

Vital Congregations

Vibrant
worship

Intentional
discipleship

Transformational
leadership

Authentic
community

Lasting
impact

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Alive and healthy congregations exhibit vibrant worship, intentional discipleship, transformational leadership, authentic community, and lasting impact.

The High Calling unpacks that acrostic so that we can identify characteristics of a vital congregation.

Jonathan Powers helps us develop a theology of *Vibrant Worship*: “Christian worship is the celebration of God’s mighty acts of salvation in and through Jesus Christ.” Ralph Sigler contributes *Intentional Discipleship*, the heart of the Great Commission. Bill Kierce introduces *Transformational Leadership* by upholding Jesus as our model. Robert

Stevenson shares his passion for *Authentic Community*, which he first experienced personally in prison. Now he leads an international network of congregations that implement true *koinonia*. Marshall Daigre describes *Lasting Impact* in terms of worship, disciple, and service in his church plant. Outreach and stewardship are also part of lasting impact, and I share about a recent opportunity of watching Dr. Coleman in action at 95 years of age. His influence embodies sustainability. These topics, represented through the acrostic VITAL, are values that the Francis Asbury Society promotes. We want to partner with denominations and congregations to spread the life-giving message of full salvation.

Paul had not yet been to Rome when he penned his letter to the church at Rome. Some academics have felt that the final chapter was an unworthy closing to such a magisterial declaration of the gospel. There he mentions twenty-seven individuals by name. Five of the names are informal or nicknames, indicating his warmth. About a

Are We Vital?

Vic Reasoner

The adjective “vital” comes from the Latin word *vita*, meaning “life.” The Latin term *curriculum vitae*, which we often use interchangeably with “resumé,” literally means “course of one’s life.” So, when we use “vital” to describe the church, we mean more than something that “is of utmost importance” (Merriam-Webster). We mean that the church that belongs to Jesus Christ should be alive and healthy.

Jesus said the church at Sardis had a reputation of being alive. The word used there—*zao* in Greek—is translated *vivas* in the Latin Vulgate. However, Jesus emphasized their reputation, not their reality. According to his evaluation, the church at Sardis was dead.

None of us wants to belong to a dead church, but do we know what it means to belong to a vital one? Are our congregations alive and healthy? How can we know?

Bill Kierce has spent his life as an evangelist, pastor, and church consultant, and now he is our new FAS president. In his doctoral research, he has studied church vitality assessment tools and read just about every book or article on the subject. He has identified over a hundred different indicators of church vitality suggested by the experts. While most studies were not all that helpful, Bill has identified five common themes found in all the research and organized those themes into the acrostic, VITAL. This issue of

Jonathan A. Powers



Dr. Powers is assistant professor of Worship Studies and associate dean of the E. Stanley Jones School of Mission and Ministry at Asbury Theological Seminary. This article has been adapted from his chapter, "Liturgy and Worship in the Emerging Methodism," in *The Next Methodism* (Seedbed, 2022).

There is no singular, monolithic definition of worship. In fact, it is quite difficult to articulate a concise statement on worship without being overly simplistic. Worship is the central act of the church and the chief end of the Christian life. It is rooted in the glory of God and thus a topic worthy of careful rumination. Moreover, worship is complex and multi-faceted, and like a well-cut diamond, every facet adds to its brilliance.

Simply put, Christian worship is the celebration of God's mighty acts of salvation in and through Jesus Christ. In worship, the people of God continually meet together in God's presence to remember his loving acts of mercy and to anticipate his promised restorative activity in the world. Fixed upon God's character and work, God's people celebrate with gratitude the One who was, who is, and who is to come. As the story of God is proclaimed and reenacted through the Word and the sacraments, the church beholds God's beauty and goodness, receives his pardon and grace, and is transformed and empowered by the Holy Spirit to go forth in mission and service to the world.

Worship is first and foremost a communal encounter with the triune God whose loving actions and merciful character evoke gratitude, adoration, and fidelity. Notably, this orientation is antithetical to a pragmatic, results-oriented approach to worship. The intent of worship is not the stimulation of people but the glorification of God. While certainly the people of God play an active role in worship, worship is not about what the church produces for God. Rather, worship is about what God has done, is doing, and will do for the church. Put plainly, worship is a loving response to a loving God. The primary disposition of the church in worship, therefore, is *eucharistos*; that is, thanksgiving.

The pattern of revelation and response characterizes all of God's interaction with humanity, as the Scriptures testify to again and again (see Gen 7:1–5; Gen 15:1–20; Ex 3:1–15; Isa 6:1–13; Luke 1:26–38; John 4:7–26; Rev 4:1–11). Since the dawn of creation, God has actively revealed himself to humankind through his created world, through the testimony of his people, by his supernatural acts, and within his written Word. In God's self-revelation, humanity is given the opportunity not only to see and know God more clearly but also to respond to God more genuinely. As God's beauty and goodness is known, worship is the natural result. N. T. Wright asserts in his book *For All God's Worth*:

Put it this way: if your idea of God, if your idea of the salvation offered in Christ, is vague or remote, your idea of worship will be fuzzy and ill-formed. The closer you get to the truth, the clearer becomes the beauty, and the more you will find worship welling up within you (10).

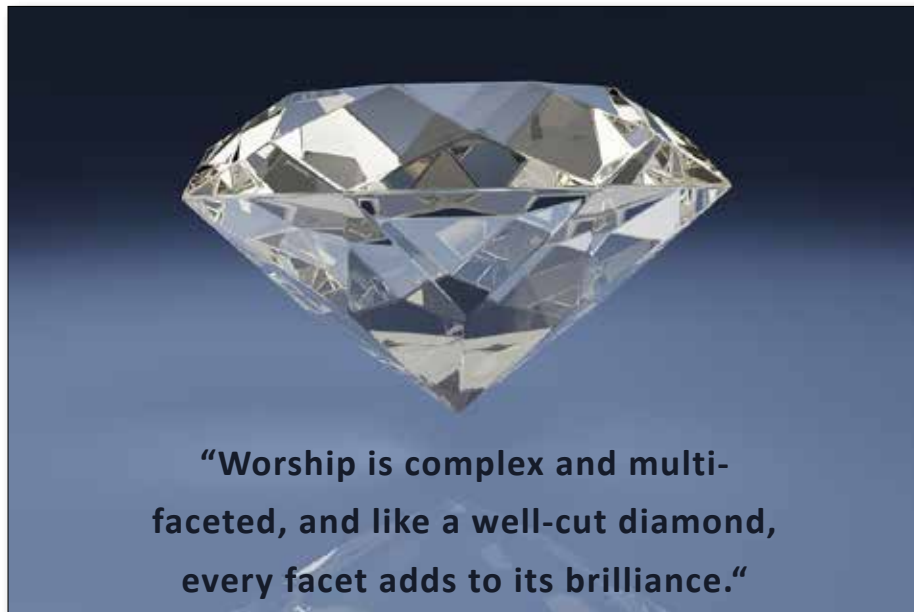
Christian worship, then, is our human response to the revealed triune God. Such revelation cannot be forced, however. Instead, it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that God is made accessible by faith so the church might be granted an epiphany of his beauty, goodness, and majesty. It is only through God's own revelatory initiative that he is made known. As the church begins to know and understand the character of God, the rightful response to his revelation is loving worship. Don Hustad reflects in *Jubilate II*:

