio, where Abe is the outreach director and leads the church’s young adults and jail ministries. God has recently blessed the jail ministry with several salvations, and the young adults ministry continues to grow as lives are changed through discipleship and service. The Kurtzes are grateful to serve the Lord together and thankful to witness spiritual growth among those they lead. This past fall, they welcomed their first child, Lainey Kate, born in October 2025.



RICKY ('13) AND CAITLIN LOWE

For the past eleven years, Ricky and Caitlin Lowe have served the Lord just outside Seattle, Washington, where Ricky pastors Mountain Highway Baptist Church in Spanaway. Since arriving in 2014, they have led a revitalization work that God has richly blessed. The church has experienced significant growth both spiritually and numerically with people regularly being saved, baptized, and grounded in their faith. Pastor Lowe’s heart for revival and for helping believers walk closely with Christ continues to guide the ministry as the church reaches the greater Seattle area with the gospel.



MICHAEL ('09) AND JOANNA ('08) MOYER

For the past sixteen years, Michael and Joanna have faithfully served at Mountain Avenue Baptist Church in Banning, California, where they have ministered in the Christian school, with the youth, and in growth groups. Recently, God has brought special encouragement through a public school Bible club that Michael leads—one student's salvation sparked a chain of family conversions and baptisms. The Moyers rejoice to see how God continues to change lives and remind them of the fruit that comes through faithfulness.



RONNIE AND WENDY ('07) REYNOSO

After graduating from WCBC with a degree in secondary education, Wendy returned to her home church, where she began teaching in the Christian school. Six years later, she married her husband, Ronnie, and together they have served in the youth ministry of Bible Baptist Church of Long Beach. Four years ago, the Lord led them to start a Christian school at their church. The school has grown rapidly, and it recently received full accreditation—a remarkable milestone for a young school. The Reynosos rejoice to see God using them to reach and impact the next generation.



RYAN ('03) AND ELISABETH ('02) STROTHER

Ryan and Elisabeth serve as missionaries in the United Kingdom, where they planted Community Baptist Church in Sutton, a suburb of South London. After completing their studies at WCBC, they served in two churches before answering God's call to England in 2008 and officially launching their church in 2015. Over the past decade, the church has grown steadily with recent blessings of salvations and baptisms. The Strothers are grateful for God's faithfulness in establishing a vibrant gospel witness in South London.



