

JUNE 2024

# HOLDING *the* ROPES

THE CAREY PULPIT

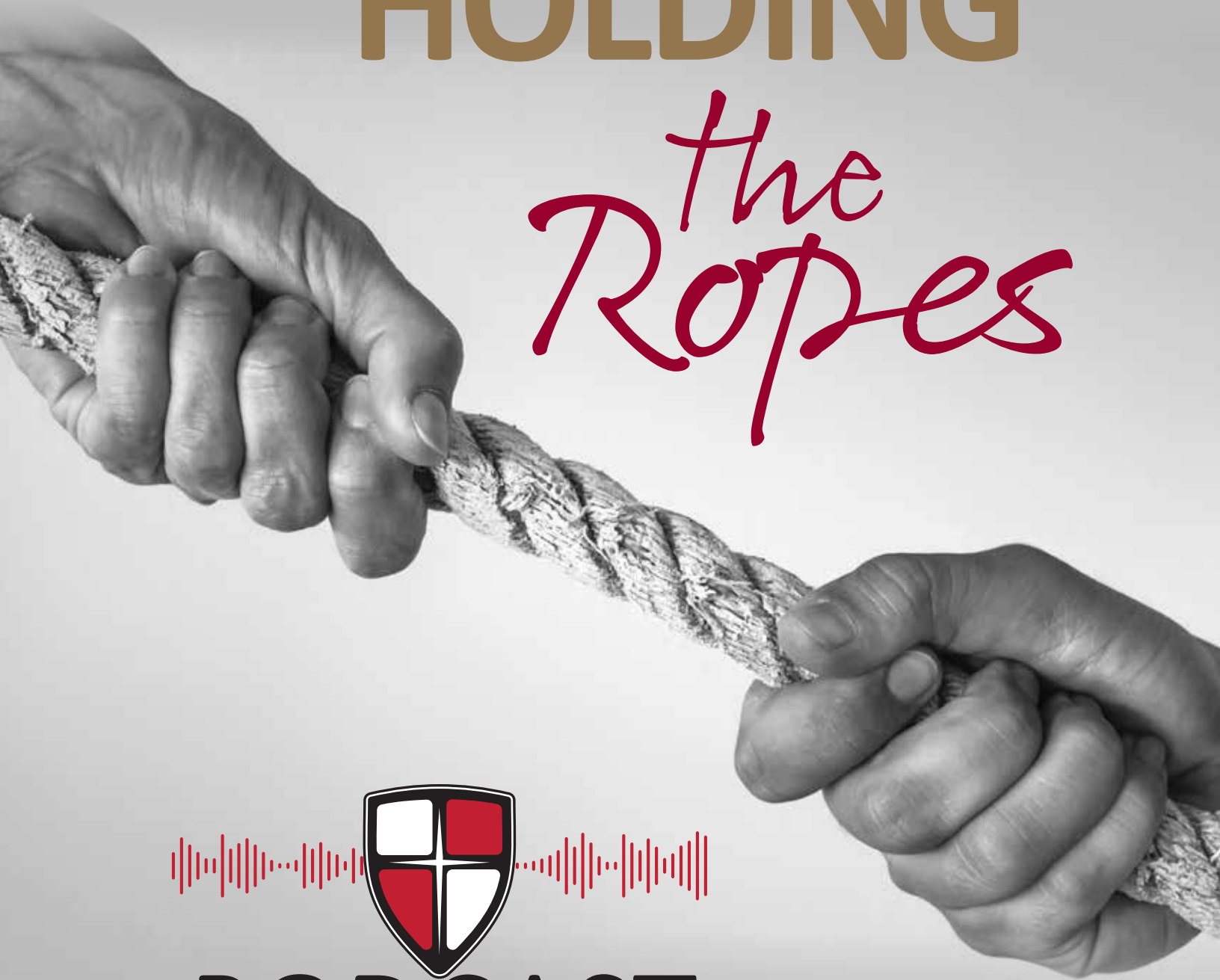
*“I will go down,  
if you will hold  
the rope.”*

-WILLIAM CAREY



# HOLDING

# *the Ropes*



## PODCAST

**LISTEN NOW**





*The historical account recalls a significant conversation between William Carey and Andrew Fuller. As Carey prepared for his challenging journey to India, he turned to Fuller and declared, “I will go down into the pit if you will hold the ropes.” Carey’s words become emblematic of the essential relationship between those who carry the Gospel to distant lands and those who provide unwavering support. Regardless of which end of the rope you hold, remember that we share an unwavering commitment to the mission.*

From this ethos emerges “Holding the Ropes” magazine (formerly, The Carey Pulpit), a source of encouragement for pastors, missionaries, church leaders, and all who labor in ministry.

At William Carey University, our steadfast commitment to the inerrancy and infallibility of God’s Word forms the bedrock of our convictions. We stand on the shoulders of giants like Carey and Fuller, who recognized the vital importance of cooperation. Deeply valuing cooperation with the Southern Baptist community, William Carey University remains resolute in training men and women to grasp the rope, continuing the noble mission of making Jesus known.



*Brett  
Golson*

**DR. BRETT  
GOLSON**

*Many Christians seem disheartened at the darkness in the world today. Everywhere we turn, we are constantly bombarded with evil; however, we must remember Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount: “You are the light of the world.” We were created to live in this moment. We were created to shine the light of God’s goodness and grace into a dark world.*

In the Cooper School of Missions and Ministry Studies, we are passionate about helping students grow in their knowledge of God and their relationship with Him. We are not just raising up future scholars, we are raising up a generation of students who are going to go out and shine the light of Christ in the darkness. Our students take classes in biblical studies, theology, missions, and ministry, not just so that they can pass tests and get a degree but so that they will be equipped to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

One unique way we do this is by not making students choose between a professional or ministry degree. We encourage them to do both! Our ministry and missions degrees easily pair with any other major at William Carey. We have students who are also pursuing majors in education, pre-med, nursing, business, and dozens of other areas of study.

Some of our students plan to go into full-time ministry positions. They feel called to serve the church as a full-time vocation. Many of them choose to study with us because they will receive advanced standing towards an MDiv degree

for the work in the classes they take with us. Others do not plan to go to seminary, so they want a well-rounded foundation which will help them go straight into church work.

Others are planning to serve the Lord in a co-vocational ministry. For example, one of our recent graduates double majored in Christian Studies and mathematics so that he could be a co-vocational youth pastor. He is currently a high school algebra teacher in the high school where most of his youth group go to school.

A growing number of our students are studying with us because they want to be missionaries in their future workplaces. They have no plans to be ministers or vocational missionaries, instead, they want to be equipped to be lights in the workplace. They want to be nurses, teachers, and business professionals who push back the darkness with the gospel of Christ.

We want all of these students to receive a world-class education without having to go into debt. We want our students to say “yes” to whatever Jesus is calling them to do; however, it will be hard for them to do that if they have mounds of school loans. This is why we offer all our students generous ministry scholarships and free textbooks.

We are excited about this generation of students! They are passionate about Christ, His Word, and His mission. They want to change the world for Christ, and we want to help them do it.



For Christ,

*Joseph  
Bird*

**DR. JOSEPH  
BIRD**

## Pastors,

*First, and foremost, let me take this opportunity to thank you for answering God's call to serve in ministry. With a shortage of pastors and a country in dire need to hear the Gospel, your work is more important now than ever before. As a pastor's son and grandson, I well understand the challenges of leading in ministry and the strain it places on you and your family. Because of my experience growing up in that environment, I appreciate what you do even more because I know the sacrifices you and your family make as you serve your congregations.*

Because of our commitment at William Carey University to training and supporting pastors in every aspect of church ministry, I am pleased that we are publishing this very important work which I hope will serve as resource and an inspiration to you in your daily work as a pastor. This collection of articles and sermon outlines, written by Carey faculty and alumni, hopefully will not only be a help and inspiration but also a daily reminder of our commitment to continue the work of our namesake, Dr. William Carey, the Father of Modern Missions.

In addition to our commitment to support you in your work, we are also committed to training the next generation of pastors. The Cooper School of Missions and Ministry Studies attracts and guides students who have been called to the ministry. They are taught by faculty who have decades of experience leading churches. We also have a genuine focus on missions as we send students from across the university to the mission field every year. Our support for those currently serving the mission field with the IMB is evidenced by our commitment to providing a scholarship to all dependents of current IMB missionaries which covers the entire cost of attending William Carey.

Dr. William Carey's mission field was in India as he served for over 30 years there leading many to Christ while facing an untold number of personal hardships. While we do prepare and send students to the mission field abroad, we also feel our first mission field is here on our own campus. With over 5,500 students, including 300 international students from over 55 countries, we do all in our power to share the Gospel right here on campus. With a strong Baptist Student Union and weekly chapel services, which are required of our undergraduate students, we don't hide the fact that we are a Christian university, and not just in name only. Our students must take Old and New Testament and they are taught by faculty who not only teach the truth of the Bible but believe the truth of the Bible. We routinely have students who make professions of faith because of their classes, chapel messages, or music experiences here on our campus.

Our university has nearly doubled in size in just the last decade. We are very excited about our growth and expansion but feel that the days ahead of us will be more challenging than anything we have experienced in our past. As Christian Higher Education is under attack more and more every day, we need your prayers and support as we continue our work in missions and ministry. Being able to lead doctors, teachers, nurses, and countless other professions to their future work through a Christian world view is of utmost importance and is at the core of our mission. We thank you for your support of our university and ask that you join us in our journey to not only continue our past success but to achieve even more in the future.

In the words of Dr. William Carey, we are Expecting Great Things from God and Attempting Great things for God. God bless you in your work.



*President  
Dr. Ben Burnett*

**DR. BEN  
BURNETT,  
PRESIDENT**



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put on the full  
armor of God.

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# WHAT IS TRUTH?

EPHESIANS 6:13-14; JOHN 18:33-38

DR. BENNIE R. CROCKETT, JR.



DR. BENNIE R. CROCKETT, JR.

*For Paul, the Roman soldier's armor became a visual metaphor for living the Christian life against the evil "crouching at the door." We consider this first visual metaphor: "the belt of truth."*

In this list of Christian defenses, "truth" may come first, for without truth, both the Christian life and even reality itself are hollow and meaningless. We rely on "the truth" so much that we constantly refer to it, submit to it, and praise it as "the standard."

**THE LOGIC OF TRUTH.** Since Aristotle<sup>1</sup> three hundred and fifty years before Jesus, people have learned that logical truth may be discovered and affirmed for physical events within time and space as well as for ideas. The truth of an event is something such as "Jesus of Nazareth lived and died in Judea in the first imperial Roman century, which was 2,000 years ago." This statement is not dependent on Christian faith; rather, the verifying evidence for Jesus' historical existence *stands independent of and simultaneously concurs* with religious faith. Truth both corresponds with reality *and* is coherent with other truth statements.

A different kind of truth statement is, "All Golden Retrievers are canines." Such a sentence is necessarily true because the denial of the statement is impossible unless we change the normal meaning of the terms in the sentence.

Both kinds of logical truth find their origin in the LORD God, the Creator and Redeemer, for all truth—in *whatever categorical content*—is His gift to humanity.

**TRUTH AS FOUNDATIONAL.** Truth is the foundation of relational trust for self-identity, family life, marriages, conversations over coffee, registration for a driver's license, banking transactions, submission of tests and research, professional life, and on the list goes. "Truthfulness is not only a convenient and useful quality which helps [people] live together comfortably, it is good in itself; even if it had no obvious useful consequences, truthfulness would be better than untruthfulness."<sup>2</sup>

Without truth as the foundational value, much of our society could and would not function in healthy ways. Denial or suppression of any truth leads to destruction under the scourge

of corrosive and corrupting delusion. And yet, we know that denying truth can be a very uncomfortable experience. Truth often exposes our weaknesses and sins. For such a realization, Plato remarked that we even might tell ourselves a "noble lie"<sup>3</sup> in order to preserve our preferred, selfish, and fake reality.

**TELLING THE TRUTH.** So, "Who can we trust to tell us and live the truth?" How do we determine the truth?

Here is one attempt in courts throughout the world: "Do you swear or affirm, under penalty of perjury, that the testimony you're about to give is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?" Such a statement immediately contrasts the person committed to tell the truth and persons who may perjure themselves with lies. For the liar in court or in daily life, "Lying consists in saying the contrary of what one thinks or believes"<sup>4</sup> or knows to be otherwise.

