

B A P T I S T B I B L E

TRIBUNE

JANUARY 2016



THE VISION ISSUE

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ON THE TABLE Happy New Year

by Randy Harp | Editor

Growing up, one of my favorite comics was Calvin and Hobbes. I remember one year, about this time, Calvin having a pretty heated discussion with Hobbes, his sardonic stuffed tiger. “Resolutions? Me? Just what are you implying? That I need to change? Well, buddy, as far as I’m concerned, I’m perfect the way I am!” For many people, the New Year is a time to take a hard look at themselves and evaluate their lives. It is a time to establish goals and a vision for the coming year.

Our theme for this *Tribune* is vision. You will hear that word often and in several different contexts. I adapted a sermon preached during a Fellowship meeting on the topic of having unity through a compelling vision. I asked Sean Sears to adapt the breakout session he led at this past September’s Fellowship meeting on your church’s unique vision. Mission Director Jon Konnerup shares from his recent trip to Japan. Pastor and founder of Bod4God, Steve Reynolds, writes on being a healthy pastor. Each of our Fellowship leaders and regular columnists also discuss vision. Even as you read through the news section and Afterwords, you’ll see vision as church plants are forced to relocate due to growth and pastors celebrate 30, 40, and 50 years at their churches.

In this issue you will also find two new features I hope will become regular additions. Each month “In the Trenches” will be thematic and provide insight from various ministries. This month you will hear from a pastor, a worship pastor, a youth pastor, a children’s director, a missionary, and a pastor’s wife on the topic of vision. The second new feature is called “The Right Angle: Biblical Wisdom in a Contemporary World”. The BBFI is blessed with many certified biblical counselors. Now, you have the opportunity to submit questions for a counselor to provide a biblical response. In this issue, Kevin Carson, chair of the Biblical Counseling Department at BBC, gives a response to the Syrian refugee crisis.

I am excited about this coming year. For me personally, it offers new challenges and new opportunities. I look forward to seeing all God has in store for both my life and for the BBFI. I consider myself fortunate to be where God has placed me. I appreciate your prayers as we start this new year together. If I can pray for you, you can email me at raharp@tribune.org or direct message me @randyharp. One other thing you can do. As you find great resources that may be a benefit to others in our Fellowship, share them on Facebook or Twitter and use the hashtag #bbfiorg.

You will also notice on page seven our advertisement for the February *Tribune* Offering. This has been an important part of the *Tribune* for years, but with the expansion we are making with the Communication Office of the BBFI it is more important than ever. The reality is, the *Tribune* budget provides for exactly what it has been. If we are going to expand and do more, we must expand our financial base as well. This requires new partners and an even stronger commitment from existing partners. I am counting on you as we work together to make more disciples for Jesus Christ.

Thank you again for allowing me to serve Christ as I serve you.

BAPTIST BIBLE TRIBUNE

VOL. 66 NO. 5

JANUARY 2016

THE VISION ISSUE



Unity Through a Compelling Vision

A closer look at the book of Nehemiah shows a compelling vision and a divine communication coming to fruition.

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Your Church’s Unique Vision

Looking at the church’s collective potential, a pastor’s passion, and the position within the community can help determine a church’s vision.

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UNITY THROUGH A COMPELLING VISTO

By Randy Harp

Adapted from a sermon preached at the May 2010 Baptist Bible Fellowship International Meeting

Unity. Coaches need it on their sports teams. Parents desire it within their family. Pastors understand the importance of it in their church. In every area of life, unity is essential to reaching full potential.

I have experienced the need for unity in every ministry God has allowed me to be a part of. As a youth pastor, we had to unify the public school students with the Christian school students. In the church I helped start, we unified two congregations. In my most recent ministry, we had to rebuild unity after the church had gone through a difficult season of ministry.

UNITY IN THE BIBLE

The Bible speaks often on the subject of unity. In John 17, it states Jesus prayed for our unity. On the last night before Jesus went to the cross, he began to do what he now does eternally — intercede on our behalf. In verse 20, Jesus says, “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” In those final moments of His earthly life, He could have prayed for strength. He could have prayed for

support from others. But, what he felt was most important was to pray for unity. Jesus knew his followers could never make the impact on the world he intended unless the world saw the “oneness” in his followers.

Not only did Jesus pray for our unity, Paul also pleaded for our unity. In 1 Corinthians 1:10 Paul said, “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” Even with all the issues Paul addressed with the church in Corinth, he



WHAT UNITES US?

The psalmist wrote, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” Does this mean we must always agree on everything? Does this mean every member of every church is going to look and act exactly alike? The obvious answer, “No!” So what is it that brings unity? For followers of Jesus Christ, it starts with the Gospel. At the foot of the cross, we are all on equal ground. Left to ourselves we are all helpless and hopeless. We must unify around the Gospel. Secondary to the Gospel, we must unify around sound biblical doctrine. For some, this may be the 20 Articles of Faith. For others it may be the Apostle’s Creed. Still others may limit their unity to the Baptist distinctives. Each person and each church must decide where they stand.

There is a third key component that brings unity that is oftentimes overlooked — one that applies to sports teams, families, churches, and even our Fellowship — unifying around a compelling vision. A compelling vision is knowing exactly what God wants, and aligning everything possible to see it accomplished. Proverbs 29:18 states, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” I understand vision here is referring to divine communication and not about setting individual or group goals. Divine communication is what brings unity. Unity comes from a vision received from God.

THE EXAMPLE OF NEHEMIAH

Have we received that kind of vision from God Himself? Yes. But before I share His vision that should ultimately bring unity, let’s look at a few biblical principles on vision. One of the best places to look is the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah is, among other things, a great leadership manual. It teaches strategy, management, and people skills. It is a book on teamwork. Possibly most of all, it shows a compelling vision and a divine communication, coming to fruition.

The setting for the book of Nehemiah takes place roughly 500 years before the time of Christ, after the Babylonian captivity. As a result of the decree of Cyrus, the Jews were allowed to return to their homeland, only to find the city of Jerusalem in ruins. We are introduced to Nehemiah as the cupbearer to the king, a high position in the royal court.

In the 20th year of the king’s reign, one of Nehemiah’s brothers who had been living in Judah visits him in Susa. Nehemiah asks about the surviving captive Jews and about Jerusalem. The answer, which bothered him greatly — survivors were in great distress and the wall of Jerusalem was broken down — birthed a passion for a compelling vision.

PRINCIPLES OF A COMPELLING VISION

The first biblical principle of a compelling vision — it starts with God and is received through prayer. The first thing Nehemiah did after hearing about the state of Jerusalem was fall on his face before God and pray. Nine times in the first chapter of Nehemiah the word pray or prayer is used. It has been said nothing significant for God ever happens apart from prayer. This must be where any vision begins.

God spoke to Nehemiah in that still, small voice and assured him of what could and should be done. He knew the walls needed rebuilding. This wasn’t just a dream Nehemiah dreamed up. It wasn’t even his idea. This was the vision given to him by God. Today, it is easy to dream up big plans for God and then ask Him to bless them. This is backwards. Our vision, whether for our family, our church, our Fellowship, or ourselves, must begin with a complete dependence on God and a commitment to listen to Him.

The second principle of a compelling vision — it goes through God’s appointed leader. Nehemiah completely accepted and believed in the vision given to Him by God, to the point he was willing to put his life on the line. In chapter two, Nehemiah is serving the king and the king notices he has a sad countenance and questions him. This terrified Nehemiah because it was a violation of the law to be sad in the king’s presence. Nehemiah confronts his fear and tells the king the vision God gave him.

God has always used His people to accomplish great things. One remarkable aspect of the book of Nehemiah is, there are no miracles involved. There are no angelic hosts coming down to help. It is just God’s man serving God’s people. A God-sized, compelling vision, however, is too great for just one person. There is no way Nehemiah could have accomplished it by himself.

understood, just as Jesus did, that unity was essential for the early church to move forward.

Unity is important because anything with division cannot stand. Every good military strategist knows you divide and conquer. It was our enemy’s strategy in the Garden of Eden. It is still his strategy today in families. It is his strategy in churches. It is his strategy in networks of churches and fellowships. Jesus states in Luke 11:17, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls.”

A leader must be willing to stand alone, but he or she also realizes that a compelling vision gets others involved. After Nehemiah had been in Jerusalem for three days evaluating the situation, he gathered everyone together. He gave a stirring challenge to the citizens of Jerusalem sharing his vision. Immediately the people responded, “Let us rise up and build.” And they began the good work.

The entire third chapter gives a detailed work plan of where each family was involved in rebuilding the wall. Everyone was included: from the strongest to the weakest, from the richest to the poorest, from the most influential to the least influential. It is almost comical reading through verse eight where it states a man named Uzziel and a man named Hananiah were working beside each other. Uzziel was a rough and tough goldsmith. Hananiah’s occupation was a manufacturer of perfumes. Now that is a contrast. The similarity between these two men? Both were laborers. However, right next to them was a man named Rephaiah, which verse nine says was ruler over half of Jerusalem.

If you are going to cast a compelling vision, it must be one that gets everyone involved. The sports team has to go beyond the superstar. A church must include the older members and the younger members, the spiritually mature and the new Christians. In our Fellowship, this includes the large churches and the smaller churches, the older pastors and the younger pastors. And it must include both sides of the methodological spectrum.

A fourth principle of a compelling vision — it will face opposition. For Nehemiah, the opposition started even before work began. The verse following “let’s rise up and build” speaks of three local leaders who literally laughed at him and accused him of rebelling against the king.

So many visions have died before they

even got started because of the opposition faced at the very beginning. Sometimes the opposition comes from the outside. Chapter four speaks of the Jews being mocked and ridiculed. Verses seven and eight speak of people from nearby areas coming against Jerusalem. They were literally surrounded. The vision seemed all but hopeless.

To make matters worse for Nehemiah, according to verse ten, people from within the camp were starting to bring opposition. Unfortunately, sometimes this is what kills a vision. A person can be convinced of God’s revelation and then allow someone close by to destroy that vision. Other times the opposition comes from distractions. One can know exactly what needs to be done but can easily lose focus.



When Nehemiah’s enemies realized they were not going to defeat him head-on, they tried a different approach. They tried to call him to a meeting. I am not opposed to meetings, but many compelling visions have died right on the conference room table. Nehemiah 6:3 gives Nehemiah’s reply, “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?” One other thought, seen through Nehemiah’s vision, opposition comes mostly right before and after great victories. If Nehemiah would have given up or given in, we likely would

not even know his name today. When God gives a compelling vision, there is going to be opposition.

Just as a compelling vision must begin with God — a compelling vision ends with God and He gets the glory. My favorite part of the Nehemiah narrative is chapter six, verses 15-16, “So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days. And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God.” God should be the one who ultimately gets the glory for what is accomplished in and through our lives. Our lives really are not about us at all. For we have been bought with a price and we must glorify

God in all we say and in all we do.

So, now that we understand more about vision and how a compelling vision is what brings unity, the question we must ask ourselves is, “What is our vision?” What is the vision God has given to you, to me, to all of His followers? We know it as the Great Commission. Matthew 28:19 says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.” That is the foundational message Jesus gave us before His ascension.

Your occupation does not matter — God’s vision for you is to help make disciples of Jesus Christ. This is the compelling vision that should unite us.

