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In stark contrast to the unchangeable Truth of the Word of God, we live in a time of unprecedented, sweeping, constant change. USA Today reported that on 22 March 2000, Dr. Freeman Dyson, a mathematician at Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey, USA, received the British Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion for outstanding originality in advancing the world's understanding of God...

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# Evaluating Ministry Motives

Rev. Les Lofquist

**This issue of *Voice* magazine explores several questions behind reaching a pagan society (most notably our own here in the United States) with the Gospel. But before these questions are asked, there is one question even more essential to pose: "Why?" Why reach a pagan society? What motivates us as God's people to minister in these days? We need to answer this before we begin addressing other issues.**

Evaluating ministry motives is never easy. The Apostle Paul admitted as much in 1 Corinthians 4:3-4. There he wrote that he cared little about the evaluative judgment of the Corinthians or even his own self-evaluation and judgment. He was solely concerned with the appraisal and estimation of the Lord, which would not be revealed "until the Lord comes who will both bring to life the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels [i.e. motives] of the hearts" (v. 5). Remember that humans are satisfied with whatever looks good. God probes for what is good. Motive-judging day won't come until the end of life, and then the Lord will reveal the secrets of each minister's heart.

This matter is further complicated by the fact that our hearts can deceive us, crying out with selfish desires, and we can misinterpret our own motives behind our actions. Proverbs 21:2 says that "every way of a man is right in his own eyes." We justify ourselves and excuse sinful behavior or attitudes, all the while posturing for position and seeking the fulfillment of our personal agendas. Thinking the best of this activity, we dangerously underestimate our propensity to sinful and selfish ambitions. We would do well to remember the truth of Jeremiah 17:9 when evaluating ourselves: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

Evaluating ministry motives is ultimately complicated by another profound reality: we cannot see inside the hearts and minds of others. We are simply unable to judge the reasons why people do what they do. Yet we see this attempted by many Christians who suspiciously attribute incorrect motives behind the actions of other brothers, forgetting completely that we cannot fully understand the mystery of their motives.

So before evaluating ministry motives, we need to remember three things. It is the Lord who will perfectly judge motives. We can't always evaluate our own motives correctly. And we will never be able to assess the reasons why other people make the ministry choices that they do.

But having said all this, does not mean we shouldn't try to understand the motivations for ministry. We need to examine the Scriptures and see what should motivate us as God's people to minister in our pagan society. Evaluating (or trying to evaluate) ministry motives is essential. And perhaps it would be easier to begin evaluating ministry motives by looking at what should not be motivating factors.

We should not try to reach our increasingly pagan culture in order to keep our positions of power. It was foreign for First Century Christians to even think that way. They saw themselves as "strangers and aliens" in their world, "citizens of heaven" who ministered in this life for the glory of their King. And many were put to death for this very world-view. They didn't die so they could gain power, or retain influence, or control their world. They were killed for exactly the opposite: their unwillingness to enter into the sinful idolatry and activity of a pagan culture.

Those who nostalgically long for the "good old days when Christians controlled America" miss this point if they are truly longing for the days when they felt more in control, in power.

We should not try to reach our increasingly pagan culture in order to be relevant, as if cultural relevance was our goal. In fact, the Gospel will confront a culture and challenge its foundations. A generation ago, G. Campbell Morgan wrote: "the spirit of the city of Corinth had entered the church...Our work is not to

catch the spirit of the age; it is to correct it" (*The Corinthian Letters of Paul* , p. 27). Those today who want to be culturally relevant in ministry had better be careful they are confronting and correcting American culture more than uncritically and unbiblically reflecting it.

We should not try to reach our increasingly pagan culture because we're angry. Sin is ugly and should cause a righteous reaction of indignation. But the anger often displayed by "Christian activists" hardly seems righteous ("God hates fags"). In fact, the angry riot in Acts 19 at Ephesus is a great illustration of reaching pagans. The Christians in Ephesus preached the Gospel, not politics, and were known as "followers of the Way" (vv. 9, 23). They were NOT known as "anti-Artemis people" or "picketers of the Temple" or "Idolaters Anonymous." They were passionately for the beautiful Christ, not angrily against the ugly Artemis.

We should not try to reach our increasingly pagan culture in order to gain favor and be well-liked by unbelievers. Certainly we do not want to push them away with an offensive personality (for that would not be Christ-like). But to construct a philosophy of ministry designed to win approval from unbelievers is not scriptural. Our Lord said, "I do always those things that please Him [i.e. the Father]" in John 8:29. The approval of a pagan was not part of our Savior's thinking, nor should it control our ministry motivations and decisions.

Popularity, fame, and affirmation by the world is actually perilous for the man of God. Over three hundred years ago, Thomas Brooks wrote that Satan presents "the world in its beauty so as to bewitch us...and eventually to destroy. Where one thousand are destroyed by the world's frowns, ten thousand are destroyed by the world's smiles" (*Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*, p. 102).

So we return to the questions, "Why? Why reach a pagan society with the Gospel? What should motivate us in ministry today?" It cannot be in order to retain power, or to be relevant, or because we're angry, or because we want approval from unbelievers.

It is simply because we want to be like Jesus, who always did everything to please the Father. We must reach this increasingly pagan society because God, in His providence, placed us in the United States (or wherever) at this time in order to reflect His love and holiness to these pagans. And He is the One who will judge our motives, so we'd better seek to please Him and not the pagans of our world or the people of our church. The formula for success is to seek always to please the Father. The formula for failure is to try to please everybody, or anybody, else.

Colossians 3:22-24, "Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. 23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. 25 But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

1 Thessalonians 2:4, But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

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# Understanding the Times

Dr. Richard I. Gregory

My father lived in one of the most fascinating times in the history of mankind. He was born in the last century when the mode of transportation for most people was the horse, street car or maybe if you were fortunate, a train. News came via letter or if you lived in a town or city, the newspaper. Most people lived on a farm or in a small town where mom and pop businesses were the rule of the day. Only the wealthy were educated beyond high school and many only went to the eighth grade. There was no welfare and if a family were needy the community or the church stepped in to help. Times were harder but much simpler.

Change came quickly with the new century. I remember going to the 1964 World's Fair in New York and seeing the General Electric Exposition. It was a circular theater with revolving seating that moved through a variety of sets depicting each decade demonstrating all the changes that had taken place in the home. My dad sat with us and reminisced with each new section. Later we talked and he shared what he had observed through the years. Before he died in 1974 his experience had taken him from the horse and buggy days to landing men on the moon.

People born in the first part of the 20th century saw their homes transformed with indoor plumbing, electric lights, centralized heating, automatic clothes washers and dryers, dishwashers, garbage disposals, air conditioning, garage door openers and so many other conveniences. They experienced the transportation revolution with the automobile, airplane and the interstate highway system. Communications progressed from the telegraph to the telephone to email and the various electronic means of teleconferencing. Radio, movies and television empowers a media that virtually molds the society it seeks to entertain with its lifestyle and amoral philosophy. The music industry controls the minds of youth and adults alike and even the Christian community has been mesmerized by its power. The computer with its variety of applications resides in most homes and captivates the imagination of the younger generation.

All these changes impact the thinking of people. No longer is simple faith in an all-knowing God enough. Man has become the master of his future and the center of his thinking, resulting in a comprehension or reality that is totally subjective. It is appropriately labeled "post modernism." With the explosion of knowledge in the first half of the century it was the "educated" thing to become intellectually relevant with the times. Liberalism, in politics and religion, flourished in this atmosphere robbing society of its moral fiber and the church of its truth. Today, being "culturally relevant" and "politically correct" is the "necessary thing" if one is to gain a hearing and effectively communicate ideas. Even the evangelical community is profoundly influenced by this concept cultural relevance in its varied attempts to communicate the gospel. The world has changed. No one can argue that. It is evidenced in the things and people that comprise it. My father's world is no more. Some mourn its passing while others rejoice at the opportunities the present world affords.

This issue of Voice attempts to address the challenge of reaching this drastically different world with its pagan ideas and people. It attempts to recognize the need to make appropriate adjustments while clinging tenaciously to the unchanging truths of the gospel about the sinfulness of the individual and the need for true repentance for sin and personal trust in the finished work of Christ alone for salvation. It recognizes that our enemy, Satan, is very subtle and that he is involved in "devouring people" and captivating them into doing his will. It warns against compromising the truth for the sake of opportunity and seeks to motivate the people of God to become personally involved in reaching men, women and children for the Lord.

