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www.ifca.org

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Accomplishing IFCA's Purpose

— Les Lofquist —

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel. (Philippians 1:27)

At the Mid Year Meetings of the IFCA International Board of Directors, we spent a great deal of time asking ourselves some strategic questions about the nature and purpose of our Regional meetings and our Annual Convention. This was time well spent as we attempted to strengthen the bonds of IFCA International and overcome the inherent weaknesses of the independent local church. We were looking for ways to do a better job of accomplishing our purpose: to strengthen local churches toward becoming healthy churches who work together in joint ministry ventures.

In the past I have written about the strategic issue of overcoming the weaknesses of the independent local church. Many independent churches and men

remain isolated and alone in attitude and practice. This type of fierce independence keeps them from interacting with other like-minded churches and pastors in a way that would benefit all. This even at times fosters the sinful attitude of competition among other like-minded churches instead of cooperation, making a mockery of the biblical teaching regarding the autonomous local church. All of this exposes the inherent weakness of the independent church.

*How can networking
be implemented since
IFCA International is
not a denomination*

How can this inherent weakness be overcome without sacrificing the biblical doctrine of the autonomy of the church? The key is seen in the concept of networking independent churches in the spirit of interdependence, which is a biblical concept. But one issue we need to face is this: how can networking be implemented since IFCA International is not a denomination, but a voluntary fellowship of autonomous churches and Christian workers?

Another issue we need to face is regarding barriers which must be overcome in every network. Individualism, so rampant in the thinking of all Americans, keeps many from ever entering into mutually beneficial relationships. A lack of teachability and an unwillingness to ask for help are real problems each pastor faces within his church and within himself. Another barrier to networking is a lack of knowledge: “who do you ask for help even when you are willing to listen?” “Who is competent to help me in this situation?”

What then are the answers for us in IFCA International to all the above questions? I suggest that a strong, personal commitment to your Regional and the Annual Convention is the place to start.

PURPOSE OF IFCA INTERNATIONAL'S REGIONALS

IFCA International is divided into 42 Regionals to better serve the needs of the independent local church and its leaders. In cooperation with the staff at the IFCA International Home Office, Regional Presidents serve as part of the National Ministry Team in order to:

- Connect congregations with one another to share ministry ideas and strategies.

- Support pastors in their ministries and personal spiritual growth.
- Provide congregations with tools for church health.
- Provide a strategy for church planting within the Regional.
- Intervene in church conflict situations to bring godly resolution.
- Help congregations find pastors.
- Ensure high pastoral standards through licensing and ordination councils.
- Give leadership to support ministries such as Christian camps.
- Encourage discipleship opportunities for teens through Regional and National youth activities.
- Provide mentoring and encouragement for pastors and church leaders.

We ask that everyone on the Regional leadership team commits to

fulfilling the above purposes with excellence. But we also need every member of the Regional to help us fulfill the above purposes. Unless there is broad support for the Regionals, the above purposes will not be accomplished.

WHY YOU SHOULD ATTEND REGIONAL MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS

There is an old saying, “the world is run by people who show up.” This contains some truth. It certainly is true in our churches.

All of us pastors have had this experience: what seems to be a great man comes to church and he has what seems to be tremendous potential to become a deacon or an elder someday. He has outstanding leadership ability and a wonderful family ... but he attends church sporadically, only for Sunday morning worship services maybe twice a month. Will he become a deacon or elder that way? No.

IFCA International is the same. You can show all the potential for leadership in your Regional or at the national level. But if you only attend your Regional meetings sporadically, and hardly ever attend the Annual Convention, your leadership potential in IFCA International will not be utilized and you will become frustrated. “*Why don’t they see my potential? Why don’t they use me?*” Perhaps the reason is this simple: we don’t really know you because you are hardly ever in attendance. If you don’t show up, we don’t know you well enough to ask you to lead. And all of us lose.

The Regional meetings and Annual Convention are not simply Bible Conferences

IFCA International is structured in such a way that we “run the organization” at our Regional meetings and at the Annual Convention. The Regional meetings and Annual Convention are not simply Bible Conferences (like the Moody Pastors Conference, The Shepherds Conference, or a host of other conferences). The IFCA International Annual Convention and the Regionals are where:

- we review our cause
- we communicate our shared vision
- we plan and organize
- we decide upon ministry direction
- we select leaders

If we don’t have a strong and representative attendance at the Regionals and conventions, we will sputter and falter as an organization.

Therefore, I urge you to attend your Regional meetings faithfully. And I urge you to do everything you can to attend the Annual Conventions regularly.

If you already regularly attend, then I urge you to commit yourself to doing everything possible to make your Regional a better attended, better organized and more excellent group.

LES LOFQUIST’S ITINERARY

JANUARY 2007

- 9 Heart of America Regional, Kansas City
- 16-17 BMW Board Meeting, Atlanta, GA
- 22 MI Regional, Lapeer, MI
- 26 Calvary Bible College Board Meeting, Kansas City, MO

FEBRUARY 2007

- 2-8 IFCA Fellowship Cruise, Ft. Lauderdale, FL
- 22 Finance Committee

MARCH 2007

- 11 Midwest Bible Church, Chicago, IL
- 12 Northern IL Regional, Westchester, IL
- 22-23 Dixie / Cumberland Regional, Winston Salem, NC
- 23 Piedmont Baptist College Chapel, Winston Salem, NC
- 25-27 Calvary Bible Church, Narragansett, RI

YOUR QUESTIONS, MY PLEA

In my travels I have frequently heard: *“what does the IFCA do? Where are you going? I want to do something, go somewhere as an organization!”* That certainly captures my attention and I am addressing those very questions on the national and international levels. That’s my role.

However, when the person in the pew asked similar questions of me when I was a pastor, I would respond in this way. “Those are fair and good questions to ask of me and the church. Here are some of the things I am doing as a pastor and we are doing as a church to address your questions.” Then I would try and answer their questions as carefully as I could. When I was done, I would pause and end by saying this. “That’s what we’re doing. But now having said all that, let me ask you: are **you** faithfully doing **your** part to help our church achieve our goals?”

I knew I could not do everything necessary to make the church I pastored become what it needed to be. I needed the faithful efforts of my fellow

church leaders and our church folks as well. It is the same for IFCA International. So let me ask you: are **you** faithfully doing **your** part to help IFCA International achieve our goals?

If we intend to accomplish joint ministry ventures as a Fellowship, if we intend to become healthy churches working together, then we must follow through on the commitments we make to one another. Even a commitment as simple as attending the Regional meetings and the Annual Conventions. Otherwise the interdependent network of IFCA International will suffer and we will fail to accomplish our purpose as an organization.



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Dr. Rich McCarrell, Executive Director

*“...establishing and encouraging
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2 Thess. 2:17

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The Consequence of Impatience

— Richard I. Gregory —



I was sitting with a young pastor over lunch when he asked me how to earn the trust of church leaders. He was struggling with a group of elders who were not certain of his motives and seemed to question everything he tried to do. I understood his frustration. I know this is the experience of a number of young pastors, including myself years ago. However, there is great danger when the pastor does not take time to gain the trust of the leaders of the church. This results in the consequence of ministry impatience.

There is abundant biblical teaching emphasizing the need for patience and longsuffering in the conduct of ministry. In 1 Thessalonians 5:14 the Apostle Paul exhorts the believers that they should be patient toward all while they admonish, comfort and support. In Philippians 4:5, Paul notes that the Philippians' forbearance should be known to all men. The Ephesian believers were instructed to "walk worthy of the vocation to which you are called with all lowliness and meekness,

with all longsuffering, forbearing one another in love." It is important that pastors, whether young or experienced, develop the Christ-like character of longsuffering in the conduct of their ministry.

An energetic visionary often overlooks this very important truth: God is never in a hurry!

An energetic visionary often overlooks this very important truth: God is never in a hurry! When a young man graduates from seminary, he has a myriad of tools to accomplish his calling. He has the ability to read the text in Hebrew and Greek. He has been taught the sufficiency of Scripture to accomplish all God intended. He has been taught how to apply the Scripture to real life situations. He believes the proper use of these tools will accomplish what God has called him to do. What he often overlooks is the complexity of the people the Lord has called him to pastor. He also overlooks the all-important element of time.

Education does not automatically

qualify a man to be an effective leader. In fact, if a man points to his academic degrees as the reason people should respect him, he will gain only their contempt.

ONE MINISTRY CHALLENGE WHERE I NEEDED PATIENCE

When I arrived at Limerick Chapel as the successor to a very capable and charismatic founding pastor, I had the degrees, the vision, and the energy of youth. I also knew I had some very real challenges ahead.

