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... Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.*" Those two verses along with fifteen years of testing and breaking in my life (the loss of our first child, some very hard times in ministry, being faithful yet not fruitful) are serving to destroy my self-sufficiency and driving me to trust in the Lord. That process is not finished yet.... [more](#)

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Many people reflect on their own mortality when attending a funeral or memorial service. Someone I know of who trusted Christ as a result of a funeral explained why when he said, "It was so clear that the Christians were dealing with death better than the non-Christians." At that funeral he was thinking of his own mortality which caused him to observe how others were dealing with theirs. The actual day of the service isn't the only time to reach them, though...

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Church Growth or Health

Rev. Les Lofquist
Executive Director

I recently came across a profound truth expressed in the form of a cartoon. It showed a man in a business suit standing in front of a number of charts and slides depicting upward trends and referring to growth principles. With exasperation and flailing arms, he turned to two men on the floor praying next to him and exclaimed: "Hey! If you guys would get off your knees long enough, I could teach you something about church growth!"

Rather sad, isn't it? But it seems to be illustrative of where many are in today's American Evangelical churches.

It started with good, old-fashioned American pragmatism: finding that which really works well and riding it all the way to everything bigger and better ("which proves it's the best!"). Identify strategies, techniques, methods, programs, and theories designed to help the church grow. And for the past thirty years it's been all the rage in seminaries, churches, and Christian publishers. Americans have exported our brand of Pragmatic Christianity all around the world. I've witnessed evidence of this firsthand in my travels. Our culture's entrepreneurial spirit and financial wherewithal have seen to it that our "church growth strategies" are now worldwide. I've observed it in Germany, India, Russia, Korea, Japan, Central America, and South America. I never cease to be amazed at the effectiveness of American marketing (and that includes Christian marketers) every time I travel overseas.

I find one recent trend to be much more refreshing. It's the trend away from talking about "church growth" to talking about "church health."

Recognizing the difference

We need to recognize the difference: church health and church growth are not synonymous. The numerical growth of a church does not necessarily indicate congregational health. Sometimes numerical growth is more a matter of demographics than the moving of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, churches can be vital and healthy yet fail to experience numerical growth (that was my experience for many of the years I pastored in Utah). An emphasis on church health enables a congregation, regardless of size or location, to focus on its relationship with God, with one another as fellow members, and with its community and the world.

A healthy church is a local church where the people of God are functioning as He has designed. Churches that do not function thisway are not healthy. As long as a church deals with methods, models, and marketing strategies, the church will only be treating the symptoms of an illness that is robbing the church of its vitality. And as long as we continue to talk about symptoms, we will persist in thinking we can heal the sickness with another new program, method, or model. The critical issue is the supernatural empowering of the church, which occurs when a church dwells in right relationship with its Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, "I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Christ made it perfectly clear: it's His business to complete the Church. And this He is doing. Yet it is also clear from Scripture that Christ has given believers the privilege of being laborers together with Him in the process. In 1 Corinthians 3:9, Paul reminded the Corinthian believers of the role that leadership plays in the increase of the body of Christ. Paul wanted them to understand that neither they nor their leaders control the increase. That is God's business. Where He does include them is in the process of faithfully sowing and watering the truth of His Word (1 Corinthians 3:5-8).

Paul also wanted to emphasize that while methods may be of some importance and some leadership styles may be preferred, our primary emphasis must be on the character, integrity, and spiritual maturity of the co-laborers Christ is using in the great process of growing the Church. Paul wrote that the Corinthian believers were not functioning as effective co-laborers with Christ. They championed human leaders which promoted strife and division (1 Corinthian 3:3-4). Instead, they were to be concerned with "how" they built (1 Corinthians 3:10). It is obvious from the context that this involves an obedient attitude on the part of the believer, not an efficient program on the part of a church (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

Christ's concern is not with the efficient methods, strategies, and techniques used in churches ... but with a vital and obedient union with Him (John 15:1-10). The Church is a living organism. It is more like a body (1 Corinthians 12:27) than a smooth running organization or a well-oiled machine. In that sense the discussion about church health is much more appropriate.

What does Christ say to the church?

The New Testament presents Jesus Christ in relationship to the church as Head (Ephesians 5:23), High Priest (Hebrews 8:1), Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5), Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4), Advocate (1 John 2:1), and Bride Groom (Revelation 19:7). The Book of Revelation adds to these by portraying Him as the glorified Lord of the Church (Revelation 1:9-20).

In the second and third chapters of Revelation, we read the letters dictated by the Lord Jesus Christ to seven local churches. Here, in a direct and specific way, we see an assessment by the Lord of the Church regarding the health indicators for local congregations.

What is striking to me is that most of the usually stated health indicators (by today's "church experts") are not at all evident in Christ's messages to the seven local churches of Asia. Nothing is seen regarding more effective evangelism, equipping and discipling ministries of the church, nor vision casting by the pastors. In a quick reading of these two chapters, here are Christ's church health indicators:

- Holiness and dealing with personal sin (Rev. 2:2, 20-21)
- Exclusive love for Christ (Rev. 2:4-5)
- Endurance despite the challenges and difficulties of ministry (Rev. 2:3, 9-10, 13; 3:10)
- Confronting corporate sin, evil and heresy in the church (Rev. 2:6, 14-15, 24)
- Focus on eternal rewards (Rev. 2:7,11,17,26,28; 3:5,12,21)

The word "repent" is an extremely important word used by Christ in His messages to the churches (2:5, 16, 22; 3:3, 19). Yet "repentance" is one word I have never seen in any discussions about church growth, and it appears in precious few discussions about church health. Amazing, given its prominence by the Lord of the Church!

The importance of balance

Numbers of books have been written in the past several decades outlining the "secrets" or "keys" or "characteristics" of healthy churches. What began with Gene Getz's two emphases on evangelism and edification for the church (in *Sharpening the Focus of the Church*, Chicago: Moody, 1974) was expanded by Getz to include faith, hope, and love (in *The Measure of a Church*, Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1975). In the 1980s the list of characteristics of a healthy church grew to include the healthy New Testament church model based on Acts 2:42-47 (evangelism, teaching, fellowship, worship). I saw all kinds of churches adopt those four elements (or a variation of them) in their church's mission statement back in those years. It seems this wasn't enough: in the 1990s a barrage of books were written and seminars were presented attempting to elaborate on more crucial elements of a healthy church. [At the end of this article you will find a chart with an overview of all these "secrets" or "keys" or "characteristics" of church health as outlined by these more recent authors.]

Having said all of the above, what would I understand to be the key element of church health?

In a word, it's balance!

Church health can only occur when our message is biblical and our mission is balanced. Each of the purposes that the New Testament presents for a local church must be in balance with all the other purposes presented in the New Testament for health to occur in a local assembly.

However, because we are imperfect beings, balance in a church does not occur naturally. In fact, my experience is that we must continually correct imbalance. It seems to be the nature of humans to overemphasize the aspect or purpose of the church we feel most passionate about. I've seen this in my own ministry. I've seen it in other men and churches. I believe that it's the natural tendency for leaders to emphasize what they feel strongly about and neglect whatever they feel less passionate about. In this way, out-of-balance churches become an extension of their pastor's giftedness. They focus mainly on what the pastor cares about most.

That's why balance is so necessary for church health. And a biblically based, balanced church ministry is one that the Lord Jesus will use in the process of building His Church. Pursuing a biblically based, balanced ministry should be the lifelong pursuit of every pastor and local church.

Dangers in this pursuit

It causes me concern that Americans are leading the way in defining the crucial elements for church health. Is this as a result of a dangerous preoccupation in our market-driven culture? Does this come from our business-based mindset? I attempt to be ever vigilant and avoid falling prey to the American idol of pragmatism. That is a very real danger in discussions about church health.

Another danger is that we might miss the emphasis on obeying Scripture in our attempts to organize around a method. Even though we attempt to define church health indicators based on the New Testament, the obsession may be with a method rather than with obedience. That's scary. I've read some books that seem to imply "if you do this, this, and this ... you will have growth because you will be healthy." This represents health-by-method as opposed to health-by-obedience.