The Church must not abandon the clear teachings of the Word of God with respect to both faith and practice. It must with conviction recognize the inherent power of the Word of God to overcome all

cultural and intellectual barriers. It must not overlook the clear teaching that God has declared that "preaching" is foundational in communicating the Word of God and that all other methods, though effective, must never diminish the emphasis the church places upon its relevance in worship, teaching and evangelism.

Let us not forget that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

# REACHING A PAGAN SOCIETY

## What About Sin, Repentance & Holiness of life?

Rev. Jim Thompson

We are seeing a trend developing in our Christian Culture today in America that is affecting our ability to reach the lost for Christ. This trend is actually nothing new, but in recent years it has grown to where it is much more obvious. The trend that I am speaking of is the movement away from holiness to a more tolerant position of sin.

In Matthew 5:13-16, Christ talks of the believers as being salt and light in our world. It is important to note that the chapter begins by telling us that Christ, after he was seated, began speaking to his followers. As we apply this text to us today, we see that the Sermon on the Mount becomes a practical sermon for all believers today to read and follow.

Of special note is verse 16 where Christ says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (NKJV). We have been made lights not so we can see our own way, but that others might see the way. The problem with many today is that we as American Christians have such a high tolerance of sin that the world can not see much difference between us and them.

Imagine a graph where a line is drawn to show the decrease in morality in our American society throughout the years. As one can guess, the line keeps going down. Now picture a second line on that same graph. This line represents morality among God's people. As should be, there is a large gap between the two lines. The problem is that as the society line has gone down, the Christian's line has gone down in equal proportion. What was unacceptable to Christians a few years ago is now acceptable. As morality in our society has plummeted, the tolerance level of Christians has grown. All this is done in the name of winning the lost. We no longer desire to expose the sinful condition of man and show his lost condition, but we want to make him feel good about himself and in so doing, we feel good that we can have a better relationship with him.

There is a saying in evangelism that says, 'You've got to get them lost before you can get them saved.' Of course this means that one must deal with the sin problem and get the lost to see that they are sinners. The purpose of this is to show them their need for a Savior. Suppose you were driving down the road and notice a house on fire. As you stop, you further observe there is man sitting in the living room. You have a choice to make at this point. You can stand there and not want to interrupt the man from what he is doing, or you can tell him his house is on fire so he might escape. The same is true in our evangelism. We can stand by and make people feel good about themselves or we can tell them about their sin problem and the penalty of hell. Talking to people about their sin and the penalty of hell is never easy or fun, but is absolutely necessary if they are to ever see their need for a Savior. We can quote Romans 3:23, but do we use it in sharing the gospel?

This makes the idea of repentance even more important. The Greek word for repentance is *metanoeo* and simply means "to change the mind." We find this word in Luke 17:3 in reference to repenting from sin. Does it simply mean to change one's way of life, or to change one's thinking about his sin, which should result in a change of life? In Acts 2:38, Peter tells his listeners to repent. This follows after they inquired as to what to do with the new information that Peter had given them concerning Jesus Christ. Peter is now telling them to change their minds about who Christ is.

In Acts 26, we find the Apostle Paul giving his own personal testimony before King Agrippa. In verse 26 Paul states, ". . . that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance" (NKJV). The obvious is clear: there are works defining true repentance. Repentance becomes more than just a change of the way one thinks, it involves a change of mind about how one acts. We often, in our desire to reach the lost and see people saved, forget to include that salvation brings about a change, not only in

the heart, but in our actions. If one is to do the works "befitting repentance", he must receive Christ as Savior and this includes a change in life style. Either 2 Corinthians 5:17 is true or it is not. We are either new creatures or we are not.

Some of the first verses I memorized as a new believer were Titus 2:11-13. It wasn't until sometime later that I discovered verse 14 which states, ". . . and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works" (NKJV). When God saves an individual, He expects him to do good works. As I often say, "We are not saved by works, we are saved to work." If we are going to be effective in reaching a pagan society, then this pagan society must see a difference in us and this involves a commitment to good works which involves holiness and purity. It is a life style that the lost must see and observe in God's people.

Going back to the Sermon on the Mount, Christ does say that the result of others seeing our good works is that our Father in Heaven would be glorified, Matthew 5:16. The question is, who exactly is glorifying the Father? Is it the one doing the good works, or is it the one who sees the good works? John 15:8 makes it clear that believers glorify the Father by the good works that are done, but how does an unbeliever glorify the Father when he sees our good works?

1 Peter 2:12 states: "having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation." (NKJV) Much debate has occurred regarding what the day of visitation is, but many conclude it is the day of their salvation. In other words, when the unsaved observe the good works of believers, they can respond by trusting Christ as Savior, thus glorifying the Father in Heaven. When believers let their light shine, it can bring the lost to Christ and thus, God is glorified. When it comes to reaching a pagan society, sin, repentance and holiness must be addressed and the believer must see a difference in the believer. After all, to accept the message, one must accept the messenger.

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# **EVANGELISM IN A POST-MODERN SOCIETY**

**By Dr. Jerry Franz**

"God can be found in all world faiths through people who are sincere," someone recently instructed me. "How inconsistent and contradictory this god must be," I challenged, but my words meant nothing. This gentleman's opinion is not new, but the non-reaction to any kind of reasonable challenge may be. Post-modernists are not bothered by contradictions; indeed, they welcome paradox. How can we reach these people if we cannot give a reasonable apologetic for Christianity (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15)?

Most will agree that post-modernism represents a growing way of thinking in our world, especially in America. The strongest bastions and disseminators of post-modernism are the arts, media, and the modern university, a fact that almost guarantees an increasing trend and influence, and which explains why post-modernism resonates with so many youth today.

## **WHAT IS POST-MODERNISM?**

Post-modernism repudiates modernism's view of reality. The prevailing world view of the modern era, dating from the Enlightenment (18th century), sets forth a universe wherein are absolute principles and laws, discovered through reason and science. Post-modernists desire a post (after) modern era, because they say modernist's absolutes have caused wars, holocaust, racism, poverty, and about every other evil in Western Civilization. Post-modernists note that people who claim to be right, and everybody else wrong, usually find ways to force, militarily and/or ideologically, their views on others.

Besides that, say Post-modernists, no one or no civilization in all of human history has emerged with "the" truth. When societies self-consciously reach this wearied stage in their history, they often turn to some philosophy of skepticism, where the search for truth is abandoned.

Post-modernists are perhaps the first to weave a skeptical philosophy that is positive-oriented. They celebrate the absence of any overarching truths or absolutes with a romanticism reminiscent of what Carl Sagan did for impersonal and fatalistic evolution. In Post-modernism, all people create their own reality within the uniqueness of their minds. Pushing your unique world on someone else, or on a distinct tribe or culture, is at least ignorant, possibly arrogant, and to the most ardent post-modernists it constitutes intellectual terrorism. Everybody has the right to be right, and deserves the affirmation of everybody else.

## **THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT REACHING POST-MODERNISTS**

You don't need be threatened and intimidated by this post-modern society. They are probably no harder to reach than the evolutionary, secular-minded modernists, but their mind sets are worlds apart.

In contrast to the modernist, post-modernists are not afraid of spirituality, indeed, they crave it. Just as Eastern Europe longed for a real spirituality in the aftermath of Communism, so Western Civilization has come to a point of hungering for a faith, after almost three centuries of Enlightenment humanism.

## **THE CHALLENGE OF REACHING POST-MODERNISTS**

The bad news is that Christian spirituality is thought to have been tried and proven a failure, along with all the other institutions and ideas that did not bring peace and harmony on earth. The Christian scandals and obvious hypocrites the young people today observed in their formative years only seem to confirm this. Understand also that many post-modernists were reared in traditional churches and have a 'been there, done that' attitude.

In one sense, post-modernists have an advantage. Their philosophy is so new (although many of the ideas are not) that we don't possess a track record to critique. On the other hand, Christendom has often

faltered and failed, the laundry list of which is frequently rehearsed through the media and classrooms of America.