The church was known as a preaching center with large crowds at both Sunday services. But many who attended were not members of the church. As the new pastor I found it frustrating that because of the existing structure of the youth program, I did not have much opportunity to minister to the youth or children. They had separate worship services on Sunday morning and often sat in the back of the large sanctuary in the evening. Throughout the week, the youth ministry was led by men and women who were heavily involved in a local youth center, but not in our church. In addition, there were ten organized youth clubs funded by the church but led by people primarily responsible to a parachurch organization. The youth

ministry was “out from under” the supervision of the elders. I knew this was not biblical and that change was needed. I also knew that I was not yet equipped to accomplish the needed change. I had to be content to concentrate on my pulpit ministry and give God the time to develop in my leadership the confidence of both the leaders and the people. Patience was a virtue that was not natural to me as a so-called Type A personality.

But God was gracious. He granted me wisdom to carefully cultivate an atmosphere where the church leaders could begin to evaluate the nature of the church and its responsibilities so that change could begin. I could have pulled out my biblical guns and blazed away, believing all I had to do was “use the Scripture” and people would fall in line. But the church’s traditions were too deeply entrenched for this approach. I would have invited opposition from the very individuals I needed if we were to accomplish the changes I believed God intended for our church. I was not interested in a “back door revival” (i.e. people leaving the church) which so often results when change is pushed in an untimely manner.

In those first few years, I often found myself in conflict with the programs of the various parachurch organizations flourishing within our congregation. The approach I took was passive. I did not actively oppose those ministries. The issue was not that these ministries were “bad.” Rather, they were robbing our church of its identity as the place where our youth would be properly prepared to hold to the conviction of their beliefs. Since parachurch ministries depend on numerous churches for support, they are often reticent to take definitive doctrinal positions. Their teaching is often devotional in nature and does not lay the doctrinal foundation necessary for the development of convictions. Four years after I arrived, we began Chapel Christian Academy with the expressed purpose of equipping our youth to develop a Christian worldview and live godly in this present evil world. In concert with the Academy, we quietly began a youth program that was not recreationally based but

instead emphasized service and Bible study. Our leadership began to pray that the Lord would raise up twenty of our youth to respond to the call of God to vocational ministry. My wife pioneered a ministry among women called Sarah Fellowship which met weekly and involved well over 100 women. A college and career group was established and the Monday Night Bible Institute began. During church services, I slowly began to deemphasize announcements of parachurch activities and replaced them with announcements about activities of our own church ministries.

*I could have pulled out
my biblical guns and
blazed away.*

The breakthrough came one weekend when our elders gathered for a retreat. We studied together the nature and ministry of the church, along with the biblical responsibilities of its leaders. It was as if someone had turned on the light. The shadows of distrust fled, replaced by their understanding of the church’s direction and the changes which needed to be made. This began a ministry which produced numerous missionaries, pastors, Christian school teachers and dedicated young professionals.

ANOTHER MINISTRY CHALLENGE WHERE I NEEDED PATIENCE

The youth programming dilemma was not the only challenge I faced when I first came to the Chapel.

When Bible preaching churches formed in the 1930s, they became gatherings of people opposed to the cancerous growth of liberalism within mainline denominations. They were more interested in agreeing on the Fundamentals rather than on the details of doctrinal statements. The Chapel reflected this in its approach to membership. In practice, baptism was not emphasized. And even though the church’s doctrinal statement included

a fine delineation of the meaning and mode of baptism, prospective members were not required to be baptized in accord with the Chapel’s Statement of Faith. A prospective member had to agree with the church’s doctrinal statement without reservation. But in the matter of baptism, he was not required to obey it.

In the initial process when I candidated at the church, I noted this glaring contradiction. So I brought this to the attention of the elders. I stated that if I were to be called as Senior Pastor, I would endeavor to bring consistency to this matter. I also requested assurance that any candidate for membership in the future who had not been baptized by immersion as a believer must explain why he was not willing to do so. The elders saw my point and agreed that this change was needed. I assured them that I would carefully approach the issue by teaching on the subject when the text addressed it. The change was eventually made as part of a

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Constitutional revision over eight years later. In the mean time, no one was received into membership who had not been baptized as a believer by immersion as agreed upon by the elders.

A MATTER OF INTEGRITY

I feel strongly that a man should never accept the call to a particular ministry if he has a hidden agenda. Before a call is accepted, open and honest discussion of issues should be conducted wherever there is disagreement. Anything less is lacking in integrity. And integrity will be needed in order to gain the confidence of the flock who extend the call to the shepherd. When the shepherd's real intent is ultimately discovered (even after what some call a "power base" has been accomplished in the church) the confidence in his integrity and his pastoral leadership suffers. People cannot or should not be pushed or confronted in such a way that a pastor's integrity is called into question.

The consequence of a pastor's ministry impatience is frustration and disunity. Peter reminds the elders in 1 Peter 5:2-3 that they should "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."

It is necessary that a pastor be open and honest. He should allow the people to see his heart, his love for them and his desire for God's best for them, for His glory. A pastor should always give the Lord time to change either his mind or the minds of the people he seeks to lead. Being willing to accept an adverse decision in matters of preference goes a long way to develop the confidence so necessary for the trust of the people. A pastor needs to see that he does not always have to be right in order to solidify his leadership. There are times when he learns to be still and know that the Lord is God, and He is never in a hurry.

"For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God." (1 Peter 2:20)

Dr. Richard I. Gregory serves as IFCA International Minister at Large. He was IFCA Executive Director from 1987-2000.

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Nature of the Roman Catholic Church As They Perceive It

— Larry Miller —



Perhaps you have noticed some changes in the Roman Catholic Church. Since Vatican II (1962-65) you may have noticed that most Roman Catholics feel free to eat meat on Friday, their Mass is usually not conducted in Latin, it is no longer a mortal sin to attend a Protestant Church and other “surprises.” You may have experienced conversation with a Roman Catholic neighbor or friend and found yourself surprised at the similarity with you in language and understanding.

You may have also noted more agreement with them, particularly as we engage in the culture wars in the United States. Roman Catholics and Evangelicals are often “lumped together,” both considered dangerous by the mainstream media. This is

because we do agree on many moral issues such as abortion, capital punishment, traditional view of family and marriage, and homosexuality. Timothy George called this “ecumenism of the trenches.”¹

*Are most Roman Catholics my “brothers and sisters in Christ?”
Do they really believe in salvation by faith alone or salvation by faith plus works?*

But also as you observe, perhaps by attending a Roman Catholic funeral or wedding, there are still apparent differences: they bow before a statue of Mary during the wedding ceremony, they plead for God’s mercy on the

deceased at a funeral, or they may exhort the faithful to pray for the deceased so as to reduce time in Purgatory.

As you observe the American scene, you may wonder what the deeper levels of theological agreement and disagreement may be. Are most Roman Catholics my “brothers and sisters in Christ?” Do they really believe in salvation by faith alone or salvation by faith plus works? Have they changed their view of papal infallibility? They don’t *really* believe the wafer becomes the body of Christ and the wine the real blood of Christ, do they? Do they *really* believe the Roman Catholic Church is the only way of salvation? Are the differences in their church and my church (or the Evangelical church down the street) mere window dressing, just different ways of expressing our common Christian faith? Or are the differences rooted in core, substantive, real differences on foundational issues such as authority, the nature of the church, the means of salvation and the nature of the Cross work of Christ?

In the book *Is the Reformation Over?* Mark Noll and Carol Nystrom review eight different post Vatican II dialogues between Protestant groups and the Roman Catholic Church. They concluded that after these dialogues spanning over thirty years “the most serious differences were rooted in ecclesiology, contrasting versions of what the church is and how it functions.”² In my review of this book (see my article in the July/August 2006 issue of *Voice*) I included a number of grave concerns about the implications and directions of the book. However, I agree with the authors that the Roman Catholic Church is different from what most Evangelicals understand as the biblical meaning of church and that this ecclesiastical difference is at the core of what separates Protestants and Roman Catholics.

In this brief article some of the most important characteristics of the Roman Catholic Church are included, as they describe them. The Roman Catholic Church is not monolithic in that all the people, not even all the priests, agree completely regarding some of the following areas. But I present the official dogma of the hierarchical church. Council of Trent, Vatican II and post Vatican II sources are used.³ Based on my studies and years of ministry experience in a predominant Roman Catholic culture, it is this hierarchical official dogma that most impacts and influences the life of Catholic lay people at the parish level.

AUTHORITY IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The perceived authority of the Roman Catholic Church rests on three pillars. First is their view of apostolic succession. The official Roman Catholic dogma declares emphatically that the apostolic authority to govern the church belongs to the Pope and bishops.

