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TRUTH Magazine

Spring 2017 Edition

The Most Convicting Verse in the Bible

*Working Together to Advance the Grace of God
and Impact the World for Christ*



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TRUTH Magazine

Endeavoring to set forth God's purpose and grace according to 2 Timothy 1:8-11

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April-June 2017

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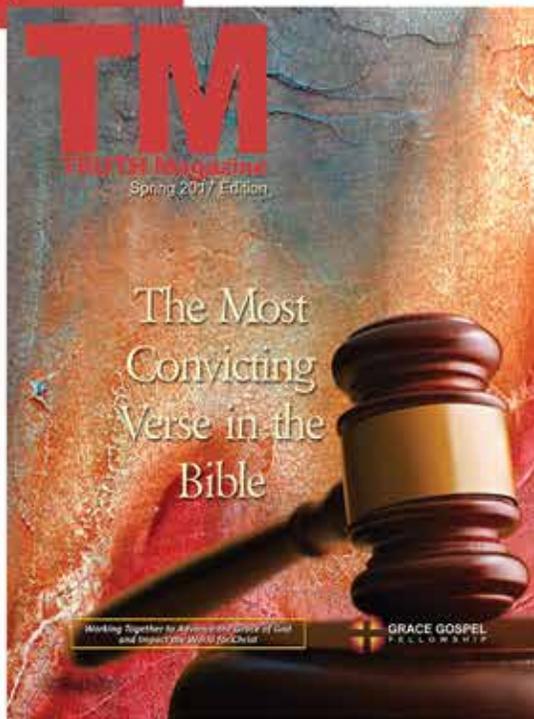
A youth pastor, a senior pastor, a college president, a GMI board member, a husband, and a dad. His legacy will live on in each of the lives he touched in ministry, in the life of the wife he loved, and in the children they raised.

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by Jeremy Clark



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BY GGF CHURCH HEALTH TASK FORCE



STRIIVING OWARD UITY

This article is the expanded explanation of the third of an eight-part series developed by the Church Health Taskforce (CHT) to use as a Self-Assessment tool for evaluating the direction of your church and ministry. If you would like a copy of the entire Self-Assessment tool, you can download it at ggfusa.org (under “Resources”). If you missed the introduction to this series as well as the explanation of the first two sets of questions on the topics of “Worship” and “Balanced, Practical Theology,” you can find them in the previous three issues of TRUTH magazine. The present article is focused on “Striving Toward Unity” within your church. The goal of the CHT is to provide you and your church with a starting point to begin digging deeper into what it looks like to be a healthy body.

“That the Christian life is meant to be lived in community is either directly expressed or the subtext of every epistle to the Church.”

Striving Toward Unity

1. Do your regular attendees feel a sense of ownership to the ongoing work of the church?
 - a. How naturally will a newer attender feel a sense of ownership?
 - b. Are you actively striving to make newer attendees feel a sense of ownership?
2. Do you have any cliques that are noticeable in the church?
 - a. What are you doing about them?
 - b. How much influence do they have?
3. When disagreements regarding ministry and church life arise, how are they dealt with?
 - a. What are the greatest areas of tension within the life of your church? How are they being addressed?
4. What are others learning from those who serve in various ministries of the church?

In Ephesians 4, Paul describes the role of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to be equipping God’s people for works of service. The goal of all of this equipping and service among the Church is the building up of the body into Christian maturity. When this work is not being done, Paul says, we are like “infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of doctrine and by the cunning craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.” But notice that for Paul, the marker for maturity, is “unity in the faith.” Christian maturity is not something some individuals attain, while other members get tossed about. Just 10 verses earlier, Paul had admonished these believers to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4.3). The entire passage speaks to the corporate body moving forward and growing together.

Not Optional

That the Christian life is meant to be lived in community is either directly expressed or the subtext of every epistle to the Church. The mystery of the Church, “is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body,

and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 3.6). All but four of the Pauline epistles are directed to communities of churches, and even those addressed to individuals (the Pastoral Epistles and Philemon), express the urgency and importance of the community for the Christian life. Again and again, he refers to his fellow believers as “brothers and sisters” denoting a connection and dependence on one another as deep as family ties.

Unity is an indisputable matter for Paul. To see this, we do not have to look any further than what appears to be the first major theological conflict of the Church. In both Galatians and Acts 15, Paul spends serious energy combatting division within the body. In Galatians 2, Paul tells of how Peter had withdrawn from fellowship with Gentile Christians because of the influence of other Jewish Christians, and Paul is compelled to confront him on this matter. It is important to notice that Paul does not simply dismiss Peter as unspiritual or divisive, criticize him to the others, and break off fellowship. Instead, he makes every effort to confront the divisions in which Peter has participated and invite him back into restored fellowship.

Within most large groups, it is natural for people to break off into smaller groups of more intimate relationships. In our churches, these show up as home fellowship groups, Sunday school classes, special committees, or boards. These groups can provide an important means of support and encouragement for their members. However, they can also be a source of division when separate groups find themselves at odds with one another. Paul gives us a model of loving confrontation in which the goal is reconciliation and restoration of fellowship.

One Body, Many Parts

Perhaps the central epistle for unity within the church is 1 Corinthians. Here Paul goes to great lengths to address issues that are creating division within the community, and presents his most detailed explanation of the church as the Body of Christ with each member playing his or her unique part and contributing to the whole.

One of Paul's key points in 1 Corinthians 12 is that no person has more value to the body than any other. For those of us familiar with these chapters, this is perhaps an overly familiar point to emphasize, but it needs to be reinforced because, often, our natural tendency is to prioritize members of the body over one another. We give prominence based on the contributions a person makes within the life of the church, the length of time they have attended, their standing in the community, their age, or any number of other factors. However, if we believe that the Holy Spirit is uniquely gifting each of us, then we will come to recognize that no part of the body has more importance than any other. Therefore, a critical component in striving toward unity within our churches is working to ensure that we are valuing the presence and involvement of each member.

When the new member or a teenager vocalizes a desire for different expressions of worship or ways to minister in the community, we must be willing to listen with humility and respond with openness and grace. Likewise, when a long-term member of the community is struggling with the church beginning to look different than what he or she is used to, we must be willing to listen with humility and respond with openness and grace. Along with this, we must be willing to recognize the ways in which the Holy Spirit can minister and work through each of our members, and work to learn from all people, not just those who serve in prominent preaching and teaching roles. Striving toward unity means that everyone's presence matters to the church.

Unity, Not Uniformity

Another thing that quickly becomes clear when we look at the biblical admonishments for Christian unity, is that unity does not equal uniformity. Again, this is perhaps made most clear in 1 Corinthians 12, in which Paul goes to great lengths to emphasize that each member of the body is meant to play a different role. But the diversity within the body extends beyond different spiritual gifts to different preferences and convictions as well. In Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8-10, Paul addresses believers who have come to differing understandings on "disputable matters." Here is an area where the Body of Christ has an opportunity to bear witness to the power of the gospel in our world. Our culture is regularly offering us ways to divide ourselves from one another: social status, generational gaps, and political preferences are just a

handful of ways we are invited to see ourselves in categories of "us vs. them." However, as Paul told Peter in Galatians 2:15-16, "We...know that a person is not justified by the works of the law," (or we could add, any of the previous categories) "but by faith in Jesus Christ." In other words, we may be different from one another in all sorts of ways that our society deems important, but we still embrace one another as brothers and sisters - one body, worshipping our one Lord side-by-side.

*...unity does
not equal
uniformity*

Striving Toward...

We need to do the work to figure this out. It is very easy to read the Pauline passages on the importance of unity in the body and want to affirm them, but when we start dealing with real people in our church community, things get messier really quickly. When we deal with real people in relationship, we will inevitably step on some toes. Paul's final words in 2 Timothy 4 reflect this reality, but they also speak of a restored relationship that had been damaged on his first missionary journey.

What is critical as a first step in striving toward unity as a body is for each one of us to give the other person priority. Paul emphasizes in Philippians 2:3-4, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests, but to the interests of others." That means when I find myself at odds with another member of the church, my primary responsibility is to seek to understand and serve them. The example for us is Christ, who had every right to be served, but instead "made himself nothing" on our behalf. The move toward unity begins with you first.