## THE ROAD TO THE GOSPEL

A post-modernist usually does not think in terms of Christianity being right or wrong, as those categories are not clear anymore. Post-modernists are extremely skeptical when anyone claims to be telling "the" truth, because so many truth-tellers (politicians, public religious figures, scientists, and experts of all kinds) have lied and/or been wrong. Post-modernists do not trust the mind to apprehend or communicate truth, even if there were such a thing. They must see truth incarnated (in the flesh).

Actually, the post-modern challenge may be quite timely for us. We have heretofore found it easy to sit back on our established theology and pay less attention to the practical theology of a Spirit-filled life. To get the attention of a post-modernist, your love and good works will be more important than the intellectual strength of your argument. Obviously, we have to generalize when referring to large groups. It is not that our transformed lives were never important to modernists, or that post-modernists never listen or require a reasonable explanation. But it does seem valid to say that each group has a strong preference and attraction to either the intellectual/scientific (modernist) or the experiential/mystical (post-modernist). To further complicate the matter, we must understand that we cannot yet divide the world into these two neat and tidy groups, as I have been doing for the purpose of explanation. There are many in both groups, but also some who, to varying degrees, partake of both.

## WHAT WE SHOULD NOT CHANGE

Bridges to the Gospel may vary, but once we can get a person to consider the Gospel, we have no need to alter its message. **The Gospel is relevant to both the modernist and post-modernist, and to every other world view, past or present.** The same could be said of a Spirit-controlled Christian. **We do not need a new spirituality for the day; the Biblical one has always been more than enough.** Our confidence is not in our rational or experiential apologetics (never should have been), but in the power of God's Word and Spirit.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let me recommend the following:

1. Learn about post-modernists so you can understand their concerns. Remember that their skepticism toward truth stems from their perception that they haven't observed it - in history or in the present.
2. Understand their apathy toward authority figures. It is our challenge to re-earn the privilege of entering their guarded, private world by our blazing passion for the Living God. Remember that many Native Americans and African slaves came to Christ (the faith of their enemies) during the Great Awakening when a vibrant Christianity was in their midst. Real Christianity can sweep away centuries of accumulated barriers.
3. Don't treat them like hardened enemies of the Gospel, but give them the respect that Jesus gave to all seekers (cf. 2 Tim. 2:24-26).
4. Present the Gospel to them, depending upon the Holy Spirit to drive it home. Avoid "if you were to die tonight..." kind of routines. One of their criticisms of Christianity is that it is 'heaven-only', and that Christians don't care for this world's obvious needs.
5. Remember the importance of patient relationships. A new study by Group Magazine reveals that among youth today, 77% came to Christ over a long period of time in the Christian community (July/Aug. 2000, p. 31).

6. Above all, don't be intimidated into silence. World views come and go, but the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes - post- modernists included.

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# Purpose-Driven or Spirit-Driven Church?

Pastor Ben Brown

Is there a dichotomy between a purpose-driven and a Spirit-driven church? There shouldn't be. Unfortunately, a dichotomy does exist in many churches today. When the purposes a church pursues are based upon traditions, temperatures, or trends, then the Spirit is not necessarily controlling that church's ministries. Such purposes can potentially lead us astray from the purposes God's Word instructs us to pursue.

- Tradition can lead the church to do what it does only because, "What we are doing is what we have always done and we should therefore continue."
- Temperature taking can lead the church to do what it does only because, "What we are doing is what the majority or strong minority think we should do and we should therefore do it."
- Trends can lead the church to do what it does only because, "What we are doing is what someone we admire is doing and we should therefore do it."

Traditions, temperatures, and trends are not inherently wrong, but they are leading us in wrong directions if they are not fostering our pursuit of purposes based upon the truth of God's Word. Ultimately, God's Word must be that which guides the church's purposes, not traditions, temperatures, and trends. The Spirit of God is driving a ministry only when this is true. If purpose finds its source in the Word of God, then a dichotomy between purpose-driven and Spirit-driven ministry will not exist. They will be one and the same.

## What constitutes a Spirit driven ministry?

Before answering this question, I think we must first answer the question, "What constitutes a Spirit-driven life?" For there to be Spirit driven ministry, there must first be Spirit driven ministry leaders. There must be men who are obeying the command in Ephesians 5:18, "Do not get drunk on wine which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit" (NIV). The ministry and its purposes will not be driven by the Spirit when the minister is not controlled by Him.

The minister also needs to make sure that he is obeying the parallel command in Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (NIV). That this passage is parallel to the command in Ephesians 5:18 is demonstrated by the similar results which flow from obeying each command-i.e. teaching, admonishing, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, thanksgiving, and submission. The command in Ephesians 5:18 is a passive imperative. The idea is that being controlled by the Spirit is something we are commanded to continually allow God to do in our lives. The command in Colossians 3:16, on the other hand, is an active imperative. The idea is that we are commanded to continually and actively get into the Word of God in order for the Word to get into us. As you put these two ideas together, we learn that we are responsible both to get the Word abundantly into us and to allow the Spirit to use it to control us.

If our lives are not driven and thus controlled by the Spirit and the Word of God is not abundantly at home in us, then how could we expect our ministry purposes to be built upon God's Word and driven by His Spirit? Spirit driven ministry starts with Spirit driven leaders who form Spirit driven purposes first for their lives and then for their ministries. The Spirit drives only those ministries which have purposes that are built upon the truth of God's Word.

In evaluating how much God's Spirit is driving our youth ministry at Pleasant View Bible Church, we do our best to go through the following process. First, we pray. We have found in our lives that God is much more anxious to lead us through the principles of His Word than we are to follow. We have

learned that prayer is the means by which our wills are bent into conformity with God's. This fact is what we believe Christ intended for us to learn when He taught us to pray, "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). I appreciate the approach of J. Hudson Taylor who said, "There are three ways to do God's work: one is to make the best plans we can, and carry them out to the best of our ability...or, having carefully laid our plans and determined to carry them through, we may ask God to help us, and to prosper us in connection with them. Yet another way of working is to begin with God; to ask His plans, and to offer ourselves to Him to carry out His purposes."

While continuing in prayer, we study God's Word in search of the Biblical principles which define what we must do in ministry. For example, we must, under the larger umbrella of making disciples, evangelize the lost (Matthew 28:19-20); We must teach and preach God's Word (1 Timothy 4:13) with emphasis on both Biblical content and Biblical applications to that content (2 Timothy 3:16-17); We must incorporate Biblical worship and fellowship including prayer (Acts 2:42; 1 Timothy 2:1); praise (Acts 2:47, Ephesians 5:18-19); sharing of possessions (Acts 2:44-45; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7); and partaking of the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26); we must do all things unto God's glory (1 Corinthians 10:31).

All of these principles for ministry have already been determined for us by God. It is our responsibility to work diligently in study, prayer and dependence on the illuminating ministry of the Spirit to discover them.

After discovering what God has determined we must do in ministry, we are careful to make sure that we are applying what we know. In pursuit of application, we develop Biblical purposes based on Biblical principles which define what we will strive to do in ministry -our goals. For our ministry to our youth at Pleasant View Bible Church, the following purposes have been set: "Our youth ministry exists in support of the home to: train students to be followers of Christ; tell unbelievers the gospel of Christ locally and globally; teach students obedience to Christ with emphasis on doctrine and discipline; together share in prayer, praise, possessions, and partaking of the Lord's Supper-all to the glory of God."

After our purposes have been developed, we form programs that will best meet our purposes. Biblical programs define how we will do that which we have purposed to do. Each and every program we do with our students is based upon a Biblical purpose which is based upon a Biblical principle.

After we have prayed, discovered Biblical principles, developed Biblical purposes, and have formed Biblical programs to meet those purposes, we continue to probe God's Word to make sure we are doing what God has determined we must do. We continue to pray, making sure that our wills are bent towards doing God's. We believe that approaching ministry the way we do gives full room for the Spirit to drive our ministry and its purposes.

