

Morning Star

Important Questions About Significant Goals

By Pastor Torrey Robinson

Those who are new to our church in the last eleven months have probably noticed a large banner hanging on the back wall of the sanctuary and wonder what it's all about. The banner contains no words only numbers – 25-250-2010. There are too many numbers to represent a license plate or a phone number and too few to be a social security number. So what is the significance of the numbers 25-250-2010?

Quite simply, these numbers are a measurement of two of the biggest goals in our church's history. 25 is the number of people that we expect to see come to know Jesus as their personal Savior. 250 is the number of people we expect to be in worship each Sunday. 2010 marks the deadline for these two goals to become a reality. That means that we expect most of this to take place in the next 12 months.

In saying that we "expect" this to happen, I am not speaking presumptuously. I am not saying that it necessarily will happen. But this is more than just wishful thinking. 25-250-2010 are two very tangible and measurable goals that flow from our vision to share God's love and hope to transform, hearts, homes, Westchester and the world. Our vision points us in a direction. The goals we set move us in that direction.

But frankly, these are very BIG goals for our church. To gauge the number of people who come to faith at First Baptist, we have chosen to use the measurement of baptism which is how the New Testament Church counted conversions. We might typically expect to see about five or six people baptized in our church family in a year. That means our goal to see 25 people come to faith in Christ from the beginning of 2009 to the end of 2010 is at least two or three times the number of baptisms we would expect over a two year period. And our goal to see our worship attendance grow to 250 people by the end of 2010 means that the Sunday morning congregation would double in size from what it was at the beginning of 2009.

Such big goals raise questions. Does God even want

us to set numerical goals like these? Some feel that it is not very spiritual to focus on numbers. But numbers can be important spiritual indicators when they allow us to see God's hand at work. In the Biblical account in Judges 7, Gideon had 32,000 soldiers. But God reduced that number to only 300 men, so it would be evident that victory was from God, not Gideon's army. In the book of Acts, someone kept track of numbers. We are told that about 3,000 people trusted Christ in response to Peter's sermon in Acts 2. In Acts 4 we are told that the church had grown to at least 5,000. Those numbers were tangible demonstrations of God's working. If we are trusting God, I believe God expects us to set tangible goals.

With such big goals, should we really expect to accomplish them? That's a fair question, but let me ask it this way. Could the God who added three thousand new believers to the church in Jerusalem in one morning bring 25 people to faith and double our Sunday morning attendance in two years' time? What seems big for us is nothing for God. Besides, the end results are not our responsibility. No matter how hard we work, only God can change hearts. Our responsibility is to each do our part. What God chooses to do through us is His business.

Where do we stand right now with 12 months remaining to reach these goals? I have to admit right now that we have a long way to go. Again, measuring conversions by baptisms, we've had two people in our church family baptized so far this year with another baptism scheduled later in November. As for church attendance, it seems apparent to the casual observer on Sunday mornings that our church attendance has

25
250
2010

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increased in the past year, but until now we haven't kept good track of the exact number.

The Trustees have been asked to track the attendance for us going forward. Even without precise measurements, it is clear that we have a long way to go in the next 12 months to reach both of these goals. And if we are to reach them, it is essential that we begin to accurately track them. What you expect you have to inspect.

And that leads to perhaps the scariest question of all.

What happens if we don't reach our goals at the end of 2010? Let me be honest. When the elders first started talking about these goals at the end of 2008, this was the question that I asked myself frequently. Realizing the enormity of these goals, I agonized over this question. What would it mean for my leadership as your pastor if these big goals were a big flop? What if there was little difference in our church at the end of 2010?

I suppose that remains to be seen. But I no longer lose

sleep over this. I know God wants our church to share our faith with those around us. And if we are actively sharing the good news we will see people come to faith. If people are placing their faith in Jesus, our church will grow. Our vision to share God's love and hope to transform hearts, homes, Westchester and the world is compelling, but it will never be more than words on a page unless we trust God to do something great through us.

This edition of *The Bright and Morning Star* is dedicated to the 25-250-2010 goals. As you read the articles, I ask you to pray. Pray for God to work in and through our church. Pray for God to work in and through you. The elders wanted to set big goals so that we would have to rely upon God. Only He can change a sinner's heart. God does some of His most amazing work through people. The biggest question remains, are you willing to trust God to do something great through you?★

25-250-2010 and Missions

By Doug Morton

I suppose if this last spring you asked each member of the Yankees what they expected it would take to end the season with a World Series victory, you would not be surprised to hear responses similar to the following. "We just need to focus on doing our best and working hard." "We can't give up when we're losing and we need to persevere." "We need to discipline ourselves, encourage each other and stay focused."

