

WINTER 2018



# engage

A Journal for  
Church of God  
MINISTRIES

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From Your Church

Lee University Turns 100

Seven Principles to Lead  
as Jesus Led

Getting Serious About  
Church Planting

Our Wesleyan Heritage

WINTER 2018  
VOL. 14, NO. 1

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# A Building of Firsts

**E**ARLY CHURCH of God history includes several iconic buildings which were located in Cleveland, Tennessee. Most were located within a square mile of where A.J. Tomlinson and his family settled in 1904, in a two-story house on Gaut Street. The home, which still stands today, was where the early church leader conducted and hosted the earliest business of the church.

It wasn't long until the need for a functional space for the church was proposed, and a one-level wooden structure was built across the street from the Tomlinson home. The first critical need was to accommodate publishing, but the building would also serve as the first official Church of God headquarters building. It was enlarged as the fledgling denomination grew; and in less than a decade after its construction, it would be expanded to three floors.

There is a photo of that Gaut Street structure—what became primarily known as the Evangel Publishing Co.—on page 15 of this issue. An article there celebrates the centennial of Lee University, another Church of God entity that got its start in that building on January 1, 1918. Although it has been torn down for decades, one can still find traces of the foundation of the old Evangel Publishing Co.

Along with Lee's 100th birthday, 2018 marks 50 years since the relocation of the International Offices to the current 25th and Keith Street site. As we remember these milestones, let us also celebrate humble beginnings and realize, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." ■

*Engage* journal is published in the interest of providing resources for Church of God pastors.

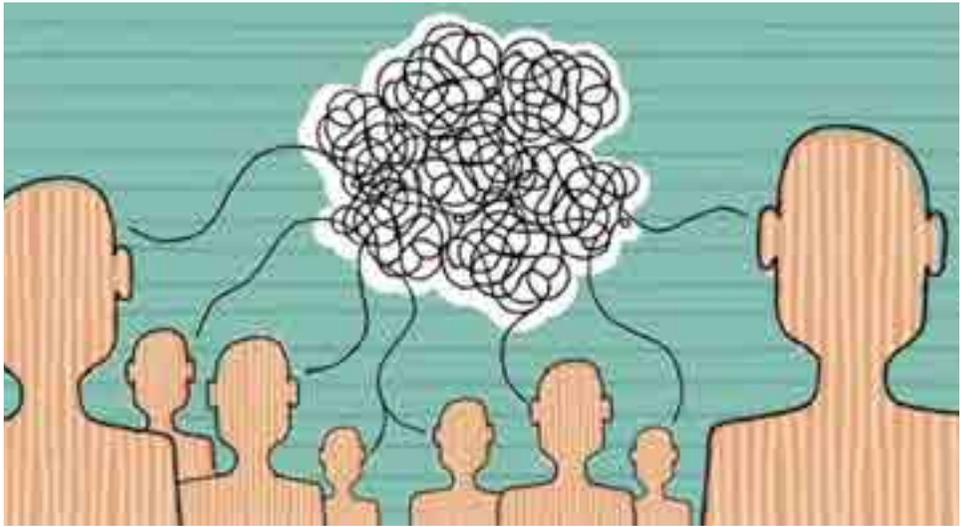
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# Eliminate CHRISTIAN JARGON From Your Church

Let's throw out the insider language.

by J. R. BRIGGS

**A** FEW YEARS AGO, a friend, who was a successful insurance agent, invited me to attend a high-end luncheon. The hotel ballroom was filled with a few hundred insurance agents from around the region. After lunch was served, a prominent leader in the insurance industry spoke, joking about “claimants,” “negligence,” and “aggregate limits of indemnity.” While the other agents laughed, nodding in agreement with the speaker’s comments, I fidgeted in

my seat. I appreciated my friend’s invitation and ticket to the lunch, but I left feeling unintelligent and confused.

Every group, if it’s together long enough, develops insider language. The luncheon I attended used insider language targeted to their specific industry. They didn’t use it to be exclusionary; they employed it for the sake of identity, clarity, and efficiency. But I realized—in maybe the clearest manner in my life—what happens in the hearts and

minds of visitors and spiritual sojourners when we use insider language in a local church.

My experience at the luncheon brought to mind the biblical story of Zacchaeus the tax collector. What prompted Zacchaeus to climb a tree and become immortalized in that Sunday-school song you're probably humming in your head right now? "He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd" (Luke 19:3 NIV). In their pursuit of Jesus, the crowd blocked Zacchaeus (and maybe others) from seeing and experiencing Jesus.

We do this too when we use church-specific language. Call it the "Zacchaeus Effect." Is it at play in your church?

"I just want to love on people."

"Pray the prayer and walk the aisle."

"God laid it on my heart to tell you something."

Ask someone with no church experience what it means to "feel called" and they might think you're referring to the phone vibrating in their pocket. Ask those outside the church what a *love offering* is, and they might honestly think it's a sexual euphemism. I've been a pastor for more than 15 years, and I still don't know exactly what people mean when they sign off from an email with "Be blessed."

We also use phrases from Scripture with the assumption that everyone has the same level of biblical literacy. Being healed "by the blood of the Lamb" or giving your "tithes and offerings" are alien expressions

to outsiders. At a party several years ago, someone shared, "God told me ..." A friend pulled me aside to ask, with sincerity, "When God spoke to her was His voice deep? Did it sound anything like Morgan Freeman's?" If my friend's question sounds funny or strange, it might mean we've become too accustomed to insider church language. Could it be, in our pursuit of Jesus, we may be blocking others from seeing Him?

## THE HAZARDS OF CHURCH JARGON

God's grace is available to any and all who desire it. According to Jesus, the Kingdom is like a banquet catered to outsiders who don't think they belong. Jesus didn't just invite them in; He prioritized and celebrated them.

This is why we have to be aware of the hazards of using Christian insider language.

### 1. *Christian jargon is isolating.*

For church outsiders, our worship gatherings can be like watching a foreign film without subtitles. Our insider language confuses those who aren't the regulars, and when people are confused, they tune out.

### 2. *Christian jargon often communicates sloppy theology.*

We invite people to "accept Jesus into their hearts" (a phrase not found in Scripture) or we say, "Before we worship, let's pray," as if prayer is not a form of worship. Perhaps we begin our Sunday service with, "Holy Spirit, we invite Your presence here this morning." May we never forget that the Holy Spirit is already among us, inside every believer. If we are not careful, our language

can communicate things to others we don't actually want to communicate.

### 3. *Christian jargon is lazy.*

It takes intentional work to think about our language in a way that invites people in rather than locking them out. So let's put in the required effort to communicate the most important story we can tell people.

## HOW TO KILL CHRISTIAN JARGON IN YOUR CONGREGATION

If we want to eliminate language that blocks others from seeing Jesus, what can be done?

### 1. *Scrutinize your language as a team.*

To avoid the Zacchaeus Effect, start by noticing when you use Christian insider language—and who is around when you use it. We must name a thing to change a thing, which requires awareness. I often ask my staff and leadership teams, “What phrases do we use that we assume people understand?” By answering this question, our team has learned to speak differently to make sure we aren't using code language around people who aren't insiders.

### 2. *Ask spiritual outsiders what they think.*

Several years ago, I asked a friend, who had little interest in spiritual matters, if he would attend one of our services and answer this question with complete honesty: “What do we say in our church that doesn't make sense to you?” Never one to back down from a challenge, he accepted. Later that week, I treated him to lunch and asked about his experience. His response was eye-opening, to say the least. Things

we said in our services without a second thought were, to him, confusing, frustrating, and even humorous. It was one of the best investments in a meal I've ever made.

### 3. *Make a game out of it.*

Discovering and putting to rest our Christian jargon doesn't have to be a dreary funeral procession. Yes, it's humbling and convicting to confront the barriers we've placed between us and others, but we all do it. Thankfully, God's grace covers our shortcomings.

Come up with a list of “churchy” words you'd like to use less often. Then ask a group of key leaders, “How could we say \_\_\_\_\_ in a more compelling and accessible way?” Make it fun by creating a round of “Lingo Bingo.” Hand your leaders a blank Bingo card and ask them to write down the most common words and phrases they hear from the front of the church in a typical service. After they've filled in their Bingo cards, discuss the results as a team.

### 4. *Take time to explain.*

The solution to church jargon isn't always to replace significant words with common phrases. Sometimes, a short explanation will do. By assuming everything I say during a service will be heard by people who are not church insiders, I must occasionally press pause to explain what I mean when I use certain words.

Many people have never heard words like *atonement*, *justification*, or *resurrection*—at least not in the way we mean them. Howard Hendricks used to tell his seminary students, “If it's a mist in the pulpit, it'll be a fog in the pew.” By taking the time to explain insider

concepts, we can remind regular attenders that there are people among them who don't know these terms.

I'm not arguing that we water down the good news of Jesus Christ by softening our language, nor that we kowtow to political correctness. I'm not suggesting we throw out our inherited language to make it sound sexier. Instead, I'm advocating for something more important: infusing our language with intentionality, clarity, accessibility, and imagination. We have the opportunity to inculcate clear and accessible language into the minds, hearts, and souls of our congregations so they will understand that the message of Jesus is available to all people.

Language matters: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,

and the Word was God" (John 1:1 KJV). It is a sacred gift, meant to bring about information and intimacy. Words are the brushes with which we paint the story of God on the canvas of our context. Don't take for granted the words available to you. Use them clearly and discerningly. Steward them wisely and compellingly.

If we eliminate church jargon and replace it with better phrases, then others won't have to scale trees to catch a glimpse of Jesus' good news. Instead, they can stand with us, side by side, worshipping Jesus together. ■

*J.R. Briggs is the founder of Kairos Partnerships and pastor of The Renew Community, in the greater Philadelphia area. Find him on Twitter at @jr\_briggs.*

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# SEVEN PRINCIPLES TO LEAD AS JESUS LED

by ED STETZER

**J**ESUS DID NOT come to be your leadership guru. He came to die on the cross for your sins and in your place.

Yet, He did lead. And we can learn from how He led. If we look closely, we see that His leadership was wrapped in humility and servanthood. Even for those in high leadership positions, we all ultimately submit to one Person—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus also led perfectly. Now, of course, we are not perfect, but nonetheless Jesus' model guides us toward more Spirit-led leadership that honors all those under our care. The more we follow Jesus, the more "perfect" we can be in emulating and taking on the characteristics of a good leader. And when we lead like Jesus, we leave a legacy that is shaped around Jesus.