Christian worship is our affirmative, transforming response to the self-revelation of God. . . . We are not seeking to find or to know an obscure, frightening being who needs to be placated. God makes and continues to make the first move, showing himself in power and in love, inviting our response. In fact, worship is any and every affirmative response to God (100).

Worship is always connected to the God who has been self-revealed. By remembering God's past work and anticipating his promised future in worship, especially through the Word and at the Table, a powerful revelation of God comes to the church in the present. As he makes his grandeur and beauty known, the church cannot help but respond in prayer and praise.

Moreover, Christian worship is mindful of the larger reality of

creation, Christology, and eschatology. The eschatological reality of worship resides in both the anticipation of the kingdom that Christ will bring as well as the work of the kingdom the church is called to live out now on earth. In the United Methodist Church's liturgy of the Eucharist, for instance, the church proclaims, "By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet." There is acknowledgement in the liturgy of Christ's work in both the here and now and in the final victory yet to come. Thus, worship stands "in a horizon of eschatological hope, that is, of future fulfillment as well as present experience" (Reumann, *The Supper of the Lord*, 25). Framing worship in the fullness of God's narrative means keeping in mind the eschatological view of the new creation being ushered in through Jesus Christ. Worship is therefore eschatological because it celebrates Christ's continual work and anticipates his final victory (see Rev 21). In worship, the church is continually reminded of its role in God's inaugurated kingdom and is nourished for the work that needs to be done in the world. It is only through this hope-filled eschatological view that the church discovers the lifestyle of worship it is called to live out in the world.



"Worship is complex and multi-faceted, and like a well-cut diamond, every facet adds to its brilliance."

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Ralph Sigler



Rev. Sigler has been senior pastor at Harvest Church in Dothan, Alabama, since 1996. Rev. Sigler and the leaders of Harvest Church have developed a discipleship course for their church. In this article, Rev. Sigler introduces his discipleship plan and the transformational impact it has had upon hundreds of Harvest Church members.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. (Matt 28:19–20)

We call it The Great Commission. With a title like that, it must be important. Yet, how many American Christians are confident they are living as disciples? How many know how to make disciples?

The Great Commission is the last command Jesus gave his disciples before he ascended to heaven. This command became the marching orders for the early church. Within a few decades, Christianity spread throughout the Roman world and beyond—without mass communication, marketing strategies, church buildings, or the Internet.

Jesus discipled a small group of men. The apostles and Paul did the same. In 2 Timothy 2:2, we see four generations of disciples: “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.” Notice the progression of disciples: “me,” “you,” “reliable men,” and “others.” He told them to disciple others, who discipled others.

I had started a church in Dothan, Alabama, in 1996, and it was going well. I had some previous experience with discipleship. In high school, the Lord connected me with a new believer eager to learn and grow. I got to teach and disciple him, and he went on to lead campus ministries discipling hundreds of students. Later, as a youth pastor, I formed small discipleship groups with heavy emphasis on spiritual disciplines and accountability. After a few course corrections, this youth discipleship ministry became very effective, helping our students develop depth and live consistently for Jesus.

However, as a pastor, I wasn’t sure how to disciple the church in an intentional way. I had heard many people say that evangelism and discipleship were the primary tasks of the church, but they usually spoke of “discipleship” in very general terms: almost anything that could help Christians grow. How would we know—how would the people know—if they were actually discipled?

When a person came to Christ, what was next? We might say, “Come to church. That’s what I did when I got saved.” And they do need church. Or, “Take a Bible study class.” They do need to learn the Bible. Or, “Go to that seminar/conference,” “hear this speaker,” “read this book,” and so on. We just hoped they would “get” it. It seemed to me that if you asked Christians, even those who had followed Jesus for years, to disciple a new believer, the great majority wouldn’t know what to do.

The church has not been teaching Christians how to make disciples. It’s not that discipleship is not happening in life-giving churches. Churches offer many of the important things that help people grow, and people can become disciples if they choose. Unfortunately, it is often so haphazard that people don’t know how to explain it, teach it, or reproduce it. I was beginning to wonder if adults with careers and children could commit to any type of comprehensive discipleship. There were programs and curriculum available for youth and college students that were organized, systematic, and intentional, but I couldn’t find any for adults.

So my church did what other growing churches were doing: we offered dozens of small groups. Many of them were good, and many of our people grew. But I couldn’t get away from the conviction that discipleship was too important to be random and haphazard. Evangelism and discipleship are at the core of what Christ followers are called to do! They form the mission Jesus gave us and are how he told his followers to reach the world and to see people transformed.

Because I couldn’t find what I was looking for, I decided to write it. I was guided by this question: “What do our people need to learn

and experience to *know* they are living as disciples of Christ, and to know *how* to make disciples?” I wanted it to be broad, accessible, and in a workbook format: broad enough to be somewhat comprehensive in equipping people as disciples; accessible to anyone in the church willing to do it (therefore, it couldn’t be overly demanding); and a workbook format because people share more profoundly when they have taken time to respond beforehand to questions and Scriptures. The goal for this plan was to be used one-on-one or in small groups. In working on lessons, then going over the

lessons together, members of a group engage the material twice and hear insights from others.

The result of this project was five workbooks:

1. Phase 1 focuses on being a disciple, one’s life purpose, and knowing God.
2. Phase 2 is about the mind of Christ and the family of God.
3. Phase 3 teaches about the Lordship of Christ and walking in the Spirit.
4. Phase 4 addresses ministry to the church and ministry to the world.
5. Phase 5 concentrates on extending God’s kingdom.

After Phase 5, we encourage the groups to do a six-week study on spiritual warfare. In addition to 43 lessons in the five phases, there are many experiences with prayer models (focus on learning to listen to God) and ministry opportunities (ministering to each other and outreach to others). In the middle of each phase, instead of meeting together, group members are to spend an hour in directed prayer.

