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First Glimpse >>

Driven to Discipleship



My daughter just had her first car accident. No worries... she and the other driver are both fine. I wish I could say the same for his bumper!

I guess it was inevitable. After all, kids don't come with an instruction manual. And even if they did, I'm pretty sure the chapter on teaching them to drive would be missing. Nobody—and I mean nobody—is qualified to pen those pages.

For a year, I have arrived places pale and shaky. The passenger side armrest of our Camry has indentations left by clutching fingers, and if you look closely, you will find a permanent footprint in the floorboard where a passenger brake should be. I've prayed hard, shut my eyes often,

and swallowed (most) critical comments. And—unlike my wife—I am happy to report that I never grabbed the steering wheel. Not even once!

To be honest, my behavior has little to do with my daughter. She is an excellent driver. Sure, it took her a few weeks to learn to keep it between the lines on sharp Tennessee curves, and I'm not sure she will ever master a clutch. But for the most part, she took to the driver's seat like a pro.

My fear has more to do with letting go. For months, every time I opened the

passenger door, my mind screeched, "No! She's not ready." I simply couldn't fathom that my little girl was prepared for the open road.

But she was, equipped by a lifetime of watching, listening, and learning from the back seat. "Always follow at a safe distance." "Come to a complete stop." "Accelerate into the turn." "Always check your blind spot." And my favorite: "Never, ever try to outrun a train!"

Unfortunately, she may have learned more from my example than my exhortation. She sometimes drives like a NASCAR driver on the final stretch, and her exclamations of disgust at slow drivers in the left lane sound hauntingly familiar. I'm going to blame the rolling stops and rapid acceleration on my wife, though.

The whole process of teaching Victoria to drive has been a wonderful reminder. As Christians, we follow the Great Command and pour ourselves into others—showing, teaching, and modeling Christ. Discipleship. Imperfect people sharing a perfect Savior. The Apostle Paul put it most simply when he wrote to the Corinthians, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." Live out your faith, teach them well, and then "give them the wheel" to follow God's path for their lives.

Back to Victoria's first accident...it all happened so fast. How was I to know she would pull in behind me at the last second? Otherwise, I'm sure I never would have backed into her. I hope she will let me live it down, but I have my doubts. **ONE**

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ONE Magazine reserves the right to edit published letters for length and content.

I have an interesting story regarding ONE Magazine that may bring a smile to your face.

Last night at our local grocery store I could hear two children having a discussion from the next aisle over. I listened as they gave their opinions on “the best” articles from *ONE Magazine*. Intrigued, I walked over to find two seventh graders debating the optimal way to select a *ONE Magazine* article.

I should probably end the story there, but I found out that a local

teacher uses articles from the magazine for a typing class. By their definition, “the best” articles in *ONE Magazine* are the shortest since they require the least amount of typing.

I told the students I would notify the editor.

—Stephen Beck, Principal, Free Will Baptist School, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands

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ARE YOU BUILDING BATTLESHIPS *to* Carry the Conversation?

BY RON HUNTER

In recent months, decisions made by the Supreme Court have stimulated numerous conversations. Many Christians have talked gloom and doom, but when the government attempts to overturn biblical values, the Church has the opportunity to become more instrumental in shaping culture. The change to the definition of marriage has become the center of much dialogue. These conversations are actually healthy because people are grappling with the theology and ethics surrounding various comparative ideals. Questions like, if two men or two women can legally marry, what about one man and three women? How about a man and an under-aged girl (or boy)? These discussions prompt people to suggest the need for boundaries. What is the source of boundaries? Is it popular opinion, personal choice, or is there a moral line to cross? If there is a moral or ethical line, what (or who) determines that line? Do questions like these help strengthen one's position on this discussion or do they cause people to cave into societal or cultural pressure?



While pastors may find the banter and discussion of such topics routine, our kids (especially those in middle and high school and college) may not be equipped for this conversation. Why is this? Has the church or Sunday School not done an adequate job to prepare them? Have you talked with your kids about these topics (and not just a one-way conversation)? What can be done to prepare young adults and teens for encountering the culture? Who do our kids look to for their beliefs and morality?

Parents, kids have been watching, learning from, and imitating *you*. Go back to their first steps—the first time your son or daughter pulled up on the side of the couch, turned toward the middle of the room, and let go to walk: one step, then two, a bit of a wobble, and then plop, fall. Your little one looked up from this crumpled position to see your reaction—what you did, what you said, and how you looked—to interpret the moment. If you seemed scared or upset, the crying commenced. If you cheered or clapped, the laughing began. Through the developmental years and into adolescence, your child interpreted the world through your reactions.

Research has shown the top spiritual influencers of teens today are (in this order) mom, dad, pastor, grandparent, Sunday School, youth group, and church camp. Traditionally, parents teach their kids more than anyone else from the earliest stages—how to eat, how to distinguish colors and numbers, and how to pronounce words. Even when you think they are not paying attention, children and teens take their most important cues from parents' views on topics such as finances, authority, relationships, politics, ethics, and God. Often, a child unknowingly adopts and accepts as truth the way his or her parents view the world and, as such, adopts their *worldview*.

How does one build a worldview? Suppositions are the introduction of new values, ideas, knowledge, or moral dilemmas. An example of what our kids face as a new supposition is evolution instead of creation. Other suppositional challenges include the notion that Christian beliefs are non-scientific and anti-education. Presuppositions are the suppositions previously adopted. Holding to the authority of Scripture, God as the source of Truth, and a biblical set of ethics for the treatment of humanity are all examples of presuppositions we want established in our kids (and adults). Simply stated, one has to evaluate a new supposition on the basis of what he or she already has adopted as correct. The lifetime accumulation of presuppositions creates a worldview. A worldview allows individuals to make decisions without conscious deliberation and, as such, determines values.

We need to build our kids' worldviews like battleships. Provide them with ammunition and armor to defend truth. Bible memorization is a good start, but we need to help them connect the dots of how Scripture helps make decisions about everyday life issues. Keep each member of the family in a weekly Bible study, which could be a systematic and planned set of studies

found in LifeGroups, Sunday School, or small groups. The classes, all ages on their level, need to learn apologetics (how to defend their faith). Most of all, teach and equip parents and grandparents how to reinforce Scripture-guided life decisions with their kids and grandkids. Each generation, and person, will adopt a worldview.

A worldview helps you arrive at solid decision-making and faith development or results in poor judgment and actions. The difference in cultivating solid values or bad behaviors is your starting point. If your starting point is flawed, your ending point will be flawed as well. If you are not developing a deeper and daily walk in Scripture but relying only on what happens at church, it is impossible to "own your faith" for daily use. True discipleship is not a part-time discipline. True discipleship cultivates a healthy biblical worldview.

Every person has a worldview even if he or she does not realize it. Worldviews are not fixed; they are constantly in development. It took a lot of time to accumulate your presuppositions to form your worldview, and it will likewise take work to shift the weight of one's thinking in order to reshape a worldview. The most effective way to shape worldviews is for church and home to work together to reinforce what is taught in both settings.

DEVELOPING A STRONG BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW IS BUILDING KIDS LIKE BATTLESHIPS.

The order of influence we should shoot for with church and home is theology, biblical worldview, philosophy (ethics), and then actions. You can see how each step of the sequence builds on the previous, and the foundation always comes back to theology (founded upon Scripture) as our guide for life. Sadly, today, society has flipped the primary order of influence to begin with actions. This occurs when culture cries out for tolerance, acceptance, and suggests people embrace unbiblical truth as the new norm. The flipped sequence is actions, philosophy (ethics), flawed worldview, and theology. We have a flawed starting point. No wonder society's theology is lacking when we are not building

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In The DNA of D6, Ron Hunter clearly lays out a plan for linking church and home in that valuable process of generational discipleship. Church leaders need to absorb every word.

Richard Ross, Ph.D.

Professor of youth ministry, Southwestern Seminary

Ron Hunter offers us wisdom and advice that youth workers and the entire church staff should read, consider, and enlist.

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Center for Parent/Youth Understanding

The DNA of D6 is one of the best books I've read on discipleship. I have required it for several of our staff to read!

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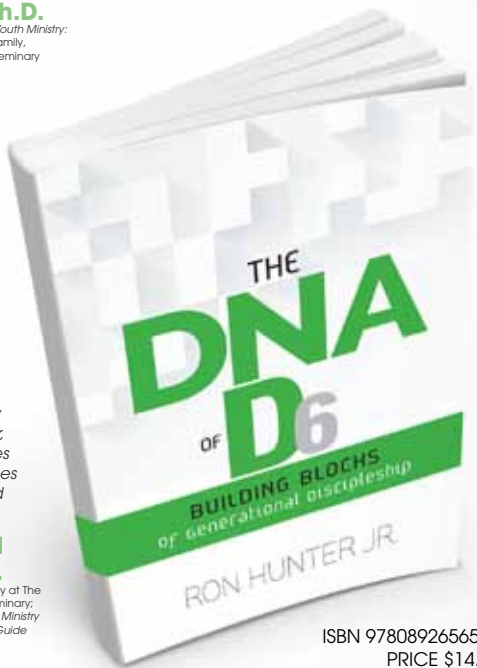
Dannah Gresh

Best-selling author and Founder of *Secret Keeper Girl*

The DNA of D6 is a powerful and practical family ministry book that I wholeheartedly recommend to every pastor, ministry leader, and parent who cares about healthy churches and Christ-centered families.

Timothy Paul Jones, Ph.D.

Professor of Christian Family Ministry at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; author of *Perspectives on Family Ministry* and *The Family Ministry Field Guide*



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ONLY PARENTS WITH STRONG BIBLICAL WORLDVIEWS CAN CONSISTENTLY HELP THEIR KIDS SUCCESSFULLY GRAPPLE WITH TOUGH TOPICS WITH THE GRACE OF CHRIST'S HEART TO REACH PEOPLE.

strong biblical worldviews.

Who will have more influence in shifting the worldview of children and teens? That's right—still the parents. So back to our question at hand: can the parents in our churches carry the weight of such conversations? Only parents with strong biblical worldviews can consistently help their kids successfully grapple with tough topics with the grace of Christ's heart to reach people. If parents' worldviews have the strongest influence, why are we not spending more time helping moms and dads (and grandparents) further develop not just a worldview, but a *biblical* worldview? The Supreme Court decision gives us a renewed reason to equip parents for these significant conversations. You can only talk passionately about what you passionately believe. Scriptural dialogue comes when the church equips parents to coach their kids.

America calls its military a *defense system*. Developing a strong biblical worldview is building kids like battleships. You want them to sail the vast ocean of life, not looking for a fight, but being more than capable to defend their theological foundations. Let's help our kids launch into life sailing with strength alongside others in the fleet, fully capable to carry the difficult conversation because their parents armed them well.

About the Writer: Ron Hunter is CEO of Randall House. He was recently published in two books: *The DNA of D6* and *Youth Ministry in the 21st Century: Five Views* (Youth, Family, and Culture). Both volumes are available at randallhouse.com.

LEAVING OUR NETS

By Sarah

Early in Christ's earthly ministry, He walked along the Sea of Galilee. Close your eyes and immerse yourself in the story in Matthew 5. Feel the sun warm your face. Smell the slightly fishy air. Hear the water lapping on the shore, the sound of two brothers' easy banter, and a voice calling out to them. It is the voice of Jesus beckoning, "Come, follow me, and I'll make you fishers of men."

It is His invitation to join in an exciting venture. To this, most of us would shout, "Yes, count me in! I want to catch men!" But they do something a little crazy, something that doesn't make any sense. They leave their nets. They go empty-handed on this unknown journey. So, I look at these nets left behind on the ground—these man-sized casting nets—and I wonder what the nets represent to them. What would they mean to me? Could I truly leave my nets behind?

IDENTITY

These nets marked the brothers' identity. Everyone who saw James and John knew they were fishermen. Fishing was more than a job. It was who they were. A heritage. It was all they knew; and they knew it well. What is a fisherman without his nets? How would people know who they were without the tools of their trade? I can see myself picking up that net of identity and trying to follow Jesus.

Where do we place our identity? It might be focused on what we do, in who others say we are, or in what we wish we could be—causing us to lose sight of the One to whom we belong. This can easily lead to comparisonitis. You know, that disease that leads to envy, pride, or feelings of worthlessness. This cancer eats at us, robbing us of joy, and keeping us off the path of thankfulness.

If someone asked, "Who are you?" how would you respond? I'm afraid I might focus on what I do, where I live, or my occupation. Maybe the family to which I belong. All those things fall far short of who I really am. Not that anything is wrong with these things; but they do not define my true identity. They actually pale in comparison to who I truly am. When we say yes to Jesus, we become children of God. It is not earned or deserved—just a part of saying yes. I am the cherished daughter of the Most High King! How awesome is that?

SECURITY

Those nets were James and John's livelihood, their security. They not only made their living with those nets, they put food on the table for their families. They invested time, energy, and money in the tools of their trade. Who would walk off and leave their job or turn their backs on the very thing that gave them support and supplied their needs? Without those nets, they had no income.

At the very least, by hanging on to their nets, they could feed themselves and Jesus...they wouldn't go hungry. Yes, I would try to make it about how I could serve Jesus. It would not be about me, or my needs; but down deep, that would not be the truth. This leaving-it-all-behind kind of living, the living-sacrifice kind of living, just makes no sense! So, I wrap my net of security around my shoulders, ready to follow Jesus.

What makes you feel safe and secure? Maybe the better question is: what don't you have that will fill your needs or make you feel safe? A person or place? A job or money in the bank? Our nets are the "if only" things we have labeled "needs" in our hearts and minds.

Have you ever wrestled with God about these things...money, for instance? Have you ever known He was calling you to give a seemingly crazy amount? You try to remind Him of the real needs you have, which make this kind of giving impossible. All the while, knowing full well when we say yes to Jesus, and all is yielded to Him, He promises to fulfill all our needs. Knowing crazy, hilarious giving is how He supplies the needs of others. It is truly all His anyway. We just steward it to bless others. As we give obediently, in turn, we are blessed.

COMFORT

The feel of those nets in their hands must have brought a sense of comfort. Yes, fishing was hard work. Their success depended so often on things outside their control. Still, I can just imagine there was something about the way the nets felt in their hands. The familiar rhythm of casting. The pleasure of tugging them in, with the hope of a catch. They would return to their nets when confused, at a loss, or when facing the unknown.

What brings you comfort? That sense of ease—the known? Today, many comforts are available, from mattresses to La-Z-Boys® to cars with smooth rides, technology, and gadgets. We



THE
THINGS WE
OWN OR
NEED TRAP
US.

easily become a little obsessed with all the things available—things we need to make life more comfortable. During my flights across the Pacific, I am allowed one 50-pound bag. Believe me, it is always full and never less than 50 pounds. My bag is filled with things to make my life more comfortable.