Gene Wilkes has helpfully categorized seven principles that we can take to heart to inspire our leadership. I have personally

found these helpful in different leadership positions in which I have served. None of us is perfect, but we strive to be leaders, who at the end of each day, may hear the voice of our God saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

## **1. Jesus humbled Himself and allowed God to exalt Him.**

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under*

the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:5-11).\*

## **2. Jesus followed His Father's will rather than seeking a position.**

*For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me (John 6:38).*

*Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work' (John 4:34).*

## **3. Jesus defined greatness as being a servant.**

*And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, 'What were you discussing on the way?' But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, 'If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all' (Mark 9:33-37).*

## **4. Jesus took risks to serve others, because He trusted He was God's Son.**

*Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper (John 13:3).*

## **5. Jesus left His place at the head table to serve the needs of others.**

*He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the*

*disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him (John 13:4-5).*

## **6. Jesus shared responsibility and authority with those He called to lead.**

*And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal (Luke 9:1-2).*

## **7. Jesus built a team to carry out a vision worldwide.**

*And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age' (Matthew 28:18-20). ■*

\*All Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, *English Standard Version*, ESV ©. Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

*Ed Stetzer holds the Billy Graham Distinguished Chair of Church, Mission, and Evangelism at Wheaton College, is executive director of the Billy Graham Center, and publishes church leadership resources through Mission Group. (Source: Christianity Today)*

*Let's Talk About It . . .*

## GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT **CHURCH PLANTING**

by TIM HILL, General Overseer



*(Editor's Note: This article is the second in a series titled, "Let's Talk About It," by General Overseer Tim Hill.)*

### **A MIRACLE FROM VISION AND HOPE**

Sometimes after I preach, I find myself going back recalling statements and reliving moments in my sermon that were emboldened by what I like to believe was anointing from God, and not mere temporary exuberance. If you will recall, during my message at the 2016 International General Assembly, I stated that I believed a million dollars could be found within the Church of God to start the "church planting bank." Looking back, I cannot affirm that my statement was as much anointed as it was just simply an expectant vision for the Church. Hopefully, it was both! Regardless, when the newly elected International Executive

Council came together in their first meeting in September 2016, they made the vision of a million dollars for church planting a reality. But they did not stop there.

When the Council met in January 2017, they designated another half-million dollars for church planting, for a total of \$1.5 million to begin the church planting bank. By April 2017, the Church Planting Bank—formally called the Church of God Church Planting Designated Fund—was initially funded, guidelines and policies were developed, and the first seven church planters had met the criteria to qualify for matching, no interest loans, from the bank.

Less than a year from the time I made the funding pronouncement at the International General Assembly, a group of church planters have already raised some or all of their matching funds. Money from the church planting bank has been disbursed to them,

and they are preparing to launch their new churches this fall. [Note: This article was written mid-year 2017.]

This is wonderful news, and I am glad. No, actually I'm thrilled . . . believe me, I am thrilled!!

But let's talk about it . . .

## **ONLY A BEGINNING**

One and a half million dollars isn't nearly enough money to reach the countless cities, towns, and communities across America that need a vibrant, life-giving church. These funds will be used up and will vanish quickly without a continual inflow of new dollars into the church planting bank and into state/regional offices and the International Offices for funding new churches. We must keep working to raise additional funds . . . and we will.

It is important to remember that the church planting bank is not giving out grants. These funds are zero interest loans that are intended, among other things, to help the church planter acquire equipment, get a social media presence, do advertising, and build the "brand" of the new church plant, usually well before the first service is ever held.

## **A SYSTEM OF PARTNERSHIPS**

The church planting bank funding model mirrors those developed by the Association of Related Churches (ARC) and other church planting agencies. On the front-end, it is understood by the church

planter that these funds are to be paid back, primarily so that they can be used to plant more churches. Following the structure already in existence for local Church of God congregations, the repayment model is set up where ten percent (10%) of the income from the new church plant will go to repay the loan. The hope is that the church can repay the loan quickly and become a fully organized Church of God congregation. But most important, the goal is for that new congregation to start reaching out immediately to their local community to tell them of the saving grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This prompts me to make a clarion call for help for our church planters across the country. They need all of us to assist them, not only in prayer, but also in raising the needed dollars to qualify for the matching loan from the church planting bank. These church planters need help from their local church, their state/regional office, their sponsoring church, as well as their family and friends. Your contribution to the kingdom of God can pay dividends for multiple years to come as you plant "seeds" into a new church.

## **PERCEPTION VS. REALITY**

Let me completely debunk the rumor and the mistaken idea that "since the church planting bank has \$1.5 million, there is no need for financial assistance from other levels of the church." Nothing could be further from the truth. Because of the massive need

to plant churches across this great country, and the corresponding costs associated with such, I am personally requesting that every state overseer, every State Council member, every pastor, and every Church of God layperson get involved in our church planting effort and find a church planter that you can assist.

While our church planting efforts are developing strongly, I recognize that “one size doesn’t fit all.” There are different models for church planting and churches are being planted every day by people who will just simply find a way to get the job done, with or without assistance from the Church of God “structure.” I applaud the ingenuity of these efforts as we all work together to increase the kingdom of heaven.

But, as I have just noted, church planting is not something that we can do on our own. So as not to reinvent the wheel, we have developed tremendous partnerships for training and coaching church planters with the Association of Related Churches (ARC), Church Multiplication Network, Dynamic Church Planting International (DCPI), and others. Along and with these partners, the Church of God’s Office of Church Planting and Church Revitalization offers onsite and webinar coaching for potential church planters. The director of our Office of Church Planting, Mitch Maloney, and the Church Planting Task Force, headed by Dr. Sean O’Neal, stand ready to assist those who have an interest in serving as a church

planter, whether you seek funds from the church planting bank or not.

## **MAKING THIS PURPOSE A PRIORITY**

As we so proudly proclaim, the Church of God has approximately 6,500 churches throughout North America. In the not too distant past, we were planting as many as 250–300 churches per year. In the midst of the economic recession and Tithe of Tithes reallocation, we hit an all-time low of planting only 85 churches in one year. For the last few years, we are back to planting between 100–110 new churches per year. I am pleased that we are increasing again, but we can—and we must—do better.

As a Pentecostal movement, we have a message that must be shared with communities everywhere. One of the greatest ways to share that powerful message is through planting new churches. Can we as the Church of God actually plant 1,000 new churches in the United States and 10,000 globally by 2020? The Scriptures seem to demand no less of us. Acts 1:8 says that “After the Holy Ghost is come upon you . . . you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (KJV).

Whether it is planting a church in a Tennessee city of over 150,000 people, a rapidly growing suburb of Ft. Worth, Texas, an upwardly mobile community of professionals in Northern Alabama, or along

the beautiful Columbia River in the Pacific Northwest, Church of God church planters are going into our modern-day Jerusalems, Judeas, Samarias, and into the uttermost parts of our nation. And they will make a difference for the Kingdom—with your help—and with your prayers.

### A CALL TO ACTION

Since we are talking about it, our church planting efforts can only be successful if they are bathed in prayer, we have ministerial families that are willing to take on the difficult task of planting a new church, and we have the financial resources available to get these churches off the ground. So, to each of you, I offer these challenges:

- Join me in daily prayer for those who are planting churches. Whether you pray for a specific church planter or church planting in general, this effort will succeed only if it is covered in prayer.

- Pray about becoming a church planter or participating in a “launch team” for a new church plant. You will have to give up the comfort of the familiar, but the reward that you will receive will be out of this world!!

- Consider giving a regular offering to the church planting efforts in your state or gifting resources to the Church Planting Bank. Your gift will truly keep on giving when you give to plant a church.

Yes, let’s talk about it, but also let’s do something great for the kingdom of God. ■

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# Lee University Celebrates Its Centennial in 2018

by CAMERON FISHER

**T**HE CHURCH OF GOD'S premier institution of higher learning turned 100 years old on January 1, 2018, and will take the entire year to commemorate the historic milestone.

The announcements, events, and press releases began on January 1 and will culminate in a weekend "Celebration" event set for November 2-3, 2018.

The institution now known as Lee University began on the morning of January 1, 1918. At precisely 9:30 a.m., the first instructor, Nora Chambers, rang a small bell and called to order the first class of a dozen members. Chambers was an evangelist and experienced teacher at Holmes Bible College who bravely accepted the admonition from Church leaders to guide the first class of a dozen students. Arriving from various parts of the country, the group assembled at the Evangel Publishing Co., a wood-frame structure located at 2524 Gaut St. in Cleveland. The

second-story room where the students and Mrs. Chambers gathered was the same space where the Elders Council, referred to today as the Executive Council, held their meetings.

The humble beginning of that day was the culmination of several years of deliberations by early Church of God leaders to establish a program "for the training of young men and young women for efficient service on the field," and where the Bible was to be, "the principal textbook." The name of the institution at the time was the Church of God Bible Training School.

The school that would become affectionately known as BTS, would spend its first 20 years in various locations around Cleveland, Tennessee, until 1938 when the former campus of the Murphy Collegiate Institute in Sevierville, Tennessee, was acquired. The growth of BTS necessitated the move, and it would be located there for the next nine years.

The return to Cleveland and the campus of today came in 1947 when Bob Jones College relocated its operations to Greenville, S.C. The campus of BJC had occupied the Cleveland property since 1933, following the closing of the former Centenary Female College. The move of BTS back to Cleveland was a pivotal milestone for the 29-year-old school. With the relocation, the decision was made to rename the institution Lee College, after former Church of God General Overseer F.J. Lee, who also served as the school's second president from 1922 to 1923.

In 1968, Lee became a four-year liberal arts college and has since been on an almost non-stop trajectory of growth in programs,

buildings, and enrollment. Since 1947, Lee has grown tenfold with more than 5,000 students today. From a small 20-acre campus near downtown Cleveland, there are currently more than 120 acres, and it is now joined with the downtown area. In 1997, fifty years after its relocation to Cleveland, Lee College became Lee University and is today listed as a top-tier Master's Degree University with membership in the most prestigious academic agencies and athletics that compete in NCAA Div. II.

Lee University President Dr. Paul Conn, who has been at the helm at Lee for almost 32 years, said, "In the life of a university, a 100th anniversary is as big as it gets. This is certainly true of Lee. We have a story worth



*This building, originally located on Gaut Street in Cleveland, Tennessee, served as the Church of God's first Publishing House, General Offices, and on January 1, 1918, as the site of the opening class of students for Bible Training School, the forerunner of Lee University.*

celebrating, and we look forward to doing it all year with friends and supporters.”

Chairman of the Lee Centennial Committee and vice president for Institutional Research, Dr. Jayson VanHook, said, “The committee has designed a broad schedule of events that embraces all the important partnerships in Lee’s 100-year history, and the plan is to unfold these events and celebrations as we go, ending with the Celebration event in November.” The year-long commemoration will include events for students, alumni, faculty, community, friends, and supporters.

To learn more about the events and happenings of the centennial, as well as

view update videos as they are released, visit [www.leeuniversity.edu](http://www.leeuniversity.edu). ■



*The Lee University School of Business is the latest modern classroom facility built on campus, opening last fall.*



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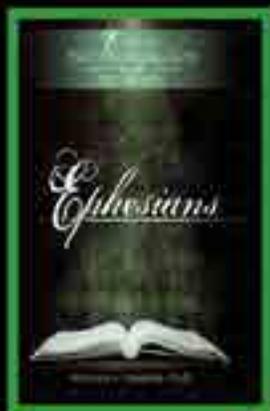
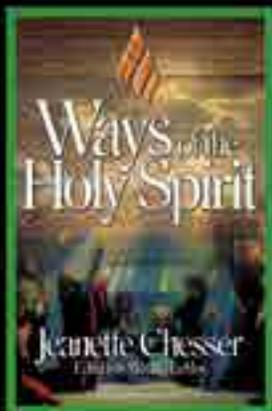
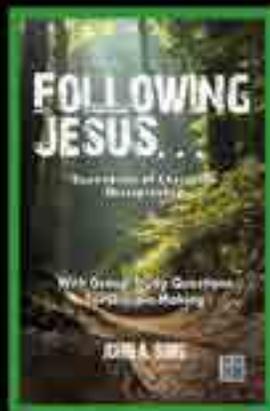
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# Thoughts on Our WESLEYAN HERITAGE

by A. D. BEACHAM

*(Editor's Note: The following is a reprint of a blog post by Dr. A. D. Beacham, general superintendent of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC)—a movement with similar beliefs and doctrines with the Church of God)*

**O**UTSIDE OF REFERENCE to God's dealings with Israel and the church through Jesus Christ as described in the Bible, IPHC theology has been primarily shaped by three historical events and persons.