A further danger is self-absorption rather than Christ-centeredness. It is possible to become overly analytical about the health of our church ministries to the point of diminishing Christ. We act as if the key to church health is found in the devotion to the pursuit itself. Remember, Christ is the Lord of the Church and He is doing the building! We must be vitally connected to Him in order for Him to use us in the process. He is the key, not some method involving a list of goals to pursue. In our pursuit, we cannot forget the Ultimate Goal is to know Christ and glorify Him, by drawing upon His power.

Another danger in pursuing church health is the possibility of confusion and discouragement. Take a look at the end of this article and view of all these "secrets" or "keys" or "characteristics" of church health. It can be confusing for a pastor or a local church. It can even overwhelm, "because how can we do all of those things here at our church?!". More than a few men return home discouraged after attending the latest church health seminar or reading the latest book on the subject.

One last danger is attempting to become the perfect church (or "an excellent one") led by the perfect pastor (or, again, "an excellent pastor"). Perfectionism becomes a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is driven by the commendable desire to do well. What heart-surgery patient wouldn't want a perfectionist for a surgeon? What airline passenger doesn't want the pilot to be a perfectionist? Giving one's best for the glory of Christ, whether it involves repairing a car or preparing a Sunday School lesson, is admirable. Going the extra mile is a good thing. On the other hand, perfectionism is also driven by a fear of the consequences of not doing well. And it is this fear that cultivates regret, because perfectionists never can get things exactly right. Perfectionist beliefs set us up to be disappointed in ourselves and other people around us in church, given that achieving perfection is impossible. In other words, the high standards of perfectionism become an impediment to vitality in Jesus Christ. It becomes even more frustrating when the demands for excellence ("church health!") create high expectations in the church if it is populated by people of

low commitment to that pursuit. They're happy for you to pursue balanced church health ... just don't ask me to help you.

The values of the pursuit

Pursuing a biblically based, balanced ministry should be the lifelong pursuit of every pastor and local church. This is a praiseworthy goal for everyone who names the name of Christ. It is so for several reasons.

First, it places the discussion where the New Testament places it. An emphasis on balance and health and obedience rather than an emphasis on numbers and growth and bigger-means-better.

Second, it helps the pastor and local church to know their priorities and set their ministries in such a way as to allow the Lord Jesus the maximum opportunity to use them as He wills.

Third, it reflects the teaching in verses such as "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:31) and "Whatever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:23). Churches and pastors should obey the Lord of the Church as they minister for Him in their communities.

Read over the indicators of church health as presented following this article. Study the Word to see whether these things are true. Attempt to forge a biblically based ministry that is balanced, for the glory of God. Review Christ's messages to the churches in Revelation 2-3. Pray and seek His strength and blessing in your ministry. Then trust Him to use you in whatever way He may sovereignly choose.

**Church health, not necessarily church growth,
is a worthy goal if properly understood.**

A Healthy Church

An Assessment According to Paul's Letter to Titus

Dan Fredericks

I am in that stage of life-the forty something decade-when it becomes important for even normally healthy individuals to begin an annual physical checkup routine. So, dutifully and somewhat reluctantly, I've begun to incorporate such a practice, subjecting myself to poking and prodding for the purpose of assessing and assuring the true state of my health. The results have been both encouraging and discouraging. I am generally in excellent physical shape, and yet tests have revealed the consequential need to "watch what you eat, and avoid saturated fatty food." So much for the enjoyment of eating! However, in order to maintain good health and to assure some longevity, I've agreed to discipline myself.

In similar fashion we must take stock of our spiritual health, including the health of our ministry. Some churches are lean and vigorous, but over time they can become sedentary and spiritually unhealthy. We would be well advised to give ourselves and our churches an annual physical-a spiritual checkup, if you will. Let me suggest the book of Titus as a good standard for establishing a spiritual checkup list.

Paul's letter to Titus contains the key word, "sound", derived from the Greek word from which we get the word hygiene. It is also used for that which is good, healthy, whole, or safe and sound.¹ Paul also makes use of this when writing to Timothy in 1 Timothy 1: 10.

Additionally, another key word Paul uses is "pure". Purity is to be an essential quality of the believer and a characteristic of the church. Three different words are used, generally translated pure or purity in the English text: katharos in 1: 15, speaking of that which is clean in contrast to something dirty and stained; hagnos in 2:5, speaking of that which is free from defilement with a moral connotation; and apthoria in 2:7, speaking of that which is without corruption.

The Apostle is obviously occupied with concern for the moral and spiritual wellbeing of the church. Purity in doctrine will lead to purity in life. Soundness in doctrine will lead to soundness in the Christian life. A parallelism used of Paul worth noting is his use of "sound in doctrine," followed by "sound in faith."² Soundness in doctrine produces soundness in faith, like the parallel health benefits of a healthy diet accompanied with exercise.

According to Paul's letter to Titus a healthy church is characterized by the following components:

A Healthy Church is Known by What it Believes In (Titus 1: 4).

Our standard for good spiritual health is the faith we have rooted in Christ.³ Our faith is not a faith in faith, but rather the faith in the work of God in Christ. It is not sufficient to have mere belief in things religious. Our faith is specific and directed to the object: the Lord Jesus. One cannot eat anything and remain in good health. Likewise an any-kind-of-faith cannot produce a healthy spiritual life.

A Healthy Church is Known by What Its Leadership Models (Titus 1:5-9).

There is great value in role models who inspire us to get in shape. An entire industry has developed around personal fitness, but most fail to follow through. Our favorite athletes and trainers become posters on our walls, while we fail to follow their examples. The church requires "personal spiritual trainers" who can set the standard and inspire others to follow their example. The Lord has entrusted men in the church to become spiritual servant leaders and role models for the health of the flock. Men who will have spiritual maturity and moral integrity and will protect and prescribe a course for spiritual health in the church.

A Healthy Church is Known by What it Stands For (Titus 1:9).

The healthy church will be one that practices the discipline of a healthy diet of sound biblical intake. For some the clear teaching of God's word will be sweet, while for others it may be bitter medicine. In any case, the word of God will always produce spiritual health when taken in regularly, meditated upon deeply, and practiced tenaciously. Our churches must be places where the Bible is clearly taught.

A Healthy Church is Known by What it Guards Against (Titus 1: 10, 16).⁴

The real benefit for the health of the local church disciplined by a balanced diet and exercise of biblical instruction is the preventative against the threatening influences of false teaching. There is a constant presence of certain biological viruses and bacteria that can potentially infect a healthy body. So the Scriptures warn of the ever-present reality of false teachers that seek to infect the life of the church with false teaching.

We must be on the defensive as well as the offensive, watching and guarding our own lives, and that of our flock, against these ever-present intruders.

A Healthy Church is Known by What It Protects (Titus 2:1-14).

We are told to "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect..." (v. 10). The moral and spiritual covering which should adorn and characterize the believer also serves to protect and

preserve the church as a whole. Proper outward attire serves to promote a moral modesty. It also provides protection from the elements that could bring harm to the body.

Purity is a parallel theme in Titus.⁵ As in the case of maintaining good physical health, it is true that personal responsibility must be taken by each individual to live a healthy lifestyle on a daily basis. Personal moral responsibility must be exercised day by day, and moment by moment. Carelessness and excesses will breed consequences that can become debilitating and life threatening.⁶

Paul instructs Titus to urge daily discipline and self-control for the entire spectrum of church life: older men to younger men, older women to young women. This spectrum covers every status of life from children at home to the environment at work. Healthy personal character rooted in spiritual discipline will produce health in relationships and every social context. To neglect this discipline is to set a course of erosion leading to the destruction of a local church and even the society at large.

