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ONE

magazine

APRIL - MAY • 2022

Everyday *Discipleship*

**Five Must-Ask Questions
for Discipleship**

Mothering in Church

*Mister Ruth's Story
From the Underbelly
of the World*

Strangers in Our Land

Progressive Lenses

Husband of One Wife

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*To communicate to Free Will Baptists a unifying vision
of our role in the extension of God's Kingdom*

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Straight to the Source

BY ERIC K. THOMSEN

“What is circumcision?”

The innocent question dropped like a bomb in our quiet living room. My wife cut her eyes toward me with a raised eyebrow: “I’ll let you handle this one.”

It was one of hundreds of tough questions that came up during a two-plus year journey through the Bible with our daughter. We began reading aloud together to help Victoria establish a lifelong habit of daily time in the Word. It was the natural “next step” after reading to her as a baby and toddler, sounding out syllables with her through several children’s Bibles, and then encouraging her to read through an illustrated Bible on her own.

Starting in Genesis not long after her eleventh birthday, we chose to read from an adult Bible rather than another children’s version. If she could handle junior high literature from authors Lowry, Lewis, and Tolkien, we knew she was ready to tackle the most important Book of all.

To our surprise—although I am not sure *why* we were surprised—reading the Bible aloud soon became one of our most valuable parenting and discipleship tools. Not only did we reinforce the importance of spiritual discipline, but...those questions! Chapter by chapter, night after night, readings introduced the deeper matters of life naturally, triggering tough conversations easy to overlook or avoid due to awkwardness or embarrassment. From sexuality, marriage, and gender roles to finances, race, civic responsibility, assurance of salvation, and much more, no subject was off-limits, and the questions kept coming.

Over time, we realized reading through the Bible aloud addressed many of the issues crucial for adulthood. More importantly, we taught our daughter to find the answers to her questions in one trusted source—the Word of God.

Don’t get me wrong. Reading through the Bible together wasn’t always easy. Some days it wasn’t fun. But it was *always* worth it. Along the way, we learned some simple lessons to help us finish what we started.

Be realistic. Originally, we planned to read through the Bible in a year. It took 30 months. And that was okay.

We missed some days, got sidetracked a few times, but kept plugging away. Amble along at your own pace, understanding some chapters and books will be more challenging than others. Make pronouncing ten-syllable biblical names a game. Intersperse tough passages with easier reading sections.

Take time to answer questions.

Reading is important. Meditation and comprehension are equally as important. Questions and conversations about Scripture allow its rich truths to sink in and shape character. If a question derails the rest of the day’s reading, it’s okay. God’s Word is eternal. It will be there the next night.

Don’t dodge the tough questions. If you don’t answer them, Google or friends might. Don’t be afraid to say, “I don’t know.” This will help your child learn spiritual growth is a lifelong process.

Don’t stop for the “terrible teens.” When adolescence stretches the lines of communication thin, take refuge in the Word of God. Make it a safe place where your family comes together to talk about anything. Try not to be offended when questions suddenly have an edge to them. Understand God’s Word may be cutting deep into the heart of a young person struggling to establish lifelong convictions and standards.

Are you ready to make a memorable trip through God’s Word? Be prepared. The journey may result in your own spiritual growth as much as the kids. **ONE**



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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thank you so much for Frank Gregory's article about prison ministry in the February-March issue. As the wife of a man who served 8 years in prison, I can't adequately express how much of a difference men (and women) like Mr. Gregory make in the lives of inmates. My husband is a walking testimony of God's grace and mercy. We call his incarceration his God-ordained "time out." God routinely used chaplains and volunteers to pour His Word and His purpose into my husband's life. Today he's a completely different man, the spiritual leader of our family and a godly father to our children. I encourage anyone who's considering doing prison ministry—or feels called to it—to not hesitate. There are men and women who desperately need you to bring them God's truth!

—M.S. (name withheld for privacy)

Editorial Note:

From phone calls and emails to letters and posts—even a full-length article—*ONE Magazine* readers provided a flood of response to Robert E. Picirilli's article, "Whatever Happened to Soul-Winning?" in the February-March issue. Be sure to read some of those responses, as well as the article, in a special section in the June-July issue. One thing is certain: Free Will Baptists are still concerned about sharing the gospel. I'm glad.

—Eric K. Thomsen, Managing Editor

Have something to say? Say it! Your feedback, comments, and suggestions are appreciated.

Email editor@nafwb.org or send correspondence to: **ONE Magazine, Letters to the Editor, PO Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011-5002**

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Must-Ask Questions for Discipleship

BY RON HUNTER

Every pastor desires the best discipleship approach for the congregation. Churches and contexts vary greatly based upon geography, age, socioeconomics, and other reasons. However, reality shows all churches share the same basic problems and needs. Culture shares the same problems, making the solutions less elusive. Basically, you should ask five questions when planning your discipleship strategy.



Always start with asking “why” and not

“what.” Many pastors fall prey to thinking they must look toward a bigger church to model a discipleship approach. Similarly, they ask “What’s next?” thinking the next program will be the answer to the

challenges. Starting with “why” forces you back to the very reason we are called to minister and reach people for Christ. Churches around the country (and the world) face the same problems: aging congregations, biblical illiteracy, lack of biblical worldview, and the loss of teens and young people as they reach adulthood.

The last problem is why the first problem exists. If churches had concentrated on keeping youth and young adults thirty years ago, congregations would not be aging. Bottom line: you cannot determine what to do without knowing what is most needed. Start with *why*. Simon Sinek said, “Vision is a destination—a fixed point to which we focus all effort. Strategy is a route—an adaptable path to get us where we want to go.”

Our *why* indicates our purpose. *Why* (we exist) determines our *how* (we value certain priorities), and our *how* helps us select our *what* (activities that reflect our values and fulfill our purpose for existing).

People will more readily adopt the *what* when the *why* is clear. Remember the *why* frames your philosophical strategy and *what* forms the tactics or programs to solve or accomplish the mission or strategy.

Before going too far, let's define *discipleship*. Biblically, it means passionately finding, pursuing, and living for Christ while helping others (all generations and ethnicities) do the same, which involves both reaching and teaching components in the church and at home (Matthew 28:18-20; John 15; Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Psalm 78:1-8). Dietrich Bonhoeffer argued, "Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ."



The second question is, **what characteristics matter?** Research studies show four main characteristics will reduce teens walking away from their family, faith, and church. Characteristics that help kids grow into adults who love and serve Christ are: Bible engagement, sharing one's faith, volunteering in church, and a warm, loving, involved adult nurturing a kid's life.

Bible engagement means helping all ages interact in and around the Word of God daily. By sharing one's faith, you go on record as a Christian, creating accountability with

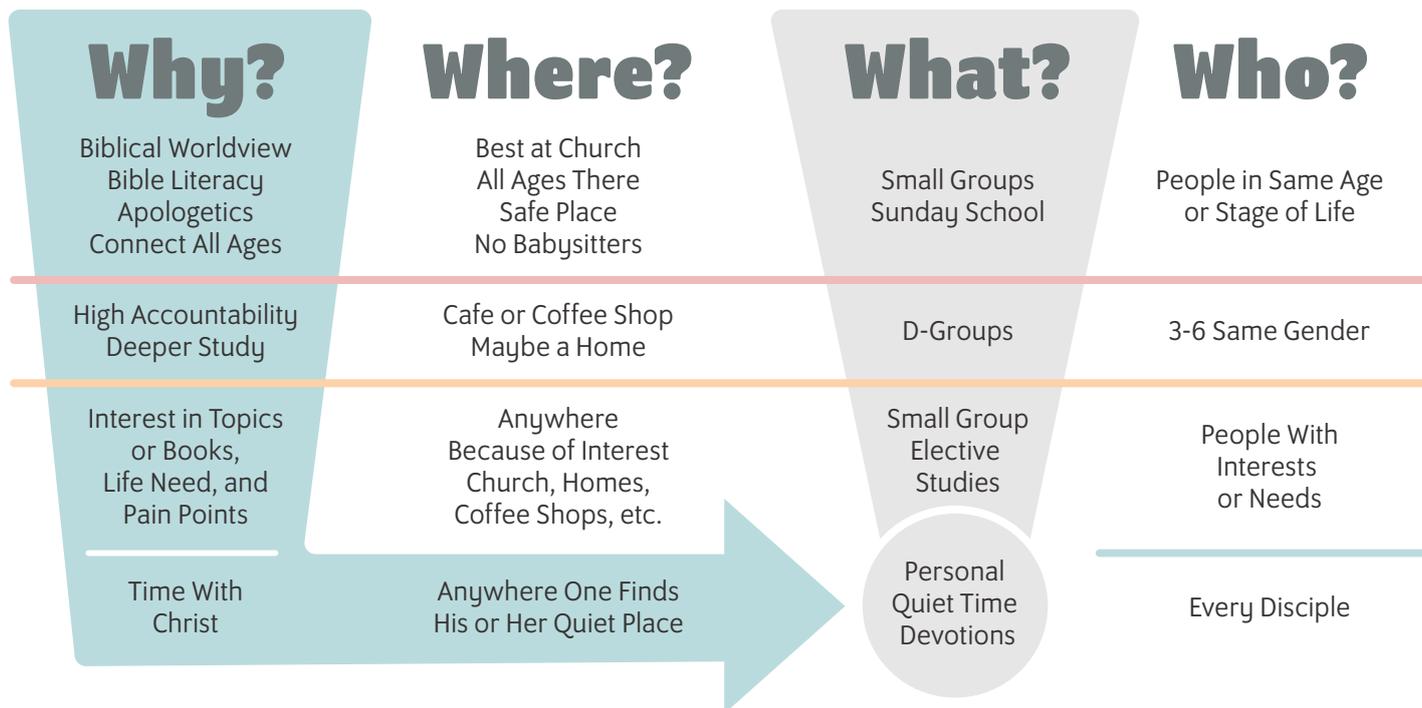
peers, classmates, and colleagues while also fielding their questions and driving them back to the Bible for answers (more Bible engagement). Volunteering further solidifies commitment and growth. Finally, when adults (especially parents and grandparents) nurture biblical values and decision-making, the stickability increases exponentially.



The third question is **who do we minister to?** Discipleship must be done within community. People gravitate to others like themselves, forming community around common interests. Group people in communities based on needs, age, seasons of life, age of their oldest kids, marital status, and more.



With the communities identified, ask **where do these communities meet?** Utilize the natural gatherings of your church for intentional discipleship. You want everyone gathering for worship, but growth and connection will occur in smaller settings. Use small groups/Sunday School classes for people grouped by similar life stages and study an age-aligned curriculum that starts at church but carries over into the home. Each group must aspire to connecting all ages around the Word by teaching the same theme or topic. Then four to six adults of the same gender from their small group can form D-Groups and pursue deeper study and establish higher accountability.



Ultimately, the final group is a “group of one,” the disciple, who prioritizes personal quiet time. These layers of natural gatherings are seen in the biblical model of Jesus, who preached to the crowds (worship), taught His disciples (small groups/Sunday School), taught the inner three at deeper times (D-groups), and commanded individual disciples to “watch and pray” (quiet time).

The debate continues over meeting in the church or home (which may include coffee shops, etc.). Which is better? The answer, YES to both, but again knowing *why* each location works. For some non-Christ followers, meeting at a coffee shop is safe, less threatening, and perhaps more convenient. The same convenience may apply to regular church members, but you still expect attendance at weekly worship services.

Why ask everyone to come to two events at two different locations when you can extend the time of one event to combine discipleship and worship in small group and church service in one location and one calendar event? In a day when people are reluctant to visit other homes or host guests for safety/liability reasons, the church offers many advantages: appropriate options for kids, enough chairs (including right size chairs), tables, restrooms, and built-in supervision because all ages meet at the same time.

It almost goes without saying, the young adults of every generation own “the cool factor.” They can easily gather in homes or coffee shops, but that all stops when they have children themselves. Or, they tend to stay in a close circle of friends that prohibits reaching new people. The *layers of discipleship* graphic shows suggested meeting types, locations, and participants based on discipleship maturity level as discussed in the next question.



Fifth and finally, **which model works best?**

Four family ministry or generational discipleship models are taught by major Christian universities and seminaries: The D6 model, the integrated model, the adoptive model, and the milestone model. The *D6 model*, named after Deuteronomy 6:4-7, teaches generational discipleship through church and home. The church, through age-specific ministries, equips parents to continue discipling their kids daily with connections around the lessons started at church. The *integrated model* seeks the same as the D6 model but removes all age-specific ministries (Sunday School, youth groups, and children’s ministry) by keeping all ages together in worship and one big class. The *adoptive model* has more mature Christians adopting or mentoring the younger or less mature. Finally, *milestones* recognize

key benchmarks in a child’s development such as birth, going to school, accepting Christ, baptism, getting a first cell phone, purity talks, driver’s license, graduation, and ultimately becoming an active adult church member. The key to milestones is the celebration of these events while preparing parents to navigate and model biblical values leading into each milestone.

Which model works best? Ideally, layering all of them through a focus on seasons (milestones), weekly at-church mentoring across generations and from teachers and volunteers (adoptive), and the foundation of age-aligned lessons in church and aligned daily devotions for regular faith conversations in the home. There is a place for integration as well, with combined worship services for everyone—not just the little ones joining the adults. Plus, integrated activities like service projects, mission trips, and similar foster adoptive relationships, with parents serving alongside their kids.

Studies show *the major factors in kids reaching adulthood and sticking with their faith include regular time in Scripture, sharing their faith, and having an involved, caring adult helping develop their faith.* The *what* that is taught and *what* we do should always complement the *why*, informing your choice of *what*. Foundationally, all ages study the same lesson using a planned curriculum like D6. Putting every age on the same page sets families up for helpful conversations and application by parents and grandparents at home, where life happens, and instruction is needed. The *what* supports the *why*. But, if everyone writes his or her own curriculum, or if some groups study the sermon and others something different, no connected conversations can easily take place in the home.

D6 provides biblical literacy and includes biblical worldview teaching with everyday conversations and life applications. D6 equips families for home discipleship with age-aligned devotional studies, encouraging and discipling them in the deepest level of individual discipleship habits. Doing so makes it easy to have a caring adult studying the same material, and helping apply those lessons to everyday life. The *why* you teach must answer the research, the *what* solves the issues all congregations face, and builds your comprehensive strategy to make a generational difference. **ONE**

About the Author: Since 2002, Ron Hunter Jr., Ph.D. has served as executive director and CEO of Randall House & D6 Family Ministry. He pastored 11 years before starting his present role. Hunter has five published books and is passionate about leadership and discipleship.

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Mothering in Church

DO NOT GROW WEARY IN DOING GOOD

BY REBEKAH ZUÑIGA

Seasons of life present us with new and sometimes difficult situations. Caring for elderly parents, battling chronic illness, and entering or ending a career—such circumstances present unique challenges and can make church attendance and fellowship with the Body of Christ difficult. Mothering young children is another season that can be challenging as we strive toward spiritual growth and community with a local body of believers.

Young mothers often find themselves either managing their own children in the pew during service or caring for a group of children as a nursery or children’s ministry volunteer. It is easy to become discouraged by the prospect of another Sunday morning of toddler tantrums, missed naps, and nursery volunteer shortages. The “big church” on the other side of town with a booming kids’ program (and an hour of peaceful worship for mom) can start to look very attractive.

Allow me to share three statements of encouragement for those moms wondering if church is even worth all the trouble on Sunday morning.

1. Your children need you to go. Your kids need you to be at church with them, even (and especially) if the church does not offer a kids’ program. Storytelling is a primary means of character formation in children. But stories are not just in books. In a recent podcast episode, author N. D. Wilson encourages parents to step back and view our own “character” in the arc of God’s story and to use our knowledge of our story’s Author to inform how we make our own character decisions.

In other words, your life is a story your child is reading, vividly illustrated, piercing straight to the heart. You are the first hero your child knows, and your words and actions define what heroes are like. Are they

courageous or cowardly? Do they persevere or give up? Do they worship God or themselves? Are they disobedient or properly submissive? Your weekly faithfulness builds a pattern of thinking and behaving in your children, even if your time in church feels less than “spiritual.”

Your own faithful church attendance does not guarantee your children will also be faithful, and it cannot make up for unfaithfulness in Bible



teaching at home. However, your faithful church attendance does provide an invaluable scaffolding upon which the Holy Spirit can build. Charlotte Mason, in a discussion on instilling good habits in children, remarks, “Thought runs into the rut, which has been, so to speak, worn for it by constant repetition.”¹ Let this repetition be the weekly hymns, prayers, and preaching of your local congregation.

2. Your church needs you to go. Other moms need the solidarity of your presence. I remember the first wedding I attended as a new mom. It sounded to me like every grunt and snuffle my two-month-old made echoed through the aisles at an ear-shattering volume. When I finally decided to make my way out the back, I met my new tribe. Five or six moms lined the back wall, bouncing babies and passing out cheese puffs to antsy toddlers.

Few things are as encouraging as knowing you are not alone. Your presence—yes, your noisy presence—can be uplifting to the mom across the aisle who might have been tempted to think she was the only one struggling.

But it is not just other moms; the older people in your congregation need you there, too. They need the presence of a younger person to whom they can pass the torch, so they are not tempted to let the flame flicker out as each day draws closer to Heaven’s rest. Your presence reminds them of the work yet to be done and encourages them their work is not in vain. Your presence connects the hands of elderly saints to the hands and hearts of your children, enabling the chain of faithful witness to continue.

In addition to the elderly, other kids need your presence. Whether their parents attend church or not, kids need relationships with other faithful adults to build a strong web of Christian community from which to learn and grow.

Your faithfulness could provide the steady adult input some child is missing. Your presence, with your children, can be an important step toward the greater goal of intergenerational worship and discipleship.

¹ Charlotte Mason, *Home Education*, 114–15; <https://www.amblesideonline.org/CM/vol1complete.html>

3. You need you to go. Finally, whether you feel as though you get anything out of it or not, you should attend church out of your own neediness. The Bible commands us not to forsake meeting together (Hebrews 10:25), and all of God’s laws are for our good (Deuteronomy 10:12-13; Psalms 25:8-10). We must obey in faith, even if growth in faithfulness does not quickly display the types of results we want.

You may not be able to take notes on the sermon; you may have to keep one eye open during corporate prayer; you might even miss the last verse of your favorite hymn. But God is not thwarted by your toddler or nursing. His will for you is your sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:3), and His Spirit works extraordinary things through very ordinary means.

Your time with the children in your care will come to an end, but if you are a redeemed child of God, your standing as a member of Christ’s body will not. Your friends and family—even the little ones into whom you are pouring your life—may “despise, forsake you,”² but the Lord will take you in (Psalm 27:10). Your presence—against all odds some Sundays—is a triumphant recognition of that fact, and a bold declaration of where your loyalties lie. Submit to God in faith, and He will lift you up at just the right time (1 Peter 5:6).

Getting Practical

Adjust Expectations. Disappointment is the difference between expectations and reality. Realize not every church is equipped with the personnel to provide childcare for every service, yet God may still desire your continued presence in the congregation.

On the one hand, most small children can sit still and be reasonably quiet for a few minutes with regular practice. On the other hand, even a well-trained, well-behaved child can only do so much. Sitting in service with your children will never feel as easy as sitting without them, and that does not mean it is a worse experience. It is just harder. Assess whether your expectations are too high or too low and adjust as needed.

Prepare. Set aside special (quiet) toys just for church. This strategy can expand the amount of time your toddler can remain reasonably quiet. Practice whispering at home. A wrap, sling, or baby carrier can help a younger baby get

² Joseph Medlicott Scriven, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” 1855.



that precious morning nap during the sermon, enabling you to stay in the service.

If you can inquire ahead of time about the songs and Scripture, sing the songs and read a children's version of the passage during the week, so your children can participate more easily, and you can focus your own mind more quickly.

Ask for help. When you demonstrate faithful effort to bring yourself and your kids to church week after week, you will find most people are more than happy to give you a break every now and then, even if your church does not have a regular kids' program or nursery volunteers. Even if they do not offer to help, many people are willing to hold the baby while you take an older sibling to the restroom, help you find a quiet place to nurse, or guard the other end of the pew for you, if you just ask.

When we help each other care for children in the service, we communicate to visitors and other families that church services, though not kid-centered, are kid-friendly. We welcome children as Christ did (Matthew 19:14).

I have mistakenly attended church in the past with the expectation I will leave the service more centered, focused, or spiritual. I am thankful for the times God speaks to me in a special way through a particular Sunday service. However, if I keep up that type of expectation, I will be sorely disappointed and discouraged from bringing my

children to service. It will tempt me to think they should always be shuttled off to their own age-specific services, so I can enjoy some peace and quiet.

