

WHEN YOUR PREACHER LEAVES: Interim Services for Churches Between Ministers

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Preparing for “Retirement” and Interim Ministry: What Do I Do with my Books?

by Jerrie Barber

When I announced June 13, 2004, that I would be completing my preaching at Berry’s Chapel in Franklin, Tennessee, the first Sunday of April 2007, I began to make plans to make the transition. Perhaps more accurately, I continued to make plans. Gail, the elders, staff, and I had discussed the proposed change for seven or eight months before the announcement.

One of the major things I considered in 2005 was what to do with my library. After much deliberation, I decided to decrease it substantially. As Christmas of that year approached, I went through my books, and chose those that I would like to give away. After selecting them, I offered them first to my children and grandchildren, second to the staff at Berry’s Chapel, third to the congregation at Berry’s Chapel, and fourth to the *Third Monday Preachers’ Workshop*.



This process was helpful to me as I looked anew at my “book friends” that had been my companions for decades. I gave away several books that year.

The next year, the reality that I was making a significant change was more pronounced. By this time, I knew we would be moving to Eddyville, Kentucky, to do our first interim work. Leading up to Christmas 2006, I went through the hundreds of books still in my library. Now the question was not, “Which books do I wish to give away?”. This time I looked at each book individually and asked myself, “Had I rather move this book multiple times in the next few years (if the Lord wills that we do interim ministry in more than one place) or had I rather give this book away?”. The answer to that question nine times out of ten was that I chose to give the book away. I distributed in the same order again: family, staff, congregation, and preacher friends. Many people came by the office to visit. We discussed our relationship, the value I had gained from my “book friends,” and our future.

With the extensive Bible software program I have on my computer and with the wealth of information on the internet, I have been happy with that decision. I have continued to buy “reading books.” I have had few regrets about the books I gave away.

I plan to continue to enjoy the memories of that transition exercise and apply that principle to future changes.

God’s Everlasting Presence

by John Parker

One of the most popular features at the Tower of London is the ravens. Large and raucous, they walk around with impunity. The red-suited Beefeater guards feed and protect them. But while they lead a sheltered and comfortable life, their wings are clipped so they cannot fly away. The reason? English legend declares that so long as the ravens are there, the Tower cannot fall. So the ravens are prevented from ever leaving.



God’s people can be far more confident in their belief that their protector will abide with them. God has promised that He will never leave us, and that so long as we are faithful to him, we will never be abandoned.

The Lord promised in Isaiah 49:15: “Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.” Moses promised Israel: “(For the LORD your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them” (Deuteronomy 4:31). Jesus said of his disciples, “My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand (John 10:29).

Of course, unlike the ravens, we may choose to sin and leave God ourselves (Acts 8:18-24; Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:27-31). But if we are faithful, God remains with us. Just before he ascended to heaven, Jesus promised his disciples: “Lo, I am with you always,

even unto the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). The hymn “Sweet Is the Promise” has these words as its chorus: “I will not forget thee or leave thee; In My hands I’ll hold thee, in my arms I’ll fold thee; I will not forget thee or leave thee; I am thy Redeemer, I will care for thee.”

Let us always remain faithful. If we do, we can be assured of God’s abiding presence.

Shakespeare Quotations for Ministers, by John Parker

Haply your eye shall light upon some toy
You have desire to purchase, and your store [of money],
I think, is not for idle markets, sir.
TWELFTH NIGHT 3.3



My offense . . . is something of my negligence, nothing of my purpose.
TWELFTH NIGHT 3.4

Do not tempt my misery,
Lest that it make me so unsound a man
As to upgraid you with those kindnesses
That I have done for you.
TWELFTH NIGHT 3.4

Virtue is beauty, but the beauteous evil
Are empty trunks o’erflourish’d by the devil.
TWELFTH NIGHT 3.4

Mustard Seeds from Favorite Books, Jerrie Barber

The Heart of a Champion, by Bob Richards, © 1959, 1987, 2009 by Bob Richards



We talked to Zatopek afterwards. Do you know how long he trains every day? Six and a half hours, every day of the year. Can you imagine it? He works out two hours in the morning, three and a half hours in the afternoon, and in the cool of the evening he goes out and runs for an hour before he goes to bed. Is it any wonder that he has broken every record? He said this to me, and it is one of the most interesting comments I’ve ever heard: “I run until I hurt; that’s when I begin my training program.” When most athletes quit and go in and take a shower, that’s when he begins to run harder than ever before. He says, “I’ve learned that if I can just get beyond fatigue, there is a reserve of power that I never dreamed I had, and then I go on to run my best races.” It’s the ability to hurt and keep on going that has made that fellow the most fantastic runner in all the history of distance running (page 46).

It was that kind of spunk that won for Mal Whitfield the Olympic championship. I say it's in the heart of every champ. They can hurt but they don't quit. They keep on going. Life has its hurts, its setbacks, its defeats, its heartaches. No man can meet life in all of its fullness, but he must at one time or another meet hurt and pain and suffering – not only physical but mental pain, spiritual pain, financial pain. In every walk of life there is some sort of suffering and heartache that you've got to face, but the champion is the one who can meet it with a stiff upper lip, with faith in God, and somehow, even with that hurt and pain in his heart, he keeps on going to achieve greatness. I've never read the story of a great man without finding that at one time or another in that man's life he went through days of hurt, and it was the molding influence of the hurt that made the man what he was. It's a great principle for life. It's the heart of a champion (page 48).