That divine mission, entrusted by Christ to the apostles, will last until the end of the world (Mt. 28:20), since the gospel which was to be handed down by them is for all time the source of life for the

Church. For this reason the apostles took care to appoint successors in this hierarchically structured society ... Therefore, this sacred synod (Vatican II) teaches that by divine institution bishops have succeeded to the place of the apostles as shepherds of the Church, and that he who hears them, hears Christ.⁴

There has been effort in Vatican I and Vatican II, as well during dialogue with various Protestant groups, to clarify or “tone down” papal infallibility or supremacy.

There has been effort in Vatican I and Vatican II, as well during dialogue with various Protestant groups, to clarify or “tone down” papal infallibility or supremacy. But the official the view of the Church is clear.

Just as, by the Lord’s will, St. Peter and the other apostles constituted one apostolic college, so in a similar way the Roman Pontiff as the successor of Peter, and the bishops as the successors of the apostles are joined together... For in virtue of his office, that is, as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church, the Roman Pontiff has full, supreme, and universal power over the Church. And he can exercise this power freely.⁵

According to this understanding, “the power of binding and loosing,” which was given to Peter (Mt. 16:19), was granted also to the college of apostles, joined with their head (Mt. 18:18; 28:16-20).⁶ Do you want forgiveness? Go to the Roman Church. Do you want truth? Go to the Roman bishops or Pope.

If one wants to look for the “real power” of the Roman Catholic Church it may be found in the concept of apostolic

succession. It gives the Pope and bishops ultimate and almost total authority within the Church in all matters.

The second pillar of their authority is their view of Scripture and Tradition. The definitive text, approved by a near unanimous vote, became the “Dogmatic Constitution in Divine Revelation” in the Vatican II documents. It states,

Consequently it is not from Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore, both sacred tradition and sacred scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence... Sacred tradition and sacred scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, which is committed to the Church.⁷

So to this day, the official Roman Catholic position is that Tradition is authoritative alongside, if not above, Scripture. As an example,

...when the dogma of Mary’s assumption was declared in 1950, the absence of any reference to it in scripture was acknowledged. But, it was added ...we know Mary’s ascension into heaven through tradition.”⁸

The third pillar of their authority rests in the arena of hermeneutics. The official position of the Roman Catholic Church is that its “approved” teachers are those with the ultimate authority in interpreting the Scriptures. “The task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church.”⁹ The teaching office is the magisterium which includes “all who proclaim the word with authority in the Church. It generally refers to the Pope and the bishops.”¹⁰

So whatever the official Church says the Scripture means is what it is supposed to mean to the Catholic lay person. If this aspect of dogma is accepted, it provides the Roman Catholic Church overwhelming con-

trol over the people. And many do accept this dogma. As an example, my wife was dialoguing with a Roman Catholic acquaintance. She asked if when he read the Bible and it seemed to say something different than his priest, which would he believe: the Bible or the priest? He quickly responded, "my priest." She then asked, "What if he is wrong and it is an issue of salvation." His response was "well, in that case he would go to hell and not me." Someone else recently related this story to me. He asked a friend if he was looking at the green grass in front of his Catholic Church and the priest told him the grass was blue, what color the grass would be? The friend replied, "the grass would be blue." Such conversations illustrate the overwhelming control of the Roman Catholic Church over the thinking of so many people.

ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN SALVATION

Two issues should be sufficient to illustrate the eternal difference between the understanding of the Roman Catholic Church and what we as conservative Bible believers understand the Bible to teach.

The first is regarding the sacrament of baptism. Baptism by water into the Catholic Church, normally by a bishop or a priest,¹¹ makes one a Christian.¹² It removes original sin¹³ and starts the baptized one on the way toward heaven. So one can become a Christian through water baptism alone, as administered by an ordained Catholic priest.

This is why in the pre-Vatican II days Protestants were considered condemned and headed to hell.¹⁴ In the post-Vatican II era we Protestants are considered "separated brethren,"¹⁵ and perhaps may get to heaven through some sort of "baptism by desire."¹⁶ This remains a bit mysterious to me.

However, according to their core thinking, salvation comes only through the Roman Catholic Church and initially only through water baptism.

The second issue to demonstrate our eternal difference is the overall sacramental nature of the Church. The Catholic Church observes seven sacra-

ments: baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, holy orders, and matrimony.¹⁷ A quick look at the Eucharist will be sufficient to give us an overview of the church and its view of sacraments.

According to their core thinking, salvation comes only through the Roman Catholic Church and initially only through water baptism.

Normally only Roman Catholic priests ordained by the authority of the Pope are permitted to conduct the sacrament of the Eucharist.¹⁸ The priest can pronounce the words that call God into action and then He (God)

converts the bread into the body of Christ and the wine into the blood of Christ.¹⁹ As this and other sacraments are experienced, grace and righteousness flow into the soul of the recipient. This is independent of the level of the individual's faith. Speaking of the sacraments in general we note the following statements from The Catechism of the Catholic Church, "This is the meaning of the Church's affirmation that the sacraments act *ex opera operato* (literally: 'by the very fact of the actions being performed'), i.e., by the virtue of the saving work of Christ... It follows that the 'sacrament is not wrought by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the recipient, but by the power of God...' The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation."²⁰

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH ARE ONE

Repeatedly those who study the similarities and differences between

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Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Church conclude that the most basic difference is in the way each looks at the church. The Roman Catholic system sees everything through the lens of the Church. We can find language in the 1994 Catechism about the nature of the Church with which we would agree. However, their views of ecclesiology take them far beyond what most Evangelicals would understand from biblical teaching.

The following material is taken from *Is The Reformation Over?* by Noll and Nystrom as they review The Catholic Catechism. From this author's viewpoint, it provides a good summary of the implications of this extreme view that Christ and the Church are one.

This basic confession ("Christ and his church are one") explains why Catholics can offer salvation through baptism into the church. It is why the pope (as the vicar of Christ) can speak without error in matters of faith and morals. It is why Ignatius, who died in 110, could say that only priests in connection to a bishop, in connection with the pope (as Roman Catholics would understand in their reconstructed history), can offer valid sacraments. It is why Protestants may not share a Catholic Eucharist. To do so would acknowledge the authority of the pope as representing Christ through his church. It is why a church marriage is unbreakable. It is why Cyprian, who died in 258, could say "No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother." It is why Mary is called the Mother of the church; she is the mother of Christ. It is why the church can interpret the keys given to Peter as authority to forgive sins. It is why the church is self-correcting (the whole body cannot err in matters of belief). It is why the word of the church is higher than individual conscience and reason... It is why Catholics view the Protestant Reformation as such a drastic mistake—a splintering of the church is an attack on Christ himself.

If Christ and his church are one, then a great deal of Catholic doctrine simply follows naturally. In a word, ecclesiology represents the typical difference between evangelicals and Catholics.²¹

And I would add that for the Catholic Church it appears that ecclesiology replaces biblical soteriology.

CONCLUSION

For those of us who take the Bible as our final authority, it is valid to ask the same question that Michael Horton asked, "Is the Catholic Church an acceptable Christian communion? Is it authentically Christian?"²²

We do not ask this question as harsh legalists nor as prejudiced anti-Catholics. We are deeply concerned that the one billion Roman Catholics worldwide are dependent on a religious system that cannot deliver what it promises (heaven, perhaps, by way of Purgatory). It cannot deliver what it promises because of the erroneous view of the church and the requirement that the "faithful" meet the condition of faith plus works for salvation. We need to lovingly and effectively evangelize all lost people, including religious but lost Roman Catholics.

