

2008 National Founders Conference Live-blogging by Timmy Brister

L e n g t h e n i n g the Cords
and Strengthening the Stakes:
RENEWING AND PLANTING LOCAL CHURCHES

[NFC I: Ted Christman on “An Exposition of Psalm 1”](#)

About Ted Christman:



Ted Christman is the founding pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in Owensboro, Kentucky where he has joyfully labored since 1973. Ted received his BA at Bob Jones University, his MDiv at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary and has pursued postgraduate studies at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He is the author of *Forbid Them Not: Rethinking the Baptism and Church Membership of Young People*, the *Daily Bible Reading Schedule*, and the chapter entitled "Loving Your Flock" in *Dear Timothy*. He is board member and pastoral-mentor at the Midwest Center for Theological Studies. He and his wife, Dianne, have two grown children, Rebekah and Jonathan, both of whom are involved in kingdom service.

Ted Christman to the live-blogger: "This guys preaches Psalm 1 better than anyone else I have ever heard . . .".

Text: [Psalm 1](#)

The theme of this familiar psalm is the present and future blessedness, and the present and future misery of the wicked. It is about both. The structure is very simple: it divides into two parts, exactly in half. Verse 1-3 is about the blessed man, and 4-6 is a description of the miserable man.

Preliminary Observations

1. This psalm divides all of humanity into two categories--all of humanity. We are familiar with this division in the Scriptures--children of God and children of the devil, saved and lost, light and darkness, etc. This division is as ancient as the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. We must hold to these two categories in our preaching. Our people must be very conscious as to what category they belong to.

2. The word "blessed" carries the meaning of a deep-seated joy, delight, satisfaction, and contentment in God. It carries a "holy happiness."
3. The expression that we find in verse 2, "the law of the Lord," ought to be understood as broadly and not narrowly. The psalmist is not just referring to the Ten Commandments; the Torah is to be understood as the instruction of the Lord. A legitimate expression is "the Word of God."

Some Particulars

The Righteous

Literally, the word "blessed" can be translated "Oh the blessed of the man who . . .". He begins negatively.

1. Negatively: What a godly, happy man does not do and does not go. The fact of the matter is that there are places that godly people do not go and things godly people do not do and people godly people should not socialize with.
 - a. "does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly" - does not live out his life according to the teaching of the one who is wicked; this reminds me of the fact that epistemology always gives birth to ethics. The ungodly begin with the wrong place. God has authoritatively given us the knowledge through His Word.
 - b. "does not stand in the way of sinners" - does not desire the company of sinners; this does not mean that he does not want to reach out to sinners to reach them with the gospel; rather he does not prefer the company of sinners.
 - c. "does not sit in the seat of scoffers" - does not identify himself with the enemies of God's Word, cause, and people.

There is a linear digression in this verse--going downhill, and it is not so much as slowing down as much as going down.

2. Positively

- a. "he delights in the law of the Lord" - he doesn't go first to godly people; his first companion is the Word of God, the revelation of God--that's what he delights in; to delight in the Word of God is to delight in the God of the Word.
- b. "he meditates in it" - giving close concentration of mind and thought until we are affected by what we have seen and experience and savor what we have seen in our hearts; it is staying with the Word of God and seeing it internalized, savored, resolved, and applied. We are to do this "day and night". We like this man ought to be obsessed with the Word of God--preoccupied with the Word of God, thinking about it as often as we can.

3. Analogously - like a tree planted by the water that prospers
4. Covenantally - the explanation in verse 6 ("for the Lord *knows* the way of the righteous"): a knowledge of intimate concern and love that began from all eternity
5. Morally - verse 6 ("the way of the *righteous*")

The Wicked

1. Morally - the "wicked"
2. Contrastively - shows difference over and against the godly and righteous
3. Analogously - "like the chaff that the wind drives away"
4. Eschatologically - "he will not withstand the judgment" (his end)

Application to Delighting in the Law of the Lord

1. *Delighting in the Word of God is essential.* What is it essential for? For our salvation. According to the psalmist, this and this alone is the one who is blessed, who has the favor of God. If we do not delight in the Word of God at all, we have no reason to believe that we are saved. It is essential for our happiness, for our fruitfulness, for our perseverance, and for our prosperity (all in verse 3). Who would not want to be the man in Psalm 1:3? Can you say this is a description of me?

Merely not doing verse 1 does not guarantee the blessings of verse 3. It is not what we do not do that makes us prosper; it is delighting in the Word of God, meditating on it day and night. It is what we *do* that accounts for our prosperity. We can still do avoid doing the things in verse 1 and perish; but you cannot do what is verse three and not be blessed. This subjective affection (delighting) which manifests itself objectively in meditation is absolutely essential for our ministerial prosperity.

2. *Delighting in God's Word is dynamic.* This affection can and must increase in our lives. There are degrees of delight, are there not? Do you delight in the Word of God now than ever before? We should prayerfully cultivate this delight in God's Word. We must not say, "I wish I had a greater degree of delight, but you know, I am just not there yet, and maybe someday God will be pleased to grant me delight." You and I would never allow an unbeliever to argue that way. No, we need to see God's Word as an acceptable, wonderful, God-prescribed drug that is by its very nature, is addictive--so addictive that the more of it you get, the more you need it. This prescription has unlimited refills and won't cost you anything. We must grow in this grace, and God has made it addictive on purpose. We need to eat the scroll and enjoy the honey, like

Bunyan who, when pricked would bleed "Bibline." We need to the reality of the song we sing, "Give me one pure and holy passion, give me one magnificent ambition, give me one glorious ambition for me life--to know and follow hard after you." What if God answered that prayer in holy visitation? He would hand you His Word and say, "Delight in this, meditate on this." We will be granted this holy passion, magnificent obsession, and glorious ambition, and make you like a tree planted by streams of living water and prosper in all that he does.

May God grant us that great blessing.



[NFC II: Andy Davis on “Dangers in Reforming a Church”](#)

About Andy Davis:



Dr. Davis was born in Boston, Massachusetts where he later earned his bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from MIT in 1984. He then began his career as a Mechanical Engineer with Eaton-Nova Corporation in Beverly, Massachusetts. He was married to Christine Lee Rogers on Mar 14, 1988, and they have two sons and three daughters. Dr. Davis started his seminary training while working as an engineer and earned his Masters of Divinity from [Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary](#) in 1990. In 1992, Dr. Davis resigned from his engineering position to pastor the New Meadows Baptist Church in Topsfield, Massachusetts. In 1994, the Davis family followed the call

of the Lord to Tokushima, Japan, where they were involved in church planting through the International Mission Board. In 1998, Dr. Davis graduated from the [Southern Baptist Theological Seminary](#) in Louisville, KY, with a Ph.D. in Church History. In October of 1998, Dr. Davis accepted a call to be the senior pastor of the [First Baptist Church, Durham, NC](#).

The greatest display of the glory of God in my life has been the reformation of a local church.

It has also been a time of great difficulties, strife, and depression. At a period of my ministry of preaching boo-by-book in Scripture, I was led to Revelation chapter 1 verse 20. I would ask that you turn there this evening.

Text: [Revelation 1:10-20](#) (click)

I prayed that God would give me a vision for the local church and His glory in it, for the reformation of the church, and the renewal of his people in it. This is a vision that John had of the resurrected Christ in the reformation of His Church.

The seven lampstands represent all churches everywhere in all times. The lampstands represent actual local churches in John's day, and Jesus is walking through the midst of His churches. The fact that the church is represented as lampstands speaks to the fact that the church is to be a light to the world; the church is the focus of all God's saving efforts. The church is of immense value and worth to God (the reference to gold).

Jesus holds them in his right hand, a sense of ownership, protection, and authority--the right to rebuke, to correct, and to protect. How awesome is it to consider Jesus' priestly ministry among His Churches? These seven churches represent Christ's ongoing work of reformation in the Church. To all, Christ gives words of exhortation, to look ahead to the sweet rewards, to hear all that God is saying to the churches. This is a potent handbook of God's zeal to bring reformation to the churches. God is at work, and Jesus is at work always.