Instead, if I realize the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead is at work in me both to will and to do for His good pleasure (Romans 8:11; Philippians 2:13), then my circumstances no longer determine how spiritual I can be. In the power of the Spirit, I can bring rowdy kids to church and still be a faithful worshiper. In fact, it may be that if you have children, you cannot be a faithful worshiper *without* bringing them.

Perhaps God is more pleased by my imperfect efforts to guide my children through the worship service than by my ability to pay perfect attention when my kids are in the care of someone else.

Let us spur one another on to love and good deeds this week by encouraging ourselves, our kids, or our young moms to obey God's command of corporate worship. **ONE**

About the Author: Rebekah Zuñiga lives in Arnold, Missouri, with her husband Zuri and son Agustin. She holds an M.A. in teaching from Trevecca Nazarene University and a B.A. in history from Welch College. A stay-at-home-mom, she has interests in educational philosophy, biblical theology, and mathematics. She is a member of Grace Free Will Baptist Church.

TODAY is the best time to start!

Sure, if you planted a tree last month or last year, it might already be tall and strong, with deep roots. But, if you didn't act then, it's not too late. To grow a strong tree in the future, the best time to plant is **TODAY**.

And to have a strong plan for long-term ministry, the kind that will reach others for Christ long into the future, **TODAY** is the day to start. It all begins with establishing your church's institutional investing. That seedling will grow, and over time, it will shade your ministry with its strength. Reach out to the Board of Retirement now. Because **TODAY** is the best time to start!

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When the Dream Is Less Than Dreamy

BY MARIANNE E. STEWART



I am, as the saying goes, living the dream. I'm married to a wonderful, good-looking man who loves Jesus Christ more than he loves me. We have two young boys who bring smiles to our faces and joy to our hearts every day. Two years ago, we bought the house my parents built, a simple but sturdy home on five beautiful acres in the country, a short ten-minute drive from town. My husband has a steady job with great income and a promising future. When our youngest was born three years ago, I left my graphic design job at a book publisher (a job I really loved) and started working for myself—my dream job. By no stretch of the imagination, life is good!

So why is “living the dream” so...well...*stressful*?

Living the dream doesn't mean the dream looks exactly how you expected. All the years I dreamed of working for myself, my imagination had a distinct way of highlighting the “glamorous” and glossing over the nitty-gritty, day-to-day details. When I started my own design company three years ago, the stress level that came with this dream job caught me off guard. For a long time, I pondered why.

For a while, I thought it was simply the stress of welcoming our second child and working from home at the same time. Talk about an adjustment! At a family reunion,

when our youngest was two months old, a cousin (with three grown kids of his own) told me

the days of newborns and small children are the absolute hardest, but to savor every moment purposefully. I believe him. These years have been *hard*. Even after two “practice” years with our oldest, the logistical challenges of going from one child to two threw me for a loop. Things didn't take twice as long; they took *four times* as long!

I grossly underestimated how much time I'd spend preparing bottles, cooking chicken nuggets, picking up toys, wiping up spills, and changing diapers—so, so, so many diapers. It was purely the grace of God that enabled me to complete *any* income-producing work on top of mothering. After pulling a couple of desperate all-nighters to meet press deadlines, I promptly vowed never to do it again. All-nighters are for college students and barn owls—*not* for older-than-average moms of newborns. Three years in, some things are getting easier and others more difficult, but I expected as much. Still, these ongoing life adjustments can't quite account for why “living the dream” is so stressful.

For a while, I attributed the stress to an excessive workload and poor time management. I'm a textbook procrastinator, particularly irritating because I often produce my best creative work under pressure. A full-time workload squeezed into irregular, infrequent, and irritatingly short pockets of time between mothering and housekeeping tasks caused my stress levels to soar. My work primarily consists of designing magazines and other large-scale print projects, and I was rarely able to work in long enough stretches to find a creative flow. Throw a global pandemic into the mix. My husband, manager



of an “essential” auto shop, worked much longer hours than normal, and for a time, it was socially irresponsible to visit grandparents (a.k.a. the regular babysitters). I found myself at home, mostly alone, trying to juggle it all. Proverbial balls were dropped, the kids watched too much television, and I wasn’t as proud of my work as I wanted to be.

Thankfully, things have improved considerably in recent months, though I still have 30-or-so extra pounds clinging to my midsection to remind me exactly *how* stressed I was. Yet, juggling work and home still didn’t seem to be my primary source of stress. I mean, working moms *everywhere* deal with these same issues, right?

Over these years, as I’ve pondered the stress that comes with “living the dream,” I’ve decided *pressure* is a more appropriate word than stress. With that word, I think I’ve arrived at the heart of the matter. The bulk of the pressure stems from knowing the magnitude of what’s *really* at stake: *the eternal souls of two little boys*. No, it’s not my (or my husband’s) responsibility to save them. Jesus already did that through the cross and resurrection. Nor is it our place to convict them of their sin. The Holy Spirit takes care of that. However, it *is* our responsibility to demonstrate lives spent loving and following the Savior. It *is* our job to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and might. It *is* our job to teach His commands to our boys, to talk of them all day, every day, no matter what we do or how challenging our workload might be (see Deuteronomy 6:4-7).

I don’t claim to write from a place of success or having it all figured out, but rather from the “messy middle.” Our family is comfortably blessed with material goods and provisions, and it’s easy to settle into daily routines and rhythms devoid of intention and purpose. However, Jesus didn’t save me to make me comfortable—not yet. I’ve got eternity to rest comfortably in His presence. He saved me because I was lost in sin, and He loves me dearly. And with His saving work came His command to go and make disciples.

In this season of life, my most important mission field is our children. I must intentionally make the most of every opportunity to talk about God and how much He loves them, to show the love of Christ to them and those around us, to demonstrate obedience to God’s commands,

and to practice stewardship of His gifts. Some days we read Bible stories together. More often, it’s casual conversations about all the things God made and did as we explore our world.

Our boys are five and three, so they’re still learning the basics of God’s beautiful creation. Some days, when I’m working extra-hard to meet a deadline, I rely on Bob and Larry of VeggieTales™ fame to help reinforce biblical virtues. (I will forever be grateful to Phil Vischer.) Other times, I play Sunday School songs in the car, joyfully listening to the unprompted five-year-old belt out, “Sing hosanna! Sing hosanna! Sing hosanna to the King of Kings” as we push our cart through the grocery store. It thrills my soul that my husband taught our boys, who both struggle with communication development, to say “Jesus loves me” before they could say anything else.

When all is said and done, and I finally meet my Savior, my greatest desire is to hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” The pressure I feel in this “dream life” comes from the battle between what I desire versus what God desires—between what’s comfortable and what’s eternally profitable.

It’s comfortable to rely on others to pour the knowledge of God into our boys, but it’s *our* responsibility to be their primary teachers. It’s comfortable to plan my days around my to-do list, but it pleases God to give my attention to Him first and foremost. It’s comfortable to rely on social media and YouTube for snippets of the Word to (attempt to) fill my cup, but it’s eternally profitable to study the Word itself deeply and commit it to heart and memory.

Yes, I write from the “messy middle,” and many days I fall wretchedly short of the goal. Thankfully, God’s mercies are new every morning. Each new day I press forward, striving to be a better steward of the opportunities and time given to me. **ONE**

About the Author: Marianne Stewart is a self-employed graphic designer. After graduating from Middle Tennessee State University in 2005, she spent two years as a secretary, five years designing for a small printing company, and six years designing for Randall House Publications, before starting Stewart Art & Design: stewartartdesign.com. She and her husband, Patrick, live in Lebanon, Tennessee, with their sons, John and James.

Parenting Is Leading

BY RON HUNTER JR., PH.D.

Many books have been written about leading without a title. Understanding how your influence works without a position of authority cuts both ways; do not assume you have influence just because you have authority. Phrases like, “This is my house and my rules” and “I am the parent, and you will do it because I said so” have little enduring effect on teenagers. Yes, I am hoping you connect parenting and leading as both rise and fall on relationships and not positional authority.

Have you ever noticed overly commanding bosses or parents create resentment because of their leadership style?



BIBLE VERSES

Matthew 6:21;
12:34-35

Proverbs 4:23

Psalms 103:13

Colossians 3:21

Ephesians 4:22-24;
6:1-4

1 Peter 5:2-3

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

Psalms 78:1-7

LEADERSHIP QUOTE

“Angry words might sometimes motivate children to do what you say, but a closer look reveals damaged family relationships. Short-term compliance comes at the cost of long-term closeness.”

—Scott Turansky

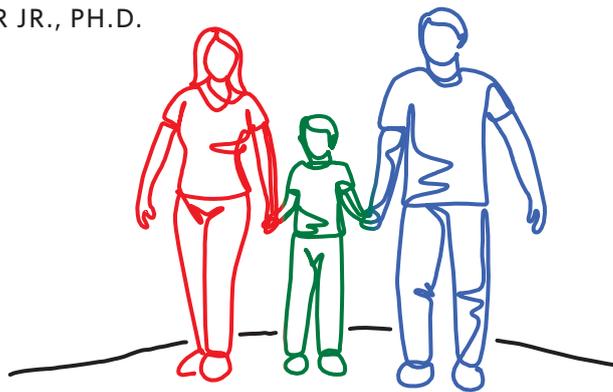
While followers and kids may come around and do well, many simply endure until they can escape. Others rebel.

To be fair, parenting involves freedom of will for both you and your kids. You can do everything perfectly and still have kids who refuse to follow direction, just as not every person will follow great bosses or leaders.

Still not convinced leading and parenting are connected? Leadership scholar Joanne Cuilla, describes leading as a “transformational process when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality.”

My current personal definition of leading [with parental brackets] shows “the relational ability to influence people [kids] to passionately pursue [godly] goals that morally benefit the culture [for Christ].” The major component in leading and parenting is not titles or expertise but relationship.

Paul combined leading and parenting in 1 Timothy 3 when offering criteria for pastors and deacons to manage their



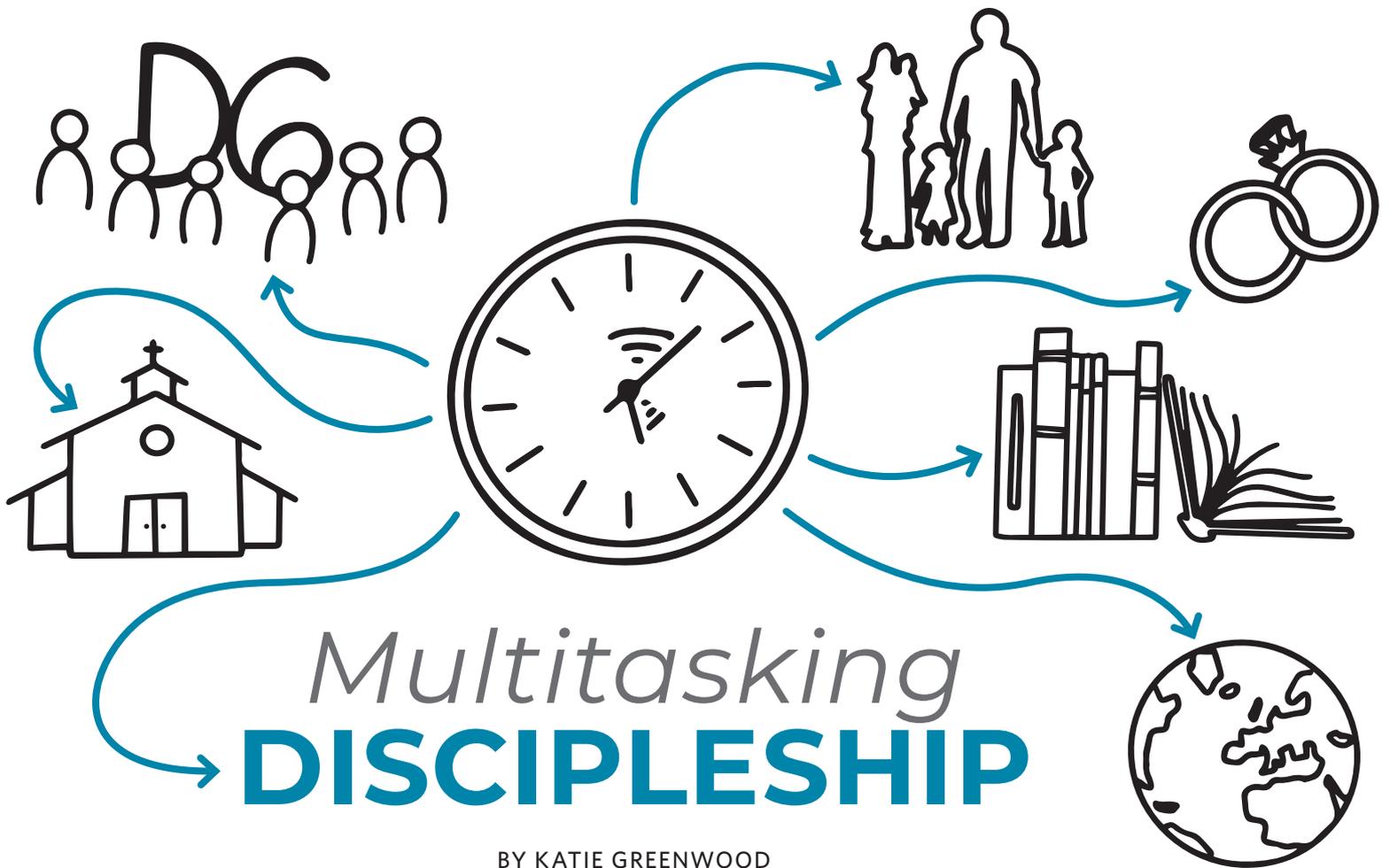
families and have obedient children. Paul’s condition here needs to be combined with his words to the church in Ephesus. He told dads to bring up children in a nurturing (relational) way while teaching them about the things of God.

Be careful not to quote obedience passages to your kids without heeding what Scripture says to us. We love the “listen, honor, and obey” commands but tend to overlook the “nurture” and “not embittering” or “discouraging” them verses. Find common ground to connect with your kids around conversations and activities.

How often have we parented from a position of fear—fear that others will judge us for what our kids do? Fear that our kid’s choices equal ours? If we are consistent in our Arminian theology, should we not similarly see compatibility in parenting? We can no more dictate passion, values, and beliefs to our kids any more than we can to employees.

Good parents, like good leaders, work closely to instill values in ways our kids choose to adopt those values. We cannot influence without a relationship. And being related does not automatically denote relationship. Just like we earn our ability to lead, we must earn our kids’ hearts while parenting. Focus on the relationship of the heart prior to the behavior. That’s how God, our Father, works with us. He seeks our heart first, knowing everything else will follow. [ONE](#)

About the Columnist: Ron Hunter Jr. has a Ph.D. in leadership and is CEO of Randall House and D6 Family Ministry. You may contact him at ron.hunter@randallhouse.com.



BY KATIE GREENWOOD

Facilitating many tasks at once can be a fun challenge for me. Recently, while I relaxed in my favorite chair, I chuckled at the satisfaction I felt after a particularly productive hour. A meal was cooking in the oven. I had started washing a load of sheets after putting wet towels into the dryer. I then added a few items to the dishwasher and started it before settling into my favorite chair. That's when things really ramped up. I pushed a button on a phone app, and a robot began vacuuming the living room. I logged on to a store website and did our grocery shopping for the week. Oh, and I sent encouragement to some friends.

The bottom line: I was doing laundry, washing dishes, cooking a meal, vacuuming, grocery shopping, and encouraging friends—all at the same time!

Soon, I heard the chime of the completed dryer cycle. The dishwasher settled into the drying phase, and the oven timer joined the party to announce a cooked meal. Meanwhile, the robot vacuum cleaner returned to its base, and I received the confirmation number for my grocery order.

As I sat with my feet propped on an ottoman, it felt good to know so much had been accomplished in a short

amount of time. I couldn't help but wonder what my grandparents or great-grandparents would think of the way things have progressed, how different everyday life has become.

Because Randall House has become such an important part of my life and ministry, sometimes I find myself wondering what its founding team would think about the organization today. I know they'd be proud of the continued commitment to strong, biblical curriculum. And I imagine their delight in the many other ways God has expanded the reach and multiplied the efforts and dedication of those who have served throughout the journey.

Strong biblical curriculum is still at the heart of everything Randall House does, but God has provided many other avenues for Kingdom ministry. Randall House is a trusted resource for training teachers, encouraging parents, leadership development, and family discipleship through D6 Ministries. Randall House and D6 reaches around the world in Brazil, Korea, Malaysia, China, Russia, Singapore, Indonesia, Australia, Denmark, France, India, Albania, South Africa, East Africa, Egypt, Chad,

Ethiopia, Cuba, Mexico, and Spain. Several Randall House volumes are even used in non-English-speaking churches *within* the United States.

In addition to Bible curriculum for churches, Randall House also creates devotional study guides for every member of the family and provides various teaching and training opportunities for learning God's Word, improving talents, and developing leadership skills.

Strong biblical curriculum is still at the heart of everything Randall House does, but God has provided many other avenues for Kingdom ministry.

Today, as I sit in that same comfy chair where I felt like a victorious multi-tasker, I picture a young boy in Singapore learning about the Good Shepherd. I am reminded of a nurse in North Carolina who daily points patients and co-workers to Christ because she chose to dedicate her life to God while attending a teen leadership conference developed by Randall House. I smile at a social media

post of a young married couple serving as small-group leaders in their local church. I remember seeing them at a D6 Conference and listening as they talked excitedly about the impact it had on them. The face of a dad I know comes to mind, and I am grateful he found the devotional study guides from Randall House helpful in leading his family and keeping his marriage strong.

So here I am—feet propped up on the ottoman again. I am feeling thankful, not because my laundry finished, and my dishes were washed during my online grocery shopping trip. This time, I feel thankful for the many ways God continues to use Randall House to provide curriculum resources and so much MORE—multitasking discipleship. **ONE**

About the Author: Katie Greenwood is the director of curriculum at Randall House. She has been married to her best friend, Steve, for three decades, and they have three daughters. Katie has a passion for inspiring others to love the Lord and His Word. Learn more about multi-tasking resources: D6family.com.

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MISTER RUTH'S STORY

From the UNDERBELLY
of the WORLD

BY BILL AND BRENDA EVANS

A mishmash story is Randy Ruth's description of his 50-year history of fostering 50 boys and young men and adopting six of them—a mishmash shared with his wife, Jo Ann, until her passing in 2019. Randy and Jo Ann were both raised near Portsmouth, Ohio. After Randy graduated from Welch College in 1970, they moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, found jobs, and assisted Bob Francis in a Free Will Baptist church plant. Two years later, they fostered their first young boy.

How did Randy and Jo Ann decide to become foster parents? "We did not decide—God put foster parenting into our lives," Randy recalls. It started with Desmond Q—a "charming" boy born to a 15-year-old girl and a sailor in 1960 because of a dare among a group of high school girls. (The first to birth a child won the small pot of money the girls threw together.) At age 11, Desmond was caught stealing food. His mom entertained men, Desmond said, and made him leave for the night. So, he sneaked into a nearby office building through the ventilation system, ate the workroom food, and spent the night out of the cold.

Child Protection Services placed Desmond in a foster home. He soon showed up at the Ruth's inner-city church—super cute, blond, blue-eyed, impish, and starved for attention. "He immediately attached himself to us," Randy says. Desmond visited their home without invitation, ate meals, even came when they were at work (he knew where the key was hidden) to eat pickles from their fridge. Desmond loved pickles, and Jo Ann with her "spine of steel and heart of gold" kept a good stock of pickles and motherly love—two crucial things missing in Desmond's life.

Desmond soon “appointed” himself to help with children’s activities at the church, cleaning, doing chores, and absorbing the positive adult attention he craved. After a week at youth camp one summer with Randy and three other kids from St. Paul, a message was waiting on the church answering machine from Desmond’s social worker—don’t take Desmond back to his foster home. With no other instructions, Randy and Jo Ann bedded him down on their sofa for the weekend.

Monday morning, Randy called the social worker who said Desmond’s foster mom had shot and killed his foster dad. Desmond needed new foster parents, but they had found none. The next day, the social worker asked Randy if he and Jo Ann would foster Desmond.

“At that time, a child could be placed into foster care without a license if there was a court order for placement. Without even getting a firm answer from me, and without a chance to consult with Jo Ann, we were given a court-ordered foster kid three days before his 13th birthday. We didn’t even know how the foster care system worked....so that is how we ‘decided’ to become foster parents!” Randy explained with a smile.

