

Encourage

Inspiration for IPHC Leaders

One Generation Will Tell Another

BY SCOTT HAMPTON

God's Work Extends To All Generations

BY DOUG BEACHAM

Every Leader Must Learn to Say No

BY B. KAY JONES

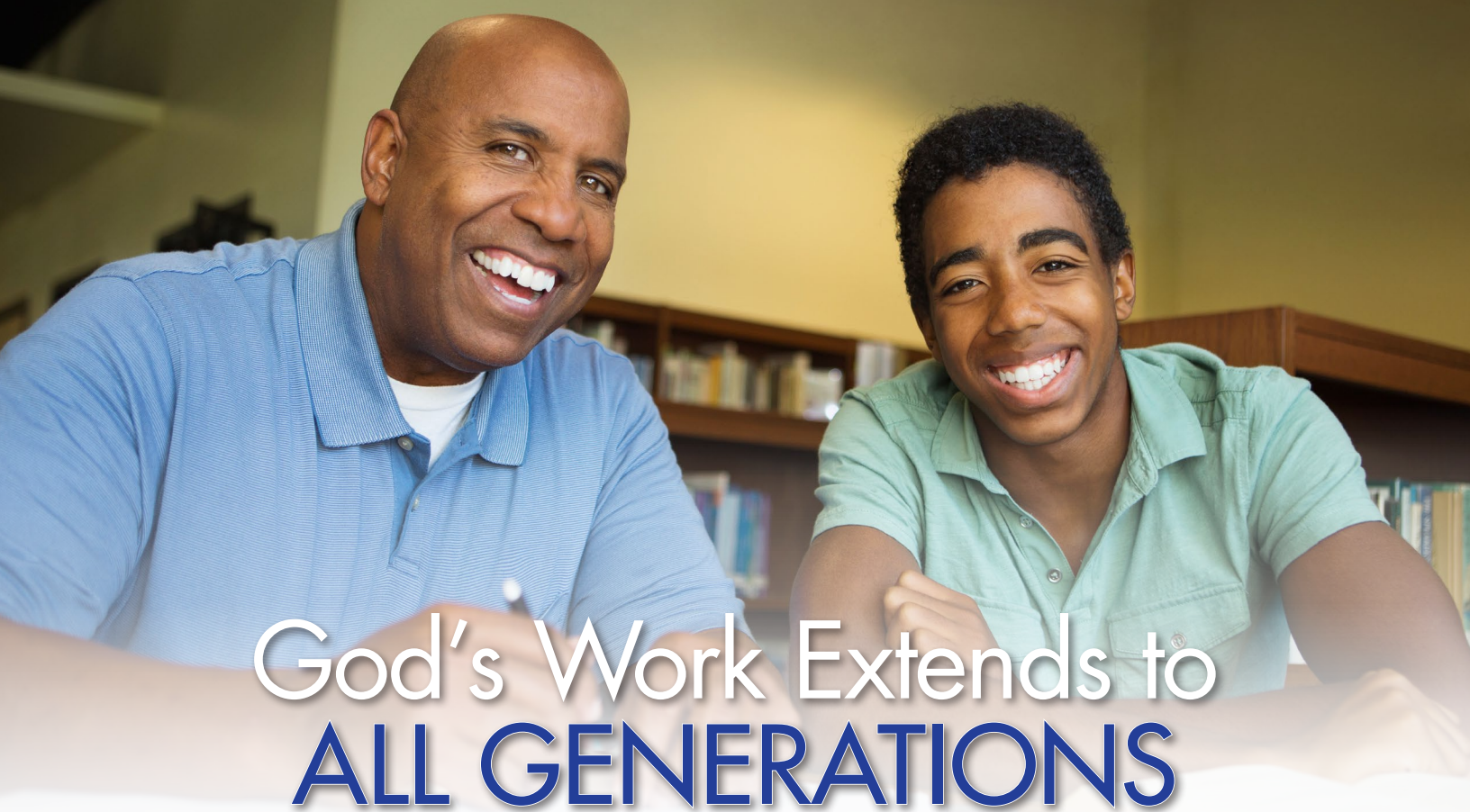
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God's Work Extends to **ALL GENERATIONS**

We are not here just to serve ourselves. We are part of God's larger purpose that spans from the past to the future.