The immense danger of not reforming the local church is utmost danger. We are out of step with Jesus Christ, who is always rebuking us, correcting us, changing us. Jesus will come and in judgment remove the lampstand from its place. Martin Luther, "The whole life of the believer should be one of repentance." When the church stops reforming, it is saying that it no longer needs to repent.

We are used to hearing Christ's word of repentance and rebuke; we yearn for it because of the wretchedness of indwelling sin. I long for the day to be free at last from the struggle and battle against sin. *But I have found that non-Christian church members are not used to that call for repentance--they think that is something you do once and for all time and that is it.*

FBC Durham was established in 1845, and in 1988 the by-laws were changed to allow women for deacons. The first time I called the church to repent was when the church voted in the first woman as deacon which at that time was a lay elder.

The church that stops reforming is dead.

Some churches are more healthy than others. The call for reformation is going to be different for one at Sardis than one in Philadelphia. For the one that is dead or dying, it will address different issues than others. The real question is how can a church drifting theologically be reformed? A church that has been running off pastors be reformed?

Ten Dangers I Have Learned from My Experience in Church Reformation

1. Forgetting the centrality of God in church reform

The church is God's, for He bought it with his own blood (Acts 20:28). The blood of God purchased the church. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit completely invested in the owning of the church--it is His alone. And He alone has been there throughout all of history. We need to keep central God's interest in it, His power over it, and His right to command it. God is zealous over His church.

2. Self-reliance.

The core issue of salvation is this: in whom will you place your trust ultimately. The only two ways of salvation in this world--self-salvation and salvation by faith in Christ alone. This is such a core tendency of the human heart, and it will be to the day we die--we tend to rely on ourselves. The danger is that you are going to look inward to see if the resources are there to meet the challenges. The two sides of self-reliance: side one, you look inward for the resources which you don't have and murmur and complain and get bitter against God; side two, you look inward for the resources and you find them and results in pride, arrogance, and boasting. You are not the answer, never have been, and never will.

3. Failure to rely on the Word alone.

Sola Scriptura is still true in the reformation in the local church. Put all your eggs in this basket. You will be blessed in everything you do because God will bless His Word. Martin Luther, "I did nothing; the Word did it all." The sufficiency of Scripture--do you believe God's Word is sufficient to reform a church, to revive a dying church? We don't need any gimmicks, and reformation out of the box. Reformation does work with handouts and powerpoints. We need to resist pragmatism and gimmickry. Isaiah 55:10-11--God's Word will not return empty, but will accomplish God's purpose.

We need to avoid church conference and management techniques. That is not where it is at. 2 Cor. 4:2 - renounced secret and shameful ways It is not about marshalling enough people in your corner to accomplish reform.

4. Deficiency in prayer or prayerlessness.

Jonathan Edwards, "Hypocrites Deficient in Private Prayer". That title is enough to bring conviction, doesn't it? Deficiency is a big danger. We must beg that God would reform His Church. Prayer puts us in the humbling position as beggars, trusting in God's power to reform the church. It is home base for the church. The most urgent need of the church is a deeper, intimate knowledge of God (Carson on Paul's prayers). Don't focus on technique and strategy; get on your knees and ask God to reform His church. Prayerlessness is arrogance, unbelief, and disobedience.

5. Pride toward your people resulting in gossip and slander about you.

Consider the Pharisee and the tax collector. There is a tendency when you have experienced reformation to think that you are better than those who haven't seen reformation. What do you have that you didn't receive? (1 Cor. 4:7). God hates slander and gossip--check them in the lists of things detestable in the eyes of God. We should be praying that God would grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth.

6. Cowardice or fear of man.

I dealt with this every step of the way. Fear of what man thinks. What will _____ do? Will I be criticized again? What will the deacons think about this? What if I lose my job and can't take care of my family? It makes a preacher shrink back from preaching the whole counsel of God's Word. Jesus forces you to make choices--see Paul's example in Gal. 1:10. One man said to me, "I will fight you every step of the way." And he did. No matter what I did, he would hate me. The Lord showed me a Scripture, [Isa. 51:12-13](#):

"I, I am he who comforts you;
 who are you that you are afraid of man who dies,
 of the son of man who is made like grass,
 13 and have forgotten the Lord, your Maker,
 who stretched out the heavens
 and laid the foundations of the earth,
 and you fear continually all the day
 because of the wrath of the oppressor,
 when he sets himself to destroy?"

We have to be courageous; cowardice is an enemy to reformation in the church.

7. Mistaking non-essentials for essentials.

Dr. Mohler is concerned about young ministers turning churches upside down. Well, it is not the young people alone, but anyone who seeks to reform a church needs to be careful. You need to be careful where you put the line in the sand. In essentials unity; in nonessentials liberty; in all things, charity. The idea that there are not any "nonessentials" will get you in trouble. Not all doctrines are of equal weight. Not every fight is over doctrine; sometimes it is building programs, budgets, worship screens, etc. We need wisdom. Cowardice is fleeing when you should stand and fight; contentiousness is when you should be patient but act without wisdom.

8. Impatience

2 Tim. 4:2 is a key verse for reform. "With great patience and careful instruction . . ." Give God time to work. Give His Word time to work in the hearts of your people. It is arrogance to think that they must get it immediately. How did God work with you? Give it time. Know your people, and don't go too fast. Jesus, "I have much to say to you, more than you can bear . . .". Many agricultural illustrations point to patience. You don't stick a seed in a soil and come back in an hour to see how it is doing. Martin Luther, "Take care of the idols in the heart, and the idols of the wall will take care of themselves."

9. Discouragement

Satan is on every street corner selling poison to every minister telling them to "drink this." Satan sells discouragement because our weapons are irresistible. If we get the full gospel array on us, with the Word of God in our hands, Satan will lose. So what does he do? He keeps you on the sidelines in discouragement. Every servant has fought discouragement and despair. Paul, "sorrowful and yet rejoicing" . . . Martin Luther, "I am quitting preaching; I not preaching anymore . . .". For 15 months, he did not preach. Why? Discouragement. Adoniram Judson, when his wife died, he dug his own grave and stared into it for weeks and said, "I believe in him, but I find him not." (Other examples: Charles Spurgeon, David Brainerd, Martyn Lloyd-Jones). Lloyd-Jones in his book *Spiritual Depression*: "Stop listening to yourself and start preaching to yourself."

10. Not developing men as leaders around you

Reformation is led by godly men. There were godly men who stood up for me and had enough of the way their pastor was being treated.

The Ten Dangers Turned Positive

1. Keep the glory of God central in all things.
2. Rely on God and God alone.
3. Unleash the power of the word of God through faithful exposition of Scripture.
4. Saturate your efforts through prevailing prayer.
5. Humble yourself continually before God and others; see the grace of God in your own life.
6. Be strong and courageous, fearing God more than men.
7. Keep clear on essential issues; spend your strength on them.
8. Be patient. Don't expect reformation to come overnight.
9. Never be discouraged; Christ will most certainly build his church.
10. Build a strong group of godly men in your church who will encourage you in the work of reformation.

Join me in prayer for reformation of our churches.

L e n g t h e n i n g the Cords
and Strengthening the Stakes:
RENEWING AND PLANTING LOCAL CHURCHES

[NFC III: Tom Nettles on “Biographical Sketch of Daniel Marshall”](#)

About Tom Nettles:

Dr. Nettles is widely regarded as one of the foremost Baptist historians in America. He came to [Southern Seminary](#) from the faculty of [Trinity Evangelical Divinity School](#) where he was Professor of Church History and Chair of the Department of Church History. He previously taught at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary. Along with numerous journal articles and scholarly papers, Dr. Nettles is the author or editor of nine books. Among his books are *By His Grace and For His Glory*; *Baptists and the Bible*, the highly influential volume which he co-authored with L. Russ Bush; and *Why I am a Baptist*, co-edited with Russell D. Moore.

Text: [2 Corinthians 3](#) (click)

It is a tremendously powerful concept to say that "You are our letter . . .". This passage speaks of the ministry of Daniel Marshall. We are looking at Daniel Marshall because we are here talking about church planting. The history of Baptist life is a series of church plants.

