

BUCKINGHAM REPORT

**AN IN-DEPTH CRITIQUE BY AMERICA'S FOREMOST
CHRISTIAN ANALYZER OF THE ISSUES, PEOPLE, &
EVENTS AFFECTING TODAY'S SPIRIT-LED LEADERS**

NO LONGER UNDER THE CLOUD?

On March 16 the Associated Press reported on a Commerce Department release: For the first time in 71 years foreigners own more capital in the United States than Americans own abroad. This makes the United States a "net debtor." Analysts are now predicting that the United States foreign debt will mount even more rapidly to a deficit of more than \$100 billion by the end of the year. This would make the United States the world's leading "debtor nation," with a debt load higher than Brazil and Mexico.

On a national scale this is causing plant shutdowns as well as a loss of rich world markets. In the long run, we'll be forced to produce more than we consume in order to pay foreigners.

What got us into this mess? One word: greed. We've overpriced ourselves and overpaid our workers. People abroad can do our jobs better—and cheaper—than we can. The *Kiplinger Washington Letter* says this erosion of our industrial base is permanent.

My conclusion: America has lost (or is rapidly losing) the anointing of God. This is based on Deuteronomy 28. God says one can determine His blessing because: "You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none...If you pay attention to the commands of the Lord your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom" (vs. 12-13, NIV).

"However," He continues, "if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all His commands and decrees...all these curses will come upon you and overtake you...The alien who lives among you will rise above you higher and higher, but you will sink lower and lower. He will lend to you, but you will not lend to him. He will be the head, but you will be the tail" (vs. 15, 43-44, NIV).

What could be clearer? Ronald Reagan may be right, but there is a vast difference between calling people to rightness and calling them to righteousness. The result: We have moved from a place of blessing to a place of curses.

What do we do? First, pray. Secondly, get involved in political action (although I am convinced that is merely a stopgap measure, putting off the inevitable for a while longer). Thirdly, start now by setting up an alternative society in which a "remnant people" will qualify for the blessings.

There is some doubt that such an alternate society can be formed, however, if the Church continues to imitate the ways of the world by going into debt. If God is no longer blessing our nation since we are a "debtor nation," what will His judgment be upon His Church if we continue our practice of being a "debtor Church" owing money to aliens and infidels? There are, you know, set procedures for carrying the ark.

NON-CHARISMATICS FIGHT BACK

Several Baptist leaders in Texas have called for Southern Baptist churches to be on the lookout for "Charismatic takeovers." They cite examples of churches where the majority of the people, over a period of time, were baptized in the Holy Spirit. As these people came into places of leadership, they gradually changed the structure of the church, sometimes moving it away from the traditional Baptist positions.

Writing in the *Texas Baptist Standard*, Berl Cavin, director for the Dallas Association Missions Division, told of a church who called in a pastor, not knowing he was Spirit-filled.

"Then it happened," he wrote. "The worship services took on a new sound. They were leaving Southern Baptist principles and practices." He went ahead to say the church had been "stolen by a non-Baptist group."

To prevent this from happening, Texas leaders are suggesting that Baptists place a deed restriction on all church property, stating that if the people ever depart from traditional Baptist doctrines, the property will revert to the local Baptist Association (organization of local churches). He even goes so far as to suggest that churches should deed their property to the local association before any problems surface to keep their property from being stolen by Charismatics.

DEALING WITH ANGER

Confronting anger in another person—be it a staff member, spouse, some city official, a waitress, or an irate parishioner—can be an awkward experience. While ministers often seem to enjoy confronting sin from the pulpit, confronting an angry friend at the front door of the church (or over the telephone) is usually something from which most of us run.

I've learned about dealing with anger (and angry people) by observing my friend, Dr. Harvey Hester, a Christian psychotherapist who practices in conjunction with our church ministry. Dr. Hester says that ignoring anger in another person—or laughing it off—usually adds fuel to the anger. Getting defensive (for instance, saying, "Well, how many hours have you spent in the exegesis of that verse of Scripture, dumbell?") may give you a feeling of superiority, but it may also give you a bloody nose or, even worse, set in motion a chain reaction which will reap problems for years to come.

