

Book Reviews

February 15, 2008

Posted: 2/15/08

Book Reviews

Before You Plan Your Wedding ... Plan Your Marriage by **Greg and Erin Smalley (Howard Books)**

Little girls dream of wearing flowing white dresses and lovely sheer veils. Brides and grooms, along with their families, spend hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars making the fairy tale ceremony and reception come true. But all too often, they forget that marriage for a lifetime is more important than wedding for a day.

Before You Plan Your Wedding ... Plan Your Marriage offers guidance for building a lasting Christlike union. In chapters ranging from "Will You Forgive Me?" to "If Only We Had Known," psychologists Erin and Greg Smalley share principles for making marriage work. "Couple exercises/homework" conclude each chapter, as the authors suggest activities such as focusing on each other (and not the wedding) 20 minutes a day.



What are you reading that other Texas Baptists would find helpful? Send suggestions and reviews to books@baptiststandard.com.

The Smalleys manage to tackle tough issues and differences in male-female communication and expectations with humor and personal stories. They share that early in their dating, Gary called Erin for a defining-the-relationship talk. Over dinner, he indicated he felt pressured. Erin left the restaurant assuming they had broken up—a suspicion confirmed when he didn't call for some time. So she started dating another guy, much to Greg's surprise when he returned from a long trip he forgot to mention to Erin.

Baptist Briefs

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Baptist Briefs

Fewer forced terminations in SBC churches last year. Forced terminations in the Southern Baptist Convention were down during 2006. The Southern Baptist Church-Minister Relations Association found 680 full-time and bivocational pastors were forced out of their positions in 2006, plus 265 staff members. While the total of 945 is 27 percent lower than the 1,302 reported for 2005, Barney Self, a former pastoral counselor with LifeWay Christian Resources who conducted the survey, pointed out the report lacked input from four state conventions. The omissions mean the actual number of terminations may have been closer to 1,100, he noted. According to the survey, control issues were the top reason for staff dismissals—the same reason that has topped the surveys since they were initiated in 1996.

SBC conducts online survey about youth. Teenagers, their parents, student ministry volunteers and youth ministers in Southern Baptist churches are eligible to participate in an online survey through April 13. Church registration for the survey, at www.sbcstudents.com/annualsurvey, runs through the end of March. After the survey closes, each participating church will be able to download a full report April 15. It will show the responses of their congregation separated into groups without identifying specific individuals who took the survey. All individual input will remain confidential. Free online manuals will be made available to churches to guide them in conducting workshops that bring key parents, youth and leaders to the table to set a new direction based on the information gathered from the survey. State conventions will be able to post statistics from their states on their websites, while SBC entities will have access to national figures to help determine effective directions for student ministry within the convention. Participating churches, meanwhile, will be able to compare their results with statewide and nationwide results.

Cartoon

February 15, 2008

Posted: 2/15/08

Shared meals at church take on a different flavor to meet changing needs

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Shared meals at church take on a different flavor to meet changing needs

By David Briggs

Religion News Service

AKRON, Ohio (RNS)—Andrew Hamilton still can taste the homemade apple, cherry and peach pies that capped off the covered-dish church meals of his youth in Lakeville, Mass.

In those days, children played on their own for hours while adults spent Sunday afternoons in conversation. The church seemed like one big family, said Hamilton, 44, pastor of Akron's Springfield Church of the Brethren.

Markesha
Kimmie,
10,
arranges
Kool-Aid
for a
supper at
Broadway
United
Methodist
Church in
Cleveland.

Many
churches
have
revamped
the
traditional
church
supper to
meet the
changing
needs of
busy
families.

(RNS
photo by
Lynn
Ischay/*The
Plain
Dealer* of
Cleveland)

2nd Opinion: Touch others: Healing & helping

February 15, 2008

Posted: 2/15/08

2nd Opinion: Touch others: Healing & helping

By Jerry Hopkins

Educators learn a great deal about people—their views, virtues, vices and other things. The aim of most teachers and educational administrators is to help people. A central theme for educators is to be helpful, constructive and positive.