The first event is the Protestant Reformation led by Martin Luther. The triggering event is usually considered when Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses to

the Wittenberg church door on October 31, 1517. This year (2017) marks the 500th anniversary of this significant event in history. From Martin Luther, we have our emphasis on the priority of Scripture for doctrine; we have the affirmation of justification by faith alone; and we have the universal priesthood of all believers.

Each of these is important in its own way for us as Pentecostal believers. We have a high view of the Bible and recognize it as the written Word of God, as well as bearing witness to the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah of Israel and the eternal living Word of God. Justification by faith frees us from the condemnation of the

measuring stick of our own works in seeking to prove ourselves worthy of God's love. Instead, God's love is given to us as an act of grace, and our response is one of faith in what God has done in Christ for us. Thus, our "works" take their place as a witness to God's redeeming grace and blessings, and not a place of self-righteousness. Finally, the universal priesthood of all believers means that every Christian is a "priest" and can come before God. It also means that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are available for every follower of Jesus, and not just for those who gain recognition in public ministries.

The second figure is the Anglican priest John Wesley, and the renewal movement he began in the eighteenth century in England that came to be known as Methodism. Our understanding of holiness, as a manifestation of divine love, flows from Wesley's understanding of the Bible. Our first four doctrinal statements reflect Wesley's version of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. From Wesley's movement, we gain the foundations of our ecclesiology. This ecclesiology, partly reflected in our Episcopal/Congregational form of government, is one of the reasons IPHC has affirmed the fivefold ministry gifts of Ephesians 4, and grown in our understanding of these ministries. From Wesley, we have learned care for the poor, and the power of the gospel to combine redemption with the divine purpose of blessing to and for the world.

The IPHC was birthed in the cradle of the late nineteenth-century Holiness Movement.

From Wesley, we learned that God has begun a good work in our lives that goes beyond justification by faith and forgiveness of sins. Often called the "second blessing," or "sanctification as a second definite work of grace," we experience victory over the dominion of sin and are empowered to fully live as instruments of righteous blessing in the world. In many respects, sanctification is the life-flow of grace that runs through the kingdom of God. Of further importance, from Wesley, we have our Arminian understanding of God's saving grace, predestination, election, and human response.

The third is the early twentieth-century Pentecostal revival at Azusa Street in Los Angeles. Through this revival, we saw the distinction between the Holy Spirit's work in sanctification and the Holy Spirit's work empowering us for global mission. We continue our journey personally and corporately of allowing the Holy Spirit to use His gifts through us to bless the world. Pentecostal denominations influenced by the Los Angeles revival view the Pentecostal baptism with the Holy Spirit as distinct from justification by faith and/or sanctification. [This includes the IPHC, the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, the Congregational Holiness Church, the Pentecostal Free-Will Baptist, the Church of God in Christ, and the Assemblies of God.]

For some time, I have been reflecting on our Wesleyan background. I grew up in a Pentecostal Holiness pastor's home. My teenage years were spent under the

ministry of the late Rev. John W. Swails at the Franklin Springs Pentecostal Holiness Church, Franklin Springs, Georgia. I still remember the impact of his sermons during a period when he was reading Wesley's *Journals*. Each Sunday morning there were powerful accounts from the *Journals* that stirred my teenage heart. I attended Emmanuel College, as a junior college, and began my initial preparation for ministry in this Wesleyan Pentecostal framework.

After graduating from the University of Georgia, I was accepted at Duke Divinity School (Methodist) in Durham, North Carolina, and at Union Theological Seminary (Presbyterian) in Richmond, Virginia, (now Union Presbyterian Seminary). Torn between the two graduate programs, I finally decided to attend Union in Richmond.

There were several reasons for that decision: (1) I had a very good IPHC church situation at the Ray of Hope IPHC, about a mile from the Union Theological Seminary (UTS) campus. Rev. Carl Campbell offered me an associate position that allowed me to attend seminary full time; (2) I had an uncle, Buster LeDoyen in Portsmouth, Virginia, who was married to one of my mother's sisters, Christine. He was a Presbyterian layman whose life reflected God's grace and the best of Presbyterianism. The quality of his life influenced my decision. To this day, I can still hear my mother, who was Arminian, and Uncle Buster lovingly argue

about predestination when we would visit. Neither converted the other! (3) When I called the two schools concerning financial aid, the Presbyterians paid almost my entire education! In retrospect, there was some sense of "predestination and election" in their generosity!

In my years of study at UTS, I read John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Emil Brunner, Reinhold Niebuhr, and other Reformed theologians. Those were years of finding my way intellectually along the Protestant continuum of various shades of Reformed Calvinism and my Wesleyan background. My instructors were all gracious and made no effort to "convert" me. They did attempt to give me the tools to think biblically and theologically, and I hope I have had some level of success in applying what I was taught.

With that said, I have no interest in engaging in a theological controversy over these issues. I am very grateful for Reformed writers/speakers whom I continue to follow, such as John Piper, Tim Keller, and R.C. Sproul. While I don't always agree with them, I learn much as I open my mind and heart to their insights. I figure we are all followers of Jesus if we've been born again. In my view, there are workshops in heaven where Jesus meets with all who have engaged in fights over such doctrines. He tells us where all of us were wrong, commands us to hug and love one another, and get on with eternal life!

But at the end of the day, and in the later crucibles of pastoral ministry and denominational leadership, I came to affirm our Wesleyan-Arminian theological heritage. I find that our Wesleyan-Arminian tradition gave me a better perspective on the Bible, human experience, and the mystery of divine grace and human response. I find our Holiness-Pentecostal understanding of the Bible provides a liberating and joyful understanding of the kingdom of God.

In recent months, I've had several IPHC ministers ask me about our Wesleyan-Arminian roots. So, I offer you some resources that I have found particularly fruitful. Enjoy your reading and share with me some of what you are reading!

1. I think the best place to start on John Wesley is Wesley himself, particularly his *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. You can purchase it through your favorite online bookstore or download it at The Wesley Center Online.



2. The Wesley Center online is an excellent starting point for your study of Wesley and Wesleyan thought.

3. The Pentecostal Theological Seminary (PTS) of the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, is providing a wide range of biblical and theological serious scholarship from a Wesleyan-Pentecostal perspective. Several faculty have IPHC roots and connections, including Dr. Cheryl Bridges Johns and Dr. Chris Green.

4. I found Elizabeth Jay's *The Journal of John Wesley—A Selection*, to be an easy read and a concise overview of Wesley's ministry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

5. Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992 edition). This is a major study (more than 600 pages) with detailed notes. Well worth the read.

6. A good introduction to Wesleyan theology is William M. Greathouse and H. Ray Dunning, *An Introduction to Wesleyan Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1989).

7. Randy L. Maddox provides insight into Wesleyan theology and life with *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994).

8. The late Thomas C. Oden has written extensively about Wesley and Wesleyan theology. I recommend his four-volume series *John Wesley's Teachings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014). I had the privilege of a lunch meal with Dr. Oden

a few years ago in Oklahoma City. We had an engaging conversation regarding IPHC Wesleyan roots and contemporary Methodist thought.

9. *John Wesley: A Biography* by Stephen Tomkins is an interesting read, providing a look at some of the quirks of Wesley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003).

10. An excellent overview comparing Arminian and Calvinist thought is *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* by Roger Olson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press,

2006). I found this to be a fair, non-polemical assessment of Arminianism compared to Calvinism.

11. The IPHC has excellent resources on holiness on our website. I draw your attention to Noel Brooks, *Scriptural Holiness*, and the PDF of J. Holmes, *God's Provision for Holiness*. More recent studies include IPHC ministers Paul Evans, *Holiness Reconsidered* (Xulon Press) and Terry Tramel, *The Beauty of the Balance: Toward an Evangelical-Pentecostal Theology* (Franklin Springs, GA: LifeSprings Resources, 2012). ■



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# ABSTINENCE



## Doctrine and Polity Committee Addresses Strong Drink

by FRENCH ARRINGTON

Late last year, members of the Church of God Doctrine and Polity (D&P) Committee released a paper with extensive research supporting the Church of God stance on abstinence from beer, wine, and liquors.

**Dr. French Arrington**, chair of the D&P Committee, authored the paper, which addresses the subject. He references multiple biblical instances of the negative aspects of imbibing and offers compelling evidence for upholding the doctrine of abstinence—a long-held teaching in the Church of God.

The Doctrine and Polity Committee exists to routinely examine the belief statements, doctrines, and polity in place within the structure of the denomination. The group considers amendments reflective of modern culture and offers recommendations for modifications, employing extensive biblical research.

Serving alongside Arrington is a group of ministers, scholars and academicians. They include Dr. Terry Cross and Dr. Jerald Daffe, professors in the School of Religion at Lee University; Dr. David Han, Dr. Lee Roy Martin, and Dr. Steven

Land, professors at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary; and Dr. Víctor Pagán, retired leader with Church of God World Missions. Second Assistant General Overseer Dr. J. David Stephens serves as executive liaison.

*“It is vital to our movement to regularly examine our polity structure,” Stephens stated. “In addition, our constituency is constantly bombarded with inquiries about our beliefs that remain biblically sound, but may become questioned in light of an ever-changing lifestyle and culture. In this paper, Dr. Arrington has brilliantly defended one of our most frequently criticized cultural stances.”*

*The following is the document, BEER, WINE, AND LIQUORS: TOTAL ABSTINENCE in its entirety (NOTE: this document is available in Spanish by clicking on the Spanish tab at [www.churchofgod.org](http://www.churchofgod.org)):*

**H**ISTORICALLY, the Church of God has been committed to sanctification and holiness (uncompromised devotion to God) and has maintained that the Bible strongly prohibits the use of beer, wine, and liquors. An early doctrinal statement of the church’s teaching urges “total abstinence from all liquor and strong drink” (*Church of God Evangel*, August 15, 1910, p. 3). Emphasizing this teaching, the Church of God Practical Commitments reminds us of our liberty in Christ (John 8:32, 36; Rom. 6:14; 8:2 NKJV) and counseled us not to put ourselves under bondage (Gal. 5:1). “Therefore, a Christian must totally

abstain from all alcoholic beverages and other habit-forming and mood-altering chemical substances . . .” (Minutes of the 75th International General Assembly, 2014, p. 28). Our main focus is on what the Bible teaches about total abstinence from all social, recreational, or other uses of alcohol.

## **THE BIBLE AND ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES**

Both the Old and the New Testaments employ a number of words for alcoholic drink. The major Hebrew words are *yayin* (wine) and *shekar* (strong drink), and the Greek is *oinos* (wine). Leading Hebrew and Greek lexicons indicate that these biblical terms refer to drinks that have some alcoholic content. Even sweet or new wine (Hebrew: *asis* and Greek: *gleukos*), which was probably still fermenting and thought by many to be mere grape juice, can be intoxicating (Isa. 49:26).

## **ALCOHOL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

The first example of the evil effects of alcohol in the Old Testament is the story of Noah (Gen. 9:20-27). In this story, drunkenness led to shame and family tragedy, as well as a curse placed upon Canaan. Wine was also a factor in incest that led to the pregnancies of Lot’s daughters (Gen. 19:31-38). We also see cautions regarding alcohol in Solomon’s writings; for example, “Wine is a mockery, strong drink is raging; and whoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Prov. 20:1; cf. 23:29-35).