Every team knows that reaching a lofty goal demands hard work, discipline, and perseverance. But does the same thing apply to us as it relates to our goal of 25-250-2010? How does each ministry fit in to the goal? How does missions fit in to the goal? The questions are valid, but the answers need not be complicated. There may be some lessons we can learn from a winning ball club, but for the most part, the sport team analogy will break down rather quickly when you compare it to what the scripture teaches.

John Piper¹ has some keen insight on the place of missions for the church today. He writes, "*Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn't...When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It's a temporary necessity. But worship exists forever.*" He goes on to say that worship is the fuel and goal of missions. Our true goal should be to bring our friends, neighbors, and the nations to the throne of God in worship. It is our passion for the majesty and beauty of God that should fuel our efforts to reach others (both here and abroad) for Christ.

I firmly believe that church growth is not simply the

result of what **we do** as individuals and ministries. But rather, church growth is the natural result of what **we are** as individuals and ministries. We will probably not reach our goal of 25 baptisms and 250 worshippers solely by working hard and being focused. Ministry events do not convert sinners, excellent leadership strategies do not automatically lead to increasing membership rolls, and mission committees with budgets are not the driving force behind the world missions movement.

Don't get me wrong, there is a place for strategies, ministries, and even mission committees, but all of this is not **the cause** of church growth, but rather **the result** of church growth. What will cause the church to grow here and around the world is that passionate flame of worship within our hearts. As it burns, the light of missions will shine though out "Westchester and the World."

So how about those Yankees? Hard work, discipline and perseverance are good things, but they are not the best things. Without a passion for baseball, it would not take long for discouragement and frustration to set in. The season is long. Batting slumps and losing streaks are bound to occur. Likewise for us, if our only goal is to win the "25-250-2010 Series," we can become easily discouraged when things don't seem to be going well. But if we focus on fostering a passionate worship for the Christ that gives eternal life to all who believe, we will be naturally fueled to spread the good news of God's "love and hope to transform hearts, homes, Westchester and the world."★

¹Let the Nations Be Glad. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI 1993.

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The Bright and Morning Star is seeking contributions for the next issue on any topics of interest which glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. Please send articles to: The Bright and Morning Star Newsletter at the address above.



The 2009 FBC Christmas Festival & Live Nativity Was A Great Success!

By Aaron Velez

Our Christmas Choir sang beautiful carols while The Irvington Village Band followed up with more music of the season!



The teens of Irvington's "Midnight Run Club" were present to reach out and explain their amazing outreach ministry called "Bridges to Community". A group of these youngsters will travel to Nicaragua to help build sustainable homes for families in Masaya. Please consider donating funds to support these young leaders!



The Fellowship Hall was abuzz with fun activities for all! Kids and adults alike participated in various crafts.

Everyone's favorite, the Ginger Bread House decorating contest!

Many folks got some Christmas shopping done by purchasing some beautiful hand-crafted jewelry items. All proceeds support Christian Ministries!



The real reason for the season was portrayed beautifully through the "Live Nativity."

Finally, LOTS and LOTS and LOTS of helpers made sure a good time was had by all! I want to thank everyone who participated, invited someone, sang a song, played an instrument, helped set-up or clean-up, manned a station, or anything else I am forgetting. I praise God for your service and selfless giving of your time. You show Jesus love through your actions and we are a better church because of it. Happy New Year!★



Pioneers for Christ

By Dr. Dan Rizzi

Since the inception of the “Seniors Ministry” back when Rev. Dr. Bruce Boria was our pastor, the seniors with the goal of “Turning the inside out, to bring the outside in,” have persevered and with the grace of God, have flourished and reached our goal.

Although our actual membership of seniors from FBC is diminishing, it is not indicative of the size of the ministry. We decided quite a while ago as our numbers diminished to be recognized as the “Pioneers For Christ” which would be all inclusive regardless of age.

Fifteen years ago it was our goal to introduce the seniors of Tarrytown to the hospitality of the First Baptist Church with the hope that we might have the opportunity to plant a seed for our Lord to act upon.

Our scrumptious meals, reasonably priced at \$2.00, then \$3.00 and finally \$5.00 have been overwhelmingly, pleasantly received and praised.

At first, our meals were totally prepared by our members at home (no kitchen), but as our ministry grew it became a semi-catered affair and currently almost totally purchased because of the large numbers of attendees.

