

---

---

# *The Baptist Pietist* CLARION

Vol. 14, No. 1 ☞ In essentials unity • In non-essentials liberty • In everything charity ☞ Feb. 2017

---

Edited by G. WILLIAM CARLSON, *Professor Emeritus of History and Political Science at Bethel University*; and  
RON SAARI, *retired Senior Pastor at Central Baptist Church (rsaari@comcast.net)*  
Previous issues can be found at [http://cas.bethel.edu/dept/history/Baptist\\_Pietist\\_Clarion](http://cas.bethel.edu/dept/history/Baptist_Pietist_Clarion)

---

---

## Tribute Edition for ~ G. W. Carlson (1943–2016) ~

### An Introduction to this Edition of the Baptist Pietist Clarion

PASTOR JOEL LAWRENCE, *Senior Pastor, Central Baptist Church, St Paul, MN* | Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. February 12, 2017, marked the one-year anniversary of the passing of William “G.W.” Carlson. At the time of his passing, Bill was working on, and nearly finished with, a new edition of the Baptist Pietist Clarion. Following his death, a number of people, including myself, Bill’s good friend Ron Saari, and another close friend and collaborator, Ted Lewis, decided that we wanted to conclude Bill’s work on that edition of the Clarion and have it published. However, we also felt that it would be fitting if this edition of the Clarion would serve also as a memorial edition giving tribute to Bill’s many years of work for pietism through the Baptist Pietist Clarion.

So, what you have in your hands includes two different sets of writings: First, the articles that were being prepared for publication at the time of Bill’s death are included here toward the end of this edition. Second, we have gathered some of the many trib-

utes that were given to Bill at his memorial service, as well as some others that have been received. It is fitting that the articles which were gathered by Bill for a 2016 volume represent a range of topics dear to his heart: pietistic prayer, Baptist identity, religious liberty in America, and Bethel history. We’ve also included several pieces written by Bill that round out his varied interests: non-violent peace witness, remembering radical Baptists, and the theme of forgiveness. As we remember Bill and all he stood for, we hope that his legacy will find new ways to continue in our world.



### A Note from Cathy Carlson

In 2002, G. William Carlson and Ron Saari established the Baptist Pietist Clarion (BPC) as a means to preserve the pietistic heritage of the Baptist General Conference (now Converge Worldwide). Bill wanted to give voice to those leaders of the faith who, in various ways, could effectively communicate pietistic principles. The motto, “In essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, in all things charity”, was dear to his heart.

At the time of his death in February of 2016, Bill was working on the next edition. He had contacted a number of individuals to write on specific topics and had received some rough drafts. My thanks to Joel Lawrence and Ted Lewis for taking those drafts and completing this edition of The BPC. Thank you to all of you who have written articles for the BPC and who have supported and encouraged Bill in this endeavor over the past 15 years. Perhaps someone out there would like to take on this project and continue the publication. He would be pleased if you did!

# The History of the Baptist Pietist Clarion



RON SAARI | The Baptist Pietist Clarion was an outgrowth of the divine foreknowledge (or Openness of God) debate within the denom-

ination which took place in the 1990s. At the beginning there was an uncertain truce between the competing factions in the debate. One side, the Concerned Pastors, had the advantage of “Desiring God Publications.” The Committed Pastors needed a way to provide some balance and to keep our message in front of the constituency, and hence, the birth of the “The Baptist Pietist Clarion” which lasted from 2002 to 2016 with approximately a dozen volumes.

The Baptist Pietist clarion was a journal developed by G.W. Carlson that exercised his talents as a scholar, historian, and writer, and at the same time gave expression to his personal faith. As a college student, he wrestled with Reformed theology. In consultation with Doc. Dalton, a Bethel History Professor, he was pointed towards pietism and there he found the home for his faith.

Bill grew up as a BGC kid. The roots of the BGC are anchored in Pietistic theology. His family was loyal to the denomination and hence his choice of Bethel as a place to study and grow was natural. History became his chosen field and as a young teacher at Bethel he became established as a beloved teacher. There he had the opportunity to shape the lives of many young adults.

What made pietism so attractive to Bill? It fits well within the Baptist framework. It affirms sole competency by stressing the need for every individual to make a deci-

sion about Christ. It affirms personal spiritual regeneration through an emphasis of being born again. It affirms personal piety by the strengthening of the inner person through prayer and study. It affirms holy living by emphasizing experiential Christianity where it is not just known, but it is lived out daily. It is both head and heart.

Perhaps one of the greatest attributes of Pietism is the way it engages those of differing perspectives. Pietists affirm when it comes to doctrine: “In essentials, unity — in non-essentials, liberty — in everything, charity.” Bill understood there are a breadth of theological and political positions in the church and in

academic life. He often said to me, “Try to find ways for a win-win solution to conflict and problems.”

Bill lived out the perspective of win-win in the political arena as well. Another saying he often relied on was to “keep your enemies as friends”

because you will never know when you will need them to build a coalition. On more than one occasion I observed him sitting down for a meal with a political opponent.

Within the BGC, now Converge Worldwide, is a trait known as an *irenica spirit*. It refers to a gentleness towards others who have differing points of view. It is sometimes criticized as being too non-confrontational or non-committal. I describe it as a heart-felt warmth that prizes the value of each individual as made in the image of God. It is that trait of warmth which values the individual that I observed in Bill Carlson every time I was with him. I believe it was part of his Pietist Baptist framework. I, for one, am glad I got to experience it first hand!



# Contents

- 1 An Introduction to this Edition of the BPC | *Joel Lawrence*  
A Note from Cathy Carlson | *Cathy Carlson*
- 2 The History of the Baptist Pietist Clarion | *Ron Saari*
- 3 Looking Out the Window: 2002 Commencement Prayer by GW Carlson | *G. William Carlson*
- 4 I Was a Stranger | *Chris Gehrz*  
The Soul of a Prophet | *Joel Lawrence*
- 6 Civility with Spice | *Ted Lewis*  
Tribute from a Friend | *Ron Saari*
- 7 G.W. | *Angela Shannon*
- 8 Tribute from a Daughter | *Sara Koehn*
- 9 Tribute from a Son | *Ian Carlson*
- 10 Tribute from a Grandson | *Alex Koehn*
- 11 A New Way to Pray | *Terri Hansen*
- 12 Radical Baptists: It Takes One to Know One | *G. William Carlson*  
Why I Still Call Myself A...Baptist | *Roger Olson*
- 13 Pulpits and Politics Don't Mix | *Glen Scorgie*
- 14 Baptist Joint Committee: Just Another Pulpit Freedom Sunday | *Don Byrd*
- 15 The Choral History of Bethel Choirs | *Dennis Port*
- 18 Living as Forgiven People: Ten Principles of Authentic Forgiveness | *G. William Carlson*

All 16  
Baptist Pietist Clarion  
volumes can be  
accessed online at:  
<https://baptistpietistclarion.com>

# Looking Out the Window: A Prayer by GW Carlson at Bethel's 2002 Commencement

G. WILLIAM CARLSON (COMPILED BY TED LEWIS)

It is the end of the school year, Lord, and we have the opportunity to reflect on our experiences as mutual learners. Over the past year I have had the opportunity to reflect on the joys of "gazing out the window..."

As I looked out the window, this spring, I see:

Winter (sorta) turning into spring;  
Children riding big wheels down the sidewalk;  
People dashing with coats flapping, trying to meet the bus;  
An immigrant Hmong family trying to make it in their new country.

On this day of celebration, Lord, may we be Christians who, after we look out the window:

Celebrate the glories of the creation;  
Engage children with the love and message of Jesus Christ;  
Work and play using well the gifts that you have given to each of us;  
Compassionately respond to people who hurt and reach out to those who suffer.

Lord, recently I have become overwhelmed by two stories of Christians and the windows in their lives; stories that I have shared with students in my classes this spring. A former President of the Southern Baptist Convention asked a Holocaust survivor what she remembered most about her experience. She said the "empty windows." As she walked down the streets on her journey to the concentration camps she looked up and saw only empty windows. Where were the members of the community who she had previously known and loved? No one was watching.

In a second story, a philosophy professor cried when he read the account of a lone, young Jewish boy sitting in a bus to be taken away to a concentration camp from the French village of La Chambon. The Christian children of the community passed precious pieces of chocolate to him through the window. They were unwilling to let him be alone.

Lord, may we, this day, be the people of God who are always willing to intentionally look out the window;

Lord, may we, this day, be the people of God who never let those who experience oppression pass by without being observed;

Lord, may we, this day, be the people of God who pass "pieces of chocolate" through the window to people who hurt;

Lord, may we, this day, be the people of God who use the gifts that we have developed over the past few years to live out the healing presence of Christ.

Lord, we ask you to bless this ceremony and all who participate. Amen.

(printed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baptist Pietist Clarion, June 2002)

## Afterword to Windows Prayer by Ted Lewis

Four years after Bill Carlson wrote and spoke this commencement prayer, he wrote a short article that sheds more light on the meaning of 'looking out the window.' This 2006 piece was later printed in the Baptist Pietist Clarion (March 2012). The title of the article was, "Asking Good Questions: Intentionalizing Our Spiritual and Academic Journey?" After highlighting Dr. Elving Anderson's penchant for asking good questions, Carlson reflected on how Philip Hallie, author of his all-time favorite book, *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed*, was deeply moved as a non-Christian ethicist to ask new and daring questions about the moral courage of Christians. The historical example of Andre Trocme's mobilization of Le Chambon villagers to assist the Jews safely to Switzerland was one of Bill Carlson's greatest archetypal illustrations of Christian ethics-in-action throughout church history.

After listing the seven core features of courageous Christian dissenters, (see "Radical Baptists: It Takes One To Know One" in this Clarion volume), Carlson concluded the article by referencing an essay by Jimmy Allen, a former President of the Southern Baptist Convention. Allen makes a connection between the "tears of Jesus" as mentioned in the triumphal entry passage and the lack of tears for Alice Gahana, the Holocaust survivor who walked through her town toward the concentration camp trains while noticing the vivid absence of people looking out of their own windows. No one came to see her. The tears of God, states Allen, are often "falling today because we are not even going to the windows to see the people who are hurting today. We don't want to know. And God cries."