Does your family have that kind of a vision? Does your church have that kind of vision? Can our Fellowship of churches be described as having that kind of vision? The reality is, we cannot do it on our own. We need each other. We must unify together like never before to fulfill the vision Jesus left us. We say we believe the Great Commission. Let’s unify around it.

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- booklets

Online

- eBooks
- websites
- social media
- blogs
- podcasts
- webinars
- mobile app

In Person

- consulting
- conferences
- coaching Network



Our Vision Is Expanding

If you have read the past few issues of the *Tribune*, you know this ministry is expanding. There are three phrases that define our vision: In Print, Online, and In Person. To the left you can see ways we would like to expand.

Here is the reality, the *Tribune's* budget has been established for the purpose of a print magazine. If we are going to fully expand the Communication Office, we need to expand our budget. This requires, minimally, two things. **We need new partners.** If you are not a regular supporter, would you consider giving in 2016? If you are not ready to make a long-term commitment, would you consider a one-time February Tribune Offering. **We also need a stronger commitment from our existing partners.** We are so thankful for your support over the years, but as we expand, would you consider expanding with us?

We are committed to providing the highest quality and most beneficial resources possible. We want to serve you, as we partner to make more disciples for Jesus Christ.

FROM THE PRESIDENT VISION AND THE BBFI

In a 2010 TED talk, Melinda Gates commented that no matter where she travels, she finds Coca-Cola. She went on to discuss a few practices that have made Coke so successful.

The Baptist Bible Fellowship, like Coca-Cola, is in the distribution business. Our mission is to deliver the Gospel around the world and our vision is to assist the efforts of local churches. So, let's look at three ways we can learn from the success of Coca-Cola.

REAL-TIME DATA Coca-Cola gathers real-time local data and uses it to expand their market. Our Fellowship provides a relationship platform for information sharing. Through the *Tribune*, Mission Office, Church Planting Office, and colleges, we facilitate real conversations between people who are passionate about spreading the Gospel. We hear about laborers and needs around the globe. This data sharing is how God directs surrendered individuals to a place of ministry. After that, supporters in the network contribute to help spread the Gospel.

LOCAL ENTREPRENEURIAL TALENT Coca-Cola relies on local entrepreneurs. Our Fellowship celebrates the local church. Pastors must understand their local culture to deliver the Gospel within that context. We should fight the tendency to demand conformity to a style or program, and remain united on a foundation of sound doctrine and a heart to spread the Gospel.

INCREDIBLE MARKETING Coca-Cola's marketing campaigns reach out to the bigger themes of life. In the Fellowship, we can remind one another of the eternal importance of our efforts. We can come together to be inspired by preaching, touched by stories, and challenged to renew our hearts for the spread of the Gospel.



Eddie Lyons
BBFI PRESIDENT

WORLD MISSIONS 20/20 VISION — SEOUL, KOREA

As Jesus finishes speaking with the sinful and confused woman at the Samaritan well in John 4, the disciples arrive. They are more concerned about food, or perhaps even more about religious traditions and their reputations. They did not have their priorities in proper order. Our Lord encouraged them, and in turn us, to change focal points. Instead of fixating on the temporal, traditions, or reputations, He calls us to lift up our eyes and look.

The Global BBFI Fellowship Meeting will be held in Seoul, Korea, March 14-17, 2016. This meeting will be a time to enlarge our vision, to focus on the task at hand, and to lift up our eyes.

LOOK UPWARD: When you look and see the world, do you see it the way God sees it? Look upward and see the Lord and who He is. As the Lord of the harvest, He leads us to accomplish the great task He has given us.

LOOK OUTWARD: More than ever, by looking outward, the great need for the Gospel can be seen through the dire situation of our world. Look out and see the world — people — over 7 billion of them!

LOOK INWARD: While looking at the harvest, how do you see yourself and what God could do through you? Evangelization of the world is not a spectator activity.

LOOK FORWARD: What about the ripe harvest? People are trying everything they can to find peace and fill emptiness while searching for truth. When we align our focus and see the needs of the world, we become motivated and involved in the BBFI's worldwide mission endeavors.

Attend the Korea 2016 Global Meeting and have your vision refocused!



Jon Konnerup
BBFI MISSION DIRECTOR

BBFI LEADERSHIP

CHURCH PLANTING BE SURE OF YOUR CALLING

One of the most challenging biblical questions of ministry is: Is an individual "God-called" into ministry? The Bible is full of individuals who answered the call of God as they were persuaded in their hearts/spirits that God had spoken to them.

We have the record of Jesus calling his 12 disciples; Saul and Barnabas received a call and anointing of the Holy Spirit as they were sent out to make disciples of all nations. The Bible is filled with such examples.

While examining these calls, there is no record of any one of them anointing themselves. Each had a story of their individual calling. Each gives a testimony to their unworthiness and

humbleness as they submit to a surrendered life.

Today, our calling stories contain similar experiences. Even though our stories differ, our experiences bring us to the same conclusion. It is not necessarily with a verse that we explain the call of God, but rather with life experiences and convictions that connect to the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and will of God the Father.

The calling story of each individual is unique to the time, the place, and the personality of the one receiving the call. It is not necessarily a one-time dynamic experience, but rather a series of persuasions that takes place within the individual.

Mine occurred over several years, beginning at about the age of 12 and culminating with a total surrender to the ministry during my junior year of high school. Now, after 50 years of fulltime ministry, I can say I always had the foundation of a calling story from God.

My encouragement to all church planters is be sure you have a calling story and be sure you can articulate it in a manner that convinces those you are leading to believe and follow.



John Gross
BBFI CHURCH PLANTING (APEX)

On May 15, 2012, I shared my vision for Baptist Bible College during my inaugural message. I want BBC to become to the world of ministry what Harvard is to business, John Hopkins is to medicine, and Yale is to law. I desire for our institution to be the premier college for training men and women to take the message of the Gospel to the world. I want our pastors, missionaries, worship leaders, youth leaders, teachers, and business professionals to have the best education possible so they are equipped for the great task God has called them to do.

Mike Linch said, "Visions are always birthed from burdens. A great vision always comes

about from a burden you have." We have a great burden at BBC to see lives changed for Christ. From that great burden comes our great vision. We must do whatever is necessary to make this great dream a reality.

Every dollar we spend and every decision we make at BBC, from recruiting new students to teaching current students to enhancing student life, is done with our vision in mind. We are constantly evaluating and reshaping our strategic plan to make sure it aligns with our vision to become the best school for ministry training.

It is a great burden that has led to our great vision. "When your dream is bigger than you

are, you only have two choices: give up or get help" (John Maxwell). We will never give up on making our dream a reality, but we cannot do it alone. Would you commit today to help us? A generous supporter has offered to match gifts given up to \$250,000. Your gift today will have twice the impact — it will help us to teach more to reach more. Give today at www.gobbbc.edu.



Mark Milioni
BAPTIST BIBLE COLLEGE PRESIDENT

PERSPECTIVES: VISION

BOSTON BAPTIST COLLEGE **THE DRIVING LESSON**

Having teenagers is a blast ... Uh, sort of. I will confess I love it when the kids are little — you only lose the games you throw, you're still a hero, and they always want to ride with you wherever you go. Then they grow up and want to do their own driving. And in my house, I'm the driving teacher. In some ways, riding shotgun with your son after he gets his driving permit is sheer terror. That footbrake on the passenger side gets a workout, and staying calm is not a given! But helping my sons become drivers has always been a rite of passage for them, and it's a lesson for me, too.

Driving is largely about being alert to where you are,

and watching the road ahead. Oh sure, sometimes we need to peak in the rearview mirror, but driving is about moving forward.

Boston Baptist College is quite a vehicle to drive. In the end, we are trying to help our best young people "drive" into ministry. Our trustees were just on campus and led an interactive three-day workshop with our students entitled "Getting There." The focus was on learning from the Scriptures, and from our own experiences, about the road to Christian leadership. It was a three-day driving lesson! It's what you help us do in Boston; together, we educate our best young men and women to serve in our churches. That's it. That's

what is in the rearview mirror (our past) and that's what we see on the road ahead (our present and absolutely our future).

These driving lessons are not for the faint of heart. Parallel parking, merging into traffic, watching the speed, responding to that knucklehead who cut you off — in the car and in the college we have these kinds of challenges. But we can't drive forever. The little ones grow up, and it's our responsibility and our privilege to get them ready to take the wheel.



David Melton
BOSTON BAPTIST COLLEGE PRESIDENT

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YOUR CHURCH'S UNIQUE VISION

By Sean Sears

While the 12 disciples were all given the same responsibility to make disciples, there is no question each of them looked and acted differently. I believe that was intentional on the part of Jesus. Like those disciples, I believe it is his plan to make each congregation unique and to place them in their specific communities intentionally. Our churches have the same mission, but look and act differently.

As pastors, I believe part of our job is to discover the uniqueness of our church and the community in which God has placed us. The more we know about how God put our local church body together and the more we know about our community, the better positioned we are to meet one with the love of the other. The more a community feels loved by us who follow Jesus, the more likely we are to be used by God to draw that community to repentance and faith. And the more clearly we define what that looks like (meaning, our vision for our local churches), the more disciples we make.

The vision isn't to grow our churches. That's the wrong focus and it's not even our job. Jesus said He would grow the church. We don't pray for Jesus to do His job. He already said he would. So, if it isn't happening, there's a reason. There are barriers keeping it from happening. Unconfessed sin in the heart of believers? Possibly. A lack of concern for those far from Jesus? Maybe. Our job is to identify and ruthlessly eliminate every non-biblical barrier preventing people from knowing and following Jesus.

The vision of the church isn't to make disciples either. That's our mission, our purpose. And that mission hasn't

changed since Jesus initiated and handed off his ministry (Matthew 4:19 and 28:19, respectively). Our vision is what disciple-making will look like within the church He is building — in the community he has placed us. Specifically, what should disciple-making look like in your church, in your town? How is it unique? Trying to implement everything you heard at (insert latest conference here) can become an exercise in frustration unless those new methods or ideas fit within your clearly articulated vision for your specific church. The longer you wait to craft your clearly articulated vision, the longer your church may drift in true disciple-making.

FOUR GUIDELINES TO CLARIFYING VISION

1. **Clarifying Vision looks as much to the past as it does the future**
2. **Clarifying Vision considers strengths as much as limitations**
3. **Clarifying Vision is about identity as much as methodology**
4. **Clarifying Vision engages what God is already doing around you**

Will Mancini, *Church Unique*
(San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), pp 53

Will Mancini has written, in my opinion, the best how-to guide for developing a unique, Holy-Spirit-driven vision in his book *Church Unique*. I'd like to summarize one part of that

COLLECTIVE POTENTIAL

The collective potential refers to the unique giftedness and demographic of your particular local church. These are the things that make your church feel different from other churches of like faith and practice. The more transparent you are in your response to the following questions, the more helpful this will be to you. Answer these questions in light of the membership and regular attenders of your church, rather than the leadership in your church.