With lies, we want "an increased sense of power . . . of occupying a superior position. I know the truth, but to get my own way I impose delusions on others, thus triumphing over them . . . by having a monopoly on truth on the matter in question and by altering the world in accordance with my will."<sup>5</sup> Rather, it is better to hear and listen what our Lord Jesus says about the truth and integrity, "Let your yes be yes, and your no, no, and anything beyond this comes from evil."<sup>6</sup>

Following Jesus, early Christians spoke truth by embracing public faith in Jesus against the opposing powers of pagan and political Rome. Such truth telling that the Roman Emperor and the pantheon were immoral and inferior to Jesus Christ could yield a martyr's death by execution. The Christian faith was not delusional; then and now, it always has dealt with empirical reality as it is. If you want to be real in this world, be a Christian! Christians determine to say and to live, "I have decided to follow Jesus."<sup>7</sup>

**THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS** (Ephesians 4:21). Let us shift attention to the text in John 18:33-38, the trial scene Jesus before Pilate. The Roman procurator Pontius Pilate had four questions for Jesus: 1) "Are you the King of the Jews?" – a question with political meaning. 2) "What have you done" (to be handed over)? – "My kingdom . . . is not from the world." 3) "Are you a King?" – [repeat of question 1 revealing Pilate's political worry]. "For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Those of the truth listen to my voice." 4) "What is truth?"

We have known about one fragmentary ancient manuscript of John 18 for one hundred years. This manuscript—the oldest known manuscript of the New Testament—is about the size of the palm of your hand, and is on display in the John Rylands University Library in Manchester, England. This papyrus manuscript from Egypt was written on the front and on the back, and dates between 125 and 175 AD. It was discovered and acquired in Egypt in 1920, and published in 1935.

This manuscript, p52, came from one of two trash heaps of the ancient world: Faiyum or Oxyrhynchus. The manuscript has just a few words on it from this passage of John 18. During the century of skepticism—the *twentieth century*—it is as if the manuscript came to life to answer Pilate’s question “what is truth?” Such an irony! The manuscript recites Pilate’s skepticism. Notice that Jesus did not verbalize an answer to him about that question. Rather, *the Truth was standing in front of Pilate!*

If you want to access the essence of truth, it has to be the awareness of the LORD God in life. Such truth is wherever we are. For Jesus said, “**I am the way, and the truth, and the life.**” He was standing in front of Pilate, and he is standing in front of our contemporary skepticism. Jesus has brought us the truth in himself.

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1011B; *On Interpretation* 1; *Categories* 5 [4a35-39].
  - <sup>2</sup> W. R. Matthews, “The Fate of the Liar,” in *Strangers and Pilgrims: Some Sermons Preached During the War* (London: Nisbet and Co., Ltd., 1945), p. 60.
  - <sup>3</sup> Plato *Republic*, III 414 (cf. 375a 409c).
  - <sup>4</sup> Mortimer J. Adler, “Truth,” *The Great Ideas: A Lexicon of Western Thought* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992), p. 866.
  - <sup>5</sup> Matthews, “The Fate of the Liar,” 61.
  - <sup>6</sup> Matthew 5:37 (my translation). Cf. Psalm 15:1-2: “O Lord, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill? Those who walk blamelessly and do what is right and speak the truth from their heart.” Note וְיִשְׁמְרֵם אֱלֹהִים תְּמִימֵי דַבָּרָם.
  - <sup>7</sup> Garo Christians, “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus,” in *The Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1991), # 305.
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# SPIRITUAL DEFENSE

## *The Breastplate of Righteousness*

EPH. 6:14B (ESV)

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DR. JOSEPH BIRD



DR. JOSEPH  
BIRD

**W**hen my wife and I got married, we were broke. I distinctly remember the financial trials of those early years. If everything went perfectly, we would have about \$20 left over at the end of the month. As you know, we do not live in a perfect world, and things never go perfectly.

One month in particular, we both had doctor’s visits, an unplanned dentist visit, and a couple of other less-than-ideal circumstances. Looking at the bills and our bank account, I quickly realized we didn’t have the money we needed that month. Luckily, I have exceedingly kind and understanding parents. I called them and told them about our situation. They told me not to worry and promised to send help. They sent us a check that paid our bills and gave us extra money to get back on our feet. I am so thankful that I have parents who care for me.

The good news for us is that God the Father is a good Father who cares deeply for us and takes care of us. One of the ways He cares for us is by giving us access to what we need. We are in a spiritual battle, one that we are ill-equipped to win on our own. How can we possibly face Satan, demons, and the incredible darkness that surrounds us? The short answer is—we can't! At least not by ourselves.

Eph. 6:10-20 is an excellent example of how God provides what we cannot provide for ourselves. In this text, God does not tell us to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and get to work being what we could never be on our own. In fact, the text conveys the exact opposite truth.

The text doesn't tell us to strengthen ourselves—it tells us that we have access to God's vast strength. (Eph. 6:10) The text doesn't tell us to put on our armor; instead, the text tells us to take God's own armor. Paul is likely referencing Is. 59:16-17, which reads, "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. He put on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak." (ESV)

Paul pulls from Isaiah's description of Yahweh's armor and shows us that God is providing His own armor to help us defeat the darkness. So, when the text calls us to stand (v. 14), to resist (v. 13), to prepare (v. 13)—it is not calling us to do what we are unable to do. God has provided what we need. However, the text is also clear that while God has generously provided all that we need, we do have a part to play.

The call to put on the breastplate of righteousness is a call to action. Some assert that this text is speaking of Christ's infused righteousness that we receive at conversion, but this is incorrect. We cannot take on and off Christ's imputed righteousness. Instead, this text is a call to practical righteousness.

The text deals with action and personal agency on our part. We do actually need to put the armor on. A sickness exists in the church today that tells people that after they become Christians, they can just go on and do their own thing. They can live life their own way on their own terms. The call in this text to put on the breastplate of righteousness flies in the face of this corrupt teaching.

In this text, Paul is calling us to action. He calls us to push back the forces of darkness through a life that lives in obedience to the Spirit and the Word of God. The type of life that seeks to do God's will in every situation. A life that practically lives out His commandments.

Paul's instruction in this text mirrors our Lord's teaching when He commands us to be salt and light in this dark world. (Matt.

5:13-14) The day-in and day-out of how we live our lives should display the light and love that God has given to us.

While we cannot face spiritual powers and darkness on our own, we have a great defense against them when we put on this practical righteousness of a life lived in obedience to Christ. God has provided us with all the armor we need, but we must put it on.

When my parents sent my wife and me a check to help us with bills, we still needed to deposit it in the bank. Likewise, we must actually put on God's armor in order to face the spiritual darkness. God has saved us and equipped us to push back the great darkness of our day. We need the breastplate of righteousness, and all God's armor, in order to fulfill His calling on our lives.

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*Trying to decide between a  
professional or ministry degree?*

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# THE GOSPEL OF PEACE AND THE WAR WITHIN

EPHESIANS 6:10-20

DR. BRETT GOLSON



DR. BRETT  
GOLSON

*The Apostle Paul issues a comforting exhortation to all believers regarding spiritual warfare. He emphasizes the need for all believers to equip themselves against the unseen forces of evil by donning the spiritual armor of God.*

Among these various pieces of armor, Paul specifically implores us to “shod” our feet with the Gospel of peace. Roman soldiers would affix spikes in their sandals which provided confidence in a firm footing and a strong battle foundation that prevented them from being pushed backwards. So, what is this Gospel of Peace? The Apostle Paul stated, “*For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. How much more then, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. And not only that, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation.*” (Romans 5:6–11, CSB).

The Gospel brings peace! We have peace with God, peace with others, and peace with ourselves. But Satan would have you in

turmoil, conflicted, and at war, especially inwardly. Most of my personal battles have been fought within myself: My feelings, my thoughts, my past, my failures, all battles within. How can we win the battle within? Can we really have peace?

**War typically unfolds on multiple fronts. For instance, during World War II, the European Theatre witnessed battles on both the Western and Eastern fronts, in addition to engagements in the Mediterranean, Middle East, and the Asian-Pacific theatre.**

**The same is true for spiritual warfare. There are various fronts in which we engage in battle. For example, there is the external front that includes a battle of values, ideologies, temptations, persecution, opposition, false teaching, deception, culture, and relationships. Many sermons have addressed these issues. But let us look at the internal front where so many spiritual wars are lost. Let us consider what the Word of God has to say about that struggle and what habits we can form that will cause us to be victorious.**

## **THE MORAL WAR—KNOWING AND DOING WHAT IS RIGHT.**

When Christian and cultural morals collide, believers often find themselves in a turbulent inner struggle. We face a constant challenge to uphold biblical morality in the face of cultural opposition. The culture insists on conformity as they promote individualism, secularism, and materialism. Christians are not exempt from those battles and must grapple with Christian dissonance and fear of rejection. Such a battle produces inward turmoil. Sandals shod with the Gospel of

peace remind me to stand firm and “Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2, CSB). Develop a habit of regularly studying God’s Word to align your moral compass with biblical principles.

### INSECURITY WAR—SELF-ESTEEM, SELF-CONFIDENCE, AND SELF-HATE.

Christians, especially adolescent teens, often develop poor self-esteem and other forms of insecurity. People with self-hate often compare themselves unfavorably with others. Strangely, we usually compare their best qualities with our worst ones. Negative self-talk speaks destruction into our lives. We often listen to ourselves rather than talk to ourselves. Self-hate happens when we possess unrealistic expectations, ignore our strengths, focus on our weaknesses, and allow past abusive events or a traumatic childhood to dictate our future. Sandals shod with the Gospel of peace remind me to stand firm and remember “*For it was you who created my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I will praise you because I have been remarkably and wondrously made. Your works are wondrous, and I know this very well. My bones were not hidden from you when I was made in secret, when I was formed in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw me when I was formless; all my days were written in your book and planned before a single one of them began*” (Psalm 139:13–16, CSB). Replace negative self-talk with God’s promises. Daily remind yourself of your value in God’s sight.

### PAST WAR—WHAT I HAVE DONE!

Learning to forgive oneself can be a life-long struggle. We bare the guilt and shame of our past. Maybe you feel shame for betraying someone’s trust through infidelity. Maybe you have harmed someone physically or emotionally through gossip and bullying. You may carry guilt from years of wasted time because of addiction. Shame can pop its head up when we fail in our commitments, when we are dishonest, or when there is moral failure. Sandals shod with the Gospel of peace remind me to stand firm and remember, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1, CSB). Daily practice self-forgiveness and focus on God’s grace. Learn from mistakes without dwelling on them.

### DECISION-MAKING WAR—WHAT SHOULD I DO?

**Sometimes, our desires are fueled by emotions, even when we’re fully aware that those desires may not be in our best interest.** While feelings are important indicators, they are seldom good decisions makers. Another common defect in making decisions is relying purely on reason. Just because we have rationally thought something through does not mean it is the right thing. Why? Because we do not have access to

all the information. Of course, God expects us to use our reasoning skills. But He has provided a more reliable way for us to make decisions. I once asked, “if God wants us to make good decisions, what has He done to ensure that we can?” As I explored this, I discovered that our decision-making process is fundamentally different as believers. We have the Bible that guides us in truth. We have prayer that guides us in discernment. We have the church that guides us with wise counsel. We have the Holy Spirit that guides us with conviction. Sandals shod with the Gospel of peace remind me to stand firm and remember to “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6, CSB). God wants us to use our logic and allow feelings to inform us, but realize that we have a secret source to make good decisions. Seek God’s guidance through prayer and seek wise counsel when making decisions.

### FEAR WAR—LACKING COURAGE.

Many believers struggle with fear. The top five phobias are: **Arachnophobia**—An intense fear of spiders and other arachnids; **Ophidiophobia**—An intense fear of snakes; **Acrophobia**—An intense fear of heights; **Aerophobia**—An intense fear of flying; **Cynophobia**—An intense fear of dogs. Fear paralyzes us. For those who are afraid of heights, they will never experience what it is like to climb a mountain or jump out of a plane. For many, that is perfectly fine. But unhealthy fear can impact your life choices and hinder you from accomplishing God’s will. Sandals shod with the Gospel of peace remind me to stand firm and remember “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with My righteous right hand (Isa. 41:10, CSB). Also see: **2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 4:18; Psalm 34:4; Joshua 1:9; Proverbs 29:25.** Replace fear with godly courage and confidence. See this issue from God’s perspective:

Remember that internal conflicts are possibly the most common and reoccurring struggles of human experience. *Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil.*

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*Dr. Brett Golson holds the position of Vice President of Strategic Operations at William Carey University. He has been in ministry for 32 years, serving as a full-time pastor, co-vocational pastor, and interim pastor. Dr. Golson has led over 35 mission trips overseas and many more within North America. Dr. Golson is a full professor and has played pivotal roles within the institution. He served as the first chair of the Christian Ministries department, later he served as the Dean of the Cooper School of Missions and Ministries and held the position of Vice President of Church Relations. Additionally, he shares a life with Karen Golson, who serves as the Director of Advancement at WCU. Together, they are blessed with four married children and eleven grandchildren.*

# LIVING WELL

## *The Shield of Faith*

EPHESIANS 6:16

DR. TIM GLAZE



DR. TIM GLAZE

*The University's theme verse, "Therefore put on the full armor of God," from Ephesians 6:11, is the beginning point for our thoughts. I believe that Paul would have us live our lives "well." From the broader context, particular attention will be placed on Verse 16: "In*

*addition to all these (or in every situation), take the Christian faith as your shield. With it, you can put out all the flaming arrows of the evil one."*

Several years ago, I heard an interesting story that is said to have taken place during a National Prayer Breakfast. May I add that I have not "fact-checked" this story, but its point serves our situation well. The National Prayer Breakfast occurs annually and is traditionally held on the first Thursday of February. As I understand it, The Fellowship Foundation organizes the National Prayer Breakfast on behalf of the United States Congress. The highlights of the event are speeches by two keynote guests. One is the U.S. president, while the second speaker's identity remains secret until the day of the event.