Nothing is inherently wrong with things that make life more enjoyable or more bearable. But what if we become so focused on what makes us feel comfort that we are lulled into a sense of entitlement? “I have a right to my nets. If I can’t take them along, then I’m not so sure it is worth the trip!” The things we own or need trap us. Life just does not seem possible without them. Eventually, they own us. They enslave. In the midst of the hard, cold, and confusing things life brings, we forget—He alone brings comfort. And true freedom can only be found in following Him.

It is not that there is anything wrong with nets. They serve a good, useful purpose. They are a source of blessing. Can something that was once a blessing cease to bless? Yes...when it gets in the way of following Jesus down the hallways of our schools, into our places of work, through the hospital, into shops and markets, as we interact with those He brings into our path.

Somehow, we have diluted what it means to follow. We have forgotten He warned us there is a cost—that following is a daily act of surrender, denying ourselves, taking up our cross. We also forget He promised He would always be with us. In the messy, hard things of life He will be present, giving irrational peace, joy in the journey, and so much more.

The invitation is given. “Come.” I bend over and pick up my nets, wrapping them around my shoulders like a shawl. It just doesn’t make sense to leave them behind.

So off I go, following Jesus down the dusty roads, through the desert, along the crowded streets. Tripping others and myself. Weighed down. Stumbling. Distracted. Exhausted. Literally wrapped in my nets and eventually, unable to continue.

He kneels beside me, gently untangling this mess of netting, assuring me I have no need for the nets. I am His, and He is faithful and true. In Him, I will find all I need. Rising, I willingly, maybe fearfully, open my hands and let go. I surrender, knowing my deepest longing is not filled by identity, security, or comfort, but by Someone—Jesus, the faithful One, who alone can fill my emptiness and satisfy my soul. **ONE**

About the Writer: Sarah lives and works for a non-profit organization in Asia.



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SNAPSHOTS OF STUDENT SPIRITUALITY

BY BARRY RAPER



Youth ministry author Kenda Creasy Dean recently wrote the book *Almost Christian*. It's a book about research specifically directed at youth in American churches. The subtitle is worth noting: *What the Faith of our Teenagers is Telling the American Church*. While it is certainly right for us to be concerned about the evangelical church in America, another question comes to mind: What about the faith of Free Will Baptist teenagers? It was with this in mind that the Free Will Baptist Student Survey was created.

ORIGIN OF THE SURVEY

After starting with a base set of questions, the survey researchers met with a group of experienced pastors and youth pastors in the middle Tennessee area for brainstorming. From this meeting we were able to hammer out both the final list of questions and also formatting for the survey.

The first discovery was that making a survey is difficult. We also knew in the back of our minds that the survey had limitations. For example, we had many additional questions, but for the sake of brevity we restricted ourselves to the final number represented in the survey—46 questions. Below is the general format of the survey:

Format: Statements of belief and behavior				
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree Or "No"	Mildly Disagree	Undecided	Mildly Agree	Strongly Agree Or "Yes"

PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

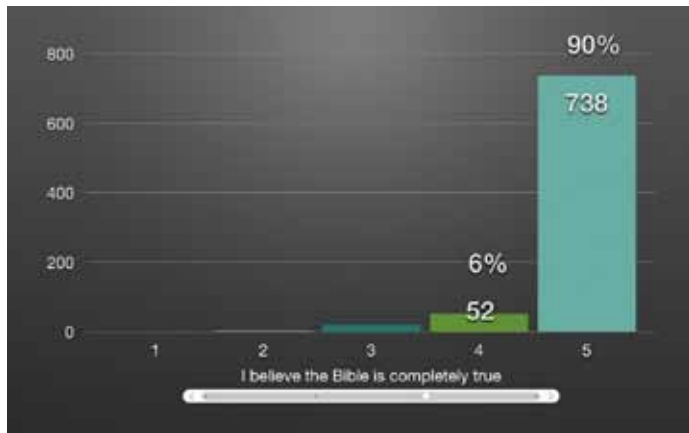
The primary purpose of the survey is to gain an accurate picture of the spirituality of Free Will Baptist students. Other surveys have been conducted that gauge beliefs and behaviors of American teenagers in general. However, we wanted to discover where Free will Baptist students stand on certain core issues.

A second purpose of the survey is to assist local churches in making disciples of youth and their families. Church leaders and parents can take information gleaned from the survey and make the necessary adjustments in training and teaching. One local church, for example, took the survey, reviewed the results, and then had an open discussion forum with parents and students. Assessment of the survey results may lead to changes in preaching, curriculum, and education.

THE EARLY NUMBERS

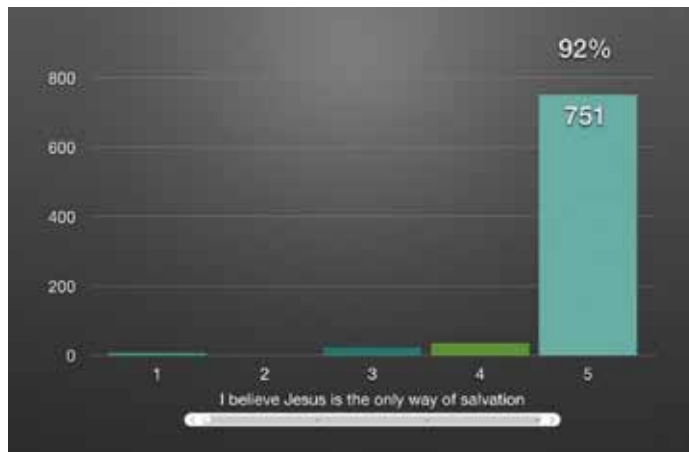
Space will not allow for an in-depth review of all of the numbers generated by the survey to date. At the time of writing more than 800 surveys have been completed. Respondents come from a variety of states, sociological areas, and church sizes. Below are a few select entries to give the reader an idea of what we are learning about the beliefs and behaviors of Free Will Baptist students:

“I believe the Bible is completely true.”

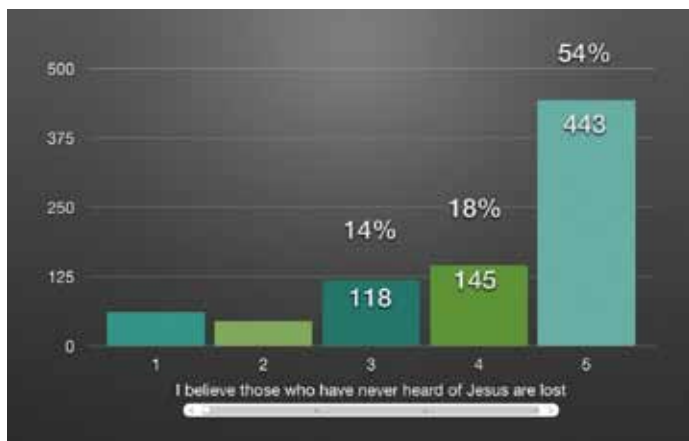


Several statements throughout the survey gauge convictions about the Bible, the reality of Hell, beliefs about homosexuality and abortion, and other issues. Consider, for instance, three statements related to the doctrine of salvation—from slightly different angles:

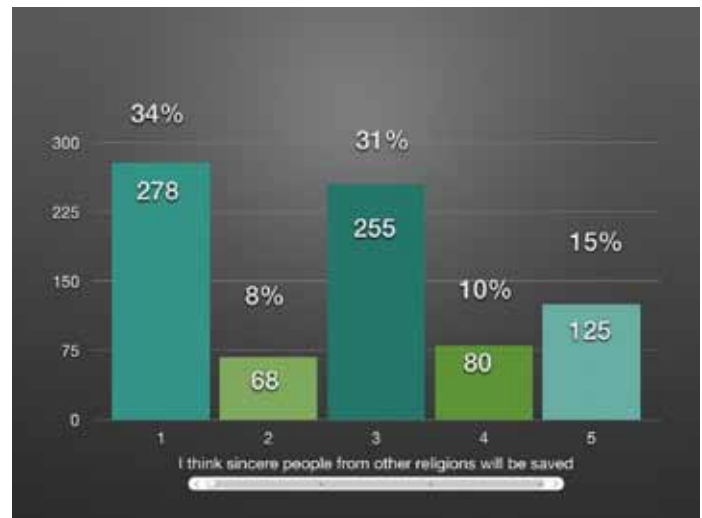
“I believe Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation.”



“I believe those who have never heard of Jesus are lost.”



“I think sincere people from other religions will be saved.”



Imagine the ministry and discipleship value of knowing the beliefs of our students regarding salvation and other crucial areas of faith and lifestyle. We believe this survey will become an invaluable tool for pastors, youth pastors, and church leaders to help them understand and minister to their students.



LOOKING AHEAD

The initial goal was to reach a thousand students with the survey. Recently, however, was made to extend the survey with the hope of gaining an even larger survey sample. Greater numbers will provide an even clearer picture of the spirituality of Free Will Baptist students and will enable more comparative analysis within the survey.

Thanks to each church and student who has taken the time and effort to complete the survey. We would like to enlist the help of your church if you haven't participated in the survey. In order to make this process more efficient, the survey is available online at www.goo.gl/MmxIOh. **ONE**

LIFE in the Valley of the Shadow of Death

BY CANDICE SMITH

*“Fatal birth defects.”
How quickly the excitement of pregnancy changes into shock and grief with those words.*

May 2014. Already the parents of a 16-month-old bundle of adorableness, my son and his wife are expecting their second child. The 20-week ultrasound shows that the baby is a girl. It also indicates several irregularities, including some with her heart and brain. A visit to a high-risk obstetrician confirms what are called “fatal defects.” We learn there is a one-in-three chance of miscarriage, possible risks for her mom if she does go full term, and in the unlikely event that she survives birth, she will live only moments. Termination is presented as an option. Firmly believing that life and death belong in God’s hands, her parents tell the doctor that termination is not an option. We begin our journey into the valley.

This is not my first experience with grief. I have lived with rejection and emotional abandonment. I have loved someone who refused to love me back after vowing to God that he would love me as long as we both lived. I have experienced the humiliation of public desertion and watched my dreams die. Being judged (often misjudged) by people I thought cared about me only added salt to the wounds.

I also experienced the grief of losing a best friend. Sadly, she walked away from our 20-year friendship when she walked away from God. Even though it’s been over five years, I still miss her and the bond we had and pray for her restoration.



I experienced another kind of grief when God led me to Welch College. I left home—family, church, house, even country—and, after traveling 1,500 miles, moved into the girls' dorm. The hardest part was leaving my children: a son, a daughter, a married son and daughter-in-law expecting my first grandchild. Even though they were adults and didn't "need" me, I felt as though I had ripped my heart in two and left half of it behind.

After nearly three years of recovery, I have finally made it to the place where I have more good days than bad, and I am looking forward to the future. But my hard-won optimism is squashed by the doctors' prognosis. Instead, dread fills me, and even though I believe God is in control, I am confused and struggle to trust Him. The shadow intensifies with the development of further concerns: terminal cancer diagnosed in family members, personal issues, and my U.S. visa becomes jeopardized.

As with my previous experiences with grief, I hear many less-than-helpful comments. I am advised to be gracious and understanding to "Job's comforters." "But I am the one with the broken and bleeding heart!" my mind screams. "Why is it my duty to be the more mature one when someone tramples my suffering?" I can't help but feel something is wrong with this picture.

I know God was there...even when my feelings were all over the place.

The comments are probably offered with the hope of relieving my sorrow (at least I hope so), but the truth is, no words can make it better. I need for others to recognize and acknowledge the pain, not minimize it or spiritualize it. Platitudes and clichés only hurt and insult me.

It really is okay only to say, "I'm sorry" or "I know you're hurting" or simply to share a hug. That validates my grief and communicates compassion, and frankly, at this stage, is what I need. I am just not ready to hear theories about how God will use this, or what His purpose might be. Worst are the suggestions that termination would have been better. Seriously? Because their time with her is limited, they should deliberately cut it shorter? I often pray for self-control to keep from telling someone off...or worse.

One of my most painful moments comes the evening I overhear my son speaking to the chairman of the cemetery committee, making arrangements for a burial plot, struggling

to get the words out. I feel as though my heart is shattering as I stand helpless, unable to do anything for this child of mine. I want so badly to ease his pain, and being powerless leaves me paralyzed. I often feel like I am drowning. A few things, however, give a bit of solace: music; the Psalms; recovery group meetings; and simply doing ordinary, daily things with my family. Sharing my struggles via email with far-away friends also helps me cope, maybe because they are not directly involved.

Weeks go by without possible complications, and we are thankful for God's grace. Early in the morning on her due date, October 8, Elaina Marie makes her entrance. She weighs 4 pounds, 10 ounces, and is beautiful despite her challenges. As I hold her and look into her face and feel the stirrings of bonding, an alarm goes off inside my head. It warns me, "Protect your heart. The smart and safe thing is not to get attached." Honestly, it is tempting. I am terrified of losing another part of my heart. Equally frightening to me, however, is where I will end up if I begin shutting down emotionally whenever facing a scary or difficult situation.

Watching my son and daughter-in-law with her inspires me. They continue bravely and unreservedly to love her with their whole hearts, just as they have from the start. So, I pray for courage and choose love, even though it surely leads me deeper into the valley.

The doctors have told us not to expect more than a few minutes with her, if even that. At first, it looks like they were correct. The birth has traumatized her; her color is terrible, and her heart rate drops to 40. They give her to her mama to hold, and within a few minutes her heart rate rises to 60. After half an hour or so, it is up to 120, within the normal range of 120-160 for a newborn. Despite the obvious anomalies, she seems like a typical newborn; as the hours go by, it is tempting to grasp at false hope.

On the second day, I ask the doctor to explain again why she is considered terminal. As I hear the hopelessness of her condition voiced, I feel like something is dying inside me, too. Later that day, her parents bring Elaina home to care for until Jesus takes her to His home and heals her. We have almost five more beautiful, excruciating days with her, trying to squeeze a lifetime of love into fleeting moments, watching her fiercely fight a battle she cannot win, until finally on the morning of October 14, she leaves her earthly parents' arms to be held forever in the arms of her heavenly Father.

