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Editorial Introduction

Lloyd A. Harsch

Lloyd A. Harsch is professor of church history and Baptist studies, occupying the Cooperative Program Chair of SBC Studies; divisional associate dean of the Theological and Historical Studies Division; director of the Institute for Faith and the Public Square; and guest editor, Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Adam Harwood, who normally holds the responsibility of editing this journal, has been out of the country serving in his additional capacity as Chaplain in the Louisiana Army National Guard. When he was called into active duty, the responsibility of editing the journal came to me. I am happy to fill in for him as he serves both our Lord and our country. I am equally pleased that recently he has been able to return safely to his family and friends. Dr. Harwood will resume the post of editor for subsequent issues. Welcome Home!

This journal includes both academic issues and those which deal with ministry. This issue will encompass both as well. Some of the articles will present principles emerging from academic research. Others from years of practical experience. Some from a combination of both. The overall theme is exploring biblical principles for effective church life.

In the opening article, Harold Bullock explains the principles, termed Heart Attitudes, which undergirded his forty-year pastorate at Hope Church in Fort Worth, Texas. These principles formed the basis of the church's membership covenant but had ministry and personal applications far beyond Texas.

Fred Luter, the long-time pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans and past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, explores the principles which helped transform a declining congregation in a transitioning neighborhood into one of the most dynamic churches in Louisiana. Hurricane Katrina scattered the members to several states and destroyed the buildings. However, these same principles helped restore the congregation to a vital, dynamic ministry.

Randall Lanthripe founded Church in the Valley in Southern California in 1987. Since then, the church has trained leaders who

have successfully started five more congregations in the area. In addition, Lanthripe directs a network of churches that utilize competency-based education to train future leaders. His article focuses on mentoring emerging leaders.

Emily Dean is assistant professor of ministry to women and director of ministry to women academic program at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Her article examines principles specific to disciplining women and best practices for training leaders.

Methodologies have limited effectiveness because they are constrained by culture. Over the past 20 years, Gary Smith has served churches from Alberta to Quebec and helped coordinate church planting in Canada. He brings a specifically Canadian perspective regarding principles effective in Canada.

John Worcester, founder of Church Planting Leadership, has trained effective church planters throughout the United States and in over 30 countries. His article focuses on principles that train individuals to effectively start new churches.

May the principles presented in these articles be helpful to the ministry context in which you are serving.

Implementing Biblical Principles for Healthy Congregational Life

Harold B. Bullock

Harold B. Bullock planted Hope Church, Fort Worth, Texas, and retired after more than 40 years as founding pastor.

The man in the photo was beaming! A shorter man in his late forties, he held suspended from his right hand a wide paper, nearly half as long as he. On the paper were listed the “Heart Attitudes,” each written in five of the major languages of his homeland, India. An evangelist, he had learned the Heart Attitudes at a 1997 missions conference in Asia. For the next fifteen years, he used them both in evangelism and in follow-up with converts. A mission team sent from our church, Hope Church, to eastern India had met him in the context of their work. They sent me the photo.

Across Cultures

The photo was amazing! The Heart Attitudes concept was developed at the beginning of Hope Church in Fort Worth, Texas, in the spring of 1978. Nearly two decades later and half a world away, the Indian evangelist had learned about them. And he had used them effectively for many years. How the information made its way to India was unclear, but it *was* clear that the biblical principles for relationships expressed by the Heart Attitudes “made sense” to people in very different cultures—and they “worked.”

A couple of years after that photo arrived, I taught a Doctor of Ministry seminar for a Southern Baptist seminary. The students were mature church leaders from very different cultures: Korea, south India, and Cameroon. As they surveyed the Heart Attitudes, all agreed they would fit and work in their diverse situations.

Biblical principles are transcultural. The method or way in which they are implemented may look different in various people groups, but the principles apply. Though we often do not think of it in this way, applying New Testament (NT) principles to the American church situation is a “cross-cultural” move—from first-century Jewish and Roman society to twenty-first-century America. These are very different societies.

You may be familiar with the old poem: “Methods are many, principles are few. Methods often change; principles never do.” Methods for carrying out church life might change across different communities and different cultures. Even in the same culture, they may change over time. But bedrock principles that underlie methods remain.

American church life involves many different types of activities, e.g., worshipping, communicating, training, leading, decision making, advising Christians, relating to each other, teaming together, working together on projects, etc. To carry out their activities, church leaders often search for principles and methods adapted from business, the military, or the behavioral sciences. These are often helpful. However, the Scriptures contain insights related to each activity, whether communicating, training, leading, or relating. We do well when our methods also align with what Scripture says.

The back-story to the Heart Attitudes

In 1978, I led the start of Hope Church in Fort Worth, Texas. The intent was to develop a church that accomplished two major goals: first, to evangelize and incorporate adults who would not normally attend church, and second, to teach Christians how to personally walk with God. That second goal included teaching Christians how to *treat one another in the ways Christ wanted*, that is, in the ways Scripture commanded.

To help church members learn to treat others rightly, seven scriptural practices were taught. The intent was that these biblical practices become for members *a different angle* of approach to life. The first four of the practices dealt with how members would *relate to one another*. The latter three dealt with how members would *team together*. Thus, the seven guidelines were called “The Heart Attitudes.”

Attitude and Heart

An “attitude” is basically an *angle of approach*.¹ Aircraft pilots are conscious of the plane’s attitude relative to the ground, especially when landing. The wrong attitude can result in disaster. People unconsciously adopt “attitudes” of approach to life, such as to

¹ “Attitude.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, meaning 5, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/attitude>.

certain persons or situations. Their “attitude” is made up of both *thoughts* and *feelings* that arise and shape how they approach that person, situation, or life itself.²

God calls his people to intentionally adopt a *mindset* different from the world around them (Col 3:1–4; Phil 2:5–8) and to approach people and situations with *concerns* different from what may have motivated them in the past (Phil 2:2–3).

In the Scriptures, “heart” usually refers to the deepest level of a person where he or she mulls over things and makes decisions (e.g., Ps 14:1; 140:2; Matt 15:19). It is the source of one’s words and deeds and shapes their personal history (Matt 15:18–19; 18:35; Prov 4:23). “Heart” Attitudes implied that the biblical angles of approach to life should be more than a practical way to ameliorate circumstances. Rather, the biblical approaches to *relating* and to *teaming* should come from one’s heart. The goal was that, over time, God’s guidelines would lodge in their hearts and shape what flowed out into their lives.

Action-Oriented

The Heart Attitudes are seven guidelines. There are many more biblical commands for how Christians should treat each other. But people must start *somewhere*. The seven guidelines cover a wide range of situations and were Hope Church’s chosen “starting place.”

Each of the Attitudes was stated as an *action*. Sometimes organizations state their values or guidelines as *nouns*, such as love, honesty, humility, or creativity. In my experience, when nouns are used as guidelines, whatever the original writers intended, people tend to substitute their own definitions in practical situations. If actions are used, a church member more easily recognizes if that action is needed and can tell whether or not that action has taken place.

For example, the first Heart Attitude (see below) could be called “love” or “agape” because it is the essence of sacrificial love. However, in American English, people might “love” their spouses, kids, friends, dogs, pickle ball, and pizza. So, how to enact “love” in a situation becomes vague and uncertain. However, an actional statement that gives direction to the love is much more useable.

² Ibid., meaning 4.

What follows below is a brief explanation of the seven Heart Attitudes. For a fuller explanation of the guidelines and how to implement them, see *The Heart Attitudes: Seven Keys to Healthy Biblical Community*.³ The book is designed for use by church members, especially in group life. It contains a larger explanation of each Heart Attitude and several helpful examples and scenarios for applying them.

The Seven Heart Attitudes

1. Put the goals and interests of others above my own

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Phil 2:3–4 ESV)

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. (John 13:34 ESV)

Philippians 2:4 says that Christians are to look not *only* to their own interests but *also* the interests of others. Each Christ-follower has interests that are legitimate. They have responsibilities to carry out in their marriages, their jobs, their extended families, and to the government, and perhaps contracts they have made or promises to keep (See Ps 15:4; Matt 5:37). They may also have personal dreams, goals, and desires.

At the same time, each is to be aware of and concerned for the interests of others. In pursuing one's *own* interests, he or she should consider and not damage the interests of *others*.

Scripture goes even further in John 13:35. Jesus commanded his followers to love one another “as I have loved you.” Biblical love is willing to sacrifice for what is best for the ones loved. There will come times when a Christ-follower needs to put the interests of others *above* his own like Christ did when he went to the Cross.

Consider the following example. Jeff is a member of a small group in his church. The group meets on Tuesday night. For the past three weeks, Jeff has been very busy and has had little time to rest. He had planned Thursday evening next week just to relax. At

³ Harold B. Bullock with Carla Holiday, *The Heart Attitudes: Seven Keys to Healthy Biblical Community* (Fort Worth, TX: Life Shaping, 2021).

this week's group meeting, however, one of the group members just had his work schedule shifted, so that next week, he must work on the group meeting night. After that, his regular work schedule will resume. Others in the group wanted to change the group meeting to a Thursday night so that every person could be there. But Thursday night was going to be Jeff's "fun time." However, Jeff could give up his fun night. It is not something crucial to his life. He will have other nights he might relax. This is an opportunity for Jeff to put the interests of others above his own.

2. Live an honest, open life before others

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor. (Eph 4:25 NIV)

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (1 John 1:7 NIV)

Honesty is risky. Those who really know a person may use that knowledge to damage him. Therefore, our world uses lies and pretense to handle much of life.

Christians, however, are forbidden to deceive one another. When a Christian trusted Christ, he or she entered into a "fellowship" (Greek *koinonia*) with the Father, the Son, and with one another (1 John 1:3). But, to *experience* real fellowship with each other, Christ-followers must "walk in the light" like Christ is in the light. Light reveals; darkness conceals (see Prov 4:18–19; John 6:19–21). As Christians lie or pretend about their lives, they conceal themselves; they walk in darkness. Therefore, genuine fellowship with other Christians will not develop. Fellowship grows amid *honesty* and *openness*.

Christians are to be honest *in the things they say*. Deception breaks fellowship. A deceiver will pull back from the one deceived lest his lie is discovered. When people realize they have been lied to, they draw back from trusting the liar. So, fellowship is diminished by the liar's "darkness." Thus, we are to be honest in what we say. If they lie, they should clear up the matter.

Christians also should be honest about *who they really are*. The *person that they are presenting* themselves to be should reasonably match *the person they really are* on the inside. Truth about one's interests, one's personality, likes and dislikes, history, etc., enable people to know us and relate to us. If one pretends, others know only the false façade that has been presented to them. Inside the

façade, the pretender feels lonely and disconnected. A person who is honest can genuinely connect with others.

“Openness” deals with being willing to reveal ourselves. How *much* should Christians reveal? Some people mistakenly aim for “transparency,” telling *everyone everything* about themselves. While transparency is right and just in business transactions, Scripture does not encourage us, on a personal level, to reveal *everything* about ourselves to *everyone* (Prov 12:23). Instead, Scripture commends “discretion” (Prov 1:4; 2:11). Discretion is using good sense in *what* you talk about, *when* you talk about it, and *how* you talk about it.

There may be private areas in life, which, out of good sense, people do not ordinarily talk about—perhaps details of one’s marriage or painful or shameful experiences in one’s past. However, even in these areas, one needs to be open to answering *needed* questions and revealing the truth when it is necessary. In *The Heart Attitudes*, the author deals with how to handle different kinds of openness scenarios.

Discretion is valid; *deception* is not. Christ-followers should not deceive others.

3. “Give and receive Scriptural correction”

But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (Heb 3:13 ESV)

not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Heb 10:25 ESV)

In the Greek New Testament, the same verb is used in both the above verses, translated first as “exhort” and then as “encouraging.” The word is *parakaleo*, which means to “call near” and implies encouraging someone to pursue a course of conduct. Different means might be used, such as *entreating* them, *exhorting* them, or *consoling* them.⁴ “Exhort” means to strongly encourage or try to persuade someone to do something.⁵ It can imply correcting them.

⁴ H. E. Vine, “Exhortation,” in *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 390.

⁵ “Exhort” in *Oxford Languages*, <https://www.dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/exhort>.

To “encourage” means to talk or behave in a way that gives someone confidence to do something.⁶

Church members have the responsibility to call *each other* forward with Christ. Christians are both to *give* needed encouragement and correction and to *receive* it. Under sin’s tantalizing delusion, a believer can gradually harden against the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Being willing to receive another’s exhortation can prevent the hardening (Heb 3:13). And someone must give the exhortation.

How should one respond to correction by others? We easily feel stung and react. In light of Ps 141:5, one should take correction as an attempt by others to help. Thank the person for their concern and input. You might tell them that you will pray about the matter. Then, take the correction to the Lord and ask his guidance on the matter. It may be that the one who corrected was in error. If so, no changes are needed. However, it may be that they were correct, and God is trying to get one’s attention through their correction. A wise person makes needed changes.

Three ideas which Hope Church has used in new member training may be helpful.

First, *build an encouraging relationship with people*. Church life is not to become a “mutual rebuke society.” Ephesians 4:15 says that as Christians “truth in love,” the Body of Christ develops. Truthing is to take place in a certain context: love. In that kind of relational environment, correction is more easily given and received. “He has done about half his work in convincing another of ERROR who has first convinced him that he LOVES him.”⁷

In Hope Church’s new member training, we have told people to “aim for 90% encouragement and only 10% correction. Unless it is an emergency, if you think you need to correct someone, start on nine encouragements.”

Second, *correction should be based on what the Scriptures say*, not on one’s personal opinions or tastes or what someone feels is proper. Paul advises believers to keep matters of personal preference between themselves and God and not to impose them on others or judge others by their own personal standards (see Rom 14).

⁶ Oxford Languages, “Encourage.”

⁷ Albert Barnes, *Notes Explanatory and Practical on the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians* (London: Knight & Son, 1852), 104, capitalization in the original.

Third, in a sense, *each church member can “blow the whistle”* when things go out of bounds in church life—and *each one needs to heed the whistle* when it is validly blown by others.

4. “Clear up relationships”

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. (Matt 5:23–25 ESV)

If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him (Luke 17:3 ESV)

In Matthew 5, Jesus said that if our brother has *something against us*, we should seek him out and get it cleared up. In Luke 17:3, the Lord said if our brother has *offended us*, we are to go to him and get matters cleared up. The initiative to clear up the relationship lies with the one who realizes that there is a problem.

People who relate frequently have many opportunities to hurt and offend each other. Thus, home life can easily sour. Work teams can grow frustrating. Ministry team members drop out.

When an offense occurs, the relationship needs to be cleared. The one who realizes there is a problem should take the initiative to talk with the other person. Or the offended one should go to the offender and tell him or her about the hurt that occurred. The offender should admit sin, make restitution (if applicable; see Exod 21–22), and ask forgiveness. And the one offended should forgive the offender (Matt 6:14–15; 18:21–35). When the relationship is cleared, it can heal over time.

Clearing up relationships is not easy. However, clearing relationships will allow people to remain friends for years. It also greatly reduces friction in the church and increases the level of peace, adding delight to church life (Ps 133:1–3).

The Heart Attitudes book gives examples of how to clear relationships in different types of situations.

5. “Participate in the ministry”

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To

him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet 4:10–11 ESV)

from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Eph 4:16 ESV)

Often only a fraction of members serves in a church's ministries. However, that is not the kind of congregational life urged in the New Testament.

God gives to each Christian spiritual gifts, as God chooses (1 Cor 12:11), to enable them to "be part of the action" as He works through the Body of Christ. Each Christian has a role to play. The Apostle Peter instructed Christians to use their gifts to serve others in the church (1 Pet 4:10–11). As Christians serve, God's grace flows, people are helped, and those helped give thanks and glory to God for the help they have received.

Paul says that the Body of Christ grows as "as each part does its work" (NIV). Regarding Eph 4:16, Albert Barnes writes, "The meaning is, that each part contributes to the production of the whole result, or labours for this.... Every part labors to produce the great result. No one is idle; none is useless."⁸

New member training at Hope Church has taught: "God wants to work through you in the ministry. As you are getting started, do *something* to help out in Hope's ministry. As time goes on, you will discover your particular spiritual gifts and the ministry arena where you need to focus. Right now, participate, *do something* to help out."

Those who begin to participate will discover the joy in it and grow in participation.

6. "Support the work financially."

One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches. (Gal 6:6 ESV)

Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim

⁸ Barnes, *Notes Explanatory*, 105.

the gospel should get their living by the gospel. (1 Cor 9:13–14 ESV)

In the Old Testament, God commanded that one-tenth (a “tithes”) of everyone’s “income” was his (Lev 27:30, 32). God specified that the tithes due to him should be turned over to the Levitical priests to provide a living wage for the work they did at the central place of worship, which was earlier the Tent of Meeting, also called the Tabernacle, and later the Temple (Num 18:21–24). Therefore, Israelites brought their offering to God at the Temple and turned them over to the priests who served there.

Paul says that in the church, things are to be handled “in the same manner.” The Lord (Christ) commanded that, just as the priests at the Temple were paid from the tithes and offerings of the Israelites, so church workers should get their wages for living from their work for the gospel. They are to be paid out of funds provided by church members (1 Cor 9:13–14). Paul later made the point that they *deserve* their wages; that is, justice demands they be paid (1 Tim 5:17–18). Therefore, those who benefit from the work of the church staff (“one who is taught”) are to “share all good things” with those who teach and help them.

The members of the church provide money for the operation of the church (Gal 6:6), for offerings for missionaries (Phil 4:15–17), and for helping Christians in distress (2 Cor 12:12–14).

Many church members have not been used to giving to the work of the church. Also, many have never really trusted God enough to give substantially to his work. For those reasons, new member training at Hope Church taught tithing but did not require it for membership. As with *participating in the ministry*, new members have been urged: “God has given you this responsibility. Get started. Start giving at the amount for which you can step forward in trust of God. Do *something*—and then, *grow* in trust of God and in giving.”

7. “Follow spiritual leadership within Scriptural limits”

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Heb 13:17 ESV)

Now I urge you, brothers—you know that the household of Stephanas ... have devoted themselves to the service of

the saints—be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer. (1 Cor 16:15–16 ESV)

A Christ-follower's first loyalty is to God and his kingdom (Matt 6:33). Out of loyalty to God, Christians respect and obey the leaders of civil government (Rom 13:1–7; 1 Pet 2:13–17), and on their job (Eph 6:5–9)—within limits.

In church life, people rise to leadership, some of whom Christians should follow and others they should not.

First, there are leaders whom *no* Christian should follow. Since a Christ-follower's first loyalty is to God, Christians remain true to the faith handed down to us by the Apostles, “the trustworthy message as it has been taught” (Titus 1:9 ESV, NIV). Therefore, none should follow *false teachers* (e.g., Gal 1:8–9; 2 Cor 11:3–4, 13–15) or zealous “*scripture twisters*” who distort the meanings of words and passages (2 Pet 3:15–17).

Nor should Christians follow *abusive* church leaders (3 John 9–12). Valid church leaders *behave differently* from leaders in the non-Christian realm. In business or in the military, a leader may lead by ordering others around. The leader's authority is given by the institution he or she serves. The “company” is backing the leader; he or she *must* be followed. Also, followers are under contract to obey the leader's orders or face serious consequences.

While leaders in the world may lord it over others, leadership is different in church life. Christ commanded that *among his people*, a leader must be the servant of his followers (Matt 20:25–28). Thus, Peter told elders, “You should aim not at being ‘little tin gods’ but as *examples* of Christian living in the eyes of the flock committed to your charge” (1 Pet 5:3).⁹

Church members are volunteers. They will follow people whom they respect *enough* to allow that person to influence them. Church *employees* might have to follow a bossy pastor in order to keep their jobs, but church *members* do not. If they do not respect the leader, they can simply drop out.

A leader's authority grows when he sets the example in Christian living. Thus, Paul urged young Timothy to bolster his leadership by setting the believers an example (1 Tim 4:12). Leaders are to be aggressive (see Titus 2:15); however, they are to do so with

⁹ J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English*, 2nd ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995).

kindness and gentleness, even when correcting those who oppose them (2 Tim 2:24–26).

Second, church members should *follow valid leaders*. In Heb 13:17, the word “obey” translates the Greek word *peitho*. In the passive voice, *peitho* means to *be persuaded*.¹⁰ H. E. Vine explained that the “‘obedience’ suggested results not from submission to authority but from persuasion.”¹¹ George Ladd wrote of Paul’s authority: “this authority was that of spiritual and moral suasion, not formal and legal. Acts pictures Paul exercising his authority at the Jerusalem council in terms of persuasion rather than official authority. The final decision was made by the ‘apostles and the elders, with the whole church’ (Acts 15:22ff).”¹²

In practice, in different cultures, groups may accord different levels of authority to pastors. But the NT principles for leadership remain. A wise church leader guides his approach to followers by the “wisdom from above” (James 3:17). He makes it reasonable to follow him. And, when valid reasons are given, followers should be *easily* persuaded and comply with the leader and obey.

In the same verse, “submit” translates the Greek word *hupеiko*, meaning to *yield or surrender*.¹³ When there are questions and a leader gives valid reasons, there comes a time to “get on board” and follow to make things happen. So, a follower *yields* to the leader.

A stronger Greek word is used when 1 Cor 16:16 directs church members to “submit” to church staff leaders. That word, *hupotasso*, was a military term derived from words meaning “to rank under.” It pictured troops arranged under a leader’s command.¹⁴ The verb appears in the middle voice and indicates one is responsible to *make himself submit*. Sometimes people adopt the attitude, “If you want me to submit to you, make me!” However, the scriptures direct Christians to *make themselves* submit, to make themselves directable by leaders.

Church leaders have a limit to their authority and should not go beyond it. Each Christian is a priest before God. There are directions that a Christian must get from God, not from leaders. For example, a pastor does not have the authority to specify which

¹⁰ Vine, “Obedience,” *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*, 795–96.

¹¹ Vine, “Obedience,” *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*, 795–96.

¹² George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 576–77.

¹³ Vine, “Submit,” *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*, 1100.

¹⁴ Vine, “Subject,” *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*, 1099.

person a Christian should marry or which job he should take. He might warn of some kinds of people *not* to marry or jobs not to take because Scripture speaks about those things (e.g., 2 Cor 6:14; Eph 4:28). A pastor might advise a person, but for guidance on major decisions, a person needs to seek God and use God's scriptural guidelines and good sense in making decisions.

Direction, Balance, and Protection

The seven Heart Attitudes apply to many situations in church life. They provide direction to Christians and enable them to move forward as they encounter common challenges. They function as a set and provide balance and protection to the church's fellowship.

For example, consider the concept of "following." Heart Attitude 7 directs a member to follow spiritual leaders but *within scriptural limits*. Thus, a member does not have to follow blindly or slavishly. In addition, the member and his or her spiritual leaders have a commitment to Heart Attitude 1, to *put the goals and interests of others above their own*. As members follow, they should be looking to the leader's interests. But the leaders also should be looking to their followers' interests.

If the leaders are not looking after their followers' interests, then both the follower and the leader have a commitment to Heart Attitude 3, to *give and receive scriptural correction*. So, the follower has the right—and responsibility—to speak to the leader about the matter. The mutual commitment to correction enables *followers* to follow with a sense of both empowerment and commitment. It also allows leaders to become aware if they are unintentionally creating problems for others. If there is a problem, they can *clear the relationship* (Heart Attitude 4) and move forward together.

Implementation

In order to help the guidelines become the church's "way of life," four steps were taken.

First, top-level church leaders—church staff and major organizational leaders—*set the example* of implementing the guidelines in the practical situations of church life. Leader-example was a major training tool in the New Testament (John 13:12–17; 1 Cor 4:16, 2 Thess 3:6–10).

Second, the seven practices were taught to existing members and, through the years, have been taught to new members. New member training included *what* the guidelines meant, *why* they were important, and a brief presentation of *how* one might do them. The “why” included two motives: *gratitude* (Eph 5:1–2) and *consequences*, both of obedience and disobedience (Gal 6:7–8).

Third, the commitment asked of new members was low, not high. The commitment was stated: “I realize that often, as a part of the church, I will need to... (then the Heart Attitudes were listed). I am willing to work together with the church toward these.” One did not have to always do the Heart Attitudes or even like them. However, a Christian who was willing to work on them could grow in them. So, the “bottom line” commitment asked was to “be willing to work on them.” If people were unsure, they continued attending and might sign later. If they were unwilling, some would leave, but others remained and later signed the covenant.

Rarely did new Christians or “ordinary Christians” have problems with the membership covenant. Those who reacted to the commitment were usually Christians who had been leaders in other churches who had not been required to make any commitments.

Fourth, members *learned to live out the Heart Attitudes* through Hope’s group life. Group leaders set the example in applying the Heart Attitudes. For example, many members first experienced “clear up relationships” when their group leader asked their forgiveness for something the leader had done wrong. Leaders also *prayed for and coached members* in how to apply the guidelines as members faced challenging situations.

Fifth, to keep the Heart Attitudes fresh, every two or three years, a sermon series would be presented on the Heart Attitudes, and group life would discuss them. The series would use testimonies from people who had seen God work in their lives as they applied a specific guideline.

Long-Term Results: Church, Families, Careers

I led as senior pastor of Hope Church for forty-two years. Over time the guidelines shaped the culture of Hope Church and became “how we do things around here.” The long-term blessings of the Heart Attitudes were many. Several other churches have built the Heart Attitudes into their church life. Their pastors have reported results in line with what follows.

In the church: As church members lived the Heart Attitudes, their own walks with Christ deepened. New people entering the church could see examples of people doing the Heart Attitudes. They more quickly “got it.” Leaders who emerged were trustworthy, so delegation became far easier. More time could be spent on the ministry work than in trying to keep everything under control. Evangelism became easier because non-Christians found the church atmosphere enjoyable. It was easy to include them because church members treated them considerately.

The Heart Attitudes did not make the church life problem-free. However, the principles gave a kind, intelligent framework for solving problems. Broken relationships between leaders could be repaired. Church conflict was far easier to defuse. In an atmosphere of honesty, openness, giving and receiving correction, and clearing up relationships, it was difficult for divisive people to get traction. Instead, they would leave the church and attend elsewhere.