Of the 100 to 130 seniors who gather at our church every other month (sometimes an hour or more early) few even knew the FBC existed even though they may have resided in the Tarrytowns their entire lives. They now look forward with anticipation for the good, plentiful food, the fellowship, our message of the day, and of course, the raffle. Almost everyone gets a prize. The disgruntled promise they’ll be back again in spite of not getting a door prize.

A very large percentage of our attendees are Roman Catholic. Whether they are true believers or not, is between them and God, however, for many it is the very first experience in a church other than their own.

We have given pamphlets, tracts and Bibles to our guests and our messages by our leaders have obviously opened eyes and hearts. Many favorable comments have been offered about our messages and by all appearances, well received. Of course, there is no way to measure the number of those that may have come to Christ but our goal to “Turn the inside out, to bring the outside in” has been achieved. Have we met the ultimate goal to bring them to Christ remains in the blessed hands of our Lord and Savior.★

My5 – Seeking Christ Followers Who Multiply

By Steve Armstrong

When we first discussed the 25-250-2010 goal as Elders, we felt that we needed to evaluate if this was a goal that came from God or if it was something that we were forcing. After all, it almost seems presumptuous to set numbers on church growth or how many people we want to see come to Christ. The thing that assured us that we were on the right track was the parable of the sower in the gospels.

In this parable, Jesus talks about four kinds of seeds that were planted and yielded four very different results. One of the seeds is picked off by the birds. Another seed is planted in rocky soil and while it initially sprouts, it has no root and quickly dies. A third seed sprouts only to be choked by thorns, and so it doesn’t really grow much at all. The fourth seed is planted on good soil, and multiplies, producing a crop 30, 60, or 100 times the original seed.

From this parable we learn that God is not interested in a plant – He wants a harvest. If we translate this principle to our spiritual lives, I think we learn that God desires us to multiply other Christ followers. So we were convinced that it was not off base from the will of God to think that each person in our church could help lead one person to Christ in the next two years.

So from the very onset of the 25-250-2010 goal we believed that the primary source of growth in our church

would be the faithful witness of our congregation to their friends, families, co-workers and neighbors.

This is where the My5 Campaign comes from. Really, My5 is a challenge to everyone in our church to intentionally pray for people in their lives who do not know Christ, and commit themselves to be witnesses to their 5. We’ve done similar things in the past in our church, but we wanted to once again emphasize that we are called to be witnesses of the grace of Jesus Christ to those in our lives who do not know Him.

The My5 campaign is simple and powerful. Participants merely prayerfully determine who their 5 are, and then write their names on a My5 bookmark or booklet. Although we will periodically remind and encourage people to invite people from their My5 list to church or to outreach events, it is up to each participant to remember to pray for their 5 and look for opportunities to share Christ with them. And I firmly believe if we are obediently following Christ’s command to be fruitful and multiply, God will be faithful and we will see people come to Christ. But we will never approach the 25-250-2010 goal unless everyone steps up to be witnesses for Christ.★

Anyone interested in participating in the My5 campaign can find materials on the back table in the sanctuary or contact Steve Armstrong for more information.

Doorkeeper's Ministry: The Ministry of Welcoming

By Yolanda Parker Johnson

I think that this is such an exciting time here at the First Baptist Church of Tarrytown. I am convinced that God has a plan in motion for our Church. It was wonderful to be a part of and watch as God opened doors and made it possible for us to complete the work on our Church building ahead of schedule. Why do you think God did that? He has blessed us with a magnificent kitchen, fellowship hall, additional classrooms and bathrooms in the Church.

For any newcomers, before the renovations, we had to walk outside and go to the other building for a bathroom. God is good! Also, I believe that He did all of that because He has a plan in motion for us!

When our Church asked God, what's next for us and how we should use this new space; our Purpose, Vision and Goal came alive: Purpose: To share God's love and hope to transform hearts, homes, Westchester and the world. Vision: Be a community where God is at work, lives are changed, broken hearts are healed, hope becomes real and people are on fire for God and His Word. Goal: 25-250-2010 – 25 people come to Christ and our congregation grows to 250 people by 2010.

Wow, can all this really happen here at First Baptist Church? I say yes it can, by God's power and because "*with God all things are possible*" (Matthew 19:26b). God is the heart changer and He provides the increase, but are we willing to trust Him, step out on faith and be His partners in this endeavor?