On this occasion, the President and the First Lady were speaking. The surprise guest was Mother Teresa from Calcutta, India, who received the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize and many other humanitarian awards. The speeches were in the following

order: the First Lady, Mother Teresa, and then the President. The First Lady stood and was warmly received by the crowd. She delivered her impassioned address and returned to her seat, receiving warm applause from the floor. Then Mother Teresa stood and humbly made her way to the podium. She, too, was warmly welcomed, and the crowd listened as she delivered her carefully crafted remarks. As she concluded her speech, everyone in the room stood and gave her a standing ovation that seemed to last for minutes. She graciously and humbly returned to her seat. Now, the President stood and made his way to the podium. How might the most powerful person in the world top that? In what could have easily been an awkward moment, with introspection and sincerity, he began his speech, "It is hard to argue with a life that is well lived." He caught the moment. He understood. The most powerful to the weakest, the richest to the poorest, the most educated to the least – Will stand to recognize a "life well lived."

### **THE FIRST LESSON. LIVING WELL BEGINS AND ENDS WITH JESUS.**

Let's back up three decades from when Paul penned these words. He stood watching and agreeing with those who stoned Stephen to death, a recent convert to the faith and an advocate for the way of Christ. Then Paul set out to hunt down and arrest all those who claimed to be followers of Jesus of Nazareth, with plans of bringing them back to Jerusalem to be tried and sentenced.

On the road to Damascus, located in southern Syria, something happened to him that would forever change the



direction and purpose of his life! Authorized to travel from town to town, he arrested Christ's followers and brought them back to Jerusalem. That day, Paul encountered the living Jesus. Paul came face to face with the resurrected Jesus! He would learn what God's plan for his life would be. His life would never be the same. Paul was to be God's chosen instrument to take Jesus' name to Gentiles, kings, and Israelites. And God would show him how much he must suffer for His name. Paul would learn the power and the centrality of a living "faith." When faith is matched with truth, righteousness, peace, and salvation, they become God's weapons to fight the enemy. Learn how to apply them. You'll need them throughout your life. Be sure to use God's Word wisely. It is indispensable.

LIVING WELL starts by trusting in Jesus (knowing Him). Like Paul, the journey begins with saving faith and embracing (believing) God's free gift of grace that He offers in Jesus. He truly is the hope of the world.

### THE SECOND LESSON. LIVING WELL REQUIRES THAT YOU KNOW WHO THE ENEMIES ARE.

Some of you may ask, "Come on, this is the 21st century – Do you believe that the Devil and demons are real?" First, I would argue that Jesus believed and was acquainted with them. No doubt, His whole ministry was under attack by Satan. Secondly, there is no other plausible explanation for the darkness and evil that is taking place in the world. I agree with this pastor who said, "... there is an enemy whose names are Satan, the deceiver, and the destroyer, whose sole goal is to convince us to join him in rebellion against God so we can accompany him to hell. So what Paul says to us about the spiritual armor is as relevant to us as it was to them."<sup>1</sup>

The enemy we face is real. Whether his attacks are from within us or from without, it is real. We need a healthy respect and knowledge of our enemy. Paul wrote in verse 12, "Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the Devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens."

As one commentator stated, Satan's forces are POWERFUL. They are WICKED. Power is neutral. How it is used determines if it is EVIL or GOOD. They hate the light. They love lies and falsehoods. They thrive on what is evil and lurk

in the darkness with secret intents. They do not respect your rights. They are utterly wicked and ruthless in pursuing their malicious designs.<sup>2</sup>

They are CUNNING – and deceptive. Only the power of God can defend and deliver us from the might, the evil, and the craft of the Devil.<sup>3</sup>

### THE THIRD LESSON. LIVING WELL REQUIRES RELIANCE ON GOD, WHO IS THE SHIELD OF FAITH.

Billy Gramh illustrated active faith by telling this story. He told the story of a young girl who was flying into a storm. The clouds engulfed her plane, and the wind and rain battered it. She could only rely on her instruments and her training. BUT TO SURVIVE, SHE WOULD HAVE TO TRUST (FAITH) HER INSTRUMENTS. If we are going to survive, we will need to trust/rely on God.

As a shield, our faith holds to the reality that God will protect us, that He will guard and defend us. We have no fear. We are thus able to stand firm. Paul knew that only faith's trust or reliance on God could quench and deflect fiery weapons thrown at us. The makeup of our shield would put their fires out! Our trust brought on by life's experiences helps us know that God has our best in mind.

I invite you to live life well! It begins and ends with Jesus. It is doing life with Him and through Him. You must recognize your enemy. Your success depends on using the shield of faith and all that Satan will hurl at you/us. Allow Him to be the source of your life. Rely on God – He becomes the shield that puts out Satan's fiery attacks on our lives.

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*Dr. Tim Glaze completed his undergraduate studies at Mississippi College, where he received a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. Subsequently, Dr. Glaze attended New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, receiving a Master of Divinity, a Master of Religious Education, and a Doctor of Ministry degree. Glaze joined the Carey family as the Baptist Student Union Director in 1995 and served in that capacity for over twenty-five years before joining the Cooper School of Missions and Ministry Studies faculty as Associate Professor of Religion. He also holds the William Carey Endowed Chair of Missions and enjoys leading mission trips worldwide. Dr. Glaze and his wife Laurie have three grown children, Rebekah, Andrew, and Caroline, and one grandson, Berkley Nelms. Currently, he serves as the pastor of Willow Pointe Church in Lamar County.*

### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Greear, J. D. 2017. "Being Strong in God: Ephesians 6:10–20." In J. D. Greear Sermon Archive, Eph 6:10–20. Durham, NC: The Summit Church.
- <sup>2</sup> Stott, John R. W. 1979. *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*. The Bible Speaks Today. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.

# THE HELMET OF SALVATION

EPHESIANS 6:17

DR. THOMAS MCSWAIN, JR.



DR. THOMAS  
MCSWAIN, JR.

*During his confinement in Rome, Paul wrote this letter and handed it off to his courier, Tychicus. Paul crafts this letter in two parts: doctrine and duty. In chapters one to three, Paul outlines doctrine, and in chapters 3-6, he expounds on the believer's duties. In chapter 2, Paul states the doctrinal position*

*of the believer as being "seated with Christ in heavenly places (2:6). In chapter 4, Paul argues, based on the position of the believer, that he or she should "walk worthy" of their salvation (4:1). Paul presents the position of the believer in the first half of the letter and the resultant practices in the second half. He opens with our position in Christ and closes with our practice in Christ. The believer possesses a seat with Christ but should walk out their salvation daily with what might be described as the givens and the grabs.*

When I arrived at Fort Jackson for basic training, one of the first places I visited was CIF (central issuing facility) to pick up my TA-50. TA-50 is the standard issued gear for soldiers, such as a Load-Bearing Vest, Assault Pack, Ruck Sack, Tactical belt, canteens, poncho, Advanced Combat Helmet, etc.

In similar manner, Paul ordered believers to wear God's (TA-50) armor to withstand the elusive Devil and evil days. In the text's language, Paul organizes the TA-50 "givens" and "grabs." The "givens" may be defined as things the soldier, or the believer, already possesses, like the belt, breastplate, and shoes. But as the battle intensifies, the believer must "grab" items like the shield, helmet, and sword. The difference involves things the believer always wears and things the believer will need to keep ready for when the battle intensifies.

In the widely popular TV show NCIS, Mark Harmon, playing the ornery character of retired gunnery sergeant Gibbs, often walked into the room and aroused his distracted agents with the phrase, "Grab your gear!" The phrase "grab your gear" signaled agents to prepare and secure tools for the upcoming task in the field. Today, through the text, Paul has just entered the room and said to every believer, "Grab your gear!"

The Devil is elusive, and the days are evil, hence the command to wear the helmet of salvation. How is the Devil described? The Devil is old; "the morning stars sang while God created" (Job 38:4-7). The Devil is orthodox; he believes that God exists (James 2:19). The Devil is organized with compelling "arguments" and "strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4). The Apostle Peter reminds believers to "be sober minded, be alert" because our enemy seeks to "devour" us. (1 Pet. 5:8). Indeed, the Devil is elusive, and the days are evil, hence Paul's command to wear the helmet of salvation.

While Paul commands the believer to "put on the entire armor," today we concern ourselves with the "helmet of salvation". How can I stand, you may ask? Notice the *Gift*, the **Gear**, and the *Guarantee* to stand.

## THE GIFT

We stand with the *gift* of what is passed to us. The *gift* is not *procured* by us but *passed* to us.

The sense of the term *take* means to “receive” or accept what is freely passed to us. Is my salvation secure, you ask? Let’s evaluate the *hand* passing me the helmet. The amour belongs to the Lord, and it is He who is handing you the helmet (Isa. 59:17). If Bob Ross handed you a paintbrush and said, “Paint here,” would you be concerned about the color on the bristles? If Ben Carson handed you a scapple and said, “Cut here,” would you question the sharpness of the blade or the precision of the placement? Nor should you question your salvation for it was God who saved you! The helmet of salvation belongs to God (Isa 59:17)! He is gifting it to you. Furthermore, listen to Jesus’ encouragement, “*My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.*” (John 10:27–30).

## THE GEAR

The helmet protects the mind [corrupting heresies or concerns about Heaven]. As mentioned, when I arrived at Fort Jackson for basic training, one of the first places I visited was CIF (central issuing facility) to pick up my TA-50. Among the items received from CIF was the Advanced Combat Helmet. The Advanced Combat Helmet (ACH), made from Kevlar® fibers, was designed to protect against shrapnel or moving objects from afar, from fragmentation or blasts from proximity, and from 9 mm bullet shots or ammunition aimed directly at your head. The helmet of salvation protects you from shrapnel, fragmentation, and point-blank attacks from the enemy. The helmet protects us from thoughts originating from the inside or insecurities or taunts hurled at us from the outside by the enemy.

## THE GUARANTEE

The helmet is a gift from God, gear for protection, and backed by a guarantee. Our helmet provides the guarantee to stand with Peace. The Bible recognizes two types of God-given peace: objective and subjective. In salvation, we enjoy peace [objective] with God positionally (Rom 5:1) and [subjective] with God practically as we are assured of our ultimate salvation (Phil. 4:7). Believers experience peace with God objectively; the war between God and man is over. But we also experience tranquility, a calmness in our spirit resulting from the objective peace with God. This resultant peace is subjective and can be experienced as a feeling. As High Priest, Jesus prays for our protection, and this should give us peace. In John 17:11-15, Jesus prayed twice, “Keep them in your name,” and asked the Father to “keep them from the evil one.”

Because of Jesus’ prayer and sacrifice, the believer possesses “a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept *in Heaven for you*, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

Today, through the text, Paul has just entered the room and said to every believer, “Grab your gear”! With great assurance, we receive that which is passed to us, the helmet of salvation. Grab your gear, you are at war! When operating *in theater*, the arena of battle, the enlisted soldier could be severely reprimanded if he/she moved about without headgear. Believer, you are at war! How dare you walk around without the helmet of assurance God has freely given. “Put on the full armor!” “Take the helmet of salvation!” Grab your gear!

One day, I will turn in my gear, to study war no more. I will no longer need assurance. I will be home. In Heaven, we will appear in robes of glory, not armor. But until then, believer, remember that the Devil is elusive, and the days are evil, so hence the command to wear the helmet of salvation.