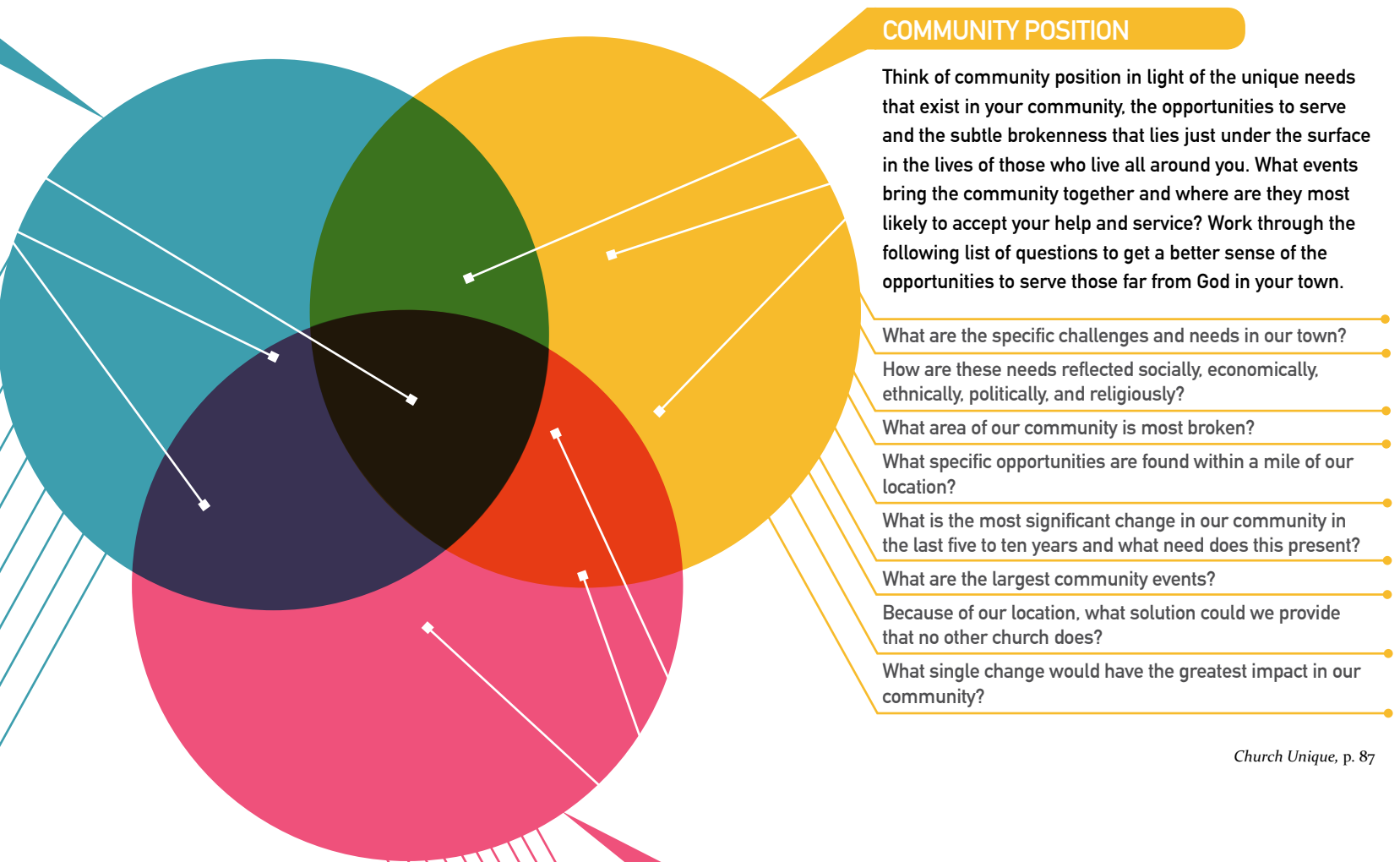
- What would a first-timer say they liked most about your church?
- If our church ceased to exist, what would people in town feel is missing?
- What would other area pastors say is our strength?
- What is the biggest impact we've made in town?
- Who currently attends our church (age, ethnicity, education, background, etc.)?
- What spiritual gifts seem to be prominent?
- What is the most significant ministry inside our church?
- If we had to do only one ministry outside our walls, what would it be?

Church Unique, p. 92

book which he calls "your kingdom concept." Your kingdom concept is where three independent characteristics intersect. It's the first of four steps in identifying the unique way God intends you to make disciples. I would encourage you to take time to work through this on a separate sheet of paper or on a white board with leaders in your church.

Think of a venn diagram with three intersecting circles. Each circle is labeled as follows: community position, collective potential, and clear passion. Mancini labels them differently, but these have been easier for me to remember. Your clearly articulated vision will be what it looks like for your church family to fully accept their responsibility to serve in the center of these three circles.

After you work through your kingdom concept, a few gaps may emerge. Remember,



Church Unique, p. 87

when Jesus saw the needs of the multitudes, he was moved with compassion and healed them. What if we spent a little more time looking at the needs of the multitude rather than the wants of the disciples? It's not an either/or, but a both/and. It's not like we aren't aware of the disconnection between our churches and the spiritually lost who live around us. We may simply lack a tool to help us figure out how to make the connection.

Your unique vision for the future of your local church will probably best be found at the intersection of where your community already is, who God has pulled into your church community, and how he has uniquely gifted and called you. If this sparks a bit of excitement in your heart and you want to follow through on this, I encourage you to purchase *Church Unique* and work through it.

Clear passion is about the lead pastor in your church. There is a reason God has placed you, as a pastor, in that congregation, in that community. There was a reason Paul was sent to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews. Paul's unique upbringing, Roman citizenship, and education uniquely positioned him to speak credibly to local politicians and even to Caesar himself.

- Why has God called you, and not anyone else, to be the pastor of this church?
- What one thing bothers you most about the world?
- If you knew you wouldn't fail, what one thing would you pursue for God?
- What gives you energy?
- What do others say you are good at?
- What have you secretly believed you would be good at if given the chance?
- What three words reflect the best of what you've accomplished?
- What do you pray for the most?
- What would you want others to say about your life after you're gone?

Church Unique, p. 97

IN THE TRENCHES

Pastor

Linzy Slayden
Pastor | Friendship Baptist Church | Owasso, OK

The Power of Vision

Vision is another word for seeing, and true Godly vision consists of foresight, insight, and oversight that come from His sight, or seeing what God sees.

Foresight is like looking at life through a telescope — seeing what is ahead as it connects us to our future. It is the element of vision that helps life make sense and gives us the motivation we need to go forward and work together.

Insight is like viewing life through a microscope — understanding why things happen in life. It also helps determine the underlying motivations of the heart.

Oversight puts life into context, like flying over our house in a helicopter. There is a perspective we can only receive from this view that helps us understand where we are with respect to where everything else is. The sons of Issachar are great examples of this kind of vision.

A vision from the Lord creates a mission from heaven, which needs a plan to complete it.

A lot of people have lofty ideas about things they would like to accomplish for God but seem to have no sense of how to see the dream fulfilled. There are entire books dedicated to this subject, therefore, I will

just give an overview of how to accomplish a vision.

The first part of accomplishing any vision is to take it from the unseen world and bring it into the natural realm. After spending time with the Lord, looking honestly at the situation, and reading the

Word of God, the pastor formulates the vision in his mind. Then he simply writes down the vision. Articulating the vision on paper pulls the dream that is in your spirit (that no one can see but you) into the visible world so others can capture it in their own hearts. Tools that help visualize the mission, such as architectural drawings, models, testimonies of others who have accomplished similar dreams, or visits to places that have a common purpose, are all helpful in capturing and defining the vision for both yourself and others who will come along and help.

There is an old story about three bricklayers that illustrates what it looks like when people receive motivation from a vision.

There were three bricklayers working beside each other on a wall. Someone came up to the first one and said, “What are you doing?” “What’s it look like I am doing?” he replied

sarcastically, “I am laying bricks!” The man asked the next guy on the wall what he was doing. He said, “Can’t you see what I am doing? I am building a wall.” Then the last man was asked what he was doing. He

exclaimed, “I am building a great cathedral for God!”

Who do you think will do the best quality work and be the hardest worker? It all depends on what they, and you, see.

“A vision from the Lord creates a mission from heaven, which needs a plan to complete it.”

Missionary

Brian Weed
Missionary to Nicaragua

Truths of Vision

The concept of vision is often a scary explosion of responsibilities in our minds as we begin ministry. But as the smoke of worry clears away, for a soldier of the cross, vision is simply following the marching orders of our Lord. We should realize vision forms our ministry DNA and the DNA of those we lead. We can “do” vision by understanding the truths of vision.

Real Vision: Vision is the strategy God gives us to implement His plans for our sphere of ministry. Once you have the marching orders, you must develop a plan (the vision) to complete the mission. Then, once you have the plan, you must work the plan until the vision becomes a reality. This involves a walk with God, work ethic, and a bit of old-fashioned grit. For Rachael and me, our vision is to plant an association of churches that catches the vision to plant more churches. We started with the Managua church as our Jerusalem and have spread to multiple regions of Nicaragua. In 2016, our churches will be planting two more churches.

Vision-Casting: What good is vision if we aren’t vision-casting? As I write this article, I am just a few hours from speaking to our leadership team in Nicaragua. Tonight I will once again pour vision into these men and women. Vision-casting is simply taking that God-given vision and communicating it in a crystal clear way. This allows your vision to become the heartbeat of the ministry or organization God has called you to lead, develop, and advance.

VISION

Women's Ministry

Cindy Lyons

Women's Ministry Director | High Street Baptist Church | Springfield, MO

Keeping a Fresh Vision in Women's Ministry

Whatever season we are in, we need a fresh vision from the Lord. Otherwise, we find ourselves "doing ministry" without passion or purpose. Women's Ministry is not just a social gathering.

We want to minister to our church women by encouraging, teaching, discipling, and equipping them, and by getting them plugged into community groups and serving. We also want to lead unchurched women to the Lord, disciple them, and get them plugged in.

Aubrey Malphurs says, "A vision is a clear, challenging picture of the future of the ministry as you believe that it can and must be." She says it should clarify direction, helps us carry out our function, prompt passion, involve risk-taking, offer sustenance, create energy, provide purpose, and motivate giving.

Below are some keys to developing a fresh vision for women's ministry:

1. Ask God to give you a vision and write it down.

A good vision is a clear mental picture of the future of your ministry.

2. Find out what is working in other ministries.

Seek new ideas and consider how to make them work for your church.

3. Gather a creative and influential small team.

Start brainstorming and seeking God together. This will help refine the vision.

4. Make a plan to carry out the vision.

What weekly activities or events will make it happen? In our church, we hold a big event every year to reach unchurched women with the Gospel and to encourage our regular attenders. How will you facilitate community? We developed Life Groups to help women connect in friendship and grow together in the Lord.

5. Share the vision with the larger team.

Encourage them not to just put on an event but for every meeting to serve a purpose. Commission them as women of influence who are doing their part to reach women for Christ.

6. Keep believing God can do great and mighty things!

Youth Ministry

Blake Housley

Student Ministry Pastor | Park Crest Baptist Church | Springfield, MO

Vision

I asked some of our students: "Of all five of your senses, which would you absolutely hate to lose?" The most common answer — sight. Why? Sight lets us know where we are, who is around us, and where to go. It gives a sense of comfort and stability, even control. Sight allows us to move forward in the right direction. Casting a vision to your students is like opening their eyes to what God can accomplish through them.

There are too many students leaving the church for us as youth pastors to have half-hearted, weak visions. We have a great God who can do great things. It is time we develop, share, and implement the purpose for why we exist as a youth ministry.