Carlson then finished his article with this profound statement: "Therefore, an eighth characteristic of 'courageous' Christians is that *they intentionally look out the windows*. They cry when they encounter economic and social injustice. They live out the gospel of reconciliation." He then brought the article full-circle by recalling Jesus' question to Peter, "Who do you say that I am?" Engaging this question, for Carlson, was the "starting point for a life of courageous Christian discipleship." True faith leads to following a true example.

# I Was a Stranger (For GW Carlson)



CHRIS GEHRZ | My first conversation with G.W. Carlson took place two weeks shy of fourteen years ago: I was in town for my brother's wedding, and a cousin of

mine insisted that I meet her favorite Bethel professor. So there I was...not quite knowing what to make of the man, the beard, the books, or his displeasure at learning that I'd attended a private school in the suburbs rather than a public school in St. Paul. Half an hour later we parted company, joking that maybe I'd be asking him for a job someday, but pretty sure that we'd never see each other again.

Thousands and thousands of conversations later...Our last one took place three weeks ago today in the intensive care unit at St. Joe's. It was the first time that I could honestly describe GW as "nonresponsive." It was the first time that I would have more to say in a conversation than he did. The first time and the last. I think we all had some sense that it might be my farewell, so Cathy, Sara, and Gwen were kind enough to go for a walk while I held GW's hand and prayed desperately for the right words to say. At last, I pulled out my phone, opened a Bible app, and called up a passage I knew was meaningful to him from Matthew 25:

*"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you*

*in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'" "The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."* (Matt 25:37-40, NIV)

*"When did we see you a stranger and invite you in...?"* Truly, I once was a stranger — to Bethel, to Christian higher education, to social justice, to Pietism — and GW invited me in.

Loudly, imperfectly, joyfully, he invited in so many more people who might otherwise have felt strangers to this place and to the joy of learning, to his church and denomination, to his neighborhood and city and country. To Bethel he invited in students and faculty of color: brothers and sisters in Christ who too often are made to feel like strangers in this community by people like me. He invited in young women made to feel strange by other Christians for their intellectual curiosity, their abilities as athletes, or their calls to pastoral ministry. To his church he invited in homeless from the neighborhood and immigrants from the other side of the world. To his own spiritual formation, he invited in Christians whose perspectives and practices most Baptists and evangelicals saw as strange, if not worse.

*"I was a stranger," said Jesus, "and you invited me in" (Matt 25:35b, NIV).*

Or as the NRSV puts it, Jesus the stranger was "welcomed" whenever GW welcomed a stranger to his mind, his classroom, his office, his church, his city, or his nation.

What a word: welcome. What a word, and how thoughtlessly we often say it, without realizing the healing it describes and enacts. Truly, when we welcome the stranger, we are saying, "It is well that you have come." It is well: what was sick is being made healthy; persons who were broken are being made whole. For what else is the Fall but for this: created for relationship, we were made strangers — to our Creator and to each other? By sin, we see God and everyone made in his image with fear and suspicion rather than awe and wonder.

But by grace, we replace estrangement with reconciliation. What else is our mission but this? Because Christ "died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves," the Apostle Paul admonishes that we ought to "regard no one from a worldly point of view." We ought to regard no one, not black or white, male or female, Christian or Muslim, native-born or immigrant, Democrat or Republican, indeed, *no one* as the strangers that the world sees.

Friends, "the new creation has come." God has "reconciled us to himself through Christ and [given] us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:15-18, NIV). So I pray that you hear again the call — in GW's booming, Jersey voice may you hear the call — to invite in the stranger and say to them the words that no doubt greeted our friend when he entered the presence of our Lord: "It is well that you have come."

Peace be to the memory of G.W. Carlson.

## The Soul of a Prophet

### G. William Carlson Memorial Service



DR. JOEL LAWRENCE | Without question, Bill Carlson was one of the most impactful men I have had the privilege of calling a friend. He impacted the University he

called home for so many years, the students into whom he poured himself, the churches where he ministered faithfully,

and the family he loved so deeply. We have all met impactful people in our lives. But as we remember Bill, we need to ask: What was the secret of his impact? Why has his loss brought so many people together to celebrate and give thanks for his life, and to mourn his loss?

As I have reflected on Bill's life, as I have had many conversations about Bill, I believe that his impact can be attributed to one thing: *Bill Carlson was infused with the soul of*

*a prophet.* Bill's life embodied the passions of the prophets of God, and this passion has left a deep mark, a deep impact, on our world.

Bill Carlson was passionate about God. This passion led him away from a simply theoretical vision of God and His work into a deep longing to see God's Truth lived out in the challenges of our world. With this, Bill's passion was focused on defending the weak and the vulnerable, on standing with those who are on margins, with seeking to infuse

*continued on p. 5*

an often cruel world with the love and justice that God has wrought through His Son Jesus Christ.

In this passion for God, Bill echoed the prophets, and so it is fitting, in this service of remembrance, to turn to a prophet of Israel, the prophet Micah, to a verse that Bill so deeply embodied and was at the heart of his impact during his days on earth. The verse that exemplifies Bill is Micah 6:8: “He has showed you, O human, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”

These are the words of YHWH, the One True God, the God of Israel, the Father of Jesus Christ. YHWH spoke these Words through His prophet, Micah, to call Israel to faithfulness in loving God and loving their neighbor, the heart of what it means for Israel to be God’s covenant people. And in this call God makes it clear what he desires.

The first thing that God requires of Israel is that they *do justice*. This means that the community that belongs to God is to recognize that no human being is intrinsically more valuable than any other. They are to recognize that the ways we tend to value humans, based on wealth or earthly power or prestige or position, are all false, and that there is no hierarchy of value. Because of this, we are to live our lives guided by the truth that from the greatest in human eyes to the least, all are to be valued as God’s creation and shown the heart of God.

Secondly, God tells Micah that he requires the Israelites to *love mercy*. In commanding this, God is revealing what is in His own heart: He is a God of love and kindness toward His creation, a God who is slow to anger and quick to show mercy. Throughout the Scriptures we find God describing Himself as a God of mercy, and in so doing declaring that any people who would call on His name, any people who would live under His rule, must themselves be a people of mercy, who demonstrate the compassion of God to all they encounter, both within the people of the covenant relationship and without.

And so it was with Bill who embodied the



*He has showed you, O human,  
what is good. And what does the  
LORD require of you? To act justly  
and to love mercy, and to  
walk humbly with your God.*

~  
*Micah 6:8*

truth of Micah. Throughout his life, Bill was an advocate for justice; Bill was a defender of marginalized people, an advocate for women in ministry, women in the classroom and faculty, and for seeing Bethel grow as a place of justice for all who were part of the community. And Bill was a man of mercy who had a tender heart for all who were left out by society; he sought to extend to them the mercy of God by himself being a merciful presence.

But Bill’s passion for justice and mercy cannot be understood apart from the third thing that God requires according to Micah 6:8. The requirement to *walk humbly with your God*. Bill walked humbly with His God, and deep in his heart he was a worshipper of God. In this, he recognized the glory of God and the praise due His name, and he gave his life as an act of worshipping God. For him, worship is not a mere formality, something that you do once a week at church or when you attend chapel. No, for Bill worship is the

root of action, the spring from which justice and mercy flow.

My final conversation with Bill took place at the copier machine at Central Baptist the day before his stroke, the place where many of our conversations took place. Bill came into the room with papers flying everywhere, books and clipboard in hand, working to get the copies he needed ready in order to teach his Sunday School class. After a brief chat and helping him get the copier to cooperate, as he was going down the hall one way and I was going the other way, he asked me, “Joel, what do you think Amos would say about what’s going on in Flint, Michigan?” I was struck in that moment, and continue to be impressed by the fact that that question arises from the soul of a worshipper whose life of worship was living and active, who sought to live out the truth of God in the daily struggles and triumphs of this world.

There is a deep sadness in our hearts at Bill’s loss. People like Bill Carlson don’t cross our paths each day, people with his passion, his wisdom, his joy. When one like this leaves us, we are left with a deep sense of grief, of loss. But sadness can’t be the final word. The Prophets of Israel,

when given words of rebuke or correction, were also given a word of hope to deliver to God’s people. So it was with Micah. In Micah 2:2-3 we read the following: “In the last days the mountain of the LORD’S temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’ The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” While we mourn Bill’s passing, we are given this word of hope: We are reminded that he is in that place even now, that place where all divisions of this broken world are mended, the divisions of race, wealth, status, power. Bill has joined the company of worshippers on God’s Holy Mountain, all together united in their praise of God.

Praise be to God.

## Civility with Spice

TED LEWIS (FEB. 2016)

His style of speaking never lacked spice.  
Something zesty in the juice of justice  
Was extracted by his agile mind  
To flavor the way he engaged others.  
Current issues for him were curry dishes  
Richly marinated in ethical herbs  
Which would wake the palates of the past.  
Had you once been his debate partner  
In a panel on politics or war  
You would have savored his appetizing  
Style of collegial civility  
That separated you from your ideas.  
Due to his large irenic Baptist heart  
Your presence would have been welcomed  
On the wide smorgasbord of free thinking  
Where there are no restricted diets of truth.  
And yet the hot sauce of his convictions  
Would have fired up the buds of your mind,  
For all of his dishes were enlivened  
By the lives of faith-heroes whom he prized,  
The ones who died for the love of peace-truth.  
It was his way to excite us into action  
By animating all that we would eat.  
He gave his teaching life to spread forth  
The grand culinary gospel of God,  
And having himself tasted the salt-speech  
Of the nonviolent Nazarene  
He too styled his life accordingly,  
Serving up his civility with spice  
And never without a frisky smile.