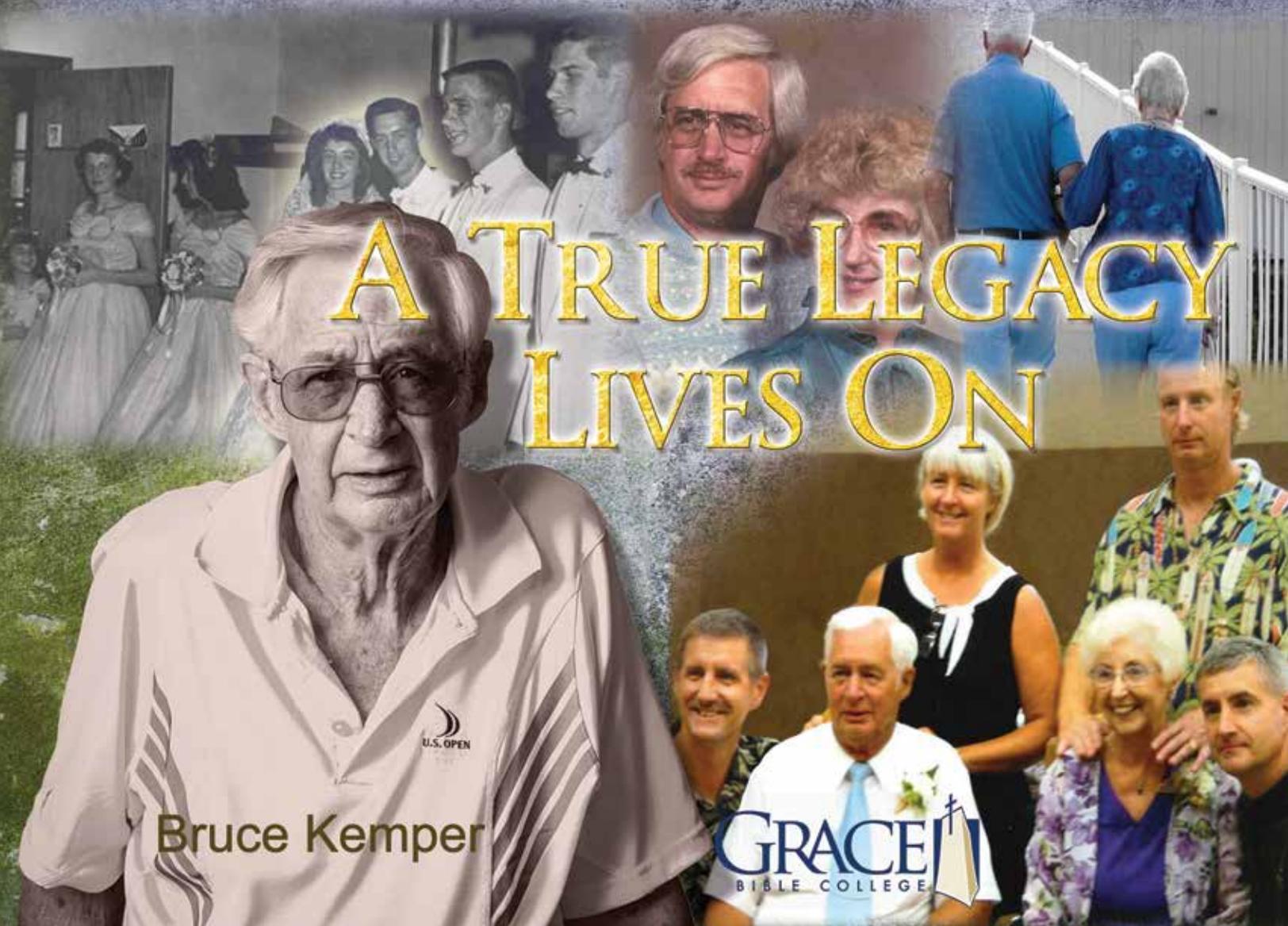
What is one step you can take to pursue greater unity with a member of your church this week? ■



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by Ken Kemper, President of Grace Bible College

We all know great men and women who have impacted us in deep and lasting ways. We speak of their legacy: what they stood for and what they valued in their work and life. I pondered this a great deal as I came into my 40s and 50s and saw my own children growing up and leaving the home, eventually starting families of their own.

Many of us have some unique family traditions which we inherited from our parents, or new ones we set out to establish in our homes based on our desire to make memories or honor our heritage. In our home, we have stories and celebrations which focus our attention on God's goodness, and like most, those which center on the relationships, the grace of God, and the strong family dedication to serving Christ. Like many families, our children did not always understand the great value of these core attributes we desired to build into their lives, but as they grew they understood the incredible reality and gift of those values in life.

On February 2 of this year my father, Ernest Bruce Kemper, passed away. All of our family gathered to talk and memorialize his life together and recognize the great legacy which we have, value, and seek to pass on to our children, and our children's children. We all attend funeral and memorial services and listen to others tell a life story in 60-90 minutes. I will confess the wonderful memorial to our friend Dick Walker in mid-December and that of my father were longer than normal. They were beautiful services, and yet didn't even begin to justifiably tell the whole story. These were men who touched lives in phenomenal ways and did so with high intentionality. Both of these men were engaged in ministry through Grace Bible College and many other ministries as well. Both of these men had a daily ambition to touch other lives, to encourage and support them while seeking to honor God.

The Measure of Legacy is in the Future Generations

We have all known great leaders and felt they were monumental in their impact, but as we looked around 10 or 20 years later we were unable to tangibly see those who were carrying on that legacy in the next generation. Was it because they embodied ideas and concepts and did not connect them to life and relationships? I am not sure. It bothers me to think that my legacy could be only good memories rather than inspiration toward values which can be lived out in the days beyond my own. Deep inside don't we all desire to see our children and others stand for those deeply rooted attributes which we hold so dear? Of course, we do!

E. Bruce Kemper lost his father to Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS) when he was just eight years old. He and his younger brother Deane were cared for by grandparents much of the time due to the fact that their single mother had to work hard to bring in finances to support the family. A legacy of faith was begun by his mom and grandparents as they explained the gospel to Bruce as a child. I recently saw an old Bible that was given to my father by his dad which only said, "To Bruce – 2 Timothy 3:15." (That verse says, "And how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.") It was the night his father passed away that my father (Bruce Kemper), as an eight year old boy, gave his life to Christ as his personal Lord and Savior. He would say, "Two people had to die for my salvation." Dad and his brother Deane were both brought up to fear the Lord and were in church every week with their mom or grandparents. Both boys excelled in athletics, yet Bruce turned down athletic opportunities after high school to pursue a calling in ministry by attending Moody Bible Institute. There Bruce met Judi Wardell from Michigan. They pledged to serve the Lord together in ministry, which they did for more than 58 years as a married couple.

My parents raised four rambunctious children, Kathy, Keith, Kris, and myself, and instilled biblical values in us from an early age. They also instilled a real love for people and ministry! So many ministry families see their children turn away from the church and ministry due to their struggles. However, in the hearts of all four of Bruce and Judi's children is a strong commitment toward ministry and the local church.

Paul spoke to Timothy in one of the last letters he ever penned and encouraged him: "You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And

the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Timothy 2:1-2). I witnessed my dad giving away Bibles to children and adults when coming to Christ or attending church regularly. He always wrote in the front cover, their name and II Timothy 3:15—passing on the legacy of prayerfully seeking salvation for every person as his father did for him in those short-lived years of his childhood.

A Legacy of Love for God's Word & the Message of Grace

My father was an early riser who greeted each day with a joyful spirit. He was also dedicated to reading God's Word on a daily basis and spending time in prayer. He not only taught those principles, but he modeled them until his last days. Those who sat under his teaching could recognize his love for God's Word.

In his early years of ministry in Seattle, he and my mother began to learn of the distinctive ministry of the Apostle Paul to the Gentiles and revelation of that mystery of the grace of God. They both dug deep into study and as first generation Grace believers, never faltered from their excitement of understanding and teaching the Bible from this mid-Acts dispensational perspective. In churches where my father served, there was always growth and vision for the future. He was at times accused of not being "grace enough" because of how "positive" and "non-divisive" his ministry was compared to many. He taught the whole Word and always pointed out the dispensational perspectives. As children growing up under his strong expositional preaching, we knew of no other way to understand this exciting message of Grace revealed to the Apostle Paul for us today. Dad saw the message of Grace as evangelistic in nature and always presented the gospel for man's need and based it on God's grace on the cross. He was not willing to narrowly define the "Grace Message" to a particular distinctive in which we differed from others, but as God's wonderful gospel for all nations which needed to be preached evangelistically like the Apostle Paul had done in his world.