I was asked what are the responsibilities of the Doorkeepers and what can this Ministry do to support the direction of our Church. The Doorkeepers serve as Christ's Ambassadors and are the greeters of our Church. We are to cheerfully & warmly welcome all who enter our doors for any Church event. We strive to create an environment that makes everyone feel welcomed, wanted & respected. We are a point of contact that can provide information to help make it easy for our guest to feel comfortable, to know about us and get connected.

I know, you thought the Doorkeepers just handed out bulletins on Sunday morning and yes we do that, but also a little more. The Doorkeepers are the front line for our Church's Purpose, Vision and Goal.

We all know that first impressions can be lasting ones and I have also read that people make up their

mind about a church in the first 7-10 minutes of contact. That can be long before a song is sung or the message is preached.

Often we are the first people that visitors have contact with and a smiling face and warm greeting can make all the difference in the world. In an effort to increase our opportunities to make guests, visitors, newcomers and regular attendees feel welcomed and appreciated; we have expanded the duties of a Doorkeeper to include both before and after service greeters. A greeter is also scheduled to be in our Fellowship Hall after service.

Since welcoming extends well beyond just hand shaking, we take the time to start conversations to engage our guests and find out about them. We are available to answer any questions about our Church and we invite or accompany folks to our Bagel Time. While speaking with them, we strive to remain mindful not to smother anyone or make them feel uncomfortable. Also, we are keeping records of the visitor cards, they receive a following up letter from the Pastor, phone calls are made to answer questions and the visitors receive postcards to update them on special church events.

God is blessing our church in many ways and each week He has been sending someone here to worship with us, whether they are a visitor, guest of someone or just a newcomer returning again. Believe me, not every church can boast about that kind of blessing. That also means that we have a responsibility to take care of God's gifts and make sure every guest in God's house feels welcomed and appreciated and the Doorkeepers can't do it alone.

When I look around our Church, I do see so many people already warmly extending themselves to others. As our church family continues to develop and strengthen our "Lifestyle of Welcoming", I think this is a very important way for us to execute our vision of sharing God's love and being an example to lead others to Christ. Developing a Church "Lifestyle of Welcoming" does take a little work and effort on our part and may mean stretching out of our comfort zones.

Here are a few suggestions and I'm sure they may sound familiar because both Pastor Torrey and Steve our Youth Pastor have talked about them. Be willing, stop and take the time, smile and go for it! Circle of

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FBC Tarrytown Hosts CB SuperCluster Meeting

By Art Baulch

On Saturday, October 17, our church hosted a Conservative Baptist (CB) SuperCluster meeting. 15 CB churches were represented with 60 people attending (pastors, ministry leaders, and other lay people). This meeting was one of four such regional meetings scheduled in New York and New England this Fall. This is the second year of these meetings. Our church hosted the meeting to encourage the participation of churches in Westchester, Rockland, Orange, Putnam, and Dutchess counties.

The term “SuperCluster” has to do with the fact that churches of a certain region, e.g., the Hudson Valley, New York City, and Long Island, are each called a “cluster.” The “SuperCluster” meeting brings together pastors and church leaders from different clusters.

The SuperCluster meetings take the place of one CB meeting that previously was held in October at Schoon Lake, NY in the Adirondack mountains. The meeting attracted mostly pastors.

At the October 17 SuperCluster, Pastor Torrey Robinson was the Master of Ceremonies, the FBC Worship Team led by Grace Soong provided uplifting praise music, Barbara Morton and crew provided lunch. Brian Rush, Steve Armstrong, Carl Robinson, Jacques Cowart and others volunteered their time for cleanup chores.

At 10:00 am, Pastor Torrey opened in prayer, Mark Marchak, Edwin Colon, and Denny Burns provided a “Missions Door” presentation. Marchak presented a brief “Wolf Pack Ministry Fund” DVD that demonstrated a growing movement of new churches in New York City. Michael Herbert discussed the Bethel Seminary of the East and Michael Lindsey discussed URBACAD.

Dr. Roger Haber of Central BC, Middleboro, MA (home of Ocean Spray® cranberry juice) gave a special message. Dr. Haber underlined that the U.S. Northeast was the biggest mission field in the U.S. He stated that the CB was a “covenant community to further God’s kingdom.” Citing Romans 8:29, Haber asserted that we are to be a people in the image of God. “We need to look like Jesus,” Haber stated. He encouraged people to follow the IDWJD principal, “I Did what Jesus Would Do”. “As a unified community”, Haber stated, “CB churches can move out of isolation and into more effective work.”

In a key point, Haber stated, “God’s purpose of bringing us into covenant community is to see a people empowered and impassioned to further the kingdom.” and, “It is a joyful privilege to partner with God in His kingdom.”