**BY DOUG
BEACHAM**

DOUG BEACHAM is the presiding bishop of the IPHC. He has served in various roles in the church including Georgia Conference Superintendent, executive director of Church Education Ministries, and executive director of World Missions Ministries. You can follow Bishop Beacham on [Facebook](#) or Twitter [@DougBeacham](#).

The verses in Ephesians 3:16–21 are special to me. They're special because it was a prayer my father prayed over me during the Georgia Conference camp meeting in the middle 1990s.

My friend Bane James had asked me to speak at one of the morning sessions. At the close, Bane asked my father to come and pray for me. Dad laid his hands on me and closed his prayer by quoting Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3.

Little did I know that my father would be with the Lord in a few short years. Soon afterwards I became superintendent of the Georgia Conference.

Since 2001, I have had the privilege of serving the IPHC in various general church leadership roles: Discipleship Ministries, World Missions Ministries and now as the General Superintendent. But I am keenly aware of the twenty-four years of general church service my father provided as the General Treasurer and General Secretary-Treasurer.

I am often in meetings in what was his office in Oklahoma City. I often see and touch documents that he signed in his official role for the IPHC.

The IPHC Core Value related to All Generations, which is our focus this year, has given me opportunity to reflect on the past, the present and the future.

I was a history major at the University of Georgia. The study of history is still keen to me, wherever I am. You've seen those historical markers on the side of highways? That's me slowing down to read them!

I love reading old newspapers or old documents. My Dad kept excellent records, and at one point we still had personal checkbook registers from the 1940s and 1950s. Not a bad way to see how a family spent money in the past!

I remember in the middle 1960s, when the IPHC general offices were still in

Franklin Springs, Georgia, that the church safe in Dad's office was stolen. It was found a few days later in a field several miles away. As a teenager, I went with my Dad to meet the sheriff and claim the papers that had been scattered from the safe, which had been broken open.

The thieves thought there was money in the safe, but they were disappointed! Instead, the thieves found documents that had no value to them. In some instances, the documents were unintelligible, such as the ones I picked up scattered over the field written in strange characters.

I asked my Dad, "What are these?" He replied, "Those are Chinese deeds to IPHC properties in China that were confiscated by the communists after 1949. We're keeping them for the future."

All that past, whether personal or not, continues to have an impact on my life. Those experiences with my father helped shape my understanding of the present and future. They remind me that my actions today are part of something that God has been doing in the generations before me. It reminds me that those who will be the action figures of tomorrow will be part of God's ongoing work in Ephesians 3:20, God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (KJV).

Twice in Ephesians 3 Paul began sentences with, "For this reason..." (3:1, 14, NKJV). The work of God "to all generations" (3:21) finds its reason in Ephesians 1-3. There the eternal purposes of God are revealed in Jesus Christ.

The sin that has alienated humanity from God, and us from one another, is reconciled through the cross of Jesus Christ. The destiny of the Jew to bless the alienated Gentile is brought together in what Paul calls the "mystery" (1:9; 3:3, 4, 9), that Jew and Gentile are together in Jesus Christ.

I like the older King James Version translation of "For this cause," in Ephesians 3:1 and 14. It reminds me of a similar phrase in 1 Samuel 17:29, where the young shepherd David, facing an arrogant, profane, and godless Philistine, calls out this challenge, "Is there not a cause?"

It is for "this cause," expressed in the reconciliation of the world to God in Christ, that each generation carries on its gospel mission. "For this cause...":

1. Each generation is confident of divine strength, "according to the riches of His glory" (3:16).
2. Each generation is confident that Christ dwells "in your hearts by faith" (3:17).
3. Each generation discovers afresh the power of Christ's love, "which passes knowledge" (3:17-19).
4. Each generation by faith discovers that Christ "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" by and through the Holy Spirit "that works in us" (3:20).

Whenever I'm with a group of young adults, whether at a local

Encourage

A place of hope. A people of promise.