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# The Doctrinal Downgrade of the Market-Driven Church

By Rev. Gary E. Gilley

Everyone loves the classic fairy tale, Cinderella. Born to nobility, her path in life had taken an unfortunate turn resulting in a miserable existence as a mistreated servant girl - unloved and unappreciated. Then for one brief moment a window of opportunity opened for Cinderella and she seized that moment. With a new gown and a fancy hairdo she was able to impress the crowd and win the love of the Prince. A wonderful story that will forever delight our hearts. When the same storyline is applied to the gospel, however, we should not express the same delight. The gospel undoubtedly was born to nobility, being the good news about Jesus Christ, our Savior. Nevertheless, the gospel has fallen on hard times recently. While not denying the central core of the message some have decided that it is too drab and unattractive in its old-fashioned, out-of-date garb. Some sprucing up is needed if we expect today's world to find it attractive. It is at this point that a paradigm shift has taken place in the evangelical community through the new methods, and message, propagated by the market-driven church.

There is good reason to believe that a new gospel message has penetrated our churches. It is a gospel dressed in the fancy gown of conservative evangelicalism and adorned with biblical phraseology. But the careful observer begins to wonder if this new gospel is a masquerade, a costume that disguises something different, and something less, than the old gospel we fell in love with years ago. I fear that beneath the beautiful dress lies a new gospel based on flawed philosophy (felt-needs), misguided methodology (market-driven), and that ultimately crystallizes into a mutated gospel of self-esteem and personal fulfillment.

## Help Me, I Feel a Need Coming On

Thanks to the saturating influence of psychology in our society we have become a people with incredible needs. We have needs where past generations didn't even have wants. We have needs that never existed until recently and we have been taught that we have the right to have those needs met. We are a bundle of felt-needs just dying to be satisfied. In a society where felt-need is king it does not take a genius to recognize that if you can offer a product that meets needs, the world will be beating down your door, whether you are Wal-Mart, Burger King, Weight-Watchers or the church. Keep in mind the quickest, easiest, and surest strategy for maximum outward success has always been for the church to copy the world. This has often been the pattern of the church throughout history. All that changes is the packaging.

While it is true that Christ meets needs, it does not necessarily follow that it is justifiable to "market" Him as One Who meets needs. It may be wise to caution that every time we borrow from the world's methods or message we have firmly planted our feet on quicksand. Or as Peter L. Berger said, "He who sups with the devil had better have a long spoon." (*Dining with the Devil* by Os Guinness p. 31). Nevertheless, George Barna (the most highly regarded marketing researcher in evangelicalism) assures us that we have little to worry about, after all, "Ministry, in essence, has the same objective as marketing: to meet people's needs. Christian ministry, by definition, meets people's real needs by providing them with biblical solutions to their life circumstances." (*A Step-by-Step Guide to Church Marketing* by George Barna p. 21). Barna is correct - almost, but it is a big "almost." Our God is One Who comforts, satisfies, loves, brings joy and many other wonderful blessings, and the church should feel free to present Him as such. But the gospel message (and we should realize that when the market-driven leaders speak of marketing the church they are talking about ways to bring "Unchurched Harry" to Christ) is always presented in the Scriptures as a means to meeting just one need - salvation from sin. And when the gospel is transformed into a technique to meet any other need it in turn redefines the Christian life as well. The Christian life, according to God's Word, is more about self-sacrifice than met needs; more about living to glorify God than about "what's in it for me." Additionally, the church does

not primarily exist to help people feel better about themselves and their circumstances; it exists to teach people how to please God. "Instead of looking at God's face, this teaching suggests that individuals look in the distorted mirror of modern psychology." (*Willow Creek Seeker Services* by G. A. Pritchard p. 233). The distinction between the market-driven approach and the biblical approach lies largely in understanding this fundamental difference.

### **To the Market We Will Go**

Some within the "market-driven church" would cringe at being called such. They would rather be hailed "purpose-driven" or "seeker-sensitive." But others such as George Barna pull no punches. In works such as *Marketing the Church* and *A Step-by-Step Guide to Church Marketing*, Barna outlines for pastors, who have not had the privilege of a graduate course in marketing, (Barna p. 15) just how it is to be done in the church. As to the debate within evangelical circles concerning marketing, Barna declares it to be over and the marketing gurus have won (*Ibid.* pp. 13-14).

If this is true (and as one visits churches all over the country from liberal to conservative and observes their mimicking of market-driven principles one would have to agree that Barna has a good case) what exactly has been won (or lost, depending upon your view)?

Barna defines marketing as "a broad term that encompasses all of the activities that lead to an exchange of equally valued goods between consenting parties. In other words, activities such as advertising, public relations, strategic planning, audience research, product distribution, fund-raising and product pricing, developing a vision statement, and customer service are all elements of marketing. When these elements are combined in a transaction in which the parties involved exchange items of equivalent worth, the marketing act has been consummated" (*Ibid.* p. 19). Is the gospel marketable by this definition? The premise of all marketing is that the consumer must be pleased; he must be kept happy; he must be given what he wants if we are to succeed. This premise works very well for say, McDonald's, but can the church adopt it? Certainly it can, but is not the church, and more importantly, the gospel message, altered and distorted in the process? Ponder these words by David Wells, "The fact is that while we may be able to market the church, we cannot market Christ, the gospel, Christian character, or meaning in life. The church can offer handy childcare to weary parents, intellectual stimulation to the restless video generation, a feeling of family to the lonely and dispossessed - and, indeed, lots of people come to churches for these reasons. But neither Christ nor his truth can be marketed by appealing to consumer interest, because the premise of all marketing is that the consumer's need is sovereign, that the customer is always right and this is precisely what the gospel insists cannot be the case" (*God in the Wasteland* by Wells p.82).

### **A New Gospel**

In response to those who object, Lee Strobel (formerly Teaching Pastor at Willow Creek Community Church) counters that "these objections generally relate to the method that's used to communicate the Gospel, not the message itself, and consequently we're free to use our God-given creativity to present Christ's message in new ways that our target audience will connect with." (*Inside the Mind of Unchurched Harry and Mary* by Strobel p. 168). This is simply not the case. While some of the methods may disturb us it is their message that is of real concern. The leaders in the market-driven church would loudly proclaim that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. But they have redefined, or at least added to, the contents of salvation. Under the new gospel, salvation is not simply the forgiveness of sin and the imputation of righteousness. It is not merely a deliverance from the wrath of God upon a deserving and rebellious people. The new gospel is also a liberation from low self-esteem, a freedom from emptiness and loneliness, a means of fulfillment and excitement, a way to receive our heart's desires, a means of meeting our needs. Strobel writes, for example, concerning evangelizing today, "It is our challenge to help this new generation of Unchurched Harrys understand

that Christianity does work, that is, that the God of the Bible offers us supernatural wisdom and assistance in our struggles, difficulties, and recovery from past hurts" (*Ibid.* p. 57).

No one denies that there are many benefits to the Christian life but these benefits must not be confused with the gospel itself. According to Scripture the gospel is the good news that lost sinners can be forgiven of their sin and receive the righteousness of Christ in exchange. When the gospel is marketed as a source for supernatural wisdom and as assistance during difficult times, has not the gospel been altered? The old gospel was about an offended God; the new gospel is about a wounded us. The old gospel was about sin, the new gospel is about needs; the old gospel was about our need for righteousness, the new gospel is about our need for fulfillment. The old gospel is offensive to those who are perishing; the new gospel is attractive. Many are flocking to the new gospel but it is altogether questionable how many are actually being saved. What we need in our churches is not a therapeutic, altered gospel that mirrors the spirit of the age, but rather the courage to become relevant by preaching the foolishness of the cross.

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For an expanded treatment contact Southern View Chapel and ask for the booklet "Market-Driven Church." (Southern View Chapel, 3253 South 4th St., Springfield, Illinois 62703 or at 217-529-1876 or at svchapel@aol.com). Also check their web site at [www.svchapel.org](http://www.svchapel.org)

# Overcoming Ethnic Barriers

Dr. Robert Kennedy

My father grew up in the early part of the 20th century. As did many people in the part of the country in which he lived, he had a name for every non-Caucasian cultural group. In a not so subtle way, the labels that he gave to people different from him were his way of reacting to cultural differences. These pejorative terms and the worldview that gave rise to them created barriers that insulated his generation from cultural differences and changes in society they could not or perhaps did not want to understand. To his credit, my father overcame much of the stereotypical thinking of his earlier years, although I do not think that he ever grew to embrace the multi-culturalism that came to distinguish this country in the latter part of the century. Mostly we as a family simply avoided contact with people different from us through our choice of relationships, worship places and living environment.