Three one-hour seminars were presented in the afternoon:

- **“An Effective New Way to Tell the Old Story”** by Dr. Torrey Robinson
- **“Local Church Ministry to the Addicted”** by Dr. Tony Gibson and
- **“The Sabbath as a Solution for Stress”** by Dr. Mark Billingham.

The “SuperCluster” meeting was closed at 2:30 pm by Rev. Dr. Randy M. Keeley, the Executive Director of CB Mission Northeast.

Attendees departed the 4.5 hour meeting refreshed, inspired and encouraged.★

CB MISSION NORTHEAST MEMBER CHURCH COVENANT

In partnership for the Gospel of Christ, to the glory of God the Father, and by the power of the Spirit, as a member church of CB Mission Northeast, we covenant to:

- Faithfully uphold our core beliefs, values, and policy as stated in CBMNE’s Statement of Faith and Bylaws.
- Celebrate our diversity and the uniqueness of each local church ministry; graciously treating each other with love, encouraging, protecting, and supporting one another.
- Prioritize our church’s mission to be a Great Commission community energized with Great Commandment passion, seeking to reach people for Christ, impact our communities, and multiply churches.
- Actively participate in our association by sharing our strengths, energy, and resources in ministry to each other, bringing greater health to our churches.
- Strengthen and support our pastors and leaders by enabling their active participation in cluster fellowships, leadership development, and by using their gifts and talents to serve the greater body of Christ.
- Generously support our association through regular financial contributions and by praying for our Regional Staff and our CB churches in our area.
- Humbly receive the ministry of others as they seek to strengthen us and to give them permission to hold us accountable to this covenant if they perceive within us aloofness, independence, or competitiveness.

FBC Worship Ministry at the Forefront of Outreach

By Grace Soong

Every Sunday, the Worship Ministry is on a mission, a mission of outreach and evangelism, a mission to bring people closer to God. Every week, our combined teams of praise, sound and visual have one goal and that is to lead people TO worship.

A great definition of Worship that I've come across is, "Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His Beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose - and all of this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable and therefore the chief remedy for that self-centeredness which is our original sin and the source of all actual sin" (William Temple, from Readings in St. John's Gospel).

By Worship, I'm not talking about just singing together nice songs as a congregation or having a "moving experience" while we're singing. We are called to have a relationship with God. Well in that relationship, our biggest responsibility is ONE-SIDED. We are to Worship God and God alone.

We are made to worship and are mastered by the objects of our worship. We worship whatever rules our time, energy, thoughts, longings, and choices. So, on Sunday mornings, the Worship Ministry's goal is to lead the congregation TO WORSHIP THE ONE LIVING AND TRUE GOD using the gifts of music He has given us to bring others TO HIM. He is far greater than anyone or anything and we must proclaim His worth, value, majesty and glory above all else, with homage, respect, reverence and praise. He is to be obeyed, feared and adored with all our love, devotion and service in our thoughts, words and deeds at ALL times.

Being a musician, I like to think of these song words as our motto:

Empty hands held high, such small sacrifice.
If not joined with my life, I sing in vain tonight
May the words I say, and the things I do,
Make my lifesong sing, bring a smile to You

Let my lifesong sing to You,
Let my lifesong sing to You
I wanna sign Your name to the end of this day,
Knowin' that my heart was true
Let my lifesong sing to You.

We sing and play and lead others with our best sound and visuals to help the congregation "...be filled with the Spirit by reciting psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs for your own good. Sing and make music to the Lord with your hearts." Eph. 5:18-19 Leading others to Worship is an act of our Worship, but only part of our "lifesong."

Our FBC Worship Ministry encompasses praise team, sound team and visual team and is presently comprised of many talented and dedicated people: **Aaron Velez, Ali Soong, Amy Mark, Calvin Ocheltree, Carl Robinson, Casey Simyak, Chip Lotierzo, Christian Rush, Heike Fendrich, Kenny Hahn, Lindsey Ocheltree, Lisa Baugh, Michael LaCroix-Fralish, Rachel Dahlborg, Ron Javellana, Sue Robinson, Tom Thomas, Yolanda Johnson, Yi Li Zheng.**

Every Sunday, our mission is to create a time dedicated to actively glorifying the triune God in corporate Worship with the mission that people individually will be engaging in personal Worship that will carry them through all aspect of their lives.

We are at the forefront of Outreach every Sunday. Our role in helping our church reach out to bring others to know Christ and have a right relationship with Him, to Worship Him, has and always will be our mission.★



Doorkeepers Ministry (continued from page 5)

Ten Rule: Greet anyone that comes within 10 feet of you. Rule of Three: After service talk and greet guest first before other members.