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congregation, YouthQuest, Accelerant, March for Life or with my own grown children and young grandchildren, I often hear my father's voice praying Ephesians 3 over me and over them. I feel his hand on my shoulder and my head. I sense from his spirit one generation intentionally, and literally, handing "this cause" to another generation.

It's our cause and our time beckoning us to renewed faith and love in Christ, "to all generations." □

"Those experiences with my father helped shape my understanding of the present and future. They remind me that my actions today are part of something that God has been doing in the generations before me."

One Generation Must Tell the Next Generation



Our God is a generational God. Your church should be also!



BY SCOTT
HAMPTON

SCOTT HAMPTON and his wife, Heather, and their children live and work in Amarillo, Texas, where Scott serves as the Great Plains Conference Superintendent. Before becoming superintendent he served as the Conference Discipleship Director as well as ministering with the pastoral staff of Christian Heritage PHC from 2009-2014. From 2014-2017 he was pastor of Elevate Church. In 2015, he received his degree in Business Administration at West Texas A&M University. Scott has served with the IPHC Discipleship Ministries Council since 2014.

It is with great excitement and expectation that we enter 2018 focusing on the fifth Core Value of the IPHC, which is “We Prayerfully Value All Generations.” We define this Core Value of our movement by stating:

“We celebrate all generations and acknowledge that each is essential in the Body of Christ. We honor those who have gone before us and empower those who are following. The contribution of each generation is welcomed and encouraged as we pursue our God given destiny.”

I believe discipleship is born in a culture of honor. We must honor those on whose shoulders we stand, knowing that the next generation stands on the shoulders of the previous generation.

To produce active Christ followers in every generation requires replicating this culture of honoring and empowering time and again.

This becomes part of our mission. However, for years in my journey of being involved in discipleship ministries on the local church, conference, and national levels, there has always been this question that brings tension to the mission: How do we effectively disciple multiple generations in one church?

In his book *From Generation to Generation: Reaching, Raising Up, and Releasing Every Next Generation*, Bayless Conley states: “God chose Abraham to become the father of His chosen people, and the one through whose lineage the Savior would one day come.... God gives only one reason for choosing Abraham, saying in Genesis 18:19, ‘I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD...’” (NLT).

God saw a special quality in Abraham, who is called the father of our faith. Conley continues: “God selected Abraham because He knew Abraham would think and act generationally—that he would take the things he had learned from God and pass them on to his children and grandchildren.”

What a powerful and illuminating thought! God was intentional in His selection of Abraham because he knew that Abraham would act generationally.

We see this theme continuously supported throughout scripture as we read about the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Generational thinking brings new life to our reading and understanding of the Word. Moses disciplined Joshua. Naomi disciplined Ruth. Elijah disciplined Elisha. Jesus disciplined the

twelve. And then in the New Testament church, Paul disciplined Timothy, and modeled the way we should train the next generation.

One ultimate purpose should be carried from one generation to the next until the arrival of Christ our King. What if you and I took such a view of the generational importance of our assignment?

Psalm 78:5–7 says: “For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments;”

Verse 5 speaks of “a testimony” and

“a law” that became the foundation of what the Lord desired to pass on from one generation to the next. There were not a plethora of options made available. The desired goal was a singular focus on a testimony and a law that pointed to God.

In our effort to unite generations in the discipleship journey of the local church we must have a focused and united vision. I’ve seen this

take many forms in various churches, from an emphasis on the Apostles Creed to a fixed set of values using words such

as reach, connect, grow, and serve.

It may seem too simplistic to some, but for our particular faith family we have a set of Core Values and Articles of Faith that serve us very well for guideposts along the discipleship journey.

We see in verse 7 of Psalm 78 that what was produced in the generation receiving the united vision was (1) a hope in the Lord, (2) a remembrance and understanding of His works and (3) a commitment to obedience to His commands. These are the “fruit” of a united vision being passed down generationally.

In my days as a student pastor and senior pastor these signs of growth were all I ever hoped for God’s people. I continue to long to see these produced in generations to come as we communicate a united purpose.

