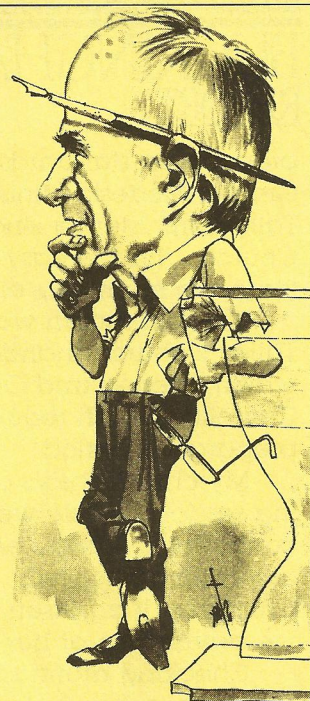


# BUCKINGHAM

## REPORT

AN IN-DEPTH CRITIQUE OF THE ISSUES, PEOPLE & EVENTS AFFECTING TODAY'S CHRISTIAN LEADERS



Jamie Buckingham

### WHAT ABOUT CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

Most churches have a membership. Even if it is not formal, it is recognized. "I belong to..." is acceptable terminology when describing our relationship with a local church.

Recently I read a C.S. Lewis essay on membership. Lewis said some disturbing things. He reminded me that the word "membership" is of Christian origin, but it has been taken over by the world and emptied of all meaning. Now when we talk of members we mean units, specimens of the same kind of thing, rows of identically dressed and identically trained soldiers set side by side.

When the apostle Paul talks of members, however, he is speaking of organs in a body—things essentially different from, and complementary to, one another. He means things which differ not only in structure and function, but also in dignity.

Lewis points out that Paul's concept of membership is best seen in the structure of a family made up of grandfather, parents, grown-up son, child, dog and cat. All are members. But like the organs in the body, they are not interchangeable units. Each person is almost a species in himself. The father is not simply a different person from the son; he is a different kind of person. If you subtract any one member you have not simply reduced the family in number, you have inflicted an injury on its structure. Its unity is a unity of unlikes, almost of incomensurables.

We all recognize the need of having men marching to the same drumbeat. True church membership, however, is far more than that. It is better likened to a liver, a brain and a big toe—all of whom listen to and depend on the beat of the heart—but all of whom have different functions.

Almost every week someone asks me what our church believes about something. Of all the questions I receive, that is the most difficult to answer—for we are all different in our church. We are not identical units; instead we are a body which embraces individual differences. This was Paul's concept: everyone is different.

We are people of different persuasions, different skills, who have banded together to form a family called "the church." Our commonality is not what we believe—but who we are. While we abide by standards, our strength is in our differences. In this way we capture the spirit of unity in diversity, for that's what a real body is.

Every "member" is a necessary part of the local body. Members, yes, but not in the institutional sense for people cannot be rotated like tires on an automobile. Each one is different. Each behaves differently. Each believes differently. Each has different skills and functions. If they understand this design—and are willing to make commitments which call for them to stick together despite differences—they will learn to work together: helping one another, respecting each other, even considering others better than themselves without trying to force each other to be the same. Surely that pleases God.

As Lewis says, "The Christian is called, not to individualism, but to membership in the mystical body." Instead of complaining that your people are all different, give thanks—for in our differences we are strong.

### PREMARITAL STANDARDS REQUIRED

Last fall 63 pastors in Modesto, California, agreed to enforce minimum standards for couples who ask them to officiate at their weddings.

The standards mandate a four-month minimum waiting period, during which time engaged couples must complete at least two counseling sessions. The cooperating ministers agreed that "couples who seriously participate in premarital testing and counseling will have a better understanding of what the marriage commitment involves."

The original suggestion for marriage

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preparation standards was suggested to the Greater Modesto Ministerial Association by Jim Talley, minister for singles at the First Baptist Church. "It's too easy to get married, therefore there are too many divorces," Talley said.

The four-month waiting period is minimum. Talley's church mandates an eight-month waiting period and Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church requires a six-month marriage preparation period.

My church insists on four premarital counseling sessions. While we do marry divorcees if the counselor is convinced the old problems are being faced honestly, we do not marry non-Christians. If a person refuses to commit to Christ we advise him or her to seek a civil marriage.

Checking around I've discovered there are many churches that have no policy and quite a few that are trying to develop one. I would like to hear from you if your church has a policy concerning premarital counsel. We'll publish the results in an upcoming issue, along with any comments you may have. Begin by answering these questions.