A Legacy of Love for God's People

My father enjoyed people, and he wanted to be with people all the time. He invited people over to the house after church, or he invited people to go for ice cream or Mexican food after church. He told the

whole church to come over for Memorial Day if they didn't have plans and he would do some grilling. On holidays we almost always had some people over who did not have family or were from out of town. People in restaurants and public places nearby became his friends easily and were invited to come fellowship with us. He showed his children how to initiate relationships: walk up with excitement to meet someone, and greet them with friendliness, and extend your hand expecting the same in return. This made him a leader and people wanted to be around him. His interest in others meant that he learned names really well and stories about their families and their past. He walked into a room and his presence was known. I was always happy when my father was there because of what he exuded towards others. He modeled approaching life with confidence and trust in God that motivated others, especially his children to do the same.

My father loved his family and wanted to be at every event. One particular morning after returning from a mission trip to the Philippines, I was unable to sleep because of my excitement about how God had used me and was calling me. My dad got up at 5:30 am and took me out for breakfast. He told me how proud he was of me and how excited he was for me to be called to ministry as he and mom had prayed for that always. He engaged each of his children in different ways and showed great pride in our gifts and especially our walk with Christ and ministries. As his four children left home and began families and ministries in different parts of the world, they all approached ministry and people in similar fashion.

Living out the Legacy

I have no one who impacted and modeled for me how to do ministry more than my father, Bruce Kemper. I am not the same as him, but certainly learned to love the Lord, His Word, and people (saved and lost) from his example. My three siblings also serve the Lord in GGF churches according to their gifts as leaders, too. Dad visited us more than once while we served in Africa. I had him preach and translated for him. He walked away and said, "I can't imagine anything more exciting in life than to preach the gospel with my son and see souls saved!" This pleased my father and he often mentioned it. When our three children (Kaleb, Zach, and Naomi) all chose to attend Grace Bible College and enter full-time ministry, he often talked about the legacy. He wanted to visit them and his other grandchil-

dren and encourage them. In this last year, my parents, my children, and their families all gathered for the GGF Leadership Conference here in Grand Rapids. We spent each evening at my home, and after putting the little ones to bed, we would listen to my father and mother talk about their childhood upbringing and the early years of their ministry together. This was so that their legacy could be intentionally known and lived out. Our three children, serving in ministry, made calls to my father and mother for advice, which absolutely thrilled them in their years of retirement. They gave wisdom, listened, and always prayed for each one.

As people remember my father's service to the many Grace churches in Washington, California, and Michigan, as well as his leadership at Grace Bible College, Bethesda Mission, and Grace Ministries International, they speak of the impact which he had on their lives. Impact is so encouraging, and we are all impacted by many people in various ways. It is the legacy of a man who was far from perfect and had weaknesses and failures, but endeavored to be committed to the right things in life that must live into the next generations. Paul's challenge to Timothy is to see the evidence of his teaching and life displayed in the lives of Timothy himself, faithful men, and also another generation. The longer I am in ministry myself, the more I realize that how we treat people and instill the grace of God in their lives is what will lead and change them the most. There is a level of intentionality in the relationships. My father did this extremely well, and therefore the calling, the message of Grace, and love for His Word and people is the legacy I seek to duplicate in my life. A legacy feels as if it runs deep in your bone core and is part of your DNA. A legacy like this comes out in everyday life, and in long-term goals for life and ministry. It is more than just sounding like or looking like your dad. It is grasping what he was about in the best sense and living it out yourself. In this case, it is an investment in others.

E. Bruce Kemper invested his life, as did many others, in people for a lasting legacy. That legacy has already begun to be lived out daily in two more generations who are faithfully doing the same things. There is a need for many more of this tribe and legacy to multiply into other generations according to 2 Timothy 2:1, 2. May these words inspire each of us to intentionally invest in a legacy which is a living reality for those around us and not just an inheritance of concepts, memories, or possessions. This is a lasting and worthy investment of life. ■



On December 21, 2016, Grace Ministries International missionaries Cory and Kim Hodgson, Brook Seekins, and Mike and Lynn Caraway received letters from the Grace Churches in Tanzania asking them to leave the country. They were no longer welcome as guests under the church’s work permits which allowed them to live and serve as missionaries in Tanzania. Less than a month later, instead of fighting the decision of the church, these families left their homes in Tanzania brokenhearted and grieving. The ripples then began to roll outward from the impact of this decision. Beyond the immediate effects their departure would have on their own ministries, individual Tanzanians began to contemplate life and ministry without their missionary coworkers. Likewise, the rest of the missionary family in Tanzania wondered the same as they also agonized over having to say goodbye to these friends who had become family. Soon after, this news hit the rest of the GMI organization hard. GMI’s largest and oldest field had lost nearly half of its missionary staff. Family, friends, and supporters were soon receiving information and naturally began to ask about the welfare of the families directly affected, the missionaries left behind, and what this meant for this field for which many have been praying and following for decades.

Without getting into the background or details leading up to the church’s unexpected and surprising decision, suffice it to say none of our missionaries committed any sin, great or small, or any moral failing which warranted their removal, nor is the purpose of

this article to tell you what is going to happen next in Tanzania, other than GMI wants to see this relationship restored and is working towards that end. Given that these are the foremost questions people are asking, what then is the purpose for discussing Tanzania in this article?

Crises are instructive and having nearly half of your missionary team in your oldest field being asked to unexpectedly leave in short order by the church they were working with qualifies as a crisis. Situations like these are instructive both for those going through them and those who are observing. Our missionary team and their families who are enduring this unbelievably difficult time of grief, pain, and uncertainty have and continue to handle this situation with the grace God provides (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Not only that, they have also experienced the blessing of even greater dependence on the Lord having been challenged to learn spiritual lessons which they probably never imagined learning in this manner.

In a similar fashion, GMI is learning too. In the midst of this, one of many lessons which has been reaffirmed is that without vision, a mission, and direction an unexpected turn of events could paralyze and even halt the advance of any organization. Without goals and a solid commitment to next steps, the temptation would be to singularly focus on the events of the moment to the detriment of future blessings and successes of which the Lord would give us the privilege to take part. Oftentimes, we confuse smooth sailing with direction and purpose when in reality direction



and purpose are made evident when times are tough. When storms come and yet through God’s strength progress is made and efforts are exerted towards accomplishing goals, then we can more clearly see that direction and purpose.

“ Oftentimes, we confuse smooth sailing with direction and purpose...”

The Apostle Paul’s mission when he wrote to the Roman believers was “to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man’s foundation” (Romans 15:20). Pursuant to his mission, he set a goal to travel to Spain while first visiting the believers in Rome who would send him on his way (Romans 15:24). He asked the church at Rome to pray that it would be God’s will to make it to them as part of his larger strategy of also stopping by Jerusalem before visiting them and journeying onward to Spain (Romans 1:10, 15:30-33). As Paul neared Jerusalem where he would meet with the believers there and deliver a “contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem” (Romans 15:27), he was confronted about the dangers of entering the city. In response, he acknowledged the real possibility of his own martyrdom declaring, “for I am ready not only to

be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13). Needless to say, death would have paralyzed and halted Paul’s pursuit of his quest to reach Spain. Paul presupposed a possible circumstance that would have been detrimental to his plans and goals, but he did not shy away from them and continued to pursue them with resolve. Borrowing from Paul’s example, while GMI did not anticipate the situation in Tanzania, it is with resolve we forge ahead pursuing goals consistent with our mission of sharing God’s grace with the world.

Vision 2023 is GMI’s 10-year strategic plan adopted in 2013 which, if fully realized, would have us opening 8 new fields, sending 16 new U.S. missionary families or individuals, and sending 10 individuals or families from around the world to serve as missionaries on our missionary teams. In the last few months, God has continued to bless GMI demonstrating His faithfulness in the middle of unsettling events.