Though foster care began with Desmond Q without their choosing it, Randy says, “lost boys and young men who were placed in my path by God in His divine providence” quickly became his life and passion. In the simplest terms, to foster parent you “give all your love to someone who

may not have experienced it...love the person, not their actions....It is difficult to love a pile of smelly, dirty socks, but they are part of a needy child. Writing reports, patching cut knees, driving to appointments are all love just as much as a hug or a snuggle.”

The youngest of the 50 or so foster sons Randy and Jo Ann eventually loved and cared for was seven; the oldest just days away from his eighteenth birthday. That child, now a 43-year-old adult with special psychiatric/emotional needs, still lives with Randy.

Shortly after a young neighborhood boy was murdered on their church steps by his uncle, Randy got a degree in family counseling and social work and was hired by a boys’ shelter in Minneapolis. Over 50 years, he was licensed by six agencies, became a certified adolescent sex offender counselor, president of the National Foster Parent Association, where he spoke internationally in Australia and four European countries, a consultant for the National Institute of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and developed and managed a grant program for Supported Adoption. Along the way, he and Jo Ann fostered dozens of boys and adopted six.

As for Desmond, eventually his father asked for custody, and the county agreed. “I was devastated. It was so hard to imagine life without him. Our emotions were shattered into a thousand splinters, but we were given solace by simply knowing we had done the best we could and knowing our love would remain in his memory for a lifetime.”

Desmond stayed in contact with Randy and Jo Ann for a time and often stopped by for pickles. But at 17, his father accused him of a sexual offense with a female family member and kicked him out. He couch-surfed with various friends, then moved to Florida and stopped contact with Randy for many years. Eventually Desmond served time in prison because he “began living out the family norm,” Randy said. Desmond’s father was part of a crime family dealing in guns, stolen cars, and armed robberies.

To Randy’s surprise, two years ago Desmond contacted him through Facebook. He is 61, divorced with two sons, still in Florida, but not very communicative. Randy finished his story of Desmond with a sad smile and an exclamation point in his voice: “That’s a very long answer to the question of how we *decided* to become foster parents 50 years ago!”

Randy has written about Desmond and many other boys he and Jo Ann foster parented, using their real names with permission or changing names and details for the boys’ privacy. One was Michael E. whose life changed forever at age five. He was sitting between his parents in their pickup when his mother pulled a pistol from her purse, reached across Michael, and shot her husband in the head.

Though foster care began without their choosing it, Randy says, “lost boys and young men who were placed in my path by God in His divine providence” quickly became his life and passion

He came to the Ruths sometime later, emotionless and deeply troubled. Years after moving on, he visited Randy briefly, still emotionless. Later a note came. Michael was married and had a baby. Randy sent a gift, then a letter. It was returned—no more communication.

Tim B., a “super difficult kid to live with,” was an emergency placement and undersocialized. He knew nothing about hygiene, table manners, and interaction with others. But Tim was brilliant, also a consummate liar. “He would lie for no reason...or argue that black was white and white was black,” Randy says. Tim’s social worker told Randy if Tim’s lips were moving, he was lying.

Tim once got serious burns from fireworks but told the gullible hospital staff he had fallen into wet lawn fertilizer. Living on his own after high school, Tim kidnapped an old man in a Cadillac, made him lie in the back seat while Tim drove around town showing off “his Cadillac.” He spent two years in jail for that. Later, Tim visited off and on, even drove from Denver for Jo Ann’s memorial service. Recently, at age 32 and happily married, Tim sent Randy

this message via Facebook: “I love you! Thank you from the bottom of my heart for opening up your home...being the best father figure I could ever have asked for...I miss you. Love you, Pops!”

Randy likes being called Pops. One of his definitions of foster parenting is risking the protection of one’s heart for the protection of a child. It’s standing in the gap, loving those entrusted to you for however long they are entrusted.

Randy has seen the dark and sad underbelly of the world. He turns 79 this year, but says, “God led me into and through this ministry. I’m still in contact with about 20 of my foster sons...God gave me a passion and a love. And that is not over.” **ONE**

One of Randy’s definitions of foster parenting is risking the protection of one’s heart for the protection of a child.

About the Author: Bill and Brenda Evans live and write in Ashland, Kentucky. Contact them at beejayevans@windstream.net.



A Quiet Legacy...

Myrtle Reeds left behind everything she knew in Missouri when she and her husband Roger moved to Nashville, Tennessee, for him to serve as the director of the new Free Will Baptist Sunday School Department. For the next four decades, Myrtle worked quietly and diligently to create quality Sunday School materials, serving as children’s editor developing curriculum and teaching resources. While her husband traveled 50,000 miles a year promoting the department, Myrtle balanced household chores and raising children with her editorial work. Along the way, she influenced generations of Free Will Baptists through flannelgraphs, Bible picture cards, and missionary stories that often helped lead young people to their faith and calling.

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Blessed Fruit From Wicked Roots

BY PAUL V. HARRISON

“Be not overcome of evil but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21).

Three months into her marriage to Richard Edwards, Elizabeth Tuthill announced she was pregnant by another man. She continued her infidelities and once threatened to cut Richard’s throat while he slept. Horrible to say, her ravings seemed credible. One of her sisters murdered her own child, and a brother axed another sister to death. Richard obtained a divorce, but not before the couple had six children.

What good could *possibly* come from such a union? Well, their firstborn graduated from Harvard and pastored a single church for 64 years. He and his wife had 11 children—ten girls and a son, Jonathan.

The couple determined to overcome a sordid past and exemplify virtue in their home.

As a teen, young Jonathan penned 70 resolutions. Here’s a sampling:

- “Resolved, That I will do whatsoever I think to be most to the glory of God, and my own good, profit, and pleasure, in the whole of my duration.”
- “Resolved, Never to speak evil of any one, so that it shall tend to his dishonor, more or less, upon no account except for some real good.”

▪ “I frequently hear persons in old age say how they would live, if they were to live their lives over again: *Resolved,*

That I will live just so as I can think I shall wish I had done, supposing I live to old age.”

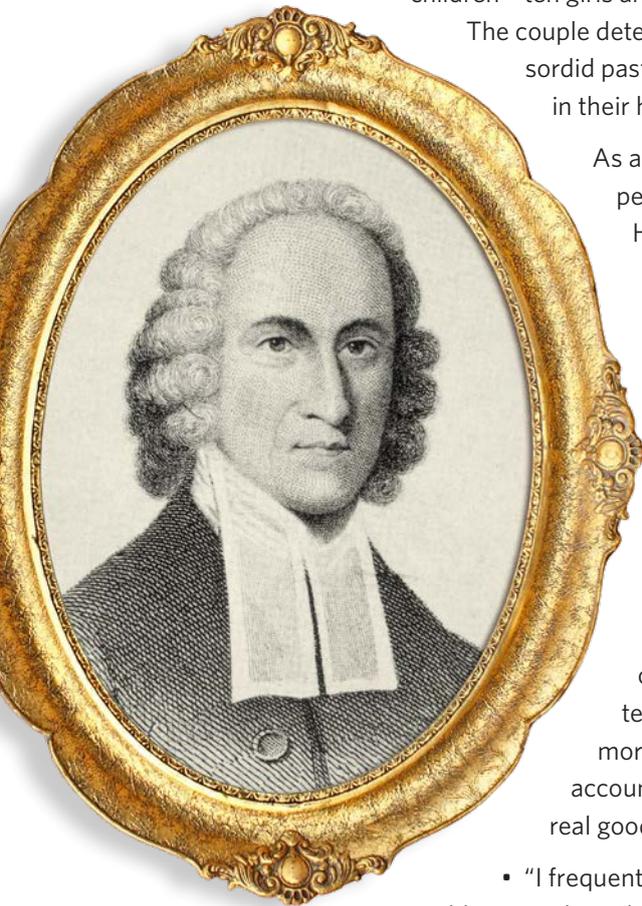
In 1726, Jonathan became assistant pastor to his grandfather in Northampton, Massachusetts. The next year he married Sarah Pierpont, of whom he had written three years earlier: “They say there is a young lady in [New Haven] who is loved of that Great Being, who made and rules the world, . . . and you could not persuade her to do any thing wrong or sinful, if you would give her all the world.”

In 1729, Stoddard died, and Jonathan took his place as pastor of the church for 21 years. In one sermon he warned: “Man, when he first comes into the world, is like a young twig, easily bent; but the longer you suffer [*i.e.*, allow] yourself to grow at random, the more you will be like an inflexible tree.” Such word pictures characterized his preaching. Describing Jesus’ agony in Gethsemane, he said: “Those great drops of blood that fell down to the ground were a manifestation of an ocean of love in Christ’s heart.”

Edwards’s preaching often left his congregation repenting and rejoicing. In 1750, however, he rejected a church tradition, and his people fired him. After serving a stint as missionary to Native Americans, he accepted the presidency of Princeton University. Before his death at age 54 of an inoculation gone bad, Edwards wrote weighty volumes still found in many ministerial libraries today.

Who could have guessed such wicked roots would produce such blessed fruit? **ONE**

About the Columnist: Paul V. Harrison has pastored Madison FWB Church in Madison, Alabama since 2015. Previously, he pastored Cross Timbers FWB church in Nashville, Tennessee, for 22 years. He was an adjunct professor at Welch College for 17 years, teaching church history and Greek. Paul is the creator of Classic Sermon Index, a subscription-based online index of over 66,000 sermons, with clients including Harvard, Baylor, and Vanderbilt, among others: classicsermonindex.com.





Meeting the

MOSAIC of NEEDS

BY BETH CAMPBELL,
DONNA FORREST,
AND CARRIE FORREST

Six-year-old Teddy* broke down every Sunday on the way to church. His parents dreaded these Sunday morning showdowns as he cried, screamed, and yelled in the back seat. Of course, Teddy's parents, devoted church members, insisted he go to church, including Sunday School and children's church. After weeks of tantrums, Teddy's parents begged him to tell them why he was so upset. Teddy finally confessed it was because he didn't want to do the worksheets and coloring pages his teachers gave him.

Teddy has a diagnosis that makes seemingly ordinary tasks like worksheets difficult. While Teddy's classmates enjoy the fun activities on their pages, for Teddy it represents another struggle to stay focused and the frustration over how easy and enjoyable the assignment is for everyone else. As a result, Teddy dreads Sundays.

How can churches help children like Teddy? As churches seek to minister to families and children, chances are some attendees will need unique methods for biblical instruction to meet their mosaic of needs. Recent statistics show 4.3% of children in the U.S. have some type of disability, with a cognitive difficulty being the most common (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The CDC reports approximately one in 54 children in the U.S. is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD), according to 2016 data. For these families, church can be a daunting place, filled with unknowns, frustrations, even danger.

* All names in the article have been changed to protect identities.

When our church realized we needed to serve struggling families more effectively, we were blessed to have special education professionals within the congregation who provided guidance. Because not all churches have these resources, allow us to share some basic principles that helped us minister to these families.

1. Church should be a place where families and children feel accepted and safe. Often, parents of children with special needs want to avoid embarrassing scenes or disruptions during the service. Publicly welcome them to your congregation and to your services. Use your church website or social media page to invite special needs families to your church and to explain how your church is meeting their needs. Be upfront about your desire to help families impacted by disability. Educate the congregation on how they can embrace and minister to these individuals. Start with small things: not staring or reacting negatively to outbursts. Remove any "stigma" surrounding interruptions or behavioral issues and make your church a welcoming place for everyone. Remind your congregation God knows, loves, and has a unique plan for every person (Psalm 139).

No matter how welcoming your church may be, safety remains a challenge. Charley's* parents were concerned for his safety at church. Charley has a developmental delay that means he doesn't sense or understand risk or danger. His parents worry about sending him to Sunday School



without them. What if he dashes out the door into the parking lot or from the breezeway into traffic on his way to children's church? What if he pulls a rack of chairs down on top of him while trying to climb them?

These and other serious safety issues for those with disabilities are something churches must address. Some safety and accessibility challenges can be overcome with simple solutions. Assign a volunteer to accompany at-risk children at all times. Create safe meeting spaces that prevent easy wandering or unintended access to potentially dangerous furniture or equipment. Remove physical access barriers by providing wheelchair ramps, adjustable height tables, and wheelchair-accessible bathrooms. Offer training for volunteers on how to handle a "runner," a child who may have occasional violent outbursts, and other common situations that may arise.

Other safety challenges may prove more difficult. If no one in your church family has experience in these areas, seek outside help. Invite a professional or a special needs family to visit your church, making note of their experience and identifying areas for improvement. Partner with other congregations to meet the wide variety of needs and make informed recommendations to parents about which congregation is best equipped to help them.

2. Parents are key to helping church workers understand their child's needs. As you prepare your church to welcome families with unique needs, talk with parents. Be open about your desire to make church a place where they feel safe, welcomed, and included. However, be honest about limitations. If your church is not equipped to handle certain challenges, acknowledge those limitations. Then ask parents what can be changed to help. Understand each person and each situation is unique and requires unique solutions.

Be prepared for criticism. Special needs ministry is hard, and things aren't always going to go right. Exhausted and frustrated parents may not respond well. Encourage parents to voice their complaints but direct them to a key person in the church rather than teachers and other volunteers. Ask parents to be involved in finding solutions, perhaps even training volunteers.

Develop a notification system. Church workers may need parents quickly on occasion. Develop an emergency re-

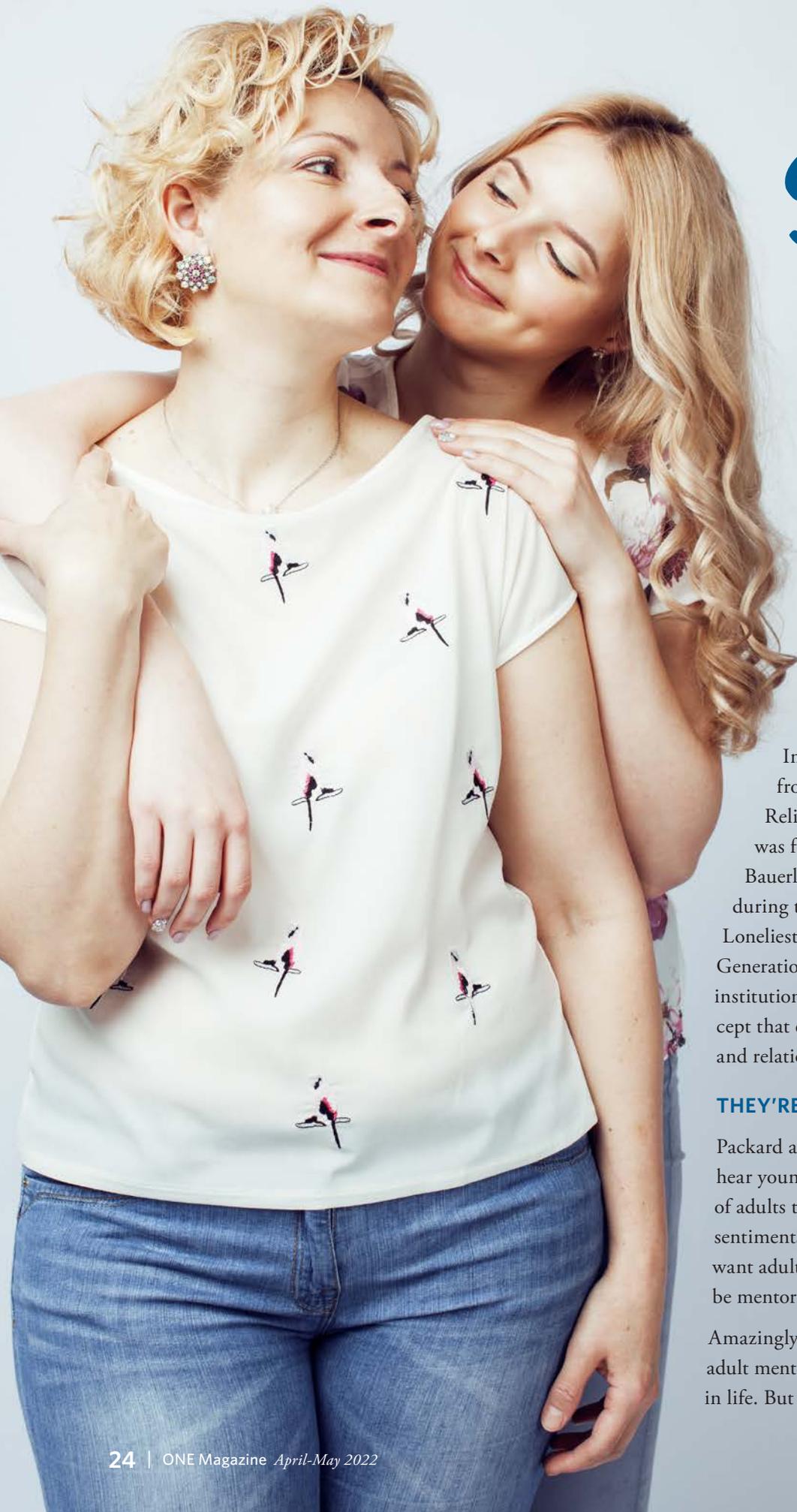
sponse procedure and train all workers to use it. This can range from the wireless "buzzers" like those used by many restaurants to a volunteer ready to make a quick dash to the sanctuary if the need arises. How you notify parents is not as important as being ready to do so *before* a situation arises.

3. Not all children learn at the same rate, or in the same way. This brief article does not allow space for a "deep dive" into educational methods, but consider a few suggestions: Equip rooms with sensory toys/activities. Avoid full spectrum (bright, primary colors) for painting and decorations. Keep lessons simple. Have active and alternative learning options for those who struggle with traditional learning methods (coloring sheets, activity sheets, etc.). Review often, using short, easy-to-remember points. Use audio-visual teaching aids, but don't rely on video, understanding it may over-stimulate some students. Remember music is a valuable (though sometimes chaotic) learning tool for most children.

Are you just getting started? **Don't expect perfection.** Special needs ministry is challenging, and the parents to whom you minister will understand the ups and downs. They live with them 24-7. Keep the "big picture" in mind. The goal is to provide a place where families are loved, accepted, and grow closer to Christ. Charley's mom reflects, "We've always appreciated how much the church tries to include Charley, and you all make him feel welcome.... Charley loves Jesus, and when we miss church, he is all over us, wearing us out. He loves church and does not like to miss. He takes a lot of patience, love, and understanding, and you give him that."

How can the church help children like Charley? It's simple, according to his mom. "Charley is a person with a heart and a soul, and we just want him to be included, loved, and accepted like any other child. Smiles and encouragement can really uplift a parent and give them the validation that they're doing something right. Everyone needs a 'Charley' in their life." **ONE**

About the Author: Beth Campbell is a counselor and administrator at Cheatham County Central High School in Ashland City, Tennessee. She works with Donna and Carrie Forrest in the children's program at Bethel FWB Church.



Reaching

GEN

Part
Two

Z

BY J. MATTHEW PINSON

In my last article, I discussed a recent study from Springtide Research, “The State of Religion and Young People 2020.” The study was featured in a conversation between Mark Bauerlein and sociologist Dr. Josh Packard during the First Things podcast entitled “The Loneliest Generation.” The study underscores that Generation Z, while lacking trust in existing social institutions, longs for “relational authority”—a concept that embodies the best of institutional authority and relationality.

THEY'RE NOT LOOKING FOR A BUDDY

Packard and his research team assumed they would hear young people in their study say they were tired of adults telling them what to do and other similar sentiments. Instead, these students said they don't want adults to be their buddies. They want adults to be mentors, a source of authority in their lives.

Amazingly, 24% of young people without strong adult mentors said they had no meaning or purpose in life. But when they have only one strong adult

mentor, that number drops to 6%! Yet between one-fourth and one-third of young people surveyed said they didn't have a single trusted adult in their lives, including their parents.

“INCREASED CONNECTIVITY, DECREASED CONNECTION”

The study underscored numerous other studies revealing today's young people are the loneliest segment of our society, unlike previous generations where older people were the loneliest people. Packard and Bauerlein note this statistic is counter-intuitive because of younger people's hyper-connectivity on social media.

Just as we need to be careful not to jettison institutions, we also need to be careful not to jettison in-person relationships. The study showed while members of Generation Z have many acquaintances on social media, those do not equate to real relationships or true embodied friendships. While they have increased connectivity, they have decreased connection.

This calls into question what the social media industry is fostering—the contrasting idea that social media *increases* relationships and community and *decreases* loneliness. This study and others reveal time spent on social media is directly correlated to increased feelings of isolation and loneliness. (Of course, we're not saying to do away with social media either; we've just got to reduce obsession with and addiction to it and figure out how to ask serious questions about it. Facebook's own internal research—recently brought to light by a whistle-blower—should heighten this awareness.)