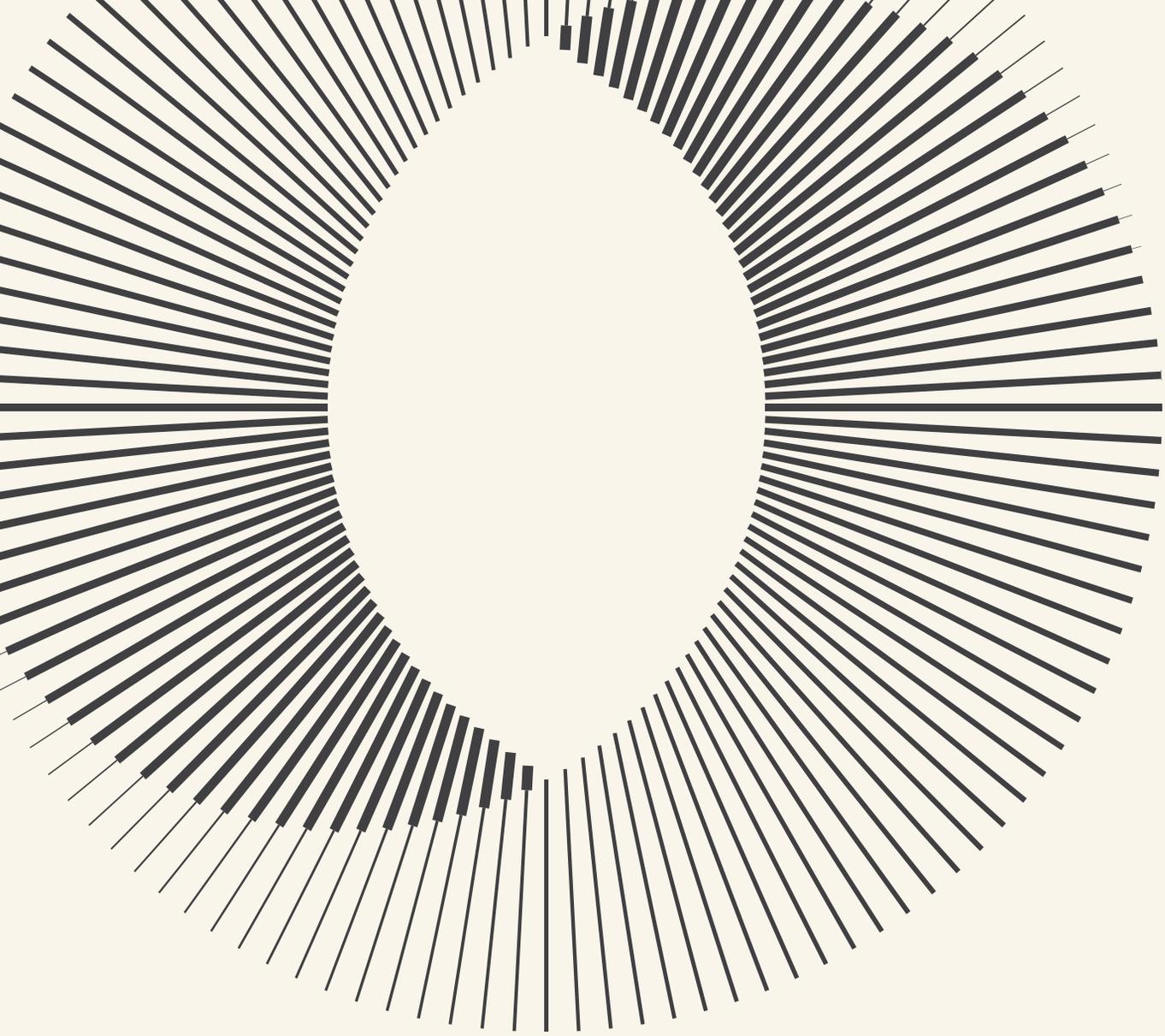
EVANS ('07) AND REGINA TAMBUNAN

Evans and Regina serve at Shalom Independent Baptist Church in Jakarta, Indonesia, where Evans has ministered since graduating from WCBC with a master's degree in Christian education. Over the past eighteen years, he has helped strengthen the church's outreach and discipleship ministries while teaching at Jakarta Independent Baptist College. In 2024, he was ordained as a pastor and currently serves alongside his father, Pastor Maringan Tambunan. Regina leads ladies' discipleship and homeschools their two children. Together, the Tambunans are grateful to see lives changed and new believers growing in churches across Indonesia.



SCOTTY AND ALLISON THOMPSON ('17)

Scotty and Allison serve the Lord in Arlington, Texas, where Scotty pastors Tabernacle Baptist Church. After five years as youth pastor at Faith Baptist Church in Danville, Indiana, God called him to lead this revitalization work in 2022. In just two and a half years, the church has seen remarkable growth, including numerous salvations, baptisms, and over \$250,000 in building renovations. The Thompsons are praying for God's direction as they seek a larger facility to accommodate continued growth.



God Is Able to Provide in Seasons of Transition

JOEL NORRIS

Have you ever found yourself doubting something in a difficult season that was easy to believe in a comfortable one? When someone asks, “Is God able?” most of us would immediately answer, “Yes.” But in seasons of transition, when life shifts and the path ahead feels uncertain, our hearts can quietly whisper, “Maybe,” or “I hope so.”

We know, believe, and teach that God is able. But when what once felt steady suddenly changes, even strong faith can waver. It’s in those times we wonder

whether God’s power still reaches our situation.

Jeremiah wrestled with that tension. In a time of national and personal upheaval, he prayed, “Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee” (Jeremiah 32:17). But just a few verses later, God repeated Jeremiah’s statement as a question: “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?” (verse 27). It’s as if God was saying, “Jeremiah, do you really

believe this?"

Like Jeremiah, we know the right answer. Yet, also like Jeremiah, our confidence can waver when the next step is unclear.

Not every transition is a season of trial. Some bring long-awaited change or exciting opportunity. But every transition, whether chosen or unexpected, calls us to depend again on God's faithful provision.

Indeed, God is able to provide, and He does so in the ways we need most during times of transition.

GOD IS ABLE TO PROVIDE A PLAN

We all like to know the plan so we can prepare. Actually, as leaders, we like to prepare the plan so we can know what to do next.

But we must recognize that as finite creatures, we are limited. We might assume that if we do not know or develop the plan, there must not be one. Or we might assume the plan in motion will not turn out well because it did not come from us.

One of my favorite promises of Scripture is found in Psalm 37:23: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way." This is difficult for planners to acknowledge, but did you know that it is not your job to have a plan for God? God is the one ordering our steps—and He can do a far better job of it than you or I can.

Our responsibility in seasons of transition is to remain faithful and follow the order of God. I wish I could go back to all those times and seasons when I assumed that because I hadn't signed off on the plan, it wasn't going to work out. I wish I could speak to the doubts in my heart and remind myself that God's ways and plans are always higher than mine (Isaiah 55:8–9) and that He is working all things together for good (Romans 8:28).