[Daniel Marshall \(1706-1784\)](#)

Ninth of eleven children. Became a believer in 1726. A man of "ardent temper" very zealous for Christ. For 20 years, he lived in prosperous circumstances. Marshall was speaking of the necessity of the new birth and was arguing for a regenerate church membership. In 1744, he heard Whitfield preach and saw many conversions. He came to believe that the time of the millennial glory was near. The confession stance of his church and his hope of success was in the historical stance of Calvinism. Marshall had the conviction that he should dispose of all his earthly goods for the sake of the conversion of the heathen. The nearest opportunity for the conversion of the heathen was the Mohawk Indians in 1751. Many of the Indians were impressed by the concerns of the gospel, and several were converted.

In Winchester, Marshall attended a church within the Philadelphia Association and concluded that they were biblically sound. He was licensed to preach the gospel and the unrestrained exercise of his gifts. His gifts were "[not above the level of mediocrity.](#)"

** At this moment, I realized that I in no wise will be able to keep up with Dr. Nettles in his paper on Daniel Marshall. I will see if I can get a PDF copy of it up for download. In the meantime, another article by Dr. Nettles related to Daniel Marshall is "[Shubal Stearns and the Separate Baptist Tradition](#)."

Biblical Principles that can be gleaned . . .

1. *True success and preaching comes not by might nor by power, but by His Spirit.*
2. *God gives the increase.* Marshall gives flesh to reality that God does not depend on the legs of men, but on His own determination to build His own church and uses whatever instrument He desires.
3. *The great value of personal courage bolstered by the fact that God will own His cause.* Paul-
-"For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain."
4. *Marshall served as a great encouragement to young ministers.* He attended his preaching with great urgency and fervency. He knew how to encourage one to stir up the gift of God in them, to not be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord.
5. *The irreplaceable value of zeal.* The prominent feature of Marshall's character was the burning zeal for the conversion of the heathen. Love to Christ, love for the souls of men, constituted his ruling passion.
6. *The indivisible nature of doctrine and gospel ministry.* Each church plant began with a robust doctrinal statement. A firm doctrinal basis from the beginning can protect the sheep from the wolves as well as a witness to truth once for all delivered to the saints for generations to come.

L e n g t h e n i n g t h e C o r d s
a n d S t r e n g t h e n i n g t h e S t a k e s:
R E N E W I N G A N D P L A N T I N G L O C A L C H U R C H E S

NFC IV: Voddie Baucham on “Building a Solid Doctrinal Foundation”

About Voddie Baucham:



[Voddie Baucham](#) serves as Pastor of Preaching at [Grace Family Baptist Church](#) in Spring, TX. He has become one of the most highly sought-after preacher/teachers in the nation, and has been referred to as an “Evangelist to intellectuals.” Voddie’s ministry is marked by thought-provoking insights into

God's Word and commitment to sound biblical theology and expository preaching.

We are a church plant, but we are hoping to be a church planting movement. We have seven guys who have been in training for the purpose of planting churches in our area. We want to put into the DNA a solid doctrinal foundation. I want to give an easy answer, and then I want to expand on that from a practical perspective.

First, the easy answer.

Text: 2 Timothy 4:2a ([1-5](#))

"Preach the Word."

That's it. That's how you do it.

In order to understand the significance of this passage, we need to understand the significance of the context of 2 Timothy. *First*, the intimacy of 2 Timothy is astounding--the closeness of their relationship, the love they have for one another. *Second*, the care and instruction that Paul takes to help young Timothy. *Third*, the overall singleness and focus is hard to miss. The theme is on the one hand preserve and proclaim the truth of the gospel. Paul is about to be martyred, he knows he is about to die. On the other hand, endure the suffering that will inevitably follow as a result of having done the first part (of preserving and proclaiming the gospel).

2-Pronged Theme of 2 Timothy

[1:13-14](#) - guard the good deposit entrusted to you

[1:8](#) - share in the suffering for the gospel by the power of God

[2:1-2](#) - entrust to faithful men who will teach others also

[2:3](#) - endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus

[3:14](#) - continue in what you have learned and have believed

[3:12](#) - all who live a godly life will be persecuted

[4:2](#) - preach the Word

[4:5](#) - endure suffering

It's all throughout the book.

I believe that it is important to understand this two-pronged theme: we are called to preserve and to proclaim, and on the other hand, we are to suffering and endure as a result of faithful stewardship of the gospel.

Why is this so crucial? Let's look at the text:

1. It is the standard by which we will be judged (4:1).

Jesus is coming, and he is going to judge the living and the dead.

2. The Word is the answer no matter the question (4:2).

Opportune time, inopportune time. Preach the Word. That's what we do. There is never a time where you will be called to preach where God's Word will not suffice to address. There's never a time when we will not need and be utterly dependent on the Word of God. If it is not the Word of God, it does not meet the deepest needs of men.

It's not always opportune time. Often times it is inopportune time.

3. Therein and therein alone do you have moral authority (4:2b)

The authority is not in ourselves but in the Word of God alone. There are a whole host of things you will never preach about if *you* are the authority. If you are committed to things you know and have come to understand things that you have mastered in your life, you are not going to preach many things in your life and second, you will still be a hypocrite.

4. The difference between "you" and "them" is the Word of God (4:3-4). Our flesh wants to be liked and stroked.

"But as for you . . ." (cf. 3:12-14)

My flesh has a tendency to look at individuals who are growing rapidly and look what they do rather than looking at God's Word at what I am supposed to do and look for God's increase. You will not be everyone's favorite. You will not always be endeared.

5. The Word of God defines you and shapes your ministry. It is about us and the Word and the Word in us (4:5).

If Paul had preached differently, he might have not gotten martyred! Paul is about to be killed, and never once does he flinch at death. Paul is telling him, "Timothy, they are about to kill me for preaching the Word of God. Now, it is your turn to take my place."

Practical Perspectives

There are over 195 million non-churched Americans, 2 1/2 million in Houston. Our goal is ten churches planted in the first 10 years of our existence. Consider these facts:

* No county in the USA has a greater church population today than it did 10 years ago.

* In the last decade, church membership declined by 10% while the American population grew by 11.5%.

* Each year, between 3,500-5,000 churches die every year. 60% fewer churches per 10,000 people.

* We are below 10 churches for every 10,000 people.

* 80-85% of churches are plateaued or declined.

* The majority of church growth occurs in churches less than 2 years old.

There's another crisis . . .

There are many would be church planters--most of them have more zeal and passion than anything else. But many are planting in protest or for pragmatic purposes. A lot of young people are dissatisfied with church in America, so they are planting because of that. Many are not coming from solid, doctrinal, and especially not Reformed foundation. There are many out there who are trying to achieve church planting by other means than biblical ecclesiology.

Seven Things to Consider

1. Develop a biblical theology of church planting. Understand why we do it from a biblical perspective. If we are not doing it from a biblical perspective, we will say that the Word is appropriate for certain things, but not church planting. No, we need marketing. If we don't have an intentional, biblical understanding of church planting, we will be pure pragmatists.

A. We plant churches to extend and expand God's kingdom (Matt. 28:18-20). Church planting is inherent in the Great Commission. We must go where people are and plant indigenous churches to reach the peoples of different languages, cultures, lands, etc. The gospel has come to us (America), the remotest parts of the earth as seen in Acts 1:8.

B. We must see the worship of God spread among the nations (Psalm 96). The songs we sing are birthed from peoples and places throughout church history where churches were planted. Every nation, tongue, tribe, and tongue (Rev. 5:9; 7:9) because the church was planted everywhere.

C. Establishing gospel outposts. A church is established where the gospel was received. As the movement went forward, the gospel was central, not personalities.

2. Develop a culture of church planting. Consider [2 Tim. 4:9ff](#). Paul in his natural conversation could not stop talking about where missionaries were sent and churches were being planted.

3. Seek, disciple, and plant with biblically qualified church planters. We should seek them out. It is intentional. We should disciple them, meaning we should invest in them, training them, and equipping them. Then we must plant with them. Send out your best for church planting.

4. Plant from the ground up. Our starting point is important. We develop mission strategies not by what God has *blessed* but by what God has *said*. You don't modify operations based on feedback. Methods are doctrinal. If you have been around church planting at all, you have heard this mantra: "we don't change the message, just the methods." The message gives us the method.

