



## Men's Conference hosted by Monroe Missionary Baptist

**MONROE** – On the mountain, Jesus taught his disciples to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). The overall aim of the Christian life is to pursue God’s kingdom, not our own kingdoms in this world. Turning away from ourselves, we look to Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith. Assured of Christ’s love and centered upon His completed work for us, we have a firm foundation upon which to resist darkness and seek the kingdom of God.

Monroe Missionary Baptist Church in Monroe, Michigan is hosting their 2023 Men’s Conference on the theme of, “The Purpose of the Christian Life”. Their Men’s Conference aims to ground and grow men in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Through a mixture of learning and fellowship, they desire to encourage men to follow Christ in their various callings in life.

The guest speaker this year is Jon Moffitt, who serves as pastor of Grace Reformed Church, in Spring Hill, Tennessee. Originally from Southern California, he has served churches in Utah, California, and Tennessee, and in addition to preaching at his local church, can be heard on the Theocast Podcast. Jon and his wife, Judith, have four children.

- Registration: online at [mmbconline.org/mens-conference](http://mmbconline.org/mens-conference) or call (734) 241-6860
- Dates: March 3-4
- Cost: \$20/person
- Location: 14260 S Dixie Hwy, Monroe, MI, 48161

For more information about the conference and schedule, [click here](#).

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Spencer Snow has served as Discipleship Pastor of Monroe Missionary Baptist Church since 2019. Originally from Missouri, he’s a graduate of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, and makes his home in Monroe with his wife, Courtney, and their three children.

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## The call to lead; the call to develop leaders

**EASTPOINTE** – In October and November 2022, I was doing a series called Standing Together, a 7-week series that focused on the local church and in our church. It was a way to teach a new members class to the entire church. I did this series because Eastside Community Church had

very little if any information on our current members due to a change in leadership, Covid-19, record keeping ability, and various other reasons.

This series did two things; it taught in a church setting to all who come on Sunday who we are as a church, and asked those attending to become a partner in ministry with our church.

In the first message of the series we looked at the responsibility of the pastor to the church. The point of focus for the pastor was Ephesians 4:11-12 "And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ". From this passage, we were able to see one of the main responsibilities of our church's pastors; to prepare and equip this local assembly of believers to do ministry.

There are many pastors who minister bi-vocationally. You work hard for a living to support your families. You spend time ministering to them, loving them, and being the shepherd they need. Then turn around with what is left of your time, and give it to a local assembly of believers.

This is done because God has called you to teach, to lead, and to sacrifice so that a group of believers will stand together sharing with others that Jesus Christ is the Rock of Salvation, and the gates of hell will not prevail against this truth. However, we sometimes get lost in where we should focus our time which is precisely what I had done.

After this series, I was praying ahead to 2023 to see what and how God would use our midweek Bible study. I felt I had an answer, but I reached out to one of my good friends in ministry and asked him this serious question, "What would you focus your pastoral time on if it was limited, so it can be maximized?" His answer back to me was the same I had come up with, but in a different order. My answer was preaching and leadership development, his answer was leadership development and preaching. This essentially was the role of the Pastor that I had given Eastside Community Church a few weeks earlier, to equip them for ministry.

Now that I know the what, I had to figure out the how. How and or what can I do to invest my time in developing leaders? We have a Wednesday night program that serves as a more in-depth Bible study. We are currently doing a through the Bible series, I announced that after we finished this series, we would be transitioning our Wednesday Night meetings into a leadership training process. It will focus on training individuals in our church with the Timothy Initiative: Disciples Making Disciples. You can read more about this program at [ttionline.org](http://ttionline.org).

The basis of the program started out with missionaries, and it was used to assist them in their discipleship making process. Intentional, the program teaches families how to become a disciple that will go out and reach another family and disciple them. The concept is to use these families as small churches that keep planting more churches. It has become so effective that it is now being used here in America. The desire and dream are to turn our small group of Wednesday Night attenders into ferocious church planters.

I share these thoughts and our story to encourage you with the opportunities you have to put in an intentional leadership development strategy. If you're pastoring bi-vocationally, you will probably need to be creative on the when, where, and how. You might look at your situation and think there isn't any more time!

I encourage you to look through the things you're doing and cut something, so you can replace it with training leaders. If you're fortunate enough to be able to pastor vocationally, and you're not developing leaders intentionally, I encourage you to reserve a weekly spot in your calendar and be available for a small group of people. Invite them to go on a journey with you.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Damon Gardzelewski is pastor at Eastside Community Church in Eastpointe, Michigan. He holds a Master of Divinity from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, a Master in Religious Education from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, and a B.S. in Religion from Liberty University. Damon has served churches in student ministry and lead pastor roles.

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## **Studying theology in secret – Final Thoughts**

**Editor's note:** The following story is the last in a three-part series about the challenges of training pastors behind the Iron Curtain in Romania.

I am grateful to American churches and Christians for sponsoring international missions. I have met with Campus Crusade for Christ (now Cru), behind the iron curtain, as well as with the Navigators, Brother Andrew, and many others. Biblical Education by Extension (B.E.E.) was a seminary with the purpose of preparing pastors. While it was not the only one, it was the most widespread in Romania. As the mission grew, the risks grew also. We didn't do anything illegal, but the Communists were xenophobic, and they told us each missionary is a CIA agent in disguise.

Even with the omnipresence of the Secret Police ("Securitate" in Romanian), they couldn't stop us. We didn't know the national leaders. We heard a search of one of the pastors found literature, and he was charged and awaiting trial, but we didn't know at that time that he was one of the leaders. The good hand of the Lord was upon us (Ezra 8:22b.)!

After a couple of years, the teachers who came got used to the addresses, and no longer needed the first generation of students to wait for them at the train station. Only first time

missionaries needed to be met at the train station when the meeting location was not predetermined.

Occasionally, we saw real miracles. My city, Arad, was only 30 miles from the border and usually the hotels were filled with foreign students. But during the cold winters with electric and heat restrictions few tourists would come, so the missionaries would be more conspicuous.

One February we were very concerned. There were few foreigners that winter and two Americans in the hotel would be suspicious. "Why didn't they move our class to April or, at least March?!" We were waiting nervously in a small apartment, and there was a heavy fog outside. How would the missionaries find us? The fog was so thick that I got lost twice, and I knew the area. The missionaries knew the address because they had been there before, but they could not ask anybody for directions or take a cab.

Two hours behind schedule, the doorbell rang. Someone joked, "Well, it's either the Secret Police or the missionaries." Relieved, the host greeted the missionaries and teachers. Only the angels could have led them to the meeting place!