How much more would we enjoy the seasons of change and transition if we reminded ourselves of the promises and plan of God on the front end rather than waiting until the ride was over to see how He was able to provide for us all along?

GOD IS ABLE TO PROVIDE POWER

Unlike physical power, God's power is not bound to a place, position, or person. It is accessible and available to everyone.

When Elijah transitioned his ministry to Elisha in 2 Kings 2, Elisha picked up his predecessor's mantle and asked, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" Immediately, he saw God's power as the waters of the Jordan parted for him just as they had for Elijah (verse 14). The power that carried Elijah across the Jordan carried Elisha as well.

A season of transition with God will not leave you stranded. The same power that brought you to this place will carry you to what's next. The same God who sustained one generation is strong enough to sustain the next. The same God who worked in the past is still working in the present and will continue to work in the future.

God's power is not limited to history; it is a present reality. When you find yourself in a season of transition, don't just remember what God did; rely on what He can do right now.

GOD IS ABLE TO PROVIDE PEACE

Seasons of transition often make us feel as though life has slipped beyond our control. And with that loss of control can come a loss of peace. But just because something is beyond your control doesn't mean it's beyond God's control. The same omnipotent, eternal God who ordered your steps before the

change is still sovereign over what comes next.

God doesn't call us to peace through willpower or positive thinking; He gives His peace through Christ. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6–7). As we take every need to God with thankful hearts, He responds by giving us His peace—a peace that meets us in transition and sustains us through it.

GOD IS ABLE

If someone were to ask, "Would you like to see God's plan, power, and peace on full display in your life?" I think most of us—including me—would quickly say "yes." But what if seasons of transition are the very way God shows us how able He truly is? What if the situations we fear most are the ones He uses to reveal His goodness and strength?

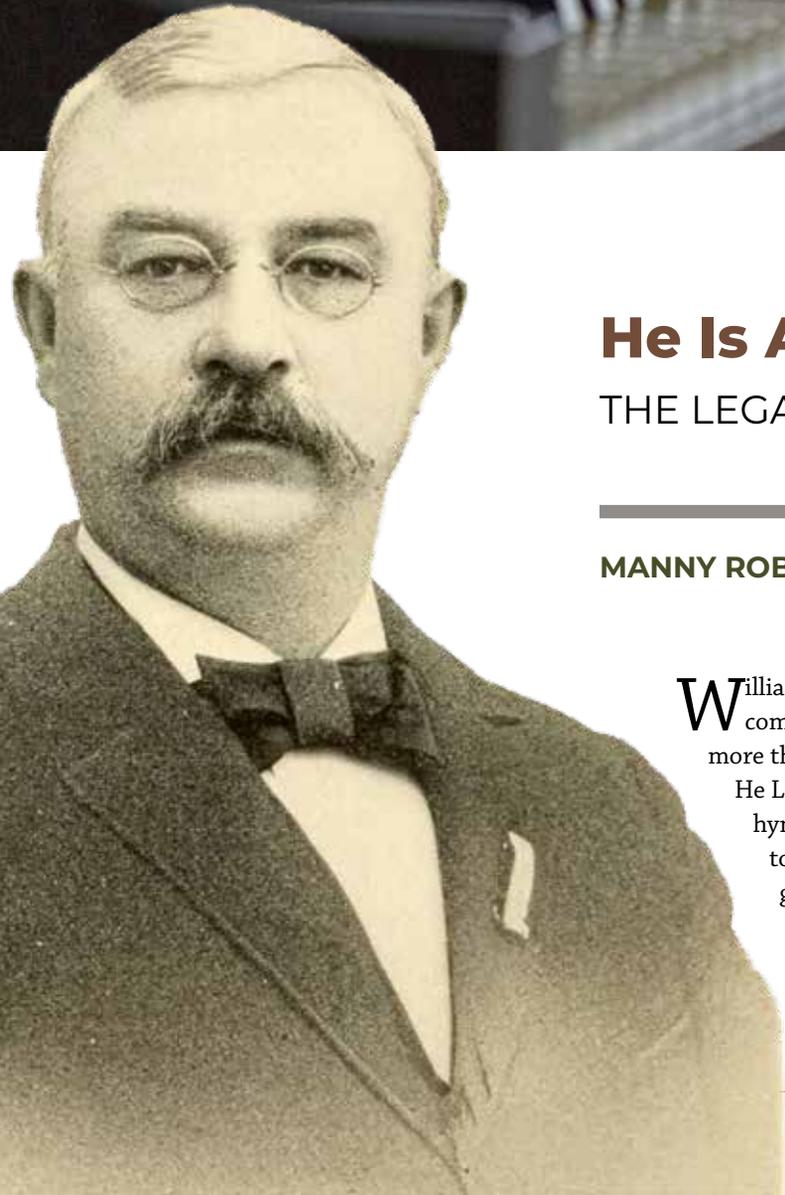
The truths about God that once seemed true in theory are proven true in practice—and they apply in every season: the new ministry assignment, the battlefield of spiritual warfare, the hospital room of a health crisis, the graveside of a loved one, and every transition in between.