In summary, the Old Testament opposes the use of alcohol for these major reasons:

- Strong drink distorts the perception of reality and impairs performance (Isa. 29:7).
- Strong drink interferes with sound judgment and the capacity to make responsible decisions (Lev. 10:9-11).
- Strong drink weakens spiritual and moral sensitivities (Isa. 5:11-12).
- Strong drink can lead to addiction (Prov. 23:35).

These reasons are sufficient grounds for Christians to abstain and not even consider drinking.

## ALCOHOL IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament also speaks about the grave effects of alcoholic beverage (*oinos*, wine). Many references to wine (except its medicinal use in 1 Tim. 5:23 and a few others) are strong warnings or prohibitions against its use. A powerful indictment against wine is in Eph. 5:18, where the use of alcoholic drink has the potential of causing wild and disorderly conduct. The warning is that being under the control of strong drink is totally incompatible with being filled with the Holy Spirit.

In his inspired wisdom, Paul establishes spiritual requirements for those holding office in the Church of our Lord. He instructs the church leaders, whether pastors (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7) or deacons (1 Tim. 3:8), regarding the consumption of alcohol to be “blameless,” strongly implying total abstinence is the biblical standard.

Therefore, such passages should not be interpreted to allow church leaders to drink alcoholic beverages in moderation. In Paul’s day, wine was one of the safest liquids to drink. At that time, people often suffered from parasites and other health ailments because of drinking contaminated water. Wine was a mixed drink with several parts of it water, and therefore different from the wine consumed today. The Greeks, the Jews, and the early church fathers left no doubt that “wine” meant wine mixed with water (Robert H. Stein, “Wine Drinking in New Testament Times,” *Christianity Today*, June 20, 1975, pp. 9-11). No longer is drinking water a health problem in much of the world, especially in developed countries. In America today, there is no need for alcoholic beverages to be used for health purposes. In ancient times, the drinking of wine was a safety measure.

Another argument against moderate drinking and for total abstinence is that the New Testament calls Christians to sobriety (*napho* 1 Thess. 5:1-11; 2 Tim. 4:5; 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:7) and temperance (*naphalios*, 1 Tim. 3:2, 11; Titus 2:2). (The words: *napho*, *naphalios*, *enapho* are found in Otto Baurfeind, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4, trans. by Geoffrey Bromiley). Though these passages do not refer only to alcohol as causing impairment, they certainly include it. Paul’s advice does not justify social or recreational drinking. Frequently, the Bible calls believers to a lifestyle contrary to the ungodly and undisciplined culture (cf. Luke 21:34-36; Rom. 13:12-14; Gal. 5:19-24).

We should remember that Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach (1 Tim. 5:23). This advice Paul gave could well indicate that Timothy practiced total abstinence. If Timothy drank wine, even in moderation, there would have been no need for Paul to instruct him to use some wine for health purposes. It should not be forgotten that in Bible times, medicines were very rare and few medical aids were available to treat human ailments. Since wine was readily available, it is understandable why it was used for medicine. In the first century, the alcohol content of wine was typically about two to six percent. Today, alcoholic drinks are far more potent (A.R.S. Kennedy, "Wine and Strong Drink," *Dictionary of the Bible*). Even so, one could overdo the drinking of diluted wine, as some of the biblical characters likely did (Gen. 9:20-27; 19:30-38).

## **JESUS AND STRONG DRINK**

On one occasion, Jesus contrasted Himself with John the Baptist. He said, "For John came neither eating nor drinking and they (the Pharisees) say, 'He has a demon!' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard'" (Matt. 11:18-19). He did not offer an apology for His behavior. He had done nothing for which to apologize.

When one hears the use of alcohol discussed, reference is usually made to Jesus' miracle of turning water into wine at Cana (John 2:1-11). Does this miracle indicate that Jesus approved of the consumption of

alcohol? Before we reach a conclusion, we need to look at the features of this event from several angles:

- We cannot be certain that what Jesus created had alcoholic content. The headmaster of the feast was impressed with what Jesus produced, declaring, "Every man serves the good wine first and when men have drunk freely, then that which is poorer; but you have kept the good wine until now" (2:10). His comment was probably on how good the wine tasted, that is, its quality, not on the alcoholic content.

- The primary purpose of the miracle was to manifest Jesus' glory (v. 11). To say that the Son of God showed forth his glory by producing gallons of intoxicating wine seems to go far off base. The miracle manifested Christ's sovereignty over the natural world and his power to transform the lives of people.

- The focus of the miracle was on its spiritual significance, not on the wine. John described it as a "sign" which drew attention to the saving power of Jesus (2:11) and indicated that there was much more to the miracle than to provide the wedding guests with something to drink.

- John presents the wedding as a sober event in tone, not telling what happened after Jesus did the miracle. The account closes without any hint that the wedding feast turned into a drunken spree.

- There is no indication that Jesus drank any of the wine produced by the miracle. Jesus knew well the teaching of the Old

Testament on strong drink (Prov. 23:29-35; Hab. 2:15; Amos 2:8, 12; 4:1).

There is no proof that Jesus ever drank alcohol. Sound interpretation of Holy Scripture avoids promoting a practice based on silence.

## **MAKING THE DECISION FOR TOTAL ABSTINENCE**

Because of the effects of drinking alcoholic beverages, the Bible is against drinking alcohol (Prov. 23:29-35). In fact, in the New Testament, there appears to be a clear movement toward the rejection of the use of alcohol and for total abstinence. Such a movement is known as the “biblical process.” For example, in the New Testament, we can see the significance of the biblical process in reference to the actual drink used in the Lord’s Supper. When Jesus instituted the Supper, he did not use the term “wine” (*oinos*). Rather he spoke of “the fruit of the vine” (Matt. 26:26-27; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20). Furthermore, Paul speaks of “the cup” when referring to the beverage used in the Supper (1 Cor. 10:16, 21; 11:23-28). The point is, it is very significant that there is no reference in Scripture to wine in connection with the Lord’s Supper. Does this suggest something about Jesus’ and Paul’s attitude regarding strong drink?

In light of the teaching of the Bible, here are four compelling biblical principles for Christians to abstain from all alcoholic beverages.

1. *The principle of Christ’s lordship* (1 Cor. 6:20). Christians are free, but not free to do whatever they want. They belong to Christ and should put forth every effort to honor His lordship in their lives.

2. *The principle of edifying others.* Paul’s advice is “Let all things be done for edification” (1 Cor. 14:26; cf. 10:23). Christians are to avoid any behavior (including drinking) that influences others to engage in activities that may be to their spiritual and physical detriment.

3. *The principle of the proper treatment of the body.* The Christian’s body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Whatever Christians do against their bodies affects the residence of the Holy Spirit and God’s creative masterpiece. The body is sacred and is destined for resurrection (1 Cor. 6:13ff.).

Some argue that there are health benefits in wine. Researchers from Harvard Medical School report that wine has anti-aging properties; but rather than being from the alcoholic content, the anti-aging properties are the resveratrol in the red skins of the grapes ([www.google.com/health+benefits+of=wine+](http://www.google.com/health+benefits+of=wine+)). Moreover, medical authorities remind us that alcohol has significant adverse health effects.

4. *The principle of doing all to God’s glory.* Paul says, “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). Whatever activity a Christian engages in—all must be to God’s glory. There is no glory for God in the

pursuit of pleasure that has no regard for the detrimental influence it has on others and oneself. It is inconceivable that God approves of the use of alcohol. Living for the glory of God includes the practice of total abstinence.

## CONCLUSION

Even if the Bible were to have said nothing against drinking, the tremendous toll the use of strong drink has taken on people is a clear indication that abstinence is the only risk-free practice. Christians have a moral responsibility to be examples in lifestyle and to consider how they can best serve and edify others. For us as believers, the most important argument against drinking should be, "What does the Lord say?" According to the Bible, God will hold all Christians responsible for their behavior (Rom. 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:12-13; 2 Cor. 5:10). Therefore, what really counts is what God thinks about our behavior.

We, the credentialed ministers and lay members of the Church of God, must follow Biblical teaching and not consume beer, wine, liquor, or any alcoholic beverage. It is imperative that we practice total abstinence for the sake of others, for the sake of the Gospel, for the sake of ourselves, and for the sake of God's glory. For these reasons and others, the Church of God came together in the 1948 General Assembly and, guided by the sole authority the Bible, that body of believers adopted the Statements of Faith,

# Whatever Christians do against their bodies affects the residence of the Holy Spirit and God's creative masterpiece.

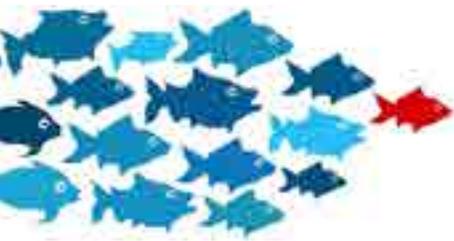
reaffirming its earlier stand on the doctrine of total abstinence from alcohol. The Church of God stands against the use of all alcoholic beverages with the prayer that the behavior of God's people will aid the Church of God in doing its part in finishing the Great Commission. ■

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

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- Fingarette, Herbert. *Heavy Drinking: The Myth of Alcoholism as a Disease*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988.
- Jaeggli, Randy. *Christians and Alcohol: A Scripture Case for Abstinence*. Greenville, South Carolina: Bob Jones University Press, 2014.
- Shaw, Mark. *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective*. ISBN-13: 9781885904683, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), 2008

# FIVE CLEAR MARKS OF A MATURE LEADER

by BRANDON COX



## 1 2

**Y**OUR BODY'S physical maturity typically peaks in early adulthood, but your spiritual maturity will keep growing even into eternity.

If you serve in any leadership capacity for very long, you're going to have to grow in maturity over time to be able to handle all the new challenges and changing seasons of leadership.

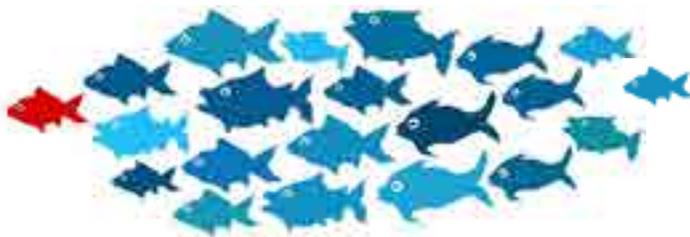
We often think of great leaders as charismatic, inspirational, and naturally talented, but what does the heart of a mature leader look like? Here are five signs.

### **MATURE LEADERS UNDERSTAND HOW TO FOLLOW.**

A mature leader understands how to follow leadership and responds with gracious obedience to leadership. He doesn't have to be in the driver's seat all the time. Before Peter and the other apostles were ready to lead the fledgling church, they first needed to learn about humility and obedience to Jesus, their Master.

### **MATURE LEADERS CARE ABOUT THE SMALL STUFF.**

Jesus talked about the Father's willingness to give greater leadership capacity and influence to those who were faithful in the little things first. Great leaders have often invested a lot of time and energy into getting the little things right long before reaching the stage or the C-suite.



*Brandon Cox has been a pastor since he was 19 and has served churches large and small, including serving as a pastor at Saddleback Church. Currently, he is planting a purpose-driven church in northwest Arkansas. (This article originally appeared on charismanews.com. Used with permission)*

# 3

## **MATURE LEADERS ARE ALL ABOUT PEOPLE.**

A mature leader values people over position, relationships over rules, and connections over control. In other words, the mature leader is far more concerned about relationships with people than the leadership task itself. Even the task-oriented “high D” leaders learn to be intentional about putting people first.