1. Name and location of church.
2. Membership and/or attendance.
3. How long has your present policy existed?
4. Who does your premarital counseling?
5. Do you have a follow-up after marriage?
6. What is the church's policy on marrying  
(a) divorcees, (b) non-Christians, (c) teenagers,  
(d) Christians from other churches, (e) couples of different races?
7. Please outline your premarital counseling policy, give reasons for your policy and enclose any printed materials you may use. Send this to Ed Caldwell, *Ministries Today*, 190 N. Westmonte Drive, Altamonte Springs, FL 32714.

## WHEN A CHILD DIES

Recently my wife told me she is still battling certain fears because of a horrible experience she had when she was 12. Jackie lived in a tiny, four-room house along with her parents, her grandmother, her brother and sister, and her teenage aunt. When the aunt was 15 she contracted a blood disease called purpura—a breakdown of the platelets which prevents clotting. Our little town had two doctors, a public health nurse and a 10-room hospital. My wife's family was poor. Medical insurance was nonexistent. When the teenage girl had her next menstruation, she hemorrhaged and bled to death.

Not only was there limited medical help

available, there was no pastoral counseling before or after the crisis. The trauma affected Jackie's life for many years.

Fortunately, not only medical help but pastoral counseling is now available to those who need it. Yet without debate, one of the toughest tasks any pastor has is ministering to a family that has lost a child through sickness or accident. While most ministry is centered on the parents, the wise counselor knows how important it is to minister to the surviving siblings. Psychiatrist George Pollock, in an article in the *American Medical News* says, "The mourning process for the surviving child may be complicated by the psychological loss of the parents who might withdraw...during their own grieving."

Harry Levinson, a psychologist formerly with the Menninger Clinic, points out that parents may withdraw because they're in grief and shock, and because they don't know what to say to their children. Here are Levinson's suggestions that pastor's can use when counseling parents on how to minister to their own children.

**1. Discuss openly what happened.** Go into detail to explain exactly how the child died—in language the sibling can understand. If children feel the death is a mystery or secret, they will be confused and probably afraid. Adult secrets have awesome power over children, sometimes sowing lifelong fearfulness, guilt or withdrawal from intimacy. Occasionally young children may feel guilty, actually believing they caused the death by having been angry at the sibling.

**2. Let the children know you suffer from the loss.** Your children need to know it's OK to feel and express sorrow. But don't be overwhelmed or appear helpless in the child's presence. Children suffer even more when they feel their parents cannot handle a situation and seem defeated.

**3. Assure the children you will not leave (as the dead child has).** Surviving children will fear being left alone and may want you with them much more than usual. Be generous with physical contact and affection which is the most reassuring form of love. The fear of being left alone will gradually subside if the parents reach out immediately to the surviving children.

**4. Watch out that you don't leave the impression the dead child was loved more than the surviving children.** Such expressions can arouse jealousy toward the dead child which are almost impossible for the surviving children to cope with.

**5. The pastor or therapist should be al-**

lowed to have personal contact with the surviving children. The quicker the children hear their adults talking about the "situation," the quicker they will adapt. Assurances of heaven, however, should not be relegated to the professional religious leader. They should come from the parent primarily—then from others.

Levinson points out that, although explanations should not be put off, feelings will take time to surface. Expect many moments of silence. Be sure to couple these, however, with just as many moments of confidence and conversation—and lots of physical affection.

### THE NATION'S #1 PROBLEM

According to Citizens for Drug Awareness, a group deeply concerned about the number one problem facing our nation, the United States is on the verge of chaos when it comes to drugs. Here are the hard statistics:

- The life expectancy of every age group in the nation is increasing except for the teen group—whose life expectancy has decreased 15 percent since 1960.
- One out of every five high school students has a drinking problem.
- One third of American children start smoking marijuana in grade school.
- One in 16 high school seniors smokes pot every day.
- Fifty percent of all high school students are drug users.
- More than 70 percent of high school seniors use drugs regularly.
- It takes five to 15 years from the time of a first drink to become an alcoholic; but because of more susceptible body chemistry, it can take a teen six to 18 months, and a pre-adolescent as little as three months from the time he takes his first drink until he is a confirmed alcoholic.

Add to those statistics these:

- Twenty percent of all those whose lives you depend on—airline pilots, ambulance drivers, doctors, nurses, cab drivers—are active drug users.
- One out of five drivers approaching you on Saturday night is either drunk or high on illegal drugs.
- The problem is so bad that even conservatives such as William Buckley say the only way to handle it is to legalize drugs.