A Healthy Church is Known by What It Cares For (Titus 2:11-14).⁷

Aggressive evangelism was a mark of the healthy early church. Aggressive but not offensive⁸ though the message itself did at times offend.⁹ Paul's exhortation to Titus was as much evangelistic as it was instructive. The phrase "God our Savior" and similar characterizations is used six times, twice in each of the three chapters. The lost in need of a Savior must be the concern of a healthy church. Those who have been made spiritually well have a responsibility to seek out the spiritually sick that they may become well.¹⁰ Christ, alone, is the cure for the sin sick soul.

A Healthy Church is Known by What It Eagerly Looks For (Titus 2:13).

A healthy church has an ultimate perspective and goal. It focuses on the reality of the imminent return of the Lord. This sets the motivation to maintain and excel in personal and corporate purity. When we know we must give an account to the Lord, we are motivated to maintain our discipline. This was Paul's focus in life and ministry: that he not be found disqualified and unfit for ministry.¹¹

Most of us get lazy until our doctor's or dentist's appointment draws near. And then we begin our futile attempts to take greater care of ourselves in desperation, only to find out that we could not make up in time our long term neglect.

The Church does not know the day of our Lord's return, but the fact of His return is certain. We are motivated to be found ready so that we should not find ourselves ashamed at His coming.

But more than a negative motivation, it should be a positive inspiration. The Lord is watching. And His appearing will be "blessed" and a time of great rejoicing. This should motivate us to be in shape spiritually, upon His return.

A Healthy Church is Known by What it Honors and Respects (Titus 3:13).

A healthy church must be characterized by its respect for God's appointed authorities. How can we possibly say we honor God when we despise the authorities that He has put in place? Regardless of political preferences, our ultimate loyalty lies with God and not with any human government. This is not an excuse to disregard government, but to uphold and submit to those in civil authority over us. This is actually a reflection of our ultimate submission to the Sovereign over all. A biblical view of civil government and human authority is essential to spiritual health.

A Healthy Church is Known by What it Rejects (Titus 3:9-11).

A healthy church does not permit itself to become entangled with prideful controversies.¹² Our human pride is the greatest earthly enemy and threat to our ministry health. We destroy our own

spiritual health with pride. It must be rejected and renounced personally and corporately. It must not be tolerated at any level. Pride multiplies and divides like cancer. Separating and destroying healthy cells and replacing them with deadly ones. Radical steps to eliminate this threat must be taken. The health of the church depends upon it!

I would challenge our fellowship to practice a regular pattern of church health assessment. If you have ideas for assessing church health, please pass them along to me. We are seeking to develop the IFCA Church Health Institute to improve our overall vitality and effectiveness in the ministries the Lord has entrusted to us.

There are many good resources to encourage your church health. If you have found additional resources helpful, please let me know. To your church health!

Dan Fredericks is the IFCA International Director of Church and Pastoral Ministries. He invites your participation and interaction at dan@ifca.org

1 See A. T. Robertson, (Word Pictures, Vol 4 p. 563),"The healthful (hugiaino, old word for being well, as Lu 5:3 1; 3 Jo 1:2, in figurative sense in N. T. only in the Pastorals) teaching." See Tit 1:9; 2 Ti 4:3.

2 Compare 1:9, 13 and 1:1, 2

3 Jude 3

4 Consider 2 Peter 23, and Jude, as well.

5 See 1: 15; 2:5, 7, 14; not to mention the references to "godliness" to be Godlike in all things.

6 Romans 13:11-14

7 Ephesians 2: 10; 1 Timothy 2:14; Titus 3:8, 14

8 1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 6:3

9 1 Peter 2:8

10 See 1:34; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6

11 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Philippians 3:8-16; 2 Timothy 4:7

12 2 Timothy 2:16

Transition in Leadership

Paul J. Bufford

The Problem

Writing about the first ten years of the twenty-first century, George Barna and Mark Hatch predict, "During this decade the American Church will experience a massive turnover in Church leadership. Many of the individuals who have shaped the Church as we know it today will pass the baton to successors."¹

Some of our leaders and their organizations have already named their successors. IFCA International chose Les Lofquist to succeed Dick Gregory as Executive Director in 1999. Lester Pipkin, the founder and first president of Appalachian Bible College, relinquished the presidency to Dan Anderson in 1983. Dwight Zimmerman has passed the torch of leadership for Cedine Ministries to Vernon Tannahill. With the exception of Lester Pipkin, each of these leaders was interviewed for their insight regarding the process of transition.

Many other organizations still face this important and difficult task. Scores of leaders will be needed to fill the ranks of those retiring. A significant number of those retiring are the visionary founders of their organizations. The situation is similar in our churches.

Significant Observations

Several observations stand out from my research on this topic for my doctoral dissertation.

First, it was surprising to learn that so little has been written about transition in leadership for ministry organizations and churches. This is obviously not because of a lack of need. Few organizations had resources available to them during their transition process. Some also acknowledged a hesitation to use outside resources, feeling that it would have minimal value because of the uniqueness of each organization.

Second, transition is often not done well by ministry organizations. This lengthy and sometimes detailed process has many pitfalls. There are so many things that can go wrong. Perhaps the lack of resources is a factor making mistakes more common.

Third, each organization should have in place a contingency plan for emergency leadership transition. Roland Bingham, the founding director of Sudan Interior Mission, died during his fiftieth year as director of the mission. It took nearly two years to find a replacement. The founding president of Columbia International University, Robert McQuilkin, also died in office.

Other possible emergencies also make a contingency plan essential: moral failure, a medical emergency, sudden departure. One man who founded and served as General Director of a mission was left in a coma for over six weeks by complications following gall bladder surgery. Two months later he was still in the hospital. Also, moral failure has created a need for an immediate successor for other ministries.

Transition Principles

The purpose of my research project was to discover the lessons learned by ministry organizations that have navigated these choppy waters. Leaders willingly shared their stories in personal interviews and permitted the review of public and private documents to provide guidance to other organizations in planning and preparing deliberately for leadership transition.

The Board is Responsible for Leadership Transition

Selecting the senior leader is one of the key responsibilities of the board of any organization, including parachurch organizations. Robertson McQuilkin, past president of CIU says, "The most important function of the board is choosing leadership."

The board may choose to permit the departing CEO to recommend a new CEO. However, this does not keep them from being ultimately responsible. If the new senior leader does not work out, the constituents will ultimately hold the board responsible.

Before an organization is ready to choose a new leader, the organization must be prepared for transition. The steps will vary from organization to organization, but the changes to be made

should be undertaken deliberately. Biblical Ministries Worldwide established a Directions Committee. Source of Light Mission appointed a committee they called the 2020 Vision Committee.

Transition Requires a Well-Articulated Vision

Establishing and refining the vision of the organization is a prerequisite before choosing the leader. BMW followed this principle to their benefit. Other boards have selected a new leader without a clear vision and have suffered the consequences.

After the merger that produced BMW, the time was approaching to choose a new general director. The board appointed a Directions Committee to answer the question, "What are our goals for the future?" They wanted to communicate where they were going.

Paul Seger, who became the director of Biblical Ministries Worldwide, says, "They had already done their homework and knew what direction they wanted the mission to go. Then they found a person that they believed had that philosophy of ministry and wanted to go that direction. So in essence what happened when I came on board, I already had a mandate on hand knowing 'this is where we want to go.'"

The mistake some boards make is to bring in a new senior leader and then to try to determine what the vision and direction of the ministry will be. This can produce significant conflict between the board and the leader as that vision is being hammered out. The new leader may feel that his selection empowers him to take the ministry in the direction he feels is best. The board, on the other hand, may be thinking, "This is not what we had in mind." Instead of the new leader bringing impetus to the ministry, confusion, indecision, and often conflict will occur due to the lack of clear direction.

Did this mean that it will be unnecessary to work on the vision of the organization after a new leader is selected? No. The incoming leader's first task is to clarify the vision of the organization. Questions to be answered include: "Why do we exist?" "What is our mission?" "What is our part in fulfilling the Great Commission?" "What are the things that must never change in our ministry?" People identify with, support, and join a movement that has a compelling cause to attract them. A new senior leader must articulate and refine the vision in his own words to a new generation.