Start with a dream. What dream do you have for your students and for reaching students in your city? The best way to develop this vision is in prayer. Who better to receive vision from?

Once you have a dream, ask yourself, "How can this be accomplished?" Determine goals to keep you on track. They should also help motivate and evaluate.

Now share it with your leaders and students. We've become good at painting the mission statement on the walls of our youth rooms, but how often do we communicate it in our teaching? Do we celebrate reaching goals or change our services, activities, or outreach events to align with the vision? If we do not become outspoken and active on accomplishing our purpose, it will never happen.

More important than sharing vision is implementing change that points our students toward the vision. This is where the goals you set come into play. As students see each goal come to fruition, it encourages them to accomplish the overall mission.

Whatever vision God has for your student ministry, it must be developed, shared, and implemented. Our God can work in great and mighty ways. We must communicate this truth to our students and guide them toward the abundant life to which God has called them.

"We've become good at painting the mission statement on the walls of our youth rooms, but how often do we communicate it in our teaching? Do we celebrate reaching goals or change our services, activities, or outreach events to align with the vision?"

Worship Ministry

Eddie Harrison

Worship/ Creative Arts Pastor | Crosspointe Church | Yorba Linda, CA

The “Why” Behind the “What”

In 1976, Steve Wozniak, an electronics buff, created the first Apple computer. He knew how to build a circuit board, but, by his own admission, he knew nothing about making it into a product people wanted.

Steve Jobs knew little about computers, but coupled with Wozniak’s technical prowess, he would turn circuit boards into what Apple is today. Wozniak knew what needed to be done, but Jobs knew why it needed to be done. That’s vision.

When leading the worship ministry in your church, it is critical you communicate the why of what you do — your vision. Otherwise, you have nothing more than a group of musicians. Consider the statement: This team exists to use

our musical talents in church and play songs that tell people about Jesus. Compare it to: This team exists to use the gifts God has given us to serve our church so we may lead people to find and follow Jesus.

The first statement has little energy and reads like a to-do list. The second sentence communicates: as a part of this worship team, I can make a difference! God gave me these gifts, so I’ll serve my church. In doing so, I may lead someone to his or her greatest decision ... following Jesus!

Have you reminded your worship ministry lately they have the opportunity to lead people to an eternal encounter with the one true God using a powerful tool God created? Have you reminded them their mistakes are miniscule

compared to the difference they can make in the lives of those in attendance?

It is the worshipful encounter with God that gives your musical ability any value. This is a truth the worship leader should brand on his or her heart and should communicate at every opportunity.

Have you reminded them their mistakes are miniscule compared to the difference they can make in the lives of those in attendance?

Family Ministry

Tiffany Lyons

Children’s Director | High Street Baptist Church | Springfield, MO

Vision Is Necessary

Whether you have done children’s ministry for 20 years or are just starting out, you need to have a vision for where your ministry can grow and improve. Nothing living and healthy ever stays the same.

How can we get fresh ideas? Look at other ministries. See what they are doing well and adapt those ideas to your church. Look at what is vying for kids’ attention and learn what you can from those organizations.

Dream. When I talk about my vision for our children’s ministry, I tell people, “I want church to be as fun as Disneyland!” Disneyland is amazing, but Disney does not have the life-giving message of the Gospel. So, let’s implement some of Disney’s strategies to get families to come to their theme park, and share the hope of the Gospel to the kids in our city.

Cast the vision. Make it clear and repeat it over and over again. At every volunteer training session, orientation, and personal conversation go back to the vision. At our church we say we must be intentional about making our children’s ministry a place where kids and families want to come and we never miss an opportunity to share the Gospel. This is our unique purpose. We must have both to be successful.

Take steps toward the vision. The vision can sometimes seem so big that we become paralyzed. How will we ever get there? Where should we start? Take one step at a time. You won’t accomplish your vision in a month (if you do, you are dreaming too small). To ensure you keep moving and don’t become stagnant, create timelines and deadlines for each step.

Ask God for a fresh vision and believe the best is yet to come!



THE RIGHT ANGLE

BIBLICAL WISDOM FOR A CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Q. How does the Christian respond to the Syrian refugee crisis?

By Kevin Carson

A. How do we respond to President Obama seeking to resettle more than 10,000 Syrian refugees in the United States? As evidenced in social media, the average Christian is conflicted; in fact, non-Christians are as well. As Christ-followers, we want to respond biblically, yet we want to protect against the dangers of ISIS, especially in light of the events in Paris and San Bernardino. So, what should we hope and do?

FOUR PRINCIPLES TO HELP YOU THINK THROUGH OUR CONFLICT

The Bible implores us, in relationship to one another, to be full of mercy and grace, just as God is toward us (Ephesians 4:32, et.al.). In the Old Testament, Israel was to show mercy to those who were less fortunate and foreigners (Leviticus 23:22). In the New Testament, every Christian is to be known by love (John 13:35), where mercy is just an outworking of love. As a follower of Jesus, we are to be kind, have tenderhearted compassion, and forgive one another. Tenderhearted compassion references the deepest love from the heart that flows out of personal sympathy, encouraging graciousness toward one another. When we see and hear the plight of the Syrian refugees, our natural inclination is to love and help provide for them.

We are also Americans who have a vested interest in this nation. Our nation isn't just a landmass, a set of values, the sum total of the GNP, or "a land of opportunities." Our nation is people. This issue is greater than a mere

political conversation. It relates to the safety of all Americans — including those in our own homes.

Furthermore, God's purpose and role for government is for justice and protection of people (Romans 13:1-7). There is a responsibility associated with bringing Syrian refugees, or any person for that matter, to resettle in the United States. The government's primary purpose is not to demonstrate mercy to foreigners. If the government refuses to resettle refugees, it actually helps protect its citizenry. In this instance, though, as a representative of her people, it would be best for the government to not just protect, but also work with other nations to provide help (acts of mercy) in Syria.

Tough times call for perseverance. Our perseverance comes from what we know about God and His plan. God is in control and wants to receive glory even in the midst of danger and tragedy (Romans 8:28-39). Our response must reflect our confidence in God's love and plan for the world, which of course includes sharing the Gospel.

HOW DO WE RESPOND?

How do we reconcile these dissimilar ideas — mercy, love, Gospel-intention, and protection? How do we live and speak consistently? Here are a couple of ideas.

Our response should be full of love and mercy — love toward Americans as our neighbors and love toward the Syrian refugees

as the foreigners. We should also show mercy regardless of what the government does. If the government helps refugees in Syria, there are missionaries and organizations desperately needing volunteers and donations. If Syrians are resettled here, we love and serve willingly. Our responsibilities to demonstrate love and mercy do not change.

Mercy has many different looks. The American government can and should seek to help the refugees and the citizenry. Many Syrian refugees have been sinned against, and most are in desperate need. At the same time, there may be terrorists among them. Without a robust vetting system, it seems dangerous to bring these individuals into the United States. However, the U.S. should work toward a solution to the Syrian civil war, while helping those displaced until they no longer have to be helped.

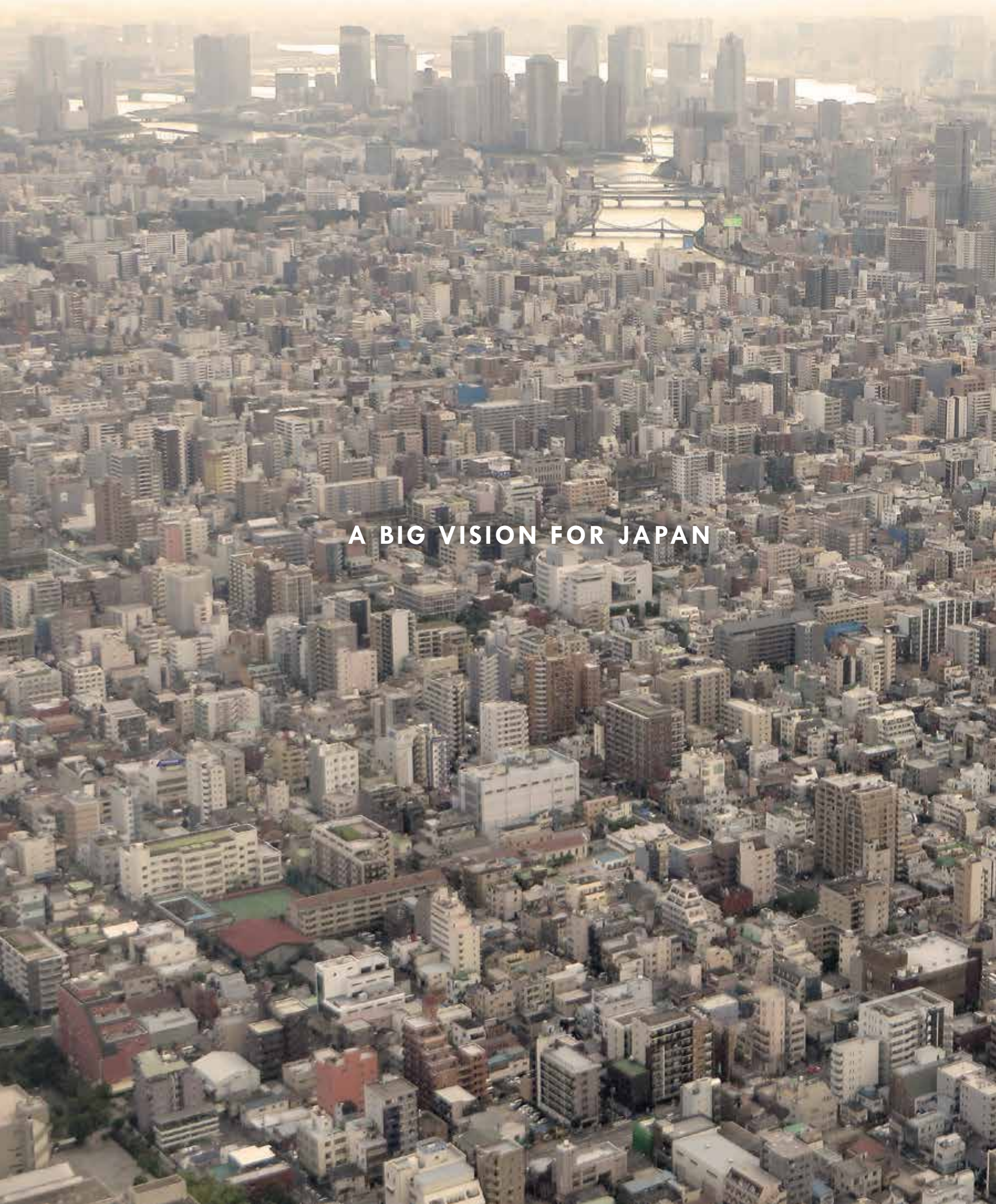
Our primary response should be Gospel-centered. This may be an answer to believer's prayers as those who were unreachable may now live in our communities and neighborhoods. What an incredible opportunity for us to pray for their salvation and share the Gospel with them.

Regardless of what the government does, may we honor God in demonstrating the same kind of love Christ gives us to those who need it, while also praying for God's protection and wisdom.

Kevin Carson serves as department chair of Biblical Counseling at Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary in Springfield, MO. He is the pastor of Sunrise Baptist Church in Ozark, MO.