Endnotes:

- 1 Timothy George, "Catholics and Evangelicals in the Trenches," *Christianity Today*, May 16, 1994, 16.
- 2 Mark Noll and Carol Nystrom, *Is The Reformation Over?*, 2005, 113.
- 3 Using the Walter Abbott and Joseph Gallagher English translations of the Vatican II documents, *The Documents of Vatican II*, 1966 and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Liguori MO: Liguori Publications, 1994.
- 4 Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, 39-40.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 42-43.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 43.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 117. Also, the 1994 *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 26, indicates this is the ongoing Roman Catholic Church position..
- 8 G.C. Berkouwer, *The Second Council and the New Catholicism*, 1954, 108.
- 9 Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, 118.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *The Documents of Vatican II*, 146, 149, 152. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, page 317, par. 1120 and 352, par. 1256.
- 12 *The Catechism*, 342, par. 1213, 1215; 346, par. 1227; 350, par. 1250; 352, par. 1257; 354, par. 1266, 1267.
- 13 *Ibid.* 114, par. 405; 350, par. 1250; 353, par. 1263.
- 14 *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, trans. H. J. Schroeder, 1941, 197-98. Note canon 24. "If

anyone shall say that the justice received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works, but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but no cause of its increase—anathema sit. (197-98) It is impossible to miss the intent and mood of this statement and others. And the fathers of the Council knew full well what they were doing. On June 21 Marcello Cervine (afterwards Pope Marcellus II) reminded them that no preceding council had dealt fully with this doctrine and that Luther's doctrine of justification by faith only was at the root of most of his errors on the sacraments, the power of the keys, indulgences and purgatory. When in October a vote was taken on the question whether justification is inherent or imputed, the latter was rejected by a vote of 32 to 5. In other words, the Council opted for a transformationist view of justification." (204-05)

- 15 *The Documents of Vatican II*, 342. John H. Armstrong, "The Evangelical Moment?" in *Roman Catholicism: Evangelical Protestants Analyze What Divides Us and Unites Us*, ed. John H. Armstrong, 1994, 302.
- 16 *The Catechism*, 353, par. 1260.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 341, par. 1210.
- 18 *The Documents*, 146, 149, 152. *The Catechism*, 317, par. 1120; 352, par. 1256.
- 19 *The Catechism*, 394, par. 1411; 384, par. 1375.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 319, par. 1128, 1129.
- 21 Noll and Nystrom, 146-47.
- 22 Michael Horton in *Christianity Today*, July 18, 1994, in article entitled, "Resolutions for Roman Catholic and Evangelical Dialogue"

Larry Miller is an IFCA International member and has ministered in South Louisiana for over 35 years, 30 years as Pastor of Berean Bible Church in New Orleans. He is currently Director of Equippers Ministry International. You may reach him at <equippersministry@cox.net>

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The Importance of Baptism

— Doug Redford —



Baptism is a part of what is commonly referred to as The Great Commission:

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age,’” (Matthew 28:18-20).

While the descriptive phrase “Great Commission” is man-made and not part of the text, there is no question as to the importance of these instructions from Jesus to His disciples. This passage has been used by God to call untold numbers of believers to mission service both at home and abroad. It has served as the motivation for the Church to be actively involved in evangelism. And it has been used as the foundation for countless disciple-making ministries and programs.

But my interest is in the second of three participles in these verses which modify the imperative verb, “make disciples.” The second of the three is “baptizing” and it’s recently become a specific interest of mine as I’ve led a team at our church tasked with clarifying our church’s position on baptism.

*I remember growing up
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Baptism was mentioned,
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But there is no question
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the same attention as
missions or evangelism.*

I remember growing up in an IFCA church. Baptism was mentioned, certainly, and celebrated at least twice a year. But there is no question that it did not receive the same attention as missions or evangelism. Missions, as well as individual

missionaries, often received entire services dedicated to a particular people group or country, a mission agency, or the individual missionary or family. Many churches also hosted multi-day Missions Fairs or week-long Missions Conferences where the importance of missionary service was again emphasized. Evangelism, likewise, was continually kept at the forefront through efforts such as door-to-door visitation, “Evangelism Explosion,” and outreach efforts that included Christian film nights, Vacation Bible School, and Word of Life sports marathons for youth.

But it was not the same with baptism. There were no “Baptism Fairs” or entire services dedicated to the importance of baptism. At best, baptisms were added on to a regular service. When someone indicated an interest in being baptized, typically many years following conversion and in some cases decades later, all that was required was a brief meeting with the pastor where he heard the testimony of the person being baptized and explained the baptism procedure (what to wear, where to change, the order of those being baptized). The baptism itself was simple and included a brief explanation of our church’s view of baptism, a short question confirming the faith of the person being

baptized, and then the immersion of the individual to complete the process. As the person came up out of the water our congregation sang, "Where He Leads Me, I Will Follow."

During the time I spent in this church (and this was a great church!), from as early as I can remember to the time I went to Bible Institute, I do not remember ever being personally asked about baptism, one of the key parts of the "Great Commission." Although I had trusted in Christ as a young child, and reconfirmed that decision several times as I approached adulthood, the subject of baptism was mentioned only when a baptismal service was approaching on the calendar. But even then it was not a "hard sell." It was an extremely "soft sell," something that eventually needed to be done by every follower of Christ, but something that certainly could be done later. It was a "nice" thing to do. It was in no way presented as something that should be done shortly following

conversion and that it needed to be done in obedience to Christ.

I attended and graduated from an IFCA-member Bible Institute. During my freshman year I remember a chapel speaker challenging all of us who had not been baptized to take this important step of obedience. So on my first opportunity at my home church, during that first year at Bible Institute, I was finally baptized. I had been a follower of Christ for at least 12 years and maybe as many as 15. But it is interesting to note that, as near as I can remember, this was the only time in my three years at the school that the subject of believer's baptism was ever mentioned. While I clearly remember receiving careful instruction on the baptism of the Spirit, there was essentially no instruction on water baptism, a key part of the Great Commission.

But, like my home church, my education in the Bible Institute emphasized missions and evangelism

(which are, lest anyone think I believe otherwise, also important things to do). The school hosted an annual Missions Conference which featured missionaries from around the world. During this conference, regular classes were cancelled so all students could attend. We also welcomed missionaries to the chapel pulpit on a regular basis. Evangelism, as well, was so important that an entire class was dedicated to it. This class was required for graduation.

*Why, in so many
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of Christ regarding
believer's baptism?*

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I mention all of this, including my church upbringing and college experience, not to denigrate those outstanding experiences in missions and evangelism. I raise the issue only to ask, "Why, in so many of our churches and institutions, is so little attention paid to the direct command of Christ regarding believer's baptism?"

As we evaluate the place of baptism in our churches, I'd like us to remember several things:

1. Christ commanded us to do it (Matthew 28:18-20). While the Lord Jesus commanded many things, baptism was one of only two public activities He specifically told His followers they needed to do (the Lord's Table is the other). In much the same way that the Lord's Table communicates powerful spiritual truths and reminds us of all that Christ has done for us, so does baptism. Dr. Larry E. Dyer, in his book *Water Baptism-The Believer's First Obedience*, says that baptism "is clearly the rite of introduction into discipleship of Jesus." He writes that the act of baptism demonstrates

six things. The first three involve “a pledge from God to the believer”: a pledge of forgiveness of sin, a pledge of identification with Christ, and a pledge of union with Christ. The second three involve “a pledge from the believer to God”: a declaration of our repentance, a public confession of faith in Christ, and a declaration of loyalty to Christ.¹ While all six of these can be seen in baptism, perhaps the most important (from a church-wide perspective) is the public confession of faith. When we have baptisms at my church, we provide the opportunity for each person being baptized to briefly tell their story. What a tremendous encouragement for all who hear! It is also a great reminder that God is still in the business of changing lives.

2. Believer’s baptism was the New Testament practice for those who believed, as an outward expression of faith. This is seen clearly in Acts 2:41, “So then, those who had received his word were baptized...” (NASB). This is why we refer to it as “believer’s baptism.” We see the same thing in Acts 8 and the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. The eunuch was baptized after Philip explained the gospel to him and he believed.

3. Believer’s baptism symbolizes inward cleansing. For this reason, among others, I believe immersion is the preferred method of baptism. I believe it best communicates the

washing away of sin, our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ, and our new life with Him. It most clearly demonstrates the meaning behind the Greek word *baptizo* (“to dip, immerse” as the launderer immersed the article of clothing being dyed). I do believe the case for immersion is stronger than that for other methods.

4. Faith in Jesus Christ saves us, not baptism. Ephesians 2:8-9 tells clearly teaches this (along with numerous other New Testament passages). We need to keep this in mind, especially as we speak with those from other church traditions. We need to be firmly convinced of what baptism is (see above) and what it is not (the means to salvation).

*Who should be
encouraged to be baptized
and at what point do we
say it is required?*

A final issue to be addressed is where to “draw the line.” Who should be encouraged to be baptized and at what point do we say it is required? This is one of the issues we are discussing and debating at my church.

Let me say that it is very easy to discuss the issue in the abstract and

write the requirement on a sheet of paper. But when real people, people who serve side-by-side with you, are involved in the issue, it becomes much more difficult. Here’s the thing: Scripture doesn’t tell us when baptism should happen, only that it should happen after conversion. Different churches “draw the line” at different places and have good reasons for selecting their position. I don’t believe there is a “hard and fast” rule for churches to follow.

I would, however, encourage you to examine the issue of baptism in your church and, if necessary, take those steps to elevate it to the importance Christ places upon it and which it seems to have in the New Testament. Ask these questions: Do those in my church understand the importance of baptism? Are we encouraging those who are not baptized to follow Christ in joyful obedience? Do we have frequent baptismal services and are they held in such a way to show God’s work in lives today?

It is my prayer and desire that we become complete Great Commission followers of Jesus Christ, demonstrating to an unbelieving world that He is still working today.