As Packard said, social media is “giving adults a false sense of security about how plugged-in to social life their kids are. They see them on devices and with social media, and they incorrectly assume that they are handling it okay. It's one thing when your kids are playing in the front yard, and you hear them. But if you're not engaged with how they make friends and set rules and norms online, you can't assume that they're not lonely and isolated, because a lot of times they are.”

In addition to parents, much of the solution to loneliness, isolation, and lack of meaning and purpose used to be found in social institutions, especially religious institutions, Packard argues. That is no longer the case. Yet again, the answer is not to de-emphasize institutions but

to reinvest our institutions with a renewed emphasis on relational authority—the combination of authentic relationships and mentoring by an adult who has integrity.

MORE ON THE “NONES”

As an aside, the study also casts doubt on the way some people have interpreted “the rise of the Nones.” Packard forcefully argues that the rise of the Nones is more about growing anti-institutionalism and not necessarily a move away from religion. Along with other researchers, Packard and his team do not believe religious affiliation and non-affiliation, in connection with the question of “Nones,” are meaningful categories.

Much higher rates of young people now claim to be strongly religious but not affiliated with a *particular* religious group. The reality, Packard explains, is much more complicated than the two checkboxes of *religiously affiliated* and *non-affiliated* suggest. Young people who want to “engage in worship or read sacred texts,” etc., might well list themselves as religiously unaffiliated on a survey.

Many such young people, however, also claim to have strong “religious values” and “live them out,” “go to worship,” etc. It's more about an anti-institutional mindset rather than an anti-religion or anti-Christian one, Packard insists. In fact, he says, “religious leaders should see this as an opportunity.” The last thing we need to do in responding to anti-institutionalism, he asserts, is to indulge it or move away from strong, vibrant social or religious institutions.

A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY

Packard concludes: “There's a whole lot of young people that you might have thought were shut down to the very conversation about religion. And they're not. They're open to the conversation. But they're not going to have it with you because you are the pastor of such-and-such church.... They're going to have that conversation with you because you're Ben, and they know you because you've been around their lives. I do think that is a potential opportunity.”

We must have authority without authoritarianism, Packard explains. We must realize the days of young people respecting authority just because of a title like pastor, youth pastor, or teacher is a thing of the past. In this “culture of distrust around social institutions,” he argues, the more leaders rely on their position, title, or expertise rather than relational authority, the less effective they will be.

Still, Packard stresses, though Gen-Z sees personal relationships with adults of integrity lacking in many social institutions, including religious ones, these young people still regard expertise and authority as a necessary ingredient. Thus, the study shows, a leader's position and expertise are still crucial, but they're nothing without personal relationships and integrity.

LISTENING

The most important thing we can do to invite the members of Generation Z into the conversation about faith, the study shows, is to listen to them intently. Packard recommends asking one or two follow-up questions, saying "Tell me more about that." This is because young people are tempted to assume you're not really listening and don't really care. They won't listen to your experience and expertise as an adult if they think you don't care and aren't really listening.

I think Bauerlein and Packard are exactly right: "You can be very tough with kids if you're attentive, if you're there, if you're listening, if you're offering yourself. You can get a lot of trust that way."

DIAGNOSING THE PROBLEM, REDISCOVERING THE SOLUTION

I encourage readers to listen to this podcast, examine this study, and share these statistics and conclusions with oth-

ers who work with young people. The worst thing a leader can do when faced with a problem is to misdiagnose it. When we inadvertently do this, we usually not only fail to help the problem; we make it worse.

It's crucial not to misdiagnose the problem of why young people are checking out of church, because if we spend all our time on a well-intentioned but wrong solution, we'll find ourselves drifting further from the real solution.

Most of all, we must remind ourselves the ultimate answer—the ultimate solution—is found in God's ordinary means of grace revealed to us in Scripture. That's what struck me as I listened to Packard and Bauerlein. What they're saying (and what the research is showing) about the solution is "back to the future": sharing and teaching biblical truth, in the context of deep, personal, embodied relationships, with adults whose lives are marked by integrity.

This ancient strategy that emerges from this cutting-edge study is found in the Bible and the way God's people have interpreted it and lived it out over 20 centuries. And it's the solution to the most profound problems of people young and old today. May God guide and bless our efforts to engage and reach each new generation with His timeless and always relevant truth. **ONE**

About the Author: Dr. J. Matthew Pinson has been president of Welch College since 2002. Learn more: www.Welch.edu.

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Josh Owens Resigns from Welch



Josh Owens

After ten years as director of marketing and media, Josh Owens has announced his departure from Welch College, according to President Matt Pinson.

Over the past decade, Owens helped the college build a strong visual brand through print and digital designs. He helped lead the rebranding efforts after the college name change in 2012 and helped introduce the college to the Gallatin community during its relocation in 2017. He has overseen two website rebuilds and redesigns, the most recent taking place in 2021. In addition to print and digital work, he has helped oversee the college's annual FORUM/Bible Conference since 2011.

“It’s hard to say goodbye to Josh,” Pinson said. “We love him. He’s been a part of the college, in one way or

another, since he came as a student in 2003, and even at that time, with his landscaping business, he was working to improve the college’s image.”

“I am thankful for my time at Welch College,” Owens said. “President Pinson and the entire leadership team have trusted me to bring the Welch brand to life over the past ten years through a variety of print and digital designs. I am thankful for the opportunities I have had to serve alongside many wonderful and talented people. As I look back over my time at Welch, it is evident God has been developing and preparing me to serve in this new role. I look forward to supporting and serving the college in new ways as they continue to educate leaders to serve Christ.”

Owens assumed his new role February 21 as digital user experience designer at HCA Healthcare, headquartered in Nashville. 

Jeff Caudill to Serve as Marketing Operations Manager



Jeff Caudill

Middle Tennessee pastor Jeff Caudill has been selected as marketing operations manager at Welch College, according to Daniel Webster, enrollment services director.

“I am so excited to announce Jeff’s appointment,” Webster said. “I’ve never had the opportunity to work closely with Jeff, but everyone who has speaks highly of his administrative abilities. With Jeff’s organizational skills and institutional knowledge,

I believe this part-time position is a perfect fit. I am excited about the future marketing program at Welch.”

Caudill currently serves as executive pastor at Cofer’s Chapel in Nashville, a pastorate he has held since 2010. He plans to continue in this position. Before his time at

Cofer’s Chapel, Jeff served at Welch for ten years (2000-2010), as director of enrollment services. Caudill holds two degrees, a bachelor’s degree in Youth Ministry from Welch (1999) and a master’s degree in Educational Leadership from Trevecca University (2010).

“I am looking forward to the opportunity to be back on the Welch campus,” Jeff notes. “It is exciting to see how God in His providence has made it possible for me to take on the role of marketing operations manager while continuing to serve at Cofer’s Chapel. Welch College has always held a special place in my heart.”

Jeff has been married to Calisse for 41 years. They have two daughters and five grandchildren. The Caudills’ daughters and sons-in-law—Stephen and Rebekah Lopes, Joshua and Rachel Eidson—are all Welch alumni. 

Facing Down Temptation

BY BARRY RAPER

James 1:12-18

As a young teen, I remember riding in the back of the truck with two friends. My mom was driving us home down a dusty backroad shortcut through the woods. The three of us boys decided to see who could grab the biggest handful of leaves from the tree limbs along the way. At some point, I looked over the cab of the truck and saw a huge limb headed right for us. I thought, "This is the one!"

I readied myself, and at just the right moment, I reached up and grabbed the limb. But instead of pulling the leaves from the limb, before I realized what was happening, the limb pulled me from the truck. Thankfully, my mother didn't run over me, and the only real pain I experienced came from landing on my face in the road.

As an adult, I have discovered temptation is much like that experience. You reach for something enticing, and before you realize what is happening, sin has a grip on you, and you find yourself face down on the road to destruction. We all face temptation. It is not a matter of *if* but *when*. No one is exempt, and no believer reaches a place where he or she isn't tempted. If you are battling temptation right now, understand you are not alone.

What do you do when you are tempted? How do you handle it? What should you do? One of the most important things is to **recognize the source of your temptation**. James tells us temptation originates within—our inner desires. In James 1:14-15, he shared three stages of temptation: desire, determination, death.

Desire

Desires are part of being human. We were created by God in His image to think, feel, and act. However, those desires were damaged by the Fall and have been twisted by human nature leading to sinful and damaging behavior. For example, we all have a natural desire to eat, and nourishment is necessary for our bodies to be healthy. As broken sinners, however, we often take eating to extremes. If we

eat too much, the Bible calls it gluttony. And if we give in to this sin, it quickly becomes damaging to our health. Therefore, the biblical emphasis on moderation and self-control is ultimately for our good.

We can also apply this to sexual desire. On one hand, we know sexual desires are right, good, and natural. Ultimately, sex was God's idea. From the beginning, He made us male and female, created to be joined as husband and wife into "one flesh." From that standpoint, our inward desire for sexual activity is both natural and good. On the other hand, sin can twist these desires before or outside of marriage. And when we yield to sinful desires and make a conscious choice to cross dangerous lines, we start down a dangerous and often deadly road.

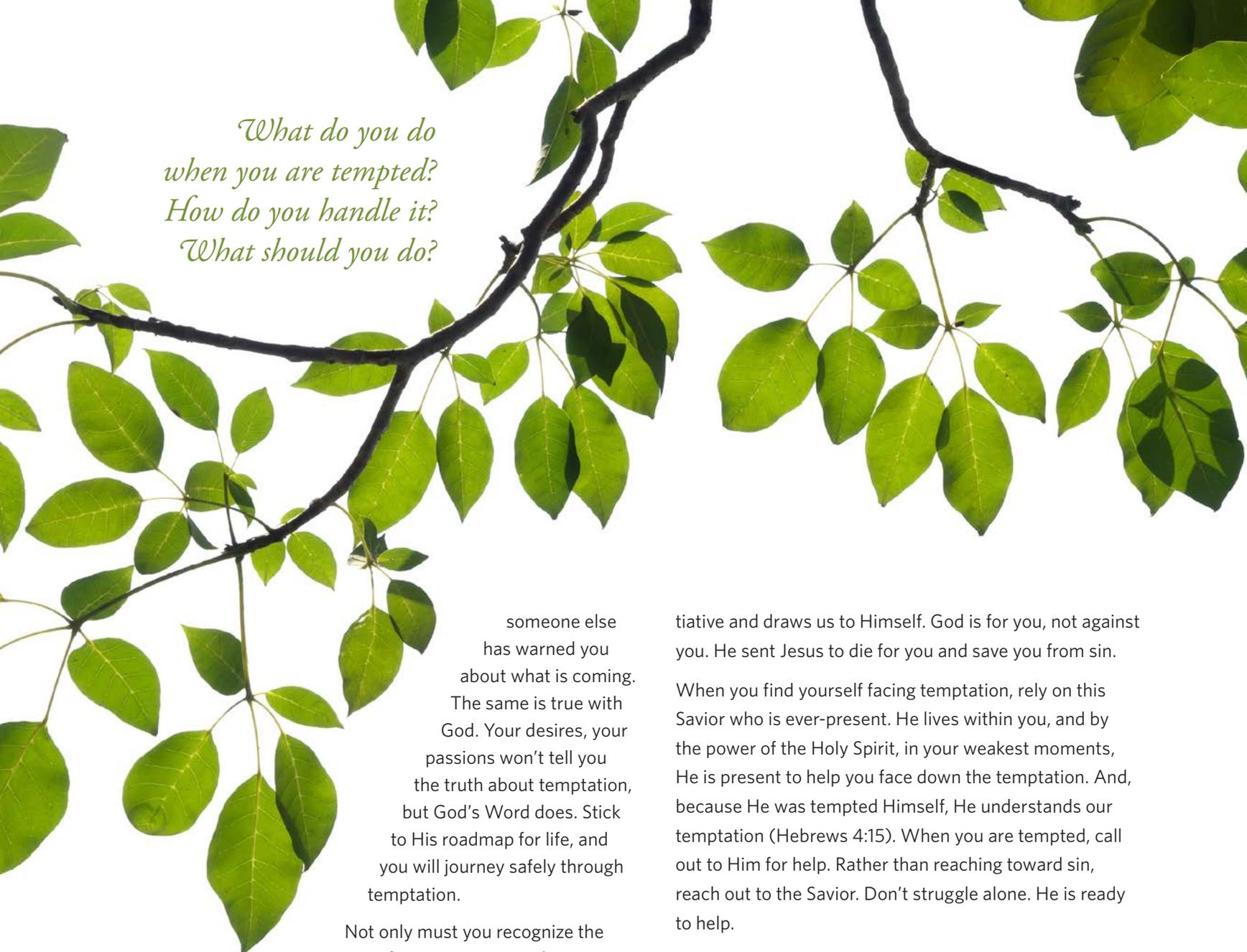
When I don't resist inclinations toward evil desires, I get closer to acting out those desires. James used the metaphor of birth and life, telling his readers when desire has "conceived," it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown or mature, results in death.

I have a great traffic app on my phone. The first few times I used it, I was surprised by all it would do. Living near Nashville, Tennessee, traffic can be a real headache. I soon discovered the app had a feature to alert you to hazards ahead. Immediately, I began using it. A few minutes later, the app warned, "Watch out! Roadkill ahead."

I thought, "What?! How does it know about a dead animal on a remote Tennessee highway?"

Sure enough, a quarter of a mile later, I passed a dead deer on the shoulder of the road. I was mystified until a friend at church explained the traffic app is a social app. When other users see something "down the road," they report it. That way, before you find yourself in danger,





*What do you do
when you are tempted?
How do you handle it?
What should you do?*

someone else has warned you about what is coming. The same is true with God. Your desires, your passions won't tell you the truth about temptation, but God's Word does. Stick to His roadmap for life, and you will journey safely through temptation.

Not only must you recognize the source of your temptation, those powerful inner desires, but when you are tempted, you also must **rely on a Savior who is present.** After describing the character of God in verse 13, James revisits those characteristics in verse 17: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Someone has pointed out the good things in your life don't come from below, around, or within. They come from above. Every good thing in life can be traced to the heart and hand of God. He loves you and has good plans for you. In fact, it was *His choice* to save you. That is what verse 18 teaches. Sure, we have a choice to make in the matter of salvation, to repent of our sin and trust the saving work of Christ. But the Bible also teaches Christ first takes the ini-

tiative and draws us to Himself. God is for you, not against you. He sent Jesus to die for you and save you from sin.

When you find yourself facing temptation, rely on this Savior who is ever-present. He lives within you, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, in your weakest moments, He is present to help you face down the temptation. And, because He was tempted Himself, He understands our temptation (Hebrews 4:15). When you are tempted, call out to Him for help. Rather than reaching toward sin, reach out to the Savior. Don't struggle alone. He is ready to help.

Remember the stormy night Peter left the boat and began walking on the water toward Jesus? He suddenly realized he was surrounded by wind and waves and storm, and he was afraid. His faith shrank, and he began to sink. In desperation, he cried out, "Lord, save me." Immediately, Jesus stretched out His hand and helped Peter safely through the storm.

In our culture, it may seem impossible to live a holy life that brings glory to God. At times, you might even feel like Peter, sinking in a storm of temptation. But remember Peter and reach for the Savior. He will be waiting to help. **ONE**

About the Columnist: Dr. Barry Raper pastors Bethel FWB Church near Ashland City, TN. He is associate dean of Welch Divinity School.

Strangers in OUR LAND

BY CLINT MORGAN

From an early age I heard the warning “stranger-danger.” We kids were clearly instructed not to take things from a stranger. In today’s world, living under the mantra *stranger-danger* would keep us paralyzed by fear, perhaps spending an inordinate amount of time barricaded in our homes. None of us desire to live in a constant state of alarm. So, how do we respond to the growing presence of strangers in our land?

A quick glance at significant facts and figures may help our discussion. The population of the world is 7.9 billion. The United States claims 333.6 million inhabitants. In our ever-changing country, we can barely leave home without encountering one of the 44.8 million, or 13.7%, foreign-born inhabitants in the U.S. An estimated 10.3 million of the foreign born are undocumented (american-immigrationcouncil.org).

Taking note of these statistics, we realize immigrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers make up a large social grouping affecting our lives at many levels. Therefore, we cannot push this matter aside and think ignoring it solves it.

A vast majority of those seeking entry into the U.S. are escaping situations of constant danger. In their birth countries, they faced extreme poverty, war, crime, and daily threats. Escaping these conditions simply made sense. They are willing to leave the familiar and take enormous risks to enter the unknown, because their present situation is unbearable and life threatening. Immediately upon arrival in the United States, or any country, they come face to face with life-changing elements:

- Living in unfamiliar surroundings (lodging, transportation, shopping, medical service, etc.)
- Demands of operating in a new language
- Dealing with being an “unwanted stranger”
- Hearing about another God.

In days gone by, missionaries went to the nations. God is now bringing the nations to us. The primary question is: how do we, as followers of Christ, address the increasing challenges and opportunities before us, with the influx of immigrants and refugees in the U.S.?

A 2015 Lifeway Research poll found “90% of all evangelicals say the Scripture has no impact on their views toward immigration reform.” It is sobering, even frightening, to think the Bible is not the primary source guiding Christians in their thoughts regarding a matter as important as immigration.

A subsequent Lifeway study (2017) indicated, “Protestant congregations in America were twice as likely to fear refugees as help them.” The survey revealed 20% of evangelicals see immigration as a threat to U.S. customs and values, while 48% consider it a burden on our society. This attitude among the evangelical community is disconcerting.



It was encouraging to read “Senior pastors overwhelmingly believed Christians have a responsibility to care sacrificially for refugees and foreigners.” Yet, only 33% of evangelical pastors address the issue of immigration from the pulpit. Will people in the pews grapple with such questions if their leadership chooses not to?

DANGEROUS PRESUPPOSITIONS

Presuppositions about the strangers in our land will, to a great degree, color our response to them. As humans, we see the world through a grid of accumulated knowledge and experiences. These form our *presuppositions*. We interpret and react to what we see, hear, and sense through the filter of those presuppositions.

As we seek to develop a practical, biblical response to the challenges and opportunities offered by the presence of nearly 45 million immigrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers, we should deal with some major presuppositions that may completely slant our responses.

First, consider some negative presuppositions that skew one’s processing. If one perceives those coming to the U.S. from other countries as:

- A raider of the work force
- A financial burden to our country
- A menace to our culture
- A danger to our religious beliefs
- A disturbance in our educational system
- A carrier of strange and dangerous diseases
- A nuisance in our communications
- A threat to our security (such as terrorists, infiltrators, spies, etc.)

our thoughts and actions will tend toward the negative. If this is the starting point of one’s thinking, it will be difficult, but not impossible, to move toward a compassionate response.

No doubt, some of those coming to the U.S. do arrive with hate-filled hearts and present a threat. However, should we allow this to be the dominant factor directing our actions and reactions to the presence of non-native Americans? The truth is, practically all of us need only go back a few generations to find family members who were *strangers* in the United States.

POSITIVE PRESUPPOSITIONS

Let’s examine some values we, as Christians, should allow to guide us in caring for the strangers in our land. First, it is imperative we see every human being, specifically each immigrant or refugee, through God’s view—a viewpoint solidly based on the biblical principles regarding all humanity. We should agree on the following declarations:

- All people are God’s creation.
- Every human has a soul with eternal value.
- Christians should love all people as we love ourselves.
- All inhabitants of this earth have the right to feel loved, safe, and valued.
- Everyone should have access to the necessities of life.
- God desires all humans spend eternity with Him.
- Christ died for all mankind.
- He has commissioned us to take the gospel to *all nations* and this includes those coming to us as immigrants and refugees.

Take another look at this list. One-by-one, ask the simple question: *are there any exceptions?* If there are no exceptions, these principles should take a higher priority in deciding our actions. They call us to move beyond Christian rhetoric to ask how loving our neighbor as ourselves is lived out among our immigrant and refugee neighbors. Using this affirmative, Bible-based perspective makes it more likely we will respond compassionately and justly.

THE WORD SPEAKS

It would be pretentious of me, or anyone, to declare a definitive answer regarding how to respond to the challenges and opportunities of immigrants and refugees in the U.S. Yet, let’s remind ourselves once again of biblical teaching. Both the Old and New Testaments provide principles to guide us. Numerous verses address this subject.

Old Testament

Exodus 12:49. “One law shall be to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.”

Leviticus 19:9c, 10b. “Thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field...neither shalt thou gather every grape

ACTION STEPS

What are some concrete actions we can take to address these challenges and opportunities?