Have a question?

Submit your question to TheRightAngle@Tribune.org. Due to space limitations, not all questions may be answered in print. Questions that do appear in this section will have all personal identification removed. For questions requiring answers beyond the scope of a simple Q&A forum such as this, the Tribune recommends you contact a local biblical counselor. The advice given here is not a substitute for a personal conversation with your local biblical counselor.



A BIG VISION FOR JAPAN



Japan is considered to be the largest unreached people group in the world, with **less than 1% of its 127 million populace believing in Jesus.**

By Jon Konnerup

The Baptist Bible Fellowship International has had missionaries in Japan since our founding in 1950. From the beginning, our missionaries focused on evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. Sharing the Gospel in Japan has never been easy — even after hundreds of years of missions — yet our missionaries and the Japanese pastors and their churches refuse to retreat. Instead they continually search for new outreach opportunities.

The Difficulties

One of the most challenging difficulties for Western missionaries to overcome when introducing and spreading the Gospel in Japan is the mastery of the Japanese language. There are two alphabets containing 46 letters each, *Hiragana* and *Katakana*. Their written forms bear no resemblance, but their pronunciations are identical. In addition to these two alphabets, there are Chinese kanji, or characters, in the Japanese written language system. In the Japanese dictionary, there are over 50,000 different *kanji*. It is estimated, in order to read a Japanese newspaper, one needs to comprehend about 2,000 basic *kanji*. Regardless, the Western mind, which is accustomed to a lifetime of studying and writing using only 26 letters, has no point of reference to which it can correlate and thus memorize such a massive amount of letters. Furthermore, Japanese phonetics is very different from that of Western language, which only adds to the tremendous language barrier. Language is a bridge to the heart, and if one cannot do well in Japanese, missionary work will prove to be most challenging.

Another difficulty missionaries to Japan encounter is the financial hurdle. Japan is possibly the most expensive mission field in the world. Most missionaries to Japan avoid discussing the financial aspects of their ministries when visiting churches because of the misconceptions that can occur when specific dollar amounts are mentioned.

All missionaries experience cultural

adjustments, but adjusting to Japanese culture is particularly challenging, especially for the typical American mindset. It is much like putting a square peg into a round hole. If missionaries come with a willingness to learn and extend graciousness in areas that are not absolutes, they can learn to lead in this country and enjoy a strong, thriving ministry.

Aside from the usual difficulties missionaries face in spreading the Gospel in Japan, its history and culture are often at odds with Christianity. Japan's history includes an isolation period of 200 years and decades of Christian martyrdom which had a very profound effect on the spreading of the Gospel.

In spite of the contrast, Japanese have eagerly embraced many aspects of Western culture ranging from fads and philosophies to baseball and scientific methods. So why not Christianity? Minoru Okuyama, director of the Missionary Training Center in Japan, offers one explanation. Upon being appointed as director in 2010, he addressed attendees of a global mission conference stating, “Japanese make much of human relationships — more than the truth. Consequently, we can say that as for Japanese, one of the most important things is harmony; in Japanese, *Wa*.” He went on to say, “The Japanese are afraid of disturbing the human relationships of their families or neighborhoods even though they know Christianity is best.” Chinese and South Koreans, by contrast “make more of truth or principle than human relationships.” More than anything, the Japanese people place value on acceptance ... acceptance by one another. If they exclusively embrace Christianity, they essentially deny who they are, Buddhist/Shintoist Japanese, and are consequently regarded as unacceptable to their people. It is therefore difficult for Japanese to move away from traditional practices of Japan and become Christians.

Pastor Hiroshi Saito of Tokyo Bible Baptist Church says, “Most of Japanese care what the neighborhood people, relatives, or

family believe so they follow the majority. If the majority goes to church, the people will go to church.” Consequently, if most people don’t believe in the Bible of Jesus Christ, it is difficult for the Gospel to penetrate such an averse mindset.

Missionary James Smith writes, “The key for missionaries is to recognize these difficulties and fully rely on God and the power of the Gospel to change people’s lives. Also, as a missionary to Japan, you have to be realistic and know you will most likely not have the kind of numbers you would elsewhere. At the same time, you have to hold on to the truth that the Gospel changes lives, and it can break the hardest of hearts. Ultimately, the devil is behind the resistance to the Gospel. He has the Japanese people right where he wants them.”

THE JAPAN BBF

The JBBF was one of the first religious fellowships recognized under the new law decreed by General Douglas McArthur. It is a fellowship comprised of approximately 93 independent Baptist churches and their pastors. Each local church is active and has a vision to reach every city, town, and village. Reverend Yusuke Saito was the first missionary sent out by JBBF to Okinawa in 1971, and he is still there spreading the Gospel. JBBF is corporately sending out seven missionary families to Taiwan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Uganda, Hawaii, and a restricted access country. They also support home missions by starting new churches under the authority of the local church. Most of the Fellowship’s pastors are graduates of Japan Baptist Bible College, which was established in 1954. It offers a four-year degree for full-time ministers and workers, a two-year degree for church workers, and a one-year diploma for church workers. Since 1954, the JBBC has awarded degrees to over 250 graduates.

MORE LABORERS NEEDED IN JAPAN

Since Japan is the largest unreached people group in the world, it definitely needs more missionaries. Yes, it is a difficult field. However, just imagine, when you walk out your door every day, everyone you encounter is possibly unsaved and therefore a potential candidate who needs to hear the Gospel,

receive Jesus as Savior, and be changed forever.

Missionary James Smith states:

First, **Japan needs missionaries who come with a long-term strategy.** They must be well trained in the Bible, ministry, and cultural anthropology. Counseling would be a benefit as well.

Second, **missionaries to Japan need to come well-supported.** The cost of living is expensive in relation to rent, food, and utilities.

Third, **they need to come with a vision of long-term ministry.** In other words, unless God leads in a dramatic way, plan to invest your entire lifetime in Japan.

Fourth, rather than being personally tutored, **missionaries to Japan need to attend a good Japanese language school.** Planning to formally study for at least two

years is a wise way to think.

Fifth, **plan to not only spread the Gospel to the masses, but have a good plan for discipleship.** Many Japanese might agree to accept Christianity, but their faith will probably not take hold in their hearts if they are not taught the truths of God’s Word.

Finally, **above all things, know you are called to Japan.** Some days that is all you have to cling to in order to have the motivation to remain.

Pastor Hiroshi Saito says, “The tough veteran missionaries are now getting older. They need someone who can receive the baton. The new generation of missionaries needs to be strong theologically and stable mentally with a strategy to be patient and endure. I would also say, please do not cut the support for those who are on the battlefield. And please support new missionaries who will be tough soldiers for Christ.”

FROM JON KONNERUP

In September 2015, I participated in the 30th anniversary of one of BBFI missionary Ken Board’s churches. I also spent time with our other missionaries to Japan — the Wyatts, Kings, Smiths, and Lavern Rodgers. In a country where the average church size across all denominations is 23, these missionaries have done an amazing work. They have led many to Christ, disciplined them, and trained them for church leadership. It is because of their efforts, your prayers and financial support, coupled with the work of the Japanese pastors, the light of Jesus is shining in Japan. They have a vision to reach every city in Japan and send as many missionaries as they can beyond their islands.

May we pray, not only for new missionaries, but also for our current missionaries and the Japanese churches and leaders. In spite of the difficult nature of reaching Japan, I believe God is still calling people to reach the Japanese. He can still soften their hearts and save them from their sins!

Special thanks to missionaries Ken Board and James Smith and Pastor Hiroshi Saito for assisting with this article.





MISSIONARY LETTERS

Steve & Kelli Mowery | **Spain**

New visitors to our church — Pablo and Mercedes, who recently received Christ after 40 years in a Pentecostal church, began searching for a church that was faithful to the Scriptures and found us. They have had to make hard choices and sever ties to be obedient to the Lord.

Gines was first exposed to a Baptist church last month in Chile. Upon his return, he realized there was a Baptist church (us!) in his own neighborhood. I have presented the Gospel. Pray for his salvation and his family's.

Keith & Debra Gandy | **Germany**

Husband and father to be baptized — Every soul matters to God, but it does bring me even greater joy when the husband and father of a family becomes pro-active in following Jesus. Andi has expressed his desire to follow the Lord in baptism and his family now attends church with him.

All too often in Europe, spiritual matters are relegated as the women's responsibility. This has led to a spiritual vacuum in society. Thus my greater joy when men sense the Spirit drawing them into a closer walk and they respond.

Don & Delores Swearingin | **Mexico**

Thirty-five years ago I came to Mexico for the first time. I returned home, sold everything I owned, and came back to the land God called my family and me to. Thirty-five years later, God has established 13 churches and we are working on Bible college number three. God is good! But the story does not end there. These 13 churches have started more churches.

I was recently asked to preach the first mission conference for one of the baby mission churches. They listened, they learned of faith promise, and they are now giving to the missionary effort of their mission church. As a congregation, they voted and have started supporting their first missionary, Eric Gonzalez, a missionary sent from the seventh church we started.

This is what missions is all about — reproducing yourself over and over in God's plan. You start them, you teach them. They start them, they teach them. And the growth goes on and on.

Allen & Michelle Ketel | **Russia**

Birthday greetings are a little different here. All guests give a special wish for the person having the birthday. It usually goes something like, "I desire for you health, happiness, success, and good grades, wishing you the best of all, happy birthday." Obviously, as ambassadors of Christ, we work to give believers and unbelievers wishes more important than temporary health! Recently, I gave a gentleman a light bulb, (LED, they are still expensive and quite unique here) for his birthday and wrote on the box that my desire for him was his eyes would be opened and he would turn from darkness to light ... and receive forgiveness of sins. My son's birthday was last week and I wished for him the words of Jeremiah 17:7-8. "Blessed is the one that trusteth ... and in whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters ..." These are more than just nice wishes, they are the call of God for my neighbors and my children to find in God, mercy, a way, salvation, and reason to praise.

Ron & Christine Enoch | **South Sudan**

Baraka received Christ shortly after we came to Khor Wolliang. He has struggled for the past several months with living for Christ. On Sunday, November 8, following a dispute about land, he was shot in the thigh, resulting in a broken femur. He has been in the Juba Teaching Hospital ever since waiting for surgery. First the surgeon was out of the country, and then there was no power at the hospital. As of two days ago, he was still waiting for surgery. Please pray God will have mercy and allow surgery to happen successfully. But more than that, pray God will work in his heart!

Doug & Donna Stamper | **Kenya**

There is a real problem here in Kenya with transportation for the average Kenyan. Many rely on the *Matatu* (a 14-passenger minivan that does not obey traffic laws), the *Boda-Boda* (a bicycle with a rear luggage rack that doubles as a seat), and the infamous *Piki-Piki* (a motorcycle licensed to carry two, but is often seen with three or four adults). In the last few weeks, Pastor James's wife, Phebe, was hit by a *Piki-Piki* and Pastor Patrick fell while carrying another on his *Piki-Piki*. They both received some injuries, but are now laughing about it. Honestly, there is no other option available to them — they just accept this is life in Kenya. Pray for safety in travel, not only for your missionaries but also for the faithful servants who partner with us to reach Kenyans with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul & Barbara Frizzell | **Bolivia**

What a blessing to look back over the past 27 years as Bible Baptist Church of Tabladita celebrates their 27th anniversary. Our first service was held October 1988, ten months after our arrival in Bolivia. The government had relocated over 10,000 miners from Potosi to this small community in the mid 80s. Far from home and family, people were open and receptive to the Gospel. Knocking on doors led to an invitation into the home of Francisco and Nora. It wasn't long before they and their five children trusted Christ as Savior. Next Emilio and Vicenta and their children followed by Marcial and Tomasa and their children were saved. Fourteen were baptized within the first two months! Barbara and I learned the true meaning of Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ..." These three families are still in the church today! Pray for this church as it continues reaching its world with the Gospel.