It is amazing to see the transformation and revelation that comes to most who have never before prayed for more than five minutes at a



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Lead Like Jesus: The Nature of Authentically Transformational Leadership

Bill Kierce



Bill Kierce currently serves as president of the Francis Asbury Society. He is a passionate and persuasive communicator who is committed to the message of Scriptural holiness, believing that a life fully surrendered to Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit results in purity of heart and power for ministry. In this article, Bill strongly encourages us to follow Jesus—and only Jesus—as our model for effective leadership.

Though essential to highly functioning organizations, leadership is an elusive concept. Is a leader synonymous with a supremely talented individual who inspires others to action, as depicted by academic theories introduced after the Second World War? Are leadership qualities inherent or can they be learned? Or, as more recent scholarship suggests, is leadership a process involving multiple people who may act in various roles as leaders and followers, sometimes even exchanging places? Is it formulaic or dynamic? To what extent do circumstantial conditions give rise to leadership or even cause skilled leaders to fail?

Almost 40 years ago, Warren Bennis and Bert Nanus, in their classic work *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge*, claimed there were over 350 published definitions of leadership. That was before the explosion of Christian and corporate leadership literature throughout the last few decades. Gurus from just about every sector have produced innumerable volumes introducing leadership principles, practices, and products. John Maxwell alone has written almost one hundred publications about leadership. Yet no one has successfully defined the word. I believe the definition offered by Peter G. Northouse is as good as any: “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (*Introduction to Leadership*, 2021).

While we may not agree on a universal definition of leadership, we know it when we see it: that moment of synergy when a group instinctively senses that it is operating at an uncommon level. We most certainly can identify the absence of leadership when we see it. This article will not offer the reader “ten tricks to transform your leadership.” Instead, it will seek to drive the reader deep into the heart of the greatest leader in human history and the lives of leaders who have followed him throughout the centuries since. He invested three years sharing himself with a rag-tag group of fishermen, tax collectors, political zealots, and social nobodies, molding them into an army of spiritual entrepreneurs, who, when empowered by the Holy Spirit, established the most successful movement the world has ever known. It is not successful simply because multiplied millions of people over 2,000 years have surrendered their lives to its claims, but because the gospel of Jesus Christ possesses the singular capacity to save every sinful human being from the inevitability of eternal self-destruction. Yet why are so many of our churches devoid of vitality?

If we want our leadership to be truly vital, first for ourselves and then others, we must learn from Jesus. He is more than a model for effective leadership. He offers us the invitation to be filled with the same Spirit that inhabited and empowered his incarnated body (John 16). This means that Jesus is fully capable of reproducing his leadership in us and through us. What kind of leadership are we talking about? In the academic literature, there are three prominent approaches to leadership that are often grouped as spiritual in nature: transformational leadership, servant leadership, and authentic leadership. We will explore them in this article, discussing their strengths and applicability to spiritual leadership. We will also demonstrate how each approach is inadequate when standing alone

and, from the biblical text, how Jesus embodied all three. Herein I am introducing a term, not to my knowledge found in the literature, that describes the kind of leadership to which those in positions of spiritual responsibility for others must aspire: *authentically transformational servant leadership*.

ACADEMIC RESEARCH ON LEADERSHIP (RESEARCH FOUNDATIONS)

Leadership, as a field of research, emerged in the first few years of the twentieth century but proliferated after World War II, especially in the Western world. Images of heroism, embodied in Generals Eisenhower, Patton, and MacArthur dominated the American consciousness. Just a few years later, a youthful new U. S. president would call a new generation to public service and propel astronauts into space and ultimately onto the moon with his vision. These visages gave rise to what were often called “Great Person Theories” of leadership. These theories suggested that leadership is the product of personality and charisma, innate abilities that inspire others to achieve more than they might otherwise believe they are capable.

Transformational Leadership

James MacGregor Burns, a professor at Williams College in Rhode Island, to study political and military leaders, introducing his theory of *transformational leadership* in 1978. This approach suggests that leader behaviors can motivate team members toward increasing levels of performance and engender passion for the organizational cause that leads to self-sacrifice. The transformational leader is a visionary who is consumed with creating a better future for the organization. According to Burns, he or she seeks to accomplish this through:

1. *Intellectual stimulation*—challenging the status quo.
2. *Individual consideration*—casting a vision that creates value for every individual in the organization.
3. *Inspirational motivation*—inspiring others to internalize the mission.
4. *Idealized influence*—modeling the approach that the leader wants others to adopt.

It is important to note that while transformational leadership places a strong emphasis upon the moral component of leadership, Burns’ interest was more on the morality of the mission than the

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“Jesus Collecting Disciples” by Travis. Used with permission. (CC BY-NC 2.0)

personal morality of the leader. This highlights the dark side of transformational leadership—a leader tempted by greatness but lacking in holiness who seeks to justify the means by the ends.

Servant Leadership

Coinciding with Burn's research was that of Robert Greenleaf, an executive with the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T), who opted for a moral approach to leadership not based on authoritarian power but upon genuine concern for others. Greenleaf's book *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (1977) launched a movement that continues to frame much of leadership scholarship, especially in Christian institutions. The goal of the servant leader is not to achieve greatness or to promote a personal agenda but to serve others. By prioritizing the wellbeing and growth of team members first and foremost, the servant leader believes that persons will be motivated to serve the best interests of the organization and its mission. The servant leader is therefore characterized by qualities such as humility and empathy without regard to personality traits or charismatic appeal.

Authentic Leadership

The twenty-first century dawned with two primary publications defining an approach to leadership that seem to combine qualities of transformational and servant leadership. Interestingly, these appeared in the midst of the ethical crisis in American culture created by the Enron scandal. On the academic side, Fred Luthans and Bruce Avolio introduced their theory of *authentic leadership* in 2003, proposing that trust is increased in a group when a values-based leader demonstrates self-awareness and transparency. One year later, former Medtronic CEO and Harvard Business School professor Bill George released *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value* (2004). George suggests that when a leader's core values and organization's values are aligned, companies (and churches) can become a force for good in their communities, creating more enduring value for shareholders than would be achieved by the financial bottom-line alone. Authentic leaders are characterized by integrity and consistency, leading with loyalty to their inner convictions. They are mission-driven because they genuinely believe in the organization's purpose and are focused on long-term results, nurturing team members toward growth by listening to and learning from their colleagues. Through relationship-building, the authentic leader fosters courage in the team to act on behalf of the organization's mission. One might say that the authentic leader's motto is "Love and learn, then leap."