PRAY. First and foremost, ask God to direct us.

Be INTENTIONAL about getting to know the foreign-born in your neighborhood.

- **Learn their names.** Make an honest effort to pronounce their names correctly. Though sometimes challenging, remember how important it is for people to call you by name.
- **Inquire about their family.** In most cultures, family is valued. Asking about family is a great first step in getting to know someone.
- **Ask about their homeland.** It is important to do this in a polite manner. Generally, it is not appropriate to straightforwardly ask, “Where were you born?” It is perhaps better to say, “I really enjoy learning about the world. May I ask about your birth country?” This can be followed by more questions.

We should purpose to HELP the strangers in our land feel:

- Loved
- Safe
- Valued

We should ASSIST newcomers in learning to acquire the necessities of life in a way that does not create dependency.

- Proper legal documents
- Transportation
- Grocery stores
- Banks
- Police departments
- Schools, etc.

We need to be exceedingly COMMITTED TO:

- Praying for the strangers in our land.
- Reaching out to them to become acquainted.
- Ministering to their needs, if possible.
- Sharing Christ, even if they are resistant and do not receive Him.
- Loving and being kind, even if they do not reciprocate.

of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger.”

Leviticus 19:34. “But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

Deuteronomy 24:14. “Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates.”

New Testament

Matthew 25:44-45. “Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.”

Luke 4:18b. “Preach the gospel to the poor... preach deliverance to the captives... set at liberty them that are bruised.”

James 2:14-17. “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”

May we, as Christians, expend the time and energy necessary to properly grapple with this opportunity in a manner that promotes Christian values and demonstrates God’s love, mercy, and justice to *strangers in our land*. If we act properly, it will bring respect to Christianity. Most importantly, a proper response will bring honor and glory to God. **ONE**

About the Author: Clint Morgan has been director of IM, Inc. since 2011. Learn more: iminc.org.



My AMERICAN DREAM

BY CASEY JONES

As a 25-year-old man, bundled up against the harsh Ukrainian winter, I stood for 30 minutes watching people to figure out how to ride the bus. A simple task, but new to the culture and language, it didn't come easily or quickly to me.

Fast-forward to my return to the United States. I watched my international friends struggle through our American systems. They experienced the same confusion I encountered serving overseas. My friends were victimized because they didn't know our culture, language, or systems. I knew something had to change, so I started advocating for them and walking alongside them. I helped them navigate doctors' visits and insurance, understand their basic rights as tenants, find employment and adequate housing, or simply open a bank account. I loved it.

Slowly, my efforts morphed into what has become the American Dream Center. I started this nonprofit organization in fall 2017. We help families achieve their Amer-

ican dream, believing everyone deserves to flourish in the country they call home. Why do we do this? It is simple: God has commanded us to care for the foreigner as ourselves, to love our neighbor as ourselves. Multiple Scripture verses, from both Old and New Testaments, refer to taking care of the foreigner (sometimes called *strangers* or *sojourners*), treating them with the same respect offered to native-born citizens.

The American Dream Center assists immigrants in three main areas. First, with immigration legal services we help them navigate the confusing process of immigration. Second, we provide advocacy and assistance. Things like insurance, driver's licenses and car registrations, enrolling kids in school, doctor visits, and renter's rights



fall into this area. Finally, we help them find good, honest employment by providing resume building and classes in interview skills.

After her citizenship swearing-in ceremony, one Mexican woman tearfully thanked us. “I can’t believe I’m done. I thought this would never happen.”

It’s amazing to walk alongside people and help them over their hurdles. They are grateful someone has taken time to help. One woman said, “American Dream Center has been amazing, helping my husband and me with his immigration process. At every step, they have been in full communication about what is needed and what to expect. They made us feel like they only want the best for us and wanted us to succeed in the process.”

Leaving a job interview, a Syrian man turned to me and asked, “Why are you doing this?”

I quickly replied, “Jesus loves you, and so do I.” This man and his family started a Bible study not long after.

The nations are here! God has made missions easy. No longer do I have to travel across the globe; I simply need to cross the street. During the past year we helped more than 100 families from 46 countries. People from countries I will never visit now live in my own backyard. We help provide their physical needs so we can share the Good News with them and meet their spiritual needs. People from closed countries hear the gospel for the first time because American Dream Center welcomes them.

May we never forget Jesus’ powerful words: “When I was a stranger, you welcomed me.” 

About the Author: Former missionary to Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Ivory Coast, Romania, and Panama, Casey Jones is executive director of the American Dream Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma, a partner organization of IM, Inc. Learn more: americandreamcenters.org.



From *Honduras* to *Athens*

BY JOEL FRANKS

Dreams don't come true every day. In fact, many people would say a dream come true is the rarest event in life. But for the follower of Christ, dreams *should* come true, at least occasionally. We serve a mighty God. And when our dreams are in accordance with His will, we should expect to realize them. After all, that is what prayer is all about!

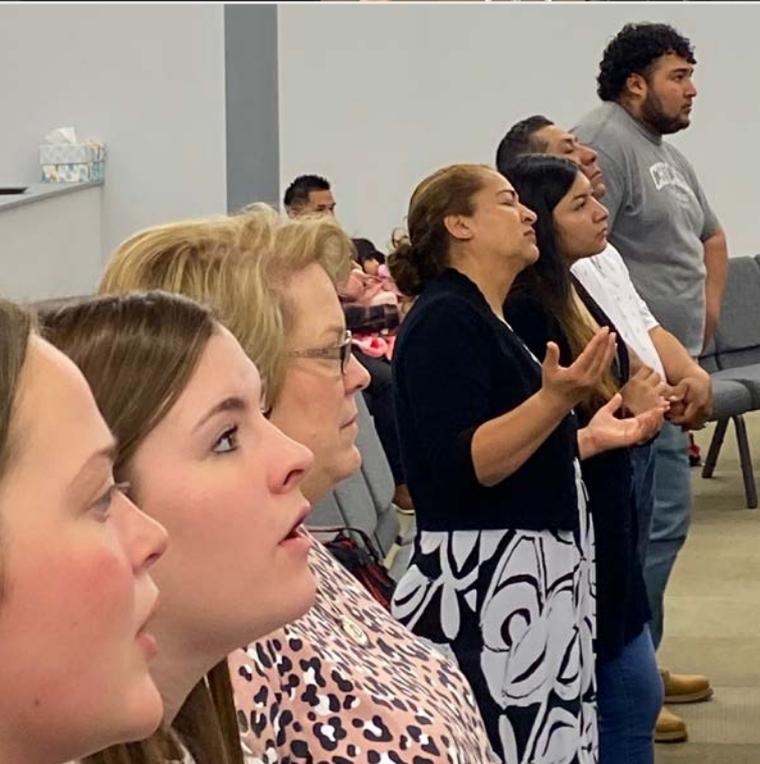
When B.J. Eaton and I started mapping out our design for planting a new Free Will Baptist church, we dreamed of a multicultural church body. But we were moving to Athens, Alabama. The churches in this area are, unfortunately, still

largely separated by culture and ethnicity. For the first two years that Cultivate Church existed, we struggled to reach people who looked different from us. That's not to say we didn't have many visitors from various ethnicities, but the truth is our church was "whiter" than we had prayed it would be.

But we didn't stop praying. We never stopped dreaming of a day when we would have a multiethnic congregation. And in 2021, God began to answer that prayer in His own timing. Pastor Amilcar Castro from Progreso, Yoro, Honduras was a friend of ours. We had been supporting him as he planted three different Free Will Baptist churches in five years. We had been to visit him, and he had come to visit us, and even preached in our church. Then God opened the door for Amilcar to move to the United States permanently.

That still didn't mean Cultivate Church would be able to bring him to Athens. We are a new church plant and a joint project between North American Ministries and the Alabama Mission Board. As I prepared to talk with our leaders, I prayed I would not hear those dreaded words, "We've never done it like that before." And God answered the prayer. Though Free Will Baptists had never started a church like *this* before, our leadership saw the value in doing so now.





Athens is experiencing explosive growth. Thousands of people are moving into this suburb of Huntsville every year. Many of these new people speak Spanish exclusively, and we were not equipped to reach them. Cultivate Church desperately needed help in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with Spanish-speakers. God heard our cry for help and worked everything out for Amilcar to come and work with us.

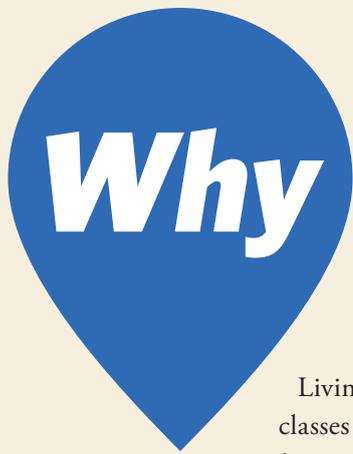
Though we faced uncertainty and unforeseen obstacles, the Lord was in control at every turn. Sometimes, it was a last-minute answer to prayer that paved the way—like when we couldn't find housing for our new pastor and his family. No apartments or houses were available to rent for months. But right after I scheduled a call to tell them to postpone the move, a house became available a mile from the church. In just a few days, our church people had fully furnished the house and through another faithful supporter, provided a car.

This new ministry opportunity looks different than anything we have done in the past. Like it will be in heaven, we have one church that worships God *together* with different tongues. Over the last two months, we have seen many cultures represented: Hondurans, Cubans, Guatemalans, Venezuelans, Dominicans, and Mexicans have joined those born here in the States. We may all be different nationalities and cultures, but we follow the same Jesus!

On Wednesdays, we gather to eat a pot-luck dinner before Bible studies in Spanish for some and English for others. We have an English service on Sunday that some of our Latino brethren attend and a Spanish service some of the Anglo people attend. We may not comprehend everything, but we are there to worship God and minister to one another.

It is clear to everyone we are *one* Free Will Baptist church sent to reach the people of Athens with the gospel message. God is blessing the work. In the first two weeks of 2022, we have baptized three people. One looked like me. The others did not. Our dream is coming true before our tear-filled eyes. **ONE**

About the Authors: Joel Franks and B. J. Eaton are joint church planters with North American Ministries and the Alabama Home Mission Board to Athens, Alabama. Learn more: cultivateathens.org.



Why Go to Church?

BY JACOB*



Living in southern France, I took French classes at a local university last year. One day, we learned how to give directions. My professor taught us basic phrases to help people: “take a left,” “take a right,” “cross the street,” and other simple but useful commands.

Using a city map in our language books, she asked us how to get to various places. Each time she asked for directions, she gave us a reason she wanted to go to there. “I would like to get a book; how do I get to the library?” “I want a croissant; how do I get to the bakery?”

Practically every French map identifies church locations, and *l’église* or “the church” is a vocabulary word everyone learns. My professor asked us how to get to the church... and stopped. She tried to think of a reason she wanted or needed to go to a church but couldn’t come up with one. It became an awkward, uncomfortable silence. Finally, she said she needed to meet someone in front of the church.

The only reason she could come up with to go to a church was to meet someone—not a wedding, not a funeral, not Christmas or Easter. She simply wanted to meet a friend in front of the church to go somewhere else.

I had always heard French people were secular and non-religious. Many claim to be both Roman Catholic and atheists. Their “religion” is entirely cultural. While I knew this factually, this moment was the first time I experienced it.

Recently, I talked to Pedro Garcia, the outreach pastor at The Donelson Fellowship, about atheism in Europe. He grew up as an atheist in Spain before coming to know Christ as Savior. When we talked, he used the term *apathetic*. According to Pedro, most European atheists don’t consider themselves atheists—not because they believe in God; they have never thought about it. They simply don’t care. They are apathetic toward God and anything supernatural.

In the United States, most atheists consciously choose to believe God does not exist. In Europe, people are atheists because they simply never have thought about Him. From an early age, children in the French school system are taught that people who believe in God are stupid. The French think they have outgrown God. They put their trust in science and regard spiritual things as silly superstitions. This makes sharing the gospel with many French people difficult.

How do you share the gospel with someone who—at best—has never thought of God’s existence as a real possibility? Or who, at worst, thinks you are stupid for believing in Him? This is the reality for ministry among the French. Pray with us for God to move in the hearts and lives of these disinterested people, so they will know He is real, and He cares for them, even if they have never cared about or even considered Him. 

About the Author: Jacob (last name withheld for security reasons) is an English teacher serving with The Hanna Project. He has done humanitarian work in Cote d’Ivoire and helped with an English, Music, and Sports Camp in Bulgaria. Jacob is using English as a means for improving the lives of North African immigrants in Southern France. Learn more: hannaproject.com.



Are **YOU** the Weakest Link?

BY ERIC K. THOMSEN

“Red Rover, Red Rover, send Jenny right over.”

Perhaps you remember the game of Red Rover from childhood. Two teams, arms linked, face one another. One team recites the familiar sing-song chant, usually picking out the scrawniest, weakest member of the opposing team. The unlucky kid leaves his team’s line and runs full speed across the playground to (hopefully) break through the linked arms of the opposing team. The simple object of the game? To find the weakest link.

Nehemiah 3 is honestly the kind of chapter I sometimes want to skip during daily Bible readings—a virtual laundry list of unpronounceable names. Yet, upon closer examination, Nehemiah 3 is not a chapter to skip. It may be the most interesting chapter in a fascinating book, filled with subtle yet important lessons about the work of God.

Perhaps you remember Nehemiah’s moment in history. In 587 BC, Judah was overthrown, and its people deported to Babylon, with only a handful left behind to care for the land. Half a century later, in 538 BC, then-king Cyrus allowed some exiles to return and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem eight years later, in roughly 530 BC. He was one of three men who led the Judeans back to their homeland. Zerubbabel built the temple, Ezra brought the law back into Israel’s life, and Nehemiah rebuilt the city wall to make Jerusalem secure.

While Zerubbabel and Ezra worked in the religious realm, Nehemiah was sent to govern the people. The returning exiles needed strong leadership to handle the opposition to their work and complete the daunting tasks before them.

We know little about Nehemiah, particularly his youth or background. We first meet him as an adult exile serving in the Persian royal court, the personal cupbearer to King Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 1:11–2:1). This trusted (and

prestigious) position reveals something about Nehemiah’s sterling character.

Nehemiah was a layman, not a priest like Ezra or a prophet like Malachi. He served the Persian king faithfully before leading the effort to rebuild his homeland. It is likely Nehemiah’s experiences in the Persian court equipped him well for the political and physical challenges he encountered in Jerusalem. Under his leadership, the Jews withstood opposition and came together to accomplish their goal of rebuilding the wall. This book contains Nehemiah’s firsthand account of the massive undertaking.

That brings us to chapter 3. It is a simple chapter, a straightforward listing of “who did what” to rebuild the Jerusalem wall. I can almost see Nehemiah making notes on a yellow legal pad as he walked the city perimeter overseeing the labor. In fact, a map reveals the list moves counterclockwise around the city.

Obviously, a brief article doesn’t allow for a detailed exploration of each group of workers and the repairs they made. But within these verses, Nehemiah’s record reveals several important principles about the work of the Lord—principles still important for today’s church.

They embraced a common goal. Nehemiah communicated his vision well, and each group mentioned in this chapter worked together to carry out their portion of the task. Together, they accomplished what no single person or group could do alone. This remains true for Free Will Baptists and the church in general.

It takes all kinds of people to carry out God’s work. From priests and merchants, doctors to goldsmiths, rulers to shepherds—all did their part to complete the task before them. This is a great reminder for believers today.



The church is greatest when it embraces diversity and aids individual believers in finding and fulfilling unique roles within the Body of Christ.

Families working together for God are a powerful testimony. Nehemiah pointed out the sons of Hassenaah in verse 3 and Shallum and his daughters (way to go, ladies) in verse 12. How about today? The Teague families serve as missionaries in France. The Hampton families are planting a church in Missoula, Montana. Three generations of Forrest and Milom families work together at my own church. These families and myriad others like them quietly live out their faith and mission before a watching world, teaching each new generation the importance of

lives devoted to Christ. It is vital for the church to continue to equip families to embrace the challenges and opportunities of ministry...together.

God rarely takes remarkable people and makes them willing. He takes willing people and makes them remarkable.

Sometimes God's work will (really) stretch us. Jewelers and perfume makers were among the workers Nehemiah described. They probably didn't know much about building walls, but they did not shirk from the task and did what needed to be done. God didn't need a thousand

masons and carpenters to rebuild the wall. He used ordinary people willing to work. By the way, this remains true. God rarely takes remarkable people and makes them willing. He takes willing people and makes them remarkable. From hardware store to corporate office, God is looking for men and women who simply hand over their lives to Him without reservation. He has promised to do the rest.

God's work is not always pleasant. "You want me to work *where*? The Dung Gate? You've got to be kidding!" The Dung Gate was the entrance where all the sacrificial waste, garbage, and entrails were carried from the city. Yuck. Yet, in verse 14, Malchiah, the son of Rechab, didn't hesitate. He got the job done despite the gore. In case you haven't noticed, plenty of "Dung Gates" remain in God's work today. Those jobs in the Kingdom may not be glamorous, but "dirty work" is as essential as any other ministry.

God's work often puts others first. It's interesting that throughout the chapter, most repairs were made near the homes of the workers:

- Verse 10 – Jedaiah made repairs opposite his house.
- Verse 23 – Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs in front of their house; and Azariah made repairs beside his house.
- Verse 28 – The priests made repairs, each in front of his house.
- Verse 29 – Zadok made repairs opposite his house.

But in verse 21, in the middle of all of this *Home Make-over: Jerusalem Style*, we find Mere-moth. While the others were concerned about repairing the wall in front of their own homes, he was busy repairing the section in front of someone else's house—never mind his own.

It's bad to be the weak link. In verse 3, we find a sad commentary. While the common men of Tekoa worked diligently, their nobles refused. As Nehemiah described it, they "put not their necks to the work of their Lord."

Yikes! That is not how I want God to describe my life. The leaders, the wealthy landowners of this small "suburb" of Jerusalem, refused to work, and their actions were recorded for eternity. God takes Kingdom work seriously, and He expects everyone to do his or her part. When I consider these nobles, it is my prayer that Free Will Baptists never reach the point we think *any* job in the Kingdom is beneath us.

Also interesting: when the nobles of Tekoa didn't lead, God still accomplished His will through the common men of the village. They finished their own assignment and moved on to complete another section of the wall, as recorded in verse 27. They went above and beyond, despite the poor example of their nobles. It's a good reminder that God will accomplish His will. It is up to us to join Him in what He is doing.

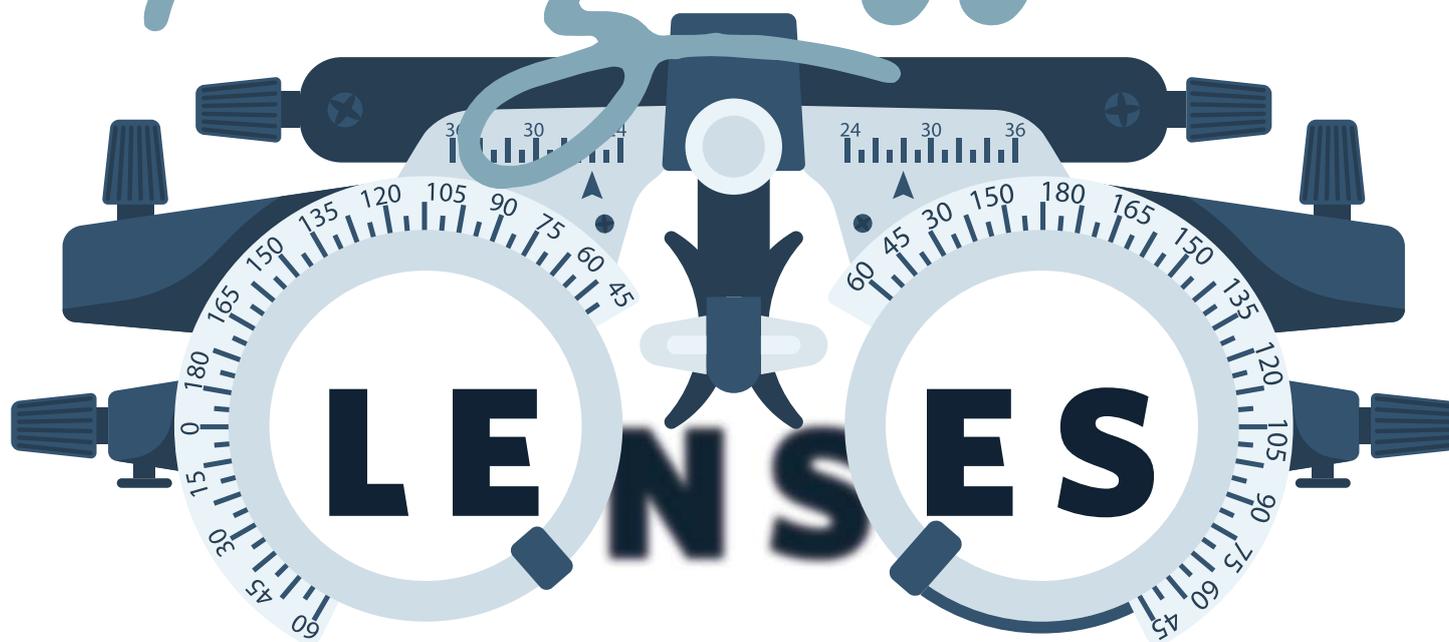
And that brings me back to the game of Red Rover. It is the picture that always comes to mind when I read this chapter: an army of determined believers standing shoulder to shoulder, arms linked, hearts joined, faces set, refusing to be the weak link. Men and women determined to carry out the work of the Kingdom...together.