END NOTE

1. Dyer, Dr. Larry E., *Water Baptism-The Believer’s First Obedience*, Kregel Publications, 2000.

Doug Redford ministers as Director of Development at Mel Trotter Mission in Grand Rapids, MI. A graduate of Grand Rapids School of Bible and Music he also serves as an elder in a church begun by Independent Bible Mission of Michigan.

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Ministry in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska

— Bob Rodgers —



INITIAL CONTACT

In late fall of 2005 I, as the Washington/Alaska Field Director with Northwest Independent Church Extension, received a request from Aleutian Bible Church in Unalaska/Dutch Harbor for direction and help. This came through a contact of our N.I.C.E. missionary pastor and fellow IFCA member in Anchorage, Mike Massey. I scheduled a time to make a trip to Anchorage and then on to Unalaska/Dutch Harbor. Through God's provision we flew to Anchorage, initiating our first physical contact on Alaskan soil. After spending a number of days with the Massey's, we left the bitter cold and our thirteen-year-old son and flew to Dutch Harbor to survey the situation on the island of Unalaska.

EXPLORATION AMIDST ISOLATION

Unalaska is an island about 80 miles long, 800 miles southwest of Anchorage and approximately two-thirds along the Aleutian chain. Set in the heart of the 1,000-mile-long

Aleutian chain, this rugged outpost was a Russian fur trade outpost in the 18th Century. Visitors can hike amid fields of wildflowers, pick wild berries, go mountain biking, climb several peaks, kayak along wilderness coastlines and or take part in fishing the waters of the Bering Sea or Pacific Ocean. This is also halibut country: the world record (459 pounds) was landed here, and the island sponsors a fishing derby every summer with a \$100,000 prize if you catch a new record halibut.

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Unalaska/Dutch Harbor has the history of being a strategic military site for Navy and Army personnel during World War II. It is also the number one fishing port in the world. Many have watched with interest "The Deadliest Catch" television program which initiates out of Dutch Harbor.

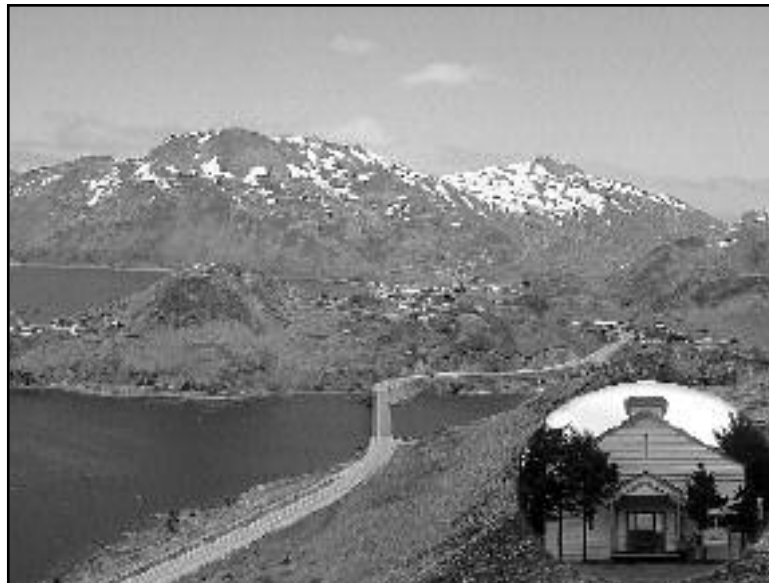
Unalaska claims around 4000 inhabitants with another 1,000 or so during the main fishing season. The economic base is not only centered in the fishing industry with a few canneries, but life is kept moving with schools, medical clinic, library, community center, a few restaurants, a major hotel, machine shops, a couple stores, and a few other entities. Educational opportunities along with community activities help life in the isolation of a small, remote island. Weather on the island is unique since it sits between the Pacific Ocean on one side and the Bering Sea on the other. The temperatures range on average between 25-55 throughout the year with some snow, rain, sunshine and lots of wind. Another aspect of isolation relates to six miles of paved road. There aren't many places to go.

While our four days were short on the island, it was a privilege to spend time discussing the history, needs, apprehensions, desires, and vision of two core families who make up Aleutian Bible Church. Our main concern was whether this was a potential opportunity for N.I.C.E. to invest its time and resources. In many respects this would be a unique church plant outside our usual way of doing things. Ministering alongside our missionary pastor in Anchorage is one thing. But to take on the responsibility of a

church in the Aleutian Chain would take some consideration.

THE NEED

Aleutian Bible Church began in 1999 with 7-8 families participating. Due to families moving off the island and a lack of a pastor, the church disbanded and the remaining families filtered into the only other Evangelical church, a Charismatic work. Many liberal groups make up the religious community of Unalaska: from Mormonism to Bahai, to Roman Catholicism, to liberal Methodists, to Russian Orthodox. The newly restored 19th-century Church of the Holy Ascension, a landmark, onion-domed, Cathedral has an acclaimed collection of religious artifacts and icons. While the two core families making up Aleutian Bible Church had been involved in the Charismatic work, the theological gap grew to an extent that the greater need for doctrinal stability outweighed the pleasures of a large, established worship gathering. As a result they pulled out and began meeting again, developed a Statement of Faith, meeting regularly around the Word and worshipping through devotionals and tapes.



We assured the folks they had a legitimate concern and a desperate need for an independent Bible church.

We assured the folks they had a legitimate concern and a desperate need for an independent Bible church. However, a continual concern involves the extreme flight costs and limited modes of transportation that prohibit the normal routine of frequent visits with on-sight counsel and direction. Praise the Lord for emails that continue to give quick access to the ministry in Unalaska. Another major concern is that of finding a pastor who is willing to minister in an isolated area with limited medical and shopping facilities.

This will take the heart of a “true” missionary pastor and wife who are in decent health. Upon our departure we committed ourselves to continue pursuing further contact and to work toward helping to secure a shepherd for them.

OUTLOOK FOR ALEUTIAN BIBLE CHURCH

Aleutian Bible Church is a unique ministry combining aspects of church planting with an established church setting. They do not want to exist just for Sunday mornings. They are excited about calling a pastor, having regular preaching, Bible studies, Sunday School, an AWANA program and Day Care outreach in community

for kids. The folks would eventually like to purchase their own building for worship and activities, which possibly could include a parsonage.

At this point, they are determining between a short-term Interim Pastor or a permanent Pastor, finalizing the Constitution, waiting on acceptance of membership with IFCA International and developing a Leadership Team until such a time when Elders can be established.

Unalaska/Dutch Harbor, while being in a unique setting, is similar to all other places. They have believers desiring to grow and lost souls needing to hear the gospel. It offers a wonderful challenge and opportunity to help establish a strong, independent min-

istry while at the same time being involved in community life. The family who ministers in this part of God's world may not find this a "piece of cake" but they will be blessed for serving the Body of Christ for God's glory.

PRAYER

On behalf of the families of Aleutian Bible Church, will you commit this unique ministry to the Lord in the following areas; 1) The calling of a mature shepherd to lead the flock, someone not affected by isolation who has good, physical health. 2) Continued strength, patience and encouragement for the church as they wait on the Lord. 3) An ability and boldness for the church to hold fast the truth. 4) God's wisdom in putting together a leadership team in the absence of elders.

Bob Rodgers gives leadership through Northwest Independent Church Extension as the Washington and Alaska Field Director. He gives guidance in the planting and assisting of Bible believing churches in growth and development.

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Prepare Ye the Way!

— Byron Paulus —



I wonder what people must have thought when news first began to filter out about the rising new star. Virtually overnight, he had emerged out of nowhere to become the hottest young communicator in the entire region. A rough outdoorsman with a forthright message, this unorthodox, unrefined maverick refused to let anybody pull his strings. In fact, he seemed utterly oblivious to cultural expectations and norms, and was apparently unconcerned about the effect that his eccentric “image” might have on his ratings.

Yet, though both his lifestyle and his message seemed to run counter-clockwise, people went out of their way to hear him speak. And though his words cut across the grain of their established ways, many of his hearers embraced the costly message, for, unlike the dribble they had become accustomed to hearing from their acknowledged leaders, this man’s words had a ring of truth about them.

The fourth gospel account introduces this first century preacher in a simple, yet profound way: “*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John*” (John 1:6).

In recent years I have found myself drawn to this man, his mission and his

message. His profile is so different than that of most men you and I know, and yet, if we are to experience a visitation of the Lord Jesus among His people in our day, I believe we need to hear from such men today.

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HIS MILIEU

Luke’s gospel provides an impressive list of dignitaries whose names were household words in the early part of the first century-- the list includes an emperor, a governor, three tetrarchs, and two high priests. From a human vantage point, these men wielded the supreme power and influence in the Roman and Jewish worlds. But when God wanted to send notice that He had come to earth, He did not call a press conference in one of the political or religious capitals. He did not advertise in the cultural or economic centers of the world.