In family life: Families changed. For many, home-life greatly improved as they practiced the Attitudes at home, both with their spouse and their children. Children who learned that way of life have grown up, married, and are raising a third generation. It has been encouraging to see them solving marital problems and conflicts far faster than the pioneers of Hope.

On the job. Businesses and careers have been blessed. While all businesses require hard work and good financial management, a number of businesspeople have adapted the Heart Attitudes to their business situations and created profitable businesses that have far less stress and friction. Also, employees who prudently live out the Heart Attitudes at work grow to be highly valued personnel.

Years ago, I received a letter from a young woman who had become a Christian at Hope Church and grown spiritually. She had felt God wanted her to move back to southern California and try to lead her family members to Christ. Her letter contained a copy of the employee evaluation done by her supervisor at the end of her first year on her new job. In different areas of job performance, the supervisor had rated her 4.9 out of 5.0. My friend had highlighted in yellow several areas of the evaluation that were impacted by the fact that she had learned to live the Heart Attitudes. Her note said, “I don’t know if you knew it, but when you were

teaching us the Heart Attitudes, you were teaching us how to succeed at work.”

Her comment brings to mind Jesus’ words, “Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them” (John 13:17 NIV).

Implementing Biblical Principles for Effective Church Life in New Orleans from an African American Context

Fred Luter, Jr.

Fred Luter Jr. has served as Senior Pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, Louisiana, for 35 years and was the first African American President of the Southern Baptist Convention (2012–2014).

I have had the honor and privilege of being pastor of the Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans for the past 34 years. I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ in October 1977. Because of my zeal for God and my desire to see unsaved friends I grew up with have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, I started preaching on the street corners of the neighborhood I was raised in called “the Lower Ninth Ward” every Saturday at 12:00 noon.

My wife, Elizabeth, and I were members of Law Street Baptist Church, a National Baptist Church, where I served as an associate minister and taught Sunday school. Occasionally I would get an invitation to preach at various churches around the city. In the summer of 1986, I was preaching at Greater Liberty Baptist Church. After the service, a member of the church told me that Franklin Avenue was looking for a pastor. That evening I mentioned it to Elizabeth. We prayed about it, and later that week, I submitted my resume to the pulpit committee of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church. I was contacted a week later and was given a date to teach a combined Sunday school class and preach for the 11:00 am Sunday worship service. After the service, there was a meet-and-greet reception held in the fellowship hall where about 45–50 members met me, Elizabeth, and our two children, Kimberly and Chip, who were 4 and 2 years old at the time. After the fellowship reception, I was invited back to the sanctuary to be interviewed by the pulpit committee and members of the church. At the end of the hour-and-a-half interview, I was told that someone from the pulpit committee would contact me later that night. At about 6:30 pm on that Sunday night, I was informed that I was unanimously

elected as the new pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church. As the saying goes, the rest is history!

The following article outlines some biblical principles I implemented as a young preacher, pastoring my first church that grew Franklin Avenue from a small Southern Baptist Mission Church with 65 members to one of the largest churches in the city of New Orleans.

The Challenge to the Members of Franklin Avenue

In sermons and Bible studies, on a regular basis, I challenged the members of our congregation that if our church was going to grow, we had to be faithful in four areas. Based on what I had seen God do in my life, I could testify that God rewards faithfulness. And if we were faithful in following these biblical principles, then God would certainly be faithful to us.

Principle #1 Be Faithful to God

If a church wants the blessings of God on her life, that church must be faithful to God. We must not allow any worldly or secular things to compromise our obedience to God. Over and over again in the Old Testament, the children of Israel kept backsliding because they repeatedly put other things before the true and living God. As a matter of fact, one of the reasons that thousands of them never made it to the promised land was because of their lack of faith in God.

Even though God had sent Caleb and Joshua to spy out the land and they came back with a good report, the children of Israel chose to believe the report of the other spies whose faith was replaced by fear. Consequently, because of their lack of faith in God, they wandered for forty years in the wilderness, and most of them died before they ever crossed into the promised land. Unfortunately, many congregations never “cross over” because of their lack of faith in God.

However, we see a totally different story in Acts 2 with the New Testament church. After the Holy Spirit empowered them on the Day of Pentecost and after Peter preached his powerful sermon, these believers were ready to be faithful to God. Because of their obedience to God, the Bible says in Acts 2:47 that “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Well, that was my message to the small membership of Franklin Avenue. I assured them that if we were faithful to God, then God would

be faithful to us. However, in order for that to happen, we had to make God and God alone a priority in our lives. God had to be first in our lives—not sports, not politics, not fraternities, not sororities, not social clubs, not Mardi Gras, not golfing, not fishing, not hunting, not shopping, or anything else that would prevent or hinder us from being “light” and “salt” in the city of New Orleans.

As a matter of fact, that’s when I shared with them a saying that I have shared in sermons and Bible studies through the years when I would say:

It’s not about the pastor but the Master!

It’s not about the leaders but the Lamb of God!

It’s not about the singing but the Savior!

It’s not about the building and the budget, but about the
Bright and Morning Star!

Let’s be faithful to God, and God will be faithful to us!

Principle #2 Be Faithful to God’s Word

At first, it felt awkward telling those who professed to be Christians to be faithful to God’s Word until I realized how many people in the church were not faithful to God’s Word. I am amazed that so many people who say they are Christians do not make the reading of God’s Word a part of their daily lives. Even though the Bible is the bestselling book in the world, the fact is a lot of people do not read the Bible on a regular basis. That is not only true with people who are not Christians but also true among people who profess to be Christians.

Therefore, my constant challenge to the membership at Franklin Avenue was that every member should make a commitment to attend Sunday school on Sunday mornings and to attend Bible study on Wednesdays. I am convinced that a believer cannot truly be light and salt in this world without a regular diet of the Word of God. Every Believer who is serious about growing spiritually should read the Word of God, study the Word of God, memorize the Word of God, and apply the Word of God in their everyday lives to stand against the daily tempting tactics of the enemy.

To bring this point to life, I always use the example of Jesus Christ, who, when he was tempted by the devil in Matt 4 and Luke 4, used the Word of God by saying “it is written” to withstand

every temptation of the enemy! Listen, if Jesus, God's Son, used the Word of God, what about you and me?

I am so committed to the importance of being faithful to God's Word because I truly believe that everything we need to live a godly life in this ungodly world is found in the Word of God. Our walk, talk, actions, and lifestyle should be directed by the Word of God. The Bible gives instructions for how to handle every area of our lives, including conflict with fellow believers. I will never forget a discussion I had with a church leader years ago about using "Roberts Rules of Order" to conduct a church business meeting. I said to him we are conducting a "church" business meeting, attended and led by church members. Therefore, my question to him was, "who" is Robert, and why is he given authority to run our church business meeting! From that day on, Roberts Rules of Order never has been mentioned in any of our business meetings.

Another area where I challenged our church about the importance of being faithful to God's Word was in the area of giving tithes and offerings. Before I was elected as pastor of FABC, the church paid all its bills by having fundraisers. Every week, the church would sell chicken and fish dinners to pay the church's monthly expenses. On top of that, the church would have at least three offerings on Sunday during the worship service.

As a student of the Word of God, I knew this was not biblical stewardship, but I also knew that I should not come in and make immediate changes as a new pastor. Therefore, I started teaching and preaching about the importance of being faithful to God in our tithes and offerings. Going into my third year of preaching, teaching, and living the Word of God, I made a bold challenge to our congregation. This was my challenge: let's stop selling chicken and fish dinners to pay our bills, and let's start doing what the Bible says about giving tithes and offering. I told them, "Let's try tithes and offerings for the first six months of the year, and if God does not open up the windows of heaven and pour us out blessings as he promised in the book of Malachi, then I would be the first person to put on an apron and start frying chicken and fish dinners to help us pay our bills!" Well, I rejoice to announce that I never had to put on an apron. But better than that, our giving through tithes and offerings proved the saying, "You can't beat God's giving, no matter how you try. The more you give, the more he gives to you!" This was just another of many examples of

what happens to a congregation that is faithful to God's Word! Let's be faithful to God's Word, and God will be faithful to us.

Principle #3 Be Faithful to Your Family

One of the areas that I am truly strong about without compromise is the fact that pastors and church leaders should be faithful to their families! I have seen too many sad situations and read too many sad stories about pastors and church leaders not making their families a priority. If you, as a pastor or church leader, have a family and you spend more time at church than with your own family, then I do not believe that is God's will for your life. When you and I stand before God to give an account of our lives while on this earth, I assure you that how you answer for the stewardship of your family will be more important to God than the hours you spent at church. After all, God will take care of HIS church; however, you are responsible for your family. I tell every husband that I counsel with that God expects you to be the priest, protector, and provider for your family.

Of course, if that is going to happen in the church, the pastor must model that before the congregation. In all my years of being the pastor at Franklin Avenue, I took pride in the fact that every member of our church knew who my wife Elizabeth was. As a matter of fact, on some Sundays, when we had a lot of guests worshipping with us, after greeting them, I would say, "I want you to know who I am in love with," and have Elizabeth to stand. Of course, I would always introduce her as "the love of my life, the apple of my eyes, my prime rib, and my good thing!" It would always bring applause from the congregation and loving appreciation from my wife, Elizabeth.

Another area where I tried to model being faithful to your family was in the life of my kids, Kimberly and Chip. Throughout their young school life, before going away for college, I made sure that I attended every school event that they participated in. Whether it was soccer games, basketball games, dance recitals, or school plays, they could always look in the crowd to see their parents in the audience. As a matter of fact, my kids' school schedule always took priority over the church schedule. If a church meeting was scheduled at the same time as an event at school for one of my kids, I would have another minister oversee the meeting, or if that was not possible, I would request that the meeting be rescheduled. Any church meeting can always be rescheduled!

Not only was making my family a priority a blessing to my wife and kids, but it also was a tremendous testimony to the members of our congregation. As our church started growing and adding more ministries to meet the needs of the membership, there was always something going on every week night and on Saturday mornings and afternoons at the church. As a matter of fact, our facilities manager started calling our church “FABC WE NEVER CLOSE” because there was always something going on. One evening, I called our leadership together and mentioned the fact that some of us were spending more weeknights at church than we were at home with our families, and we saw the effects it was having on some families. Therefore, on that evening, we made a decision that Friday night would be Family night, and we canceled all Friday night church events.

Of course, the Luter family had to model that, so when our kids were home, each of them had the choice of what our family would do on those Friday nights. Kimberly would decide where we go on the first Friday of every month, Chip would decide what we would do on the second Friday of every month, and Elizabeth and I would make the decision for the third and fourth Fridays. To this day, I have seen the benefits of that decision in the life of our family and our congregation.

My mom and dad divorced when I was six years old. Therefore, I never had a dad in my house when I was growing up. My mom worked two or three jobs, raising five kids—not to make ends meet but to make ends wave at each other. Consequently, as a teenager heavily influenced by peer pressure, I made a lot of bad choices and decisions because I did not have a father figure at home who I am sure would have made a difference in some decisions I made with my so-called friends. That’s one of the reasons that when I became a father, I prayed, and I begged God to allow me to be a role model and an example in the life of Kimberly and Chip. I wanted to be the type of man that my daughter would want to marry one day and the type of man my son Chip would want to grow up to be one day. Well, God not only answered my prayer, but he also gave me something I did not ask for. He allowed my daughter to marry a Christian gentleman she met in college who loves and takes care of my daughter just like I did; however, God also allowed my son to truly be a “Chip” off the old block. If you get a chance to meet or get to know him, you will see that he is a born-again believer who loves God, who loves God’s

Word, and loves people. The something I did not ask for is the fact that God not only saved Chip but God also called him into the ministry! But that's not all. After being a pastor in Tampa, Florida, for six years, God has allowed Chip to come back home, where he now serves as my right hand in the position of senior associate pastor! As the old Baptist preacher would say, "Ain't God Good?"

There are so many other stories and testimonies I could share about the benefits of being faithful to your family but suffice it to say that your family is your first ministry; therefore, be sure to make your family a priority. Be faithful to your family, and God will be faithful to you!

Principle #4 Be Faithful to the Church where you serve.

The fourth and final principle is primarily a challenge I gave to myself as a young pastor. When I was elected as pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, I was both excited and nervous. I was excited because this congregation of 65 members elected me to be their pastor, but I was also nervous because of the awesome responsibility of being a pastor of a church for the first time. At that moment, I made the commitment to be the best pastor I could be because of the trust this congregation gave to me by electing me as their pastor. Even though we were few in number, I knew that if we were obedient to the will of God, there was nothing we could not accomplish. I also made a commitment to put all I had into this pastorate as if I was going to be there for the rest of my ministry. In other words, I had made up in my mind to bloom where I was planted. I never thought about starting out at Franklin Avenue for two or three years and then moving on to something bigger and better. As a matter of fact, most of the African American pastors I knew growing up stayed at the church that elected them until retirement or death. The only time there was an exception to that fact was if there was a church split when the pastor would leave and start another church with a remnant of members from the previous church.

I also realized that there are great rewards in being the pastor of a church for a long time. As of this writing, I am two months shy of being the pastor at FABC for 35 years! During that time, I have had the honor of dedicating a baby, baptizing that person when they became a believer, officiating the wedding of that person when they became an adult, and watching things come full

circle when I was able to dedicate the child of that parent, just like I dedicated the parent over thirty years ago! The only way that can happen is when you are at a church for a long period of time.

When Hurricane Katrina devastated and flooded our city, Elizabeth and I relocated to Birmingham, Alabama, and stayed there for seven long months with our daughter Kimberly. While living there, I had the honor of preaching at several churches around the Birmingham area. After preaching for one church three Sundays in a row, because the pastor had resigned and relocated to another city, I was approached by the pulpit committee, who asked me about applying for the vacant position as pastor of the church. I must admit I was honored to be asked to apply for the vacated position. However, I always knew I would be going back to New Orleans to fulfill my calling and commitment to the congregation that took a chance on electing this “street preacher” from the Lower 9th Ward of the city to be their pastor. In other words, even though there were other options, I had made up my mind to be faithful to the church where I served.

Because of my commitment to be faithful to the church where I served, I knew that there were at least three things I had to do for the members of the congregation of FABC. One, I had to love them. As I look back on my years as pastor of this congregation, it was evident that I had a genuine love for this membership. Even though there were good days and bad days. Even though there were highs and lows. Even though there were ups and downs, my love for the membership never wavered. In the midst of all the attacks of the enemy in trying to separate me from this congregation, I realized that spiritual warfare was a reality in every congregation. However, because I was faithful to God’s Word, I was prepared for those times by putting on the whole armor of God so that I would be able to stand and have the victory over the enemy who had come to steal, kill, and to destroy. Yes, thank God for his Word during times of discouragement.

The second thing I had to do for the membership at FABC was to lead them. Even though pastors and preachers are human, because of our calling, I am assured that God will give us what we need to shepherd the sheep that we lead. I saw firsthand how God did this in my life as pastor of FABC when Hurricane Katrina hit our city and scattered our congregation all over the country. For weeks, I had no idea where most of our membership was located. However, with the help of the internet, I was able to lead our dis-

placed members by posting on our website a monthly updated letter entitled “From the Heart of Pastor Luter.” In this letter, I shared with them words of encouragement and inspiration, told them how to let us know where they were living, and most importantly, communicated our plans to return and rebuild our beloved sanctuary that had been flooded with nine feet of water. I also put my preaching schedule on our website to let displaced members know if I was preaching in a city near them. During those times, it would not be unusual to see 20–30 Franklinites in the audience when I preached. It was always a time filled with hugs and tears after the service to be reunited with members you did know if they were dead or alive. For nearly nine months, God allowed me to lead our displaced congregation on our website until we were able to move back to the city of New Orleans.

The third thing I did for the membership of FABC to show my commitment to them was to listen to them. In those early years of being pastor of FABC, there were Sunday mornings after worship services and Wednesday nights after Bible study where members would be in line to shake my hand and greet me. During those special moments, oftentimes, members would share with me prayer requests or personal things they were dealing with in their lives and families. Depending on the situation, I would pray with them or let them know how to call my assistant to set up an appointment for them. However, I was committed to standing there until I spoke with the last person in line. What amazed me each and every week was that many of them were not in line for prayer or even wanting to set up an appointment to meet. Most of them were in line because they needed someone to listen to them! That’s it. They just needed to look in the eyes of someone who would listen to them. And who better to do that than their pastor? There is an old saying that people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care. I have seen that statement become true as a pastor that was faithful to the people where I served.

Well, those are the biblical principles I implemented in the life of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, which is now the largest African American Church in the city of New Orleans.

1. Be Faithful to God
2. Be Faithful to God’s Word
3. Be Faithful to Your Family

4. Be Faithful to the Church where you serve.

I have no doubt that if you are faithful to God in all the above areas, God will be faithful to you! May God bless and keep each of you, your family, and your ministry is my prayer. And always remember that God rewards FAITHFULNESS!

Implementing Biblical Principles for Mentoring Emerging Leaders

Randal Lanthripe

Randal Lanthripe founded Church in the Valley, Ontario, California, where he has served as senior pastor for 35 years and which started five additional churches. He also serves as director of the 17:6 Network of churches and director of The Antioch Project, which partners with Northwest Baptist Seminary, Langley, British Columbia, using a competency-based approach to train people for vocational ministry.

Church in the Valley (CIV) was planted in August of 1987. It launched in Diamond Bar, California, about 30 miles east of Los Angeles in Los Angeles County. The vision for CIV has been to reach non-Christians with the gospel and then help the new Christians and members grow to maturity in Christ. If God would allow, the dream was also to mentor young men who would launch out to plant and pastor more churches.¹ As time went by, the focus zeroed in on planting churches throughout the Los Angeles region. God has graciously allowed that to happen. At first, mentoring was more informal yet intentional as young leaders to mentor emerged in the congregation. Currently, most of the mentoring is accomplished through a formal training program.

A training program called The Antioch Project began in 2008 at Hope Church in Fort Worth, Texas, under the pastoral leadership of Harold Bullock. The program was created by Jessica Sturdevant. It is a five-year program designed to train men and women who sense a call to vocational ministry.² Mentoring is a core component of the Antioch Project. In 2012, Church in the Valley in Southern California was offered the opportunity to participate in the project. The author of this article is now the director of this program. There are forty-four alumni of the program and fifty-

¹ Ralph Moore, *Starting a New Church: The Church Planter's Guide to Success* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2002), 255ff.

² Larry R. Donnithorne, *The West Point Way of Leadership: From Learning Principled Leadership to Practicing It* (New York: Doubleday, 1993). Principles from this book were used in creating the Antioch Project program.

two current students from five churches. There is one campus in Texas and one in Southern California.

Mentoring and Time Commitment

Often, coaching and mentoring are used interchangeably. However, there is a clear difference between the two. For example, baseball coaches play a very specific role in a player's life. They aim to instruct their players in the fundamentals and strategy of baseball alone. The relationship does not expand to other areas of life. In contrast, mentors guide players in navigating the world beyond the ballpark: fame, finances, and wise relationships. A spiritual mentor aims to develop people across all areas of life. The New Testament qualifications for leadership focus on handling life in a godly way. Paul's instruction to Timothy illustrates this. "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim 4:12).³ One has the sense that Paul has been mentoring Timothy toward development in each of these areas and more. The list of qualifications for New Testament leaders is mostly related to character, so it would follow that Paul is mentoring Timothy in these qualities.

God uses responsibility in ministry to prepare people for greater responsibility.⁴ Through the weight of responsibility, God strengthens character, increases capacity, and develops competence along with skill. As men and women are doing ministry, mentors can walk alongside them and accelerate growth. Mentors can magnify the truths and principles God intends for them to learn. A well-timed word from a mentor has tremendous power for instruction. It is especially helpful for future church planters to take responsibility for small group leadership and for teaming in evangelism. They will learn a great deal from rallying a small group to accomplish goals of evangelism and edification. As they lead people to follow Christ, they will learn a great deal about leading volunteers.

Mentors may have differing amounts of time for working with trainees. One person can train under a mentor for several years.

³ All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

⁴ A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1971), 99–119. This is one component of the training Jesus used with his disciples.

With other people, the mentor may have much less time. There are two examples in Scripture of timeframes at both ends of the spectrum. In Acts, Priscilla and Aquila mentored Apollos for a very short time:

Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. (Acts 18:24–26).

In contrast, Paul's mentoring relationship with Timothy spanned many years. One has the sense that theirs was a very close relationship. "This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare" (1 Tim 1:18). Paul was familiar with the faith of Timothy's grandmother and mother, another clue to the closeness of their relationship that has developed over a longer period. The apostle set an example for us in relating to the family of the persons they were training.⁵ There is a warmth and concern for the whole family evident in this statement. Awareness of family relational patterns gives much helpful insight to a mentor.

Select Well

Ministry leaders who are best suited for mentoring emerge from existing positions of service. They qualify themselves for investment in mentoring as they handle ministry responsibility faithfully. A leader should look for capable and committed young leaders to mentor who are godly. Men and women who are faithful, available, teachable, industrious, and have a heart to please God are worth the investment of one's time. The priority in mentoring is to select people to mentor with these qualities. "You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and

⁵ Donald A. McGavran and Win Arn, *How to Grow a Church* (Glendale, CA: Regal, 1973), 29–34. Family units are a key to evangelism and then discipling and mentoring.

what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 2:2–3). The challenge to share in suffering reveals the commitment needed in ministry. Often, there may be someone in our ministry who is talented but not committed. A mentor cannot build commitment or motivation into someone else.⁶ The best way forward is to select people to mentor who have already demonstrated the level of commitment they will need for the ministry they are training for.

One of the qualifications for elder-level leadership in the New Testament is to manage one’s household well.⁷ A leader’s credibility in ministry is affirmed by how he or she handles family life. Inside the family, one cannot pretend to have faith. Children know the real story about their parents’ faith and lifestyle. Over time, the truth becomes evident. The qualifications for leadership in Scripture mean that it is ideal for both the husband and wife to team well in marriage. For these reasons, it is important to mentor both the husband and wife if possible because the marriage will have an impact on the ministry.

This writer and his wife have mentored two couples for a little over 20 years. In 1999, Josh and Erika De La Rosa started attending CIV. In 2007, Josh and Erika and a launch team of seven adults and their children planted Orangecrest Community Church in Riverside, California. The church has grown consistently under Josh’s leadership. Over time, Josh and Erika have mentored another couple who planted Valley Lights Church in Santa Clarita, California, on the other side of Los Angeles. Valley Lights is CIV’s first granddaughter church. Orangecrest is the first fruit of the vision to raise up leaders who will plant churches around the Los Angeles area. In 2001, Alex and Samantha Barrett started attending CIV. In 2006, Alex joined the staff of CIV, which allowed for more mentoring. In 2012, Alex began pastoring a campus of Church in the Valley in Alhambra, California, that would eventually become a standalone congregation. This was further preparation

⁶ John Hawkins, *Leadership as a Lifestyle* (Provo, UT: Executive Excellence, 2001), 70–75.

⁷ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: A Commitment to Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 43–44. Sanders connects managing family well to reaching a minister’s full potential.

for church planting. In 2018, Alex and Samantha and a launch team of eight adults and their children started Ridgeview Church in Fontana, California. Ridgeview is still in its infancy but is steadily reaching people. Throughout the article, they will share what has been most helpful to them in the mentoring relationships they have enjoyed.

Intentionally Set the Example

Paul consciously set the example for Timothy and others he mentored. This is the first principle of biblical mentoring.

You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim 3:10–15)

A mentor becomes a kind of YouTube-style training manual for doing ministry. If someone needs to learn how to do a project around the house, it is common practice today to consult YouTube. In a video, one can see and hear how to do something.⁸ Seeing and hearing is said to increase learning by 50% rather than merely reading about it. Timothy saw Paul's example as he taught, set goals, exercised faith, and endured suffering. Regarding pay for doing ministry, Paul states, "It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate" (2 Thess 3:9). This illustrates how Paul was intentional about the example his team was setting. They had a right to receive a salary for their ministry, but they worked bi-vocationally to set the example.

Josh spoke of the power of example as he was mentored, "You indirectly set an example for me in evangelism and church planting. I met the very people that you led to Christ and experienced

⁸ Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, 41.

life in the church that you planted. This immersed me into a very different culture where my leadership and personal values were challenged through first-hand experience.” This is an example that demonstrates the power of being in the culture of a healthy church. When people experience what they have not experienced before, it has the potential to impact them deeply. Experience cements learning. It adds to learning beyond reading about ministry or seeing someone else do ministry. Mentors who intentionally set an example and create experiences for those they are training deepen their impact in the lives of those they mentor.

Humbly Share Life

A second principle for mentoring is to share life with those being mentored.⁹ Building trust is essential for establishing a good relationship. If a mentor has a longer timeframe to train a person, sharing life is crucial. This will deepen the impact of training. This is what Paul did: “So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us” (2 Thess 2:8). If a mentor isolates themselves from the person in training, the opportunity for greater impact is missed. Samantha commented on the impact of Cindy sharing life with her, “She invited me into her life. She was not just a formal mentor but a spiritual mother. I got to do life with her—come over for dinner, hang outs, join in with her family, etc. I knew I was not just an assignment to her.” If the persons being trained feel like a project, they are not experiencing what Paul described in 2 Thess 2:8. Love and faithfulness are two core ways trust is built or rebuilt (see Prov 16:6). Knowing that the mentor cares for the individuals in training is an essential aspect of building trust. If they do, they will more likely adopt the values and principles being lived out by the mentor.

