

Texas Baptist Forum

November 17, 2006

Posted: 11/17/06

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Business skills

The [Rio Grande Valley scandal](#) is quite a blow. I hope this incident is not symbolic of a general ineptness in Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board management. We probably have some people in our BGCT management who need to be replaced, but I'm not advocating a general housecleaning.

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Letters are welcomed. Send them to marvknox@baptiststandard.com;
250 words maximum.

The logo for 'Out (Loud)' features the word 'Out' in white on a blue background, followed by '(Loud)' in white on a red background.

"I'm not an arm-waver and a clapper and a dancer. Music doesn't do that to me, although it stirs me inside."

Bill Hybels

Pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, a Chicago-area megachurch, speaking about how he chooses to stand, eyes closed in contemplation, while others in his sanctuary sway and wave their arms in praise (*Chicago Tribune/RNS*)

"God's promise to us was that we would have entrance into the hearts of the ungodly without them knowing it."

Matthew Crouch

Producer of the new film *One Night With the King*, based on the biblical story of Esther, telling Texas pastors about his efforts to use the film to influence culture (*Dallas Morning News/RNS*)

"If we're not willing to use it here against our fellow citizens, then we should not be willing to use it in a wartime situation."

Michael Wynne

Air Force secretary, suggesting nonlethal weapons, such as high-power microwave devices, should be used on American citizens in crowd-control situations before being used on the battlefield (*CNN.com*)

My experience is that most ministers, while they may be excellent pastors, are not very good business managers. They don't want to put forth the time and effort to properly manage the business affairs of the church, or in the Valley case, the business affairs of the Valley ministry.

Good management of a multi-million-dollar budget won't just happen. It requires managers with good business skills. I'll state without fear of contradiction that if the BGCT had good business practices in place, that were followed by BGCT management, there is no way the Valley scandal would have occurred.

I hope the BGCT Executive Board implements its plan to evaluate current business practices and to make the changes necessary to correct the deficiencies in our organization. The BGCT is a business. It just happens to be the most important business in the state of Texas. It deserves the best we can give.

Seborn Thomas

Baytown

BGCT ruling

I was outraged at the BGCT annual meeting Tuesday, Nov. 14.

I could not believe [the chair ruled out of order](#) a motion from the convention on the grounds that the convention does not have authority over the issue because it is the exclusive right of the Executive Board.

By the fact that the chair read his comments, this was not a decision made in the heat of the moment. This was a deliberate attempt to prevent the messengers of the convention from exercising any decision-making power over this huge scandal.

The message was loud and clear to those of us on the floor: Just keep sending your money and keep your mouth shut. Regardless whether or not the motion was good or would have been approved, the chair made a poor decision. Perhaps this is why less than 10 percent of the 5,700 BGCT churches even bothered to send messengers to the annual meeting. We can spend 20 minutes passing meaningless resolutions, but we cannot address the misuse of over \$1.3 million.

The leaders of the convention should have spent two days winning back our trust. Instead, they only demonstrated the opposite.

Todd Pylant

Benbrook

An otherwise-enjoyable BGCT annual meeting ended with a great disappointment.

President Michael Bell apparently changed his mind regarding David Montoya's motion to require the Executive Board and executive director to turn results of the Valleygate investigation over to the authorities and ruled it out of order. In many years of attending convention meetings, I never have seen debate opened on a motion only to have it pulled from the floor like that.

Bell then read a lengthy, obfuscating statement that proclaimed the Executive Board and its actions in this matter beyond the authority of the duly-elected and seated messengers of an annual meeting. I was speechless! Why was such a thing even done? It was evident the motion would have failed. But now we have The Statement. Such an interpretation, read into the minutes, has established a dangerous precedent. Following this reasoning, any issue the Executive Board takes up during the year is

off limits for the annual meeting to address.

Is a body that claims to hold to the “endangered” doctrine of soul competency now saying to its own, “We don’t trust you to discern God’s will”? What are annual meetings supposed to accomplish if there is no freedom to bring the will of the messengers to bear upon convention leadership?