Cultural isolationism and the ethnic barriers which support it is not an option open to believing Christians seeking to live for the Lord and have an impact on their world. Multi-culturalism has become a major characteristic of the United States today and we must understand its biblical roots and embrace it as individuals and local churches. To do this we must intentionally seek to confront and overcome the ethnic barriers separating Christians of like precious faith and keep us from uniting in our worship of God. Overcoming these barriers also enables us to reach those effectively with the gospel of Jesus Christ which at its very core embraces all ethnic groups. Dismantling these barriers means the following.

First, we must understand that differences between cultures are an essential aspect of the diverse world that God created in His own image. The manifold nature of God cannot be isolated in one sex or race. The dominion mandate (Ge 1: 27-28) that humankind "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" all but assured different ways of doing things and perhaps even linguistic diversity by virtue of geographic distance. The multi-hued, multi-cultured societies that arose reflect in their variety the creative nature of God who has not limited worship of himself to one people or tongue, but desires that his praises vibrate from a multitude of tribes, tongues and nations. Sin, however, has made barriers out of these great blessings. God's covenant with Abraham, the father of the Hebrew people, had as one of its major objectives the blessing of all peoples through a Savior coming from Abraham's descendants. Nevertheless, into the New Testament era Israel struggled with the virus of ethnocentricity from which no culture is immune: the belief in the superiority of one's own ethnic group and the tendency within every society to judge the behavior of others by one's own values. In Christ peace has been made, "for He Himself is our peace, who made both groups (Jews and Gentiles) into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall . . ." (Eph 1:14 NASB).

However, while the message of the gospel transcends cultural, racial and linguistic barriers, local churches in their worship and membership have not. In a series of articles entitled "*How Race Is Lived in America*" the New York Times June 4, 2000 [\(1\)](#) describes an integrated Southern church which it terms the "rarest rarity." To be truthful, however, segregation, whether by default or intent, is not confined to one part of the country. Look around you in church on Sunday morning. How ethnically diverse is your congregation? How many friends from ethnic groups other than your own do you have? (Does your pastor have?) As in all areas of personal sanctification, the love and appreciation of those ethnically different from us comes about as we consciously apply the power of the Holy Spirit to our areas of weakness. We are able to do so but we also have a choice.

If we have a biblical mandate to embrace cultural differences as God-given, we must do so because of the rapidly changing complexion of American society. In 16 of the 25 largest urban areas of the United States, people of color now make up the majority population. According to an article in Time (April 9, 1990), sometime in the 21st century non-white ethnic groups will outnumber Caucasians for the first time. By 2056, the "average" U.S. citizen will trace his or her descent to areas outside of white Europe. (This information comes from a paper prepared for Washington Bible College by Dr. Joe Henriques in

May 2000.) Most of us have seen the change occur most dramatically in our workplace where racial and ethnic diversity are now commonplace. Beyond that, however, virtually every larger city now has a worship center for religious groups traditionally considered "non-Western": Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. Members of these religious groups are becoming increasingly involved in the political process, influencing legislation affecting each of us. IFCA International chaplains in the military, in hospitals, universities, prisons and jails are now working alongside of Muslim clerics certified by federal, state and local authorities. If we are to effectively reach our society with the gospel and defend those values we hold dear, we must embrace its diversity or retreat even further into our cultural isolationism.

**Three "I's" form the principles that must guide us in this process.**

**Intentionality:** We must identify the conscious and unconscious barriers to our full appreciation and embracing of cultural differences. Then we must do something to overcome them. We must be intentional in our efforts. Change will not come about by chance.

**Integration:** We must integrate the solutions that we come up with into every facet of the life of the church or institution.

**Implication:** In determining the implications that these solutions should have for the members of our congregations, every person at every level must be involved. No one is exempt, neither the choirmaster nor the janitor, neither the pastor nor the person in the pew.

**Here are some practical suggestions for applying these principles.**

1) Recognize the challenge of overcoming ethnic barriers in the formulation of the missions statement of the organization. Every church and church-related institution must recognize that we live in a multi-cultural society and that our perceptions of ethnicity need to change.

2) Acknowledge that change begins with me. Confronted by the most ethnic diverse student body of any Bible college and seminary in the United States, my perceptions of race and ethnicity were challenged to the core as I struggled to develop a biblical perspective of the fast-changing world in which I live. My childhood background and eleven years of ministry in Europe did little to prepare me for the cultural shock that I experienced in returning to the States. The love and understanding of Christians from non-Caucasian cultures helped me survive. I began to develop confidential relationships with individuals with whom I could discuss penetrating questions about race. I determined that my family would participate in my learning experience and we invited African-Americans into our home for meals. I made it a point to have representatives of African-American mission agencies stay in our home during our missions conferences, although to my shame I confess my initial feelings of discomfort.

3) Recognize that change must occur at the leadership level in order to be effective. My experience has been that unless the pastor, president, dean or board is convinced that change is necessary and becomes a change-agent in the process, very little will take place at other levels.

4) Recognize that change occurs slowly and only through much prayer. As in every other area of personal sanctification, the Holy Spirit tills the ground, plants the seed and brings forth the fruit.

But he moves at his own pace.

1 [New York Times article - "Shared Prayers-Mixed Blessings"](#)

**Webservant note:** Click on this link to view the interesting NY Times article- There is a Questionnaire link where you can tell your account of experiences with race. - You may need to register (it's free)

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# Today's Worship Music: Adapting or Conforming?

Dr. Steve Mathewson

In the quest to reach a pagan culture for Christ and to lead believers in fresh, genuine worship of God, IFCA International church leaders face a critical question regarding today's worship music. Does contemporary worship music adapt to our culture within biblical guidelines, or does it err in conforming to the world (Romans 12:2)? To put the question another way, how do we shape a music ministry in our churches which is fresh and relevant but which avoids compromising to the whims of secular culture? We face this question whenever we choose church musicians, when we decide what instruments to use in our worship, when we determine what style of music these musicians and instruments will use, and when we select music for worship services.

Like it or not, it's impossible to answer this question by making blanket statements about Christian music because there are so many different types of songs, musical styles, and musicians. Instead, IFCA International church leaders must filter their evaluation of today's worship music through the grid of biblical principles. This article explores three biblical principles which should shape our response to today's worship music.

## **Sing a New Song**

To begin with, Scripture mandates the use of new songs in worship. Psalm 149:1 says: "Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints" (NIV). Likewise, Psalms 96 and 98 both begin with the command: "Sing to the LORD a new song" (see also Psalms 33:1;40:3; 144:9). The Hebrew term translated "new" refers to something fresh or recent and is related to the word "new moon." In the great throne-room scene in Revelation 5, the four living creatures and twenty-four elders fall down before the Lamb and sing a new song (Revelation 5:8-9). The Greek term for "new" refers to something "recently made, not yet used, fresh." New songs are necessary as new generations of believer experience God's marvelous works in their lives (Psalms 98:1 and 144:9-10).

If we take the Bible seriously, then, we must not discriminate against today's worship music simply because it is new. The temptation is to canonize a collection of hymns from a previous era and say, "There, we have enough music, and no one can improve on these songs anyway."

Thankfully, Isaac Watts' father did not respond from this mindset when young Isaac complained about the music at their church. Instead, the elder Watts exclaimed, "Why don't you give us something better, young man!"

## **On the other hand, new songs should not delete old songs from our memory.**

That's the reason why some church leaders complain about today's worship music. They see churches taking an "either-or" approach - singing either songs written before 1978 or only songs composed after 1978. But wise pastors and worship leaders will use the best songs from every era.

During a typical Sunday morning worship service at the church I pastor, it is not uncommon for us to sing songs like "Be Thou My Vision" from the 700s, "A Mighty Fortress" from the 1500s, "Holy, Holy, Holy" from the 1800s, "Lord, I Lift Your Name on High" from the 1980s, "You are My All in All" from the 1990s, and "Take My Life" from the 1990s. Such a blend shows appreciation for the new songs from all eras of church history. God has not confined gifted teachers and musicians to a particular era.

## **Pay Attention to the Content**

If we plan to use new songs, though, we must insist that they conform to Biblical standards. By far, the most pressing criterion for evaluating today's worship music relates to content. Does a song possess

doctrinal integrity? Do the lyrics speak of God and His relationship to His people with accuracy and clarity?