Professor Thomas was afraid of a strip search at the border, and he ate the note with the address to Doru Popa's house, our designated host. "Lord, please help me find Popa's apartment," he prayed. All he remembered was apartment number 5. Walking on the streets, during a hot summer, he was praying desperately. Suddenly, he saw a big door to an old Habsburg style building; it resembled the description his preceding teacher gave him.

He went into a court and saw the five stairs that led to apartment 5. We were there waiting for him. Thomas was relieved. What Thomas didn't know, but the Holy Spirit knew, was that in my city of Arad there were probably hundreds of Habsburg style buildings with the same type of huge and heavy wooden door; there was nothing special about that building. Once again, the good hand of our precious Lord was with us again!

The Romanian communist regime fell in 1989 and the trials against two pastors involved in B.E.E. never took place. The B.E.E. became free to do its work and continues to this day. It also continues in other countries, freely or in secret.

The irony is that God's plan was for Romanian Communism to fall around Christmas. It started with Christmas caroling at the house of a reformed pastor who was under house arrest (1). The Communists told us in the early sixties that by the year 2000, religion and the church would disappear. Guess what? The Communists disappeared 11 years before the scheduled funeral of Romanian Christianity. The Lord protected His church!

There was nothing dangerous or subversive in our studies. However, the young generation interested in socialism should know that the totalitarian regimes would find Christian ideas, and other ideas in general, more dangerous than stealing, carjacking, bank robbery or even murder. That's why they invested so much into a supervision apparatus.

I hope that my modest memories would motivate us to remember and pray more fervently for the persecuted Christians (Hebrew 13:3) and for the missionaries.

Soli Deo gloria!

*(1) The picture attached is from the Romanian Revolution in my city, Arad, on December 23, 1989.*

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Doru Radu is one of the elders at Golgotha Romanian Baptist Church in Warren, Michigan. Radu immigrated from the communist Romania and likes to write stories about the good hand of our Lord who protected us during the 45 years of communist persecution.

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## **First-Person: Plan to make mistakes this year**

**NASHVILLE, TN** – Within a few hours of the “New Year”, some of the most famous people in the world—passed out of this world!

Question: what would you do if you knew this was your last year to live on this side of eternity? Or to put it more succinctly, how would you live if you knew you had only one more year to live—at least on earth—on this side of heaven or hell?

Jesus tells the following parable in just a few short sentences, but in those brief statements, He teaches and gives us so much to think about:

*A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it, but found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, “Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and found none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground? But he answered and said to him, “Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.”*

– Luke 13:6-9

New Question for the New Year: are you a fruit bearing believer? If not—then why not?

This article is simply about you. It’s about doing a major introspection of your life. It’s about understanding that you were not promised a year, or a month, or even a week to live, you were only promised today! This article is about you, examining your own life to see, if in fact, you are bearing fruit.

So, as not to be confusing, I believe there is one primary fruit of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life, that fruit is called "LOVE." Every other thing listed is an aspect of love whether it is peace or joy or gentleness. (Galatians 5)

Additionally, when Jesus is teaching his followers in the last hours of his life, He describes fruit that is to exist in the life of each believer, in this context, he discusses his own life being laid down for his friends, and that is called the greatest "LOVE" of all! (John 15)

The challenge I believe from the parable, though, is not so much about fruit as it is about the fact that we have a very limited time on this planet to do what we are supposed to do!

The vine dresser asks for one more year, and if no fruit, then—well then... cut it down—he pleads with the owner of the Vineyard, let me dig around it he says, let me fertilize it with dung"

Last question: Are you willing to let God dig around in your life and to fertilize what needs to grow in order for you to produce the fruit he made you to produce?

Some of us don't bear fruit because we are afraid it won't be perfect enough or we will make a mistake! Learn what some have learned from their own mistakes: "A life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable, but more useful than a life spent doing nothing." (George Bernard Shaw).

So my advice—just act! Do something!

So said Neil Gaiman—"I hope in this year to come that you make mistakes..., because if you are making mistakes, you are making new things, trying new things... Learning, living, pushing yourself, changing your life—changing your world."

So don't be afraid to try and try and try—and yes—fail!

*"We should regret our mistakes and learn from them, but we should never ever carry them forward into the new year with us ."*

(L.M.Montgomery)

Lastly—Sophocles poignantly reminds us— *"All men make mistakes... but a good man yields when he knows his course is wrong and repairs this evil. The only crime is pride."*

True that—it may be that the greatest sin on judgment day is the sin of omission, afraid to love our neighbor, afraid to love your wife as Christ loved the church, afraid to love one another. Afraid we will make a mistake, and it will be worse. Trust me, it will never be worse!

So this year, maybe your last year, let God do what he wants to... in and through you... and bear fruit like never before!

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. David L. Thompson holds an undergraduate degree from Belmont University in Psychology and Religion, a graduate degree from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Education, and a doctorate in Counseling and Pastoral Psychology. He has served as a chairman of the Church Planting Group and Executive Committee Chair at the North American Mission Board for 10 years. He has been a Police Chaplain since 1991 and served as a Corporate Chaplain to the Coca Cola Bottling Company in Nashville, Tennessee where he resides with his wife. He has six children and five grandsons.

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## **I miss these things**

**PLYMOUTH** – There are some things in life I miss. The fact is, we all do. Big and small. Great and even the insignificant. It is ingrained in our souls to long for people, places, possessions, and experiences of our past. These nostalgic desires are natural and pervasive throughout humanity. Yet, we all have different longings and for different things.

A recent study by Harvard University found that happiness and well-being have a strong correlation with deep relationships. No surprise there! We need each other.

At certain times I find myself thinking of and reminiscing about long past friends and family. It's good for me and reminds me of how blessed my life has been.

Some days, when my thoughts wander and I begin to wonder, small and seemingly insignificant things in my past can instill a peace and calmness in my heart. Things like a gum eraser and the unmistakable scent it gives, takes me back to my earliest days of school at Kermit Elementary and the carefree and unencumbered life I lived. Fun, play, friends, and no pressing responsibilities. A longing wells up in me for those lost times.

Something else that I miss is the sound of a wooden screen door opening and closing, and its accompanying sounds produced by the long metal spring and the well-worn hinges as they squeaked and banged about. Fresh watermelon in the summertime being eaten and the juices from its crimson flesh running down one's face and arms as you try to take as much in as your immature mouth can hold. The deafening silence of a deep winter's night after a fresh fallen snow with the only sound perceptible being the exhale of your breath and the crunch made by your boots as you imprint the new fallen blanket of white. The smell of a newborn baby and the



purity of that perfect skin. Thunderstorms advancing across the desert sands and mesquite, foretelling its approach with rumbles of thunder, growing louder and louder as it advances and the distinct odor of moisture in the air.

Funny, is it not, how what we miss and what we remember can be so small and insignificant. Of course, it is the emotions and experiences that are attached to them that give weight to their worth.