At the GMI board meeting in February, the board approved another GMI missionary family to serve on our missionary team. Givemore and Sylvia Nyakambiri, originally from Zimbabwe, are missionary candidates assigned to work for a time in Malawi and then on to Mozambique to evangelize, plant churches, and disciple believers. Later this spring Givemore will receive a ministry degree from Africa Bible College (Malawi) having already received a Certificate in Ministry from Zambia Grace Bible Institute and a Diploma in Missiology from ProChristo Global Missions (Zambia). The Nyakambiris are well known to the GMI missionary family having served together regionally in Zimba-

bwe, Zambia, Mozambique, and Malawi. Among their gifts, Givemore and Sylvia are proven church planters and Givemore is an effective teacher and preacher. During a conversation with Givemore and Sylvia about where they would like to serve as missionaries, they described two countries. One country was open to the things of God, welcoming to foreigners, and desirous to have more missionaries come and serve. The other, Mozambique, they described as hostile, corrupt, and relatively closed. Assuming that the Nyakambiris would eagerly choose the former, they promptly corrected that assumption noting that those who are hostile and headed to hell need the opportunity to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. We thank God for leading Givemore and Sylvia to us.

meets in GMI missionaries Carlos and Denise Brunk's home will be moving into a rented building soon. The construction of a meeting place for the congregation which now gathers in GMI missionaries Emiliano and Raquel Seravalli's home has begun now that the perimeter wall on the property in Nagarote, Nicaragua, is substantially complete. In Paraguay the Bomers and Gularts have just signed a lease for a building where the faithful group which now meets in the Gularts' apartment can continue to expand. Again, we thank the Lord as He causes the growth (1 Corinthians 3:7).

Having been accepted as GMI missionaries at the October 2016 board meeting, Tom and Michelle Sanchez are actively raising support for their ministry

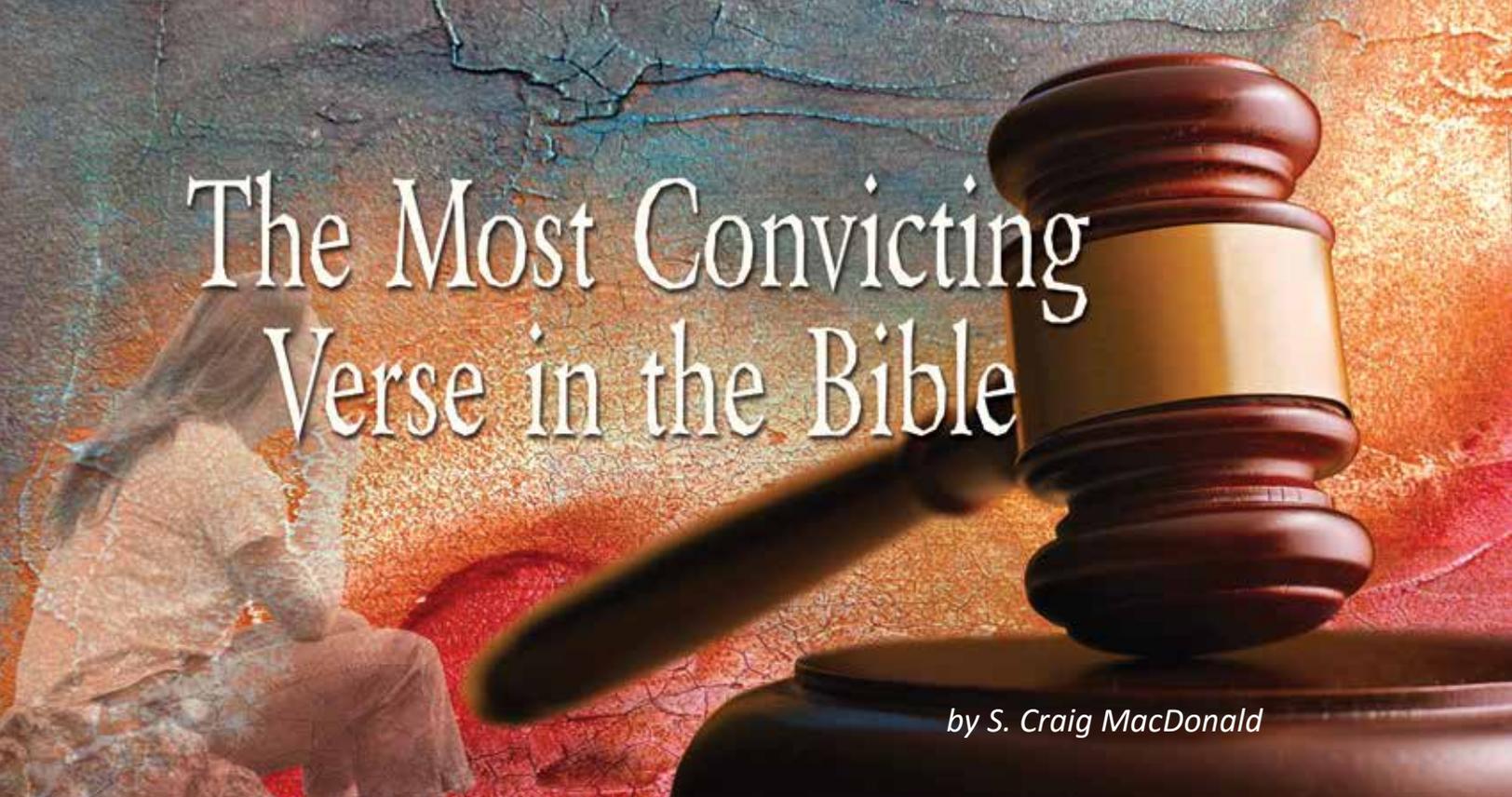


In March, GMI missionaries Frosty and Cathy Hansen, who only starting raising support in August, arrived in Bolivia to begin their ministry. Just before their arrival, the president of the association of churches with which we work in Bolivia (Misión Evangélica Bethesda) wrote GMI grateful that the Hansens are returning to this field to assist the church in establishing a Bible training program to further ground pastors and church leaders in their doctrine and ministry, raise up a new generation of leaders, and train Bolivians to be missionaries who could take the gospel beyond their borders into the rest of South America and the world. With a new field in neighboring Paraguay, GMI is excited about the prospect of a collaborative regional effort to reach even more of the continent with the gospel of grace.

On GMI's three newest fields, plans to move churches started in missionaries' homes into new facilities are progressing. In Bonaire, the church which

which would have them open the country of Burundi (East Africa) as a new field. In the last several months, GMI missionaries have taken survey trips to Panama (Chuck and Joy Befus), Honduras (Emiliano and Raquel Seravalli), and Ghana (Joseph Asong) while GMI missionaries Kennedy and Sofia Simtowe continue to work towards opening Mozambique as a new field.

Nobody nor any organization relishes the difficult task of dealing with the fallout arising from unforeseen and challenging events. The reality is all of us will be tested. It is not easy, but when trials come we can choose to "glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5:3-4). Perseverance is that much easier to grab hold of and appreciate in our lives when we see how the Lord is still working through us as we persistently pursue a mission and goals which are in accordance with His righteous and loving character. ■



The Most Convicting Verse in the Bible

by S. Craig MacDonald

I'm sitting in a Starbucks with a tall skinny peppermint mocha (don't judge) and a fire in my belly resulting from something that happened this morning. And the only way I know to deal with this particular fire is to write about it. So if you choose to read what follows understand that a lot of mental, emotional, and spiritual energy lies behind it.

At 4 a.m. I picked up a message from our son Steve. The brother of our daughter Michelle (we don't have daughters-in-law), who also happens to be named Craig, was diagnosed over a year ago with pancreatic cancer, something that almost always brings death in about six months. This healthy husband and father of two young children began a battle against the odds that included the best in medical care and the earnest prayers of his family, immediate and extended.

Tests and surgeries showed that the cancer was detected very early and was in an area of the pancreas that sometimes yields to very aggressive treatment, a regimen he began. It took a heavy toll on his body, but God answered those prayers through the medium of medicine and he was recently declared cancer free!

No one in that situation is ever released from medical monitoring, and a test two weeks ago showed more rapidly growing spots on his liver. The family was told no further treatment could reverse the inevitable and the best they could do was prolong his life for perhaps a year. Friends started a Go Fund Me page so they could take a final family trip and prayed for God's grace for what was ahead.

