

# COMMUNICATOR

NAZARENE PUBLISHING HOUSE

## God's Gift to the Church

**How would it change my pastoral life, even my daily attitudes, if I thought about my work as a way that God is seeking to love his people?**

In my recent reading through Second Chronicles, the Lord impressed on me a wonderful lesson in pastoral leadership. Chapter two is the story of the beginning of Solomon's work to bring to fruition the vision of his father in building a magnificent Temple for the Lord. As part of his preparation, Solomon sends a message to King Hiram of Tyre outlining the materials and skilled craftsmen that he will need to achieve such a grand building.

While giving King Hiram the list, Solomon also shares his faith saying, *"This will be a magnificent Temple because our God is an awesome God, greater than any other"* (2 Chronicles 2:5, NLT). He completes his letter with notation of what Hiram will be paid for his help and waits for the reply to come.

It is King Hiram's reply to Solomon that grabbed my attention. One would expect the reply to such a message to be all business, but Hiram begins with something else. He opens his letter of reply with these words: *"It is because the Lord loves his people that he has made you their king! Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who made the heavens and the earth! He has given David a wise son, gifted with skill and understanding, who will build a Temple for the LORD."* (2 Chronicles 2:11-12, NLT). The non-business like, passionate response of the King of Tyre surprised me. I lingered over it because somehow those words struck a chord in my heart. I was even surprised by the tears that involuntarily began to fill my

eyes, making it impossible to see the text clearly. I paraphrased the words as I ran them over in my mind, *"Wow, the Lord must really love his people to make you their king!"*

Now I am fully aware that neither Hiram nor the writer of Second Chronicles had Christian ministry in mind, but I couldn't help but draw that response over into the realities of my pastoral life. What if we were to extract the leadership principle from this and hear it personally? What if someone would say of us, *"Wow, the Lord must really love that congregation to make you their pastor?"*

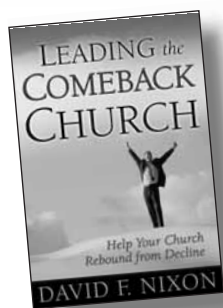
Several penetrating questions come to mind. First, would anyone say that of my pastoral leadership in the congregation where I serve? What an important question! Do we ever evaluate our ministries on the basis of whether or not our people feel loved by God through us?

Secondly, how would it change my pastoral life, even my daily attitudes, if I thought about my work as a way that God is seeking to love his people? Pastor, you are one of the primary means by which God intends to love his people—the particular people that make up your congregation. And yes, I am certain that this applies to those who are sometimes very difficult to love! Are we not to be a model of God's merciful, grace filled, long-suffering, and pursuing love? What a privilege and what a responsibility! You really are God's gift to the church!

—Jeren Rowell



By David F. Nixon



Only a few pastors successfully lead their churches back to a time of growth and vitality after major decline, crisis, or plateau. Six times, David F. Nixon led struggling churches to viability. Six times, he helped congregations to overcome obstacles to growth that made others shake their heads and walk away. Nixon believes that you don't have to be another statistic—another pastor who walked away from a dying church. Both you and your church can survive.

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- Overcome financial challenges
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- Focus on spiritual growth

David F. Nixon is district superintendent for the Dallas district of the Church of the Nazarene. He served for 32 years as a pastor in the Church of the Nazarene, leading congregations in Kansas, Florida, South Carolina, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, and Tennessee. He holds a doctor of ministry degree from Drew University.

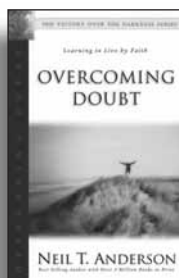
(Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2004, 160 pp., \$15.99, paper, COZZ083-412-1026)

## BOOK BRIEFS

### Recent publications you should know about

#### CHRISTIAN LIFE

*Overcoming Doubt* by Neil T. Anderson. (Gospel Light, 2004, 120pp., \$9.99, paper, COZZ083-073-2543). Here is another outstanding and informative work by an experienced and prolific author. Neil Anderson is no stranger to many of our readers. This book is one of four in his series, "Victory Over The Darkness". Anderson handles the issue of doubt and faith quite well in this compact and power hitting volume. He views doubt as a common difficulty for all on the Christian journey and presents the reader with valuable information in overcoming belief or doubt. In the seven brief but impacting chapters, he handles issues such as the nature of doubt and the nature of faith (stating that if we are to increase our faith we must increase our knowledge of God), our mind as the place where doubts are formed, the results of doubting which often is indecision, three principles key to faith related to doubt, and the struggle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. Each chapter ends with a series of thought-provoking questions for the reader to apply to the topics relative to that particular chapter. The book is well written, easy to read, relevant and biblical. The subjects of doubt, fear, faith, anxiety, assurance, and depression are only a few of the hard-hitting topics Anderson addresses. I would recommend this book to our readers and believe that it not only would be excellent sermon or counseling material but a Sunday School book for young Christians as well. (SR)



relationship with husband and other children is explored. No pat answers to questions but one is pointed to God who is the answer. This would be a helpful resource for pastors giving care to women in a difficult life situation. (GK)

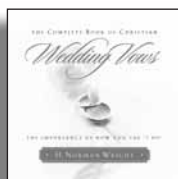
#### SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