I’m not so certain I trust such a convention with my tithes and offerings. That’s taxation without representation. Revolutions have been started for that reason!

Jay Fleming

Karnes City

Churches & entertainment

In the mid-’60s, I became pastor of Woodlawn Baptist Church in Portland, Ore. When our youth attendance began to decline, I learned a neighboring church was offering boat rides on the Columbia River as a reward for attendance. Churches commonly use attractions like skiing trips, beach parties and other entertainment to attract youth to church services.

We never were offered this kind of entertainment when I attended church as a youth. Instead, we enjoyed exercises like “Sword Drills,” where the teacher called out a text, and we competed to see who could find it first in our Bibles. We brought our Bibles to all services, and after a weekly visitation program, we were served refreshments .

Has entertainment overshadowed the spiritual thrust of the church, and have we sold our youth on shallow loyalties? Are we teaching them how to serve, or just how to be served?

Good social activities for our youth are valuable tools, but things like boat rides on the Columbia only pay off—if it gets them on the Ship of Zion.

Doug Fincher

St. Augustine

I am a senior citizen, but only age 70. I don't drive a Lincoln and don't drive 35 on the freeways.

I love beautiful, happy music in the church, but not necessarily the "let me entertain you" loud and boisterous atmosphere most praise services offer. Awe and reverence are not there.

Little sing-a-long choruses for the congregations don't cut it. Young parents are not hearing the beautiful hymns and anthems, and for sure their children are not hearing them!

Elizabeth Buchanan

Plano

Prosperity gospel

Regarding "[Group critiques prosperity gospel](#)" (Sept. 18). This common misconception is adding to the already confusing matter of the "seeker sensitive" church. This article deals with two separate, exclusive issues: Presenting an authentic gospel in biblical ways to which our culture can relate, and presenting a false gospel of prosperity and wealth.

Most of the seeker-sensitive churches I know and have been associated with are preaching the same truths of sin, confession and salvation that

Baptists have shared for centuries. There is nothing unscriptural about positioning the appearance and ministry rationale of the church for those who need it most. Jesus' ministry was built on just this kind of approach.

The majority of "mega churches" are doing exactly that, and very successfully reaching, converting and baptizing the unchurched in record numbers. Are seeker-sensitive churches neglecting the centralities of the faith? Perhaps they are returning us to a greater realization of those very principles.

But the issue of claiming and expecting God to be our spiritual sugar daddy is a different concept entirely. This superficial approach is neither biblical nor effective for lasting change in people's hearts.

We need to be sure we don't confuse that kind of counterfeit ministry with the many effective churches attempting to reach our culture with a gospel of hope in a troubled world. People will never hear the valid message until we are successful in getting them to listen in the first place.

Jim Cleaveland

El Paso

The "healthy, wealthy and wise" gospel ([Oct. 16](#)) has always been around. The Gospel writers tell us about the huge crowds that pressed in to get something they needed from Jesus; some healing, some relief, some information, some more bread.

Today, we have the "blessing-centered" gospel, the "doctrine-centered" gospel, the "change-my-circumstances centered" gospel, the "give-me-some-information-how-to-be-successful-in-whatever-centered" gospel, the "music-centered" gospel, the "church-centered" gospel, the "denomination-

centered” gospel. The one thing they all have in common is a “self center,” which is very popular and gets results.

Have you ever noticed how self-centered people are? Have you ever noticed how self-centered you are? But what about Jesus?

He is on a hill far away. Unfortunately, too far away in all of our quests for results and success. He certainly is not the center; not in most conferences, conventions, seminars or church services.

“How To” is now our theme. Maybe that is why about 90 percent of U.S. churches are flat-lined or declining and why Jesus is spreading like wildfire in places like Africa, Asia and South America.

The good news is that now they are sending missionaries to us, and whenever we go on a mission trip to these places. we come back as missionaries “on fire for Jesus”!

Church in America, let’s return to our first love, Jesus Christ, and find in him all there is.

Bubba Stahl

Corpus Christi

. Letters are limited to 250 words.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.