Coach Situationally

A third principle for mentoring is to coach those in training through current ministry situations. In coaching, one advises on how to handle a specific part of life or ministry. A wise mentor

⁹ Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1993), 33.

provides an advantage by helping the trainee learn to read and respond well as the situations of life flow. This is what Paul was doing throughout his letters to Timothy and Titus in the New Testament. He mentored them by showing them how to handle specific challenges and threats experienced in ministry. Some examples of the coaching Paul gave them: (1) dealing with false teachers, 1 Tim 4:1–6; (2) coaching on relationships to older and younger men and women, 1 Tim 5:1–2; (3) explaining to Titus why he was left in Crete, to appoint elders, Titus 1:5. These are a few examples of coaching in specific ministry situations. As mentors coach situationally, they reveal the highest priority in each circumstance.¹⁰ Paul showed Titus the priority of leadership in the church by explaining he was left in Crete for that purpose. When the qualifications for elders were laid out in Titus 1:6–9, he would understand the priority of selecting leaders of character. In 1 Tim 4:6, Paul tells Timothy that if he points these things out to the congregation, he will be a good minister of Christ Jesus. Coaching gives the trainee a sense of what is at the heart of each situation. Josh commented on how helpful it is to have “regular time for input and advice which sped up the decision-making process.” I would often come with a list of questions, and having the regular time kept me from getting bogged down on decisions.

Cooperate with God amid Pressure

People in training are under the pressure of handling life, ministry, and the training program itself (if mentoring is in the context of a training program). A fourth principle for effective mentoring is to wisely use the pressure God is allowing to develop character and solidify values. God uses pressure to develop his people.¹¹ Paul lists some of what he had suffered for the sake of the gospel in 2 Cor 1. Next, Paul makes this statement, “Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead” (2 Cor 1:9).

¹⁰ Hawkins, *Leadership as a Lifestyle*, 25–26. Mentors give those they mentor an advantage of allowing them to learn from others’ experience and possibly avoid getting beat up.

¹¹ Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, *Pain: The Gift Nobody Wants* (New York: Harper Collins, 1988), 179–97. This book gives perspective on the relationship between painful experiences and where God is working in the lives of his people. A wise mentor who asks questions to draw out the connection is extremely helpful and can be used by God to accelerate development.

God faithfully grows our faith and develops our character through trouble and suffering. Romans 5:3–5 describes how we can rejoice in our suffering because it produces endurance that produces character that produces hope that does not disappoint. A wise mentor knows how to work alongside the Lord as he works in the life of others through the pressure that they experience.

There is an art to cooperating with the Lord gained only through experience. It is hard to watch as someone suffers and walks through trouble. However, a wise mentor does not circumvent the faith or character God is developing through it.¹² So, the mentor walks through the trouble with the person in training. The mentor can make the most of the trouble through strengthening conversations that give perspective and call them forward to faith and obedience. When a person is suffering intensely, it is not the time for direct challenge. There is a time for direct challenge, but not when a person is suffering intensely. Timing is a key to effective mentoring. In extreme trouble, a mentor may release the person in training from ministry responsibilities if possible. But it is often best to let God do the work that he can only do through suffering. This is a judgment call at the heart of the art of mentoring. The bottom line is that mentors should never short-circuit the work of God in the life of the person they are training as they experience trouble.

Root Training in Scripture

A friend of mine says, “People don’t need to hear my opinion; they need to hear what God thinks about it.” This may not be original to him, but he makes a good point. The fifth biblical principle for mentoring emerging leaders is to make sure to root teaching and training in Scripture. Scripture is the primary source for equipping God’s people. Paul makes this clear in his second letter to Timothy, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16–17). Mentors should be careful

¹² J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader* (Colorado Springs, CO: Nav-Press, 1988), 57–75. A wise mentor is an invaluable resource as they guide people they mentor under the pressure of the checks that Clinton outlines in these pages. They can help them see what God is doing and encourage them to pass these tests.

to connect what is happening in the trainee's life and ministry to Scripture. It is Scripture that equips people for ministry. The word of God is a powerful tool in a mentor's hand. It always accomplishes the purpose for which God gave it (see Isa 55:11). It carries its own power as you speak it into the life of the person you are training. Erika shared that Cindy was consistently "sharing openly and honestly about her walk with the Lord (this challenged me in my walk and built trust, so I was more willing to be open with her)." Mentors who share what God is teaching them out of Scripture have a greater impact than using their own words and wisdom.

Love Sacrificially

A mentor must speak truth into the life of the person being trained to be effective. Truth sinks deeper when the person being trained has experienced the sacrificial love of the mentor. The sixth principle for mentoring is to love those being trained sacrificially. If truth must be spoken into people's lives, and they have experienced genuine love from the one speaking it, they realize they are being told the truth because they are cared for.¹³ Love is the atmosphere within which the truth has the opportunity to gain a hearing. Paul mentions this in Ephesians, "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph 4:15). Timothy knows that Paul loves him; this is found in 1 Tim 3:10. When someone loves a person, it is not a chore to spend time with them. If mentors view their time with the person they are training as a chore, a task to check off the list, the person will know it. It is like parenting. If children do not believe their parents enjoy them, they are resistant to adopting their training and values. Love, expressed through enjoying time with others, helps open them up to truth as a mentor speaks it. Samantha said this about Cindy, "Cindy is very compassionate and accepting. I never felt judged by her. She showed care, concern, and understanding but always landed on the truth. I could trust her to accept me where I was and point me to God's hope even if it meant I needed to receive gentle correction from her." Love opens people up to hearing the truth.

¹³ John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leaders Around You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 61–82. Maxwell gives a picture of what it looks like to have an enjoyable relationship with people one mentors.

Commend Character and Commitment

A seventh principle for biblical mentoring is to commend character and commitment over talent and ability. This is what Paul did in his New Testament letters. In this passage, he commends Timothy's unique character,

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also. (Phil 2:19–24)

Paul commends Timothy's selfless concern for the interests of Jesus Christ. This is quite a commendation and, at the same time, an encouragement for Timothy. It holds up what is important to God and what should be honored and commended by Christ-followers everywhere. A well-timed commendation holds up the right standard for character and commitment.

Character and commitment become evident when people do hard things. Paul makes it clear that people must be honored for taking risks for the mission, "So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me" (Phil 2:29–30). Epaphroditus is commended for risking his life for the sake of the gospel. Well-timed commendations embed the right values and lead people in training to recognize what is highly valued by God. In commending Epaphroditus, Paul showed every church and believer what is important to the Lord. Men who risk their lives for the sake of the gospel are to be honored. This is an important way a mentor can highlight the importance of character and commitment.

The role of a mentor, in a biblical sense, is to strengthen the souls of those they are training and encourage them to continue in the faith. One can see Paul's pattern of circling back to the churches he started: "strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). People's souls are strengthened by commending their faith

and obedience in the face of adversity. An effective mentor will use strengthening words to help people being trained when they are discouraged. True commendations and calling people forward will strengthen those who are down.

Reproduce, Don't Replicate

The goal of a spiritual mentor should be to develop a person in line with the way God has gifted them. The eighth principle of biblical mentoring is to focus on developing the person God is growing, not to replicate oneself.¹⁴ Paul makes this statement in 2 Tim 1:6, “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” Paul’s concern was to help Timothy grow in line with the gifts God had given him, not to make Timothy in his own image. It is dishonoring to the Lord when mentors aim to make someone in their own image. It is honoring to the Lord when a mentor recognizes the gifting and abilities with which God has blessed them. All people have the dignity of being made in the image of God. Psalm 139 makes it clear that God has built-in strengths and giftings in people as he knit them together in the womb. The Lord is honored when a mentor builds on the foundation God has laid by playing a role that enhances God-given gifts and abilities. This was Paul’s approach to mentoring.

Conclusion

The major concern in mentoring is to shape the priorities of the person being mentored. People’s priorities will shape how they will make decisions for the rest of their lives. They will always choose what is most important to them. The principles of mentoring in this article will help a person in training understand godly priorities. First, through the mentor’s example, they see what is most important to the mentor. Second, if mentors are sharing their lives with them, they are experiencing the highest priorities in their life. Third, as a mentor coaches the person in training through real-time situations, the mentor guides in a way that the highest priorities in each situation become apparent. Fourth, when

¹⁴ Howard A. Snyder, *The Community of the King* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 89–114. Snyder shows God’s ideal for a church community in this chapter.

a mentor aims to strengthen the person under pressure, priorities are better understood. The responsibilities from which they are released and what they are held to are instructive. Fifth, the priority of Scripture is made evident as a spiritual mentor counsels and trains based on the word of God. Sixth, by showing sacrificial love to the person in training, the priority of loving God and others is made evident. Seventh, a mentor's commendations and praise show that character and commitment are more important than competence. Competence is necessary, but character has a higher priority for leaders than skill or ability. Eighth, by focusing on developing persons according to their gifting, they understand the unique contribution they can make to the body of Christ.

The Apostle Paul mentored Timothy and Titus and others whose names are not known. In this way, he extended his influence and the Kingdom of God as well. In 2 Tim 2:2, Paul says leaders must be faithful to pass along the experience they have gained, and the principles learned through the years to faithful and capable men and women through a mentoring relationship. Many leaders in the church have experienced the work of God in their lives through ministry. This is a stewardship. Faithful leaders multiply their impact through mentoring. There is a great deal of opportunity to advance the Kingdom of God in this way. Leaders in the church are called to follow the example of Paul by mentoring others.

Implementing Biblical Principles for Discipling Women

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Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matt 28:19–20)¹

The call to make disciples is a call to all believers regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, or country of origin. Jesus said to go and make disciples. He did not distinguish between individuals or give this responsibility only to males or only to females. Instead, the expectation is that all Christians will be going and making disciples. Naturally, as you are going about your daily life, you should be focused on taking advantage of opportunities for disciple making. While the call for all of us looks the same, what that looks like in our lives will vary according to gender, age, or cultural background.

In thinking about discipling women specifically, what comes to mind? One of the primary passages God provides regarding the discipleship of women is found in Titus 2. In that passage, we find specific instructions given to older women regarding their behavior in the church. Why is that so important? Older women naturally set the example for younger women. They outline a pattern of behavior for younger women to follow. In this short passage, the Apostle Paul outlined expectations for older women in the congregation. He said, “In the same way, older women are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not slaves to excessive drinking. They are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husband and to love their children, to be self-controlled, pure, workers at home, kind, and in submission

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the Christian Standard Bible.

to their husbands, so that God's word will not be slandered" (Titus 2:3–5).

"Some women may be hesitant to teach this curriculum because the bookends of this directive are concerning a woman's relationship to her husband. Now clearly not all women are married and not all women have children. In Paul's day this would have been a given that most women would be married, yet in twenty-first century western culture marriage and children cannot be assumed for women. However, these instructions are applicable to all women because all women can learn to love others."²

Biblical Principles for Discipleship

Implementing Biblical principles for discipling women means that at the heart, women are seeking to follow and teach these directives. Let's break them down and see what women leading other women in the church could look like. The first section outlines an older woman's character. Then the second section outlines what she should teach. In seeking to find women who can disciple other women in the church, these characteristics should be evident in the lives of women who are setting the example for other women.

In her character, a woman should:

1) Be reverent in behavior – Spiritually mature women who are setting an example through their character will be women whose hearts are committed to the Lord. These women will be known for wholeheartedly submitting their lives to Jesus. Not only do they show reverence at church, but also in the way that they live their lives. Their focus is on the Lord and what He wants them to do each day. The overall theme of what Paul was communicating to older women is that they should set an example for younger women by living lives of reverence.³

2) Avoid slander – Spiritually mature women are careful with their speech. They avoid spreading hurtful gossip. Instead, they use their words to bless others. As James exhorts, "With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people

² Emily Dean, "Ministry Leadership with Women," in *Together We Equip: Integrating Discipleship and Ministry Leadership for Holistic Spiritual Formation*, eds. Jody Dean and Hal Stewart (Bloomington, IN: Westbow, 2018), 193.

³ Knute Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 360.

who are made in God's likeness. Blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, these things should not be this way" (James 3:9–10). The term for slander used is *diabolos*, which is the root term for the devil. The idea of slander is associated with working for the enemy rather than working for God.⁴ Women who are growing in Christlikeness actively seek to tame the tongue and use it to bless others with their speech.

3) Avoid excessive drinking – Spiritually mature women also avoid engaging in anything that would control them other than the Lord. As Paul challenged the Ephesians, "And don't get drunk with wine, which leads to reckless living, but be filled by the Spirit" (Eph 5:18). Anything that takes our focus away from the Lord can become an idol in our lives. Women who are growing in their relationship with the Lord will seek to be consumed by the Holy Spirit rather than allowing other things to take God's place in their lives.

In her curriculum, a woman should teach:

1) What is good – Teaching what is good means teaching about the character of God. We know that God is good (Ps 34:8) and that His creation is good (Gen 1:10). God's goodness is seen through the metanarrative of Scripture in God's redemptive plan for creation. Helping women understand who God is and how he is working through history until now should be a key focus in discipling women. Knute Larson notes that teaching what is good "refers not to formal classroom education but to teaching by example."⁵ As women are going, they should be teaching younger women about the goodness of God.

2) Love for family – That women in the first century would have a husband and children would be a natural assumption.⁶ While women in the twenty-first century may or may not have a husband or children, most women have some type of family, whether it be parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc. If we get to the heart of what the passage is saying, it reminds us of Jesus' focus on loving God and loving others. "The word *love* in this instance comes from the root word *phileo*, or "brotherly love." It emphasizes the strength of companionship, of pulling together

⁴ Thomas Lea & Hayne Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 299.

⁵ Larson, *1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 360.

⁶ Larson, *1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 361.

toward a goal, of devotion measured by kindness and mutual friendship.⁷ Who are those nearest to us? We should love those people. Sometimes family can be the hardest to love. This passage reminds us of the importance of choosing to love those closest to us, even when it can be challenging to do so. Teaching women to love those in their closest circles is a necessary step in following Jesus.

3) Self-control – Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), so to exhibit self-control means that women are allowing the Holy Spirit to control their lives. The idea here is of someone exhibiting a sound mind. Having a sound mind focused on the things of Christ leads to behavior that is self-controlled.⁸ Women should not only set the example of being filled with the Spirit, but also they need to teach other women how to yield their lives daily to the Holy Spirit. When we are daily dying to self and allowing the Spirit to control us, then we will exhibit self-control.

4) Purity – Purity and self-control go hand in hand. As we avoid allowing anything in our lives to take our focus off Jesus, then we will seek purity in all things. Much like the climate in which the Corinthian church found itself, seeking to live in the world but not of the world can be challenging in twenty-first-century America. Teaching women to make good choices is crucial to helping them fix their eyes on Jesus. In keeping their attention on Christ, women will be able to live pure lives.

5) Life Management – In thinking about working at home, the idea of life management comes to mind. With the 2020 pandemic, more women, as well as men, are working from home, and of those, women were more likely to desire to continue working from home.⁹ They are juggling home responsibilities with work responsibilities all in the same space. Teaching women to be workers at home means teaching them how to juggle all of life's responsibilities. How does one manage schedules, budgets, bills, laundry, etc., often while working full-time or part-time and raising children or even educating children at home? Many of these

⁷ Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 361.

⁸ Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth, *Adorned: Living Out the Beauty of the Gospel Together* (Chicago: Moody, 2017), 164.

⁹ Parker, Kim, Juliana Horowitz, and Rachel Minkin, "How the Coronavirus Outbreak Has and Hasn't Changed the Way Americans Work," Pew Research, December, 9, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/12/09/how-the-coronavirus-outbreak-has-and-hasnt-changed-the-way-americans-work>.

skills are not taught in school, so where does a young woman learn how to manage her life from a Christlike perspective? Teaching women to follow Jesus includes teaching how to handle everything from a biblical worldview.

6) Kindness – Also a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22), it is interesting that kindness comes after working at home. “The two Greek terms rendered “to be busy at home” (*oikourgous*) and “to be kind” (*agathas*) may be taken together to simply mean *good workers at home*. Taken independently, “to be busy at home” (*oikourgous*) would indicate an efficient management of household responsibilities, and “kind” (*agatha*) would indicate a lack of irritability in light of the nagging demands of mundane and routine household duties.”¹⁰ In managing life, it seems that doing so with kindness is important. How does one handle the twentieth call she has had to make to get her refrigerator repaired? Managing life can be stressful, and kindness tends to fall away when we are stressed. Treating everyone with kindness no matter what challenging circumstances arise is a defining characteristic of a Christ-follower. Teaching women to treat others with kindness in all circumstances will distinguish them as Christians.

7) Submission to authority – When we first submit ourselves to the Lord, then submission to authority naturally follows. While specifically this admonition is directed to wives, we all have people in authority over us, whether that be a pastor, employer, etc. Most people have someone in their lives to whom they are required to submit to authority. Typically, if there is an authority issue with people, there is also an authority issue with God. However, important to note is that this passage does not advocate inferiority¹¹ or abuse of authority. God does not desire for authority to be abused in any way, and women should seek immediate help if they are in any type of abusive situation. Overall though, under healthy circumstances, teaching women to respect those whom God has placed in authority in their lives is an important step to submitting their lives to Christ.

Methods for Discipleship

With all these guidelines given in Scripture, in what ways should women seek to teach these principles? A frequent question

¹⁰ Lea & Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 300–301.

¹¹ Lea & Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 301.

then becomes, how can I disciple women amid the busy culture in which we live? Thankfully, discipling others is not as complicated as many initially think. Often women think that they do not know enough to disciple another woman. Others may believe that they are not Christlike enough to set an example for women. Yet that is simply not true. If a woman is growing in her understanding of scripture and growing in spiritual maturity, though not perfect, she has something to offer a younger woman from the strength she has gained in her spiritual journey.¹² What younger women are looking for is a guide who is a little further along in the journey. What women need most is another woman who offers an example, presence, and guidance on what it looks like to follow Christ.

1) Example – With fewer people in the United States professing faith in Christ, fewer women are growing up in homes where they are taught about Jesus.¹³ Women desire to observe what it looks like to follow Jesus daily. They are not looking for perfect examples. They are looking for women who are real and authentic. No one is perfect, but anyone who is seeking to grow in spiritual maturity can set an example for others to follow.

2) Presence – Anxiety levels among young adults are at an all-time high, and many say they just need people in their lives¹⁴. Older women should avoid discounting the value of their presence. Many younger women desire to spend time with older women. Even if it is just for a cup of coffee occasionally, younger women want to develop relationships with older women.

3) Guidance – Younger women want older women who will speak into their lives. They are hungry for guidance on how to live a godly life in Christ Jesus. While older women may not think that they have anything to teach or offer younger women because life is changing so quickly, the unchanging truths of God's word remain the same (Isa 40:8). So, women who are growing in the truth of God's word do have something to share. They need to impart the unchanging wisdom of God to the younger generation.

¹² Melissa B. Kruger, *Growing Together: Taking Mentoring Beyond Small Talk and Prayer Requests* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020).

¹³ America's Changing Religious Landscape, Pew Research, May 12, 2015, <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape>.

¹⁴ 5 Trends Shaping the Next Season of Next Gen Discipleship, Barna Group, August 19, 2020, <https://www.barna.com/research/five-themes-to-frame-next-gen-discipleship>.

Organizing for Discipleship

While the basic method of offering an example, presence, and guidance may seem simple, implementation within a church requires some organization. Some women may take it upon themselves to seek out other women to disciple, yet most women will benefit from some structure and guidance on how to make disciples. A frequent question at conferences and training events is often, how do I connect the older women with the younger women in our church? Here are a few basic steps to create a structure for discipleship among women.¹⁵

1) Pray – Asking the Lord how to create a climate of discipleship is the most important step in preparing women to be disciple makers. Without the help of the Holy Spirit, any attempts to organize for discipleship will be futile. The church is desperately in need of the Holy Spirit's guidance to give direction and stir the hearts of women to disciple other women. Ask the Lord to call out women to be disciple makers.

2) Cast vision – Next, older women must see the need to disciple younger women. Women need to see a compelling vision for what scripture requires of them. All believers are commanded to disciple others, so women need to see that God expects them to disciple others. While many women in the church know they should be discipling, they often get caught up in fear and insecurity. The leader will need to dispel any myths, such as that older women have nothing to offer younger women. Help them see what they have to offer and that there are younger women who do want to hear what they have to share.

3) Help them meet the qualifications – Provide opportunities to be sure that older women are growing in their faith. Ideally, many women at this stage of life will be spiritually mature, but age does not always equate with spiritual maturity. All believers must continue to grow in their faith no matter how long they have been Christians. If they have areas in their lives that do not meet up to the standards for leaders, give them opportunities to grow in those areas.

4) Help them know how to teach – Some women may feel comfortable with teaching while others may not feel equipped to lead someone else. Yet much of discipleship involves guiding

¹⁵ For more information on this topic, please see Emily Dean, "Ministry Leadership with Women," in *Together We Equip*, 188–98.

someone else along life's journey. Women do not have to have a special skill set to be able to disciple someone. They simply need to share what they know. Providing them with tools on how to lead someone on the journey of following Jesus can help ease their concerns and equip them to faithfully carry out Jesus' command to disciple others.

5) Help them know what to teach – Another concern older women may have is that they feel like they do not know enough about the Bible to be able to teach someone. Women need to be assured that they do not have to be a biblical scholar to teach another woman how to follow Jesus. Again, they simply need to share what they know. Help them to remember what God has done in their spiritual journeys and prepare them to share about it.¹⁶ They can study scripture with the women they are discipling and learn as they go. Giving women tools and resources and equipping them with a clear picture of what discipleship looks like will help them feel more confident and prepared to disciple women.

6) Choose a format – Along with preparing them to teach, creating a structure for discipleship will ensure that discipleship is actually taking place. Older generations generally want more formal organization while younger generations prefer more natural, organic approaches, yet some structure will be necessary to help women connect.¹⁷ Several options are available depending on what works best for the church setting.

One-to-one discipleship is the most labor intensive because you have a 1:1 ratio of people. The benefits are that individuals being discipled get a lot more personal interaction, and the opportunity exists for deep friendship beyond the discipleship relationship. The negative aspect is that discipling one-to-one requires a lot of leaders. Also, a lot more relational pressure for connections exists in the one-to-one environment. If the individuals fail to naturally connect, then the relationship may feel forced or awkward.

Another option would be to offer triad groups. In the triad group, one woman would disciple two other women. The triad

¹⁶ Kandi Gallaty, *Disciple Her: Using the Word, Work, and Wonder of God to Invest in Women* (Nashville: B&H, 2019), 45–48.

¹⁷ Sue Edwards and Barbara Neumann, *Organic Mentoring: A Mentor's Guide to Relationships with Next Generation Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2014), 15.

group naturally multiplies the number of women being disciplined and reduces the number of leaders needed. The benefit of the triad group is that opportunities for deep connection still occur, but the relationships may feel more relaxed with three people instead of just two women. While more efficient than one-to-one, the triad group still requires more leaders than the small group.

The most efficient option for structuring discipleship on a church-wide scale is to offer small groups. With small groups, ideally, there would be one leader with three to five participants. Larger groups can be utilized, but the opportunity to participate in discussion greatly diminishes once the group goes beyond five to six people. Small groups offer a variety of perspectives. Women get the chance to grow in their leadership skills as they can take turns leading various aspects of the group. With more women in a small group, additional relationships can occur. Keeping a small group at five to six women also provides greater opportunities for accountability. The larger a group becomes, the easier it is to be a passive participant. With small groups, fewer leaders are needed, which can allow more women to be disciplined.¹⁸

Choosing the right structure will depend on the needs and resources of each church. The various structures all have positive and negative aspects to consider. What will flourish at one church may not work well at another as each church is different. Important in choosing an organizational structure is to consider the best fit for the unique setting in which a leader serves. Regardless of the form chosen, what is most imperative is that churches are creating a climate for discipleship to occur. Once women catch the vision of the need for discipleship and how they can participate, they will begin to see that discipling other women is an integral part of following Jesus.

¹⁸ Dean, "Ministry Leadership with Women," 190–93.

Implementing Biblical Principles for Effective Church Life in a Canadian Context

Gary Smith

Gary Smith is lead pastor of Bow Valley Baptist Church, Cochrane, Alberta, and has served as the North American Mission Board's Church Planting Catalyst in Canada.

What is so unique about Canada, eh? Everyone knows it is colder and further north than most of the United States. But is it unique enough to merit its own way of applying biblical principles for effective church life?

The Canadian context is quite different, however, in more ways than many realize. Considering that, this article will use 100% Canadian content (Canadian authors, church planters, pastors, or others who have served in the Church) to give perspective on principles for effective church life in this unique context. First, one must uncover some of the differences that are unique to a Canadian perspective, then discover what biblical principles have driven effectiveness within the unique Canadian church and culture.

One might not know that there is a vast difference between Canada and the United States when it comes to religious differences.¹ Observe some comparisons between statistical data of the United States and Canada to bring clarity to the differences between these two neighbors²:

- More than seven-in-ten Americans (73%) and a (slight) majority of Canadians (52%) describe themselves as “very spiritual” or “moderately spiritual.”
- A third of Canadians (32%) say they are atheist, agnostic, or have no religion, compared to only 19% of Americans.
- In addition, 69% of Canadians either never attend religious services or do so only for special events such as

¹ For the sake of brevity, a comparison for cultural understanding will be considered between the United States and Canada.

² “Religious Adherence Differs Greatly Between Canada and the United States.” Last modified Nov. 16, 2020. https://researchco.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Release_Religion_NA_15Dec2020.pdf.

weddings, funerals, or baptisms, compared to 41% of Americans.

- Attendance to religious gatherings is significantly higher in the United States than in Canada. While 38% of Americans say they go to a church, temple, or synagogue at least once a week, only 16% of Canadians follow the same path.
- Finally, 48% of Americans say religion is “very important” to them personally. In Canada, only 24% of respondents feel the same way.

As one can see, there are significant differences in the religious thoughts and practices between Canadians and Americans. This is the reason the author and his family moved to Canada as church planters from Omaha, Nebraska, to strive to impact the greater lostness in the Canadian culture versus the American culture. In the process, the vast differences that were, and are, between the US and Canada, became evident.

While many Americans feel that Canadians are like them, “Many Canadians think that their country is totally different from the United States. Canadians and Americans are alike and the exact opposite at the same time. Americans are generally more sociable, patriotic, conservative, religious, and traditional. Canadians are more restrained and at the same time more liberal.”³ These differences include their worldview, their thoughts on religion, their perspective on the role of government, and how they relate to one another. All of this requires a Canadian approach and a Canadian Christian worldview to healthy church life. An excellent example of this worldview is stated by Bruxy Cavey, a well-known Canadian pastor. He states, “Jesus calls us into principle-based spirituality.”⁴ This lays a foundation for the implementation of Biblical principles for healthy Canadian church life.