Pragmatism:

- A. Concerned with results rather than principles
- B. Concerned with how something works

We are not called to pragmatism; we are called to be sober-minded.

Church planting begins by looking first at the field, then based on the field, develop a strategy and method for church planting. No. You start with the gospel, then go with the church, and then go to the field. When Paul becomes all things to all men, he is not talking about the church conforming to the culture, he is talking about personal contextualization to reach the people. Paul is not gauging felt needs to determine what you should do or say.

5. Take time to develop a core group. Don't hide your doctrine from anybody.

6. Plant with a long-haul mentality. We have a little over 100 members and average 250 in attendance; 25% have come through baptism (and we don't baptize children under 12). Biblical church growth takes time.

7. Plant here, there, and yonder. Churches are to be planted everywhere. 1.8 billion who have never heard the name of Christ. We need gospel outposts.

People know me from my itinerant preaching mostly. Of the 19 years I have been preaching, 18 of them I have been on staff at church. 10 of them have been as minister of mission, teaching and training in the area of church planting. This is what I love. I don't have a full-time itinerant ministry. I love the local church too much. My prayer is that you get a glimpse of a passion for planting local churches, gospel outposts, for the glory of God. The field is being dominated by the pragmatists; the most "successful" church planters are those speaking at conferences. We need church planters with a solid doctrinal foundation that has the intent of reproducing. That's what we need.

L e n g t h e n i n g the Cords
and Strengthening the Stakes:
RENEWING AND PLANTING LOCAL CHURCHES

[NFC V: Ed Stetzer on “Lengthening the Cords and Strengthening the Stakes, Part 1”](#)

About Ed Stetzer:



[Ed Stetzer](#) has planted churches in New York, Pennsylvania, and Georgia and transitioned declining churches in Indiana and Georgia. He has trained pastors and church planters on five continents, holds two masters degrees and two doctorates, and has written dozens of articles and books. Ed served for three years as seminary professor at the Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky and has taught at fifteen other seminaries. He is currently the Director of [Lifeway Research](#) and Lifeway's Missiologist in Residence.

Text: [2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10](#); and [Luke 24:46-49](#)

I am delighted to be here and challenged to be here at the same time. I am anxious because of the journey that I have been in. I also realize that this is not my typical setting, and I am not the typical speaker at the Founders Conference. I want to be up front with you that I have a bias, namely, that many of my Reformed friends are not well-represented in church planting. One of the reasons why we are having this meeting is so that we can be more active in church planting.

4 of the 5 top multiplying churches are Reformed (Redeemer, Mars Hill, Perimeter, Spanish River). I am here to say that I believe that you want to be more engaged in church planting, and I want to provoke you in this area. I want to encourage you in some ways we can do the work of church planting.

Quote: William Carey in *Inquiry* (using every lawful means to bring about the conversion of the heathen)

If a biblical theology is to birth a biblical church, how is that to work out to biblical church planting? We don't do a very good job of listening to and learning from others. We desperately need each other with doctrinal preaching and missional engagement. Let's look at Luke 24:46-49 to see how it is done.

A recruitment to a cause is not a propagation of the gospel. I want to look at four things in this passage. Let's begin where the Scriptures begin.

1. The Gospel and the Mission (46)

It begins with the gospel. Consider what Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 15:1-4. Paul wants to make sure we understand what the gospel is--the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The Messiah would suffer and raise again on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness would be proclaimed in His name to all nations. Jesus puts together the idea of the death and resurrection *and* repentance and forgiveness to be proclaimed in His name to all nations. *Fundamental to the nature of the gospel is the propagation of the gospel.* The gospel is going somewhere; it is on mission. The challenge is that we often forget that God is on a mission; our God is a missionary God. By His nature He sends. We are identified by people whom God has sent into the world. Part of the challenge is to bask in His glory when His glory is expressed in His mission. Sometimes we are afraid to engage the lost world with the mission of Jesus Christ. Holiness is not separation from sinners but separation from sin.

Can I encourage you? Do not make heroes of any heroes or any church that is filled with good doctrine and God-centered worship but cannot reach lost people for Jesus Christ. What you celebrate, you become. Fill your meetings and your publications and your presentations by celebrating others who are communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ and its power is transforming lives of sinners. Some people have been to the theological gym and have huge theological arms, but they never have worked out the legs. They have huge theological arms on every agenda but have stick-like legs because they have never used them. Could it be that God could use Founders Movement that we can be both biblically formed and shaped such that we have muscular legs and arms? The gospel has to be central in what we do.

You cannot do evangelism separate from the church.

2. The Gospel for the Nations (47)

The Great Commission gives us a fuller picture that the gospel is to be proclaimed to all nations. The gospel is a message for the nations. Jesus was referring that there were people of different ethnicities, different cultures, different contexts, different languages, different kinds of peoples. Our hearts must break for the peoples of the world. We must take the gospel to them. It must be a burning passion in us.

A. We need a passion for God's global mission.

The IMB needs you involved to "let the nations be glad." The "how" is often times determined by the "who" and the "where" of culture. A biblically faithful church must look different in New York than in Tulsa than _____. Older expressions are not necessarily more holy expressions, and vice-versa. Nostalgia will not reach a world for Jesus Christ; a gospel on mission will.

I have seen a lot of churches who have marks but have not mission, and I don't believe God is honored by that.

B. Church plants need to be seeker-comprehensible.

I used "seeker" just to rile you up. If you are going to plant churches, you have to recognize and learn that you don't plant churches where people already understand church principles and practices. The way that I preached and the songs that I sang had to be done in a such a way that those who have never been to church can have understood.

C. What we often call respectful, sober, and worshipful is often based more on culture than Scripture.

There are biblically commanded elements of worship. It matters biblically what takes place in church, but in churches we have baptized culture and made it a command.

3. A Clear Obligation to Witness (48)

Because of our theological persuasion, the thing we need to be known for is witnessing and sharing Jesus Christ. You know that the Founders Movement is controversial in the Convention. I think you want to be known for biblical church planting and evangelism. A lot of books are coming out in Reformed circles on evangelism, but books being written on topics are not going to make you evangelistic. It's like me writing a book on weight loss. Be known for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

I am sick and tired of the word "hyper-Calvinist." There is no one I know who is a hyper-Calvinist. But we need to be careful not to be "functional hyper-Calvinists." If the end result is the same, God is not honored nor given the glory that is due.

I see church planting as the outflow of our love to Jesus Christ. I have seen church planters getting so preoccupied with church planting that they are doing it without the gospel. If your movement would begin with a church planting initiative, it would be with a robust understanding of the gospel.

I am convinced that if we are going to understand God's mission, we need to understand the people we are going to reach. If the 50's came back, most Southern Baptists are ready to go. But the gospel must be proclaimed here and now. Don't try to make God and Bible relevant; God and the Bible are already relevant. The problem is that you are not relevant.

Reach out and evangelize through community and bridge events. Start groups and begin worship. Disciple the people.

We must be biblically faithful, culturally relevant, counter-culturally communities for the gospel and the kingdom.

4. A Spirit-Empowered Mission (49)

Stay until you are empowered from on high. I have forgotten the power of the Spirit in my ministry many times. You can't do this without the Holy Spirit. My encouragement to you is, five years from now be known for being a church planting movement that shocks everyone--and you cannot do this apart from the power of the Holy Spirit.

I think we have come more adept at expressing our desires for the conversion of sinners, but we have yet to use every lawful means to spread the knowledge of His name. I want to know all that I can to tell people about Jesus Christ. I get that pragmatism is something that people want to beat on, and it often discourages me. Pragmatism is like a low-hanging pinata on Cinco de Mayo. I am less pragmatic than I used to be, but there are some things we can learn.

God wants church plants with His agenda and for His glory. Can a group obsessed with biblical ecclesiology marry those things to God's mission to transform communities for the glory of God. I believe it can, and I look forward to being here with you in the process.