In a dramatic display of sovereignty and divine wisdom, He bypassed all the glitz and glamour of the world’s systems and singled out an obscure

man who had spent over a decade out in the desert, off the beaten path, seeking nothing more than to know God. As the Scripture records, “The word of God came,” not to Tiberius Caesar or Pontius Pilate, not to Herod, Philip, Lysanias, Annas, or Caiaphas, but “unto John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness” (Luke 3:2).

Far away from the din and frenetic activity of the more heavily populated areas, in the desolate wasteland of the Judean wilderness, God found a man whose ears and heart were tuned to heaven. It was to this man that God revealed His plan to redeem mankind. This is the man God selected to be a forerunner of the Savior, to prepare the way for His physical ministry on earth.

HIS MOLDING

What kind of man did God choose for this vital ministry? We know, first of all, that John the Baptist had spent years in relative isolation, in preparation for being thrust by God into public ministry. Luke summarizes those years in this way: “And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel” (Luke 1:80).

It is not generally in the crowded byways, but in the solitary places that God makes and fits men to fulfill His purposes in their generation. Those lonely places provide an ideal setting in which to learn to listen to God and to discern His voice, to become mighty in spirit, rather than dominated by the demands of the flesh, to become driven to seek God’s favor

rather than men's applause, and to gain heaven's perspective on the condition of our world.

But how many servants of God are content to live alone in the "wilder-ness" until God says it is time for them to embark on their public ministry? "Success" by today's standards often hinges on the school you attended, the degrees you have earned, the contacts you have made, who has heard you preach, the conferences you attend, and how effectively you can network with leaders more prominent than yourself.

John the Baptist did not look to men to validate or promote his ministry. He did not create a platform for himself. He did not build his ministry. He didn't have to, for he was God's man and it was God's ministry. He waited in solitude until it was God's time to thrust him out, and until he had clearly heard the message that God wanted to speak through him. Then, at the appropriate time, his message was attended with the power of God and, like a well-shot arrow, found its mark in the hearts of all who heard.

HIS MODERATION

The Scripture reveals something further about the kind of man God chose to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus to earth. We see that John's lifestyle was a temperate one, not only in where he chose to live, but also in his choice of food and clothing. His clothing was the usual dress of prophets, and his diet was one common to the poor. John refused to be self-indulgent, choosing rather to exercise restraint and moderation.

The three issues that consume the minds of most Western Christians--what we eat, what we wear, and where we live--meant nothing to this man who was consumed with the issues of eternity. In this day of malls, super-marts, mail order catalogues, e-commerce, and restaurants on every corner, it is not easy to maintain a lifestyle of fervent, unfettered devotion to the things of God.

I do not mean to imply that God intends for all of His servants to subsist at the poverty level. But, where are the

men who refuse to become entangled in the "cares and riches and pleasures of this life"? Where are the men who are willing to "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ" and who "esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures" of this world? Where are the men who care for nothing but the Kingdom of God and the souls of men? These are the men who will most likely be used by God to prepare the way for a visitation of His Son, Jesus.

*King Jesus was
coming to earth. Advance
preparations must
be made.*

HIS MISSION

Many issues were begging to be addressed in John's day. The tyranny of Rome, slavery, crime, prison reform, infanticide, religious repression, civil rights violations--these were all matters to which he might have devoted his efforts. But John did not allow himself to become distracted from the mission for which God had placed him here on earth.

His mission was clearly defined--to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. John would have been familiar with the ancient oriental custom of sending workmen ahead of a traveling monarch to clear away debris and smooth out the roads so that his journey would not be impeded. King Jesus was coming to earth. Advance preparations must be made. A highway must be prepared in the hearts of men.

How easy it is to become diluted in our efforts to serve Christ--to lose sight of our mandate from God and to become caught up in a myriad of lesser callings. The man that God uses as an instrument of revival is a man who knows his mission and cannot be diverted from it.

HIS MESSAGE

For some 400 years, God's people had been without any word from heav-

en. Their religion had become nothing more than an empty, lifeless form, devoid of any reality or power. It wasn't that other religious leaders didn't have anything to say; the problem was that they did not have a message from God.

John did not get his message by reading commentaries, listening to sermon tapes, or sitting under brilliant seminary professors. He didn't conduct market research to determine the "felt needs" of the people in his vicinity, nor did he consult opinion polls to find out what topics would be of interest to his constituents.

The Scripture is clear that the message which John the Baptist delivered was one that he had received from God. The message that God gave to John the Baptist was the most desperately needed message of his hour. It is also the most desperately needed message of our hour. It was a two-pronged message of repentance and a call for the hearts of the fathers to be turned toward their children (Luke 1:17).

There is no indication that John in any way soft-peddled his message or adapted it so as not to offend the sensitivities of his hearers. The only thing he modified was the application of his message to different segments of his audience--whether "prospective donors," government officials, religious hypocrites, or outright scoundrels.

If we are to experience the visitation of Jesus in revival in our day, we must once again proclaim that same message of repentance. The psalmist reminds us that "righteousness goes before Him and prepares the way for His steps" (Psalm 85:13). This is the message that must precede His visitation in revival.

HIS MINISTRY

Many observations could be made about the ministry of John the Baptist. But three points cannot be overlooked. The first is that his ministry was one of preaching: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching . . ." (Matthew 3:1). We are blessed to have at our disposal today many excellent tools and methods for communicating spiritual truth--drama, power point, music, literature, counseling, teaching, etc. But there is no substitute for the

preaching of Christ and His Word.

A second insight into John's ministry is that he was a voice "crying in the wilderness" (Matthew 3:3). This speaks to me of passion, intensity, and urgency. I believe our churches and our world have been lulled to sleep by preachers who may be articulate communicators, but who lack this sense of holy passion.

John's ministry was a bold, courageous one. He feared no one and nothing but God Himself.

Finally, John's ministry was a bold, courageous one. He feared no one and nothing but God Himself, for he had not been sent by man, but by God, and he was accountable, not to men, but to God. As a result of his unflinching, unwavering commitment to proclaim the truth, he ultimately laid down his life. But the flame of his life and ministry has never been able to be extinguished.

Oh, that God might raise up in our day a generation of preachers who would boldly, uncompromisingly proclaim the message of repentance, thus preparing the way for God to visit His people in revival.

HIS MOTIVATION

Perhaps the supreme test of John's ministry came one day when some of his disciples came to him to report that multitudes of people were going to Jesus to be baptized. These well-intentioned men were concerned that John's popularity might wane in the face of such "competition."

John never showed himself to be a truer servant of God than when he expressed his delight that all were being drawn to Jesus, and insisted, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Here is revealed the deepest heart motivation of the man God chooses and uses to be an instrument of revival--he is free from any subtle, secret desire for recognition or advancement, and is driven only by a stubborn, untainted longing for Jesus to be exalted.

When, in the fullness of time, God determined to send His Son to earth, He first sent a man to prepare the way, turning the hearts of the people to the Lord. Could it be that before God will send the manifest presence of His Son to visit us in revival, He intends first to raise up men who will go before the Lord in the spirit of John the Baptist, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord?

These men will not necessarily be found in the big cities or the megaministries--they may be found in the most unlikely places. One thing is certain--they will be men who have met

with God, men with a message from God, and men who are willing to pay any price to fulfill God's purposes in our generation.

My prayer is that God will make me such a man--a man consumed with God and usable as an instrument of revival in our day.

Byron Paulus serves as Executive Director of Life Action Ministries, based in Buchanan, MI. For more than three decades, Life Action has worked with churches to help bring about revival. Life Action's newest local-church ministry --"THIRST"-- is a four-day revival conference, challenging believers to change how they respond to life when they find a fresh thirst for God. For more information about "THIRST," call toll-free 1-800-321-1538 or visit www.LifeAction.org. (See the ad on page 26.)

Piedmont Baptist College

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The Amish Schoolhouse Shooting

The following account of Police Chaplaincy ministry with the Pennsylvania State Police is by IFCA Police Chaplain Grover Devault, retired Army IFCA International Chaplain.

OCTOBER 2, 2006

It was early Monday morning that the phone began to ring off the hook. First came a call from a Lieutenant with the Pennsylvania State Police, then another from another station (Emerville, in Chester County), then another (Avondale PA), and finally Headquarters, at “J” Troop station in Lancaster. “Come as quickly as you can” was the urgent cry. “We need you!”