Defining Health

“Health,” when applied to congregational life, can have a variety of definitions, depending on one’s preferred quantifiers. In nearly every definition of church health in Canadian denomina-

³ Canadians Vs. Americans: Top 10 Differences. Last modified November 5, 2019. <https://newlifevisa.com/canadians-vs-americans-top-10-differences>.

⁴ Bruxy Cavey, *The End of Religion: Encountering the Subversive Spirituality of Jesus* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2007), 95.

tions, one will find that church health and reaching people for Christ are tied together.

The Canadian Baptists of Western Canada define health as reaching “people for Christ by seeking the health and extending the ministry of the local church.”⁵ The Free Methodist Church of Canada, comprised of nearly 150 churches, provides an excellent definition for a healthy church: “A healthy Church does whatever it takes to continually place the gospel within reach of those around them resulting in a worshipping community of Jesus-followers who do whatever it takes to continually place the gospel within reach of those around *them* resulting in a worshipping community of Jesus-followers.”⁶

This “whatever it takes” attitude is prevalent among healthy churches in Canada. However, it is not just the attitude. This attitude drives the desire to see the Gospel “within reach.” The Canadian National Baptist Convention (CNBC)⁷, the sister convention to the Southern Baptist Convention in the US, carries a similar attitude spelled out in its vision and first core value. The CNBC’s vision states: “We see a day when every man, woman, boy and girl has multiple opportunities to see, hear, and respond to the good news of Jesus Christ.” The CNBC’s first core value is “Gospel Urgency.”⁸ For the CNBC, this vision is driving towards their visionary objective of 1,000 healthy, multiplying, and cooperative churches.

Health in the Canadian church cannot be separated from the Gospel. It is not just head knowledge of the gospel; it is the practice of healthy churches to share the gospel regularly. These healthy churches also know that in order to share the gospel effectively, they need to be planting new churches.

⁵ “Statement of Faith,” available at <https://cbwc.ca/about/#statement-of-faith>.

⁶ “Healthy Church Profile,” Last modified 2011, available at <https://www.fmcic.ca/healthy-church-profile-appendix-4-satt-report-2011/>.

⁷ There are ten major groupings of Baptists in Canada. For a description of each fellowship, see Albert Wardin, *Baptists Around the World: A Comprehensive Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 359–66.

⁸ “Our Mission,” available at <https://cnbc.ca/articles/our-mission>.

Healthy Churches and the Great Commission

Healthy churches understand the Kingdom and the heartbeat of the King. They take the King's final words, otherwise known as the Great Commission, very seriously. Jesus the King said,

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age. Amen. (Matt 28:18-20)⁹

George Hill, founder and president of Victory Churches International, based in Calgary, Alberta, states in his book, *Planting Healthy Growing Churches*,

The commission is urgent. We need to place a high priority on evangelism! Statistics show that only 15% of churches in North America are growing. And, of those that are growing, only 1% is growing through new converts. The rest are growing through transfer growth. That tells me that we have not taken the Great Commission seriously. If we had, then all our churches would be growing through new converts, the people we had led to the Lord. We need to discover a new urgency in our call to evangelize our communities.¹⁰

In his article entitled, "Why is Evangelistic Growth So Slow," John Worcester, church planter and trainer of church planters in Toronto, Ontario, advocates following Jesus' example in evangelism training. Jesus was equipping his young church planters throughout the four Gospels, and he was training them in evangelism. Worcester states, "A careful study of the first four chapters of John's gospel shows us how Jesus used discovery evangelism during the first few weeks of starting His movement. He demonstrated discovery evangelism and then He taught about it."¹¹

⁹ Unless otherwise noted all citations comes from the New King James Version of the Bible.

¹⁰ George S. Hill and Bradley T. Dewar, *Planting Healthy Growing Churches*, (Calgary, AB: Victory International, 2015), 27.

¹¹ John Worcester, "Why is Evangelistic Growth So Slow?" available at www.churchplanting.net/uploads/1/2/7/6/127637814/whyisevangelisticgrowthsoslow.pdf, 1.

Discovery evangelism requires trusting Christ's words, "the fields are white for harvest." It involves faith to believe it is possible to find some who are ready to respond.¹⁶ Healthy churches know how to train people in the Great Commission, give people a heart for the Great Commission, and honor the request of the Lord Jesus. As a result, they will be finding people open and ready for the Gospel.

In Jesus' very first recorded training time with his future church planters, He taught them about discovery evangelism.¹²

Do you not say, 'There are still four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I tell you, raise your eyes and observe the fields, that they are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that the one who sows and the one who reaps may rejoice together. For in this case the saying is true: 'One sows, and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have come into their labor. (John 4:35–38)

The organization, Church Planting Canada, along with the leadership of Daniel Im and Ed Stetzer, did a significant survey and study, finding that the church plants in Canada which were most effective were doing three things: praying, equipping leaders, and sharing Jesus.¹³ Sharing Jesus is desperately needed. Sharing Jesus is what the Great Commission is all about. And it is evident that healthy Canadian churches are sharing a clear Gospel witness in their services, in their outreach, and through personal interaction.

James R. Nikkel writes, "While there are many churches in North America that have a good balance of church outreach and nurture, there are also many that are weak on the side of outreach and growth. The result is that the majority of churches in Canada

¹² Worcester, "Why is Evangelistic Growth So Slow?"

¹³ Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im, "The State of Church Planting in Canada," (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Research, 2016), available at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/584194b4c534a5709226e1b1/t/5852df6b8419c233346b0bad/1481826162966/NewChurches.com-TSOCP-Canada+%28%29.pdf>

are on plateau or in decline. The Canadian Church must see a resurgence of the Great Commission.¹⁴

The Great Commission is great news for the ability of a church to begin thriving and moving forward again. Hill writes, “Some churches need to do this very thing in order to get off a plateau. Instead of becoming introverted, they need to get a great commission vision.”¹⁵

Healthy Canadian Churches Plant Churches

Healthy churches in Canada not only have a gospel urgency, but they must also include planting new churches. Canadian author, pastor, church planter, and founder of Victory Churches International (a network of over 2,000 churches in 30 nations), Hill, notes, “New churches are vital to the health and the continued growth of the whole church.”¹⁶ His reasoning and rationale include the following: “Church planting is the heart and soul of the great commission. It’s the *raison d’être* of the church and its primary occupation.” He even goes so far as to say, “All other activities of Christian ministry are incidental to the formation and multiplication of local churches.”¹⁷

It is rare to find authors who describe church planting as the number one aspect of church health. However, Hill convincingly argues that one cannot help but consider church planting being at least a core aspect of church health. And, one can see, when surveying the healthiest of churches in Canada, that the most healthy and effective churches are almost all involved in church planting. Here are some examples:

The story of LaChapelle in Montreal is a perfect example of health through planting. LaChapelle is reaching into the most unreached people group and the largest most unreached city in North America, the Quebecois. David Pothier, the church planter for LaChapelle, and a core group of people began the congregation in 2012. By the grace of God, they are planting new churches almost yearly. They have surpassed well over 1,000 people at the

¹⁴ James R. Nikkel, *Church Planting Road Map* (Belleville, Ontario: Guardian, 2004), 21.

¹⁵ Hill and Dewar, *Planting Healthy Growing Churches*, 30.

¹⁶ Hill and Dewar, *Planting Healthy Growing Churches*, 6.

¹⁷ Hill and Dewar, *Planting Healthy Growing Churches*, 6.

mother church, and they see people coming to Christ nearly every week.¹⁸

In one of the most rural places in Canada, a pastor was given a vision from God to plant a church in a drug-infested community. The town is in Northeastern New Brunswick and was known as “dopetown.” Its true name was Doaktown. Through strong evangelism, this church has seen hundreds come to Christ, and it has assisted in planting several new evangelistic churches, which are continuing to do well and remain healthy.¹⁹ If one defines health by evangelism and churches being planted, this church is extraordinarily healthy.

Pastor Hugh Morrison of Margaree Baptist Church has a heart to see every community on the Cabot Trail in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, have a church and a clear gospel witness. This church is nearly 150 years old, and yet it is burning with desire and health in order to honor the words of the Savior. In the sanctuary is a map of Cape Breton Island with the words, “Cape Breton for Christ,” and they are serious about winning the whole island to Christ.

In the first century, churches were committed to church planting. In describing the church at Thessalonica, Paul notes: “For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything” (1 Thess 1:8). Here was a local church, the Thessalonian Church, that spread the gospel throughout their entire region. The Great Commission to the Thessalonian Church meant the planting of new works in neighboring communities. The Thessalonian Church exemplifies the Great Commission and church health.²⁰

Immigration is another reason for local churches to find health by planting new churches. This gives them the ability to reach the world in their own backyard. When this author pastored Bow Valley Baptist Church in Cochrane, Alberta, the congregation watched as the community grew and many people groups from around the world moved to the area. The town had been primarily

¹⁸ Barbara Denman, “Montreal Church Planters Make Inroads Among Unreached People Group,” in Florida Baptist Convention online news post, March 13, 2019, available at <https://flbaptist.org/montreal-church-planters-make-inroads-among-unreached-people-group/>

¹⁹ “David Storey, Church Planter,” HeartCry Missionary Society web page available at <https://heartcrymissionary.com/testimony/david-storey/>.

²⁰ Hill and Dewar, *Planting Healthy Growing Churches*, 28.

anglo and Caucasian. However, the people group landscape of Cochrane began to change rapidly.

What brought incredible health to this congregation was the planting of Latino and Filipino congregations, which used their church facility. One thing that became extremely exciting and powerful was having joint baptism services and people seeing the “nations,” so to speak, being baptized and worshipping together.

Planting non-English congregations goes way beyond just the excitement and thrill of joint baptism services. Hill writes, “A tide of third world migration is taking place in first-world nations today that, by all indications is only going to intensify going forward . . . exploding population rates in developing nations are pushing immigration quotas to record levels. In destination cities like Toronto, virtually one out of every two people were born outside of Canada.”²¹

In order to see the church survive, thrive, and continue to be healthy, one must also look to the needs of the world now and in the future. Hill asserts that effectively evangelizing an area requires “one good church for every 2,000 people.”²² Citing a United Nations population report, Hill concludes:

The United Nations estimates that by the year 2050 the world’s population will increase to 12 billion. That means that there will be approximately twice as many people on earth as there were at the turn of the century. Based on the formula of one good church for every 2,000 people, the Church will need to plant another 3 million churches by the year 2050 just to keep up with population growth.²³

The local church is God’s only program for evangelism.

Story upon story of churches planting churches in Canada provide vibrant examples that church planting is vital for church health. And it is vital for a healthy church moving forward. It is critical for people in existing churches to see the need in the next community and neighborhood, which is really the heart of Jesus (Mark 1:38–39). When a church reverberates with the heart of Jesus, it is moving more and more towards health. It is quite astounding to think that congregations get to partner with Jesus in

²¹ Hill and Dewar, *Planting Healthy Growing Churches*, 14.

²² Hill and Dewar, *Planting Healthy Growing Churches*, 16.

²³ Hill and Dewar, *Planting Healthy Growing Churches*, 16.

what He said He would be doing, “I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it” (Matt 18:16).

A Healthy Canadian Church Takes Jesus Seriously About Blessing Community

Pastor Bruxy Cavey, the author of *The End of Religion*, and Teaching Pastor at the Meeting House in Hamilton, Ontario, says that “we must take Jesus seriously.”²⁴ Bruxy points out that His followers are to take the initiative to love as Jesus described it when He said, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (Matt 22:39).

Canadian pastor, author, and professor Mark Buchanan states it this way, “love is what Jesus is up to.”²⁵ Jesus said, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you . . . My command is this, love each other as I have loved you . . . This is my command, love each other” (John 15:9–17). Healthy Canadian churches take Jesus’ words seriously and love his way. The way of love Jesus was talking about was extravagant, and Buchanan leads his growing church to love this way. He states, “without extravagant love the church will never turn the world on its head. It won’t even turn the world’s head. Without love, the church will leave the world exactly how we found it.”²⁶

Cavey calls this type of love “other focused action.” This type of action (a focus on others) “sits as the epicenter of Jesus’ teaching on faith, religion, and ethics,” and it is to be “the foundational principle of our lives.”²⁷ A healthy church will be other focused and living out the Biblical admonition found in Phil 2.

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. (Phil 2:3–4)

Of course, the Lord Jesus epitomized Phil 2, and healthy churches will learn to do the same through the modeling of their leaders who follow Jesus’s example and in their discipling. Cavey’s church and its campuses make this a key dynamic of their ever-

²⁴ Cavey, *The End of Religion*, 93.

²⁵ Mark Buchanan, *Your Church is Too Safe* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 19.

²⁶ Buchanan, *Your Church is Too Safe*, 23.

²⁷ Cavey, *The End of Religion*, 95.

expanding satellites. With intentionality, they strive to reach those who “aren’t into church,” as their tag line reads.

Intellectually, one can value the ideas presented above until they break into our comfort zones. However, anyone who knows Jesus well knows that he pushes people out of their comfort zones. Comfort zones are much more ingrained in the Canadian church than one would like to admit. Buchanan tells the following story about comfort zones.

A young lady in our church moved to another city to attend university. I knew of a good church in that city...and I recommended she try it. Her first Sunday she arrived at the church early and took a seat near the front. A few minutes later a couple walked in and stood over her. She looked up and asked if she was in their seat. “Yes.”

She got up and moved three rows back. The next person just told her straight up, “You’re sitting in my seat.” She moved again, this time to the other side of the sanctuary and further back. Shortly, another couple came, sat in the pew directly in front of her, and turned and glared at her. “Am I in your seat?” “Yes, you are.” “That has been our seat for forty years.” She got up, sat in the balcony, and never returned.²⁸

Compassionate Christians sense the Lord Jesus grieving for her and are saddened by this. A healthy church loves like Jesus, who did not even have a place to lay his head. Hopefully, he would be able to find a seat. God forgive us.

Healthy Churches and the Kingdom of God

In order to take Jesus seriously, Cavey very clearly points out, “the primary mission of Jesus was to tear down religion as the foundation for people’s connection with God and to replace it with Himself. The divine coming to us in our own context and in our own form. This is what Jesus called the Kingdom of God.”²⁹

Healthy churches take the Biblical idea of the Kingdom of God seriously. Buchanan bridges the heartbeat of Cavey with the idea of the Kingdom of God. He states, “The Kingdom of God is a

²⁸ Buchanan, *Your Church is Too Safe*, 152.

²⁹ Cavey, *The End of Religion*, 125.

republic of love. It's not about eating or drinking or music styles."³⁰

Cavey and Buchanan both assert that Jesus was all about the Kingdom. As Cavey states, "You cannot help but notice the recurring theme of the 'Kingdom of God' or the 'Kingdom of heaven' (in the New Testament). In fact, his [Jesus'] entire message is summarized as 'the good news of the kingdom.'"³¹

The Kingdom begins with this present life. Jesus taught that the Kingdom is something one enters into here on earth. Jesus taught his followers to ask for His Kingdom to come (Matt 6:10). When a church understands the "nowness" of the Kingdom of God, and it understands the heart of this Kingdom's King, it will desire to spread His Kingdom (his ways, his will, his intentions). Churches that understand and live out this priority will experience dynamic health.

Healthy Churches Disengage from Their Cultural Identity

In contrast to what is healthy, there are non-healthy practices churches need to avoid. Douglas John Hall, in his book, *The End of Christendom and The Future of Christianity*, challenges the church to "Disengage from our status of cultural establishment."³² Later he goes on to state, "North American Christians must liberate themselves from the conventions of culture-religion."³³

Throughout Canada's history, to be in a certain region of the country or to be from a certain cultural group of people meant that one was also a part of that culture's religious heritage. For example, to be in the Province of Quebec used to mean one was Roman Catholic. Living in the Prairie Provinces more than likely meant one was Mennonite. As a pastor and church planter in Quebec, this author had more people refuse immersion baptism, or at least be greatly delayed in their decision, because of their "cultural Catholic" heritage.

After transitioning to become the Church Planting Catalyst for the Prairie/Urban cities and communities of Western Canada, I was astounded by how many cultural Mennonites there were. I

³⁰ Cavey, *The End of Religion*, 125.

³¹ Cavey, *The End of Religion*, 125.

³² Douglas John Hall, *The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity), 65.

³³ Hall, *The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity*, 65.

had the privilege of sharing the Gospel with one of my son's coaches in Manitoba, and he kept answering my questions about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ with the fact that he had been a Mennonite all of his life. Somehow, being in the church all his life was what mattered in relation to his thoughts about knowing Jesus. Sadly, there was no spiritual life there. All he knew was a practice and a habit of Mennonite church attendance. Certainly, healthy churches will lead people to know and understand that a habit, a practice, and a cultural-religious identity are not what knowing God personally is about.

Hall's answer to this is that the people in the pews must know what they believe. Their own belief system must go beyond what people knew and understood about their faith historically.³⁴ Otherwise, Hall states that modernism, postmodernism, and secularism will have their way with modern Christians.³⁵

True Fundamentalism

A way to correct this is to truly understand the fundamentals of the Christian faith. In other words, to become a fundamentalist in the truest sense of the word. Cavey claims, "The problem with many Christian fundamentalists is that they are not fundamentalist enough when it comes to Jesus. . . . Many Christian fundamentalists . . . have replaced his teachings with the prevailing conservative ethos of the day masquerading as religious dogma."³⁶

In a sense, the discussion has come full circle, returning to the previous point of taking Jesus seriously. Do Canadian Christians fundamentally take Jesus seriously? Are their fundamentals what would be His fundamentals? Cavey concludes, "Christ was clear--- the way to bring about meaningful change is to lay your life down."³⁷ Certainly, people in a church, with this as their mindset, will fit God's description of health.

Conclusion

It is the author's hope that this Canadian perspective on church health was most of all biblical. That was the intent and request.

³⁴ Hall, *The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity*, 65.

³⁵ Hall, *The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity*, 65.

³⁶ Cavey, *The End of Religion*, 81.

³⁷ Cavey, *The End of Religion*, 81.

These Canadian pastors, authors, church planters, and a Canadian transplant like the author, have much to contribute to the discussion of healthy church life. May there truly be a biblically-healthy church in Canada, Ehh!

Biblical Principles of Training Church Planters

John Worcester

John Worcester is founder of Church Planting Leadership and has trained church planters throughout the United States and in over 30 countries.

Biblical wisdom is the bedrock for church planting success (Luke 6:46–49). Truth from the Bible must be the foundation for both the content and process for the training of church planters. Cutting corners by compromising Biblical truth may build a new church faster, but when the storms of life come, it will collapse.

Church planter trainers and ministers, like all humans, are prone to wander from accurate Biblical interpretation. It is tempting to settle for the approximate meaning of a passage and miss the most accurate meaning. A mixture of truth and error may be as dangerous as orange juice laced with poison. The Bible is our completely reliable guide.

The reality is that we all have minds that are not yet completely renewed (Rom 12:2). This means we can come up with bright ideas that make sense to us, but they may lead to a dead end (Prov 14:12). God’s inspired Word equips church planters by teaching, reproving, correcting and training them to be wise master builders of the local church (2 Tim 3:16–17; 1 Cor 3:10).

One can find nuggets for church planting and training for church planting throughout the New Testament. Most of the writers were church planting apostles. It was written during one of the fastest-growing church planting movements in history. In addition, it was authored, in no small part, to advance the mission of church planting.¹

The first section of this paper looks at why the training of church planters is to be prioritized. A strong enough “why” motivates formulating a workable “how.” Section two will focus on

¹ While church planting was a big part of the New Testament writer’s world, we still need to be careful about two things. First, we should not go too far by saying church planters have a special ability to see things that non-church planters cannot. This would be standpoint epistemology and this is dangerous. Second, we should also be careful about reading into a text or twisting a text to fit a preconceived agenda.

how to discover church planters to train. Section three will introduce some practical principles and tips for developing church planters.

Apostles

To understand what the Bible says about training church planters, one must know what the New Testament means by the word “apostle.” One of its primary uses was for those who were sent to plant churches.

There is much confusion and abuse over the role of an apostle today. The Greek word “*apostolos*” is generally just transliterated from Greek to English, and it means “sent one.” Jesus first used the term when he named twelve disciples as “apostles” in Luke 6:13. From where did Jesus get this term? It was already used in the ancient world but not used much in the religious vocabulary.

One way the word “apostle” was used was in a military context. It was used of the commander of a military mission sent to expand a kingdom’s territory. Jesus seems to have taken the word “apostle” from the historical context in the ancient world. He gave it a new spiritual and righteous application. Jesus is building his church by breaking down the gates of hell (Matt 16:18). He is setting spiritual captives free (Luke 4:18). Apostles were to take spiritual territory and set up new colonies of God’s kingdom behind enemy lines. The following is from the Kittles *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*:

apostolos (apostle) was one of the special terms bound up with sea-faring, and more particularly with military expeditions..... In the first instances this simply denotes the dispatch of a fleet (or army) on a military expedition.... In this way it comes to be applied not merely to an army but to a band of colonists and their settlement and on the other to the commander of an expedition, e.g., the admiral.²

Understanding the meaning of the word “apostle” is helpful to unlocking the New Testament teaching about church planting. For clarification, I am not saying that church planters should call themselves apostles. The word has too much baggage, but it is useful for Bible study.

² Gerhard Kittel, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 1:7.

The following are among the types of apostles referred to in the New Testament. The unique Apostles, who were with Jesus, who wrote the New Testament, and who also became church planters. There are no more of these types of Apostles today. There were also apostles or messengers of the church (2 Cor 8:23). They were sent with gifts from one church to another. I also think the apostles of the churches, referred to in Eph 4:11 and 1 Cor 12:28, included those who were the church planters. Finally, there were false apostles (2 Cor 11:13).

Notice the proof that the Apostle Paul gives that he was an apostle: “If I am not an apostle to others, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord” 1 Cor 9:2). The “you” here refers to the church in Corinth. The very existence of this local church is evidence that the one who planted the church is an apostle. In fact, Paul’s primary purpose for writing all of 1 Cor 9:1–18 was to defend the right of other church planting apostles to be financially supported.

Ephesians 4:11–13 says plainly that the equipping gifts, including that of apostle, will be in use “until” the body of Christ is built up to full maturity. The church is not complete yet, so apostles are still needed.

The position of apostle is listed in 1 Cor 12:28–29 with no indication that this position has passed away. The following leaders, who were not part of the twelve were listed as apostles: Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), Apollos (1 Cor 4:6–9), Andronicus and Junia (Rom 16:7), James (Gal 1:19), and Silas and Timothy (1 Thess 1:1, 2:6).

It is interesting that there were more individuals who were called apostles by name in the New Testament than were called pastors. Since the Middle Ages, pastors have been the dominate, almost exclusive position in the church world. The focus on pastors probably goes back to the day when whole countries were called Christian. Citizens were considered Christian even if they had not been personally born again. Cultural Christianity became common place. This led to the mistaken conclusion that now only pastors were needed to take care of the “already” Christians in their parish. As a result, a stubborn tradition developed that apostles were no longer needed.

The three sections that follow will examine why the church is to prioritize the training of church planters, as well as a few ideas on how to discover and develop them.

Section One: Prioritizing the Training of Church Planters

Jesus gave a graphic picture of the need for harvest workers right before he sent his disciples out on an evangelistic mission in search of persons of peace.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (Matt 9:36–38)

The more we see the lost the way Jesus did, the more compassion will drive us to do whatever it takes to rescue them. He sees unsaved people like sheep in desperate need of a shepherd. “Harassed” comes from the word for skinned or flayed open. “Helpless” refers to sheep being cast down on their backs and unable to save themselves from danger. Lost people need an apostolic shepherd to be sent to their rescue.

Jesus also encouraged the faith of His disciples by declaring that a plentiful harvest awaited them. Prior to this, he had also inspired them to “lift up their eyes to see that fields are white for harvest” (John 4:35). This faith is what inspires evangelistic missionaries to broadly sow gospel seed. Planters are to practice what can be called discovery evangelism. This approach to outreach is what is called skimming in the business world—finding those who are ready to respond to what is being offered, in a church planter’s case, the message of Christ.

The bottom-line application of what Jesus is saying in Matt 9:36–39 is the need to pray for more workers. The problem at hand is not in the harvest lands; the problem is in the lack of field hands. This should be a top priority prayer of our hearts.

A funnel illustrates the priority Jesus placed on training church planters

Jesus is our primary example of how to develop evangelistic, apostolic church planters. When he said, “follow me and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt 4:19) to his first four full-time apprentices, he was combining evangelism with his church planter training strategy. When Jesus spoke of fishing, he was primarily thinking of net fishing, not rod and reel fishing. He was calling

these fishermen to learn to catch schools of fish at the same time. This sounds a lot like church planting.

The wide top of the funnel is evangelism, and this is using a net for fishing. Jesus continually drew huge crowds of unsaved people into his ministry through his large group teaching and healing meetings (Luke 6:17). The bottom, much narrower part of the funnel was the training of the few (Luke 6:12, 13). It is worth noticing that all those Jesus decided to focus his most intense training efforts on were apostles. He did not just train in depth any kind of leader. He trained apostles. Why? Jesus was pacesetting a method for training future apostles. Paul followed this same pattern by primarily apprenticing a young apostle named Timothy (2 Tim 2:2).

Jesus focused most of his time and energies on the top and bottom of his movement funnel. He apprenticed apostles as he went from place to place preaching the gospel. However, Jesus did not forget those disciples in the middle of the funnel. He taught the masses in large crowds and had brief life-changing encounters with many individuals from among them. Yet Jesus still concentrated his individual and small group time with the twelve he was training. In short, Jesus taught many, touched some, and trained a few.

Therefore, the first compelling reason for us to prioritize training church planters is because it is what Jesus did.