GEORGE W. TRUETT — Pulpit paragon

From early in the 20th century until his death, George Washington Truett (1867-1944) was the most famous Baptist pastor in America and perhaps the most highly acclaimed preacher of any denomination. He pastored First Baptist Church of Dallas, TX, for a remarkable 47 years, taking it from a moderately sized congregation, to a mega-church with nearly 8,000 members, hundreds of annual baptisms, a Sunday school enrollment for a time exceeding 6,000, and extensive local, national, and international ministries and influence.

Truett was a native son of the Appalachian Mountains in southwest North Carolina, just north of the Georgia state line. His parents and grandparents were committed Baptists; the large extended family could boast of more than one preacher among them.

Long exposed to the Bible and the claims of the Gospel in his childhood, and though under deep conviction of sin on more than one occasion, George did not respond to the Gospel until age 19 during an evangelistic meeting.

Young Truett started an academy to educate the local children; it grew quickly under his leadership. As a result, Truett, barely in his twenties, was asked to give a report on the importance of education to a Georgia Baptist preachers' meeting, and so impressed was a Baptist businessman in attendance that he offered to pay Truett's tuition at Mercer College (Truett had ambitions of becoming a lawyer). However, the Truett family soon relocated to Whitewright in northern Texas, and the offer had to be declined.

Still desiring a law career, Truett often spoke in church, teaching and occasionally filling the pulpit, but with no thought of becoming a preacher. But when he was 23, the church voted unanimously to ordain him to the ministry, without his prior knowledge or consent! He accepted their action as God's directive will for his life.

Truett redirected his educational ambitions toward Baylor College in Waco, TX, but before he could begin classes, he was "drafted" by B. H. Carroll to lead a debt-retirement effort for the college. In 23 months, all \$92,000 needed was raised, and Truett's name became well known throughout Texas. He finally enrolled at Baylor College in 1893, married a local girl, pastored a Waco church for four years, and was then called to First Baptist Church of Dallas. At the time, Dallas had just over 40,000 residents; by 1940, that would grow to nearly 300,000.

Shortly after becoming pastor in Dallas, Truett and some men from the church, including the Dallas police chief, were quail hunting. Truett's gun accidentally discharged, striking

the chief in the leg; he died the next day. This tragedy had a profound effect on Truett, and probably accounted for his great solemnity in public and his total avoidance of humor in the pulpit.

George was an avid reader, especially of history and literature, from his youth. As an adult, on his many travels, he always took a satchel of books along. His personal library included thousands of volumes; half the ground floor of the family home was converted to a study to accommodate them. Truett authored 14 books, all sermons and addresses. These printed sermons are said to be a feeble representation of Truett's preaching.

Truett was known for his excellent speaking voice and preaching abilities. He had a bit of the Appalachian singsong in his delivery, and spoke slowly and distinctly, a practice shaped in youth by learning to communicate with his deaf brother who could lipread. After his name became known, Truett was much in demand for revivals, commencements, dedications, conferences, and lectures. At President Wilson's request, Truett spent six months ministering to American troops in 1918-1919.

In the last two decades of his pastorate, Truett, who was president of the Southern Baptist Convention three times (1927-1929) and of the Baptist World Alliance (1934-1939), was gone so frequently from his own church that it inevitably had a negative impact on the church's vitality and growth.

While thoroughly conservative in theology (one must not assume that the seminary begun in Waco by SBC "moderates" and bearing his name reflects Truett's theological views), Truett did not like controversy. His nemesis in Fort Worth, Frank Norris, in contrast, practically reveled in it. Norris criticized, and justifiably so, on theological grounds, Truett's association with, among others, the BWA, though Norris's manner was often inexcusable.

Truett's legacy was in the church he built and the lives he touched with the Gospel.

The biography by son-in-law Powhatan James, *George W. Truett: a Biography* (Broadman, 1939; 277pp.; revised edition 1945) was written for popular consumption, avoided all criticism, and lacked historical perspective. Keith E. Durso's *Thy Will Be Done: a biography of George W. Truett* (Mercer, 2009; 377 pp.) is a thorough, scholarly account, with extensive bibliography and very full documentation. Leon McBeth's *The First Baptist Church of Dallas: Centennial History* (Zondervan, 1968) has a detailed account of the Truett pastorate at FBC.



URBAN CURRENT

Vision of a city church

The silver casket resting in the front of the packed auditorium cradled Jermaine's body. Outside, it was a sunny May Saturday. Inside, a somber congregation clouded by bereavement contemplated the life of a 16-year-long life cut short. He collapsed while playing basketball at school and died two days later.

Loved ones, neighbors, schoolmates, and church family hear the story of an 8-year-old who started coming to a new church, meeting in a house. Jamie Thompson, assisted by Armitage Baptist, was planting the church. Jamie was drawn to Garfield Park, a quintessential inner-city hood, three miles from our church building.

Curtis, Jamie's brother, led Jermaine to Christ. Curtis cut his spiritual teeth in the Armitage youth group. Jermaine drifted. However, he rededicated his life at age 14 while at Armitage's youth camp. The next year he brought his girlfriend, Nekia, to camp. She got saved. Soon, Nekia's two sisters came to Christ. Jermaine's older brother made a profession of faith. Michael, another young man discipled at Armitage, now a part of the church plant, invested in Jermaine's spiritual walk.

The grieving congregation heard of a young man who loved Jesus. Jermaine wore a purity ring and explained it to people. He left football practice early to walk six of the most dangerous blocks in America to attend Bible study. He joined the men in an all-night prayer meeting. He volunteered at kids' camp. He didn't care what other people thought of him. Because of his love for the Lord and his winsome personality, he was respected.

His own words at age 16, "I was an angry person who wasn't kind to women. Then I prayed with Curtis to accept Jesus. I walked away for a while, but last year I got serious. I want to live for God."

Who could have known he was so close to the end of earthly life?

Pastor Jamie pointed the grieving

congregation to Jermaine's life as a witness to the saving, life-transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

You see, Jamie, whose father was in Christian work, grew up in the hood looking more like the hood than the son of a missionary. "I was good at hiding all the things I was doing from my parents. I was in a real rebellious state at that time, trying drugs and drinking with friends. God used a message from Kenny Ruiz in a Sunday morning Bible study at Armitage to bring repentance and salvation," Jamie recounts.

Kenny. Yes, Kenny! Oh, yes, Kenny! He grew up in the streets. I remember the week he showed up at church a brand new Christian. I recall missing Kenny in church a few weeks after he began attending. Inquiring, we discovered the Jehovah Witnesses had found him. Our staff knelt on a cement floor praying against the evil one, doctrines of demons and false teachers, interceding for the life of this baby believer.

Several years later, God used Kenny to bring Jamie to faith in Christ. Kenny is now pastor of yet another young church not far from Armitage.

As Jamie grew in the Lord and expressed a desire to pursue ministry, he was discipled and mentored in our body. A portion of his training was our Chicago Armitage Urban Studies Experience (CAUSE), which recruits and trains leaders to work in cities around the world.

Vision. I was just a kid, but God gave me a vision: a New Testament church thriving in the center of our city. I didn't know any better. I believed the vision. I believed God. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

There were no models. There were no books. There were no conferences. There was no support.

There was no safety net.

There was a vision. From God.

It was a vision of a church of such size and strength so as to impact the whole city.

A multicultural church. A church for everyone.

To my knowledge, such a church did not exist at the time. Many churches that did exist in our grossly under-churched city were dying and/or moving out of the city.

Now, I think back through the years. I reflect on our congregation. Urban through and through. Unsophisticated. Unassuming. We lack many of the things churches take for granted — adequate building, ample parking, members with means. Here we are, buried in a gang-ridden neighborhood doing what a New Testament church does — loving God, following Jesus, and preaching the Gospel.

Kenny grew. God used Kenny to bring Jamie to Christ. Jamie grew. His brother Curtis grew. Kenny plants a new urban congregation. Jamie plants a new church with Curtis.

That's how Jamie came to be standing in front of hundreds of people in an hour of sorrow, pointing to the power of Christ through the short life of one more convert, Jermaine. Oh! And Nekia, Jermaine's girlfriend? She is now a children's ministry intern.

Ah, the multiplication of ministry. It does happen every now and again.

A vision

Souls won to Christ

A church grows

Young leaders trained

New churches started

An at-risk teenager transformed

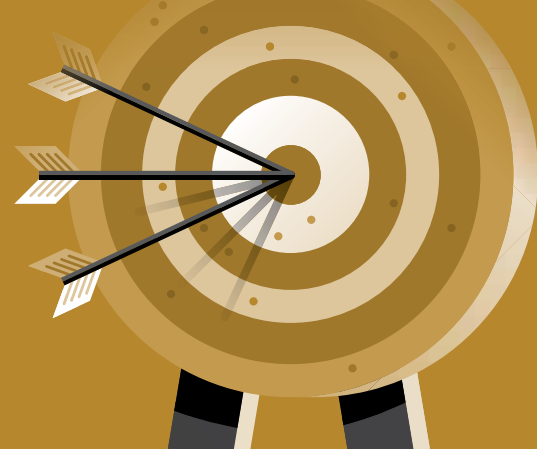
Hundreds more evangelized at his funeral

by Charles Lyons, Pastor
Armitage Baptist Church,
Chicago, Illinois
charles.lyons@armitagechurch.org



DEVELOPING A PERSONAL VISION FOR 2016

By Randy Harp



Alice came to a fork in the road. “Which road do I take?” she asked. “Where do you want to go?” responded Cheshire Cat. “I don’t know,” Alice answered. “Then,” said the Cat, “It doesn’t matter.”

– Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

In his book *The Power of Vision*, George Barna defines vision as “the clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to his chosen servants based upon an accurate understanding of God, self, and circumstances.” It is the time of year when people start attempting to discover that clear mental image of their preferable future for the coming year. For many people, this comes in the form of New Year’s resolutions. While there is nothing wrong with New Year’s resolutions, success takes a lot more than merely coming up with a list of ideas. It is estimated 80 percent of people who make New Year’s resolutions break them, oftentimes within the first few weeks, and then they give up on them completely.

This year, rather than making New Year’s resolutions, consider taking time to establish goals for the coming year. Each goal should point you in the direction of the vision, the clear mental image of a preferable future, you feel God has given you. Ultimately, the principle to understand is this — to be successful in life you must be proactive rather than reactive. You have to have a plan and a process rather than simply reacting to every circumstance that happens to come along.