As soon as I arrived at Headquarters a Lieutenant put me in his patrol car and sped to the Amish Schoolhouse in Bart Township where I saw that horrible scene just about 45 minutes after the shooting took place. Helicopters were landing and taking off with girls who were wounded. Several who were dead at the school remained on the ground or in the one room school. Dear little Amish girls. The team of State Police was gathering together and the Commissioner had just arrived via helicopter. Our men and women performed professionally and personally.

First I addressed, individually, those troopers who had blood on them and who had lifted the girls out of the classroom and one trooper who had cut his hand breaking into the windows to get at the gunman who had stormed the classroom. He was discovered lying dead on the floor having shot himself. Our SERT

(or SWAT as some call it) had rushed the building when communications had failed. They had to break the windows because the doors were barred.

I saw that horrible scene just about 45 minutes after the shooting took place.

After attending the troopers I spoke with the Amish Bishop and his two helpers (at their request). They sat on the ground on a little incline near the fence of the schoolhouse. They were quite shocked and needed some comfort. I asked how I could help them and they asked to be allowed to go to the farmhouse, about 3/4 miles away to be with the families of the children. A trooper provided a patrol car to take me along with them to the farmhouse where the owner invited us in to speak with the teacher, Miss Emma Zook. I needed to get the police the names of the girls. She provided me the names of Marian Fisher 7, (now dead), Esther King 7, (hospital), Anna Mae Stolsfoze 12, (dead), Barbie Fisher (hospital), Emma Fisher (hospital), Mary Liz Miller 8, (now dead), Rachel Ann Stolsfoze (hospital), Sarah Ann Stolsfoze (hospital), Lena Miller 7, (now dead), Naomi Rose Ebensshade (now dead), and Rosanna King (hospital). That was

the account known at the time. We did not know where each of them were at that time, but our Commissioner offered to send any parents by helicopter to any of the hospitals if they so desired. None took up that offer since vans were waiting to transport them.

I asked the Bishop if he would like me to lead all the parents gathered in the farmhouse in prayer. He said “Yes, and please stand in the middle of the room so all can hear.” I prayed like never before. It was a great contrast since the Bishop followed reading prayers from a PA Dutch worship book.

For the rest of Monday I did debriefings with the troopers and returned the next day to speak with more of the Amish to see how we could best serve them. As a group of several elders gathered, I worked with them to discover their needs and present them to our men.

I thank you all for your prayers for me as I ministered the Gospel to these men and women.

OCTOBER 9, 2006

Today I was again invited to the Amish Schoolhouse in Nickol Mines, PA to speak with the Bishop on behalf the Pennsylvania State Police. I came in the same police patrol car that carried me down there last Monday. I was asked by my superiors to seek out the Bishop and find out if we could do anything more by way of debriefing or counseling to those in need in the Amish community.

What I next witnessed was an amazing act of therapy by the male leaders of

the Amish community. They asked the boys and the parents to return to the schoolhouse (now all cleaned up and put back like it was, except for the broken out windows). The children obediently turned out and sat at their regular desks. The teacher, Miss Emma May Zook also returned. She seems so small and fragile and still in some shock. I spoke with her and reassured her that what she did was God's will in escaping and making that call to the State Police. She looked down and the Bishop said "What you have said was a good thing!" The boys then all gathered in the entrance to the one room school and rang the school bell at just 10:45 A.M. as did all the churches in Lancaster city and county. All members of the community bowed their heads in prayer. It was so moving I had tears in my eyes and my hands shook.

I asked the Bishop if we, the State Police, could do anything further. He asked me how were they to spend the money that was being given to them. We talked of several needs they had. I

informed him that churches like ours were giving them money to meet their needs. Then he asked a most surprising question, "How can we give money to the State Police for all they have done?" I replied, "We are paid by tax payers and do not need your money. But thank you so much for such a kind and generous offer." We had prayer and I returned to Headquarters.

OCTOBER 12, 2006

Yesterday I spent the whole day debriefing the troopers. First the command staff, officers who were at the scene, then troopers who were inside the schoolhouse and yard, and then any others who were in the area at all. We covered many topics that would affect them and their spouses and children in the days ahead. Some told stories of how the events affected them and made many self-disclosures. For some it has been very painful and they needed days off to recover. Holding children dead or dying in their arms is really traumatic. When I arrived on the scene they were

blood-covered and had just placed the little Amish girls in the helicopters. I want to be available for them to talk, or be quiet, but to be God's messenger of mercy, grace, and love for them.

I plan to just spend time with those I have come to know in this special ministry over the past three years at Lancaster, Ephrata, Emerville, and Avondale. We have the very best in law enforcement people. Their professionalism and quality of life speaks for itself. I am honored and most proud to be associated with them. Do continue to pray for them.

Please continue to remember in prayer your chaplains who serve the Lord in many important missionary opportunities. If you want more information on becoming a Police or Fire Chaplain contact Warren Dane, IFCA International Director of Chaplaincy at chaplain@ifca.org.

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Mr. Matthew Allen
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Fellowship News



Indian Hill Bible Church of Ingleside, IL celebrated their 50th Anniversary. Pictured here (L to R) is: Les Lofquist, Pastor Sid Miller, Associate Pastor Danny Diehl and Senior Pastor Mark Abbey.



The Pacific Northwest Regional met in Tacoma, WA at Northwest Baptist Seminary for a three day conference.



Pictured here at one of UIM International's 50th Anniversary Banquets is (L to R): Les Lofquist, Dan Fredericks, UIM Director Emeritus Don Fredericks, Host Pastor John Kaufield, UIM General Director Warren Cheek, and Tom Olson.



Helen Aringdale attended her first IFCA Regional in 1972 in Des Moines, IA and in 1980 she began attending the Annual IFCA Conventions. She has attended 15 conventions and has traveled by bus alone to 10 of them. In October 2006 Helen was awarded the Iowa Outstanding Older Worker Award. She was flown to Washington DC to be honored at the 2006 Experience Works Prime Time Awards program along with the other 51 recipients. Helen was able to share that her longevity in working comes from her faith in the Lord and the wisdom she received from her father. We would like to extend our congratulations to Helen. Pictured here with Helen (on right) is the Lt. Governor of Iowa Sally Pederson (on left).

Pictured here is Brady Farr, the new pastor at Bible Fellowship Church of Olney, IL. He replaces Pastor Larry Duncan who left to help plant the Louisville Launch Jeffersontown (KY) Bible Church.



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At the Korean Bible Mission Anniversary in Valley (Korean) Bible Church, Les Lofquist is pictured with (L to R): Associate Pastor Chi Chung, Pastor Nam-min Cho, Sean Chun, James Lee, and Rae Hyun Kim.

Source of Light Mission

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Pictured here are some of the missionary church planters in Romania. They are part of Partners in Evangelism International (an IFCA member mission). Les Lofquist spoke at their conference in Curtea de Arges, Romania. He was accompanied by IFCA pastors Douglas Lee of Lamont, WA and PIE Board member Richard Wahl of River Grove, IL.

Teach the Word Not the Topics

— Travis Huseby —

IFCA NATIONAL YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE



Preaching the Word and not the topics, was the theme of our most recent Youth workers seminar in the Wisconsin Regional. We held our annual S.O.S. (Sink Or Swim) youth workers seminar and spent the day being encouraged and equipped as youth workers to teach God's word instead of the latest topical fads.

Over the last eight years, I have seen first hand how important it is to focus on expository teaching of God's word instead of trying to speak on topics that seem relevant. As the shepherds of today's youth, we must rise to higher ground and teach our students the Bible or we are failing them, hurting their spiritual growth.

When we teach topics as youth leaders we usually fit Scripture into the topic we are addressing. A steady diet of this leads to shallowness and can easily lead to error. Even when false teaching isn't being done, there is a danger in only teaching on topics. Most teens are graduating today with

an understanding of how their youth pastors/ leaders feel about many issues (even from a Biblical perspective). Yet they do not know for themselves, from the Bible itself, what they believe or why they believe it.

They do not know for themselves, from the Bible itself, what they believe or why they believe it.

When the Bible itself is taught verse by verse, every topic you could ever think of will be addressed. Another awesome result of verse by verse "text teaching" is that you provide an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to illuminate His Word in the hearts of your students. The Holy Spirit has never promised to illuminate my ideas on topics, even when I "stick-on" Bible verses to what I teach. However there are many promises in God's word that the Holy Spirit will illuminate the Bible. So we obviously should be teaching the Bible.

As part of text teaching, it is very important that our teens learn how to study the Bible for themselves, using

tools like concordances and Bible dictionaries. If we can teach students the Bible and how to study it, we are teaching them what they need to know in order to be able to grow for the rest of their Christian lives, instead of feeding them in such a way as to leave them helpless when they go off on their own.