Nature illustrates the priority of training church planters

Creation itself screams out another reason for training church planters. Living things reproduce, and churches reproduce by sending out properly prepared church planters. Church is like a form of spiritual life that is to be multiplied. Jesus regularly used the planting, growing, and harvesting of plants as a common-sense metaphor for how to fill the earth with kingdom life (John 4:35–39; Matt 13:1–30).

Life typically goes through three basic stages of growth. This is true for plants, animals, humans, and local churches. Generally, healthy local churches first go through the Fast Growth Stage, second the Frequent Reproduction Stage, and third the Faithful Contribution Stage. We will discuss the first two stages.

Fast Growth Stage. Life begins at conception and continues to grow rapidly through childhood. During this stage, the organism grows within its God-ordained size range. Then its annual

growth rate slows to a crawl. This is one reason why 80% of churches are plateaued or declining. There are other reasons for sluggish church growth, but this is the most commonly forgotten one. As a church reaches maturity, it works more and more on strengthening itself. This strengthening involves leadership development and financial fitness.

These strengths help the church succeed in the second stage, **Frequent Reproduction**. Like in nature, being plateaued in size is not necessarily bad. Plateaued churches can be healthy. Staying relatively the same size frees up energies and resources for reproduction. Maturity is for multiplication. Plateauing is for planting.

The path to an ever-expanding, exponential growth of the Church of Jesus Christ is the multiplication of local churches. This is how churches can be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth.

How do churches multiply? The lifeblood of church multiplication is discovering, developing, and deploying qualified evangelistic growth church planters. The overwhelmingly most important criteria for church planting success is the knowledge, skill, character, and vision of the church planter.

When is a church ready to plant a church? It is not when the church is large enough. It is not when the church is rich enough. It is not even when a church is healthy enough. It is when the church has an adequately prepared church planter ready to be sent out. Even a very small, dirt-poor, rather dysfunctional church might have an extremely capable church planter ready to be released to start a church.

Before we leave section one, it is important to clear up one more point. Jesus had three distinguishable phases in his church planter training. We will illustrate these by looking at the example of the development of the Apostle Peter.

Phases of training Peter

Phase one was the *disciple stage*. We see Peter become a disciple in John 1:42. He is called a disciple in John 2:2. A disciple of Jesus is not an undefined word for the gospel writers. Jesus himself told the crowds that a person cannot be considered his disciple without being fully committed to following him (Luke 14:27).³

³ Being committed does not mean mature. When my son was four, he was committed to learning to ride a two-wheel bike, but he certainly was not immediately a mature bike rider until after many falls and renewed efforts.

During the first stage of training as a disciple, Peter was taken on a short-term trip with four other disciples (John 2–4). This was before he was called into the “fisher of men” training (Matt 4:19). We can be confident of this timing because the gospel writers give a clear time stamp for these events. John 3:24 says that the events of John 1–4 came before the events that come after Matthew 4:12.

This brings us to phase two of Jesus’ training of Peter. Jesus called Peter into a full-time *“fisher of men” apprenticeship*. Peter left his job and joined Jesus’ traveling fishing crew. Peter went with Jesus as he preached from village after village (Matt 4:23; Mark 1:38–39). It is not clear how long this level of training lasted, but it seems to be a clear step up from learning with the crowd and taking short-term trips.

The third phase of Peter’s training was full-time apostolic training (Luke 6:12–13). Jesus chose a few out of His many disciples to name “apostles.” This was such a vital decision Jesus spent the whole night in prayer beforehand.

And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out the demons. (Mark 3:14–15 NASB)

Like phase two, phase three involved traveling and closely associating “with” him. It also included being sent out to preach and exercise spiritual authority.

The commission Jesus gave his eleven apostles at the end of his time on earth also required them to train church planters (see Matt 28:18–20). In order to make disciples of all nations on earth, apostles must be sent out. How can the unsaved hear unless someone is sent to preach? (Rom 10:15). How can those who repent be baptized and discipled unless a local church is planted nearby⁴? Therefore, it is paramount that effective church planters be discovered, developed, and deployed to fulfill the Great Commission.

Once you have decided that training church planters needs to be a priority, you need to find a future planter to train. Not everyone is to be a church planter (1 Cor 12:29). If you try to train someone not gifted or called to this challenging task, you frustrate everyone involved.

⁴ Churches not only need to be close enough geographically, they also need to be close enough culturally to win the lost effectively (1 Cor 9:19f).

Section Two: How to Discover Church Planters to Train

Like an archer who wounds everyone, so is one who hires a fool or hires those who pass by. (Prov 26:10)

What can we glean from how Jesus selected church planters to train? Jesus looked for signs of evangelistic gifting in those he chose. Andrew ran to get Peter. Peter and Andrew seemed to have talked with Jesus about going to find Philip. Philip went out to find Nathaniel. Matthew threw a party for his unsaved friends right after meeting Jesus (John 1:35–45; Matt 9:9–13). These men went out to find those who needed to come to know Jesus.

It is a great sign when a new believer starts inviting people to church or sharing their faith. This is a clue that you may have an evangelist church planter on your hands. Not all new disciples are this outwardly oriented. Keep your eye out for the evangelistically inclined ones, for they may be the ones you are to train as planters. Give them more attention and training. Move with the movers. Mobilize these movers, and they may become vital parts of Christ's movement.

It should be noted that Jesus knew the men he selected to train to fish for men. They had been on trips with Jesus (John 1–4) and interacted with Jesus in other ways (see Luke 4). This is noteworthy because, for years, I misunderstood this concept. I used to think that when Jesus called the fisherman to become fishers of men, it was the first time they had seen Jesus. Reading Matthew, Mark, and Luke without fitting John's account in at the proper place could easily give someone this impression. I was enlightened when I read A. B. Bruce's book *The Training of the Twelve*.⁵

Before someone is brought into full-time apprenticeship training for church planting, do your best to see if they have the character to handle the weight of this ministry. Jesus provides a great example of some character qualities to look for.

In Luke 5:1–11, Jesus took Peter and some other 'phase one disciples' through an experiential assessment process. He used five tests of character.

Test one: would Peter let Jesus use his boat for kingdom purposes (Luke 5:1)? Test two: would Peter be coachable enough to

⁵ Alexander Balmain Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve: Or, Passages Out of the Gospels, Exhibiting the Twelve Disciples of Jesus Under Discipline for the Apostleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2000). See page 11.

obey a command of Jesus that went against Peter's best judgment in his area of greatest expertise, fishing (Luke 5:4–5)? Test three: would Peter share the glory and financial reward of his catch with the other disciples or keep it all for those in his boat (Luke 5:6:7)? Test four: would Peter humbly recognize that he did not deserve this grace Jesus bestowed on him since he was just a sinful man (Luke 5:8)? Test five: would Peter make the commitment of leaving everything behind to join Jesus' crew to learn to fish for men (Luke 5:10–11)?

How did Peter do? He passed with flying colors. He was accepted on Jesus' mobile evangelistic training team. Tip: If you want to assess the character of potential planters, do something with them in a real-life situation like fishing. I have found that working with someone, playing sports or a board game with them is quite helpful. It brings all sorts of things to light that may be missed if you only relate to someone in a church setting.

Paul also selected church-planting teammates to invest in deeply. He found Timothy, a young man in Lystra, who fit a need he had on his team. Paul checked his references and found that he had a good reputation. He also tested Timothy with a strategic yet serious level of commitment to qualify for the team (Acts 16:1–3). Timothy passed Paul's assessment and was invited to train on Paul's evangelistic church planting team.

Section Three: How to Train Church Planters

My hope is that you are now both motivated to prioritize the training of apostles and looking for potential planters to select for training. Now we turn to a few practical training principles and tips. The choices related to "how" varies according to the gifts and unique circumstances you and your potential planter are facing. Effective methods require creative, innovative contextualization. You will need to figure out how to communicate the unchanging revelation of God in a relevant way.

Fortunately, the Bible gives some timeless, cross-culture principles which serve as guardrails so that our innovations do not go too far. We will pinpoint a few of these we have found to be fruitful. We have applied these principles over the past forty years of planting and training planters in different cultures in the USA as well as in Russia, Canada, and several other nations.

Jesus and Paul modeled the primary New Testament method of training church planters. They used a *true apprenticeship model*.

This was a relational on-the-job training process under a master trainer. It was like a journeyman house builder learning from a master house builder. It was probably much like the way Jesus learned the building trade from his earthly father.

A few years ago, I struck up a conversation with a retired master sausage maker named Fritz. I asked Fritz how he became a master sausage maker, and it floored me. In Germany, you need one and half years of college, followed by an apprenticeship under a master sausage maker for another three and a half years before you can be certified by the sausage-making guild. The apprentice actually had to live and work with the master sausage maker. He had to learn all the aspects of making sausage, managing workers, and running the business. In Germany, they seem to take training sausage makers more seriously than we do training church planters! They also use a much wiser method of training. Interestingly enough, it is the same method Jesus used to train The Twelve.

Why are true church planter apprenticeships like this so rare today? The number one reason is because we are not fielding very many sequential church planters like Paul. Paul planted one church after another and therefore repeatedly provided slots for apprentices under a veteran church planter each time. This has been the type of church planting my wife and I have been led to do for the past forty years. Because of this, we have been able to provide many apprenticeship opportunities. After training, our apprentices have gone on to successfully plant churches and sometimes quite large reproducing churches.

Training Future Church Planters in established churches or university campus ministries

“One secret of New Testament church growth was that leaders were *trained in and by the church in action*. It trained as it went forward. This remains the secret of church growth today. Trainees who come out of victorious churches and who have been trained by men who are themselves multipliers of churches, are generally effective.” - Donald McGavran.⁶

We have two very brief examples of churches that trained church planters in the New Testament – Antioch and Ephesus. In Antioch, many Gentiles came to Christ, and the Jerusalem church

⁶ I have been using this quote for such a long time, but I cannot find where it comes from, nevertheless the truth is worth thinking about.

sent Barnabas to see what was going on (Acts 11:20–24). Barnabas knew Saul had experience winning Gentiles, so he went to recruit Saul and brought him back to Antioch. It appears that Saul was on staff for a year under Barnabas. I picture this being a time of refining for Saul, which prepared him to be sent out on a church planting team (Acts 13:1–4).

Ephesus is the city where Paul had planted a powerful church. He turned it into a training center that prepared, trained, and sent out evangelistic leaders all over the region. We are not sure if their leaders were specifically called apostles or church planters, but the result of their work makes me think many of them were (Acts 19:8–10). The two years of training in the hall of Tyrannus had similarities with seminaries today. Seminaries offer helpful theological training and even church planting classes. This academic training is useful but does not replace the need for on-the-job training experience in a planting ministry.

Since there are so few true apprenticeships available under veteran sequential planters, we need to have other ways to raise up planters from the harvest for the harvest. For example, someone in the church could start an evangelistic growth small group as part of the ministry. Once they succeed in planting the group, they can turn around and plant another. This second time they could apprentice a future group planter to do as they did. Planting new groups provides experience in one of the most important and challenging skills every church planter faces.

We are currently experimenting with a church-based evangelistic growth group planter training process. It equips a leader to get the first group started in a church or ministry, even if no one is available to apprentice them. Once the new group planter has succeeded, he can apprentice someone the next time he plants a group.

Our Group Planter Training process lasts ten months and features three types of training. First, there are twelve seminars that lay out the principles of evangelistic growth group planting. Second, there are twelve personal coaching appointments with an experienced group planter. Third, there are eight Peer Advisor Cohort meetings with 8–9 other planters where they encourage and offer counsel to each other. The goal is for each person in training to have started a new group that includes some people who have come to Christ by their efforts.

Group planter training in the context of a local churches has another advantage. It can also be an encouraging value-shaping spiritual family for the planter, where character can be forged over many years. All the spiritual gifts of the body of Christ can be used to help develop church planters from the crib to church plant.

How might different gifts be used to develop or deploy a church planter? A successful businessman in a local church could use his gift of giving to support church planters in training. Another member of the church could use their gift of teaching children to impart God's Word to future planters. Others encourage or help in many other aspects of the multi-year process of raising up a qualified church planter.

A church where we received significant training, Hope Church in Fort Worth, Texas, has been unusually fruitful in raising up qualified church planters. They provided the bulk of discipling in the lives of several planters and then sent them to us for a year or so of church plant apprenticeship. This was a win/win for all. We received apprentices with good character to help us, and the planters received valuable experience in the first stages of starting a church.

A few other training “how to’s”

The following practical tips apply to either apprenticing on a church planting team or a group planting apprenticeship in a local church.

Tip one: use trips for training like Jesus. Send trainees on mini-mission trips, either close by or on a short-term international mission trip anywhere on the globe. Trips are great for training. Travelers get out of their comfort zone and learn to depend on God in fresh ways. If you have ever been on a mission trip, you know how motivating it is to make the most of your time while in the new location.

Tip two: provide repeated evangelistic experiences. Just as Jesus repeated the first evangelistic stage of planting with his apprentices, we can do the same.

Tip three: train your apprentices in several strategic evangelistic tools. Train them how to:

- Do discovery evangelism – which is searching for persons of peace who are ripe for harvest.

- Reach existing family and friends of those who come to Christ. We call this *oikos* evangelism.
- Make gospel appointments like Jesus did with Nicodemus.
- Do “as you go” evangelism like Jesus did with the woman at the well
- And, of course, do large group evangelistic preaching

A few other tips include asking apprentices penetrating questions and answering their questions as you work together. Training them through both encouragement and Scriptural correction. Correction is a key shortcut to wisdom that Jesus frequently used with the Twelve.

One final tip that I have found helpful to most church planters – they do better with specific, nuts and bolts, practical training on how to do their tasks rather than just general principles. I have found this to be especially true when doing international church planter training in places like Russia, Mongolia, Nepal, Brazil, and China. These trainees may not try to follow the specific examples exactly, but if they are explained, they really help the trainee understand the principles behind the practices.

Conclusion

Jesus and Paul both prioritized the training of church planters. They modeled principles of how best to discover church planters to train. They looked for those who had evangelistic inclinations, as well as the character qualities needed to withstand the challenges of planting. Jesus and Paul also developed church planters through true apprenticeships. They took teams of future planters with them on one evangelistically focused trip after another. We would be wise to follow the examples of these role models as closely as we can manage.

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. (Acts 9:31)

Book Reviews

The Gospel of Our King: Bible, Worldview, and the Mission of Every Christian. By Bruce Riley Ashford and Heath A. Thomas. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019. 208 pages. Paperback, \$22.99.

The two authors of *The Gospel of Our King*, Bruce Ashford and Heath Thomas, are well-known and well-versed within their respective fields of study. Ashford completed both his MDiv and PhD in Theological Studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he recently concluded his service as Provost and Professor of Theology and Culture. He is now a Fellow in Public Theology at the Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics. He has written several books, including the recent release, *The Doctrine of Creation* (IVP Academic, 2020), co-authored by Craig Bartholomew. He also edited *Theology and Practice of Mission* (B&H Academic, 2011). Thomas completed his MA in Theology from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and his PhD in Old Testament from the University of Gloucestershire. For nearly a decade, he served as a Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Now, he serves as President and Professor of Old Testament at Oklahoma Baptist University, where he has been since 2015. Like Ashford, Thomas has authored and edited several books, including *Poetry and Theology in the Book of Lamentations* (Sheffield Phoenix, 2013) and *Faith Amid the Ruins: The Book of Habakkuk* (Lexham, 2016).

In *The Gospel of Our King*, Ashford and Thomas aim to answer a simple question: what are people for? They are clear at the outset that “the world exists, you and I exist, *for the King*,” an answer that “draws us to identify both the purpose of humanity and what counts as responsible action in the world” (1). To do this, they also seek to identify the Bible’s main point, a necessary step in explaining *what people are for*. They believe “the Bible presents God and Jesus within a universal story” (3). Their summation of that story comes in four parts—creation, fall, redemption, and restoration—a four-fold description of Scripture that has become more common in recent years, especially for the simplicity it brings to gospel proclamation. Once a believer comes to terms with this

four-fold explanation of Scripture—or once an unbeliever is saved and comes to terms with it—he can and should see how it affects the way Christians live; that is, how it affects the mission of every Christian as those who “exist... *for the King*” (9).

Creation, fall, redemption, and restoration are each dealt with in the first four chapters, respectively. Those chapters, together, articulate the Bible’s narrative in great detail. Firstly, God created his people to rule as “vice-regents” under his ultimate rule, executing “order, justice, and goodness” for the good of all mankind (30). Secondly, God’s vice-regents, as a result of their sin, “spurned the charge of God and experienced deep and abiding fracture with God, with one another, and with God’s world” (30). Thirdly, God made a way of redemption to “bring God’s people to God’s land under God’s rule” (59). Fourthly, restoration of God’s people takes place through the New Covenant fulfilled in Jesus; in this restoration, “the story of redemption unfolds,” and God’s people begin to see “what living for the King really means” (76). By detailing this four-part narrative, Ashford and Thomas hope to develop their reader’s worldview.

As this worldview is developed, their goal is to bring clarity to the mission God has given to his people. That mission, like the Bible’s narrative, is also four-fold and is dealt with in the last four chapters of the book (after a fifth chapter “interlude” on worldview, gospel, and mission). The Christian’s mission is (1) theological, (2) social, (3) cultural, and (4) global. Our *theological* mission is to “introduce the Bible’s radical monotheism” to others, showing them that they can be set free from their sin by God and moved into a new way of life—conformity to God’s will (115–16). Our *social* mission consists of offering others the opportunity of union with Christ, characterized by a life of “gospel words and deeds” and leading others into that same kind of life. As Christ’s representatives, our *cultural* mission is to redeem culture—and to “make” culture—speaking and acting “responsibly in our [various] cultural contexts” (155). Our *global* mission is to be a light to the nations, seeing disciples made from each as the gospel is proclaimed to the ends of the earth.

This book—a needed one—is well done and well written. It makes further contributions to the scholarship already done on the subject of the Christian’s mission and the church’s mission, though it primarily deals with the former. From the beginning, the authors are clear on the definition of the gospel. In nearly one

hundred pages, they show how the gospel story is told from Genesis to Revelation, encompassing creation, the fall, redemption, and our future and final restoration. Of course, the gospel is simple, as Paul made clear in his concise summary in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4. However, that gospel has a context, a context that is found in the full testimony of Scripture. Therefore, to fully grasp the beauty and grandeur of the gospel, Christians need to both know and show its unfolding progression from creation to restoration. Ashford and Thomas accomplish this, and as they describe this redemptive message of the Bible, they helpfully lead their readers to see God's role as the author of that story. And consequently, readers will have a greater understanding of God's role in planning and accomplishing his mission—a mission in which his people have been given a part to play theologically, socially, culturally, and globally.

Numerous other strengths could be noted from *The Gospel of Our King*. There is a strong and needed emphasis on God's Trinitarian nature and how that nature relates to the *missio dei*. Ashford and Thomas sufficiently tie in the themes of covenant and kingdom throughout the book. As well, they are clear about hell and judgment in ways that other books of this kind have not been (e.g., Christopher Wright's *The Mission of God* [IVP, 2006]). This clarity is needed, especially for those who advocate for a more *holistic* mission, which Ashford and Thomas both do. However, it is to that advocacy that I must turn as my primary critique.

In his book, *Paradigms in Conflict* (Kregel, 2018), David Hesselgrave included a chapter on holism and prioritism, covering two viewpoints in missiology concerned with the relationship between word-centered activities and deed-centered activities. Holists (i.e., those who hold to holism) see ancillary missionary activities as *equally important* as evangelism, discipleship, and church planting, while prioritists (i.e., those who hold to prioritism) see ancillary missionary activities as *secondary* to evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. In short, prioritists believe *there is a priority* in our multi-faceted mission, while holists believe in *the priority of no priority*. While Hesselgrave popularized these terms in the field of missiology, he was by no means the first to discuss them. Decades before Hesselgrave's book, Donald McGavran—in his book, *The Bridges of God* (World Dominion Press, 1955)—addressed what he saw as a departure from prioritism in Christian mission. More recently, Christopher Wright wholeheartedly advocated for holism

in his aforementioned book, *The Mission of God*. Knowingly or not, *The Gospel of Our King* continues this debate, though somewhat confusingly.

Throughout the book, Ashford and Thomas are clear that they believe in *holistic* mission. They believe our mission as God's people has a "holistic nature," as "God's redemption is holistic" (8, 101). What is more, our mission is holistic because the "redemption and Lordship of Christ" causes us to have a "holistic view of mission" (112). Since both gospel words and deeds are needed, they believe, "Mission, then, is holistic in scope" (111). Indeed, our mission reflects Christ's mission by consisting of a "potent combination of words and deeds" (196). While there could be an unintentional misuse of the term "holistic" here, that seems unlikely, as Ashford provided two "update reflection" chapters in a new edition of Hesselgrave's *Paradigms*.

As a prioritist, it is always mildly off-putting to read of a potential move away from priority in missions. Yet, as I read further, Bruce and Ashford did not seem to advocate for true "holistic mission" as much as I initially thought, though it is a phrase they still repeatedly use. Again, prioritists do not believe ancillary missionary activities are unneeded or unhelpful. They simply believe they are secondary; they believe there is priority, which is what the authors end up purporting quite often.

Throughout, Ashford and Thomas make their view on the importance of evangelism, discipleship, and church planting rather clear. Often, they note the various "centers" of Christian mission or perhaps the multiple facets of *one* center—those activities that should be given priority: "preach[ing] the gospel and plant[ing] churches among every known people group" (9); "international [or global] mission" (110); "interpersonal evangelism and international evangelism" (112); "proclaim[ing] the name of Christ" (194); and the "centrality of local churches" (195). In the clearest of terms, they write at the end of their book: "In our own day, we must speak the name of Christ and declare his gospel. Gospel proclamation must never be displaced as the center of our mission" (196). The main issue, then, is that the authors explicitly advocate for holism while implicitly advocating for prioritism and, thus, mischaracterizing both viewpoints. As well, while the many "centers" mentioned above helped remedy this shortcoming, there was also a point at which they noted that "[j]ust and merciful ac-

tions” are also “central to the Christian mission,” leaving me in a final state of uncertainty as to where they actually stand.

Put simply, the book would have been strengthened if the authors had dealt more forthrightly with other works in this debate, particularly Hesselgrave’s. Though I remain unsure, my hope is that they do believe in priority in mission and, specifically, that priority should be given to evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. Even with the confusion, I recommend *The Gospel of Our King*. It will help readers learn how to make the gospel known from all of Scripture and show how the gospel is not just for us *to keep* but also for us *to give away*.

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Palau: A Life on Fire. By Luis Palau with Paul J. Pastor. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019. 237 pages. Hardcover, \$24.99.

Luis Palau has been called the Billy Graham of South America. He was born in Argentina and became a worldwide evangelist. He began his ministry in Bogota, Colombia, in 1966. The book was composed after Luis received his cancer diagnosis as he began to realize that he was dying and would not be healed (231). The review will begin with the perspective of the book, then the contents of the book, and finish with an evaluation of the book.

Palau’s *sitz em leben* uniquely impacted the composition of this book. Early in the work, he noted the distinctive character. Rather than being a collection of details that describe the greatness of Palau and his ministry or a work that celebrates Palau’s life, the book reads as a dying man’s reflection. Palau ponders the movement of the sands of time, realizing the value of certain people in his life, and, in a parting announcement, informs the world of the significance of these “others” who have shaped him. In his memoir, Palau and Pastor inform the reader as to the “making of Luis Palau.” Palau, with all of his success and worldwide impact for the sake of Christ, did not create himself, and he realizes this truth and desires to give honor to whom honor is due.

The book contains twelve chapters with a principle associated with each chapter. The first nine chapters are focused on the people who have shaped Palau’s life. Chapter ten addressed the global nature and character of the church, with the final two chapters

dealing with the fear of death and the hope of heaven. One expects Palau to have been greatly influenced by his mother and father, a man who died when Luis was young, but to hear the names and stories of other “unsung” influences is an important aspect of the book. For example, in chapter three, Paul wrote about Mr. Charles Rogers, a Plymouth Brethren missionary, who came to Argentina. Rogers was an oil executive from the United Kingdom who evangelized and pastored in Palau’s hometown. Rogers was the first person to give Palau’s mother a Bible. Palau lost track of Rogers after moving from his birth home but then discovered that Rogers died in Southern Argentina after planting a church there.

Another influential person was Major Ian Thomas, the heroine of chapter five. Thomas taught Palau about the strength that comes from the indwelling Holy Spirit, the “Secret Fire” that inhabits Christians. This Secret Fire gave Palau the courage to rebuke the movement in Cuba by Castro and other Communists movements in Latin America. These important people and their stories shaped Palau, and they would be lost forever if he did not put them on paper.

The work by Palau is important and should be read for several reasons. North Americans need to know more about Luis Palau. God used this man to reach thousands, if not millions, for Christ. Luis Palau changed the world by changing societies. Palau was to Latin America what Billy Graham was to North America, and his impact deserves to be known.

Palau writes from a unique perspective, a living man near death reflecting on dying to himself throughout his life. The book contains wisdom from years of ministry. The missional stories of Palau strengthen the church to be more faithful, more intrepid, and more zealous for the cause of Christ. The worldwide impact of Palau reminds every generation how God can change the world through the ministry of one man who has been shaped by God and the people of God. One example of Palau’s influence is the conversion story of Matt Redman, the Christian Worship artist. Palau conducted a crusade in Britain, and Redman heard the gospel at one of Palau’s events in London.

The book reminds its readers that great people are not self-made. Though Palau’s name was attached to the ministry and its success, the ministry was much more than one man preaching in various venues around the globe. The ministry of Palau began with his family in a small town in Argentina. Palau’s life was a con-

tinual progress of positive influences by God-fearing people that helped him to be shaped into a man that could be used by God for great work. Read the book because believers need to know the stories of God's work and faithfulness in other countries by other men in other languages. Read the book because it's hard to determine our influence in this world, and the people we are ministering to might be the next Luis Palau. Read the book because a life of obedience is worthy of celebration, especially a life of obedience lived in humble surrender to holy God.

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Figural Reading and the Old Testament: Theology and Practice. By Don C. Collett. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020. 208 pages. Paperback, \$24.00.