Transition is Ongoing

The need to prepare for transition is not an occasional one. Preparation for and the process of transition at all levels in a ministry organization is an ongoing process that demands constant attention. It needs to be a part of the fabric of the organization. One man admits that he began making a list of people he considered as prospects to become his successor at the very outset of his twenty-two years in ministry leadership.

A primary objective for each organization should be to develop "bench strength." One current leader has made it a personal goal to see that when he retires there is a large pool of qualified applicants for his position. The lengthy process of leadership development must be a priority for every ministry leader.

Transition Takes Time

Effective selection of a new senior ministry leader requires no less than one to two years from the time that the director announces his intention to retire to the installation of a new director.

At least four separate and distinct time periods must be included: 1) The preparation of the organization for transition including refining its purpose and vision, 2) The period of time given to selecting a successor, 3) Any period of overlap during which the new leader is being prepared by his predecessor, 4) The period of adjustment after the new leader assumes full responsibility and authority.

Some organizations will benefit greatly from having an interim CEO. This avoids short-cutting the process. It takes time to solicit the names of prospects, to request applications and resumes, to secure written reference letters, and to review and evaluate all of the material gathered about each candidate.

The New Leader's Ministry Description Must Be Developed

What responsibilities are to be included in the ministry of the CEO? What qualifications are essential to carry out these responsibilities? What percentage of his time will be given to management of the organization? What will be his responsibilities away from the office: fund-raising, promotion/publicity, public relations? How will his management responsibilities be handled when he is away from the office?

This job description should reflect more the future needs of the ministry than the focus of previous leadership. How has the climate of this ministry, other similar ministries, and the world at large changed? In what ways do those changes need to be reflected in the choice of a new leader?

Any age limitations must be established. Does the organization have a mandatory retirement age? What would be the minimum number of years that a new leader would need to have available to serve? It takes five years before the organization can determine if the new leadership selection fits.

The Process Must Be Well-Defined

A leader of the group charged with the task of determining the process and recommending the new CEO must be identified. This leader must have the needed time to devote to the search process.

A well-defined selection process must be agreed upon at the outset. The board of directors must not hurry the process. A group of busy leaders may have the tendency to want to do that. But this temptation must not be permitted.

One of the factors that can put pressure on the process is the upcoming departure of the existing leader. If a retirement or departure date has already been announced, the search committee may feel rushed to meet the deadline.

A comprehensive application should be developed and completed by all being considered as candidates. This application should include permission to secure written references from previous employers, military records, credit history, educational records, and criminal background searches. A list of interview questions should be developed. This assures fairness and completeness.

Determine the Role of the Former Leader Within the Organization

On the way to lunch with two leaders of a mission organization, I was asked, "Based on your research, what percentage of transitions are done well?" I responded, "About 15%, if a successful transition means that both the outgoing and the incoming leader were satisfied." Though the mission director was surprised, his administrative assistant was not. By the end of the interview, the director admitted that little consideration was given in the process to the role of the outgoing leader following completion of the transition.

Here is a place where intense feelings can surface. Retirement is difficult for any leader. After leading their organization for thirty to fifty years, they may feel like an outsider. The new leader is more inclined to rely on the board and their subordinates. The exiting leader feels like he no longer has a voice or even a listening ear to his concerns, feelings, or ideas. He sees the direction and even the values of the organization changing. He views the rapid pace of change as a reflection upon his own leadership. If the people and organization that knows him best isn't willing to listen any longer, who will?

What can retired leaders find to do that seems meaningful? Their identity has been wrapped up in their leadership role. Who are they now? A meaningful relationship to the organization needs to be provided whenever possible. This is best established between the board and the outgoing executive before the new leader is selected. Two factors will affect this: how secure the new leader is, and how gracious the outgoing leader is.

Successful transition requires the cooperation of the existing leader. He must be sensitive to the need to inaugurate the process and to release control of the ministry. This requires humility and a sense of God's timing.

The Respective Functions of the Board and the New Leader Must Be Defined

Transition in leadership often necessitates or stimulates a change in the function of the board and its relationship to the CEO. Under a visionary founder, the board may begin as a board of reference to give credibility to the new ministry. Another primary role initially may be to provide advice and council to the founder. At this stage, board members are chosen because of their friendship with the founder or their commitment to the new ministry.

A major shift often occurs when a successor is chosen. Instead of the leader choosing his board, the board chooses their leader. Instead of the board buying into the leader's vision, the leader is expected to buy into the vision of the ministry as articulated by the board.

Ministry staff may be included as board members in the early years. As long as the board's function is advisory, this can work satisfactorily. It may even be beneficial. But once the board becomes the overseer of the CEO instead of his advisor, this becomes a problem.

Board members will need to take the initiative to change the board's function and membership. For boards which desire to function as policy-making boards, an up-to-date board policy manual needs to be developed. These policies typically fall into three areas: ends policies, executive limitations, and board/staff linkage. Consultants and literature are now available to assist boards in changing to a policy governance model.²

Relying on the Holy Spirit

No set of principles, as important as they may be, can substitute for the guidance of the Holy Spirit upon the leadership of the organization and the search process. Questions which must be asked include: 1) Is everyone charged with the task of securing a new leader filled with the Spirit and walking in His power? 2) Are the organization and the search committee submissive to the will of God? 3) Are the members of the committee committed to and working in harmony with one another? 4) Are there any unresolved conflicts of the past which will hinder unity in the present search for God's will?

The future of Christian ministry organizations depends in large part upon the ability of the organization to make a successful transition to new leadership. No organization can afford to overlook this important process.

Paul Bufford is a graduate of Bob Jones University and Dallas Theological Seminary. He serves as Senior Pastor of Abingdon (VA) Bible Church and President of the Cumberland Regional of IFCA International.

1 George Barna and Mark Hatch, *Boiling Point* (Ventura, California, Regal Books, 2001), 249

2 John Carver, *Boards That Make a Difference*, 2d ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997)

The Bond of Peace - The Crushing Peace of God

Dan Fredericks

Director of Church & Pastoral Ministries
IFCA International

Peace is clearly one of the outstanding benefits of our salvation. After all, the Scriptures are clear that "having been justified by grace we have peace!" There are well over 350 references to peace in Scripture, stretching from Genesis to Revelation. Yet isn't it ironic that in practice and experience peace is so often a rare commodity?

It is the desire of IFCA International that our churches be characterized by a prevailing peace. But we must admit that too often there is an absence of peace and harmony in many of our relationships, both inside as well as outside the church. We know we have peace theologically, but often we fail to realize it experientially.

The "peace with God" that is a reality theologically must be true in experience and practice as the "peace of God" in the life of the believer individually and the life of the church collectively. Herein lies our battle ground.

Consider four factual imperatives that relate to the peace that ought to characterize our personal and church life.

First, peace implies the reality of inherent conflict. That may sound like a contradiction, but consider this. Peace is never attributed to heaven¹ because there is no source of conflict in heaven, as there is no presence of sin there. Peace is always related to our experience on earth. In a sense, God will force peace upon the earth when the Prince of Peace arrives with His kingdom rule on earth.² Until then, there will be no lasting peace on earth. In Romans 16:20, for example, "And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." Peace will come to earth by force when Satan is crushed.³ There is little comfort in the fact that we are to expect that conflict, to one degree or another, will be our constant "neighborhood bully." But we must remain patient in light of this reality.⁴ Our enemies (the world the flesh and the devil) are ever at work to disrupt our peace.