## A Tribute from a Friend



RON SAARI | *Memorial Service for Bill Carlson,*  
*February 28, 2016*

The Saari family expresses our condolences to the Carlson family. We personally have lost a great friend. Bill and Cathy have ingratiated themselves with my wife and me and with our children. Bill's life and my life interfaced on several levels. I was the lead Pastor of Central Baptist where Bill was a lay leader and churchman. We teamed up in a denominational dispute to defend Baptist Pietism and civility in the theological discourse. This partnership ultimately led to the annual publication of the Baptist Pietist Clarion. In addition, we were golfing buddies who played golf together regularly for twenty years. You have heard in our T.V. culture, "If it is Sunday, it is Meet the Press." Among us it could be said, "If it is Friday, Ron and Bill are on the golf course."

Bill was a teacher. For many of you he was called G.W. I thought I would frame my remarks around the theme of what G.W. taught me.

**G.W. taught me that he would never be early for anything.** Many times I was on the first tee waiting while Bill was in the parking lot getting ready to play. More than once he called and asked if I would purchase his green fee. I always cut him slack because I knew that it was his social nature that often delayed his timely arrival.

**G.W. taught me that he was a man of integrity.** He had a commitment to only buy American. Not many of us have worked as hard as he did to live out his convictions. On one occasion we drove to Wyoming, MN, to buy an American made golf shirt. He prided himself in finding a pull golf cart that was made in the USA.

**G.W. taught me that Pietism was more than a passion for him. It was a life choice.** As a college student, he struggled with the implications of Reformed theology. After consulting with Doc. Dalton, he was pointed toward Pietism, which became a life-giving expression of his faith. Pietism rescued his faith. Pietism taught that faith was active in both the head and the heart. Pietism had an evangelism and a social justice expression. Pietists believed in civility in theological discourse. Pietism emphasized prayer and discipleship as Christ followers.

**G.W. taught me about his commitment to keep his political opponents as friends.** His bumper sticker was that "God is not a Democrat nor a Republican." In problem solving he always looked for win-win solutions.

**G.W. taught me about his love for the arts and his love for the city.** At the time Bill and Cathy joined Central Baptist they were a gift to the church. In addition to serving on important boards and committees, they have helped make the Art Exhibition a meaningful ministry of the church.

**G.W. taught me about his willingness to serve as editor of the Baptist Pietist Clarion.** Much of his work in this capacity can be found on-line. He usually included one of his grandmother's poems. Here is one such expression by Signe Peterson:

No rest on this earth is to be found,  
Hold out then in every circumstance,  
Expect naught but trouble and toil.

When to our final home you go,  
You to be guest and stranger are bound,

When you shall beyond the grave advance,  
When you must reside on earth's soil.

At last perfect joy you will know.

Even on our life's sunniest heights,

Weeping nevermore will there be found,  
Some shadow will always appear,

For no sorrow there will we see,  
To muddy and tarnish our delights,

Peace and joy will evermore be abound,  
And leave our road dark without cheer

And the Lord all in all will be.

Bill and Cath's Christmas letter from this past year quoted Alex Haley's admonition on his stationary which said, "Find the good - and praise it." Bill concluded with this, "May we find ways like Haley to express thanks to those who played significant roles in our lives." Today, Bill, we say thanks for the way you invested in all our lives.

Peace be to your memory, G.W. We look forward to seeing you again when our work on earth is done!

## G.W.

(POEM BY ANGELA SHANNON GIVEN AT MEMORIAL SERVICE)

G.W. must have been God's Will for Bethel.

First he was a student, swirling across campus  
in a whirl of history. Then he joined the faculty  
in 1968 — a revolutionary year etched by fire, by  
the lost of a King and a Kennedy.

In such a time, G.W. brought his goodwill to Bethel.  
Dressed in blazers and toting books, he recited  
history and scripture, scripture and history —  
marking the past, rooting the present, signaling the future.

To those isolated on margins--to those on the chilly outskirts —  
he offered a hand, walking with them to the center.

To those unsure of their place, he was a comforting guide.

Through laughter and fellowship  
G.W. turned strangers into friends.  
In his gentle way, led by inner light,  
he put aside barriers, and brought home-like

warmth to Bethel. His greetings were more  
than hollow hellos. When he asked, "how are you  
doing?" he waited on an answer.

Devoted and hopeful, G.W. connected  
beyond work — beyond obligation and duty.  
He reached for the heart, his small talk sincere,  
his big talk nurturing the spirit.

In a time of manifold distractions, he was singularly present.  
In a time of ruckus and noise, he listened intently.  
In a time of loud declarations,

touching all he encountered, imparting wisdom and  
comfort. In a season of uncertainty, G.W. — God's Walker —  
walked out his piety.

G.W. — God's Walker — walked out his faith.

# A Tribute from a Daughter — Sara Koehn

His birth name was Gordon William Carlson. At a young age his was called Billy. As a student at Bethel he was G. William. As a professor his name was G.W. or more humbly, Dr. Carlson Professor Sir. At church, in the neighborhood, and in politics he was Bill.

Proverbs 22:1 says, “A good name is more desirable than great riches and to be respected is better than silver and gold.” While you knew him as Bill, G. William, G.W. or Gordon... I would like to introduce you to 3 other names that I knew him as.

## **HUSBAND.**

For the past 46 years mom called him her husband. This weekend we got to look through a scrapbook that she made leading up to their engagement. We caught a glimpse of what it was like when they first met each other and the beginning of their relationship. Their first date was January 25 to see Romeo and Juliet. After that, there were dinners made, letters written, cards sent and dates recorded. He proposed on April 5, three months later. In a letter shortly after their engagement his mom, my grandma, wrote, “Cathy Carlson – that sounds good.” They were married (or “hitched” as the Bethel Clarion said) on December 20 of that same year, 1969.

Over the past 46 years mom has become a master at interpreting his handwriting. She can often read things that no one else can decipher. One of the first letters he wrote to her said, “If you can read my writing...” Hundreds of notes, letters and cards later, she’s an expert. Together they celebrated anniversaries, birthdays and holidays. Together they went to plays, concerts and lectures on Russian history. Together they spent weekends in Duluth, Grand Marais and Lanesboro. Together they took road trips out to Georgia and back. Together they modeled a committed, loving relationship. Together they started our family.

## **DAD.**

My brother Ian and I got to call him dad. Dad...coached our softball, baseball and soccer teams. Dad...was at our games cheering us on. Dad...graciously allowed a muddy baseball team into the house to escape the rain between games. Dad...encouraged and

supported our activities and hobbies. Dad... set up a family jigsaw puzzle on New Year’s Day while watching football. Dad...introduced us to family games like Pit and Rook. Dad...hid jellybeans in the living room every Easter.

Dad...made sure we realized that Easter and Christmas were about Jesus. We had to fill in answers from the Bible to a scavenger hunt before we would look for our Easter baskets and we read a letter to Jesus before we would open our Christmas presents. The running joke at Christmas is when I was reading the family letter to Jesus and mistakenly thanked the Soviet Army rather than the Salvation Army. After that the letters were typed. Dad... sat us down at the kitchen table to go over pros and cons in our decisions. Dad...brought new culture to our lives by having us listen to things like Prairie Home Companion...It didn’t stick. Dad...prepared an outline of possible activities on each family vacation – yes complete with topics and sub topics. Dad... welcomed Michelle and Matt into the family as if they were his own. Dad...continued to challenge us to serve, think, and grow

*A good name is more  
desirable than great riches  
and to be respected is better  
than silver and gold.*



*Proverbs 22:1*

## **PAPA.**

This is Papa. You may be wondering why I chose this photo to start – well, my reason is two-fold. First, I knew that this would be the hardest part of my tribute. Hopefully starting it off with something that makes me laugh will help me get through it. Secondly, Papa was one of the kids. He was Papa to Nathan, Nora, Samuel, Shannon and Alex. To be honest, I would say that this was his favorite name. He loved being goofy and having fun with his grand kids. And the grandkids loved having fun with papa.

Papa...was caught dancing on the Jumbo Tron at a Timberwolves game. Papa...was his grandkids biggest fan attending as many

sporting events of theirs as he could. Papa... pitched to the kids in the yard and set up mini golf courses through the house. Papa... loved playing spoons even though he was often the first one out. Papa...made it his mission to stock the kid’s bookshelves - 2 paperbacks or 1 hard cover on each trip to Barnes and Noble...Barnes and Noble gift cards were only to be used on books.

Papa...enjoyed planning trips with the families each summer. The beginning of the summer would be with the Georgia family and the end of the summer with the Minnesota family. Yes, these trips also came with an outline. Papa...took every opportunity he could to take the grandkids golfing or mini golfing. Usually saying it was something the kids wanted to do...sure Papa. Papa... bragged nonstop about his grandkids. He is so proud of you five. I’m sure there are many people here that have heard stories about you.

## **AND THIS IS OUR FAMILY.**

Technically I suppose that that’s a 4<sup>th</sup> name...but Dad’s 3 points were never actually 3 points either. Our family had an amazing opportunity to spend this past Christmas together in Florida. As you can see by dad’s date book we made lots of great memories there. I’m sure all our activities are very clear to you. Our family is grounded in our faith. Our family mourns our loss but finds comfort in our memories. Our family would like to thank all of you for your prayers, kind words, hugs, food, flowers, offers of help and friendship. We have felt your love and support during this time. In a letter to my mom early on he said he was going to focus on being a “plain ordinary good teacher.” Well dad...I’m sorry to say that you missed that goal. You were anything but plain and ordinary. You were a dynamic, exceptional, great teacher in and out of the classroom.

Proverbs 22:1 says, “A good name is more desirable than great riches and to be respected is better than silver and gold.” In one translations it says, “choose a good reputation over great riches.” In all of his names a great reputation follows. As a family we will work to honor that reputation by living out these 3 points...Need help?? Seek justice, Love mercy, Walk humbly.

## Tribute from a Son — Ian Carlson

Well, it's great to see so many familiar faces here today. In John's gospel, Jesus was speaking to His disciples, reminding them about what He had taught them, but also warning them about the problems they would have after He left. He said, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Be of good cheer: that's an important but hard thing to remember sometimes.