They also prayed for something else, something the medical profession could not even hope for. They prayed for a miracle.

Last week Craig had yet another procedure to get a precise picture of what was going on inside his body. It required two surgeons because his insides are so messed up from the excavating work done already. Because the standard biopsy results didn't make sense the medical team assumed there was some kind of error and ordered an MRI. It confirmed the biopsy results; it is not cancer. The multiple doctors on Craig's case agree that this makes no sense, but they have concluded that the cancer has not returned. The growing spots are some kind of fatty deposits. Rejoicing!!

“The multiple doctors on Craig's case agree that this makes no sense, but they have concluded that the cancer has not returned...Rejoicing!!”

This is the second situation we've encountered recently of medical professionals at a loss for an explanation. The youth pastor at our church, a vibrant 30-something husband and father, was diagnosed a few years ago with two forms of cancer so rare that I'd never heard of them, can't pronounce it, and think it has something to do with his blood. He went through what has been described as a miserable treatment regimen that left him cancer free.

Two months ago our pastor announced to the congregation that tests showed the cancer was back. "David has determined to accept this as God's choice for his life and the family is preparing themselves to deal with the future, however it plays out." The clear message to the congregation was that David's condition was likely terminal. Then he prayed for David and his family, including for a miraculous healing.

David was accepted into a clinical trial at the University of Washington because of his relatively young age, his otherwise good physical condition, and the rarity of his cancer. The family made plans to relocate to Seattle for the year he would receive the treatment that would be so demanding that travel back and forth from Eugene, OR, would be impossible.

I cannot explain how the absolute sovereignty of God and the effective prayers of His people align. But I don't need to.

Part of the intake process was a full set of tests to establish a baseline. You can probably anticipate what comes next. They sent him home because they found no evidence of cancer. You might say that a doctor here in Eugene had misdiagnosed, but don't tell David that. These are the same skilled specialists who correctly diagnosed and treated the earlier appearance of these cancers, so they have a lot of credibility with him and with the people at the U of W who agreed to accept David into their clinical trial based on that diagnosis.

David is back home with his family and with the youth who thrive under his ministry. He has a reputation for being a crazy hard worker and you can imagine that he's approaching his efforts with a renewed energy.

The most convicting verse in my Bible? In James chapter four the Apostle goes on a rant against some among the readers who are behaving very badly. They quarrel and fight (v. 1), covet (v. 2), and "do not have because you do not ask," (v. 2). James adds that when they do ask they don't receive, "because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions" (v. 3). That sentence, "You do not have, because you do not ask," brings me up short. It causes me to wonder what God has not done because I have not asked.

You might respond, "God is sovereign and will do his sure and certain will regardless of the action or inaction of individuals or groups." The necessary implication of that statement is prayer doesn't have any effect on outcomes. At best it has a positive effect on the one who prays, strengthening his or her spiritual life, but prayer does not change anything beyond the one who prays.

That, however, is not what the Bible clearly teaches. In James 5 we read that, "The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working" (v. 16). James illustrates this truth by citing the case of Elijah who was, "a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit" (vv. 17-18). We're told that the withholding of rain and then the return of rain happened as the direct result of Elijah's prayers.

In Colossians Paul asks his readers to "pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word" (4:3), an odd request if their prayers held benefit only for them. In the same letter he tells them that Epaphras struggles on their behalf in his prayers, "that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God" (4:12). Were Epaphras' earnest prayers of benefit only to him? If so, why even bother telling the Colossian Christians about those prayers?

I cannot explain how the absolute sovereignty of God and the effective prayers of his people align. But I don't need to. The Bible says both are true and I accept by faith what the Bible clearly and unambiguously teaches.

If my ability to fully grasp the ways of God is going to be the standard of my acceptance of biblical truth then my faith comes in second to my reason. That's not a place I want to be!

"God is not doing miracles in this dispensation. That was a methodology he used with Israel." This objection also lacks any biblical basis. Miracles come in two types, direct and indirect. Indirect miracles are done by God through a human agent. It's noteworthy that the first indirect miracles were given by God to Moses in Exodus 4 when Moses objected that the Israelites wouldn't believe he had been sent by God. God tells Moses to do these three miracles in the presence of the Israelites to convince them he is God's appointed deliverer. Prior to this point all the miracles had been done directly by God. Think of those associated with creation, the flood, and the multiplication of languages at Babel.

plained by divine intervention in nature and the affairs of mankind. That takes us back to James 4:2, "You do not have because you do not ask."

Why don't we ask? Understanding the nature of miracles and accepting by faith what the Bible says about prayer removes any theological basis for not petitioning God for miraculous action. Are we too timid? We're told to go to the "throne of grace with confidence so we can receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). Frankly, I can't come up with any good reason to explain why I so often fail to ask God to do great and miraculous things, especially for others.

Asking God to do things for me may put me under the indictment of verse 3, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions." That certainly is not always the case, but was some-

Understanding the nature of miracles and accepting by faith what the Bible says about prayer removes any theological basis for not petitioning God for miraculous action.

But here in Exodus 4, concurrent with God's dealings with Israel as his special people, we first see human agents used by God to do miracles. In the New Testament these indirect miracles are identified as signs, the English translation of a Greek word that means something that can be observed by the five senses that authenticates the thing it accompanies. In his gospel John uses the word sign 17 times to describe the miracles Christ did and tells us they were done to accredit Jesus as the Son of God (John 20:30-31). In 1 Corinthians 1:22 Paul writes, "Jews demand signs," that is, indirect miracles that authenticate the one who claims to speak in the name of God.

Indirect miracles were a methodology used by God to meet a specific need of the Jewish people. The first indirect miracles coincide with God's dealings with Israel in delivering them from Egypt and ended with Israel's setting aside in the Book of Acts. But just as direct miracles predate Exodus 4, so they extend beyond Acts. He is still the God of miracles, doing that which can only be ex-

plained by divine intervention in nature and the affairs of mankind. That takes us back to James 4:2, "You do not have because you do not ask."

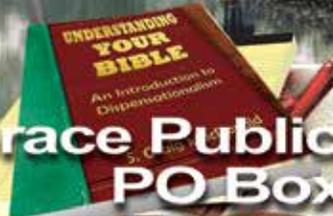
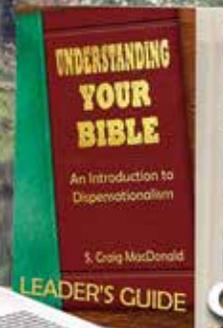
thing characteristic of the problem people James was addressing. I'm sure that Craig and David joined their families and friends in praying for miraculous healing, and God graciously answered with a "So be it!"

Yes, I am convicted of my failure to pray boldly for God's miracles, especially when there is no reasonable basis for hope. And I am ashamed to think of what God did not do because I did not ask. If that previous sentence seems impossible to you then you need to find another explanation for that clear implication of James 4:2 and the teaching on prayer throughout the Bible.

After the email about Craig's miraculous healing and word of David's miraculous healing I am committed to praying more, and more boldly for others I know in similar situations, including a friend fighting Stage 4 colon cancer. Why wouldn't I, especially when God has specifically told me prayer is powerful and effective?

Who should you pray for? ■

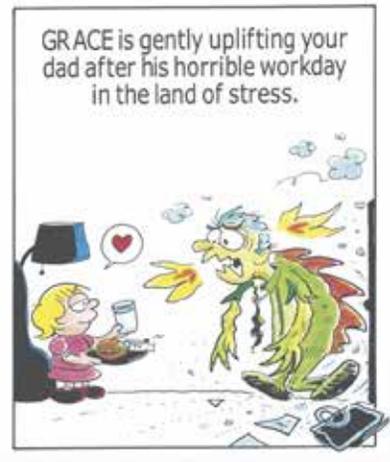
This spring why not really get
into God's Word?