L e n g t h e n i n g t h e C o r d s
a n d S t r e n g t h e n i n g t h e S t a k e s :
R E N E W I N G A N D P L A N T I N G L O C A L C H U R C H E S

NFV VI: Don Whitney on “Reforming Through Discipline”

About Don Whitney:



Don Whitney has been Associate Professor of Biblical Spirituality and Senior Associate Dean at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, since 2005. Before that, he held a similar position (the first such position in the six Southern Baptist seminaries) at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, for ten years. He is the founder and president of The Center for Biblical Spirituality. Prior to his ministry as a seminary professor, Don was pastor of Glenfield Baptist Church in Glen Ellyn, Illinois (a suburb of Chicago), for almost fifteen years. Altogether, he has served local churches in pastoral ministry for twenty-four years. He is the author of *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (NavPress, 1991), which has a companion discussion guide. He has also written *How Can I Be Sure I'm A Christian* (NavPress, 1994), *Spiritual Disciplines Within the Church* (Moody Press, 1996), *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health* (NavPress, 2001), *Simplify Your Spiritual Life* (NavPress, 2003), and *Family Worship* (Center for Biblical Spirituality, 2006). His hobby is restoring and using old fountain pens.

This issue has been addressed on repeated occasions, and now there are many people in this room who teach on this subject of church discipline. When this conference began 26 years ago, it would be hard to find one church who practice church discipline, but now there are dozens who are doing it. There is always the need to teach again the doctrines we hold dear, especially the doctrine of the church and focusing on the change that needs to be brought in the reformation of the church.

Reformation always begins with teaching. The goal of church discipline is restorative, not punitive. It is not "banning people from the church" (as the Wall Street Journal puts it). The goal is to restore a believer to righteousness. We want to bring them back, to heal the breach, to restore them in love.

Let's look at Matt. 18:15-20.

Text: [Matt. 18:15-20](#)

The need for church discipline is inevitable. Don't think your church will never need to practice discipline. Sooner or later, God will test every church, every minister in this matter of discipline. You will come up against the opportunity and go into the desert or you will follow God.

First Step (15).

The meeting should be in private (in step one of church discipline). Part of the goal is to protect the reputation of the person. You may be incorrect about what you have been told or what you have seen or heard. The private nature of church discipline in the first step is most often violated. Love covers a multitude of sins, and love should cause us to think the best of people, to give them the benefit of the doubt.

The goal should be reconciliation. You cannot over-emphasize the goal of winning your brother back.

Second Step (16).

There may be rejection, rationalization, justification, denial, or threats when someone refuses correction in the first step. You can almost always expect the threat of a lawsuit. When that happens, it is usually a threat to keep you from following through with discipline. Yet must follow God's command and obey him rather than men. When you have someone with you, they can be really helpful, especially when you go public (witnesses confirm the facts, events). But there is also wisdom, objectivity, protection, and solemnity with added witnesses.

Third Step (17).

The withdrawal of fellowship requires a persistent refusal to listen and repent. Step one and step two might occur several times before you come to step three. It is important to understand that we are talking about a persistent refusal to come to repentance.

This withdrawal of fellowship requires a corporate decision of the church. As a body of believers, we receive members into the church; as a body of believers, we remove members from the church. It is *church* discipline, not *pastor* discipline.

This withdrawal of fellowship requires the cooperation of the entire church. We treat them as a lost person because they continually act like one. This is the ultimate effort to restore them and

to bring them back. We give them every opportunity to respond to their sin in repentance as they ought to respond. We don't have the right to treat them unChristiantly or in an uncivil way; we are to love them seek to evangelize them (win them to Christ).

The Promise of Jesus (18-20).

Discipline done rightly will have already been ratified in heaven (v. 18). The presence and power of God is behind those who seek to be obedient (v. 19-20). Church discipline is the main context of Christ's presence within the church.

Let's also look at [1 Corinthians 5](#).

John L. Dagg: *"When discipline leaves the church, Christ goes with it."*

The three marks of the church: (1) preaching of the gospel, (2) ordinances, (3) church discipline. If these historic marks of the church are indeed necessary, what are we think about the vast majority of churches today who do not have the last mark?

In cases of withdrawing fellowship, the church should mourn over the sin (5:1-2). The church must also act as a body (v. 3-4). Remember, this is a matter of *church* discipline, not *elder* or *leader* discipline. The church must act and decide together. The church delivers the person to Satan by removing him from membership (v.4-8), 12-13).

You can find more information on the importance of church membership as it relates to church discipline in my chapter in *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church* (which you can [read online here](#)).

We are commanded by Jesus to say that certain things are wrong, that we should "judge" as it is expected in the local church. It is not the self-righteous judging. Rather, the church as a whole and individually stops associating with the person. Yet, while we treat them as an unbeliever, we should allow them to come and sit under the preaching of the gospel should they be willing to come. It could be that the preaching of the Word is the very means God uses to bring them to repentance.

Miscellaneous Matters of Church Discipline

When?

Whenever Christian love is violated by serious personal offenses.

Whenever Christian unity is violated by those who form factions and destroy the peace of the church.

Whenever Christian law is violated by those living scandalous lives.

Whenever Christian truth is violated by those who reject essential doctrines of the faith.

Dangers to avoid?

Inconsistency. Severity. Leniency.

Barriers?

Fear of judgmentalism. Fear of the outcome (1 John 4:8). Desire to avoid problems--the greater problem is to avoid discipline. Doubt about effectiveness.

Legally, the safest thing you can do is follow your church documents to the letter because you are only doing what you said you would do. That is why it is necessary to have a healthy constitution and church covenant.

Dever: It should mean something to a member of the church, not for our sake, but for God's sake
...

This is a Christological issue, a Lordship issue. This is about Jesus Christ as head of the church and his rule over our lives. God help us for His name's sake.



[NFC VII: Ed Stetzer on “Lengthening the Cords and Strengthening the Stakes, Part 2”](#)

Text: [Luke 10:1-16](#) (click)

Is this a church planting related text? I do think we find very important principles we can use in the area of church planting. There are not that many times where the Bible says, "Go and plant churches," but it does say "Go and make disciples." But it was the normal practice of the NT church to be engaged in church planting; it was the assumed undercurrent of the early church to be planting churches. Mission is wrapped in theology in the practice of the church.

The normative practice is no longer church planting today. What was normal in the NT has become abnormal today that is to the fault and detriment of the church in America.

We are to be engaged in church planting. We are not to be a cul-de-sac in the kingdom of God. I want you to see six things in this text:

1. They began in prayer ([1-2](#))

God is a sending God, and they lived under the missional mandate as "those who are sent." God is at work in the world, drawing men and women to himself. The harvest is there; therefore, we

should pray to the Lord of the harvest. That prayer is essential and fundamental because church planters have the tendency of not being prayerful people but workers, self-starters, etc. When you begin to pray for the place you are going to plant a church, God is going to break your heart for the people there. It frustrates me that people are deciding where to plant based on demographics reported six months earlier.

2. It flows into a radical reliance (3-4)

When you fall in love with God's mission and love for his calling, then a radical reliance is the natural outflow that began in prayer. We have created a three-tiered level of Christian spirituality. The bottom tier is lay people; the second tier is those called to ministry; the top tier is those called to missions. This is one of the most unhelpful, unbiblical distinctions because people begin to say, "Well, I am not *called* to be on mission. We pay you to do that." All Christians are called to ministry; all Christians are called to be on mission. We are all sent on God's mission--the only question is where and among whom you will go.

Jesus is unapologetic about the "go." Jesus is talking about us in prayer transitioned into a radical reliance. The gospel is not a promise to comfort, but a promise to mission. The call of God is not determined by any human agency. People will try to talk you out of being involved in church planting. Don't be distracted by people along the road--focus on the mission. You will never have enough money, never have enough people, never have enough resources to plant a church. But when you let them go, God will bless and provide.

Let's bring forth not only historic theology and historic missiology. The only church planting movement that took place was called "The Western Frontier" (1795-1810). It was the era of the Baptist farmer preacher. It was a time when poor farmers went out and started churches.

3. It blesses a community (5-6)

We come with a blessing, leaving the results to God. It is the acknowledgment that God is at work, bringing people to Himself. Sometimes we revel in rejection. Yes, the gospel is offensive; there is always the stumbling block of the cross. But perhaps people are stumbling over the cross, they are stumbling over the church along the way.