A shift towards a united vision and the fruit it will produce will help answer the question of how to disciple multiple generations in one church. Picture your place of ministry full of life as the “Abrahams” share the testimony of God’s goodness to the “Isaacs” that are coming behind them. Now replicate the picture with the “Isaacs” and the “Jacobs” of your church. Let one generation tell of God’s goodness to another!

The young and old alike should celebrate the hope they have in the Lord, remembering His mighty works in their lives, and living obediently to his call. This picture of church-wide discipleship isn’t just a dream. It’s possible.

Our churches must include all generations. I pray your church will follow the biblical pattern of Abraham so that multitudes will embrace faith in Jesus Christ. ■

“God was intentional in His selection of Abraham because he knew that Abraham would act generationally.”

Every Leader Must Learn to Say "NO"



If you don't understand the importance of boundaries, you will become drained, depleted and depressed.



BY B. KAY
JONES

B. KAY JONES is a life coach, mentor and speaker. Ordained in the IPHC, she speaks in churches, high schools and conferences, and she has seen people of all ages liberated by God's power. Alongside her husband, Les, she has served on the leadership team of New Song Family Church in Decatur, Alabama, for 20 years. B.Kay has served as Women's Ministry Director on state and local levels, and she is also involved in helping victims of addiction and abuse in her community.

Pastors and church leaders today are under siege. I've been saddened by the amount of ministers finding themselves emotionally shipwrecked, abandoned by the ones they love or in demoralizing situations.

Many of my friends started ministry on fire for God but later made headlines because they strayed far from their callings. Within a few recent weeks I read articles about several different ministers who experienced breakdowns or moral failures, or left suicide notes—some with confessions that admitted: "I found myself depleted."

Whenever I see a pattern in identical wording coming from multiple sources I tend to stop and examine the pattern. Is God speaking something to me? How did these people find themselves in such a depleted state that they chose to devastate countless people by pursuing something that would cost them everything?

The word *depleted* continued to echo in my mind, because I was depleted myself—exhausted, lonely and needing a break. I realized that just like all these wonderful people who started well, anyone could become depleted. So how could I safeguard myself from a similar tragedy?

Church leaders tend to help others, but we seldom seek out the help we need for ourselves. We counsel multitudes, but we have nobody to talk to. Many of my friends in ministry suffer from depression, loneliness, fear and doubt of God's perfect love for them, but they are afraid to admit this. They fear it might ruin their image.

Honestly, I could feel myself unraveling. I felt like I was going in the opposite directions of my dreams. Finding myself in the middle of life and so far from the goals God set before me. I sought out a fellow minister I'd heard great things about and employed her help in sorting through the clutter of my life to rediscover the joy, peace and love the Father has intended for all of us to walk in. She has given such beautiful insight and accountability.

The failure my depletion had brought about was a failure to thrive. I was dying inside. My zeal was fizzling out and I was losing my sparkle. I needed some good old fashioned accountability. I needed someone who didn't care about my title or my position, but could help me remember who I was created to be. God sent someone to me! What a blessing it has been to have a mentor who challenges me to reach higher.

What I realized in our mentoring sessions was that I had become accustomed to being a receptacle of other people's garbage. Leaders often think we have to be there for everything, listen to anything people have to say, and take whatever they want to hand us.

That is why many ministers are dying of heart attacks, their marriages are ending in divorce and their children are desperately seeking attention in the wrong places. Depleted leaders often have nothing left to give when they get home. We take in a lot of toxins, but we fail to release them into the hands of the Heavenly Father at the end of each day.

My mentor taught me something I never learned at home or in Bible college. She taught me the power of the word *no*.

It is so easy to get caught up with "Being all things to all men," that we

rob ourselves of living the abundant life we preach about. We overcommit ourselves to people who are often not as committed to us. Then we forget to nurture the ones who will be there after the dust settles—our family.

We are not called to be everyone's answer. We have to teach people to

**"Church leaders
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rely on Jesus, not us. We cannot set ourselves up as saviors to anyone.