In the weeks that follow, I am tempted with regret. Why didn't I hold her more? Talk to her more? Sing to her more? I

My hope is in God. He hasn't brought me this far to abandon me now.

believe this is false guilt, sent from the enemy of my soul to keep me from moving through the grief process, so I reject it. The first time I begin to feel happy, immediately I feel guilty. Again, I reject the guilt. I remind myself of God's truth and His promises, even though most of the time I don't feel them. I know Elaina is supremely happy and enjoying perfection in the presence of God and someday I will be with her again, but right now there is a gaping hole where she was supposed to be. I come across the following principle in an article about grieving during the holidays: *gratitude does not cancel out grief, and it is possible to experience both at the same time.* It is as though I carry a heavy weight, but gradually God takes it away bit by bit, until one day I realize I have cried less this week, or I enjoyed something without guilt, or I was able to shift the focus off my own pain to reach out to someone else, or I have been able to see something good that God has used the experience to accomplish.

May 2015. One year ago, I was celebrating graduation from Welch College and looking forward to two new grandbabies (my

daughter and her husband were also expecting). I was definitely on top of the mountain, but the road took a sudden turn. For 12 months, I have been traveling through a valley, sometimes dark and scary, and despite the occasional bright spot, often terribly painful. Yet, through it all, I *know* God was there...even when my feelings were all over the place. He has promised He will never leave me.

One night, around two weeks before Elaina's due date, I was crying out to God about how much it hurt to go through this alone (translation: without a husband), and I asked Him, not for the first time, where to turn for comfort. This time, my loving Father graciously answered me. My comfort will come from the same place it came when my ex-husband left, when I was home-sick in Nashville, and when I experienced other grief beyond measure. The God of all comfort, the LORD God Almighty would be enough. And He has been. Again and again, things have fallen into place to supply just what I needed at just the right time, but I know it is He who has actually been providing.

Once again, I am facing a major life change. Once again, all I can do is hold tightly to God's truth and promises. He can give me beauty for ashes, joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (Isaiah 61:3). My hope is in Him. He hasn't brought me this far to abandon me now. **ONE**

About the Writer: Candice Smith is a 2014 Welch College graduate. After several months of employment at North American Ministries and International Missions, she recently returned to New Brunswick, Canada.



A Lasting Legacy

To some it must have been a strange decision when Charles Hampton joined the faculty and administration of Welch College in 1974, bringing along a highly regarded Ph.D. in mathematics from University of Texas. "With his credentials and love for teaching, he could have been on the faculty of almost any university in this country," recalled fellow administrator Robert Picirilli, "making multiples of the money he made here and earning considerably more prestige. Instead, Charles chose to make higher Christian education his ministry, his service to the Lord and the Church."

That decision had a lasting impact on the college. Hampton served the next 25 years at the school, 20 years as registrar, leaving behind a legacy of faithfulness as an example to the next generation. **Why not create your own lasting legacy** to benefit Welch College through an endowment with Free Will Baptist Foundation?



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Are We *Mutual* Encouragers?

BY ELIZABETH HODGES

Romans 1:8-12

Romans 12:8 encourages readers to be mutually encouraged by one another's faith. I recently experienced this mutual encouragement...at McDonald's, of all places. After purchasing a large sweet tea, I took time to speak to my formerly homeless friend who sells newspapers on the corner. She was troubled and anxious, asking for prayer. Her military daughter has been deployed, and she does not know where she is.

I told her, "I understand, and I will pray." My military son has been in similar situations, and I could pray with understanding. I thanked God for the nudge to get tea that particular morning so I could encourage Lisa. Throughout that day, God brought others to my mind who encouraged me in times of fear and need, and I found myself thankful for their obedience. I also began to reflect on various duets in the Bible who "mutually encouraged" each other.

Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1:16-18)

You know the story well. When all three husbands died, mother-in-law Naomi decided to return to her hometown of Bethlehem. She told her daughters-in-law to return to their fathers' houses and continue their lives. Orpah obeyed, but Ruth refused. She chose to serve Naomi and her God instead. God blessed her decision, and Ruth found favor with Boaz. In time, she became the mother of Obed, grandfather of David, and ancestor of Jesus. I



am so thankful Naomi's imperfect faith challenged Ruth, and she was obedient to God in turn—mutual encouragers.

Jonathan and David (1 Samuel 18:1-5)

King Saul never understood the relationship between these two young men. Jonathan accepted David as God's choice as Israel's next king. He helped rather than hindering him. Throughout the chapters that describe their friendship, we find Jonathan seeking David's wellbeing, even when his father sought to kill his friend.

Years later, David mourned the death of Saul and Jonathan, and then inquired if anyone remained in Jonathan's household to whom he could show kindness. Enter handicapped Mephibosheth. David showered him with kindness, restored his family's land, and gave him servants.

What an example of mutual encouragement over generations. Can you imagine Mephibosheth telling this story over and over to his children and grandchildren? We may never know in this life the full extent of our kindness to others—mutual encouragement.

Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 2:9-10)

As a child, did you ever say, "When I grow up, I want to be just like..."? What was it about that person that captivated you? Challenged you? Motivated you? I imagine Elisha saying something similar about his mentor Elijah. He walked closely with God's prophet. He saw God work through him. So, when Elijah asked Elisha what he could do for him, Elisha was ready, asking for a double portion of the spirit of Elijah.

Elijah told Elisha he had asked a hard thing, but Elisha did see Elijah caught up into Heaven, and the mantle fell to him. Can you imagine his account of that experience? Was he challenged to encour-

age others as Elijah had encouraged him? I have no doubt. Does your faith challenge, inspire, motivate...and encourage anyone?

Elisabeth and Mary (Luke 1:39-45)

Luke 1:39-45 records Mary's hasty journey to the hill country after learning she would give birth to the Messiah. Her older cousin Elisabeth welcomed her warmly:

"Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy."

What a blessing! Elisabeth was six months along in her own miraculous pregnancy and could share with Mary. She could listen and share in Mary's anxieties. God knew what this young teenager needed, and He provided for her. Who is your Mary?

Barnabas, Saul, and John Mark (Acts 9:26-27)

Had I lived in Jerusalem during this time period, I would have been terrified of Saul. The believers knew he had been intent on destroying them. They had witnessed his wrath and evil actions, and I'm sure they kept their distance. Yet Barnabas was willing to be obedient to the Lord and take a chance on this changed man. It is no coincidence that Barnabas was well known as the "son of encouragement."

Later, Acts 15:36-41 records the dissension between Barnabas and Paul over John Mark. Barnabas thought he needed a second chance after deserting the previous missionary journey. Paul did not.

The disagreement became so sharp that Barnabas and John Mark began a new ministry together while Paul chose

Silas as his new partner. However, Barnabas was right. Years later, in his letter to Timothy, Paul recognized that John Mark had become "profitable to him for the ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11).

We may not always agree with our "mutual encouragers," but God may use those very disagreements to sharpen us, to make us better tools for building His Kingdom. We must be obedient, following His lead, even when the choice is not popular.

Paul and Timothy (2 Timothy 1:3-11)

This passage recounts Paul's friendship with Timothy, and Timothy's faith, which encouraged Paul: "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (verse 5). As Timothy matured, he became a traveling companion to Paul. Then, near the end of Paul's life, he entrusted his ministry to this young man.

Can you imagine the emotions Timothy must have experienced as Paul's successor? The doubts that may have plagued him? Perhaps that is the reason for Paul's encouragement in verse 7: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." How many preachers, pastors, and evangelists through the centuries have been encouraged by these words Paul shared with Timothy? God continues to use their mutual encouragement long after their deaths.

What about us? Who has played the role of "mutual encourager" in our lives? Have we thanked them? If not, we should. And then, we should ask ourselves, "With whom will I share 'mutual encouragement'? Do others see my faith lived out daily? Consistently? Humbly? May they find me faithful...and encouraging." **ONE**

Are You a DISCIPLE?

BY
SCOTT BEE

Recently, while watching the movie *Do You Believe?* I was reminded that being a disciple of Christ does cost you something. In fact, isn't that what the Lord told His followers? In Luke 14:25-33, Jesus affirmed three times that being His disciple would cost us something.

In the movie mentioned above, a Christian EMT (emergency medical technician) shared his faith with a dying man. He placed a cross in the man's hand and asked him if he believed in Jesus Christ. Because he shared his faith with the dying man, he faced the possibility of losing his job. Before entering the courtroom to stand before the judge, the prosecuting attorney met him in the hallway and asked him if he were willing to risk all for the sake of his faith in Christ. He replied simply, "I am."

The attorney quickly responded with these words: "That cross you hold in your hand is going to cost you everything."

So, the question I propose is this: how much are we willing to pay to be Christ's disciple? Are we willing to lose all? When the answers don't come, when the pressure seems insurmountable, when you're at your lowest low, when you've done all you know to do, when you've prayed all you know to pray—are you still willing to be His disciple?

As I've reflected on these questions, I have come to the conclusion that indeed, being a disciple of Christ will cost you, but the rewards are beyond compare. Consider the following letter found in the Bible of a young pastor in Zimbabwe who was later martyred for his faith:

I am a part of the fellowship of the Unashamed. I have the Holy Spirit Power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I am finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tame visions, mundane talking, chintzy giving, and dwarfed

goals. I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by presence, learn by faith, love by patience, lift by prayer and labor by power. My pace is set, my gait is fast, my goal is Heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions few, my Guide is reliable, my mission is clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, deterred, lured away, turned back, diluted, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity. I won't give up, back up, let up, or shut up until I've preached up, prayed up, paid up, stored up, and stayed up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. I must go until He returns, give until I drop, preach until all know, and work until He comes. And when He comes to get His own, He will have no problem recognizing me. My colors will be clear, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

It is a great honor to serve the One who suffered and died in my place, to be His disciple, to live out the days He's given to make more disciples. Soon we will see Jesus face to face, and all the worries and cares of this world will no longer be important. Soon we will hear the blessed words we so desire to hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Are you His disciple? If so, you are not alone. **ONE**

At Welch College >>

Dr. Jeff Cockrell Named to New Testament Post



Jeffrey Cockrell, well-known Free Will Baptist pastor and online instructor at Welch College, has been appointed to the college's full-time faculty beginning January 2016 according

to Provost Greg Ketteman. Cockrell will teach biblical studies with a specialization in New Testament and serve as program coordinator of the new M.A. program in Theology and Ministry scheduled to begin January 2016.

Dr. Cockrell has served as a Free Will Baptist pastor for nearly 30 years in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Currently, he serves as senior pastor of Ahoskie FWB Church in Ahoskie, North Carolina, which

also operates a Christian academy. He has served in a number of denominational posts at local and state levels and is as a member of the Historical Commission of the National Association of Free Will Baptists.

Dr. Cockrell holds a Ph.D. with a concentration in New Testament from the University of Wales, an M.A. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and a B.S. and M.A.R. from Liberty University. In addition to pastoral work, he has taught undergraduate and graduate courses at a number of institutions, including Gordon-Conwell, Liberty, and North Carolina Wesleyan College. He is author of a number of scholarly and popular articles and papers.

"We are delighted to welcome Dr. Cockrell to the faculty of Welch College," said Dr. Ketteman. "He brings long experience in Free Will Baptist ministry, outstanding academic credentials, and a passion for teaching. He

clearly demonstrates Christian virtues such as humility, diligence, and wisdom, traits that have been prominent during his career. Dr. Cockrell has proven to be an effective teacher, gaining significant experience in the Welch online program as well as teaching online and in traditional formats for numerous other Christian and public colleges. These experiences will be particularly valuable in his role as program coordinator for the Master of Arts program in Theology and Ministry."

President Matt Pinson said, "Dr. Cockrell brings just the right mix of pastoral effectiveness, evangelistic zeal, and academic credibility to his new position at Welch. We're so excited to have a man of such proven ability, character, and spirituality to join our full-time faculty."

Dr. Cockrell and his wife Terri have been married 30 years and have two grown sons, Drew and Joel. ■

Stevanus to Coach Flames



Donnie Stevanus has been named interim Men's Head Basketball Coach at Welch College. A Southern Illinois native, Stevanus graduated from Welch College in 1993 with a B.S. in teacher education. He was an outstanding member of the Flames basketball team while a student at Welch.

Stevanus has taught Physical Education and Health in Metro Nashville Public Schools since the fall of 1994, and coached basketball for age groups ranging from elementary to high school. He lives in Pleasant View, Tennessee, with Leah Plunkett, his wife of 20 years, and their four daughters, Elizabeth (a freshman at Welch), Mary Grace, Georgia, and Chloe.

Donnie serves as a deacon and Sunday School teacher at Bethel FWB Church in Ashland City, Tennessee. "My faith in Jesus Christ is the most important part of who I am," Stevanus said. "And my hope for the Flames is that they will be examples of what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:31: 'Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God'—*Soli Deo Gloria!*"

"We are blessed to have found such a strong coach," said Flames' Athletic Director, Gary Turner. "Donnie will be a perfect fit for us. His experience and background are a great asset to Welch College." ■

Intersect >>

BY BARRY RAPER

The Demand of Discipleship

LUKE 14:25-34



In recent years, Twitter has become one of the most popular forms of digital technology. For those who might be unfamiliar with this app, the object is to share short bursts of text called “tweets.” These tweets range from popular quotes to experiences, pictures, daily updates, and so on. You can follow other people on Twitter and, of course, people can subscribe to your Twitter feed and follow you as well.

The number of followers varies greatly. Pop singer Justin Bieber has 46 million followers, LeBron James has 19 million, and ever-popular Free Will Baptist youth pastor Jon D. Forrest (@jondforrest) has 865 followers.

Following someone on Twitter really carries no great demand. You can stop following him or her just as quickly as you started with only a simple tap on the screen. Twitter requires no real investment—no real cost.

It *does cost* to follow Jesus, however. While the basic meaning of the word *disciple* is to follow or to learn, it involves much more for the Christian. In Luke 14, Jesus clearly spelled out the primary and life-altering demand of discipleship for the large crowd who followed Him: **your relationship with Jesus must be more important than any other.**

Jesus called for loving allegiance that makes all other human loves pale in comparison. In Matthew’s Gospel, this particular demand is worded this way, “Whoever loves father or mother *more than me* is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter *more than me* is not worthy of me.” No human relationship is omitted. It is impossible to be a disciple of Jesus without giving Him rightful place on the throne of your life.

This demand is really no different than the first of the Ten Commandments: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you

out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.”

We sometimes think of “gods” in terms of the Happy Buddha statue at the local Chinese restaurant, but a god is anything or, in this case, *anyone* who takes Christ’s place. Jesus took this command a step further with the phrase “yes, even his own life.” The reality is, your favorite person in the world is you! Jesus demands us to love Him even more than we love ourselves. Ultimately, only one person can call the shots in your life, and it can’t be you. Otherwise, you cannot be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Let me be clear: salvation comes by grace through faith. Salvation doesn’t come by the work of following Jesus, but by His finished work on the cross. Salvation is free, paid by the Savior’s redemptive work. But His grace has implications. His call to salvation is the call to follow Him, to be His disciple. Have you decided to follow Jesus? If not, why not? Accept His call today, and you will never regret it.