I miss singing certain hymns. Now before you think I am getting on a “soap box” about contemporary worship styles, I am not. I love the fresh, new and expressive ways many within our younger generations glorify God. But nonetheless, I miss the way certain hymnists and musicians of the past expressed the awe and wonder they found in God.

Hymns like the Quaker John Whittier wrote:

I know not what the future hath  
Of marvel or surprise,  
Assured alone that life and death  
His mercy underlies.

Or Daniel W. Whittle’s conversion confession in a Confederate prison:

I know not why God’s wondrous grace  
To me he hath made known,  
Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love  
Redeemed me for his own.  
But “I know whom I have believed,  
And am persuaded that He is able  
To keep that which I’ve committed  
Unto Him against that day.”

This one you may not remember but it speaks volumes to me. Written by a Methodist minister, Fred Pratt Green, immediately following WWII.

When in our music, God is glorified,  
And adoration leaves no room for pride,  
It is as though the whole creation cried,  
Alleluia!

I miss these things. I am not sad or angry. Just thankful and blessed that they are part of my life’s collective. To walk in those memories brings great joy and happiness.

I miss these things and it is so good to remember.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Tim Patterson is Executive Director/Treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. Elected unanimously in May of 2015, Patterson formerly served for 9 years as pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Fla. He also served as trustee chair and national mobilizer for the North American Mission Board.

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# **How to revitalize your church**

**PLYMOUTH** – Do you and others, in the church, want to reignite those past feelings of expectancy again. How do you do that? Is there a pathway where you can rediscover that passion you once had? Is there an answer to, “How will the church influence the surrounding community by bringing people a step closer to the Lord?”

## **Four Easy Steps**

There is some good news and four easy steps that will build a fresh new anticipation in your souls and hearts. All you need is the following:

### **1. Book for each person**

*Reclaiming Glory (Updated Version): Revitalizing Dying Churches* written by our friend Mark Clifton and published by B&H Books, January 6, 2023, available on Amazon for \$14.99. Ask members, and especially the influencers, to read the book within a specific span of time. Conversations and ideas will start to flow in a fresh new way.

### **2. Videos to watch together**

Sign up for access to free accompanying videos that will enrich the book’s contents and your discussions: <https://bit.ly/3QSaQar> - watching and interacting with one another after viewing the videos will bring a deeper level of examination.

### **3. Meeting schedule**

Create a high-priority schedule where church leaders and members can meet, while reading sections of the book prior to gathering and for viewing the videos together as a family. Perhaps make this content part of one of the already scheduled gatherings when your church family meets.

#### 4. Set into motion

This final stage is the most rewarding because the congregation will know what needs to be done to reignite that holy expectancy in the church. Convinced by what needs to be done to reclaim God's glory in the church and community, the ideas formulated after weeks of reading the book, viewing the videos, and discussing the materials will turn into practical plans in which everyone can participate.

Across North America, including Canada, church members and leaders are gathering together to courageously renew the focus of their local congregation for greater impact on the community while reclaiming God's glory in the church. Join the renewal.

This material and content are so practical that every pastor and church member, working together with a sincere desire to glorify the Lord, will achieve the renewal they crave.

Act now and become the catalyst for church revitalization.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Tony L. Lynn is the State Director of Missions for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. Before coming on staff at the BSCM, Tony served as lead pastor for more than six years at Crosspoint Church in Monroe, Michigan. He and his wife, Jamie, also served with the International Mission Board in Africa and in Europe.

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## Tools for revitalization

**Editor's note:** This month's episode of the "[Punching Holes in the Darkness](https://www.bscm.org/podcast/episode/ebf9bab1/church-revitalization)" podcast, discusses church revitalization, a special tool the BSCM is offering Michigan churches. Click this link to listen. <https://www.bscm.org/podcast/episode/ebf9bab1/church-revitalization>

**PLYMOUTH** – "M&S (Mike and Shar) Construction." That's the name Shar and I chose for a business we started to "make ends meet" during a transitional time in our lives. I shake my head and chuckle at the name as I think back. We didn't build homes - we remodeled them. We couldn't use "M&S Remodeling" because another company was using it at the time.

It was amazing how God provided for us as one job led to another over a three-year period. In one neighborhood, we ended up hanging vinyl siding on four houses and painting the interior of another. As business picked up, we quickly realized that we needed a plan to replace worn out

tools, and buy new ones for some of the work we were doing. We decided to invest 10 percent of the profits from every job to buy new tools (I feel a grunt like “Tim the tool man Taylor” coming on right now. I love tools!)

Shar went into the home center where we purchased most of our building materials and picked up a set of tools she saw me eyeing on an earlier trip. When she put the tools in the cart to buy them as a surprise for me, she got a kick out of it when the salesperson we dealt with often said in jest, “I wish you were my wife” as he looked at my new tools.

“The right tool for the right job” was a mantra we developed because it often made work quicker and safer. Over time, a few handheld hammers became a collection of framing nailers, roofing nailers, finishing nailers, and floor nailers. That happened with saws and other tools as well. We ended up having the tools we needed for the types of remodeling jobs we did.

Every contractor needs a toolbox with the tools necessary for the work.

Every pastor needs a toolbox with the “tools” necessary for the work.

Chief among them, and in a category all their own, are his saving relationship with Christ, his walk and filling with the Spirit, his calling by God to the Gospel ministry, and his commitment to the Bible as the ultimate guide for faith and practice.

Other tools make an incredible difference too - study Bible notes, Bible dictionaries, concordances, commentaries, books on theology, church history, and Biblical counseling to name just a few. Seminary, if at all possible, should be pursued. It is an incredible blessing not only to the pastor, but to the church he serves as well.

Another “tool” that every pastor needs in his toolbox today is an understanding of church revitalization. It is estimated that as many as 90% of churches in the United States need some level of church revitalization. It can be something as simple as a course correction of a ministry area to a total replant of the church. 900 Southern Baptist churches do not experience the revitalization they need and close every year. The reality is that almost every seminary graduate heading into pastoral ministry will go to a church needing revitalization. Almost every pastor or follower of Christ reading these words will be in a church that needs some level of revitalization.

These words about the overwhelming need for revitalization seem “shocking” to me as I write them. And yet, the last words of Jesus to His church called her to revitalization (Revelation 2 & 3). The church at Ephesus in Rev. 2 was doing just about everything right, but she abandoned the love she had at first. Jesus calls her to remember, repent, and return. Jesus doesn’t mention anything the church at Laodicea is doing right, yet He says, “As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent” (Revelation 3:19). She was loved and invited to repent and be zealous.

