

EDITORIAL: Colossal challenge demands humility

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The next two years should be good for our souls.

The Baptist General Convention of Texas' new executive director, Randel Everett, fired a double-barreled challenge during his [installation service](#) May 19. He called it Texas Hope 2010. And it calls for Texas Baptists to accomplish two enormous feats in just under two years:

Present the gospel to everybody in Texas in a way they will understand it. And make sure all Texans know where their next meal is coming from.

I like how this new guy thinks. These two concise goals embrace both Jesus' Great Commission and his Great Commandment.

Marv Knox

Of course, Texas Hope 2010 is a tall order in a state where 11 million residents do not affiliate with any church. It's a huge task in a state with some of the highest poverty rates in the nation. How can we explain the message of Jesus in more than 100 languages, not to mention an infinite array of cultures? How can we ensure ongoing food distribution in some of the poorest counties in the country, not to mention cities bursting at the seams?

A Paradox

Here's a paradox: The greatness of Texas Hope 2010 is its impossibility. We can't do it. Not in our own strength, anyway.

Fortunately, (this sounds trite, but it's true) God can. We'll be blessed if God uses us to help all Texans know about Christ and forget about hunger.

The wonderful thing about the impossibility of Texas Hope 2010 is that it kicks our pride in the head. Let's just admit we're a prideful people. And we come by all that pride quite naturally.

First of all, Baptists tilt toward pride. It's a corruption of one of our greatest strengths. We believe in the priesthood of all believers. We don't need a priest or anybody else to mediate between ourselves and God. We know we can relate directly to God. This is wonderful knowledge. But taken to its extreme (which we're prone to do), it leads to Lone Ranger spirituality. Even if we don't say it, we tend to think, "Ain't nobody but Jesus gonna tell me what to do."

Second, as Texans, we're proud of our pride. This is another corruption of a strength. In their purest forms, independence and self-reliance are virtues. But when we take them to their extremes, they lead to stubborn arrogance. We say, at least to ourselves: "Just me 'n Jesus. I don't need anybody else."

Being both Baptists and Texans, we overdose on pride. Could our recent malaise be a direct result of our pride? Has it been God's punishment for our arrogance? Denominationally, we stood up to a takeover movement and preserved historic Baptist principles and practice. Demographically, we set out to start churches and meet needs all over the state. Those are virtues. But when we started believing we did it, we made idols of our virtues and started worshipping ourselves and not God.

So, God has given us an assignment we know we can't accomplish without help. What do we do?

- **Get on our knees and pray.** First, for forgiveness, repenting of our pride. Second, for God's divine intervention and daily help in taking on a task we know we can't accomplish on our own.

• **Admit we need the help of others.** If we think we can accomplish Texas Hope 2010 through more than a million Texas Baptists in 5,000 churches, we'll slip on the banana peel of pride again. We've got to admit we need to collaborate with other Christians in other denominations. And, even more humbling, we need to admit we need the help of other Baptists in Texas. (Lord, forgive, then help us.)

• **Roll up our sleeves and get busy.** To accomplish Texas Hope 2010, we must live among and love the people we easily objectify—the poor and the stranger. As missionary/theologian D.T. Niles said, “Christianity is one beggar telling another beggar where to find Bread.” In humility, let us thank God for our Bread and bread as we work with others to make sure all Texans are fed, spiritually and physically.