We are simply messengers of God's peace and love, dispensing what we have received from Him and quickly running back to the Father for a refill. We must totally leave the results up to Him.

We cannot feed people from an empty plate. If we are always giving and never stopping to replenish ourselves, we are heading at high speed toward the proverbial brick wall. Stopping to refresh yourself and finding someone who will hold you accountable is paramount in your survival as a Christ-centered leader.

We have to learn the power of *no* to go the distance in ministry. It's easier to say "no" when you think of N-O as standing for "Nurturing Oneself."

No was not a word I was comfortable with. I didn't grasp no as an option. Therefore, I was trying to be Wonder Woman to the world. Doing

so was not good for me, my family or those I was leading. We need to forsake the Wonder Woman or the Super Man title and point people to the Wonderful Counselor!

Most situations are not as urgent as people make them sound to be. My friend June Evans told a story about an urgent call she and her husband, Gene, received early one morning. The caller relayed that she needed to meet with them immediately because she was being taunted by demons.

Pastor Gene wisely asked the caller, "How long have you known you had demons?" She replied, "Well, I have known it for years."

Pastor Gene's reply was classic: "If you've had them for years, a few more hours won't hurt you. We can meet you later this morning during office hours."

Pastor Gene was applying the power of *no*. Sometimes the power of no is just separating the urgent from the necessary. It was necessary for the lady to find freedom, but it was not urgent for her to receive it at 2 a.m.

Sometimes the power of *no* is just *not right now*. We get depleted when we run to every roar and feed our need to be needed. If people build their dependency on us, they will never form a proper dependency on Christ.

Every roar should not alarm us. Stop and pray. Analyze the roar. Is it a distraction or a need? Am I feeding chaos or helping someone grow in their dependency on God?

As leaders, we need to guard our world by choosing to say no to the urgent and embracing the necessity of saying yes to nurturing ourselves so that we have the spiritual empowerment to go the distance for Christ.

We have to set boundaries and not allow ministry to keep our lives in a tailspin. We have to nurture ourselves with rest and recreation.

Every day, we need to do something that replenishes our souls and removes our mind from the daily grind. This way we will not become depleted. We can be the spouse, parent and minister that we need to be. We can live the abundant life God promised us. □

The New Testament Reality of Relationship Evangelism



Most people come to Christ because of relationships—not events.
We need to reexamine our strategies!



BY GARRY
BRYANT

GARRY BRYANT, the son of a Pentecostal Holiness minister, has served as a senior pastor, conference Christian Education director, superintendent of Redemption Ministries, national field director of ACTS2DAY Ministries and is currently serving as executive director of Evangelism USA Ministries. His ministry goal is to raise-up the body of Christ in effective ministry to carry out the Great Commission. Garry and his wife LaDawn live in Oklahoma City, and they have two grown children.

Approximately eighty percent of churches in the United States have now either plateaued or are in decline. Though this fact is disheartening, there is a New Testament phenomenon that can educate and engage us in a strategy of effective evangelism and that is human relationships.

Every one of us—regardless of age, culture, ethnicity and economic status—lives in a world where we participate in relationships. More than 75 percent of individuals who come to know Christ have experienced salvation as a result of a direct relationship.

There is a Greek word that is found many times in the New Testament that can provide tremendous insight and revelation to our evangelism productivity. *Oikos* defines an individual's primary base of relationships and relational sphere of influence. For example: family, neighbors, friends, and co-laborers.

Let's consider some of the biblical passages that contain or reference this New Testament phenomenon.

In the ministry of Jesus: "The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 'Return home and tell how much God has done for you.' So, the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him," (Luke 8:38–39 NIV).

This man experienced a mighty deliverance and his desire was to immediately go with Jesus. Jesus would not allow him, but instructed him to return to his community and share all that had been done for him. Let's look at examples of this principle in the New Testament:

1. ZACCHAEUS.

"When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.' So, he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, 'He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.' But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.' Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham,' (Luke 19:5-10).

Zacchaeus accepted Christ and demonstrated the change in his life, and Jesus declared the impact on his business relationships.

2. THE CENTURIAN'S SON.

"The royal official said, 'Sir, come down before my child dies.'