One of the first questions my kids asked when I flew home after dad's passing was, "Did you cry? We've never seen you cry" – kids are great, aren't they? Yes, we cried and we will probably cry some more from time to time. We'll cry, because *we* lost a father, a husband, a grandpa, a brother, a cousin, an uncle, a colleague, a mentor, a professor, a friend. But here's what we will NOT do. We will NOT cry *for* the father we've lost, or the husband, or the grandpa, or the brother, or the cousin, the uncle, the colleague, the mentor, the professor, the friend. Because we know that death no longer has its sting, the grave no longer has victory over us. But why is that true? Why do we say that at funerals? What does it mean? Why do things like this happen? Why does God take people we love from us? Kids ask a lot of question. I know my daughter was asking that question a lot. Sometimes adults ask questions, too. It's okay, keep asking them. I'll try to answer them while I tell you about my dad.

### MY DAD...LOVED...MUSIC.

His taste was a little different than mine, or most people – very eclectic. I would often hear the music coming up from his office in the basement through the floor and into my room – and he worked late! He was a night owl like I am. We've started taking our kids to concerts, they're starting to get into music now – I'm just thrilled I know most of the words. One of the bands we saw in concert last year was Casting Crowns. Probably the most gifted lyric writers I've ever heard – you can read their songs and know they are inspired. They were talking about a song that they'd been performing, one of the few that

didn't really have a story behind it. And then the lead singer was diagnosed with cancer and had to have his kidney removed. He realized then the song was written by God for him as he was going through it. These are the words God wrote – and I hope you always remember this, Nora. I know this is now one of your favorite songs. *"If your eyes are on the storm, you'll wonder if I love you still. But if your eyes are on the cross, you'll know I always have and I always will. Your world's not falling apart, it's falling into place"* ('Just Be Held' 2014). See, we won't always know why, but we do have this promise. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose" (Romans 8:28). They don't work together for good the way *we* want them to, but according to *His* purpose, for those who love God. That can be a scary idea to hold on to, if you don't know God, if you're not sure God is a loving God.

### MY DAD...LOVED...BOOKS.

You may or may not have noticed all the books that he collected over the years. They filled up his office here, and have now filled up the basement. We tried to estimate how many there are and it was somewhere north of 10,000. (Maybe he wanted to have one for every lake.) He seemed to love any book ever written anywhere by anyone – and chances are pretty good that he owned it. There's only one person I've seen who likes to read as much as he did – our daughter Nora (you get that from Papa). But there is one book that stood above them all – the Bible. I remember one time I was talking with mom and dad. I had just finished reading through the 'Bible in a year' and we asked dad how many times he had read through the Bible from start to finish. He said "probably 40." We both shot him a look that was a combination of "Really?" and "You know He can hear you." Who knows, maybe he did...but it's all been revealed to him now. Well, this book tells us about the loving God we have. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Not demonstrated, past tense, but demonstrates – active, present

tense – it's still happening, even today. How does He demonstrate His love for us? Even while we were sinners – He didn't wait until we were 'good enough' – thank God! – Christ died for us, in *our* place, as payment for *our* sins. Now *that* is awesome.

### MY DAD...LOVED...TO TALK

When I was a kid it would drive me *crazy*. After church, I'd be wanting to leave so we could get home usually to watch the Vikings game. We'd be standing there...we being me, my sister and my mom...but where's dad? Mom would say, sometimes with a sigh, "He's talking to someone." See I didn't appreciate why sometimes we couldn't just have some quiet. As I got older, I realized that that was his way of bonding, of connecting with people. We couldn't go anywhere without running into someone he knew. When he came to visit us out in San Diego, we were attending North Coast Calvary Chapel. This was just before Bethel West opened, there were probably 100 people there at a Saturday night service. Service ends, we get ready to leave, and he says, "Oh, there's so-and-so, let me say hello." Are you kidding me?? Happened all the time. And because I didn't appreciate it as a kid, God, in His infinite wisdom and sense of humor, has passed along that trait of loving to talk to our oldest son, Nathan (you get that from Papa).

### MY DAD...LOVED...GOLFING

When I was in high school he started taking me to play at Como Golf Course. I was a big, strong baseball player. Okay, I wasn't really big or strong then, but I always wanted to hit it as far as I could, usually hoping it would land in one of the adjacent fairways. He would hit it short and down the middle. Except occasionally, when he'd slice one and cry out "Oh, fiddle!" And somehow, he'd always beat me. Then I went to work for a golf company, and I had to put a stop to that. My favorite single golfing memory was returning to Como Golf Course. I was driving par 4's from the tee and then 3 putting for par – I could not make a birdie the *entire day*. But on the last hole, a par 5 – I've parred every single hole, and I've never shot under par before. I crushed a drive right down the



middle, 300 yards easy. And if you're a golfer, you know what I was thinking: "Don't screw this up, don't screw this up." I can still to this day remember the scene. With the clubhouse up the hill on the right, I hit a perfect 8-iron right at the flag – and it landed *this* far from the hole. Even I didn't screw that up – made an eagle – still the only time I've ever shot under par, and my dad was there – he was always there. Hopefully my kids will be able to create a memory like that with me some day.

### MY DAD...LOVED...TO DEBATE

He loved to be the contrarian. He and I disagreed on a lot of things. For example, whether or not Sports Illustrated counted as 'reading.' Or in the present day, whether or not you could truly 'read' on one of those 'newfangled doohickies' (Nook, Kindle, or Tablet of some kind). And politics. And we enjoyed 'discussing' things. (My sister's probably rolling her eyes.) But we agreed on the most important things. "The Lord is not willing that *any* should perish but that *all* should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). And John 3:16. "For God so loved the world,

that He gave His only Begotten Son, that *whoever* believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." *That* is why death has lost its sting, and *that* is why the grave no longer has victory over us. *That* is why we can be here and still be joyful through the tears. We will see him again, and there *is* hope for all of us in Christ. We will listen to music together, we will read books together, we will talk together, we will golf together, and we will debate together again. Thank you, Lord, for that truth, and thank you, Dad, for everything. We will keep our eyes on the cross, and we will be of good cheer. Amen

## A Tribute from a Grandson — Alex Koehn, Age 8

Hi, my name is Alex. Thank you all for coming here today. We were happy and sad when Papa died. We were happy because now he gets to be with his mom and dad. And he gets to be with Jesus. I was sad because we don't get to see him now until we join him in heaven. We were very close to each other

a lot. I still have good memories of him. He used to come pick me up and we would go play golf. He would buy me a lot of snacks. I used to go over to his house for a lot of sleepovers. Shannon and I would wake him up so we could eat Swedish pancakes. Sometimes it's sad that we don't get to be with him.

And now that he's up in heaven, God is telling him to watch over us. We get to be with him a lot now that he is gone. We still get to be with him because he is watching over us. So now that he is up in heaven, it's a better place for him because God is watching over Papa and Papa gets to be with God.

*Introducing the*

# G. W. CARLSON PEACE LIBRARY

in the  
*Agapé Peace Center*  
Duluth, MN

Preserving the core of Bill Carlson's  
faith-and-peace library for the post-digital age.

For more information, contact [tedlewis76@gmail.com](mailto:tedlewis76@gmail.com)

# A New Way to Pray



TERRI L. HANSEN  
*Central Baptist Church, St. Paul, MN*  
(Dec 2016) | It's that time of year when we make resolutions for the New Year. It is also that time of

year when we break those resolutions – it is a statistical fact! While 45% of all individuals make resolutions, do you have an idea of how many of them actually keep their New Year's resolution? A whopping 8%! Why is it so hard to change? Why do we fail so often at attempts to make permanent changes in our lives? Is it just an exercise in futility?

There is plenty of help out there from support groups. The bookstores are full of self-help titles. We can go to a psychologist, a hypnotist, a therapist, a life coach. We can get a gym membership or a personal trainer. There is a wealth of help available. The Bible even tells us that through Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, we have power to overcome the sins that so easily entangle and trip us up. In our weakness he is strong! But still we fail again and again.

Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest and well-known author and teacher on spiritual transformation, has written a book called *Breathing Under Water*. This book takes a close look at the Twelve Step Program of Alcoholics Anonymous and how it parallels the gospel message of Jesus. He sees a very obvious link between the wisdom of the Twelve Steps and what St. Francis called “the marrow of the Gospel.”

Now, you might be thinking, I'm not an alcoholic or an addict – I don't need that kind of help or support. Rohr would suggest that addiction is synonymous with sin. We all suffer from an addiction to our own way of thinking, our own way of doing, and our self-centered bent to control our own destiny:

“We are all spiritually powerless...and not just those physically addicted to a substance... Alcoholics just have their powerlessness visible for all to see. The rest of us disguise it in different ways, and over-

compensate for our more hidden and subtle addictions and attachments, especially our addiction to our way of thinking... We keep doing the same thing over and over again, even if it is not working for us... We really are our own worst enemies, and salvation is primarily from ourselves. It seems that humans would sooner die than change or admit that they are mistaken.” (pp. xviii-xix)

We have a sin problem. We don't need more resolutions, more will power, or more self-help books. What we need is true, permanent, inner transformation. I believe there is a way of praying, a way of relating to God, that will lead us down a path of inner transformation and permanent change. Rohr goes through all twelve steps in his book, but there is one step, Step 11, that I believe holds the key. I want to address Step 11 here and do so in light of a familiar passage on transformation, Rom. 12:1-2.

Step 11 reads like this: “(We) sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.”

*But when you pray,  
go away by yourself,  
shut the door behind you,  
and pray to your Father  
in private...*

~  
*Matt. 6:6*

What is different about this type of prayer and what does meditation look like? How do we use it to improve our “conscious contact with God?” How do we know what God's will is? And where do we find this power to carry out God's will?