# 4

## **MATURE LEADERS DEFLECT CREDIT TO WHOM IT IS DUE.**

A mature leader doesn't thrive on receiving credit, but celebrates when others receive it.

# 5

## **MATURE LEADERS BUILD ON THE WORK OF OTHERS.**

A mature leader has roots, leans on experience, values input, stands on the shoulders of giants, and listens *at least* twice as much as he speaks. This is why we say so often that not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers. Leaders learn wisdom and apply it.

In other words, maturing leaders know how to follow, to listen, to learn, and to love people, and they will patiently invest the time and collect the experience necessary to become proficient in those practices.



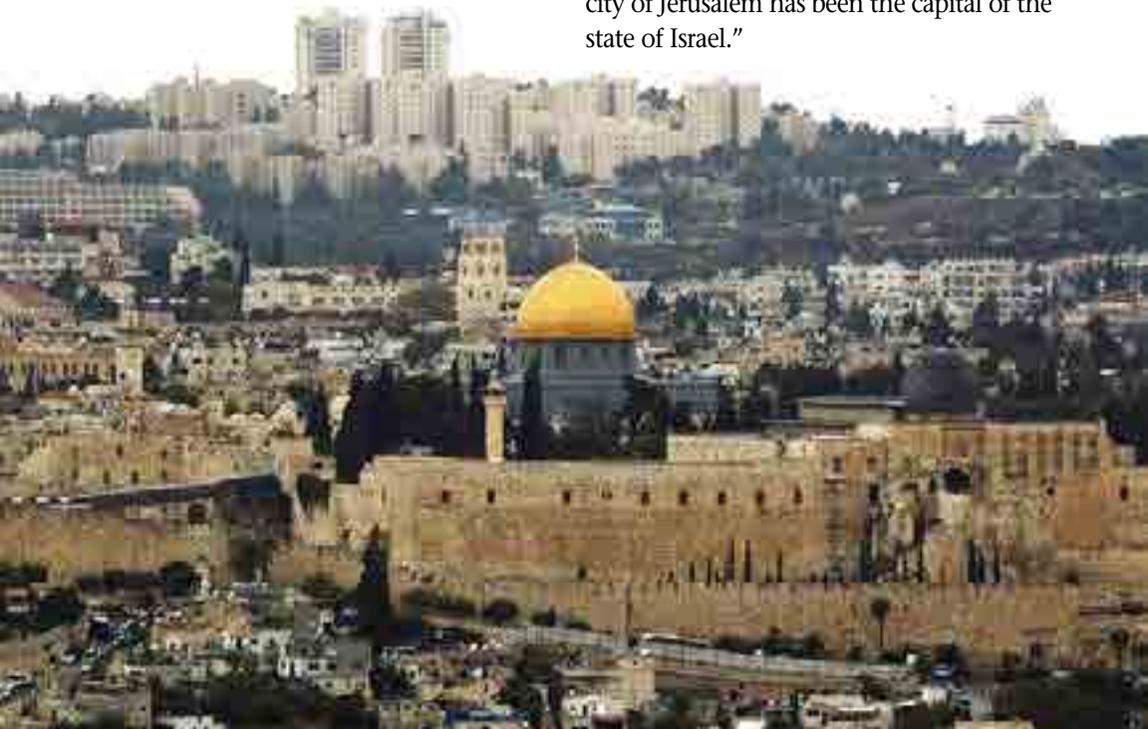
# THE BIBLICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF RECOGNIZING JERUSALEM AS ISRAEL'S CAPITAL

by JENTEZEN FRANKLIN

**O**N WEDNESDAY, Dec. 6, 2017, there was a significant spiritual shift in the universe as the U.S. President Donald Trump reaffirmed and formally declared that the United States will recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. This is the first and most necessary step toward another major milestone, moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem.

While it has been the practice of some to insist on international determination

over this topic, it is Israel's right to decide the location of her capital as was spiritually declared by King David. It was then legally documented in 1950 when the Israeli Knesset passed the Jerusalem Law, and declared Jerusalem to be the eternal, undivided capital of the state of Israel. Declaring Jerusalem to be Israel's capital would not itself mark a change in American law. In 1995, Democrat President Bill Clinton signed a statute declaring, "Since 1950, the city of Jerusalem has been the capital of the state of Israel."



Naming the city of Jerusalem the capital of Israel is not just a political right of Israel, it is also of great theological importance to Christians worldwide, and certainly to the churches I pastor. Christianity begins in Jerusalem, serving as the context for Jesus' life and earthly ministry. Jerusalem is the city where Jesus was crucified on a cross, laid in a tomb, rose from the grave, and showed Himself to many others over a 40-day period. It is the city where many believe Abraham brought Isaac up Mt. Moriah and passed God's test of faith and the city where King Solomon built the magnificent temple, declaring it a house of prayer for all nations. It is also the city Isaiah envisioned as the world's center where the nations would beat their swords into plowshares and learn war no more. It is the city where Jesus wept.

The significance of Jerusalem to Christians, however, cannot be separated from the significance of Jerusalem to the Jewish people. Their history is our history. We are intertwined through our Old Testament Scriptures and spiritual legacy. Their biblical examples are our biblical examples, and we share this heritage in Jerusalem as our spiritual capital, while Israel also legally proclaims it as her national capital. Their national history has become our spiritual history.

We pray for the peace of Jerusalem, as Scripture implores us to do, and we trust her peace and prosperity, not to man-made institutions and international efforts, but

to the God of all peace, and to the greatest Jew to have ever lived—Jesus Christ.

There is a strong possibility that many in our congregations will have seen this story as breaking news and be left to themselves to try to understand what it means to the evangelical church. Below is a brief, easy-to-understand fact sheet that you can use to help your congregation understand the significance of this major announcement.

### **NAMING JERUSALEM THE CAPITAL OF ISRAEL FACT SHEET:**

#### **Historical Significance:**

- The history of Israel dates back to Genesis and the story of Abram who would become Abraham.
- Abraham was promised a land by God (the Promised Land), and that land was Canaan and would later become Israel (Genesis 12—fulfilled when descendant Joshua took the land in Joshua 6 when the walls came down).
- David declared Jerusalem to be the capital of Israel (City of David—2 Sam. 5).

#### **Political Significance:**

- Legally documented in 1950, the Jerusalem Law was passed by the Israel Knesset, declaring Jerusalem to be the eternal, undivided capital of the state of Israel.
- In 1995, Democrat President Bill Clinton signed a statute stating, "Since 1950, the city of Jerusalem has been the capital of the state of Israel."

### Theological Importance:

- Christianity began in Jerusalem, serving as the context for Jesus' life and earthly ministry
- The city where Jesus was crucified on a cross
- The city where He was laid in a tomb
- The city where He rose from the grave
- The city where He showed Himself to many others over a forty-day period
- The city where many believe Abraham brought Isaac up Mt. Moriah and passed God's test of faith
- The city where King Solomon built the magnificent Temple, declaring it a house of prayer for all nations
- The city Isaiah envisioned as the world's center where the nations would

beat their swords into plowshares, and learn war no more

- The city where Jesus wept

### Shared Significance With Orthodox Jews:

- The significance of Jerusalem to Christians cannot be separated from the significance of Jerusalem to the Jewish people
- Their history is our history
- We are intertwined through our Old Testament scriptures and spiritual legacy. Their biblical examples are our biblical examples, and we share this heritage in Jerusalem as our spiritual capital while Israel also legally proclaims it as her national capital. Their national history has become our spiritual history.



### FINAL THOUGHTS

Naming the city of Jerusalem the capital of Israel is not just a political right of Israel, it is the right of all nations. It is also of great theological importance to Christians worldwide, and certainly to the churches I pastor. Please join me in praying for the peace of Jerusalem, as Scripture implores us to do, and we trust her peace and prosperity, not to man-made institutions and international efforts, but to the God of all peace, and to the greatest Jew to have ever lived—Jesus Christ. ■

*Jentezen Franklin is the senior pastor of Free Chapel in Gainesville, Georgia, with five campuses nationwide. (Source: Charisma News)*

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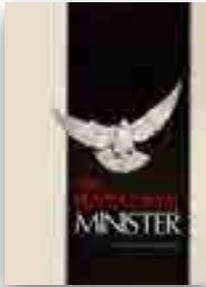
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*The Pentecostal Minister Flashback will reprint articles from the forerunner of Engage. The articles will be presented as they were originally written, so dates and cultural references will reflect the period. However, most of the advice and research is still applicable to ministry today.*

# Pentecostal Minister

# FLASH BACK

## SINGLES AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

By Raymond F. Culpepper • Fall 1989

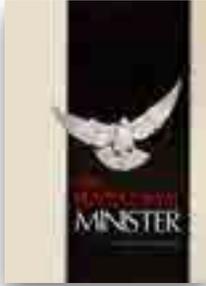
**T**HE CARTOON PICTURED a busy intersection on a hot afternoon with cars bumper to bumper, horns honking, drivers anxious, and one lone pedestrian standing at the crosswalk. Suddenly, the pedestrian signal flashed on the opposite corner. Instead of the usual “Walk” or “Don’t Walk,” the message was, “Good Luck!”

In many respects, that cartoon accurately illustrates the message of the church to the divorced, separated, widowed, and never-married. It is not that the church does not care, but that the church sometimes does not know how to care.

I heard the humorous story of a paratrooper on his first jump. He was told by the instructor to leap from the airplane, count to ten, then pull the rip cord. In the event the parachute did not open, he was told to pull the second cord for the auxiliary parachute. After pulling both cords with no success, the young paratrooper saw a flash on the ground.

A man on the ground began ascending through the air. The two men passed in mid-air, one going up, and one coming down.

The paratrooper yelled, “Say, Fellow, do you know anything about a parachute?”



S – Story  
I – Issues  
N – Need  
G – Gospel  
L – Leadership  
E – Enemies  
S – Start

The man going up replied, “No, do you know anything about a Coleman stove?”

That is about it for the church and singles: We are involved, but we are often frustrated with the reality left out of the instruction manuals. It is my purpose to discuss singles ministry in the context of the local church. I will use the acrostic SINGLES as an outline.

## STORY

Singles ministry for me is first a story. The singles story at Metro, (the church that I pastor) started in a Birmingham coffee shop in 1982. J. Randle Weeks and I met to discuss a music ministry need at our church. After offering him the position of music minister, Randle shared with me his burden for single adults. “I will accept the position as music minister,” he committed, “and I’ll do my best, but my call is to minister to single adults. If I come,” he continued, “my burden will come with me.”

Randle prepared me by saying, “If you are serious about supporting a ministry to singles, settle your theology of divorce, get ready to help hurting people, and don’t let criticism from the church establishment detour you.”

In January 1982, Randle met with four or five singles in a nearby restaurant. A few months later, there were 30 singles, then 40, then 50. Suddenly, our nice comfortable church of about 120 people had been invaded by the never-married, the divorced, the separated, even the widowed.

I found challenges I had not seen before. Some church leaders felt threatened. Some felt overpowered. Others felt superior to all the new people. Still others wanted to close down the singles ministry. There were also, thankfully, still others committed to reaching and loving.

Ready or not, the church lost the “small church” feel where everyone knew everyone else’s children. Change was the order of the day. The singles were there to stay. With them came love, acceptance, and warmth, as well as personality flaws, hang-ups, and hurts.



The singles ministry at Metro was the catalyst for growth. The church became friendlier. The people broke out of their cliques. The singing during the services evolved into a worship experience when singles began worshipping with meaning and involvement. All the old systems were challenged, and a new day dawned.