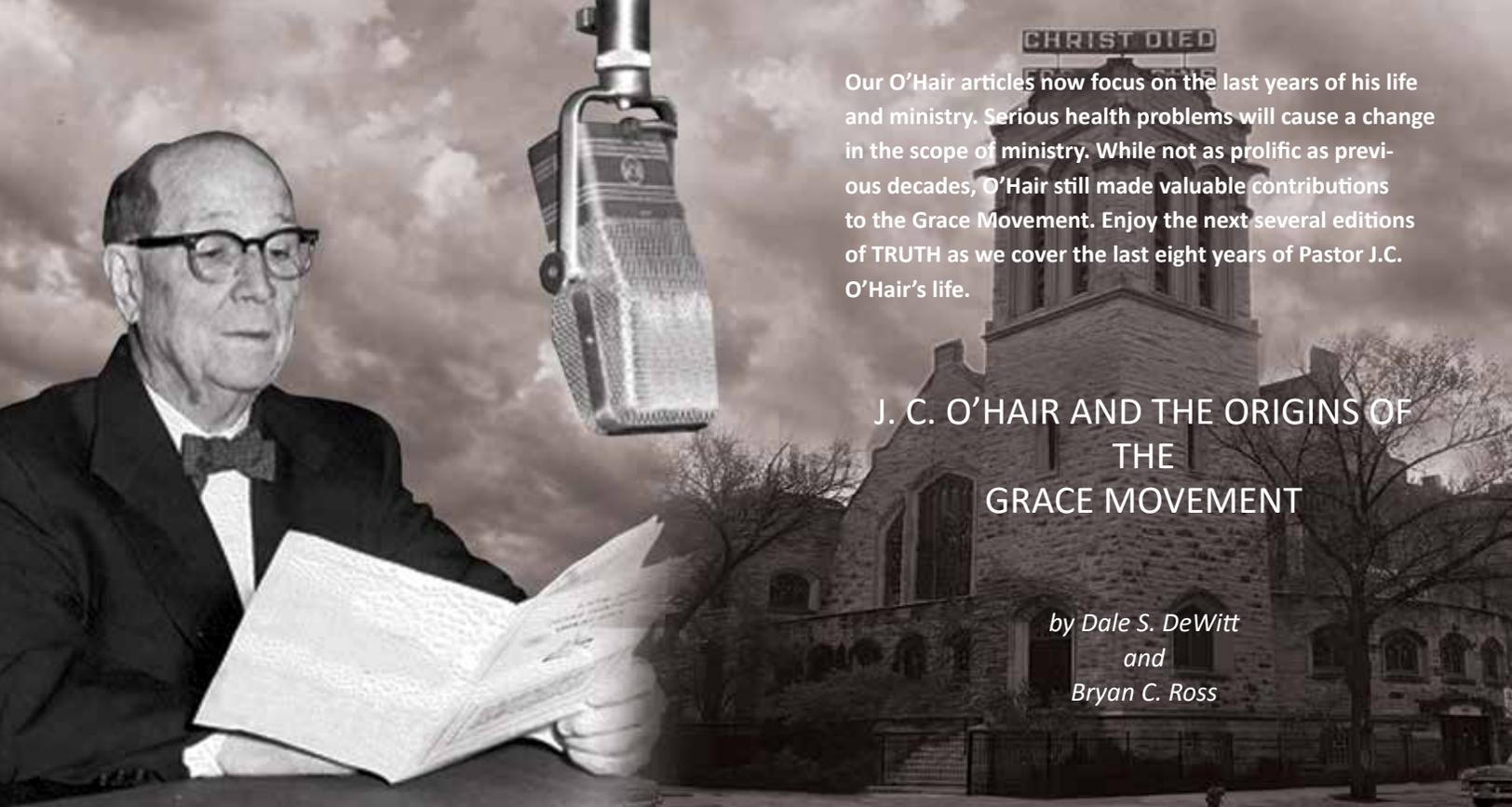
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Leah

FROM BEREA



CONNOLLY '17



Our O'Hair articles now focus on the last years of his life and ministry. Serious health problems will cause a change in the scope of ministry. While not as prolific as previous decades, O'Hair still made valuable contributions to the Grace Movement. Enjoy the next several editions of TRUTH as we cover the last eight years of Pastor J.C. O'Hair's life.

J. C. O'HAIR AND THE ORIGINS OF THE GRACE MOVEMENT

by Dale S. DeWitt
and
Bryan C. Ross

Retrospect: Looking Back During the 1950s

The 1950s were the last years of J. C. O'Hair's life; he died in January, 1958 in his eighty-first year. When the decade opened he was already seventy-four, having been through a serious health problem in the early 1930s, and stressful controversies with Harry Ironside and James Gray (1930s) and again with Waddi Haggai and Otis Fuller through the 1940s. During the decade O'Hair's writing and publication output declined sharply, a decline which may have begun as early as 1945. Compared to the more than eighty items of the 1940s, he produced only about twenty-five booklets and pamphlets from 1950 through January, 1958—at least this is all we could find among the total of more than 250 written pieces over his whole ministry. When one considers the persistence and force of the baptism-Bullinger controversies of the 1930s and 1940s, it becomes difficult to resist attributing the decline in output at least partly to weariness bred by constant pressure. And yet one local witness close to O'Hair told the authors that O'Hair never slowed down during the later years of his life.

During the previous decade (1940s) O'Hair sought to integrate biblical concepts, terms and phrases of importance into his dispensational theology; biblical correlations of this sort did not continue to any significant degree in the 1950s; only a few of the twenty-four pamphlets and booklets of the decade did engage this

effort. The two cases in point were *The Riches of the Lord of Glory* and *The Nation Israel...Three Elections*; fortunately, the latter survived but apparently in a typed manuscript only.¹ In addition to these two pieces a few dispensational studies appeared. As in previous chapters the most significant elements of dispensational theology important for the emerging Grace Movement will have the priority here. Brief discussion of three small pamphlets on the subjects of grace and the Christian life will conclude the chapter.

...O'Hair never slowed down during the later years of life.

The new element in this decade—if there is one—is not easy to discern. One could conclude from reading the pamphlets and booklets that the decade saw only repetitions of older ideas. Amid this repetitiveness, however, a new slant is visible in which O'Hair became retrospective, looking back in various subtle

¹ This piece is in the O'Hair collection of Bultema Library (Grace Bible College, Grand Rapids, MI).

ways on his life and mission or his American evangelical-fundamentalist context. Mentions of D. L. Moody, rare in previous decades, are an example.² Sometimes O’Hair seems puzzled about why earlier interest in Paul’s mystery of the church by some fundamentalist teachers appeared to fall away. This is the case with some once good friends in Christian leadership who earlier embraced at least in part his view of Paul’s revelation. He also wondered why this Pauline theme failed to penetrate the thinking of larger denominational churches where, as he thought, it would do the most good. His puzzlement appears quite straightforwardly in *The Recovery of Lost Truth: Who is Responsible for the Stalemate?* Perhaps this pamphlet is the best clue to the outlook and content of the decade’s writings.

A topical classification of 1950s pamphlets and booklets suggests O’Hair’s priorities during the decade. The categories are not entirely discrete since they overlap somewhat as was the case in the classified lists of previous chapters.³

- 7 on Dispensational Studies
- 6 Controversial-Retrospective Subjects
- 4 Evangelism
- 2 Grace in Scripture
- 2 The Christian Life
- 2 Personal Life and Testimony
- 1 Biblical Books

As in other decades, pamphlets on evangelism, the Christian life, and grace in Scripture appeared. O’Hair, like the movement emerging from his ministry, shared historic evangelical commitments to divinely inspired Scripture, Trinitarian doctrine, evangelical salvation, energetic witness to Christ at home and abroad, and the Christian life of all believers. The Gospel of John will be discussed because it relates closely to O’Hair’s Trinitarian evangelism and dispensational theology themes. John’s Gospel became increasingly important to O’Hair during his ministry, although the emerging Grace Movement’s attention to John’s Gospel has not generally reached the level of its founder’s interest.

² J. C. O’Hair, *What it Means to be a Christian*, pp. 1-3, discusses an example of Moody’s personal and public witness to salvation in Christ. Otherwise references to Moody in the pamphlets are sparse compared to his frequent mentions of contemporary national Bible teachers of note like Scofield and Ironside, or a dominant personality of the second half of the previous century like J. N. Darby.

³ For O’Hair’s booklets and pamphlets of 1950-1958, see the Appendix.

Two pieces on his personal life and testimony provide further biographical information and photos; of these his Thank-You Letter of July 1957 has the most information, especially about his last months on earth. The “thank-you” was addressed to his congregation and radio listeners for cards received during a recent hospital stay and prolonged convalescent period in 1956-1957.