JESUS AS AN AUTHENTICALLY TRANSFORMATIONAL SERVANT LEADER

Let's get this truth straight: Jesus is never at the mercy of a leadership theory. So, if we believe the prophet who says, "The farmer knows



"The Baptism of Jesus" by Travis. Used with permission. (CC BY-NC 2.0)

just what to do, for God has given him understanding" (Isa 28:26 NLT), then perhaps at least some of the wisdom gleaned from leadership research may reveal what Jesus already knew and how he applied those principles to his own leadership. As we observe the three and a half-year journey of Jesus with his disciples in the Gospel accounts, we can clearly recognize aspects of transformational, servant, and authentic leadership.

Jesus Was/Is a Transformational Leader

Jesus was the most mission-driven leader who has ever lived, completely focused on his "why," the purpose of the Incarnation. He "came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10 NIV; see also Mark 10:45). When tempted in the Judean wilderness to abandon the mission, he was resolute, quoting Scripture to his tempter in resistance (see Matt 4:1–14). When in ignorance his disciples encouraged him to evade the cross, Jesus made it clear that the mission was not negotiable (see Matt 16:23). With the religious establishment, he challenged the status quo. Jesus cast a vision that created value for each follower; for instance, he baited fisherman with the promise they would be empowered to cast their nets for souls (see Matt 4:19). He inspired his followers to internalize the mission and make it their own (see Matt 28:18–20). Jesus idealized his influence by modeling the life he made available to others. In contrast to J. M. Burns' admiration of the flawed lives of "great men," Jesus promised the possibility of a purified heart for everyone desiring to be transformed by him (see Matt 5:8, Matt 5:48, John 15:3).

Jesus Was/Is a Servant Leader

Though he had every right to leverage his title to royalty, being God in human flesh, Jesus chose to reject any claim to greatness in favor of taking on the role of a servant (see Phil 2:5–11). He commanded his disciples to do the same when they jockeyed for position within the group (see Matt 18:1–4). As leaders, we must always cast off the temptation to measure our value by our standing among our peers or to compare the size of our churches or ministries with those we consider more successful. Humility and empathy are far more valuable traits to the kingdom of God than personality and capacity. However, the servant leader is not a milquetoast. Jesus turned over the tables of those who had corrupted the system of sacrifice that he was on mission to fulfill (see Matt 21:12–13). Once in a while, the servant leader is required to turn over a table or two. One of the criticisms of servant leadership theory is that it can be used as an excuse for so-called leaders who lack courage or conviction. Jesus lacked neither—nor should we.

Jesus Was/Is an Authentic Leader

The words "authentic" and "authority" derive from the same etymological root. Jesus amazed the populace of his day because he "taught as one who had authority, not as their teachers of the law" (Matt 7:29 NIV). A leader's authority is inextricably bound to the uniqueness of their personal authenticity. The leader is not like anyone else, because they are themselves. The authentic leader is a relationship builder. Jesus invited twelve ordinary people "to be with him" on a journey (see Mark 3:13–15). Through the normal circumstances of life together he taught them about sowing seeds (see Mark 4:1–20), tending sheep (see John 10:1–18), and carrying crosses (see Luke 9:23–26)—all of which authentically transformational servant leaders must know how to do. There is no pretending when someone spends over three years, night and day, with a group of friends. Nearing the end of their time together, he asked them, "Who do you say that I am?" Their answer: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matt 16:13–20). The spiritual leader finds their identity firmly rooted in the identity of Jesus, the Son of God. We are who we are because of *whose* we are. When we lead from that place of security, Jesus will build his church and "the gates of hades will not overcome it" (Matt 16:18 NIV). ✠

Robert Stevenson



“Roberto” Stevenson and his wife have been missionaries to Mexico for the last 35 years, beginning as street evangelists. Roberto is now lead pastor of the Tierra Prometida network of about sixty churches in Mexico, Spain, Colombia, Costa Rica, and the United States. This is the largest evangelical movement in all of Mexico. Robert is a graduate of Wesley Biblical Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi.

An essential ingredient in a vital church is authentic community. When a church, a ministry, or a leadership team lives that unity in the Spirit, it is electric, attractive, and unmistakable. The true church is not hidden away or invisible.

The early disciples saw the church as a group of redeemed sisters and brothers highly visible because of their lives of love and holiness. All evangelism must take seriously the basic call of the gospel to become part of the church family, the visible community that is already experiencing a foretaste of the kingdom of God as they worship and serve together.

I advise pastors against employing a plethora of Greek vocabulary in their teaching and preaching. (Most who do have never really studied the language.) However, we have taught our people the word *koinonia*. The early church had it: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship [*koinonia*], to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42 NIV). John, in his eldership role, wrote about it: “But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship [*koinonia*] with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). *Koinonia* means sharing, to have all things in common. Paul uses it in Romans 15:26 when he speaks of the offering or contribution that the churches in Macedonia and Achaia made for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Our church members use it for the frequent love feasts or fellowship meals we share together. In Mexican culture, we love those moments that include laughing and eating together.

Koinonia is an intimate communion in the Holy Spirit characterized by participative sharing in a common commitment to a spiritual community. We aren’t required to make it, and we cannot fake it. We are called to maintain it, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3 KJV). Surely this word invites us to be intentional about providing opportunities so that the church not only ministers together but also that we do life together. When a church has authentic community, the unchurched recognize it. It is like a magnet. People long for a sense of belonging in our hyper-individualized and unmistakably digitalized society. The church of Jesus Christ is the answer for the world today.

As a new convert in Danbury Federal Penitentiary in 1981–82, I experienced genuine community in the small church of born-again brothers behind the walls. In an environment hostile to Christlikeness, we met together almost every day. We encouraged one other, we prayed for one another, we rejoiced with one another, and we wept

with one another. We spoke the truth in love to one another. Even though we were incarcerated, those couple of unforgettable years marked my life and taught me what discipleship could be and what church should be. Many times over these past forty years I have been blessed to participate in congregations and leadership teams that live this aspect of the gospel. Have you?

While attending Bible College in Pennsylvania, I was invited to be the residential director of Liberty Ministries, a halfway house for ex-prisoners. The founders and board were Mennonite pastors and businessman who highly valued community and included me in their living example. I still maintain ties with a couple of those men after many years. In Mexico City my wife and I have formed church planting teams where—despite ethnic and cultural differences—the spirit of camaraderie can only be described as true *koinonia*. The discipleship group I was invited to participate in at Wesley Biblical Seminary over ten years ago continues to be a source of strength and encouragement.