In Ephesians 5:18-19, the Apostle Paul indicates that being filled with the Spirit involves "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord."

This statement offers three categories related to content. The psalms, of course, consist of words taken directly from Scripture. Hymns direct praise to God and focus on His attributes. Spiritual songs speak more of a believer's experience or aspirations as a child of God.

When evaluating today's worship music by its content, I am intrigued that it roughly resembles the content of songs in the edition of Inspiring Hymns which my IFCA International church used during my childhood. Quite frankly, there is a mixed assortment from outstanding to trite to doctrinally incorrect. I once heard Dr. Lehman Strauss say he'd like to write a book on "Humbugs in the Hymnal." I suppose I could add a companion volume titled "Blurry Songs on the Projection Screen." The fact is, every era of music has a mixed blend of home runs as well as humbugs.

Overall, though, I am delighted with the number of outstanding worship songs written in the 1980s and 1990s. One of the great strides in today's worship music is using language directly from the Psalms in songs like "God is the Strength of My Heart" (Psalm 73:25-26) or "It is Good to Praise the Lord"(Psalm 92:1-2). Other songs fall into the "hymn category." They may not contain as many stanzas as Charles Wesley's hymns, but they communicate rich theological truth. I appreciate songs like "We Believe" and "Now Unto the King Eternal" which is taken almost verbatim from Paul's doxology in 1 Timothy 1:17.

Numerous other songs offer praise to God for His attributes, including "Firm Foundation," "We Declare Your Majesty" and "Shout to the Lord." In the past few weeks, I find myself praying often the words of "Take My Life" (also known as "Holiness").

*Holiness, holiness is what I long for.*

*Holiness, holiness is what I need.*

*Holiness, holiness is what You want from me.*

*Take my heart and form it.*

*Take my mind and transform it.*

*Take my will and conform it*

*To You, to You, oh Lord.*

While today's worship music is sometimes criticized for its depth, I find much more depth in many of the newer songs than in "approved oldies" like "Pass It On," "Do Lord" or "Somewhere in Outer Space."

### **Appreciate Various Styles**

Now once a song has been evaluated by its content, the controversial question of style surfaces. Is it alright for the music to have a contemporary beat? What about using synthesizers, guitars, and even drums?

Recently, I heard a godly preacher and close friend lament the use of dance-hall drums in a church where he candidated. I wondered to myself why he rejects dance-hall drums but doesn't mind the dance-hall pianos which grace the platforms of most church facilities today. We forget that instruments and styles accepted as "sacred" today stirred controversy when first introduced.

Take the organ as an example. Because the Roman hydraulis or water organ was used with pagan rites, games and theatre, Jerome warned in the 4th century that Christian virgins should be deaf to its music. When the organ was introduced to churches in Colonial America, many worshippers called it "the devil's box of whistles."

Song styles caused controversy, too. In pre-reformation days, the Roman churches preferred singing in unison. Harmony was allowed if the interval was an open fifth (for example, a "C" and a "G"), but an open third (a "C and an "E") was considered a "sensuous interval." When Martin Luther wrote his hymns, he used a musical style which resembled the tavern songs of his day rather than the Gregorian chants. In 19th century America, hymns often reflected the parlour music style popularized by Stephen Foster. J. Edwin Orr's hymn text, "Search Me, O God," was written in the early 1940s and was set to the same tune as a love song, "Now is the Hour," which reached the top of the Lucky Strike Hit Parade.

The fact is, worship music in every era has borrowed the styles of popular culture. So what does the Bible say? As one of my seminary Hebrew professors pointed out to me, all the instruments listed in Psalm 150 had their origin in pagan nations and were first used in pagan worship. Yet God commanded Israel to use those same instruments in the worship of himself. According to Psalm 150, there's room for brass, strings, percussion, and winds,. Furthermore, worship in the Psalms is exuberant and enthusiastic. Psalm 100 calls believers to shout for joy, worship with gladness, and come with joyful songs. Somber is not more sacred than music with a distinct beat..

Scripture gives believers freedom in the area of style. To be honest, the fuss about worship styles is due mainly to preference, not to theology. This is a key area of church life in which Christians must practice love. We must learn to use and appreciate styles which may not always fit our tastes. This goes for senior saints as well as senior high saints. Worship leaders should not alienate traditionalists by disregarding their tastes. But neither should traditionalists alienate new believers or believers from a younger generation by refusing to allow worship songs which conform to their preferences.

Pastors and worship leaders must commit to stretching a congregation without splitting it. Sensitive creativity is the key. Introduce a new song every month. Choose music from every era in church history. Revive an old hymn by playing it with a more contemporary sound. Take the time to tell the story behind a hymn like "Come, Thou Fount" and explain unfamiliar expressions like "Here I raise my Ebenezer" or "Let Thy goodness like a fetter bind my wandering heart to Thee."

When designing outreach events such as crusades, men's or women's retreats, VBS, or camp programs, leaders must exercise even more effort to use music which will effectively reach non-believers.

Evaluating today's worship music forces believers to think biblically. It requires us to base our choices on biblical principles - not on personal biases or comfort zones. May Jesus Christ be praised by the kind of music we use in our churches and by the attitudes which accompany its use.

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# How to Measure a Church

By Rev. Joseph Smith

Should we measure churches at all? Some would cite David's census as proof that God doesn't want us to measure. But that could just as easily be seen as forbidding the wrong kind of measure. The fact is that those who aim at nothing, usually hit it. And if there is a Biblical aim for a church, we should measure it by whether it is focused on that aim and fulfilling that purpose.

Measuring churches for the sake of boasting is wicked. But it is not wicked to take stock of our progress and see if we need mid-course correction. And mid-course corrections are impossible without understanding where you should be going. Remember the Kamikaze Commander who gave out medals for the most safe round trips?

Popular measurement asks the number of people who walk through the door. Well, God cares about people. But God doesn't care about bigness. Bigger just is not better. Remember Gideon's army? Remember how he took Philip from the Samaritan revival to meet a lone traveler in the desert?

Another popular measurement is the money they generate. But remember, though money is important to mission, mission that rests in abundant money lacks the power of God. Money just can't replace the power of God. Beware trusting in riches.

Still another popular measurement is the stability of the organization. Is it stable? It's nice to achieve stability. In church planting we discovered that people often waited until a church proved it would survive before they got involved. But stable churches often lose motivation. They don't produce an excess of leadership that is the key to the growth of a movement. The "little brown church on the corner" syndrome sets in. We have a non-risky situation, and a nice place for our daughters to marry. That's a formula for apathy.

The final popular measurement I will mention are the programs they run. An intern in a downtown church told members of our church plant that we had no right to exist because we didn't have a graded choir program! These folks think of a "full service" church is a goal.

The kind of services offered by churches often reflect their mission goals. It's the fashion today for churches to have a mission statement that reflects their long-range strategy. Most of them are pretty good. The problem comes when we begin to develop tactics to reach those goals. These short-range goals are sometimes less informed by Scripture.

What is the tactical goal of a local church? What does Scripture say? Let's make some observations on Matthew 28:19-20, It is about making disciples - not getting decisions. Discipleship is a process, not a product. We baptize and teach. God's presence is promised.

What was Jesus' strategy? Was he interested in multitudes? He wept over the multitudes but He concentrated on twelve. His tactical plan, or short range goal was not a direct leap toward the long term strategy. His plan might fail every test given by the mega-church movement. Decisions can be made in masses. Disciples are made in intimacy.

Some would set the tactics of Paul against those of Jesus. Jesus had a rural ministry. Paul concentrated on the cities. But while their contexts were different, their tactical plans are identical. Paul spells it out in Ephesians chapter four. The task of church leaders to prepare God's people for works of service. May I propose a test of a local church's success? **It is what percentage of the people who walk in the door are actually serving.**

Church growth isn't the Great Commission. In church growth you keep those you train for ministry. The Great Commission is concerned with sending them. Large churches may be the result of creating

spectators rather than servants. I'm a member of a church that has the largest collection of magnificent piano players who sit on their hands every Sunday. While there are many in this church who serve, it still has the largest pool of unused talent anywhere. That's nothing to boast about.