The question every concerned Christian, and especially every pastor, needs to be asking

What can my church do to fight the enemy and heal the wounded? Our church has just called a full-time staff member—a certified pharmacist who has been through an 18-month training program for Christian drug and alcohol rehabilitation therapists—to minister to the

addicted in our community. For additional information on programs of this nature write Mickey Evans, Dunklin Memorial Camp, Rt. 1, Box 1600, Okeechobee, FL 33472.

### TELEMARKETING/DIRECT MAIL NEW TOOL FOR EVANGELISM

In a recent issue of *National and International Religion Report* Steve Wike and Ed Plowman tell how C. Peter Wagner, professor in Fuller Seminary's Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth, and Norman Whan, a former telemarketing businessman, have joined forces to promote telemarketing as a new concept in forming new churches. More than 300 new churches of various denominations were begun over the last two years with instant congregations of at least 100 people. All relied on telemarketing.

Pastor Bob Swanger of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Columbus, Ohio, has also used telemarketing successfully—not only in planting new churches but in increasing the size of their own congregation. For instance, when Christ the King moved into their new building in Westerville they increased the size of their congregation by several hundred in a telemarketing campaign. Now the church is sponsoring seminars to train other churches in how it works. (Contact Pastor Bob Swanger, Christ the King Lutheran Church, Box 29402, Columbus, OH 43229. Telephone: (614) 882-1117.)

Here's how it works:

- The sponsoring church obtains from the telephone company names and numbers of all people living in a certain area.
- A "bank" of 10 telephones is installed in the sponsoring church, manned by trained volunteers.
- Calls are made in the early evening and last 45 seconds or less.
- Any who express interest are sent a packet of literature.
- Additional mailings follow.
- Final calls are made over a four-week period, encouraging people to gather on a particular Sunday.

Results in all telemarketing campaigns are remarkably similar as far as percentages are concerned. If calls are made to 20,000 homes, about 2,000 (10 percent) unchurched people are willing to receive mailed information. Of these 200 (one percent) will attend the first service and 100 (0.5 percent) will return the next week. A church started in Huntington Beach, California, with 56,000 calls pulled 502 people into two services on opening day.

Pastor Swanger feels this new tool for

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evangelism is an open door which will soon close. Right now very few have walked through it. However, as popularity grows and more calls of every nature invade the privacy of homes, the phone companies and/or the government will soon pass restrictions. In other words, strike while the iron is hot.

## NEED A YOUTH DIRECTOR? CONTACT TENTMAKERS

Now there's an alternative to hiring a full-time youth worker. A group called Tentmakers Youth Ministry is training young men and women who then commit themselves to a minimum of two years in a congregational youth ministry—not as full-time workers, but as dedicated, trained, unpaid volunteers.

Taking a lead from Paul's example (he sometimes made tents in order to finance his ministry), president Dick Amundson has pioneered in training qualified young men and women who then go back into churches—primarily small churches which cannot afford another staff member—as youth workers.

The ministry began in 1979 in the Minnesota area, training youth workers for Lutheran congregations. It quickly expanded into a number of other states and is now placing tentmakers all the way from Wisconsin to Florida.

Claude Bowen, who directs the training, told me each tentmaker is trained in a five-week classroom and contextual experience as well as a 10-day wilderness camp. The training is primarily relational and is conducted by an impressive group of business and ministry leaders.

If you have a volunteer youth director, Tentmakers will train him or her. If you need one, they have qualified young men and women who are eager to be placed.

Contact: Tentmakers Youth Ministry, 500 Blake Road South, Hopkins, MN 55343. Telephone: (612) 935-3147.

## TAKING OVER A NEW CHURCH

"Few leaders, however creative or ingenious, can look back and see no predecessors," writes historian John Hope Franklin. "Those who stand tall in our presence...stand on the shoulders of giants who have preceded them."

The wise leader knows the importance of identifying with the past. The pastor, for instance, who continually proclaims that "nothing ever happened until I took over," is making a grave mistake. Not only is he

probably wrong, but serious listeners in his church know he is only trying to convince his own ego. They will resent his self-back-slapping and give him low grades for not having done his homework in history. They will also begin to side with his predecessor with whom they suspect he is competing.

Identification is a way of learning what to do and how to do it. It begins with genuine admiration and thankfulness for those who have preceded you. The wise leader will try to imitate those good values and behaviors of the ones who have laid the foundations. If they are compatible with your life-style and personality, it will be good to integrate them into your own value system. This is especially true if you are a new pastor, staff member or group leader. You can learn the ropes through identification with the history of the group than by going it alone. It pays, in other words, to catch the spirit of the group and of your predecessor.