John Wesley rediscovered the biblical principle that our faith formation has much to do with accountability groups within the church. He believed there is no personal holiness without social holiness. Class meetings were intimate gatherings of ten to twelve who met weekly for spiritual growth. Leaders in these meetings provided an atmosphere of trust for all members “to bear one another’s burdens” and spiritual accountability for those who were struggling. In early Methodism, leaders would set the example for others by honestly sharing about their temptations, inner battles, and weaknesses. That sounds like my church in prison or like a good twelve-step group.



“In Mexican culture, we love those moments that include laughing and eating together.”

This is the will of God for all believers today. If your church or small group has captured this New Testament concept, praise his name! If you had it and lost it, the good news is you can get it back and keep it. Craig Groeshel says in his popular podcasts, “We must be people focused and Jesus centered.” This is a good mindset to recapture the biblical principle that the church is the family of God.

I was a part of Fuller Seminary at the height of the church growth movement. I am grateful for all I learned during that time, but people aren’t merely numbers to grow our church or grow our egos. We really care about their lives and their needs. They are people created in the image of God who need to be restored in a loving body of believers. Jesus is the answer, but we are his hands and feet to bring hope and healing.

In the Gospels we see Jesus created an incredible bond among such a diverse group of young men and women as they did life together. Community building was an important part of his ministry. He was always befriending sinners, reaching out to the outcasts, and bringing the lonely into the family of God. It is not all about trying to be contemporary, relevant, or cool; it is about providing

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Marshall Daigre



Marshall Daigre is the founding pastor of Harvest Pointe Methodist Church in Madison, Alabama. He is an adjunct professor of Religion at Calhoun Community College. Through this article, Marshall hopes to inspire you and your church to serve others and spread the Good News through three vital acts of the church: worship, discipleship, and church activity.

The church has three vital acts: worship, disciple, and serve. These three essential acts sum up all church activity. We find these in some form in both Testaments and throughout church history. Three “great” statements correspond with the three acts: The Great Commandment (Matt 22:36–40; worship), The Great Commission (Matt 28:16–20; discipleship), and The Great Commitment (Matt 20:28; service). Any and every healthy church will do these three things well. The church I planted and pastor—Harvest Pointe Methodist Church—has built its life around these three acts, and I want to encourage you to do the same.

THE FIRST ACT OF THE CHURCH: WORSHIP

Worship involves what we adore and love, what is highest and first. Think about its everyday use: for example, she worships Elvis or he worships Alabama football. Biblically, worship concerns what we bow to and lift up as worthy. What we worship, we submit to, exposing what we value most. So, worship must be first on paper and in practice.

Worshipping the triune God is our worthiest and foremost public act. The Bible knows nothing of a private or public faith but a public and private faith. Our culture dichotomizes the two. Even “Christians” today reject the unity, privatizing faith. Israel and Jesus worshiped privately and publicly—and so must we.

At Harvest Pointe, we’re intentionally liturgical in worship. That doesn’t mean traditional. *Liturgy* means “public work” or “the work of the people.” That is, worship is fundamentally a public participation in the worship of God. Worship isn’t a presentation we attend but a ritual we do. It is more than music, and it’s not a show or entertainment. People already have enough of that!

Liturgical worship organizes around Word and sacrament. We proclaim God’s word through prayers, songs, Scripture readings, preaching, etc. Then, we do what God says by giving and confessing, remembering and rehearsing holy baptism and communion. These acts engage the whole person—body and soul, material and mystical. We stand, sit, and kneel; we sing and keep silent; we listen and think; then, we respond and do—all while gathered around the family table.

So, worship is participatory and holistic. Since the first Easter, Christians have gathered on Sunday to worship the risen Lord. We should do likewise. Statistically, the American Christian will worship fewer than fifty-two times this year. Let’s be counter-cultural and worship every Sunday!

Let’s recover the Lord’s Day as a holy day of worship. Like the Sabbath before it, Sunday is a weekly holy day of worship. It is still the most public way to show that God is first.



Team Sunday is in the Fall, during football season (a big deal in Alabama). We invite everyone to wear their favorite team colors that day for worship. During worship, we talk about unity. Afterward, we eat tailgate food together. Not only is this fun but also it creates church-family memories. And it’s something easy to invite unchurched people to.

For groups, we look specifically to Jesus and

THE SECOND ACT OF THE CHURCH: DISCIPLESHIP

A disciple is a learner. Consequently, everyone is a disciple of something or someone. As students of Jesus, we don’t set the curriculum, schedule, or outcomes; he does. We learn in the classroom of his creation, and our curriculum requires a cross. The program is for life: into eternity. The outcome is holiness: a saint. There is one required text: the Holy Bible. The end (*telos*) is nothing less than Jesus himself, and the cost of discipleship is only everything.

No discipleship exists without evangelism, so the latter is part of the former. Further, discipleship always ends with doing, not thinking. At Harvest Pointe, we’ve (re)discovered three fruitful ways to disciple: big days, groups, and equipping.

Big days are about inviting others to “come and see” (John 1:39). These are special occasions with food and fellowship like Israel experienced in the Exodus and Jesus used during his time on earth (e.g., Feeding the Five Thousand). The circumstances may be a holy day, like Easter, or a made-up day, like Team Sunday.

the concentric circles around him. We need godly friendships like he had with his best friend, John the Beloved. Beyond that was his band of brothers: Peter, James, and John. Then, his small group, the Twelve. Beyond that were other disciples, friends, family, etc.

When God works, he always sends a person. Thus, discipleship is fundamentally relational. God wants to populate our life with disciple-making relationships where we mutually give and receive. John Wesley divided groups into societies, classes, and bands. No matter what we call them, groups of varying sizes and types are necessary for every disciple’s life.

As a church, equipping or resourcing is essential too: an Advent devotion, books to promote holiness (like the Francis Asbury Society puts out), a 90-day Bible challenge, online theological courses (like what Wesley Biblical Seminary offers), etc. Providing resources to equip the saints is the business of the church.

THE THIRD ACT OF THE CHURCH: SERVICE

Even unbelievers know that serving those in need is good. Although misdirected on how to help others, they know it is a vital part of every community. Christians agree, and the church should lead the way in serving the city, not in how the city determines, but according to King Jesus.

Continued on page 10

Practicing What He Preaches: Vitality in Action

The Lasting Impact of Robert E. Coleman

Outreach and stewardship are necessary for any church or congregation to have lasting impact. Dr. Robert “Clem” Coleman is an internationally known evangelist, author, professor, and speaker. His book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, first published in 1963, has sold over three million copies and has been translated into more than one hundred languages. Billy Graham claimed that few books have had more impact on the cause of world evangelism. *Christianity Today* highlighted it as one of the most influential books upon evangelicalism in the second half of the twentieth century. So, Dr. Coleman is well-known and respected, especially in the community where he lives.