Reading and Writing on Dispensational Theology

J. C. O’Hair’s Early Reading in Retrospect

In the preceding chapters, the millenarian-dispensational thought-stream was discussed along with important individual teachers from whom O’Hair learned just after his conversion. Among them O’Hair identifies Isaac Haldeman and Leon Tucker. In one piece he mentions C. I. Scofield with them, but does not mention reading anything written by Scofield in this earliest stage of his Christian life.⁴ Not until the 1950s did he actually mention Tucker and Haldeman as his earliest theological lights. For this reason, a few further comments on their contribution along with that of a few others seem in order. Both leaders are mentioned together in the Life Story tape-transcript (1955), and Haldeman is singled out again with comment in *The Church of Christ and Ten Confused Fundamentalists* (ca 1956).⁵ Why Tucker and Haldeman are mentioned only this late in O’Hair’s writings is puzzling since Scofield is mentioned often after 1920. The puzzle cannot be solved decisively, but a few suggestions seem apropos.

Intentional secrecy about Haldeman and Tucker seems unlikely. O’Hair uses a few forerunners’ names beginning in the middle 1920s with more appearing in the 1930s. The earlier relative silence may be a happenstance, or O’Hair just did not think of referring to them because other, more urgent issues stemming from attacks over baptism and Bullingerism were pressing. Another explanation might be the lack of a suitable context; in the 1950s O’Hair was thinking

⁴ Scofield’s pamphlet, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, was available before 1899; O’Hair may have read it soon after his conversion, but he does not say so.

⁵ J. C. O’Hair, *The Church of Christ and Ten Confused Fundamentalists* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, 1956?), p. 19. In mentioning Haldeman he also mentions A. C. Gaebelein, C. I. Scofield, and W. B. Riley, and says he “profited much through their ministries and Bible teaching” (p. 19). He adds Haldeman to the group and distinguishes him as a “writer I read shortly after I was saved in November 1899” (p. 19).

back over his ministry more than in previous decades. Despite the provocative title—The Church of Christ and Ten Confused Fundamentalists—the latter pages of this pamphlet are full of kindly, appreciative, even laudatory remarks about many fundamentalist teachers whose writings and radio ministries had been a personal blessing. This is the context in which Haldeman is singled out as a major light among several lights including Scofield. But even deeper in this context is the impact of Haldeman at a crucial time in O’Hair’s life—the months immediately after his salvation. Tucker is mentioned for this early time as well, but Haldeman takes first honor, at least according to this pamphlet.

O’Hair’s relative silence about contemporary authors in earlier writings, and the relative disinterest of most pamphlet readers in historical theology matters have together encouraged some O’Hair followers to think he discovered most of his dispensational ideas alone with only the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This view of O’Hair may have been encouraged by a limited reading of his pamphlets, or even in a few followers by a form of founder-honor or tendency to attribute more to his originality than is realistic. One simple step out of this tendency would be a more thorough reading of pamphlets and booklets published after 1925 where he begins to mention Scofield and Darby more often, and occasionally after 1930 Sir Robert Anderson. His allusions to A. E. Bishop are not especially significant since Bishop was actually a minor figure even though his small pamphlet was important to O’Hair for his own view of miracles. Unfortunately, some readers of O’Hair have access to only a few pamphlets and booklets which may lack mention of O’Hair’s theological lights and therefore provide only limited knowledge.

Beyond this limited group of writers, the question remains open about what other sources O’Hair was reading and to whom he was talking between 1899 and 1917 when he began writing. Nothing here suggests he was not reading more widely; we just do not know what he was reading beyond authors he mentions. Clearly he was reading his Bible carefully and intensely, a fact cited in family memoirs. We can be quite sure he was studying Scofield’s Reference Bible after its publication in 1909. By 1920 he had probably read at least several and perhaps a number of premillennial-dispensationalist teachers. Our blind spot is the years between reading Haldeman and Tucker and his arrival in Chicago in 1917 (except for Scofield’s

Bible)—a period of about seventeen years.⁶ It is probably fair to assume considerable reading during the St. Louis years in connection with his membership at Washington-Compton Presbyterian Church, the church long pastored by J. H. Brookes; according to Carl Sanders this church had accumulated a collection of millenarian and dispensational writers under Brookes’ leadership.

Whoever O’Hair was reading or talking to beyond the leading writers mentioned above, it is important to remember these writers were mostly populist pastor-teachers though often well-educated; but they were not university scholars. The American premillennial-dispensational movement was deeply populist in tone and outlook, and distrustful of professional scholars. Many of the latter were professors in universities and seminaries, and were “Bible teachers” of sorts, although by 1920 a growing number were deeply affected by Modernism and the biblical criticism movement of the post-Civil War era. Fundamentalism was in retreat from the university and busy establishing Bible institutes as an alternative to college, university and seminary ministry education. Though not a seminary or university trained scholar, O’Hair was sufficiently instructed theologically to pass a Presbyterian ordination examination, and after taking the pastorate at North Shore Church he studied at Moody Bible Institute for several years.⁷ But aside from formal education, he was an aggressive thinker in expanding the thought of popular dispensational teachers’ about the gospels, the early chapters of Acts, and Paul’s Gentile mission and church teaching. ■

⁶ For further recent discussion of older dispensational writers, see Pietsch, *Dispensational Modernism*, pp. 96-145. Despite this odd and perhaps critical-sounding title, Pietsch’s discussion of the old American dispensationalists is fair, mostly positive, and full of suggestive insights on the related flow of ideas in the late nineteenth century. By “Modernism” Pietsch meant early American dispensationalists’ adoption of late nineteenth century scientific method principles for Bible study in which they were not at all “anti-modern” as sometimes suggested by opponents. Pietsch’s study argues that early dispensationalists were successful in large part because they adopted popular scientific methods current in the later nineteenth century, i.e., classification (taxonomy), data quantification, and correlation of complex but related observations of data. With these methods and their details applied to study of the Bible, the early American dispensationalists built a new version of the dispensations, climaxing in Scofield’s dispensational scheme covering the whole Bible.

⁷ O’Hair refers to his studies at Moody Bible Institute in a personal letter of October 23, 1944, to Moody president Will Houghton. The letter is in the O’Hair collection of Bultema Library, Grace Bible College.

ALIENS

Is There Life on Other Planets?

by Ed Jeude



An organization called SETI (Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence) has quite a few thousand members around the world. Their computers monitor the airwaves searching for ANY kind of a signal that could possibly be construed as emanating from a distant civilization. This search is one of the reasons for continuing and even expanding our “Space Program.” So far, no intelligent signals have been detected.

Those who espouse evolution statistically “conclude that there must be life out there” given that the Hubble telescope detects millions of not just planets but entire galaxies. They are looking for a “Goldilocks” planet that is not too hot, not too cold, but just right including gravity, atmosphere, radiation levels, light, water, soil, plants, animals, and other things that we are not fully aware that we need for life on earth. Planet Mercury is molten, Venus melts the metal lead, Mars has an environment that cannot support life as we know it. Other than planet earth, our solar system is essentially uninhabitable.

Christians look to the Bible for what God says on the subject: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). “Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts” (Gen 2:1). “He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth...” (Acts 17:26). When we leave the “face of the earth” and go into outer space or under the ocean, very well thought-out provisions are required to sustain human life for even a limited time.

The Bible refers to supernatural intelligent beings: angels, cherubim, seraphim, mighty, powers, thrones, dominions, authorities, in short, the heavenly host of which we know nothing except through scripture. It speaks of “The Nephilim (giants) on the earth in those days...when the sons of God came into the daughters of men, and they bore children [offspring not from Adam] to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown” (Gen 6:4). It also speaks of “Angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode...being kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day...” (Jude 6). Angelic beings certainly can and have sinned but I find no biblical plan of redemption for them. The Apostle Paul asks, “Do you not know that we [Christians] will judge angels?” (1 Cor 6:3). We’ll certainly need precise jury instructions from the righteous Judge of all men!

Given the remote possibility that intelligent mortal life is discovered “out there,” are any Christians prepared to biblically answer questions that the world would ask concerning sin and redemption? Did (or will) Jesus Christ go to planet Goldilocks and die for their sins? Huh? Huh?