First of all, there is an ineffective way to address God in prayer. In Matt. 6, Jesus is addressing the crowds in the Sermon on the Mount. Verses 5 and 6 say, “When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I

tell you the truth - that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private...” (NLT)

Now, it can be very helpful to literally go somewhere private and shut the door behind you, but it is interesting to note that in Jesus' day, most of the Jewish homes only had a single room. There was no closet or private place to go to be alone. Instead, this private place, this inner room, is within us. This is prayer that takes us in to that secret place in all of us where we meet God, where we speak with him spirit to spirit, where we listen for his voice, our very center, our soul.

“Oh, no – don't go there,” some of you are saying. That is a bit too weird, too new age, too mystical. Well, there is nothing new about it. It was Jesus' idea, and he did it often. We read in the gospels of Jesus going off to be by himself, to speak with his heavenly Father, to spend time alone with him. He spent forty days in the wilderness before embarking in public ministry. This meditative form of prayer, this contemplative practice of looking deep into the core of ourselves and inviting God to open us up to his work in our lives, this is the prayer that is so often missing – this is the prayer that can transform us and bring about permanent change.

Romans 12:1-2 is an excellent outline for contemplative prayer. Verse 1 says, “and so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.” (NLT)

In our dualistic world, we tend to separate the physical from the spiritual. They are two very different things and they have a hard time coexisting. We see our bodies as limiting us, getting in the way of our spiritual selves. Your body is not your enemy. It is a gift! It is the house, the vessel that Jesus chose to inhabit when he came as a human baby. It is the house, the vessel that he now chooses to reside in each one of us. Does that ever just blow your mind? God dwells in me – in you – by choice! He does not just dwell in my spirit but in my body, as well!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~  
*continued on p. 17*

# Radical Baptists: It Takes One to Know One

(G.W. Carlson Remembers Clarence Jordan)



(Editorial note from Ted Lewis: Through my involvement in publishing *Roots in the Cotton Patch: The Clarence Jordan Symposium 2012* (Cascade Books), Bill was

able to contribute a chapter on the radical Baptist tradition which he presented in Georgia at the symposium. His full chapter, "Clarence Jordan as Baptist: Celebrating the Radical Baptist Heritage," can be read on the Baptist Pietist Clarion website. One of Bill's special gifts was to create exhaustive bibliographies, and thus he was also commissioned to write a bibliography of

all writings by and about Clarence Jordan. Jordan founded Koinonia Farm in the mid-1940s, an intentional Christian community that experimented with racial integration in the South long before the height of the civil rights movement. Here now is Bill's introduction to his chapter.)

In January 1963 I had my first opportunity to interact with Clarence Jordan. I was a junior at Bethel College in St. Paul, Minnesota. His stories about a Jesus who ministered in Georgia were interesting to me. He represented a third option in the civil rights movement. Beyond securing rights within the legal system and using nonviolent protests as a

tool for demanding change Clarence Jordan advocated that the Christian church model a community which would look like the Kingdom of God. Here was a person who reflected my Baptist heritage and would mobilize its core beliefs to create a demand for a "radical" expression of faith.

This was the era of the early efforts to integrate Christian colleges, an effort that was not always successful. President Lundquist was at least willing to allow for diverse voices to be present on campus including the address by Benjamin Mays at the 1957 Commencement. In 1960 Martin Luther King was invited to speak on campus. He was eventually not able to attend because of a civil rights crisis in Atlanta. Dr. Anton Pearson, a contemporary

*continued on p. 20*

## Why I still call myself a...Baptist



ROGER OLSON, *Foy Valentine Professor of Christian Theology and Ethics at Truett Seminary* (Patheos June 1, 2012) | Some of my theological friends criticize me

for holding on to my "Baptist" identity in the current theological and political context (especially the U.S.A.) where these labels have largely come to mean mean-spirited, narrow-minded, legalistic, even hypocritical religiosity, and where they are virtually equated with the Religious Right, of which I am not a part.

Many Baptist churches have dropped the word "Baptist" from their names because it has been so tarnished by television evangelists, right-wing religious politicians and the so-called "Baptist wars" of the last twenty-five to thirty-five years.

Besides, they say, Baptists have very little in common beyond getting people wet. Many (perhaps most) no longer believe in separation of church and state. In fact, Baptists have become known for opposing it. Many no longer believe in or practice congregational autonomy. All the traditional

hallmarks of Baptist faith and practice have been sacrificed on various altars political, theological and practical.

Who are those who have been in the forefront of the church growth movement, the Religious Right, neo-fundamentalism, rationalistic theology and apologetics, so-called "complementarianism," etc., etc.? Baptists.

My friends challenge me to realize it is too late to rescue the label; the barbarians have invaded and taken over and there's no point in trying to rescue what is now a hopelessly sullied label and identity.

Besides, as I said (and they keep reminding me), there is very little that has ever or now holds "Baptists" together as an identifiable tradition. So, they tell me, stop reifying or hypostasizing "Baptist" as if it were a real phenomenon. Stop essentializing it, they say. Also, my northern friends tell me "Baptist" has become a primarily southern phenomenon.

A few years ago my late friend Stan Grenz (who proudly called himself both Baptist and evangelical) told me an interesting little story of an incident at his (then) institution of higher education. A well-known Anglican theologian, a colleague, had traveled to the American South (from Canada) to give some

lectures at a Baptist university and seminary. When he returned, at a gathering of professors, this Anglican theologian said (commenting on his trip to the South) "Baptists are uncouth." Of course, Stan spoke up to him and said "Am I included?" The Anglican theologian said "Present company excepted."

Well, I'm just stubborn enough not to give "Baptist" over to the barbarians or give in to non-Baptists who vilify it; I will defend the label and tradition, as it really was and should be, until I die. Every label has its problems. I prefer to do the hard work of rescuing "Baptist" from all the distortions that surround it in popular culture and even among those who proudly proclaim it.

What I find ironic is that some of my friends who, though moderate, proudly identify themselves as Baptist, tell me that I should give up calling myself "evangelical" or identifying myself with that movement for the same reason others tell me to give up calling myself "Baptist" or identifying with that tradition.

(Roger Olson was Associate Professor and Professor of Theology, Department of Biblical and Theological Studies, Bethel College, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1984-1999.)

# Pulpits and Politics Don't Mix



GLEN SCORGIE, *Professor of Theology at Bethel Seminary San Diego* (October 7, 2012; revised January 2016) | Since 2008, “Pulpit Freedom Sunday” has

been celebrated. It's organized by (mostly conservative evangelical) Christian pastors concerned that their rights to free speech from the pulpit (and, they would say, freedom of religion) may be at risk from an intrusive government and a dubious amendment back in 1954 to a pivotal section of the federal tax code.

The specific legislation in question, 501(c)(3) states that tax-exempt organizations (like churches) are prohibited from “participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office.” The Alliance Defending Freedom, the organization supporting these pastors, is trying to goad the government into attempting to act on this legislation. They are gunning for a showdown on freedom of religion. I confess to very mixed feelings.

I am not a lawyer or a tax expert, but it strikes me that in terms of the principles of the American Constitution the pastors may have a point. What is deeply troubling, though, is the thought that any pastors should presume to use the pulpit to try to influence the voting practices of their congregations. As the apostle Paul famously mused, in his inspired way, “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient or helpful.” That would seem to apply to political pulpiteering.

There is something profoundly demeaning to intelligent church members to have their minister advising them on how they should vote. There is something profoundly inappropriate about a minister doing so from the vantage point of a podium designed for the faithful proclamation of the Gospel and revealed truth. Ministers should not overreach themselves and their competencies, nor should intelligent congregations allow it. Ministers should stick to what they are

(hopefully) qualified to do, and stop meddling in the affairs of state. Why regress to an activity that the clergy has historically never performed very well, and often with disastrous consequences?

America has been a shining beacon of freedom for many years partly because it has embraced the principle of the separation of church and state. Churches lose their spiritual independence when they get enmeshed in the details of politics and political intrigue. We have already seen too many cases in which naïve Christian leaders have been completely co-opted by smarter, manipulative politicians and political parties.

To listen to some preachers, Jesus Christ came to earth to give us clarity about free enterprise. They see him as the Adam Smith of the first century. The truth is that Jesus did talk a lot about freedom and personal responsibility, but he also talked a lot about watching out for those in need, living simply and caring for God's earth. It is a curious thing that when many ministers, around election times, start to opine on “biblical principles,” their lists bear a striking resemblance to the platform of only one party.

Just this past week, for example, the Fundamentalist Liberty University, founded by televangelist and Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell, and now led by his son, invited Donald Trump of all people to speak at its Fall convocation, and with great hoopla and congratulations, awarded the thrice-wed real estate developer and reality TV show star an honorary doctorate. A university spokesperson described Trump as “a one of the greatest visionaries of our time” and a champion of free enterprise (including operating beauty pageants for profit).

In his convocation address Trump startled even the mainstream media by advising the Christian students to “get even.” He commented: “I always say don't let people take advantage—this goes for the country, too, by the way—don't let people take advantage. Get even. And you know, if nothing else, others will see that and they're going to say, ‘You know, I'm going to let Jim Smith or Sarah Malone, I'm going to let them alone because they're tough customers.’”

According to reports the student body at Liberty, who had initially cheered wildly for Trump, went quiet at this point. No doubt they were wondering how they should reconcile this with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, contained in the big Bibles many of them were carrying. That Donald Trump would advocate such things, being who he is, is hardly surprising. What is more surprising and troubling is Liberty University's subsequent defense of Trump's speech. Liberty vice-president the Rev. Johnnie Moore, Jr. confirmed his own conviction that Jesus would get even and did. Moreover, he explained, the Bible is filled with stories of God getting even with his enemies. God is portrayed as giving grace, but he is also portrayed as one tough character.