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*Thomas McSwain, Jr. has been married to Sonya for 27 years, and they reared four children together while embracing their role to teach and train their children in the way of God. Thomas and Sonya fulfilled this biblical mandate by homeschooling their children. Interestingly, three of the McSwain children enrolled at William Carey University.*

*McSwain earned a Doctor of Education degree in Organizational Leadership with an Emphasis in Christian Ministry and a Master of Arts in Christian Studies with an Emphasis in Pastoral Ministry from Grand Canyon University. He also earned a bachelor’s degree from William Carey University.*

*McSwain presently serves as pastor of Old Hopewell Baptist Church in Collins, Mississippi. Formerly, he has served as senior pastor of two churches: one in Thomasville, North Carolina, and one in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He has served on staff as discipleship pastor, as well.*

*He is author of book, Don’t Fight the Darkness, with foreword by Dr. Fred Luter, former President of the Southern Baptist Convention. McSwain serves as a certified mentor with New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary for one-on-one discipleship. He also partners with First Sweet Pilgrim Association for Sunday School and BTU Congress, serving over 300 students. With Christ’s church as his passion, McSwain serves a licensed trainer for Send Network of the North American Mission Board. He has served as Vice President of Baptist Medical and Dental Missions International (BMDMI) in Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. Additionally, McSwain has served in the U.S. Army in the 82nd Airborne Division, including a tour of duty in Operation Enduring Freedom.*

*McSwain has been invited to preach at William Carey University’s Chapel Services on occasion and he enthusiastically has rejoined the Carey family as an Adjunct Professor of Old and New Testament.*

*Thomas relishes family time, appreciates art, enjoys writing and traveling abroad.*



# THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

EPHESIANS 6:17

WESLEY P. PEDEN



WESLEY P.  
PEDEN

*“Take...the sword of the Spirit – which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17 CSB). The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, exhorts his reader to put on the full, six-piece armor of God. The first five armor pieces are defensive; they protect. The truth-belt protects the waist, and the righteous chest plate protects the torso (Eph 6:14; cf.*

*Isaiah 59:17); the readiness-sandals protect the feet as they carry the good news of peace (Eph 6:15; cf. Isa 52:7); the faith-shield protects the whole soldier from hotly evil arrows (Eph 6:16); and the salvation helmet protects the head (Eph 17; cf. Isa 59:17). The Spirit’s sword, however, is offensive, acting as weapon against the spiritual enemy, the evil one (Eph 6:16).*

Now, Paul clarifies what he means by “the sword of the Spirit” with the appositional relative phrase “which is the word of God.” In other words, the Spirit’s sword that Paul’s readers ought to take up is the “word of God” (*rēma theou*; Eph 6:17). According to the biblical witness, there are three uses of the phrase “word of God” (*rēma theou*), three edges to the Spirit’s sword if you will: (1) in reference to God’s commands (e.g., Exodus 24:3 LXX), (2) in reference to God’s promises (e.g., Isa 38:7 LXX), and (3) in reference to God’s acts (e.g., 1 Samuel 28:18 LXX).

As *God’s commands*, the word of God guides the believer through life as it guided the Israelites in the wilderness. God’s commands are good. Though they limit those following them, the limitations are meant for protection and provision in the life of the obedient. And if God’s commands are the word of God, then his commands line the first edge of the Spirit’s sword. Spiritual battles are fought with the sharp blade of God’s commands. Recalling and obeying the word of God pierces through the evil one’s lies of temptation.

As *God’s promises*, the word of God assures the believer in the midst of the uncertainty and frailty of life. God’s words are true; what he has

said will come to pass. Those promises that were received by faith in the Old Testament we receive through faith in the Messiah. “For every one of God’s promises is ‘Yes’ in [the Son of God]. Therefore through him we also say ‘Amen’ to the glory of God” (2 Corinthians 1:20 CSB). If the word of God is made up of God’s promises, then the Spirit’s sword has a whetted edge that slays the doubts and schemes of the powers of darkness.

As *God’s acts*, the word of God emboldens the believer to walk by faith and not by sight. If he has worked on behalf of his people in the past—through the Exodus of the Israelites and through the ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ for the world—then he will work on behalf of his people in the future when Jesus returns to make everything new (cf. Revelation 21:5). If the word of God is a reference to God’s acts in history, then his acts are etched into the third edge of the Spirit’s triple-edged sword. The spiritual battles are fought not by the acts of believers; they are fought by the acts of God. No, not even a word from a person is necessary, for God’s word is his action. “The LORD will fight for you, and you must be quiet” (Exodus 14:14 CSB).

The spiritual battles, while they assume the form of “flesh and blood,” are “against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens” (Eph 6:12 CSB). The battle must be fought with God’s full armor and the Spirit’s sword. The offensive blows that we make against the darkness at work in the world must leave a mark, one that is characterized by God’s commands, his promises, and his acts. When sin is crouching at the door of every room we enter, we must wield the *commands* of God by walking in faithful obedience to him. When the world and its enticements lure us, we must wield the *promises* of God of a better provision in eternal life. When the enemy seeks to destroy us with temptation and doubt, we must remind him that *God has acted on our behalf* through Jesus Christ, and he will act again. “Glory be to God, we know the end of the war. [...] Let us sharpen our swords to-night, and pray the Holy Spirit to nerve our arms for the conflict. Never battle so important, never crown so glorious. Every man to his post, ye warriors of the cross, and may the Lord tread Satan under your feet shortly!”<sup>1</sup>

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*Wesley P. Peden is an Instructor of Religion at William Carey University. He has earned a Master of Divinity and a Master of Theology from the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where he studies in the New Testament PhD program. Peden also serves First Baptist Church Oloh as the Director of Adult Discipleship and Missions.*

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, *Morning & Evening: Daily Readings* (Albany, OR: Sage, 1996; original editions, 1865, 1868), 673.



# HOLDING

# *The Ropes*

*for International Missionaries and Their TCKs*

PAUL CHITWOOD, IMB PRESIDENT

**FOR NEARLY 180 YEARS, THE INTERNATIONAL MISSION BOARD HAS BEEN SOUTHERN BAPTISTS' AVENUE FOR SENDING MISSIONARIES, FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION BY TAKING THE GOSPEL TO THE NATIONS AROUND THE WORLD. WE THANK GOD THAT WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY IS DIRECTLY CONTRIBUTING TO IMB MISSIONARY PRESENCE. LET ME SHARE HOW THAT CONNECTS.**

Jesus clearly told his followers to go to those who are lost: “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 all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

The first Southern Baptist missionary, Samuel Clopton, followed the call to China in 1845, followed by John Day's obedience to go to Liberia in 1846. They were closely followed by the appointment of a feisty young woman named Charlotte “Lottie” Moon in 1873. Of course, these missions endeavors were preceded by the work of other evangelical missionaries such as William Carey, “the father of modern missions,” in India. Thousands — tens of thousands — have followed in the years since, taking the gospel to the hardest-to-reach people and places on Earth in obedience to the Lord.

Cooperatively, we remain committed to this task in view of the vision of “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with

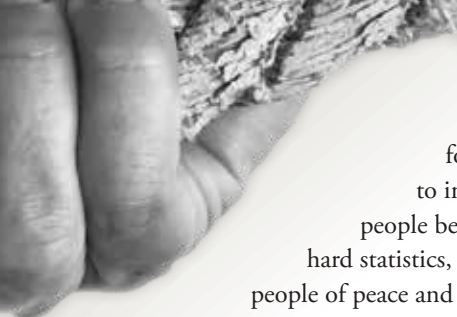
palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” (Revelation 7:9-10).

We believe the Lord has the ultimate victory!

For now, between the Great Commission and this “Great Multitude,” God has provided us an opportunity to be on mission with Him. At the IMB, we call this the “Great Pursuit.” The hard statistics show us that 173,451 people die every day separated from God. With 86,400 seconds in a day, that means that every second, two people are entering a hopeless eternity.

There is so much work to do.

That's why we are pursuing those who have never heard the gospel — we're going to the far-flung cities, to the middle-of-nowheres, to the places where people have given up on religion and even relationships. We're looking



for ways to impact the people behind those hard statistics, to find people of peace and moments of grace, to push toward millions of lives being changed, forever.

In the early 1800s, missionaries were known to pack their personal belongings in crates that were about 80 inches long, 23 inches wide and 12 to 14 inches deep; they were sailing overseas with their caskets in tow, never intending to return to their homeland. The travel was too far, too expensive, too difficult, and the work could not be left behind. Thankfully, advances in travel permit today's missionary families to travel to the far sides of the Earth with much more ease and frequency. Technology allows grandparents, siblings, and church supporters to have video chats with their family and friends around the world. Even the most remote places can be reached by a satellite phone in desperate times. And work cadence allows missionaries a brief respite back in the U.S. every few years.

But the commitment to go to the nations is no less of a life impact than it has been through the past dozens of decades. As families put the "American dream" on a shelf, at least for a season, they are committing to learning a new culture, and often, a new language. If they have children, they're committing to a new way of education, often involving international schools, boarding schools, or home schooling. And they know that, one day, their children will grow up and pursue their own calling, whether to return to the mission field or to pursue other opportunities the Lord places before them.

For missionary families, that season of life often involves sending their child back overseas to the United States, which has become like a new culture to that young adult. These "Third Culture Kids" (or TCKs) are navigating the same challenges as other college-aged students, with the added pressure of knowing Mom and Dad are more than a few miles away. For the parents, the stress of

separation can be compounded with the costs of covering a university education. Let's face it: while IMB is forever grateful that Southern Baptists take good care of our missionary families, these ministers are not over-paid and have lived in faith for their provisions.

That's where the generosity of William Carey University directly impacts our missionaries. And we at the IMB are sincerely grateful.

William Carey University has demonstrated its dedication to supporting IMB's TCKs by providing scholarships for full tuition, housing, meal plans, and textbooks. This commitment ensures that missionary families can benefit from a quality education without financial burden. Any parent can attest to the stress relief of knowing their child is well cared for: that they are safe, well-fed, and well-educated. This gift of scholarship from William Carey University allows these TCKs' parents the opportunity to focus on their gospel mission.

The Allinder family is one example of how William Carey University directly impacted a family's ability to remain on mission in Asia and the Pacific Rim. Tom Allinder, who serves as IMB's senior director of global logistics services, told me that William Carey was an important part of his family's success during a difficult time. He said:

"Thanks to William Carey's generosity and dedication to missions, our daughter received an excellent education in a secure, welcoming, and, most importantly, Christian environment. This holds significant importance for us as missionaries, as entrusting our children to college away from us poses a considerable concern. Having the assurance that our Third Culture Kids are thriving in such a supportive atmosphere grants missionaries the confidence and peace of mind needed to remain steadfast in spreading the Gospel worldwide."

Tom's daughter, Caitlin, echoed her appreciation for the generosity of WCU.

"I speak for myself and other TCKs when I say attending William Carey was a huge blessing," she said. "Going to

college surrounded by other like-minded students and professors who poured into us was a rare experience. It also allowed me to rekindle childhood friendships I had growing up on the [mission] field that have now blossomed into life-long friendships. Thank you, William Carey, for your generous scholarship and to those who poured into the TCKs during our college experience."

Just as TCKs have served as missionaries alongside their parents, we would love to see them and their William Carey classmates consider future service. If God calls them to missionary service, we have options all over the world for these students. IMB NextGen opportunities include packaged trips, summer options, and ways to serve for months at a time. All of these options help prepare the next generation of missionaries, and we believe those TCKs play a strategic role in addressing the world's greatest problem.

Thank you, William Carey University, for holding the ropes for these missionaries, their kids, and future generations of missionaries.



**PAUL  
CHITWOOD**

*Paul Chitwood was elected president of the IMB in November 2018. He previously had served as executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention since 2011. For 18 years prior to that, Chitwood served as the pastor of local churches of varying*

*sizes in Kentucky. During his pastorates, he served as chairman of the International Mission Board's trustees from 2008-10, part of his tenure as an IMB trustee from 2002-10. A native of Jellico, Tenn., Chitwood is a 1992 graduate of Cumberland College and earned the Master of Divinity and Ph.D. from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and a master's degree in nonprofit administration from the Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame. He served as a faculty member of the seminary between 2002 and 2018.*

<https://www.imb.org/leadership/>





# ANGOLA

## *Mission Trip*

SARAH REYNOLDS, DPT STUDENT

**IN MAY 2023, WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY VISITED LUANDA, ANGOLA, TO PROVIDE PHYSICAL THERAPY SERVICES, NURSING CARE, AND MINISTRY TO LOCALS IN THE AREA. THE MISSION TRIP WAS COORDINATED WITH THE INTERNATIONAL MISSION BOARD OF SOUTHERN BAPTISTS. OUR GROUP INCLUDED TWO PHYSICAL THERAPY FACULTY, TWO STUDENTS, AND ONE NURSING STUDENT.**

Luanda is the capital city of Angola. It is the largest city in the country, with a population of almost 2.6 million. The city grew dramatically during Angola's civil war (1975-2002) as refugees fled from warfare in rural areas. This influx of residents overwhelmed the city, finding it difficult to maintain clean and accessible water, proper sewage and trash collection, and roadways.

These conditions were quickly seen as we left the airport and the scenery changed immediately as we left the city center with skyscrapers, shops, and restaurants. On the drive to the hotel, the relatively large expressway boasted up to five lanes in each direction. Beyond

the sidewalk, you could see entrances to neighborhoods. At these entrances would be crowds of people, packed in like sardines. With a closer look, we noticed that most people's shoes were worn, women were selling everything from homemade bread to individual toiletry items, and many houses lacked doors or windows. Roofs were patched together with whatever materials seemed available, and the floors were dirt. We were in a different world.