Second, peace is something we are called to, but not something that we inherently possess. There is nothing more painful than a broken relationship that has reached a point of disrepair through hearts hardened against another and against God. In such a case Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 7:15, "Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace" [emphasis added]. Nothing is more painful than this level of conflict, when a personal and intimate relationship has been shattered by a prideful and sin-hardened heart. Only God can change a hardened heart. That is a condition we cannot fight. Rather we are called to peace; not compromise, not peace keeping, not appeasement, but to peace. When we have done all that is within our sphere and ability to promote and preserve

peace, we then must entrust the circumstances to God.⁵ God will judge the hardened heart, but he will lift up and commend the humble heart. Scripture is clear that God is opposed to the proud of heart, but gives grace and places His favor upon the humble.⁶

Third, peace requires hard work. The second law of spiritual thermodynamics is at work as it relates to unity and peace. Just as the natural law reflects the constant "winding down" of the natural order, so too is a similar law at work in the spiritual realm. Relationships tend to deteriorate if neglected or taken for granted. There needs to be a constant effort put forth to ensure the preservation of peace. Peace is so valuable and vital yet it is also so fragile. It requires constant cultivation. Ephesians 4:3 says, "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Peace is the bond that keeps the loose ends of unity together. Due to the nature of our sinful desires, even as believers, we are prone to unravel like a well worn garment that has been over-used, unless it is carefully maintained. In Colossians 3:14, this bond (sundesmos that which holds together) is love. We could say that it requires the doublebond of peace and love to hold together the unity of the body, keeping it from fraying and deteriorating into a state of uselessness.

Last, peace must become the rule of one's life. The unique peace of God is to be the objective arbiter and determiner of our life. This has little to do with a feeling of peace. We erroneously attribute peace to a state of emotion. Rather, it is a discipline of the heart and mind. Colossians 3:15 makes this clear by stating, "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful." Like the umpire of our lives, God must have the final say, and His ruling in peace must govern our lives. The word for "rule" in this text is that from which we derive the word umpire.⁷ Peace is the product of submitting to the rule of the Lord over every aspect of our lives in an attitude of trust out of love, knowing that God does all things well.⁸

By grace, God's peace is provided. And by a determined appropriation of that peace we commit ourselves to respond and submit to its rule over our lives, diligently exercising its virtues over the natural inclinations of our sinful and rebellious hearts. Ultimately, peace is the presence of a person, the Person of Jesus Christ. He is "God with us." May our peace be the knowledge of His abiding presence by the Spirit, in anticipation of His actual presence yet to come.

IFCA International has developed a conciliation ministry and has funded the training of a committee charged with assisting our Fellowship through instruction and resources, to help us live out our theology of peace. The Conciliation Committee exists not only to provide guidance through times of conflict, but more importantly to insure an atmosphere and culture of peace within and among our Fellowship of churches and ministries. To this end a manual has been prepared, in cooperation with Peacemaker Ministries, designed to provide a practical guide for training and managing issues of conflict that do arise from time to time.

This [manual](#) may be obtained by IFCA members via our website (click on the link to [Our Conciliation Ministry](#) under "Quick Links.") Additionally, the men of the Conciliation Committee stand ready to come and present the Biblical Peacemaking seminar in your church, to your church leadership team or at your next Regional meeting.

In addition to our IFCA manual, the reader is encouraged to purchase a copy of the book, *The Peacemaker*, by Ken Sande. It can be obtained directly from Peacemaker Ministries on their website at www.HisPeace.org.

The IFCA International Conciliation Committee consists of Dr. Ernie Baker, Dr. Jerry Back, Rev. Steve Spacek, Rev. Jim Thompson and Rev. Daniel Fredericks. For assistance and interaction feel free to correspond with Dan Fredericks at dan@ifca.org.

1 Colossians 1:20 mentions peace in relationship to heaven in this passage, however the text is not making reference to Heaven, the place of God's dwelling. A. T. Robertson notes in Word Pictures (Vol. 4, p. 481), "Much needless trouble has been made over this phrase as if things in heaven were not exactly right. It is rather a hypothetical statement like verse 16 not put in categorical form (Abbott)."

2 Footnote: Jeremiah 33:9; Zechariah 9: 10;

3 Footnote : Revelation 19:10 20:3

4 Footnote: Consider for example, Acts 14:19-23; Hebrews 10:3039

5 Footnote: Romans 12:18; Hebrews 12:1415

6 Footnote: Proverbs 8:13; 16:18; 1 Peter 5:8

7 Footnote: A. T. Robertson's notes the following, "Rule (brabeueto). Imperative active third singular of brabeuo, to act as umpire (brabeus), old verb, here alone in N.T. See 1 Co 7:15 for called in peace."

8 Footnote: Romans 8:26-30; Philippians 4:6-8

For Those Retired

Tom Olson

Pastor Dean Magellan is a faithful minister of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Raised in a Christian home, he felt the call of the Lord to minister while attending a week of Bible Camp before his senior year of high school. After high school he attended a small Bible college to see if the Lord would lead him into the pastorate. He met his lovely bride when they both volunteered to minister in a small local church teaching Sunday school as part of the weekly service assignment. Upon graduation they married and accepted the call of a small rural church. Although the church could only pay them \$50 per week, they provided them with a beautiful parsonage. The church grew under Pastor Magellan's ministry, with several of the young people going to the mission field. After 20 years Pastor Magellan was called to another small rural church and started all over again. The church had a parsonage and paid \$150 per week. Pastor Magellan faithfully taught the Word and young people responded, including his own two boys who went to Bible college and became pastors themselves.

After 25 years of ministry at his second church, Pastor Magellan decided to retire. Fortunately, Pastor Magellan had not opted out of Social Security like many of his college classmates. However, the two churches he pastored were so small the wages he received during the last 45 years were just able to pay bills week to week. There had been no extra money to set aside for retirement. Both of the churches he pastored did the very best they could for Pastor Magellan, including food showers every fall after the farmers had harvested their crops. But where would they now live in retirement? They had lived in the parsonage all of the ministry and now needed a place to live. This meant they now needed rent money each month. Even though the Social Security checks came each month in retirement, the Magellans were coming up short and the little savings they had was evaporating very quickly.

I am sure you have heard true stories similar to the fictitious story that was presented above. Sadly, there are pastors and missionaries who are simply coming up short each month in their

retirement years. Some are able to fill pulpits or minister part-time for a church as a visitation/calling pastor to help meet the cash shortage. Other men are either not physically able and are unable to find these types of opportunities.

Another option has been developed and is available through the IFCA Benevolence Committee. Men who have been a member of IFCA International for the last five years and have attained the age of 65 are eligible to participate in the Supplementary Financial Assistance Program managed by the IFCA Benevolence Committee. The purpose is to enable interested and concerned individuals or churches to contribute toward the financial needs of retirement-aged IFCA brothers by giving through IFCA International. A pastor who meets the requirements should request from the IFCA Home Office an application for the Supplementary Financial Assistance Program. He should fill out and return the application to the Benevolence Committee for their approval of the project. Upon approval, the pastor would then send out letters to friends, relatives and past ministries to raise funds to help meet his retirement financial need. As funds come into the IFCA Home Office, receipts are written for the gifts. On or about the 22nd of each month, a check for up to \$1,000 is sent to the participating pastor along with the receipts. We request that the participating pastor send a thank-you letter and the receipt to each donor.

In order to comply with IRS regulations, each project must be approved in advance by the IFCA International Benevolence Committee. Once the project is approved funds may be received. The wife of the recipient is eligible to continue to receive Supplementary Financial Assistance after the death of her husband, providing funds are available for the approved project. An administrative cost of five percent of the total month gifts is assessed.

If you are a retired pastor age 65 or over, and have been a member of IFCA International for the last five years, you are eligible to participate in this program. We do not raise the money for you. You will have to raise the funds for your project, but we are able to provide tax deductible receipts for those who donate to your project. Please call the IFCA Home Office at 1-800-347-1840 and request the application for the Supplementary Financial Assistance Program. Perhaps this may be the answer to help you meet the financial shortage which you may be experiencing each month. And it is one way that we in IFCA International can minister to one another.

Tom Olson is IFCA International Director of Finance and Operations. He and wife Virgie have been in the Home Office for over 27 years.

Funerals: God's Unexpected Blessings!