'Go,' Jesus replied, 'your son will live.' The man took Jesus at his word and departed... Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, 'Your son will live.' So, he and his whole household believed," (John 4:49-50, 53).

The centurion's son was miraculously healed. This official's entire household was impacted and they all believed.

3. HOUSE CHURCHES AFTER PENTECOST.

"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2: 46-47).

This provides the most descriptive insight into the life and activity of the early church, after the day of Pentecost. It is obvious that life in believer's homes played a most significant part.

4. THE RELATIVES OF CORNELIUS.

"At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly... The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends... 'Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.' So, he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days," (Acts 10: 1-2, 24, 47-48).

In this passage, Cornelius the Gentile and his household

received the gospel, were baptized in the Holy Spirit and with water.

5. LYDIA IN PHILIPPI.

"On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the

members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. 'If you consider me a believer in the Lord,' she said, 'come and stay at my house.' And she persuaded us" (Acts 16:13-15).

Lydia experienced her conversion during Paul's ministry in Philippi. She and the members of her household believed and were baptized. She was also a seller of cloth and had a sphere of influence in the business world.

6. THE FAMILY OF CRISPUS.

"Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the

Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized," (Acts 18: 7-8).

Crispus was the synagogue leader, not only did he influence his family, but the synagogue as well was a part of his sphere of influence.

All of these give clear and undeniable evidence that our multi-relational levels of influence are a primary and obvious target for sharing and expanding the gospel. It is a strategy and responsibility that we must not ignore but take full advantage of.

We must instruct new believers and communicate to them the great privilege and responsibility to understand their sphere of influence. We must help them share the testimony of their salvation.

Could we not become more intentional in targeting these already developed and active relationship opportunities? Let's remind ourselves according to the instructions of Jesus, the issue is not with the harvest. He said it is ripe. The issue lies with the laborers. Let's rise to a new place of revelation and activation, seeing our own *oikos* as a ripe field ready for harvesting. □

Who Reaches Who?

HOW ARE PEOPLE INFLUENCED TO RECEIVE JESUS OR ATTEND CHURCH?

Initiated by pastor or church staff	0 – 3 %
Visitation	½ – 1 %
Small Group Activity	4 – 6 %
Church Programs	2 – 4 %
Benevolent efforts/special needs	1 – 3 %
Uninvited visit	2 – 4 %
Special services/big events	½ – 1 %
Friends/relatives/associates	75 – 90 %

This information was provided by Win Arn, Thom Rainer and Bob Orr.

FIVE THINGS

Leaders Should Never Listen To



Not everything requires a response. Learn to tune out distractions so you can fulfill your divine mission.



BY J. LEE GRADY

J. LEE GRADY is an ordained IPHC minister who directs The Mordecai Project, an international outreach focused on confronting gender-based violence. For 18 years he served as an editor with Charisma magazine, and he is the author of several books including the newly released *Set My Heart on Fire*, a Bible study on the Holy Spirit. He and his wife, Deborah, live in LaGrange, Georgia.

My favorite Christian author, British preacher Charles Spurgeon, always told his Bible college students that a minister must never allow people's opinions or attitudes to distract him from God's holy assignment. Spurgeon urged his disciples to adopt what he called "one blind eye and one deaf ear" so they would not allow people to hinder them from fulfilling their mission.

Spurgeon wrote: "We cannot shut our ears as we do our eyes, for we have no ear lids, ... yet it is possible to seal the portal of the ear so that nothing contraband will enter."

I have learned over the years that there are certain conversations I must shut out. Words have the power to inspire, but the wrong kind of words can also derail us. And in this era of Facebook outrage—where everyone feels they must inject themselves into every argument—we must learn to switch our ears off so we don't get pulled into a fight that's not ours.

Today, streaming TV, unlimited texts and tweets, polarizing political debate and endless communication is shaping a generation of overreactors. But not everything requires my response. Here are five things I'm learning to tune out:

1. OTHER PEOPLE'S OFFENSES.

Some people who were offended 25 years ago will never rest until they see justice served—and they will ask you to take sides in the trial. Stay a mile away from any such dispute, or you will get pulled into it like quicksand.