We want to equip pastors and church leaders with revitalization tools to put in their toolbox. There are no revitalization “silver bullets,” but there are Bible based, church tested, resources that help churches take their next steps toward renewed life and vitality. We have partnered with a church revitalization ministry called [Corpus](#). Their “toolbox” is a six-step process that pastors and church leaders can use for church revitalization.

## **THE SIX STEPS**

### **THE DISCOVERY**

A seven-step assessment designed to synthesize data and discoveries, helping pastors to accurately evaluate the current state of the church.

### **THE CONVERGENCE**

A series of “sweet spot” exercises considering church purpose, leadership passion, and community potential; designed to identify where to position the church’s ministry for maximum impact.

### **THE PYRAMID**

An in-depth series of exercises designed to develop all of the directional elements for the church, including mission, strategy, values, vision, annual plan, and goals.

### **THE PATH**

A process to develop a customized plan for evangelism and discipleship.

### **THE LADDER**

Creation of a customized, multi-level plan for leadership development using a four-fold framework.

### **THE TOOLKIT**

Practical resources and ideas to help pastors and church leaders launch the new vision and build momentum toward its fulfillment.

Dr. Rob Peters is going to be in Michigan on Monday and Tuesday, March 27-28, to meet with pastors and church leaders who want to learn more about Corpus Revitalization. We will organize his schedule based on the pastors that are interested in talking with him. Please contact [mike@bscm.org](mailto:mike@bscm.org) for more information.

The cost for each church going through the training is \$1,999. Because of the generosity of Michigan Baptists in the Frances Brown State Mission Offering, the BSCM will invest \$1,500 of the cost for each church team. **The cost for each church will be \$499.**

Corpus Informational Meetings:

**Monday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Dinner 6:00pm (RSVP at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/corpus-informational-meeting-monday-march-27th-6pm-at-eastgate-baptist-tickets-530647550107>)

Eastgate Baptist Church  
4226 E. Atherton Road  
Burton, MI 48519

**Tuesday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Dinner at 6:00pm (RSVP at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/corpus-informational-meeting-tuesday-march-28th-6pm-bscm-office-tickets-530664721467>)

BSCM Office  
41100 Plymouth Road  
Bldg.1, Suite 315  
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Some daytime meetings are available if you and your team are not able to make the evening sessions. Please contact [mike@bscm.org](mailto:mike@bscm.org) to schedule a meeting or for more information.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Mike Durbin is the State Evangelism Director for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. Before joining the state convention staff, Mike served as Church Planting Catalyst and Director of Missions in Metro Detroit since 2007. He also has served as a pastor and bi-vocational pastor in Michigan, as well as International Missionary to Brazil.

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## What to do with rumors

**WINDSOR, ONTARIO** – Abraham Lincoln’s coffin was pried open twice.

The first occasion was in 1887, twenty-two long years after his assassination. Why? You may be surprised to know it was not to determine if he had died of a bullet fired from John Wilkes Booth’s derringer. Then why? Because a rumor was sweeping the country that his coffin was

empty. A select group of witnesses observed that the rumor was totally false, then watched as the casket was resealed with lead.

A second time, fourteen years later, the martyred man's withered body was viewed again – this time by even more witnesses. Why again? For the same grim purpose! Rumors of the same nature had again implanted doubts in the public's mind. The pressure mounted to such proportions, that the same ghoulish, grotesque ceremony had to be carried out. In spite of the strong protests of Lincoln's son Robert, the body was exposed a second time. Then finally – the corpse was permanently embedded in a crypt at Springfield. (Charles R. Swindoll, *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1983, pp. 105-107.)

Pretty cruel, right? But rumors are like that. Lacking authoritative facts and direct source, information is loosely disseminated, creating unrest and harm. It is pandered by busybodies who cater to the sick appetite of petty people. Swindoll says, "Those who feed on rumors are small, suspicious souls. They find satisfaction in trafficking in poorly lit alleys, dropping subtle bombs that explode in others' minds by lighting the fuse of suggestion. They find comfort in being only an 'innocent' channel of the unsure information... never the source. The omnipresent phrases 'They say' or 'Have you heard?' or 'I understand from others' provides safety for the rumor-spreader."

A pastor for more than 35 years, I have dealt with my share of rumors, and I have the scars to prove it.

So, what do you do with rumors?

I submit Swindoll's four suggestions for silencing rumor-mongers:

1. Identify sources by name. If someone is determined to share information that is damaging or hurtful, request that the source be specifically stated.
2. Support evidence with facts. Do not accept hearsay. Refuse to listen unless honest-to-goodness truth is being communicated. You can tell. Truth is rarely veiled or uncertain. Rumors fade when exposed to the light.
3. Ask the person, "May I quote you?" It's remarkable how quickly rumor-spreaders can turn four shades of red! Equally remarkable is the speed with which they can backpedal.
4. Openly admit, "I don't appreciate hearing that." This approach is for the strong. It might drive a wedge between you and the guilty... but it's a sure way to halt the regular garbage delivery to your ears.

You may want to look up Proverbs 10:11, Proverbs 15:1-7, and James 3:12, just in case you need a little more support from Scripture.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. Garth Leno is the Pastor/Planter Care Specialist with the BSCM. He serves in a similar role with the Canadian National Baptist Convention, and he is the founding pastor of The Gathering Church in Windsor, Ontario, a church he planted with his wife, Patty, and a few of their friends.

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# **Seven questions pursuing church Health**

**PLYMOUTH** – At your invitation . . .

I would be happy to lead your local church leadership, or better yet, a gathering of a few local church leadership teams in your area in a workshop filled with discussions, activities, and discoveries that will reignite a new passion for your church's future. Imagine a one-time gathering of 3 hours during one weeknight, or on a Saturday, or during a Sunday afternoon where you could have conversations with people from your church. I will make myself available to fit your schedule.

## **Seven Questions**

We would walk through seven questions and a process that will help your church take its next step to accelerate a Gospel movement in the lives of your members and in the lives of those in your community. Here is a general description of the questions:

### **1. What is your church's current health condition?**

By looking at five options, you and your leadership will evaluate the current health of your church. You will enjoy strolling through the options to see if everyone can easily agree on the church's current wellness.

### **2. Does the church's decision-making process and flow of relationships match its size?**

The size of your church does not decrease or increase the value of the church, but the size of your church should impact decision-making and the relationship flow. When these elements of church do not match, health is hindered, and injuries occur.



### **3. How old is the church?**

The older the church the more pastors it had, the more models of ministry were followed, the more positive and negative events that occurred in its history, the more generations exist in the congregation, and the longer some things have become sacred cows.

### **4. At what point is the church in its journey?**

Imagine one car with four potential drivers traveling together on a long journey over a mountain range, then ask yourself who is driving this car? Is it vision? Is it disciple making? Is it programs? Is it management?