Don C. Collett is an associate professor of Old Testament at the Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, PA. He received his M.Div. from Westminster Seminary (1997) and his Ph.D. from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland (2007). Collett's research field is the Book of the Twelve and canonicity.

Figural Reading is Collett's attempt to remedy what he perceives to be a "loss of an Old Testament consciousness with respect to the theological issues" (2). As such, Collett proposes that Scripture should be read in a figural manner shed of the literary reading methods espoused of late. Collett's three-prong defense of figural ('allegorical' here after) reading is to cite the Old Testament's figural nature, historical use of the early church fathers and concludes by defending against other methods. In Part 1, "Frameworks," Collett discusses Genesis 1 and 2 as not only the archetypal events of creation but a hermeneutical paradigm for handling the remainder of the Old Testament. Collett believes that the failure to grasp the two accounts together is because modern Old Testament reading has left behind the patristic tradition of reading in an allegorical way. In Part 2, "Exegesis, Figural Reading, Metaphor, and Theological Exegesis," Collett utilizes numerous passages from the Ketuvim to defend his defense of allegorical reading (Job 28, Proverbs 8:30, etc.) For Collett, the literary devices found in scripture are not only a means of writing but a call for allegorical reading. In Part 3, "Assessment," Collett retorts nu-

merous interpretation methods which diminish the allegorical reading method. Collett's primary defense in this section is to hail Calvin and Luther as heroes who affirm allegorical reading (37). As such, *Sensus plenior*, Christotelism, and *Wirkungsgeschichte* have deficiencies that result in the Old Testament losing its theological roots (153).

While Collett's writing style is easy to read and the book is laid out in an easy-to-follow tripartite structure, the work has major flaws. The first major flaw is found in Collett's terminology and reasoning for the text. At first glance, one would hope that this work is not a regurgitation of early allegorical readings of the biblical text. Yet, in his own admission, Collett notes "figural" is synonymous with "allegorical" (2). Collett's reasoning for the work is based upon his perception that "the character and identity of God, creation, providence and figural logic in the Old Testament have been eclipsed in the name of so-called biblical theology" (2). As a student of biblical theology, such a claim is hard to fathom, for it is directly contrary to the concept of biblical theology. The thrust of biblical theology, from its inception, has been to show theological consistency across both testaments and to prevent such a systematic divorce as espoused by Collett. He claims that the church does not recognize the significance of creation and its providence of Old Testament's figural ordering because of biblical theology (4). In retort, covenantal biblical theology places great importance upon these. Furthermore, biblical theology does not begin from the New Testament as Collett espouses, but rather starts with Eden and concludes with the "New Eden" in Revelation.

The second major flaw of the text is the flaw of allegorical reading itself. Collett should be praised for trying to help New Testament Christians grasp the difficult Old Testament texts, but allegorical reading is dangerous, to say the least. Where are the parameters of allegory? As Fee and Stuart so cleverly articulate, "The text can't mean what it never meant."¹ Collett's dismissive handling of various interpretation methods completely abandons avenues to truly uncover "what the text meant." Indeed, allegorical reading of Genesis 1 and 2 is not a new concept. However, allegorical reading of these texts has been well articulated in biblical theology as the "structuralist" view and defended within a his-

¹ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas K. Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 30.

torical covenantal structure by the likes of Meredith Kline and others. As such, the text warrants a “historical-allegorical” reading, not just an allegorical reading without parameters. To that end, Collett’s use of allegorical reading of other biblical texts and the literary devices therein undermines the theological implications which he desired for the modern Christian to grasp. Collett stated, “biblical words in a given grammatical-historical context typically have one sense, when these words are providentially ordered in relation to figural signs, they take on extended senses by which they become capable of supporting many senses” (108). However, Collett gives no clarity to the parameters of meaning that can be attributed to biblical words.

The third major flaw of Collett’s work is his use of the Early Church Fathers and the reformers to validate his allegorical readings. While some early church fathers may have indeed read allegorically, there is not a universal use of allegorical reading. As Kline, Blomberg, and Hubbard rightly note, the early church utilized four major methods of interpretation: allegorical, typological, midrash, and traditional.² All of these methods handled the Old Testament in light of the New Testament, thus exactly what Collett is trying to prevent! Much like his use of the Early Church Fathers, Collett’s citation of Luther and Calvin is suspicious to those who have read Calvin and Luther’s original works. The reformers utilized a Christocentric interpretation method, but somehow Collett believes they are a model of allegorical interpretation (37).

Overall, the book offers three positive features. First, Collett rightly reminds the reader that literary exegesis often leads us to forget the “transcendent Lord who inhabits yet transcends biblical language” (42–45). Second, the work gives the reader insight into the mind and method of ancient allegorical reading. When one reads of the early believers practicing an allegorical reading, one often questions the rationale and method. Here Collett offers a modern rationale and demonstration of the method, though flawed on both parts. Finally, the work offers a cautionary tale of how the method can undermine that which it is striving to defend. With great reason, later believers moved away from the allegorical method of reading all Scripture. As demonstrated by Collett,

² William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation: Third Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 80–85.

without theological and historical parameters, allegorical reading can undermine the theology of the text and leave open the interpretation possibilities. Readers should also understand that allegorical reading can contribute to one's grasp of Scripture but must be utilized in light of other methods and biblical texts. Overall, this work is not suggested as a standalone text. Readers would greatly benefit from reading this text with any number of historical surveys of biblical interpretation so as to rightly grasp what Collett espouses concerning the text, the early church, and modern interpretation methods.

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Is It Abuse? A Biblical Guide to Identifying Domestic Abuse and Helping Victims. By Darby A. Strickland. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2020. 360 pages. Paperback, \$19.99.

Darby Strickland teaches and counsels at the Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation (CCEF). She also contributed to the book *Becoming a Church That Cares Well for the Abused* and has authored two booklets addressing domestic abuse. Strickland is an expert on this topic, and in this book, she is thorough in her approach to inform and engage people who want to learn about recognizing and relieving domestic abuse in the church.

Before delving into the topic of domestic abuse, the author provides a list of helpful resources that consists of helper training and helper tools. The training resources offered include what God says about oppression, case studies, and a message for elders and pastors. The helper tools give screening questions and inventories on the subjects of physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, and financial abuse. Also noteworthy is the author's note to readers that recommends how they might use the book. Her audience is anyone who desires to help domestic abuse victims.

Strickland divides her book into three parts. Part 1 covers understanding oppression, part 2 addresses uncovering oppression, and part 3 discusses upholding the oppressed. To further assist readers, there are appendices that entail a safety plan, ways to educate the church on domestic abuse, dating red flags or warning signs of abuse, an assessment for premarital abuse, an abusive argument inventory, and descriptions of who domestic abuse ex-

perts are, followed by a glossary and resource suggestions. This book is comprehensive.

In her note to readers, Strickland communicates that she wants to facilitate thoughtful care to readers and equip them to recognize cues that a problem exists, draw out stories for situational clarity, and give wise Christ-centered counsel for victims of abuse (16).

This book can be applied to both male and female victims of domestic abuse. The author notes that although both genders may suffer abuse, it is more common for women. Less than five percent of domestic abuse cases involve abusive treatment of men by women with whom they have a relationship (17). Therefore, the content is primarily focused on female victims of domestic abuse.

Strickland acknowledges that some readers may want to skip part of the book to go straight to the content that addresses how to recognize abuse and help the oppressed. She advises readers not to disregard the critical information about understanding oppression in part 1 (16). It provides a foundational education for readers that will equip them for greater effectiveness in their work with domestic abuse victims.

Furthermore, pastoral and biblical counselors are immediately armed with encouragement for the victims they support. The author's initial message to readers lists several Bible verses from Psalms that may be used to comfort the oppressed. Psalm 9:9 says, "The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble." Psalm 103:6 says, "The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed." Psalm 147:3 says, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."

An impactful comment from the author is reminding domestic abuse victims that the Lord knows their trouble, sees them and is their rescuer is one of the most powerful things that a helper can do for them (18). To further equip pastoral counselors or others in the church who might help victims, reflection questions to assist with learning are in each chapter.

The author's intent is to train readers to view oppression biblically and become a trusted guide for abuse victims. This book did an excellent job of that by biblically and practically explaining oppression, describing the atrocities of domestic abuse, and providing strategies for helping victims. Because there are many variables in each case of domestic abuse, the author provides as much detail as possible to help counselors identify and support victims.

Strengths of the book are its detailed information, including probing questions designed to uncover abuse, guidance for creating a safety plan, premarital counseling questions related to potential abuse, descriptions of the mindset of oppressors, additional resources for reading, and victim support, and ways to educate the church. It is written in a logical and effective manner in which continual cautions about the need for ongoing wisdom, discernment, and patience while helping domestic abuse victims are given. The reflection questions allow for further equipping and enable the gaging of one's own experience. The book missed detailed information on helping the oppressor; however, general advice and resources were provided to address that gap.

People in our local church may be experiencing domestic abuse, and it is important that the church be equipped to recognize abuse and support victims well. This book offers valuable insight to accomplish that goal. I highly recommend this book to pastors, church leaders, and counselors. Books such as this that reveal how abusers think provide ways to identify abuse and offer proven counsel to support abuse victims are needed. Christ-centered counsel is used throughout the book in a balanced way to equip counselors with godly wisdom for helping people with the challenge of domestic abuse, which includes victims and oppressors, children and adults.

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Conspicuous in His Absence: Studies in the Song of Song and Esther. By Chloe T. Sun. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021. 336 pages. Paperback, \$34.00.

Chloe T. Sun is a professor of Old Testament and academic dean at Logos Evangelical Seminary, founded in Los Angeles, California. Sun's research efforts are centered on various aspects of relating to God through reading the Old Testament. Inevitably, any scholar dealing with this topic will sooner or later have to deal with the theology of the Megilloth, otherwise known as the "Five Scrolls" (i.e., Song of Songs, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther). Scholarly works on these books have "blossomed in recent years," as their importance and canonical coherence have become more apparent (45). Sun contributes to this conversation

through her articles and commentary on the Song of Songs [*Love Already but Not Yet* (2016)]. In light of this, *Conspicuous in His Absence* is a welcomed analysis of how two of these five scrolls deal with the presence of divine absence in the Old Testament.

Sun introduces her book with the words of Ps 22:1, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” She then states that this cry “reverberates deep into the heart of the human soul” (1). Just like the Psalmist, every believer has moments where they must grapple with God’s absence. Sun seeks to deal with this perceived problem by analyzing the books of Song of Songs and Esther. As Sun states several times throughout, within the entire bible, “Song of Songs and Esther set themselves apart by leaving the name of God out of the texts” (2, see also 50, 290, etc.). Sun’s chosen methodology is related to the field of theological interpretation influenced by Kevin Vanhoozer combined with elements of literary, intertextual, historical, and canonical analysis.

In chapter one, Sun deals with the theological idea of divine presence and absence. Sun surveys the field of research and explains that most approaches to this theological subject fall into three broad categories. First, the diachronic approach is represented by scholars like Dale Patrick, Richard Elliot Friedman, and Mark McEntire. Second, the dialectic approach is articulated in the works of Samuel Terrien and Walter Brueggemann. Third, the canonical approach is more in line with Sun’s analysis, though it has been adopted recently by scholars like Amy Erickson and Andrew Davis. Sun acknowledges that each method has its merits. However, she also finds them lacking in some area or another when not combined with other forms of analysis.

Sun begins chapter two by providing her definition of divine absence. Borrowing from the work of Anthony Godzieba, Sun defines divine absence as referring “to an aspect of God that escapes human comprehension” (50). Given that both the Song and Esther have often been neglected in Old Testament theologies, Sun spends most of her second chapter explaining how these two books fit into the collection of the Old Testament. In her opinion, these books related to wisdom literature in the sense that they “present two different but equally important trajectories of human experiences: the search for love [i.e., the Song] and the search for justice in the created world [i.e., Esther]” (86). As such, these books should be viewed as “cousins” to the strict class of wisdom

literature found in the Old Testament because of the various wisdom elements located within them (see 64).

For Sun, this designation is critical because both books were written to serve as *countertexts*. By this, she means texts “in Scripture whose contents, ideology, and theology diverge from the main trajectory revealed in the majority portion of Scripture” (78). From here, Sun spends chapter three arguing for how the Song and Esther deal with time in unique ways. Finally, Sun concludes this chapter by stating that both books help one understand that “God does not subject himself to human begins’ timeline, nor does he live inside the confinement of human time” (135).

While this reality might discourage those reading these two books, Sun also analyzes how these books deal with the idea of sacred space in chapter four. Sun notes that God first appears to humanity within a garden called Eden. Later biblical texts describe the tabernacle/temple as reminiscent of Eden (see 147–49). Sun details how the Song shares at least seven strong parallels with the garden of Eden (see the summary on 146), while the kings’ palace in Esther shares just as many similarities with the temple in Jerusalem (see 160–177). From these correspondences, Sun reinforces the importance of connecting the Song and Esther with wisdom literature. Thus, Sun argues that though God is absent in these books, “the thought of God lingers in the mind of the informed reader” (179). In other words, the reader can think about the beauty of creation and every created thing and see that all things reflect God’s inherent glory. For those who know God, his presence can be felt in everything he allows to exist.

Chapter five is the most problematic of the book. Up until this chapter, Sun’s approach has been focused on theological aspects of each book that can be validated through the grammatical statements found in the text. In other words, Sun has been seeking to follow signs of authorial intention. However, in chapter five, Sun abandon’s the quest for authorial intent in her explanation of how the Song became associated with the Passover feast. Instead, Sun relies on how the book has been interpreted within Song of Songs Rabbah and the Targum of the Song. While Sun does well to demonstrate how the Song began to be read in this way, Sun does not deal with how this sort of reading is related to the authorial intention of the book.

Lastly, in chapter six, Sun presents a compelling canonical reading of both books. Anyone familiar with the canonical ap-

proach will find this chapter primarily a repetition of conventional research in this field. Still, Sun does well to demonstrate how both of these books serve a purpose within the canon.

In all, this book should be well received. Though Sun does not answer every question about divine absence, she does provide a general solution to this problem as articulated in both the Song and Esther. Both books seem to have been written to encourage believers to live life according to what God has done in the past with the expectation that he will do something similar in the future. Though more research should be done, Sun's book will aid anyone seeking to do such.

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Counsel for Couples: A Biblical and Practical Guide for Marriage Counseling. By Jonathan D. Holmes. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019. 282 pages. Hardcover, \$20.99.

Jonathan Holmes is a pastor of counseling at Parkside Church in Ohio and is the executive director/founder of Fieldstone counseling. He is a graduate of the Master's University with degrees in Biblical Counseling and History and obtained an MA at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

In *Counsel for Couples*, Holmes intentionally identifies his intended audience as "ordinary pastors and counselors" (17). In addition, he clearly states the purpose of the book, which is to leave his readers with a "solid, biblical theology and methodology" to aid them in doing marriage counseling (18). The author uses the first six chapters to clarify his theological convictions and introduce the reader to a number of his insights. In Chapter 1, he explains the reasons why he identifies pastors as counselors and discusses the distinctiveness of biblical counseling. In Chapter 2, he offers the reader an abbreviated theological anthropology. Chapter 3 contains questions to consider before starting counseling couples, reasons to end counseling, and reasons to refer a couple. Chapter 4 concentrates on forgiveness in relation to the gospel in marriages. In Chapter 5, the author focuses on "sacrificial love" and how to help couples become "others oriented" (91). In Chapter 6, the author shifts to practical insights and aids his readers in structuring their first session. In the succeeding chapters, Holmes discusses

his approach to specific issues in marriage counseling such as adultery (Chapter 7), pornography (Chapter 8), unbelieving spouses (Chapter 9), low marital satisfaction (Chapter 10), abuse (Chapter 11), bad communication patterns (Chapter 12), parental difficulties (Chapter 13), miscarriage, infant death, and infertility (Chapter 14), intimacy issues (Chapter 15), and managing in-laws (Chapter 16). The final chapter is dedicated to self-care for counselors. The chapters are brief and accessible to the reader, so he accomplishes his goal of creating a resource for pastors and lay leaders.

Holmes introduces his perspective on biblical counseling early in the book. He states, “biblical counseling is distinct from other forms of counseling in that we believe scripture is sufficient to address and speak to all of life’s issues” (34). The author seems to imply that other forms of counseling have a deficient view of scripture’s sufficiency. He refers to some other forms of counseling as “semi-biblical” (66).

Counsel for Couples is written from a nouthetic counseling perspective, but the author acknowledges some of the limitations of his position. For example, Holmes acknowledged that an issue could exceed a person’s ability, and it would be wise to refer to a mental health professional (65). However, Holmes recommends his readers exercise more caution when referring to a “professional Christian counselor” than a counselor with a secular worldview (66). He states “additional work may need to be done” to help clients untangle “semi-biblical counseling” as opposed to completely secular counseling (66).

Another example of the author acknowledging the limitations of his perspective can be found in the resource portions in the chapters and his references. For instance, when Holmes lists resources for his readers on adultery, he lists several resources from authors that do not align with the nouthetic perspective. His list implies authors outside of his perspective have wisdom and knowledge that can be useful to pastors and lay leaders in the church.

In *Counsel for Couples*, Holmes explores the complexity of humans and states we are “physically embodied, social embedded, spiritually embattled and live in God’s world” (45–46). Throughout the chapters, it is evident he gives great priority to humans beginning spiritually embattled and how they live in God’s world. However, Holmes does not adequately address the emotional as-

pects of man in his chapters. For example, he offered practical advice like “make time for intimacy, talk to your spouse, and be quick to forgive” for couples who struggle with sexual intimacy (246–48). The advice is helpful but does not address the hurt, anger, or shame a spouse may feel that has overcome their desire to have sex. In addition, the author advises couples who have lost a child to “don’t put grief on a timeline” (221). Again the advice is valuable, but the reader is left wondering how they handle the waves of grief that will come in their marriage. Holmes offers wisdom, principles, and advice but lacks a guide for how the reader can help their counselees do what he recommends. Therefore, the book does provide the readers with solid theology but lacks a clear methodology.

Overall, *Counsel for Couples* is a profitable resource for pastors and lay leaders who have a desire to help couples grow in godliness. The book offers practical advice, solid theology, and wisdom to the readers. It is not an exhaustive resource and lacks tools to aid the readers in treating the complexity of human emotions. The author acknowledges wisdom can be gained from counselors who do not align with his position. Therefore, *Counsel for Couples* is a helpful resource for lay leaders and pastors.

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Interpreting Scripture: Essays on the Bible and Hermeneutics. By N.T. Wright. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020. 400 pages. Hardcover, \$19.75.

N.T. Wright, former Bishop of Durham and Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity at St. Andrews University, currently serves as Senior Research Fellow at Wycliffe Hall in Oxford. The present work is the first in a trilogy of collected essays by Wright, and the other two focus on his writings of Jesus and the Apostle Paul. This volume contains a collection of twenty-two essays, some previously published in other volumes, that Wright considers to be some of his most significant writings on various theological themes and studies (ix). What follows is a helpful book that provides an overview of Wright’s concepts on these themes with specific application for the life of the Christian. Although there is not a clean-cut division for the book, the chapters build

upon one another successfully and are connected by similar themes.

The work begins with a moving tribute to Wright's former *Doktorvater*, G. B. Caird, and how this mentorship played a significant role in Wright's own scholarship (7–8). This chapter appropriately establishes the diligent work of Wright that is seen in the rest of the essays, regardless of whether the reader fully agrees with the essay or not. Of particular interest is the frequent discussion of heaven and, what Wright believes, is the correcting of a theological trend found mainly in the United States. Heaven, he argues, is the “renewed creation itself. It is God's world restored, healed and folded with the spirit, sharing in the freedom that goes with the glorification of God's children” and is not a “far-off and basically disembodied final resting-place” (37). Rather, the Bible tells the story of “how the creator makes a world, a heaven-and-earth reality, *in order that he may dwell there with his human creatures* (301, emphasis original). It is a theme that Wright refers to frequently, one that is further expanded in his book *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*.

Helpfully, each essay is preceded with a brief reflection which sets the essay in its proper setting and provides the reader with a glimpse into the mind of Wright as to why he wrote this particular essay. For example, in “God and Caesar, Then and Now,” Wright argues in defense for the established Church of England as seen in the reflection at the beginning. Here, one can sense the pastoral awareness of Wright as he contributed to the *Festschrift* of the late Very Reverend Wesley Carr, Dean of Westminster from 1997–2006. He concludes the essay by urging his hearers to learn from their previous mistakes and build on strengths, “confident that our God has not led us up a blind alley these last thousand and more years, but that the gospel of his kingdom can and will guide and transform our national life as well as our personal lives for generations to come” (52). Of course, the Baptist will bristle at most of this essay, but Wright is undoubtedly pastoral in his care for people as evidenced by this essay and various parts of others as well (i.e., 108, 127, 148, 192–208, etc.).

One particular strength of *Interpreting Scripture* is the entrance it provides into the corpus of Wright's scholarship. Although he is primarily known for his work in Pauline studies, he also has written studies on Jesus and the Gospels and the history of interpretation. According to the introduction, Wright has written more than

eighty books and hundreds of articles that span the entire field of the New Testament. What this book provides, as does the others in the series, is an introduction to Wright's work in this respective field or subject of study. Are you curious to know his views on the Apocalypse, the new creation, or Bible translation? This book provides those entry points that will, undoubtedly, serve as a launching pad for other research to be done within Wright's canon.

Another helpful facet of the book is the introduction of each chapter done by Wright himself. These brief sections of the book helpfully set the chapter within the appropriate time-frame of Wright's scholarship, why the chapter was written and where the chapter, if published, can be found. Wright says that his "views on various subjects displayed here have undergone a mostly gentle development" (ix), and it would be an interesting research project for one to undertake how his views have been changed one way or the other.

Because the book is a compilation of various articles there does, at first glance, seem that the chapters are arbitrarily thrown together without a clear structure. I do believe the chapters can be pieced together to reflect a congruent thought from one theme to the next, but a clear division would have strengthened the structure of the book. Also, although it is helpful to have the pagination of the published from which the chapter was taken, it does interrupt the flow of reading and stands out of place.

Overall, for one who is interested in pursuing work on N.T. Wright, or for the more seasoned lay leader in the church who is interested in hermeneutics and biblical studies, this book presents carefully selected essays that encompass much of Wright's work. This book is to be commended for compiling parts of Wright's canon of work on Hermeneutics and biblical interpretation. Although knowledge of Wright's other works is helpful to grasp the sphere of most of these essays, the book does serve as a helpful guide into the realm of Wright's scholarship and his career of writing.

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T&T Clark Handbook of Analytic Theology. Edited by James M. Arcadi and James T. Turner Jr. London: T&T Clark, 2021. 544 Pages. Hardcover, \$175.00.

Analytic theology (henceforth AT) has now come into its own as a discipline. Twelve years have now passed since the publication of the inaugural volume in which the term *analytic theology* was coined,³ and the discipline has seen a productive and fruitful season. For instance, several institutions now have centers that offer graduate degrees in AT, namely the Logos Institute of Analytic and Exegetical Theology housed at the University of St. Andrews, and the University of York now offers an M.A. in AT. There are also several monograph series for AT, such as the Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology (Oxford University Press), the Routledge Studies in Analytic and Systematic Theology (Routledge Publishing), and the Analyzing Theology series (Wipf & Stock). In addition, there is also a well-respected journal for the discipline—*Journal of Analytic Theology*—and several annual AT conferences, such as the Helsinki Analytic Theology Workshop that is hosted by the University of Helsinki. And to top off these achievements, we now have seen the publication of the *T&T Clark Handbook of Analytic Theology*.

The *T&T Clark Handbook of Analytic Theology* (henceforth HB) was compiled and edited by James M. Arcadi and James T. Turner Jr., two figures who are established in the AT community. Arcadi (Ph.D., University of Bristol) is Associate Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and Turner (Ph.D., University of Edinburgh) is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Anderson University. Arcadi's main research interests have been analytic treatments on the eucharist, and Turner's have been analytic treatments on personal eschatology and theological anthropology. Along with Oliver Crisp and Jordan Wessling, Arcadi has also written a full-length explication of and apologetic for AT.⁴ Again, both scholars are well-known and well-respected within the AT community.

³ Oliver D. Crisp and Michael C. Rea eds., *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁴ Oliver D. Crisp, James M. Arcadi, and Jordan Wessling, *The Nature and Promise of Analytic Theology*, Brill Research Perspectives (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

The HB weighs in heavily at 37 chapters. The chapters are organized topically, each topic corresponding to a subject that one would read about in a typical systematic theology. These chapters are divided into six overarching parts: I) Methods and Sources, II) Doctrine of God, III) Person and Work of Christ, IV) Pneumatology, V) Creation and Humans, and VI) Experiences and Practices. Each chapter aims to bring the reader up to speed on the current research of analytic treatments to each subject while also offering insights particular to the scholar who penned the chapter. Many contributors are already well known in the world of theological studies, such as Oliver Crisp, David Fergusson, Katherin Rogers, William Lane Craig, Timothy Pawl, Thomas McCall, and Adonis Vidu. Other contributors are younger scholars who have already made a noticeable splash in their particular areas of theological research, such as Joshua Farris, Joanna Leidenhag, R. T. Mullins, William Wood, Ross Inman, Tyler McNabb, the late Benjamin Arbour, and Andrew Ter Ern Loke. Though each chapter is of a reasonable length (typically 12–16 pages), a detailed summary of each chapter requires more space than is afforded here. Instead, I will summarize each of the six parts of the HB and highlight some of the chapters in each part along with their strengths and weaknesses. I will conclude with an overall assessment of the HB and a target-specific recommendation.