We spent five days on the ground helping in a local clinic. The clinic provided health services in dentistry, an ER (although we would consider it an after-hours clinic), lab work, a

pharmacy, and a few inpatient beds. To help the clinic, we instructed a CPR class for approximately twenty medical staff from area clinics. Adult and infant CPR mannikin donations were arranged through Global Health Strategy of the IMB, and these were used during the CPR class. The CPR manikins remained at the local clinic for future courses and continued educational opportunities for the area.

Over the five days, we were able to treat around 150 patients. Physical therapy evaluations and treatments allowed locals to be heard and seen in an area with limited medical services and availability. Patients had a wide variety of ailments, including orthopedic and neurological impairments, and patients included men, women, and children. The nurse in attendance was able to serve in their emergency department, providing services to patients and teaching and coaching the medical staff on safety concerns and proper safety techniques.

Many patients who visited the clinic walked up to 2-3 miles, sometimes more,

to be seen. They waited patiently in the makeshift waiting room. Once they were called and seen, they were always so happy and grateful. The team asked if they could pray for them at the end of each patient visit. Everyone said yes, and while they did not understand our English, the patients were enthusiastic about the opportunity. After the prayer was done, they always raised their heads with smiles on their faces. You could feel the warmth of God's presence around us.

Between clinic hours, we were able to visit a few sites around town. The local missionaries took us to places with 'food like home.' One place was a burger joint in the mall in the city center. Upon closer inspection during our drive over, we found the skyscrapers primarily unfinished. (All of the pictures of Luanda on my previous Google searches were wrong – go figure!) I say that to say this. All too often, our or others' façades drastically differ from what is inside. Many pretty buildings are unfinished in the largest city that lacks the infrastructure to support its growing



*Patient from clinic.*

population. It starts from the inside with God's love.

In the vast city of Luanda sits a church hidden away down a back alley with beautiful blue and white tile at its entry. Inside is a sanctuary filled with music from three different choirs, and upstairs is the children's area, packed to the brim with bright eyes and open hearts. This church cares for its people. They help each other out in times of need and rejoice in each other's successes. At first glance, Luanda may seem like a bright, bustling city, but it can be desolate and bare upon inspection. There is hope—a bright, cheerful, strong hope fortified by God's love. This church is small in size for the city, but big in heart.

I hope our work helped spread the word of God's love and helped people within the community take that step to reach out and learn more.

As someone who had never done a mission trip, I was initially nervous. I don't find myself good at 'praying out loud,' and I am sure the first was completely botched. (I am glad they spoke Portuguese and not English!) What I found, though, was a passion for helping, leading a life that God would be proud of, and understanding more of the love of God. We go on mission trips to spread the word of God and help others, but sometimes, I bet, it helps us just as much as it helps others.



*Teaching infant CPR.*



# Student Missions *Highlights*



## ▲ SAMANTHA YOUNG

My name is Samantha Young, and I am a junior at William Carey majoring in Chemistry and Intercultural Studies. Currently, I am in the process of discerning where God is calling me after graduation, but I plan to either continue pursuing a career in the sciences or theological education. Uncertainty is never easy, but right now, I know I need to be faithful where I am and trust that God will reveal His plan for me in His perfect timing!

This past summer I had the incredible privilege of traveling to Indonesia for two months as a part of the BSU summer missions program here at Carey. While I was there, my team and I spent our time evangelizing, mobilizing local believers, and working to plant a new church in our area. The amount of lostness around us was unbelievably heartbreaking, but God proved His love to be so much greater!

Too often, I forget the enormity of God, yet in His faithfulness, the Lord took me out of my comfort zone and placed me in the path of those who wanted to know more about Him. In the end, our obedience to Him is the only thing that matters because His love for us is greater than we can ever understand.

Carey missions has given me the opportunity to wrestle with a calling I had never truly considered. To me, the need for missionaries was always apparent, but I had never thought about going long-term until this past summer. The truth that people die every day without ever hearing the name of Jesus wasn't real to me until I stepped overseas. While I don't know what God is calling me to do with the rest of my life, I do know that my heart can't be unbroken for the lost. Only God knows what my future holds, but He used Carey missions to open my eyes to possibilities I had never imagined before.

## ▼ SARAH FUNK

My name is Sarah Funk, and I am a Sophomore at William Carey. I am majoring in Psychology and minoring in Intercultural Studies. After I graduate, I will potentially pursue a master's in counseling. I plan to go overseas





long-term and serve on the mission field, sharing the gospel with unreached people groups.

This past summer, I had the privilege of serving on a mission trip in Thailand, building relationships with university students. Each day, I was pushed out of my comfort zone and challenged to share the gospel with people we met at every opportunity. While it was intimidating at first, it brought me so much joy! I could clearly see how the Lord answered our prayers in specific ways throughout our time there. Through this experience, I now feel the heaviness of lostness to an even greater measure, and an urgency of reaching the billions who have never heard the name of Jesus.

#### **AIDAN ALBRITTON** ►

My name is Aidan Albritton, and I am a junior at William Carey University. While I study Marketing and Management, with a minor in Speech Communications, I am taking on opportunities to explore a career in marketing or advertising. I have no primary career goals, yet I know I want to be available, in both areas.

I served this past summer in New York City, and it was an incredibly stretching experience. This was my first time living for an extensive amount of time outside of Mississippi. Being engrossed in a culture and environment that was very different from the one I grew up in was very enlightening. No culture or place is better than the other, they are simply different. I got to meet people from many other parts of the world, whether it was Bangladesh, Ecuador, etc.! In summary, going to New York and participating in Carey missions gave me the opportunities to go to a new place and gain meaningful, educational experiences with people of other lifestyles and cultures. I highly recommend everyone to take a chance to participate in short term missions.



# Women

## IN MINISTRY



### ▲ REBEKAH CLARK

I grew up in a church that was passionate about missions. For most of my life, my father has been my pastor, and he and my mother have always placed an emphasis on the importance of international missions. We would have missionaries speak to

our congregation on a regular basis. I can vividly remember hearing the stories they would tell and being so enthralled and challenged by their words. While other children wanted to grow up to be doctors, lawyers, teachers, and astronauts, I wanted to grow up and be like those missionaries. They were my heroes. When I was around 12 years

old, I felt God calling me to missions. I assumed that I would have to wait until I was older to go to the mission field. What I didn't realize was my parents had been feeling God calling our family overseas and they had prayed for confirmation of that calling through me.

My family served in Bucharest, Romania with the International Mission Board. This was one of the greatest experiences of my life. I traveled throughout the country with my parents, assisting in their ministry, but they also encouraged me to have a ministry of my own. The Lord opened the door for me to serve with a non-profit organization that ministered to abandoned children in hospitals throughout the city. At 14 years old, I would leave school early once a week and take a taxi to the other side of the city where I served with the nursing staff that cared for these children. On average, we would have 60-70 children from birth to 3 years old with only me and 2 nurses to care for them. From day one, my heart was broken, not only for those children, but also for the nurses who labored and served them day in and day out. God was faithful, even during this difficult season. He gave me the strength and passion to continue working with these children even when my heart was so broken.

For my high-school graduation my parents gave me a study Bible and a



suitcase and told me these would be two of the most important things in this next season of my life. They also bought me a plane ticket to Honduras to spend a month in a rural village with some family friends who were missionaries there. It turned out to be one of the best summers of my life. I spent my time tarantula hunting, eating great food, and learning more about cross-cultural personal evangelism. My time in Honduras solidified my passion for missions.

During my time as a student at William Carey, I was fortunate to be able to travel home during breaks to visit my parents in Romania and continue serving alongside them. This was instrumental in my spiritual life because it was hands-on discipleship in missions. As my passion was growing, I was able to observe my parents as well as participate in the ongoing work of career missionaries. My time going back and forth to Romania served as the catalyst for my desire to be a Journeyman.

In my senior year of university, I was required to take Senior Seminar. This class was designed to be a research class with the topic chosen by the student. After some discussion with my professor, I settled on “Women’s Involvement in the Modern Missions Movement.” I learned a great deal during my research and writing, but as is often the case, I didn’t give it much thought after graduation. A year later, I stepped off a plane in Seville, Spain to serve as a Journeyman with the IMB. It hit me that I was now one of those women that I had spent so much time researching. I was now one of those women who was playing a part in the kingdom and in the modern missions movement. The weight of that privilege was, and still is, heavy in my heart. I am still in awe of God and his faithfulness to put each piece of my life puzzle in exactly the right place at exactly the right time.

For example, I was required to take Spanish for my undergraduate degree program. As most college students do, I chose the class that was offered later

in the morning instead of the first class of the day. The professor for this class taught Castilian Spanish. At the time I thought this was to my disadvantage, but the Lord was working in my life. Even though I wasn’t thinking about Journeyman at the time, he already knew I would need Castilian Spanish and worked it out in my favor.

I loved my time as a Journeyman and recommend it to any college student interested in ministry or missions. God was so faithful during those 2 years that it will take me a lifetime to realize all he did. One of the initial ways I realized his faithfulness was in my team. My sister and I are extremely close, and it was very difficult to leave her knowing I wouldn’t see her for two years. It was extra difficult because the month before I left my first niece was born. I knew that when I came back, she would be a toddler and not know who I was. God was faithful and provided abundantly more than I could have asked for. He provided me with incredible teammates, especially in one of the couples I served with. They were about my sister and brother-in-law’s age. They had a daughter that was born just a couple of days before my niece as well as two young sons. It was more nieces and nephews than I was prepared for! The Lord was so good to give me a family that loved me and brought me into their life.

After my time serving with IMB, I served for 7 years as a Girl’s Minister before moving back to Mississippi and coming to work at Carey. In that time, I have been blessed to be able to travel all over the world. I have continued to do mission work and mobilization, and I’ve continued to see the faithfulness of God. From the mountains of Ecuador to the tulip fields of Amsterdam. From the Caribbean to the villages of South Asia. From Norway to Togo, West Africa, and everywhere in between—my heart carries countless stories of how God has been faithful. I can confidently tell you that he is just as faithful to you as he is to me! He is faithful in the big things and in the small things.

Psalm 52:6-9 says, “The righteous shall see and fear, and shall laugh at him, saying, ‘See the man who would not make God his refuge, but trusted in the abundance of his riches and sought refuge in his own destruction!’ But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever. I will thank you forever, because you have done it. I will wait for your name, for it is good, in the presence of the godly.”

We have two places where we can put our trust: in ourselves or in God. When we put our trust in ourselves, we are elevating ourselves to the status of a god. We are making the prideful and arrogant statement that we do not need anyone but ourselves. That we are good enough. We will never be good enough. We will never be enough. We will never find that peace and we will not thrive when we choose to make ourselves our own god. We will come up short every time.

The other option is trusting in the Most-High God, the one who made the universe and everything in it with only his words. The only one who deserves our trust because he has proven himself to be faithful time and time again. The one whose steadfast love and mercy is consistent and will never change. When we trust in him, we will be like the green olive tree that is planted in the house of God. We will be healthy, flourishing, and unshakable!

Know that God is faithfully working in every detail of your life for his glory and your good. The things you are doing now may seem trivial and insignificant, but God is working them out for a purpose. There are no small or trivial things in the Kingdom of God. I fully believe I took art classes in college so I could be a better artist and sell my paintings to support my missionary work. I believe that I took Spanish classes so I could share the gospel with a Spanish girl I bumped into at the Eiffel Tower. God gave me a love for manicures/pedicures so I could go to Southeast Asia and meet about 80 of our single, career IMB



missionaries and give them manicures and pedicures, encourage them, pray for them, and listen to their stories while doing their nails. God gave me a passion for basketball and I have been able to share the gospel internationally through playing basketball and coaching young girls. God gave me an ability to learn languages and I believe that I learned Romanian so that while I volunteered at a halfway house in Spain, I could translate from Romanian to Spanish for a young girl who was caught in human trafficking. He gave me a love for fashion and shopping, which led to the opportunity to travel to West Africa with a non-profit whose platform is fair trade ethical clothing. When I'm in a market in another country I always look for opportunities to tell the shop owners about Jesus. The list goes on and on. God is faithful and he is laying out pieces of your life one story at a time. No piece is insignificant. No piece is more valuable than the other. Each piece is holy. Each piece is useful. Each piece is important to your story and to the kingdom. When you cannot see what the next piece is, do the last thing the Lord told you to do, and he will be faithful to tell you the next thing in its season. God is preparing you for things that you cannot even understand. I pray that you will come to see and understand his faithfulness in this season.