For twenty-five years Robert E. Coleman preached every Friday night on the streets of Lexington, Kentucky. He says there is hardly a spot in downtown Lexington that he hasn’t preached. Now, at age 95, having lost his wife in 2017, Dr. Coleman lives alone with his dog “Hallelujah.”

Though he limits his activities a little closer to home these days, Dr. Coleman is still very much involved in vital ministry. In fact, those with whom he interacts every week know him simply as “Clem,” a man who prays over their breakfast every Saturday morning at a local Bob Evans Restaurant. These men come from a wide swath of professions and backgrounds and meet just to chat. There is no special evangelistic agenda or ministry program, just a few men sharing their lives and a cup of coffee or a breakfast platter.

After Dr. Coleman’s wife passed away, he was invited to attend and pray. Soon he was the beloved elder. Sometimes his prayer might be ten minutes long—basically a short devotional embedded in the prayer. A couple times during COVID, when the restaurant was closed, part of the group met in the parking lot, standing around their cars while he prayed.

Vic Reasoner recently had the opportunity to attend and observe this men’s gathering. Fourteen men met around the table with “Clem.” Curious to know why the esteemed author of the textbook he was assigned to read in seminary (*The Master Plan of Evangelism*) has such a casual nickname, Vic asked Dr. Coleman’s daughter Angie, who explained, “During college, Clem Kadiddlehopper was one of Red Skelton’s popular characters on radio and later TV. Dad was tall and a clumsy dancer so the name stuck.”

I Will Build My Church continued from page 6

genuine love and caring. Those outside of the church are seeking true relationships.

In order to maintain a sense of community within the church, the church must continually go out to those who walk in darkness and still dwell in the land of the shadow of death. Ministering works of mercy together as the body of Christ creates a strong sense of unity. It brings glory to God and gives purpose to the family of God.

There is no contradiction: as a means to enjoy a healthy, unified church, it is essential that the body of Christ is always reaching out to those who are not yet members of the family. Jesus loved to share meals with everybody—even those who were opposed to him and especially with “sinners.” He said, “When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind” (Luke 14:13 NKJV). As we go out to the streets of this megacity, to the prisons, the hospitals, the bus stops, the indigenous villages, we experience an amazing sense of *koinonia*. This is the will of God in Christ Jesus for his church today. ✎

Vic’s teenaged grandson was visiting the weekend he had the opportunity to attend this breakfast, so Vic brought him along to witness the church in action represented by one faithful man. After orders had been taken, one man took his knife and tapped on his glass. After everyone at the table got quiet, “Clem” stood and prayed for the group. He became very fervent as he thanked God for the atoning blood of Christ.

Vic felt honored to participate, saying:

My grandson went with me and ended up next to Dr. Coleman. Clem took a real interest in my grandson and engaged him in conversation. I got a picture of that conversation. In the background is a statement by Bob Evans who was obviously talking about physical hunger, but Dr. Coleman has been feeding spiritual hunger for decades through his evangelistic efforts and his books.

Later, I told my grandson, “Joel, you just saw a man of great influence and integrity up close. At 95, he is still practicing what he wrote that the church should be doing. Wilmore is full of famous doctors, but only one answers to “Clem”!

If anyone had a right to tout his success for the cause of Christ, it is Dr. Robert E. Coleman. However, his purpose in life is and has been to promote Jesus Christ himself. Most if not all of the men who meet with “Clem” every week do not realize who he is. To them, he is a kind and thoughtful friend who talks to them and prays for them—someone who participates in their lives. Isn’t that what Jesus did during his time on earth? Isn’t that what he has called us to do? Yes, indeed it is! ✎



Photo credit: Vic Reasoner

The Master Plan of Evangelism

Robert E. Coleman



\$12.95 (Paperback; 118 pages)

It all started when Jesus called a few men to follow him and share God’s message with their neighbors. We are called to do the same. But evangelism can be difficult—even intimidating. With all the evangelism resources available, where should you turn to find advice on how to share the Good News with others? Robert E. Coleman says the answers aren’t found in TV evangelism, easy-evangelism guidebooks, or the latest marketing techniques. Rather, he looks to the Bible, to the ultimate example found in Jesus Christ.

“Few books have had as great an impact on the cause of world evangelization in our generation . . .” —Billy Graham

third are women. A few are wealthy, but most are slaves. There are Jewish names, Greek names, and Latin names in his greetings. They may, in fact, be his leadership team. Some commentators feel that the five clusters of names indicate five house congregations in Rome. Assuming a maximum of fifty people assembling in each house, the church in Rome probably did not constitute over 250 people when Paul wrote to them, yet they are known worldwide (see Rom 1:8). When Paul finally arrives in Rome he will find that the gospel has penetrated into Caesar's household (see Phil 4:22) and even into the palace guard (see Phil 1:13). That is the power of the gospel being shared through vital congregations!

In Revelation 3:2, Jesus told the church at Sardis to "strengthen what remains." Yes, some were lifeless, but others were merely careless: They were ready to die but were not yet dead. A spark of faith still flickered, but they had not maintained the fullness of the Spirit. Only a few had kept their white garments pure, and they were blameless. John Stott preached, "An alive and awake minority can recall the majority from death." It takes no grace to curse the darkness, but it does take commitment to light a candle.

Church historian Kenneth Scott Latourette explained that Christianity has spread by pulsations of advance, retreat, and advance. Each major advance carried it further than the one before it, and each major recession was less severe than the previous one. Wesley expressed hope that one such advance, the Methodist revival, would not die: "No; I trust this is only the beginning of a far greater work—the dawn of 'the latter day glory.'" Wesley then expressed his belief that God "will carry it on in the same manner as he has begun." Thus, he expected the "latter day glory" to arrive gradually as the gospel was preached and all classes of people were converted and entered the kingdom of God. He described this as "the grand Pentecost" fully come. Long live the church of Jesus Christ! *Viva la iglesia!* ✠



Certainly, worship is nothing less than the celebration of God's mighty acts of salvation and anticipation of his final victory over all things; however, worship is also much, much more. It is:

- The recognition of the triune God who has revealed himself through his continual work of bringing salvation to the world.
- The declaration of the truth of who God is, what he has done, and what he promises to do.
- Participation with Christ and with one another in doxological praise to God the Father.
- A grace-filled encounter with Jesus Christ through the Spirit's work in the sacraments.
- The formation of the church as the people of God who are his witnesses in the world.

Worship is all this—and more!