If you have already made the decision to follow Him, to become His disciple, have you allowed another relationship to rival your relationship with Him? Father, mother, spouse, children, boyfriend, girlfriend—even your own life? We must not allow anyone to keep us from following Christ. This is the demand of discipleship. **ONE**



How a Failed College Became a Catalyst for Unity

John Welch and the Free Will Baptist University

BY ERIC K. THOMSEN

From earliest days—long before the formation of the National Association—Free Will Baptists in both North and South demonstrated great concern for education. A number of historic schools were started and closed, or absorbed by other denominational groups, as was the case after Free Will Baptists merged with Northern Baptists in 1911.



Only three regional Free Will Baptist colleges remained in operation during the second decade of the 20th Century—Ayden Seminary and College, in Ayden, North Carolina; Tecumseh College, in Tecumseh, Oklahoma; and Zion Bible School in Blakely, Georgia. By the time the denomination united in 1935, only Zion Bible School remained in operation.

This lack of a unified Free Will Baptist college had long been a source of frustration. In 1907, representatives from Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee made efforts to open a new college, The Free Will Baptist University, in Nashville, Tennessee. Unfortunately, only one student enrolled, and the new school came to an abrupt end.

Yet the frustrating attempt was not futile, for that single student, John L. Welch, became a major catalyst and spokesman in the push for a Free Will Baptist school. Appointed chairman of an education committee by the Eastern General Conference in 1921, Welch worked tirelessly through the 1920s and '30s to promote the idea of a unified college within the Eastern General Conference. He also met regularly with representatives from the West (the Cooperative Association) to discuss the need for a school.

In a report to delegates attending the 1933 Eastern General Conference, Welch said, "I have found a strong and growing sentiment among our people for a centralized educational institution." In a bold move, he recommended that the formation of the institution hinge upon the union of the two conferences: "First, that the question of a centralized educational institution be made contingent upon the merging of the Cooperative General Association and the General Conference into one national body."

Welch went so far as to recommend a committee of leaders from both groups meet in Nashville to consider the city as a permanent site for the new school. This group became known as the Joint Educational Committee. Thus, the push for a unified Free Will Baptist college became synonymous with and a catalyst for a unified denomination.

Free Will Baptist Bible School, Nashville, Tennessee

When the denomination organized in 1935, the first order of business for the newly elected Education Committee was to recommend Nashville as the location for a "Bible School" to start as early as 1936. Delegates tapped Welch, who had also been elected moderator of the denomination, to serve as the National Secretary of Education, heading a five-member Board of Trustees for a school that did not yet exist. They appointed Selph Jones (Missouri), Henry Melvin (North Carolina), J.C. Griffin (North Carolina), M.F. Vanhooose (Kentucky), and E.A. O'Donnell



(Oklahoma) to serve with him on the board.

In the wake of the organizational meeting, plans were delayed, despite the growing concern for a college. Four years later, during the 1939 convention in Bryan, Texas, Welch's daughter Jean, a 16-year-old high school student, delivered an impassioned address to delegates. According to the minutes, "The challenge and prayer so gripped the hearts of all present that it resulted in a great educational rally such as many had never experienced before."

During the same meeting, the Education Board shared its own observations regarding the denomination's need—and great desire—for a college: "There is not only an increasing interest, but a greater demand for Christian Education than we have even seen before. This interest is especially noticeable among the laity of our churches, and particularly among the youth...further delay will not only work a hardship, but will have a tendency to destroy present interest. By our delay, we both deny the privilege of Christian Education to those so much in need of it, and we lose to other denominations the best talent, which might have become our greatest asset of tomorrow."

In spite of growing educational fervor, it was three long years before the dream finally became reality. In 1941, under the lead-

ership of Executive Secretary L.R. Ennis and Secretary of Education J.R. Davidson, the Education Board purchased a beautiful home at 3609 Richland Avenue for \$15,000. They made a down payment of \$5,000, and a year later, in October 1942, when the college was dedicated for service, the entire debt had been retired on the property located in the West End area of Nashville.

Free Will Baptist Bible School opened September 15, 1942, with nine students: James Hagin (Georgia); Sam and Rashie Kennedy (North Carolina); Paul Kettelman, Opal Hiltabidal, and George Waggoner (Illinois); Sylvia and Damon Dodd and Marie Thomas (Missouri). Later in the semester, three additional students were added to the body: Dan Cronk (Michigan); Chester O'Donnell (Alabama); and Robert Woodard (North Carolina).

The Board of Trustees appointed South Georgia pastor L.C. Johnson as the school's first president. When initially approached by L.R. Ennis at the 1942 convention in Columbus, Mississippi, the soft-spoken southern gentleman resisted the appointment. But at the urging of his colleagues, Johnson graciously accepted, telling the committee that he could not understand his appointment but would submit to the spiritual

judgment of older, more experienced men who seemed certain about God's leading.

Johnson quickly proved to be a man of courage and vision, and he carved out a successful educational program—although one far different than expected by most Free Will Baptists. According to Dr. Robert E. Picirilli, chairman of the Free Will Baptist Historical Commission, “While those first leaders thought only in terms of a Bible institute, Dr. Johnson led the new college to a well-rounded program that included both sound biblical content and a generous core of Christian liberal arts.”

Welch, Johnson, and countless other Free Will Baptists passionate about the cause of Christian education laid the college foundation well. Nearly 75 years and two name changes later, Welch College continues to thrive. And more than a century after John L. Welch became the solo student of the “failed” Free Will Baptist University, the college that became his namesake continues to be a unifying agent in the denomination, producing pastors, missionaries, teachers, businessmen and businesswomen dedicated—as the college mission states—to serving Christ, His Church, and His world through biblical thought and life. **ONE**

About the Writer: Eric K. Thomsen is managing editor of *ONE Magazine*. He is a member of the Free Will Baptist Historical Commission. This article cites a number of public records. For a fully annotated version of this article, visit www.helwysocietyforum.com/?p=5956. Reprinted by permission.

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Leader Profile >> BY RON HUNTER JR.

Leadership comes in all forms and sizes, but the results are the same. Leaders influence behavior and make a difference in people's lives. Profiling leaders shows a diverse combination of traits, but impacting lives is always a common theme. 


Todd Parrish

As leadership has developed over the years, an egocentric or “look at me” style is giving way to a more preferred servant style, a transformative approach to leading. Some people lead from behind the scenes, while others possess the skill to lead humbly out front. Some do both. Todd Parrish is such a leader.

Growing up, Todd was influenced by several spiritual giants. Beginning with his parents (who led him to Christ); his grandfather Thurman Hall (a pastor); Bobby Jackson, who preached the night Todd's father found the Lord; and Clint Morgan who, just before his first term in Africa, preached at youth camp where Todd answered the call to preach.

It is no wonder Todd did not run from his call but ran to it. His godly parents knew he was interested in pastoring when they discovered him in the backyard baptizing an unwilling candidate—the family cat.

Having pastored First FWB Church in Washington, North Carolina, for nearly four years, Todd and his wife Merinda love the congregation and also love helping people heal from their deepest hurts. Todd describes Merinda (White) Parrish as the greatest gift God gave him for ministry. The couple just celebrated their 25th anniversary, and their most enjoyable dates are dinner and a movie, fishing, or just grilling on the back deck—anything as long as they are seeking to deepen their friendship and fondness for each other. Their two daughters, Emily and Ellen, are students at Welch College, serving God with full abandon.

Todd leads his church well. He effectively works as one of the key leaders in state ministry. But more importantly, Todd is a leader to his family, carrying on the example of his own parents and grandparents set for him. **Todd, You are a great leader!** 



What do people misunderstand about you?

People sometimes fail to see how deeply I care when I lovingly confront them with truth. I want them to know that the depths of my love and care will not let them continue in a harmful direction.

Who is your favorite author?

Robert J. Morgan

What books are you reading right now (or in the past six months)?

The Warrior Soul: Five Powerful Principles to Make You a Stronger Man of God by Jerry Boykin and Stu Weber
Answers to Prayer by George Muller
Mastering Life Before It's Too Late: 10 Biblical Strategies for a Lifetime of Purpose by Robert J. Morgan
100 Bible Verses Everyone Should know by Heart by Robert J. Morgan
First Lessons in Beekeeping by C.P. Dadant

What is your biggest failure? The busyness of trying to do so much that I fail to complete some tasks or forfeit doing them with excellence.

What would you like to see in Free Will Baptists in five or ten years? I would love to see our denomination embody Paul's testimony of “forgetting what's behind, and pressing forward to the goal.” I would love to see our people heal from the hurts of yesterday and move forward as a body of believers.

Paper or Plastic

Fiction or non-fiction? Non-fiction

Music or talk radio? Talk radio

Sushi or Burger? Burger

Facebook, Email, Pinterest, Twitter, or texting

(don't pick Fax)? Facebook

Tie or No Tie? Tie

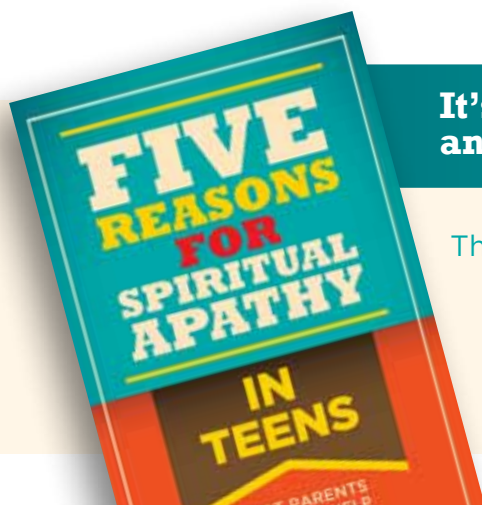
Mac or PC? Mac

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THE SEED WAS PLANTED

BY
IDA
LEWIS

As you read this article, I will be in my last few weeks at North American Ministries.

Retirement always seemed so far in the future, and it has come as a surprise—even a shock—that the time has arrived so quickly. My work has made such a difference in my life over the years, and it all started with a seed planted when I was a young girl.



Lifelong friends from church; they all remain active in churches today.



Leading the pack in Sunday School.



Ready for baptism.



Honored for completing several years of Bible memorization.

My family made sure I was raised in church, and I was there every time the door opened...whether I was supposed to be there or not. From intense training in Bible memorization to lessons from God's Word and missions, both home and foreign, the things of the Lord, church, and salvation were in my path at all times. I accepted the Lord into my heart at the tender age of five. My pastor commented at the time that I probably had learned more about the Lord than many adults. I don't know about that, but I will forever be grateful for this pattern in my life during this time of learning and understanding.

At age 12, I had the opportunity to work in a local church plant. Our church was "mothering" a new church and asked for volunteers. Because I was interested in missions, I was happy to participate in the work. We washed cabinets, scrubbed floors, decorated rooms, set up chairs, displayed materials, painted, passed out flyers by the hundreds, and so on. I was right in the middle of these efforts and loved every minute.

That single experience in my life set the tone for what would come later. The seed had been planted. I saw what it took to plant a church back then. (And believe me when I say planting churches in today's society can be much more difficult.) The help received from the "mother church" volunteers blessed the pastor of this church plant tremendously. For my part in the work, he rewarded me with accordion lessons.

I have heard it said that mission trips for young people are a waste of money because they do not speak foreign languages. What could they possibly do to be of help or communicate? Going on a mission trip to help church planters, both in the U.S. and around the world can be one of the most inspiring activities our students can experience. Like me, they learn firsthand all the work that goes into planting a church as they work with other young people to make a difference. Few things are more exciting than to watch the proverbial "light bulb" switch on as a young person realizes that God may want him or her involved in missions for the rest of his life! Our kids are important. Encourage them to participate in missions activities. It may change their lives.

Eventually, I married Ray, my high school sweetheart, and we started a family, later adding our children Chris and Kelly. Ray announced the call to preach, and off we went to Welch College, followed by a wonderful time in the pastorate. We eventually returned to Nashville and I went to work for Home Missions (North American Ministries).

Under the direction of Roy Thomas, I worked directly

with the missionaries—processing faith promises and planning mission conferences, among other tasks. I remained in that capacity for five years, left the department for a time, and returned in 1995. Under the leadership of Trymon Messer, I found myself working with church planters. For 20 years, I poured myself into the role of publications editor. My life centered around deadlines; maps; directories; prayer cards; books like *God Did It* by Trymon Messer; and articles for *Aim*, *Contact*, and *ONE Magazine*; along with newsletters and special projects like Roll Call Sunday, Benjamin Randall Day or Mission: North America Offerings—anything to help church planters and chaplains.

My heart has always been with the church planter. Many start their ministry with little or no help and carve out a work, often in an area isolated from other Free Will Baptists. Imagine going to a place where the nearest Free Will Baptist might be hundreds of miles away and starting from scratch: finding a place to worship, getting the word out about the new church, making a place for your family, and raising enough money to meet the financial needs of your family and church. To say the least, this is a daunting task.

The employees at North American Ministries feel that anything we can do to help church planters is our ministry. We are proud to be a small part of every soul reached for Christ. We want to do anything and everything we can to help church planters and to carry out the other ministries that fall under the North American Ministries umbrella.

Ray and I already have begun to brainstorm ways we can continue to help church planters during our retirement. I wouldn't trade anything for my experiences during 25 years with North American Ministries. What began as a seed for missions planted in the heart of a young girl has blossomed into my life's work. While retirement will change some things, I will always remain focused on helping the work of North American Ministries.

It has been my distinct pleasure to work under General Directors Roy Thomas, Trymon Messer, Larry A. Powell, and currently David Crowe. My work with Brother Crowe has spanned almost 20 years. During that time, I made wonderful friendships and saw many tremendous things happen for the Lord's work—both in general and specifically in North American Ministries.

Thank you, fellow Free Will Baptists, for allowing me to work with you these 25 precious years. You have meant more to me than you will ever know. I am proud to be a part of the Free Will Baptist family and the fellowship of believers in Christ. **ONE**





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Crossing Cultures

BY MATT PRICE

While preaching in September 2012, I surveyed our congregation to find out how many different languages were spoken that day at our church. Our church is known as a multicultural and multilingual congregation. Yet, even we were astonished to discover that our congregation spoke 28 different languages that day. Considering the 110 people in the service, that's impressive. Many in attendance were students.

The Free Will Baptist Church in Nantes, France, is near Université de Nantes, attended by 35,000 students. Around 10% of those students are from other countries. Needless to say, this is a mission field within a mission field. With a little effort, and some creative people, through the years our church has become a magnet for students looking for a place to belong.