Here's where Jesus is, for me, the Champion of champions in the game called life. Here was One who, no matter what the circumstances, did not give up. When the world collapsed around Him, He maintained His spirit, His ideals, to the very end. Here was One who dared to believe that the impossible could be done, that men could be free from sin, that men could live new lives, that men could reflect the image of God in their personalities. Here was One who didn't quit when He hurt. He went to the cross to live forever, in the hearts of men and in the heart of the universe. Here was One who gave everything He had, physically, mentally and spiritually. He's the greatest inspiration of human life (page 54).

To win the great ones, you've got to train thousands of hours. There is only one coin that will pay the price of training – desire. To win the great ones, you've got to put out all the way down to your toenails. There is only one thing that will do it: a burning desire to win. You've got to have enough desire to pour on the extra bit of effort: *that* is the thin margin between victory and defeat. Only one thing will do it: a burning ambition, a compulsive desire (page 60).

But underneath the blue USA uniform, dangling loosely at his side, was a crippled left arm, two-thirds the size of his right. He broke it thirteen times when he was a child, and it never healed properly. This could have beaten him. It was literally a stump that was crooked, but Harold Connolly had the something I'm trying to describe. He did push-ups with his arm; he lifted weights; he did chin-ups. He did everything in his power trying to build up that arm. I wish you could have seen his fifth throw in Melbourne. As he stepped into the seven-foot circle, 100,000 people waiting, he looked out over his shoulder at the two Russians who had broken the Olympic record. They were way out ahead of everyone else. He had fouled once. Just two more throws was all he had (page 62).

It's the kind of a thing the Hungarian boy had when, in 1952, he looked down his pistol barrel and split the bull's-eye again and again and again. He just couldn't miss. He too won a gold medal with that perfect right hand and eye, and coordination. Six months later, he lost his right arm. And in Melbourne he came back with his *left* hand,

and split the bull's-eye again and again and again, three and a half years later, to win his second gold medal with his left hand (page 64).

Again, if you want to be the person you ought to be, *you've got to welcome competition*. This is a hard thing to do because there is a tendency within us to want to level off, to accept a certain standard as being "good enough." Now I know that the idea of competition is being criticized today by many leading educators who question its value. But may I simply assert this fact: You cannot escape competition in life. From the time a child is born until he dies, he is facing competition of one kind or another. It cannot be avoided; it is indispensable to progress. Now what do I mean by competition? Competition is someone setting a standard for you that you ought to set for yourself; it is that outside stimulus or impetus that forces you to set your own standards higher and to achieve a little higher mark (page 108).

We should realize that health is the prediction upon which great things in life are built. A nation that is not strong physically, or a person who is not strong physically, cannot accomplish great things. I will go so far as to say this – and it may hurt some folks – but I believe that there is a relationship between physical discipline and the discipline of the mind and the spirit and the emotions. The person who is not physically fit is indicating a basic pattern of weakness in certain areas, and I think that when a nation becomes weak, something bad has happened to the fiber of the people (page 125).

Smile of the Month

Abraham Lincoln was walking down the street with his two sons, who were crying and fighting. "What's the matter with the boys?" a friend asked.

"The same thing that's wrong with the whole world," Lincoln replied. "I have three walnuts and each of the boys wants two" (*Be Joyful*, by Warren W. Wiersbe, page 11)!



Barber Clippings

Gail and I continue to enjoy our work. Gail spoke at a Ladies' Day at Thompsons Station last month. She continues her Ladies' Bible Class each Tuesday. I spoke at a Teachers' Appreciation Banquet at the Mount Pleasant church in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

The *God's Great Servants* leadership class continues well on Wednesday night at Hendersonville.

The brethren continue the preacher search. I appreciate the hard work that thirty of our people continue to do in order to find a good fit for the next person to be the pulpit minister at this congregation.

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John Parker

Jill and I have completed our sixth month of interim ministry for the Fairview church. We are happy to report that on November 1 the elders announced that Brad Tate, a native of Decatur, Alabama, currently preaching in Texas, will be coming with his fine wife and two children to become the new preacher for Fairview. Brad trained at the excellent Memphis School of Preaching under veteran and highly respected gospel preacher brother Garland Elkins and the other staff members there. We wish Brad every success in his new work.

We are happy to announce that my book with photographer Paul Seawright, *Abide with Me: a Photographic Journey Through Great British Hymns*, has now sold over 10,000 copies. We are pleased that on November 14 at Homecoming at Freed Hardeman University, my alma mater where I taught from 1969-82, I will be signing the book from 11:00-1:00 near the Athletic building. We thank the university for this honor. I will also be signing the book at the Lipscomb University Arts and Crafts event at Avalon on the campus of Lipscomb University from 9:00-11:00, and that same day at Cokesbury Bookstore at 12:00 noon at their Christmas celebration. On November 30 at 7:00 p.m. Ray Walker and I will be at Davis Kidd Bookstore in Green Hills for a signing at this company famous throughout the Southeast. On October 12 we were honored to show our Power Point lessons on the hymns to the seniors members of the Hillsboro Church of Christ.

I continue to work on my video on *Romeo and Juliet* for students of Christian High Schools with Dr. Mike Fernandez, Director of Theater at Lipscomb University, and with Nashville videographer Russ Sturgeon, a member of the Granny White church where I am privileged to serve as an elder. We plan to film the video in December.

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