It must be recognized that in addition to all that we know about worship, it is also a mystery, so it can never be fully comprehended or explained. However, I would be remiss not to mention one final feature of worship that is fundamental to Christian life. Namely, worship is delight in God. Saint Augustine of Hippo believed the greatest good that can be achieved in the Christian life is worship because worship is the *telos*—or chief end—of all creation. John Wesley reiterates this idea in his commentary on the Roman Catholic catechism:


In divine worship, (as in all other actions,) the first thing to be considered is the end, and the next thing is the means conducting to that end. The end is the honour of God, and the edification of the Church; and then God is honoured, when the Church is edified. The means conducting to that end, are to have the service so administered as may inform the mind, engage the affections, and increase devotion.

God has designed the world so that a deep longing and desire for happiness and joy are built into its very being. Augustine writes in his *Confessions*, "You stir us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is unquiet until it rests in you" (14). Every creature seeks to satisfy the


longing of the soul, which cannot be fulfilled outside of delight in God. As Augustine writes in his book *De Trinitate*, "For the fullness of our happiness, beyond which there is none else, is this: to enjoy God the three in whose image we were made" (77). Thus, only in worship of the triune God is true delight, satisfaction, and happiness found.

Worship is participation in true delight, then, because in worship the church experiences the glorious presence of God's wonderful, mighty, and holy love. May such delight characterize our worship as we remain mindful of God's gracious devotion, responding with gratitude in ceaseless wonder, love, and praise. ✠

Hosea



God's Unchanging Love



A study with
Dr. John Oswalt

Beginning Monday, August 28, 2023

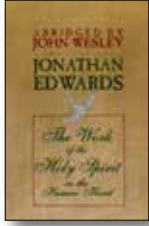
7:00 p.m.

The Francis Asbury Society
1580 Lexington Rd
Wilmore, KY 40390

God's love extends through and
beyond whatever judgment our bad
choices may bring upon us.

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Human Heart

by Jonathan Edwards; abridged by John Wesley



\$7.99 (Paperback; 112 pages)

Whenever there are reports of revival, an outpouring of the Spirit, or unusual phenomenon, these reports are often evaluated in light of the writings of Jonathan Edwards. He was pastoring in Northampton, Massachusetts, when the First Great Awakening broke out in 1740. His famous sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” contributed to the Great Awakening, but he became concerned about the claims of spiritual manifestations without the evidence of a changed life in so many people. In 1741, he preached, “The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God.” In 1742, Edwards preached another series of sermons, which were later published as *A Treatise on Religious Affections*, in which he attempted to develop a reliable series of indicators by which truly gracious “affections” or feelings could be distinguished from those which had no grace. His vocal insistence upon this position led to his dismissal from the pulpit of his church in 1750.

Edwards was a Calvinist, and his observations are often valuable; however, they are mixed with his determinism. In 1744 John Wesley published a 48-page, edited version of “The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God.” In 1773 Wesley published an abridged

edition of *A Treatise on Religious Affections* in volume 30 of his *Christian Library*. In his introduction Wesley said:

He had given an account of a glorious work in New-England; of abundance of sinners of every sort and degree, who were in a short time converted to God. But in a few years, a considerable part of these “turned back as a dog to the vomit.” What was the plain inference to be drawn from this? Why, that a true believer may “make shipwreck of the Faith.” How then could he evade the force of this truly by eating his own words, and proving, (as well as the nature of the thing would bear,) that they were no believers at all? In order to this, he heaps together so many curious, subtle, metaphysical distinctions, as are sufficient to puzzle the brain, and confound the intellects, of all the plain men and women in the universe; and to make them doubt of, if not wholly deny, all the work which God had wrought in their souls. Out of this dangerous heap, wherein much wholesome food is mixed with much deadly poison, I have selected many remarks and admonitions, which may be of great use to the children of God. May God write them in the hearts of all that desire to walk as Christ also walked!

These classic writings of Edwards, redacted by Wesley, were reprinted in 1998 under the title, *The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Human Heart*. Unfortunately, few realize that this book includes only the observations with which Wesley is in agreement. The Francis Asbury Society offers this book in our bookstore. ✝

Implementing a Plan for Discipleship continued from page 3

time. These directed times (instructions on what and how to pray are given) of confession, forgiveness, total surrender, and group ministry are intended to teach them how to spend quality time with God, to help them know God and become his disciples.

Well, it works! Adults can commit to a systematic discipleship plan. We have seen many do it, grow, become leaders, and confidently live as disciples. At our church membership class, we explain that our discipleship plan is the primary tool God has given us to help people live successfully for Christ. After these classes, and after catalytic events such as our Spiritual Life Conferences, we help connect people to a discipleship group. We see a constant cycle of people coming to Christ and growing quickly. People who’ve been spiritually stagnant for years are growing like never before!

We are blessed to be a church filled with mature leaders who consistently encourage and teach new believers. The church is functioning at a high level, and the people are pushing forward, excited about what God is doing, expectant, and constantly hungry for more. The discipleship plan is a vital part of our church, producing a large number of leaders with a couple of years of common discipleship experience. There is great unity as we have the same purpose and goals.

However, this discipleship plan is a tool. It still depends on authentic leaders whose walk with Christ is worthy of being reproduced. This plan is not something that can be effectively led by just any volunteer. The leaders need some spiritual maturity, but with authentic leaders, this tool is highly effective.

Church is wonderful when God is freely moving in people’s lives. God is moving powerfully at our church, and the things he’s doing here are so good that I want every church to implement a discipleship plan like ours! I believe it comes from God. I encourage you to pray about a plan to make disciples in your church. ✝

Three Vital Acts continued from page 7

Jesus tells us that he came not to be served but to serve. How much more then should his followers? If worship puts God first and discipleship makes us more like Christ, then serving others is the outworking of a worship-filled saint. With only a cursory glance at church history and our Wesleyan tradition, it becomes undeniable how vital works of mercy are.

Matthew 25 is the ground floor for who and how we serve: food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, hospitality to the stranger, clothing for the naked, and presence to the sick and imprisoned. Of course, this is literal and physical as well as symbolic and spiritual (i.e., poor in spirit, thirsting for righteousness, hopeless and suffering, etc.).

Be creative in imagining ways you and your church can serve your city. The city of God (the Church) transforms the cities of men. Like healing water poured out, go to the lowest places. Find the lowest point in your community and go there, bearing the Good News with serving hands.

For example, our congregation ministers weekly to older people in assisted living. No longer able to care for themselves and often forgotten by their own families, these people had mobile lives like many of us but don’t now. With health issues, depression, anxiety, and death all around, these are some of the lowest, the forgotten that Jesus is talking about. They will never come to our church or give a dime. They don’t have to. We go to them, bringing with us the Good News. We’ve discovered that in serving others, the offshoot is joy.