The wise pastor or senior staff member, when moving into a new situation, will—either before he arrives or shortly after moving in—take time to go through the historical files of the church. This will include back issues of the church paper, files of staff memos, and perhaps tapes of selected meetings. He will also schedule briefing sessions with "old-timers" who are always more than willing to help pass along the torch. He will not be bound by the past, but unless he knows it he will never be effective in the present.

A new, or young, pastor may feel he is giving up independence by identifying with his predecessor—and with the ongoing dream of the organization. He may fear stunting his own growth and even blunting the voice of the Holy Spirit by listening to the voice of history. But if he is secure and willing to be a learner, and if he lets himself follow that voice for a while, he will eventually—with the support of the old-timers—move into his own place of leadership.

## BODY LANGUAGE

Body language, like any other language, needs translation.

In Israel, for instance, the constant influx of diaspora Jews who are making *aliyah*—moving to Israel from other nations—means the people must constantly learn to translate not only some new spoken language but body language as well. Not to do so could be embarrassing, even dangerous.

Raphael Schneller, an educational sociologist at Bar-Ilan University in Tel Aviv, has been researching body language in Israel for many years. He concludes that all new immigrants, particularly the thousands who have recently

moved from Ethiopia, risk misunderstanding because different groups attach different meanings to various gestures.

For instance, the "hand push" which means "leave me alone" to an Israeli, is a friendly greeting to an Ethiopian. The "hand flick" which means "enough already" to an Israeli, means "I love you" to the newcomer from Ethiopia.

I can remember the confusion I experienced in the Singapore airport when I saw a Chinese friend, who had just bid me goodbye, gesturing for me to "come back"—palm up, fingers beckoning in a "come-hither" gesture. I retraced my steps thinking he wanted me to return, only to discover this is the traditional gesture for goodbye in Singapore.

According to management expert Kenneth Blanchard, learning body language is a lot easier than you think. Just remember, body language is just that—language—and needs translating to be effective. When talking to someone keep your eyes on their eyes, mouth, body position, hands—and listen to their tone of voice. What they are telling you.

How, for instance, would you translate a staff member who keeps looking at his hands as you talk to him about a new assignment? Or an elder who listens to your explanation with a tight, pasted-on smile? Or a subordinate who comes into your office with an explanation but keeps clearing his throat as he talks?

If you are talking with a deacon and he sits there tapping his fingers on the desk, what do you think he is thinking? Or maybe you've got something important to say to your teenage daughter and she rolls her eyes toward the ceiling? Could she possibly be thinking, "When is this sermon going to end?"

Even more important, check out your own body language when you are in a conversation with someone. I remember walking through the crowd at a Christian Booksellers Association convention and seeing Josh McDowell talking with an unknown man. McDowell had invaded the man's "private zone," that 18-inch radius around our faces which we guard with a psychological magnetic field to keep out unwanted strangers. He was right in the man's face, listening. It was a perfect example of a man who cares what another man is saying.

Kathryn Kuhlman used to do that to me. She would lean forward, her face only inches from mine. Miss Kuhlman, however, never used that position to listen—she used it to emphasize her point. And she was masterful at it.

*Eye Contact:* If a staff member or worker is pleased with your style of management he will

usually focus directly on you while you speak. If he looks to one side or at the ceiling, he may feel pressured or at least uncomfortable. If his gaze repeatedly hits the floor, he may be in the doldrums and in passive disagreement with your suggestions. Rapid blinking of the eyes often means anxiety. Bottom line: if the person is not looking at you, you may need to change your approach.

*Speech:* If the person you are talking to responds in a steady, calm tone of voice you're probably handling him correctly. Quick, staccato speech or the use of a higher pitch than normal means something is wrong.

*Body Position:* If a worker or someone you're counseling feels at ease in your presence he will usually face you in a casual, relaxed manner. Folded arms across the chest could signal disagreement or defensiveness. Thumb-twiddling, finger-drumming, and criss-crossing of legs indicate you've lost his attention.

What to do? First find out what is wrong with your approach and use that information to figure out a more effective approach.

Second, run constant checks on how you are responding to someone else. Recently I caught myself sitting back with my arms folded across my chest while someone unloaded a bushel of woe. Their plight was not important to me, but it was to them. I changed my body language—and in the process, got interested in what they were saying.