Part I takes up the topics of methods and sources in AT. These chapters cover important topics such as model building in theology (Oliver Crisp), the doctrines of biblical inspiration and perspicuity (Adam Green), religious epistemology (Tyler McNabb and Erik Baldwin), the role of tradition in AT (Lucas Stamps), AT and the philosophy of science (Benedikt Paul Göcke), and the nature and value of faith in AT (Daniel Howard-Snyder and Daniel McKaughan). Models, according to Crisp, are “simplified conceptual frameworks or descriptions by means of which complex sets of data, systems, and processes may be organized and understood” (9). In other words, models are simplified representations of pertinent sets of data. Just as scientists and other scholars develop models to help clarify and conceptualize the object of their inquiry, so do theologians develop models to help them clarify and conceptualize the object of their inquiry, which is God and all things related to God. Understood in this light, model building is an important and useful task taken up by the theologian.

Ever since its inception, AT has come under the frequent charge of not engaging the discipline of historical theology (HT) or the church's theological tradition. Stamps rightly points out that, while this has been the case for some analytic theologians, it has not been the case for all of them. Several practicing analytic theologians, such as William Abraham, Oliver Crisp, and Timothy Pawl, he notes, have been deeply engaged in retrieving historical voices in their respective AT projects. Stamps provides a helpful spectrum of minimalist and maximalist approaches to incorporating insights from the church's tradition in AT, encouraging his readers to veer towards the maximal end.

Benedikt Paul Göcke's chapter on AT and the philosophy of science deserves some attention as well. He argues that "based on recent debates in the philosophy of science, the attempt to develop an all-encompassing theological theory of God, the world, and human life that deploys the means of analytic philosophy not only coheres with the historicity, presuppositions, aims, limits, and methods of science but also is a genuine task of the scientific account of reality itself" (55). His notion of "science" does not refer narrowly to the natural sciences, but to the humanities as well. It follows the German notion of *Wissenschaft* in this sense, and it aims "to provide reliable theoretical and practical orientation concerning the nature of reality and our place in it, based on our pre-theoretical experience of reality" (60). In this sense, theology is a science, and it would benefit AT greatly, therefore to engage the philosophy of science.

The chapters that comprise Part II take up the doctrine of God. Included are the topics of classical theism (R. T. Mullins), divine omnipotence (Katherin Rogers), divine omniscience (Benjamin Arbour), divine immensity and omnipresence (Ross Inman), divine omnibenevolence (Jordan Wessling), divine providence (David Fergusson), divine aseity and abstract objects (Lindsay Cleveland), and the doctrine of the Trinity (Thomas McCall). In the chapter on classical theism, Mullins provides a clear articulation of what the classical model of God entails, noting its commitment to four distinct divine attributes: simplicity, immutability, impassability, and atemporal eternity. He notes some challenges that continue to face the classical model, namely the inconsistencies that creation *ex nihilo* poses for atemporal eternity and immutability, and the problem of modal collapse for simplicity. Though some philosophers and theologians have attempted to respond to these

problems, Mullins points out that they have yet to do so sufficiently.

Benjamin Arbour takes up the doctrine of divine omniscience in his chapter, and he puts forth a helpful and articulate definition of *omniscience* after sorting through multiple definitions and theories of the attribute. He writes, “For every being, x , x is omniscient if and only if, for every type of knowledge state, B , if x is in a token of B then x 's token of B has an object a truth, and if x is not in a token of B then if x were in a token of B then x 's token of B would have as an object a falsehood; and, x enjoys all cognitive perfections such that everything known by x is known perfectly and, therefore, infallibly (124). This is a careful and broad definition of omniscience that deserves more consideration and attention than I can provide in this review.

Part III takes the person and work of Christ as its subject matter. The topics covered in these chapters include the incarnation (Timothy Pawl), Christ's impeccability (Johannes Grössl), philosophical issues in the atonement (William Lane Craig), and the doctrines of election, grace, and justice (James Anderson). Pawl's chapter on the incarnation is particularly helpful in that he provides and explains the significant contemporary models of the incarnation currently on offer, such as those proposed by Thomas Flint, Andrew Loke, and Pawl's own constructive developments for the conciliar model. Craig's chapter on the penal substitutionary theory of atonement (PSA) provides a brief but articulate defense of the PSA theory that reflects his recent work on the subject. In particular, he demonstrates that many of the contemporary challenges against the theory, namely that it entails that God executes injustices, fail, and he uses insights from contemporary legal philosophy to aid him in his apologetic.

Part IV takes up the subject of pneumatology. This Part is composed of three chapters, making it the shortest of the six Parts, though it is only one chapter shorter than Part III. What is striking here is that Part II on the doctrine of God is composed of eight chapters, and Part V on creation and humanity is composed of eleven chapters. Perhaps the noticeable lack of chapters on Christology and pneumatology—particularly the latter—demonstrates an area that needs more AT attention and treatment. Nonetheless, the chapters here cover the topics of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Adonis Vidu), deification and union with God (Carl Mosser), and the charismatic gifts of the Spirit (Joanna Leidenhag).

Each of these chapters is excellent, discusses the pertinent contemporary literature—both analytic and non-analytic—on the subjects, and provides helpful, constructive paths forward.

Part V is the longest section of the HB, perhaps as a result of covering two broad theological *loci*: creation and humanity. The topics discussed here include creation *ex nihilo* (Andrew Loke), the soul as the *imago Dei* (Joshua Farris), the fall and original sin (Olli-Pekka Vainio), sin as self-deception (William Wood), theological ethics (Kent Dunnington), supersessionism and the theology of race (Sameer Yadav), disability theology (Hilary Yancey), gender and justice (Michelle Panchuk), the theology of animals and animal suffering (Faith Glavey Pawl), the relationship between AT and the natural sciences (Aku Visala), and personal eschatology (James T. Turner Jr.). Chapters of particular note here include those by Loke, Farris, and Turner.

Loke articulates the biblical warrant for affirming the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, and he brings the doctrine into discussion with insights from contemporary cosmological science. Building off this, he then develops a robust articulation and defense—both scientific and philosophical—of the soundness of the *kalām* cosmological argument. In his chapter on the *imago Dei*, Farris makes the argument that it is the human soul that is the image of God in humanity, which he refers to as the structural model of the image. This structural model is contrasted to the relational model, the functional model, and the Christological model. While each model has its own strengths and weaknesses, Farris lands on the structural model being the strongest, which he then accompanies with a robust defense of a substance-dualist theory of human constitution.

In his chapter on personal eschatology, Turner advances one of the more intriguing theories of life after death on offer. This view denies that there is an intermediate state that the soul enjoys between physical death and the resurrection; however, this is not an argument for soul sleep. Rather, Turner argues, upon physical death, the human soul departs and is immediately conscious at the resurrection of the body. Though he does not use this language, one might think of this as a time skip of sorts. If person *S* were to die now, then *S*'s soul would “time skip” to the final resurrection, which is a bodily resurrection, wherein it would be immediately conscious in its resurrection body. Turner's interesting view requires two debatable key components: a hylemorphist theory of

human constitution and a unique ontology of time that he terms *eschatological presentism*. On eschatological presentism, only two moments of time exist: the present moment and the eschaton. While both hylemorphism and eschatological presentism are debatable positions, Turner's proposal deserves careful consideration in its evaluation.

Part VI—the final Part—takes up the subjects of Christian experiences and practices. These chapters discuss analytic spirituality (David Eford), baptism (Nathaniel Gray Sutanto), the Eucharist (James Arcadi), liturgy (Joshua Cockayne), and prayer (Scott Davison). The chapters by Eford and Cockayne were particularly interesting. While Sutanto's and Arcadi's chapters on baptism and the Eucharist are both excellent and thought-provoking, they will face their fair share of challenges from those Christians who affirm ordinance theories of these practices rather than sacramental ones—such as most Baptists. Nonetheless, each of these chapters is carefully argued and clearly written. Anyone desiring to pursue analytic treatments of these subjects will need to interact with these chapters. Arcadi and Turner conclude the HB with an incredibly useful bibliography that includes the vast majority of seminal analytic works written on the subject matter of each chapter. This bibliography alone is worth the high price of the HB.

The *T&T Clark Handbook of Analytic Theology* will be an essential resource for anyone interested in AT. Indeed, this HB is a valuable resource for every systematic and philosophical theologian, even those who would not consider themselves an analytic theologian *per se*. Arcadi and Turner have provided us with a monumental resource. As with any resource of this type, some entries are stronger than others. Among the stronger entries are those by Crisp, Stamps, Göcke, Mullins, Arbour, Inman, Wessling, McCall, Pawl (Timothy), Craig, Vidu, Mosser, Leidenhag, Loke, Farris, Vainio, Wood, Turner, Eefird, Arcadi, and Cockayne. Among the weaker entries are those by Dunnington, Yancey, and Panchuk. What makes these chapters weaker was one of the following—depending on the chapter: the need for further clarity, need for further argumentation and substantiation, or engagement with other seminal works on the subject that were neglected. For example, in Yancey's chapter on disability theology, she fails to engage the important essay by R. T. Mullins, which was the first published AT treatment—and one of the few published AT

treatments—of disability theology.⁵ Since each chapter aims to discuss the current state of analytic treatments to each subject, it is striking that Mullins’s paper receives no mention. This is not to say that these chapters are bad chapters or that they have little-to-no value, only that they were weaker in comparison to the other chapters.

Overall, however, the HB is an excellent resource and one that will benefit systematic and philosophical theologians, both analytic and non-analytic, for years to come. Due to its high price, however, many will be unable to afford their own hard copy until a paperback is released. I encourage readers who would like to interact with this resource to encourage their libraries to acquire multiple copies that can be checked out. While the HB is an excellent resource for professional theologians and philosophers, graduate students, and seminary students, I would also recommend it to pastor theologians as well. Both the teaching of professors and the preaching of pastors stand to benefit from this resource.

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Know Why You Believe. By K. Scott Oliphint. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017. 224 pages. Paperback, \$14.99.

Zondervan’s “Know” series of books introduces the average Christian to central and foundational elements of the faith (“Know the Creeds and Councils,” “Know the Heretics”). K. Scott Oliphint has contributed *Know Why You Believe* to the series and admirably fulfilled its purpose: resourcing average-yet-interested Christian laypeople with robust ideas in an unimimidating volume. Zondervan’s inexpensive paperback publication makes it ideal for all forms of Sunday schools, small groups, or even an entry-level class on apologetics that provides an orderly, clear, and stable jumping-off point for further discussion.

Oliphint’s introduction references C. S. Lewis’s famous quip from “Is Theology Poetry?": “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.” Oliphint sets the truth of the gospel and the

⁵ R. T. Mullins, “Some Difficulties for Amos Yong’s Disability Theology of the Resurrection,” *Ars Disputandi* 11 (2011): 24–32.

Apostles' Creed in the same context, to be gladly received as true not only for their internal and external evidence but also for their explanatory ability—setting all of life in its truthful framework. Therefore, in terms of its broad positioning, the apologetics of *Know Why You Believe* retains traditional emphases on evidence and rationality while also infusing the consideration of that evidence with a properly chastised understanding of the importance of lived experience in any human affirmation of truthfulness.

The book is sensitive to postmodernism's insights concerning the situated nature of all human knowing, while at the same time (1) correcting postmodernist apologetics' failure to affirm that we *can know* from such situatedness and (2) proceeding on the assumption that evidence and reasoning are precisely what would allow us to spiral closer together and more greatly fuse our horizons of understanding.

Chapter 1 answers the question "Why Believe in the Bible?" and, in a simple and unassuming discussion, sets forth the textual evidence of scripture and the nature of progressive revelation while easily moving between quotations of B. B. Warfield and critiques of "The Da Vinci Code." The chapter, in this way, is a good example of how Oliphint's command of the scholarly discussion in this book allows him to remain sensitive to how these apologetic questions touch on pop culture and thereby enter everyday life.

Chapter 2, "Why Believe in God?" similarly addresses atheism from its primary faces (i.e., the new atheists) while expanding the discussion to include some traditional philosophical and biblical considerations. For example, Oliphint glosses Bertrand Russell's claim that if everything must have a cause, then God also must have a cause and that one might just as easily suppose that the world itself is the uncaused entity. Oliphint addresses the argument philosophically and then addresses the reader biblically: all persons in their sinfulness would prefer God not exist, and human motivations are involved in our assent to truth—as Romans 1 affirms. Chapter 3 ("Why believe in Jesus?") secures an understanding of Jesus' identity against the various seminars and quests of academia, as well as the various ways pop culture reimagines the Lord.

Chapter 4 on miracles helps the reader discover the root causes of modern skepticism towards the supernatural, while chapter 5 reveals how standard historical methods of investigation reveal an empty tomb on Easter Sunday. Oliphint rightly emphasizes how

the evidence that is good for discipleship concerning Jesus' resurrection is not necessarily all that is needed for conversion. In other words, Jesus himself, when the Pharisees asked for extra evidence, insisted that such evidence for the Pharisees would not convince them because of their own faith commitments—already contrary to God's revelation in Christ. Oliphint's consistent balance between objective evidence and its subjective appreciation and interpretation is one of the book's most consistent and praiseworthy features that will make it invaluable for lay contexts in the church.

Chapter 6 deals with apologetic concerns related to salvation (especially divine predestination and whether human nature is good or evil). Chapters 7 and 8 both consider the impact of materialism, the former in light of supernatural and spiritual realities involved in the afterlife and the latter dealing directly with pop culture's "conflict hypothesis" between science and Christianity. Chapters 9 and 10 both deal with the average secular person's inchoate moral objections to Christian claims: the problem of evil and the exclusivity of the truth of Christianity and salvation in Christ.

Know Why You Believe develops an angle from which to make its appeals that should please a wide array of apologetic practitioners. Further, it appeals surprisingly well to an audience that ranges from an interested unbeliever or skeptic to a well-disciplined Christian. Trained apologists and philosophers will appreciate the ability of each brief chapter to address the issues broadly and arrange material from key writings and conversation partners sourced from the history of both church and culture. Pastors and small group leaders will be grateful for its ease of reading, interesting analogies, and illustrations. This book should help many Christians, especially young people in the context of high school or college, know why they believe.

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Reading Moses, Seeing Jesus: How the Torah Fulfills Its Goals in Yeshua.
By Seth D. Postell, Eitan Bar, and Erez Soref. Bellingham,
WA: Lexham, 2017. 126 pages. Paperback, \$16.99.

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Bar (DMin) is One for Israel's director of media and evangelism. Erez Soref (PhD in psychology) is the president of One for Israel and Israel College of the Bible. Additionally, all the authors are Messianic Jews, Jewish believers of Jesus.

The purpose of the book, as stated by the authors, is twofold: 1) "to provide an answer for questions about the believer's relationship to the Law," and 2) "to show how Yeshua is the Torah's goal" (19). In the remainder of the book, the authors work to prove how the Torah's end goal was not just to present the Law to Israel, but rather "to lead Israel through the broken Law and beyond, namely to the Messiah" (18). Though stated as purposes, the book seems to be following the thesis of the work and not the purpose statements. "... Our thesis about the purpose of the Torah (Genesis through Deuteronomy) is that it is a historical narrative, whose purpose is to lead Israel *through* the broken Law and beyond, namely, *to* the Messiah who, Moses assures his readers, will come in the last days." (18) This thesis statement is the probable driving force behind the structure of the book, as well as the underlying reasoning for the arguments made within.

Though never explicitly stated to be so, the work is divided into four sections, with each section addressing a particular facet of the conversation of the Torah and the modern believer. The first section, chapters 1–3, lays the groundwork of principles behind studying the Torah. The authors argue that Moses, in writing the Torah, knew from the very beginning that Israel would be disobedient to the law and, therefore, would be exiled because of that disobedience. The authors provide Torah groundwork via narratives instead of topics to support the assertion that the Torah points towards the Messiah. In chapter 3, the authors finally give a direct reference to the Messiah. To this point, the authors had said many times that the goal of the Torah was to bring the Israelites to the era beyond the Torah. Here in chapter 3, the authors advocate for a Messiah who would perfectly obey the Torah in the stead of the Israelites. In chapters 4–5, the authors look specifically at the Adam narrative, demonstrating ways in which Adam prefigures the history of Israel and the Messiah. In chapter 4, we see Adam, who is given dominion over the things that God has created, as the first pseudo-king. Additionally, the authors draw on parallels between the tabernacle and the Garden of Eden to position Adam as the first pseudo-priest. This, the authors argue, is pointing towards Israel's goal, which is to be a priesthood, consecrated

for the work of God, and to have dominion over the land promised to them. Additionally, in chapter 5, the authors argue that these roles of Adam are incomplete in that they are filled, temporarily, by a sinful man. This points towards the need for an even greater priest and king to follow Adam and be the reflection of God among all of Israel. In chapters 6–8, the authors dissect three prophetic poems which point towards this coming priest and king: the Messiah. Chapters 6–8 continue with the narrative of the text by focusing upon three prophetic poems, which all prophecy the coming of the Messiah. Finally, chapters 9–12 cover the implications of the Mosaic Law upon the lives of the modern reader, Gentile or Jewish. Chapter 9 covers the purpose of the Torah, as defined by the New Testament. Chapter 10 covers how modern readers interpret and understand the Mosaic laws, which seem bizarre in a modern context. Chapter 11 touches on how the Law of Moses shifted to the extreme form of legalism which plagued the church leaders of Jesus’s time. Finally, in chapter 12, the authors discuss how Messianic Jews should approach obedience to the Mosaic laws and gives the call to action for the book: to “be consumed with Yeshua, not with laws and traditions!” (125).

Few books exist which capture the Torah, like *Reading Moses, Seeing Jesus* has. The book is easy to read since it is written in a narrative style. Knowledgeable readers will find themselves reading this work with anticipation of how the authors grasp the foreshadowing of the Messiah. Though the work could have been helped by following the canonical chronology of the Torah, this book captured a fresh Messianic outlook of the Torah.

The main critique of the book is the rather deceptive nature of the title and subtitle. Though the book did a wonderful job of pointing towards the need for the Messiah as seen through the Torah’s narrative, there were surprisingly few arguments as to why this Messiah would have to be Jesus. The authors state in the introduction of the book that they believe that “to be faithful followers of the Torah, in our view, is to believe in Yeshua.” (18). However, there is surprisingly little in the text about Christ’s fulfillment of this Mosaic foreshadowing of the Messiah figure. Potentially there was a subliminal desire not to offend Jewish friends; thus, the lack of a compelling case to Jesus being the Messiah prefigured in the Torah. Thus, if the title were different, this book would easily be accepted by non-messianic Jews (with the exception of the previously mentioned quote from page 18).

The suggested change is to move Chapters 9 and 10, which focus on the function and purpose of the Law, to the beginning of the book. Such a move would permit these two chapters to be a great setup for properly understanding the function of the Law before jumping to all the different ways the Messiah was foreshadowed and displayed in it. Furthermore, this change would help both Jews and Gentiles understand the proper way of evaluating the Law and its purposes. Finally, while it might make for a bigger book, adding another section showing Jesus as the Messiah would have been even more compelling for the book's grander purpose. All in all, this book was an interesting read from the Messianic perspective. Readers would greatly benefit from reading this work alongside *The Messianic Vision* by Kevin Chen.

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Divine Agency and Divine Action: Volume 3—Systematic Theology. By William J. Abraham. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. 304 pages. Hardcover. \$105.00.

William J. Abraham is Albert Cook Outler Professor of Wesley Studies and Director of the Polycarp Community at Southern Methodist University, and Inaugural Director of the Wesley House of Studies at Baylor University. He holds two doctoral degrees—a D.D. (h.c.) from Asbury Theological Seminary (2008) and a D.Phil. from Regent's Park College, Oxford University. He also has held positions at Seattle Pacific University and Harvard Divinity School. He has published papers on a wide variety of topics in the disciplines of philosophy and theology that have appeared in *Faith and Philosophy*, *Religious Studies*, *Journal of Analytic Theology*, *European Journal of Philosophy of Religion*, and *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*. His books include *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, *The Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology*, *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology*, *Divine Revelation and the Limits of Historical Criticism*, *The Logic of Evangelism*, and the continuing tetralogy, *Divine Agency and Divine Action*. The book under review here is the third volume of this tetralogy.

The third volume of Abraham's *Divine Agency and Divine Action* is a short systematic theology (ST). As one might infer from the title, the central theme of this ST is divine agency and divine ac-

tion—who God is, what God has done, and what God still does. This volume should be seen as the next step in his tetralogy. Volume one analyzed the current debates surrounding divine agency and divine action throughout the twentieth century with insights into how and where to move forward.⁶ The conclusions in that volume were that no general notions of divine agency and divine action would suffice to explain the concepts in the Christian tradition. In volume two, he looks through the Christian tradition to garner insights from how important thinkers have predicated agency and action of God.⁷ While the first two volumes primarily have been descriptive, this volume takes on a normative voice. The book is divided into eighteen chapters, discussing nine topics—each topic/doctrine receives two chapters of discussion, each chapter averaging approximately fifteen pages in length. As the reader might assume, a one-volume ST at such a short page length as Abraham’s aims to be a deflationary treatment; Abraham does not get distracted with tangential issues of method or other philosophical matters.

Abraham begins by defining ST as “formally an exercise in university-level, post-baptismal Christian instruction. Materially, ST is a deep, contemporary articulation of the Christian faith in terms that focus on divine agency and divine action” (9). First, ST is a discipline that is carried out at a higher level of intellectual rigor, i.e., university-level. Second, it is a post-baptismal discipline in that it presupposes that ST is something to be carried out by believers rather than non-believers—it is practiced logically subsequent to the Christian’s act of faith. And third, ST is instructive—it does not aim simply to describe *what* Christians believe and *how* Christians behave but to inform Christians on what they *should* believe and how they *should* behave. As a normative discipline, ST is also concerned with the truth of theology. Therefore, ST also must take up the tools of logical analysis and historical theology in its work. This is clearly seen in Abraham’s treatment with his use of the tools of analytic philosophy. He retains a strong commitment to the seven ecumenical creeds of the church catholic, which he uses as the primary hermeneutical lens through which to inter-

⁶William J. Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action: Volume 1—Exploring and Evaluating the Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁷William J. Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action: Volume 2—Soundings in the Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

pret Scripture. While Scripture is theology's *norma normans*, its norming norm, the church's tradition takes on the role of *norma normata*, that norm which is normed.

Abraham takes up the Christian doctrine of God in chapters three and four, discussing the Holy Trinity in the former and the divine attributes in the latter. The ecumenical creeds are important to help believers make sense of Scripture's doctrine of God, acting as a sort of "curriculum vitae for God" (40). Abraham's first major thesis on the trinity is that "God is a unique, mysterious, tri-personal agent" (42). This notion of God as agent is one of Abraham's central claims throughout his tetralogy (42). After discussing how the church developed the doctrine of the trinity, he claims that the doctrine is the most economical way to do justice to five sets of phenomena: the revelation of God in God's word and deed in Israel; the revelation of God in God's mighty acts in Jesus of Nazareth; the revelation of God to chosen apostles like Paul, called and appointed by God to interpret God's acts in Christ; the experience of the apostles in their encounter with Jesus of Nazareth/the experience of generations of Christian converts in their encounter with the apostolic and post-apostolic memory and witness to Jesus; the experience of Christians at Pentecost and thereafter, that is, the multiple and manifold experiences with God here and now which are naturally identified as experiences of and encounters with the Holy Spirit of God (45).

While the doctrine of the trinity is not taught by any specific proof-text in Scripture, it is an essential doctrine of the Christian faith that arose to fit these five needs faced by the early church.

Abraham turns his attention to the divine attributes in chapter four. He reminds his readers that the most fundamental category with which he is working to understand God is that of agent, claiming that "Agents are made known through what they do. Thus, in coming to know God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we also come to know the intrinsically attractive love and the almighty power of God" (55). All too often, Abraham claims, theologians and philosophers attempt to list and expound upon the divine attributes with little attention to the doctrine of the trinity. One must understand that they are discussing the attributes of the tri-personal God, not a mono-personal god. This is why the doctrine of the trinity comes prior to discussing the divine attributes. Abraham then discusses and affirms the following fourteen attributes of God, dividing them into two lists (58–60).

1. God is all loving.
2. God is the source of all true human happiness and human welfare.
3. God is worthy of worship.
4. God is just.
5. God is holy.
6. God is righteous, intervening in history to fulfill his covenant promises, to put things right when they go wrong, and to vindicate those who put their trust in him.
7. God is free.
1. God is omnipotent.
2. God is both eternal and everlasting. God both transcends and indwells time and space.
3. God is omniscient. God knows everything it is logically possible to know. If the future can be known (a claim I take to be true), then God knows the future.
4. God is omnipresent.
5. God is impassible.
6. God is immutable. In his essential attributes, he does not change. God does not change in his character.
7. God's existence is a necessary existence.

Abraham excludes the doctrine of divine simplicity (DDS) from his list of attributes. While he affirms that God is one and exists as a perfect unity, he rejects DDS on the grounds that it forces us to claim that all of God's attributes are identical with one another and identical with Godself, which "is incoherent" (63). Not only is it incoherent, but it is also incompatible with God being tripersonal (63).

The person and work of the Son takes up chapters five and six. In discussing the person of Christ, Abraham walks the reader through the seven ecumenical councils and their Christological affirmations, namely his being one *ousia* (essence, substance, or being) with the Father, his having a complete human nature and a complete divine nature, his being only one person—not two, and his having both a human and a divine will. He discusses briefly the quests for the historical Jesus, claiming, "None of these proposals are able adequately to cope with Jesus theologically" (82). When discussing the work of Christ in chapter six, Abraham notes that "there is no canonical doctrine in this arena" (84). Though it is one of the central doctrines of the Christian faith, no ecumenical council ever convened to determine how exactly Jesus' death re-

sults in the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation between God and humanity. Scripture and the church's tradition employ numerous metaphors and concepts to describe the work of Christ, all of which should be taken seriously. He discusses numerous issues that he takes with the penal substitutionary theory of the atonement (PSA), claiming that it is unjust always to punish someone who is not guilty, Jesus' death is never described as a punishment but as a sacrifice, and that it would involve the Father participating in evil in order to do good (95–96). Nonetheless, he chooses to retain the language of penal substitution since it shows up so frequently in the history of theology and since it speaks “in a very powerful way when we see ourselves as those who have systematically violated the law of God” (96–97). The ultimate reason for Jesus' coming to earth, Abraham claims, was to baptize his image bearers in the Holy Spirit.