Dennis Gilbert

Upon the death of a loved one, many non-churched families turn to a funeral home asking if they have "a minister who could help them" preside over the service of their loved one. Several funeral homes in my area have gifted, competent, and godly staff that know the importance of ministering to the social and spiritual needs of such families. In the last few years God has enabled me to have a working relationship with our area funeral homes to help families during such dark times. For me, funerals have become unexpected blessings for myself and the families to whom I have ministered. Maybe it could be a tool for you and your church family.

As I began working with the local funeral homes, I made it clear that money was not to be an issue. If people were unprepared for expense of death (and many are unprepared), the funeral home staff knows they can share with the family, "we have a pastor who understands and is willing to help you." This keeps our time together a spiritual ministry.

Before the public visitation I contact the family, asking if I can meet with them to introduce myself to them, ask some questions about their loved one and together work out the structure of our upcoming service. I take no more than thirty minutes of their time. I have found that meeting them after their final visitation the night before the service is best for the family. I share with them that I go by "Dennis" since I have found that non-churched people aren't sure what to call "ministers." Simplifying this has helped with our time together.

As I meet with the family, I express my sorrow for their loss and assure them that I want to do the very best to have an honorable service for them and their loved one. I let them know it is their service, not mine; I am here to help them. I share with them there is a difference between a Sunday Morning Service and a memorial service (that usually relaxes them). I share with them that my part of the service is usually about thirty minutes, that I will begin with a welcome and express appreciation on behalf of the family for those who attend, have prayer, take a little of the Bible and a little of their loved one and blend them together and will close the service reminding people to sign the guest book as they walk out. I encourage family involvement as much as possible. After the general information I then ask the family about their loved one's likes, dislikes, hobbies, interests, special accomplishments, etc. I get as much information about their loved one as I can, thank them for their time and pray for them, asking that God would give us an honorable time tomorrow for their loved one.

During the service I use passages that are designed to provide present comfort and spiritual help. The circumstances around the loved one's life and death determine the passage I will use. I begin with a welcome from the family and prayer. I share with them about God's bottle of remembrance (Psalm 56:8) and encourage them to allow God to catch their tears during their time of loss. And then I will use a brief passage for the remaining time together. For example, I often use Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 stressing verse one and eleven and God's desire to make every season in life a beautiful season "in its time." I share four reasons why this day, though sad, is designed to give them a time to look back in the future and see that God made even this day of loss beautiful in its time. I have four points. It is a beautiful time because it is:

A Time to Reaffirm. A memorial service not only acknowledges a death has occurred, it also acknowledges that a life has been lived and we are here today to acknowledge our appreciation for the time we had with our loved one.

A Time to Reflect. This is where I insert the families' comments about their loved one.

A Time to Remember. A memorial service is not only for us; it is for God and during this day of loss and sadness God wants us to remember His loss. I stress that God never intended a memorial service to be part of our lives (I explain Adam and Eve's disobedience in The Garden, quote Romans 5:12 and share as a result of their actions, today we live in a broken world where death is a very real part of our lives. God is longing to help us in our time of loss by providing us with comfort for today and hope for tomorrow.) I share the sadness of John 14:1-6 and the hope Jesus gave to his disciples then that is still the hope He gives today. It is a natural blend to remind those present that God not only wants to comfort us in our loss, but He truly wants to help us with our tomorrows.

A Time of Release. The funeral is the time to release the loved one into the hands of his Creator (never mentioning the spiritual condition of the deceased). I close with something like this, "If our loved one could share anything with us today, I think he would thank you for being here to support the family in their loss and he would ask you to read this booklet called Bridge to Life. If you have never asked Jesus Christ to be the Good Shepherd of your life or are uncertain about your spiritual life with God, I want to make sure you pick up this booklet." With that I read a final poem, close in prayer, and sit down as the funeral director concludes the service.

You might ask, "How have people responded to the offer of the booklet and the gospel material in the back?" I can say at almost every service gospel tracts are taken. I have had people come up to me after the service sharing their appreciation that the gospel was not only presented but made available for those present to take home with them. I can't tell you how many tracts I have given out during these last few years. What I can tell you is that it has been my desire to minister not only to their hurt, but to provide them with genuine eternal hope. This past year together with our local funeral homes, we have seen several people place their trust in Christ for salvation from their sin. It has been a remarkable ministry to be asked by non-churched families if "a minister" could come to their home or to their hospital room and talk to their loved one who is near death. What a joy it has been for me to share the gospel and observe family members listening in as their loved one repents, asking Jesus to forgive them of their sins and give them the gift of everlasting life.

To me the important observation of this unexpected ministry is clear: you have to genuinely care about their loved one and the family's loss. If they can see your compassion they will listen to your words of comfort. At that time your memorial service becomes a Sunday Morning Service of hope and eternal encouragement.

Today we have families who are attending our church because of our time with them in their loss. If we can share God's love and the message of salvation with compassion, we will have a ministry to the unchurched in our community. Not every family has been interested in hearing about their spiritual condition. But it is an opportunity to share with families that there is a God who still cares enough about them to bring someone into their life to remind them of their true need. Funerals have been a very unexpected blessing for me. I am thankful for my church family that views my action in the community as "their mission field." May you consider making unfortunate times unexpected blessings for others in their time of need.

Dennis Gilbert graduated from Grand Rapids Baptist College and Seminary. He has pastored for over 20 years. He now serves as Pastor at Church of the Open Door in Wyoming, MI. He also serves on the IFCA Credentials Committee.

Trusting the Lord In All Things

Karon Schneider

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.*" Those two verses along with fifteen years of testing and breaking in my life (the loss of our first child, some very hard times in ministry, being faithful yet not fruitful) are serving to destroy my self-sufficiency and driving me to trust in the Lord. That process is not finished yet.

Today was another example of a circumstance which the Lord will use in my life if I'm willing to trust Him and not myself. Not two hours ago, we said goodbye to our fellow missionaries we have come to love and appreciate but whom the Lord is redirecting. We are now the only ones on this field. It isn't earth shattering, but it has shaken me out of my "comfort zone" once again.

How easy it would be to fret and wonder what will happen to us: ("where will I find another friend like her? With whom will I talk about this struggle or that concern?") What about my kids who have lost their best friends! The reality of the situation is that my trust needs to be firmly rooted in the Lord. He is my Shepherd. He knows what is best. He will take care of me. Disciplining my mind not to fret or worry will only happen as I am enveloped with the deepest conviction that there is nothing I can or should do. I must trust my Creator. He is in control. And

so, trials are His purposeful tool by which He chisels away my self-sufficiency and replaces it with trust in His own Person.

One of my favorite writers says it like this: "The creature's illusion of self-sufficiency must, for the creature's sake, be shattered; and by trouble, or fear of trouble on earth...God shatters it". Many of us have learned the Christian disciplines from an early age. We've truly desired to walk every moment in His ways, and yet we are often the most tempted to rely on ourselves. Although we must give ourselves to Him and to the ministry, we must also learn that fruit and blessing come from His hand, not ours. It is through the fire, the struggle, the hurts and tears, that we learn to take our eyes off ourselves and learn to trust in Him.

At first glance, the difference may seem minute. The contrast is that of truly resting in my Creator, Savior and Father as opposed to resting in my own efforts, my perspective, my "understanding". As I develop a deep-rooted, wholehearted dependence on my God (trust in the Lord WITH ALL YOUR HEART), I will be able to accept the hardships, big and small, of my life with joy, knowing they will be used to produce a greater dependence on Him. He will show me my utter need of Him and so teach me greater trust.

Well, how did I do with this most recent trial? My thoughts took a downward spiral and I lost my perspective for a bit. It didn't take long, however, for truth to knock on the door of my awareness, reminding me of God's "track record" in my life and His promises. Not only that, but it made me realize again how quick I question and draw conclusions rather than wait in expectation to see what He will do. And so my journey into knowing my trustworthy God continues..."Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him..." (Ps. 62:5a).

Karon Schneider grew up in Spain, the daughter of LeRoy & Barbara Kenney. She met her husband, Bob, at Grand Rapids School of Bible and Music (MI) and they later served in Spain for eleven years. Karon and Bob are presently serving with their three children in Puerto Rico as church planters.