Proverbs 26:17 says: “He who passes by and meddles with strife not belonging to him is like one who takes a dog by the ears.” You are not the jury, and you do not have to make a ruling on this. Sometimes pastors arrive at a new congregation and learn that one family expects him to take sides in a feud that started several decades ago. That is foolish. Just ignore the comments and point your church toward a healthy future.

2. IDLE GOSSIP.

I am amazed when Christians who have experienced the forgiveness and love of Jesus rudely dissect other people with their words. When the Bible refers to “malicious gossips” (1 Tim. 3:11), the Greek word is *diabolos*, which is actually a name used for Satan because he accuses man to God. Gossip is the work of the devil, but the knives he uses to cut people into pieces often look very religious!

Churches can be torn apart when people make up lies about each other, misread motives or harbor suspicions they share as “prayer requests.” Gossips are always ready to drop a hint—about where they saw the youth pastor last weekend, about Mrs. Jones’ divorce, about Mr. Smith’s reputation or about why the pastor’s wife didn’t smile at them last Sunday. Don’t even taste the juicy morsel that a slanderer tries to serve you; tell him or her that gossip is not on your diet.

3. SECONDHAND CRITICISM.

I’ve tried to stay open to criticism, and my door is always open if someone needs to point out my flaws. But if I hear through the church grapevine that Mrs. Rogers didn’t like my sermon, or that Mr. Williams thinks I am too harsh, or that Miss Jones heard that Mrs. Lyons told Mr. Edwards that Mrs. Simmons said I am unfriendly, I don’t give it another thought.

For one thing, the report is probably not true, and secondly, if these people want to criticize me they can do it to my face. Otherwise I don’t need to worry about every comment someone makes about me. Dogs will bark, and crickets will buzz, but I cannot allow their inconsequential noise to distract me from my mission.

Years ago, revivalist Steve Hill prayed for me to have what he called “alligator skin,” because he knew I would be criticized for the things I write. Ever since then I have tried to let people’s opinions and comments roll off me, as if I had waterproof reptilian scales.

You can do the same. Don’t spend a drop of emotional energy worrying about what people think about you; instead be more concerned about pleasing God.

4. FALSE ACCUSATIONS.

If you are in ministry, chances are you will be skewered sooner or later by someone who feels it is their spiritual duty to destroy

your reputation. King David experienced this, and we can learn much from his struggle.

I have many pastor friends who have had to endure character assassination—either by Sauls (insecure leaders), Absaloms (unfaithful subordinates) or Shebas (rebellious critics). But I don’t feel it is my responsibility to track down every person who has a low opinion of me.

David trusted God to deal with those who opposed him. You don’t have to prosecute your enemies. Don’t have such a fragile ego that you have to hunt down those who don’t like you. Extend grace and let God vindicate you. Take the high road, knowing that God can use even your enemies to build your character.

“Don’t even taste the juicy morsel that a slanderer tries to serve you; tell him or her that gossip is not on your diet.”

5. EXOTIC BUT FRUITLESS TEACHINGS.

Finally, I have learned that I must turn a deaf ear to a great deal of popular Christian chatter that is disguised as truth. People often ask me, “What do you think of So-and-So’s prophecy about Donald Trump?” or “Did you hear the new revelation about Russia’s plans to invade Israel?” or “How do you feel about the return of the Nephilim from Genesis 6?” I always change the subject.

I’m not interested in getting on anyone’s spiritual bandwagon, and I don’t waste my breath talking about speculations, conjectures, unfounded revelations, blood moons or spooky visions that have no biblical basis. I plan to stay focused. My goal is to keep the main thing the main thing.

Paul had to remind Timothy about this. He told his spiritual son to “instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculations rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith” (1 Tim. 1:3-4). Listening to certain exotic teaching will derail your church and take you off course. Tune it out.

If it’s not about taking the gospel of Jesus to lost people, I’m shutting my ears. If we would focus on what really matters, and tune out the distractions, we’d reach the world for Christ so much faster. ▣