Our first church plant started as a Bible class that had three people at a dinner table. Today about 650 worship there. But the number is not what is impressive. It's the fact that somewhere around 75% of those people have a weekly face-to-face ministry with someone. In such a church, stepping out to serve God somewhere else doesn't seem foreign. Locations are relative. Ministry is imperative. When I tell people how many missionaries and pastors have come from some tiny churches, they shrug in disbelief. The fact is that following the Second World War, half of all the missionaries that went out were from churches of fewer than 100 in eleven north central states. And according to a study by the editor of the Evangelical Missiological Society, they were the best group of missionaries in history.

Mission leaders bemoan the recent trend from long-term to short-term missionaries. Short-term work lacks the linguistic attainment and cultural understanding of long-term work. Is this a lack of commitment? I've had the job of recruiting missionaries; my experience is that this is really because of a shift from our goal being world evangelism, to self fulfillment. Students are told, take this course, and you will be a \_\_\_\_\_. The concept is to produce people who are conveniently conformed to being cogs in our industrial age machine.

So they are willing to go to the mission field **IF** they are only asked to do what they were trained to do. The training took place apart from an examination of God's purposes, let alone His call. But now it has become an identity. Doing something else is "just not me!"

The job description of the servant of God is, "whatever it takes." Most people from urban and suburban circles can't adapt to that. Ask them who they are, they give you a job description. Ask the rural kid, and he gives you a genealogy or a geography lesson. He's trained to ask, "Can I do that?", before he asks "who else can do it." That's why small rural churches have done a better job of producing people who minister.

What is more, a church's ministry cannot be measured apart from its context. The church in the growing suburb ought to grow in numbers. Let's not feel proud that we've planted a church that is succeeding there. The question is, "Are a higher percentage of these people hearing the Gospel than when we started?"

Churches that are in areas where they can't keep their people need a different way to look at things. I think of a church that was between a major university and an Air-Force base. The average length of residency for these folks was four years. You'd get someone saved, started on the road to ministry, and they'd be gone. The wise pastor had reunion Sundays, where these people who began there came back or wrote back to tell people how God was using them. That church had a huge impact on the whole world. But later leaders decided this was no way to build a stable church. They needed to concentrate on people who would stay. And now it's ordinary, stable, and largely insignificant.

We pity churches that have struggles. I've pastored a number of them. But I ask, "What's wrong with struggle?" Are the goals of God for our lives better accomplished in a situation of ease? Is dependence on visible resources better than depending on God? The world provides nothing but struggle to lead us on to God.

Now I don't want to leave the impression that small churches are better. If you have a large church, you probably couldn't help it. I've seen large churches that never let themselves get comfortable. But bigness makes complacency easy. It takes real effort for big churches to keep on the mark.

To be sure you don't go away with some minor point stuck in your mind, let me summarize.

- Bigger isn't better.
- Disciples are the goal, not decisions.
- Equipping is the focus, not empty growth.
- The thing to measure is ministering people.
- Don't disdain struggle.

### **Endnotes**

1. The Prairie Evangelicals by George J. Jennings, 1992

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# **Sanctify Them in the Truth; Thy Word is Truth."**

**John 17:17**

**Dr. Robert Provost**

In stark contrast to the unchangeable Truth of the Word of God, we live in a time of unprecedented, sweeping, constant change. USA Today reported that on 22 March 2000, Dr. Freeman Dyson, a mathematician at Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey, USA, received the British Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion for outstanding originality in advancing the world's understanding of God. His reward was \$948,000. He was nominated by a professor at Nazarene University in Bethany, Oklahoma, USA, for work that attempts to meld science and religion to a common goal of helping all humanity.

The winner of religion's most lucrative prize is a church-going agnostic who does not pray and does not consider God omnipotent or omniscient. Early in life he decided most Bible stories were fables. Others who have received the Templeton Prize in earlier years have included Dr. Billy Graham, Mother Theresa, and Charles Colson. Just a few years ago the thought of an agnostic receiving a \$1 million prize for his work in religion would have been impossible to comprehend. But even the world of religion is changing by the minute and getting darker and darker.

At the same time, in the realms of the aspects of life that are of paramount importance, the words of the wisest man who ever lived will ever be true. That which has been is that which will be and that which has been done is that which will be done. So, there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

Some nine hundred years after King Solomon wrote these words of ageless wisdom. Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth. Thy Word is truth." He was praying to God the Father for His disciples. He included future disciples, "those also who believe in Me through their word." Through the God-breathed written Word of His disciples, by God's marvelous grace we have clearly been included in God's answer to this prayer of His beloved Son. And He continues to answer it every day in each of our lives.

The burden of my heart is to attempt to achieve Peter's purpose recorded in 2 Peter 3:1-2, to stir up your sincere minds by way of reminder concerning the words spoken by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by the apostles. There are at least five vital facts concerning the Word of God for the man of God. As you consider these crucial truths, may the Lord work through His Word to strengthen and encourage you to keep protecting your flock and standing firm in the face of many adversaries.

1. God and His Word are to be feared. During the burning bush encounter described in Exodus 3:1-6 God said to Moses: "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." When I first visited the USSR in 1989, I worshiped in houses of prayer that reminded me of this passage. A quiet, deep reverence for God, and for the Word of God was evident. The choral music was heavenly. The congregational singing was powerful. People stood spontaneously for a worship anthem, for the reading of Scripture, and for prayer they either knelt or stood as they consciously came into the presence of our Lord. Small children sat perfectly quietly for the entire three hour service.

From young to old, everyone knew that they were on holy ground when they came to the House of Prayer for Worship. From Yamskaya Church in Kiev, to Serova Church in Odessa, to Central Church in Moscow, to Golgotha Church in Minsk, to All Nations Church in Almaty, to Poklonoya Church in St. Petersburg, to Central Church in Omsk or Central Church in Krasnoyarsk it was always the same awe-inspiring worship. The "holy ground" in the houses of prayer is radically different than the ground outside the houses of prayer. Even the lost visitors are humbled by the over-whelming presence of the Lord. Clearly the presence of the Lord is in these houses of prayer.

In his book entitled "Our Sufficiency in Christ," Dr. John MacArthur describes his first visit to Yamskaya Church in Kiev with these words: "The people were reverent, subdued, and prayerful as the service unfolded. I felt I was in the Book of Acts with the early church and I didn't want to leave!"

Proverbs 9:10 tells us, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." The man who lacks wisdom is usually a man with no fear of God. The first step towards wisdom is the fear of God. Isaiah 33:6 tells us, "The fear of the Lord is his treasure." And the fear of the Lord will be your treasure. This is because with the fear of the Lord will come a wealth of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge.

Isaiah 66:2 tells us that God seeks the man, "who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My Word." We still have men who are humble, and men who are contrite of spirit, but where are the men who tremble at God's Word? Isaiah 66:5 tells us, "Hear the Word of the Lord, you who tremble at His Word." Where are the men who tremble at His Word? How long does it take a man who trembles at His Word to prepare a sermon?

2. The Word of God is the greatest treasure of all. Proverbs 2:1-5 tells us that we need to treasure His commandments, seek His Word as silver, and search for it as a hidden treasure. Then we will discern the fear of God and discover the knowledge of God. Psalm 19:10 tells us that the Word of God is more desirable than fine gold, sweeter than honey. Every time you open God's Word it should be a special blessing. Our desire for God's Word should be ever increasing. Men never get enough gold, nor eat enough honey. Our appetite for God's Word should exceed all other appetites in our lives.

Psalm 119:14 tells us that the Psalmist rejoiced in the Word of God as in all riches. There was no treasure known to the Psalmist that would bring more rejoicing than his rejoicing in God's Word. Psalm 119:127 tells us that the Psalmist loved the Word of God more than fine gold. Gold was the most valuable, most sought after possession on earth. But for the Psalmist, God's Word was more precious even than fine gold. There have been times in the lands of Russia when God's people would give anything to get a Bible.

Deuteronomy 8:3 tells us that man does not live by bread alone, but lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Men without God's Word have serious malnutrition. Men without God's Word have much worse than vitamin deficiencies. In Matthew 4:1-4 Jesus turned away the temptation of Satan by saying, "It is written, man shall not live on bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Notice the emphasis again being on "every word." Edifying, strength-giving words proceed out of the mouth of God.