<< [Jer. 29:4-7](#) >>

4 "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

In the name of Jesus, and because of the agenda of the kingdom of God, bless the community, pray for the welfare of the city, and seek to bring good to the people. We can't get around the

fact that we are to speak blessing into the community; Jesus models this and commands us to do it as well.

4. Build relationships and settle in (7-8)

Be incarnational and an expression of the Christian community. We should engage and give honor to the people we are seeking to reach ("eat and drink what is before you"). If you are going to plant a church, you need to become a part of the community where you are planting the church. You should identify with the people. We have to unpack our bags and become a part of the people. Dig deep in your relationships with unbelievers. We should be like John Knox who said, "Give me Scotland or I die!"

You will be in places that are not growing, not popular, not sexy. And it is tempting to look at places where other people are and develop a "mistress" mentality seeking bigger and better opportunities. But we must be faithful to where God has placed us and be able to say, "Give me _____ or I die."

5. Meet needs and serve people (9)

God has called us to meet needs. I know that we often beat down "felt needs" but people have real needs where we can connect with them. We need to them understand what their real needs are. Jesus is unapologetic about meeting the real needs of people. Evangelicals have to find a way to bring back a divided Jesus, to reconcile the Jesus of Luke 4 and the Jesus of Luke 19:10. Liberals want justice without Jesus; fundamentalists want Jesus without justice. Jesus is the Savior who both performs justice and saves sinners.

We are not known as being good at sharing Christ, or showing Christ, but if we are going to get back to the Great Commission, we need to recover both. We need to get back to being, doing, and telling the gospel to the lost. The church is not the kingdom of God; it is a sign and instrument of the kingdom of God. When we serve as God's people with God's agenda, we are a sign of God's kingdom. The world does not see us as seeing and showing the good news.

We must live Jesus-shaped, Scripturally-defined lives.

6. You are announcing the kingdom (10)

We don't talk much about the kingdom of God. We've lost some of the things that Henry and Ladd were talking about. When Jesus showed up, the King showed up. When we plant churches, we are extending the boundaries where Christ reigns--a church as a sign and instrument of the kingdom of God. The world around us sees what the kingdom of God looks like when visible saints express the love and life of Christ. Part of the problem is that we believe that church planting belongs to denominational agencies and not local churches. Less than 5% of SBC churches are mother churches. This is a movement that was birth from a missions movement. If you really believe the agenda of the kingdom of God, if you want God's name and God's fame magnified, how can you not want to be a part of church planting?

We need God-centered, biblically-saturated churches planting God-centered, biblically-saturated churches. I have a reaction when people say they want to go into deeper things. It seems to me that the things people want is not meat but minutiae. Deep things are being, telling, and doing the good news to your neighbor. When our churches are not about our churches but about the agenda and mission of God, we are going deep.

My encouragement to you is: God is saying to us, "Now go . . .". I hope what drives you is that one of the attributes of God is a sender by nature, and we are to be a missionary people to reflect the character of our missional God. Because He is a sender, we must now go.



NFC VIII: Leadership Dialogue

The panel discussion consists of the follow people: Fred Malone, Ed Stetzer, Ted Christman, Voddie Baucham, Donald Whitney, Andy Davis, Phil Newton, and Tom Ascol.

Q: The different between a Reformed church and not a Reformed church.

A: (Christman) We are all in the process of reforming; the definition allows for room between four point and five point Calvinists. A deep and profound commitment with *sola Scriptura* is fundamental.

Q: Voddie, how essential are godly men in the leadership of a local church?

A: I think godly men are essential in a local church. Baxter bemoans the idea of homes that are not governed appropriately and how difficult that is for the pastor and likewise how easy it is when there are godly men practicing godliness in their homes and in the church.

Q: What do you do strategically to gear discipleship toward men?

A: The first thing we do is to be priest and prophet in their home, to expect and equip men to do that. We put alot of capital in men to being disciplers in their home. "I double-dog dare you to be a shepherd in your home."

Q: Phil, what's the best training method or program for raising up elders in the church?

A: Biblical exposition is the starting point, but it is out of the natural teaching and preaching men are being raised up. Some accountability and discipling as well--we went through a series of questions for men in dialogue to teach doctrinal development in men. Small group and one-on-one discipling compliments the preaching.

Q: Andy, how do you know when it is time to leave a church?

A: I think all of us would sense the calling of the Lord (John 10 - my sheep hear my voice). The Lord is sovereignly and providentially leading us to a life of good works. When things are going very difficult, questions are being asked is it time? But no soldier who is called gets involved in civilian affairs. You try to stay because God has called you there. There are some key issues if the church significantly rejects, there may be a time to leave or resign (such as exclusivity of Christ, inerrancy, etc.).

Q: Would you say the burden of proof is on the change--the reason of leaving.

A: Yes.

Q: At what point is a church in its size to plant another church?

A: (Baucham) When we started, we had it all figured out. But then we ran into this little problem--we grew faster than we expected, and we didn't have planters ready. We learned to hold that loosely. We plant when there are planters ready. I think there is a danger inherent in the question to believe that you have to be a certain size to plant.

Q: But it is a battle--do we try to grow bigger here, or no, we are going to expand out. Can a small church do that?

A: (Stetzer) Every church should be involved in church planting at some level. I think ultimately to the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the congregation. Most of you right now could and should be involved to be planting churches, but you will not because you are trying to maintain the ministries you have right now. There are two forces: the centripetal force (outward) and the centrifugal force (inward), and it is often that the centrifugal force wins the day. You can be involved in church planting at different levels, and you could be involved right now.

Q: Churches that have multiple services--would that not be a better option? Is that a good recommendation?

A: Yes and no. For me, the more we planted, the more we sent our way. Some of the best church planting churches have multiple services.

Q: Fred, Founders is openly Southern Baptist, but how can it reach out and bring in others who are not Southern Baptist but are Reformed?

A: (Malone) I think first of all in certain ways we tried from the beginning. We had contact outside of Baptist circles with the conferences to teach and rehearse Baptist theology and distinctiveness. I think the expansion of contact came through the Journal and now has come through the website. Our concern is not just to be Southern Baptist or Reformed, but to be biblically-based churches that are preaching the gospel solidly. The press, the journal, the media that we are doing, but now, there is such a rise of interest in the Reformed faith as expressed in

the sovereignty of God in salvation and holy living in biblically-based churches, and we need to find new ways to bring encouragement and opportunities to facilitate those growing convictions.

Q: In what ways can churches who are Reformed and Southern Baptist work together to plant churches?

A: We need to provide opportunities for fellowship, recognizing that there are going to be differences between us. Just because you are preaching the five-points of Calvinism does not mean you are preaching Jesus Christ. Expository preaching is not just a running commentary but a putting forth of Jesus Christ. I don't believe we have taught men to preach Christ faithfully in the pulpits. The best book for Christ-centered preaching is C.J. Mahaney's *The Cross Centered-Life*.

(Stetzer) I want to encourage you that your influence is remarkable inside and outside the denomination. I am very encouraged that you are going to take that influence and focus in on church planting and evangelism. Do not underestimate that. There are thousands of people who are watching this conference. Taking biblically-based churches to plant churches will be an incredible gift to the body of Christ. Thank you for doing it.

Q: Does a church planter require a different skill set than a pastor who wants to revitalize a church?

A: It begins with a common set, but I do think you can be a great pastor but cannot plant a church or revitalize a church. Church planters have to be

Q: Are you churches biased to church planting than going into established churches and doing the work of reformation?

A: (Stetzer) Of course. Why would they not be? That is the natural order of thing. Dever's guys have the t-shirts that "church planting is for wimps."

Q: What's the failure rate of church plants?

A: After four years, 68% stay around (through NAMB). Acts 29 success rate is 96%.

** **Note:** I did not type most of the Q&A. It was lengthy with a lot of going back and forth. I would encourage you to check out the archive video from the 316 Network under Bethel Baptist Owasso.

L e n g t h e n i n g the Cords
and Strengthening the Stakes:
RENEWING AND PLANTING LOCAL CHURCHES

[NFC IX: Andy Davis on “The Importance of Filling Your Life With Scripture”](#)

I hold in my hand a miracle. The Bible is a miracle, and I challenge you to give me any definition of a miracle that our Bible does not qualify. It was the Word God sent, for faith comes by hearing so that we might be saved. James 1:17 - God chose to give us birth by the word of truth. The Scriptures are able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15).

