

COMMUNICATOR

NAZARENE PUBLISHING HOUSE

Belonging

Who belongs in this Church? Well, everyone and anyone can belong, right? I know we believe this but it seems we have significant opportunity these days to model for the world what it means to *belong* in the kingdom of God.

It's good to belong. All of us have a need to belong, to be part of a community where we not only have a sense of "fitting in" but also a sense of "contribution" to the good of the whole. We pastors are very familiar with this need and we deal with it daily in the lives of people who are lonely and disconnected. Much of our work is helping them to find the deepest sense of belonging, rooted first in Christ and then in the community of faith.

I'm thinking about the places where I belong. I think about my family, both immediate and extended. I think about my congregation and especially the group of pastors with whom I serve. I think about my district family and the wonderful relationships throughout the Church of the Nazarene that I've built over the years, enriching my life in many ways. I'm also reflecting on how it will be to gather soon and renew relationship with brothers and sisters from around the world.

As we approach the 26th General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene next month, I'm thinking about "belonging." Who belongs in this Church? Well, everyone and anyone can belong, right? I know we believe this but it seems we have significant opportunity these days to model for the world what it means to *belong* in the kingdom of God. That our Church is changing is no secret. The explosive growth of the Church around the world is well documented, especially in places that those with power and wealth sometimes call "third world." One place where, in my opinion, we have been slow to grow is in the area of sharing places of significant leadership in the Church.

In some ways we have been an "international" church from the beginning. Yet 100 years into the movement we are still electing to our highest offices of leadership

people who come from a narrow spectrum of the global community. Is it time for this to change? Is it time for the General Assembly to elect to our highest offices persons who will help us to reflect our belief that *everyone* and *anyone* can belong in this Church?

The only way a real "sharing" of leadership works is when the people who hold power choose with purpose and mission to give away that power and invite those with less power to take up places of leadership and authority. This is much more than theory. There are people now in place who are ready for these levels of leadership and could represent the truly diverse nature of our Church.

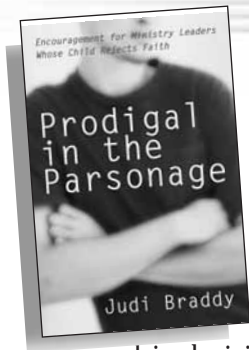
Talking like this raises many questions and may even raise emotional temperatures for some. It can be difficult for those of us who have held power for so long to think about surrendering that power and losing some of the control that we may have enjoyed up to now. One might even think that those who contribute the most money should be the ones who hold the power, but I can't imagine a Christ-follower really thinking that way for long. As part of Christ's Church we are to be a reflection of the kingdom of God--a place of inclusion, safety, justice, peace, forgiveness, reconciliation, and belonging!

Our *Manual* says it well: "The denomination is poised today with an unfinished agenda of moving from 'international presence' to an 'international community' of faith." (From the Historical Statement, *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*, 2001-2005). May the Lord help us not only to embrace fully this vision but also to live out its implication.

See you in Indianapolis!

-Jeren Rowell





Leaders Whose Child Rejects Faith by Judi Braddy

Parenting is seldom easy. Rebellion may invade the home, forcing parents to recognize and cope with it. But how do parents maintain their peace of mind when rebellion turns into a rejection of faith, especially when the rejection is in the home of a minister? Judi Braddy is an ordained minister and pastor's wife who understands this question and knows firsthand the pain and suffering of watching a beloved child walk away from God. *Prodigal in the Parsonage*

offers parents, especially those in ministry, an insider's perspective and time-tested encouragement for struggling with the daily trials that come when their child rejects faith. Braddy addresses topics such as whether or not you can be an effective minister if your own family is in disarray, dealing with the stages of grief as your child slips further from the faith, and remembering that the child is not the enemy. *Prodigal in the Parsonage* offers the insight and encouragement parents need to endure the grief and anxiety of parenting a prodigal.