Dr. Hester recommends that you immediately acknowledge the person's anger. This is done by saying calmly, "You're angry about this, aren't you?" Let it be known that you're concerned. Listen—until they run down—without trying to answer. Keep calm; don't take them *too* seriously. By all means, try to find out what's at the bottom of the anger. Maybe you really are wrong and he/she has a right to be angry. If this is the case, a quick apology may settle the entire matter. On the other hand, the source of anger may be something far deeper.

Finally, determine you'll find some kind of agreement on a timetable. For instance, "We need to work this out. Let's meet next Tuesday and see if we can't reach a satisfactory settlement." Or, if it's your spouse, you may need to say, "We're both emotional right now. Let's make a date for lunch and talk about it then."

It's hard to be angry with someone who's buying.

INSTRUCTIONS TO VISITING SPEAKERS

Form letters, as impersonal as they are, are still a good means of communicating when the same information needs to go out to different people on a regular basis. If your church is like Evangel Cathedral in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and has a large number of visiting speakers, you might want to copy this letter which Pastor Houston Miles sends to each visiting speaker prior to his arrival.

Greetings in the name of our precious Lord! We are looking forward to having you with us at Evangel Cathedral.

A reservation has been made for you, as follows:

Place: _____

Date: _____

Confirmation Number: _____

If you cannot check in by 6:00 p.m., you should call the motel and guarantee your reservation for late arrival. Phone # _____.

If you are traveling by plane and need transportation from the airport to the motel, please let us have your flight schedule and we will arrange transportation for you.

Pastor Miles requests that you please meet him behind the auditorium platform 15 minutes before service time so he can discuss the order of our service with you.

We request there be no solicitation of names, addresses, or phone numbers from our membership, including any newsletters that may be offered to our members. Any items to be offered for sale need Pastor's prior approval.

The church will be happy to provide your food expenses during your visit, and you may charge your meals at the motel restaurant. However, we will not be able to assist with the payment of your personal long-distance calls or any other personal charges. When checking out of the motel, please leave your key with the desk clerk.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call the church secretary.

TRAVEL TIPS

A couple of years ago Dick Schneider, senior editor for *Guideposts*, stopped in LaGuardia Airport in New York to buy a hot dog. Standing at the counter, he put his briefcase on the floor

beside him to smear the mustard on his frank. Moments later he looked down and his briefcase was missing.

Rushing into the main terminal, he saw a smartly dressed young woman striding toward the door with *his* briefcase. He ran across the terminal, grabbed her arm and said, "I think you have my briefcase." Startled, she said, "Oh!" She then released his briefcase and ran out the door.

Later Dick discovered that there are rings of people (made up of well-dressed men and women) who do nothing but prowl airports, banks, hotel lobbies and other busy places, absconding with briefcases which are put on the floor while unsuspecting patrons register at desks, make deposits, or smear mustard on hot dogs. If the briefcase contains no cash or negotiable instruments, they find the person's home or business number in the briefcase and call, saying they will return the briefcase for a stated "reward."

If you have to put your briefcase on the floor, it's a good idea to put it between your feet rather than to one side. The best idea is to place it on the counter. Better to run the risk of mustard on your Samsonite than no Samsonite at all.

In this issue I am SPOTLIGHTING...

EVALUATING RESULTS

There is, in business management, a rule called the 80/20 principle. In short it boils down to this: 20 percent of all management activity is usually responsible for 80 percent of the results; 80 percent of all activity produces only 20 percent results.

As you apply this rule to your own church leadership, it is obvious you should strengthen the 20 percent effort which produces the 80 percent result. That applies both to dollars and man hours.

In other words, step back and take a long look at what is really working—what is paying off—and major on that.

Case Study #1

Glenwood Church in Houston is located in an upper middle-class suburb. Two years ago Pastor Charles Knowland convinced his elders to begin a weekly television program to "reach the city of Houston for Christ." Start-up costs, including equipment, were in the neighborhood of \$100,000. A basement classroom was renovated into a studio for the interview program Knowland wanted. Air time on a UHF station cost the church about \$1,000 a week. Pastor Knowland spent two days a week preparing for the program. His secretary estimates she spent approximately 50 percent of her time working on program details. After being on the air six months, Knowland was forced to hire a producer. He worked part-time for \$32,000, while holding down another job at a secular TV station.