There are elect people who have not been justified yet; there are justified people who are not finished being sanctified. The finish line of salvation is the resurrected body; therefore, we are not finished yet, and we are in danger every hour. We need the ministry of the word of God every hour. The doctrines of grace, the five points of Calvinism have been precious to me most all of my Christian life. Most believers are aware of the "p" of tulip--the perseverance of the saints. But I have come to have a different view of perseverance over the past couple of years. It is much more dynamic; Jesus continues to save me, continues to project me until I am brought to glory.

(I missed a great exposition on our dependency upon the Trinitarian work of ongoing sanctification in the life of a believer to keep one in the faith through perseverance wholly as a divine work of grace. I was taking photos as this time).

The ongoing ministry of the Word keeps our faith in Christ strong.

Text: [John 15:1-8](#) (click)

The centrality of this message is abiding, remaining, and dwelling in Christ. This fruitfulness comes only from abiding in Christ, and abiding in Christ does not come apart from abiding in the Word of God. Look at verse seven and eight:

7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

I want trace out this theme of the centrality of the Word. Then I want to speak generally how this will be beneficial and helpful, and giving practical helps in studying Scripture.

1. Eternal life comes by the Word (3)

"You already clean because of the Word I have spoken to you." We must be washed by Jesus or we do not go to heaven. Nobody's will is stronger than Jesus'. Clean means justified--to be pure in the sight of God. God is looking on us as clean--he sees us pure and clean in Christ because of the word spoken to you. Rom. 5:1--we have peace with God; Heb. 10:22--hearts sprinkled and consciences cleansed.

2. Eternal life is sustained daily by the Word (2,4)

Sanctification is the ongoing work of cleaning by the Spirit with the Word of God. The Father is cleaning you all the time--he is pruning you. God is cleaning those who are already clean. There is a direct relationship between justification and sanctification. We are sanctified daily by the same means we are justified--the word of God. We have an essential daily walk with Christ through the Word (4).

This is a dynamic walk with Christ. It is life-giving sap from the vine to branch. Everything you need for life is flowing from the vine, but you must remain in the vine. You cannot thrive today with the fellowship you had yesterday with God.

3. Fruitfulness in ministry depends upon your communion with Christ (5)

Healthy communion with Christ is guarantees fruitfulness in ministry--fruit that will remain. 1 Cor. 3 talks about the testing of our works by fire. If we have done is burned up, we will suffer loss. Justified people will suffer loss. Do you want to suffer that loss? God has appointed us to bear fruit that lasts. What does it mean by fruit? Not just evangelism, it is that; but it is anything that we do by faith following the leadership of the Spirit and using of our spiritual gifts--even giving a cup of cold water in Jesus' name. It is money given in secret, putting sin to death, praying to the Father in the closet--any of these things and more, and I say that *it is impossible apart from abiding in Christ to do anything of eternal consequence.*

4. Communion with Christ moment by moment depends on Scripture (7-8)

"If you remain in Me, and *My words* remain in you . . ."

His words must live in you for you to constantly to be abiding in Christ. In this way, you will continually be transformed to the image of Christ. It is total saturation of the word of God, transforming you over decades. Constantly immersion in God's Word we will be transformed--constantly moving through your mind changing the way

5. Effective personal prayer life depends upon Scripture (7).

Ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. That's not, "Lord won't you buy me a Mercedes-Benz." What you wish is different; you are transformed in what you want. You want Christ exalted to the ends of the earth. A great example of this powerful effective prayer was George Mueller. He ministered 10,000 orphans over 64 years. He had that kind of German

discipline with prayer journals. He cited over 50,000 examples of answered prayer, 30,000 of them answered on the same day. All of the prayers were saturated by the Word of God--gleaning principles, patterns, and promises He could bring back to God in fervent, effectual prayer. His life verse was [Psalm 81:10](#):

I am the Lord your God,
who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.
Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.

Word at Work in Your Life

The central need of the hour according to Don Carson is to know God better. The core of true worship is revelation and response. God reveals and we respond. Your prayer life should be motivated and constrained by the word of God. When you understand what God has done, who he is--then you will worship. Pray richly. Pray deeply. Mortification of sin depends upon intimate acquaintance with the Word of God. Jesus is our model in this. When he was in the desert, he did not bring anything with Him except the word of God. The sword of the Spirit put the devil to flight. The more Scripture you have internalized, the more weapons you give the Holy Spirit to fight the devil and live with spiritual victory. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly! You will never exhaust Scripture and its truths.

Marriage--washed with water through the Word. Present your spouse clean through the powerful work of the Word in your marriage. Talk with your children about the precepts of God's Word. You need to saturate your child's life with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Evangelism--give the Spirit a full array to address the unbeliever with the Word. Consider the case of Phillip in Acts 8 and his explanation of Isaiah 53.

Counseling--we should be competent to counsel one another. As we saturate our minds with the word of God, we will be able to bring out the appropriate Scripture to counsel a brother or sister in Christ, to bring the truth of God to bear in their lives.

Basic Scripture Intake

Basic daily quiet time. Less than 10% of students at an evangelical seminary have a quiet time. 19 out of 20 seminary students don't finish the race in Christian ministry. Are you having a quiet time early in the morning? Why not imitate Jesus? Better an ounce of prevention than a pound of cure.

We need to study for breadth and depth. I would read through the Bible in a year, and I would recommend memorizing a book of the Bible in a year. George Mueller read through the Bible over 100 times in his lifetime--that is every six months for his entire life! In order to read through the Bible, you must keep with it.

You need to meditate on Scripture, not as water through a pipe, but pause and let the words sink into your life. Feed and give food to your inner man. The first and greatest duty is to get your

own soul happy in the Lord first by study and second by prayer. Let God speak to you first and speak back to Him in prayer. The goal is personal feeding on Christ.

I say to you that memorization is the most efficient way to do all of this. Why should you memorize Scripture? God is commending Scripture memory to you, but He is not commanding it. If I was in 1985 offering you a million shares of stock in Microsoft, you would buy it. Memorizing Scripture will make you rich.

John 15:7--His words. It is plural. All of Scripture are Christ's words. How can you have His words in you if you don't memorize them? The blessing is "much fruit." Let the word of Christ *dwell in you richly*. How does that not speak of memorization?

Psalms 1:2--on his law he meditates day and night. Do you picture a big torah scroll before him? The Psalmist is commending this to his readers. He was ready day and night, and this commends memorization.

Joshua 1:8--do not let this book of the law depart from your mouth, let it stay in you, and meditate on it day and night.

Psalms 119:11--hide the word of God in your heart.

James 1:21-22--the man who look intently and continues to do this, this is memorization

Deut. 6:6-9--the words that I command you shall be on your heart, when you walk down and when you rise

Psalms 119:97 - I meditate on your law all the day long

Prov. 2:1ff--store up my commands within you

Prov. 7:1-3--keep my words and store up my commands within you; write them on the tablet of your heart

Your Ten Best Excuses for not Memorizing a Book of the Bible

1. *I don't have a good memory.* You have a better memory than you think you do. Think of all the numbers and names you know.
2. *It will take up too much time; I am too busy.* This is the most efficient use of your time. It will bless you in everything you do. Invest your life in the Word of God.
3. *I am too lazy, and it's hard work.* The secret to memorization is repetition over time. Repeat, and repeat, and repeat over months. It is hard work, but it is worth doing.
4. *I am not very interested; it seems boring.* Could the word of God really be boring to you if you are justified by faith? You haven't seen the glories of the word of God.

5. *I have tried it before, and it never really worked.* Try it again.
6. *I don't see the benefit of working that hard.* I have given you numerous benefits.
7. *I read the Bible everyday; why do I need to memorize it?* Satan isn't going to wait for you to get your Bible before he tempts you.
8. *I don't know what translation to use.* Use any reputable translation. I use the NIV, but any reputable one would work.
9. *I might become prideful.* No, you will become prideful, so memorize verses on pride to humble you.
10. *I don't know how to do it.* It is simply repetition over time.