*Christianity Today*, the chief magazine for American evangelicalism, and one known for its somewhat right wing disposition, seemed not to be particularly aghast about the Trump debacle. A columnist suggested that universities are, after all, places where students need to be exposed to a variety of ideas. It failed to acknowledge that awarding an honorary doctorate to a convocation speaker is about the highest act of endorsement a school can grant to any individual and what they stand for. In the words of the late Francis Schaeffer, we just saw “nature eat up grace” in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Most ministers are remarkably good and gifted people, but some of them are excessively ambitious. And those are the ones to whom the media pay most attention. Their efforts to get into the limelight are ostensibly to gain a wider influence for God and good, but it often ends up being a lot about them. They also use techniques of power and persuasion that are virtually indistinguishable from those employed by their “worldly” adversaries. They are better at fueling conflict than facilitating reconciliation.

My father was a minister, and a good man, and I've had the privilege of helping to train hundreds of them through the years. I have a word for them all. If God has called you to be a minister of the Gospel, remember what an honor and privilege it is. And don't stoop to playing politics. Speak to a balance

—continued on p. 14

and breadth of moral issues, to be sure, and do so courageously, but always do it from a vantage point above the fray. It will preserve the credibility of the pulpit, and keep you from dividing the church along party lines. In the end it is worth keeping in mind that God is not a Republican or a Democrat.

Let the church be the church. For years

in French-speaking Quebec the Roman Catholic priests aligned themselves with the ruthless conservative government of that province, and told the people from the pulpit how to vote. The color of the government party was blue, and their opponents' red. On the Sunday before an election the priests would say to their congregations:

"Remember now, heaven is blue, and hell is red." But then, when the people eventually rebelled against that oppressive government, they also turned against the church for being part of their betrayal. Today, sadly, Quebec is the most secularized corner of North America.

It is not the place for churches to dictate or even recommend how Christians should vote on candidates and propositions. When it comes to that final matter of how someone properly connects the dots between their Christian principles and a slate of electoral options, individual Christians are on their own. Anything more is an encroachment on the spirit of separation of church and state. Rather, the business of churches is to help form the thinking and character of believers along lines of truth and goodness so that they can go out and freely decide how best to respond to the issues on the ballot. Healthy churches form believers, and produce wise voters, but good churches don't take political sides. The true church of Jesus Christ is much bigger than any single political party, and the institutions of organized Christianity, and the dynamics of Christian fellowship within them, need to reflect this fact.

(Scorgie has been Professor of Theology at Bethel Seminary San Diego since 1996. He is also involved in the Chinese Bible Church of San Diego and lectures regularly in Asia. Glen has authored several books *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (2011)(with James D. Smith), *A Little Guide to Christian Spirituality* (2007), *The Journey Back to Eden* (2009), *The Challenge of Bible Translation* (2003) (with Mark L. Strauss and Steven Voth) and *A Call for Continuity: The Theological Contributions of James Orr* (2004).

The article originally appeared on Glen Scorgie's blog <http://glenscorgie.com/2012/10/07/pulpits-and-politics-dont-mix>

## Baptist Joint Committee: Just Another Pulpit Freedom Sunday

DON BYRD (September 27, 2012)

On October 7, a handful of pastors around the country will try to spark a lawsuit by challenging the IRS to investigate them for endorsing candidates for office from the pulpit. Pulpit Freedom Sunday is the name organizers have given to this yearly exercise. And while several dozen have endorsed candidates on that day in the past, it has yet to result in an IRS sanction. Writing for the *New Republic*, Amy Sullivan explains why the argument put forward by those who oppose the no-endorsement rule for tax exemption fail.



*In order to believe that churches are being censored by the government, you have to accept that religious organizations have not only the right to engage in partisan speech and activities but also the right to be exempt from federal taxes and the right to accept donations that are tax-deductible.*

*There simply is no constitutional right that covers the latter. The tax-exempt status for churches is a monetary benefit given to them by the government, as is the rule allowing individuals to deduct their contributions to religious organizations.*

*It's quite simple. If a church wants to endorse a candidate and engage in campaign activities, there are absolutely no restrictions preventing it from doing so. But it must pay federal taxes, and its donors cannot deduct their contributions.... The churches involved in Pulpit Sunday want to have it both ways. They want to use tax-deductible donations to participate in campaigns, and no doubt there are plenty of political donors who would prefer to deduct their political contributions by sending them through religious organizations.*

She's exactly right. This is not a religious freedom issue, or a free speech issue. It's a tax exemption rule that is quite reasonable and fair and applies equally to all 501(c)(3) organizations. It protects churches from becoming money-laundering arms of political campaigns, and in the process it saves clergy from foolishly dividing its congregations along political lines. That part is just a bonus, but a helpful one. Polls consistently show Americans want their church leaders to refrain from involving the church in electoral politics. My advice? Just say no.

# The Choral History of Bethel Choirs



DENNIS PORT, *Professor of Music, Bethel University* (Lecture given at Calvary Church on April 11, 2015 to The Bethel Historical Society) |

When I was asked to give a brief lecture on the history of choral music at Bethel I thought it would be a simple task. I knew that C. Howard Smith had started the Bethel Chapel Choir in the 1940s, that Bob Berglund had conducted for 36 years until 1995, when I came, and I'd been the conductor since. How complicated could it be? Virtually no preparation necessary, I thought.

But when I made the 'mistake' of actually doing some serious research on the topic, my discoveries were so extensive that I finally had to just stop and say: "This is enough." I had learned far more about our wonderful choral heritage than I had known existed. I want to share some of that with you today.

My thanks to Diana Magnuson, who steered me to the electronic sources that made a lot of reading and interesting discovery much easier. Before I begin on Bethel Choir history I want to share just a couple of interesting non-choral facts that emerged along the way:

- Did you know that until the 50's Bethel's mascot was the Indians! Why the Indians, observed my wife? With virtually a completely Swedish constituency, why not "the Vikings," or "the Norsemen," or something at least vaguely Scandinavian?
- My search lead me to several prominent Bethel personalities who unbeknownst to me had been part of the choral history. In the 1938 Bethel Men's Glee Club alone I found pictured: Maurice Lawson, John Goodman, John Valine, and Bruce Fleming. All later BGC leaders.
- I discovered that in the Clarion issue that featured an article on the formation of the Chapel Choir in 1948, there was reference to the famous presidential campaign that pitted Dewey, Truman, and Wallace, in the now-notorious "Dewey wins!" debacle. What an historical time!

But now to the purpose for this morning. I had long heard that the Male Chorus (or Glee Club) was Bethel's first singing ensemble, and that was confirmed. The Male Chorus tradition goes back to 1906. In the 1932 Spire (yearbook) the description of choral singing highlights the impact of Professor George Hultgren, director of the Glee Club. Hultgren had studied music in Europe. He had also formed a loosely-structured mixed choir, the precursor of the later Bethel Choirs. To my delight, in one of the earliest pictures of that group Virgil Olson was pictured as a first tenor. I remember Virgil's beautiful tenor voice late into his remarkable life.

But the seminal year for the Bethel Choir tradition as we now know it was 1948. There had been a spike in student population that young professor C. Howard Smith saw as an opportunity for Bethel to join the other fine choral traditions already existing in Minnesota, mostly at the Lutheran colleges. With Nels Sjernstrom already conducting the well-established Male Chorus, Howard Smith launched the first official Bethel Choir. From the October 22 Clarion: "Another new addition to the Bethel Music Department is the Chapel Choir under the direction of Professor C. Howard Smith. Each Saturday morning at 9:00 the choir rehearses..."

And so it began.

True to its name, the Chapel Choir sang mostly in chapel services that year, and made plans to take its first short tour to the Northwest. There was also a first-ever joint concert of The Male Chorus, the Women's Chorus, and the Chapel Choir in the spring. That was the launch of our great tradition. I clearly remember my dear friend, C. Howard, reminding me in my second year at Bethel (1997) that Bethel Choir was celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> year of existence. It was obvious that he was rightly proud of its beginning, and delighted that a former student of his was now its conductor.

## THE 1950S

The Chapel Choir became a prominent part of Bethel's choral ministry in the 50's. Auditions increased and the size of the group grew from 30 to 40. The results of auditions were posted in the Clarion, so apparently

it was seen as quite an honor to make the Chapel Choir.

Big changes took place in 1954. To avoid the rivalry between the Male Chorus and the Chapel Choir, a decision was made that the Male Chorus, directed by Nels Sjernstrom, would draw only from seminary students, those pre-enrolled in seminary, and those "grandfathered in" from the previous year's group. Bethel Chapel Choir would then have all of the rest of the men from whom to draw. That changed the choral landscape for a short time and was obviously a boost to the mixed choral singing tradition. That mandate was obviously short-lived, because by the time I came to Bethel in the early 60's the Male Chorus was definitely drawing college men, and the rivalry between the groups might have been considered "fierce!" Also, at mid-decade came the beginning of the presidency of Carl Lundquist, the change of the names of the Chapel Choir to The Bethel College Choir, and the mascot change from The Indians to The Royals!

The choir also began making major tours. In 1958 the choir travelled to California singing every day and twice on Sunday, with NO days off. And ALL of the concerts were in BGC churches – most of whom seemed thrilled to be considered for a concert.

In 1957 the choral program took another huge leap forward with the beginning of The Festival of Christmas. The innovative C. Howard Smith was also at the center of this initiative. Called "Festival of Christmas" from its inception, the first was held in December of 1957 in the Snelling Avenue gymnasium. From the beginning it was a joint effort with the art department, as Eugene Johnson created his remarkable paint-by-the-number thematic flats that adorned the front of the gym. Incidentally, in my early years at Bethel I personally had the privilege of painting those flats. Those of us living a far distance from home didn't travel home at Thanksgiving in those years, so it was a great diversion and contribution. It is something that I recall with great satisfaction, even nostalgia.

Perhaps the most remarkable "fun fact" that I discovered in researching the Festival of Christmas was to find that the Proces-

*continued on p. 16*

sional and Recessionals for those first years were composed by none other than Ron Veenker! Ron is, of course, the father of Jon Veenker, present department chair, and the composer and arranger of all 20 years of the Festivals that I led. “Apple falling not far from the tree” occurs to me!