Hebrews 4:12 tells us, "For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." What a treasure! 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." There is no greater treasure known to mankind.

3. The treasure of God's Word is forever. Psalm 33:11 tells us, "The Counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation." From century to century, God's Word is never out of date, and never old-fashioned. Psalm 119:89 tells us, "Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven." After many thousands of years, it is still by far the greatest book ever written, the most reliable, only inerrant, fully authoritative book. It logically follows that the Bible is still the most popular book on earth.

Isaiah 40:8 tells us, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever." Everything else on the earth will die, but the Word of God will stand forever. In 1 Peter 1:22-25 Peter quotes Isaiah 40:8 to say, "The Word of the Lord abides forever." We have been born again of imperishable seed, that is, through the living and able Word of God. Not only is God's Word living, but

it will live forever! And it keeps giving new life. Other seeds give life just once. But God's Word constantly and forever gives life.

In Matthew 5:18 Jesus said: "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished." Until heaven and earth shall pass away, not even the smallest letter, nor even part of a letter will pass away until all is accomplished.

4. The treasure of God's Word must be guarded. Everything that is valuable must be protected. Everything that is valuable must be guarded. People guard their homes with steel doors and locking systems, window bars, fences, vicious dogs, and alarm systems. Banks guard their money in safes and vaults and transport it in armored cars with men with guns. But the Word of God is much more valuable than homes or money. And the Word of God must be guarded by pastors.

Deuteronomy 4:2 tells us, " You shall not add to the Word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." The Word of God cannot be changed. If it could be changed it would lose its value. Commandments would be lost. Then there would be no way for people to know God's commandments, and, therefore, they could not keep God's commandments.

In Jeremiah 26:2 God told Jeremiah, "Speak all the words that I have commanded you to speak to them. Do not omit a word!" Sometimes there are situations where it might be more pleasant to omit some words. People wouldn't be offended if you don't talk about their sin. At the same time, however, they also wouldn't be encouraged to repent of their sin. It couldn't be more clear. We are to preach God's Word exactly as He has written it.

In John 10:35 Jesus said, "The Scripture cannot be broken." He is our Savior. Even more than that, He is our Lord and our King! Jesus is almighty God! When He tells us that the Scripture cannot be broken, we had better be extremely careful not to break it. In Acts 20:27 The Apostle Paul said, "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God." Whether people are offended or not, we are to preach all of God's Word. Some may get angry and even leave the church. But others will repent of their sin. As men of God, we answer to God, Himself, for how we preach His Word.

In Revelation 22:18-19 The Apostle John said, "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book." A man who trembles at God's Word wouldn't even think of adding words or taking away words from the Bible.

What about the brother who didn't take the proper time to study, and as a result unknowingly adds or subtracts from God's Word when he preaches it? What consequences will result from his lack of preparation? This should provide a powerful incentive to all who preach God's Word to do it accurately or not at all.

5. As men of God, our most important work is to guard the eternal treasure of God's Word. And, the Word of God is filled with instructions concerning how we are to do it. Here are seven clear directives for guarding the eternal treasure of God's Word:

(1.) A man of God must study the Word diligently and handle it accurately! (2 Timothy 2:15 )

(2.) A man of God must always preach the Word without restraint no matter what! (2 Timothy 4:1-2 )

(3.) A man of God must preach Christ crucified! (1 Corinthians 1:18- 25)

(4.) A man of God must protect himself and his flock from false teachers! (Acts 20:28-32)

(5.) A man of God must guard what has been entrusted to him, avoid opposing arguments, and stay true to the faith! (1 Timothy 6:19-20)

(6.) A man of God must guard the treasure which has been entrusted to him! (2 Timothy 1:14)

(7.) A man of God must teach God's Word to faithful, gifted, men who are able to teach others in the same manner! (2 Timothy 2:1-3)

### **Conclusion**

God has given this awesome responsibility to each of us in Christian leadership! This is not a responsibility which we can pass on to someone else. There will be no excuse for not being found faithful as a diligent guardian of the treasure of God's Word. When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, you can be sure that we will each be called to give an account for our stewardship of the treasure of God's Word.

Therefore, my dear brothers, may we ever increase in our fear of our Holy God and in our fear of His precious, unchangeable, inerrant, authoritative Word. May we ever increase in our conviction and handling of the Word of God as the greatest treasure of all. May we ever increase in our comprehension of the eternity of God's Word. May we ever increase in our understanding of the importance of guarding the treasure of God's Word. And may we ever increase and multiply our diligent efforts to guard the eternal treasure of God's Word today, and in the years to come. May God help us do it all for the glory of Jesus Christ!

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God will stand forever (Isaiah 40:8).

***Dr. Bob Provost is President of Slavic Gospel Association in Loves Park, IL.***

# CHAPLAIN'S DIARY

## THE CHALLENGE OF HOSPITAL MINISTRY

**CH (COL) Don Breland, USA (Ret.)**  
**Director of Spiritual Care, St. Joseph Regional Health Center**

**Chaplain Gregory Rhine**  
**Emergency Room Chaplain, Baylor Medical Center, Garland, Texas**

**Chaplain Breland, having served as a senior Army Hospital Chaplain several times during his Army Chaplaincy career, stepped into a leadership role in a civilian hospital. He describes the nature of his ministry leadership and pastoral opportunities.**

I am the Director of the Spiritual Care Department and share chaplain responsibilities with two other staff chaplains. Our facility has 276 beds, plus an outpatient cancer center, a day surgery facility, a large emergency room, a rural hospital in a small town nearby, and two rural health clinics. We make daily visits to patients and patient families, and have multiple opportunities to pray, counsel, share Scripture, and to foster the beginning of, or the deepening of, a person's relationship with the Lord. One of the most demanding things we do is to assist families as they make end-of-life decisions for their loved ones (should they continue or discontinue life support technology?). One worship service is held each week. We all conduct weddings and funerals as appropriate to our role. I also serve on the hospital ethics committee and conduct a Clinical Pastoral Education program for local clergy.

Perhaps the most eventful thing which happened this year was the collapse of the bonfire on the Texas A&M campus. Twelve persons were killed and many injured. Our hospital received many of the injured, one of which died the next day (Friday). We also received all of the deceased to be held until a local judge approved their release to funeral homes. For three very intense days, we worked around the clock and saw God's answer to prayer all around us. Working with the distraught families whose child had been killed or seriously injured was the most demanding. Fortunately several good pastors and campus ministers (Navigators, Campus Crusade, and others) came in to help. God used them wonderfully to comfort and encourage.

The young man who died on Friday was a strong Christian and gave a very clear testimony of his faith and trust in God just before he died. His parents repeated that testimony to a large crowd who gathered for an impromptu memorial service about an hour after he died late Friday evening. Several people trusted the Lord as a result of that service.

**Chaplain Greg Rhine serves as an Emergency Room Chaplain at Baylor Medical Center in Garland, Texas. He shares a brief account of his ministry outreach in this challenging environment packed with Good News opportunities.**

My ministry as an ER chaplain at Baylor Medical Center at Garland has been going great. Between the weekend chaplain (also a Dallas Theological Seminary alumnus) and myself, during a seven month period beginning last July we ministered to over 12,000 patients and their family members! This included our comforting and ministering the hope of the Gospel to over 120 grieving families whose loved ones had died in our hospital. Additionally, over 157 patients and staff attended our chapel services during this same period. I had the privilege of performing three weddings (along with the requisite counseling) for staff members and I disciplined one staff member in a Bible study conducted weekly at the hospital. Not included in these statistics are my active participation in bi-weekly meetings for cancer survivors and the grieving. Whew!

My chaplain supervisor told the hospital administration that if we didn't have the ER evening chaplains (that's us) on staff, all of the ministry, previously mentioned, would not have happened. We praise God for being able to touch so many people.

*Please pray for our Hospital Chaplains as they minister the word of God and His love to patients, their loved ones and hospital staff. They are Chaplains Don Breland, Tom Drenoske, Jerry Moore, Gregory Rhine, Walter Ross, Jeffrey Ryan and Gerald Wylie.*

*If you are interested in pursuing this important missionary ministry, please feel free to contact our Director of Chaplaincy, Warren Dane. Email: [chaplain@ifca.org](mailto:chaplain@ifca.org)*