The word of God is living and active. If I could have one sin out of my life, it would be pride. That self-focus and selfishness, I would love to have it out. Those who walk in pride, God is able to humble (Dan. 4). Is it a warning? Yes. Is it a promise? Yes. Store up the word of God in your hearts, and in the judgment day, you will not be disappointed.



[NFC X: Phil Newton on “From Planting to Reforming”](#)

About Phil Newton:



Pastor Phil Newton began [South Woods Baptist Church](#) in 1987. He received his education at the [University of Mobile](#), [New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary](#), and [Fuller Theological Seminary](#). In addition to his pastoral responsibilities, Phil serves on the Executive Board of Founders Ministries, has taught as an adjunct professor at Crichton College in Memphis and Theologique de Nimes (France), and enjoys leading foreign mission trips annually. He has published articles in several journals and has authored *Elders in Congregational Life* and *The Way of Faith*.

Church planting and church reformation have everything to do with each other. I want to show you this in Acts 14. We should not be satisfied that we have planted a church and walk away; there must be an ongoing reformation in the church.

Text: [Acts 14:21-23](#) (click)

I did not realize what I was getting into 21 years ago when I planted a church. I knew what church planting was, I understood about finances, buildings, community engagement--but what I didn't know or expect was combining the necessity of reformation to church planting. If I just planted a church the way I wanted, everything would be perfect and pure. Had I known what had happened, I might have been frozen in my tracks, but after thinking about it, I would have continued because it has been a remarkable journey.

When I started, church planting was a novelty and church reformation was a rare thing. They are not new innovations; this is just biblical. Plant churches and continue the work of biblical reformation.

1. Church planting in a nutshell

Church planting takes place once persecution took place after Stephen's martyrdom. Churches began to be planted in Judea and Samaria, and then we find the gospel going to the Gentile world with Cornelius, and so on. From Antioch with a missionary spirit inherent in the gospel, Paul and Barnabas was sent out by the Holy Spirit. It is in the first missionary journey of Paul we find the text. Everywhere they preached the gospel, however, not all places churches were planted (e.g., Perga).

I want to look at these two elements in church planting.

A. Preaching the gospel with a reliance upon the grace of God to work.

That's the NT pattern; no circus shows, high-wire acts, mud wrestling, etc. Over and over, they were preaching the Word of God. They were hearing the word as though God were speaking it to them through the gospel. They relied on the grace of God to work through biblical proclamation. There is a temptation today for making things happen--to rely on ourselves. Do you rely on the power of God to work? Or do you seek out some clever device that will *really* make people respond?

When the gospel was preached, the hand of the Lord was at work. They witnessed (saw) the grace of God at work among the people. There was a continual dependence upon the Lord. We are to preach the gospel with all the passion and vigor we can, depending upon God to do the work only He can do.

We teach techniques, and there is a place for that, but gospel preaching seems to be an afterthought. Biblical exposition is glaringly missing from the curriculum of church planting today. If gospel proclamation and biblical exposition are not central, it is not a church. Paul did not shy away from meaty theological themes when preaching the gospel. Paul shows a good example of why we should never shy away from biblical, doctrinal preaching. Evangelistic preaching should be more, not less doctrinal preaching, than any other kind of preaching (Lloyd-Jones). We need meaty, theological messages--not the stuff hard to understand, our sermons becoming mere exercises of academia, but there is a richness when we deal with the word of God

in its context and see its rich application on every level. Paul's preaching was theological precise, saturated, and rich. It was experientially decisive--it called for a verdict. There is no other alternative than repenting and believing in Christ. It was only through Christ, not through the Law, would anyone be justified. We should not be hesitant in the call for action, the call for repentance. We need to press people to look to Christ.

Paul's message was theologically oriented and experientially decisive. I would encourage you to read and analyze Paul's sermon in Acts 13. There is a logic that Paul uses. There was a sense of reasoning set on fire in Paul's preaching. It made sense, conclusions being drawn for the hearers, urging hearers to understand and believe. Is there a sense of urgency and passion in you? Why the doctrinal, logical, passionate preaching?

To make disciples.

A disciple is a follower of Christ, and they are made through the faithful and fervent proclamation of the gospel. Paul was not wanting to drum up professions of faith; he wanted to make disciples. Paul was never contented to report the numbers to headquarters; he was committed to making disciples. If you are not a disciple, you are not a Christian. There are no levels to Christianity (pre-disciple level). I wonder if the wrong picture has been modeled for a couple of generations that all we need to do is get people to make decisions.

Those disciples were organized into local assemblies and congregations. That is why disciple-making and church planting must go together. It is natural and should be in our own settings. There was no headline in Acts when a church was planted; it was simply expected. It was in the DNA.

2. Ongoing Reformation Was Taking Place

We fail to understand the nature of reformation and the nature of the church itself. The Reformers were never convinced that they had done all that need to be done. It is an ongoing process of taking the church back to the word of God, back to the source, back to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This takes place in the midst of both internal and external opposition.

A. It involves strengthening the souls of the disciples.

"strengthening the souls of the disciples . . ." (22)

Paul wanted them to stand in the impregnable force of the power of the gospel. Why did Paul talk about "strengthening souls"? At Pentecost, about 3,000 *souls* were saved. It is the *soul* that gives heed to or rejects the prophetic word (ch. 3). There is a rational, thinking, decisive nature in the soul. These disciples were discerning in thought, decisive in action, engaged in the instruction and application of the word of God. Paul wanted these believers to live out the gospel and experience it daily in their lives. It called for establishing and stabilizing them in Christ, that they may be steadfast, immovable, and abounding in the work of the Lord. We are teaching them to live like Christians when they face trials, as well as in times of great success. Simply, we are teaching them to be grounded in the gospel.

Don't we need this today?

B. It involves encouragement to continue in the faith.

It is a coming alongside someone to urge them on. It requires a passion for others for their good. Paul and Barnabas had gone back to the cities and were encouraging them to continue in the faith to persevere in the midst of great opposition. Paul reminded Timothy, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead . . ." Paul was reminding Timothy of the reformation that must continue in our own lives. We must continue in the faith that has once for all been handed down to the saints. How are you going to live like a Christian? Continue in the faith. Reformation cannot exist without confession. Many lack a solid foundation of truth when trials come. That's why faithful exposition of God's Word is so critical in an ongoing reformation, because it takes us back to the Word of God which changes our lives.

Notice how Paul qualifies this.

"through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God"

We are not inviting Christians into a picnic--this is a spiritual battle. The rationale for encouraging the saints is a realistic view of the Christian life. There is no self-help program or steps with a money-back guarantee to fix your life. Expect tribulation, consider yourself worthy to suffer for the sake of the gospel. The trials and tribulations have not changed. We should not expect anything less than what Paul and the disciples experienced.

C. They appointed elders for them in every church.

The elders gave a structure for ensuring sound doctrine and exercising redemptive discipline, offering wise direction for the church, and modeling Christian distinctives. Reformation affects our polity, because how you function as a church relates directly to your mission. I am not advocating anyone run home if you church does not have elders to use that title. The title is not worth dying on, but qualifying men for this office is a hill worth dying on. Leaders in the church must be taught biblically, and must see themselves as an example to the flock. This will not happen overnight by fly-by pastors. It takes years of laboring in the pulpit, in small groups, in one-on-one teaching. Many reformation has been squelched by proud, unqualified men.

Take seriously Christian leadership. What you call the leaders is not the most important thing; the qualities of the leaders is most important.

D. There is a reliance upon God for faithfulness in the work of reformation.

"they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed"

Thank the Lord for His faithfulness. Christ will build His church. It is His. It is not our church. Their confidence was not in Paul and Barnabas. They committed them *to the Lord* in whom they believed. They placed them before the Lord, saying, "They are yours, O Lord." Have you done

that lately? Have you said, "Lord, this is your church. I just want be used as you are pleased to use me"?

Paul lived daily with the burden of the churches, but he recognized that he was a servant and steward, having been entrusted with the gospel and care of God's people.

You may not be able to do everything that you want to do, but plant churches and continue the work of reformation. Do not assume that planting churches is enough. There must be ongoing reformation. Stick with that work of strengthening and encouraging and developing faithful leaders, and remember whose church you serve, who holds and secure your people, and commend them to the Lord.