### **5. What is the level of generosity/stinginess in the church?**

The generosity/stinginess of the church members informs you as to whether the members believe they are giving to something meaningful, and whether they trust those who spend the funds? Examining how much is spent in the church compared to the amounts helping others outside the church reveals the Kingdom of God vision of the members.

### **6. What is the current pastor's functional strength?**

Ephesians 4:11 mentions apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These functions were perfectly carried out in Jesus Christ who left those functions to us to complete as united church members. Pastors, elders, deacons, whatever designation is used in your church is healthier when leaders and members fill-in the gaps others are not easily suited to complete.

### **7. What is the current pastor's length of service?**

Most unions of pastors and churches go through three stages: the launch zone, the growth zone, and the fizzle zone. The most effective pastors with long records of service will tell you that they remained at one address for decades because they relaunched the same church before the fizzle zone led to the frozen zone. Leaders and members of the church should renew their health, every four to five years by asking:

- What is working?
- What is broken?
- What is confusing?
- What is missing?

## **Coaching in Six One-hour Sessions**

If you desire, I will meet with you one-time every two-weeks, for a duration of one-hour, for a total of twelve-weeks. You will read one short article in preparation for the session, then apply that article to your church. These one-hour sessions will give time for each church leadership team to dig into more deeply one of these previous seven questions.

## **Another Six Sessions to Create a Church Wellness Plan**

After the time of coaching is ended, each church leadership team will be guided to repeat the schedule together, for twelve more weeks, where they will focus on finding precise solutions that will lead to better health for the church. While looking for solutions, I will be available and can offer solutions, but searching for the correct solutions together may be energizing for the leaders and members of the church.

## **Releasing the Revitalization Movement**

After the efforts are completed during those previous six months, the church's leadership team can set-up a party where they can explain the grand vision they believe will start and continue sustained health in the church. The details can be left to each church to do as they believe matches their own congregation. The focus is on making the renewed mission, vision, values, and strategy of the church aim precisely for church health.

## **Quick Summary of Sixteen Hours in Seven Months**

- One 3-hour introduction workshop with me
- Six 1-hour coaching sessions digging into the questions with me
- Six 1-hour solution finding sessions with church leaders & members
- One 1-hour revitalization announcement party with the entire church

If you want to invite me to serve you with "Seven Questions Pursuing Church Health," call or write to Dan Carty who will set up an appointment between us: Dan Carty, (734) 776-6495 or [Dan@bscm.org](mailto:Dan@bscm.org) – I look forward to hearing from you. Sixteen hours over the course of seven months could keep your church health for decades to come.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. Tony L. Lynn is the State Director of Missions for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. Before coming on staff at the BSCM, Tony served as lead pastor for more than six years at Crosspoint Church in Monroe, Michigan. He and his wife, Jamie, also served with the International Mission Board in Africa and in Europe.

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## Compassion never ends

**MACOMB TOWNSHIP** – My husband is a pastor and we have been in ministry together for more than twenty years. During these twenty years, our roles and titles have changed somewhat, but our purpose has not. We are called to share the gospel, build disciples, and minister to people.

When ministering to people, we often help those who are sick, hurting, or in need. What happens when the needs become more than what we can handle? In ministry, the compassion opportunities will never end, so it is up to us to go before the Lord, and ask him to give us wisdom and discernment to handle the needs that are before us.

As leaders in ministry, I think we can learn a good lesson from Jesus in John 5 when he healed the lame man at the pool of Bethesda.

*Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda. Crowds of sick people – blind, lame, or paralyzed – lay on the porches. One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, “Would you like to get well?”*

– John 5:2-6 (NLT)

*Jesus told him, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!” Instantly, the man was healed!*

- John 5:8-9a (NLT)

It is important to point out that the passage says there were “crowds of sick people” who gathered at the pool of Bethesda who hoped they would have an opportunity to be healed by the waters. Can you picture this in your mind? So many people, with so many needs! In walks Jesus, the one who could heal all the sick and take away all their pain. However, that wasn’t His purpose on that day. Instead, Jesus made His way over to the lame man and asked him, “Would you like to get well?”

I often think of this passage of scripture when I am feeling overwhelmed by the needs of ministry. God doesn’t ask us to meet all the needs we see. We are not the savior of the world. We have a Savior, and His name is Jesus. He has already come and because he has come, we can now go to Him and ask Him for wisdom and discernment in how to give compassion to those we see who are in need.

I love this quote by Andy Stanley:

*“Do for one what you wish you could do for everyone.”*

We should focus on meeting the needs for the one God has asked you to minister to. How often do we start our day and begin straightaway meeting the needs of everyone right in front of us? What if we started our mornings with a prayer like this:

*Jesus, I surrender my day to you. Who do you want me to minister to today? Give me discernment in the decisions I make today so that I can walk out the purpose you have for me to be your hands and feet. I pray against distractions from the enemy and that I will be in tune with your voice as you lead. Give me the strength and stamina I need to be able to do what you are asking me to do. Help me to not do more than what you have purposed for my day. Please make it clear. – Amen*

This prayer is powerful because it invites Jesus to lead our day and ushers in an awareness of His presence. A great prayer to pray at night as we end the day is:

*Jesus, thank you for leading and guiding me today. Help me to be satisfied with the needs that you asked me to help meet today. I can now leave the other unmet needs in your sovereign hands knowing you have a plan and purpose to meet those needs. I pray for peace and rest tonight. – Amen*

When we consistently invite Jesus to lead our lives, we begin to see the way He is working and then allow Him to direct our steps more and more. Our eyes are then opened to see exactly what needs God has placed in our lives for that day. It also keeps us from trying to do more than what God has ever intended for us to do.

*“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”*

– Matthew 11:28-30 (MSG)

Friend, if you are in ministry or another vocation where you may feel a bit of compassion fatigue from time to time, I invite you to lean on Jesus today. Let Him be your guide. Surrender your day and your time to Him and let Him give you all you need.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Karen is married to Scott Blanchard, pastor of Lakepointe Church, and moved from Florida to Michigan in the summer of 2009 to plant Lakepointe Church in Shelby Township. She enjoys mentoring and discipling women and also leads women’s life groups through her church. She is passionate about helping women find their purpose in who God created them to be. She is on staff at Lakepointe Church and loves being part of what God is doing in the Metro Detroit area!

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# Don't underestimate God

**MIDLAND** – I've often been blessed by the ministry of the Blackaby family. Studies like *Experiencing God* have taught me to trust God because He is faithful. We too often underestimate God and His Word. Here are a few things I've learned from the Blackabys that I hope will challenge you to trust and obey God for more than you are.

Self-sufficiency can kill a church and a pastor. Look what happened to the church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:17). Do you think God would want you or your church in a position where you don't need Him?

The important thing is not how much treasure you or your church have, but how much God has. You might see your situation one way while God sees it another (Rev. 2:9).