*Rebekah Clark is a graduate of William Carey University where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in History with a minor in Art. After graduation she served for 2 years with the International Mission Board as a Journeyman in Seville, Spain. Rebekah served an additional year with the IMB as a student mobilizer, traveling across the United States recruiting students to serve short term and long term with IMB. She served for 7 years on staff at a church in Arkansas as the Director of Girl's Discipleship before returning to Mississippi where she currently works as the Associate Director of Alumni Engagement at William Carey.*



### ▲ MAEGAN PUTNAM

In the Spring Trimester of my sophomore year at William Carey University, I enrolled in a class called “Women in Ministry.” I did not know what to expect from this class, but as a woman whom God had recently called to ministry, I was intrigued by what the class could teach me. During the ten weeks of reading about and studying the biblical perspective on how and why God created both men and women, I learned what it means to be complementarian.

Complementarianism is the idea that God created men and women equally yet differently to reflect Him in ways the other cannot. Colors provide a great example of this idea, for many colors pair together, or complement each other, in a way that creates something beautiful. Similarly, men and women complement each other in both daily life and ministry to create a more beautiful whole than either can create on their

own.<sup>1</sup> As a result, there are some aspects of ministry for which men are better suited and others for which women are better suited. That does not make either set of roles better or more superior, but instead different, so they bring honor and glory to God in equal yet separate ways.

Through the Women in Ministry class, I also saw more clearly how Scripture portrays complementarianism within the church and the home. Throughout the Bible, women are involved with more than just taking care of the home and their families. While primarily they were caretakers, biblical women were also seen working outside the home (Prv. 31) and being involved in government and politics (Jgs. 4-5, 2 Kgs. 22, Est.). Nevertheless, the Bible contains clear instructions concerning the extent of women's leadership, specifically within the home and the church. Eph. 5:22-24, 1 Pt. 3:1-6, and 1 Tm. 2:11-12 highlight that women must

submit to their husbands and not hold positions of authority over men. Yet they are still invited to join with the church in discipleship, service, and fellowship (Acts 1:13-14, Acts 18:24-26, Rom. 16:1-6, 2 Tm. 1:5, Ti. 2:3-5). One example of this is Priscilla and Aquila, two of Paul's co-workers in ministry. As a married couple, they taught a young believer "the way of God," led a church in their home, and practiced their trade of tent-making (Acts 18:24-26, Rom. 16:3-5, 1 Cor. 16:19, Acts 13:1-3).

Another example is Lois and Eunice, the grandmother and the mother of Timothy, the original recipient of 1 and 2 Tm. Although they are only mentioned once in the Bible, 2 Tm. 1:5 reveals that these two women lived out and taught their faith in God to Timothy, who came to share that same faith, most likely due to their influence. Thirdly, the Apostle Paul called Phoebe a servant or "deaconess" in one of the local churches (Rom. 16:1-2). Her service, along with that of the other women Paul mentions in this passage, illustrates that women were as equally involved with the church as men, just in different ways, which Paul further highlights in other Scriptural passages when he describes the requirements for and roles of pastors and deacons (1 Tm. 3:1-13, Ti. 1:5-9, 1 Pt. 5:1-4).

While these concepts are often easily seen, sometimes they are less easily applied in a modern church setting. Many Southern Baptist churches today have multiple leadership positions, such as senior pastors, deacons, youth ministers, children's ministers, music ministers, and so forth. Many of these positions are open to both men and

women. During the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention, Southern Baptist messengers approved the proposed amendment to the first paragraph of Article 3 in the SBC Constitution, which states "that a cooperating church 'affirms, appoints, or employs only men as any kind of pastor or elder as qualified by Scripture.'"<sup>2</sup> This aligns with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000's statement that "[The church's] two scriptural offices are that of pastor/elder/overseer and deacon. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture."<sup>3</sup> Since the only two scriptural offices are pastors and deacons, where do these other leadership roles come into play? Furthermore, can and should women be in these roles?

Dr. John Leeman with the 9Marks ministry states that anyone who works "in a titled capacity for a church" should meet the qualifications of either a pastor or a deacon as listed in 1 Timothy 3.<sup>4</sup> While Southern Baptists agree that only men can be pastors, they do not add gender stipulations to deacons in their official statements about church offices. Leeman therefore claims that any church position that is not a pastoral role falls under the office of deacon, whether that be ministerial, administrative, or anything else. He adds a "job description" for the office of deacon, which highlights the need for them to be model servants who can attend to needs, organize and mobilize acts of service, preserve unity, and support the ministry of the pastors. Combining this with the biblical examples of women involved in ministry and the church, we can accept that women in leadership positions

under the authority of the pastors are acceptable and even encouraged. While women are not permitted to have authority over men, and thereby not permitted to teach men on their own, the Bible instructs them to teach other women, highlights their roles in raising and teaching children, and demonstrates that they should be active participants in the church's mission and ministry (1 Tm. 2:11-12, Ti. 2:3-5, Prv. 1:8-9, Prv. 6:20, Prv. 31:26, Rom. 16:1-15).

Complementarianism does not restrict women's roles in the church or the home, but rather enables them to live in a manner worthy of Christ and to fulfill the unique role of cheerful submission and partnership with men that God has ordained since Creation (Eph. 5:22-24, Gn. 1:26-31, Gn. 2:15-24). In the church, women can lead under the authority of the pastors. They can teach other women and children and even come alongside their husbands to help disciple younger men. In the home, women can manage their households and raise their children to love and walk in Christ, living in beautiful harmony with their husbands, who should love them as Christ loves His bride, the church (Eph. 5:25-33).

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*Maegan Putnam is the Administrative Assistant for the Cooper School of Missions and Ministry Studies. She graduated from William Carey University in May 2023 with a B.S. degree in Christian Ministry and Psychology and began working at Carey in July 2023. Maegan is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Christian Theology. She lives in Hattiesburg, MS and serves in the children's and the college ministries at Hardy Street Baptist Church, where she has been a member for four years.*

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Roat, Alyssa, "What Are Complementarianism and Egalitarianism? What's the Difference?" *Christianity.com* (July 2019), accessed February 14, 2024, <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-terms/what-are-complementarianism-and-egalitarianism-what-s-the-difference.html>.
- <sup>2</sup> Rob Phillips, "A 2023 Amendment to the BF&M 2000," *The Pathway* (August 10, 2023), <https://mbcpathway.com/2023/08/10/a-2023-amendment-to-the-bfm-2000/>.
- <sup>3</sup> Southern Baptist Convention, *The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message*, SBC.net, <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/>.
- <sup>4</sup> Leeman, Jonathan, "What Job Titles Should Churches Use? Two Simple Rules," 9Marks, September 23, 2022, [https://www.9marks.org/article/what-job-titles-should-churches-use-two-simple-rules/#\\_ftnref2](https://www.9marks.org/article/what-job-titles-should-churches-use-two-simple-rules/#_ftnref2).

# THE STATE, THE SELF, AND SHAME

ROMANS 1:16

BRANDON KNIGHT



BRANDON  
KNIGHT

**DO YOU REMEMBER THE STORY OF PETER'S DENIAL OF JESUS? PETER ANNOUNCES HE WILL NEVER "FALL AWAY" EVEN**

**IF THE WORLD DID. THE TIME COMES AND PETER NOT ONLY DISOWNS JESUS PUBLICLY, BUT HE DOES IT THREE TIMES. THAT THIRD TIME, JESUS MAKES EYE CONTACT AND PETER WEEPS BITTERLY (LK. 22:61). SHAME IS ONE OF THE "FIERY ARROWS" THROWN AT US TODAY THAT WE TEND TO NEGLECT. ITS SUBTLE INFLUENCE WRECKED HIM. WHETHER WE KNOW IT OR NOT, WE TOO ARE BEING TEMPTED TO BE ASHAMED OF JESUS, WHICH BRINGS US TO OUR PASSAGE TODAY.**

The posture of Paul's thesis in Romans is defensive; yet, we never stop and ask why. "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*" (Rom. 1:16, NET)

Let's look at the original context of Paul's writings and "why" he begins this letter declaring that he is not ashamed.

## THE STATE AS THE SOURCE OF HONOR/SHAME

Paul declared that he was unashamed of the gospel because Roman society said he should be ashamed. The Honor/Shame demands of the Roman Empire clashed with the early church because Caesar was the highest patron worthy of all honor. Therefore, Paul's declaration means that his hope in Christ, not Caesar, will be vindicated at the end of time.

In *Romans*, Paul is writing to a predominantly Gentile area living in a polytheistic culture that interlaced good citizenship with religious worship. In essence, the Empire defined for them what was "honorable" and what was "shameful," meaning that

it was shameful to reject the religious polytheism of the Roman Empire.

In fact, Christians were the first atheists. Rebecca Denova, a professor of Early Christianity, argues that: "Atheism meant disbelief in the gods and, at the same time, it was a civil crime against the state." Thus, to reject the civil religion was the greatest shame and even considered criminal.

Christians experienced progressive antagonism from the Roman Empire because they were unwilling to bend the knee in worship. Persecution from the state steadily increased until the book of *Revelation* is written in which John is exiled for refusing to bend the knee to the State.

Why did the Christians disobey? Because the gospel rejected emperor worship. Dr. Ben Witherington, a New Testament scholar, underscores the "countercultural" nature of Paul's writings to the churches in the Roman Empire. He says, "For Paul it is God, not society, that can bestow real honor and dispense lasting shame. It is God,



including God in Christ, that is at the apex of Paul's pyramid of values, and as such only God is immune to Paul's telling criticisms of his world. Paul was attempting to set up a counterculture with a set of values often at odds with that of the larger society" (p. 155).

The question is, "Do contemporary Christians see reality in the same countercultural way?" Or, "Have we been absorbed by the culture?" Interestingly, here in the US, we've come full circle. Whether we know it or not, we too are tempted to worship the State.

In the same way that Paul could say that he was unashamed of the gospel even as it caused social shame, we too must reject the temptation of American politics. When we do not do that, we are showing that our hope isn't in the gospel, but rather in the candidate and/or nation, and we begin to look more like the imperial cult than we realize.

### THE SELF AS THE SOURCE OF HONOR/SHAME

If we look around, much has changed regarding honor/shame. Cultural Christianity is no longer the norm, nor does the State dictate honor/shame. Today, the source of honor and shame is the individual and one's authenticity.

Carl Trueman calls this "expressive individualism" by which he means: "... the idea that we are most authentically ourselves when we perform outwardly that which we feel inwardly" (Olson 2020).

In a 2020 interview, Trueman argues Christians have bought into this new zeitgeist and, as a result, have flipped worship and discipleship on its head: "For example, when worship becomes about me expressing myself to God, rather than learning to think God's thoughts after him and striving to be shaped by him, then expressive individualism is vitiating my concept of discipleship" (Olson 2020).

What does this mean exactly?

Whereas historically the temptation was to worship the state, we now are being persuaded to believe that the "self" should be the central focus of all our actions and values.

In their 2018 book *Good Faith*, Kinnaman and Lyons document that 84 percent of Americans believe that "enjoying yourself is the highest goal of life" (Williams 2021). This belief rejects the notion of truth outside of one's self and reigns supreme. If Paul were beginning the letter of *Romans* today, they argue, he would instead write: "I am not ashamed of myself and when I realize this, it is powerful and brings life."

The gospel demands us to reject worship of the self because we must see how insufficient we are on our own.

### CHRIST AS THE SOURCE OF HONOR/SHAME

The gospel is that Christ alone is the true source of honor and shame.

Again, Paul's thesis implies that he knew that the gospel was ridiculed by many in Rome. They evaluated the message of the cross based on the wisdom of the world (1 Cor. 1:22-25). As a result, the gospel was only perceived as foolishness, even though it was the power of God. The danger is the same for us today.

We must realize that Christ alone is the ultimate benefactor of honor and shame. He has been exalted above all nations and waits to judge the earth (Heb. 12:2).

So, what does it look like to specifically apply the gospel in a countercultural way?

We must realize that both the State and the Self need salvation. Our only hope is Christ.

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*Brandon Knight is an Assistant Professor of Strategic Communication & Leadership and Director of Forensics at William Carey University. Brandon hails from Collins, Mississippi where he met and fell in love with his wife and best friend, Ashley. Together, they have four children: Cadence, Emery, Eden, and Jude. After receiving an MDiv (Biblical Studies) at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, he went on to complete his Ph.D. in Communication and Rhetorical studies at the University of Southern Mississippi in 2019. Prior to his time at Carey, he also served as a youth pastor for five years at two locations in the local Hub City area and, more recently, served as an interim at Leaf River Baptist Church in Collins, Mississippi.*

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# IN BETWEEN

LEANDER BRIDGES



LEANDER  
BRIDGES, I

**H**ello, my name is Leander Bridges. I am thankful to Dr. Brett Golson for giving me this opportunity to place an article in William Carey University's preaching

magazine. The article's title is an unusual one. It is entitled such because I and the church I pastor, Springhill Baptist Church in Ellisville, MS, have the privilege of being the first African-American pastor and congregation officially accepted into the Jones County Baptist Association, which is a part of the Mississippi Baptist Convention and the SBC. Dr. Golson asked me to write about being dually affiliated because we are also a part of East MS Baptist Convention and the National Baptist Convention USA, which are African-American entities.