### THE 1960S

A major historic change in the choral program took place in the 60’s. In 1959-1960, Howard Smith took a much-deserved sabbatical. In his absence, a young conductor who was teaching at Annandale High School, a graduate of Moody Bible Institute where he was a student of the great Don Hustad, was hired as interim Bethel College Choir director. Hustad’s influence on his protégé was most clearly seen in his challenge that excellence should not only be a quality of Christian school choirs – it should be its hallmark. It was a lesson thoroughly learned and implemented by the young conductor.

That Bethel College Choir interim director was, of course, Robert Berglund. “Bob” was not only an outstanding conductor, but was deeply passionate about choral excellence, and was a fierce disciplinarian. But it WAS a different time. When people asked me how I responded to the discipline of Robert Berglund my answer was simple: “Did you know Wilbert Port!?” This was the era of Vince Lombardi, folks. Serious discipline was considered the path to excellence, and Berglund’s choirs soon gained that reputation for excellence.

As a result of that year, Robert Berglund was hired fulltime to continue with The Bethel College Choir. The “elephant in the room,” of course, is how the founder of the choir could go on sabbatical and upon returning lose the choir that he had founded. I will allow that elephant to remain in the room because circumstances surrounding it draw far too much on subjective matters which are painful to many to this day. Suffice to say, President Lundquist saw it in the best long-term interest of the choral program to keep Robert Berglund on. The 36 years that followed perhaps affirmed at least the longevity part of the equation.

### THE BERGLUND YEARS

Robert Berglund left a remarkable legacy for the Bethel Choir program, building as he did on the seminal work of C. Howard Smith.

- The choir grew from numbering 40-50 to being an ensemble frequently over 70 singers, paralleling the remarkable growth in student population in the 70’s.
- Bethel College Choir continued its growth in reputation outside of the Bethel community. “We” moved into the category of one of the fine choral ensembles in the state of Minnesota, a state rich in choral traditions.
- The choir began international touring in 1968, and every four years since, and in 1969 premiered *The Passion of St. Luke* of Krzysztof Penderecki at Carnegie Hall. Bethel College Choir was in “the big time.”
- The word “College” was dropped from the name of the choir officially in 1973, becoming The Bethel Choir. I’m not sure I’ve ever had this confirmed by Dr. Berglund himself, but I strongly suspect that this was following the precedent our “rival schools,” St. Olaf and Concordia, who’s choirs were The St. Olaf Choir and The Concordia Choir. No doubt these traditions wanted to be seen as more than “just” a college choir! Bethel had joined those ranks.

A mention of the Berglund years wouldn’t be complete without remarking on the marvelous legacy of hymn arrangement that he left to the choral world. They are still performed by Bethel Choir, and good church choirs.

After a year off, C. Howard Smith, one of the most gracious men I have ever known, began directing the Bethel Male Chorus, where he continued a marvelous tradition of choral excellence. In 1962 Oliver Mogck began directing the Women’s Choir. In the 70’s Mary Fall began a remarkable run of conducting that ensemble until the formation of the Bethel College Singers, a mixed group, in 1987. When Howard retired from conducting his tradition was turned over briefly to Oliver Mogck, then to C. Edward Thomas, and finally to Jerry Sundberg, also

ending with the College Singers in 1987.

### THE PORT YEARS

In 1995, at the retirement of Robert Berglund, his successor was happily engaged at Northwestern College, and counter to the thinking of many Bethel folks, was NOT “waiting in the wings” for the Bethel position to open up. In fact, Dennis Port did not apply in the first round of applications, being happy with “his own” program” at NWC. Finally convinced to apply, . . . well, the rest is history.

My goals in inheriting such a great tradition from my own mentor were:

- To maintain the excellence of the program. To hold up what I had been entrusted.
- To keep the classical choir strong in what was increasingly becoming a “pop” culture in the church – often yielding fewer dedicated classical choral singers.
- To continue to see Bethel Choir as a meeting place for future couples. The number over the years are legion, with at least three in my final choir! There’s something about the “intimacy” of a choir tour.

Perhaps the biggest growth in my years at Bethel has been in the Festival of Christmas where a fourth performance was added and led to a final six years of sellouts. In those years the band and orchestra have assumed a major role, growing from a token band involvement and no orchestra at all in 1994. That has been extremely satisfying. A highlight of the Festival years was the TPT production of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Festival in 2006. It is STILL being played, and I am getting younger every year!

In the fall of 2015 Bethel Choir will be turned over to the extremely capable hands of Dr. Gene Peterson. He is hired, excited – and ready to go.

I talked a lot about tradition in Bethel Choir – from the first day of class. The future is challenging, but looks bright as the tradition continues. I am humbly grateful to have had a small part in this great legacy, and to have stood on the shoulders of such giants.

To God alone belongs the glory.

So, we give it back to him. We place it on the altar of our hearts as a living and holy sacrifice. Holy! Why do we need to do this? Because, we are out to attempt this crazy inner prayer stuff and our bodies have to be on board or we will fail. As Rick Warren was fond of saying, the trouble with a living sacrifice is that it keeps crawling off the altar!

What do I mean by our bodies have to be on board? As amazing as our bodies are and as amazing as it is that this place we are going is within us, we are also limited by our bodies. Our bodies get tired. We get restless, we get distracted, hungry, anxious. Placing our bodies on this altar is an act of bringing our bodies into full surrender to God. You may need to take a nap. If you are too tired, you won't be able to sustain this state of prayer for long. You may need to eat something, take off your shoes, put on a sweater if you're cold, walk around if you are restless. Do whatever it takes until you can maintain a posture of quiet and prayer before God's altar – fully submitting all that you are – body and spirit – to him. That is the way to true worship. All in – 100%.

Now, remember what we saw earlier in Matt. 6? Don't be like the hypocrites praying on the street corner? Don't babble and say the same words over and over. Most of our prayers are very ego-centric. The customary way of prayer is about taking our own private needs and hurts as our reference point, and then inviting God to help us, when we have already determined what we think is the best solution. Don't get me wrong – there is a place for bringing our requests, our needs before God. He cares about what we care about. But there is more to prayer than petitioning God for our own needs and the needs of others.

This other type of prayer requires going from ego-centric to soul-centric. Put aside your agenda. Look deep into God's heart and mind and ask for his perspective. Let him begin to widen your lens and give you a better, bigger picture of the world around you. He will help you know what you really want, what you desire. How does he want you to live? How does he show love? How does he explain pain and suffering? Quit telling him what you want and ask him to show you what

is on his heart. Pray not to change God, but to allow God to change you. Empty yourself of yourself and he will fill your heart. And then, comes the good part!

As you engage God in this way, God begins to transform you by changing the way you think. Verse 2 of Romans 12 says it perfectly: "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." (NLT)

*Don't copy the behavior and  
customs of this world,  
but let God transform  
you into a new person by  
changing the way you think.  
Then you will learn to  
know God's will for you,  
which is good and pleasing  
and perfect.*

*Romans 12:2 (NLT)*

God actually likes to be in charge. He wants to help each of us know what we really desire and want. We can't know that if we are always telling him what we want. We have to listen more. If we empty our minds of our own ideas, he will be able to fill our hearts. We don't change God when we pray – He changes us. And the best part is that when we pray this way – asking God to change us, to fill us with his thoughts and desires - he always answers that prayer affirmatively.

He transforms the way we think – we begin to think like he does, with the very mind of Christ! This new mind knows, understands, accepts, and sees correctly, widely, and wisely. The "who" of prayer also shifts. It is not you who is praying, but Christ in you. Rohr says, "The contemplative mind prays from a different sense of Who-I-am. It rests, and abides in the Great I AM, and draws its life from the Larger Vine, the Deeper Well." (p. 96)

Col. 3:3-4 puts it this way: "Your real life

is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory." (NLT) It doesn't get any better than that. You are now personally in on the deal. It is divine participation – you opting in and God always there!

So, you change your approach, and God will change the way you think – your mind. Once your mind is changed, the soul and body can follow suit. This is quiet, non-public prayer. This is going off to a quiet place and going in your mind and heart into the inner room of your soul. It is surrender – placing your body on the altar, leaving your small agenda behind. You will find with practice, that this prayer and only this prayer can invade, touch, and heal the unconscious. This is going into that place in each of us where all the garbage lies, but it is also the place where God reveals himself and overwhelms us with his love.

I want to challenge you to take the time to practice this soul prayer. Put aside your lists and personal concerns for a few minutes every day to go deeper – to explore the heart of God in you. Let it change the way you think, let it reveal to you what God's perfect will for you is. Begin to live in the very presence of Christ now. You can be changed from the inside out. Spiritual transformation doesn't require New Year's resolutions or massive amounts of will power and self-discipline. But it does require trying some new things. Allow God's spirit to do the heavy lifting - the work of transformation that you seek in this New Year! His Kingdom is within you!

(Terri L. Hansen, Central Baptist Church, St. Paul, MN)

# Living as Forgiven People: Ten Principles of Authentic Forgiveness

G. WILLIAM CARLSON | In October 2005 Terri Hansen and I had the opportunity to conduct a Day of Spiritual Renewal on the topic of Living as Forgiven and Forgiving People. The retreat was cosponsored by Central and Elim Baptist Churches. The core assumption was that “forgiveness and reconciliation are practices that give concrete expression to our calling as disciples of Jesus Christ.” It is a theme that is derived from our pietist heritage and needs to be emphasized in a world that too often values “revenge and triumphalism.”

Each of us has experienced times where being a forgiving person has been difficult if not impossible. A student once asked me how one could forgive a family member who has been abusive, slanderous and irresponsible? A faculty colleague once asked me how one can forgive the leaders of the former apartheid regime in South Africa who have killed his friends and made it difficult for him to gain an education? How do you minister in a Baptist church in Croatia in a manner that allows for Serbs and Croats to worship and serve the Lord Jesus Christ together? How does a society ask for forgiveness for failing to stop the lynching of African-Americans in the 20th century? How do you ask forgiveness from a student who received an irresponsible tongue lashing during the classroom experience? Can

pastors forgive church members who have intentionally undermined a significant church ministry?