## HOW TO GET YOUR WAY

Most growth is imperceptible. There was a time while some of our grandchildren were living out of state that Jackie and I only saw them occasionally. When they did get to visit, we always said, "My, how you've grown!" I knew, however, that their parents didn't say that to them each morning. You can't see that kind of growth close up. It has to be viewed over a long period of time.

Wise people understand this and don't try to force growth. Plants grow at their own speed. You can't pull on them and make them grow faster. If you do chances are you'll destroy or deform them.

The same is true with ideas. Ideas take time to grow. You plant the seed, water it, fertilize it, let the sun shine on it, perhaps wait for it through the winter and eventually it grows. Even the growth is imperceptible. But if you come back a month later, you'll see progress.

We've been going through this kind of growth in our church. Some growth is outward. We can see it. The growth of concepts, however, is tougher to see.

Yet when folks who have been away a

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while return to visit they always say, "Things are different here."

They're right. Things are changing. Ideas are growing. But you don't wrench these new concepts into being. They have to grow into being because they are planted in people.

I've found, for instance, that I often have a new idea long before its time. If I try to force this change on people, they resist. But if I plant the seed and then provide the proper climate for that seed to germinate, it will one day sprout. When it does it will already have roots extended into the soil of confidence in the church.

It's not unusual for me to plant an idea seed and then a year later hear someone, who would have rejected the idea had I forced it, come forth with the same idea—and think it originated with them.

My dad once reminded me of the bright young pastor who accepted a country church. At the first meeting of the official board he insisted the church needed a budget.

"This church has never had a budget and never will," the chairman snapped.

The other board members, scowling, nodded their heads in agreement.

The pastor quickly apologized and agreed. There was a sigh of relief around the table as the old men relaxed. This young pastor wasn't so bad after all.

"Tell you what let's do," the pastor said. "I'll bet we could make it a lot easier on the treasurer if we took a sheet of paper and in one column put down the amount of money we need each year, and on the other side wrote down the things we need to spend money for."

The chairman smiled and slapped the young pastor on the back. "Now that's the kind of idea we like around here. I'm all for it."

You don't wrench an idea. You cultivate it—and God gives life to make it grow.

## ORAL ROBERTS REPORTS ON MISSIONARY TOUR

In a personal letter written just a few days after his return from Africa in late July, Oral Roberts shared the highlights of his latest missionary journey. With his permission, I'm reprinting part of his letter. Keep in mind, as you read, Roberts is 70 years of age.

"I had a very effective trip. Twenty-five thousand miles in 12 days beginning in Guatemala with a thousand Indians and their babies where our medical mission team ministered to them. Then on to Jamaica where

we had a service at the stadium and then worked with our medical missions group in conjunction with the Church on the Rock, which is one of Larry Lea's churches. Then we went on to Nigeria and were with Archbishop Benson Idahosa who really is 'king' in more ways than one—not only in Nigeria but it seems in many nations in Africa. He arranged visits with the real king and other powerful leaders. Our acceptance was unprecedented in my ministry. Benson has built a 25,000-seat church which is equal to the seating of Cho's. It was jammed with about that many outside, and it was a powerful experience in my life and in theirs.

"We went on to Ghana where we delivered one of our young black doctors from Ghana (a recent graduate of ORU School of Medicine) and the response of the government toward this young man was, I have to say, phenomenal. I was really unprepared for what he meant to that nation. They donated 32 acres of ground for his clinic. And we will be sending others as the Lord provides. Meanwhile, the prime minister, the minister of health and others worked with us in a great stadium service. I had spoken to crowds of 100,000 in Nairobi years ago but was unprepared to speak to the 250,000 that filled the stadium that particular night—with many more outside. I had never seen that many people in one audience.

"We flew on to Nairobi and to Kakamega to visit our medical mission station there and were immediately taken to the African bush about 20 miles north of the equator under the hottest sun I have ever encountered. Our doctors and nurses were immunizing African babies, hundreds of them, for things you and I were immunized for as children, such as polio, diphtheria, measles and typhoid. We then toured our clinic, which we have in cooperation with the Jerry Savelle Ministries, and found it in good order. They are treating about 200 people a day.

"I will say this...at the end of the 12 days, I had no strength left in my body; neither did Evelyn and the rest of the team. I had taken Dean Edwards of our medical school and Carlton Pearson along with the camera crew and all of us gave everything we had.

"When we got back to Tulsa and reflected on those 25,000 miles in 12 days, I think we were in unanimous agreement—it was the most effective missionary journey of my 41 years of being in the ministry. I feel a very strong move in my spirit, and although things are tough, I am convinced that we are making some real progress."