Now, I am not intending to say that singles ministry will do that for every church, or for that matter, any other church. But what I am saying is, it brought us hurting people, transformed them by God's power, and in the process, revolutionized our church. Change is difficult, and a few who couldn't accept change, eventually left to find another church.

Here is the rest of the story. Five years ago the singles began 4:30 a.m. intercessory prayer, which continues. The singles started discipleship training which has discipled more than 500 individuals, both single and married. The singles have made outstanding leaders in the church in virtually every area.

Today, approximately 15 percent of our congregation (900 to 1,000) is part of BACS (Birmingham Adult Christian Singles). Approximately 15 to 20 percent of our annual receipts (\$900,000 to \$1,000,000) is given by singles.

The bottom line is there have been scores helped, healed, loved, and saved. Metro is much more balanced now in terms of multiple ministries, but singles ministry is the story I love to tell. Singles have demonstrated an invincible love and dedication to God that has been an inspiring example to a growing church.

## ISSUES

The letter *I* in singles represents *issues* faced by single adults. Harold Ivan Smith, a leader in singles ministry, has listed eight key issues faced by contemporary single adults in the United States. Here is a synopsis:

1. Goal Orientation—Single adults often feel a sense of aimlessness and purposelessness. Many feel they are in limbo waiting until marriage and family before ever settling life's goals.
2. Loneliness—While many adults live with companions, children, and pets, singles spend time alone with a television,



stereo, a cat or dog, and two or three magazine subscriptions. Most singles lack meaningful social interaction.

3. **Mystique of marriage**—Marriage is indeed God’s plan and design for fulfilled families, but the false idea that the unmarried are unproductive is a subtle, but prevalent issue.

4. **Morality**—A culture that winks at immorality between consenting adults places real stress on many singles to “sleep around,” while looking for acceptance and trying to meet “physical” needs.

5. **Money**—Single adults for the most part struggle with child support, limited income, and debt.

6. **Health**—Mental, emotional, and physical health all present distinct challenges to single adults.

7. **Identity Crises**—Charting a course through single life is especially challenging while trying to answer questions like: “Who am I, really?” “Why am I here, really?” “What does my future hold, really?”

8. **Discrimination**—Most job and credit applications have questions for the married, single, and divorced. Obviously, one’s attachment to another person makes a difference to employers and credit institutions, as well as some churches.

## NEED

The *N* in singles represents *need*. Let us talk about sheer numbers of single adults in the United States. Recent estimates place the number at more than 60 million. Here is how that categorizes:

- 31,680,000 never-marrieds
- 12,300,000 divorced
- 2,750,000 separated
- 12,980,000 widowed

There are approximately 240 million people in the United States. So basically, one out of four individuals is a single adult. Forty percent of adults are single. Illustrated, that is the combined population of all the southeastern United States (Florida, Georgia, Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky,



Mississippi, and Louisiana) plus the combined population of all of Canada! Six of every ten children born in the 1980s will grow up in a single-parent home.

Between 50 and 60 percent of all advertising is slanted to single adults. By 1992, 50 percent of American adults will be single. In every town, there is a divorcee who needs acceptance and respect. In every town, there is a widow or widower who needs to be appreciated. In every town, there is an unattached single adult who counts for something great. Tragically, many churches just say, “Good Luck.”

## GOSPEL

The letter *G* represents *gospel*—good news. The essence of singles ministry in a local church is good news:

- God cares!
- Jesus loves!
- The church reaches!

The gospel says to singles, “The God who knows you best, loves you most.” Without the gospel (Romans 1:16) a singles ministry is only a club. But with the gospel, the bondage is broken and there is reason to the rhyme. The gospel sets people free. I have seen homosexuals and bisexuals delivered. I have seen individuals with multiple personalities made whole. I have seen rejects reclaimed, alcoholics and drug addicts transformed. The gospel—the good news that accepts us as we are and transforms us into Christ’s image—is the very essence of singles ministry.

A few weeks ago, I was privileged to baptize in water a new single adult convert who was completing his fourth hitch in prison for theft, robbery, and larceny. As we left the baptistery, he paused, looked into my face, and said, “Praise God! The thief is dead. The criminal is dead. I’m a new creature, the old is gone, and the new is me!”

The gospel is indeed for singles, as well as families. Jesus was single. Paul, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Henrietta Mears, Francis Asubry, and Bill Gothard were all singles!



## LEADERSHIP

The *L* in singles represents *leadership*. A local church cannot have an effective singles ministry without leadership, but how do we get it? Christ's model for leadership was simple.

First, pray in the laborers. Pray the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into the harvest (Matthew 9:31).

Second, disciple the laborers. Three years were required for Christ to disciple His laborers. It was and is time consuming, but essential. One-to-one training is the key.

It is often in the translation of the dream into reality that we and our leaders have the biggest challenge. It is essential for the leader to transform the vision into a set of accomplishable tasks. It is easy to have a vision: The difficulty lies in the long process required in realization. There are three stages to a vision.

1. The Vision Stage—Morale is high, obstacles are minimized, faith is strong, and impatience is the order of the day. Here, the vision seems so real we “feel” its realization.

2. The Aggravation Stage—Motives are purified, faith is tried, patience is developed, spiritual warfare is waged, obstacles loom, and process is the order of the day. Here the vision often falls to the ground and dies, thus allowing God to raise it up to fruitfulness (John 12:24). The bigger the vision, the longer the aggravation.

3. The Realization Stage—The dream starts to become reality, the vision is enlarged, faith is strengthened, and humility is the order of the day. Even here, a sense of process must be maintained.

As well as facing the challenges of vision, the leader must also deal with the sociological aspects of a new group. Years ago, Dr. Paul L. Walker shared with me the four phases through which a new group passes. I have witnessed these phases operate in the planting of our church, the start-up of BACS, and virtually every new venture or ministry we have undertaken over the past nine years. Here they are!

Phase I—Forming—when the group sees the goal, and commits to pursue it.

Phase II—Storming—when the group settles the leadership and direction issues. This stage is a must and is normal.



Discouragement and disillusionment come easily here. Only the strong in commitment and vision survive this as leaders.

Phase III—Norming—when one group begins to be comfortable in specific roles. This is the “holding your own” phase, when God deepens the foundation.

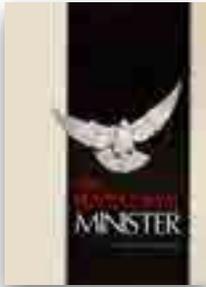
Phase IV—Performing—when the group begins to realize the goal visualized in Phase I. This is the “it’s happening” phase.

If you are a pastor feeling the need for a singles ministry, here is a brief list of things I have found helpful.

1. Pray with your singles leader regularly.
2. Ask your singles leader to share his vision with you, and you do the same, on a regular basis.
3. Keep lines of communication open. Do not hesitate to discuss sticky issues privately.
4. Lead with love and burden.
5. Refuse to be jealous if your singles group grows initially faster than your church is growing. The singles ministry is an extension of your ministry. Time will balance your church.
6. Always remain Kingdom conscious without pushing denominational loyalty on new singles.
7. Give your singles group enough autonomy to function as an interdenominational ministry, if necessary. BACS is incorporated as an interdenominational ministry. This gives the singles of our city a large door through which they can walk. Again, the purpose of a singles ministry is ministry first, church growth second. Time has proven that some people involved in BACS, for varied reasons, will never be part of Metro Church. However, others have been turned our way, and growth has resulted. The people at BACS and I have an understanding and agreement that ministry to the individual is the priority.
8. Preach sermons that reinforce love, acceptance, and forgiveness.

## ENEMIES

The *E* in singles represents *enemies*. Ministry demands awareness of our enemies. Satan always comes to divide, devour,



duplicate, and deceive. He is our greatest enemy. The only methods for handling his devices are to be intelligent, vigilant, diligent, and militant (2 Corinthians 1:11; 1 Peter 5:8; Hebrews 11:6; Ephesians 6:10-18).

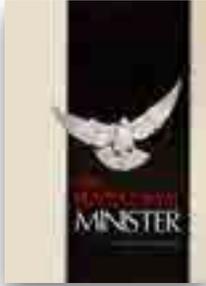
A personal stigma regarding divorce on the part of the pastor, singles leader, or church leaders can be an enemy. I often wonder how God views people in our churches who have committed sexual sins with more than one partner before marriage who finally get saved, then married—but who cannot accept divorced people.

Divorcees in particular are not second-class believers. I have never known a person to marry with the intention of divorce. But, we ask, how can we love the divorcee, yet hate the divorce? The answer—the same way we hate cancer, but love the person cancer takes from us.

A pastor friend shared with me that he regularly preached against divorce, leading a crusade against its evils. One Sunday afternoon after he had delivered just such a blistering message, the Lord spoke to him. In a shocking way, the Lord said, “The way you preached this morning you must think the divorced people in your church asked for a divided home, wanted the hurt, and invited the trauma. You must think they planned it all. Things would be different in your life if you were in their shoes. Why don’t you stop beating and start loving?” That message changed his preaching approach.

Love is not license. Acceptance is not approval. Forgiveness is not compromise. Churches are not museums where saints go to be on display; they are hospitals, emergency wards, and trauma centers where the bruised and beaten receive a healing balm.

Another enemy of singles ministry is discouragement on the part of the leaders. The nature of a single is detachment and aloneness. It is therefore difficult to commit to regular attendance, long-term relationships, and deep spiritual commitment. Without an understanding of this aspect of the single, the leader is destined to discouragement. The leader must consistently model a positive attitude and leadership style that places the



person before the program. The rewards will be spiritual commitment and consistency on the part of those who follow.

There are various other enemies that threaten your ministry:

- Competition among singles for control of the group
- Rejection by some church members
- Copying other churches without tailoring your ministry to your locale
- Fear of what your peers will say about the “kind” of church you have
- A lack of balance between the social and spiritual needs of individuals (Large regular doses of social interaction and fellowship are extremely helpful.)

### ONE LAST WORD

I discovered that age difference is not a major problem among singles. The common denominator that ties them together is singleness. What a sight it is to see the older widows and widowers laughing and sharing responsibility with younger singles—all brought together under the banner and through the bond of the love of Jesus.

Is singles ministry for every church? Probably, yes. Some ministries will evolve into thoroughly organized groups with weekly Bible studies, a telephone hotline, a discipling leader, a full-time director, a pastoral care director, a full-time secretarial staff, a full-time office, officers, social and spiritual committees, and leaders.

Other groups, however, will minister effectively through once-a-month social activities, Bible studies, and discussions. The point is to find out who your singles are (widows, widowers, never-marrieds, separated, and divorced). Then pray about their needs and select a leader.

That brings us to the last S in singles—START. ■

*At the time of this article's publication, **Raymond F. Culpepper** was senior pastor of a church he founded in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1980 with 18 members. He had a paid staff of 15 persons and a congregation of nearly 900 people.*



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Hurricane Irma



Hurricane Maria

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## LEGAL NOTES

Dennis W. Watkins

# Child Abuse Reporting Laws: A New Era—PART 1

**T**HIS IS SOMEWHAT of a sweeping statement to begin an article with, but I think that we are “living in a new day” when it comes to the subject of churches and child abuse reporting laws.

This subject has been very sensitive prior to now, but it has intensified over the last numerous months. Let’s take a look at how this has developed.

## THE “BISHOP FINN” CASE

Bishop Robert Finn was a Roman Catholic bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Kansas City-Saint Joseph, where he served for more than ten years (2005–2015). Bishop Finn was not guilty of abusing any children, but in 2010, he became aware that one of the priests under his church authority had taken inappropriate pictures of children and stored them on his computer. Bishop Finn did not report this to the authorities, but instead tried to deal with the priest internally. Without Bishop Finn’s approval, church representatives reported the abuse to the authorities.