CHAPLAINS DIARY

GOD AT WORK IN IRAQ
CH (CPT) Kevin Doll, U.S. Army

In the following email letter to his prayer partners, Chaplain Doll shares how God is working in his life and the lives of those whom he is serving near Fallujah, Iraq.

Dear Friends, greetings in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

A few weeks ago I was reading the book of Isaiah and came across this passage in Isaiah 41:10-13

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. "All who rage against you will surely be ashamed and disgraced; those who oppose you will be as nothing and perish. Though you search for your enemies, you will not find them. Those who wage war against you will be as nothing at all. For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.

As I read through this passage I was struck by verse 12 "Though you search for your enemies, you will not find them. Those who wage war against you will be as nothing at all." A few days prior to reading this passage I was on an evening convoy returning from Baghdad, the trip went well and we did not encounter any hostile actions other than the pot holes we seem to always hit. We were about 20 minutes from our base camp when we were passed by another convoy that was heading

south. About 10 minutes after we passed the convoy, we heard reports over the radio that the convoy was taking small arms fire, after about a minute, reports starting coming in, indicating that this was an ambush attack rather than a simple drive by shooting. It was not long until the inevitable and much feared reports come through, that the convoy was hit by an improvised explosive device (IED). Within a few minutes of the attack, orders were given to close the roads to all military travel and all convoys were ordered to return to the nearest military base until further notice.

As we approached the main gate of our base camp I was struck by the fact that once again God had provided his protection for me and my unit. Yet, this fact did not make much of an impression on me until I read this verse in Isaiah; at which time I was struck with the reality of God's ever watching presence over me. As I meditated on this verse, the Lord opened my eyes to the truth, that there had been many times when we had driven through an IED site before an attack or soon after an attack. I was reminded of the hundreds of mortars that have been fired into our base camp since I have been here. How I have always been out of harms reach, even when the mortars have landed in close proximity to my location. I was especially reminded of the mortar that landed directly across the street from our tents that did not explode. I spent that morning in awe of God's greatness and watch care over us, I have often read similar verse throughout the Bible but have never been able to fully appreciate the rich promises and comfort that they provide. I can remember talking to a retired Navy Chaplain a few years ago who shared with me his experience in Vietnam. He shared with me the peace that God had given him throughout his time in Vietnam, which enabled him to provide significant ministry to his Sailors and Marines. Over the years, I often thought about what he had told me and to be honest, could never really understand it until I came to Iraq and experienced God's peace and courage for myself.

Two weeks ago I conducted a battalion prayer breakfast and I shared with them this verse out of Isaiah; the theme of the prayer breakfast was rejoicing in God's protection. That morning we spent time together as a battalion lifting up our hearts unto God and thanking him for his tremendous blessing of safety. Out of the eight months we have been deployed, we have not lost a single soldier due to death, this fact is not lost upon us as we hear about and attend memorial services for fellow soldiers that have died.

Last week when I was joking with my commander, trying to convince her that she needed to send me home early, she made the comment "Chaplain, there is a reason why we have not had any deaths or major casualties in our battalion" and then she said "That's why I need you here." It is easy to forget or overlook the impact we have as chaplains on our units and our Soldiers. There are many times when I wonder if I am having any spiritual impact on my unit at all, it is during these times that God brings someone into my life to reassure me that yes, He is using me for his purpose. Just the other day a fellow Christian came by my office and asked if he could talk with me. As I invited him in, he began to share with me a sin that he had kept hidden for that last eleven years. As he shared with me his struggles and his heartbreak that he has faced over the long years, he simply said Chaplain I just want to smile again. What a joy it was to open the Scriptures to this dear Christian Brother and share with him the everlasting grace and forgiveness that God offers to all. That day, the peace of God that was stolen from him, for so many years, was once again restored as we set together rejoicing over God's redeeming grace. He left my office smiling, knowing that he was truly forgiven.

When I deployed from Ft. Hood in February, I was sure that soldiers would be lining up to receive Christ in Iraq because of the reality of war. But even in war, the veil of sin is so darkened that people still see no reason for a savior. Yet, I have been amazed at the level of spiritual growth and development of our fellow Christian soldiers here in Iraq. The revival that I envisioned happening in Iraq has never come about, yet a revival has broken out among God's own people, that I never

anticipated. God is doing great and mighty works within the lives of our fellow Christians here in Iraq; I count it a privilege to have such a small part in what God is doing in the lives of our Christian soldiers. Please continue to pray for the continued spiritual growth of our fellow Christians serving in uniform.

CH (CPT) Kevin M. Doll
Serving God and Country

GOD AT WORK AT SEA LT Mike Amedick, CHC, USNR

Chaplain Mike Amedick is assigned to a group of destroyers and cruisers (identified in Capital letters) in the Harry S. Truman aircraft carrier battlegroup. He shared with me the following updates on his ministry via email while he moved from ship to ship at sea... [Dir. Chaplaincy Warren Dane]

I am in the "middle of the world" sailing in the Mediterranean Sea. We're taking part on a world-wide naval exercise called Summer Pulse '04.

Usually in this ministry I don't get to see too many long-term effects. Sailors come and go so frequently. I'm really excited about the story of one of the sailors on MASON however. A year ago Kristy was despondent. She hated being aboard ship and wanted to do anything to get out of the navy. I was able to talk with her and get her stabilized. In the year since other people and I have worked with her. Since has subsequently come to know the Lord, is active in her church, and is a great influence onboard here. She will be honorably discharged from the navy in November and will be using her college benefits to attend Liberty University to study Bible. What a great turnaround!

A young cook (culinary specialist) named Derrick Belton here on BARRY wanted to talk with me yesterday. I've talked with him a few times over the past year, once when his best friend was killed in an auto accident, another time when he was trying to get transferred to the West Coast.

This time he wanted to know about the significance of baptism. He grew up in a non-denominational church in California and he's a Christian but he had never been baptized. I was able to talk with him about its purpose and significance and he concluded that he should be baptized and he is setting it up for when he will be on leave next month and able to be baptized in his home church.

A few weeks back I wrote to you about a HN Lavar Suro. He is a sailor from the LABOON spending this underway period on BARRY. Anyhow, I had had a good opportunity to share the gospel with him for an hour or so, and in the past few weeks he has accepted Christ. He's been coming to the services, reading his Bible voraciously and asking tons of questions as well as going through Rick Warren's 40 Days of Purpose book. He plans on being baptized as soon as we get back into port.

Please remember your military chaplains as they serve military personnel and their families around the world. They minister to those in combat, to those who were wounded and the families of those who gave their life in the War on Terror. Warren Dane, Director of Chaplaincy

An Idea for Your Church
Death - a prime opportunity to introduce people to life.

Many people reflect on their own mortality when attending a funeral or memorial service. Someone I know of who trusted Christ as a result of a funeral explained why when he said, "It was so clear that the Christians were dealing with death better than the non-Christians." At that funeral he was thinking of his own mortality which caused him to observe how others were dealing with theirs.

The actual day of the service isn't the only time to reach them, though. The days, weeks and months following the services are just as effective in winning the lost as the actual services themselves. The reminder to the loved ones that you care sometimes provides opportunity for the gospel.

One Michigan church requests the guest book listing the names and addresses of those who signed in at the funeral home or memorial service. They ask family of the deceased to screen names of those who already know the Lord. Then they send a letter to the remaining people that includes:

1. Appreciation for their expression of love and concern
2. A few suggestions on how they might continue to encourage the sorrowing
3. An attractive tract that gives a clear presentation of how a person can be certain of heaven
4. A brief invitation to visit the church

Include a name and number of someone who could be of help during this continued time of adjustment to the loss of a loved one. Remember this is something a special person or team can do. It does not have to be done by the pastor or church administrative assistant. Use a time of grieving to introduce them to Someone who so understands our grief that He wept when a friend died (John 11:35).