Many of them come to Nantes to study for one to three years. As they participate in our discipleship programs, they become grounded in their faith and develop a passion to share their faith with their compatriots. In effect, our church has sent “missionaries” back to their homes in more than 30 different countries.

Shuang

Shuang, a young Chinese student, began attending our church thanks to a friend's invitation. Her family had deep ties to the Communist Party in China. So, it was understandable when Shuang said she had zero knowledge of Christianity.

She began attending English Bible studies, because her English was better than her French. During the first Bible study she attended, she had an endless string of questions. With each passing month, we could see the Holy Spirit truly moving in her life. She even began answering questions when others asked about things she had questioned herself in the beginning.

After a year in Nantes, she returned to China during one of the holiday breaks. She was excited to tell her family about the things she had learned and about the people she had met in

France. When she returned from her visit, her whole behavior had changed. She was cold and distant. During one of our conversations, Shuang said, “Matt, while I was home, I realized I have been lied to my entire life. I have no idea what truth is anymore. How can I know the promises in the Bible are not simply more lies?”

Shuang stopped attending church, but I convinced her to keep attending our Bible studies. During those times, we went back to zero and worked through all her questions again. Two long years after she first entered the church, she gave her life to Christ and was baptized. The day of her baptism, she invited 20 other Chinese students to come and hear her testimony. Most of them had never been inside any type of church before. Tears filled many of their eyes as they heard about Shuang's struggle to find truth. During her testimony, she emphatically announced to her friends she now understands truth is found in Jesus Christ and in Him alone.

Eva

Last year, Eva showed up on a Sunday morning. A student from Senegal, she had recently arrived in Nantes. She had be-



come a Christian only a month earlier. Because of her decision to follow Christ, her Muslim family rejected her. Family members tried to take her passport so she would be unable to leave until she recanted. Her mother told Eva, “I lost your twin sister when she was five years old. Now, I have lost you.”

Eva fled her home because of the persecution she was experiencing. She arrived in Nantes without knowing anyone and with few belongings. For the next few months, our church became her family as we responded not only to her physical needs, but also to her spiritual needs. Even though she had accepted Christ as her Savior, she had little time to be discipled by Christians in Senegal. She wanted to defend her faith but lacked the tools to do so. Over the next few months, members in our church gave her those tools.

Anna

This year, Anna Forlines has come to help us with our international student ministry. She is participating in a program by the University of Nantes geared toward international students who want to learn French. Though learning French may not sound like an outreach ministry to some, this is far from the truth. When Anna took her placement tests, the director said 500 students from 60 countries are studying in the program this year.

As Anna and her classmates endeavor to learn the French language together, they will make mistakes and enjoy a lot of laughter. They will learn about one another’s lives as they conjugate verbs into past, present, and future tenses. They will share their worldviews as they struggle with the gender of French nouns.

The bond created during these moments is intense. Friendships will last a lifetime. Of course, Anna will use these connections to share the love of Christ with those who may be hearing the name of Jesus for the first time. She will seek to be a light in a very dark place. We are praying God will use Anna to bring students into a relationship with the Master.

Anna is not the first Free Will Baptist student to walk the halls of Université de Nantes. Cristina and I participated in the same program 16 years ago. We hope she will not be the last Free Will Baptist student to participate in this program. We are always looking for students who would like to spend one year abroad to make an impact for the Kingdom.

You and Your Church

How can your church get involved with cross-cultural university ministry?

If your church has a college or university nearby, you have international students nearby. You may never have a passport, but you can still answer the call to “go into all the world” simply by getting onto your local campus.

I can safely say international students will not come looking for a church. However, most are open when the church meets them in their world. Many students are looking for someone who can help improve their English. Most of the time, this simply takes time and a little patience.

If you feed them, they will come. Poor college students of every nationality need food. I have found that international students love fried chicken and mashed potatoes. But honestly...what is there not to love about that?

International student ministry takes time and patience. But there is nothing like watching someone grow from zero knowledge of Christianity to announcing to peers that the Truth cannot be found in any other name under heaven except in Jesus Christ. **ONE**



About the Writer: Matt and Cristina Price are in their third term of service in France. Learn more about their ministry at www.fwbgo.com.

Around the World >>



A Call for 30 Days of Prayer and Fasting

Antioch, TN—General Director Clint Morgan issued a call to 30 days of prayer and fasting for International Missions. “Prayer should be a staple of the Christian’s walk. But, at times,” Morgan acknowledged, “the concerted, focused, diligent prayer of a larger group seems to move God to reveal Himself more clearly and allow us as individuals to better understand His will.”

This 30 Days of Prayer and Fasting ran October 1-30. Requests focused on asking God to help us gain His view of the world, become more committed to reaching the lost, call more laborers into the Harvest, know precisely where to send those called, be the mission agency He desires with His agenda, have clarity concerning partnerships, abundantly resource His plans, and provide a vision for the future.

Blogs and prayer requests will remain on the Mission website (www.fwbgo.com). Those who missed the opportunity to participate may use the information at any time to pray for God to move in Mission leadership and throughout our denomination. ■

THP Project Trio

Antioch, TN—The Hanna Project (THP) tackled three projects on three continents in three months. Each project fulfilled the organization’s promise to bring help, hope, and healing to those in need worldwide.

In August, a team of ten traveled to Ecuador. Serving August 21-29, the team expanded the cafeteria at Antioch Christian Academy, a rapidly expanding dual language school in the jungles of Ecuador.

A five-man team traveled to Doropo, Côte d’Ivoire, West Africa, September 3-14. In partnership with BERACA, the Ivorian NGO that operates the Doropo Hospital, and 11 Ivorian workers, the team worked to improve the hospital. Tasks accomplished included painting, replacing screen wire on windows, replacing broken window panes and window pane mechanisms, putting locks on doors, replacing plywood panels on doors, build-

ing a roof on a porch, electrical and plumbing repairs, repair of two generators, and the installation of a new sound system for evangelism in the hospital.

A team of seven served in Kulyab, Tajikistan, October 1-10. The team continued a project begun in 2013, providing a youth residence home for boys. The home now houses girls as well. A playground was added and

siding installed. The team also distributed eyeglasses to those in need of them.

THP will return to each of these areas in 2016 to reinforce help, hope, and healing. Anyone interested in participating in a THP trip (to one of these locations or others) may visit the website—www.hannaproject.com—or email Curt Holland (curt@fwbgo.com). ■



Snapshots Around the World

Bulgaria—Tim and Lydia Awtrey began a Bible study entitled “Meeting Jesus” on Sunday, October 4. Designed for interested non-believers, Josh Provow began, the same Bible study began October 14 in a nearby town, Butovo.



Brazil—Pastor José Assunção baptized six people at the Marabá FWB Church in Araras, Brazil, on Sunday, September 20.

Brazil—Pastor Jean Carlo baptized four young people at the Jaboticabal FWB Church on Sunday, August 23.

Brazil—Pastor Elizeu Cantelmo baptized nine people at the First FWB Church in Araras, Brazil, on Sunday, September 27. The same day, Pastor Rafael dos Santos of the Buritis FWB Church in Belo Horizonte baptized five people.



Côte d'Ivoire—The Ivorian National Association convened August 24-28. In addition to regular business, seminars, and preaching, one man was ordained to the ministry, five men graduated from the Bible institute,

and 47 people responded to the final altar call—some for salvation, others for full-time service. The group also agreed to partner with a pastor to plant a church in the neighboring country of Ghana.

Cuba—David Outlaw (educational specialist with IM) and Ron Callaway (former missionary and Welch College professor) taught Theology of Paul in the graduate program at Cedars of Lebanon Seminary in Pinar del Río, Cuba, September 21-25.

India—Carlisle Hanna departed India September 8, arriving in South Carolina September 9.



Japan—Daniel and Katie Speer and their daughter Audrey arrived in Tokyo, Japan, September 24, to begin a two-year internship.

Japan—A new ministry, Hope Alive, began Saturday, August 8, in Tokyo. The bi-monthly English worship outreach con-

sists of Bible study, worship, and English language community. Josh and Alicia Crowe spearhead this endeavor.



Japan—Sixty people attended a day camp hosted by the three Free Will Baptist churches in Tokyo in September. Many of those attending participate in English clubs, but do not attend church.

Japan—A Japanese woman was baptized at the Mihashidai Church in Hokkaido on August 2. Her husband is not a believer. In September, an elderly couple (78 and 80), whose daughter has been a believer for many years, accepted Christ and was baptized. The wife has terminal cancer. Dale Bishop exclaimed, “We have prayed for them for 28 years! Praise the Lord!”

Spain—Neil and Mandi Morgan departed for Spain October 6 to begin their first term in the country after transferring from Uruguay. Initially, the couple will work with Spanish pastor José Manuel and his wife Carmen.



Uruguay—First FWB Church of Rivera, Uruguay, celebrated its 53rd anniversary September 25-27 with a weekend missions-focused revival. Speakers were missionaries Steve Torrison and Jaimie Lancaster and Uruguayan pastor Gerardo Acevedo. Activities included special music, a play, pictures from a mission field, pictures from the early days of the church, greetings via Skype from former missionaries Paul and Amy Robinson (church founders), and cake and refreshments on Sunday. Casildo Tridade is the pastor. Kenneth Eagleton, regional director for Latin America, represented International Missions. They collected \$200 for the WMO (World Missions Offering).

Uruguay—Jaimie and Tammy Lancaster returned to Uruguay August 19 following five months stateside for extended medical treatment for Tammy. After experiencing

seizures, doctors discovered 10 arteriovenous malformations (abnormal connections between arteries and veins). Medication should limit further episodes.



Uruguay—Representatives from the Free Will Baptist churches in Uruguay met Saturday, September 26, at the Cristo es el Camino FWB Church in Rivera. The delegates and guests from the five churches and one preaching point delivered reports, participated in a round-table discussion about the future of the work, listened to preaching, conducted business, and fellowshiped over dinner.



Uruguay—More than 50 children (and many parents) attended the Children’s Day outreach event on Sunday, August 16, in Montevideo, Uruguay. The gospel was presented and they were invited to regular services.



6 SECONDS

That Could Change Missions Forever

BY BRANDON ROYSDEN, NYC DIRECTOR

Really? Changing Free Will Baptist missions in 60 seconds? Is that even possible? At Randall House and Vertical Three Ministries, we believe it is, and we believe Buck-A-Week is a great place to start.

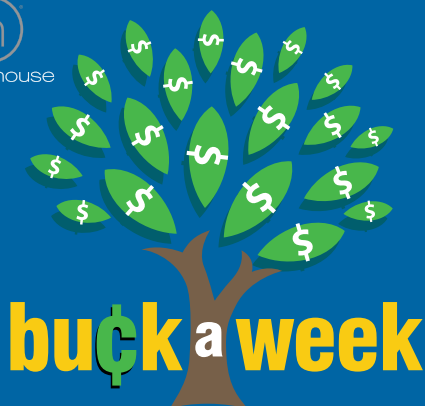
Established in 2006, Buck-A-Week is a fundraising initiative developed in cooperation with Randall House, Free Will Baptist International Missions (FWBIM), and North American Ministries (NAM) that challenges children, students, and adults to set aside \$1 each week for an entire year to support missions efforts across the denomination. The question is whether a single dollar could really make a difference.

MIRACLE IN THE MATH

According to www.nafwb.org, there are nearly 300,000 members of the National Association of Free Will Baptists. Imagine for a moment that we could get even 5% to participate in Buck-A-Week. This would mean for every church of 100 people, five would join this effort. With only that small number, Buck-A-Week would take in over \$750,000 dollars each year.

WHY BUCK-A-WEEK?

Great question! Obviously, FWBIM and NAM still need all the support they get. Buck-A-Week is simply meant to be icing on the cake. It's \$4 per month that few would miss. It's the cost of a tall frappuccino or value meal at your favorite fast food restaurant. For some, it literally may be the amount of change lost somewhere in your couch cushions right now.



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2016 **MISSIONARY PROJECTS** Chris & Megan Davenport – Hawaii
Steve & Lori Torrison – Uruguay

The beauty of this opportunity is not simply the ease with which most of us could give \$4 each month. Buck-A-Week is also set up to allow the money given now to continue to give in the future. Not only are two missionary projects (one FWBIM and one NAM) chosen each year as recipients of a portion of this offering, but a percentage is deposited into a Buck-A-Week endowment that continues to grow with the hope of supporting Free Will Baptist missions for many years to come.

NEW (AND OLD) WAYS TO GIVE

With the Internet at our fingertips, it is now easier than ever to be involved, which is why we are excited to announce the ability to participate in Buck-A-Week through online giving. This is where that 60 seconds could really make a difference. Setting up recurring gifts for each month is simple and can be done online (verticalthree.com/buck-a-week) or by texting 'Pushpay' to 77977, downloading the app, searching for Vertical Three, and signing up to give.

For children or those who prefer to participate with cash, we have personal savings banks that can be ordered from Randall

House. Money collected can be brought to the National Youth Conference, sent by check to Randall House, or deposited and given through the online giving portal at verticalthree.com.

THE BYSTANDER EFFECT OR THE DIFFUSION OF RESPONSIBILITY

Of course, we are excited about the possibilities for Buck-A-Week, but unfortunately, we also fear the bystander effect. The bystander effect refers to the phenomenon that exists when people do not offer to help because there are others around who they assume could or might do it instead. It's that voice in our heads that tells us, "Someone else will take care of it." "Someone else will give." "Someone else will make up the 5%." In this case, though, we want *you*.

We want to teach our children and students a posture of planned giving. We want to support Free Will Baptist missionaries because of everything they have done and all they will do for the kingdom of God. We want to provide a simple but profound way to change the course of missionary support in our denomination. Will you join us? **ONE**

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STUCK!

BY BRAD RANSOM

Recently, one of our church planters made a statement I've heard at least a hundred times from other church planters and pastors of established churches: "I'm stuck!" I looked up the definition of *stuck* in the dictionary. The word had half a column of variations and definitions, but in essence, the word stuck comes from the word stick: "To be or remain fixed or embedded; to be puzzled."

I think this fits the statement pastors are making. "I'm stuck, fixed, embedded, and puzzled." Basically, "Our momentum is stalled. We aren't moving ahead. We're stuck right where we are." Many pastors are content with stuck, as long as it doesn't shift into reverse. Being stuck, however, is the first step toward reverse. If you are not moving forward, you're in decline. If your growth chart doesn't show any increase over the past couple of years, you're stuck. We can call it many different things, but when all the layers and excuses are peeled away, it's the same—stuck.