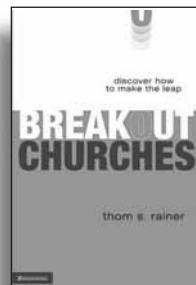
(Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2004, 144pp., \$12.99, paper, COZZ083-412-2065)

BOOK BRIEFS

Resources for Pastoral Ministry

CHURCH GROWTH

Breakout Churches. By Thom Rainer. (Zondervan, 2005, 272pp., \$22.99, cloth, COZZ031-025-745X) Dr. Rainer has been a student of the local church for nearly two decades. He and his research teams have examined thousands of churches. They have looked at the most effective evangelistic churches in America. They have studied churches that are reaching the unchurched. They have examined churches to discern what they are doing to retain and assimilate members. They have taken a journey to discover the churches that are effectively reaching young people, and they have studied hundreds of other issues in the local church that never made it into the books he wrote. In all of these studies, he came across few churches that he would classify as great by any standard. Then he read *Good to Great* by Jim Collins, a masterpiece of research on the business world of America.



The sad state of the American church has been lamented in many venues. Whether statistical measures such as attendance or conversions are used, or whether the impact of the church on culture is measured, the results are similar. The majority of churches in America are weak at best and dying at worse. This book simply seeks to discover churches that have been mired in mediocrity, only to breakout to become great churches impacting lives and entire communities.

The book should be required reading for all church leaders—especially church board members. Although the author uses material from *Good to Great* extensively, his ideas on how to grow a church demand reflection. Certainly the book is not a scholarly presentation, but the author has an adequate background and writes in an easy to read manner. (Reviewed by Joe Biscoe)

PASTORAL CARE

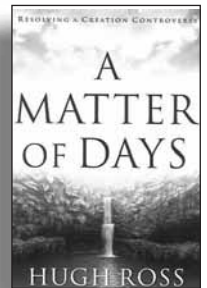
Mom, Dad . . . I'm Pregnant. By Jayne E. Schooler. (NavPress, 2004, 176pp., \$13.99, paper, COZZ157-683-4824). Wow! What courage! What a much-needed ministry tool and resource! This is the best book addressing real-life issues that I've read it a long time. The author writes from personal experience, making the book a great companion for those facing the unplanned pregnancy of a



child—regardless of age. The author also addresses the father and how his rights, role, and responsibilities are often overlooked. She also writes about grandparents parenting grandchildren. There are questions at the end of each chapter to assist with personal application. This book needs to be on every pastor's shelf with a supply to give to those coming for counseling related to an unplanned pregnancy. I can't praise it enough. (Reviewed by Linda Hardin)

CURRENT ISSUES

A Matter of Days. By Hugh Ross. (NavPress, 2004, 302pp., \$15.99, paper, COZZ157-683-3755). The issue of Creation has become a hot topic among Christians. One school of thought, the so-called "young earth" proponents insist on six 24 hour days of creation, 144 hours as reckoned by our clocks. The other school of thought, the "old earth creationists," believe that God did indeed create the heavens and the earth and that the Bible is true and reliable but that "day" could mean longer periods of time. This second group believes that there are fewer conflicts between the Scripture and science than most think. When there is an apparent conflict they would suggest that there be further study rather than a rejection of the Scripture.



The conflict is severe. Some of the "young earth" proponents tend to de-Christianize anyone who disagrees with them. They have been harsh in their condemnation of any who do not specifically agree with their view. Hugh Ross is a scientifically prepared Christian who is also an evangelist and has founded a group called "Reasons to Believe." The group supports the authority of the Bible and believes that one does not have to embrace the 144-hour creation model. He does not attack those who have attacked him but rather presents a logical and careful presentation of the issue.

This book presents light rather than heat to the debate. It is well done, warmly evangelical, and kind. He leaves room for those who would respectfully disagree with him. The book is produced by *Navigators* in an attempt to help resolve this divisive matter. Anyone who will seriously read this volume will be helped in their understanding and enriched in their belief in God who created this magnificent universe of ours. Any pastor or student of the Scripture who has been troubled along this line would find a great deal of help. (Reviewed by Ron Wilson)

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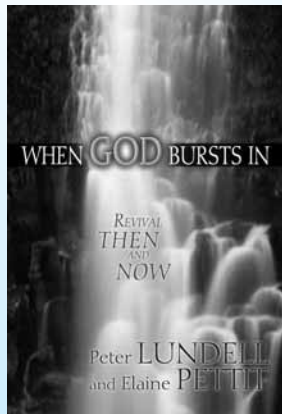
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"Eli, you should KNOW better than joking like that... they really BELIEVE you when you say you'd preach for nothing if you had to!"