To Answer Your Question

Q. How do you deal with people who don't believe the Bible?

A. Take the offensive. After thanking the person for being honest, ask him to help you understand what he means by, "I don't believe the Bible." If he doubts that it is the Word of God, ask, "What about the Bible don't you believe?"

When I used this approach with an unbeliever at lunch one day, he told me that he thought the Bible was full of mistakes. So I asked for an example.

Embarrassed, he told me he hadn't read the Bible lately. "That's okay," I said. "Where in the Bible have you read?"

Then he admitted he had never read the Bible. He thought it contained mistakes because someone else had told him so. That gave me an opportunity to stress the danger of hearsay and the need to read the Bible personally. Before we parted, he promised he'd do just that.

But suppose he had pointed to something that appeared to be a contradiction (perhaps two gospel accounts of the same incident, each reporting different facts). Do two things. Using 2 Timothy 3:16, tell him that the apparent contradiction he is referring to cannot be a contradiction because the Bible was written by God Himself and is therefore without error. Secondly, assure him that you will study the verses and get back to him to clear up the confusion. It is never wrong to say "I don't know." Once you have discovered the answer, you will be prepared should that particular question come up again.

Q. When I started to explain the gospel to a man at work, he responded, "One religion is as good as another." What should I have said?

A. Point out that no religion is any better than the foundation on which it rests. Christianity stands or falls on an empty tomb. For that reason, Christ had every right to say, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Because He alone conquered sin and the grave, He alone can grant life to others.

Years ago I toured the Mormon visitor center in Salt Lake City and asked the guide, "What is the one thing on which everything you believe everything stands or falls?" He answered, "Joseph Smith." I then said, "That's astounding!" He asked why.

Knowing that he was a pilot by trade, I said, "I fly enough to know that pilots are very intelligent. I'm amazed that you are willing to base everything on someone who you have no proof came up from the grave. If Joseph Smith is alive, you are okay. If he's not alive, you're in the worst condition possible."

I'll never forget the expression on his face. It was a new revelation to him. It gave me an opportunity to explain the gospel. When I left, I could tell he was thinking seriously about his beliefs.

Encourage a person who claims that all religions are alike to study the evidence for the empty tomb. You might recommend a book such as *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell or *A Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel. Once your co-worker looks at the resurrection, he may conclude with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

A second issue worth bringing to this man's attention is that Christ is set apart by the prophecies He uniquely fulfilled. Christ fulfilled more than 300 Old Testament prophecies that spoke of the coming Messiah. Other so-called messiahs have simply shown up. They weren't specifically prophesied, and they didn't fulfill the Old Testament requirements. But Christ could say to the people of His day, "You search the Scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

Q. I recently led my best friend to Christ. How can I help her grow spiritually?

A. There is no substitute for Bible study and prayer. Recommend she start with the book of Philippians, reading a chapter a day and staying in that book for a month. Also, I stress the importance of involvement in a Bible-teaching church.

Then meet with her once a week for eight weeks. A new believer needs you more than she needs your materials. Select materials that would fit her background and level of Bible knowledge. Your encouraging presence each week as you interact with her about spiritual things will make the difference.

If your church has an idea to encourage others in evangelism, send it to Larry Moyer at lmoyer@evantell.org. Visit EvanTell at www.evantell.org

My Husband My Pastor

Edith Moore

I've had a few discoveries in my life, but none so profound as the Sunday I discovered that my husband had become my pastor.

Charles and I had been ministering at Guerneville Bible Church in Northern California for about six months. Every Sunday and Wednesday I would listen to my husband's messages and share with him my critique of them. With this attitude I was learning very little. Also my attitude was hard for my husband to bear and was not helping in the ministry. So I began praying about my attitude. Then it happened. One Sunday morning my husband was preaching and the Lord transformed him from just being my husband into my Pastor!

I started learning from him. Each Sunday and Wednesday I would eagerly anticipate his messages, as he was an excellent Bible teacher.

Why did I have this attitude? I can only confess that I was more concerned each Sunday and Wednesday with my husband looking good, sounding good, being accepted by the people, and making me look good. Instead of realizing that Charles was God's spokesman in the pulpit, I thought he was representing me to the people.

After the Lord was able to get through to my heart Charles was free to be directed by the Lord. He did not have to worry about me trying to critique him in his preaching and direct him.

I thank God that He changed my heart and allowed me to truly be blessed and taught by my husband/pastor. I also experienced freedom from all the useless concerns and insecurity that my attitude brought. God continued to bless me for my change of heart by allowing my ministry with other women in the church to be the best that I have ever experienced. Praise God that He is in the business of changing hearts. And I thank Him for showing me that He was speaking to me through my husband, my Pastor!

The Lord saved Charles and Edith in 1973. Charles graduated from Sacramento Bible Institute and did a year internship at Vallejo Bible Church before he was ordained. They had four grown children. Charles went to be with the Lord on Saturday, September 25, 2004

Book Notes

Giving the Sense - Understanding and Using the Old Testament Historical Texts, David M. Howard Jr. and Michael A Grisanti editors. Kregel Publications 482 pp.

Many years ago John Bright, in his book entitled History of Israel, asked the question: "Shall I study the Old Testament or the New Testament when given a choice?" His conclusion was that the question was as invalid as asking, "Do you wear trousers or a shirt?" The well-dressed man wears both. So it is with the study of the Bible-both Testaments must be studied.

To honor Eugene H. Merrill, long time Old Testament Professor at Dallas Seminary, twenty scholars have written articles updating the conservative perspective on a variety of OT themes. Common areas of interest, such as the date of the Exodus, the use of Archaeology, the Name of the Lord, OT Theology, and Authorial Intent are covered. Other articles that are not often addressed but are equally insightful, include "What really happened during the conquest?" and "Incredible numbers of the Hebrew Kings."

This book will likely have wide appeal to teachers of the Old Testament in schools and seminaries, but the busy pastor can benefit greatly by perusing its contents.

An extensive subject and Scripture index found in the back helps pinpoint areas of special interest. While you may not find an abundance of message material in this book, it does assist greatly in helping us become careful proclaimers of our Older Testament.

Decision Making and the Will of God, by Garry Friesen with Robin Maxson, Multnomah Publishers, 2004, 525 pp.

After twenty-five years the subject of the will of God is again being revisited by this author. Rather than the book being reduced in size, it was expanded and for good reason. As a result of debate, discussion, and study, this revised and updated edition reflects much maturity and refinement.

For those familiar with the debate, Friesen recommends the "Wisdom View" over the "Traditional View" (which had its origin in the Keswick Movement in the late 1800s). In Friesen's approach, the Wisdom View gives the believer the freedom to choose within the confines of God's Moral Will. The Traditional View suggests that God has an ideal perfect will for each believer to discover through Bible-reading, prayer, counsel, circumstances, and feelings of peace.

Friesen deals with topics such as subjective guidance, weaker brothers, and decisions involving marriage, vocation, and giving. As with the original edition, this book is well footnoted, has many graphs and charts, is loaded with great illustrations, and has extremely helpful Appendix (where Friesen reviews and evaluates 15 books on the Will of God, all published since 1980). This alone is worth the price of the book, which is \$14.99 (a real bargain). He also includes his practical "Painless Scripture Memory" plan, and an index of Scripture references used in the book.

If you plan to preach or teach about the subject of the will of God, you will do yourself and the people to whom you minister an immense favor by mastering the contents of this book.

Reading the original edition was a liberating experience for me. Once I discovered that God's will was not something I had to "find" or wonder if I was in or out of, I could relax. For things about which Scripture gives no command, we are free to make our own wise choices, and God will work all the details together for good.

Friesen's book is comprehensive, and in my opinion, it is the best definitive book on this topic. It reinforces one of my favorite verses on the subject of guidance--I Corinthians 16:12, which seems to indicate that we should listen to our spiritual leaders and then do what we wisely determine when we think the time is right.

Reviewed by Pastor Ken Hornok, Salt Lake City