Many of you may be wondering why we did it. Well, the first reason is that God led us to, and the second reason is that the church that I pastor operates from an eleven-point vision. One of the points of that vision is to bring down the walls of race and denomination among Christians. Therefore, we are very interested in seeing walls that have been dividing the body of Christ for so many years come down. Our affiliation with both conventions puts us, as the title says, 'in between'. Dual affiliation has us on the inside with Baptists who are African-American and on the inside with Baptists who are Caucasian.

In order to aid in bringing down the walls of hostility, prejudice, and even sometimes hatred, we are positioned 'in between'. While dual affiliation has been a very good fit for us, at the same time I know there

are African-Americans who are not in agreement with us having done this, and there are white Americans who are not in agreement either. However, I and our church, which voted unanimously to do this, are interested in helping to bring to an end something that never should have existed – prejudice in the body of Christ. When laid up against Scripture (which is where God's kingdom rules are found), the prejudice that exists among believers is an anti-Christian activity (Gal. 3:26-29; Eph. 2:1-14; 4:4-6).

With God's help, we want to do our part in investing in the spiritual character of both these conventions. The truth of the matter is this... there is something wrong with our Christian character when we support prejudice and hatred of any kind. I believe that both sides of the aisle can use a good dose of 'Christ-likeness' in this area.

This is the Lord's will for us: 1) to stay the course on both sides and 2) to make a mark, not for ourselves, but for the kingdom and unity. There is no telling what could be done if we were really unified in the name of Christ.

I have laid out our heartfelt concern about one of the greatest divides in churchdom, prejudice, and the need to see it end. I plead for you to lend your heart and say... "I'm in". It will take all of us working together to eliminate this evil. John 8:32 says "...and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free". The truth is, it is time for the body of Christ to be free of prejudice.

I must acknowledge that it was during a very dark time in my life, the life of my family, and the life of our church that the decision to be 'in between' was made. That dark time was the loss of our eleven-year-old granddaughter, Laina Michelle Bridges, in a car accident. We learned the true meaning of Romans 8:28 "...and we

know that all things work together for the good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose". During this time, we saw both Blacks and Whites rally around us in such a show of support that ethnicity did not matter. This was Christianity demonstrated at its finest, and should not be reserved for 'special' occasions, but define us daily. Let us join hand to hand, shoulder to shoulder, heart to heart on this journey to discover the fullness of what God can do to us and through us... together!

In His name and service,  
Leander Bridges, I

---

*Leander Bridges, I was licensed in the ministry in 1977 and ordained in 1978. He has been pastoring since 1978. He currently is the pastor of Springhill Missionary Baptist Church of Ellisville, Mississippi, where he has been since 1984. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Bible from Southeastern Baptist College, Laurel, Mississippi. He has also done studies at The University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Mississippi and Mississippi Baptist Seminary of Jackson, Mississippi.*

*He formerly served on the Executive Board of the Office of Evangelism for the National Baptist Convention USA, Incorporated. On that Board, he served as the Southwest Regional Coordinator.*

*In his state, he serves as Director of Evangelism of the East Mississippi State Baptist Convention. He was the former Lecture Series Coordinator for the First Enterprise Baptist District Association. He currently serves as a trustee on the board of William Carey University. He is the author of the book entitled "Building the Black Church - 7 Curses Facing the Black Church".*

*He has been married to his wife, Esther since 1977. They have three grown children: Rev. Eric Bridges (Danielle), Krista Overby (Howard) and Rev. Leander Bridges, II (Tamiko). They have 13 grandchildren. They reside in Ellisville, Mississippi. It is his prayer that countless numbers of souls will be won to Jesus Christ through his efforts for the Lord.*



# PREACHING JESUS

## *in the Black Church*

DR. THOMAS MCSWAIN, JR.



DR. THOMAS  
MCSWAIN, JR.

**I VIVIDLY  
REMEMBER  
SITTING IN  
THAT SMALL  
COUNTRY  
CHURCH  
DURING  
SUNDAY  
SERVICES.  
THE**

**QUAINT CINDERBLOCK  
BUILDING CONSISTING OF  
THE SANCTUARY AND A  
TRUNCATED HALLWAY OFF TO  
THE SIDE THAT LOOKED LIKE  
AN EXIT BUT DOUBLED AS  
THE PASTOR'S OFFICE.**

Dusty plank wood floors, rickety old benches that moved and creaked at the slightest suggestion of movement. Spider webs blanketed window seals, and dirt-daubers spackled corners and crevices. Bloodthirsty mosquitoes whispered serenades in your ear, while the occasional frenzied wasp retaliated, in angst, against an equally heated lightbulb.

But none of that mattered, every ear focused in on the Word pouring like hot gravy from God's man. The passing of years actively erased the Scripture from which he took his text and the title of the sermon, but nothing will ever banish from my memory the illustration he used concerning the second coming of Christ. The tall lanky pastor preached in

a short robe that left much of his dark trousers exposed, and danced vigorously but cautiously, bound by the borders of his narrow platform. His legs grew from beneath his young robe like the legs from the "daddy-long leg" spiders in the corner. His torso hunched protectively over his notes like a thirsty athlete at a water fountain after running laps.

His congregants sat like starved paupers waiting to lap up the thirst-quenching Word that poured from his mouth.

Presently, worked into a huff, he threw down his handkerchief, gripped the microphone in one hand, and with controlled movements, he grasped the dangling cord with the other.

Mama said this is what Deacon Fikes meant when he'd yell, "You throwing it down now, Preacher!"

As the sermon roared to a climax, Rev. Powell illustrated to saint and sinner the looming and definite arrival of the coming Christ.

"Chilen' though, hah, it may not seem like it, hah, Christ is on his way back, hah," he cautioned in an unusually clear voice.

"Aint he all right? Hah!"

He'd inhale deeply, dragging air across his rough vocal cords, creating a choking sound, and at the end of each phrase he seemed to exhale leftover air that emerged from his lips like a pruned laugh— "hah."

"He's coming, hah ... but will you be ready, hah?"

At that moment he tugged at the dangling cord, gathering it, winding it, and wrapping it around his right hand. At his tug, the spool of superfluous cord snaked its way from the dusty floor, up the one step to the pulpit, around the lonely speaker box, up the torso of the lectern, and finally around the backside and into the palm of his hand.

When his winching, winding arm had tugged and expended the superfluous spool of cord from the floor and jerked the rope tight, Rev. Powell exclaimed:

"Chilen', hah, time is winding up."

With this vivid illustration accompanied by that sober warning, he forever stamped this biblical truth of Christ's imminent return on my mind.

A clear presentation of the Gospel focused on the Person and purpose of Jesus. Paul was determined to know nothing, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified while among the Corinthians. He argued with the Athenians and reasoned with the Thessalonians, but with the Corinthians, he "determined to know nothing" but Jesus and Him crucified so that their confidence would rest in God alone (1 Cor. 2:2). The small rural back church, which I attended as a child, may not have had the benefit of much learning, but the pastor was diligent to preach Jesus, and Him crucified.

# Pastoring Through the Problems

STEVE TAYLOR



STEVE  
TAYLOR

After thirty years in ministry and a fifteen-year tenure as senior pastor at a thriving church, I can affirm that ministry frequently brings joys and abundant blessings. There

have been seasons that are filled with joy. I have seen those who were in positions of leadership get saved. I have seen families that have been heading to divorce court strengthened by the grace of God. I have seen rebellious children repentant. Indeed, ministry is wonderful. There are seasons where the hand of God is evident, fruit is obvious, and growth is happening.

As we know, in ministry, there are other seasons – the seasons of endurance, the seasons of pain. For my ministry it began just prior to Covid-19 and the shutting down of the world. It began when my best friend, an associate who had been serving for thirty years, died of pancreatic cancer in his office. The battle continued through Covid. The battle continued with a sinful scandal that painfully impacted the ministry. Subsequently, a beloved group of individuals left our church.

During my own storms and discouragement in ministry, I realize that the members who trust me as their pastor were going through their own seasons. Life-shattering issues such as divorce, unemployment, and rebellious children. People were hurting. The pastor is supposed to have the calm, wise answers. He is to patiently love them through their storms – even when his heart is hurting.

It turns out that ministry isn't always easy. Yet, it has been during the painful seasons that the Lord has strengthened me. It is during this time that I have learned important lessons on how to make it when you want to walk away.

The first lesson was a reminder of the providence of God. Even in the storms of life, God is still on the throne. He is not wringing his hands or saying “oops.” God is purposing all things for our good and His glory (Romans 8:28). God is not caught off guard. Rather, each storm has been designed by His hand for our good. The life of Joseph illustrates this. After all the pain of life, from being sold as a slave, falsely accused, and forgotten in prison, he didn't get bitter. Rather, he is trusting in a sovereign God. “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good...”<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of providence is our hope. As one theologian writes, “the sovereign character of God becomes the ground of practical hope and comfort to all who trust him.”<sup>2</sup> My prayer is continual trust in a God who is worthy!

The second lesson I learned is that God never wastes trials. As I was walking through the difficulties of ministry, it was easy for me to get negative. Perhaps it came from sleepless nights, but I found myself being more of a judge than a pastor. Looking down on the sheep rather than being a humble leader worth following. It was during this time that I reluctantly went on a trip to India. My plan was to teach a group of pastors what I thought would be some great theological lessons. I would soon learn that I was going to be the one who would be taught. I met men who were going through trials that made mine look like ant hills. These men suffered. These men had been beaten by Hindu radicals. One of the pastors, Ashok, shared

testimony and photos where Hindus left him beaten and bloody. Upon returning from the trip, I received a FaceTime call from Ashok. He was filled with joy. The man who had beat him was a village witch doctor. This Hindu man was so moved by the love and joy that Ashok showed in suffering that he came to repentance and turned by faith to Jesus. Peter writes, “But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.” Ashok modeled it; I learned it! Even during trials, Jesus must be seen by a watching world as Lord of our lives, and we will be producing an infectious faith!

The third lesson learned was that trials are used by God for purification. I do not handle difficulties well. I can be marked with impatience, complaining, and a judgmental spirit. Trials do not cause these sins, trials reveal them. This season was used to reveal sin. Sin that I must deal with if I am to be the man He saved me and called me to be. David put it this way, “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word” (Psalms 119:67).

I am thankful. God has blessed. I have walked through storms, and I have seen the loving hand of God. God has led me to repentance. I am reminded of the infinite value of God even when things hurt. I have never experienced the hurts of Job, yet his words echo true in my heart, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).

I praise the Lord as the church is

bouncing back. Souls have been saved and baptized. We are growing again – and best yet – so am I!

*Steve Taylor serves as the Senior Pastor of Russell Baptist Church in Meridian, MS, where he has ministered for the last fifteen*

*years. He has been in pastoral ministry for thirty years serving in roles of pastor, associate pastor, and youth pastor. He has been married to Adrienne Taylor for twenty-seven years and has three children (Drew, Caleb, and Micah), one daughter in law (Brookelyn), one future daughter in law (Lizzy Davis) and one granddaughter (Aven).*

*Steve holds a Bachelor of Science in Bible and Christian education from Maranatha University, and two master's degrees, a Master of Arts in Biblical exposition from Pensacola Theological Seminary, and a MDiv. from Liberty University. He was also awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity from Emmanuel Theological Seminary.*

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Sinclair B. Ferguson and J.I. Packer, *New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 542.

# PROFESSOR OR PRACTITIONER

## *How I Chose to Pursue a Doctor of Ministry*

DR. COREY FONTAN, D.MIN

“Dr. Corey Ryan Fontan”. That was one of the best days of my life as I heard those words while walking across the stage in the chapel of the New Orleans



COREY FONTAN,  
D.MIN

Baptist Theological Seminary in December of 2018. It was the crowning achievement of my academic life as I shook the hand of President Chuck Kelley and knelt for the hooding as all of the

professors who had invested in my work stood behind me. It was the culmination of four years of study—reading, writing, project design and implementation, and ultimately a completed, published Project in Ministry. I remind my kids all the time when they complain about their studies that I went to school for a total of twenty-five years from beginning to end. It has almost become a joke in our house at this point. But how did I get here and why did I choose this path?

I surrendered to the ministry at the age of thirteen, so seminary was something that was always in my educational plans. Pursuing a Masters of Divinity from a Southern Baptist seminary was never a question for me. A doctorate though? That was a different story altogether. From the moment I began seminary, it was a question that I was asked often—“Are you going to pursue doctoral studies?” My answer was generally—“No, at least not any time soon.” I wanted to be finished with school and move on with a life of ministry. Needless to say, I did not enter seminary with any notions of staying that long. But, the Lord had other plans.