Don't allow your poverty to determine your ministry. Most of our churches are small. We always need more people, money, equipment, volunteers, leaders, musicians, etc. We know what we don't have – but so does God. When God initiates a work, He bases it on heaven's bank account, not ours.

Your church's ability to minister is never limited by your resources; it is driven by God's provision. It is dangerous for a church or a pastor to be in a position where they think they don't need God.

God does not need to provide any resources for what you are not doing. Some people think, "as soon as we get the money, we'll do it." God did not stop the waters of the Jordan River until the priests stepped into the water. Peter had never walked on water until he stepped out of the boat. God often waits until we step out in faith before He provides the required resources. God is faithful to provide for every need we have as we obey Him. God does not promise to supply our good intentions; He will provide as we obey.

God can take what you already have and use it powerfully. At times, churches can fixate on what they don't have and fail to recognize what God has already given them.

A church is in a precarious position when the phrase "we can't afford to" is uttered more than "God is leading us to..."

Jesus said, "if you are faithful in a little, God will give you more" (Matt. 25:21,23). God will not hold you accountable for what you don't have. But He will hold you accountable for what you did with what He gave you.

On Judgment Day, there will be no rewards for having merely preserved what we have. We should be those who so believe in and trust God that we take what the Master has given us and invest it so that we can earn the greatest possible return for our King.

You will never make disciples of all nations if you only attempt what you think you can afford. Let God set the agenda for your church and confidently obey His commands, trusting that God can well afford to accomplish whatever He leads you to do. Don't limit God by attempting what only you can afford; attempt what you think He can afford.

I encourage you to read *Flickering Lamps* by Richard and Henry Blackaby, as much of what I shared came from that book.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

David Roberts is the Associational Mission Strategist (AMS) for the Bay Area Baptist Association. He is also an Adjunct Professor for Liberty University School of Divinity and Spring Arbor University. He is married to Melissa and they live in Midland.

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## **Imperfect people belong here**

**ROSEVILLE** – Inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty are these words by Emma Lazarus. “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!” These words sound so inviting, so noble, so beautiful. Reality is a bit different.

One day at the gym I watched an older man (probably about my age) get more and more frustrated because a younger guy was on a treadmill longer than the older guy thought he should be. Finally, the older guy had enough and pulled the plug on the machine. When the younger guy (middle eastern descent – maybe?) asked him what his problem was, the older guy told him to, “Go back to the country you came from.” Apparently, he hadn’t heard of Emma Lazarus or knew much about the Statue of Liberty.

It is so easy to get an image of the kind of people we want to be around us whether that be our country or our church. Typically, they are people who appear to be what we are, or what we want to be perceived as. But, when we view the life of the church this way, we sadly miss one of the primary purposes of the church. Isn’t the gospel sticky enough to make natural born enemies, and people of different groups one body who love one another?

Years ago, I was frustrated that several wheelchairs were near the front doors of our building. I thought this made us look like a Nursing Home. I feared that it would not be attractive or inviting to younger people. People in wheelchairs are generally not the demographic church

growth strategists tell us to aim for. But doesn't Jesus love people who are in wheelchairs too? Do I only want a congregation made up of people who don't need assistance, who are strong, self-sufficient, etc.?

My frustration was no different than the reaction of the guy at the gym. I was thinking in my heart that if you need a wheelchair, we really don't want to make it easy for you here. You can go back to where you came from. But that is not what the gospel is about is it?

It is the weak, the broken, the sick, the lame, the poor and the tired who are most drawn to Christ. Jesus said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mark 2.17)

The perverted prosperity gospel would have us buy into the notion that we can have a church without needy people, and that the weak only get in our way and slow us down. But what is supernatural about loving people who are strong, sufficient and successful? How is the power of the gospel displayed by making room only for people who are what we want to be like? Wasn't that one of the big problems of the early church? Remember that Jew and Gentile thing? Isn't the church to be the people who give space in their lives to one another, no matter what?

I've learned a bit since then. We still have wheelchairs near our front door and now I like it because it says if you aren't perfect, you belong here. The fact is, only imperfect people belong in the church, right? And that is good because we have a perfect Savior.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Bob Johnson has been serving as the Senior Pastor of Cornerstone since 1989. He has a Masters of Divinity degree from the Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary (1997).

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## **Video library takes Bible to unreached, oral learners**

More than 3,000 unreached people groups don't have a single verse of Scripture in their language, said Paul Wynn of [OneMessage.tv](http://OneMessage.tv).

And even if they did, 80% are oral learners, meaning they come from a storytelling tradition where the written word wouldn't be of any value.

With a goal of reaching those people groups for Christ, OneMessage.tv works with missions partners, including the [International Mission Board](#), to produce a collection of 20 Bible story videos using members of specific people groups as actors and translating it into their languages.

“Once that library is completed, we give it to the ministry, and then they can share those videos,” Wynn told The Baptist Paper.

“They can do movie nights in the villages where they work and show it on a big screen,” he said, “or they can do little files on their phones and go ... home to home and share them, or share them in small groups.”

About a decade ago, Wynn was in Nigeria and noticed a herdsman wearing traditional African clothing standing with some cattle in a field. The man’s mobile phone rang, and he pulled it out and started talking.

“Even in villages that perhaps don’t have power, they’ve got cell phones,” Wynn said, noting children sometimes start businesses pedaling bicycles to produce power for charging phones.

### **Global partners**

For more than 15 years, Wynn and Doug Keesey worked in media production for various ministries through their company OneMission.tv. In 2019, they launched OneMessage.tv after working with an IMB missionary in Colombia to use locals as actors in videos communicating Bible stories.

During the past three years, Wynn and Keesey have been working with four people groups in Africa and South America, completing an entire library for one of the groups. They’re currently in discussions with a people group in northern Iraq.

“When we go, we don’t ask the missions partners for anything except some sweat equity,” Wynn said. “If they can help us find actors for a few days and that kind of thing, that’s all we ask. We just give them the resource when it’s completed.”

Typically, the videos are between three and six minutes, so it’s easy to sit down with someone and show it on a phone. If missionaries host a movie night, they may show five of the stories back to back.

“We concentrate heavily on Genesis and Exodus and then move into the gospels,” Wynn said. “It’s based to a certain degree on the IMB storying method. They have a list of about 40 stories that they use.”

Wynn and Keesey consider which stories will work well visually and address attitudes or misconceptions a people group might have. For instance, the story of the golden calf in Exodus 32 is relevant to groups that practice idol worship.



“We move into Jesus’ birth, a number of His miracles and then His crucifixion and resurrection,” Wynn said.

### **Stories of value**

The stories are so valuable to some that they go to great lengths to obtain and share them.