I don't claim to have all the answers, but I can tell you I've been stuck. I pastored for many years, with definite times without forward momentum. I've studied momentum, growth barriers, ruts, and many other issues related to stuck, and I've learned some things along the way. I would like to share three:

FOCUS

Most stuck churches have lost their focus. If your church isn't reaching people and growing, it has lost focus...I can almost guarantee it. The focus of every church should be outreach. The goal of the church is to fulfill the Great Commission. Matthew 28:19-20 is clear: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

We are to win and disciple others. Winning and discipling people has many pieces. It would take pages to scratch the surface of the subject, but let me share a few ways the church can do this successfully.

1. Focus on evangelism and discipleship. Everything your church does should be motivated by evangelism. If a ministry is using up valuable resources and volunteers in an effort that doesn't aid the evangelistic efforts of your church, stop!

2. Teach your church to be friendly. I've never been to a church the pastor describes as unfriendly, but many are! Every church thinks it's friendly, but the truth is, many are not. People are friendly to friends but not to guests. Invite a "secret shopper" to visit your church for an honest evaluation that may be brutal but informative.

3. Clear the calendar. Most churches are wearing their people out. Activity is not an automatic sign of spirituality. Church members need time to connect with people outside of church. If your church family is involved in activities every night of the week, when will they have time to engage with neighbors? Slow it down and don't wear out your people.

4. Have an intentional plan for discipleship. Evangelism is first, but discipleship runs a close second. The church must become more intentional about discipling believers and moving them toward service rather than casual attendance.

ORGANIZATION

Several important areas of organization have implications on momentum and keeping a church moving forward:

1. Physical barriers to growth. Scores of things can be physical barriers to church growth from seating and parking capacity to printed materials, website, and marketing pieces.

Seating. Remember the 80% rule? When you're 80% full, you're full. Recent studies have actually lowered that number to 70-75%. If your sanctuary seats 120 people, you can only run 90 consistently. Americans want their private space. They'll crowd in for special occasions, but they will not do it on a regular basis. If you have reached the limit in your seating

A high-angle, top-down photograph of a man driving an orange riding lawn mower on a lush green lawn. The man is wearing a dark blue jacket, blue jeans, and brown work boots. He is holding the steering wheel with both hands. The lawn is vibrant green with some small white flowers scattered near the bottom of the frame. The overall scene is bright and clear, suggesting a sunny day.

All churches get STUCK.

**The problem comes when leaders
allow it to remain that way.**

capacity, you have to do something to create more space either through multiple services, building, or relocating. It's a simple fact of math.

Parking issues are real issues, too. Today, many families drive multiple cars to church. A general rule is 2.25 people per parking space. If you have 50 parking spaces, you can average 112 people. Don't fight this simple rule. If you're full, you're full. Figure out a way to create more space. Don't ignore the fact that full is full and act as if you can't figure out why you can't average 150 when your sanctuary only seats 100.

Printed material and website. We live in a culture of information overload. You need quality printed material for your church. Bulletins with print lines, crooked type, and out of date clip-art won't attract or keep new people. All printed material must be high quality, attractive, and correct. Your website is the "storefront" of your church. A visitor's first impression will likely be through your site. Younger generations will naturally visit your website to find location, service times, how others dress, what will happen to their kids, and what to expect. Your church must have an up-to-date website, or it likely will remain stuck.

2. Structural barriers to growth. I'm a "congregational rule" guy, but many churches have too much congregational rule. Congregations want leadership to be accountable, but to lead when appointed or elected. Most church members find it cumbersome, even insulting to vote on maintenance items and issues that can and should be handled by leaders. If the congregation has to vote on everything, your church likely will become stuck.

Change is hard enough, but when a church creates multiple steps to making change, it becomes really difficult. If a Sunday School teacher can't paint her room without a vote by the body, the church probably has too cumbersome a system. Changes should make sense and allow for accountability, but they shouldn't require an act of congress. Reserve congregational votes for big issues such as calling a pastor, incurring debt, building or relocating, adopting a budget, and so on. Church structure should be established in a way that allows the church to be congregational without being micromanaged.

Another structural barrier to growth is staffing issues. Staffing needs change over time. I remember the day when the second most important and sought after staff position (after pastor) was music and/or education. Years later, needs shifted, and teen or student pastors moved into second place. Today, children's pastors seem to be in that spot. If your church is stuck, look at your staffing and see if adjustments need to be made in personnel and resources.


3. Personal barriers to growth. How do new people "break into" leadership at your church? In his book, *One Size Doesn't Fit All*, author Gary McIntosh describes three types of church sizes: single cell, with only a few people in leadership and few new people; stretched cell, where new people are allowed to gain certain responsibilities but the main core remains in charge; and multiple cell, which embraces new leadership at all levels. Single and stretched cell churches rarely grow beyond 200 people, stuck because their structures don't allow new people to become leaders.

AESTHETICS

Every morning, I go through a routine. I shave, shower, fix my hair, brush my teeth, and pick out clothes that are clean, ironed, and (hopefully) match. I try to keep my car clean and my office presentable. Why do I worry about all these details? I want to be ready in case company drops by. The same should be true at church.

What message does it convey to first-time church guests if your facility is unkempt, the bathroom stinks, the nursery is unattended, and leaders aren't on time or prepared? It tells them what you do isn't important, and you weren't expecting guests. People care about how things look. If your church doesn't show well to visitors, they probably won't come back for a second visit. If they don't come back for a second visit, you likely won't win them. You'll be stuck.

All churches get stuck. The problem comes when leaders allow them to remain that way. A couple of years ago, I lived in the country and had a lot of grass to mow. I had a zero-turn riding mower that made the job easy, but I encountered a problem. I had places on my property that stayed muddy for a long time after it rained. Many times, I would be riding my mower, cutting grass, when all of a sudden, I'd bog down and get stuck. When this happened, I had two choices: I could sit on the mower, open the throttle full speed, spin my wheels, and tell myself I was mowing the grass. Or I could get off, get some help, and get the mower unstuck. Only when I chose the latter did I make any real progress. If your church is spinning its wheels, I trust you will get some help and get unstuck.

North American Ministries stands ready to help churches that become stuck. We would love to come alongside and help you get your church moving forward again. We don't have a one-size-fits-all program, and we recognize that every church is different. If we can assist your church, please contact us. 

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

BUILDING

an Equal-Opportunity Church

BY TIMOTHY YORK

On July 26, 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) into law. One of the drafters of the original bill, Robert Burgdorf, Jr., said, “The ADA is solely about ‘equal opportunity’...” The heart of this legislation was to level the playing field for people with disabilities, because everyone should have the opportunity to contribute to society.

The tendency to only allow those who are “whole” an opportunity to contribute is not only found in corporate America or third-world countries; it is also found in the church. Sometimes, it seems as though the *modus operandi* of the typical church is that only paid ministers and “elite” mature laity are given equal opportunity to contribute significantly to Kingdom work. Admittedly, some fulfill a narrow and precise function within the Body of Christ in contrast to others who are given broad responsibilities.

This was the Apostle Paul’s exact point in Romans 12:3: “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” All are given some, although some are given more.

The context of Romans 12 is Paul’s dissertation on spiritual gifts. He explained that “reasonable service” to Christ is the logical response to the forgiveness we receive. However, he went on to encourage us to provide our personal service to God through the Body of Christ. Paul continued in verses 4 and 5 by saying, “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”

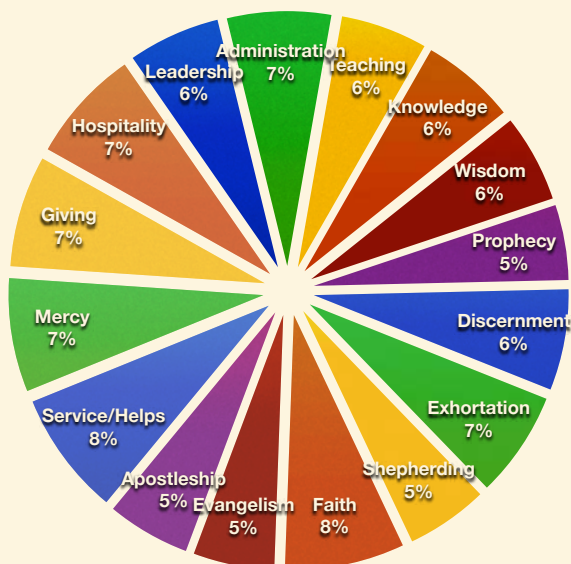
Because Christian service is the expectation for every believer, we are to complete this task as a unified body, not as freelance operatives. Why then, does the church refrain from using all her resources, but seems to prefer that a frazzled and burned out few shoulder the responsibility? Operating this way only accomplishes one thing—a handicapped body.

Charles Spurgeon said, “As every beast, bird, fish, and insect, has its own place in nature, so has every Christian a proper position in the economy of grace.” Paul’s own “disabilities act” for the Church (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12) brings equal opportunity to the body, because every believer has a distinct function to fulfill in the local church. In essence, God will not handicap His Church, but rather adequately distribute the gifts among the members of that body.

Recently, our church put this to test by administering a spiritual gifts analysis to all of our regular attendees. We then created a graph to represent each individual’s scores and the result of this across the body was astonishingly balanced. God has sufficiently gifted our church, across all of the members, to be one body “fitly joined together.”

In summary, churches need to take the spiritual gifts of the members into account when staffing the ministries of the church. **ONE**

Spiritual Gifts Assessment for NorthPoint FWB Church, Depew, NY.



About the Writer: Timothy and Amanda York are church planters in Buffalo, New York. Learn more: www.northpointbuffalo.com.

PLAY THE **MONEY GAME** TO WIN

••• BY BILL AND BRENDA EVANS •••

In many homes, January is about football. At our house, it's also about financial assessment.

We look back over our finances for the past 12 months and set plans for the next 12. Recently, we sipped on a third cup of coffee and started that process. Money is not just a mathematical or spiritual issue for us. It's like an emotional, highly-contested football game. Winning a turf brawl over money is not our goal. It's not a win unless it's a win for both of us. If one wins and the other loses, that game goes into the loss column. Ties don't count either. Playing the money game in marriage requires strategies. We've put our heads together on some game strategies that work for us.

BRENDA: *First of all, we try not to quarrel, but talk and plan. When we downsized back in the summer, we made a budget for sprucing up the new house. Later, we talked again and adjusted that figure based on money in the bank, just like Lee (our football coach son) adjusts plays on the sidelines. Lee wears a headset connected to other coaches—one is perched high above the field in the press box. When his play calling isn't getting the job done, he consults a coach who has a different perspective and then makes adjustments.*

Each of us sees the playing field a little differently. That's a strength. Bill is best at being certain we're provided for. I'm best at the beauty and pleasure side—decorating the house or traveling more, for example.

BILL: Yes, you do like to travel.

BRENDA: Remember that insurance policy you bought when the boys were young, and how I ranted on and on about it? We almost fought.

BILL: I remember. It was small, but you were in college, the boys in Christian schools, and all you saw were those tuitions, the grocery budget you had to figure down to the penny, holes in the knees of the boys' jeans, payments on our rattle-trap car, tithes, missions. That kind of thing.

BRENDA: But you stopped me with a question, didn't you?

BILL: I asked what you would do if I died and left you and the boys on your own. We lived in a parsonage. You and the boys would have nowhere to go. I told you the insurance money would at least buy you a used trailer.

BRENDA: So I cried and cleared my eyes. I hadn't known what I wasn't seeing.

BILL: Dad drilled that into me. Not insurance, but that it was my responsibility to provide for my family. Honorable men do that, he said. It's a mark of manhood. Remember how he put his arms around us both right after our wedding and told me, "Take care of this little lady, Bill."

BRENDA: For me, the insurance was a lesson about seeing the big picture. Somehow, we figured out how to cut something somewhere and make the payments. Of course, the Lord helped us.

BILL: A second strategy is that *we're not too optimistic.*

BRENDA: And that's not easy for me because I'm an optimist by nature. But our view is not pessimism; it's realism, as you say.



BILL: Yes, that's it. We don't assume that our finances will be better in the future than in our past or present. That would be like too much cockiness in a football player, the invincibility factor. Well-grounded confidence is different. It considers both offense *and* defense, as well as the skill and heart of the players. Too much optimism and you disregard risk and dangers as you decide how to spend, borrow, and invest.

BRENDA: You have the will to win, so that's the heart part. I'm not as competitive, but you've given me freedom to exercise the skills I am good at. We each bring strengths to the game.

BILL: We do. You're not a window shopper or mall crawler. You mostly stay out of those places, except for online used book spots, which you have a weakness for. That caper with the iPhone, P. F. Chang, and Teva sandals is not your usual mode.

BRENDA: Truth is, for me, shopping is work, not entertainment. Plus, if I see it, I might want it. So, I mostly stay away. But since we're into this football thing, talk about our offensive and defensive strategies.

BILL: You know the maxim that you win games by offense but championships by defense. We're fairly big on defense: we plan for the *what-ifs*. We also don't assume that the Lord will miraculously provide when we haven't been wise with what he's given us already. No strut and presumption. He's never obligated to rescue us from our stupidity. So, we invested 10-15% of our income (and much more later in life) in our retirement plans and maxed out available matching funds. We have a revocable trust at FWB Foun-

ation because access and interest are better than at banks and credit unions. We're retired but still save monthly. We also buy used—things like cars—and rarely borrow. And we enjoy extras along the way.

BRENDA: What was it your dad said?

BILL: If you can't afford it, don't buy it. If you can't pay your way, don't go.

BRENDA: We're also pro-active. We have an offense.

BILL: Yes, give tithes and offerings, pay off credit cards every month—no interest, ever! Shop purposefully and not be suckered out of position by that line on store receipts telling us how much we "saved." Truth is, you never save when spending.

BRENDA: What about a Hail Mary?

BILL: A Hail Mary is a really risky financial decision, kin to buying lottery tickets and get-rich schemes.

BRENDA: Have we ever done a Hail Mary?

BILL: You mean you don't remember?

BRENDA: Oh, that junk bond purchase you made years ago. But it wasn't huge.

BILL: But it wasn't wise either.

BRENDA: True, we lost yards and mourned in the locker room, didn't we? (Laughter)

BILL: We did. And the photograph plan you bought when Jeff was a baby. That turned out better. At least we got good pictures.

BRENDA: But I spent a lot of money without talking to you about it. My re-

gret was torture. Of course, you forgave me and comforted me, but I still suffered over it.

BILL: Well, we learn from our fumbles and dropped balls. That's what you do when you make mistakes: change.

BRENDA: Another thing we've noticed in our relationship is the emotional side of money. It's like a competitive football game; it pulls us in all different directions.