This also is one of the important themes of Jesus' life. In the historical book known as Acts, author/historian Luke describes this: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit, and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). Doing good and healing should characterize anyone's life who works with people.

The central theme of our lives should be to serve others like Jesus did—offering healing, loving, helpful touches. Jesus went about doing good, lifting and loving, rather than hurting and hindering; blessing and building, rather than blighting and condemning. We need to do an audit of our lives,

our attitudes and actions. Are we doing good, helping and healing?

DOWN HOME: A part of my heart now beats in Europe

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DOWN HOME: A part of my heart now beats in Europe

The last I saw of Molly was just a tiny glimpse of her luscious blonde hair.

Even after we finished our hugs and kisses and waves goodbye, Joanna and I stood like statues outside airport security. We waited until we could see our youngest daughter no more.

Somewhere between “We’ll miss you,” and “I’ll be praying for you every day,” and “You’ll have a great time; I’m so jealous,” and “We’ll be in touch through IM and Skype,” and “Always travel in groups, and don’t stay anyplace where you don’t feel safe,” Jo and I realized saying goodbye to our kid was harder than we reckoned.

Of course, sending Molly abroad for a semester isn’t like shipping a child off to war or waving farewell to a daughter or son bound for missions in the Congo. But this was hard enough. This is our child, and she was about to be so far gone.

EDITORIAL: Candles alight for new Baptist unity

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EDITORIAL: Candles alight for new Baptist unity

Would you rather light a candle or curse the darkness?

At least 10,000 candles glowed in Atlanta, pushing back the cursed darkness of racism that enshrouded Baptists in this hemisphere for more than 160 years.

Those “candles” actually were people—Baptists who defied nay-sayers and doom-forecasters to attend the [New Baptist Covenant convocation](#). They brightened the bleak midwinter. They cast light toward a new spring, a time for thawing frozen feelings; a time for planting seeds of reconciliation, collaboration and infinite hope; a time for leaning into awkward trust, unproven optimism and untested love.



Nay-sayers did their best to dampen those candlewicks so they’d never light. Doom-forecasters projected darkness for Atlanta, predicting polarization. They said the whole thing was cooked up by Jimmy Carter to promote a liberal Democratic agenda. They said the politicians would

pollute the well of naive goodwill with partisanship. They said white attendance would be appalling and set racial reconciliation back five generations. They said Southern Baptist Convention-haters would leverage the platform to bash the SBC. They said Bill Clinton would campaign for his wife. In sum, they declared disaster.

Board to honor Wade, vote on Everett for Executive Director

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Board to honor Wade, vote on Everett for Executive Director

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

DALLAS—The Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board will honor a recently retired executive director Feb. 25 and vote on a nominee for his replacement the next morning.

Executive director nominee Randel Everett and his wife, Sheila, will be available to meet directors of the board individually throughout the day Feb. 25. At a retirement dinner that evening, directors will recognize Charles Wade for his eight years of service as executive director. Wade

retired Jan. 31.

Sheila and Randel Everett

Faith Digest

February 15, 2008

Posted: 2/15/08

Faith Digest

Lost bird helps raise funds for English church. A tiny bird blown across the Atlantic Ocean from North America on winter winds is helping raise funds to repair the roof of an ancient church in the tiny English village where it landed. The white-crowned North American sparrow, a rare visitor to Britain's shores, has become an attraction for "twitchers"—birdwatchers—in the Norfolk village of Cley-next-the-Sea, and a fund-raiser for the settlement's Church of St. Margaret of Antioch. The twitcher tourists turning up in their thousands to view the seven-inch sparrow already have chipped in more than \$6,000 in donations—with possibly more to come—that will be used to mend the east England church's 13th century roof.

A minister walks into a bar Chuck Kish, 44, pastor at Bethel

Assembly of God in Carlisle, Pa., is launching a program at a local pub to put chaplains in bars. They'll offer help to people who might have ended up there for reasons other than relaxing and socializing. Kish said he and the chaplains he trains will not be there to preach against "the evils of drinking" or to make converts. Chaplains will work in teams, one male and one female. "Some people may think this would be a strange place to find a chaplain. But we need to go where the people are," Kish said.