“After we did our first set of stories, we heard of a man who was a believer who walked three or four kilometers up to a high spot where he could get cell coverage and download the stories. Then he walked back to his village so he could share the stories by Bluetooth with other people there,” Wynn related.

They’ve even seen some of the local actors come to faith in Christ.

“When we were in South America three years ago, we went to a village that had about 100 people but only two believers, a man and a woman,” Wynn recalled. “They were kind of our starting point for our actors. The very first story that we shot with them was Cain and Abel. This man got his brother, who was not a believer, to come and play Cain. The believer played Abel.

“When we started that morning, the missionary kind of sidled up next to me and said, ‘I think he may be a little hungover this morning.’ But this guy totally got into it. He was hands down our best actor. This people group by and large is not overly demonstrative — you really have to get them going — but this guy took to it. He hung out with us for the next two days while we were shooting stories.”

During the process the two brothers formed a relationship with the missionary, and a few weeks later the unbelieving brother started asking questions about Jesus. Within a couple of months he became a believer, Wynn said.

### **New believers starting a church**

The people group now has about 10 baptized believers with plans to build a church.

“When people watch these videos, they’re seeing their own faces,” Wynn explained. “They not only hear it in their heart language, they’re also seeing people who look like them.”

He added this is a reproducible strategy that works in a lot of contexts worldwide.

Some of the videos have found their way into villages missionaries haven’t even gotten to yet, Wynn said.

“The people groups that we’ve worked with probably had not seen a video of any kind in their language,” Wynn related, and because of this project, the first one they’re experiencing is about the Bible.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Erin Roach is a writer for [The Baptist Paper](#).

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## **6 things to help make your mission trip impactful**

Let’s face it, churches spend a whole lot of money and time doing short-term mission trips around the globe. If we are going to invest so much, let’s do it right by being intentional from the beginning.

My husband, Tim, and I have hosted teams taking entry-level mission trips in Panama. Our goal is always to help churches not only see but experience their role in carrying out the missionary task. We’ve seen the good, the bad and the ugly. Through the years, we’ve found when you add prayer to the following six things, your mission trip will be intentional and impactful:

### **1. Flexible doesn’t mean “wing it.” Send teams that are prepared.**

Try to paint a picture for your team about what they signed up to do. Help them know what to pack, wear and what not to take. Make sure your team leaders spend time talking to missionaries on the field. They will have tips and hints on the best way to prep your team. Practice cultural greetings. Try food that might seem weird. Take a bucket bath. Talk about the concept of “time” as it relates to the people you will serve. This helps to get the “Ooh that’s weird” comments out of the way while still in the U.S. When you get to your country of service, it’s easier to slide right into the culture.

Short-term trips are jam packed with activities. This means it is important to have your Bible lessons already prepared and be comfortable sharing the gospel. Not only will you have an immediate impact, but you’ll have time to invest in relationships, not to mention sleep more. No long nights preparing for the next day!

### **2. Partner with local believers. We can help!**

Yes, work with your IMB missionary but let us connect you to local believers, churches and ministries. While this may not be possible in every country, work toward partnering with nationals already doing the work. This is important for discipleship. After you go back home,

what's the plan for discipling the new followers of Christ? By partnering with local churches, not only will they take over the task of discipleship, but you become sister churches supporting each other.

### **3. If nationals can do it, you shouldn't.**

The last thing we want to do is create dependency. Being tied to ministries with national believers keeps dependency down. Spend your time empowering, not enabling. This means if your trip involves teaching a Vacation Bible School, it's your job to mentor and encourage the local believer as they teach beside you. This allows them to recreate the ministry after you are gone.

This is an important principle with almost any type of ministry, whether it's door-to-door evangelism or putting on a new roof. This approach is not only biblical but provides a legitimate reason for being in parts of town tourists don't normally see.

### **4. The only solution you need is for lostness.**

It's in our nature to fix things and make it better. The Lord reminded me years ago that I didn't have enough power or resources to fix all the problems in the world. What you can try to fix, however, is your new friend's eternity. Each day 157,690 people die without Christ. You have the solution for a lost world — the gospel!

### **5. The ENTIRE church should be involved, not just the five traveling.**

A short-term trip can transform the entire church. Have a plan to get everyone involved from the beginning and afterward. Ask classes to pray. Create notes of encouragement for your team to read — this can be done by kids, teens and adults. Study the country and people as a congregation. Stay connected with the team while they are ministering.

When the team returns, the trip isn't over. Your church will be forever changed by this experience. Use this opportunity as a springboard to deepen your church's walk with the Lord.

### **6. Short-term trips should lead to a long-term commitment.**

Be forward thinking from the very beginning. There are more than 7,000 people groups among the least reached with the gospel in the world. It's going to take all of us working together to reach the nations. This long-term commitment may lead to ministries not only with a people group in another country but also with them in your own community.

We want to empower short-term mission teams to make disciples and multiply churches among the least reached peoples of the world. The IMB will help prepare you to serve alongside missionaries and national believers.

Find a short-term trip that works for you and your church. [Visit our trip finder and training resources.](#)

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Tina Louderback is an IMB missionary serving in Panama. She teaches a course on “Short-Term Missions Success” at [IMB Missions College](#).

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## **Pastor’s guided tours of D.C. aim to shore up love for God’s Word**

**WASHINGTON (BP)** – In addition to reading and studying Scripture, it can be powerful to experience the Bible’s real-world impact.

Inspire Experiences offers Christian groups experiential tours based around the biblical connections found in Washington, D.C.

The organization explores the various monuments and museums around the nation’s capital while exploring the impact of the Bible and faith upon the nation’s history.

Michael McAfee, Inspire’s president and co-founder, told Baptist Press the goal of Inspire is to give an experience that will help people holistically engage the truth of Scripture.

“We exist to inspire a generation to be biblically literate, historically informed and spiritually engaged,” McAfee said.

Inspire began test piloting their tours in late 2019, and officially launched its ministry in February 2020 – just before it had to shut down.

After making it through the COVID-19 pandemic, McAfee said the demand for the various experiences they offer is now sometimes more than they can keep up with. Various groups that come can include anything from school or church groups, to couples simply wanting to have a special travel experience.

Some of the sites explored within the tour options include the Jefferson Memorial and other historical monuments, the National Museum of African American History & Culture and the main attraction of the Museum of the Bible.

McAfee formerly worked for the Museum of the Bible, even before it opened. He said the job helped him realize the incredible discipleship opportunity the city had to offer.

“We realized that throughout Washington, D.C., there are so many biblical ties and connections that make a trip to D.C. a phenomenal discipleship experience,” McAfee said.

“If people walk away with one thing from our trip, we want them to know the whole Bible is a story that points to Jesus and that they have a starting point for engaging with the Scriptures when they go home.