I have a feeling Nehemiah would have enjoyed the game.

ONE

About the Author: Eric K. Thomsen is the managing editor of *ONE Magazine*.

Progressive



BY CAROL REID

I scratched my glasses.

I'm not talking about a little scratch. I'm talking about rubbing against the can of spray-on sunscreen in my backpack while I walked for an hour on the beach. Picture a big gash, right in the middle of the (formerly) no-line bifocal.

At first, I tried to clean that annoying spot. I even took soap and water and tried to wash it away. No luck. When I realized it was indeed a scratch, and my glasses were not wearable unless I kept one eye closed, I was in a fix.

We immediately went to a dollar store and bought three pairs of reading glasses (one for computer, one for books, and one spare). Then I spent six weeks pulling them on and off, trying to adjust, trying to keep up with the ones I needed, trying

to look from the person in my office back to the computer screen or page we were discussing.

After a visit to the eye doctor for a new prescription and a long wait for lenses, I was so thankful when my new glasses arrived, and I could see again. Yes, those Verilux progressive lens, no-line bifocals cost an arm and a leg, but they are worth it.

Vision is so important to us! If you don't (yet) depend on a pair of bifocals like I do, you should thank the Lord for good eyes. We are blessed to live in the twenty-first century when modern healthcare enables us to read or drive or see a screen, even when our vision is less than perfect.

Some people have "far and near" contact lenses—where one eye adjusts for distance vision, and the

other for close-up views. Friends say it takes some getting used to, but they can quickly see whatever they need to see. We expect to see *automatically*, without extra effort or concentration. We expect to see near and far—all at once.

That is God's expectation for us too, to see the needs of others, near and far away, all at once.

FIND YOUR FOCUS

God wants our focus to be first on Him. Even when we are overwhelmed and confused, we can be centered in God's presence and assured of His help. It is crucial to put our full focus on Him. Then we must turn to the work He has given us to do. We should be attentive to His direction and His clear plan for sharing the gospel (Colossians 3:1-2).

Acts 1:8 records Christ's last instructions to His disciples before ascending into Heaven. The first and essential step to His plan was the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. What a disaster we would have without tapping into this resource. The third person of the Trinity is the electricity in the wire, the turbo in the charger, the juice in the battery. Without His intervention, strength, and help, our efforts are for nothing.

God's Word describes the ministry of the Holy Spirit, both in who He is and in what He does. Find more about his ministry in the following passages:

- [Luke 11:13; Acts 5:32](#)
- [John 14:26](#)
- [1 John 5:6](#)
- [2 Corinthians 3:17](#)
- [Romans 8:10](#)
- [John 15:26](#)
- [John 16:13](#)
- [Romans 8:26](#)

What roles of the Holy Spirit are most meaningful for you in this stage of your life?

Acts 4:31 tells us when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, they spoke the good news of salvation boldly. In our lives, too, we must rely on the Spirit's power to boldly share the gospel, both nearby and far away.

START AT HOME!

That was the instruction of Jesus Christ when He commissioned the disciples in Acts 1:8. There in Jerusalem, their own homes, community, and city, they would begin to share the message. This strategy accomplishes several things.

First, every believer is involved. Location does not limit anyone. Also, this base of believers allows teamwork, idea generation, and funding to reach beyond our local area to share the gospel. The supply line of resources and volunteers enables a believer, a family, a church, a group of churches to reach further than they ever could alone.

We are witnesses of the gospel as part of our everyday lifestyle. It's not just about going to church. Yes, we regularly gather to worship and learn. But sharing the good news with our local community isn't about what happens at our church building.

When we go to the store or gas station, when we clock in on the job, attend the PTA meeting, or work out at the gym—that's when we shine like lights in a dark world. How does that look?

- It looks like courtesy and patience.
- It looks like joy and peace.
- It looks like endurance in hard times.
- It looks like thoughtfulness and kindness.
- It looks like unselfishness.
- It looks like dependability.

Admit it. Those characteristics make you stand out from the crowd. You share the gospel by the relationships you build and your daily conduct in the workplace and marketplace of life. Your community should recognize you belong to Christ.

There's a place, though, that should see your testimony of the gospel even before your community. (Watch your toes! This might hurt.) That's your home. Often, it is easier to bear witness to Christ on the job or in public than with our own families. The people who know us best see us at our worst—our crabby, selfish, moody, inconsistent selves. And it ain't always pretty.

In fact, our families may be turned off to the gospel when we act one way in public and another at home. They are painfully aware of the hypocrisy. In those instances, not

only do we fail to share the good news, but we also build barriers to it by our actions at home.

As you follow Christ's command to start at Jerusalem, draw your circle very small and begin by sharing the gospel in your own home (Deuteronomy 6:5-7). Use every opportunity to authentically demonstrate the difference knowing Jesus makes, even to your own family.

HEAD FOR JUDEA

Reach beyond your community, your "tribe." We are often nearsighted, seeing the needs in our neighborhood or church but forgetting those beyond our comfort zone. Our Lazy Boy™ recliners are rubbing off on us. We must ask the Lord to help us see others as He sees them, to be sensitive to their needs, to reach out and rescue them in their distress (Matthew 25:31-46).

Acts records examples of disciples who stepped out of their comfort zones to minister to others. In Acts 8, Philip was commanded to leave a powerful revival in Jerusalem and travel to the desert in Gaza. There he met a man unlike himself—a different background, perhaps a different skin color, and other notable differences. What do we know about their interaction? We *know* God set up the meeting, prepared the Ethiopian's seeking heart, and enabled Philip to introduce him to Jesus. It made all the difference for the Ethiopian, and undoubtedly for his community, as the gospel continued to spread.

In Acts 17, Paul had an unusual opportunity when he visited Athens. He stood up with philosophers and testified to "the unknown God," the creator and judge of the world.

Could Philip and Paul have backed away from these "uncomfortable" opportunities to share the gospel outside their communities? What would the results have been? What opportunities does God have in store for you?

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Think of God's plan as a target, or series of concentric circles. As the message continues to expand, ring by ring, the gospel travels further. The ultimate goal of God's plan is for every people group to hear the good news of Jesus Christ and find forgiveness of sin.

There is no other plan.

Perhaps you've worked a crossword or jigsaw puzzle and gotten stumped in a section of the puzzle. Nothing seems to work, so you start another section of the puzzle and work backward to fill in the missing letters or pieces. The gospel has traveled the same way. When believers fail to take the message of redemption to the next "circle," God starts another path, a new route. He is intentional about every tribe and every nation (Matthew 24:14). We need to share His heart and get busy doing our part.

PROGRESSIVE LENSES

Remember, we are talking about *progressive* lenses here—not having to put on and pull off two or three pairs of glasses to see clearly. That means you wear them all at once to see up close *and* far away through the same pair of glasses.

Let's apply that to God's plan for the gospel in Acts 1:8. Don't see these circles of outreach as sequential. See them as simultaneous, concurrent, both near and far, both close and distant. And the wonderful thing is they inform and extend one another. Our families are stronger when we help them see the needs of others around the world. Our churches are stronger when we unite to reach the community or support cross-cultural ministry. Our impact on the world is better when we model strong homes and healthy churches.

Each circle feeds the others as we follow God's plan to share the gospel with all people. Ask Him today to give you a clear vision of your next step in His plan. **ONE**

Our families are stronger when we help them see the needs of others around the world. Our churches are stronger when we unite to reach the community or support cross-cultural ministry. Our impact on the world is better when we model strong homes and healthy churches.

About the Author: Carol Reid is senior editor at Randall House Publications and a regular writer for WNAC. Download the study guide that accompanies this article: onemag.org/ProgressiveLenses.pdf.

Resources for You

BY BRAD RANSOM

For more than two years, the Free Will Baptist Executive Office and North American Ministries have partnered to bring churches comprehensive church revitalization resources. Never in Free Will Baptist history have more tools been available to help churches. Below is an alphabetical list of all that is available.

- **Better Together Podcast:** A new podcast drops every Monday and Thursday. Subscribe using your favorite podcast platform or subscribe to our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/nafwb>.
- **Fresh Wind Resources:** The volume, "A Guide for Churches" is an 82-page self-assessment manual for churches that provides guidance as they plan. It includes 13 free videos (available online) to help any church become healthier. Receive more information by emailing nam@nafwb.org.
- **Pastor Resource Video Series:** This series contains 15 short episodes with practical assistance and training for every church and leader. Access these free videos by visiting <https://www.fwbnam.com/videos/>.
- **Pastor's Boot Camp:** An onsite training opportunity is offered twice each year in Nashville. The two-day live event contains 12-plus hours of practical instruction provided by seasoned practitioners. The training is also available in a shorter format called "Pastor's Boot Camp on the Road." The one-day session can be brought to your church, association, or state by special arrangement. Please contact nam@nafwb.org or questions@nafwb.org for more information.
- **Rekindle:** Currently, 66 coaches across the United States have received training to help churches, with at least one in your area. For more information about Rekindle, or to connect with the administrator, please visit <https://nafwb.org/rekindle>. PowerPoint presen-



tations of *Ten Rekindle Strategies* are available for your church or area. Contact us for more information.

- **Social Media Templates:** Great resources are posted several times each week. Share these resources on your church or personal page. Find us @NAFWB on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter or download graphics at nafwb.org/graphics.
- **Special Event Training:** As time allows, NAM and Executive Office personnel will travel to your church, district, or state association and provide special training on a wide variety of subjects chosen by the church and or association.

Both the Executive Office and North American Ministries are available to help you and your church. For more information about any of these resources, or to connect with our staff, please visit fwbnam.com or nafwb.org. **ONE**

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

IN JESUS' NAME?

FREE WILL BAPTISTS AND THE MILITARY CHAPLAINCY TODAY

BY CHAPLAIN (LTC) BRAD HANNA

Can a Free Will Baptist chaplain serve faithfully in the military today? This question has been posed in numerous ways: “Can you pray in Jesus’ name?” “Is sharing the gospel forbidden in the military?” “Does the military restrict the topics you can teach and preach?” “Do you have to affirm lifestyles Free Will Baptists believe are unbiblical?”

Both pastors and church members have voiced these concerns to us throughout the years for good reason. Free Will Baptists expect our ministers—whether in the pulpit, chaplaincy, or any other role—to represent our denomination in theology and practice without hesitation or compromise.

I am always pleased to share with churches and those considering the call to military chaplaincy that Free Will Baptists, and any other denomination or faith group, not only *can* remain faithful to their beliefs, but they are *expected* to be faithful to them. The military has a unique relationship with the chaplaincy. While all who serve in the military wear the uniform of their various services, chaplains are unique in that we are “on loan” from the faith group that sends us. Simply put, Free Will Baptist *chaplains* are Free Will Baptists *pastors* in uniform who provide religious support to men and women who serve the armed forces.

While this faith group endorser/military relationship has not changed in many years, as our nation has become less religious, more religiously diverse, and more secular in beliefs, some cases have raised concerns about whether everyone in the military fully understands and embraces the concept. Congress shares those same concerns. In the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 (Public Law 112-239), the annual law Congress passes to provide direction and oversight to the military, they directed the military to ensure religious rights of conscience were upheld for both individual service members and chaplains. Specifically, the law states: “No member of the

Armed Forces may—

- (1) require a chaplain to perform any rite, ritual, or ceremony that is contrary to conscience, moral principles, or religious beliefs of the chaplain; or
- (2) discriminate or take any action against a chaplain, including denial of a promotion, schooling, training, or assignment, on the basis of refusal by the chaplain to comply with a requirement prohibited by paragraph (1).”

Congress also directed the secretary of defense to issue regulations implementing these protections.

This year, in fulfillment of Congress’ directive, the Department of Defense issued an order directing all services to provide Religious Liberty and Religious Accommodation training to all commanders, judge advocates, recruiters, and chaplains.

This has been an incredible turn of events. The focus has turned back toward the constitutional right of free expression of religion. I hope and pray this will serve to limit the occasions where individuals or commanders make unwarranted complaints against chaplains or service members who simply follow their conscience and the theology of their endorsing denomination.

Free Will Baptist chaplains *can* serve faithfully, *are* serving faithfully, and *will continue* to serve Christ and our denomination faithfully for years to come. It is a great time for many more of our young ministers to consider a calling to the military chaplaincy.

Continue to pray for more Free Will Baptist chaplains and to encourage more young men to join our ranks. **ONE**

About the Author: (LTC) Brad Hanna is state command chaplain for the Oklahoma National Guard. To learn more about Free Will Baptists and the chaplaincy, visit FWBNAM.com/chaplaincy.

Four NAM Church Plants Reach Self-supporting Status

It's always exciting when a church plant crosses the "finish line" and reaches self-supporting status. It takes less time for some than others, but the important thing is the church is healthy and ready for the next phase of its ministry. Four churches on the North American Ministries (NAM) map have recently become self-supporting and organized as local, autonomous congregations.

Project Utah



Wolf Family

Crosspoint Church near Salt Lake City, Utah, led by Pastor Logan Wolf, became self-supporting January 1, 2022. This was a joint project between NAM and Faith Missions. Tim and Jessica Lewis opened the Utah field in the early 2000s, planting Summit Chapel in Ogden, Utah. Scott Warren and his wife Staci served alongside the Lewis family. Scott and Staci later

moved to Salt Lake City, where Randy and LeAnn Ledbetter joined them to plant Crosspoint Church.

Logan Wolf began spending summers in Utah. God was dealing with his heart to move to the Great Salt Lake Valley after learning it had essentially no gospel presence. Logan and his wife Grayson eventually moved into a small third-story condo in Provo in May 2011. They began holding weekly church services in the conference center of a Best Western later that year, starting New Morning Church.

Eventually the Ledbetters and Warrens moved to other ministries, and the decision was made to merge the Taylorsville and Provo works under Logan's leadership. During a morning service at Crosspoint in 2015, he explained to the full auditorium, "To continue to minister effectively and efficiently in Utah, we are merging CrossPoint and New Morning and adopting a multi-site model."

Wolf later noted, "We are seeing God do some incredible things in this new phase of ministry: repentance, reconciliation, spiritual growth, and a new generation of disciples.

Since summer 2020, we've seen 60 people profess faith in Jesus and be baptized."

During this new phase of ministry, Logan and Grayson Wolf have left the auspices of Faith Missions and North American Ministries. They continue to serve in Utah.

Restore Church, Portsmouth, Virginia

On January 1, 2022, Restore Church went self-supporting. The church was a joint project between NAM and the Home Missions Board of Virginia. Marc and Casie Nepll have been NAM church planters since 2007. They joined the team as associate church planters to help David and Charity Sexton plant CrossPointe Church in Suffolk, Virginia. When CrossPointe went self-supporting in 2014, Marc and Casie moved to Portsmouth and began raising funds to establish a new church.



Nepll Family

In 2015, they began gathering a launch team, and on January 31, 2016, Restore launched with 264 people in attendance at a local sports museum. Average attendance never dipped below 130 the first year. With parking difficult and the museum slated to close in two years, pastors Marc and Kevin Bass began hunting for a new location. In 2017, the church purchased and renovated a commercial warehouse with the help of the Church Extension Loan Fund. This new location also included a commercial space and commercial tenant that helped cover a large portion of the mortgage payments.

On January 28, 2018, the church held a grand opening in the new facility with more than 350 people in attendance. The church grew by close to 100 people over the next few months, and average attendance broke the 200 barrier. As the church grew, they added staff and small group leaders. Restore welcomed more than 2,000 first-time guests during their first four years. Since launching, more than 250 people have given their life to Jesus at Restore.



Bass Family

Kevin and Beth Bass will continue working with NAM for six months to pray and seek the next season of ministry. They want to see another church planted in the Hampton Roads, Virginia, area.

While they're content to stay at Restore, they would also love

to be part of a new church plant if the right doors open. Restore has people, financial support, and mobile church equipment ready for the right planter.

When asked about memories over the past few years, Pastor Marc says, "God has blessed me with three moments I'll never forget. Our grand opening was a wild day, and my faith was confirmed in many ways. I was grateful for His blessing. When we moved into the new facility and saw tremendous growth, I remember a sense of humility as Pastor Kevin and I watched God move. I was grateful for God's providence. Then, as the world fell apart in 2020, God blessed my wife and I with a pregnancy we had been told would never happen by doctors. I was blessed by God's goodness and mercy. Serving God has brought us more joy than anything else we could ever do with our lives."

NAM is proud of the Portsmouth team and looks forward to seeing what God continues to do in the Portsmouth and Hampton Roads area. For more information about the church please visit www.restore.church.

Compassion Church, Gilbert, Arizona



Scott Family

When Myron and Julie Scott felt the call of God from North Carolina to Arizona, nothing could have prepared them for the changes they encountered over the next few years. The Heritage FWB Church was in serious decline, with massive debt and

problems. They have experienced many ups and downs during their nine-year ministry in Gilbert, but God has done incredible things.

The church underwent a massive update, remodel, and name change from Heritage to Compassion Church.

While the church still has a large debt to manage, they have been able to win new people, make disciples, and take on all their own expenses. With a growing congregation, the group is active in the community and seeing new people saved, baptized, and assimilated into the church continuously.

We are incredibly thankful to God, the Scott family, and all those who have served faithfully at this church and helped it get where it is today. This healthy, growing congregation is in Gilbert, Arizona, today because of faithful workers, supporters, and prayer warriors. For more information, please visit <http://compassionaz.org>.

Flagship Church, Erie, Pennsylvania

In 2011, after raising financial and prayer support, the Daryl Grimes family embarked on a journey to plant a church in Erie, Pennsylvania. At the time, Erie was Pennsylvania's fourth largest city and a place of much spiritual darkness. Erie has one of the highest rates of alcoholism in the state, and much of its population has suffered mentally, physically, and spiritually because of substance abuse.



Grimes Family

The church launched Easter 2012. The group had purchased an old church building for \$85,000. After only three weeks of meeting in the building, they received a phone call from a church that had closed and committed \$100,000 to pay off their building and help with needed repairs. Although the church knew the building was not a long-term solution, it became their home until the Spring of 2020 when they purchased an office building and remodeled it for their current facility.

Pastor Daryl Grimes writes, "We are so thankful for the impact God has used Free Will Baptists to make in Erie. However, your prayers are needed now more than ever, as we continue to minister in the Flagship City. Although we went "self-supporting" May 1, 2022, we will need to be more dependent upon God, His provisions, and His people's prayers. Please pray for God to send more laborers into this needy field. Let's ask Him to send a great harvest before His return!" For more information about Flagship Church, visit <https://flagshipchurch.com>. **ONE**

IMPACT 2022:

HOMELESS IN BIRMINGHAM

BY JOEL FRANKS

This year, IMPACT is getting a head start. We have an opportunity to bless the homeless population in Birmingham during the National Convention in July, but we need you to get involved now. While in Birmingham, we want to provide a substantial population of homeless people with a “care kit” that demonstrates the love of Christ in action through us.

What can go into a homeless care kit that will be helpful to a person in need? The following list is specifically created from the requests of the homeless population in Birmingham:

- Socks (most requested)
- Water bottle
- Bandages (especially large adhesive bandages)
- Wet wipes
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Sunscreen
- Tuna and cracker packs
- Single-serving snacks (trail mix, nuts, crackers)
- Breakfast or protein bars (avoid chocolate, which melts in the heat)
- Nail clippers
- Comb and brush
- Hand lotion
- Lip balm
- Tissues
- Headlamp
- Flashlight
- Can opener
- Quarters for laundry
- Sewing kit
- First aid kit
- Ziploc bags

Items to avoid include soap, hand sanitizer, mouthwash, anything with fragrance, large items. Soap, because anywhere they can get a shower offers soap. Hand sanitizer and mouthwash because they often contain alcoholic content, and this is not a good idea for potential or recovering addicts. Fragrance, because it is insulting and many

people have sensitivities. Large items, because they are difficult to carry.