Jesus’ ministry suggested that a “forgiving” disposition was a characteristic of discipleship. (Matthew 18) The “Living as Forgiving People” section of the retreat focused on three stories in Christ’s life and three illustrations of forgiveness found on the “Journey Toward Forgiveness” video. Participants were encouraged, through small group discussion, to develop a set of principles for the achievement of authentic forgiveness. The following were the results of the participants’ conversations.

## A. SEEKING AUTHENTIC FORGIVENESS: RECOGNIZING AND DEFINING THE ISSUES

In John 8:1-12, Jesus engages in a dialogue with the religious leaders concerning a woman caught in adultery. After some discussion about the “impact of the law” on adultery cases, Jesus queried: “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” When the elders went away leaving Jesus with the adulterous woman, he said to her, “neither do I condemn you...Go now and leave your life of sin.” Jesus offered the woman a fresh start. She was to commence a new life because of her encounter with Jesus Christ.

*“Let any one of you who is without sin  
be the first to throw a stone at her.”*

*Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.*

*At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time,  
the older ones first, until only Jesus was left,  
with the woman still standing there.*

*Jesus straightened up and asked her,*

*“Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”*

*“No one, sir,” she said.*

*“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared.*

*“Go now and leave your life of sin.”*

~  
*John 8:7-11*

Walter Wangerin, a distinguished Christian writer, tells the story of Elijah, a well-loved African-American school principal and his wife, Mary, a bright, thoughtful and determined third grade school teacher. Elijah tragically died of cancer. He had often asked Wangerin to pray the Lord’s Prayer at his bedside.

When his last death rattle passed, Mary continued to be angry with a God who “allowed her husband to die too soon and too quick and through too much pain.” Wangerin preached about the “merciful God that Elijah consistently saw as the God of the whole universe and the God who held kindness and love and forgiveness for all the people.”

One Sunday, just about the time of the saying of the Lord’s Prayer, Mary stood up, without anger in her eyes, looked at the members of the congregation and said “Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come.” The congregation raised their arms and prayed with her. Wangerin saw a woman who “sang us sweetly home, past her grief to amen, to amen and to forgiveness.”

What do these two stories tell us about the nature of forgiveness and how it can be achieved? What core principles can one reach about the “authentic forgiveness” that God wishes us to have and to share with others?

1. Forgiveness allows each party to a conflict the possibility of a fresh start.
2. Forgiveness is a choice that one must make. It is an intentional response to difficult and painful issues.
3. Forgiveness allows one to understand and take responsibility for one’s part in the development of the conflict.

## B. SEEKING AUTHENTIC FORGIVENESS: LEARNING TO LET GO/LEARNING TO LET GOD WORK IN YOUR LIFE.

In Luke 19:1-9 Jesus engages in a dialogue with the tax collector Zacchaeus. Jesus broke socioreligious boundaries to commune with Zacchaeus at his home. The encounter encouraged Zacchaeus to confess

his misuse of power. He gave half of his possessions to the poor and restored fourfold the taxes that he had stolen. Jesus stated that “salvation has come to this house.” What a transformation! Zacchaeus’ encounter with Jesus brought about a desire to seek restoration and restitution.

In the video, “Journey toward Forgiveness,” John Perkins tells the story of his journey from anger to reconciliation. He tells the story of how his brother, returning home from military service in World War II, is shot by a white marshal at a movie theater. John was himself beaten when serving time in prison protesting the ills of segregation. John eventually moved to California, came to grips with the forgiving God and returned to Mississippi to develop a Christian community known as Voice of Calvary Ministries.

*“I say all the time,  
the saddest people that  
I know are people who are  
not able to forgive...and so  
forgiveness frees me.”*

*John Perkins*

John now works with law enforcement to provide support for young people in trouble. The Community provides educational, economic and leadership development, low-income housing options, and a tutoring program. John lives as a forgiving Christian: “I say all the time, the saddest people that I know are people who are not able to forgive...and so forgiveness frees me.”

What does it mean that “forgiveness frees me?” How do reconciliation and restitution relate to one another? What does it mean to take the initiative? Is reconciliation possible and under what circumstances?

4. Forgiveness demands that people seek restitution with those who have been harmed.
5. Forgiveness requires people to take the initiative to break the cycles of animosity and hatred.
6. Forgiveness has as its ultimate goal the possibility of reconciliation.

### C. SEEKING AUTHENTIC FORGIVENESS: A JOURNEY THAT HAS NO GUARANTEES

In John 13:31-38, 18:15-26, and 21:15-25 Jesus engages in a dialogue with Peter concerning the need for faithful disciples. Peter, the overly zealous and excitable disciple, eagerly pledges to be that faithful follower who would lay down his life for Jesus. Jesus predicted that Peter would deny him three times before the “rooster crowed.”

After Jesus’ death, three times Peter chose not to be known as Christ’s follower. Peter seemed to misunderstand the “political” nature of the Kingdom of God and probably sought for a more successful political transformation of the current political order.

The “good news” of Jesus Christ is that he did not give up on Peter. After the resurrection, Jesus had breakfast with the disciples and he particularly singled out Peter. He asked Peter three times if Peter loved Jesus. Peter replied “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” Receiving God’s gift of forgiveness, Peter was given the assignment of evangelism and teaching. (Acts 2)

Bud Welch in the video, “Journey Toward Forgiveness,” tells the story of how his daughter, Julie Marie, was killed in the April 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. In his anger he would have killed Timothy McVeigh himself if given the chance. He turned to alcohol and became a second victim to the Oklahoma tragedy. His hangovers lasted all day. In January 1996 he came to the bombsite, as he had done every day, and sought to do something different with his life.

He decided to visit Tim McVeigh’s parents and show them that he did not blame them. As he left their home he hugged Tim’s sister Jennifer who was about Julie’s age. In tears Bud said to Jennifer, “Look, honey, the three of us are in this for the rest of our lives. I don’t want your brother to die and I’ll do everything I can to prevent it.”

As he walked away from the house Bud realized that until that moment he had walked alone, but now a tremendous weight had lifted from his shoulders. He stated, “I had found someone who was a bigger vic-

tim of the Oklahoma bombing than I was, because while I can speak in front of thousands of people and say wonderful things about Julie, if Bill McVeigh meets a stranger he probably doesn’t even say he had a son.” Welch concluded that “about a year before the execution I found it in my heart to forgive Tim McVeigh. It was a release for me rather than for him.”

What does it mean for Peter to be “restored” to the Christian community and be given the assignment of “feeding Christ’s sheep?” Why did Bud Welch take the risk of meeting Tim McVeigh’s father? How did he gain the courage to take that step? Who most benefits from the act of “forgiving” and are there any guarantees of a reconciliation outcome?

7. Forgiveness needs to be a part of one’s normal every day life in order to be able to accomplish the task in the most difficult of times.
8. Forgiveness is a product of our experience of God’s grace. This enables us to act in ways that may be difficult or to confront concerns we may wish to avoid.
9. Forgiveness brings no guarantees of successful results. It is a journey without predictable outcomes.
10. Forgiveness is a requirement of Christian discipleship. It is an illustration of a theology of reconciliation and role model of what it means to be sons and daughters of God. These authentic principles are useful starting points for allowing all of us to think about what it means to be a forgiving people. As Christians, by God’s grace, we are a forgiven people. We are constantly in need for God’s forgiveness as we fail to meet God’s expectations for our lives. God expects that we will also be a forgiving people. As disciples of His, we are to be agents of reconciliation.

Can we make this a norm in our lives?

of Clarence Jordan at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville and Professor of Old Testament at Bethel Seminary argued for a Christian commitment to civil rights in St. Paul and endorsed a pacifist stand on war and peace issues.

During my forty-four years at Bethel University I have developed and frequently taught a class entitled *Christian Nonviolence* which attempts to explore the theological, historical, and practical implications of peacemaking as a Biblical norm. Clarence Jordan helped to raise many of the core themes for this course, and I have regularly included his sermons on the Good Samaritan, radical discipleship, and Christian peacemaking in the class.

The life and witness of Clarence Jordan, along with F. O. Nilsson, Isaac Backus, Francis Bellamy, Helen Montgomery, Nannie Burroughs, Walter Rauschenbusch, and Martin Luther King Jr. has helped me to develop a paradigm for radical Baptist discipleship which encourages courageous Christian dissent. The paradigm includes the following:

1. an early identification with people in need or people who are unacceptable to mainstream societal norms;
2. a serious discontent with the witness of the established Christian church in their community and a desire to recover a more authentic faith;
3. a desire to follow in the footsteps of Christ and faithfully to live out the principles of the Sermon on the Mount;
4. a need to develop an alternative faith community to provide a “counter-culture” Christian witness, encourage responsible discipleship, and develop collegial support networks;
5. a faith journey that integrates Christian spirituality and social and economic justice;
6. a theological commitment to the “sacredness of life” and the dangers of hedonism and materialism;
7. a belief in a “servanthood” model of leadership.

During the past two decades “progressive Baptists” have found Clarence Jordan a valuable prophet whose critique of the issues of

his day are still relevant to an understanding of the gospel in today’s Christian communities. Although, he is relevant to leaders of many traditions, he is significantly relevant for those who believe that the “Baptist” tradition must recover a radical heritage and apply it to today’s challenges.

Final note by Ted Lewis: The article ends with the inspiration of Clarence Jordan for two leading Baptist professors of Christian ethics, David Gushee and Glen Stassen. “They have found Clarence Jordan a helpful role model in the development of a contemporary radical Baptist witness.” Indeed, Jordan’s life and witness “expresses well the paradigm of conscientious Christian discipleship and thus he is an encouragement to today’s radical Baptist community.”

Recommended reading for further study: *Substance of Faith and Other Cotton Patch Sermons* by Clarence Jordan. (For 40% off discount, contact tedlewis@wipfandstock.com)



G William Carlson

4 / 21 / 1943 – 2 / 12 / 2016