BILL: For me, one of those directions is power. I like feeling I can do anything I want to do. Because of that, I don't carry a lot of cash. It's like carrying water or sand in my hands. It dribbles or sifts out a little at a time. For others, it's credit cards, which is simply borrowing money at a crazy interest rate. Consequences are not good when you're "chop-blocked" by an enormous plastic linebacker.

BRENDA: Or use money as comfort.

BILL: That, too. *Stuff* becomes our game ball. We like it. We want it. We hold it tight and close. You know, we boys seldom grow up completely, so we go back to the marks on the wall to see how tall or fast or successful we are. We let *stuff* become the mark. Let it determine our self-worth, as if we think a lot of stuff says we're winning the game.

BRENDA: I don't know how to tally up our score here. I know there's more we could say about playing the money game in a marriage.

BILL: Let's just say that the longer we ignore bad financial habits, the harder it is to win. Small changes, tweaking our money game plan immediately, helps turn a game loser into a game winner. **ONE**

WOMEN

and



BY JOHN BRUMMITT

In 1935, Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act into the fabric of American life. Miss Ida May Fuller received the first benefit in 1940, in the amount of \$22.54. Since that time, the program has grown to more than 60 million individuals receiving benefits. While average benefits have grown to \$1,221 per month, or \$14,652 per year, most Americans still don't understand the best way to utilize social security in their retirement planning. Many individuals rely on social security to make up 35% or more of their retirement income.


While the history of the social security program may be interesting, it is not the main focus of this article. A recent study revealed that women receive less on average from their social security benefits than what they are allowed. This is not because of inequality in the system, but because the average woman retires at age 62, and full benefits are not available until age 66. In 2014, research into social security records discovered that 40.8% of all women began drawing benefits at age 62, and 65% were younger than 66. Only 2.8% waited until age 70 to begin drawing benefits. Age 62 has been the average retirement age for women for decades and remains relatively unchanged.

So, what is wrong with retiring and drawing benefits early? It is a common myth that if an individual draws benefits earlier, he or she will get to draw benefits longer, thus getting more money. Again, this is a myth, because people forget to factor in one thing—the penalty! If you retire at age 62, you receive a 30% reduction in your social security benefit. If you are drawing on your spousal benefit, it can be reduced by 32.5%. So, in a simple breakdown, you would have to draw benefits eight years longer to draw the same amount of money. Since the age difference between 62 and 66 is only four years, you can see that the math doesn't work out. You won't make up the money you lose by taking it early.

On the flip side, if you wait to draw benefits until after age 66,

age 70 for instance, you receive an increase in your benefits as much as 32%. Again, only 2.8% of women wait until age 70 to begin drawing their benefits. By waiting until age 70, in 12 years you will receive the same amount from social security as you would in 16 years by taking it at age 66. Since life expectancy is around 86 for women, it might be worth delaying the time when you start receiving benefits. I understand not everyone has a choice. Sometimes, you have to take benefits in order to make ends meet, but if you have the option, don't take the reduction.

Often, women also leave money on the table when it comes to spousal benefits. Social security allows you to draw on yourself or 50% of your spouse's benefit amount when you start drawing. Even if you are divorced from your spouse, as long as you were married for ten years or longer, you can claim spousal benefits. The social security office will look up the amount for you. You just need to ask.

According to the National Women's Law Center, nearly 2.9 million women in the U.S. over the age of 65 have an income below poverty level—more than double the 1.3 million men. One reason could be the reduction in benefits by not making it to full retirement age or not claiming the benefits that are the greatest advantage to them. 

About the Writer: John Brummitt graduated in 2011 with an MBA from Tennessee Tech University. A 2004 graduate of Welch College, he has been with the Board of Retirement since the spring of 2006. He will become director in January 2016.

Master's Men >>

Salt Lake City Roof Project

Salt Lake City, Utah—Seven men from three states converged on Salt Lake City, Utah, September 10-13, to replace a deteriorating roof at CrossPoint Free Will Baptist Church.

Five volunteers from Arkansas and North Carolina joined Master's Men Director Ken Akers and North American Ministries Church Planting Director Brad Ransom to assist with the project. Over three days, the crew replaced half of the old roof that had begun to show signs of wear.

"I want to offer special thanks to Don Matchett, missions director for Arkansas," said Director Akers, "as well as Hilltop FWB Church in Fuquay-Varina, North Carolina, which sent four men to help on this project."

To learn more about CrossPoint Church, visit: www.crosspointutah.com. ■



FROM BASE TO BATTLEFRONT

BY CH (CPT) ROY SWISHER



When opportunity knocks, open the door.

When God and country call, say, “Here I am. Send me.”

These two maxims set the stage for this article and how God is using me as a Special Forces IMA chaplain. I soon discovered that my mission was the same, no matter where my assignment took me—from base to battlefield: to take care of soldiers and their families, provide religious support, measure and affect morale, and advise my commander and the staff concerning moral and ethical matters.

This mission comes with many challenges. In addition to my pastoral responsibilities, I also face the task of maintaining cohesion and teamwork. To do this, I meet regularly with our Unit Ministry Team, taking them to lunch, visiting in their areas, and getting to know them and their concerns for their families. God has blessed me with the opportunity to work with a great team of chaplains and chaplain assistants. Still, it is not easy to build relationships among individuals from diverse backgrounds. It takes a bit of finesse, mutual understanding, and genuine concern for each team member in our care to achieve the need for cohesion successfully.

As chaplain, I have worked hard to build rapport with five battalion command teams. I cover for each battalion chaplain when he is away. Caring for their soldiers has earned the respect of battalion commanders, executive officers, and command sergeants major from each battalion. Reserve chaplains at the group level receive no free passes. We are expected to do an exemplary job in the absence of the group chaplain, so I do whatever the group commander requires to bring about the success of the mission.

After much waiting, I found myself assigned to Kuwait and Iraq. The excitement in my soul was overwhelming. Understandably, my family was not as thrilled. Arrival was an exciting time, as I was reacquainted with my company and soldiers in the group support battalion. The Religious Affairs NCO (my bodyguard since I can't carry a weapon) and I spent a great deal of

individual time with soldiers in Kuwait and Iraq. I would take my "Sword" over their rifles and 9mm weapons anytime. I encouraged many soldiers by sharing pictures of their spouses and children taken during an event for families of deployed soldiers. It was important for them to see I really care about them and their families.

We provided chapel and church services and luncheons for soldiers—physical food and spiritual nourishment that brought a smile to their faces. One intelligence officer even joked, "Chaplain, where are the tacos?" It seems I've developed a reputation for bringing in tacos for lunch back at the base. It gave us all a good laugh. It is these little things that help me forge a close relationship with the soldiers. We are much like Free Will Baptists: we love to eat!

While stationed at home, we constantly express our love for soldiers and their families by providing pizzas, tacos, barbecue ribs, country ham biscuits, soup, and sandwiches. I am grateful to our home church, First Free Will Baptist, Portland, Tennessee, for providing funds to give our soldiers a little taste of home. They showed their appreciation enthusiastically, and several sought me out for counseling after enjoying the food.

Although my time on the front was short, the mission was a success based on the affirmation and appreciation offered by both soldiers and commanders. I truly appreciate the opportunity to be involved in the Lord's work of chaplaincy. **ONE**

IT IS NOT EASY TO BUILD THESE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG INDIVIDUALS FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS.

WHAT IS AN IMA CHAPLAIN?

Chaplain Roy Swisher serves as an IMA (Reserve) chaplain. As an part of IMA, he commits to 12 Inactive Duty Training (IDT) days per year and one Annual Tour (AT) of 12 days.

To learn more about the Free Will Baptist chaplain ministry, visit WWW.FWBNAM.COM

About the Writer: CH (CPT) Roy Swisher is the IMA chaplain serving as deputy group chaplain at 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) on Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington.



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A NEW CHAPTER

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By Norma Jackson Goldman

If you love to read, it's hard to put down a good book, even when the hour is late. I tell myself, "Just one more chapter and then I will stop," but I read that one, and another, and another before finally admitting, "I just have to stop, or I won't be able to get up tomorrow!"

Retirement is much like a book, with new pages and chapters unfolding in our life stories. The close of one year leads to the possibilities of the next, and what life will hold for us. This time of year, and this season of life, is the perfect time to reflect on God's plan to carry out His Kingdom purposes in and through you. As long as there is life, there is the expectation that we will make an eternal difference in God's world, His people, and in those who do not yet know Him. You are about to write a new chapter, and my prayer is that you will approach it with great excitement and purposeful intentionality.

Writing a Good Chapter Takes Good Planning

Have you ever noticed that not much gets done without some sort of plan? Oh, it may just be in your head—not even written down. But it's there, and you have a tremendous sense of satisfaction when everything works according to plan. In retirement, my home has become the center of family celebrations and milestones. Since we don't all live in the same city, that means the plans include how many are coming, who will sleep where, how to coordinate schedules for getting everyone showered and dressed for church on time, and of great importance to my family—what will we eat?

Recently, in one five-week period, we experienced three birthdays, a baby shower, and a baptism. With this much activity, plans had to be written down, a schedule developed, menus planned, and the budget adjusted to handle each event.

Pretty much the same things need to happen as you write your new chapter. What's the plan? What is on God's agenda

for you, how will you organize your schedule around His plan, and how will your budget be affected? I'm about to experience a big birthday, and God led me to develop a plan of the things I believe He wants me to accomplish in the next few years (if He chooses to leave me here, of course).

In this new chapter, God led me to set six priorities. Your plan could have fewer, or more. I'll describe just two of the six to help jump-start your thinking about your own new chapter.

Knowing God

I want to become more and more like my Father, to know better who He is, how He acts in human history and specifically in my life. I want to understand

Your new chapter is going to be written...whether you put it in print or not. Why not live it out with a plan, with purpose, and with intentionality?

His holiness more fully so I can be more sensitive to sin and more intentional in worship. This can only come about by planning.

Family

Two unsaved family members are weighing on my heart. I believe God is calling me to "love" them into His Kingdom. That means all the family occasions we share must be times where love is freely, intentionally expressed. I want to

pray for and model maturity in my own life so my adult children will continue to grow in faith. Two young men in our family will soon establish families; I want to be part of that through prayer and encouragement.

The other priorities are participating in missions, giving Bibles, personal ministry, and celebrating life.

Your new chapter is going to be written...whether you put it in print or not. Why not live it out with a plan, with purpose, and with intentionality? **ONE**

About the Writer: Former magazine editor Norma J. Goldman enjoys a successful writing career in her retirement from her home near Houston, Texas. Learn more about Free Will Baptist retirement options: www.BoardofRetirement.com.

Master's Men >>

Operation Saturation in Castle Rock

Castle Rock, Colorado—On September 19, volunteers gathered at the new location of Truth Free Will Baptist Church in Castle Rock, Colorado, to distribute information about the new church being started in the neighborhood.

Pastor Donnie Burke and his wife Susan joined the volunteers in placing literature on the doors of many neighborhood homes. Truth Church had been meeting in Academy Charter School, where each week it was necessary to set up and take down sound systems, furniture, and other items necessary for the service.

In the new location, they will be able to use the facility at any time without the need to set up and tear down. Currently, they are renovating and adding additional space for a sanctuary.

For more information about Truth Church, visit www.truthfwb.com. ■



Brown on **Green** >>



**IF YOU ARE
CONSIDERING
BUYING A HOUSE,
NOW IS THE TIME
TO BUY.**

About the Writer: David Brown, CPA, became director of the Free Will Baptist Foundation in 2007. Send your questions to David at david@nafwb.org. To learn how the Foundation can help you become a more effective giver, call 877-336-7575.

Our House

IT'S A GOOD TIME TO BUY A HOUSE.

Interest rates are low, and houses are beginning to become a good investment again. However, the gains in value on houses now will be slow and steady in contrast to the outrageous growth rate before the collapse of the 2008-2009 housing market. According to *LendingTree*, the average mortgage loan is \$222,261 with an interest rate of 4% for 30 years. A few years ago 6-7% interest rates were common, making house payments much higher. The payment on a 30-year mortgage of \$222,261 at 6.5% is \$1,404.84, over 32% higher payment than today. So, if you are considering buying a house, now is the time to buy.

Others are more interested in paying off the house they have already. Many have taken advantage of low rates, refinanced their houses, and shortened the term of their loan. With interest rates this low some wonder if paying off their mortgage is a good investment? The answer is yes!

When you pay off your mortgage, you are, in a sense, investing at the rate of your mortgage. Some now have very low mortgage rates, perhaps 3.5% or even lower. An investment rate of 3.5% may not seem like a good investment, but since it is removing debt from an asset, the rate is as close as you will get to a sure thing.

In today's investment environment, most people will jump at a sure investment of 3.5%, especially with inflation below 2%. Paying off a mortgage takes discipline, but just a little extra makes a big difference in paying off your mortgage early. Let's use the example of the \$222,261 average mortgage and assume the homeowner has made normal payments for the first five years. Adding \$157 to each payment will allow the homeowner to pay off the mortgage five years early. Instead of paying 30 years of interest, they will pay for only 25 years. Paying off a home is much more than a financial decision; it also offers peace of mind as you near retirement.

Some may want to shorten the term on their house. The average mortgage of \$222,261 on a 15-year loan at 4% dramatically increases the payment to \$1,644.04. However, in reality, shorter-term notes usually have lower interest rates, so it is likely your payment would be lower than the example above. "Our house" is a good investment, whether you are buying your first home or paying off the home you have. **ONE**

WNAC >>

Flourish:

2015 WNAC Retreat

Women from 15 states gathered at Embassy Suites in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, for the 2015 Flourish Retreat. The Oakleigh Room filled with anticipation as Izabella McMillon from Operation Christmas Child began to share how the Lord brought her out of the darkness of Communism into the light of His presence through a simple shoebox.

Izabella answered three questions, "How do I flourish in hopelessness, in harsh circumstances, and when everything goes against the norm?" In hopelessness, God's Word needs to fall fresh upon us. When we are grounded in God's Word, we will flourish and endure anything. She referred to Naaman's maiden (2 Kings 5:1) who flourished in a hopeless situation (stripped of all family) by serving her master well.

To flourish in harsh circumstances, Izabella used the account of Job. Although he lost everything, Job flourished because he worshiped and did not blame God (Job 1:20-22). Radiant living came when he stood firm and trusted God (Job 19; 27), stood still and looked at God's wondrous works (Job 37:14), forgave his friends (Job 42), and fixed his eyes firmly on God.

Izabella reminded us of the faithfulness of Ruth and Naomi. God placed people in their lives to point them in the right direction, to make sure they made the right decisions. Izabella challenged her listeners to leave a legacy that brings those we love into the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

Three breakout sessions, "Radiant Living in Social Media," "Flourishing Through Time in God's Word," and "Biblical Womanhood in Today's Culture" were available for women to attend.

