

Texas Baptist Forum

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Faith is central

Faith is whatever you center your life around. If it's making money, then money is your faith. If you center your life on God and living his way, then God is your faith.

The first faith is idolatrous and leads to self-destruction. The second faith is true, for it is creative and builds life. Both are faith, for each is the organizing principle in someone's life.

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

Out ((Loud))

“It amazes me that Jesus could call a Matthew and a Simon both to be his disciples. Matthew was a tax collector, a conservative of the conservatives. Simon was a zealot, the liberal of the liberals. ... They were farther apart than Ted Kennedy and Rush Limbaugh could ever dream of being. ... What’s amazing is that you don’t find Jesus whispering a word about which one he thought was better. ... Jesus is the lord of a transpolitical kingdom.”

Greg Boyd

Pastor of Woodland Hills Church in St. Paul, Minn., speaking at a forum on ministers and politics sponsored by Christian Ethics Today (RNS)

“In order to be an effective leader, you can’t just be president of the Christians. It insults our intelligence to assume that we would let difference separate us.”

T.D. Jakes

Dallas megachurch pastor, writing a letter to the editor in *Time* magazine in response to an article on Democrats and religion (RNS)

But even true faith contains doubt. Take biblical Abraham, for example. He was certain he experienced a call from God. But he struggled with doubt about whether he was getting the call of God right. Scripture says that after Abraham experienced God's call, "he went out from his homeland, Babylonia, to he knew not where."

So, we can be certain we are centered on God. But we never can be certain we have the details, doctrines and definitions of walking in God's way all figured out. These will need to be worked on and worked at all our lives. New levels of understanding always should be evolving within us. At best, our understandings will be only partial truths of the Infinite.

This keeps us humble. Faith is not what doctrines we believe. It is what centers and governs our life. If this is understood and held to, it would stop so many wars, hatreds, divisions and ugly attitudes of arrogance.

Alvin Petty

Andrews

Reaching the unreached

It may not be at the level David D'Amico is praying for, but Texas Baptists are riding the "currents of internationalization," actively developing a people group-focused missiology ([Sept. 17](#)). Four years ago, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, and Dallas, Union, San Antonio, Austin and Tarrant associations provided startup grants to help fund the Texas Great Commission Initiative (www.txgci.org). Additional support has come from the International Mission Board.

The Great Commission Initiative provides intensive training and networking

opportunities to equip Christians to identify, engage, evangelize and disciple unreached people groups.

In three years, we have trained more than 100 Texas pastors, church planters and strategists. More than 300 people groups have been identified, 100 of them engaged, and more than 75 churches started.

By studying what God is doing around the world, we have identified several key issues that must be addressed to make disciples of “panta ta ethne”—all the people groups:

- Detailed worldview analysis of individual ethnolinguistic people groups.
- Communication of the gospel in the people group’s heart language.
- Discipleship methods resulting in obedience to Jesus and healthy reproduction.
- Communication strategies appropriately placed on the orality-literacy continuum.

I agree with D’Amico: Unless Texas Baptists make discipleship of unreached people groups in Texas a major priority, Christ followers in Texas will become an increasingly marginalized minority. GCI doesn’t claim to have all the answers yet, but we are getting good at asking the right questions.

Tim Ahlen

Dallas

Limits of fall

In Letha Puett’s letter regarding home economics classes at Southwestern

Seminary ([Sept. 17](#)), she states there is no higher calling for a woman than building a strong Christian home. My reply is that there is no higher calling for a man, either!

Being educated in theology or any other field and serving in the ministry is not incompatible for any Christian of either gender. All Christians are to respond to the call of God and to minister to the least of his children among us.

Limiting service to one gender is a phenomenon of the fall and not of the redeemed. As the Apostle Paul said, in Christ there is neither male or female. So, those who make distinctions contrary to that Scripture need to get into Christ and stop denying God's ability to call and use any Christian for his purposes.

Ralph E. Cooper

Waco

What do you think? Send letters to Editor Marv Knox by mail: P.O. Box 660267, Dallas 75266-0267; or by e-mail: marvknox@baptiststandard.com.

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