Mormons name new president. Thomas Monson was elected the 16th president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Monson, 80, was the longest-serving member of the church's top leadership body. He succeeds Gordon Hinckley, who died Jan. 27 at age 97, as leader of the world's 13 million Mormons. Monson chose Henry Eyring, 74, as first counselor, the church's No. 2 position. Dieter Uchtdorf, 67, was named second counselor—the third man in the church's triumvirate.

Pope defends Catholic uniqueness. Pope Benedict XVI has defended a controversial Vatican statement on the uniqueness of the Catholic church, saying it would enhance, not derail, ecumenical dialogue. The pope made his remarks in a meeting with members of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the church's highest doctrinal body. The pope commended the body on a document it published last July, which reaffirms the teaching that the "one Church of Christ ... subsists in the Catholic Church" alone. The document describes non-Catholic Christian churches as defective, and it says Protestant denominations are not even churches "in the proper sense."

Family Place helps mother leave fear behind

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Family Place helps mother leave fear behind

By Analiz González

Buckner International

MIDLAND—Ambra Riley spent the night in her daughters' room holding her baby tightly in her arms. She put something over the doorknob so she'd know if her husband tried to enter.

Her husband may have stolen her self-esteem and robbed her family of happiness, but he would not take her son, she reasoned.

In Between: New Reformation: Shared ministry

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In Between:

New Reformation: Shared ministry

The great Reformation of Luther and Calvin left unfinished business. What the Christian world has not taken seriously is the ministry of all believers, whether lay or ordained, male or female. The Apostle Paul described it as “equipping all believers for ministry” (Ephesians 4:12).

Greg Ogden writes in his book, *The New Reformation: Returning the Ministry to the People of God*: “Serious signs of strain have become visible in traditional American church life. Overworked and stressed pastors and staff worry about large numbers of inactive and passive members who look to the church during times of need, but who often give very little in the form of regular committed service. Fast-growing churches and younger denominations are growing because they have found ways to entrust ministries to nonordained people.”



One Texas pastor agrees and said it this way to me just a few days ago: “I am overwhelmed, while laypersons in my church are totally underwhelmed and unchallenged because they see their primary task is to pay and pray for the staff to do everything. I was even told, ‘Preacher, you’re trained and paid, so it is up to you to get ministry done the best way you can.’”

In between Charles Wade’s and the BGCT’s next executive director, I have the wonderful privilege of listening to the concerns, questions and prayer requests of Texas Baptists—both inside and outside the convention staff. I plan to share some of those relevant matters with you during these next few weeks.

Texas Baptist Forum

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Texas Baptist Forum

Hypocrites everywhere

You do not have to do a survey, but have you noticed how many hypocrites we have at ballgames, malls, movie theaters, driving down the highways, lecturing/teaching in our schools, colleges, universities, seminaries and the Congress?

- [Jump to online-only letters below](#)

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



"What do I do? Do I go up to them and say, 'Can I see your documents before I give you free spaghetti?' It negates Matthew 25, where Jesus says, 'What you do for the least of these, you do for me.'"

Dave Lewis

Pastor in Shawnee, Okla., about a new state law, which makes it a felony to knowingly shelter or transport illegal immigrants
(*Presbyterian Outlook/RNS*)

"In spite of their best efforts to steer people to another candidate ... they failed. Why? Because the people said: 'I don't care who you think I should vote for. I'm going to vote for who I want to vote for.'"

Richard Cizik

Vice president for governmental affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals, speaking about religious right leaders' political influence (RNS)

"Far too often, religious services in the USA are of the adults, by the adults and for the adults. And don't think young people aren't noticing."

Stephen Prothero

Chair of Boston University's religion department (USA Today/RNS)

You bet, we have hypocrites in the church—I'm probably one of them.

But I am thankful I have a church that gives me the opportunity to continue "working out" my salvation.