Proverbs 14:8 states, “The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way.” In other words, the wise can look into the future to see where they want to be, or more importantly, where God wants them to be, and then work toward getting there. You will never get there without setting goals at the beginning.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES ON SETTING GOALS

Your goals should be pleasing to the Lord. This is foundational. Our goals should be focused on God and His kingdom, not on ourselves. Many people fail to reach their goals because they are motivated by selfishness. You can ask yourself, “Does this goal work toward building my kingdom or God’s?” (2 Corinthians 5:9)

Pray about your goals. Before you set any goals, ask God what in your life needs to change. When He answers, make those your goals. (Proverbs 16:3)

Set realistic goals. Don’t set yourself up for failure by selecting impractical and unattainable goals. You’ll become discouraged and give up. Work hard at planning realistic goals. (Proverbs 21:5)

Define specific steps and set a completion date for each goal. Jesus had a plan for everything He did. There was never a time when He “winged” it. Achieving goals is a process and every process has a completion. (Proverbs 20:4)

Monitor your goals. Your goals should be measurable. Monitoring helps you evaluate consistency. Goals aren’t met in large chunks. They are met in incremental stages. An important tool here is having someone hold you accountable. Get some help! (Proverbs 19:20-21)

Don’t quit. You are going to have rough days. You may take a step backward. But you must never quit. If God revealed this goal for you, He will help you until the end. (James 5:11)

It is one thing to understand biblical principles for goal-setting. It is another to be proactive in establishing goals. In the space below write down at least one goal for each of the following categories:

SPIRITUAL GOALS (Proverbs 3:5-6) _____

FAMILY GOALS (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) _____

PHYSICAL GOALS (1 Timothy 4:8) _____

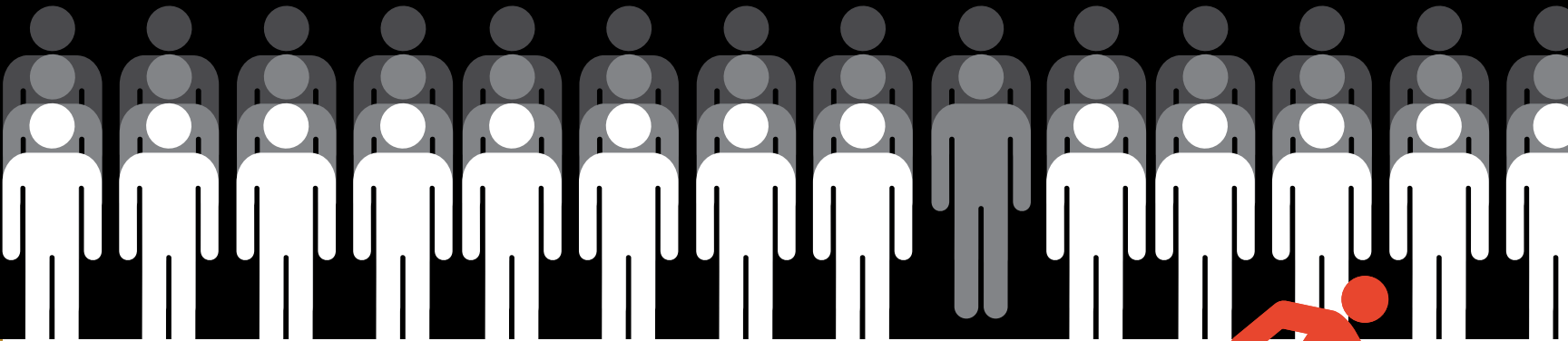
SOCIAL GOALS (Romans 12:13) _____

WORK GOALS (Proverbs 14:23) _____

FINANCIAL GOALS (Proverbs 3:9-10) _____

WISDOM GOALS (Proverbs 24:3) _____

RECREATIONAL GOALS (Ecclesiastes 8:15) _____



ABANDON AVERAGE HEALTH AND WELLNESS

By Steve Reynolds



Tired. Stressed. Sick. Overweight. Do these words describe you? For the vast majority of pastors, they are the norm. Over the course of our years as church leaders, too many of us have sacrificed our health and wellbeing on the altar of ministry. We have lost the vibrancy — and the waistlines — we once had, opting instead for the poor, counterfeit version of health that has become the acceptable average in our culture.

If you are ready to live a life with the physical vitality you need to do all God has called you to, then it's time to make a change. A healthy pastor lives in a state of faithful proactivity. The church is healthy and growing, as is the pastor. He is intentional about keeping his body — his most critical tool for ministry on this earth — healthy and strong. He knows how to identify godly health goals and pursue them. He experiences the fulfillment that comes with embracing the life God has called him to.

You know as well as I do that spiritual warfare is nothing to be taken lightly. What you may not realize is your health is not exempt from the war. Satan will do anything he can to raise roadblocks to your ability to live the life God has in store for you. Getting you to sabotage your own body is one of his most cunning tactics. As Jesus said:

The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life. (John 10:10)

If Satan can steal your health, kill your drive, and destroy your peace of mind, then your ability to do God's work will be obliterated. Thankfully, there are things you can do to keep the enemy's schemes at bay. Start by surrendering your body to God. Then stop making excuses.

Excuses, excuses, excuses! I've heard

them all as I've worked with people across the country to get healthy. I hate excuses, but I can tell you Satan loves them. The enemy of your soul loves using carefully crafted excuses to cast doubt over the best intentions. Just think about this: if you are stuck in the rut of average — unhealthy, not living the abundant life in Christ, and not working to your full potential as a church leader — then the enemy is thrilled. He's getting his exercise doing a happy dance because you are compromised; you are not being as effective for the kingdom as you could be.

Excuses are a natural byproduct of wrong focus. They are the result of concentrating on the obstacles to a healthy lifestyle — and, believe me, there will be plenty of obstacles — rather than on the opportunities good health provides. Instead of bemoaning how hard it will be to change your bad habits, shift your attention to all the ways being healthy will transform your life for the better. When you have a big enough *why*, the *how* won't seem intimidating. Here are just three of the benefits a healthy lifestyle provides:

Good health helps you maximize your life. Since God went to such lengths to design the intricate details of your body (Psalm 139), you should maximize what he can do through it while you are alive. When you run it down with unhealthy foods, lack of exercise, and massive doses of stress, you block that opportunity — you trade it for a counterfeit version of God's best. Poor health choices limit your potential and likely shorten the length of your days on this earth, but taking care of yourself will open the door to fully engage in the abundant life God has in store for you.

Good health can help you feel better and be more productive each day. When you

get your health on track, you will have more energy each day. You may have fewer aches and pains. Your mind will be clearer. You can work harder and connect with people in your life with more enthusiasm. Don't let excuses rob you of opportunities to live the life you were created for.

Good health gives you a new opportunity to worship God. Since your body is the temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), taking care of the temple is a form of worship. Intentional good health brings God glory. Again, you and I are to honor God by reflecting his excellence in every way — including with our physical wellbeing. Don't miss the opportunity to worship your Heavenly Father and show His excellence to the world by being an example of refreshing, vibrant health.

Don't let excuses rob you of living the life you were created for.

Steve Reynolds co-authored the book The Healthy Renegade Pastor with Nelson Searcy and Jennifer Dykes Henson. Steve can be contacted at sreynolds@bod4god.org.

Instead of bemoaning how hard it will be to change your bad habits, shift your attention to all the ways being healthy will transform your life for the better.

O'FALLON, MO

GRACE RIVER CHURCH PLANT MOVES TO NEW LOCATION

Grace River Church had a record-breaking day — 188 people in attendance and nine baptized — as they changed locations to the YMCA in O'Fallon December 6, 2015. Pastor Chris Highfill planted the church 11 months ago, having been on staff and sent out by Seminole Baptist in Springfield, MO. "God has blessed us

with a great team of people to work with here in O'Fallon. We are amazed at the life change that has taken place since we moved here less than two years ago," says Highfill. "Please continue to pray for Grace River Church as we make disciples."



DESTREHAN, LA

NEW ORLEANS AREA CHURCH PLANT CHANGES LOCATIONS

GracePoint Baptist Church, a church plant in the New Orleans area, changed locations December 6, 2015. Pastor Chris Housewright says, "It has been three years since we launched Sunday morning services. We've had ups and

downs, but since August of this year we are experiencing growth. We're very excited to see what God has in store for us at our new location!"



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TRENTON, NJ

A CELEBRATION OF 40 YEARS FOR NEW TESTAMENT BAPTIST CHURCH AND PASTOR ALAN FRISCH

New Testament Baptist Church and Pastor Allen Frisch celebrated the church's 40th anniversary November 15, 2015 with a dinner at the Nottingham Ballroom. Approximately 160 people were in attendance as Pastor Frisch was presented with a commemorative plaque and monetary gift and a 30-minute video presentation was shown. George Sypniewski, husband of the church secretary (who has served the church for over 35 years), put the video together.

Frisch, a 1971 graduate of Baptist Bible College, and his wife, Debbie, with two sons moved from West Palm Beach, FL, to start New Testament Baptist Church October 1975. Not having a clear strategy on how to begin, Frisch listened to Max Helton's tapes "How to Start a Church," and then spent the next month

knocking on doors and meeting thousands of people. On November 16, 1975, the first service was held with 21 people attending.

For the first ten years the church rented facilities, used members' homes, and met outdoors when weather permitted. In 1980 God provided ten acres of land and in 1985 the church completed and moved into their present church building.

Frisch's vision for the church was to be a soul-winning, mission-minded church that preached the Gospel and supported missionaries around the world. Hundreds have been saved and baptized at New Testament Baptist Church and over \$1,400,000 has been given to missions.

When asked what led Frisch to New Jersey, he replied, "God used the fact there were only

four BBFI churches listed in the directory in a state with over eight million people. There are now over 20 churches listed in the BBFI directory."

Since New Testament Baptist was a church plant of Berean Baptist Temple, West Palm Beach, FL, where Mike Kalapp was pastor, they knew the importance of

church planting. In turn, they have helped start many other churches in New Jersey and the Northeast.

Allen and Debbie have three sons and daughters-in-law (Allen and Nichelle, Ron and Michelle, and Tim and Julie) and eleven grandchildren. They are especially grateful to Bob and Phyllis Gotwald and Jorge and Dale Leon who have served in the church from the very beginning, in addition to the many others who have been with the church for over 30 years. In 1977, Allen's parents, Harold and Gerri Frisch, sold their business in Miami Beach, FL, and moved to be with Allen and Debbie; they too continue to serve in the church.



Founding members who were present for the anniversary celebration (from left): Angie Butcher, Linda (Butcher) D'Amico, Phyllis Gotwald, Bob Gotwald, Allen Frisch, Debbie Frisch, Jorge Leon, Dale Leon, Philip Leon, and Allen Frisch, Jr.

AUSTIN, TX

MARCELLUS CELEBRATES 30 YEARS AT FIRST INDEPENDENT BAPTIST CHURCH

Mike and Jena Marcellus celebrated their 30th anniversary with First Independent Baptist Church in Austin, TX, December 6, 2015. The couple founded the church and have led the congregation since.



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KANSAS AND OKLAHOMA HOLD STATE FELLOWSHIP MEETINGS



WICHITA, KS

The Kansas BBF hosted their annual Christmas banquet December 7 with new BBFI Communication Director Randy Harp as special guest. The meeting was organized by state chairman Tim Adrian.