“Ultimately, it’s not a win for us if we create a bunch of Pharisees that know a lot of things about the Bible but are not engaged in their church and living it out by making disciples in their own personal life.”

Living out discipleship is something McAfee wants to be a part of his own life.

Although frequently in Washington for his work with Inspire, McAfee is based in Oklahoma City where he serves as a teaching pastor at Council Road Baptist Church.

Council Road is the same church where McAfee met his wife, Lauren, when they were 7 years old.

He now jokes that his whole life was figured out at that age because that is the same year he became a Christian, was baptized and determined he wanted to be a preacher when he grew up.

“I couldn’t imagine if we weren’t engaged with a local church regularly,” McAfee said.

“Our content and what we produce would be far less relevant, impactful or helpful. In our lives we’re trying to model discipleship and living in biblical community.”

In addition to local church work, the McAfees are involved with several other ministries together.

The two co-wrote a book designed to reach those in the Gen Z and Millennial generations who are disillusioned or disinterested in the Bible titled “Not What You Think.”

Lauren is also a pro-life advocate and is a leader with the recently established [Stand for Life](#) organization. The two have even lived out a form of pro-life advocacy in their own family through adoption, but it has not been an easy road.

The couple adopted their 4-year-old daughter Zion in 2019, and soon discovered a cancerous tumor on her liver. The cancer was diagnosed as Stage 1 and she is currently in remission, but the trials were not over.

Since adopting Zion, the McAfees have experienced two failed adoptions, including one that was more than a year in process. Through those difficulties, the couple learned more about God's loving plan in a tangible way.

"We learned that God's painful providences are for the purposes of intimacy," McAfee said. "God is ultimately using painful situations to draw us closer to Him. As much as we want to control things ourselves, we can trust Him with their lives."

"When you surrender and realize things happen to lead us to intimacy with God, then you start to kind of come out of the valley. You discover the intimacy you get with God is greater than the expectation of what you thought life was going to be better."

The couple is currently in the process of adopting another daughter and producing a book about what they learned throughout the whole experience.

McAfee said he hopes Inspire creates experiences that will help Christians learn the Gospel and biblical truth in a way that will help them in life.

"Being a Southern Baptist preacher, I am fully committed to the priority of preaching and the uniqueness of sermons and more generally in the importance of didactic teaching," McAfee said.

"I think it is also critical to have experiential ministry to come alongside of that to complement it. I think we see Jesus doing that in that He didn't just come to the disciples to teach them, but He lived life with them."

"There is a reason you remember so much of the experiences you have on vacation is that you're not doing the same thing you always do. Why not do something like that that's also a faith-deepening experience? Let's associate this kind of memories with learning to read the Scripture and learning the Gospel and its implications."

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Timothy Cockes is a Baptist Press staff writer.

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# 101-year-old Ky. Baptist recounts salvation story after meeting Corrie Ten Boom

**LOUISVILLE, KY (BP)** – Eleanor Gorin, born March 5, 1921, grew up in the first house built on Cherokee Road in Louisville and received Christ after meeting the famous Holocaust survivor Corrie Ten Boom.

It was the late 1960s, in the middle of the Jesus movement, when Gorin says “the Holy Spirit jumped across the water,” all the way to Bermuda, where she and her husband were living at the time.

There, Gorin became involved in a seven-person prayer group of “hungry, thirsty, cultural Christians.”

“The Lord worked it so” that Ten Boom stopped there on a tour to share the story of her time in prison.

“She had such an impact on my life,” Gorin said.

Ten Boom, best known for her book *The Hiding Place*, was a watchmaker from the Netherlands who became imprisoned for hiding Jews in her family home during the Holocaust.

At the time Ten Boom visited Gorin’s prayer group, already “The Lord had been drawing us to Himself.”

Ten Boom stayed for nearly two weeks, and Gorin recalls how she shared her testimony, starting with her ministry to the mentally handicapped during her teenage years, then her imprisonment and her love for the Jewish people.

Gorin recalls Ten Boom said, “With the mentally handicapped, you don’t worry about the intellect. The Holy Spirit goes straight to the spirit of the individual.”

Ten Boom illustrated the Holy Spirit coming into the lives of Christians by pulling out “her little carpet bag,” holding up an empty glove, shaking it and saying, “these fingers in the glove can’t do a thing,” like an individual without the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, we are like gloves without fingers inside, and can do nothing spiritually.

“We were hanging on every word,” said Gorin, “our mouths were wide open.”

After hearing from Ten Boom, Gorin heard from other influential speakers including Abram Vereide, some from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Cannon Wallace Bird.

One night, Gorin went to a service led by Bird, an Anglican priest.

“His face was radiant” as he shared his testimony. At the end of the evening, he led the listeners in a salvation prayer, one that Gorin prayed for herself.

“That was when I knew that I knew,” said Gorin, and she “came to know Jesus in a personal way.”

“If you make it real in your own heart,” Bird told attendees, “then go home and tell somebody before you go to bed tonight.”

So Gorin went home and told her daughter, “Honey, I want you to know that tonight I asked Jesus into my heart.” Gorin then woke up her husband and told him the same. His response, which Gorin attributes as being from the Lord, was, “What’s going to be different?”

One difference, Gorin said, was that her “values began to change.”

Whereas before, music and art had been idols in Gorin’s life, “the Word of God opened up to me ‘like the petals of a flower,’” as she recalls someone explaining it, and God began convicting her of idols and sin.

Previously, Gorin had struggled with sin, wondering why she could not change. Now those idols in her life became less important.

Gorin says she started to “understand those mysteries” in the Bible after she “began to yield to the Holy Spirit.”

After a six-year stay in Bermuda, when she and her husband came back to the States, they settled in Richmond, Va., and began opening their home for college student Bible studies, where they shared the Good News they had received and “saw miracle after miracle after miracle” as students turned from “drugs and other things” to the Lord.

Now, the advice Gorin gives to young believers seeking to grow in Christ is to “become saturated in the Word of God.”

Gorin’s husband, Lewis, who was saved some time later, spent later years reading the Bible to Eleanor. After he passed, Eleanor said “18 times he’d read the whole Bible” out loud to her in the kitchen.

Gorin says that people need to “come to a place of deep commitment and surrender” to the Lord for growth.

It is in the Word of God that we understand “how black our sin can be and how much he can forgive if we repent.”



All through the Bible we receive “tremendous encouragement.”

“Jesus still speaks to us from the seat next to the Father,” says Gorin, and we must read and listen.

Gorin, previously a part of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, is now a member of Hurstbourne Baptist Church in Louisville, where she attends faithfully.

She feels she has been given the gift of a long life so that she can “touch more people with her testimony.”

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Hannah Julian is a writer for [Kentucky Today](#).

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