*Reaching Out* by Billy Kennedy. (NavPress, 2003, 64pp., \$8.00, paper, COZZ157-683-4085). *Reaching Out* presents everything: what a small group (cell group) is, basic training about running meetings, and the lifecycle of small group. It is a basic and good training manual for the Christian student interested in leading small groups. The material is presented in a compelling way that will help students get a big picture view of this sort of ministry. It provides a logistical, nuts-and-bolts approach that can serve as a continuing reference for student leaders as they encounter the reality of a small group. I found the book in line with the theological understandings of the Wesleyan-Arminian view. (MK)



#### CHRISTIAN RITUALS

*The Complete Book of Christian Wedding Vows* by H. Norman Wright. (Bethany House, 2003, 208pp., \$12.99, paper, COZZ076-422-8331). A creative collection of contemporary wedding vows, prayers, Scripture readings and quotations for Christian homilies, this book also contains guidelines for writing your own vows. I keep a copy of this in my library to loan out to couples in the early stages of wedding planning. (BR)



*Experiencing Life* by Mark Dowds and Jason Boucher. (NavPress, 2003, 64pp, \$8.00, paper, COZZ157-683-4107). *Experiencing Life* is a great resource for a small group discussion. It is designed for students with little or no church background, but would also be quite useful for teens who have been over-churched. It is divided into three sections: loving, giving, and serving—values it proclaims are universal. The brilliance of this little book is that it simply uses New Testament stories, which reflect those particular values, in an updated Message sort of language. I was quite impressed with this series by Fresh Resource, and especially with this particular volume. I will use this with the students I work with and probably begin some new small groups for our post-modern worship experience. They are designed to be peer led. Students will be able to express to other students what this journey of faith is all about. (MK)



(Reviewers: Gwen Clark, Mike Kipp, Sherman Reed, Bud Reedy)

Some of the books featured in *Communicator* have not been reviewed for theological content and are not endorsed by Nazarene Publishing House or the Church of the Nazarene. They may have significant value, but readers should exercise theological discretion.



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# What Are Your Friends Reading?

*The Communicator asked several pastors and other colleagues around the country to share about what they've been reading lately. Every month we share their reports in this space.*

*Longitudes and Attitudes: The World in the Age of Terrorism* by Thomas L. Friedman. (Anchor, 2003, 400 pp., \$14.95, paper, COZZ140-003-1257). Friedman does a masterful job in explaining how Westerners can understand and relate to the Arab, Muslim, and Israeli worlds after September 11, 2001. As a traveling columnist for the *New York Times*, Friedman shares his insights throughout his travels in Europe and the Middle East. The author says of his book that it is "not meant to be a comprehensive study of 9-11 and all the factors that went into it. Rather, my hope is that it will constitute a 'word album' that captures and preserves the raw, unpolished emotional and analytical responses that illustrate how I, and others, felt as we tried to grapple with 9-11 and its aftermath." The book helps to explain the complexity of issues that are woven into the fabric of terrorism, through the author's own experiences. Friedman has a gift for clarifying difficult issues involved in the Middle East. The book helped me gain a better understanding of our new world order. The book helped identify the origin of conflicts between the West and parts of the Middle East. It has also helped me gain a better understanding of how to minister in a society that is rapidly changing. I grappled with multifaceted issues and discovered a few safe strongholds for future ministry trends. This book has helped me interpret our mission in the context of the contemporary worldview and social environment.

*Submitted by Mike Stipp, Pastoral Services Coordinator, Clergy Development.*

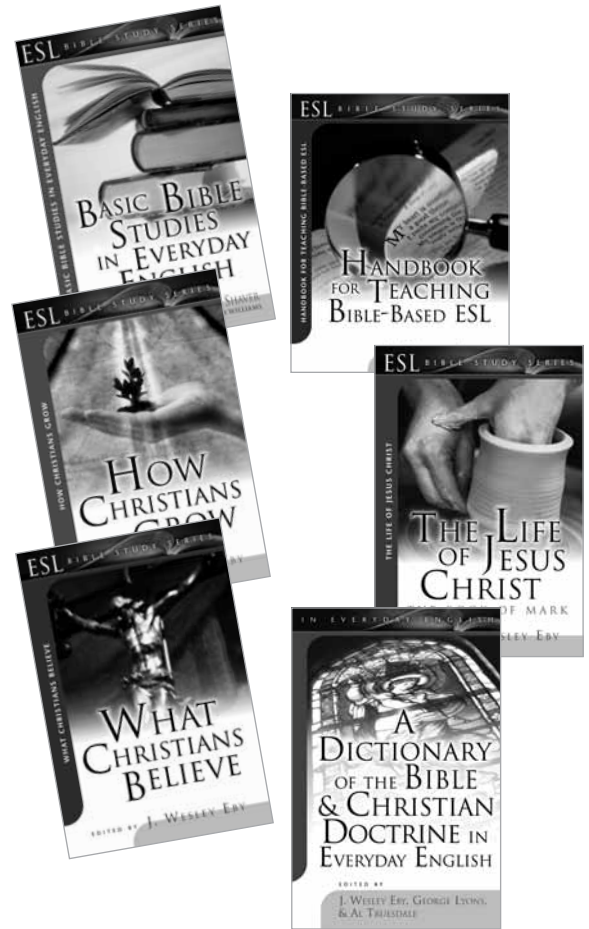
## CHURCH OF THE COVERED DISH by Thom Tapp



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