At the end of one year on the air Knowland asked his board to let him “go national” by purchasing time on the PTL or CBN satellite. His board balked. They asked one of the elders to check the results of the TV program. What was it producing besides keeping a lot of people busy? The 80/20 rule quickly came to the surface.

During the first year, the church had spent a quarter million dollars (\$250,000) for the show. It was consuming the time of a large number of church employees—especially the pastor—plus dozens of volunteers who made the sets, worked behind the scenes, moved equipment and helped on the floor during airtime. Although hundreds of people had called into the switchboards (oh, yes, there were telephone volunteers, too) saying they had accepted the Lord or had been healed, there was no hard evidence that they had been followed-up on and no evidence that any of them had joined or even visited Glenwood.

Besides that, despite constant appeals for money, the church was virtually carrying the entire financial load, most of which had been taken from the world missions budget. At Glenwood Church 50 percent of the activity was producing zero percent of the results. Instead of “going national” the board dropped the entire TV program.

Case Study #2

Peachtree Heights Church, an old, downtown Atlanta congregation, called in a new staff member as director of ministries. This was a new position designed to “help people discover their gifts and use their gifts in ministry.” After a lot of debate the elders agreed to call James Coxdale, a 62-year-old retired psychologist. Dr. Coxdale, who had been in private practice in the Druid Hills section of Atlanta, came on staff 18 months ago at a salary of \$19,000 a year—enough money to supplement his small retirement income. He was also furnished a car which had been donated to the church.

One year later the board reviewed Coxdale’s ministry. Conservative estimates indicated he was responsible for helping at least one-half the congregation find their place in some kind of productive and satisfying ministry. He had also helped scores of floundering marriages find stability and he was a big contributing factor in the church’s 15 percent numerical growth. All this was done on a budget which consisted of his salary, office space, desk, chair, filing cabinet and telephone. He didn’t even use the church secretary except to run notices in the church paper. In this case, for less than 20 percent of the church activity and budget, he had accounted for about 80 percent of the results over the year.

As a pastor you should, on regular occasions, run a serious and objective evaluation of all church programs, activities and staff, including your own pet projects. Those people and activities which are producing the greatest results should be fortified. Perhaps the staff members need substantial raises and the programs need expanding. Those which are consuming huge amounts of time and money, but producing little, should be evaluated—and probably curtailed or even dropped. Some of these programs may be pure “service” programs, with results which are impossible to judge this side of eternity. Chances are, though, that the same amount of money and time, reinvested in other ways, would return far greater dividends.

There is an axiom, for instance, which proves true most of the time: The hiring of a well-managed staff member who works with people (i.e., youth director, minister of music, minister

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to senior saints, staff evangelist) will always result in enough financial increase in church offerings to pay not only for his/her salary but for programs as well.

Case Study #3

Two years ago my church, Tabernacle Church of Melbourne, Florida, an interdenominational church in a growing area of the state, called in Curry Vaughan Jr. as a full-time senior pastor. Although Curry had retired as a lieutenant colonel from the U.S. Army Chaplains Corps with 20 years in service, the church paid him a full salary as though he had no retirement income. In less than one year, offerings had increased substantially more than enough to compensate for his salary.

Last year we added another full-time staff member, Bruce Truitt, who came out of the business world to be youth minister. Again, in less than a year, offerings increased more than enough to cover his salary and to pay for his energetic youth program.

Now the church has begun an active search for a full-time minister of music and worship, with faith this person will also pay for him/herself in a short time. (Recommendations and applications are welcome and should be directed to Music Search Committee, Tabernacle Church, 1619 Ferndale Avenue, Melbourne, FL 32935.)

My experience and various informal surveys show that people—that is, staff members, adequately managed volunteers, etc.—always produce more than programs. If the Glenwood Church in Case Study #1 had taken that \$250,000 they spent in their TV ministry and invested half of it in new staff members, they could have doubled the size of their congregation in two years. The other half, invested in a Bible translation project, would have insured the translation of a Bible into an unknown language—a project which would have produced results into eternity.

This is not to say a church should not have a television ministry, or that hiring a new staff member is the answer to all a church's expansion and/or financial problems. It is to say it is mandatory that the pastor/manager reevaluate each church program and staff member on a regular basis to see if the amount of money and time being put into each project and person is resulting in the desired dividends.