It takes guest about 3 minutes to exit the church after worship and we want to be sure that someone has made contact before they leave. Be a spotter: Look for faces you don't recognize and welcome them, whether they are in the parking lot or in our church.

You can also volunteer to serve in the Doorkeepers Ministry. One of the wonderful things about this ministry is that you can be young, old, single or a family can do it together. You can be a new believer or a long time member; all are welcomed in this ministry. All you need is a smile and a willing

heart to share God's love.

Our ministry has grown but there is still room. We need you and your prayers as the Doorkeepers work to be intentional and purposeful in serving as His Ambassadors and Ministers of Welcoming. Please join us!!

Those serving in this Ministry are: **Aaron & Jenna Velez, Dan & Amy Marks, Dan & Joan Rizzi, Ed Phillips, Greg & Claudia Thompson, Hazel & Jasmine Blenkinsopp, Helen Green, Jacques & Katie Cowart, Mario Bodden, Steve Ruff & Yolanda Johnson, Sue Hubbard Gordon, Susan Grant, The McGovern Family, Tom Thomas, and Yolanda Parker Johnson.★**

Adult Sunday School Begins "Kamikaze New Testament Survey"

If you like to get up a little earlier on Sunday mornings, then grab your cup of coffee and head over to FBC for a brand new "Kamikaze New Testament Survey," which is meeting at 9:30 a.m. for 12 weeks. The class is taught by Steve Armstrong and is held in the upstairs mezzanine.

We will be studying all 27 books of the New Testament, and will be discussing authors, dates,

audiences and the major themes from Matthew to Revelation. This class will provide each participant with a foundation to understand the New Testament and study it better individually.★

Take this NT Gospels Quiz!

1. What gospel do most scholars consider the first gospel written?
2. What gospel did the church traditionally believe came first?
3. Which gospel was probably written last?
4. What 2 gospels contain the Jesus' birth narratives?
5. What gospel was written by a Gentile?
6. Which miracle is contained in all four gospels?
 - A. The raising of Lazarus
 - B. The healing of the centurion's servant
 - C. The feeding of the 5,000
 - D. The calming of the storm
7. Which gospel is typically associated with Peter, even though he didn't write it?
8. Which character is mentioned in all 4 gospels?
 - A. Nicodemus
 - B. John the Baptist
 - C. Joseph of Arimathea
 - D. Matthew
9. The shortest verse of the Bible, "Jesus wept," is found in which gospel?
10. Name the disciple who probably lived the longest? (for answers, come to the study!)

SUNDAY SCHOOL SCHEDULE

- Week 1 (1/10) - Gospels Overview**
- Week 2 (1/17) - Matthew**
- Week 3 (1/24) - Mark**
- Week 4 (1/31) - Luke**
- Week 5 (2/07) - John**
- Week 6 (2/14) - Acts**
- Week 7 (2/21) - Romans**
- Week 8 (2/28) - 1/2 Corinthians**
- Week 9 (3/07) - Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians**
- Week 10 (3/14) - 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John, Jude**
- Week 11 (3/21) - Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John, Jude**
- Week 12 (3/28) - Revelation**

THANKSGIVING

Luanne C. Clark

Oh God, Lord
Maker of blue sky mornings,
eternal love, and children's laughter;
when I become preoccupied with
having worldly goods,
when I cannot focus beyond
the word ME and MINE,
when I feel the growth of my ego
surpassing the scope of my wisdom,
and brash, fast, and arrogant
become the colors that I wear,
I will pause.

I will pause and remember
that this is Your universe, that
this is Your world, even my flesh
is Your flesh, and I am just an
invited spirit with a free lease
on life and living.
Like a good tenant,
I should always try to take
good care of your property,
for You are a good landlord.

And even when storms
of reality rip at the walls
of my strength, when
the thunder of my anger
drowns out my reason,
when clouds of misfortune
make me doubt even You,
and I am at my lowest tide,

You still provide
me with starry nights,
the sound of rain,
the silence of snow,
the newness of spring,
and kindred spirits
to warm my heart when the
winter of despair is
at my door.

Like a friend who knows
the sound of my call before
I can think to make it;
You comfort me with
little surprises, and
quick smiles to break
the monotony of my
pain, and my self-pity.
When worldly affairs drive me
to the precipice of ungodliness,
I will close my eyes,
rest the world aside,
and wrap myself in the
bosom of Your peace.