Because of his failure to report this known abuse, Bishop Finn was charged with the crime of failure to report suspected child abuse. He was convicted in 2012 and sentenced to two years of probation. He was the first Catholic bishop in the United States to suffer this type of penalty, and he resigned his position in 2015.

## STATE V. LAUREL DELAWARE CONGREGATION (DELAWARE SUPERIOR COURT 2016)

This case involved a church and elders in a Jehovah’s Witnesses Church in Seaford, Delaware, who learned of an inappropriate relationship between an adult female member of the church with a minor male member of the church. The elders investigated the matter and excommunicated both parties under the rules of the church. However, contrary to Delaware law, the elders did not report the matter to the authorities. In May 2014 the Department of Justice filed a civil lawsuit against the local church *and* the elders who learned of the abuse. It is important to

There are increasingly harsh penalties for failure to report child abuse, and it is possible that these types of penalties will only increase in prevalence around the country.

note that the elders were sued personally, as well as in their official capacities.

In their defense of the charges against them, the church officials cited the “clergy-penitent privilege,” but the Superior Court of Delaware eventually ruled that the privilege does not protect church officials who fail to report child abuse, and the case against them was allowed to proceed. The Department of Justice sought a \$10,000 penalty and other costs and fees against the church and elders.

### WHERE ARE WE ON THIS SUBJECT?

I am of the opinion that the events I have described have brought us to a critical juncture, because we have witnessed the imposition of penalties, whether criminal or civil, against both Catholic *and* Protestant church leaders for failure to report child abuse.

What are the possible penalties here? Such penalties include possible criminal charges and civil liability (the payment of monetary damages), but there are other possible problems as well. In some states, the failure to report child abuse will cause the

statute of limitations against civil actions to be “tolled,” or held to be not in effect. Thus, a civil case from many years prior might be brought against a church or person who fails to report child abuse. In short, there are increasingly harsh penalties for failure to report child abuse, and it is possible that these types of penalties will only increase in prevalence around the country.

### PROPER COURSE OF ACTION

I have set out the problem in this article, and in forthcoming articles I will discuss what the proper actions are that churches and church officials should take when confronted with these issues. If you find yourself dealing with this situation, feel free to contact your state overseer/administrative bishop, and we will try to locate assistance in your state. ■

*Dennis W. Watkins is legal counsel for the Church of God. The writer is not engaged in rendering legal or other professional services herein. If legal advice or expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.*



## MONEY MATTERS

Art Rhodes

# Ministerial Housing Allowance, Tax Reform, and Other Financial Matters

**A**S WE CLOSE one year out and start a new year, there are several important financial issues that are facing pastors. Only a few of those issues are addressed here.

### MINISTERIAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE HELD UNCONSTITUTIONAL

As expected, a federal district court judge in Wisconsin has ruled that the ministerial housing allowance violates the Constitution. In a ruling dated October 6, 2017, Judge Barbara Crabb held that Section 107(2) of the Tax Code, the provision that specifically addresses the “cash” ministerial housing allowance, violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, simply because it does not have a secular purpose or effect, and because it singles out “ministers of the Gospel” for special tax treatment not available to others.

The ruling deals only with the housing allowance where ministers are provided

cash to rent or purchase a home, and leaves fully intact, at least for now, the tax-free use of parsonages.

Although Judge Crabb ruled that the ministerial housing allowance was unconstitutional, she did not immediately implement her ruling. Instead, the judge gave all parties the opportunity to submit suggestions on how they believe her ruling should be implemented. While the deadline for those suggestions and recommendations has passed, a final order by the court has not been entered as of mid-December 2017.

Regardless of the implementation of “remedies” by Judge Crabb, the unconstitutional determination will be appealed to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago, continuing a legal battle that ultimately could end up before the U. S. Supreme Court. It is expected that the Church of God International Offices and the Church of God Benefits Board will file a “friend of the court” brief in support of maintaining

While the media and Members of Congress continue to refer to the tax package as “tax reform,” many knowledgeable insiders have started referring to such just as “tax legislation,” fearful that much of the reform promised during the campaign season has been lost in the legislative process.

the housing allowance, for both active and retired ministers, once the case reaches the appellate court.

## TAX REFORM

As of mid-December 2017, much debate continues in Washington over the fate of tax reform. While the media and members of Congress continue to refer to the tax package as “tax reform,” many knowledgeable insiders have started referring to such just as “tax legislation,” fearful that much of the reform promised during the campaign season has been lost in the legislative process.

Several provisions included in either the House or Senate versions, or both, are of concern to church organizations, and we have made Members of Congress aware of those concerns. The provisions include, among others, the following:

- **Catch-up contributions for 403(b) retirement plans:** Under current law, ministers and church-related employees can utilize “catch-up” contributions to their retirement plans to make up for years earlier in their careers when they were unable to make significant contributions because of

more modest salaries. The Senate’s version strikes this provision.

- **Post-employment contributions to 403(b) retirement plans:** Under current law, employers can continue to contribute to the retirement accounts of a minister or church-related employee for up to five years after the end of employment. This ability is removed in the Senate’s version.

- **Moving expense reimbursement:** In both versions, the exclusion from gross income and wages for qualified moving expense reimbursements is repealed. This would have a pronounced impact on ministers who may relocate several times during their career.

- **Employer-provided higher education assistance:** Under the House bill, the current exclusion for employer-provided education assistance would be repealed.

- **Adoption assistance programs:** Under the House bill, the exclusion for employer-provided adoption assistance programs would be repealed. Repealing this exclusion would result in a financial barrier to an important pro-family program.

Staff members from the Church of God Benefits Board have participated in more

than a dozen meetings with members of Congress this year to discuss these issues—and more.

## TRUSTEES FUND RATE FOR 2018

In the recent meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Church of God Benefits Board, the entity charged with managing the Ministers Retirement Plan, the return on the Trustees Fund was set at four percent (4.00%) for 2018.

In a time when fixed return rates remain at a historical low, the Board determined that it was extremely fortunate that the Ministers Retirement Plan can continue to pay at a rate that greatly exceeds the market rate. While the Board has projected the rate for the Trustees Fund to remain at four percent in 2018, it is possible that the rate could change based upon market conditions. If the economy recovers more quickly than anticipated, the rate could be increased. Conversely, if the economy were to falter, the Board could lower the rate during the year if such became necessary.

Participants are also reminded that they may invest in three other options besides the Trustees Fund. The other options are all based upon stock funds and fluctuate with the stock market. Your ability to withstand volatility should be taken into consideration

before making any investment selection. Further, you should always remember that past performance is not a guarantee of future performance.

If you are not a member of the Ministers Retirement Plan, you can join by going to [www.benefitsboard.com](http://www.benefitsboard.com) and clicking on “Join the Plan.” For new participants, the Benefits Board will match dollar-for-dollar the first \$500.00 contributed to your account in 2018.

## ChurchEXCEL

As a reminder, do not forget the new—and FREE—resource website from the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA). The site, entitled ChurchEXCEL, can be accessed at [www.ecfa.church](http://www.ecfa.church). After registering, you will have free access to a library of documents for use by ministers and churches, webinars, tax guides, podcasts, eBooks, and a lot more. Our friends at ECFA do everything with excellence, and we highly recommend this site to all Church of God ministers and churches. ■

*Art Rhodes is president and CEO of the Church of God Benefits Board, Inc. The Board of Trustees and the staff of the Benefits Board are not engaged in rendering financial advice, legal advice, or other financial planning services.*



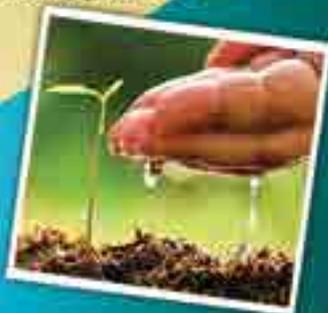
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## POINTS FROM THE PASTORAL STAFF

Melvin Colon

# Equipping Lay Ministers

**P**ASTORAL CARE is a vital part of ministry at Park West Church. Whether it's a funeral service, a visit to the hospital, a 6 a.m. surgery, a visit to the Emergency Room, or a phone call, pastoral care commands attention and time. Our lead pastor, Gerald McGinnis, believes that as a body, we should care for the sick, be with those who suffer, and provide encouragement for those going through a tough time. However, with the demands of life in ministry, we knew we could not be there every time for every one as we hoped to be. In the meantime, God was stirring up people within our congregation.

About four years ago, I was approached by several of our members who wanted to be trained and better equipped for ministry. They wanted to better serve the community of faith. We started looking into ways to equip the body of Christ for ministry. We needed a comprehensive plan to meet the plans of the congregation to

identify, equip, and empower our laity in the ministry of pastoral care.

After prayer and talking with our lead pastor and several others involved in pastoral care, we decided to do a couple of things. First, train laity on how to do hospital and nursing home visits. Second, we also learned that one of our pastoral staff members had become a Stephen minister, and she mentioned that this is exactly what we needed at our church to empower laity to do the work of ministry. Stephen Ministries is dedicated to equipping God's people for ministry. Stephen Ministry congregations equip and empower lay caregivers—called Stephen ministers—to provide high-quality, confidential, Christ-centered care to people who are hurting. They've trained well over 600,000 Stephen ministers and over 12,000 churches throughout North America.

Since 2015, we have trained over 40 laity who felt the calling to "bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2, NRSV). These

These brothers and sisters in Christ minister to our body whether it's through a hospital or home visit, a phone call, providing a meal, or taking someone to a doctor's visit, and in so many other ways.

brothers and sisters in Christ minister to our body whether it's through a hospital or home visit, a phone call, providing a meal, or taking someone to a doctor's visit, and in so many other ways. The Bible calls us as ministers to equip the body, so they can build up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12).

We have been so blessed to see many of our members feel empowered to serve the

body, as well as our community. Trained and empowered laity is making a big difference in the kingdom of God through pastoral care and more. I am honored to be part of what God is doing today! ■

*Melvin Colon is associate pastor of Care at the Park West Church of God in Knoxville, Tennessee.*

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## BOOK REVIEW

Tom George

# GET WELL SOON

by David Cooper

**A** NEW BOOK from the prolific pen of Dr. David Cooper, pastor of Mt. Paran Church of God in Atlanta, Georgia, and published by Pathway Press, shows how to be healthy in every area of your life. The author states that the Word of God, along with nutritional and medical science, shows us the way to get well soon. In the Introduction, Dr. Cooper says:

I have discovered three aspects of life that are inseparably connected—happiness, holiness, and health. These three companions always travel together. We cannot be healthy in one part of our lives and unhealthy in another. The human spirit, mind, and body always function in harmony with each other. What happens in one part affects the other parts in either a good way or a bad way.

The book is a practical guide for finding happiness, holiness, and health by overcoming the things that detract us from these three important aspects of life.

In chapter 1, which is titled, “Do You Want to Get Well?” Dr. Cooper uses the story of the crippled man at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-9) to show that getting

well is more important than being healed. He writes:

What a strange question to ask a disabled man—*Do you want to get well?* It’s downright insulting. The question he asked the man explains why Jesus came into the world—to make us well. Jesus did not ask him, “Do you want to be healed?” or “Do you want to walk?” That is not the question. The real question is, “Do you want to get well?” The distinction is important. Jesus chose the word “well” intentionally instead of the word “healed.” The word well (*hygies*) is the root word of our English word *hygiene*; it means “to make someone clean, whole, sound, and complete.” . . . Jesus came to make us well—not just to heal us. He came to treat the root cause of our problems—not treat our symptoms with temporary relief.

