

A FOCUSED BEGINNING = AN EXCELLENT ENDING

by Wenton A. Fyne

The end of a day, a week, a month, or a year provides space for reflection and introspection. It gives us a chance to step away and examine our actions, attitudes, and reactions. All of us were created for a purpose, and effectively carrying out this purpose means we must take time away from our busy schedules to evaluate and measure our life's mission. Jesus, our greatest example, took time away from His disciples to rest and pray for direction.

January and February provide the perfect opportunity for this type of reflection and direction seeking. December is the month of endings—the end of the holiday season, the end of the year—but January and February point toward possibility—new goals, new objectives, new determination, new challenges, new assignments, new friends, new hope.

I've observed this understanding as I've listened to the State of the Union addresses. Each year the President deals with history, examines present challenges, and then expresses his hopes for the future. This is by far his most important speech because it lays out the agenda for the nation so everyone can focus on the goals ahead.

As pastors, evangelists, and teachers, it is equally important for us to take time away to pray, fast, and seek the mind of God in order to effectively develop a missional agenda for the goals and tasks of the coming year. **If we start this year with a great beginning we'll be less likely to lose our focus as the year unfolds.**

Someone once wrote, "In our efforts to listen to God's Word, we often neglect what might be called his first words to us. This is the gift of ourselves to ourselves: our existence, our nature, our personal history, our uniqueness, our identity. All that we have and indeed our very existence is unique and never to be repeated. We are the way God has chosen to express himself in space and time."

We must never lose focus for ourselves and the unique purpose that God has created us for. Our Sovereign God has called us to this high and humbling calling. This knowledge alone offers us a way to draw strength and gives us daily opportunities for gratitude and thanksgiving. We are a part of history. History will record the good or the bad—nothing we do in this life, no matter how minute, goes unnoticed. Men may not recognize it, but God does. The song writer said it best, "May those who come behind us find us faithful." We must serve our generation well with all of the gifts and talents that God has given us—and only our best efforts are good enough.

So, as we reflect and plan we need to ask ourselves these questions. How have we been doing? Can we do more than we've

[continued inside]



inside

A Weekly Remembrance

Grace

Christian Neighbor Center

Books to assist Urban/
Compassionate Ministry

A FOCUSED BEGINNING = AN EXCELLENT ENDING

[continued]

been doing? Have we gone the extra mile? Have we given our best? Is there something we need to change, do away with, or add? How can we begin well and end excellent?

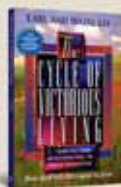
Remember: It's not how much we do; it's our efforts that count. Whether we pastor a small, midsize, or large church, teach in a large or small university, supervise a small or large district, or oversee ministers around the world, it's our faithfulness that counts.

So, as we march forward into 2007, let's take some time to look deep inside ourselves. Let's organize our thoughts, put them into action, and above all remember that a focused beginning and faithful perseverance provide the strength and hope needed for an excellent ending.



— Wenton A. Fyne, Senior Pastor
Beulah Church of the Nazarene
Brooklyn, New York

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NEW HOPE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE
PRINCETON, ILLINOIS
LAURA ROOT, SENIOR PASTOR

A few years ago I had the chance to spend time with a couple of our Olivet religion majors. While most of the time I struggled to understand the complexity of their wonderful minds, I did pick up and retain one important message—their desire for weekly Communion. I shared their desire to practice Eucharist on a weekly basis, but wondered if it would fit our Nazarene culture? After learning more about John Wesley's views on Communion and the value he placed on weekly and even daily Communion, I felt led to discuss the possibility of making it a part of our weekly worship service.

I will admit that initially there was some resistance. But after a time of reasoning together, we moved forward and the Eucharist is now integrated into our weekly Sunday morning gatherings. Two and a half years, and over 260 Communion services later (we hold two services on Sunday morning,) I am still in awe of God's anointing and His presence as we gather at the table in remembrance of Him.

Definite changes to the service order were needed to compensate for the time it takes to receive Communion. God's way of showing up changed from week to week and the way we served the elements changed as well. Most often Communion is offered following the message. Words of institution are given and an explanation of salvation is presented, which serves as a wonderful way of leading people through a sinner's prayer. Because of the size of our church and the flow of the service, people are invited to approach any of four stations where a minister serves the elements. As Communion begins, our worship team once again leads us in worship, helping to prepare and soften our hearts to experience Christ.

It is humbling to serve the elements and give a blessing or, very often, to receive a blessing from the congregation. Some go to the altar and pray before receiving communion and others receive and then pray before returning to their seats. At New Hope we have discovered that no matter how we come to His table it is simply a great joy to come.