I will think of the blessings
and fond memories that I have,
laugh at the silliness and
tragedy of my mistakes, and
genuflect on the stairs of my soul
in praise of You.
For You are the Word and the Flesh,
the Thought and the Presence,
the Light and the Way.
You are the sunrise, the sunset,
green summers, white winters, and Love.

You are the Power and the Glory,
forever and ever,

Amen.



The Missional Church

By Frank Pastore

The Apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians, pointed out many marvelous truths. I would like to consider what he wrote about the church in the third chapter of that letter: “When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of his power.

To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” (Eph 3:4-10).

We could never be a missional church without fully appreciating who we are in Christ. All who are, by God’s grace, born of the Spirit are partakers of the promises of God. We are members of the Body of Christ. We are one in Christ (unified in the Spirit), and we are called to join in community (a local church) in obedience to Scripture, organized under qualified leadership, meeting regularly for worship and the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, disciplined by Christ through His Spirit in His church for holiness.

My appreciation and love for the Body of Christ will have much to say about my missional impact. God wants to scatter us to fulfill the Great Commission as missionaries to the world around us (our family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, our town, village, state, country, etc., etc.) for His glory and our joy.

If you’re a believer take a moment and consider what God has done for you. Lately, I’ve been repenting of my sin of thanklessness. Oh, but I do say thank You, Lord, quite often. But there is a lack of depth to my gratitude. I am a partaker in this mystery—I am a fellow heir and a partaker in the promise of Christ Jesus through the gospel! Lord, help me appreciate what that means.

For us to be effective we must, first of all, be real. A church that is missional is biblical—believing what the Bible teaches and trying to live it out fully. A missional church preaches and practices repentance. Lord, make me an instrument in Your hands. Help me to love supernaturally so that my faith will be authentically lived out and so that I

might be a conduit of Your love and grace.

We hold this gospel treasure in earthen vessels. Yet despite our frailty and imperfections God has chosen to use the church to make his wisdom known to angelic beings. We are on display to show forth God’s wisdom! Wow! Why aren’t we more in love with the church?

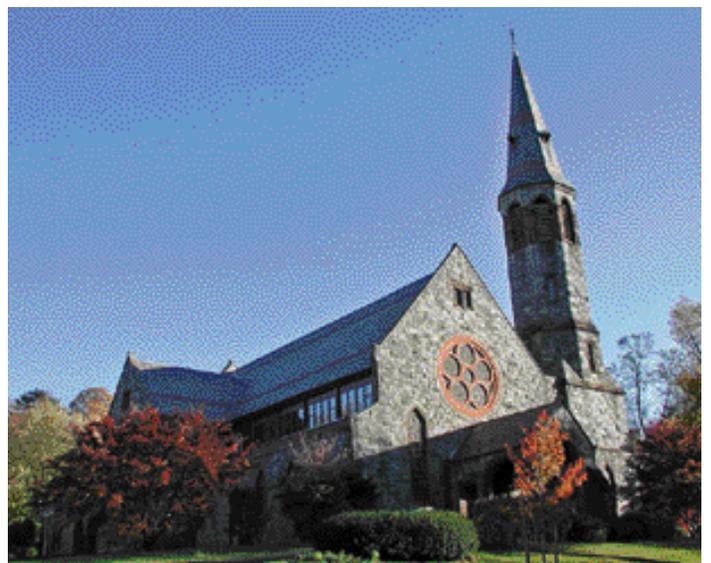
The late Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his commentary on Ephesians observes: “As members of the Body of Christ we are the most wonderful phenomenon in the universe, the most amazing thing God has ever done. It is the church, this body to which we belong, this body of which we are parts, that is the supreme and highest manifestation of God’s handiwork.

The church is the final expression of the wisdom of God, the thing above all others that enables even the angels to comprehend the wisdom of God.”

Through Your Spirit, LORD, bring conviction, the grace of repentance, and a love for the lost. May my union with Christ be so rich and satisfying that I am able to live and love sacrificially. May my desire to see First Baptist grow be born of the conviction that God is truly honored when His sons and daughters are living gospel-rich lives and demonstrating the truths of the gospel to each other and a lost world.

May we have the passion of the Samaritan woman who fearlessly and joyously called her neighbors to “come and see.” May we have the conviction of Philip who went to find Nathanel to tell him that the Messiah had come and that Nathanel should “come and see.” May we see you so clearly, Lord, that we will go and tell others to come and see.★

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If one of your goals for this new year is to get more inspired through music and books, well, we've put together the following Top Ten's for you to make it easier. You can find these CDs and books at **Christianbook.com** Prices quoted are retail prices.