Start with a nice zipper plastic bag. Why the zipper? The regular types tend to stop sealing after opening and closing a few times. Spend the extra change to purchase the nice ones. The person who receives this will get a bonus reusable bag to store important personal effects after they use the items from the care kit.

Please take a moment to write a note by hand. This shows you care, just like a hand-written thank you note, hand-written invitations, or anything else. Don't put a tract inside. Most recipients view those like junk mail. One glance tells you what it is, and it gets tossed. Instead, write *why* you are giving this care kit—that you love, care for, and value the recipient. Include a Bible verse and let them know you will be praying for the person who receives your kit. This will go much further than a tract requiring zero effort.

Your church or youth group can start gathering items and assemble these packs before shipping them to the North American Ministries office. If you cannot purchase and assemble the items yourself, why not consider a donation. Find a PayPal link on the IMPACT page (fwbmastersmen.org/impact) that will allow you to donate funds toward the purchase of care kit items. These items will be purchased and the kits assembled in Birmingham to avoid shipping costs.

Please help us make an IMPACT on Birmingham with the love of Christ. ONE

About the Author: Joel Franks is IMPACT coordinator for the 2022 convention. IMPACT is a ministry of Masters Men: www.fwbmastersmen.org.

Husband of One Wife

PANEL DISCUSSION, 2021 LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

MODERATED BY RON HUNTER JR., PH.D.

In 2017, Doug Carey wrote Randall House proposing a book on the biblical phrase, “husband of one wife” and whether someone divorced could pastor a church. I read the letter, made a snap judgment, and said, “No way!” Then I called a half dozen conservative pastors across the denomination seeking counsel. Without exception, they all told me the denomination *needs* to be talking about this.

I was blown away by the interest. I replied to Doug, proposing a book containing more than his view. We invited ten pastors and state leaders to start meeting twice a year at the Leadership Conference and National Convention. Over the next four years, the book evolved into the work now published with five authors and an editor.

We divided up the five most common positions, preferences, or principals held regarding this important passage. Each writer was tasked to start with exposition from Scripture from a particular viewpoint and expand upon it. We sought four Free Will Baptist writers to tackle the non-traditional views and asked Dr. Chris Shirley, professor and program chair of all master’s degrees at Southwestern Seminary to address the traditional view.

Authors Dr. Danny Baer, Dr. Jeff Blair, Doug Carey, Dr. Jeff Manning, and Mike Trimble formed a panel at the 2021 Leadership Conference, and Dr. Eddie Moody, executive secretary, asked me to emcee. Below is a summary of that 45-minute panel discussion. Our goal is not to change anyone’s mind. Please don’t think a national agency is recommending something; that’s not our goal. In fact, we have no control or authority. Our job is to help people wrestle with Scripture. When reading a book, never skip the introduction; you find the thesis there. In this book, the prologue and epilogue tell Carey’s story. Panelists constantly reminded the audience we are not the Holy Spirit. We are simply sharing what has been gleaned from Scripture; the Holy Spirit will do his part and guide your convictions to come down where needed.

Question for DR. JEFF MANNING: Based on 1 Timothy 3:1-7, if we take Scripture literally, without interpretation, some argue a pastor is *required* to be married, since **Scripture says he must be the husband of one wife**. What theological or practical corners do we back ourselves into if we make marriage a prerequisite?

MANNING: A dear friend shared about not being married during a period in his own ministry. Someone contested the viability of him being a pastor. What issues does that stance raise? For starters, Paul, the very author God used to give us these qualifications and write multiple books of Scripture would not have been qualified, as he was not a married man. If you hold that one *must* be married to be a pastor, the One who bled, suffered, and died for our sins would also not be qualified to pastor because, obviously, Jesus was not a married man.

The same qualifications used to argue one must be married, requires he also have children because he must rule his household well with his *children* under proper tutelage from him. If you hold that view, is he qualified only after he has more than one child? Because Scripture, in both places, talks about children plural. If we require a pastor to be a married man, what happens if his wife dies. Think about how this could play out. A pastor’s wife could die on a Tuesday, and he could attend her funeral Saturday and resign Sunday because he’s no longer qualified. That sounds super simplistic, but that is the corner we find ourselves in if we argue that a pastor *must* be a married man.

Question for MIKE TRIMBLE: In 1 Timothy 3, did Paul place **more weight on the husband of one wife requirement than the other requirements?**

TRIMBLE: First Timothy 3 has a list of qualifications: above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money, must manage his own household well, keep



Dr. Ron Hunter



L to R: Doug Carey, Dr. Jeff Manning, Dr. Jeff Blair, Dr. Danny Baer, Mike Trimble

his children submissive, must not be a recent convert, and must be well-thought-of by outsiders. Out of the 15 qualifications, it appears most of us are only concerned about one of them—husband of one wife. Everyone gravitates toward the one, often ignoring the other 14. We’ve all seen quarrelsome, high-profile evangelical ministers who pastored and brought great harm to the cause of Christ. We must look at *why* there are 15. We took one qualification and ignored 14 others that carry identical weight and are equally inspired by God.

Question for DR JEFF BLAIR: In the associational polity we practice, with autonomy of the local church at the top moving through the district, state, and national association at the bottom, how should we deal with differences on such issues?

BLAIR: In Dr. Baer’s chapter, he points out the word *divorce* does not occur anywhere in our *Treatise*. The *Treatise*, as the authoritative document articulating Free Will Baptist beliefs and practices, doesn’t address this issue, nor does it suggest what all Free Will Baptists must do or believe about it. Obviously, if someone says, “I don’t believe in the possibility of apostasy,” that’s simple. Just turn to the page and say, “This is not who we are.” But divorce is not articulated in the *Treatise* and will come up through a local church if it’s going to come up. The district association is where this will be handled.

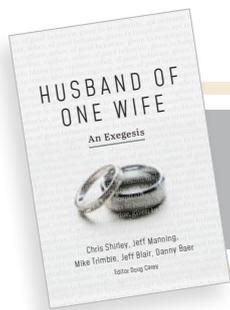
Question for JEFF MANNING: In every author’s chapter, we find some real “aha” moments. I want to highlight one from yours, Dr. Manning. You used two insightful words regarding a pastor’s marital status, how would you differentiate between the Bible’s *expectations* and *stipulations*?

MANNING: This whole question regarding whether a pastor or staff minister is married hit home for me about seven years ago when we were looking for a youth minister. My son Jake submitted his resume, and I stepped away from the process for obvious conflict-of-interest reasons. The search committee did their due diligence. Jake was the man they thought they should recommend. At the time, Jake was in a serious relationship, but the relationship ended. I thought he would be a married man by the time he started, and suddenly, he was not going to be anywhere close.

It’s legitimate for churches to expect pastors to be married; Scriptures are written in such a way that a vast majority will be married, and if he is, he is to be a one-woman man. If he does have children, he is to rule them. But you can’t make that a stipulation like he must not be quarrelsome, he must not be given to wine, he must be able to teach. If you do, you find yourself in a corner that leaves you without any biblical legitimacy whatsoever. Expect a man to be married but don’t make it a stipulation.

Question for MIKE TRIMBLE: What other items in the 1 Timothy 3 list of qualifications need more emphasis?

TRIMBLE: The easy answer is *all of them*. Dr. Manning’s excellent chapter addresses expectations versus stipulations. Is the list a set of guardrails, or what we really want out of a man who has been faithful for a lifetime? Is he faithful to his wife, self-disciplined? You must decide *if* every item in Paul’s list works the same as: *if* the guy is divorced, he’s gone, not even to be considered.



Available at
randallhouse.com

I've randomly picked four qualifications to play this "sit down if..." game. So, would everyone stand up. We're going to just take *above reproach*, which means perfect, blameless, and carries the idea of devoted, devout faithfulness. Sit down if you've ever been imperfect or unfaithful.

All right, another shot. The word *gentle*, not violent but gentle. This word means kind or gracious. Sit down if you've ever been unkind to someone. What about the qualification: *well thought of by outsiders*? This includes someone outside your church, including a church you left previously. Do they have anything to say against you, believed you acted inappropriately, unkind, not gentle?

You would say, "Come on, give a little grace here; I'm a growing believer."

And I'm saying, if you want grace, where is the grace for those who struggle with the husband of one wife issue? We have to come to terms with how we apply the complete list and treat all qualifications the same.

Question for DR. DANNY BAER: What do you feel is the biggest barrier in restoring a fallen brother to ministry?

BAER: I don't think there is any question the biggest barrier is us. We're much quicker to shoot our wounded than to pick them up and help. We're more likely to ask someone else about the person rather than call the person and ask directly. There are moments when I should have picked up the phone or put an arm around someone hurting—we're the barrier.

Question for DOUG CAREY: Can you tell us with complete integrity and honesty you preach God's intended design for the home to your congregation about marriage and divorce, or would your church say you're soft on that topic?

CAREY: It's a valid question. At the beginning of my return to ministry, some thought, "He's been through this; he'll change his preaching or be soft on it."

I've been anything but soft. For anyone who experienced it, or had a child experience it—even a biblical divorce is horrific. Because I know the pain, I never hesitate to share from a biblical viewpoint. My churches and my wife can attest to nearly 30 years of sermons on divorce. It's made me more compassionate when folks come to me with marital problems

or talk to me about divorce. I could reach them as never before. I shed tears with them and tell them I feel their pain. I'm not suggesting we must experience it to know. While it made me more compassionate, it hasn't changed my preaching. As preachers, we stand for Truth.

Question for DR. DANNY BAER: In your chapter, you weren't willing to state your position regarding a divorced minister returning to the role of pastor. Can I put you on the spot and ask if you're willing to share it now?

BAER: I was unwilling to share in the book for a couple of reasons. Like Dr. Blair said, such practices are decided by the local church and associations. The Committee on Denominational Research learned 76% of associational ordaining councils use divorce as a litmus test. It's a yes or no question. However, 7% will ordain him if divorce occurred prior to salvation.

When I was first ordained and received my yearly card, that was the main qualification. Things have changed a lot since I was a young man. Even our consideration for divorce has changed as churches are allowing divorced people as members, they teach classes, and sit on church boards. With this happening, you probably don't see them as living in adultery by remarrying after divorce.

Paul did not mention divorce here, but when it comes to pastors, we do. Let me make it clear. In this book, *no one* is in favor of divorce. Jesus wasn't in favor of divorce. Paul wasn't in favor of divorce. Divorce has never been God's plan, but if you examine how husband of one wife is more a qualitative than quantitative concern, then Paul meant one man devoted to one woman.

We need to look at the broad context of all Scripture and not simply a yes or no answer. For it to be a biblical divorce, Jesus made allowance for infidelity, Paul made allowance for abandonment. And if you're divorced legally in the sight of man and God, you are no longer married to that person, and if you get remarried you don't have two living wives.

There are qualifications, and we must consider what these words say and what God intended them to mean, and I think we ought to give consideration while still preaching that God hates divorce. Marriage to one woman for life is still God's plan. **ONE**

About the Author: Since 2002, Ron Hunter Jr., Ph.D. has served as executive director and CEO of Randall House & D6 Family Ministry. He pastored 11 years before starting his present role. Hunter has five published books and is passionate about leadership and discipleship.



Created *for* Generosity

BY CHRIS COMPTON

Recently, I have been reflecting on the radical generosity of the Lord. Despite my shortcomings, the Lord has been good and generous to me. I can trace the generous hand of God upon me throughout my life. From my salvation experience and meeting every need to providing a wonderful wife and family, good jobs and income, and His abiding presence during the loss of my dad. In everything and everywhere between, the Lord has been generous.

I feel like David in Psalm 8 when he pondered, “What is man, that thou art mindful of Him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?” God, in all His power and glory, cares about us. Why? That is simply who He is. God is a generous God.

What does this truth mean for us? Since God is generous, we should be generous also. In fact, He created us for generosity. We are made in the image of God, and while sin has tainted that image, it has not eradicated it completely. We are made for something more than ourselves. We were made to reflect the image of a good and generous God. The Bible is replete with stories and instructions that point us toward a life of generosity. We are to live generously, and we are to give generously.

Like any other aspect of our faith journey, it takes purpose and discipline to be generous. We must work at it and prepare for it. This involves stewardship. We learn this

lesson from Joseph in the book of Genesis. After being sold into slavery by his brothers, Joseph rose to prominence in Egypt and became a powerful ruler. God was with Joseph, preparing him for something greater. During a dream, God revealed a famine would come to the land. Joseph acted. He directed the Egyptians to store up food during the time of abundance. Not only did his stewardship allow the Egyptians to have food during the famine, but Joseph’s planning also prepared him to assist his brothers when they came looking for life-saving provisions.

Joseph’s story sets an example of making preparation to be generous in the future. The better we steward our resources today, the more prepared we will be to bless others generously in the future. God created us to be His hands and feet upon this earth to show and share His generosity.

Our generosity leads to the glory of God. It also blesses us as we lay up treasures in Heaven and not on earth. And the greater our generosity, the happier and more contented we will be in our lives. **ONE**

About the Author: Chris Compton is accounting administrator for Free Will Baptist Board of Retirement. He graduated in 2007 with a M.A. in Bible exposition from Columbia International University. A 1998 graduate of East Tennessee State University, he has over 15 years of administrative/financial experience in varied fields, as well as seven years of pastoral ministry experience.

Modeling Financial Leadership

BY JOHN BRUMMITT

According to a 2021 survey, of 34% of couples living in the same house, one or both partners couldn't correctly identify how much money the other earns. Only 17% of parents with incomes over \$100,000 per year have told or plan on telling their children how much they earn or their net worth. The survey also found people are more comfortable talking with friends about marital problems, mental health, addiction, race, sex, and politics than money.

As a society, for the most part, we do not talk about money beyond the general talk of what you do for a living, where you live, or maybe something you purchased—if it was a good deal. For decades, money has been considered an “impolite” topic of conversation.

Because of this gag order placed on money, we find more and more anxiety attached to finances. Even if you have a good income, many still feel this fear or anxiousness attached to our views on money. According to a recent survey by NextAdvisor, almost 78% of survey responders were at least a little anxious about their current financial situation. Only 14.7% said they were not anxious, while 7.4% said they didn't know.

Because we don't talk about our finances, our children repeat the cycle once they are out on their own. Why do we think talking about money is in bad taste or inappropriate? Why does it make us uncomfortable to be asked how much we earn, invest, or have invested? I am not saying we all need to disclose tax returns or post earning statements on social media. Revealing the information doesn't help negativity or anxiety regarding money. In actuality, it might make things worse, because people naturally compare themselves, saying things like “Well, I should be doing better” or “She doesn't deserve to be paid that

much.” Again, these comparisons are harmful and do not reflect God's grace. So, what are we to do?

Model biblical leadership when it comes to finances.

We often place money in a different bracket than the rest of our lives. We give God most areas but view money as “something different.” This may result from guilt over not giving God full control over our paycheck, tax return, investments, and earnings. Because our use of money makes us feel sinful, we pretend God is not part of it. This is simply not true.

God has given us clear guidance in Scripture regarding finances, income, and the accumulation of wealth to help us navigate this important area that impacts day-to-day living. We are not to worship money or put it before God, but we are also not to fear money. God is still on His throne, and He has promised to provide our every need.

Our conversations about finances need to be based on biblical principles. Avoid saying “Look what I've done” or “Look what I have.” But also avoid the reverse: “I never had the money to do _____.” Don't get stuck on the have nots and focus instead on the joyous blessings of God. If you want to end the negative feelings and anxiety surrounding finances, focus on His blessings and His sufficiency.

Stop comparing your situation to others. You can't look at someone's bank statements or income and make a good comparison anyway. You don't know what they have endured to get where they are, or why the Lord has blessed

Continued on page 57



Pandemic to Endemic

BY DAVID BROWN, CPA

The United States, along with the rest of the world, has dealt with COVID-19 for almost two years. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), more than 950,000 Americans have died during the pandemic. Along the way several variants have been designated with Greek alphabet names, although three have dominated the news. *Alpha* was the original virus. *Delta* soon proved to be more transmissible, and currently, *Omicron* is the dominant strain.

Some quick definitions are helpful. A *pandemic* is a disease that spreads across multiple countries and affects many people. An *epidemic* describes a sudden increase in disease cases in a specific area. An *endemic* is an outbreak consistently present but limited to a particular region. This makes the spread of disease and rates of transmission more predictable. Malaria, for example, is endemic in many tropical countries and regions.

Many news organizations have released articles about the effect the Omicron variant is having on COVID. *Yahoo Finance*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and the British newspaper *The Daily Mail* all published articles describing the most recent research and trends. Based on early studies in South Africa and Great Britain, where the variant first spread in Europe, researchers reached two conclusions: 1) the Omicron variant is much more transmissible than previous strains of COVID, but 2) it is also less deadly than other forms of the disease.

The current CDC charts bear this out. In terms of infections, the first COVID-19 peak was reached in January 2021, with a seven-day moving average of 246,000 infections per day. It peaked again with the Delta variant in September 2021 at 162,000, but in early January 2022, the infection rate has reached its highest level, with 806,801 cases in a single day. However, the death rates accompanying these peaks are dramatically different. Deaths peaked in May 2020 at 2,209; January 2021 at 3,385; and Delta peaked in September 2021 with 1,899. However, in January 2022, deaths from the Delta variant



peaked at 2,162, despite a caseload four times those of previous surges.

Many researchers believe the true death rate of Omicron is approaching the same level as seasonal flu. Most people wonder when COVID will “go away.” The short answer is COVID may never go away but become part of our lives much like seasonal flu and other diseases we encounter all the time. Is the flu deadly? Yes! the flu kills between 12,000 and 52,000 people every year, according to the CDC.

However, if COVID is transitioning from pandemic to endemic, we can deal with it just like we handle other illnesses we face. Of course, we should still be cautious. And those who are particularly vulnerable to the effects of this virus should remain extremely vigilant. But if these trends continue to hold true, it may be time to move on with our lives—an end to the pandemic. **ONE**

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

Pre-Registration

2022 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FREE WILL BAPTISTS

NAFWB | V3 | BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA | JULY 24-27

One Form Per Person | Register Online: www.nafwb.org | Name Badges Required for All Convention Events

First Name _____ Last Name _____
Home Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Country (if outside USA) _____ Email _____
Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____
Church You Attend _____ Church City _____ State _____

National Association (All voting delegates must be members in good standing of a FWB church.)

Voting Delegates

- National Board/Commission Member
- Ordained Minister
- Ordained Deacon
- State Delegate (Authorization Required)
- Local Church Delegate (Delegate Card Required)

Non-Voting

- Attendee (All Ages, Including Infants and Toddlers)

Tickets

WNAC Laughter and Latté.....Qty_____ x \$25 = _____
Monday, July 25, 8:30 p.m. (\$30 onsite; limited quantity available)

Welch Alumni & Friends Luncheon.....Qty_____ x \$45 = _____
Wednesday, July 27, noon (\$55 onsite; no tickets will be sold between
pre-registration closing and convention; limited availability onsite)

National Association Info: 877-767-7659 | www.nafwb.org

Vertical Three Conference

Preschool

- Ages 3-5, Attending Preschool Worship - \$25 (\$35 onsite)
- Ages 0-5, Not Attending Preschool Worship - NO FEE

Students: \$25

Any student or competitor* attending any CTS competition or event
MUST pay \$25 V3 conference fee (\$35 onsite).

- Grades K-3
- Grades 4-6
- Grades 7-12

*Competitors must pay this V3 conference fee **in addition to**
CTS competition fees already paid.

College Age | Adults: \$20

Adults attending any competition or event MUST pay \$20.