For more resources on Communion . . .
Come to the Table: A Resource Book for Holy Communion
COZZ978-0-8341-7308-8 \$7.99



How's that Workin' for ya?



LAKEVIEW CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE
TOPEKA, KANSAS
RICHARD E. GUILFOIL SR., SENIOR PASTOR

WHAT: *Christian Neighbor Center*

WHY: Our church mission statement is **"Building a Bridge to the Lost and Hurting."** We continually look for opportunities to go beyond the walls of our church to touch hearts and build bridges with the lost and hurting world outside our congregation. A number of years ago I was introduced to a street minister by the name of George Eutsler. George was a white haired fellow with a passion for the homeless and the lost. He started the Rescue Mission many years ago in Topeka but felt his real ministry was on the streets. From this passion he established the Christian Neighbor Center to reach out to alcoholics, drug addicts, prostitutes, and anyone in need of a meal, shower, clothes, and Christ's message of good news and hope. After visiting his center one day, I realized that our church had neglected to reach out to this population of people. George had already established the ministry opportunity, but there was still a need for additional resources and volunteers. So, very soon after my first meeting with George a partnership was formed.

HOW: Lakeview Nazarene soon became a monthly physical and financial partner in ministry with The Christian Neighbor Center. Our members help the Center by providing skills and labor wherever it's needed. We provide food for the Center so food baskets can be distributed to needy families and many of our people volunteer to assist in ministry and counseling to help those with no place to turn. I also serve as a board member and spend time weekly at the Center. God continues to show me ways to minister to individuals who are struggling.

RESULT: The Christian Neighbor Center became the bridge we needed to practice our mission statement as a church. The ultimate result is that together we feel invested in His Kingdom, knowing that our efforts are helping to reach the lost, one donated item, one hot meal, one Christ-centered conversation at a time. To God be the glory!

(For details on this partnership, contact Pastor Richard E. Guilfoil Sr. at (785)266-3247 or email Dickguil@aol.com.)

Improving Your



Urban/Compassion Ministry



Reclaiming the Urban Family
Dr. Willie Richardson
COZZ978-0-3102-0008-6
\$12.99, Zondervan Publishing
This book provides hands-on help for pastors and church leaders in urban homes. Dr. Richardson addresses concerns such as lay biblicism, outreach, marriage preparation, enrichment, single-parent families, evangelizing families, and more. It is a great resource for urban ministry and compassionate ministry.



A Way with Words. . .

...the big Achilles heel of the church is the practice of attractional Christianity, which is how you get people to come to church. It's all "come and see," instead of "go and be." We're all trying to figure out how to bring more people into the church and it shouldn't be about coming to church. It should be about coming to Christ. And then when those people come to Christ, the Church's job is to send them out.

—excerpted from "Stuck In a Closet with Leonard Sweet" by Eric Hurtgen, Relevantmagazine.com

Corny Pastor Joke

After hearing his dad preach on "justification," "sanctification," and all the other "-ations," a minister's son was ready when his Sunday school teacher asked if anybody knew what "procrastination" meant. The boy answered, "I'm not sure what it means, but I know our church believes in it!"

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This powerful book describes the “bent down” theology of Jesus as told from the Gospel of John. Michael Lodahl offers pastors, church leaders, and small group members a look at four passages in John illustrating how God is willing to bend down and dwell among us in order to reach us where we are and to help us see how we are to live as Christ’s body in today’s world. It’s a great reminder of our calling to be servants of Christ.

When Love Bends Down

Images of the Christ Who Meets Us Where We Are

Michael Lodahl

COZZ978-0-8341-2220-8

\$11.99, Beacon Hill Press, 2006



Strength in the Struggle

Vashti Murphy McKenzie

COZZ978-0-8298-1212-1

\$15.00, Pilgrim Press, 2001

This book is helpful for both male and female pastors and lay leaders who are looking for a biblical and personal perspective on how to be a better and stronger leader in an urban or multicultural setting. Its intriguing perspective comes from the first female bishop of the African American Episcopal Church, Bishop Vashti McKenzie.



Dirty Hands—Pure Heart

Sermons and Conversations with Holiness Preachers

Edited and Compiled by Tom Nees

COZZ978-0-8341-2244-4

\$14.99, Beacon Hill Press, 2006

This uniquely formatted book is a great sermon reference resource and will help urban pastors hear from leading Nazarene preachers on the necessity and power of holiness preaching in today’s rapidly changing culture.