“He [Jesus Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:15-16). I can’t see any “wiggle room” for an intelligent race in the universe that He doesn’t already know about.

Since man was created in God’s image which was then marred by Adam’s deliberate disobedience, God made provision for mankind’s redemption thru “Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Timothy 1:9). Even as the Philippian jailer asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”, the answer is still “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved...” (Acts 16:30).

I spent seven years in Florida as an engineer with the space program and interfaced with many astronauts during project Mercury, Gemini, and the Dragon anti-tank missile program. A number of the astronauts are not ashamed to say that they trust Jesus Christ with their current as well as their eternal life. May our “Space Program” prosper as we continue to explore and wonder at God’s creation. ■



Region 1: Northwest



Five of our region's churches got together for our annual senior high Winter Blast at **Cascade Mountain Bible Church** in Leavenworth, WA. Seventy-one students participated. A lay youth leader from Port Orchard, Kevin Fontenot, did the speaking. A good time was had by all and teens grew in their relationship with the Lord.

Berean Bible Church in Shoreline reports that the elders and staff are working on becoming more intentional with the five purposes of the church. Their thirty-something young adult group is a growing, vibrant group that is a big part of their church's ministry. Pastor Jim is leading a trip of sixty people to Israel in May. Pray for a safe and educational experience. ■

Region 2: Southwest



In January the men of **Grace Bible Church** (Anaheim, CA) had a breakfast fellowship in which they honored Frosty Hansen. The attendance was good they decided to continue breakfast fellowships on the third Saturday of every month at 10 am. So if you're in the area, drop in. ■

Region 3: West



Bethel Union Church (Akron, CO): (Pastor Peter Tel) - 2016 was a great year. We are looking forward to the rest of 2017. We enjoy working with the Cope Community Church, along with our youth groups, as we meet together two times a month. Bible studies are going well. I really enjoy our men's breakfast we have on Wednesday mornings going through the Psalms. We typically have four different churches represented at these breakfasts. Our outreach is interesting and intense, and we are seeing miracles worked in peoples lives through just doing our part in caring for the needs of others and praying with them.

Cope Community Church (Cope, CO): (Terry Covert, Pastor) - Spring Happenings at Cope Community Church... New coed Bible study on Monday evenings ... Our "Seniors Only" [high school seniors] dinner and Bible study on Wednesday evenings is a fun and fantastic time [who knew a 65-year-old pastor still had it in him to minister to high school kids!]

Denver Bible Church (Arvada, CO): (Pastor Bob Enyart) - Of the many ways to spread the gospel at DBC we just produced our second origins video. The first was on earth science and this one's about space. One endorsement just came in from a former NASA Cassini Saturn

mission administrator David Coppedge and another from an Australian cosmologist and creator of the world's most precise clock Dr. John Hartnett. God's Grace Movement must be amazingly diverse.

Grace Bible Church of Lakewood (Lakewood, CO): (Pastors Harl Hargett and Mark Smith) - Our lives are often refreshed and lifted up in a vibrant community of Faith. Where our Lord's people gather to worship, hear the Word of God and get spiritual nourishment is indeed a thing of great beauty. We of Grace Bible Church are working hard to build this kind of assembly that will touch lives and souls in a very deep manner and provide respite from the grueling demands of this secularized world. We are thinking outside of the box to carry His Name in places and spaces where people are often overlooked.

Harvest Fellowship (Brighton, CO): (Pastors Steve Blackwell & Bob Hill) - It is great to serve Christ in a neighborhood that only 3.5% attend any church at all. In review, we have had 275 people receive Christ in 2017 and many are being disciplined or taught the scriptures. Our teens in the youth group have been responding to a deep commitment to Christ after being disciplined for a couple of years, with not just being a fan, but a follower of Christ. A couple of the students have started a high school Bible study at a neighborhood Starbucks and just split it into two groups because it was growing rapidly. PTL for the youth demonstrating their relationship with God.

Liberty Heights Chapel (Lawton, OK): (Kerry Malakosky, Pastor) - Liberty Heights Chapel will be

having its 64th Anniversary on April 23 (Lord willing). The church was started by Pastor Weldon Rightmer and his wife Doris in 1953 in Lawton, OK. Pastor Weldon and Doris had both ministered in the Lawton area for several years before they started the Chapel. During the '50s and '60s, Doris had kindergarten classes at the Chapel as well. ■

Region 4: Upper Midwest



March is the month of our Annual Business Meeting at [Grace Bible Church](#) of West Allis, WI. This year is the 83rd anniversary of annual meetings. This year in July we shall be celebrating our 85th year of existence. Some people look forward to milestones in their lives or in the life of a church. It is truly an honor to be around for a long, long time and to have a history of God's faithfulness to a body of believers.

We have a number of 90+ year olds and are very thankful for them. Their vision in years past... their sweat, tears, and efforts to al-

low us to be where we are today... cause us to be grateful to God for what they have done. They poured their prayers, time, and money into this work of God and He has blessed it amazingly.

In 1927 Pastor Charles Baker along with J. C. O'Hair began a Bible study. Out of that small group of believers came a church known as Fundamental Bible Church in 1932 and also Milwaukee Bible Institute in 1944. God has blessed both institutions and today Grace Bible Church has been in its new location since 1980 and Grace Bible College in Grand Rapids since 1961. They are still flourishing and striving to glorify God through their efforts.

There is much work to be done in the coming days as long as we have life and energy to evangelize the lost and edify the saints. We look forward to the future and what God will do with our lives that are surrendered to His will. May God unify us in the GGF so that we might see even more progress in the gospel and the grace of God in our efforts for our risen Savior Jesus Christ. ■

Region 5: Lower Midwest



[St Louis Bible Fellowship](#)

continues to experience growth, thanks to our radio advertisement over a local radio station. Our choir is busy rehearsing for our Resurrection Sunday Cantata under the direction of Jill Calkins. Our children's ministry continues to grow under the direction of Tyrell & Rachel Shoemaker! Serenity Glass has taken over the duties of leading our worship on Sunday morning! If you are ever in St Louis on Sunday, come join the excitement!

Usually ten to twenty Region 5 representatives meet three times yearly to discuss local ministry highlights, national reports, and items for prayer, all while enjoying good fellowship while we lunch. Meetings are at Ryan's in Effingham, IL, starting at 11am. Next meeting is May 18, 2017. Feel free to join us. Reservations not required but Kaleb Kemper (1kalebkemper@gmail.com) coordinates the meetings. ■

Let's all be in prayer for our sister churches in our regions and the activities happening that we know about. Also be praying for churches currently without pastors that they may find the man the LORD has for them.

Region 9: Western Michigan



At [Coopersville Bible Church](#) we are finishing up our year of Coached By Christ. We had a great group and we know they learned a lot about the Lord. Our leaders did a great job and we thank them for their faithfulness to the Lord and to the club. We look forward to next fall in prayer that the Lord will bless our

efforts for Him. With VBS on the horizon, we want to tie it into CBC as a way of attracting new clubbers.

March began with a "Friend" Sunday. The congregation was encouraged to invite friends and help us form new relationships. We met some new people and made some new friends. Their future with us is in the hands of the Lord. We enjoyed having them and hope to see them want to call our church their home.

Our recent Sunday morning messages have been looking at the seven churches in Revelation. We look at their condition and what God had to say about them, His warnings and admonitions. As we have looked at each one we have seen how they parallel the condi-

tion of the church throughout the ages. Seeing these seven churches helps to alert us to the dangers that surround us. This is a highly recommended study. ■

Region 10: Central Michigan



Many things are getting worked on here at [Frontline Bible Church](#) since the start of the new year. We had a consultant come in to evaluate our entire church at the end of 2016, and his report came out in January. On the one hand, it's never fun to receive information on what you're doing wrong, but it was definitely great to see the

things we're doing right. The board has been working hard on shoring up the issues that were raised, and progress is already being made and felt.

There's also been a lot of work getting done to prepare for Pastor John's upcoming ministry sabbatical. Pastor will be stepping away from normal ministry duties for three months (mid-July to mid-October) to recharge and equip himself for how to better lead an equipping church. While this is the first time since the church's inception that a serving pastor has taken a sabbatical, there is great support and anticipation for what can come of it for both pastor AND congregation. ■

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