During the Friday morning devotion, Judy Lytle shared ten suggestions to help women live radiantly in difficult times: 1) go to the Word; 2) allow friends and family to help carry your burdens; 3) gain strength through songs, sermons, and devotions; 4) bathe the hurting heart with His love; 5) try not to blame anyone for your difficulties; 6) recognize He knows best even when you don't understand; 7) continue to praise Him; 8) keep living; 9) remember other people are depending on you; 10) laugh. ■



a ministry of (h) randall house

REFINE

2015 **D6** CONFERENCE

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

With powerful blows, the smith strikes the misshapen lump of raw metal. Sparks fly as the hammer falls time and time again. Days pass into weeks until, finally, the metal is shaped into a useful tool in the hands of the master.

It's a beautiful illustration of discipleship. Over days, weeks, years, even decades, parents and grandparents reinforce the truths of God's Word in the next generation. It is a long and sometimes difficult process as the lives of children are molded—refined—into useful tools for the Master.

The 2015 D6 Conference called parents and church leaders to take a closer look at this discipleship process, examining current ministry strategies and seeking the most effective ways to mold the next generation for Christ. The conference theme, drawing from principles of Scripture, called them to *Refine*.

Over 1,500 attendees from 41 states made their way to Louisville, Kentucky, September 16-18, for the seventh annual D6 Conference. In addition, attendees



traveled from 21 countries, including Malaysia, Thailand, South Africa, Brazil, Canada, Australia, and Belgium. For three intense days, 55 speakers tackled a wide range of subjects with a single goal: refining generational discipleship.

The conference offered 72 seminars and workshops led by presenters such as Timothy Paul Jones, professor and associate vice president at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville,

Kentucky; Melissa McDonald, national children's specialist for the Christian and Missionary Alliance denomination; Richard Ross, founder of True Love Waits; and Lydia Randall, author of *My Faith Box* and creator of Faith Path.

MAIN STAGE

Nashville-based theatrical percussion performance group StikYard provided an unforgettable beginning to the confer-

ence as the sound of a hammer striking the anvil led to a spectacular fusion of pyrotechnics and rhythmically charged sounds of percussion instruments.

The multi-sensory display brought the already energetic crowd to their feet before *Ron Hunter*, D6 Conference director and CEO of Randall House, challenged parents, grandparents, and churches to develop a generation of “battleships” fully prepared to defend against the negative influence of culture. He reminded listeners that according to Scripture, God says this happens best at home as the church helps equip parents—the primary influencers of their children. “One church hour a week is not enough for effective discipleship,” he urged listeners. “Kids take their cues on how to react to life from parents.” He challenged fathers to be fully engaged, reminding them “a spiritually absent dad is no different than an absent dad.” He issued a call for pastors to fight for their congregations, dedicating themselves to equipping parents and grandparents for discipleship.

Shaunti Feldhahn, former Wall Street analyst turned social researcher and best-selling author, debunked five common marriage myths often perpetuated by the church. The number one myth is that Christian marriages end in divorce at the same rate as unbelievers. She shared a single common ingredient discovered in her research that keeps marriages together—hope! She challenged pastors to address the challenges and blessings of marriage openly with their congregations, and to make sure children and teens are present for those conversations.

Pete Wilson, pastor of Cross Point Church in Nashville, Tennessee, encouraged listeners to follow the example of David’s showdown with Goliath—be diligent; fight for your dreams (even if you are facing a giant); remember the power of God (compared to any obstacle you face); and act in belief rather than doubt.

Alvin Sanders, senior vice president of World Impact, told listeners the Great Commission should be the “Christian operating system.” He encouraged them to put “fresh eyes” on this passage. These words of Jesus will tear down walls of racial division and cut

to the heart of the matter—the gospel is for everyone. He challenged churches to stop being “racial islands” and reach the community surrounding them: “Don’t tell me you’re reaching your community,” he admonished, “when you are not reaching *all* demographics in your community.”

Tim Elmore, best selling author and president of Growing Leaders, challenged church leaders to “march off the map,” leaving the settled, safe world of the church to pioneer “new maps” for the next generation. He urged churches to implement programs based on future needs of the next generation rather than past traditions, and defined the next generation as EPIC: Experiential, Participatory, Image Rich, and Connected. This, he explained, is the new reality in which the church must operate.

Veggie Tales creator *Phil Vischer* encouraged listeners to pursue innovative ways to integrate faith and storytelling. He addressed two areas of communication where the church needs improvement: *what we teach* and *how we teach it*. He warned against shallow biblical teaching (admitting the simple, moralistic messages of *Veggie Tales*™ fall into this category). He reminded listeners that kids are far more capable of learning than most adults think, and he urged the church to lead children (and their parents) through the *entire* Bible to give context to the message of the gospel. He encouraged repetition and offered four simple guidelines for teaching—be clear, be concise, be sticky...and repeat.

Jen Hatmaker, popular speaker, reality TV star, and bestselling author, recalled teen years immersed in the church culture—strong youth group, revivals, trips, Christian concerts, and camps. She shared her horror at seeing Christian friends leave the faith after high school and expressed growing concern as successive generations continue to leave the church in record numbers. The solution to this problem is not attraction, events, or consumer-oriented churches, she asserted. Instead, she suggested it is a failure to disciple when discipleship is the core of the church. Today’s generation is looking for depth—teachers who dive into the Word, tackle tough issues, and come alongside

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—RON HUNTER



“IT’S TIME TO STOP WORRYING ABOUT WHAT IS TRENDY. WHO CARES IF THE SENIOR PASTOR IS WEARING PLEATED DOCKERS. WHAT WE NEED IS DEPTH.”

—JEN HATMAKER



them as mentors. Rather than entertaining the church at large, she urged church leaders to pour themselves into the lives of a select few, concluding: “I seriously believe we will get more done with a small number of committed disciples than with a stadium full of spoiled church members.”

Brian Haynes, creator of Legacy Milestones and lead pastor at Bay Area First Baptist Church in League City, Texas, reminded the audience that the staff (and volunteers) at a church break or make the ministry. He offered four suggestions for recruiting and hiring church workers: start at the values level; shape for strategy; hire or staff according to vision (rather than filling a slot); and occasionally move forward by going backwards. He told listeners the most effective church staffs are based on vision and fueled by honesty, even when it hurts.

Well-known humorist and speaker Carol Barnier, author of *Engaging Today’s Prodigal*, opened the window to the shadows of her past as a former atheist, giving church leaders and parents of prodigals a unique opportunity to look inside the mind of someone who left the Church (but thankfully returned). She warned, “Even Christians growing up in capable, loving homes can become atheists.” As a former activist who baited young people away from the church, she provided guidelines for opening doors of redemption to a generation losing its faith: teach apologetics; learn new ways to start conversations; give Jesus room and time to work; interact with love and respect; and recognize the power of influence we possess. She urged parents and leaders not to give up on prodigals, that the God of the Universe is waiting with open arms when they finally turn toward Him: “As long as there is breath,” she encouraged listeners, “there is hope!”

MAIN STAGE EXTRAS

For the third year, D6 Minis gave a number of speakers an opportunity to deliver short, powerful messages with a single point.

Chad Overton, minister to children at Houston’s First Baptist Church, advised listeners to plan a “winter” in their lives, taking time to “sharpen equipment,” rest, and allow God to replenish and nourish their souls.

Todd Meadows, pastor of students and missions at Grace Baptist Church in Somerset, Kentucky, encouraged listeners to build a bridge between church and home, to think *purpose* before practice, *being* before doing, *people* before programs, and *quality* before quantity.

Ron Deal, founder of Smart Stepfamilies, shared the complex challenges facing today’s blended families. He challenged churches to educate and equip themselves to meet the needs of stepfamilies and break the generational cycle of divorce.

A panel group featured Kurt Johnston, leader of student ministries at Saddleback Church; Scott Rubin, director of Elevate junior high ministry at Willow Creek Community Church; and Tom Schefchunas, multi-campus director of middle school ministries at North Point Ministries. These leaders explored the challenges (and blessings) of middle-school ministry, and shared lessons learned on a wide range of topics, from relationships with senior pastors to juggling busy schedules and recruiting volunteers.

BEYOND THE BOX

The D6 Conference is filled with much more than seminars and main-stage speakers. Between seminars and sessions, attendees flooded the exhibit area and explored the latest resources from 40 ministry exhibitors. They exchanged ministry challenges over coffee, swapped solutions, and prayed together about the burdens of ministry.

D6 2015 offered two new opportunities for training and networking. *Lunch With a Leader* provided intimate, small-group moments where attendees came face-to-face with leading advocates of family ministry (and avoided long lunch lines). Each leader spent the time with a maximum of 20 people, answering specific questions about ministry challenges and opportunities.

Connect Groups teamed up leaders from various ministry types—student, family, children, and leadership—for brainstorming, encouragement, networking, and sometimes simply conversation with new friends. “This has been great,” said Jason Byerly, D6 blogger and children’s pastor. “D6 is the highlight of



my year and I can't wait to get here."

Throughout the conference, attendees sang along with Matt Papa, pastor and recording artist from Durham, North Carolina, whose music is saturated with theology from, in his own words, "a heart that longs to see people from every corner of the world set ablaze by the love of God that is in Christ Jesus."

Drew Worsham, on campus pastor of Resonate Church in Pullman, Washington, kept watchers guessing and gasping with his skills as an illusionist and mentalist.

Conference emcees Tommy Swindol, discipleship pastor at The Donelson Fellowship in Nashville, Tennessee, and Josh Griffin, high school pastor at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, guided the flow of sessions, interviewed speakers, and provided (sometimes out-of-control) comic relief in the form of energetic crowd breakers, crazy games, and a steady stream of banter.

During the closing moments of the conference, Tommy Swindol urged attendees to take the discipleship responsibility personally—not as a minister, staff, or team member...but as a Christian. "It's my responsibility to disciple," he shared, "and it is your responsibility as well. We're here to own it. We're here to make disciples for Him. And with His power, we can change the world."

"I am so thankful you came to D6," Ron Hunter told attendees. "It has been another great conference, and we are thrilled to be part of how God is working around the world through generational discipleship." He celebrated the expansion of D6 Conferences to Australia, France, Norway, and Southeast Asia before announcing the 2016 theme—*Generations*. The 2016 American D6 Conference will be held September 21-23, in Louisville, Kentucky. Get the lowest registration rate by visiting www.D6Conference.com. This year, bring your senior pastor at no cost, simply by entering the code PastorFree. **ONE**

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

DEFINING MOMENTS

After seven years of covering D6 Conferences for *ONE Magazine*, I have come to anticipate six particular moments that occur during each conference and seem to define the conference for me:

THE FRENZY. Pallets, boxes, people scrambling in all directions. Lifts, lighting, sound checks, airport runs—few people know the pandemonium that takes place behind the scenes as D6 staffers prepare for the crowd to arrive. "It's really cool to see everyone work together to make it happen," said Brandon Roysden, event coordinator. "Every year, we take this empty space, and in just a few hours, turn it into the background for a life-changing event. This is a great team."

THE QUIET. Dimly lit ballroom filled with thousands of empty chairs. Speakers praying over empty rows. Haunting melody echoing through the space as a guitarist runs through one last song. With preparations complete, the room is poised, ready, just waiting for the doors to open. As a journalist, I am privileged to enjoy this moment few conference goers experience.

THE OPENING. Excitement. Energy. Electricity. As the final few seconds tick off the countdown clock, the anticipation is almost palpable. Then, the lights go down, and the entire room takes a collective breath. D6 is underway!

THE QUESTION. The moment during a seminar when everyone connects—a shared burden, an a-ha moment, the question everyone is thinking, but only one has the courage to say aloud. The follow-up. The intense discussion. It's the moment when conference becomes Christian community.

THE SONG. "Lord I Need You." "In Christ Alone." Every year, one refrain resonates. This year was no different, and I will never forget the tingles that ran down my spine as 1,500 voices joined as one during the closing song, ringing out the words:

*I believe in God the Father; I believe in Christ the Son
I believe in the Holy Spirit; our God is three-in-one.
I believe in the resurrection; that we will rise again
For I believe in the name of Jesus.*

THE CONNECTION. The moment when you realize God is speaking...to you. From main stage to hallway to seminar room, His Spirit tugs at your heart, and you realize *this* is why you came to D6.

Photo: Mark Cowart



KEITH BURDEN, CMP
Executive Secretary
National Association
of Free Will Baptists

ONE to ONE >>

THE GIFT CERTIFICATE

My daughter celebrated her 10th birthday in October 1987. At that point she had been taking piano lessons for a few years. Like any proud father, I thought she had made remarkable progress. From my purely objective perspective, I thought she performed better than any of the other piano students at every recital.

As December 25th approached, our family set aside a time to observe an annual holiday tradition—decorating our home for Christmas. I cheerfully retrieved the boxes of decorations from storage. The delightful aroma of freshly baked goodies filled the air along with the familiar sounds of music from the season. Looking back, it really was the most wonderful time of the year!

By the end of the day, the job was complete. The tree was trimmed. It sparkled and glistened as ornaments were hung with care. Decorations too numerous to mention were thoughtfully displayed throughout our home. Outside, the roof of our house was lined with clear white lights and the large mural of the nativity scene in the front yard

stood as a testimony to the real meaning of Christmas. Ah, what great memories!

When Christmas morning finally arrived, our daughters excitedly rushed into the family room. There were squeals and screams as wrapping paper was torn away and tossed aside. Few things are more gratifying to a father than the grateful hugs and kisses

from his children as they open their gifts.

Afterwards, when all of the excitement subsided, it was time for my wife and me to open the gifts from our kids. These often consisted of the usual items—potholders, house shoes, socks, and neckties. While I don't remember the specifics of most of those Christmas presents, one is particularly memorable.

I opened an envelope from my daughter and pulled out a single piece of paper. On one side in large print were the letters—I O U. On the other side were the words:

GIFT CERTIFICATE

This certificate entitles Keith Burden to a lesson in piano to be taught by me!
Signed: Santa Claus

Needless to say, I immediately recognized the unique, special nature of that gift. That's why it has been neatly tucked away in a "keepsakes" folder for the past 28 years. Today, it serves as a reminder of the gift God gave to each of us that very first Christmas.

My little girl had little or no money with which to purchase a gift for her father. Instead, she gave me something money can't buy—a part of herself, her time, and her talent.

This year, as you try to decide what to give to your heavenly Father who has everything, consider following the example of my daughter. Give God your time and your talent. Give Him yourself. It really is the one gift that keeps on giving. **ONE**





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