We share our story at Harvest Pointe not because it’s the way to do church but to encourage you to express worship, discipleship, and service in imaginative ways in your local church, to inspire you to be witnesses to your own stories of how God is using these three acts of the church to bring heaven to earth. ✝

Jesu, the Word of Mercy Give

Charles Wesley

*Jesu, the word of mercy give,
And let it swiftly run;
And let the priests themselves believe,
And put salvation on.*

*Clothed with the spirit of holiness,
May all thy people prove
The plenitude of gospel grace,
The joy of perfect love.*

*Jesus, let all thy lovers shine
Illustrious as the sun;
And, bright with borrowed rays divine,
Their glorious circuit run:*

*Beyond the reach of mortals, spread
Their light where'er they go;
And heavenly influences shed
On all the world below.*

*As giants may they run their race,
Exulting in their might;
As burning luminaries, chase
The gloom of hellish night:*

*As the bright Sun of righteousness,
Their healing wings display;
And let their lustre still increase
Unto the perfect day.*



Holiness Preaching Conference
October 15-18, 2023
@Trinity Hill Methodist Church | 3600 Tates Creek Rd | Lexington, KY

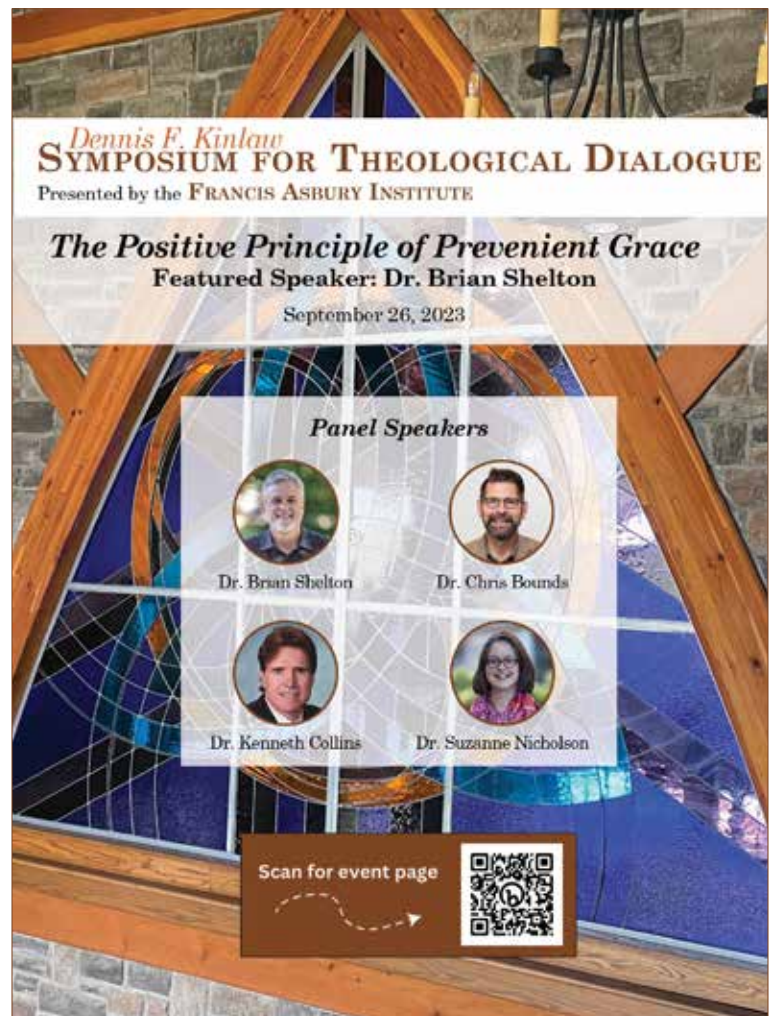

Dr. Chris Bounds


Bill Kierce


Dr. John Oswalt


Dr. Mike Powers


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Dennis F. Kinlaw
SYMPOSIUM FOR THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE
Presented by the FRANCIS ASBURY INSTITUTE


The Positive Principle of Preventive Grace
Featured Speaker: Dr. Brian Shelton
September 26, 2023

Panel Speakers



Dr. Brian Shelton


Dr. Chris Bounds


Dr. Kenneth Collins


Dr. Suzanne Nicholson

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Contender: Going Deeper in the Book of Jude



Andy Miller III

\$12.95 (Paperback; 118 pages)

Why did Jude write this letter? He said it wasn't the letter he planned to write. The circumstances of his readers compelled him to call them to "contend for the faith once for all delivered to the Saints." Reading the Book of Jude, we learn a lot about the group opposing the gospel and negatively influencing his dear friends. When we put the pieces together, we find that Jude's adversaries resemble people opposing the gospel in our time.

Cross Purposes

Stan Key

\$20.95 (Paperback; 320 pages)



Today the revolutionary power of the gospel has been diluted and polluted by forms of Christianity that are shaped by prosperity theology, pop-psychology, self-help religion, and politics. Cruciformity must, once again, become the defining center of the Christian faith, and every believer must learn to deny self, renounce status, and lay down their lives for others. It is this second cross that is the special focus of this book.

Upon This Rock...

Charlie Fiskeaux

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Jesus replied, . . . Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it." (Matt 16:16–18 NLT)

The confession "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" is the foundation of the church that Jesus declared he would build. While we observe the ebb and flow of local churches and denominations, we can be confident that there are persons responding to Jesus' call to follow him in an intimate, personal relationship in which Jesus asks for a commitment of everything that we are and have.

Our foundational documents declare, "The church is never stronger, no man is happier, and no society ever healthier than they are holy." So, the Francis Asbury Society supports the church—and persons in the church—by declaring this message of total commitment, of being wholly devoted to God. Accordingly, FAS seeks persons who believe in taking the message of Scriptural holiness to all people and churches and are prepared to support these efforts. Your contributions will enable the proclamation of the holiness message to persons eager to live their lives fully committed to Jesus.

Details for various methods of giving to the ministries of the Francis Asbury Society are available on our website: www.francisasburysociety.com/support.

Sign up to receive our companion e-newsletter, *Ministry Matters*, at www.francisasburysociety.com

The High Calling—September–October 2023

The High Calling is a bimonthly publication of The Francis Asbury Society to serve as a link between FAS and its constituents, building loyalty and awareness so that the teaching and experience of Christian holiness may continue to be lived and proclaimed throughout the world.

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The High Calling

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