Top Ten Christian Songs of the 2000's

from Billboard.com

1. **"Word of God Speak"** – MercyMe
CD *Spoken For*, 2002, Ino Records/m2.0
Communication, \$13.99
2. **"My Savior, My God"** – Aaron Shust
CD *Anything Worth Saying*, 2005,
Word Entertainment Inc., \$11.90
3. **"By Your Side"** – Tenth Avenue North
CD *Over and Underneath*, 2008,
Reunion Records, \$11.99
4. **"The Motions"** – Matthew West
CD *Something to Say*, 2008,
Emi Cmg Distribution, \$13.99
5. **"Give Me Your Eyes"** – Brandon Heath
CD *What If We*, 2008,
Provident Music Distribution, \$13.99
6. **"East to West"** – Casting Crowns
CD *The Altar and the Door*, 2007,
Provident Music Distribution, \$17.90
7. **"Blessed Be Your Name"** – tree63
CD *Blessed Be Your Name: The Hits CD*, 2008,
Inpop, \$9.99
8. **"There Will Be A Day"** – Jeremy Camp
CD *Speaking Louder Than Before*, 2009,
BRC Records, \$13.99
9. **"You Are My King"** (Amazing Love) – Newsboys
Adoration: The Worship Album, 2003,
Emi Cmg Distribution, \$13.99
10. **"Voice of Truth"** – Casting Crowns
CD *Casting Crowns*, 2003,
Provident Music Distribution, \$13.99

Top Ten Bestselling Christian CDs

from Christianbook.com, January 7, 2010

1. **WOW Hits 2010 CD**
Emi Cmg Distribution / \$14.99
2. **Until The Whole World Hears CD**
Casting Crowns
Provident Music Distribution / \$17.98
3. **Glory In The Highest CD**
Chris Tomlin
Sixsteps / \$9.99
4. **Peace on Earth CD**
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- 5a. **Casting Crowns CD**
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- 5b. **Sing We Now of Christmas, 2 CDs**
Fresh Mix Productions / \$14.99
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Contemporary, Compact Disc (CD)
Various Artists
Syntax Records / \$17.99
8. **Time Again: Amy Grant Live DVD**
Amy Grant
Word Entertainment Inc., \$19.98
9. **It Is Well CD**
Kutless
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10. **Wherever You Are CD**
Third Day
Provident Music Distribution / \$13.99

Top Ten Bestselling Christian Books

from Christianbook.com, January 7, 2010

1. **Know Your Bible: All 66 Books Explained**, by George Knight, published by Barbour Publishing, \$3.95
2. **Dr. Colbert's I Can Do This Diet**, by Don Colbert, M.D., published by Siloam, \$24.99
3. **Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God**, by Francis Chan, published by David C. Cook, \$14.99
4. **How to Pray: The Best of John Wesley on Prayer**, by John Wesley, published by Barbour Publishing, \$3.95
5. **199 Treasures of Wisdom on Talking with God**, by Andrew Murray, published by Barbour Publishing, \$3.95
6. **Never Far from Home, Miller Family Series #2**, by Mary Ellis, published by Harvest House Publishers, \$13.99
7. **Winter's Awakening, Seasons of Sugar Creek Series #1**, by Shelley Shepard Gray, published by Avon Inspire, \$12.99
8. **199 Promises of God**, published by Barbour Publishing, \$3.95
9. **Fearless: Imagine Your Life Without Fear**, by Max Lucado, published by Thomas Nelson, \$24.99
10. **Morning's Refrain: Song of Alaska Series #2**, by Tracie Peterson, published by Bethany House, \$14.99

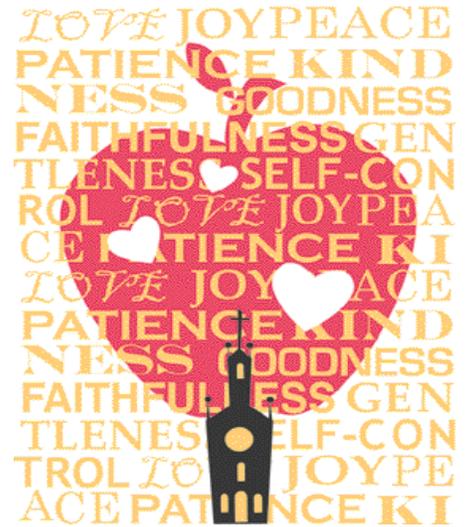
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