During a master’s workshop, our class was privileged to sit in briefly on a doctoral seminar class in progress. I was intrigued by the discussion, by the setup, and by what seemed to be a great opportunity for growth. It was then, during what I thought would be my last year of school, that I began to make the determination that a doctoral degree was indeed in my future. Sitting in that seminar class, listening to those

interactions, sparked a desire in me to continue my studies beyond my M.Div.

The next determination to be made was which path to take. My options consisted of the research path of a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) or the professional path of a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min). Even at this point in my life, I still was not entirely sure of the differences in those programs or their destinations. Initially, I set out to inquire about admission to the D.Min program and was encouraged by faculty to at least give some some consideration to a Ph.D. I agreed to do so, and even took some courses to “level up” for entry into the Ph.D. program if I decided to do so. However, through that process of exploration, study, and examination, I was able to get a clearer picture of the options before me and came to the determination that the D.Min. route was best suited for me.

Let’s consider, in simple terms, the difference in these programs. I classify them as the professor and the practitioner. The Ph.D. is a research degree which allows the student to



engage in original research that is intended to enhance a particular field of study. If a person desires to be a full-time professor, this is the path they will need to take. With few exceptions, most full-time professors in theological institutions have earned their Ph.D. The other path is the D.Min., which I classify as the practitioner degree. The D.Min. is to theological education what the M.D. is to the medical field. The D.Min. serves to equip the student to deeply engage in the research of others and seek the best ways to implement what they have studied into the setting of a particular field of ministry. Either path offers its own challenges and its own unique opportunities.

As I weighed these options, it became clear to me that my desire was not to be a full-time professor, but rather to use my research to develop a plan for how to best utilize certain tools, primarily in the context of the local church community.

As someone who has always been passionate about the ministry of the local church, the D.Min. seemed to be a better fit for me and the path of ministry that I believed the Lord was leading me down. I graduated almost six years ago, and I am still served well by that course of study and do not regret the decision I made.

One common misconception that I had when I first began, and that I have heard stated by others, is that the D.Min. is somehow a “lesser” degree than the Ph.D. This assertion is simply not true. The requirements and expectations are different for each, but this is because they each serve their own unique purpose and offer their recipients unique opportunities. Dr. David Currie (Ph.D) is the Dean of the Doctor of Ministry Program at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary. His classification of the Ph.D. as a teacher for the church and the D.Min. as a teacher in the church

is a helpful way to clarify. He has said that “the church needs far more teachers in the church than for the church.” This in no way is a detraction from the Ph.D., but does indeed highlight the importance and significance of the Doctor of Ministry degree. I am grateful that I took this path, and I would encourage anyone who loves the local church to consider it as well.

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*Dr. Corey Fontan currently serves as the Lead Pastor of First Baptist Church in Union, MS. He has previously served churches in Mississippi and Louisiana. He earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Mississippi State University, and Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He has been married to his wife, Kim, since 2006, and they have two children—a son, Jace, and a daughter, Ally Grace. Dr. Fontan enjoys reading, sports, and traveling with his family.*

## SHOCK AND AWE

LUKE JOHNSON



LUKE JOHNSON

**I FELT BOTH SHOCK AND AWE WHEN I HEARD IT. OUR TREKKING JOURNEY HAD CARRIED US DEEP INTO THE**

**HIMALAYAS OF NORTH INDIA, AND AS WE CROSSED A RIDGE, WE STOPPED AT ONE HOUSE AND CONVERSED WITH THE FAMILY WHO LIVED THERE. THAT’S WHEN I HEARD IT. THOSE IN THAT**

**SLATED-ROOF HOME TOLD US HOW THEY SMEARED THE BLOOD OF A LAMB ON THEIR DOOR FRAME EVERY YEAR TO WARD OFF EVIL SPIRITS, A CUSTOM PASSED DOWN FROM PREVIOUS GENERATIONS. AS I LEARNED MORE ABOUT THIS ANCIENT PRACTICE, I WAS IN SHOCK, YET AS THE WORDS SANK IN, I STOOD IN AWE OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN FRONT OF MY EYES.**

Shock and awe hit again two years later as we trekked four days to reach an extremely remote Himalayan village,

crossing one mountain pass at 15,000 feet. In the town, we met a Hindu priest who had come as he did every August, braving the long, rugged path to the village and carefully avoiding landslides, slippery rocks, and the mountain river hundreds of feet below. Why would he take such a risky hike? He made the yearly journey at a specific time to offer an animal sacrifice on a specific day to protect the village from evil spirits for the next year. As I heard that he undertook a perilous journey to help a group of people feel safe, I was again in shock and awe.

Five years earlier, I was traveling near the Myanmar border in northeast India when I heard something similar but

different. While staying among a people group that was now Christian, I read through their published tribal history. To my amazement, this tribe, while engaging in headhunting and war in their pre-gospel years, had observed an annual day of atonement paralleling Leviticus 16. Rather than a scapegoat, they used chickens, with the “scape rooster” sent out of the village never to return. They had done so for centuries without knowledge of Christianity or the Jewish sacrificial system.

All three incidents raise missiological possibilities of God’s common grace found among unreached people groups to prepare the way for proclaiming the gospel through existing cultural examples called redemptive analogies. David Sitton, a former missionary to Papua New Guinea, defines redemptive analogies as “a story or ritual in a society that provides an analogy with some aspect of the gospel message and so facilitates communication and understanding of the message.”<sup>1</sup> Missionaries may avail themselves of these examples, which already exist within people groups and their cultures, to cross barriers and bring the gospel to the unreached and unengaged. As Don Richardson writes in his book *Peace Child*, redemptive analogies are spiritual keys from God’s grace to bring clarity and understanding of the living God among those who have never heard of

Christ.<sup>2</sup> Discovering these metaphors allows missionaries to take customs and stories from a people group and then perform biblical contextualization to communicate the gospel faithfully. The shock arises from seeing pictures of the gospel painted so clearly in the cultures and customs of unreached people groups. The awe descends from realizing the grace of a sovereign, loving God who desires all tribes and peoples to be saved and worship Him in spirit and truth.

However, redemptive analogies can present legitimate issues among missionaries. One must honestly question if all customs or practices within people groups can be redeemed and thus used to share the gospel. For example, should a Middle Eastern custom involving child brides be used to preach the good news of Jesus? Can missionaries, in clear conscience, use a ritual involving stealing or violence toward others? Some situations rightly give missionaries spiritual pause to consider only using certain cultural examples to share the gospel.

An additional danger in using redemptive analogies is the creation of syncretism within a culture. Merging elements from Christianity with native religions and then preaching Jesus is not faithfully communicating the gospel of Christ. Creating such a toxic mix is to construct a new religion, and presenting

this new religion to others as Christianity is downright sinful, destructive, and damning. Missionaries must use Spirit-led discretion and remain faithful to Scripture in their theology and methodology, proclaiming the exclusivity of Jesus Christ.

Deep in the Himalayas, I was in shock and awe as we sat with the Hindu Priest, opened a Hindi Bible, and asked him to read Hebrews 10:1–14, where he discovered that the blood of animals could never atone for sins. Instead, he learned that Someone came down from Heaven, lived a perfect life, died a substitutionary death, and victoriously rose again to save and sanctify forever all who call upon His name in repentance and faith. When asked about the verses he had just read, the priest asserted without hesitation, “This is true. This is true.” We continued to share with him that the Lamb was indeed slain, and His smeared blood on the wood speaks the greatest and only word of salvation for all the peoples of the world. May we continue to ponder the glories of this cosmic gospel, join God in His mission, and remain in shock and awe.

---

*Luke Johnson serves as Equipping Pastor for Crosspointe Community Church in Laurel, MS, and is a PhD candidate in International Missiology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC. He and his wife, Lauren, live in Laurel, MS.*

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> David Sitton, *To Every Tribe with Jesus!: Understanding and Reaching Tribal Peoples for Christ* (Sand Springs, OK: Grace & Truth Books, 2005), 121.

<sup>2</sup> Don Richardson, *Peace Child*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Bethany House, 2014), 244–45.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF THEOLOGICAL TRAINING AND EDUCATION

KEITH HARRIS



KEITH HARRIS

In Romans 10:14-15, Paul asks rhetorical questions meant to spur the church in Rome to want to preach the gospel to the lost: “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And

how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?” These are good and necessary questions. Yet, the question that most preachers that are called of God and sent out by churches is, “Where are you going to seminary?” For those who are called and sent in Mississippi, that question means leaving the state – that is until William Carey University introduced their Master of Arts (M.A.) in Christian Theology program.

I began studying at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) in my early twenties. I was a young man trying to be a good husband to my wife, respond God’s call, and figure out how to meet the expanding needs and responsibilities in the church I was serving. I was encouraged to begin seminary to help me become the pastor I needed to be. But seminary and I never really fit together; the Master of Divinity program is broad and, after I took the classes I was most passionate about, I ended up dropping out. At the time, the NOBTS extensions made my studies possible. There were simply no options that fit what I needed, nowhere near me.

Nearly nine years later, my wife and I began praying about whether I should finish seminary or look for something else. The one thing that was clear was that God was moving me in a direction that needed more theological education and training. During the pandemic, I had begun publishing Bible studies to mail out to church members with no internet or streaming access. That ministry was blossoming into a small web-based ministry that continued to serve those church members and expanded to include others within our church and community, even to other states and countries. I needed to make sure that, as I sought to faithfully share the gospel and expound upon the Scriptures, I was being clear in what I wrote and communicated. I wanted to give the same clarity in my writing that Ezra had in Nehemiah 8:8, presenting the word clearly and give “the sense, so that the people understood the reading.”

Our prayers were answered when Dr. Chas Rowland shared a social media post about Carey beginning the program and looking for applicants. Dr. Rowland put me in contact with Dr. Brett Golson, and from the first conversation with Dr. Golson, I knew I had found my place. He told me that the purpose of the program would be to help people not only learn theology but be able to communicate it faithfully and clearly. It would be academically rigorous, but such important work requires diligent study. The result was to be more than academic, though, keeping the end goal in mind: taking the gospel of Jesus Christ to churches or the mission field. Paul’s questions to the church of Rome

would be answered with graduates who are not only called and sent to preach, but also able to preach and teach in such a way that people are given the sense and understand the Word.

Now that there is an opportunity for masters level theological training in Mississippi, the excellent work already being done in the Cooper School for Missions and Ministry Studies is blossoming. Those whose stories are like mine – where typical seminary does not fit – now have a place to go and study how to rightly handle the word. Having completed nearly seventy hours of an M.Div. at NOBTS and fully completed the M.A. in Christian Theology at Carey, I have a unique perspective to offer. The rigor at Carey is the same; if anything, it is more rigorous in some respects, especially when more effort is needed to clearly communicate theology.

The M.A. in Christian Theology was the perfect fit for me as a non-traditional student, working full-time and serving as a pastor. It was also the perfect fit for my fellow graduates who were in or near Hattiesburg and benefited from the community and facilities that Carey has to offer. Others, like me, took advantage of the virtual potential the program offers – while still being able to have a sense of community and still benefiting from the amazing tools offered by Carey’s library services. More than anything, I can testify that I not only have a desire to communicate theological ideas well but now have more tools, education, and abilities to do it. This is why the M.A. in Christian Theology program exists: that people will be able to hear because they will teach and that



those people listening can understand what is being taught.

At last year's annual SBC meeting, a celebrity pastor called for dividing lines of orthodoxy to be redrawn over a single word in the New Testament. Effort was made to clarify that it was just a matter of disagreement over one word, as if any word in Scripture was a mere stringing together of letters rather than "breathed out by God" (2 Timothy 3:16). Churches across the SBC and news outlets debated issues and formed opinions. Does theological clarity and education have any bearing on such matters? There was a time in the 4th and 5th century when one single

letter determined whether the Church believes that Jesus is God or is merely like God. One side believed in the God of the Bible, and the other side did not. Students in the M.A. in Christian Theology program are prepared to explain the historical theology as well as engage in discussions in current SBC life.

I am thankful for this program and excited that it exists to provide needed theological training for Mississippi pastors and Bible teachers. At Carey, our motto is "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." The M.A. in Christian Theology embodies this, enabling its students to teach and

preach with clarity and conviction. The work has just begun, but people in Mississippi churches have already benefited as its graduates and current cohorts are teaching. Paul asked how people would hear unless they are sent. The M.A. in Christian Theology is a beautiful opportunity to send people to do just that.

---

*Keith Harris is a 2023 graduate of Carey's Masters of Christian Theology program. He lives in Duck Hill, MS with his wife, Candice, and children, Keri and Xander. He teaches at Grenada High School and is a pastor at Christ Community Church in Grenada.*



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**KATE FLETCHER**

*Project Manager*

Kate Fletcher is a sophomore at William Carey University pursuing a degree in Strategic Communication and Leadership with a minor in Christian Ministries. She is active in the Student Government Association where she serves as the Commissioner of Student Affairs. She is a leadership council member of the Carey Chorale and Worship choir. Kate's career goals are to work in marketing and public relations.

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Ephesian 6:13