Abraham next takes up the person and work of the Holy Spirit in chapters seven and eight. He begins by warning his readers that this doctrine must not stray too far from the doctrine of the trinity since it is only properly located there. Throughout the chapter, he discusses important developments in the doctrine of the Spirit that have been significant in the church's history, such as the *filioque* controversy, appropriate pronouns for discussing the Spirit, conciliar pneumatology, and the Pentecostal movement. He discusses numerous biblical images and metaphors used to describe the Spirit, arguing that we need to hold onto the meaning of these. These metaphors also find an important place in church tradition. The only way of describing the Spirit that Abraham rejects from the church's tradition is that of the Spirit being the relation that unifies the Father and the Son, as this implicitly subordinates the Spirit to the Father and the Son. The primary work of the Spirit is bringing about the kingdom of God; everything the Spirit does is towards this end. In lieu of this task, the Spirit baptizes those who seek union with Christ, empowers Jesus in his earthly ministry, and empowers the church to do her work as history continues towards God's kingdom, which includes the bestowal of the spiritual gifts.

The doctrines of creation and providence occupy chapters nine and ten. Abraham defends the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, which is the primary focus of the chapter. He looks at the history the doctrine has had in the church's tradition, and he affirms that a form of natural theology grounded in general revelation is possible,

with the reminder to his readers that “Agents are known through what they do” (136). The issue that the church has run into throughout her history concerning the doctrine of providence has been that of divine action and human freedom. God is at work in creation and history to bring it to his desired kingdom, yet he does not infringe on the freedom of his creatures. Abraham is critical of both divine determinism and open theism, and he seems to affirm some version of Molinism, which relies on God’s middle knowledge, i.e., counterfactuals of what his free creatures *would* do (not to be confused with *could* do) in any given circumstance. This seems to provide a more adequate solution to the problem of evil than those provided by determinism and open theism.

Abraham turns his attention to the doctrine of humanity in chapters eleven and twelve. He focuses on the image of God in chapter eleven. He emphasizes four components of his discussion of the image of God: “an initial account of the language of imaging the divine, a broad description of human nature, a focused analysis of what it means to be made in the image of God, and a final section on the significance of my account for our treatment of others” (159). What makes persons distinct from nonpersons is that they are agents—self-conscious agents, embodied agents, cognitive agents, moral agents, relational agents, spiritual agents, or souls, and mortal agents. In being these, human beings, though not gods, are godlike, and this follows from being made according to God’s image.

Sin is the focus of the second chapter on the doctrine of humanity. To describe what sin is, ultimately, is to “attempt to diagnose what has gone wrong in the world” (174). Evil is a real problem in the world, and it is God’s actions in the world that will overcome it. Divine judgment is but one way that God will rid the world of sin. Abraham goes on to affirm the reality of demons in the world and argues that theologians need to reclaim this reality in their academic work.

Abraham takes up the doctrine of the church in the next two chapters. He addresses numerous matters in these chapters, including the church’s relationship to Israel. He argues that the church did not begin on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts but when God first called Abraham. He claims that the contemporary emergence of Messianic Judaism is “the most significant event in the history of the church since the Reformation” (192). The ministry of the church is embedded in the kingdom of God.

The church's worship and liturgy are essential to her ministry because it is through these that God works in the lives of believers to conform them to the image of Christ. The church is called to be a witness for Christ to the world, and it is through their worship and liturgies that they do so. The two major forms of this witness are word and deed, and these two come together in the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist.

The doctrine of salvation is the focus of chapters fifteen and sixteen. Predestination is the focus of the former and sanctification of the latter. Abraham rejects the vision of predestination that is found in Calvin and more narrowly defined Reformed traditions, and he affirms the Wesleyan doctrine of prevenient grace. While it is true that God has predestined to establish a people for himself, it is not the case that this predestination erases the freedom of human agents. Though God is the cause of human salvation, causality does not necessitate determinism: "God has decided in eternity that those who respond in simple faith and repentance to his Word will be saved; those who do not, will not be saved" (220). However, salvation is not complete without conspicuous sanctity. While the work of Christ is the primary cause of the victory over sin, human agents must work in their own lives to overcome sin and cease sinful acts. This comes about as individuals grow in Christ and learn to love God and neighbor.

The final two chapters take up the topics of eschatology. Eschatology is concerned with God's ultimate purpose for his creatures, and this can be divided into personal eschatology and cosmic eschatology. Abraham summarizes the canonical tradition as articulated in the Nicene Creed, noting that the Creed "speaks of the future first in relation to its claims about Christ and second in relation to the future of the individual" (248). Central themes for eschatology are hope and anticipation, as it is the hope for God's future that drives the church forward in her ministry. He also discusses the beatific vision, heaven, and hell. Abraham concludes the book by discussing the consummation of all things.

There are many strengths to Abraham's short ST. Its brevity makes it a great choice for a one-semester ST course at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and it gives the reader the impression that working their way through a ST will not take years of their life. However, this strength is also a weakness. Readers will quickly notice the absence of detailed biblical exegesis, which is ironic since the author claims Scripture as theology's *norma normans*.

Readers might also find it concerning that much more attention is given to the church's tradition in doctrinal formulation than biblical exegesis. Readers who are not convinced that the church's tradition represents the best interpretations and synthesis of Scripture's material will find this particularly concerning.

As a work of analytic theology, readers might be surprised at Abraham's lack of argumentation, particularly when refuting opposing positions. While there is some argumentation throughout the book, most might expect significantly more in a work of analytic theology. Those in the classical Reformed traditions will also take issue with numerous aspects of Abraham's book, such as his Wesleyan preferences in soteriology or his Molinist takes on providence and the problem of evil. Nonetheless, Abraham's ST stands well within the classical orthodox traditions of Christianity. He draws attention to multiple important theologians who are often overlooked in many systematic theologies, such as Symeon the New Theologian and Austin Farrer. His sensitivity to Pentecostal traditions is refreshing as well, and his interactions with theologians from multiple traditions situate the book in such a way that it is ideal for an ecumenical readership.

Overall, William Abraham has written a very thought-provoking one-volume ST, one that sticks close to the church's tradition and engages with theologians across denominations. This book is ideal for advanced undergraduate students and graduate seminary students. It is particularly suited for those interested in philosophical theology, namely analytic theology, though its contents are also great for those without such interests. Without question, Abraham's tetralogy, including this volume, will be discussed by theologians and philosophers of religion for many years to come.

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Systematic Theology. By Robert Letham. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020. 1072 pages. Hardcover, \$50.00.

Robert Letham (PhD, University of Aberdeen) is professor of systematic and historical theology at Union School of Theology. He has authored numerous books related to several significant loci in systematic theology, such as Christology and Trinity. Given his

academic focus as a Professor and author, he is an ideal writer of a systematic theology. His systematic theology intends to stand within the historical Christian tradition, remaining catholic and confessional, while also grounded in the Reformed tradition (33).

The structure of Letham's systematic theology is mostly traditional. While he is somewhat unique in beginning with the doctrine of God before moving to prolegomena (i.e., the word of God), the remaining order is standard. He moves from God to God's works to the image of God to covenant to the Son to the Spirit to the people of God to the purposes of God. He addresses all the standard major topics within each doctrinal locus.

Given that the order and topics of a contemporary systematic theology are largely undifferentiated, I intend to critically interact with various sections in Letham rather than regurgitate common material. Book reviews are most valuable when there is substantive critical engagement rather than mere summary. Therefore, I begin with several potential concerns. By way of reminder: Picking out small grievances in a book nearly 1,000 pages long is not meant to color the whole of the book, nor is it an easy task. While I do have several concerns of note, these should not be overemphasized to the point of contaminating the overall achievement—which is a trustworthy and evenhanded systematic theology. Moreover, some of my criticisms are likely more with the publisher's word count constraint than with Letham's own thinking on the subject.

My first concern is that Letham often has sections that are extremely brief and lacking in any legitimate content. While some topics such as Theosis (768–88) get a full 20 pages of attention, others get less than a paragraph. Furthermore, he at times ends sections without explaining the meaning or purpose of the content whatsoever (56, 63, 300, 429, 446, 518). The transition to the next section occurs abruptly, leaving the reader wondering what he/she is supposed to think about the preceding content. The most grievous example comes on page 340, where there is a *one-sentence* paragraph. Letham says: "The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* rejects trichotomy." That is literally all it says. Then comes the next section heading. While it is understandable that some sections will receive lesser treatment in a one-volume systematic theology, one-sentence sections are unacceptable. This unevenness seems to appear throughout the work.

My second concern revolves around certain claims appearing uncharitable at times. For example, Letham says regarding credobaptism that it “suggests that the human response of faith is decisive for each person in terms of covenant membership; covenantal grace is conditioned on the individual response” (446). He claims credobaptists are perfectionists on the visible church and base membership wholly on regeneration. He says, “credobaptist churches of whatever stripe come into this category” (794). These claims simply are not true. While *some* credobaptists may fall into this caricature, many do not. Moreover, he lacks any direct citation for support of his bold assertion. Consider a second example where Letham says, “Both modalism and subordinationism were attempts to make the Trinity intelligible to human reason” (99). I highly doubt any Unitarian (or otherwise) would recognize their motivation for denying the Trinity therein. Maybe that is the logical conclusion of their endeavor, but few would willingly claim such an outright motivation. While I think we should all affirm the Trinity, it is unhelpful to paint theological opponents in a false light.

My third concern is how frequently Letham makes a statement along the lines of “this is a systematic theology not a volume on ethics” (309, 322, 347). This claim is overly strange to me. The three cited times this occurred were in sections on *human sin and providence, marriage and male and female, and bioethics and human nature*. Only the third topic appears to be outside the purview of typical systematic theologies—and even then, it is an open question of whether it *should* be. I think such a claim impoverishes Letham’s work by avoiding some challenging areas that would be enriching to the reader.

My fourth concern is largely stylistic rather than substantive. The volume has several “discussion questions” at the end of each chapter, but most chapters only have three questions that are largely broad overview questions, offering little more than restating the content of the chapter in question form. I think if a section like this is added, it should be far more robust or cut out altogether.

While I do see problems with Letham’s work, I find it to be a reliable guide overall. There are several areas worthy of special attention. First, Letham’s entire section on sin is fabulous (366–401). His discussion on the nature of guilt is especially lucid (375–80). His discussion on the imputation of Adam’s sin is the best

summary I have ever read and is worthy of wide dissemination (387–96). It is clear, cogent, and compact. His section on Scripture is also excellent and worthy of a wide audience (185–219). He also has a helpful section on the difference between the East and West on the Spirit's procession (135–44). The most original and contemporary contribution, in my estimation, is his critique of two kingdoms theology (588–94). While two kingdoms theology may be on the rise in much of evangelicalism and Reformed theology, he leaves no doubt that it is on shaky ground and is severely deficient.

In sum, I would recommend Letham's work as a reliably conservative guide to the major topics in theology. He lacks odd idiosyncrasies that have plagued newer systematic theologies in the contemporary period, making the text an ideal one for classroom use. While I do have concerns, as noted, none of these are substantive theological concerns that would indicate theological *error*. My concerns revolve around structure, order, and style—all aspects that are superficial to a degree. My critiques are relevant for those considering whether to read Letham or someone else. I think his style of explanation is understandable for the lay churchman and is best suited for undergraduate-level thinking. Therefore, it could be a suitable resource for a local church, depending on the context. While it is Reformed, those outside the Reformed tradition should have no fear in reading or recommending it. He does not unfairly treat non-Reformed soteriological sources. His Reformed leanings largely are displayed in his topics of focus and his assumptions which he honestly shares.

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The Way of Worship: A Guide to Living and Leading Authentic Worship.
By Michael Neale and Vernon M. Whaley. Grand Rapids, MI:
Zondervan, 2020. 298 pages. Hardcover, \$29.99.

Michael Neale is an award-winning songwriter and nationally acclaimed author. He serves at Prestonwood Church in Plano, Texas, as lead worship pastor, and has teamed up with Vernon M. Whaley, administrator at Trevecca Nazarene University and former dean of the School of Music at Liberty University, to write this thought-provoking, creative text. Neale's ability to evoke the

imagination coupled with Whaley's wisdom and experience from years of investing in music and worship students work harmoniously to engage both students of worship and worship leaders as they seek to become intentional, mature worshipers.

The purpose of this book is to engage young worship leaders to help them avoid pitfalls that might occur due to their being platformed beyond their level of maturity. The book deals with what the authors refer to as "heart issues" and practical issues related to worship leadership in the twenty-first century. Divided into twenty-eight chapters, Neale and Whaley have organized this book in a way that might prove beneficial in both the classroom and as a small-group study in a local church setting.

The Way of Worship is comprised of two sections, each containing two segments, labeled A, B, C, and D. Part one centers on biblical precepts while part two highlights ways to incorporate them into practice. In each chapter, there are three icons representing the perspective of the text. For example, each chapter begins with the image of a quill and paper, indicating a continuing fictional story. A drawing depicting a river denotes biblical application to the preceding narrative, and an open book icon points to a "wisdom" section stemming from that biblical perspective. Each section flows smoothly into the next. The organizational structure of the book would fit well into an academic semester for high school or college students if they were to cover two lessons a week for fifteen weeks. This would leave two weeks leftover for mid-term/final exams. Lessons are short enough for church worship teams or small groups to cover one topic per week for twenty-eight weeks.

Neale begins part one of the book by capturing the imagination of the reader with a fictional account born from a real-life white-water rafting adventure. He introduces characters and draws parallels of their experiences on the river with those of training worship leaders. The book reads like a novel with nuggets of wisdom interwoven creatively with Whaley's life experience and expertise. Each chapter begins with another episode of the rafting adventure. Topics covered in part one include deciphering God's plan and hearing his call, the awe and wonder of God, what it means to worship in spirit and truth, and the importance of thankfulness in the life of the worshiper. Whaley incorporates personal stories of brokenness and transparency in order to offer life applications to those who might benefit from them. Other issues discussed in this

section include the importance of time invested in a relationship with Christ as he shapes character and integrity and acknowledging limitations that can lead to encounters with him that refresh the soul of any worshiper and/or worship leader (138).

In the second part of *The Way of Worship*, the authors initiate a shift from foundational principles and precepts for worshiping in spirit and in truth to a more practical way of living out those beliefs. Developing an attitude of generosity is a commitment to surrender all personal ambitions to God (145). The authors highlight how a life completely submitted to him develops empowering qualities in the worshiper that help to establish lifelong patterns of service, sacrifice, and discipleship of others along the way (196). The authors further discuss the value of honest communication regarding the intention of the worshiper's heart as well as ways to avoid unpleasant consequences of unhealthy communication. They emphasize that learning to navigate the harsh waters of reality in collaboration with others, as well as the perseverance necessary to endure that process, can lead from painful struggle to joyous victory (271). When a worshiper is willing to delve into the intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual limitations inherent in every human, God uses those efforts to strengthen his or her leadership effectiveness (276).

There are several strengths and weaknesses in *The Way of Worship*. The first strength is its adaptability to both the academic classroom and for use in the local church. A further strength is that the authors also provide a companion workbook as well as DVDs, so this material would be functional in a church setting as weekly Bible study material. The paperback workbook, entitled *The Way of Worship Student Workbook: A Hands-on Guide to Living and Leading Authentic Worship*, consists of 160 pages and may be purchased for \$12.99. While the text is easy to read, the authors incorporate fictional characters to make points. Some readers who are students might find it patronizing and less academic than they'd prefer for a textbook used in an institutional setting.

The intention of the authors is to address the unfortunate situation of young worship leaders being given leadership responsibilities beyond their level of capability. The creative interweaving of fiction and non-fiction makes for easy reading and captures the imagination. The transparency of the authors is a gift to students of any kind and likely renders this book an effective tool for disci-

pling worship leaders in the academy and in the local church on their journey toward maturity.

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The Whole Counsel of God: Why and How to Preach the Entire Bible. By Tim Patrick and Andrew Reid. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020. 256 pages. Paperback, \$22.99.

Tim Patrick and Andrew Reid are the authors of *The Whole Counsel of God: Why and How to Preach the Entire Bible*. Patrick is the principal of the Bible College of South Australia and has served in ministry and church revitalization efforts for ten years. Reid is the principal of Evangelical Theological College of Asia in Singapore. He served as a lecturer in Old Testament, hermeneutics, and Hebrew. He is one of the founding members of the Gospel Coalition Australia. The authors wrote this book out of their concern that many churches are malnourished due to pastors preaching only parts of the Scriptures and not the entire canon (15). The authors' central purpose is to put forward "the case that vocational preachers should work to preach the *entire Bible* to their congregations" and to offer some practical suggestions for how to do it (15). In the author's words, "This book is about what to preach, and about how to plan and manage a long-range, ordered, and deliberate preaching program" (23).

The book is divided into three sections. Section one sets forward the argument for preaching the entire canon of Scripture. The authors begin this section with the tragic story of Jephthah in Judges 11:1–12:7, whose misdeeds can all be traced back to his insufficient knowledge of the Scriptures (19). In the same way, the people of God must know all of the Word of God in order to know how to follow God's ways in the world (19). The authors argue for comprehensive preaching against the "light, thing, hotchpotch diet of Scripture" that most churches receive (22). Though pastors can place a high theological priority on the doctrine of Scripture, a realistic assessment of the pastor's preaching ministry may reveal that only some parts of the Bible are really worth studying.

Chapter one lays a foundation for a preaching ministry grounded in the Word of God. After surveying relevant biblical

passages, the authors argue that expository preaching weaves together the New Testament emphasis on evangelistic proclamation and edificatory teaching for the best benefit of the local church (48–49). Then the book turns to establishing the veracity of the canon as the foundation for pulpit ministry. To close out this section, the authors present a diagnostic analysis of several kinds of preaching programs that can fail to do justice to the whole of Scripture, noting the consequences of embracing such a program.

Section two provides theological and practical considerations for attempting to preach through the whole Bible. Their stated challenge is to encourage all vocational preachers to preach the entirety of every book of the Bible over a thirty-five-year ministry (81). In chapter four, the authors demonstrate the necessity for understanding the Scriptures through the lenses of biblical theology, systematic theology, and what they call gospel theology. The authors argue that gospel theology is made up of Christology (concerning Jesus the King), atonement (concerning his death and its implications for humanity), and eschatology (concerning his resurrection and its implications for the future of the creation, as well as ethics); they believe all biblical teaching falls within these three categories (98–101).

Chapters six through eight are the most practically helpful chapters in the book when considering how to develop a preaching calendar. The authors attempt to construct a paradigm for a preaching calendar that follows the major genre divisions of Scripture: Torah, former prophets, latter prophets, writings, gospels, other NT books (133). The authors argue for *seriatim expository preaching*, which means expository preaching that is focused on preaching a series of expository sermons rather than isolated expository sermons (143). These chapters will be helpful for preachers and students who struggle to put together preaching calendars.

In section three, the authors survey the pastoral implications of preaching the entire canon. Chapter nine highlights the centrality of the Word in Christian gatherings and offers practical ways to integrate that with other ministries in the church. In chapter ten, the authors discuss how their method can work with a preaching team and how to track progress through the Bible. Finally, the authors focus on the implications of their challenge for the preacher and the congregation. To accomplish the goal of preaching the whole counsel of God, preachers must be committed to humble personal Bible study. In order to be effective, they must remember

to preach to *their* congregation, not someone else's congregation (233).

One critique is rooted in the reality of ministry. The authors write to encourage preachers to "make the fullness of God known to their people over a lifetime of preaching" (22). Later, the authors set as their challenge that "all vocational preachers should set themselves the goal of preaching through the entire Bible over a thirty-five-year period" (81). The reality is most pastors will not serve the same church for the entirety of their ministerial career, whether that is ten years or thirty years.

The authors highlight a shortcoming in seminary education, especially when it comes to pastoral ministry. Most seminaries, the authors say, do not provide any help in designing our structuring preaching calendars, leaving pastors to follow the models they have seen and experienced (64). The authors address this lacuna well and provide tools to help overcome it. While some preaching calendars are arbitrary, the second section of the book offers insight and help on structuring a preaching calendar that is clearly founded in the structure of Scripture.

Their category of gospel theology is similar to biblical theology, as it attempts to see "Jesus as the single biggest topic in the Bible and as the message that brings coherence to every part of the Bible" (99). Much of the redemptive-historical varieties of biblical theology assert the same thing, so it may seem redundant. In the end, the authors recognize that the divisions between these categories are somewhat "artificial" (101). While the authors emphasize the importance of biblical theology for preaching, they also show concern for attending to the details of each specific text.

Initially, chapter two felt foundational and like a step backward from chapter one. This chapter attempts to define the limits of canonical Scripture. However, they made no assumptions that every reader of the book would have the same understanding of what constitutes the *canon* of Scripture. Given the discussion of the relevance of the Apocrypha for Christian preaching, perhaps the authors have potential Roman Catholic readers in mind (59).

This book falls within the category of practical theology and would be readily useful in a class on pastoral ministry or in training preachers and teachers in the local church. The book's importance can be conveyed by a statement from the authors themselves. They say, "If the preacher is the primary interpreter with whom they are seeking to share the faith, then his reading of the

Bible shapes the reading of many other people” (111). It is a reminder of the responsibility that comes with entering a pulpit. Preachers would do well to take up this book and read it.

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Positive Psychology in Christian Perspective: Foundations, Concepts, and Applications. By Charles Hackney. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021. 344 pages. Casebound, \$45.00.

In some circles, the words “psychology” and “a Christian perspective” are often implied to be hostile in terms of having a relationship. For some, psychology is to be rejected because of its, more-often-than-not, materialist predispositions and assumptions about human nature, relationships, and our experiences of spirituality. Charles Hackney, however, advocates for a mediating position in which the field of psychology not only *can* be explored but perhaps even *ought* to be explored as Christian pastors or practitioners seek to understand the breadth and depth of human experiences. Hackney also reverses the discussion in a way that follows Mark McMinn’s position⁸ that, perhaps, the field of psychology actually needs the Church. Throughout this lengthy treatment of the relatively new field of positive psychology, Hackney maintains a keen eye on opportunities to integrate psychology into our understanding of humanity while also maintaining a critical eye on what kinds of implications and value judgments are being made by the field that may genuinely not comport with a Christian worldview.

Charles Hackney completed his PhD in social psychology from SUNY Albany and is currently an associate professor of psychology at Southern Wesleyan University in South Carolina. Previously, Hackney has taught at Luther College in Saskatchewan as well as served as the Chair of the Psychology Department at Briercreech College and Seminary. In addition to his work as a professor and instructor, Hackney has also written a handful of articles relevant to the intersection and integration of psychology and Christianity, including an article co-written with Johnathan Pennington at

⁸ See Mark McMinn, *The Science of Virtue: Why Positive Psychology Matters to the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2017), 6–11.

Southern Baptist Theology Seminary regarding the Sermon on the Mount and positive psychology and human flourishing.⁹ This small work anticipated Pennington's larger treatment of the topic in *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary*.¹⁰ These other sources are relevant to mention here at the onset of the review of this present work because they illustrate the ongoing discussion within the fields of theology and psychology about the practical possibility of bringing these fields together for the potential betterment of both.

Hackney covers a lot of ground in this book. For reference, the references section of the book consists of 60 two-column pages that include sources from theology, psychology, philosophy, and sociology, to name just a few. Hackney does, however, do his readers a favor by providing a robust structure to the book consisting of seven separate but related sections that examine: the big picture, positive subjective experiences, positive cognitions, positive personality, positive relationships, applied positive psychology, and the positive in the negative and the negative in the positive. This breaking down of the information assuredly helps the reader to navigate the information that Hackney is presenting, which would be especially helpful for someone unfamiliar with the field of psychology in general and someone who is more familiar with psychology in general but wants to take some first steps into positive psychology more specifically.

For the most part, Hackney's work is more about the summary and dissemination of information from positive psychology to Christian readers. Hackney's summary of this information does come across clearly and concisely, which makes the book easily accessible to someone who does not have a background in psychology or mental health, which makes it a helpful resource for both pastors and theologians (or perhaps pastor-theologians)¹¹ that are looking for a resource to understand some of the contributions positive psychology might have for their ministry and theology. Additionally, the book nears a conclusion with a discussion

⁹ J. T. Pennington, and C. H. Hackney, "Resourcing a Christian positive psychology from the Sermon on the Mount," *Journal of Positive Psychology* 12: 427–35.

¹⁰ J. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: MI, 2017).

¹¹ See Todd Wilson and Gerald Hiestand, eds. *Becoming a Pastor Theologian: New Possibilities for Church Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016).

about some of the practical applications of positive psychology in various other areas such as sport psychology, education, the workplace, and faith communities.

Bookending the book are two parts that are more constructive in that Hackney helps situate his readers into the history of psychology and why positive psychology might be a helpful course correction for the field of psychology more broadly as well as a resource for ministers and theologians. At the beginning of the book, Hackney addresses the history of human flourishing by bringing his readers back to what many would consider the source material: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Following this, both sequentially and in terms of some influence, Hackney addresses the subject of human flourishing in a theological perspective by drawing on Thomas Aquinas and other contemporary theologians such as Ellen T. Charry and her books *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine*¹² and *God and the Art of Happiness*.¹³ In this first section, Hackney is successful in situating his readers into the discussion of human flourishing from both philosophical and theological perspectives and in showing how the field of positive psychology succeeds, and in some ways fails to succeed, in being conversant with the discussion of human flourishing more broadly and historically.

Overall, Hackney's work is a significant contribution to the field of Christian Psychology and mental health counseling as he helps to situate his readers into the discussions going on within a relatively niche, but certainly helpful, field of psychology. For ministers and theologians, this can also be a helpful resource for someone seeking to wrap their head around theological anthropology and is looking for some source material from the book of nature that is examined from a Christian perspective. One aspect that would have made the book stronger would have been Hackney drawing the themes and topics he addressed throughout the book and proposing a Christian vision of positive psychology that is conversant with these topics. He begins the book by examining a theology of flourishing, and the book could have ended stronger with a "theology of positive psychology." However, this is not a

¹² Ellen Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹³ Ellen Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

significant limitation as the book remains a helpful resource in general.

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