Just the Way You Like It

Companies like Cold Stone Creamery are on the fast track to success due to a “have it your way” business model. Demands for super-premium ice cream concocted on a cold stone delivered fresh to the customer, often times by a song and dance, is what makes going out for ice cream so much fun. Cold Stone has 1,300 chains and will add 300 more annually for the next three to five years. For ice cream lovers this is a great trend, but beyond ice cream could the “have it your way” trend be a negative one for the Church? It’s something to consider.

(Send your thoughts on this topic to communicator@nph.com and view the discussion at planworship.com.)

—To read more on this topic, visit <http://www.fastcompany.com/customer/2006/articles/honorable-cold-stone.html>

An End to a Trend

June 2006 was the final production month for the iconic American front lawn ornament—the pink flamingo. The pink flamingo and the velvet Elvis stand as pillars of American cheesiness and we are now left to wonder what youth pastors will put on their senior pastor’s front lawn during the midnight hours? Not to worry though...the ever stylish garden gnome is always ready for the task—and it’s rumored that he likes to travel.

Reduce Your Carbon Footprint

The average American releases 22,000 pounds of CO2 into the atmosphere each year through home or auto usage. There is an increasing awareness among environmentally conscious Christians to help reduce CO2 emissions by taking a few steps toward improving their energy habits. One way is to turn off and unplug all your electronics when you aren’t using them; as long as they are plugged in they still draw power. For more tips on how to reduce CO2 emissions visit www.nativeenergy.com or see *Relevant Magazine*, November/December, 2006, p. 28.



A scripture-based resource with 49 different openers, reflections, readings, scripts, prayers, start-to-finish worship services, and more.

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STATISTICS,
SOUNDBITES,
and Suggestions

60%

of U.S. born-again Christians claim they have shared their faith at sometime with someone they knew was not a Christian.

The average U.S. household spends

\$884

annually for food consumed outside the home.

Excerpted from The Foster Letter-Religious Market update,(10/2506). For more, visit <http://www.garydfoster.com>.

“The Holy Spirit and the task of the church walk together hand in hand. **God does not give people the Holy Spirit in order to let them enjoy the spiritual equivalent of a day at Disneyland.** The point of the Spirit is to enable those who follow Jesus to take into all the world the news that he is Lord, that he has won the victory over the forces of evil, that a new world has opened up, and that we are to help make that happen.”

—N.T. Wright in *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*, Harper Collins, 2006, p. 122.

Married Couple Status

Following a decade long decline, the percentage of U.S. households consisting of married couples has now fallen below **50%**. The American Community Survey released by the Census Bureau shows that **55.2 million** of the nations **111.1 mission households** (49.7%) in 2005 had a man and a woman married to each other in them. Unmarried couples—both same sex and male/female couples—represent about **10%** of U.S. households.

-The Ivy Jungle Network Campus Ministry Update, October 2006, www.ivyjungle.org.

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www.3littleangels.org – This is an excellent web source with information and resources to help every pastor and chaplain minister to couples and families who have lost their child in pre or post birth delivery.

www.shepnaz.org – Shepherd Church of the Nazarene, Gahanna, OH

This church website will inspire you to explore ways your church can touch the world in its own backyard through multicultural education ministries and community outreach programs.

www.kcurbanyouthcenter.org – Kansas City Urban Youth Center, Kansas City, MO

Located down the street from NPH, this urban outreach center for children and teens is a great place to consider when planning your next youth or adult missions trip. Visit their website for information and ideas on how you can support their efforts.

My dear Children, let's not just talk about love; let's practice real love. This is the only way we'll know we're living truly, living in God's reality. It's also the way to shut down debilitating self-criticism, even when there is something to it. For God is greater than our worried hearts and knows more about us than we do ourselves. [1 John 3:18-20 TM]

A Word from Matt



"Grace." Recently I walked three blocks North on Troost Avenue where NPH is located in search of my friend Chuck who oversees the Kansas City Urban Youth Center. As Chuck and I talked about how the ministry of the youth center started and where it's come in just over two years, my mind kept picturing the word "grace." It occurred to me that this ministry, just blocks from downtown Kansas City and located in an inner-city neighborhood where teens need strong positive mentoring, is who we are and continue to be as Nazarenes. We declare a message of redemptive grace that offers power and hope to all types of communities. Seeing this message of grace being lived out and shared in communities in desperate need of positive support is what makes me proud to be a friend and ministry partner with Chuck and with those of you serving in urban communities. Spending just a few moments with Chuck reminded me of the need for NPH and the Nazarene Church as a whole to be strong partners with our urban friends in the message of God's amazing grace in North America and the world. May God's grace be abundant in your life as you minister among those who need to experience His amazing grace. We are praying for you and your ministry.

— **Matthew S. Zimmer, Editor, Church Resources Manager**
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