Throughout the remaining chapters of the book, Dr. Cooper discusses various things that prevent us from having happiness, holiness, and health in our lives. He gives a biblical prescription for being well.

*Get Well Soon* is sprinkled with illustrations that add interest and appeal to the reader. Ministers will find material they can adapt to their sermons. This book will be a valuable addition to any minister’s library. Lay readers will find much of interest in this well-written work. The book is an easy read, but has a message that will benefit all who apply it to their life situation.

*Get Well Soon*, ISBN 978-1-59684-961-7, (5.5" x 8.5"), paperback, \$10.99, is available from Pathway Bookstore, [pathwaybookstore.com](http://pathwaybookstore.com), 800-553-8506. ■

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# CHURCH OF GOD HIGHLIGHTS

*News Happening Between September 16, 2017 and January 15, 2018*

## Operation Compassion Responds to Hurricanes

(September 2017) With two Category 5 Hurricanes—Irma and Maria—having decimated several islands in the British and American Virgin Islands within a week of each other, Operation Compassion has started relief efforts to those islands. In addition, to the ongoing recovery effort in Houston and Florida, Operation Compassion is waiting for the all-clear to begin shipping operations to Tortola, St. Lucia, Antigua, and Dominica.

In Tortola, Hurricane Irma destroyed 85 percent of the island, leaving government buildings, schools, hospitals, and homes uninhabitable. Operation Compassion has staged 10, 40-foot sea worthy containers for immediate shipment, focusing on the needs of the people. Containers afterward will focus on supplies for rebuilding, as well as continuing support for families and individuals.

Hurricane Maria slammed head-on into Dominica, leaving a wake of near total destruction in this island nation of 75,000 people. Operation Compassion has two containers staged and ready for the all-clear to begin shipping. In addition, St. Lucia and Antigua was battered and Operation Compassion has staged one container for each, ready to get the all-clear.

The hardest hit received from Maria was Puerto Rico. The American territory received a broadside from Maria, and two days later they



were still receiving rain and flooding from outer bands as the storm moved to the northwest. Crews are currently working to restore emergency power for hospitals and necessary functions of the island.

Currently, Operation Compassion has product staged in Houston from their Cleveland, Tennessee, warehouse that will be flown to Puerto Rico as soon as the airport is open

"The power of the Holy Spirit must mark everything we do," Hill stated. "On June 4, we will celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit. I hope pastors will take advantage of these resources by using the Sundays in May to speak on some aspect of the Holy Spirit, the baptism, or Pentecost."

## International Council Presents Recommendations

(September 2017) The International Council of the Church of God concluded its biennial gathering earlier this week and presented five recommendations to the International Executive Council. All five were discussed and referred to

committee for further study for either implementation or possible presentation to the International General Council of the Church of God next summer.

Proposal number one recommended that the process of examination for the first two levels of credentialing be changed to reflect the international nature of the Church of God. It was explained that the introductory level of credentialing, especially in pioneer countries for the Church of God, could be expedited without compromising integrity of the process.

A second recommendation stated that the maturity of Church of God movements outside the USA be affirmed, encouraged, and recognized through establishing measurable maturity goals and officially certifying the obtaining of such goals. Currently, the Church of God does not have a means of recognizing and giving greater voice to those strong national movements outside the USA who exhibit clear fidelity to the Church of God and have fully developed structures of education, finances, and missions.

A third recommendation addressed increased international synergy. Ensuring that especially those national movements that are mature and aligned with the Church of God have voice and input will bring a new level of missional synergy as an international movement.

A fourth recommendation to the IEC suggested that a theological study group be appointed to engage in deep biblical inquiry and dialogue on relevant topics, and present its work to the International General Assembly.

A final recommendation addressed the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, stating that in alignment with our doctrine and the Church of God emphasis on Pentecostal doctrinal affirmation, this 2018 International General Assembly urges every Church of God congrega-

tion around the globe to renew its commitment to preach, teach, and practice the baptism of the Holy Spirit and to emphasize the operation of the Pentecostal belief on the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit.

## Petersen Elected Moderator of Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa

(October 2017) Dr. Stafford Petersen was recently elected moderator of the Full Gospel Church of God of South Africa. Formerly secretary general of the Full Gospel Church, Petersen replaces Anton van Deventer whose time in the moderator role was completed due to tenure limitations.

Dr. van Deventer was elected as moderator of the Full Gospel Church in 2001, and was re-elected three times. He leaves the office as the longest-serving moderator in the history of the Full Gospel Church.

Since 2016, Petersen has been serving as the Full Gospel Church representative on the International Executive Council of the Church of God. He most recently attended the gatherings of the International Council and International Executive Council in September in Cleveland, Tennessee.



*Tim Hill (left)  
with Stafford  
Petersen*

Petersen was elected during the national convention of the Full Gospel Church held earlier this month. Church of God General Overseer Tim Hill was present for the election.

## General Overseer Releases Crucial Document on FINISH Commitment

(November 2017) Church of God General Overseer Dr. Timothy M. Hill has released a document titled, "The FINISH Commitment: The Essential Alignment of Priorities, Paradigms, and Purpose."

The 54-page bound volume is a summary and expansion of an address delivered to the International Executive Council of the Church of God earlier this year.

Hill's compilation of the volume coincides with the first anniversary of his election as general overseer of the Church of God in July 2016. Reflecting on the first year of casting the vision that became known as the FINISH

Commitment, he said, "I am still overwhelmed at the largeness and even the seeming audacity of such a challenge. To think that a movement like the Church of God could play a significant role in completing the Great Commission boggles my mind, yet it inspires my soul."

The bulk of the document deals with 25 issues, which Hill has categorized into the six categories: Doctrinal Affirmation, Structural Acclimation, Generational Assimilation, Ministerial Activation, Visional Actualization, and Spiritual Acceleration.

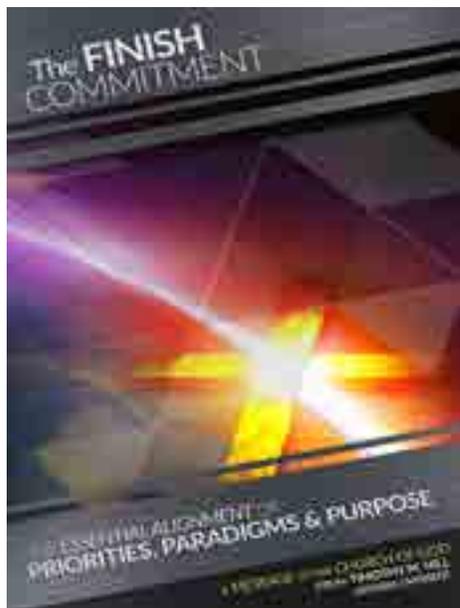
## Founder of MWOA, PCL Bob Pace Passes Away

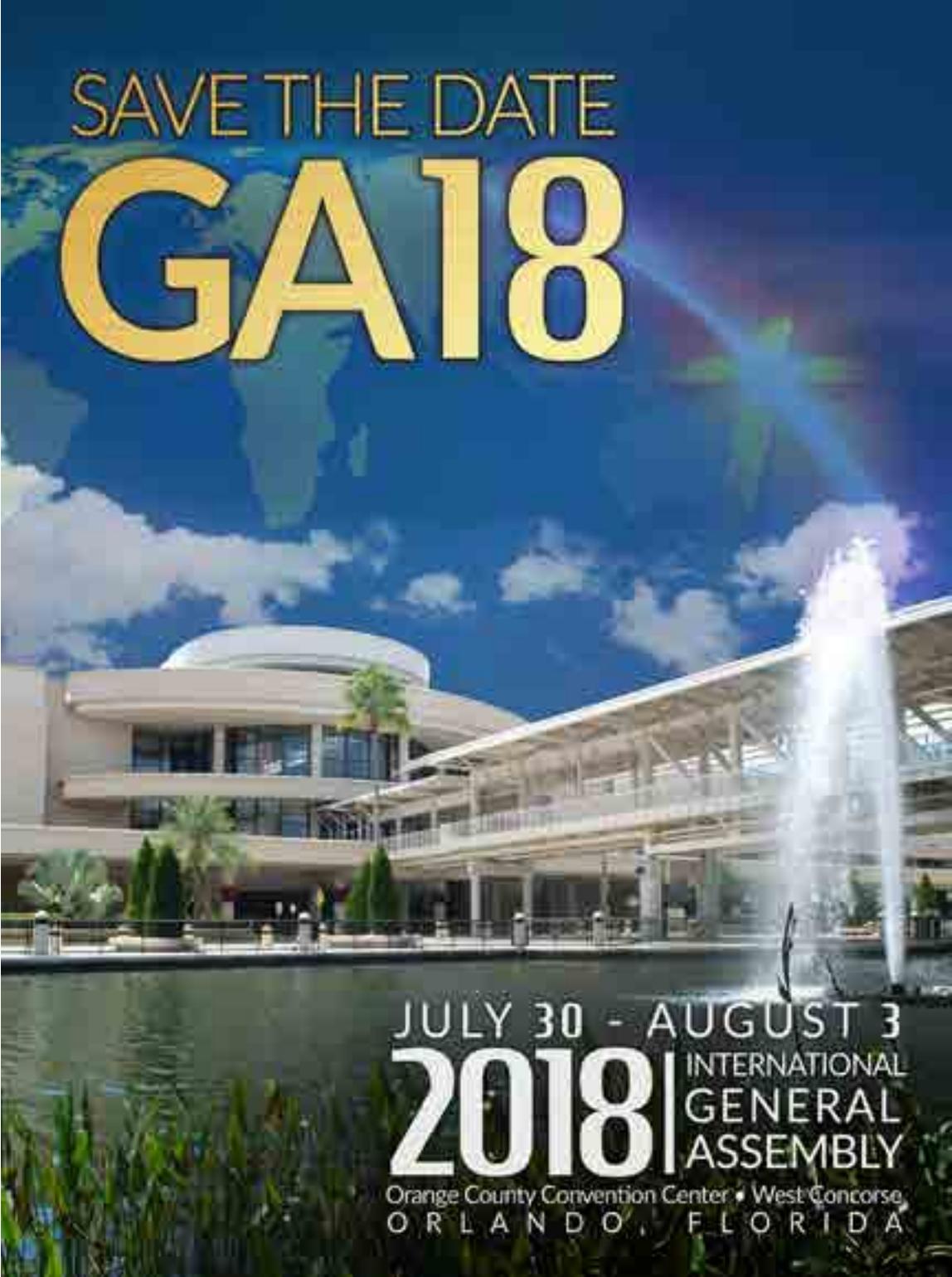
(December 2017) Robert D. (Bob) Pace, Sr., who founded both Men and Women of Action and People for Care and Learning, passed away on Sunday, December 10, 2017.

The two organizations are independent, but have roots in the Church of God when they were founded. Both continue to have a profound impact on the benevolent and disaster relief efforts as both partner with the denomination on numerous projects throughout the year.

"The Church of God has lost a true servant leader with the passing of Bob Pace," stated Church of God General Overseer Tim Hill. "The vision he had to reach the lost and disenfranchised of the world in a practical way will carry on because of his dedicated leadership and untiring service to the kingdom of God."

Pace was the founder and director of Men and Women of Action from 1983 to 2000 when he retired and started People for Care and Learning—a ministry with a primary emphasis on Southeast Asia.





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