- Adult Attendee

V3 EventQty_____ x \$13 = _____
(Featuring Byron Trimble | Comedian, Speaker, Mammal)
Tuesday, July 26, 9:00 pm (\$15 onsite/at the door)

V3 Information: 800-877-7030 | www.verticalthree.com

Register April 1 – June 24 | No Refunds After June 24

Payment Options:

- + Check (Payable to FWB Convention)
- + Visa, Discover, or MasterCard only (both debit and credit cards accepted)

Card # _____

Card Holder _____ Exp ____/____

Signature _____

NAFWB Questions: 877-767-7659 | convention@nafwb.org

Return to:

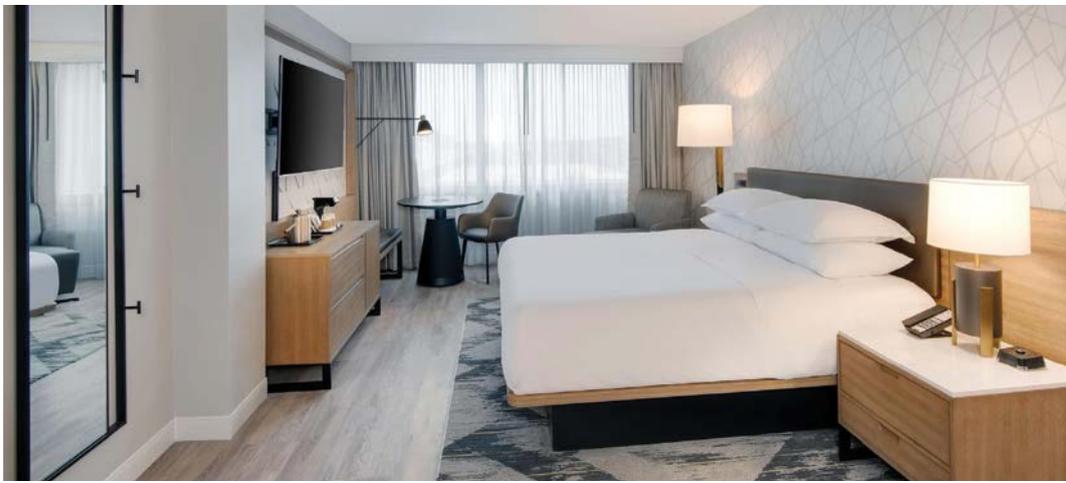
Convention Registration

PO Box 5002

Antioch, TN 37011 / FAX: 615-731-0771



Office Use Only: Date _____ CK# _____ Amt \$ _____ From _____



Sheraton Birmingham Hotel
 2101 Richard Arrington Jr Blvd N
 Birmingham AL 35203
 205-324-5000
Rate: \$162
 Self Parking: \$10
 Valet Parking: \$35

*Rates do not include 17.5% tax plus \$3 per night convention and tourism tax.



The Westin Birmingham
 2221 Richard Arrington Jr Blvd N
 Birmingham AL 35203
 205-307-3600
Rate: \$167
 Self Parking: \$10
 Valet Parking: \$35

*Rates do not include 17.5% tax plus \$3 per night convention and tourism tax.

Note: Both hotels are connected to the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex.

2022 CONVENTION HOUSING INFORMATION



1. Prepare Personal Information.

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

2. Contact the Hotel.

- + **Online reservations open Monday, May 16, 9:00 a.m. CDT.** Links to make reservations will be available at nafwb.org.

3. Things to Remember:

- + Hotels have been instructed **NOT TO ACCEPT** reservations before opening day.
- + Hotel rates do not include 17.5% tax plus \$3 per night convention and tourism tax.

**Reservation cut-off date:
 Friday, June 24, 2022**

Visit nafwb.org for more info.



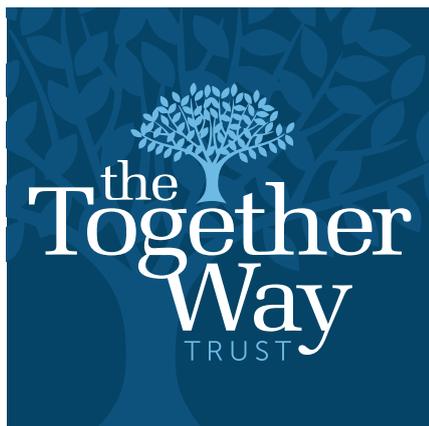
NOTE: The first night's room and tax will be charged for canceled reservations.

The charge is non-refundable, but reservations are transferable. Available rooms may be posted at nafwb.org for transfer.

Note: Convention policy supercedes hotel policy.

The Together Way Trust Tops \$100,000

Antioch, TN—In 1982, the Executive Office used a \$100 check from Wilbur and Alma Worthington (parents of former Executive Secretary Melvin Worthington) to open the Worthington Trust at Free Will Baptist Foundation. The trust was eventually renamed The Together Way Trust, and their initial gift has earned interest for the denomination since and will remain in the trust until the Lord returns.



director of the Foundation, notes “Endowments are a great way for even small gifts to make a big impact.”

Over the years, other donors have joined the Worthingtons, and January 1, 2022, the trust totaled more than \$103,000. Recently, the Free Will Baptist directors set a new goal to reach \$5 million in the trust, which means approximately \$250,000 in interest will be available to national ministries each year.

Endowment gifts can be given in various ways. They can be offerings over and above tithes. They can come from churches that want to give a lasting, high-impact gift. Or they can originate from something one chooses to give to the trust, such as real estate or some other type of property. The gifts do not have to be large. Bill Evans, previous

This type of endowment giving, where the initial gift is never touched, can help Free Will Baptist national ministries avoid debt that could cripple outreach and take pressure from their budgets. Would you like to make a never-ending gift to Free Will Baptist ministry? Learn more at nafwb.org/TogetherWay. **ONE**

Introducing 2022 Nominees for Standing Boards and Commissions

Antioch, TN—The 2021-22 Nominating Committee presented the following nominees to be considered for the 2022 convention election, according to Johnny Miller (AR), committee chairman. Please note: Board of Retirement, FWB Foundation, and North American Ministries do not elect board members in 2022.

Executive Committee 2025

David Taylor (AR)

Danny Williams (AL)

Mike Kilcrease (CA)*

Mike Kilcrease pastors The Lighthouse FWB Church in Hanford, California. Previously, he served as associate pastor at Harmony FWB Church in Fresno. Mike earned a B.S. in religion and a M.A. in pastoral counseling from

Liberty University. He has filled various roles in the California State Association, where he currently serves as executive secretary of the state and plans the annual state men's retreat.

Welch College 2028 Term

Brad Ryan (IL)

Wayne Miracle (GA)

Rusty Campbell (TN)*

Rusty Campbell has served Pleasant View Christian School in Pleasant View, Tennessee, since 2012, first as assistant administrator (2012-2016) and currently as head of school. Previously, he worked at Welch College for more than a decade as a member of both the faculty and administration. He earned a B.S. in history and a M.A.

in educational curriculum and instruction from Austin Peay State University and pursued doctoral studies in curriculum and instruction at Tennessee State University. In addition to his educational activities, Rusty teaches Sunday School at Bethel FWB Church and has coached various athletic teams. He and his wife Beth have one son, Barrett.

IM, Inc. 2028 Term

- Will Harmon (AR)
- Cameron Lane (AR)
- Rodney Yerby (AL)

Randall House 2028 Term

- Jay Baines (VA)
- Tim York (NY)
- Darren Gibbs (NC)

WNAC 2028 Term

- Jonda Patton (KY)
- Lee Ann Wilfong (MO)
- Sharon Dickey (TX)*

Sharon Dickey has been a pastor's wife for 28 years. She and her husband Doug are currently serving Fellowship FWB Church in Bryan, Texas, where they have been since 2010. Previously, the couple served at Flatwoods FWB Church in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee. A homeschooling mom of three, Sharon has been active in WNAC as local coordinator, district coordinator (8 years), state vice president (6 years), and state president (2 years). She attends every national convention, participating in WNAC events and the CTS Expo. She additionally works with local homeschooling groups and volunteers with volleyball and soccer teams in her community.

COMMISSIONS

Theological Integrity 2027

- Kevin Hester (TN)

Historical 2027

- Willie Martin (GA)

Music 2027

- Doug Little (TN)

Media 2027

- Devon Dundee (AR)*

Devon Dundee is the creative media director at Cavanaugh FWB Church in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Devon began attending Cavanaugh as a teenager and joined the staff in 2016. He earned a B.A. in Religious Studies and Psychology from Hendrix College in 2014. In 2017, he completed an M.Div. at Baylor University's Truett Seminary. Devon loves using media to create space for himself and others to worship God. He and his wife Katherine have been married since 2018.

**Biographical information is provided only for new board nominees. ONE*

Continued from page 52

that person. Financial comparison is only beneficial for wage adjustment or justification in your working career. Do your research before asking for a raise or a job interview or get caught in the trap of comparing yourself to a neighbor with an entirely different career path. And when you become aware of negative feelings or feel financial anxiety creeping up on you, turn your focus back to the positive.

I know this sounds simple, but research has shown that making a daily list of positive things in your life makes you a happier, more positive, productive person. The right outlook on money makes it easier for you to handle difficulties when they arise. Our focus affects our outlook on finance and our approach to talking about it with our family and friends. ONE

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

Snapshots Around the World



Pakistan—As the Taliban intensifies persecution in Afghanistan, millions of Afghan refugees have streamed over the border into Pakistan. According to Director of Field

Partnerships Kenneth Eagleton, “Pakistani FWBs are actively involved in receiving and sheltering Afghan Christian refugees. The Hanna Project’s Emergency Response Fund (www.hannaproject.com) is helping provide safety and meet needs for these refugees.”

Cuba—Twenty-six young people completed a seven-month online Bible course sponsored by the Free Baptist Youth Union and Cedars of Lebanon Seminary. Participants received certificates of completion on January 30.



Cuba—Saturday, January 15, Pastor Alex Sal baptized 20 people in Pinar del Rio, Cuba.

Bulgaria—A young man from the Shumen church was baptized February 6. Members of the Shumen congregation, led by Brenton and Debbie Driscoll, traveled to Varna for a joint service. Afterward, the young man was baptized in the Black Sea.



Panama—The FWB church in Las Tablas, Panama, established a new outreach in the village of La Palma de Las Tablas in January 2022. Nineteen people attended the first Bible study/service.

Côte d’Ivoire—On Sunday, February 13, Pastors Edmond and Laurent held a communion service and baptized nine young people in the Tchafrité FWB Church in Ivory Coast. Due to a drought, the baptisms were held in 55-gallon barrels.



Samburu—In early February, Eddy and Amanda Simmons rejoiced when no one showed up for the women’s discipleship lesson. The women went out, in pairs, to share the gospel in a previously unreached area. Five women and a warrior gave their lives to Jesus Christ. Amanda exclaimed, “That makes 11 people they have led to Christ in the last month!”

Former Missionary Lloyd Plunkett With the Lord

Clarksville, TN—Lloyd George Plunkett died Wednesday, January 19, 2022, at Walking Horse Meadows in Clarksville, Tennessee. He was 85.

Born March 16, 1936, in Farris, Oklahoma, Lloyd was a United States Army veteran. He spent 30-plus years as a pastor and taught Bible at Pleasant View Christian School in Pleasant View, Tennessee. He and his wife

Betty (deceased) ministered as missionaries in the Ivory Coast (1992-1995, 1997-1999). The couple served as dorm parents for high school boys at International Christian Academy in Bouaké.

Bethel Free Will Baptist Church in Ashland City, Tennessee, hosted the funeral services on Sunday, January 23, with Barry Raper officiating. **ONE**

GO THE extra mile

86th NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA | JULY 24-27, 2022

The 86th Free Will Baptist National Convention will meet July 24-27 in Birmingham, Alabama. As the denomination returns to Birmingham for the fourth time (previously 1957, 1987, 2006), attendees will accept the challenge to “Go the Extra Mile.”

Sunday morning, **Rett Floyd (SC)** and **Chris Todd (SC)** will explore *going the extra mile to practice forgiveness* (Luke 15:11-32). Sunday evening, **Tim Baumgarten (AL)** will look at *going the extra mile by protecting our Christian family* (Romans 14). Monday evening, **Jim McComas (TN)** will challenge listeners to *go the extra mile by reaching the hurting* (Luke 8:40-46), followed by **Kent Barwick (GA)** Tuesday, who will examine *going the extra mile to reach those difficult to reach* (John 4). During the Wednesday evening missions service, **Fernando Bustamante (SC)** will offer a final challenge to leave our comfort zones and *go the extra mile to take the gospel to the ends of the earth* (Acts 10).



Rett Floyd (SC)
Sunday School



Chris Todd (SC)
Sunday Morning



Tim Baumgarten (AL)
Sunday Evening



Jim McComas (TN)
Monday Evening



Kent Barwick (GA)
Tuesday Evening



Fernando Bustamante (SC)
Wednesday Evening

For a second year, attendees will take part in the Washing of the Saints’ Feet on Sunday afternoon, followed by the Lord’s Supper during the Sunday evening service. Dr. Eddie Moody, executive secretary, notes the importance of these moments: “Sharing in the ordinances together at the beginning of the convention sets the right tone of humility for the rest of the meeting, carrying over into business sessions, board meetings, and all other activities. I encourage everyone to join us.”

During Tuesday and Wednesday business sessions, delegates are expected to approve denominational budgets of nearly \$32 million. Moderator Tim York will guide delegates through the election of board members, general officers, and commission



appointees. In addition, national agencies and commissions will submit annual reports.

Attendees are encouraged to participate in **IMPACT Birmingham**, the annual, one-day evangelistic campaign of service and outreach. Saturday, July 23, IMPACT returns to the city where the program started in 2006. This year, IMPACT will focus on serving the homeless community in and around Birmingham. For more details about IMPACT, read Joel Franks' article, "Homeless in Birmingham." To register, visit fwbmastersmen.org.

In addition to worship and business, attendees will enjoy scores of seminars, panels, and workshops presented by various departments and agencies of the National Association. Find schedule updates: nafwb.org/convention.

Convention Music

A **Convention Choir and Orchestra** will return in 2022, guided by the Free Will Baptist Music Commission. Music coordinator Kevin Justice notes, "We are thrilled to once again have a live choir for worship. If you want to be in the choir, watch for details about accessing music prior to the convention at fwbworship.com. Once onsite, the choir will rehearse each evening before worship services."

The convention will also feature a live orchestra and praise

team. Contact Joshua Riggs (jkriggs@mail.com) for participation requirements. If you're interested in singing with the **praise team**, contact Kevin Justice (kevin@unityfwb.org) to submit a video for consideration by convention music planners.

Vertical Three

During its simultaneous meeting with the national convention, the 54th **Vertical Three Conference** will explore the 2022 theme "14:6," emphasizing Jesus is the only way to salvation. This year's conference will feature keynote speakers **Kristi Johnson (TN)**, **Caleb Milling (OK)**, **Tommy Franks (AL)**, **Chris Edwards (SC)**, and **Jeffrey Dean Smith (TN)**.

Between CTS Expo events, seminars, and worship services, student attendees are sure to grow as their faith is challenged at the conference. Tuesday evening, Vertical Three will host comedian **Byron Trimble** for a special late-night event. Learn more about the conference: verticalthree.com.

Making the Most of the "Magic City"

Birmingham has seen many changes since Free Will Baptists first met in the city in 1957. Today, the downtown area has been revitalized, including a fresh facelift for the 2022 World Games, hosted only days before the National Convention.



Take advantage of several new and exciting features across the city. The 31-acre **CityWalk BHAM** has become an outdoor gathering place, with a quarter-mile walking trail. The city has constructed a challenge course, amphitheater, and sports area with artificial turf. From 16th Street to 18th Street, space has been created for food trucks, a roller-skating rink, and an activity zone. Explore the unfolding master plan for Birmingham at citywalkbham.com.

The **Uptown District**, located on the campus of the **Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex** (convention meeting place), features new restaurants and cafés within walking distance including pizza, hot chicken, burgers, and other local flavors. Also in the Uptown District, the **Alabama Sports Hall of Fame** gives fans an opportunity to explore 5,000-plus sports artifacts. Interested in getting in the game instead of reading about it? **TopGolf™** is located nearby and is perfect for people of all skill levels.

For those who enjoy free, educational activities, visit the **Civil Rights District**, with six blocks of free historical sites, including the **Civil Rights Institute and Museum**, **Kelly Ingram Park** and **Sixteenth Street Baptist Church**. The **Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame** boasts exhibits to honor musicians such as **Nat King Cole** and **Lionel Hampton**. Other free attractions include the **Birmingham Railroad Park** and **Birmingham Botanical Gardens**. The **Birmingham Zoo** also offers a large

zoo featuring 230 species of animals across 122 acres.

If you enjoy unusual attractions, check out **Sloss Furnaces**, a free national historic landmark, currently the only 20th century blast furnace preserved in the United States. View the city from amazing heights atop the observation deck at **Vulcan Park**, home of the world's largest cast iron statue, built for the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis.

If you prefer the great outdoors, head to **Red Mountain Park** with hiking trails to explore, aerial adventure tours, and team building activities. Play golf? Take advantage of one (or more) of several pristine courses near Birmingham, all part of Alabama's **Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail**.

Find information about these activities and many more at VisitBirmingham.org.

Circle July 24-27 on your calendar and begin praying now for the annual meeting of Free Will Baptists. We look forward to seeing you in Birmingham.

FOR THE LATEST CONVENTION UPDATES:
NAFWB.ORG/CONVENTION

Five Great LOCAL FLAVORS to Sample in Birmingham

- + Alabama barbecue (ask for white sauce)
- + Fried chicken & waffles
- + Fried green tomatoes
- + Stone ground baked grits
- + Ashley Mac's strawberry cake (with a *whole pound* of fresh strawberries in every cake)



Let's Put "Associate" Back Into Associations

BY EDDIE MOODY

Ecclesiastes 4:9-11

We now give ourselves to one another...

So says the first paragraph of the Free Will Baptist Church Covenant. How do Free Will Baptists *give themselves* to one another? Certainly, this happens on a local church level, but it is not limited to the local congregation. The fourth paragraph begins, "We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together for church conferences." Our founders saw the church conference or association meeting as a key to striving together to proclaim the gospel.

Coming out of COVID (and for many, even before), involvement in local associations has waned. Should we rekindle our associations? Ecclesiastes 4:9-11 teaches the value of working together and warns against the danger of isolation. This is true for individual believers, congregations, and even the denomination. When we come together (associate), we accomplish more (verse 9), can help one another (verse 10), benefit from fellowship (verse 11), and are protected from outside threats (verse 12).

How can we rekindle our associations? We can't control the behavior of others, but each of us can choose to be the "spark that gets the fire going" in our association. Let's begin by praying for one another (James 5:16). Think about your counterpart at another church, whether you are a pastor, deacon, teacher, sound technician, or some other role. Pray for them daily. Watch them online. Pay attention to their social media, and reach out to them through calls, notes, mail, or posts and messaging on social media. Look for reasons to get together for coffee, lunch, or a game. If another church has an activity, attend if you can, and invite them to activities at your own church.

As you interact, "watch over one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, to be careful of one another's happiness and reputation." In other words, the fifth paragraph of the Covenant reminds us to downplay differences and accentuate what you hold in common.



What happens when we put the *associate* back into *associations*? We "strengthen the weak, encourage the afflicted, admonish the erring, and...promote the success of the church and of the gospel."

Recently, we published a podcast demonstrating this with Pastor Duane Littlefield of the Salem Association in Florida. The association has been working with First FWB Church in Sneads, Florida. The church had been decimated by COVID. The association began working with the church to help renovate their facilities. Pastor Littlefield noted every member of the church who worked with association members had clearly been blessed. Further, the pastor of the Sneads Church reports the community has been making inquiries about the renovations and activities.

The work of the Salem Association with the Sneads Church has had far reaching impact. Really, the whole endeavor has been a testimony of the love of Christ to everyone who observed.

This is what happens when we put associate back into the association. 



Eddie Moody

Executive Secretary,
National Association of
Free Will Baptists

And then he died...

In **Genesis 3**, the serpent sold Eve a big lie. He said, "Ye shall not surely die." Sadly, she believed the lie and tasted the fruit. As a result, only two chapters later, we find a list of Eve's descendants who died because she and Adam sinned. **Over and over, the text reads, "AND HE DIED."**

Since that weak moment in the Garden of Eden, death has been part of human existence. However, it is good to know you can prepare your estate to benefit your children and the ministries you love before that moment arrives. Let **Free Will Baptist Foundation** and **Cornerstone Estate Planning** help you prepare for the inevitable.

Watch a Brief Video explaining how to get started.

- + Facebook: Free Will Baptist Foundation
- + Web: fwbgifts.org (estate planning tab)



Free Will Baptist Foundation
877-336-7575 | fwbgifts.org

Convention Choir is back!

Both choir and orchestra will return during the 2022 convention, according to music coordinator Kevin Justice, who notes, "We are thrilled to once again have a live choir on stage for worship." If you want to be in the choir, learn how to access the music prior to the convention at fwbworship.com. Once onsite, the choir will rehearse each evening before convention services.

Contact **Joshua Riggs** (jkriggs@mail.com) for orchestra participation requirements. For the praise team, contact **Kevin Justice** (kevin@unityfwb.org) to submit a video for consideration by the convention music team.

For more convention info: nafwb.org/convention





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