OWASSO, OK

Pastor Linzy Slayden and Friendship Baptist Church hosted the December meeting of the Oklahoma Baptist Bible Fellowship December 7-8. Monday night included a casual time with dinner at a local Japanese steakhouse. Tuesday morning speakers were Keith Kaufman (TriPointe Baptist Church), Charles Modrell (Collinsville Baptist Tabernacle), and Scott Quidley (McCauley Baptist Church). There was a ladies meeting with Sheri Quidley and a panel discussion for pastors. BBFI Communication Director Randy Harp also spoke in the business meeting sharing his vision for the Tribune and communication ministry of the BBFI.



SPRINGFIELD, MO

GRACEWAY COMPLETES FAMILY LIFE CENTER, ADDS SECOND SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE

Graceway Baptist Church in Springfield, MO, and Pastor Robert Stephenson are celebrating the completion of a \$1.8 million family life center project.

When the center's construction was nearly finished, the church held a dedication dinner September 21, 2015.

The two-story facility adds 22,000 square feet of

classroom, fellowship, and gymnasium space to the Graceway campus. The existing buildings were completed in 2006 when Graceway

relocated from its former location on Republic Road.

Outgoing *Tribune* editor Keith Bassham was on hand for the building dedication, and he challenged the congregation to continue its forward-thinking in the mission to reach their

community and the world for Christ.

In addition to adding the family life center, the church also added a second Sunday morning worship service to alleviate overcrowding in the worship center. Graceway currently supports 118 missionaries and projects and is sending church for five missionary families.



Keith Bassham addresses the congregation.

WITH THE LORD

HOUSTON, TX

DON BOWLES

Don Bowles, BBFI missionary since 1970, left this life November 18, 2015, at the age of 82. Don, a 1963 graduate of Baptist Bible College, and his wife, Mona Bowles, were approved as Baptist Bible Fellowship missionaries to Korea in 1970, where they served until their resignation in 1977. They were reinstated as BBFI missionaries to Zaire in May 1987. Due to political unrest in Zaire, Don and Mona began ministering in Zambia in the early 90s where his work was focused on building a Bible college to equip Africans.

Don is survived by his wife and five adult children. A memorial service was held November 21, 2015, at Christ Community Church in Houston, TX.

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PROJECT PERU EXCEEDS \$1 MILLION IN INTEREST-FREE CHURCH LOANS

By Debbie Harmon with Keith Bassham

Project Peru, an interest-free, revolving loan fund based in Lima, Peru, celebrated passing the \$1 million mark in November. To mark the occasion, pastors from the States joined missionaries and pastors in Lima, Peru, for a two-day celebration and meeting November 18-19 at Iglesia Biblica Bautista de Zarate. More than 100 pastors and workers attended.

The host church, whose auditorium was built with help from a Project Peru loan, is pastored by Pedro Vilchez Malpica, who also serves as vice president of Project Peru. Guests from the U.S. included BBFI Mission Director Jon Konnerup, Pastor Linzy Slayden of Owasso, OK, and Pastor Richard Edwards of Jacksonville, FL. They and Peruvian pastors challenged those attending. More than 20 pastors who have benefited from Project Peru gave testimonies to proclaim the conference theme, Celebrating God's Goodness. The attending pastors' wives were

taught by Debbie Harmon.

Missionary Max Harmon began Project Peru with an original base fund of \$150,000 that grew to \$230,000 the first four years from three stateside sources. Inspired in part by a similar international BBFI program, the sole purpose of the fund is to help with land purchases and church-building projects in Peru.

Most first-time loans range from \$5,000

to \$10,000. After repayment, a church can request a loan for double the amount of the original loan. Peruvian churches to date have given well over \$60,000 in offerings (above loan repayments) which help the fund to grow and pay minimal monthly expenses.

Since its inception 14 years ago, \$1,038,183.14 has been loaned to 90 different independent Baptist churches. That means, says Harmon, "Our beginning base loan fund of \$230,000 has been rotated almost five times in 14 years, and the fund has averaged \$72,000 in loans each year."

Serving alongside the host pastor, other men guiding the loan fund include Missionary Max Harmon, Pastor Manuel Bonilla, Pastor Willie Urquiaga, Pastor Fortunato Chircca, and Pastor Apolinaio Bedregal. Steve Mosher (an original U.S. donor) and Linzy Slayden serve as advisers in the U.S.



Peruvian pastors and guests at celebration event

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Pastor Derryl DeShields

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(727)536-0481 • Pastor Matt Trill

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Pastor Adam Alley

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Pastor Clifton Cooley

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Pastor George Mulford III

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Looking back at a vision

By Craig Dyson

Fresh out of Baptist Bible College in 1963, a young preacher and his wife headed to their roots with a firm belief in something the late pastor John Rawlings said: “Find a city, drive a stake in it, and give your life to that city.” That desire, through the work of the Holy Spirit, led James L. Upchurch to return to Raleigh, NC, and start Faith Baptist Church in 1963. Pastor Upchurch and his wife, Rennie, worked tirelessly to start this church; but as the church started to grow, some members began attacking the young preacher for his passionate words and soul winning. On December 8, 1965, Pastor Upchurch resigned as pastor, unaware of the future, yet still burdened for the city of Raleigh.

On a cold December night, just three days after he resigned, when the Upchurches saw everything they worked for be changed, 26 other people saw something different. Many of them experienced the saving grace of Jesus Christ through the preaching of Pastor Upchurch and together they saw God leading to start a new work and reach the community. So that night, in the small home of the young pastor, vision became reality.

Through prayer and a simple willingness to be used, a mission was established. After it was commissioned by Pastor Thornton Hall, the first service was held. The first Sunday, the group met at a house located in the middle of a scrap yard, kindly offered by one of those faithfully attending. Eventually, the new mission held services at a local YWCA. However, after a few weeks Upchurch knew something had to be done. A couple of years before, when Faith Baptist Church started, they met at that same YWCA and the thought of going through that process again was discouraging.

Today, if you take a drive south out of Raleigh, you will come upon 6910 Fayetteville Road, which is the home of Mid-Way Baptist Church. In 1966, what you would have stumbled upon was much different. For years, a man by the name of Virgil Sorrell prayed God would send someone to reach those who lived close by. Sorrell kindly offered his small basement to be used for a meeting place. Upon moving the mission to that basement, people began to be saved and their lives were changed. Over 125 people would cram into that basement for services. On February 10, 1966, Mid-Way Baptist Church was organized calling James Upchurch to shepherd the new church. Later that year, two acres across the street from the house they were meeting in was donated to the church by the Sorrell Brothers Lumber Yard. On that land, the first building was built in 1966 and was dedicated in April 1967.

In 1976, God allowed Mid-Way to purchase the Sorrell Brothers

Lumber Yard, which was adjacent to the donated two acres. Today, Mid-Way has over 80 acres used to help reach the surrounding area for Jesus. From a small basement across the street, to land and buildings worth over 14 million dollars, all is a testimony of the faithfulness of God.

In the 50 years of Mid-Way’s existence, lives have been changed, families have been restored, buildings have been built, and God’s Word continues to be taught. In spite of the many positive experiences, God has used difficult moments to grow the church. In 1974, a recession hit America. During the next seven years there were many times Pastor Upchurch did not know if the church would

survive. A new 1,500-seat auditorium, office complex, and a large staff made the pressure more difficult. God used this to mold Pastor Upchurch and led him to teach the church the importance of stewardship. He began teaching this principle in 1969; however, in 1987, everything fell into place. That year, Mid-Way celebrated the first Chest of Joash stewardship service by giving \$17,244 to continue the ministry of the church. Since that time, over \$10 million has been received through the Chest of Joash to God’s kingdom.

Mid-Way continues their Gospel impact not only in the local community but also throughout the world. With a passion for missions, they have annually given over \$240,000 to support missionaries and projects around the globe. In 2004, the Jeremy House was built as an encouragement to missionaries

who need a brief rest as they travel. Through the faithfulness of God’s people, Mid-Way supports over 93 mission projects and has never missed a monthly support payment to those with whom they’ve partnered.

February 7, 2016, Mid-Way will celebrate their 50th anniversary. It is a rarity today to find a church still guided by its founding pastor, but God has blessed the faithfulness and leadership of James and Rennie Upchurch and their family. If you are able to celebrate the anniversary with Mid-Way, or if you drive past what was just a lumber yard back in 1966, we trust you see clearly everything that happened in 50 years is because of God’s faithfulness. Every life touched, both on earth and those in eternity, testify to what God did through the simple vision and prayer of a young preacher so many years ago. Truly, Mid-Way is a “miracle of its day,” and by God’s grace will continue to be for many years to come as God shows He is faithful.



(Top left) The original lumberyard property. (Top right) Mr. Sorrell's basement. (Middle left) First worship center built on property. (Middle right) The Jeremy House. (Bottom left) Current buildings. (Bottom right) The Upchurches.

JANUARY 2016

PRAYER CALENDAR

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1  MISSIONARY Dan & Patty Peters <i>Hungary</i>	2  CHAPLAIN Maj. Jeremiah & Shari Catlin <i>U.S. Army</i>
3  MISSIONARY Scott & Carrie Merritt <i>Navajo Indians</i>	4  T.E.A.M. MISSIONARY Hannah Yelinek <i>England</i>	5  MISSIONARY Jon & Ruth Bergen <i>Scotland</i>	6  MISSIONARY Jonathan & Anna Saliba <i>Colombia</i>	7  MISSIONARY Ramzi & Ruth Kammar <i>Israel</i>	8  MISSIONARY Bruce & Pam O'Neal <i>Philippines/MANNA</i>	9  MISSIONARY Tim & Barbara Downs <i>Ivory Coast</i>
10  MISSIONARY James & Margie Manning <i>Australia</i>	11  MISSIONARY Ed & Annita Hoagland <i>Mexico</i>	12  MISSIONARY Mike & Caroline Tester <i>Hong Kong</i>	13  WORKERS IN Restricted Countries	14  MISSIONARY Mike & Cindy Burgett <i>Japan</i>	15  BBFI MISSION OFFICE - SPRINGFIELD, MO Jon Konnerup <i>Mission Director</i>	16  MISSIONARY Mark & Susan Schladenhauffen <i>South Africa</i>
17  T.E.A.M. MISSIONARY Ian & Amanda Richards <i>Australia</i>	18  MISSIONARY Russ & Sylvia Daniels <i>Uganda</i>	19  MISSIONARY Patrick & Ann-Janel McClure <i>Brazil</i>	20  MISSIONARY Rex & Jan Harmon <i>Jamaica</i>	21  MISSIONARY Jeff & Andrea Williams <i>Canada</i>	22  MISSIONARY James & Lori Bradley <i>Mexico</i>	23  BAPTIST BIBLE COLLEGE Mark Milioni <i>President</i>
24  MISSIONARY David & Angela Speights <i>Thailand</i>	25  MISSIONARY Scott & Kristi Hudgins <i>Colombia</i>	26  MISSIONARY Carole Elkins <i>Nicaragua</i>	27  MISSIONARY James & Lisa Mantonya <i>Brazil</i>	28  BBFI Builders	29  MISSIONARY Tom & Regina Franklin <i>Dominican Republic</i>	30  MISSIONARY Benjamin & Raelene Walker <i>New Zealand</i>
31  MISSIONARY Mitch & Elizabeth Calmes <i>Tanzania</i>						

As is the business of tailors to make clothes and cobblers to make shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray.
Martin Luther

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ROMANS 8:37