It is very easy to forsake the study necessary for text teaching. But the rewards of your personal study and then seeing the "implanted Word" replace sin in the lives of your students far outweighs the "easy-way out." I trust all of our youth workers and youth Pastors have a desire to see their students grow in their relationship with the Lord. I truly believe that "text teaching" is the way to see this happen.

No matter how tempting it may be or how relevant you think you may be by dealing with topics, please take the time to teach God's word. Let God's living Word (which informs us to know what is right, what isn't right, how to make things right and how to keep them right) cut into the hearts and lives of our teens as we faithfully and simply teach it.

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∞ DEATH OF ∞ HIS SAINTS



RUSSELL ALLAN GABLER

Russell Allan Gabler was born October 19, 1922 to Joseph W. and Caroline Souster Gabler in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He grew up in Elgin, graduating from Elgin High School in 1941. He was born again in Christ at the age of 13. He studied at Moody Bible Institute, graduating from the Pastor's Course in 1945. He became a member of IFCA International in July 1945. He graduate with a BA degree from Wheaton College and attended Fuller Seminary in California, where he received his Bachelor of Divinity degree. He also graduate from the California School of Theology with a Doctorate of Divinity. He was ordained September 30, 1946 at the Elgin Bible Church.

He married Marie Trieber on June 15, 1947. He pastored the Oak Park Christian Church in Savanna, Illinois from 1945-1953, the First Friends Church in Los Angeles, California from 1954-1957, the Central Bible Church in Costa Mesa, California from 1957-1962, then the Carson Bible Church until he retired in 1991. He taught at Biola University, served as a Chaplain with the LA County Sheriff's Department in Carson, California from 1985-2000. He was active in many different Southern California and National Evangelical Organizations, including IFCA International, American Missionary Fellowship's Camp Wynola, The Council on Alcohol Problems, The Hindustan Bible Institute in Madras, India etc.

Russell is survived by his wife, Marie; one daughter, one son, four grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. He is also survived by a sister, a sister-in-law, and a brother-in-law.

He was preceded in death by a son in 2000, a grandson in 1999, a brother in 2003, a sister in 2003 and his parents.



DR. R. GLENN GREENWOOD

R. Glenn Greenwood, 79 went to be with the Lord Sunday evening September 10, 2006 following several months of failing health. He was born in Johnstown, PA on December 10, 1926. He was a graduate of Moody Bible Institute, North Park College, Cedarville University, Central State University and received his doctorate from Trinity Southwest University. Upon graduating from Moody Bible Institute, he served on the pastoral staff of three churches. In 1965 he founded Berea Bible Church where he also served as Pastor Emeritus since retiring in 2002. He was also an educator for 22 years in the Tecumseh Local Schools. He was a founding member of WEEC Radio and was very active in many community endeavors through the Springfield (IL) area. He also authored two published books. Glenn was an international traveler and speaker having visited over 40 countries and all seven continents. He also served his country in the United States Navy during WW II. He joined IFCA International in 1999. He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Marjorie and four children.

JOHN KENNETH (KEN) ADAMS

John Kenneth Adams, Sr., 89, entered into the presence of his Savior on December 17, 2005. He was re-united with his wife, Elva, to whom he was faithfully married for 67 years. She preceded him in March, 2005. He is survived by four children, 13 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren.

Upon graduation from high school, he attended the Coast Guard Academy for one year, then attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia for three years.

Having been saved at an earlier age, he sensed the hand of God leading him to the ministry. He graduated from the Bible Institute of Pennsylvania, now Philadelphia Biblical University, then volunteered to serve during WW II in the Army.

He served as associate pastor of Maranatha Tabernacle in Darby, PA, until the Lord led him to Phoenix. There God used him to start a church in his home in 1960, which became Fellowship Bible Church, where he pastored for twenty-one years. He was a member of IFCA for 58 years.

It is not possible to measure the impact of this man who lived a life dedicated to obedience to God in thought and deed. All who knew him attest to his gentle strength, godly wisdom, and simple integrity. He had an unwavering trust in his Heavenly Father.



IFCA International Sunday

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2007

- To inform our churches about IFCA ministries
- To encourage our mutual interdependence
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Contact CE Chairman Fran Gardner Jr for information about registration

(941) 351-1453 sarasotagardner@hotmail.com

IFCA Youth Convention 2007

JUNE 25- 30, 2007 BAPTIST BIBLE COLLEGE SPRINGFIELD, MO

Theme: "Seek Those Things Which are Above"

SPEAKER: NELSON MILES, PRESIDENT FRONTIER SCHOOL OF THE BIBLE

www.ifcayouth.com

IFCA International Annual 2007 Convention Registration

Marriott Tulsa Southern Hills, Tulsa, Oklahoma
June 25 - 29, 2007

Begins with registration, 1-5 pm, Monday, June 25 • Ends at 12 noon, Friday, June 29

Send form and your payment in full to IFCA, PO Box 810, Grandville, MI 49468-0810

Name _____
(LAST) (FIRST) (TITLE)

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____ Please check if this is your first IFCA Convention that you have attended.

Child Registration Infant-age 12 (Children 13 and older should attend the IFCA Youth Convention or pay the adult registration fee.)

Name _____ Age _____ Name _____ Age _____

Name _____ Age _____ Name _____ Age _____

REGISTRATION & MEALS

Adult Registration Fees

Weekly Registration (5 days)

Number of Adults _____ x \$72 \$ _____
 (after May 31st \$82)

OR

Daily Registration (per day per adult)

Number of Adults _____ x \$26 \$ _____

Child Registration

(infant - age 12) _____ x \$35 \$ _____
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 Children (ages 4-11) _____ x \$59 \$ _____

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Ladies Luncheon Ticket only _____ x \$15 \$ _____

Total Amount Due \$ _____

IMPORTANT NOTE

*You must call 1-866-242-5060 and request the IFCA INTERNATIONAL GROUP RATE to make room reservations for the convention. **This form is for IFCA Convention Registration and Meals only.** Thank you.*

2007 IFCA INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL CONVENTION INFORMATION

LOCATION

Marriott Tulsa Southern Hills
1902 E. 71st Street
Tulsa, OK 74136
Phone 1-866-242-5060 to make reservations,
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Begins with registration, 1-5 pm, Monday, June 25
Ends at 12 noon, Friday, June 29

HOTELS

The Marriott Tulsa Southern Hills is prepared to meet all the room needs of individuals and families attending the 2007 IFCA Adult Convention. Each of their guest rooms is appointed with amenities for your comfort and convenience. Every room features a hair dryer, iron & ironing board, in room coffee maker, internet access and voice mail. Indoor pool, whirlpool, sauna, jogging trail, and fitness center.

The room rate is \$79.00 single or double per night plus tax currently at 13.517%. This group rate will be available Thursday, June 21, 2007 through Saturday, June 30, 2007 based on availability. You will need to call 1-866-242-5060 to book your room and you will need an individual credit card to guarantee the reservation. When calling the 1-866-242-5060 you must request the IFCA INTERNATIONAL GROUP RATE. The hotel is holding a block of rooms for our convention through, May 31, 2007. After that cut-off date, the hotel will release the unreserved rooms for general sales. Plan to make reservations early to avoid the higher rates or the room block being full.

Check-in time is 4:00 pm and check-out time is noon.

MEALS

The package includes four dinners and three lunches inclusive. The Meal Plan begins with dinner on Monday, June 25, and ends with dinner, on Thursday, June 28, 2007. No breakfast provided.

Pricing: Weekly Meal Ticket for those who are guests staying in the hotel, adults \$89.00 and children ages 4 - 12, \$59.00. Children 3 and under, may eat off their parents plate for free.

For those who are not guests staying in the Marriott Tulsa Southern Hills, the weekly meal ticket is adult \$109.00 and children ages 4 - 12, \$69.00

WOMEN CONFERENCE

Our 2007 Conference speakers are: Mary Murphy, Pat Gregory and Marcia Hornok. We will have further information in the March/April VOICE magazine. All women who pre-register will be sent additional information regarding the details of the Women's Conference

CHILD CARE

Details to be available in the March/April 2007 issue of the VOICE Magazine

YOUTH CONVENTION

IFCA Youth Convention 2007
June 25 – 30, 2007 – Baptist Bible College, Springfield, MO
(just 3 hours from the Adult Convention)

Theme: "Seek Those Things Which are Above"
Speaker: Nelson Miles, President of Frontier School of the Bible

We have lowered the price this year to \$250 for Early Bird Registration (Before May 1st) \$265 for Adults (Before May 1st)
Regular Registration by June 1st: \$265 Students, \$285 Adults
After June 1st Registration is: \$280 Students, \$300 Adults

If you are interested in being a counselor, please visit the website www.ifcayouth.com for the required forms, additional information and the registration form. Convention cost for counselors is \$50

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