Is God able to provide? Yes, He is. So don't run from the season. Embrace it, and be amazed at what God is able to do.



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He Is Able to Deliver Thee

THE LEGACY OF A GOSPEL HYMN

MANNY ROBLES

William Augustine Ogden was a gifted musician, teacher, and composer whose songs have shaped Christian worship for more than a century. Hymns such as “Bring Them In,” “Where He Leads I’ll Follow,” and “Look and Live” still appear in hymnals today. Among his best-known works is “He Is Able to Deliver Thee,” a hymn that has comforted believers for generations by reminding them of God’s power to rescue, the protection found in Him, and, as the song itself declares, “the grandest theme” ever sung.

Born October 10, 1841, in Franklin County, Ohio,

Ogden moved with his family to Indiana at the age of six. From a young age, he demonstrated a gift for music. At eight, he was already attending singing schools. By ten, he was proficient in reading church music. By eighteen, he was the song leader in his church.

With the outbreak of the American Civil War, Ogden served in the 30th Indiana Volunteer Infantry. During this time, he organized a choir among the troops, which gained a reputation in the Army of the Cumberland. After the war, he studied under some of the leading church and sacred music teachers of the day, including Lowell Mason, Thomas Hastings, E. E. Bailey, and B. F. Baker.

Ogden was a gifted composer, poet, and songwriter—a rare combination. He wrote memorable, straightforward tunes designed for congregational singing and for use in children’s programs. He wrote both words and music for hymns, composed anthems for youth, and published numerous songbooks. In 1870, he published his first successful songbook, *Silver Song*, which sold more than 500,000 copies. In 1887, he became superintendent of music in the public schools of Toledo, Ohio, where he served until his death in 1897.

Among Ogden’s many works, “He Is Able to Deliver Thee” reflects his special burden for evangelism. Its simple structure and direct appeal to the sinner set it apart, centering on proclaiming the gospel and spreading the truth. Though we do not know the exact circumstances of its writing, the Lord clearly used Ogden’s background and passion for souls to shape this hymn. More than a century later, its assurance of God’s power to deliver still rings true for every believer.

To appreciate why this hymn has endured, we can turn to its words. Each stanza highlights a different facet of the “grandest theme” of all: God’s power to deliver.

Verse 1

*'Tis the grandest theme thro' the ages rung;
'Tis the grandest theme for a mortal tongue;
'Tis the grandest theme that the world e'er sung:
Our God is able to deliver thee.*

No theme in all of history rivals the message that God is able to deliver. As Daniel’s friends declared before Nebuchadnezzar, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us” (Daniel 3:17). From the creation

of the world, this has been the song echoed through the ages, declared by faithful witnesses, and sung by the redeemed. Unlike themes centered on feelings or opinions that fade with time, the message of deliverance is eternal, unchanging, and majestic. Its beauty lies in its simplicity.

Verse 2

*'Tis the grandest theme in the earth or main;
'Tis the grandest theme for a mortal strain;
'Tis the grandest theme, tell the world again:
Our God is able to deliver thee.*

Indeed, God’s ability to deliver is the grandest theme to tell a world in need of deliverance. The message is not meant to remain silent or exclusive; we are to take it to the ends of the earth, reaching every soul with the glorious news that Jesus saves (Mark 16:15).

Verse 3

*'Tis the grandest theme, let the tidings roll
To the guilty heart, to the sinful soul;
Look to God in faith, He will make thee whole:
Our God is able to deliver thee.*

Here the truth becomes deeply personal. God’s deliverance extends to the guilty heart and the sinful soul, offering forgiveness, restoration, and hope. Scripture promises, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13). The same God who parts seas and shakes nations is the God who meets the sinner in need and makes him whole through Christ.

Musically and lyrically, the hymn’s accessibility helped it spread quickly across America, becoming a fixture in revival meetings, church services, and personal devotion. Its march-like melody reflects the nineteenth-century gospel style, making it ideal for both congregational worship and evangelistic outreach. More than a century later, “He Is Able to Deliver Thee” continues to encourage Christians with its assurance that God’s power is not bound by time or circumstance. Whatever trials we face, Ogden’s words still ring true: Our God is able to deliver thee.



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